

23 October 2019: PIB Summary & Analysis

18th NAM Summit

Context:

Vice President will lead the Indian delegation to the 18th NAM Summit in Baku, Azerbaijan.

About the NAM Summit:

- The 18th Summit of the Heads of State and Government of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) will be held in Baku, Azerbaijan in October 2019.
- The theme for the 18th NAM Summit: **“Upholding the Bandung Principles to ensure concerted and adequate response to the challenges of contemporary world”**.
- The **Ten Principles of Bandung**, a political statement encapsulating the need to promote world peace and cooperation were formulated at the Asian-African Conference in 1955.
- The theme is significant as it relates to the forthcoming 65th anniversary of the Bandung Principles in 2020 and the 60th anniversary of the establishment of the NAM in 2021.
- India is one of the founding members of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), which was established in 1961 with 29 members. It has since grown to 120 members to become one of the largest groupings of nation-states.
- The Summit will focus on a whole gamut of contemporary issues such as terrorism, threats to peace and security, UN reform, climate change, sustainable development, economic governance and south-south cooperation.
- At the NAM Baku Summit, the Republic of Azerbaijan will take over the chairmanship of the NAM for the upcoming 3 years.
- The first NAM Summit was held in 1961 at Belgrade, Yugoslavia.
- The previous summit in 2016 was held in the Island of Margarita in Venezuela.

Read more about the [Non-aligned Movement \(NAM\)](#) at the linked article.

Agreement on Science and Technology Cooperation between India and the USA

Context:

The Union Cabinet approved proposal for agreement on science and technology cooperation between India and the United States of America.

Details:

- The Agreement is expected to provide an opportunity to promote ‘high quality’ and ‘high impact’ research and innovation partnerships as well as broadening and expanding relationships between the extensive scientific and technological communities.
- The cooperation between both countries would include:
 - Exchanges of scientific and technical information and experts.
 - Convening of seminars and meetings.
 - Training of scientists and technical experts.

- Conduct of cooperative research projects.
- Establishment of science and innovation-based public-private partnerships.
- Use of advance research facilities.

CCEA approves Review of Guidelines for Granting Authorization to market Transportation Fuels

Context:

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) chaired by the Prime Minister has approved the review of guidelines for granting authorization to market transportation fuels. This marks a major reform of the guidelines for marketing of petrol and diesel.

Details:

- The current policy guidelines had not undergone any change since 2002.
- It has now been revised to bring it in line with the changing market dynamics and with a view to encouraging investment from private players, including foreign players, in this sector.
- The new guidelines are expected to give a fillip to 'Ease of Doing Business'.
- It will also boost employment in this sector.

Salient features:

- Entry barrier for private players is decreased. Entities seeking authorisation need to have a net worth of Rs. 250 crore as opposed to the earlier Rs. 2000 crore prior investment.
- Non-oil companies can also invest in this sector now. Earlier, there was a requirement of prior investment in the oil and gas sector, mainly in exploration and production, refining, pipelines/terminals, etc.
- The entities seeking market authorisation for petrol and diesel are allowed to apply for retail and bulk authorisation separately or both.
- Companies have been given flexibility in setting up a joint venture or subsidiary for market authorisation.
- In addition to conventional fuels, the authorized entities are required to install facilities for marketing at least one new generation alternate fuel, like CNG, LNG, biofuels, electric charging, etc. at their proposed retail outlets within 3 years of operationalization of the said outlet.
- Entities will also encourage the employment of women and ex-servicemen at the retail outlets.
- CCTV facilities will be set up at all retail outlets.
- The authorised entities are required to set up minimum 5% of the total retail outlets in the notified remote areas within 5 years of grant of authorisation. A robust monitoring mechanism has been set up to monitor this obligation.
- An individual may be allowed to obtain dealership of more than one marketing company in case of open dealerships of PSU oil marketing companies but at different sites.

First National Protocol to Enumerate Snow Leopard Population in India Launched

Context:

The Union Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) launched the First National Protocol on Snow Leopard Population Assessment in India, on the occasion of **International Snow Leopard Day**.

About the Snow Leopard Population Assessment in India (SPAI)

- The Assessment has been developed by scientific experts in association with the Snow Leopard States/UTs. Snow leopard states/UTs are:
 - Ladakh
 - Jammu & Kashmir
 - Himachal Pradesh
 - Uttarakhand
 - Sikkim
 - Arunachal Pradesh
- The assessment was unveiled at the 4th steering committee meeting of the **Global Snow Leopard & Ecosystem Protection (GSLEP)**
- The SPAI is expected to lead to scientifically robust national and state-wise population estimates of this endangered and elusive cat across its high altitude habitat, both inside and outside protected areas.
- **Additional benefits expected out of SPAI:**
 - Reliable distribution map of snow leopards
 - Spatial mapping of threats faced by the species across different parts of its range
 - Identification of important population and biodiversity sites in need of greater protection
 - Capacity building of young conservationists and local champions
 - Identification of potential refugia for snow leopards in response to various pressures such as global climate change
- The guidelines for SPAI bring together the best practices from various resources, including guidelines prepared by Wildlife Institute of India (WII), Nature Conservation Foundation (NCF), PAWS Technical Support Committee of GSLEP, GTI Council, [WWF](https://www.worldwildlife.org/), World Bank Group, Wildlife Conservation Trust and the Global Tiger Forum.
- SPAI is also referred to as Population Assessment of World's Snow Leopards (PAWS) for India.

About the Global Snow Leopard & Ecosystem Protection Program (GSLEP):

- The GSLEP is a joint initiative that aims to conserve the endangered snow leopard within the broader context of also conserving valuable high mountain ecosystems.
- GSLEP unites all 12 range country governments (snow leopards are found only in 12 countries), nongovernmental and inter-governmental organisations, local communities, and the private sector around this aim.
- The snow leopard range countries have agreed to work together to identify and secure at least 23 snow leopard landscapes by the year 2020.
- The two-day international meeting of GSLEP Program (where the National Protocol was launched) is being organized by the GOI's Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change at New Delhi.

About the International Snow Leopard Day:

- This day is observed every year on 23rd
- This date was chosen because it was the day in 2013 when political leaders from 12 countries came together for the first time to endorse the **"Bishkek Declaration"** on the conservation of snow leopards.
- The 12 leaders came together in the Global Snow Leopard Forum held in the Kyrgyz capital

Bishkek, with a shared goal of conserving snow leopards and their fragile habitats.

- The GSLEP was also launched on this day.

About the Snow Leopard:

- The snow leopard is a large cat native to the mountain ranges of Central and South Asia.
- Its scientific name is *Panthera uncial*. It is also called ounce.
- It is listed as 'Vulnerable' on the IUCN Red List.
- It is threatened by poaching and habitat destruction.
- It is found in 12 countries:
 - India
 - China
 - Kyrgyzstan
 - Afghanistan
 - Bhutan
 - Mongolia
 - Kazakhstan
 - Nepal
 - Pakistan
 - Russia
 - Tajikistan
 - Uzbekistan
- In India, they inhabit the higher Himalayan and Trans Himalayan landscape in an altitudinal range between approximately 3,000 m to 5,400 m above mean sea level.
- They are found in five states namely,
 - Jammu & Kashmir
 - Himachal Pradesh
 - Arunachal Pradesh
 - Uttarakhand
 - Sikkim
- This area contributes to about 5% of the global snow leopard range.
- Long term research and conservation efforts in India have made it one of the best-researched snow leopard range countries in the world.
- The snow leopard is the indicator of the health and sustainability of the mountain ecosystem that provides water to up to 60 per cent of the world's population (Central Asia and the Tibetan Plateau).

National Panchayat Awards 2019

Context:

Out of the 2.5 lakh panchayats in the country, 240 panchayats were conferred the National Panchayat Awards 2019 by the Union Minister for Panchayati Raj in New Delhi.

About the National Panchayat Awards:

- The Best performing Panchayats were selected based on various criteria and indicators.
- This incentivization encourages Panchayat representatives who make special efforts; creates models for other Panchayats and Gram Sabhas to follow and focuses public attention on Panchayats' performance, which encourages all Panchayats to improve their performance. Finally, this creates an eco-system for overall good governance at the local level.

- The awards were given under five categories:
 - Deen Dayal Upadhyay Panchayat Sashaktikaran Puraskar (DDUPSP): Given to best performing Panchayats (District, Intermediate and Gram) in recognition of the good work done for improving the delivery of services and public goods.
 - Nanaji Deshmukh Rashtriya Gaurav Gram Sabha Puraskar (NDRGGSP): Given to Gram Panchayats for their outstanding contribution to the socio-economic development by involving Gram Sabhas.
 - Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPDP) Award: Given to best performing Gram Panchayats which have developed their GPDPs according to the State/UT specific guidelines prepared in line with the model guidelines issued by Ministry of Panchayati Raj.
 - Child-friendly Gram Panchayat Award: Given to best performing Gram Panchayats/Village Councils (VCs) (one in each State/UT) for adopting child-friendly practices.
 - e-Panchayat Puraskar: Given to States/UTs or promoting e-enablement of PRIs for bringing in efficiency, transparency and accountability in their functioning.

Gram Manchitra:

- A Spatial Planning Application called 'Gram Manchitra' was launched on the occasion.
- Gram Manchitra is a Geo-Spatial based decision support system for the panchayats.
- The panchayats can utilize this App to plan, develop and monitor developmental activities on real-time basis.