

1. Trachischium Apteii

Why in News?

- A New Snake Species named ‘Trachischium apteii’ was recently discovered for the first time in Arunachal Pradesh.

About:

- Trachischium apteii is a non-venomous burrowing snake in Arunachal Pradesh found under fallen logs inside a thickly forested area of the Tally Valley Wildlife Sanctuary near the town of Ziro in Arunachal Pradesh.
- The newly discovered species belongs to a group of fossorial snakes that live mostly underground, and surface mainly during or after a heavy monsoon shower.
- Experts behind the discovery suggested that due to the burrowing habits of species of this genus, snakes belonging to the group are seldom seen and hence remain poorly studied.
- Trachischium apteii was named so to honour the contribution of ‘Deepak Apte’, well-known marine biologist and Director of the (Bombay Natural History Society) BNHS.
- Trachischium species are commonly called slender snakes, and are currently known by seven species that are distributed across the Himalayas, and the Indo-Burma and Indo-China regions.
- Morphologically, the snake is distinguished by smooth and dorsal scales arranged in 15 rows throughout the body.
- The dorsal colour of the holotype is dark brown to black with faint dorsal longitudinal lines.
- Large-sized members of the genus measure about 293 mm to 299 mm (measuring less than a foot that is 300 mm or 30 cm).



2. Merger of Daman & Diu and Dadra & Nagar Haveli

Why in News?

- Lok Sabha has passed a bill to merge UTs Daman and Diu, Dadra and Nagar Haveli.

About:

- The Bill amends the First Schedule to merge the territories of the two UTs: (a) Dadra and Nagar Haveli, and (b) Daman and Diu.
- The merged territory will form the single UT and named as Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu.
- **Article 240(1)** of the Constitution allows the President to make regulations for certain UTs, including the UTs of Dadra and Nagar Haveli, and Daman and Diu.
- The Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu (Merger of Union Territories) Bill, 2019 will help in strengthening administrative efficiency services.
- The First Schedule to the Representation of the People Act, 1950 provides one seat in Lok Sabha to each of the two UTs. The Bill seeks to amend the Schedule to allocate two Lok Sabha seats to the merged UT.
- Provisions retained are reservation provided to people in the two union territories will continue, the number of Lok Sabha seats will also remain unaltered and the jurisdiction of the Bombay High Court will continue over the two territories, there will be no change in the status of Group III and IV employees.
- The country currently has nine Union Territories after the creation of the UTs of Jammu and Kashmir, and Ladakh. However, with the merger of Daman and Diu, and Dadra and Nagar Haveli, the number of UTs will come down to eight.



3. Cartosat-3 Satellite

- ISRO team has successfully launched PSLV-C47 carrying indigenous Cartosat-3 satellite.

Cartosat-3:

- It is an advanced earth imaging and mapping satellite. It would also boost the military's space surveillance.
- The satellite will be placed in an orbit of 509 km at an inclination of 97.5 degrees.
- Cartosat-3, with an ISRO-best resolution of 25 cm, will be the first of a series of high resolution, third generation satellites planned for observing the Earth.
- The satellite will be able to pick up objects of that size (25 cm) from its orbital perch about 509 km away. This will make Cartosat-3 among the few sharpest, if not the best, civil earth imagers worldwide.
- Cartosat-3 will also have multi-spectral (captures light from across the electromagnetic spectrum) capabilities, which will help the military zoom in on enemy hideouts and terror hubs.

4. Exercise MILAN 2020

Why in News?

- Naval Exercise MILAN 2020 is scheduled to be held at Vishakhapatnam in March 2020 in which 41 countries have been invited.

Highlights:

- The Government pursues cooperation initiatives with friendly foreign countries including in Indian Ocean Region through structured interactions like Staff Talks, Empowered Steering Group etc.
- The areas of cooperation include Capacity Building, Marine Domain Awareness, Training, Hydrography, Technical Assistance, Operational Exercise etc.
- 41 countries including Oman, Qatar, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Bangladesh, South Korea, the US, the UK, Australia, Vietnam, Myanmar, Iran, Sri Lanka, Thailand among others are going to participate.

5. World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA)

Why in News?

- World Anti-Doping Agency report outlines Russia's Doping Cover-Up

About:

- The International Olympic Committee (IOC) banned Russia's participation at the 2018 Winter Olympics in Pyeongchang, South Korea.
- The Russian Olympic Committee was suspended and barred from attending the event.
- Only a few Russian athletes were allowed to perform under Strict Conditions.



WADA:

- It is established in 1999 as an international independent agency composed and funded equally by the sport movement and governments of the world.
- It is headquartered in Montreal, Canada.
- It aims at harmonizing anti-doping regulations in all sports and countries.
- It is collective initiative led by the International Olympic Committee.
- Its key activities include scientific research, education, development of anti-doping capacities, and monitoring of the World Anti-Doping Code (Code) the document harmonizing anti-doping policies in all sports and all countries.
- It releases an annual report with regards to doping violations.

IOC:

- It was created on 23 June 1894 and is the supreme authority of the Olympic Movement.
- It is a not-for-profit independent international organization that is committed to building a better world through sport.
- It ensures the regular celebration of the Olympic Games, supports all affiliated member organisations and strongly encourages, by appropriate means, the promotion of the Olympic values.

6. Spike: Anti-Tank Guided Missile

Why in News?

- The Indian Army has inducted Israel made Anti-Tank Guided Missiles ‘Spike’ along the LoC in Jammu and Kashmir to bolster defence along the border with Pakistan.

Spike:

- It is a fire-and-forget anti-tank guided missile and anti-personnel missile.
- It was developed and designed by the Israeli company Rafael Advanced Defence System.
- It is available in man-portable, vehicle-launched, and helicopter-launched variants.
- Nag, AMOGHA are the other anti-tank missiles with India.

7. Compulsory Retirement

Why in News?

- The Central Board of Direct Taxes, CBDT has compulsorily retired 21 Group B officers of the rank of ITO.
- The officers were retired under Fundamental Rule in the public interest, till now 85 officers have been compulsorily retired this year.



Compulsory Retirement

- Fundamental Rule 56(j) of Central Civil Services (Pension) Rules, 1972, provides for compulsory retirement of government staff in public interest.
- These rules allows the government to retire a public servant in public interest, “whose integrity is doubtful” and those “found to be ineffective” in working.
- The rule insists bureaucrats to either perform or perish.
- Under 56 (j), the performance of an officer who has turned 50 or 55 or has completed 30 years of service (whichever is earlier,) is being reviewed to ascertain if he/she is liable for compulsory retirement.

8. UMEED Mission

Why in News?

- Jammu and Kashmir Rural Livelihoods Mission popularly known as UMEED continues its work to reduce poverty in the Union Territory. UMEED was launched in 2011, is continuing in extension mode in Jammu & Kashmir.

UMEED Mission:

- UMEED has an objective to be a people-led and people-centred initiative for providing space, voice and resources for the poor in an open and transparent manner.
- The Mission is aimed to facilitate the poor to develop a strong Social Capital base to create, support and nurture their institutions to function effectively for the cause of poor.
- To ensure universal mobilization, at least one member from each rural poor and vulnerable household, preferably a woman, remains part of Self-Help Group (SHG).

