

# KSG:NEWSPAPER CRUX

23<sup>RD</sup> JULY, 2020

## NEWSPAPER HIGHLIGHTS

- About a quarter of the sitting Rajya Sabha members have declared criminal cases against themselves, according to an analysis of their self sworn affidavits by the Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR).
- The Chinese and Indian armies have agreed to not use unmanned aerial vehicles at the friction points in eastern Ladakh along the Line of Actual Control (LAC), other than for mutually agreed "short time periods".
- Delhi's meteorology and the quantity of chaff burnt play a greater role in worsening air quality than the time chosen by farmers in Punjab to start crop burning, a study argues.
- The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has directed the Environment Ministry, Oil India Limited (OIL) and two other entities to explain how the proposed drilling of seven oil wells in an eastern Assam national park(DibruSaikhowa National Park) was permitted.
- The colour of water in Lonar lake in Maharashtra's Buldhana district turned pink due to a large presence of the salt loving Haloarchaea microbes, according to a study by a Punebased institute(Agharkar Research Institute).
- A rapid deployment of the Indian Air Force (IAF) assets in forward locations in response to the prevailing situation in eastern Ladakh sent out a strong message to India's adversaries.
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi invited U.S. companies to invest in India's healthcare, infrastructure, defence, energy, farm and insurance sectors, saying the country offers openness and opportunities.

## REVAMP STRATEGY FOR FREE TRADE AGREEMENTS(FTA) TO ENSURE ECONOMIC BENEFIT

### Key facts

1. Government move is aimed to ensure that FTA's provide **economic and strategic trade benefits**. Focus is on to those countries which India does not have a significant trade deficit.
2. FTA is a **pact between two or more nations to reduce barriers to imports and exports** among them.
3. India has viewed FTAs as an important tool to enhance its trade and investment, and has signed maximum number of FTAs in Asia.
4. With the exception of SAFTA(South Asia free trade agreement), **India's trade deficit with ASEAN, Korea and Japan** has widened.
5. Expert suggests that Chinese goods are routed through these countries.
6. Concern over **loss of revenue due to trade agreements**, especially in manufacturing sector.
7. Also, India is expected to benefit more on the services front, with software professionals.

## CALL FOR STRATEGY OVERHAUL FOR REVISED LAND RESTORATION TARGET

### Key facts

1. Last year, India decided to restore 26 million hectares of degraded lands by 2030, revising its earlier target of **21 million hectares**.
2. Land degradation is **deterioration or loss of productive capacity of soils** for present and future.
3. Currently, nearly **one third of the country's area** i.e. 96.4 million hectares is under land degradation.
4. Land restoration is part of India's commitment to **achieve land degradation neutrality**, a flagship initiative under the **United Nations Convention to Combat desertification**.
5. Strategies needed-Comprehensive **rainfed crop systems approach** rather than a soil conservation approach.
6. **Encourages corporate support** to provide scalability to efforts.

## CENTRE'S INDECISION ON GENETICALLY MODIFIED(GM) CROPS LEAVES FIELD OPEN FOR BLACK MARKET OPERATORS

### Key facts

1. Environmentalist and pro-GM seed farmer's organisations asked government to take **concrete stand on GM crops**.
2. Currently, **Bt cotton is the only GM crop** allowed for commercial cultivation in India.
3. But the GM crops like HT cotton, Bt brinjal, and HT soya seeds are **available in the black market** and farmers are already cultivating these GM crops.
4. Proponents argue that, **goal of food security** and nutritional requirements for growing population can be met by GM crops.