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Environment

United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)

Why in News?

High-Level Dialogue on Desertification, Land Degradation and Drought (DLDD) was convened recently with the support of UNCCD to assess the progress made in fighting land degradation.

About UNCCD:

- It was established in **1994**.
- It is the sole **legally binding international agreement** linking environment and development with the sustainable land management.
- It was an organisation setup by recommendation of the **Rio Conference's Agenda 21**.
- **Focus areas:** It addresses specifically the **arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas**,

called as the drylands, where some of the most vulnerable ecosystems and population is found.

- **Aim:** To implement the Convention and achieve the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** with the end goal to protect land from over-use and drought, so that it can continue to provide food, water, energy, and other necessities.
- The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, GoI is the nodal Ministry for this Convention.

Polity and Governance

Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act

Why in News?

Delhi High Court recently in a judgment defined the contours of the otherwise vague provisions of the UAPA, and laid down some important principles upon the imposition of Section under the Act.

About UAPA, 1967:

- The law aims at effective prevention of unlawful activities' associations in India.
- The Act gives **absolute power** to the **central government**, i.e., centre can deem an activity as unlawful by way of declaration through an Official Gazette.
- It has provisions for **death penalty** and **life imprisonment** as highest punishments.
- Under provisions of UAPA, both **Indian and foreign nationals** can be charged.
- It is applicable to the offenders in the same way, even if crime is committed on a foreign land outside India.
- Subsequent Amendments' to UAPA:
- The 2004 amendment added **Terrorist act** to the list of offences for purpose of

banning organisations engaged in terrorist activities.

- The 2019 Amendment empowered central govt. to designate even **individuals** as terrorists on certain grounds provided in the Act.
- The Act also empowers the **Director General** of National Investigation Agency (NIA) to grant approval of seizure or attachment of property when the case is investigated by NIA.
- The Act also empowers the officers of the NIA, of Inspector rank or above, to investigate cases of terrorism in addition to those conducted by the DSP/ACP or above rank officer in the state.

Combating terror

The Ministry of Home Affairs on Wednesday declared four individuals as terrorists under the recently amended Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act. A look at its provisions:

- It empowers the government to designate individuals as terrorists. Previously, only an organisation could be designated as one

- It empowers the National Investigation Agency (NIA) to seize properties, which previously required permission from the Director General of Police

- Also, it allows NIA officers, of the rank of Inspector or above, to investigate cases. Before, only Deputy Superintendent

or Assistant Commissioner of Police or above, could do so

- Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) chief Masood Azhar, Hafiz Saeed of the Lashkar-e-Taiba, his deputy Zaki-ur-Rehman Lakhvi and underworld don Dawood Ibrahim have been designated as terrorists



Under Masood Azhar's leadership, JeM carried out an attack on the Pathankot air base

- Presently, 10 autonomous councils exist in states of **Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram**.
- This special provision is provided under Article 244(2) and Article 275(1) of the Constitution of India.

Key takeaways:

- The **Governor** is empowered to organise and re-organise these ADCs.
- If there are different tribes in an autonomous district, the governor is empowered to divide the district into several **autonomous regions**.
- ADCs are composed of 30 members, of whom:
 - four are **nominated** by the **governor** and the
 - remaining 26 are elected on the basis of **adult franchise**.
- Term in office:
 - The elected members hold office for a period of **five years** (unless the council is dissolved earlier)
 - Nominated members hold office during the **pleasure** of the governor.
- Each autonomous region also has a **separate regional council**.

Power of ADCs:

- The district and regional councils are empowered to administer the areas under their jurisdiction.
- They can make laws on specified matters like
 - land,
 - forests,
 - canal water,
 - shifting cultivation,
 - village administration,
 - inheritance of property,
 - marriage and divorce, etc.

Sixth Schedule areas:

Why in News?

Tribal minister recently wrote a letter to Union home minister demanding to place the Constitution (125th Amendment) Bill, 2019 in the floor of Parliament which would empower the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution.

About Sixth Schedule Areas:

- The provision of Sixth Scheduled Areas was brought to protect tribal population and provide autonomy to these communities through creation of autonomous development councils.
- The ADCs can frame laws on **land, public health, agriculture** and others.

- But all laws so created require the assent of the **governor**.
- **Village councils:** The district and regional councils within their territorial jurisdictions is empowered to constitute **village councils** i.e., **court** for trial of suits and cases between the tribes.
- The jurisdiction of high court over such suits and cases is as **specified by the governor**.

<p>MEGHALAYA</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Khasi Hills Autonomous District Council ● Jaintia Hills Autonomous District Council ● Garo Hills Autonomous District Council 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Mara Autonomous District Council
<p>MIZORAM</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Chakma Autonomous District Council ● Lai Autonomous District Council 	<p>TRIPURA</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council
	<p>ASSAM</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Dima Hasao Autonomous Council ● Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council ● Bodoland Territorial Council

Governmental Initiatives

UDAN Scheme

Why in News?

The Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways and the Ministry of Civil Aviation (under UDAN Scheme) signed MoU to develop Seaplane Services in India.

About UDAN 4.1:

- It focusses on connecting smaller airports, special helicopter services and seaplane routes.
- In consonance with **Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways**, it will also contribute to **Sagarmala Seaplane Services** project.
- Seaplane route between **Kevadia and Sabarmati** Riverfront in Ahmedabad is an example of Sagarmala Seaplane Services project.

About UDAN Scheme:

- Ude Desh ka Aam Nagrik (UDAN) scheme was launched to boost **regional connectivity** in 2016.
- It is under the **Ministry of Civil Aviation**.
- It aims to create affordable but economically viable and profitable flights on regional routes so that flying is within reach of common man even in small towns.
- The scheme also envisages creating connectivity services in the **un-served** and **underserved** airports of the country by the revival of existing air-strips and airports.
- Financial incentives are to be provided from the **Centre, state governments and airport operators** to selected airlines to encourage operations from such airports, and also to keep airfares affordable.

International Relations

Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)

Why in News?

Recently, 42nd session of the FAO's Conference was held recently.

About FAO:

- It is one of the **specialized agencies** of the United Nations which leads international efforts to defeat worldwide hunger.
- World Food Day is celebrated every year across the world on 16th October to mark the anniversary of the founding of the FAO in 1945.
- India also released a commemorative coin of ₹ 75 denomination to mark the 75th Anniversary of the FAO.
- It is headquartered in **Rome**.
- Its sister bodies are the **World Food Programme** and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD).

Key Initiatives of FAO:

- Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS).
- It monitors the **Desert Locust** situation throughout the world.

Flagship Publications:

- The State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture.
- The State of the World's Forests.
- The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World.
- The State of Food and Agriculture.
- The State of Agricultural Commodity Markets.

- The non-OPEC countries which export crude oil are included in **OPEC plus** countries.
- Notable OPEC plus countries: Malaysia, Oman, Russia.

NOTE:

- **USA** is not part of OPEC+.
- **Oman** is not part of OPEC but part of OPEC+.

OPEC+

Why in News?

OPEC+ Countries are slowing pushing up the production of crude oil, which may reduce oil prices in the country.

About OPEC

- The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) was created after after Baghdad Conference, 1960
- Five founding countries: Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Venezuela.
- It is a permanent intergovernmental organization to co-ordinate and unify petroleum policies among member nations.
- Headquarter: Vienna, Austria.
- OPEC membership is **open** to any country that is a substantial exporter of oil and shares the ideals of the organization.
- Currently, OPEC has a total of 14 Member Countries.

OPEC+