

18 June

1) **NITI Aayog Governing Council**: Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently chaired the fourth meeting of Governing Council of NITI Aayog. The meeting was yet another attempt to take India – a federation of states forward with equal participation of all the stakeholders.

The Government, in January 2015, replaced Planning Commission with NITI Aayog (National Institution for Transforming India). It established with the aim to achieve Sustainable Development Goals and to enhance cooperative federalism by fostering the involvement of State Governments of India in the economic policy-making process using a bottom-up approach.

Facts for Prelims- Initiatives by NITI Aayog:

Its important initiatives include "15 year road map", "7-year vision, strategy and action plan", AMRUT, Digital India and Atal Innovation Mission.

2) **Assumption Island**:

After a growing political opposition, Seychelles President Danny Faure has cancelled the agreement with India for the development of Assumption Island.

The decision by the Seychelles President to drop the deal in the face of protests over a perceived loss of sovereignty is a blow to the government's "SAGAR" (Security and Growth for All in the Region)

3) **Thimpu-based SAARC Development Fund** will soon be launching a social enterprise development programme (SEDP) to fund 80 entities annually across eight-member states, including India.

- The SEDP is being launched as part of its SAARC Development Fund's social window.
- The programme will be implemented in all the SAARC member

states with the objective of identifying and building social enterprises by using a mix of grants and concessional returnable capital.

- The programme intends to fund **around 80 enterprises across the 8 SAARC member states annually.**

4) **Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG)**

28th NSG plenary meeting was held recently in Jurmala, Latvia. With this, Latvia has become the first Baltic state to Chair the NSG. There was no headway in India's application for NSG entry in the meeting.

Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) is a multinational body concerned with reducing nuclear proliferation by controlling the export and re-transfer of materials that may be applicable to nuclear weapon development and by improving safeguards and protection on existing materials. Interestingly, the NSG was set up in 1974 as a reaction to India's nuclear tests to stop what it called the misuse of nuclear material meant for peaceful purposes. Currently, it has 48 members.

5) **GLONASS**: Russia has successfully launched a Glonass-M positioning satellite using a Soyuz-2.1b carrier rocket from Plesetsk space center. With this launch, there are now 26 Glonass satellites in orbit.

GLONASS is an acronym, which stands for Globalnaya Navigazionnaya Sputnikovaya Sistema, or Global Navigation Satellite System. **GLONASS** is Russia's version of GPS (Global Positioning System).

6) **World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought: 17 June-**

The World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought is observed every year to promote public awareness of international efforts to

combat desertification. The day is a unique moment to remind everyone that land degradation neutrality is achievable through problem-solving, strong community involvement and co-operation at all levels.

2018 Theme: "Land has true value – invest in it."

7) *The Gender Action Plan:*

The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) recently created a new plan to support and enhance gender-responsive policy needs. The Gender Action Plan (GAP) that will increase and strengthen the participation and leadership of women at all levels of decision-making and local implementation of the UNCCD, including drought management as well as sand and dust storms and land degradation neutrality interventions, with the aim to reach gender parity by 2030.

8) Artillery gun Dhanush:

The indigenously upgraded artillery gun Dhanush has successfully completed final user trials and is ready for induction into the Army.

Key facts:

- **Dhanush** is an upgraded version of the Swedish Bofors gun procured by India in the mid-1980s.
- Dhanush is a 155-mm, 45-calibre gun with a maximum range of 40 km in salvo mode.
- It has been developed by Ordnance Factory Board (OFB).