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Solar energy will play big role in 'Atmanirbhar Bharat': PM

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday said solar energy would play a major role in achieving self-reliance in energy, essential for an 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' (self-reliant India).
- Inaugurating a 750 MW solar power project in Rewa district, Madhya Pradesh, he said: "We won't be able to use solar power entirely unless we have within the country improved solar panels, improved batteries and best quality storage. We need to work in this direction now."
- Solar energy, he asserted, would be a big medium for the energy needs of the 21st century.

14% excess rain in India so far this monsoon

- Monsoon rainfall since June has been 14% more than what is normal for this time of the year.
- So far, India has received 28.7 cm rainfall as opposed to the typical 25.2 cm. Only on nine of the 40 days of monsoon so far has rainfall been less than the daily average, according to data from the **India Meteorological Department (IMD)**.
- About 40% of districts received excess rain while 27% others have seen deficient rain, having received at least 20% less rain than usual.
- There are 29 districts in Uttar Pradesh, 17 in Gujarat and 16 in Jammu and Kashmir that have received deficient rain. Paradoxically, Uttar Pradesh also leads in the number of districts with excess rain (35), followed by Bihar (32) and Madhya Pradesh (28). Currently, the IMD collates rainfall data from 681 districts.



A new low in man-animal conflict, says SC; sends notice to Kerala and Centre

- The Supreme Court on Friday took cognisance of the death of a pregnant elephant in May from eating pineapples filled with fire crackers by villagers in Kerala as a new low in man-animal conflict episodes across the country. A Bench led by Chief Justice of India Sharad A. Bobde sought a response from the Centre, Kerala and other States about the increasing levels of barbarity witnessed in trapping and killing wild animals straying into human habitation.
- The petition also said the forest service is riddled with a large number of vacancies, making their presence ineffective. They are hardly able to patrol the large swathes of forest land or play a role in wildlife conservation.
- There is hardly any scientific practices evolved to lessen man-animal conflicts.
- The petition sought declaration of the “practice of using barbaric means/snares/shaved sticks/explosives to ward off wild animals as illegal, unconstitutional, and violative of Articles 14, and 21 of the Constitution.”

After camel back, drones used for cross-border smuggling

- Not long ago, Pakistan-based criminal syndicates and terror outfits smuggled drugs, weapons and other illegal goods on camel back across the vast Thar desert in Rajasthan and through well-trained foot couriers. Now, they are taking to drones.
- The increasing use of drones for cross-border smuggling has led the Indian security agencies to look for various ways to put in place reliable systems as part of a smart border management mechanism for deterrence. In terms of border security, drone jammers may not prove to be more effective and, hence, other viable options for surveillance and detection are being explored.
- The latest case of arms dropping through a Pakistani drone was detected when the Border Security Force shot down the UAV near Rathua village in the Hira Nagar sector of Jammu on June 20. It was loaded with a M4 rifle of the U.S. make, two magazines, 60 live rounds and seven grenades.



Recipients unidentified:

- This was the first time a drone dropping was noticed in the Hira Nagar sector along the International Border with Pakistan. The enforcement agencies are yet to identify the intended recipients of the consignment.

IAF gets last of 5 AH-64E Apache attack helicopters from Boeing

- Boeing handed over the last of the five **AH-64E Apache attack helicopters** to the Indian Air Force (IAF), completing the contract for 22 Apaches.
- The Apaches were deployed at the Leh air base as part of the forward movement of assets, amid the stand-off with China in Ladakh.
- The final five of the 22 Apache attack helicopters were handed over to the IAF at the Air Force Station, Hindan, in June, Boeing said in a statement on Friday.
- Earlier, in March, Boeing handed over the last five of the 15 **CH-47F(I) Chinook heavy-lift helicopters** to the IAF.
- The IAF inducted the first batch of Apaches in September 2019 and based them at Air Force Station, Pathankhot, Punjab. While the last five Apaches arrived in India early this year, the handover was slightly delayed due to the COVID-19 lockdown.

\$3 billion deal:

- India contracted 22 Apache helicopters and 15 Chinook helicopters from Boeing through the Foreign Military Sales programme of the U.S. government in September 2015 under a \$3 billion deal. During the India visit of President Donald Trump in February, India and the U.S. signed a deal for six additional Apaches for the Army.
- Boeing's joint venture in Hyderabad, Tata Boeing Aerospace Limited, has been producing aero-structures for the AH-64 Apache helicopter for both the U.S. Army and international customers, the statement said. Boeing's suppliers in India are manufacturing critical systems and components for the Chinooks, including the crown and tailcone assembly by the Tata Advanced Systems and the ramp and aft pylon by Dynamatic Technologies.



‘Myanmar Nagas worried over Army crackdown’

- International rights groups have panned the Myanmar military, called Tatmadaw, for violence on the Rohingya Muslims and the Buddhist Arakanese.
- The predominantly Christian Nagas in Myanmar have been the Tatmadaw’s targets too, the Isak-Muivah faction of the National Socialist Council of Nagaland has said while pointing fingers at the Indian Army for the plight of the people in the adjoining country.
- The group, known as NSCN(IM), calls itself the National Socialist Council of Nagalim. “Amid COVID-19 pandemic sweeping the globe, the Indian Army and the Myanmar Army launched military operation in the northern western parts of the Naga Self-Administered Zone, Sagaing Region of Myanmar bordering India,” it said in its mouthpiece, Nagalim Voice.
- The group cited the Eastern Konyak Union as saying that the “army has been deployed in every village of the Naga-inhabited areas of Myanmar. This has instilled fear in the minds of the people who have not been getting rice and other essential commodities since February due to the crackdown, combined with the Coronavirus situation”.

China, U.S. in new spat over Uighur crackdown

- China said on Friday it will impose tit-for-tat measures after the U.S. slapped sanctions on Chinese officials for their involvement in a crackdown on Muslim minorities, raising tensions between the superpowers.
- The two countries have traded barbs and sanctions on a slew of issues since President Donald Trump took office, from trade to more recent spats over the coronavirus pandemic, a security law in Hong Kong, and Chinese policies in the far west regions of Tibet and Xinjiang.
- The latest Chinese response followed a U.S. announcement of visa bans and an assets freeze on three officials, including Chen Quanguo, the Communist Party chief in Xinjiang and architect of Beijing's hardline policies against restive minorities.