

Prelim Bits 28-04-2017

Judicial Performance Index

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- It is the proposed index by NITI Aayog.

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- The index will help High Courts and their chief Justices keep track of the performance and processes at district courts and subordinate levels for reducing delay.

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- The index will fix non-mandatory time frames for different types of cases to benchmark when a case has been delayed.

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- The index can also include certain progress made by subordinate courts on process steps already approved by High Courts. This annual evaluation will fix the problems and reduce the delay.

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- This index will also spur competitive reform among the subordinate courts in the state.

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SIPRI

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- **Stockholm International Peace Research Institute** (SIPRI) is an independent international institute dedicated to research into conflicts, armaments, arms control and disarmament.

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- It is one of the most respected think tanks worldwide. It has a presence in Sweden and Beijing.

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- In its recent report titled "Trends in world Military expenditure, 2016", which ranks countries based on their military spending, places India as the world's fifth largest spender on defense for 2016.

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- Top Countries in military spending:

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1. US (\$611 billion),
2. China (\$215 billion),
3. Russia (\$69.2 billion) and
4. Saudi Arabia (\$ 63.7 billion).
5. India \$55.9 billion

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- Pakistan does not figure in the top 15 spenders.

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Protecting Coral Reefs

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- In a recent research, Scientist has found that Common household **vinegar** may help protect Australia's iconic Great Barrier Reef.
- Vinegar, which contains weak Acetic acid, may help in killing crown-of-thorns starfish (CoTS), which is one of the primary reasons for the decline of corals.
- This innovative method of killing the pest by vinegar has been proven safe to other marine life and will be introduced on the Great Barrier Reef.
- The **crown-of-thorns starfish** usually preys upon hard or stony, coral polyps.
- It is one of the largest starfish in the world and has a very wide Indo-Pacific distribution where coral reefs or hard coral communities occur.
- The range includes tropical and subtropical latitudes from the Red Sea and the east African coast across the Indian Ocean, and across the Pacific Ocean

to the west coast of Central America. It is most common in Australia.

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Flood risk in Himalayan region

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- A new study has found that Earthquakes and landslides in the Himalayas resulting in large volume of hard rocks being dumped into rivers can increase flood risk up to hundreds of kilometers downstream.

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- They found that large landslides in the southern, lower elevation ranges of the Himalayas are more likely to increase flood risk than those in the high mountains further north.

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- The rocks in the south travel only a short distance less than 20 km to reach the Plain whereas rocks from the northerly region often travel at least 100 km to reach the plain.

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- Rocks in the south such as **quartzite** are hard and reach plain as gravel or pebbles which can build up in rivers, altering the natural path of the water whereas rocks from the north region such as **limestone and gneiss** tend to be softer and gradually broken down and dispersed widely, thus reducing flood risk.

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