

## UPSC Daily Current Affairs 12 Jul 2021

### China says it 'drove away' U.S. warship

(Topic- GS Paper II- IR, Source- The Hindu)

#### Why in the news?

- Recently, Chinese military has “drove away” USS Benfold (U.S. warship) that illegally entered Chinese waters near the Paracel Islands.

#### More on the new

- On July 12, 2016, the Permanent Court of Arbitration in the Hague ruled that China had no historic title over the South China Sea.
- The islands are claimed by China, Taiwan and Vietnam, which require either permission or advance notification before a military vessel passes through.
- Hundreds of other islands, reefs and atolls in there source-rich waterway are contested by Brunei, China, Malaysia and the Philippines, with China claiming rights to resources within its so-called **nine-dash line, or most of the region.**

#### US Concern

- The U.S. Navy said that the Benfold asserted navigational rights and freedoms in the vicinity of the Paracel Islands consistent with international law.
- “Under international law, the ships of all states enjoy the right of innocent passage through the territorial sea.

#### China's Claim

- China lays claim to nearly all of the South China Sea, including the Paracel Islands.
- However, Taiwan, Philippines, Brunei, Malaysia and Vietnam also claim parts of the region, believed to hold valuable oil and gas deposits.
- It has alleged that the USA warship broke into China's Xisha (Paracel) island's territorial waters without the permission of the Chinese government and accused USA for “seriously violating China's sovereignty” and “harming regional peace.”



### Contesting Claims Over Islands

- The Paracel Islands are claimed by China, Taiwan and Vietnam.
- The Spratly Islands are claimed by China, Taiwan, Vietnam, Brunei and Philippines.
- The Scarborough Shoal is claimed by Philippines, China and Taiwan.

### About South China Sea



- South China Sea is an arm of western Pacific Ocean in Southeast Asia.
- It is south of China, east & south of Vietnam, west of the Philippines and north of the island of Borneo.
- It is connected by Taiwan Strait with the East China Sea and by Luzon Strait with the Philippine Sea.

### Bordering states & territories

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- It is bounded on the northeast by the Taiwan Strait (by which it is connected to the East China Sea); on the east by Taiwan and the Philippines; on the southeast and south by Borneo, the southern limit of the Gulf of Thailand, and the east coast of the Malay Peninsula; and on the west and north by the Asian mainland.
- The South China Sea and the East China Sea together form the China Sea.

### 'Right to repair' movement

(Topic- GS Paper II- Government Policies, Source- The Hindu)

#### Why in the news ?

- In recent years, countries around the world have been attempting to pass effective 'right to repair' laws.

#### About Right to repair' movement

- The movement traces its roots back to the very dawn of the computer era in the 1950s.
- The goal of the movement is to get companies to make spare parts, tools and information on how to repair devices available to customers and repair shops to increase the lifespan of products and to keep them from ending up in landfills.
- Right to repair advocates also argue that this will help boost business for small repair shops, which are an important part of local economies.

#### Right to Repairs in different Countries

##### In United States

- Recently, President Joe Biden signed an executive order calling on the Federal Trade Commission to curb restrictions imposed by manufacturers that limit consumers' ability to repair their gadgets on their own terms.

##### Right to repair in Europe

- Recently, the UK government introduced right-to-repair rules with the aim of extending the lifespan of products by up to 10 years. Manufacturers of products like washing machines, TVs and refrigerators are required to make spare parts available to people purchasing electrical appliances.
- The new legislation gives manufacturers a two-year window to make the necessary changes to abide by the new legislation.

## Concern

- Large tech companies, including Apple, Microsoft, Amazon and Tesla, have been lobbying against the right to repair.
- Their argument is that opening up their intellectual property to third party repair services or amateur repairers could lead to exploitation and impact the safety and security of their devices.
- **Tesla, for instance, has fought against right to repair advocacy, stating that such initiatives threaten data security and cyber security.**

## Department of Public Enterprises (DPE)

(Topic- GS Paper II- Governance, Source- PIB)

### Why in the news?

- Recently, Central government has decided to bring Department of Public Enterprises (DPE) under finance ministry from **the ministry of heavy industries.**
- **Ministry of Heavy Industries and Public Enterprises will now be called the Ministry of Heavy Industries.**

### More on news

- Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had announced about this change in her budget speech 2021-2022.
- The finance ministry will now have six departments, with five other departments being Economic Affairs, Revenue, Expenditure, Investment and Public Asset Management and Financial Services.

## Department of Public Enterprises (DPE)

### Background

- In their 52nd Report, the **Estimates Committee of 3rd Lok Sabha (1962-67)** stressed the need for setting up a centralized coordinating unit, which could also make continuous appraisal of the performance of public enterprises.
- This led to the setting up of the Bureau of Public Enterprises (BPE) in 1965 in the Ministry of Finance. Subsequently, as a result of the reorganization of the Ministries/Departments of the Union Government.
- In September, 1985, BPE was made part of the Ministry of Industry.
- In May, 1990, BPE was made a full-fledged Department known as the Department of Public Enterprises (DPE) under the **ministry of heavy industries.**

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### About The Department of Public Enterprises

- It is the nodal department for all the Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSEs) and formulates policy pertaining to CPSEs.
- It lays down, in particular, policy guidelines on performance improvement and evaluation, autonomy and financial delegation and personnel management in CPSEs.
- It furthermore collects and maintains information in the form of a Public Enterprises Survey on several areas in respect of CPSEs.

### Significance of the move

- This move aims to ease disinvestment process.
- Finance ministry already has a department dealing with Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSE) so inclusion of DPE would result into better coordination on issues like disinvestment.
- Other identified areas include coordination on general policy matters impacting CPSEs, evaluating their performance, and review of capital projects.
- Recently the significant privatisation roadmap being pursued by the government, including strategic sale of Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd (BPCL), Shipping Corporation, Container Corporation, Neelachal Ispat Nigam Ltd, Pawan Hans, Air India, which are expected to be completed in 2021-22.
- Key government companies like BPCL, ONGC, IOC, HPCL, Power Grid Corporation, Coal India, among others, will now come under direct control of Finance Ministry.

### Bryum Bharatiensis

(Topic- GS Paper III-Environment, Source- The Hindu)

### Why in the news?

- Recently, a group of polar biologists from India has discovered the **Bryum Bharatiensis, a type of mosses.**
- The plant species was found at the Larsemann Hills, overlooking the Southern Ocean, near one of the world's remotest research stations, Bharati.

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### Significance

- It is the first time, since the launch of the first research station in Antarctica, four decades ago, that India discovered a new plant species.
- The discovery is a matter of concern as it indicates the changing topography of the icy continent, due to the effects of global climate change.
- The scientists further noticed melting glaciers, crevasse-infested ice sheets, and glacial melt-water lakes on top of ice sheets, during their expedition, thus pointing out the grave concerns regarding the perils of climate change.

### Lightning strikes

**(Topic- GS Paper I- Disaster Management Source- The Hindu)**

#### Why in the news?

- Recently, at least 30 people were killed in separate incidents of lightning in various parts of the country in the past 24 hours.
- While Rajasthan reported 18 deaths, Uttar Pradesh recorded 12.

#### About lightning

- National Geographic describes lightning as an “electrical discharge caused by imbalances between storm clouds and the ground.”
- This “imbalance” is created between storm clouds and objects on the ground; the lower reaches of the storm clouds are “negatively” charged while objects on the ground are “positively” charged.

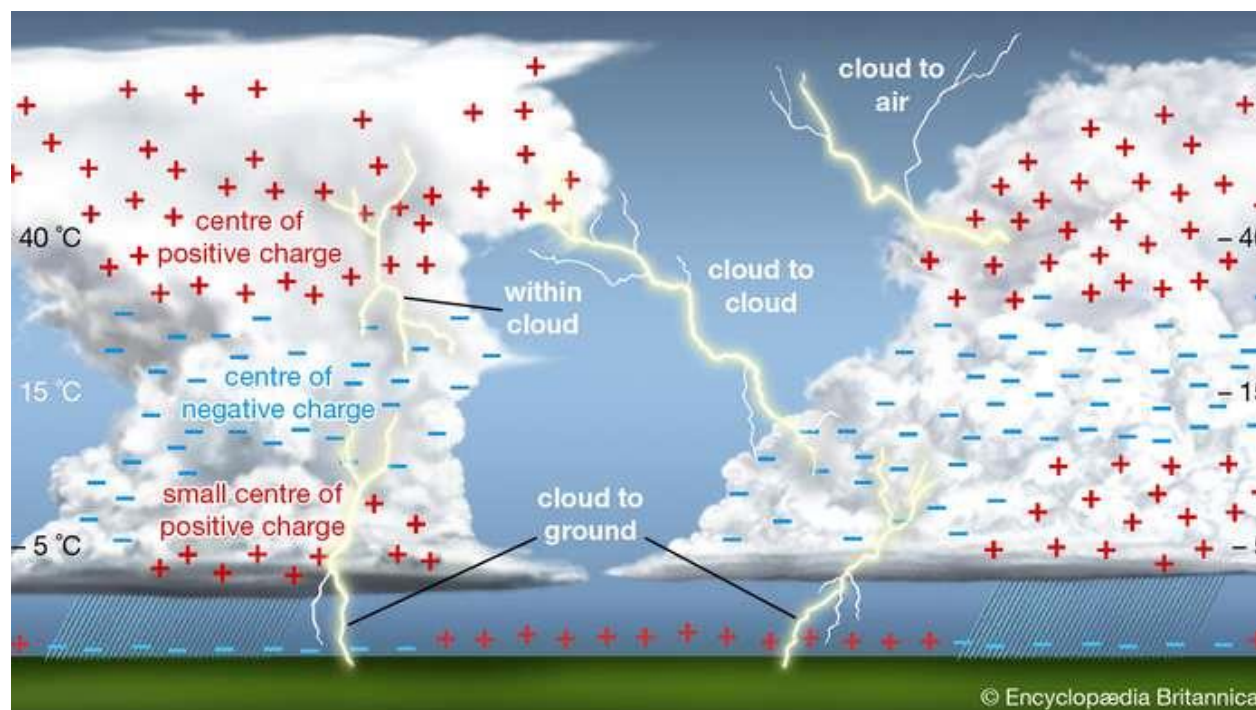
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- This imbalance leads to the passage of current between the two opposite charges, which is called lightning.

### How it occur?



- Lightning occurs when regions of excess positive and negative charge develop within the cloud.
- Typically, there is a large volume of positive charge in the upper regions of the cloud, a large negative charge in the centre, and a small positive charge in the lower regions.
- These charges reside on water drops, ice particles, or both.

### Electrical charge distribution in a thunderstorm

- When the electrical charges become sufficiently separated in a thundercloud, with some regions acquiring a negative charge and others a positive, a discharge of lightning becomes likely.
- About one-third of lightning flashes travel from the cloud to the ground; most of these originate in negatively charged regions of the cloud.

## Zika virus

(Topic- GS Paper III-Science and Technology, Source- The Hindu)

### Why in the news ?

- Recently, three more Zika positive cases have been confirmed in Kerala.

### About Zika Virus

- Zika virus is a mosquito-borne flavivirus that was first identified in Uganda in 1947 in monkeys.
- It was later identified in humans in 1952 in Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania.
- Zika virus disease is caused by a virus transmitted primarily by Aedes mosquitoes, which bite during the day.

### Symptoms

- Symptoms are generally mild and include fever, rash, conjunctivitis, muscle and joint pain, malaise or headache.
- Zika virus infection during pregnancy can cause infants to be born **with microcephaly** and other congenital malformations, known as **congenital Zika syndrome**.
- Infection with Zika virus is also associated with other complications of pregnancy including preterm birth and miscarriage.
- **In Guillain-Barre syndrome**, the body's immune system attacks part of the peripheral nervous system. This can result in muscle weakness and loss of sensation in the legs and/or arms.

### Transmission

- Zika virus is primarily transmitted by the bite of an infected mosquito from the Aedes genus, mainly Aedes aegypti, in tropical and subtropical regions.
- Aedes mosquitoes usually bite during the day, peaking during early morning and late afternoon/evening.
- This is the same mosquito that transmits dengue, chikungunya and yellow fever.
- **Zika virus is also transmitted from mother to fetus during pregnancy, through sexual contact, transfusion of blood and blood products, and organ transplantation.**

### Treatment

- There is no vaccine or medicine for Zika. Instead, the focus is on relieving symptoms and includes rest, rehydration and acetaminophen for fever and pain.

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## Government Programme/Initiatives

### Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme

- To strengthen/maintain decentralized laboratory based and IT enabled disease surveillance systems for epidemic prone diseases to monitor disease trends.

### National Vector Borne Disease Control Programme

- The central nodal agency for prevention and control of six vector borne diseases i.e. Malaria, Dengue, Lymphatic Filariasis, Kala-azar, Japanese Encephalitis and Chikungunya in India.

### Rashtriya BAL Swasthya Karyakram (RBSK)

- It is an initiative under the National Health Mission, has a surveillance for Microcephaly (system for monitoring birth defects).

## Retail Direct Scheme

(Topic- GS Paper III-Economics, Source- The Hindu)

### Why in the news?

- The Reserve Bank has recently issued a scheme 'RBI Retail Direct', a one-stop solution to facilitate investment in government securities by individual investors.

### About Retail Direct Scheme

- The RBI Retail Direct' facility was announced in the Statement of Developmental and Regulatory Policies dated February 05, 2021 for improving ease of access by retail investors through online access to the government securities market – both primary and secondary - along with the facility to open their gilt securities account ('Retail Direct') with the RBI.
- It is a part of continuing efforts to increase retail participation in government securities.
- It is a one-stop solution to facilitate investment in Government Securities by individual investors is being issued today.

### Key highlights of the scheme

- Retail investors (individuals) will have the facility to open and maintain the 'Retail Direct Gilt Account' (RDG Account) with RBI.
- RDG Account can be opened through an 'Online portal' provided for the purpose of the scheme.

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- The 'Online portal' will also give the registered users the following facilities:
  - a. Access to primary issuance of Government securities
  - b. Access to negotiated Dealing System-Order Matching (NDS-OM).

### **Significance**

- Now, a retail investor can place a direct bid with the NDS-OM system and open a gilt account in the e-Kuber system, the RBI platform for gilt auctions.

### **Securities Available For Trade**

- Once the scheme is launched, retail investors can buy and sell Treasury Bills, G-Secs, Sovereign Gold Bonds and State Development Loans.

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