

1st to 7th June 2023

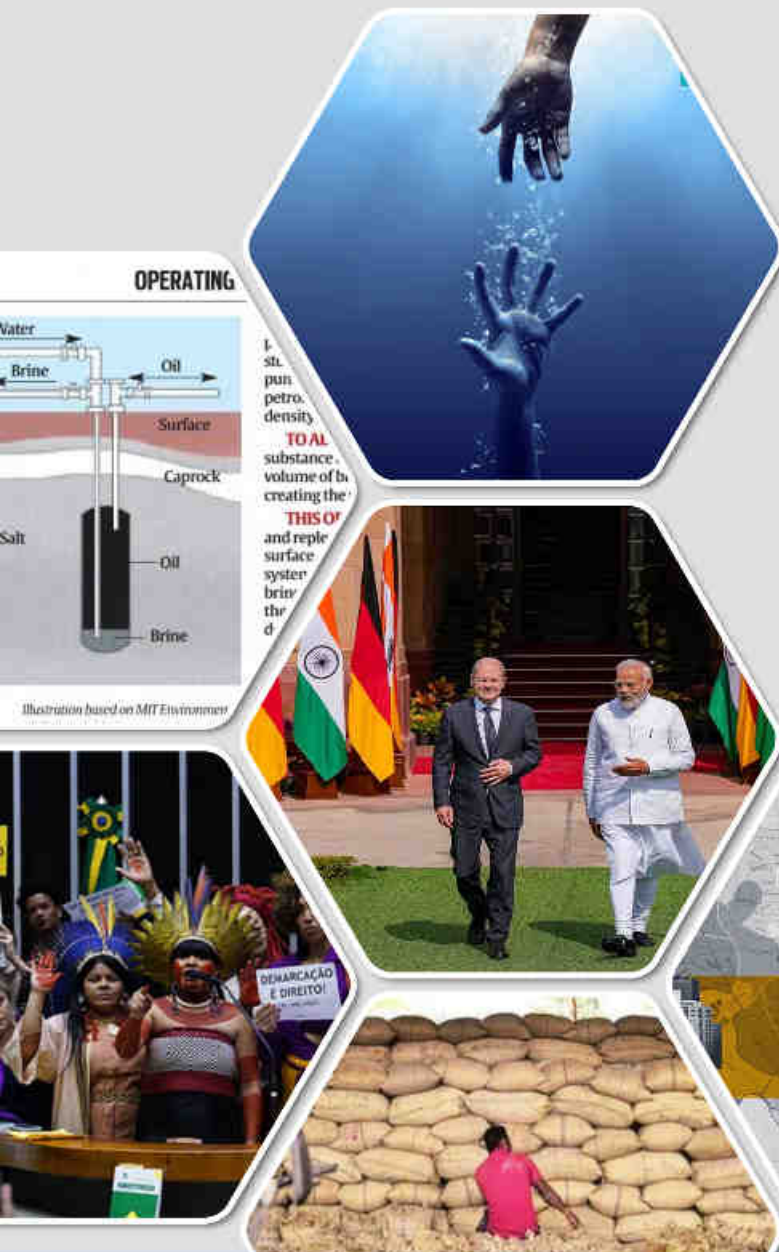
WEEKLY Current Affairs

For

UPSC / RPSC

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EXAMS



- ◆ Global Alliance for Drowning Prevention
- ◆ Centralised Laboratory Network (CLN)
- ◆ Unified Registration Portal for GOBARdhan
- ◆ PM SVANidhi Mobile App
- ◆ Training Launch of Agni-1 Ballistic Missile
- ◆ UP's Family ID Portal
- ◆ Sustainable Green Airports Mission



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Current Affairs 1 to 7 June 2023

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Global Alliance for Drowning Prevention

During the 76th meeting of the World Health Assembly (WHA), a significant alliance was established to tackle a pressing global public health issue – drowning prevention. With over 90% of drowning deaths occurring in low- and middle-income countries, this alliance aims to assess the impact of drowning worldwide and implement effective prevention measures. The main objective of the Global Alliance for Drowning Prevention is to comprehensively assess the impact of drowning worldwide. By preparing a global status report, policymakers can gain critical insights into the issue and make informed decisions regarding prevention strategies. The alliance is dedicated to ensuring that drowning prevention receives the attention it deserves on the global public health agenda.

Impact on Vulnerable Populations

Drowning disproportionately affects the world's poorest people. Recognizing this, the alliance acknowledges the urgent need to address inequalities in drowning risk exacerbated by rising poverty. By focusing on prevention measures and targeted interventions, the alliance aims to save lives and improve the well-being of vulnerable populations.

Global Resolution

resolution put forward by the Governments of Bangladesh and Ireland called upon the World Health Organization (WHO) to lead collaborative efforts in preventing drowning within the United Nations system and relevant UN entities.

As per the resolution, member states were urged to examine their respective national drowning situations and implement policies and programs aimed at mitigating risks.

The draft decision emphasized the need for reporting progress on the implementation of the resolution to the World Health Assembly (WHA) in 2025. This report should encompass updates on the global status report on drowning prevention and highlight contributions towards the Thirteenth General Programme of Work, covering the period 2019-2025.

Furthermore, the proposal recommended that the report in 2029 should include an assessment of the accomplishments of the global alliance and its alignment with broader agendas, including the UN-mandated Sustainable Development Goals and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030.

Call to the WHO Director-General

The proposal requests the WHO director-general to facilitate research on drowning context and risk factors. Additionally, the director-general is encouraged to promote the adaptation of effective drowning prevention measures and evaluate the effectiveness of existing prevention programs. These efforts are crucial for developing evidence-based strategies and improving global drowning prevention outcomes.

11th Edition of the World of Work Report

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) has released its 11th edition of the World of Work report, providing insights into the projected global unemployment rates and the need for social protection. As the world recovers from the impact of the pandemic, it is crucial to address the disparities in employment opportunities and foster economic stability.

According to the ILO, the projected global unemployment rate for 2023 is expected to fall below pre-pandemic levels, reaching 5.3%, which corresponds to approximately 191 million individuals. While this indicates a positive trend, it is essential to consider the varying degrees of recovery among different regions and income groups.

Regions with Reduced Unemployment Rates

The report highlights regions that have successfully reduced their unemployment rates below pre-crisis levels. Latin America and the Caribbean, northern, southern, and western Europe, and central and Western Asia have demonstrated resilience in their labor markets, with unemployment rates ranging from 6.3% to 6.7%, showing a positive recovery trend.





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Introducing the Jobs Gap Indicator

To measure the unmet demand for employment, especially in developing countries, the ILO has introduced a new indicator called the jobs gap. This indicator encompasses all individuals who desire employment but are currently jobless. It provides a comprehensive measure of the employment challenges faced globally.

Challenges for Low-Income Countries

Low-income countries face significant obstacles in closing the jobs gap. The report reveals that the jobs gap rate for these countries stands at a staggering 21.5%. Furthermore, this rate has increased from 19.1% in 2005 to 21.5% in 2023, highlighting the persistent employment challenges they encounter.

Rising Debt Levels and Policy Interventions

Developing countries also face additional challenges due to rising debt levels, which constrain their ability to implement effective policy interventions. This limitation hampers responses to complex threats and reinforces the existing employment divide between high-income and low-income countries.

The Benefits of Social Protection

The report emphasizes the importance of social protection policies in reducing disparities and fostering economic growth. Introducing universal basic old-age pensions in developing countries, for example, would lead to a 14.8% increase in GDP per capita within a decade and a significant reduction in extreme poverty by 6 percentage points.

The Need for Global Financial Support

To ensure a comprehensive recovery and bridge the employment gap, the report advocates for global financial support for job creation and social protection. By investing in these areas, countries can work towards narrowing the gap between rich and poor nations and fostering long-term economic stability.

Draft Aircraft Bill, 2023

The civil aviation ministry in India has taken a significant step towards enhancing regulations in the aviation sector with the introduction of the Draft Aircraft Bill, 2023. This bill aims to streamline and improve provisions related to the design, manufacture, possession, use, operation, sale, import, and export of aircraft.

The Draft Aircraft Bill, 2023 is a proactive measure by the civil aviation ministry to establish an effective framework for the regulation and control of various aspects related to aircraft operations in India. It recognizes the need to modernize and simplify existing regulations to meet the current needs of the industry.

Reviewing the Existing Aircraft Act, 1934

Before drafting the new bill, a comprehensive review of the existing legislation, the Aircraft Act of 1934, was undertaken. This evaluation aimed to identify redundancies, address shortcomings, and align the regulations with the evolving aviation landscape.

Public Consultation Period

To ensure a participatory approach and gather diverse perspectives, the civil aviation ministry has invited public consultations on the Draft Aircraft Bill, 2023. The consultation period spans 30 days, allowing stakeholders and the public to provide valuable feedback and suggestions.

Fostering Growth in the Civil Aviation Market

India's civil aviation market is one of the fastest-growing in the world. The Draft Aircraft Bill, 2023 recognizes the importance of robust regulations in supporting this growth. By providing better provisions for the design, manufacture, possession, use, operation, sale, import, and export of aircraft, the bill seeks to facilitate a conducive environment for the aviation industry to flourish.

Significance of the Preamble





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The preamble of the Draft Aircraft Bill, 2023 sets the stage for its objectives. It emphasizes the need for comprehensive provisions to regulate and control various aspects of aviation. This includes matters connected to the design, manufacture, possession, use, operation, sale, import, and export of aircraft, ensuring a holistic approach to aviation regulation.

Draft Resolution on the Impact of Chemicals, Waste and Pollution on Human Health

The member nations of the World Health Organization (WHO) have recognized the pressing need to address the detrimental effects of chemicals, waste, and pollution on human health. During the 76th World Health Assembly, a resolution was accepted, highlighting the importance of tackling this global issue.

Resolution Acceptance: Chemicals, Waste, and Pollution on Human Health

The primary focus of the resolution is to address the impact of chemicals, waste, and pollution on human health. This resolution emphasizes the urgency of implementing measures to mitigate the adverse effects caused by these factors.

Collaboration for Updated Reports

The World Health Organization and the United Nations Environment Programme have been urged to collaborate and update the State of the Science of Endocrine Disrupting Chemicals report. Originally published in 2012, this report serves as a crucial foundation for understanding the potential health risks associated with these chemicals.

Chemicals of Concern

The resolution identifies several chemicals of concern, including cadmium, lead, mercury, highly hazardous pesticides, and endocrine-disrupting chemicals. These substances have been linked to adverse health outcomes and pose significant risks to individuals and communities.

Impact on Developing Countries

Developing countries bear a disproportionate burden of childhood death, illnesses, and disability resulting from chemical exposure. The representatives of member states have stressed the urgent need to address this issue and prioritize the well-being of vulnerable populations.

Health Priorities in Relation to Chemicals, Waste, and Pollution

The resolution acknowledges the interconnected nature of health priorities and highlights the need to consider maternal and child health, antimicrobial resistance, and environmentally related diseases in the context of chemicals, waste, and pollution. A comprehensive approach is necessary to address these complex challenges.

Monitoring and Reporting Progress

To ensure effective implementation of the resolution, progress reports are required to be submitted in 2027 and 2029. These reports will provide an assessment of the measures taken and their impact on mitigating the adverse effects of chemicals, waste, and pollution on human health.

Concerns about Non-Communicable Diseases

One of the long-term concerns expressed in the resolution is the increasing prevalence of non-communicable diseases resulting from poor management of chemical waste. It underscores the importance of taking proactive measures to prevent and control these diseases in the face of rising waste generation.

Adopting a One Health Approach

The report on human health implications is expected to consider a One Health approach. This approach recognizes the interconnectedness of human, animal, and environmental health, aiming to address complex health challenges comprehensively.

Factors in Data Collection





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Data collection efforts should encompass various factors, including sex, age, disability, and the harmful effects of substances on different organ systems. This comprehensive approach will help identify vulnerable groups and tailor interventions to address their specific needs.

World's Largest Grain Storage Plan in the Cooperative Sector"

India, known for its agricultural prowess, is embarking on a monumental plan to revolutionize its foodgrain storage capacity. The Union cabinet recently approved a scheme that will allocate a staggering ₹1 trillion towards increasing storage capacity by 70 million tonnes in the cooperative sector. This ambitious project, set to become the world's largest grain storage plan in the cooperative sector, aims to address key challenges faced by farmers and enhance the country's food security.

The current grain storage capacity in India stands at 145 million tonnes. Recognizing the need for expansion, the government plans to bolster the capacity by an additional 70 million tonnes, reaching an impressive 215 million tonnes within the next five years. This significant increase in storage capacity will play a vital role in reducing food wastage and facilitating better planning for farmers.

Cooperative Sector Takes the Lead

One of the distinctive features of this plan is its implementation within the cooperative sector. This means that cooperatives will have the opportunity to establish decentralised storage facilities across the country. By leveraging the power of cooperatives, the burden on the Food Corporation of India (FCI) will be reduced, ensuring smoother operations and improved efficiency in the storage and distribution of foodgrains.

Pilot Project for Seamless Implementation

To ensure seamless and effective execution, the Ministry of Cooperation will initiate a pilot project in ten selected districts across states and Union Territories. This strategic approach will provide valuable insights into regional requirements, enabling the integration of local needs into the nationwide implementation of the programme. By incorporating diverse perspectives, the government aims to optimize the impact of the storage capacity scheme.

Transforming Credit Societies into Vibrant Enterprises

The Ministry of Cooperation has set forth a comprehensive strategy with the objective of converting Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS) into thriving and prosperous business ventures. These PACS will play a pivotal role in strengthening India's food security, reducing wastage, and improving farmers' income. Emphasis will be placed on developing agri-infrastructure, including warehouses and processing units at the PACS level, to enhance the overall agricultural landscape of the country.

Establishing a Regional Office for Development Cooperation

Recognizing the importance of multilateral cooperation, India will establish a regional office of the Universal Postal Union (UPU) in New Delhi. This office will facilitate UPU's development cooperation and provide technical assistance activities in the region. Through this collaboration, India aims to enhance postal services, improve efficiency, promote e-commerce, and support trade initiatives in the region.

Brazil's Bill 490

Protests have broken out across Brazil in response to the approval of a new land bill by the country's Chamber of Deputies. The bill, known as Bill 490, imposes restrictions on the recognition of ancestral land for indigenous people. This move has sparked outrage and opposition from tribal communities and their supporters.

Bill 490 was approved by a vote of 283 to 155 in the Chamber of Deputies. This outcome has heightened tensions and exacerbated the already existing disputes over land rights and indigenous sovereignty in Brazil.





Land Recognition Condition

Under the new law, tribal people can only obtain recognition for land they have been occupying since before the constitution of 1988. This condition restricts the ability of indigenous communities to claim their ancestral lands, which they consider vital for their cultural preservation and livelihoods.

Concerns Raised by Experts

Experts have raised several concerns regarding the new law. One major worry is the increased vulnerability of tribal communities to land exploitation, deforestation, and violence. By limiting land recognition, the legislation opens the door for land sharks and natural resource exploration, potentially leading to further habitat loss and environmental degradation.

Lack of Prior Consultation

Amazon Watch, a non-profit organization focused on rainforest and tribal rights, has criticized the lack of prior consultation before the passage of the bill. They argue that the absence of meaningful dialogue with indigenous communities violates international standards and undermines the rights of indigenous peoples.

Ancestral Lands in the Amazon Rainforest

Most of the tribal territories considered ancestral lands are located in the Amazon rainforest. These areas hold immense cultural and ecological significance for indigenous communities, who act as stewards of the natural environment.

Global Criticism and Solidarity

The bill has faced criticism from the global community, which has expressed solidarity with the affected tribes of Brazil. Many view the legislation as a violation of international standards, including the International Labour Organization Convention 169 and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Trans-Exclusionary Radical Feminist

The Oxford Union talk featuring Dr Kathleen Stock, a gender-critical feminist academic, was met with opposition and protests from trans-rights activists. Dr Stock, known for her views on biological sex and gender identity, has been a prominent figure in discussions surrounding feminism.

Gender-critical feminism, previously known as TERF, emphasizes the significance of biological sex over gender identity. Dr Kathleen Stock, along with others aligned with this school of thought, argues that recognizing gender identity undermines the fight for women's rights. They contend that women's experiences and struggles are rooted in their biological sex and cannot be separated from it.

The Origins and Perception of the Term TERF

Trans-Exclusionary Radical Feminist (TERF) emerged during the 1970s feminist movement in the United States. Initially intended as a neutral description, the term has evolved and is now widely regarded as derogatory and a slur. In response to its negative connotations, the term gender-critical feminism is now preferred as a more acceptable way to refer to this perspective.

Challenges and Criticisms

Activists argue that gender-critical feminists' refusal to acknowledge gender as a spectrum is a setback for the LGBTQIA+ movement. They assert that this rigid understanding of sex can be weaponized to deny rights and access to policies for the transgender community, while also increasing the potential for misogyny towards them. Critics highlight that recognizing gender identity and the diverse experiences of individuals does not diminish the fight for women's rights but rather broadens the understanding of gender issues.

Prominent Figures and Controversies





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JK Rowling, the renowned author of the Harry Potter series, has expressed views aligned with gender-critical feminism. Her stance has sparked controversy and debate, with some praising her for defending women's rights and others criticizing her for allegedly excluding transgender individuals from feminist discourse.

Balancing Perspectives

The discussion surrounding gender-critical feminism and its relationship to transgender rights is complex and multifaceted. It is important to approach these debates with an understanding of the differing viewpoints and the potential impact on marginalized communities. The discourse should strive for inclusivity, empathy, and a focus on human rights.

Centralised Laboratory Network (CLN)

India has recently become a member of the Centralized Laboratory Network (CLN), a global collaboration aimed at testing vaccines during pandemic and epidemic disease outbreaks. The CLN, which is part of the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI), consists of 15 partner facilities from 13 countries.

India, known for its expertise in medical research, has joined the Centralized Laboratory Network. The Indian Council of Medical Research-National Institute of Virology (ICMR-NIV) is among the new members contributing to the global efforts in testing vaccines for emerging infectious diseases.

Purpose of the CLN

The primary objective of the CLN is to conduct rigorous testing of potential vaccines during pandemics and epidemic outbreaks. By establishing standardized methods and materials, the CLN ensures that vaccine candidates are evaluated rapidly and accurately, identifying the most promising options for further development.

Role within the CEPI

As part of the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI), the CLN plays a crucial role in supporting CEPI's mission to accelerate the development of vaccines against emerging infectious diseases. By standardizing testing procedures, the CLN facilitates efficient evaluation and comparison of vaccine candidates, aiding CEPI in identifying the most viable options.

Expansion of the CLN

The KAVI Institute of Clinical Research (KAVI ICR) and the University of Nairobi Institute of Tropical and Infectious Diseases (UNITID) from Kenya, as well as Synexa Life Sciences from South Africa, are some of the other members of the CLN. This expansion enhances the network's global reach and expertise.

CEPI-Funded Network's Objectives

The CEPI-funded network, which includes the CLN, has a dual focus. First, it aims to identify vaccine candidates with the highest potential for combating emerging infectious diseases. Second, the network supports the development of sustainable regional outbreak preparedness infrastructure. By promoting collaboration and coordination, the network strengthens global readiness to respond effectively to future outbreaks.

India-EU Global Gateway Conference

The Ministry of External Affairs, the EU Delegation to India, and the Asian Confluence have come together to organize the India-EU Connectivity Conference. This conference aims to explore opportunities for boosting connectivity investments in India's North Eastern States and its neighboring countries.

The India-EU Connectivity Conference, scheduled to take place in Meghalaya, marks an important milestone in enhancing connectivity and building infrastructure. It is the outcome of the India – EU Connectivity partnership that was launched in May 2021 during the India – EU Leaders' Meeting.





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Focus on Digital, Energy, and Transport

The conference will revolve around three pillars: digital, energy, and transport. By exploring opportunities in these areas, the conference aims to identify concrete projects for joint implementation. This aligns with the priorities outlined in the EU Strategy for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific, which emphasizes sustainable and inclusive prosperity, green transition, ocean governance, digital governance and partnerships, connectivity, security and defense, and human security.

Leadership and Collaboration

Conrad Kongkal Sangma, Chief Minister of Meghalaya, and Rajkumar Ranjan Singh, Minister of State for External Affairs, will lead the India-EU Connectivity Conference. The involvement of senior officials from the Indian government, EU Commission, and governments of Nepal, Bhutan, and Bangladesh reflects the commitment to fostering regional collaboration and connectivity.

The Significance of the Global Gateway

The Global Gateway, an international investment project worth €300 billion, plays a central role in the conference. The EU's substantial financial commitment through various instruments, such as the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI)-Global Europe, InvestEU, and the European Fund for Sustainable Development, demonstrates their determination to reshape global infrastructure projects.

Countering Challenges and Building Partnerships

One of the key challenges India faces in the Global Gateway initiative is the scale and limitation of funding. However, the initiative presents an opportunity to align mutual development goals, enhance transparency, and counter the problematic aspects of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) implemented by China. India's participation in the Global Gateway would allow for planning and implementing large-scale projects in collaboration with the consortium of EU countries.

While the Global Gateway initiative is still a work in progress, discussions during the India-EU Connectivity Conference will help address key issues such as the financing mechanism. The emphasis on connectivity, infrastructure building, and regional partnerships underscores India's commitment to economic diplomacy and

Pfizer Inc's RSV Vaccine

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) recently granted approval for Pfizer Inc's respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) vaccine for older adults. This marks a significant development in the fight against RSV, a common respiratory disease that poses a serious threat to seniors.

Pfizer Inc's RSV vaccine has received the FDA's approval, making it the second vaccine authorized to combat this respiratory disease. This decision follows the prior approval of a similar vaccine by GSK Plc, highlighting the efforts to provide effective preventive measures against RSV.

Targeting Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV)

The approved vaccine aims to provide protection against respiratory syncytial virus (RSV). RSV is a common respiratory virus known to cause mild, cold-like symptoms in most cases. However, it can lead to severe complications, especially for infants and older adults, making vaccination crucial for this vulnerable population.

Recommended Age Group

Pfizer's RSV vaccine is specifically approved for individuals aged 60 and older. This aligns with the age group targeted by the previously approved vaccine developed by GSK Plc. By focusing on this demographic, the vaccine aims to safeguard older adults who are at a higher risk of experiencing severe RSV-related complications.





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Protecting the Vulnerable

Infants and older adults are particularly susceptible to the severe effects of RSV. For this reason, vaccination plays a crucial role in protecting these at-risk individuals. The FDA's approval of Pfizer's RSV vaccine for older adults is a significant step in preventing serious respiratory complications and potentially fatal outcomes.

Ahmednagar District to be Named After Ahilyabai Holkar

Ahmednagar district in Maharashtra has recently undergone a significant change as it is now known by a new name, Punyashlok Ahilya Devi Holkar.

Ahilyabai Holkar: A Symbol of Strength and Leadership

Ahilyabai Holkar, daughter of Mankoji Shinde, is a legendary figure known for her indomitable spirit and exceptional leadership. Her life is an inspiration to many, and her contributions have left an indelible mark on history.

The Journey of Ahilyabai Holkar

After marrying Khande Rao, the son of Malhar Rao Holkar, Ahilyabai's life took a new turn. Following her husband's death, she took charge of the kingdom of Malwa. Ahilyabai's rule lasted for a remarkable thirty years, from 1765 to 1795. During her reign, she brought about significant administrative and social reforms, leading to a period of prosperity and order.

Ahilyabai Holkar and Temple Restoration

One of Ahilyabai Holkar's notable contributions was her active involvement in the restoration of Hindu temples. Her commitment to preserving and reviving ancient religious sites is widely acknowledged. In 1783, she commissioned the construction of the magnificent Somnath temple, which stands as a testament to her devotion and patronage.

The Renaming of Ahmednagar District

The decision to rename Ahmednagar district as Punyashlok Ahilya Devi Holkar signifies the government's desire to honor Ahilyabai's legacy. By bestowing her name upon the district, the government aims to elevate its status and pay homage to the remarkable achievements of this extraordinary ruler.

National Mission for Mentoring

In a constant effort to enhance the quality of education and support the growth of teachers, the National Mission for Mentoring (NMM) was established. Recently, a capacity building workshop was organized recently by the National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE).

Continuous Professional Development through Mentoring

The primary purpose of the National Mission for Mentoring is to facilitate the continuous professional development of school teachers through mentoring. Recognizing the importance of ongoing support and guidance for educators, the NMM aims to create a robust system of mentorship that empowers teachers to enhance their teaching practices and overall effectiveness in the classroom.

The Pilot Launch of NMM

The NMM was launched in pilot mode on 29th July 2022. As part of this initial phase, a select number of central schools were chosen to implement the program and provide valuable insights for its future expansion and refinement.

Selection of Central Schools

A total of 30 central schools were selected to participate in the pilot mode of NMM. Among these, 15 Kendriya Vidyalayas (KVs), 10 Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas (JNVs), and 5 Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) affiliated schools were included. This diverse selection ensured representation from different educational institutions and backgrounds.

Launch and Capacity Building Workshop





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The National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) played a pivotal role in launching the NMM in pilot mode. As part of the launch, a two-day capacity building workshop was organized by the NCTE. The objective of the workshop was to provide quality professional support to teachers and equip them with the necessary mentoring skills to excel in their roles.

Responsibility of Teachers in Successful Mentoring Sessions

Teachers themselves play a crucial role in conducting successful mentoring sessions using the NMM Web Portal. By actively engaging with the platform and leveraging the available resources, teachers can foster a culture of continuous learning and improvement. The NMM Web Portal serves as a valuable tool for teachers to seek guidance, share best practices, and reflect on their teaching methodologies.

Expert Mentors Onboarded

To ensure the effectiveness of the NMM, 60 outstanding professionals with expertise in various domains were onboarded as mentors. These mentors possess specialized knowledge and skills in areas such as instructional leadership, digital education, socio-emotional learning, inclusive education, professionalism and ethics, classroom management, and more. Their collective expertise provides teachers with a diverse range of support and guidance tailored to their individual needs.

Phukot Karnali Hydro Electric Project

In a significant collaboration, the National Hydroelectric Power Corporation (NHPC) and Vidhyut Utpadan Company (VUCL) have signed an initial pact for the development of the Phukot Karnali hydroelectric project.

The Phukot Karnali Hydro Electric Project is expected to have an installed capacity of 480 MW. This substantial capacity will enable the generation of approximately 2,448 GWh of electricity annually. The project aims to leverage the flow of the Karnali River to harness hydroelectric power and contribute to the energy needs of the region.

Key Features of the Project

The Phukot Karnali project encompasses several key features that are essential for its successful operation. These include a 109-metre-high RCC dam, an underground powerhouse, and the installation of 6 turbines, each with a capacity of 79 MW. Additionally, the project plans to include a Surface Power House with a capacity of 6 MW, utilizing minimum environmental release and comprising two machines of 3 MW each.

Peaking Run-of-River Scheme

The Phukot Karnali project is designed as a Peaking Run-of-River (PRoR) type scheme. This scheme allows for the optimal utilization of river flow variations by storing water during high-flow periods and releasing it during peak demand periods. This ensures a stable and reliable power supply while minimizing the impact on the river's ecosystem.

Utilization of the Karnali River

The power generation of the Phukot Karnali project will be facilitated by the flow of the Karnali River. By utilizing the river's water resources, the project aims to contribute to sustainable energy production and address the growing electricity demand in the region.

NHPC and VUCL: Roles and Status

NHPC, a premier government enterprise with 'Miniratna' status, holds expertise in the development of hydropower projects. On the contrary, VUCL holds the responsibility for the development, construction, ownership, and operation of significant hydropower projects in Nepal, operating within a model of collaboration between the public and private sectors. Together, NHPC and VUCL aim to drive the development of the Phukot Karnali hydroelectric project and strengthen the power sector cooperation between India and Nepal.

Unified Registration Portal for GOBARdhan

The Union Minister for Jal Shakti recently unveiled the unified registration portal for 'GOBARdhan,' a pioneering initiative aimed at promoting the biogas sector in India.





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The unified registration portal for 'GOBARdhan' serves as a centralized platform to evaluate investment opportunities and participation in the biogas or compressed biogas (CBG) sector. The main objective is to simplify and optimize the procedure of establishing biogas plants throughout the nation.

Registration for Government, Cooperative, and Private Entities

The unified registration portal allows any government, cooperative, or private entity operating or intending to establish a biogas, CBG, or Bio CNG plant in India to obtain a unique registration number. This registration number serves as a key identifier for entities involved in the biogas sector, facilitating their engagement and access to various benefits and support from the ministries and departments of the Government of India.

Objective of the GOBARdhan Initiative

At the heart of the GOBARdhan initiative lies the objective to convert waste into wealth and energy. By harnessing the potential of organic waste materials such as cattle dung, agri residue, and other bio waste, the initiative aims to generate biogas, CBG, and bio fertilizers. It aligns with the principles of a circular economy, driving sustainable economic growth and promoting environmental stewardship.

Scope and Implementation

The GOBARdhan initiative encompasses a wide range of schemes and programs under different ministries and departments. These include the Waste to Energy Scheme, the Sustainable Alternative Towards Affordable Transportation (SATAT) scheme, the Swachh Bharat Mission (Gramin) Phase II, the Agri Infrastructure Fund, and the Animal Husbandry Infrastructure Development Fund. The comprehensive approach ensures collaboration and coordination among diverse stakeholders, including state governments, the private sector, entrepreneurs, and societies.

Prerequisite for Benefits and Support

To avail benefits and support from central government schemes and programs, registering new projects on the unified registration portal is a prerequisite. This requirement ensures that entities participating in the biogas sector can access the available assistance and incentives provided by the government, maximizing the impact of their initiatives.

Promotion of Circular Economy and Sustainable Economic Growth

The GOBARdhan initiative plays a pivotal role in promoting a circular economy, where waste materials are transformed into valuable resources. By converting organic waste into biogas, CBG, and bio fertilizers, the initiative addresses waste management challenges while contributing to sustainable economic growth. It aligns with the government's vision of fostering environmental sustainability and resource efficiency.

Eligible Outputs under GOBARdhan

Under the ambit of GOBARdhan, any plant or project producing CBG/Biogas (more than 10 cuM/day) and bio slurry as principal outputs is eligible for participation. This inclusiveness encourages a diverse range of stakeholders to engage in the initiative and contribute to the sustainable development of the biogas sector.

Swachh Jal Se Suraksha Campaign Report

The Union Minister for Jal Shakti recently unveiled the report detailing the advancements made during the Jal Jeevan Mission: Swachh Jal se Suraksha (SJSS) Campaign. The campaign took place between 2nd October, 2022, and 31st March, 2023, with the primary objective of urging the States and Union Territories (UTs) to prioritize and actively engage in water quality monitoring and surveillance endeavors.

The Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) focused on the crucial aspect of providing a safe water supply. The key considerations under JJM revolved around the "Supply of Safe Water." This underscored the importance of ensuring that every household receives water that is free from contamination and meets the prescribed quality standards.

Water Quality Testing in Villages





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One of the significant achievements of the SJSS Campaign was the extensive water quality testing conducted in villages. A remarkable 5.39 lakh villages, accounting for 89.69% of the total, reported testing for chemical parameters, while 4.47 lakh villages (74.46%) underwent testing for bacteriological contamination, particularly post monsoon.

Drinking Water Samples Testing in Schools and Anganwadi Centres

In an effort to promote safe water consumption among children, the SJSS Campaign emphasized the testing of drinking water samples in schools and anganwadi centres. A total of 6.58 lakh schools (67.63%) and 7.16 lakh anganwadi centres (67.43%) had their water samples tested, ensuring the provision of safe drinking water to young learners.

Training of Women for Water Quality Testing

Empowering women as change agents, the campaign focused on training them for water quality testing. A staggering 21.80 lakh women were trained from 4.59 lakh villages (76.41%) to use Field Testing Kits (FTKs) effectively. This initiative aimed to enhance the participation of women in monitoring and ensuring the quality of water supply.

Remedial Action and Best Performing States

An impressive 90.34% of the contaminated samples reported during the campaign underwent remedial action, reflecting the commitment of stakeholders to address water quality issues promptly.

The performance of states and Union Territories (UTs) was also assessed during the campaign. Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, and Madhya Pradesh emerged as the best performing states, showcasing their dedication and effectiveness in implementing the SJSS Campaign.

PM SVANidhi Mobile App

The PM SVANidhi scheme, launched by the Central government, has provided crucial support to street vendors in India during the challenging times brought on by the pandemic. Recently, the government unveiled a mobile app specifically designed for street vendors to ease their loan application process.

Launching the Mobile App: A Game-Changer

The mobile app for street vendors under the PM SVANidhi scheme was launched recently, providing vendors with a user-friendly platform to apply for loans conveniently. By streamlining the loan application process, the app eliminates unnecessary paperwork and administrative complexities, ensuring a smooth and efficient experience for street vendors seeking financial assistance.

Aiding Street Vendors During Economic Stress

The primary objective of the PM SVANidhi scheme is to provide handholding support to street vendors during pandemic-induced economic stress. Recognizing the vital role played by street vendors in the informal economy, the scheme offers a working capital collateral-free loan of ₹10,000. This financial lifeline enables vendors to meet their immediate business needs and sustain their livelihoods during uncertain times.

Interest Subsidy: Alleviating Financial Burdens

One of the notable features of the PM SVANidhi scheme is the provision of a 7% interest subsidy. This subsidy significantly reduces the financial burden on street vendors, making it easier for them to repay their loans. With subsequent loans of ₹20,000 and ₹50,000 also available, street vendors have access to increased financial resources that can help them expand and stabilize their businesses.

Udyam Registration Certificate: Promoting Formalization

The Udyam Registration Certificate, launched in collaboration with the Ministry of Small and Medium Enterprises, plays a crucial role in promoting the formalization of street vendors' businesses. This certificate simplifies the process of





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registering a business and provides street vendors with numerous benefits. By obtaining the certificate, vendors gain access to various government schemes and credit facilities, opening doors to greater opportunities and growth.

Recognizing Exceptional Performance

The PM SVANidhi scheme has witnessed exceptional performance by several lending institutions and states. Recently, Union Housing and Urban Affairs Minister Hardeep Puri felicitated institutions such as the State Bank of India, Bank of Baroda, Union Bank of India, and Andhra Pradesh Grameen Vikas Bank for their remarkable contributions. Their support and dedication have played a pivotal role in ensuring the success of the scheme and reaching out to street vendors in need.

Impact and Achievements

As of June 30, 2023, the PM SVANidhi scheme has sanctioned an impressive 48.5 lakh loan applications, with over 46.4 lakh loans disbursed to street vendors across India. This amounts to a total loan disbursement of ₹5,795 crore, providing much-needed financial stability and empowerment to street vendors. Moreover, the scheme has positively impacted the lives of more than 36 lakh street vendors, offering them the opportunity to sustain and grow their businesses in a challenging economic landscape.

Law Commission's Report on Sedition Law

The Law Commission of India has recently proposed key amendments to the law of sedition, aiming to prevent alleged misuse while ensuring clarity and safeguarding constitutional rights. Let's delve into the details of these proposed changes and their potential impact.

Under the guidance of Ritu Raj Awasthi, the former Chief Justice of Karnataka High Court, the Law Commission of India has been entrusted with addressing concerns related to the law of sedition. The issue was referred to the Commission by the home ministry in 2016, sparking a comprehensive review of the existing provisions.

Understanding the Current Law

Section 124A of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) currently defines sedition as a crime punishable by life imprisonment or imprisonment of up to three years, along with a fine. This provision has faced criticism for granting courts wide discretionary powers in determining the severity of punishment, potentially leading to arbitrary decisions.

Supreme Court Intervention

Last year, in response to concerns about potential misuse of the sedition law, the Supreme Court temporarily stayed its operation. Former Chief Justice of India, N V Ramana, expressed apprehensions regarding the law's application. However, in 1962, the Supreme Court's landmark ruling in the Kedarnath Singh case upheld the constitutional validity of Section 124A, narrowing its scope to those who incite violence.

Proposed Amendments for Clarity

To address the ambiguities surrounding sedition, the Law Commission recommends incorporating the ratio decidendi of the Kedarnath Singh ruling. This inclusion would bring greater clarity to the interpretation and application of the provision. By doing so, the proposed amendments aim to strike a balance between safeguarding fundamental rights and maintaining social harmony.

Punishment Parity and Safeguards

The Commission further suggests amending the punishment under Section 124A to ensure parity with other offenses under Chapter VI of the IPC. This move would help avoid discrepancies in the severity of punishments handed down for similar offenses. Additionally, to curb potential misuse, the Commission advocates for the issuance of model guidelines by the Central Government, providing a framework to prevent arbitrary use of the sedition law.

Procedural Safeguards

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Incorporating a provision analogous to Section 196(3) of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) is also recommended as a procedural safeguard. This provision would introduce necessary checks and balances before the filing of a First Information Report (FIR) concerning an offense under Section 124A of the IPC.

Salt Cavern-based Oil Storage Facility

Engineers India (EIL), a government-owned engineering consultancy firm, is conducting a study in Rajasthan to assess the potential and feasibility of establishing salt cavern-based strategic oil reserves. This initiative aligns with the Indian government's objective of enhancing the country's strategic oil storage capacity. If successful, it would mark India's first salt cavern-based oil storage facility, complementing the existing three strategic oil storage facilities in Mangaluru, Padur, and Visakhapatnam.

Success Story: The United States' Strategic Petroleum Reserve

The Potential of Rajasthan for Salt Cavern-Based Storage

Understanding the Importance of Strategic Crude Oil Reserves

Countries develop strategic crude oil reserves to mitigate major disruptions in the global supply chain. With India being the world's third-largest consumer of crude oil, relying on imports for more than 85% of its requirements, strategic petroleum reserves (SPRs) play a crucial role in ensuring energy security and availability during global supply shocks and emergencies.

The Current Strategic Oil Storage Capacity in India

India's existing strategic oil reserves have a capacity of 5.33 million tonnes, equivalent to approximately 39 million barrels of crude. This capacity can sustain the country's demand for approximately 9.5 days. To further strengthen the SPR, India is expanding its storage capacity by a cumulative 6.5 million tonnes at two locations: Chandikhol in Odisha (4 million tonnes) and Padur (2.5 million tonnes).

Advantages of Salt Cavern-Based Storage Facilities

Salt cavern-based storage facilities offer distinct advantages compared to rock cavern-based storage. Unlike rock caverns that require excavation, salt caverns are created through solution mining, a simpler, faster, and less cost-intensive process. These facilities are naturally well-sealed, enabling rapid injection and extraction of oil. The salt lining inside the caverns acts as an impermeable barrier against liquid and gaseous hydrocarbons, making them ideal for storage. Additionally, salt cavern-based storage can be predominantly operated from the surface, further streamlining operations.

Success Story: The United States' Strategic Petroleum Reserve

The United States has established the world's largest emergency oil storage, the Strategic Petroleum Reserve (SPR). It relies on salt cavern-based storage facilities located in salt domes along the Gulf of Mexico coast in Texas and Louisiana. With a cumulative capacity of approximately 727 million barrels, the US SPR serves as a model for successful salt cavern-based strategic oil reserves.

The Potential of Rajasthan for Salt Cavern-Based Storage

Rajasthan, endowed with ample salt formations, offers favorable conditions for the development of salt cavern-based strategic storage facilities. Previous attempts to build a strategic oil reserve in Bikaner did not materialize. However, the partnership between EIL and Germany's DEEP.KBB GmbH has bridged the technical expertise gap required for salt cavern-based storage. With the upcoming refinery in Barmer and existing crude pipelines, Rajasthan's infrastructure is conducive to the establishment of strategic oil reserves.

Helmand River Dispute





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Iran and Afghanistan have been involved in a longstanding conflict concerning the distribution of water resources from the Helmand River. Recent events, including clashes between Iranian and Taliban troops along the border, have further escalated tensions between the two countries.

The Helmand River serves as a crucial water source for both Afghanistan and Iran, supporting agriculture, livelihoods, and ecosystems in the region. Originating near Kabul in the Hindu Kush mountain range, the river flows for approximately 1,150 kilometers (715 miles) before emptying into Lake Hamun, which straddles the Afghanistan-Iran border.

Unfortunately, Lake Hamun, once the largest freshwater lake in Iran, has suffered immensely over time. Factors such as drought and the impact of dams and water controls have caused the lake to dry up, resulting in severe environmental and economic consequences for the region.

The Helmand River Treaty and Disagreements

To regulate the allocation of river water, Iran and Afghanistan signed the Helmand River Treaty in 1973. However, the accord was not fully implemented, leading to ongoing disagreements and tensions. Iran has accused Afghanistan of violating its water rights, claiming that it receives significantly less water than agreed upon in the treaty. Afghanistan, on the other hand, attributes the reduced river water volumes to climatic factors such as decreased rainfall.

Tehran-Taliban Relations

Iran and the Taliban have a complex relationship. While Tehran had cultivated good ties with the Taliban before their takeover of Kabul in 2021, incidents at the border have strained their interactions. The Taliban's unwillingness to honor agreements regarding water rights has added to the tensions. The sustainable resolution of the water dispute requires closer collaboration and information sharing between officials and experts from both countries.

Training Launch of Agni-1 Ballistic Missile

India continues to make significant strides in bolstering its strategic defense capabilities through successful missile launches. The recent training launch of the Agni-1 missile by the Strategic Forces Command from APJ Abdul Kalam Island in Odisha stands as a testament to the country's commitment to precision and technological advancements.

India achieved yet another milestone with the successful training launch of the Agni-1 missile from APJ Abdul Kalam Island in Odisha. The missile launch, conducted by the Strategic Forces Command, successfully verified and confirmed the operational and technical aspects of the missile. With the ability to strike targets with a remarkable degree of precision, the Agni-1 missile showcased its effectiveness and showcased India's dedication to enhancing its strategic deterrent capability.

Agni-V:

Among India's notable missile achievements is the Agni-V, which was successfully test-fired with a range of up to 5,000 km. This long-range ballistic missile further solidifies India's position in the realm of missile technology and adds to its strategic defense capabilities. The Agni-V's impressive range enables it to target distant locations, enhancing India's deterrence capabilities and bolstering national security.

The Ranges of Agni 1 to 4 Missiles

India's missile arsenal includes the Agni 1 to 4 missiles, each with distinct ranges. The Agni 1 missile has a range of 700 km, while the Agni 2 extends to 2,000 km. The Agni 3 covers a range of 3,000 km, and the Agni 4 has an impressive range of 3,500 km. This range diversity allows India to address varying strategic requirements and ensures comprehensive coverage in different scenarios.

The Maiden Flight Trial of the Endo-Atmospheric Interceptor Missile

In April, India achieved a significant milestone with the successful maiden flight trial of an endo-atmospheric interceptor missile. The trial took place off the coast of Odisha in the Bay of Bengal. The primary objective of this sea-based missile





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trial was to engage and neutralize a hostile ballistic missile threat. This achievement signifies India's growing capabilities in ballistic missile defense and places the country among an elite club of nations possessing such prowess.

Strengthening Strategic Capabilities

India's consistent focus on developing and enhancing its strategic deterrent capability highlights its commitment to national security and defense preparedness. The successful missile launches, including the Agni series and the endo-atmospheric interceptor missile, demonstrate India's dedication to refining its defense systems and keeping pace with evolving challenges.

UGC (Institutions Deemed to be Universities) Regulations, 2023

The Centre has recently released the UGC (Institutions deemed to be Universities) Regulations, 2023, bringing about significant changes in the eligibility criteria for institutions aspiring to be deemed universities. These revised guidelines aim to establish more quality-focused deemed universities in the country.

The new guidelines replace the previous 2019 guidelines and align with the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. One of the major changes is the simplification of eligibility criteria, which now emphasizes multi-disciplinarity, NAAC grading, NIRF ranking, and NBA grading. Institutions that meet specific requirements in these areas can apply for deemed university status.

New Eligibility Criteria

As per the updated guidelines, a multi-disciplinary institution is eligible to seek deemed status when it possesses valid NAAC accreditation with a cumulative grade point average (CGPA) of no less than 3.01 for three consecutive cycles. Furthermore, NBA accreditation must be obtained for two-thirds of eligible programs over the same three consecutive cycles, or the institution must consistently rank within the top 50 in any specific category of NIRF for the past three years.

Inclusion of Cluster Institutions

The guidelines also allow a cluster of institutions managed by multiple sponsoring bodies or societies to apply for deemed university status. This provision enables collaboration and collective efforts in establishing quality-focused institutions.

Increased Faculty Strength and Corpus Fund Requirement

The revised guidelines raise the faculty strength requirement from 100 to 150, ensuring a strong academic base for deemed universities. In the case of private institutions, the corpus fund requirement has been increased from ₹10 crore to ₹25 crore, promoting financial stability and sustainability.

Registration on the Academic Bank of Credits

To promote academic flexibility and student mobility, the revised guidelines make it mandatory for deemed universities to register on the Academic Bank of Credits (ABC). This registration enables institutions to offer twinning programs, joint degree programs, and dual degree programs, aligning with the regulations concerned.

Setting up Off-campus Centers

Deemed universities meeting specific criteria, such as minimum 'A' grade or being ranked from 1 to 100 in the "Universities" category of NIRF rankings, are eligible to establish off-campus centers. This provision enables deemed universities to extend their reach and impact, catering to the diverse educational needs of different regions.

Pharmaceutical Inspection Convention and Pharmaceutical Inspection Co-operation Scheme (PIC/S)

India is poised to strengthen the quality of its medical products and improve market access by joining the Pharmaceutical Inspection Convention and Pharmaceutical Inspection Co-operation Scheme (PIC/S). This decision comes in response to incidents such as the tragic deaths of 66 children in Gambia, which were linked to toxic Indian-made cough syrups, as well





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as market access challenges faced by Indian medical products in quality-conscious regions like the UAE and Gulf Cooperation Council. Joining PIC/S will enable India to adopt global standards and pave the way for enhanced cooperation and regulatory practices among countries.

Improving Medical Product Quality and Industry Standards

Under PIC/S, India's industry, particularly micro, small, and medium enterprises, will be required to adopt global standards, specifically focusing on good manufacturing practices. This step will not only help avert tragedies similar to the Gambia incident but also facilitate market access in advanced economies. By aligning with international norms, India's medical product quality will be enhanced, providing assurance to consumers and regulators.

Resolving Market Barriers

Certain countries, including the UAE, Gulf Cooperation Council, and other advanced economies, employ reference prices from developed markets to set their own prices. This approach inadvertently acts as a barrier for affordable Indian drugs, despite their superior quality. By becoming a member of PIC/S, India's prices will also be considered for referencing, allowing the country to overcome these market barriers and gain better access to these regions.

The Role of PIC/S

The PIC/S serves as a platform for harmonizing, educating, and updating aspects related to Good Manufacturing Practice among member countries. Additionally, it plays a pivotal role in fostering relationships and coordination between regulatory authorities and governments. By participating in PIC/S, India will align its manufacturing protocols and quality control measures with international standards, ensuring uniformity and compliance across member countries.

Global Collaboration and Membership

PIC/S boasts a prominent membership base that includes countries like the United States, the United Kingdom, Switzerland, Japan, Germany, France, and others. This collaboration allows participating countries to share best practices, exchange knowledge, and collectively enhance the quality and safety of medical products. India's membership in PIC/S will strengthen its ties with these nations, leading to a broader exchange of expertise and ensuring the country remains at the forefront of international healthcare standards.

SEBI-SAT Stalemate Over Provision 23(E) of SCRA

The Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) and the Securities Appellate Tribunal (SAT) are currently embroiled in a stalemate over the interpretation of a specific provision in the securities law.

At the heart of the impasse lies Provision 23(E) of the Securities Contracts (Regulations) Act (SCRA). This provision states that any company violating listing conditions could face a penalty of up to ₹25 crore. However, there is a disagreement between Sebi and SAT regarding the interpretation of "listing conditions."

Divergent Views on Listing Conditions

Sebi has taken the stance that "listing conditions" specified in the Act refer to violations of listing rules. On the other hand, SAT rejects this interpretation and argues that the provision only applies if listing conditions are not met. Consequently, SAT has overturned more than half a dozen Sebi orders related to listing-agreement violations.

The Stalemate Reaches the Supreme Court

With the stalemate unresolved, the matter has now reached the Supreme Court. A two-judge bench comprising Justice K.M. Joseph and Justice B.V. Nagarathna will hear the appeals related to the issue. This development has attracted significant attention from legal experts and market participants awaiting a resolution.

Differentiating 'Listing Conditions' and 'Conditions of Listing Agreement'





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Legal experts highlight the distinction between “listing conditions” and “conditions of listing agreement” under the SCRA. They argue that the violation of “conditions of listing agreement” falls under a separate provision, Section 23(2) of the SCRA. Consequently, they assert that the penalties imposed under Provision 23(E) should only apply to violations of “listing conditions.”

Sebi's Use of Section 23(E)

Sebi has utilized Section 23(E) in multiple cases involving listing-agreement violations. Apart from the well-known Suzlon Energy Ltd case, Sebi has imposed penalties under this provision in cases concerning Man Industries (India) Ltd, IFGL Refractories Ltd, and Winsome Yarns Ltd. SAT has expressed dissatisfaction with Sebi's repeated use of Section 23(E) despite its ruling in the Suzlon matter.

The Maximum Penalty and Listing-Agreement Violations

Notably, Section 23(E) imposes a maximum penalty of ₹25 crore, while the specific section for listing-agreement violations stipulates a maximum penalty of ₹1 crore. This discrepancy has led to concerns about proportional penalties based on the scale and nature of violations.

What is Electronic Interlocking?

The recent train accident in Odisha's Balasore has brought the focus on the safety measures implemented in the railway system and the role of electronic interlocking system.

Electronic interlocking is a crucial safety measure in the railway system. Its primary purpose is to prevent conflicting movements between trains by ensuring that signals are not changed in an improper sequence. This system aims to ensure that trains receive a signal to proceed only when the route is proven safe.

The Cause of the Train Accident

The tragic train accident in Balasore was caused by a change in electronic interlocking. The accident had occurred due to a change that took place during the electronic interlocking process. An investigation is underway to determine the details and identify those responsible.

Responsibility for Investigation

The Commissioner of Railway Safety has been assigned the responsibility of investigating the train accident. This body will conduct a thorough examination of the incident, gather evidence, and determine the factors that contributed to the accident.

Casualties and Train Involvement

Tragically, the train accident resulted in the loss of 288 lives, with over 1000 people injured. The incident involved three different trains: Bengaluru-Howrah Superfast Express, Coromandel Express, and a goods train. Seventeen coaches of the passenger trains were derailed and suffered severe damage.

Units Involved in Rescue Operations

The rescue operations were carried out with the assistance of multiple units. Seven National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) teams, five Odisha Disaster Rapid Action Force (ODRAF) units, and 24 Fire Services and Emergency units actively participated in the rescue and relief efforts.

Derailment in Indian Railways

A report titled “Derailment in Indian Railways” was released in 2022 by the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG). This report flagged several shortcomings and provided multiple recommendations to improve the safety of the railways.

Identifying Shortcomings and Areas of Improvement





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One of the significant shortcomings highlighted in the CAG report was the failure in conducting proper inspections. The report revealed that inspections by Track Recording Cars, which are crucial in assessing the geometrical and structural conditions of railway tracks, experienced shortfalls ranging from 30-100%. This raised concerns about the accuracy and effectiveness of track assessments.

Additionally, the report flagged failures in submitting and accepting inquiry reports after accidents. This lack of proper documentation and analysis hindered the ability to learn from past incidents and implement necessary preventive measures.

Another concerning aspect was the inadequate utilization of the dedicated railway fund. The report pointed out that the fund, meant for priority tasks related to safety, was not fully utilized. This raised questions about the allocation and management of resources within the railway system.

The report also highlighted a decline in funding for track renewal, which was linked to a significant number of derailments. Approximately 289 derailments, accounting for 26% of the total incidents from 2017 to 2021, were attributed to track renewals. This called for a reevaluation of investment priorities to ensure the maintenance and upgrade of railway tracks.

Derailments and the Role of Bad Driving

Among the factors contributing to derailments, the report emphasized the role of bad driving and overspeeding. It stated that 154 accidents, out of a total of 1129 derailments, were attributed to the loco pilots. This underscored the need for better training, monitoring, and strict adherence to safety protocols by the train drivers.

Operational Challenges in the Track Management System (TMS)

The CAG report raised concerns about the non-operational status of the Track Management System (TMS), which is a web-based application for monitoring track maintenance activities. The in-built monitoring mechanism of the TMS portal was found to be inactive, and important information, such as closure of inspection notes, was not properly recorded. This highlighted the need for an efficient and functional system to oversee track maintenance operations.

Recommendations for Enhanced Safety

In light of the findings, the CAG report presented several recommendations to improve the safety of India's train system. It stressed the importance of strict adherence to scheduled timelines for accident inquiries to ensure timely resolution and implementation of preventive measures. The report also emphasized the adoption of fully mechanized methods of track maintenance and the use of improved technologies to enhance safety operations.

Nand Baba Milk Mission Scheme

In an effort to bolster milk development and production in Uttar Pradesh, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has launched the Nand Baba Milk Mission. With a budget of Rs 1,000 crore, this initiative aims to empower milk producers and provide them with opportunities to sell their milk at reasonable prices through dairy co-operative societies.

The primary objective of the Nand Baba Milk Mission is to empower milk producers in Uttar Pradesh. By establishing dairy co-operative societies, the mission aims to provide producers with a fair and reasonable price for their milk, thereby ensuring their economic well-being.

Establishment of Dairy Farmer Producer Organizations (Dairy FPOs)

As part of the Nand Baba Milk Mission, there is a proposed plan to set up Dairy Farmer Producer Organizations (Dairy FPOs) in 5 districts of the state. These organizations will play a crucial role in facilitating the sale of milk directly in producers' villages. The involvement of women in Dairy FPOs is an important aspect of the plan, promoting gender inclusivity and empowerment.





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Strengthening Rural Economy and Agro-based Infrastructure

The Dairy Development Department is leading the efforts to strengthen the rural economy and ensure remunerative prices for farmers' milk. Through the establishment of Dairy FPOs, the mission aims to enhance the sale of milk in villages, contributing to the growth of the agro-based infrastructure in Uttar Pradesh.

UP's Family ID Portal

The Uttar Pradesh government has launched the Family ID portal to create a comprehensive database of family units and facilitate employment opportunities.

Building a Comprehensive Database for Enhanced Benefits

The Family ID portal serves as a centralized platform for families without a ration card and those not covered under the National Food Security Scheme. Its primary objective is to establish a comprehensive database of family units, enabling targeted delivery of government benefits and improving transparency in the process.

Facilitating Access to Government Schemes

Families without ration cards can apply for a unique Family ID through the portal. This ID acts as a gateway to avail themselves of various government schemes. By registering on the portal, these families gain access to employment opportunities, thus fostering economic empowerment.

Identification of Employment Deprivation

Through the integrated database obtained via the Family ID portal, families lacking employment opportunities can be identified and prioritized for job placement initiatives. By addressing unemployment concerns at the individual and family levels, the portal plays a crucial role in fostering economic growth and social well-being.

Enhancing Efficiency in Verification

The Family ID application process involves verification by designated authorities. Urban areas rely on the Deputy District Magistrate, while rural areas involve the Block Development Officer and Panchayat Officer/Village Development Officer. This verification process streamlines the authentication of family information, ensuring accuracy and reliability of data.

Unlocking the Potential of Government Schemes

The integrated database obtained through the Family ID portal enables improved management of beneficiary schemes. Timely targeting, transparent operations, and accessibility to facilities become more achievable, allowing eligible families to benefit from government initiatives effectively.

Promoting Self-Reliance and Empowerment

The Family ID portal contributes to the larger vision of self-reliance and empowerment for every family in Uttar Pradesh. By extending the reach of government schemes to families without ration cards, the portal ensures that vulnerable households are not left behind and can actively participate in socio-economic development.

International Conference on Spacecraft Mission Operations (SMOPS-2023)

The International Conference on Spacecraft Mission Operations (SMOPS-2023) is a highly anticipated event organized by the Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO). Collaborating with the Italian Space Agency (ASI) and the International Academy of Astronautics (IAA), SMOPS-2023 aims to bring together experts from space agencies, start-ups, industry, and academia to discuss emerging technologies and automation in space mission operations and ground segment. It will be held on June 8 and 9, serving as a global platform for knowledge sharing and collaboration.

Enlightening Topics: Advancing Space Mission Design and Operations

The conference will cover a wide range of topics, including space mission operations management, advanced space mission design, automation, management of large constellations, ground station operations, human spaceflight mission





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operation management, flight dynamics operation challenges, space situational awareness, simulation and modeling, and the application of artificial intelligence in satellite data handling, processing, and applications.

Diverse Participation

SMOPS-2023 is designed to encourage participation from multiple stakeholders. Space agencies, start-ups, industry representatives, and academia will come together to exchange ideas, foster collaboration, and drive innovation in space mission operations and ground segment.

Ground Segment Operations: Exploring Present and Future Trends

One of the key areas of focus at SMOPS-2023 is the ground segment operations. Experts will discuss the present and future trends in ground station operations, addressing the evolving needs and challenges faced in this crucial aspect of space mission operations.

Significance and Impact: Propelling Collaboration and Innovation

The SMOPS-2023 conference holds immense significance in the realm of space exploration. By providing a platform for experts to share knowledge, insights, and best practices, it paves the way for collaboration and fosters innovation in space mission operations and ground segment. Such initiatives contribute to the advancement of space technology and further our understanding of the universe.

Mizoram Government's High-Level Committee on Internally Displaced

The Mizoram government has taken a significant step towards addressing the challenges faced by Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) from Manipur. Under the leadership of Lalchamliana, the High-Level Committee on IDPs has been established. Additionally, an executive committee has been formed to implement decisions related to the IDPs. These initiatives aim to provide relief and humanitarian assistance to those affected by ethnic clashes.

Lalchamliana, the Minister for Home and Disaster Management, is heading the High-Level Committee on IDPs in Mizoram. The executive committee, with H. Lalengmawia as the member secretary, is responsible for the implementation of decisions pertaining to the IDPs. The primary objective of these committees is to ensure effective measures for the well-being of the IDPs.

Refugees and Displaced Population

Mizoram currently provides shelter to more than 40,000 refugees from Myanmar who fled their country due to the military junta. Additionally, there are 772 refugees from Bangladesh who have sought refuge in Mizoram, escaping the crackdown by the Bangladesh army. Moreover, almost 9,000 IDPs from Manipur are facing ethnic clashes and are in need of support and assistance.

Provision of Relief and Assistance

The executive committee, in collaboration with various departments, is working towards providing relief and humanitarian assistance to the IDPs from Manipur in Mizoram. Liaison with concerned departments ensures the effective implementation of relief measures and addresses the urgent needs of the affected population.

Mizoram Kohhran Hruaitute Committee (MKHC)

The Mizoram Kohhran Hruaitute Committee, representing major churches, plays a crucial role in supporting the efforts of the committees. Their involvement ensures a collaborative approach in addressing the challenges faced by the IDPs and provides additional support in humanitarian initiatives.

Ensuring Oversight and Supervision

The High-Level Committee on IDPs is entrusted with overseeing and supervising the provision of relief and basic humanitarian assistance. Through these committees, the Mizoram government aims to ensure that the IDPs receive the necessary support, including access to food, shelter, healthcare, and other essential services.





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NHAI's First 'Sustainability Report'

The National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) recently released its inaugural 'Sustainability Report for FY 2021-22'. The report highlights NHAI's commitment to environmental sustainability and its efforts in promoting social responsibility.

The Sustainability Report provides insights into NHAI's governance structure, emphasizing transparency and accountability in its operations. It also highlights the involvement of various stakeholders in NHAI's sustainability initiatives.

Reducing Direct and Indirect Emissions

NHAI's report showcases significant progress in reducing direct emissions. From FY 2019-20 to 2021-22, direct emissions decreased by 18.44% primarily due to reduced fuel consumption. Moreover, NHAI is actively transitioning towards clean and green energy sources to further curtail indirect emissions.

Decline in Greenhouse Gas Emissions

The report highlights a commendable decline in Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions. In FY 2020-21, GHG emissions from energy consumption, operations, transport, and travel saw a reduction of 9.7%, followed by a 2% decline in FY 2021-22. This positive trend underscores NHAI's commitment to environmental preservation.

Energy Efficiency in Operations

NHAI has made remarkable strides in improving energy efficiency during its operations. In FY 2020-21, energy intensity measured in Giga Joules per kilometer reduced by 37%. The following year, it witnessed a further reduction of 27%. These achievements reflect NHAI's focus on adopting sustainable practices in its operations.

Promoting Sustainability in Construction

NHAI is actively promoting sustainability in National Highway construction. The report highlights the increased use of recycled materials such as fly-ash and plastic waste over the past three years. This eco-friendly approach aims to minimize environmental impact and contribute to a circular economy.

Wildlife Protection and Conservation

To mitigate man-animal conflicts and protect wildlife, NHAI has created more than 100 Wildlife Crossings across 20 states in the last three years. These crossings serve as crucial measures for safeguarding wildlife habitats and promoting sustainable development.

Afforestation and Green Highways

NHAI has embarked on extensive plantation drives to develop eco-friendly National Highways. The report showcases a significant increase in the number of saplings planted from 2016-17 to 2021-22, with around 2.74 crore saplings planted to offset direct emissions from vehicles. NHAI actively collaborates with stakeholders, including State Rural Livelihood Mission, Self Help Groups, CSR partners, and NGOs, to organize these plantation drives.

Promoting Inclusivity and Responsible Work Practices

NHAI's commitment to inclusivity is evident in its efforts to increase women employment and employment of marginalized communities. Through a performance-based management system, NHAI has achieved a 7.4% increase in female hiring and an overall 3% increase in its workforce over the past three financial years.

National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF) Rankings 2023

The National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF) Rankings 2023 were recently released by Minister of State for Education and External Affairs, Rajkumar Ranjan Singh. These rankings serve as a significant benchmark to assess the quality and performance of educational institutions across the country.

An Overview of NIRF Rankings 2023





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The NIRF rankings encompass four major categories: Overall, Colleges, Universities, and Research Institutions. The rankings aim to provide valuable insights into the progress and performance of institutions in terms of academic excellence, research output, and overall institutional quality. These rankings are available on the official website of NIRF at nirfindia.org.

Expanding Categories and Dimensions

In its eighth edition, the NIRF rankings have expanded from four to twelve categories, including eight subject-specific rankings. This expansion allows for a more comprehensive assessment of institutions across various domains. The subject domains now include Engineering, Management, Pharmacy, Law, Medical, Architecture and Planning, Dental, and a new addition—Agriculture and Allied Sectors.

Top Performers in the Overall Category

In the overall category, the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Madras secured the top position, maintaining its success from the previous year. The Indian Institute of Science (IISc) in Bengaluru emerged as the leading university, reaffirming its commitment to academic excellence. Additionally, IISc Bangalore was recognized as the second-best institution in the overall category.

Excellence in Universities

In the university rankings, IISc Bengaluru retained its top position, showcasing its consistent commitment to research and academic prowess. Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) and Jamia Millia Islamia (JMI) secured the second and third spots, respectively, highlighting their contributions to the academic landscape of the country.

Leaders in Engineering

When it comes to engineering institutes, IIT Madras emerged as the top performer for the second consecutive year. IIT Delhi, IIT Bombay, IIT Kanpur, and IIT Roorkee followed closely, showcasing their exceptional contributions to engineering education and research.

Noteworthy Management Institutions

In the field of management, the Indian Institute of Management (IIM) Ahmedabad secured the top spot, demonstrating its excellence in producing business leaders. IIM Bangalore, IIM Kozhikode, IIM Calcutta, and IIM Delhi were also recognized for their outstanding contributions to management education.

Recognizing Achievements in Other Domains

The NIRF rankings also acknowledge the top performers in other domains such as Pharmacy, Colleges, Medical, Research Institutions, Innovation, Law, Architecture, Dental, and Agriculture and Allied Sectors. These rankings shed light on the institutions that have excelled in their respective fields and contribute significantly to the growth of those domains.

The Significance of NIRF Rankings

The NIRF rankings play a crucial role in evaluating and improving the quality of higher education in India. By providing a comprehensive assessment and comparison of institutions, the rankings help students make informed decisions about their academic pursuits. The NIRF rankings align with the government's efforts to enhance the quality and accessibility of education across the nation.

With the expansion of categories and a growing number of participating institutions, the NIRF rankings continue to evolve and become more inclusive. They serve as a reliable guide for students, parents, and educational stakeholders, enabling them to identify and appreciate the best institutions in India.

Antardrishti Dashboard





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RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das recently launched a financial inclusion dashboard called 'Antardrishti', marking a significant step towards promoting financial inclusion in India. This innovative tool aims to provide valuable insights for assessing and monitoring the progress of financial inclusion by capturing relevant parameters.

The Purpose of Antardrishti: Monitoring Financial Inclusion

The primary objective of the Antardrishti dashboard is to evaluate and track the advancements made in financial inclusion across the country. By analyzing key metrics and indicators, it enables policymakers and stakeholders to gain a comprehensive understanding of the current state of financial inclusion. This real-time monitoring allows for targeted interventions and initiatives to address areas with limited access to financial services.

Internal Use by the RBI

Initially, the Antardrishti dashboard will be utilized for internal purposes within the Reserve Bank of India (RBI). This internal usage enables the central bank to gauge the extent of financial exclusion at granular levels and identify specific regions that require attention. By examining this data internally, the RBI can devise strategies and collaborate with relevant stakeholders to promote greater financial inclusion.

Facilitating Financial Inclusion: A Multi-Stakeholder Approach

One of the key advantages of the Antardrishti dashboard is its ability to facilitate greater financial inclusion through a multi-stakeholder approach. By involving various entities, such as financial institutions, regulators, and policymakers, in the decision-making process, the dashboard promotes collective efforts to enhance financial inclusion. This collaborative approach ensures that diverse perspectives and expertise contribute to the development of inclusive policies and initiatives.

Understanding the Financial Inclusion Index

In 2021, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) devised the Financial Inclusion (FI) Index as a reliable means to accurately gauge the level of financial inclusion. The FI Index considers three crucial dimensions: 'Access', 'Usage', and 'Quality'. It encompasses multiple sectors, including banking, investments, insurance, postal services, and pensions. The index condenses various aspects of financial inclusion into a single numerical value that ranges from 0 to 100. The score of zero signifies total exclusion from financial services, whereas a score of 100 signifies comprehensive inclusion in the financial system.

Involvement of Key Stakeholders

The development of the FI Index involved close collaboration between the government, sectoral regulators, and the RBI. By leveraging the expertise of these stakeholders, the index was carefully designed to provide a comprehensive overview of financial inclusion in India. This inclusive approach ensures that the FI Index accurately reflects the progress and challenges in achieving financial inclusion goals.

Sustainable Green Airports Mission

The Airports Authority of India (AAI) has taken a significant step towards sustainability and carbon neutrality with the launch of its publication, "Sustainable Green Airports Mission." The booklet was unveiled by Jyotiraditya Scindia, the Union Minister of Civil Aviation, on World Environment Day. The publication highlights the various initiatives undertaken by AAI to promote sustainable practices and reduce its carbon footprint.

The primary objective of the "Sustainable Green Airports Mission" is to document and inform stakeholders about AAI's sustainability initiatives. It serves as a comprehensive platform to track progress, encourage knowledge sharing, and seek cooperation for enhancing efficient and sustainable airport operations. The booklet aligns with the Panamrit goals set by the Prime Minister of India at COP26, focusing on sustainability and carbon neutrality.

Sustainability Initiatives at AAI Airports





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SUGAM showcases the remarkable initiatives taken by AAI airports in promoting sustainability. AAI has developed a roadmap to transition from fossil fuel-based energy to green power from renewable sources. With the aim of reducing the carbon footprint, AAI plans to optimize energy efficiency, increase onsite solar capacity, and explore other renewable energy options. Notably, AAI already meets around two-thirds of its energy requirements through renewable sources.

Solar Plants and Renewable Energy

AAI has taken significant steps to encourage the usage of green energy at its airports. Solar plants with a combined commissioned capacity of 55 MWp have been installed and commissioned across 42 AAI airports, enabling these airports to run on 100% renewable energy. This adoption of renewable energy sources not only reduces carbon emissions but also sets an example for other airports to follow suit.

Driving Towards Net Zero Emissions

The “Sustainable Green Airports Mission” encapsulates the Union Government’s vision of updated 2030 Nationally Determined Contributions and the long-term goal of achieving net zero emissions by 2070. The booklet aims to promote transparency and knowledge sharing among airports, inspiring them to contribute to the collective goal of achieving net zero emissions. AAI’s sustainability initiatives pave the way for a greener aviation industry.

ONE LINER

- Medium-range ballistic missile Agni-1 was successfully test-fired in Odisha.
- Chandrayaan-3 reaches launch port at Sriharikota ahead of next month’s launch.
- High Court of Karnataka has upheld constitutional validity of Section 37A of the Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA), 1999.
- Telangana to mark 10th year of formation on June 2.
- 100 units of free power for all households announced in Rajasthan
- GST collections cross ₹1.5 lakh crores for the fifth time.
- May’s manufacturing PMI rose to 31-month high of 58.7: S&P Global survey.
- Uttar Pradesh govt launches 15-day mega registration drive for MSMEs
- India and Nepal sign pacts on energy, transport; India to import 10,000 MW of electricity from Nepal.
- U.S. and Taiwan sign trade deal aimed at deepening economic relations between both sides, as China issues warning.
- Pakistan posts record inflation for second consecutive month; inflation rose to 37.97% in May.
- Andhra Pradesh: Disha Mobile App gets a record 1.17 crore registrations since its launch three years ago
- The death toll of the tragic train accident in Balasore, Odisha has risen to 238, and around 900 are feared critically injured.
- Integrated Command and Control Centre set up in Srinagar under Smart City Mission.
- 88% of wage payments made through Aadhaar Based Payment Bridge System till May: Rural Development Ministry.
- President Droupadi Murmu to be on State visit to Suriname and Serbia in June.
- IRENA report ‘Low-cost finance for energy transition’ praises India’s renewable energy growth.
- ICAI Central Council approves renewal of mutual recognition agreement (MRA) with CPA Canada, CPA Ireland.
- RBI proposes cyber security framework for payment system operators, seeks feedback by June 30.
- Centre imposes stock limits on Tur and Urad dal to prevent hoarding and speculation
- IRDAI has issued draft guidelines for Bima Vahak, a new initiative aimed at enhancing insurance inclusion and awareness across India.
- Sri Lankan Cabinet Ministers approve proposal for establishment of Truth and Reconciliation Mechanism.





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- UAE Meteorologist Dr Abdulla Al Mandous has been elected as the new President of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO)
- UN Security Council extends UN political mission in Sudan for 6 months.
- BRICS Foreign Ministers pitch for use of local currencies in international trade.
- Celeste Saulo of Argentina has been appointed as the first female Secretary-General of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO).
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been invited to address a joint session of the U.S. Congress.
- Finale Bahnen-Tournee 2023 cycling: India's Esow Alben wins bronze medal.
- 3rd Khelo India University Games to conclude in Varanasi.
- Indian men's team beat Belgium 5-1 in FIH Pro League.
- India urges G-20 countries to join proposed Global Vaccine Research Collaborative to tackle inequity.
- Oil India Limited (OIL) begins aerial survey to locate hydrocarbon deposits
- Malviya National Institute of Technology (MNIT), Jaipur has been identified as the National Centre for Earthquake Safety of Dams.
- Odisha Balasore railway tragedy toll rises to 288; over 1000 injured persons have been provided medical assistance.
- India bans fourteen fixed-dose combination (FDC) medicines that are found to lack therapeutic relevance.
- International Day of Innocent Children Victims of Aggression is observed on June 4.
- TRAI directs telcos to develop a unified digital platform to seek, maintain and revoke customers' consent for promotional calls and messages.
- Ashwani Kumar has been appointed as the new MD and CEO of public sector UCO Bank
- Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) announced relaxations for victims of the Odisha train accident.
- Texas becomes largest state to ban transgender care for minors
- US President Joe Biden signed into law a bill to suspend the nation's debt limit through 1 January 2025.
- Indonesia proposes peace plan to end war between Russia and Ukraine.
- Turkey's Tayyip Erdogan has been sworn in for new term as President.
- India defeated Great Britain 4-2 in a penalty shoot-out in the second leg FIH Pro League match.
- Manisha Bhanwala won all four matches to claim the women's 65kg gold medal at Ranking series wrestling event in Kyrgyzstan.
- Lakshya Sen lost men's singles semifinal against Thailand's second seed Kunlavut Vitidsarn in Thailand Open .
- Sainyam wins women's 10m air pistol gold in Junior World Cup.
- India's first carbon neutral village being developed in Bhiwandi Taluka of Thane.
- Railway board recommends CBI probe into Odisha Train crash.
- 3rd G20 Health Working Group Meeting is being held at Hyderabad, Telangana
- Doorstep delivery of free medicines begins in Kozhikode, Kerala.
- Defence Minister Rajnath Singh to meet US Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin to enhance defence partnership

ECONOMY & CORPORATE

- Indian American Ajay Banga assumes charge as World Bank President.
- Services PMI dropped in May, still remains second highest in 13 years.
- NSE and BSE to introduce enhanced surveillance for micro-small companies
- The State Bank of India has launched Project Kuber in Bengaluru.
- UAE to Host World's Largest Conservation Conference of IUCN in 2025.
- President Murmu to attend celebrations in Suriname's capital marking 150th anniversary of arrival of Indians in the country





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- Saudi Arabia announces to cut oil production by 1 million barrels per day in July
- World Environment Day is celebrated on 5 June with the theme of "Beat Plastic Pollution."
- India win three medals in Asian U-20 Athletics Championship on the opening day.
- ISSF Junior World Cup: Gautami Bhanot, Abhinav Shaw win India's second gold medal.
- Flanders Cup 2023 Athletics: Top Indian sprinter Amlan Borgohain bags two gold medals.



ACSA

