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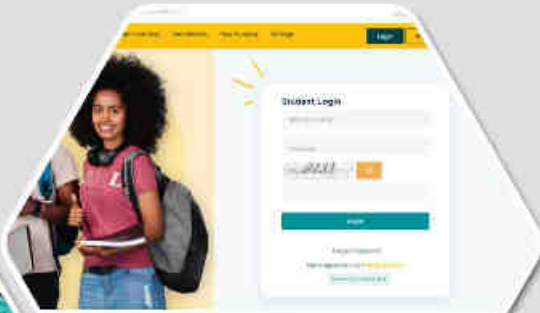
ACSA

WEEKLY Current Affairs

1st to 7th August 2023

For **UPSC / RPSC** and All Other Competitive **EXAMS**

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- ARCL and CDMDF
- Archeological Significance of Benisagar
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- Guidelines on Basic Facilities and Amenities for a Safe Environment for Women and Women Cell
- Yojana Classics
- Mammography Screening with Artificial Intelligence (MASAI) Trial
- Study in India (SII) Portal

Current Affairs 1 to 7 August 2023

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Asia Pacific Telecommunity (APT)

The Asia Pacific Telecommunity (APT) is gearing up for a significant meeting in August, scheduled to be held in Brisbane. This key gathering aims to determine the future deployment of the 6 GHz spectrum band for 5G services in India. As India and other Region 3 member nations, including China, South Korea, Japan, and others, prepare for the World Radio Communications-2023 conference in Dubai, the decisions made in this meeting will play a crucial role in shaping the 5G landscape in the country.

Deciding the 6 GHz Spectrum Band for 5G Services

The primary purpose of the APT meeting in Brisbane is to deliberate and finalize the deployment of the 6 GHz spectrum band for 5G services in India. This decision holds significant importance as the 6 GHz spectrum band offers internet speeds up to 10 Gbps, enabling faster and more efficient communication networks. The meeting aims to build momentum and collective support from all Region 3 nations to embrace the 6 GHz spectrum for a cost-effective rollout of 5G services.

Key Region 3 Member Nations

The APT meeting will witness participation from crucial Region 3 member nations, which include India, China, South Korea, Japan, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Australia, and New Zealand. This diverse group of countries in the Asia-Pacific region plays a vital role in driving ICT policy and regulatory coordination, making the meeting a significant platform for crucial discussions regarding 5G deployment.

Tech Giants' Interest in the 6 GHz Spectrum Band

Tech giants such as Google, Meta (formerly Facebook), Amazon, Microsoft, Cisco, Qualcomm, Intel, and Netflix have shown a keen interest in the 6 GHz spectrum band. They see potential in utilizing this band to boost broadband penetration in rural India through the WiFi route. With internet speeds of up to 10 Gbps, the 6 GHz spectrum presents an opportunity to bridge the digital divide and offer affordable and high-speed internet access to remote areas.

Telcos' Divergent Stance

On the other hand, India's top telcos, namely Reliance Jio, Bharti Airtel, and Vodafone Idea, have a different perspective. They are vying for the 6 GHz spectrum band to be auctioned and made fully available for 5G services immediately and for future 6G endeavors. This divergence in opinions sets the stage for intense discussions during the APT meeting.

Importance of the APG's Role

Within the APT, the Asia-Pacific Group (APG) is tasked with aligning all major Region 3 wireless/spectrum matters, including the 6 GHz band deployment for 5G services. The APG will present a common proposal at the WRC-2023 conference in Dubai, aiming to harmonize the 6 GHz band's utilization and create a cost-efficient 5G devices/network ecosystem centered around these airwaves.

Awaiting India's Position

Many Region 3 countries are anxiously awaiting India's position at the upcoming APG meeting. India's support for deploying the 6 GHz band for 5G services carries significant weight, particularly given China's recent allocation of the band for the same purpose. India's decision is expected to have a cascading effect on the region's 5G strategies and spectrum allocations.

About the 6 GHz Band

The 6 GHz band is the only mid-band spectrum range capable of accommodating contiguous bandwidth of 300-400 units per telco. Such capacity is vital to address the evolving demands in the telecommunications sector towards the year 2030.

ARCL and CDMDF

The Indian financial market has witnessed significant growth and development in recent years, driven by various government initiatives aimed at enhancing liquidity, market stability, and investor confidence. In a recent event, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman launched two crucial institutions (ARCL and CDMDF) to further bolster the corporate debt market and encourage global market access for Indian companies.

One of the significant developments in India's financial market is the establishment of AMC Repo Clearing Limited (ARCL). The newly launched institution focuses on the clearing and settlement of corporate bond repo

transactions. By facilitating smooth and efficient repo services, ARCL aims to widen and deepen the corporate bond repo market. This move is expected to boost liquidity and improve accessibility to funding for inventory and short-term liquidity needs without liquidating assets. ARCL represents a pivotal step towards creating a more vibrant and dynamic corporate bond repo market.

Corporate Debt Market Development Fund (CDMDF): Enhancing Secondary Market Liquidity

The government's commitment to enhancing secondary market liquidity in the corporate bond market led to the creation of the Corporate Debt Market Development Fund (CDMDF). This fund operates as a permanent institutional framework to instill confidence among market participants during both stressed and normal times. The CDMDF's primary goal is to purchase investment-grade debt securities, thereby bolstering the bond market's development and stability. It provides a backstop facility in times of market dislocation, offering a safeguard for corporate debt investors and contributing to a more resilient financial ecosystem.

Market Capitalisation Milestone: India's Progress

Market Capitalisation has reached an impressive Rs. 300 lakh crore. This achievement is a testament to the country's robust financial market growth. Over the past decade, India's Market Capitalisation has nearly doubled every five years, making it the fifth most-valued country globally. The surge in Market Capitalisation reflects growing investor confidence and a positive outlook for India's economic prospects.

IFSC: Enabling Direct Listing and Access to Global Markets

The International Financial Services Centre (IFSC) is a crucial platform that enables direct listing of listed and unlisted companies on its exchanges. This initiative is set to be operational shortly, allowing startups and similar companies to access global markets through the GIFT IFSC. Such access to global markets not only offers Indian companies better valuations but also opens doors to global capital, fostering growth and expansion opportunities.

Expanding Corporate Debt Issuers: REITs and InvITs

The Union Budget 2021 introduced a legal framework for new types of entities, such as Real Estate Investment Trusts (REITs) and Infrastructure Investment Trusts (InvITs), to issue corporate debt securities. This move diversifies the corporate bond market by encouraging different entities to participate actively. REITs and InvITs contribute to the country's infrastructure and real estate sectors, attracting a wider investor base and boosting overall market activity.

What is TechEquity?

In a significant stride towards gender equality and digital inclusion, India is set to launch TechEquity – a transformative digital platform aimed at empowering women worldwide. With its official unveiling scheduled on the first day of the two-day G20 EMPOWER summit in Gandhinagar, TechEquity holds the promise of impacting two to three million women in the coming year.

TechEquity emerges as a pioneering initiative under India's G20 presidency, seeking to bridge the gender digital divide. The platform's primary goal is to empower women by equipping them with essential digital and financial literacy, tech skill development, and core skill enhancement courses.

Multilingual Access: Inclusivity for All

TechEquity prioritizes inclusivity by offering content in an impressive 120 languages. This multilingual approach ensures that women from diverse linguistic backgrounds can access the platform, irrespective of geographical location.

Three Years of Support: India's Commitment

India showcases its commitment to women's empowerment by funding TechEquity for the next three years. This financial support ensures the platform's sustainability and continued efforts towards bridging the gender digital divide.

FICCI: Ensuring Smooth Functioning

The Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FICCI) plays a critical role in maintaining TechEquity. As the organization responsible for its upkeep, FICCI ensures seamless operations and enriches the user experience.

EMPOWER: Catalyzing Women's Economic Representation

EMPOWER, the G20 Alliance for Empowerment and Progression of Women's Economic Representation, was established in 2019. It is the G20 coalition dedicated to advancing and promoting the economic representation and empowerment of women. This alliance operates under the Sherpa Track, bringing together government and private sector representation, with a primary focus on accelerating women's leadership and empowerment across G20 nations.

Archeological Significance of Benisagar

Benisagar, a village located 85 kilometers from Jharkhand's West Singhbhum district, is a treasure trove of historical wonders. Excavated by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), this site has revealed continuous habitation from the fifth century A.D. to the 16-17 century A.D. The archaeological significance of Benisagar has earned it a place on the prestigious list of 100 prominent archaeological monuments curated by the ASI.

The history of Benisagar dates back to 1840 when Colonel Tickell of the British Army first visited the site. His exploration sparked interest in the region's ancient past, setting the stage for further investigations by historians and archaeologists.

The Enigmatic Stone Seal: A Linguistic Puzzle

One of the most intriguing discoveries at Benisagar is a stone seal bearing the inscription "Priyangu Dheyam Chatuvidya (Chaturvidya)." The inscription, written in the ancient Sanskrit language, has puzzled scholars and researchers, hinting at the presence of a knowledgeable individual named Priyangu well-versed in the four Vedas.

Historical Period and Temple Architecture: A Glimpse into the Past

Based on epigraphic evidence, the website of the Archaeological Survey of India places Benisagar in the 5th century. Additionally, the temple architecture found at the site bears resemblance to the Rekha Deula type, which is prevalent in Odisha, suggesting possible historical connections.

A Musical Stone: The Bell-Like Sound

One of the most remarkable features of Benisagar is a massive stone near the temple that produces a bell-like sound when struck by another stone. The unique acoustic property of this stone has intrigued locals and visitors alike, making it a notable attraction.

The Union Government's Tourism Plans: Modern Amenities for Ancient Sites

In line with its efforts to promote cultural heritage and tourism, the Union Government plans to provide necessary facilities at archaeological monuments across the country. These facilities include an audiovisual center, WiFi, Audiorail, and a Water Management System, aimed at enhancing the visitor experience at sites like Benisagar.

The Everlasting Pond: Nature's Masterpiece

The special attraction of Benisagar lies in a magnificent pond, measuring 300 by 350 meters, which never dries up. This remarkable natural wonder stands as a testament to the enduring power of nature and adds to the charm of the archaeological site.

FALCON Shield-2023

China and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) have been making strides in strengthening their defense and security cooperation through joint military drills and arms deals. One notable exercise, the Falcon Shield 2023, is scheduled to be held in China's Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region.

The Falcon Shield 2023 military drill aims to strengthen pragmatic exchanges and cooperation between the Chinese and UAE militaries while fostering mutual understanding and trust. However, specific details regarding the size of the UAE contingent, the duration of the training, and its scope have not been disclosed by the Chinese defense ministry.

Xinjiang as a Venue for Joint Military Exercises

Xinjiang has been a preferred venue for joint military exercises in the past. In 2016, the region served as the venue for collaborative military training that included the infantry units of China and other member nations of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) bloc. The exercise focused on boosting combat capabilities, promoting military communication, and enhancing readiness to handle security threats effectively.

UAE's Involvement and Defense Arsenal

The UAE's Air Force primarily relies on Western fighter jets, including F-16s and Mirage-2000. However, the country has shown interest in diversifying its arsenal by incorporating Chinese-made weaponry. In 2011, China completed the sale of at least five Wing Loong I drones to the UAE, and later, Abu Dhabi became the inaugural export customer for the Wing Loong II drones in 2017.

China's Export of L15 Advanced Trainer Jet

In February 2023, China officially announced a deal to export the domestically developed L15 advanced trainer jet to the UAE. The L15 represents a new generation of versatile light attack and combat trainer jets, capable of

providing training for pilots of fourth- and fifth-generation fighter jets while executing critical air-to-air combat and land attack missions.

China-UAE Defense Cooperation and Regional Geopolitics

China's growing involvement in the UAE's defense sector has raised concerns among US officials, as it signifies potential deepening ties between the two nations. Despite being a traditional US ally, the UAE's collaboration with China in military exercises and arms deals indicates a shift in the regional geopolitical landscape.

Guidelines on Basic Facilities and Amenities for a Safe Environment for Women and Women Cell

In an effort to foster a safe and secure environment for women in Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs), the University Grants Commission (UGC) has developed the "Guidelines on basic facilities and amenities for a safe environment for women and Women Cell." These guidelines serve as a significant step towards ensuring a secure and respectful space for women in HEIs. Recognizing the need for comprehensive action, the UGC is striving to make a positive impact on students' and employees' lives.

In line with the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition, and Redressal) Act, 2013, the UGC has mandated all HEIs to have an Internal Complaints Committee (ICC). This committee plays a crucial role in addressing any grievances related to sexual harassment within the educational institutions. Its establishment ensures that appropriate measures are taken to prevent and redress any misconduct or harassment.

A Dedicated Toll-Free Helpline

To facilitate timely redressal of grievances, the UGC has set up a toll-free number, 1800-111-656. This helpline acts as a support system for anyone who wishes to report incidents of harassment or seeks guidance on related issues. The toll-free number serves as a testament to the UGC's commitment to creating a safe and supportive environment for women.

UGC Regulations for Sexual Harassment

The UGC has also introduced specific regulations, known as the UGC (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal of Sexual Harassment of Women Employees and Students in Higher Educational Institutions) Regulations, 2015. These regulations are legally binding on universities and colleges and provide a framework to prevent, prohibit, and address incidents of sexual harassment. By establishing clear guidelines, the UGC seeks to create a robust mechanism for dealing with such incidents effectively.

Promoting Gender Sensitization

Gender sensitization is a critical aspect of creating a safe and inclusive environment. To address this, the UGC conducts seminars, workshops, and awareness programs in HEIs, focusing on gender sensitization. By fostering an understanding of gender issues, stereotypes, and biases, the UGC aims to promote a culture of respect, equality, and empathy on campus.

Inclusive Initiatives Targeting Students and Employees

The UGC's initiatives are designed to improve the safety and well-being of all women in HEIs, including both students and employees. By offering support and protection to these specific groups, the UGC seeks to enhance their overall experience within the educational institutions.

New Catalytic Process of Producing Hydrogen from Methanol:

Hydrogen, considered one of the cleanest sources of energy, holds immense potential as a green fuel. Traditionally, obtaining pure hydrogen from water and methane required energy-intensive processes. However, a new and promising method has been developed to produce hydrogen through a catalytic reaction with methanol. This groundbreaking research was conducted by scientists from the Indian Institute of Science Education and Research (IISER), Tirupati, making significant strides in the realm of sustainable energy production.

The innovative method involves utilizing a commercially available ruthenium complex as a catalyst under mild conditions. This facilitates the generation of hydrogen from methanol through a clean chemical dehydrogenation reaction. The use of methanol as a hydrogen source is especially noteworthy due to its gravimetric hydrogen content of 12.6%. Moreover, methanol proves effective in converting to H_2 and CO_2 as final products, making it a potential source for transfer hydrogenation and C1 chemistry.

Hydrogen as a Carrier in Synthetic Organic Chemistry

Methanol's significance as a hydrogen carrier should not be overlooked. It presents a practical solution in synthetic organic chemistry, where storing and transporting free hydrogen can be challenging. By serving as a hydrogen carrier, methanol simplifies the handling of hydrogen, thereby enhancing transfer hydrogenation and C1 chemistry.

Applications in Industrial Synthesis

The impact of this research extends beyond the laboratory, as it offers a viable approach for industrial synthesis. The hydrogen liberated from methanol feedstock can be efficiently employed in the synthesis of valuable chemicals and pharmaceuticals. This opens new avenues for sustainable and affordable chemical production, contributing to a greener and more economically viable future.

Yojana Classics

Publications Division, the premier publishing house of the Government of India, has been at the forefront of preserving and promoting the country's cultural heritage, art, and architecture through its vast collection of books and journals. Among its latest offerings, the collectible series 'Yojana Classics' stands out.

Publications Division, under the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, has been dedicated to disseminating knowledge on various themes, ranging from nation-building and history to biographies and children's literature. Their commitment to preserving India's cultural heritage and showcasing the notable contributions of national leaders is evident through their extensive collection of books and journals.

Introducing 'Yojana Classics'

One of their latest initiatives is the collectible series 'Yojana Classics,' a treasure trove of captivating works crafted from select publications since 1957 in the popular development monthly, Yojana. The series not only

showcases the mesmerizing richness and vastness of content published over the years but also offers readers an enriching journey into the world of Art, Culture, and Heritage of India.

Celebrating 'Yojana Classics' at Delhi Book Fair 2023
The launch of 'Yojana Classics' was marked by its release at the Delhi Book Fair 2023. Shri Apurva Chandra, the Union Information and Broadcasting Secretary, was the esteemed dignitary who inaugurated this much-awaited collectible series. His visit to the Publications Division stall was accompanied by Director General, Ms. Anupama Bhatnagar, and other senior officers of the department.

Exploring the Enriching Collection
Visitors at the Publications Division stall at the Delhi Book Fair were captivated by an exquisite collection of books covering diverse themes, including history, heritage, and biographies. The premium books on Rashtrapati Bhavan and selected speeches of Presidents, Vice Presidents, and Prime Ministers were also showcased, exclusive to Publications Division.

Immersing in the World of Journals
Along with books, the stall offered a range of widely circulated journals such as Yojana, Kurukshetra, Aajkal, and Bal Bharti. The comprehensive insights presented in these journals are valuable for students, academicians, and enthusiasts of art and culture.

Constitution (Jammu and Kashmir) Scheduled Tribes Order (Amendment) Bill, 2023
The Constitution (Jammu and Kashmir) Scheduled Tribes Order (Amendment) Bill, 2023, was introduced in Lok Sabha on July 26, with the aim to include four communities in the Scheduled Tribes (ST) list in Jammu and Kashmir. This development has generated both interest and agitation among various communities in the region.

The Bill seeks to include four communities in the ST list: Gadda Brahmin, Koli, Paddari Tribe, and Pahari Ethnic Group. The proposed inclusion is a significant step towards acknowledging the unique identities of these communities and providing them with specific benefits.

Gujjars and Bakerwals – Dominant ST Communities
In Jammu and Kashmir, the Gujjars and Bakerwals are the dominant ST communities. With a combined population of nearly 18 lakh, they constitute the third-largest group in the region after Kashmiris and Dogras. The ST status granted to the Gujjar-Bakerwal community in 1991 brought them 10% reservation in government jobs and educational institutions.

Agitation Among Gujjar-Bakerwal Leaders
The proposed inclusion of the Pahari Ethnic Group and Paddari Tribe in the ST list has sparked unrest among the Gujjar-Bakerwal community. They are concerned that the expansion may lead to a reduction in their share of the quota benefits pie. Gujjar-Bakerwal leaders contend that Gadda Brahmins and Kolis, already part of the ST list, share similarities with the new communities.

Paharis' Quest for ST Status

The demand for ST status for the Pahari Ethnic Group dates back to 1989 when the J&K government recommended their inclusion. However, the Registrar General of India rejected the proposal, citing a lack of historical records. Despite repeated efforts, the case faced multiple rejections.

Recommendation by Justice (retd) G D Sharma Commission

The breakthrough for the Pahari Ethnic Group and other communities came in 2019 when the Justice (retd) G D Sharma Commission recommended ST status for Gadda Brahmins, Kolis, Paddari Tribe, and Pahari Ethnic Group. The commission's report highlighted the social, educational, and economic backwardness of these communities.

G20 Environment and Climate Sustainability Ministerial Meeting

The G20 Environment and Climate Sustainability Ministerial Meeting, held on July 28, 2023, in Chennai, was a significant gathering of world leaders to address crucial climate issues. However, as the meeting concluded, several key challenges emerged as countries struggled to reach consensus on critical climate issues.

One of the primary issues that dominated the discussions during the G20 meeting was the transition away from fossil fuels. Unfortunately, the participating countries could not come to an agreement on this pivotal matter. Despite its importance, the topic found mention only in the Chair's summary, where it was referred to as the 'phasing down of unabated fossil fuels'. This lack of agreement on transitioning away from fossil fuels raised concerns about the collective commitment to addressing climate change effectively.

Missed Consensus on Renewable Energy and Emissions Peaking

The G20 meeting was unsuccessful in reaching an agreement on two crucial climate objectives – increasing renewable energy capacity threefold and attaining early global emissions peaking. Both of these targets are vital for curbing greenhouse gas emissions and mitigating the impacts of climate change. However, differences among countries, particularly those with significant fossil fuel interests, hindered progress in reaching a unified stance on these crucial issues.

Obstruction from Major Economies

China, Saudi Arabia, and Russia were identified as major countries that opposed significant commitments towards energy transition. These nations' resistance further complicated the negotiations and highlighted the challenge of dealing with emerging economies that may prioritize their self-interests over global climate action.

Climate Finance Reaffirmation

One positive outcome from the G20 meeting was the reaffirmation of climate finance goals. However, it is worth noting that the outcomes only mildly emphasized the urgent need to ramp up demands for climate finance. Climate finance is essential for supporting developing nations in their efforts to adapt to climate change and transition to low-carbon economies. The lukewarm reaffirmation indicates that more robust financial commitments are required to accelerate climate action worldwide.

Technological Proposals for Energy Transition

Despite the lack of consensus on various climate issues, the outcome document proposed the adoption of certain capital-intensive technologies for energy transition. These included bioenergy with carbon capture and

storage, direct air capture, and small modular reactors. However, concerns arose as these suggestions assumed a universal applicability of these technologies, disregarding the varying capacities and requirements of different countries.

Scattered Focus and Geopolitical Influences
The outcomes of the conference appeared scattered, veering off into various other important but tangentially related themes such as land degradation, biodiversity, blue economy, circular economy, plastics, and water management. This lack of a clear and focused approach may have diluted the effectiveness of addressing the pressing climate challenges.

Mammography Screening with Artificial Intelligence (MASAI) Trial
Breast cancer is a prevalent health concern affecting women across the globe. Detecting breast cancer at an early stage is crucial for successful treatment and improved patient outcomes. A groundbreaking research study led by Lund University, Sweden, has shed light on the potential of artificial intelligence (AI) in revolutionizing mammography screening. The study, published in The Lancet Oncology journal, reveals promising results that could significantly impact breast cancer detection rates and radiologist workloads.

Unveiling the Impact of AI in Breast Cancer Detection
The study compared the effectiveness of AI-supported mammography screening with standard screening methods. One of the key findings from the research is that AI-supported mammography detected one-fifth (20%) more breast cancers compared to traditional screening techniques. This highlights the potential of AI as a powerful tool to augment the capabilities of radiologists and improve cancer detection rates.

Lightening the Load for Radiologists
The burden on radiologists is considerable, with the need to analyze a large volume of mammograms regularly. However, the study brings forth a promising breakthrough in this regard. AI-supported screening was found to reduce the screen-reading workload for radiologists by an impressive 44%. This reduction is significant as it can lead to more efficient screenings, quicker diagnosis, and better utilization of radiologists' expertise.

Size and Scope of the Study
The research study involved a substantial sample size, reflecting the magnitude of the impact it can have. A total of 80,000 Swedish women participated in the study. These women were randomly allocated into two groups – an intervention group comprising 40,003 women, who underwent AI-supported screening, and a control group consisting of 40,030 women who underwent standard screening.

Detection Rates and Cancer Findings
The study meticulously recorded the cancer detection rates in both groups. A total of 244 women (28%) from the AI-supported screening group were found to have breast cancer. In comparison, 203 women (25%) from the standard screening group were diagnosed with breast cancer. The AI-supported screening led to 41 more cancer detections, underlining its potential to improve early diagnosis.

False-Positive Rates and AI Accuracy

False-positive results in breast cancer screening can lead to additional stress and unnecessary follow-up procedures for patients. However, the study showed that the false-positive rate remained consistent at 1.5% in both the AI-supported screening group and the standard screening group, affirming the accuracy and safety of AI-enhanced mammography.

AI-Supported Screenings: Handling the Numbers
The study delved into the sheer volume of mammograms processed with AI support. In the AI-supported screening group, a total of 46,345 screen readings were conducted. This was notably lower compared to the 83,231 screen readings performed in the standard screening group. The reduction in screen readings further emphasizes the efficiency and potential cost-effectiveness of AI implementation in breast cancer screening programs.

Ayush Visa
The Ministry of Home Affairs recently introduced a new visa category known as the "Ayush Visa," aimed at promoting medical tourism in India. This visa is designed to cater to foreign nationals seeking various forms of medical treatment, including therapeutic care, wellness, and yoga, under Ayush systems or Indian systems of medicine.

The Ayush Visa is a significant step towards providing foreign nationals access to traditional Indian systems of medicine, including Ayurveda, Yoga, Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha, and Homeopathy. The primary purpose of this visa category is to attract individuals from around the world who seek specialized medical treatments offered in India. This includes those seeking holistic wellness, alternative therapies, and natural healing methods.

Boosting the Healthcare Economy
The Ayush Visa initiative comes at a time when the global wellness economy is experiencing rapid growth, with an estimated annual growth rate of 9.9%. By 2025, the Ayush based healthcare and wellness economy is projected to reach an impressive $70 billion. This showcases the immense potential for India to become a dominant player in the medical tourism industry.

Collaborative Efforts
Recognizing the significance of promoting medical value travel, India Tourism Development Corporation (ITDC) recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Ministry of Ayush. The collaboration aims to enhance the prominence of Ayurveda and other traditional forms of medicine, making it more accessible to international visitors.

Moreover, the Ministry of Ayush and the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare are jointly developing the "Heal in India" portal. This online platform will serve as a one-stop destination for medical tourism promotion in India, providing comprehensive information about available treatments, healthcare facilities, and visa requirements for foreign nationals.

Future Targets

Looking ahead, the Government of Assam plans to expand its sapling planting efforts. In the next year, the target is to plant 3 crore commercially-viable saplings, and in 2025, the aim is to reach 5 crore saplings. These progressive targets show the government's commitment to enhancing the State's green cover and preserving its biodiversity.

Assam Wood-based Industries (Promotion & Development) Rules 2022

In addition to the Amrit Brikshya Andolan, the Chief Minister also introduced the Assam Wood-based Industries (Promotion & Development) Rules 2022. This replaces the earlier Assam Wood-based Industries (Establishment & Regulation) Rules of 2000. The new rules are designed to facilitate the growth of indigenous wood-based industries by removing the hindrance imposed by the previous regulations.

Benefitting Agarwood Growers

The new rules have been particularly beneficial for agarwood growers in Assam. They now allow for the processing of agar oil in home-based units, providing a significant advantage for growers in upper Assam. This move is expected to enhance the income of farmers involved in agarwood cultivation.

Vivad se Vishwas 2 :

In a significant move to facilitate the resolution of contractual disputes involving the government and its undertakings, the Ministry of Finance has launched the "Vivad se Vishwas 2" scheme. This initiative aims to streamline the process and promote ease of doing business while ensuring timely settlement.

The Vivad se Vishwas 2 scheme is a voluntary settlement mechanism introduced to address contractual disputes between the Government of India and organizations operating under its control. The scheme is an extension of its predecessor, aimed at providing a much-needed impetus to resolving disputes and fostering a business-friendly environment.

Applicability and Deadline

Under this scheme, disputes up to 30th September 2022 will be covered, bringing a considerable number of pending cases under its purview. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced the scheme's introduction during the budget, emphasizing the government's commitment to promoting fair and efficient dispute resolution.

Settlement Terms

To encourage early settlement, the scheme offers graded settlement terms depending on the pendency level of the dispute. For court awards passed on or before 30th April 2023, contractors will be offered settlement amounts of up to 85% of the net amount awarded or upheld by the court. Similarly, for arbitral awards passed on or before 31st January 2023, the settlement amount offered will be up to 65% of the net amount awarded.

Seamless Implementation through GeM

To ensure the seamless implementation of the scheme, the Department of Expenditure has issued detailed guidelines for "Vivad se Vishwas 2 (Contractual Disputes)" on 29th May 2023. A specialized webpage has been set up by the government e-marketplace (GeM) solely for the implementation of the scheme, ensuring that only

eligible claims will be processed through it. This approach aims to streamline the settlement process and expedite resolution.

Study in India (SII) Portal

The Indian government launched the Study In India (SII) portal, marking a crucial step towards making India a hub of global education. This platform aims to simplify the journey of international students in India, providing them with seamless access to valuable educational opportunities.

Welcoming International Students: A Shared Vision

The Study In India (SII) portal was inaugurated by Union External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan. The government's main objective behind this initiative is to welcome students from diverse backgrounds to pursue higher education in India. By endorsing the country as a prime education hub, India seeks to establish a strong international presence in the education sphere.

Streamlining Application Processes

The SII portal has been designed to provide international students with a user-friendly experience throughout their application process. From registration to visa approval, the platform offers a seamless interface that simplifies their entire journey. This streamlined process allows students to focus on their academic aspirations without being bogged down by administrative complexities.

Guided by the National Education Policy

The vision for the Study In India (SII) portal is deeply rooted in the guiding principles of the National Education Policy (NEP). The Education Minister emphasized that the NEP is instrumental in shaping the vision of making India a preferred education destination. The portal aims to transcend academic boundaries and foster an environment that promotes a prosperous future for both domestic and international students.

A Flagship Programme for Global Education

The SII programme, introduced by the Ministry of Education in 2018, is a flagship project with a clear aim to endorse India as a prime education hub. By collaborating with top Indian universities, the programme opens the doors for international students to explore valuable educational opportunities in the country.

Benefits for Domestic Students

The presence of international students has proven to be beneficial for domestic students in India. By interacting with peers from diverse cultures, students can gain a deeper understanding of the globalizing world. This exposure prepares them better for a global workplace, enhancing their prospects in an interconnected world.

Ambassadors of Goodwill

International students who complete their education in India play a crucial role as ambassadors of goodwill for the country. Their experiences in India create strong connections between nations, fostering mutual understanding and respect. As they return to their societies of origin, they carry the essence of India's rich culture, traditions, and values, strengthening global ties.

ONE LINER

- ISRO successfully launched the PSLV-C56 carrying Singapore's DS-SAR and six other satellites.
- Data on Swachhata Abhiyaan, a mobile app of the Social Justice and Empowerment Ministry, identifies 6,253 cases of manual scavenging in the country.
- Maharashtra seeks World Bank's assistance for upgrading infrastructure and capacity building.
- Power Ministry notifies rules for streamlining accounting, billing and subsidy payments by States
- ADB and Union Government sign USD 200 million loan for expanding urban services in Rajasthan
- IAF choppers drop 600-kg food packets in flood-hit areas in Telangana.
- National Moth Week (July 22 and July 28) was observed in the Nilgiris.
- 13.13 lakh girls and women went missing between 2019 and 2021: Government data.
- Over six crore taxpayers had filed their income tax returns (ITRs): IT Department.
- India to become middle-income country with GDP of USD 6 trillion by 2030: Report
- PFRDA bars intermediaries for annuities business.
- India's per capita income to grow nearly 70% to USD 4,000 by FY30 from USD 2,450 in FY23.
- Foxconn subsidiary inks ₹1,600 crore deal with T.N. to set up electronic components manufacturing facility.
- Two Indian military aircraft visit Australia's strategic Cocos Islands.
- African leaders are leaving two days of meetings with Russian President Vladimir Putin without grain deal.
- Central African Republic began voting in a referendum on a new Constitution.
- Death toll rises to at least 10 in Thailand warehouse explosion.
- Tennis: Iga Swiatek beats Laura Siegemund to win Warsaw Open.
- 2023 F1 Belgium Grand Prix: Verstappen secures eighth consecutive win.
- Indian women beat Spain 3-0 to win Spanish Federation hockey tournament.
- 75.51 lakh houses completed under Prime Ministers' Awas Yojana (PMAY-U) programme.
- West Bengal Legislative Assembly passed a motion condemning the violence in Manipur.
- Commission for OBC submits sub-categorization report to President Droupadi Murmu.
- ISRO injects Chandrayaan-3 spacecraft into translunar orbit.
- G-20 EMPOWER Summit to begin in Gandhinagar.
- PM Narendra Modi confers Lokmanya Tilak National Award for contributions towards progress of country.
- India's core sector growth touches a five-month high in June in 8.2%.
- More than 6.5 crore Income Tax Returns filed this financial year so far.
- Sri Lanka's key inflation rate nearly halved to 6.3% in July from 12% last month.
- Russian ballistic missiles slammed into an apartment and a university building in President Volodymyr Zelensky's hometown.
- Pakistan: Toll rises to 54 in suicide blast at political convention.
- As part of second phase of CPEC, Pakistan and China ink six agreements.

- Myanmar junta extends state of emergency for six months.
- First nuclear reactor in seven years enters service in U.S.'s Georgia.
- Cristiano Ronaldo becomes highest goal scorer with headers in football history.
- WTA Rankings: Polish tennis player Iga Swiatek begins Week 70 as World No. 1
- Data: Women do seven hours of housework, men under three hours in India.
- Health Ministry announced the launch of an e-clearance portal to bring bodies from abroad.
- Second phase of caste-based survey resumes in Bihar.
- Centre forms expert panel to revise anti-discrimination guidelines on campuses.
- Supreme Court: President retains power to scrap Article 370.
- Government e-Marketplace registers highest ever Gross Merchandise Value of more than ₹ 2 lakh crore in FY 2022-23.
- GST Council sticks to its plan to collect 28% tax on online gaming.
- Centre imposes restrictions on import of laptops, tablets and personal computers with immediate effect.
- Centre invites applications for the National Metallurgist Awards (NMA) 2023.
- Bilateral trade between India and LAC countries surges to 50 billion dollar in FY 2022-23.
- Beijing has experienced the 'heaviest rainfall in 140 years'
- China's cyberspace watchdog plans to limit children's smartphone time to 2 hours.
- Thailand's Move Forward Party (MFP) has been excluded from coalition to form government.
- Badminton: Kidambi Srikanth and PV Sindhu progresses into Singles quarter-finals of Australian Open.
- Asia's oldest football tournament Durand Cup to begin today.
- Hockey: 7th Men's Asian Champions Trophy to begin in Chennai, Tamil Nadu.