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Current Affairs

22nd to 31st March 2023

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UBS

UBS, Switzerland's biggest bank, recently agreed to purchase Credit Suisse in a move that aims to contain the panic that ensued after two American banks collapsed earlier this month. This unique acquisition has sent shockwaves throughout the banking industry and has garnered attention from investors and analysts worldwide. In this article, we delve into the history of UBS and analyze the impact of this deal on the global banking sector.

UBS was established in 1998 when the Swiss Bank Corporation and the Union Bank of Switzerland merged together. The Swiss Bank Corporation was founded in 1854 as the Basel Bank Corporation by six private bankers in Basel, Switzerland. It merged with the Zürich Bank Corporation and entered the commercial banking sector. In 1897, the bank changed its name to Swiss Bank Corporation and acquired several other banks in Switzerland and abroad. The Union Bank of Switzerland opened in 1912 after the merger of Bank in Winterthur and Toggenburger Bank. Like the Swiss Bank Corporation, it also acquired several banks in Switzerland and became one of the country's biggest banks.

UBS Today
UBS is now one of the largest banks in the world, with a market capitalization of $63 billion as per a 2022 report. It has around 200 branches and 4,600 client advisors in Switzerland alone, and provides its services in 50 other countries, including India. UBS is known for providing private banking, wealth management, asset management, and investment banking services for private, corporate, and institutional clients.

Impact of the Acquisition
The acquisition of Credit Suisse by UBS created a major impact in the banking industry. The Swiss government and regulators brokered the deal, with UBS paying around $3.2 billion to Credit Suisse and the Swiss central bank providing $108 billion in liquidity assistance to both banks. The Swiss government also agreed to provide more than $9 billion to backstop some losses that UBS may incur by taking over Credit Suisse. While this deal aims to contain the global financial market panic, the impact of this acquisition on the global banking sector is yet to be seen.

World Down Syndrome Day

Every year on March 21st, World Down Syndrome Day (WDSD) is observed to raise awareness about Down syndrome, advocate for the rights of people with Down syndrome, and promote their inclusion and well-being. This day is significant because it marks the uniqueness of individuals with Down syndrome and highlights the need for society to embrace diversity.

What is Down Syndrome?
Down syndrome is a genetic condition that occurs when there is an extra copy of the 21st chromosome, resulting in physical and intellectual disabilities. People with Down syndrome may have a distinct facial appearance and are prone to several health complications, including heart defects, hearing and vision problems, and thyroid conditions. However, with proper care and support, people with Down syndrome can lead happy and fulfilling lives.

History of World Down Syndrome Day
WDSD was first observed on March 21, 2006, and later recognized by the United Nations General Assembly in 2011. This day is dedicated to raising awareness about Down syndrome and promoting well-being of people with this condition.

Significance of World Down Syndrome Day
WDSD provides the opportunity to highlight the importance of providing people with Down syndrome the right to education, employment, healthcare, and social inclusion, and emphasis on their valuable contributions to the society. It's a celebration of diversity and an opportunity to break down barriers and stigmas associated with Down syndrome.

Healthcare for Down Syndrome

People with Down syndrome require a different healthcare approach, given the potential for physical and mental health conditions that may arise. Regular medical check-ups are critical for managing these conditions and preventing further complications. Occupational therapy, speech therapy, and counseling can also be beneficial in addressing the unique needs of people with Down syndrome.

Theme for World Down Syndrome Day 2023

The theme for WDSD 2023 is "With Us Not For Us." This theme highlights the importance of involving people with Down syndrome in decision-making and planning processes that affect their lives. It encourages individuals with Down syndrome to speak up, be heard, and take an active role in shaping their future.

INS Sujata's Visit to Mozambique

INS Sujata, a Sukanya class patrol vessel of the Indian Navy, based at the Southern Naval Command in Kochi, recently visited Port Maputo, Mozambique as a part of its Overseas Deployment from 19 to 21 March 2023. The purpose of the visit is to improve the bilateral relations and mutual cooperation between the two navies.

During its visit, the Commanding Officer of INS Sujata called on several military and civilian dignitaries, including Rear Admiral Eugenio Dias Da Silva Muatuca, the Commander of Mozambican Navy, and Mr. Eneas Da Conceicao Comiche, Mayor of Maputo. The High Commissioner of India and other officials were also present during these meetings.

Cross-Deck Training and Other Activities

As part of the visit, approximately 40 personnel of the Mozambican Navy visited INS Sujata to attend the Cross deck training. This training module covered walkarounds of training facilities, briefing on diving operations, training on VBSS and light weapons, visual communication, and maintenance of machinery and hygiene onboard. Furthermore, various other activities, including a combined morning yoga session and soccer match, were organized between the personnel of both Navies. A reception was also hosted onboard INS Sujata, which was attended by several Indian and Mozambican dignitaries and diplomats.

Enhancing Mutual Cooperation and Bilateral Ties

The visit of INS Sujata to Port Maputo, Mozambique, further enhanced the mutual cooperation and bilateral ties between the two Navies. Such visits not only provide opportunities for the exchange of knowledge, skills, and expertise but also help in strengthening diplomatic ties and building a strong relationship between the two countries. The visit by INS Sujata highlights India's commitment to maintaining peace and security in the region while also fostering friendship and cooperation with other countries.

UN 2023 Water Conference

The UN 2023 Water Conference is being held from March 22 to 24 in New York, marking the first summit on water in 50 years. The conference will be a watershed moment to mobilize member states, the UN system, and stakeholders alike to take action and bring successful solutions to a global scale.

The Paris Moment for Water

The conference could be a 'Paris moment' for water, as described by the special envoys for water from the co-hosting countries, Tajikistan and the Netherlands. The conference seeks to bring greater focus on water, which is a critical foundation for many of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, including health, food, gender equity, education, livelihoods, industry, climate, and the environment.

The Global Water Crisis

According to the World Meteorological Organization, around 3.6 billion people struggle to get enough water to meet their needs for at least one month every year. Despite safe water and sanitation being a human right, billions of people lack access to these essentials for life, as stated by the United Nations.

The Importance of the UN 2023 Water Conference

The UN 2023 Water Conference could be a crucial step to ensure the sustainable management of water and sanitation for all, as per UN Sustainable Development Goal 6. It also marks the halfway point through the International Decade for Action "Water for Sustainable Development" to raise awareness of the global water crisis and decide on action to achieve internationally agreed water-related goals.

The Water Action Agenda

The conference is expected to adopt the Water Action Agenda, which represents voluntary commitments of countries and stakeholders to meet global water-related goals and targets. The Water Action Agenda aligns with the five themes that support the SDG 6 Global Acceleration Framework, including water for health, water for sustainable development, water for climate, resilience, and environment, water for cooperation, and the Water Action Decade.

The Growing Demand for Water

The world's growing population, coupled with economic development and changing consumption patterns, means that the demands on water resources are far greater than 50 years ago. The gap between water demand and supply is estimated to be 40% by 2030, with a dramatic and unequal increase in demand between countries, as stated in the World Economic Forum's Global Risks Report 2023.

What is Nemateleotris lavandula?

Scientists from the Australian Museum Research Institute, the University of Sydney, and the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory have identified a new species of the genus Nemateleotris. The lavender-blushed dartfish, or Nemateleotris lavandula, was discovered in the western and central Pacific Ocean.

Nemateleotris belongs to the bony fish family Gobiidae, which includes dartfish. Dartfish are small, brightly colored, elongated, and moderately compressed fishes. They are known for their elongated pennant-like first dorsal fin, which they repeatedly flick back and forth, often in sync with their pelvic fins.

Dartfish are typically found near or in coral reefs, hovering close to the substrate in areas that have sand channels and loose coral rubble. They usually measure no more than 7 cm (2.8 inches) in length and feed primarily on plankton and other small invertebrates that they pick out of the water column.

Meet Nemateleotris Lavandula

Nemateleotris currently includes five recognized species native to the Indian and Pacific oceans. The lavender-blushed dartfish, Nemateleotris lavandula, is the newest addition to this genus. The species was previously mistaken for the Helfrich's dartfish, Nemateleotris helfrichi. The molecular analysis revealed a difference of 1% in sequence data between both species, in addition to differences in morphometric measurements, live, and preserved coloration details.

Nemateleotris lavandula is small in size, measuring only 5 cm (2 inches) in length. The species has a lavender to lilac body that becomes increasingly pale toward the caudal peduncle. It is widespread across much of the western and central Pacific Ocean, including Yakushima Island in southern Japan, the Caroline Islands, the Marshall Islands, and the Mariana Islands, among others.

The lavender-blushed dartfish is usually found in seaward sand channels and rubble pans adjacent to coral reefs at depths between 25-100 m (82-328 feet). It is most commonly observed as single or paired individuals, with juveniles sometimes in small groups, often mixed with other plankton feeders.

Exercise Cobra Warrior

Indian Air Force (IAF) Mirage-2000 aircraft have been participating in Exercise Cobra Warrior in the United Kingdom over the past three weeks. This joint training exercise has been taking place alongside six other Air Forces, including those from the United Kingdom, Finland, Sweden, South Africa, Saudi Arabia, the United States, and Singapore. This exercise involves high-intensity, large force, and tactical air war fighting operations. The Mirage-2000s were drawn from all three existing squadrons, including those that took part in the Balakot air strike in February 2019.

Challenges and Lessons Learned

Gp. Capt. Pranav Raj, CO of 7 Mirage squadron 'Battle Axes' based at Gwalior, and the IAF's Exercise Director, stated that the team has faced several challenges, including the weather, which is quite different from that in Gwalior or Central India. More than 80% of the team has seen snowfall for the first time. Despite these challenges, the maintenance team has done an excellent job of keeping all five aircraft available for missions. The exercise has been a great learning experience, as the IAF has flown with F-18s and F-16s and participated in the entire spectrum of air operations, including offensive and defensive counter missions.

Participating Countries

Finland, India, and Saudi Arabia joined Exercise Cobra Warrior for the first time. The initial plan was to bring in indigenous Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) Tejas, but they were busy with another exercise, so the Mirage-2000s were deployed. The Saudi Arabian Air Force flew six Eurofighter Typhoons from RAF Coningsby base, while the Indian team, Finnish team, and Belgian Air Force flew six F/A-18 Super Hornets and six F-16s, respectively, from Waddington airbase.

Exercise Cobra Warrior

Exercise Cobra Warrior is held twice a year and is the largest air exercise hosted by the Royal Air Force. This edition saw around 70 aircraft take part and was directed by staff at RAF Waddington airbase. The exercise invites participating nations to operate with each other and with the United Kingdom. The fighter jets in the exercise were supported by RAF Voyager mid-air refuelling aircraft flying from RAF Brize Norton, and the RAF's Air Mobility Force also participated in the exercise.

World Tuberculosis Day 2023

World Tuberculosis Day is observed every year on March 24 to raise awareness about the global epidemic of tuberculosis (TB) and the efforts made to eliminate it. It provides recognition to health professionals, researchers, policymakers, and advocates in the fight against TB. In this article, we will discuss the history and significance of World Tuberculosis Day, the theme for 2023, and India's contribution to the global fight against TB.

History and Significance of World Tuberculosis Day

World Tuberculosis Day commemorates the day when Dr. Robert Koch discovered the tuberculosis-causing bacteria in 1882. The CDC estimates that TB has been in existence for over three million years, and it has had several names throughout history depending on where it was found. The theme for World TB Day 2023 is "Yes! We can end TB!" and aims to highlight the importance of increased funding, quick action, multisectoral cooperation, rapid adoption of new WHO guidelines, and innovative adoption in eradicating TB.

One World TB Summit

During the 'One World TB Summit', which was held during the World TB Day 2023, the Prime Minister Narendra Modil highlighted India's ideology of "Vasudhaiva Kutumbkam," which means one world, one family, and how this philosophy is providing the world with comprehensive solutions. India has chosen the theme of 'One Family, One World, One Future' during its G20 presidency, based on these beliefs.

Modi also mentioned India's resolution to eliminate TB by 2025, five years before the global target of 2030. He highlighted India's efforts towards public participation, special campaigns for nutrition, new treatment strategies, intensive use of

technology, and promoting good health through campaigns like Khelo India and Yoga. Modi further mentioned the 'Ni-kshay Mitra' campaign, which urges people to join the campaign of TB-free India, and more than 10 lakh TB patients have been adopted by citizens. Indian children as young as 10-12 years old are also taking the fight against TB forward by becoming Ni-kshay Mitra. Since 2018, approximately Rs 2,000 crore has been sent directly to the bank accounts of tuberculosis patients, and about 75 lakh patients have benefited from it.

Triple Threat Report

A new report released by UNICEF on March 19, 2023, highlights a major factor driving water insecurity in the world's worst-impacted countries. The report, titled "Triple Threat," reveals that a lack of monitoring of water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) related programs, projects, and policies in a third of the developing nations is causing the problem. This lack of monitoring makes mitigation more challenging, and it's affecting 10 African countries where children are most affected by the convergence of three water-related threats: inadequate water, sanitation and hygiene, related diseases, and climate hazards.

The 10 African countries facing the triple burden of inadequate WASH, related diseases, and climate hazards are Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, and Somalia. According to the Children's Climate Risk Index 2021 by UNICEF, these countries have a combined population of 190 million children and are the world's most water-insecure and climate-impacted countries. They are within the top 25% of the developing countries in terms of exposure to climate and environmental hazards, shocks, and stresses.

Inadequate Access to WASH Facilities in Developing Countries

Globally, the percentage of households with access to at least basic drinking water rose to 90% in 2020 from 82% in 2000. Access to households with at least basic sanitation rose to 78% in 2020 from 56% in 2000 based on estimates of the World Health Organization (WHO) / UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme. Despite these global improvements, approximately four million children under the age of five die every year due to unsafe water, sanitation, and hygiene practices globally. Chad, in particular, has the lowest percentage of access to basic WASH facilities and has the world's highest burden of deaths of children under five years due to unsafe WASH.

Slow Progress in Achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)

Considering the 2030 targets, the progress made in the last decade (until 2020) is slow, as 600 million children globally still face health issues from access to unsafe water and sanitation or no access at all. The United Nations General Assembly and the Human Rights Council recognized the human right to safe drinking water and sanitation as part of the binding international law in 2010. However, the report notes that countries most affected by poor WASH, related disease, and climate threats are not on track to meet the UN-mandated sustainable development goals (SDG) target of universal access to basic WASH services by 2030.

Insufficient WASH Funding in Developing Countries

In 2022, the UN-Water Global Analysis and Assessment of Sanitation and Drinking Water found that 75% of countries had insufficient WASH funding. There is a need to scale up investment in the sector rapidly, including from global climate financing, which is currently estimated at $114 billion per year in developing countries. If these 10 African countries are not on track, then the Global South will not meet SDG 6 of water and sanitation, resulting in a huge investment in health costs.

Exercise Vayu Prahar – A Multi-Domain Exercise at LAC

In the midst of the ongoing stand-off between India and China at the Line of Actual Control (LAC), the Indian Army and Air Force have conducted a 96-hour multi-domain air and land exercise, called 'Vayu Prahar', in the eastern sector. The exercise was conducted in the second week of March with the main objective of formulating plans that can lead to synergy in multi-domain operations.

What are Multi-Domain Operations?

Multi-domain operations are used to coordinate activities across different branches of the military to achieve converging results. Essentially, it is a mechanism to ensure that all branches of the armed forces work together seamlessly to achieve a common goal.

Vayu Prahar Exercise
The main aim of the Vayu Prahar exercise was to enable coordination and rehearsal among various agencies for quick mobilisation, transportation and deployment of forces within a theatre, which can be executed across theatres. The scope of the joint exercise included the rapid mobilisation of a rapid reaction force from the hinterland, which was then tasked with air-land operations in a nominated advance landing ground (ALG).

Advance Landing Ground (ALG)
An ALG is usually a single landing strip for an aircraft, which in India is predominantly operated by the military forces. After landing at the ALG, the rapid action force was responsible for carrying out "contingency tasks" in challenging high-altitude terrain.

Location of the Exercise
Though exact location of the exercise and the ALG is unknown, there are seven to eight ALGs in the state of Arunachal Pradesh, which lies in the eastern sector of the Line of Actual Control (LAC) with China. In December 2022, over 200 soldiers of China's People's Liberation Army clashed with Indian soldiers in the Yangtse area of Arunachal's Tawang district. The clash came amid rising reports of Chinese incursions and construction activity over the past few years near the eastern sector.

India-China Stand-Off
The stand-off between India and China in the western sector of the LAC in eastern Ladakh is now in its third year. After 17 rounds of talks at the corps commander-level, the stalemate over Depsang Plains continues. Further talks are awaited for later this month.

World Happiness Report 2023
The annual World Happiness Report, published by the United Nations Sustainable Development Solutions Network, has just been released, and it reveals that Finland remains the happiest country in the world for the sixth consecutive year. The report is based on data from the main life evaluation question in the Gallup World Poll, which measures how happy citizens perceive themselves to be.

Top 10 Countries in the World Happiness Report
The report ranked the top 10 happiest countries, with Finland in the lead followed by Denmark, Iceland, Israel, and the Netherlands. Other European countries such as Sweden, Norway, Switzerland, and Luxembourg also made the top 10. New Zealand was the only non-European country to make it to the top 10. The rankings are based on a range of factors such as social support, life expectancy, freedom to make life choices, generosity, and perceptions of corruption.

India's Position in the World Happiness Report
India's position in the World Happiness Report has improved from 136 to 126, although it is still behind its neighboring countries such as Nepal, China, and Bangladesh. Despite having the world's fastest-growing economy, India's ranking in the report has consistently been low, leading some to question how it can be ranked lower than countries in turmoil.

Russia and Ukraine in the World Happiness Report
Despite the ongoing conflict between Russia and Ukraine, both countries rank higher than India in the World Happiness Report, with Russia ranked 70th and Ukraine ranked 92nd. The report indicates that both countries experienced increased levels of kindness in 2020 and 2021, but in 2022, Ukraine saw a sharp rise in benevolence while it declined in Russia.

The World's Least Happy Countries

The World Happiness Report also highlights the least happy countries, with Afghanistan ranking as the unhappiest country out of the 137 nations surveyed. The report also highlighted other nations such as Lebanon, Zimbabwe, and the Democratic Republic of Congo as being among the unhappiest countries, largely due to factors such as high levels of corruption and low life expectancy.

About the World Happiness Report

The World Happiness Report is a comprehensive analysis of happiness levels across the world based on various criteria, including both domestic and global factors. The report gauges happiness based on feedback from a nationally representative sample of individuals regarding their current life satisfaction levels. The first report was published in 2012 and has been released annually since then, typically in March.

DigiClaim Module Under PMFBY

On March 24, 2023, Union Minister of Agriculture Narendra Singh Tomar launched the National Crop Insurance Portal's digitized claim settlement module 'DigiClaim' in New Delhi, India. The module falls under the ambit of Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY), and will disburse claims electronically, benefitting farmers from six states. The launch marks a revolutionary step towards ensuring that farmers can receive claim amounts digitally in a time-bound and automated manner, making them self-reliant and empowered.

The Launch and Benefits of DigiClaim Module

At the launch, Union Minister Tomar informed that with the DigiClaim Module, insurance claims totaling Rs 1260.35 crore have been disbursed on March 23, 2023, to insured farmers in Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Uttarakhand, and Haryana with the click of a button. The process will continue as and when the claims are released. With this launch, the automated claim settlement process will be an ongoing activity to ease all insured farmers' lives and provide them with a sustainable financial flow and support.

One of the significant advantages of the DigiClaim Module is that farmers' claims will be processed directly to their respective bank accounts in a transparent and accountable manner. The technology has been enabled through the integration of the National Crop Insurance Portal (NCIP) and Public Finance Management System (PFMS). This would directly impact the claim reversal ratio, which is expected to go down with DigiClaim. Another noteworthy feature of this digital advancement is that farmers would be able to track the claim settlement process on their mobile phones in real-time and avail the scheme's benefits.

 A Shining Example of Cooperative Federalism

Currently, the Central Government is closely working with all exited states from the scheme and has had discussions with their senior officials. Andhra Pradesh and Punjab are making a comeback to the scheme, which shows a shining example of coorporative federalism. Governments of Telangana, Gujarat, Bihar, West Bengal, and Jharkhand have also been approached to rejoin PMFBY, and several discussions have been underway. Out of these states, Telangana and Jharkhand have indicated their willingness to come back under PMFBY.

Chenab Bridge – World's Highest Rail Bridge

The Indian Railways is constructing the world's highest railway bridge in the challenging terrain of the Himalayas, which is expected to be completed in the coming months. The Chenab Bridge, an engineering marvel, is a part of the strategically important Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramullah (USBRL) railway link that will connect Jammu & Kashmir to the rest of India.

The Chenab Bridge is 35 meters taller than the Eiffel Tower in Paris, making it the world's highest rail bridge. The 1.3 km long bridge has a design speed of 100 kmph for trains and a lifespan of 120 years.

Completion and Use of the Bridge

The USBRL project is expected to be completed by December 2023 or January 2024. The Vande Bharat Express train will run over the Chenab bridge, and a maintenance facility for Vande Bharat trains will be established in Badgam. The new Vande Metro, developed for short-distance inter-city travel, will also run between Jammu and Srinagar.

The Significance of the Bridge
The 111 km stretch from Katra to Banihal is essential, and the 1.3 km long Chenab Bridge is a crucial part of this stretch. Once completed, the entire USBRL Railway project will provide all-weather connectivity and join Jammu and Kashmir to the rest of India.

Expertise and Cost of the Project
Several international agencies and premier Indian institutes, such as IIT Roorkee, IIT Delhi, DRDO, and Geological Survey of India, are providing their expertise in planning and implementing the bridge project. The ambitious project is being executed by Konkan Railway Corporation Ltd. at an estimated cost of Rs. 1486 crore.

Gaj Utsav 2023 – Celebrating 30 Years of Project Elephant
The Indian Government is set to celebrate the 30th anniversary of Project Elephant with the Gaj Utsav 2023. This two-day event aims to promote elephant conservation, protect their habitat and corridors, and prevent human-elephant conflicts. It will also ensure the welfare of captive elephants in India.

The Gaj Utsav 2023 will be inaugurated by President Droupadi Murmu on April 9 at Kaziranga National Park in Assam. This event is significant as Kaziranga is a UNESCO World Heritage site and home to the highest density of tigers in the world.

Project Elephant: Its Significance
Project Elephant is a centrally-sponsored scheme launched in 1991-92 to protect elephants and their habitats in India. With an estimated population of 30,000-40,000 elephants, India accounts for more than 60 per cent of the global wild elephant population. Elephants are considered a national heritage animal protected under Schedule I of the Wild Life Protection Act, 1972.

Celebrating Project Tiger's 50th Anniversary
In addition to the Gaj Utsav, India is also celebrating the 50th anniversary of Project Tiger in Mysuru, Karnataka. Starting on April 7, this event aims to showcase India's tiger conservation success globally, release the latest tiger census data, and present the government's vision for tiger conservation.

India's Tiger Conservation Success
Project Tiger, launched in 1973, promotes tiger conservation in India. Approximately 2.4 per cent of India's geographical area is covered by tiger reserves, which serve as repositories for biodiversity conservation, ensure regional water security and carbon sequestration, and contribute to accomplishing India's climate change mitigation targets. India has a current tiger population of about 3,000, accounting for more than 70 per cent of the global wild tiger population. The tiger population in India is increasing at six per cent per annum, which is significant in the context of global tiger conservation.

Exostoma Dhritiae – New Species of Catfish from Arunachal Pradesh
A team of scientists from the Zoological Survey of India (ZSI) recently discovered a new catfish species in Arunachal Pradesh. The discovery was announced in a statement by the ZSI. The new catfish species has been christened 'Exostoma Dhritiae'.

Discovery and Naming of Exostoma Dhritiae
The new species was found in Siking stream, a tributary of Siang river in Upper Siang district of Arunachal Pradesh. The discovery of this new catfish species adds to the biodiversity of India. The scientists of the ZSI named the new species

'Exostoma Dhritiae' after Dhriti Banerjee, the first woman director of the ZSI, as a mark of honour for her contributions to research on the fauna of the country.

Size and Local Name of Exostoma Dhritiae
The new species is a small fish found in streams in these hills and is called 'Ngorang' by local tribals. Its discovery is a significant feat as the finding of new, smaller species can be much more difficult than larger ones. The new species adds to the diversity of life in the region and can help scientists better understand the ecology of the area.

Location of Arunachal Pradesh
Arunachal Pradesh is a state in northeastern India, bordering the states of Assam and Nagaland to the south and sharing international borders with Bhutan to the west, Myanmar to the east, and China to the north. The location of Arunachal Pradesh makes it a hotspot for biodiversity as it is home to a variety of ecosystems, including rainforests, grasslands, and high altitude mountain ranges.

Role of ZSI in Research
The ZSI is a premier organization in the field of zoological research and is responsible for carrying out surveys, studies, and research on various aspects of animal taxonomy and ecology. The discovery of Exostoma Dhritiae is just one example of the important work being done by the ZSI.

G20 Chief Science Advisers' Roundtable
The G20 Chief Science Advisers' Roundtable (CSAR) is a critical government-to-government initiative of the G20 Presidency that will deliberate on free and universal access to scientific journals that are behind paywalls. India assumed the G20 presidency on December 1, 2022, and the G20 summit will be held in New Delhi from September 9-10, 2023.

In the run-up to the G20 summit, CSAR will be organising two high-level meetings in Ramnagar, Uttarakhand and Bengaluru. The participating G20 nations will discuss access to scientific journals that are free, immediate, and universal. Additionally, they will talk about high subscription and article processing charges levied by journals, interoperable inter-linking of national repositories with international repositories and archives, and an open access mandate to make knowledge outputs of public-funded scientific research widely available.

Furthermore, on CSAR's agenda is promoting One Health for disease control and preparedness, improving diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility in science and technology (S&T) and setting up an institutional mechanism for inclusive, continuous and action-oriented global S&T policy dialogue.

Free Access to Scientific Journals
Most scientific papers charge high subscription rates from readers. In 2019, the University of California dropped its nearly $11 million annual subscription to Elsevier, the world's largest publisher of academic journals. Although open-access journals are free for readers, they charge fees from scientists who wish to publish papers in them. Open access papers have drastically fewer lead authors from low-income regions than paywalled articles.

The One Health Agenda
Participating G20 nations will discuss a pandemic preparedness plan for flexible, adaptive, and timely responses to pandemics as well as integrated disease surveillance mechanisms for humans, livestock, and wildlife, as part of the One Health agenda. They will also talk about developing a roadmap for diseases and investing in analytics capacity (such as disease modelling, artificial intelligence, and machine learning tools) and data standards.

Other Government-to-Government Initiatives
Besides CSAR, other government-to-government initiatives are a part of the G20. These include Science-20 (S20) and G20 Research Innovation Initiative Gathering (RIIG). The S20 Engagement Group will comprise the national science academies

of the G20 countries. RIIG aims to address the challenges of achieving socioeconomic equity through research and innovation.

Vedic Heritage Portal

The Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA) has recently launched the Vedic Heritage Portal, a digital repository of vedic knowledge and traditions from across the country. This portal is the result of a seven-year effort and an estimated cost of Rs 5 crore. The Vedic Heritage Portal is a one-stop solution for researchers and others who seek information about the Vedic heritage of India. It was launched by Union Home Minister Amit Shah and Union Culture Minister G Kishan Reddy during the IGNCA's 36th Foundation Day celebrations.

The Vedic Heritage Portal is an effort to map the Vedic heritage of India. The portal offers detailed information about oral traditions, textual tradition in the form of published books/manuscripts, or implements (yajna-related objects). The aim of the portal is to collate information for making Vedas accessible to people and provide a forum for further dialogue. It is a digital platform that preserves and promotes the 'Vedas', which are an intangible heritage of humanity as per the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

Content on the Vedic Heritage Portal

Over 550 hours of audio-visual content related to more than 18,000 Vedic mantras have been uploaded on the website, prepared in conjunction with people who know Vedas, Vedic research institutes, Vedapathi families, and experts from all over the world. The Vedic Heritage Portal is available in a mix of English and Hindi, besides audio content in Sanskrit. The portal also includes research articles and lectures on scientific subjects explaining the relevance of 'Vedic knowledge' in the perspective of modern science.

IGNCA's Future Plans

Apart from the Vedic Heritage Portal, the IGNCA is planning to create a museum dedicated to the Vedic implements, or vessels used in yajna. The museum will showcase over 250 vessels from the vedic traditions of Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and Andhra Pradesh. IGNCA is also working on a project called Vrihattar Bharat, which will explore cultural linkages of India with 40 other countries, including South East Asian Nations such as Cambodia, Vietnam, Laos, and Mongolia.

What is BARC B1201?

India's Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC) and National Aluminium Company Limited (NALCO) jointly developed BARC B1201, India's first Bauxite Certified Reference Material (CRM). The launch of this CRM is a significant achievement, especially since it is the first of its kind in India and only the fifth in the world.

A CRM is a sample of a material that has been analyzed and certified for its composition, purity, and other important characteristics. It is used as a standard to compare other samples of the same material, ensuring that the results obtained from different laboratories are comparable.

Who is NALCO?

NALCO, also known as National Aluminium Company Limited, is a government-owned company that specializes in integrated and diversified operations in mining, metal, and power. Its main products are alumina and aluminium, and it is the leading manufacturer and exporter of these materials in India.

NALCO comes under the aegis of the Union Ministry of Mines. The Indian government owns 51.5% of the equity in NALCO.

What is BARC?

BARC, short for Bhabha Atomic Research Centre, is India's premier nuclear research facility. It was founded by Homi Jehangir Bhabha in January 1954 and is headquartered in Trombay, Mumbai, Maharashtra, India.

The purpose of BARC is to conduct a multidisciplinary research program essential for India's nuclear program. It is also involved in other areas such as chemistry, physics, engineering, and biosciences.

Launching of BARC B1201

Shri M.P. Mishra, Director (P&;T), NALCO, and Dr. A. C. Sahayam, Head of Division, National Centre for Compositional Characterisation of Materials, formally launched BARC B1201. The launch took place at NALCO Research & Technology Centre, Bhubaneswar, on 24th March 2023.

What is Mission Arikompan?

A wild elephant by the name of Arikomban has been causing chaos in the higher ranges of Idukki district. Arikomban is a rogue tusker, infamous for its habit of raiding rice shops and causing destruction in its path. Over the past few years, Arikomban has trampled at least 10 people to death and destroyed around 60 houses and shops. The forest department has come up with a plan to capture Arikomban and train it to be a 'kumki', a captive elephant used for operations against rogue elephants.

People for Animals – Thiruvananthapuram filed a petition challenging the forest department's decision to capture Arikomban. The petitioner's plea was to radio-collar and release the wild elephant in another location of the forest. Walking Eye for Animal Advocacy also impleaded in the matter related to capturing the rogue tusker. However, the division bench of Kerala High Court stayed the forest department's decision to capture Arikomban till March 29.

Mission Arikomban

The forest department has initiated 'Mission Arikomban', an operation to capture the rogue tusker. The plan is to capture it with tranquilizer shots and later shift it to an elephant training center. The operation was originally slated to begin on March 25. For this mission, the forest department has built a rapid response team of 71 members. Chief forest veterinary surgeon Arun Zackariah is heading the 11 groups of the rapid response team for the mission.

Arikomban's Habits and Diet

Arikomban's name is derived from its habit of raiding rice shops. The wild elephant prefers to eat rice, atta, and wheat. The forest department's plan to train Arikomban to be a 'kumki' is aimed at using it for operations against other rogue elephants

LVM3 M3/OneWeb India – 2 Mission

On March 25, 2023, the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) and NewSpace India Limited (NSIL) successfully launched the OneWeb India-2 mission, a significant achievement in space connectivity. The mission's primary objective was to deploy 36 satellites into a 450 km circular orbit with an inclination of 87.4 degrees, which was accomplished using the LVM3 rocket. In this article, we will delve into the details of this mission and OneWeb's ultimate goal.

The OneWeb India-2 mission utilized the LVM3 (Launch Vehicle Mark 3) rocket, which is India's largest rocket to date. The total weight of the payload carried by LVM3 was 5,805 kg, which included the 36 OneWeb satellites. The satellites were designed to provide high-speed, low-latency broadband connectivity to governments, businesses, and communities worldwide.

OneWeb's Mission and Milestones

OneWeb's mission is to provide connectivity for everyone, everywhere, through a global communication network powered from space. The company aims to bridge the digital divide by providing affordable, reliable, and high-speed internet access to remote and underserved regions. The OneWeb India-2 mission was a crucial milestone in achieving this goal, as it brought the total number of satellites in OneWeb's constellation to 618. This number enables global service, making it the first low Earth orbit (LEO) operator to reach this milestone.

Satellite Dispensing and Phases

The OneWeb India-2 mission involved the dispensing of satellites in nine phases. The satellites were released into their intended orbits over several hours, with each phase comprising four satellites. This approach ensures that the satellites are placed in their proper positions, preventing collisions and minimizing the risk of debris.

OneWeb's Previous Mission and Launches

The OneWeb India-2 mission followed the successful launch of the OneWeb India-1 mission, which deployed 36 satellites into orbit in February 2022. The OneWeb India-2 mission marked the 18th launch conducted by OneWeb. Each launch brings the company closer to achieving its mission of providing connectivity for everyone, everywhere.

1st G20 Trade and Investment Working Group (TIWG) Meeting

India's G20 Presidency is conducting the first Trade and Investment Working Group (TIWG) Meeting in Mumbai from March 28th – 30th, 2023. The TIWG Meeting is an important forum for over 100 delegates from G20 member countries, invitee countries, regional groupings, and international organizations to engage in discussions about accelerating global trade and investments.

On the first day of the TIWG Meeting, an International Conference on 'Trade Finance' was be held, where the role of banks, financial institutions, development finance institutions, and export credit agencies in closing the trade finance gap was discussed. The conference also focused on how digitalisation and fintech solutions can improve access to trade finance. Eminent speakers from India and abroad have been invited to provide concrete solutions for mitigating the growing trade finance gap.

Experience Zones and Exhibitions

At the conference venue, a wide range of experience zones on spices, millet, tea, and coffee was set up. Additionally, an exhibition on textiles was also on display during the TIWG Meeting. The G20 delegates visited the Bharat Diamond Bourse on the first day of the meeting.

Making Trade Work for Growth and Prosperity

The focus of the TIWG Meeting on March 29th will be on making trade work for growth and prosperity, and building resilient Global Value Chains (GVCs). The highlight will be on realizing shared outcomes for making growth inclusive and resilient, increasing the participation of developing countries and the Global South in GVCs, and building resilient GVCs to withstand future shocks.

Inauguration and Closed-Door Sessions

Across four technical closed-door sessions on March 29th and 30th, the priorities related to global trade and investment, which the Indian Presidency is pursuing, will be discussed.

Integrating MSMEs in Global Trade and Building Efficient Logistics

On March 30th, the two working sessions will focus on integrating MSMEs in Global Trade and building efficient logistics for trade. The Indian Presidency seeks to carry forward the efforts of past G20 Presidencies to ensure the integration of MSMEs into global trade, given their important role in sustaining livelihoods in both developed and developing countries. The discussions will also be held on developing robust logistics infrastructure that could bring down transaction costs both across borders and in the hinterlands.

Building a Shared Understanding

The aim under India's G20 Presidency is to build a shared understanding of the challenges being faced in accelerating global trade and investment. The TIWG Meeting provides an opportunity for delegates to deliberate on existing opportunities that can be harnessed to formulate human-centric concrete outcomes and deliverables.

First Urban Climate Film Festival

The National Institute of Urban Affairs (NIUA), a Central Autonomous Body under the Ministry of Housing & Urban Affairs, is organising the Urban Climate Film Festival under the CITIIS program. The festival aims to create wider awareness of the impact of climate change on life in cities and engage the public in the dialogue on sustainable urban development.

Supporting International Organizations and Selected Films

The French Development Agency (AFD) and the European Union provided support for the festival, which has received films from over 20 countries. A jury shortlisted 27 films, and 11 were selected for showcasing in the festival.

Screening in Five Cities

The selected films will be screened in five cities, allowing a wider audience to engage with the message of the festival. The festival will not only raise awareness about climate change and sustainable urban development but also inspire people to take action.

CITIIS Program and Sustainable Urban Infrastructure Projects

The CITIIS program aims to assist 12 Smart Cities in India implement innovation-driven and sustainable urban infrastructure projects. By organising the Urban Climate Film Festival under the CITIIS program, NIUA is promoting the program's approach to urban infrastructure projects.

National Institute of Urban Affairs

The National Institute of Urban Affairs is a Central Autonomous Body under the Ministry of Housing & Urban Affairs that undertakes multi-disciplinary research, policy planning, and advocacy in the domain of urban development. NIUA's work is vital in promoting sustainable urban development in India.

U20 and Urban Engagement Group of G20

The U20 is the urban engagement group of G20. It brings together mayors from the world's largest cities to develop policies and solutions to global issues such as climate change, urban infrastructure, and social inclusion. The Urban Climate Film Festival organised by NIUA aligns with the U20's objective of enabling a sustainable urban development.