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1. North East Research Conclave 2022 inaugurated (May 23, 2022)

The North East Research Conclave (NERC) 2022 was inaugurated at IIT, Guwahati by the Union Minister of Education and Skill Development, Shri Dharmendra Pradhan.

- The conclave will strengthen linkages between industry, academia and policy makers and further strengthen the research, start-up and entrepreneurship ecosystem in the resource-rich North Eastern Region states and the country.
- **Key points related to the Conclave -**
- NERC 2022 will prove to be a global benchmark in meeting the R&D priorities of India and the world.
- On the occasion, an MoU “Assam Advanced Health Innovation Institute (AAHI)” was also signed between the Government of Assam and IIT, Guwahati.
- North East Research Conclave 2022 is being organised to showcase the best research and development activities of academic and research institutes from all the states of North East India.
- The North-East Research Conclave is a platform for entrepreneurs and research institutions to showcase their innovations.
- The North East Research Conclave will help the younger generation to fulfil their dreams in the near future.

2. 8th BRICS Environment Ministers Meeting (May 21, 2022)

The Union Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Bhupendra Yadav participated in the 8th BRICS Environment Ministers' Meeting on 20 May.

- The meeting was held virtually under the chairmanship of the People's Republic of China.
- Ministers and representatives of Brazil, Russia and South Africa also participated in the meeting.
- **The theme of the meeting - 'Foster High-Quality BRICS Partnership, Usher in a New Era for Global Development'.**
- The Joint Statement of the 8th BRICS Environment Ministers' Meeting was also accepted in the meeting after extensive deliberations among the BRICS countries.
- **About BRICS**
- The full form of BRICS is Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa.
- Goldman Sachs economist Jim O'Neill coined the term BRIC (without South Africa) in 2001.

- He claimed that by 2050, the four BRIC economies would dominate the global economy by 2050.
- South Africa was included in the list in 2010.
- The presidency of the Forum is rotated annually among the members.
- BRICS accounts for about 40% of the world's population.
- It accounts for 30% of the world's GDP (Gross Domestic Product).

3. PM Modi to attend to third edition of Quad leaders' summit in Tokyo (May 20, 2022)

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will attend the Quad Leaders Summit in Tokyo on May 24 at the invitation of Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida.

- US President Joe Biden, Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison and Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida will attend the summit.
- The summit in Tokyo is the fourth meeting of the Quad Leaders since the first virtual meeting in March last year.
- During the visit, Modi will participate in business programs with Japanese business leaders.
- He will also address and interact with the Indian community in Japan.
- He will also hold a bilateral meeting with US President Joe Biden.
- The two leaders will review the India-US Strategic Partnership and act on discussions held during the bilateral meeting of the Prime Minister of India with the US President last September.
- Modi is also likely to hold bilateral talks with his Australian counterpart.
- **Purpose of the meeting**
 - To review progress of Quad Initiatives and Working Groups, identify new areas of cooperation and provide strategic guidance and vision for future collaborations.
 - The meeting will provide an opportunity to both the leaders to take forward the mutual dialogue after the 14th India Japan Annual Summit held in New Delhi in March this year.
- **About Quad**
 - This is known as the 'Quadrilateral Security Dialogue' (QSD).
 - It is an informal strategic forum comprising four nations - United States of America (USA), India, Australia and Japan.
 - It aims to work for a free, open, prosperous and inclusive Indo-Pacific region.

- The first meeting of the Quad was held in 2007 on the sidelines of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).
- The Quad Summit provides an opportunity for leaders to exchange views on the development of the Indo-Pacific region and current global issues of mutual interest.
- Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe was the first to consider the formation of the Quad in 2007.

4. India hosts SCO-RATS meeting (May 17, 2022)

Counter-terrorism experts from India, Pakistan and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) discussed ways to enhance cooperation in tackling various regional security challenges in a meeting hosted in New Delhi on May 16.

- The meeting is being held under the regional counter-terrorism framework of the SCO.
- A major focus of the discussion was on the situation in Afghanistan where all countries are threatened by terrorist groups operating in the Taliban-ruled country.
- Pakistan has sent a three-member team for the meeting.
- The Afghan issue has figured prominently in almost all the major meetings of the SCO.
- **Council of Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure of SCO (RATS SCO)**
- India assumed the presidency of the SCO (RATS SCO) on 28 October last year for a period of one year.
- India has shown keen interest in deepening its security-related cooperation with the SCO and its Regional Anti-Terrorism Framework (RATS).
- This specifically deals with issues relating to security and defence.
- The SCO is an influential economic and security bloc and has emerged as one of the largest inter-regional international organisations.
- **The member states of the SCO**
- Russia, China, India, Pakistan, Kyrgyz Republic, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan
- Afghanistan is among the observer states of the SCO.

5. Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal inaugurates India-UAE Economic Partnership Summit (May 14, 2022)

Union Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal and UAE Economy Minister Abdullah bin Touq Al Marie inaugurated the India-UAE Economic Partnership Summit in Mumbai on 13 May.

- The two leaders also launched the India-UAE Start-up Bridge to boost the economy.
- The summit was organised by Confederation of Indian Industry.

- India and UAE have immense potential to work together and the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) will open a lot of doors to markets across the world.

- **Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA)**

- The Comprehensive Trade Agreement between India and the United Arab Emirates will help generate employment opportunities and boost the growth of the domestic economy.
- The Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) is expected to increase bilateral trade in goods to over US\$100 billion and trade in services to over US\$15 billion within five years.
- The agreement paves the way for several sectors, especially labour intensive sectors such as textiles, gems and jewellery, pharmaceuticals and agriculture.
- The agreement will open doors not only for Indian and UAE businesses but also for other countries as the UAE is a transit point for large parts of Africa, CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States) countries and the Gulf region.
- CIS countries include Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, and Tajikistan.
- Indian pharma products will get immediate access to the UAE market.
- Bilateral trade will reach at least US\$ 100 billion in the near future.

6. US President Joe Biden to host ASEAN summit (May 13, 2022)

US President Joe Biden will host leaders and top officials of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in Washington DC.

- Washington has focused on the Russo-Ukraine war as well as battling Chinese influence in the Indo Pacific.
- The ASEAN "special summit" was postponed from late March just days before Biden's first visit to Asia as president.
- ASEAN member state Myanmar, whose government was toppled on 1 February last year, will not participate in the summit.
- The US wanted an 'apolitical' representative from Myanmar to attend the meeting.
- ASEAN's 'five-point Consensus' to end the turmoil in Myanmar has not progressed since its release in April last year.

- **About ASEAN**

- Association of Southeast Asian Nations or ASEAN is an international organisation formed in Bangkok, Thailand in 1967.
- It promotes economic development, peace, security, social progress and cultural development in the Southeast Asian region.

- ASEAN Secretariat – Indonesia, Jakarta.
- General Secretary of ASEAN - Lim Jock Hoi, Brunei
- Official Languages - Burmese, Filipino, Indonesian, Khmer, Lao, Malay, Mandarin, Tamil, Thai and Vietnamese
- Working Language - English
- ASEAN Summit is the supreme policy making body of ASEAN.
- ASEAN is third largest market in the world
- It is the sixth largest economy in the world, third in Asia.
- ASEAN has Free-trade agreements (FTAs) with China, Japan, South Korea, India, Australia and New Zealand.

- **ASEAN Member Countries**

- Indonesia
- Malaysia
- Philippines
- Singapore
- Thailand
- Brunei
- Vietnam
- Laos
- Myanmar
- Cambodia

7. PM Modi addresses 'Utkarsh Samaroh' in Bharuch (May 12, 2022)

Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressed the 'Utkarsh Samaroh' organised in Bharuch, Gujarat.

- This program has been organised to commemorate the 100 percent saturation of four major schemes of the state government in the district.
- These schemes will help in providing timely financial assistance to those in need.

- **About Utkarsh Initiative**

- The Bharuch district administration has launched the 'Utkarsh Initiative' campaign to ensure full coverage of schemes providing assistance to widows, elderly and destitute citizens.

- This initiative includes four schemes Ganga Swaroopa Aarthik Sahay Yojana, Indira Gandhi Vrudh Sahay Yojana, Niradhar Vrudh Aarthik Sahay Yojana and Rashtriy Kutumb Sahay Yojana.
- During the campaign from January to March this year, taluka-wise WhatsApp helpline numbers were announced to collect information about those who were not getting the benefits of the scheme.
 - Utkarsh camps were organised in all the villages and wards of the municipal areas of the district to collect the necessary documents for approval on the spot.
 - Utkarsh Sahayaks were also given incentives to make the campaign more convenient.

8. PM Modi attended second Global Covid virtual summit (May 12, 2022)

PM Narendra Modi participated in the Second Global COVID Virtual Summit on 12 May at the invitation of US President, Joseph Biden.

- The summit aims to promote new actions to address the challenges of the pandemic and build a strong global health security framework.
- The theme of the summit is 'Preventing Pandemic Fatigue and Prioritising Preparedness'.
- Secretary General of the United Nations, Director General of World Health Organisation and other dignitaries participated in the summit.
- The Prime Minister had also participated in the first Global COVID virtual Summit hosted by President Biden on 22 September 2021.
- India is playing a key role in the ongoing global effort to combat the pandemic by developing safe and affordable vaccines, drugs, low-cost indigenous technologies and capacity building of health care workers.
- India is also actively participating in multilateral fora with the World Health Organisation aimed at strengthening and improving the global health security framework.
- **Current status of COVID in India**
 - According to health ministry data India recorded 2,505 new Covid-19 cases and 52 deaths on 11 May 2022.
 - While the total number of cases stands at 43,112,690, the total deaths reported are 522,864.
 - According to the ministry data the total number of recoveries stands at 42,557,939.

9. Bhupender Yadav leads Indian delegation at COP15 summit on desertification (May 10, 2022)

The Indian delegation led by Union Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav has reached Abidjan, Cote D Ivoire to attend the Conference of Parties, 15th meeting of the United Nations Convention on Combating Desertification (UNCCD COP15) from 9th to 20th May 2022.

- India had hosted the fourteenth session of this Conference from 2nd to 13th September 2019, in New Delhi.
- The COP15 theme is 'Land, Life, Legacy from scarcity to prosperity'.
- It is a call to action to protect land which is the lifeline on this planet, and continues to benefit present and future generations.
- Land is the cornerstone of a healthy, productive society, and COP15 will explore the relationship between land and other key issues.

- **Agenda of the Conference**

- Drought, land restoration, land rights, gender equality and youth empowerment are the top subjects on the Conference agenda.
- Through its decisions adopted by UNCCD's 197 Parties, COP15 is expected to galvanise sustainable solutions for land restoration and drought resilience.

- **About UNCCD**

- It stands for United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification.
- It was established in 1994.
- Its aim is to combat desertification and the ill effects of drought.
- It is a legally binding convention that links development and the environment with sustainable land management.
- The Convention obliges national governments to take measures to deal with the issue of desertification.
- India ratified the Convention to Combat Desertification in December 1996.
- India is the COP president for 2019 - 2021.

- **About COP**

- The conference of the parties (COP) is the meeting of the ratifying governments.
- The Prime Minister of India at COP14 announced that the country will resettle an additional 50 lakh hectares of land by 2030.

10. Webinar on "Challenges in Thalassemia 2022" (May 9, 2022)

On the occasion of World Thalassemia Day on 9 May Union Tribal Affairs Minister Arjun Munda addressed the webinar "Challenges in Thalassemia 2022" in New Delhi.

- It was jointly organised by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs along with various ministries and Thalassemia Association.
- Experts from different parts of India and the world participated in the conference.

- **About Thalassemia**

- Thalassemia is an inherited blood disorder that causes the human body to have less haemoglobin than normal.
- World Thalassemia Day is observed every year on 8 May to spread awareness about this condition.
- This year, it is celebrated with the theme 'Be Aware. Share, Care: Working with the global community as one to improve thalassaemia knowledge.'
- Iron deficiency is the most common and can cause extreme tiredness, shortness of breath, weakness and cold hands and feet.
- Iron is a mineral that our body needs for growth, development and making haemoglobin.
- Haemoglobin is a protein in red blood cells that carries oxygen from the lungs to all parts of the body.
- Iron is a cofactor for neurotransmitters and is important for the synthesis and metabolism of hormones.