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1. British home secretary Suella Braverman clears Sanjay Bhandari's extradition (Jan. 17, 2023)

Sanjay Bhandari's extradition
Two months after a **Westminster court in London** ordered the **extradition of fugitive arms dealer Sanjay Bhandari** to India, British Home Secretary **Suella Braverman** has given her approval on the matter.

An overview of the news

- It is noteworthy that on **November 7, District Judge Michael Snow** ordered Bhandari's extradition which was sent to Home Secretary Suella Braverman for approval.

- Bhandari, 60, has been under investigation **since 2019 for corruption in a Rs 2,985-crore deal in 2009** to buy **75 PC-7 trainer aircraft** from Swiss aircraft maker **Pilatus Aircraft.**

- He is also facing a probe for alleged **money laundering** in properties linked to Robert Vadra, son-in-law of former Congress president Sonia Gandhi in London.

What is Extradition?

- Extradition is the formal process of **surrendering a person from one state to another**.

- The purpose of this process is the prosecution or **punishment for offences** committed by a person within the jurisdiction of the requesting country.

- The extradition of a fugitive criminal to India is regulated under the **Indian Extradition Act, 1962.**

- The **Consular, Passport and Visa (CPV) Division**, Ministry of External Affairs is the central/nodal authority to administer the Extradition Act.

- Extradition process can be initiated in case of under-investigation, under-trial and convicted criminals.

2. National Council of Education Research and Training notified India's first National Assessment Regulator "PARAKH" (Jan. 17, 2023)

India's first National Assessment Regulator
Recently the National Council of Education Research and Training has notified India's first National Assessment Regulator "PARKH" with the aim of setting up assessment guidelines for all boards.

- **What is PARAKH?**

- PARAKH stands for Performance Appraisal, Review and Analysis of Knowledge for Holistic Development.

- It will act as a component of NCERT.

- It is also entrusted with the task of conducting periodic learning outcome tests like National Achievement Survey (NAS) and State Achievement Survey.

- This framework will also act to check the emphasis on rote learning as envisaged by the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020.

- Its team comprises prominent evaluation experts with a deep understanding of the education system in India and internationally.

- **Objective of PARAKH:**

- **Uniform Norms and Guidelines:** To lay down norms, standards and guidelines for student assessment and assessment across all recognized school boards in India.

- **Improvement in assessment pattern:** It will act to encourage school boards to change their assessment pattern towards meeting the skill requirements of the 21st century.

- **Reducing disparity in evaluation:** This will bring uniformity across state and central boards that currently follow different standards of evaluation, leading to wide disparities in marks.

Benchmark Assessment: The benchmark assessment framework will address the issues contained in the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020.

3. ASI discovers two 1200-year-old miniature stupas at Nalanda (Jan. 17, 2023)

miniature stupas at Nalanda
The **Patna Circle of the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)** has discovered **two 1200-year-old miniature stupas** during landscaping activities near the **Sarai Tila mound** within the complex of the world heritage site '**Nalanda Mahavihara**' in Nalanda district of the state.

An overview of the news

- The figures of **Buddha** are shown on the stupa carved out of stone.

- These stupas carved out of stone depicting figures of Buddha are about **1200 years old.**

- Such stupas were popular as votive offerings in India as early as the **7th century.**

About the Stupas?

- The stupa is a **hemispherical structure** symbolising the burial mound of the Buddha.

- It rose to prominence after the **advent of Buddhism** and reached its peak during the **reign of Ashoka.**

- Stupas evolved from **chortens in Tibet** and **pagodas in East Asia.**

Nalanda Mahavihara site complex

- Nalanda was a **Mahavihara**, a large **Buddhist monastery** in the ancient kingdom of **Magadha (modern Bihar)** in India.

- It is considered by historians to be the **world's first residential university** and one of the largest centres of learning in the ancient world.

- It was established during the **Gupta Empire period.**

4. China's population drops for first time since 1961 (Jan. 17, 2023)

China's population drops
The biggest decline in the **population of China** has been recorded after the **year 1961**. **Negative population growth** has now started in **China.** The death toll in China is more than the number of children born.

An overview of the news

- According to the **China's National Bureau of Statistics** China's population declined by roughly **850,000 to 1.41175 billion** at the end of 2022.

- In China, **9.56 million** people were born in 2022, while **10.41 million** people died.

- China's birth rate last year was just **6.77 births per 1,000 people**, down from **7.52 births in 2021**, the lowest ever.

- The number of Chinese women of childbearing age, which the government defines as **25 to 35**, has declined by nearly **4 million.**

- This has caused domestic demographers to worry that China will grow old before it gets rich, slowing the economy as revenues decline and increasing government debt as health and welfare costs rise.

Impact of the One Child Policy

- The main reason for China's population decline is the **one-child policy** implemented between **1980 and 2015.**

- Additionally, **higher education in China is very expensive**, which has prohibited many Chinese people from having more than one child.

- The fundamental reason why women do not want children is the failure of society and men to take responsibility for raising children.

- **China's strict zero-covid policies** that were in force for three years have further damaged the country's demographic outlook.

- Local governments have introduced measures to encourage people to have more children from 2021, including tax cuts, longer maternity leave and housing subsidies.

5. Warehousing Development Regulatory Authority signs MoU with SBI (Jan. 17, 2023)

Warehousing Development Regulatory Authority
Warehousing Development Regulatory Authority (WDRA) signed a memorandum (MoU) of understanding with **State Bank of India** to help farmers in getting low interest rate loans on 16 January.

An overview of the news

- The objective of the MoU is to provide information on the benefits to the depositors besides carrying out further activities to improve **agricultural finance in India.**

- It is envisaged that the product will have far reaching consequences with regard to acceptance of **e-NWRs (electronic Negotiable Warehouse Receipt)** among small and marginal farmers.

- Combined with the inherent security and negotiability of the e-NWR system, the Produce Marketing Loan will go a long way in improving rural liquidity and increasing farmers income.

Warehousing Development Regulatory Authority (WDRA)

- WDRA was constituted on 26 October, 2010 under the **Warehousing (Development and Regulation) Act, 2007.**

- It is a **Statutory Authority** under the **Department of Food and Public Distribution**, Government of India.

- The Authority has its Headquarters in **New Delhi.**

- The Authority consists of a **Chairperson** and **two Members** appointed by the Central Government.

6. UN declares Pakistan based Abdul Rehman Makki a global terrorist (Jan. 17, 2023)

Abdul Rehman Makki a global terrorist
On January 17, the **United Nations Security Council (UNSC)** listed Pakistan-based terrorist **Abdul Rehman Makki** as a global terrorist.

An overview of the news

- He has been declared a 'global terrorist' under **UNSC's ISIL (Da'esh) and Al-Qaida Sanctions Committee.**

- In **June 2022**, India criticised China for blocking the resolution of sanctions under the Sanctions Committee, also known as the **UNSC 1267 Committee.**

- Makki has already been listed as a terrorist by India and the United States for his involvement in fundraising, recruiting and radicalising youths to plan attacks in India, especially Jammu and Kashmir.

Who is Abdul Rehman Makki?

- Makki is the brother-in-law of **Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT**) chief and 26/11 mastermind **Hafiz Saeed.**

- He heads the political affairs of Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) and also plays a role in raising funds for **Lashkar's operations.**

- The US government has placed a reward of **$2 million** on Abdul Rahman.

- According to the US State Department, in 2020, a Pakistani anti-terrorism court convicted Makki on a terrorism financing count and sentenced him to prison.

- He is also a militant of **Jamaat-ud-Dawa (JuD)** and has been designated as a terrorist by India under the **Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act of 1967.**

7. Rajnath Singh launches 'Soul of Steel' Alpine Challenge (Jan. 16, 2023)

Soul of Steel
To promote tourism in border areas, the defence minister **Rajnath Singh** launched the "**Soul of Steel" Alpine Challenge** on 14 January.

An overview of the news

- Rajnath Singh also flagged off the 460 km long car rally '**Road to the End'**, a joint operation by the Indian Army and CLAW.

- The rally will reach its destination in the Garhwal Himalayas near **Niti village in Chamoli district** in the next three days.

- A team of Indian Special Forces veterans with multiple expertise in CLAW, mountaineering, skydiving, SCUBA diving, unarmed combat, multi-terrain survival techniques and emergency medical response will lead the challenge.

About 'Soul of Steel' challenge

- It will test the **high altitude endurance** of an individual and will initially feature **12 Indian participants** and six international teams between the ages of 18 and 30.

- This challenge will run for **three months.**

- It is being organised by **CLAW Global**, a conglomerate of giants.

- The Indian Army is supporting the adventure challenge.

- It is modelled on the lines of the '**Ironman Triathlon'**, a long distance triathlon held in **Europe** that tests a person's physical abilities.

- The initiative aims to enable life skills training and youth development.

- This is also expected to give a boost to the global promotion of adventure tourism in Uttarakhand.

8. Piyush Goyal launched MAARG portal for startup mentorship (Jan. 16, 2023)

Piyush Goyal launched MAARG
Commerce and industry minister **Piyush Goyal** launched the **MAARG platform (Mentorship, Advisory, Assistance, Resilience, and Growth)** on 16 January.

An overview of the news

- The portal would facilitate **mentorship** between **startups and entrepreneurs** across sectors, stages, and functions.

- It will allow startups to connect with mentors and discuss their mentorship needs.

- Startups can connect with academics, industry experts, successful founders, seasoned investors and others to receive personalised mentorship, clarity and practical advice on growth strategy.

Objectives of the MAARG Portal

- To provide guidance and support to startups throughout their life cycle.

- To establish a formal and structured platform that facilitates matchmaking between mentors and startups at large across diverse sectors.

- Establishing a result-oriented mechanism that allows tracking of the progress of the mentor-startup engagement.

Key Functions of MAARG Portal

- Tracking mentor and startup interactions to deliver impact.

- Enabling video calls and communication through the platform.

- Mobile friendly interface for ease of use.

- Communicate recognition and benefits of mentor contributions.

- Facilitate ecosystem supporters to host friendly events.

- Providing feedback, query and complaint mechanism.

9. Union Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal hands over 9th to 10th century Nataraja idol to Archaeological Department official in Chittorgarh Fort (Jan. 16, 2023)

Nataraja idol to Archaeological Department official in Chittorgarh Fort
Union Minister of State for Culture Arjun Ram Meghwal has handed over the 9th to 10th century Nataraja statue to the Archaeological Department of Chittorgarh Fort, Rajasthan.

- The statue, which dates back to the 9th to 10th centuries, was **stolen from the Shiva temple at Badoli in Chittorgarh district in 1998** and sold to a museum in London.

- After a long legal process, in the year 2020, it was successful in bringing this statue to India from a private museum in London.

- Now this statue will be kept under the protection of the Archaeological Survey Department in Kumbha Mahal.

- From the year 2014 till now, 229 idols of ancient importance have been brought back to India by the Government of India.

- On this occasion, the Union Minister of State for Culture, Arjun Ram Meghwal has also assured the construction of a ropeway on the Chittorgarh Fort and to connect Chittorgarh with the Bharatmala Yojana.

- **Chittorgarh Fort**

- Chittorgarh fort is the largest fort in India. It is located in Chittorgarh, Rajasthan.

- Chittor was the capital of Mewar.

- Chittor Fort was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site on 21 June 2013.

- This fort was built by the Mauryan dynasty king Chitrangad Maurya in the seventh century.

10. Startup India Innovation Week 2023 (Jan. 16, 2023)

Startup India Innovation Week 2023
The '**Startup India Innovation Week'** was organised by the '**Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade' (DPIIT**) under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry from January 10 to 16, 2023. '**National Startup Day**' is also celebrated on 16 January.

An Overview of the news

- The main objective of organising the Startup India Innovation Week is to engage the stakeholders of the **startup ecosystem** in the country and to foster the spirit of entrepreneurship and innovation in India.

- In this, knowledge sharing sessions are organised for entrepreneurs, aspiring entrepreneurs.

- The sessions also included stakeholders from the startup ecosystem such as government officials, incubators, corporates and investors.

- As a part of **Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav** celebrations, various startup related events were organised at more than **75 locations across the country** to foster the spirit of entrepreneurship and innovation by engaging the startup community across the country.

- These include dedicated workshops for women entrepreneurs, training of incubators, mentoring workshops, capacity building workshops, startup pitching sessions, etc.

National Startup Awards

- To celebrate the National Startup Day, **DPIIT** organised a felicitation ceremony for the winners of the **National Startup Awards, 2022** on January 16.

- The felicitation ceremony recognized and rewarded the excellence displayed by startups and ecosystem enablers across various sectors, sub-sectors and categories.

World's 3rd Startup Ecosystem in India

- In the last few years, India has emerged as a **'hotspot'** for startups. India has the third largest startup ecosystem in the world with **108 unicorns.**

- There were **471 startups** in the country in 2016, which increased to **86,456 in 2023**. There has been an astonishing growth of over 15,000% in the number of startups in India in 6 years.

- There were more than 100 unicorns in the country as of 5 May 2022, with a total valuation of **$332.7 billion.**

Startup India Programme

- The Startup India campaign was launched on **16 January 2016**. DPIIT has recognized more than **75 thousand startups** to coincide with the 75th year of independence.

- DPIIT under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry recently launched the **MAARG portal.**

- In this portal one can get an opportunity to connect with experts, industry experts, successful startup founders, investors as well as world class mentors and experts.

- In addition, under India's G20 chairmanship, Startup20 Engagement Group has been established. The establishment of Startup20 Engagement Group will encourage innovations and recognize the role of startups in the changing global landscape.