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1. India to host Permanent Mission Roundtables at UN Head Quarter as Chair of G- 20 (Feb. 21, 2023)

India as the **Chair of the G-20** will host the **Permanent Mission Roundtable at the UN Headquarters** ahead of the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Summit** to be held in **New York** this year.

An overview of the news

- A series of round table conferences have been lined up for the **next few months**.
- A roundtable titled '**Gandhian Trusteeship: A panel discussion on Sustainable Lifestyles and Enduring Pace**' will be held.
- This will be followed on March 9 by a roundtable on '**The world we women and girls want: Technology-driven social and economic advancement**'.
- On March 16, a roundtable on '**Grassroots leadership and transformation: Charting the path of empowerment through technology and skill development**' will take place.
- A special program has been planned to commemorate the birth anniversary of **Dr BR Ambedkar on 14th April**.
- During the event, the focus will be on India's growth story and achievements.
- The **2023 SDG Summit** will be held in **September 2023** under the auspices of the United Nations General Assembly.

2. Eknath Shinde-led Sena faction gets 'bow and arrow' symbol (Feb. 21, 2023)

The **Election Commission of India** on 17 February ordered the **Eknath Shinde faction** to be renamed the **Shiv Sena**, the commission also said that the **arrow and bow** would be retained as election symbols by **Eknath Shinde's party**.

An overview of the news

- Both the Shiv Sena factions (**Eknath Shinde and Uddhav Thackeray**) are fighting for the party's bow and arrow symbol after Shinde (the current chief minister of Maharashtra) rebelled against Thackeray last year.
- The Election Commission, in its 78-page order, said the current constitution of Shiv Sena is "**undemocratic**".
- Uddhav Thackeray was the chief minister of Maharashtra before Shinde rebelled and took over in **June 2022**.
- Both the factions are fighting to keep the original name and symbol of the party to represent the "**real**" **Shiv Sena**.

- Shiv Sena leader Uddhav Thackeray said the Election Commission's order recognizing the Eknath Shinde faction as the real Shiv Sena was "dangerous for democracy", and he would challenge it in the Supreme Court.

How does EC decide who gets the symbol?

- The question of a split in a political party outside the legislature is decided by **para 15 of the Emblems Order, 1968**.
- Accordingly, the Election Commission of India (ECI) may take into account all available facts and circumstances and conduct a majority test.
- The decision of the Election Commission shall be binding on all such rival sections or groups that have emerged after partition.
- This applies to disputes between recognized national and state parties.
- For splits in registered but unrecognised parties, the Election Commission usually advises the two factions to resolve their differences internally or approach the court.

Election Commission of India

- It is a permanent and independent body established by the **Constitution of India** to ensure free and fair elections in India.
- It was established as per the Constitution on **25 January 1950**.
- It administers the elections to the **Lok Sabha, Rajya Sabha, State Assemblies, State Legislative Councils and the President and Vice President** of the country.
- It has nothing to do with elections to panchayats and municipalities in the states. For this the Constitution of India provides for a separate State Election Commission.
- Basically there is only **one Chief Election Commissioner** in the Election Commission.
- Currently it consists of **two Election Commissioners**.
- The **President** appoints Chief Election Commissioner and Election Commissioners.
- They have a tenure of **six years, or up to the age of 65 years**.

3. India, Uzbekistan hold 4th Joint Military Exercise- 'Dustlik' (Feb. 20, 2023)

As part of the **military-to-military exchange program** between the **Indian Army and the Uzbekistan Army**, the fourth edition of the training exercise **Dastlik (2023)** began on 20 February.

An overview of the news

- The exercise will be held at **Pithoragarh, Uttarakhand till March 5, 2023.**
- **45-45 soldiers** from both countries will participate in the exercise.
- The Indian contingent in this bilateral exercise will be represented by the **14th Battalion The Garhwal Rifles**, which is part of the Western Command.
- The Uzbekistan Army will be represented by troops from the **North Western Military District of the Uzbekistan Army.**
- Its purpose is to give impetus to the ever-growing military and diplomatic relations between the two countries.
- This exercise shows the strong resolve of both the countries to combat terrorism.

Previous Exercises- 'Dustlik'

- The **first edition** of this exercise was conducted in **November 2019** in Uzbekistan.
- The **second edition** was held in India in 2021 from 10 to 19 March at **Chaubatia, Ranikhet.**
- The **third edition** of the exercise was conducted from March 22 to 29 in 2022 in **Yangiyarik district of Uzbekistan.**

Significance

- Keeping in mind the Belt and Road Initiative of China, this exercise is very important.
- Both the armies share counter-terrorist operations in mountain/rural/urban scenarios under the **UN mandate.**
- Military diplomacy to connect with Central Asia.

4. 18th World Security Congress (Feb. 20, 2023)

The **18th World Security Congress** is being organised by the **International Union of Railways (UIC)** and **Railway Protection Force (RPF)** from 21 to 23 February in **Jaipur.**

An overview of the news

- The 18th edition of this Congress is focused on the theme of "**Railway Safety Strategy: Responses and Vision for the Future**".
- It will be attended by concerned officials from UIC, partner international organisations, Indian Railways, RPF and senior police officers from India besides security heads from railway organisations across the globe.

- The Congress is divided into **4 sessions**, which include the topics "**Safety of critical assets and goods**", "**Human safety approaches**", "**Best railway safety equipment and practices around the world**" and "**Vision 2030**".
- Earlier, in **2006 and 2015**, RPF India successfully organized and hosted the International UIC World Security Congress in New Delhi.
- RPF Director General **Sanjay Chander** IPS has taken over as the **Chairman of the International UIC Security Forum** from July 2022 to July 2024.

About International Union of Railways (UIC)

- The **Union Internationale des Chemins de Fer (UIC)** or International Union of Railways (UIC) is headquartered in **Paris, France**.
- It is a professional association which has been in **existence since 1922**.
- It represents the railway sector and promotes rail transport around the world.
- UIC serves on the mission of promoting interoperability and standardisation of rail transport, increasing cooperation and sharing of best practices, supporting members in new business and new areas of activities and proposing improved technical and environmental performance of rail transport.

About Railway Protection Force of India

- This is a prime **security and Law Enforcement Agency** in the field of Railway Security in India.
- It was **formed in 1957** for better protection of railway property.
- It has proven itself with the additional roles of passenger safety and passenger convenience and protection of railway property.
- Director General of RPF - **Sanjay Chander**

5. India's lunar mission Chandrayaan-3 achieves another milestone (Feb. 20, 2023)

Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) on 19 February said that the '**Chandrayaan-3**' lander has "**successfully**" underwent the **Electro-Magnetic Interference/Electro-Magnetic Compatibility (EMI/EMC) test** at the **U R Rao Satellite Centre**.

An overview of the news

- The EMI-EMC test is conducted for satellite missions to ensure functionality of the satellite subsystems in space and their compatibility with the expected electromagnetic levels.
- The purpose of this test is to ensure that the satellite's systems work properly in conjunction with the expected electromagnetic levels in space.

- This is an important step in preparing the test satellites.
- The test was conducted between January 31 and February 2 at the UR RAW Satellite Center in Bengaluru.
- During this test several points related to the post-landing phase of Chandrayaan's mission were checked.
- These include a number of tests including launch capability, polarisation of antenna for radio frequency systems and compatibility of lander and rover.
- All the systems performed satisfactorily during the test.
- The complexity of this operation relates to the establishment of radio frequency communication links between these modules.

6. UAE and India launch the UAE Chapter of the Business Council (Feb. 19, 2023)

The **UAE and India** launched the **UAE India Business Council - UAE Chapter (UIBCUC)** on 18 February to strengthen economic ties and enhance **bilateral trade and investment**.

An overview of the news

- It was launched by **Dr Thani bin Ahmed Al Zeyoudi**, UAE Minister of State for Foreign Trade in Dubai.
- One year of signing of the **India-UAE comprehensive free trade agreement**, completed.
- The UIBCUC aims to increase bilateral trade to \$100 billion and attract investments of **\$75 billion** from the UAE to India.
- The council will bring together key partners and stakeholders from both countries and encourage innovative collaboration between Emirati and Indian businesses.
- The Council will play a key role in supporting the two governments in their joint mission to promote bilateral trade and investment.
- It will operate under the supervision of the **Federation of UAE Chambers of Commerce and Industry**.
- It is registered with the **Dubai Chamber of Commerce** as a legal and financial entity.
- UIBC-UC will have its office in **Dubai**.
- **Faizal Kottikollon** of Kef Holdings has been appointed as the **Chairman of UIBC-UC**.
- **Major General (Retd.) Sharafuddin Sharaf**, the Chairman of the UIBC (India Chapter), will serve as the **Vice Chairman**.

Key partners and stakeholders

- Sovereign Wealth Funds from the UAE and large conglomerates from India such as - TATA group, Reliance, and Adani, as well as tech innovators like OLA, Zerodha, and EaseMyTrip.

The founding members of the UIBC-UC from the UAE side

- Mubadala - Sovereign Wealth Fund of the UAE, Wizz Financial, DP World, EMAAR, Emirates Airlines, Emirates NBD Bank.

The founding members of the UIBC-UC from Indian side

- TATA, Reliance, and Adani, OLA, Zerodha, Udaan, and EaseMyTrip.
- Prominent Indian entrepreneur-led corporations based in the UAE such as KEF Holdings, Buimark Corporation, Apparel Group, EFS and Lulu Financial.

7. Ashwini Vaishnaw inaugurates SemiconIndia Conference of Electronics Manufacturing Supply Chain Ecosystem in New Delhi (Feb. 19, 2023)

The Minister for Communications, Electronics & Information Technology and Railways, **Ashwini Vaishnaw** inaugurated the '**SemiconIndia Conference of Electronics Manufacturing Supply Chain Ecosystem**', on 18 February in New Delhi.

An overview of the news

- He highlighted the success achieved in telecom manufacturing and the **Vande Bharat development** supported by the government.
- He highlighted 'Your success, our success and the success of the global semiconductor industry'.
- He highlighted that 'Electronics manufacturing is not sustainable in India without the development of semiconductor ecosystem which plays a major role in driving the overall economic growth in automotive, power, telecom, electronics etc.
- Conference is being organised by the **Institute of Supply Management (ISM)**.

Prominent sessions

- Panel discussion on the existing semiconductor ecosystem in India.
- Presentation on facilitating the development of the semiconductor ecosystem.
- Panel discussion regarding the fab construction and availability of requisite chemicals, gasses.
- Presentation on vision for skilled workforce generation.
- Panel discussion regarding the industry readiness, challenges for materials and equipment with panellists.

- Panel Discussion regarding Policies and readiness of State Governments for semiconductor ecosystem.
- Panel discussion regarding the concerns of the industry.

India's Semiconductor Mission

- On **29 December 2022**, the Information Technology Minister, Ashwini Vaishnaw, launched the **India Semiconductor Mission**.
- Under the policy, the government will provide Rs 76000 crore incentives for companies setting up manufacturing facilities in India.
- This was done by the government to encourage companies to set up chip manufacturing plants in India.

What is semiconductor?

- Semiconductors are materials which have a conductivity between **conductors and insulators**.
- They can be pure elements, **silicon or germanium or compounds; gallium, arsenide or cadmium selenide**.
- They are the basic building blocks that serve as the heart and brain of all modern electronics and information and communications technology products.
- These chips are now an integral part of contemporary automobiles, household gadgets and essential medical devices such as ECG machines.

8. 49th meeting of GST Council to take place in New Delhi (Feb. 18, 2023)

The **49th meeting of the GST Council** was held on 18 February in **New Delhi**.

An overview of the news

- The meeting, chaired by Finance Minister **Nirmala Sitharaman**, discussed setting up appellate tribunals and mechanisms to prevent tax evasion in the pan masala and gutkha business.
- After the Union Budget was presented earlier this month, the GST Council meeting has offered to extend the 50-year interest-free loan to states for one more year.

About GST Council

- To implement GST, the Constitutional **(122nd Amendment) Bill** was passed by both the Houses of the Parliament **in 2016**.
- The GST Council has been notified as a **constitutional body** to deal with issues related to GST.

- It is a **joint forum of the Center and the States** which was established by the President in accordance with Article 279A (1) of the amended Constitution.

Members of GST Council

- **Union Finance Minister (Chairman)**, Union Minister of State (Finance) from the Centre.
- Each state minister in charge of finance or taxation or any other minister may be nominated as a member.

Functions of GST Council

- To make recommendations to the Center and the States on important issues relating to GST.
- It also decides on various rate slabs of GST.

What is the Goods and Services Tax (GST)?

- It was introduced through the **101st Constitution Amendment Act, 2016**.
- It is one of the biggest indirect tax reforms in the country and was introduced with the slogan of '**One Nation One Tax**'.
- GST subsumes indirect taxes like excise duty, value added tax (VAT), service tax, luxury tax etc.

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10. Twelve cheetahs brought from South Africa to Kuno National Park in Madhya Pradesh (Feb. 18, 2023)

Twelve cheetahs from **South Africa** were brought to **Kuno National Park in Madhya Pradesh** on 18 February. Of the 12 cheetahs, **seven are male and five are female**.

An overview of the news

- **The first group of Namibian cheetahs** reached Kuno National Park in Madhya Pradesh on **17 September 2022** under the cheetah reintroduction programme.
- **The second batch of Cheetahs** started their journey to Kuno on 17 February 2023 from **Tambo International Airport in Gauteng**.
- The aircraft landed at **Gwalior Air Force Base** in Madhya Pradesh on 18 February.
- The onward journey was undertaken in **Mi-17 helicopters** of the Indian Air Force.
- Union Environment Minister **Bhupendra Yadav** and Chief Minister **Shivraj Singh Chouhan** released the cheetahs in their quarantine enclosures.

- The health of the cheetahs will be checked and then they will be kept in quarantine for a month.

Reintroduction Action Plan

- Reintroduction of a species means releasing it in an area where it is capable of surviving.
- Under the scheme, **50 cheetahs** will be released in various national parks of the country over a period of 5 years.

Extinction of cheetahs

- The last cheetah of the country was found dead in the year 1947 in Chhattisgarh and **in the year 1952** it was declared **extinct** in the country.
- **Habitat loss, conflict with humans, poaching** and high susceptibility to diseases are the major causes of their extinction.

About 'Project Cheetah'

- This is a one of its kind project in which a species is being brought out of the country **(from South Africa / Namibia)** and restored to the country.
- The subspecies of the extinct cheetah in India was the **Asiatic cheetah (Acinonyx jubatus venaticus)** and the subspecies of the cheetah being brought back to the country is the **African cheetah (Acinonyx jubatus jubatus)**.
- Research has shown that the genes of both these subspecies are similar.