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1. Cabinet approves signing of MoU between India and Chile for cooperation in agriculture and allied sectors (Feb. 15, 2023)

The **Union Cabinet** chaired by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi has approved the signing of **Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)** between the **Government of India and the Government of Chile** on 15 February for **cooperation in agriculture and allied sectors**.

An overview of the news

- This MoU provides for cooperation in agriculture and allied sectors.
- Under the MoU, a **Chile-India Agricultural Working Group** will be set up.
- This group will be responsible for supervision, review and evaluation of the implementation of the MoU as well as for establishing frequent communication and coordination.
- The meetings of the Agriculture Working Group will be held once a year, alternately in **Chile and India**.
- The MoU shall come into force upon its signature and shall remain in force **for a period of five years from the date of execution**.
- Thereafter it will be automatically renewed for a period of **5 years**.

The main areas of cooperation

- Agricultural Policies for the Development of Modern Agriculture
- Organic agriculture to facilitate bilateral trade of organic products
- To promote exchange of policies aimed at developing organic production
- Promotion of innovation in agriculture sector between Indian institutions and Chilean institutions
- Cooperation in Science and Innovation to Address Common Challenges

2. Indo-US exercise TARKASH (Feb. 15, 2023)

Indo-US exercise TARKASH

The **6th edition of joint exercise Tarkash** was recently concluded in **Chennai** by the **National Security Guard (NSG) and the US Special Operations Force (SOF)**.

About Exercise TARKASH

- This is the sixth edition of the exercise which began on **16 January and ended on 14 February**.

- It is a joint exercise by the **National Security Guard (NSG) and US Special Operations Forces (SOF)**.
- **“Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN) Terror Response”** has been included in this exercise for the first time.
- An exercise to deal with **chemical and biological attacks** by terrorists was also included in the exercise.
- Chemical and biological attacks have been made part of the exercise in the backdrop of the **Russia-Ukraine war**.
- Last year, Russia accuses Ukraine of receiving aid from Western countries and of carrying out a chemical attack in **Kharkiv**.

Objectives of the Exercise

- The objective of the exercise is to neutralize the terrorists, safe release of hostages and neutralization of chemical weapons being carried by the terrorists.

Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN) Weapons

- These weapons are classified as **weapons of mass destruction (WMD)**.
- In the past these weapons have been used by states and terrorist groups.
- The most recent use of CBRN was in the form of a sarin gas attack in **Syria in 2017** that killed over 100 people.
- These weapons are a serious threat to international peace and security.

Chemical, Biological and Radiological weapons

- Chemical weapons include **mustard gas and nerve agents**.
- Biological agents like **anthrax, botulinum toxin and plague** are some examples of biochemical weapons.
- Radiological weapons include **weaponised radioactive waste and dirty bombs** as well as nuclear weapons.

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4. Air India signs 470 aircraft deal with Airbus, Boeing (Feb. 15, 2023)

Air India

With an aim to upgrade its fleet and expand its operations, **Tata-owned Air India** on 14 February confirmed an agreement to buy a total of **470 wide-body and narrow-body planes from Airbus and Boeing**.

An overview of the news

- Of the 470 new aircraft ordered by Air India, **250 are from Airbus and 220 from Boeing**.

- Prime Minister **Narendra Modi** has expressed confidence that India will emerge as the third largest global market in the aviation sector in the coming years.
- This deal reflects the strength of the **US-India economic partnership**.
- The Indian aviation sector will need more than **2,000 aircrafts** in the next 15 years.
- This historic deal shows strengthening of strategic partnership between India and France.
- This deal will help in fulfilling the growing demands of the aircrafts.
- Under the **regional connectivity scheme-UDAN**, the number of airports in the country has increased from **74 to 147 in the last eight years**.
- Remote parts of the country are being connected by air connectivity which has helped in socio-economic development.

About UDAN scheme

- **Ude Desh Ka Aam Nagrik (UDAN)** was launched in **2016** as a **Regional Connectivity Scheme (RCS)** under the **Ministry of Civil Aviation**.
- Its objective is to provide affordable, economically viable and profitable air travel on regional routes to the common man even in small towns.

5. First Agriculture Deputies Meeting of the Agriculture Working Group (Feb. 15, 2023)

Agriculture Working Group

The first **Agriculture Representatives Meeting (ADM) of the Agriculture Working Group (AWG)** under the **G20 chairmanship** of India was held in **Indore**.

An overview of the news

- Union Civil Aviation Minister **Jyotiraditya Scindia** launched it on 14 February 2023.
- On the second day of the meeting, presentations were made on the release note for AWG, covering the **four key themes** of Food Security and Nutrition, Sustainable Agriculture with Climate Smart Approach, Inclusive Agriculture Value Chain and Digitization for Food System and Agriculture Transformation.
- Member countries, invited countries and international organisations made their interventions on the issue note.
- G20 member states and guest countries also held bilateral meetings focusing on the **G20 agriculture agenda**.
- After the technical session, the delegates visited **Silotia village in Dhar district** where they saw organic farming in poly house.
- The key deliverables of the AWG will be discussed on the third and concluding day of the event.

- Mention was made about the 3S template for development in the agriculture sector – ie
- **Smart, Serve All and Sustainable.**
 - Their views were also presented on the importance of drones in the Indian agriculture development saga.

6. Prominent Indian-American politician Nikki Haley announces US Presidential bid (Feb. 15, 2023)

US President

Former South Carolina Governor, Indian-American leader and Ambassador to the United Nations **Nikki Haley** announced her candidacy for the **US President** on 14 February.

An overview of the news

- In this way, she has become the first Republican to challenge former US President Donald Trump to become her party's nominee for the White House in 2024.
- Haley, 51, has been a **two-time governor of South Carolina and the US ambassador to the United Nations.**
- Before entering the presidential election, Haley must win the primary vote for the Republican presidential candidate, which begins in January next year.
- The next US presidential election will be held on **November 5, 2024.**

About Nikki Haley

- Helly is the child of migrant **Punjabi Sikh parents.**
- Haley was born in **Bamberg, South Carolina**, and became the **state's first female governor and the first Indian-American** to lead the state.
- If she wins the Republican presidential nomination in 2024, she will make history as the first woman and the **first Asian-American.**

7. PM Modi to inaugurate national Aadi Mahotsav on Feb 16 in New Delhi (Feb. 14, 2023)

Aadi Mahotsav

Prime Minister **Narendra Modi** will inaugurate the **national Aadi Mahotsav** on 16th February, 2023 at **Major Dhyan Chand National Stadium, New Delhi.**

An overview of the news

- This **15-day festival** is being organised at the **Major Dhyan Chand National Stadium in New Delhi.**
- This was announced at a media briefing by the Union Minister of Tribal Affairs, **Arjun Munda** in New Delhi.

- The Ministry of Tribal Affairs is making all out efforts to ensure full participation of tribal communities in realising the vision of **Atmanirbhar Bharat**.
- The Minister said that **TRIFED** is working with top designers to ensure quality and contemporary design in tribal products as well as to retain their originality.

Theme of Aadi Mahotsav 2023

- The Theme of the event “**A Celebration of the Spirit of Tribal Crafts, Culture, Cuisine and Commerce**”.
- The theme represents the basic ethos of tribal life.

Festival Highlights

- The festival will feature exhibition-cum-sale of tribal **handicrafts, handlooms, paintings, jewellery, cane and bamboo, pottery, food and natural products**, tribal cuisine and more to showcase it through 200 stalls.
- **One thousand tribal artisans and artists** from **28 states** and union territories will participate in the festival.

About Aadi Mahotsav

- It is a national tribal festival and a joint initiative of the **Union Ministry of Tribal Affairs and the Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India (TRIFED)**.
- It was started in the year **2017**.
- **The main objective** of this festival is to acquaint people with the rich and diverse crafts and culture of tribal communities at one place.

Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India (TRIFED)

- It came into existence in **1987**.
- TRIFED is a national-level organisation functioning under the administrative control of the **Union Ministry of Tribal Affairs**.
- Its Head Office is located in **New Delhi** and has a network of **13 Regional Offices**.
- It aims at **socio-economic development of tribal people** in the country through marketing development of tribal products.

8. New Zealand declares national emergency after Cyclone Gabrielle lashes North Island (Feb. 14, 2023)

New Zealand government

The **New Zealand government** has declared a **national emergency** after **Cyclone Gabrielle** hit the North Island.

An overview of the news

- Cyclone Gabrielle causes widespread **flooding, landslides and huge ocean swells** across the North Island.
- This is an **unprecedented weather event** that is having widespread impacts across much of the **North Island**.
- Gabriel appeared over some small islands about 100 km north-east of Auckland, but is now moving south-west.

National State of Emergency in New Zealand

- A national state of emergency has been declared in New Zealand on **two previous occasions** - the **first in 2011** after a magnitude 6.3 earthquake in Christchurch and the **second** in the early days of the **COVID-19 pandemic**.

9. Saudi Arabia to send its 1st female astronaut to space this year (Feb. 14, 2023)

Saudi Arabia's first female astronaut

Saudi Arabia's first female astronaut is set to go into space this year, in what is seen as a move to reform Saudi Arabia's **ultra-conservative image**.

An overview of the news

- Saudi female astronaut **Rayna Barnawi** will join **Saudi Ali Al-Qarni** on a 10-day mission to the **International Space Station (ISS)** this year.
- **Barnawi and al-Karni** will fly to the ISS aboard a **SpaceX Dragon spacecraft** as part of a mission by American privately funded space infrastructure developer private space company **Axiom Space** .
- The **Ax-2** will be launched by a **SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket** from Launch Complex 39A at **NASA's Kennedy Space Center in Florida, America**.
- Another fellow **Emirati, Sultan Al-Neyadi** will also visit the space station at the end of February 2023.
- Axiom Space launched its **first private astronaut mission** to the ISS in April 2022, with four private astronauts spending 17 days in space orbit.
- In 2019, Saudi Arabia's neighbouring **United Arab Emirates became the first Arab country** to send a citizen into space. Astronaut Hazza al-Mansoori spent eight days on the ISS.
- **In 1985**, Saudi royal prince **Sultan bin Salman bin Abdulaziz** participated in a US-organised space mission, becoming the first Arab Muslim to travel in space.

Saudi Arabia

- King - **Salman**

- Capital - **Riyadh**
- Currency - **Saudi Arabian riyal**
- Official Language - **Arabic**
- Official Religion - **Islam**

10. Union Health Ministry organises “Cycle for Health” rally at Lady Hardinge Medical College (Feb. 14, 2023)

The Union **Ministry of Health and Family Welfare** organised a **Cyclothon** with the theme '**Cycle for Health**' at **Lady Hardinge Medical College (LHMC)** on 14 February.

An overview of the news

- Faculty, staff and students participated in the rally with great enthusiasm and in large numbers.
- The main **objective of organising this rally** is to promote physical and mental health and to provide information about environment friendly transport to the citizens.
- Mega cycling events in the form of cyclothons or cycle rallies are being organised in all the **1.56 lakh Ayushman Bharat-Health and Wellness Centers (AB-HWCs)**.
- These activities are being carried out as part of the year-long "**Healthy Mind, Healthy Home**" campaign launched in November last year, which aims to promote awareness about healthy living.
- Accordingly, a health fair will also be organised on the **14th of every month** in all AB-HWCs across the country, where activities like yoga, tele-counselling, Nikshay Poshan Abhiyaan, non-communicable diseases screening and drug distribution, sickle cell disease screening will be organised. Activities will be organised.
- Union Health Minister **Dr. Mansukh Mandaviya**, also known as "**Green MP**" for his enthusiasm for cycling, has urged people to use cycles to promote health and fitness.