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1. 11th India-Mongolia Joint Working Group Meeting Held in New Delhi (Feb. 11, 2023)

The 11th meeting of the India-Mongolia Joint Working Group was held on 10 February 2023 in New Delhi.

An overview of the news

- Co-chaired by Dr. Ajay Kumar, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Defence, India and Brigadier General Gankhuyag Davgdorj, State Secretary, Ministry of Defence, Mongolia, the meeting of the Joint Working Group took place for the first time since the pandemic.
- Both the countries reviewed the progress of various bilateral defense cooperation initiatives and identified measures to further enhance the existing areas of cooperation.
- Both sides reviewed the progress of various bilateral defence cooperation initiatives and expressed satisfaction at the efforts made in this direction despite the restrictions imposed by the COVID pandemic.

India -Mongolia Relation

- India established diplomatic relations with Mongolia **in 1955** and upgraded relations with Mongolia to a strategic partnership.
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Mongolia in 2015 upgraded it to a "**strategic partnership**" and declared it as an essential component of the '**Act East Policy**'.
- Mongolia has publicly voiced its support for India's membership for a permanent seat on the **United Nations Security Council (UNSC)**.
- Both the countries are members of the **Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) and the World Trade Organization (WTO)**.

Mongolia

- It is located in **North Central Asia**.
- Capital: **Ulaanbaatar**
- Currency: **Tugrik**
- President: **Ukhnaagiin Khurelsukh**

2. Two-day inception meeting of G-20 EMPOWER group of Ministry of Women & Child Development begins in Agra (Feb. 11, 2023)

The two-day establishment meeting of the **G-20 EMPOWER Group** of the **Ministry of Women and Child Development** began in **Agra** from 11 February.

An overview of the news

- The theme of the meeting : **Empowering Women to Lead across Sectors: Role of Digital Skilling and Future Skills.**
- The Ministry of Women and Child Development is the **nodal ministry** of India for G20 EMPOWER.
- **Dr. Sangita Reddy**, Joint Managing Director, Apollo Hospitals Enterprises Limited, is the chairperson of EMPOWER 2023 during India's G20 Presidency.
- Under India's G20 presidency, EMPOWER will host **three meetings** in February, April and June 2023 in **Agra, Thiruvananthapuram and Bhopal** respectively.
- An exhibition will also be organized during the event to showcase the work of women-led micro-enterprises, women artisans and craftsmen from different states.
- Women leaders from G-20 countries, guest countries, international organisations and the private sector have been invited to the founding meeting.
- India's G20 Presidency is **inclusive, equitable, ambitious, decisive and action-oriented** for the economic empowerment of women.

About G20 EMPOWER

- The G20 Alliance for the Empowerment and Progression of Women's Economic Representation (EMPOWER) is an **alliance of G20 business leaders and governments.**
- It aims to accelerate **women's leadership and empowerment** in the private sector.
- The G20 Empower 2023 under India's chairmanship is prioritising the shift from women's development to women-led development.

3. Govt appoints two new Supreme Court judges (Feb. 11, 2023)

The Central Government has approved **Justice Rajesh Bindal** and **Justice Arvind Kumar** as **judges of the Supreme Court.**

An overview of the news

- **Chief Justice of Allahabad High Court Rajesh Bindal** and **Chief Justice of Gujarat High Court Arvind Kumar** have been made judges of the Supreme Court.
- The total number of judges in the Supreme Court has **gone up to 34**, which is also the **sanctioned number of 34 judges.**
- On **January 31**, the six-member collegium of the Supreme Court sent the names of these two judges to the government for approval.

- Earlier on **December 13, 2022**, the names of **five judges** were recommended. These five judges were sworn in as judges of the Supreme Court on 6 February.
- These include the names of Rajasthan High Court Chief Justice **Pankaj Mithal**, Patna High Court Chief Justice **Sanjay Karol**, Manipur High Court Chief Justice **PV Sanjay Kumar**, Patna High Court Justice **Ahsanuddin Amanullah** and Allahabad High Court Justice **Manoj Mishra**.
- Chief Justice of India **DY Chandrachud** has to finalise 19 judicial appointments in his tenure till November 2024.

4. South Africa declares 'State of Disaster' over electricity crisis (Feb. 10, 2023)

Recently South African President **Cyril Ramaphosa** declared a "**state of disaster**" due to the **country's power crisis** during his annual State of the Nation address in Cape Town.

An overview of the news

- This follows just 10 months after the Covid-induced "**State of Disaster**" was lifted.
- South Africa is currently facing several crises, including issues such as **power crisis, unemployment, increase in crime and violence**.
- The electricity supply company in the country for almost 10 years has become financially weak amid large-scale looting and corruption, due to which the power crisis has arisen.
- The President announced that a **Minister of Power** would be appointed to deal with the matter more effectively and promptly.
- The new minister will assume overall responsibility for overseeing all aspects of the power crisis response, including the National Energy Crisis Committee.

South Africa

- President: **Cyril Ramaphosa**
- Capitals: **Cape Town** (Legislative), **Pretoria** (Executive), **Bloemfontein** (Judicial)
- Currency : **Rand**

5. Bangladesh PM Sheikh Hasina inaugurates Indian LOC funded part of Joydebpur-Tongi rail line (Feb. 10, 2023)

On 10 February, Bangladesh Prime Minister **Sheikh Hasina** opened traffic operations on the rail line between **Joydebpur and Tongi**.

An overview of the news

- This is the initial section of the Dhaka-Tongi-Joydebpur rail line project, funded under a concessional line of credit provided by India.

- It is a '**testimony of the strong and abiding friendship**' between the two countries.
- Operation of more trains will be possible on this section of 11 kilometre long double line rail route from Tongi to Joydebpur.
- Acting High Commissioner of India **Binoy George** was also present on the occasion.
- Hasina also inaugurated a total of 69.20 km of rail lines under three projects, including the operation of trains on **Rooppur and Shasidal routes of Bangladesh Railway**.
- The Rooppur section of the railway will facilitate transportation of goods and equipment to the **Rooppur Atomic Power Plant**.

Joydebpur-Tongi rail line Project

- **Bangladesh Railways (BR)** launched the project in **November 2012** to improve the capacity of a vital section connecting the capital with most of the country's rail network.
- The project, aimed at building the **third and fourth dual-gauge railway lines** on the Dhaka-Tongi route and the second dual-gauge line on the Tongi-Joydebpur route, is expected to cost Tk 848.60 crore.
- The 11.09 km Tongi-Joydebpur section, which connects the capital to the North-Western region, is a dual-gauge single line with a capacity to handle 44 trains per day.

Rail Links Between India and Bangladesh

- Agartala (India)- Akahaura (Bangladesh)
- Radhikapur (India)-Biroi (Bangladesh)
- Haldibari (India)-Chilahati (Bangladesh)
- Singhabad (India)-Rohanpur (Bangladesh)
- Petrapole (India)-Benapole (Bangladesh)

6. Lithium reserves found for the first time in Jammu and Kashmir (Feb. 10, 2023)

For the first time in the country, reserves of 59 lakh tonnes of lithium have been found in the Reasi district of Jammu division.

An overview of the news:

- **The Geological Survey of India** has discovered lithium deposits in the **Salal-Haimana area of Reasi district in Jammu and Kashmir**.
- Currently India is dependent on imports for Lithium, Nickel and Cobalt. This discovery will reduce India's dependence on lithium from other countries.

- **A report on 51 mineral blocks including Lithium and Gold was submitted to the State Governments during the 62nd Central Geological Programming Board (CGPB) meeting.**
- Out of these 51 mineral blocks, 5 blocks are related to gold and other blocks are related to potash, molybdenum, base metals.
- These minerals have been found in different districts of 11 states which include Jammu and Kashmir (UT), Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu and Telangana.

Lithium:

- It is a chemical element with the **symbol (Li)**.
- It is a soft and silvery white metal.
- It is the lightest metal and the lightest solid element at standard conditions.
- It is alkaline and a rare metal.
- Lithium has an **atomic number of 3 and an atomic mass of 6.941u**.
- Lithium is one of the key components of rechargeable batteries for mobile phones, laptops, digital cameras and electric vehicles.
- It is also used in some non-rechargeable batteries for things like heart pacemakers, toys, and watches.
- Countries with the largest reserves: Chile > Australia > Argentina

7. Operation "DOST" (Feb. 10, 2023)

India is carrying out a **rescue operation named 'Operation Dost' with National Disaster Response Force personnel, essential items and medical equipment to help after the earthquake in Turkey.**

An overview of the news:

- **On February 6, 2023, an earthquake measuring 7.7 on the Richter scale affected Turkey and Syria**, causing massive devastation along with loss of life and damage to infrastructure in both countries.
- A field hospital has been set up by the Indian Army in Turkey's Hatay province under Operation Dost.
- **C17 Globemaster aircraft** of the Indian Air Force has been **put into operation**.
- Operation Dost is a symbol of the fact that India is a friend of Turkey, that is, both should strengthen their relations more.

Other operations carried out by the Government of India in the past:

Operation Ganga 2022

- It was operated by the Government of India to provide humanitarian aid and to evacuate Indian nationals from Ukraine amid the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Operation Dev Shakti 2021

- It was launched by the Indian Air Force and Air India to bring back Indians from Afghanistan after the Afghan capital Kabul was captured by the Taliban on 15 August 2021.

Vande Bharat mission

- In the year 2020, the Government of India launched 'Vande Bharat Mission' campaign to evacuate Indians trapped in other countries due to Coronavirus.

Operation Rahat 2015

- It was launched by the Indian Navy, Air Force and Air India to rescue and bring back Indian and foreign nationals from Yemen following the intervention of Saudi Arabia-led coalition forces in the Yemen Civil War.

Operation Maitri 2015

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9. MobiKwik becomes India's first app to Support Credit Cards on UPI (Feb. 9, 2023)

MobiKwik becomes the **first fintech app** to support **RuPay Credit Card on UPI**.

An overview of the news

- With RuPay credit cards now linked directly to **UPI IDs, MobiKwik customers** can easily make payments at merchants by scanning the UPI QR code and using the UPI PIN for payment authentication.
- This facility will provide an easy and secure payment experience to **MobiKwik customers**.
- It will also open up new opportunities for merchants to be part of the credit ecosystem, with the acceptance of credit cards using asset-light QR codes without the need for **point-of-sale (POS) terminals**.
- **RuPay credit cards** are issued by all major banks (private and public sector) for both commercial and retail use.
- The integration of RuPay Credit Card with UPI is in line with the vision of **National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) and RBI**.

- RuPay Credit Card promotes credit card acceptance in India for merchants who are not part of the credit ecosystem.

About UPI

- **Unified Payments Interface (UPI)** is a single platform that integrates various banking services and facilities under one umbrella.
- It is developed by **National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI)**.
- The names of the top UPI apps currently are - **PhonePe, Paytm, Google Pay, Amazon Pay and BHIM**.
- NPCI launched UPI in **2016 with 21 member banks**.

10. Union Minister Giriraj Singh inaugurates Mission Antyodaya Survey 2022-23 (Feb. 9, 2023)

Rural Development and Panchayati Raj Minister **Giriraj Singh** inaugurated the **Mission Antyodaya Survey (MAS)** 2022-23 in New Delhi on 9 February.

An overview of the news

- The **Rural Development Department** is conducting the Mission Antyodaya survey in all the Gram Panchayats of the country from **2017-18**.
- Survey will be done in all the **2,69,253 Gram Panchayats** whose profiles have been created on **e-Gram Swaraj**.

Objectives of Mission Antyodaya Survey 2022-23

- Through the convergence of various schemes, the outcomes for the lives and livelihood of the people are to be realised.
- Support a participatory planning process for Gram Panchayat Development Planning that will improve service delivery, increase citizenship and improve governance at the local level.
- To conduct an annual survey at the Gram Panchayat level to monitor the progress of the development process in rural areas.
- Preparation of Panchayat wise ranking and gap report on the basis of data collected through survey at Gram Panchayat level.

About 'Mission Antyodaya'

- It was initiated in the **Union Budget 2017-18**.
- It has been brought with the objective of optimum utilisation and management of the resources allocated by **27 Ministries/Departments of the Government** of India under various programs for the development of rural areas.

- **Gram Panchayats** have been kept at its focal point.
- The Ministry of Panchayati Raj and the Ministry of Rural Development are its **nodal agencies**.
- It aims to eradicate poverty in various dimensions of rural households.