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1. Khadi Fest-23 inaugurated in Mumbai (Jan. 28, 2023)

Khadi Fest-23 inaugurated in Mumbai

Manoj Kumar, Chairman, **Khadi and Village Industries Commission**, inaugurated the **Khadi Fest- 23** which will run from January 27 to February 24, 2023 at the **Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) Headquarters in Mumbai.**

An overview of the news

- Events and exhibitions like Khadi Fest, Khadi Institutions, **Prime Minister's Employment Generation Program - PMEGP** and **Fund Scheme for Regeneration of Traditional Industries - SFURTI** units provide a platform to bring thousands of artisan products directly to the customers.
- The fest will showcase apparel made of Khadi, Pashmina, Kalamkari, Phulkari, Tussar silk, etc while Dry-fruit, Tea, Kahwa, Honey, Bamboo Products, Carpets, Aloe Vera Products and others will be up for sale.
- On 2 October this year, **Khadi India's Delhi outlet** created an **all-time record** of selling Khadi worth Rs 1.34 crore in a single day.
- Last year, there was a record sale of one lakh fifteen thousand crore rupees of Khadi and village industry items.
- Apart from this, the **Khadi Fest-2022** held on 3rd October registered a sale of Rs.3.03 crore.

Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC)

- The Khadi Village Industries Commission was established in **1957** under the **Khadi and Village Industries Commission Act 1956.**
- It is under the **Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises.**
- It is responsible, along with other agencies, for the planning, promotion, organisation and implementation of programs for the development of Khadi and other village industries in rural areas.
- KVIC Chairman: **Manoj Kumar**

2. Startup-20's two-day inception meeting begins in Hyderabad (Jan. 28, 2023)

A **two-day inception meeting of the Startup-20**, the **new engagement group of G-20** initiated by India, has begun in **Hyderabad** on 28 January.

An overview of the news

- Union Tourism Minister **G Kishan Reddy**, G-20 Sherpa **Amitabh Kant**, Startup-20 President **Chintan Vaishnav**, **JS Ashish Sinha** from G-20 Secretariat and around **180 delegates** from G-20 participated.
- As part of India's G20 presidency, a number of meetings and events will be held at various places across the country.
- It will provide a **common platform to startups** from G20 member countries to discuss a range of issues related to their establishment and operations.
- It aims to **bridge the knowledge gap** in the startup ecosystem economies of the member countries.
- This will help the government to make **startup friendly policies**.

About Startup -20

- Startup 20 is an important **working group** in the context of the need to generate more **entrepreneurs for a growing economy**.
- Startup 20 is based on three distinct pillars which include **Foundations and Alliances, Finance and Inclusivity and Sustainability**.
- The main objective of Startup 20 is **to create a conducive environment for startups** by increasing synergy between startups, corporates, investors, innovation agencies and other key ecosystem stakeholders.
- With its rich background of culture of innovation, **Hyderabad** is an ideal location for the inception ceremony of Startup 20 of G20 group.
- Startup 20 activities will include five events including **Inception Meet, Summit and three other intervention events** in different parts of India.
- **Startup 20 Summit** will be held in **Gurugram** from 3rd July.

3. Luminous to build India's first green solar panel factory in Uttarakhand (Jan. 28, 2023)

Luminous Power Technologies on 27 January announced its plan to build the **country's first green energy-based solar panel manufacturing factory in Uttarakhand**.

An overview of the news

- The new manufacturing plant located in **Rudrapur** is expected to be fully operational by the **end of 2023**.
- This state-of-the-art facility will be equipped with the **latest technology** to design and produce **high quality solar panels** that will be used for both **residential and commercial applications**.

- Spread over **4.5 lakh sq ft/10 acres**, the facility will help enable a solar generation capacity of **500 MW per annum**, which can be scaled up to **1 GW**.
- It will produce a range of solar panels with power output from **40W to 600W**.
- The plant has been certified as a green facility by the **Indian Green Building Council (IGBC)** and will **reduce CO2 emissions** by over **70 million tonnes per year**.
- This solar panel facility is completely robotic and will harness energy from **100 percent solar power**.

4. Coal India Ltd to Launch M-Sand Projects in a Big Way (Jan. 28, 2023)

With a focus on **cost-effective and high-quality sand production**, Coal India Limited's subsidiaries will commission **five M-Sand (sand) plants by 2024**.

An overview of the news

- Sand is classified as a "**minor mineral**" under the **Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957**.
- Administrative control of minor minerals rests with the **state governments** and is regulated through state specific rules.
- Due to high demand, regular supply and complete ban on sand mining to protect the river ecosystem during monsoon, it has become very necessary to find an alternative to river sand.
- The '**Sand Mining Framework**' (2018) prepared by the Ministry of Mines envisages alternative sources of sand obtained in the form of sand (M-Sand) manufactured from **crushed rock fines (crusher dust) from overburden (OB) of coal mines** .
- During '**opencast mining**', the top soil and rocks are removed as waste and the broken rock (overburden or OB) is dumped in the dump to extract the coal.

What is M-sand?

- It is a form of **artificial sand**, which is made by **crushing hard stones**, mainly **rocks or granite**, into **fine particles**, which are then washed and pulverized.
- It is widely used as a **substitute for river sand** for construction purposes, mostly in the production of concrete and mortar mixes.

Advantages of M-sand

- Using manufactured sand is more economical than using natural sand, as it can be produced in **large quantities at a lower cost**.

- This sand can have a uniform grain size, which can be **beneficial for construction projects** that require a specific type of sand.
- The use of manufactured sand **reduces the need for mining natural sand**. The mining of natural sand has negative environmental impacts.
- Its use can help **reduce the amount of water needed** for construction projects, as it does not need to be washed before use.
- Manufactured sand is more granular and has a rougher surface, making it **more practical for construction projects**.

5. Signing of MoU on Cultural Cooperation between the Government of India and the Government of Egypt (Jan. 28, 2023)

India's Ministry of Culture signed an MoU with the Government of Egypt to strengthen cultural ties.

An overview of the news

- The MoU was signed by the **Culture Minister of India, Shri G. Kishan Reddy** and the **Foreign Minister of Egypt, Shri Sameh Hassan Shoukry**, in the presence of the **Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi** and the **President of the Arab Republic of Egypt, Abdel Fattah El Sisi**.
- This MoU has been signed for a period of five years.
- Under the aegis of the MoU on Cultural Cooperation signed between India and Egypt, both the countries will host cultural activities in the fields of music, dance, theatre, literature, libraries, organising festivals in the respective countries, research and documentation etc.

About Egypt

- Egypt is a country **located in North Africa**.
- Egypt is home to famous monuments such as the Giza Pyramid Complex. One of the Seven Wonders of the World, the Pyramids of Giza are **located on the banks of the Nile River**. The **Great Pyramid of Giza was built in 2560 BC**.
- Capital - Cairo
- President - Abdel Fattah el-Sisi
- Currency - Egyptian pound

6. Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) launches "Nidhi Aapke Nikat 2.0" (Jan. 28, 2023)

Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) launched "**Nidhi Aapke Nikat 2.0**"- A District Outreach Program for expanding its presence in more than 685 districts of the country on 27 January.

An overview of the news

- It was e-launched by **Arti Ahuja**, Secretary (Ministry of Labour & Employment) from the EPFO Headquarters, in the presence of Central Provident Fund Commissioner (CPFC) and officers of EPFO.
- It is a massive **district outreach program** in all the districts of the country through **Nidhi Aapke Nikat program**.
- The objective of this program is to reach all the districts of the country on the same day i.e. 27th of every month. EPFO has organised camps in 685 districts of the country.

About EPFO

- Employees Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) is a **statutory organisation** set up under the Union **ministry of Labour and Employment** was **set up in 1951** by an Ordinance issued by the President.
- Later Parliament passed the **Employees' Provident Funds Scheme, act 1952**.
- It is the country's **largest social security organisation**.
- EPFO assists the Central Board of Trustees in the administration of a provident fund scheme, pension scheme and an insurance scheme for the registered establishments in India.

7. 'She Feeds the World' program (Jan. 28, 2023)

'She Feeds the World' program

The 'She Feeds the World' program has been **launched by PepsiCo and CARE in India**.

An overview of the news

- The program will be **initially implemented in Coochbehar and Alipurduar districts of West Bengal**.
- Through this program, PepsiCo and CARE **aim to improve the status of over 48,000 women**. More than 1.5 million people of West Bengal will benefit from this program.

- The main objective of this program is to increase crop yield, increase income of women of BPL families, ensure access to healthy and balanced diet as well as provide training to women on sustainable agriculture.
- Women will be empowered in the agriculture sector through the programme, which will primarily focus on small-scale women producers.
 - In developing countries, women make up about half the number of men in agricultural work and work 13 hours more per week than men.
 - Research shows that if women farmers are given the same access to resources as men, they can increase their farm yields by 20-30 percent, potentially reducing the number of hungry people in the world by 150 million can be reduced.

8. India, South Africa sign MoU to introduce 12 African Cheetahs annually over next eight to ten years (Jan. 27, 2023)

India and South Africa on 27 January signed a **Memorandum of Understanding** to introduce **12 African Cheetahs** annually over the **next eight to ten year**.

An overview of the news

- As per the agreement, an initial batch of **12 cheetahs** will be brought from South Africa to India during **February 2023**.
- These cheetahs will be joined by **eight cheetahs** brought to **India from Namibia during 2022**.
- Increasing the cheetah population is a priority for the Government of India and its conservation will have important and far-reaching consequences, aiming to achieve a number of ecological objectives.
- After the import of 12 cheetahs in February, there are plans to move **12 cheetahs annually for the next 8 to 10 years**.
- The initiative to reintroduce the cheetah to India comes after a request from the Indian government, after the species had become **locally extinct** due to over-hunting and habitat loss.

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.

9. National Child Science Congress begins in Ahmedabad (Jan. 27, 2023)

The **30th National Child Science Congress** began at **Science City in Ahmedabad** on 27 January.

An overview of the news

- It was inaugurated by **Vijay Nahera**, Secretary, Gujarat Science and Technology Department.
- The **Gujarat Council on Science and Technology**, Gujarat Council of Science City, and SAL Education are hosting the five-day Congress, which will conclude on **January 31**.
- More than **1400 delegates** including child scientists, escort teachers, evaluators and government officials will participate in it.
- More than **850 students** from across the country will be showcasing their unique projects at the Congress.

National Children Science Congress

- It sparks **children's curiosity**, provides an opportunity to unleash their creativity and give shape to their imagination.
- This program is supported by the **National Council for Science and Technology Communication**, Government of India.
- Selected awardees are sponsored for the **National Children's Science Congress** held every year from 27th December to 31st December at selected places.
- It aims to transform the way science is taught and learned in schools by linking the learning process to the surrounding physical and social environment.

10. PM Modi interacts with students on Pariksha Pe Charcha (Jan. 27, 2023)

PM Modi interacts with students on Pariksha Pe Charcha

Prime Minister **Narendra Modi** on 27 January interacted with students during the 6th edition of **Pariksha Pe Charcha program** at **Talkatora Stadium in New Delhi.**

An overview of the news

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi participated in the event and has encouraged everyone to take part in the program.
- The Prime Minister emphasised that students must match their determination and their own strength with the expectations of their parents.
- The Prime Minister gave the mantra to adopt micro-management techniques on multi-tasking and efficient time management.

About Pariksha Pe Charcha

- It is a unique interactive program that brings together **students, parents and teachers** from India and abroad to discuss their concerns related to examinations and life after school.
- The goal of Pariksha Pe Charcha program is to help participants **overcome stress and celebrate life as a celebration.**
- The **Department of School Education and Literacy** under the **Ministry of Education** has successfully organised this program for the last **five years.**