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1. India and UAE signed a Mutual Recognition Arrangement for Authorized Economic Operators (June 24, 2023)

India-and-UAE-signed-a-Mutual-Recognition

India and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) on 23 June have signed a **Mutual Recognition Arrangement for Authorized Economic Operators.**

An overview of the news

- The agreement was formally signed during the **World Customs Organization's (WCO) Customs Co-operation Council meeting** held in **Brussels.**

Aim of Mutual Recognition Arrangement

- The Mutual Recognition Arrangement aims to **promote trade facilitation and ease of doing business** between the two countries.
- It establishes a framework for recognizing **Authorized Economic Operators (AEOs)** from both India and the UAE.

Significance

- The recognition of AEO status will streamline **customs procedures, reduce administrative burdens, and lower costs** for authorized businesses.
- This agreement signifies an important milestone in the **economic cooperation** between India and the UAE and is expected to **strengthen bilateral trade ties.**
- By leveraging the benefits of the Mutual Recognition Arrangement, both countries aim to enhance **trade facilitation, improve the ease of doing business, and encourage investments.**

India-UAE Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA)

- The signing of this arrangement is in line with the broader objective of the **India-UAE Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA)** signed in **February 2022.**
- CEPA aims to significantly **increase the total value of bilateral trade** in goods and services within five years.
- The Mutual Recognition Arrangement is expected to contribute to achieving the trade targets set under the CEPA, fostering **greater economic growth and cooperation** between India and the UAE.

2. China inks deal with Pakistan to set up nuclear power plant (June 22, 2023)

China-inks-deal-with-Pakistan-to-set-up-nuclear-power-plant

China and Pakistan signed an agreement on 20 June to set up nuclear power plants worth \$4.8 billion in Punjab province.

An Overview of the News

- The nuclear power plant deal is a **symbol of growing economic cooperation** between China and Pakistan.
- The agreement covers the construction of the **1,200 MW Chashma-5 nuclear plant in Punjab's Mianwali district.**
- Pakistan is receiving a significant investment of **\$4.8 billion from China for this project.**
- Pakistan actively engaged with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to meet the conditions required for the 9th review, and Prime Minister Sharif of Pakistan acknowledged the support of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Qatar.

About Pakistan

- Independence - **14 August 1947**
- Capital - **Islamabad**
- President - **Arif Alvi**
- Prime Minister - **Shahbaz Sharif**
- Official languages - **Urdu, English**

About China

- Government - **Unitary Marxist-Leninist One Party Socialist Republic**
- President - **Xi Jinping**
- Capital - **Beijing**
- Official Language - **Standard Chinese**
- Currency - **Renminbi**

3. For the first time, US regulators approved the sale of chicken made from animal cells (June 22, 2023)

US-regulators-approved-the-sale-of-chicken-made-from-animal-cells

The US regulators on 21st June have granted approval for the sale of chicken made from animal cells, making it the first time such products will be available to consumers.

An overview of the news

- Two California-based companies, Upside Foods and Good Meat, have received the green light from the Department of Agriculture to offer "cell-cultured" meat, which is produced in laboratories rather than derived from slaughtered animals.

Benefits of Cultivated Meat

- The approval of lab-grown meat marks a new era in meat production aimed at addressing concerns related to animal welfare and environmental impact.
- This has the potential to significantly reduce animal harm and environmental degradation.

Federal Inspections and Safety

- Both Upside Foods and Good Meat have obtained the approvals for federal inspections required to sell meat and poultry in the US.
- Prior to this, the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) had declared the products from these companies as safe for consumption.
- Joinn Biologics, a manufacturing company associated with Good Meat, has also been cleared to produce the cultured meat products.

Process of Lab grown meat

- Cultivated meat is grown in steel tanks using cells derived from **living animals, fertilized eggs, or stored cell banks.**
- Upside Foods produces large sheets of meat that are then shaped into **chicken cutlets and sausages.**
- **Good Meat**, which already sells cultivated meat in Singapore, creates various products such as cutlets, nuggets, shredded meat, and satays from chicken cells.
- The production of cultured meat begins with the **selection of cells from live animals** or commercially available cell lines.
- These cells are combined with a **nutrient-rich mixture** in a cultivator, where they grow rapidly.

4. India-United States Defence Acceleration Ecosystem (INDUS X) launched in Washington DC (June 22, 2023)

India-United-States-Defence-Acceleration-Ecosystem-(INDUS-X)

The **U.S. Department of Defense** and the **Indian Ministry of Defense** launched the **India-U S Defense Acceleration Ecosystem (INDUS-X)** on 21st June at an event hosted by the U S-India Business Council.

An overview of the news

- The launch of INDUS-X is a major milestone in promoting US-India **defense cooperation, innovation, and job creation.**
- The initiative seeks to enhance defense capabilities and contribute to global peace, security and prosperity while reaffirming commitment to a free and open **Indo-Pacific region.**

Significance of INDUS-X

- INDUS-X aims **to revitalize defense industrial cooperation** between the United States and India, promoting the development of new technologies and fostering collaboration in manufacturing.
- It represents a strategic effort to strengthen bilateral ties and unlock the potential for advancements in the defense sector.

Job Creation and Economic Growth

- INDUS-X holds the potential to **create job opportunities** for working families in both countries.
- By fostering collaboration between U S and Indian start-ups, the initiative aims **to generate employment and drive economic growth**, contributing to global peace, security, and prosperity.

Collaboration Agenda

- This agenda outlines various initiatives that INDUS-X stakeholders intend to pursue, complementing existing government-to-government collaboration.
- These initiatives include the formation of a **Senior Advisory Group for Start-ups.**

Indo-Pacific Defence Capabilities

- U S and Indian officials have affirmed that INDUS-X will act as a catalyst for innovation and contribute to equipping their armed forces with the necessary capabilities to ensure the defense of a free and open Indo-Pacific region.
- This emphasizes the shared commitment to regional security and stability.

5. Estonia becomes first Central European nation to allow same-sex marriage (June 21, 2023)

same-sex-marriage

Estonia's parliament passed a law legalizing same-sex marriage, making it the first Central European nation to do so.

An Overview of the News

- Same-sex marriage is prohibited in several former communist Central European countries that were once part of the **Soviet-led Warsaw Pact**.
- In **2014**, Estonia legalized same-sex partnerships.
- In **2016**, the government passed an **anti-discrimination law to protect LGBTQ+** individuals from discrimination in employment, education, and other areas.

About Estonia Same-sex Marriage Bill:

- The bill was passed by **55 votes in the 101-seat parliament**, with the support of a coalition of liberal and social democratic parties led by **Prime Minister Kailas, who will win the 2023 election**.
- The new law will go into **effect in 2024**.
- A recent poll by the Center for **Human Rights found that 53% of Estonians** support same-sex marriage, **compared to 34% a decade earlier**.
- The Estonian parliament voted on the bill and it passed, making **Estonia the first country in the Baltic region to legalize same-sex marriage**.

Why Same-sex marriage in Estonia?

- According to the government, half of Estonians in the **LGBTQ+ community have recently experienced harassment**.
- **Tomas Jermalavicius, head of studies at the International Center for Defense and Security**, believes that Estonia's successful legalization of same-sex marriage was aided by changing public opinion and Kailas' strong electoral victory.
- **Latvia and Lithuania**, the other **two Baltic nations** formerly annexed by the **Soviet Union**, have **not yet legalized same-sex marriage**.
- Same-sex partnership bills in **Latvia and Lithuania are stuck in their parliaments**.
- Same-sex marriage allows same-sex couples to formalize their commitment and build a stable foundation for their families.

6. China blocks proposal to declare 26/11 attacks accused Sajid Mir global terrorist (June 21, 2023)

China-blocks-proposal-to-declare-2611

China has **blocked** a proposal by India and the U.S. at the **United Nations** to designate **Sajid Mir**, a **Pakistan-based LeT terrorist**, as a **global terrorist** on 20th June.

An overview of the news

- The proposal aimed to blacklist Mir under the **1267 Al Qaeda Sanctions Committee** of the **UN Security Council**, subjecting him to asset **freeze, travel ban, and arms embargo**.

Involvement in Mumbai Terror Attacks

- Sajid Mir is wanted for his involvement in the **26/11 Mumbai terror attacks**, which took place in **November 2008**.
- He is considered one of India's most wanted terrorists, with a bounty of **5 million US dollars** placed on his head by the U.S.

China's Obstruction

- China had previously put a hold on the proposal to designate Mir at the UN in September of the previous year.
- However, Beijing has now officially blocked the proposal, preventing his designation as a **global terrorist**.

Imprisonment and Doubts

- In June, Sajid Mir was sentenced to over **15 years in jail** in a terror-financing case by an anti-terrorism court in Pakistan.
- Previously, Pakistani authorities had claimed that Mir had died, but Western countries remained unconvinced and demanded proof of his death.
- This issue became a significant concern during the **Financial Action Task Force's** assessment of Pakistan's progress on their action plan.

Role in Mumbai Attacks

- Mir is a senior member of the Pakistan-based **Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT)** terrorist organization.
- The U.S. State Department has stated that he was LeT's operations manager for the Mumbai attacks, playing a leading role in planning, preparing, and executing the terrorist acts.

7. Oman Creates History as First Foreign Government to Promote Country through Yoga (June 21, 2023)

First-Foreign-Government-to-Promote-Country-through-Yoga

The **Indian Embassy in Oman** has introduced a unique video titled '**Soulful Yoga, Serene Oman**' on the occasion of the **International Day of Yoga 2023**.

An overview of the news

- This initiative is considered pioneering and showcases the **beauty of Oman** while featuring yoga enthusiasts from different countries.
- The video stands out as it is a collaborative effort between the Indian Embassy and '**Visit Oman,**' a subsidiary of **Oman's Ministry of Tourism.**
- This partnership marks the first instance of a foreign government using yoga to promote its own country, highlighting the significance of this collaboration.
- The video not only demonstrates the increasing popularity of yoga worldwide but also highlights its growing prominence in Oman.
- With a significant **Indian community of 700,000 in Oman,** yoga has gained considerable traction in recent years.

Promoting Yoga through Initiatives

- The Indian Embassy has been actively involved in promoting yoga in Oman through various initiatives.
- In 2022, they organized the '**Muscat Yog Mahotsav,**' a 75-day celebration featuring over 75 yoga events across major cities in Oman.
- This initiative was timed with the **75 years of India's independence celebrations.**

Oman Yoga Yatra

- This year, the Embassy launched the '**Oman Yoga Yatra,**' a five-month-long journey leading up to a large-scale celebration of the International Day of Yoga 2023.
- The event, scheduled for June 21, 2023, is expected to attract more than 2,000 participants from diverse backgrounds.

About Oman

- Sultan - **Haitham bin Tariq Al Said**
- Capital - **Muscat**
- Official Language - **Arabic**
- Official Religion - **Islam**
- Currency - **Omani rial**

8. Number of refugees globally stood at 35.3 million by end of 2022: UNHCR (June 21, 2023)

According to the report of the **United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR),** by the **end of 2022,** the global number of refugees will reach **35.3 million.**

An overview of the news

- This figure represents an increase of more than eight million refugees from the previous year.

Most affected countries

- More than half of all refugees worldwide, **52 percent**, originated from **three specific countries**.
- These countries are **Syria** with a refugee population of 6.5 million, **Ukraine** with 5.7 million and **Afghanistan** with 5.7 million refugees.

Definition of refugee

- According to international law, refugees are persons who are forced to flee their home countries because of persecution or the presence of a serious threat to their **life, physical well-being, or personal liberty**.
- These persons seek protection in other countries.

World refugee day

- To draw attention to the plight of refugees globally, the United Nations designated 20 June as World Refugee Day.
- This annual festival serves as an opportunity to raise awareness and highlight the **challenges faced by refugees around the world**.

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

- It is an **international organization** mandated to protect and support refugees, as well as finding **durable solutions to their displacement**.
- It was **established in 1950** to address the needs of refugees after **World War II**.
- It operates in various countries around the world, providing protection, assistance, and advocacy for refugees and other forcibly displaced persons.
- Headquarter - **Geneva, Switzerland**

9. UK launches new landmark trading scheme for developing countries (June 20, 2023)

UK-launches-new-landmark-trading

The UK launched the Developing Countries Trade Scheme (DCTS) on 19 June.

An overview of the news

- This trade scheme provides a significant opportunity for India and 65 other poor and developing countries.

- The scheme simplifies trading rules and cuts tariffs on products entering the UK from 65 developing countries, including Bangladesh.

About Developing Countries Trading Scheme (DCTS)

- This is a preferential trading program that has been introduced by the United Kingdom.
- The DCTS replaces similar arrangements that were previously in place during the UK's membership in the European Union.
- The primary objective of the scheme is to support trade and promote economic growth for 65 poor and developing countries.
- Through the DCTS, these countries are granted preferential treatment in terms of trade, with reduced or eliminated tariffs on certain products imported into the United Kingdom.
- By providing favorable trading conditions, the DCTS aims to enhance market access for these countries, stimulate economic activity, and foster mutually beneficial trade relationships.

Benefits of the scheme

- It creates opportunities for businesses and supports **livelihoods** by facilitating trade between participating countries and the United Kingdom.
- By lowering trade barriers and providing preferential treatment, the scheme aims to **create employment opportunities** for individuals in participating countries.
- It plays a role in diversifying **local and international supply chains**, which contributes to **job creation and economic growth** in these countries.
- Through increased market access and favorable trading conditions, the scheme helps participating countries to access the UK market and expand their export capabilities.
- By increasing exports, countries can diversify their economies and reduce their dependence on limited products or markets.

10. India gifts missile corvette INS Kirpan to Vietnam (June 20, 2023)

India-gifts-missile-corvette-INS-Kirpan-to-Vietnam

Defense Minister **Rajnath Singh** on 19 June announced the gift of an indigenous in-service **missile corvette, INS Kirpan**, to the **Vietnam People's Navy**.

An overview of the news

- The announcement is expected to significantly enhance the capabilities of the **Vietnamese Navy**.
- The announcement was made during talks between Defense Minister Singh and Defense Minister of Vietnam General **Phan Van Gang in Delhi**.

- During the meeting, bilateral defense cooperation initiatives between India and Vietnam
- were reviewed and both sides expressed satisfaction at the progress of the ongoing engagements.
 - The Ministers identified opportunities to further enhance cooperation, particularly in areas such as defense industry cooperation, maritime security and multinational cooperation.
 - Apart from the talks, the Defense Minister of Vietnam also visited the **Defense Research and Development Organization (DRDO)** headquarters to explore ways to enhance defense industrial capabilities through research and joint production.
 - The strengthening of defense ties between India and Vietnam underscores the strategic partnership between the two countries and their shared commitment to regional security and cooperation.

About INS Kirpan

- INS Kirpan is a missile corvette belonging to the **Khukri class** with a displacement of about **1,350 tonnes**.
- It was commissioned into the Indian Navy on **12 January 1991**.
- The length of the corvette is **91 meters** and the beam is **11 metres**.
- It is capable of attaining speeds of over **25 knots**.
- Equipped with a variety of weapons including medium-range cannon, **30 mm close-range gun**, chaff launcher and surface-to-surface missiles, INS Kirpan has the versatility to play multiple roles.
- The roles performed by INS Kirpan include coastal and offshore patrolling, coastal security, surface warfare, anti-piracy operations and Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) operations.