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1. Ashish Jha appointed United States covid response coordinators (March 19, 2022)

Indian American Dr Ashish Jha has been appointed as the covid response coordinator by the American President Joe Biden.

Dr Jha was born in Madhubani in Bihar and was the Dean of the Brown University School of Public Health.

2. Sri Lankan finance minister Basil Rajapakse visit to India (March 17, 2022)

The Sri Lankan finance minister **Basil Rajapakse** visited India on 16 and 17th March 2022. It was his second visit to India after his December 2021 visit.

Sri Lanka is facing a severe economic crisis and Sri Lanka wants economic assistance from India. India has already provided a \$500-million line of credit for purchasing fuel and a currency swap of \$400 million.

For more detail kindly see 3 December 2021, 14 January 2022 post also

3. Bhagwant Mann sworn as the 18th Chief Minister of Punjab (March 17, 2022)

Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader Bhagwant Mann was sworn in as the 18th Chief Minister of Punjab on 16 March 2022. The Governor of Punjab Shri Banwari Lal Purohit administers the oath of office to Bhagwant Mann at **Khatkar Kalan**, the native village of freedom fighter Bhagat Singh.

- **Bhagwant Mann was elected from Dhuri Assembly constituency with 58206 votes.**
- The Aam Aadmi party won 92 seats in the 117 Punjab Legislative Assembly.
- **The election to constitute the 16th Legislative Assembly of Punjab was held on 20 February 2022.**
- **Charanjit Singh Channi of Congress party who was the 17th Chief Minister of Punjab lost the election.**

Important for Exam

- Article 164 of the constitution provides that the Chief Minister of a state is appointed by the Governor of the state and the other ministers are appointed on the advice of the Chief Minister.
- The oath which the Chief Minister and the Minister takes are mentioned in the Third Schedule of the Constitution.

4. ICJ ask Russia to stop military operation in Ukraine (March 17, 2022)

The top United Nation court , International Court of Justice(ICJ), has asked Russia to immediately stop its military operations in Ukraine. In a 13-2 judgement pronounced on 16 March 2022 the court ordered the "Russian Federation to immediately suspend the military operations that it commenced on Feb 24, 2022 on the territory of Ukraine."

- The court also ordered that Russia must also ensure that other forces under its control or supported by Moscow should not continue the military operation.
- Ukraine filed its case at the ICJ shortly after Russia's invasion began on Feb. 24, saying that Moscow's stated justification, that it was acting to prevent a genocide in eastern Ukraine, was unfounded.
- During hearings earlier this month, Ukraine said there was no threat of genocide in eastern Ukraine, and that the U.N.'s 1948 Genocide Convention, which both countries have signed, does not allow an invasion to prevent one.
- Although the rulings of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) are binding, it has no direct means of enforcing them, and in rare cases in the past countries have ignored them.
- Russia never participated in the ICJ hearing on the Ukraine case and it has rejected the ICJ ruling.

International Court of Justice(ICJ)

- The International Court of Justice is successor to the Permanent Court of Justice set up in 1920 by the League of Nations.
- After the Second World war, it was replaced by the International Court of Justice in 1945. The United Nation replaced the League of Nation in 1945.
- ICJ is one of the six principal organs of the United Nation and is also called the World Court.
- It hears cases relating to disputes between the member states of the United Nations according to International law.
- Headquarters of the ICJ : **The Hague, Netherlands**
- ICJ is composed of 15 Judges elected by the UN for a term of Nine Years .

Four Indian has so far been elected as the Judge of the ICJ

- B.N RAU, in 1952 -53
- NAGENDRA SINGH (He was the President of the ICJ from 1985-1988). He was the first Indian judge to have been elected for a 9 years term
- R.S.Pathak (1989-91)
- DALVEER BHANDARI (2012- till date)

5. Karnataka High Court rule that Hijab is not a part of Islamic culture (March 16, 2022)

A three judge bench of the Karnataka High Court headed by Chief Justice Ritu Raj Awasthi and which also included justice Krishna S Dixit and Justice Jaibunnisa M Khazi has dismissed petition filed by some muslim students which challenged the Karnataka government order to ban the wearing of hijab in educational institutions where uniform were prescribed.

The petition challenged the state government order dated 05.02.2022 issued under sections 7 & 133 of the Karnataka Education Act, 1983. This order directs the College Development Committees all over the State to prescribe 'Student Uniform',

In the **RESHAM AND ANOTHER VS. STATE OF KARNATAKA AND OTHERS 2022** main issues raised by the petitioners in the court were as follows :

- Whether wearing the hijab or the headscarf is part of essential religious practice in Islamic faith under article 25 of the Constitution?"
- Second issue was ;Whether wearing school uniform is violation of petitioners fundamental rights guaranteed under article 19 (1) a of the constitution that is freedom of expression and article 21 that is privacy?
- Third Issue was ; The government order of 5 February 2022 which made uniform compulsory in educational institution was violative of fundamental rights of article 14 ,which guarantees equality before law and article 15 which prohibits the discrimination by state on the basis of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them?

The High Court Judgement

- The High Court held that "wearing of the hijab by Muslim women does not make up an essential religious practice in Islamic faith" as per the article 25 of the constitution which provides freedom to practice and propagate of religion in India.
- On the second issue the court held that the government has the power to impose reasonable restrictions on the right to freedom under Article 19 of the constitution. Hence the government move to prescribe uniforms for the students is a reasonable restriction under article 19 of the constitution. The state can make this rule.
- On the third issue the court held that the government was competent to issue the 5 February order 2022 which made uniform compulsory for students and banned hijab was valid.

Seat of Karnataka High Court : Bangalore

6. Country's first Artificial Intelligence & Robotics Technology Park launched in Bengaluru (March 15, 2022)

The country's first Artificial Intelligence & Robotics Technology Park (ARTPARK) was launched in **Bengaluru** on 14 March 2022. It is promoted by a not-for-profit foundation set up by the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) Bengaluru.

- The Park has been set up with a capital of Rs 230 crore out of which the central government contribution is Rs 170 crore and the Karnataka government contribution is Rs 60 crore.
- The ARTPARK will work on creating a globally leading Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Robotics Innovation ecosystem in the country.

Indian Institute of Science (IISc)

- The Indian Institute of Science was set up in 1909 at **Bengaluru, Karnataka** by a partnership between the industrialist JRD Tata, the Mysore royal family and the Government of India.
- IISc is India's premier institute for advanced scientific and technological research and education.
- In 2018, IISc was selected as an Institution of Eminence (IoE) by the Government of India.

7. India's first Digital Water Bank 'AQVERIUM' launched in Bengaluru (March 15, 2022)

The country's first Digital Water Bank 'AQVERIUM' was launched in Bengaluru on 14 March 2022. It has been launched by new age company AquaKraft Group Ventures.

- It is a digital blockchain platform which would convert water conserved by companies and other institutions into water coins.
- These coins will be traded like crypto currencies and will have economic value like other digital assets.

8. Narayan Pradhan selected for GD Birla Award for Scientific Research (March 15, 2022)

Professor Narayan Pradhan has been selected for the 31st GD Birla Award for Scientific Research 2022 for his outstanding contribution in the field of material sciences. This was announced by the K.K.Birla foundation on 14 March 2022.

- Professor Narayan Pradhan is presently a member of the faculty at the School of Material Sciences, Indian Association for the Cultivation of Science, Jadavpur, West Bengal.

GD Birla Award for Scientific Research

The GD Birla award was started by the K.K.Birla foundation in 1991 to honour the founder of the Birla group, Ghanshyam Das Birla.

- It is given to an Indian scientist living in India and under the age of 50 years for outstanding research in the past 5 years.
- It carries a cash prize of Rs 5 Lakhs.
- 30th award 2021 winner : Prof Suman Chakraborty.
- It is given every year.

9. Power of Dog win best film awards at BAFTA awards (March 15, 2022)

The British Academy Film Awards or BAFTA awards was announced on 14 March 2022 at the Royal Albert hall, London, England.

Winners list

- Best Feature film : **The Power Of The Dog**
- Best Actress: **Joanna Scanlan**. She got the award for acting in the film "After Love".
- Best Actor : **Will Smith**. He got the award for acting in the film "King Richard".
- Best Director : Jane Campion. He got the award for directing the film " The Power Of The Dog".
- Best Animated film: **Encanto**
- Best supporting actor : **Troy Kotsur**. He got the award for acting in the film CODA. He is a deaf actor.
- Best supporting actress: **Ariana DeBose**. She got the award for acting in the film " West Side Story".
- Best British Film: **Belfast**. It was directed by Kenneth Branagh.

10. India is the largest importer of arms in the world :SIPRI (March 15, 2022)

India is the largest importer of arms in the world accounting for over 11% of the world arms import during 2017-21 ,according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI). These finding were published in the SIPRI'S **"Trends in International Arms Transfers 2021"**

Highlights of the SIPRI report

- India's arms imports have decreased by 21 percent between 2012-16 and 2017-21, but it still remains as the largest importer globally.
- The **five largest arms importers** in the 2017-21 period were India, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Australia, and China.
- These five countries accounted for nearly 38 % of the world's arms import during this period.
- **Russia was India's largest supplier of arms** in both 2012-16 and 2017-21. However, the volume of India's imports from Russia fell by 47 per cent between these two periods.
- **France is the second largest supplier of arms to India after Russia.**
- **The five biggest exporters of arms in the same period were the United States, Russia, France, China, and Germany.**
- They accounted for around 77% of the world arms export during 2017-21.
- As for exports, the US remained the world's biggest weapons supplier accounting for 39 per cent of the total.

- Russia is the second-largest exporter, but their trade has fallen by 26 per cent.
- Meanwhile, the largest arms importers in Europe are the UK, Norway, and the Netherlands.
- In 2017-21, China accounted for 4.6 per cent of global arms exports, a 31 per cent drop from its exports share in 2012-16. However, 47 per cent of China's exports during 2017-21 went to Pakistan.

Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI)

SIPRI is an independent international institute dedicated to research into conflict, armaments, arms control and disarmament. It is funded mainly by the Swedish Government .

Established in 1966,

Headquarters : **Solna, Sweden**