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1. Russia-Ukraine conflict forces over 4 million children into poverty: UNICEF (Oct. 18, 2022)

The UN agency **UNICEF** has revealed that the economic crisis due to **Russia-Ukraine conflict** has thrown more than **4 million children into poverty** across eastern **Europe and Central Asia**.

Important facts

- In an official statement, UNICEF said that children are bearing the biggest burden of the economic crisis caused by the Ukraine war.
- Conflict and rising inflation have pushed an additional 4 million children into poverty in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, a **19 percent increase** since 2021.
- UNICEF has concluded this from a study of data from **22 countries**.
- Russians and Ukrainian children have been the most affected since Russia's attack on Ukraine in February this year.
- On the other hand, the **World Food Program** estimates that around **19 million Afghans** face food insecurity.

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)

- It was established by the United Nations General Assembly on **11 December 1946**.
- Poland's physician **Ludwik Rauschmann** was instrumental in the formation of UNICEF.
- The main purpose of establishing it was to provide food and health services in case of emergency to children and mothers in countries devastated by World War II.

2. Review of site work progress of Maritime Heritage Complex at Lothal, Gujarat (Oct. 18, 2022)

Prime Minister **Narendra Modi** reviewed the site work progress of the **National Maritime Heritage Complex** at **Lothal in Gujarat** on 18 October via video conferencing.

About National Maritime Heritage Complex

- It is being developed in **Lothal (Indus Valley civilisation)** region of Gujarat.
- The project not only showcases India's rich and diverse maritime heritage but also helps Lothal to emerge as a world class international tourist destination.
- The foundation stone of the project was laid by Prime Minister **Narendra Modi** and the master plan was agreed in March 2019.

- Work on this project started in **March 2022**, it is being developed at a cost of about **Rs 3500 crore**.
- This heritage theme park will cover an area of 400 acres with structures like the National Maritime Heritage Museum, Lighthouse Museum, Maritime Institute, and eco-resorts.
- It is one of the major projects under the **Sagarmala scheme** of the **Ministry of Culture (MoC) and Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways (MoPSW)**.

About Lothal

- Lothal was one of the southernmost sites of the ancient **Indus Valley civilization**, located in the **Bhil region** of the state of Gujarat.
- Construction of the city Lothal is believed to have begun around **2200 BCE**.
- Lothal was discovered in **1954 by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)**.
- Lothal is known for the discovery of the oldest man-made dockyard.
- It was an important and thriving trade centre in ancient times, with its trade in pearls, gems and precious jewellery reaching the far corners of West Asia and Africa.

About Indus Valley Civilization

- It is also known as the **Harappan civilization** which developed in the western part of South Asia, contemporary Pakistan and western India around **2,500 BC**.
- It was basically an urban civilization and people lived in well-planned and well-built towns, which were also centres of trade.
- It had wide roads and a well-developed drainage system and houses were built of burnt bricks and had two or more storeys.

3. Ulf Kristersson elected Sweden's new Prime Minister (Oct. 18, 2022)

Sweden's parliament on 17 October elected **Ulf Kristersson**, 59, leader of the Conservative Moderate Party, as the **new Prime Minister**.

Important facts

- He will head a coalition that is also backed by a once radical right-wing party.
- His government is expected to assume office on October 18.
- His alliance consists of three parties. Although the coalition does not have a majority, in Sweden, the prime minister can rule as long as there is no majority against him in parliament.
- His party emerged as the major winner in Sweden's 11 September general election, with a record **20.5 percent** of the vote, behind **outgoing Prime Minister Magdalena Andersen's Social Democrats**.

- The Social Democrats have dominated Swedish politics since the **1930s**.
- The new government plans to cut taxes, start the process of building new nuclear power plants, tighten immigration rules and give more police powers as part of a policy deal with the Sweden Democrats.

About Sweden

- It is located on the **Scandinavian Peninsula** in **northern Europe**.
- The ancient name of the country was **Svitiod**.
- Prime Minister - **Ulf Kristersson**
- Capital - **Stockholm**
- Currency - **Swedish krona**
- King - **Carl XVI Gustaf**

4. Diplomat Apoorva Srivastava appointed Ambassador to Slovak Republic (Oct. 18, 2022)

Apoorva Srivastava, a diplomat in the **Indian Foreign Service**, has been appointed to serve as **India's Ambassador to the Slovak Republic**.

Important facts

- Apoorva, a 2001 batch officer, is currently serving as the **Consul General at the Consulate General of India in Toronto**.
- Prior to this, she held various positions in the Ministry of External Affairs and was posted in Kathmandu and Paris, among other places.
- India and Slovakia have signed agreements ranging from defence and air services to economic and cultural.
- India and Slovakia regularly support each other's candidacy for top positions in multilateral organisations such as the International Court of Justice and the United Nations.

Slovak Republic

- Slovak Republic or Slovakia is a landlocked country of **central Europe**.
- It is bordered by Poland to the north, Ukraine to the east, Hungary to the south, and Austria to the southwest.
- Its former federal partner, the Czech Republic, lies to the west.
- Prime Minister - **Eduard Heger**

- Capital - **Bratislava**
- President - **Zuzana Caputova**
- Currency - **Euro**
- Official Language - **Slovak**

5. India-Africa Defence Dialogue (Oct. 18, 2022)

India-Africa Defence Dialogue (IADD) being held on 18 October on the sidelines of the **12th DefExpo in Gandhinagar, Gujarat.**

Important facts

- **The theme of the dialogue** is '**India-Africa : Adopting Strategy for Synergising and Strengthening Defence and Security Cooperation**'.
- **It aims** to explore new avenues of convergence for mutual engagement including in the areas of capacity building, training, cyber security, maritime security and counter-terrorism.
- **Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analysis (MP-IDSA)**, India's leading think-tank for advanced research in international relations, is the **knowledge partner** for the **India-Africa Defence Dialogue.**
- India's approach towards Africa is guided by the **Kampala Principles** enunciated by Prime Minister **Narendra Modi in 2018.**
- On February 6, 2020, the first ever India-Africa Defence Ministers' Conference was held in **Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh** in conjunction with the DefExpo.

What are Kampala Principles?

- The Kampala Principles promote the ownership of private sector partnerships (PSEs) through development cooperation by partner countries.
- These principles ensure the alignment of PSE projects and programs with national sustainable development priorities.

About African continent

- It is the **second largest continent (after Asia)**, covering about one-fifth of the total land surface of Earth.
- It is **bounded by** the Atlantic Ocean in the west, the Mediterranean Sea in the north, the Red Sea and Indian Ocean in the east, and the Atlantic and Indian Oceans in the south.
- The island of **Madagascar**, off the coast of Africa, is one of the **largest islands in the world.**

- The African continent has a population of over **one billion**, with a combined **GDP of \$2.5 trillion**, making it a huge potential market.
- Africa is a resource-rich continent rich in **crude oil, gas, pulses and lentils, leather, gold and other metals**, all of which are lacking in substantial quantities in India.

6. Conference of the Secretaries of Civil Aviation (Oct. 18, 2022)

The **Conference of Civil Aviation Secretaries** of all States and Union Territories was organised by the **Ministry of Civil Aviation** on 17 October 2022 at **Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi**.

Important facts

- The inaugural session was presided over by **Rajiv Bansal, Secretary, Ministry of Civil Aviation**, Government of India.
- Presiding over the inaugural session, Rajiv Bansal said that a lot of progress has been made in the aviation sector in the last year.
- He said domestic air traffic is almost near the pre-Covid level, many new airports have been inaugurated and new routes have been started.
- The government has taken several steps to promote drones, helicopter medical emergency services and fractional ownership, he said.
- During the conference, requested the states to reduce VAT on Aviation Turbine Fuel, ATF and appreciated the states which have already done so.
- Civil Aviation Minister **Jyotiraditya Scindia** addressed the Conference.

Objective of the conference

- The objective of the conference is to promote greater cooperation and synergy between the State Civil Aviation Departments and the Ministry of Civil Aviation to enhance the development of the civil aviation sector.

Government Initiatives in Civil Aviation sector

- National Civil Aviation Policy, 2016
- UDAN (Ude Desh ka Aam Nagrik) Scheme
- The Government has allocated INR 10,667 crore for the Ministry of Civil Aviation in Union **Budget 2022-23**.
- The government has allowed **100% FDI under automatic route for greenfield projects**, while **74% FDI is allowed under automatic route for brownfield projects**.

7. Iraq's Moqtada al-Sadr's movement refuses to join new government (Oct. 17, 2022)

Iraqi firebrand Shia leader Moqtada al-Sadr's movement announced its refusal to join a new government being formed by Prime Minister-designate **Mohammad Shia al-Sudani**. This is likely to prolong the political instability in the country. The Moqtada al-Sadr's movement announcement came after the Iraqi Parliament elected **Abdul Latif Rashid**, a 78-year-old Iraqi Kurd, as Iraq's new president on 13 October 2022.

The newly elected President named al-Sudani as prime minister in a bid to end a year of political gridlock in the country since the October 2021 elections.

Mohammad Shia al-Sudani, supported by Iran backed Coordination Framework coalition parties has one month, within which to form a government.

Political instability in Iraq

- The democratic institutions built in oil-rich Iraq since the 2003 US-led invasion that toppled Dictator Saddam Hussein remain fragile, and neighbouring Iran wields major influence in the Shia majority Iraq.
- After the toppling of Saddam Hussein there has been bitter sectarian conflict between the Iraqi populations divided into Kurdish, Sunni, and Shia groups.
- To tackle the sectarian problem a new power sharing system has been developed in Iraq .The **President** by convention is Kurdish, the **Prime minister** a Shiite Arab and the **parliament speaker** a Sunni Arab.
- Iraq has been without a new government since elections last October, when candidates loyal to Mr. Sadr won the single biggest bloc of seats and eclipsed rival Shiite political parties backed by Iran. His relationship with Iran is also not good.
- Moqtada al-Sadr, who has the ability to mobilise tens of thousands of his supporters with a single tweet, has repeatedly demanded early elections, while the Coordination Framework wants a new government in place before any polls are held.
- Tensions between the two rival Shia camps boiled over on August 29 when more than 30 al-Sadr supporters were killed in clashes with Iran-backed factions and the army.

Republic of Iraq

In ancient times the region where modern Iraq is was known as Mesopotamia (Land between the rivers).

The modern state of Iraq was created in 1921 by Britain.

It gained its independence from Britain in 1932.

It is an Oil rich Arab country and it is the **largest supplier of crude oil to India.**

Capital: **Baghdad**

Currency: **Iraqi Dinar**

President: **Abdul Latif Rashid**

8. Prime Minister Inaugurates 600 Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samruddhi Kendras (Oct. 17, 2022)

Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated **PM Kisan Samman Sammelan 2022** at **Indian Agricultural Research Institute in New Delhi** on 17 October, 2022.

Important facts

- The Prime Minister also inaugurated **600 Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samruddhi Kendras (PMKSK)** under the Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilisers.
- The Prime Minister also launched the **Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Jan Fertilizer Project - One Nation One Fertilizer**.
- One Nation, One Fertilizer will free the farmer from all kinds of confusion regarding the quality and availability of manure.
- During the event, the Prime Minister also released the **12th instalment** of Rs 16,000 crore under the **Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN)** through Direct Benefit Transfer.
- The Prime Minister also inaugurated the Agriculture Startup Conclave and Exhibition.
- During the programme, the Prime Minister also launched an e-magazine on fertilisers, '**Indian Age**'.

Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samruddhi Kendras

- 3.25 lakh fertilizer shops will be developed across the country as **Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samridhi Kendra (PMKSK)**.
- These will be the centres where farmers can not only buy fertilizers and seeds but also conduct soil tests and get useful information about farming techniques.
- Under this scheme, retail fertilizer shops in the country will be converted into PMKSK in a phased manner.

9. International Day for the Eradication of Poverty (Oct. 17, 2022)

The **International Day for the Eradication of Poverty** is observed annually around the world on **17 October** to highlight the issues of poverty, hunger and violence.

Important facts

- The day intends to find ways to reduce and eradicate poverty.
- Every year on this day people from all backgrounds, social origins and beliefs gather together to show their solidarity with the poor.
- Its aim is to raise awareness about the struggles of people living in poverty.

- The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (**UNESCO**) believes
- that the lasting fight against poverty can be fought through education, science and the support of a creative economy.

Theme of 2022

- The theme of International Day for the Eradication of Poverty 2022 - '**Dignity for all in practice.**'
- This year's theme is based on the dignity of man, which is not only a fundamental right but is the basis of all other fundamental rights.

Background of the day

- On **17 October 1987**, more than a million people gathered at the **Trocadero in Paris**.
- He declared that poverty is a violation of human rights of an individual and there is a need to ensure that these rights are respected.
- Trocadéro is the place where the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights** was signed in **1948**.
- On **22 December 1992**, the **United Nations (UN) General Assembly** declared **17 October** as the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty.

Global scenario of poverty

- Around **689 million people** worldwide live in extreme poverty and live on less than **\$1.9** each day.
- About **1.3 billion people in 107 developing countries** live in multidimensional poverty. They account for 22 percent of the global population.
- About **84.3 percent** of multidimensionally poor individuals live in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.

Poverty in India

- According to the National Poverty Line in 2011, about **21.9%** of the population in India is **below the poverty line**.
- Presently the poverty line is **INR 1,059.42 per month** in rural areas and **INR 1,286 per month** in urban areas.
- Poverty in India is estimated by the **Task Force of NITI Aayog under the Ministry of Statistics and Program Implementation** through the calculation of the poverty line on the basis of data obtained by the National Sample Survey Office.

10. Railway minister inaugurates India's first aluminium Freight Rake (Oct. 17, 2022)

On 16 October 2022, Union Railways Minister **Ashwini Vaishnaw** inaugurated **India's first aluminium freight rake** at **Bhubaneswar railway station**.

Important facts

- The first Aluminum Freight Rake - **61 BOBRNHSM1**, was flagged off by the Minister whose destination is **Bilaspur**.
- A dedicated effort of Make in India programme, it is indigenously designed and developed in collaboration with **RDSO, Hindalco and Besco Wagons**.
- Apart from freight trains, Indian Railways is also introducing aluminum passenger coaches in the near future.

Features of Aluminium Rake

- It is fully Lock Bolted construction with no welding on superstructure.
- The tare is 3.25 tons lower than normal steel rakes, 180 ton extra carrying capacity resulting in higher throughput per wagon.
- Higher payload to tare ratio is 2.85.

Significance

- This will reduce the **carbon footprint** as there will be less fuel consumption and more transportation of goods.
- A single rake can save over 14,500 tonnes of **CO2** over its lifetime.
- Its cost is **35% more** than the normal cost as all its structure is made of **aluminium**.
- Low maintenance cost due to high corrosion and abrasion resistance.