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1. 81 crore people to get free foodgrains for one year under NFSA (Dec. 24, 2022)

81 crore people to get free foodgrains for one year under NFSA

The government on 23 December decided to provide **free foodgrains to 81.35 crore people for one year** under the **National Food Security Act (NFSA)** at an estimated cost of Rs 2 lakh crore. It will be implemented from **1 January 2023**.

Important facts

- As per the cabinet decision, beneficiaries under NFSA will get free food grains for one year **till December 2023**.
- The decision comes a few days before the [Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana \(PMGKAY\)](#) expires on **December 31, 2022**.
- The beneficiaries will not have to pay a single rupee to get foodgrains.

About PMGKAY

- It is a food security welfare scheme announced by the Central Government in **March 2020**, during the Covid-19 pandemic.
- It is a part of the **Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Package (PMGKP)** to help the poor in the fight against COVID-19.
- The program is run by the **Department of Food and Public Distribution** under the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution.
- Under the programme more than 80 crore beneficiaries are provided 5 kg free wheat/rice per person per month.
- It is the **largest food security program** in the world.

Objective of the scheme

- To provide food security to all priority households (ration card holders and those identified by the Antyodaya Anna Yojana scheme), to provide food grains to India's poorest citizens through the Public Distribution System.

National Food Security (NFS) Act, 2013

- It aims to provide subsidized food grains to approximately two-thirds of India's 1.2 billion people.
- This includes **Re 3 per kg of rice, Re 2 per kg of wheat and Re 1 per kg of coarse grains** under the Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS).
- It converts the existing food security programs of the Government of India into a legal mandate.

- The existing food security programs include the **mid-day meal scheme**, the **Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) scheme** and the **Public Distribution System (PDS)**.

2. Sitiveni Rabuka becomes the new Prime Minister of Fiji (Dec. 24, 2022)

Sitiveni Rabuka became Fiji's prime minister on 24 December 2022

Sitiveni Rabuka became Fiji's prime minister on 24 December 2022 after a coalition of parties voted narrowly to install him as leader of the country. It also signals the end of the former Prime Minister **Frank Bainimarama's** 16 years in power. In the 55 member Parliament of Fiji, Sitiveni Rabuka secured 28 votes against Bainimarama's 27 votes.

Rabuka now heads a three-party coalition government consisting of his **People's Alliance**, the National Federation Party led by Biman Prasad and the Sodelpa Party, led by Viliame Gavoka.

Fiji will have three deputy prime ministers in Biman Prasad (finance), Viliame Gavoka (tourism), and Manoa Kamikamica (external trade) under the coalition arrangement.

Republic of Fiji

It is an archipelago of 300 islands and 500 islets in the South Pacific Ocean near New Zealand.

It gained Independence from Great Britain in 1970.

About two-fifths of the Fijian populations are Indians who were brought as indentured labourer by the British from North India to work in the sugar fields of Fiji.

English, Fijian, and [Fijian Hindi](#) are the official languages of the country.

The Parliament of Fiji is unicameral and consists of **55 members**. The term of the Fijian parliament is of **four years**.

Capital of Fiji: **Suva**

Currency: **Fijian Dollar**

President: **Jioji Konrote**

3. PM Modi addressed the 75th 'Amrut Mahotsav' of Shree Swaminarayan Gurukul Sansthan (Dec. 24, 2022)

75th Amrut Mahotsav of Shree Swaminarayan Gurukul Rajkot Sansthan
75th
Amrut
Mahotsav
of
Shree
Swaminarayan
Gurukul
Rajkot
Sansthan

Prime Minister **Narendra Modi** addressed the **75th Amrut Mahotsav of Shree Swaminarayan Gurukul Rajkot Sansthan** via video-conferencing on December 24.

Important facts

- The five-day Amrit Mahotsav celebrations were inaugurated by Chief Minister **Bhupendra Patel at Sahajanand nagar in Rajkot** on 22 December.
- Spiritual leaders, saints and devotees from across the world are participating in large numbers in the grand Amrit Mahotsav celebrations to be held at **Sahajanand Nagar** in Rajkot.
- Mega blood donation camps, free medical check-up camps are being organized during Amrit Mahotsav celebrations, where renowned doctors are providing free medical services and free medicines to the people.

About Shree Swaminarayan Gurukul Rajkot Sansthan

- It was established at Rajkot in **1948** by seer **Shri Dharmajivandasji Swami**.
- It has expanded significantly and currently has more than 40 branches across the world, providing school, undergraduate and postgraduate education to more than 25,000 students.

4. CCEA increases the Minimum Support prices for copra for 2023 season (Dec. 23, 2022)

Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs(CCEA)

The **Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs(CCEA)** chaired by the **Prime Minister Narendra Modi** on 23 December 2022 has approved an increase in the [Minimum Support Prices \(MSPs\)](#) for copra for 2023 season. The approval is based on recommendations of the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP).

The MSP for Fair Average Quality of milling copra has been fixed at Rs. **10860/- per quintal** and for ball copra at **Rs. 11750/- per quintal** for 2023 season. This is an **increase** of Rs. 270/- per quintal for milling copra and Rs. 750/- per quintal for ball copra over the previous season.

The announced MSP of copra for 2023 season is in line with the principle of fixing the MSP at a level of at least 1.5 times all India weighted average cost of production as announced by the Government in the Budget 2018-19.

National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India Ltd. (NAFED) and **National Cooperative Consumers' Federation (NCCF)** will continue to act as Central Nodal Agencies for procurement of copra and de-husked coconut under **Price Support Scheme (PSS)**.

Price Support Scheme

- It has been launched by the government of India.
- Under this scheme when the prices of commodities fall below the Minimum Support price (MSP) , state and central notified procurement nodal agencies purchase commodities directly from the farmers at MSP under specified Fair Average Quality,
- This helps and protects the farmers against the economic loss in farming.

5. Government approves Bharat Biotech's Nasal covid vaccine (Dec. 23, 2022)

India on 23 December 2022 has allowed the use of Bharat Biotech's nasal COVID-19 vaccine as a booster dose.

The government of India on 23 December 2022 has allowed the use of Bharat Biotech's nasal COVID-19 vaccine as a booster dose. The vaccine will be offered to people of 18 years and above.

The vaccine will be available initially at the private hospitals and can be booked on the CoWIN app from 23 December 2022.

The nasal vaccine **BBV154** had received approval of the [Drugs Controller General of India](#) in November for restricted use in an emergency situation for those above 18 as a heterologous booster dose.

This vaccine has been specifically formulated to allow intranasal delivery through nasal drops. The nasal delivery system has been designed and developed to be cost-effective in low and middle-income countries.

It was developed in partnership with **Washington University, St. Louis** of the United States of America.

The rise of [mutant variants](#) in China and other countries may cause a fresh surge of infections in India, which is a cause of concern for the government.

Hyderabad based Bharat Biotech company has also developed injectable **Covaxin vaccine** with Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) and National Institute of Virology, Pune.

Heterologous vaccine

A heterologous vaccine is a type of booster vaccine which is given to a person who has already taken a different vaccine. A heterologous vaccine is also called a mix and match vaccine because a person is taking two types of vaccine for the same disease.

The **novel coronavirus** was first detected in **Wuhan** China in December 2019 and was later declared a Public health emergency of International concern by the World Health Organisation on 30 January 2020 and a Pandemic on 11 March 2020. The first case of the virus in India was confirmed in **Kerala** on 30 January 2020.

The Covid vaccination in India was started on **16 January 2021**.

6. CJI D Y Chandrachud constitutes a committee to conduct accessibility audit of Supreme Court premises for disabled (Dec. 23, 2022)

The committee which was set up on 22 December 2022 will be headed by the Supreme Court Judge S Ravindra Bhat.

The Chief Justice of India (CJI) **D Y Chandrachud** has set up a committee to conduct an audit of “physical and functional access” of the top court premises to make them disabled friendly.

The committee which was set up on 22 December 2022 will be headed by the **Supreme Court Judge S Ravindra Bhat**.

The committee will prepare a report on the accessibility audit, result of the survey of persons with disability and recommendations/proposals geared towards removing the barriers to access.

The other members of the committee include **Dr Sanjay Jain**, professor of National Law School of India University, Bengaluru, **Shakti Mishra**, librarian nominated from the apex court, **V Sridhar Reddy**, advocate nominated by the Supreme Court Bar Association and **Nilesh Singit**, independent accessibility expert nominated by the Centre for Disability Studies (NALSAR University of Law).

7. Unique musical dance event held in New Delhi to recharge electric vehicle by dancing (Dec. 23, 2022)

recharge electric vehicle by dancing

The Union Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas organized a unique one-day event on 23 December 2022, called **‘Dance to Decarbonise’**, where renewable energy generated through dance was used to charge electric vehicles. This unique event was held at the **National Stadium, in New Delhi** as a run up to the India Energy Week that will be held in Bangalore in the month of February 2023.

One of the imperatives of this event was to build engagement around sustainability by leveraging dance and music. The activity involved setting up a state-of-the-art stage, which will harness renewable energy created by people dancing on it to charge an SUV and an e-auto rickshaw.

The event is seen as a commitment by the Government to achieve net-zero emissions by 2070 and the implementation of responsible energy sources over transformational energy systems for the future.

Union Ministry for Petroleum and Natural Gas: **Hardeep Singh Puri**

8. ISRO to carry US instrument on board the forthcoming Chandrayaan 3 mission (Dec. 22, 2022)

Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) forthcoming Chandrayaan 3 mission will carry scientific instruments of the United States of America. The Chandrayaan mission 2 also carried American scientific instruments. This information was given by the Union Minister of state (Independent charge)Science & Technology, Atomic Energy and Space, Dr Jitendra Singh in the Rajya Sabha on 22 December 2022.

He said that India has signed 4 cooperative documents specifically to collaborate in space exploration in the last five years.

Apart from the United States of America, India has also signed an agreement with **Japan** to conduct a feasibility study for a joint lunar polar exploration mission, while with the **United Kingdom** it has an agreement for conducting a feasibility study for collaboration in future space science missions.

He said, India and Bhutan collaborated on the development of **INDIA-BHUTANSAT** Satellite carrying into payloads NanoMX, an optical imaging payload developed by ISRO and APRS-Digipeater. The satellite was successfully placed in orbit on 26.11.2022.

A communication satellite 'South Asia Satellite' was dedicated by India to South Asian Countries in 2017.

ISRO mission to Moon or Chandrayaan

ISRO launched Chandrayaan mission to study the moon. The **Chandrayaan 1 mission was** launched on 22 October 2008 from Satish Dhawan Space center, Sriharikota, Andhra Pradesh. It launched a Moon Impact Probe that crashed on the moon surface and discovered a **small amount of water on the Moon's surface.**

Chandrayaan 2 was launched on 2 July 2019. The mission aimed to land a rover on the moon's South Pole. However the lunar lander **Vikram** crashed on the moon surface on 7 September 2019 and prevented rover **Pragyaan** from successfully travelling on the surface of the moon.

Chandrayaan 3

According to the ISRO chairman S.Somanath Chandrayaan 3 is scheduled to be launched in June 2023. It will only consist of a rover and lander and will communicate with the earth via an orbiter from Chandrayaan 2.

Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)

It was set up on 15 August 1969

It is India's national space agency.

Headquarters: **Bengaluru**

Chairman: **S.Somanath**

9. Alok Singh appointed head of Air India's low cost airline business (Dec. 22, 2022)

Tata Group has appointed **Alok Singh** as the chief of its low cost airline business from 1 January 2023. The Low Cost Carrier business will comprise **AirAsia India** and **Air India Express**.

Currently the Tata group operates four air lines. They are **Air India, Air India Express, AirAsia India** and **Vistara**. Vistara is a joint venture of Tata with Singapore Airlines.

On 29 November 2022, Tata group announced the merger of [Vistara with Air India](#) under a deal wherein Singapore Airlines will also acquire a 25.1 per cent stake in Air India. The deal, which will make Air India the **country's largest international carrier** and second-largest **domestic airline**, is expected to be completed by March 2024, subject to regulatory approvals.

The Tata group intends to merge budget carrier AirAsia India with Air India Express and the merger is likely to be completed by the end of 2023.

After Merger the company will be called **Air India Express**.

AirAsia India was launched in 2014 while Air India Express started operations back in 2005.

Low cost airlines or budget airlines or no-frill airlines do not provide traditional services like food, drinks or other premium services and their fares are also usually low. Some of the major low cost airlines operating in India are Go Air, Indigo, Air India Express, and Spice Jet.

Air India Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer: **Campbell Wilson**

10. 3 cases of Omicron subvariant BF.7 found in India, causing COVID surge in China (Dec. 22, 2022)

According to official sources, three cases of **Omicron subvariant BF.7** have been detected in India so far which is apparently driving the current surge of Covid cases in **China**.

Important facts

- The first case of BF.7 in India was detected in October by **Gujarat Biotechnology Research Centre**.

- So far, two cases have been reported from **Gujarat** while one case has been reported from **Odisha**.
- Chinese cities are currently in the grip of the highly contagious Omicron strain, with most BF.7 cases spreading to **Beijing**.

About Omicron variant BF.7

- BF.7 is a sub-lineage of the **Omicron variant BA.5** and has the strongest infection ability since it is highly transmissible.
- It has a shorter incubation period, and has a higher capacity to cause reinfection or infect even those vaccinated.
- It has already been detected in several other countries, including the **US, the UK** and European nations such as **Belgium, Germany, France and Denmark**.
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