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1. Opening Ceremony of International Year of Millets 2023 held in Rome, Italy (Dec. 7, 2022)

The United Nations agency Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) hosted an opening ceremony of the International Year of Millets - 2023 (IYM2023) in **Rome, Italy** on 6 December 2022 in a hybrid mode.

An Indian delegation led by **Shobha Karandlaje**, Minister of State, Agriculture & Farmers Welfare along with other senior officials were present at the opening ceremony.

Shobha Karandlaje conveyed PM Modi's compliments to the United Nations for declaring the Year 2023 as the International Year of Millets. PM, through his message, thanked the global community for supporting India's proposal to mark the International Year of Millets (IYM).

PM Modi said that "India will steer the IYM2023 celebrations worldwide and organise campaigns to promote the cultivation and consumption of Millets, both in India and abroad during the next year."

Speaking on the occasion, Director General, FAO Mr. QU Dongyu said the IYM2023 will provide us with a unique opportunity to give visibility to crops that have great potential to strengthen global nutrition, food security.

Millets and India

According to the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), India is the largest producer of millet in the world.

- The total production of millets in India in 2020-21 was 17.96 million tonnes which was nearly 41% of the world production.
- **Rajasthan** was the largest millet producing state in India.
- Millets are grown in about 21 states in the country including Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Telangana, Uttarakhand, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, and Haryana.
- India was **the 5th largest exporter of millet** in the world in 2020 .

FAO (Food and Agricultural Organisation)

- The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations is a specialized agency of the United Nations that leads international efforts to defeat hunger and improve nutrition and food security.
- It was founded in 1945.
- Its headquarters is in Rome (Italy).
- It was conferred with the Nobel Peace Prize in 2020

Director General: QU Dongyu

2. Mandaviya inaugurates National Animal Resource Facility for Biomedical Research at Genome Valley, Hyderabad (Dec. 17, 2022)

National Animal Resource Facility for Biomedical Research at Genome Valley, Hyderabad

Union health minister **Mansukh Mandaviya** on 17th December inaugurated **ICMR's National Animal Resource Facility for Biomedical Research (NARFBR)** at **Genome Valley in Hyderabad** to address **zoonotic threats**.

About ICMR's NARFBR

- It is a top-notch facility that will provide the ethical care and use and welfare of laboratory animals used during research.
- It will not only serve as a **state-of-the-art facility for ethical animal studies** but also apply to basic regulatory animal research.
- It will help in capacity building of new researchers and quality assurance checks as well as create procedures for new drugs, vaccines and pre-clinical testing within the country.
- It would be an asset for the country to deal with **zoonotic diseases**.

Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)

- It is one of the oldest medical research bodies in the world for the coordination and promotion of biomedical research.
- Its headquarter is in **New Delhi**.
- It works under the Department of **Health Services (DHS) of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare**.
- It was established in 1911 as the **Indian Research Fund Association (IRFA)**.
- Later in **1949** it was renamed as ICMR.

3. NASA launches international mission 'SWOT' to survey Earth's water (Dec. 17, 2022)

NASA launches international mission 'SWOT' to survey Earth's water

The US National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) and the French space agency Centre National d'Etudes Spatiales (CNES) have jointly launched **the Surface Water and Ocean Topography (SWOT) mission** to track nearly all the water on Earth's surface.

The SWOT mission was launched through a **SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket** from the Space Launch Complex at **Vandenberg Space Force Base in California, United States of America** on 16 December 2022. The mission has a lifespan of three years.

Feature of the Mission

- According to NASA SWOT will cover the entire Earth's surface between 78 degrees south and 78 degrees north latitude at least once every 21 days.
- It will provide data on more than 95 per cent of the world's lakes larger than 15 acres (62,500 square meters) and rivers wider than 330 feet (100 meters) across.
- Currently, freshwater researchers have reliable measurements for only a few thousand lakes around the world.

- The satellite will measure the height of water in freshwater bodies and the ocean on more than 90 per cent of Earth's surface.
- This information will provide insights into how the ocean influences climate change; how a warming world affects lakes, rivers, and reservoirs; and how communities can better prepare for disasters, such as floods.

National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA)

It is an American government's premier space agency which was set up in 1958 to promote research and development in the exploration of outer space and Earth's atmosphere.

NASA mainly launches its rockets from its two primary spaceports. One is John F. Kennedy Space Center on Merritt Island in Florida, United States and from Vandenberg Space Force Base in California, United States of America.

Headquarters of NASA: **Washington D.C**

Administrator of NASA: **Bill Nelson**

4. Iran is suspended from the U.N. Commission on the Status of Women (Dec. 17, 2022)

Iran is suspended from the U.N. Commission

Iran has been expelled from the **United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)**, in which India abstained from voting.

Important facts

- The US proposal at the **UN Economic and Social Council** to remove Iran from the **panel received 29 votes.**
- **Out of a total of 54 members, eight votes were against and 16 were absent.**
- There have been widespread protests in Iran against the order forcing women to wear the hijab, with Iran voting to suspend it after vigorous lobbying by the US.
- The Economic and Social Council has expressed serious concern over the actions taken by the Government of Iran since September 2022 through the draft to remove Iran from the **remaining 2022-2026 term** of the 'Commission on the Status of Women'.
- The draft said that Iran continued to violate women's human rights, including freedom of expression.
- Through the resolution, it was decided to remove Iran "with immediate effect" from the remaining term of 2022-2026 of the 'Commission on the Status of Women'.

About UN Commission on the Status of Women

- It is a functional commission of the **UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)**, one of the main organs within the **United Nations.**

- It has been described as the UN organ promoting **gender equality and the empowerment of women.**
- Every year, representatives gather at UN Headquarters in New York to evaluate progress on gender equality, identify challenges, set global standards and formulate concrete policies to promote gender equality and advancement of women worldwide.
- **India** is a member of this commission **from 2021 to 2025.**

5. Tokyo Makes Solar Panels Mandatory for New Homes Built After 2025 (Dec. 17, 2022)

Tokyo Makes Solar Panels Mandatory for New Homes Built After 2025

On December 15, the **Japanese capital's local assembly** passed a new rule mandating that all new homes in Tokyo built by large-scale home builders after April 2025 must **install solar power panels** to cut household carbon emissions.

Important facts

- This new rule for newly built homes mandates about **50 major builders** to equip homes of up to **2,000 square metres (21,500 sq ft)** with renewable energy sources, mainly solar panels.
- The **Tokyo Metropolitan Government** aims to halve greenhouse gas emissions by **2030 compared with 2,000 levels.**
- Japan is the **fifth largest carbon emitter in the world.** It has committed to achieve carbon neutrality **by 2050.**
- Meanwhile, scientists at the **California Institute of Technology** also launched a space solar program in 2013 following a \$100 million grant, while teams from countries including Japan, Russia and India are also studying the possibilities.

6. India Energy Week 2023 to be held in Bengaluru (Dec. 17, 2022)

India Energy Week 2023 to be held in Bengaluru

India Energy Week 2023 (IEW 2023), being organised during India's G20 Presidency, will be held in **Bengaluru between February 6 and 8, 2023.**

Important facts

- **Hardeep S Puri**, Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas & Housing and Urban Affairs, inaugurated the **curtain raiser.**
- **Basavaraj Bommai**, Chief Minister of Karnataka was the Chief Guest for the occasion.

- The Curtain Raiser marks the beginning of number of preparatory events being hosted in the run up to the India Energy Week 2023.
- Major events include "**Dancing Charged Electric Vehicles**" on 23rd December 2022 at New Delhi's Kartavya Path, "**Car Rally of Sustainable Fuel Vehicles**" from New Delhi to Manesar on 8th January 2023.

India Energy Week 2023

- It is expected to feature more than **30 energy Ministers, 50 CEOs and 10000+ delegates.**
- This will provide a unique opportunity to showcase India as an engine of global economic growth and a driver of global consumption.
- It will provide an unprecedented opportunity for regional, international leaders and CEOs to come together for strategic policy making and technical knowledge sharing.
- During the 19 strategic conference sessions, a wide spectrum of issues covering the entire energy sector will be discussed.
- It covers themes such as Energy Security, pathways for decarbonization, Resilient Energy Supply Chains, Emerging Fuels such as Biofuel and Hydrogen, Investments in Upstream and Midstream Sector etc.

7. 48th meeting of GST Council (Dec. 17, 2022)

48th meeting of GST Council

The **48th meeting of the GST Council** was held on 17th December via video conferencing.

Important facts

- The meeting was chaired by Union Finance Minister **Nirmala Sitharaman.**
- The meeting was attended by Union Minister of State for Finance Pankaj Choudhary, Finance Ministers of States & Union Territories and Senior officers from Union Government & States.
- In June 2022, the GST Council had its 47th meeting.

Agenda of 48th GST council meeting

- Certain offences relating to GST are expected to be decriminalised.
- A decision will be made in areas on online gaming, casinos, gambling, and horse racing.
- Establishment and powers of GST Appellate Tribunal in 2023.
- Reduction in GST rate on health insurance from 18% to 12%.

- To define the scope of CCI's power to act as an anti-profiteering authority.
- Applicability of the special composition scheme for selling brick kilns with a 6% GST rate without the input tax credit.
- Converting to capacity-based GST valuation principles for tobacco taxes.

About GST Council

- To implement GST, the **Constitutional (122nd Amendment) Bill** was passed by both the Houses of the Parliament in 2016.
- The GST Council has been notified as a constitutional body to deal with issues related to GST.
- It is a joint forum of the Center and the States which was established by the President in accordance with **Article 279A (1)** of the amended Constitution.

Members of GST Council

- Union Finance Minister (Chairman), Union Minister of State (Finance) from the Centre.
- Each state minister in charge of finance or taxation or any other minister may be nominated as a member.

Functions of GST Council

- To make recommendations to the Center and the States on important issues relating to GST.
- It also decides on various rate slabs of GST.

What is the Goods and Services Tax (GST)?

- It was introduced through the 101st Constitution Amendment Act, 2016.
- It is one of the biggest indirect tax reforms in the country and was introduced with the slogan of 'One Nation One Tax'.
- GST subsumes indirect taxes like excise duty, value added tax (VAT), service tax, luxury tax etc.

8. AIIMS Delhi campus declared 'tobacco-free zone' (Dec. 16, 2022)

AIIMS Delhi campus declared 'tobacco-free zone'

The **All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS)** located in the capital **New Delhi** has been declared a '**Tobacco-Free Zone**'. Information in this regard has been given through an office memorandum issued by **Dr. M. Srinivas, Director, AIIMS**, New Delhi.

Important facts

- Strict action will be taken against doctors, permanent or contractual staff and security staff found smoking or chewing tobacco in the hospital premises.
- Besides, smoking and spitting tobacco on the premises of the AIIMS will be a punishable offence for the patients, attendants, and visitors and the erring persons will be **fined Rs 200**.
- All the heads of departments have been requested to ask the staff working under them to strictly follow the guidelines.
- The security personnel have also been instructed not to allow the patients, attendants, visitors, and staff members to use tobacco in any form on the hospital premises.
- Tobacco is a prominent risk factor for leading causes of death and a number of **non-communicable diseases (NCD), including cancer, cardiovascular diseases, and lung disorders**.
- The Central Government has enacted the **Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products (Prohibition of Advertisement and Regulation of Trade and Commerce Production, Supply and Distribution) Act (COTPA)** in 2003 to protect people from tobacco use and adverse effects.
- AIIMS New Delhi was established in 1956 and is under the **Ministry of Health and Family Welfare**.
- The other All India Institutes of Medical Sciences are AIIMS **Bhubaneswar, Jodhpur, Patna, Raipur, Rishikesh, Bhopal** and the newly built AIIMS **Nagpur**.

9. National Highways & Infrastructure Development Corporation Ltd signs MoU with NIT Manipur (Dec. 16, 2022)

National Highways & Infrastructure Development Corporation Ltd

[**National Highways & Infrastructure Development Corporation Ltd \(NHIDCL\)**](#) has signed MoU with **NIT Manipur** through Video Conference on 14th December 2022.

Important facts

- The MoU was signed between Prof **Gautam Sutradhar**, Director NIT Manipur and **Chanchal Kumar**, Managing Director, NHIDCL.
- National Highways and Infrastructure Development Corporation Limited (NHIDCL), works under the **Ministry of Road Transport and Highways, Government of India**.
- It is looking for innovative technologies to find practical solutions to the challenges faced in the construction of highways that withstand extreme climatic conditions.
- In the same process NHIDCL has signed MoU with prestigious institutes like IIT Roorkee, IIT Kanpur, CSIR-CRRI, NSDC, IIT Patna, NIT Srinagar, NIT Agartala, NIT Silchar, NIT Uttarakhand, NIT Nagaland NIT Sikkim, IIT Kharagpur\

10. Atal Innovation Mission and UNDP India launch 5th edition of Youth Co:Lab for Young Entrepreneurs (Dec. 16, 2022)

5th edition of Youth Co:Lab for Young Entrepreneurs

The 5th edition of **Youth Co:Lab**, Asia Pacific's largest **youth innovation initiative** was jointly launched by [Atal Innovation Mission \(AIM\)](#), [NITI Aayog and UNDP India](#) on 15 December, 2022.

Important facts

- The applications for this edition were launched by **Chintan Vaishnav**, Mission Director AIM, NITI Aayog and **Dennis Curry**, Deputy Resident Representative, UNDP India.
- Entrepreneurs are an important factor in leading social change and accelerating the effort to meet the **SDG targets**.
- All young innovators and entrepreneurs are invited to participate in this incredible opportunity to unleash their creativity and build their solutions through Youth Co:Lab.

About Youth Co: Lab

- It is an initiative launched in **2019 by UNDP India** in partnership with **Atal Innovation Mission, NITI Aayog**.
- Its aim is to establish a **common agenda for Asia-Pacific countries** to invest in and empower youth to accelerate implementation of the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** through leadership, social innovation, and entrepreneurship.
- It is supporting young social entrepreneurs who can play an important role in leading social change and furthering the implementation of SDG targets.
- This initiative, till date, has been implemented in 28 countries and territories, reaching over 200,000 participants, benefitting more than 11,000 young social entrepreneurs and supporting over 1,240 social enterprises.