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1. US, South Korea begin biggest joint military drills since 2018 (Aug. 22, 2022)

South Korea and the United States began their biggest joint military exercise 'Ulchi Freedom Shield' since 2018 on 22 August with the resumption of field training.

IMPORTANT FACTS -

- Known as Ulchi Freedom Shield, thousands of military personnel are expected to participate in the exercise.
- It will run for two weeks starting 22 August.
- The US and South Korea have said they are defensive in nature and will conduct exercises to coordinate security forces in response to North Korea's aggression.
- The exercise is likely to involve warships, aircraft and armoured vehicles.
- The US, South Korea and Japan conducted a joint missile defence exercise in Hawaii earlier this month.
- The US, Japan and South Korea have warned that North Korea is preparing for its first nuclear test since 2017.
- North Korea is trying to develop smaller weapons to attack US allies in Asia and could increase the power of those weapons that would be carried to the US by intercontinental ballistic missiles.
- The US still has about 28,500 troops in South Korea and military leaders on both sides have said the exercises are necessary to prepare for any provocation by Pyongyang (North Korea).
- Ulchi Freedom Shield exercise will improve South Korea's combat capability.

South Korea :

- It is in East Asia. It is located on the southern part of the Korean Peninsula.
- In 2017 South Korea had the fastest internet connectivity globally.
- President - **Yoon Suk-Yeol**
- Prime Minister - **Kim Boo-Kyum**
- Capital - **Seoul**
- Official Language - **Korean**

2. S Jaishankar unveils Gandhi's bust in Paraguay (Aug. 22, 2022)

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, who is on his first ever official visit to South America, unveiled a bust of Mahatma Gandhi in Paraguay on 21 August.

IMPORTANT FACTS -

- He appreciated the decision of Asuncion Municipality to establish it on the main waterfront of the city.
- The External Affairs Minister also visited the historic **Casa de la Independencia** from where Paraguay's independence movement began more than two centuries ago.
- External Affairs Minister, S Jaishankar is on an official visit to Brazil, Paraguay and Argentina from 22-27 August.
- In Paraguay, S Jaishankar will also inaugurate the new **Indian Embassy complex**, which started functioning in January 2022.
- EAM's visit is aimed at exploring new areas of cooperation in the post-pandemic era.

About Paraguay :

- It is a land-locked country in **south-central South America**.
- It is one of the world's largest exporters of **hydropower**.
- The rivers provide access to the Atlantic Ocean and serve as sites for hydroelectric power plants.
- Paraguay is a member of **MERCOSUR**.
- The Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR) is a regional integration process, initially established by **Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay, and later joined by Venezuela and Bolivia**.
- India has a preferential trade agreement with MERCOSUR.
- Diplomatic relations between India and Paraguay were established in year 1961.
- President - **Mario Abdo Benitez**
- Capital - **Asuncion**
- Currency - **The guarani**

3. Govt launches 2nd phase of Grameen Udyami Project (Aug. 22, 2022)

National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) in partnership with Seva Bharti and Yuva Vikas Society on 20 August launched the second phase of Grameen

Udyami Project to augment skill training in tribal communities for their inclusive and sustainable growth.**IMPORTANT FACTS -**

- The second phase of the pilot project was launched in Ranchi.
- The Central Government has sanctioned a budget of 85 thousand crore rupees exclusively for tribal areas.
- The initiative aims to provide multi-skilled and functional skills to the youth of India to enable their livelihood.
- The Prime Minister has emphasised on inclusion of tribal communities in the workforce, ensuring their holistic development so as to make them self-reliant and integrated into their respective geographical areas.

Grameen Udyami Project :

- It has been implemented under the Parliamentary Package Scheme.
- It is a unique multi-skill project, funded by NSDC, which aims to train 450 tribal students in Madhya Pradesh and Jharkhand.
- The project is being implemented in six states- Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand and Gujarat.
- Minister of State Rajiv Chandrashekar and tribal MPs embodied this concept.
- In the first phase of training, candidates from rural and tribal areas of Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat were included.

The training under the project :

- Electrician & Solar PV Installation Technician
- Plumbing & Masonry
- 2-Wheeler Repair & Maintenance
- IT/ITES with e-Governance
- Farm Mechanisation

Objectives of the project :

- Increase in Rural/Local Economy
- Enhance employment opportunities
- Reduce forced migration due to lack of local opportunities
- Conservation of natural resources

4. India's first indigenously built Hydrogen Fuel Cell bus launched in Pune (Aug. 22, 2022)

Union Minister of State, Science and Technology Jitendra Singh on 21 August launched "India's first indigenously developed hydrogen fuel cell bus" in Pune.

IMPORTANT FACTS -

- The bus is developed by the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) and private firm KPIT Limited.
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 'Hydrogen Vision' is crucial for India to ensure self-reliance.
- PM's 'Hydrogen Vision' means affordable and accessible clean energy, meeting climate change goals, and creating new entrepreneurs and jobs.
- The central government is going to start operating hydrogen-powered buses on a pilot basis in the Leh region of Ladakh.

What is a hydrogen fuel cell ?

- The hydrogen fuel cell uses hydrogen and atmospheric air to generate electricity, producing only heat and water in the process.
- The hydrogen fuel cells on the bus combine hydrogen and oxygen atoms to generate electricity.
- The two gases i.e. hydrogen and oxygen react in an electrochemical cell, similar to a conventional battery cell, to produce electricity, water, and a small amount of heat.
- This electricity is used by electric motors to propel the vehicle.
- Hydrogen fuel cells continue to produce electricity as long as there is a supply of hydrogen.
- Like a conventional cell, a fuel cell consists of an anode (negative electrode) and a cathode (positive electrode) around an electrolyte.

Advantages of Hydrogen Fuel Cell :

- They produce no tailpipe emissions. They emit only water vapour and warm air.
- 'Tailpipe' emission standards specify the maximum amount of pollutants allowed in the exhaust gases from an internal combustion engine.
- They are more efficient than internal combustion engine vehicles.
- It is more practical than battery-powered electric vehicles.
- Hydrogen can be refilled in a fuel cell vehicle within minutes.

Hydrogen-powered vehicles provide an excellent means to eliminate road emissions.

5. US announces 775 million dollars additional military assistance for Ukraine (Aug. 20, 2022)

On August 19, the United States government announced additional military aid of up to \$775 million for Ukraine.

IMPORTANT FACTS -

- This is the 19th Presidential Drawdown Authority (PDA) package that the US Department of Defence has provided to Ukraine since August 2021.
- The USA will provide Ukraine with ScanEagle surveillance drones, mine-resistant vehicles, anti-armor rounds and howitzers to help the Ukrainian military retaliate against Russian invaders.
- The US sent eight HIMARS to Ukraine - which significantly strengthened Ukraine's defence against Russian weapons depots.
- The US has promised to send four more HIMARS.
- In the context of the Russia-Ukraine conflict, the US is helping Ukraine's military by providing them with weapons to strengthen it.
- The latest aid comes as Russia's attack on Ukraine turns six months old.

HIMARS — a key weapon against Russia :

- The US-made High Mobility Artillery Rocket System is known as HIMARS.
- The M142 HIMARS system (High Mobility Artillery Rocket System) is a modernized, lighter and more agile wheel-mounted missile for US and allied forces.
- The use of HIMARS has been effective in deterring Russian military positions.
- It can hit targets up to 70 kilometres away.
- Ukrainian troops can deploy this wheeled, high-tech lightweight rocket launcher outside the range of most Russian artillery.

US' military aid to Ukraine :

- This military assistance forms part of a long history of US support to Ukraine.
- On 24 February this year, Moscow launched an invasion of Ukraine.
- The United States has committed about \$9.8 billion in security assistance to Ukraine.
- Since 2014, the United States has given Ukraine more than \$11.8 billion in security aid.

6. India's first electric double-decker bus unveiled in Mumbai (Aug. 20, 2022)

Union minister for road transport and highways Nitin Gadkari on 18 August unveiled India's first electric double-decker air-conditioned bus in Mumbai.

IMPORTANT FACTS -

- Brihanmumbai Electric Supply and Transport (BEST) introduced the first of its newly acquired electric double-decker air-conditioned bus.
- This electric double-decker bus will be the world's first - semi-low floor, air-conditioned, electric double-decker with wide doors on the rear overhang and a ladder at the rear.
- The double-decker electric bus is manufactured by Switch Mobility, the electric vehicle arm of Ashok Leyland.
- The company has signed a contract with BEST for the supply of 900 electric buses in various phases.
- Of these, 50% buses are expected to arrive by March 2023 and the remaining 50 per cent after that.
- This initiative upholds the vision of a self-reliant India and provides sustainable and cost-effective solutions.
- Compared to a single-decker bus, the number of passengers sitting in it can be almost double.

7. 65th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference in Canada (Aug. 20, 2022)

An Indian parliamentary delegation led by Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla is participating in the 65th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference (CPA) in Halifax, Canada.

IMPORTANT FACTS -

- The conference is being held in Halifax, Canada from **20-26 August**.
- The delegation included Anurag Sharma, MP (Lok Sabha) and CPA executive committee member, Sunita Duggal, MP (Lok Sabha) and member of CWP steering committee, Neeraj Shekhar, MP (Rajya Sabha), Santosh Kumar, MP (Lok Sabha), Anubhav Mohanty, MP (Lok Sabha), Dr. Kanimozhi NVN Somu, MP (Rajya Sabha) and Utpal Kumar Singh, General Secretary, Lok Sabha.
- The conference will also be attended by 23 Presiding Officers of India and 16 Secretaries of State Legislatures who are also members of the CPA.
- Eight workshops on various topics will be organized during the conference.

- The Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla will participate as a panellist in the Workshop 'C' titled
- **“A People’s Parliament : Accessibility through Innovation”**.
 - The Speaker will also interact with his counterparts from other Commonwealth countries to discuss matters of mutual interest and parliamentary cooperation.

About Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference (CPC) :

- The conference is the largest gathering of Commonwealth Parliamentarians who come together to discuss and debate major global political issues and developments.
- Between 1948 and 1959, this conference was held biennially, since 1961 it has been held annually.
- Due to COVID-19 global pandemic, the Conference has not been held since 2019.
- The 64th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference (CPC) was held in Uganda (2019).

Members of the Commonwealth of Nations :

- The head of the Commonwealth is the Queen of Great Britain Elizabeth II.
- He received this title as a result of elections following the resignation of his father.
- The title of head cannot be inherited, so the new head of the Commonwealth of Nations is elected by voting at each meeting.
- The Commonwealth comprises 54 countries of the world in all 6 continents.
- The members have a total population of 2.1 billion, which is about a third of the world's population.
- Of its total population, 1.17 billion live in India.
- After India, the next largest Commonwealth countries by population are Pakistan (176 million), Bangladesh (156 million), Nigeria (149 million).
- The land area of the Commonwealth of Nations accounts for about 21% of the total world land area.
- The largest Commonwealth nations by area are Canada, Australia and India.

8. India’s first portal on arrested narco offenders (Aug. 19, 2022)

India's first portal named 'NIDAAN', a first-of-its kind database on arrested narco offenders ' gets operational.

IMPORTANT FACTS -***About NIDAAN Portal :***

- **NIDAAN or the National Integrated Database on Arrested Narco-offenders** - has been developed by the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB).
- It is part of the Narcotics Coordination Mechanism (NCORD) portal which was launched by Union Home Minister Amit Shah during the National Conference on 'Drug Trafficking and National Security' in Chandigarh on July 30.
- The platform gets its data from ICJS (Inter-operable Criminal Justice System) and e-Jail (a cloud-based application) repositories.
- It is planned to be integrated with the Crime and Criminal Tracking Network System (CCTNS) in future.
- ICJS, an initiative of the Supreme Court's e-committee, was created to enable seamless transfer of data and information between various pillars of the criminal justice system such as courts, police, prisons and forensic science laboratories.

Significance of the Portal :

- It is a one stop solution for all drug related data of offenders.
- It will help the investigating agencies as an effective tool for linking together various aspects during investigation of drug cases.
- This will enhance the capacity of all law enforcement agencies working against drug offences.
- It hosts data about the accused who have been arrested for drug offences.

9. Government launches Online Marketplace feature "Aqua Bazar" in "Matsya Setu" app (Aug. 19, 2022)

Union Minister for Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying, Parshottam Rupala launched the Online Market Place feature "Aqua Bazar" in the "Matsya Setu" mobile app on 19 August 22 during the 9th general body meeting of the National Fisheries Development Board, Hyderabad.

IMPORTANT FACTS -

What is Aqua Bazar App ?

- The app is developed by the ICAR-Central Institute of Freshwater Aquaculture (ICAR-CIFA), Bhubaneswar.
- It has been developed with funding from National Fisheries Development Board (NFDB), Hyderabad through Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMSY).
- It will assist fish farmers and stakeholders in locating fish seeds, feed and medicines as well as essential services for the fisheries sector.

- Farmers will also be able to list table-sized fish for sale.
- It aims to connect all the stakeholders in the aquaculture sector.

National Fisheries Development Board :

- It was established in 2006 as an autonomous body.
- It works under the Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying.
- It aims to increase fish production and productivity in the country and coordinate fisheries development in an integrated and holistic manner.

10. 17th Pravasi Bhartiya Divas to be held at Indore in January 2023 (Aug. 19, 2022)

According to the External Affairs Ministry the 17th Pravasi Bhartiya Divas 2023 will be held at Indore in January next year.

IMPORTANT FACTS -

- Secretary, Consular, Passport and Visa Division, Ausaf Sayeed and Madhya Pradesh Chief Secretary Iqbal Singh Bains signed an MoU to host Pravasi Bharatiya Divas.
- The MoU was signed in the presence of Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan.

About Pravasi Bharatiya Divas :

- **On January 9, 1915, this day was chosen as Pravasi Bhartiya Divas to commemorate the return of Mahatma Gandhi to India from South Africa.**
- Mahatma Gandhi led India's freedom struggle and changed the lives of Indians forever.
- Celebration of Pravasi Diwas started in India in 2003.
- In the year 2015 it was revised and it was decided to celebrate Pravasi Bharatiya Divas every two years.
- The 16th Pravasi Divas Conference was held in New Delhi with the theme "Contribution to Self-reliant India".
- This day marks the contribution of the overseas Indian community in the development of India.