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1. North Korea fires two cruise missiles from west coast town of Onchon (Aug. 17, 2022)

North Korea fired two cruise missiles from the west coast city of Onchon on the morning of August 17.

IMPORTANT FACTS -

- The launch comes as South Korea and the United States begin a four-day preliminary joint exercise in preparation for the long-suspended live field training Ulchi Freedom Shield, which takes place from August 22 to September 1.
- South Korean President Yoon Sek-yol said that his country is ready to provide phased economic aid to North Korea if it ends the development of nuclear weapons and begins denuclearization.
- Unlike ballistic missiles, cruise missiles are powered by jet engines and remain close to the ground, making them difficult to detect.
- Most cruise missiles are not designed to carry nuclear warheads.

Recent missile launches by North Korea :

- North Korea has recently conducted a flurry of missile tests, making its 18th launch on August 17 this year.
- North Korea only has four tests in 2020, and eight in 2021.
- The last missile launch was on June 5 with eight short-range ballistic missiles – which were responded to by South Korea and the US firing eight more missiles into the waters off the eastern coast of the Korean peninsula.

About North Korea :

- Capital - Pyongyang
- Official Language - Korean
- President - Kim Jong-un

2. US President signs major climate change and health care legislation (Aug. 17, 2022)

US President Joe Biden has signed a historic climate change and healthcare spending bill into law on August 16.

IMPORTANT FACTS -

- This law will go a long way in reducing health care costs and combating climate change.
- According to the White House, the **\$740 billion investment** bill is the largest commitment to combat climate change in the country's history.
- The White House claimed that Biden's **Inflation Reduction Act** would reduce greenhouse gas emissions by nearly a billion tons in 2030.
- This law is ten times bigger than any climate law ever enacted.
- The bill provides for significant investment in renewable energy through wind and solar power projects and heavy tax credits for electric vehicles.
- The law would also stipulate the cost of the drug for Medicare recipients in excess of \$2,000 annually.
- The new law will also help the nearly 13 million Americans pay for their health insurance.

Similar climate packages announced by other countries :

- In May 2022, **Japan** announced an '**Invest in Kisida**' plan.
- 'Invest in Kisida' plan aims for a \$1.1 trillion investment to bolster the Japanese economy.
- Japan aims to transition to clean energy and reduce greenhouse gas emissions by **46 percent by 2030**.
- In June 2021, the **European Union (EU)** proposed a similar '**Fit for 55**' plan to reduce emissions by 55% by 2030.

3. Ministry of AYUSH signs MoU with MeitY for digitalisation of AYUSH sector (Aug. 17, 2022)

The Ministry of AYUSH and the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for the AYUSH Grid project.

IMPORTANT FACTS -

- As a part of the MoU, the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology will provide technical assistance to the Ministry of AYUSH to digitise the AYUSH sector for a period of 3 years.
- This MoU is a continuation of an MoU signed in 2019.
- The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology will provide technical support including adoption of emerging technologies for the AYUSH Grid project.

- Advisory input on the AYUSH Grid project will be provided by a high level advisory committee. The committee will be headed by Secretary AYUSH and co-chaired by Secretary, Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology.

Ayush Grid Project :

- AYUSH Grid is a proposed central information and communication platform that will provide various technical services for standardisation of all systems of medicine (Ayurveda, Yoga and Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha, Sowa Rigpa and Homoeopathy) under AYUSH.
- The AYUSH Grid project was launched by the Ministry of AYUSH in 2018 to form a backbone for the IT sector.
- The project was launched under the Digital India program which supports 'Information and Technology' to enhance service quality and improve service delivery.
- The project will allow integration of all stakeholders and services or functions related to AYUSH systems of health care.

4. India contributes USD 400,000 to the United Nations Trust Fund (Aug. 17, 2022)

Reflecting its commitment to global promotion and protection of human rights and support of UN human rights, India has contributed USD 400,000 to four voluntary trust funds.

IMPORTANT FACTS -

- As a founding member of the United Nations, India strongly supports the objectives and principles of the United Nations and has made significant contributions to the implementation of the goals of the Charter and the development of specialized programs and agencies of the United Nations.
- India's deep engagement with the United Nations is based on its strong commitment to multilateralism.
- India firmly believes that the United Nations and the standards of international relations that it has promoted are the most effective tools to address today's global challenges.
- These global challenges are poverty eradication, environment, climate change, peace building and peacekeeping, terrorism, disarmament, human rights, migration and health and pandemics.
- The United Nations also has an important role to play in newly emerging areas such as cyber security, space and frontier technologies such as artificial intelligence.

Purpose of the fund :

- The fund is meant to support victimization of atrocities, technical cooperation, implementation of Universal Periodic Review (UPR) and the participation of Least Developed Countries (LDCs)/Small Island Developing States (SIDs).
- Global promotion and protection of human rights.
- In 2007, India became the first country to deploy a women's contingent for a police unit set up for the United Nations Peacekeeping Mission in Liberia.

United Nations Human Rights Council :

- It is an inter-governmental body within the United Nations system.
- It is responsible for strengthening the spread and protection of human rights around the world.
- It was created by the United Nations General Assembly in 2006.
- It has been created in place of the former United Nations Commission on Human Rights.
- It is headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland.

5. Odisha Government Signs Pact With National Institute of Ocean Technology For Protecting Coastline (Aug. 16, 2022)

The Odisha government has signed an MoU with the National Institute of Ocean Technology (NIOT) to protect its coasts.

Important facts

- As per the MoU, NIOT will provide technical guidance, design and outline of climate resilient coastal security measures to the state government.
- The agreement will benefit the residents of six coastal districts of the state namely Balasore, Bhadrak, Kendrapara, Jagatsinghpur, Puri and Ganjam.
- This MoU will prove to be a milestone in Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) in the coastal areas of the state.
- The state government is taking all possible measures for disaster mitigation and is focusing on zero casualties.
- The MoU signed for the next 5 years will help in saving the life and property of the people of the coastal areas along with the protection of the beach embankments.
- Odisha has a vast coastline of about 480 km in length and the coastal region is prone to natural calamities.

About National Institute of Ocean Technology (NIOT)

- The National Institute of Ocean Technology, under the Ministry of Earth Sciences, is India's premier institute specialising in the field of ocean engineering and beach conservation.
- Director - GA Ramdas
- Established - November 1993
- Headquarters - Chennai, Tamil Nadu

6. UK becomes first nation to approve Omicron vaccine (Aug. 16, 2022)

The UK on 16 August approved a booster dose against COVID-19, which is claimed to be effective against both the original and variant Omicron forms of the coronavirus.

Important facts

- The agency's decision was based on clinical trial data showing that the booster dose triggered "a strong immune response" against both Omicron and the original 2020 coronavirus.
- With this, Britain has become the first country to have approved such a vaccine.
- The vaccine was found to meet the standards of safety, quality and effectiveness.
- The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency said that half of each dose of the booster vaccine Spike Vax Bivalent Original/Omicron, i.e. 25 micrograms, works against the original form, while the other half targets Omicron.

5 variants of coronavirus are cause of concern

- **Omicron** - Identified in southern Africa in November 2021
- **Delta** - emerged in India in late 2020 and spread around the world
- **Gamma** - Emerged in Brazil in late 2020
- **Beta** - Emerged in South Africa in early 2020
- **Alpha** - Emerged in Britain in late 2020

7. Scotland becomes first in the world to provide free period products (Aug. 16, 2022)

Scotland became the first country in the world from August 15 to ensure universal access to free period products.

Important facts

- The Scottish Parliament voted unanimously in favour of the Period Products Bill, which made the right to free access to sanitary products in public buildings a legal right in November 2020.
- After the enactment of this law, sanitary napkins will be available free of cost in many public places including community buildings, youth clubs and medical stores.
- Even before this, in the year 2018, Scotland has become the first country to provide free sanitary products in government schools.

What is included in the new law?

- Under the law, local authorities and education providers are legally required to provide period sanitary facilities free of charge to those who need them.
- In addition to the provision of free products, the government has funded an educational website for employers, improved menstrual health resources available to schools, and implemented a successful anti-stigma campaign.
- Product seekers can locate their nearest collection point using the PickupMyPeriod mobile app, which was launched by social enterprise "Hey Girls" with the support of the Scottish Government.

About Scotland

- Scotland is a country in the United Kingdom.
- Capital - Edinburgh
- Currency - Pound Sterling
- Prime Minister- Nicola Sturgeon

8. Global Employment Trends for Youth report - 2022 (Aug. 16, 2022)

The Global Employment Trends for Youth 2022 report has been released by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) as part of the global call to action for a "human-centred recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic".

Key points of the report

- According to the "Global Employment Trends for Youth 2022" report, rare unemployment among youth aged 15-24 has reached 15.6% worldwide. This is three times the unemployment rate among adults.
- According to the report, the number of unemployed youth population has come down from 75 million in 2021 to 73 million in 2022. However, this number is still 6 million more than the number before the Covid-19 pandemic.
- The unemployment rate in Africa is 12.7%, lower than the global average of 14.9%. This figure highlights that young people have withdrawn from the labour markets.

- Schools were closed in India for 18 months. Of the 240 million school going children, only 8% in rural areas and 23% in urban areas had access to online education. As a result, 92% of children on average have lost a basic ability in language. 82% of children have lost at least one basic ability in maths.
- According to the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE), the labour force participation rate (LPR) in India fell to 38.8% in June 2022.
- The share of people in the age group of 18-21 in newly created EPF accounts has come down from 37.9% in 2018-19 to 24.1% in 2021-22.

About International Labour Organisation

- It was established in 1919 by the Treaty of Versailles as an affiliated agency of the League of Nations.
- In 1946, it became the first specialised agency affiliated with the United Nations.
- Objective of Establishment: Social justice is essential for global and lasting peace.
- India is a founding member of the ILO and has been a permanent member of the governing body of the ILO since the year 1922.
- The first office of ILO in India was established in 1928.
- Headquarters- Geneva, Switzerland
- Director General - Gilbert Hongbo

9. William Ruto declared winner of Kenya presidential election (Aug. 16, 2022)

In Kenya, Deputy President William Ruto has been declared the winner of Kenya's presidential election on 16 August.

Important facts

- He defeated his rival Raila Odinga by a very small margin, securing 50.5 percent of the vote.
- The worst drought in 40 years has ravaged the northern part of the country, leaving 4.1 million people dependent on food aid, while the country's debt levels have risen.
- Ruto was the Vice President of Kenya for the last 9 years.
- Significantly, President Uhuru Kenyatta remained in power for a decade.

History of violence

- In 2017, over 100 people were killed after the Supreme Court quashed preliminary results over irregularities in the electoral process.

- Amid fears that allegations of vote rigging had led to bloody conflicts after the presidential elections in 2007 and 2017, the courts were urged to control any disputes.
- The US Embassy in Kenya urged all parties to work together to peacefully resolve concerns about the election.
- Economic issues such as rising food and fuel prices, government debt, unemployment and widespread corruption were central to the election in the country.
- People here were more worried about fuel prices after the Russia-Ukraine war.

About Kenya

- Capital - Nairobi
- Official Languages - Swahili, English
- Currency - Kenyan Shilling

10. NMDC and FICCI to organise Conference on Indian Minerals & Metal Industry (Aug. 13, 2022)

National Mineral Development Corporation Ltd. (NMDC) and FICCI will be organizing a conference on the Indian minerals and metals industry on 23rd and 24th August at New Delhi.

Important facts

- The two-day event is being organized to commemorate the 75 glorious years of India's independence and the ongoing "Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav" in association with the Union Ministry of Steel and Mines.
- Speakers from industry, policy and academia will participate in the conference.
- Global and domestic producers, mineral associations, policy makers, mine equipment manufacturers, global corporates, central and state government officials, among others, will be present and address the conference.
- The event will also witness a panel discussion on the future of minerals and metals around the world.

Theme of the conference - 'Transition Towards 2030 & Vision 2047'**Objective of the conference**

- The objective of the event is to deliberate on the roadmap for the minerals and metals sector to achieve 'Vision 2047'.

About Minerals

- A mineral is a natural substance of organic or inorganic origin with definite chemical and physical properties.

- Minerals are of two types - Metallic minerals and Nonmetallic minerals
- Examples of metallic minerals are iron ore, copper, gold, etc.
- Non-metallic minerals are basically inorganic such as mica, limestone and graphite, etc.
- Metallic minerals are sub-divided as ferrous and non-ferrous metallic.

National Mineral Development Corporation Ltd. (NMDC)

- It was established in 1958 as a wholly owned public enterprise of the Government of India.
- It is under the administrative control of the Ministry of Steel, Government of India.
- It is India's largest Iron Ore producer.
- The company was classified as a "Navratna" Public Sector Enterprise in 2008 by the Department of Public Enterprises.