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1. Water shortage officially in Netherlands due to drought (Aug. 5, 2022)

The Netherlands government has officially declared a water shortage due to the ongoing drought in the country, national water levels at an all-time low.

Important facts

- According to the Water Shortage Management Team of the country, continuous drought in the country has led to 'water shortage'.
- The scarcity of water is so bad that the waters of the Rhine River are supplying 50% less water than normal.
- The water shortage is already having a negative effect on shipping and agriculture in particular.
- Water used for irrigation of crops is banned in some parts of the country.
- Prolonged water scarcity can lead to salinization of the soil, affecting the agricultural industry.
- Despite the fact that the Netherlands is known for its abundance of water, it has declared a water shortage for the fifth time in the last 22 years.
- The water scarcity situation has now escalated to the third level threat in 2003. Threat of the third level means a specified national crisis.
- Drought means that the supply of fresh water must be comparatively less, but it can also affect the quality of drinking water.

2. Minerals Security Partnership (Aug. 5, 2022)

India is to join an 11-member US-led partnership for critical mineral supply chains called the 'Mineral Security Partnership (MSP)'.

Important facts

- A group of Western countries are collaborating to develop alternatives to China to ensure key industrial supplies.
- The Mineral Security Partnership is a new ambitious US-led partnership to secure the supply chain of rare minerals with the aim of reducing dependence on China.
- India is not a part of this arrangement but is working to gain entry through diplomatic efforts.
- Demand for rare minerals, which are essential for clean energy and other technologies, is projected to increase significantly in the coming decades.

What is the Minerals Security Partnership (MSP)?

- It is an initiative by the United States to strengthen rare mineral supply chains.
- Partner countries - Australia, Canada, Finland, France, Germany, Japan, Republic of Korea, Sweden, United Kingdom, United States and European Commission.
- Its purpose is to ensure that rare minerals are produced, processed and recycled in such a way that countries benefit from the full economic development of their geological management.
- This new group will focus on the supply chains of cobalt, nickel, lithium and the 17 "rare minerals" found on Earth.

Rare Earth Elements

- The 17 rare earth elements (REE) include the 15 Lanthanides (atomic numbers 57 — which is Lanthanum — to 71 in the periodic table) plus Scandium (atomic number 21) and Yttrium (39).
- REEs are classified as light RE elements (LREE) and heavy RE elements (HREE).
- Some REs are available in India such as Lanthanum, Cerium, Neodymium, Praseodymium and Samarium, while others such as Dysprosium, Terbium, Europium that are classified as HREE are not available in India.
- Hence, there is a dependence on countries such as China for HREE.

Importance of these minerals

- The batteries used in electric vehicles require minerals such as cobalt, nickel and lithium.
- REE is an essential component for over 200 consumer products such as mobile phones, computer hard drives, electric and hybrid vehicles, semiconductors, etc.

3. ICMR starts new initiative in northeast (Aug. 5, 2022)

The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) on 4 August inaugurated the Foodborne Pathogen Survey Network (ICMR-FoodNet) in the northeastern States of India.

Important facts

- This latest initiative is part of the project launched by ICMR in 2020.
- The Integrated Task Force Project coordinates various operations, monitors outbreaks of foodborne enteric disease, and conducts intensive systematic laboratory-based surveillance in four north-eastern Indian states in collaboration with research and medical institutions and the food sectors.
- The project also includes assessment of disease burden, detection of specific pathogens responsible for outbreaks, and documentation of antimicrobial resistance patterns among intestinal bacteria.

Foodborne Pathogen Survey Network (ICMR-FoodNet)

- FoodNet determines the incidence of laboratory-diagnosed infections for bacterial pathogens typically transmitted through food.
- It provides a foundation for food safety policy and prevention efforts.
- It estimates the number of foodborne illnesses, tracks the incidence of specific foodborne illnesses over time, and disseminates information.

Northeast India

- Northeast India comprises seven states : Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura.
- The northeast is bordered by Bhutan, China, Myanmar and Bangladesh with a total length of over 2000 km and is connected to the rest of India by a narrow 20 km wide corridor of land.
- Northeast India is also known as the “Seven Sisters”.

4. New Zealand introduced Bill on Tobacco Endgame (Aug. 4, 2022)

New Zealand's parliament recently introduced the Smoke-Free Environment and Regulated Products (Smoked Tobacco) Amendment Bill to fulfil its plan to be smoke-free by the year 2025.

About New Zealand Bill on Tobacco Endgame

- The 'tobacco endgame' refers to a policy approach that focuses on ending tobacco-related disease with the aim of a 'tobacco-free future'.
- The bill calls for three strategies to significantly reduce or eliminate smoking.
- If implemented, the bill would be the first law in the world to prevent the next generation from buying cigarettes legally.

Proposed Strategies

- To significantly reduce the amount of nicotine (known as "denicotinization" or "very low nicotine cigarettes - VLNC") in tobacco so as not to become addictive.
- 90% to 95% reduction in the number of shops selling tobacco.
- Selling tobacco to people born on or after January 1, 2009, is illegal (thus making the "smoke-free generation").

Current status of tobacco use**Global**

- One in four people around the world use tobacco

- Cigarette smoking is the most common form of tobacco use worldwide.
- Other tobacco products include waterpipe tobacco, various smokeless tobacco products, cigars, cigarillos, roll-your-own tobacco, pipe tobacco, bidis and kreteks.
- According to the World Health Organisation, the tobacco epidemic is one of the world's biggest public health threats to date, killing more than 8 million people every year.

Status in india

- According to the National Family Health Survey-5 (Year 2019-21), 38% of men and 9% of women above the age of 15 use tobacco products.
- Women (19%) and men (51%) belonging to Scheduled Tribes are more likely to use tobacco than those belonging to any other caste/tribe group.
- Among men as well as women, tobacco consumption is higher in rural areas (43 percent for men and 11 percent for women) than in urban areas.
- It is one of the leading causes of death and disease in India and causes about 1.35 million deaths every year.
- India is also the second largest consumer and producer of tobacco.

5. Chabahar Day conference (Aug. 4, 2022)

On July 31, 2022, the Chabahar Day convention was launched in Mumbai by Sarbananda Sonowal (Union Minister of Shipping) and Shripad Naik (Minister of State for Shipping).

Important facts

- The inaugural ceremony was attended by dignitaries from Kazakhstan, Iran, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Afghanistan.
- In May 2016, India and Iran signed a bilateral agreement, in which India agreed to renew a berth at Shahid Beheshti port.
- India also agreed to rebuild a 600-metre long container handling facility at this port.
- In October 2017, India sent its first consignment of wheat to Afghanistan through Chabahar port.

About Chabahar Port

- Chabahar Port is located in the Gulf of Oman. It is at a distance of 72 km from Gwadar port in Pakistan. Gwadar Port was developed by China.
- It serves as the only port in Iran consisting of two separate ports named Shahid Beheshti and Shahid Kalantari, each with 5 berths.
- It is an important pillar of India's Indo-Pacific vision, in its endeavour to connect Eurasia with the Indian Ocean region.

- It is a part of the International North South Transport Corridor network connecting India.
- Iran has given special impetus to enhance trade cooperation activities between India and Iran through Chabahar Port.

Importance of Chabahar Port for India

- **Alternate Route** - Chabahar Port provides India with an alternative supply route, thus reducing the importance of Pakistan in relation to trade.
- **Connectivity** - In future the Chabahar Project and the North South Transport Corridor will complement each other by optimising Indian connectivity with Russia and Eurasia.
- **Strategic Needs** - China is aggressively pursuing its Belt and Road Initiative under the One Belt One Road project.
- Chabahar port is important for India to enhance connectivity with Afghanistan and Central Asian countries.

6. 10 more Indian wetlands sites get Ramsar tag, number rises to 64 (Aug. 4, 2022)

India has recognized 10 more Ramsar sites or wetlands of international importance, taking the number of such sites to 64.

Important facts

- Ramsar sites covering area in the country has become 12,50,361 ha now.
- The 10 new sites include - six sites in Tamil Nadu and one each in Goa, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh and Odisha.
- Designating these sites will help in conservation and management of wetlands and wise use of their resources.

10 wetlands designated as Ramsar sites

1. Koonthankulam Bird Sanctuary (Tamil Nadu)
2. Satkosia Gorge (Odisha)
3. Nanda Lake (Goa)
4. Gulf of Mannar Marine Biosphere Reserve (Tamil Nadu)
5. Ranganathittu BS (Karnataka)
6. Vembannur Wetland Complex (Tamil Nadu)
7. Vellode Bird Sanctuary (Tamil Nadu)
8. Sirpur wetland (Madhya Pradesh)

9. Vedanthangal Bird Sanctuary (Tamil Nadu)
10. Udhayamarthandapuram Bird Sanctuary (Tamil Nadu)

Kindly see 26 July post also

7. US Senate approves Finland and Sweden's accession to NATO (Aug. 4, 2022)

The United States Senate on 3 August approved Finland and Sweden's accession to NATO.

Important facts

- The US Senate voted 95 to one in favour of both Western European countries joining NATO.
- This historic vote provides an important indication of the continued, bipartisan US commitment to NATO.
- The Nordic countries, which had long maintained neutrality, had united to join a 30-member coalition in light of Russia's invasion of Ukraine.
- Earlier the National Assembly of France voted in favor of Finland and Sweden's NATO membership.
- Several countries, including Germany, Canada and Italy, have already approved the ratification.

NATO membership process

- First a country must formally apply for NATO membership.
- The joining country must meet the criteria set out in NATO's 1995 "Study on Expansion". These criteria include a functioning democratic political system based on a market economy, the ability to make a military contribution to NATO, etc.
- A country can join NATO only if all its 30 member countries support its membership.
- A country can become a member of NATO after ratification of accession protocols, which may take 8 to 12 months.
- At present, Turkey has not agreed to give NATO membership to Finland and Sweden.

About North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO)

- NATO is an intergovernmental military alliance consisting of 30 member states belonging to Europe and North America (28 European states, the US and Canada).
- NATO aims to guarantee the security of its members through political and military means.
- According to Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty, an armed attack against any NATO member in Europe or North America shall be deemed an attack against all NATO members.

- Article 5 has been invoked only once so far after the 9/11 terrorist attacks against the US.
- The last country to join NATO was North Macedonia in 2020.
- Headquarters- Brussels, Belgium

8. World Dairy Summit 2022 to be held in India after 48 years (Aug. 4, 2022)

India will host the International Dairy Federation's World Dairy Summit 2022 at the India Expo Centre & Mart in Greater Noida from September 12 to 15.

Important facts

- In the summit stakeholders from 40 countries will participate.
- The last World Dairy Summit was held in 1974 in New Delhi.
- After 48 years, India is organising the summit again.
- The theme of the event is "Dairy for Nutrition and Livelihood" .
- Its sponsors are Amul and Nandini (marketed by Karnataka Co-operative Milk Producers Union Limited). Mother Dairy will be the main sponsor of the event.

About World Dairy Summit

- It is an annual meeting of the global dairy sector, bringing together around 1500 participants from all over the world.
- The participant profiles include CEOs and employees of dairy processing companies, dairy farmers, suppliers of dairy industry, academicians, government representatives, etc.
- It is a prestigious event for India because India is now the largest milk producer in the world and the highest number of cattle.

Dairy and livestock sector of India

- Dr. Verghese Kurien is known as the "Father of White Revolution" in India.
- Dairy is contributing 5 percent of the national economy and employing more than 8 crore farmers directly.
- India ranks first in milk production, which contributes 23 percent to the global milk production.

Government Initiatives to the Dairy sector

- **Rashtriya Gokul Mission** - launched in December 2014 with an outlay of Rs 2025 crore for the development and conservation of indigenous breeds through selective breeding.

- **National Animal Disease Control Programme (NADCP)** - It is a flagship scheme launched in September 2019 for control of Foot & Mouth Disease and Brucellosis by vaccinating 100% cattle, buffalo, sheep, goat and pig population.
- **Animal Husbandry Infrastructure Development** - It has been approved for incentivizing investments by entrepreneurs, private companies, MSME, Farmers Producers Organizations for Dairy sector.

9. India to host UNSC meet on counterterrorism in October (Aug. 4, 2022)

For the first time, India will host diplomats and officials from all 15 countries of the UN Security Council, including China, Russia and the United States, for a special meeting on terrorism in October.

Important facts

- India is chairing the meeting of the Anti-Terrorism Committee (CTC) as a member of the UNSC.
- The meeting will particularly focus on challenges such as terrorism financing, cyber threats and use of drones.
- India will attempt to highlight cross-border threats from Pakistan and Afghanistan in this meeting to be held two months before India completes its term as an elected member of the UNSC (2021-22).
- In addition, India is pushing the members of the United Nations to adopt a Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism (first proposed in 1996), which is likely to be taken up during the meeting.

Counter-Terrorism Committee of UNSC

- It was established by Security Council Resolution 1373, which was adopted unanimously on 28 September 2001 in the wake of the 9/11 terror attacks in the US.
- It includes all permanent and non-permanent members of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC).
- The committee was tasked with overseeing the implementation of Resolution 1373, which urged countries to implement a number of measures aimed at increasing their legal and institutional capacity to combat terrorist activities both domestically and around the world.

About UNSC

- It was established in 1945 by the United Nations Charter.
- It is one of the six major organs of the United Nations.
- The other 5 organs of the United Nations are - the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), the Trusteeship Council, the Economic and Social Council, the International Court of Justice and the Secretariat.

- It has five permanent members - China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States, collectively known as the P5.
- Any one of them can veto a resolution.
- Headquarters - New York

10. Centre increases Fair and Remunerative Price on sugarcane (Aug. 4, 2022)

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs in its meeting on 3 August has approved the Fair and Remunerative Price (FRP) of sugarcane for sugar season 2022-23 (October-September) to Rs 305 per quintal.

Important facts

- The Cabinet has approved the highest ever Fair and Remunerative Price (FRP) of Rs 305 per quintal for sugarcane farmers.
- The FRP for sugar season 2022-23 is 2.6 per cent higher than the current sugar season 2021-22.
- The FRP of Rs 305 per quintal is linked to the basic recovery rate of 10.25 per cent.
- Recovery rate is the amount of sugar that sugarcane fetches and higher the quantum of sugar derived from sugarcane, greater the price it fetches in the market.
- This decision will benefit five crore sugarcane farmers and their dependents as well as five lakh workers employed in sugar mills and allied activities.

What is Fair and Remunerative Price (FRP)?

- It is the price declared by the government at which the mills are legally bound to pay for the sugarcane procured from the farmers.
- The payment of FRP across the country is governed by the Sugarcane Control Order, 1966.
- Under this, payment is mandatory within 14 days from the date of delivery of sugarcane.

Major sugarcane-producing states

- Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra and Karnataka account for nearly 80 percent of the total sugar production in the country.
- The other major sugarcane-producing states are Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Tamil Nadu, Bihar, Haryana, and Punjab.
- India is the world's second-largest sugar producer after Brazil.
- Since 2010-11, India has consistently produced surplus sugar, comfortably exceeding the domestic requirements.

