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1. Government approves sale of electoral bonds from July 1 (July 1, 2022)

The government approved the issuance of the 21st tranche of electoral bonds that will open for sale from July 1.

- In the 21st phase of sale, State Bank of India has been authorised to issue electoral bonds through its 29 authorised branches with effect from July 1 to July 10.
- An electoral bond will be valid for 15 days from the date of issue.
- No payment would be made to any political party, if the bond is deposited after expiry of the validity period.
- The authorised SBI branches are in Lucknow, Shimla, Dehradun, Kolkata, Guwahati, Chennai, Patna, New Delhi, Chandigarh, Srinagar, Gandhinagar, Bhopal, Raipur, and Mumbai.
- The 20th tranche of electoral bond sales took place from April 1 to April 10, 2022.
- The sale of the first batch of electoral bonds was initiated from March 1-10, 2018.
- SBI is the only authorised bank which issues Electoral Bonds.
- **What are Electoral Bonds?**
- It was introduced in the Finance Bill, 2017, the Electoral Bond Scheme was notified on January 29, 2018.
- It is just like a promissory note that may be purchased by a person who is a citizen of India or incorporated or established in India.
- Bonds are available for purchase by any person (who is a citizen of India) for a period of ten days each in the months of January, April, July and October.
- A person can buy bonds either singly or jointly with other persons.
- These are issued in multiples of Rs 1,000, Rs 10,000, Rs 1 lakh, Rs 10 lakh and Rs 1 crore without any maximum limit.
- The main objective of the electoral bond scheme was to bring transparency in electoral funding in India.
- Only registered Political Parties which secured not less than one percent of the votes polled in the last General Election to the House of the People or the Legislative Assembly of the State, shall be eligible to receive the Electoral Bonds.

2. 'Partners in the Blue Pacific' program launched by US and allies (June 30, 2022)

Recently the US and its allies - Australia, New Zealand, Japan and the United Kingdom have launched a new initiative called 'Partners in the Blue Pacific' for "effective and efficient cooperation" with the small island states of the Blue Pacific region.

- The purpose of the PBP is to promote cooperation in the areas of "climate crisis, connectivity and transport, maritime safety and security, health, prosperity and education".
- **Partners in Blue Pacific (PBP) Initiative:**
- The PBP is an "informal mechanism" of five countries to support the Pacific islands and promote diplomatic, economic ties in the region.
- It focuses on increasing "prosperity, resilience and security" in the Pacific region through closer cooperation.
- That is, through the PBP, these countries together and individually will provide more resources to the Pacific Island countries to counterbalance China's aggressive outreach.
- Former members will "promote Pacific regionalism" and forge strong ties with the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF).
- **Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) -**
- The Pacific Islands Forum is the region's premier political and economic policy organisation.
- It was established in 1971.
- It consists of 18 members including Australia, the Cook Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, French Polynesia, Kiribati, Nauru, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, Samoa, the Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu. countries are included.

3. 'One Health' pilot project launched in Bengaluru (June 30, 2022)

On June 28, 2022, the Ministry of Dairying and Animal Husbandry launched the 'One Health' pilot project in Bengaluru.

- "One Health Pilot Project" was launched by the Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying, with Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) and Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation as implementation partners.
- This health project is being implemented in Uttarakhand and Karnataka.
- The One Health pilot project will bring together stakeholders from human, animal and environmental health to develop solutions to prevent future zoonotic disease outbreaks such as the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The success of this pilot project will help the Centre develop a national 'One Health' roadmap.
- The roadmap will be equipped with better feedback mechanisms and management.

It will also incorporate world best practices.

- **About Confederation of Indian Industry**

- CII is a non-governmental advocacy group and trade association.
- Its headquarter is in New Delhi.
- This association was established in 1895.
- It engages with other leaders in business, academia, political and society in shaping industry, regional and global agendas.
- It is a membership based organisation.

4. Phase II of the 'Going Online As Leaders' (GOAL) program launched (June 30, 2022)

Recently, the second phase of 'Going Online as Leaders' program has been started by the Union Tribal Ministry in association with Facebook to provide mentorship to tribal youth through a digital system.

- The GOAL program will provide mentorship to tribal youth through digital mode.
- This digitally enabled program is envisaged to act as a catalyst to explore the hidden talents of tribal youth, which will help in their personal development as well as contribute to the all-round upliftment of their society.
- This program is designed in such a way that tribal youth and women can acquire knowledge in various fields like horticulture, food processing, bee keeping, tribal art and culture etc. on a long-term level through digital skills and technology.
- This program will play an important role in their empowerment by connecting tribal women to the digital world.
- The GOAL program will prove to be helpful towards enabling the tribal youth to become financially independent.

- **Key points of the goal program:**

- Digital-skills training will be provided to 5,000 young tribal entrepreneurs, professionals, artisans and artists selected under the program
- The youth who are trained will be called 'Mentees' and will be called 'Mentors' by experts from different disciplines and fields.
- The selected 5,000 'mentees' will participate in the program for nine months or 36 weeks, which will include a 28-week mentorship program followed by an eight-week internship.

- **The main focus of this program will be on three main areas, which include**

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1. Digital Literacy
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2. Life Skills, Leadership, Entrepreneurship, and Agriculture
3. Art and Culture, Handicrafts, Clothing, Health, Nutrition
- **GOAL 1st Stage:**
- The first phase of Goal was conducted by Facebook in the year 2019 on a pilot project basis with 100 'Mentis' and 25 mentors in 5 states from February to October, 2019.

5. Establishment of an India Centre to promote India-centric activities in South Korea (June 30, 2022)

The India Centre has been established at Busan University of Foreign Studies, South Korea to promote activities related to India.

- This centre will act as a major organisation for India related programs in Busan.
- It will provide necessary resources for interested students in India and will emphasise on increasing academic and cultural cooperation with Busan University.
- An MoU was also signed on the occasion to promote cooperation in the field of education and cultural exchange between Busan University and the Swami Vivekananda Cultural Centre in Seoul.
- Busan University of Foreign Studies and Hanuk University of Foreign Studies in South Korea are the two higher educations where Hindi is taught as a full-time subject.
- The Department of Hindi Language was established in 1983 at Busan University of Foreign Studies (BUFS).
- **About South Korea**
- South Korea is a country located in East Asia that is known as the 'Land of Quiet Mornings'.
- The nation's capital, Seoul, is the world's second largest metropolitan area and a major global city.
- North Korea is the only country bordering this country.
- Martial arts Taekwondo originated in Korea.
- President- Yoon Suk-yol
- Currency- South Korean won

6. Gabon and Togo join the Commonwealth of Nations (June 29, 2022)

Two African countries, Togo and Gabon, were inducted into the Commonwealth of Nations as the 55th and 56th members, respectively, at the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting held in Rwanda's capital, Kigali, chaired by Rwandan President Paul Kagame.

- Rwanda was the last country to join the Commonwealth in 2009.
- Togo and Gabon were historically French colonies that were never British colonies.
- **New members Togo and Gabon**
- The formal Commonwealth member process for the Central African nation of Gabon began in 2017 while the process for the West African nation of Togo began in 2014.
- Gabon is surrounded by Equatorial Guinea, Cameroon, and the Republic of the Congo, which is also a member of the Commonwealth.
- Togo is bordered by Ghana, a member of the Commonwealth of Nations, as well as by Benin and Burkina Faso.
- **About Commonwealth -**
- The Rashtramandal, commonly referred to as the Commonwealth, is a political union of previously 54 and now 56 member states.
- It was originally created as the British Commonwealth of Nations through the Balfour Declaration at the royal convention of 1926.
- The current Commonwealth of Nations was formally formed in 1949 by the London Declaration.
- The current head of the Commonwealth is Queen Elizabeth II.
- Secretary General - Patricia Scotland
- Headquarters- London

7. Discovery of high grade lithium in Nigeria (June 29, 2022)

Recently high grade lithium has been discovered in Nigeria.

- **Lithium**
- Lithium is an element and is abundantly concentrated in nature in two minerals, spodumene and lepidolite.
- They are usually found in special rocks called rares and greases.
- The Geological Agency described lithium as high grade because it is found with an oxide content of 1-13%. Exploration usually starts at a low of 0.4%.
- Lithium has an atomic number of 3 and an atomic mass of 6.941.

It is the lightest known metal.

- **USE**

- Lithium disilicate ($\text{Li}_2\text{Si}_2\text{O}_5$) is a chemical compound from which glass and ceramic objects are made.
- Lithium metal is used to make useful alloys.
- Lithium is used in rechargeable batteries for mobile phones, laptops, digital cameras and electric vehicles.

- **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION -**

- The Greenbush mine in Western Australia is the largest hard-rock lithium mine in the world.
- The largest importers of lithium are South Korea, China, Japan, the United States and Belgium.
- Recent surveys by researchers from the Directorate of Atomic Minerals (under the Atomic Energy Commission of India) have estimated the presence of lithium reserves of 14,100 tonnes in a small stretch of land in southern Karnataka's Mandya district.

8. India approves the draft of the General Statutory Rules (GSR) notification to introduce NCAP (New Car Assessment Programme) (June 29, 2022)

The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) approved the draft GSR notification to launch India NCAP (New Car Assessment Programme) to bring safer cars to India.

- The NCAP will be rolled out from April 1, 2023 and will mean that auto manufacturers in India as well as importers will have the option to get the cars within the country star rated.
- The program will work as a consumer-centric platform, and will allow customers to access safer cars based on star-ratings.
- The United States was the first country to start a program to test car safety standards through crash tests.

- **India NCAP**

- It is a new car safety assessment program that proposes a mechanism to give 'star rating' to automobiles based on their performance in crash tests.
- The India NCAP standards are aligned with global benchmarks and are beyond the minimum regulatory requirements.
- The proposed India NCAP assessment will assign a star rating from 1 to 5 stars.
- The vehicles for this program will be tested on the basis of testing agencies with necessary infrastructure.

- This will be applicable to M1 category approved motor vehicles with a gross forest cover of less than 3.5 tonnes, manufactured or imported in the country.

- **Importance of NCAP for India**

- 1. Empowering Consumers to Make Informed Decisions
- 2. Enhances Exportability
- 3. Automobile industries will be self-sufficient

9. Union Education Ministry released performance grading index for districts (June 29, 2022)

According to the Performance Grading Index released by the Department of School Education and Literacy (DoSE&L), Ministry of Education (MoE), three districts of Rajasthan- Sikar, Jhunjhunu and Jaipur have been placed in 'Utkarsh' grade in the year 2019-20.

- A year ago, no district came under the 'Utkarsh' category.
- Rajasthan has the highest number of districts in this grade at 24, followed by Punjab (14), Gujarat (13), and Kerala (13).
- The districts with the lowest score (1 out of 50) in this category in the year 2020 are South Salmara-Mankachar (Assam), Alirajpur (Madhya Pradesh), North Garo Hills and South Garo Hills in Meghalaya, and Khowai (Tripura).
- Bihar, Goa, Jammu and Kashmir, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim, Tripura and Uttarakhand have not a single district in the very best and best category.

- **Progress**

- As per the report, there has been an increase in the number of districts across all categories.
- The number of districts in the very best grade increased from 49 to 86 during 2018-19 to 2019-20, showing "significant improvement".
- 33 districts improved their scores in the results, but there was no improvement in grade-level.
- **Digital Learning Category:** 20 districts have shown more than 20% improvement as compared to 2018-19, while 43 districts have improved their scores by more than 10% during 2019-20.
- **Infrastructural facilities:** 478 districts improved their score in the year 2019-20 as compared to the year 2018-19.

- **About performance grading index**

- The PGI-D assesses the performance of the school education system at the district level by creating an index for comprehensive analysis.

- The PGI-D structure consists of a total of 600 points across 83 indicators, grouped under six categories.
- These categories are further divided into 12 domains.
- **Assessment Grade:**
- The PGI-D classifies districts into 10 grades. The highest grade is 'Daksh', for districts scoring more than 90% of the aggregate marks in that category or overall.
- This is followed by 'Utkarsh' (81% to 90%), 'Ati Uttam' (71% to 80%), 'Uttam' (61% to 70%), 'Pracheshta-1' (51 % to 60%) and 'Pracheshta-2' (41% to 50%) is ranked.
- The lowest grade in PGI-D is 'Aspirant-3' for a score of up to 10% of the total marks.

10. NITI Aayog releases report on "India's booming gig and platform economy" (June 29, 2022)

Recently NITI Aayog released a report titled 'India's Booming Gig and Platform Economy'.

- According to the report the Indian gig workforce is expected to expand to 23.5 million workers by 2029-30, a 200% jump from the current 7.7 million.
- The report estimates that gig workers will constitute 4.1% of the total workforce in India by 2029-2030, up from 1.5% now.
- In the year 2020-21, 77 lakh (7.7 million) workers were engaged in the gig economy. Which constituted 2.6% of the non-farm workforce or 1.5% of the total workforce in India.

• Major issues raised in the report

- Job and income insecurity: Gig workers do not benefit from labour regulations relating to wages, hours, working conditions and the right to collective bargaining.
- Occupational safety and health risks: Workers engaged in employment with digital platforms, especially women workers in app-based taxi and delivery sectors, face various occupational safety and health risks.

• Gig economy

- The gig economy is a free market system in which there are simple temporary positions and organisations contract with independent workers for short-term engagements.
- According to a report by Boston Consulting Group, India's gig workforce employs 15 million employees in industries such as software, shared and professional services.
- According to the 2019 India Staffing Federation report, India is the fifth largest country in flexi-staffing globally after the US, China, Brazil and Japan.

- **Gig worker:** A person who works or participates in work arrangements and earns income from such activities outside the traditional employer-employee relationship".

• India's gig sector potential

- An estimated 56% of new jobs in India are being generated by gig economy companies in both blue-collar and white-collar workforce.
- The gig economy can provide 90 million jobs in the non-farm sectors in India, with the potential to increase GDP by a further 1.25% in the "long term".