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1. India, EU resume free trade talks after 9-year lull (June 18, 2022)

As per the Ministry of Commerce and Industry India and the European Union (EU) have resumed free talks for free trade agreement (FTA) after a nine years lull.

- Negotiations were resumed on 17 June at an event held at the European Union Headquarters in Brussels.
- India's Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal, and Valdis Dombrovskis, Executive Vice-President of the European Commission, formally re-launched the India-EU Free Trade Agreement (FTA) negotiations.
- The first round of India-EU Free Trade Agreement talks is scheduled to begin in New Delhi on June 27.
- In addition, negotiations for an Investment Protection Agreement (IPA) and a Geographical Indication (GI) agreement were also initiated.
- This will be one of the most important FTAs for India as the EU is its second largest trading partner after the US.

• India and the European Union (EU) trade

- India-EU trade registered an all-time high of \$116.36 billion in 2021-22, registering a year-on-year growth of 43.5%.
- India's exports to the EU grew by 57% to \$65 billion in FY 2021-22.
- India has a surplus trade with the EU.

• European Union (EU)

- It is an international organisation made up of European countries, which was formed in 1993.
- It is a group of 28 countries that act as a cohesive economic and political bloc.
- 19 of these countries use the euro as their official currency.
- 9 EU members -Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Sweden, and the United Kingdom do not use the euro.
- Its goal is to promote peace and the well-being of all citizens of the EU.

2. MHA to reserve 10 % vacancies for Agniveers in Central Armed Police Forces and Assam Rifles (June 18, 2022)

The Union Home Ministry on June 18 announced to reserve 10 per cent vacancies in the Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs) and Assam Rifles for 'agniveers'.

- The Ministry has also decided to relax the upper age limit of three years for Agniveers for recruitment in Central Armed Police Forces and Assam Rifles.
- The first batch of Agniveers will get a relaxation of 5 years over and above the prescribed age limit of 23 years, taking it up to 28 years.
- The announcement comes amid widespread protests against the recently unveiled scheme for recruitment of soldiers in the armed forces on a short-term contractual basis.
- The soldiers recruited under this scheme will be called 'Agniveer'.
- Several states like Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh and Assam have also announced various measures to encourage the youth to apply under the Agnipath scheme and assured them reservation in their states.
- Uttar Pradesh government said the 'Agniveer' will be given priority in police and related services.
- Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar said his government will give preference to the 75 per cent soldiers who come back after four years as soldiers and seek government jobs.
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About 'Agnipath' scheme

- Under this scheme, to reduce the rising salary and pension expenses, short-term soldiers will be recruited on contract basis, which will be called 'Agniveer'.
Under the scheme the soldiers will be recruited initially for a period of four years and some of them would be retained.
Indian youth will be provided an opportunity to serve in the Armed Forces as 'Agniveer'.
Women will also be recruited into armed forces under the scheme.
This will help in ensuring optimum balance between youth and experience in the Army.
The "Agnipath" scheme, earlier named as "Tour of Duty", was initiated in the presence of the Chiefs of the three Services.
At present, the Army recruits youth under Short Service Commission for an initial tenure of 10 years, which can be extended up to 14 years.
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- **For more information please visit 14 and 17 June 2022 news**

3. Somalia's president appointed Hamza Abdi Barre as prime minister (June 18, 2022)

Somalia's President Hassan Sheikh Mohamed has appointed Hamza Abdi Barre, former chairman of the Jubaland State Election Commission, as prime minister.

- Hamza Abdi Barre, 48, of the semi-autonomous state of Jubaland, replaced Mohamed Hussein Roble.
- Recently Hassan Sheikh Mohamed was elected the new President of Somalia.

- **About Somalia**

- Somalia is a country located on the eastern edge of Africa.
- It is bordered by Djibouti to the northwest, Kenya to the southwest, the Gulf of Aden to the north, the Indian Ocean to the east, and Ethiopia to the west.
- Somalia is a semi-arid country with about 1.64% of the arable land.
- Capital- Mogadishu
- Currency - Somali shilling

4. China to host 14th BRICS Summit in Beijing on June 23 (June 18, 2022)

Chinese President Xi Jinping will host the 14th BRICS Summit in Beijing on **June 23**.

- The Summit will be held in virtual format under the theme of "Foster High-quality BRICS Partnership, Usher in a New Era for Global Development".
- President Xi Jinping will host the High-level Dialogue on Global Development in Beijing on June 24.
- Under the "**BRICS Plus**" format, the leaders of emerging countries invited to the upcoming summit are also expected to participate.
- **China** introduced the "**BRICS Plus**" format last year by inviting some countries from different regions at the Xiaomi summit.
- **About BRICS**
- The full form of BRICS is **Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa**.
- Goldman Sachs economist Jim O'Neill coined the term BRIC (without South Africa) in **2001**.
- He claimed that by 2050, the four BRIC economies would dominate the global economy by 2050.
- South Africa was included in the list in 2010.
- The presidency of the Forum is rotated annually among the members.
- BRICS accounts for about 40% of the world's population.
- It accounts for 30% of the world's GDP (Gross Domestic Product).

For more information please visit 21 May 2022 news

5. Government extended the upper age limit for the Agnipath scheme from 21 to 23 (June 17, 2022)

The central government has increased the upper age limit for the Agneepath Recruitment Scheme from **21 years to 23 years**.

- As per Defence Ministry the age waiver will be given only "**one time**" for the proposed recruitment cycle for 2022.
- The decision has been taken as there has been no recruitment in the last two years.
- Preference will be given to Agniveers in the recruitment of **Central Armed Police Forces and State Police**.
- Those aspiring to become entrepreneurs after the service will get **financial packages** and **bank loans**.
- Agniveer who wants to study further will be given a **12th class equivalent certificate**.
- Agneepath scheme will increase opportunities for youth to serve in the armed forces.
- In the coming years, the recruitment of Agniveers will be almost three times the current recruitment in the Armed Forces.
- Under this scheme more than **forty six thousand** youth will be recruited this year.

For more information please visit 14 June 2022 news

6. Biden nominates Indian-American Radha Iyengar to top Pentagon position (June 17, 2022)

President Joe Biden has nominated Indian-American **Radha Iyengar Plumb** to the top post at the **Pentagon**.

- She is currently serving as the **Chief of Staff** to the Deputy Minister of Defence.
- She has now been nominated for the post of Deputy Under Secretary, **Defence for Acquisition and Sustainment**.
- Prior to her appointment as Chief of Staff, she was the Director of Research and Insights for Trust and Security at **Google** and led the team in **business analytics, data science** and **technical research**.
- She has also served as the Global Head of Policy Analysis at **Facebook**.
- She has also served in several senior positions on national security issues in the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Energy and the White House National Security Council.
- Ms. Plumb was also a senior economist at the **RAND Corporation**, where she focused on improving the measurement and evaluation of preparedness and security efforts at the Department of Defence.
- Early in her career, she was an assistant professor at the **London School of Economics** and did her postdoctoral work from Harvard.
- She received her PhD in Economics from Princeton University.

7. Iraq's 'Pearl of the South' Lake Sawa dry due to water crisis (June 17, 2022)

Iraq's famous and prominent **Lake Sawa** has dried up for the first time in its centuries-old history.

- Locals believe that the lake has dried up due to mismanagement by local investors, neglect of the government and climate change.
- **About Sawa Lake**
- It is a biodiversity-rich wetland located near the city of Samwa, south of Iraq's capital, **Baghdad**.
- Sawa Lake is mentioned in some old **Islamic texts**.
- It is said that the lake was created miraculously on the day **Prophet Muhammad** was born in 570 AD
- Thousands of religious tourists come every year to take a dip in the holy waters of this lake.
- In 2014, Lake Sawa was designated a **Ramsar Site**, an international designation for significant wetlands, recognized as a rare area in need of conservation.
- This lake was known as the **pearl of the south**.

8. Centre approves Rs.1,043 crores as Disaster Response Fund to Rajasthan and Nagaland (June 17, 2022)

A high-level committee headed by Union Home Minister Amit Shah on June 17 approved additional central assistance of Rs 1,043 crore under the National Disaster Response Fund (NDRF) to Rajasthan and Nagaland, which were affected by drought during 2021-22.

- The committee approved additional central assistance of ₹ 1,043.23 crore, of which ₹ 1,003.95 crore would be received by Rajasthan and ₹ 39.28 crore for Nagaland.
- During the financial year 2021-22, the central government has released Rs 17,747.20 crore to 28 states in their SDRF and Rs 7,342.30 crore from NDRF to 11 states.
- **National Disaster Response Fund (NDRF)**
- It is a fund managed by the Central Government.
- It is used to meet the expenses of emergency response, relief and rehabilitation for any disaster situation.
- It was earlier called National Disaster Contingency Fund (NCCF).
- In 2005, the Disaster Management Act was enacted and its name was changed to National Disaster Response Fund (NDRF).

- NDRF was established in accordance with Section 46 of the Disaster Management Act, 2005.
- In June 2020, the Finance Ministry approved a proposal to allow individuals and institutions to contribute directly to the NDRF.
- **State Disaster Response Funds (SDRF)**
 - It has been constituted under the Disaster Management Act, 2005.
 - It was constituted on the recommendations of the 13th Finance Commission.
 - It is the primary fund available with the State Governments to meet the expenditure for providing immediate relief for the response to notified disasters.
 - The Centre contributes 75% of the SDRF allocation for general category States and Union Territories.
 - The Centre contributes 90% for special category States and Union Territories (northeastern States, Sikkim, Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir).
 - Disaster covered under SDRF are Cyclone, drought, earthquake, fire, flood, tsunami, hailstorm, landslide, avalanche, cloudburst, pest attack, frost and cold waves.

9. PM to dedicate to nation Pragati Maidan Integrated Transit Corridor project on 19th June (June 17, 2022)

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will dedicate the main tunnel and five underpasses of the Pragati Maidan Integrated Transit Corridor project to the nation on June 19.

• About Integrated Transit Corridor Project

- It is an integral part of Pragati Maidan Redevelopment Project.
- The project has been built at a cost of over Rs 920 crore.
- It aims to provide hassle free and easy access to the new world class Exhibition and Convention Centre being developed at Pragati Maidan.
- The main tunnel connects Ring Road to India Gate via Purana Qila Road passing through Pragati Maidan.
- Along with the tunnel, there will be six underpasses these are- four on Mathura Road, one on Bhairon Marg and one at the intersection of Ring Road and Bhairon Marg.
- This project will ensure hassle free vehicular movement thereby saving time and money of the commuters.
- It is part of the central government's broader vision to make people's lives easier with changes in urban infrastructure.

10. U.S. to fund 3 Indian research institutions (June 17, 2022)

The United States of America has announced \$122 million in funding to the top three Indian medical research institutes to help prevent preventable pandemics, early detection of disease threats, and prompt and effective response.

- A total amount of US\$ 122,475,000 will be disbursed to three top Indian health research institutes over a period of five years.
- These three research institutes are Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), National Institute of Virology (NIV), Pune and National Institute of Epidemiology (NIE), Chennai.
- The fund will accelerate progress towards India that protects against infectious disease threats by focusing on emerging pathogens.
- The fund will help in detecting and controlling zoonotic disease outbreaks through a 'one health' approach, evaluate vaccine safety monitoring systems, capacitance of the public health workforce in epidemiology and outbreak response.
- Starting from September 30, 2022, eligibility for funding is limited to ICMR, and ICMR institutions, which are the National Institute of Virology (NIV), Pune, and the National Institute of Epidemiology (NIE), Chennai.

- **Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)**

- It is one of the oldest medical research bodies in the world headquartered in New Delhi for the coordination and promotion of biomedical research.
- It works under the Department of Health Services (DHS), Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.
- It was established in 1911 as Indian Research Fund Association (IRFA).
- Later in 1949 its name was changed to ICMR.

- **National Institute of Virology (NIV)**

- It is one of the major institutes of the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR).
- It was established at Pune, Maharashtra in 1952.
- It was established as Virus Research Center (VRC) under the aegis of ICMR and Rockefeller Foundation (RF), USA.

- **National Institute of Epidemiology (NIE)**

- It is a permanent premier institute of the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) established on 2 July 1999.
- It was established by merging the Central JALMA Institute for Leprosy (CJIL Field Unit), Avadi with the Institute for Research in Medical Statistics (IRMS), Chennai.
- The objectives of the Institute are conducting epidemiological studies, development of human resources in epidemiology and bio-statistics etc.