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1. NASSCOM to launch portal to promote digitization of small and medium enterprises (May 21, 2022)

The Electronics and IT, Skill Development, and Entrepreneurship ministry has announced that NASSCOM will launch a portal to promote digitization of small and medium enterprises.

- The portal will bring SMEs and Startups on a single platform to encourage SMEs to adopt digitally and build capacity.
- **About NASSCOM**
- It is a not-for-profit industry association and is the apex body for the IT BPM industry in India.
- It has made unprecedented contributions to India's GDP, exports, employment, infrastructure and global visibility.
- In India, it provides maximum employment in the private sector.
- It was established in 1988 and since then, has been making continuous efforts to support the IT BPM industry.
- It is dedicated to expanding India's role in the global IT ecosystem by creating a conducive business environment.

2. BRO conducts final break through blast of Nechiphu Tunnel in Arunachal Pradesh (May 20, 2022)

The Border Roads Organisation (BRO) conducted the final "Break Through Blast" on May 20, 2022 to mark the successful completion of the Nechiphu Tunnel excavation work in Arunachal Pradesh.

- BRO Director General Lt Gen Rajeev Choudhary operated it from New Delhi virtually.
- The foundation stone of the project was laid by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on October 12, 2020.
- **About Nechiphu Tunnel**
- It is a 500 metre long "D-shaped, Single Tube Double Lane Tunnel".
- It is situated on the Balipara-Chariduar-Tawang (BCT) Road in West Kameng District.
- The tunnel will accommodate two-way traffic and will be equipped with modern lighting and security features.
- The tunnel has been conceived to eliminate the extreme foggy conditions around the Nichifu Pass, which have hindered normal traffic and military convoys for several decades.

- Nichifu Tunnel Project as well as BRO's Vartak Project has also completed the excavation work on another strategic tunnel "Sela Tunnel Project" on the same road on January 22, 2022.

- **About Border Roads Organisation (BRO)**

- It is a road construction executive force of India.
- It is a part of the Indian Armed Forces.
- It develops and maintains the road network in India's border areas and friendly neighbouring countries.
- Founder - Jawaharlal Nehru
- Founded - 7 May 1960
- Headquarters - New Delhi
- Purpose - To provide infrastructure to the Armed Forces of India and the Allied Nations

3. Amritsar-Jamnagar Greenfield corridor to be completed by September 2023 (May 20, 2022)

Road Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari has said that the target is to complete the Amritsar-Jamnagar Greenfield Corridor by September next year.

- The Amritsar-Jamnagar Greenfield Corridor is one of the most important greenfield corridors being developed by the National Highways Authority of India.
- Gadkari said that the Bikaner to Jodhpur section of 277 kilometres is targeted to be completed by the end of this year.

- **About Amritsar-Jamnagar Greenfield Corridor**

- It is being developed at a total capital cost of Rs 26,000 crore.
- This corridor will connect the economic towns of Amritsar, Bhatinda, Sangaria, Bikaner, Sanchore, Samakhiali and Jamnagar across the four states of Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan, and Gujarat.
- It will connect the northern industrial and agricultural centres of the country with major ports of western India such as Jamnagar and Kandla.
- This will significantly reduce fuel, transit time and logistics costs and help it to stay in the competitive global export market for a longer period of time.

4. Centre, states have equal power to make laws on GST: Supreme Court (May 20, 2022)

The Supreme Court on May 19 held that the Centre and state legislatures have "equal, simultaneous and unique powers" to make laws on the Goods and Services Tax (GST) and the recommendations of the GST Council are not binding on them.

- The Supreme Court ruling confirms a decision of the Gujarat High Court which held that the Centre cannot levy Integrated Goods and Services Tax (IGST) on ocean freight from Indian importers.
- The Central Government vide Notification No. 8 of 2017 notified in June 2017 that IGST at the rate of 5% shall be levied on the service of carriage of goods in a ship.
- This notification was rejected by the High Court.
- **Basis of the Judgement**
- The court said that Article 246A of the Constitution empowers the states to make laws with respect to GST.
- It empowers (the union and the states) together to make laws on GST.
- It treats the Union and the States equally.
- Article 279A states that neither the Centre nor the states are dependent on each other in the constitution of the GST Council.

5. Centre decides to lift price capping on raw jute (May 20, 2022)

The government has decided to remove the price cap of Rs 6,500 per quintal on raw jute from May 20 this year.

- The removal of the cap will help farmers, mills and the jute MSME sector, in which more than 7 lakh people depend on the jute trade, apart from around 40 lakh jute farmers.
- The price cap was fixed on September 30 2021.
- The declining trend in prices will also benefit the exports of jute goods, which account for about 30 percent of the turnover of the industry in value terms.
- **Some important facts**
- Jute is an important natural fibre crop after cotton in India.
- Raw jute plays an important role in the economy of the country.
- Jute cultivation is mainly concentrated in eastern and north eastern India.
- India is the world's largest producer of jute, followed by Bangladesh.
- It is primarily grown in West Bengal, Odisha, Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Andhra Pradesh.
- West Bengal leads jute cultivation.

- The jute industry of India is 150 years old.
- There are about 60 jute mills in West Bengal.
- Jute can be used for geotextiles, activated carbon powder, wall coverings, floors, textiles, rugs, ropes, sacks, handicrafts, curtains, carpet backings, papers, sandals, carry bags and furniture.
- In October 2020, the government decided that 100% food grains and 20% sugar would be compulsorily packed in jute bags.

6. Foodgrain production during 2021-22 is higher by 23.80 million tonnes than previous five years (May 20, 2022)

The Union Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare has released the third advance estimate of production of major agricultural crops for the year 2021-22.

- The production of food grains in the country is estimated to be a record 314.51 million tonnes which is higher by 3.77 million tonnes than the foodgrain production during 2020-21.
- The production during 2021-22 is higher by 23.80 million tonnes than the average foodgrain production of the last five years (2016-17 to 2020-21).
- Record production of rice, maize, pulses, oilseeds, gram, rapeseed, mustard and sugarcane is estimated.
- **Estimated production of major crops during 2021-22 is as follow**
 - Foodgrains 314.51 million tonnes
 - Rice 129.66 million tonnes
 - Wheat 106.41 million tonnes
 - Nutri / Coarse Cereals 50.70 million tonnes
 - Maize 33.18 million tonnes
 - Pulses 27.75 million tonnes
 - Tur 4.35 million tonnes
 - Gram 13.98 million tonnes
 - Oilseeds 38.50 million tonnes
 - Groundnut 10.09 million tonnes
 - Soyabean 13.83 million tonnes
 - Rapeseed and Mustard 11.75 million tonnes

- Sugarcane 430.50 million tonnes
- Cotton 31.54 million bales (each 170 kg)
- Jute & Mesta 10.22 million bales (each 180 kg)

7. GeM inks MoU with Self Employed Women's Association (May 20, 2022)

Government eMarketplace (GeM) and Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA) inked a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for, outreach, mobilisation and capacity-building of women-led micro and small enterprises, women entrepreneurs etc as sellers and service providers in public procurement.

- The MoU was signed by GeM Chief Executive Officer PK Singh and SEWA Vice President Rehana Riawala in New Delhi.
- GeM will train SEWA members to assist women-led micro and small enterprises, women entrepreneurs, SHGs among others, with GeM processes related to seller registration and on-boarding on the platform, upload/ update of product/ service catalogues, acceptance of orders etc.
- This will be done directly through the integrated online National Public Procurement Platform.
- Training sessions will be conducted through individual and virtual training mode for SEWA members at district and block level.

• About Government e Marketplace [GeM]

- It is a one stop National Public Procurement Portal to facilitate online procurement of common use Goods & Services.
- It was launched in 2016, with the original objective of bringing transparency and efficiency in the government procurement process.
- Its Nodal Ministry is the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

• About Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA)

- It is a trade union based in India that organises women for informal employment.
- It was founded in 1972 by Indian lawyer and social activist Ela Bhatt and a small group of other women.
- Its primary goals are full employment and self-reliance of its members.

8. Ruchi Soya to buy Patanjali Food Business for 690 crores (May 19, 2022)

Edible oil company Ruchi Soya has announced that it will buy the food division of Patanjali Ayurved for Rs 690 crore.

- Ruchi Soya Industries Limited will be renamed as Patanjali Foods Limited after regulatory approval.
- The 21 products from the food industry acquired include ghee, honey, spices, juices and wheat.
- **Key points**
- According to a company source, Ruchi Soya will pay an annual royalty of 1% of the gross turnover of the items to Patanjali Ayurved under the transfer agreement.
- The Board of Patanjali Ayurved has approved the transfer of the food business to Ruchi Soya Industries.
- Ruchi Soya will receive production units in Padarth (Haridwar, Uttarakhand) and Nevasa (Maharashtra) as part of the agreement.
- Employees, assets, contracts, licences and permits, distribution network and consumers associated with Patanjali Ayurved's food retail business will all be transferred.
- Patanjali Group had acquired Ruchi Soya in 2019 for Rs 4,350 crore through insolvency proceedings.

9. Second phase of wellness mother campaign begins (May 19, 2022)

Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla launched the second phase of Suposhit Maa Abhiyan in Kota to keep pregnant women of the Kota Bundi region well-nourished.

- Under the campaign, a target has been set to nourish three thousand pregnant women, so that 2,000 women in Kota and 1 thousand in Bundi will get the benefit of the campaign.
- Under this campaign, nutrition kits will be provided to pregnant women for 9 months.
- In the year 2020, Suposhit Maa Abhiyan was started by identifying 1000 pregnant women with the goal of removing nutritional deficiency among women.
- Nutrition kit has been prepared by Hans Foundation for the beneficiary women and health cards were also provided to the women for monitoring.
- **Other efforts currently being made**
- **Nutrition campaign**
- Under POSHAN Abhiyaan (erstwhile National Nutrition Mission), all districts in 36 States/ UTs have been covered in a phased manner.
- It is an integrated multi-ministerial mission to ensure the achievement of malnutrition free India by the year 2022.
- The main objective of POSHAN Abhiyaan is to reduce stunting in identified districts of India by improving access and quality of Anganwadi services. In addition, to ensure holistic development and adequate nutrition for pregnant women and post-delivery mothers and their children.

Goals of National Nutrition Mission 2022

- To reduce low birth weight by 2% per annum from 2017 to 2022.
- Reducing stunting to the level of 25% by the year 2022.
- To reduce the level of anaemia existing in children below 5 years of age and women in the age group of 15-49 years by 3% annually from 2017 to 2022.

10. Government set up Cotton Council of India for holistic development of the Cotton sector (May 18, 2022)

The Union Government has announced the formation of the Cotton Council of India under the Chairmanship of Suresh Bhai Kotak. This was announced by the Union Textile Minister Piyush Goel after a meeting with the stakeholders of the cotton industry from farmers to industries.

- The Cotton Council will have representation from Textiles, Agriculture, Commerce, and Finance Ministries along with Cotton Corporation of India and Cotton Research Institute.
- The council will discuss, deliberate, and prepare a robust action plan for bringing out a tangible improvement in this field.

• Cotton In India

- India has the distinction of having the largest area under cotton cultivation which is about 37% of the world area under cotton cultivation between 12.0 million hectares to 13.5 million hectares.
- India is the largest producer of cotton in the world accounting for about 24% of the world cotton production.
- The yield per kgs hectare which is presently 469 kgs/ha is still lower against the world average yield of about 808 Kgs kgs /ha.
- The biggest task of the Cotton Council of India will be to increase productivity of cotton in India so that it can meet the needs of the textile industries and increase the income of the farmers.