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1. Prime Minister launched the National Sickle Cell Anaemia Elimination Mission in Madhya Pradesh (July 2, 2023)

On July 1, Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched the National Sickle Cell Anemia Elimination Mission in Shahdol, Madhya Pradesh.

An Overview of the News

- The mission aims **to eliminate sickle cell anaemia by 2047.**
- This mission will be implemented in **278 districts of 17 states of India.**
- The targeted states include **Gujarat, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, West Bengal, Odisha, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Assam, Uttar Pradesh, Kerala, Bihar** and **Uttarakhand.**
- The mission focuses on **creating awareness and universal testing among about seven crore people in the age group of 0-40 years in the affected tribal areas.**
- Collaborative efforts of **Central Ministries and State Governments** will be employed for consultation and implementation.

About Sickle Cell Anaemia

- According to the **National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute (NHLBI)**, sickle cell anaemia is a collection of inherited red blood cell conditions that affect haemoglobin, which carries oxygen in the body.
- In individuals with sickle cell anaemia, the haemoglobin is denatured, causing the red blood cells to become rigid and sticky, forming a C-shaped form called a 'sickle'.
- As per the Forbes report, **the global prevalence of sickle cell disease ranks second highest in India.**
- According to a report by the **National Health Mission, Madhya Pradesh (MP) has the highest prevalence of sickle cell anaemia in India.**

Symptoms of Sickle Cell Anaemia

- **Red blood cell abnormality:** In sickle cell anaemia, the red blood cells become sickle-shaped instead of their normal shape.
- **Anaemia:** The shortening of the life span of sickle cells reduces the number of healthy red blood cells, leading to anaemia.
- **Swelling:** Sickle cells damage the spleen, causing swelling in the hands and feet.
- **Increased susceptibility to infection:** Sickle cell anaemia makes individuals more susceptible to infection due to spleen damage.

2. PM inaugurates 17th Indian Cooperative Congress in New Delhi (July 1, 2023)

PM-inaugurates-17th-Indian-Cooperative-Congress-in-New-Delhi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressed the **17th Indian Cooperative Congress at Pragati Maidan, New Delhi on 1 July.**

An Overview of the News

- The **National Cooperative Union of India (NCUI) is organizing the two-day event.**
- The theme of the Indian Cooperative Congress is '**Amrit Kaal: Prosperity through Cooperation for a Vibrant India**'.
- The program was presided over by **Union Home and Cooperation Minister Amit Shah.**
- The objective of the Ministry of Cooperatives is **to discuss various trends in the cooperative movement.**
- The Government has set up a separate Ministry of Cooperatives to strengthen the cooperative movement in the country.
- The Prime Minister's participation in the Congress reflects the government's commitment to promote the cooperative sector.
- The objective of the 17th **Indian Cooperative Congress is to discuss the trends, best practices, challenges and future policy direction of India's cooperative movement.**
- More than 3600 stakeholders including Cooperative Societies, International Cooperative Organizations, International Cooperative Alliance, Ministries, Universities and reputed institutions participated in the event.

3. Virgin Galactic completes first manned mission to space (June 30, 2023)

Virgin-Galactic-completes-first-manned-mission-to-space

Virgin Galactic, founded by **Richard Branson**, successfully completed its **first manned mission to the edge of space** on June 29, marking a significant milestone for the company after two decades of dedicated efforts.

An overview of the news

- The mission had a research-oriented focus and featured two Italian Air Force personnel, **Colonel Walter Villadei and Lieutenant Colonel Angelo Landolfi**, who were funded by Virgin Galactic.
- Pantaleone Carlucci, an engineer affiliated with Italy's **National Research Council**, and **Colin Bennett**, a Virgin Galactic astronaut instructor, were also part of the group.

- The mission aimed to assess the flight's comfort and functionality, providing valuable feedback to enhance **Virgin Galactic's rocket-powered spaceplane, VSS Unity.**
- The journey began at Virgin Galactic's spaceport in **New Mexico**, where the passengers boarded VSS Unity attached beneath the wing of the twin-fuselage mothership, **VMS Eve.**
- VMS Eve accelerated down the runway and ascended to an altitude exceeding **40,000 feet before releasing VSS Unity.**
- VSS Unity ignited its rocket engine and ascended directly upward, reaching an altitude of more than **80 kilometers**, which is recognized as the edge of outer space by the United States government.
- During its ascent, VSS Unity achieved **supersonic speeds** and experienced moments of weightlessness at the peak of its flight.
- After reaching the designated altitude, VSS Unity glided back to the spaceport, entering freefall and landing on a runway.

About Virgin Galactic

- Virgin Galactic is a space venture established by British entrepreneur **Richard Branson.**
- The company aims to provide **commercial space travel experiences to customers.**
- Virgin Galactic has been in operation for over two decades, with the goal of making **space accessible for non-astronauts.**
- The company's spacecraft, **VSS Unity**, is a rocket-powered spaceplane designed to carry passengers to the edge of space.
- Unlike traditional space missions, Virgin Galactic's focus is on providing a unique and thrilling experience rather than conducting scientific research.

4. World Bank approves \$700 million for crisis-hit Sri Lanka (June 30, 2023)

World-Bank-approves-\$700-million

The **World Bank** has approved a substantial funding package of **700 million dollars for Sri Lanka**, providing a significant boost to the country's financial situation.

An overview of the news

- Out of the approved funds, approximately **500 million dollars will be allocated for budgetary support**, aimed at stabilizing the country's economy.
- The remaining **200 million dollars will be dedicated to welfare support**, with the objective of assisting those most affected by the ongoing crisis.

Sri Lanka's financial crisis

- Sri Lanka has been facing its most severe financial crisis since gaining independence from **Britain in 1948**.
- The country experienced record lows in Foreign Exchange reserves last year, prompting India to provide humanitarian assistance totaling approximately **4 billion dollars** through grants and lines of credit.
- The World Bank's assistance represents the largest amount of financial support received by the crisis-stricken nation since the approval of the **International Monetary Fund (IMF)** agreement in March.
- The IMF agreement provided Sri Lanka with an extended fund facility of close to **3 billion dollars**, which will be available over a 48-month period.

About the World Bank

- It was **established in 1944** and is headquartered in **Washington, DC**.
- Its primary goal is to **reduce poverty in developing countries** by providing financial assistance, technical expertise, and other resources to support development projects.
- The World Bank operates through two main institutions: the **International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD)** and the **International Development Association (IDA)**.
- The IBRD provides loans to middle-income and creditworthy **low-income countries**, while the IDA provides grants and loans to the poorest countries.
- The World Bank also works closely with other international organisations such as the United Nations, the International Monetary Fund, and regional development banks to coordinate development efforts and promote economic growth.
- Founders - **John Maynard Keynes, Harry Dexter White**
- President - **Ajay Banga**

5. India's first-ever report on Critical Minerals for India unveils (June 30, 2023)

India's-first-ever-report-on-Critical-Minerals

Union Minister of Mines, **Pralhad Joshi** on 29th June **launched India's inaugural report on Critical Minerals for India**.

An overview of the news

- The report identifies **30 critical minerals** that are crucial for various sectors such as **defense, agriculture, energy, pharmaceuticals, and telecom**.
- This comprehensive list represents a significant milestone in India's efforts to achieve self-reliance and security in terms of mineral resources.

- The report aligns with India's vision of attaining '**Net Zero**' targets, emphasizing the importance of sustainable resource management.
- The purpose of the list is to provide guidance for policy formulation, strategic planning, and investment decisions within the mining sector.
- By identifying critical minerals, India aims to enhance its domestic production capabilities, reduce dependence on imports, and strengthen its mineral security.
- The report's findings will play a vital role in shaping India's mineral resource policies and facilitating long-term sustainability in key sectors of the economy.

What are Critical Minerals?

- Critical minerals are a specific group of minerals that play a vital role in various sectors of the **economy, including defense, energy, telecommunications, agriculture, and pharmaceuticals**.
- These minerals are essential for the production of **high-tech products, renewable energy technologies, advanced defense systems**, and other critical applications.
- Critical minerals possess unique properties and characteristics that make them difficult to substitute or replace with alternative materials.
- The identification and strategic management of critical minerals are crucial for ensuring the economic growth, security, and sustainability of a country's industries.

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7. Union Cabinet approved PM-PRANAM scheme (June 29, 2023)

Union-Cabinet-approved-PM-PRANAM-scheme

The **Union Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA)** on 28 June approved the **PM-PRANAM Scheme.**

An overview of the news

- The scheme is aimed at incentivising states to use **alternative, non-chemical fertilisers.**
- The cabinet also decided to continue the current urea subsidy for three years starting FY23, with an outlay of **Rs 3.68 trillion.**

About PM-PRANAM Scheme

- The full name of PM PRANAM is **Promotion of Alternative Nutrients for Agriculture Management Scheme.**
- **Aim of the Scheme :**
- to **reduce the use of chemical fertilisers**
- Reducing the subsidy burden on chemical fertilisers, which is projected to reach **Rs 2.25 lakh crore in 2022-23 - 39 per cent** more than last year's figure of **Rs 1.62 lakh crore.**
- **70 percent** of the grant provided under the scheme can be used for asset creation related to technology adoption of alternative fertilizers and alternative fertilizer production units at village, block and district level.

Introduction of sulphur-coated urea (Urea Gold)

- The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) has made a significant decision to introduce **sulphur-coated urea, also known as Urea Gold, in the country.**
- This move aims to address the issue of **sulphur deficiency in the soil.**

- Sulphur-coated urea offers a more **economical and efficient solution** compared to other types of urea available in the market.
- It provides a **higher nitrogen absorption rate**, leading to **better crop productivity**.
- Conventional urea typically has a **nitrogen absorption rate of around 30%**.
- Neem-coated urea, which is another alternative, offers a higher absorption rate of **50%**.

8. UN chief appoints Xu Haoliang of China as deputy head of UNDP (June 29, 2023)

UN-chief-appoints-Xu-Haoliang-of-China-as-deputy-head-of-UNDP

UN Secretary-General **Antonio Guterres** has announced the appointment of **Xu Haoliang from China** as the new **Undersecretary-General and Associate Administrator of the UN Development Programme (UNDP)**.

An overview of the news

- Xu Haoliang will succeed **Usha Rao-Monari** from India in this role.
- Xu has been serving as the **UN Assistant Secretary-General and Director of the Bureau for Policy and Programme Support** at the UNDP since 2019.
- Prior to that, from 2013 to 2019, he held the position of **UNDP Assistant Administrator** and **Director of the Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific**.
- He has worked in various capacities within the United Nations, undertaking assignments both in the field and at headquarters in regions such as **Asia-Pacific, Europe, and Central Asia**.
- Before joining the United Nations, Xu worked in the field of **civil engineering** in China and the United States.
- His academic qualifications include a bachelor's degree in engineering from Tongji University in China, a master's degree in management science from the Stevens Institute of Technology in the United States, and a master's degree in international affairs from Columbia University.
- Xu is proficient in **Chinese, English, and Russian**.

About The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

- It is the leading agency of the **United Nations**.
- It works to **eradicate poverty and reduce inequality in 170 countries** and territories.
- It helps countries to develop **policies, leadership skills, partnering abilities, institutional capabilities**, and to build resilience to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

- Its work is concentrated in three focus areas; **sustainable development, democratic governance and peace building, and climate and disaster resilience.**

9. DoT announces '5G & Beyond Hackathon 2023' (June 29, 2023)

DoT-announces-'5G-&-Beyond-Hackathon-2023'

The **Department of Telecommunications (DoT)** has been actively organizing **Hackathons to foster the development of 5G products and solutions.**

An overview of the news

- These initiatives have led to the creation of innovative **5G products and solutions** across various technological verticals.
- In continuation of these efforts, the DoT has announced the commencement of applications for the '**5G & Beyond Hackathon 2023**' from June 28, 2023.
- The primary objective of this hackathon is to identify cutting-edge ideas with a focus on India, which can be transformed into practical and effective 5G and beyond products and solutions.
- A total **prize pool of Rs one crore** will be distributed among one hundred winners of the hackathon.
- Additionally, the winners will have the unique opportunity to receive guidance from mentors representing the government, industry, academia, Telcos/OEMs (Original Equipment Manufacturers), and other relevant stakeholders.
- The aim is to promote the exploration of these domains and harness the potential of 5G technology in addressing real-world challenges.
- The 5G & Beyond Hackathon is open to **individuals, students, start-ups, and academic institutions** across India.

10. Canada launches 'Digital Nomad Strategy' for foreign workers (June 29, 2023)

Canada-launches-'Digital-Nomad-Strategy'-for-foreign-workers

Canada launched the "**Digital Nomad Strategy**" to address its **skilled labour shortage, particularly in the tech industry.**

An Overview of the News

- The strategy aims **to attract talented individuals from around the world.**
- The shortage of skilled workers, particularly in the tech industry, has prompted Canada to take proactive measures.
- The announcement was made during **Collision's technical conference in Toronto.**

- The strategy focuses primarily on the technology industry, recognizing its importance in driving innovation and economic growth.

Digital Nomad Strategy

- Foreign workers are allowed to stay in Canada for up to **six months under the Digital Nomad Strategy.**
- If digital nomads receive job offers during their stay, they have the option of extending their time in the country.
- The strategy aims **to address the shortage of skilled professionals in Canada's tech sector.**
- Digital nomads can continue their remote working arrangements while living in Canada.
- This strategy encourages networking and collaboration between foreign workers, local professionals and Canadian businesses.

About Canada

- Capital - **Ottawa**
- Currency - **Canadian Dollar**
- Official languages - **English and French**
- National Symbol - **Maple Leaf**
- Prime Minister - **Justin Trudeau**