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1. Govt awards GI tag to Mithila Makhana to boost farmers' income (Aug. 22, 2022)

The Central Government has granted Geographical Indication (GI) tag to Mithila Makhana.

IMPORTANT FACTS -

- According to the GI Registry Certificate, it has been registered as GI Mithilanchal Makhana Producer Association.
- Usually, this name assures quality and uniqueness, which is essentially due to its place of origin.
- Any association of persons, producers, organization or authority established by or under law can apply for GI tag.
- This step will help the Makhana growers to get maximum value for their produce.
- Once a product has got this tag, no person or company can sell anything similar to that name.
- This tag is valid for a period of 10 years after which it can be renewed.
- Other benefits of GI registration include legal protection of that commodity, prevention against unauthorized use by others and promotion of exports.

What is a Geographical Indication ?

- A Geographical Indication (GI) is primarily an agricultural, natural or manufactured product (handicrafts and industrial goods) originating in a given geographical area.
- Such a name assures quality and uniqueness which is due to its origin in the specified geographical area.

Some Famous Geographical Indications :

- Basmati Rice, Darjeeling Tea, Chanderi Fabric, Mysore Silk, Kullu Shawl, Kangra Chai, Thanjavur Painting, Allahabad Surkha, Farrukhabad Print, Lucknow Zardozi and Kashmir Walnut Wood Carving, Mahabaleshwar Strawberry, Banarasi Saree, Tirupati Laddu, Jaipur Blue Pottery.

Importance of geographical indication :

- Geographical Indication tag provides equal rights and protection to the holders of intellectual property rights like copyright, patent, trademark etc.
- These are the factors for the promotion of fame and culture of any country.

- They play an important role in the prestige of any country.
- They are an integral part of India's rich culture and collective intellectual heritage.
- The rural economy of remote areas benefits immensely by granting GI tag to specific types of products.

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3. Union Home Minister Amit Shah presides over 23rd Central Zonal Council Meeting in Bhopal (Aug. 22, 2022)

Union Home Minister Amit Shah chaired the meeting of the Central Zonal Council in Bhopal on 22nd August where issues related to connectivity, electricity, sharing of river water and common interest were discussed.

IMPORTANT FACTS -

- The meeting was attended by Chief Ministers, Ministers, Chief Secretaries, Principal Secretaries and senior officials of Member States and Central Government.
- In this meeting of the Central Zonal Council, the states of **Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand** are included.
- UP CM Yogi Adityanath, Uttarakhand CM Pushkar Singh Dhami, Chhattisgarh CM Bhupesh Baghel and Madhya Pradesh CM Shivraj Singh Chouhan were present in the Central Zonal Council meeting.
- The Central Government holds regular meetings of the Zonal Councils from time to time as part of the overall strategy to strengthen and promote cooperative and competitive federalism in the country.
- These regional councils enable dialogue and discussion on issues affecting one or more states.

About Zonal Councils :

- In 1956 first Prime Minister of India, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru give the idea of creation of Zonal Councils.
- There are five Zonal Councils in India which were established in 1957 under Section 15-22 of the States Reorganization Act, 1956.
- A Standing Committee is constituted by each Zonal Council consisting of the Chief Secretaries of their respective Zonal Councils of the Member States.
- These Standing Committees meet from time to time to resolve the issues.
- Chairman - The Union Home Minister is the Chairman of each of these Councils

• Vice-chairman - Chief Minister of the host state

Five Zonal Councils :

1. **The Northern Zonal Council** - States of Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Punjab, Rajasthan, National Capital Territory of Delhi and Union Territory of Chandigarh are included.
2. **The Central Zonal Council** - States of Chhattisgarh, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh are included.
3. **The Eastern Zonal Council** - States of Bihar, Jharkhand, Orissa, Sikkim and West Bengal are included.
4. **The Western Zonal Council** - States of Goa, Gujarat, Maharashtra and the Union Territories of Daman & Diu and Dadra & Nagar Haveli are included.
5. **The Southern Zonal Council** - States of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and the Union Territory of Puducherry are included.

Objectives of the Zonal Councils :

- National integration
- Enabling Centre and States to collaborate and exchange ideas and experiences
- Stopping the growth of regionalism, linguism and specific tendencies
- To establish an environment of cooperation among the states for successful and speedy execution of development projects

Significance of Zonal Councils :

- Zonal councils provide a forum for discussion on issues affecting one or more states or issues between the Centre and the states.
- It helps in developing a coordinated approach through deliberation and exchange of views among the states on important issues of social and economic development.
- They provide a forum for resolving disputes between the Centre and the states.

Kindly also see 11 June and 9 July 2022 post.

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5. US, South Korea begin biggest joint military drills since 2018 (Aug. 22, 2022)

South Korea and the United States began their biggest joint military exercise 'Ulchi Freedom Shield' since 2018 on 22 August with the resumption of field training.

IMPORTANT FACTS -

- Known as Ulchi Freedom Shield, thousands of military personnel are expected to participate in the exercise.
- It will run for two weeks starting 22 August.
- The US and South Korea have said they are defensive in nature and will conduct exercises to coordinate security forces in response to North Korea's aggression.
- The exercise is likely to involve warships, aircraft and armoured vehicles.
- The US, South Korea and Japan conducted a joint missile defence exercise in Hawaii earlier this month.
- The US, Japan and South Korea have warned that North Korea is preparing for its first nuclear test since 2017.
- North Korea is trying to develop smaller weapons to attack US allies in Asia and could increase the power of those weapons that would be carried to the US by intercontinental ballistic missiles.

- The US still has about 28,500 troops in South Korea and military leaders on both sides have said the exercises are necessary to prepare for any provocation by Pyongyang (North Korea).
- Ulchi Freedom Shield exercise will improve South Korea's combat capability.

South Korea :

- It is in East Asia. It is located on the southern part of the Korean Peninsula.
- In 2017 South Korea had the fastest internet connectivity globally.
- President - **Yoon Suk-Yeol**
- Prime Minister - **Kim Boo-Kyum**
- Capital - **Seoul**
- Official Language - **Korean**

6. S Jaishankar unveils Gandhi's bust in Paraguay (Aug. 22, 2022)

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, who is on his first ever official visit to South America, unveiled a bust of Mahatma Gandhi in Paraguay on 21 August.

IMPORTANT FACTS -

- He appreciated the decision of Asuncion Municipality to establish it on the main waterfront of the city.
- The External Affairs Minister also visited the historic **Casa de la Independencia** from where Paraguay's independence movement began more than two centuries ago.
- External Affairs Minister, S Jaishankar is on an official visit to Brazil, Paraguay and Argentina from 22-27 August.
- In Paraguay, S Jaishankar will also inaugurate the new **Indian Embassy complex**, which started functioning in January 2022.
- EAM's visit is aimed at exploring new areas of cooperation in the post-pandemic era.

About Paraguay :

- It is a land-locked country in **south-central South America**.
- It is one of the world's largest exporters of **hydropower**.
- The rivers provide access to the Atlantic Ocean and serve as sites for hydroelectric power plants.
- Paraguay is a member of **MERCOSUR**.

- The Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR) is a regional integration process, initially established by **Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay, and later joined by Venezuela and Bolivia.**
- India has a preferential trade agreement with MERCOSUR.
- Diplomatic relations between India and Paraguay were established in year 1961.
- President - **Mario Abdo Benitez**
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8. Govt launches 2nd phase of Grameen Udyami Project (Aug. 22, 2022)

National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) in partnership with Seva Bharti and Yuva Vikas Society on 20 August launched the second phase of Grameen Udyami Project to augment skill training in tribal communities for their inclusive and sustainable growth.

IMPORTANT FACTS -

- The second phase of the pilot project was launched in Ranchi.
- The Central Government has sanctioned a budget of 85 thousand crore rupees exclusively for tribal areas.
- The initiative aims to provide multi-skilled and functional skills to the youth of India to enable their livelihood.
- The Prime Minister has emphasised on inclusion of tribal communities in the workforce, ensuring their holistic development so as to make them self-reliant and integrated into their respective geographical areas.

Grameen Udyami Project :

- It has been implemented under the Parliamentary Package Scheme.
- It is a unique multi-skill project, funded by NSDC, which aims to train 450 tribal students in Madhya Pradesh and Jharkhand.
- The project is being implemented in six states- Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand and Gujarat.
- Minister of State Rajiv Chandrashekhar and tribal MPs embodied this concept.
- In the first phase of training, candidates from rural and tribal areas of Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat were included.

The training under the project :

- Electrician & Solar PV Installation Technician
- Plumbing & Masonry
- 2-Wheeler Repair & Maintenance
- IT/ITES with e-Governance

Farm Mechanisation

Objectives of the project :

- Increase in Rural/Local Economy
- Enhance employment opportunities
- Reduce forced migration due to lack of local opportunities
- Conservation of natural resources

9. India's first indigenously built Hydrogen Fuel Cell bus launched in Pune (Aug. 22, 2022)

Union Minister of State, Science and Technology Jitendra Singh on 21 August launched "India's first indigenously developed hydrogen fuel cell bus" in Pune.

IMPORTANT FACTS -

- The bus is developed by the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) and private firm KPIT Limited.
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 'Hydrogen Vision' is crucial for India to ensure self-reliance.
- PM's 'Hydrogen Vision' means affordable and accessible clean energy, meeting climate change goals, and creating new entrepreneurs and jobs.
- The central government is going to start operating hydrogen-powered buses on a pilot basis in the Leh region of Ladakh.

What is a hydrogen fuel cell ?

- The hydrogen fuel cell uses hydrogen and atmospheric air to generate electricity, producing only heat and water in the process.
- The hydrogen fuel cells on the bus combine hydrogen and oxygen atoms to generate electricity.
- The two gases i.e. hydrogen and oxygen react in an electrochemical cell, similar to a conventional battery cell, to produce electricity, water, and a small amount of heat.
- This electricity is used by electric motors to propel the vehicle.
- Hydrogen fuel cells continue to produce electricity as long as there is a supply of hydrogen.
- Like a conventional cell, a fuel cell consists of an anode (negative electrode) and a cathode (positive electrode) around an electrolyte.

Advantages of Hydrogen Fuel Cell :

- They produce no tailpipe emissions. They emit only water vapour and warm air.
- 'Tailpipe' emission standards specify the maximum amount of pollutants allowed in the exhaust gases from an internal combustion engine.
- They are more efficient than internal combustion engine vehicles.
- It is more practical than battery-powered electric vehicles.
- Hydrogen can be refilled in a fuel cell vehicle within minutes.
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