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1. 17th Pravasi Bhartiya Divas to be held at Indore in January 2023 (Aug. 19, 2022)

According to the External Affairs Ministry the 17th Pravasi Bhartiya Divas 2023 will be held at Indore in January next year.

IMPORTANT FACTS -

- Secretary, Consular, Passport and Visa Division, Ausaf Sayeed and Madhya Pradesh Chief Secretary Iqbal Singh Bains signed an MoU to host Pravasi Bharatiya Divas.
- The MoU was signed in the presence of Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan.

About Pravasi Bharatiya Divas :

- **On January 9, 1915, this day was chosen as Pravasi Bhartiya Divas to commemorate the return of Mahatma Gandhi to India from South Africa.**
- Mahatma Gandhi led India's freedom struggle and changed the lives of Indians forever.
- Celebration of Pravasi Diwas started in India in 2003.
- In the year 2015 it was revised and it was decided to celebrate Pravasi Bharatiya Divas every two years.
- The 16th Pravasi Divas Conference was held in New Delhi with the theme "Contribution to Self-reliant India".
- This day marks the contribution of the overseas Indian community in the development of India.

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3. China's army to take part in Vostok-2022 exercise in Russia (Aug. 19, 2022)

The People's Liberation Army of China will participate in the strategic command and staff exercise Vostok-2022 in Russia from 1 - 5 September.

IMPORTANT FACTS -

- India, Belarus, Tajikistan, Mongolia and other countries will also participate in the exercise.
- The exercise will be held under the command of the chief of Russia's General Staff, Valery Gerasimov, at 13 training grounds of the Eastern Military District.
- During the exercise, the participating forces will practice measures to maintain military security in the eastern sector.
- The exercise will contribute to "friendly cooperation between the armed forces of all countries".
- It will advance the level of strategic dialogue by all parties and strengthen the ability to respond to various security threats.
- Last year, India participated in Exercise ZAPAD 2021 in Russia, in which 17 countries including China and Pakistan participated.

India's Exercises with China & Russia :

- **China** - Exercise Hand-in-Hand
- **Russia** - Exercise Indra, Exercise TSENTR

4. China's funding for the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor down 56% (Aug. 19, 2022)

China's funding to Pakistan for the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) declined by about 56% in the first half of 2022.

IMPORTANT FACTS -

- Other countries such as Russia, Egypt and Sri Lanka saw a 100% drop of BRI engagement compared to 2021.
- The project is running from Gwadar port in Pakistan to Kashgar city in Xinjiang, China.
- The project is not running as per the initial promise due to lack of transparency, debt problem, poor management and corruption.
- The project is facing local opposition and frequent attacks on the project and its personnel in Pakistan and other security challenges.
- Apart from this, the deteriorating economic condition of Pakistan is also affecting the project.
- According to reports, China has recently asked for its military presence in Pakistan to safeguard and look after the project.
- China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) project, on the other hand, is also facing global criticism for its inadequate transparency of loans.

China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) :

- It is a project connecting China's northwestern Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region and Gwadar Port in Pakistan's western province of Balochistan.
- The length of this project is 3,000 km.
- It is a bilateral project between Pakistan and China.
- It aims to promote connectivity across Pakistan through a network of energy, industrial and other infrastructure development projects, highways, railways and pipelines.
- It is a part of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

5. Draft Indian Ports Bill, 2022 released for stakeholder consultation (Aug. 19, 2022)

To amend the British-era law for the port sector, the government has released the draft Indian Ports Bill, 2022 for stakeholder consultation.

IMPORTANT FACTS -

- It has been drafted to consolidate and amend the laws relating to ports for prevention of pollution at ports and to ensure compliance of the country's obligation under maritime treaties and international instruments to which India is a party.
- Measures for the protection of ports have also been mentioned in the bill.
- This Bill 2022 will repeal and replace the existing Indian Ports Act, 1908.
- The proposed bill will streamline the development of the maritime sector, while also promoting ease of doing business by defining unnecessary delays, disagreements and responsibilities.

Objectives of the bill :

- To promote inter-state and Centre-State integrated planning through a purely advisory and recommendatory framework.
- Ensuring prevention of pollution measures for all ports in India involving India's obligations under international treaties.
- Addressing the gaps in the dispute resolution framework required for the growing port sector
- Introducing transparency and collaboration in development and other aspects through the use of data.
- To empower and establish State Maritime Boards for effective administration, control and management of non-major ports in India.
- To provide an adjudicatory mechanism for redressal of port related disputes.
- To set up a National Council to promote the structured growth and development of the port sector.
- Ensuring optimum utilization of India's coastline.

Why was this bill brought ?

- The Indian Ports Act, 1908 is over 110 years old.
- It is now imperative that the law be amended to reflect the current framework, incorporate India's international obligations, address emerging environmental concerns and assist in the consultative development of the port sector in the national interest.

Importance of Ports in India :

- India has 7,500 km of coastline, 14,500 km of potential navigable waterways and strategic bases on major international maritime trade routes.
- About 95% of India's trade by volume and 65% by value is carried out through sea transport facilitated by ports.
- Several port-led development initiatives have been identified and taken up under the aegis of the Sagarmala Project of the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways.

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7. Goa is the first Har Ghar Jal State in the country and Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu the first Union Territory (Aug. 19, 2022)

According to the Ministry of Jal Shakti, Goa has become the first 'Har Ghar Jal' certified state in the country, where now all households have access to clean water through taps.

IMPORTANT FACTS -

- The people of all the villages in both these states and union territories have declared their village as 'Har Ghar Jal' through a resolution passed by the Gram Sabha and certified that safe drinking water is provided to all the households in the villages through taps.
- The ministry said potable water is available through tap connections to all 2.63 lakh rural households in Goa and 85,156 households in Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu.
- All two lakh 63 thousand rural households of Goa and more than 85 thousand families of Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu are now getting clean and safe drinking water through taps.

First 'Har Ghar Jal' certified district in the country :

- Last month, the ministry had informed that Burhanpur district of Madhya Pradesh has become the first 'Har Ghar Jal' certified district in the country.
- Till then, Burhanpur was the only district in the country where people from each of the 254 villages had declared their villages as 'Har Ghar Jal' through a resolution passed by the Gram Sabha.

Jal Jeevan Mission :

- It is a flagship programme of the Government of India which was announced from the ramparts of Red Fort by the Prime Minister on August 15, 2019.
- The objective of the mission is to supply potable tap water in adequate quantity, prescribed quality and on a regular and long-term basis to every rural household of the country by 2024.

- It is implemented by the Government of India in partnership with the States/Union Territories.
- This mission comes under the Ministry of Jal Shakti.

Funding Pattern :

- The fund sharing pattern between the Center and the states under the mission is 90:10 for Himalayan and North-Eastern states and 50:50 for other states.
- In the case of Union Territories, 100% contribution is made by the Centre.

8. HAL to open office in Kuala Lumpur for business operations in Southeast Asia (Aug. 18, 2022)

Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) signed a MoU to set up an office in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

IMPORTANT FACTS -

- This office will help HAL to tap new business opportunities for Fighter Lead-in Trainer (FLIT) and other requirements of Royal Malaysian Air Force (RMAF) such as Su-30 MKM and Hawk upgrade.
- This will strengthen India's commitment in supporting the Malaysian Defence Forces and industry for a sustainable aerospace and defence landscape in Malaysia.
- HAL had submitted a proposal in October 2021 for the supply of 18 FLIT LCAs against a global tender issued by RMAF to the Ministry of Defence, Malaysia.
- Being one of the largest producers of Russian-origin Su-30 aircraft, HAL stated that it has the capability to provide necessary support to the RMAF for the Su-30 MKM fleet, which is facing low serviceability due to the Russia-Ukraine crisis.
- Other HAL platforms such as HTT-40, Do-228, Advanced Light Helicopter (ALH), and Light Combat Helicopter (LCH) are likely to be inducted by the RMAF in the future.
- HAL's office in Kuala Lumpur will market promotion of HAL's range of products and services not only in Malaysia but throughout Southeast Asia.

9. Thai Public Broadcasting Service signs MoU with Prasar Bharati (Aug. 18, 2022)

The Thai Public Broadcasting Service (Thai PBS) on 18 August signed a Memorandum of Understanding with India's public broadcaster Prasar Bharati for comprehensive cooperation between Thailand and India to strengthen their bilateral ties.

IMPORTANT FACTS -

- Thai PBS and Prasar Bharati share the same values as public broadcasters.
- The MoU will contribute to better understanding between the peoples of the two countries and is the first step in cooperation in exchange of news and programmes.
- Indian Ambassador to Thailand Suchitra Durai represented Prasar Bharati in signing the MoU.
- Both countries also signed MoU on Health and Medical Research Cooperation between Indian Council of Medical Research and Department of Medical Sciences, Thailand.

India -Thailand relations :

- **The year 2022 is the 75th year of diplomatic relations between the two countries.**
- Both countries share a maritime boundary in the Andaman Sea.
- Thailand was one of the first countries to establish diplomatic relations with India in 1947.
- In 2021, Thailand became India's fourth largest trading partner in ASEAN.
- In 2021-22, Thailand was India's 22nd top trading partner, with a total trade of US\$6.6 billion.
- The MoU on Defence Cooperation between India and Thailand was signed on 25 January 2012.
- Since 2015, India has participated in the largest Asia Pacific military exercise Ex-Cobra Gold as an 'Observer Plus' category.

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