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1. PM Modi launches blockchain-based digital degrees at IIT Kanpur (Dec. 29, 2021)

- The technology has been developed by IIT Kanpur under the National Blockchain Project.
- These digital degrees can be verified globally and are unforgeable.
- The blockchain system works on the principle of decentralization. This means that the control is not in the hands of a central agency, but in a distributed network of nodes. This will help in keeping the data safe even if any specific node is compromised.
- Also, the information in a blockchain is recorded and stored sequentially along with an exact timestamp. The previous information can't be altered, only amended by adding a new block. This makes tampering with a transcript very hard.
- Blockchain technology can simplify the tedious task of maintaining the records of students by making them digitized. Also, the students will be able to access their records remotely.
- Blockchain technology will simplify the verification process. Any institute can do so with a few clicks instead of going through lots of paper documentation, in cases of transfer students, or sharing records with employers, or issuing degrees.

2. Centre notifies the Consumer Protection (Direct Selling) Rules, 2021 (Dec. 29, 2021)

- On December 28, the central government issued new regulations for the direct selling business, paving the way for the formalization of the direct selling industry while also intending to keep a check on this so-far unregulated segment.
- This is notified by the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food, and Public Distribution.
- It is notified under the Consumer Protection Act 2019.
- The direct selling industry's major participants in India include companies like Tupperware, Amway, Herbalife, and Oriflame.

Highlights-

- Existing Direct Selling entities need to comply with these rules within ninety days.
- The rules apply to all India-based direct selling companies as well as to any direct selling entity that is not established in India but offers goods or services to consumers in India.
- Direct selling entities and direct sellers using e-commerce platforms for sale, should also comply with the Consumer Protection (e-Commerce) Rules, 2020.
- Direct selling entities and direct sellers are prohibited from:
 - Promoting a Pyramid Scheme or enroll any person to such scheme or participate in such arrangement in any manner whatsoever in the garb of direct selling business;
 - Participate in money circulation scheme in the garb of doing direct selling business.
- State Government to set up a mechanism to monitor or supervise the activities of direct sellers and direct selling entity.
- Direct sellers must have at least one physical location as their registered office within the country.
- Direct selling entities to be liable for the grievances arising out of the sale of goods or services by its direct sellers.

As per data published by the World Federation of Direct Selling Association (WFDSA), the retail size of the Indian direct selling industry was valued at \$3 billion, or about Rs 22,500 crore, in 2020 with year-on-year growth of 28.3%, making it the fastest-growing market in the world. The sector employs over 7.4 million active direct sellers.

3. Prime Minister inaugurates Kanpur Metro and Bina-Panki Multi Product Pipeline Project. (Dec. 28, 2021)

Kanpur Metro

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi on 28 December 2021 inaugurated the first phase of Kanpur Metro.
- It is a nine Km long section from IIT Kanpur to Moti Jheel area.
- The total length of the project is 32 KM being built at the cost of Rs 11000 crore .
- European Investment bank is providing Rs 5552 core(euro 650 million) loan for the Kanpur metro project.

Bina-Panki Multi Product Pipeline Project

- He also inaugurated the Bina-Panki Multiproduct Pipeline Project.
- The pipeline extends from the Bina refinery in Madhya Pradesh to Panki in Kanpur and will help the region access petroleum products from the Bina refinery.
- Bina oil refinery is in the Sagar district of Madhya Pradesh and it has been set up by Bharat Oman refinery.
- It is a joint venture of Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited(BPCL) and OQ SAOC (formerly known as Oman Oil Company SAOC)).

4. United Arab Emirates issued its first civil marriage licence to a non-muslim couple (Dec. 28, 2021)

- A Canadian couple were the first to marry under the new law on the personal status of non-Muslims in the Emirati capital, Abu Dhabi.
- UAE in November 2021 had announced that non-muslims would be allowed to marry, divorce and get joint child custody under civil law in **Abu Dhabi** according to a new decree issued by its ruler.
- The United Arab Emirates, where foreigners make up 90% of the approximately 10 million population has been amending its laws to present itself as a modernising force in a largely conservative region.
- In the United Arab Emirates personal status laws on marriage and divorce had formerly been based on Islamic sharia principles, as in other Gulf states.

United Arab Emirates (UAE)

Capital: **Abu Dhabi**

Currency: **United Arab Emirates dirham**

President: **Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan**

Prime minister: **Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum**

About Abu Dhabi

- Abu Dhabi city in the emirate is the federal capital of the UAE.
- Abu Dhabi is the largest emirate in the United Arab Emirates, occupying 84 per cent of the national landmass territory. It has 200 islands and a long coastline stretching 700km.
- It is an oil-rich emirate and the second-most populous city of UAE, after Dubai.

Starting on January 1, 2022, the Emirates will become the only Gulf country not to observe weekends from Friday, the Muslim day of prayer, to Saturday.

5. UN Special Envoy calls for New Year's ceasefire in Myanmar (Dec. 28, 2021)

- United Nation's special Envoy **Noeleen Heyzer** said she is deeply concerned by increased violence in **Kayah state of Myanmar** and other areas, which has displaced thousands of civilians, many of whom have fled the country for protection and assistance.
- "The people of Myanmar have already suffered tremendously and the socio-economic and humanitarian situation has been compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic," said Ms. Heyzer.
- Ms. Heyzer **urged all parties to act in the greater interest of the nation and to fully respect their obligations under international law to protect civilians, ensure free movement towards safety, and allow humanitarian access to those in need.**
- "To this end, **she appeals for a New Year's ceasefire** throughout Myanmar," the statement said.

UN Secretary-General António Guterres appointed Ms. Heyzer as his Special Envoy on Myanmar back in October 2021. She succeeded Christine Shriner Burgener, who had served since April 2018.

Issue in Myanmar

Myanmar has been in sheer chaos **since February 1, 2021, when the military junta overthrew the government and imprisoned the leader, Aung San Suu Kyi**, who has been sentenced to four years detention and faces multiple other criminal charges.

- **At least 1,375 people have been killed and more than 8,000 jailed due to the protests and oppositions since the coup.**

6. Kerala Tops NITI Health Index (Dec. 28, 2021)

- National Institution for Transforming India (NITI) Aayog has released the fourth edition of the State Health Index for 2019-20.

Theme of the report

- The report, titled "**Healthy States, Progressive India**", ranks states and Union Territories on their year-on-year incremental performance in health outcomes as well as their overall status.

Who brings out the report

- The report has been developed by NITI Aayog, with technical assistance from the World Bank, and in close consultation with the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW).

The Health Index is a weighted composite index based on 24 indicators in three domains:

- Health Outcomes
- Governance and Information
- Key inputs and process

Highlights of the Report

NITI Aayog has divided the states into Larger States', Smaller States' and Union Territories'.

Ranking of states

- **Largest State**
- Amongst the Largest States Kerala is the best performer states followed by Tamilnadu, Telangana ,Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra.
- The Bottom ranked state was Uttar Pradesh followed by Uttarakhand ,Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Bihar.
- **Smaller States**
- Amongst Smaller states, Mizoram topped the rank while Nagaland came at the bottom
- **Union Territories .**
- Amongst Union Territories , Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu topped the rank while Puduchery was ranked at the bottom.

The first Health Report 2017 was released by the NITI Aayog in 2018**7. Government directs Automobile Industry to produce flex-fuel vehicles in India (Dec. 28, 2021)**

Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari has asked automobile manufacturers to manufacture flex-fuel vehicles (FFV) and flex-fuel strong hybrid electric vehicles (FFV-SHEV) complying with BS-6 norms within six months.

- This is part of the government effort to reduce its dependencies on fossil fuel like petrol, diesel, CNG in vehicles.
- This will reduce greenhouse gas emission from the vehicle and help India in achieving its commitment to reduce the total projected carbon emission by one billion tonnes by 2030.
- It will also reduce import of petroleum as a fuel.

Flex Fuel Vehicle

- FFVs are vehicles that are capable of running on more than one fuel variant.
- Flex fuel vehicles are capable of running on a combination of 100% petrol or 100% bioethanol and their blends.

- **Hybrid Electric Vehicles** have both the conventional internal combustion engine (which uses petrol or diesel as fuel)and an electric motor which is stored in a battery.

8. UAE has lifted ban on import of Poultry products from India (Dec. 28, 2021)

- The United Arab Emirates has lifted the ban on the import of eggs and other poultry products from India .
- The ban was lifted after India assured UAE that it will follow bio safety norms set by the World Health Organisations for Animal Health to prevent infection from Bird flu.
- UAE banned import of poultry products five years back on the concern over bird flu.
- **UAE is the third largest trade partner of India after China and the United States with a bilateral trade of around USD60 billion last year.**
- **It is the third largest export market for India after the U.S and China**

9. FCRA license of Missionaries of Charity not renewed by the Government of India (Dec. 28, 2021)

- According to the Union Ministry of Home Affairs the license of the Mother Teresa founded Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) Missionaries of Charity license has not been under the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA) 2010, renewed due to certain adverse input received by the ministry against the NGO.
- A First Information Report (FIR) was filed on 12 December 2021 against one of its children's homes in Vadodara following allegations of religious conversions made by the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR).
- The license of the NGO is set to lapse on 31 December 2021.
- The NGO has clarified that its bank account has not been frozen.
- **Under the FCRA NGO, in India has to open account in the New Delhi Main Branch (NDBM) of the State Bank of India (SBI).**

What is FCRA

- The Foreign Contribution Regulation Act 2010 regulates the receipts of foreign contribution foreign contribution received by certain Individuals, companies, Political Parties, association or NGO resident in India .
- The government can ban receipt of foreign contributions if it feels that it harms the national interest.
- It can also cancel the license of the Associations, NGO if they do not follow the procedure mentioned in the law.
- The law is administered by the Union Ministry of Home Affairs.

Mother Teresa

Mother Mary Teresa born as Anjezë Gonxhe Bojaxhiu in Skopje now in North Macedonia. She was a Roman Catholic nun who came to India and founded Missionaries of Charity in 1950 in Kolkata.

The Missionaries of Charity was formed to serve the poor and destitute.

She received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1979.

10. Covaxin likely to be only COVID-19 vaccine for children between 15-18 years (Dec. 27, 2021)

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi, while addressing the nation on 25th December 2021, announced that vaccination against Covid-19 for children between 15-18 years will start from January 3, 2022.
- **Bharat Biotech's Covaxin** is the only Covid-19 vaccine **which will be administered, for now, to children in the age group of 15-18 years.**
- The children will be able to register on the CoWIN app from January 1 using their student ID Card because some might not have Aadhaar or other identity cards.
- The estimated population to be covered in this category is seven to eight crores.