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1. Indian embassy to organise second edition of North-East India Festival in Bangkok (July 22, 2022)

The second edition of the Festival of Northeast India is being organised by the Embassy of India in Bangkok Central World in association with Trend MMS of India from July 29 to July 31, 2022.

Important facts

- The first edition of this festival was held in February 2019.
- This has opened up business opportunities for the Indian business community of the North East.
- Trade has got a boost especially in the fields of tourism, agriculture and food processing.
- This year's Northeast India Festival will focus more on promoting trade, investment and tourism.
- In addition, there will be more opportunities for culture, education and people-to-people exchanges.
- The three-day festival will be inaugurated on July 29, 2022.
- Dr. Rajkumar Ranjan Singh, Minister of State for External Affairs will be the Chief Guest for the festival.

2. Jawaharlal Nehru Port becomes first full landlord port of India (July 22, 2022)

Jawaharlal Nehru Port (JNP) has become India's first major 100% landlord port, with all the docks operating on the 'Private-Public Partnership' (PPP) model.

Landlord Model

- In this model, the publicly governed port authority (owner) acts as a regulatory body and a 'landlord', while all other functions relating to port operations are performed by private companies.
- In return, the 'landlord port' receives a portion of the revenue from the private entity.
- Earlier, the government had proposed to set up a major port at Wadhawan (India's 13th major port) near Dahanu in Maharashtra based on the 'Landlord Model'.

About 'Jawaharlal Nehru Port'

- Mumbai's 'Jawaharlal Nehru Port', is one of the leading container ports in the country and ranked 26th among the top 100 global ports - as per Lloyd's List Top 100 Ports 2021 report.

- The Jawaharlal Nehru Port Container Terminal (JNPCT), is currently handling 9000 TEU capacity vessels and with the upgrade, it can handle 12200 TEU capacity vessels.
- At present, there are 12 major ports in India - Deendayal (formerly Kandla), Mumbai, JNPT, Mormugao, New Mangalore, Cochin, Chennai, Kamarajar (earlier Ennore), VO Chidambaranar, Visakhapatnam, Paradip and Kolkata (including Haldia).

3. Dinesh Gunawardena sworn in as 15th Prime Minister of Sri Lanka (July 22, 2022)

Dinesh Gunawardena was sworn in as the 15th prime minister of Sri Lanka by President Ranil Wickremesinghe on 22 July along with 17 other cabinet ministers.

Important facts

- Gunawardena is parliamentarian of the Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLPP) party.
- Gunawardene was appointed Home Minister by the President Gotabaya Rajapaksa in April.
- Gunawardena, 73, earlier served as the foreign minister and education minister for the nation.
- The Sri Lankan economic and political crisis, resulted in economic mismanagement and conflict in Ukraine, sparked months of mass protests and eventually forced then-president Gotabaya Rajapaksa to flee the country.
- Wickremesinghe was elected as the new president of Srilanka on 20 July and was sworn in as Sri Lankan president on 21 July.
- Wickremesinghe declared a state of emergency, demanding a bailout from the International Monetary Fund.

About Sri Lanka

- The Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka is a tropical island nation off the southeast coast of the Indian subcontinent. It is separated from the Indian subcontinent by the Gulf of Munnar and the Palk Strait.
- Capitals: Colombo (Executive and Judicial) and Sri Jayawardenepura (Legislative).
- Official Languages: Sinhala and Tamil
- Currency: Sri Lankan Rupee

4. Russia resumes Nord Stream natural-gas supply to Europe (July 22, 2022)

Russia has started sending natural gas to Europe via the Nord Stream pipeline system after a pause, bringing relief to Europe, whose economy is wobbly under pressure from short supplies.

Important facts

- Germany, which is heavily dependent on Russia's gas, had feared that Moscow would not reopen the pipeline after the scheduled work.
- Germany believes Russia is reducing supplies in retaliation for Western sanctions on the Ukraine war.

Nord Stream Pipeline

Nord Stream has two pipelines, each containing two lines.

1. Nord Stream 1

It was completed in 2011 and runs from Vyborg in Leningrad (Russia) to Lubmin near Greifswald, Germany.

1. Nord Stream 2

In 2015, Russian energy major Gazprom and five other European firms decided to form Nord Stream 2.

It runs from Ust-Luga in Russia to Greifswald in Germany through the Baltic Sea and was completed in September 2021.

It will carry 55 billion cubic metres of gas every year.

Nord Stream 1 and 2 together will supply an aggregate of 110 billion cubic metres of gas to Germany per year.

The pipeline falls in the territory of EU members Germany and Denmark.

In December 2019, work on the project was suspended due to the threat of US sanctions.

In January 2021, the US sanctioned a Russian ship carrying out pipe laying work for the project.

An agreement was reached between the US and Germany on the Nord Stream 2 pipeline.

Top 5 Natural Gas producing Countries

1. United States - 914.6 billion Cubic Meters
2. Russia - 638.5 billion Cubic Meters
3. Iran - 250.8 billion Cubic Meters
4. China - 194 billion Cubic Meters
5. Qatar 171.3 billion Cubic Meters

Top 5 Countries that Consume the Most Natural Gas

1. United States
2. Russia

- China
- 3.
4. Iran
5. Canada

Top 5 Countries with the Largest Natural Gas Reserves

1. Russia
2. Iran
3. Qatar
4. Turkmenistan
5. United States

5. Unmarried women have right to safe abortion : Supreme Court (July 22, 2022)

The Supreme Court, in an order on July 21, held that denying an unmarried woman the right to a safe abortion is a violation of her personal autonomy and liberty.

Important facts

- Justice Chandrachud was hearing an appeal by a woman who wanted to abort her 24-week pregnancy as she had become pregnant before marriage and was abandoned by her partner.
- The Delhi High Court had dismissed her plea saying that abortion of an unmarried woman was not covered under the Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act.

Judgement of Supreme Court

- The bench said that the live-in relationship has already been recognized by the Supreme Court.
- There are a large number of people in the social mainstream who do not see any harm in having premarital sex.
- A woman's right to reproductive choice is an inseparable part of her personal liberty under Article 21 of the Constitution.
- A woman has a sacrosanct right to bodily integrity.
- A woman's right to make reproductive choices is also a dimension of 'personal liberty'.
- The court said that forcing a woman to continue with her pregnancy would not only violate her physical integrity but would also aggravate her mental trauma.

- The Supreme Court directed that the AIIMS director should constitute a medical board to conduct a medical examination of the woman and see whether the abortion of the woman poses any threat to her life.
- If the medical board comes to the conclusion that there is no risk of termination of pregnancy at 24 weeks, then the pregnancy of the woman should be terminated.

6. Rajya Sabha takes up discussion on Weapon of Mass Destruction Amendment Bill 2022 (July 22, 2022)

Rajya Sabha on 21 July took up discussion on the Weapon of Mass Destruction and their Delivery Systems (Prohibition of Unlawful Activities) Amendment Bill 2022.

Important facts

- This bill has been brought to amend the Weapons of Mass Destruction and their Delivery System (Prohibition of Unlawful Activities) Act, 2005.
- The 2005 Act prohibits illegal activities such as the manufacture, transportation, or transfer of weapons of mass destruction and their means of distribution.
- The bill envisages a prohibition on the financing of any activity related to weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and empowers to take action against the financiers of such activities.

Purpose of the Bill

- Prohibiting the financing of activities related to weapons of mass destruction
- Empowering the Centre to freeze, confiscate or attach money, financial assets or economic resources to prevent financing.
- Prohibiting the provision of money, financial assets or economic resources in relation to weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems.

What are weapons of mass destruction?

- Weapons that are likely to cause large-scale death and destruction and their presence in the hands of an enemy power can be considered a serious threat.
- Nuclear, biological, chemical weapons can be called weapons of mass destruction.
- The atomic bomb used in the Hiroshima and Nagasaki attacks in Japan is one of the weapons of mass destruction.
- To control the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty of 1968, the Biological Weapons Convention of 1972 and the Chemical Weapons Convention of 1993 are the main ones.
- India is not a signatory to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty but is a signatory to both the Biological Weapons Convention and the Chemical Weapons Convention.

7. Droupadi Murmu elected as the 15th President of India (July 22, 2022)

Draupadi Murmu has been elected as the 15th President of India, becoming the first tribal woman to hold the top constitutional post in the world's largest democracy.

Important facts

- She will take oath as the 15th President of India on July 25, after the term of her predecessor Ram Nath Kovind ends on July 24.
- Murmu, 64, is the first tribal community woman to become president and the second woman after Pratibha Patil to be appointed to the country's top constitutional post.
- She is the youngest President of India as well.
- Ms Murmu got 64 per cent of the vote and opposition candidate Yashwant Sinha got 36 per cent of the vote.
- She got 6,76,803 votes in comparison to his rival Yashwant Sinha's 3,80,177 votes.

Who is Droupadi Murmu?

Early life

- She was born in 1958 in Pahardpur village of Mayurbhanj district of Odisha.
- She was born in the Santhal community.
- She was educated at Unit II High School and Rama Devi College (now University) in Bhubaneswar.
- She served as a Junior Assistant in the State Irrigation and Power Department from 1979 to 1983.
- Then she worked as a teacher at Sri Aurobindo Integral Education Centre at Rairangpur till 1997.

Political Life

- In 1997, she was elected to Rairangpur Corporation and became the Vice-Chairman of the civic body.
- In the year 2000, Ms. Murmu won her first assembly election.
- She first time became Minister for Transport and Commerce and then for Fisheries and Animal Husbandry.
- In 2015, Ms Murmu was appointed as the Governor of Jharkhand.
- When there was a BJP government in Jharkhand, the Raghubar Das-led government brought in two Bills to amend the Chota Nagpur Tenancy Act, 1908, and the Santhal Pargana Tenancy Act, 1949.

- These amendments, allowing the transition of land use from agricultural to commercial purposes in tribal areas, created a major ruckus among tribal groups and civil society.
- These Acts were brought for land rights for tribal communities and rights over natural resources.
- When the government changed in Jharkhand in 2019, Soren and Ms. Murmu formed a good working relationship.

About Santhal community

- The Santhal community is one of the most politically active and prominent tribal communities.
- The Santhals are among the major tribes including the Gonds, Mundas, Hos, Oraons, Bhils, Meenas, Khonds and Nagas, who also dominate the tribal landscape in the country.
- In the Santhal Rebellion of 1857, under the leadership of the Kanhu Murmu brothers, the Santhals were at the forefront of providing leadership to the Jharkhand movement against colonial rule.
- Notable among the Santhals in political life is Shibu Soren, father of the current Chief Minister of Jharkhand Hemant Soren.
- **Kindly see 23 June 2022 post also**

8. US House approves CAATSA waiver for India (July 21, 2022)

The US House of Representatives passed an amendment, which approves an exemption to India against CAATSA sanctions.

Important facts

- This amendment was passed by voice vote.
- This gives India an exemption to purchase S-400 missile defence systems from Russia under CAATSA sanctions.
- America's relaxation is in the direction of countering China.
- The amendment was passed during the floor consideration of the National Defence Authorization Act.

CAATSA Amendment

- The CAATSA amendment was drafted and introduced by Indian-American Congressman Ro Khanna.
- The amendment seeks the Joe Biden administration to grant India exemptions under CAATSA to help deter aggressive countries like China.

What is CAATSA?

- CAATSA stands for Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act.
- The law authorises the US administration to impose sanctions on countries that buy major defence equipment from Russia.
- The US government is free to take punitive action under CAATSA against countries involved in transactions with the Russian defence and intelligence sectors.

9. Chemicals & Fertilizers Minister launches two schemes for Pharmaceuticals Industry (July 21, 2022)

Chemicals and Fertilizers Minister Dr. Mansukh Mandaviya on 21 July launched two schemes to strengthen the pharmaceutical industry with focus on Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises and Clusters.

These schemes are-

1. Pharmaceutical and Medical Device Promotion and development Scheme (PMDPS)
2. Assistance to Pharmaceutical Industries for Common Facilities Scheme.

Important facts

- The scheme will address the issues of technology up-gradation at the unit level and cluster level.
- The government is committed to unlocking the immense potential of the pharma industry.
- The scheme will help the industry to enhance its quality, technology and infrastructure up-gradation.
- It will also encourage collaboration between various stakeholders for the overall development of the pharma sector.
- The scheme will increase investment, encourage research and innovation and enable the industry to develop future products.
- To strengthen the supply chain of the pharmaceutical industry, of which MSMEs are an integral part, the government will encourage such businesses to obtain Schedule M certification or Good Manufacturing Practices (GMO) certification.

10. 9th ASEAN-India meet on transnational crimes (July 21, 2022)

The 9th ASEAN-India Senior Officials Meeting on Transnational Crimes was held in a virtual mode on 20 July.

Important facts

- Both sides strongly condemned terrorism in all its forms, stressing the need to promote international cooperation to combat terrorism and transnational crimes.

- The consultation was co-chaired by Joint Secretary (Counter Terrorism), Ministry of External Affairs Government of India, Mahaveer Singhvi, from the Indian side.
- Deputy Secretary (Policy), Ministry of Home Affairs, Singapore Government, Pua Kok Keong co-chaired the Consultation from the ASEAN side.
- Both sides stressed the need to strengthen international cooperation to combat terrorism and transnational crimes in a comprehensive and sustained manner.
- They discussed ways to enhance cooperation in the areas of terrorism, illicit drug trafficking, trafficking in persons, transnational economic crimes and cybercrime within the framework of the ASEAN-India Action Plan to combat transnational crimes.
- Institutional linkages and capacity building programs between the two sides were also discussed.
- The 10th ASEAN-India SOMTC Consultation on International Crimes will be held in Indonesia in 2023.

ASEAN-India dialogue

- It was initiated in 1992 with the establishment of the Regional Partnership, which evolved into a Full Dialogue in December 1995, a Summit-level Partnership in 2002, and a Strategic Partnership in 2012.
- At present, the ASEAN-India Strategic Partnership stands on a strong foundation.
- ASEAN is central to India's Act East Policy and the Comprehensive Indo-Pacific Strategy.
- This multi-faceted partnership includes several regional dialogue mechanisms and working groups that meet regularly at various levels and include annual summits, ministerial and senior officials' meetings.
- Ongoing India-ASEAN cooperation is guided by the 2021-2025 Action Plan that was adopted in 2020.

About ASEAN

- Association of Southeast Asian Nations or ASEAN is an international organisation formed in Bangkok, Thailand in 1967.
- It promotes economic development, peace, security, social progress and cultural development in the Southeast Asian region.
- ASEAN Secretariat – Indonesia, Jakarta.
- General Secretary of ASEAN - Lim Jock Hoi, Brunei
- Official Languages - Burmese, Filipino, Indonesian, Khmer, Lao, Malay, Mandarin, Tamil, Thai and Vietnamese
- Working Language - English
- ASEAN Summit is the supreme policy making body of ASEAN.
- ASEAN is third largest market in the world

- It is the sixth largest economy in the world, third in Asia.
- ASEAN has Free-trade agreements (FTAs) with China, Japan, South Korea, India, Australia and New Zealand.

ASEAN Member Countries

- Indonesia
- Malaysia
- Philippines
- Singapore
- Thailand
- Brunei
- Vietnam
- Laos
- Myanmar
- Cambodia