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1. Israeli PM's historic visit to UAE (Dec. 13, 2021)

- **Israel's Prime Minister Naftali Bennett arrived in the United Arab Emirates for the first ever official visit by a Prime Minister of Israel to the UAE..**
- **The UAE last year became the third Arab nation to establish full diplomatic relations with Israel after Egypt and Jordan.**
- **Bahrain and Morocco then followed as part of a series of deals referred to as Abraham Accords brokered by former U.S. President Donald Trump.**
- Sudan also agreed to normalise ties with Israel under the Abraham Accords, but full relations have not yet materialised.
- For details of the Abraham accord refer to the 25 November post.

Israel

- It was created in 1948 as a homeland of the Jews after partitioning the Arab dominated Palestine in West Asia..
- Capital : Israel claims Jerusalem as its capital but many countries including the United Nations do not accept it as its capital. Tel Aviv is accepted as the capital of Israel by many countries of the world.
- Currency : Shekel
- Parliament : Knesset

UAE(United Arab Emirates)

- **It gained its independence from Britain in 1971 .**
- **It is a federation of seven Emirates ,Abu Dhabi, Ajman, Dubai, Fujairah, Ras Al Khaimah, Sharjah and Umm Al Quwain.**
- **Capital of UAE: Abu Dhabi**
- **Currency : UAE Dirham**

2. New Caledonia votes to remain part of France (Dec. 13, 2021)

- Voters in the French island territory of New Caledonia chose overwhelmingly to stay part of France, in a referendum held on 12 December which was boycotted by pro-independence forces.
- Official results showed 96% of those who took part chose to stay in France. However the overall turnout was less than 44%.
- The referendum held on 12 December was the third and last in a decades-long process aimed at settling tensions between native Kanaks seeking independence and those who want the territory to remain part of France.

- New Caledonia, colonized by Napoleon's nephew in the 19th century, is a vast archipelago of about 270,000 people east of Australia and hosts a French military base.

Capital of New Caledonia : Noumea.

Currency: CFP Franc

3. Tigray rebels retake Ethiopian world heritage Lalibela (Dec. 13, 2021)

Tigray rebels on 12th December recaptured the north Ethiopian town of Lalibela, home to a UNESCO world heritage site from the Ethiopian government forces..

Ethiopian Civil War

The conflict started on 4 November, when the Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed ordered a military offensive against the northern regional forces in Tigray.

The escalation came after months of feuding between Mr Abiy's government and leaders of Tigray's dominant political party, the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) .

For almost three decades, the party was at the centre of power, before it was sidelined by Mr Abiy, who took office in 2018 after anti-government protests.

Mr Abiy pursued reforms, but when Tigray resisted, the political crisis erupted into war.

Lalibela

Lalibela is a town in the Amhara Region of Ethiopia. **It is famous for its rock-cut monolithic churches. It is a holy pilgrimage site for Christians. The Rock-Hewn Churches were declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1978**

Ethiopia (Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia) -

- A landlocked country in the **horn of Africa**.
- **Capital - Addis Ababa**
- **Currency - Birr**
- **Lake Tana in the North is the source of Blue Nile**

Abiy Ahmed - He is the **present prime minister of Ethiopia**. As the first Ethiopian and the first African head of state, **he won the 2019 Nobel Peace Prize for his work in ending the 20-year post-war territorial stalemate between Ethiopia and Eritrea.**

Horn of Africa

- The Horn of Africa takes its name from the horn-shaped land formation that forms the easternmost point of the African continent, projecting into the Indian Ocean south of the Arabian Peninsula.
- The term is also used to refer to the greater region of adjacent countries located at the southern end of the Red Sea and on the Gulf of Aden: the Sudan, Eritrea, Djibouti, Somalia and the landlocked Ethiopia.
- Located on the main shipping route for the transport of oil from the Persian Gulf to Europe and the United States, the Horn of Africa is considered one of the most strategically important regions in the world.

4. Saudi Arabia bans Tablighi Jamaat (Dec. 13, 2021)

Saudi Arabia has stunned the Islamic World by banning the Tablighi Jamaat, the Islamist proselytizing(conversion) movement.

The Saudi Ministry of Islamic Affairs announced the measure on its social media platform terming the Sunni Islamic organisation as "one of the gates of terrorism" and that Tablighi Jamaat poses "a danger to society".

Tablighi Jamaat

- Tablighi Jamaat , which literally means a society for spreading the faith, is a Sunni Islamic missionary movement. The proselytising movement aims to reach out to ordinary Muslims and revive their faith, particularly in matters of ritual, dress, and personal behaviour.
- **It was launched by Deoband cleric and prominent Islamic scholar Maulana Muhammad Ilyas Khandhalaw in 1927 in Mewat,Haryana.**
- After Partition in 1947, a Pakistan chapter was started in the town of Raiwind, Lahore. Currently, Bangladesh has one of the largest chapters. The Tablighi Jamaat also has a significant base in the United States and Britain, which has a large Indian subcontinent diaspora. It also has a presence in Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore.
- Its roots lie in the Deobandi version of the Hanafi school of jurisprudence.
- Salafism, which is sometimes also referred to as Wahhabism which is practised in Saudi Arabia is a rival of the Deobandi school and this move of the Saudi is seen as a rivalry within the Sunni Islam.

Saudi Arabia

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is the largest state in West Asia and a major oil exporting country in the world.

Saudi Arabia claims to be the leader of the islamic world as it is home to the two most holy mosques of Islam.

Al-Masjid al-Haram mosque is in Mecca, which is also the world's largest mosques and Al-Masjid an-Nabawi in Medina.

The Organisation of Islamic Countries(OIC) headquarters is at Jeddah ,Saudi Arabia.

Capital of Saudi Arabia : Rlyadh

Currency :Saudi Riyal

5. Swarnim Vijay Parv (Dec. 13, 2021)

- It is a **2-day event commemorating the valor & professionalism of the Armed Forces and their contribution to the liberation of Bangladesh in the Indo-Pak 1971 war, at India Gate Lawns in New Delhi.** It marks 50 years of India's victory in the war.

It was inaugurated by the Defence Minister Mr. Rajnath Singh.

- It will also mark the **culmination of the year-long journey of the Victory Flame, the Swarnim Vijay Mashal which, having traversed the length and breadth of the country and collected soil samples from the villages of the gallant soldiers of the war.**

6. PM Inaugurates Kashi Vishwanath Corridor (Dec. 13, 2021)

- Prime Minister inaugurated the **400 metre long Kashi Vishwanath Corridor in Varanasi connecting the ancient temple to the western banks of the Ganges,** facilitating the pilgrims and devotees of Baba Vishwanath, to practice the age-old custom of taking a dip in the holy river, collecting Gangajal, and offering it at the temple on 13 December.
- The ₹800-crore project started with Mr. Modi laying the foundation stone on March 8, 2019
- While the first phase, the gateway to the Ganges, would be opened on 13 December by the Prime Minister, and in the second phase the steps going down and the ghat would take another two months to complete.
- The project cost is **Rs 339 Crores and is spread over a massive area of about 5 lakh square feet.**
- **More than 40 ancient temples have been rediscovered, restored, and beautified.**
- **The architect of the project is Mr. Bimal Patel.**

The Kashi Vishwanath Temple is one of the most famous Hindu temples dedicated to Lord Shiva often referred to as Shri Vishwanath and Vishweshwara, literally meaning Lord of the Universe. It is located in Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh in India.

The temple is one of the twelve Jyotirlingas, the holiest of Shiva Temples. The 12 Jyotirlingas are -

- Somnath in Gir, Gujarat
- Mallikarjuna in Srisailam, Andhra Pradesh
- Mahakaleshwar in Ujjain, Madhya Pradesh
- Omkareshwar in Khandwa, Madhya Pradesh
- Baidyanath in Deoghar, Jharkhand
- Bhimashankar in Maharashtra
- Ramanathaswamy in Rameshwaram, Tamil Nadu
- Nageshwar in Dwarka, Gujarat
- Kashi Vishwanath in Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh
- Trimbakeshwar in Nasik, Maharashtra
- Kedarnath in Rudraprayag, Uttarakhand
- Ghrishneshwar in Aurangabad, Maharashtra

Varanasi city was called Kashi in ancient times, and hence the temple is popularly called Kashi Vishwanath Temple.

Varanasi is one of the oldest cities in the world.

Since 1983, the temple has been managed by the government of Uttar Pradesh.

During the religious occasion of Shivratri, Kashi Naresh (King of Kashi) is the chief officiating priest.

Architect - Bimal Patel

He received the **Padma Shri Award for his contributions in the fields of Architecture and Planning in 2019.**

Significant projects-

- Central Vista Project
- Kashi Vishwanath Corridor
- Sabarmati Riverfront
- Gujarat High Court
- Bhuj Development

7. International News (Dec. 12, 2021)

1. Mount Semeru erupted in Indonesia

- Mt Semeru (3676 m above sea level) is the biggest mountain on the island of Java.
- Semeru is one of the most active volcanoes in Indonesia and a part of a chain of volcanic mountains stretching from northern Sumatra to the Lesser Sunda Islands.

2. Suu Kyi sentenced to four years in prison

The military junta ruling Myanmar has sentenced the deposed leader Aung San Suu Kyi for four years for incitement against the military and breaching COVID-19 rules,

3. US to diplomatic boycott Beijing winter olympics

The US has announced a diplomatic boycott of the 2022 Winter Olympics in China because of concerns about China's human rights record especially its treatment of Uighur muslim in Xinjinag provinces, a move that has been heavily criticised by Beijing.

- However American sports persons will participate in the winter olympic games.
- Following the US announcement, New Zealand and Australia also announced a diplomatic boycott of the games though their athletes will be participating in the games.
- **Canada will join the United States, the United Kingdom and Australia** in a diplomatic boycott of the Beijing Winter Olympics over human rights concerns, **Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said on December 8.**

4. ADB to provide loan to India

Government of India and Asian Development Bank(ADB) has signed two agreement for loan to projects in India

- ADB will provide a \$125 million loan to improve access to safe and affordable drinking water supply and citywide inclusive sanitation services in Dehradun and Nainital cities in the state of Uttarakhand.
- It will also provide a \$150 million loan to provide access to inclusive, resilient, and sustainable housing for the urban poor in the state of Tamil Nadu.

5. India amongst the most unequal countries in the world

As per the '**World Inequality Report 2022**' by **World Inequality Lab**, which aims to promote research on global inequality dynamics. India is among the most unequal countries in the world, with rising poverty and an 'affluent elite'.

- **Distribution of Wealth:** In India, the top 10% and top 1% hold 57% and 22% of the total national income respectively while the share of the bottom 50% has gone down to 13%.
- **Gender inequality:** The share of female labour income share in India is equal to 18% which is significantly lower than the average in Asia (21%, excluding China) & is among the lowest in the world. Although, the number is slightly higher than the average share in the Middle East (15%).

6. Nicaragua cut its diplomatic relation with Taiwan

- The Central American country Nicaragua has become the latest country to cut diplomatic ties with Taiwan in favour of China.

- The decision was praised by China, which demands that any country that wants diplomatic relations with it must cut existing ties with Taipei.
- However, Taiwan sees itself as a democratically-governed, independent country, though it has never formally declared independence from the mainland.
- Before Nicaragua, the Pacific Island nations of Kiribati and the Solomon Islands were the latest countries to cut ties with Taiwan in favour of China in 2019.

Capital of Nicaragua: **Managua**

President of Nicaragua: **Daniel Ortega**

Capital of Taiwan: **Taipei**

7. UN General Assembly Grants Observer Status To International Solar Alliance

- The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) has granted Observer Status to International Solar Alliance (ISA), India's Permanent Ambassador to the United Nations.
- A total of 108 countries participated in the Assembly, including 74 Member Countries and 34 Observer and Prospective Countries, 23 Partner Organizations and 33 Special Invitee Organisations.

8. National News (Dec. 12, 2021)

1. Ram Nath Kovind inaugurates centennial year celebration of the PAC

- President Ram Nath Kovind inaugurated the centennial year celebration of the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) in the Central Hall of Parliament on **4th December**. The PAC is one of the most powerful financial committees of Parliament.
- The Committee on Public Accounts is the oldest Parliamentary Committee and was first constituted in 1921.
- The Committee consists of 22 Members, 15 Members are elected by Lok Sabha and 7 Members of the Rajya Sabha are associated with it.

2. PM inaugurated Vyasi Hydroelectric Project

- The Prime Minister inaugurated the 120 MW Vyasi Hydroelectric Project, built over Yamuna river at the cost of over 1,700 crore rupees.
- Located in Dehradun district and **operated by Uttarakhand Jal Vidyut Nigam Limited**, the Vyasi power project is a run-of-the-river scheme on the Yamuna.

3. India's first privately build Cryogenic Engine

- Hyderabad based Skyroot Aerospace successfully tested Dhawan1, thus making it country's first privately developed, fully cryogenic rocket engine.
- The Cryogenic engine has been named after Satish Dhawan, who was the third chairman of ISRO. He pioneered the development of advanced space launch capabilities of India.
- It runs on two high performance rocket propellants — liquid natural gas (LNG) and liquid oxygen (LoX).

4. 57th Raising Day of BSF held at Jaisalmer

- Union Home and Cooperation Minister Shri Amit Shah addressed the 57th Raising Day celebrations of the Border Security Force in Jaisalmer, Rajasthan.

5. Anemia in Children: leading to child growth failure

According to the 5th report of the National Family Health Survey (NFHS) of 2019-2021, a higher proportion of children aged 6 to 59 months have been found to be anaemic compared to NFHS-4 (2015-2016).

Highlights:

- The share of anaemic children in NFHS-5 (2019-21) increased by 8.5% points compared to NFHS-4 (2015-16) and was closer to levels of NFHS-3 (2005-2006).
- In 30 out of 36 states/UT's one half the children in age group 6-59 months are found to be anaemic.
- Assam, Mizoram and Chattisgarh recorded the highest increases.
- Gujarat had the highest share of children (79.7%) who were anaemic.

6. Russian President Visit to India

Russian President **Vladimir Putin visited India on 6th December for the 21st India - Russia Annual summit with Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi.**

- first in-person meeting between Putin and Prime Minister Narendra Modi after their meeting on the sidelines of the BRICS summit in Brasilia in November 2019.
- After their meeting in New Delhi both the **country issued a Joint Declaration titled "India-Russia: Partnership for Peace, Progress and Prosperity"**
- The two countries signed **28 agreements, including 9 government-to-government agreements** and those that spanned areas of defence, space, finance, power, culture, scientific research, education and health among others.

7. Maitri Diwas

India and Bangladesh celebrate 6 December as Maitri diwas to commemorate the recognition of the day when India recognised Bangladesh as an Independent country.

- The war to liberate Bangladesh began on December 3, 1971 and ended with the signing of the Instrument of Surrender by Pakistani General A.A.K. Niazi on December 16.

8. India Crosses Covid Vaccination Milestone

- Half of the eligible population(18 Years and above) in the country is now fully vaccinated against COVID.
- In total, 85% of the eligible adult population has now received the first dose, while 50.35% are fully vaccinated.

9. Government has constituted Tribal Advisory Council in all states having Scheduled Areas

Tribes Advisory Council (TAC) have been constituted in 10(Ten) states having Scheduled Areas there namely Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha and Rajasthan.

10. India adds Ghana and Tanzania in the list of “at-risk” countries

Countries in Europe, including the U.K., and South Africa, Brazil, Botswana, China, Ghana, Mauritius, New Zealand, Zimbabwe, Hong Kong, Singapore, Tanzania and Israel have been placed in the “at risk” category.

- Passengers from “**at-risk” countries** have to follow additional COVID-19 testing and quarantine measures.

11. Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) and 12 others killed in Chopper Crash

Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) and 12 others killed in Chopper Crash

India’s first ***Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) General Bipin Laxman Singh Rawat, his wife Madhulika Rawat, an army Brigadier, Lieutenant, Wing Commander, Squadron Leader and 7 others were killed in a chopper crash in Coonoor, Tamil Nadu.***

- The helicopter Mi-17-V5 had taken off from Sulur Air Force base in Coimbatore ,Tamil Nadu to the Defence Services Staff College, Wellington, Tamil Nadu to address the faculty and student officers of the ‘Staff Course’.

IAF has ordered tri-service investigation into chopper crash

The Indian Air Force (IAF) has ordered a tri-service investigation led by Air Marshal Manavendra Singh, Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief Training Command, in the Mi 17 V5 chopper crash in Tamil Nadu.

Black box of the ill-fated chopper has been recovered by the investigation team.

12. Cabinet Nod for Ken-Betwa River Linking Project

The Union Cabinet approved the funding and implementation of the Ken-Betwa river interlinking project. It is the first out of the 30 projects of the National Perspective Plan for interlinking of rivers.

Highlights-

- Benefit Water Starved Districts of the Bundelkhand region of MP and UP like Panna, Tikamgarh, Chhatarpur, Sagar, Damoh, Datia, Vidisha, Shivpuri and Raisen of Madhya Pradesh, and Banda, Mahoba, Jhansi and Lalitpur of Uttar Pradesh,
- The total cost of the project Rs 44,605 crore at the 2020-21 price level. The Centre would fund Rs 39,317 crore for the project, with Rs 36,290 crore as a grant and Rs 3,027 crore as a loan.
- The project is slated to irrigate 10.62 lakh hectares annually, provide drinking water supply to 62 lakh people and generate 103 MW of hydropower and 27 MW of solar power.
- The project will partly submerge the Panna Tiger Reserve in Madhya Pradesh and affect the habitat of vultures and jackals, which is the major environmental and wildlife concern hindering the progress of the project for all these years.

- The two states signed a tripartite agreement with the Centre on World Water Day (22nd March) to finally implement this ambitious project.

13. Human Rights Violation Data by Ministry of Home Affairs

According to data provided by the Ministry of Home Affairs to the Rajya Sabha on 8th December 2021, around **40% of human rights violation cases** lodged annually by the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) in the past three financial years till this October 31 **were from Uttar Pradesh.**

- ***Current Chairman of the NHRC : Justice Arun Kumar Mishra***

14. Bills on Assisted Reproductive Technology, surrogacy passed

- The Rajya Sabha passed two Bills to regulate and supervise assisted reproductive technology clinics and surrogacy on December 8.
- The Assisted Reproductive Technology (Regulation) Bill, 2021 was passed by the Lok Sabha on December 1. It was passed by a voice vote in the Upper House

15. Only 56% Funds of Poshan Abhiyaan Used

- State Governments and Union Territories utilized only 56% of the total funds released under the Poshan Abhiyan or Nutrition Mission in the past three years.
- Out of a total amount of Rs, 5,312 crores disbursed by the Centre between financial years 2019 to 2021, a sum of Rs 2,985 crores was utilized.

16. International flights to be resumed after 31st Jan. 2022

Directorate General of Civil Aviation announced on 09th December that full resumption of international flights stands postponed at least till January 31, 2022.\

17. Government of India extends PMGAY-G till March 2024

The Government of India has extended the Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana-Gramin(PMAY-G) beyond March 2021 till March 2024 so as to provide financial assistance for the construction of the remaining 155.75 lakh houses under the scheme.

18. Rajya Sabha passes Pharma Education Bill

Rajya Sabha passed the National Institute of Pharmaceutical Education and Research (Amendment) Bill, 2021 which amends the National Institute of Pharmaceutical Education and Research Act, 1998.

19. No proposal under consideration to scrap Section 124A of the Indian Penal Code (IPC)

Stating the Government of India position ,Law Minister Kiren Rijiju informed the Lok Sabha that the section 124 A of the Indian Penal Code(IPC) 1860 which deals with sedition in sub -judice before the Supreme Court and the government has no intention of scrapping the section.

20. India co-chairs Global Methane Initiative Steering Leadership Meeting

A Steering Leadership meeting of Global Methane Initiative (GMI) has been held virtually in which the Additional Secretary, Ministry of Coal, V.K. Tiwari as the Vice Chairman of this global initiative informed the participants about the work being carried out by India to mitigate the emission of methane.

9. India to supply medicines to the Afghan people (Dec. 12, 2021)

- The Government of India has joined Qatar, the UAE, Turkmenistan and Pakistan that have sent humanitarian support to Taliban-ruled Afghanistan.
- India has sent medical relief material to the Indira Gandhi Children Hospital in Kabul.
- This is the first time that India has sent humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan after the Taliban took over Kabul by dislodging the government of President Ashraf Ghani in August.
- The medical relief material will be handed to the WHO (World Health Organisation) in Kabul as the Indian does not recognise the Taliban government in Kabul led by Habitullah Akhunzada .
- The relief material was sent back by special Kam Air flights that had brought 10 Indians and 94 Afghan minority community members from Afghanistan to India.
- As part of the **Operation Devi Shakti**, which was launched in August to evacuate Indians and Afghan minority community members from the strife torn country, the Government has evacuated a total of 669 people from Afghanistan. This includes 448 Indians who were working on various projects and businesses and 206 Afghan nationals.

10. G-7 Foreign and Development Ministers Meeting (Dec. 12, 2021)

- The United Kingdom, which is currently the chairman of the Group of 7 countries, hosted the foreign ministers meeting of the member countries at Liverpool in England .
- It will be held on 11-12 December 2021.
- The meeting was held in the midst of concern that Russia is going to attack Ukraine which is denied by Russia.
- The Foreign Ministers of **India, European Union, Australia, South Korea, along with representatives from the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)** will take part in G-7 foreign ministers as guests.

G-7 or Group of Seven

- It is a group of the wealthiest, industrialised and liberal democracies in the world.
- It includes United Kingdom, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, United States, Canada
- Russia was made a member of the group in 1998 but was expelled in 2014 after its occupation of Crimea ,which is a part of Ukraine.

History of G-7

- In 1975 France hosted the first summit meeting which was attended by 6 leaders of the United Kingdom, France, Italy, Japan, Germany and the United States.
- In 1976 Canada was made the member of the group and it was converted into G-7
- Russia was made a member of the group in 1998 and it was converted into G-8 but Russia was expelled in 2014 after its occupation of Crimea ,which is a part of Ukraine.

Forthcoming Summits

- The current Chairman of the group is United Kingdom
- The 48th Summit meeting 2022 will be held in Germany
- The 49th Summit meeting 2023 will be held in Japan
- The 50th Summit meeting 2024 will be held in Italy