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1. PM Modi conferred Egypt's highest state honour (June 26, 2023)

PM-Modi-conferred-Egypt's-highest-state-honour

Prime Minister **Narendra Modi** was awarded the '**Order of the Nile,**' Egypt's highest honor, by President **Abdel Fattah El-Sisi** during a ceremony at the Presidential palace in Cairo on 25th June.

An overview of the news

- The '**Order of the Nile**' was established in **1915** and is bestowed upon **heads of states, crown princes, and vice presidents** who have rendered invaluable services to Egypt or humanity.
- This is the **13th highest state honor** conferred upon Prime Minister Modi.
- During the first bilateral visit by an Indian Prime Minister to Egypt in 26 years, India and Egypt elevated their relationship to a 'Strategic Partnership' following extensive discussions between Modi and El-Sisi.

Political and security cooperation

- The talks focused on enhancing **political and security cooperation.**
- Modi and El-Sisi signed a **strategic partnership document**, which encompassed various areas of collaboration such as political and security cooperation, defense collaboration, trade and investment ties, scientific and academic exchanges, and strengthening people-to-people contacts.
- The two countries signed three more pacts covering agriculture and allied sectors, **protection and preservation of monuments and archaeological sites, and competition law.**
- Modi and El-Sisi also discussed further cooperation within the G-20 framework, emphasizing issues such as **food and energy insecurity, climate change**, and the need for the **Global South** to have a unified voice.
- Modi extended an invitation to El-Sisi to attend the **G-20 Summit in New Delhi in September.**

Egypt's historic Al-Hakim Mosque

- Before returning to India, Modi visited Egypt's historic **Al-Hakim Mosque** in Cairo, which dates back to the **11th century.**
- The mosque has been restored with the assistance of India's **Dawoodi Bohra community.**
- Modi admired the intricate carved inscriptions on the walls and doorways of the mosque, which was **constructed in 1012.**
- Al-Hakim Mosque is the **fourth oldest mosque** in Cairo and the **second Fatimid mosque built in the city.**

About Egypt

- Egypt is a country located in **North Africa**.
- Egypt is home to famous monuments such as the **Giza Pyramid Complex**. One of the **Seven Wonders of the World**, the Pyramids of Giza are located on the banks of the **Nile River**. The Great Pyramid of Giza was built in **2560 BC**.
- Capital - **Cairo**
- President - **Abdel Fattah el-Sisi**
- Currency - **Egyptian pound**

2. India and UAE signed a Mutual Recognition Arrangement for Authorized Economic Operators (June 24, 2023)

India-and-UAE-signed-a-Mutual-Recognition

India and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) on 23 June have signed a **Mutual Recognition Arrangement for Authorized Economic Operators**.

An overview of the news

- The agreement was formally signed during the **World Customs Organization's (WCO) Customs Co-operation Council meeting** held in **Brussels**.

Aim of Mutual Recognition Arrangement

- The Mutual Recognition Arrangement aims to **promote trade facilitation and ease of doing business** between the two countries.
- It establishes a framework for recognizing **Authorized Economic Operators (AEOs)** from both India and the UAE.

Significance

- The recognition of AEO status will streamline **customs procedures, reduce administrative burdens, and lower costs** for authorized businesses.
- This agreement signifies an important milestone in the **economic cooperation** between India and the UAE and is expected to **strengthen bilateral trade ties**.
- By leveraging the benefits of the Mutual Recognition Arrangement, both countries aim to enhance **trade facilitation, improve the ease of doing business, and encourage investments**.

India-UAE Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA)

- The signing of this arrangement is in line with the broader objective of the **India-UAE Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA)** signed in **February 2022**.
- CEPA aims to significantly **increase the total value of bilateral trade** in goods and services within five years.
- The Mutual Recognition Arrangement is expected to contribute to achieving the trade targets set under the CEPA, fostering **greater economic growth and cooperation** between India and the UAE.

3. India and US sign Artemis Accord to take Space cooperation to new heights (June 24, 2023)

Artemis Accords

During his state visit to the United States, Prime Minister **Narendra Modi signed the Artemis agreement** with the **US National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA)**, highlighting the growing importance of India's role as a global space power.

An overview of the news

- The agreement establishes the foundation for cooperation in space exploration and underlines India's commitment to peaceful space activities.

Joint Mission to the International Space Station (ISS)

- In addition to the Artemis agreement, NASA and the **Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO)** have agreed to launch a joint mission to the **International Space Station in 2024**.
- This collaborative effort will enable both countries to advance their space research and exploration efforts.

What is the Artemis Agreement?

- The Artemis Agreement outlines principles for international cooperation in **space exploration, particularly relating to the use of the Moon, Mars, comets and asteroids for peaceful purposes**.
- As non-binding multilateral arrangements, these agreements allow governments, including the United States and other participating nations, to contribute to NASA's Artemis program.

Significance of the Artemis Program

- NASA's Artemis program aims to **advance scientific discoveries and expand human exploration of the lunar surface**.

- By studying the **Moon**, researchers hope to make breakthroughs that could lead to
- advances in various fields such as **technology, medicine and our understanding of the universe.**
 - The program focuses on sending astronauts to **Mars and exploring other planets and celestial bodies.**

Establishment of the Artemis Accord

- **In 2020, NASA** established the Artemis Agreement in collaboration with the **US State Department.**
- These agreements serve as agreements between the United States and the **seven other founding member states**, reinforcing commitment to international space treaties and agreements.
- These agreements promote best practices, including the **transparent sharing of scientific data with the public.**

Guiding principle of Accord

- The purpose of the Artemis Agreement is to create a framework for **peaceful and cooperative space exploration.**
- These principles facilitate progress while ensuring ethical and responsible practices in space.
- Since many countries and private companies are actively engaged in **lunar missions and operations, agreements establish shared principles governing civilian exploration and use of outer space.**
- Key principles include conducting all activities in space peacefully and with **full transparency, sharing research findings, registering space objects, and releasing scientific data.**

Nations Participating in the Artemis Accord

- The agreement was signed in **October 2020** by the directors of the national space agencies of the **United States, Australia, Canada, Japan, Luxembourg, Italy, the United Kingdom and the United Arab Emirates.**
- Ukraine joined the agreement a month later. Subsequently, in 2021 the agreement was extended to **South Korea, New Zealand, Brazil, Poland, Isle of Man and Mexico.**
- In 2022, **Israel, Romania, Bahrain, Singapore, Colombia, France, Saudi Arabia, Rwanda, Nigeria and the Czech Republic** also become signatories.
- **Spain, Ecuador and now India** have also joined it, taking the total number of participating countries to **28.**

4. India-United States Defence Acceleration Ecosystem (INDUS X) launched in Washington DC (June 22, 2023)

India-United-States-Defence-Acceleration-Ecosystem-(INDUS-X)

The **U.S. Department of Defense** and the **Indian Ministry of Defense** launched the **India-U S Defense Acceleration Ecosystem (INDUS-X)** on 21st June at an event hosted by the U S-India Business Council.

An overview of the news

- The launch of INDUS-X is a major milestone in promoting US-India **defense cooperation, innovation, and job creation.**
- The initiative seeks to enhance defense capabilities and contribute to global peace, security and prosperity while reaffirming commitment to a free and open **Indo-Pacific region.**

Significance of INDUS-X

- INDUS-X aims **to revitalize defense industrial cooperation** between the United States and India, promoting the development of new technologies and fostering collaboration in manufacturing.
- It represents a strategic effort to strengthen bilateral ties and unlock the potential for advancements in the defense sector.

Job Creation and Economic Growth

- INDUS-X holds the potential to **create job opportunities** for working families in both countries.
- By fostering collaboration between U S and Indian start-ups, the initiative aims **to generate employment and drive economic growth**, contributing to global peace, security, and prosperity.

Collaboration Agenda

- This agenda outlines various initiatives that INDUS-X stakeholders intend to pursue, complementing existing government-to-government collaboration.
- These initiatives include the formation of a **Senior Advisory Group for Start-ups.**

Indo-Pacific Defence Capabilities

- U S and Indian officials have affirmed that INDUS-X will act as a catalyst for innovation and contribute to equipping their armed forces with the necessary capabilities to ensure the defense of a free and open Indo-Pacific region.
- This emphasizes the shared commitment to regional security and stability.

5. Oman Creates History as First Foreign Government to Promote Country through Yoga (June 21, 2023)

First-Foreign-Government-to-Promote-Country-through-Yoga

The **Indian Embassy in Oman** has introduced a unique video titled '**Soulful Yoga, Serene Oman**' on the occasion of the **International Day of Yoga 2023**.

An overview of the news

- This initiative is considered pioneering and showcases the **beauty of Oman** while featuring yoga enthusiasts from different countries.
- The video stands out as it is a collaborative effort between the Indian Embassy and '**Visit Oman,**' a subsidiary of **Oman's Ministry of Tourism**.
- This partnership marks the first instance of a foreign government using yoga to promote its own country, highlighting the significance of this collaboration.
- The video not only demonstrates the increasing popularity of yoga worldwide but also highlights its growing prominence in Oman.
- With a significant **Indian community of 700,000 in Oman**, yoga has gained considerable traction in recent years.

Promoting Yoga through Initiatives

- The Indian Embassy has been actively involved in promoting yoga in Oman through various initiatives.
- In 2022, they organized the '**Muscat Yog Mahotsav,**' a 75-day celebration featuring over 75 yoga events across major cities in Oman.
- This initiative was timed with the **75 years of India's independence celebrations**.

Oman Yoga Yatra

- This year, the Embassy launched the '**Oman Yoga Yatra,**' a five-month-long journey leading up to a large-scale celebration of the International Day of Yoga 2023.
- The event, scheduled for June 21, 2023, is expected to attract more than 2,000 participants from diverse backgrounds.

About Oman

- Sultan - **Haitham bin Tariq Al Said**
- Capital - **Muscat**
- Official Language - **Arabic**
- Official Religion - **Islam**
- Currency - **Omani rial**

6. India gifts missile corvette INS Kirpan to Vietnam (June 20, 2023)

India-gifts-missile-corvette-INS-Kirpan-to-Vietnam

Defense Minister **Rajnath Singh** on 19 June announced the gift of an indigenous in-service **missile corvette, INS Kirpan**, to the **Vietnam People's Navy**.

An overview of the news

- The announcement is expected to significantly enhance the capabilities of the **Vietnamese Navy**.
- The announcement was made during talks between Defense Minister Singh and Defense Minister of Vietnam General **Phan Van Gang in Delhi**.
- During the meeting, bilateral defense cooperation initiatives between India and Vietnam were reviewed and both sides expressed satisfaction at the progress of the ongoing engagements.
- The Ministers identified opportunities to further enhance cooperation, particularly in areas such as defense industry cooperation, maritime security and multinational cooperation.
- Apart from the talks, the Defense Minister of Vietnam also visited the **Defense Research and Development Organization (DRDO)** headquarters to explore ways to enhance defense industrial capabilities through research and joint production.
- The strengthening of defense ties between India and Vietnam underscores the strategic partnership between the two countries and their shared commitment to regional security and cooperation.

About INS Kirpan

- INS Kirpan is a missile corvette belonging to the **Khukri class** with a displacement of about **1,350 tonnes**.
- It was commissioned into the Indian Navy on **12 January 1991**.
- The length of the corvette is **91 meters** and the beam is **11 metres**.
- It is capable of attaining speeds of over **25 knots**.
- Equipped with a variety of weapons including medium-range cannon, **30 mm close-range gun**, chaff launcher and surface-to-surface missiles, INS Kirpan has the versatility to play multiple roles.
- The roles performed by INS Kirpan include coastal and offshore patrolling, coastal security, surface warfare, anti-piracy operations and Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) operations.

7. India, Sri Lanka to accelerate implementation of digital education project in Galle District (June 20, 2023)

Sri-Lanka-to-accelerate-implementation-of-digital-education

India and Sri Lanka have expressed their commitment to fast-tracking the implementation of a **digital education project in the Galle District, Sri Lanka**.

An overview of the news

- The High Commissioner of India to Sri Lanka, **Gopal Baglay**, and the Secretary of the Sri Lankan Ministry of Education, **M N Ranasinghe**, exchanged diplomatic notes to accelerate the establishment of modern computer labs and smart boards in **200 schools**.
- These facilities will be equipped with customized **curriculum software**.
- The project is aimed at promoting digital literacy among students in underprivileged areas of the **Galle District**.
- It is supported by a grant from the Government of India.
- This digital education initiative is part of a broader set of grant projects in the education sector undertaken by the Indian government in Sri Lanka, highlighting their commitment to enhancing educational opportunities in the country.

India's development assistance to Sri Lanka

- India's development assistance to Sri Lanka encompasses a total amount of approximately **USD 5 billion**, with nearly **USD 600 million** provided as grants.
- Across Sri Lanka's **25 districts**, more than **65 grant projects** have already been implemented, demonstrating the substantial support from India in various sectors.
- The digital education project in the Galle District is among more than 20 ongoing projects that are at different stages of implementation, further illustrating the sustained collaboration between India and Sri Lanka in driving socio-economic development in the region.

About sri lanka

- The Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka is a tropical island nation located off the **southeast coast of the Indian subcontinent**.
- Sri Lanka is separated from the Indian subcontinent by the **Gulf of Munnar and the Palk Strait**.
- Capital: **Colombo** (Executive and Judicial) and **Sri Jayawardenepura** (Legislative).
- Official languages: **Sinhala and Tamil**
- President – **Ranil Wickremesinghe**
- Prime Minister – **Dinesh Gunawardena**
- Currency: **Sri Lankan Rupee**

8. India & Serbia agree to set bilateral trade of 1 Billion Euros (June 9, 2023)

India-&Serbia-agree-to-set-bilateral-trade-of-1-Billion-Euros

President **Droupadi Murmu** and her Serbian counterpart **Aleksandar Vucic** on 8 June in **Belgrade** agreed to set a target for **bilateral trade from the present 320 million euros to one billion euros by the end of the decade.**

An overview of the news

- President Draupadi Murmu is on a three-day state visit to Serbia from June 7 to 9.
- During the visit, President Draupadi Murmu highlighted that the relations between the two sides have a shared understanding of each other's core interests.
- In a joint press statement, President Murmu highlighted the positive outcomes of the delegation-level talks and the resolve of the two countries to work on diverse areas of potential cooperation.

Official talks

- President Murmu's official engagements in Serbia included a guard of honor at the Serbia Palace, restricted-level talks, delegation-level talks, a joint media address, and a business event.
- These engagements aimed to foster closer ties and explore opportunities for collaboration between the two nations.
- During the bilateral interactions, both leaders emphasized their commitment to the rule of law, respect for sovereignty, and territorial integrity of nations.

Fraternal Relations

- President Vucic described Serbia's relationship with India as a fraternity, emphasizing the strong bond between the two countries.
- He expressed that India should consider Serbia as a second motherland, underscoring the warmth and depth of their bilateral ties.

Areas of Cooperation

- President Vucic identified six major areas of cooperation between India and Serbia, including defense and military technology cooperation, pharmaceuticals, agriculture, industrial cooperation, information technology, and cultural cooperation, including film production.
- These areas present potential avenues for collaboration and mutual benefits.

About Serbia

- Serbia is a **landlocked country** in the **west-central Balkans**. For most of the 20th century, it was a part of **Yugoslavia**.
- Prime Minister: **Ana Brnabic**

- Capital: **Belgrade**
- President: **Aleksandar Vučić**
- Currency: **Serbian dinar (RSD)**

9. Defence Minister Rajnath Singh holds talks with his US counterpart Lloyd Austin (June 6, 2023)

Defence-Minister-Rajnath-Singh
Defence Minister **Rajnath Singh**, held discussions with **US Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin** in New Delhi on 5th June.

An overview of the news

- The meeting focused on **strengthening defence cooperation** in various areas, including aligning strategic interests and enhancing security cooperation.
- During the talks, Minister Singh emphasized the significance of the **India-US partnership** in ensuring a free, open, and rules-based Indo-Pacific region.
- He expressed India's commitment to closely collaborate with the United States across different domains, aiming for capacity building and further **strengthening strategic partnership**.
- Both ministers explored opportunities to build resilient supply chains and identified areas for co-development of new technologies and co-production of existing and new systems.
- Facilitation to enhance cooperation between the **defense start-up ecosystems** of the two countries was also discussed.
- A roadmap for **US-India defense industrial cooperation** was agreed upon, which will shape their cooperation in the years to come.
- They welcomed the recent dialogues focused on **Defense Artificial Intelligence and Defense Space**.
- Regional security issues were also discussed, reflecting their shared interest in promoting **peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific region**.
- The meeting was attended by senior officials of the Ministry of Defense including Chief of Defense Staff General **Anil Chauhan**, Defense Secretary **Giridhar Armane** and DRDO Secretary and Chairman **Dr Sameer V Kamat**.

India America relations

Historical Background

- The establishment of diplomatic relations between India and the United States **dates back to 1947**.
- Both countries share common values of **democracy, pluralism and rule of law**.

Strategic Partnership

- India and the United States have developed a strong strategic partnership based on shared interests and values.
- The partnership has seen significant growth in various areas including defence, trade and technology.

Defense and Security Cooperation

- Defense cooperation between India and the US has expanded significantly in recent years.
- Both countries engage in joint military exercises, defense equipment cooperation and intelligence sharing.
- Defense ties have been strengthened by the signing of the **US-India Defense Technology and Trade Initiative (DTTI)**.

Economic and trade relations

- Economic relations between India and America have grown steadily.
- The US is one of India's largest trading partners and bilateral trade has grown over the years.
- Both the countries have signed various agreements to enhance economic cooperation and promote investments.

Technology and Innovation

- India and the US cooperate in the fields of **science, technology and innovation**.
- Cooperation has been promoted in areas such as space exploration, clean energy and information technology.
- The US has supported India's initiatives like **Digital India and Skill India**.

10. 1st India-Namibia Joint Commission of Cooperation (June 6, 2023)

External Affairs Minister **S. Jaishankar** recently **co-chaired** the **first India-Namibia Joint Commission** with Namibian Foreign Minister **Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah** in **Windhoek**.

An overview of the news

- In his opening remarks, Dr. Jaishankar highlighted the special place Namibia holds in the hearts of Indians.
- He emphasized that India supports Namibian independence and expressed happiness at Namibia's rightful place in the international community.

- Dr. Jaishankar underlined the **strong bond between India and Namibia**, which is
- characterized by developmental cooperation, capacity building programs and political solidarity.
 - The Joint Commission will assess the progress of India-Namibia relations. In addition, high-level visits and ongoing interactions will strengthen the **India-Namibia partnership** in the future.
 - During his visit, the External Affairs Minister inaugurated the **India-Namibia Center of Excellence in Information Technology** in Windhoek. The center will contribute to research, cyber security and good governance.

About Namibia

- Namibia is a country located in **southwestern Africa**, bordering the **Atlantic Ocean** to the west.
- It shares borders with **Angola, Zambia, Botswana and South Africa**.
- The country's diverse geography includes the **Namib Desert** along the **Atlantic coast**, the **Kalahari Desert** to the east, and the **central plateau**.
- Namibia gained independence from South Africa on **March 21, 1990**, becoming the last African country to gain independence from colonial rule.
- **Windhoek is the capital and largest city of Namibia.**
- Namibia is known for its stunning **natural landscapes and diverse wildlife**.
- **Etosha National Park**, located in the north of the country, is a popular destination for wildlife enthusiasts, offering the chance to see **elephants, lions, giraffes, rhinos** and various bird species.