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1. NTPC Vidyut Vyapar Nigam commissions first solar rooftop project at IIT Jodhpur (June 19, 2023)

NTPC Vidyut Vyapar Nigam Ltd (NVVN)

NTPC Vidyut Vyapar Nigam Ltd (NVVN) commissioned its **first rooftop solar PV project at IIT Jodhpur**, Rajasthan on June 14, 2023.

An overview of the news

- The **1 MW grid-connected solar project** has been implemented by **NVVN under the RESCO (Renewable Energy Service Company) model**.
- The **Power Purchase Agreement (PPA)** duration for the project is **25 years**.
- **NVVN**, an arm of state-run power producer NTPC, is responsible for the project implementation.
- The rooftop solar project is installed on the roofs of **14 buildings within the IIT Jodhpur campus**.
- The project is expected to generate around **14.9 lakh units** of electricity annually, meeting **15% of IIT Jodhpur's electricity requirement**.
- The rooftop project will contribute to a reduction of **1,060 tonnes of CO2 emissions per year**.
- NVVN was established as a wholly-owned subsidiary of NTPC in 2002 to explore the potential of power trading in India.

2. Nusrat Chowdhary will become the first Muslim woman federal judge in US history (June 19, 2023)

Nusrat Chowdhry

Nusrat Chowdhry, a civil rights lawyer, has been confirmed by the US Senate for appointment as the **first Muslim female federal judge in US history**.

An overview of the news

- She became the **first Bangladeshi American and the first Muslim American woman** to become a **federal judge**.
- She will serve as a federal judge in **Brooklyn federal court in New York** after receiving a **50-49 vote** along party lines.
- Endorsed by the **American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU)**, she currently holds the position of **Legal Director for the ACLU of Illinois**.
- Chowdhary previously served in the ACLU National Office and was the Deputy Director of the **ACLU Racial Justice Program**.

Chowdhury has a notable academic background, having **graduated from Columbia, Princeton and Yale Law Schools.**

- He has also served as **clerk to chief justices in the US District Court and US Circuit Court of Appeals.**
- Earlier, in 2019, **Zahid Qureshi** became the country's first federal Muslim judge when he was confirmed to serve as a district court judge in New Jersey.

3. Centre discontinues sale of rice, wheat under OMSS Scheme (June 19, 2023)

Open Market Sale Scheme (OMSS)

The **central government has discontinued the sale of rice and wheat** from the central pool under the **Open Market Sale Scheme (OMSS)** to state governments.

An overview of the news

- This decision will affect some states, including **Karnataka**, that provide free grains to the poor through their own schemes.
- The **Food Corporation of India (FCI)** has issued an order stating that the sale of **wheat and rice** under the OMSS for state governments is discontinued.
- However, the sale of rice under the OMSS will continue for **northeastern states, hilly states, and states facing law and order** situations or natural calamities at the existing rate of **Rs 3,400 per quintal**.
- FCI may sell rice under the OMSS to private parties from the **central pool stock to moderate market prices**.
- The central government had previously allowed states to buy rice and wheat from the FCI for their own schemes without participating in e-auctions as part of the **OMSS policy for 2023**.

Rice prices

- Rice prices have been increasing due to the slow progress of the monsoon and have risen by up to **10% in the last year** at the mandi level.
- The monsoon rains are crucial for rice production as about **80% of the country's total rice production** is grown during the kharif season.

Open Market Sale Scheme (OMSS)

- **Nodal Agency-** Food Corporation of India (FCI)
- **Purpose-** To sell foodgrains, especially wheat and rice, at predetermined prices in the open market.
- **Mode of Selling-** Weekly auctions by FCI on the platform of the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange Limited.

Quantity allowed in a bidding - A bidder can purchase in a single bid range from • 10-100 tonne.

- OMSS comprises **2 schemes**
- -Sale of wheat to bulk consumers/private traders through e-auction.
- -Sale of Raw Rice Grade 'A' to bulk consumers/private traders through e-auction.

About Open Market Sale Scheme (OMSS)

- It is a government initiative launched with the aim of **reducing the excess stock of food grains**.
- **Nodal Agency**- Food Corporation of India (FCI)
- Its objective is to sell food grains, especially **wheat and rice**, in the open market at pre-determined prices.
- The sales are carried out through weekly auctions by FCI on the platform of **National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange Limited**.
- Under this a bidder can buy in a single bid range of **10-100 tonnes**.
- Schemes for sale of wheat to bulk consumers/private traders through e-auction and sale of grade 'A' raw rice to bulk consumers/private traders through e-auction are included under OMSS.

About Food Corporation of India (FCI)

- It is a prominent **Public Sector Undertaking (PSU)** under the **Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution in India**.
- It was **established in 1965** to ensure food security and support the **nation's public distribution system**.
- FCI's primary mandate is to **procure, store, and distribute food grains** across the country.
- It aims to maintain an adequate buffer stock of essential commodities and provide timely and affordable food grains to the vulnerable sections of society.
- FCI undertakes the procurement of food grains from farmers at **Minimum Support Prices (MSPs)** declared by the government.
- It procures crops such as wheat, rice, and coarse grains directly from farmers through designated procurement centers.

4. DAC approves procurement of armed UAV MQ-9 Predator drones from US (June 19, 2023)

UAV-MQ-9

India's defence ministry on 15th June approved the **acquisition of 31 MQ-9B armed drones from the US.**

An overview of the news

- The **Defense Acquisition Council (DAC)** has approved the purchase of armed **Predator Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs)** at a cost of over **\$3 billion**.
- The UAVs will be procured from **General Atomics Aeronautical Systems (GA-ASI)**, a United States-based aeronautical company.

What are Predator Drones?

- The Predator UAV, produced by **General Atomics Aeronautical Systems Inc. (GA-ASI)**, is commonly referred to as the **MQ-9**.
- The MQ-9 has an impressive endurance, **capable of flying for over 27 hours** without refueling.
- It can reach speeds of up to **240 KTAS (Knots True Airspeed)**.
- The UAV is designed to operate at high altitudes, with a **maximum operating ceiling of 50,000 feet**.
- It possesses a substantial payload capacity, allowing it to carry up to **3,850 pounds (1,746 kilograms)** of equipment, sensors, or other mission-specific payloads.
- Additionally, the MQ-9 has the capability to carry external stores, such as weapons or additional fuel, with a **maximum weight of 3,000 pounds (1,361 kilograms)**.

Benefits of the MQ-9 UAV

- The **MQ-9 UAV (Unmanned Aerial Vehicle)** exhibits an increased payload capacity and horsepower in comparison to its predecessor, the **MQ-1 Predator**.
- It offers extended endurance, persistent surveillance, and the ability to carry out strikes, providing valuable capabilities for military operations.
- The MQ-9 UAV has a maritime variant known as the **Sea Guardian**.
- The Sea Guardian variant of the MQ-9 UAV possesses an impressive endurance capability of **over 30 hours**, making it suitable for maritime surveillance and other related missions.

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6. Gita Press, Gorakhpur, awarded Gandhi Peace Prize for 2021 (June 19, 2023)

Gita-Press,-Gorakhpur

Gita Press, Gorakhpur, will be awarded the **Gandhi Peace Prize for 2021** in recognition of its **exceptional contribution to social, economic, and political transformation through non-violent and Gandhian methods**.

An overview of the news

- The jury, headed by **Prime Minister Modi**, unanimously selected **Gita Press** as the recipient of the **Gandhi Peace Prize**.
- PM Modi highlighted Gita Press's efforts in promoting **Gandhian ideals of peace and social harmony**, emphasizing that the award signifies recognition of their community service after a century of establishment.

About Gita Press

- **Established in 1923**, Gita Press is renowned as one of the world's largest publishers, having **published 41.7 crore books in 14 languages**, including **16.21 crore copies** of the **Shrimad Bhagavad Gita**.

About Gandhi Peace Prize

- The Gandhi Peace Prize, **instituted in 1995** on the occasion of **Mahatma Gandhi's 125th birth anniversary**, is an annual award that **pays tribute to Gandhi's ideals**.
- The award is open to individuals irrespective of **nationality, race, language, caste, creed, or gender**.
- The prize includes a monetary amount of **₹1 crore**, a **citation**, a **plaque**, and an **exquisite traditional handicraft/handloom item**.
- Previous recipients of the Gandhi Peace Prize include **Sultan Qaboos Bin Said Al Said of Oman in 2019** and Bangabandhu **Sheikh Mujibur Rahman of Bangladesh in 2020**.

7. India's biggest natural arch formed 184 million years ago discovered in Odisha by GSI (June 17, 2023)

discovery of India's largest natural arch

A recent survey conducted by the **Geological Survey of India (GSI)** has led to the **discovery of India's largest natural arch** in the **Kenduadihi block of Sundargarh district in Odisha**.

An overview of the news

- The GSI's state unit has proposed to designate the natural arch in the **Kanika range of Sundargarh forest division** as a **Geo Heritage Site**, making it the country's largest natural arch with the **Geo Heritage tag**.
- Currently, India has two other natural arches—one located in the **Tirumala hills of Tirupati** and the other in the **Andaman and Nicobar Islands**.
- However, both of these arches are **smaller in size** compared to the one found in Sundargarh.

About Sundargarh Natural Arch

- The Sundargarh natural arch, formed in the **ferruginous sandstone** dates back approximately **184 to 160 million years** during the lower to middle **Jurassic age**.
- The arch has an oval shape and measures **30 meters in length** at the base, with a **height of 12 meters**.
- The **alcove** of the arch has a maximum **height of 7 meters** and a **width of 15 meters**.
- These structures indicate a high-energy fluvial environment during the process of sedimentation.

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9. National Water Awards: Madhya Pradesh tops in Best State category (June 17, 2023)

National-Water-Awards

Vice President **Jagdeep Dhankhar** presented the **fourth National Water Awards** in **New Delhi** on June 17.

An overview of the news

- The awards, announced by the **Jal Shakti Ministry**, recognized **41 winners across 11 categories** for their outstanding contributions to water conservation in India in 2022.
- **Madhya Pradesh received the first prize in the best State category**, while the **best district award went to Ganjam District in Odisha**.
- The **Jagannadhapuram Village Panchayat in Bhadravati Kothagudem district of Telangana** was honored with the **best Village Panchayat award**.
- Each winner was presented with a **citation, a trophy, and cash prizes**.

National Water Awards

- The **National Water Awards** aim to acknowledge and encourage the efforts made by individuals and organizations in realizing the government's vision of a **water-prosperous India**.
- They also seek to create awareness about the importance of water and promote the adoption of best practices for its sustainable use.
- Vice-President stressed the significance of adopting the **three Rs - Reduce, Reuse, Recycle** - to revive ancient water harvesting systems such as ponds.
- Union Jal Shakti Minister **Gajendra Singh Shekhawat** shared that approximately **56,000 Amrit Sarovars** (sacred ponds) have been constructed in the country.

10. Daniel Ellsberg, Renowned Whistleblower of the Pentagon Papers, Passes Away at 92 (June 17, 2023)

Daniel-Ellsberg

Daniel Ellsberg, a prominent whistleblower who leaked the **Pentagon Papers**, passed away at the age of 92.

An overview of the news

- Ellsberg's actions, which exposed the government's deception and doubts regarding the **Vietnam War**, had far-reaching consequences and played a role in President **Richard Nixon's resignation**.
- Ellsberg revealed his terminal illness with **pancreatic cancer** in February.
- Until the **early 1970s**, Ellsberg was an influential member of the government and **military establishment**.
- As a Harvard graduate and self-described "**cold warrior**," he served as a consultant on Vietnam, risking his life and holding the highest security clearances.

- He gained the trust of officials from both Democratic and Republican administrations.
- The Pentagon Papers, a comprehensive study commissioned by then-Defense Secretary **Robert S McNamara** in 1967, became the catalyst for Ellsberg's whistleblowing.