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1. BRICS Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Cape Town (June 3, 2023)

brics Nations

BRICS countries kicked off its **foreign ministers meeting on 1st June in Cape Town**, the legislative capital of South Africa.

An overview of the news

- External Affairs Minister **S Jaishankar** participated in the meeting of foreign ministers of **BRICS countries**.
- **South Africa**, which currently holds the **chair of the bloc**, hosted the BRICS Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Cape Town on 1-2 June.
- The foreign ministers' meeting will finalise the agenda for the **15th BRICS summit scheduled to be held in South Africa in August**.
- It is believed that 19 countries are in line to join BRICS.

Joint Agreement

- The BRICS foreign ministers agreed BRICS cooperation should be strengthened to promote unity among developing countries.
- Advance the global governance system reform.
- Accelerate the realization of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals.
- Contribute to world peace and development.

About BRICS

- The full form of BRICS is **Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa**.
- Goldman Sachs economist **Jim O'Neill** coined the term **BRIC (without South Africa) in 2001**.
- He claimed that by 2050, the four BRIC economies would dominate the **global economy by 2050**.
- **South Africa** was included in the list in **2010**.
- The presidency of the Forum is rotated annually among the members.
- BRICS accounts for about **40% of the world's population**.
- It accounts for **30% of the world's GDP** (Gross Domestic Product).
- In the year 2014, during the 6th BRICS Summit in Fortaleza, Brazil, the BRICS leaders signed an agreement to establish a **New Development Bank (NDB)**.

2. Cabinet approves setting up of UPU Regional Office in New Delhi (June 2, 2023)

The Cabinet approved the setting up of a **Regional Office of the Universal Postal Union (UPU) at New Delhi.**

An Overview of the News

- The purpose of the office is to carry out the development cooperation and technical assistance activities of the **UPU in the region through an agreement with the UPU.**
- India will actively participate in multilateral organizations in the postal sector with a focus on South-South and triangular cooperation.
- India will provide field project experts, staff and office infrastructure for the UPU Regional Office.
- The office will formulate and implement projects for capacity building, training, improving postal service efficiency and quality, enhancing postal technology, promoting e-commerce and trade in the region.
- These projects will be coordinated with UPU.
- The establishment of the office will expand India's diplomatic footprint and strengthen its ties with other countries, especially in the Asia-Pacific region.
- It will also enhance India's presence and influence in global postal forums.

About UPU

- **Establishment:** The UPU was established in 1874 through the Treaty of Bern.
- **Purpose:** It is a specialised agency of the United Nations.
- **Postal Coordination:** The UPU coordinates postal policies among the member countries.
- **Global Postal System:** It oversees and enhances the postal system around the world.
- **Financial Services:** UPU promotes accessible and affordable postal financial services.
- **Innovation and Collaboration:** It encourages member countries to embrace innovation and collaborate with stakeholders.

3. Health Ministry asks OTTs to post anti-tobacco warnings (June 2, 2023)

Health-Ministry-asks-OTTs-to-post-anti-tobacco-warnings

The **Union Health Ministry** has made it mandatory for **OTT platforms** to display **anti-tobacco warnings** as seen in cinema halls and television programmes.

An Overview of the News

- The amendment to the **Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products Act, 2004** requires online platforms to show at **least 30 seconds** of anti-tobacco health spots at the beginning and middle of their programmes.
- A prominent static message stating "**Tobacco causes cancer**" or "**Tobacco kills**" must be displayed at the bottom of the screen when displaying tobacco products or their use.
- Warning messages should be legible with black font on a white background and health warnings, spots and disclaimers should be in the language of the material.
- Display of tobacco brands, product placement and use of tobacco in promotional material is prohibited.
- India has implemented measures to reduce tobacco use including 85% pictorial warnings on cigarette packets since 2018.
- India's data from the Global Youth Tobacco Survey shows that tobacco use has declined by **42% among school-going children aged 13-15 over the past decade.**
- The decision was taken by the Health Ministry after consultations with the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (I&B) and other stakeholders.

Tobacco Effects:

- More than 7 million deaths are caused by direct tobacco use, while **1.2 million deaths** are due to secondhand smoke exposure.
- More than **80% of the world's 1.3 billion tobacco** users live in low- and middle-income countries.
- In 2020, 22.3% of the global population used tobacco (36.7% men, 7.8% women).

WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC):

- Adopted by WHO member states in 2003, it is currently ratified by **182 countries.**
- It aims to address the tobacco epidemic and its harmful effects.

New and Emerging Nicotine and Tobacco Products:

- **Heated Tobacco Products (HTPs):** Toxicity similar to other tobacco products, proved no less harmful.
- **Electronic-cigarettes:** injurious to health, especially risky for young people and pregnant women.

WHO response:

- **MPOWER** measures were **launched in 2007** for effective tobacco control implementation.

- MPOWER measures include monitoring, protection, termination support, warnings, advertising restrictions, and taxes.

4. Etihad Airways named Environmental Airline of the Year 2023 (June 2, 2023)

Etihad Airways, the **national airline of the UAE**, has been named the **Environmental Airline of the Year 2023** for the second year in a row at the **Airline Rating Awards**.

An Overview of the News

- The prestigious award acknowledges the airline's commitment to **sustainable aviation through innovation and collaboration**.
- **Etihad is ranked third in the 'Top 10 Airlines' category**, which evaluates comfort, innovation, value and safety in economy, business and first class.
- Etihad's sustainability strategy focuses on emissions reduction, industry alignment, collaboration with the UAE ecosystem and proactive transparency.
- Key initiatives of the airline include the **Greenliner program** using Boeing 787 Dreamliners and the deployment of Sustainable50 A350-1000 aircraft.
- **Antonaldo Neves**, Group CEO, Etihad Aviation Group
- **Geoffrey Thomas**, Editor-in-Chief, AirlineRatings.com

About United Arab Emirates (UAE)

- **Location:** It is located in Western Asia.
- **Geographical Boundaries:** It shares borders with Oman and Saudi Arabia.
- **Maritime Borders:** It also has maritime borders with Qatar and Iran in the Persian Gulf.
- **Religion:** Islam is the dominant religion in the UAE, with the majority of the population being Sunni Muslim.

Capital - **Abu Dhabi**

Official language - **Arabic**

Government - **Federal Islamic parliamentary elective semi-constitutional monarchy**

President/Crown Prince - **Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan**

Prime Minister - **Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum**

Vice President - **Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum and Mansour bin Zayed Al Nahyan**

5. Sri Lanka's Council of Ministers Approves Establishment of a Truth and Reconciliation Mechanism (June 2, 2023)

Sri Lanka's Council of Ministers Approves Establishment of a Truth and Reconciliation Mechanism

Sri Lanka's cabinet ministers approved a proposal to **set up a Truth and Reconciliation Mechanism.**

An Overview of the News

- The proposal draws inspiration from the successful **Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa.**
- In March, Sri Lanka's Foreign Affairs Minister **Ali Sabri and Justice Wijedasa Rajapaksa** visited South Africa to study the commission's functioning.
- The proposed mechanism aims to address issues surrounding the three-decade-long armed conflict in Sri Lanka.
- Former prime minister Ranil Wickremesinghe submitted a cabinet memorandum and concept paper in 2018 as the basis for the commission.
- There were efforts to set up a **similar mechanism in 2015 under pressure from the United Nations human rights body**, but it was not followed through.
- The establishment of a Truth and Reconciliation Mechanism is seen as a way to address the demands of affected Tamils seeking information on missing persons.
- The proposed commission aims to provide answers, reconciliation and justice in the post-conflict context of Sri Lanka.

About Sri Lanka

- It is an **island country in South Asia.**
- It was earlier known as **Ceylon.**
- The official name of the country is the **Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka.**
- It is located in the **Indian Ocean, southwest of the Bay of Bengal.**
- Sri Lanka is separated from the Indian peninsula by the **Gulf of Mannar and the Palk Strait.**

Capital - **Sri Jayawardenepura Kotte (legislative) and Colombo (executive and judicial)**

Official languages - **Sinhala AND Tamil**

President - **Ranil Wickremesinghe**

Prime Minister - **Dinesh Gunawardena**

6. India approves world's largest food storage scheme in co-operative sector (June 2, 2023)

world's-largest-food-storage-scheme

The **Union Cabinet** on 31st May approved forming and empowering an **Inter-Ministerial Committee (IMC)** to create the “**world’s largest grain storage plan in the cooperative sector**” by converging **8 ongoing schemes of three ministries**.

An overview of the news

- This **₹1 trillion scheme** will be the **world's largest grain storage scheme in the cooperative sector**.
- The scheme will help cooperatives set up decentralized storage facilities across the country, which is likely to reduce the burden on the **Food Corporation of India (FCI)**.
- This will reduce wastage of agricultural produce and help farmers to plan their sales better.

Implementation of the scheme

- An **Inter-Ministerial Committee (IMC)** will be constituted under the **chairmanship of the Cooperation Minister**.
- The Minister of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Minister of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution, Minister of Food Processing Industries and concerned Secretaries will be the members of this Inter-Ministerial Committee (IMC).
- The **Ministry of Cooperation** will implement a pilot project in at least **10 selected districts of different States/UTs of the country**.

8 Schemes identified for convergence

- **Schemes of Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare**

1. Agriculture Infrastructure Fund (AIF)
2. Agricultural Marketing Infrastructure Scheme (AMI)
3. Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture (MIDH)
4. Sub Mission on Agricultural Mechanization (SMAM)

- **Schemes of Ministry of Food Processing Industries**

1. Pradhan Mantri Formalization of Micro Food Processing Enterprises Scheme (PMFME)
2. Pradhan Mantri Kisan Sampada Yojana (PMKSY)

- **Schemes of Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution**

1. Allocation of food grains under the National Food Security Act
2. Procurement operations at Minimum Support Price

7. Bureau of Indian Standards notifies 31 Indian Standards related to AYUSH herbs, products (June 2, 2023)

31-Indian-Standards-related-to-AYUSH-herbs

The **Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS)**, the national standard body of India, has recently introduced **31 Indian standards pertaining to Ayush herbs and products.**

An overview of the news

- The **31 Indian standards encompass various aspects of Ayush**, including **30 herbs and one product, namely the stainless steel neti pot.**
- These standards were recently made public through a gazette notification issued by the **AYUSH ministry.**
- In order to emphasize its commitment to Ayush, **BIS has established a separate department** to focus specifically on Ayush-related matters.
- BIS plays a crucial role in **standardization, marking, and quality certification activities.**
- By taking this step towards standardization in the field of Ayush, BIS aims to enhance the quality and credibility of Ayush products and services.
- The Ministry of Ayush states that the implementation of these standards will facilitate international trade by ensuring the quality of Ayush products and services.

About Bureau of Indian Standards

- Bureau of Indian Standards is the **national standards body** of India under the **Department of Consumer Affairs, Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution, Government of India.**
- Headquarter- **Manak Bhawan, Old Delhi**
- Director General- **Pramod Kumar Tiwari**
- Established- **23 December 1986**

8. UPI hits record 9 billion transactions worth Rs 14 lakh crore (June 2, 2023)

UPI-hits-record-9-billion-transactions

The **Unified Payments Interface (UPI)** registered more than **nine billion transactions in May 2023** amounting to over **14 lakh crore rupees.**

An overview of the news

- According to the **National Payments Corporation of India NPCI**, UPI recorded a total **9.41 billion transactions in May 2023**.
- UPI had recorded **8 billion transactions in January** this year, followed by 7.5 billion in February, 8.7 billion in March, and 8.89 billion in April.
- In Financial Year 2022-23, the payment system processed a total of **83 billion transactions**, amounting to a value of **139 lakh crore rupees**.
- India's homegrown payments system UPI is one of the globally accepted payment systems and has emerged as a trusted payment mode ever since its launch in 2016.
- The report titled "**The Indian Payments Handbook - 2022-27**" said that the share of UPI in the total transaction volume in the retail segment during 2022-23 was around 75 per cent.
- The Indian digital payments market is expected to reach **411 billion transactions in FY 2026-27 from 103 billion in FY 2022-23**.

About UPI

- Unified Payments Interface (UPI) is a single platform that integrates various banking services and facilities under one umbrella.
- It is developed by **National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI)**.
- The names of the top UPI apps currently are - **PhonePe, Paytm, Google Pay, Amazon Pay and BHIM**.
- NPCI **launched UPI in 2016** with 21 member banks.

National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI)

- NPCI, an umbrella organization for operating retail payment and settlement systems in India, has been initiated by the 'RBI' and the 'Indian Banks' Association' (IBA) under the '**Payment and Settlement Systems Act, 2007**'.
- It is a '**not-for-profit**' company established under the provisions of **Section 25 of the Companies Act 1956** (as amended in 2013), with the objective of providing physical and electronic payment infrastructure to the entire banking system in India.

9. UAE withdraws from US-led Combined Maritime Forces (CMF) (June 2, 2023)

United Arab Emirates (UAE)

Recently the **United Arab Emirates (UAE)** has announced its **withdrawal from the US-led Combined Maritime Forces (CMF)**, a maritime alliance.

An overview of the news

- A few weeks ago, Iran seized two tankers within a week in **Gulf waters near the Strait of Hormuz**.
- The second tanker, Niovi, was on its way from Dubai to the port of **Fujairah in the United Arab Emirates**.
- The UAE was disappointed by the lack of US response to the recent tanker seizures, saying it was a "**misrepresentation**" of the talks between the two countries.

Why did UAE withdraw from this alliance?

- The UAE did not give any specific reasons for withdrawing from the Combined Maritime Forces (CMF) in an official statement.
- This could be part of a broader strategy by the UAE to assert its own regional influence, pursue independent foreign policies, or rebalance its relations with China and Iran.

About Combined Maritime Forces (CMF)

- It was **established in 2002**.
- Its objective is promoting **security, stability, and prosperity across maritime regions**.
- **Member Nations** - 34 member nations: Australia, Bahrain, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Denmark, Egypt, France, Germany, Greece, Iraq, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Republic of Korea, Kuwait, Malaysia, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Pakistan, the Philippines, Portugal, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Seychelles, Singapore, Spain, Thailand, Turkey, UAE, United Kingdom, United States, and Yemen.
- Its main operations are **counter-narcotics, counter-smuggling, suppressing piracy, encouraging regional cooperation**.
- Focus Areas - **Arabian Sea, Gulf of Oman, Gulf of Aden, Red Sea, Indian Ocean, Arabian Gulf, and surrounding areas**.
- In **April 2022**, India had announced that it would join the CMF as an **Associate Partner**.

10. South Korea launches first commercial-grade satellite (June 1, 2023)

South Korea to launch its first commercial-grade satellite on May 25, 2023.

An Overview of the News

- The **commercial-grade satellite** was launched by the **Naro Space Center in Gohang, South Korea**, using a Launch **Nuri rocket**.
- The main satellite, called "**Next Generation Small Satellite 2**", was accompanied by seven cube-shaped satellites.

- The main satellite objectives include verifying **imaging radar technology and observing cosmic radiation** in near-Earth orbit.
- South Korea's Science Minister Lee confirmed the successful launch of all seven secondary satellites from the rocket.
- South Korea plans to launch **three more Nuri rockets by 2027**.
- In the past year, South Korea became the **10th country to send a satellite into space** using its technology, with a "**performance verification satellite**" launched via a Nuri rocket.

South Korea

- It is an **East Asian nation** located in the **southern part of the Korean Peninsula**.
- It shares a heavily militarised border with North Korea.
- President - **Yoon Suk Yeol**
- Capital - **Seoul**
- Prime minister - **Han Duck-soo**