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1. NTPC REL signs MoU with Government of Tripura for cooperation in renewable energy development (Jan. 16, 2023)

On January 16, 2023 NTPC Renewable Energy Limited (NTPC REL) in New Delhi signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Government of Tripura for development of floating and ground mounted based renewable energy projects in the state.

- The MoU was signed by Rajeev Gupta, Chief General Manager, on behalf of NTPC REL and Shri Mahanand Debbarma, Director General & CEO, Renewable Energy Development Agency, on behalf of Tripura.
- This MoU will play a vital role in the development of large scale renewable energy projects in Tripura and will help the Government of Tripura to fulfill its clean energy commitments and obligations.

• About Tripura

- Capital - Agartala
- Governor - Satyadev Narayan Arya
- Chief Minister - Manik Shah
- State Bird - Green Imperial Pigeon (*Ducula aenea*)
- State Tree - Agar (*Aquilaria malaccensis*)
- State Flower - Nageshwar (*Mesua Feria*)
- Borders - Bangladesh, Mizoram and Assam.

2. Maghi Mela Festival (Jan. 16, 2023)

Maghi Mela Festival

Maghi Mela festival is being celebrated from January 14 in **Punjab**.

An overview of the news

- The Maghi Mela has been celebrated in the city of **Sri Muktsar Sahib** in Punjab for centuries in memory of the **40 Sikh warriors** who died fighting the Mughals in the **Battle of Khidrana in 1705**.
- It was only after this war that Khidrana was named **Muktsar or Mukti Kund**.

About Maghi Mela

- Maghi Mela is held every year in the holy city of **Sri Muktsar Sahib** in January or in the month of **Magh as per Nanakshahi** calendar.
- It is one of the most important festivals of Sikhs.
- The festival marks the martyrdom of **40 Sikh soldiers** fighting against the Mughals.

- In the 1700s, the Mughals and the Sikhs were at constant war with each other.
- The **Khidrana War** began when in 1704, during the siege of **Anandpur Sahib** by the Mughals, 40 Sikh soldiers deserted their posts.

About Battle of Khidrana

- In 1704, during the siege of Anandpur Sahib by the Mughals, **40 Sikh soldiers** abandoned their posts and fled.
- On reaching their village near Amritsar, a woman named **Mai Bhago** scolded them and challenged the fighters to return to Anandpur Sahib in the service of their guru.
- With Mai Bhago the freshly inspired soldiers marched towards **Anandpur Sahib** to help Guru Gobind Singh.
- He met Guru Gobind Singh at Khidrana where he came face to face with the Mughal army and sacrificed his life in the process.

3. Rajasthan becomes first state to implement blindness control policy (Jan. 16, 2023)

Rajasthan becomes first state to implement blindness control policy

The **Rajasthan Government** implemented the **Blindness Control Policy** on 13th January. Rajasthan is the '**first state**' in the country to implement this policy with the objective of '**right to sight vision**'.

An overview of the news

- This is an innovative initiative by the Medical and Health Department of the state in the direction of realising the **vision of a healthy Rajasthan in the state**.
- On the directions of Chief Minister **Ashok Gehlot**, the document of the policy on prevention of blindness was made public by the Medical and Health Department.
- The policy has been implemented with the aim of bringing light to the lives of more than **three lakh visually impaired people** in the state.
- The blindness prevalence rate in the country in the year **2020 was 1.1 percent**, which will be worked towards bringing it down to **0.3 percent** through the 'Right to Sight Vision' policy.
- Under this policy of the State Government, **Keratoplasty Center and Eye Bank** will be compulsorily operated in all Government Medical Colleges.
- Cornea collected by private organisations and NGOs receiving financial assistance under this policy will be made available to government institutions on priority.
- Under the policy, efforts will be made in collaboration with voluntary organisations, trusts, hospitals and other charitable organisations working in this field in the districts.
- A large-scale campaign for **eye donation** will be launched by taking private organisations along.

- Special training will be given to eye specialists, eye surgeons, postgraduate students, counsellors and eye assistants working for eye donation.

4. Magh Bihu or Bhogali Bihu Festival (Jan. 16, 2023)

Magh Bihu or Bhogali Bihu Festival

Union Minister of Shipping and Waterways **Sarbananda Sonowal** on 15 January burn the traditional **Assamese Meji (bonfire) in Guwahati** as part of the **Magh Bihu or Bhogali Bihu** celebration.

About Magh Bihu or Bhogali Bihu Festival

- Bhogali Bihu which is also known as **Magh Bihu** is being celebrated in every province in **Assam** with great enthusiasm.
- This is a festival of **farmers**. It is celebrated in the month of '**Magha**' in the middle of January.
- After the annual harvest, it is celebrated with community feasts.
- The main attraction of this festival is **food**. The night before 'Bhogali Bihu' which falls on **15th January** is called '**Uruka**' which means the night of feasts.
- The villagers build **bamboo huts called 'Bhelaghor'** or **community kitchen** where they start with the preparations for the festival.
- Various dishes made from sesame, **jaggery** (black syrup from sugarcane) and **coconut** along with vegetables, meat and sweets like **pitha and laru** are made to celebrate this festival.
- This festival is celebrated for **a week**. It is celebrated by singing, dancing, feasting and bonfires.
- As per the customs of the festival, people eat the food prepared for the feast at **Bhelaghar** and then burn the huts the next morning.
- The **Sun God** is worshiped on this day in different parts of India in the form of various festivals such as **Pongal (Tamil Nadu), Maghi (Punjab) and Uttarayan (Gujarat)**.

5. IAS 'Shanti Kumari' becomes first woman Chief Secretary of Telangana (Jan. 13, 2023)

Following the Telangana High Court's order, 1989 batch IAS officer A. Shanti Kumari was appointed as the Chief Secretary of Telangana.

- Shanti Kumari has become the first woman to hold the post of Chief Secretary in Telangana.
- He has replaced Somesh Kumar, who was the Chief Secretary earlier.

- Prior to his appointment as Chief Secretary, IAS officer A.K. Shanti Kumari was holding the post of Special Chief Secretary, Forest.
- a. Shanti Kumari is a post graduate in Marine Biology.
- During her three decades of service, Shanti Kumari held various positions in education, health, poverty alleviation, skill development and forest departments.
- **About Telangana -**
- It was the 29th state (there are now 28 states in India) to be formed on 2 June 2014. It was carved out of Andhra Pradesh.
- The Telangana region was a part of Hyderabad State from 17 September 1948 to 1 November 1956, later it was merged with Andhra State to form Andhra Pradesh State.
- Capital: Hyderabad
- District :33
- Chief Minister - K. Chandrasekhar Rao
- Governor: Dr. Tamilisai Sundarraj

6. 'Year of Enterprises Project' (Jan. 13, 2023)

Kerala's 'Year of Enterprises' project has been awarded as a best practice model at the 2nd National Conference of Chief Secretaries.

- It has been selected under the Throughput on Micro Small and Medium (MSMEs) category.
- **The project was inaugurated by Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan on 30 March 2022.**
- The project was launched with the aim of creating one lakh enterprises in a year, while the state achieved the target in eight months.
- The project has successfully created 1,18,509 enterprises and received an investment of Rs 7,261.54 crore.
- The 'Year of Enterprises' project has created 2,56,140 jobs so far.
- **2nd National Conference of Chief Secretaries**
- The 2nd National Conference of Chief Secretaries was held in New Delhi.
- Which was **presided over by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.**
- The conference was attended by representatives of the Central Government and Chief Secretaries of States and Union Territories besides subject experts.

7. Uttarakhand passed the Women's Reservation Bill (Jan. 15, 2023)

Women's Reservation Bill

Uttarakhand Governor **Gurmeet Singh** has given assent to a bill providing for **30% horizontal reservation** for domiciled women citizens of the state in public services and posts.

An overview of the news

- The bill known as the **Uttarakhand Public Services (Horizontal Reservation for Women) Bill 2022** was passed by the Uttarakhand Legislative Assembly on November 30 during the winter session.
- This decision is considered an important one for ensuring **gender equality and social justice** in the state government.

Reservation For Women

- The Bill provides for **20% horizontal reservation** for direct recruitment to public services and posts against vacancies to be filled up to July 24, 2006.
- Thereafter, **30% horizontal reservation** will be provided in favour of women candidates permanently domiciled in Uttarakhand.

Cabinet Approval

- The state cabinet had on October 12 authorised Chief Minister **Pushkar Singh Dhami** to bring an ordinance on the issue of women's reservation in state government jobs.
- The move came after a High Court judgement and was aimed at ensuring that **30% reservation for women** in state services would be implemented.

8. The 'Soul of Steel' challenge was launched in Uttarakhand (Jan. 14, 2023)

'Soul of Steel'

The '**Soul of Steel**' challenge was launched in **Uttarakhand** on January 14, which aims to test **endurance at high altitude**.

An overview of the news

- It has been started on the lines of '**Ironman Triathlon**' long distance triathlon challenge in Europe.
- The effort is being led by **Claw Global**, a venture and supported by the Indian Army.
- Soul of Steel aims at pooling skill sets and creating a challenge that will develop the human ability to stabilize, survive in high altitude areas.
- Apart from life skill training and youth development, it will promote **adventure tourism** in Uttarakhand globally.
- Initially, there will be **12 Indian participants** and **six international teams** and the age profile to apply is 18 to 30 years.

- The locations chosen are generally in the area of **Nanda Devi National Park**, which has many peaks over 7000 feet.

9. Union Labour and Employment Minister inaugurates Regional Office of EPFO at Alwar, Rajasthan (Jan. 14, 2023)

Union Minister for Labour and Employment, Forest, Environment and Climate Change **Bhupender Yadav** inaugurated the Regional Office of Employees' Provident Fund Organization (EPFO) at **Alwar, Rajasthan** on 13th January.

An overview of the news

- The opening of the regional office will benefit around 2 lakh workers, 12,000 establishments and 8500 pensioners in Alwar and neighbouring districts of **Bharatpur and Dholpur**.
- The major industrial areas governed by the Regional Office are Bhiwadi, Khushkheda, Tapukara, Karoli, Neemrana, Behror, Gheelot, Khairthal.
- This regional office will serve workers employed in industrial and other establishments in **Alwar, Bharatpur and Dholpur districts**.
- **Jaipur** is divided into two Regional Offices namely Regional Office **Jaipur** and Regional Office **Alwar** for the management of EPFO.

About EPFO

- Employees Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) is a **statutory organisation** set up under the **Union ministry of Labour and Employment** was set up in **1951** by an Ordinance issued by the President.
- Later Parliament passed the **Employees' Provident Funds Scheme, act 1952**.
- It is the country's largest **social security organisation**.
- EPFO assists the Central Board of Trustees in the administration of a provident fund scheme, pension scheme and an insurance scheme for the registered establishments in India.

10. India's First Centre of Excellence in Online Gaming to be set up in Shillong (Jan. 13, 2023)

Digital India startup hub through software technology parks of India will set up **India's first centre of excellence for online gaming in Shillong** by March, said IT Minister **Rajeev Chandrasekhar** on 13 January 2023.

An overview of the news

- The Center of Excellence in Shillong is expected to catalyse startups and entrepreneurs from India's Northeast to build the next generation online gaming ecosystem.
- The **Ministry of Electronics and IT (MeitY)** recently released the draft amendments to the **IT Rules 2021** with respect to online gaming for public consultation.
- MeitY will also set up **a state-of-the-art facility** under the National Institute of Electronics and IT (NIELIT) in Shillong to impart training on digital skills.
- A 10-acre campus will soon be prepared for this.
- Government is relaunching Skill India through **PMKVY 4.0** which will provide skill training to around 50,000 youth in Meghalaya with industry supported job opportunities.