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1. Ashadhi Bij - The Kutch community's New Year (July 2, 2022)

Ashadhi Beej is celebrated every year on the second day of the month of Ashadha as Hindu New Year by the Kutch community in the Kutch region of Gujarat.

• Important facts

- In 2022, it was celebrated on 1 July. It is also known as Kutchi New Year.
- Kutchi New Year is a traditional festival and is celebrated in homes.
- This festival marks the beginning of rains in the Kutch region of Gujarat.
- During Ashadhi seed, the humidity in the atmosphere is tested to predict which crop will do better in the coming monsoon.
- Lord Ganesha, Goddess Lakshmi and other regional deities are worshipped on this occasion.
- In other parts of Gujarat, the Hindu New Year is celebrated on Kartik Shukla Paksha after Diwali.

• Rann of Kutch

- The Rann of Kutch in India is located in the Thar Desert biogeographic region in the Indian state of Gujarat. This area is also spread in the Sindh province of Pakistan.
- The Rann of Kutch covers a vast area of about 10,000 square miles and is located between the Gulf of Kutch and the mouth of the Indus River in southern Pakistan.
- In the north-east corner of the Rann of Kutch is the Luni River, which originates from Rajasthan.
- The Rann of Kutch is counted among the wetlands of India.
- The Gulf of Kutch lies to the west of this region and the Gulf of Khambhat is to the east.
- The region is home to a large population of the wild Asian donkey, which is a member of the wild horse family.
- The Indian Wild Ass Sanctuary is famous for the Chote Rann of Kutch.
- The Rann of Kutch is the only region in India that gives refuge to migratory flamingos.
- The region is home to a total of 13 species of lark.
- Some of the other bird species found in the marshlands of Kutch include Ibis, Spoonbill, Common Crane, Pelican etc.
- The Biosphere Reserve of the Rann of Kutch is considered an important area for the conservation of critically endangered vulture species.

2. Habitat World Cities Report 2022 (July 2, 2022)

Recently the United Nations published its report titled "Habitat World Cities Report 2022".

- The urban population in India is projected to reach 675 million in 2035. This will be the second highest figure after China.
- After the COVID-19 pandemic, the global urban population is on the rise again. This will increase to 2.2 billion by 2050.
- India's urban population is expected to reach 675,456,000 in 2035 as compared to 483,099,000 in 2020.
- The percentage of population in India's urban areas will be 43.2 percent by 2035.
- **Global scenario**
- The urban population in China is projected to reach 1.05 billion in 2035.
- The urban population in Asia will increase to 2.99 billion in 2035.
- In the past two decades, India and China experienced rapid urbanisation and economic growth. As a result, the number of people living in poverty has decreased.
- Large economies like China and India account for the bulk of the world's population. The growth trajectory in these countries has affected global inequality.
- **About United Nations Human Settlement Program (UN-Habitat) -**
- It was established in 1978.
- UN-Habitat is the United Nations agency for human settlements assigned by the United Nations General Assembly the task of promoting socially and environmentally sustainable towns and cities towards the goal of providing affordable housing for all.
- Headquarters- Nairobi, Kenya
- Executive Director- Maimunah Mohammad Sharif

3. NITI Aayog releases compendium of various Ayush-based initiatives (July 2, 2022)

NITI Aayog has released a compendium of AYUSH based medical interventions from States and Union Territories.

- The name of this compendium is "Mitigation and Management of COVID-19: Compendium of AYUSH-Based Practices from Indian States and Union Territories".
- This compendium gives detailed information on various AYUSH-based initiatives and measures taken by the States and Union Territories in view of the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic.
- It was released by NITI Aayog Vice-Chairman Suman Beri and Minister of State for AYUSH and Women and Child Development Dr. Munjpara Mahendrabhai Kalubhai.

- In preparing this compendium of AYUSH-based measures, NITI Aayog has contacted all the States and Union Territories and urged them to share the AYUSH measures taken in mitigating and managing the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The report indicated that there is a need to further strengthen the traditional health systems in the country.
- The compendium also includes a summary of the Ministry of AYUSH, guidelines and initiatives of the Government of India.
- The measures mentioned in the collection were divided into five categories:
 1. Information about the targets of the measures adopted by the States and Union Territories
 2. AYUSH Human Resource and Infrastructure
 3. Quick Actions and Initiatives
 4. Digital Platforms and Tele-medicine
 5. Issues to arise or to be resolved

- **About NITI Aayog**

- It is the premier policy think tank of the Government of India, it provides directional and policy inputs.
- It designs strategic and long-term policies.
- It also provides relevant technical advice to the Centre, States, and Union Territories.
- The Governing Council of NITI Aayog is chaired by the Prime Minister and includes the Chief Ministers of all the States and Union Territories and the Lieutenant Governors of other Union Territories.
- It was constituted on January 1, 2015.
- NITI stands for National Institution for Transforming India.
- The Government of India constituted the NITI Aayog to replace the Planning Commission, which was set up in 1950.
- This step was taken to better meet the needs and aspirations of the people.

4. Eknath Shinde sworn-in as CM of Maharashtra (July 1, 2022)

Shiv Sena leader Eknath Shinde was on **30 June** sworn in as the **20th chief minister** of Maharashtra, while BJP's former chief minister Devendra Fadnavis took oath as the deputy chief minister.

- Governor Bhagat Singh Koshiyari administered the oath of office to Shinde and his deputy Fadnavis at the Raj Bhavan in south Mumbai.

- Maharashtra Governor has asked Chief Minister Shinde to prove his government's majority in the state assembly.
- The Cabinet decided to convene a two-day special session of the state legislature on 2nd and 3rd July.
- The Speaker of the assembly will also be elected during the special session.
- Shinde, who served as urban development minister in the previous Maha Vikas Aghadi government, had rebelled against Shiv Sena chief and then chief minister Uddhav Thackeray.
- He camped in a hotel in Guwahati and later in Goa with 39 other army MLAs, reducing the Aghadi government to a minority.
- After the Supreme Court refused to stay the governor's decision to conduct a floor test, Thackeray resigned from his post.

- **About Eknath Shinde**

- Before emerging as the leader of Shiv Sena, Eknath Sambhaji Shinde drove an auto-rickshaw to earn a living.
- Born on 9 February 1964, Shinde dropped out of college before completing his graduation.
- He is 58 years old and hails from Satara district of western Maharashtra, he started his political career from Thane, Mumbai.
- He is a four-time MLA, having handled the urban development and PWD portfolios in the previous Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government led by Uddhav Thackeray.
- Shinde was appointed the Leader of Opposition in the Maharashtra Legislative Assembly for a brief period in 2014.

- **Important facts about Maharashtra**

- Establishment - 1st May 1960
- Official Language - Marathi
- Neighbouring States - Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Goa, Dadra And Nagar Haveli, Chhattisgarh
- Members of Parliament - Lok Sabha 48 (Rajya Sabha seats 19)
- Legislature - Bicameral (Assembly 289 and council 78 seats)
- Literacy - 82.91%
- Districts - 36
- Major Rivers - Tributaries of Tapti, Bhima, Godavari and Krishna
- Capital - Mumbai
- Population - 11.23 crore (2011 census)

5. Gabon and Togo join the Commonwealth of Nations (June 29, 2022)

Two African countries, Togo and Gabon, were inducted into the Commonwealth of Nations as the 55th and 56th members, respectively, at the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting held in Rwanda's capital, Kigali, chaired by Rwandan President Paul Kagame.

- Rwanda was the last country to join the Commonwealth in 2009.
- Togo and Gabon were historically French colonies that were never British colonies.
- **New members Togo and Gabon**
- The formal Commonwealth member process for the Central African nation of Gabon began in 2017 while the process for the West African nation of Togo began in 2014.
- Gabon is surrounded by Equatorial Guinea, Cameroon, and the Republic of the Congo, which is also a member of the Commonwealth.
- Togo is bordered by Ghana, a member of the Commonwealth of Nations, as well as by Benin and Burkina Faso.
- **About Commonwealth -**
- The Rashtramandal, commonly referred to as the Commonwealth, is a political union of previously 54 and now 56 member states.
- It was originally created as the British Commonwealth of Nations through the Balfour Declaration at the royal convention of 1926.
- The current Commonwealth of Nations was formally formed in 1949 by the London Declaration.
- The current head of the Commonwealth is Queen Elizabeth II.
- Secretary General – Patricia Scotland
- Headquarters- London

6. Announcement to ban single use plastic (SUP) from July 1 (June 24, 2022)

Recently, the central government has prepared a list of single-use plastic items that will be banned from July 1, 2022.

- The manufacture, import, stocking, distribution, sale and use of notified single-use plastics, including polystyrene and expanded polystyrene, shall be prohibited with effect from July 1, 2022.
- A gazette notification was issued in 2021 by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change and the ban was announced.

Single use plastic

- Single use plastic refers to plastic items that are used once and are discarded.
- Single-use plastic products such as plastic bags, straws, coffee bags, soda and water bottles, and plastics used mostly for food packaging.
- **single use plastic parts**
 - According to the Minderoo Foundation's 2021 report, single-use plastics account for a third of global production, with 98% being made up of fossil fuels.
 - Single-use plastics are responsible for most of the 130 million metric tons of plastic waste globally in 2019, all of which is burned, landfilled or released directly into the environment.
- **Single use plastic waste generation in india**
 - The report found that India is among the top 100 countries producing single-use plastic waste - rank 94 (the top three are Singapore, Australia and Oman).
 - With domestic production of 11.8 million metric tonnes annually and imports of 2.9 MMT, India's net production of single use plastic waste is 5.6 MMT and per capita production is 4 kg.
- **Which items will be banned in India?**
 - The Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) has announced a ban on items like earbuds, candy, balloon sticks and ice cream sticks.
 - Cutlery items including plates, glasses, cups, spoons, knives, forks, trays will also be banned.
 - It has also been reported to ban sweets cans, invitation cards, cigarette packs, PVC banners of less than 100 microns as well as polystyrene for decoration.
- **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION -**
- **Plastic ban countries**
 - Bangladesh- Bangladesh became the first country to ban thin plastic bags in the year 2002.
 - New Zealand- New Zealand became the latest country to ban plastic bags in July 2019
 - China- China issued a ban on plastic bags with a phased implementation in the year 2020
 - US - Eight states in the US have banned single-use plastic bags, beginning with California in 2014.

7. India-Nepal India gaurav Tourist Train (June 24, 2022)

The first India-Nepal Bharat Gaurav tourism train has been flagged off from Delhi's Safdarjung Railway Station.

- This tourist train will connect India and Nepal for the first time.
- 500 Indian tourists are on board this train.
- The Bharat Gaurav Tourist Train between India and Nepal will provide an opportunity to people across the country to visit the country's architectural, historical and cultural sites.
- The first journey of this train (Ramayana Circuit) covered the religious destination of Janakpur (in Nepal) apart from other popular destinations like Ayodhya, Nandigram, Varanasi, Sitamarhi, Chitrakoot, Prayagraj, Hampi, Panchavati (Nashik), Rameshwaram and Bhadrachalam.
- Bharat Gaurav Trains is an attempt to showcase the rich spiritual, cultural and historical heritage of India to its people.
- This unique idea was conceived by the Ministry of Railways.
- This train will return to Delhi after completing an 18 days journey.
- It will cover a distance of about 8000 km in the entire Ramayana tour.
- The theme of Bharat Gaurav Train is 'Dekho Apna Desh'.
- IRCTC has fixed a fee of Rs 62370/- per person for this 18 days journey.

- **About Bharat Gaurav Scheme**

- In November 2021, Indian Railways introduced Bharat Gaurav trains which will be operated by private operators and will run on theme-based circuits.
- Through this scheme operators have the "Right of Use" of railway rakes and infrastructure.
- Under this scheme, private players and tour operators can buy trains on lease from the Railways and operate them on any circuit of their choice and decide the fares, route and quality of services.
- Till now, railways used to operate the passenger section and goods section but now the tourism section has also been added under this scheme.
- The scheme has been developed after extensive discussions with several state governments including Odisha, Rajasthan, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu and stakeholders.
- The first train to be operated between Coimbatore (Tamil Nadu) and Shirdi (Maharashtra) by a private operator under the "Bharat Gaurav" scheme was flagged off on June 14.

8. 14th summit of BRICS countries organised (June 24, 2022)

The 14th BRICS Summit was held in virtual mode on 23rd June, 2022 which was presided over by the President of China, Xi Jinping.

- During this meeting, the Heads of State discussed inter-BRICS cooperation in areas such as trade, terrorism, traditional medicine, health, environment, reform of multilateral institutions and combating the COVID-19 pandemic.

- The summit was attended by Chinese President Xi Jinping, Russian President Vladimir Putin, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, South African President Cyril Ramaphosa and Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro.
- The BRICS grouping has become a forum for all developing countries to discuss and deliberate on issues of common concern.
- Ahead of the summit, China held several preliminary meetings, including the BRICS Foreign Ministers' Meeting and the National Security Advisors' meeting.
- The BRICS Summit 2022 was held under the theme “Foster High-Quality BRICS Partnership, Usher in a New Era for Global Development” .
- The 13th BRICS summit was held in India in the year 2021 which was presided over by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.
- India hosted the BRICS summit for the third time in 2021 after 2012 and 2016.

- **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).

9. Santhals community in spotlight after NDA named Draupadi Murmu as their Presidential candidate (June 23, 2022)

The Santhal community is back in the spotlight after the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) named Draupadi Murmu as their Presidential candidate for the upcoming election on July 18.

- Community leaders termed it the 'Golden Age' for the Santhals in the country.
- If elected, Draupadi Murmu will become India's first tribal woman president.

- **Who are the Santhals?**

- The Santhals are the third largest scheduled tribe community in India after the Gonds and Bhils.
- Santhal population is found in Odisha, Jharkhand and West Bengal.

- Mayurbhanj, the home district of Draupadi Murmu, is one of the districts with the largest concentration of the tribe.
- In Odisha, apart from Mayurbhanj district, Santhals are found in Keonjhar and Balasore.
- The literacy rate of this tribe is very high as compared to other tribes of Odisha.
- Santhal's tribal language is called Santhali, which is written in a script called Ol chiki, developed by Santhal scholar Pandit Raghunath Murmu.
- **Other notable Santhal personalities**
- Hemant Soren, the Chief Minister of Jharkhand belongs to santhal tribes.
- Girish Chandra Murmu, the first Lieutenant Governor of the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir, is now Comptroller and Auditor General of India.
- Mayurbhanj MP, Biseshwar Tudu, is a Santhal who is the Union Minister for Tribal Affairs and Jal Shakti.

10. Maharashtra political crisis and anti-defection law (June 23, 2022)

The anti-defection law has once again come into the limelight after 34 MLAs wrote to the Maharashtra Governor promising their support to Shiv Sena's 'rebel' MLA Eknath Shinde.

- Some MLAs have formed an alliance with the rebel party leader and are camping in Guwahati.
- The party has warned its MLAs that their absence from the meeting would lead to speculation that they want to leave the political party.
- Therefore, action will be taken against them under the Anti-Defection Act.
- **What is the Anti-Defection Law?**
- The Tenth Schedule, popularly known as the Anti-Defection Act, was included in the Constitution via the 52nd Amendment Act, 1985.
- It lays down provisions for disqualification of elected members on the ground of defection to any other political party.
- The anti-defection law provides for the disqualification of legislators who, after being elected on a political party ticket, "voluntarily give up their party membership".
- This law also applies to independent MLAs.
- But this law does not apply when the number of legislators leaving a political party is two-thirds of the party's strength in the legislature.
- These MLAs can merge with another party.
- **Rule of two thirds in Maharashtra**
- According to reports, 30 MLAs are with the rebel leader.

- Shiv Sena has 55 MLAs in the Maharashtra Assembly, if the rebel MLAs want to merge,
- then two-thirds of the 55 i.e. 37 MLAs will have to go to another party together.
 - If this happens then there will be no constitutional action against those MLAs.
 - But if this does not happen, then action can be taken against these MLAs under the anti-defection law.