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1. U S and India launch a joint task force on energy storage technologies (Oct. 8, 2022)

India and the United States have launched a new task force under the Strategic Clean Energy Partnership (SCEP), which will focus on the accelerated deployment of energy storage technologies.

Battery energy storage systems (BESS), are devices that enable energy from renewables, like solar and wind, to be stored and then released when customers need power most.

The task force was announced during the meeting of the Union minister for Petroleum and Natural Gas **Hardeep Puri** and the US Energy Secretary Jennifer Granholm in **Washington** on 7 October 2022.

They also issued a US India Strategic Clean Energy Partnership (SCEP) joint statement which highlighted the importance of bilateral clean energy engagement to strengthen energy security and to accelerate clean, secure, and just energy transition.

2. Solomon PM told Australia, no Chinese military presence in the country (Oct. 8, 2022)

Solomon Islands Prime Minister **Manasseh Sogaware** assured Australia on 7 October that his country would not allow a **Chinese military presence** in its territory.

Important facts

- The island nation has been at the centre of a diplomatic conflict in the southern Pacific Ocean between the **United States, Australia and their allies** on the one hand and **China** on the other.
- Earlier this year, the Solomon Islands struck a **security agreement with China**, saying it needed Beijing's assistance with its domestic security situation.
- The agreement shook the **US and Australia**.
- There was concern that the deal could potentially lead to a **Chinese military base** and power test on the island nation.
- The United States and its regional allies fear that China could open a Chinese naval base, which would significantly increase China's military reach in the **South Pacific**.

About Solomon Islands

- The Solomon Islands is a nation located in **Melanesia, east of Papua New Guinea**, consisting of more than **990 islands**.
- **Melanesia** is a subregion of **Oceania** in the southwestern Pacific Ocean.
- It does not include the **Santa Cruz Islands** and the outlying islands such as **Rennell and Bellona**.

Its capital is **Honiara**, which is located on the **island of Guadalcanal**.

3. Divyangana Sharma and Ritika Saxena have been honoured with the prestigious Victorian Premier Award. (Oct. 7, 2022)

Two Indian students, **Divyangana Sharma** and **Ritika Saxena** have won the prestigious **Victorian Premier's award**. Divyangana Sharma has won the coveted Victorian Premier's Award - International Student of the Year 2021-22, while Ritika Saxena won the International Student of the Year award in the Research category.

Divyangana has also won Victorian International Education Awards 2021-22 in the Higher Education category. Divyangana Sharma came to Melbourne to study nursing at Holmesglen Institute in February 2020.

Ritika moved to Melbourne as an 18-year-old and is now a PhD student involved in stem cell research,

Victoria

Victoria is one of the six states of Australia. It is the second largest state of Australia after New South Wales.

Like all states of Australia, it has a constitution of its own.

The head of the Victorian government is called Premier.

The current Premier is : Daniel Andrews

Capital of Victoria: **Melbourne**

4. U.N. peacekeeping chief to visit India (Oct. 7, 2022)

UN peacekeeping chief **Jean-Pierre Lacroix** is on a visit to **India, the United Arab Emirates, Pakistan and Japan** from 6 October to 15 October.

Important facts

- He participated in a two-day meeting organized by the **Challenges Forum**, which brings together leading policy makers, practitioners and academics on key issues related to peacekeeping.
- India is one of the largest military contributors to its missions in **UN peacekeeping**.
- The purpose of Lacroix's visit is to review the countries' contributions to and support for UN peacekeeping and progress in enhancing the effectiveness of peacekeeping.
- The Challenge Forum (CAF) 22 was co-hosted by the organization's **Indian partner United Service Institution of India (USI)**.

About UN Peacekeeping

- UN peacekeeping began in **1948** when the UN Security Council authorized the deployment of UN military observers in the **Middle East**.
- It helps to bring countries from **conflict to a difficult path of peace**.
- It deploys soldiers and police from all over the world for peacekeeping.
- India is one of the largest military and police contributors to UN peacekeeping operations.
- There are currently more than **5,700 Indian peacekeepers** deployed in **nine of the 12 UN peacekeeping missions**.

5. UN Human Rights Council rejects debate on China's mistreatment of Uighur Muslims in Xinjiang (Oct. 7, 2022)

The **United Nations Human Rights Council** on 6 October voted against a Western-led resolution to discuss China's alleged human rights abuses against **Uighurs and other Muslims in Xinjiang**.

Important facts

- The vote was a **diplomatic victory for China**, proving that criticism of China's actions in **Xinjiang** was baseless, so the allegation was dismissed.
- The **US, Britain, Germany and other allies** proposed holding the debate, but **19 members** of the council voted **against** the resolution and **17 countries voted in favor** of the resolution, while **11 did not participate** in the vote.
- **India** also did not participate in the voting.
- **The 47-member council** is the apex human rights body of the United Nations.

Why was the motion brought up for debate?

- In August, the United Nations published a report concluding that the rampant arbitrary detentions of Uighurs and other Muslims in Xinjiang and "**serious human rights violations**" were occurring.
- The report also said Beijing's action could be a crime against humanity.
- The report detailed "**credible**" allegations of "**brutal, inhuman or degrading**" treatment, sexual and gender-based violence against detainees.

Who are Uighurs?

- There are about 12 million Uighurs living in **northwestern China**, mostly Muslims, in the region of Xinjiang.
- Uighurs speak their own language similar to **Turkish**.

- They see themselves culturally and ethnically closer to the **Central Asian countries**.
- Their population in Xinjiang is slightly less than half of the total population.

About Xinjiang

- It lies in the north-west of China and is the country's biggest region.
- It is a mostly desert region, which produces about a **fifth of the world's cotton**.
- It is also rich in oil and natural gas and Beijing sees it as an important trade link due to its proximity to Central Asia and Europe.

6. OPEC Plus member countries cut oil production, US stockpiles fall (Oct. 6, 2022)

Representatives of **OPEC Plus member** countries met in Vienna on 5 October after two and a half years in which the member countries agreed to cut the amount of oil production by **two million barrels per day**.

Important facts

- This decision to cut production will come into effect from **November**.
- The US has criticized the cut in oil production quotas by the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and its allies.
- This move of OPEC will have the most negative impact on low and middle income countries.
- Earlier, OPEC countries had made a symbolic cut in production last month.

Why is OPEC Plus slashing production?

- Oil prices skyrocketed after Russia's invasion of Ukraine.
- The recent cut is the biggest since 2020 when OPEC Plus members cut production by 10 million bpd during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- This cut will boost oil prices and will be extremely beneficial for Middle Eastern member states.
- This will reduce oil demand in a faltering global economy and the cuts will increase profits.

About OPEC

- It is a permanent, intergovernmental organisation that was established in 1960 at the Baghdad Conference by Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Venezuela.

The purpose of this organisation is to coordinate and integrate the petroleum policies of its member countries and to ensure the stabilisation of oil markets to ensure efficient, economic and regular supply of petroleum to the consumer.

- Headquarters - **Vienna (Austria)**
- OPEC has **14 member states** (Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Algeria, Libya, Nigeria, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, Republic of the Congo, Angola, Ecuador and Venezuela).

OPEC plus

- It is a coalition of OPEC members and the world's **10 major non-OPEC oil exporting countries**.
- Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Brunei, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Mexico, Oman, Russia, South Sudan and Sudan.

7. Former German Chancellor Angela Merkel wins UN refugee award (Oct. 5, 2022)

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) on 4 October honoured former **German Chancellor Angela Merkel** with the **UNHCR 'Nansen' Refugee Award for the year 2022** for her '**moral and political courage**' during the refugee crisis in Syria.

Important facts

- The award selection committee said she was chosen for her leadership, courage and compassion, which helped ensure the protection of millions of desperate asylum seekers.
- Merkel will be honoured with the award on **October 10 in Geneva**.

Merkel's efforts for refugee protection

- Under the leadership of former German Chancellor Angela Merkel, Germany gave asylum to more than **1.2 million refugees** and asylum seekers in **2015 and 2016**.
- These refugees had reached **Germany** to save lives from violent conflict in **Syria and other places**.
- UN Refugee Agency High Commissioner **Filippo Grandi** praised the former chancellor's resolve to stand up for the protection of refugees, human rights and international law.

About UNHCR Nansen Refugee Award

- This award was established in **1954**.
- This award is given every year in memory of **Fridjof Nansen**, devoted to Norway's scientific, diplomatic and human welfare work.

- This award is awarded to an individual, group or organisation that has made efforts to
- protect refugees, displaced and homeless people.

8. NPCI to launch Rupay Debit Card in Oman (Oct. 4, 2022)

Oman has become the latest country in the world where National Payment Corporation of India (NPCI) will launch its RuPay Debit card.

A memorandum of understanding (MoU) was signed on 4 October 2022 between the Central Bank of Oman and National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) for cooperation in digital payment systems.

The agreement was signed during the visit of the Minister of State for External Affairs **V Muraleedharan** to Oman. He was on a two day (3-4 October) visit to Oman.

This was his second visit to Oman and he met Oman's foreign minister Sayyid Badr bin Hamad bin Hamood Albusaidi .

Rupay Card

RuPay is an Indian payment gateway like Visa or MasterCard and is increasingly being expanded to India's neighbouring countries or nations with a huge Indian diaspora.

Rupay card was officially launched for public in **India on 8 May 2014**

Singapore was the **first foreign country** where it was launched in May 2018, followed by Bhutan and the Maldives.

In West Asia, **UAE was the first country** where RuPay was launched during PM Modi's August 2019 visit.

Agreement has also been signed with Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, France and Nepal for its launch in the respective countries.

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. Indian American Vivek Lal gets Lifetime Achievement award in US (Oct. 4, 2022)

Indian-origin General Atomics CEO **Vivek Lal** has been honoured with the Lifetime Achievement Award by **US President Joe Biden** with a citation for '**With Grateful Recognition**'.

Important facts

- The award is given to him by **AmeriCorps** and by the Office of the President.
- AmeriCorps operates as part of the US government, which aims to promote activities that inspire Americans to "serve communities".
- Indian-American Vivek Lal is currently the Chief Executive Officer of General Atomics Global Corporation.
- Lal was born on 05 March 1969 in Jakarta, Indonesia.
- Lal completed his PhD in Aerospace Engineering from Wichita State University in Kansas.
- He has also been the CEO and Chairman of Reliance New Ventures Reliance Industries Limited.

10. Alain Aspect, John Clauser, Anton Zeilinger chosen for the Nobel Prize for Physics 2022 (Oct. 4, 2022)

The Royal Swedish Academy of Science has announced the winners of the [2022 Nobel Prize](#) in Physics on 4 October 2022. Three scientists; **Alain Aspect of France, John Clauser of USA** and **Anton Zeilinger of Austria** were honoured for their work in Quantum physics.

According to the Academy the awards were given for their "experiments with entangled photons, and pioneering quantum information science",

Quantum physics is a field of science that aims to study matter and energy at the most fundamental level. Each of the three winners conducted ground breaking experiments using entangled quantum states, where two particles behave like a single unit even when they are separated.

The Academy said that as a result of their work, development was underway to use the "special properties of individual particle systems to construct quantum computers, improve measurements, build quantum networks and establish secure quantum encrypted communication."

On 3 October 2022, **Svante Paabo of Sweden** was announced the winner of the Nobel Prize for Medicine.

The Nobel Prize will be conferred on 10 December 2022 in Stockholm, Sweden.

List of Nobel Prize winners from India -

- Rabindranath Tagore (1913) - Literature. First **Asian to get a Nobel Prize.**
- CV Raman (1930) - Physics
- Har Gobind Khurana (1968) - Medicine. He was an Indian born American citizen.
- Mother Teresa (1979) - Peace
- Subhramanyan Chandrashekar (1983) - Physics. He was an Indian born American citizen.
- Amartya Sen (1998) - Economics.
- Venkatraman Ramakrishnan (2009) - Chemistry. He is an Indian born British and American citizen.
- Kailash Satyarthi (2014) - Peace
- Abhijit Banerjee (2019) - Economics. He is an Indian born American citizen.

