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1. Centre signs \$96.3 mn loan with ADB to improve water supply in Himachal (Aug. 23, 2022)

The Asian Development Bank and the Indian Government on 22 August signed a 96.3 million dollar (about Rs 769 crore) loan agreement to provide safe drinking water and improve water supply and sanitation services in Himachal Pradesh.

IMPORTANT FACTS -

- This project is in line with the objectives of Jal Jeevan Mission, which aims to provide piped water to all rural households by 2024.
- This loan has been given by ADB under the Himachal Pradesh Rural Drinking Water Improvement and Livelihood Project.
- More than 90 percent of the rural population of the Himachal Pradesh has access to drinking water, but the water supply infrastructure is old and in a dilapidated condition, resulting in poor quality of service.
- Under this ADB project, 75,800 households in Himachal Pradesh will be connected to this service and 370,000 residents in ten districts will get uninterrupted supply of clean drinking water.
- Under the project, water supply infrastructure will be improved and institutional capacity will be strengthened in Himachal Pradesh.
- In this way safe, sustainable and inclusive rural water supply and sanitation services will be ensured.

Aims of the project :

- The project aims to build 48 groundwater wells, 80 surface water facilities, 109 water treatment plants, 117 pumping stations and 3,000 km of water distribution pipelines.

Asian Development Bank (ADB) :

- It is a regional development bank established on 19th December 1966.
- The ADB currently consists of 68 members, 49 of whom are from Asia and the Pacific and 19 from outside.
- It envisions a prosperous, inclusive, resilient and sustainable Asia and Pacific region.
- It seeks to eradicate extreme poverty in the region.
- It assists its members and partners by providing loans, technical assistance, grants and equity investments to promote social and economic development.
- Its headquartered in Manila, Philippines.

2. Maharashtra declares 'Dahi Handi' an official sport (Aug. 22, 2022)

Like Kho-Kho and Kabaddi, Dahi Handi has now been given the status of a sport in Maharashtra. It will be considered as a kind of adventure sport.

IMPORTANT FACTS -

- Chief Minister Eknath Shinde told the Vidhan Sabha that Govindas joining Dahi Handi would be given benefits of government schemes, 5 percent reservation in government jobs.
- Govinda will now also be given insurance cover. If an accident occurs while playing Dahi Handi and in such a situation a Govinda dies, then an amount of Rs 10 lakh will be given as assistance to the relatives of the concerned Govinda.
- In case of serious injury on Govinda's eyes or both legs or both hands or any two important parts of the body, the state government will give him an assistance of Rs.7.5 lakh.
- In such a situation, if any Govind's hand, leg or any part of the body is lost, then in such a situation, he will be given an assistance amount of 5 lakh rupees.

What is Dahi Handi ?

- Dahi Handi is celebrated on the occasion of Janmashtami, the birth of Lord Krishna.
- Dahi Handi is part of the Janmashtami festival, where young participants called 'govindas', dressed in colourful clothes, form and break a human pyramid to reach a pot hung in the air.
- Dahi Handi was first started here in 1907 on the occasion of Krishna Janmashtami.
- The tradition of Dahi Handi, which started in Mumbai in 1907, has been going on for the last 104 years in Ghansoli village near Navi Mumbai.

3. MP's tribal-dominated Mandla becomes India's first full functional literate district (Aug. 19, 2022)

Madhya Pradesh's city Mandla, which is a tribal-dominated region has become India's first fully 'functionally literate' district. It has been announced by the state government.

IMPORTANT FACTS -

- The district administration had launched a campaign in 2020 to make the residents fully literate.

- With the aim of making people literate, the administration employed the education, and women and child development departments along with social workers.
- The tribals often complained to the authorities about fraudsters withdrawing money from their bank accounts and the root cause was that they were not functionally literate.
- To solve this problem, Mandla District Magistrate Harshika Singh started an initiative to make people functionally literate.
- District administration launched a major campaign to make them functionally literate from 15 August 2020 by roping in the school education department, women and child development department, anganwadi and social workers to educate women and senior citizens.
- Within two years the entire district has become functionally literate.
- According to a survey in 2011, the literacy rate in the district was 68 percent.
- Another report in 2020 stated that more than 2.25 lakh people in the district were not literate and most of them were tribals living in forest areas.
- According to the 2011 census, the literacy rate of Madhya Pradesh is 69.32 percent. In this, male literacy is 78.73 percent while female literacy is 59.24 percent.

What is Functional Literacy ?

- It refers to an individual's ability to engage in all those activities that require literacy for the effective functioning of his group and community and also enables him to read, write and calculate for his own sake.

4. Rajnath Singh unveiled the statue of "Veer Durgadas Rathod" in Jodhpur (Aug. 18, 2022)

Defense Minister Rajnath Singh unveiled the statue of "Veer Durgadas Rathod" on his 385th birth anniversary in Jodhpur, Rajasthan.

IMPORTANT FACTS -

- Raksha Mantri, while paying a heartfelt tribute to Veer Durgadas Rathod, described him as a symbol of social harmony, honesty, bravery and devotion.

Veer Durgadas Rathod :

- Durgadas Rathod was a brave Rathod Rajput warrior who defeated the Mughal ruler Aurangzeb in battle.
- After the death of Maharaja Jaswant Singh in the 17th century, Veer Durgadas Rathod single-handedly maintained the rule of the Rathore dynasty over Marwar (Jodhpur).

- Durga Das's father Askaran Rathod was the minister of Maharaja Jaswant Singh. He was given special military status. Mother's name was Netkanwar Bai. Durgadas was brought up in a village named Lunawa.
- On 22 November 1718 at Ujjain on the banks of Shipra, Durgadas died at the age of 81, his mausoleum in red stone still stands at Chakratirtha, Ujjain, a pilgrimage for all freedom fighters and Rajputs.

5. Drone-based healthcare services launched in Arunachal Pradesh (Aug. 18, 2022)

On August 15, 2022, in Arunachal Pradesh, the “Medicine from the Sky” project was successfully unveiled.

IMPORTANT FACTS -

- The first flight of the drone service was conducted from Seppa to Chiang Tajo in East Kameng district.
- The project is inspired by the Prime Minister's vision of transforming India into a drone hub of the world.
- In Arunachal Pradesh, the pilot project “Medicine from the Sky Project” is being launched in collaboration with the World Economic Forum (WEF).
- The “Medicine from the Sky Project” is funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).
- It is being implemented by Redwing Labs, a start-up based in Bengaluru.
- The project will provide a clear vision on operational issues, regulatory issues and financial viability. Based on this, the government will formulate a policy and take steps to adopt the emerging technology in a phased manner.

About Arunachal Pradesh :

- Capital- Itanagar
- Governor- BD Mishra
- Chief Minister- Pema Khandu
- Legislative Assembly - 60 seats
- Rajya Sabha - 1 seat
- Lok Sabha - 2 seats

6. Govt launches Village Defence Guards scheme to fight terrorism in Jammu (Aug. 17, 2022)

The Government of Jammu and Kashmir has approved the formulation of the Village Defense Guard Scheme (VDGS)-2022 "to prevent incidents of terrorist acts inspired and supported from across the border and to boost the security grid in the Union Territory".

Important facts

- The scheme has become effective from August 15, 2022 and will have a potentially positive impact.
- The objective of this scheme is to organise a small group of volunteer armed citizens in the border villages to inculcate a sense of self-defence for the security of the villages.
- A maximum of 15 persons in each group will be designated as "Village Defence Guards" (VDGs).
- Each group will be known as a "village defence group" and will be headed by a retired officer from the Army, CPMF, or the Jammu and Kashmir Police.

Jammu and Kashmir

- Jammu and Kashmir was a state of India till 5 August 2019 which was bifurcated in August 2019 to form two union territories namely Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh.
- Capital- Srinagar (May-October), Jammu (November-April)
- Lieutenant Governor - Manoj Sinha
- Legislative Council - 36 seats
- Assembly - 89 seats

7. Punjab bans use of 10 insecticides (Aug. 16, 2022)

The Punjab government on July 13 banned the use of 10 types of insecticides for a few days to save the heritage of Basmati rice.

Important facts

- Before banning these pesticides, the Agricultural Association had requested to ban these agrochemicals for export of Basmati to other countries to save the good yield of Basmati.
- With this restriction, farmers can get the right yield of Basmati and they can earn more profit from it in the coming time.
- This ban has been imposed for 60 days starting from 12 August 2022.

Names of 10 pesticides that have been banned

- Acephate, Buprofezin, Chloropyrifos, Methamidophos, Propiconazole, Thiamethoxam, Profenofos, Isoprothiolane, Carbendazim, and Tricyclazole

Why were pesticides banned?

- In view of the constraint on the export and consumption of Basmati rice in the state, the government has banned these pesticides.
- Punjab Agricultural University (PAU), Ludhiana has recommended alternative agrochemicals to control pests in Basmati rice in the state. So that farmers can get good yield of Basmati in the coming time.
- Good quality Basmati rice can be produced with the ban of pesticides.

8. Jharkhand Tribal Festival (Aug. 10, 2022)

On the occasion of World Tribal Day, 'Jharkhand Tribal Festival' has been organised on 9th and 10th August 2022 at the historic Morhabadi Maidan in Ranchi.

Important facts

- Rajya Sabha member and JMM supremo Shibu Soren inaugurated the festival on 9 August in the presence of Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren.
- Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel will attend the closing ceremony of the program on August 10.
- A series of programs related to tribal art, culture, tradition and literature will be organized during the two-day festival.
- Sports, panel discussions, seminars, exhibitions and tribal fashion shows are organized in this event.
- Artists from Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Sikkim and North East participated in the festival.
- The objective of the program is to take tribal civilization and culture on the national platform.

Other festival of Jharkhand

- **Sarhul** - It is celebrated during the spring season when new flowers appear on the branches of Sal trees.

In this, the village deity is worshipped who is considered to be the protector of the tribes.

- **Karam/ Karma** - It is the worship of Karam Devta, the god of strength and youth. It is held on the 11 of the moon in Bhadra month. Groups of young villagers go to the forest and collect wood, fruits and flowers which are used for worship.
- **Tusu Parab or Makar** - This festival mostly takes place in the region between Bundu, Tamar and Raidih region of Jharkhand. It is a harvest festival held during winters on the last day of the month of Pus.

- **Rohini** - It is perhaps the first festival of Jharkhand. It is the festival of sowing seeds in the field. Along with Rohini, some other festivals like Rajasawala Ambavati and Chitgomha are also celebrated.
- **Bhagta Parab** - This comes between the period of spring and summer. It is best known as the worship of Budha Baba.

Sohrai - It is known for the care of domestic animals such as cows and buffaloes. It is celebrated on the new moon day, immediately after Deepawali.

9. JD(U) leader Nitish Kumar sworn in as the Chief Minister of Bihar for the eighth time (Aug. 10, 2022)

JD(U) leader Nitish Kumar took oath as the Chief Minister of Bihar for the 8th time and RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav as Deputy Chief Minister on 10 August.

Important facts

- Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar met Governor Fagu Chauhan and submitted his resignation as the Chief Minister of NDA.
- Nitish Kumar again met Governor Fagu Chauhan on 9 August and staked a claim to form a new government in the state.
- Nitish Kumar also submitted a list of 164 MLAs to the Governor belonging to seven parties supporting him. These include RJD, Congress, Hindustani Awam Morcha, left parties and one independent MLA.
- Nitish Kumar was unanimously elected as the leader in a joint meeting of these parties.
- The meeting took place after the JD(U) broke ties with the BJP-led NDA.

Nitish Kumar early life

- He was born on 1 March 1951 in Bakhtiarpur, Bihar.
- He is a graduate in Mechanical Engineering from Bihar College of Engineering (present-day NIT Patna).
- Before joining politics, he was associated with Bihar State Electricity Board.

Political career of Nitish Kumar

- During 1974 to 1977, he participated in Jayaprakash Narayan's movement and joined the Janata Party led by Satyendra Narayan Sinha.
- In 1989, Nitish Kumar backed the Janata Dal and endorsed Lalu Prasad Yadav as the Leader of the Opposition in the Bihar Legislative Assembly.
- In 1994, he along with George Fernandes formed a new party called Samata Party.
- After joining hands with the BJP in 1996, he became a minister in the Atal Bihari Vajpayee cabinet.

- In March 2000, Nitish served as the chief minister of the state for seven days.
- In 2003, the Samata Party merged with Sharad Yadav's Janata Dal.
- In the same year, Janata Dal (United) was formed.
- In 2010, Nitish's party came to power as an ally with the BJP and Nitish again became the chief minister.
- In 2013, JD(U) leader Nitish broke his party's alliance with the BJP after 17 years.
- Within a year, Nitish was back again as Chief Minister with the support of RJD and Congress.
- In 2020, Nitish Kumar took oath as the Chief Minister of Bihar for the seventh time with the support of the BJP.
- Nitish Kumar again ended his alliance with the Bharatiya Janata Party-led National Democratic Alliance and rejoined the RJD.
- He briefly served as the Union Minister of Railways, Minister of Surface Transport and Minister of Agriculture.

10. PM Modi dedicate to nation 2nd Generation Ethanol Plant at Panipat in Haryana (Aug. 10, 2022)

Prime Minister Narendra Modi dedicated to the nation the 2nd Generation (2G) Ethanol Plant at Panipat in Haryana on 10 August.

Important facts

- This is part of a long series of steps taken by the government over the years to promote the production and use of biofuels in the country.
- This is in line with the Prime Minister's efforts to make the energy sector more affordable, accessible, efficient and sustainable.

About the Plant

- It has been built at an estimated cost of over Rs 900 crore by Indian Oil Corporation Ltd (IOCL).
- It is located close to the Panipat Refinery.
- The project will use about two lakh tonnes of rice straw (straw) annually to generate about 30 million litres of ethanol annually.
- Farmers will be empowered for better use of agro-crop residues and additional income generation opportunities will be provided to them.
- The project will have zero liquid discharge.
- Reduction in burning of rice straw (stubble) will reduce carbon dioxide emissions by about 3 lakh tonnes per year and reduce greenhouse gases.

About ethanol

- Ethanol is a kind of alcohol, it is also called ethyl alcohol.
- It can be used as fuel in vehicles by mixing it with petrol.
- After sugarcane, the central government is now focusing on preparing ethanol from rice.
- By producing ethanol, farmers can make their economic condition better by earning good profits.
- Ethanol is mainly produced from the sugarcane crop, but it can also be prepared from different types of sugar crops.

Ethanol blending programme (EBP) in India

- Under this programme 5 per cent ethanol-blended petrol will be supplied to retail outlets.
- It aims to popularize 5 per cent ethanol-blended petrol in 9 states and 4 union territories.
- Its aim is to reduce the country's dependence on crude oil imports, cutting carbon emissions and boosting farmers' incomes.