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1. India-Bangladesh Friendship Pipeline to be jointly inaugurated by PM Modi and Sheikh Hasina (March 17, 2023)

Indian Prime Minister **Narendra Modi** and Bangladesh Prime Minister **Sheikh Hasina** will inaugurate the **India-Bangladesh Friendship Pipeline** through video conference on March 18, 2023.

An Overview of the News

- The India-Bangladesh Friendship Pipeline is a proposed **130 km long pipeline for high-speed diesel transport from Siliguri in India to Parbatipur in Bangladesh.**
- Maitri Pipeline is the **first cross-border energy pipeline between India and Bangladesh** with an estimated cost of Rs 377 crore.
- The pipeline has a capacity to transport **1 million metric tonnes per annum (MMTPA) of high-speed diesel (HSD)**, and will be constructed by **India's Numaligarh Refinery Limited (NRL) at an estimated cost of USD 1.6 billion.**
- Initially, the pipeline will supply high-speed diesel to seven districts in northern Bangladesh.
- The operationalization of the India-Bangladesh Friendship Pipeline will provide a **sustainable, reliable, cost-effective and environment-friendly mode of HSD transportation from India to Bangladesh.**
- The pipeline will enhance cooperation in energy security between India and Bangladesh.
- This is part of the **Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed between India and Bangladesh in April 2017** to strengthen cooperation in the energy sector.
- The pipeline will help Bangladesh meet its growing energy demand and reduce its dependence on imported fuel, while providing an opportunity for India to expand its energy exports to neighbouring countries.

About Bangladesh

- Prime Minister - **Sheikh Hasina**
- Currency - **Bangladeshi Taka**
- Capital - **Dhaka**

2. Union Home Ministry announced 10% reservation for former Agniveers (March 17, 2023)

Union Home Ministry announced 10% reservation for former Agniveers

The **Union Home Ministry** has announced a **10% reservation for former Agniveers** in the **Central Industrial Security Force (CISF)**

An Overview of the News

- Its **objective** is to provide opportunities to a specific group and promote their participation in the Armed Forces.
- This reservation is similar to the reservation announced for former **Agniveers in the Border Security Force (BSF)**.
- Former Agniveers will get relaxation in the upper age limit and will also be exempted from **Physical Efficiency Test**.
- The upper age limit for candidates of the **first batch of Agniveers** shall be relaxed by up to five years, whereas the other batches shall get age relaxation by up to three years.
- The **Agnipath scheme** has been launched by the central government for recruitment in the Armed Forces.
- The **Agnipath scheme was approved by the Indian Government in June 2022**.
- The scheme aims to induct youth between **17-and-a-half years of age and 21 years of age** on a four-year short-term contractual basis.
- The scheme has been designed to ensure a **youthful profile of the Armed Forces**.

3. Indian Railways to become Net Zero Carbon Emitter by 2030 (March 17, 2023)

"net zero carbon emitter" by 2030.

Union Railway Minister **Ashwini Vaishnav** recently said in a written reply to a question in the Lok Sabha that the Indian Railways is working on a mission mode to become the largest green railway in the world and towards becoming a "**net zero carbon emitter**" by 2030.

An overview of the news

- **Indian Railways** has taken several initiatives to reduce carbon emissions which include the use of energy efficient technologies.
- Indian Railways is starting production of three phase electric locomotives with regenerative features, use of Head on Generation (HOG) technology, use of LED lights in buildings and coaches, use of star rated equipment.
- In addition, key strategies identified to achieve the net zero carbon emission target are procurement of electricity through renewable energy sources, transition from diesel to electric traction, promotion of energy efficiency, and afforestation.

The projected energy demand of Indian Railways

- The estimated energy demand of **Indian Railways** is expected to be around **8,200 Megawatts (MW) in 2029-30**.

- To achieve net zero carbon emissions, the **expected requirement of renewable capacity by 2029-30** would be **around 30,000 MW**.
- By **February 2023**, about **147 MW of solar plants** and about **103 MW of wind power plants** have been commissioned.
- In addition, **about 2150 MW** of renewable capacity has also been tied up.
- Indian Railways plans to progressively procure renewable energy through various power purchase modes for its future energy requirements.

Contribution of railways towards combating Climate Change

- Indian Railways has adopted an integrated approach to green transport to increase the total share of Indian Railways in land based freight traffic from the **present 36 per cent to 45 per cent by 2030**.
- Indian Railways is setting up **Dedicated Freight Corridors (DFCs)** across the country.
- Its first phase is estimated to reduce emissions by about **457 million tonnes** over a period of 30 years.
- The **traction diesel fuel** will use **5 percent blending of biofuels**.
- Water use efficiency will be improved by **20 percent by 2030**.
- Plantation will be done to increase carbon absorption, there will be emphasis on waste management and pollution control.
- The Minister of Railways - **Ashwini Vaishnaw**

4. IndiaAI ecosystem (March 17, 2023)

task force for framing a draft roadmap for the artificial intelligence ecosystem

The **Ministry of Electronics and IT** set up a **task force for framing a draft roadmap for the artificial intelligence ecosystem** by the end of April.

An overview of the news:

- The Minister of **State for Electronics and IT** has announced the establishment of the IndiaAI platform, which aims to support research and provide tools for startups in the field of artificial intelligence.
- This platform will **focus on promoting Indian startups, research, and innovation**, which could contribute to the growth of the Indian economy.
- Estimates suggest that **AI could potentially add USD 967 billion** to the Indian **economy by 2035** and **USD 450-500 billion** to India's **GDP by 2025**, which is a significant amount and could account for 10% of the country's USD 5 trillion GDP target.

About IndiaAI platform:

- INDIAai stands for '**The National AI Portal of India**' platform.
- The platform was **launched in 2018**.
- It is a joint initiative of the **Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY)** and the **National Association of Software and Services Companies (NASSCOM)**.
- The primary objective of the IndiaAI platform is to create a collaborative ecosystem for AI in India by bringing together industry, academia, startups, and the government.
- The platform provides a forum for stakeholders to exchange ideas, collaborate on projects, share best practices, and access AI resources such as datasets, algorithms, and tools.
- IndiaAI also aims to support the development of **AI-based solutions** that address societal challenges such as healthcare, education, agriculture, and urban development.
- The platform provides access to funding, mentorship, and other resources to startups and entrepreneurs working on AI-based solutions.
- **IndiaAI has several initiatives like:**
 - AI for All program: which aims to provide AI training to over 1 million citizens in India, and the AI research and innovation hub, which is a network of AI research centers and labs across the country.

5. The US Senate appointed of Eric Garcetti as the United States Ambassador to India (March 17, 2023)

Eric Garcetti has been confirmed by the **US Senate as the new ambassador to New Delhi**, chosen by **President Joe Biden** for the role.

An Overview of the News

- Garcetti was supported by a majority of Senators, with **52 in favour and 42 against**.
- **Seven Republican Senators** joined the Democrats in backing **Garcetti for the role**.
- Eric Garcetti served as the **mayor of Los Angeles, California** in the past..
- He is the first LA mayor in more than 50 years to be nominated for a diplomatic position.

About the US Senate

- The **US Senate is one of the two chambers of the US Congress**.
- It has **100 senators**, each state is represented by two senators, who serve for six-year terms.

- The Senate has significant powers, including the ability to approve presidential nominations and treaties, and to serve as a court for impeachment proceedings.
- The **Vice President of America is the leader of the Senate**, but votes only in case of a tie.

6. Ministry of Steel signs MoU with selected companies under PLI scheme (March 17, 2023)

Ministry of Steel signs MoU with selected companies under PLI scheme

The **Ministry of Steel** on 17 March **signed MoUs with selected companies under the Production-linked Incentive (PLI) scheme** for specialty steel in New Delhi.

An overview of the news

- India has become a growth center for the future of the steel industry. India will play an important role in this sector in the next two decades.
- A total of **57 MoUs were signed with 27 companies during the event.**
- The production linked incentive scheme aims to boost domestic manufacturing and cut down on import bills by encouraging local companies to set up or expand existing manufacturing units.

Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme

- It is an initiative that provides incentives to **domestic industries to promote production at the local level.**
- Through this scheme, the government aims to incentivize **companies to increase the sales of manufactured products in domestic units.**
- The **objective of the scheme is to make domestic manufacturing globally competitive and to become a global champion in manufacturing.**
- The government has launched this scheme with an outlay of around **Rs 2 lakh crore for 14 sectors** including Automobiles and Auto Components, White Goods, Pharma, Textiles, Advanced Chemistry Cell and Specialty Steel.

7. The developed drug gets DCGI approval (March 16, 2023)

The developed drug gets DCGI approval

Recently, **DGCI developed an important drug, developed by DRDO technology** that has been approved for **radiological and nuclear emergencies.**

An Overview of the News

- The drug is called '**Prussian Blue**' insoluble formulation and has been developed under the Technology Development Fund (TDF) scheme.
- It has got approval from the Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI).
- The drug has been developed by the industry based on technology from the Institute of Nuclear Medicine and Allied Sciences (INMAS), Delhi, a laboratory of the Defense Research and Development Organization (DRDO).
- This drug will be available under the trade names **Pru-DecorpTM and PruDecorp-MG**.
- The formulation is used for the purification of Cesium and Thallium and its Active Pharmaceutical Ingredient (API).
- It is one of the important medicines listed by the **World Health Organization (WHO)** for radiological and nuclear emergencies.

About Drug Controller General of India (DCGI):

- The Drug Controller General of India (DCGI) is the head of the Central Drugs Standard Control Organization (CDSCO) in India.
- DCGI is also the **Central Licensing Authority for Medical Devices under the Medical Devices Rules 2017**.
- CDSCO is the Central Drug Regulatory Authority in India, overseen by the Drugs Controller General of India.
- CDSCO works under the Directorate General of Health Services, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, which is part of the Government of India.
- The headquarters of CDSCO is located in New Delhi, and it also has six regional offices across the country.
- CDSCO's mandate is to ensure the safety, efficacy and quality of medical products manufactured, imported and distributed in India by promoting transparency, accountability and uniformity in its services.

About Defense Research and Development Organization (DRDO)

- The **Defense Research and Development Organization (DRDO)** is an agency of the Government of India responsible for the research, development, and manufacture of advanced technology systems in the fields of defense, aerospace, and security.
- It was **established in 1958** with the aim of designing and developing indigenous defense technologies to strengthen India's defense capabilities.
- It operates under the Ministry of Defense and consists of more than 50 laboratories, centers, and establishments spread across the country.
- Its primary mission is to provide technological solutions for the country's defense and security requirements, which includes developing new technologies, systems, and platforms for the Indian Armed Forces.

8. RBI and Central Bank of UAE signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to promote innovation in financial products and services (March 16, 2023)

Central Bank Digital Currencies (CBDCs) and examine interoperability between the CBUAE and the CBDCs of the RBI.

The MoU involves both the central banks working together to explore **Central Bank Digital Currencies (CBDCs) and examine interoperability between the CBUAE and the CBDCs of the RBI.**

An Overview of the News

- The cooperation aims to increase efficiency and reduce costs in cross-border transactions, which further the **economic ties between India and the UAE.**
- The MoU also includes **technical cooperation and knowledge sharing on matters related to fintech and financial products and services.**
- The collaboration between RBI and CBUAE is an important step towards **fostering innovation and collaboration in the area of FinTech.**
- The joint exploration of CBDCs and cross-border testing is expected to pave the way for increased efficiency and cost reduction in cross-border transactions, benefiting both India and the UAE.

About Reserve Bank of India (RBI)

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) was established through the **Reserve Bank of India Act 1934** and began operations on **April 1, 1935.**
- The Government of India **nationalised the RBI in 1949**, and since then it is wholly owned by the government.
- Under the **Banking Regulation Act of 1949**, RBI has the authority to regulate banks in India.
- RBI is also empowered to regulate **Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFCs)** under the RBI Act of 1934.
- The **Payment and Settlement Act of 2007** designates the RBI as the regulator for digital payment systems.
- The headquarter of RBI is located in **Mumbai, India.**

9. Ministry of Education organises a multimedia exhibition during the 2nd EdWG meeting of G20 (March 16, 2023)

Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann.

On 15 March 2023 the **Ministry of Education** in partnership with **IIT Ropar** organised a **multimedia exhibition** at **Khalsa College, Amritsar**. The exhibition was held during the **G20 2nd EdWG meeting**.

An Overview of the News

- Exhibition was inaugurated by **Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann**.
- The exhibition has over 90 stalls from various organisations including NCERT, NBT, NSDC, IKS, IDEAS Technology Innovation Hub at ISI Kolkata, Punjab Tourism, IIM Amritsar, IIT Mandi, IIT Ropar and many start-ups.
- The primary objective of the exhibition is to provide hands-on exposure and learning opportunities related to research and collaboration in academia.
- The exhibition is a two day working group meeting to be held on **16-17 March 2023**.

About the G20

- The G20 (Group of Twenty) is an international forum consisting of **19 countries** and the European Union, representing the world's leading economies.
- Its members include **Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, South Korea, Turkey, the United Kingdom, and the United States**.
- The G20 was **formed in 1999** with the aim of promoting international financial stability and sustainable economic growth.
- The G20 countries together account for **around 80% of the world's gross domestic product (GDP), 75%** of global trade, and two-thirds of the world's population.
- The G20 holds annual meetings where leaders discuss economic and financial issues facing the world, including trade, investment, innovation, and climate change.

10. India and Luxembourg release joint Commemorative Postage Stamp (March 16, 2023)

India and Luxembourg celebrating **75 years of friendship** on March 15, 2023. To mark the occasion, both the countries launched a **joint Commemorative Postage Stamp**.

An Overview of the News

- The Postage Stamp symbolises the **long standing and strong ties between India and Luxembourg**.
- Both the countries have been cooperating in the steel sector for the **last 20 years**.

- The **Paul Worth company of Luxembourg** has been working in India for the last two decades under this collaboration.
- In **November 2015**, Luxembourg hosted the **12th Asia-Europe Foreign Ministers' Meeting**.
- The partnership between India and Luxembourg in various fields reflects their commitment to strengthen their friendship and explore future opportunities for cooperation.

About Luxembourg

- Luxembourg is a small nation located in **Europe and shares borders with Belgium, France, and Germany**.
- **In 1994, Luxembourg City** was recognized as a **UNESCO World Heritage Site**.
- From 2013 to 2014, Luxembourg served on the **United Nations Security Council for the first time**.
- Prime Minister - **Xavier Bettel**
- Currency - **Euro**
- Official languages - **Luxembourgish, French, German**