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1. South Africa declares 'State of Disaster' over electricity crisis (Feb. 10, 2023)

Recently South African President **Cyril Ramaphosa** declared a "**state of disaster**" due to the **country's power crisis** during his annual State of the Nation address in Cape Town.

An overview of the news

- This follows just 10 months after the Covid-induced "**State of Disaster**" was lifted.
- South Africa is currently facing several crises, including issues such as **power crisis, unemployment, increase in crime and violence.**
- The electricity supply company in the country for almost 10 years has become financially weak amid large-scale looting and corruption, due to which the power crisis has arisen.
- The President announced that a **Minister of Power** would be appointed to deal with the matter more effectively and promptly.
- The new minister will assume overall responsibility for overseeing all aspects of the power crisis response, including the National Energy Crisis Committee.

South Africa

- President: **Cyril Ramaphosa**
- Capitals: **Cape Town** (Legislative), **Pretoria** (Executive), **Bloemfontein** (Judicial)
- Currency : **Rand**

2. Bangladesh PM Sheikh Hasina inaugurates Indian LOC funded part of Joydebpur-Tongi rail line (Feb. 10, 2023)

On 10 February, Bangladesh Prime Minister **Sheikh Hasina** opened traffic operations on the rail line between **Joydebpur and Tongi**.

An overview of the news

- This is the initial section of the Dhaka-Tongi-Joydebpur rail line project, funded under a concessional line of credit provided by India.
- It is a '**testimony of the strong and abiding friendship**' between the two countries.
- Operation of more trains will be possible on this section of 11 kilometre long double line rail route from Tongi to Joydebpur.
- Acting High Commissioner of India **Binoy George** was also present on the occasion.
- Hasina also inaugurated a total of 69.20 km of rail lines under three projects, including the operation of trains on **Rooppur and Shasidal routes of Bangladesh Railway.**

- The Rooppur section of the railway will facilitate transportation of goods and equipment to the **Rooppur Atomic Power Plant**.

Joydebpur-Tongi rail line Project

- **Bangladesh Railways (BR)** launched the project in **November 2012** to improve the capacity of a vital section connecting the capital with most of the country's rail network.
- The project, aimed at building the **third and fourth dual-gauge railway lines** on the Dhaka-Tongi route and the second dual-gauge line on the Tongi-Joydebpur route, is expected to cost Tk 848.60 crore.
- The 11.09 km Tongi-Joydebpur section, which connects the capital to the North-Western region, is a dual-gauge single line with a capacity to handle 44 trains per day.

Rail Links Between India and Bangladesh

- Agartala (India)- Akahaura (Bangladesh)
- Radhikapur (India)-Biroi (Bangladesh)
- Haldibari (India)-Chilahati (Bangladesh)
- Singhabad (India)-Rohanpur (Bangladesh)
- Petrapole (India)-Benapole (Bangladesh)

3. Lithium reserves found for the first time in Jammu and Kashmir (Feb. 10, 2023)

For the first time in the country, reserves of **59 lakh tonnes** of lithium have been found in the **Reasi district of Jammu division**.

An overview of the news:

- The **Geological Survey of India** has discovered lithium deposits in the **Salal-Haimana area of Reasi district in Jammu and Kashmir**.
- Currently India is dependent on imports for Lithium, Nickel and Cobalt. This discovery will reduce India's dependence on lithium from other countries.
- **A report on 51 mineral blocks including Lithium and Gold was submitted** to the State Governments **during the 62nd Central Geological Programming Board (CGPB) meeting**.
- Out of these 51 mineral blocks, 5 blocks are related to gold and other blocks are related to potash, molybdenum, base metals.
- These minerals have been found in different districts of 11 states which include Jammu and Kashmir (UT), Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu and Telangana.

Lithium:

- It is a chemical element with the **symbol (Li)**.
- It is a soft and silvery white metal.
- It is the lightest metal and the lightest solid element at standard conditions.
- It is alkaline and a rare metal.
- Lithium has an **atomic number of 3 and an atomic mass of 6.941u**.
- Lithium is one of the key components of rechargeable batteries for mobile phones, laptops, digital cameras and electric vehicles.
- It is also used in some non-rechargeable batteries for things like heart pacemakers, toys, and watches.
- Countries with the largest reserves: Chile > Australia > Argentina

4. Operation “DOST” (Feb. 10, 2023)

India is carrying out a **rescue operation named 'Operation Dost' with National Disaster Response Force personnel, essential items and medical equipment to help after the earthquake in Turkey.**

An overview of the news:

- **On February 6, 2023**, an earthquake **measuring 7.7 on the Richter scale affected Turkey and Syria**, causing massive devastation along with loss of life and damage to infrastructure in both countries.
- A field hospital has been set up by the Indian Army in Turkey's Hatay province under Operation Dost.
- **C17 Globemaster aircraft** of the Indian Air Force has been **put into operation**.
- Operation Dost is a symbol of the fact that India is a friend of Turkey, that is, both should strengthen their relations more.

Other operations carried out by the Government of India in the past:**Operation Ganga 2022**

- It was operated by the Government of India to provide humanitarian aid and to evacuate Indian nationals from Ukraine amid the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Operation Dev Shakti 2021

- It was launched by the Indian Air Force and Air India to bring back Indians from Afghanistan after the Afghan capital Kabul was captured by the Taliban on 15 August 2021.

Vande Bharat mission

- In the year 2020, the Government of India launched 'Vande Bharat Mission' campaign to evacuate Indians trapped in other countries due to Coronavirus.

Operation Rahat 2015

- It was launched by the Indian Navy, Air Force and Air India to rescue and bring back Indian and foreign nationals from Yemen following the intervention of Saudi Arabia-led coalition forces in the Yemen Civil War.

Operation Maitri 2015

- This operation was launched by the Government of India after the 2015 earthquake in Nepal.

5. MobiKwik becomes India's first app to Support Credit Cards on UPI (Feb. 9, 2023)

MobiKwik becomes the **first fintech app** to support **RuPay Credit Card on UPI.**

An overview of the news

- With RuPay credit cards now linked directly to **UPI IDs, MobiKwik customers** can easily make payments at merchants by scanning the UPI QR code and using the UPI PIN for payment authentication.
- This facility will provide an easy and secure payment experience to **MobiKwik customers.**
- It will also open up new opportunities for merchants to be part of the credit ecosystem, with the acceptance of credit cards using asset-light QR codes without the need for **point-of-sale (POS) terminals.**
- **RuPay credit cards** are issued by all major banks (private and public sector) for both commercial and retail use.
- The integration of RuPay Credit Card with UPI is in line with the vision of **National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) and RBI.**
- RuPay Credit Card promotes credit card acceptance in India for merchants who are not part of the credit ecosystem.

About UPI

- **Unified Payments Interface (UPI)** is a single platform that integrates various banking services and facilities under one umbrella.
- It is developed by **National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI)**.
- The names of the top UPI apps currently are - **PhonePe, Paytm, Google Pay, Amazon Pay and BHIM**.
- NPCI launched UPI in **2016 with 21 member banks**.

6. Union Minister Giriraj Singh inaugurates Mission Antyodaya Survey 2022-23 (Feb. 9, 2023)

Rural Development and Panchayati Raj Minister **Giriraj Singh** inaugurated the **Mission Antyodaya Survey (MAS)** 2022-23 in New Delhi on 9 February.

An overview of the news

- The **Rural Development Department** is conducting the Mission Antyodaya survey in all the Gram Panchayats of the country from **2017-18**.
- Survey will be done in all the **2,69,253 Gram Panchayats** whose profiles have been created on **e-Gram Swaraj**.

Objectives of Mission Antyodaya Survey 2022-23

- Through the convergence of various schemes, the outcomes for the lives and livelihood of the people are to be realised.
- Support a participatory planning process for Gram Panchayat Development Planning that will improve service delivery, increase citizenship and improve governance at the local level.
- To conduct an annual survey at the Gram Panchayat level to monitor the progress of the development process in rural areas.
- Preparation of Panchayat wise ranking and gap report on the basis of data collected through survey at Gram Panchayat level.

About 'Mission Antyodaya'

- It was initiated in the **Union Budget 2017-18**.
- It has been brought with the objective of optimum utilisation and management of the resources allocated by **27 Ministries/Departments of the Government** of India under various programs for the development of rural areas.
- **Gram Panchayats** have been kept at its focal point.
- The Ministry of Panchayati Raj and the Ministry of Rural Development are its **nodal agencies**.

It aims to eradicate poverty in various dimensions of rural households.

7. Urban-20 City Sherpas' meet begins at Ahmedabad in Gujarat (Feb. 9, 2023)

A two-day **Urban-20 City Sherpas'** meet began on 9 February in **Ahmedabad**.

An overview of the news

- More than **30 international cities** are participating in this two-day event to discuss the **sustainable development of U20 cities**.
- Following the meeting, a draft communique will be finalised which will be issued during the **Mayors Summit** later this year.
- The meeting is being organized by the Union **Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs** and the **Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation**.
- The purpose of the meeting is to focus on **fostering solidarity** between cities to find common solutions that are in line with the overall objectives of the G20.
- This is the **third meeting** to be held in **Gujarat** as part of India's chairmanship of the G20.

About Urban-20

- The U20, one of the G20's engagement groups, provides a forum for cities in the G20 countries to discuss and collectively address key urban development issues - **climate change, social inclusion, sustainable mobility and affordable housing**.

Six priority areas of U20

- Environment-friendly behaviour,
- Water security,
- Climate finance,
- Local identity,
- Urban planning and administration
- Digitalisation of urban amenities

8. 50% less strength than sanctioned posts in Scheduled Tribes Commission (Feb. 9, 2023)

presented by the **Ministry of Tribal Affairs** on 6 February in Lok Sabha revealed that the **National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST)** is currently functioning with less than **50% of its sanctioned strength**.

About National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST)

- It has been established by amending **Article 338** and inserting a new **Article 338A** in the Indian Constitution through the **89th Amendment Act**.
- It is a **constitutional body**.
- It consists of a **chairman**, a **vice-chairman** and **three whole-time members** (including a woman member).
- Its term is for **3 years** and the chairman is appointed by the **President**.
- It investigates and monitors matters relating to Safeguards provided for STs.
- Chairman - **Harsha Chauhan**
- Union Minister of Tribal Affairs - **Arjun Munda**

NCST's Powers and Functions

- The Commission has the power to inquire into any complaint relating to the **deprivation of rights and safeguards** of the Scheduled Tribes.
- It has all the powers of a **civil court**.
- To examine and monitor matters relating to safeguards available to STs under the Constitution, to evaluate the working of such safeguards.
- To participate in and advise on the planning process for the **socio-economic development** of the Scheduled Tribes.
- To evaluate the progress of their development under the **Union and any State**.

9. Maritime India Vision 2030 (Feb. 9, 2023)

To boost the waterways network, the **Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways** has planned several initiatives to develop ports in India at par with global standards.

An overview of the news

- This project has been made under the **Maritime India Vision (MIV) 2030**.
- The ministry has planned an investment of Rs **1,00,000 to Rs 1,25,000 crore** for capacity enhancement and development of world-class infrastructure at ports.
- Under the Maritime India Vision (MIV) 2030 the government aims to make **world-class mega ports, transshipment hubs**.

- The container throughput of Indian ports was **17 million TEUs (Twenty Equipment Unit)** in the period 2020, while that of **China** was **245 million TEUs** in the same period.
- The combined container throughput of the top 20 major global ports stood at 357 million TEUs during the 2020 period.

Maritime India Vision 2030

- It is the master plan to ensure coordinated and accelerated development of India's maritime sector over the **next decade**.
- It identifies over **150 initiatives across 10 themes** covering all aspects of the Indian Maritime Sector.
- It is a comprehensive effort to define and meet the **National Maritime Objectives**.
- It envisages an overall investment of **Rs 3,00,000 - 3,50,000 crore** in the ports, shipping and inland waterways categories.

10. Ashwini Vaishnav launches 'Digital Payments Utsav' to promote digital payments across the country (Feb. 9, 2023)

Electronics & Information Technology and Communications Minister **Ashwini Vaishnav** launched the '**Digital Payments Utsav**' in New Delhi on 9 February.

An overview of the news

- A comprehensive month-long campaign "**Digital Payments Utsav**" has been planned from for the **promotion of Digital Payments** across the country,
- It will focus on **G-20 Digital Economy Working Group event** cities, namely **Lucknow, Hyderabad, Pune and Bengaluru**.
- Minister of State for Electronics and Information Technology and Skill Development and Entrepreneurship **Rajeev Chandrasekhar** was the guest of honour at the event.
- **G-20 co-branded QR codes and a coffee table book** showcasing India's journey to global leadership in digital payments and digital inclusion were released at the event.
- The 'Digital Payments Utsav' will also highlight how digital payments are ensuring **financial inclusion** and empowering small traders, street vendors and common people of the country.
- The Digital Payments Utsav will also introduce digital payments as a '**whole of government**' initiative with active participation from other central ministries.
- **MeitY** is striving to increase access to easy and convenient digital payment solutions for all citizens.