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White Shipping Information

- White shipping information refers to exchange of relevant advance information on the identity and movement of commercial non-military merchant vessels.

- It is an information network protocol that allows the navies of two countries to exchange information about ships in their oceanic territories.

- Ships would be classified into white (commercial ships), grey (military vessels), and black (illegal vessels)

- It facilitates preventing any potential threat from sea from impinging an coastal and offshore security of the country

India's White Shipping agreement

- In 2014, the Government had approved the proposal to conclude bilateral and multilateral agreements for exchange of white shipping information with Navies, Coast Guards and agencies entrusted with maritime security of 26 countries and 3 multinational groups.

- India has also signed white shipping agreements under IFC-IOR with many countries in the IOR and shares maritime information with all the partner countries.

- For example, India has signed White shipping agreement with US, France and Singapore recently

Pandit Bhimsen Joshi

- The Prime Minister has paid homage to Pandit Bhimsen Joshi Ji on(February 4) his birth anniversary.

- The birth centenary of Pt Bhimsen Joshi (1922-2011), a doyen of Hindustani classical music and Bharat Ratna laureate is being celebrated in a befitting manner from 4th February, 2021 to 2022 by the Government of India by organising various events as a tribute to the maestro.

- Pandit Bhimsen Gururaj Joshi was an Indian vocalist from Karnataka, in the Hindustani classical tradition.

- He was born on 4th February 1922 in Ron, Gadag district, Karnataka

- He is known for the khayal form of singing, as well as for his popular renditions of devotional music.

- Bhimsen Joshi belongs to the Kirana gharana tradition of Hindustani Classical Music

- His first guru was Channappa of Kurtakot; later he trained under Pandit Shyamacharya Joshi

- <u>He was the first musician from India whose concerts were advertised through posters in New York city, United States</u>

- Pandit Bhimsen Joshi is remembered for his famous ragas including Shuddha Kalyan, Miyan Ki Todi, Puriya Dhanashri, Multani, Bhimpalasi, Darbari, Malkauns, Yaman, Asavari Todi, Miyan Ki Malhar and others

- Bhimsen Joshi was instrumental in organising the Sawai Gandharva Music Festival annually, as homage to his guru, Pandit Sawai Gandharva

Kirana gharana

Gems Of Kirana Gharana

- Kirana gharana is one of the most prolific Indian classical khayal gharanas, and is concerned foremost with perfect intonation of notes(awara)

- In the 19th-century the Kirana gharana coalesced around Miyan Bande Ali Khan, a player of the rudra veena.

- <u>The gharana's style was further developed, and established as one of the prominent styles in modern Indian classical music in the late 19th / early 20th centuries by the musicians Abdul Karim Khan and Abdul Wahid Khan</u>

- The central concern of the Kirana style is swara, or individual notes, in particular precise tuning and expression of notes.

- In the Kirana Gayaki (singing style), the individual notes (swaras) of the raga are considered not just random points in the scale but independent realms of music capable of horizontal expansion.

- Highly emotional pukars in the higher octaves form a part of the musical experience

- Another unique feature of this gharana is the highly intricate and ornate use of the sargam taan (weaving patterns with the notations themselves) introduced by Abdul Karim Khan under influence from the Carnatic classical style.

- <u>In the late nineteenth century Abdul Karim Khan and Abdul Wahid Khan revolutionized the khayal gayaki by introducing the vilambit (a slow tempo section) to delineate the structure of the raga note by note.</u>

- Frequently performed ragas by musicians of the gharana include Todi, Lalit, Multani, Patdeep, Puriya, Marwa, Shuddha Kalyan, Darbari Kanhara, and Komal-Rishabh Asavari

Gharana

- In Hindustani music (North Indian classical music), a gharānā is a system of social organisation in the Indian subcontinent, linking musicians or dancers by lineage or apprenticeship, and more importantly by adherence to a particular musical style.

- The word gharana comes from the Hindi word 'ghar' which is derived from the Sanskrit word Griha, which means 'house'.

- It typically refers to the place where the musical ideology originated; for example, some of the gharanas well known for singing khyals are: Agra, Gwalior, Indore, Jaipur-Atrauli, Kirana, and Patiala.

- Four famous kathak gharanas are: Lucknow, Jaipur-Atrauli, Benares and Raigarh.

India & Bahrain join hands for Renewable Energy

- India and Bahrain have agreed to forge deeper engagement in the field of renewable energy.

- The Joint Working Group in the field of Renewable Energy which held its first meeting in virtual format, underscored the importance of renewable energy to meet climate change goals.

- The two sides presented the initiatives taken, progress made and future targets set by their governments.

- They also discussed opportunities available in the sector. They agreed to share experiences, expertise and best practices in the field of renewable energy.

- They decided to have greater engagement in capacity building and focused cooperation.

- A Memorandum of Understanding was signed in July 2018 between India and Bahrain for promoting bilateral cooperation in the field of Renewable Energy.

1,000 more mandis to be integrated with e-NAM in 2021-22: Govt

- Keeping in view the transparency and competitiveness that e-NAM has brought into the agricultural market, the government has proposed in the Union Budget 2021-2022 to integrate 1,000 more Mandis with National Agriculture Market, e-NAM platform.

- The Agriculture Infrastructure Funds would be made available to Agricultural Produce Market Committees for augmenting their infrastructure facilities.

- e-NAM is an innovative initiative in agricultural marketing to enhance farmer's accessibility to multiple numbers of markets and buyers, to bring transparency in trade transactions with the intent to improve and also to develop the concept of One Nation, One Market for agriculture produce.

RBI to set up a 24x7 helpline for digital payment services

- RBI has announced certain measures of protection of common bank account holders in today's Monetary policy statement.

- It includes setting up of 24*7 helpline for digital payment services, integrated ombudsman scheme, CTS across all bank branches and allowing retail investors to open Gilt accounts with RBI.

- As a result, digital transactions have registered massive growth in recent times. But some users face difficulties during transaction has to suffer a lot for grievance redressal.

- The Payment Systems Vision document of RBI envisages setting up a 24x7 helpline for addressing customer queries in respect of various digital payment products.

- The helpline will, in addition to building trust and confidence, also reduce expenditure on both financial and human resources, otherwise incurred for addressing queries and grievances.

- The major payment system operators would be required to facilitate setting-up of a centralised industry-wide 24x7 helpline for addressing customer queries in respect of various digital payment products and give information on available grievance redress mechanisms by September 2021.

- The Cheque Truncation System (i.e CTS) is in use since 2010 and presently covers around 1.5 lakh branches. But RBI has observed that about 18,000 bank branches are still outside any formal clearing arrangement. So, RBI has proposed to bring all such branches under the CTS clearing mechanism by September 2021.

- Financial consumer protection has always been the priority of the central bank. As an alternate dispute resolution mechanism, RBI has three Ombudsman for banking, Non-Banking Financial Companies and for Digital transactions.

- To make the alternate dispute redressal mechanism simpler and more responsive to the customers of regulated entities, RBI has been decided to implement, 'One Nation One Ombudsman' approach for grievance redressal. The Integrated Ombudsman Scheme will be rolled out in June 2021.

- Encouraging retail participation in the Government securities market has been the focus area of the Government of India and the RBI.
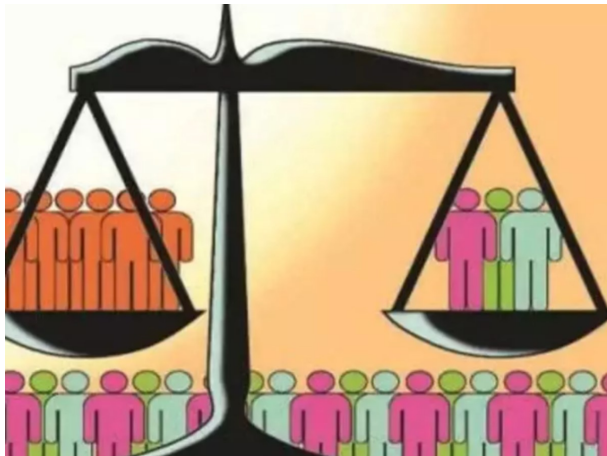
1st ASEAN-India Hackathon 2021 concludes

- The ASEAN-India Hackathon-2021 aims at enhancing the cooperation between India and ASEAN countries in science, tech and education

- All the ASEAN countries participated in this unique initiative of providing innovative solutions to overcome the challenges under two broad themes of Blue Economy and Education.

- Student teams from all the 10 ASEAN countries as well as India participated in this ASEAN-INDIA Hackathon

- These teams comprised of 330 students and 90 mentors. The students were divided in 54 cross-country teams, where each team consists of six students and two mentors

- These diverse teams competed on developing the best solution for 11 problem statements provided by various reputed organisations and government bodies.

- The Ministry of Education's Innovation Cell and the All India Council for Technical Education in collaboration with the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) and ASEAN countries organized the first ASEAN-India Hackathon.

- Due to COVID-19 restrictions, the Hackathon was conducted online using a digital platform, indigenously developed by the Ministry of Education's Innovation Cell.

Bargi

- A head of Assembly elections in West Bengal the "insider-outsider" theme is playing out once again

- The term is a reference to the several Maratha invasions of Bengal between 1741 and 1751.

- In Bengali folk lore and literature on these events, the term bargis is used as a casual reference to trouble some outsider force

- The word bargi referred to cavalry men in Maratha and Mughal armies. The word comes from the Persian bargir, literally meaning "burden taker", historian Surendra Nath Sen notes in his 1928 work The Military System Of The Marathas. But in the two imperial armies, the term signified "a soldier who rode a horse furnished by his employer"

- In the Maratha cavalry, any able-bodied person could enlist as a bargir, unless he had the means to buy a horse and military outfit– in which case he could join as a silhedar. Both the bargirs and the silhedars were under the overall control of the Sarnobat (Persian for Sari-Naubat ,or Commander in Chief).

Sub-categorisation of OBCs

- OBCs are granted 27% reservation in jobs and education under the central government.

- In September last year, a Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court reopened the legal debate on sub-categorisation of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes for reservations.

- The debate arises out of the perception that only a few affluent communities among the over 2,600 included in the Central List of OBCs have secured a major part of this 27% reservation.

- The argument for sub-categorisation — or creating categories within OBCs for reservation — is that it would ensure "equitable distribution" of representation among all OBC communities.

A year on, mind the gaps in the pandemic response

- Official statistics show that India has fared better on rates of infections and deaths than many higher income countries.

- India's initial response was marked by political commitment at the highest level, with several steps taken early in screening international travellers, restricting inbound traffic from severely affected countries, and preparing quarantine facilities for those testing positive.

- India was also among the few countries to announce a stringent nationwide lockdown much before it had a significant number of cases.

- when India ended up lifting the lockdown, cases were already rising rapidly with confirmed cases per million people going further from 200 on June 9, 2020 to 7,454 on January 1, 2021.

- Unfortunately, the lockdown was also marked by excessive dependence on security forces to ensure enforcement of physical distancing measures and quarantine-related restrictions.

- The lack of consultation with State governments saw many of them implementing COVID-19 response policies hesitantly without much initiative or innovation.

- Second, in all epidemic responses, generation and use of strategic information plays a crucial role.

- Given India's global reputation as a software superpower, the pandemic would have been an ideal staging ground for fast-tracking plans to create an integrated digital health information system to improve the efficiency and transparency of the COVID-19 response.

- The Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme (IDSP), India's national disease surveillance framework, was not visible throughout the response.

- The response was also marked by a lack of involvement of civil society organisations as partners with state agencies.

- On earlier occasions such as polio eradication and AIDS response, civil society played an important preventive and promotional role in bringing the infections under control.

- It goes to the credit of many civil society organisations that they voluntarily stepped into the response and played a meaningful role in providing social support and lobbying with funding organisations such as the Global Fund for AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (GFATM) to provide social support to affected families.

- The pandemic period has exacerbated existing social inequalities and the poor face a 'lost decade' ahead, a challenge which needs to be addressed on priority.

An inevitable showdown

- The Government's notice to Twitter after it reinstated several handles that mentioned a controversial hashtag, which the former wanted blocked, marks a critical point in an already uneasy relationship between a powerful government and an influential technology platform.

- The issue pertains to tweets put out by some handles on the ongoing farmer protests as also a hashtag that suggested that a farmer genocide was being planned.

- The Ministry of Electronics and IT ordered these handles (257 URLs and one hashtag) to be blocked on the grounds that they were spreading dangerous misinformation about the protests.

- Twitter initially complied with the order but then restored these tweets and handles, which included those of media houses.

- The Government's initial order was issued under Section 69A of the Information Technology Act, 2000, under which it can direct an intermediary to block any information for public access "in the interest of sovereignty and integrity of India, defence of India, security of the State, friendly relations with foreign States or public order or for preventing incitement to the commission of any cognizable offence relating to above…"

- This is the same Section under which hundreds of Chinese apps have been banned in recent months.

- The world over, technology platforms have enough safeguards to act as intermediaries without being liable for the content that is published.

- But Twitter's act of defying the orders as per the law means it is on slippery territory.

- Though the use of Section 69A has been often criticised for the secrecy surrounding the process, it was upheld by the Supreme Court in the landmark Shreya Singhal vs Union of India (2015).

The way forward in Myanmar

- The coup in Myanmar coincided with the first month of the Biden administration in the U.S., which has promised to bring back the values of democracy and respect for human rights to the core of the U.S. foreign policy.

- Not with standing the western sanctions before 2010, China, Thailand and Singapore were the key trading partners of Myanmar.

- The present reality is no different. Singapore was reportedly the largest foreign investor in Myanmar in 2020, accounting for 34% of the overall approved investment.

- Given that the military has been able to economically withstand sanctions by striking deals with Asian countries in the past, sanctions are unlikely to bring any major political change.

- The limited European trade with Myanmar that started after 2010 benefits the poor — the European Union's 'Everything But Arms' scheme targets the poor in Myanmar's garment industry.

- The scheme allows the world's least-developed countries, such as Myanmar, to export most goods to the EU free of duties.

- Two, the old debate around the need for accountability for crimes against humanity will resurface.

- As political changes got underway in 2010, many generals, such as Than Shwe, who was the de-facto head of Myanmar from 1992 to 2011 and was on the radar of the international community for perpetuating a regime of human rights abuses, quietly vanished from the scene.

- Three, a critical international player in Myanmar is China. China has appointed specific envoys for Asian affairs, who are de-facto working on Myanmar-related issues since 2013. The international community, particularly the West, has to factor in China's multi-layered influence on Myanmar.

- Four, many international mechanisms comprising Western and Asian countries that were formed to coordinate strategies on Myanmar were disbanded after the 2015 election.

- The changes in Myanmar were irreversible was the standard thinking.

- Five, the expectation that Myanmar will see a nationwide protest against the Tatmadaw after the coup should be examined with the geographical extent of Bamar, Myanmar's largest ethnic group, who support the National League for Democracy.

- The minorities in the country form around 35% of the population. In the current scenario, the military will continue to exploit ethnic and religious fault lines.

- Engagement with domestic stakeholders, including ethnic minorities, especially from the north, should be pursued by the international community.