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Indian Navy receives 3 Mk III Advanced Light Helicopters from HAL



- The Indian Navy received three "made in India" Advanced Light Helicopters (ALH) from the state-run Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd (HAL) today. The helicopters are customised for coastal security.
- The Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Karambir Singh informed media persons on the side-lines of Aero India show today in Bengaluru that out of the 16 Mk-III helicopters ordered, three were delivered today.
- The naval version of ALH is fitted with an array of advanced sensors that can detect Mumbai terror attacks like intrusions on Indian waters.
- These helicopters have latest generation avionics, indigenous low frequency dunking sonar, full glass cockpit with integrated architecture display system and the powerful Shakti engines.
- It also has a nose mounted surveillance radar with 270 degree coverage that can detect and track multiple marine targets. Its synthetic aperture radar and inverse synthetic aperture radar can detect targets on sea.

Assam Chah Bagichar Dhan Puraskar Mela Scheme



- Assam govt to distribute 3 thousand rupees each to nearly 7.5 lakh people under Chah Bagicha Dhan Puraskar scheme
- Assam Tea Garden Workers Scheme will bring tea labourers closer to the banking sector and thus promote cashless transaction
- Under this scheme, the workers of the tea community will receive Rs. 2500 in their bank accounts. In addition to this, tea labourers will get another Rs. 2500 in the next phase.

Eligibility

- Residents of Assam and who work on tea gardens
- Women belonging to BPL category

Centre working on setting up Single Window System for clearances, approvals of industry



- The Centre is working on setting up a Single Window System for clearances and approvals of industry in the country
- Presently investors have to visit multiple IT platforms and offices of various stakeholders to gather information and obtain clearances
- To address this, a centralized Investment Clearance Cell was proposed.
- The cell is being planned as a One-stop digital platform to obtain all requisite central and state clearances and approvals required to start business operations in India.
- The Investment Clearance Cell will be a National portal that integrates the existing clearance systems without disruption to the existing IT portals and will have a single, unified application form.
- This will provide time-bound approvals and real time status to investors.

National Safety Council



Shri S. N. Subrahmanyam has been appointed Chairman of the National Safety Council for a period of three years.

National Safety Council

- The National Safety Council will assist DGFASLI in re-writing the regulations governing OSH in the country which have not been updated for over 50 years.
- The NSC will also be involved in framing the scheme for third party audit and certification under the OSH Code.
- The NSC is already working on the safety rating of establishments based on their OSH readiness and performance which can be extended through the country and linked to the inspection system.

1st India-EU High Level Dialogue on Trade and Investment held



- The 1st High Level Dialogue (HLD), co-chaired by the Minister of Commerce and Industry Shri Piyush Goyal and the European Union Executive Vice-President & Trade Commissioner Mr. Valdis Dombrovskis, was held on 5th February 2021.
- Commitment to the establishment of this Dialogue was a major outcome of the 15th India-EU Leader's Summit held in July 2020, with an objective for a Ministerial level guidance towards the bilateral trade and investment relations.

- During the discussions, in the HLD, the Ministers emphasized the importance of global cooperation and solidarity in a post COVID-19 era and agreed for further deepening of bilateral trade and investment relationship through a series of regular engagements, aiming at quick deliverable for the businesses in these tough times.
- The Ministers also agreed to meet within the next three months, with an objective for reaching consensus on a host of bilateral trade & investment cooperation issues viz. a bilateral Regulatory Dialogue; an India-EU Multilateral Dialogue to explore further possibilities of cooperation; etc.
- In a significant step forward, regular interactions for re-initiation of bilateral trade and investment agreements, with an interim agreement, to start with, were also discussed.
- The Ministers concluded with the confidence and commitment towards a renewed India-EU commercial and economic partnership reflecting full potential of bilateral commercial relations.

Support for Marginalized Individuals for Livelihood & Enterprise

(SMILE)



- New Scheme Support for Marginalized Individuals for Livelihood & Enterprise (SMILE)
- Support for Marginalized Individuals for Livelihood & Enterprise (SMILE) which is a new Scheme after merger of existing Schemes for Beggars and Transgenders.
- The budgetary outlay is Rs 70.00 crore.
- Objective: is to cover the welfare measures for both transgender persons and persons who are engaged in the act of begging.
- Focus: On rehabilitation, provision of medical facilities, counselling, education, skill development etc with the support of State Governments/UTs/Local Urban Bodies, Voluntary Organizations, Community Based Organizations (CBOs) and institutions etc.
- It is estimated that an approximate 60,000 poorest persons would be benefited under this scheme for leading a life of dignity.

Nasha Mukh Bharat Abhiyan



- The Nasha Mukh Bharat Abhiyan in 272 districts would be strengthened with 13,000 youth volunteers to spread the message of “say no to drugs”.
- The plan is being implemented in 272 districts and the districts were identified by the narcotics control bureau.
- These districts are mostly from Haryana, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Delhi and North Eastern States.

- These districts are highly affected by drug abuse.
- This was mainly because the National list of districts that are mostly affected by substance abuse says that 18 of 22 districts of Punjab are affected.
- Around 8.5 lakh Indians inject drugs and 4.6 lakh children need help for inhalant dependence and around 7.7 million Indians or need help for opioid dependence.
- The Nasha Mukta Bharat Abhiyan was specifically launched in 2015 by the Shiromani Akali Dal in Punjab.

Nasha Mukta Bharat: Annual Action Plan (2020-21)

- The National Action Plan for Drug Demand Reduction has been formulated and is being implemented by the Ministry Of Social justice and empowerment under the programme.
- The scheme is being implemented between 2018 and 2025.
- Launched for on the occasion of “International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking”
- The action plan is a combined effort of the Narcotics Bureau, the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment and the Department of Health and Family welfare.
- Aims at reduction of adverse consequences of drug abuse through a multi-pronged strategy involving education, de-addiction and rehabilitation of affected individuals and their families

The Action Plan has the following components:

- Awareness generation programmes,
- Focus on Higher Educational institutions,
- University Campuses and Schools,
- Community outreach and identification of dependent population,
- Focus on Treatment facilities in Hospital settings and Capacity Building Programmes for Service Providers,
- skill development,
- livelihood support of ex-drug addicts.

The National Skill Development Fund (NSDF),



- NSDF ,has been helpful in increasing skilling of youth, enabling increased employment opportunities for them
- NSDF meets its objectives through National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC), which is an industry led 'Not For Profit Company' set up for building skill development capacity and forging strong linkages with the market.

- NSDC acts as a catalyst in skill development by providing funding to enterprises, companies and organizations that provide skill training
- It also develops appropriate models to enhance, support and coordinate private sector initiatives
- NSDC promotes establishment of model and aspirational skill centres known as Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Kendra (PMKK) for imparting skill training in every district throughout the country.
- A financial assistance of Rs. 231 Crore has been provided by NSDF to NSDC for setting up of PMKKs.

NASA shares colourful 'tie-dye' image of Moroccan mountains taken via satellite



- NASA shared a colourful image of the Anti-Atlas Mountains in southwest Morocco on its Instagram page. The image, captured via an orbiting satellite, gives a view of the mountains from 708 km above the Earth's surface. "The photo was taken in infrared light...to highlight different layers of rock and sediment, giving the tie-dye appearance," said NASA.

Nigeria's candidate set to become first woman and African to head WTO



- Nigeria's candidate for Director-General of World Trade Organization, Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, is set to become the first woman and the first African to lead the trade body in its 25-year history. The US gave its formal support to the 66-year-old economist to lead the WTO. This came hours after South Korea's trade minister, the other candidate, stepped out of the race.

Human activities' sounds affecting marine animals' communication: Study



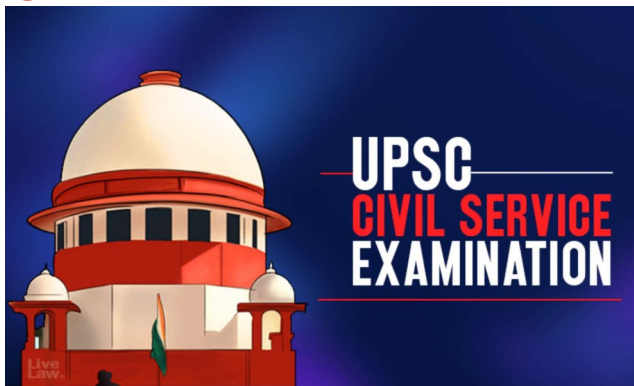
- A study in which a University of Victoria ecologist participated said that human activities are changing sounds within the ocean and are affecting marine animals' ability to communicate
- Many fish and marine animals use sound to communicate with each other. However, increased noise from shipping traffic and other human activities are making it harder for fish to hear each other.

Bengaluru's NIMHANS to get India's 1st govt-run dementia care centre



- National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences (NIMHANS) Sakalawara Community Mental Health Centre campus in Bengaluru will soon get the country's first government-run dementia care centre, officials said. "It will take at least 18 months for the completion of construction of the centre," NIMHANS Professor of Psychiatry and Consultant Dr PT Sivakumar said.

UPSC aspirants who gave last allowed attempt in 2020 will get 1 more chance: Centre



- Centre on Friday told the Supreme Court that civil service aspirants who gave their last permissible attempt of UPSC exam in October 2020 will get an extra chance
- "Relaxation will be given to the extent of providing one extra attempt for CSE, specifically limited to CSE-2021, to those who had their last chance to appear in 2020," it said.

Lucknow lawyer features in Forbes' list for her work for orphans



- Poulomi Pavini Shukla, a lawyer from Lucknow has been featured in Forbes India 30 Under 30 list for her work in educating orphans. In an interview, she said her motive is to highlight the plight of orphans and to get them educated. Shukla also started 'Adopt an Orphanage' programme, to provide tuition money, stationery and other essentials for the needy.

Denmark to build world's first energy island in North Sea



- Denmark on Thursday approved a plan to build the world's first energy island in the North Sea. The artificial island will produce and store greenhouse energy to provide electricity for three million European households. The island, which is currently in its initial phase, will be the size of 18 football fields and would cost 210 billion Danish kroner (\$33.9 billion)

Rajasthan govt begins skill-training campaign to make state 'beggar-free'



- The Rajasthan government has launched a campaign to make the state 'beggar-free' by rehabilitating beggars. Currently, 43 beggars who were living in Jaipur, are being skill-trained and will later be provided with jobs, Rajasthan Skill and Livelihoods Development Corporation Chairman Niraj Kumar Pawan said. Once the campaign succeeds in Jaipur, it will be taken to other districts, he added.

Passports: what police verify?



- After an application is made for a new passport, the police are required to make a verification of the details provided by the applicant.
- This process primarily includes physical verification of the address of the applicant, the duration of his or her stay at the place as mentioned in the application, and the applicant's criminal antecedents, if any.
- An applicant is in any case required to mention if he or she has any criminal case or court case pending against them. This is further verified by the police and a report is made and sent to the Regional Passport Office.
- There port generally falls into any of three categories: Clear, Factual and Not Recommended.
- The first is a thumbs-up, the second gives a factual account of the applicants status of address and criminal antecedents and leaves it for the RPO to decide whether to issue the passport, and the third clearly recommends that the passport should not be issued as either the address is wrong, or the documents are not proper, or the person's antecedents are such that his or her passport must not be issued.
- Police verification is not done for re-issuance of a passport, unless the circumstances of the applicant have changed or the passport is being re-issued on account of it being lost or stolen.
- According to the Passport Act, a person can be denied a passport for two set of reasons which respectively fall in the remit of the government and the courts.
- In the first set, an individual may be denied a passport if he or she is actually not a citizen of India; is likely to engage in activities prejudicial to the sovereignty and integrity of India abroad; his or her departure is likely to be detrimental to India's security; his or her presence abroad may prejudice India's friendly relations with any foreign country; or in the opinion of the Central Government the issue of a passport or travel document to the applicant will not be in the public interest.

- In the second set, an individual may be denied a passport if he or she has, at any time during the period of five years immediately preceding the date of the application, been convicted by a court in India for any offence involving moral turpitude and sentenced to imprisonment of not less than two years.
- An applicant may also be denied passport if proceedings in respect of an offence alleged to have been committed by the applicant are pending before a criminal court in India; or if a warrant or summons for the appearance, or a warrant for the arrest, of the applicant has been issued by a court with the court deeming it necessary to prevent his or her travel abroad.
- Any decision by the government to deny a passport to anyone based even on an FIR— let alone social media behaviour or participation in a protest—can be challenged in the court.

Square Km Array



- The Square Kilometre Array Observatory (SKAO) project, spanning two continents and involving the participation of 20 countries, is expected to be ready for carrying out observations towards the end of this decade
- Headquartered and controlled from the UK, the SKA is not a single telescope but will be an array of antennas strategically designed and set up in South Africa and Australia.
- It is proposed to be built in two phases, with an estimated 1.8 billion euros required for phase I, planned over the next ten years.
- SKA will allow astronomers to look deeper in to the universe and unravel secrets about its evolution.
- Among its goals are: studying the universe and its evolution, the origin and evolution of cosmic magnetism, and dark energy and evolution of galaxies
- The three hosting nations are South Africa, Australia and the UK—headquarters in which will remotely monitor the telescope operations located in Australia and South Africa.
- Member nations include Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Japan, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, South Korea, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland.
- Although there are 16 member nations, not all of them have officially attained membership as yet. India's SKA membership, for example, is currently under review with the DAE and DST, and is expected to be completed some time this year

What is a 'toolkit'?

- Toolkit refers to a set of adaptable guidelines or suggestions to get something done. The content depends on the aim of the toolkit.
- For example, the central government's Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade's toolkit for implementation of Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) includes the guidelines to follow when investigating IPR violations, applicable laws, definitions of terms such as counterfeit and piracy, etc.
- Again, the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA), a division of the non profit American Library Association, which promotes libraries and library education around the world, has several tool kits online, such as those on efficient library systems, and working with teens.

Terminal declined

- The Rajapaksa government's decision to overturn Sri Lanka's tripartite agreement to develop Colombo's East Container Terminal is a setback to India and Japan.
- The project, worth an estimated \$500-\$700 million, was a key marker for infrastructure investment in the island nation where Chinese projects are most prominent.
- More than two-thirds of trans-shipment at this port is tied to India, making it an important trade and connectivity link.
- Japan has been a keen supporter of Sri Lanka's growth story, with its loans of about ¥1.1 trillion and grants and technical cooperation of about ¥300 billion.
- As a joint venture for India and Japan to invest in, the ECT project was also expected to showcase how the two Indo-Pacific partners, and also Quad members, could provide South Asia with viable, transparent and sustainable alternatives for financing and development.
- The sharp statements from New Delhi and Tokyo now reflect their deep disappointment and their suspicions about the motivations
- The ostensible reason for the Rajapaksa government's decision is growing pressure from port union groups which have opposed any foreign participation
- And threatened a "work-to-rule" agitation if ECT operations were handed to the Adani group, as proposed.
- India has also had some misgivings about whether the Rajapaksa brothers, who became President and Prime Minister in 2019-2020
- The larger question of a possible Chinese role in the ECT decision also hangs over the decision, given that other terminal projects at the Colombo Port such as the Colombo International Container Terminal, have not faced similar pushback.
- India has also set much store by its partnership with Japan, which could be a template for similar projects, as a counter to China's BRI. There is much at stake for all three countries to derail the partnership.

New questions

- The results of the ICMR's third serological survey to ascertain the spread of COVID-19 show that nearly one in five Indians — about 270 million — may have been infected.
- The third edition also included a serological survey of doctors, nurses and paramedical staff, revealing that nearly 25% — significantly above the national average — had been infected.
- The ICMR emphasises that the results point to a significant number still potentially vulnerable, underscoring the need to be vaccinated and continuing with distancing and masking up.
- Also, neither this survey nor any city-wide survey has evaluated how long antibodies persist and if certain virus mutant variants can overcome the protection from antibodies.

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