

Current Affairs: 14.12.2021

HARNAAZ SANDHU



India's Harnaaz Sandhu made history as she was crowned Miss Universe 2021, 21 years after India last brought home the title when Lara Dutta was crowned Miss Universe 2000.

About:

Harnaaz Kaur Sandhu (born 3 March 2000) is an Indian model and beauty pageant titleholder who was crowned Miss Universe 2021. She is the third entrant from India to win Miss Universe. Before Harnaaz Sandhu, the Miss Universe title was won by two

Indians - Sushmita Sen in 1994 and Lara Dutta in 2000.

SUPERSONIC MISSILE-ASSISTED TORPEDO SYSTEM



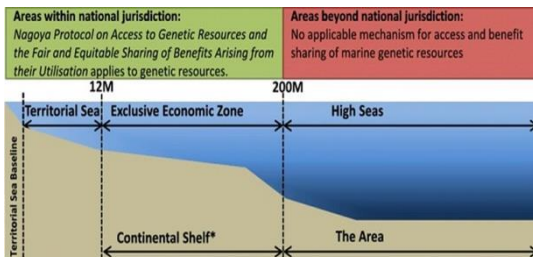
A supersonic missile-assisted torpedo system developed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) was successfully launched from Wheeler Island in Odisha.

About:

The system is a next-generation missile-based stand-off torpedo delivery system. During the mission, full-range capability of the missile was successfully demonstrated. The system has been designed to enhance anti-submarine warfare capability far beyond the conventional range of the torpedo.

The missile carried a torpedo, parachute delivery system and release mechanisms. This canister-based missile system consists of advanced technologies — two-stage solid propulsion, electro-mechanical actuators and precision inertial navigation. The missile is launched from a ground mobile launcher and it can cover a range of distances. While a number of DRDO laboratories developed various technologies for this system, industry participated in the development and production of various sub-systems.

UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION ON THE LAW OF THE SEA (UNCLOS)



India remained committed to promoting a free, open and rules-based order rooted in international law and undaunted by coercion, the Centre informed Parliament while reiterating support for the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

About:

As a State party to the UNCLOS, India also supported freedom of navigation and overflight, and unimpeded commerce based on the principles of international law, reflected notably in the UNCLOS

1982. The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), also called the Law of the Sea Convention or the Law of the Sea Treaty, is an international agreement that establishes a legal framework for all marine and maritime activities. The Convention resulted from the third United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS III), which took place between 1973 and 1982. UNCLOS replaced the four treaties of the 1958 Convention on the High Seas. UNCLOS came into force in 1994, a year after Guyana became the 60th nation to ratify the treaty.

ABU ROBOCON 2022



In what is being seen as recognition of India's marvels in the field of Technology, Doordarshan will be hosting the international finals of Robocon 2022 in August next year.

About:

The Robot competition, which is organised by Asia-Pacific Broadcasting Union and hosted by different member countries every year, will be held in New Delhi in 2022. The theme of DD Robocon 2022 will be Lagori. ABU Robocon 2021 was hosted by China wherein the international Robocon contest was held on December 12, 2021. Started by

Asia-Pacific Broadcasting Union (ABU) in 2002, ABU Robocon pits Robots against each other in completion of a task in a given period of time. The contest aims to create friendship among young people with similar interests who will lead their countries in the 21st century, as well as help advance engineering and broadcasting technologies in the region.

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LokpalOnline

Chairperson, Lokpal of India, Justice Pinaki Chandra Ghose inaugurated' a digital Platform for Management of Complaints called 'LokpalOnline' here that can be accessed by all citizens of the country and complaints can be filed from anywhere, anytime at <http://lokpalonline.gov.in>.

About: LokpalOnline is an end-to-end digital solution for the management of complaints against public servants filed under the Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, 2013. It may be recalled that Lokpal of India, has been established under the Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, 2013 to inquire and investigate into allegations of corruption against public functionaries falling within the scope and ambit of this Act. At present complaints sent by post, e-mail or delivered by hand are entertained by the Lokpal of India. The Portal, hosted on NIC Cloud, has been developed on an Open Source Technology. Its security audit has been done by an agency empanelled by the CERT-In (Indian Computer Emergency Response Team), Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology.

Important features of this digital platform are following:

Convenience to complainants for filing complaint online from anywhere anytime. Information to the complainant about action on complaint at every stage through e-mails and SMS. Facility to complainant to ascertain status of complaint at anytime. Identity of the complaint is kept confidential. The CVC, CBI and other inquiry agencies can upload their reports directly on 'LokpalOnline' platform. Reminders to inquiry agencies through e-mails and SMS. Generation of analytical reports as per requirement

NEW GAS STOVE FOR DOMESTIC PNG

The Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas informed Rajya Sabha that a novel fuel efficient domestic cooking stove for Piped Natural Gas (PNG) has been developed by Petroleum Conservation Research Association (PCRA) in collaboration with CSIR-Indian Institute of Petroleum (IIP) Dehradun.

About:

This is the first product of its kind in the Country. Entire combustion system including burner, mixing tube, venture etc. has been customized in this new stove to handle PNG. The stove has been optimized to have the highest thermal efficiency. The newly developed PNG stove has a thermal efficiency of around 55% in comparison to the maximum efficiency of 40% for the modified LPG stoves presently being used on PNG by the domestic households.

PCRA has been promoting this newly developed PNG stove which has a cost almost similar to normal LPG stove.

PCRA has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Energy Efficiency Services Limited (EESL) under Ministry of Power for developing and implementing a model for marketing this new PNG stove by EESL for PNG customers on pan India basis.

2nd EDITION OF WATER INNOVATION CHALLENGE

Atal Innovation Mission, NITI Aayog and the Royal Embassy of Denmark to India announced the second edition of water innovation challenges here to address the global water woes through innovations as part of the Indo-Danish Bilateral Green Strategic partnership.

About:

The AIM-ICDK water challenge is being rolled out under the year-old ambitious partnership of AIM, NITI Aayog and Innovation Center Denmark (ICDK) under the aegis of Denmark Embassy in India, and the Denmark Technical University (DTU).

The initiative aims to identify innovative & next-gen solutions to solve proposed challenges in collaboration with corporate and public partners. The initiative will engage young talents from leading universities and innovation hubs across the nation to build their skills and apply their technical disciplines and innovation capacity. The winners of the challenges will also represent India at the International Water Congress 2022. The Denmark Embassy in India, and the DTU will be preparing the Indian participants for the Global Next Generation Water Action (NGWA) program to be hosted by DTU.

GREENFIELD AIRPORTS

Ministry Of Civil Aviation (MoCA) informed Rajya Sabha that MoCA has accorded 'in-principle' approval for setting up of 21 Greenfield Airports across the country so far.

About:

Government of India has formulated a Greenfield Airport Policy, 2008 which provides Guidelines for establishment of new Greenfield Airports in the country. As per Policy, an Airport Developer, including the State Governments, willing to establish an Airport is required to send a proposal to the Ministry of Civil Aviation (MoCA). There is a 2-stage process for approval of the proposal i.e. 'Site-Clearance' stage and 'In-Principle' approval stage. In accordance with this policy, MoCA receives proposals from the State Governments or Airport developers from time to time for establishment of airports. MoCA has so far accorded 'in-principle' approval for setting up of 21 Greenfield Airports across the country.

CHAR DHAM HIGHWAYS

The Supreme Court upheld the Government's mandate to broaden three Himalayan highways, considered crucial by the Ministry of Defence (MoD) for quick troop build-up along the India-China border.

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The three National Highways — Rishikesh to Mana, Rishikesh to Gangotri and Tanakpur to Pithoragarh — act as feeder roads to the northern border with China. They are part of the Char Dham Highway project. The highways will now be developed in accordance with the double lane with paved shoulder (DLPS) system. The verdict is based on an application filed by the MoD to modify the court's September 8, 2020 order, which directed that mountain roads for the Char Dham project should be 5.5 metre in width in compliance with a 2018 circular of the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways.

UN DRAFT RESOLUTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE & SECURITY

India voted against a draft resolution at the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) linking climate to security, saying it was an attempt to shift climate talks from the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) to the Security Council and a “step backward” for collective action on the issue.

About:

The resolution was sponsored by Ireland and Niger, and it did not pass, with 12 UNSC members voting for it, India and Russia voting against it and China abstaining.

Niger, which holds the UNSC presidency for December, organised a debate on December 9 titled ‘Maintenance of international peace and security: security in the context of terrorism and climate change. One of the objectives of the debate was to examine how terrorism and security risks could be linked to climate change, as per a concept note circulated by Niger. India’s Permanent Representative and Ambassador to the U.N. T.S. Tirumurti said, the draft resolution, would undermine progress made at Glasgow, where the latest round of talks under the UNFCCC, the 26th Conference of the Parties (COP26), concluded in November. Tirumurti said the attempt to discuss climate action and climate justice issues at the UNSC was “motivated by a desire to evade responsibility in the appropriate forum.”

PROMPT CORRECTIVE ACTION (PCA) FRAMEWORK FOR NBFCs

The Reserve Bank of India announced a Prompt Corrective Action (PCA) Framework for Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFCs), to strengthen applicable supervisory tools.

About:

This will take effect October 1, 2022. This is in line with the PCA framework for banks, whose aim was to help improve their financial condition and governance issues. The framework will apply to all deposit-taking NBFCs, all non-deposit taking NBFCs in the middle, upper and top layers, including investment and credit firms, core investment firms, infrastructure debt funds, infrastructure finance firms and microfinance institutions. It has excluded NBFCs not accepting or not intending to accept public funds, primary dealers and housing finance firms, along with government-owned ones. The objective of the framework is to enable supervisory intervention at the appropriate time and require the supervised entity to initiate and implement remedial measures in a timely manner, so as to restore its financial health. Among large NBFCs (assets exceeding ₹25,000 crore), rating agency ICRA noted that three entities were in breach of the net NPA criterion as of September. However, all the entities have established parentage.

KOREAN WAR

At a joint press conference with Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison in Canberra earlier this week, South Korea’s President Moon Jae-in said North Korea and South Korea, the US, and China had agreed in principle to declare a formal end to the Korean War.

About:

- The Korean War lasted from 1950 to 1953 and the Armistice Agreement brought about a cessation of hostilities in July 1953. Both North and South Korea have technically remained at war since.
- Since Moon Jae-in became president, engagement with North Korea has remained an important part of his foreign policy. In addition, he has also been a vocal proponent of ending hostilities and conflict with

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Pyongyang.



Important Info : Background

- Over the past few years, particularly during Donald Trump's presidency, there has been unusual development in DPRK-US relations.
- In June 2018, DPRK leader Kim Jong Un met with Trump in Singapore for a historical summit, becoming the first North Korean leader to meet a sitting US president.

Chief Minister Nitish Kumar has again raised his nearly 15-year-old demand for the status of special category state (SCS) for Bihar. Nitish has been seeking SCS for Bihar since at least 2007.

In a special category state, the Centre-state funding of centrally-sponsored schemes is split in the ratio of 90:10, much more favourable than the 60:40 or 80:20 splits in other (non-SCS) states.

The Constitution does not provide for any state to receive special treatment compared to others.

However, for a range of reasons including historical disadvantage, difficult or hilly terrain, nature of population (low density or a large share of tribals), strategic location along the border, economic or infrastructural backwardness, etc., the Centre has over the decades extended special assistance to some states.

From 1969 onward, a body called the National Development Council (NDC) — which used to be a part of the now defunct Planning Commission of India — recommended SCS status for 11 states: eight from the Northeast, Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, and Uttarakhand.

After the government accepted the recommendations of the Fourteenth Finance Commission in 2015, however, the concept of SCS effectively disappeared.

The NITI Aayog, which has replaced the Planning Commission, has no power to allocate funds — and therefore, the discretion that the ruling party at the Centre had to dole out special favours to states through the Plan panel, no longer exists.

States such as Bihar, Odisha, and Jharkhand have, however, persisted with the demand. Andhra Pradesh too has claimed SCS.

WHOLESALE PRICE INDEX (WPI)

Wholesale inflation, based on the Wholesale Price Index, jumped to 14.23 per cent in November from 12.54 per cent in October (on a year-on-year basis), data released by the Ministry of Commerce & Industry showed.

About:

It was primarily due to rise in food prices especially of vegetables, and minerals and petroleum products. This is the highest level of wholesale inflation in the 2011-12 series and eighth consecutive month in which it has stayed at double-digit level. This comes after the retail inflation print for November, had shown a spike to a three-month high of 4.91 per cent despite a cut in excise duty on fuels. The wide gap between WPI and CPI inflation reflects the price pressures on the inputs side, which are expected to pass through to the retail level in the coming months.

Important Info :

Gap between WPI and CPI inflation. Despite not being a policy tool, the surge in the WPI is a cause of worry. While the CPI-based retail inflation — the more widely tracked policy tool — looks at the price at which the consumer buys goods, the WPI tracks prices at the wholesale, or factory gate/mandi levels. Between the wholesale price and the retail price, the difference essentially is the former only tracks basic prices devoid of transportation cost, taxes and the retail margin etc. And that WPI pertains to only goods, not services. So, the WPI basically captures the average movement of wholesale prices of goods and is primarily used as a GDP deflator (the ratio of the value of goods an economy produces in a particular year at current prices to that of prices that prevailed during the base year).

KASHMIR TIGERS

The J&K Police have named 'Kashmir Tigers', a little-known militant outfit, in the biggest attack on security forces since the abrogation of Article 370 in August 2019.

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About:

The attack on a police bus in Srinagar on December 13, 2021 left three dead and 11 injured, several of them grievously. The name of Kashmir Tigers first surfaced in January this year, with police calling it a shadow group of the Jaish-e-Mohammad. In June, the outfit claimed responsibility for a grenade attack in South Kashmir. Since the August 2019 change, police have blamed several new militant outfits such as Kashmir Tigers in attacks. At least two of them, The Resistance Front (TRF) and People Against Fascist Forces (PAFF), have come up prominently, seemingly relegating the Hizbul Mujahideen, Lashkar-e-Toiba and Jaish to the background. The name of another outfit, the United Liberation Front, has also come up. Security forces say there is a visible change in the nomenclature of these militant outfits – from names that had religious connotations to names that are “secular” in nature.

CENTRAL VIGILANCE COMMISSION (AMENDMENT) BILL 2021

Parliament has passed the Central Vigilance Commission (Amendment) Bill, 2021.

About:

- The bill will replace the ordinance promulgated in this regard.
- The Bill seeks to amend the Central Vigilance Commission Act, 2003.
- The Act provides for the constitution of a Central Vigilance Commission to conduct inquiries into offenses alleged to have been committed under the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988.
- Presently, the Director of Enforcement has a tenure of a minimum of two years.
- The Bill adds that the tenure of the Director may be extended by up to one year at a time, till the completion of five years from the initial appointment. Such extensions may be granted in the public interest, on the recommendation of the Committee.
- Under the 2003 Act, the Director of Enforcement is appointed by the central government, on the recommendation of a Committee.
- This Committee is chaired by the Central Vigilance Commissioner and includes the Secretaries from the Ministries of Home Affairs, Personnel, and the Revenue department.

NATIONAL SUMMIT ON AGRO AND FOOD PROCESSING

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will address the farmers during the valedictory session of the National Summit on Agro and Food Processing on 16th December 2021 at 11 AM in Anand, Gujarat via video conferencing.

About:

- The Government of Gujarat is organizing the National Summit on Agro and Food Processing, with focus on Natural Farming.
- The three day Summit is being organized from 14th to 16th December, 2021.
- It is being attended by over 5000 farmers who will be present in the Summit, apart from farmers being connecting Live through Central Institutes of ICAR, Krishi Vigyan Kendras and ATMA (Agricultural Technology Management Agency) network in the States.
- The Summit brings in focus on natural farming.

Important Info :

Zero Budget Natural Farming?

- Zero Budget Natural Farming is a promising tool to minimize the dependence of farmers on purchased inputs, and reduces the cost of agriculture by relying on traditional field based technologies which lead to improved soil health.
- Desi cow, its dung and urine play an important role from which various inputs are made on the farm and provide necessary nutrients to soil.
- Other traditional practices such mulching the soil with biomass or keeping the soil covered with green cover round the year, even in the very low water availability situations, ensure sustained productivity even from the first year of adoption.