

Current Affairs: 22/24.04.2022

FOODGRAINS EXPORT BY INDIA

Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, Director-General, World Trade Organization (WTO), is looking into resolving WTO rules that are making it difficult for India to export foodgrains to meet shortages in other countries, caused by the Russia-Ukraine war, according to Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman.

About: The difficulties included WTO rules around the export of food by a country that had also procured food on a Minimum Support Price basis. At the IMF Plenary meeting on Thursday, Ms. Okonjo-Iweala said the WTO was “looking at it [food export issues] positively,” as per the Finance Minister, who expressed optimism that the issue could be resolved. India has reached out to more than 20 countries regarding exporting wheat, and is targeting a record 15 million tonnes of wheat for export this year, as per a Bloomberg report. India is expected to have a surplus this year, producing more than 111 million tonnes of the crop. India’s export of foodgrains to meet global market shortages was also discussed during External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar’s meetings in Washington last week.

COAL SHORTAGE

The India Energy Outlook 2021 report of the International Energy Agency (IEA) said energy use in India has doubled since 2000, with 80% of demand still being met by coal, oil and solid biomass.

About: Pandemic-related disruptions, however, prevented the stock-up of coal. Mining operations were halted to curb the spread of the virus. Despite the gradual easing into operations, mining activities were hampered during the monsoons, delaying arrival of stocks. With household demand for power picking up and the arrival of summer, combined with the sudden acceleration in economic activity, it has resulted in a demand-supply mismatch. Decline in coal stocks and the resulting power outages in several States have spurred queries of renewable energy’s potential to fill in for the conventional resource.

Significance of Coal

- Coal is abundantly available, has shorter gestation periods and coal-based plants have lower capital costs than hydel and nuclear plants, therefore, making it the most viable enabler of energy security in the country.
- The conventional resource’s capacity addition is further helped by the increased participation of the private sector in power generation.

PRADHAN MANTRI BHARTIYA JANAUSHADHI KENDRAS

Union Government has set a target to increase the number of Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Kendras to ten thousand by March 2024.

About: The government has invited applications to open Janaushadhi Kendras in three thousand five hundred 79 Blocks of four hundred six districts of 26 States and Union Territories. It highlighted that under the scheme, seven hundred 39 districts of the country have been covered and eight thousand six hundred ten stores have been opened till the last month.

The Ministry said that about fifteen thousand crore rupees have been saved of the general public under this scheme.

The Ministry said that new applications have been invited to cover five hundred 79 blocks of 406 districts. It said that any Individuals, Unemployed Pharmacist, Government nominated agencies, NGO’s, Trust and Societies can apply for PMBJK.

Cross & Climb, Rohtak



GOVERNMENT ORDER (GO) 111

Environmentalists are criticising the Telangana government for withdrawing an over 25-year-old government order protecting the historic Osman Sagar and Himayat Sagar reservoirs in Hyderabad, which they say will destroy the fragile surrounding ecosystem.

About: On March 8, 1996, the government of erstwhile (undivided) Andhra Pradesh had issued 'Government Order (GO) 111' prohibiting development or construction works in the catchment area of the Osman Sagar and Himayat Sagar lakes up to a radius of 10 km. The GO prohibited the setting up of industries, residential colonies, hotels, etc. which cause pollution. The aim of the restrictions was to protect the catchment area, and to keep the reservoirs pollution-free. The reservoirs were created by building dams on the Musi (also known as Moosa or Muchkunda) river, a major tributary of the Krishna, to protect Hyderabad from floods. Osman Sagar was completed in 1921, and Himayat Sagar in 1927.

MARIUPOL

Russian President Vladimir Putin is claiming control over Ukraine's port city of Mariupol even as its defenders are still holding out at a giant seaside steel mill.

About: His statement reflected the importance of the city on the Sea of Azov. Mariupol is a city in Ukraine, on the north coast of the Sea of Azov at the mouth of the Kalmius river, in the Pryazovia region currently under Russian control. Mariupol, which is part of the industrial region in eastern Ukraine known as the Donbas, has been a key Russian objective since the Feb. 24 invasion began. Capturing the city would allow the establishment of a land corridor from Russia's border to Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula that Moscow annexed in 2014. It also would deprive Ukraine of a major port and prized industrial assets.

CLIMATE DISINFORMATION

Citing the latest assessment report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), social media giant Twitter has announced that it will prohibit misleading advertisements on climate change.

About: Twitter's announcement on Earth Day is part of an attempt to curb climate change disinformation campaigns on its network. Twitter has said that climate denialism shouldn't be monetised on the platform and that "misrepresentative ads shouldn't detract from important conversations about the climate crisis". In 2019, Twitter shared plans to achieve 100 percent carbon-neutral power sourcing in their data centres by the end of 2022.

Google's announcement of similar policy

- In October 2021, tech giant Google had done something similar when it announced a new monetisation policy for Google advertisers, publishers and YouTube creators.
- Google's policy prohibits ads for, and monetization of, content that contradicts "well-established scientific consensus around the existence and causes of climate change".

KHELO INDIA UNIVERSITY GAMES 2021

Vice President of India Shri M. Venkaiah Naidu will declare the second Khelo India University Games 2021 open at the Sree Kanteerava Indoor Stadium, Bengaluru.

About:

The Khelo India University Games 2021, hosted by Jain University with unparalleled support from the Karnataka State Government and the Sports Authority of India will be India's biggest sporting event and first mass participative competition post the Pandemic.

Cross & Climb, Rohtak



Through the Khelo India University Games 2021, the Karnataka Government is also focusing on a pressing issue - environmental sustainability. Everything used in the Games outside the field of play will be made of reusable material. About 3879 competitors from 200-plus universities will be in action across 20 different disciplines including indigenous sports like Mallakhamba and Yogasana.

POSTAL BALLOTS FOR NRIs

Chief Election Commissioner Sushil Chandra, during a recent visit to South Africa and Mauritius, urged Non-Resident Indians (NRIs) to register as overseas electors and told them that a proposal on postal ballots for NRIs was being contemplated, the Election Commission of India said.

About: He shared with the members of the Indian community that extension of Electronically Transmitted Postal Ballot System (ETPBS) facility to overseas voters is being contemplated. In meetings with NRI groups, Mr. Chandra spoke of the experience of conducting elections in India, which has 950 million voters in over 1 million polling stations. The ECI had written to the Law Ministry in 2020 proposing that NRIs be allowed to vote through postal ballots, following which the matter has been under consideration by the government. While the ECI at present allows NRIs to register as overseas electors as long as they have not acquired the citizenship of another country, they have to reach their respective polling booths to cast their votes in person on voting day. According to an ECI official, as of now there are only 1.12 lakh registered overseas electors.

EARTH DAY 2022

World Earth Day 2022 was observed with main theme for 2022 as “Invest In Our Planet”.

About: Earth Day marks the anniversary of the birth of the modern environmental movement in 1970. It is widely recognized as the largest secular observance in the world, marked by more than a billion people every year as a day of action to change human behavior and create global, national, and local policy changes. In 1969, at a UNESCO Conference in San Francisco, peace activist John McConnell proposed a day to honor the Earth and the concept of peace, to first be observed on March 21, 1970, the first day of spring in the northern hemisphere. This day of nature's equipoise was later sanctioned in a proclamation written by McConnell and signed by Secretary-General U Thant at the United Nations. A month later, United States Senator Gaylord Nelson proposed the idea to hold a nationwide environmental teach-in on April 22, 1970. The first Earth Day was focused on the United States. In 1990, Denis Hayes, the original national coordinator in 1970, took it international and organized events in 141 nations. On Earth Day 2016, the landmark Paris Agreement was signed by 123 countries. This signing satisfied a key requirement for the entry into force of the historic draft climate protection treaty adopted by the consensus of the 195 nations present at the 2015 United Nations Climate Change Conference in Paris.

JOHN F. KENNEDY PROFILE IN COURAGE AWARD

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy is among five people named as recipients of the John F. Kennedy Profile in Courage Award for acting to protect democracy.

About: The John F. Kennedy Library Foundation said that he was chosen because of the way he has “marshaled the spirit, patriotism and untiring sacrifice of the Ukrainian people in a life-or-death fight for their country. The foundation said four U.S. officials were chosen for standing up for free and fair elections, as the system is challenged in ways it has never been before. They are Republican U.S. Rep. Liz Cheney of Wyoming, Michigan Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson, Arizona House Speaker Rusty Bowers, and Fulton County, Georgia, elections worker Wandrea “Shaye” Moss.

SUMAN BERY

Dr. Suman K Bery has been appointed new Vice Chairperson of NITI Aayog. He will take charge as Vice Chairperson of NITI Aayog from the 1st of next month.

About:

Cross & Climb, Rohtak



- In an order, the Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions said that Vice Chairperson of NITI Aayog, Dr. Rajiv Kumar will be relieved from his post on 30th of this month.
- Suman K Bery had earlier served as Director-General of the National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER) in New Delhi. NCAER is one of the country's leading independent non-profit policy research institutions.
- He also served as a member of the Prime Minister's Economic Advisory Council, National Statistical Commission and Reserve Bank of India's Technical Advisory Committee on Monetary Policy.