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DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS

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DESCRIPTIVE

❖ **PM Modi raises aspirations of Tamils with Sri Lankan President Ranil Wickremesinghe**

➤ PM calls for implementation of 13th Amendment and provincial elections in the island country; Sri Lankan President lauds India for support offered during financial crisis over the past year.

➤ India expects Sri Lanka to implement the Thirteenth Amendment and ensure a “life of respect and dignity” for its Tamil population Minister.

➤ Welcoming Sri Lankan President Ranil Wickremesinghe to India, Mr Modi informed that both sides have held talks on a number of infrastructure projects that can ensure greater connectivity between the two countries and announced a development assistance package for the Tamils of Indian origin who are marking 200th anniversary of their arrival into the island nation.

➤ Mr. Wickremesinghe expressed his government’s “profound appreciation” for the support that India extended to Sri Lanka over the last year that he described as the “most challenging period in Sri Lanka’s modern history”.

➤ “We also talked about reconstruction and reconciliation in Sri Lanka. President Wickremesinghe presented his inclusive approach.

➤ We hope that Sri Lanka will fulfill the aspirations of the Tamils. We expect that Sri Lanka will take forward the process of rebuilding for equality, justice and peace.

❖ **Over ₹1.08 lakh crore spent on railway safety, says Minister**

➤ The Indian Railways is taking a slew of measures to ensure safety in operations following the Balasore triple train tragedy which left 295 persons dead and over a thousand injured, Union Minister for Railways Ashwini Vaishnaw told the Rajya Sabha.

➤ Rashtriya Rail Sanraksha Kosh (RRSK) was introduced in 2017-18 for the replacement, renewal and upgradation of critical safety assets, with a corpus of Rs. 1 lakh crore for five years.

➤ “From 2017-18 till 2021-22, a gross expenditure of Rs 1.08 lakh crore was incurred on RRSK works,”.

➤ The measure include enforcing adherence to protocol for alteration works involving changes in the existing system.

➤ A special drive has been launched to ensure that there is double locking in relay room and goomties at level - crossing gates.

❖ MoU signed between OneWeb India and Gujarat Government to set up India's first private satellite network portal

➤ The Gujarat government has signed an MoU with London-based company OneWeb and the Department of Science and Technology, Government of India to set up two 'Satellite Network Portal Sites'.

➤ One of the sites is to be launched in Jotana, Mehsan. The project is intended to provide high-speed, affordable, and secure satellite internet access across the country, with a focus on villages, district panchayats, local administrative bodies, and government departments.

➤ The MoU was signed by Vijay Nehra, Secretary, the State Department of Science and Technology, and Rahul Vatts, Director of OneWeb India Communication Pvt. Ltd.

➤ Scheduled to be launched in 2023 with an estimated cost of over Rs.100 crore for its Phase-1.

➤ It is expected to create approximately 500 direct and indirect employment opportunities in the state.

❖ **Dr Jitendra Singh says nuclear power capacity set to increase from 7480 MW to 22480 MW by 2031**

➤ Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) Science & Technology; MoS PMO, Personnel, Public Grievances, Pensions, Atomic Energy and Space, Dr Jitendra Singh present installed nuclear power capacity in the country is 7480 MW comprising of 23 nuclear power reactors.

➤ Stating this in a written reply in the Rajya Sabha, the nuclear power reactors generated 46982 Million Units of electricity (including infirm generation) in the year 2022-23.

➤ The share of nuclear power in the total electricity generation in the country was about 2.8% in the year 2022-23. The details are given in annexure.

➤ The present installed nuclear power capacity is set to increase from 7480 MW to 22480 MW by 2031 on progressive completion of projects under construction and accorded sanction.

➤ The Government has also accorded 'in principle' approval for new sites to set up nuclear reactors in future.

❖ **Haryana Govt appoints nodal officials to facilitate Railways Ministry for establishing goods sheds**

➤ The Haryana Government appointed nodal officials to facilitate the Ministry of Railways to ensure the timely implementation of PM Gati Shakti - National Master Plan for establishing goods sheds in every district of Haryana.

➤ A decision was taken at a meeting chaired by Chief Secretary Sanjeev Kaushal at Chandigarh .

➤ Additional Deputy Commissioners and Executive Engineers of PWD (Building and Roads) will coordinate and supervise the smooth functioning of goods sheds within their respective districts.

- This strategic move is expected to significantly boost the State's economy, enhancing trade and logistics across the region.
- The setting up of these goods sheds will have a transformative impact on Haryana's transportation network, leading to increased trade and commerce within the state.
- Indian Railways has also undertaken the comprehensive revamping of 29 railway stations in Haryana, envisioning them as vibrant centres of economic activity for the respective cities and towns where they are situated.

❖ **G20 countries to come together for ensuring decent work and labour welfare for all workers**

- The two day G20 Labour and Employment Ministers Meeting 2023 concluded in Indore successfully with unanimous adoption of three G20 Outcome Documents which are G20 Policy Priorities on Strategies to Address Skill Gaps Globally, G20 Policy Priorities on Adequate and Sustainable Social Protection and Decent Work for Gig and Platform Workers and G20 Policy Options for Sustainable Financing of Social Protection.
- These documents will be submitted to the Leaders for their consideration to be annexed to the G20 New Delhi Leader's Declaration 2023. The Ministers also adopted the Outcome Document and the Chair's Summary.
- The Labour & Employment Ministers' meeting took a historical step closer to strengthen global amity.
- The G20 nations have agreed to include the reference to 'respect for multilateralism', 'respect for purposes and principles of the UN Charter', as well as the phrase by our Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi 'Today's era must not be of war'.
- There was participation from 176 plus Delegates, including 26 Ministers from G20 Member and Guest countries.
- There was participation from 15 Heads and Representatives of International Organizations, namely OECD, ISSA, ILO, and World Bank.

❖ **Argentina signs letter of intent with HAL to buy helicopters**

➤ Defence PSU Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) furthered its relationship with the Argentinian defence establishment with the signing of a letter of intent (LoI) with the country's ministry of defence for productive cooperation and acquisition of light and medium helicopters for South American country's armed force .

➤ The LoI was signed by Jorge Taiana, Argentina's defence minister, and CB Ananthakrishnan, CMD of HAL, in the presence of Francisco Cafiero, secretary of international affairs, Javier Gobbi, Argentina's ambassador to India, Dinesh Bhatia, Indian ambassador to Argentina side and HAL.

➤ The defence minister and his team viewed the flying display of various HAL products at HAL Airport before visiting the Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) and Helicopter divisions.

❖ **Shri Kiren Rijiju says IMD has launched Heat Index**

➤ Union Minister of Earth Sciences, Shri Kiren Rijiju informed that the India Meteorological Department (IMD) has recently launched the Heat Index on experimental basis.

➤ The experimental Heat Index has been launched by IMD to provide general guidance for the regions within India where, the apparent temperature/feel like temperature (considering the impact of humidity along with the temperature) are on the higher side causing discomfort for the people.

➤ At present, heat index is derived using the heat index equation similar to what is used by National Weather Service, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), USA.

➤ The heat index provides information about the impact of humidity on the high temperatures and thus provides a feel like temperature for human beings which can be used as an indication for human discomfort.

- It provides guidance towards additional care to be taken by people to reduce discomfort.
- The Heat Index is implemented on experimental basis only across the entire country including the State of Andhra Pradesh.
- However, it is mentioned that, heat index for Bhubaneswar and Ahmedabad under Heat Action Plan is done under project mode by National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) in collaboration with local agencies like Indian Institute of Public Health (IIPH).

❖ Coal Ministry bags “Best Engagement” Award for Procurement through GeM Portal

- Coal Ministry has successfully set new benchmarks in the e-procurement ecosystem, creating a level playing field for stakeholders and fostering fair competition.
- The Ministry has performed consistently well on GeM platform for two financial years in a row.
- During the financial year 2023-24, the Coal Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs) have demonstrated unwavering confidence in GeM by publishing bids worth Rs. 21,500 crore.
- Coal Ministry was recently awarded for its achievements on e- procurement through GeM by Ministry of Commerce.
- The Ministry of Coal has been awarded in “Best Engagement” category, Coal India Limited (CIL) has been awarded “Rising Star” and NLC India Limited has been awarded in the “Timely Payments” category.
- Moreover, high value tenders worth Rs.5,372.60 crore have been published on GeM portal during the period 10th to 16th July 2023.
- As on 17th July 2023, the actual procurement facilitated through GeM this financial year stands at an impressive Rs 3,909 crore.
- Hence, the Ministry has surpassed last year's target of Rs. 4000 crore within a span of 100 days in current financial year.

❖ Indian GM Praggnanandhaa wins Super GM chess tourney in Hungary

- Young Indian Grandmaster R Praggnanandhaa emerged champion in the V Geza Hetenyi Memorial Super GM chess tournament 2023.
- The 17-year-old GM scored 6.5 points to finish clear first in the 10-player event.
- After nine rounds of play, he ended up a point ahead of M Amin Tabatabaei (Iran) and Russia's Sanan Sjugirov.
- Praggnanandhaa posted five wins, drew three games and suffered only one defeat in the tournament, at the hands of Amin Tabatabaei in the fifth round.
- In the final round, he secured a draw against Polish GM Radoslaw Wojtaszek with white pieces.
- The teenaged Indian GM now has a live rating of 2707.3.
- Praggnanandhaa scored wins over Sjugirov, Parham Maghsoodloo (Iran), Adam Kozak (Hungary) and Peter Prohaszka (Hungary).
- He drew his last three games, against Pavel Eljanov (Ukraine), Maxim Matlakov (Russia) and Wojtaszek.

❖ Online portal launched to report violation of ban on e-cigarettes

- Despite the ban imposed by the Union government in 2019, e-cigarettes continue to be sold on e-commerce sites, even to children below 18, warn experts working in the area of tobacco control.
- Now to curb this, the Health Ministry has launched an online portal to facilitate reporting of violations under the Prohibition of Electronic Cigarettes (Production, Manufacture, Import, Export, Transport, Sale, Distribution, Storage and Advertisement) Act (PECA).
- The portal, www.violation-reporting.in, will allow faster action against any reported violations.

- The ban on electronic cigarettes was introduced to protect our younger generation from a new form of toxic addiction.
- It's a welcome move by the Health Ministry to launch the online portal for strict enforcement, implementation and to ensure the ban is effective.

❖ **Tony Bennett, masterful stylist of American musical standards, dies at 96**

- Tony Bennett, the eminent stylist whose devotion to classic American songs and knack for creating new standards graced a decades long career that brought him admirers from Frank Sinatra to Lady Gaga, died. He was 96.
- Publicist Sylvia Weiner confirmed Bennett's death to The Associated Press, he died in New York.
- There was no specific cause, but Bennett was diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease in 2016.
- Bennett received many accolades from fellow singers, but none so meaningful than when his friend and mentor Sinatra said in a 1965 Life magazine interview: "For my money, Tony Bennett is the best singer in the business."

❖ **Biden picks female admiral to lead Navy. She'd be first woman on Joint Chiefs of Staff**

- President Joe Biden has chosen Adm. Lisa Franchetti to lead the Navy, an unprecedented choice that, if she is confirmed, will make her the first woman to be a Pentagon service chief and the first female member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.
- Biden's decision goes against the recommendation of his Pentagon chief.
- But Franchetti, the current vice chief of operations for the Navy, has broad command and executive experience and was considered by insiders to be the top choice for the job.
- Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin recommended that Biden select Adm. Samuel Paparo, the current commander of the Navy's Pacific Fleet, several U.S. officials said last month. But instead, Biden is nominating Paparo to lead U.S. Indo-Pacific Command.

❖ Saudi Aramco locks up stake in China petrochemicals firm

- Saudi Aramco , it had completed its purchase of a 10-percent stake in a Chinese petrochemicals firm, part of an expansion into the world's top crude importer.
- The Saudi energy giant unveiled plans in March to acquire the stake in Rongsheng Petrochemical, valued at \$3.4 billion.
- The deal calls for the supply of 480,000 barrels per day of Saudi crude to an integrated refining and chemicals complex owned by a Rongsheng affiliate.
- “Our strategic partnership with Rongsheng advances Aramco’s liquids to chemicals strategy while growing our presence in China and showcases our importance as a reliable supplier of crude oil.
- “This key acquisition is an important part of Aramco’s long-term growth strategy, expanding our presence in a vital market.”
- “marks the entry of Rongsheng and Aramco into a new era together, and also signifies an important step forward in Rongsheng’s internationalization strategy.”

❖ DGCA allows Go First to restart flights with conditions

- Aviation industry regulator DGCA granted Go First conditional approval to resume flight operations after resolution of its initial concerns that had emerged following a safety audit.
- Key among the pre-conditions laid out by the DGCA is the requirement that the airline conduct a test flight with each of its aircraft before pressing them into commercial operations.
- Scheduled flight operations can be commenced only after the availability of the required interim funding and approval of flight schedule by the DGCA.
- The cash - strapped airline will be able to resume sale of tickets, which was halted by the DGCA, only after the regulator has approved the flight schedule. The airline plans to resume operations with 15 aircrafts and 114 flights.