



CURRENT AFFAIRS NOTES

04/08/2023

1. THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA INAUGURATES 'UNMESHA' AND 'UTKARSH' FESTIVALS IN BHOPAL

The President of India, Smt Droupadi Murmu inaugurated 'Unmesha' – International Literature Festival and 'Utkarsh' – Festival of Folk and Tribal Performing Arts on August 3, 2023 at Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh.

The 'Unmesha' festival is a three-day international literary gathering, while 'Utkarsh' celebrates the rich expressions of folk and tribal traditions in India.

Unmesha: Asia's Largest Literature Festival

- 'Unmesha' has earned a reputation as India's most inclusive and Asia's largest literature festival, representing a multitude of languages and cultures.
- The festival is on its way to becoming the world's largest literature gathering.

Utkarsh: Celebrating Folk and Tribal Expressions

- 'Utkarsh' festival celebrates the rich heritage of folk and tribal expressions in India. It provides a platform for traditional artists and performers to showcase their art forms and preserve the cultural legacy of diverse communities.
- 'Utkarsh' represents a vivid tapestry of India's cultural diversity and serves as a testament to the importance of recognizing and promoting indigenous arts.

The festivals, organized by the Sahitya Academy and Sangeet Natak Academy, respectively, are set to promote inclusivity and cultural diversity in Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh.

The President said that literature gave strength to the ideals of our freedom struggle. In every corner of the country, many writers gave expression to the ideals of freedom and renaissance.

Novels, stories, poems and plays written in the period of Indian renaissance and freedom struggle are popular even today, and they have a wide influence on our minds.

2. 86 airports using green energy in the country

Share of green energy in 55 airport's total energy consumption is 100%.

Airports across the globe are continuously focusing on use of renewable/green energy.



Presently, 86 airports across the country are using green energy out of which the share of green energy in airport's total energy consumption is 100% for 55 airports.

However, use of conventional sources of energy is the prime source of carbon emission at airports and thus replacing non-renewable energy with green energy helps in reducing the carbon footprint of the airport.

Therefore, MoCA has advised all the operational airports with scheduled operations and developers of the upcoming Greenfield Airports to work towards achieving Carbon Neutrality & Net Zero which inter-alia includes use of green energy.

3. The first Test Vehicle mission, for the validation of crew escape system for Gaganyaan, the maiden human space flight mission of India is planned in August/September 2023

Static tests of all Crew Escape System motors have been completed as also Ground testing of Crew Module Propulsion system is completed and Training of crew (Astronauts) is nearing completion.



In a statement laid on the table of the Rajya Sabha, Dr Jitendra Singh informed that all subsystems pertaining to Test Vehicle TV-D1 mission have been realized and the Crew module integration is completed.

He also added that Static tests of all Crew Escape System motors have been completed as also Ground testing of Crew Module Propulsion system is completed. Training of crew (Astronauts) is nearing completion.

The objective of the Gaganyaan mission is to demonstrate the capability of conducting human space flight missions to Low Earth orbit (LEO) on-board Indian Launch vehicles.

The Orbital module consists of a Crew module and a Service module. Crew module, which is a pressurized module, acts as living quarters for the crew. The orbital module will be positioned in a ~400 km circular orbit around earth for 1 to 3 days & the Crew module will return back to the designated location at sea.

The other progress made for Gaganyaan programme is as follows:

- i. 2nd Crew Module sub-assembly identified for uncrewed missions is completed and delivered by industry.
- ii. Orbital module preparation facility construction completed. Facility has been commissioned for integration activities of the Test vehicle mission. Launch pad augmentation works for Gaganyaan are underway.
- iii. Recovery training plan by ISRO and Indian Navy & recovery training program commenced at Naval Dockyard, Visakhapatnam.

The delivery of human centric products for crew training commenced from various national labs. Testing of human centric products is underway.

4. Yellow-bellied Sea Snake



The Yellow-bellied Sea Snake is a highly venomous species of snake that belongs to the subfamily Hydrophiinae (the sea snakes).

- This snake is considered the most widely-distributed snake in the world.
- It is found in tropical and subtropical waters around the world.
- It is found in tropical ocean waters in the Indian and Pacific Oceans, including the coasts of Africa, Asia, Australia, Mexico, including Baja California, and Central America.
- This species can uptake up to 33% of its oxygen requirements through the skin while diving and swimming at the surface of the water.
- They are carnivores (piscivores) and eat only fish.

Conservation Status:

- IUCN Red List: Least Concern

5. “MERI MAATI MERA DESH” CAMPAIGN TO PAY TRIBUTE TO THE ‘VEERS’ WHO LAID DOWN THEIR LIVES FOR THE COUNTRY

NATION-WIDE JAN-BHAGIDHARI PROGRAMMES TO BE ORGANISED FROM VILLAGE TO NATIONAL LEVEL.

SHILAPHALAKAMS (MEMORIAL PLAQUES) TO BE INSTALLED IN GRAM PANCHAYATS.

SOIL FROM VARIOUS CORNERS OF THE COUNTRY TO BE BROUGHT TO DELHI IN AMRIT KALASH YATRA FOR CREATING AMRIT VATIKA.

- This campaign aims to honour the brave freedom fighters and bravehearts who sacrificed their lives for the country.
- The campaign will include various programs across the country to remember the bravehearts (Veers).
- Shilaphalakams (memorial plaques) commemorating them will be installed in gram panchayats, close to Amrit Sarovars.

Shilaphalakam or Memorial plaques saluting the spirit of sacrifice of local bravehearts from the village, panchayat, block, town, city, municipality etc. are to be erected across urban and rural areas.

It will have the Prime Minister's message with the names of those who have laid down their lives for the nation belonging to that region.

6. NHAI Launches 'Rajmargyatra' a Unified Mobile Application for National Highway Users

The National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) takes a significant stride towards improving the highway user experience with the launch of 'Rajmargyatra,' a citizen-centric unified mobile application.



The app is currently available in Hindi and English.

Key Features of 'Rajmargyatra' App:

- Comprehensive Highway Information: 'Rajmargyatra' serves as a one-stop repository of essential information for National Highway users.
- Get real-time weather conditions, timely broadcast notifications, and access to details about nearby toll plazas, petrol pumps, hospitals, hotels, and other essential services that ensure a seamless and safe journey on National Highways.
- The registered complaints will be handled in a time-bound manner, with system-generated escalations to higher authorities in case of any delays. Users can also track the status of their grievances for complete transparency.



- Seamless FASTag Services: 'Rajmargyatra' integrates its services with various bank portals, making it convenient for users to recharge their FASTags, avail monthly passes, and access other FASTag-related banking services – all within a single platform.
- Over-speeding notifications and voice-assistance to encourage responsible and safe driving behavior.

7. PM JI-VAN YOJANA

In March 2019, Government had notified the “Pradhan Mantri JI-VAN (Jaiv Indhan- Vatavaran Anukool fasal awashesh Nivaran) Yojana” for providing financial support to integrated bio-ethanol projects for setting up Second Generation (2G) ethanol projects in the country using lignocellulosic biomass and other renewable feedstocks.

8. Parliament passes the Offshore Areas Mineral (Development and Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2023

Renewal of production leases provision removed; Period fixed as 50 years similar to MMDR Act.

In case of Atomic Minerals operating rights only to PSUs.

The proposed amendment in the Act will bring major reform by introducing auction as the method of allocation of operating rights in the offshore areas.

The OAMDR Act, 2002 came into force in 2010. However, no mining activity has been undertaken in the offshore areas till date.

The Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957 (MMDR Act) was amended in January 2015 to provide for allocation of mineral concessions in onshore areas through auction.

India has a unique maritime position. India’s Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of over two million square kilometers holds significant recoverable resources.

GSI has delineate the resources of the following minerals in the offshore areas:

- 1,53,996 million tons of lime mud within the EEZ off Gujarat and Maharashtra coasts.
- 745 million tons of construction-grade sand off Kerala coast.
- 79 million tons of heavy mineral placers in the inner-shelf and mid-shelf off Odisha, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra.
- Phosphorite in the Eastern and Western continental margins.

- Polymetallic Ferromanganese (Fe-Mn) nodules and crusts in Andaman Sea and Lakshadweep Sea.

9. Central government schemes for labourers

Government is implementing various schemes for the welfare of the labourers.

- The Ministry has developed eShram portal for creating a comprehensive database of unorganised workers.
- The Life and Disability cover is provided through Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana (PMJJBY) and Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana (PMSBY).
- The Ayushman Bharat-Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (ABPMJAY) provides health cover.



In order to provide old age protection to unorganised sector workers the Government of India launched Pradhan Mantri Shram Yogi Maan-dhan (PM-SYM) Pension Scheme in 2019.

10. 13th Indian Organ Donation Day ceremony

“In 2013, around 5000 people came forward to donate their organs. Now there are over 15,000 organ donors annually”

Felicitates Donor Families for their contribution towards saving lives and encourages others to spread awareness on organ donation.

“The 13th IODD ceremony was held to felicitate deceased donor families for their brave decision of donating organs of their loved ones, to spread awareness on deceased organ donation and to recognize the contribution of medical professionals working in the field of organ donation and transplantation by awarding them.



11. CITIIS 2.0

Government has approved the 'City Investments to Innovate, Integrate and Sustain 2.0 (CITIIS 2.0)' on 31 May 2023. CITIIS 2.0 has been conceived by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) in partnership with the French Development Agency (AFD), Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau (KfW), the European Union (EU), and National Institute of Urban Affairs (NIUA). The period of the program would be for 4 years. CITIIS 2.0 has 3 major components:

Component-1: Financial and technical support for up to 18 Smart Cities for projects promoting circular economy with focus on Integrated Waste Management.

Component-2: Support to all States/Union Territories (UTs) for Climate action.

Component-3: Interventions at National level to support scale-up across all cities and towns.

12. AGRI INFRASTRUCTURE FUND

The Agriculture Infrastructure Fund (AIF), a scheme launched in 2020 to provide loans for building post-harvest facilities and community farming assets, has disbursed only 15% of its Rs 1 lakh crore target in the first three years.

The Agriculture Infrastructure Fund (AIF) was introduced in July 2020, as part of the special COVID-19 package under the Aatmanirbhar Bharat initiative.



The scheme aimed to offer Rs 1 lakh crore as loans for developing post-harvest infrastructure and community farming assets by the financial year 2025-2026 and to provide interest subvention and credit guarantee assistance till 2032-2033.

- Lack of awareness and outreach:
- Lack of bankable projects
- Lack of coordination and convergence
- Lack of infrastructure and logistics

The government should intensify its efforts to create awareness and disseminate information about the scheme among the target beneficiaries. This can be done through various channels such as print and electronic media, social media, webinars, workshops, roadshows, etc.

Leverage the existing networks and platforms such as Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs), Common Service Centres (CSCs), Agricultural Technology Management Agencies (ATMAs), etc. to reach out to the farmers, FPOs and agri-entrepreneurs at the grassroots level.

Facilitate access to credit, technology, markets, etc. for the beneficiaries through various schemes and initiatives such as PM-KISAN, PM-FME, PM-KMY, e-NAM, etc.

The government should also harmonize the norms and standards for post-harvest infrastructure across the states and sectors.

13. BAN ON ACECLOFENAC & KETOPROFEN

- The Indian government's decision to ban the manufacture, sale, and distribution of ketoprofen and aceclofenac, and their formulations for animal use, has been widely applauded by experts working on vulture conservation.
- In a notification dated July 31, 2023, the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare extended its proactive approach to vulture conservation.



- It banned the manufacture, sale, and distribution of ketoprofen and aceclofenac which are other non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) toxic to vultures.
- Ketoprofen and aceclofenac can be converted to diclofenac once administered to animals, making them equally dangerous to vultures.
- The ban on these drugs is a significant step towards safeguarding the vulture population, which continues to face threats from other lethal chemicals like nimesulide.

Research in 2004 revealed that diclofenac was the primary cause of vulture deaths, leading to a loss of 97% of the vulture population by that time. Species such as the oriental white-backed vultures, long-billed vultures, and slender-billed vultures were severely affected.

The Action Plan for Vulture Conservation 2006 incorporated the Vulture Recovery Plan's recommendations. In 2006, the use of diclofenac as a veterinary drug was banned, and it was officially gazetted in 2008. Instead, the use of another drug, meloxicam, was recommended as a safer alternative.