

### NEWSPAPER HIGHLIGHT

The Delhi government said that temporary weirs built on major drains flowing into the Yamuna have substantially helped to clean the drains by improving their biochemical oxygen demand (BOD) level and decreasing the amount of other pollutants as well. "A report shows that there is a drastic reduction in suspended solids after the construction of the temporary weirs. Total suspended solids went down from 166 mg/l in Rithala to just 49 mg/l in Rohini Sector 15.

A report released by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) estimated that emissions of plastic waste into the aquatic ecosystems may triple by 2040 if no meaningful action is taken. Thus, the UN Environment Assembly meeting in February-March 2022 may finalise a way forward for global cooperation in this regard.

India and France are close to concluding a deal, for the joint development of a 125KN engine for the indigenous fifth generation Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft (AMCA) under development, according to defence officials. The collaboration is between the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) and French engine maker Safran.

Ukraine said it would hold talks with Russia at its border with Belarus — near the Chernobyl exclusion zone — after a call between President Volodymyr Zelensky and Belarus leader Alexander Lukashenko. "The politicians agreed that the Ukrainian delegation would meet the Russian one without preconditions at the Ukraine Belarus border, near the Pripyat River," Mr. Zelensky's office said.

North Korea launched a ballistic missile into the sea on Sunday, its neighbours said, in a resumption of weapons tests that came as the United States and its allies are focused on Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The missile launch was the eighth of its kind this year. Some experts have said North Korea is trying to perfect its weapons technology and pressure the United States into offering concessions like sanctions relief.

The UN Human Rights chief, in a new report on Sri Lanka, has pointed to "setbacks to accountability for

### COUNCIL OF EUROPE

1.About the Council of Europe: The Council of Europe is an international organization founded in the wake of World War II to uphold human rights, democracy and the rule of law in Europe. **2.Founded in 1949 (Treaty of London (1949)), it has 46 member states (including all 27 EU members)**, with a population of approximately 820 million, and operates with an annual budget of approximately 500 million euros. **Headquarters: Palace of Europe, Strasbourg, France.**  
3.Roles and responsibilities: The Council of Europe cannot make binding laws, but it does have the power to enforce select international agreements reached by European states on various topics.

### SC ASKS CENTRE TO CLARIFY ON LEGALITY OF CRYPTOCURRENCY

1.The Supreme Court has asked the Centre whether dealing with cryptocurrencies like bitcoin is legal in India. The Court posed the query while hearing a plea by one of the accused in the GainBitcoin scam, seeking quashing of the charges against him.

2.Regulation-There's no formal regulation on cryptocurrencies in India so far. The Centre has been working on crypto regulatory framework since 2019 but is yet to introduce a bill. The central bank has always maintained a strong stance against private digital currencies. It had banned the banking system from aiding such trades, which was struck down by the Supreme Court in 2020.

3.Latest developments: In Union Budget 2022, finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman had proposed 30 per cent tax on earnings from cryptocurrencies and non-fungible tokens (NFTs). She also said that losses from their sale could not be offset against other income, delivering another disincentive to trading and investment in digital assets. The government also introduced 1 per cent tax deducted at source (TDS) on digital assets. It also announced that RBI will introduce its digital currency in FY23 that will lead to more efficient and cheaper currency management system.

4.Cryptocurrencies-Cryptocurrencies are digital currencies in which encryption techniques are used to regulate the generation of units of currency and verify the transfer of funds, operating independently of a central bank. They use Blockchain technology. Examples: Bitcoin, Ethereum etc.

**5.SC Garg Committee recommendations (2019): Ban anybody who mines, hold, transact or deal with cryptocurrencies in any form. It recommend a jail term of one to 10 years for exchange or trading in digital currency.**

It proposed a monetary penalty of up to three times the loss caused to the exchequer or gains made by the cryptocurrency user whichever is higher. However, the panel said that the government should keep an open mind on the potential issuance of cryptocurrencies by the Reserve Bank of India.

### CHERNOBYL DISASTER

1.After a brief but fierce battle, Russian troops were able to capture the Chernobyl nuclear plant in northern Ukraine, the site of one of the worst nuclear disasters in human history.

2.Chernobyl disaster-The Chernobyl tragedy was the result of a nuclear accident on 26 April 1986 at reactor No. 4 at the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant, near the town of Pripyat in the Ukrainian SSR (Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic). There were nearly 8.4 million people exposed to radiation in the three nations. It occurred when a group of technicians in what was then Soviet-controlled Ukraine carried out a botched safety test that led to a series of explosions. It is said to have released 400 times more radiation than the atomic bomb that was dropped on Hiroshima in Japan.

3.Concern now-**Since the Chernobyl is under Russia's control now, damage to the nuclear waste storage facility could lead to radioactive dust spreading across Ukraine, Belarus and parts of Europe.**

past human rights violations and the recognition of victims' rights", despite the Rajapaksa government's recent steps aimed at reforms. The latest report on Sri Lanka comes ahead of the 49th session of the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva beginning on Monday. While there will be no resolution on Sri Lanka this session, an interactive dialogue on the progress made by Sri Lanka in promoting reconciliation, accountability, and human rights is expected to be held during the week.

Nepal lawmakers adopted a \$500 million U.S. grant, following street clashes between the police and protesters who are against the funds, which have become a bone of contention between China and the United States. Nepal signed the U.S. government's Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) pact in 2017 to fund infrastructure projects but its ratification had been in limbo because of divisions within political parties, including the ruling coalition.

The United States and European nations agreed on Saturday to impose the most potentially crippling financial penalties yet on Russia over its unrelenting invasion of Ukraine, going after the central bank reserves that underpin the Russian economy and severing some Russian banks from a vital global financial network.

Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered his defence chiefs to put the country's nuclear "deterrence forces" on high alert and accused the West of taking "unfriendly" steps against his country. Moscow has the world's second largest arsenal of nuclear weapons and a huge cache of ballistic missiles which form the backbone of the country's deterrence forces.

Eight fishermen from Thangachimadam near Rameswaram were arrested by the Sri Lankan Navy near Katchatheevu island in the early hours of Sunday, on charges of poaching in international waters. Their mechanised boat was seized by the authorities.

After abstaining from the UN Security Council Resolution 8979 condemning Russian action in Ukraine, India faces more difficult choices with the U.S. and European-led coalition now pushing for a vote at the UN General Assembly aimed at "isolating Russia". The UNGA vote, which could take place as early as Monday, will follow a discussion of the UNSC late on Sunday night on an "emergency special session" to examine the text of Resolution 8979 which Russia had vetoed. The U.S.

## SUSTAINABLE CITIES INDIA PROGRAM

1.The World Economic Forum and the National Institute of Urban Affairs (NIUA) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to collaborate on a jointly designed 'Sustainable Cities India program'. The 'Sustainable Cities India program' intends to enable cities to decarbonize in a systematic and sustainable way that will reduce emissions and deliver resilient and equitable urban ecosystems.

2.Implementation: The Forum and NIUA will adapt the Forum's City Sprint process and Toolbox of Solutions for decarbonization in the context of five to seven Indian cities across two years. The City Sprint process is a series of multi-sectoral, multi-stakeholder workshops involving business, government, and civil society leaders to enable decarbonization, especially through clean electrification and circularity.

3.The City Sprint process uses the Toolbox of Solutions - a digital platform containing over 200 examples of clean electrification, efficiency and smart infrastructure best practices and case studies across buildings, energy systems and mobility from over 110 cities around the world.

## COBRA WARRIOR

1.The Cobra Warrior exercises are the largest joint military exercises conducted by the Royal Air Force (RAF) in the United Kingdom for over a decade.

2.The forthcoming Cobra Warrior exercises will witness pilots from the Indian Air Force flying five Tejas fighters along with combat aircraft from the Royal Air Force and other leading air forces, including from Saudi Arabia, Belgium and Sweden.

## CORBEVAX

1.It is India's indigenous Covid-19 vaccine. It is a "recombinant protein sub-unit" vaccine. It means it is made up of a specific part of SARS-CoV-2 - the spike protein on the virus's surface

2.The spike protein allows the virus to enter the cells in the body so that it can replicate and cause disease. However, when this protein alone is given to the body, it is not expected to be harmful as the rest of the virus is absent.

3.The body is expected to develop an immune response against the injected spike protein.

## SPARSH:SYTEM FOR PENSION ADMINISTRATION(RAKSHA)

1.The Ministry of Defense has signed an agreement with CSC e-Governance Services India Limited (under Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology) to expand the coverage of pension services under SPARSH or System for Pension Administration (Raksha) across four lakh Common Service Centers.

2.This will provide last mile connectivity to pensioners, especially those who live in remote areas of the country and those who do not have access or technical knowledge and skill to use SPARSH. SPARSH is an initiative of the Ministry of Defense.

3.It aims to provide comprehensive services to defense pensioners. It promotes the Government's vision of 'Digital India', 'Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT)' and 'Minimum Government, Maximum Governance'.

## SOLAR PROTON EVENTS

1.A solar particle event or solar proton event (SPE), or prompt proton event, occurs when particles emitted by the Sun, mostly protons, become accelerated either in the solar atmosphere during a solar flare or in interplanetary space by a coronal mass ejection shock. 2.These particles can penetrate the Earth's magnetic field and cause partial ionization of the ionosphere.

3.Energetic protons are a significant radiation hazard to spacecraft and astronauts. Coronal Mass Ejection (CME) is one of the biggest eruptions from the Sun's surface that can contain a billion tons of matter accelerated to several million miles per hour into space. The underlying cause of CMEs is not well understood. Astronomers agree, however, that the sun's magnetic field plays a major role.

## KARAKATTAM DANCE

1.Karakattam is an ancient folk dance of Tamil Nadu performed in praise of the rain goddess Mariamman (the rain goddess).

2.The performers balance a pot on their head. Why in News? An organization has demanded that Karakattam (also known as Kumbakkali in certain parts) be recognised as the agricultural

**and European countries leading the diplomatic charge against Russia are hopeful of gaining a large majority in the 193member UNGA, given that more than 80 countries cosponsored Resolution 8979, and have been working the phones to convince others to vote along with them.**

**Iran's chief nuclear negotiator Ali Bagheri Kani will return for talks on resolving the remaining issues in indirect negotiations with the United States to revive a 2015 deal, the official IRNA news said.**

art form of Kerala.