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3<sup>RD</sup> NOVEMBER 2022

The Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee (GEAC), India's apex regulator of genetically modified plants and food products, has approved the environmental release of Dhara Mustard Hybrid11 (DMH11), a genetically engineered variant of mustard. Trials conducted over three years by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) suggest that DMH11 has 28% higher yields than its parent Varuna and was 37% better than zonal checks, or local varieties that are considered the best in different agroclimatic zones. Activist groups allege that the GM mustard hasn't been evaluated as a herbicide tolerant crop posing potential risks. They also allege that GM mustard plants may dissuade bees from pollinating the plant and this could have knock off environmental catastrophes.

Section 8 of the Representation of the People Act (RPA), 1951, contains provisions aimed at decriminalising electoral politics. There are two categories of criminal cases that attract disqualification upon conviction. In the first category are offences that entail disqualification for a period of six years upon any conviction. All other criminal provisions form a separate category under which mere conviction will not entail disqualification. The Supreme Court has the power to stay not only the sentence, but also the conviction of a person. In some rare cases, conviction has been stayed to enable the appellant to contest an election.

The Defence Research & Development Organisation (DRDO) on Wednesday conducted the maiden flight test of Phase 2 of the ballistic missile defence (BMD) interceptor missile successfully. "The AD1 is a long range interceptor missile designed for both low exo-atmospheric and endoatmospheric interception of long range ballistic missiles as well as aircraft. It is propelled by a two stage solid motor and equipped with an indigenously developed advanced control system, navigation and guidance algorithm to precisely guide it to the target," a DRDO statement said. The test was conducted at the A.P.J. Abdul Kalam Island.

The horns of rhinoceroses may have become smaller over time from the impact of hunting, according to a recent study which analysed artwork and photographs of the animal spanning more than five centuries. The study, published in the latest

## RBI LAUNCHES PILOT PROJECT OF DIGITAL RUPEE IN WHOLESALE SEGMENT

1.RBI launched digital rupee to settle secondary market transactions in government securities. It would make monetary and payment systems more efficient. It would reduce transaction costs by pre-empting the need for settlement guarantee infrastructure. Also, first pilot in Digital Rupee - retail segment will be commenced soon in selected locations.

2.Earlier, launch of a Digital rupee was announced in 2022 Union Budget. Digital rupee or Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC) is legal tender issued by RBI in digital form. It will be referred as e₹ (digital Rupee).

3.It will be same as a sovereign currency and is exchangeable, convertible one-to-one at par (1:1) with the fiat currency. CBDC can be classified into two types Retail (e₹ -R): Potentially available for use by all. Wholesale (e₹ -W): for access to select financial institutions.

4.Benefits of Digital Rupee-Make inter-bank market more efficient. Bolster digitisation and to achieve a less cash economy. Support financial inclusion. Reduction in operational costs involved in physical cash management. Offline feature in CBDC would also be beneficial in remote locations.

## 'CITIES ALIVE: DESIGNING CITIES THAT WORK FOR WOMEN' REPORT BY UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

1.Report stresses the need to directly engage women in decision-making processes, across all aspects of urban planning and development.

Key challenges faced by women: Safety and security: Unsafe streets and public spaces, reduced mobility due to safety concerns, disproportionate exposure to climate hazard. 32% of women survey respondents feel unsafe in public spaces at night.

2.Justice and equity: Limited gender equity in urban governance, limited voice in decision-making and leadership. Just 29% of women in business globally are in senior decision making positions. Health and wellbeing: Inadequate public spaces, Inadequate healthcare, water, hygiene etc. 76% of female respondents feel lack of safe routes as a barrier to their health and wellbeing.

3.Enrichment and fulfilment: Prejudice and obstacles to education and employment, Inadequate leisure, and Poor sense of belonging. 17% of global population find it unacceptable when a female family member has a job.

4.Strategies suggested-Create safer streets and provide safer mobility, integrate gender responsiveness in urban climate strategies. Collection of gender-disaggregated data, protect women's right to property. Increase access to physical and mental healthcare and nutrition facilities. Accessible and inclusive leisure and cultural space.

## COUNTRY'S BIGGEST DATA CENTRE' INAUGURATED IN UTTAR PRADESH

1.North India's first hyperscale data centre 'Yotta D1', has been built at a cost of Rs 5,000 crore, in Greater Noida. The data centre will increase data storage capacity of the country, which until now stood at 2%. This is despite India having 650 million internet users in the world are from India, using 20 percent of data.

2.About Data Centre-It is a dedicated secure space within a centralized location where computing and networking equipment is concentrated for purpose of collecting, storing, processing, distributing or allowing access to large amounts of data. It provides Network infrastructure (connects servers etc. to end-user locations); Storage infrastructure (to store data); and Computing resources (provide processing, memory, etc. that drive applications).

3.Need for data centres Data localisation norms make it crucial to set up a robust data centre infrastructure India. Necessary to

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edition of People and Nature by the British Ecological Society, relied on a repository of images maintained by the Netherlands based Rhino Research Center (RRC). "We found evidence for declining horn length over time across species, perhaps related to selective pressure of hunting, and indicating a utility for image based approaches in understanding societal perceptions of large vertebrates and trait evolution," said the study, authored by scientists from the Universities of Helsinki and Cambridge.

Israel's Benjamin Netanyahu inched towards reclaiming power on Wednesday after projected election results showed a majority government was within reach for the veteran right winger, though the outlook could shift as ballots are counted. If the exit polls hold, it would mark a dramatic comeback for Mr. Netanyahu, Israel's longest-serving Premier, whose Likud party is poised to form a coalition with its ultra Orthodox Jewish allies and a rising extreme right.

Elaben Bhatt, 89, Gandhian, women's activist and founder of the Self Employed Women's Association, passed away on Wednesday in a hospital in Ahmedabad after a brief illness. The recipient of several national and international awards, she was globally recognised as a leader who carried out pioneering work in organising the informal sector for self employment and empowering women across South Asia.

₹51,875 crore, the amount approved as subsidy by the Union government for phosphatic and potassic (P&K) fertilizers for the second half of 2022-23, according to an official statement. The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs, approved nutrient based subsidy rates for P&K fertilizers for the 2022-23 Rabi season.

20 number of strategic research projects cleared by the Union government under the National Technical Textiles Mission. The projects worth around ₹74 crore, are in the fields of speciality fibre, agro-textiles, smart textiles etc. Despite the usage of speciality fibres in India, indigenisation of the technology is still a major challenge, according to Minister Piyush Goyal.

5 lakh, the number of immigrants to

protect digital sovereignty in connected world.

4.Steps taken to promote data centres-Infrastructure status to Data centres to get easier access to institutional credit, attract foreign investments etc. Draft Data Centre Policy 2020, aims to make India a Global Data Centre hub.

## MULLING REMOTE VOTE FACILITY FOR NON-RESIDENT INDIANS (NRIS), CENTRE TELLS SUPREME COURT

1.Remote voting refers to a mechanism that allows electors to vote from locations other than polling stations assigned to their registered constituencies — either within country or even abroad. Voting rights for NRIs were introduced in 2011 through an amendment to Representation of People Act (RPA) 1950. However, section 20A of the Act requires overseas electors to be physically present in their electoral constituencies to cast their votes.

2.Significance of remote voting-With lakhs of voters unable to exercise their franchise on account of geographical barrier due to different reasons, remote voting aims to bridge that gap. Voter can cast vote from multiple locations and not solely from one registered polling station. Follow the spirit of Article 326 of Constitution that provides voting rights on basis of adult suffrage. Strengthens representative democracy.

3.Limitations of Remote Voting Violates the secrecy of the ballot as it might be hacked which distort results. Difficult to identify the voter. Hampers quality of vote share and good representative.

4.Other mechanisms of voting Proxy voting (introduced in 2003): A registered elector can delegate his voting power to a representative. Only a "classified service voter" which includes members of the armed forces, BSF, CRPF, CISF, General Engineering Reserve Force and Border Road Organisation.

5.Electronically Transmitted Postal Ballot System Here, ballot paper is transmitted through Electronic Means to the service voters. Members of the armed forces, police (serving outside the state), government employees posted outside India and their spouses; people under preventive detention; special voters such as the President of India, Vice President, etc.

## NASA CAPTURES IMAGE OF SMILING SUN DUE TO PHENOMENON NAMED 'CORONAL HOLES'

1.NASA's solar dynamics observatory observed the phenomenon of coronal holes in ultraviolet light as these are typically invisible to our eyes.

2.About Coronal holes Coronal holes are regions on the sun's surface from where fast solar wind gushes out into space. Because they contain little solar material, they have lower temperatures and thus appear much darker than their surroundings. The holes are not a unique phenomenon, appearing throughout the sun's approximately 11-year solar cycle. These coronal holes can cause a solar storm on Earth as they release a complex stream of solar winds.

3.These fast solar wind streams interact with earth's magnetic field and creates geomagnetic storm (GMS). GMS is a disturbance in earth's magnetosphere, which is the area around the planet controlled by its magnetic field. Earth's magnetosphere protects its inhabitants from most of the particles emitted by the sun.

4.Impact of geomagnetic storms Disrupt high-frequency radio broadcasts and global positioning system devices. Damage satellite electronics and expose astronauts to increased levels of radiation. Voltage surges due to altered magnetic activity can affect power supply on earth and cause outages.

## 21ST MEETING OF SCO (SHANGHAI COOPERATION ORGANISATION) COUNCIL OF HEADS OF GOVERNMENT HOSTED VIRTUALLY BY CHINA

1.Key highlights of the meet India did not affirm to the joint communique supporting the Belt and Road' initiative" of China. India pitched for more trade through Iran's Chabahar port and International North South Transport Corridors (INSTC). INSTC is a 7,200-km multi-modal transport corridor that combines road, rail and maritime routes connecting Russia and India via Central Asia and Iran.

2.About SCO trade and connectivity Total trade value of its

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be welcomed to Canada, by 2025, as the country unveiled plans for a big increase in the number of immigrants entering the country to address a critical labour shortage. It puts a heavy emphasis on admitting more permanent residents with needed work skills and experience, alongside more modest targets for family members and refugees.

23 number of missiles fired by North Korea, including one that landed close to South Korea's waters, South Korean President Yoon Sukyeol informed, calling it effectively a territorial invasion. North Korea conducted an artillery barrage, firing into a maritime "buffer zone" set up to reduce tensions between the two countries during an ill fated bout of diplomacy.

Negotiations between India and the U.K. towards finalising a trade agreement have resumed under the Rishi Sunak government according to No. 10 Downing Street.

member states increased from \$667 billion in 2001 to \$6 trillion in 2020. India's total trade with SCO Members is only \$141 billion. Bulk of India's trade with SCO countries is with China (\$100 billion) this year. With central Asia, trade is less than \$2 billion.

**3.Challenges for India-Lack of flourishing trade between India and Central Asian states due to no direct access. Lack of connectivity, hampering development of energy ties between hydrocarbon-rich region and India.** Growing closeness of China and Russia as trading partners. Both sides want to increase bilateral trade to \$250 billion by 2024. SCO endorsing RBI.

**4.About SCO-**It is an intergovernmental political, economic, and military organization founded in Shanghai in 2001. It originated from Shanghai five (China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan) grouping of 1996. Later, Uzbekistan, India and Pakistan joined as other members of SCO. SCO summit in Dushanbe (2021) agreed for Iran to join and Belarus has also begun the membership process.