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News: Questioning the safety of Aadhaar

Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI)

- The Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) is a **statutory authority established on 12th July 2016** by the Government of India under the jurisdiction of the **Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology**, following the provisions of the **Aadhaar Act of 2016**.
- The UIDAI is mandated to assign a **12-digit unique identification (UID) number (Aadhaar) to all the residents of India**.
- Against the UIDAI orders, **there will be provision to file appeal before TDSAT (Telecom Disputes Settlement and Appellate Tribunal)**, and against the orders of TDSAT an appeal can be made in the SC.

News: EU bans majority of Russian oil imports

- In the most significant effort yet to punish Russia for its war in Ukraine, the European Union agreed to ban the overwhelming majority of Russian oil imports after tense negotiations that tested how far the bloc is willing to go to ostracize Moscow.

European Union (EU)

- European Union is **founded by Maastricht treaty in 1993** (amended thrice by Treaty of Amsterdam 1997, Treaty of Nice 2001 and **Treaty of Lisbon 2007**).
- EU is a Political and Economic Union of **27 member states**.
- Combined area is 4,233,255.3 km² and population is about 447 million.
- Combined GDP of European Union members are \$20 trillion (25% of Global GDP).
- Members: **Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain and Sweden**.
- EU countries are having **High Human Development Index**.
- EU is funding Electronic Auto-rickshaw in India named "**Namma Auto**".

- In the recent India visit, Ambassador of EU to India, announced the setting up of India's first major off-shore wind energy power plant in Gujarat.
- On 1 December 2009, the Lisbon Treaty entered into force and reformed many aspects of the EU. In particular, it changed the legal structure of the European Union, merging the EU three pillars system into a single legal entity provisioned with a legal personality, created a permanent President of the European Council, the first of which was Herman Van Rompuy, and strengthened the position of the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy.
- There are five recognised candidates for membership of the European Union: Turkey (applied in 1987), North Macedonia (applied in 2004), Montenegro (applied in 2008), Albania (applied in 2009), and Serbia (applied in 2009). All have started accession negotiations.
- Kosovo, whose independence is not recognised by five EU member states, and Bosnia and Herzegovina are recognised as potential candidates for membership by the EU.
- The accession criteria are included in Copenhagen criteria.
- Common currency Euro is used among 19 out of EU countries (called EUROZONE).

- Countries in European Union but out of Eurozone are Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Hungary, Poland, Romania and Sweden.
- There are countries which are not in European Council, but **uses Euro with formal agreement (Andorra, Monaco, San Marino and Vatican City) and without any agreement (Kosovo and Montenegro).**
- **Broad Term – Based Trade and Investment Agreement** is a trade agreement between EU and India.
- EU is the **largest trade partner of India** and India is the **9th largest trade partner of EU.**
- 3 % of EU trade is with India, whereas 11% of Indian trade is with EU.
- BTBI will bring a Free Trade Agreement with EU.
- European Union is the **co-manager of BIOFIN** initiative along with UNDP where, National Biodiversity Authority (NBA) is the partner in India. (Statutory bodies).

Green Passport

- The European Union Digital Covid Certificate (EUDCC), or the **Green Passport**, which is in the form of a **digital QR code**, attests that a person has

been vaccinated against COVID-19, and also if they have had a recent negative test and/or are considered immune having previously contracted the illness.

- It is recognised by all 27 EU countries, as well as Switzerland, Liechtenstein, Iceland and Norway for passengers within Europe, who are bound not to need separate documentation for intra EU travel.
- The move led to a sharp protest from India, as well as the African Union, as concerns grow over vaccine passports that discriminate against travellers from developing countries with limited access to vaccines.

EU Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)

- Launched in 1962, EU Common Agricultural Policy is a partnership between agriculture and society, and between Europe and its farmers.
- It is a common policy for all EU countries. It is managed and funded at European level from the resources of the EU's budget.
- It aims to support farmers, improve agricultural productivity, ensure a stable supply of affordable food, safeguard EU farmers, tackle climate change and the sustainable management of natural resources etc.

EU Farm to Fork Strategy

- EU Farm to Fork Strategy is at the heart of the European Green Deal aiming to make food systems fair, healthy and environmentally-friendly. It aims to accelerate transition to a sustainable food system.
- Reforms were undertaken by the EU in the CAP as well as the Farm to Fork Strategy to make agriculture green as well as sustainable.
- The EU has also set a target of bringing 25% of the area in the EU under Organic Farming by 2030.

Fit for 55 Package

- Fit for 55 Package is the new climate proposal released by European Union.
- The EU in December 2020 submitted a revised Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) under the Paris Agreement.
- The new package attempts to deliver the Nationally Determined Contribution and carbon neutrality goal through proposed changes that would impact the economy, society and industry, as well as ensure a fair, competitive and green transition by 2030 and beyond.

- It claims to achieve a balance between “regulatory policies” and market-based carbon pricing to avoid the pitfalls of each.
- It **proposes to increase the binding target of renewable sources in the EU’s energy mix to 40%** (from 32% earlier) and improve energy efficiency by 36% (from 32.5% earlier) by 2030.
- **Vehicular Carbon Emissions must be cut by 55% by 2030 and by 100% by 2035**, which means a phase out of petrol and diesel vehicles by 2035.
- It also includes some provisions that benefit the auto industry. **Public funds will be used to help build charging stations every 60 kilometers**, on major highways, a move that will encourage sales of electric cars.
- It will also help **finance a network of hydrogen fueling stations**.

Emissions Trading System

- It calls for the **creation of an Emissions Trading System (ETS) for buildings and road transport**, separate from the EU’s current ETS, to become operational from 2026.

News: Israel signs UAE free trade deal, its first in Arab world

- Israel signed a free trade deal with the United Arab Emirates recently, its first with an Arab country; building on their U.S brokered normalization of diplomatic relations in 2020.
- The UAE was the first Gulf country to normalize ties with Israel and only the third Arab nation to do so after Egypt and Jordan.

News: West Nile Virus

- Recently, a 47-year-old man in Thrissur, Kerala died due to West Nile Virus (WNV). This has caused the Kerala health department to be on alert.

West Nile Virus (WNV)

- West Nile Virus (WNV) is a member of the flavivirus genus and belongs to the Japanese encephalitis antigenic complex of the family Flaviviridae.
- WNV is commonly found in Africa, Europe, the Middle East, North America and West Asia.
- Older people, children and those with weakened immune systems are most at risk.
- WNV was first isolated in a woman in the West Nile district of Uganda in 1937.

- It was identified in birds in the Nile delta region in 1953. Before 1997, WNV was not considered pathogenic for birds.
- Human infections attributable to WNV have been reported in many countries for over 50 years.
- WNV is an infectious disease spread by infected mosquitoes. It spreads from birds to humans with the bite of an infected Culex mosquito. It can lead to a fatal neurological disease in humans.
- The virus causes West Nile fever in around 20% of cases, according to the World Health Organization (WHO).
- It is related to the Zika, Dengue and Yellow Fever Viruses.

Symptoms

- Those infected usually have no symptoms or mild symptoms.
- The symptoms include a fever, headache, body aches, skin rash, and swollen lymph glands. They can last a few days to several weeks, and usually go away on their own.
- If West Nile virus enters the brain, it can be life-threatening. It may cause inflammation of the brain, called encephalitis, or inflammation of the tissue that surrounds the brain and spinal cord, called meningitis.

Treatment

- There are **no specific vaccines or treatments for human WNV disease.**
- The best way to avoid WNV is to prevent mosquito bites.
- Treatment is supportive for patients with neuro-invasive West Nile virus, often involving hospitalization, intravenous fluids, respiratory support, and prevention of secondary infections.

News: Cheetah Relocation in India

- India will be soon releasing cheetahs from South Africa and Namibia into the wild at Kuno Palpur in Sheopur district of Madhya Pradesh.

Asiatic Cheetah

- Asiatic Cheetah is also known as **Iranian or Persian Cheetah.**
- Presently, it is found **only in Iran that too around 40-50 individuals.**
- Its habitat once ranged from **Arabian Peninsula to India, but extirpated** from these area.
- IUCN Status: **Critically Endangered.**
- CITES Status: **Appendix I**
- It is a **smaller Cheetah** compared to that of African Cheetah having a cat-like appearance.

African Cheetah

- IUCN Status: **Vulnerable**
- CITES Status: **Appendix I**
- There are about 6500-7000 individuals present.
- Recently, Supreme **Court lifted its 7-year stay on proposal to re-introduce African Cheetah from Namibia to Palpur Kuno Sanctuary in Madhya Pradesh.**
- Once abundant, **cheetahs were extinct in India since 1952, due to poaching, habitat destruction & reduction in prey (due to their poaching).**
- **India, first approached Iran to relocate Asian Cheetahs**, but the proposal was declined by Iran as the number of Asiatic Cheetah is too low.

Palpur Kuno Sanctuary

- Palpur Kuno Sanctuary is located in **Madhya Pradesh**.
- It received **the status of National Park in 2018**.
- Main predators in the protected area are Indian Leopard, Jungle cat, Sloth bear, Dhole, Indian Wolf, Golden Jackal, Striped Hyena & Bengal fox.
- Project Lion is announced to protect the Asiatic Lions. Earlier, **Palpur Kuno Sanctuary (in Madhya Pradesh) was selected as the first Project Lion Site.**
- November 2020 saw the extension of Project Lion Sites to 7. **Apart from Palpur Kuno, other sites are Madhav National Park and Gandhi Sagar Wildlife**

Sanctuary in Madhya Pradesh, Sitamata Wildlife Sanctuary, Mukundra Hills Tiger Reserve and Kumbhalgarh Wildlife Sanctuary, Rajasthan and Jessore-Balaram Ambaji WLS and adjoining landscape in Gujarat.

News: Stockholm + 50

- Stockholm+50 is being held in Stockholm, Sweden. It will commemorate the 50 years since the 1972 United Nations (UN) Conference on the Human Environment (also known as the Stockholm Conference).

Stockholm Conference

- The **United Nations Conference on the Human Environment** is generally called Stockholm conference.
- It is the **first declaration of international protection of the environment**.
- The outcome of the conference contains **26 principles**. These principles provide the basis of an International Policy for the Protection and improvement of the environment.
- **United Nations Environment Programme (1972, HQ- Nairobi- Kenya) has been established by the UN General Assembly** in pursuance of the Stockholm Conference.

- **Nairobi Declaration** was in commemoration of 10th anniversary of Stockholm Conference.

News: World Environment Day

World Environment Day

- World Environment Day is celebrated on **5th June of every year by United Nations as its flagship event.**
- Purpose of celebrating the environment day is in **encouraging awareness and action for the protection of our environment.**
- World Environment Day came into existence in **1972** by the United Nations Assembly on the first day **Stockholm Conference** held on the human environment and later in 1974, the day started to be celebrated with the theme "Only One Earth".
- Theme for the year 2021 was “**Reimagine, Recreate and Restore**” and that of year 2022 is “**Only One Earth**”.
- Every year the day will be hosted by a country. 2020 event was hosted by Colombia in partnership with Germany. **2021 Global host is Pakistan.**
- The theme means to **prevent, halt and reverse this damage – to go from exploiting nature to healing it.**

- **UNEP implements** the celebration on behalf of UNGA.