

Daily Current Affairs

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John L. “Jack” Swigert, Jr. Award

- **Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)**’s Chandrayaan-3 mission team has been awarded the 2024 **John L. “Jack” Swigert, Jr. Award** for Space Exploration by the US-based Space Foundation.
- This prestigious award is given to recognize the remarkable achievements of a space agency, company, or consortium in the realm of space exploration and discovery.
- **Chandrayaan-3 mission**, launched by ISRO on July 14, 2023, was a groundbreaking achievement for India.



- The mission consisted of a lander named Vikram and a rover named Pragyan, and it successfully landed at the unexplored south pole of the moon on August 23, 2023.
- This made **India the first country** in the world to land a lunar module at the south pole of the moon.
- The **Space Foundation**, in presenting the **John L. “Jack” Swigert, Jr. Award** for Space Exploration to the Chandrayaan-3 team, recognized the exceptional technical and engineering achievements of the mission.

- The **John L. “Jack” Swigert, Jr. Award** for Space Exploration was instituted by the Space Foundation in 2004, in memory of John L. “Jack” Swigert, Jr., who was part of NASA’s Apollo 13 mission to the moon.
- **The Space Foundation** is a non-profit organization founded in 1983, dedicated to the global space ecosystem. It offers collaboration, information sharing, and education to further the advancement of space exploration and discovery. The annual Space Symposium, organized by the Foundation, brings together the leaders of the global space community.

Zimbabwe Introduces ZiG

- Zimbabwe has launched a new **gold-backed currency called ZiG**, an abbreviation for **“Zimbabwe Gold.”**
- This move comes as the country grapples with **hyperinflation** and a volatile financial landscape. Under the leadership of central bank governor **John Mushayavanhu**, the ZiG currency will operate with a market-determined exchange rate, replacing the depreciating RTGS dollar.
- The new notes, ranging from **denominations of 1 to 200**, aim to restore confidence in the local currency.



- Additionally, **coins will be introduced** to alleviate the scarcity of US coins, which has led to unconventional forms of change.
- To instill faith in the **ZiG**, **Mushayavanhu assures** that the currency will be backed by **precious minerals, predominantly gold**, or foreign exchange reserves.
- This measure aims to prevent the rampant devaluation experienced by previous iterations of **the Zimbabwean dollar**, addressing historic mistrust stemming from past currency crises.

- Despite the **introduction of ZiG**, the US dollar remains the dominant currency in transactions, reflecting deep-seated preferences among Zimbabweans. Skepticism persists due to previous failed attempts at currency stabilization, notably the bond note, which collapsed amid government overspending.

GUJCOST Designated as Nodal Centre

- **GUJCOST has been appointed** as the Nodal Centre for **ISRO's START programme**, aimed at nurturing aspiring scientists and engineers in the field of space science and technology.



- The programme, **conceptualized by ISRO**, provides an introductory online platform covering various areas of space science research.
- Under the **START programme**, **GUJCOST** will conduct live classes, acting as the central hub for knowledge dissemination.
- **Four Regional Science Centres** in Rajkot, Patan, Bhavnagar, and Bhuj will also contribute to facilitating the programme, expanding its reach across the region. The inaugural online programme, titled **"Exploration of Solar System,"** invites registrations until April 19.



EU-India Collaboration

- The **European Union (EU) and India** have embarked on a collaborative effort to nurture startups in the field of **Electric Vehicle (EV) battery recycling**.
- This initiative is a direct outcome of the **India-EU Trade and Technology Council (TTC)** announced in April 2022, aimed at enhancing cooperation in clean and green technologies.



- Under the TTC framework, both regions have launched expressions of interest for startups specializing in **EV battery recycling**.
- This matchmaking event seeks to facilitate partnerships between European and Indian startups, **promoting knowledge exchange and advancing circularity** in rare materials.
- Twelve startups, six from each region, will be selected to pitch their innovations during the matchmaking event in June 2024.



- Following these presentations, six finalists (three from each region) will be chosen to explore market opportunities through visits to India and the EU, respectively.
- Marc Lemaître, European Commission: Emphasizes the importance of unlocking innovative possibilities for a green and circular economy, encouraging EU innovators to collaborate with their Indian counterparts.

Largest Importer of Russian Crude

- **China has surpassed India** as the primary importer of Russian crude oil via sea routes, with China importing **1.82 million barrels per day (bpd)** in March compared to **India's 1.36 million bpd**.
- This shift is attributed to **India's slowdown** in imports due to sanctions and rising prices. In March, **China imported 1.82 million bpd** of Russian crude by sea, exceeding India's 1.36 million bpd.



- This trend marks a significant shift, as **China has become the largest buyer** of Russian seaborne crude.
- India's recent **slowdown in Russian crude imports** is linked to various sanctions and escalating prices.
- Despite a **7% month-on-month increase** in March, India's imports fell short of China's, indicating a strategic shift in its oil procurement.
- **Urals sour-grade oil remains** India's primary import from Russia.
- India's increased reliance on Russian crude stems from geopolitical tensions, particularly since **Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022**.
- Despite pressure from Western nations and OPEC+'s efforts to stabilize crude prices, India continues to purchase oil from Russia due to significant demand

and Moscow's discounted offerings. Indian officials argue that this strategy contributes to stabilizing global crude prices.



Sittwe Agreement Approved

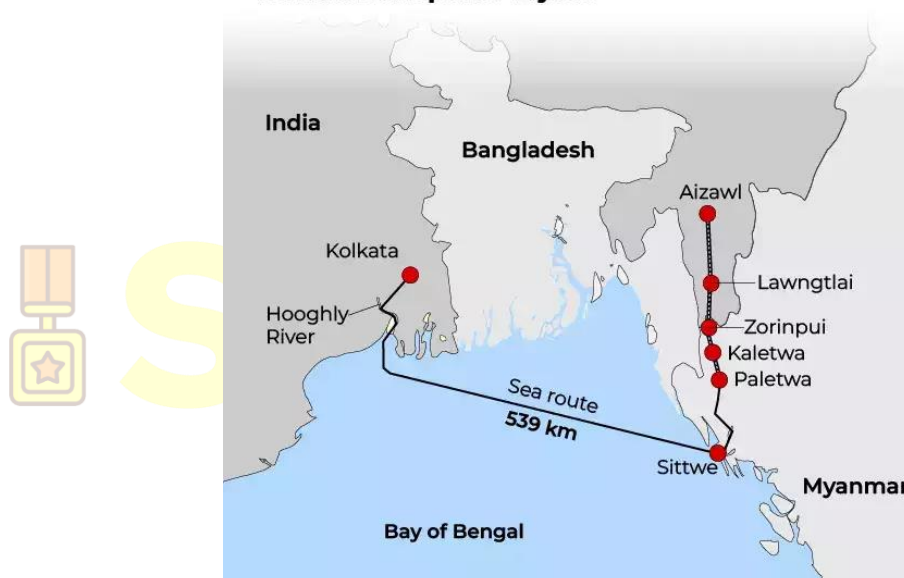
- In a strategic move to bolster its **maritime presence and enhance regional connectivity**, India has gained operational control over the **Sittwe Port in Myanmar**, following approval from the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA).
- The agreement allows **India Ports Global (IPGL)**, a company fully owned by the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways, to manage the entire port on the **Kaladan River**, marking India's second overseas port acquisition after Chabahar in Iran.



- Unlike the limited control over **terminals in Chabahar**, India now possesses complete operational authority over the Sittwe Port, positioning it strategically in the Indian Ocean rivalry with China.

- The deal includes a **long-term lease arrangement**, subject to renewal every three years, enabling India to undertake substantial development initiatives at the port.
- The port development is integral to the Kaladan project, aimed at enhancing connectivity between **Sittwe in Myanmar and Mizoram in India**, facilitated by waterways and road networks.
- The port's development aligns with India's strategy to uplift landlocked northeastern states by reducing transportation and logistic costs, thereby fostering economic growth and regional integration.

Kaladan Multi Modal Transit Transport Project



- **The Kaladan project's waterways and road networks** will substantially improve connectivity to Mizoram and Tripura, furthering trade and commerce in the region.
- **Amidst Myanmar's civil unrest**, particularly in the Rakhine state where Sittwe is situated, security concerns loom large due to ongoing conflicts between the Myanmar army and insurgent groups like the Arakan Army.
- The escalating conflict poses a potential threat to the stability and continuity of the Sittwe project. If the **rebels gain control over the Rakhine province**, it could jeopardize the port's operations and future prospects, highlighting the precarious geopolitical landscape in the region.

Indonesian Delegation Visits India

- An **Indonesian delegation** led by Mochammad Firman Hidayat, Coordinating Ministry of Maritime Affairs and Investment, to explore collaboration in various sectors and learn from **India's best practices in the mid-day meal scheme** and digital inclusion.
- The visit comes in the context of Indonesia's recently concluded elections and the incoming administration's plans to introduce new socio-economic initiatives.
- **Indonesia's President-elect Prabowo** has proposed implementing a **mid-day meal scheme in schools**, similar to India's program, as part of his election manifesto.



- The Indonesian delegation's visit to India aimed to gather insights and knowledge to make their domestic mid-day meal plan a success.
- The delegation also sought to learn from India's experiences in **digital inclusion and connectivity**, which are among the top domestic priorities of the Indonesian government.
- The delegation also explored potential areas of cooperation in reducing **marine debris, aquaculture, bio-material, bio-fuel**, and early warning systems for earthquakes during their visit to the Ministry of Earth Sciences.
- At the **Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology**, the Indonesian delegation gained insights into India's Digital Public Infrastructure, particularly the **Jan Dhan Aadhar Mobile (JAM)** trinity initiative for financial inclusion and accessibility.



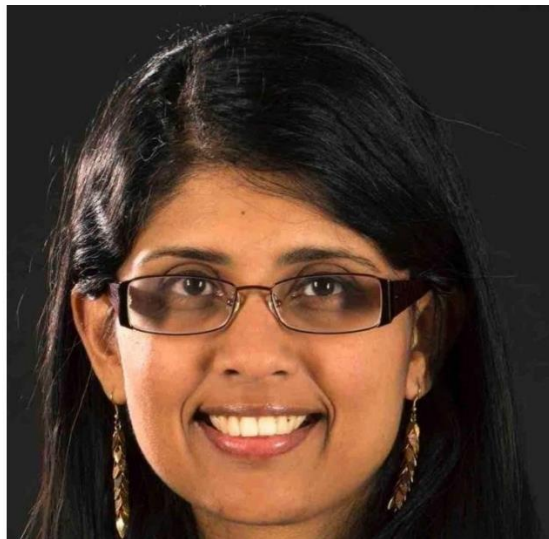
- The JAM trinity links bank accounts, Aadhaar (unique identity), and mobile numbers of Indian citizens, enabling direct benefit transfers during the Covid-19 pandemic without requiring in-person or material movements.
- One of the primary objectives of the Indonesian delegation was to learn about **India's "Mid-Day Meal Scheme."**



- The delegation interacted with officials from the Ministry of Education, gaining insights into the scheme's implementation, logistics, nutritional value, challenges, and the roles of central and state governments.
- The delegation also visited **Akshaya Patra's kitchen facilities** in Bangalore, a not-for-profit organization that is the Government of India's largest partner in operating the Mid-Day Meal Scheme.

Indian Origin Expert Ashwini

- **Dr. Ashwini Keshavan, an Indian-origin neurologist**, has been selected to be a part of a **world-class research team in the UK**. This prestigious team has been entrusted with the crucial task of conducting research to **detect dementia through blood tests** and gathering more evidence to support this approach.
- The research team's findings are expected to have a wide-ranging impact in the coming five years, as the **potential to diagnose dementia** through a simple blood test could revolutionize the way the condition is detected and managed.



- Dr. Ashwini Keshavan is part of a team that is **focusing on p-tau217**, a promising biomarker for Alzheimer's disease. This means that her research is aimed at examining the potential of **this specific protein as an indicator of Alzheimer's**, one of the most common forms of dementia.



- The overarching goal of these collaborative efforts is to **make the detection and diagnosis of dementia more accessible and affordable**, with the research team actively working to recruit participants from across the UK.
- **Dementia is a syndrome** that leads to a decline in cognitive function, which includes memory, reasoning, comprehension, spatial awareness, mathematical abilities, learning capacity, language skills, and decision-making processes. It is a chronic and progressive condition, and the symptoms are distinct from the typical effects of biological aging.
- Dementia can have various causes, such as **brain cell damage**, head injury, stroke, brain tumor, or even HIV infection.
- Dementia disproportionately affects women, with **65% of total deaths** due to the condition occurring in women.
- This initiative aligns with the World Health Organization's (WHO) "Global Dementia Action Plan," which sets global targets for dementia to be achieved by 2025.



REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. ZiG Currency Introduced By

- A. Zimbabwe
- B. Egypt
- C. Sudan
- D. Somalia

ANSWER: A

2. Which Country Is Largest Importer Of Russian Crude Oil

- A. India
- B. China
- C. Pakistan
- D. Bangladesh

ANSWER: B

3. Sittwe Port Is Situated In

- A. Bangladesh
- B. Myanmar
- C. Bangladesh
- D. Sri Lanka

ANSWER: B

4. Phanigiri Buddhist Site Is Located In Which State

- A. Telangana
- B. Karnataka
- C. Kerala
- D. Odisha

ANSWER: A

5. Recently, Indian Coast Guard Aquatic Centre Has Been Inaugurated At Which Place

- A. Tuticorin, Tamil Nadu
- B. Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh
- C. Rameshwaram, Tamil Nadu
- D. Kakinada, Andhra Pradesh

ANSWER: C

6. Lunar Polar Exploration Mission (LUPEX) Is A Joint Mission Between Which Two Space Agencies

- A. ISRO & JAXA
- B. NASA & ISRO
- C. CNSA & ROCOSMOS
- D. ESA & NASA

ANSWER: A

7. What Is 'INDRA App'

- A. A Multi Purpose App That Will Help Astronauts To Carry Activities
- B. It Provides Digital Financial Data To States
- C. It Disseminates Weather Related Information And Forecasts
- D. It Is Related To Anganwadi Workers

ANSWER: C

8. Maravakandy Dam Is Located In Which State

- A. Tamil Nadu
- B. Uttar Pradesh
- C. Maharashtra
- D. Telangana

ANSWER: A

9. A Decade Of Documenting Migrant Deaths” Report, Recently Released By Which Organization

- A. International Labour Organization (ILO)
- B. World Trade Organization (WTO)
- C. International Monetary Fund (IMF)
- D. International Organization for Migration (IOM)

ANSWER: D

10. Kodaikanal Solar Observatory Is Situated In Which State

- A. Tamil Nadu
- B. Karnataka
- C. Maharashtra
- D. Kerala

ANSWER: A

11. Caracal Due To Verge Of Extinction, Belongs To Which Species

- A. Wild cat
- B. Leopard
- C. Fish
- D. Kangaroo

ANSWER: A

12. What Is The Theme Of ‘International Mining Awareness Day 2024

- A. Protecting Lives, Building Peace
- B. Safe Ground, Safe Steps, Safe Home
- C. Together for Mine Action
- D. Perseverance, Partnership, and Progress

ANSWER: A

13. Recently, A Large Scale Damage To Cardamom Plantations Has Been Reported In Which State Due To Drought

- A. Kerala
- B. Tamil Nadu
- C. West Bengal
- D. Sikkim

ANSWER: A

14. LEADS Programme 2024, Launched By Which Organization

- A. Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FICCI) & Reserve Bank of India (RBI)
- B. Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)
- C. Indian National Science Academy (INSA) & National Centre for Good Governance (NCGG)
- D. National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD)

ANSWER: C

15. Which Organization Introduced A Digital Health Promoter Prototype S.A.R.A.H Harnessing Generative AI For Public Health

- A. WHO
- B. WTO
- C. ILO
- D. UNDP

ANSWER: A

16. Which State Government Initiated The 'Rice Fallow Management Project'

- A. Bihar
- B. Odisha
- C. Jharkhand
- D. Uttar Pradesh

ANSWER: B

17. Archaeologists From Kerala University Unearthed A 5,200-year Old Harappan Settlement At Which Place

- A. Padta Bet, Gujarat
- B. Bhirrana, Haryana
- C. Desalpur, Gujarat
- D. Hisar, Haryana

ANSWER: A

18. Which Country Has Supported The BIMSTEC Charter

- A. Nepal
- B. Bhutan
- C. Bangladesh
- D. Myanmar

ANSWER: A

19. Special Website Named 'Booth Raabta' Has Been Launched In Which State To Provide Election-related Information To The People

- A. Madhya Pradesh
- B. Haryana
- C. Punjab
- D. Uttar Pradesh

ANSWER: C

20. Who Among The Following Has Written Ghoolamgiri

- A. Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar
- B. Acharya Vinoba Bhave
- C. Jyotiba Phule
- D. Dadu Dayal

ANSWER: C