

Current Affairs
(16-11-2024, Saturday)

A special stamp was issued on Birsa Munda's 150th birth anniversary

- On November 15, 2024, Tribal Honor Day, the Department of Posts has released a special stamp to celebrate the 150th birth anniversary of tribal leader and freedom fighter Bhagwan Birsa Munda.

Legacy of Birsa Munda:

- **Born:** 15 November 1875 at Ulihatu in Bihar (now part of Jharkhand).
- **Great Revolt (Ulkulan):** From 1899 to 1900, he led the Ulkulan (Great Revolt) to mobilize tribal communities against British rule.
- **Self-governing society:** He advocated the creation of a self-governing society free from exploitation and referred to as “Munda Raj”.
- **Death:** Died at the age of 25, yet he stands as a symbol of the power and courage of tribal communities.

Tribal Honor Day:

- The day was introduced to honor the contribution of tribal communities in India's freedom struggle.
- Celebrated every year on Birsa Munda's birthday, it commemorates his legacy and emphasizes the importance of tribal communities in Indian history.

National Press Day 2024 Celebrated with the Theme “Changing Nature of Press”

- On **16th November 2024**, India observed **National Press Day**, celebrating the significance of a free and responsible press as the **fourth pillar of democracy**. The event was held at the **National Media Centre, New Delhi**, with the theme, “**Changing Nature of Press**”, focusing on the evolving media landscape.

Background:

Origin of National Press Day:

- Observed annually on **16th November** since **1966**, marking the establishment of the **Press Council of India (PCI)**.
- The PCI, recommended by the **First Press Commission (1956)**, aims to safeguard **press freedom** and maintain **journalistic ethics**.

Role of the Press Council of India:

- Acts as a **quasi-judicial body** under the **Press Council Act, 1978**, with statutory authority to regulate press freedom and ethical journalism.
- The PCI resolves complaints, issues guidelines, and investigates interference in press freedom.

Commemorations:

- **National Awards for Excellence in Journalism:** Recognizing outstanding contributions, including the prestigious **Raja Ram Mohan Roy Award**.
- **Annual Souvenir:** A collection of articles, goodwill messages, and achievements highlighting the year's theme and awardees.

Key Highlights of National Press Day 2024:

Theme: "Changing Nature of Press" emphasizes:

- The shift towards **digital media** and its challenges.
- Balancing **freedom of expression** with responsibility in an evolving landscape.

Initiatives by the PCI:

- Guidelines for **ethical reporting**, including sensitive issues like **natural disasters** and **LGBTQ+ representation**.
- Promotion of **journalistic training** through internship programs like the **Summer Internship Program (SIP)** and **Winter Internship Program (WIP)**.
- Collaboration with international media councils for **cross-border press freedom initiatives**.

Impact on Media Democracy:

- Over **37,000 complaints** resolved by the PCI since 1979.

Significance:

- **Media's Role in Democracy:** Reinforces the press's responsibility to inform, educate, and empower society.
- **Safeguarding Press Freedom:** The PCI's efforts have strengthened ethical journalism, enabling the press to adapt to modern challenges without compromising integrity.

Wildlife Institute of India (WII) and the Success of Project Cheetah

- Experts from the **Wildlife Institute of India (WII)** have praised the '**Project Cheetah**' in **Kuno National Park, Madhya Pradesh**, highlighting its success.

The ambitious project, which aimed to reintroduce cheetahs to India after a long absence, is considered an important milestone in wildlife conservation. The project's success has been attributed to the significant role played by the WII in providing scientific guidance, research, and management strategies throughout the initiative.

About the Wildlife Institute of India (WII):

- **Established:** In 1982 as an autonomous institution under the **Ministry of Environment, Forests, and Climate Change**, Government of India.
- **Location:** Situated in **Dehradun, Uttarakhand**, sharing its boundaries with the famous **Rajaji National Park**.

Objectives of WII:

- **Scientific Research:** Focuses on building comprehensive knowledge of India's wildlife resources.
- **Training and Education:** Provides training programs and academic courses to equip personnel with the necessary skills for wildlife conservation and management.
- **Research and Development:** Conducts research on wildlife management, endangered species, biodiversity, and techniques suitable for Indian conditions.
- **Collaboration:** Works with national and international organizations on wildlife research and conservation.
- **Regional and International Focus:** Aims to establish itself as a regional hub for wildlife and natural resource conservation.

Nepal Exports Power to Bangladesh via Indian Grid

- In a landmark development for regional energy cooperation, the first-ever trilateral power transaction involving Nepal, India, and Bangladesh was inaugurated today through a virtual event. The event witnessed the initiation of electricity transmission from Nepal to Bangladesh using India's power grid.
- This groundbreaking arrangement marks a major step in enhancing sub-regional energy connectivity. The Ministry of External Affairs highlighted the historical importance of the initiative, emphasizing that it strengthens inter-regional cooperation in the power sector.

Background:

Origins of the Initiative:

- The idea of facilitating power exports from Nepal to Bangladesh via Indian infrastructure was formalized during Nepal's then-Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal's visit to India in 2023. During the visit, the two nations underlined their commitment to advancing sub-regional cooperation in the energy sector, recognizing its potential to mutually benefit all stakeholders.

Key Agreements:

- To operationalize this initiative, a tripartite power sales agreement was signed on October 3, 2024, in Kathmandu. The agreement involves three entities:
 - **Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA):** Responsible for power generation in Nepal.
 - **Bangladesh Power Development Board (BPDB):** The buyer of the electricity.
 - **NTPC Vidyut Vyapar Nigam (NVTN):** India's trading arm facilitating the transaction through its grid.

Scope of the Agreement:

- Under this arrangement, Nepal will export up to 40 MW of power to Bangladesh using India's grid infrastructure. This is expected to be a stepping stone toward more extensive energy exchanges in the region.

Implications:

The successful execution of this trilateral power flow is expected to:

- **Boost Regional Connectivity:** Strengthen energy ties between South Asian countries.
- **Promote Energy Security:** Enable efficient utilization of surplus electricity in Nepal and address power shortages in Bangladesh.
- **Foster Economic Integration:** Lay the groundwork for deeper economic interdependence among participating nations.

IITF 2024 – India International Trade Fair

Opening Ceremony:

- IITF (India International Trade Fair) opened pavilions for Handicrafts/Entrepreneurial products of backward class at India International Trade Fair 2024.

Support of Backward Sections:

- Created a platform for 100+ underprivileged artisans and entrepreneurs.

- To provide marketing and export opportunities for their economic development.
- Project to provide access to the global market for traditional handicrafts.
- 35+ stalls showcasing products and technologies developed by people with disabilities (divyanchan).
- National organizations showcase new assistive devices and technologies.
- Promotes creativity, employment, and economic development of disadvantaged and underprivileged communities.
- Joint implementation by National Institutions, Public Sector Enterprises (PSE) with the Ministry.
- Strengthening of traditional handicrafts, Vocal for Local campaign.

OECD Highlights India's \$120 Billion Implicit Taxation on Farmers in 2023

- The **Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)** released its *Agricultural Policy Monitoring and Evaluation 2024* report, revealing that India implicitly taxed its farmers USD 120 billion in 2023, the highest among 54 countries analyzed.

Background:

OECD's Report Focus:

- The report evaluates agricultural support policies in 54 countries, analyzing the impacts on farmers, markets, and sustainability.

Market Price Support (MPS):

- A policy tool designed to maintain domestic prices for agricultural goods above world market levels.
- India recorded a **negative MPS of USD 110 billion** in 2023 due to export restrictions on rice, sugar, onions, and de-oiled rice bran.
- Negative MPS indicates farmers were paid less for their produce than the global market would have offered.

Explanation:

Global Agricultural Support Trends:

- Total agricultural support in the analyzed countries averaged **USD 842 billion annually (2021-23)**.
- Support levels dipped in 2022-23 but remained above pre-pandemic levels.

India's Agricultural Policies:

Negative Impact:

- Export restrictions on key crops led to suppressed prices for Indian farmers.
- India's negative MPS of USD 110 billion accounted for **62.5% of global negative price support**, followed by Vietnam and Argentina.

Minimal Positive Support:

- While subsidies and the Minimum Support Price (MSP) provided USD 10 billion, they were overshadowed by price-depressing policies.

The World Health Organization (WHO) projects 10.3 million measles cases by 2023

- This is a 20% increase compared to 2022.
- Tragically, the disease led to 107,500 deaths, mostly in children under the age of five.

Symptoms of Measles

- Fever, cough, red, spotty rash etc.
- Can cause serious complications, including pneumonia, encephalitis and death.

Disease spread factors

- **Covid-19:** Disruption of routine vaccination programmes.
- **Misinformation and vaccine hesitancy:** Widespread misinformation and vaccine hesitancy against vaccines has resulted in low vaccination rates.
- **Measles is preventable by vaccination:** Vaccinated people are protected against measles.

Sri Lanka's Ruling NPP Achieves Landslide Victory in Parliamentary Elections

- Sri Lanka's **National People's Power (NPP)** coalition secured a **two-thirds majority** in the parliamentary elections.
- The leftist alliance won **159 seats** in the 225-member Parliament.

Election Results:

National People's Power (NPP):

- Ruling party secured 159 seats, achieving a decisive mandate.

Main Opposition:

- Samagi Jana Balawegaya (SJB) led by Sajith Premadasa won 40 seats.

Other Key Parties:

- **Ilankai Tamil Arasu Kadchi (ITAK):** Secured 8 seats.
- **New Democratic Front (NDF):** Aligned with former President Ranil Wickremasinghe, suffered a setback, winning only 5 seats.

Practice question:**1. Consider the following statements:**

1. Nepal has started exporting 40 MW of power to Bangladesh through India's power grid.
2. The power sales agreement for this initiative was signed on October 3, 2024.
3. This power export agreement involves Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA), Bangladesh Power Development Board (BPDB), and NTPC Vidyut Vyapar Nigam (NVTN).

How many of the statements given above are correct?

- (a) Only one
- (b) Only two
- (c) All three
- (d) None of the above

2. Which state was the focus state for the 2024 IITF?

- (a) Bihar
- (b) Uttar Pradesh
- (c) Jharkhand
- (d) Tamil Nadu

3. What is the key achievement of the Wildlife Institute of India (WII) in the success of Project Cheetah?

- (a) The successful reintroduction of cheetahs to India
- (b) The successful preservation of the Bengal Tiger
- (c) The creation of a national wildlife database
- (d) The implementation of the tiger conservation program

4. Which theme was celebrated during National Press Day 2024?

- (a) Press and Democracy
- (b) Changing Nature of Press
- (c) Freedom of Press
- (d) Responsible Journalism

5. Consider the following statements:

1. The OECD report suggests that export bans on key agricultural products are a major cause of the implicit tax on Indian farmers.
2. India's negative Market Price Support (MPS) accounted for 62.5% of the global negative price support in 2023.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

6. Consider the following statements:

1. Measles cases increased globally in 2023 due to COVID-19 pandemic-related disruptions in vaccination programs.
2. The majority of the global deaths from measles in 2023 occurred among children under five.
3. Measles can be prevented through vaccination, but vaccine hesitancy is a growing challenge.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2
- (b) 3 only
- (c) 2 and 3
- (d) 1 and 3