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1. Cuba Approves Historic Privatisation Bill

Cuba's Parliament has unanimously approved a landmark bill introducing major changes to its socialist economy and allowing privatization in several sectors, as the country struggles under severe U.S. economic sanctions.

(i) This is considered the most significant reform to Cuba's socialist system since the 1959 Cuban Revolution led by Fidel Castro and marks an important step toward a market-oriented economy.

(ii) U.S. sanctions, disruptions in oil supplies, and the decline of the tourism sector have pushed the country into a severe economic crisis. As a result, subsidized services such as free education and healthcare have been affected.

(iii) For the first time, Cuba has permitted privatization. State-owned enterprises will be converted into private commercial companies with shares and investment opportunities.

(iv) Private firms will now be allowed to employ more than 100 workers, and individuals may own and operate multiple businesses for the first time.

2. BRICS National Security Advisers' Meeting Begins in New Delhi

The meeting of National Security Advisers (NSAs) of BRICS countries will begin in New Delhi on Monday (June 22).

(i) The two-day conference will be chaired by India's National Security Adviser Ajit Doval. China has confirmed the participation of Foreign Minister Wang Yi, who is expected to hold bilateral talks with Doval on India-China relations.

(ii) Representatives from member countries, including Iran's Deputy Secretary of the National Security Council Nizamipour, will attend. Issues such as the Ukraine war and tensions between Pakistan and Afghanistan are expected to be discussed. India is also expected to raise concerns regarding terrorist attacks in Jammu and Kashmir allegedly linked to Pakistan-based groups.

(iii) India currently holds the Chairmanship of the BRICS grouping, which includes 11 member countries such as India, China, and Russia. The NSA meeting is being held as part of India's Presidency.

3. Central Government Bans 16 Fixed-Dose Combination (FDC) Drugs

The Central Government has prohibited the manufacture, sale, and distribution of 16 Fixed-Dose Combination (FDC) medicines across the country.

(i) According to the Ministry of Health, the ban was imposed under Section 26A of the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940, because these combinations lack adequate medical justification, provide limited therapeutic benefits, and may cause adverse side effects.

(ii) FDC medicines contain two or more active pharmaceutical ingredients in fixed proportions.

The Ministry stated that:

- Following directions from the Supreme Court, an expert committee was established by the Drug Technical Advisory Board (DTAB) to review FDC medicines and identify irrational or potentially harmful drug combinations.
- Based on the committee's recommendations, 16 FDC drugs have been banned nationwide with immediate effect.
- These include medicines related to dermatology, pain relief, muscle relaxation, and antimicrobial treatments.

(iii) Banned Drug Combinations

- Acetylsalicylic acid with ethoheptazine
- Dicyclomine + Paracetamol + Cledinium Bromide
- Dicyclomine + Paracetamol + Cledinium Bromide + Chlordiazepoxide
- Gliclazide with Chromium Picolinate
- Paracetamol with Lignocaine

Antibiotic-related combinations banned include:

- Amoxicillin with Serratiopeptidase
- Amoxicillin + Serratiopeptidase + Lactobacillus Sporogenes
- Amoxicillin with Cloxacillin
- Lactic Acid Bacillus with Serratiopeptidase
- Cefadroxil with Probenecid
- Cefuroxime with Serratiopeptidase

(iv) Cosmetic Products Also Banned

Certain skincare and cosmetic formulations containing combinations of:

- Aloe vera or aloe vera extracts
- Vitamin E
- Jojoba oil
- Orange oil
- Wheat germ oil
- Tea tree oil
- Allantoin
- D-Panthenol

have also been prohibited.

State drug controllers, regulatory authorities, and law enforcement agencies have been instructed to ensure strict implementation of the ban. Manufacturers, importers, and distributors have been directed to take corrective action in compliance with the law.

4. Karnataka Reiterates Support for Mekedatu Dam Project

Karnataka Water Resources Minister Ramalinga Reddy stated that the Mekedatu Dam project would benefit both Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. Further steps will be taken once the Detailed Project Report (DPR) receives approval from the Cauvery Water Regulation Authority.

(i) He added that negotiations would be the best way to resolve the dispute and that Karnataka is willing to hold talks with Tamil Nadu.

(ii) Tamil Nadu's Legislative Assembly recently passed a unanimous resolution opposing the project and urging the Central Government not to grant approval.

Responding to this, Reddy said:

- If the Mekedatu reservoir had already existed, water could have been released to Tamil Nadu even during periods of low rainfall.
- The project would help meet Karnataka's drinking water needs while ensuring regular monthly releases to Tamil Nadu.
- Both states could benefit, and opposition to the project may adversely affect farmers.

(iii) Next Steps After Approval

- The Detailed Project Report has been submitted to the Cauvery Water Regulation Authority and is under review.
- After suggested modifications are incorporated and approval is granted, further action will be initiated.
- The project is intended solely for water storage, not irrigation.
- It aims to supply 4.75 TMC of drinking water to Bengaluru and generate 40 MW of electricity.
- Karnataka seeks only its allocated share of Cauvery water and not Tamil Nadu's allocation.

(iv) Preference for Negotiated Settlement

- Reddy argued that prolonged legal battles can delay solutions for decades.
- He cited the Krishna River water dispute as an example.
- Karnataka remains open to dialogue with Tamil Nadu regarding the project.
- He also called for political unity within Karnataka on the issue.
- Current water storage levels stand at approximately 11 TMC in the Krishnaraja Sagar reservoir and 5 TMC in the Kabini reservoir.

5. International Day of Yoga 2026

Ahead of the International Day of Yoga on June 21, around six lakh organizations registered to participate in yoga sessions alongside Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

(i) At India's initiative, the United Nations recognized Yoga in 2014 and declared June 21 as the International Day of Yoga.

(ii) This year's celebrations are being held worldwide under the theme "Yoga for Healthy Ageing."

6. Madras High Court: India Cannot Become a Dumping Ground for Foreign Waste

The Madurai Bench of the Madras High Court observed that India cannot be allowed to become a dumping ground for waste generated by other countries.

(i) The case was filed by Sripathi, a businessman from Sivakasi, Virudhunagar district, who imports paper materials used in handicrafts and decorative products from Canada, the United States, and Singapore.

(ii) During inspection, Customs officials and the Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board found that the imported consignments contained plastic waste, broken glass, food waste, and municipal solid waste mixed with the paper materials.

(iii) Consequently, Customs authorities seized the cargo, imposed penalties, and ordered that the waste be returned to the countries of origin.

(iv) The petitioner requested permission either:

- to re-export the waste to Dubai, or
- to recycle or dispose of it within India.

Justice D. Bharatha Chakravarthy ruled:

- Waste imported from one country must be returned to the same country and cannot be sent to a third country.
- The practice of developed countries exporting waste to developing nations is often described as “waste colonialism.”
- India cannot be allowed to serve as a dumping ground for foreign waste.
- One illegal act cannot be corrected through another illegal act.
- Allowing disposal within India would violate public policy and environmental protection objectives.
- Therefore, the waste must be returned to the countries from which it originated, and the case was disposed of accordingly.