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1. UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer Resigns

(i) Keir Starmer (63), the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom and leader of the ruling Labour Party, has resigned from his position.

(ii) He assured that a new Prime Minister would take office by September and that he would continue as caretaker Prime Minister until then to ensure a smooth transfer of power.

- In the UK, a person must be elected leader of the ruling party to become Prime Minister.
- As Andy Burnham enjoys strong support within the Labour Party, he may be unanimously elected without opposition and could assume office by mid-July.
- If a contest arises, a new party leader is expected to be chosen before Parliament reconvenes in September.

(iii) With Starmer's resignation, the UK is set to select its seventh Prime Minister in the last ten years. Following a series of leadership changes under the Conservative Party, a similar transition is now occurring within the Labour Party.

2. United States Temporarily Lifts Sanctions on Iranian Oil

(i) As part of a recently reached interim agreement between the United States and Iran, the U.S. has temporarily suspended economic sanctions on Iran's crude oil production, distribution, and sales for 60 days.

- U.S. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent stated that the authorization will remain valid until August 21.
- This marks the first time since the 1990s that Iranian oil has been permitted for import into the United States.

(ii) Earlier, following high-level talks held in Bürgenstock, Switzerland, under the mediation of Pakistan and Qatar, the two countries agreed on a roadmap aimed at reaching a final agreement within the next 60 days.

(iii) In a joint statement issued by the mediating countries, it was noted that the progress made during the talks, conducted in a positive and constructive atmosphere, was encouraging.

(iv) Both countries also agreed to develop new security mechanisms to ensure uninterrupted navigation through the Strait of Hormuz and to monitor the ceasefire in southern Lebanon.

(v) A high-level committee will be established to oversee negotiations and supervise technical working groups dealing with nuclear issues and economic sanctions.

(vi) The U.S. delegation was led by Vice President J.D. Vance, while the Iranian delegation was headed by Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf.

- After the talks, Vance stated that a strong foundation had been laid for a final agreement and expressed optimism about a future of peace and prosperity in the Middle East.

(vii) Although U.S. President Donald Trump did not participate directly in the negotiations, some of his social media posts briefly disrupted the discussions.

- Certain warning remarks directed at Iran caused a temporary pause in the talks.
- However, through J.D. Vance's intervention, discussions continued past midnight and concluded successfully.

3. Opposition to Removal of Kerala Representative from Mullaperiyar Dam Safety Panel

(i) The ruling Congress and opposition CPI(M) Members of Parliament in Kerala have opposed the removal of the state's representative from the Comprehensive Dam Safety Evaluation Committee (CDSEC).

- The Mullaperiyar Dam, located in Kerala, is maintained by the Government of Tamil Nadu.
- It serves the agricultural needs of five districts—Madurai, Theni, Dindigul, Sivaganga, and Ramanathapuram—and provides drinking water to several regions.
- Kerala has consistently argued that the dam is unsafe and has demanded the construction of a new dam nearby.
- Kerala's newly sworn-in Chief Minister V.D. Satheesan recently stated that discussions would be held with the Tamil Nadu Government on the issue.

(ii) In this context, Kerala's representative on the dam safety committee, T.K. Sivarajan, was recently removed from the panel.

4. U.S. Approves Sale of Apache and Howitzer Support Equipment to India

(i) The United States has issued an official notification regarding the sale of equipment and services related to Apache helicopters and lightweight Howitzer artillery systems to India, worth approximately ₹4,500 crore.

- The Indian Army operates advanced AH-64E Apache attack helicopters manufactured in the United States.
- It also uses lightweight Howitzer artillery guns designed for targeting enemy positions in high-altitude mountainous regions.

(ii) The United States provides equipment and maintenance services required for these systems.

- The U.S. Defense Security Cooperation Agency announced that India had requested Apache-related equipment and support services.
- The U.S. approved the sale at an estimated value of ₹1,873 crore.

(iii) Similarly, India's request for equipment and services related to lightweight Howitzer artillery systems was approved at a value of ₹2,175 crore.

(iv) According to the U.S. Department of Defense:

- These acquisitions will enhance India's ability to address current and future threats.
- They will strengthen India's internal security and help counter regional challenges.
- The sale will not adversely affect the military balance in South Asia.
- It will also have no impact on the operational readiness of the U.S. military.

5. Kunal Shah Appointed Global CEO of WhatsApp

(i) Kunal Shah, founder of Bengaluru-based fintech company CRED, has been appointed the Global Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of WhatsApp.

(ii) The announcement was made by Mark Zuckerberg, founder of Meta, WhatsApp's parent company.

- Will Cathcart, who served as WhatsApp's global CEO for seven years, will step down and focus on developing new services within Meta.
- Consequently, Kunal Shah has been chosen to lead WhatsApp.

According to Mark Zuckerberg:

- Kunal Shah will join Meta as the next head of WhatsApp.
- He built CRED into one of India's most significant technology companies.
- His entrepreneurial mindset and global outlook make him well-suited to lead the world's largest messaging platform.
- Meta also plans to invest \$900 million (approximately ₹8,500 crore) in CRED.
- This investment will make Meta a minority stakeholder in CRED without participating in its management.
- Kunal Shah stated that he will retain his stake in CRED while taking up his responsibilities at WhatsApp.

6. U.S. Trade Representative Jamieson Greer to Visit India

(i) Jamieson Greer, the United States Trade Representative (USTR), is scheduled to visit India this week to advance negotiations on the interim bilateral trade agreement agreed upon by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Donald Trump.

(ii) During the G7 Summit in France, Modi and Trump directed officials from both countries to expedite the implementation of bilateral trade arrangements.

- Greer's visit aims to discuss the recently agreed interim trade deal and the broader U.S.–India trade agreement with Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal and senior Indian officials.
- The USTR's office stated that these discussions form part of the wider bilateral trade negotiations between the two countries.
- Earlier, official-level talks on the interim agreement were held in New Delhi on June 2 and June 4.
- The visit is also significant because Greer recently recommended an additional 12.5% tariff on imports from 54 countries, including India.
- Following a Supreme Court ruling invalidating President Trump's reciprocal tariff measures, the United States initiated a fresh investigation under Section 301 of the Trade Act of 1974.
- The investigation examined how trade practices in countries such as India, China, and Japan may have affected American manufacturing.
- Based on the findings, Greer recommended imposing additional tariffs on imports from 54 countries, including India.

7. External Affairs Minister Jaishankar Meets Mongolian President

(i) India's External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar met Mongolian President Ukhnaagiin Khürelsükh during his official visit to Mongolia.

- As part of his visit to Mongolia and South Korea, Jaishankar first arrived in Ulaanbaatar, the capital of Mongolia.

(ii) After Mongolia, Jaishankar will travel to South Korea, where he will meet Foreign Minister Cho Hyun.

- He will also participate in the Jeju Forum for Peace and Prosperity, where he is scheduled to deliver an address.

- The Jeju Forum is regarded as an important platform where experts from various fields discuss major international issues.

8. Justice V. Ramasubramanian is the Chairperson of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC).

9. Landmark Supreme Court ruling that elevates the right to safe walking on footpaths to a fundamental constitutional right.

(i) Supreme Court's Landmark Ruling

- A Supreme Court bench comprising Justice P.S. Narasimha and Justice S.V. Bhatti declared that walking on clearly defined and well-maintained sidewalks is a basic right of pedestrians.
- The Court emphasized that the construction of footpaths for pedestrians should take priority over the construction of roads for vehicle traffic.
- The ruling originated from a case involving a 5-year-old boy from Karnataka who was killed by a tanker lorry while walking to school with his father.

(ii) Constitutional and Legal Basis

- The Court noted that the right to walk safely in public spaces is guaranteed by the Constitution of India.
- Specifically, this right is derived from Article 19(1)(d), which ensures the freedom to move throughout the nation, and Article 21, which protects the right to life and personal liberty.
- This case is compared with the expansion of rights to the 1978 Maneka Gandhi case, which paved the way for including rights such as a clean environment, free education, and privacy under the umbrella of fundamental rights.

(iii) Duty of Local and Central Authorities

- The responsibility to ensure wide and safe sidewalks lies with Gram Panchayats, Municipalities, and Corporations.
- The Court criticized Governments for prioritizing high-speed expressways while ignoring the basic necessity of footpaths for citizens.
- The bench suggested that the Central Government should enact a specific law to mandate sidewalk construction on all roads across the country.

(iv) Alarming Pedestrian Fatality Statistics

- According to 2024 Ministry of Road Transport and Highways data, 19,680 pedestrians died in road accidents in India, accounting for 20.6% of total road fatalities.
- Tamil Nadu ranks first in the country for pedestrian deaths with 4,712 fatalities, followed by Bihar (4,149), Maharashtra (3,344), and West Bengal (3,241).

(v) Challenges: Encroachment and Misplaced Priorities

- Existing sidewalks are often extremely narrow (only 4–5 feet) and are frequently encroached upon by shops, street vendors, and two-wheeler parking.
- These obstructions force pedestrians onto the main road, putting them at high risk.
- An increasing trend where vehicle drivers view pedestrians as "obstacles" rather than rightful users of the public space.

(vi) Recommendations for Reform

- The Court ordered the Law Commission to study and formulate policies regarding pedestrian rights

and fair compensation for accidents.

- Key ministries, including Road Transport and Highways, Rural Development, and Housing and Urban Affairs, must focus on pedestrian safety as a priority.
- Following the ruling, authorities must act quickly to permanently remove encroachments and construct standard footpaths on both sides of all roads.