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1. India and Japan Agree to Set Up 1,000 Biogas and Organic Fertilizer Plants in India

- i. India and Japan have decided to establish 1,000 biogas and organic fertilizer production plants in India with Japanese cooperation.
- ii. Similarly, the two countries signed an agreement for the joint production of advanced military equipment for the first time.
- iii. These important decisions were taken during the 16th annual summit talks held in New Delhi between Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi.
- iv. Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi arrived in India on a three-day state visit. During the annual high-level bilateral talks held in New Delhi, the two leaders held extensive discussions on strengthening cooperation in areas including trade, investment, economic security, energy, emerging technologies, defense, and people-to-people ties.
- v. In the context of China's growing influence in the Indo-Pacific region, the leaders also discussed regional developments and international issues.

Key Agreements Signed

- Following the talks, several important agreements were signed in the presence of the two Prime Ministers to expand cooperation in economic security, clean energy, critical technologies, pharmaceuticals, medical equipment manufacturing, and biotechnology.

Economic and Energy Security

- India and Japan have formulated a joint action plan on economic security. Through this initiative, resilient supply chains in strategic sectors such as semiconductors, quantum technologies, and advanced technology products will be strengthened.
- Under the India-Japan Biogas Initiative, 1,000 biogas and organic fertilizer production plants will be established in India. This initiative is expected to further strengthen sustainability, prosperity, and rural livelihoods in Indian villages.
- To address challenges such as crude oil supply disruptions, the two countries have committed to significant fuel resilience initiatives. Cooperation in batteries, green hydrogen, and clean energy sectors will be expanded.
- India and Japan signed their first-ever defense co-production agreement. According to Prime Minister Modi, this agreement for the joint production of naval radio antennas will strengthen regional peace and maritime security.

75th Anniversary of Bilateral Relations

- India and Japan will complete 75 years of diplomatic relations next year. According to Foreign Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal, both countries have agreed to organize various commemorative events to mark the occasion.
- India-Japan relations were elevated to a “Special Strategic and Global Partnership” in 2014. More than 70 dialogue mechanisms are currently operational between the two countries.

Trade and Investment

- More than 100 new trade agreements have been signed between India and Japan over the past ten years, resulting in investments exceeding \$10 billion (approximately ₹95,462 crore) in India.
- The target for the next decade is to attract investments worth 10 trillion yen (approximately ₹5.9 lakh crore) from Japan and to double the number of Japanese companies operating in India.
- Prime Minister Modi stated that the combination of Japan’s precision technologies and India’s software capabilities would provide fresh momentum and strength to the field of artificial intelligence.

2. Wildfires Spread Rapidly in Southern France Due to Severe Heatwave and Drought

- i. Due to the severe heatwave and drought affecting European countries, wildfires are spreading rapidly through forest areas in southern France.
- ii. Following record temperatures recorded in late May and June, France is experiencing severe drought conditions. Vegetation has dried out completely, and strong winds have further intensified the spread of wildfires.
- iii. In particular, around 2,200 acres of land near the Spanish border have already been destroyed by fire. More than 800 firefighters, supported by over 150 fire engines and firefighting aircraft, are involved in controlling the blaze.
- iv. Meanwhile, wildfires also spread to tourist destinations such as Marseille and Fréjus, forcing the evacuation of more than 2,000 people from campsites as a precautionary measure.
- v. French health authorities have expressed serious concern that the prolonged heatwave may have caused the deaths of up to 1,000 people so far.

3. India’s Oil Companies Incur Losses of ₹74,781 Crore Due to Iran-US-Israel Conflict

- i. Union Minister for Petroleum and Natural Gas Hardeep Singh Puri stated that India’s oil companies had incurred losses of ₹74,781 crore as of June 30 due to the conflict involving Iran, the United States, and Israel in West Asia.
- ii. The conflict led to the closure of the Strait of Hormuz, a crucial maritime route used for transporting crude oil and natural gas from Gulf countries. This resulted in fuel shortages and price increases in

many countries worldwide. However, India's public sector oil companies did not significantly raise domestic fuel prices despite rising international prices.

iii. Addressing reporters in New Delhi, Minister Puri stated

- Although tensions have eased somewhat and international crude oil prices have declined, oil companies are still refining crude purchased at higher prices during the peak of the crisis. Therefore, the full benefit of lower prices has not yet reached consumers.
- Due to tensions in West Asia, international crude oil prices had started rising as early as February. Despite this, Indian oil companies continued selling fuel below production cost.
- As of June 30, oil companies had incurred losses of ₹74,781 crore by selling petrol, diesel, and LPG below their production costs.
- The fuel currently being supplied was refined from crude oil purchased nearly two months ago. Most of this crude was bought during April and early May, when international prices were exceptionally high.

4. Indian Navy Foils Piracy Attempt in Gulf of Aden

The Indian Navy's stealth warship, INS Trikanth, foiled a piracy attempt on a foreign-flagged cargo ship in the Gulf of Aden. Naval officials confirmed that the safety of all 21 crew members, including an Indian sailor, was ensured.

5. Central Government Issues Rules for the VB G RAM G Rural Employment and Livelihood Guarantee Scheme (125-Day Employment Scheme)

- i. The Central Government has issued three sets of rules under the VB G RAM G (Viksit Bharat – Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin)) Rural Employment and Livelihood Guarantee Act, 2025, popularly known as the 125-day employment scheme.
- ii. The VB G RAM G scheme, introduced as a replacement for the Mahatma Gandhi Rural Employment Guarantee (100-day employment) scheme, came into effect on July 1. The Union Ministry of Rural Development issued several notifications in this regard.

First Notification

- State Governments must identify pending payments under the 100-day employment scheme up to June 30 and submit certificates within 180 days confirming payment of eligible dues.
- The Central Government may extend this deadline by an additional 90 days if valid reasons are provided.
- All works currently undertaken under the 100-day employment scheme will be brought under the

125-day employment scheme.

- Existing job cards will remain valid until new employment guarantee cards are issued.

Second Notification

- Wages and unemployment allowances under the 125-day employment scheme must be transferred directly to beneficiaries' bank or post office accounts.
- Cash transactions are strictly prohibited.

Third Notification

- The Central Government will bear the entire expenditure for Union Territories without legislative assemblies.
- Expenditure incurred by State Governments beyond Central funding will be monitored through the Management Information System (MIS).

- iii. The 125-day employment scheme was officially launched in Tirupati, Andhra Pradesh, by Union Rural Development Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan and Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu.

6. Growth of maize cultivation in India and a strategic shift from water-intensive crops like rice and wheat to maize.

i. Historical Evolution and Growth Milestones

- Historically, maize production in India began slowly compared to international trends, where growth started well before India's Green Revolution.
- A major turning point occurred in 2007-08 when production increased by 22%, followed by a 25% increase the subsequent year.
- In the last decade, maize has become the fastest-growing irrigated crop in India, with production rising from 2.26 crore tons in 2015-16 to 5.5 crore tons in 2025-26.
- Maize production has achieved a growth rate that is triple that of wheat and double that of rice and pulses.
- A significant historical fact is that maize achieved this rapid growth without the heavy government incentives typically provided to rice and wheat.

ii. Geographical Distribution and State-wise Performance

- Maize is successfully cultivated across all agricultural regions of India due to its unique ability to adapt to diverse geographical conditions.
- Five states—West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Telangana, and Tamil Nadu—account for 22% of the total maize cultivation area but contribute a significant 38% of total production.
- Yield Statistics by State:

- West Bengal leads with a yield of 7 tons per hectare.
- Andhra Pradesh follows with 6.5 tons.
- Bihar records 6.1 tons.
- Telangana and Tamil Nadu maintain similar high-productivity levels.
- While Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, and Karnataka cultivate maize on a large scale, their yields remain lower at approximately 3 tons per hectare.
- Despite having 70% irrigation coverage for maize, production in Uttar Pradesh remains low due to a lack of systematic effort.

iii. Scientific Adaptability and Potential

- Maize is one of the few crops that can be grown in all three seasons: Kharif, Rabi, and Summer.
- The use of modern, high-quality hybrid seeds is cited as a primary reason for the recent surge in yields.
- While the current national yield is 4 tons per hectare, the Indian Agricultural Science Center believes that by introducing better seeds, India can double this to reach an international standard of 8 tons per hectare.

iv. Environmental Rationale for the Shift

- Maize requires significantly less water compared to rice and wheat, which are noted for depleting groundwater levels.
- Unlike rice and wheat, which can damage soil fertility and pollute the environment, maize is a more sustainable alternative.
- Shifting to maize provides farmers with stable, continuous employment and a sufficient income, making it a necessary policy goal for the Government.