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1. Union Cabinet Approves Draft Bill to Impose Stricter Punishment for Examination Malpractice

- i. The Union Cabinet has approved a draft amendment bill aimed at ensuring stringent punishment for those involved in examination malpractice, particularly question paper leaks.
- ii. The approval came just hours after Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced that a bill containing strict measures against question paper leaks would be introduced in Parliament on Monday, July 27.
- iii. According to Government sources, the proposed legislation provides for:
 - Imprisonment of up to 10 years for those involved in question paper leak scams.
 - A maximum fine of ₹10 crore.
- iv. During the Monsoon Session of Parliament, thousands of youths, under the banner of the Cockroach Janata Party, marched towards Parliament protesting against alleged irregularities in the NEET examination and demanding the resignation of Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan. Police dispersed the protesters using lathi charges and tear gas. The clashes left many protesters and over 100 security personnel injured. Opposition parties have also continued to disrupt Parliament demanding the minister's resignation.
- v. Against this backdrop, the Union Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Modi, approved the draft amendment bill to strengthen punishments for examination fraud.
- vi. Earlier, following widespread controversy over public examination paper leaks, the Central Government enacted the Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Act, 2024. Before this Act, India did not have a dedicated law to deal with such examination-related offences. Although President Droupadi Murmu gave assent to the Act, it was officially notified in June 2024, four months later, after major allegations of NEET and NET question paper leaks triggered nationwide protests.

- vii. The 2024 law prescribed:
- 3 to 5 years' imprisonment for examination fraud.
 - 5 to 10 years' imprisonment and a minimum fine of ₹1 crore for organised examination malpractice.
- viii. The proposed amendment seeks to make the law even stricter by increasing the penalties. Under the new provisions:
- A minimum of 5 years' imprisonment and a maximum of 10 years may be imposed.
 - A fine of up to ₹10 crore may also be levied.

2. United States Imposes 10% Import Tariff on Goods from India

- i. The United States has imposed a 10% import tariff on goods imported from India.
- ii. The same 10% tariff has also been imposed on imports from 16 other countries that maintain trade relations with the United States.
- iii. According to the Office of the United States Trade Representative (USTR), the tariff on India was reduced to 10% after taking into account India's amendments to its Foreign Trade Policy on July 14, aimed at preventing the export of goods produced using forced labour.
- iv. The new tariff replaced the temporary 10% tariff imposed on imports from 60 countries, including India, on February 24, which expired at midnight on Thursday.
- v. At the same time, the United States imposed a 12.5% tariff on imports from 43 countries, including China, the United Kingdom, and Japan, which have not enacted laws to prevent the export of goods produced through forced labour, as recommended by the USTR.

3. China Uses Water Cannons Against Philippine Patrol Vessels in the South China Sea

- i. China's Coast Guard used powerful water cannons against two patrol vessels belonging to the Philippine Bureau of Fisheries near the disputed Scarborough Shoal in the South China Sea.
- ii. This marked the third confrontation between the two countries during the current week.
- iii. The Philippines strongly condemned China's actions and reiterated that Scarborough Shoal lies within its Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ).
- iv. China, however, maintained that it has complete sovereignty over Scarborough Shoal and said its actions were intended to stop Philippine vessels that had allegedly entered the

area illegally.

- v. Although the Permanent Court of Arbitration ruled in 2016 that China's claims over much of the South China Sea have no legal basis under the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), China continues to assert ownership over the strategically important global shipping route.

4. Ukraine Discusses Local Production of Patriot Missiles

- i. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said discussions have been held with the American defence company Raytheon regarding the manufacture of Patriot air defence missiles within Ukraine to counter Russia's continuing missile attacks.
- ii. During the NATO Summit in Turkey, U.S. President Donald Trump reportedly assured Ukraine that it would receive a licence to produce Patriot missiles for its own defence.
- iii. Following this, Zelenskyy met Raytheon representatives in Kyiv, and it was announced that both Government and private-sector teams from the two countries would jointly work on the production project.

5. Bangladesh President Mohammad Shahabuddin Resigns

- i. Bangladesh President Mohammad Shahabuddin (76) resigned from office due to ill health.
- ii. A long-time supporter of former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, who had stepped down following intense student protests, Shahabuddin resigned despite having two years remaining in his term.

6. Rahul Bhatia is the Co-founder and Managing Director of IndiGo Airlines.

7. India Announces Team for the Chess Olympiad

- i. India has announced its squad for the 46th Chess Olympiad to be held in Samarkand, Uzbekistan.
- ii. The team includes reigning World Champion D. Gukesh, along with siblings R. Praggnanandhaa and R. Vaishali.

- iii. The tournament will be held from September 16 to 27.
- iv. India will field teams consisting of five men and five women.
- v. Having won both the Open and Women's titles at the 2024 Chess Olympiad in Hungary, India will participate as the defending champion.

8. FMSCI Granted Interim National Sports Federation Status

- i. The Federation of Motor Sports Clubs of India (FMSCI) has been granted interim National Sports Federation status by the Union Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports.
- ii. The development comes as FMSCI and the Government are working together to bring Formula One (F1) racing back to India.
- iii. The recognition makes FMSCI eligible to receive financial assistance from the Central Government.
- iv. India last hosted a Formula One Grand Prix between 2011 and 2013. The event was discontinued due to taxation and financial issues.
- v. The Government is now aiming to bring Formula One back to India by 2028.
- vi. According to Formula One, the number of Indian F1 fans increased from 80 million in December last year to 98 million within six months.
- vii. FMSCI was established in 1971 and is recognised by the Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile (FIA).

9. Viswanathan Anand Becomes Acting President of FIDE

- i. Five-time World Chess Champion Viswanathan Anand has assumed charge as the Acting President of the International Chess Federation (FIDE).
- ii. The development follows the inclusion of FIDE President Arkady Dvorkovich of Russia in the European Union sanctions list over issues related to the Russia-Ukraine conflict.

10. Durand Cup – Football

11. India's Sainyam won a silver medal at the Shooting World Cup being held in China.

12. Bill Introduced to Make Insulting 'Vande Mataram' a Punishable Offence

- i. A Constitutional Amendment Bill has been introduced in the Rajya Sabha to make obstructing or insulting the national song "Vande Mataram" a punishable offence.
- ii. The bill, titled the National Honour (Prevention of Insults) Amendment Bill, 2026, was introduced by Union Minister of State for Home Affairs Nityanand Rai, despite strong opposition from opposition parties, including Left MPs.
- iii. The amendment seeks to modify the Prevention of Insults to National Honour Act, 1971.
- iv. The existing law already makes insulting the National Flag, the Constitution, and the National Anthem punishable with up to three years' imprisonment.
- v. The amendment proposes to extend the same legal protection currently available to the National Anthem to the National Song, "Vande Mataram."
- vi. Earlier, the Union Home Ministry directed that the complete six-stanza version of Vande Mataram should be sung in all Government schools and official Government functions across the country.
- vii. The guidelines specify that:
 - State songs may be sung first.
 - Vande Mataram must be sung next.
 - The National Anthem must then be sung.
- viii. In this context, the amendment bill has now been formally introduced in the Rajya Sabha to make obstructing or insulting Vande Mataram a punishable offence.

13. Analysis of the recurring mining and tunnel accidents in India, specifically focusing on the recent tragedy in Sikkim.

- i. Mining accidents and the resulting loss of lives have become common occurrences both in India and globally, yet they fail to bring lasting change or comfort to the victims.
- ii. Recent Accidents in India (2026):
 - Meghalaya: In February, 18 people died in an illegal mine explosion in the East Jaintia Hills district.
 - Kerala: In July, 8 people lost their lives due to a landslide during tunnel road work in Wayanad.
- iii. The Sikkim Tragedy (Teesta-6 Project):

- A massive landslide occurred at the Teesta Stage-6 hydroelectric project tunnel in the Namchi district(Samdong area).
- 25 workers died in this incident.
- Out of the 27 workers present in different parts of the tunnel at the time of the accident, only two survived.
- The workers involved were primarily from West Bengal, Uttarakhand, and Assam.

iv. Geographical and Technical Risks:

- The Teesta river flows for 400 km through Sikkim and West Bengal before entering Bangladesh; several hydroelectric stations are built along this path.
- The region is earthquake-prone and sits near the Himalayas, making it geologically sensitive.
- Drilling into ancient rock formations often releases trapped methane gas. When this gas mixes with oxygen, even a small spark from tools or electrical equipment can cause a violent explosion.
- Such explosions release thick smoke and carbon monoxide while depleting oxygen, leading to the immediate suffocation and death of workers in narrow spaces.

v. Project History and Management:

- The Teesta-6 project was originally started by a private company but was abandoned due to escalating construction costs.
- The project was subsequently taken over and continued by a Government corporation.

vi. Historical Context of Disasters:

On October, 2023 the South Lhonak Lake (a glacial lake in the Himalayas) burst, causing floods that swept away hundreds of people.

vii. Core Arguments and Questions Raised

- In the 21st century, technology allows for unmanned missiles to hit targets thousands of kilometers away and for robots to perform surgeries. Why has technology not yet been implemented to detect and remove methane gas before sending workers into dangerous tunnels?
- While development projects are necessary, it is the primary duty of the Government to ensure the safety of the workers involved.
- Poor workers who sacrifice their lives to build "Modern India" often remain unidentified and forgotten, buried without recognition.