Revised Guidelines for Disabled Admissions

❖ **Context**
  ➢ National Medical Commission's new guidelines say on admissions and quota for disabled people.

❖ **Key Highlights:**
- The guidelines propose the removal of the **80% disability cap** for medical education, except for locomotor disabilities, where it will not be entirely eliminated.
- **Formation of the Panel:** The panel was established in response to a directive from the **Delhi High Court, aiming to explore possibilities** for candidates with disabilities in medical education.
- **Eligibility Criteria for Medical Courses:** As per the current guidelines, individuals with over **40% disability** can be eligible for medical courses and quotas if their disability can be reduced below the 40% threshold with the help of aids.
- **Inclusion of Candidates with Mental Illnesses:** Members from the Psychiatry Department argue that individuals with mental illnesses can pursue medicine without posing a **threat to patient safety**, as long as they meet the necessary requirements and complete the mandatory internship.
- Questioning Guidelines for Mental Illness Reservation: Concerns are raised regarding existing guidelines that discourage **reservation for candidates** with mental illnesses due to the lack of objective methods to establish the presence and extent of mental illness.
- **Inclusive Approach:** The panel recommends allowing everyone to pursue a medical course, with individuals with disabilities exceeding **40% being eligible** to compete for 5% of the seats reserved for persons with disabilities.
- Criteria for Locomotor Disabilities: Regarding locomotor disabilities, the guidelines suggest that students should be capable of performing various activities and tasks without depending on wheelchairs or crutches.

- **Concerns about Specific Tasks:** Specific concerns are raised regarding tasks like kneeling or crouching, which may not be essential for medical practice and could unnecessarily disqualify candidates.
- **Suitability of Assistive Devices:** Some experts argue that certain assistive devices, like the Jaipur foot, can provide mobility that enables individuals to perform essential tasks. However, questions remain about their suitability in specific situations, such as military service.

❖ **About National Medical Commission:**
- The NMC was established in 2019 under the National Medical Commission Act, with the objective of reforming the **existing medical education system** in the country.
- It replaced the previously functioning Medical Council of India (MCI).
- **Composition and Structure:**
  o The NMC consists of various members**, including a Chairperson, Members,** and ex-officio Members appointed by the central government.
  o The commission comprises medical professionals, experts from related fields, and representatives from different states and union territories.
- **Functions and Responsibilities:**
  o The NMC is responsible for formulating policies and regulations related to medical education, including undergraduate and postgraduate medical courses.
  o It sets standards for medical education, including curriculum, infrastructure, and faculty requirements.
  o The NMC also oversees the conduct of common entrance examinations for admission to medical courses, such as the **National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (NEET).**

Migration Pact Signed

❖ **Context**
  ➢ India and Australia have signed a migration pact aimed at facilitating the movement of students, academics, and professionals between the two countries.

❖ **Key Highlights:**
- The agreement was announced during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Australia, **highlighting the strengthening of bilateral relations.**
- The migration and mobility partnership agreement aims to promote the exchange of **students, graduates, researchers, and businesspeople**, fostering closer people-to-people ties and cooperation in preventing people smuggling.
- The agreement has the potential to enhance cooperation and expand opportunities for collaboration.

- In addition to the migration pact, India plans to establish a **new consulate** in Brisbane, adding to its existing consulates in Perth, Melbourne, and Sydney.
- **Some other agreements:**

  o Both countries also finalized the **Terms of Reference for the India-Australia** Hydrogen Task Force, which focuses on exploring green hydrogen opportunities and aligning with energy targets and emissions reduction goals.

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The Telangana- A.P. Water Dispute

❖ **Context**
  ➢ The Krishna water dispute between Andhra Pradesh (A.P.) and Telangana remains unresolved even nine years after the bifurcation of the combined state.

❖ **Key Highlights:**
- **Historical Background:** The dispute traces back to the formation of Andhra Pradesh in 1956 when a Gentlemen's Agreement was signed to safeguard Telangana's water resource interests.
- **Bachawat Tribunal (KWDT-I):**
  o In 1969, the Bachawat Tribunal was established to settle water share disputes among Maharashtra, Karnataka, and Andhra Pradesh.
  o The Tribunal allocated 811 tmcft dependable water to Andhra Pradesh and recommended the diversion of Tungabhadra Dam water to drought-prone areas in Telangana, which was not implemented.
- **Lack of Specific Water Allocation:**
  o The Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation Act, 2014, did not specify water share allocations after the bifurcation.
  o An ad hoc arrangement with a 34:66 (Telangana:A.P.) ratio for water sharing, subject to annual review, was agreed upon.
- **Divergent Perspectives:**
  o Telangana advocates for an equal share of water based on basin parameters and international sharing practices.
  o Concerns raised about water diversion by Andhra Pradesh from fluoride-affected and drought-prone areas within the basin.

- **Protection of Developed Areas:** Andhra Pradesh claims a higher share to safeguard the interests of already developed command areas.
- **Central Government's Role:**
  o The Central government has convened meetings of the Apex Council but has not taken decisive action to resolve the issue.
  o Telangana withdrew its petition from the Supreme Court based on the Ministry of Jal Shakti's assurance to refer the matter to a Tribunal, but the process has been delayed.
- **Ongoing Persistence:** The dispute between Andhra Pradesh and Telangana continues to persist, with no resolution in sight.

IMF's Call for Restructuring

❖ **Context:**
  ➢ The **International Monetary Fund** (IMF) has urged Sri Lanka to promptly reach restructuring agreements with its creditors ahead of the IMF's first scheduled review in September.

❖ **Key Highlights:**
- The objective is to help Sri Lanka achieve debt sustainability and revive its economy after last year's economic crash.
- An IMF mission conducted a staff visit to Sri Lanka to assess the implementation of **the Fund's program.**
- The program aims to support debt sustainability and economic recovery in the aftermath of the economic downturn.
- Sri Lanka has witnessed some positive developments, including moderated inflation, stabilized exchange rates, and the Central Bank rebuilding reserves buffers.
- However, the overall macroeconomic and policy environment remains challenging.
- **Importance of Restructuring Agreements:** Attaining timely restructuring agreements with creditors is crucial for restoring debt sustainability in Sri Lanka.

- **Creditor Committee's Involvement:** A 17-member creditor committee, co-chaired by **India, Japan, and France**, held discussions regarding Sri Lanka's formal request for debt treatment.
- **Emphasis on Fair Debt Treatment:** The committee emphasized the need for **private creditors** and other official bilateral creditors to present a debt treatment plan that aligns with the terms agreed upon by the creditor committee.

- **Sri Lanka's Economic Challenges:** Sri Lanka's economic difficulties initially stemmed from a balance of payments problem, which subsequently led to a severe meltdown, resulting in shortages of essential supplies for an extended period.

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News in Between the Lines
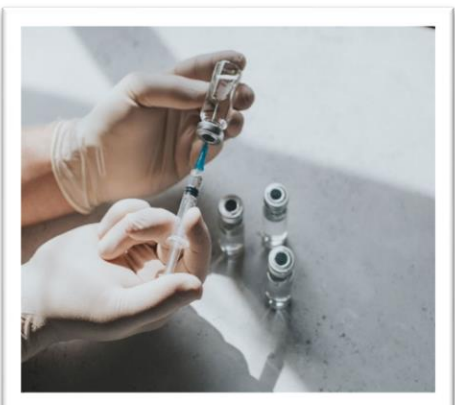
Digital India Bill

❖ **Context:**
➤ The Digital India Bill, a comprehensive draft law governing the Internet, is set to be released in the first week of June 2023.

❖ **Key Highlights:**
- This bill is expected to be the most significant overhaul of Internet laws since the Information Technology Act, 2000, and its subsequent amendments.
- The government aims to pass the law during the winter session of Parliament within the current calendar year.
- The law will follow a framework based on foundational principles and will be regulated through rules.
- **Regulation of Artificial Intelligence (AI):**
  - The minister highlighted the intention to regulate AI based on the concept of user harm.
  - The draft aims to identify specific areas where restrictions on AI technologies should apply and establish guardrails for high-risk AI systems.
- **Consolidation of Regulations:**
  - The government's move to consolidate the existing patchwork of regulations into a principle-based structure is welcomed by industry experts.
  - However, concerns have been raised about the potential removal of the safe harbour provision, which is considered essential for growth and innovation in the digital economy.
- **Sectoral Regulation and Harmonization:**
  - Sectoral regulators like the Reserve Bank of India will continue their efforts without significant impact from the new technology legislation.
  - The Digital India Bill aims to harmonize various aspects of the tech space and ensure coordination among different ministries and departments.
- **Role of Regulators:**
  - The minister expressed a preference for regulators to intervene only in exceptional circumstances, rather than creating additional compliance burdens for startups and the innovation ecosystem.
  - The proposed approach is similar to the planned Data Protection Board, which would provide adjudication or independent intervention when necessary.

Vaccine For Pancreatic Cancer

❖ **Context:**
➤ Researchers have created a **personalized mRNA** vaccine for pancreatic cancer, demonstrating encouraging outcomes in preventing tumor recurrence after surgery.

❖ **Key Highlights:**
- In a small study involving 16 pancreatic cancer patients, half of them remained free from relapse during the 18-month trial period after receiving the mRNA vaccine.
- **Targeting Tumor Mutations:**
  - The mRNA vaccine specifically targets mutations present in the patients' tumors, stimulating an immune response against these unique **neoantigen structures.**
  - This approach aims to enhance the immune system's ability to recognize and attack cancer cells more effectively.
- **Addressing Challenges in Pancreatic Cancer:**
  - Pancreatic cancer is challenging to detect early, and even after surgical removal of the tumor, it frequently returns due to the cancer's adaptability.
  - The personalized vaccine approach holds promise for **individualized therapy,** targeting the unique characteristics of each pancreatic cancer case.
- **Significance in Pancreatic Cancer Treatment:**
  - Pancreatic cancer is **notoriously difficult to treat**, with a low survival rate and limited treatment options.
  - The development of an mRNA vaccine tailored to **individual patients** represents a significant breakthrough in using this technology for pancreatic cancer vaccines.

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Sengol

- ❖ **Context:**
  - ➢ The Sengol, a historic sceptre from Tamil Nadu, will be installed in the new parliament building next to the Lok Sabha Speaker's seat.
- ❖ **Key Highlights:**
  - The word **"Sengol"** is derived from the Tamil word "Semmai," meaning "Righteousness."
  - **Sengol Description:** The Sengol measures five feet in length and features a **'Nandi'** bull on top, symbolizing justice.
  - **Symbol of Independence:**
    - ○ It holds great significance in the commemoration **of India's Independence.**
    - ○ On August 14, 1947, **Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru received** the Sengol through **the Adhinam** of Tamil Nadu.
    - ○ This symbolic act represented the shift of power from the British to the people of India.
  - **Historical Inspiration:**
    - ○ Lord Mountbatten, the last Viceroy of India, **sought a ceremony** to symbolize the transfer of power.
    - ○ C Rajagopalachari, the last Governor-General of India, **shared the ancient Chola dynasty tradition.**
    - ○ The Chola ceremony involved the handover of the Sengol from one king to his successor to sanctify the transfer of power.
  - **Transfer Ceremony:**
    - ○ During the ceremony on August 14, 1947, the Sengol was brought by **three** individuals, **including the Deputy High Priest of the Adheenam, the Nadaswaram player Rajarathinam Pillai, and the Oduvar (singer).**
    - ○ The Sengol was taken in procession and a special song composed by the Tamil saint **Tirugnana Sambandar** was rendered.
    - ○ Eventually, the sceptre was handed over to Nehru at his house, marking the completion of the symbolic transfer of power.

UDAN 5.1

- ❖ **Context:**
  - ➢ The Ministry of Civil Aviation has launched version 5.1 of the Regional Connectivity Scheme (RCS) called Ude Desh Ka Aam Nagrik (UDAN) to improve connectivity in remote areas and establish last mile connectivity through helicopters.
- ❖ **Key Highlights:**
  - This specific round of UDAN focuses on helicopter routes.
  - The Ministry has reduced airfare **caps by up to 25% to make helicopter** travel more affordable for passengers.
  - **Viability Gap Funding (VGF)** caps for operators of single and twin-engine helicopters have been substantially increased to enhance financial viability for operating the awarded routes.
  - UDAN 5.1 represents two emerging phenomena in Indian civil aviation: deeper democratisation of air travel with a **focus on last-mile connectivity**, and the growing use of helicopters in promoting tourism.
  - The Minister believes that **increased helicopter penetration** will boost tourism, **hospitality, and local economies** in the country's remote and unserved regions.
  - So far, 46 helicopter routes have been **operationalized under previous** rounds of the scheme, benefiting hilly and North Eastern states.
  - The UDAN scheme has provided passengers with **improved air connectivity**, airlines with concessions for operating regional routes, and unserved regions with direct and indirect economic development benefits.

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