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VOCABULARY

1. Precariously: In a way that is not securely positioned and is likely to fall or collapse.
 - Synonyms: Insecurely, unstably, perilously
 - Antonyms: Securely, stably, safely
 - Sentence: The ladder was precariously balanced on the edge of the roof.

2. Reprieve: A temporary relief or delay.
 - Synonyms: Pardon, respite, postponement
 - Antonyms: Continuation, persistence, aggravation
 - Sentence: The workers received a brief reprieve from their demanding schedule.

3. Opaque: Not able to be seen through; not transparent.
 - Synonyms: Cloudy, obscure, unclear
 - Antonyms: Transparent, clear, lucid
 - Sentence: The windows were so dirty they were almost opaque.

4. Sceptics: People inclined to question or doubt all accepted opinions.
 - Synonyms: Doubters, cynics, nonbelievers
 - Antonyms: Believers, supporters, optimists
 - Sentence: The sceptics were not convinced by the company's optimistic forecast.

5. Moribund: In terminal decline.

- Synonyms: Expiring, declining
- Antonyms: Flourishing, thriving, growing
- Sentence: The moribund economy showed signs of recovery.

6. Antitrust: Relating to legislation preventing or controlling trusts or other monopolies, and ensuring competition in business.

- Synonyms: Competition law, monopoly regulation
- Sentence: The new antitrust laws are designed to prevent corporate monopolies.

7. Engulfed: To sweep over something so as to surround or cover it completely.

- Synonyms: Overwhelmed, inundated, swallowed
- Antonyms: Uncovered, exposed, freed
- Sentence: The valley was engulfed by the sudden flood.

8. Cess: A tax or levy.

- Synonyms: Tax, levy, duty
- Sentence: The government imposed a cess on luxury goods to generate additional revenue.

9. Scrutiny: Critical observation or examination.
- Synonyms: Inspection, examination, analysis
 - Antonyms: Neglect, oversight, disregard
 - Sentence: The documents were subjected to intense scrutiny by the experts.
10. Autonomy: The right or condition of self-government.
- Synonyms: Independence, self-rule, sovereignty
 - Antonyms: Dependence, subjugation, control
 - Sentence: The region demanded greater autonomy from the central government.

IDIOMS AND PHRASES

11. Up in the air: Uncertain or undecided.
12. Take the bull by the horns: To confront a difficult situation directly and with courage.
13. Rain on someone's parade: To spoil someone's plans or joy.
14. Keep an eye on: To watch or monitor something closely.
15. In hot water: In trouble or facing difficulties.

CURRENT AFFAIRS

11th July, 2024

1. The Reserve Bank's FI-Index, capturing the extent of financial inclusion across the country, rose to 64.2 in March 2024, showing growth across all parameters. The index captures information on various aspects of financial inclusion in a single value ranging between 0 and 100, where 0 represents complete financial exclusion and 100 indicates full financial inclusion.

 - “The value of the index for March 2024 stands at 64.2 vis-à-vis 60.1 in March 2023, with growth witnessed across all sub-indices,” the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) said in a statement on July 9. The improvement in FI-Index is mainly contributed by usage dimension, reflecting deepening of financial inclusion, it added.
2. Om Birla, Speaker of the Lok Sabha, will head a prominent Indian parliamentary delegation to the 10th BRICS Parliamentary Forum in St. Petersburg, Russia. The forum aims to explore the role of parliaments in advancing global development and security through multilateral cooperation.

 - The forum’s theme is ‘The Role of Parliaments in Strengthening Multilateralism for Equitable Global Development and Security’.

3. The government has designated the Ministry of Minority Affairs as the nodal ministry for the Haj Committee, taking over from the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA). This change includes new rules and the nomination of officers from various ministries to the committee.
4. World Population Day, celebrated every July 11, is a special day to talk about why the number of people in the world is important. The United Nations started this day in 1989 because many people were interested in a day called 'Five Billion Day' in 1987. This marked when the world's population was estimated to be five billion.
5. On June 29, the Karnataka government published the draft of the Karnataka Platform-based Gig Workers (Social Security and Welfare) Bill, making it the second Indian State to initiate such a move, the first being Rajasthan.
 - The Bill seeks to regulate the social security and welfare of platform-based gig workers in the State and is expected to be placed in the monsoon session of the Assembly.
6. **The 11 newly designated biosphere reserves are:**
 - Kempen-Broek Transboundary Biosphere Reserve (Belgium, Kingdom of the Netherlands)
 - Darién Norte Chocoano Biosphere Reserve (Colombia)

- Madre de las Aguas Biosphere Reserve (Dominican Republic)
- Niimi Biosphere Reserve (Gambia)
- Colli Euganei Biosphere Reserve (Italy)
- Julian Alps Transboundary Biosphere Reserve (Italy, Slovenia)
- Khar Us Lake Biosphere Reserve (Mongolia)
- Apayaos Biosphere Reserve (Philippines)
- Changnyeong Biosphere Reserve (Republic of Korea)
- Vald'Aran Biosphere Reserve (Spain) Irati Biosphere Reserve (Spain)
- UNESCO has approved the designation of 11 new biosphere reserves in 11 countries, including Belgium and Gambia for the first time and two transboundary biosphere reserves.

7. The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has shortlisted two of its four trained Gaganyaan astronauts for the Axiom-4 mission to the International Space Station (ISS) in collaboration with the United States' National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA).

- The mission aims to dock with the ISS for a fourteen-day duration.

- Indian astronauts will receive training from NASA, international partners, and SpaceX, focusing on spacecraft systems and emergency preparedness, as part of India-US space cooperation goals.
8. Singapore's food watchdog on Monday said it has approved some 16 species of insects like crickets, grasshoppers and locusts for human consumption, adding to the internationally-renowned menu of global foods including Chinese and Indian dishes in the multiethnic city-state.
 9. "Polaris Dawn," a ground-breaking mission that SpaceX is getting ready for, intends to send astronauts farther from Earth than any previous mission has in more than 50 years.
 - The crew of the mission, which will take off on a Falcon 9 rocket from Florida, could spend up to five days in space, as per the reports of 'The U.S. Sun'.
 10. Azerbaijan Army servicemen have arrived in Kazakhstan to take part in the "Birlestik-2024" operational-tactical command-staff exercise. This joint military drill, scheduled from July 11 to July 17, will be conducted at the Oymasha training ground and Cape Tokmak in the Caspian Sea. The exercise is part of a collaborative effort between the Defense Ministries of Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan.