

● POLITY

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● ECOLOGY

ECOLOGY AND ENVIRONMENT

RED SAND BOA

CONTEXT: TWCS-India report reveals 172 instances of red sand boa seizures (2016-2021), highlighting rampant illegal trade in India.

HIGHLIGHTS: Red sand boa, classified as 'Near Threatened', faces illegal trade across India, notably in Maharashtra (59 cases) and Uttar Pradesh (33 cases), driven by pet demand and black magic use. WCS-India's report aims to raise awareness, prevent illegal trade, and safeguard the species against decreasing population trends.

ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA: The study emphasizes social media's role in red sand boa's illegal trade, particularly YouTube acting as a buyer-seller platform, and recommends research by conservation groups to comprehend and address the issue.



INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

CHINA DOUBLES DOWN ON NEW MAP

CONTEXT: China defended issuing a new "standard map" for 2023 as "a routine practice" and asking New Delhi to "refrain from over-interpreting" after India lodged a "strong protest" over the new map that was released on Monday, and showed within China's borders all of the Indian State of Arunachal Pradesh, Aksai Chin, as well as the entire South China Sea. These territories were also displayed in previous Chinese maps, the new publication was seen by New Delhi as an unnecessary move that will only further complicate already tense relations, particularly over the border issue. China downplayed the move, Beijing for its part had in 2019 strongly objected to India's map showing the newly created Union Territory of Ladakh, although New Delhi had underlined to Beijing then that the map had not changed India's external borders.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

ADITYA-L1 MISSION

CONTEXT: ISRO's Aditya-L1 Mission, India's inaugural solar mission, aimed at comprehending Sun's dynamics and space weather, set to launch on September 2.

HIGHLIGHTS: ISRO's Aditya-L1 solar mission, designed by Liquid Propulsion Systems Centre (LPSC), employs a LAM from Mars and moon missions. It'll enter a large halo orbit around Lagrange point (L1) after exit from Earth's gravitational influence, studying the Sun as India's first observatory-class solar mission. Launch to L1 takes about four months.

About the Mission

- Aditya-L1: India's 1st solar mission to explore the Sun's dynamics. Positioned in halo orbit at L1 point.
- Advantage of continuous Sun observation from L1 without eclipses, yielding real-time space weather insights.
- Carries 7 payloads for photosphere, chromosphere, and corona studies using detectors.
- Aims to unravel coronal heating, mass ejections, flares, space weather drivers, magnetic field influence.
- Investigates solar upper atmosphere dynamics, CME origins, particle dynamics, plasma diagnostics, and more.

What are Lagrange Points?

Aditya-L1 aims for a halo orbit around Lagrange point (L1), 1.5 million km from Earth, conserving fuel due to its gravitational equilibrium. Lagrange points result from the balance of gravitational forces in two-body systems, with L1 located on the Sun-Earth line at 1% of the Earth-Sun distance.

VISIBLE EMISSION LINE CORONAGRAPH (VELC):



Aditya-L1's main payload, created by Indian Institute of Astrophysics, will capture 1,440 daily sun images from Lagrange Point 1, 1.5 million km away, studying the corona uninterrupted.



"Education is the ability to listen to almost anything without losing your temper or your self-confidence." - Robert Frost

POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

PLAYING OUT A FARCE

CONTEXT: Article 174(1) of the Constitution mandates that sittings have to take place within six months of the end of the previous session. The Assembly met just before the stipulated six months after the last session on March 3. Incomprehensibly, the session was adjourned sine die just 48 minutes after it began; there was barely 11 minutes of business with 10 MLAs of the Kuki-Zo community also absent.

NB: “Adjourned sine die” is a Latin phrase that means to adjourn without setting a day or time to reconvene. For example, a legislature might adjourn sine die when it concludes a meeting without setting a date to reconvene. The phrase literally means “without a day”.

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ECONOMICS AND DEVELOPMENT

UNDERSTANDING CURBS ON RICE EXPORTS

CONTEXT: The Indian government has prohibited the export of white rice, levied a 20% export duty on par-boiled rice till October 15, and permitted the export of Basmati rice for contracts with value of \$1,200 a tonne or above. The export of broken rice has been prohibited since last September.

India is the largest rice exporter globally with a 45 % share in the world rice market with overall rice exports in April-May of 2023 21.1 % higher compared with the same period last financial year. The total rice exports (except broken rice) were 15% more at 7.3 million tonnes as against the 6.3 million tonnes during the corresponding period last year. In May alone, export of Basmati rice was 10.86 % higher than its exports in May 2022. Non-Basmati rice shipments were 7.5 % more, despite the government introducing a 20 % export duty on white rice and prohibiting the export of broken rice last September.

Third Advanced Estimate of the Department of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare: Rice production during the Rabi season 2022-2023 is 158.95 lakh tonnes, 13.8 % less than 184.71 lakh tonnes during Rabi 2021-2022. Rice sown during Kharif season 2022-23 is 384.05 lakh hectares as on August 25 compared with 367.83 lakh hectares during Kharif season 2021-22.

The government has increased the Minimum Support Price (MSP) for rice, and the paddy procured now by rice millers are at a price higher than the MSP. The restrictions on exports will ensure that there is no steep climb in rice prices in the market. When the bench mark price set by the government is high, the farmers will realise better prices.

Prices of Indian par-boiled rice in the international market is competitive even with the levy of a 20% duty. Countries such as Indonesia, which are rice exporters, are looking at imports (raw rice) now.

NOT ENOUGH ON THE PLATE

The data for the charts were sourced from a blog published by the World Bank titled, 'Over 3.1 billion people could not afford a healthy diet in 2021, an increase of 134 million since the start of COVID-19,' and the 'State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World (SOFI) 2023'

Chart 1: The chart shows the cost of a healthy diet in terms of PPP dollars per person per day in 2021, the latest year with comparable data

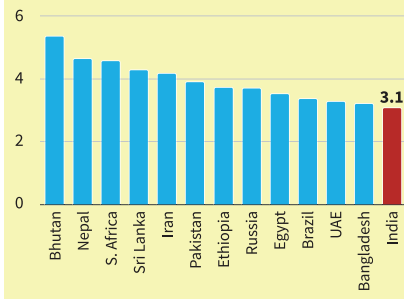


Chart 2: The chart shows the share of the population that is unable to afford a healthy diet in 2021. For instance, in India, 74% were not able to afford a healthy diet

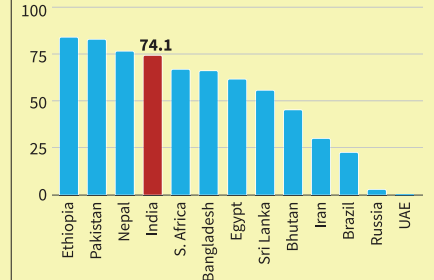


Chart 3: The chart shows the change (in %) in the cost of a healthy diet over the years across regions

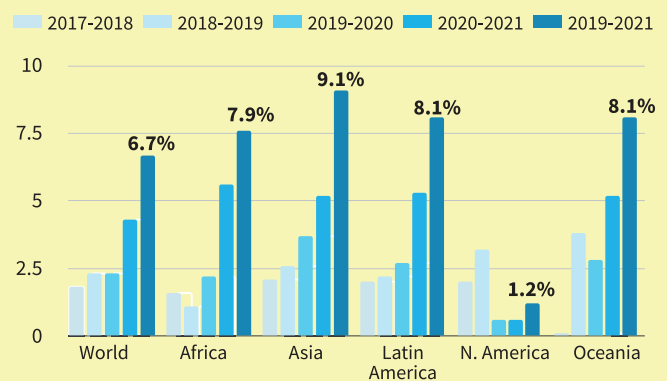
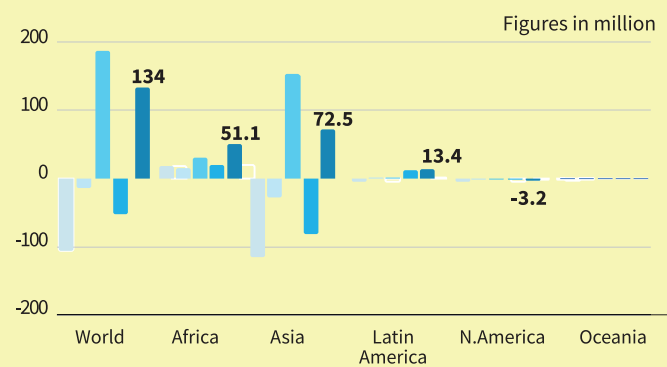


Chart 4: The chart shows the change in the number of people (in million) who were unable to afford a healthy diet over the years across regions



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Corporate office:
Vedhik IAS Academy
Samkalp Bhawan, Plot No.15,
Sector 4, Rama Krishna Puram,
New Delhi, Delhi-110022

Regional office
Vedhik IAS Academy
202, Raheja Chambers, 12,
Museum Road. Bangalore -
560001. Karnataka, India.

GCC Office:
Bobscoedu,
Bobsco Trading & Contracting Co. W. L . L
Office 22, Dream Tower 1,
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