Prelim Bits 23-02-2023 | UPSC Daily Current Affairs

UPI –Paynow Linkage

India's real-time retail payment system Unified Payments Interface (UPI) and its equivalent network in Singapore called PayNow, were integrated recently.

- **Unified Payments Interface (UPI)** - It is India's mobile-based fast payment system which facilitates customers to make round-the-clock payments instantly.
- It uses a Virtual Payment Address (VPA) which eliminates the risk of sharing bank account details by the remitter.
- UPI supports both Person-to-Person (P2P) and Person-to-Merchant (P2M) payments and it also enables a user to send or receive money.
- **PayNow** - It is a fast payment system in Singapore which enables peer-to-peer funds transfer service.
- **UPI-Paynow linkage** - Singapore is the first country with which India has cross border P2P facility.

  According to the RBI Remittance Survey, 2021, out of total inward remittances to India, Singapore stood at 5.7% in 2020-21.

- **Significance** - Cross-border retail payments are generally less transparent and more expensive than domestic transactions.
- The UPI-PayNow linkage will enable faster remittances between the two countries at a competitive rate and bring the benefits of digitalization.
- It will also help the Indian diaspora in Singapore, especially migrant workers and students, through the instantaneous and low-cost transfer of money from Singapore to India and vice-versa.
- **G20** - It closely aligns with the G20's financial inclusion priorities of driving faster, cheaper and more transparent cross-border payments.

  Singapore, although not a G20 member, has been invited to participate in the G20 Summits.

References

1. PIB | Integration of UPI and PayNow
2. The Indian Express | UPI and Singapore's PayNow are integrated

Chicago convention

An air services agreement was signed recently between India and Guyana that will pave the way for flight services between the two countries.

- Chicago Convention also known as the Convention on International Civil Aviation, drafted in 1944 by 54 nations.
- It laid the foundation for the standards and procedures for peaceful global air navigation.
- It set out as its prime objective the development of international civil aviation.

India and Guyana are signatories to the Convention on International Civil Aviation (Chicago Convention).

- It also formalized that a specialized International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) would be established, in order to organize and support the intensive international co-operation.

Indians have a sizeable presence in Guyana and are the largest ethnic group comprising about 40% of the population.

International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)
• ICAO is one of the specialized agencies of the United Nations (UN). • It coordinates the principles and techniques of international air navigation, and fosters the planning and development of international air transport to ensure safe and orderly growth. • It is being funded and directed by 193 national governments as signatory states to the Chicago Convention. • ICAO headquarters are located in Montreal and Quebec, Canada.

References

1. The Hindu| India-Guyana air services agreement
2. ICAO| Chicago Convention

New START

Russia has recently announced the suspension of its participation in the New START, the last remaining major military agreement with the United States (US).

- **START-I** - Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty was signed between the US and the erstwhile USSR in 1991, and came into force in 1994.
- It capped the numbers of nuclear warheads and intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) that each side could deploy at 6,000 and 1,600 respectively.
- It lapsed in 2009, and was replaced by the Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty (SORT, also known as the Treaty of Moscow), and then by the New START treaty.

- **New START** – It came into force in 2011, and placed new verifiable limits on intercontinental-range nuclear weapons.
- The two countries met the treaty's central limits on strategic offensive arms in 2018, and subsequently agreed to extend the treaty till 2026.
- But Russia suspended its participation accusing the U.S. and its NATO allies of openly declaring the goal of Russia's defeat in Ukraine.

References

The Indian Express | Russia suspends New START Treaty

Sansad Ratna Awards, 2023

The 13th edition of the Sansad Award was announced recently.

- The Awards were instituted at the suggestion of Dr APJ Abdul Kalam to honour top performing Parliamentarians on the basis of their work in the apex legislative body.
- He launched the 1st edition of the Award function in 2010.
- So far, 90 top performing Parliamentarians have been honoured.
- The Sansad Ratna Awards' Jury committee comprises eminent Parliamentarians and members of civil society.
- The Sansad Ratna *Awards are not given by the Government of India*.
- The awards were the brainchild of K Srinivasan, a communication strategist who founded the Prime Point Foundation in 1999.
- The awards were started with support from IIT Madras.

> *T K Rangarajan, former Rajya Sabha MP and a Senior CPIM leader will be honoured with the "Dr APJ Abdul Kalam Lifetime Achievement Award" for his contribution to Parliament and Indian people over the years.*

References

1. The Indian Express | Sansad Ratna Awards
2. Sansad Ratna | Official

Mercury in Skin lightening products

The Governments of Gabon, Jamaica and Sri Lanka have united in a $14 mn project to eliminate the use of mercury in skin lightening products.

- It is a 3-year project funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF).
- It will be implemented by the UN Environment Programme and executed through the World Health Organization (WHO) and Biodiversity Research Institute (BRI).
- This initiative will support a holistic approach to phase out the harmful chemical and promote the beauty of all skin tones.

Effects of Skin lightening Products

- **Melanin Production** - Skin lightening products inhibit the body's production of melanin, the pigment that plays a role in determining skin, hair and eye colour.
- **Health** - They can cause skin rashes, discolouration and scarring, digestive and immune system damage, but also anxiety and depression.
- **Passive Damage** - The risk is not only restricted to users.
- Children can be exposed through breastmilk, and food chains can become contaminant when cosmetics are washed off into wastewater.
- An international treaty known as the *Minamata Convention* has set mercury limits in skin lightening products to *1 milligram per kilo*.

Minamata Convention

- It is a global treaty established to protect human health and the environment from the adverse effects of mercury and its compounds.
- It entered into force in 2017 with ratification by over 50 countries.
- India is a party to the Minamata Convention and ratified it in 2018.
- The first meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Minamata Convention on Mercury (Mercury COP1) was held at Geneva, Switzerland.
- Global Environment Facility (GEF) is the financial mechanism for Minamata Convention.

References

UN News | Project to eliminate Mercury usage

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