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WEEKLY  
CURRENT AFFAIRS**

**WEEK-1**

01<sup>st</sup> August - 07<sup>th</sup> August, 2021

**TARGETED EXAMINATIONS**

**CSE, ESE, PSUs, State Exams,  
SSC and Banking Exams**

1<sup>st</sup> AUGUST 2021

## NISAR Satellite: ISRO-NASA joint mission

- The ISRO-NASA Joint Mission NISAR (NASA-ISRO Synthetic Aperture Radar) satellite is scheduled to be launched in early 2023.
- It aims to measure changes in the earth's surface globally using advanced radar images.

### Key Highlights:

- NISAR will be launched in early 2023. NISAR is a joint Earth-observing mission between NASA and the Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) with the goal to make global measurements of the causes and consequences of land surface changes using advanced radar imaging.
- This is a dual-band (L-band and S-band) radar imaging mission with full polarimetric and interferometric modes of operation for observing small changes in land, vegetation, and cryosphere.
- NASA and ISRO are providing two radars that are optimized each in their own way to allow the mission to observe a wider range of changes than either one alone.
- ISRO will provide the satellite bus, an S-band synthetic aperture radar, the launch vehicle, and associated launch services. All data from NISAR would be freely available 1 to 2 days after observation and within hours in case of emergencies like natural disasters.

## BRICS Counter Terrorism Action Plan

- The BRICS Counter Terrorism Action Plan that will strengthen counter-terror cooperation among the members of the grouping has been finalised. This discussion took place at the sixth meeting of the BRICS Anti-Terrorism Working Group.
- The Counterterrorism action plan aims to further strengthen result-oriented cooperation between

BRICS countries in areas such as preventing and combating terrorism, radicalisation, financing of terrorism, misuse of the internet by terrorists, curbing travel of terrorists, border control, protection of soft targets.

### Key Highlights:

- The working group meeting was held on a virtual basis, with the participation of the working group member states India, Russia, Brazil, China and South Africa.
- The BRICS countries also exchanged views on the assessment of terrorist threats at the national, regional and global levels, and are determined to further strengthen counter-terrorism cooperation in accordance with the action plan.
- The action plan is one of the key elements of India's tenure as BRICS President and is expected to be adopted at the BRICS National Security Advisors meeting scheduled for August.

## New Strategic Oil Reserves

- In accordance with the Strategic Petroleum Reserve (SPR) programme, the government approved the establishment of two additional commercial and strategic underground storage facilities at Chandikhol (4 MMT) and Padur (2.5 MMT) in PPP model.

### Key Highlights:

- In the first phase of the SPR programme, the government, through its special tool India Strategic Petroleum Reserve Limited (ISPRL), established oil storage facilities with a total capacity of 5.33 million metric tons (MMT) in 3 locations. All the three storage facilities in Visakhapatnam (1.33 MMT), Mangaluru (1.5 MMT) and Padur (2.5 MMT) are filled with crude oil.
- The petroleum reserves which were established in the first phase are of strategic importance, and the crude oil stored in these reserves will be used in the scenario of oil shortage.

### About Strategic petroleum reserves:

- Strategic petroleum reserves are essentially huge stockpiles of crude oil to keep the wheels of the country running in crunch situations.
- This is because the government has to stay prepared with emergency stores of crude oil to tide over severe supply shocks of this critical fuel.
- Many major global oil consumers such as the US, China and Japan have built massive strategic reserves of oil over the years, and India too embarked on the path in the last decade.

### India's Plan on Strategic Petroleum reserve:

- Indian Strategic Petroleum Reserves Ltd, has constructed three strategic petroleum reserves in huge underground rock caverns at Visakhapatnam on the East Coast, and at Mangalore and Padur on the West Coast.
- These facilities, with a total capacity of 5.33 million tonnes, can meet about 10 days of India's crude oil requirements.
- The new facilities approved recently can provide additional supply for about 12 days.

2<sup>nd</sup> AUGUST 2021

### e-RUPI Digital Payment Solution

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi is to launch "e-RUPI Digital Payment Solution" on August 2, 2021. e-RUPI is an e-voucher-based payment solution.

### Key Highlights:

- e-RUPI is a digital solution which allows cashless payment solutions for COVID-19 vaccination.
- The digital payment solution has been developed with the support of DFS (Department of Financial Services) and NHA (National Health Authority) and is powered by National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI).
- This seamless one-time payment mechanism enables users to redeem the voucher without a card, digital

payments app or internet banking access, at the merchants accepting UPI e-Prepaid Vouchers. The e-RUPI would be shared with the beneficiaries for a specific purpose or activity by organizations via SMS or QR code.

- This contactless e-RUPI is easy, safe and secure as it keeps the details of the beneficiaries completely confidential. The entire transaction process through this voucher is relatively faster and at the same time reliable, as the required amount is already stored in the voucher.
- Platform will be used to deliver services under schemes that are meant to provide drugs & nutritional support under Mother and Child welfare schemes, drugs & diagnostics under schemes such as Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana, fertilizer subsidies and TB eradication programmes.

### NOTE:

e-RUPI was launched in collaboration with the Department of Financial Services, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare and National Health Authority.

### PV Sindhu: First Indian Woman to win Two Olympics medals

- PV Sindhu, an ace Indian badminton player, has become the first Indian woman to win two Olympic medals after defeating 'He Bingjiao' of China.

### Key Highlights

- PV Sindhu won a bronze medal in the ongoing Tokyo Olympics and became the first Indian woman to win two Olympic medals.
- She met with Chief Minister Jagan at the state secretariat in Amaravati. Later, sports officials handed her over a cash reward of 30 lakhs as per the state policy for winning the medal.
- Sindhu has become the 4th athlete to win multiple medals in women's singles badminton category at Olympic Games.

- She has joined South Korea's Bang Soo-Hyun who won silver at Barcelona Games in 1992 as well as gold medal in women's singles badminton category at 1996 Atlanta Games.

## Indian Women Hockey team entered Olympics Semi-Finals

- Indian women's hockey team etched its name in the history books by entering the Olympic Games semifinals for the first time, stunning three-time champions and world no.2 Australia.
- Earlier, Indian men's hockey team also entered the Olympic semi-finals after a gap of 49-years.

### Key Points:

- Women's field hockey tournament at the 2020 Summer Olympics is the eleventh edition of the field hockey event for women at the Games.
- Hockey event will be held from July 24 to August 6, 2021. All hockey games will be played at Oi Hockey Stadium in Tokyo, Japan. Game was originally scheduled to be held from July 25 to August 7, 2020. But the Olympics were postponed to 2021 because of COVID-19 pandemic. This year, games are being played behind closed doors.

3<sup>rd</sup> AUGUST 2021

## Freedom Fighter Pingali Venkayya

- On the occasion of the birth anniversary of Pingali Venkayya, Vice President Venkaiah Naidu and other members of the Union Cabinet paid homage to him. Year 2021 marks the 145th anniversary of Pingali Venkayya.

### Key Highlights

- He was an Indian freedom fighter born in 1876. He was born and brought up in a Telugu Brahmin family in Andhra Pradesh.
- Pingali Venkayya was the architect behind the design of Indian national flag. Present-day national flag of India is inspired by the design of Pingali Venkayya.

- Between 1918 and 1921, Venkayya raised the issue of having an own flag in every session of the Congress. Back then, he was working as a lecturer in the Andhra National College in Machilipatnam.
- He met the Mahatma once again in Vijayawada and showed him his publication with the various designs of the flag. Acknowledging the need for a national flag, Gandhi then asked Venkayya to design a fresh one at the national congress meeting in 1921.
- Initially, Venkayya came up with saffron and green colours, but it later evolved with a spinning wheel at the centre and a third colour-white.
- The flag was officially adopted by the Indian National Congress in 1931.

## Narendra Modi: 1st Indian PM to chair UNSC debate

- It will be the first time an Indian Prime Minister will chair an open debate at the UN Security Council. This is India's first presidency in the UNSC during its 2021-22 tenure as a non-permanent member of the UNSC.
- India started its two-year tenure as a non-permanent member of UNSC on January 1, 2021. It is India's seventh term on UNSC as a non-permanent member. Earlier, India has been a member of UNSC in 1950-51, 1967-68, 1972-73, 1977-78, 1984-85, and 1991-92.

### About United Nations Security Council (UNSC):

- UNSC is one among six principal organs of the United Nations (UN). It has been tasked with ensuring international peace and security. It also recommends admission of new members at UNSC and approves any changes to the UN Charter.
- Some of its functions and powers include-establishment of peacekeeping operations, enactment of international sanctions and authorization of military action. It is the only UN body having the authority to issue binding resolutions on member states.

## General Insurance Business (Nationalisation) Amendment Bill

- The General Insurance Business (Nationalisation) Amendment Bill, 2021 passed in Lok Sabha. The Bill seeks to amend the General Insurance Business (Nationalisation) Act, 1972. The Act was enacted to nationalise all private companies undertaking general insurance business in India. The Bill seeks to provide for a greater private sector participation in the public sector insurance companies regulated under the Act.

### Key Highlights:

- The first aims to omit the provision to Section 10B of the Act so as to remove the requirement that the Central government holds not less than 51 per cent of the equity capital in a specified insurer.
- The second amendment is to insert a new Section 24B, providing for cessation of application of the Act to such a specified insurer from the date on which the Centre ceases to have control over it.
- And, the third amendment is also to insert a new Section 31A, making a director, who is not a whole-time director, liable only for acts of omission or commission committed with his knowledge and connivance by the insurer.
- Although the Bill has a provision that will allow the government to bring down its shareholding below 51 per cent, Sitharaman clarified that this is not a Bill for privatisation.

4<sup>th</sup> AUGUST 2021

## Solarpunk

- Solarpunk is an art movement that envisions how the future might look if humanity succeeded in solving major contemporary challenges with an emphasis on sustainability problems such as climate change and pollution.

### Key Points:

- Solarpunk describes a multitude of media such as literature, fine arts, architecture, fashion, music, tattoos, and video games in a similar manner to adjacent movements such as steampunk and cyberpunk as well as more established art movements like Baroque and Art Nouveau and Impressionism.
- The iconography of solarpunk focuses on renewable energies such as solar and wind power.
- Solarpunk is highly concerned with technology but also embraces low-tech ways of living sustainably. For instance, gardening, positive psychology and DIY culture.

### Ideology of solarpunk

- Solarpunk comprises many aspects of punk ideologies such as egalitarianism, humanitarianism, anti-consumerism, anti-authoritarianism, anti-corporatism, anti-war, anti-racism, anti-sexism, decolonisation, animal rights etc. It also comprises aspects of free-culture movement, freedom of information and free software.

## Tribunals Reforms Bill, 2021

- The Tribunals Reforms Bill was recently passed in Lok Sabha by voice vote. The Bill replaces a similar Ordinance promulgated in April 2021.
- The Bill seeks to provide for uniform terms and conditions of the various members of the Tribunal and abolish certain tribunals, as a part of its bid to rationalize the tribunals.
- Lok Sabha passed the Tribunals Reforms Bill on August 3, 2021 that seeks to abolish nine appellate tribunals.

### About Tribunals Reforms Bill, 2021:

- The bill provides for the abolition of the tribunals or the authorities under various Acts by amending the Copyrights Act, 1957, Cinematograph Act, 1952, the Customs Act, 1962, the Airport Authority of India Act, 1994, the Patents Act, 1970, and the Trade Marks Act, 1999.

- The tribunals under the Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers Rights Act, 2001, Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999, and the Control of National Highways (Land and Traffic) Act, 2002, will also be wound up.
- All the pending cases before such tribunals or the authorities will be transferred to the High Court or Commercial Court.
- The Tribunal Reforms Bill will also provide for the uniform terms and the conditions of service for Chairperson and members of various tribunals.
- Under the CIRP, debtors or its creditors will be able to apply for initiation of CIRP in case there is default of Rs. 1 lakh.
- A committee of creditors will also be constituted under CIRP to decide on insolvency resolution.

### About Pre-pack:

- It envisages the resolution of the debt of a distressed company through a direct agreement between secured creditors and the existing owners or outside investors, instead of a public bidding process.
- Under the pre-pack system, financial creditors will agree to terms with the promoters or a potential investor and seek approval of the resolution plan from the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT).

### NOTE:

All pending cases before such tribunals or authorities will be transferred to Commercial Court or High Court.

5<sup>th</sup> AUGUST 2021

## Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (Amendment) Bill, 2021

- The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (Amendment) Bill, 2021 was recently passed by Parliament, replacing an ordinance on the same.
- Union Corporate Affairs Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had tabled the amendment bill that seeks to amend the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016.

### Key highlights:

- It will replace the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (Amendment) Ordinance, 2021, which was promulgated on 4th April 2021.
- It proposed the Pre-packaged Insolvency Resolution Process (PIRP), also called 'pre-packs' as an insolvency resolution mechanism for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs).
- It will introduce a time-bound process to resolve issues of insolvency of the corporate debtors within 330 days. This process of resolution is called the Corporate Insolvency Resolution Process (CIRP).

## Samagra Shiksha Scheme

- Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs has given its approval for the continuation of the revised Samagra Shiksha Scheme for a period of five years, i.e. from 2021-22 to 2025-26.
- It has been upgraded to align it with the Sustainable Development Goal for Education and the new National Education Policy launched in 2020.

### About Samagra Shiksha Scheme:

- It is an integrated scheme for school education covering the entire gamut from pre-school to class XII.
- It aims to deliver inclusive, equitable, and affordable school education.
- It subsumes the three Schemes of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) and Teacher Education (TE).
- The scheme covers 1.16 million schools, over 156 million students and 5.7 million Teachers of Govt. and Aided schools (from pre-primary to senior secondary level).

- It is being implemented as a centrally sponsored scheme. It involves a 60:40 split in funding between the Centre and most States. It was launched by the Ministry of Education in 2018.

#### ■ NOTE:

This scheme is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme. Thus, the funds are shared between Centre and State in the ratio of 90:10 for the North-Eastern States & Himalayan States and 60:40 for other States & Union Territories with Legislature.

## States' powers to make own OBC lists restored

- The Union Cabinet have cleared a Constitution amendment bill which seeks to give power to states and UTs to make their own OBC lists.

#### Key Points:

- The 102nd Constitution Amendment Act of 2018 inserted Articles 338B, which deals with the structure, duties and powers of the National Commission for Backward Classes, while 342A deals with powers of the President to notify a particular caste as SEBC and power of Parliament to change the list.
- Opposition parties had accused the Centre of assaulting the federal structure by taking away the power of the states to identify and list the other backward classes (OBCs).

#### About NCBC:

- National Commission for Backward Classes (NCBC) was given the status of constitutional body under 123rd constitutional amendment bill 2017 and 102nd amendment 2018 in constitution.
- Article 338B of the Indian Constitution deals with the NCBC. It works under the parent head of the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.

- NCBC was established on August 14, 1993 in accordance with the provisions of National Commission for Backward Classes Act, 1993.

#### ■ NOTE:

NCBC was set up as the result of Indra Sawhney & Others v. Union of India.

## AERA (Amendment) Bill, 2021

- The Parliament passed the Airports Economic Regulatory Authority of India (Amendment) Bill, 2021 after the Rajya Sabha approved it after a brief discussion amid protests by the opposition on various issues.

#### Key Highlights:

- Bill was tabled by Civil Aviation Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia and was passed in the Lok Sabha in June 2021.
- Now, it will be sent to the President Ram Nath Kovind for his assent.
- Airports Economic Regulatory Authority of India (Amendment) Bill 2021
- The AERA bill proposes to amend the definition of 'major airport' in accordance with the Airports Economic Regulatory Authority Act, 2008 (AERA Act).
- Bill seeks to aid the government's plan of privatisation of smaller airports under its asset monetisation programme that was announced during the union budget for 2021-22.
- It also promises to help in faster development of small airports and expediting regional air connectivity UDAN scheme by expanding air connectivity in remote areas.
- Amendment will enable AERA to regulate tariff and other charges of aeronautical services for major airports with annual passenger traffic of more than 3.5 million as well as a group of airports together.

**NOTE:**

Airports Economic Regulatory Authority (AERA) is a regulatory agency that regulates tariff and other expenditure & fees of major airports in India. This statutory body was established under the Airports Economic Regulatory Authority of India Act (AERA), 2008.

**6<sup>th</sup> AUGUST 2021**

**Mahila Kisan Sashaktikaran Pariyojana**

- The Union Minister of Agriculture and Farmers has informed the Lok Sabha about the Mahila Kisan Sashaktikaran Pariyojana (MKSP).
- The government has said that under the schemes implemented by the Department of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare (DA&FW) at least 30 percent of the expenditure allocated for agricultural schemes is being incurred for women to bring them into mainstream agriculture. This mainly includes Mahila Kisan Sashaktikaran Pariyojana.

**Key Points:**

- The "Mahila Kisan Sashaktikaran Pariyojana" (MKSP) is a sub component of the Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana-NRLM (DAY-NRLM). It was started in 2011.
- The primary objective of the scheme is to empower women in agriculture by making systematic investments to enhance their participation and productivity, as also create and sustain agriculture based livelihoods of rural women.
- It seeks to improve the present status of women in Agriculture, and to enhance the opportunities available to empower her.
- MKSP recognizes the identity of "Mahila" as "Kisan" and strives to build the capacity of women in the domain of agro-ecologically sustainable practices.

**NOTE:**

Upto 60% (90% for North Eastern States) of the funding support for such projects is provided by the Central Government.

**Arctic Science Ministerial**

- Information regarding India's participation in the 3rd Arctic Science Ministerial (ASM3) was recently given in Parliament by the Government.
- It was jointly organised by Iceland and Japan and is the first Ministerial meeting held in Asia.
- The theme for this year is 'Knowledge for a Sustainable Arctic'.

**Key Points about Arctic Science Ministerial**

- Arctic Science Ministerial (ASM) is a global platform for discussing research and cooperation in the Arctic region.
- Iceland and Japan have jointly organized the 3rd Arctic Science Ministerial (ASM3). It is the first Ministerial meeting being held in Asia.
- The first Arctic Science Ministerial was hosted by the United States in Washington in 2016. The second ASM was co-hosted by the European Commission, Finland, and Germany in Berlin in 2018.
- Its Purpose is to provide opportunities to various stakeholders, to enhance collective understanding of the Arctic region. It also emphasizes the constant engagement in monitoring and strengthening Arctic observations.
- **Theme:** 'Knowledge for the Sustainable Arctic'.

**Fast Track Special Courts (FTSCs)**

- Recently, the Union Cabinet has approved the continuation of 1,023 Fast Track Special Courts (FTSCs) including 389 exclusive POCSO Courts, from April 1, 2021, to March 31, 2023.
- The Centre's share of 971.70 crore will come from the Nirbhaya Fund.

**About FTSCs:**

- Fast Track Special Courts are dedicated courts expected to ensure swift dispensation of justice.
- They have a better clearance rate as compared to the regular courts and hold speedy trials.
- Besides providing quick justice to the hapless victims, it strengthens the deterrence framework for sexual offenders.

- Central Share is to be funded from Nirbhaya Fund. The Scheme was launched on 02.10.2019.
- To bring more stringent provisions and expeditious trial and disposal of such cases, the Central Government enacted "The Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2018".
- It made provision of stringent punishment including the death penalty for perpetrators of rape.
- This led to the establishment of the Fast Track Special Courts (FTSCs).

### ■ NOTE:

Article 247 gives power to Parliament to establish certain additional courts for the better administration of laws made by it or of any existing laws with respect to a matter enumerated in the Union List.

7<sup>th</sup> AUGUST 2021

## Members of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme (MPLADS)

- The Union government has said that it is not considering any proposal to restore Members of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme (MPLADS) funds for FY21 and FY22.

### About Scheme:

- The MPLADS is a Plan Scheme fully funded by the Government of India. The annual MPLADS fund entitlement per MP constituency is Rs. 5 crore.
- MPs are to recommend every year, works costing at least 15 percent of the MPLADS entitlement for the year for areas inhabited by Scheduled Caste population and 7.5 per cent for areas inhabited by S.T. population.
- In order to encourage trusts and societies for the betterment of tribal people, a ceiling of Rs. 75 lakh is stipulated for building assets by trusts and societies subject to conditions prescribed in the scheme guidelines.
- Lok Sabha Members can recommend works within their Constituencies and Elected Members of Rajya Sabha can recommend works within the State

of Election (with select exceptions). Nominated Members of both the Rajya Sabha and Lok Sabha can recommend works anywhere in the country.

- All works to meet locally felt infrastructure and development needs, with an emphasis on creation of durable assets in the constituency are permissible under MPLADS as prescribed in the scheme guidelines. Expenditure on specified items of non durable nature are also permitted as listed in the guidelines.

## Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act

- Since 2019, the Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) administration has booked over 2,300 people in more than 1,200 cases under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, and 954 people under the Public Safety Act (PSA).
- Of these, 46 per cent of those booked under UAPA and about 30 percent of those detained under PSA are still in jail, both inside and outside J&K.

### Key Points about Act:

- It was first promulgated in 1967 to target secessionist organisations and considered to be a predecessor of laws such as the (now repealed) Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act (TADA) and Prevention of Terrorism Act (POTA).
- It aims at effective prevention of unlawful activities associations in India.
- Unlawful activity refers to any action taken by an individual or association intended to disrupt the territorial integrity and sovereignty of India.
- The Act assigns absolute power to the central government, by way of which if the Centre deems an activity as unlawful then it may, by way of an Official Gazette, declare it so.

### ■ NOTE:

In June 2021, delivering a judgment defining the contours of the otherwise "vague" Section 15 of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967, (UAPA), the Delhi High Court laid down some important principles upon the imposition of Section 15, 17 & 18 of the Act.

## Erupting Alaska Volcanoes

- Three remote Alaska volcanoes are in different states of eruption. One of the volcanos is producing lava while the other two is blowing steam and ash.
- Pictures showed episodic low-level ash emissions from Pavlof Volcano.
- Ash clouds were rising just above the volcano's 2,518-metre summit and were drifting about 9.7 kilometres to the south before dissipating.
- The Pavlof Volcano erupted in 2016 and dropped some ash on the Nelson Lagoon community of Alaska.
- The Semisopochnoi Volcano also erupted at Aleutian Island.

### Pavlof Volcano

It is a stratovolcano of the Aleutian Range on the Alaska Peninsula. It is one of the most active in the United States since 1980. It has erupted in 1980, 1981, 1983, 1986–1988, 1996–1997, 2007, 2013. It erupted two times in 2014. Its last eruption was recorded in March 2016.



### Great Sitkin Volcano

It is a stratovolcano composed of caldera and dome. It is located about 1,851 kilometres southwest of Anchorage.



### Semisopochnoi Volcano

This volcano is located about 241 kilometres away on an uninhabited island at western end of the Aleutian Islands. It has been erupting intermittently. On August 4, 2021 it spitted an ash cloud that went about 3,048 metres into the air.

