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India's Best Institute for IES, GATE & PSUs

**MADE EASY  
WEEKLY  
CURRENT AFFAIRS**

**WEEK-1**

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

**TARGETED EXAMINATIONS**

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

1<sup>st</sup> SEPTEMBER 2021

## Sri Lanka declares Food Emergency

- Sri Lanka has declared an economic emergency, after a steep fall in the value of the South Asian country's currency caused a spike in food prices.

### Key Highlights

- President Rajapaksa declared a state of emergency under the public security ordinance to prevent the hoarding of essential items, including rice and sugar.
- The government has appointed a former army general as commissioner of essential services, who will have the power to seize food stocks held by traders and retailers and regulate their prices.
- The military will oversee the action which gives power to officials to ensure that essential items, including rice and sugar, are sold at government-guaranteed prices or prices based on import costs at customs and prevent hiding of stocks.

### ■ NOTE: \_\_\_\_\_

Inflation is the rate of increase in prices over a given period of time. Inflation has been rising consistently since the pandemic hit in multiple countries; primarily owing to supply and demand-side disruptions owing to the pandemic.

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## Parliamentary Outreach Programme

- Lok Sabha speaker, Om Birla, inaugurated a parliamentary outreach programme to empower Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) in the union territory of Jammu and Kashmir.

### Key Points:

- The Parliamentary Outreach programme for empowerment of Panchayati Raj institutions launched at Leh in the Union Territory of Ladakh.
- The programme is a unique initiative to strengthen the institutions of governance and planning at the grassroot level.

- The broad objective of the parliamentary outreach programme for the Empowerment of Panchayati Raj Institutions is to create mass awareness/ mass participation, self-confidence/ self-respect for the ground level leaders, creation of sense of ownership of the assets that have been created, fuelling the ambitions for grass root political leaders for democratic values, awareness about the various schemes and the doorstep delivery.
- Parliamentary Outreach Programme for Empowerment of PRIs is a unique initiative, first of its kind Programme that seeks to strengthen the institution of governance and planning at the grass-root level.

## India's first meeting with Taliban

- India's ambassador to Qatar held talks with a top Taliban leader. The first formal diplomatic engagement since the hardline Islamist group took over Afghanistan.

### Key Highlights

- With this meeting, the Government of India has softened its stance on the Taliban.
- Indian security officials and diplomats are already understood to have engaged with Taliban representatives for several months.
- This meeting was held on the request of Taliban, because Taliban leaders have been keen to receive acceptability.
- During the meeting, discussions focused on safety, security and early return of Indian nationals who were stranded in Afghanistan.
- India's only concern was that "Afghanistan's soil should not be used for any anti-Indian activities and terrorism".

### ■ NOTE: \_\_\_\_\_

140 Indians and members of the Sikh minority are still remaining in Kabul. India has transported 565 people, including 112 Afghan nationals to Delhi, so far.

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2<sup>nd</sup> SEPTEMBER 2021

## Plant based Smart Air-Purifier “Ubreathe Life”

- World's first Plant-based smart air-purifiers called “Ubreathe Life” launched by the scientists of Indian Institutes of Technology, Ropar & Kanpur, and Faculty of Management Studies of Delhi University.

### Key Highlights:

- The living-plant based air purifier “Ubreathe Life” amplifies the air purification process in the indoor spaces.
- These indoor spaces can either be hospitals, schools, offices and our homes. This is the world's first, state-of-the-art ‘Smart Bio-Filter’ that can make breathing fresh.
- Ubreathe Life amplifies the air purification process in indoor spaces like schools, hospitals, offices, and homes.
- This product is being developed by Urban Air Laboratory which is a start-up company of IIT Ropar.
- Product is being claimed as the world's first, state-of-the-art ‘Smart Bio-Filter’, which can make breathing fresh.

### How Ubreathe Life works?

- The technology works through the air-purifying natural leafy plant. The room air interacts with leaves and goes to the soil-root zone where maximum pollutants are purified.
- The technology used in this product is the ‘Urban Munnar Effect’ along with patent-pending “Breathing Roots” to exponentially amplify the phytoremediation process of the plants.

### NOTE:

- Phytoremediation Process is the process by which plants effectively remove pollutants from the air.

## Poshan 2.0

- Recently, the Ministry for Women and Child Development inaugurated Poshan 2.0 and urged all Aspirational Districts to establish a Poshan Vatika (nutrition garden) during the Nutrition Month (Poshan Mah) from 1st September. This will be celebrated as a part of Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav.
- Entire month has been subdivided into weekly themes for focused and assimilated approach in order to improve Holistic Nutrition and ensure speedy and intensive outreach.
- The Ministry of Women and Child Development has planned several activities for this month in tandem with the States and Union Territories.

### Key Highlights:

- POSHAN scheme focuses on the 1,000 days between a mother's pregnancy and her child's second birthday.
- Prioritizing women and girls, and addressing their nutritional deficiencies through fortification and provision of take-home rations.
- The introduction of community-based programmes for tackling severe acute malnutrition.
- The guidelines now place accountability at the district level with nutrition indicators included in the KPIs (key performance indicators) of DN/DC.
- POSHAN tracker- The Ministry of Women and Child Development has developed a new software tool called the Poshan Tracker. The aim is to streamline the supply side of the scheme. This will replace the earlier ICDS CAS, because the data generated by it was not usable.

### About POSHAN Abhiyan

- POSHAN Abhiyaan stands for Prime Minister's Overarching Scheme for Holistic Nutrition. It is a flagship programme of the government to improve nutritional outcomes for pregnant women, lactating mothers, children and adolescent Girls.

- This program was launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi from Jhunjhunu in Rajasthan on March 8, 2018.
- Government announced POSHAN 2.0 programme in Budget 2021-2022 with the focus on aims of POSHAN Abhiyaan. It focuses on developing practices that nurture health, wellness and immunity towards disease and malnutrition.

**3<sup>rd</sup> SEPTEMBER 2021**

## Ramon Magsaysay Award 2021

- Recently the Ramon Magsaysay Award 2021 was announced. The award is presented in a formal ceremony in Manila, the capital of the Philippines on 31st August each year.
- Bangladesh's Dr. Firdausi Qadri (Affordable Vaccine Champion), Pakistan's Muhammad Amjad Saqib (Poverty Alleviation Visionary), Filipino fisher and community environmentalist Roberto Ballon, American Steven Muncy for humanitarian work and refugee assistance and Indonesian torch bearer for investigative journalism, Watchdoc.

### Key Points:

- Dr Qadri is an emeritus scientist at the International Centre for Diarrhoeal Disease Research, Bangladesh (icddr,b).
- She is also a laureate of the 2020 L'Oréal-Unesco for Women in Science Award which was presented to her for her advocacy of early diagnoses and global vaccination & her work on understanding and preventing infectious diseases affecting children across developing countries.

### About Ramon Magsaysay Award

- The Ramon Magsaysay Award is the highest honour in Asia. It was established in April 1957 and is widely regarded as the equivalent of the Nobel Prize in Asia. The award is presented to individuals who have

made extraordinary contributions in eradication of poverty and development of the society in Asia.

## Exercise ZAPAD 2021

- A contingent of 200 Army personnel to be participated in the multinational Exercise ZAPAD 2021 which is being held at Nizhniy, Russia.

### Key Points

- It is one of the theatre-level exercises of the Russian armed forces and which focuses primarily on operations against terrorists.
- 17 countries have been invited to participate in ZAPAD 2021, of which nine are participating countries while eight are observing countries. India too is a part of this military exercise with 200 Indian Army personnel contingent.
- ZAPAD 2021 is a 13-day exercise. It is being held from September 3 to September 16. More than a dozen nations are taking part in the exercise.

## Saath Initiative

- The Lieutenant-Governor of Jammu & Kashmir, Manoj Sinha recently launched the Rural Enterprises Acceleration Programme titled 'Saath' for Self-Help Group women.

### Key Highlights

- This initiative will help about 48000 SHGs in which about four lakh women are connected, in Jammu and Kashmir.
- The Saath initiative will focus on mentoring and market linkages of products that were created by these women.
- Government also aims to create 11000 more SHGs in upcoming years.
- This platform will transform the lives of these women and make them independent and strong socially and financially.

- This initiative was launched with the aim of transforming the lives of rural women associated with SHGs. It aims to accelerate livelihoods of rural women who are engaged in small works.

#### ■ NOTE:

The Saath initiative was launched in line with the Umeed scheme that enabled women to start their own business.

**4<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER 2021**

## Central Bank Digital Currencies (CBDC) Scheme

- Central banks in Australia, Singapore, Malaysia and South Africa have launched digital currencies (CBDC) schemes.

### Key Points:

- It is a cross border payments trial that uses different central bank digital currencies (CBDC) in order to assess if this allows transactions to be settled in a cheap and easy manner.
- Many govt and central banks are exploring the use of CBDCs.
- This latest project aims to develop prototype shared platforms for cross-border transactions using multiple CBDCs.
- Countries like China, are trialling retail-focused CBDCs that have been designed to replicate cash in circulation.
- Other countries are considering using wholesale CBDCs in order to improve the internal workings of financial systems.
- Most of the projects are still in early stages and are domestically focused. But, developing global rules and frameworks on how CBDCs can be used internationally is complicated technically.

#### ■ NOTE:

Central bank digital currency (CBDC) is the virtual format of a fiat currency in a particular nation or region. It is an electronic record or digital token of official currency. This currency is issued and regulated by its monetary authority.

## New COVID variant 'Mu'

- Mu Variant of the coronavirus was first identified in Colombia in January 2021. Now, the World Health Organization (WHO) is monitoring this variant of interest.

### About Mu Variant:

- The Mu variant, also known as B.1.621, was added to the WHO's watchlist on 30 August after it was detected in 39 countries and found to possess a cluster of mutations that may make it less susceptible to the immune protection many have acquired.
- Mu has been reported in other South American countries and in Europe, besides Columbia.
- As per WHO, global prevalence of the Mu Variant has declined to 0.1 percent. In Colombia, its prevalence stands at 39 percent.
- All viruses, including SARS-CoV-2, mutate over time. Most of the mutation has little or no effect on properties of the virus. However, there are certain mutations which can impact the properties of a virus, how easily it spreads, severity of the disease, and its resistance to vaccines & drugs.

### Variant of concern:

- WHO has currently designated four Covid-19 variants of concerns. It includes Alpha variant, which is present in 193 countries, as well as Delta variant, which is present in 170 countries. Now, Mu variant was added to the list which is currently being monitored along with four others.

## New Development Bank

- **Context:** The New Development Bank (NDB) by the BRICS group of nations has added the United Arab Emirates, Uruguay and Bangladesh as the new members recently.
- The purpose of the bank is to mobilize resources for infrastructure and sustainable development projects in BRICS.

### About New Development Bank

- New Development Bank was Launched in 2015 by the BRICS Members- Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa. It was formerly referred to as “BRICS development bank”.
- It is headquartered in Shanghai. The first regional office of the NDB was set up in Johannesburg, South Africa while a second regional office was established in 2019 in Brazil, followed by in Russia.
- The bank mobilises resources for infrastructure and sustainable development projects in the member countries as well as in other developing nations.

#### ■ NOTE:

The Bank has an authorised capital of USD 100 billion. It is open for subscription by members of the United Nations.

5<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER 2021

## UT of Ladakh's State Animal and Bird

- The UT of Ladakh recently adopted two endangered species Snow Leopard and Black-necked Crane as its State animal and State bird respectively.
- Ladakh adopted these species two years after it was

created as a separate Union Territory (UT) from the erstwhile State of Jammu & Kashmir (J&K).

### About Black-Necked Crane

- Black-necked Crane, scientifically known as *Grus nigricollis*, is a medium-sized crane found in Asia. It breeds on the Tibetan Plateau and remote parts of India and Bhutan. It is an endangered species.
- The crane is 139 cm long with a wingspan of 235 cm and weighs of 5.5 kg. It is whitish-grey in colour along with a black head, red crown patch, white patch to the rear of eye, black upper neck and legs.
- It is respected in Buddhist traditions and is culturally protected in much of its range.
- In India, Black-necked crane are only found in Ladakh region.
- It was the State bird of J&K before it was split into two UTs in 2019.



### About Snow Leopard



- Snow leopard, scientifically known as *Panthera uncia*, is a felid of genus *Panthera* and is native to the mountain ranges in Central and South Asia.
- It has been listed as Vulnerable on the IUCN Red List

as its global population is lesser than 10,000 mature individuals. It is expected to decline by 10% by 2040. Poaching and habitat destruction are the biggest threat to them.

## Vatan Prem Yojana

- The Gujarat Government held its first meeting on Governing body of Vatan Prem Yojana which was launched on August 7, 2021. The meeting was held under the chairmanship of Chief Minister Vijay Rupani.

### Key Highlights

- Governing body proposed works to the tune of Rs 1,000 crore, which have to be completed by December 2022.
- Governing body has made it possible for donors to send their money online.
- Under the scheme, Non-Resident Gujaratis (NRGs) and NRIs can contribute 60 percent of the cost of a village-level project. Remaining 40 percent amount will be borne by the state government.

### About Vatan Prem Yojana

- Vatan prem Yojana is a renewed version of Madar-e-Vatan scheme by the Gujarat government.
- In the earlier version of the scheme, contribution of the state government and NRIs was 50:50. Now, it has been changed to 60:10.
- The Vatan prem yojana will cover village-level projects such as: Smart classes in schools and Library, Community Hall, Primary health centre and Anganwadi, CCTV surveillance system, Water recycling, drainage, sewage treatment and beautification of ponds, Bus-stand, Solar energy powered streetlights, etc.

## World Social Protection Report 2020-22

- World Social Protection Report 2020-22 was recently released by International Labour Organisation (ILO). The report examined the impact COVID-19 pandemic on social protection.

### Key Findings of report

- The report found that an additional spending required to ensure minimum social protection for all and reduce the financing gap has increased by 30 per cent since the start of the pandemic.
- As per report, more than half of the world population are not getting any form of social protection.
- Only 47 per cent of the global population had effective access to one social protection benefit, in 2020 while 53 per cent (4.1 billion people) had no protection at all.
- 45 per cent of women with new-borns receive cash maternity benefit.
- One in three people with severe disabilities receive disability benefits.
- People in Europe and Central Asia are among the best covered population. 84 per cent of populations in Europe and Central Asia are having access to at least one benefit.
- In the USA, the rate of social protection is 64.3 per cent.
- In Asia, the Pacific and the Arab States, lesser than half of people are covered under protection.
- In Africa, only 17.4 per cent of the people are getting at least one social protection.

### DO YOU KNOW:

Social protection comprises of access to healthcare and income security in cases of unemployment, old age, inability to work, and for families with children.

6<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER 2021

## AYUSH AAPKE DWAR

- Union Ministry of AYUSH recently launched the campaign called “AYUSH AAPKE DWAR” by distributing medicinal plants to staff.
- About 21 states are participating in launch activities in which more than 2 lakh saplings will be distributed across India.
- AYUSH AAPKE DWAR campaign was launched with the aim of distributing medicinal plant saplings to 75 lakh households in India in one year.
- These medicinal plants include Ashoka, Tejpatta, Stevia, Ashwagandha, Jatamansi, Giloy/Guduchi, Shatavari, Guggulu, Lemongrass, Tulsi, Sarpagandha, Brahmi, Kalmegh and Amla.

### About Union Ministry of AYUSH

- The Ministry of AYUSH is dubbed as “Ministry of Ayurveda, Yoga, Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha, Sowa-Rigpa and Homoeopathy”. It was set up on November 9, 2014 to develop education, research and propagation of indigenous alternative medicine systems across India. This ministry includes seven traditional systems of healthcare.
- AYUSH ministry runs various healthcare programs, with primary focus on rural population.
- It forms an integral backbone of the Ayushman Bharat Yojana.
- Till date, about 50000 children have been enrolled in ‘Homeopathy for Healthy Child’

### Additional Tier-1 (AT1) Bonds

- **Context:** The State Bank of India (SBI), India’s largest lender, recently announced that it has raised Rs 4,000 crore through additional Tier-1 (AT1) bonds. These AT1 bonds were raised at a coupon rate of 7.72%.

### Key Highlights

- It the first such issuance in domestic market after the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) notified new rules.
- SBI has AAA credit rating from local credit agencies while the AT1 offering is rated AA+. This is the highest rating in India for such instruments.
- SBI was also the first lender to raise capital through offshore AT1 bonds in 2016.
- The latest issuance by SBI has encouraged other lenders such as Axis Bank to look after the offshore AT1 bond issue in order to raise about \$1 billion.
- Axis Bank became the second Indian lender in 2021 to tap overseas debt markets to raise funds using AT1 bonds. HDFC Bank also raised \$1 billion, recently.

### About SEBI Rule

- SEBI amended the 100-year valuation rule for perpetual bonds, in March 2021.
- As per new rules, deemed residual maturity period of Basel III AT-1 bonds will be 10 years until March 31, 2022. This period will be increased to 20 and 30 years in subsequent six-month period.
- According to new rule, from April 2023, residual maturity of AT-1 bonds will become 100 years from the date of issuance of these bonds.

### About AT1 Bond

- AT1 bonds are also called perpetual bonds. They carry no maturity date but are having a call option. The issuer of these bonds may call or redeem the bonds in case it is getting money at a cheaper rate, especially when interest rates are decreasing.

## Manda Buffalo

- The National Bureau of Animal Genetic Resources (NBAGR) has recognised the Manda buffalo as the 19th unique breed of buffaloes found in India.



- It is found in the Eastern Ghats and plateau of Koraput region of Odisha.
- The Mandas are resistant to parasitic infections, less prone to diseases and can thrive on modest resources.

7<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER 2021

## Karbi Anglong Peace Accord

- **Context:** A tripartite agreement among five insurgent groups of Assam, the Centre and the State government was recently signed to end years of violence in the Karbi Anglong region.

### Highlights of the Agreement:

- Under the peace accord, more than 1,000 armed cadres have abjured violence and joined the mainstream. The agreement provides for their rehabilitation.
- The Union Government will make available a special development package of 1,000 crore over the next five years, for the Assam government to undertake specific projects for the development of Karbi areas.
- The Assam government will set up a Karbi Welfare Council for focused development of Karbi people living outside the 'Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council' (KAAC) area.
- The Consolidated Fund of the State will be augmented to supplement the resources of KAAC.
- The present settlement proposes will give more legislative, executive, administrative and financial powers to KAAC.

## About Karbi

- Originally, Karbis are one of Northeast India's tribal groups, largely inhabiting the Karbi Anglong and Dima Hasao (formerly North Cachar) hills districts.
- A major ethnic community of Assam— Karbis are dotted by many factions, and marked by ethnic violence, killings, abductions, taxation since the late 1980s.

## Background

- The core demand of the Karbi outfits was the formation of a separate state.
- In November 2011, the organisation decided to lay down its arms and sign a tripartite memorandum of settlement with the Centre and the Assam government, settling for enhanced autonomy and special packages for the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC).
- The Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC) is an autonomous district council, which is protected under the Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution.

## Significance of Karbi Anglong Accord:

- The Karbi Anglong Agreement is important as an insurgency by Karbi has had a long history in Assam, which has been marked by killings, ethnic violence, abductions and taxation since the late 1980s.
- The agreement hopes to bring an end to this violence and establish peace in the state.
- Around 1000 Karbi militants had surrendered before the Assam government in February 2021.

## Greece's Climate Crisis Ministry

- Greece Government has created a new Ministry to address the impact of climate change.
- This is done in the wake of massive wildfires that burned more than 1,000 square kilometers (385 square miles) of forest on the island of Evia and in southern Greece.
- The Ministry will look into firefighting, disaster relief and policies to adapt to rising temperatures resulting from climate change.

## India's first Dugong Conservation Reserve

- Government of Tamil Nadu recently announced its plan to set up India's first Dugong Conservation Reserve in the Palk Bay.
- Gulf of Mannar is a shallow bay area between south eastern end of Tamil Nadu and western Sri Lanka.
- With the help of community participation, Government will also construct a Dugong Marine Conservation Reserve in the Gulf of Mannar and Palk Bay area to protect the species.
- Marine Conservation Reserve will be established over an area of 500 km in Palk Bay.

### About Dugong

- Dugong or Sea Cow is an endangered marine mammal. The mammal is restricted to coastal habitat because of seagrass, which is a major part of its diet. They have a distinct dolphin-like tail, different skull form and teeth pattern.
- It is facing extinction because of habitat loss, sea pollution, and loss of seagrass.
- Dugong is found in Gulf of Mannar and at Palk Bay in Tamil Nadu. It is believed that, an estimated 200 individuals live in the Palk Bay and Gulf of Mannar area which would largely benefit from Tamil Nadu government's recent decision to establish conservation reserve.
- The IUCN has listed dugong as a vulnerable to extinction species.

