



WEEKLY CURRENT AFFAIRS

FEBRUARY, 2022

Week-1

1-7 Feb, 2022

★★ Useful for ★★

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

1st FEBRUARY 2022

Collegium System

- **Context:** Recently, the Supreme Court collegium has recommended the elevation of Madras High Court Acting Chief Justice (ACJ) Munishwar Nath Bhandari as its Chief Justice.

Key points about Collegium System:

- Collegium System is a novel mechanism devised to ensure a democratic system of appointment and transfer of judges. It came into existence through Second and Third Judges Case judgments.
- It is headed by the CJI and comprises 4 other senior-most judges of the court. An HC collegium is led by its Chief Justice and four other senior-most judges of that court.
- NJAC was thought of as a replacement of the Collegium System but it was invalidated by the Supreme Court.
- The government's role is limited. It can only get an inquiry conducted by the Home Ministry if a lawyer is to be elevated as a judge in a High Court or the Supreme Court. It can also raise objections and seek clarifications regarding the collegium's choices.

NOTE:

Judges of the Supreme Court and High Courts are appointed by the President under Articles 124(2) and 217 of the Constitution.

United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL)

- The Economic Survey 2021-22 has called for a standardised framework for Cross-Border insolvency as the Insolvency & Bankruptcy Code (IBC).
- It has been highlighted in the report of the Insolvency Law Committee (ILC) which had recommended the adoption of the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL) with certain modifications to make it suitable to the Indian context.

- Trade means faster growth, higher living standards, and new opportunities through commerce.

About UNCITRAL:

- United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL) is the core legal body of the United Nations system in the field of international trade law.
- UNCITRAL was established in 1966 with a recognition that "international trade cooperation among States is an important factor in the promotion of friendly relations and, consequently, in the maintenance of peace and security".
- Its business is the modernization and harmonization of rules on international business.
- **There are 60 members in UNCITRAL elected for six years:** 14 from Asia, 14 from Africa, 10 Latin American and Caribbean, 8 Eastern European and 14 western European and other states.
- UNCITRAL is formulating modern, fair, and harmonized rules on commercial transactions.

India-Philippines BrahMos missile deal

- Recently, the Philippines signed a nearly \$375 million deal to buy three batteries of the BrahMos missile.
- The Philippines was set to become the first country to buy the BrahMos missile. The contract includes delivery of three missile batteries, training for operators and maintainers as well as the necessary Integrated Logistics Support (ILS) package.

About BrahMos

- BrahMos is a joint venture between DRDO and Russia's NPOMashinostroyeniya and the missile derives its name from Brahmaputra and Moskva rivers. It is capable of carrying a warhead of 300 kilograms (both conventional as well as nuclear).
- This version of the missile has been designed to launch either in a vertical or a horizontal mode from moving/stationary assets to target both land and sea targets.

- The missiles, fired at a speed of 2.8 Mach or nearly three times the speed of sound, significantly increase the capability of the ships in engaging long-range targets.
 - BrahMos missiles are designed and developed by BrahMos Aerospace, a joint venture company set up by the Defence Research and Development Organization (DRDO) and Mashinostroyeniya of Russia.
 - The range of the missile was originally capped at 290 km as per obligations of the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR). Following India's entry into the club in 2016, officials said the range would be extended to 450 km and to 600 km at a later stage.
 - A five-judge Constitution bench had upheld the Constitutional amendments: by which Articles 16 (4A) and 16 (4B) were inserted, saying they flow from Article 16 (4) and do not alter its structure.
- NOTE:**
- Article 16 (4A) empowers the State to make provisions for reservation in matters of promotion to SC/ST employees if it feels they are not adequately represented in services.
 - (4B) enables the State to carry forward the unfilled SC/ST quota of a particular year without clubbing it with the regular vacancies of the year to which it is carried forward.

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SC, ST Reservations in Promotions

- The Supreme Court has refused to dilute conditions for reservations in the promotion of Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) in government jobs, adding that it cannot lay down a new yardstick.

Key Points:

- **Court judgements:** Right from the Indra Sawhney verdict of 1992, popularly known as the Mandal Commission case to the Jarnail Singh verdict of 2018 has been referred to by the apex court.
- A three-judge bench headed by Justice Nageswara Rao said states are obligated to collect data on the inadequacy of representation of SCs/STs.
- The 2006 judgment in M Nagaraj vs Union of India had "made it clear that the validity of law made by the State Governments providing reservation in promotions shall be decided on a case-to-case basis for the purpose of establishing whether the inadequacy of representation is supported by quantifiable data.

ASEAN Digital Ministers (ADGMIN) Meeting

- The 2nd ASEAN Digital Ministers (ADGMIN) meeting with India was held on a virtual platform.

Key Points:

- The ADGMIN is an annual meeting of Telecom Ministers of 10 ASEAN (Association of South-East Asian Nations) countries.
- The meeting discussed and deliberated various matters relevant to strengthening regional digital cooperation in the spirit of digital inclusion and integration.
- Digital Transformation: the Engine for ASEAN Economic Recovery from COVID-19.-

About ASEAN:

- Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is a political and economic organisation aimed primarily at promoting economic growth and regional stability among its members.
- It was founded in 1967 by the five South-East Asian nations of Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand.

- ASEAN Summit is the highest policy-making body in ASEAN comprising the Head of States or Government of ASEAN Member States. Summit is held twice annually.
- The First ASEAN Summit was held in Bali, Indonesia in 1976.
- ASEAN countries are Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam and dialogue partner countries - Australia, Canada, China, EU, India, Japan, Republic of Korea, New Zealand, Russia, UK and US.

Green Climate Fund

- **Context:** According to a recent report, countries with the greatest vulnerability to climate change have been denied funding for adaptation under the Green Climate Fund (GFC).
- **Climate finance:** refers to local, national, or transnational financing, which may be drawn from public, private and alternative sources of financing.
- One of the largest vehicles for climate finance connected to the UNFCCC is GCF which was born out of the Copenhagen Accord of 2009.
- It offers financing through “a flexible combination of grants, concessional debt, guarantees or equity instruments”.

About Green Climate Fund (GCF):

- The GCF was founded in 2010 by the UNFCCC.
- This climate fund is the most prominent in the world.
- The GCF was founded to help communities around the world that are directly impacted by climate change.
- In addition, GFC also helps developing countries to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG).

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Great Barrier Reef

- **Context:** Recently, Australia unveiled a billion-dollar package to protect the climate-ravaged Great Barrier

Reef. It aims to prevent the vast network of corals from being removed from UNESCO’s World Heritage list.

- Earlier, UNESCO has decided to downgrade the status of the Great Barrier Reef in Australia because of its dramatic coral decline.
- When the UN previously threatened to downgrade the reef’s World Heritage listing in 2015, Australia created a Reef 2050 plan and poured billions of dollars into protection.
- The Great Barrier Reef is unique as it extends over 14 degrees of latitude, from shallow estuarine areas to deep oceanic waters. The reef is located in the Coral Sea, off the coast of Queensland, Australia. It was selected as a World Heritage Site in 1981.

About Coral Reefs:

- A coral reef is an underwater ecosystem characterized by reef-building corals. Reefs are formed of colonies of coral polyps held together by calcium carbonate.
- The coral polyps live in an endosymbiotic relationship with algae. Algae provide up to 90 per cent of the coral's energy.
- **Temperature:**
 - The temperature of the water should not be below 20°C.
 - The most favourable temperature for the growth of the coral reefs is between 23°C to 25°C.
 - The temperature should not exceed 35°C.
- Corals can survive only under saline conditions with an average salinity between 27% to 40%.
- Coral reefs grow better in shallow water having a depth less than 50 m. The depth of the water should not exceed 200m.

India Enterprise Architecture (IndEA) 2.0

- The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) has proposed a new model of “Federated Digital Identities” under the India Enterprise Architecture (IndEA) 2.0.

- The InDEA 2.0 framework is useful to the policymakers in the government, and architects and system designers in the public and private sector.
- InDEA 2.0 proposes a model of Federated Digital Identities that seeks to optimize the number of digital identities that a citizen needs to have.
- Under the new model, a citizen's multiple digital IDs — from PAN and Aadhaar to driving licence and passport numbers — can be interlinked, stored, and accessed via one unique ID. Citizens can use the digital ID “for availing other third-party services through authentication and consented eKYC”.
- A UNESCO team will be visiting the sites soon to undertake an examination. It will be decided if the monuments may be designated as historic sites after the examination.
- If the Hoysala temples attain this status, these monuments will be fourth on the state's list of World Heritage Sites. The other three include the Hampi Monuments of Vijayanagara, Pattadakallu Temples complex of the Chalukyan era and the Western Ghats.

About Hoysala Temples:

About IndEA:

- India Enterprise Architecture (IndEA) was first proposed and designed in 2017 “with a view to enabling alignment of the IT developments with the business vision of government organisations.
- IndEA provides a generic framework, (based on The Open Group Architecture Framework -TOGAF) consisting of a set of architectural reference models, which can be converted into a Whole-of-Government Architecture for India, Ministries, States, Govt. Agencies etc.
- The IndEA framework is based on a federated architecture approach and recognizes the need to accommodate both greenfield (new) and brownfield (existing / legacy) eGovernance initiatives.

- The Hoysala temples have a basic Darvidian morphology but show strong influences of the Bhumiya mode widely used in Central India, the Nagara traditions of northern and western India, and the Karnataka Dravida modes favoured by the Kalyani Chalukyas.
- They are easily distinguishable from other medieval temples by their highly original star-like ground plans and a profusion of decorative carving.
- Hoysala architecture is the building style developed under the rule of the Hoysala Empire between the 11th and 14th centuries, mostly concentrated in southern Karnataka.

NOTE:

A World Heritage site is classified as a natural or man-made area or a structure that is of international importance, and a space that requires special protection. These sites are officially recognised by the UN and the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation, also known as UNESCO.

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India's Nomination for World Heritage List

- The Hoysala temples of Belur, Halebid, and Somnathapura in Karnataka have been selected as India's World Heritage nominee for the years 2022-2023.
- The Archaeological Survey of India has designated all three Hoysala temples as protected monuments.
- Since April 15, 2014, the Sacred Ensembles of the Hoysala have been on the UNESCO Tentative List."

Union Budget 2022-23

- Recently, Finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman presented a budget worth Rs 39.45 lakh crore with a massive push to infrastructure spending.
- India's economic growth is estimated at 9.2% to be the highest among all large economies. India's gross domestic product (GDP) in dollar terms has already crossed \$3 trillion.

- The fiscal deficit is projected to be higher at 6.9 per cent this fiscal as against 6.8 per cent estimated earlier. The fiscal deficit of the government for 2022-23 is estimated to be Rs 16,61,196 crore.

PM GatiShakti:

- The seven engines that drive PMGatiShakti are Roads, Railways, Airports, Ports, Mass Transport, Waterways and Logistics Infrastructure.
- The scope of PM GatiShakti National Master Plan will encompass the seven engines for economic transformation, seamless multimodal connectivity and logistics efficiency.

Infra, Roadways, Railways, Waterways and Logistics:

- New rail products in the form of 'One Station – One Product', 400 next-gen Vande Bharat trains, and 100 PM Gati Shakti cargo terminals over the next three years provides integration of NIP with Gati Shakti and is likely to prove crucial in employment generation.
- National Ropeways Development Program, Parvatmala to be taken up on PPP mode.
- Draft DPRs for 5 river links Damanganga-Pinjal, Par-Tapi-Narmada, Godavari-Krishna, Krishna-Pennar & Pennar-Kaveri have been finalized.
- 400 Vande Bharat trains with higher efficiency for passengers will be developed in the next three years.
- Four multi-modal national parks contracts will be awarded in FY23.

Agriculture:

- Government to promote funds for blended finance (government share limited to 20%) for sunrise opportunities such as climate action, agri-tech, etc.
- Fund to be facilitated through NABARD to finance startups for agriculture and rural enterprise, relevant for farm produce value chain. Startups will support FPOs and provide tech to farmers.
- Use of Kisan Drones to be promoted for crop assessment, digitisation of land records, spraying of insecticides and nutrients.

- MSP for farmers to be transferred directly into bank accounts.
- Chemical-free natural farming to be promoted in India.

Education:

- A Digital University would be established to provide access to students across the country for world-class quality universal education.
- One class one TV channel programme to be expanded to 200 TV channels.
- Virtual labs and skilling e-labs will be established to promote critical thinking skills and simulated learning environments.
- The Digital Ecosystem for Skilling and Livelihood – the DESH-Stack e-portal would be launched.

Healthcare:

- The health sector has been allocated Rs 86,200.65 crore in the Union Budget.
- A National Tele Mental Health Programme will be launched to improve access to quality mental health counselling and care services.
- An open platform for the National Digital Health Ecosystem will also be rolled out.
- For the National Health Mission, the budget allocation increased from Rs 36,576 crore in 2021-22 to Rs 37,000 crore in 2022-23.

Tax proposals:

- Taxpayers have been allowed a one-time window to correct omissions in income tax returns (ITR). They can file the updated returns within 2 years from the assessment year.
- Digital rupee to be issued using blockchain and other technologies; to be issued by RBI starting 2022-23. This will give a big boost to the economy.
- 30 per cent tax on income from the transfer of virtual digital assets has been proposed.
- One per cent tax deducted at source (TDS) on the transfer of virtual assets above a threshold, gifts would be taxed.

- Both Centre and States govt employees' tax deduction limit to be increased from 10% to 14% to help the social security benefits of state govt employees and bring them at par with the Central govt employees.

MSMEs

- Udyam, e-shram, NCS and ASEEM portals are to be interlinked.
- 130 lakh MSMEs provided additional credit under Emergency Credit Linked Guarantee Scheme (ECLGS). ECLGS to be extended up to March 2023.
- Guarantee cover under ECLGS to be expanded by Rs 50000 Crore to the total cover of Rs 5 Lakh Crore.

Prime Minister's Development Initiative for North-East Region (PM-DevINE):

- New scheme PM-DevINE launched to fund infrastructure and social development projects in the North-East.
- An initial allocation of Rs. 1,500 crore was made to enable livelihood activities for youth and women under the scheme.

Other Social Infrastructure Initiatives

- Vibrant Villages Programme for the development of Border villages with a sparse population, limited connectivity and infrastructure on the northern border.
- Rs. 48,000 crore allocated for completion of 80 lakh houses in 2022-23 under PM Awas Yojana.
- Modernization of building bye-laws, Town Planning Schemes (TPS), and Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) will be implemented.
- Unique Land Parcel Identification Number for IT-based management of land records.

GIFT-IFSC:

- World-class foreign universities and institutions to be allowed in the GIFT City.
- An International Arbitration Centre to be set up for timely settlement of disputes under international jurisprudence.

NOTE:

According to Article 112 of the Indian Constitution, the annual financial statement of a year is a statement of the estimated receipts and expenditure of the government for that particular year.

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Digital Rupee: Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC)

- In the 2022 Budget, the Finance Minister announced the launch of the Digital Rupee, a central bank digital currency (CBDC).
- The Reserve Bank of India will launch the CBDC in the upcoming financial year. This follows the government's plans to launch the CBDC that will be backed by blockchain technology.

Key Points:

- CBDC is a legal tender issued by a central bank in a digital form. It is the sovereign currency in an electronic form and it would appear as a liability (currency in circulation) on a central bank's balance sheet.
- The underlying technology, form and use of a CBDC can be moulded for specific requirements. It is similar to a fiat currency issued on paper and is interchangeable with any other fiat currency i.e., CBDCs should be exchangeable at par with cash.

Global presence of digital currency:

- Till December 2021, there are 87 countries (representing over 90% of global GDP) exploring a CBDC, compared to only 35 countries that were considering a CBDC in May 2020.
- Out of these, 9 countries (the Bahamas, 7 eastern Caribbean & Nigeria) have now fully launched a digital currency.
- Nigeria is the latest country to launch a CBDC, the e-Naira, the first outside the Caribbean.

- However, the major countries with the 4 largest central banks (the US, the Euro Area, Japan, and the UK), are furthest behind.
- There are 14 countries, including China and South Korea, who are now in the pilot stage with their CBDCs and preparing a possible full launch soon.

Ethanol Blended Petrol (EBP) Programme

- As per the Economic Survey 2021-2022, the ethanol supply in the country to enable blending with petrol is likely to reach 302 crore litres by the end of Ethanol Supply Year (ESY) 2020-2021.
- The government has been promoting the use of ethanol as a blendstock with main automotive fuel like petrol in line with the National Policy on Biofuels (NBP) -2018 under the Ethanol Blended Petrol (EBP) Programme.
- India advances the target for 20% ethanol blending in petrol (E20) to 2025 from 2030. The ethanol blending target for ESY 2021-22 is 10%.

About Ethanol:

- An organic chemical compound produced from biomass (mainly from sugarcane in India).
- Since ethanol is produced from plants that harness the power of the sun, ethanol is also considered a renewable fuel.
- High oxygen content allows engines to combust fuel more effectively.

PM-DevINE Scheme

- The Union Minister for Finance and Corporate Affairs introduced a new scheme called the Prime Minister's Development Initiative for the North-East (PM-DevINE) when presenting the Union Budget 2022-23.

Key Points:

- It will be implemented through the North-Eastern Council. North-Eastern Council (NEC) is the statutory body established after amending the North-Eastern Council Act, 1971 in the year 2002. It is the nodal agency for economic and social development of 8 North Eastern Region States.
- An initial allocation of Rs. 1,500 crore will be made for the new scheme.
- It will fund infrastructure, in the spirit of PM GatiShakti, and social development projects based on the felt needs of the North-East.
- This will enable livelihood activities for youth and women, filling the gaps in various sectors.
- However, it will not be a substitute for existing central or state Schemes.
- Its main objective is to fund infrastructure and social development projects in the North-East.

Bomb Cyclone

- Recently, the 'Bomb cyclone' hit the eastern US triggering transport chaos and outages. A bomb cyclone happens when atmospheric pressure in the middle of the storm drops at least 24 millibars over 24 hours, quickly increasing in intensity. The lower the pressure, the stronger the storm.

Key Points:

- It is used by meteorologists to indicate a mid-latitude cyclone that intensifies rapidly.
- It is a massive winter storm hammering the coast, bringing strong winds, flooding, ice and snow.
- It is a combination of rapidly declining pressure and extreme cold.
- This particular storm is the most explosive ever, observed on the east coast.
- It is called a bomb cyclone, a dramatic name for what happens when the storm explosively strengthens while the pressure plummets.

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Newly announced Ramsar sites

- On the occasion of World Wetlands Day, Khijadia Wildlife Sanctuary in Gujarat and Bakhira Wildlife Sanctuary in Uttar Pradesh have been added to the Ramsar site.
- India has a network of 49 such sites, the highest in South Asia, covering 10,93,636 hectares. The certification brings visibility to ecologically sensitive wetlands and helps in conservation.

Key Points:

- **Bakhira Wildlife Sanctuary:** It is the largest natural floodplain wetland in the district of Sant Kabir Nagar, Uttar Pradesh. Established in the year 1980, the sanctuary's lake is important for the migratory birds who fly down here in the winter season.
- **Khijadia Wildlife Sanctuary:** It is a coastal wetland with rich avifaunal diversity providing a safe habitat to endangered and vulnerable species. Located 12 km away from Jamnagar District headquarters in Gujarat. It is a freshwater wetland, heaven for birds.

About the Ramsar Convention:

- The Convention was adopted in the Iranian city of Ramsar in 1971 and came into force in 1975.
- The convention entered into force in India on 1 February 1982.
- It is one of the oldest intergovernmental treaties signed by member countries to preserve the ecological character of their wetlands of international importance.
- It aims to develop and maintain an international network of wetlands that are important for the conservation of global biological diversity and for sustaining human life through the maintenance of their ecosystem components, processes and benefits.

Saffron Bowl Project

- North East Centre For Technology Application and Reach (NECTAR) under Saffron Bowl Project has identified a few locations in Arunachal Pradesh and Meghalaya for saffron cultivation.
- NECTAR is an autonomous body under the DST in collaboration with the Botany and Horticulture departments of Sikkim Central University implemented a pilot project in Yangyang village of South Sikkim.
- Saffron is a plant whose dried stigmas (thread-like parts of the flower) are used to make saffron spice. Saffron cultivation is believed to have been introduced in Kashmir by Central Asian immigrants around the 1st Century BCE.

About National Saffron Mission (NSM)

- NSM was launched in 2010-11 but it was only applicable for the cultivation of saffron in Jammu and Kashmir.
- In 2020, the Government has decided to revive this mission and expand the cultivation of saffron to the northeastern part of the country.
- In 2020, the revised objective of the mission was to start the cultivation of saffron in the northeast of India.
- North East Centre For Technology Application and Reach (NECTAR) has been given the charge to manage the pilot project which will be started in the northeast for saffron cultivation.

Blue Economy: Sixth dimension of Vision of New India by 2030

- Union Ministry of Science & Technology remarked that the Government of India's Vision of New India by 2030 enunciated in 2019 highlighted the Blue Economy as the sixth dimension of its vision.
- R.K. Dhowan and Viswapati Trivedi committee: In 2018, Niti Aayog had set up a committee under R.K. Dhowan and Viswapati Trivedi to draft a National Maritime Policy.

About Blue Economy:

- Blue economy broadly refers to the use of ocean resources for economic growth, improved livelihoods and jobs in a sustainable manner. It is a nouveau term for business conducted in the oceans, the global commons, for centuries.
- This includes different sectors such as fisheries, tourism, offshore oil and gas and infrastructure among others.
- India's blue economy is estimated to be around four per cent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

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Chandrayaan-3

- The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) will launch Chandrayaan-3 in August 2022, according to the government's announcement to the Lok Sabha.
- The ISRO has planned 19 missions until December 2022 consisting of eight launch vehicle missions, seven spacecraft missions and four technology demonstrator missions.

Key Points:

- Chandrayaan-3 is the third Moon mission of the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) and the successor of the Chandrayaan-2 mission which aimed to land a rover on the lunar South Pole. It was sent aboard the country's most powerful geosynchronous launch vehicle, the GSLV-Mk 3.
- However, instead of a safe landing, lander Vikram crashed on the moon's surface on September 7, 2019, preventing rover Pragyaan from reaching the

surface. It would have been the first time a country landed a rover on the moon in its first attempt if the mission had been successful.

- It involves various processes, including finalisation of configuration, subsystems realisation, integration, spacecraft level detailed testing and a number of special tests to evaluate the system performance on earth.
- It is critical for ISRO as it will demonstrate India's capabilities to make landings for further interplanetary missions.

India's first Graphene Innovation Centre

- The Kerala government announced the country's first Graphene Innovation Centre, a joint venture of the Digital University of Kerala, Centre for Materials for Electronics Technology (C-MET) and Tata Steel Limited.
- India Innovation Centre for Graphene would come up in Thrissur at a cost of Rs 86.41 crore.

About Graphene:

- Graphene is a one-atom-thick layer of carbon atoms arranged in a hexagonal lattice.
- It is the building block of Graphite, but graphene is a remarkable substance on its own with a multitude of astonishing properties.
- It is the thinnest, most electrically and thermally conductive material in the world, while also being flexible, and incredibly strong.
- It is almost perfectly transparent since it only absorbs 2 per cent of light.
- Graphene is also known as a wonder material due to its vast potential in the energy and medical world.