MADE EASY

WEEKLY CURRENT AFFAIRS

JULY, 2023

Week-3

15-21 July, 2023

★★ *Useful for* ★★

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

15th JULY, 2023

India-France to co-develop Jet Engine

- **Context:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi has paid an Official Visit to France. He was the Guest of Honour at the Bastille Day Parade.

Key Highlights:

- PM Modi was conferred with the highest honour of France, the Grand Cross of the Legion of Honour, by the French President.
- India and France have issued a joint statement – "25th Anniversary of the Strategic Partnership between France and India: towards a Century of Indo-French Relations". This sets the course for the France-India bilateral relationship in all areas till 2047.
- Year 2047 will mark 100 years of India's Independence, 100 years of diplomatic relations between our two countries, and 50th year of the Indo-French strategic partnership.
- The roadmap for bilateral relations has three pillars that is partnership for security and sovereignty, partnership for the planet, partnership for the people.
- The two countries signed agreements on acquisition of 26 Rafale-M (the marine version) fighters for the Indian Navy, co-production of three more Scorpene class submarines at the public sector Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Ltd and joint development of a combat aircraft engine.
- India and France have released India-France Indo-Pacific Roadmap. Under this roadmap, the two sides decided to work on finalizing an Indo-French development fund for third countries. This will enable joint financing of sustainable development projects in the Indo-Pacific region.
- India and France will also work to set up the Indo-French Health Campus for the Indo-Pacific, with the aim of making it a regional magnet for research and academia.
- In 2018, India and France agreed on a 'Joint Strategic Vision of India-France Cooperation in the Indian Ocean Region.

- India and France made a joint commitment to eliminate single-use plastic products pollution, including a ban on single-use plastic products which have low utility and high littering potential.
- The two countries have decided to constructively engage other like-minded countries to strengthen the negotiations for an international legally binding instrument to end plastic pollution.

Mangrove Initiative for Shoreline Habitats and Tangible Incomes (MISHTI) Scheme

- **Context:** Recently, Mangrove Plantation drive held in Chengalpattu, Tamil Nadu as part of the Mangrove Initiative for Shoreline Habitats and Tangible Incomes (MISHTI) scheme.

Key Highlights:

- The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change has organized a mangrove plantation program at Kovalam Panchayat in Chengalpattu District in Tamil Nadu.
- It was organized as part of the Mangrove Initiative for Shoreline Habitats and Tangible Incomes (MISHTI) scheme.
- The MISHTI Scheme was announced in the Budget 2023-24.
- Its objective is to take up mangrove reforestation and afforestation along the coastal districts of India by adopting best practices that already exist in India as well as from other countries including Indonesia.
- To develop mangrove associated ecotourism initiatives and livelihood generation in coastal states.
- Currently, there is approximately 5000 sq kms of area under mangroves and through the MISHTI program an additional area of 540 sq km is proposed to be covered across 9 States and 4 Union Territories.
- The scheme is planned to be implemented for a period of five years from 2023-2024 to 2027-2028.
- MISHTI is to be implemented by converging CAMPA Fund, MGNREGS, and other sources.

- MISHTI will contribute to the efforts of 'Mangrove Alliance for Climate (MAC)' – an intergovernmental alliance for promotion of Mangrove, of which India became its active member during the (CO P27)

16th JULY, 2023

Export Preparedness Index (EPI) Report, 2022

- **Context:** NITI Aayog has released the third edition of Export Preparedness Index (EPI) for States/UTs of India for the year 2022.

Key Highlights:

- EPI is a comprehensive tool which measures the export preparedness of the States and UTs in India.
- Its aim is to undertake a comprehensive analysis of States and UTs across export-related parameters in order to identify their strengths and weaknesses.
- **The index assesses the performance of the States and UTs across four pillars:**
  1. Policy Pillar evaluates states and UTs' performance based on its adoption of the export-related policy ecosystem at a state and district level as well as the institutional framework surrounding the ecosystem.
  2. Business Ecosystem assesses the prevailing business environment in a state/UT, along with the extent of business-supportive infrastructure, and a state/UTs' transport connectivity.
  3. Export Ecosystem focuses on the export-related infrastructure in a state/UT along with the trade support provided to the exporters, and the prevalence of Research and Development in the state/UT to foster innovation.
  4. Export Performance is an output-based indicator which gauges the growth of a state's export over the previous year and analyzes its export concentration and footprint on the global markets.
- **Topped by:** Tamil Nadu has topped the index followed by Maharashtra and Karnataka.

- Gujarat, which held the top position in EPI 2021 (released in 2022) has been pushed to the fourth slot in EPI 2022.
- **Hilly States:** Uttarakhand secured the top position among hilly/Himalayan states in the EPI 2022.
- **Landlocked States:** Haryana topped the chart among the landlocked regions, indicating its preparedness for exports. It was followed by Telangana, Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Madhya Pradesh, and Rajasthan.
- **Union Territories/Small States:** Goa has ranked first followed by Jammu and Kashmir, Delhi, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, and Ladakh.
- **Districts:** Out of the 680 districts engaged in exports, the top 100 districts contribute about 87% of the total exports from India.
- Among export districts, Jamnagar in Gujarat tops the index. It was followed by Surat, Mumbai Suburban, Mumbai, Pune, Bharuch and Kanchipuram.
- **India's exports:** Despite global slowdown, India's exports in 2021-22 crossed an unprecedented USD 675 Billion, with trade in goods accounting for USD 420 billion.
- The value of merchandise exports crossed USD 400 billion in FY2022, an ambitious goal set by the government, reaching up to USD 422 billion by March 2022.

Bharat New Car Assessment Programme (NCAP)

- **Context:** India will get its own crash safety star rating for four-wheelers called Bharat New Car Assessment Programme (NCAP) from 1st October, 2023.

Key Highlights:

- Bharat NCAP is a new safety assessment programme for passenger vehicles that can seat up to eight people and weigh less than 3.5 tonnes.
- As part of the programme, cars will be crash-tested and given points which in turn would translate into stars. The safest of the lot will get five stars.

- There will be three types of crash tests - frontal, side and pole-side impact tests. Scoring would be done for both adult safety for front passengers and child safety at the rear.

- Out of a maximum 32 points for adult safety, a car would have to score at least 27 for a 5-star rating.

- For child safety, a 5-star rating would be awarded for those cars that score a minimum 41 out of 49 points.

- Bharat NCAP will be rolled out from 1 October but it will be voluntary, so cars will only be tested at the request of makers.

- Even in developed countries, NCAPs are mostly voluntary. They are aimed at nudging firms to offer more than the basic safety features by sparking competition.

- Bharat NCAP will bring India at par with other parts of the world like the US, Europe, Japan, Australia and Latin America that have NCAPs of their own.

- it will bring about more transparency, create awareness among consumers and help buyers choose cars based on their safety credentials.

17th JULY, 2023

Perovskite Solar Cells (PSC)

- **Context:** Indian scientists have indigenously developed highly stable, low-cost Carbon-based perovskite solar cells

Key Highlights:

- A perovskite is a material that has the same crystal structure as the mineral calcium titanium oxide also known as Perovskite.

- It was first found in the Ural Mountains and named after Lev Perovski who was the founder of the Russian Geographical Society.

- Because of their unique crystal make-up, perovskites often display a number of interesting properties, including superconductivity, giant magnetoresistance, and ferroelectricity

- Perovskite Solar Cells (PSC) is a type of solar cell that includes a perovskite-structured compound, most commonly a hybrid organic-inorganic lead or tin halide-based material, as the light-harvesting active layer.

- Perovskite Solar Cells (PSC) offer a promising alternative to traditional silicon solar cells as they have higher efficiencies and very low production costs.

- However, Perovskite solar cells face the problem of degradation during operation when they come in contact with heat, moisture, light, and other environmental factors. This long-duration stability is a major hindrance in the large-scale commercialisation of the product.

- Scientists have indigenously developed highly stable, low-cost Carbon-based perovskite solar cells with superior thermal and moisture stability which can help overcome the challenges of degradation during operation.

India – Indonesia Economic and Financial Dialogue (EFD)

- **Context:** India and Indonesia have announced the launch of the "India – Indonesia Economic and Financial Dialogue".

Key Highlights:

- This platform was launched during the G20 Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors (FMCBG).

- Its aim is to enhance collaboration on bilateral and international economic and financial matters by bringing together economic policymakers and financial regulators from both countries.

- Areas of cooperation include macroeconomic challenges and global economic prospects, bilateral investment relations, and cooperation in G20 and ASEAN matters.

- EFD Dialogue will not only deepen the bilateral relationship between India and Indonesia, but also contribute to the broader economic and financial stability of Southeast Asia and the world.

- Indonesia has emerged as India's largest trading partner in the ASEAN region, with our trade seeing an eightfold increase since 2005, reaching an impressive $38 billion in FY 2022-23.

Global Gibbon Network (GGN)

- **Context:** Recently, the first meeting of the Global Gibbon Network (GGN) to save Hoolock gibbon was held in the Hainan province of China.

Key Highlights:

- Gibbons are the smallest and fastest of all apes. The hoolock gibbon, unique to India's northeast, is one of 20 species of gibbons found in tropical and subtropical forests in Southeast Asia.
- Gibbons are highly intelligent creatures with distinct personalities and strong family bonds, similar to other apes. Since 1900, gibbon distribution and populations have drastically decreased, leaving only small populations in tropical rainforests.
- Gibbons are known for their energetic vocal displays and were initially found in Assam. They are diurnal and arboreal. They are omnivorous.
- Initially, zoologists believed that there were two species of hoolock gibbons in the northeast region of India — the eastern and western hoolock gibbons.
- In 2021, a study conducted by the Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CCMB) in Hyderabad provided evidence through genetic analysis that there is actually only one species of gibbon in India.
- The primary threat to the hoolock gibbon is the deforestation caused by infrastructure projects.
- Western hoolock gibbon is classified as endangered and the eastern hoolock gibbon as vulnerable. Schedule I of Wildlife Protection Act 1972

About Global Gibbon Network (GGN):

- GGN was founded with a vision to safeguard and conserve a key element of Asia's unique natural heritage – the singing gibbon and their habitats, by promoting participatory conservation policies, legislations, and actions.

- It was first initiated in 2020 and was organized by two institutions in China through Ecofoundation Global and the Hainan Institute of National Park

18th JULY, 2023

Aspartame: Artificial Sweetener

- **Context:** The WHO classified Aspartame as "possibly carcinogenic to humans". However, experts believe that anything in moderation is not harmful

Key Highlights:

- Aspartame is an artificial sweetener that is 200 times sweeter than normal sugar. It is available in powder form and is used in tea, coffee, colas, chewing gums and packaged desserts because it does not increase the calorie level.
- In 1965, a chemist named James M. Schlatter discovered it, and it was first used to replace sucrose.
- The Joint Expert Committee on Food Additives (JECFA) came to the conclusion that there is insufficient evidence to demonstrate that aspartame causes human cancer. To reduce potential health hazards, they also suggested limiting aspartame consumption.
- The JECFA established the daily intake of 0–40 mg/ kg body weight for aspartame

Steel Slag Road Technology

- **Context:** The Union Minister of Science & Technology has announced that India has developed the world's latest Steel Slag Road technology.

Key Highlights:

- Slag is made up of impurities melted out of the ore during the steel-making process in most of the Steel Plants.
- CSIR- Central Road Research Institute (CRRI), New Delhi has pioneered the development of use of Steel slag in road construction.

- In 2022, Surat in Gujarat became the first city in the country to get a processed steel slag (industrial waste) road.
- The Border Roads Organisation (BRO) has also used steel slag to construct a long-lasting heavy-duty road at Arunachal Pradesh along the India-China border area.
- Besides, India's largest road building agency, National Highway Authority of India successfully tested the Steel Slag Road technology on NH-66 (Mumbai- Goa).
- India is the world's second largest steel producer. For per ton of steel production around 200 kg Steel slag is generated as solid waste.
- Steel slag generation in the country is about 19 Million tons per annum and expected to reach 60 million tons by 2030.
- This huge quantity of steel slag is piled up in and around the steel plants as big mounds and becoming the source of air, water, and land pollution.
- Hence, the use of steel slag in road construction is an environmentally friendly cost-effective method.
- Steel slag road costs are about 30% cheaper than conventional making of roads.
- Steel slag roads have been found to last ten years as compared to three to four years for bitumen roads, thus bringing down sharply the maintenance costs.
- Steel slag roads are more durable and resistant to weather unpredictability.

19th JULY, 2023

Crimean-Congo Haemorrhagic Fever (CCHF)

- **Context:** According to the World Health Organization (WHO), Climate Change is helping in the spread of deadly viruses like Crimean-Congo haemorrhagic fever (CCHF).

Key Highlights:

- Crimean-Congo haemorrhagic fever (CCHF) is a viral haemorrhagic fever usually transmitted by ticks.

- The virus is present in the tick family of insects. Animals such as cattle, goats, sheep and hares serve as amplifying hosts for the virus.
- Transmission to humans occurs through contact with infected ticks or animal blood. CCHF can also be transmitted from one infected human to another by contact with infectious blood or body fluids such as sweat and saliva.
- The disease was first described in the Crimean Peninsula in 1944 and given the name Crimean hemorrhagic fever.
- In 1969 it was recognized that the pathogen causing Crimean haemorrhagic fever was the same as that responsible for an illness identified in 1956 in the Congo Basin.
- The linkage of the two place names resulted in the current name for the disease and the virus.
- CCHF is endemic in all of Africa, the Balkans, the Middle East and in Asia.
- CCHF outbreaks constitute a threat to public health services as the virus can lead to epidemics. It also has a high case fatality ratio (10–40%).
- The first fatality from the disease in Europe was in Spain. In India, one person succumbed to CCHF last month in Gujarat.
- There is no vaccine for the virus in either humans or animals, and treatment generally consists of managing symptoms.

Mekong Ganga Cooperation (MGC)

- **Context:** India's External Affairs Minister has addressed the 12th Mekong Ganga Cooperation (MGC) Mechanism meeting.

Key Highlights:

- Mekong-Ganga Cooperation (MGC) was launched in 2000 at Vientiane, Lao PDR with the signing of the Vientiane Declaration.
- The grouping was initially called Ganga Suvarnabhumi Programme (GMSP).

- Both the Ganga and the Mekong are civilizational rivers and the MGC initiative aims to facilitate closer contacts among the people inhabiting these two major river basins.
- It is an initiative by six countries – India and five ASEAN countries, namely, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam.
- The MGC meetings are co-chaired alternately every year between India and one of the 5 Mekong countries.
- The four foundational areas of cooperation under MGC include tourism, culture, education, and transport & communication.
- It has further expanded to include new areas like health and traditional medicine, agriculture and allied sectors, small and medium enterprises, water resources management, science and technology, skill development, and capacity building.
- The Government of India announced the implementation of Quick Impact Projects (QIP) in CLMV (Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, and Vietnam) countries at the 6th Mekong Ganga Cooperation (MGC) Ministerial Meeting held in New Delhi in 2012.
- Each QIP project costs not more than US$ 50,000/.
- The emphasis of QIPs is on short gestation high visibility projects with a normal gestation period of up to one year, which directly benefits the local communities with results that are immediate and visible.
- The type of projects under QIP includes the creation or up-gradation of physical infrastructure such as roads, local community centers and social infrastructures such as in the education, health, sanitation, or community development sectors.

20th JULY, 2023

DPT3 Immunization

- **Context:** The WHO and UNICEF estimates for national immunization coverage for 2022 has been released recently.

Key Highlights:

- The WHO and UNICEF estimates for national immunisation coverage for 2022, released showed that in the WHO South-East Asia Region, the coverage rate for DPT3 recovered to the pre-pandemic level of 91%, a sharp increase from the 82% recorded in 2021.
- As per the estimate, the coverage rate for DPT3 vaccine in India rose to an all-time high of 93% in 2022.This has surpassed the previous pre-pandemic best of 91% recorded in 2019.
- The DPT vaccine or DTP vaccine is a class of combination vaccines against three infectious diseases in humans: diphtheria, pertussis (whooping cough), and tetanus.
- The vaccine components include diphtheria and tetanus toxoids and either kill whole cells of the bacterium that causes pertussis or pertussis antigens.
- The number of zero-dose children (those that have not received even the first dose of DPT vaccine) halved to 2.3 million in 2022 from 4.6 million in 2021.
- Similarly, the number of partially vaccinated children (those that have received at least one dose of DPT vaccine but did not complete the primary series of three doses) reduced to 6.5 lakh in 2022 from 1.3 million in 2021.
- The region had the best immunization recoveries among all the WHO regions. This can be majorly attributed to the efforts being made by India and Indonesia.

Sahara Refund Portal

- **Context:** Union Home Minister and Minister of Cooperation launched the Central Registrar of Cooperative Societies (CRCS)-Sahara Refund Portal.

Key Highlights:

- The purpose of the CRCS-Sahara Refund Portal is to protect the interests of members of the cooperatives. The portal will help address the genuine claims of depositors who had invested money in Sahara Group's cooperative societies

- This portal has been developed for submission of claims by genuine depositors of Cooperative Societies of Sahara Group - Sahara Credit Cooperative Society Limited, Saharayan Universal Multipurpose Society Limited, Hamara India Credit Cooperative Society Limited and Stars Multipurpose Cooperative Society Limited.
- There are two main conditions related to the process: first, the investor's Aadhaar card must be linked to their mobile number, and second, the Aadhaar card must be linked to their bank account.
- The online Portal developed for submission of claims is user friendly, efficient and transparent. The entire process is digital.
- Necessary checks and balances have been incorporated in the Portal to ensure that only the legitimate deposits of the genuine depositors are refunded.
- The portal can also be accessed through the Ministry of Cooperation website.
- The depositors will be verified through Aadhaar card to ensure their identity.
- The money will be deposited into the bank account of the claimants within 45 days.

TCRM Matrix Framework

- **Context:** NITI Aayog released the Techno-Commercial Readiness and Market Maturity Matrix (TCRM Matrix) Framework to Drive Innovation and Entrepreneurship in India.

Key Highlights:

- Its aim is to revolutionize technology assessment and fuel innovation and entrepreneurship in the country.
- The Working Paper casts light on the historical evolution of technology assessment frameworks, including the Technology Readiness Level (TRL), Commercialization Readiness Level (CRL), and Market Readiness Level (MRL) scales.
- By building upon these frameworks' core principles, the TCRM Matrix framework presents an integrated assessment model that offers in-depth insights and actionable intelligence to stakeholders at every stage of the technology development cycle.
- The working paper provides clear guidelines for integrating the TCRM Matrix framework within the broader innovation ecosystem. By doing so, policymakers, strategists, academicians, and investors can unlock its full potential and drive meaningful change.
- The paper gives a way forward for policymakers, strategists, academicians, and investors on how to integrate the framework within the larger ecosystem of innovation, and entrepreneurship.
- The paper elaborates on the key requirements and rationales for adopting the framework and whether it can lead to significant positive implications as well as the constraints, if any, in implementing this framework.
- It has also been specified that an extensive exercise has to be done before adopting the framework within any specific environment.
- The framework adoption has to be within the national and sectoral innovation facets.

21st JULY, 2023

Tankai Method

- **Context:** The Ministry of Culture and Indian Navy have entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to revive and preserve the 2000-year-old technique of shipbuilding known as the Tankai method.

Key Highlights:

- The Tankai method is a 2000-year-old technique of shipbuilding. It is also known as 'stitched shipbuilding method'.
- In this method, the ships are constructed by stitching wooden planks together rather than using nails.
- This method offers flexibility and durability to ships making them less susceptible to damage from shoals and sandbars.

- The arrival of European ships led to a shift in shipbuilding techniques. But this art of stitching ships has survived in a few coastal regions of India, primarily for small local fishing boats.
- The Ministry of Culture and Indian Navy have entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to revive the Tankai method.
- As per the MoU, the plan is to construct an ocean-going wooden stitched sail ship using the ancient Tankai method.
- The significance of this stitched ship project extends beyond its construction. It aims to revive the maritime memory and instill a sense of pride in India's rich maritime heritage among its citizens. Additionally, it aims to promote cultural memories among the Indian Ocean littoral countries

Digital Time Voucher

- **Context:** The Election Commission of India (ECI) has introduced a digital time voucher system for political parties to access government-owned electronic media, such as Doordarshan and All India Radio for campaigning during elections.

Key Highlights:

- A digital voucher is a type of voucher that is given online and can be redeemed at a later date.
- Election Commission of India (ECI) has planned to issue digital time vouchers to National & State political parties for campaigning on Doordarshan & All India Radio during elections.
- These vouchers can be redeemed by political parties at designated Doordarshan or AIR centres in exchange for total time allotted.
- Each political party shall be given time Vouchers of different denominations of, 5 minutes and 10 minutes, equal to the total time allotted to it for telecasts on Doordarshan and broadcasts on AIR.
- The political party shall have the discretion to choose any representatives and allow them to use those time vouchers provided that no such individual representative shall be allowed to use more than 20 minutes of the total time allotted to that party, either on Doordarshan or on AIR.
- This step also reflects the EC's commitment to leveraging technology for the betterment of the electoral process and ease of all stakeholders.