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WEEKLY  
CURRENT AFFAIRS**

**WEEK-2**

08<sup>th</sup> July - 14<sup>th</sup> July, 2021

**TARGETED EXAMINATIONS**

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

8<sup>th</sup> JULY 2021

## Taal Volcano of Philippines

- Scientists of the Philippines warned that the second-most active volcano of the Philippines, Taal Volcano, can erupt anytime soon amid “anomalously high” volcanic gas emissions.
- Country also recorded the highest levels of volcanic sulphur dioxide gas emission after eruption. Sulphur dioxide emission is about 22,628 tonnes per day.
- These volcanic emissions were accompanied by 26 strong and very shallow low-frequency volcanic earthquakes because of magmatic degassing”.

### About Taal Volcano

- Taal volcano, in the Philippines, is a large caldera filled by Taal Lake. It is located in the province of Batangas. It is considered the most active volcano in the Philippines, with a total of 34 recorded historical eruptions.
- All these volcanoes were concentrated on Volcano Island, near Taal Lake. Caldera was formed by prehistoric eruptions during 140,000 and 5,380 BP. This volcano is a part of Ring of Fire. This volcano was known as Bombou or Bombon in the 1800s.

### NOTE:

It is a region around the rim of Pacific Ocean where several volcanic eruptions and earthquakes occur. It is a horseshoe-shaped belt which is about 40,000 km long and 500 km wide. Ring of Fire comprises of Pacific coasts of South America, North America & Kamchatka.

## Solicitor General of India

- A delegation of Trinamool Congress (TMC) MPs met President of India and sought the removal of Tushar Mehta as the Solicitor General of India, on the grounds of “criminal misconduct” and “gross

impropriety” following his meeting with BJP MLA Suvendu Adhikari.

- Suvendu Adhikari is an accused in the 2016 Narada tapes case, and Mr. Mehta is representing the CBI in the Supreme Court and the Calcutta High Court in the agency’s probe against senior TMC leaders in the matter.

### About Solicitor General of India:

- The Solicitor General is the second highest law officer in the country.
- He is subordinate to the Attorney General of India, the highest law officer and works under him.
- He also advises the government in legal matters.
- Solicitor general is appointed for a period of three years by the Appointment Committee of Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister.
- Office and duties of the Attorney General are created by the Constitution under Article 76.
- While, Solicitor General and Additional Solicitor Generals’ office and duties are governed by Law Officers (Conditions of Service) Rules, 1987 and not by Constitution (thus they are statutory posts and not constitutional).
- Moreover, attorney generals have the right to participate in the proceedings of Parliament, but cannot vote.
- Whereas, Solicitor General and Additional Solicitor Generals’ do not have these rights wrt to participation in parliament.

## NIPUN Bharat Programme

- The Ministry of Education has launched NIPUN (National Initiative for Proficiency in Reading with Understanding and Numeracy) Bharat Scheme.
- It aims to cover the learning needs of children in the age group of 3 to 9 years.

### About the Programme:

- This initiative is being launched as a part of NEP (National Education Policy) 2020.
- This policy aims to pave the way for transformational reforms in school and higher education systems in the country. This policy replaced the 34 year old National Policy on Education (NPE), 1986.
- It will be implemented by the Department of School Education and Literacy.
- Target: It has been envisioned for ensuring that every child in the country necessarily attains foundational literacy and numeracy by the end of Grade 3, by 2026-27.
- A five-tier implementation mechanism will be set up at the National- State- District- Block- School level in all States and UTs, under the aegis of the centrally sponsored scheme of Samagra Shiksha.

### Key components:

- Foundational skills enable to keep children in class thereby reducing the dropouts and improve transition rate from primary to upper primary and secondary stages.
- Activity based learning and a conducive learning environment will improve the quality of education.
- Innovative pedagogies such as toy-based and experiential learning will be used in classroom transactions thereby making learning a joyful and engaging activity.
- Intensive capacity building of teachers will make them empowered and provide greater autonomy for choosing the pedagogy.

9<sup>th</sup> JULY 2021

### Harit Dhara

- Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) has developed an anti-methanogenic feed supplement 'Harit Dhara' (HD), which can cut down cattle methane emissions by 17-20% and can also result in higher milk production.

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### About Harit Dhara:

- Harit Dhara is prepared using condensed and hydrolysable tannin-rich plant-based sources abundantly available in the country.
- It changes the composition of the volatile fatty acids that are the end-products of rumen fermentation (along with hydrogen and CO<sub>2</sub>).
- It roughly costs Rs 6/kg and it is to be fed only to animals aged above three months having fully functional rumen.
- When given to bovines and sheep, it not only cuts down their methane emissions by 17-20%.
- It also results in higher milk production and body weight gain.
- It has been made from tannin-rich plant-based sources. Tropical plants containing tannins, bitter and astringent chemical compounds, are known to suppress or remove protozoa from the rumen.

### Benefits:

- It decreases the population of protozoa microbes in the rumen, responsible for hydrogen production and making it available to the archaea (structure similar to bacteria) for reduction of CO<sub>2</sub> to methane.

### Discrete auroras on Mars

- The UAE's Hope spacecraft, sent by the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to orbit Mars, has captured images of discrete auroras on Mars.
- Unlike auroras on Earth, which are seen only near the north and south poles, discrete auroras on Mars are seen all around the planet at night time.

### Auroras on Earth:

- Auroras are caused when solar wind, charged particles ejected from the Sun's surface, enter the Earth's atmosphere.

- These particles are harmful and the Earth's geomagnetic field acts as a shield to protect humans from these harmful solar winds.
- However, at the north and south poles, some of these solar wind particles are able to continuously stream down and interact with different gases in the atmosphere to cause a display of light in the night sky.
- This display, known as an aurora, is seen from the Earth's high latitude regions (called the auroral oval) and is active all year round.
- On the north pole of Earth, these lights are called Aurora Borealis or Northern Lights, and are seen from the US (Alaska), Canada, Iceland, Greenland, Norway, Sweden and Finland.
- On the south pole, they are called Aurora Australis or Southern Lights and are visible from high latitudes in Antarctica, Chile, Argentina, New Zealand and Australia.
- It had prescribed three years' imprisonment if a social media message caused "annoyance" or was found "grossly offensive".
- The court, in the Shreya Singhal judgment authored by Justice Rohinton F. Nariman in March 2015, had concluded that the provision was vague and worded arbitrarily.

### Concerns:

- The SC had noted that Section 66A arbitrarily, excessively and disproportionately invades the right of free speech, under article 19(1) (a) of the Constitution, and upsets the balance between such right and the reasonable restrictions that may be imposed on such right and the definition of offences under the provision was open-ended and undefined.
- The court also said that the provision used expressions "completely open-ended and undefined" and every expression used was "nebulous" in meaning.

### Significance:

- Studying Martian auroras is important for scientists, for it can offer clues as to why the Red Planet lost its magnetic field and thick atmosphere— among the essential requirements for sustaining life.

### Section 66A of the IT Act

- The Supreme Court has issued a notice to the Centre on the use of Section 66A of the IT Act that was scrapped several years ago and said that it is shocking that the judgment striking down the law has not been implemented even now.

### Key Points:

- Section 66A defines the punishment for sending "offensive" messages through a computer or any other communication device like a mobile phone or a tablet. A conviction can fetch a maximum of three years in jail and a fine.

### Bihar's Valmiki Tiger Reserve (VTR)

- Authorities in Bihar's Valmiki Tiger Reserve (VTR) have started planning for conservation of vultures after 150 of the birds were sighted recently in the protected area.

### Key Points:

- Valmiki Tiger Reserve (VTR) was set up in the early 1990s.
- It is spread over 899 square kilometers in Bihar's West Champaran district, bordering Nepal's Chitwan National Park to its north and Uttar Pradesh to its west.
- Gaur, which are native to south and Southeast Asia, had shifted to Chitwan a few years back due to grassland destruction in VTR.
- There are nine recorded species of vultures in India — the Oriental white-backed, long-billed, slender-billed, Himalayan, red-headed, Egyptian, bearded, cinereous and the Eurasian Griffon.

10<sup>th</sup> JULY 2021

## Bengal Legislative Council

- The West Bengal Assembly passed a resolution supporting an ad hoc committee report that favoured creation of a legislative council.
- According to law, West Bengal can have a maximum of 94 members in legislative council, accounting for one-third of total assembly seats, after this resolution gets support of Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha.

### About Legislative Council:

- Under Article 169 of the constitution, Parliament may by law create or abolish the second chamber in a state if the Legislative Assembly of that state passes a resolution to that effect by a special majority.

### How are members of the Council elected?

- 1/3rd of members are elected by members of the Assembly.
- 1/3rd by electorates consisting of members of municipalities, district boards and other local authorities in the state.
- 1/12th by an electorate consisting of teachers.
- 1/12th by registered graduates.
- The remaining members are nominated by the Governor from among those who have distinguished themselves in literature, science, art, the cooperative movement, and social service.

### NOTE:

Presently six states; Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Telangana and Karnataka; have a Legislative Council.

## Recusal of Judges

- The Calcutta high court has imposed a penalty of 5 lakh on West Bengal chief minister for seeking recusal of Justice Kaushik Chanda from her Nandigram election petition.

### Key points:

- When there is a conflict of interest, a judge can withdraw from hearing a case to prevent creating a perception that she carried a bias while deciding the case.
- The conflict of interest can be in many ways — from holding shares in a company that is a litigant to having a prior or personal association with a party involved in the case.

### Grounds for Recusal:

- The judge is biased in favour of one party, or against another, or that a reasonable objective observer would think he might be.
- Interest in the subject matter, or relationship with someone who is interested in it.
- Background or experience, such as the judge's prior work as a lawyer.
- Personal knowledge about the parties or the facts of the case.
- Ex parte communications with lawyers or non-lawyers.
- Rulings, comments or conduct.

## The draft Cinematograph (Amendment) Bill 2021

- The Standing Committee on Information and Technology has conveyed its discontent to the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting on the “super censorship” clause introduced in the draft Cinematograph (Amendment) Bill 2021.

### Cause of concern:

- In the draft, there is a provision which allows the government to order recertification for a film already certified by the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC).
- The government says the clause would only be invoked if the content of a film impinged on security and integrity of the nation.

**Key Provisions in the draft bill:**

- Revision of certification: This provision will give the Centre “revisionary powers” and enable it to “re-examine” films already cleared by the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC).
- Age-based certification: It seeks to introduce age-based categorisation and classification. It proposes to divide the existing categories (U, U/A and A) into further age-based groups: U/A 7+, U/A 13+ and U/A 16+.
- Provision against piracy: At present, there are no enabling provisions to check film piracy. Violation shall be punishable with imprisonment and fine.
- Eternal certificate: It proposes to certify films for perpetuity. Currently a certificate issued by the CBFC is valid only for 10 years.

11<sup>th</sup> JULY 2021

**Document on the conservation of river Ganga**

- National Mission for Clean Ganga has released a policy document on the conservation of river Ganga.

**Key Highlights:**

- Cities situated on Ganga river banks will have to incorporate river conservation plans when they prepare their Master Plans.
- These “river-sensitive” plans must be practical and consider questions of encroachment and land ownership.
- There is a need for a systematic rehabilitation plan for such encroaching entities that emphasizes alternative livelihood options in addition to a relocation strategy.
- The Master Plan shouldn't mandate specific technologies, but it can “create an environment” for facilitating the use of state-of-the-art technologies (without naming the providers) for river management.

**About the National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG):**

- The National Council for Rejuvenation, Protection, and Management of River Ganga, commonly known as the National Ganga Council, executed the National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG).
- This mission became a registered society on August 12, 2011, under the Societies Registration Act, 1860.
- State-level Programme Management Groups (SPMGs) in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal and Jharkhand, and assist the National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG) under the National Ganga Council.

**Bitcoin Hardware Wallet**

- Twitter CEO Jack Dorsey announced his payments firm Square would soon build a hardware wallet to store bitcoin.
- The wallet will be a type of plug-in device, much like a USB pen drive that stores, manages and secures a user's crypto assets.

**Key Points:**

- Hardware wallet is a special type of cryptocurrency storage which maintains and secures private crypto keys of users in hardware devices.
- This wallet is known for providing security and utility when users interact with blockchains. It allows users to work on multiple blockchains simultaneously.
- This is translated as utility factor because users can manage Bitcoin, Ethereum & Alt. Coins, Lumens etc on a single device.

**Advantages:**

- Hardware wallets are extremely secure across cyberspace because it is a hardware device. Wallet isolates key or access from the rest of the Internet. Thus, it is safe from online attacks.

## White Flag Campaign

- In Malaysia, some residents of low-income families have started waving white flags as part of the so-called “White Flag Campaign”, or the #benderaputi (white flag) movement.

### Key Points:

- They are doing this to convey distress about the financial crunch they have had to deal with amid the lockdowns due to Covid-19.
- As part of the movement, families that are facing hunger or need any other kind of assistance are encouraged to wave a white flag or put a piece of white cloth outside their homes to signal that they need help.
- The idea is that by spotting the white flag, neighbours and good samaritans can reach them. On the Sambal SOS app, which was initially called the Bendera Putih app, people can see the map of Malaysia where active food banks are marked. This is to help people easily track down food banks.

12<sup>th</sup> JULY 2021

## Authorised Economic Operators Programme

- The Central Board of Indirect Taxes & Customs (CBIC) has inaugurated the online filing of Authorised Economic Operators (AEO).
- The new version (V 2.0) of the web application is designed to ensure continuous real-time and digital monitoring of physically filed applications for timely intervention and expedience.

### About Authorised Economic Operators (AEO) Programme:

- AEO is a programme under the aegis of the World Customs Organization (WCO) SAFE Framework of Standards to secure and facilitate Global Trade.
- The programme aims to enhance international supply chain security and facilitate movement of legitimate goods.

- AEO is a voluntary compliance programme.
- It enables Indian Customs to enhance and streamline cargo security through close cooperation with the principal stakeholders of the international supply chain viz. importers, exporters, logistics providers, custodians or terminal operators, customs brokers and warehouse operators.

### SAFE Framework:

- In June 2005 the WCO Council adopted the Framework of Standards to Secure and Facilitate Global Trade (SAFE Framework) that would act as a deterrent to international terrorism, to secure revenue collections and to promote trade facilitation worldwide.
- The SAFE Framework has emerged as the global Customs community's concerted response to threats to supply chain security, equally supporting facilitation of legitimate and secure businesses.
- It prescribes baseline standards that have been tested and are working well around the globe.

## Agriculture Infrastructure Fund

- The Union Government has given its nod to the various modifications in the Central Sector Scheme of Financing Facility under ‘Agriculture Infrastructure Fund’.

### Latest modifications:

- Eligibility has now been extended to State Agencies/APMCs, National & State Federations of Cooperatives, Federations of Farmers Producers Organizations (FPOs) and Federations of Self Help Groups (SHGs).
- For APMCs, interest subvention for a loan upto Rs. 2 crore will be provided for each project of different infrastructure types e.g. cold storage, sorting, grading and assaying units, silos, et within the same market yard.
- The power has been delegated to the Minister of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare to make necessary changes with regard to addition or deletion of beneficiary.



### About Agriculture Infrastructure Fund:

- The Agriculture Infrastructure Fund is a medium - long term debt financing facility for investment in viable projects for post-harvest management infrastructure and community farming assets through interest subvention and credit guarantee.
- The scheme also entails providing credit guarantee coverage under Credit Guarantee Fund Trust for Micro and Small Enterprises (CGTMSE) for loans up to Rs. 2 Crore. NABARD will steer this initiative in association with the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare.
- Under the scheme, Rs. 1 Lakh Crore will be provided by banks and financial institutions as loans with interest subvention of 3% per annum and credit guarantee coverage under CGTMSE for loans up to Rs. 2 Crores.
- Farmers, Marketing Cooperative Societies, Joint Liability Groups (JLG), Multipurpose Cooperative Societies, Agri-entrepreneurs, Start-ups, and Central/ State agency or Local Body sponsored Public-Private Partnership Projects.

#### ■ NOTE:

The fund will be managed and monitored through an online Management Information System (MIS) platform. It will enable all the qualified entities to apply for loan under the Fund.

### Report on Human-wildlife conflict

- The World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) and the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) recently released its report titled "A future for all – the need for human-wildlife coexistence".

#### Key points:

- Conflict between humans and animals is one of the main threats to the long-term survival of some of the world's most iconic species.

- Over 500 elephants were killed between 2014-2015 and 2018-2019, mostly due to human-elephant conflict.
- It also affects polar bears, Mediterranean monk seals and large herbivores like elephants.
- Global wildlife populations have decreased by 68 per cent since 1970 because of conflicts.

### About Sonitpur Model:

- In Sonitpur district in Assam, destruction of forests had forced elephants to raid crops, in turn causing deaths of both elephants and humans.
- In response, WWF India had developed the 'Sonitpur Model' during 2003-2004 by which community members were connected with the state forest department.
- They were given training on how to work with them to drive elephants away from crop fields safely.
- Advisory for management of Human-Wildlife Conflict (HWC) approved by Standing Committee of National Board of Wildlife (SC-NBWL):
  - Empower gram panchayats in dealing with the problematic wild animals as per the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.
  - Utilise add-on coverage under the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojna for crop compensation against crop damage due to HWC.

13<sup>th</sup> JULY 2021

### SPARSH : System for Pension Administration (Raksha)]

- The Ministry of Defence has implemented SPARSH [System for Pension Administration (Raksha)], an integrated system for automation of sanction and disbursement of defence pension.



**Key Points:**

- This web-based system processes pension claims and credits pension directly into the bank accounts of defence pensioners without relying on any external intermediary.
- A Pensioner Portal is available for pensioners to view their pension related information, access services and register complaints for redressal of grievances, if any, relating to their pension matters.
- SPARSH envisages establishment of Service Centres to provide last mile connectivity to pensioners who may be unable to directly access the SPARSH portal for any reason.
- In addition to several offices of the Defence Accounts Department, which are already functioning as Service Centres for pensioners, the two largest banks dealing with defence pensioners – State Bank of India (SBI) and Punjab National Bank (PNB) – have been co-opted as Service Centres.

**Zika Virus**

- Alarmed by cases of Zika virus in neighbouring Kerala, Karnataka has issued guidelines to prevent the spread of the disease in the state.

**Key Points:**

- Zika virus is a mosquito-borne flavivirus that was first identified in Uganda in 1947 in monkeys. It was later identified in humans in 1952 in Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania.
- The Zika virus is predominantly transmitted by infected mosquitoes from the Aedes genus, mainly Aedes aegypti. The Aedes mosquitoes also spread dengue, chikungunya and yellow fever. They usually bite during the daytime, mostly during the early morning or later afternoon.
- Apart from the mosquitoes, an infected person can also spread the virus. This virus can be transmitted from a pregnant woman to the fetus, through sexual

contact, transfusion of blood and blood products, and organ transplantation.

**Symptoms:**

- Generally, the symptoms include fever, rash, conjunctivitis, muscle and joint pain, malaise, or headache. It lasts for about two to seven days. Most infected people do not develop any symptoms.

**NOTE:**

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), the Zika virus has no treatment or vaccine.

**Himalayan Yaks**

- Recently, the National Research Centre on Yak (NRCY) at Dirang in Arunachal Pradesh's West Kameng district has tied up with the National Insurance Company Ltd. for insuring the high-altitude yak.
- The Yak population has been decreasing at an alarming rate.
- Climate change and inexplicable changes in the weather pattern have been reported from the yak rearing areas throughout the country.

**About Himalayan Yaks:**

- The Himalayan yak (*Bos grunniens*) is a totemic animal of the high
- The woolly yaks are indicators of change in temperature on the mountains. The animal finds it difficult to tolerate the conditions below 7,000 feet above sea level.
- The domestic yak is a long-haired domesticated cattle found throughout the Himalayan region of the Indian subcontinent, the Tibetan Plateau, Northern Myanmar, Yunnan, Sichuan and as far north as Mongolia and Siberia.

- It is the largest animal on the Tibetan plateau – it can be as tall as 2.2 metres at the shoulder, and weigh up to a thousand kilograms.
- Yak is a “flagship species”, and indicates the health of the ecosystem within which it lives.
- As per the draft proposal, it shall be the duty of the government to introduce a compulsory subject on population control in secondary schools.
- Bill put emphasis on the need to control & stabilise the population of the state in order to promote sustainable development with more equitable distribution. Bill also seeks to provide welfare to the population in the state by implementing and promoting the two-child norm.

14<sup>th</sup> JULY 2021

## The Uttar Pradesh Population (Control, Stabilization and Welfare) Bill, 2021

- The UP State Law Commission has proposed a population control bill titled The Uttar Pradesh Population (Control, Stabilization and Welfare) Bill, 2021.
- The Law Commission said the bill proposes to bar the violators of the two-child policy from contesting local body elections or applying for government jobs.

### Key Points:

- The Uttar Pradesh law commission formulated a proposal for population control and welfare, rewarding couples that adhere to a 'two-child policy'.
- The UP law commission said that the policy will be voluntary — it will not be enforced upon anyone.
- However, if any person decides to "voluntarily" keep the number of their family members limited, they will be eligible for government schemes. On the other hand, if someone doesn't follow the policy, they will face restrictions in government jobs, availing ration, and other benefits.

### Key provisions:

- Bill called to debar those having more than two children from contesting in local polls.
- They will also be prevented from applying for or getting promotion in government jobs.
- They would also be debarred from receiving government subsidies.

## Antarctic Meltwater Lakes

- NASA scientists discovered two functioning subglacial lakes beneath the Antarctic ice sheet using a sophisticated Earth-observing laser device.
- Scientists were able to image the subglacial lakes using NASA's Ice, Cloud, and Land Elevation Satellite 2, or ICESat-2. Laser pulses were employed by the ICESat-2 to measure elevation data for ice, clouds, and land, as well as their topography.

### Key Highlights:

- NASA Uncovered Two New Subglacial Lakes – Meltwater Lakes Beneath Glacial Ice – In Antarctica Using Data From ICESat 2 And Plotted The Network Of Lakes With Great Precision, According To Fricker And Her Colleague Matthew R. Siegfried.
- These Maps Will Now Aid Scientists In Better Understanding Antarctica's Water System And How These Glacier Lakes Contribute To Ocean Water.
- They Can Explain And Predict The Formation And Disappearance Of Antarctic Lakes Using The Measurements.

### NOTE:

- ICESat-2 is the successor of ICESat. It was launched by NASA in 2018. This new satellite can gather elevation data with higher precision.
- Using data from ICESat 2, Fricker has now discovered two new subglacial meltwater lakes under glacial ice of Antarctica. Networks of Lakes were mapped with high precision.



## Giant Pandas

- **Context :** According to Chinese officials, Giant pandas are no longer endangered in the wild, but they are still vulnerable with a population outside captivity of 1,800.

### Key Facts:

- The International Union for Conservation of Nature announced that pandas have been upgraded from “endangered” to “vulnerable.”
- There are now 1,800 giant pandas living in the wild.
- Number increased due to China's devotion in maintaining nature reserves and other conservation initiatives during recent years.
- They live in a few mountain ranges of central China, mainly in Sichuan and neighbouring Shaanxi & Gansu.

### About Giant panda:

- This bear, also known as panda bear, is native to South Central China. Bear is characterised by its bold black-and-white coat and rotund body. Giant panda name is used to distinguish it from red panda.
- IUCN Status of Giant Panda

Giant panda was considered “vulnerable” for five years. The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) removed giant pandas from the list of endangered species in 2016. This decision was challenged by Chinese officials then.

