



WEEKLY CURRENT AFFAIRS

JANUARY, 2022

Week-2

8-14 Jan, 2022

★★ Useful for ★★

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

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United Nations Security Council (UNSC)

- **Context:** The United Nations Security Council got five new members as Albania, Brazil, Gabon, Ghana and the United Arab Emirates.
- Estonia, Niger, St Vincent and the Grenadines, Tunisia and Vietnam completed their terms.
- Each year the General Assembly elects five non-permanent members (out of 10 in total) for a two-year term.
- To be elected to the Council, candidate countries need a two-thirds majority of ballots of the Member States that are present and voting in the Assembly.
- The UNSC elections were traditionally held in the General Assembly hall with each of the 193 member states casting its vote in a secret ballot.

About UNSC:

- United Nations Security Council (UNSC) is one of the UN's six main organs and is aimed at maintaining international peace and security.
- It held its first session on 17th January 1946 in Westminster, London.
- Its headquarter is in New York City.
- **The Council is composed of 15 Members:**
 - **Permanent members with veto power:** China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States.
 - **Ten non-permanent members:** Albania , Brazil, Gabon, Ghana , India, Ireland ,Kenya, Mexico, Norway and United Arab Emirates.

Asian Waterbird Census (AWC)

- Recently, the Asian Waterbird Census (AWC) found lower waterbird species diversity at East Delhi's Sanjay Lake when compared to the count from the past three years.
- This census is expected to help with identifying and protecting areas that are important for waterbirds.

Key Points:

- The AWC is conducted in January each year and is coordinated by the Wetlands International South Asia and the Bombay Natural History Society in India .
- It is an integral part of the global waterbird monitoring programme, the International Waterbird Census (IWC), coordinated by Wetlands International.
- It runs in parallel with other regional programmes of the International Waterbird Census in Africa, Europe, West Asia, the Neotropics and the Caribbean.
- It was initiated in 1987 in the Indian subcontinent and since has grown rapidly to cover major region of Asia.
- It is the longest-running citizen science initiative .
- Under this initiative, systematic counting and monitoring of waterbirds is undertaken to study trends and condition of wetlands, covering hundreds of sites.

Domestic Systemically Important Banks (D-SIBs)

- **Context:** The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) announced that the State Bank of India (SBI), ICICI Bank and HDFC Bank will continue to be identified as Domestic Systemically Important Banks (D-SIBs).

About D-SIBs:

- D-SIBs are financial institutions that are large enough where they cannot be allowed to fail.
- RBI places D-SIBs in appropriate buckets depending upon their Systemic Importance Scores (SISs).
- The central bank's current update on D-SIBs is based on the data collected from banks as of March 31, 2021.
- A failure of any of these banks can lead to systemic and significant disruption to essential economic services across the country and can cause an economic panic.
- Based on the bucket in which a D-SIB is placed, an additional common equity requirement is applied to it.

- Under bucket 1, banks require 0.2 per cent of additional common equity Tier 1 capital as a percentage of risk-weighted assets (RWAs), and under bucket 3, banks require 0.6 percent of additional common equity Tier 1 capital as a percentage of RWAs.

Clouded Leopard

- **Context:** Recently, a team of researchers snapped clouded leopards at an elevation of 3,700 metres in a community-owned forest along the Indo-Myanmar border in Nagaland.

About Clouded Leopard

- **Scientific Name :** Neofelis nebulosa
- It is a medium-sized cat, 60 to 110 cm long and weighing between 11 and 20kg.
- It is named after the distinctive 'clouds' on its coat - ellipses partially edged in black, with the insides a darker colour than the background colour of the pelt.
- It has a stocky build and, proportionately, the longest canine teeth of any living feline.
- It spends most of the time in the tropical evergreen rainforests but can also be found in dry tropical forests and mangrove swamps. It has been found at relatively high altitudes in the Himalayas.
- It is found across Southeast Asia and the Himalayas in the following countries: southern China, Bhutan, Nepal, northeast India, Burma, Thailand, Vietnam, Malaysia, Cambodia, Laos, and Bangladesh.
- **Protection Status:** It is categorised as 'Vulnerable' under the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species.

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Silver Line Project

- The Silver Line Project is being opposed by the Left Democratic Front (LDF) and environmentalists.
- According to them, It is financially unviable and would lead to the displacement of over 30,000 families.

- This project would cause great environmental harm as its route cuts through precious wetlands, paddy fields and hills.

Key Points:

- Silver Line Project is a 532-km semi-high speed rail corridor.
- It will connect 11 of the 14 districts of Kerala, situated at both ends. Alappuzha, Wayanad, and Idukki are not part of this.
- It aims to cut the travel time between the two ends of the state from 12 hours to less than four hours.
- It also plans to connect the corridor with the international airports at Kochi and Thiruvananthapuram.
- The plan for a high-speed rail network was first suggested in the 2011 Budget.
- It can take a significant load of traffic off the existing stretch and make travel faster for commuters, which in turn will reduce congestion on roads and help reduce accidents. It will also reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Reciprocal Access Agreement (RAA)

- Japan-Australia defense agreement 'Reciprocal Access Agreement (RAA)' signals that middle powers are willing to play a more active role in the Indo-Pacific region.

Key Points:

- The RAA is a bilateral defense and security pact between the governments of Australia and of Japan that provides for shared military training and military operations.
- It establishes streamlined arrangements to support the deployment of defense forces more quickly and with less administration.
- The pact was signed because of concerns that the Chinese Communist Party party was exhibiting increased belligerence especially over the South China Sea region, including militarization of disputed features, and dangerous coercive use of coast guard vessels.

- On 6 January 2022, at a virtual summit, the Japanese Prime Minister and Australian Prime Minister formally signed the RAA.
- The Reciprocal Access Agreement (RAA), the defense treaty between Australia and Japan, apart from its strategic significance for Asia and the Indo-Pacific.
- Currently it has six members: Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Tajikistan. Uzbekistan had quit the alliance in 2012. Afghanistan and Serbia hold observer status in the CSTO.
- The headquarter of CSTO is located in the Russian capital of Moscow.

■ NOTE:

India already has “2+2” ministerial dialogues with both Japan and Australia and has done much to expand bilateral, trilateral and regional cooperation in the security domain.

Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO)

- Recently, Kazakhstan's President has called in the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) to help quell protests over the hike in fuel prices in the country.

Key points:

- The Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) is a Russian-led military alliance of seven former Soviet states that was created in 2002.
- The CSTO's purpose is to ensure the collective defense of any member that faces external aggression.
- It has been described by political scientists as the Eurasian counterpart of NATO, which has 29 member states, while the CSTO has just six.
- The organization supports arms sales and manufacturing as well as military training and exercises.

About Collective Security Treaty Organisation:

- The Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) is an intergovernmental military alliance (six countries) that came into effect in 2002. Its origin can be traced to the Collective Security Treaty, 1992 (Tashkent Treaty).

Maya Civilization

- **Context:** A recent study suggests that the Maya civilization had access to approximately 500 drought-resistant edible plants. The mystery of the Maya civilization's rapid decline from splendor continues to elude us.

About Maya civilization

- Maya civilization was a Mesoamerican civilization. The civilization originated in the Yucatan Peninsula.
- The civilization developed in the area that today comprises southeastern Mexico, all of Guatemala and Belize and the western portions of Honduras and El Salvador.
- The civilization was known for its monumental architecture and an advanced understanding of mathematics and astronomy.
- The civilization flourished between 600 and 800 AD. However, between 800 and 950 AD, many of the cities of civilization were abandoned. This period is called the collapse of the Classic Maya civilisations.

Sea Dragon 22 Exercise

- India and five other nations begin anti-submarine exercise 'Sea Dragon 22' in the Pacific Ocean.
- It is being held at Andersen Air Force Base in Guam in the Western Pacific and it includes contingents from India, the US, Australia, Canada, Japan and South Korea.
- India, Japan, Australia and America are also part of the Quad and also participate in the Malabar exercise.

About the exercise

- Sea Dragon is an annual US-led multinational exercise designed to practice and discuss Anti-submarine warfare tactics to operate together in response to traditional and non-traditional maritime security challenges in the Indo-Pacific region.
- It will involve more than 270 hours of in-flight training and activities ranging from tracking simulated targets to tracking a US Navy submarine.
- It will strengthen cooperation and deepen mutual understanding among the participating navies and air forces.

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3rd National Water Awards

- Uttar Pradesh has been awarded the first prize in Third National Water Awards-2020 in the best state category, followed by Rajasthan and Tamil Nadu.

Key Highlights:

- The first National Water Award was launched by the Ministry of Jal Shakti in 2018.
- It was instituted to recognize and encourage exemplary work and efforts made by States, Districts, individuals and organizations across the country in attaining the government's vision of a Jal Samridh Bharat.

Objectives:

- To encourage the stakeholders to adopt a holistic approach towards water resources management in the country.
- To create awareness among the people about the importance of water and attempt to motivate them to adopt the best water usage practices.

Evidence of water on Moon

- China's Chang'e 5 lunar lander has discovered the first on-site evidence of water on the moon's surface.

Key Highlights

- On January 8, 2022, the study was published in the peer-reviewed journal Science Advances.
- It was discovered that the lunar soil at the landing site had a water content of less than 120 grams per tonne, or 120 parts per million (ppm).
- It also indicates that a light, vesicular rock has 180 parts per million of water.
- In comparison to Earth, these are substantially drier.

About Chang'e-5 spacecraft

- It is the fifth lunar exploration mission of the Chinese Lunar Exploration Program. It is also the first lunar sample-return mission of China. It has been named after the Chinese moon goddess Chang'e.
- The space craft was launched on November 23, 2020 from Hainan Island and it landed on the Moon on December 1, 2020. It collected around 1,731 g of lunar samples and returned to the Earth on December 16, 2020.
- The spacecraft had landed on one of the youngest mare basalts, which is located at a mid-high latitude on the moon.

Citizenship (Amendment) Act [CAA]

- **Context:** The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has requested that the time for developing the regulations for the "Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA), 2019" be extended even further. Third and the latest extension expired on January 9, but MHA failed to notify the rules.

About The Citizenship (Amendment) Act [CAA], 2019:

- CAA was passed by Parliament on December 11, 2019. The President gave his assent on December 12, 2019.
- The Ministry of Home Affairs had notified in January 2020 that the Act will be implemented from January 10, 2020. However, the same was postponed amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

- The act seeks to provide citizenship to the six undocumented non-Muslim communities from Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh, on the basis of religion. They would be provided citizenship, if they entered India on or before December 31, 2014.
- It also exempts the members of these six communities from any criminal case under the Passport Act, 1920 and Foreigners Act, 1946, if they entered India before December 31, 2014.

■ NOTE:

CAA has been chastised for not allowing Muslims from the three Muslim-majority nations to participate. Furthermore, religion had been explicitly employed as a factor for citizenship under Indian law for the first time.

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Pierre-Olivier Gourinchas

- **Context:** Pierre-Olivier Gourinchas has been named the next Chief Economist of the International Monetary Fund (IMF). As the organization's chief economist, he replaced Gita Gopinath.
- Gourinchas is now the director of the University of California's Clausen Center for International Business and Policy.
- Gita Gopinath was the former chief economist of IMF. She was also the first woman to hold this position.

About International Monetary Fund (IMF)

- IMF is an international financial institution. It is headquartered in Washington, D.C. The institution comprises 190 countries.
- It is working to foster global monetary cooperation, facilitate international trade, secure financial stability, promote sustainable economic growth, promote high employment and reduce poverty worldwide.
- It was created in 1944 but started working formally on December 27, 1945. It came into existence with 29 member countries.

■ NOTE:

Presently, Bulgarian economist Kristalina Georgieva is the managing director (MD) and Chairwoman of the IMF.

Orang National Park

- **Context:** Recently, the government has issued a notification to make Orang National Park more than thrice its existing size.
- The gharial, wiped out from the Brahmaputra River system in the 1950s, could be the prime beneficiary of a process to expand an Assam tiger reserve.

About Orang National park

- It is located on the north bank of the Brahmaputra River in the Darrang and Sonitpur districts of Assam, India.
- It was established as a sanctuary in 1985 and declared a National Park on 13 April 1999.
- It is also known as the mini Kaziranga National Park (IUCN site) since the two parks have a similar landscape made up of marshes, streams and grasslands and are inhabited by the Great Indian One-Horned Rhinoceros.

Light Combat Aircraft Programme

- Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) stated that LCA-MK1A is expected to take flight in June 2022.

About Light Combat Aircraft programme

- It was conceptualized in the 1980s and the first flight of the LCA technology demonstrator was held in January 2001.
- The indigenous single-engine 4.5 generation multi-role fighter jet christened as 'Tejas' has come a long way both in terms of the maturity of the platform as well as the overall aircraft development programme despite repeated delays and cost overruns.

- It was designed by the Aeronautical Development Agency under the Department of Defence Research and Development. It replaced the ageing Mig 21 fighter planes.
- It is the lightest, smallest and tailless multi-role supersonic fighter aircraft in its class.

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China a 'developing' country at WTO

- China's designation as a 'developing country' at the World Trade Organization (WTO) has become a sensitive topic, with a number of nations concerned that the upper-middle-income country is benefiting from WTO principles that are intended for impoverished countries.
- The WTO lacks a proper definition of a developing nation although two-thirds of its 164 members classify themselves as developing.

Benefits of the 'developing country' tag:

- Certain WTO agreements give developing countries special rights through special and differential treatment (S&DT) provisions, which can grant developing countries longer timeframes to implement the agreements and even commitments to raise trading opportunities for such countries.
- WTO pacts are often aimed at reduction in government support to certain industries over time and set more lenient targets for developing nations and grant them more time to achieve these targets compared to developed ones.
- The classification also allows other countries to offer preferential treatment.

Red Sanders

- **Context:** Red Sanders (Red Sandalwood) has fallen back into the 'endangered' category in the International Union for Conservation of Nature's (IUCN) Red List. It was classified as 'near threatened' in 2018.

About Red Sanders

- **Scientific Name:** Pterocarpus santalinus. It is known for their rich hue and therapeutic properties.
- They are high in demand across Asia, particularly in China and Japan, for use in cosmetics and medicinal products as well as for making furniture, woodcraft and musical instruments.
- A tonne of Red Sanders costs around between Rs 50 lakh to Rs 1 crore in the international market.
- They are usually growing in the rocky, degraded and fallow lands with Red Soil and a hot and dry climate. It is an Indian endemic tree species, with a restricted geographical range in the Eastern Ghats. The species is endemic to a distinct tract of forests in Andhra Pradesh.
- **Protection Status:** It is listed in Appendix II of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES).

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Gateway to Hell

- Recently, the President of Turkmenistan has ordered experts to find a way to extinguish a fire in a huge natural gas crater named the Darvaza gas crater. It is also known as the 'Gateway to Hell'.
- Gateway to Hell has the crater has been burning for the last 50 years

About 'Gateway to Hell'

- It is located in the Karakum desert, 260 kilometres away from Ashgabat (Ashgabat (Turkmenistan's capital).
- The crater is 69 metres wide and 30 metres deep.
- In 2018, the country's president officially renamed it the "Shining of Karakum".
- In 2013, George Kourounis, a Canadian adventurer, was the first person to go inside the crater in an expedition funded by National Geographic.

- **Origin:** The details of the origin of the crater are contested but it has been said that the crater was created in 1971 during a Soviet drilling operation.

Man-Portable Anti-Tank Guided Missile (MPATGM)

- **Context:** DRDO has successfully tested the final deliverable configuration of Man-Portable Anti-Tank Guided Missile (MPATGM).

About MPATGM

- MPATGM is an indigenously developed low weight, fire and forgets missile.
- The missile is incorporated with state-of-the-art Miniaturized Infrared Imaging Seeker (IIS) along with advanced avionics.
- It is a passive weapon guidance system that uses the infrared light emission from a target to track and follow it. Missiles that use infrared seeking are often referred to as "heat-seekers" since infrared is radiated strongly by hot bodies.
- The successful trial of the missile is a major boost for the government's 'Atma Nirbhar Bharat' (self-reliant India) campaign.

BrahMos advanced variant

- An extended range sea-to-sea variant of the BrahMos supersonic cruise missile was successfully test-fired by India from the Indian Navy's newly commissioned INS Visakhapatnam.

About the missile

- BrahMos was deployed by the Navy on its warships first in 2005, and has the capability to hit sea-based targets beyond radar horizon.
- 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 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). After India's entry into the club in 2016, officials said the range would be extended to 450 km and to 600km at a later stage.

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Quarterly Employment Survey (QES)

- The report of the second quarter of Quarterly Employment Survey (QES), part of All-India Quarterly Establishment-based Employment Survey (AQEES) was released.

Key Findings:

- Total employment in nine select sectors stands at 3.1 crore for the quarter ending September 2021. So, employment is showing an increasing trend.
- Manufacturing accounted for nearly 39%, followed by Education with 22% and Health as well as IT/BPOs sectors both around 10%.
- The overall percentage of female workers stood at 32.1, higher than 29.3% reported during the first round of QES.
- The registration under the e-shram portal for the informal sector workers is increasing which along with new developments in the National Career Service (NCS) portal and QES survey results will provide a national data bank for providing realistic picture of employment at all India level.
- The demand side surveys along with supply side survey i.e., will help bridge data gaps on employment in the country.

About QES Report:

- The report of “Quarterly Employment Survey” is an important publication meant to give insights into the change of employment over the previous quarters and many other related parameters.
- This will serve as useful data for policy-makers, Central/ State Governments officials, researchers and other stakeholders.

Dr. S. Somanath

- **Context:** Recently, the Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) announced the appointment of the eminent rocket scientist Dr S Somanath as its new chairman and Space Secretary.
- Dr Somanath is taking over the reins of ISRO at a critical juncture when sweeping reforms and critical missions are set to define the forward journey of the storied space agency.
- He has played a major role in the development of the PSLV and the Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle Mk-III (GSLV Mk-III).
- He joined the GSLV Mk-III project in 2003 and served as Project Director from 2010 to 2014.

World Hindi Day

- Recently, UNESCO's World Heritage Centre has agreed to publish Hindi descriptions of India's world heritage sites on the WHC website on the occasion of World Hindi Day.

About World Hindi Day

- World Hindi Day or Vishwa Hindi Divas is celebrated every year on January 10 to mark the first World Hindi Conference that was held in Nagpur on January 10 in 1975.
- The conference was inaugurated by then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and saw participation from a total of 30 countries.
- In 2006, former Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh declared that January 10 will be observed as World Hindi Day every year. This was also the first time that the ministry of external affairs started celebrating the day abroad.
- It is celebrated across the world to promote the use of the Hindi language.

