



WEEKLY CURRENT AFFAIRS

JULY, 2022

Week-3

15-21 July, 2022

★★ Useful for ★★

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

15th JULY, 2022

Jerusalem Declaration

- **Context:** American President Joe Biden and Israeli Prime Minister Yair Lapid signed a joint strategic declaration in Jerusalem, in which the US vowed to prevent Iran from obtaining nuclear weapons.

Key Highlights

- The statement said that the US will use “all elements of national power” available to it to deny Iran the ability to arm itself with nuclear weapons.
- The joint declaration also included a pledge by Washington to continue US military aid to Israel. A record 10-year \$38bn aid package was signed in 2016 under the administration of former US President Barack Obama when Biden was vice president.
- Both President Joe Biden and Prime Minister Yair Lapid spoke of their support for the US-Israeli relationship, and the perceived threat from Iran.
- President Joe Biden reiterated his support for a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict but did not mention Palestinians by name.

Artificial Intelligence in Defense' Exhibition

- **Context:** First ever 'Artificial Intelligence in Defense' exhibition & symposium organised by Ministry of defense held in New Delhi.

Key Highlights

- Defense Minister Rajnath Singh launched 75 newly-developed Artificial Intelligence (AI) products/technologies during the first-ever 'AI in Defence' (AIDef) symposium and exhibition,
- The products, launched as part of 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav' celebrations, fall under various domains.
- These include AI Platform Automation, Autonomous/Unmanned/Robotics systems, Block Chain-based Automation, Command, Control, Communication, Computer & Intelligence, Surveillance &

Reconnaissance, Cyber Security, Human Behavioural Analysis, Intelligent Monitoring Systems, Lethal Autonomous Weapon Systems, Logistics and Supply Chain Management, Operational Data Analytics, Manufacturing and Maintenance, Simulators/Test Equipment and speech/voice analysis using Natural Language Processing.

- Three AI products developed by the DPSUs having dual use applications and good market potential, namely AI-enabled Voice Transcription/Analysis software developed by Bharat Electronics Limited; Driver Fatigue Monitoring System developed by Bharat Earth Movers Limited and AI-enabled evaluation of Welding defects in X-rays of Non-destructive Testing developed by Garden Reach Shipbuilders & Engineers were screened during the event.
- Defense Minister also released the physical as well as e-version of the book comprising the details of these 75 products, showcasing the collective efforts put on by the Services, Defence Research & Development Organisation (DRDO), Defence Public Sector Undertakings (DPSUs), iDEX start-ups and the private industry in last four years in the field of AI.

Stealth Frigate 'Dunagiri'

- **Context:** The 4th ship of the Project 17A Frigates, the in-house initiative of the Indian Navy as part of India's 'self-reliance' objective, “Dunagiri” was launched in the Hooghly River at Kolkata.

Key Highlights

- Named after a mountain range in Uttarakhand, 'Dunagiri' is the fourth ship of P17A Frigates.
- These are follow-on of the P17 Frigates (Shivalik Class) with improved stealth features, advanced weapons and sensors, and platform management systems.
- The first two ships of the P17A Project were launched in 2019 and 2020 at MDL (Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited) and GRSE (Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers Limited) respectively.

- The third ship (Udaygiri) was launched at MDL on 17 May 22 earlier this year.
- P17A ships have been designed in-house by the Indian Navy's Directorate of Naval Design (DND).

16th JULY, 2022

Varanasi: First Cultural and Tourism Capital of SCO

- **Context:** The holy city of Varanasi, showcasing India's culture and traditions over the ages, will be declared the first "Cultural and Tourism Capital" of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO).

Key Highlights

- Secretary General of SCO, Zhang Ming said Varanasi will become the Cultural and Tourism Capital of the SCO for 2022-23 under a new rotating initiative by the eight-member organization to promote people-to-people contacts and tourism among the member states.
- Under this initiative of SCO, each year a city of the cultural heritage of a member country that will take over the rotating Presidency of the organization will get the title to highlight its prominence.
- The new initiative will come into force after the Samarkand, Uzbekistan summit of SCO, following which India will take over the Presidency and host the next Heads of the State summit.
- India hosted the Head of the Government of the SCO meet in 2020.
- SCO member states were considering several initiatives to promote tourism to enhance people-to-people contacts once the COVID travel restrictions ease. Kazakhstan has announced a visa-free policy for tourists from India and other countries.

National Institute Ranking framework (NIRF) 2021

- **Context:** Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan recently released the NIRF (National Institute Ranking framework) 2021.

Key Highlights

- The Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Madras was declared the best university in the overall category this year. Followed by Indian Institute of Science (IISc) Bengaluru at a close second, followed by IIT Bombay, IIT Delhi and IIT Kanpur as the top five institutes in the overall category.
- This year too, IITs dominated the list as IIT Kharagpur, IIT Roorkee and IIT Guwahati have followed IIT Kanpur to complete the top 8 ranks.
- AIIMS-Delhi has secured the ninth rank and JNU is ranked tenth.
- Jamia Hamdard has once again taken the top rank in the pharmacy category.
- Indian Institute of Science (IISc) Bengaluru ranked first in the research category.

About NIRF 2021

- 11 categories for which the NIRF Rankings 2022 were announced include- overall, universities, colleges, management, law, architecture, engineering, medical, dental, pharmacy, and research.
- The top institutes and universities of India are judged on the basis of certain predetermined factors for the NIRF Rankings. These include -- Teaching, Learning & Resources (TLR), Research and Professional Practice (RP), Graduation Outcomes (GO), Outreach and Inclusivity (OI), Peer Perception.
- Institutes need to register and submit data for the NIRF Rankings. The same data is also made public through its website. Physical audits and checks are carried out by NIRF to ensure that the data is authentic. Institutes may be debarred from ranking and face consequences if they are providing false data.

Ashish Kumar Chauhan

- **Context:** The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has approved the appointment of Ashish Kumar Chauhan as the Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the National Stock Exchange (NSE).



Key Highlights

- Ashish Kumar Chauhan will replace outgoing Managing Director and CEO Vikram Limaye. Although Limaye was eligible for a reappointment, he did not seek extension at the NSE.
- At present Chauhan is MD and CEO of Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE).
- He did his B. Tech in Mechanical Engineering from IIT Bombay. He then completed his PGDM from IIM Calcutta.
- He started his career at IDBI Bank, before moving to the NSE. Between 1993 and 2000, Chauhan worked extensively in developing the derivatives segment at the NSE, which currently is the exchange's main volume driver.
- He has served as a distinguished visiting professor at Ryerson University, Toronto, Canada.
- He also has experience outside the financial sphere. He had worked as CEO of Mukesh Ambani-led IPL cricket team Mumbai Indians in its formative years and also worked as president and CIO of Reliance group between 2000 and 2009.

Key Highlights

- The summit was hosted by Saudi Arabia, and attended by leaders of the Gulf Cooperation Council, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan and the US.
- The summit reviewed global challenges and regional affairs, while the leaders reaffirmed their commitment to guarantee the region's security and stability.
- They also voiced their support for efforts to guarantee that the Gulf remains free of mass destruction weapons.
- During his remark, the Saudi Crown Prince conveyed King Salman bin Abdulaziz's called on Iran to cooperate and not intervene in the affairs of regional countries.
- US President Joe Biden said the US will never allow Iran to acquire a nuclear weapon. He also said the US would remain an active, engaged partner in the Middle East and urged leaders gathered at the Arab summit to see human rights as a powerful force of economic and social change.
- Biden also said that the US will not leave a vacuum in the region in favor of Russia, China and Iran, adding that the US interests are linked to successes in the Middle East and affirmed the US will work to establish sustainable economic ties in the region.

National e-governance Service Delivery Assessment

- **Context:** The national e-governance service delivery assessment was conducted by the DARPG recently.

Key Highlights

- The national e-governance service delivery assessment was conducted by the DARPG in association with its knowledge partners– National Association of Software and Service Companies (NASSCOM) and Klynveld Peat Marwick Goerdeler (KPMG).
- This is a periodic assessment intended to improve the effectiveness of the states and Union Territories and the Central government in the delivery of their online services to citizens.

17th JULY, 2022

Jeddah Security and Development Summit

- **Context:** Jeddah Summit for Security and Development, was recently concluded in second largest city of Saudi Arabia.

- The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) bagged the first spot under the Central ministries' portal in a national e-governance service delivery assessment.
- The Digital Police portal of the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) has been placed at number two in the assessment.

Kerala Fiber Optic Network (KFON)

- **Context:** Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan recently launched the KFON (Kerala Fiber Optic Network) in the state and with this Kerala became the first state in the country with its own internet service.

Key Highlights

- Announced in 2019, the KFON initiative envisages a total of 35,000 km of optical fiber network across 14 districts.
- KFON aims to create a core network infrastructure that will provide free internet access to 20 Lakh economically-backward households.
- Close to three years after it was announced, the Kerala Fiber Optic Network (KFON) initiative has received the Internet Service Provider (ISP) license from the Department of Telecommunications (DoT).
- With the Kerala government inaugurating the first phase of the ambitious Kerala Fiber Optic Network (KFON) project, over 8,000 government offices and educational institutions in the state will get to enjoy the benefits of high-speed connectivity.
- KFON envisages laying a complementary optical fiber network across the state and augmenting the broadband infrastructure, bringing into the fold a total of 30,000 entities.
- It is a joint venture between the Kerala State Information Technology Infrastructure Ltd (KSITIL), Kerala State Electricity Board (KSEB). A consortium led by Bharat Electronics Ltd (BEL) is executing the project and will be responsible for the operation and maintenance of the 35,000-km-long network for the next seven years.

18th JULY, 2022

Sprint Challenges

- **Context:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently unveiled 'SPRINT challenges', aimed at giving a boost to the usage of indigenous technology in the Indian Navy.

Key Highlights

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi unveiled the initiative at a naval seminar organized to engage Indian industry and academia towards achieving self-reliance in the defense sector.
- The seminar was organized by the Naval Innovation and Indigenisation Organization (NIIO) and the Society of Indian Defense Manufacturers (SIDM).
- The NIIO, in cooperation with the Defense Innovation Organization (DIO), aims to induct at least 75 new indigenous technologies/products into the Indian Navy in sync with 'Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav' commemorating 75 years of the country's Independence.
- This collaborative project is named SPRINT — Supporting Pole-Vaulting in R&D through iDEX (Innovations for Defense Excellence), NIIO and TDAC (Technology Development Acceleration Cell).

CAATSA

- **Context:** The US House of Representatives has voted in favor of granting India a waiver from Countering American Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA).

Key Highlights

- The amendment was authored and introduced by Indian-American Ro Khanna, who is the Vice-Chair of the Congressional India Caucus and member of the House Armed Services Committee.
- The amendment received an astounding majority of 330 to 99 and now awaits passage in the Senate.

- If the waiver is indeed granted, it will allow India to freely purchase Russia's S-400 missile system without the fear of American sanctions.
- The decision comes amid escalating tensions between the US and Russia over Moscow's invasion of Ukraine.

About CAATSA

- CAATSA or Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act is a US legislation that imposes punitive measures, by way of sanctions, for defense and strategic engagement with "American adversaries" like Iran, North Korea, and Russia.
- It was passed in 2017.
- The idea behind CAATSA was to punish Russia for the Crimean annexation in 2014 and its alleged role in the 2016 US presidential election.
- The sanctions are intended to economically hurt Russia over its international actions. CAATSA primarily allows the US government to punish any country that engages in transactions with Russian defense and intelligence sectors.

Lok Adalat

- **Context:** National Legal Services Authority Chairman Uday Umesh Lalit, recently launched the country's first AI-powered digital Lok Adalat during the 18th All India Legal Services Authorities' meet held in Rajasthan.

Key Highlights

- The digital Lok Adalat by Rajasthan State Legal Services Authority (RSLSA) is designed and developed by its technology partner Jupitice Justice Technologies.
- The Digital Lok Adalat will be used to dispose of pending disputes or disputes that are at the pre-litigation stage.
- The platform helps one perform end-to-end dispute resolution with easy drafting and filing of applications,

one-click generation of e-notices, smart templates to draft settlement agreements, digital hearings powered by tailor-made video conferencing tools, etc.

- It offers an AI-powered voice-based interactive chatbot and advanced data analytics tools to help gain deeper insights into the functioning of Lok Adalat through custom reports and BI Dashboards for data-driven decision making.
- The vision of of digital lok adalat is to speed up justice delivery.

19th JULY, 2022

NITI Aayog's Digital Banks Report

- **Context:** NITI Aayog, in its recently released report titled 'Digital Banks: A Proposal for Licensing & Regulatory Regime for India', made a case and offered a template and roadmap for a digital bank licensing and regulatory framework.

Key Suggestions

- A digital bank would be a bank defined in the Banking Regulation Act, 1949, and shall have its own balance sheet and legal existence. Such a bank would be different from the 75 Digital Banking Units (DBUs) announced in Union Budget 2022-23.
- The report said that existing partnership-based neo-bank models face several challenges, such as revenue generation and viability. They have limited revenue potential, high cost of capital, and offer products of only partner banks.
- The report said that initially "restricted" licenses should be issued for such banks to applicants. The restricted nature of the license would limit the volumes and value of customers serviced. The applicant would then be required to commence operations as a digital business bank/digital consumer bank in a regulatory sandbox. A full-scale license would be issued based on satisfactory performance in the sandbox.

- The report states that the applicant for a license may require one or more controlling persons to have an established track record in e-commerce, payments, or technology space. Applicants may have the option to apply in the form of a consortium. Existing neo-banks seeking to upgrade or small finance banks that see the opportunity in digital business bank license are potential eligible candidates. Fintech businesses may also be allowed to procure such a license.

Banthia Commission Report

- **Context:** The Supreme Court has accepted the report of the Banthia Commission and directed the Maharashtra State Election Commission to hold elections as per this report.

Key Highlights

- The report of Jayant Kumar Banthia-led commission which collated empirical data on Other Backward Class (OBC) communities, submitted its report recommending up to 27% political reservation in every local self-government body depending on population in state of Maharashtra.
- A dedicated commission under former Chief Secretary Jayant Banthia was appointed by the then Maharashtra Government in March 2022.
- The terms of reference set for the Banthia commission were to conduct empirical inquiry on the backwardness of the community, specify the representation of OBCs using village-level data and to ensure that total reservation does not cross the 50 per cent mark.
- The commission used the data from the state's Rural Development department and Urban Development department to reach the figure of OBCs.
- Data from the education department was also used to calculate the number of scholarships extended to OBC students. Besides, information from various other departments as well as welfare schemes was also included in the report to stress on the backwardness of the community. The commission also traveled across the state to meet various

organizations, institutions and individuals in different parts of Maharashtra to include their inputs.

- Previously too, an interim report of the State Backward Class Commission (SBCC) was prepared which lacked empirical study and research.

20th JULY, 2022

Confederation of Indian Industry (CII)-Exim Bank Conclave

- **Context:** "Confederation of Indian Industry (CII)-Exim Bank Conclave on India-Africa Growth Partnership" was recently held in Delhi for strengthening and expanding India-Africa ties.

Key highlights

- At the conclave, Commerce and Industry Minister, Piyush Goyal emphasized that both countries can work together to bring cost-effective solutions in several areas like drinking water, logistics, healthcare, education, fintech, and solar power, among others.
- The Union Minister mentioned four areas that can help fulfill the aspirations of both India and Africa. These comprise solar power to bring clean energy, energy security, jobs to Africa, defence trade, physical and digital infrastructure, and co-creating a startup ecosystem.
- India is among the top 5 investors in Africa. Africa is also India's fourth largest trading partner.
- Indian exports to Africa stood at \$40.3 billion, while imports from Africa stood at \$49.3 billion in 2021-22.

Vehicle Location Tracking Device (VLTS)

- **Context:** Himachal Pradesh becomes first state in the country to connect all registered commercial vehicles equipped with Vehicle Location Tracking Device (VLTS) with Emergency Response Support System (ERSS).

Key Highlights

- Chief Minister of Himachal Pradesh, Jai Ram Thakur formally inaugurated the initiative at a program organized at Peterhof, in Shimla.
- With this, the registered commercial vehicles can be tracked anywhere in the country through VLTD.
- More than 9,423 vehicles have been registered, equipped with VLTS and linked with ERSS which will be monitored by both the police and the transport department.
- A facility of panic buttons for the safety of women and children in public vehicles was also introduced.

The Basic Road Statistics of India, 2018-19

- **Context:** The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways recently released the third edition of "The Basic Road Statistics".

Key Highlights

- As per the report, the total road constructed increased to 63,31,757 km in 2019 from 62,15,797 km in 2018 and registered a growth of 1.9 per cent.
- According to the report, Maharashtra has the largest network of national highways with 17,757 km (13.4 per cent), followed by Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan with 11,737 km (8.9 per cent) and 10,342km (7.8 per cent), respectively, as of March 31, 2019.
- State highways constituted 2.8 per cent of the total road network in the country and the total length of state highways as of March 31, 2019, was 1,79,535 km.
- Maharashtra also has the largest state highways network of 32,005 km, followed by Karnataka at 19,473 km, Gujarat at 16,746 km, Rajasthan at 15,061 km and Andhra Pradesh at 13,500 km.
- The report pointed out that rural roads constitute 71.4 per cent of the total road network in the country and its length rose to 45,22,228 km on March 31, 2019, registering a growth of 2.5 per cent over the previous year.

About "The Basic Road Statistics of India"

- The Basic Road Statistics of India is an annual publication on the road sector, brought out by the Transport Research Wing of the Ministry of Road Transport & Highways.
- It has eight sections and covers information relating to road length, surfaced road length, major initiatives of the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways.

21st JULY, 2022

Henley Passport Index

- **Context:** Henley & Partners recently released the Henley Passport Index which lists the World's Most Powerful Passports for the year 2022.

Key Highlights

- Three Asian nations Japan, Singapore and South Korea bagged the top three positions on the list, reversing pre-pandemic rankings that were dominated by European nations.
- Japan, with the world's most powerful passport, provides hassle-free entry to 193 countries.
- India's passport ranked 87th among 199 countries, offering visa-free access to 60 countries.
- Countries to which Indians have 'visa-on-arrival' access include Asian destinations like Thailand, Indonesia, Maldives and Sri Lanka. There are also 21 countries in Africa that provide visa-on-arrival services to Indian citizens. There are only two European countries that do the same.
- China placed 69th with access to 80 countries, and Afghanistan's passport is the least useful, getting the holder into only 27 countries.
- As for Bangladesh, it occupies the 104th position - five spots higher than Pakistan.
- According to latest government data, as many as 1,63,370 Indians renounced their citizenship to become citizens of other countries in 2021. Most Indians transferred their citizenship to the United States (78,284), followed by Australia (23,533), Canada (21,597) and the UK (14,637).

- The Henley Passport Index uses 17 years of data and helps the government, as well as the global authorities, assess the value of citizenships of different countries. The index also ranks countries on the basis of which passports offer the most prolific visa-free, or visa-on-arrival access.
- The ranking is based on data from the International Air Transport Association, which maintains the world's largest database of travel information, and it is enhanced by extensive, ongoing research by the Henley & Partners Research Department.

Draupdi Murmu

- **Context:** Draupadi Murmu has won the election to become the next president of India, defeating opposition candidate Yashwant Sinha by a wide margin.

Key Highlights

- Draupdi Murmu won by a wide margin, garnering over 64 per cent valid votes. She will succeed Ram Nath Kovind to become the country's 15th president.
- She is the first person from a tribal background to take the office.
- With each MP having a vote value of 700 in this presidential election, Draupdi Murmu had a total vote value of 5,23,600 which is 72.19 per cent of the total valid vote count of MPs polled.
- MLA vote value is calculated by dividing the population of a state or UT by the number of assembly seats multiplies by 1000. While for MP, the formula is total value votes of MLAs of a state/UT divided by total number of MPs in both houses of parliament.



About Draupdi Murmu

- Draupdi Murmu belongs to Odisha. She was born in a Santal Tribal family on June 20, 1958, in village Uparbeda of district Mayurbhanj.
- She got Bachelor of Arts degree from Ramadevi Women's College in Bhubaneswar and then worked as a Junior Assistant in Irrigation and Power Department from 1979 to 1983 in the Odisha government.
- She was elected as a councilor in 1997 and became the vice-chairperson of the Rairangpur NAC. She also became the MLA from the same constituency.
- In the year 2000, she became Minister of State (Independent Charge) at the Transport and Commerce Department in the Odisha government. During the same period, she also handled the Department of Animal Husbandry and Fisheries as Minister of State.
- From the year 2015 to 2021, she served as Honorable Governor of Jharkhand.
- She was the first woman Governor for the state and the first female tribal leader to serve as a Governor in any Indian state.
- In 2007, Murmu was awarded the 'Neelkanth Award' for Best MLA by Odisha Legislative Assembly.

