



# WEEKLY CURRENT AFFAIRS

**AUGUST, 2022**

**Week-2**

**8-14 Aug, 2022**

★★ Useful for ★★

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

8<sup>th</sup> AUGUST, 2022

## NITI Aayog Governing Council

- **Context:** NITI Aayog's 7th Governing Council meeting was held recently.

### Key Highlights

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi chaired the seventh NITI Aayog Governing Council meeting at Rashtrapati Bhavan's cultural centre in Delhi.
- The meeting was attended by 23 chief ministers, 3 Lieutenant Governors and 2 Administrators and Union ministers and it was the first physical meeting of the Governing Council since the onset of the pandemic, with the 2021 meeting held via video conferencing.
- The council held discussions over several issues such as crop diversification, urban development, implementation of the National Education Policy (NEP), and urban governance.
- Prime Minister Narendra made a strong case for modernising the farm sector by using technology.
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi asked states to focus on crop diversification at NITI Aayog meeting.
- The Prime Minister also spoke about upcoming India's presidency of the G-20 in 2023. G-20 is a grouping of developed and developing nations.
- Prime Minister wants India to become self-sufficient in edible oil, said NITI Aayog Vice Chairman after governing council meeting.

## Skylight Mega Exercise

- **Context:** The Indian Army recently conducted an exercise to evaluate the operational readiness of the country's satellite communication systems.

### Key highlights

- To test the operational readiness of satellite systems and personnel manning them, the Indian Army carried out Exercise Skylight validating and showcasing the resilience of its communication capabilities in case terrestrial connectivity is disrupted in future conflicts.

- During the two-week long exercise, all satellite communication assets in the Army were activated and military personnel simulated various technical and operational scenarios, including disruption of terrestrial connectivity in the event of an attack.
- Various agencies responsible for space and ground segments, as also the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) participated in the exercise.
- The exercise covered the eastern part of the country, northern borders and the island territories.

## Electricity (Amendment) Bill, 2022

- **Context:** Electricity (Amendment) Bill 2022 was introduced in Lok Sabha and then sent to Standing committee.

### Key Highlights

- The Electricity Amendment Bill 2022, is aimed at allowing the privatization of electricity on the line of communication, which, according to the Center, can create a steady power supply across the country.
- Section 42 of the Electricity Act will be amended, which means that it will grant non-discriminatory open access to the distribution network, allowing private companies to supply electricity, provided they get a license.
- Under the new bill, Section 14 of the Electricity Act will also be amended, which means that distribution networks will be facilitated open-access usage, enabling competition and enhancing the efficiency of power supply across the country.
- The government wants to introduce a section in the Act that will enable the management of power purchase and cross-subsidy in case of multiple distribution licensees in the same area of supply.
- These measures are expected to promote competition in the power distribution sector so that consumers benefit from competitive prices.
- The government also proposes to enable regulators to fix a minimum tariff ceiling to discourage unhealthy pricing wars among distributors and a maximum ceiling to ensure consumers are protected against price increase shock.

- Amendments are also being made in the Act to strengthen the functioning of the National Load Dispatch Center for ensuring the safety and security of the grid and for the economic and efficient operation of the power system in the country.
- The Electricity Amendment Bill 2022 is opposed and protested against, as it is majorly aimed at the privatization of electricity supply in India, which, according to power engineers, will lead to major loss and monopoly in the power industry of the country.

9<sup>th</sup> AUGUST, 2022

## PARVAZ Market Linking Scheme

- **Context:** A market linking scheme named PARVAZ was recently launched in Jammu and Kashmir.

### Key Highlights

- Under the scheme, 25 per cent subsidy on freight charges is given for carrying perishable fruits harvested in Jammu and Kashmir for shipment through Air Cargo.
- The subsidy is provided to farmers through Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) mode.
- 25% subsidy as provisioned under 'Parvaz' scheme, shall be provided on the air cargo rates on horticulture/agriculture perishables- cherry, strawberry, plum, peach, pear, litchi, and exotic and organic vegetables only.
- The organic/exotic vegetables eligible under the scheme would be identified by an expert committee.

## Energy Conservation (Amendment) Bill, 2022

- **Context:** The Energy Conservation (Amendment) Bill, 2022 was passed in Lok Sabha, which seeks to amend the Energy Conservation Act, 2001.

### Key Highlights

- The Act promotes energy efficiency and conservation. It provides for the regulation of energy consumption

by equipment, appliances, buildings, and industries.

- The Bill adds that the government may require the designated consumers to meet a minimum share of energy consumption from non-fossil sources. Designated consumers include: (i) industries such as mining, steel, cement, textile, chemicals, and petrochemicals, (ii) transport sector including Railways, and (iii) commercial buildings, as specified in the schedule.
- Failure to meet the obligation for use of energy from non-fossil sources will be punishable with a penalty of up to Rs 10 lakh.
- The central government or any authorized agency may issue carbon credit certificates to entities registered under and compliant with the scheme.
- The Bill includes 'energy conservation and sustainable building code'. This new code will provide norms for energy efficiency and conservation, use of renewable energy, and other requirements for green buildings.
- The Bill expands the scope of the energy consumption standards to vehicles and vessels which was till now limited to for equipment and appliances which consume, generate, transmit, or supply energy.
- The Act empowers the State Electricity Regulatory Commissions (SERCs) to adjudge penalties under the Act.
- The Bill expands governing council of Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE) between 31 and 37.

## Small Modular Reactors (SMR)

- **Context:** NITI Aayog Scientist V K Saraswat suggested the government to focus on setting up small modular reactors (SMRs).

### Key Highlights

- Recently, NITI Aayog member and scientist V. K. Saraswat suggested that the government should focus on setting up small modular reactors as it would help meet India's energy needs and also in replacing aging thermal power plants.

- Small modular reactors (SMRs) are advanced nuclear reactors that have a power capacity of up to 300 MW(e) per unit, which is about one-third of the generating capacity of traditional nuclear power reactors.
- The advantage of an advanced modular reactor is that it is factory fabricated and can be operated by any agency and there could also be a larger participation of the private sector in that.
- Currently, India operates 22 reactors with a total capacity of 6,780 MW in operation.
- As per Department of Space and Department of Atomic Energy, the share of nuclear power in the total electricity generation in the country was about 3.1 per cent in 2020-21.

10<sup>th</sup> AUGUST, 2022

## Bharat Bill Payment System (BBPS)

- **Context:** RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das has proposed to enable Bharat Bill Payment System (BBPS) to accept cross-border inward bill payments.

### Key Highlights

- Using BBPS thus, NRIs can directly pay electricity, water bill and other utility bills, who otherwise have been facing challenges in utility bill payments on behalf of their families in India.
- Also, this will give a broader market approach for BBPS and further enhance forex inflow in the country.
- Additionally, this also promotes the adoption of BBPS by global bill payment ecosystems.

### About Bharat Bill Payment System (BBPS)

- BBPS is an RBI conceptualised system driven by the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI).
- It offers interoperable and accessible bill payment services to consumers via digital (bank channels) along with a network of agents & bank branches.
- All recurring payments can be done through BBPS. These bills can be for electricity, telecom, DTH, Gas,

water bills, Insurance, Loan repayments, Education fees, FASTag Recharge, Municipal taxes, Housing society, Subscription fees, etc. in one single window.

- The payment mode options at BBPS are Cash, Cards (Credit, Debit & Prepaid), IMPS, UPI, AEPS, Internet Banking & UPI, and Wallets.
- More than 20,000 billers have been onboarded on the system and more than eight crore transactions are processed on a monthly basis. However, this system is currently available to only residents in India.

## Nallathamby Kalaiselvi

- **Context:** Nallathamby Kalaiselvi has been appointed as the first woman Director General of CSIR (Council of Scientific and Industrial Research).



### Key Highlights

- Senior electrochemical scientist Nallathamby Kalaiselvi has become the first woman director general of the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research.
- She has been appointed for a period of 2 years.
- She is known for her work in the field of lithium-ion batteries.
- She is at present director of the CSIR-Central Electrochemical Research Institute at Karaikudi in Tamil Nadu.
- She will also hold the charge as Secretary, Department of Scientific and Industrial Research.
- She is currently involved in the development of practically viable Sodium-ion/Lithium-sulfur batteries and supercapacitors.

## 2G Ethanol Plant

- **Context:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently inaugurated the second generation (2G) Ethanol plant in Panipat.



## Key Highlights

- The plant is based on state-of-the-art indigenous technology and is built at an estimated cost of over Rs 900 crore by Indian Oil Corporation Ltd. (IOCL) and is located close to the Panipat Refinery.
- The plant can utilize two lakh tonnes of rice straw annually to produce about 30 million liters of ethanol annually.
- It will produce 100 kilo litre ethanol per day, after processing 750 tonne paddy straw in a day.
- This plant would provide employment to around 250 people directly and to 1000 people indirectly.
- For the ethanol production, Paddy straw will be purchased from farmers. For this purpose, 12 collection centers have been set up in Panipat and Karnal.
- The project will have zero liquid discharge.
- Through the reduction in the burning of rice straw (parali), the project will contribute to a reduction of Greenhouse Gases equivalent to about 3 lakh tonnes of Carbon Dioxide equivalent emissions per annum, which can be understood as equivalent to replacing nearly 63,000 cars annually on the country's roads.

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## Exercise Vajra Prahar, 2022

- **Context:** Indo-US Joint Special Forces exercise "Ex Vajra Prahar 2022" commenced at the Special Forces Training School at Bakloh of Himachal Pradesh.

## Key Highlights

- The 13th edition of the Indo-US joint special forces drill, Exercise Vajra Prahar 2022, commenced at the Special Forces Training School (SFTS) at Bakloh in Himachal Pradesh today. It is spread over a period of 21 days.
- The Vajra Prahar series of joint exercise aims to share best practices and experiences in areas such as joint mission planning and operational tactics as also to

improve inter-operability between the Special Forces of both the nations, the statement added.

- This annual exercise is hosted alternatively by India and the United States. The 12th edition was conducted at Joint Base Lewis McChord in Washington during October 2021.
- This joint exercise is stated to be a significant step in strengthening the bond of friendship between the special forces of both nations as well as improve bilateral defence cooperation between India and the USA.

## AGM-88 HARM

- **Context:** United States has confirmed that it has supplied some anti-radiation missiles "AGM-88 HARM" to Ukraine which could be fired from Ukrainian Air Force aircrafts.

## Key Highlights

- The acronym 'HARM' in the AGM-88 HARM air-to-surface missile stands for High-Speed Anti-Radiation Missile.
- It is a tactical weapon fired from fighter aircraft, and has the capability to detect and home into radiation emitted by hostile radar stations that have surface-to-air detection capabilities.
- The AGM-88 HARM is 14 metres in length, but only 10 inches in diameter. It weighs around 360 kg and carries a fragmentation type warhead that is optimised for radar targets. It also has an anti-radar homing seeker broadband RF antenna and receiver, and a solid-state digital processor.
- The missile has a range of more than 100 km.
- AGM-88 HARM is a part of NATO inventory.
- Russia-Ukraine war is the first in which the weapon has been confirmed to have been used by a military other than the US. However, report also said that Ukraine does not have aircraft known to be compatible with the missile, there is speculation that the missiles may have been fired by NATO aircraft secretly supporting the Ukraine military in combat roles.

## Justice Uday Umesh Lalit

- **Context:** Justice Uday Umesh Lalit is appointed as the 49th Chief Justice of India (CJI) after President Droupadi Murmu signed his warrant of appointment.



### Key Highlights

- Justice Uday Umesh Lalit will assume charge after incumbent N V Ramana demits office.
- Justice Lalit will be the second CJI who was directly elevated to the apex court bench from the Bar. Justice S M Sikri, who became the 13th CJI in January 1971, was the first lawyer to be elevated directly to the top court bench in March 1964.
- Justice Lalit has been part of several landmark judgements including the one which held the practice of divorce through instant triple talaq among Muslims illegal and unconstitutional.
- He practiced in the High Court of Bombay till December, 1985 before shifting his practice to Delhi in January, 1986.
- He was appointed a judge of the Supreme Court on August 13, 2014.

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## Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana-Urban (PMAY-U)

- **Context:** Union Cabinet has approved continuation of Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana-Urban (PMAY-U) - Housing for All Mission up to 31st December 2024.

### Key Highlights

- Under the proposal, financial assistance is to be provided for the completion of already sanctioned 122.69 lakh houses till March 31, 2022.
- Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY) is an initiative by the Union government, under which the Centre is aiming to provide affordable housing to the urban

poor with a target of building two crore affordable houses by 31 March, 2022. The policy has two components -- Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Urban) (PMAY-U) for the urban poor and Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Rural) (PMAY-G) for the rural poor.

- As per the official statement, during 2004-2014, 8.04 lakh houses were completed under the urban housing scheme. In 2017, the originally projected demand was 100 lakh houses. Against this projection, construction work for 62 lakh houses has been completed.
- According to the data released by the government, central assistance approved since 2015 stands at 2.03 lakh crore against 20,000 crore in 2004-2014. Up to March 31, this year, the central assistance of 1,18,020.46 crore has already been released and 85,406 crore will be released till December 31, 2024.

## Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC)

- **Context:** US firm Microsoft has become the first big tech company to join the Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC), a Government of India backed project.

### Key Highlights

- US firm Microsoft has become the first big tech company to join the Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC), a government-backed project which is aimed at enabling small merchants and mom-and-pop stores in parts of the country to access processes and technologies that are typically deployed by large e-commerce platforms such as Amazon and Flipkart.
- The software giant intends to introduce social e-commerce group buying experience in the Indian market, which would include a shopping app for Indian consumers along with their social circle, harnessing the ONDC network to discover the best pricing among retailers and sellers.

- A number of participants are currently live on the ONDC network, offering a number of services in the e-commerce supply chain such as buying, selling and offering logistics services. Among those that are live are Paytm which has joined the platform as a buyer, and Reliance-backed Dunzo, which is offering logistics services for hyperlocal deliveries.
- Axis Bank, HDFC Bank and Airtel have already initiated integration with the network.

### About Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC)

- It is an initiative aimed at promoting open networks for all aspects of exchange of goods and services over digital or electronic networks.
- ONDC is to be based on open-sourced methodology, using open specifications and open network protocols independent of any specific platform.
- It is being developed as a counter to the current duopoly in the Indian e-commerce market which is largely dictated by Amazon and Walmart-owned Flipkart.
- The ONDC platform lies in the middle of the interfaces hosting the buyers and the sellers. So far, the buyer side interface is being hosted by Paytm, whereas the seller side interface is being hosted by other players like GoFrugal, etc.
- When a buyer searches for an item on the Paytm app, from where ONDC has gone live, the app will connect to the ONDC platform, which will connect it to seller side interfaces that will list all the companies from where you can buy the particular item.

### Global Employment Trends for Youth 2022 Report

- **Context:** According to Global Employment Trends for Youth 2022 report, Indian youth employment deteriorated in India in 2021 compared to 2020.

#### Key Highlights

- According to Global Employment Trends for Youth 2022 report released by the International Labour

Organisation India experienced severe working-hour and employment losses in 2020 and 2021.

- The recovery in youth employment is still lagging globally, the report says confirming that COVID-19 has hurt young people more than any other age group.
- As per report, the total global number of unemployed youths is estimated to reach 73 million in 2022, a slight improvement from 2021 (75 million), but still six million above the pre-pandemic level of 2019,
- In India, the report said survey conducted by Center for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE), show that the youth employment participation rate declined by 0.9 percentage points over the first nine months of 2021 relative to its value in 2020, while it increased by 2 percentage points for adults over the same time period.
- Indian young women experienced larger relative employment losses than young men in 2021 and 2022.
- It also warns that the unemployment rate of young people in the Asia and Pacific region is projected to reach 14.9% in 2022.
- In India, the report added that school closures lasted 18 months and among the 24-crore school-going children, only 8% of such children in rural areas and 23% in urban areas had adequate access to online education. School closures not only prevented new learning, but also led to the phenomenon of “learning regression”, that is, children forgetting what they had learned earlier.

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### Smile-75 Initiative

- **Context:** The Union Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment has identified 75 Municipal Corporations to implement comprehensive rehabilitation of persons engaged in the act of begging.

## Key Highlights

- In the spirit of Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav campaign, SMILE-75 initiative has been launched under “SMILE: Support for Marginalized Individuals for Livelihood and Enterprise”.
- Under the SMILE-75 initiative, seventy-five (75) Municipal Corporations in collaboration with NGOs and other stakeholders will cover several comprehensive welfare measures for persons who are engaged in the act of begging with focus extensively on rehabilitation, provision of medical facilities, counseling, awareness, education, skill development, economic linkages and convergence with other Government welfare programmes etc.
- The Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment has allocated a total budget of Rs. 100 crore for the SMILE project for coming years till 2025-26.
- Through this project, the Ministry envisions to develop a support mechanism for holistic rehabilitation of those engaged in the act of begging and build an India where no person is forced to beg in order to survive and fulfill their basic needs.

## Chevalier de la Légion d’Honneur

- **Context:** Senior Congress leader and Thiruvananthapuram MP Shashi Tharoor is conferred with France’s highest civilian award Chevalier de la Légion d’Honneur.

## Key Highlights

- The French Government’s highest civilian award “Chevalier de la Legion d’Honneur” is to be presented to Congress leader Shashi Tharoor.
- The honor is being conferred to him, because he delivered a speech in French in 2021 which left the officials of the embassy, consulates, military attaches and Alliance Francaise surprised.
- The award will be conferred on him during the next visit of any minister of the French government to India.

- In 2010, Tharoor received a similar honor, from the Spanish government. The King of Spain had bestowed upon him the Encomienda de la Real Order Espanola de Carlos III.

## About Chevalier de la Legion d’Honneur

- The Chevalier de la Legion d’Honneur (Knight of the National Order of the French Legion of Honour) was instituted in 1802 by Napoleon Bonaparte.
- It is the highest civilian award given by the French Republic for outstanding contribution to the recipient’s field of expertise, regardless of their nationality.
- The Legion has five classes, listed in descending rank: grand cross (limited to 80 members), grand officer (200), commander (1,000), officer (4,000), and knight, or chevalier (unlimited).
- The membership of the Legion includes both men and women, French citizens and foreigners, civilians and military personnel, irrespective of rank, birth, or religion, can be admitted to any of the classes of the Legion.
- Admission into this order, which can be conferred posthumously, requires 20 years of civil achievement in peacetime or extraordinary military bravery and service in times of war.

## Nethanna Bima Scheme

- **Context:** On the occasion of National Handloom Day Telangana government launched the Nethanna Bima scheme.

## Key Highlights

- Under the scheme, the Telangana government has joined hands with Life Insurance Corporation (LIC) of India for the 'Nethanna Beema' scheme and termed the state department of handlooms and textiles as the nodal agency for its implementation.
- The annual premium of the beneficiaries will be paid by the government on their behalf to the LIC.



- The new scheme will provide Rs 5 lakh insurance cover to the families of weavers in case of the unfortunate demise of an eligible beneficiary.
- In India, the National Handloom Day is observed on August 7 every year to recognise the contributions of the handloom weavers of the country. In 2015, the first National Handloom Day was organized by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Chennai.
- Henipaviruses are classified as biosafety level 4 (BSL4) pathogens. They can cause severe illness in animals and humans, and as of now there are no licensed drugs or vaccines meant for humans.
- In all likelihood, the new virus has jumped from an animal to humans. The LayV virus RNA has been predominantly found in shrews, which may be its natural hosts. The study zeroed in on shrews after conducting a serosurvey of domestic and wild animals. Among domestic animals, seropositivity was detected in goats and dogs.

14<sup>th</sup> AUGUST, 2022

## Langya Virus

- **Context:** A new type of animal-derived Henipavirus named as Langya Virus has so far infected people in Shandong and Henan provinces of China.

### Key Highlights

- Almost three years after the novel coronavirus was detected in China, a new zoonotic virus has been discovered in the country's two eastern provinces with 35 infections identified so far.
- Named Langya Henipavirus, the virus was found in throat swab samples from febrile patients in eastern China.
- This new type of Henipavirus is also being called Langya Henipavirus or the LayV.
- The virus can cause respiratory symptoms such as fever, cough and fatigue.
- These also cause respiratory infections, and can be fatal. Researchers think LayV is carried by shrews, which might have infected people directly or through an intermediate animal.
- The Langya Henipavirus (LayV) was first reported in 2018 in Shandong and Henan provinces in northeastern part of China.

### About Langya Virus

- Langya Virus is part of a genus of virus called henipaviruses that are typically harboured in fruit bats.

## Butterfly Mines

- **Context:** The UK Ministry of Defense, in its intelligence assessment of the ongoing war in Ukraine, has sounded an alarm on the possible use of PFM-1 series 'Butterfly Mines' by the Russian military in Donetsk and Kramatorsk.

### Key Issues

- As per an intelligence bulletin put out by UK Ministry of Defence a few days back on the security situation in Ukraine, Russia is likely to have deployed anti-personnel mines to deter freedom of movement along its defensive lines in the Donbas.
- As per the bulletin, these mines have the potential to inflict widespread casualties amongst both the military and the local civilian population.
- PFM-1s were used to devastating effect in the Soviet-Afghan War where they allegedly maimed high numbers of children who "mistook them for toys."

### About "Butterfly Mines"

- The PFM-1 and PFM-1S are two kinds of anti-personnel landmines that are commonly referred to as 'Butterfly mines' or 'Green Parrots'. These names are derived from the shape and colour of the mines.
- The main difference between the PFM-1 and PFM-1S mine is that the latter comes with a self-destruction mechanism which gets activated within one to 40 hours.

- The 'Butterfly mine' has earned a reputation for being particularly attractive to children because it looks like a coloured toy. It is very sensitive to touch and just the act of picking it up can set it off. Because of the relatively lesser explosive packed in this small mine, it often injures the handler rather than killing them. These mines are also difficult to detect because they are made of plastic and can evade metal detectors.
- These mines can be deployed in the field of action through several means, which include being dropped from helicopters or through ballistic dispersion using artillery and mortar shells. These mines glide to the ground without exploding and later explode on coming in contact. Since these mines were green in color when they were first put to use, they also earned the name 'Green Parrots'.

## Trans-Himalayan Multi-Dimensional Connectivity Network

- **Context:** China and Nepal have agreed to build the so-called Trans-Himalayan Multi-Dimensional Connectivity Network.

### Key Highlights

- The network, under China's Belt and Road initiative, will involve the building of railways and communication networks.
- As part of the agreement, China would finance the feasibility study of Keyrung-Kathmandu Railway under the grant assistance and send experts to Nepal to conduct surveys this year.
- Keyrung-Kathmandu Railway is part of the trans-Himalayan multi-dimensional connectivity network, the plan for which was first formally agreed between China and Nepal in 2017 when Kathmandu joined the BRI.
- During a landmark visit by President Xi Jinping to Nepal in 2019, China and Nepal elevated their relationship to a "strategic partnership".

