



# WEEKLY CURRENT AFFAIRS

**DECEMBER, 2023**

**Week-1**

**1-7 Dec., 2023**

★★ Useful for ★★

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

1<sup>st</sup> DECEMBER, 2023

## 16th Finance Commission

- **Context:** The Union Cabinet has approved Terms of Reference (ToR) for the Sixteenth Finance Commission.

### Key Highlights:

- The 16th Finance Commission's recommendations would cover the period of five years commencing April 1, 2026.
- **The key Terms of Reference for the 16th Finance Commission:**
  - To recommend the distribution between the Union and the States of the net proceeds of taxes which are to be divided between them and allocation among States of the respective share of such proceeds.
  - To recommend principles that should govern the grants-in-aid of the revenues of the States out of the Consolidated Fund of India and the sums to be paid to the States by way of grants-in-aid of their revenues under article 275 of the Constitution.
  - To prescribe measures needed to augment the Consolidated Fund of a State to supplement resources of the panchayats and local bodies on the basis of recommendations made by the respective State Finance Commissions.
  - To review the existing arrangements on financing Disaster Management initiatives and make appropriate recommendations.

## Legion of Honour Award

- **Context:** V R Lalithambika (ISRO scientist) was recently honored with the Legion of Honour Award for promoting Indo-French space cooperation.

### Key Highlights:

- V R Lalithambika, who was the director of the Human Spaceflight (Ganganyaan) Programme in 2018, has been conferred the award for her engagement in space cooperation between France and India.

- She played a key role in the signing of the first joint agreement for cooperation between the French National Space Agency CNES and the ISRO on human spaceflight in 2018 where the two agencies agreed to work in the area of space medicine.
- In 2021, she was also credited for coordinating another Indo-French agreement on the Ganganyaan Mission. Under this agreement, the CNES will train India's flight physicians in France.

### About Legion of Honour Award:

- Legion of Honour (Légion d'honneur) is the highest civilian award given by France.
- The award was constituted in 1802 by Napoleon Bonaparte.
- The award is given in recognition of exceptional service to France regardless of the nationality of the individuals receiving the honor.
- Previously, former ISRO chairman A S Kiran Kumar was also awarded the honour in 2019.

## PM JANMAN Scheme

- **Context:** The Union Cabinet has approved the Pradhan Mantri Janjati Adivasi Nyaya Maha Abhiyan (PM JANMAN) Scheme.

### Key Highlights:

- PM JANMAN was announced in budget 2023-24 to improve the socio economic conditions of Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs).
- It comprises both Central Sector and Centrally Sponsored Schemes.
- The scheme will be implemented by Nine Ministries which also includes the Ministry of Tribal Affairs.
- The scheme comprises of 11 critical interventions which are part of existing schemes. These are: Pucca housing, road connectivity, piped water supply, mobile medical units, hostel construction, Anganwadi Centers, skill development centers, electricity connections, solar street lighting, Van Dhan Vikas Kendra, and mobile towers.

- The Ministry of Ayush will provide Ayush facilities to PVTG habitations through Mobile Medical Units.
- The Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship will facilitate skill and vocational training in PVTG habitations.

2<sup>nd</sup> DECEMBER, 2023

## Drone Didi Yojana

- **Context:** The Union Cabinet has approved the Central Sector Scheme for providing Drones to the Women Self Help Groups (SHGs).

### Key Highlights:

- It is a central sector scheme to provide 15,000 drones to selected Women Self Help Groups (SHGs) for the purpose of offering rental services to farmers for agriculture purposes from 2023-24 to 2025-2026.
- The scheme converges the resources and efforts of Department of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare (DA&FW); Department of Rural development (DoRD); Department of Fertilizers (DoF); Women SHGs and Lead Fertilizer Companies (LFCs).
- The women SHGs would be identified from the total 89 lakh SHGs formed under the Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana.
- Central Financial Assistance covering 80% of drone costs up to a maximum of Rs. 8 Lakh will be provided.
- The remaining amount can be raised through National Agriculture Infra Financing Facility (AIF) with a provision of interest subvention @ 3% on the AIF loan.
- One of the members of SHGs will be trained for drone piloting skills and agriculture purpose of nutrient and pesticide application.
- Another member will be trained as drone technicians. This will allow them to not just operate the drone but also repair and maintain it.
- The scheme also promotes the use of Nano Fertilizers like Nano Urea and Nano DAP through drone services.

## MAHASAGAR Initiative

- **Context:** Indian Navy has successfully conducted the first edition of the MAHASAGAR: Indian Navy's outreach initiative between Maritime Heads.

### Key Highlights:

- Maritime Heads for Active Security and Growth for All in the Region (MAHASAGAR) is a high level interaction between the Maritime Heads of the Indian Ocean Region.
- To promote security and growth for all in the Indian Ocean Region
- Participating countries are Bangladesh, Comoros, Kenya, Madagascar, Maldives, Mauritius, Mozambique, Seychelles, Sri Lanka and Tanzania
- Theme: 'Collective Maritime Approach towards Countering Common Challenges'

## XPoSat Mission

- **Context:** The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has announced a plan to launch its first X-ray Polarimeter Satellite (XPoSat) Mission.

### Key Highlights:

- It is India's first and the world's second polarimetry mission.
- The other such major mission is NASA's Imaging X-ray Polarimetry Explorer (IXPE) that was launched in 2021.
- To measure X-ray polarization from X-ray sources.
- To conduct long-term studies of the spectral and temporal characteristics of cosmic X-ray sources.
- It will supplement the traditional time and frequency domain studies.
- Its launch Vehicle is Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle(PSLV) and duration of mission Five Years
- POLIX (Polarimeter Instrument in X-rays) will measure the polarimetry parameters (degree and angle of polarization) in medium X-ray energy range of 8-30 keV photons of astronomical origin.
- It is being developed by Raman Research Institute(RRI),Bangalore in collaboration with U R Rao Satellite Centre(URSC)

- XSPECT (X-ray Spectroscopy and Timing) will give spectroscopic information (on how light is absorbed and emitted by objects). It would observe several types of sources such as X-ray pulsars, blackhole binaries, low-magnetic field neutron star etc. It was developed by the U.R. Rao Satellite Centre, ISRO.

3<sup>rd</sup> DECEMBER, 2023

## Global Green Credit Initiative

- **Context:** PM Narendra Modi launched the Global Green Credit Initiative at COP 28 in Dubai.

### Key Highlights:

- The GGC Initiative is conceptualized as a mechanism to incentivize voluntary pro-planet actions, as an effective response to the challenge of climate change.
- It envisions the issue of Green Credits for plantations on waste/degraded lands and river catchment areas, to rejuvenate and revive natural eco-systems.
- It aims to facilitate global cooperation and partnership through exchange of knowledge, experiences and best practices in planning, implementation and monitoring of environment positive actions through programs/mechanisms like Green Credits.
- The India's Green Credits Programme is a market-based mechanism to incentivize voluntary environmental actions across diverse sectors, by various stakeholders like individuals, communities, private sector industries, and companies.
- It was first announced in the Union Budget 2023-24 and launched by the Environment Ministry in October 2023.
- Such a market-based system already exists for carbon, at the national as well as international level, that allows trade in carbon credits in which companies or nation can claim carbon credits if they take action to reduce their carbon footprint. These credits can be traded for money. Green Credits programme attempts to replicate this mechanism for

other environmental actions, like water conservation or soil improvement.

- In its initial phase, the GCP focuses on two key activities: water conservation and afforestation.
- Private companies would buy these green credits as part of their CSR obligations.
- The Indian Council of Forestry Research and Education (ICFRE) is the administrator of the programme

## ALTÉRRRA Fund

- **Context:** At COP-28, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) has announced a new USD 30 billion fund called ALTÉRRRA for climate investments and transforming emerging markets and developing economies.

### Key Highlights:

- It is a privately managed fund focused on climate investments in emerging markets and developing economies.
- It is established by Lunate, an independent global investment manager based in UAE
- By 2030, emerging markets and developing economies will require \$2.4 trillion every year to address climate change.
- The fund's investments will be guided by four key pillars: Energy Transition, Industrial Decarbonization, Sustainable Living, Climate Technologies
- Initially, a portion of this fund will support development of over 6 GW of new clean energy capacity in India.
- This includes creating 1,200 MW of wind and solar projects that will begin producing clean energy by 2025.

4<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER, 2023

## Dynamic Ground Water Resource Assessment Report

- **Context:** The Union Minister of Jal Shakti has released the Dynamic Ground Water Resource Assessment Report for the entire country for the year 2023.

### Key Highlights:

- Its aim is to determine the prevailing status of groundwater resources and the impact of ongoing groundwater management practices.
- Conducted jointly by Central Ground Water Board (CGWB) and States/UTs.
- Total annual ground water recharge is 449.08 billion cubic meters (BCM), marking an increase of 11.48 BCM compared to 2022.
- Total annual ground water extraction for the entire country is 241.34 BCM.

### Initiatives taken by government to improve ground water resources:

- **Atal Bhujal Yojana (Atal JAL):** It is a Rs. 6000 crore Central Sector Scheme, undertaken with World Bank assistance, for ensuring sustainable management of ground water resources.
- **Jal Shakti Abhiyan (JSA):** Launched in 2019, it aims to promote water conservation and water resource management in 256 water stressed districts in the country through targeted interventions.

## International Maritime Organisation (IMO)

- **Context:** India has been re-elected to the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) Council for the 2024–25 period.

### Key Highlights:

- It is a specialized agency of the United Nations that regulates the maritime industry, which supports global trade, transportation, and all marine operations.
- It is responsible for measures to improve the safety and security of international shipping and to prevent pollution from ships.
- It is also involved in legal matters, including liability and compensation issues and the facilitation of international maritime traffic.

- India joined the IMO in 1959. IMO currently lists India as among the 10 states with the 'largest interest in international seaborne trade'.

## Biotechnology Research and Innovation Council (BRIC)

- **Context:** The Union Minister of Science and Technology has addressed the first ever meeting of the Biotechnology Research and Innovation Council (BRIC).

### Key Highlights:

- BRIC is an apex autonomous society under the Department of Biotechnology (DBT), Ministry of Science and Technology.
- It was formed by subsuming 14 Autonomous Institutions (AIs) under it. This has been done to provide centralized and unified biotech governance across the country.
- The institutions subsumed under BRIC will retain their distinct research mandates but governed by one body at BRIC.
- Institutes can allocate up to one-third of their lab space for researchers from outside DBT institutes and their collaborators (from industry or other institutes).
- The institutes will also have the freedom to collaborate in public-private research initiatives and receive funding and endowments from non-governmental sources for their research activities.
- Zero Waste Life on Campus' Program was launched on the occasion of the first society meeting of the Biotechnology Research and Innovation Council (BRIC). The program aims to achieve sustainable waste management across BRIC campuses through the application and adoption of knowledge and technologies. It is aligned with Mission LIFE movement.

## 5<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER, 2023

### Cyclone Michaung

- **Context:** Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu are preparing for heavy rainfall in their coastal districts as Cyclone Michaung intensified over the Bay of Bengal.

#### Key Highlights:

- Cyclone Michaung is the fourth tropical cyclone of the year over the Bay of Bengal. Other three were- Mocha, Hamoon, Midhili.
- India Meteorological Department (IMD) classified it as a severe cyclonic storm.
- The name of the cyclone 'Michaung' was proposed by Myanmar, which signifies resilience and fortitude.

### Biological Diversity Act, 2002

- **Context:** Recently, the Union Minister of State for Environment, Forest and Climate Change stated the conservation efforts and measures taken for Biodiversity Heritage Sites and plant genetic resources.

#### Key Highlights:

- The act aims at the conservation of biological resources, managing its sustainable use and enabling fair and equitable sharing benefits arising out of the use and knowledge of biological resources with the local communities
- Biodiversity Heritage Sites (BHS) are areas that are unique, ecologically fragile ecosystems that have rich biodiversity.
- BHS must comprise of any one or more of the following components– species richness, high endemism, presence of rare, endemic and threatened species, keystone species, species of evolutionary significance, wild ancestors of domestic/cultivated species etc.

- They are recognised under the Section 37 of the Biological Diversity Act, 2002.
- They are notified by the State Government in consultation with the local bodies.
- Currently, there are 44 Biodiversity Heritage Sites in 16 States.
- Government is creating awareness on conservation of plant genetic resources including seeds of farmers' varieties and landraces through the schemes like Tribal Sub-Plan, North-Eastern Hill Region and Scheduled Caste Sub Plan.

## 6<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER, 2023

### Green Industrialisation Initiative

- **Context:** African leaders launched the Green Industrialisation Initiative during the third day of COP28, aiming to accelerate green growth in African industries and attract finance and investments.

#### Key Highlights:

- The initiative builds upon the existing \$4.5 billion Africa green investment from the United Arab Emirates (UAE)
- The leaders emphasized on developing long-term plans for green industrialization.
- It highlights Africa's priorities for industrial transition and the need for just and equitable partnerships.
- The initiative underscores the importance of green industrialisation to harness Africa's vast and quality resources to secure prosperity for all.
- It aims to position Africa as a global supplier of green energy and resources.

### Post Office Bill

- **Context:** Recently, the Rajya Sabha passed the Post Office Bill.

#### Key Highlights:

- Bill is introduced by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology.

- The Bill seeks to replace the Indian Post Office Act of 1898.
- Exclusive government privilege for conveying letters is eliminated; instead, services provided by India Post will be determined by prescribed Rules.
- The leadership of India Post will be entrusted to the Director General of Postal Services, who will possess the authority to establish regulations, including those related to service tariffs and the issuance of postage stamps.
- The government reserves the right to intercept items transmitted through India Post based on specified grounds, such as concerns related to state security and public order.
- India Post will not assume any liability for its services, except as stipulated by Rules.

## RBI's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC)

- **Context:** The Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) of the Reserve Bank may keep the repo rate unchanged at 6.5 percent.

### Key Highlights:

- The central bank is also expected to retain the stance of the monetary policy as 'withdrawal of accommodation' meaning it will be focused on curbing money supply in the economy.
- With better-than-expected second-quarter gross domestic product (GDP) print at 7.6 per cent, the RBI may revise upwards its FY '24 growth estimate.
- The reason is that the inflation will start inching up because food inflation is going to increase.
- The core inflation is around 4 per cent, and therefore, there is no reason for the RBI to increase the rate.
- Though headline inflation has moderated, it remains vulnerable to recurring and overlapping food price shocks coming from global factors and adverse weather events.
- As the RBI is expected to keep the policy rate unchanged, all external benchmark lending rates

linked to the repo rate will not rise. It will provide some relief to borrowers as their equated monthly installments (EMIs) will not increase.

7<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER, 2023

## Dark Patterns

- **Context:** The Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA), has notified guidelines for the "prevention and regulation" of dark patterns.

### Key Highlights:

- The CCPA has notified the Guidelines for Prevention and Regulation of Dark Patterns, 2023, under section 18 of the Consumer Protection Act, 2019.
- The guidelines will apply to all platforms, systematically offering goods or services in India; advertisers and sellers.
- The guidelines have a list of 13 specified dark patterns. These are: false urgency; basket sneaking; confirm shaming; forced action; subscription trap; interface interference; bait and switch; drip pricing; disguise advertisement; nagging; trick question; SaaS billing; and rogue malwares.

### About Dark Patterns:

- Dark patterns are tactics used by online platforms to mislead customers and prevent them from making right choices.
- The guidelines define dark patterns as "any practices or deceptive design pattern using user interface or user experience interactions on any platform that is designed to mislead or trick users to do something they originally did not intend or want to do, by subverting or impairing the consumer autonomy, decision making or choice, amounting to misleading advertisement or unfair trade practice or violation of consumer rights."

## World Malaria Report 2023

- **Context:** World Malaria Report 2023 published by the World Health Organization (WHO). It delves into the nexus between climate change and malaria.

### Key Highlights:

- In 2022, there were estimated 249 million cases globally, exceeding the pre-pandemic level of 233 million in 2019 by 16 million cases. Pakistan saw the largest increase, with about 2.6 million cases in 2022 compared to 500 000 in 2021. Significant increases were also observed in Ethiopia, Nigeria, Papua New Guinea and Uganda.
- India accounted for 1.4% of total malaria cases in the world.
- India saw a 30% decline in malaria cases and 34% decline in deaths in 2022 as compared to the previous year
- There has been a lot of investment in insecticide mosquito nets, antimalarial drugs, and point of care tests to quickly detect the disease.
- Disruptions caused by COVID-19, threats such as drug and insecticide resistance, humanitarian crises, resource constraints, climate change impacts and delays in programme implementation particularly in countries with a high burden of the disease.
- To achieve the malaria elimination target of 2030, there has to be emphasis on strengthening of surveillance as well as tailoring of malaria interventions at sub-national level which should be data driven.
- Planning for the disease should also take into account such extreme weather events as better planning for them can reduce the incidence of malaria.

