MADE EASY

WEEKLY CURRENT AFFAIRS

JANUARY, 2024

Week-2

08-14 Jan., 2024

★★ *Useful for* ★★

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

8th JANUARY, 2024

PRASADAM: India's first health food street launched in Ujjain

- **Context:** Recently, the Union Minister for Health & Family Welfare, inaugurated India's first Healthy & Hygienic Food Street, 'PRASADAM,' at Neelkanth Van, Mahakal Lok, in Ujjain, Madhya Pradesh.

Key Highlights:

- Prasadam aims to connect people in every corner of the country with pure and safe local and traditional food.
- It is in line with the vision of 'Viksit Bharat'.
- The food street is designed to provide various facilities including a kids' play area, drinking water facility, CCTV surveillance, parking, public conveniences and seating spaces.
- The 'Prasadam' initiative strives to enhance Ujjain's tourism allure and safeguard its culinary heritage while also playing a role in fostering economic development.
- The initiative is provided with financial support which is extended to states and Union Territories (UTs) with a funding distribution ratio of either 60:40 or 90:10, under the National Health Mission.
- Standard branding of these food streets will be done as per FSSAI guidelines.
- The food street at Neelkanth Van, Mahakal Lok in Ujjain, will be the first of 100 food streets that will come up in as many districts across the country.

About 'Viksit Bharat' Vision:

- Viksit Bharat@2047 is the vision to make India a developed nation by 2047, the 100th year of its independence.
- The vision encompasses various aspects of development, including economic growth, social progress, environmental sustainability, and good governance, among others.

Inland Waterways Development Council

- **Context:** The Inland Waterways Authority of India is set to host the inaugural 'Inland Waterways Development Council' meeting in Kolkata.

Key Highlights:

- This will be the first meeting of the Inland Waterways Development Council.
- The Inland Waterways Development Council (IWDC) meeting boasts a comprehensive agenda that aims to tackle pivotal issues concerning the advancement of inland waterways in India.
- As part of the agenda, several initiatives, including the "Harit Nauka – Guidelines for Green Transition of Inland Vessels" and the "River Cruise Tourism Roadmap 2047" will also be launched at the event.
- The meeting's focus will encompass crucial aspects such as fairway development, private sector engagement, and optimizing cargo transport efficiency in Inland Water Transport (IWT).
- The agenda also includes promoting eco-friendly vessels for passenger transportation, exploring economic advantages in river cruise tourism, and advocating for sustainable practices in inland waterways development.

About Inland Waterways Development Council:

- It was established in October 2023 by the Government of India.
- It was established to focus on comprehensive development of inland waterways and the associated Inland Water Transport (IWT) ecosystem for improved cargo efficiency, passenger movement, and river cruise tourism, with active participation from States and Union Territories.

9th JANUARY, 2024

Voice Cloning: AI-generated voice scam

- **Context:** Voice clone fraud is increasing in India, with a May report indicating that 47% of surveyed individuals in the country have been affected by an AI-generated voice scam.

Key Highlights:

- A May report titled 'The Artificial Imposter' disclosed that 47% of surveyed Indians, nearly double the global average of 25%, have either fallen victim to or known someone affected by an AI-generated voice scam.
- India ranked highest globally in the number of victims to AI voice scams.
- McAfee reported that 66% of Indians would respond to a call appearing to be from a friend or family member urgently seeking money.
- The report found that messages claiming the sender was robbed (70%), in a car accident (69%), lost their phone or wallet (65%), or needed financial aid while traveling abroad (62%) were the most effective excuses.
- The report revealed that 86% of Indians share their voice data online or via voice notes at least once a week, making these tools highly potent.

India's first national landslide susceptibility map

- **Context:** In the wake of severe monsoon triggered heavy floods and landslides, IIT Delhi team has developed India's first national landslide susceptibility map.

Key Highlights:

- The map has been devised using 1.5 lakh known landslides event from sources like Geological Survey of India (GSI) along with 16 landslide conditioning factors such as soil cover, the number of trees covering the area, and how far it is from any roads or mountains, etc.
- The team used ensemble machine learning methods to analyse the data.
- High resolution mapping- The map offers a detailed (100 sqm. resolution) overview of landslide susceptibility across India, including previously unrecognized areas.
- Revealing new risk zones- It identified high landslide susceptibility in familiar areas like the Himalayan foothills, Assam-Meghalaya region, and Western Ghats. Additionally, it uncovered new high-risk zones, including parts of the Eastern Ghats north of Andhra Pradesh and Odisha.
- Map available online- The map is accessible to the public, and anyone can engage with the data without requiring technical expertise.

■ NOTE:

Ensemble machine learning is when multiple machine learning models are used together to average out an oversize impact from any one model.

10th JANUARY, 2024

Bio-Imaging Bank

- **Context:** Mumbai's Tata Memorial Hospital (TMH), India's largest cancer hospital, embraces AI with a 'Bio-Imaging Bank' for early stage cancer detection.

Key Highlights:

- It is a comprehensive repository containing radiology and pathology images with clinical details, outcome data, treatment specifics, and additional metadata.
- This resource is strategically crafted for training, validation, and rigorous testing of AI algorithms.
- The project uses deep learning to develop a cancer specific tailored algorithm for early detection, incorporating data from 60,000 patients.
- Initially the project is dedicated to head and neck cancers as well as lung cancers, with a goal of having at least 1000 patients for each cancer type.
- It focuses on medical tasks like screening for lymph node metastases, nucleus segmentation, classification, and predicting biomarkers (e.g., HPV in oropharyngeal, EGFR in lung cancer), as well as therapy response prediction.
- **Funded by:** The Department of Biotechnology, in collaboration with IIT-Bombay, RGCIRC-New Delhi, AIIMS-New Delhi, and PGIMER-Chandigarh.

SBI report's arguments against India's recovery being K-shaped

- **Context:** A new research report by the State Bank of India (SBI) seeks to debunk claims of India's "K-shaped" economic recovery.

Key Highlights:

- K-shaped recovery occurs when, following a recession, different parts of the economy recover at different rates, times, or magnitudes. This contrasts an even, uniform recovery across sectors, industries, or groups of people.

- In the case of India, according to the author, there has been a stark difference in the way different sectors of the economy recovered after the pandemic. While the overall economic growth figures look robust, there is a growing underlying inequality.

- Report highlights patterns of income, savings, consumption, expenditure and policy measures aimed at public welfare.

- It questions the use of old parameters like low two-wheeler sales or fragmented land holdings.

- For instance, low sales of two-wheelers could reflect savings being utilised to buy physical assets (real estate) and buyers shifting to purchasing used/entry-level cars.

- It cites data from Zomato as an example of rising disposable income in non-metro areas.

- It refers to the income tax data for FY22 to note that the Gini coefficient had declined significantly from 0.472 to 0.402 between FY14 and FY22.

- It highlights that 36.3% of individual tax return filers belonging to the lowest income in FY14 have left the lowest income group and shifted upwards.

Mulya Pravah 2.0

- **Context:** Mulya Pravah 2.0 guidelines issued by the University Grants Commission. These guidelines aim to promote ethics and values in higher education.

Key Highlights:

- Mulya Pravah 2.0 is an updated guideline from the University Grants Commission (UGC) aimed at promoting ethical practices and human values in higher education institutions.

- It was introduced following unethical practices highlighted by a human resource managers' survey, such as favoritism, sexual harassment, and gender discrimination in various organizational processes.

- The guideline's primary focus is on building value-based institutions by developing respect for fundamental duties, constitutional values, and national bonding.

- It emphasizes transparent administration and decision-making based on institutional and public interest, free from biases.

- Institutions are expected to ensure integrity, fairness, and high ethical standards in their administration.

- The guideline encourages respect for constitutional values, inclusiveness, and global citizenship.

- While it stresses confidentiality, this contrasts with the right to information for accountability. Institutions are urged to disclose critical information publicly.

- Teachers are expected to be role models, maintaining good conduct and standards. Staff and students' unions should support administration constructively.

11ᵗʰ JANUARY, 2024

DRDO's counter-drone system

- **Context:** The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) has completed the development of its counter-drone system, which is now poised for production.

Key Highlights:

- It is a fully integrated anti-drone system that encompasses the detection, identification, and neutralization of drones.

- The technology can effectively counter attacks, employ soft kill measures, and implement hard kill methods against various types of drones, including micro drones.
- Users can also customize it for various other challenges.
- The Transfer of Technology (ToT) has been provided to private industries such as BEL, Adani, L&T, and Icom.

Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra

- **Context:** Recently PM Modi interacted with beneficiaries of Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra as the VBSY completed 50 days.

Key Highlights:

- It has connected with about 11 crore people.
- Since the initiation of the drive, almost 12 lakh new applications were received for Ujjwala connections, along with numerous applications for the Suraksha Bima Yojana, Jeevan Jyoti Yojana, and PM SVANidhi.
- Health checkups have been conducted for over 2 crore people, encompassing one crore TB checkups and 22 lakh sickle cell checkups.
- The government aims to extend the beneficiary count to two crore through initiatives like the "NaMo Drone Didi Scheme," which featured a demonstration of around one lakh drones during VBSY.

About Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra:

- Its aim is to promote and publicize government welfare schemes.
- To enroll potential beneficiaries of these schemes by collecting details during the yatra.
- The schemes that will be publicized through the yatra include Ayushman Bharat ; PMJAY PM Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana; Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana among others.
- The target is to cover over 2.55 lakh Gram Panchayats and over 3,600 urban local bodies by 25th January 2024.

Momentum Investing

- **Context:** Momentum investing is ruling the performance charts.

Key Highlights:

- It refers to a style of investing wherein investors purchase assets such as stocks or bonds that are consistently rising in price while selling assets whose prices are falling.
- The "buy high, sell higher" philosophy of momentum investing is in stark contrast to the traditional "buy low, sell high" advice given to investors.
- Momentum investors buy assets with rising prices in the hope that the upward price momentum of these assets would continue, thus allowing them to sell these assets at higher prices in the future to make profits.
- Similarly, they sell assets that are falling in price expecting the fall in prices to continue for some time.
- Momentum investing can generate high returns that comfortably beat the benchmark indices.
- Momentum investing can cause an unsustainable rise or fall in prices and it can eventually lead to heavy losses for investors.

12th JANUARY, 2024

Einstein Probe (EP)

- **Context:** China launched the Einstein Probe (EP) to observe mysterious transient phenomena in the universe.

Key Highlights:

- A Long March-2C carrier rocket carried a satellite called Einstein Probe.
- It is new astronomical satellite which is shaped like a lotus in full bloom,
- It is a mission of the Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS) dedicated to time-domain high-energy astrophysics.

- It consists of wide-field X-ray telescopes (WXT) and follow-up X-ray telescopes (FXT).

Purpose:

- It aims to capture the first light from supernova explosions,
- Search for X-ray signals accompanying gravitational wave events, and
- Discover dormant black holes and other celestial objects.
- The satellite's X-ray detection technology is inspired by lobster-eye telescopes.

Proba-3 mission

- **Context:** India will launch the European Space Agency's (ESA) pioneering Proba-3 mission in September 2024.

Key Highlights:

- It is led by the European Space Agency (ESA).
- It is a world's first precision formation flying mission.
- To form a 144-m long solar coronagraph, which will create an artificial eclipse, revealing new views of the Sun's faint corona.
- Proba-3 consists of two small satellites — a Coronagraph spacecraft and a solar-disc-shaped Occulter spacecraft.
- A coronagraph is an instrument that will allow scientists to study the Sun's elusive corona with unprecedented proximity and detail.
- By flying in tight formation about 150 metres apart, the Occulter will precisely cast its shadow onto the Coronagraph's telescope, blocking the Sun's direct light. This will allow the Coronagraph to image the faint solar corona in visible, ultraviolet and polarised light for many hours at a time.
- Proba-3's unique positioning will provide new insights into the origins of coronal mass ejections (CMEs) eruptions of solar material that can disrupt satellites and power grids on Earth.

- The mission will also measure total solar irradiance, tracking changes in the Sun's energy output that may influence Earth's climate.
- The Proba-3's formation flying also serves as a testbed for future multi-satellite missions.

Bharat Tex 2024

- **Context:** India's textile industry, in collaboration with industry associations, is gearing up to host "Bharat Tex 2024.

Key Highlights:

- Bharat Tex 2024 is a global textile mega event organised by a consortium of 11 Textile Export Promotion Councils and supported by the Ministry of Textiles.
- It is to held in New Delhi from February 26-29, 2024,
- The aim of the event is to position and showcase India's entire textile value chain and also highlight strengths in fashion, traditional crafts and sustainability initiatives.
- The event will be in line with India's 5F vision, which represents the journey from Farm to Fibre to Factory to Fashion to Foreign, encompassing the whole textile production process from raw resources to worldwide markets.
- The event will showcase pavilions on Sustainability and Recycling, discussions on global supply chain resilience and digitization, fabric testing zones, product demos, and masterclasses.
- It will also provide a platform for knowledge exchange, information dissemination, and Government to Government and Business to Business interactions.

13th JANUARY, 2024

Swachh Survekshan Awards 2023

- **Context:** Recently, the President of India presented the 'Swachh Survekshan Awards 2023' at Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi.

Key Highlights:

- Indore (in Madhya Pradesh) and Surat (in Gujarat) together were declared as the cleanest cities of the country, and Navi Mumbai (in Maharashtra) ranked third spot.

- Indore has been ranked the cleanest city for the seventh time in a row.

- **Clean Cities (population of less than 1 lakh):** Sasvad, Patan and Lonavala secured the top three spots respectively.

- Madhyamgram, Kalyani and Haora, in West Bengal, are placed at the bottom.

- **Cleanest Cantonment:** Mhow Cantonment Board in Madhya Pradesh;

- **SafaiMitra Surakshit Sheher:** Chandigarh;

- **Ganga Towns:** Varanasi and Prayagraj secured the 1st and 2nd rank respectively.

- **Best Performing State:** Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh secured the rank 1, 2 and 3 respectively.

- Odisha is ranked fourth, followed by Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Punjab, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Sikkim, Karnataka, Goa, Haryana and Bihar.

- Rajasthan, Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh were placed at the bottom in the rank.

Current status of TB in India

- **Context:** Recent reports have shown that there have been 25,37,235 TB cases of TB in 2023.

Key Highlights:

- Public Sector TB cases notified are 1,699,119, reaching 93% of the target.

- Private Sector TB Cases notified are 838,116, reaching 89% of the target.

- TB cases have been decreased since 2022.

- TB case notification in 2022 was 13% more than what was achieved in 2021. Due to the pandemic, TB notifications fell sharply in 2020 and 2021.

- Over the years, there has been a steady rise in the private sector's contribution to TB notifications: 21% in 2017, 25% in 2018, 28% in 2019, and 31% in 2020.

- Despites cases is declining the private sector's TB case notifications have consistently fallen short of the targets outlined in the National Strategic Plan (NSP) 2022-2025.

- According to the National Strategic Plan (NSP), approximately 0.54 million TB patients are not captured by surveillance and services, potentially in the private sector or the community.

- National Strategic Plan (NSP) for Tuberculosis (2017-2025) was launched by Ministry for Health and Family Welfare. It has been launched with the goal of achieving the SDG targets related to TB by 2025, five years ahead of the global target.

14th JANUARY, 2024

Agnipath Scheme

- **Context:** Army Chief General Manoj Pande said that the Agnipath scheme was finalised after extensive consultations.

Key Highlights:

- Introduced in 2022, the Agnipath scheme — also called the Tour of Duty scheme is a short-term recruitment scheme for the Indian Army.

- Under the policy, soldiers — called 'Agniveers' — are recruited for four years, at the end of which only 25 percent of recruits from a batch are retained for regular service.

- Candidates between the age of 17.5 years to 21 years will be eligible for enrolling in the Agnipath scheme.

- The scheme provides an avenue to Indian youth, desirous of serving the country to get recruited in the Armed Forces for a short duration. The scheme enhances the youth profile of the Armed Forces.

AKASH-New Generation Missile

- **Context:** Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) conducted a successful flight-test of the New Generation AKASH (AKASH-NG) missile.

Key Highlights:

- It is a new generation state-of-the-art surface-to-air missile (SAM) for the Indian Air Force (IAF) to destroy high maneuvering low radar cross section agile aerial threats.
- It has been indigenously designed and developed by the DRDO and produced by defence public sector units along with other industries.
- Multiple advanced versions of the missile are under development by the team.

Henley Passport Index (HPI) 2024

- **Context:** India's Passport secured the 80th rank in the latest Henley Passport Index 2024.

Key Highlights:

- The index includes 199 different passports and 227 different travel destinations.
- Four EU member states — France, Germany, Italy and Spain — join Singapore and Japan in the most powerful passports in the world.
- Henley Passport Index (HPI) is an annual list put together by Henley & Partners, a London-based global citizenship and residence advisory firm.
- It is based on exclusive data from the International Air Transport Association (IATA)