



WEEKLY CURRENT AFFAIRS

OCTOBER, 2021

Week-3

15-21 Oct, 2021

★★ Useful for ★★

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

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Gati Shakti National Master Plan

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched a Rs 100 lakh crore national master plan called “Gati Shakti National Master Plan”. It was announced by the PM on the 75th Independence Day.

Key Points:

- It is a national master plan for synchronising connectivity infrastructure projects across modes of transport. It will help India realise its dream to become the “business capital” of the world.
- Its aim is coordinated planning and execution of infrastructure projects to bring down logistics costs.
- Under the plan, infrastructure schemes of several ministries and state governments will be executed and designed with a common vision.
- It will help raise the global profile of local manufacturers and help them compete with their counterparts worldwide. It also raises possibilities of new future economic zones.
- It will help India to increase both manufacturing and exports. Every product that is sold globally from India is attached to India.

NOTE:

Under the plan, the private players will get a boost to invest in National infrastructure because of easy clearances and monetary help available to them. This project will also provide last-mile connectivity to the economic zones in a limited timeframe.

India's Plastic Waste Recycling Targets

- Recently, the Union Environment Ministry has come out with a draft notification for regulation of Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) under Plastic Waste Management rules 2016.

Key facts

- The draft provides that, quantity of waste will have to be managed by producers, brand owners and

importers, who generate plastic packaging waste across India.

- When the draft notification will be passed, it will come into effect immediately.
- Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) means the responsibility of the producer for environmentally sound management of product and plastic packaging till the end of its life. People & stakeholders can submit objections or suggestions on draft within 60 days, to the environment ministry.
- **EPR covers following categories of plastic packaging:**
 - Rigid Plastic Packaging
 - Flexible Plastic Packaging of single layer or multilayer (greater than one layer with several types of plastic)
 - Plastic sheets, carry bags (including those made up of compostable plastics) & plastic sachet or pouches
 - Multi-layered plastic packaging.

Targets:

- Companies will have to collect at least :
 - 35% of the target in 2021-22.
 - 70% of the target by 2022-23.
 - 100% of the target by 2024.
- In 2024, a minimum 50% of their rigid plastic will have to be recycled as will 30% of their category 2 and 3 plastic.
- Every year will see progressively higher targets and after 2026-27, 80% of their category 1 and 60% of the other two categories will need to be recycled.
- There are similar targets, with slight variations, for companies that use packaging material as well as import them.

Malabar Phase-II Exercise

- The Indian Navy recently participated in “Second Phase of multilateral maritime exercise” called “Exercise Malabar” along with Australia, Japan and the United States.

Key Facts

- Phase-I of Malabar was held in August and hosted by the U.S. Navy near Guam.
- Phase-II was held between 12 to 15 October in the Bay of Bengal. Phase-II would build upon the synergy, coordination and interoperability developed during Phase-I of the exercise.
- Second phase of the exercise was bigger than the first phase that was conducted off the Guam coast, US in the Western Pacific. In this phase, the United States deployed more than 100000-ton Nimitz-class super aircraft carriers.

NOTE:

Malabar exercise started as an annual bilateral naval exercise in the year 1992 between India and the US. It comprises a series of exercises, increasing scope and complexity over time.

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Medical Termination of Pregnancy (Amendment) Act, 2021

- The Union Government has notified new rules under the "Medical Termination of Pregnancy (Amendment) Act, 2021.
- In this, the gestational limit for termination of a pregnancy has been increased from 20 to 24 weeks for certain categories of women.

Key Highlights:

- Enhancing the upper gestation limit from 20 to 24 weeks for special categories of women. It will be defined in the amendments to the MTP Rules later.
- It would include survivors of rape, victims of incest and other vulnerable women (like differently-abled women, minors) etc. Upper gestation limit not to apply in cases of substantial foetal abnormalities diagnosed by the Medical Board.
- The composition, functions and other details of the Medical Board to be prescribed subsequently in

Rules under the Act. Name and other particulars of a woman whose pregnancy has been terminated shall not be revealed except to a person authorised in any law for the time being in force.

NOTE:

Under the new rules, state-level medical boards will be set up that will decide if a pregnancy can be terminated after 24 weeks in cases of foetal malformation. Boards will examine the woman & her reports and then either accept or reject the proposal for medical termination of pregnancy.

Climate Resilience Information System and Planning Tool

- The Union Minister of Rural Development has launched the Climate Resilience Information System and Planning (CRISP-M) tool.

Key Points:

- CRISP-M is a web and mobile phone-based Geographic Information System(GIS) aided tool that has been designed to help communities make climate-smart decisions.
- The tool will help integrate climate information in the GIS-based planning and implementation of Mahatma Gandhi NREGA.
- This tool will be used in seven states where the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), Government of UK and Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India are jointly working towards climate resilience.
- The mentioned 7 states are Bihar, Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Odisha and Rajasthan.

NOTE:

This tool will be used in seven states namely, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha and Rajasthan, for developing climate resilience.

Border Security Force (BSF)

- **Context:** The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) enhanced the “arrest, search and seize” powers of the Border Security Force (BSF) up to 50 km from the international boundary within Assam, West Bengal and Punjab.

Key points:

- The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) claims that recent drone droppings of weapons from across the border have prompted this expansion in the jurisdiction of the BSF.
- The decision is to extend the BSF’s jurisdiction from 15 km to 50 km inside the international border along with Punjab, West Bengal and Assam. It is meant to improve operational efficiency and crackdown on smuggling rackets.
- But the move triggered furious reactions from Opposition-ruled Punjab and West Bengal, which described it as an irrational decision, a direct attack on federalism and an attempt to interfere through Central agencies.

■ NOTE: _____

BSF is India’s border guarding force along the borders of Pakistan and Bangladesh. Its Administrative Control is by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA). It was raised in the wake of the 1965 War on 1 December 1965 as India’s first line of defence for ensuring the security of the borders of India and for matters connected therewith.

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Northern Ireland Protocol

- The Northern Ireland protocol was designed to prevent checks across the border between Northern Ireland (US) and the Republic of Ireland (EU), following Brexit.
- It has resulted into disagreements between the UK and EU as it disrupted trade between Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

About Northern Ireland Protocol:

- It aims to resolve the issue of the border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. Northern Ireland is part of the UK and the Republic of Ireland remains part of the European Union (EU). It has been one of the major issues created by Brexit.
- This frontier is contested and parts of it were fortified during the decades of violence known as “The Troubles”.
- With the Good Friday Agreement those visible signs of division melted away along the open border, however, it has again come into a troubled position with Brexit.

■ NOTE: _____

Brexit is the name given to the UK’s departure from the EU. It is a combination of ‘Britain’ and ‘exit’. On 23rd June 2016, the UK held a referendum on its membership of the EU.

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Kunming Biodiversity Fund

- China pledged to inject \$233 million into a new fund called “Kunming Biodiversity Fund” for the protection of biodiversity in developing countries, recently.

Key Highlights

- The UN summit is being attended by scientists, conservationists as well as diplomats where the focus is on forging a global agreement to protect the world’s increasingly fragile biodiversity and prevent the extinction of plants and animals.
- Beijing — the world’s biggest polluter — has sought to play a more prominent role internationally on biodiversity conservation in recent years.
- Experts say China’s efforts to conserve biodiversity at home have not been matched by efforts to clean up its global supply chains or embark on sustainable investments overseas.
- A key proposal being debated at the conference is the “30 by 30” agenda that would afford 30% of the Earth’s land and oceans protected status by 2030.

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- The funding issue for the Kunming Biodiversity Fund will be taken up in January 2022 at negotiations in Geneva. China's pledge is below the \$4 billion committed by Britain for conservation projects across the world as well as France's commitment to spend 30 percent of its climate finance on protection of biodiversity.

NOTE:

The UN Convention on Biological Diversity has been ratified by 195 countries and the European Union. However, the United States has not ratified it even though it has been the world's biggest polluter historically.

One Health Consortium

- The Department of Biotechnology launched a 'One Health' consortium. It envisages carrying out surveillance of important bacterial, viral and parasitic infections of zoonotic (diseases that can spread between animals and humans) as well as transboundary pathogens in India, including the North-eastern part of the country.

Key Points:

- One Health Consortium has been empowered to carry out surveillance of important viral, bacterial, & parasitic infections of zoonotic and transboundary pathogens in India.
- This project will also look into use of existing diagnostic tests and development of additional methodologies to conduct surveillance and understand the spread of emerging diseases.
- One Health Consortium comprises 27 organisations, led by DBT-National Institute of Animal Biotechnology, Hyderabad.
- It is one of the biggest health programmes that the Indian government has launched in post-Covid times. It comprises AIIMS Delhi, AIIMS Jodhpur, GADVASU Ludhiana, IVRI Bareilly, TANUVAS Chennai, Assam agricultural & veterinary university, MAFSU Nagpur, ICAR and ICMR centres & wildlife agencies.

Exercise Yudh Abhyas 2021

- India and the United States started a 15-day mega military exercise in Alaska from October 15, 2021 in a bid to further deepen bilateral military cooperation between both the countries. Year 2021 will mark the 17th edition of the exercise "Yudh Abhyas".

Key Points:

- It is carried with the aim of enhancing understanding, cooperation and interoperability between armies of India and USA.
- The primary aim of the exercise is to share tactical level drills and learn best practices from each other.
- It is a step towards growing military cooperation between the both the countries. The focus will be on combined arms manoeuvres in cold climatic conditions.

NOTE:

- Both the countries also signed key defence and security pacts in the past few years such as 'Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA)' in 2016.
- LEMOA allows the militaries from both the countries to use each other's bases for repair & replenishment of supplies and to provide a deeper cooperation.

Global Hunger Index 2021

- India has slipped to the 101st position among 116 countries in the Global Hunger Index (GHI) 2021 from its 2020 ranking (94).
- In the 2021 edition, India has been placed behind its neighbour countries Pakistan, Bangladesh and Nepal.

Key Points:

- The GHI score of India has also decreased. It was 38.8 in 2000 but now has been decreased to the range of 28.8 – 27.5 between 2012 and 2021. A total of 18 countries, including China, Kuwait and Brazil, shared the top rank with a GHI score of less than five.
 - Africa, South of the Sahara and South Asia are the world regions where hunger levels are highest.
 - Drawing on data from 2016–2020, hunger is considered extremely alarming in one country (Somalia), alarming in 9 countries, and serious in 37 countries.
 - In the index, eighteen countries such as China, Brazil and Kuwait, shared the top rank. They got a GHI score of less than five.

About Global Hunger Index (GHI)

- GHI is a tool to measure and track hunger across the world, by region as well as by country.
- It is developed by a peer-reviewed annual report, jointly published by Concern Worldwide and Welthungerhilfe. It aims to trigger action to reduce hunger around the world.
- A tool designed to comprehensively measure and track hunger at global, regional, and national.
- GHI score is calculated on the basis of four indicators namely:
 - Undernourishment
 - Child wasting (share of children aged under five who are wasted i.e., those having low weight for their height.
 - Child stunting (children aged under five who are having low height for their age.
 - Child mortality (mortality rate of children aged under five).l levels.

Global TB Report

- The Global TB report 2021 was recently released by the World Health Organization (WHO).

Key Highlights:

- WHO estimates that some 4.1 million people currently suffer from TB but have not been diagnosed with the disease or have not officially reported to national authorities. This figure is up from 2.9 million in 2019.
- The countries that contributed most to the global reduction in TB notifications between 2019 and 2020 were
 - India (41%)
 - Indonesia (14%)
 - the Philippines (12%)
 - China (8%).
- 12 other countries accounted for 93% of the total global drop in notifications.
- The COVID-19 pandemic has reversed years of global progress in reducing the number of people who die from TB, with the first year-on-year increase (of 5.6 per cent) since 2005 and the total number of deaths in 2020 returning to the level of 2017.
- The biggest impact was felt in terms of the detection of new cases. This means a large number of cases went undetected due to highly curtailed access to diagnostics and restrictions imposed to contain the pandemic.

19th OCTOBER 2021**UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC)**

- **Context:** India got re-elected to the U.N. Human Rights Council for the 6th term with an overwhelming majority in the General Assembly.
- It vowed to continue to work for the promotion and protection of Human Rights through “Samman, Samvad and Sahyog.”

Key Facts:

- India's current term was set to end on December 31 2021.

- Countries elected by the UN General Assembly through secret ballot: Argentina, Benin, Cameroon, Eritrea, Finland, Gambia, Honduras, India, Kazakhstan, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Montenegro, Paraguay, Qatar, Somalia, UAE and the US.
- USA, which had quit the council in 2018 under the previous Donald Trump's regime, was re-elected to the global rights body for a period of three-and-a-half years.
- These new members will serve for a period of three years, starting from January 2022.

New members:

- The 193-member General Assembly elected Argentina, Cameroon, Benin, Finland, Eritrea, Honduras, Gambia, Lithuania, India, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Luxembourg, Montenegro, Qatar, Paraguay, UAE, Somalia, and the USA by secret ballot for the 2022-2024 term.
- Members of the Council will serve for a period of three years. They will not be eligible for immediate re-election following two consecutive terms.

'Healthy Smile' Mobile App

- A bilingual mobile application 'Healthy Smile' was launched by AIIMS in a bid to raise awareness on maintaining oral hygiene among children.
- This app is an initiative of the Department of Paediatric and Preventive Dentistry, with the help of AIIMS intramural research grant.

Key Facts

- This app is an initiative of the Department of Paediatric and Preventive Dentistry, with the help of AIIMS intramural research grant.
- The app consists of a musical 2-minute brushing timer with "motivational songs", it also has brushing demonstration videos, preventive dental care tips, and so on.
- App will provide information on how they can keep dental decay under control through simple home care measures.

NOTE:

This app was launched after realizing the fact that "dental caries was found to be prevalent" among the paediatric population of India up to the extent of 40-50 percent.

Dr APJ Abdul Kalam Prerna Sthal

- Dr APJ Abdul Kalam Prerna Sthal was recently inaugurated at Naval Science & Technological Laboratory (NSTL), Visakhapatnam.

Key Highlights

- On the same occasion NSTL products Varunastra, Torpedo Advanced Light (TAL), and Mareech decoy are displayed.
- The Naval Science and Technology Laboratory (NSTL) is the main naval research laboratory that is part of the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO).
- The primary mission of NSTL is to conduct research and development on underwater weapons and systems.
- It is handled by the DRDO's Directorate of Naval Research and Development. Dr. Y. Sreenivas Rao is the current director of NSTL.

NOTE:

NSTL is the premier naval research laboratory working under the Defence Research & Development Organisation (DRDO). It is located in Visakhapatnam. The main function of NSTL is the research & development of underwater weapons & associated systems.

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Green Crackers

- Concerns regarding increasing pollution due to firecrackers during the festive season, many states have imposed certain rules on fireworks in the year 2021.

Key Points:

- 'Green crackers' are low-emission fireworks that the Supreme Court in 2017 had permitted for celebrations to a moderate level during festivals & relaxed the 'complete ban' on fireworks.
- Green crackers were researched and developed by CSIR-NEERI (Council of Scientific & Industrial Research – National Environmental Engineering Research Institute).
- Green crackers are safe water and air sprinklers that emit less sound and light. They also ensure a PM reduction of 30-35 per cent and reduction in NO_x and SO₂ due to in-situ water generation acting as dust suppressant. These also cost less owing to usage of low cost oxidants.

NOTE:

- The Rajasthan government banned the sale and use of crackers in the state. Only green crackers would be allowed and there will be restricted timing for bursting crackers during the festive season.
- Delhi Pollution Control Committee has completely banned the sale and bursting of firecrackers in Delhi till January 1, 2022.

Earthshot Prize

- **Context:** A Delhi-based entrepreneur's agricultural waste recycling project was named among the winners of Prince William's inaugural Earthshot Prize, dubbed the "Eco Oscars", at a gala ceremony in London.

Key Highlights

- 2021 was the first year when awards were handed out to finalists for their contributions towards the five UN Sustainable Development Goals — restoration and protection of nature, air cleanliness, ocean revival, waste-free living and climate action.
- Earthshot Prize hopes to encourage and support the development of solutions for Earth's environmental problems.

- Five individuals or organisations that have come up with impactful solutions to problems plaguing the planet awarded one million euros.
- The prize is distributed in five separate categories that are supported by UN Sustainable Development Goals. This prize was launched in the year 2020 by Prince William, Duke of Cambridge and David Attenborough.

Lucy Spacecraft

- The American Space Agency, NASA recently launched the first-of-its kind mission to study the Trojan asteroids of Jupiter.

Key Highlights:

- Trojan asteroids are two large clusters of space rocks, which are believed to be remnants of primordial material forming the outer planets of the solar system.
- **Aim & Objective:**
 - To get insights into the formation of the solar system 4.5 billion years ago.
 - Investigating the group of rocky bodies that are circling the Sun in two swarms- one preceding Jupiter and the other trailing behind it.

About Lucy Mission:

- Lucy mission is a 12-year expedition which will study a record number of asteroids. It will be the first mission to explore the Trojans, which are rocky objects orbiting the sun in two swarms, that is, ahead of the path of Jupiter and one behind it.
- Spacecraft will journey to eight different asteroids. It will also visit the main belt asteroid and seven Jupiter trojans.

About Trojan Asteroid

- These asteroids are believed to be the remnants of the early solar system, and studying them will help scientists understand its origins and evolution, and why it looks the way it does.

- The Trojan asteroids are believed to be formed from the same material that led to the formation of planets nearly 4 billion years ago when the solar system was formed.

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Geospatial Energy Map of India

- Recently, NITI Aayog launched a comprehensive Geographic Information System (GIS)-based Geospatial Energy Map of India.
- This platform has been launched with the aim of integrating energy data scattered across several organizations. It will present consolidated data in a visually appealing graphical manner.

Key Points:

- NITI Aayog in collaboration with Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has developed a comprehensive Geographic Information System (GIS) Energy Map of India with the support of Energy Ministries of Government of India.
- The GIS map provides a holistic picture of all energy resources of the country which enables visualisation of energy installations such as conventional power plants, oil and gas wells, petroleum refineries, coal fields and coal blocks, district-wise data on renewable energy power plants and renewable energy resource potential, etc through 27 thematic layers.
- GIS mapping of energy assets will be helpful in ensuring real-time and integrated planning of the energy sector in India, considering its interdependence and large geographical distribution.

About Geographical Information System (GIS):

- GIS is an interactive system that aids in analysis, building inter-relation, visualization, comparison and interpretation.

- It is a graphic aided spatial analysis tool. It helps in the management of Spatio-temporal information by embedding multiple levels of data sets into maps.

New QUAD: India, US, UAE and Israel

- India, Israel, the United States and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) are planning to create a new QUAD by the "Abraham Accords" by holding the first meeting of their foreign ministers.

Key Points:

- The meeting is being described in some quarters as a "new Quad".
- **It was joined by:** External affairs minister S Jaishankar, US secretary of state Antony Blinken from Washington Israeli foreign minister Yair Lapid from Jerusalem and UAE foreign minister Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan from Abu Dhabi.
- This meeting is the first to bring four countries together on a single platform.
- Meeting will also be linked with India's efforts of building new plurilateral and multilateral partnerships which focuses on cooperation in areas including security, connectivity and energy.

About Abraham Accords:

- The Israel-UAE normalization agreement is officially called the Abraham Accords Peace Agreement.
- It was initially agreed to in a joint statement by the United States, Israel and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) on August 13, 2020.
- The UAE thus became the third Arab country, after Egypt in 1979 and Jordan in 1994, to agree to formally normalize its relationship with Israel as well as the first Persian Gulf country to do so.
- Concurrently, Israel agreed to suspend plans for annexing parts of the West Bank.
- The agreement normalized what had long been informal but robust foreign relations between the two countries.