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**MADE EASY
WEEKLY
CURRENT AFFAIRS**

WEEK-4

22nd September - 30th September

Targeted Examinations:

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

22nd SEPTEMBER 2020

Minimum Support Price (MSP)

Context:

The Union Government has increased the Minimum Support Price (MSP) of Rabi crops and wheat with an increase by Rs 50 per quintal. The other crops for which MSP has been increased include Grams, Mustard, Safflower and Masoor.

About Minimum Support Price

- The minimum support price is an agricultural product price that is set by the Government of India in order to purchase directly from the farmer.
- This rate acts as a safeguard for the farmer as it provides a minimum profit for the harvest irrespective of the market conditions.
- The MSP is fixed on the recommendations of the Agricultural Costs and Prices Commission.

Pradhan Mantri Ghar Tak Fibre Scheme

- The Union Government has launched the PM Ghar Tak Fibre scheme where all the villages of Bihar will be connected through Optical Fibre Internet Service.
- For this, the Common Service Centres (CSC) under the Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology (MeitY) has undertaken the task of laying optical fibre networks.

Key Highlights:

- The Project would entail implementation of 1 Wi-Fi and 5 free of cost connections to Government institutions like Primary Schools, Anganwadi Centres, Aasha workers, Jeevika Didi, etc.
- This project will lead digital services like e-Education, e-Agriculture, Tele-Medicine, Tele-law and other social security schemes to be easily available to all citizens of Bihar.
- The CSC is taking the initiative through its Village Level Entrepreneurs (VLEs) under the BharatNet Project.

About BharatNet Project:

- BharatNet is a flagship mission implemented by Bharat Broadband Network Ltd. (BBNL).
- It is a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) set up by the Government of India under the Companies Act, 1956 with an authorized capital of Rs 1000 crore.
- It aims to facilitate the delivery of e-governance, e-health, e-education, e-banking, Internet and other services to rural India.
- It also has objective to connect all the 2,50,000 Gram panchayats in the country and provide 100 MBPS connectivity to all gram panchayats.
- Currently, it is being implemented by the Department of Telecommunication under the Ministry of Communications.

USA-Maldives Defence Cooperation

The USA has signed a framework for defence cooperation with the Maldives to deepen engagement for maintaining peace and security in the strategic Indian Ocean.

Key Highlights:

- The Framework outlines a range of bilateral activities, including senior-level dialogues, engagements etc. in areas such as maritime domain awareness, natural disasters and humanitarian relief operations.
- Both countries agreed to reiterate their commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific that promotes the security and prosperity of all nations in the region.

Significance for India:

- This announcement can be seen as a timely signal to China, particularly when Indian and Chinese soldiers are locked in a stand-off at the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Ladakh.
- The framework has the potential to blunt the security aspects of cooperation between China and the Maldives, even if economic co-operation continues.
- India sees the pact as useful because India's own direct involvement in Maldivian security matters tends to be viewed with suspicion domestically.

Shinku La Tunnel

The Union Government is planning to construct a high-altitude tunnel at 16,730-ft-high Shinku La in Himachal Pradesh.

Key Highlights

- The National Highways and Infrastructure Development Corporation Limited (NHIDCL) has speeded up the detailed project report (DPR) work on the 13.5-km Shinku La Tunnel connecting the Union Territory of Ladakh and Lahaul and Spiti district of Himachal Pradesh.
- With the construction of the tunnel under Shinku La, the inhabitants of around 15-odd villages of Zaskar valley will be all-weather connected as the valley remains cut off due to heavy snowfall during the winter.

23rd SEPTEMBER 2020

INS Viraat

- INS Viraat, the world's longest serving Aircraft Carrier, is to be dismantled at Alang in Gujarat and sold as scrap.
- It was decommissioned in 2017 after 30 years of service with Indian Navy.
- The ship was commissioned into the Royal Navy as HMS (Her Majesty's Ship) Hermes in 1959. Then, it was commissioned into the Indian Navy in 1987 as INS (Indian Naval Ship) Viraat, which means enormous.
- The ship was capable of a maximum speed of 28 knots and has weight of 28,700 tonnes.
- Presently, INS Vikramaditya (previously Admiral Gorshkov) is the sole aircraft carrier operated by the Indian Navy.

O-SMART Scheme

- Recently, Parliament discussed the O-SMART scheme operating under Ministry of Earth Sciences.

- The O-SMART is an acronym for Ocean Services, Modelling, Applications, Resources and Technology.
- It generates and updates information on Marine living resources in the Indian Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ).
- It addresses ocean development activities such as services, technology, resources, observations and science and provides necessary scientific and technological background required for implementation of various aspects of Blue Economy.

Parliamentary Committees

Context:

Recently, Union Government rejected Opposition parties' demands to refer two crucial agriculture Bills to a Parliamentary Committee of Rajya Sabha.

About Parliamentary Committees

- Parliamentary committees are established to study and deal with various matters that cannot be directly handled by the legislature due to their volume and complexity.
- These committees are made up of MPs either from one or both Houses.
- Both Houses of Parliament have a similar committee structure, with a few exceptions.
- Their appointment, terms of office, functions and procedure of conducting business are also more or less similar.
- They are regulated as per rules made by the two Houses under Article 118(1) of the Constitution.
- Broadly, Parliamentary Committees are of two kinds - Standing Committees and ad hoc Committees. The former is elected or appointed every year or periodically and their work goes on, more or less, on a continuous basis. The latter are appointed on an ad hoc basis as need arises and they cease to exist as soon as they complete the task assigned to them.

Basel III Compliant Bonds

Context:

State Bank of India, India's largest lender has raised ₹7,000 crore by issuing Basel III compliant bonds.

Key Highlights:

- Basel III bonds have both higher capital requirement and loss-absorption features compared with Basel-II.
- The complaint bonds qualify as tier II capital of the bank, and have a face value of ₹10 lakh each, bearing coupon rate of 6.24% per annum payable annually for a tenor of 10 years.
- Under the globally accepted Basel-III capital regulations, banks need to improve and strengthen their capital planning processes.

Basel Guidelines:

- Basel guidelines or Basel accords are the international banking regulations issued by the Basel Committee on Banking Supervision.
- The purpose of the accords is to ensure that financial institutions have enough capital on account to meet obligations and absorb unexpected losses.

24th SEPTEMBER 2020

IIIT Laws (Amendment) Bill 2020

- The Parliament has passed the Indian Institutes of Information Technology Laws (Amendment) Bill 2020.
- The bill seeks to give five IIITs in Public Private Partnership (PPP) mode – IIIT Bhopal, IIIT Agartala, IIIT Surat, IIIT Bhagalpur and IIIT Raichur, a tag of Institutions of National importance.

Key Points:

- Currently there are 20 IIITs which are designated at institutions of national importance. With the addition of these 5 institutes, the total number would increase to 25.

- The Institutions of National importance would have the power to give degrees and categorize them as B.Tech, M.Tech or Ph.D. degree, which is currently issued by a University of National Importance.

Passage Exercise

- The Indian Navy (IN) is undertaking Passage Exercise (PASSEX) with Royal Australian Navy (RAN) in the East Indian Ocean Region.
- The exercise involves participation of Indian Naval Ships Sahyadri and Karmuk and HMAS Hobart.
- PASSEXs are regularly conducted by Indian Navy with units of friendly foreign navies, whilst visiting each other's ports or during a rendezvous at sea.
- This exercise being conducted in the East Indian Ocean Region, reflects the growing strength of Indo-Australian bilateral relations as comprehensive strategic partners, particularly in defence cooperation in the maritime domain.

ABHYAS Target Vehicle

- The DRDO recently conducted the successful flight test of ABHYAS–High-speed Expendable Aerial Target (HEAT).
- The radar cross-section (RCS) of Abhyas and its visual and infrared signatures can be used to simulate a variety of aircraft for air-defense weapon practices.
- It can also function as a jammer platform and decoy.
- The vehicle is programmed for fully autonomous flight.

Arab League

Context:

In a response to the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain normalising their ties with Israel, the Palestine has quit its current chairmanship of Arab League meetings.

About Arab League

- Arab League is a regional organization of Arab countries in and around North Africa, the Horn of Africa and Arabian Peninsula.

- It aims to enhance relations between member States and co-ordinate between them to safeguard their independence and sovereignty, and to consider in a general way the affairs and interests of the Arab countries
- It was formed in Cairo on 22 March 1945 with six members namely Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, and Syria.
- Currently, the League has 22 members, but Syria's participation has been suspended since November 2011, as a consequence of government repression during the Syrian Civil War.

Net Neutrality

Context:

The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) recently suggested setting up a multi-stakeholder body (MSB) to ensure that internet service providers in the country adhere to the principles of net neutrality.

About Net Neutrality

- Net neutrality means that governments and internet service providers treat all data on the internet equally and does not differentially charge consumers for higher-quality delivery or giving preferential treatment to certain websites.
- Network neutrality requires all Internet service providers (ISPs) to provide the same level of data access and speed to all traffic, and that traffic to one service or website cannot be blocked or degraded.

25th SEPTEMBER 2020

Saubhagya Scheme

Context:

The Pradhan Mantri Sahaj Bijli Har Ghar Yojana – “Saubhagya” has completed three years since its inception.

Key Highlights

- The scheme was launched to provide electricity connections to all households in rural areas as well as urban areas.

- The scheme was started with an estimate of 16,320 crore rupees.
- Households have been identified through the Socio-economic and Caste Census (SECC) of 2011.
- Eligible households are getting electricity for free, while others are being charged Rs. 500. The beneficiary household got One LED lights, one DC power plug.

Kritagya Hackathon

- Kritagya Hackathon is being organised in order to promote potential technology solutions for enhancing farm mechanization with special emphasis on women friendly equipments.
- The hackathon has been planned by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) under National Agricultural Higher Education Project (NAHEP).
- Students, faculties and innovators/entrepreneurs from any university / technical institution across the country can apply and participate in the event in the form of a group.

Plastic Parks Scheme

- The Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers has approved to set up ten plastic parks in the country under the Plastic Park scheme which was launched in 2019.
- The Plastic Park scheme has been launched with an aim to increase the competitiveness and value addition in the plastic processing industry through research and development in the field.

Key Highlights

- The plastic parks will be set up in Madhya Pradesh, Assam, Tamil Nadu, Odisha, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh and Uttarakhand.
- The Government of India will share Rs 40 crore per project and rest of the cost will be borne by the state government.

Note: A plastic park is a dedicated zone of plastic and related industries.

26th SEPTEMBER 2020

Yo-Yo Test

- Yo-Yo Test is a fitness-level test for sportspersons, usually in cricket, football and hockey.
- The test was developed by Danish football physiologist Jens Bangsbo.
- In this test, two cones are placed 20 metres apart, and the athlete has to run between them when the beep goes off. The beeps become more frequent after one minute, and if the athlete fails to reach the line within that time, he is expected to catch up within two more beeps. The test is stopped if the player fails to catch up before the beeps run out.
- The minimum score set by the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) to pass the test is 16.1.

Prithvi-II Missile

- India recently successfully test fired the Prithvi-II missile from Chandipur Integrated Test Range, Odisha.
- Prithvi Missile is a short-range surface to surface ballistic missile that has been indigenously developed by the DRDO. It is a single-stage liquid-fueled missile.
- Prithvi missile was the first missile to be developed under the Integrated Guided Missile Development Programme.
- **It has 3 variants:**
 - (i) **Prithvi-I:** Army version
 - (ii) **Prithvi-II:** Air Force version
 - (iii) **Prithvi-III:** Naval version

Open Market Borrowings

Context:

The Union Ministry of Finance has granted permission to raise additional financial resources of Rs. 9,913 crore to five states through Open Market Borrowings (OMBs). The concerned five states are Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka, Goa, and Tripura.

Key Points:

- The permission has been granted because these States have successfully implemented the One Nation One Ration Card System.
- Besides, due to COVID-19 pandemic, the Central Government had also allowed additional borrowing limit of up to 2% of Gross State Domestic Product to the States for the current financial year.

About Open Market Borrowing

The buying and selling of government securities in the open market is termed as Open Market Borrowings or open market operations. It is done by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).

27th SEPTEMBER 2020

SAARC Foreign Ministers' Meetings

Context:

Recently, the Foreign Ministers' meetings of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) held in a virtual manner.

Key Highlights

- India called the SAARC countries to collectively resolve to defeat the scourge of terrorism, including the forces that nurture, support and encourage an environment of terror and conflict.
- Pakistan also made a detailed statement on the resolution of "long-standing disputes", a veiled reference to Jammu and Kashmir and India's move to withdraw Article 370.
- All SAARC nations should build a common stand on the need to cooperate in battling the coronavirus pandemic.
- India has contributed 10 million USD to SAARC COVID-19 Emergency Fund and manufactured essential drugs, COVID protection and testing kits, for countries in the SAARC region

About SAARC

- It was established on 8 December 1985.
- Its member countries are—Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Afghanistan.
- The Headquarters of SAARC is located in Kathmandu, Nepal.

NASA's Data Sonification Project

Context:

- NASA's Universe of Learning (UoL) Programme in collaboration with Chandra X-ray Center, Cambridge, is working on the sonification project which aims to transform data from astronomical images into audio.
- This project allows audiences including visually-impaired communities to experience space through data.

About Data Sonification:

Data Sonification refers to the use of sound values to represent real data. It is the auditory version of data visualisation.

Working:

- NASA's distant telescopes in space collect inherently digital data, in the form of ones and zeroes, before converting them into images.
- The images are essentially visual representations of light and radiation of different wavelengths in space, that can't be seen by the human eye.
- The Sonification project has created a celestial concert of sorts by translating the same data into sound.
- Pitch and volume are used to denote the brightness and position of a celestial object or phenomenon.

Significance:

- With this project, users can now experience different phenomena captured in astronomical images as an aural experience.

- The birth of a star, a cloud of dust or even a black hole can now be 'heard' as a high- or low-pitched sound.

28th SEPTEMBER 2020

Pinaka Rocket System

- Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) has recently started production of Pinaka rocket system for the Indian Armed forces.
- It is a free flight artillery rocket system having a range of 37.5 km.
- Pinaka rockets are launched from a multi-barrel rocket launcher which has a capability to launch 12 rockets in 44 seconds.
- The weapon system is designed and developed by Pune-based DRDO lab, Armament Research and Development Establishment (ARDE).
- Recently, an upgraded Pinaka system with a range of over 90 km was test fired.

Principal Market Yard

Context:

To nullify the negative impacts of the Agricultural Bills recently passed by the Parliament, there are suggestions to declare the entire state of Punjab as a 'Principal Market Yard'.

About Principal Market Yard

- According to Punjab Agriculture Produce Market Committee (APMC) Act, there are three types of yards under the Punjab Mandi Board (PMB) — Principal Market Yard, Sub Yard and Purchase centres.
- Declaring the entire state as Principal Market Yard would mean that anybody who is purchasing from farmers anywhere, either in PMB yards or outside, has to pay the same taxes as in PMB mandis.
- For that, the Punjab Government will have to develop a system to bring every purchaser under one tax regime in the state.

29th SEPTEMBER 2020

Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar Prize

- Dr. Abhijit Mukherjee, an Associate Professor from IIT Kharagpur has been selected for 'Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar' Prize.
- The Prize is given each year for outstanding contributions to science and technology.
- The award is named after Dr. Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar, the founder Director of the Council of Scientific & Industrial Research (CSIR).
- **Eligibility:** Any citizen of India engaged in research in any field of science and technology up to the age of 45 years is eligible for the prize.
- Besides, Overseas citizen of India (OCI) and Persons of Indian Origin (PIO) working in India are also eligible. The Prize is awarded on the basis of contributions made through work done primarily in India during the five years preceding the year of the Prize.

SAATHI

- SAATHI is an initiative of the Ministry of Tourism with Quality Council of India to assist the hospitality industry to continue to operate safely and thereby instill confidence among the Staff, employees and the guests about the safety of the hotel and units.
- It was launched on the occasion of World Tourism Day on 27 September 2020.
- Earlier, Ministry of Tourism had launched the Dekho Apna Desh (DAD) initiative in January 2020 with the objective of creating awareness among the citizens about the rich heritage and culture of the country, encouraging citizens to travel widely within the country.

Health in India Report

Context:

The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation has recently released the "Health in India" report, whose main objective was to gather quantitative data on India's health sector.

Key Highlights:

- The report has highlighted the health of religious communities across country.
- According to the report, around 7.5% of Indians suffered from ailments. Further, 6.8% suffered from ailments in the rural area while 9.1% in Urban area.
- Gender-wise, women are more susceptible to diseases than men. Around 6.1% of males were suffering from ailments in rural area while percentage of women in rural area was 7.6%. On the other hand, in urban areas, 8.2% of males and 10% of females were sick of ailments.
- As per the report, the Zoroastrians were the most susceptible to ailments. Around 31.1% of Zoroastrians were suffered from ailments as of July 2020.
- The community-wise percentage of people with ailments are:
 - ♦ Zoroastrians: 31.1%
 - ♦ Jains: 11.2%
 - ♦ Sikhs: 11%
 - ♦ Christians: 10.5%
 - ♦ Muslims: 8.1%
 - ♦ Buddhists: 8%
 - ♦ Hindus: 7.2%
- The relation between health and religion is highly important, as many religious practices help to reduce the impacts of some of the diseases. The religious practices work as a guard against blood pressure. These practices also help to strengthen the immune system.

Monetary Policy Committee (MPC)

Context:

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) recently postponed the bi-monthly meeting of the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC), after the Government failed to nominate its three members to the Committee.

Background

- The MPC comprises three external members and three members from the RBI.

- The Government was expected to nominate three independent members to replace Ravindra Dholakia, Pami Dua and Chetan Ghate after their four-year term ended.
- Without the external members, only the RBI appointees remain on the committee. These include Governor Shaktikanta Das, Deputy Governor Michael Patra and Executive Director Mridul Sagar.

About Monetary Policy Committee (MPC)

- The Monetary Policy Committee is a statutory committee which is tasked with framing monetary policy using tools like the repo rate, reverse repo rate, bank rate, cash reserve ratio (CRR), etc. as well as fixing the inflation target.
- The Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934 was amended by Finance Act (India), 2016 to constitute MPC to bring more transparency and accountability in fixing India's Monetary Policy.

Armenia-Azerbaijan Recent Clashes

Context:

Recently, Defence forces of Armenia and Azerbaijan clashed over the disputed separatist region of Nagorno-Karabakh, in which both sides suffered heavy losses of lives.



Issue:

Nagorno-Karabakh region in the South Caucasus is the point of contention which has led to territorial disputes and ethnic conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan in Central Asia.

About Nagorno-Karabakh Region

- Nagorno-Karabakh is a landlocked region in the South Caucasus, within the mountainous range of Karabakh, lying between Lower Karabakh and Zangezur, and covering the southeastern range of the Lesser Caucasus mountains. The region is mostly mountainous and forested.
- The region having area of around 4,400 square kilometers, lies 50 kilometers from the Armenian border.

30th SEPTEMBER 2020

Cat Que Virus (CQV)

- Cat Que virus is one of the arthropod-borne viruses which has been recently reported in China and Vietnam.
- While culex mosquitoes are natural host of this virus, domestic pigs are the primary mammalian host of CQV.
- It can cause febrile illnesses, meningitis and pediatric encephalitis in humans.
- India is more vulnerable of this virus as it has more of culex vector, primary mammalian host (swine) and recent confirmation of CQV from jungle myna.

Ganga Avlokan

- PM Narendra Modi has recently inaugurated Ganga Avlokan Museum- India's first museum on Ganga.
- It has been dedicated to showcase the biodiversity, rejuvenation and culture in Ganga river.
- The museum is located at Chandi Ghat, Haridwar.
- It has been launched under Namami Gange Programme, which is a mission to achieve effective abatement of pollution and conservation and rejuvenation of National River Ganga. The mission is operated under Ministry of Jal Shakti and implemented by the National Mission for Clean Ganga.