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WEEKLY
CURRENT AFFAIRS**

WEEK-3

15th April - 21st April, 2021

**Targeted Examinations:
CSE, ESE, PSUs, State Exams,
SSC and Banking Exams**

15th APRIL 2021

SpaceX Crew 2

- NASA's SpaceX Crew-2 mission astronauts are all set for a planned liftoff to the International Space Station (ISS) from Launch Complex 39A. NASA is to launch the mission along with SpaceX.

About SpaceX Crew 2:

- NASA's SpaceX Crew-2 Mission is the second in line that will lift off four astronauts on a Crew Dragon spacecraft to the International Space Station.
- The astronauts to travel to the International Space Station are from NASA, JAXA and ESA. JAXA is Japanese Space Agency and ESA is European Space Agency.

About Crew Dragon

- NASA's Space crew mission is the first mission in the history of space science to conduct safe, reliable, and cost-effective transportation of humans from the ground to low-Earth orbit and the International Space Stations, and back.
- The Crew Dragon spacecraft can stay up to 210 days in the Earth's orbit. Hence this human space mission has opened doors to long-duration expeditions and research in space.
- SpaceX Crew 1 was the first time astronauts used a spaceship developed and launched by a private company. Also, it carried back astronauts to the earth.

Adenovirus

- The US health authorities recently paused the rollout of one-shot Johnson and Johnson COVID-19 vaccine.
- The vaccine uses similar technology as that of the AstraZeneca vaccine. Both the vaccines are developed from adenoviral vectors.

About Adenovirus:

- Adenoviruses (ADVs) are DNA viruses ranging from 70-90 nanometre in size, which induce many illnesses in humans like cold, respiratory infection etc.
- Adenoviruses are preferred for vaccines because their DNA is double stranded which makes them genetically more stable and the chances of them changing after injection are lower.
- Adenoviruses are non-enveloped, double-stranded DNA viruses. They were first discovered in the human adenoid tissue in 1953 by Rowe and his colleagues.
- Adenoviruses are usually spread from an infected person to others in the following ways.
 - Close personal contact, such as touching or shaking hands
 - Air transmission through coughing and sneezing
 - Touching an object or surface with adenoviruses on it, then touching mouth, nose or eyes before washing hands.

MANAS Application

- The Principal Scientific Adviser to the Government of India launched the "MANAS" App to promote wellbeing across age groups. It was jointly executed by NIMHANS Bengaluru, AFMC Pune and C-DAC Bengaluru.

About the MANAS App:

- MANAS stands for Mental Health and Normalcy Augmentation System. It is a comprehensive, scalable, and a national digital wellbeing platform. It has been developed to promote the mental well-being of Indian citizens.
- Nodal Agency is a Office of the Principal Scientific Adviser to the Government of India.
- The app is supported with tele consultation especially for mental health related problems.
- The app was launched during the 34th Foundation celebrations of C-DAC.

About Office of the Principal Scientific Adviser (PSA):

- The Office of the Principal Scientific Advisor (PSA) was set up in 1999 by the Cabinet Secretariat. It is currently a Secretary level position.
- It is the chief advisor to the government on matters related to scientific policy. The policies focus on critical infrastructure, economic and social sectors.

16th APRIL 2021

Double Mutant Corona Virus Variant

- The National Institute of Virology recently shared data showing a unique “double mutant” coronavirus variant — with a combination of mutations not seen anywhere else in the world. The double mutant has been classified as B.1.617 recently.

Key Points:

- Genome sequencing of a section of virus samples by the Indian SARS-CoV-2 Consortium on Genomics (INSACOG), revealed the presence of two mutations, E484Q and L452R together, in virus samples from states such as Maharashtra, Delhi, Punjab and Gujarat.
- The INSACOG will submit details of this variant to a global repository called Global Initiative on Sharing Avian Influenza Data (GISAID) and, if it merits, classify it as a Variant of Concern (VOC).
- India recently became the second most COVID-19 infected country in the world. This was mainly due to the double mutant variant as they spread faster.

About B.1.617

- The B.1.617 variant of SARS-CoV-2 carries two mutations, E484Q and L452R. Both are separately found in many other coronavirus variants, but they have been reported together for the first time in India.
- The two mutations are found in the virus's spike protein. The spike protein helps the virus to bind itself to the human cell's receptors and gain entry into a host cell.

Regulations Review Authority 2.0

- The Reserve Bank of India recently established the Regulations Review Authority (RRA) 2.0. The authority is to function for a period of one year.

About RRA 2.0:

- Regulations Review Authority(RRA 2.0) will streamline the regulatory instructions, reduce the compliance burden of the entities under regulations. The RRA 2.0 will achieve this by simplifying procedures and reduce reporting requirements wherever possible.
- M Rajeshwar Rao, Deputy Governor of RBI has been appointed as the head of the Regulations Review Authority 2.0.
- The authority will be set up for a period of one year from May 1. But, RBI can extend its tenure.
- It will work in reducing the compliance burden on regulated entities. This is to be done by streamlining the reporting mechanism, removing paper-based submission of returns wherever possible and revoking obsolete instructions.
- The RRA will also obtain feedback from regulated entities on simplification of procedures and enhancing the ease of compliance.
- The RRA will also examine and suggest the changes required in the dissemination process of RBI instructions and circulars.

ROPAX Jetty Project

- The Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways (MoPSW) has given the approval for the sanction of Rs. 50.30 crores for the development of an all-weather ROPAX Jetty Project on river Dhamra in the Indian state of Odisha.

Key Points:

- Ministry of Ports, Shipping & Waterways (MoPSW) has accorded administrative approval for developing all-weather ROPAX (Roll-on/Roll-off Passenger) Jetty and allied Infrastructure.

- It shall connect Kaninali in Bhadrak district & Talachua in Kendrapara district, Odisha under the Sagarmala initiative.
- This project will reduce travel time for passengers from 6 hours by road to 1 hour by waterway.

■ NOTE:

The Dhamra river is a joint stream formed by the confluence of Baitarani and Brahmani rivers. It empties into the Bay of Bengal. It lies in the Bhadrak district of Odisha.

17th APRIL 2021

Luna 25: Russian Moon mission

- Russian Space Agency 'Roscosmos' will launch its spacecraft 'Luna 25' in the last quarter of 2021 towards the icy South pole of the Moon.
- The Roscosmos is the State Space Corporation of Russia that is responsible for space flights, aerospace research and cosmonautics programmes.

About Luna 25:

- Luna 25, a Russian Moon Lander, is set to launch on October 1, 2021.
- The four-legged lander with a Lunar Robotic Arm and six science instruments has been designed to study the water below the surface at the South pole of the Moon and to assess the threats from the sharp fragments of lunar dust, for one year.
- The Moon lander will use a camera built by the European Space Agency (ESA) for the lunar missions. The European Pilot-D camera will capture the terrain of the Moon. The data will help ESA prepare for their landing on the Moon.
- Luna 25 is one of the five Lunar missions planned by Russia. The country will launch Luna 26 in 2023 or 2024. Luna 27 is expected to be launched in 2027. Details about the remaining two missions are yet to be decided.

■ NOTE:

Lunar-A was a proposed orbiter of Luna 25 mission. It was to be developed through a merger between Roscosmos and JAXA (Japanese Space Agency). However, the merger was aborted.

Asian Wrestling Championship 2021

- India has so far won one gold medal and two bronze medals at the ongoing Asian Wrestling Championships 2021 at Almaty, Kazakhstan.
- With three medals, India stands at the eighth position on the Asian Wrestling Championships Medal Tally. Iran and Kazakhstan jointly share the top spot of the Medal Tally with 9 medals each.

Key Points:

- Vinesh had earlier won four bronze and three silver medals. This is her third gold medal, but first at the Asian Wrestling Championship.
- Bajrang Punia had to settle for silver in the 65 kg Men's freestyle. Deepak Punia also won the silver medal in the 86 kg Men's freestyle.
- Sakshi Malik, who was competing in 65kg after missing her claim in her usual 62kg weight category, also had to settle for the silver medal.
- Vinesh Phogat has had seven podium finishes at the Asian Championships over the years, including three silver medals.

Lyrical Meteor Shower

- The Lyrical Meteor shower is active each year in the month of April. In 2021, they are expected to begin on April 19, 2021.

Key Points:

- The radiant of the meteor shower is located in constellation Lyra. Radiant of a shower is the point from which the paths of the meteors originate.
- Classified as the medium strength shower.

- They are caused because of clouds of dust or we can say debris left behind by the Comet C/1861 G1 Thatcher.
- They are best viewed in the northern hemisphere.

About Meteor Showers:

- A meteor shower occurs when the earth passes through the path of a comet. As the earth moves nearby, the bits of comet debris comes under the influence of the earth's gravity.
- As they are pulled by the gravitational force of the earth, they begin to move towards the earth. When this happens, they burn up due to the friction created by the Earth's atmosphere.

18th APRIL 2021

Israel's plan to reduce 80% GHG emissions by 2050

- The Israeli Ministry of Energy announced a national plan which includes a main target of reducing 80 percent of greenhouse gas emissions in the Israeli economy by 2050.

About the Plan

- The plan also aims to shut down all coal-fired power plants by 2025, reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the electricity sector by 75 to 85 percent by 2050, increase electricity generation from renewable energy (mainly from solar energy), and improve the energy consumption per unit of produce by 1.3 percent every year.
- To achieve the goals, the program includes the development of innovative technologies, improvements in the power grid, changes in energy use by households, transition to electric vehicles, and more.
- The plan will aim to make 25% of buses and vehicles in the country to be zero-emission by 2030 as compared to that of the current level.

- Also, it will work in reducing 10% of the heavy trucks, especially those trucks weighing less than 3.5 tonnes to be zero emission by 2030.

Table Mountain National Park

- An "out of control" fire broke out inside Cape Town's Table Mountain National Park, prompting the speedy evacuation of one of South Africa's most famous landmarks.
- A vacated vagrant fire may have caused the fire. Vagrant is a person without home or who wanders from place-to-place begging.

About Table Mountain National Park

- It is a flat-topped mountain. It is a significant tourist attraction. It is included in the UNESCO World Heritage site. UNESCO is the United Nations Economic and Social Commission.
- The two most important landmarks in the National Park are the Table Mountains and the Cape of Good Hope. Cape Agulhas is the southern tip of Africa.

NOTE:

The most popular feature of the Table Mountains is the level plateau that runs approximately three kilometres. The plateau is flanked by Devil's Peak in the east and Lion's head in the west.

Tribunal Reforms Ordinance, 2021

- Recently, the President promulgated Tribunal Reforms (Rationalisation and Conditions of Service) Ordinance 2021 through which the Appellate authorities under nine laws have been replaced with High Courts.
- The Ordinance has amended the Finance Act 2017 to include provisions related to the composition of search-cum-selection committees, and term of office of members in the Act itself.

Key Highlights:

- The ordinance seeks to dissolve certain existing appellate bodies and transfer their functions to other existing judicial bodies.
- It seeks to empower the Central Government to make rules for qualifications, appointment, term of office, salaries and allowances, resignation, removal and other terms and conditions of service of Members of Tribunals.
- It provides that the Chairperson and Members of the Tribunals will be appointed by the Central Government on the recommendation of a Search-cum-Selection Committee.
- It also provides the composition of the Committee, to be headed by the Chief Justice of India or a Judge of the Supreme Court nominated by him.
- Chairperson of a Tribunal shall hold office for a term of 4 years or till he attains the age of 70 years, whichever is earlier. Other Members of a Tribunal shall hold office for a term of 4 years or till he attains the age of 67 years, whichever is earlier.

NOTE:

The Article 123 of the Indian Constitution provides powers to the president to promulgate an ordinance. An ordinance laid under the act has the same effect as that of an act.

19th APRIL 2021

India-Kyrgyzstan Military Exercise

- The “Khanjar” joint Special Forces Military Exercise was held by India and Kyrgyzstan. The exercise was held in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan's capital.

About the Exercise

- It will concentrate on counter-terrorism training as well as high-altitude and mountain training. Since 2011, India and Kyrgyzstan have held an annual Khanjar exercise.

- India and Kyrgyzstan concluded four deals in 2015. The negotiations aimed to increase defense cooperation. Kyrgyzstan is a Central Asian nation. India has been looking for various ways to expand its trade in the area.
- The INSTC (International North South Transport Corridor) and Chabahar ports were planned and developed to fulfil India's interests in central Asia. Developing good relations with Kyrgyzstan is thus important for India.

Sudarshan Sen Committee

- The Reserve Bank of India(RBI) has set up the Sudarshan Sen committee to review the working of Asset Reconstruction Companies (ARCs) Comprehensively. It will recommend suitable measures for enabling them to meet the growing requirements

Key Points:

- Committee will undertake a comprehensive review of the working of asset reconstruction companies (ARCs) in the financial sector ecosystem and recommend suitable measures for enabling them to meet the growing requirements.
- The panel will also review the existing legal and regulatory framework applicable to ARCs and recommend measures to improve efficacy of ARCs.
- It will also review the role of ARCs in the resolution of stressed assets, including under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC), and give suggestions for improving liquidity in and trading of security receipts.
- Besides, it has also been asked to review the business models of ARCs.

Asset Reconstruction Company (ARC):

- ARC is a special type of financial institution that buys the debtors of the bank at a mutually agreed value and attempts to recover the debts or associated securities by itself.

- These are registered under the RBI and regulated under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Securities Interest Act, 2002 (SARFAESI Act, 2002).

World Press Freedom Index, 2021

- The Reporters Without Borders, a not-for-profit body recently published the World Press Freedom Index, 2021. It ranked 180 countries. India ranked 142 in the index. India was at the same position in 2020 as well.

Key Highlights

- Journalism, the main vaccine against disinformation, is completely or partly blocked in 73% of the 180 countries.
- Only 12 of the Index's 180 countries (7%) can claim to offer a favourable environment for journalism.
- The Report has raised concern about the larger Asia-Pacific region as several nations in an attempt to curb freedom of press have in place draconian laws on 'sedition,' 'state secrets' and 'national security'.
- Norway has topped yet again for the fifth year in the row, followed by Finland and Denmark.
- Eritrea received the last rank in the index. China ranked 177th out of 180 countries. North Korea was at rank 179 and Turkmenistan was at rank 178.

About World Press Freedom Index:

- It has been published every year since 2002 by Reporters Sans Frontieres (RSF) or Reporters Without Borders.
- Based in Paris, RSF is an independent NGO with consultative status with the United Nations, UNESCO, the Council of Europe and the International Organization of the Francophonie (OIF).

20th APRIL 2021

Insurance Scheme for Health Workers under PMGKY

- The government of India has decided to prolong the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana insurance scheme for health employees for another year.

Key Highlights:

- The current COVID Warrior Insurance Scheme that was launched by the Government of India in 2020 was to end by March 24, 2021. Thus, the GoI is extending the scheme.
- The GoI had provided one month window to invite final claims under the scheme till April 24, 2021.
- However, now the scheme has been extended for a period of one year after increasing concerns against the closure of the scheme.

Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana

- Under this scheme, 80 crore poor people, covering about two-thirds of the country's population, will get 5 kg rice or wheat each month for the next three months free of charge, in addition to the 5 kg they already get. Each household will get 1 kg of dal of their choice, for next three months, also free of charge.
- Besides, to ensure adequate availability of protein to all the above mentioned individuals, 1 kg per family, would be provided pulses according to regional preferences for next three months.

Benefit to farmers:

- The first instalment of Rs 2,000 due in 2020-21 will be front-loaded and paid in April 2020 itself under the PM KISAN Yojana. It would cover 8.7 crore farmers.

State of the Global Climate 2020 Report

- The World Meteorological Organisation recently released the "State of the Global Climate 2020" report.

Key Findings

- The decade from 2011 to 2020 was the warmest on earth.
- COVID-19 and severe weather disasters dealt a double blow to millions of people around the world.
- Cyclone Amphan is the most expensive tropical cyclone ever seen in the North Indian Ocean. The Cyclone made landfall near the India-Bangladesh border in May 2020. The cyclone has caused nearly 14 billion USD in economic damages in India.

- 2020 is on track to be one of the three warmest years on earth.
- The increase in global average temperature from pre-industrial levels to 2020 was 1.2 degrees Celsius. The term "pre-industrial levels" refers to the time before 1850. Despite La-cooling Nina's impact in 2020, the rise has occurred.

About the Report

- Since 1993, the World Meteorological Organization has been releasing the paper. The study primarily tracks climate system metrics such as rising land and ocean temperatures, greenhouse gas emissions, melting glaciers, rising sea levels, glacier retreat, and extreme weather.

Visible Infrared Imaging Radiometer Suite (VIIRS)

- According to Global Forest Watch, India reported 82,170 forest fire warnings between April 1, 2021 and April 14, 2021.
- This is more than twice the amount registered over the same time frame in 2020. The data from the Visible Infrared Imaging Radiometer Suite was used to generate the alarm (VIIRS).

Key Points:

- VIIRS is a weather monitoring equipment placed in satellites orbiting the earth. It is basically a sensor that was designed and manufactured by Raytheon company. It collects imagery and radiometric measurements of atmosphere, land, cryosphere and oceans. The data is collected in visible and infrared bands of the electromagnetic spectrum.
- VIIRS is placed in Suomi National Polar orbiting Partnership (Suomi NPP) and NOAA-20 weather satellites.

21st APRIL 2021

Potamophylax coronavirus

- Halil Ibrahim, a Kosovar biologist, named a recently discovered insect after the COVID-19 virus. Ibrahim spent years studying a new genus of Caddisfly.
- The species was discovered in the Accursed Mountains (Western Bjeshket e Nemuna National Park in Kosovo). It is also known as the "Potamophylax coronavirus."
- The species is endemic to the National Park.
- The newly found species of Caddisfly is different from those found in the Balkans. The new species is considerably smaller and lives in open and high-altitude zones, that is, 2,000 metres above the sea level.

Decanit river

- Decanit River is a tributary of White Drin. The Monastery of Visoki Decani is located on the bank of the River Decanit. It is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The river drains into the Adriatic Sea.

Air Independent Propulsion

- The Defence Research Development Organisation recently achieved a milestone in the development of the Air Independent Propulsion system. The system was operated in endurance mode and max power mode. The operation was successful.

Key Points:

- The Air Independent Propulsion System is being developed by Naval Materials Research Laboratory (NMRL) of DRDO.
- Air Independent Propulsion (AIP) has a force multiplier effect on the lethality of a diesel-electric submarine as it enhances the submerged endurance of the boat, several folds.

- Fuel cell-based AIP has merits in performance compared to other technologies.
- Operation of the land-based prototype engineered to the form-and-fit of a submarine
- In a fuel cell AIP, an electrolytic fuel cell releases energy by combining hydrogen and oxygen, with only water as the waste product.
- The cells are highly efficient, and do not have moving parts, thus ensuring that the submarine has a low acoustic signature.

Blue Nature Alliance

- The Blue Nature Alliance is a national collaboration of five primary members and a few other non-profit organizations. On April 20, 2021, the Blue Alliance was created.

Key Points:

- The alliance aims to protect 5% of the world ocean in five years.
- The alliance aims to target seven ocean locations. They are as follows:
 - Antarctica
 - Seychelles
 - Canada
 - Palau
 - Western Indian Ocean
 - Fiji
 - Tristan da Cunha, an island in the South Atlantic Ocean

NOTE:

- This will allow marine conservation groups to collaborate to conserve at least 30% of the world's ocean by 2030.
- The Marine Conservation Institute published the Marine Protection Atlas in 2012. The atlas was created to provide the most up-to-date material on coastal conservation from around the world.

