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India's Best Institute for IES, GATE & PSUs

**MADE EASY
WEEKLY
CURRENT AFFAIRS**

WEEK-1

01st December - 07th December

Targeted Examinations:

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

1st DECEMBER 2020

US Air Quality Index

- According to the recently published US Air Quality Index, Lahore once again ranked among the world's most polluted cities.
- The study notes that Lahore's particulate matter rating was 423. Lahore preceded New Delhi with a particulate matter ranking of 229.
- Kathmandu, Nepal's capital, ranked third with a particulate matter ranking of 178.

About Air Quality Index:

- The Air Quality Index is an index that measures air quality on a daily basis. The index aims to quantify how air quality impacts the wellbeing of people living in and around the world for a limited period.
- The Air Quality Index is measured on the basis of five main air pollutants, such as ground-level ozone, sulphur dioxide, carbon monoxide, nitrogen dioxide and particulate matter.
- The upper level of air quality Index is the higher level of air emissions.

Categories of Air Quality Index:

- If the Air Quality Index is between 0 and 50, the quality is classified as Fair and has marginal effects.
- If the Air Quality Index is between 51 and 100, the air quality is classified as satisfactory. Satisfactory levels of air quality can cause mild breathing problems for sensitive people.
- If the Air Quality Index is between 101 and 200, it is classified as moderately polluted. Moderately polluted air quality can cause lung disorders such as asthma.
- If the Air Quality Index is between 201 and 300, it is classified as poor. The low air quality index triggers heart disease.
- If the Air Quality Index is below 301 and 400, it is classified as very low. Very poor air quality can cause

respiratory distress, and chronic exposure can lead to lung disease and heart disease.

- If the Air Quality Index is between 401 and 500, it is categorised as severe. A severe air quality will cause respiratory issues in healthy people and will make it difficult for them to continue even light physical activities.
- The above categories of air quality standards are set by the central pollution control board of India.

Avian Influenza outbreak

- The Avian influenza disease was recently discovered at a poultry farm in Hyuga City of Japan. Around 40,000 chickens in every big farm are being slaughtered and buried.

About Avian influenza:

- It is a highly contagious viral disease that affects birds such as Turkeys, chicken, Guinea fowl. They occasionally infect mammals including humans.
- The Avian influenza virus is classified into two types based on their surface proteins namely Hemagglutinin and Neuraminidase.

H5N1

- Among all the known influenza viruses, H5N1 is considered to be highly deadly. It was the first Avian influenza virus to infect humans. The virus transmits to humans through contact with infected bird faeces, secretion from the mouth or eyes, nasal secretions, etc.

Boko Haram

- The attack on farm workers in the north-eastern region of Nigeria has left at least 110 dead. The Boko Haram jihadist is guilty of murdering him. Approximately 30 men were decapitated during the assault.
- The event is perceived to be the most brutal assault on innocent people in 2020.
- The assault took place near the capital of Borno, Maiduguri, Nigeria.

About Boko Haram

- Boko Haram was founded on the basis of the values of Salafism. The Salafism ideology evolved within the context of Sunni Islam. The revolution has been initiated in reaction to Western European imperialism.
- According to UNICEF, more than 1,000 children have been abducted by Boko Haram since 2013. Boko Haram alone was blamed for killing more than 6,644 people in 2014.
- Boko Haram was founded in 2002 by Muhammad Yusuf.

Monoliths of Utah and Romania

- Monoliths are large single, standing stone blocks. A strange monolith has recently been discovered in a small, uninhabited desert in Utah, USA.

Features of the Monolith

- The newly found Monolith in Romania is 13 feet tall and faces Mt Ceahlau on one side.
- The monolith has a mirrored surface.
- It appears to have been covered with Graffiti. Graffiti is a writing on a wall or a public place.
- It was found on the Batca Doamnei Hill in the northern Romania near a fort built by the ancient Dacian people between 82 BC and 106 AD

Mount Semeru

- Mount Semeru is an active volcano in East Java, Indonesia. The volcano is situated in the subduction zone where the Indo-Australian crust subducts beneath the Eurasian plate.
- Mount Semeru is a stratovolcano. Around 55 eruptions have been reported in Mt Semeru since 1818.

About Stratovolcano:

- The stratovolcano is often referred to as a conical volcano. It is made up of several layers of hardened lava. Stratovolcano lava is very viscous.
- It cools and hardens until it extends far. The stratovolcano also has frequent effusive eruptions. Stratovolcano lava is not a major danger to humans since it is extremely viscous.

Ethereum 2.0

- Ethereum is a crypto currency. Recently, it was launched in a faster, cheaper and more environmentally friendly platform, as the upgraded version called 'Ethereum 2.0'.

Key Points:

- Ethereum is a shared and open source blockchain network, an increasing list of cryptographic blocks. Ether (ETH) is the blockchain token on the Ethereum network.
- It's the world's second-largest market capitalization cryptocurrency, just after bitcoin. It's still the most successful blockchain in the world.
- Ethereum was first suggested by Russian-Canadian cryptocurrency researcher and programmer Vitalik Buterin in 2013.

2nd DECEMBER 2020

Wolf Brigade 44

- Brigade 44 openly pledged allegiance to the leader of the Nazi regime, Adolf Hitler. It seeks to put an end to the democratic form of governance in Germany while propagating racism and anti-Semitism.
- This group, along with its symbols, was prohibited by the German Government, which includes a skull with two pomegranates marked with the number 44.
- Wolf Brigade 44, according to the German government, wanted a Nazi state. During the raid operation, the German police found Nazi symbols from 11 members of the 44th Wolf Brigade.
- The German government is completely against organisations that propagate re-establishment of Nazi state in the country.

About Wolf Brigade 44:

- The Wolf Brigade 44 publicly declared loyalty to Adolf Hitler and propagated anti-Semitism and bigotry. It said that it was seeking to bring an end to the democratic rule in the world. For these reasons, the Wolf Brigade 44 was outlawed in Germany.

- The Wolf Brigade 44 implicitly hinted that it was part of the Nazi Paramilitary SS that was formed during the Second World War. This paramilitary group was especially violent and bore the name of Oskar Dirlewanger.

100 Octane Petrol

- The Indian Oil Corporation recently launched the first 100 Octane petrol. This is the first time 100 Octane fuel is being launched in the country.

About Octane ratings:

- Octane ratings are an indicator of the stability of gasoline. It's the ability of the gasoline to stop knocking. Knock happens as the gasoline is ignited incorrectly in the engine cylinder.
- This decreases the performance of the engine and destroys the engine. The higher the Octane number, the higher the resistance of the fuel to knock.

NOTE:

The 100-octane fuel is commonly used in luxury cars requiring high performance. The 100-octane gasoline is commonly found in racing cars.

Australian Square Kilometer Array Pathfinder

- Australian Square Kilometre Array Pathfinder (ASKAP) is a new type of radio telescope developed by Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO).

Key Points:

- The first light of the Australian Square Kilometre Array Pathfinder was in October 2012. The first light in Astronomy means the first use of a telescope.
- The array consists of 36 identical parabolic Antennas. The antennas work together as a single astronomical Interferometer. Each antenna is 12 metre in diameter. The Antennas are spread over a collecting area of 4000 square metres.

About The Astronomical Interferometer:

- It is an array of separate telescopes that work together as a single telescope to provide higher resolution images of astronomical objects such as nebulous, stars and galaxies.
- Survey science projects of the Australian Square Kilometre Array Pathfinder.

3rd DECEMBER 2020

MSP

Context:

- The 1.5-fold process is used to calculate the minimum support price (MSP) for crops. This was implemented in the 2018-19 Union budget.
- According to this formula, the MSP is set at 1.5 times the cost of output for crops as a 'predetermined concept.'
- Under this formula, the Agricultural Costs & Prices Commission (the Commission that decides the MSP) is only expected to calculate the cost of production for a season and to apply the formula.

How are the minimum support prices of crops fixed?

- The Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices, which works under the Ministry of Agriculture, will propose minimum support prices for 23 crops per year. This includes 14 crops grown during the post-monsoon or kharif season and six crops grown during the winter or Rabi season.
- When determining prices, the Commission examines many variables such as world price patterns, supply and demand for goods, inflation, trade terms between non-agricultural sectors and agricultural sectors, the environment (soil and water) and the cost of cultivation.
- In the 2018-19 Union budget, it was reported that the minimum support prices would henceforth be set at one and a half times the cost of output for crops.
- Simply put, the only duty now for the Commission on Agricultural Costs and Prices is to determine the production cost of crops for the season and to apply the 1,5-fold formula and to prescribe the minimum support price.

How is the production cost calculated?

- No field-based cost forecasts are made by the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices. On the other hand, it essentially allows forecasts using crop-specific and state-specific cost estimates of production.
- These data are provided by the Directorate of Economics and Statistics, which functions under the Ministry of Agriculture. However, these statistics are 3 years old and are not revised regularly.

Theremin

- The musical instrument of Theremin will turn 100 years old in 2020. It revolutionised the music industry by being the precursor to a new synthesiser.

About Theremin:

- It's a musical instrument. It is known to be the world's first electronic instrument and turned 100 years old in 2020. It was designed by Leon Theremin.
- It produces sound by modulating electromagnetic waves, and this is achieved without the player needing to contact the instrument.
- It has a vertical antenna for tone modulation and a looped antenna for volume control.

NOTE:

Leon Theremin is credited with a variety of discoveries from early drum machines to US airplanes.

4th DECEMBER 2020

3RF Framework

- 3RF stands for the Structure for Restructuring, Rehabilitation and Restoration. It was initiated by the United Nations to revitalise Beirut.
- The system has been prepared by the United States, the World Bank and the European Union.

- On 4 August 2020, the deadly explosion in Beirut, the capital of Lebanon, killed more than 200 civilians. A million people were left homeless. This led to riots in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

About 3RF:

- The System will determine the amount of incoming assistance towards the needs of the people of the region.
- It will concentrate on the neediest in the world. Apart from stabilisation and rehabilitation, the framework will also concentrate on resolving the root cause of the crisis.
- The purpose of the initiative is to restore port facilities, rehabilitate neighbourhoods damaged by the explosion and connect the port facility with the city.

Multi-Donor Trust Fund:

- The revitalization programme is to be funded by the Multi-donor Trust Fund set up by the World Bank, the European Union and the United Nations.
- The funds are to be reserved for the focus regions. The 3F Strategy prioritizes health, good government, education, infrastructure, social security, culture and heritage.
- The proposal would pay immediate attention to the needs of small and medium-sized businesses.

Background:

- Lebanon is now in high financial bankruptcy. Lebanon's current poverty rate is 55%. Twelve months earlier, that was 28 percent. Despite the situation, the requisite changes remain stalled due to political uncertainty.

CLMV Countries

- The sixth India-CLMV Market Conclave 2020 was held recently. India welcomed the CLMV countries to join the International Solar Partnership and the Resilient Supply Chain Project during the conclave.

- The Conclave took place yesterday under the theme "Building Bridges for Constructive Development."
- During the conclave, India stated that it was able to share the COVID-19 vaccine with CLMV countries. This is vital to the leading economy in order to avoid nationalism from being vaccinated.

About CLMV Countries:

- Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam are the CLMV countries. The CLMV countries have a special role in the field of Southeast Asia.
- Countries serve as a gateway to market entry to the European Union and China, as well as to other countries, through numerous trade agreements.
- Four countries have rich natural resources such as gold, oil, natural gas, gemstones and teak.

RBI Monetary Policy Committee

- The RBI recently held its Monetary Policy Committee meet. During the meet, the Reserve Bank of India has kept the repo rate unchanged at 4%.

Key Points:

- The rate of repo is the rate at which RBI loans to banks. The Reverse Repo Rate is expected to remain at 3.35 per cent.
- Inflation: The inflation rate held steadily above the upper end of the RBI inflation range of 2% to 6% despite the COVID-19 crisis.
- Retail inflation measured on the basis of the CPI started to increase to 7.61 per cent by October 2020. This is the fastest rate of retail inflation since May 2014. It was 8.33% in May 2014.

About Marginal Standing Facility:

- Marginal standing facility is a method to improve liquidity by borrowing RBI capital. It was implemented during the monetary policy adjustment exercise in 2011-12.
- This loan is at an interest rate above the rate of repo. The penalty interest rate is called the MSF rate.

Arecibo Telescope

- Designed in 1963, the Arecibo Telescope in Puerto Rico was built in 1963. It is the second-largest single-dish radio telescope in the world. It's been in the headlines lately because of its failure.
- It is owned by the National Science Foundation of the United States. It is understood that Mercury rotates in 59 days, not 88 days (original calculation).

About Arecibo Telescope:

- The Arecibo Telescope has one of the most powerful radars used to observe asteroids, planets and the ionosphere.
- The first exoplanets, prebiotic compounds in distant galaxies, and the first millisecond pulsar have been detected by the telescope. Prebiotic molecules are objects that contribute to the origin of life.
- The Telescope has acted as a centre for the search for extraterrestrial life and has obtained a variety of radio signals from alien civilizations.

5th DECEMBER 2020

UN Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND)

- The United Nations Commission on Narcotic Drugs excluded cannabis from Schedule IV of the 1961 Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs (1).
- This was achieved in order to understand the medicinal values of the plant. While cannabis has been excluded from Schedule IV, non-medicinal cannabis is now in Schedule I.

1961 Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs:

- The single convention schedules for drugs range from the most restrictive to the least restrictive in the following order: Schedule IV, Schedule I, Schedule II and Schedule III.
- **Schedule I:** The drugs under Schedule I are limited only to scientific and medicinal purposes. They require medicinal prescription for the supply.

- **Schedule II:** Medical Prescription of these drugs are not obligatory. The Governments are not bound to prevent the accumulation of these drugs.
- **Schedule III:** They are subjected to lesser restrictions.
- **Schedule IV:** The drugs under this category such as Heroin are considered to have dangerous properties. Under this category, the parties are required to limit their research purposes.

Legislation on Cannabis in India:

- The use of cannabis in India is regulated by the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Medicines Act, 1985. The Act regulated the cultivation and selling of cannabis flowers and resins. The act, however, makes the use of seeds and leaves.

V-Shaped Recovery

- A V-shaped recovery is a form of economic decline and recovery that resembles the shape of alphabet V in the table.
- A V-shaped recovery includes a sharp turnaround of the economy at the previous peak following a sharp downturn.
- The latest Monthly Economic Review report by the Ministry of Finance reported that the Indian economy is undergoing a V-shaped rebound as GDP declines from 23.9 per cent in April-June to 7.5 per cent in the second quarter of 2020-21.

Key Features:

- Name "V Shaped Recovery" is taken from the form of a graph depicting a contraction and a regeneration of the economy that resembles alphabet V.
- This unique turnaround entails a deep recession in the economy, accompanied by a sharp spike in the economy.
- Such recovery is the product of the government's economic stimulus and the relaxed monetary policy adopted by the Central Bank.
- The turnaround in the V-shaped curve has boosted productivity levels and raised market demand.
- V Shaped recovery is claimed to be one of the best-case scenarios, as an economic crisis is

immediately accompanied by fast recovery in core macroeconomic output parameters.

Other Shapes of Economic Recovery:

- Other types of economic recovery include Z-shaped recovery, U-shaped recovery, W-shaped recovery, L-shaped recovery, and elongated U-shaped recovery.
- The key distinction between these different shapes of economic growth is the time taken to normalise economic activity. Other considerations include the form of policy approach implemented by the Government, the effects of the pandemic on employment and household incomes.

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Azad Pattan Hydropower Project

- The Azad Pattan project is a hydropower project to be developed in Pakistan's occupied Kashmir. It is to be constructed on the River Jhelum and will have the ability to produce 700 MW of hydroelectricity.
- This is a USD 1.35 billion initiative to be jointly implemented by China and Pakistan as part of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

Key Points:

- It is one of the five hydropower systems to be built on the river Jhelum. The remaining four are Kohala, Mahl, Karot and Chakothi Hattian. Of these, Kohala, Azad Pattan and Karot are to be established as part of the CPEC network. Azad Pattan is due to be commissioned by 2024.
- It's a run-of-river system. Under the run-of-the-river system, the water of the river is drained from a running river and directed down a canal that leads to a generating house.

NOTE:

The CPEC is a flagship project of the Chinese government that connects Gwadar Port of Pakistan and Xinjiang of China.

Malayan Giant Squirrel

- Malayan giant squirrel or the black giant squirrel (*Ratufa bicolor*) is one of the largest tree squirrels in the world.
- The Malayan Giant Squirrels might decline by 90% in India by 2050. The species might become extinct in the country subsequently.
- Only 43.48% of the original habitat is favourable to the squirrel. They are fast losing its territories due to crop cultivation and human settlements.

About The Malayan Squirrels:

- Malayan Squirrel is listed as "Near Threatened" on the IUCN 2016 list and is listed as "Protected" under the Indian Wildlife Protection Act.
- India is home to three giant squirrel species, Grizzled Giant Squirrel, Indian Giant Squirrel and Malayan Giant Squirrel.

Deputy Chief for Military Operations and Strategic Planning

- The Ministry of Defense has approved the formation of a new Army Deputy Chief for Military Operations and Strategic Planning.
- The Deputy Chief will be responsible for strategic strategy, combat affairs, intelligence and tactical logistics.

Director General of Information Warfare

- The Ministry of Defense has also established another post named the Director General of Information Warfare. The task will be to address the needs of hybrid warfare, the future battlefield, and social media realities.

Background:

- The method of establishing the two posts began after the Doklam crisis with China in 2016. During the crisis, senior army officers decided to coordinate directly with the headquarters.

- The Doklam Plateau is situated at the intersection of India, China and Bhutan. The crisis started with India objecting to the building of Chinese roads in the region. According to India and Bhutan, the area is known as the territory of Bhutan.

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Bhashan Char Island

- Bhashan Char Island is a small uninhabited island in Bangladesh, situated in the Bay of Bengal. It's also known as Char Piya.
- Approximately thousands of Rohingyas are being relocated from Cox's Bazar refugee camp to the newly built facility on the island.

About Island:

- The island, which covers an area of 40 square kilometers, is thought to have been formed by the Himalayan silt only in 2006.
- The Government of Bangladesh is relocating the Rohingya refugees to this island, 60 kilometres from the mainland.

Safety issues of the Bashan Char Island:

- The Bashan Char Islands are also known as the Floating Islands. They are created by the Himalayan silt washed down from the Himalayas. Recently, the island was formed in 10 years of time. However, according to the environmentalists, it is now eroding at a rate of half a kilometre per year. Environmentalists say the island is vulnerable to cyclones and flooding.
- However, according to Bangladesh authorities, the latest Amphan cyclone proved the safety of the island.

Arctic National Wildlife Refuge Oil Deposits

- The Arctic National Wildlife Refuge is a wildlife refuge in the Alaskan region of the United States. It is the first nature sanctuary in the United States.

- The USA retains oil rights in the region known as the '1002 area' in the coastal plains. Arctic oil is a cause of new rivalries between nations, and this has been termed the 'New Cold War.'
- The US administration is set to divest its oil drilling rights at the notorious oil deposit site before the new US president assumes office.

About Arctic National Wildlife Refuge:

- It is the largest National Wildlife Refuge in the USA. It is situated along the shores of the Beaufort Sea.
- Political disagreements have been going on in the country over oil exploration. Apart from rivalries between nations, oil drilling in the field would have a disastrous effect on the natural wildlife of the region.
- The Porcupine Caribou will be the most influenced. It would also impact the lives of the indigenous tribes of the area.

Porcupine Caribou:

- The area is home to the breeding grounds of Porcupine caribou. They're the migratory animals.
- They are named for their breeding and birthplace, the Porcupine Canal. Porcupine Caribou is a kind of reindeer. The IUCN lists this as "Vulnerable."

NRI Voting

- The Election Commission recently recommended the use of postal ballots to allow non-resident Indians to cast their votes. This may be achieved using the ETPBS or the Electronically Transmitted Postal Ballot System.
- According to the ECI, it is theoretically ready to expand the ETPBS to the voters of Tamil Nadu, Assam, Kerala, West Bengal and Puducherry.

Provisions for voting in India:

- The Government of India allows its citizens to vote in three different ways namely by post, in person and through proxy. Proxy Voting was introduced in 2003, only for NRIs residing in a few listed countries. On the other hand, postal ballots involve ballots being sent by posts.

- The NRIs got voting rights only in 2011 by an amendment to the Representation of Peoples Act, 1950. Currently, NRIs can only vote in person in the constituency where their residence is located.

2020 SO

- Context: 2020 SO, the Near-Earth Object (NEO), was known as the Centaur High Level Rocket Booster, which enabled NASA to take its Surveyor Spacecraft to the Moon in 1966.
- The word 'NEO' is used to refer to an object with an orbit that takes it close to Earth.

Key Points:

- The object was believed to be an alien object because its velocity is smaller than that of the earth. Even, owing to the observance of the solar radiation pressure.
- Solar Radiation Strain is found in all celestial bodies that are closer to the radiation of the sun. It's smaller in the satellites.

Liquidity Adjustment Facility

- Recently, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has agreed to expand the Liquidity Adjustment Facility (LAF) to Regional Rural Banks (RRB) in order to make liquidity management more effective.
- The LAF was implemented in RBI in 1998 on the basis of the recommendations of the Narasimhan Banking Sector Reform Committee.
- It is a monetary policy instrument that allows banks to address transient cash shortages by repurchase or rest agreements. It can also provide RBI loans by reverse-repos to collect funds.

Tools used by RBI to control liquidity:

- RBI is using four instruments to monitor the flow of liquidity in the region. This includes Cash Reserve Ratio (CRR), Liquidity Modification Facilities (including repo rate and arepo rate), Legislative Liquidity Ratio and Open Market Operations.