Prelim Bits 17-02-2023 | UPSC Daily Current Affairs

Western Disturbance

A fresh Western Disturbance (WD) has recently hit northern India for which authorities have forecast moderate rainfall and snowfall at higher altitudes.

- **Western Disturbance (WD)** – It is the term used to describe an extratropical storm that brings sudden winter rain and snow to the northwestern parts of the Indian subcontinent.
- This is a non-monsoonal precipitation pattern driven by the Westerlies.
- The moisture in these storms usually originates over the Mediterranean Sea and the Atlantic Ocean.
- Extratropical storms are a global phenomenon with moisture usually carried in the upper atmosphere (unlike tropical storms where it is carried in the lower atmosphere).
- **WD in India –** They usually influence the weather of the north and north-western regions of India by increasing the monsoon activity.
- It was found that if the frequencies of formation and movement of depression over the Bay of Bengal in a particular year increase, then the frequencies of Western Disturbances in the same year decrease.
- They are important to the development of the Rabi crop in the northern subcontinent, which includes the locally important staple wheat.

References

1. New Indian Express | Dust may cut winter rain intensity
2. The Print | Western disturbance
3. HWRISI | Western Disturbance

SURAJ Drone

Garuda Aerospace has recently displayed solar-powered drone SURAJ at Aero India 2023.

- **Range** - It is an Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR) high-altitude drone which can fly at an altitude of 3,000 ft.
- **Purpose** - It is designed specifically for surveillance operations, providing real-time information to the high command, and protecting jawans on the ground.
- **Energy** - Solar Powered.
- **Features** - It will have ISR capability with Artificial Intelligence, machine learning and bionic chip for advanced real-time processing.
- **Capacity** - The drone would carry a payload of high-resolution zoom cameras with thermal imagery and foliage-penetrating lidar sensors with a maximum capacity of 10

kg.
- It is capable of capturing, processing, and transmitting photos and videos in real-time.
- It is all set to support the Indian Army, Navy, Airforce, BSF, CRPF, CISF, ITBP, DRDO, MOD, and the Ministry of Home Affairs.
- **Endurance** - It has an endurance of 12 hours.

References

1. The Hindu | Garuda Aerospace unveils SURAJ
2. The Hindu | Drone start-up Garuda Aerospace
3. Times of India | Garuda Aerospace raises $22 million

Global Compact on Refugees (GCR)

- The Global Compact on Refugees was affirmed by the UN General Assembly (UNGA) in 2018.
- The GCR is a framework for more predictable and *equitable responsibility-sharing*.
- It provides a framework to ensure that host communities of refugees get the support they need.

Key objectives of GCR

1. Ease the pressures on refugee host countries;
2. Enhance refugee self-reliance;
3. Expand access to third-country solutions;
4. Support conditions in countries of origin for return in safety and dignity.

Global Refugee Forum

- At the global level, the GCR establishes a Global Refugee Forum, at ministerial level.
- The forum brings the international community together every 4 years.
- It focuses on:
    - The challenges that refugee and host countries face.
    - To broaden the stakeholder's engagement.
    - To review the collective progress
- The first Global Refugee Forum took place in 2019.
- **World Refugee Day** was celebrated every year on June 20.

Reference

1. UNHCR|The Global Compact on Refugees

Off-budget borrowings

5 Southern States accounted for around 93% of the total off-Budget liabilities of eleven

major States analysed.

- The five states are Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka.
- **Off-budget borrowings** - These are loans that are taken not by the Centre directly, but by another public institution which borrows on the directions of the central government.
- In other words, these are loans obtained by government entities, such as PSUs or Special Purpose Vehicles (SPV), on behalf of the government to finance its expenditure.
- These borrowings are not included while computing the debt and in the fiscal deficit of the State governments.
- However, the State government is responsible for repaying the loan and servicing the debt from the state budget.
- **Effects** - The Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) contents that resorting to extra-budgetary resources will lead to debt trap.

As of March 2021, Telangana had the highest burden of such loans followed by Andhra Pradesh

Reference

The Indian Express | Why govt borrows off-budget, and how?

Canine Distemper Virus (CDV)

Recently there were reports from Maharashtra and Karnataka where leopards entered human habitations and were later captured.

- Canine Distemper Virus (CDV) was suggested as the cause for these human animal conflict.
- CDV makes these big cats less fearful of humans.
- CDV is also known as canine morbillivirus, is a highly infectious single-stranded RNA virus.
- CDV is a viral disease that infects the gastrointestinal, respiratory, and central nervous systems.
- Dogs who have not been vaccinated for Canine Distemper are the most at-risk.
- Predation of CDV affected dogs is the major route of getting the infectious virus.

Reference

Indian Express | Leopards in India losing fear of humans

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