



## Current Affairs of the Day

### GS Paper III

- NIA, NSG find no debris of drones at Jammu IAF base
- Small civilian drones pose a significant threat, say, officials
- Govt. unveils ₹6.28 lakh crore stimulus post 2nd COVID wave
- 10-month dosage gap boosts antibodies, says Oxford study

### Prelims

- Nuclear-capable Agni-P missile test-fired



## NIA, NSG find no debris of drones at Jammu IAF base

1. With no wreckage of unmanned vehicles found at the technical airport of the Indian Air Force (IAF), Jammu Air Force Station, a National Security Guard (NSG) team joined the National Investigation Agency (NIA) to investigate the possibility of the use of a long-distance launching pad to send in drones with payloads of explosives.
2. It seems the drones may have managed to drop the payload and escape from the spot. Drones, which require an open field or a building top for achieving flight, are frequency controlled and easily evade traditional radar systems.
3. They could cover up to 30-40 km of distance. Police sources said a few persons working at the base were questioned but let off later.
4. Meanwhile, the Army has sighted and opened fire at two drones near a military installation in Jammu's Kaluchak.

## Small civilian drones pose a significant threat, say, officials


1. As the investigation continues into the two explosions at the Jammu airbase, believed to have been carried out using drones, defence officials and experts said there was a potent threat from small civilian drones, and the armed forces should accelerate their plans to put in place counter-drone systems.
2. This incident brings to reality the long apprehensions of security forces. A quadcopter available in the open market for a few thousand rupees can hit strategic targets and cause huge damage.
3. To counter this, the Services should speed up plans for procuring anti-drone technologies, which would come at a huge expense, the official noted.
4. Another official said there had been several instances in the past couple of years where quadcopters were used to drop drugs, arms and ammunition from across the border in Jammu and Punjab. There have been several warnings in the recent past on the possible use of drones by terrorist groups.
5. As the civilian market for drones is set to see a major expansion, requisite measures in terms of capabilities, as well as policy measures, should be put in place, the official pointed out.



- There have been warnings that Pakistan-based terrorist groups could attempt to target military bases with drones. After the drone attack on the Saudi Aramco oil facilities in Saudi Arabia in September 2019, the armed forces held deliberations on the issue and put in place plans to procure counter-drone capabilities.

## Govt. unveils ₹6.28 lakh crore stimulus post 2nd COVID wave

### Relief measures

HEALTH 	BALM FOR COVID-HIT SECTORS 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ ₹50,000 crore credit guarantee for new and ongoing projects outside metros</li> <li>■ Interest rate capped at 7.95%</li> <li>■ ₹15,000 crore for public projects to augment paediatric care, ICU beds, oxygen supply and medical personnel</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme expanded by ₹1.5 lakh crore</li> <li>■ ₹60,000 crore loan guarantees and concessional credit for some sectors</li> <li>■ 25 lakh small borrowers to get guaranteed cheap loans worth ₹7,500 crore through micro-finance firms</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Fresh loans to over 11,000 tourism agents and guides to resume work</li> <li>■ EPF sops for new jobs with salaries less than ₹15,000 per month extended till March 2022</li> <li>■ Free tourist visas for first five lakh visitors</li> </ul>



#### Highlights:

- Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced some fresh relief measures for the economy, the first such package after the second COVID-19 wave, focusing largely on extending loan guarantees and concessional credit for pandemic-hit sectors and investments to ramp up healthcare capacities.
- The government pegged the total financial implications of the package, which included the reiteration of some steps that were already announced, such as the provision of foodgrains to the poor till November and higher fertilizer subsidies, at ₹6,28,993 crore.

#### New Stimulus:



1. Economists, however, noted that the elements of direct stimulus in the package and its upfront fiscal costs in 2021-22, are likely to be limited. More steps may be needed to shore up the economy through the rest of the year, they said.
2. Calling the measures an effort to stimulate growth, exports and employment as well as provide relief to COVID-affected sectors, Ms. Sitharaman announced an expansion of the existing Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme by ₹1.5 lakh crore.
3. She also announced a new ₹7,500 crore scheme for loans up to ₹1.25 lakh to small borrowers through micro-finance institutions.
4. She also unveiled a fresh loan guarantee facility of ₹1.1 lakh crore for healthcare investments in non-metropolitan areas and sectors such as tourism.
5. A separate ₹23,220 crore has been allocated for public health with a focus on paediatric care, which will also be utilised for increasing ICU beds, oxygen supply and augmenting medical care professionals for the short term by recruiting final year students and interns.
6. Indirect support for exports worth ₹1.21 lakh crore over the next five years, free one-month visas for five lakh tourists, and new seed varieties for farmers were also included in the package.
7. The existing sop to spur employment, where the government bears EPF contributions for new employees earning less than ₹15,000 a month for two years, has been extended till March 31, 2022.

## 10-month dosage gap boosts antibodies, says Oxford study

1. Two doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine, administered 44-45 weeks apart, generated nearly four times the level of antibodies than when the doses were given 8-12 weeks apart, says a report by the Oxford Vaccine Group, the developers of the vaccine.
2. Antibody levels remained elevated for nearly a year and a third booster dose of the vaccine, given to a subset of volunteers, also significantly boosted antibody levels to twice that after a second dose.
3. A single dose of ChAdOx1 nCoV-19, with a second dose given after a prolonged period, may, therefore, be an effective strategy when vaccine supplies are scarce in the short term.





4. A third dose results in a further increase in immune responses, including greater neutralisation of variant SARS-CoV-2 viruses, and could be used to increase vaccine efficacy against variants in vulnerable populations.

## Nuclear-capable Agni-P missile test-fired

**Advanced variant:** 'Agni Prime' being test-fired from Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam island off the coast of Odisha.

### Highlights:

1. A new-generation nuclear-capable ballistic missile, Agni-P (Prime) was successfully test-fired by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO).
2. Agni-P is a new-generation advanced variant of the Agni class of missiles. It is a canisterised missile with a range capability between 1,000 and 2,000 km.
3. Various telemetry and radar stations positioned along the eastern coast tracked and monitored the missile, the statement said. "The missile followed textbook trajectory, meeting all mission objectives with a high level of accuracy.
4. Canisterisation of missiles reduces the time required to launch the missile while improving its storage and mobility, one defence official explained.

### Nuclear triad:

1. The Agni class of missiles are the mainstay of India's nuclear launch capability which also includes the Prithvi short-range ballistic missiles, submarine-launched ballistic missiles and fighter aircraft.
2. The longest of the Agni series, Agni-V, an Inter-Continental Ballistic Missile (ICBM) with a range of over 5,000 km, has already been tested several times and validated for induction.
3. In the past few years, India has also operationalised its submarine-based nuclear launch capability, completing the nuclear triad. This is especially important given India's no-first-use policy while reserving the right of massive retaliation if struck with nuclear weapons first.
4. The DRDO, in 2020, successfully test-fired a 3,500-km range submarine-launched ballistic missile, K-4.



5. Once inducted, these missiles will be the mainstay of the Arihant class of indigenous ballistic missile nuclear submarines (SSBN) and will give India the stand-off capability to launch nuclear weapons submerged in Indian waters.
6. INS Arihant, the only SSBN in service, is armed with K-15 missiles with a range of 750 km.