

# PRAYAS4IAS

AN INITIATIVE BY THE PRAYAS INDIA

APRIL WEEK 1



## April (Week 1)

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# Prelims

## NATIONAL

### Sabarmati River Front Development project

(Source: [Indian Express](#) )

**Context:** The Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation, in its draft budget for 2021-22, has set aside Rs 1,050 crore for the Sabarmati River Front Development phase 2, work on which is to begin soon. Here is what the project seeks to achieve.

#### **How much land has been reclaimed so far to develop the Sabarmati Riverfront?**

- By channelling the river to a constant width of 263 m along the part that passes Ahmedabad city, 204 hectares have been reclaimed along the 11-km stretch of the Sabarmati Riverfront in the first phase of the project, on both the banks.
- This land is excluding the Central Business District (CBD) area of 126 hectares. The reclaimed land includes roads, both upper and lower promenades, as well as the land to be developed.
- As per the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation's Special Purpose Vehicle, the Sabarmati River Front Development Corporation Ltd (SRDFCL), the main considerations in allocating land uses for the reclaimed portions have been existing land use along the river; extent, location and configuration of reclaimed land available; potential for development; the structural road network and form of the city; bridges; and the possibility of providing adequate infrastructure in the new development.



While the permissible height of buildings in the CBD would depend upon the road width, the maximum permissible is 100 metre or what the Airport Authority of India (AAI) permits, whichever is less.

#### **Which part of the Riverfront is the Central Business District (CBD)?**

- The 5-6 km stretch along Ashram Road, which is the city's commercial artery, from Usmanpura to Ellisbridge on the west bank covering 126 hectares, and 52 hectares on the east bank from Gandhi bridge to Dadhichi bridge (Shahpur to Dudheshwar), is slated to be the new commercial hub.
- The development here, on the lines of the Town Planning (TP) scheme applied across the city, will witness pedestrian-friendly roads, by requiring buildings to align their façades along the road side, wider roads requiring 6-metre wide arcade, and active frontage for pedestrians.

- Both the AMC and AUDA (Ahmedabad Urban Development Corporation) will work on creating avenues for new development and redevelopment.

#### **How will the Sabarmati be different from riverfronts abroad (like Austin, Singapore, S Korea)?**

- Sabarmati being a rain-fed river, its banks provides a huge canvas to developers, as the river runs dry most of the year. Therefore, SRFDCL officials say it cannot be compared to other riverfronts.
- The river front has charted spaces for the traditional activities along the river, such as for a dhobi ghat and a Gujri bazaar, which is the Sunday flea market, that are lifelines for hundreds of city dwellers.
- To keep the river along the riverfront flowing with water, the Gujarat government feeds it waters of the Narmada river, from the Narmada canal that crosses the Sabarmati a few kilometres away from Ahmedabad.
- The government is working on a more sustainable alternative to divert the treated sewage from the treatment plants into the Sabarmati river.

#### **Uniform Civil Code**

(Source: [Indian Express](#) )

**Context:** *Chief Justice of India (CJI) S A Bobde on Saturday (March 27) lauded Goa's Uniform Civil Code, and encouraged "intellectuals" indulging in "academic talk" to visit the state to learn more about it.*

#### **What is a Uniform Civil Code?**

- A Uniform Civil Code is one that would provide for one law for the entire country, applicable to all religious communities in their personal matters such as marriage, divorce, inheritance, adoption etc.
- Article 44 of the Constitution lays down that the state shall endeavour to secure a Uniform Civil Code for the citizens throughout the territory of India.
- Article 44 is one of the Directive Principles of State Policy. These, as defined in Article 37, are not justiciable (not enforceable by any court) but the principles laid down therein are fundamental in governance.
- Fundamental Rights are enforceable in a court of law. While Article 44 uses the words "state shall endeavour", other Articles in the 'Directive Principles' chapter use words such as "in particular strive"; "shall in particular direct its policy"; "shall be obligation of the state" etc.
- Article 43 mentions "state shall endeavour by suitable legislation", while the phrase "by suitable legislation" is absent in Article 44. All this implies that the duty of the state is greater in other directive principles than in Article 44.

#### **What are more important — Fundamental Rights or Directive Principles?**

- There is no doubt that Fundamental Rights are more important. The Supreme Court held in *Minerva Mills* (1980): "Indian Constitution is founded on the bed-rock of the balance between Parts III (Fundamental Rights) and IV (Directive Principles). To give absolute primacy to one over the other is to disturb the harmony of the Constitution".
- Article 31C inserted by the 42nd Amendment in 1976, however, lays down that if a law is made to implement any Directive Principle, it cannot be challenged on the ground of being violative of the Fundamental Rights under Articles 14 and 19.

#### **Does India not already have a uniform code in civil matters?**

- Indian laws do follow a uniform code in most civil matters — Indian Contract Act, Civil Procedure Code, Sale of Goods Act, Transfer of Property Act, Partnership Act, Evidence Act, etc.





- States, however, have made hundreds of amendments and, therefore, in certain matters, there is diversity even under these secular civil laws. Recently, several states refused to be governed by the uniform Motor Vehicles Act, 2019.
- If the framers of the Constitution had intended to have a Uniform Civil Code, they would have given exclusive jurisdiction to Parliament in respect of personal laws, by including this subject in the Union List. But “personal laws” are mentioned in the Concurrent List.
- Last year, the Law Commission concluded that a Uniform Civil Code is neither feasible nor desirable.

#### **Is there one common personal law for any religious community governing all its members?**

- All Hindus of the country are not governed by one law, nor are all Muslims or all Christians. Not only British legal traditions, even those of the Portuguese and the French remain operative in some parts.
- In Jammu and Kashmir until August 5, 2019, local Hindu law statutes differed from central enactments. The Shariat Act of 1937 was extended to J&K a few years ago but has now been repealed. Muslims of Kashmir were thus governed by a customary law, which in many ways was at variance with Muslim Personal Law in the rest of the country and was, in fact, closer to Hindu law.
- Even on registration of marriage among Muslims, laws differ from place to place. It was compulsory in J&K (1981 Act), and is optional in West Bengal, Bihar (both under 1876 Act), Assam (1935 Act) and Odisha (1949 Act).
- In the Northeast, there are more than 200 tribes with their own varied customary laws. The Constitution itself protects local customs in Nagaland. Similar protections are enjoyed by Meghalaya and Mizoram. Even reformed Hindu law, in spite of codification, protects customary practices.

#### **How does the idea of a Uniform Civil Code relate to the fundamental right to religion?**

- Article 25 lays down an individual’s fundamental right to religion; Article 26(b) upholds the right of each religious denomination or any section thereof to “manage its own affairs in matters of religion”; Article 29 defines the right to conserve distinctive culture.
- An individual’s freedom of religion under Article 25 is subject to “public order, health, morality” and other provisions relating to fundamental rights, but a group’s freedom under Article 26 has not been subjected to other fundamental rights.
- In the Constituent Assembly, there was division on the issue of putting Uniform Civil Code in the fundamental rights chapter.
- The matter was settled by a vote. By a 5:4 majority, the fundamental rights sub-committee headed by Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel held that the provision was outside the scope of Fundamental Rights and therefore the Uniform Civil Code was made less important than freedom of religion.

#### **What was the view of Muslim members in the Constituent Assembly?**

- Some members sought to immunise Muslim Personal Law from state regulation. Mohammed Ismail, who thrice tried unsuccessfully to get Muslim Personal Law exempted from Article 44, said a secular state should not interfere with the personal law of people.
- B Pocker Saheb said he had received representations against a common civil code from various organisations, including Hindu organisations. Hussain Imam questioned whether there could ever be uniformity of personal laws in a diverse country like India.
- Dr B R Ambedkar said “no government can use its provisions in a way that would force the Muslims to revolt”. Alladi Krishnaswami, who was in favour of a Uniform Civil Code, conceded that it would be unwise to enact Uniform Civil Code ignoring strong opposition from any community. Gender justice was not mentioned in these debates.

#### **How did the debate on a common code for Hindus play out?**

- In June 1948, Rajendra Prasad, president of the Constituent Assembly, warned Jawaharlal Nehru that to introduce “basic changes” in personal law was to impose “progressive ideas” of a “microscopic

minority” on the Hindu community as a whole. Others opposed to reforms in Hindu law included Sardar Patel, Pattabhi Sitaramayya, M A Ayyangar, M M Malaviya and Kailash Nath Katju.

- When the debate on the Hindu Code Bill took place in December 1949, 23 of 28 speakers opposed it. On September 15, 1951, President Prasad threatened to use his powers of returning the Bill to Parliament or vetoing it. Ambedkar eventually had to resign. Nehru agreed to trifurcation of the Code into separate Acts and diluted several provisions.

### **Article 244 (A)**

(Source: [Indian Express](#) )

**Context:** *In a video message, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi promised to implement Article 244 (A) of the Constitution to safeguard the interests of the people in Assam’s tribal-majority districts.*

#### **What is Article 244(A) of the Constitution?**

- Article 244(A) allows for creation of an ‘autonomous state’ within Assam in certain tribal areas.
- Inserted into the Constitution in 1969 by the then Congress government, it also has a provision for a Legislature and a Council of Ministers.

#### **How is it different from the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution?**

- The Sixth Schedule of the Constitution — Articles 244(2) and 275(1) — is a special provision that allows for greater political autonomy and decentralised governance in certain tribal areas of the Northeast through autonomous councils that are administered by elected representatives.
- In Assam, the hill districts of Dima Hasao, Karbi Anglong and West Karbi and the Bodo Territorial Region are under this provision.
- Article 244(A) accounts for more autonomous powers to tribal areas.

#### **How did the demand arise?**

- In the 1950s, a demand for a separate hill state arose around certain sections of the tribal population of undivided Assam. In 1960, various political parties of the hill areas merged to form the All Party Hill Leaders Conference, demanding a separate state. After prolonged agitations, Meghalaya gained statehood in 1972.
- The leaders of the Karbi Anglong and North Cachar Hills were also part of this movement. They were given the option to stay in Assam or join Meghalaya. They stayed back as the then Congress government promised more powers, including Article 244 (A).
- Since then, there has been a demand for its implementation.
- In the 1980s, this demand took the form of a movement with a number of Karbi groups resorting to violence. It soon became an armed separatist insurgency demanding full statehood.
- While in February 2021, 1,040 militants of five militant groups of Karbi Anglong district ceremonially laid down arms at an event in Guwahati in the presence of Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal, the entire political discourse here still revolves around the demand for grant of ‘autonomous state’ status to the region.

## **Overseas Citizens of India**

(Source: [The Hindu](#) )

**Context:** *People of Indian origin and the Indian diaspora having Overseas Citizens of India (OCI) cards will not have to carry their old, expired passports for travel to India, as was required earlier, according to a government notification.*

### **Details:**

- The OCI card issued to people of Indian origin globally gives them almost all the privileges available to an Indian national, except for the right to vote, employment in government service and buying agricultural land.
- The OCI card gives them a visa free travel to India.
- The Overseas Citizenship of India (OCI) Scheme was introduced by amending the Citizenship Act, 1955 in August 2005 in response to demands for dual citizenship by the Indian diaspora, particularly in developed countries. It was launched during the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas convention at Hyderabad in 2006.

### **Who is called an Overseas Citizen of India?**

- An Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) is a person who is technically a citizen of another country having an Indian origin. They were citizens of India on 26th January 1950 or thereafter except who is or had been a citizen of Pakistan, Bangladesh or such other country.
- Multi-purpose and life-long visa are provided to the registered Overseas Citizen of India for visiting India and are also exempted from registration with Foreign Regional Registration Officer or Foreign Registration Officer for any length of stay in India.

### **What is an OCI Card?**

- Launched in 2005, under the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, the OCI card was introduced for fulfilling the demands for dual citizenship among the Indians living in different developed countries.
- The OCI card provides Overseas Citizenship of India to live and work in India for an indefinite period of time but does not provide the right to vote, hold constitutional offices or buy agricultural properties.

### **Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) Card: Eligibility**

A person must meet the following eligibility criteria before applying for the OCI scheme:

1. He/She is a citizen of another country having an Indian origin. He/She was a citizen of India on or before the commencement of the constitution; or
  2. He/She is a citizen of another country, but was eligible for the citizenship of India at the time of the commencement of the constitution; or
  3. He/She is a citizen of another country and belonging to a territory that became a part of India after the 15th August 1947; or
  4. He/She is a child/grandchild/great grandchild of such a citizen; or
  5. He/She is a minor child, whose parents are both Indian citizens or one parent is a citizen of India and
  6. is a spouse of foreign origin of an Indian citizen or of an OCI cardholder
- **Any person having citizenship of Bangladesh or Pakistan is not eligible to apply for the OCI card.** Even a person having a background of serving any foreign military are also not eligible for the scheme.

### **Conferment of Rights**

The registered Overseas Citizens of India are not entitled to several rights that are conferred on a citizen of India.

1. Right to equality of opportunity under article 16 of the Constitution with regard to public employment.



2. Right for election as President and Vice-President under article 58 and article 66 respectively.
3. They are not entitled to the rights under article 124 and article 217 of the Constitution.
4. Right to register as a voter under section 16 of the Representation of the People Act, 1950(43 of 1950).
5. Rights with regard to the eligibility for being a member of the State Council/Legislative Assembly/Legislative Council.
6. For an appointment to the posts of Public Services and Union Affairs of any State.

### **Mahendragiri Biosphere reserve**

(Source: [Down to Earth](#) )

**Context:** *The Odisha government has proposed a second biosphere reserve in the southern part of the state at Mahendragiri, a hill ecosystem having rich biodiversity.*

#### **Details:**

- The 5,569-square kilometre Similipal Biosphere Reserve is Odisha's first such reserve and was notified May 20, 1996.
- The area of the proposed Mahendragiri Biosphere Reserve is around 470,955 hectares and is spread over Gajapati and Ganjam districts in the Eastern Ghats.
- The hill ecosystem acts as a transitional zone between the flora and fauna of southern India and the Himalayas, making the region an ecological estuary of genetic diversities. This is according to a feasibility report prepared by the Biosphere Reserve Committee for the proposed project.
- Once the protected archeological remains of Mahendragiri were listed in the tentative list of Unesco World Heritage Sites, it would be easy to declare the spot as one.
- He said almost all criteria to accord Mahendragiri the status of a biosphere reserve had been completed. The state should now submit its proposal to the Centre, he added.
- Mahendragiri is inhabited by the Soura people, a particularly vulnerable tribal group as well as the Kandha tribe.
- The hills have diverse vegetation, according to the report of the proposed Mahendragiri Biosphere Reserve. The rich flora in Mahendragiri represents 40 per cent of the reported flora of Odisha, with around 1,358 species of plants.
- Twenty-nine of the 41 species of threatened medicinal plants found in Odisha according to the International Union for the Conservation of Nature are found in the biosphere reserve area, according to the report.
- The faunal diversity of the hills consists of 388 species of animals, including 27 species of mammals, 165 species of birds, 23 species of snakes, 15 species of amphibians, three species of turtles and 19 lizards.

### **Dadasaheb Phalke for Rajinikanth**

Source: ([The Hindu](#) )

**Context:** *The Centre announced the prestigious Dadasaheb Phalke Award for Rajinikanth for his contribution as an actor, producer and screenwriter.*

**About the Dada Saheb Phalke Award (Dadasaheb Phalke Award):**

- It is an annual award given by the Indian government for lifetime contribution to Indian cinema.
- It was instituted in 1969, the birth centenary year of **Dadasaheb Phalke**, considered the **father of Indian cinema**. Phalke directed the first Indian film 'Raja Harishchandra' (a silent film released in 1913).
- The award is given along with the National Film Awards every year.
- The first awardee was Devika Rani (1969).
- The award comprises a Swarna Kamal (Golden Lotus medallion), a shawl and a cash prize of Rs.1,000,000.

**VAJRA PRAHAR 2021**

(Source: [PIB](#) )

**Context:** *Indian and US Special Forces conclude Joint Training Exercise.*

**About Vajra Prahar 2021:**

- The 11th edition of the Indo-US Joint Special Forces Exercise VAJRA PRAHAR 2021 was conducted at Special Forces Training School located at Bakloh, Himachal Pradesh.
- It is a bilateral exercise between the special forces of India and the US
- The military forces that participate in Vajra Prahar are:
  - The US – The Special Forces and
  - India – The Southern Command of Indian Armed Forces
- The aim of Vajra Prahar is to enhance military cooperation between the two countries and also to capitalise on the rich repository of experiences of each other armies
- The exercise Vajra Prahar takes place alternately between the two countries – India and US
- In 2021, it took place in India. In 2019, the Vajra Prahar exercise took place in Joint Base Lewis-McChord (JBLM), Seattle (The US), while in 2018, it took place in Jodhpur, Rajasthan (India)
- The joint military exercise Vajra Prahar between India and the US started off in 2010
- Between 2012 and 2015, the exercise Vajra Prahar did not take place. In 2020, Vajra Prahar did not take place.

**PLI Scheme for Food Processing Industry**

(Source: [PIB](#) )

**Context:** *Cabinet approves Production Linked Incentive Scheme for Food Processing Industry.*

**Details:**

- Cabinet approves Production Linked Incentive Scheme for Food Processing Industry to support the creation of global food manufacturing champions commensurate with India's natural resource endowment and support Indian brands of food products in the international markets.
- The scheme has been launched with an outlay of Rs. 10900 crore.
- It is a Central Sector Scheme.

**About the Scheme**

- Production Linked Incentive or PLI scheme is a scheme that aims to give companies incentives on incremental sales from products manufactured in domestic units.

- The scheme invites foreign companies to set up units in India, however, it also aims to encourage local companies to set up or expand existing manufacturing units and also to generate more employment and cut down the country's reliance on imports from other countries.
- It was introduced as a part of the National Policy on Electronics by the IT Ministry to give incentives of 4-6% to electronic companies, manufacturing electronic components like mobile phones, transistors, diodes, etc.
- The main aim of this scheme was to invite foreign investors to set up their manufacturing units in India and also promote the local manufacturers to expand their units and generate employment
- The first sector which the PLI scheme had targeted was the Large Scale Electronics Manufacturing in April 2020, and by the end of the year (November 2020), 10 more sectors including food processing, telecom, electronics, textiles, speciality steel, automobiles and auto components, solar photovoltaic modules and white goods such as air conditioners and LEDs were also expanded under the PLI scheme
- As far as the eligibility is concerned, all electronic manufacturing companies which are either Indian or have a registered unit in India will be eligible to apply for the scheme
- In the Union Budget 2021, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman mentioned the inclusion of thirteen more sectors under the PLI Scheme for a period of five years and Rs. 1.97 lakh crores have been allocated for this scheme from Financial Year 2022

### **AIM-PRIME**

(Source: [PIB](#) )

**Context:** Atal Innovation Mission launches 'AIM-PRIME', in partnership with BMGF & Venture Center.

#### **About the Program:**

- **AIM-PRIME (Program for Researchers on Innovations, Market-Readiness & Entrepreneurship)** is an initiative to promote and support science-based deep-tech startups & ventures across India.
- It has been launched by the Atal Innovation Mission (AIM) in partnership with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF). The initiative will be implemented by Venture Center – a non-profit technology business incubator.
- The first cohort of the program is open to technology developers (early-stage deep tech start-ups, and scientists/engineers/clinicians) with strong science-based deep tech business ideas. The program is also open to CEOs and senior incubation managers of AIM Funded Atal Incubation Centres that are supporting deep tech entrepreneurs.
- The AIM-PRIME program is specifically tailored for the rapid scaling up of deep-tech science ventures in India, providing not just the necessary intellect and support but also the exposure they rightly deserve.
- The benefits of this program are aimed at addressing specific issues through training and guidance over a period of 12 months.
- Candidates selected for the program will get access to in-depth learning via a comprehensive lecture series, live team projects, exercises, and project-specific mentoring.
- They will also have access to a deep tech startup playbook, curated video library, and plenty of peer-to-peer learning opportunities.

## **Hypnea Indica and Hypnea Bullata**

(Source: [The Hindu](#) )

**Context:** *Two new species of seaweed have been discovered by a group of marine biologists from Central University of Punjab, Bathinda. Named Hypnea indica (after India) and Hypnea bullata (because of the blisterlike marks on its body – bullate), the seaweeds are part of the genus Hypnea or red seaweeds.*

### **Adding to the number**

- The genus Hypnea consists of calcareous, erect, branched red seaweeds. There are 61 species of which 10 were reported in India. With our two new species, the total number of species now would be 63.
- While Hypnea indica was discovered Kanyakumari in Tamil Nadu, and Somnath Pathan and Sivrajpur in Gujarat, Hypnea bullata was discovered from Kanyakumari and Diu island of Daman and Diu.
- To rule out the possibility that the species had been around earlier, but that now had been documented, the researchers compared characteristics of these specimens with all the 61 currently accepted species of Hypnea one by one.

### **Food industry**

- Species of Hypnea contain the biomolecule carrageenan, which is widely used in the food industry.
- As the two species have been found on the west and south east coasts of India, it suggests good prospects for their cultivation which can be put to good use economically.
- The study also reports one other species of Hypnea for the first time in Indian coasts, Hypnea nidifica.
- The extensive calcareous deposits on the body that has been observed also provides room for thought. Several recent studies have shown that algae with calcareous mineral deposits are prone for the damage from ocean acidification – an aftermath of climate change.
- As carbon dioxide in the atmosphere gets dissolved in ocean waters, the seawater becomes more acidic. Algae like Hypnea cannot survive in acidic seawater, hence, the only way to help these species is to reduce atmospheric carbon dioxide levels by adopting sustainable lifestyle choices.

## **Exercise SHANTIR OGROSHENA 2021**

(Source: [PIB](#) )

**Context:** *Indian Army to participate in Exercise SHANTIR OGROSHENA, a multinational military exercise in Bangladesh.*

### **About Ex Shantir Ogroshena:**

- Multinational Military Exercise SHANTIR OGROSHENA 2021 (Front Runner of the Peace) will be held at Bangladesh to commemorate the birth centenary of Bangladesh 'Father of the Nation' Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.
- The DOGRA Regiment will participate in the exercise along with a contingent of the Royal Bhutan Army, the Sri Lankan Army and the Bangladesh Army in April 2021.
- The theme of the exercise is "Robust Peace Keeping Operations".
- Military observers from the USA, UK, Turkey, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Singapore will also be in attendance throughout the exercise.

## **Utkala Dibasa**

(Source: [PIB](#) )

**Context:** *The PM greeted the people of Odisha on Utkala Dibasa.*

**Details:**

- Utkala Dibasa or Odisha Day is observed on 1 April every year to mark the formation of the state as a separate state out of Bihar and Orissa Province in 1936.
  - At that time, Koraput and Ganjam were also added from the Madras Presidency.
  - The leaders of the movement demanding a separate state for all the Odia-speaking regions were Madhusudan Das, Gopabandhu Das, Maharaja Sri Ram Chandra Bhanj Deo and others.
  - This Day is also known as Vishuva Milan.



## INTERNATIONAL

### Neutrino Telescopes

(Source: [Indian Express](#) )

**Context:** *Russian scientists launched one of the world's biggest underwater neutrino telescopes called the Baikal-GVD (Gigaton Volume Detector) in the waters of Lake Baikal, the world's deepest lake situated in Siberia.*

#### Details:

- The construction of this telescope, which started in 2016, is motivated by the mission to study in detail the elusive fundamental particles called neutrinos and to possibly determine their sources.
- Studying this will aid scientists' understanding of the origins of the universe since some neutrinos were formed during the Big Bang, others continue to be formed as a result of supernova explosions or because of nuclear reactions in the
- The Baikal-GVD is one of the three largest neutrino detectors in the world along with the IceCube at the South Pole and ANTARES in the Mediterranean Sea.

#### What are fundamental particles?

- So far, the understanding is that the universe is made of some fundamental particles that are indivisible. Broadly, particles of matter that scientists know about as of now can be classified into quarks and leptons.
- But this only applies to “normal matter” or the matter that scientists know that five per cent of the universe is made up of.
- In their book *We Have No Idea*, cartoonist Jorge Cham and particle physicist Daniel Whiteson have said that these particles make up matter that accounts for only five per cent of the universe.
- Not much is known about the remaining 95 per cent of the universe, which is classified by the authors into dark matter (27 percent) and the remaining 68 per cent of the universe of which scientists have “no idea” about yet.
- But in the universe scientists know about, exploration in the field of physics so far has led to the discovery of over 12 such quarks and leptons, but three of these (protons, neutrons and electrons) is what everything in the world is made up of.
- Protons (carry a positive charge) and neutrons (no charge) are types of quarks, whereas electrons (carry a negative charge) are types of leptons. These three particles make what is referred to as the building block of life– the atom.
- In different combinations, these particles can make different kinds of atoms, which in turn make up molecules that form everything– from a human being, to a wooden chair, a plastic plate, a mobile phone, a dog, a termite, a mountain, a planet, water, soil and so on.

#### Why do scientists study fundamental particles?

- Studying what humans and everything around them is made up of gives scientists a window into understanding the universe a better way, just how it is easy to grasp what a cake is once one knows the ingredients it is made up of.
- This is one reason why scientists are so keen on studying neutrinos (not the same as neutrons), which are also a type of fundamental particle. Fundamental means that neutrinos, like electrons, protons and neutrons cannot be broken down further into smaller particles.



- What makes neutrinos especially interesting is that they are abundant in nature, with about a thousand trillion of them passing through a human body every second.
- In fact, they are the second most abundant particles, after photons, which are particles of light. But while neutrinos are abundant, they are not easy to catch, this is because they do not carry a charge, as a result of which they do not interact with matter.
- One way of detecting neutrinos is in water or ice, where neutrinos leave a flash of light or a line of bubbles when they interact.
- To capture these signs, scientists have to build large detectors. An underwater telescope such as the GVD is designed to detect high-energy neutrinos that may have come from the Earth's core, or could have been produced during nuclear reactions in the Sun.

## **BIMSTEC**

(Source: [The Hindu](#) )

**Context:** India expressed commitment about taking the Bay of Bengal community to “new heights”. The statement was made by External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar at the ministerial meet of the BIMSTEC (Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation), which was held virtually. The meeting drew participation from all the seven-member States, including Myanmar which is witnessing a large-scale crackdown against anti-military protesters. This meeting, the 17th BIMSTEC Ministerial, **chaired by Sri Lanka**, however, avoided any reference to Myanmar's current crisis.

### **What is BIMSTEC?**

- The Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) is a regional multilateral organisation.
- Its members lie in the littoral and adjacent areas of the Bay of Bengal constituting a contiguous regional unity.
- The 7 members,
  - **Bangladesh**
  - **Bhutan**
  - **India**
  - **Nepal**
  - **Sri Lanka**
  - **Myanmar**
  - **Thailand**
- BIMSTEC not only connects South and Southeast Asia, but also the ecologies of the Great Himalayas and the Bay of Bengal.
- It mainly aims to create an enabling environment for rapid economic development; accelerate social progress; and promote collaboration on matters of common interest in the region.

### **Genesis of BIMSTEC**

- This sub-regional organization came into being in 1997 through the **Bangkok Declaration**.
- Initially, it was formed with four Member States with the acronym '**BIST-EC**' (Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka and Thailand Economic Cooperation).
- It became renamed '**BIMST-EC**' in 1997, following the inclusion of Myanmar.
- With the admission of Nepal and Bhutan in 2004, the name of the grouping was changed to 'Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation' (**BIMSTEC**).

### **Objectives**



- Creating an enabling environment for the rapid economic development of the sub-region.
- Encouraging the spirit of equality and partnership.
- Promoting active collaboration and mutual assistance in the areas of common interests of the member countries
- Accelerating support for each other in the fields of education, science, and technology, etc.

### **Asteroid Apophis**

(Source: [Indian Express](#) )

**Context:** *The USA's NASA space agency has ruled out the possibility of the dreaded asteroid Apophis causing any damage to the Earth for the next 100 years.*

#### **Details:**

- Named after the ancient Egyptian god of chaos and darkness, it was discovered in 2004, after which NASA had said that it was one of the asteroids that posed the greatest threat to Earth.
- Apophis measures 340 metres across— comparable to the size of the huge ship that has currently blocked the Suez Canal.

#### **What NASA has said about Apophis**

- Apophis was predicted to come threateningly close to us in the years 2029 and 2036, but NASA later ruled these events out. There were still fears about a possible collision in 2068, however.
- This year, the asteroid flew past Earth on March 5, coming within 17 million km of our planet. During this approach, scientists used radar observations to study in detail the asteroid's orbit around the sun.
- In order to track Apophis' motion, astronomers used the 70-metre radio antenna at the Deep Space Network's Goldstone Deep Space Communications Complex near Barstow, California. They also used the 100-metre Green Bank Telescope in West Virginia which showed imaging of Apophis. The two systems were used together in a "bistatic" experiment that doubled the strength of the received signal.
- Based on these findings, they were able to rule out any impact risk to Earth from Apophis in 2068 and long after.
- "A 2068 impact is not in the realm of possibility any more, and our calculations don't show any impact risk for at least the next 100 years," said of NASA's Center for Near-Earth Object Studies (CNEOS).
- The "risk list" refers to the Sentry Impact Risk Table maintained by CNEOS, which includes all the asteroids with orbits close to Earth.
- As said, the large asteroid will now approach Earth again in 2029, when it is expected to come as near as 32,000 km— only one-tenth of the distance between the Earth and the Moon.
- That year, the asteroid would be visible to star gazers in Asia, Africa and parts of Europe, without the need to use binoculars or telescopes.

#### **What are asteroids?**

- Asteroids are rocky objects that orbit the Sun, much smaller than planets. They are also called minor planets. According to NASA, 994,383 is the count of known asteroids, the remnants from the formation of the solar system over 4.6 billion years ago.
- Asteroids are divided into three classes. First, those found in the main asteroid belt between Mars and Jupiter, which is estimated to contain somewhere between 1.1-1.9 million asteroids.
- The second group is that of trojans, which are asteroids that share an orbit with a larger planet. NASA reports the presence of Jupiter, Neptune and Mars trojans. In 2011, they reported an Earth trojan as well.
- The third classification is Near-Earth Asteroids (NEA), which have orbits that pass close by the Earth. Those that cross the Earth's orbit are called Earth-crossers. More than 10,000 such asteroids are known, out of which over 1,400 are classified as potentially hazardous asteroids (PHAs).

- Apophis is categorised as a PHA.

## **British National Overseas Passport**

(Source: [Indian Express](#) )

**Context:** *China and the pro-Beijing Hong Kong government told 14 countries to stop accepting the British National (Overseas) passport, which as of early this year can be used by some 3 million Hong Kong citizens to get UK citizenship. Instead, they have asked these states to use the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) passport. The British government, however, has rejected Hong Kong's authority to have a say in determining if the BNO passport is valid or not, prolonging the row between the UK and China.*

### **What is this about?**

- Earlier this year, the British government opened a special visa scheme as part of which Hong Kong residents get a chance to migrate to the UK and eventually apply for citizenship.
- These visas are issued to those in Hong Kong who hold a BN(O) passport and their immediate dependents, offering them a fast track option to get UK citizenship.
- Applicants who get the visa can live and work in the UK for 5 years, after which they can apply for settlement. Twelve months after this period lapses, they can apply for citizenship.

### **What is the British National Overseas Passport?**

- According to an article in The South China Morning Post, the BN(O) was first issued in 1987, 10 years before the return of sovereignty over Hong Kong from Britain to China.
- The document replaced the British Dependent Territories citizens' passport. Anyone who was a British Overseas Territories Citizen (BOTC) by connection with Hong Kong was able to register as a British national (overseas) before July 1, 1997.
- Further, a BOCT from Hong Kong who did not register as British nationals (overseas) and had no other nationality or citizenship on June 30, 1997 became British overseas citizens on July 1, 1997. Essentially, these passports are issued to those born in Hong Kong before the 1997 handover.





# Mains

## GS I

### Why India is no country for working women

(Source: [Indian Express](#) )

**Context:** A few days ago, a comment by the BJP's **newly-appointed Uttarakhand Chief Minister Tirath Singh Rawat** about **women wearing ripped jeans** created massive outrage in social media. But, from the perspectives of the economy and public policy, perhaps the more salient comment was made by Rawat's cabinet colleague Ganesh Joshi, who reportedly said: "Women talk about all the things they want to do in life, but the most important thing for them is to look after their family and kids."

To be sure, this understanding of a woman's role in Indian society is not limited to any one group or political party. Such conservative/orthodox beliefs, as well as violence against women, are often held as the main reasons why very few women seek any employment. That is why India has one of the worst labour force participation rates (LFPR) by women.

#### The Labour force participation of women

- The LFPR basically tells what percentage of the total women within the working-age are seeking work; it includes both those who are employed as well as those who are as yet unemployed but seeking work.
- As the chart below shows, at 21% India has one of the lowest female participation rates in the world. In other words, 79% of Indian women (aged 15 years and above) do not even seek work.

#### Female participation in the labour force (in %): India languishes at the bottom

This refers to the proportion of women, aged 15 and older, who are economically active

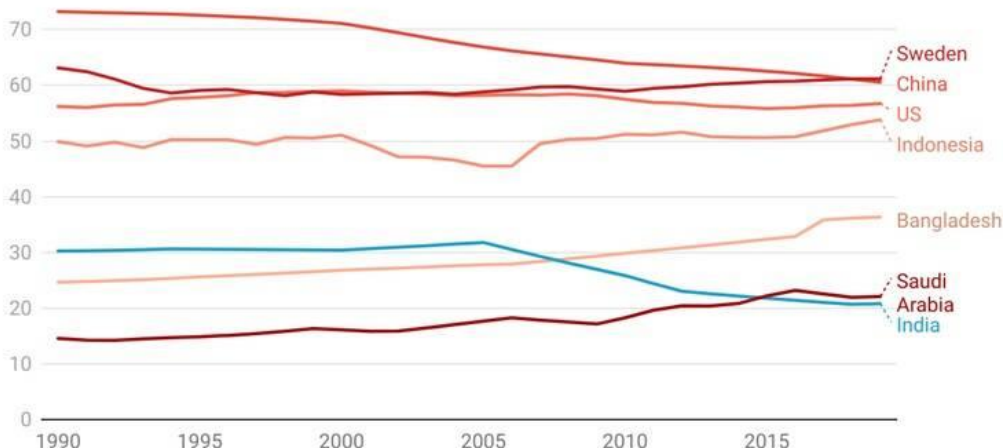


Chart: Udit Misra • Source: World Bank • Created with Datawrapper

- India has one of the lowest female participation rates in the world
- Countries with which Indian typically compares itself — such as China, the US, Indonesia, and Bangladesh — have two-to-three times higher participation rates for women.
- Worse still, it is not the case that India is behind just a handful of countries.
- As the chart below shows, no matter which cluster of countries one compares with — high income or low, highly indebted or least developed — India comes off worse. India's 21% female LFPR is not even





half the global average (47%). The bottom of this chart further underscores the poor company India keeps in terms of freedom for women.

- However, the truth about women's participation in India's economy is more complicated.

## In poor company

India vs the rest of the world: Female participation rate in labour force (in%)

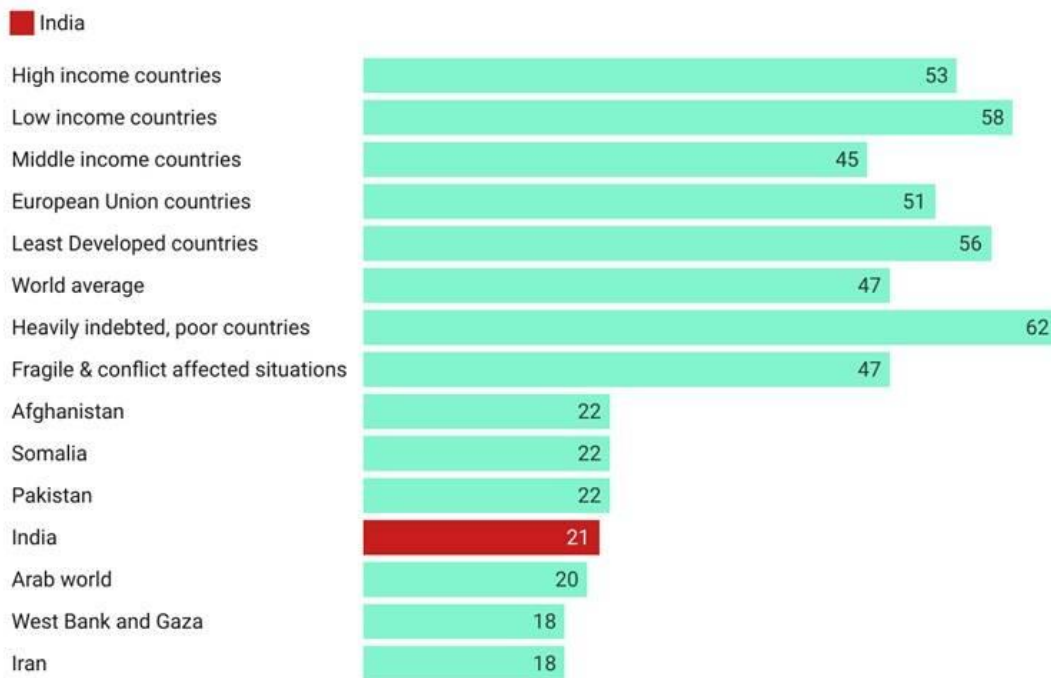


Chart: Udit Misra • Source: World Bank • Created with Datawrapper

India vs rest of the world: Female participation rate in labour force (in%)

- In a recent paper, titled “Paid work, unpaid work and domestic chores: Why are so many Indian women out of the labour force?”, Ashwini Deshpande, professor of economics at Ashoka University, makes a couple of nuanced but significant points.
- One, she argues that the LFPR does not accurately capture the participation of Indian women in the economy. She says that the majority of women in South Asia are between the two extremes — namely, those women who work outside their homes for a salary and those who are exclusively involved within their own homes (caring for their family) of their own volition.
- “These are women whose involvement in economic work (activities that are within the standard boundaries of the System of National Accounts, that is counted as economic activities when national income or GDP is measured) lies in a grey zone,” she states.
- “These are women who might work in the house or outside, and whose work might be paid or unpaid, and whose work might be continuous throughout the year or seasonal, and it might be full-time or part-time...For example, she could be involved in livestock rearing or farming or helping the kirana shop, or involved in artisanal activity, such as making baskets, weaving or pottery. If these are family activities, then her contribution to economic work (over and above her ‘care’ work) would not be paid. In such a case, it is highly likely that she would not be seen as a worker, neither by her family nor by herself,” explains Deshpande, as she lists out several jobs where women's contribution to economic work is missed by the formal surveys that calculate LFPR.
- The other point Deshpande makes is that “the whole focus on labour force participation reduces the issue of women's involvement to a labour supply issue”.
- In other words, while there are factors such as social norms or violence against women that hold them back from joining the labour force, little is said about the demand for their work.
- To better understand this, she points to the urban and rural break-up of female LFPR.



- As the chart below shows, the fall in India's overall female LFPR is almost fully because of the fall in rural India. It is another matter that urban female LFPR was always pretty low but the dip has been caused by fewer women in rural India being counted as part of the labour force.

## Rural vs Urban India: Female participation in labour force

Women in rural India have been withdrawing from the labour force; female participation in urban India has been much lower but stagnant

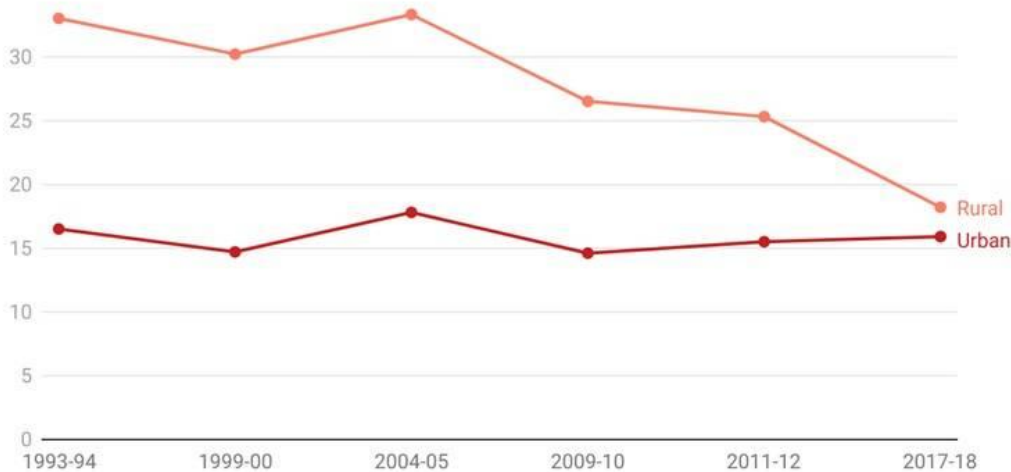


Chart: Udit Misra • Source: NSSO; Ashwini Deshpande • Created with Datawrapper

Fall in India's overall female LFPR is almost fully because of the fall in rural India

- "The fall in rural women's LFPR should make us turn the spotlight on the nature of work availability, especially non-farm opportunities," she states.
- "Education levels of Indian women are rapidly increasing (faster than those for men), and while the share of agriculture work has declined for both men and women, men have been able to find employment in other sectors. But this is not the case for women," says Deshpande.
- "A man with class 10 education can be a postal carrier, a truck driver or a mechanic; these opportunities are not open to women. Hence, it is not surprising that education is associated with a lower WPR for women," Deshpande quotes Sonalde Desai, professor of Sociology, University of Maryland.
- Some people may still wonder why it matters whether women "work". They may find the Bhagwat kind of social contract quite efficient.
- There is also a hefty opportunity cost. Women who work are the most reliable source of economic growth. When they are kept home because there is no affordable childcare—or because their husbands won't let them out of the house—they lose and so do their countries.
- Many societies invest heavily in female education, especially in the West, and then push women out of the workforce—wasting a valuable resource, losing a chance at sustained growth, and widening a skills gap that already threatens their future.
- With a deliberate global effort to lift the constraints on the Double X Economy, some of the world's most tragic problems can be solved. Women's economic empowerment has been shown, many times, to be the best available weapon against poverty. Economically autonomous women can walk away from abuse. Providing young women with the means to earn shields them from human trafficking. Gender equality reduces violence of all kinds.
- The beneficial effects of full inclusion for women would be visible at the institutional and national levels. Including women in the financial system contributes to institutional profit and also reduces risk, increases transparency and also adds stability for the entire economy. Allowing women to participate in international trade increases a nation's resilience and innovation.
- Because of its power to generate growth and reduce costs, the Double X Economy, when included, pays for itself. Investments made in affordable childcare, for instance, would be offset by an influx of women into the labor force who otherwise would have to stay home, leading to a rise in GDP, and therefore an

increase in tax revenues. Yet data shows that men will not lose jobs if women come into the workforce, because the resulting growth drives the creation of more jobs. Men benefit in other ways when they share economic responsibilities with women: overwork, male-dominant workplaces, and the lone responsibility to provide take a profound toll on men worldwide.

- Economic results are best when men and women work in a gender-balanced way, whether at work or at home. Studies show consistently that teams of males and females make better investments, produce better products, generate higher returns, and have fewer failures. At home, couples who share housework and paid work have closer relationships with children, more egalitarian values, less interpersonal tension, and more productivity.

## GS II

### Indian education system must stop chasing 'learning outcomes'

(Source: [Indian Express](#) )

**Context:** *In the present context, which seeks to demonstrate, measure and quantify learning, learning outcomes (LO) have become a fetish with policymakers and textbook developers, an idea popularised by large-scale assessment surveys, such as the Annual Status of Education Report (ASER), in India. LO essentially refers to grade-appropriate, basic competencies in numeracy and literacy, which schoolgoing children are supposed to acquire.*

#### Details:

- The National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT), the apex body responsible for making curriculum, syllabus and textbooks, has already come out with two documents listing learning outcomes at elementary and secondary stages, while the one for the higher secondary stage is underway.
- This is because the new National Education Policy 2020 underscores the importance of foundational skills as being central to a child's schooling. State Councils of Educational Research and Training (SCERT) will be soon expected to toe the line. However, the government of Andhra Pradesh has already initiated the exercise.
- Besides deciding to convert all government schools from Classes I to X to English medium, the state education department was directed to prepare "mirror image" textbooks — with lessons printed in English and Telugu, side by side. This seems to be more of a mechanical exercise without any sound pedagogic rationale.
- A quick review of the new textbooks shows that they centre around LO and follow a didactic approach of essentially presenting information/facts that children are supposed to passively consume and memorise. Such books typically deny the agency of both the teacher and the student, making them subservient to the printed text. They are physically heavy but conceptually terse.
- It was with great difficulty that National Curriculum Framework, prepared by NCERT in 2005, changed the form and nature of textbooks. Any change of government at the Centre or state level was/is usually followed by a change in textbooks, particularly history. Besides blatant misuse as a political tool, textbooks suffer from other limitations.



- They reproduce social inequalities by either omission of diverse social groups or their misrepresentation. The landmark Learning Without Burden (LWB) committee (1993) identified dense, poorly written and weakly conceptualised textbooks as being primarily responsible, in addition to unwieldy syllabi and rote-based exam system, for burdening children's school lives.
- The NCF 2005, with its roots in LWB, redirected the meaning of quality education to curricular, pedagogic and assessment practices being followed inside the classrooms. It sought to connect the life of the child outside school with learning in the classroom.
- Soon after, NCERT developed "exemplar/model" textbooks which were conceptually sound and used a variety of pedagogic techniques to bring in real-life issues in the book. The social science textbooks particularly acknowledged social conflicts which children experienced in their lives and helped make sense of them.
- They also gave fresh life to the meaning of learning which was no longer a one-way track of passing on information to children but became a process of constructing knowledge meaningfully by both the teacher and the student.
- A few states took the lead and initiated the formation of state curricular frameworks, position papers and the development of textbooks. Undivided Andhra Pradesh was one of them. However, with the revision of the earlier written books, which were both pedagogically sound and collaboratively developed, it seems like the state is bent on undoing its own achievements.

### Conclusion

- There is no denying that textbooks, just like curricular frameworks, syllabus, and assessment practices, need to be revised periodically. However, textbooks tailored to measure the acquisition of LO on part of children is a self-defeating exercise.
- This singular focus on LO will take the teaching-learning processes away from the possibility of a meaningful co-construction of knowledge to a teacher teaching to the test. Since teachers' own appraisal is contingent on children's performance in these tests, they feel pressured to ensure that children know the basic minimum and somehow pass the test.
- The choice is ours — whether we will allow testing to take precedence over learning or celebrate learning as a meaning-making exercise by both the teacher and the student.

### The Afghan endgame

(Source: [The Hindu](#) )

**Context:** As the May 1 deadline for pulling out all American troops from Afghanistan nears, United States President Joe Biden faces some difficult decisions. The U.S. could abide by the promise made in the U.S.-Taliban agreement signed in February 2020 to withdraw the last of the around 2,500 American marines stationed in Afghanistan, but Mr. Biden has said it would be tough given the levels of violence there. The U.S. could negotiate with the Taliban for an extension of the agreement, offering other incentives like the release of more prisoners and the delisting of sanctioned Taliban terrorists, although the Taliban has thus far rejected that suggestion. The other option is that the U.S. could scrap the 2020 agreement and back the Ashraf Ghani government to continue towards a negotiated settlement, even as U.S. troops remain in Afghanistan to stabilise the security situation.

### What is the U.S. likely to do?

- During his visit to Delhi last week, U.S. Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin said an extensive review of the U.S.'s plans for Afghanistan is still under way and that "no decision on the length of stay or troop numbers have been made to this point".





- At a press conference, Mr. Biden said he did not foresee U.S. troops staying in Afghanistan “for a long time” or until 2022, but that adhering to the May 1 commitment at this point would be “hard”. No U.S. troops have been targeted by Taliban militants in the past year, but violence against Afghan civilians, particularly women, journalists, students and activists has gone up manifold, and despite the peace agreement, more than 3,000 civilians were killed in 2020.
- The U.S. has shown some impatience with the Ghani government as well, believing that it is dragging its feet on intra-Afghan negotiations that began last year in Doha but have stalled for the moment. U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken wrote in a letter, which has been leaked and not denied, that Mr. Ghani must understand the “urgency of [his] tone” as he proposed a new peace plan.
- The plan proposes that Mr. Ghani step up negotiations with the Taliban for “power-sharing”, discuss principles of future governance with the Taliban, and step aside eventually for a “more inclusive” or interim government.
- The tone of the letter seems to make it clear that the U.S. is not in favour of completely scrapping the 2020 agreement. Therefore, it is most likely to pursue the option of negotiating for an extension of the agreement, according to experts, as it builds other dialogue platforms.

#### **What are those platforms?**

- Apart from the intra-Afghan negotiations in Doha, the U.S. revealed this month that it has been part of a “Troika” with Russia and China that have met several times since March 2019 along with Pakistan in search of a regional solution.
- The extended Troika met last on March 18 in Moscow, where Turkey, Qatar and Afghan and Taliban leaders were also invited.
- In his letter, Mr. Blinken proposed another mechanism for regional envoys to be led by the United Nations, which would include India and Iran as well. The next round of intra-Afghan Negotiations will be hosted in Istanbul in April, according to Mr. Blinken’s proposal.

#### **What is President Ghani’s plan?**

- Mr. Ghani has proposed his own peace plan. The plan was announced by Afghan Foreign Minister Haneef Atmar during his visit to Delhi this week, where he reached out for support.
- It would involve a full ceasefire, inviting the Taliban to participate in early elections in Afghanistan, and then for Mr. Ghani to hand over power to the elected government.
- Mr. Atmar told The Hindu that the proposal was a “generous” offer from Mr. Ghani, who has completed just a little over a year in his present term as President. He also said no regional talks could be successful if they did not include India, which is a development partner and a stakeholder, and called the Troika meet in Moscow that did not include India, ostensibly due to objections from Pakistan and China, a mistake.

#### **Where does India stand?**

- India’s position has been to back an “Afghan-owned, Afghan-led, Afghan-controlled” peace process, backing the elected government in Kabul, and it has not yet held talks with the Taliban directly.
- As a result, its option remains to stand with the Ghani government and support the constitution that guarantees a democratic process and rights of women and minorities, over any plans the Taliban might have if they come to power.
- At the same time, India has not foreclosed the option of talking to the Taliban if it does join the government in Afghanistan, and, in a first step, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar addressed the Doha inauguration of intra-Afghan talks last year.
- The government has not yet announced a special envoy on Afghanistan who could be a part of the UN-led process for regional countries, but it has made it clear that it seeks to be an integral part of the process, as the outcomes will have a deep impact on India’s security matrix as well.





## **Tackling the period taboo**

(Source: [The Hindu](#) )

**Context:** *In February 2020, college authorities, including the principal, of the Shree Sahajanand Girls Institute (SSGI) in Bhuj, Gujarat, allegedly forced over 60 girls to remove their undergarments to check if they were menstruating. This shocking act, which rightly caused outrage, followed complaints that the girls had entered the temple and kitchen in the premises while on their period, which is against the institute's rules. Four persons were later arrested.*

### **Notions of purity and pollution**

- The stigma attached to menstruation and restrictions in the private and public sphere for the duration of menstruation have long been part of women's lives in India. The stigma finds its roots in the notion of purity and pollution attached historically to menstruation.
- This was explained exceptionally by Justice D.Y. Chandrachud in *Indian Young Lawyers Association v. The State of Kerala* (2018), known popularly as the Sabarimala case, a decision that India is still struggling to accept.
- He reasoned — and rightly so — that any social practice which excludes women from participation in public life as a result of their menstruation is discriminatory on the ground of their sex. This is because it is drawn from the notion of menstruating women being “impure”, a notion which targets the physiological feature of being women.
- The first ground for rejecting such practices is thus differential treatment, which directly discriminates women on the ground of their sex and is impermissible under Article 14 of the Constitution. Viewed from another lens, it is also against the notion of substantive equality adopted by the Constitution. In fact, it supports a more formal notion of equality of ‘separate but equal treatment’.
- Women are treated differently because they have distinct physiological features than men but are nevertheless equal to men. An attractive explanation also used to justify caste discrimination previously is nothing but a guise to perpetuate and exacerbate regressive patriarchal notions of our society and must also be readily dismissed under Article 14.
- That apart, such social exclusion can be attacked on the ground of privacy. Incidents such as what took place in SSGI not only attack the ‘sex’ of women, but also impact a deeply personal and an intrinsic part of their privacy, namely, their menstrual status.
- Restrictions of movement imposed on these students are one of the many attempts of state and non-state actors to take control of their person. It is an outrageous exercise of power to prevent them from leading a dignified life during their period. It is undoubtedly an excessive invasion of a biological feature that makes them women. This surely cannot be the intent of our Constitution and its values we adopted, and needs to change.

### **Court intervention**

- Taking cognisance of the incident at SSGI, the Gujarat High Court, in early March this year, proposed to introduce a set of guidelines that prohibit the social exclusion of menstruating women from private, public, religious and educational places.
- The court also emphasised on the negative impact created by such practices on a woman's emotional state, lifestyle and, most significantly, her health. While surely a ray of hope, the effect of court intervention is yet to be seen in a society where previous decisions of courts categorically holding menstruation to be a part of the fundamental right to (private) life have failed to change societal notions surrounding it.
- The hope for women is that society will slowly but surely get past the taboo around menstruation, and abhorrent practices discriminating against menstruating women will be considered abnormal. That will be a society where no exclusion will be practiced and tolerated, and no discrimination will be perpetrated.



- It will be a society where women can freely live dignified lives, nurturing all facets of their womanhood. And it will be a society where women will be considered neither polluted nor impure during their menstruation, but will be treated with respect.

## **Indo-Myanmar relations**

(Source: [Indian Express](#) )

**Context:** *The unfolding tragedy in Myanmar, occasioned by the military (the Tatmadaw) overturning the election results last month, portends a new cycle of political repression, humanitarian disaster and geopolitical instability. India, because of its proximity to Myanmar, its geopolitical role, and its interests, will inevitably be drawn into the train of events. The most immediate challenge is, of course, dealing with the refugee crisis that this coup occasions.*

### **Details:**

- The Chief Minister of Mizoram, Zoramthanga, was correct in writing to the Centre that India cannot ignore the humanitarian crisis unfolding in our backyard, and remain “indifferent” to the suffering of those crossing the border.
- The Manipur government has, thankfully, withdrawn a shameful circular that would have prohibited providing meaningful assistance to victims of political persecution. This circular, if enacted, would have been terrible for India’s image.
- But how we deal with the victims of this crisis should not be just driven by an exercise in image management, but take the larger humanitarian and political view.
- To state that the rich and powerful nations have not pulled their weight in crafting an adequate multilateral response to the global refugee crisis is to state the obvious. Myanmar’s other neighbours, and especially ASEAN countries, are also unlikely to do the minimal decent thing.
- Helping refugees is also not costless, and the burden has to be shouldered by the nation, not just a few states. But India now risks moving from what B S Chimni, India’s most important scholar on refugee law, once called the transition from “strategic ambiguity to exclusion”.
- This is in keeping with the ideological temper of our times, where the complexities of people’s very human predicaments are effaced by xenophobia, paranoia, and discrimination. No group that is not of use to our new interpretation of nationalism will deserve any consideration.
- The humanitarian case for providing some kind of safe haven for refugees is too obvious to be stated.
- Surely the real test of “Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam” is not opportunistic displays of noblesse oblige, it is adherence to basic norms of decency.
- The principle of non-refoulement, which has been described as the equivalent of the Magna Carta in treatment of those fleeing persecution, has to be the cornerstone of any civilised state’s response to a politically induced humanitarian disaster. It is not clear where India stands on this.
- But there is also a more political case for crafting a more generous and imaginative policy.
  - First, the protests for democracy are widespread, involve young people, and are driven by a genuine opposition to military rule. India has to decide whether it is on the side of the future.
  - Second, Northeastern states like Manipur and Mizoram which will immediately bear the costs of helping refugees, are all, rightly, calling for a more generous and imaginative policy. As Avinash Paliwal, one of the most insightful writers on Myanmar, had argued in an important article, “A Cat’s Paw of Indian Reactionaries: Strategic Rivalry and Domestic Politics at the India-China-Myanmar Tri Junction,” the concerns of the Northeast states have often been historically sidelined in India’s handling of the “trijunction”. This was partly because of counterinsurgency fears, and partly because of suspicion of political forces in the Northeast. But at this historical



juncture, to ignore reasonable and accommodative sentiments in the Northeast, would be to potentially signal their marginality in shaping India's calculations. \

- Third, the counterinsurgency and subversion fears have to be intelligently handled. For one thing, if we are relying only on cooperation with the Myanmar military, without support for the local population, we will once again be setting ourselves up for long-term problems. A broadbased reputation for humanitarian concerns and the welfare of people is a strategic asset, not a liability if you are a long-term player. India should also now have the confidence that it can both politically and militarily handle any risks that occasionally arise in the context of doing the decent thing. But by closing down its borders, it is not sending a signal of strength but one of weakness; that its position is so fragile, that even an adherence to a principle of non-refoulement poses risks.
- Fourth, it is not yet clear what India's position on political developments inside Myanmar will be. With every major power, from Russia to China now seeing Myanmar in terms of geopolitical terms, the stakes for India are going to be high. Admittedly, the choices are not easy. The Myanmar military, belying all analyses, has remained mostly united and oppressive.
- We know from historical experience that unless there is significant elite division in military structures, they can hang on for a long time through brutal repression. Myanmar's tragedy seems to be that its people seem more ready for democracy. But its military seems more repressive, and its elites, including
- Aung San Suu Kyi, have been more conservative in harnessing democratic and progressive impulses. There is also the brute fact that now with even Russia in the mix, the Myanmar military may have more options for support.
- So under such circumstances, it will be tempting for the so-called realists in India to deeply engage with the military. There is also a great deal of exaggeration about Myanmar's economic importance to India. Certainly, connectivity and trade with Myanmar provide momentum for India's eastward interests.
- But frankly, it will be a stretch to say that somehow the benefits from engagement with Myanmar are so great that India cannot put them aside, if the need arises, to act on a modicum of principle.
- Presumably, India wants to be a key interlocutor in two contexts. It wants to be a key player in shaping a global response to the crisis. And it wants to have, perhaps, some role in, if possible, helping with a settlement towards a less repressive transition within Myanmar.
- But for both of those roles, it is important that India has widespread credibility with the different groups and movements inside Myanmar. That is what will give India potential advantage. But it is also important that your own positions are not seen just as a product of strategic cynicism, willing to trade any larger consideration for small short-term gains.
- For both of these contexts, the exemplariness of India's conduct matters. That is how we differentiate ourselves from the crowded geopolitical pack. By sidelining even the most basic humanitarian impulses, under a myopically realist or xenophobic impulse, India will neither realise its ideals nor its strategic objectives.

### **A step that enhances cooperative federalism**

(Source: [The Hindu](http://www.thehindu.com) )

**Context:** On January 17, 2017, the Lieutenant Governor of Delhi wrote to the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Delhi stating that the President of India had considered the Delhi Netaji Subhas University of Technology Bill, 2015 and directed that it be returned to the Legislative Assembly of Delhi. One of the reasons stated for the return was the inconsistent definition of the term "Government." In June 2015, when the Legislative Assembly of Delhi had passed the Delhi Netaji Subhas University of Technology Bill and sent it for the President's assent, it had defined the term "Government" as the "Government of the National Capital Territory of Delhi."

### **Formalises the definition**

- After the Bill was returned, the Delhi Assembly sent a modified version of the Bill for the President's assent where the definition of "government" was described as: "Lieutenant Governor of NCT Delhi appointed by the President."
- Last week, both Houses of Parliament voted overwhelmingly in favour of the amendments to the Government of the National Capital Territory (NCT) of Delhi Act.
- The aim of the amendments were to clear such ambiguities in the roles of various stakeholders and provide a constructive rule-based framework for stakeholders within the Government of Delhi to work in tandem with the Union Government. One of the changes made was to bring consistency in the definition of the term "Government".
- In this instance, the government was only formalising the definition of a term that the Delhi Assembly itself had already accepted. This rule-based framework is especially important given that Delhi is also India's national capital and the symbolism that comes with being the seat of the sovereign power.

### **Partners not adversaries**

- The National Democratic Alliance Government, under the leadership of the Prime Minister, has completely transformed Centre-State relationships.
- At the core of this transformation is the outlook that States — and by extension the Chief Ministers of the States — are partners in the national agenda, and hence must have platforms and frameworks available to work together.
- In earlier governments we saw State Chief Ministers queuing up in front of unelected officials in the erstwhile Planning Commission supplicating for grants.
- The creation of NITI Aayog, the establishment of the Goods and Services Tax Council, the restructuring of central schemes and accepting the Fifteenth Finance Commission's recommendations for greater devolution are clear examples of the Union Government viewing States as equal partners.

### **A legislative right**

- This partnership requires an environment of trust and mutual co-operation. A necessary condition for such an environment is the distinct delineation of roles and responsibilities, the removal of ambiguities, and the definition of a clear chain of command among stakeholders.
- In this regard, it was important to define, without doubt, who represents the Government in the unique case of Delhi.
- On December 20, 1991, Home Minister S.B. Chavan tabled the Constitution Amendment Bill in the Lok Sabha to add Articles 239AA and 239AB into the Constitution that paved the way for the creation of a Legislative Assembly and a Council of Ministers for the National Capital Territory (NCT) of Delhi.
- This amendment passed in 1991 empowers Parliament to enact laws supplementing constitutional provisions. Similarly, the Government of NCT Delhi also has the power to enact laws regarding matters specified under the State list and Concurrent list, to the extent these are applicable to a Union Territory.
- It becomes important to ensure there is complete synchronisation between the Union Government and the Government of NCT Delhi and that there is no encroachment in legislative matters. In the case of the Government of NCT Delhi, it has no legislative competence in matters pertaining to the police, public order, and land. The risk of incremental encroachments on these subjects in the legislative proposals under consideration of the Delhi Legislative Assembly can have severe ramifications for Delhi.
- Thus, for the Opposition to portray a government exercising its constitutional responsibilities as an undemocratic act shows a wilful lack of understanding.
- The national capital hosts the country's legislature, the seat of the Union Government, the judiciary, diplomatic missions, and other institutions of national importance. It deserves smooth functioning and cannot be subject to misadventures arising from the ambiguities in the roles and responsibilities of its stakeholders.





### A functioning relationship

- While some in the Opposition have accused the government of undermining the federal structure of the country, others have painted an even darker picture proclaiming the death of democracy itself. Nothing can be farther from the truth.
- Making Delhi Assembly rules consistent with the rules of the Lok Sabha or ensuring that the opinion of the Lieutenant Governor is taken can only ensure clarity and foster an environment of co-operation. In no manner do these amendments dilute or affect the powers of the Delhi Legislative Assembly.
- Various court judgments have also observed the ambiguities and lack of clarity. The people of Delhi deserve a functioning government, and the amendments made aid in creating such an environment.

### **Enactment of the Places of Worship Act, 1991**

(Source: [The Hindu](#) )

**Context:** A public interest litigation (PIL) in the Supreme Court (WP(C) 619 of 2020, which was filed earlier but notice was issued later vide order of the Supreme Court dated March 26, 2021), challenged Sections 3 and 4 of the Places of Worship Act, 1991 being unconstitutional, void ab initio, and against the Basic Structure of the Constitution of India.

### No precedential value

- Mr. Dave has relied mainly on the Supreme Court's observation in the Ram Janmabhoomi Case of November 9, 2019 (M. Siddiq vs. Mahant Suresh Das) with respect to the Places of Worship Act, 1991. However, there was no application of the provisions of the Places of Worship Act, 1991 to the case (Shri Ram Janmabhoomi dispute).
- Section 5 of the Places of Worship Act, 1991 clearly states that nothing in the Act shall apply to any suit, appeal or other proceedings relating to the said place or place of worship, i.e. the Ram-Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid situated in Ayodhya, in the State of Uttar Pradesh. Thereby, the 2019 judgment of the Supreme Court's (Shri Ram Janmabhoomi dispute (2020 1 SCC 1)) observation(s) with respect to the Places of Worship Act, 1991 lacks any precedential value.
- The pith and substance of the Act of 1991 is that it is ultra vires the fundamental rights enshrined in the Constitution since it bars the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court and furthermore nullifies the Fundamental Right(s) guaranteed by the Constitution of India as elucidated in Article 32 of "enforcement of fundamental rights" which cannot be suspended except as otherwise stated in the Constitution.
- This importance of Article 32 can be understood by the words of the Chairman of the Constitution Drafting Committee, B.R. Ambedkar who asserted, inter alia, that Article 32 is the very soul of the Constitution and the most important Article in the Constitution.
- Under Article 32 of the Constitution of India, the Supreme Court has the power to issue writs appropriate for enforcement of all the Fundamental rights conferred by Part III of the Constitution.
- The top court, on various instances, ruled that in view of the constitutional scheme and the jurisdiction conferred on the Supreme Court under Article 32 and on the High Courts under Article 226 of the Constitution that "the power of judicial review being an integral part of the basic structure of the Constitution, no Act of Parliament can exclude or curtail the powers of the Constitutional Courts with regard to the enforcement of fundamental rights".
- The Act of 1991, is appropriately called an Act of colourable legislation. As the Courts have held, "you cannot do indirectly which you are prohibited from doing directly".

### A weakening





- The Preamble in the Constitution gives prominent importance to liberty of belief, faith and worship to all citizens, and the same is sought to be weakened and effectively nullified or severely damaged by the enactment of the Act of 1991 in its current format.
- The concepts of faith, belief and worship are the foundations of Articles 25 and 26 of the Constitution of India. Therefore, prohibiting citizens from approaching appropriate courts with respect to suit or any other proceedings to handover the land of any temple of certain essential significance (such as being the birthplace of Lord Rama in Ayodhya and Lord Krishna in Mathura or Lord Shiva sending his fiery Jyotirlinga in the Gyanvapi premises of Varanasi), is arbitrary, unreasonable and mala fide in the context of the fundamental rights to pray and perform religious practice as guaranteed by Articles 25 and 26 of the Constitution of India.
- The intent of the Act of 1991 under Section 5, i.e. exception extended to the “Ram-Janmbhoomi matter” identifies the need and importance of resolution of such a controversy and settling long on-going disputes before the courts. But such an exception should be made for other two matters of dispute stated above.

### Other disputes

- The exclusion of the Mathura and Varanasi disputes as being additional exceptions from the Act of 1991 is wholly unacceptable and against what is given by the people of India to the makers of the Constitution, enshrined in the Preamble, which is part of the Basic Structure of the Constitution.
- Those who rely on the Act of 1991 to avoid the settlement of the dispute in Varanasi Mathura have failed to anticipate the legal principles enunciated in the judgment of the top court (in Ismail Faruqui vs. Union of India (1994 6 SCC 360)), on the religious significance of mosques and temples.
- Even in countries like Saudia Arabia, only Mecca and Medina have the immutable religious protection from demolition. And only authorised demolition is permitted.
- Section 4 (1) of the Act declaring that religious character of a place of worship existing on the 15th day of August, 1947 shall continue to be the same as it existed on that day, is no longer good law after this Court’s judgment in ((1994) 6 SCC 360) which held that a mosque is not an essential part of the practice of the religion of Islam and namaz (prayer) by Muslims can be offered anywhere, even in the open maidan, on the road, railway platforms or airports.
- Ultimately, students of law are also students of history and we must not lose sight of the past. We must learn from it. But we accept one sentiment of Mr. Dave — that we cannot open the flood gates of rebuilding all 40,000 temples which were demolished on firmans of the Mughal emperors.
- Yet, where by faith Hindus believe there was a forcible demolition of an irreplaceable non-shiftable temple, it has to be rebuilt. There are only two more such temples in the list of 40,000 — the Gyanvapi Kashi Vishwanath Temple in Varanasi and the Krishna Janmabhoomi Temple in Mathura.
- Hence, by the doctrine of casus omissus, the Supreme Court can in an appropriate case before it order that the number of exceptions in Section 5 of the Places of Worship Act, 1991, be three as an alternative solution. The Supreme Court under Article 142 of the Constitution can pass any order to carry out for doing complete justice being in the public interest, while upholding the Constitution of India.

## GS III

### NGT order on pollution control bodies

(Source: [Down to Earth](#) )

**Context:** The National Green Tribunal (NGT), in a landmark judgement, directed Haryana State Pollution Control Board (HSPCB) March 23, 2021 to strengthen its capacity, both in terms of human resource and

*setting up of modern laboratories. The order was to ensure better monitoring for improved compliance of environmental norms. NGT also directed the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) to prepare recruitment rules to be followed by all states, mechanism for annual performance audit of SPCBs or pollution control committees (PCC), among other things.*

### **Highlights of the order**

- Inspection at higher frequencies
- Capacity enhancement of SPCBs/PCCs with consent funds
- Capacity enhancement of CPCB utilising environment compensation funds
- Annual performance audit of state PCBs/PCCs
- CPCB to prepare a format containing qualifications, minimum eligibility criteria and required experience for key positions
- The important part of the judgement is asking CPCB to come out with standard recruitment rules which can be followed by all states. The existing SPCBs recruitment rules have not been updated for decades. The result is if they want to hire a communication officer or health officer, they cannot do so as recruitment rules do not allow. Also, the salary structure mentioned in decade old recruitment rules is not appropriate even for the position of the clerk, forget about qualified graduates and engineers.
- The order is the latest among a slew of similar directives from the green court. In February, NGT asked all the states and Union territories to fill up vacant posts, commission and upgrade laboratories using environmental compensation funds.

### **Case background**

- In 2018, a case was filed with NGT's principal bench for revising existing monitoring mechanism by SPCBs. This included interval of mandatory inspections of 'highly polluting 17 category', 'red', 'orange' and 'green' category industries and policy for auto renewal of consent to operate (CTO) certificate under Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974 as well as the Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981.
- The plea pointed out that an earlier report of the Central Ground Water Board (CGWB) had established deterioration of the ground water quality in Haryana. The Comptroller and Auditor General of India's 2016 report also recorded operation of several projects without valid consent to establish or CTO certificates, showing ineffectiveness of monitoring mechanism.
- In response, the tribunal sought a report from a joint committee of the CPCB, Haryana State PCB, Central Ground Water Authority and District Administration. Their report pointed out that the existing inspection intervals for industries in 'highly polluting 17', 'red' and 'orange' categories are three, five and seven years, respectively.
- The units also have provisions for auto-renewal of CTO. The report highlighted large-scale violation of environmental norms.
- The NGT passed an order for the Haryana government to revisit its inspection policy and make it adequate to ensure effective enforcement of law.
- The Haryana government, in compliance to the NGT order, proposed a revised policy with increased frequency of inspection, installation of online monitoring devices to capture real-time data and pre-verification of documents before issuing renewal.

### **Proposed frequency of inspection by Haryana government**



Periodicity/frequency of Inspection					
	Highly polluting 17 category and red category of units	Red category other the 17 category	Orange category	Green Category	CBWTF/CHWSRDF/CMSWTDF/CETP/STP
Existing policy	3 years	5 years	7 years	7 years	Once in three months
Provisions suggested in the CS meeting held on 25.05.2019	1 year	1 year	2 years	3 years	Once in three months

However, the NGT was of the opinion that the interval period between inspections be further reduced for 'highly polluting 17 category', 'red category' and 'orange category' industries.

#### Frequency of mandatory inspections directed by NGT

Industry Category	Frequency of Inspection
Highly polluting 17 Category	3 months
Other Red Category	6 months
Orange Category	1 year
Green Category	2 years
CBWTF/CHWSRDF/ CMSWTDF/CETP/STP	3 months

(Source: NGT order dated March 23, 2021)

- The NGT directed CPCB to follow these timelines for other states as well. To meet this increased frequency of inspections, the NGT additionally directed SPCBs/PCCs to undertake capacity enhancement.

#### Removing bottlenecks

- Various reports, committees and meetings have been organised since the formation of SPCBs to strengthen it. Lack of human resource at SPCB and CPCB was the highlighted issue but neither the central government nor the state government made efforts to resolve this.
- In the name of 'ease of doing business', powers and authorities of SPCB have been compromised. The latest judgement of NGT is a fresh start to the long-delayed initiative of strengthening CPCB/SPCBs/PCCs.
- "The judgment of NGT could be termed as landmark. The NGT have tried to erase the bottlenecks, which were being used to halt the strengthening of environmental regulatory," said Nivit Kumar Yadav, director, industrial pollution research, Centre for Science and Environment, a Delhi-based non-profit.

## **Permanent commission for women in Army**

(Source: [The Hindu](#) )

**Context:** *The Supreme Court in Secretary, Ministry of Defence vs. Babita Puniya last February directed the government to ensure that women officers in the Army are granted permanent commission (PC) as well as command postings in all services other than combat. Later, questioning the compliance of the Army with the directions in the judgment, around 80 women short service commission officers approached the Supreme Court challenging the arbitrary process, including unjust medical standards, applied to deny permanent commission to women officers. On March 25, the Supreme Court in Lt. Col. Nitisha vs. Union of India held that the Army's selective evaluation process discriminated against and disproportionately affected women officers seeking permanent commission.*

### **What did the Supreme Court observe?**

- A Bench led by Justice D.Y. Chandrachud observed that the pattern of evaluation inherently caused economic and psychological harm to women short service commission officers. The judgment, authored by Justice Chandrachud, said the evaluation criteria set by the Army constituted “systemic discrimination” against the petitioners.
- The Bench found several deviations in the standards adopted by the Army for evaluating women officers.
- “This disproportionate impact is attributable to the structural discrimination against women, by dint of which the facially neutral criteria of selective ACR [annual confidential reports] evaluation and fulfilling the medical criteria to be in SHAPE-1 at a belated stage, to secure PC [permanent commission] disproportionately impacts them vis-à-vis their male counterparts,” the court said in its judgment.
- Fitness is assessed under five categories, under the code letter SHAPE that includes psychological including cognitive function abnormalities, hearing, appendages, physical capacity and eyesight.
- The court observed that the reliance placed on women officers’ ACRs for determining the grant of permanent commission was unfair.

### **What is the procedure for granting permanent commission?**

- In 1992, the Union Government issued a notification making women eligible for appointment as officers in select non-combat branches. In 2008, the government extended the permanent commission to women in two branches — Judge Advocate General (JAG) and Army Educational Corps (AEC).
- In a long legal battle for equality, 322 women officers had approached the top court for granting permanent commission, and the Supreme Court delivered its landmark verdict in February 2020.
- In July 2020, the Defence Ministry issued the government sanction letter, specifying grant of permanent commission to women officers in all streams in which they are presently serving — Army Air Defence (AAD), Signals, Engineers, Army Aviation, Electronics and Mechanical Engineers (EME), Army Service Corps (ASC), Army Ordnance Corps (AOC) and Intelligence Corps.

### **How did the Army respond to the sanction letter?**

- Following the sanction letter, the Army constituted a special selection board for screening women officers for grant of permanent commission who joined the service through the Women Special Entry Scheme (WSES) and Short Service Commission Women (SSCW).
- Of the 365 optee officers who were considered fit for permanent commission by the Special No. 5 Selection Board, 277 women short service commission officers (WSSCOs) were granted permanent commission after medical scrutiny.
- However, some petitioners said the process followed was arbitrary and challenged it in the top court.

### **What are the fresh directives?**



- The Supreme Court noted that the Army's process of benchmarking women officers against the officers lowest in merit in the corresponding male batch is "irrational and arbitrary", and said this requirement should be removed.
- All women officers who have fulfilled the cut-off grade of 60% in the Special Selection Board held in September 2020 shall be entitled to the grant of permanent commission, the judgment said, subject to their meeting the prescribed medical criteria and receiving disciplinary and vigilance clearance.
- "In the spirit of true equality with their male counterparts in the corresponding batches, the WSSCOs must be considered medically fit for grant of PC by reliance on their medical fitness, as recorded in the 5th or 10th year of their service," the court said.
- Other than "non-optees", the cases of all WSSCOs, including the petitioners who have been rejected on medical grounds, shall be reconsidered within a month and orders for the grant of permanent commission must be issued within two months.
- Further, the court directed that the method of evaluation of ACRs and the cut-off must be reviewed for future batches to assess a disproportionate impact on WSSCOs who became eligible for the grant of permanent commission in the subsequent years of their service.
- Also, for the Babita Puniya case, the court held that for officers within the service bracket of 10 to 14 years who have been denied permanent commission, it has allowed them to continue in service till they attain 20 years of pensionable service.



## Current Affairs Quiz

1) Tiau River divides boundary of India with -

- a) Myanmar
- b) Pakistan
- c) Nepal
- d) Bangladesh

**Answer: a**

2) Consider the following statements with respect to Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme:

- 1. It provides 100 days of guaranteed wage employment to rural unskilled labour
- 2. Recently it was announced that the workers under the MGNREGA would get a hike of Rs. 2000 each on an average

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

**Answer : c**

3) Which of the following statements is/are correct with respect to POCSO Act?

- 1. "Children" according to the Act are individuals aged below 18 years.
- 2. The Act is gender-specific and gives more emphasis on female children.

Select the correct answer code:

- a. 1 only
- b. 2 only
- c. Both 1 and 2
- d. Neither 1 nor 2

**Answer : a**

The Act is gender-neutral.

4) Consider the following statements with respect to Overseas Citizen of India (OCI):

- 1. An Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) is a person who is technically a citizen of another country having an Indian origin.
- 2. They were citizens of India on 26th January 1950 or thereafter living in any country around the globe.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

**Answer : a**

They were citizens of India on 26th January 1950 or thereafter except who is or had been a citizen of Pakistan, Bangladesh.

5) The 6<sup>th</sup> schedule of Indian Constitution deals with-

- a) provisions in relation to the allocation of seats for States and Union Territories in the Rajya Sabha
- b) provisions in relation to the administration and control of scheduled areas and scheduled tribes
- c) provisions in relation to the administration of tribal areas in the states of Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram
- d) provisions relating to disqualification of the members of Parliament and State Legislatures on the ground of defection.

Answer: c

6) Article 244(A), recently in news, deals with-

- a) creation of an 'autonomous state' within Assam in certain tribal areas.
- b) creation of an 'autonomous state' within Nagaland in certain tribal areas.
- c) Both a and b
- d) Neither a nor b

Ans. a)

7) Whitsun reef, recently in news is located in -

- a. Brunei
- b. Myanmar
- c. Malaysia
- d. Philippines

Answer : d

China's aggressive expansion in the region has found a new ground, Whitsun Reef, where 220 Chinese vessels are currently moored though the area, which comes under the Philippines' Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ).

8) Prakash Singh Judgment, recently in news is related to-

- a) Police reforms
- b) Electoral Reforms
- c) Educational Reforms
- d) Civil Service Reforms

Answer : a

9) Which of these is/are not included in the Eight Core Sector Industries?

- 1. Crude Oil
- 2. Iron Ore
- 3. Fertilizers

Select the correct answer code:

- a) 1 and 2 only
- b) 2 only
- c) 1 and 3 only
- d) 3 only

Ans. b)

Eight Core Industries are Electricity, steel, refinery products, crude oil, coal, cement, natural gas and fertilizers.

10) Consider the following statements regarding International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

1. IAEA is entrusted with the task of upholding the principles of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty of 1970.
2. IAEA works with its member states and multiple partners worldwide to promote the safe, secure and peaceful use of nuclear technologies.
3. Established under the UN treaty, the agency reports to both the UN General Assembly and the UN Security Council.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- a. 1 and 2 only
- b. 2 and 3 only
- c. 3 and 4 only
- d. All of the above

Answer : a

Though established independently of the UN through its own international treaty, the agency reports to both the UN General Assembly and the Security Council.

11. Consider the following statements with respect to military farms:

1. The farms were set up with the sole requirement of supplying hygienic cow milk to troops in garrisons across British India.
2. The first military farm was raised on February 1, 1889, at Madras.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Answer. a)

The **first military farm was raised on February 1, 1889, at Allahabad.**

12) Consider the following statements with respect to inflation targeting in India:

1. The inflation target for the period April 1, 2021, to March 31, 2026 has been kept at the same level as it was for the previous five years.
2. The Centre has decided to retain the inflation target of 4% without any tolerance band.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Answer. a)

The **Centre has decided to retain the inflation target of 4%, with a tolerance band of +/- 2 percentage points** for the Monetary Policy Committee of the RBI for the coming five years

13) Which of the following statements is/are correct with respect to PRISM Scheme which has been launched recently?

1. It is an initiative to promote and support science-based deep-tech startups & ventures across India.
2. It was launched by the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research (DSIR), Ministry of Science and Technology.

Select the correct answer code:

- a. 1 only
- b. 2 only
- c. Both 1 and 2
- d. Neither 1 nor 2

Answer : b

- It aimed at transforming an individual innovator into a successful technopreneur by promoting, supporting, and funding implementable and commercially viable innovations created for the society.
- Under the initiative, an innovator of Indian nationality - student, professional and common citizen - is provided technical, strategic, and financial assistance by DSIR-PRISM for idea development, prototype development and pilot scaling, and patenting.

14) Which of the following statements is/are correct with respect to the recently launched AIM-PRIME Programme?

1. It is an initiative to promote and support science-based deep-tech startups & ventures across India.
2. It was launched by the Atal Innovation Mission (AIM) and NITI Aayog.

Which of the statement(s) given above is/are correct?

- a. 1 only
- b. 2 only
- c. Both 1 and 2
- d. Neither 1 nor 2

Answer : c

15. Global Gender Gap Report, 2021 was released by?

- a. UNESCO
- b. World Bank
- c. World Economic Forum
- d. UN Development Programme

Answer : c

16. Which of the following describes the provisions of Article 244 (A) of Indian Constitution?

- a. Grant of Special Funds to Tribal Areas
- b. Functioning of Panchayats in Tribal Areas
- c. Autonomous powers to Tribal Areas
- d. Regulations for certain Union Territories

Answer : c

17. Who among the following is being awarded with the Dadasaheb Phalke Award for the year 2021?

- a) Amitabh Bacchan
- b) Dharmendra
- c) Asha Bhosle
- d) Rajinikanth

Answer. d)

18 Consider the following statements with respect to Dadasaheb Phalke Award:

1. Instituted in 1969, the award is the highest honour for an artiste in Indian cinema.
2. It is presented annually at the National Film Awards Ceremony by the Directorate of Film Festivals, an organisation of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting.
3. After Amitabh Bachchan received the award in 2018, there had been no nominee for the past three years

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a) 1 and 2 only
- b) 1 and 3 only
- c) 2 and 3 only
- d) 1, 2 and 3

Ans. d)

19) Which of the following countries is/are not a member of Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation?

3. Bangladesh
4. Myanmar
5. Thailand
6. India
7. Pakistan
8. China

Select the correct answer code:

- a) 1, 2, 3 and 5 only
- b) 3, 4 and 5 only
- c) 4, 5 and 6 only
- d) 5 and 6 only

Answer : d

Member states

- Bangladesh
- Bhutan
- India
- Nepal
- Sri Lanka
- Myanmar
- Thailand

20. Consider the following statements with respect to Bills passed in Parliament:

1. Any member of the Parliament can oppose the introduction of a bill by stating that it initiates legislation outside the legislative competence of the Parliament.
2. All Government bills automatically go to Parliamentary committees for examination.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Answer : a



**Government bills do not automatically go to committees for examination.** Ministers get an option to refer their bill to a select committee.

