



# Civils Cafe

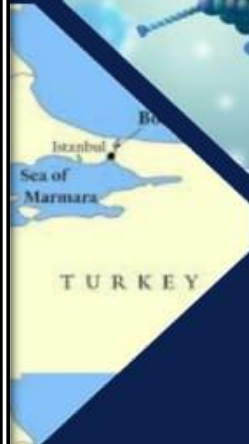
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## IMPORTANT CURRENT AFFAIRS FOR PRELIMS VOL 35

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SCAN TO EXPLORE





**IMPORTANT CURRENT AFFAIRS**

**FOR PRELIMS VOL - 35**

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## INDIAN POLITY

**1) SPECIAL ASSISTANCE MEASURES EXTENDED TO ANDHRA PRADESH**

**IN NEWS:** - The government has informed the Lok Sabha that it has extended a special package in lieu of the Special Category Status (SCS) to Andhra Pradesh.

**SIGNIFICANCE OF SPECIAL ASSISTANCE MEASURES**

The special assistance measure would make up for the additional Central share the State might have received during 2015-16 to 2019-20, if the funding of Centrally Sponsored Schemes (CSS) would have been shared at the ratio of 90:10 between the Centre and the State.

**SPECIAL CATEGORY STATUS**

- Andhra Pradesh has revived its demand for Special Category Status (SCS).
- It was the bifurcation promise and 15th Finance Commission report that stated that 'grant of SCS lies in the hands of the Centre'. SCS was promised to Andhra Pradesh by the then Congress government at the Centre in 2014, at the time of bifurcation which resulted in the formation of Telangana.
- The then Opposition party BJP too agreed to it and even stated that SCS would be extended by five more years if it was voted to power.
- There is no provision of SCS in the Constitution; the Central government extends financial assistance to states that are at a comparative disadvantage against others.
- This classification was done on the recommendations of the Fifth Finance Commission in 1969.
- It was based on the Gadgil formula. The parameters for SCS were:
  - Hilly Terrain;
  - Low Population Density And/Or Sizeable Share of Tribal Population;

- Strategic Location along Borders With Neighbouring Countries;
- Economic and Infrastructure Backwardness; and
- Nonviable Nature of State finances.
- Some prominent guidelines for getting SCS status:
  - Must be economically backward with poor infrastructure.
  - The states must be located in hilly and challenging terrain.
  - They should have low population density and significant tribal population.
  - Should be strategically situated along the borders of neighboring countries.
- Special Category Status for plan assistance was granted in the past by the National Development Council to the States that are characterized by a number of features necessitating special consideration. Now, it is done by the central government.
- Benefits: Besides tax breaks and other benefits, the State with SCS will get 90% of all the expenditure on Centrally sponsored schemes as Central grant. The rest of the 10% will also be given as a loan at zero percent interest.

## 2) GOOD GOVERNANCE INDEX

**IN NEWS:** - Good Governance Index 2021 was launched on the occasion of the Good Governance Day (December 25).

### ABOUT GOOD GOVERNANCE INDEX

- Prepared by the Department of Administration Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG).
- The objectives of GGI are to provide quantifiable data to compare the state of governance in all states and union territories, enable them to formulate and implement suitable strategies for improving governance and shift to result oriented approaches and administration.

- The GGI 2021 framework covered 10 sectors and 58 indicators:
- The sectors are agriculture and allied sectors, commerce and industries, human resource development, public health, public infrastructure and utilities, economic governance, social welfare and development, judicial and public security, environment and citizen-centric governance.
- The GGI 2020-21 categorizes states and union territories into four categories: Other states – Group A; other states – group B; North-East and hill states and union territories.

**Performance of various states:**

- Gujarat has topped the composite ranking, followed by Maharashtra and Goa.
- As many as 20 states have improved their composite GGI scores in 2021.
- Delhi has topped the union territories category composite ranking.
- Among the sectors, Uttar Pradesh secured top position in the commerce and industry sector.
- In the Northeast and Hill States category, Mizoram, and Jammu and Kashmir have registered an overall increase of 10.4 per cent and 3.7 per cent respectively over GGI 2019.

**PRACTICE QUESTION**

Consider the following statements

1. Good Governance Index is prepared by the NITI Aayog
2. The Good Governance Day is celebrated on December 25

Which among the above statements are correct?

- a. 1 only
- b. 2 only
- c. Both 1 and 2
- d. Neither 1 or 2

**Answer: - b**



### 3) ANTI CONVERSION LAWS

**IN NEWS:** - The Karnataka Protection of Right to Freedom of Religion Bill, 2021 was introduced in the state assembly of Karnataka. The Bill prohibits conversion from one religion to another by misrepresentation, force, fraud, allurement or marriage. Other States like Arunachal Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand have also passed laws restricting religious conversion.

#### MAJOR HIGHLIGHTS OF THE BILL

- **Penal Provision:** The offense of conversion is cognisable and non-bailable offense.
  - It will attract a jail term of three to five years and a fine of Rs 25,000 for people found violating the law and a jail term of three to 10 years, and a fine of Rs. 50,000 for people converting minors, women and persons from the SC and ST communities.
- **Locus Standi Doesn't Apply:** According to the proposed legislation, complaints of conversions can be filed by family members or relatives or any person in association.
  - **Exemption:** The Bill provides an exemption in the case of a person who “reconverts to his immediate previous religion” as “the same shall not be deemed to be a conversion under this Act”.
- **Provision for Willing Person:** After the law comes into force, any person intending to convert to another religion will have to inform the district magistrate at least thirty days in advance.
  - This will be followed by an inquiry to be conducted by the district magistrate through the police to establish the real intent of conversion.

- Not informing the district magistrate will lead to the conversion being declared null and void.

### **Anti-Conversion Laws in India:**

- **Constitutional Provision:** The Indian Constitution under Article 25 guarantees the freedom to profess, propagate, and practise religion, and allows all religious sections to manage their own affairs in matters of religion; subject to public order, morality, and health.
- However, no person shall force their religious beliefs and consequently, no person should be forced to practice any religion against their wishes.
- **Existing Laws:** There has been no central legislation restricting or regulating religious conversions.
- However, since 1954, on multiple occasions, Private Member Bills have been introduced in (but never approved by) the Parliament, to regulate religious conversions.
- Further, in 2015, the Union Law Ministry stated that Parliament does not have the legislative competence to pass anti-conversion legislation.
- Over the years, several states have enacted 'Freedom of Religion' legislation to restrict religious conversions carried out by force, fraud, or inducements.

## **INTERNAL SECURITY AND DEFENCE**

### **4) PRALAY MISSILE**

**IN NEWS:** - The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) has successfully conducted maiden flight test of a new indigenously developed surface-to-surface missile 'Pralay'. The missile was tested from the Dr A.P.J. Abdul Kalam Island off the coast of Odisha.

### **ABOUT PRALAY MISSILE**

- Pralay' is India's first conventional quasi-ballistic missile and is an answer to any conventional missile attack from northern or western borders.

- A quasi-ballistic missile has a low trajectory, and while it is largely ballistic, it can maneuver in flight.
- The missile has been developed in a way that it is able to defeat the interceptor missiles and also has the ability to change its path after covering a certain range mid-air.
- It is powered with a solid propellant rocket motor and many new technologies.
- The missile guidance system includes state-of-the-art navigation system and integrated avionics.
- It is a derivative of the Pahaar missile programme, which was first tested in 2011.
- Pahaar is a surface-to-surface missile with a range of 150 km.
- Primary objective is to bridge the gap between the unguided Pinaka multi-barrel rocket launcher and the guided Prithvi missile variants.
- The missile has a range of 150-500 kilometre and can be launched from a mobile launcher.
- Pralay will be the longest-range surface-to-surface missile in the inventory of the Army.
- The Army also has the BrahMos supersonic cruise missile in its arsenal, with a stated range of 290-plus kilometres.

## 5) ASIGMA

**IN NEWS:** - The Indian Army launched a contemporary messaging application named ASIGMA.

### ABOUT ASIGMA

- ASIGMA stands for Army Secure IndiGeneous Messaging Application.
- It is a new generation, state-of-the-art, web based application developed entirely in-house by team of officers of the Corps of Signals of the Army.



- The application is being deployed on the Army's internal network as a replacement of Army Wide Area Network messaging application which has been in service for past the 15 years.
- The application has been fielded on Army owned hardware.
- It has a variety of contemporary features including multi-level security, message prioritisation and tracking.
- This messaging application meets real time data transfer and messaging requirements of the Army, especially in the backdrop of current geo political security environment.
- It is in line with the Government's Make in India initiative.

## 6) MODERNISATION OF POLICE FORCES

**IN NEWS:** - To improve the quality of forensics, policing and weapons, the Centre has approved the continuation of a mega police modernisation scheme for five years (up to 2025-26) with a financial outlay of Rs 26,275 crore.

### ABOUT MODERNISATION OF POLICE FORCES

- Scheme for Modernisation of Police Forces (MPF Scheme) has been implemented by the union government since 1969-70 for reforming the state police forces.
- The government has approved the continuation of the umbrella scheme of Modernisation of Police Forces (MPF).
- The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) is responsible for implementing the Modernization of Police Forces (MPF) Scheme.
- It also aims to “strengthen the criminal justice system by developing a robust forensic set-up in India”.
- It is a centrally sponsored scheme.

- More than Rs 18,000 crore of this money will go towards security related expenditure in Jammu and Kashmir, Left Wing Extremism areas and the Northeast.

### **HISTORY OF MODERNISATION OF POLICE FORCE**

- The police reforms were introduced in the pre-independence era by the British government in 1902-1903.
- After independence, in 1977, the Indian government set up a committee “National Police Commission”. This was the first committee at the national level set up by the Indian government to report on policing.
- The NPC produced eight reports between 1979 and 1981, suggesting wide-ranging reforms in the existing police setup.
- One of the most important recommendations is about the Model Police Act but it was not accepted by the government.
- In 1996 one former DGP of Uttar Pradesh filed public interest litigation in the Supreme Court and demanded police reforms.
- In a landmark judgment, Prakash Singh Case, the Supreme Court in September 2006 had directed all States and Union Territories to bring in police reforms.
- In this judgment, the Supreme Court directed States and Union Territories to comply with seven binding directives which would kick-start the reforms.
- Post-2006: Supreme Court created Justice Thomas Committee to review the seven directives (stated by Supreme Court).
- In 2012-2013 Justice J.S. Verma committee was constituted to recommend amendments to the criminal law so as to provide for quicker trial and enhanced punishment for criminally accused of committing sexual assault against women – after nirbhaya scandal.
- This committee has recommended certain steps to reform the police, which include the establishment of the State Security Commission to ensure that

the state government does not influence the state police, which should be headed by the Chief Minister or Home Minister and also stated the seven directives of the Supreme Court.

## **7) NATIONAL MARITIME SECURITY COORDINATOR**

**IN NEWS:** - Two decades after the Kargil Group of Ministers' recommendation, the Central government shall create and appoint a National Maritime Security Coordinator (NMSC) with the objective of enhancing security architecture and energy security of India.

### **ABOUT NATIONAL MARITIME SECURITY COORDINATOR**

- The maritime security coordinator will work under the NSA and will be the principal adviser to the government on the maritime security domain.
- The NMSC will head the National Maritime Commission (NMC), which will coordinate with all organisations such as the Indian Navy, the Indian Coast Guard (ICG), the shipping ministries and the ports. The security coordinator is likely to report to the National Security Advisor (NSA)
- Setting up the National Maritime Security Coordinator (NMSC) aims to create an interface between the civilian and military maritime domains to enhance India's security architecture and energy security.

### **ABOUT NATIONAL SECURITY ADVISOR**

- The NSA is the senior official on the National Security Council (NSC) of India.
- S/he is the chief adviser to PM on national and international security policy.
- He also advises the Prime Minister on all matters relating to internal and external threats and opportunities to India.
- He oversees strategic and sensitive issues on behalf of the Prime Minister.
- He also serves as the Prime Minister's Special Interlocutor with China as well as the envoy to Pakistan and Israel on security affairs.

- NSA is assisted by the Deputy National Security Advisers.

### PRACTICE QUESTION

Consider the following statements

1. The National Maritime Security Coordinator (NMSC) will head the National Maritime Commission (NMC), which will coordinate with all organisations such as the Indian Navy, the Indian Coast Guard (ICG), the shipping ministries and the ports.
2. The maritime security coordinator will work under the NSA

Which among the above statements are correct?

- a. 1 only
- b. 2 only
- c. Both 1 and 2
- d. Neither 1 or 2

**Answer: - c**

### ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

#### 8) DAM SAFETY BILL 2019

**IN NEWS:** - The Parliament has cleared the Dam Safety Bill, 2019 for surveillance, inspection, operation and maintenance of all specified dams across the country.

#### SALIENT FEATURES

- **National Committee on Dam Safety:** The National Committee on Dam Safety will be constituted and will be chaired by the Chairperson, Central Water Commission.
  - Functions of the Committee will include formulating policies and regulations regarding dam safety standards and prevention of dam failures, and analysing the causes of major dam failures and suggesting changes in dam safety practices.

- **National Dam Safety Authority:** The Bill also envisages setting up of a National Dam Safety Authority to be headed by an officer not below the rank of an Additional Secretary, to be appointed by the central government.
  - The main task of the National Dam Safety Authority includes implementing the policies formulated by the National Committee on Dam Safety, resolving issues between State Dam Safety Organisations (SDSOs), or between an SDSO and any dam owner in that state, specifying regulations for inspection and investigation of dams.
  - The NDSA will also provide accreditation to agencies working on construction, design and alteration of dams.
- **State Dam Safety Organisation:** The proposed legislation also envisages constituting a State Dam Safety Organisation whose functions will be to keep perpetual surveillance, inspection, monitoring the operation and maintenance of dams, keeping a database of all dams, and recommending safety measures to owners of dams.
- **Obligations of Dam Owners:** The owners of the specified dams are required to provide a dam safety unit in each dam. This unit will inspect the dams before and after the monsoon session, and during and after every earthquake, flood, or any other calamity or sign of distress.
- Dam owners will be required to prepare an emergency action plan, and carry out risk assessment studies for each dam at specified regular intervals.
- Dam owners will also be required to conduct a comprehensive dam safety evaluation of each dam, at regular intervals, through a panel of experts.
- **Punishment:** The Bill provides for two types of offences - obstructing a person in the discharge of his functions, and refusing to comply with directions issued under the proposed law.

- Offenders will be punishable with imprisonment of up to one year, or a fine, or both. If the offence leads to loss of lives, the term of imprisonment may be extended up to two years.
- Offences will be cognisable only when the complaint is made by the government, or any authority constituted under the Bill.

## 9) NAIROBI DECLARATION

**IN NEWS:** - Nairobi Declaration set to fast track disaster risk reduction work

### ABOUT NAIROBI DECLARATION

- The Nairobi Declaration, adopted by African ministers and heads of delegations November 19, 2021, underlined the need to deliver commitments on the Programme of Action (PoA) for implementing the Sendai Framework in Africa.
- This included the action plans under the PoA, to implement Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (SFDRR), 2015-2030.
- The PoA outlines how Africa aims to implement SFDRR on the continent.
- Towards Disaster Risk-Informed Development for a Resilient Africa in a COVID-19 Transformed World was the theme of the virtual meet.
- It was organised by the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR), in collaboration with the African Union Commission and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development.
- Sendai Framework is aimed towards “substantial reduction in disaster risk and losses in lives, livelihoods and health and in the economic, physical, social, cultural and environmental assets of persons, businesses, communities and countries”.
- Implementation of the Sendai Framework is expected to contribute to UN-mandated Sustainable Development Goals and to achieving Agenda 2063 commitment “The Africa we want”.



- Tunis declaration was adopted at the Africa Arab Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction held in Tunis from October 9-13, 2018.

## 10) GLOBAL METHANE INITIATIVE

**IN NEWS:-** India has co-chaired along with Canada the Global Methane Initiative leadership meet held virtually.

### ABOUT GLOBAL METHANE INITIATIVE

- GMI is a voluntary Government and an informal international partnership having members from 45 countries including the United States and Canada.
- The forum has been created to achieve global reduction in anthropogenic methane emission through partnership among developed and developing countries having economies in transition.
- The forum was created in 2004 and India is one of the members since its inception and has taken up Vice-Chairmanship for the first time in the Steering Leadership along with USA.
- National governments are encouraged to join GMI as Partner Countries, while other non-State organizations may join GMI's extensive Project Network.
- The initiative currently focuses on five sectors, which are known sources of anthropogenic methane emissions:
  - Agriculture
  - Coal mining
  - Municipal solid waste
  - Municipal wastewater
  - Oil and gas systems

## ABOUT METHANE

- Methane is a greenhouse gas, which is also a component of natural gas.
- There are various sources of methane including human and natural sources.
- The anthropogenic sources are responsible for 60 per cent of global methane emissions.
- It includes landfills, oil and natural gas systems, agricultural activities, coal mining, wastewater treatment, and certain industrial processes.
- The oil and gas sectors are among the largest contributors to human sources of methane.
- These emissions come primarily from the burning of fossil fuels, decomposition in landfills and the agriculture sector.

### 11) PLASTIC WASTE MANAGEMENT

**IN NEWS:** - U.N. plans to drastically expand plastic waste management in India

## ABOUT PLASTIC WASTE MANAGEMENT

- The United Nations Development Programme aims to almost triple its plastic waste management to 100 cities in India by 2024, to combat the damaging effects of plastic pollution.
- The UNDP programme, which began in 2018, has so far collected 83,000 metric tonne of plastic waste. India generates about 3.4 million tonnes of plastic waste annually, according to official estimates.
- The UNDP is working with federal think tank, NITI Aayog and have jointly developed a 'handbook' model for local municipalities as well as the private sector.

- Plastic pollution is set to triple by 2040, the U.N. Environment Programme (UNEP) has predicted, adding 23-37 million metric tons of waste into the world's oceans each year.
- India, also the world's third-biggest emitter of greenhouse gases after China and the United States, has set 2070 as a target to reach net-zero carbon emissions, much later than those set by others and twenty years after the U.N.'s global recommendation.

## INDIAN ECONOMY

### 12) SWIFT

**IN NEWS:** - In a move to counter Russia's war over Ukraine, the US and the European Commission issued a joint statement to exclude some Russian banks from the **Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication (SWIFT)** messaging system. The intention behind this action is to further isolate Russia from the international financial system.

#### ABOUT SWIFT

- SWIFT provides the trusted messaging platform that enables financial institutions to exchange information about global monetary transactions such as money transfers.
- While SWIFT does not actually move money, it operates as a middleman to verify information of transactions by providing secure financial messaging services to more than 11,000 banks in over 200 countries.
- Most of the world trade takes place with financial messaging passing through SWIFT.
- It was established in 1973 and is based in Belgium.
- It is overseen by the central banks from eleven industrial countries: Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States, besides Belgium.
- India's financial system has access to the SWIFT.

- Prior to SWIFT, the only reliable means of message confirmation for international funds transfer was Telex.
- It was discontinued due to a range of issues such as low speed, security concerns, and a free message format.

### PRACTICE QUESTION

Consider the following statements

1. Most of the world trade takes place with financial messaging passing through SWIFT.
2. India's financial system does not have access to the SWIFT.

Which among the above statements are correct?

- a. 1 only
- b. 2 only
- c. Both 1 and 2
- d. Neither 1 or 2

**Answer: - a**

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