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The New Learning Mantra

VEDHIK DAILY NEWS ANALYSIS

10 - NOV - 2022

FOREWORD

We, at Team Vedhik is happy to introduce a new initiative - “Vedhik - Daily News Analysis (DNA)_The Hindu” compilations to help you with UPSC Civil Services Examination preparation. We believe this initiative - “Vedhik - Daily News Analysis (DNA)_The Hindu “ would help students, especially beginners save time and streamline their preparations with regard to Current Affairs. A content page and an Appendix has been added segregating and mapping the content to the syllabus.

It is an appreciable efforts by Vedhik IAS Academy helping aspirants of UPSC Civil Services Examinations. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Dr. Babu Sebastian, former VC - MG University in extending all support to this endeavour. Finally I also extend my thanks to thank Ms. Shilpa Sasidharan and Mr. Shahul Hameed for their assistance in the preparing the compilations.

We welcome your valuable comments so that further improvement may be made in the forthcoming material. We look forward to feedback, comments and suggestions on how to improve and add value for students. Every care has been taken to avoid typing errors and if any reader comes across any such error, the authors shall feel obliged if they are informed at their Email ID.

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Tushar Mehta to lead Indian delegation to UNHRC

Solicitor-General Tushar Mehta will lead the official Indian delegation to the Human Rights Council where the Fourth Universal Periodic Review will take place on Thursday, the Ministry of External Affairs has announced. A press release stated that India has been “engaged constructively” with members of the UNHRC and others in the United Nations to support human rights across the world. The announcement came hours before the session where countries like the United States, U.K., Belgium, Germany and Spain are expected to raise issues like the Citizenship Amendment Act and incidents of “hate speech” and the hijab issue of Karnataka.

Kerala govt. moves to divest Governor of Chancellor role

Renowned academic experts will be appointed Chancellors of universities, says State Cabinet; if Governor refuses to promulgate an ordinance, the Left Democratic Front government may introduce a Bill in the Assembly to remove him

G. Anand
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

In the latest escalation of its running battle with Governor Arif Mohammed Khan, the Kerala government on Wednesday decided to remove him as Chancellor of State universities, seeking to replace him with “renowned academic experts”.

The State Cabinet on Wednesday resolved to request the Governor himself to promulgate an ordinance removing him from the position. This would divest him of his powers as Chancellor, and at one stroke, render the Raj Bhavan remote from all aspects of university governance.

In an official statement, the Cabinet noted that the M.M. Punchhi Commission, constituted in 2007

Escalating row

Amid the rising conflict with Governor Arif Mohammed Khan, the Kerala Cabinet decides to remove him as Chancellor of State universities



THE ORDINANCE: State Cabinet resolves to request the Governor himself to promulgate an ordinance removing him from the position

THE IMPACT: The Governor will be divested of his powers as Chancellor and will be kept away from all aspects of university governance

THE STATE'S REASONING: M.M. Punchhi Commission had recommended that States desist from burdening Governors with the Chancellor's role

by the then-Congress-led Union government to study Centre-State relations, had vouched against granting Governors the power of Chancellors.

The Commission had recommended that State governments desist from burdening Governors with the Chancellor's role, the statement said.

The Cabinet's decision came as no surprise. On Sunday, Communist Party of India (Marxist) State secretary M.V. Govindan hinted the party would go to any extent to insulate the jurisdictional autonomy of universities from Mr. Khan's alleged trespasses.

In an apparent reference to the recent move

by Mr. Khan questioning the appointment of Vice-Chancellors of 11 universities, Higher Education Minister R. Bindu said at a press conference that there were interferences in the functioning of varsities, which aimed at making them rudderless.

The CPI(M) also seemed to take a cue from the Tamil Nadu government, which had weighed a similar executive order after several run-ins with the Governor in his capacity as Chancellor.

In case Mr. Khan disagreed with the ordinance and withheld its promulgation, the government may introduce a Bill in the Assembly to remove him, senior CPI(M) leaders indicated.

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Kerala moves to remove Governor as Chancellor

Although the ruling LDF has the numbers in the Assembly to push such a Bill through the House, it will face stiff opposition from the Congress-led United Democratic Front (UDF).

Leader of the Opposition in the Assembly V.D. Satheesan said the ordinance to curtail the Governor's powers was not well-intentioned, and at worst, could be considered conspiratorial. The CPI(M) aspired to insert its favourites into Chancellor positions to take total control of the higher education sector to promote politically partisan interests, including nepotism in appointments, claimed Mr. Satheesan, adding that the UDF would not abide by the CPI(M)'s plot.

BJP State president K. Surendran warned the government to brace itself for aggressive street protests if it removed Mr. Khan from the Chancellor's position. He alleged that the ordinance was a cover for CPI(M)-orchestrated corruption and favouritism in varsity appointments.

(With PTI inputs)

D.Y. Chandrachud takes charge as the 50th Chief Justice of India

The new CJI has been part of several Constitution Benches and landmark verdicts of the top court, and describes dissent as the 'safety valve of democracy'. He will have a term of two years and will head the judiciary until November 10, 2024

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Justice Dhananjaya Yashwant Chandrachud was sworn in as the 50th Chief Justice of India (CJI) by President Droupadi Murmu at a brief ceremony at the Rashtrapati Bhavan in New Delhi on Wednesday.

He took the oath in English and in the name of God, in the presence of Vice-President and Rajya Sabha Chairperson Jagdeep Dhankhar, Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, Home Minister Amit Shah, and Law Minister Kiren Rijju.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who was not present, tweeted, "Congratulations to Dr. Justice D.Y. Chandrachud on being sworn in as India's Chief Justice. Wishing him a fruitful tenure ahead."

His predecessor, Justice Uday Umesh Lalit, who demitted office on Tuesday,



Taking office: D.Y. Chandrachud assumes charge as the Chief Justice of India after President Droupadi Murmu administered the oath of office to him at the Rashtrapati Bhavan on Wednesday. PTI

was present at the oath-taking ceremony. Justice Chandrachud as CJI will have a term of two years and will head India's judiciary until November 10, 2024, a day before he completes 65 years. His father, Y.V. Chandrachud, holds the distinction of being the longest-serving Chief Justice, who headed the judi-

ciary from February 22, 1978 to July 11, 1985.

Chief Justice Chandrachud, who describes dissent as the "safety valve of democracy", has been part of several Constitution Benches and landmark verdicts of the top court, including judgments on the Ayodhya land dispute, and the right to privacy. He

wrote the lead judgment for a nine-judge Constitution Bench in the *Justice K.S. Puttaswamy vs Union of India* case, in which it was unanimously held that the right to privacy was a Fundamental Right.

Recently, a Bench headed by him expanded the scope of the Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act

to include unmarried women for abortion between 20 and 24 weeks of pregnancy.

The new Chief Justice has been part of the Benches that delivered path-breaking judgments on decriminalising same-sex relations, after it partially struck down Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code. He has been part of Benches that ruled on the validity of the Aadhaar scheme and the Sabarimala issue, and paved the way for permanent commission for women officers in the armed forces.

He was designated as a senior advocate by the Bombay High Court in June 1998 and became Additional Solicitor-General that year till his appointment as a judge in the Bombay High Court on March 29, 2000. He went on to become the Chief Justice of the Allahabad High Court from October 31, 2013 until he was elevated to the top court in May 2016.

Considering consent

The law must stay in tune with the times, and consider ground realities

As much as the laws of a country must adhere to the principle of justice and fairness, they also need to stay in tune with the times. It was this proviso that the Dharwad Bench of the High Court of Karnataka invoked as it urged the Law Commission of India to have a rethink on the criteria for age of consent, 'taking into consideration the ground realities'. The judges said they were motivated to make this recommendation, having encountered several cases relating to minor girls over the age of 16 years (but below 18 years) having fallen in love and eloped with the boy, and wondered why the consent of the girl in a sexual relationship is not factored in, especially when charges are made out under provisions of the POCSO Act. The Act was enacted to protect children from sexual abuse, and it raised the age of consent for sexual intercourse from 16 to 18 years. In practice, however, studies have noted that many cases booked under the Act in the adolescent group (16 years and above) have a romantic involvement, including eloping with the intention of getting married, consensually. In almost all instances, police cases are initiated by the parents of the minor girl who has eloped with the lover. Once the sexual act is confirmed, the POCSO Act is slapped on the boy, who may sometimes be a minor, or barely of legal age for marriage, and the consequences of being prosecuted for penetrative sexual assault are life altering, as they are meant to be. While the boys face criminal prosecution, the girls are also sent to government institutions when they protest parents' strong disapproval of the liaison. Activists have charged that this has the potential to wreck the lives of the youngsters involved, and entire families too are felled by this encounter with the law.

There is no doubt that children are vulnerable, and must be protected from forced attempts to sexually assault or groom them with an eye on exploitation. However, the realities of adolescent attraction and the ascertainment of consent, 16 years or above, must be considered pertinent to investigation and prosecution. The High Court judges also asked if it could be presumed that minors have knowledge of the applicable law. It may be remembered that the Justice J.S. Verma Committee on Amendments to Criminal Law also recommended that the age of consent be reduced to 16, and necessary amendments be made in the POCSO Act. The Law Commission must now train its guns on the actual implementation of the Act, and ensure the POCSO Act, stays true to its broad intent – the protection of children.

The EWS judgment and the shadow of Pandora

The Supreme Court of India's recent decision, upholding the constitutional validity of the law granting 10% reservation to Economically Weaker Sections (EWS) of the upper castes, has ignited much debate. Some pundits have affirmed the judgment marks the death knell of caste as a factor in reservation, while others argue that it underscores its perpetual relevance. In all the brouhaha, the media and the commentariat have overlooked another Supreme Court judgment just seven years ago which was potentially even more far-reaching for our democracy but which has been ignored entirely in the current debate.

In a 64-page decision in 2015, a bench of Justices Ranjan Gogoi and Rohinton F. Nariman struck down the United Progressive Alliance Government's 2014 notification including Jats in the Central list of Other Backward Classes (OBCs). Most significant was the rationale the justices provided: they observed that the state should not go by the "perception of the self-proclaimed socially backward class" on whether they deserved to be categorised among the "less fortunate"; new formulae, they averred, must be found to determine backwardness. The issue, the justices concluded, was not whether reservations were a tool to address millennia of caste discrimination or an instrument of affirmative action; the issue was how to determine who deserved consideration for reservation benefits.

'Open the gates for the most distressed'

Most significantly, the top court held that caste, while acknowledged to be a prominent cause of injustice in the country historically, could not be the sole determinant of backwardness. It argued in its judgment: "Owing to historical conditions, particularly in Hindu society, recognition of backwardness has been associated with caste. Social groups who would be most deserving must necessarily be a matter of continuous evolution. New practices, methods and yardsticks have to be continuously evolved moving away from caste-centric definition of backwardness." It ruled that the State should uncover emerging forms of backwardness in an evolving society.

"The gates would be opened only to permit entry of the most distressed. Any other inclusions would be a serious abdication of the constitutional duty of the State," the Court warned. It observed that "grave and important" decisions in reference to Article 14 and Article 16 of the Constitution must be made on the basis of "contemporaneous inputs", which were not



Shashi Tharoor

is a third-term Member of Parliament (Congress), Lok Sabha, for Thiruvananthapuram, Chairman of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Chemicals and Fertilizers, and the author of 24 books, including, most recently, 'Ambedkar: A Life'

In the recent verdict on reservation to Economically Weaker Sections, a Supreme Court judgment of 2015, which was potentially even more far-reaching for India's democracy, has been ignored entirely in the current debate

available. Most striking were the Court's observations on what constitutes "social backwardness". It said that neither educational nor economic backwardness, which the Government referred to, were enough, though both may contribute to social backwardness. "But social backwardness," the Court observed, "is a distinct concept" that emerges from multiple circumstances ranging from the social and cultural, to economic, educational and even political.

Call for new methods and yardsticks

The Court conceded that caste may be a prominent factor for 'easy determination of backwardness', but its judgment discouraged "the identification of a group as backward solely on the basis of caste" and called for "new practices, methods and yardsticks" to be evolved. It added the observation that class may be a factor too, since a class is "an identifiable section of society", but again it may not be enough to justify reservation. Citing its own decision to recognise transgenders as a distinct community with justiciable rights, the Court congratulated itself for identifying a form of social backwardness that had nothing to do with caste or class, in determining their eligibility for government benefits.

This was fascinating philosophically, but it opened up a proverbial can of worms for policy-makers. The most contentious element of the Court's judgment was its proposition that caste, and the need to right historical wrongs, is no longer sufficient grounds for government benefits. Nor is the self-perception of a caste that it is backward; not even the perception by other castes that it is. New methods, the judgment insisted, have to be developed to identify the backwardness of a group of people.

The Court, drawing a somewhat fuzzy line between 'past' and 'emerging' forms of backwardness, advanced the presumption of the "progressive advancement of all citizens on all fronts, i.e., social, economic and educational" making history an insufficient guide. You cannot keep citing historical wrongs and propose reservations as a solution to redressing them, the Court decided. This set off a conceptual bomb under the complacent edifice of the reservation system.

We have long accepted the logic of reservations in our country as a means of making up for millennia of discrimination based on birth. This is why the Constitution inaugurated the

world's oldest and farthest-reaching affirmative action programme, guaranteeing Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes not only equality of opportunity but guaranteed outcomes, with reserved places in educational institutions, government jobs and even seats in Parliament and the State Assemblies. These reservations were granted to groups listed in Schedules of the Constitution on the basis of their (presumably immutable) caste identities. The addition of the OBC category – after the acceptance by the V.P. Singh government of the recommendations of the Mandal Commission – added more people to the numbers benefiting from reservations, but it did not change the basis on which they benefited: despite the "C" in "OBC" referring to "classes", the OBC lists contained castes and sub-castes.

What criteria is the question

So we witnessed the unedifying spectacle of castes fighting to be declared backward: the competitive zeal of the Meenas and the Gujjars in Rajasthan to be deemed more backward than each other, and similar agitations by Patels in Gujarat and Marathas in Maharashtra. Then the transgender judgment, and the judgment disqualifying Jats, opened the floodgates to far-reaching questions. If caste is not a good enough basis, and class is not either, and now lack of education or income does not suffice, but the misfortune of being born transgender does, then how do we determine who deserves reservations in our society? The Supreme Court says historical wrongs are passé; the Government needs to establish that a group of potential beneficiaries is suffering backwardness right now. But it does not tell us what criteria to apply.

Justices Gogoi and Nariman suggested that the Government come back with a "matrix" to justify reservations. One could imagine a list of differently-weighted categories, ranging from income, family situation, disability, education level, etc, in addition to birth in a particular caste, which together would constitute a basis to draw up such a matrix. But the Government, not wanting to touch a Pandora's box, never came back with one, and the Court did not renew or repeat its demand either – not even when one of the judgment's authors became Chief Justice of India.

With the EWS decision, the shadow of Pandora now hovers over the Supreme Court – but her notorious box may already have been opened by this dramatic, and surprisingly under-reported, judgment of 2015.

Chhattisgarh plans special Assembly session on tribal quota

Shubhomoy Sikdar

RAIPUR

Amid confusion over the reduction in the quota for Scheduled Tribes (STs) in Chhattisgarh following a recent high court order capping reservations at 50%, the State government has proposed to convene a special session on tribal reservation.

“A proposal to convene a special session of the Legislative Assembly regarding the issue of tribal reservation has been sent to the Speaker of the Assembly, Dr. Charan Das Mahant *ji*. It has been requested to convene a special session of the Vidhan Sabha on December 1 and 2,” tweeted Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel on Wednesday.

On September 19, the Chhattisgarh High Court struck down a 2012 legislation that reserved 58% seats for Scheduled Castes,

Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes in recruitment and entrance examinations, holding that reservation above the 50% ceiling was “unconstitutional”. It was the BJP government that had in 2012 brought an amendment to the 1994 Reservation Act of the erstwhile Madhya Pradesh, as the distribution of population had changed in the new State. However, since only the reservation for STs had been increased in the 2012 amendment, the latest court order led to speculation about the pre-2012 situation being restored, triggering protests by the Opposition BJP.

According to sources, the Chhattisgarh government may bring fresh legislation that may hike the reservations in the State to 81%– 32% for STs, 12% for SCs, 27% for OBCs and 10% for the EWS.

Centre devises new guidelines for TV channels; broadcast of socially relevant topics compulsory

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Union Cabinet has approved new guidelines for uplinking and downlinking of TV channels, under which all stations holding permission – except for foreign channels and where it may not be feasible – will have to broadcast content on issues of national importance and social relevance for at least 30 minutes every day.

The provision has been introduced as “airwaves/frequencies are public property and need to be used in the best interest of society”. The eight listed

themes include education and spread of literacy; agriculture and rural development; health and family welfare; science and technology; welfare of women; welfare of the weaker sections of society; protection of environment and of cultural heritage; and national integration.

The consolidated guidelines exempt channels including those related to sports, where it would not be feasible to broadcast such content. As and when required, the Centre would issue general advisories to the channels in this regard.

Information & Broadcasting Secretary Apurva



Since airwaves are ‘public property’, they need to be used in the best interest of society, says the government. SANDEEP SAXENA

Chandra on Wednesday said the new guidelines, which replaced those operational since 2011, would ease the issue of permission to the companies and limited liability partnership (LLP) firms [which

have been allowed for the first time] registered in India for uplinking-downlinking of TV channels and associated activities.

Listing the advantages, Mr. Chandra said the requirement to seek permis-

sion for live telecast of events had been done away with, only prior registration of events would be necessary for live telecast. Prior permission would not be needed for change of language or conversion of mode of transmission, from Standard Definition to High Definition or vice versa; only prior intimation would suffice.

Teleport-hub

LLPs/companies would be allowed to uplink foreign channels from Indian teleports, which would create job opportunities and make India a teleport-hub for other countries, it said.

A higher number of promotions, but lower learning outcomes

SC/ST students have been impacted disproportionately by the pandemic as their learning outcomes have declined the most

DATA POINT

Jasmin Nihalani, Rebecca Rose Varghese & Vignesh Radhakrishnan

Higher education in India is entering a worrying phase due to the unprecedented impact of COVID-19 on school education. On the one hand, with policies mandating the promotion of students, promotion rates at the secondary school level rose significantly and repetition rates nosedived during the pandemic years (2020-21 and 2021-22). On the other, the inability to attend physical school and the lack of access to digital education caused a massive drop in learning levels after the COVID-19 outbreak. Simply put, compared to students from the pre-COVID-19 years, more students were promoted from secondary to higher secondary school and graduated from school to college during the pandemic years even though their learning outcomes were poor. This is significant as even in the pre-COVID-19 era, the employability of engineers had been reducing fast due to the poor quality of education and the lack of conceptual understanding.

The Unified District Information System for Education (UDISE+) survey for 2021-22 shows that the promotion rate among secondary school students across communities. Notably, the promotion rate among Scheduled Caste (SC) and Scheduled Tribe (ST) students increased sharply after the outbreak. The promotion rate among Other Backward Classes (OBC) students continued to rise unabated.

Chart 2 shows the repetition rate of secondary school students across communities. The repetition rates too drastically came down in the pandemic years with

some 1% students repeating their class across all communities. Notably, the gap in the repetition rate between SC/ST students and general category students declined greatly after the outbreak.

While the promotion rate surged and the repetition rate declined, the marks scored by school students in National Achievement Survey (NAS) exams dropped significantly across classes and in most subjects. NAS exams were conducted in November 2021 across select schools. Similar tests were conducted in 2017/2018. Chart 3 shows the difference between the mean score in 2021 compared to the score in 2017/2018 among Class VIII and X students (SC/ST/OBC and general category) in various subjects. For instance, in the Class X Science exam, the score of general category students dropped by 34 marks, while that of SC, ST and OBC students declined by 45, 48 and 40 marks, respectively. So, there will be a disproportionately greater impact on SC and ST students as their learning outcomes reduced the most while their promotion rates saw the highest degree of rise among all the communities.

Chart 4 shows the dropout rate of secondary school students across communities. Despite reports such as a UNICEF poll and an Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) survey pointing out that dropout rates increased in India during the outbreak, UDISE+ data do not reflect this drop.

Table 5 shows the percentage of children not enrolled in school across age groups in 2018, 2020 and 2021, according to the ASER survey. ASER showed that except in the 15-16 age group, the share of children who were "not enrolled" in schools in 2020 and 2021 compared to 2018 increased in every other age group. However, the UDISE+ shows an increase in enrollment rate across all levels of education (Table 6). This contradiction in data necessitates further scrutiny of the UDISE+ data.

Mind the knowledge gap

The data for charts 1, 2, 4 and table 6 were sourced from UDISE+ reports between 2016-17 and 2021-22. Table 5 was sourced from ASER and chart 3 was sourced from National Achievement Survey 2021 and 2017/18



Chart 1 | Promotion rate of secondary school students

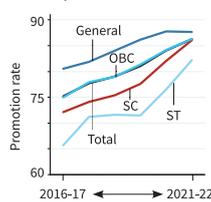


Chart 2 | Repetition rate of secondary school students

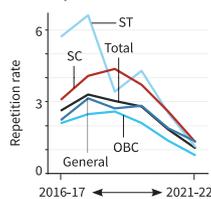


Chart 4 | The graph shows the dropout rate of secondary school students across communities

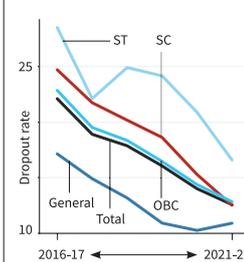


Table 5 | Share of children not enrolled in schools across age groups in 2018, 2020 and 2021, according to ASER

| Age groups | Not enrolled in 2018 | Not enrolled in 2020 | Not enrolled in 2021 |
|------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Age 6-14 | 2.5% | 4.6% | 4.6% |
| Age 7-16 | 3.9% | 5.2% | 4.7% |
| Age 7-10 | 1.4% | 4.4% | 4.4% |
| Age 11-14 | 3.2% | 3.9% | 4.1% |
| Age 15-16 | 12.1% | 9.9% | 6.6% |

ASER 2021 was conducted in 25 States and 3 UTs. A total of 75,234 children in the age group of 5-16 years were covered by the survey

Table 6 | The table shows an increase in adjusted net enrollment rate in % across all levels of education from primary to higher secondary as reported by the UDISE+ data

| Levels | 2017-18 | 2018-19 | 2019-20 | 2020-21 | 2021-22 |
|------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Primary | 96.42 | 94.26 | 97.31 | 98.61 | 99.07 |
| Upper primary | 80.95 | 78.49 | 81.61 | 84.44 | 87.25 |
| Secondary | 62.24 | 57.59 | 59.98 | 61.85 | 64.71 |
| Higher secondary | 29.97 | 30.78 | 32.3 | 34.72 | 34.22 |

Chart 3 | The difference between the mean score in 2021 compared to the score in 2017/2018 in Classes VIII and X across various subjects among SC/ST/OBC and general category students, according to the National Achievement Survey examinations



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'Rupee-settled trade suitable for export, obligation perks'

Commerce Ministry says changes introduced for granting export benefits and incentives, as well as Fulfilment of Export Obligation norms for importers, for export realisations made in rupees

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Centre has expanded the norms for incentives and export obligations under the Foreign Trade policy to cover foreign trade transactions settled in rupees, the Commerce Ministry said on Wednesday.

In July, the RBI and the Directorate General of Foreign Trade had carried out amendments in the Foreign Trade policy and trade settlement procedures to enable the use of the rupee for invoicing, payment and settlement of export, import dues.

The ministry said that

Fillip for ₹ trade

Transactions settled in Indian currency qualify for perks

■ Ministry says policy tweaks aimed at facilitating international trade transactions in rupees

■ EEPC chairman says move signals the 'internationalisation of the domestic currency'

■ "These are early steps towards 100% convertibility" of the rupee, remarks EEPC's Garodia



changes have now been introduced for granting export benefits and incentives as well as for meeting Fulfilment of Export Obligation norms for importers, for export realisations made in Indian rupees.

"Given the rise in interest in internationalisation of Indian rupee, the policy amendments have been undertaken to facilitate... international trade transactions in Indian rupees," the ministry said.

Engineering Export Promotion Council of India chairman Arun Kumar Garodia said allowing rupee trade settlement under the various export promotion schemes should help boost exports and signals the 'internationalisation of the domestic currency'.

"These are early steps towards 100% convertibility" of the rupee, he added.

The new norms for export realisation in Indian rupees cover schemes including imports for exports, Advance Authorisation and Duty Free Import Authorisation, and Realisation of Export Proceeds under Export Promotion Capital Goods Scheme.

In the hopes for a clear blue sky

How far back does Delhi's air pollution problem go? What policy measures have been taken over the decades by the Union and State governments? What are the major pollutants contributing to the increased PM2.5 levels in the capital? Have the measures taken by the State been effective?

EXPLAINER

Diksha Munjal

The story so far:

Last week, Delhi was once again covered in a haze of smog—witnessing very poor air quality, a phenomenon that has become a trend during the winter months. As the situation becomes an annually recurring one, here's a look at how far back it goes and what policies have been adopted by the Centre and Delhi's elected governments to curb air pollution over the years.

When did Delhi start acting against air pollution?

In March 1995, the Supreme Court, while hearing a plea by environmentalist and lawyer M.C. Mehta about Delhi's polluting industries, noted that Delhi was the world's fourth most polluted city in terms of concentration of suspended particulate matter (SPM) in the ambient atmosphere as per the World Health Organization's 1989 report. The Court took note of two polluting factors—vehicles and industries, and in 1996 ordered the closure and relocation of over 1,300 highly-polluting industries from Delhi's residential areas beyond the National Capital Region (NCR) in a phased manner. In 1996, Mr. Mehta filed another public interest litigation (PIL) alleging that vehicular emissions were leading to air pollution and that it posed a public health hazard. In the same year, a report about Delhi's air pollution by the Centre for Science and Environment made the apex court issue a notice to the Delhi government to submit an action plan to curb pollution. Both matters were later merged.

Later that year, the Delhi government submitted an action plan. The Supreme Court, recognising the need for technical assistance and advice in decision-making and implementation of its orders, asked the Ministry of Environment and Forests (now the Ministry of Environment, Forests, and Climate Change—MoEFCC) to establish an authority for Delhi, leading to the creation of the Environmental Pollution Control Authority of Delhi NCR (EP-CA) in 1998. The EP-CA submitted its report containing a two-year action plan in June of that year and the Supreme Court subsequently ordered the Delhi Transport Corporation (DTC) bus fleet, taxis, and autos to switch to Compressed Natural Gas (CNG), and the phasing out of all pre-1990 autos. Other measures between the late 1990s and early 2000s included the complete removal of leaded petrol, removal of 15 and 17-year-old commercial vehicles and a cap of 55,000 on the number of two-stroke engine auto rickshaws (which reports at the time said were contributing to 80% of pollution in the city). Coal-based power plants within Delhi were also converted to gas-based ones.

Around the same time, the Centre decided to establish a network of monitoring stations under the National Air Quality Programme (NAMP) to measure key pollutants. Under the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) specified by the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), pollutants like PM10 (particulate matter with a diameter exceeding 10 microns), sulphur dioxide and nitrogen oxides were measured.

How were air quality standards revised?

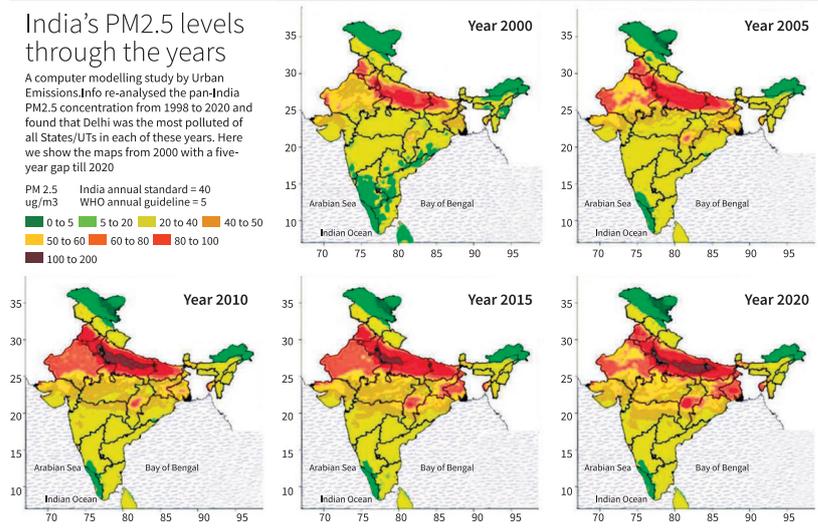
The NAAQS were revised in 2009 to include 12 categories of pollutants including PM2.5 (particulate matter with a diameter under 2.5 microns)—a noxious pollutant

India's PM2.5 levels through the years

A computer modelling study by UrbanEmissions.Info re-analysed the pan-India PM2.5 concentration from 1998 to 2020 and found that Delhi was the most polluted of all States/UTs in each of these years. Here we show the maps from 2000 with a five-year gap till 2020

PM 2.5 ug/m3 India annual standard = 40 WHO annual guideline = 5

0 to 5 5 to 20 20 to 40 40 to 50 50 to 60 60 to 80 80 to 100 100 to 200



which can penetrate deep into the lungs and even enter the bloodstream, resulting in cardiovascular and respiratory impacts. Particulate Matter (PM) is primarily generated by fuel combustion from different sectors, including transport, energy, households, industry and agriculture.

According to the revised NAAQS, the acceptable annual limit for PM2.5 is 40 micrograms per cubic metre (ug/m3) and 60 ug/m3 for PM10. The renewed WHO standards meanwhile, prescribe an accepted annual average of 5 ug/m3 for PM2.5 and 15 ug/m3 for PM10.

While PM2.5 as a pollutant was only included in 2009, a computer modelling study by UrbanEmissions.Info re-analysed the pan-India PM2.5 concentration from 1998 to 2020 and found that Delhi was the most polluted of all States/UTs each year through all the 23 years. Delhi's annual PM2.5 levels increased by 40% from 80 ug/m3 to 111 ug/m3. Another study by the U.S.-based Health Effects Institute released this year, studying data between 2010 and 2019, also found Delhi to be the most polluted city in the world in terms of PM2.5 levels.

In the winter of 2016, Delhi witnessed one of its worst incidents of pollution-induced smog, with PM2.5 and PM10 levels reaching a whopping 999 ug/m3 in parts of Delhi on November 1.

Subsequently, the Supreme Court in November 2016 told Delhi and NCR authorities to form a plan to deal with the air pollution, and the MoEFCC in early 2017 came out with the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP), which involved coordination between multiple agencies in Delhi to activate pollution control measures corresponding to the increasing Air Quality Index (AQI) levels.

What led to high pollution in Delhi?

Multiple studies over the years, including the Delhi Pollution Control Committee's (DPCC) 2019 report by IIT Delhi and Madras experts, found that the rapid growth in Delhi's population, industrialisation and urbanisation, and increase in motorised private vehicle fleet led to the high concentration of air pollutants such as particulate matter, nitrogen oxides, sulphur dioxide, carbon monoxide, and ozone.

Between 2001 and 2011, Delhi saw a

population spurt from 1.378 crore to 1.678 crore. As of 2011, the population of Delhi and NCR was 25.8 million or 7.6% of India's urban population. While Delhi's total area is 1,483 square kilometres (sq km), the population density grew from 9,340 persons per sq km in 2001 to 11,320 persons per sq km in 2011. From around 4.2 million motor vehicles registered in 2004 in Delhi alone, the registered vehicles increased to around 10.9 million in March 2018.

As for the burning of farm residue or stubble in Delhi's neighbouring States, researchers have emphasised the need for airshed management, along with improved machinery subsidies and alternatives to crop burning

While multiple polluting industries were moved out of Delhi in the 1990s, it still has one of the biggest clusters of small-scale industries. The CPCB notes that several of Delhi's polluting industrial clusters do not meet air, water, and soil standards. The Najafgarh drain basin, which houses multiple industrial areas, is the most polluted cluster in India with its air and water being in the 'critical' category.

What are the measures taken to tackle major polluters?

UrbanEmissions.Info combined officially available information and its modelling studies to infer that the share of vehicular exhaust contributing to Delhi's PM2.5 pollution is up to 30% while soil and road dust is up to 20%, biomass burning is 20%, industries is up to 15%, diesel generators up to 10%, power plants up to 5% and notably, the share of pollution from outside Delhi's urban airshed (like stubble burning in neighbouring States) is up to 30%.

Multiple researchers have alleged that the policy approach and measures taken by the Central and State authorities for specific polluting sectors over the years have been fragmented and often reactive. IIT-Bombay professor Vinish Kathuria noted in the *Economic and Political Weekly* that the 2002 public transport overhaul to CNG did not yield the desired results. While SPM and PM10 levels fell marginally, carbon monoxide levels increased.

Meanwhile, due to the Supreme Court's 55,000 cap on two-stroke auto rickshaws, the sector could not grow, leading to black marketing of permits. Studies note that between 1997 and 2011, Delhi's population grew by 45% and registered cars and two-wheelers grew by 250%, meaning the lower availability of autos could have likely contributed to increased private vehicle ownership. Besides, Delhi still does not have the required public bus fleet vis-a-vis demand.

Researchers have also noted challenges with newer policies like the odd-even vehicular rationing rule applying only to private vehicles. A study by IIT Delhi's Rahul Goel noted that although vehicular emissions contribute 25% to Delhi's PM2.5 levels, passenger vehicles contribute just 8%, of which cars constitute 5%. This means that if all passenger vehicles within Delhi stopped operating, PM2.5 levels would reduce by an average of 8%, but the remaining 17%, contributed by heavy freight vehicles, would remain as it is not covered under the odd-even rule.

Experts also point out that a coordinated response factoring in Delhi's waste management has to be taken to reduce air pollution.

While the daily waste generation rate in Delhi is over 10,000 tons, the capacity of its already overflowing landfills to collect and manage garbage is under 6,000 tons. This leads to the practice of burning waste around residential areas. Reports show that garbage is also burnt illegally in landfills when curbs are in place.

As for the burning of farm residue or stubble in Delhi's neighbouring States—Haryana, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, and Rajasthan—researchers have emphasised the need for airshed management, along with improved machinery subsidies from the government and alternatives to crop burning. An airshed is a common geographic area where pollutants get trapped.

One major argument for the failure to tackle Delhi's pollution problems is that a large proportion of these polluting sources are present all year round and high pollution levels are mainly witnessed in winter months due to unfavourable meteorological conditions, meaning stop-gap and seasonal measures often yield unsatisfactory outcomes.

THE GIST

The National Ambient Air Quality Standards were revised in 2009 to include 12 categories of pollutants including PM2.5 (particulate matter with a diameter under 2.5 microns)—a noxious pollutant which can penetrate deep into the lungs and even enter the bloodstream, resulting in cardiovascular and respiratory impacts.

Multiple studies over the years, including the Delhi Pollution Control Committee's (DPCC) 2019 report by IIT Delhi and Madras experts, found that the rapid growth in Delhi's population, industrialisation and urbanisation, and increase in motorised private vehicle fleet led to the high concentration of air pollutants.

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Level of groundwater extraction lowest in 18 years, finds study

Total groundwater recharge was 437.6 billion cubic metres, as opposed to extraction of 239.16 bcm, reports Ministry of Water Resources

Jacob Koshy
NEW DELHI

Groundwater extraction in India saw an 18-year decline, according to an assessment by the Central Ground Water Board (CGWB) made public on Wednesday.

The total annual groundwater recharge for the entire country is 437.6 billion cubic metres (bcm) and annual groundwater extraction for the entire country is 239.16 bcm, according to the 2022 assessment report. Further, out of the total 7,089 assessment units in the country, 1,006 units have been categorised as “over-exploited” in the report.

By comparison, an assessment in 2020 found that the annual groundwater recharge was 436 bcm and extraction 245 bcm. In 2017, recharge was 432 bcm and extraction 249 bcm. The 2022 assessment suggests that groundwater



Promising data: The last time groundwater extraction was this low was in 2004, at 231 bcm. AKHILESH KUMAR

extraction is the lowest since 2004, when it was 231 bcm.

Such joint exercises between the CGWB and States/Union Territories were carried out earlier in 1980, 1995, 2004, 2009, 2011, 2013, 2017 and 2020.

“A detailed analysis of the information collected from the assessment indicates increase in ground water recharge which may mainly be attributed to increase in recharge from canal seepage, return flow of irrigation water and recharges from water bodies/

tanks & water conservation structures. Further, analysis indicates improvement in ground water conditions in 909 assessment units in the country when compared with 2017 assessment data. In addition, overall decrease in number of over-exploited units and decrease in stage of groundwater extraction level have also been observed,” the Ministry of Water Resources said in a statement.

The full report wasn’t made public by the Ministry.

Policing with talent, resource sharing, not squabbling

The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) convened a conference in late October in the capital, which saw the participation of the Union Home Minister, a few State Home Ministers and police chiefs. West Bengal did not send its highest officials citing its preoccupation with *pooja*-related issues. The Delhi conference was a very important occasion aimed at improving the quality of policing in the country through an exchange of ideas. The seriousness of the subject required attendance at the level of the Chief Minister and if some States gave it a miss, it was an unfortunate development and a reflection of the lack of seriousness in matters of governance affecting public order and crime.

The debate now over the way the Tamil Nadu police have handled the case of a blast in Coimbatore that happened recently, and a possible terror-related plot, also fits in this scene and is relevant to the state of law and order in the State and elsewhere. There is a section of influential public opinion which has accused the Tamil Nadu government of having been slothful and delayed handing over investigation of the incident to the National Investigation Agency (NIA). This has been rebutted by the State Director General of Police (DGP) who said that his force could not abruptly abandon the investigation and had to do the preliminary investigation to facilitate an NIA take-over. The exchange of barbs by the two sides has been an unfortunate and avoidable development and the truth lies in between. Rather than getting into a slanging match, what is more important is an examination of the standard operating procedures in place, the identification of lacunae and the initiation of corrective measures.

Patel's vision

The first Home Minister of independent India, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, would have been dismayed by the politics in Centre-State relations in a matter as serious as policing. He placed great value on professional policing, one reason why he insisted on an elitist and well-trained corps



R.K. Raghavan

is a former Central Bureau of Investigation Director who teaches 'criminal justice and policing' at the Jindal Global University, Sonapat, Haryana

Policing is a collaborative effort and it is unfortunate that there is still conflict between the Home Affairs Ministry and some States over utilising talent in the police and the sharing of resources

such as the Indian Police Service (IPS) which worked alongside the Indian Administrative Service (IAS). He was under immense pressure from various quarters, which included his own Congress party, to disband both the Indian Civil Service and IP, but as a distinguished and astute visionary, he was steadfast in his belief. Subsequent events proved him right. Despite all their faults, the two all-India services have been a cementing force and have greatly contributed to establishing nationally accepted standards of governance, especially in the area of law and order.

The passage of 75 years in a free India has more than established that a country of our proportions and diversity will need objective policing by a highly trained police force. It is distressing that there is still conflict between the MHA and some States over utilising talent in the IPS and the sharing of resources available in the States. Both sides have to be partially blamed for this unfortunate state of affairs. Petulance in personnel management has occasionally affected administration in the Centre and States.

Camaraderie is essential

It is a no-brainer that in this, New Delhi is the senior partner in what is definitely a collaborative relationship. But there have been actions over the decades that have inflicted many deep wounds on public order. These have been situations that have demanded large numbers of well-trained policemen. The Centre has always chipped in with support from the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF). There have also been other outfits such as the Border Security Force (BSF), the Indo Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) and the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) which have also worked in tandem with the State Police. Therefore, it makes sense that the MHA and State Police stop squabbling but explore how best to forge a strong camaraderie.

We are also witness to frequent spats between States and the Centre over the use or alleged misuse of the Central Bureau of Investigation

(CBI). Here again both parties have to share the blame. But the basic point that has been ignored is that crime and bureaucratic corruption have inter-State ramifications and only a national agency can bring in a much-needed and wide perspective. Insensitive action by a few States to withdraw consent to the CBI to function in a State smacks of politics and vindictiveness, which diminishes the fight against public servant graft.

What is lacking

'Police' is a State subject under the distribution of powers laid down in the Constitution of India. But that does not mean the Union government has no say in the matter. Training and technology are two areas where the Centre does greatly contribute to sharpening police ability to combat terrorism and other major public disturbances. The Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel National Police Academy in Hyderabad is a world-class institution that has resources and the professional excellence which are generously available to State police forces. Petty squabbling reduces the exchange of ideas and goes to attenuating the police response to difficult situations that require police assistance. This is why we need a political leadership that does not get bogged down in petty differences but promotes a free exchange of talent and resources between New Delhi and the States.

There is no point in blaming a DGP if he or she does not respond to a situation in a professional manner. The DGP looks up to the Chief Minister for directions. If the latter is driven by political considerations and gives unprofessional instructions, there is very little that the DGP can do. Despite all that the Supreme Court of India has done to insulate the chief of police from political caprice, the truth is that a DGP is perilously placed *vis-à-vis* the Chief Minister and his or her party men. It is lamentable that public opinion in the country has not asserted itself to impart a better sense of policing at all levels of government. I do not foresee any change in this unfortunate situation in the years ahead.

General Studies Paper I

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| A | History of Indian culture will cover the salient aspects of art forms, literature and architecture from ancient to modern times; |
| B | Modern Indian history from about the middle of the eighteenth century until the present-significant events, personalities, issues; |
| C | Freedom struggle-its various stages and important contributors / contributions from different parts of the country; |
| D | Post-independence consolidation and reorganization within the country; |
| E | History of the world will include events from 18 th century such as industrial revolution, world wars, re-drawal of national boundaries, colonization, decolonization, |
| F | Political philosophies like communism, capitalism, socialism etc.-their forms and effect on the society |
| G | Salient features of Indian Society, Diversity of India; |
| H | Effects of globalization on Indian society; |
| I | Role of women and women's organization; |
| J | Social empowerment, communalism, regionalism & secularism |
| K | Salient features of world's physical geography; |
| L | Geographical features and their location- changes in critical geographical features (including water bodies and ice-caps) and in flora and fauna and the effects of such changes; |
| M | Important Geophysical phenomena such as earthquakes, Tsunami, Volcanic activity, cyclone etc. |
| N | Distribution of key natural resources across the world (including South Asia and the Indian subcontinent); |
| O | Factors responsible for the location of primary, secondary, and tertiary sector industries in various parts of the world (including India); |
| P | Population and associated issues; |
| Q | Urbanization, their problems and their remedies |

General Studies Paper II

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| A | India and its neighbourhood- relations; |
| B | Important International institutions, agencies and fora- their structure, mandate; |
| C | Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests; |
| D | Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests. |
| E | Indian Constitution, historical underpinnings, evolution, features, amendments, significant provisions and basic structure; |
| F | Comparison of the Indian Constitutional scheme with other countries; |
| G | Functions and responsibilities of the Union and the States, issues and challenges pertaining to the federal structure, devolution of powers and finances up to local levels and challenges therein; Inclusive growth and issues arising from it; |
| H | Parliament and State Legislatures - structure, functioning, conduct of business, powers & privileges and issues arising out of these; |
| I | Structure, organization and functioning of the executive and the judiciary, Ministries and Departments; |

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| J | Separation of powers between various organs dispute redressal mechanisms and institutions; |
| K | Appointment to various Constitutional posts, powers, functions and responsibilities of various Constitutional bodies; |
| L | Statutory, regulatory and various quasi-judicial bodies; |
| M | Mechanisms, laws, institutions and bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of these vulnerable sections; |
| N | Salient features of the Representation of People's Act; |
| O | Important aspects of governance, transparency and accountability, e-governance- applications, models, successes, limitations, and potential; |
| P | Citizens charters, transparency & accountability and institutional and other measures; |
| Q | Issues relating to poverty and hunger, |
| R | Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States, Performance of these schemes; |
| S | Issues relating to development and management of social sector / services relating to education and human resources; |
| T | Issues relating to development and management of social sector / services relating to health |
| General Studies Paper III | |
| A | Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, development and employment; |
| B | Effects of liberalization on the economy, changes in industrial policy and their effects on industrial growth; |
| C | Inclusive growth and issues arising from it; |
| D | Infrastructure Energy, Ports, Roads, Airports, Railways etc. Government budgeting; |
| E | Land reforms in India |
| F | Major crops, cropping patterns in various parts of the country, different types of irrigation and irrigation systems; |
| G | Storage, transport and marketing of agricultural produce and issues and related constraints; |
| H | e-technology in the aid of farmers; Technology Missions; Economics of Animal-Rearing. |
| I | Issues of buffer stocks and food security, Public Distribution System- objectives, functioning, limitations, revamping; |
| J | Food processing and related industries in India – scope and significance, location, upstream and downstream requirements, supply chain management; |
| K | Issues related to direct and indirect farm subsidies and minimum support prices |
| L | Awareness in the fields of IT, Space, Computers, robotics, nano-technology, bio-technology; |
| M | Indigenization of technology and developing new technology; |
| N | Developments and their applications and effects in everyday life; |
| O | Issues relating to intellectual property rights |
| P | Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment |
| Q | Disaster and disaster management |
| R | Challenges to internal security through communication networks, role of media and social networking sites in internal security challenges, basics of cyber security; |
| S | Money-laundering and its prevention; |

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| T | Various forces and their mandate; |
| U | Security challenges and their management in border areas; |
| V | Linkages of organized crime with terrorism; |
| W | Role of external state and non-state actors in creating challenges to internal security; |
| X | Linkages between development and spread of extremism. |
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| General Studies Paper IV | |
| A | Ethics and Human Interface: Essence, determinants and consequences of Ethics in human actions; |
| B | Dimensions of ethics; |
| C | Ethics in private and public relationships, Human Values - lessons from the lives and teachings of great leaders, reformers and administrators; |
| D | Role of family, society and educational institutions in inculcating values. |
| E | Attitude: Content, structure, function; its influence and relation with thought and behaviour; |
| F | Moral and political attitudes; |
| G | Social influence and persuasion. |
| H | Aptitude and foundational values for Civil Service , integrity, impartiality and non-partisanship, objectivity, dedication to public service, empathy, tolerance and compassion towards the weaker sections. |
| I | Emotional intelligence-concepts, and their utilities and application in administration and governance. |
| J | Contributions of moral thinkers and philosophers from India and world. |
| K | Public/Civil service values and Ethics in Public administration: Status and problems; |
| L | Ethical concerns and dilemmas in government and private institutions. |
| M | Laws, rules, regulations and conscience as |
| N | sources of ethical guidance; |
| O | Accountability and ethical governance; strengthening of ethical and moral values in governance; ethical issues in international relations and funding; |
| P | Corporate governance. |
| Q | Probity in Governance: Concept of public service; |
| R | Philosophical basis of governance and probity; |
| S | Information sharing and transparency in government, Right to Information, Codes of Ethics, Codes of Conduct, Citizen's Charters, Work culture, Quality of service delivery, Utilization of public funds, challenges of corruption. |
| T | Case Studies on above issues |