

● POLITY

● ECONOMICS

● TECHNOLOGY

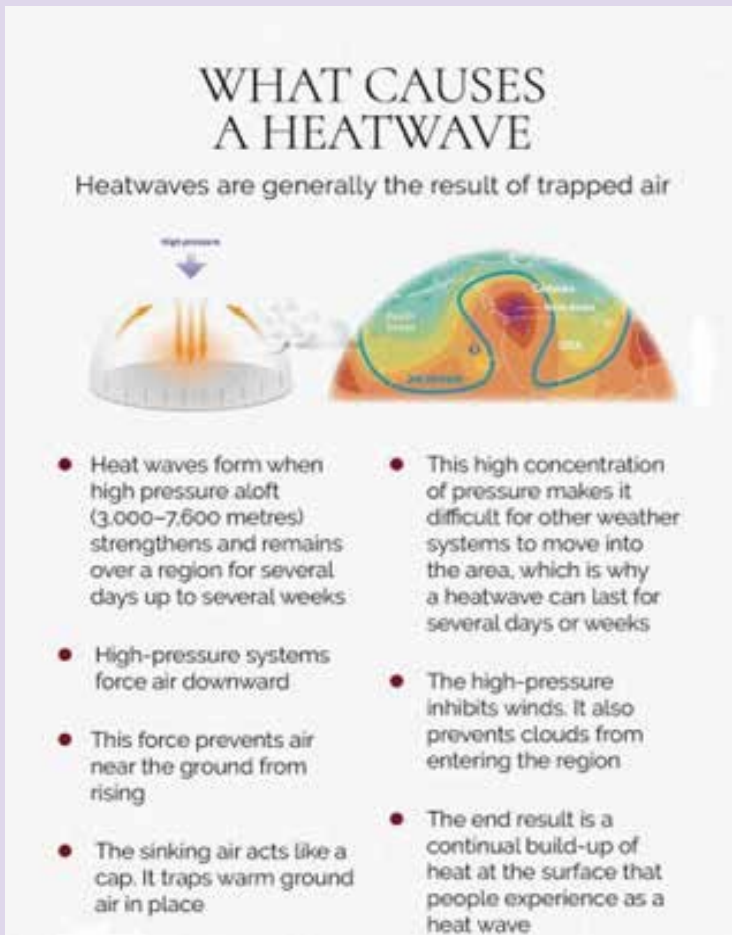
● ECOLOGY

INTERNAL SECURITY

Heatwave claims at least 61 lives; 21 polling officials among those dead

CONTEXT: With a heatwave roiling several parts of the country, at least 61 deaths from suspected heatstroke have been confirmed from multiple States on Friday, with 23 of the fatalities being poll personnel involved in the final phase of the Lok Sabha election that is set to culminate on Saturday.

Fourteen people, including 10 who were part of the election process, have died due to heat-stroke in Bihar in the last 24 hours, State officials said on Friday.



WHAT CAUSES A HEATWAVE

Heatwaves are generally the result of trapped air

- Heat waves form when high pressure aloft (3,000–7,600 metres) strengthens and remains over a region for several days up to several weeks
- High-pressure systems force air downward
- This force prevents air near the ground from rising
- The sinking air acts like a cap. It traps warm ground air in place
- This high concentration of pressure makes it difficult for other weather systems to move into the area, which is why a heatwave can last for several days or weeks
- The high-pressure inhibits winds. It also prevents clouds from entering the region
- The end result is a continual build-up of heat at the surface that people experience as a heat wave

Heatwaves- Heat waves are prolonged periods of excessively hot weather that can cause adverse impacts on human health, the environment, and the economy.

Definition of Heatwave- In India IMD defines heatwave based on the following criteria.

Plain- The maximum temperature recorded at a station is 40 degrees Celsius or more.

Coast- The maximum temperature recorded at a station is 37 degrees Celsius or more.

Hills- The maximum temperature recorded at a station is 30 degrees Celsius or more.

Heat Wave- Departure from normal is 4.5°C to 6.4°C

Severe Heat Wave- Departure from normal is >6.4°C

What are the factors behind the increase in Heatwaves in India?

- High Atmospheric Pressure Systems-** Heatwaves occur when high-pressure systems stall over a region. These systems trap warm air near the Earth's surface and prevent the normal movement of air masses, leading to prolonged periods of hot weather.
- Climate Variability-** Natural climate variations, such as El Nino and La Nina events, influence weather patterns and increase the likelihood of heatwaves. For ex- During El Nino events, warmer ocean waters in the tropical Pacific lead to changes in atmospheric circulation and weather patterns.
- Global Warming-** The long-term increase in Earth's average temperature, primarily driven by human activities such as burning fossil fuels, deforestation, and industrial processes, contributes to the frequency and intensity of heat waves.
- Urban Heat Island Effect-** Urban areas with high population density, extensive concrete and asphalt surfaces, and limited vegetation tend to absorb and retain more heat, has created localized zones of higher temperatures. This phenomenon, known as the urban heat island effect, has intensified heat waves in cities.

ENVIRONMENT

Form panel to survey Assam reserve forest, says NGT

CONTEXT: The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has asked the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change to constitute a three-member committee to survey a part of a reserve forest on the Assam-Nagaland border allegedly diverted for the establishment of an Assam police commando battalion .



The NGT also issued notices to the Environment Ministry, the Assam government, the Assam Forest Department, and two others to file counter affidavits within four weeks. This followed the hearing of a petition by eastern Assam-based environmental activist Rohit Choudhury.

What is National Green Tribunal (NGT)

It is a specialised body set up under the National Green Tribunal Act (2010) for effective and expeditious disposal of cases relating to environmental protection and conservation of forests and other natural resources.

With the establishment of the NGT, India became the third country in the world to set up a specialised environmental tribunal, only after Australia and New Zealand, and the first developing country to do so.

NGT is mandated to make disposal of applications or appeals finally within 6 months of filing of the same.

The NGT has five places of sittings, New Delhi is the Principal place of sitting and Bhopal, Pune, Kolkata and Chennai are the other four.

The Tribunal comprises of the Chairperson, the Judicial Members and Expert Members. They shall hold office for term of three years or till the age of sixty-five years, whichever is earlier and are not eligible for reappointment.

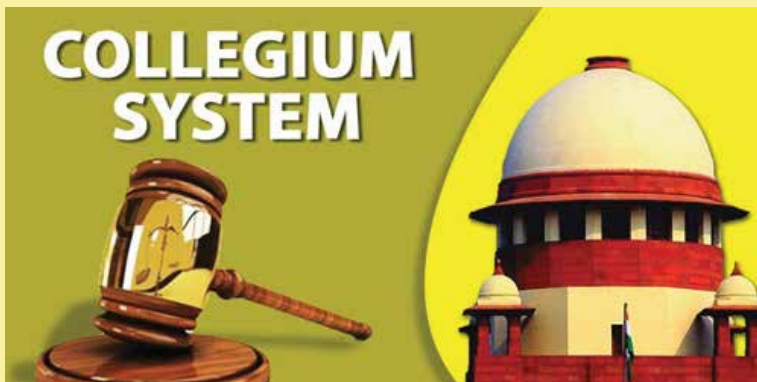
The Chairperson is appointed by the Central Government in consultation with Chief Justice of India (CJI).

POLITY

HC dismisses plea seeking information from SC Collegium

CONTEXT: The Delhi High Court has dismissed a petition seeking a direction to the Supreme Court Collegium to provide detailed reasons while refusing to accept re-commendations for the appointment of High Court judges.

It observed that the recommendations considered by the Collegium are put upon the top court's website. The requisite qualifications needed to be appointed as a judge of the High Court are laid down under Article 217 of the Constitution, it said.



What is a Collegium System and How Did It Evolve?

It is the system of appointment and transfer of judges that has evolved through judgments of the SC, and not by an Act of Parliament or by a provision of the Constitution.

Evolution of the System:

First Judges Case (1981): It declared that the “primacy” of the CJI’s (Chief Justice of India) recommendation on judicial appointments and transfers can be refused for “cogent reasons.”

The ruling gave the Executive primacy over the Judiciary in judicial appointments for the next 12 years.

Second Judges Case (1993): SC introduced the Collegium system, holding that “consultation” really meant “concurrence”.

It added that it was not the CJI’s individual opinion, but an institutional opinion formed in consultation with the two senior-most judges in the SC.

Third Judges Case (1998): SC on the President’s reference (Article 143) expanded the Collegium to a five-member body, comprising the CJI and four of his senior-most colleagues.

The SC collegium is headed by the CJI (Chief Justice of India) and comprises four other senior most judges of the court.

A High Court collegium is led by the incumbent Chief Justice and two other senior most judges of that court.

Judges of the higher judiciary are appointed only through the collegium system and the government has a role only after names have been decided by the collegium.

ECOLOGY

Railways to construct canopy bridges across track in Assam gibbon habitat

CONTEXT: The Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) has earmarked funds to construct canopy bridges for India’s only ape to move across a railway track bifurcating its prime habitat in eastern Assam.

A 1.65-km-long track — set to be doubled and electrified — divides the 2,098.62-hectare Hollongapar Gibbon Sanctuary in Jorhat district. The sanctuary has the largest concentration of the Hoolock gibbon, one of 20 species of apes on earth.

The gibbon, known for its vocalisation, spends much of its time on the upper canopy of tall trees, mostly the hollong (*Dipterocarpus macrocarpus*). The fragmentation of the forest along the track has disturbed the arboreal nature of the ape, putting it at risk while crossing the track.

The NFR had undertaken efforts in the past to build an artificial canopy bridge while the State Forest Department and Assam-based biodiversity conservation organisation Aaranyak had erected a natural canopy bridge in a part of the sanctuary frequented by the gibbons. The gibbons did not use the artificial bridge but used the natural canopy.

About Gibbons

Gibbons, known as the smallest and fastest of all apes, inhabit tropical and subtropical forests in Southeast Asia.

They have high intelligence, distinct personalities, and strong family bonds similar to other apes.

They represent one of the 20 gibbon species found worldwide.



A recent study by the Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CCMB) in Hyderabad analyzed the genetics of these gibbons.

The study revealed that there is actually only one species of gibbon in India, debunking the previous belief of separate eastern and western species based on coat color.

ECONOMY

Fiscal deficit in FY24 narrowed to 5.6% on better tax mop-up

CONTEXT: The Central government's fiscal deficit during 2023-24 at 5.6% of the GDP was better than the previous estimates of 5.8% on account of higher revenue realisation and lower expenditure, according to official data released on Friday.

In actual terms, the fiscal deficit — or gap between expenditure and revenue — was ₹16.53 lakh crore, or 5.63% of the GDP, which grew 8.2% in FY24.

According to the data released by the Controller General of Accounts (CGA), the government's revenue collection was 101.2% of the revised estimates (RE) presented in the Budget. Net tax collection was ₹23.26 lakh crore in FY24. The expenditure stood at ₹44.42 lakh crore.

What is Fiscal Deficit?

Fiscal deficit refers to the shortfall in a government's revenue when compared to its expenditure.

When a government's expenditure exceeds its revenues, the government will have to borrow money or sell assets to fund the deficit.

Taxes are the most important source of revenue for any government. In 2024-25, the government's tax receipts are expected to be Rs 26.02 lakh crore while its total revenue is estimated to be Rs 30.8 lakh crore.

When a government runs a fiscal surplus, on the other hand, its revenues exceed expenditure.

It is, however, quite rare for governments to run a surplus. Most governments today focus on keeping the fiscal deficit under control rather than on generating a fiscal surplus or on balancing the budget.

Fiscal Deficit = Total Expenditure - Total Receipts (excluding borrowings).

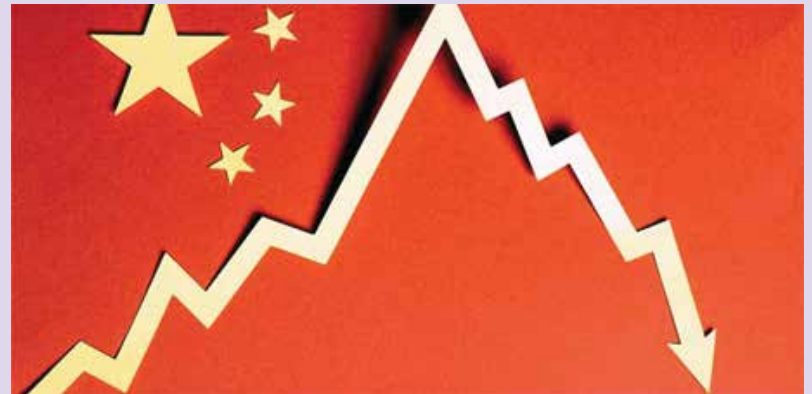
Revenue Deficit: This deficit of a government or business can be determined by subtracting the total revenue receipts from the total income expenditure.

ECONOMY

China factory activity dips as property pain persists

CONTEXT: China's manufacturing activity unexpectedly fell in May, keeping alive calls for fresh stimulus as a protracted property crisis continues to weigh on business, consumer and investor confidence.

The official manufacturing purchasing managers' index (PMI) dropped to 49.5 in May from 50.4 in April, the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) said on Friday, below the 50-mark separating growth from contraction and missing analysts' forecast of 50.4.



Purchasing Managers Index

It is a survey-based measure that asks the respondents about changes in their perception about key business variables as compared with the previous month.

The purpose of the PMI is to provide information about current and future business conditions to company decision makers, analysts, and investors.

It is calculated separately for the manufacturing and services sectors and then a composite index is also constructed.

The PMI is a number from 0 to 100. A print above 50 means expansion, while a score below that denotes contraction. A reading at 50 indicates no change.

If PMI of the previous month is higher than the PMI of the current month, it represents that the economy is contracting.

It is usually released at the start of every month. It is, therefore, considered a good leading indicator of economic activity.

PMI is compiled by IHS Markit for more than 40 economies worldwide.

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INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

11 killed as Israel strikes targets across Gaza, troops push into central Rafah

CONTEXT: Israeli forces on Friday struck targets across the Gaza Strip, with witnesses reporting air raids around the southern city of Rafah, the latest focus of the nearly eight-month war.

Israel launched its military incursion into Rafah in early May despite international objections over the safety of civilians sheltering in the city on Gaza's border with Egypt. Witnesses said on Friday Israeli strikes hit the Rafah area as well as central Gaza's Nuseirat while intense bombardment was reported in the north.

Amid stalled diplomatic efforts towards a ceasefire, Hamas said it had informed mediators it would only agree a "comprehensive" truce agreement including a hostage-prisoner swap if Israel halts its "aggression"



What is Rafah Crossing ?

The Rafah crossing is the southernmost exit point from the Gaza Strip, and it shares a border with Egypt's Sinai Peninsula. The crossing is controlled by Egypt.

It is the only exit that does not lead to Israeli territory. There are only two other border crossings in and out of Gaza: Erez is located in the north and is used by people in Israel and Kerem Shalom, in the south, which is exclusively for commercial goods.

Both Erez and Kerem Shalom controlled by Israel are currently closed.

The Rafah crossing gained heightened importance after Hamas's assault on the Erez crossing, resulting in over 1,300 casualties in southern Israel.

In response, Israel closed both Erez and Kerem Shalom indefinitely, leaving the Rafah border as the sole means of entry and exit for Gaza's people and the only crossing for humanitarian aid.

ECONOMY

At WTO, India defers response to queries on WFP rice export

CONTEXT: With global spotlight on its rice export policy, India played for time at the WTO to formulate a response to clarifications sought by Australia, Canada, Brazil, Switzerland and the U.K. on whether it had stopped its rice exporters from participating in UN World Food Program (WFP) tenders in violation of multi-lateral rules, sources said.

The U.K., at the recent WTO agriculture committee meeting, noted India's restrictions on rice exports resulted in a considerable decline in total exports of the staple in 2023-24 and hinted that these policies could be contributing to the rise in global prices

About World Trade Organisation

The World Trade Organization (WTO) is an intergovernmental organization that regulates and facilitates international trade between nations.

It officially commenced operations on 1 January 1995, pursuant to the 1994 Marrakesh Agreement, thus replacing the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) that had been established in 1948

The WTO is the world's largest international economic organization, with 164 member states representing over 98% of global trade and global GDP

Also, WTO is the only global international organization dealing with the rules of trade between nations

World Food Programme

The World Food Programme (WFP) is the leading humanitarian organization saving lives and changing lives, delivering food assistance in emergencies and working with communities to improve nutrition and build resilience.

It was founded in 1961 by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) with its headquarters in Rome, Italy.

It is also a member of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG), a coalition of UN agencies and organizations aimed at fulfilling the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The international community has committed to end hunger, achieve food security and improve nutrition by 2030.

WFP works in over 120 countries and territories to bring life-saving food to people displaced by conflict and made destitute by disasters.



"Education is the ability to listen to almost anything without losing your temper or your self-confidence." - Robert Frost

HISTORY

Ahilyabai Holkar was an ideal ruler, says RSS chief

CONTEXT: RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat on Thursday described the late Holkar queen of Indore, Ahilyabai Holkari, as the ideal ruler in a message marking the 299th birth anniversary of the queen.

The late queen was the ruler of Indore for nearly three decades in the 18th century, after being widowed early in life, and was considered not only progressive but also contributed to greatly to the revival of the Kashi Vishwanath Temple and the Maheshwari weaving style.

About Ahilya Bhai Holkar

Ahilyabai (1725 -1795) was one of the women rulers of Medieval India who belongs to the Holkar dynasty of the Maratha Empire.

She was married Khanderao Holkar in 1733 at the tender age of 8. Her husband was killed in the battle of Kumbher in 1754.

Ahilyabai is famous for having built numerous forts and roads in the Malwa region, sponsoring festivals and offering donations to many Hindu temples. Her philanthropy was reflected in the construction of several temples, ghats, wells, tanks and rest

houses stretching across the length of the country.

She welcomed stalwarts such as Marathi poet Moropant, Shahir Ananta Gandhi, and Sanskrit scholar Khushali Ram into her capital.

John Keay, the British historian, gave the queen the title of 'The Philosopher Queen'. She had been an acute observer of the wider political scene.



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