

● POLITY

● ECONOMICS

● TECHNOLOGY

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INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

INDIA'S STANCE ON PEACE PROPOSALS

CONTEXT: India refrained from endorsing the final document at the Peace Summit in Switzerland, stressing the need for proposals acceptable to both Russia and Ukraine. Alongside several other nations, India did not sign the "Joint Communiqué on a Peace Framework," emphasizing the importance of options that both parties agree on for sustainable peace.

Despite attending the summit to explore diverse perspectives on conflict resolution, India maintained its policy of abstaining from resolutions critical of Russia, consistent with its approach in international forums. The involvement of India and other Global South nations was highlighted for fostering a global consensus and addressing concerns like food and energy security.



MODEL QUESTION:

In what context was the "Joint Communiqué on a Peace Framework" mentioned in news recently?

- A) Russia's peace formula and NATO charter
- B) Ukraine's peace formula and UN charter
- C) EU peace formula and G7 agreements
- D) UN Security Council resolutions

Ans. Russia's peace formula and NATO charter

SOCIAL JUSTICE

CONTROVERSIES AND ISSUES SURROUNDING NEET UG 2024

Introduction to NEET UG

The National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (NEET) – Undergraduate, is the largest admission examination for medical seats in India, involving significant expenses for coaching, admission counseling, and fees. Since its inception, NEET has faced litigation and challenges from various lobbies, including state governments, highlighting its impact on society and the substantial wealth involved.



Recent Controversies

- **Inflated Scores and Ranks:** One of the primary issues in NEET 2024 is the inflation of scores and ranks, leading to a top-heavy distribution. Sixty-one candidates achieved the top rank with 100% marks, more than the number of seats at AIIMS, New Delhi. Additionally, 22,000 candidates scored above 90%, and 80,000 students scored above 83%, equivalent to the seats in government medical colleges in India.
- **Lack of Correlation:** There is a noted lack of correlation between NEET scores and Class 12 scores, raising questions about the exam's effectiveness.
- **Tie-Breaking Rule:** Concerns have been raised regarding the tie-breaking rule, especially with multiple students scoring 100%.
- **Physics Question with Two Correct Answers:** A physics question with two correct answers added to the controversy.
- **Grace Marks for Time Loss:** Initially awarded for time loss, the grace marks were later scrapped, causing further debate.
- **Early Result Announcement:** The early announcement of results, though generally welcomed, raised concerns about the thoroughness of in-house testing and checks.

Historical Context and Role of NTA

Historically, NEET and other competitive exams like JEE (Main) were conducted by the Central Board of Secondary

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Education (CBSE). From 2019 onwards, the National Testing Agency (NTA) took over as a specialized autonomous organization for conducting entrance exams. The NTA aims to rank candidates for counseling and assigning preferred seats based on a long-tailed distribution, which was not achieved in NEET 2024.

Tie-Breaking and Other Issues

- **Tie-Breaking Rules:** NEET has predefined rules for tie-breaking, including subject-based hierarchy and non-subject criteria like age and application number. Despite these rules, the tie-breaking issue persists, especially with multiple students scoring 100%.
- **Grace Marks Scrapped:** The NTA followed Supreme Court guidelines for awarding grace marks but later recommended scrapping them in favor of a re-test, a decision deemed fair by the Court.
- **Result Announcement:** The final results should be announced after thorough in-house testing and checks to ensure accuracy.

Transparency and SOPs

The NTA has been proactive in disclosing information and making quick corrections, such as scrapping grace marks. However, the NEET 2024 controversy has led to several litigations and media coverage due to unusual score patterns and ranking issues.

Stakeholders and Protests

The main stakeholders of NEET 2024 are the 23 lakh aspirants and the NTA. Secondary stakeholders include business leaders in the coaching and admission counseling industry. The unusual score patterns have led to protests from both aspirants and industry leaders, shaking the faith of many candidates.

Allegations and Future Measures

Unaddressed issues such as paper leaks, cooperative copying, and the nexus between exam and coaching centers require investigation. To prevent such issues, a robust and resilient system must be implemented, ensuring the integrity of examinations and admissions. The selection process should be continually upgraded and fine-tuned to remain relevant and meaningful.

Conclusion

Despite controversies, NEET remains a crucial examination for medical aspirants. The NTA's efforts in maintaining transparency and quick corrections are commendable, but continuous improvements are necessary to uphold the examination's integrity and merit.

MODEL QUESTION

Discuss the role and challenges of large-scale competitive examinations like NEET UG in the Indian higher education system. What measures can be implemented to address these challenges?

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

PANDA DIPLOMACY

Introduction to Panda Diplomacy

Panda diplomacy refers to China's practice of sending giant pandas to other countries as a symbol of goodwill and to strengthen diplomatic relationships. This tradition dates back to the Tang dynasty, but it became particularly notable in the mid-20th century.



Recent Developments

A recent instance of panda diplomacy involves China loaning new giant pandas to Australia. This decision was announced by China's Premier Li Qiang during his visit to Sydney on Sunday.

MODEL QUESTION:

“Panda diplomacy” in news is related to which of the following countries?

- A) Nepal
- B) China
- C) Bhutan
- D) India

Ans. China

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

INDIAN SOCIETY

GERMANY INTRODUCES OPPORTUNITY CARD FOR SKILLED PROFESSIONALS

Overview of the Opportunity Card

On June 1, 2024, the German government implemented the third stage of its Skilled Immigration Act, originally passed in 2020, with the introduction of the Chancenkarte, or Opportunity Card. This initiative enables skilled professionals from non-EU countries to live in Germany for up to a year while searching for work. The Opportunity Card uses a point system similar to those in Canada and Australia.



INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

SRI LANKA-INDIA CONNECTIVITY FEASIBILITY STUDY NEARS COMPLETION

Sri Lankan President Ranil Wickremesinghe announced that the feasibility study for establishing land connectivity with India is in its final stages. This was disclosed while inspecting development work in Mannar. The study's preliminary phase is complete, and discussions on land connectivity and a power grid connection with India are anticipated during India's External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar's upcoming visit. Additionally, plans for a commercial venture to sell excess renewable energy to India will be



explored. Mr. Jaishankar's visit, although not officially confirmed by India's Ministry of External Affairs, is expected to be his first standalone visit abroad since assuming office. The visit will also address the contentious issue of illegal fishing in Sri Lankan waters by Indian fishermen, as mentioned by Sri Lanka's Fisheries Minister, Douglas Devananda.

INDIA SRI LANKA RELATIONS

Renewable Energy Partnership and Geopolitical Context

- **Renewable Energy Collaboration:** Sri Lanka Sustainable Energy Authority and U-Solar Clean Energy Solutions have signed a contract worth USD 11 million to build "Hybrid Renewable Energy Systems" in Sri Lanka's islands.
- **Geopolitical Significance:** India's grant support of USD 11 million, replacing a Chinese-backed project, underscores the geopolitical dynamics in the region and reflects a broader competition for influence between India and China in the Indian Ocean.

India-Sri Lanka Relations: Historical Ties and Financial Cooperation

- **Historical Bond:** India and Sri Lanka share deep cultural, religious, and trade ties since ancient times, with over 60% of Sri Lanka's exports benefiting from the India-Sri Lanka Free Trade Agreement.
- **Financial Support:** India provided approximately USD 4 billion worth of aid to Sri Lanka during its economic crisis, crucial for the country's survival amidst a severe paucity of foreign exchange reserves.

Joint Vision for Connectivity and Economic Cooperation

- **Connectivity Vision:** Both nations have a joint vision emphasizing comprehensive connectivity, renewable energy collaboration, and infrastructure development such as the multi-product petroleum pipeline aimed at ensuring an affordable and reliable supply of energy resources to Sri Lanka.
- **Economic Integration:** Exploration of an Economic and Technology Cooperation Agreement (ETCA) and adoption of India's UPI service highlight efforts to integrate economies and promote growth. Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) from India to Sri Lanka amounted to around USD 1.7 billion from 2005 to 2019.

Challenges and Geopolitical Concerns

- **Fisheries and Border Issues:** Longstanding disputes like fishing rights and border security, including the Katchatheevu Island dispute, pose challenges to bilateral relations.
- **Tamil Ethnic Issue and China's Influence:** Concerns over Tamil minority rights and China's increasing influence in Sri Lanka, impacting regional dynamics and India's interests, are areas of contention. China has made substantial investments in Sri Lanka, including projects like the South Asia Commercial and Logistics Hub (SACL) at Colombo Port.

MODEL QUESTIONS:

Discuss the challenges in India-Sri Lanka relations. How has India's financial assistance and investment contributed to Sri Lanka's economic recovery and growth, and what are the significant areas of economic cooperation between the two countries?

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

ISRAEL'S MILITARY IMPLEMENTS HUMANITARIAN PAUSE AMID GAZA CRISIS

Israel's military announced on Sunday that it would temporarily cease fighting along a specific route in south Gaza each day to allow aid deliveries, responding to long-standing concerns about famine in the besieged Palestinian territory. This decision came after a significant loss for the Army in clashes with Hamas militants, prompting a strategic pause in military operations during daylight hours in the Rafah area. UN agencies and aid groups have consistently raised alarms about severe shortages of essential supplies in Gaza, worsened by restrictions on land access and the closure of key border crossings. Israel has defended its efforts to facilitate aid access into Gaza, citing militant interference with supplies and distribution challenges among humanitarian workers. The United States recently imposed sanctions on an extremist Israeli group for obstructing and attacking aid convoys bound for Gaza.



MODEL QUESTION:

Which countries share a border with Israel?

- A) Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia
- B) Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Turkey
- C) Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Egypt
- D) Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Iran

Ans. Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Egypt

INDIAN ECONOMY

INDIGO'S MAJOR OVERSEAS EXPANSION

IndiGo revealed its most ambitious international expansion last summer, linking cities in Central Asia and East Africa. This move marked India's largest airline venturing beyond its familiar territories of the subcontinent and West Asia.



Enhancing Regional Connectivity: UDAN Scheme Explained

The UDAN (Ude Desh ka Aam Nagrik) Scheme, launched by the Ministry of Civil Aviation, aims at developing regional airports and improving regional connectivity. It is part of the National Civil Aviation Policy 2016 and is designed for a ten-year period.

Objectives of UDAN Scheme:

- Improve air connectivity to remote and regional areas of India.
- Develop remote areas, enhance trade, commerce, and tourism.
- Enable affordable air travel for common people.
- Create employment opportunities in the aviation sector.

Key Features of UDAN Scheme:

- Airfares capped at Rs. 2,500 per hour for 50% of total seats.
- Financial support through concessions from Central and State governments, airport operators, and Viability Gap Funding (VGF).
- Regional Connectivity Fund (RCF) established for VGF requirements, with partner state governments contributing a 20% share.

Previous Phases of UDAN Scheme:

Phase 1 (2017): Connected underserved and unserved airports.

Phase 2 (2018): Expanded air connectivity to remote areas.

Phase 3 (Nov 2018): Focused on hilly and remote regions.

Phase 4 (Dec 2019): Connected islands and remote areas.

Key Features of UDAN 5.0:

Focus on Category-2 and Category-3 aircraft.

- No restriction on flight distance.
- VGF capped at 600 km stage length.
- No predetermined routes; only Network and Individual Route Proposal considered.
- Exclusivity withdrawn if Passenger Load Factor (PLF) exceeds 75% for four quarters.
- Simplified novation process for route transfers.



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Achievements under UDAN Scheme (As of Aug 2022):

- Operational airports increased from 74 to 141.
- Connected 68 underserved/unserved destinations, including 58 airports, 8 heliports, and 2 water aerodromes.
- Initiated 425 new routes, providing connectivity to over 29 states/UTs.
- Over one crore passengers benefited from the scheme, transforming regional air travel in India.

MODEL QUESTIONS:

Examine the development of Airports in India through joint ventures under Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model. What are the challenges faced by the authorities in this regard? (2017)

MODEL ANSWER

Enmetozobactum seen in news is in the context of?

- Anti-Aging concerns
- Cardiovascular diseases
- Anti-Microbial Resistance
- Mental health disorders

Ans. Anti-Microbial Resistance

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

ORCHID PHARMA'S BREAKTHROUGH ANNOUNCEMENT

Approval for Enmetozobactum:

Orchid Pharma announced on June 6 that it had received approval from the Drugs Controller General of India for manufacturing and selling Enmetozobactum, marking a significant achievement.

**Significance of Enmetozobactum:**

Enmetozobactum is a notable development as it is one of the few drugs discovered in India by an Indian company, with less than 20 such instances recorded. Moreover, it is the first India-discovered drug to receive approval from the U.S. FDA, highlighting its global recognition.

Addressing Anti-Microbial Resistance (AMR):

Enmetozobactum is an anti-microbial resistance (AMR) drug, crucial in combating disease-causing bacteria that are increasingly developing resistance to antibiotics. The drug, used in combination with Cefepime, is seen as a critical advancement in addressing the global health challenge posed by AMR.

ENVIRONMENT

PROPOSED SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT CESS: UNDERSTANDING RATIONALE AND CHALLENGES

The Bruhat Bengaluru Mahangara Palike (BBMP) has suggested implementing a Solid Waste Management (SWM) Cess of ₹100 per month per household. This proposal has sparked discussions and criticism, highlighting the need to delve into the reasons behind this cess, its intended utilization, and the broader context of challenges faced by Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) in managing solid waste.

**Basis of SWM Cess and Associated Costs**

ULBs impose user fees or SWM cess as mandated by the Solid Waste Management Rules, 2016. These charges, typically ranging from ₹30-50 per month, are collected alongside property tax. The current contemplation revolves around revising these rates to cope with the rising costs of providing SWM services, especially considering the complexity and resource-intensive nature of these operations.

Understanding SWM Costs and Service Components

Offering SWM services requires substantial resources, with ULBs allocating a significant portion of their manpower and budgets. In cities like Bangalore, waste generation is substantial, necessitating a vast fleet of waste collection vehicles, compactors, and a workforce of Paurakarmikas. SWM services encompass

collection, transportation, processing, and disposal, with collection and transportation consuming the majority of the budget.

Challenges in Solid Waste Management

Indian cities grapple with challenges related to waste composition, low recyclable material, and financial viability of waste processing. Despite efforts, operational revenue from waste processing facilities covers only a fraction of the expenses, with ULBs facing additional challenges like open littering, seasonal waste variations, and costly disposal of non-recyclable dry waste.

Solutions and Sustainable Practices

To address these challenges, strategies such as waste segregation at source, reducing single-use plastic, decentralized composting, and awareness programs are proposed. These measures, combined with efficient operations, aim to reduce overall SWM expenditure and alleviate the burden of user charges on residents.

MODEL QUESTIONS:

What are the key challenges faced by Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) in India in managing solid waste, and what solutions and strategies are proposed to address these challenges effectively?

INDIAN SOCIETY

TRENDS AND CHALLENGES FOR WOMEN IN STEM AND CORPORATE CAREERS

PoSH Act
Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act



There is a rising trend of women pursuing STEM courses in India, leading to increased employment in corporate sectors like IT. However, the attrition rate among women is higher, often due to societal pressures post-marriage, during pregnancy, and after childbirth. Workplace harassment, including verbal and sexual harassment, also contributes to women leaving organizations. The implementation of the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act aims to address these issues. Recent data from top IT firms like Tata Consultancy Services, Infosys, Wipro, and HCL shows a significant increase in cases filed under the PoSH Act, indicating a growing concern. Despite this, many cases go unreported due to various societal factors, highlighting the need for a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by women in the workplace.

INDIAN SOCIETY

GENDER PARITY CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIES

Global Gender Gap Report Overview:

The Global Gender Gap report by the World Economic Forum (WEF) highlights the slow progress in achieving gender parity globally. Despite a marginal increase from 68.4% in 2023 to 68.5% in 2024, the pace remains concerning, with an estimated 134 years needed to reach full parity.



Country Rankings and India's Position:

Iceland maintains its top rank, having closed over 90% of its gender gap, while India has slipped to 129 out of 146 countries. The report notes India's slight regression, mainly attributed to declines in education and political empowerment spheres.

Challenges and Opportunities in India:

India's progress in economic participation shows improvement, but it requires further advancement to match past scores. Bridging gender gaps in labor force participation, education, and political representation are key areas needing attention.

Strategies for Achieving Gender Parity:

Efforts should focus on preventing girls from dropping out of education, providing job skills, ensuring workplace safety, and promoting shared responsibility for household chores. Enhancing women's political empowerment is crucial, especially with pending legislation like the Women's Reservation Bill.

Call to Action:

Governments and stakeholders are urged to strengthen frameworks for collaboration between business and civil society to make gender parity an economic imperative, emphasizing the need for concerted efforts to address gender disparities.

MODEL QUESTION:

What are the continued challenges for women in India against time and space? (2019)

POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

COMPOSITION AND LIMITATIONS OF UNION COUNCIL OF MINISTERS

The Union Council of Ministers (COM) in India, led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, was sworn in on June 9, 2024. Understanding its composition and constitutional limits is crucial in the context of governance and administration.



Composition of Council of Ministers:

The COM comprises the Prime Minister, 30 Cabinet Ministers, 5 Ministers of State (MoS) with independent charge, and 36 MoS. This structure aids in advising the President, with real executive powers vested in the COM. Cabinet Ministers handle significant portfolios, while MoS assist them, with MoS with independent charge reporting directly to the Prime Minister.

Constitutional Limit and Issues:

The constitutional limit on the number of Ministers in the COM was set at 15% of the total strength of the Lok Sabha/State Legislative Assembly through the 91st Constitutional Amendment in 2003. However, challenges arise concerning the appointment of Parliamentary Secretaries (PS) to circumvent this limit, leading to legal disputes in various States and Union Territories. It's crucial to address these issues to ensure adherence to constitutional norms and efficient governance.

MODEL QUESTION

Consider the following statements:

The constitutional limit on the number of Ministers in the COM was set at 15% of the total strength of the Lok Sabha/State Legislative Assembly

This was brought in through the 90th Constitutional Amendment in 2003

Select correct answers from the codes given below:

- 1 only
 - 2 only
 - Both 1 and 2
 - Neither 1 nor 2
- Ans. A. 1 only

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

UNRAVELING COSMIC MYSTERIES: DARK MATTER, DARK ENERGY, AND GRAVITY THEORIES

Explaining Gravity Phenomena:

The general theory of relativity has been instrumental in explaining gravity and related phenomena like gravitational waves, gravitational lensing, and time dilation. It refines Newton's laws, presenting gravity as a geometric aspect of spacetime.



Dark Energy: The Universe's Mystery Force

Dark energy, constituting 70% of the universe's energy post-Big Bang, creates negative pressure in spacetime, causing celestial bodies to drift apart. This contrasts with Newtonian gravity's attractive force.

Dark Matter's Invisible Influence:

Proposed from cosmological observations, dark matter remains invisible but crucial in explaining the behavior of galaxies. Its existence is inferred from discrepancies in galactic rotation rates.

Challenges to Gravity Theories:

Some scientists propose alternate gravity paradigms to explain observed phenomena without invoking dark matter or dark energy. However, these alternatives face challenges in accounting for all observed disparities.

Quest for Understanding:

Understanding dark matter and dark energy is pivotal to grasping the general theory of relativity fully. Researchers worldwide, including in India, utilize simulations and telescopic observations to explore these cosmic enigmas.

Advancements in Cosmic Exploration:

Technological advancements, like the James Webb Space Telescope and the Dark Energy Spectroscopic Instrument (DESI), provide insights into dark matter and dark energy. DESI's 3D mapping aligns with Λ CDM model assumptions, while other theories like MOND offer intriguing but challenging perspectives.

What technological instrument is attempting to create the largest 3D map of the universe?

- A) James Webb Space Telescope
- B) Dark Energy Spectroscopic Instrument (DESI)
- C) Cassini spacecraft
- D) Hubble Space Telescope

Ans. B) Dark Energy Spectroscopic Instrument (DESI)

POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

DISPUTE OVER EVM SECURITY: ELON MUSK VS. FORMER MINISTER RAJEEV CHANDRASEKHAR

Former Minister of State for Electronics and Information Technology Rajeev Chandrasekhar engaged in a brief disagreement with Elon Musk, the founder and CEO of X and Tesla, Inc., over the security of Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs).



Elon Musk's Remarks:

In response to reports of irregularities in EVMs in Puerto Rico, Elon Musk expressed concerns about the reliability of EVMs, stating that they should be eliminated due to the risk of being hacked by humans or AI.

Rajeev Chandrasekhar's Response:

Former Minister Rajeev Chandrasekhar countered Musk's comments, asserting that the concerns raised didn't apply to Indian voting machines. Musk replied, "Anything can be hacked."

Background on Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs):

Definition and Development:

- EVMs are devices used to record votes electronically, introduced in Kerala in 1982 and adopted by the Election Commission of India (ECI) since 1998.
- They were devised by the Technical Experts Committee (TEC) of the Election Commission in collaboration with Bharat Electronics Ltd, Bangalore, and Electronic Corporation of India Ltd, Hyderabad.

Functionality and Key Features:

- EVMs consist of a Control Unit and a Balloting Unit connected by a cable, with the Control Unit managed by the polling officer.
- They can record a maximum of 2,000 votes, operate on battery power, and use one-time programmable/masked chips for security.
- EVMs are standalone machines without an operating system, ensuring reliability and security.

Benefits of EVMs:

- Accuracy: They reduce 'Invalid Votes' and improve the accuracy of voter choice.
- Efficiency: EVMs streamline voting processes, making them faster and more efficient.
- Transparency: They enhance transparency by providing verifiable records of votes cast.
- Cost-effectiveness: EVMs offer cost savings compared to paper-based voting systems.

Concerns Raised:

Lack of Transparency: Some critics argue that EVMs lack transparency in their inner workings.

Reliability: Questions have been raised about the reliability of EVMs and potential technical malfunctions.

Trust Issues: Despite security measures, there are trust issues among political parties and voters regarding the authenticity of EVMs.

Conclusion:

The dispute highlights ongoing discussions about the security, transparency, and reliability of EVMs, emphasizing the need for continuous evaluation and improvement in electoral technology.

How many votes can an EVM being used by the Election Commission of India (ECI) record at most?

- a) 1,000 votes
- b) 2,000 votes
- c) 5,000 votes
- d) 10,000 votes

Ans. b) 2,000 votes

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POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

RESERVATIONS IN INDIA

CONTEXT: Leaders of the Other Backward Classes (OBC) issued a warning to the Chief Minister Eknath Shinde-led Mahayuti government on Sunday, with former BJP MLA Prakash Shendge saying that there would be “repercussions” in the upcoming Assembly election in Maharashtra if the government tampered with reservations for OBCs.

What is reservation in India, and why is it needed?

Reservation in India is a system of affirmative action that provides certain groups of people with preferential treatment in education, employment, and other areas. Here are some of the reasons why reservation is necessary for India.

- **Historical injustice:** Reservation is a way to redress historical injustices and provide opportunities for marginalized communities such as Dalits and Adivasis.
- **Caste system:** The Caste system, which has long been a part of Indian society, has traditionally relegated certain groups to lower social and economic positions.
- **Social and economic Disparity:** Reservation aims to promote social and economic equality by providing opportunities for the underprivileged sections of society.
- **Inadequate representation:** Reservation ensures the adequate representation of depressed communities in education and employment.
- **Prejudice and discrimination:** Reservation provides protection against discrimination and ensures that marginalized communities are not denied opportunities based on their caste, religion, or gender.

What are the different types of reservations in India?

- **Vertical reservation:** It refers to the reservation of seats in educational institutions and jobs in government services for Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST), and Other Backward Classes (OBCs).
- This reservation is based on the proportion of the population of these groups in the country or a specific state.
- **Horizontal reservation:** It refers to the reservation of seats for specific categories of people within the reserved categories. For example, within the SC category reservation, there can be reservations for differently-abled people.
- **Caste-based reservation:** Caste-based reservation is a system that provides opportunities and access to education and employment to people belonging to historically marginalized castes in India, such as Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST).
- **Gender-based reservation:** Gender-based reservation is based on the principle of gender equality. In India, the Constitution has provided one-third reservation to women in local bodies under Articles 243D and 243T.
- **Income-based reservation:** It is a system that provides opportunities and access to education and employment to poor sections of society. For example, reservation to the economically weaker sections (EWS) of society.
- **Reservation for differently-abled:** It is based on the principle of inclusivity, which aims to create an equal and accessible society for people with disabilities. For example, 4% reservation is provided to disabled persons in government jobs.

SECURITY

INDIA READY TO HOST ITS FIRST MULTINATIONAL AIR EXERCISE ‘TARANG SHAKTI’ IN AUGUST

CONTEXT: The Indian Air Force’s first multinational air exercise, Tarang Shakti-2024, will be held in August, and is likely to see the participation of 10 countries, in addition to a few others acting as observers.

Among the countries sending contingents are Australia, France, Germany, Japan, Spain, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Germany will deploy fighter jets and also an A-400M transport aircraft. The A-400M aircraft will be on show-case for the IAF, given that it is a contender for the open tender for medium transport aircraft.

**About Exercise Vayu Shakti-24:**

The Indian Air Force is slated to carry out three large scale war games, namely, Vayu Shakti, Gagan Shakti and Tarang Shakti. It will be a riveting demonstration of the offensive and defensive capabilities of the IAF, spanning across day and night. The exercise will also showcase joint operations with the Indian Army.

Exercise Vayu Shakti

The IAF will first undertake the major "Vayu Shakti" firepower demonstration, which is held once every three years, with 135 fighters, aircraft, helicopters and drones at the Pokhran field firing ranges.

Gagan Shakti'

The second mega exercise will be 'Gagan Shakti'.

In this, almost the entire air fleet race would be activated from north to south, and from west to east to test integrated war fighting strategies and tactics with the other two forces and other stakeholders.

All the potent weapon systems like the Rafale fighter aircraft and the S-400 air defense systems would be participating in the 'Gagan Shakti' exercise.

The exercise, which is held once in five years, is also going to be the biggest ever of the series with active participation from other two services.

Tarang Shakti

The third major exercise, Tarang Shakti, would be the first ever multinational exercise to be held in the country.

This will see aircraft from friendly air forces like the US, Germany, France, Australia and neighbouring and other friendly countries taking part in it.

POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

NDA ALLIES TO MEET BEFORE LOK SABHA SESSION TO TAKE A CALL ON SPEAKER CANDIDATE

CONTEXT: The announcement of the date for the election of a new Speaker for the Lok Sabha has set off speculation over who will occupy the post on June 26.



About:

- The Speaker is the constitutional and ceremonial head of the House.
- Each House of Parliament has its own presiding officer.
- There is a Speaker and a Deputy Speaker for the Lok Sabha and a Chairman and a Deputy Chairman for the Rajya Sabha.
- The Speaker is assisted by the Secretary-General of the Lok Sabha and senior officers of the Secretariat on parliamentary activities, practice and procedure.

In the absence of the Speaker, the Deputy Speaker discharges the functions.

A member from the panel of Chairmen presides over the House in the absence of both the Speaker and the Deputy Speaker. However, member of the panel of chairpersons cannot preside over the house, when the office of the Speaker or the deputy speaker is vacant.

Election:

- The House elects its presiding officer by a simple majority of members present, who vote in the House.
- Usually, a member belonging to the ruling party is elected as speaker whereas deputy speaker is elected from opposition party .
- There are also instances when members not belonging to the

ruling party were elected to the office of the Speaker.

- GMC Balayogi and Manohar Joshi belonging to the non-ruling party served as the Speaker in the 12th and 13th Lok Sabha.
- When the Lok Sabha is dissolved, the Speaker remains in his office till the first meeting of the new assembly when the new speaker is elected.

Removal:

- The Constitution has given the Lower House authority to remove the Speaker if needed.
- The House can remove the Speaker through a resolution with notice of 14 days, passed by an effective majority (more than 50% of the effective strength (total strength-vacancies) of the house present and voting) as per Articles 94 of the Indian Constitution.
- The Speaker can also be removed on getting disqualified from being a Lok Sabha member under sections 7 and 8 of the Representation of the People Act, 1951.
- A speaker can also give his resignation to a Deputy Speaker.

Sources of Power and Duties:

The Speaker of the Lok Sabha derives his powers and duties from three sources:

- Constitution of India,
- Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business of Lok Sabha,
- Parliamentary Conventions (residuary powers that are unwritten or unspecified in the rules)

SECURITY

DRUGS IN PARCEL' PLOY BEING USED TO DUPE PEOPLE: CENTRE

CONTEXT: Stepping in to act against the rampant "narcotics drugs in parcel' extortion scam, the Revenue Department of the Union Finance Ministry on Sunday advised the public to stay vigilant, and stressed that Customs officials never contact individuals over phone or by email to remit Customs duties in private accounts.



About Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC):

- CBIC (erstwhile Central Board of Excise and Customs) is a part of the Department of Revenue under the Ministry of Finance, Government of India.
- CBIC administers all the indirect tax-related matters in India.
- It deals with the tasks of formulation of policy concerning levy and collection of Customs, Central Excise duties, Central Goods & Services Tax and IGST, prevention of smuggling and administration of matters relating to Customs, Central Excise, Central Goods & Services Tax, IGST, and Narcotics to the extent under CBIC's purview.
- The Board is the administrative authority for its subordinate organizations, including Custom Houses, Central Excise and Central GST Commissionerates, and the Central Revenues Control Laboratory.
- It also ensures that taxes on foreign and inland travel are administered as per the law, and the collection agencies deposit the taxes collected to the public exchequer promptly.

Under customs, matters relating to the collection of customs duty at:

- International Airports
- Seaports
- Custom Houses
- International Air Cargo Stations
- International Inland Container Depots (ICDs)
- Land Customs Station
- Special Economic Zones (SEZs)
- Container Freight Stations (CFSS) are administered by the CBIC.

Organisation:

- The CBIC is headed by a Chairman, who is appointed by the Indian Government.
- The organization is divided into various divisions and zones, each headed by a Chief Commissioner or Director General.
- The CBIC also has a GST intelligence wing, which is responsible for detecting and preventing tax evasion.



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