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POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

GOVERNOR HOLDS NO VETO POWER OVER BILLS, SAYS SC

CONTEXT: The Supreme Court petition filed by the Punjab government against its Governor's action to hold back crucial Bills released November 10 judgment on Thursday.

The ultimate decision on whether or not to accept the advice of the Governor... belongs to the legislature alone
SUPREME COURT BENCH



A Governor should send back a Bill, in case he withholds assent to the State legislature "as soon as possible" with a message to reconsider the proposed law. The Governor has no choice or discretion, and has to give his assent to it if the Assembly reiterates the Bill "with or without amendments".

A three-judge Bench, headed by Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud noted the substantive part of Article 200, mandating the Governor to follow the course of action which is indicated in the first proviso of communicating to the State Legislature 'as soon as possible' a message warranting the reconsideration of the Bill.

The Bench held the ultimate decision on whether or not to accept the advice of the Governor as contained in the message belongs to the legislature alone. The court held that a Governor withholding a Bill indefinitely would be acting in contravention of the Constitution.

DISASTER MANAGEMENT

TUNNEL RESCUE DELAYED AS DRILL MACHINE HITS HURDLE

CONTEXT: Rescue operations at the Silkyara tunnel in Uttarkashi of Uttarakhand were delayed for hours on Thursday as the drilling machine ran into an iron lattice girder, a structural element of the tunnel, that had to be removed manually.



INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

WHO ASKS CHINA FOR MORE INFO ON RISE IN ILLNESSES, PNEUMONIA CLUSTERS

CONTEXT: The World Health Organization (WHO) made an official request to China for information about a potentially worrying spike in respiratory illnesses and clusters of pneumonia in children.



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The World Health Organization (WHO) made an official request to China for information about a potentially worrying spike in respiratory illnesses and clusters of pneumonia in children. The WHO cited unspecified media reports and a global infectious disease monitoring service as reporting clusters of undiagnosed pneumonia in children in northern China. Scientists said the situation warranted close monitoring, but were not convinced that the recent spike in respiratory illnesses in China signalled the start of a new global outbreak. The emergence of new flu strains or other viruses capable of triggering pandemics typically starts with undiagnosed clusters of respiratory illness.

The WHO noted that authorities at China's National Health Commission on November 13 reported an increase in respiratory diseases, which they said was due to the lifting of COVID-19 lockdown restrictions.

HISTORY, ART AND CULTURE

MIRABAI A UNIQUE EXAMPLE OF PURE DEVOTION AND FAITH, SAYS PRIME MINISTER IN MATHURA

CONTEXT: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday offered prayers at Sri Krishna Janmabhoomi Temple in Mathura and attended 'Mirabai Janmotsav', organised to celebrate the 525th birth anniversary of the poet and Krishna devotee.



Mirabai, also known as Sant Mirabai, was a 16th-century Hindu mystic poet and devotee of Krishna. She is considered one of the greatest poet-saints of India and is revered for her profound spiritual insights and her unwavering devotion to her beloved Krishna. Born into a Rajput royal family in Kudki, India, Mirabai exhibited a deep spiritual inclination from a young age. Her childhood was marked by a profound love for Krishna, whom she considered her divine husband. This intense devotion set her apart from the traditional expectations of a princess and often led to conflicts with her family and the royal court.

Despite facing opposition and persecution for her unconventional beliefs, Mirabai remained steadfast in her spiritual pursuit. She renounced her royal life and immersed herself in the bhakti tradition, a devotional movement that emphasized personal love and connection with God. Mirabai's poems, known as padas, are characterized by their simple language, heartfelt emotions, and intense devotion to Krishna. She addressed Krishna as her beloved, expressing her longing for union with him. Her poetry resonated with people from all walks of life, and her songs continue to be sung and cherished to this day.

Mirabai's life and teachings offer a profound example of spiritual surrender and unwavering devotion. She is revered as a saint and a poet, and her legacy continues to inspire and uplift seekers of truth and love throughout the world.

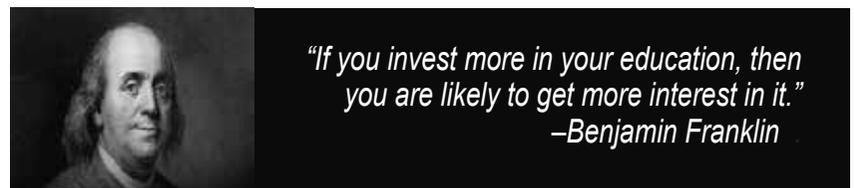
INTERNAL SECURITY

CENTRE WILL BRING IN RULES TO TACKLE DEEPFAKES, SYNTHETIC MEDIA: VAISHNAW

CONTEXT: Union Minister for Electronics and Information Technology Ashwini Vaishnaw said the government would make rules to tackle deepfakes, synthetic media that mimics authentic images, video and audio, and set out rules to prevent their dissemination online.

Mr. Vaishnaw met with representatives from social media and technology firms on the day to discuss on the subject, and said the companies were all of the view that action was warranted. The IT Ministry is expected to move swiftly to address the issue more comprehensively covering:

1. Improving the detection of deepfakes;
2. Preventing them from spreading rapidly;
3. Improving content reporting mechanisms on social media for synthetic media (timelines currently prescribe a 72-hour limit for removing them, beyond which firms lose legal protections for such content); and
4. Building greater awareness on deepfakes among the public.

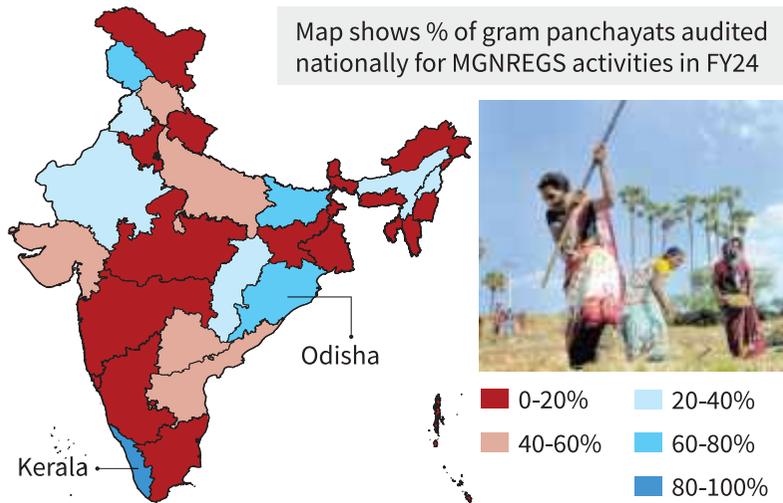


POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

MGNREGS AUDIT CROSSES 50% LOCAL BODIES IN JUST SIX STATES

Audited panchayats

Kerala is the only State that has completed social audits of all activities done under MGNREGS in each of its Gram Sabhas



Source: Union Ministry of Rural Development (as of November 10, 2023)

Of the 34 States and Union Territories, only six have completed social audit of works done under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) in more than 50 % of gram panchayats.

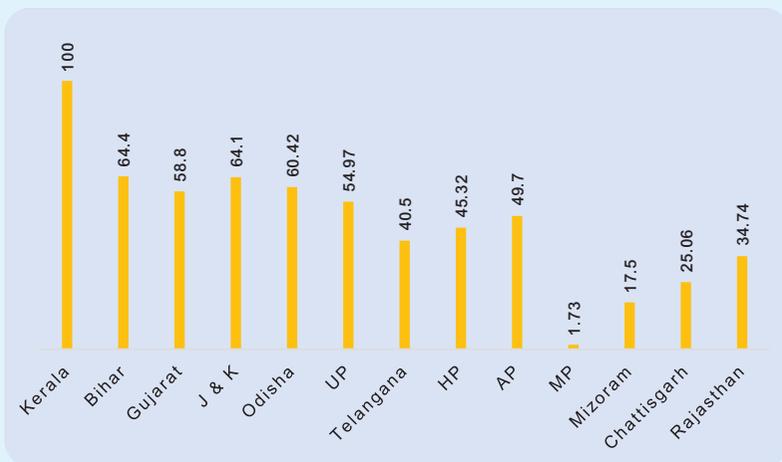


FIGURE: Column chart representation of audit coverage of States.

High rate of corruption is one of the primary complaints against the scheme and social audit is the inbuilt anti-corruption mechanism in the Act. Section 17 of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) says the Gram sabha “shall monitor the execution of works”. Each State has social audit units which are supposed to work independent of the implementing authorities. The auditing standards laid down by the Comptroller and Auditor General were issued only on

December 19, 2016. Under these, every Social Audit Unit is entitled to funds equivalent to 0.5 % of the MGNREGA expenditure incurred by the State in the previous year. The audit involves quality checks of infrastructure created under the MGNREGA and checking for financial misappropriation in wages and procedural deviations.

The Centre has, multiple times, reminded the States that if the social audits are not conducted regularly, then the funds under the MGNREGS will be withheld. The States complain that the audit is delayed because the Centre does not release the funds for the social audit units, which work independent of the State governments, in time.

PERSONALITY IN NEWS

FATHIMA BEEVI, FIRST WOMAN JUDGE IN SUPREME COURT, DEAD



CONTEXT: Fathima Beevi, the first woman judge of the Supreme Court of India died peacefully.

Fathima Beevi was born to Annaveetil Meeran Sahib and Khadeeja Beevi of Pathanamthitta in 1927. She completed her schooling at the Catholicate High School and did an undergraduate degree in Chemistry from the University College, Thiruvananthapuram. In line with her father’s aspiration to make her a lawyer, she did a degree in law and enrolled as lawyer in November 1950. In 1950, she was the first student to complete a degree in law with full marks in all subjects, and eight years later, she emerged first in a competitive exam conducted by the Public Service Commission and joined the judicial services as a munsiff. Years later, she became the first woman member of the country’s Income Tax Appellate Tribunal, before becoming the first Muslim woman to enter the higher judiciary as a judge in the Kerala High Court in 1983. She then went on to become the first woman judge in the Supreme Court of India, six years later. She was the Governor of Tamil Nadu from 1997 to 2001.



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INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

QATAR SAYS FOUR-DAY GAZA CEASEFIRE WILL BEGIN TODAY, WITH AID TO FOLLOW

CONTEXT: A four-day ceasefire in Gaza between Israel and Hamas will begin on Friday morning, a day later than originally announced, as negotiators worked out final details of the deal, which is to lead to the release of dozens of hostages held by militants and Palestinians imprisoned by Israel.



The diplomatic breakthrough promised some relief for the 2.3 million Palestinians in Gaza who have endured weeks of Israeli bombardment, as well as families in Israel fearful for the fate of their loved ones taken captive during Hamas's Oct. 7 attack that triggered the war.

On Thursday, Majed al-Ansari, a spokesperson for the Foreign Ministry of Qatar, which played a key role in mediating with Hamas, announced the ceasefire will start at 7 a.m. local time on Friday (1030 IST). He said the two sides had exchanged lists of those to be released, and the first group of hostages held by Hamas — including 13 women and children — would be freed Friday afternoon. Increased aid for Palestinians will start to enter “as soon as possible”. The Health Ministry in Hamas-ruled Gaza, meanwhile, resumed its detailed count of Palestinian casualties from the war, saying over 13,300 have been killed.

INTERNAL SECURITY

‘NEED A REGULATOR LIKE SEBI FOR AI’

CONTEXT: India will evolve norms for regulating artificial intelligence, and the AI regulator could function like financial regulator SEBI, Prime Minister’s Economic Advisory Council (PMEAC) member Sanjiv Sanyal.

New regulator

PM’s economic advisor calls for an AI regulator who doesn’t waste time trying to predict AI but monitors its evolution

- **Sanyal** says there needs to be skin in the game and ex-ante accountability and calls for regular audits
- He adds that some regulation for AI is needed and that AI regulatory norms will evolve reasonably fast



- A system has to be put in place with manual overrides just like circuit breakers in the financial market, Sanyal adds

Mr. Sanyal suggested India to think of constituting a regulator to meet the evolving challenges and noted the unlikelihood of a model of self-regulation and bureaucratic regulation to work in the AI space.

ECONOMICS AND DEVELOPMENT

DECEPTIVE SIGNALS

MERCHANDISE AND SERVICE TRADE

According to the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, India’s goods exports recorded only their second uptick this financial year, with a 6.2 % rise. Merchandise imports grew a sharper 12.3 % over last October and nearly 21 % over September’s tally to hit an all-time high of \$ 65.03 billion. The trade deficit, as a result, also hit a record \$ 31.5 billion.



FIGURE: Column chart representation of Year on Year (Y-o-Y) merchandise export growth rates

CRACKING
CIVIL SERVICES
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FIGURE: Column chart representation of monthly value of merchandise exports and imports.

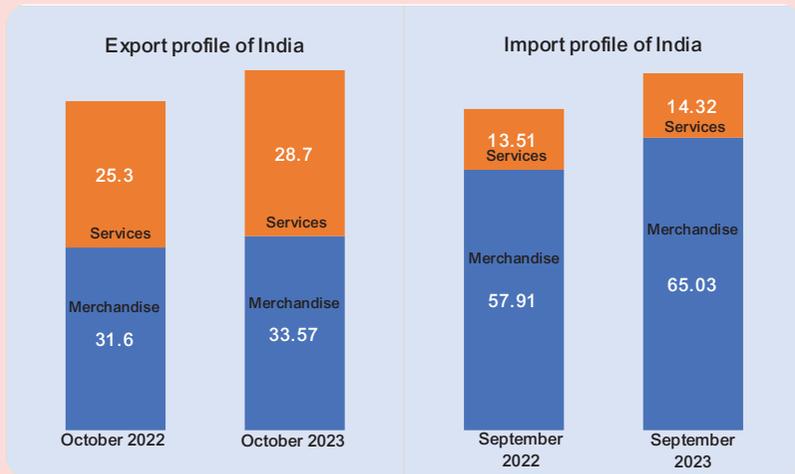


FIGURE: Bar chart representation of the (a) Export profile of India (b) Import profile of India.



Global carbon budget

The term ‘global carbon budget’ refers to the maximum cumulative global anthropogenic CO2 emissions – from the pre-industrial era to when such emissions reach net-zero, resulting in limiting global warming to a given level with a given probability. The remaining carbon budget indicates how much CO2 could still be emitted, from a specified time after the pre-industrial period, while keeping temperature rise to the specified limit.

The IPCC AR6 has shown that the world warmed by a staggering 1.07 degrees Celsius until 2019 from pre-industrial levels, so almost four-fifths of the global carbon budget stands depleted. Only a fifth remains to meet the target set in the Paris Agreement.

For a 50% chance of limiting warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius, the U.S. would have to reach net-zero in 2025, rather than 2050; Germany by 2030 instead of 2045; and the EU-28 bloc by 2031 instead of 2050.

Who’s responsible for cumulative global emissions?

According to the IPCC AR6, the developed countries have appropriated a disproportionately larger share of the global carbon budget to date.

The contribution of South Asia — which includes India — to historical cumulative emissions is only around 4% despite having almost 24% of the entire world population. The per capita CO2-FFI (fossil fuel and industry) emissions of South Asia was just 1.7 tonnes CO2-equivalent per capita, far below North America (15.4 tonnes CO2-eq. per capita) and also significantly lower than the world average (6.6 tonnes CO2-eq. per capita).

ECOLOGY AND ENVIRONMENT

COP 28: INDIA’S EQUITY DEMAND

CONTEXT: The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in 1992 recognising the ‘common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities’ (CBDR-RC) principle noted that per capita emissions in developing countries are still “relatively low” and that their share in the global emissions will grow to meet their social and developmental needs.

This principle has been reaffirmed in the Paris Agreement, whose main aim is to hold “the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels” and pursue efforts “to limit the temperature increase to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels”. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change’s Sixth Assessment Report (IPCC AR6), every 1,000 billion tonnes of CO2 in emissions causes an estimated 0.45 degrees Celsius rise in the global surface temperature.

How does the carbon budget matter for India?

The global carbon budget for a given temperature limit is a global resource, common to the entire world, but is exhaustible and limited and with only equitable methods of sharing it, consistent with the foundational principles of the UNFCCC. India must recognise a 'fair share of the carbon budget' as a strategic national resource whose reserves are depleting rapidly due to over-exploitation by developed countries.

In a rapidly depleting global carbon budget, if we fail to deploy resources at our command to forcefully use it as a strategic national resource, we will be short changed by new colonial techniques of developed countries.

In almost all the emissions scenarios estimated by the IPCC, the world breaches an increase of 1.5 degrees Celsius from pre-industrial levels in the early 2030s.

In 2022, oil, coal and gas accounted for 30%, 27% and 23% of the world's total energy, while solar and wind energy together contributed only 2.4%.

The world is still largely powered by non-renewable energy.

Developed countries have tried to browbeat developing countries into accepting rapid, economy-wide changes. At the COP 26 talks in Glasgow, they forced the issue of phasing down the use of coal but then backtracked by reopening coal plants across Europe after the Russia-Ukraine war created an energy crisis.

This has illustrated that the immediate phaseout of fossil fuels is infeasible in the face of shocks and also limits developing countries' access to their 'room to grow'.

The developed countries have stretched the argument further by calling gas "green" and a "bridge fuel" towards their own decarbonisation efforts.

What should India's stance be at COP 28?

According to the NITI Aayog-U.N. Development Programme's Multidimensional Poverty Index Report 2023 review, India has been able to lift more than 135 million poor out of poverty in less than five years (2015-2021).

India has also just extended food security welfare measures to more than 800 million people in the country, under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana

(PMGKAY), highlighting the magnitude of the challenge of poverty eradication after COVID-19.

Development is the first defence against climate change. How long will developing countries have to divert their scarce resources, manpower, and attention to meeting global problems created by developed countries?

Until developed countries themselves undertake mitigation efforts in their own backyard, the exercise will be a hogwash. It is imperative that developing countries receive a fair and equitable share of their carbon budget alongside stronger and more fruitful commitments from developed countries – including the promised but unmet climate-specific new and additional finance.

The Indian government has led from the front to foster international consensus to tackle climate change.

To this end, India has set up the International Solar Alliance, the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure, and the Global Biofuel Alliance. Through the 'Lifestyle for Environment' (LiFE) mission, the Indian government also aims to spread awareness of good lifestyle practices and establish that sustainable lifestyles are the best way forward.

At COP 28, India must demand a fair share of its carbon budget or equivalent reparations to bring about fairness within the global order. Only development brings with it an assurance to tide over the roller coasters of climate change. Scientists estimate that at a conservative price of \$50/tCO₂-eq, developed countries' carbon debt to the world is pegged at over \$51 trillion.

Based on India's historical emissions (1850-2019), it has a carbon credit equivalent of 338 GtCO₂-eq., equal to around \$17 trillion at \$50/tCO₂-eq. Without finance and technology as promised in 1992 at the Rio Earth Summit, developing countries stare at an even more unfair world.

The cover decision of the Glasgow Climate Pact recorded an unprecedented "regret" on the failure of the developed countries to provide US \$100 billion dollars a year, as promised at the COP 15 talks in Copenhagen in 2009. We need more finance and less rhetoric from developed countries. For far too long, developed countries have had a free pass, and it is time for a new India to take them on.

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Corporate office:

Vedhik IAS Academy
Samkalp Bhawan, Plot No.15,
Sector 4, Rama Krishna Puram,
New Delhi, Delhi-110022

Regional office

Vedhik IAS Academy
202, Raheja Chambers, 12,
Museum Road. Bangalore -
560001. Karnataka, India.

GCC Office:

Bobscoedu,

Bobsco Trading & Contracting Co. W. L . L
Office 22, Dream Tower 1,
Road: 2701, Adliya, Kingdom of Bahrain
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