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News Analysis (24 Jun, 2020)

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## Country of Origin Made Mandatory on GeM

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### Why in News

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**Government e-Marketplace (GeM)**, a Special Purpose Vehicle under **the Ministry of Commerce and Industry**, has made it mandatory for sellers to enter the **Country of Origin** while registering all new products on GeM.

GeM has taken this significant step to promote **Make in India** and **Atma Nirbhar Bharat** initiatives.

### Key Points

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- **Provisions:**

- **Indication of the Local Content:** GeM has enabled a provision for indication of the percentage of local content in products.  
Now, the **Country of Origin** as well as the **local content percentage** are visible in the marketplace for all items.
- **Make in India Filter:** This new filter has been enabled on the portal so that the **buyers** can choose to buy only those products that meet the minimum 50% local content criteria.  
They can also switch on a new Make in India filter to see products that match their preferences on local content.

- **Significance of GeM:**

- **Promotion of the ‘Make in India’ Initiative:** Since its inception, GeM has continuously worked towards promotion of the ‘**Make in India**’ initiative.
- **Entry of Small Local Sellers:** The Marketplace has facilitated entry of small local sellers in Public Procurement, while implementing ‘Make in India’ and **MSME** Purchase Preference Policies of the Government in the true sense.
- **Transparent and Cost-effective Procurement:** GeM is enabling quick, efficient, transparent and cost-effective procurement, especially when government organizations require products and services urgently to fight against the Covid-19 pandemic.
- **Promotion of Atma Nirbhar Bharat:** GeM has been promoting the Atma Nirbhar Bharat policy, introduced in the wake of the **Covid-19** pandemic, meant to encourage self-reliance and boost small Indian manufacturers.

## Government e-Marketplace (GeM)

- GeM is a **one-stop National Public Procurement Portal to facilitate online procurement** of common use Goods & Services required by various Central and State Government Departments/Organizations/Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs).
- It was launched in **2016 to bring transparency and efficiency** in the government buying process.
- It operates under the **Ministry of Commerce and Industry**.
- The procurement of goods and services by Ministries and the Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSEs) is mandatory for goods and services available on GeM.
- It also provides the **tools of e-bidding and reverse e-auction to facilitate** the government users achieve the best value for their money.
- At present, GeM has more than 15 lakh products, around 20,000 services, and more than 40,000 Government buyer organizations.

**Source: PIB**

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## Speaker and Anti-Defection Law

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### Why in News

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The ruling party crisis in Manipur has raised questions on the **Speaker’s powers to disqualify** under the Constitution.

### Key Point

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- **Background:**

- In 2017, Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) formed the government in Manipur after seven legislators of Congress joined the BJP.
- The Congress party asked the Speaker to disqualify these seven, but the petitions were kept pending.

According to **paragraph 2(1)(a) of the Tenth Schedule** of the **Constitution, an elected member of the house shall be disqualified from being a member if they win the election as a candidate of one party and then join another.** The power for this disqualification is vested in the Speaker, who is usually a nominee of the ruling party.

- Recently, a crisis in the ruling party emerged because the four MLAs (out of seven MLAs, who had in 2017 jumped to BJP) once again pledged their votes to the Congress and the rest three were disqualified.

- **Role of Supreme Court:**

- Citing the 2016 *SA Sampath Kumar vs Kale Yadaiah and Others case* relating to the disqualification of a Telangana MLA, the Supreme Court directed the Speaker of Manipur to rule on the **disqualification within three months.**
- The Supreme Court also questioned, “why a Speaker- who is a member of a particular political party and an insider in the House, should be the sole and final arbiter in the cases of disqualification of a political defector”.
- The Speaker did not take a call on the disqualifications.
- After, the Manipur High Court also passed similar orders relying on the SC verdict, the Speaker finally ruled on the petitions.

The High Court also reasoned that since the remedy under Tenth Schedule is an alternative to moving courts and if the remedy is found to be ineffective due to deliberate inaction or indecision on the part of the Speaker, the court will have jurisdiction.

- **Speaker and Issue of Impartiality:**

- The **office of Speaker** has been criticised time and again for being an **agent of partisan politics** especially in context of **power for the disqualification.**
- The Supreme Court in *Jagjit Singh versus State of Haryana (2006)* highlighted the similar allegations about the confidence on the **role of Speaker** in the matters of impartiality.
- In the *Kihoto Hollohan versus Zachillhu case (1992)*, one of the judges observed that the suspicion of bias on the Speaker’s role could not be ruled out as his/her election and tenure depends on the majority will of the House (or specifically of the ruling party).

- **Suggestions:**

- The Supreme Court has held that the **Parliament** consider taking a relook at the powers of the Speakers citing instances of partisanship.  
It has suggested independent **tribunals** to decide on disqualification.
- In Britain, the Speaker is strictly a non-party person. There is a convention that the Speaker has to resign from his party and remain politically neutral. .  
Hence, this mechanism can be adopted whereby Speakers need to renounce all political affiliations, membership and activity once they have been elected to the office.

## **Disqualification under the Tenth Schedule**

- The **Anti-Defection Law** was passed in **1985 through the 52<sup>nd</sup> amendment** to the Constitution. It added the **Tenth Schedule to the Indian Constitution**. The main intent of the law was to combat “the evil of political defections”.
- According to it, **a member of a House belonging to any political party** becomes disqualified for being a member of the House, if:
  - he voluntarily gives up his membership of such political party; or
  - he votes or abstains from voting in such House contrary to any direction issued by his political party without obtaining prior permission of such party and such act has not been condoned by the party within 15 days.

## **Exceptions to the Disqualification on the Ground of Defection**

- If a member **goes out of his party as a result of a merger of the party** with another party. A merger takes place **when two-thirds of the members** of the party have agreed to such merger.
- If a member, after **being elected as the presiding officer of the House**, **voluntarily** gives up the membership of his party or rejoins it after he ceases to hold that office. This exemption has been provided in view of the dignity and impartiality of the office.

## **Powers of Speaker with regard to Anti-Defection Law**

- Any question **regarding disqualification** arising out of defection is to be decided by the presiding officer of the House.
- After the ***Kihoto Hollohan case (1992)*** the Supreme Court declared that the decision of the presiding officer is not final and can be questioned in any court. It is subject to judicial review on the grounds of malafide, perversity, etc.

## **Way Forward**

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- **Impartiality, fairness and autonomy in decision-making** are the hallmarks of a robust institution. It is the freedom from interference and pressures which provide the necessary atmosphere where one can work with an absolute commitment to the cause of neutrality (as a Constitutional value).
- At a time when India's rank has fallen in the latest **Democracy Index** (2019), it is expected from Parliament to take steps to **revamp and strengthen** the institution of the **Speaker**.
- Further, the structural issues regarding the manner of appointment of the Speaker and his tenure in office needs an urgent redressal.

**Source: IE**

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## Turant Customs

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### Why in News

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The **Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC)** unveiled a Secure QR coded Shipping Bill that would be electronically sent to exporters.

This will enable end to end paperless exports under 'Turant Customs'.

### Key Points

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- This step has been taken by CBIC for fulfilling its commitment to a **Faceless, Paperless, and Contactless Customs** under the umbrella of its "**Turant Customs**" programme.

The launch of paperless documentation on exports is a sequel to a similar initiative that was begun for imports w.e.f. 15<sup>th</sup> April 2020.
- **Green Customs:** These initiatives will do away with the present requirement to take paper printout of these documents thereby **promoting Green Customs**.
- **Business Friendly:** Equally importantly exporters would not have to visit the Customs Houses for this purpose and can better utilize their time in promoting their business.
- **Implementation:** Turant Customs, which has as its main component Faceless Assessment, would be implemented in phases across the entire country by 1<sup>st</sup> January 2021.

- **Benefits:** These reforms are based on enhanced use of digital technology to reduce the time and costs for the importers, exporters and other stakeholders, thereby improving India's ranking in the **World Bank's "Trading Across Borders" parameter of its Ease of Doing Business (EoDB) index**.
  - India improved to rank 80 on "Trading Across Borders" parameter as compared with 146 in 2018.
  - This was possible due to reforms like **Single Window Interface for Facilitating Trade, e-Sanchit (e-Storage and computerised handling of indirect tax documents), and Direct Port Delivery**.
- **Other Recent Initiatives:** Ministry of Finance (Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs) also launched two Information Technology (IT) initiatives - **ICEDASH and ATITHI**.
  - **ICEDASH-** For improved monitoring of customs clearance of imported goods.
  - **ATITHI-** For facilitating arriving international passengers.

### **Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs**

- CBIC is a part of the Department of Revenue under the Ministry of Finance.
- The Central Board of Excise and Customs (CBEC) was **renamed as the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) in 2018** after the roll out of **Goods and Services Tax (GST)**.
- CBIC deals with the tasks of formulation of policy concerning levy and collection of Customs, Central Excise duties, Central Goods & Services Tax and Integrated GST, prevention of smuggling.

### **Way Forward**

- A better rank in ease of doing business and greater awareness about opportunities in Indian business sector would attract foreign investors to invest in India and will also bring advanced technologies to the country.
- However, it would be unwise to judge the state of the business activity by observing movements in the ease of doing business index as it is just the reflection of regulatory measures taken in two big cities of Delhi and Mumbai and that too on limited parameters.
- Therefore, more comprehensive measures must be taken, which would not only improve ease of doing business ranking, but also lead to a better business environment and greater prosperity for all.

**Source: PIB**

## **Anti-dumping Duty on Steel Imports**

## Why in News

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Recently, India imposed anti-dumping duty on imports of certain types of **steel products** from China, Vietnam and South Korea.

## Key Points

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- **Dumping:**
  - In international trade practise, dumping happens when a country or a firm **exports an item at a price lower than the price of that product in its domestic market.**
  - Dumping **impacts the price of that product in the importing country,** hitting margins and profits of local manufacturing firms.
  - **Anti-dumping duty is imposed to rectify the situation** arising out of the dumping of goods and its trade distortive effect.
- **Imposition of Anti-dumping Duty:**
  - The anti-dumping duty was imposed after the **Directorate General of Trade Remedies (DGTR)**, in its probe, found that the steel products imported in India from these three countries were below its associated normal value, which resulted in dumping.
    - The duty has been **imposed for five years** with a view to guard domestic manufacturers from cheap imports from these countries.
    - Earlier, a provisional duty was imposed in October 2019 on these products from these three countries, which expired in April 2020.
  - According to global trade norms, including the **World Trade Organization (WTO)** regime, a country is allowed to impose tariffs on such dumped products **to provide a level-playing field to domestic manufacturers.**

The duty is imposed only after a thorough investigation by a quasi-judicial body, such as DGTR, in India.
- **Different from Countervailing Duty:**
  - Anti-dumping duty is different from countervailing duty. The latter is imposed in order **to counter the negative impact of import subsidies** to protect domestic producers.
  - Countervailing Duties (CVDs) are tariffs levied on imported goods to offset subsidies made to producers of these goods in the exporting country.
  - CVDs are meant to level the playing field between domestic producers of a product and foreign producers of the same product who can afford to sell it at a lower price because of the subsidy they receive from their government.

## Directorate General of Trade Remedies

- It is the **apex national authority** under the **Ministry of Commerce and Industry** for administering all trade remedial measures including anti-dumping, countervailing duties and safeguard measures.
- It provides trade defence support to the domestic industry and exporters in dealing with increasing instances of trade remedy investigations instituted against them by other countries.

**Source: FE**

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## USA Extends Ban on Work Visas

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### Why in News

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Recently, the USA has decided to **extend the 60-day ban** on **immigrant and non-immigrant worker visas** till the end of 2020.

The **ban is effective immediately** so the processing of **all new H-1B, H-2B, J and L visa** categories stands suspended.

There will be an exemption for professors and scholars on J visas as well as for some food industry workers needing an H-2B visa.

### Key Points

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- **Work Visas:**

- The IT revolution, **arrival of internet and low-cost computers** in developing nations like India has given rise to the number of people who are **willing to work at relatively low costs** in the USA which is a win-win situation for both the employer and the employee.
- The USA administration **issues a certain number of visas each year to fill a vacuum of highly-skilled low-cost employees** in IT and other related domains.
- These visas allow companies from outside the USA to send employees to work on client sites.
- **H-1B Visa:**
  - These are issued to skilled workers and the most popular among Indian IT companies.
  - H-1B is for people in Specialty Occupation and requires a higher education degree or its equivalent.
- **H-2B Visa:** These are issued to seasonal workers in the landscaping and hospitality industries.
- **L-1 Visa:** It allows companies to transfer highly skilled workers to the USA for a period of up to seven years.
- **H-4 Visas:** It is for dependents of H-1B visa holders.
- **J-1 Visas:** It is for students on work-study summer programmes.

- **Reasons Behind the Suspension:**

- The move intends to **protect the domestic workers** who had been impacted due to a contraction in the economy in the wake of the **Covid-19 pandemic**.  
The overall unemployment rate in the USA nearly quadrupled between February and May of 2020, producing some of the most extreme unemployment rates ever recorded.
- The **entry of additional workers** through the H-1B, H-2B, J, and L non-immigrant visa programmes presents a significant threat to employment opportunities for domestic workers by **undercutting their jobs**.
- However, the USA held that post-ban, under normal circumstances, properly administered temporary worker programs can provide benefits to the economy.

- **People Affected:**

The new rule would **apply only to those who are outside the USA and do not have a valid non-immigrant visa** as of 23<sup>rd</sup> June and an official travel document other than a visa to enter the country. They will not be allowed to enter the USA until 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020.

- **People not Affected:**
  - No impact on **lawful permanent residents of the USA and foreign nationals who are spouses or child of an American citizen.**
  - **Foreign nationals seeking to enter the USA to provide temporary labour or services essential to the food supply chain** are also exempted from the latest proclamation.
- **Impact on Indian IT Companies:**
  - **Indian IT companies are amongst the biggest beneficiaries** of the USA H-1B visa regime and corner a huge share of the total number of visas every year.
    - As of 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020, the **US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS)** had received about **2.5 lakh H-1B work visa applications** and **67% of that was applied by Indians.**
  - It will significantly **impact the margins and worker wages of Indian IT companies which send thousands of low-cost employees** to work on client sites in the USA.
  - Though the large Indian IT companies in the USA have cut down their dependency on H-1B and other worker visas by hiring as much as 50% of staff locally, they **still rely on these visas to keep costs in check.**
- **Overall Impact on India:**

Although it is desired that the USA revokes the ban but if it does not, then India may still have some positive impacts.

  - **Probable Increase in Remittances:** With this ban, already employed skilled workers from India may get higher salaries which in turn would increase inflow of remittances.
  - **Addressing Brain Drain:** Newly graduated skilled workers would seek opportunities in India itself, thereby addressing the issue of brain drain.
  - **Enhanced Self Reliance:** India desperately needs the skilled workforce to work within the country in order to become more self-reliant (under **Atmanirbhar Bharat**) and to realise the dream of **Make in India** and the **5 trillion dollar economy.**

## Criticism

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- The move has been criticised for being **misguided and harmful to the USA's own economy.** It has the **potential to do permanent damage** to the USA's reputation of attracting the best and the brightest.
- The ban on issuing visas will **harm employers, families, universities, hospitals, communities and delay America's economic recovery.**

- Without highly skilled immigrants, the industry will slow down and the economy will worsen affecting the timeline for a treatment and cure of Covid-19 as well.  
The H-1B programme in particular plays a crucial role in addressing the shortage of healthcare professionals while also providing other key sectors of economy with talent from around the world to not only fill jobs but create new ones.
- **Legal immigration is a positive for the American economy** and visa programs allow American companies to secure qualified, legal labour throughout the world which will not be the same after the move.

## Way Forward

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- Immigrants have played a crucial role in making the USA a global leader in cutting edge technology.
- Suspending the visas will only weaken the USA's economy and its health care workforce at a time when there is a need to strengthen the both.
- Politics should not trump smart policy and the ingenuity of migrant workers should be harnessed to revive an economy in dire straits.

## Source: IE

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## Increase in Money Supply

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According to recent **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** data, the uncertainty caused by the **Covid-19 pandemic** has led to a surge in money supply.

## Key Points

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- **RBI Data:**
  - Since the end of March, 2020 **currency held by the public** increased by 8.2%.
  - **M3 money supply (refer explanation below)** increased by 6.7% in the first five months of 2020 compared with the same period last year. This is the highest growth in seven years.
  - **Currency in circulation**, which measures money with the public and in banks, has also surged.
  - However, the **savings and current account deposits decreased** by 8%. Gross capital formation also fell by 7% in the March, 2020 quarter.

- **Reason:**

The recent increase reflects **higher cash withdrawals** by depositors to meet needs during the lockdown period and also to safeguard themselves against salary cuts or job losses.

- **Impact:**

- A rise in money supply usually is seen as a leading indicator of growth in consumption and business investments, but due to Covid-19 pandemic, the rise this time is unlikely to bolster either.
- People have curtailed their discretionary spending as they're not sure of their permanent income.
- Lenders too are unwilling to take risks as slowing discretionary spending slows demand for manufactured and industrial goods.

- **Money Supply:**

- The **total stock of money in circulation among the public** at a particular point of time is called **money supply**.
  - It needs to be noted that total stock of money is different from total supply of money.
  - Supply of money is only that part of total stock of money which is held by the public at a particular point of time.
- The circulating money involves the **currency, printed notes, money in the deposit accounts** and in the **form of other liquid assets**.
- RBI publishes figures for four alternative measures of money supply, viz. M1, M2, M3 and M4.
  - **M1** = CU + DD
  - **M2** = M1 + Savings deposits with Post Office savings banks
  - **M3** = M1 + Net time deposits of commercial banks
  - **M4** = M3 + Total deposits with Post Office savings organisations (excluding National Savings Certificates)
- CU is **currency (notes plus coins)** held by the public and **DD is net demand deposits held by commercial banks**.
- The word 'net' implies that only deposits of the public held by the banks are to be included in money supply.

The interbank deposits, which a commercial bank holds in other commercial banks, are not to be regarded as part of money supply.
- M1 and M2 are known as **narrow money**. M3 and M4 are known as **broad money**.
- These gradations are in **decreasing order of liquidity**.
  - M1 is **most liquid and easiest for transactions** whereas M4 is least liquid of all.
  - M3 is the most commonly used measure of money supply. It is also known as **aggregate monetary resources**.

## Key Terms

- **Gross capital formation** refers to the ‘aggregate of gross additions to fixed assets (that is fixed capital formation) plus change in stocks during the counting period.’  
Fixed asset refers to the construction, machinery and equipment.
- **Currency in circulation** includes notes in circulation, rupee coins and small coins.
- **Currency with the public** is arrived at after deducting cash with banks from total currency in circulation.

## Source: TH

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## New Purchasing Power Parities: ICP 2017

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### Why in News

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Recently, the **World Bank** has released new **Purchasing Power Parities** (PPPs) for **reference year 2017**, under **International Comparison Program** (ICP) that adjusts for differences in the cost of living across economies of the world.

### International Comparison Program

- It is the **largest worldwide data-collection initiative**, under the guidance of the **United Nations Statistical Commission** (UNSC).
- The **main objectives** of the ICP are to:
  - Produce PPPs and comparable **Price Level Indices** (PLIs) for participating economies.
  - Convert volume and per capita measures of **Gross Domestic Product** (GDP) and its expenditure components into a common currency using PPPs.

### Purchasing Power Parities

- It is the rate at which the currency of one country would have to be converted into that of another country to buy the same amount of goods and services in each country.
- The PPP exchange rates are constructed to ensure that the same quantity of goods and services are priced equivalently across countries.

- PPP exchange rates are used to convert the national **poverty** lines from some of the poorest countries in the world to determine the **Global Poverty Line**.

For **poverty estimation in India**, the **Tendulkar committee** computed **poverty lines** for 2004-05 at a level that was equivalent, in PPP terms, to Rs 33 per day.

**Poverty Line:** The conventional approach to measuring poverty is to specify a minimum expenditure (or income) required to purchase a basket of goods and services necessary to satisfy basic human needs and this minimum expenditure is called the poverty line.

## Price Level Indices

- It is the ratio of a PPP to its corresponding market exchange rate.
- It is used to compare the price levels of economies.

## Gross Domestic Product

- It is the single standard indicator used across the globe to indicate the health of a nation's economy.
- It is the sum of private consumption, gross investment in the economy, government investment, government spending and net foreign trade (difference between exports and imports).

## Key Points

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- **India is a co-chair of the ICP Governing Board** along with Statistics Austria **for the ICP 2017 cycle**.
  - India has participated in almost all ICP rounds **since its inception in 1970**.
  - The **Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation** is the **National Implementing Agency (NIA)** for India, which has the **responsibility of planning, coordinating and implementing** national ICP activities.
- The ICP 2017 results, revised results for 2011 and estimates of annual PPPs for the period 2012-2016 are **available on the ICP website and the World Bank's Databank and Data Catalog**.
- The **next ICP comparison** will be conducted for **reference year 2021**.

- **Global Status:**
  - **Values:**
    - Globally, **176 economies participated** in the 2017 cycle of ICP.
    - The PPPs of Indian Rupee per USD at GDP level is now 20.65 in 2017 from 15.55 in 2011.
    - The Exchange Rate of USD to Indian Rupee is 65.12 from 46.67 during the same period.
    - The PLI of India is 47.55 in 2017 from 42.99 in 2011.
  - **Rankings:**
    - In 2017, India retained and consolidated its global position, as the third largest economy and accounted for 6.7% of global GDP in terms of PPPs.
    - China was at first position with 16.4% and the USA at the second position with 16.3%.
    - India is also the third largest economy in terms of its PPP-based share in Global Actual Individual Consumption (AIC) and **Global Gross Fixed Capital Formation** (GCF).
- **Regional Status (Asia-Pacific):**
  - Regionally, **22 economies participated** from the Asia-Pacific.
  - In 2017, India retained its regional position as the second largest economy and accounted for 20.83% of Regional GDP in terms of PPPs.
  - China stands first with 50.76% and Indonesia is at third position with 7.49%.
  - India is also the second largest economy in terms of its PPP-based share in Regional AIC and Regional GFCF.

### **Actual Individual Consumption**

It consists of goods and services actually consumed by individuals, irrespective of whether these goods and services are purchased and paid for by households, by government or by non-profit organisations.

### **Gross Fixed Capital Formation**

- It refers to the net increase in physical assets (investment minus disposals). It does not account for the consumption (depreciation) of fixed capital.
- GFCF is not a measure of total investment because only the value of net additions to fixed assets is measured and all kinds of financial assets as well as stocks of inventories and other operating costs are excluded.

### **Source: PIB**

## Why in News

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The **Ministry of Human Resource Development** has launched an initiative ‘**YUKTI 2.0**’ to help systematically assimilate technologies having commercial potential and information related to incubated startups in higher education institutions.

YUKTI 2.0 is **an extension of ‘YUKTI (Young India combating Covid with Knowledge, Technology and Innovation) Portal’** which was launched to identify ideas relevant in **Covid pandemic**.

## Key Points

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- **Creation of Database:** The Ministry has invited students, faculty members, startups and other stakeholders of higher education institutions to register on the YUKTI portal and share their technologies and innovations.
- **Importance of Database:**
  - Database shared will be showcased to the investor community such as businessmen, farmers and industrialists i.e. students will be able to sell their ideas.

However, preliminary innovations won't be showcased on YUKTI 2.0 but only those which have commercialisation potential.
  - It will provide a clear picture of the state of the innovation ecosystem of our higher educational institutions.
  - It will help the government to identify bottlenecks and formulate appropriate policies to strengthen the innovation ecosystem in the country.
  - Further, it will offer solutions to the problems faced by the country.
- **In Line with Atmanirbhar Bharat:** YUKTI 2.0 will also help in fostering the culture of innovation and entrepreneurship in academic institutions.
- **Other Initiatives to Boost Innovation:**
  - **Institutions of Eminence (IoE) Scheme** is a government's scheme to provide the regulatory architecture for setting up or upgrading of 20 Institutions (10 from public sector and 10 from the private sector) as world-class teaching and research institutions.
  - Various amendments have been made in the **Prime Minister's Research Fellowship Scheme** to boost research in the country.
  - Through the **Atal Innovation Mission**, the government has established Atal Tinkering Laboratories (ATLs) in schools across the country. The objective of this scheme is to foster curiosity, creativity and imagination in young minds; and inculcate skills such as design mindset, computational thinking, adaptive learning, physical computing.

**Source: PIB**



# Ashadhi Bij

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## Why in News

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The Prime Minister has greeted the people on the special occasion of Ashadhi Bij, the **Kutchi New Year**.

## Key Points

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- Ashadhi Bij falls on the **second day of Shukla paksha of Ashada month** of Hindu calendar.
- The festival is associated with the **beginning of rains** in the Kutch region of Gujarat.
- During Ashadhi Bij, the moisture in the atmosphere is checked to predict which crop would do best in the coming monsoon.

## Traditional New Year Festivals in India

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Name	Features
<b>Chaitra Shukla Pratipada</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• It marks the beginning of the new year of the <b>Vikram Samvat</b> also known as the Vedic (Hindu) calendar.</li><li>• Vikram Samvat is based on the day when the emperor Vikramaditya defeated Sakas, invaded Ujjain and called for a new era.</li></ul>
<b>Gudi Padwa and Ugadi</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Celebrated in the month of <b>Chaitra Shukla Pratipada</b> as per the Hindu Lunar Calendar.</li><li>• Deccan region including <b>Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra</b>.</li></ul>
<b>Navreh</b>	It is the lunar New Year that is celebrated in <b>Kashmir</b> . It falls on the very first day of the Chaitra Navratras.
<b>Sajibu Cheiraoba</b>	It is celebrated by <b>Meiteis (an ethnic group in Manipur)</b> which is observed on the first day of Manipur lunar month Shajibu, which falls in the month of <b>April every year</b> .

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**Cheti Chand**

- It is celebrated by **Sindhi community**. Chaitra month is called 'Chet' in Sindhi.
- The day commemorates the birth anniversary of **Ishta Deva Uderolal/Jhulelal**, the patron saint of Sindhis.

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**Bihu**

- It is celebrated three times a year.
- **Rongali or Bohag Bihu** is observed in April. Kongali or Kati Bihu observed in October and Bhogali or Magh Bihu observed in January.
- Rongali or Bohag Bihu is the **Assamese new year** and spring festival.
- The Rongali Bihu coincides with Sikh New Year- Baisakhi.

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**Baisakhi**

- It is celebrated as the Indian thanksgiving day by farmers.
- It also has religious significance for the Sikhs community as the foundation of the **Khalsa Panth** was laid on this day by **Guru Gobind Singh**.

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**Losoong**

- Losoong also known as Namsoong is the **Sikkimese New Year**.
- It is usually the time when the farmers rejoice and celebrate their harvest.
- It is mostly celebrated in the month of **December every year** with traditional gaiety and colour both by the **Lepchas and Bhutias**.

**Source: PIB**

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