



News Analysis (20 Aug, 2020)

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Turkey-Greece Stand-off

Why in News

Recently, France has deployed its military in the eastern Mediterranean Sea amid **tensions between Greece and Turkey** over **recently-discovered gas reserves**.

According to France the military has been deployed **to strengthen the autonomous assessment of the situation** and to **affirm France's commitment to free movement**, to the security of maritime navigation in the Mediterranean and **respect for international law**.

Key Points

The Stand-off:

- **Reason:** The **European Union (EU)** and its allies in West Asia and North Africa made **plans to build a gas pipeline** from the Mediterranean to Europe's mainland to transport the gas. However, **they have kept Turkey out of it**, which has infuriated Turkey.
 - The gas transport would help **reduce the EU's dependency on Russia**.
 - Earlier in 2019, the **EastMed Gas Forum** was formed by **Cyprus, Egypt, Greece, Israel, Italy, Jordan and Palestine**, and **Turkey was again excluded**.
- **Turkey's Counter:** Turkey challenged the EU pipeline project and reached an agreement with **Libya** to form an **Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ)** from its southern shores to Libya's northern coast across the Mediterranean.
 - However, Greece **claimed the Turkish zone violated its maritime sovereignty** and later announced its EEZ with Egypt, which clashed with Turkey's zone.
 - Reacting to the deal, Turkey sent its survey ship near the **island of Kastellorizo** area mentioned in the **Greece-Egypt agreement**.
 - This is not the first time Greece and Turkey have been at odds. Over the past four decades, the **countries have gone to war at least three times**.



Issues Involved:

- Overlapping Claims: Turkey and Greece, vehemently **disagree over overlapping claims to hydrocarbon resources** in the region based on **conflicting views on the extent of their continental shelves in waters** dotted with mostly Greek islands.
 - Turkey says that despite having **the longest coastline in the eastern Mediterranean** it is **confined into a narrow strip of waters** due to the **extension of Greece's continental shelf**, based on the presence of many Greek islands near its shore.
 - The island of Kastellorizo, which is about 2 km off Turkey's southern coast and 570 km from the Greek mainland, is a particular source of Turkish frustration.
- **Involvement of Many Countries:** The highly complicated issue now has the **potential to involve Europe, West Asia and North Africa.**
 - France, the EU's most powerful military force, has **thrown its weight behind Greece and Cyprus.**
 - **Cyprus is physically divided** with the **southern part ruled by the internationally-recognised government** and the **northern part controlled by Turkey.**
 - An **alliance** is also emerging among Greece, Cyprus, Italy and France, which is backed by Egypt, Israel and the UAE.
 - Turkey stands **almost isolated**, but remains a **key power** in the Mediterranean.

Way Forward

- If the EU wants to transport gas from the coast of Israel to Europe via Cyprus and Italy, an **open conflict with Turkey cannot help.** What is in everybody's interest is to **bring down tensions** and **find a diplomatic and mutually acceptable solution** to the gas conflict.

- Excluding Turkey, which has a long Mediterranean coast, is unwise. Allowing a resurgent Turkey to bully smaller powers in the region would be strategically disastrous. The EU has to **strike a balance** between these two options.

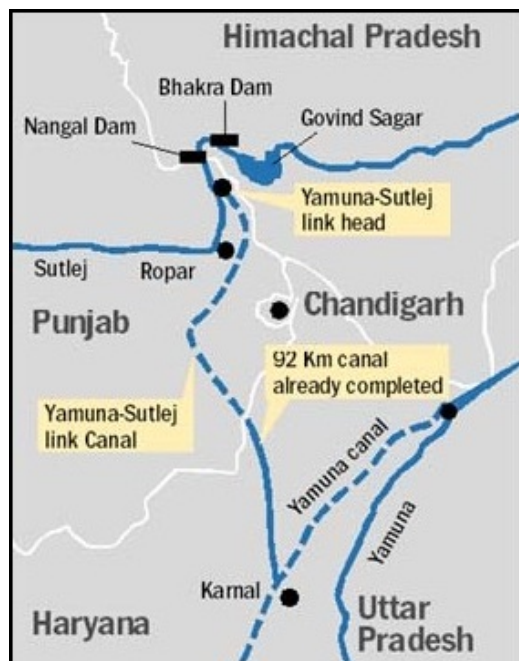
Source: TH

Sutlej-Yamuna Link Canal Project

Why in News

Recently, the Chief Minister of Punjab has warned the Centre of political unrest in the state if asked to proceed with the **Sutlej-Yamuna Link (SYL) canal project**.

Punjab has staked claims to Yamuna's waters and also reiterated the need for a tribunal on water sharing.



Key Points

- **Background:**

- **1960:** The dispute can be traced back to the **Indus Water Treaty** between **India and Pakistan**, allowing the former **'free and unrestricted use'** of Ravi, Beas and Sutlej.
- **1966: Creation of Haryana from the old (undivided) Punjab** presented the problem of giving Haryana its share of river waters.
 - For Haryana to get its share of the waters of the Sutlej and its tributary Beas, a **canal linking the Sutlej with the Yamuna** was planned (SYL Canal).
 - **Punjab refused to share waters with Haryana** stating it was against the **riparian principle** which dictates that the water of a river belongs only to the State and country or States and countries through which the river in question flows.
- **1981:** Both states **mutually agreed for the re-allocation of water.**
- **1982: Construction of 214-km SYL was launched** in Kapoori village, Punjab. **Agitations, protests and assassinations** were carried out in protest creating the environment of **terrorism** in the state and making the **issue of national security.**
- **1996:** Haryana moved the **Supreme Court** (SC) seeking directions to Punjab to complete the work on the SYL.
- **2002 and 2004:** SC directed Punjab to complete the work in its territory.
- **2004:** Punjab Assembly passed the **Punjab Termination of Agreements Act, terminating its water-sharing agreements** and thus jeopardising the construction of SYL in Punjab.
- **2016:** SC started hearings into a **presidential reference (Article 143) to decide on the legality of the 2004 Act** and declared that Punjab reneged on its promise to share the waters of rivers. Thus, the **act was termed constitutionally invalid.**
- **2020:**
 - SC has directed the Chief Ministers of both states to **negotiate and settle the SYL canal issue** at the highest political level to be mediated by the Centre.
 - Punjab has **asked for a tribunal for fresh time-bound assessment** of the water availability.
 - Punjab holds that there has been **no adjudication or scientific assessment of river waters** in the state till date.
 - The availability of Ravi-Beas water has also come down from the estimated 17.17 MAF in 1981 to 13.38 MAF in 2013. A fresh tribunal would ascertain all this.

- **Reasons for Punjab's Unwillingness:**

- Punjab is **facing severe water crisis due to over-exploitation of its underground aquifers** for the **wheat/paddy** monocycle.

According to the **Central Ground Water Authority's report**, its underground water is over-exploited in about 79% of the state.
- Punjab feels that it has **utilised its precious groundwater resources to grow the crop for the entire country** and should not be forced to share its waters as it **faces the threat of desertification.**
- Also, the **youth of the state may start feeling that the state has been discriminated against** once the construction of the canal restarts.

Pakistan and secessionist organisations like Sikh For Justice could exploit the situation to foment trouble in the state.

Article 143: Advisory Jurisdiction

- The Constitution under Article 143 **authorises the President to seek the opinion of the Supreme Court** in the **two categories** of matters:
 - On any **question of law or fact of public importance** which has arisen or which is likely to arise. The SC **may tender or may refuse to tender its opinion** to the President.
 - On any **dispute arising out of any pre-constitution** treaty, agreement, covenant, engagement, sanador other similar instruments. Here, the **SC must tender its opinion** to the President.
- In both the cases, the opinion expressed by the Supreme Court is **only advisory and not a judicial pronouncement**. Hence, it is **not binding on the President**.
- The references made by the President under Article 143 are **decided by a Bench consisting of at least five judges**.
- Few important references made by the President to the SC under its advisory jurisdiction are:
 - Berubari Union, 1960.
 - Cauvery Water Disputes Tribunal, 1992.
 - Rama Janma Bhumi case, 1993.
 - Punjab Termination of Agreements Act, 2004.
 - 2G spectrum case verdict and the mandatory auctioning of natural resources across all sectors, 2012.

Way Forward

- Punjab needs to understand the importance of the canal for Haryana and should rethink its previous stands. Adequate measures should be put in place before any new decision to keep the possible political turmoil in control. Neighbouring states and centre will have to play a crucial role.
- It's time for the Centre to chart a new course centred on Punjab's demand for a fresh tribunal for the division of the river waters. For that, it's imperative that all stakeholders stop further complicating the situation.

Source: IE

National Recruitment Agency

Why in News

The Union Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister has decided to set up a **National Recruitment Agency (NRA)** to conduct a **common preliminary examination** for various recruitments in the central government.

Key Points

- **About:**

- The NRA will conduct the **Common Eligibility Test (CET)** for recruitment to **non-gazetted posts** in government and public sector banks.
 - Approximately 1.25 lakh government jobs are advertised every year for which 2.5 crore aspirants appear in various examinations.
- This test aims to **replace multiple examinations** conducted by different recruiting agencies for selection to government jobs advertised each year, with a **single online** test.
 - The Government also plans to provide outreach and awareness facilities to assist candidates in rural and far flung areas to familiarize them with the online examination system.
 - A 24x7 helpline will be set up for answering queries, complaints and queries.
- The present recruitment agencies– **Staff Selection Commission (SSC), Railway Recruitment Board (RRB) and the Institute of Banking Personnel Selection (IBPS)**— will remain in place.
- Based on the preliminary screening done at the CET score level, final selection for recruitment shall be made through **separate specialised Tiers** (II, III, etc.) of examination which shall be **conducted by the respective recruitment agencies**.

- **Salient Features of CET:**

- The Common Eligibility Test will be held **twice a year**.
- There will be different CETs for **graduate level, 12th Pass level and 10th pass level** to facilitate recruitment to vacancies at various levels.
- The curriculum for CET would be **common**.
- The CET will be conducted in **12 major Indian languages**. This is a major change, as hitherto examinations for recruitment to Central Government jobs were held **only in English and Hindi**.
- Initially, CET will cover recruitments made by three agencies : viz. SSC, RRB and IBPS at **Group B and C (non -technical)** posts. This will be expanded in a phased manner.
- CET will be held in **1,000 centres** across India in a bid to remove the currently prevalent urban bias. There will be an examination centre in **every district** of the country. There will be a special thrust on creating **examination infrastructure in the 117 aspirational districts**.
- CET will be a first level test to shortlist candidates and the score will be **valid for three years**.
- There shall be **no restriction on the number of attempts** to be taken by a candidate to appear in the CET subject to the **upper age limit**.
 - Age relaxation for **SC/ST and OBC** candidates as per existing rules will apply.

- **About NRA:**

- National Recruitment Agency will be a Society registered under the **Societies Registration Act,1860**.
- It will be headed by a **Chairman** of the rank of the Secretary to the Government of India. It will have **representatives** of the Ministry of Railways, Ministry of Finance/Department of Financial Services, the SSC, RRB & IBPS.
- The Government has sanctioned a sum of Rs. 1517.57 crore for the National Recruitment Agency (NRA).
- The expenditure will be undertaken over a **period of three years**.
- It is envisioned that the NRA would be a specialist body bringing the state-of-the-art technology and best practices to the field of Central Government recruitment.

- **Need:**
 - At present, candidates seeking government jobs have to appear for separate examinations conducted by **multiple recruiting agencies** for various posts.
 - Candidates have to **pay fees** to multiple recruiting agencies and also have to travel long distances for appearing in various exams.
 - **Women candidates** especially from rural areas **face constraints** in appearing in multiple examinations as they have to arrange for transportation and places to stay in places that are far away.
- **Advantages for Students:**
 - Removes the **hassle** of appearing in multiple examinations.
 - Single examination fee would **reduce the financial burden** that multiple exams imposed.
 - Since exams will be held in every district, it would substantially **save travel and lodging cost** for the candidates. Examination in their own district would encourage more and **more women candidates** also to apply for government jobs.
 - Applicants are required to register on a **single Registration portal**.
 - It will also prevent the issue of **clashing examination dates**.
- **Advantages for Institutions:**
 - Removes the **hassle of conducting preliminary/screening tests** of candidates.
 - Drastically **reduces the time of recruitment cycle**.
 - Brings **standardization** in examination pattern.
 - **Reduces costs** for different recruiting agencies. **Rs 600 crore savings** expected.

Staff Selection Commission

- The Staff Selection Commission is an **attached office of the Department of Personnel and Training** under the **Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions**.
- The Government of India, in the Department of Personnel and Administrative Reforms, vide its resolution dated the 4th November 1975 constituted a Commission called the Subordinate Services Commission. The same was re-designated as Staff Selection Commission effective from 26th September 1977.
- It makes recruitment to various **Group “B” and Group “C” posts** in the various Ministries/Departments of the Government of India and in Subordinate Offices.
- It has its headquarters in **New Delhi**.

Institute of Banking Personnel Selection

- IBPS is an **autonomous body** formed in 1984.
- It is registered under the Societies Registration Act, 1860 and also a Public Trust under the Bombay Public Trust Act, 1950.
- It was created to render **assistance to organisations in the areas of personnel such as recruitment, selection, placement, etc.**
- It has its headquarters in **Mumbai, Maharashtra**.

Source: IE

Contempt of Court

Why in News

The Supreme Court found civil rights lawyer Prashant Bhushan guilty of criminal contempt of court.

The lawyer had made a defamatory tweet against the Chief Justice of India.

Key Points

- **Defamation of SC:** The judgment said that the tweet **scandalised** the Supreme Court as an institution.
 - It held that being the epitome of the Indian judiciary, an attack on the Supreme Court can lead to ordinary litigants and judges of High Courts across the country **losing the confidence in the Supreme Court.**
- **Not to vindicate judges:** However, the court acknowledged that its contempt powers could be used **only to uphold the majesty of law** and not to vindicate an individual judge against whom a defamatory remark is made.
- **Suo Moto cognizance:** The court said that the **prior consent** of the **Attorney General (AG) of India** is not required to suo motu initiate the inherent contempt powers of the Supreme Court.
 - The *suo motu* contempt powers of the top court is drawn from **Article 129 of the Constitution.**
 - The Contempt of Court Act of 1971 cannot limit this power of the court. The statute **only provides the procedure in which such contempt is to be initiated.**

Contempt of Court Act of 1971

- According to the Contempt of Court Act of 1971, contempt of court is of **two types:**
 - **Civil contempt:** It is the **wilful disobedience** to any judgment, decree, direction, order, writ or other process of a court or wilful breach of an undertaking given to a court.
 - **Criminal contempt:** It is the publication of any matter or the doing of any other act which **scandalises** or lowers the authority of any court, or **interferes** with the due course of any judicial proceeding, or **obstructs** the administration of justice in any other manner.
- **Punishment:** The Contempt of Court Act of 1971 punishes the guilty with imprisonment that may extend to **six months or fine of ₹ 2,000 or both.**
- **Amendment:** It was amended in 2006 to include “**truth and good faith**” as a defence.
 - It was added that the court may impose punishments only if the act of the other person **substantially** interferes, or tends to interfere with the due course of justice
- **Criticism:**
 - It is criticized to be **reminiscent of british colonialism** in india as the contempt laws have been abolished from the United Kingdom itself.
 - Demands have been raised to **restrict contempt** to only “wilful disobedience” of directions/judgments of the court and remove “scandalizing the court”.
 - It is also said that it may lead to **judicial overreach.**
 - There are **high numbers of contempt cases pending** in various High Courts and the Supreme Courts, which delays the justice administration by an already **overburdened judiciary.**

- **Review by the Law Commission:** The Law Commission reviewed the Contempt of Court Act of 1971 in 2018 and noted:
 - The powers of the contempt of the Supreme Court and High Courts are independent of the Act, 1971” and the **contempt powers of the higher courts are derived from the articles 129 and 215 of the Constitution of India itself.**
 - **Article 129:** The **Supreme Court shall be a court of record** and shall have all the powers of such a court including the **power to punish for contempt of itself.**
 - **Article 215:** Every High Court shall be a court of record and shall have all the powers of such a court including the power to punish for contempt of itself.
 - Therefore, deletion of the offence from the Act **will not impact the inherent constitutional powers of the superior courts** to punish anyone for its contempt.
 - India continues to have a high number of criminal contempt cases, while the last offence of Scandalising the Court in the UK was in 1931 which may be a reason for its abolition in the UK.
 - The Commission observed that abolishing the offence in India would **leave a legislative gap.**
 - It empowers the High Court to act if someone is in contempt of the subordinate courts. Diluting the Act would **expose the subordinate judiciary to acts of contempt of court.**
 - The 1971 Act **contains adequate safeguards** to exclude instances which may not amount to criminal contempt as defined under Section 2(c) of the Act 1971.
 - The statute has stood the **test of judicial scrutiny for about five decades.**

Suo Moto Cognizance

- A Suo Moto cognizance is a **Latin term** which means an action taken by a government agency, court or other central authority on their own apprehension.
- A court takes a Suo Moto Cognizance of a legal matter when it receives information about the **violation of rights or breach of duty** through media or a third party’s notification.
- **Article 32 of the Indian Constitution and Article 226 of the Indian Constitution** lay down the provisions for filing **Public Interest Litigation (PIL)** in Supreme Court and High Courts respectively. This has given rise to the court’s power to initiate legal action on their cognizance of a matter.
- Suo Moto’s power of supreme court has been provided under **Article 131** of the Indian Constitution.

Article 131 vests the Supreme Court with **original jurisdiction** over any dispute arising between the states or between the centre and state. The article gives the Supreme Court the power to take up such cases straight instead of going through a lower court or reviewing a lower court’s judgement
- Suo Moto’s actions by Indian courts are a reflection of **judicial activism.**

Source: TH

Plastic Marine Pollution

Why in News

A study published in 'Nature Communications' has estimated the **amount of microplastic pollution in the Atlantic Ocean** and put it at **11.6-21.1 million tonnes**.

There has been an uncertainty about the magnitude of **plastic pollution** in marine environments.

Key Points

- **Estimated Pollution:**

- Measurements of the **top 200 meters** of the Atlantic found 11.6 - 21.1 million tonnes of microscopic particles.
- Scientists studied pollution of the Atlantic Ocean caused by **three types of plastics - polyethylene, polypropylene, and polystyrene** - which were suspended in the top 200 metres of the ocean.

These three types of plastic are **most commonly used for packaging**.

- Based on plastic waste generation trends from 1950-2015 and considering that the Atlantic Ocean has received 0.3-0.8% of the global plastic waste for 65 years, the Atlantic waters could hold **17-47 million tonnes of plastic waste**.

- **Conclusion:**

- **Smaller plastic particles are a hazard**, as it is easier for them to sink to greater ocean depths and some marine species such as zooplanktons show preferential ingestion of smaller particles, making them easier to enter the food chain.
- Considering that plastics of other sizes and polymer types will be found in the deeper ocean and in the sediments, the study indicates that both inputs and **stocks of ocean plastics are much higher than determined**.
- It is thus critical to **assess across all size categories and polymer groups** to determine the fate and danger of plastic contamination.

Plastic Pollution

- **Issue:**

- Plastic is a **synthetic organic polymer made from petroleum** with properties ideally suited for a wide variety of applications, including packaging, building and construction, household and sports equipment, vehicles, electronics and agriculture. Plastic is **cheap, lightweight, strong and malleable**.
- **Over 300 million tons of plastic** are produced every year, **half of which is used to design single-use items** such as shopping bags, cups and straws.
- According to the **International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)**, at least **8 million tons of plastic end up in the oceans every year**.

- **Sources of Marine Plastic:**

- The main sources of marine plastic are **land-based**, from urban and storm runoff, **sewer overflows**, beach visitors, inadequate waste disposal and management, **industrial activities**, construction and illegal dumping.
- **Ocean-based plastic** originates mainly from the **fishing industry, nautical activities and aquaculture**.
- Under the influence of **solar UV radiation**, wind, currents and other natural factors, plastic fragments into small particles, termed **microplastics (particles smaller than 5 mm)** or **nanoplastics (particles smaller than 100 nm)**.

In addition, **microbeads**, a type of microplastic, are very tiny pieces of manufactured polyethylene plastic that are added as exfoliants in health and beauty products, such as cleansers and toothpastes. These tiny particles **easily pass through water filtration systems and end up in the ocean** and lakes.

- **Impact of Plastic Pollution:** Plastic can take hundreds to thousands of years to decompose depending on the type of plastic and where it has been dumped.

- **On Marine Environment:**

- The most visible and disturbing impacts of marine plastics are the **ingestion, suffocation and entanglement of hundreds of marine species**.
- Floating plastics also contribute to the **spread of invasive marine organisms** and bacteria, which disrupt ecosystems.

- **On Food and Health:**

- Toxic contaminants accumulate on the surface of plastic materials as a result of prolonged exposure to seawater. When marine organisms ingest plastic debris, these contaminants enter their digestive systems, and overtime accumulate in the food web.
- The **transfer of contaminants between marine species and humans through consumption of seafood** has been identified as a health hazard, but has not yet been adequately researched.

- **Impacts on Climate Change:**

Plastic, which is a petroleum product, also contributes to **global warming**. If plastic waste is incinerated, it releases carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, thereby increasing carbon emissions.

- **Impacts on Tourism:**

Plastic waste damages the aesthetic value of tourist destinations, leading to decreased tourism-related incomes and **major economic costs** related to the cleaning and maintenance of the sites.

India's Plastic Waste Crisis

- Single-use plastics or disposable plastics, are commonly used for packaging. Nearly half of the plastics produced in India are single use plastics.

- Most cities and towns have not implemented the provisions of the **Plastic Waste Management Rules of 2016 or PWR**.
 - According to PWR, plastic manufacturers and retail establishments that use plastics are legally bound to collect back plastic waste. This is referred to as ‘**extended producers responsibility**’.
 - The rules also mandate the responsibilities of local bodies, gram panchayats, waste generators and retailers to manage waste.
 - This includes collecting and segregating recyclable plastic, non-recyclable plastic and other waste separately for processing.
 - But most cities and towns have not implemented these provisions due to the lack of a disciplined system of segregation and recycling.
- India **banned imports of solid plastic waste only in 2019**.
- The government has set an ambitious **target of eliminating single-use plastics by 2022**.

Suggestions

- **Existing international instruments should be further explored** to address plastic pollution. The most important are:
 - **The 1972 Convention on the Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping Wastes and Other Matter (or the London Convention)**.
 - **The 1996 Protocol to the London Convention (the London Protocol)**.
 - **The 1978 Protocol to the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL)**.
- **Recycling and reuse of plastic materials** are the most effective actions available to reduce the environmental impacts of open landfills and open-air burning that are often practiced to manage domestic waste.
- Governments, research institutions and industries also need to work collaboratively **redesigning products, and rethink their usage and disposal**, in order to reduce microplastics waste from pellets, synthetic textiles and tyres.

Way Forward

Knowledge of the full extent of plastic pollution and its impacts would provide policy-makers, manufacturers and consumers with scientific evidence needed to spearhead appropriate technological, behavioural and policy solutions. It would also accelerate the conceptualisation of new technology, materials or products to replace plastics.

Source: IE

Issues Related to Minimum Wage

Why in News

Recently, the **International Labour Organization (ILO)** has termed the **current minimum wage fixing criteria** in the **Draft Code on Wages (Central) Rules, 2020** as ambiguous.

On 7th July 2020, the Central government published the **Draft Code on Wages (Central) Rules, 2020** in the Official Gazette and placed it in the public domain inviting objections and suggestions.

Key Points

- **Fixation of the Minimum Wage:**

- **Number of Consumption Units:** The Wage Code provides for the fixation of the minimum wage keeping in view the standard working class family, **the equivalent of 3 adult consumption units.**
 - The assumption that a standard working class family consists just of 3 adult consumption units is questionable.
 - This number has been arrived at by counting the male worker as 1 consumption unit, his wife as 0.8 consumption unit and two children as 0.6 consumption units each.
 - Such an assumption about the food requirements of the members of a family seems flawed. Furthermore, families with dependent elders are not considered.
- **Expenses:** The minimum wage under the code has been fixed by considering the estimate of expenses incurred towards food, clothing, shelter, fuel, electricity, children's education and medical requirements. It also includes expenses on contingencies and miscellaneous items.
 - However, the criteria prescribed for the fixation of the minimum wage **have not taken into consideration all the expenses incurred to meet the minimum needs of a family in the present day.**
 - For instance, the expenses incurred towards transport, mobile phone bills and internet connection bills have not been considered at all.
- **Clothing:** The clothing requirement at 66 metres of cloth per year per standard working class family is unrealistically low.

It also does not take into consideration the additional clothing requirements of people in cold regions.
- **Housing:** The housing rent expenditure will be factored at 10% of the expenditure on food and clothing, which is unrealistic considering that the rent towards decent housing for a family in and around metropolitan areas will amount to at least Rs. 5000 per month.
- **Basis of Fixation of Wages:** The fixation of minimum wages under the draft code has been kept on a day basis.

However, trade union leaders have opined that fixation of wages on a day basis could disadvantage workers when compared to the fixation of minimum wages on a monthly basis.

- **Fixation of Floor Wage:**

- The Code on Wages, 2020 mentions the concept of a **floor wage**, which empowers the central government to fix floor wages taking into account the minimum living standards of workers.
 - The **floor wage is a baseline wage** below which minimum wages cannot be fixed by state governments.
 - The Wage Code permits the fixation of **different floor level wages for different geographical areas**. However, this has **given rise to the fear of flight of capital** from areas where the wage is higher to areas where the wage is lower.
 - There is also fear that it will lead to **fixation of low wages by state governments** in a bid to attract greater investments thus depressing the minimum wage.
- Also, the wage rules do not outline the exact criteria and methods for fixation of floor wage rates by the Central Government.

- **Suggestions:**

- **Stating the exact methods of fixation of floor wage.** This would enable the setting of the floor wage at an appropriate level after the wage code comes into effect.
- **Fixing the periodicity of revision of the minimum wage.** Of the two components of the minimum wage – basic wage and dearness allowance – the paper suggests revision of the basic wage every five years, a part which is missing in the proposed minimum wage rules.
- **Refining the rules** and suggesting relying on the evidence-based approach by holding consultations with representative organizations of workers and employers.

Source: IE

Shortcomings of Indian Chemical Industry: TIFAC

Why in News

Recently, a report by the **Technology Information Forecasting and Assessment Council (TIFAC)** has **highlighted the shortcomings of the Indian chemical industry** which prove to be barriers in competing with China.

TIFAC is an **autonomous organisation and think-tank of the Department of Science and Technology** and it commissioned the report in March 2020 when the **Covid-19 pandemic** had started accelerating in India.

Key Points

- India **does not have enough technology, plants and infrastructure** to manufacture key chemicals in a cost-effective and less polluting manner.
- India has nearly **stopped manufacturing several key Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients (API)**.
 - India has **given up the manufacturing of APIs** for ascorbic acid, aspartame and antibiotics like rifampicin, doxycycline, tazobactam acid and even steroids.
 - **Production of intermediates** such as atorvastatin, chloroquine, gabapentin, ciprofloxacin, cephalosporins, immunosuppressants has also been **stopped**.

- India **depends on China for 67% of chemical intermediates and API** that it needs to manufacture drugs and export.
India **also depends on the USA and Italy** for API.
- The chemical industry is almost entirely **dependent on China for chloroquine and hydroxychloroquine (HCQ)**.
 - Hydroxychloroquine is an **oral drug** used in the **treatment of autoimmune diseases** like rheumatoid arthritis.
 - In March 2020, the **Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) suggested its use to contain the spread of Covid-19** for restricted populations.
- Manufacturers are **unable to meet the price** at which chemicals are produced by China. Solvent and chemicals **manufacturing costs in India are over 15% more** than in China.
- The **share of Indian bulk drugs and intermediates in the total pharmaceutical export mix reduced** to 20% in 2018 from 42% in 2008.

Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients

- These are significant ingredients in the manufacturing of drugs and are also called bulk drugs.
- The Hubei province of China is the hub of the API manufacturing industry.

Pharmaceutical Intermediates

These are chemical compounds which form the building blocks of the APIs and are produced as a by-product during the production of API.

Suggestions

- **Need for mission mode chemical engineering** with defined targets for uninterrupted synthesis of API molecules.
- **Creation of mega drug manufacturing clusters** with common infrastructure in India.
- **Development of a technology platform for biocatalysis** for cost optimization and investing in the fermentation sector of large capacity.
Biocatalysis refers to the use of natural substances from biological sources (such as enzymes) to speed up (catalyze) chemical reactions.
- **Government encouragement for Indian companies** working in chemical segments.

Way Forward

- Implementation of **various recommendations** by TIFAC will help India to become **Atmanirbhar** (self-reliant) in the pharmaceutical sector by reducing its import dependence.
 - More schemes like the **Promotion of Bulk Drug Parks and Production Linked Incentives** (PLI) are needed to reduce the manufacturing cost of bulk drugs and promote domestic manufacturing.
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Revamp of Lingaraj Temple: Odisha

Why in News

The Odisha government has decided to give a facelift to the 11th century Lingaraj Temple, akin to its pre-350-year structural status.

This announcement has come despite the massive financial burden on the State economy in the wake of **Covid-19 pandemic**.

Key Points

- The efforts will be to create a **spiritual and ecological ambience** in and around the Lingaraj Temple.
- The **redevelopment plan of the peripheral area of the temple**, known as ‘**Ekamra van Kshetra**’, in Bhubaneswar, has been approved.
- Further, the government is planning a **barrier-free access between the Temple and Bindusagar lake**.
 - After the Lingaraj Temple, the Bindusagar (a sprawling pond) is the second major attraction for devotees. The pond has a religious relationship with the main temple.
 - Historical records suggest that about 350 years ago, there was nothing between the Temple and the Lake except some temples.
 - **Bindhyabasini, Bhabani Shankar, Shukasari and Mohini temples** will be part of the redevelopment plan.
- This is a part of the **Lingaraj Temple Heritage Development Project** under **Ekamra plan**. Through Ekamra plan, it is expected that heritage redevelopment will enhance the attraction of **Bhubaneswar** as a tourist site and **claim for a UNESCO heritage site will be stronger**.



Lingaraj Temple

- Lingaraj Temple, built in **11th century AD**, is dedicated to **Lord Shiva** and is considered as the largest temple of the city **Bhubaneswar**.
- It is **believed** to have been **built by the Somvanshi King Yayati I**.
- The main tower of this temple measures **180-feet in height**.
- It is built in **red stone** and is a classic example of **Kalinga style of architecture**.
- The temple is divided into **four sections** – Garbh Griha (sanctum sanctorum), Yajna Shala (the hall for prayers), Bhoga Mandap (the hall of offering) and the Natya Shala (hall of dance).
- The sprawling temple complex has **one hundred and fifty subsidiary shrines**.
- Lingaraj is referred to as **‘Swayambhu’** – self-originated Shivling.
- Another important aspect of the temple is that it signifies the **syncretisation of Shaivism and Vaishnavism sects in Odisha**.
 - Perhaps the rising cult of Lord Jagannath (considered an incarnation of Lord Vishnu) which coincided with the completion of the Lingaraja Temple had a role to play.
 - The presiding deity in the Temple is known as Hari-Hara; Hari denotes Lord Vishnu and Hara meaning Lord Shiva.
- The temple is **out of bounds for non-Hindus**.
- The other attraction of the temple is the **Bindusagar Lake**, located in the north side of the temple.
- On the western banks of Bindusagar, lies the **garden of Ekamra Van** named after the Hindu mythological texts where Bhubaneswar the capital city of Odisha was referred as Ekamra Van or a forest of a single mango tree.

Other Important Monuments in Odisha

Source: TH

Black Box on Aircraft

Why in News

The black boxes of the Boeing 737-800 aircraft which recently crashed in Kozhikode (Kerala) have been found.

These boxes will help investigators gather information about the crucial events that led to the crash.

Key Points

- **About:** A black box, technically known as an **Electronic Flight Data Recorder**, is an orange-coloured heavily protected recording device placed in a flight. It is used to investigate the details of the events immediately preceding an accident.
 - Black Boxes are **compulsory on any commercial flight or corporate jet** where they are usually **kept in the tail of an aircraft**, where they are more likely to survive a crash.
 - It usually takes at least **10-15 days to analyse the data** recovered from the black boxes.
 - Black boxes are also used in vehicles other than planes like **railways, cars** etc.
- **Invention:** Australian Scientist **David Warren** was the first to build a FDR/CVR prototype in 1958.

- **Parts:** The "black box" is made up of two separate pieces of equipment: the Flight Data Recorder (FDR) and a Cockpit Voice Recorder (CVR).
 - FDR records things like airspeed, altitude, vertical acceleration and fuel flow.
 - CVR records the conversations in the cockpit.
- **Technology:**
 - Older black boxes used **magnetic tape**, a technology that was first introduced in the 1960s. Magnetic tape works like any tape recorder.
 - These days, black boxes use solid-state memory boards, which came along in the 1990s. **Solid state memory boards** use stacked arrays of memory chips, and are stronger.
 - The FDR contains **Crash-Survivable Memory Units** (CSMUs) which are engineered to withstand extreme heat, jarring crashes and tons of pressure.
 - To make black boxes discoverable in situations where they are under water, they are equipped with a **Beacon** that sends out ultrasound signals for 30 days.
- **Other Methods to Investigate an Aircrash**
 - Accounts from Air Traffic Control (ATC) personnel.
 - Recordings of the conversation between ATC and the pilots moments before the crash.
 - Various data recorders at the airport, which would tell about the precise point and speed of touchdown on the runway.
- **Limitations:**
 - In certain cases – like the Malaysian Airlines MH370 flight, they are not found.
 - They still lack video recording capabilities.
- **Alternatives:** It is being tried to **stream** all of their essential data **directly to a ground-based station in realtime** which would eliminate the desperate search for a box that may have been destroyed in a crash, and will be more dependable.

Aircraft Security

- **The International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)** is a UN specialized agency, established in **1944** to manage the administration and governance of the **Convention on International Civil Aviation (Chicago Convention)**.
 - The Chicago Convention was signed on 7th December, 1944 in Chicago (USA) by 52 signatory states including **India**.
 - It coordinates international air travel, establishes rules of airspace, aircraft registration and safety, security, and sustainability, and details the rights of the signatories in relation to air travel.
- **The Bureau of Civil Aviation Security (BCAS)** is an attached office of the Ministry of Civil Aviation (India).

It is the regulatory authority for civil aviation security in India.
- **The Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau (AAIB)** is a division of the Ministry of Civil Aviation which investigates aircraft accidents and incidents in India.
- Recently, the Lok Sabha passed the **Aircraft (Amendment) Bill, 2020** which seeks to amend the **Aircraft Act, 1934**.

Source: IE

Why in News

The Prime Minister of India greeted the people on the occasion of the Prakash Purab Utsav of the **holy book Guru Granth Sahib (19th August 2020)**.

Key Points

- The first Prakash Purab Utsav marked the **installation of Guru Granth Sahib in Harmandir Sahib, also known as the Golden temple, in 1604.**
- Granth Sahib is the **sacred scripture of Sikhism (religion)**. It is a **collection of nearly 6,000 hymns of the Sikh Gurus (religious leaders) and various early and medieval saints of different religions and castes.**
- It is the central object of worship in all gurdwaras and is accorded the reverence paid to **a living Guru.**
- The **first version of the book was compiled by the 5th Sikh Guru Arjan at Amritsar in 1604 CE.** He included his own hymns and those of his predecessors, the **Gurus Nanak, Angad, Amar Das, and Ram Das,** and a selection of devotional songs of both Hindu and Islamic saints (notably the poet Kabir).
- In **1704 CE the 10th and last Guru, Gobind Singh,** added the hymns of his predecessor, **Guru Tegh Bahadur (the 6th - Hargobind, 7th - Har Rai, and 8th - Hari Krishen- Gurus did not write hymns),** and enjoined that after his own death the Granth would take the place of the Guru.
- The **language is mostly Punjabi or Hindi,** interspersed with Marathi, Persian, and Arabic words.
- After the death of Guru Gobind Singh, his hymns and other writings were compiled into a book known as the **Dasam Granth.**

Source: PIB
