



RACE IAS

Daily current affairs

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BR Ambedkar:

Context:

The nation celebrated the 131st birth anniversary of B R Ambedkar on April 14 this year.

- His role as a social reformer, chairman of the draft committee of the Indian Constitution, and first law minister of the country is well-known.

Dr.B R Ambedkar contribution towards Constitutional Reforms:

- As chairman of the Constitution's drafting committee, he took meticulous measures to build a just society through liberty, equality and fraternity.
- His advocacy for universal adult franchise ensured that women had the right to vote immediately after Independence.
- His advocacy of the Hindu Code Bill was a revolutionary measure towards ameliorating women's plight by conferring on them the right to adopt and inherit.
- He contributed to developing federal finance.

Ambedkar as a pioneer in establishing many national institutions:

- The Reserve Bank of India was conceptualised from the Hilton Young Commission's recommendation, which considered Ambedkar's guidelines laid out in The Problem of the Rupee: Its Origin and Its Solution.
- As a labour member in Viceroy's Executive Council from 1942 to 1946, he evolved numerous policies in the water, power and labour welfare sectors.

- His farsightedness helped in establishing the Central Water Commission in the form of the Central Waterways, Irrigation and Navigation Commission (CWINC), Central Technical Power Board.
- He helped in establishing the integrated water resources management through the establishment of the river valley authority, which actively considered projects like the Damodar River Valley Project, the Sone River Valley Project the Mahanadi (Hirakud Project), the Kosi and others on the Chambal and the rivers of the Deccan region.
- The Inter-State Water Dispute Act, 1956, and the River Board Act, 1956 emanate from his vision.

Contribution for the welfare of labourers and Industrial Workers:

- As a member of the Bombay Assembly, Ambedkar opposed the introduction of the Industrial Disputes Bill, 1937, as it removed workers' right to strike.
- He contributed to the reduction of working hours to 48 hours per week, lifting the ban on the employment of women for underground work in coal mines, introducing the provisions of overtime, paid leave and minimum wage.
- He also helped to establish the principle of "equal pay for equal work" irrespective of sex and maternity benefits. L
- Ambedkar outrightly opposed the communist labour movements, their extraterritorial loyalties and their Marxian approach of controlling all means of production.

Ambedkar: Voice of the depressed classes:

- Ambedkar was the voice of the Depressed Classes on every platform. As their representative at the Round Table Conference, he championed the cause of labour and improving the condition of peasants.
- During the Bombay Assembly's Poona session in 1937, he introduced a Bill to abolish the Khoti system of land tenure in Konkan.
- In Bombay, the historic peasant march to the Council Hall in 1938 made him a popular leader of the peasants, workers, and the landless. He was the first legislator in the country to introduce a Bill for abolishing the serfdom of agricultural tenants.

- His essay titled 'Small Holdings in India and their Remedies' (1918) proposed industrialisation as the answer to India's agricultural problem and is still relevant to contemporary debates.

Sources: PIB.

“Long period average” (LPA):

Context:

The country is likely to receive a normal monsoon for the fourth consecutive year, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said in its first Long Range Forecast (LRF) for this year.

How is it predicted?

The IMD predicts a “normal”, “below normal”, or “above normal” monsoon in relation to a benchmark “long period average” (LPA).

- According to the IMD, the “LPA of rainfall is the rainfall recorded over a particular region for a given interval (like month or season) average over a long period like 30 years, 50 years, etc”.
- Along with the countrywide figure, the IMD also maintains LPAs for every meteorological region of the country.

Why LPA is needed?

Because annual rainfall can vary greatly not just from region to region and from month to month, but also from year to year within a particular region or month, an LPA is needed to smooth out trends so that a reasonably accurate prediction can be made.

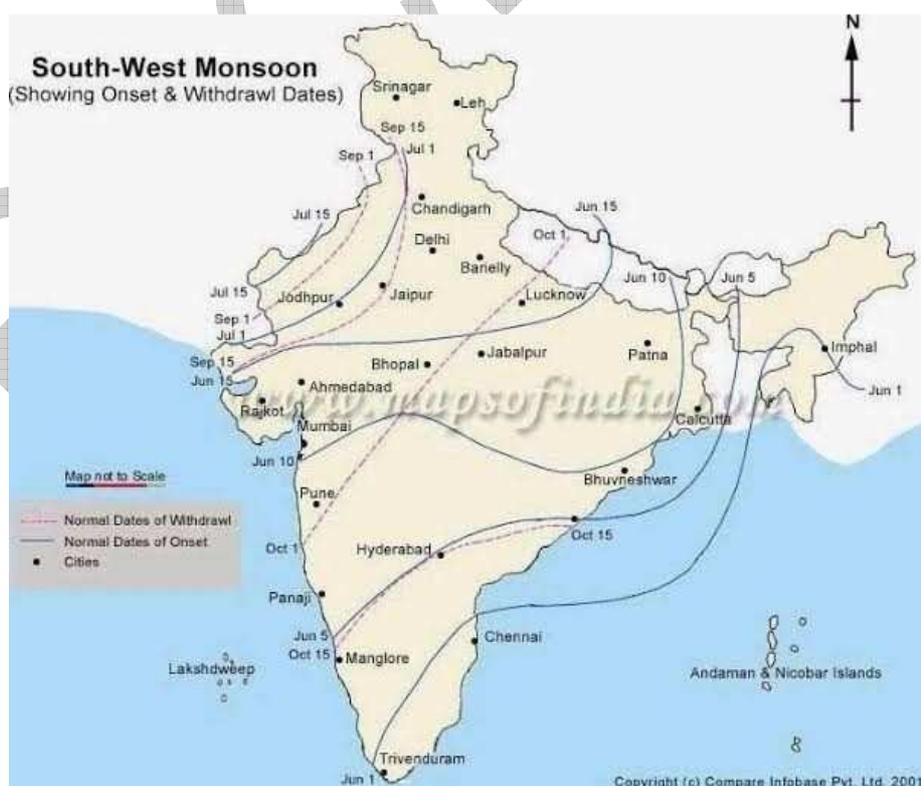
- A 50-year LPA covers for large variations in either direction caused by freak years of unusually high or low rainfall (as a result of events such as El Nino or La Nina), as well as for the periodic drought years and the increasingly common extreme weather events caused by climate change.

The onset needs a trigger in the form of a weather system in the proximity of the coastline. These are ocean born phenomena which accentuate the monsoon surge around the normal time of onset. These include:

1. The low-pressure area or depression in the Bay of Bengal during the last days of May or the beginning of June.
2. There are such systems in the Arabian Sea as well around the same time which results in onset over the mainland.
3. 'Cyclonic Vortex' is another factor which appears in the Southeast Arabian Sea, off Kerala and Lakshadweep region. They also shift along the west coast to push the monsoon current.
4. The formation of 'trough' off the west coast due to temperature differential between land and sea. This situation could be for a mild start and weak progress.
5. Lastly the cross-equatorial flow, wherein the trade winds from the Southern Hemisphere crossover to the Northern Hemisphere can bring a strong monsoon surge towards the Indian mainland.

Monsoon in India- related key facts:

1. Generally, across the world, the monsoons are experienced in the tropical area roughly between 20° N and 20° S.
2. Out of a total of 4 seasonal divisions of India, monsoon occupies 2 divisions, namely- the southwest monsoon season and the retreating monsoon season.



Sources: Indian Express

PLI scheme for textiles:

Context:

61 applications, for projects involving total investment of Rs 19,077 crore, have been approved under the **Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme for textiles**.

- These projects are expected to result in projected turnover is Rs. 1.85 lakh crore over a period of 5 years with a proposed direct employment of 2.4 lakh persons.

About the Scheme:

The Government had launched the Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme for the textiles sector worth Rs 10,683 crore.

- This is part of a larger PLI scheme for 13 sectors, with a total budgetary outlay of 1.97 lakh crore.

Focus areas?

The PLI scheme for textiles aims to promote the production of high value Man-Made Fibre (MMF) fabrics, garments and technical textiles.

Eligibility:

1. Any person or company willing to invest a minimum of Rs 300 crore in plant, machinery, equipment and civil works (excluding land and administrative building cost) to produce products of MMF fabrics, garments and products of technical textiles will be eligible to participate in the first part of the scheme.
2. Investors willing to spend a minimum of Rs 100 crore under the same conditions shall be eligible to apply in the second part of the scheme.

Incentives:

1. Under PLI, the Centre will subsidise eligible manufacturers by paying incentives on incremental production.
2. Companies investing over Rs 300 crore in plant, machinery, equipment and civil works to produce the identified products will get an incentive of 15 percent of their turnover, which needs to be Rs 600 crore in the third year.

- The companies investing between Rs 100 crore and Rs 300 crore will also be eligible to receive duty refunds and incentives (lower than 15 percent of their turnover).
- The government expects to achieve “fresh investment of over Rs 19,000 crore and a cumulative turnover of more than Rs 3 lakh crore”.

Significance:

The PLI scheme will provide an immense boost to domestic manufacturing, and prepare the industry for making a big impact in global markets in sync with the spirit of **Atmanirbhar Bharat**. It will also help attract more investment into this sector.

Need for:

Two-thirds of international trade in textiles is of man-made and technical textiles. This scheme has been approved so India can also contribute to the ecosystem of fabrics and garments made of MMF.

BOOST TO ATMANIRBHAR BHARAT

Financial outlay for the 10 sectors over a five-year period



₹18,100cr

Advance Chemistry Cell (ACC) battery

₹5,000cr

Electronic/technology products

₹10,683cr

Textile products: MMF segment and technical textiles

₹57,042cr

Automobiles and auto components

₹10,900cr

Food products

₹15,000cr

Pharmaceuticals drugs

₹6,238cr

White goods (ACs, LEDs)

₹12,165cr

Telecom and networking products

₹4,500cr

High-efficiency solar PV modules

₹6,322cr

Speciality steel

FINANCIAL OUTLAY OF PREVIOUSLY NOTIFIED PLI SCHEMES

₹40,951cr

Mobile manufacturing and specified electronic components

₹6,940cr

Critical key starting materials/drug intermediaries, APIs

₹3,420cr

Manufacturing of medical devices

Total ₹145,980cr

₹51,311cr

Sources: the Hindu.

NATO enlargement:

Context:

Russia has warned Finland and Sweden against joining NATO, arguing that the move would not bring stability to Europe.

- Russia has said that if Sweden and Finland join NATO then it would have to strengthen its land, naval and air forces in the Baltic Sea.
- Russia also raised the nuclear threat by saying that it would deploy nuclear weapon near Sweden and Finland if they join NATO.

What does Russia want?

Tensions between Russia and the West have been building ever since Vladimir Putin annexed Crimea and started his war in Ukraine.

- In response, NATO sent reinforcements to countries seen as vulnerable to Russian aggression.
- Essentially, Russia now wants guarantees that NATO will halt its eastward expansion, rule out membership for Ukraine and other former Soviet countries, and roll back its military deployments in Central and Eastern Europe.

What is the source of Russia's dispute with NATO?

- Russian leaders have long been wary of the eastward expansion of NATO, particularly as the alliance opened its doors to former Warsaw Pact states and ex-Soviet republics in the late 1990s (the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland) and early 2000s (Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia).
- Their fears grew in the late 2000s as the alliance stated its intent to admit Georgia and Ukraine at an unspecified point in the future.

What is Russia demanding of NATO and the United States today?

Russia has put forth two draft agreements that seek explicit, legally binding security guarantees from the United States and NATO, respectively:

- The draft calls for NATO to end its eastward expansion, specifically, deny future membership to ex-Soviet states, such as Ukraine. It would

also ban the United States from establishing bases in or cooperating militarily with former Soviet states.

- It would block both signatories from deploying military assets in areas outside their national borders that “could be perceived by the other party as a threat to its national security.”

But, why is Russia worried about NATO?

Russia has demanded that NATO guarantees Ukraine will never join the alliance.

- Russia believes that NATO is “encircling” Russia and posing a threat.
- It is also said that NATO missile defence threatens Russian security.
- Above all, NATO is believed to be a U.S. geopolitical project and has always tried to isolate or marginalise Russia.

About North Atlantic Treaty Organization:

It is an intergovernmental military alliance.

Established by Washington treaty.

Treaty that was signed on 4 April 1949.

Headquarters – Brussels, Belgium.

Headquarters of Allied Command Operations – Mons, Belgium.

Significance:

It constitutes a system of collective defence whereby its independent member states agree to mutual defence in response to an attack by any external party.

Composition:

Since its founding, the admission of new member states has increased the alliance from the original 12 countries to 30. The most recent member state to be added to NATO was North Macedonia on 27 March 2020.

NATO membership is open to “any other European state in a position to further the principles of this Treaty and to contribute to the security of the North Atlantic area.”

Objectives:

Political - NATO promotes democratic values and enables members to consult and cooperate on defence and security-related issues to solve problems, build trust and, in the long run, prevent conflict.

Military - NATO is committed to the peaceful resolution of disputes. If diplomatic efforts fail, it has the military power to undertake crisis-management operations. These are carried out under the collective defence clause of NATO's founding treaty - Article 5 of the Washington Treaty or under a United Nations mandate, alone or in cooperation with other countries and international organisations.



Sources: the Hindu.

MPs' panel lends voice against elephant trade:

Context:

The Wild Life (Protection) Amendment Bill, 2021 after being introduced in Lok Sabha was later referred to the Standing Committee on Science and Technology, Environment, Forests and Climate Change.

- The panel has recently recommended the Central Government not to encourage sale and purchase of captive elephants.

Need for:

Section 43 of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 states that no person having in his possession captive animal, animal article, trophy or uncured trophy in respect of which he has a certificate of ownership shall transfer by way of sale or offer for sale or by any other mode of consideration of commercial nature, such animal or article or trophy or uncured trophy.

- The amended Bill introduces an exemption clause for elephants.

Other issues wrt Bill highlighted by the standing committee:

- The Standing Committee pointed out that a number of species is missing in all the three Schedules.
- The committee also finds species that should be in Schedule I but have been placed in Schedule II.
- There are species missing altogether both in Schedules I and II as well as in Schedule III.
- The Bill also fails to address “human-animal conflict”, the committee noted.

Highlights of the Wild Life (Protection) Amendment Bill, 2021:

The proposed amendment is likely the most expansive so far in scope: it covers more areas of legislation, from trade in wild species to permitting filmmaking in protected areas and controlling the spread of invasive species.

Positives:

- The Bill increases penalties for wildlife crimes. For example, offences that attracted a fine of Rs 25,000 now attract Rs 1 lakh.
- There’s a new and separate chapter on regulating species involved in international trade according to the CITES treaty.
- The Bill prohibits possessing, trading and breeding species without prior permissions from CITES authorities.
- The Bill also recognises threats that invasive alien species pose.

What’s missing in the bill? What are the concerns?

The Bill doesn’t include regional invasive species - some of which may be native to the country but invasive in some parts.

The amendment Bill has no separate Schedule for species the Act classifies as 'vermin', so the Centre can directly notify such species and open them up to be hunted - including some of the species currently in Schedule II.

The Bill also proposes changes to the Schedules. Foremost, it reduces the number of Schedules from six to four, to "rationalise" the lists. But the two main substitute Schedules that will specify the protected species are incomplete.

The Bill will render the existing 'State Boards for Wildlife' defunct by replacing it with set up a 'Standing Committee' of the State Board of Wildlife - headed by the respective state forest minister and 10 members nominated by the minister.

- The State Boards of Wildlife currently manage the conservation and protection of wildlife at the state level. The state chief minister sits atop the board and is supported by 20+ members, including of the state legislature, NGOs, conservationists and representatives of the state forest departments and tribal welfare.

Under the proposed amendments, the commercial sale and purchase of elephants will no longer be prohibited under the Act. This clause is prone to abuse and can severely impact elephant populations by legitimising live trade of elephants.

In 1972, Parliament enacted the Wild Life Act (Protection) Act:

The Wild Life Act provides for:

- state wildlife advisory boards,
- regulations for hunting wild animals and birds
- establishment of sanctuaries and national parks
- regulations for trade in wild animals, animal products and trophies
- judicially imposed penalties for violating the Act
- Harming endangered species listed in Schedule I of the Act is prohibited throughout India.
- Hunting species, like those requiring special protection (Schedule II), big game (Schedule III), and small game (Schedule IV), is regulated through licensing.
- A few species classified as vermin (Schedule V), may be hunted without restrictions.
- Wildlife wardens and their staff administer the act.

- An amendment to the Act in 1982, introduced a provision permitting the capture and transportation of wild animals for the scientific management of the animal population.

Constitution of Various Bodies:

The WPA act provides for the constitution of bodies to be established under this act such as the National and State Board for Wildlife, Central Zoo Authority and National Tiger Conservation Authority.

Constitutional Provisions for Wildlife:

- The 42nd Amendment Act, 1976, Forests and Protection of Wild Animals and Birds was transferred from State to Concurrent List.
- Article 51 A (g) of the Constitution states that it shall be the fundamental duty of every citizen to protect and improve the natural environment including forests and Wildlife.
- Article 48 A in the Directive Principles of State policy, mandates that the State shall endeavor to protect and improve the environment and to safeguard the forests and wildlife of the country.

Sources: the Hindu.

Black Sea:

- The Black Sea, also known as the Euxine Sea, is one of the major water bodies and a famous inland sea of the world.
- This marginal sea of the Atlantic Ocean, located between Eastern Europe and Western Asia.
- It is surrounded by the Pontic, Caucasus, and Crimean Mountains in the south, east and north respectively.
- The Turkish straits system - the Dardanelles, Bosphorus and Marmara Sea - forms a transitional zone between the Mediterranean and the Black Sea.
- The Black Sea is also connected to the Sea of Azov by the Strait of Kerch.
- The bordering countries of Black Sea are: Russia, Ukraine, Georgia, Turkey, Bulgaria and Romania.

Context:

The sinking of the warship Moskva, the 600-foot, 12,500-tonne flagship of the Russian Black Sea Fleet – whether due to a Ukrainian missile strike or, as Russia claims, a fire on board – is a serious setback for Russia.

Film and Television Institute of India (FTII):

- FTII is an autonomous institute under the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting of the Government of India.
- It is situated on the premises of the erstwhile Prabhat Film Company in Pune.
- It was established in 1960.

Why in News?

The Supreme Court has directed the Film and Television Institute of India (FTII) not to exclude candidates suffering from colour blindness from its courses on film making and editing and asked it to make changes to its curriculum instead.

What is Colour Blindness?

Colour blindness, also known as colour deficiency, is the inability to see colours in the normal way. Colour blind individuals often cannot distinguish between certain colours – usually greens and reds, and sometimes blues as well.

Why does it occur?

Two types of cells in the retina detect light – the “rods”, which distinguish between light and dark, and the “cones” that detect colour.

- There are three types of cones that see colour – red, green, and blue – and our brains use the information from these cells to perceive colour.
- Colour blindness can be the result of the absence of one or more of these cone cells, or their failure to work properly.

National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI):

- NPCI serves as an umbrella body for the operation of retail payment in India.
- This organization was established by the Reserve Bank of India along with the Indian Bank’s Association under the provisions of the Payment and Settlement Systems Act, 2007.

- Presently, NPCI is promoted by ten major promoter banks.

Products of NPCI:

1. RuPay.
2. National Common Mobility Card.
3. Bharat Interface for Money (BHIM).
4. Unified Payments Interface (UPI).
5. Bharat Bill Payment System.

Why in the News?

Meta's instant messaging app WhatsApp has received clearance from the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) to add 60 million users to its UPI-based payments service WhatsApp Pay.

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