

## DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS (DCA)

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## GENDER GAP IN EDUCATION

### Context

- The **World Economic Forum (WEF)** report of 2024 on global gender gaps ranked India at **129 out of 146 economies**, with a decline in the education sector being one of the reasons for India's poor rank.

### Status of gender gap in education

- The report indicates that, despite high enrolment rates for women in primary, secondary, and tertiary education, progress has been sluggish.
- The literacy gap between men and women remains substantial at **17.2 percentage** points.
  - ♦ Consequently, **India ranks 124th** in this indicator, scoring **0.964 in education**, a decline from the score of 1.000 achieved in 2023.
- In higher education, the **AISHE report for 2021-22** indicates that the gross enrolment ratio (GER) for women is marginally higher than that for men, with women achieving a GER of 28.5 compared to 28.3 for men.
  - ♦ This marks a **32 per cent** increase in female enrolment since 2014-15.
  - ♦ However women students make up only **42.5%** of those enrolled in **STEM subjects** from undergraduate to Phd levels.
- According to the Census data from 2011, adult literacy is a matter of concern, with only **64.63% of women** who are literate, in comparison to **80.88% of men**.

### Reasons for gender gap in education

- **Limited Access to Schools:** Lack of schools within a reasonable distance from homes, especially in rural areas, discourages enrollment.
- **Early Marriage:** High rates of early marriage limit girls' opportunities to continue their education. Girls are expected to contribute to household chores and caregiving, reducing their time and opportunity for education.
- **Poverty:** Economic hardships force families to prioritize immediate income over long-term educational benefits, pulling girls out of school to work.
- **Harassment and Violence:** Concerns about the safety of girls traveling to and from school and in school itself deter parents from sending their daughters to school.

### Government initiatives

- **National Scheme of Incentives to Girls for Secondary Education:** The scheme was launched in 2008, to give incentives to students enrolled in class IX. The scheme is now on the **National Scholarship Portal (NSP)**.
- **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020:** It is a comprehensive reform in the education sector that aims to transform the Indian education system. It emphasizes holistic development along with bridging the gender gap in education.
- **The Department of Science and Technology (DST)** is implementing a dedicated scheme '**Women in Science and Engineering-KIRAN (WISE-KIRAN)**' to cater women of all walks of life in order to enhance their participation in the field of Science and Technology (S&T) with ultimate goal to bring gender parity.

### Incentives required for girls

- **Building more schools:** If a primary school exists within one or two kilometers of a child's home, parents are more likely to enroll their children, especially girls.
  - ♦ In Gujarat, where the government built few secondary and higher secondary schools, leaving largely to the private sector, girls make up only **45.2%** of students in secondary classes, far behind much poorer States like **Jharkhand (50.7%), Chhattisgarh (51.2%), Bihar (50.1%) and even Uttar Pradesh (45.4%)**.
- **Presence of women teachers:** Prioritize hiring female teachers, especially in primary schools, to make parents more comfortable sending their daughters to school.
- **Transport facilities:** Free bus passes for school girls in States like Haryana, Punjab and Tamil Nadu, as well as schemes to give free cycles to girls in Bihar and other States have improved enrolment.
- **Sanitation facility:** It remains a major obstacle for girls education in higher classes, especially after puberty, and may cause a large number of dropouts.
  - ♦ Though the Union and State governments have funded the construction of washrooms in schools, there is no funding for cleaning and maintenance, which is often left to lax local bodies.

Source: TH

## NEW NCERT TEXTBOOK REFERS HARAPPAN SOCIETY AS 'SINDHU-SARASVATI CIVILISATION'

### Context

- The new NCERT Class 6 Social Science textbook has incorporated numerous new elements.

### About

- In the new edition, the Harappan civilisation is referred to as the '**Indus-Sarasvati**' or '**Sindhu-Sarasvati**' civilisation.
  - It states that the Sarasvati basin included major cities of the civilisation, such as **Rakhigarhi and Ganweriwala**, along with smaller cities and towns.
  - The river, now known as **Ghaggar in India and Hakra in Pakistan**, is described as seasonal.
  - It attributes the decline of the Harappan civilisation to climate change, leading to reduced rainfall and the drying up of the Sarasvati River in its central basin.
- It states that India had its prime meridian, the "**Madhya rekha**," passing through Ujjain. This "**Ujjayini meridian**" served as a reference for calculations in Indian astronomical texts long before the establishment of the Greenwich Meridian.
  - Varāhamihira**, a famous astronomer, lived and worked there some 1,500 years ago.
- Also references to the **Iron pillar at the Qutub Minar site**, which dates back to the Gupta dynasty era, along with mentions of the **Sanchi Stupa**, the **monolithic temples of Mahabalipuram** and the paintings in the **Ajanta caves** have been dropped.

### Harappan Civilization

- The Harappan civilization is believed to be **one of the oldest world civilizations** together with Egypt and Mesopotamia.
- It was developed along the **river Indus** and for that reason it is also known as the **Indus Valley Civilization**.
- The Harappan civilization is identified as a **Bronze-age civilization** because many objects have been found that are made up of **copper based alloys**.

### Major Features of Civilization

- Urban Planning:** Their towns were well planned and they had brick houses which were situated along the roads.
  - Every house was equipped with a staircase, a kitchen and several rooms.
  - Their courtyards had wells, bathrooms and they had proper drainage systems.
- Ornaments:** The Harappans wore ornaments made of **gold, silver, ivory, shell, clay, semi-precious stones and others**.
- Trade and Commerce:** The civilization had extensive trade networks, reaching as far as Mesopotamia, Afghanistan, and the Arabian Peninsula.
- Religion and Iconography:** Harappan artifacts depict various symbols and motifs believed to be related to religious beliefs.
  - These include figures such as the "**Priest King**" and images of animals like **bulls**, suggesting possible reverence for certain animals.
- Craftsmanship and Artistry:** The Harappans produced **intricate pottery**, including the **famous red pottery** with black painted motifs.
  - They also created jewelry, sculptures, and seals made of **steatite, terracotta, and other materials**.
- Agriculture:** They cultivated crops such as **wheat, barley, peas, and cotton**.
- Social Organization:** The society was likely stratified, with evidence suggesting a **hierarchical structure**. This is indicated by variations in housing sizes and the presence of public buildings.
- Decline and Disappearance:** The reasons for the decline of the Harappan Civilization are still debated among historians and archaeologists.
  - Possible factors include ecological changes, such as shifts in river courses, as well as invasions and internal conflicts.

Source: IE

## FIVE-YEAR ACTION PLAN TO BOOST EXPORTS

### Context

- The **Department of Commerce** is working on a **five-year action plan** to provide the **building blocks for attaining the goal of \$2 trillion exports of goods and services by 2030**.



## About

- The final objective is to attain **\$1 trillion exports of goods and \$1 trillion exports of services by 2030**.
- The focus areas are expansion and diversification of products and markets, facilitating MSME export, growth of e-commerce, boost to the services sector, improvement of logistics and ease of doing business and bringing down transaction time and costs.

## India's Share in Global Trade

- In 2023, the country's share in global goods exports and imports **stood at 1.8 per cent and 2.8 percent respectively**.
- **Export Items:** India's top exports still remain traditional items like petroleum products, gems & jewellery, textiles, chemicals and pharmaceuticals, a breakthrough has been achieved in terms of increase in exports of telecom products, especially mobile phones.
- **Concern:** Last fiscal, India's exports were hit by slowdown in global demand as turmoil in the Middle East and Russia's war on Ukraine continued to affect economies worldwide.
- **Future Outlook:** In the current fiscal things appear more upbeat.
  - ♦ Goods exports in the first quarter of 2024-25 increased 5.84 per cent to \$109.96 billion. This is in line with international organisations like WTO predicting steady growth in world trade in 2024.

## Challenges

- **Lack of Diversification:** India's export growth challenge lies in diversifying its markets as well as products.
  - ♦ The **US and the UAE** have remained the top export destinations with the two accounting for about **25 percent export share in 2023-24**.
  - ♦ Exports to new markets like the Netherlands, Saudi Arabia, Brazil, and Indonesia have increased consistently over the recent years, there is scope for much more diversification, both in terms of products and destinations.
- **Streamlining and Reducing Time:** It has been a consistent endeavor of the government to reduce costs and time taken for exports by reducing paperwork and facilitating online transactions.

## Government has taken the following export promotion initiatives:-

- **Assistance provided** through several schemes to promote exports, namely, Trade Infrastructure for Export Scheme (TIES) and Market Access Initiatives (MAI) Scheme.
- **Rebate of State and Central Levies and Taxes (RoSCTL) Scheme** to promote labour oriented sector export has been implemented since 2019.
- **Remission of Duties and Taxes on Exported Products (RoDTEP) scheme** has been implemented since 2021.
  - ♦ From 2022 it uncovered sectors like pharmaceuticals, organic and inorganic chemicals and article of iron and steel.
- **Common Digital Platform for Certificate of Origin** has been launched to facilitate trade and increase Free Trade Agreement (FTA) utilization by exporters.
- **Districts as Export Hubs initiative** has been launched by identifying products with export potential in each district, addressing bottlenecks for exporting these products and supporting local exporters/manufacturers to generate employment in the district.
- **Regular monitoring of export performance** with Commercial Missions abroad, Export Promotion Councils, Commodity Boards/ Authorities and Industry Associations and taking corrective measures from time to time.
- **Foreign Trade Policy (FTP), 2023** aims to promote e-Commerce exports by bringing such exporters under the ambit of various export promotion schemes of the Government.

## Following measures have been taken by the Government to maximize the growth of domestic markets and to expand its reach globally;-

- Pradhan MantriGati Shakti
- National Logistics Policy
- National Industrial Corridor Development Programme
- GIS enabled Land Bank- India Industrial Land Bank (IILB)
- Industrial Park Rating System (IPRS)
- Productivity Linked Incentive (PLI)
- Make In India
- Startup India

- One District One Product
- National Single Window System

### Way Ahead

- Increasing India's meagre share in world trade is one of the goals for the government.
- Under the 100-day agenda road-map, the Commerce Department is hopeful of launching its Trade Connect' e-platform to help exporters do business and get in touch with relevant stakeholders of international trade.
- The Commerce Department wants to focus on increasing exports to markets such as Central Asia, Africa and Latin America.
- Exports could also go up considerably in countries and regions with which FTAs are being negotiated such as the EU, the UK and Oman.

Source: BL

## NEWS IN SHORT

### ROGUE WAVES

#### In News

- University of Maryland mathematicians have trained an artificial intelligence programme to distinguish wave patterns that preceded rogue waves, up to five minutes in advance.

#### About Rogue Waves

- Rogues are also called 'extreme storm waves' .
- They are twice the size of surrounding waves and often occur unexpectedly.
- Rogue waves are unusually large waves that pose significant threats to ships, coastal infrastructure, and human lives.
- **AI Development for Forecasting Rogue Waves:**Historically, the lack of real-time forecasting for rogue waves has led to fatal accidents, including ship sinkings and human casualties.
  - ♦ AI-based forecasting offers a promising solution to mitigate these risks and improve safety in maritime operations.
- **Future outlook** : Incorporating additional data such as water depths, wind speeds, and buoy locations could further enhance accuracy.

- ♦ Continued research and refinement of AI models hold potential for better understanding and prediction of rogue waves in the future

Source:IE

### PREVALENCE OF NONCOMMUNICABLE DISEASES (NCDS)

#### Context

- Recently a study examined self-reported morbidities in India by relying on the data from the **National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO)** in which non-communicable diseases gained a prominent share.

#### About

- The self-reported morbidities were classified into four broad categories: infectious and communicable diseases, non-communicable diseases, disability, and injury and other diseases.

#### Noncommunicable diseases (NCDs)

- NCDs also known as chronic diseases, tend to be of long duration and are the result of a combination of genetic, physiological, environmental and behavioral factors.
- The main types of NCD are **cardiovascular diseases** (such as heart attacks and stroke), **cancers, chronic respiratory diseases** (such as chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and asthma) and diabetes.

#### Key findings of the study

- The burden of **non-communicable diseases** has tripled in both men and women between **1995 and 2014 in India.**
- **Kerala** reported the highest rates followed by **Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, West Bengal and Punjab.**
- **The north-eastern States** have reported the lowest prevalence of non-communicable diseases.

#### Global scenario

- Noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) kill **41 million** people each year, equivalent to **74%** of all deaths globally.

- Cardiovascular diseases account for most NCD deaths, or **17.9 million** people annually, followed by **cancers** (9.3 million), **chronic respiratory diseases (4.1 million)**, and **diabetes** (2.0 million including kidney disease deaths caused by diabetes).

Source: TH

## NATIONAL FLAG DAY

### Context

- **India's National Flag Day** commemorates the adoption of the Indian national flag on July 22, 1947, by the Constituent Assembly.

### About

- It was designed by Pingali **Venkayya**.
- **Specifications:** The Indian national flag, known as the **"Tiranga"**, features three **horizontal stripes of equal width**.



- **The top stripe is saffron (kesaria)**, representing courage and sacrifice.
- **The middle stripe is white**, symbolising peace and truth, with a **navy blue Ashoka Chakra (wheel)** at its centre, which signifies the eternal wheel of law.
- **The bottom stripe is green**, denoting growth and auspiciousness.
- The flag's proportions are in the ratio of **2:3** and the **Ashoka Chakra has 24 spokes, representing continuous progress**.
- **Historical context: The Ashoka Chakra replaced the spinning wheel**, or "Charkha," which was a symbol of self-reliance and resistance during the freedom struggle.
  - This change was suggested by **Badr-ud-Din Tyabji** and endorsed by Mahatma Gandhi.
  - Ashoka Chakra is similar to the wheel that can be seen on the **abacus of Ashoka's Sarnath**

**Lion Capital**, with 24 spokes and its diameter is about equal to the width of the white band.

- **The Flag Code of India:** The Flag Code of India was modified in **2002**, allowing citizens to display and use the national flag on any day and not just National days as was the case earlier, but with respect and dignity.
  - Citizens are permitted to fly the flag throughout the year, provided they adhere to the guidelines, which include hoisting the flag between sunrise and sunset unless adequately illuminated at night.
- **Part IV-A of the Constitution:** According to **Article 51A (a)**, It shall be the duty of every citizen of India to abide by the Constitution and respect its ideals and institutions, the National Flag and the National Anthem.

Source: IE

## TWO DIFFERENT INCOME TESTS FOR OBC CIVIL SERVICES CANDIDATES

### Context

- The Union government's method of determining the non-creamy layer status of OBC candidates came into attention in the wake of the row over trainee IAS officer Puja Khedkar.

### Background

- **The OBC quota was introduced in 1993** and a guiding charter was created to exclude OBC candidates whose families had accumulated certain social and economic privileges over the years, known as the creamy layer.
- This would then allow reservation benefits only for those declared as **'non-creamy layer'** based on several criteria, including a crucial income or wealth test.
- Now, it has emerged that the Department of Personnel and Training has been applying two different income tests to different categories of OBC candidates.

### Dual standards

- The DoPT's 1993 charter had declared some OBC families ineligible on the basis of their occupations.
- Thus, **children of people in constitutional posts, senior Central and State government employees, members of the armed forces, and**

**property owners** supposedly **could not avail of the OBC quota** for the civil services.

- However, **exceptions were carved out of these exclusions** such as children of MPs and MLAs; government officials who have been promoted, not hired, into senior positions; and owners of unirrigated agricultural land, among others are all now eligible for OBC quotas, subject to a parental **annual income limit of ₹8 lakh**.

Source: TH

## PINK BOLLWORM

### Context

- Cotton acreage in the states of **Punjab, Haryana, and Rajasthan** has significantly dropped because of the **pink bollworm**.

### About

- **The pink bollworm (PBW)**, known among farmers as gulabi sundhi, damages the cotton crop by **burrowing its larvae into the cotton bolls**.
  - ♦ This results in the **lint being cut and stained, making it unfit for use**.
- **Spread:** PBW primarily **spreads through the air**. Residue of infected crops, often left by farmers on the field to be used as fuel, can also harbour PBW larvae which can then infect future crops.
  - ♦ Infected cotton seeds are another reason behind the pest's spread.
- **Prevention:** To prevent future infestation, that fields which saw PBW infestation should not be planted with the cotton crop, for at least one season.
  - ♦ Farmers are advised to burn residue at the earliest, and ensure there is no mixing between healthy and unhealthy seeds (or cotton).

Source: IE

## PRIMARY AMOEBIC MENINGOENCEPHALITIS

### Context

- Kerala has issued technical guidelines for diagnosis, management of **amoebic meningoencephalitis**.

### About

- Primary amoebic meningoencephalitis (PAM) is a **rare but lethal central nervous system infection** of rapid fatality caused by **free-living amoebae** found in **freshwater, lakes, and rivers (never in seawater)**.
- **Cause:** It is usually caused by an infection with **Naegleria fowleri**, a microscopic amoeba commonly called a **“brain-eating amoeba.”**
  - ♦ The amoeba enters through the **nasal channels** and destroys brain tissue, causing **severe brain swelling and death in most cases**.
  - ♦ This disease occurs more often during the **warmer months** of the year.
  - ♦ Patients with PAM typically have a history of swimming, diving, bathing, or playing in warm, generally stagnant, freshwater during the previous one to 9 days.
- **Symptoms:** Headache, fever, nausea, and vomiting being the most common presenting signs and symptoms.
  - ♦ The diagnosis of PAM carries a high **mortality rate of greater than 97%**.
- **Treatment:** The optimal approach to treatment of PAM due to *N. fowleri* is uncertain.
  - ♦ In theory, the best drug regimen should include an amoebicidal drug (or a combination of drugs) with good in vitro activity that is capable of crossing the blood-brain barrier.

Source: TH

## MONSOON SESSION OF PARLIAMENT

### Context

- **The first Monsoon Session** of Parliament after the NDA government came to power begin from July 22.

### About

- The Parliament Monsoon Session will have **19 sittings till August 12** when the government is expected to present **six bills**, including the one to replace the 90-year-old Aircraft Act, and also get the Parliament nod for the budget of Jammu and Kashmir, which is under central rule.

### Parliament holds three Sessions in a year

- Budget Session—February-May;
- Monsoon Session—July-September; and
- Winter Session—November-December.

### Sessions of Parliament

- The Constitution **doesn't provide for a fixed number of sessions or days of sitting.**
- Three sessions are typically held each calendar year — **the Budget, Monsoon, and Winter sessions.**
- The Central government has the authority to call for a session, and **the Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs (CCPA)**, determines the date and number of sittings.
- After finalizing the session schedule, the President calls upon the Members of Parliament to convene for the upcoming session.
- The MPs are informed about the number of sittings and other details about the tentative business of the House through the summons sent by the President.

Source: ET

## FUTURES AND OPTIONS

### In News

- Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) and the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) are worried

that the surging volumes in futures and options have started impinging on capital formation and thus pose a systemic risk to India's economic growth.

### About Futures and Options

- Futures and Options are derivative contracts whose value is based on their underlying assets.
- **Futures** are agreements to buy or sell at a predetermined price and date, while options grant the right but not the obligation to buy or sell within a specified timeframe.
- **Types** of futures include commodity, currency, interest rate, and stock futures.
  - ♦ Calls and puts are the two types of options.
- **Importance** :F&O trading aids in risk management and facilitates leveraged trading for potential higher returns. Moreover, F&O markets are pretty transparent and liquid.
- **Concerns** : F&O trading may lead to losses due to changes in market conditions. Leverage can also increase the potential losses.
  - ♦ In addition, there is counterparty risk, where parties fail to fulfil the contract.

Source: IE

