

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS (DCA)

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CREAMY LAYER PRINCIPLE NOT APPLICABLE ON SCs AND STs: SC

Context

- The Union Cabinet categorically asserted that the principle of **creamy layer** does not apply to reservations for Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs).

About

- SC Judgement:** Recently, a seven-judge Bench of the Supreme Court had ruled in a 6:1 majority judgment that State governments were permitted to sub-classify communities within the SC list based on empirical data, to grant quotas within the reserved category to uplift those who belong to the more underprivileged castes.
 - A separate but concurring judgment Justice B.R. Gavai said that States must evolve a policy for identifying the 'creamy layer' even among the SC and ST categories and deny them the benefit of reservations.
- Government's Response:** Law Minister told the Lok Sabha that the 'creamy layer' principle was not part of the Supreme Court's recent judgement on sub-categorisation within the SC quota.

Reservation in India

- As per existing instructions, reservation is provided to Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs) and Other Backward Classes (OBCs) at the rate of **15%, 7.5% and 27%, respectively**, in case of direct recruitment on all India basis by open competition.
 - In direct recruitment on all India basis, other than by open competition, the percentage fixed is 16.66% for SCs, 7.5% for STs and 25.84% for OBCs.
- The **Constitution (103rd Amendment) Act 2019** enables the State (i.e., both the Central and State Governments) to provide **reservation to the Economically Weaker Sections (EWS) of the society**.
- Since the 1992 order, several states have passed laws breaching the 50% ceiling, including Haryana, Telangana, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh and Maharashtra.
 - Laws made by many of these states have either stayed or are facing legal challenges.

What is the 50% Rule?

- The Supreme Court has historically maintained that reservations, whether in jobs or education, **should not exceed 50%** of the total seats/posts.
- Mandal Commission Case:** In **1992**, SC in the **Indra Sawhney case** had ruled that reservation should **not exceed 50%**, barring certain **extraordinary situations**.
 - Such as to provide reservations to communities which hail from far flung areas of the country and have been kept out of the mainstream of the society. This is not a geographical test but a social one.
- EWS Judgement:** The Supreme Court upheld the **103rd Constitutional Amendment** which provides for **10% additional reservations** to the EWS.
 - This means, for the time being, that the 50% limit applies only to non-EWS reservations, and States are permitted to reserve a total of **60%** of the seats/posts including EWS reservations.

Creamy Layer Principle

- It is a concept used to ensure that reservations in educational institutions and government jobs, are extended to those **who are economically and socially disadvantaged within a certain group**.
 - It aims to **prevent the more affluent or advantaged members** of a reserved category from availing themselves of these benefits.
- Origin:** The concept was first articulated by the Supreme Court of India in the **Indra Sawhney case (1992)**, also known as the Mandal Commission case.
 - The Court's ruling emphasized that within the OBC (Other Backward Classes) category, those who are relatively more privileged should not benefit from reservations.
- Criteria:** The "creamy layer" is determined based on various criteria, including income and education levels.
- Impact:** By applying the creamy layer principle, the government aims to make its affirmative action policies more effective and equitable, ensuring that those who are most in need receive the support intended for them.

Constitutional Provisions

- **Article 16:** It provides for **equality of opportunity** for all citizens but as an exception the State can provide for reservation of appointments or posts in favour of any backward class that is not adequately represented in the state services.
- **Article 16 (4A):** Provides that the State can make any provision for reservation in matters of promotion in favour of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes if they are not adequately represented in the services under the State.
- **Article 335:** It recognises that special measures need to be adopted for considering the claims of SCs and STs to services and posts, in order to bring them at par.
- **103 Amendment of the Constitution of India:** Introduced **10% reservation** for Economically Weaker Sections (EWS) of society by amending Article 15 and Article 16 of the Constitution.

Arguments in Favour of Reservation

- **Historical Injustice:** It is seen as a corrective measure to address the historical injustices and discrimination faced by certain communities.
- **Social Equality:** It is designed to promote social equality and reduce disparities by providing opportunities for education, employment, and representation.
- **Constitutional Mandate:** The Constitution of India, under Articles 15(4) and 16(4), empowers the state to make special provisions for the advancement of socially and educationally backward classes of citizens.
- **Social Upliftment:** Reservation is viewed as a tool for the social upliftment of marginalized communities, providing them with opportunities to break free from the cycle of poverty, illiteracy, and social exclusion.

Argument Against Reservation

- **Merit:** Critics argue that individuals should be selected for educational and job opportunities based on their abilities, skills, and qualifications rather than their caste or social background.
- **Reverse Discrimination:** Reservation policies lead to reverse discrimination, as individuals from certain privileged groups may face disadvantages in terms of educational and employment opportunities.
- **Creamy Layer:** The concept of the “creamy layer” refers to the economically better-off individuals within reserved categories.
 - ♦ Benefits should be targeted at those who genuinely need assistance, and there should be a reconsideration of the criteria for

determining eligibility.

- **Division in Society:** Some argue that reservation policies reinforce social divisions by categorizing people based on their caste or community.

Conclusion

- The Supreme Court has established a provision that **states must collect quantifiable data** on the **representation** of SCs and STs in a particular cadre of service and form a judgement regarding the inadequacy of representation based on that data.
- **Positive discrimination** as represented can lead to important advances in societies along with deep-seated social inequalities, but such systems **must be periodically examined and redesigned.**
- The most obvious reform would be to reduce the number of relatively wealthy beneficiaries.

Source: TH

COTTON CULTIVATION IN INDIA

Context

- As per the Cotton Association of India, **India's cotton cultivation** has **declined** and will be down by 10% to 12% this season compared with the last one.

About

- It is due to the **falling crop yields per hectare.**
 - ♦ The area under cotton last year was 127 lakh hectares. This has dropped to 108 lakh hectares so far this year.
- **The crop size has reduced** in the northern region (Punjab, Rajasthan, etc) by almost **35%** because of pink bollworm infestation.
- While in Telangana, it has shrunk by 7% and in Gujarat, the area reduced by 13% to 15% as farmers shifted to groundnut and tur dhal cultivation.
- The carry forward stock for the next season could be nil. Further, the government has increased the Minimum Support Price for raw cotton by 500 per quintal for 2024-2025 season.
 - ♦ This is likely to **raise cotton prices next season**, which begins in October.

Cotton Industry in India

- Cotton is one of the **most important commercial crops** cultivated in India and accounts for around **23% of the total global cotton production.**
- **Employment:** It plays a major role in sustaining the livelihood of an estimated 6 million cotton

farmers and 40-50 million people engaged in related activities such as cotton processing & trade.

- **The Indian Textile Industry** consumes a diverse range of fibres and yarns and the ratio of use of **cotton to non - cotton fibres** in India is around **60:40** whereas it is 30:70 in the rest of the world.
- Cotton is also one of the largest contributors to **India's net foreign exchange** by way of exports in the form of raw cotton, intermediate products such as yarn and fabrics to ultimate finished products in the form of garments, made ups and knitwear.
- Due to its economic importance in India, it is also termed as **"White-Gold"**.

Production and Consumption of Cotton in India

- India is the only country which **grows all four species of cotton** G. Arboreum & G. Herbaceum (Asian cotton), G. Barbadense (Egyptian cotton) and G. Hirsutum (American Upland cotton).
- Majority of cotton production comes from **9 major cotton growing states**, which are grouped into three diverse agro-ecological zones, as under:
 - ♦ **Northern Zone** - Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan
 - ♦ **Central Zone** - Gujarat, Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh
 - ♦ **Southern Zone** - Telangana, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka.
 - ♦ Apart from the above the cotton is also grown in the state of Odisha and Tamil Nadu.
- India is having **2nd place** in the world with estimated production of 5.84 Million Metric Tonnes during cotton season 2022-23 i.e. 23.83% of world cotton production.
- **India is also the 2nd largest consumer** of cotton in the world with estimated consumption of 22.24% of world cotton consumption.

Climate & Soil Requirement

- Cotton is a **semi-xerophyte**, is grown in tropical & sub tropical conditions.
- A minimum temperature of **15°C** is required for better germination at field conditions.
 - ♦ The optimum temperature for vegetative growth is 21-27°C & it can tolerate temperature to the extent of 43°C but temperature below 21°C is detrimental to the crop.
- Cotton is grown on a **variety of soils** ranging from well drained deep alluvial soils in the north to black clayey soils of varying depth in central

region and in black and mixed black and red soils in the south zone.

- Cotton is semi-tolerant to salinity and sensitive to water logging and thus **prefers well drained soils**.

Major Constraints in Cotton Production

- Nearly 65 percent cotton area is rainfed, mainly in the Central and Southern States.
- Cotton crop is highly prone to pests and diseases.
- Wide fluctuation in cotton prices, inadequate market infrastructure and cotton export policy.
- **Productivity:** While the world average is 800 kg per hectare, it is almost half that in India, at about 480 kg a hectare.
- **Farmer's Income:** Indian farmers earn 90,000 per hectare a season compared with 5 lakhs that their Australian counterparts earn.

Government Initiatives

- **Cotton Corporation of India (CCI):** The CCI plays a crucial role in the cotton industry by procuring and storing cotton, ensuring fair prices, and stabilizing the market. It also helps in the development of cotton marketing infrastructure.
- **Minimum Support Price (MSP):** Every year before the commencement of the Cotton Year (Oct. to Sept.), the Ministry of Agriculture based on the recommendations of Advisory Board viz., Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP) fixes the MSP with a view to give incentives to the Cotton farmers of the country.
- **Mobile App "Cott-Ally":** CCI developed an exclusive mobile app, "Cott-Ally" for cotton farmers in their regional language.
 - ♦ This mobile app also helps CCI to have direct interaction and outreach with the cotton farmers.
- **Branding of Indian Cotton:** Brand name for Indian cotton was launched on the occasion of World Cotton Day as "Kasturi Cotton India" to attain the objective of making India Atmanirbhar and vocal for local in the field of cotton.
 - ♦ Indian cotton has now been endowed with a brand and a logo and as a premium cotton which will represent its' whiteness, softness, purity, luster and uniqueness in the national and international market.
- **Integrated Cotton Development Programme (ICDP):** This program aims to enhance cotton productivity through a comprehensive approach, including better agronomic practices, pest management, and farmer education.

Way Ahead

The future of the cotton industry in India holds significant potential, but realizing it requires addressing several challenges and leveraging opportunities.

- **Sustainable Farming Practices:** Focus on research to improve soil health, water use efficiency, and organic farming methods.
- **Improved Irrigation:** Enhance irrigation infrastructure to support cotton cultivation in areas facing water scarcity.
- **Storage and Processing Facilities:** Invest in modern ginning, spinning, and storage facilities to reduce post-harvest losses and improve quality.
- **Financial Support:** Strengthen financial support mechanisms, including subsidies, insurance, and credit facilities, to enhance farmers' resilience and investment capacity.

Source: TH

NEW TREATMENT REGIMEN FOR DRUG-RESISTANT TB

Context

- India is getting ready to introduce the **BPaL (Bedaquiline, Pretomanid, and Linezolid) regimen** for all multi/extensively drug-resistant tuberculosis (M/XDR-TB) patients.

About Multi Drug Resistant TB

- **Mycobacterium Tuberculosis**, the bacteria that cause tuberculosis (TB) can develop resistance to the antimicrobial drugs used to cure the disease.
- **Multidrug-resistant TB (MDR-TB)** is TB that does **not respond to at least isoniazid and rifampicin**, the 2 most powerful anti-TB drugs.
- Most people with TB are cured by a strictly followed, 6-month drug regimen that is provided to patients with support and supervision.
- **Inappropriate or incorrect use of antimicrobial drugs**, or use of **ineffective formulations** of drugs (such as use of single drugs, poor quality medicines or bad storage conditions), and premature treatment interruption can cause drug resistance, which can then be transmitted, especially in crowded settings such as prisons and hospitals.
- **Extensively drug-resistant TB (XDR-TB)** is a rare type of multidrug-resistant tuberculosis (MDR TB) that is **resistant to isoniazid and rifampin, plus any fluoroquinolone and at least one of three injectable second-line drugs** (i.e., amikacin, kanamycin, or capreomycin).

- It has been reported in 1117 countries worldwide.

BPaL (Bedaquiline, Pretomanid, and Linezolid) Regimen

- **Bedaquiline:** An essential component of the regimen, bedaquiline has proven effective against drug-resistant TB.
- **Pretomanid:** This drug, when combined with bedaquiline and linezolid, forms the BPaL regimen. It's a six-month, all-oral treatment.
- **Linezolid:** Another critical player in the regimen, linezolid complements the other drugs.

Why Is This Significant?

- BPaL Regimen has shown promising results in countries like **Pakistan, South Africa, and Ukraine**.
- It's a game-changer because it significantly **shortens treatment duration**. Previously, patients endured 18 to 24 months of treatment; now, BPaL brings it down to **around six months by taking three tablets a day**.

Impact

- The move to BPaL should improve treatment outcomes and benefit thousands of patients.
- **India** currently has a **56% treatment success rate for MDR/RR-TB cases** and **48% for XDR-TB cases**. BPaL aims to boost these numbers.

Affordability

- The **cost breakdown** for BPaL (Bedaquiline, Pretomanid, Linezolid, and sometimes Moxifloxacin) is encouraging. The price is US\$426, making it more accessible.

What's Next?

- The focus now shifts to introducing **delamanid-based short oral regimens for children** and those who can't tolerate bedaquiline or linezolid.

Tuberculosis (TB)

- It is an infectious disease that most often affects the lungs and is caused by the bacteria *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*.
- It spreads through the air when infected people cough, sneeze or spit.
- It can manifest in two forms: **Latent TB infection** and **Active TB disease**.
 - In **Latent TB infection**, the bacteria are present in the body, but the immune system keeps them in check, and the person does not exhibit symptoms.

- ◆ However, the bacteria can become active later, leading to **active TB disease**, which is characterised by symptoms such as persistent cough, chest pain, weight loss, fatigue, and fever.
- **Symptoms:** prolonged cough (sometimes with blood), chest pain, weakness, fatigue, weight loss, fever, night sweats.
 - ◆ The symptoms people get depend on where in the body TB becomes active. While TB usually affects the lungs, it also affects the kidneys, brain, spine and skin.
- **Treatment:** Tuberculosis is preventable and curable, and treated with antibiotics.
- **TB Vaccine:** The **Bacillus Calmette-Guérin (BCG) vaccine** remains the only licensed vaccine against TB; it provides moderate protection against **severe forms of TB (TB meningitis)** in infants and young children.

India's Burden of TB

- India accounts for around 27% of TB cases worldwide – which is the world's highest country-wise TB burden.
- In India TB kills an estimated 480,000 people every year or over 1,400 patients every day.
- Additionally, the country also has more than a million 'missing' TB cases annually, which are not notified.
- India's aim to eliminate TB by 2025.

Steps Taken by Government of India to Eliminate TB

- **Revised National Tuberculosis Control Program (RNTCP)**
- **National Tuberculosis Elimination Program (NTEP):** National Strategic Plan (2017-25) for **Ending TB by 2025.**
- **Pradhan Mantri TB Mukh Bharat Abhiyan (PMTBMBA)** (additional nutritional, diagnostic and vocational support)
- **Universal Drug Susceptibility Testing (DST)** (to provide universal access to drug susceptibility testing, helping to identify drug-

Source: TH

'CLEAN PLANT PROGRAMME' TO BOOST HORTICULTURE SECTOR

In News

- The Cabinet approved the Clean Plant Programme (CPP) with a budget of Rs 1,766 crore.

About 'Clean Plant Programme'

- It is part of the Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture (MIDH).
- It was announced in the Budget Speech by the Finance Minister in February 2023.
- It seeks to set new standards for excellence and sustainability in horticulture.
- It will be executed by the National Horticulture Board in collaboration with the Indian Council of Agricultural Research.
- **Components :**
 - ◆ **Clean Plant Centres (CPCs):** For developing and providing clean planting materials.
 - Nine state-of-the-art CPCs will be established across India for advanced diagnostics and virus-free planting material
 - ◆ **Certification and Legal Framework:** To ensure quality and compliance.
 - Implementation of a robust certification system under the Seeds Act 1966 for accountability and traceability.
 - ◆ **Enhanced Infrastructure:** To support the program's implementation.
 - Support for large-scale nurseries to develop infrastructure for efficient multiplication of clean planting material.
- **Benefits:** It aims to enhance the quality and productivity of fruit crops in India.
 - ◆ Provides access to virus-free and high-quality planting materials.
 - ◆ Expected to improve crop yields and farmer incomes.
 - ◆ Strengthens India's position as a global exporter, expanding market opportunities and increasing international trade share.
 - ◆ Supports Mission LiFE and One Health initiatives.

Overview of Horticulture Sector in India

- It has emerged as a vital component of the agricultural economy, contributing significantly to the nation's GDP and providing employment to millions.
- With diverse agro-climatic conditions, India is well-suited for the cultivation of a wide variety of horticultural crops, including fruits, vegetables, flowers, spices, and medicinal plants.
- The horticulture production in the country in 2023-24 (Second Advance Estimates) is estimated to be about 352.23 Million Tonnes, a decrease of about 32.51 Lakh Tonnes (0.91%) over 2022-23 (Final Estimates).

- Increase in production of Fruits, Honey, Flowers, Plantation Crops, Spices and Aromatics & Medicinal Plants is seen over 2023-24 (Final Estimates) whereas decrease in Vegetables.
- **Global Leadership:** India is a world leader in the production of several fruits including mango, banana, guava, papaya, sapota, pomegranate, lime, and aonla.
 - ♦ India is the second-largest producer of fruits and vegetables globally.
 - ♦ Dominates in the production of spices, coconut, and cashew nut.

Importance

- It provides **raw materials** for various industries, including food processing, pharmaceuticals, and cosmetics, thereby generating substantial employment opportunities
- It plays a significant role in the Indian economy by **ensuring nutritional security**, providing rural **employment, diversifying farm** activities, and enhancing **farmers' income**.
- The horticulture sector contributes about **28% to the agricultural GDP of India**

Challenges

- **Infrastructure:** Inadequate cold storage and transportation facilities lead to significant post-harvest losses.
- **Market Access:** Farmers often face difficulties in accessing markets and getting fair prices for their produce.
- **Climate Change:** Erratic weather patterns and climate change pose a threat to horticultural production.

Government Initiatives

- **Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture (MIDH):** It aims for the holistic development of horticulture by increasing area, production, and post-harvest infrastructure.
 - ♦ MIDH is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme implemented in States/UTs since 2014-15.
- **Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY):** State governments' horticulture development projects are also supported under RKVY.
- The launch of the **National Horticulture Mission** has significantly boosted production and productivity.
 - ♦ Focuses on the development of horticulture through technology promotion, extension, and post-harvest management
- **Horticulture Cluster Development Programme:** Launched to promote integrated and market-led

development of horticulture clusters to enhance global competitiveness

Conclusion and Way Forward

- The horticulture sector in India holds immense potential for driving economic growth and improving livelihoods.
- With supportive government policies, technological innovations, and a focus on sustainable practices, the sector is poised for significant advancements in the coming years.
- There is a need for **adoption of modern technologies** such as precision farming, protected cultivation, and drip irrigation can enhance productivity and sustainability.

Source: IE

THE RAILWAYS (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2024

Context

- Union Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw introduced the Railways (Amendment) Bill, 2024 in the Lok Sabha,

Background

- The railway network was established as a branch of the **Public Works Department** before Independence.
 - ♦ When the network expanded, **Indian Railways Act, 1890** was enacted to enable proper functioning of different railway entities.
- The railways were separated from the Public Works Department and the **Railway Board Act was enacted in 1905**.
- The **Railways Act, 1989** was enacted by repealing the Indian Railways Act, 1890.
- However, the Railway Board continued to function through an executive decision without any statutory sanction.

Key Features of the Bill

- All the provisions in the **Indian Railway Board Act, 1905** are proposed to be incorporated in the **Railways Act, 1989** through this Bill.
- The Bill **seeks to grant statutory powers to the Railway Board** and enhance the functioning and independence of the body.
- **The expenditure of Railway Board** will continue to be met from yearly Budgetary provision under revenue Budget of Indian Railways as being done presently.

- ♦ The Bill does not propose to create any new Board or body resulting in additional financial implication.
- The Bill introduces **Section 24A** into the Railways Act 1989. This section allows the Central Government to sanction the running, extension or diversion of superfast trains through Thawe Junction.
- The provisions regarding the terms and conditions of service of the Chairman, Members of the Board, Secretary and the officers and other employees' are already in place and no change is proposed in the proposed Bill.

Significance

- The current Bill proposes to simplify the legal framework and will reduce the need to refer to two laws.
- The Bill, seeks to amend the Railways Act, 1989 with a view to implement the proposal of **North-Eastern Railway** to augment the train services to **cater the need of the neglected Thawe Junction** which is a demand of the various districts of the State of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar.

Source: TH

EIGHT RAILWAY PROJECTS WITH FOCUS ON EASTERN STATES

Context

- The Union Cabinet approved **eight new railway projects** at an estimated cost of **₹24,657 crore**.
 - ♦ It also approved the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana-Urban (PMAYU) 2.0

About the Railway Project

- The railway projects will provide connectivity, facilitate ease of traveling, minimize logistics costs, reduce oil imports and lower carbon dioxide emissions.
- With focus on the **development of Eastern states under Purvodaya plan**, the projects cover 14 districts in the seven States of **Odisha, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Jharkhand, Bihar, Telangana and West Bengal**.
- Expected to be completed by 2030-31, the project will increase the existing network of the railways by **900 km**.

Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana-Urban (PMAYU) 2.0

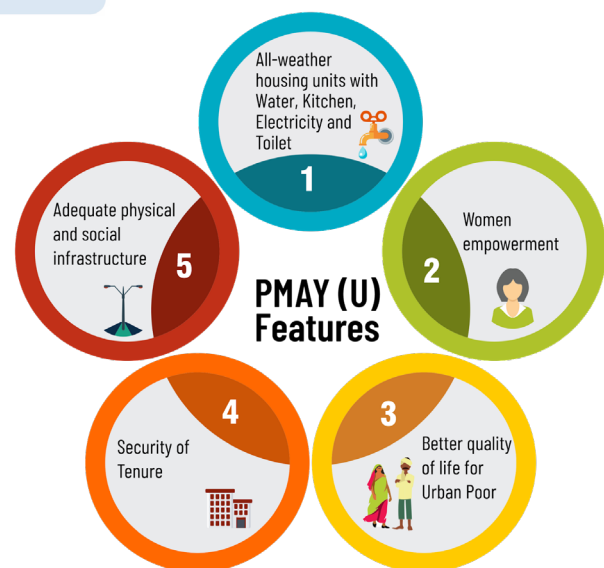
- Under Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana-Urban (PMAYU) 2.0 financial assistance will be provided to one crore urban poor and middle-class

families to construct, purchase or rent a house at affordable cost.

- A total government **subsidy of ₹2.30 lakh crore** will be provided under the scheme which will have a total investment of **₹10 lakh crore**.
- Under PMAY-U, 1.18 crore houses have been sanctioned while more than 85.5 lakh houses have already been constructed.

What is PMAY-U?

- **The Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA)** launched the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana – Urban (PMAY-U) in 2015, as a flagship Mission of the Government of India.
- **Objective:** It addresses urban housing shortage among the Economically Weaker Section (EWS)/ Low Income Group (LIG) category including the slum dwellers by ensuring a pucca house to eligible urban households.
- **Components** of the scheme are as;
 - ♦ In-situ Slum Redevelopment (ISSR)
 - ♦ Credit Linked Subsidy Scheme (CLSS)
 - ♦ Affordable Housing in Partnership (AHP)
 - ♦ Beneficiary-led Individual House Construction/ Enhancement (BLC-N/ BLC-E)
- **Implementation period:** The scheme was earlier from 25.06.2015 to 31.03.2022. Now it has been extended up to 31.12.2024, except Credit Linked Subsidy Scheme (CLSS) vertical, to complete all the houses sanctioned under the scheme.



Status of the PMAY

- Around 83% of the houses to be constructed under PMAY-U are not meant for the urban landless poor, but rather for families having access to capital and land.

- The slum rehabilitation scheme within PMAY-U has sanctioned only 2.96 lakh homes.
- Under PMAY-G more than 2.94 crore houses have already been sanctioned to the eligible beneficiaries by the States/UTs and over 2.55 crore houses have already been completed as on 01.02.2024.

Source: ET

NEWS IN SHORT

KAKORI TRAIN ACTION CENTENARY FESTIVAL

Context

- Recently, the Uttar Pradesh government has inaugurated the '**Kakori Train Action Centenary Festival**' in Lucknow marking the **100th anniversary of the Kakori Train Action** and to educate youths and schoolchildren.

About Kakori Train Action

- The train robbery at **Kakori, near Lucknow** was the **Hindustan Republican Association (HRA's)** first major action, in **August 1925**.
- The **Number 8 Down Train**, chugging between **Shahjahanpur and Lucknow**, carried more than just passengers. It bore **treasury bags, laden with taxes collected from Indians**, destined for the British government's coffers.
- It was led by **Ram Prasad Bismil and Ashfaqullah Khan**, who decided to intercept this moving symbol of colonial exploitation.
- As the train approached Kakori, one of the revolutionaries, **Rajendra Lahiri**, pulled the emergency chain, halting the locomotive, and looted only what they believed rightfully belonged to their compatriots—about 8000.

Objectives of the Robbery

- **Funding the Revolution:** HRA, later known as the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (HSRA), needed resources. It was aimed to provide the necessary funds for procuring weapons and sustaining their struggle.
- **Protest Against Taxation:** The British administration heavily taxed Indians. The Kakori revolutionaries sought to highlight this injustice by targeting the very tax money being transported.
- **Creating Awareness:** By robbing the train, they aimed to garner public attention and create a positive image of the HRA among fellow Indians.

Aftermath

- The British administration launched an intense manhunt, arresting several revolutionaries associated with the HRA.
- Among them were **Ram Prasad Bismil (arrested in Shahjahanpur)** and **Ashfaqullah Khan (arrested in Delhi)**. In total, forty people were apprehended across India.

Source: News On AIR

PROTECTION OF CIVIL RIGHTS ACT, 1955

Context

- Adivasis have been included as **persons professing the Hindu religion** in the **Protection of Civil Rights Act, 1955**, the government told the Parliament.
 - ♦ The Minister's response comes amid the ongoing debate over whether Adivasis, or tribal people, of the country can be categorised as practising Hindus.

Protection of Civil Rights Act, 1955

- It was designed to enforce the fundamental rights guaranteed by the Constitution of India, ensuring that SCs and STs could enjoy equal treatment and opportunities.
- **Prohibition of Discrimination:** The Act made it illegal to discriminate against individuals based on their caste in various aspects of public life, including access to public places, employment, and educational institutions.
- **Penalties:** It specified penalties for individuals and entities that engaged in discriminatory practices or violations of the Act. This included fines and imprisonment for those found guilty.
- **Enforcement:** The Act empowered the state to take necessary steps to enforce its provisions, including the establishment of special authorities or officers to address grievances and oversee implementation.
- **Amendments:** Over time, the Act has been amended and supplemented by other legislation to strengthen the protection of civil rights and address emerging issues.
 - ♦ The most notable among these is the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989, which further strengthens provisions against discrimination and violence.

Source: TH

PARLIAMENTARY SESSION ADJOURNED SINE DIE

Context

- The Lok Sabha was **adjourned sine die** one sitting ahead of the scheduled end of the session.

About

- The current session of Parliament was scheduled to end on August 12 but Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla adjourned the **House sine die (for an indefinite period)**.
 - Similarly, the Rajya Sabha was also adjourned sine die.
- During this session, the **Finance Bill** was passed, and a bill to amend the Waqf law was introduced and referred to a joint committee amid protests.
- The productivity of the House was above **130 percent**.
- There were a total of **twelve government Bills** that were introduced in the monsoon session and four Bills were passed.
 - The bills which were passed are as follows:** The Finance Bill, 2024, The Appropriation Bill, 2024, The Jammu and Kashmir Appropriation Bill, 2024; and The Bharatiya Vayuyan Vidheyak, 2024.
- Parliament holds three Sessions in a year:**
 - Budget Session—February-May;
 - Monsoon Session—July-September; and
 - Winter Session—November-December.

Source: TM

SILICA DUST

Context

- The researchers have found that silicosis could become as big a health problem as exposure to asbestos.

Silica Dust

- Silica dust or silica crystals, are found in soil, sand, concrete, mortar, granite and artificial stone.
 - When the **materials are cut or drilled, crystalline silica is released** into the air as a very fine dust.
- When respirable crystalline silica (RCS) is breathed in, it can cause a condition known as silicosis.
 - Silicosis** is a respiratory disease which causes a hardening of the lungs. This can be disabling or even fatal.

Exposure limit

- The United Kingdom's occupational limit for silica dust exposure is **0.1 mg/m³**. It is in line with most European countries, including France, Austria, and Switzerland.
 - Researchers have proposed the exposure limits to **0.05 mg/m³**, which is in-line with US standards.
- In India the prescribed exposure limit (PEL) for free silica dust is **0.15 mg/m³**.

Source: IE

NO-CONFIDENCE MOTION AGAINST VICE-PRESIDENT

In News

50 Opposition MPs have signed a resolution for a no-confidence motion against Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankhar

- The Opposition accuses the Chairman of making personal remarks against members, violating Rule 238(2) of the Rajya Sabha, which prohibits personal charges against members.

About

- Constitutional Basis:** The resolution is being pursued under **Article 67(B) of the Indian Constitution**.
 - Article 67(B)** of the Indian Constitution allows the removal of the Vice-President by a Rajya Sabha resolution passed by an effective majority, and agreed upon by the Lok Sabha with a simple majority.
- Article 67(B) requires at least fourteen days' notice before moving the resolution.
- Historical Significance:** If successful, this motion will be a historic first in Indian parliamentary history.
 - The no-confidence motion against a sitting Vice President represents an extraordinary step, reflecting the depth of the current political discord.
 - Historically, such motions have been rare and usually pertain to the Prime Minister or other high-ranking officials.

About No-confidence motion

- It is a parliamentary motion that signifies that the elected government no longer has the confidence of the majority of the members of the Lok Sabha, the lower house of India's Parliament.

- The primary purpose of a no-confidence motion is to test the strength and stability of the ruling government.
 - ♦ If the motion is passed, it indicates that the government has lost the support of the majority and must resign.
- They have been a part of India's parliamentary history since independence.
 - ♦ They serve as a crucial mechanism for ensuring accountability and transparency in governance¹.
- **Procedure:** Any member of the Lok Sabha can introduce a no-confidence motion. It requires the support of at least 50 members to be admitted for discussion

Source:TH

LAND PORTS AUTHORITY OF INDIA (LPAI)

Context

- The Union government of India constituted a high-level committee, Which constituted a member from the Land Ports Authority of India, to monitor the situation along the Indo-Bangladesh border.

Land Ports Authority of India (LPAI)

- It is a statutory body established under the **Land Ports Authority of India Act, 2010** and working under the **Ministry of Home Affairs**.
- LPAI is entrusted with the task of **building land ports on India's borders** and providing state of the art infrastructure facilities to facilitate seamless and efficient movement of cargo and passengers.

Source: TOI

ANTARCTICA'S DEEP-WINTER HEATWAVE

Context

- For the second time in just two years, Antarctica is experiencing a record-breaking heatwave during its winter season.

What's Causing Antarctica's Deep-Winter Heatwave?

- **Weakening Polar Vortex:** The Polar vortex is a band of **cold air and low-pressure systems** that usually **swirls around the poles** of the Earth in the **stratosphere**. It typically remains strong and

stable during the southern hemisphere's winter, effectively trapping cold air over Antarctica.

- ♦ But this year, **large-scale atmospheric waves** (think periodic disturbances in the fields of atmospheric variables) disturbed the vortex, allowing trapped cold air to escape and warmer air to sneak in.
- ♦ As this warmer air descended from the upper atmosphere, it led to the temperature surge in the region.
- ♦ A weakened southern hemisphere vortex is a rare event, occurring roughly once every two decades on average.
- **Antarctic Sea Ice Reduction:** In June, the sea ice coverage hit its second-lowest level ever for that time of year (just a smidge more than what we saw in June 2023, which was the lowest ever).
 - ♦ **Sea Ice acts like nature's reflective shield.** Its bright, white surface bounces more sunlight (solar energy) back into space than liquid water does. So, when the sea **ice shrinks, more heat gets absorbed, and temperatures rise.**
 - ♦ **Moisture from the Indian Ocean: Convection and tropical cyclone** activity along with the increasingly **wavy jet stream** (the fast-moving ribbon of air in the upper atmosphere) in the Indian Ocean played a significant role.
- **Fallout and Concerns**
 - **Melting Ice Sheets:** Warmer temperatures mean increased melting of ice sheets and glaciers. It contributes to rising sea levels globally, affecting the coastal communities.
 - ♦ The Antarctic Ice Sheet, a glacier covering 98% of the Antarctic continent, holds more than 60% of the world's total freshwater.
 - **Ecosystem Disruption:** Antarctic ecosystems are finely tuned to extreme cold. A sudden heatwave can throw everything off balance, affecting everything from penguins to krill populations.
 - **Feedback Loops:** As ice melts, darker ocean water is exposed. Dark surfaces absorb more heat, leading to further warming—a vicious cycle.

Source: IE

LANDSLIDE EARLY WARNING SYSTEMS (LEWS) IN INDIA

In News

India launched its first regional early warning system for rain-induced landslides

About LEWS

- It is developed by the Geological Survey of India (GSI), and is designed to predict the likelihood of landslides based on rainfall data.
- The **National Landslide Forecasting Centre** started by the GSI.
- **Current Coverage:** Daily forecasts are provided for Kalimpong, Darjeeling, and the Nilgiris.
 - ♦ It will Extend coverage to other areas by 2030.

Function

- Prediction: Assess likelihood of landslides.
- Dissemination: Share information to mitigate impacts.
- Response: Enable timely action based on forecasts.

Types:

- **Regional Systems:** Forecasts over larger areas but cannot pinpoint specific slopes.
- **Slope-Specific Systems:** More detailed, targeting individual slopes.

International Comparisons:

- **Hong Kong:** Effective communication through door-to-door campaigns.
- **Other Countries:** Italy, the US, and Japan have developed advanced systems for debris flows.

Source:DTE

