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AUSTRALIA TO BAN SOCIAL MEDIA FOR CHILDREN

In News

- The Australian government has announced plans to introduce **legislation restricting social media access for children** under 16, aiming to mitigate **potential harms associated with online platforms.**

Social Media

- **Social media** refers to **online platforms** where people create, share, and exchange information and ideas. **Examples include** Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn.

Harmful effects of social media on children

- **Mental Health Issues:** Increases anxiety, depression, and risk of cyberbullying.

- **Sleep Disturbance:** Poor sleep quality and screen addiction.

- **Academic Impact** Reduces focus, leading to lower grades and procrastination.

- **Social Skills Decline:** Less face-to-face interaction weakens social skills.

- **Body Image Issues:** Causes body dissatisfaction and self-esteem problems.

- **Privacy Risks**: Exposure to inappropriate content and data privacy threats.

- **Materialism:** Influencer culture promotes unrealistic lifestyles and self doubts.

Social Media Regulation in India

- In India, social media regulation is governed by the **Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021** and **Digital Personal Data Protection Act (DPDPA) 2023.**

IT Rules 2021:

- **Grievance Redressal Mechanism:** A three-level grievance redressal system has been established, allowing users to report concerns. Each platform must respond to complaints within a specified time frame.

- **Disclosure of Origin:** Social media platforms are required to reveal the first originator of a controversial or harmful message when requested by a court or authorized government agency. This rule helps track the spread of misinformation or harmful content.

- **Chief Compliance Officer:** All social media intermediaries must appoint a Chief Compliance Officer (CCO), a resident of India, to ensure the platform's adherence to local laws and respond to legal requirements.

- **Voluntary Verification:** Significant social media platforms must provide an option for users to voluntarily verify their accounts, promoting trustworthiness on the platform.

Digital Personal Data Protection Act (DPDPA) 2023:

- **Section 9:** Governs children's data under age 18 with three conditions:

- **Parental Consent:** Requires verifiable consent from parents/guardians.

- **Well-being Focus:** Data processing must prioritize child well-being.

- **No Targeted Advertising:** Restricts tracking and behavioral advertising targeting children.

Global Social Media Regulations for Children

- **China:** Restricts daily internet use based on age, with limitations ranging from 40 minutes to two hours per day, and bans internet use for minors from 10 PM to 6 AM.

- **European Union:** Proposed a ban on internet access without parental consent for children under 16. Imposes strict data privacy controls, setting a benchmark for user data protection worldwide.

- **South Korea:** Enacted the Cinderella Law in 2011, which banned children under 16 from online gaming from midnight to 6 AM, aimed at reducing internet addiction. The law was abolished in 2021.

- **France:** Requires parental authorization for children under 15 to access social media.

  - Earnings of influencers under 16 are protected from parental access until the child reaches 16.

Issues with Banning Social Media for Children

- **Enforcement Difficulties:** Digital age restrictions are hard to enforce; children can find ways to bypass them.

- **Parental Burden:** Age restrictions place an added burden on parents, especially where digital literacy is low, making it difficult for them to monitor children's activities effectively.

- **Freedom of Expression:** Banning social media restricts children's rights to express themselves and access diverse information.

- **Benefits of Social Media:** Provides community support, promotes learning, and keeps children informed about global issues and trends.

Way Ahead

- **Enhanced Age Verification Technologies:** Implement advanced, reliable age-verification tools that can accurately restrict children's access based on regulatory requirements.

- **Parental Involvement and Digital Literacy Programs:** Introduce widespread digital literacy programs for parents and guardians, especially in regions with low digital awareness.
- **Stricter Data Privacy and Content Moderation Policies:** Reinforce data privacy for minors by updating policies to ensure their personal information remains protected.
- **Integrated Digital Literacy in School Curricula:** Schools can play a crucial role by integrating digital literacy into the curriculum, helping children understand the ethical and safe use of social media.
- **Emphasis on Mental Health Support:** Develop support systems within schools and communities to address the mental health impacts of social media use on children.

Source: LM

THREE-PHASE APPROACH TOWARDS ENHANCING JOINTNESS ACROSS THE ARMED FORCES

Context
- Army chief General outlined the three-phase approach towards enhancing jointness across the armed forces, at a time when the military is ready to present its Theaterisation model to the decision-makers.

Background
- **Theaterisation,** which requires **jointness and integration**, is a long-awaited reform for the best use of the military's resources to fight future wars.
- **The Theaterisation model** being pursued involves raising;
  - The China-centric northern Theatre command in Lucknow,
  - The Pakistan-centric western Theatre command in Jaipur, and
  - The maritime Theater command in Thiruvananthapuram.

The Three-phase approach
- **Jointness 1.0:** It focused on integrating acquisition planning, courses, and operational joint logistic nodes, with three fully operational and four more in progress.
- **Jointness 2.0:** The progress was made in aligning doctrines, standard operating procedures and creating joint maintenance organizations for major platforms.
- **Jointness 3.0:** The army aims to expand common operational planning process, tech sharing, and resources like UAVs and ISR (intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance) systems.

Integrated Theatre Command
- It is a unified command in which the **resources of all the services are unified** under a single commander looking at a geographical theater.
- The commander of a joint command will have the freedom to train and equip his command as per the objective and will have logistics of all the services at his beckoning.
  - The three services will retain their independent identities as well.
- A committee headed by **Lieutenant General D B Shekatkar** had recommended three commands: Northern, for China; Western, for the Pakistan border' and Southern, for maritime security.

Integrated vs Jointness
- **Jointness** means that while the 3 Services progress and develop in their respective spheres with their independent identity, they function together and so coordinate their operations in war.
- **Integrated Commands**, on the other hand, seek to merge individual service identities to achieve a composite and cohesive whole.

Advantages
- **Better acclimatization of troops** in the given battlespace for operational efficiency.
- **Training needs and administrative requirements** of the troops can be better understood for specialization and conducting drills.
- **Quick mobilization of troops** is possible for the high-intensity war-like situation.
- **The allocation of military hardware** can become theater specific and result in optimisation of the resources.
- **Unified command** will allow for prompt and precise decision making and remove hierarchical redundancies.

Challenges in Implementation
- **Difference of opinion among three forces:** There are differences among the three forces on scope, structure, and control of the commands.
- **Transfer of Resources:** There is a contention on the kind of war-fighting equipment that will be deployed under a single command and ambiguity surrounding the transfer of weapons, platforms, and resources from one theater command to another.
- **Curriculum Framework:** In terms of preparing the educational bedrock for military personnel to

serve in theater commands, the country seems to be behind the curve.

Concluding remarks

- The three-phase approach to enhancing jointness lays a strong foundation for creating a cohesive and efficient command structure.

- However, successful implementation requires overcoming inter-service differences, revising educational frameworks, and ensuring robust resource allocation mechanisms.

Source: HT

AIRSHIPS FOR CLIMATE CHANGE

Context

- Climate change is bringing back the idea of airships as viable alternatives for transportation and environmental observation.

What are Airships?

- **Airships are lighter-than-air aircraft** that are lifted by gas with a density lower than atmospheric gasses.

    - This principle also operates in **helium balloons.**

- **The structure** of an airship often includes an envelope (or balloon) filled with the lifting gas and a **gondola or cabin** where the crew, passengers, or cargo are housed.

- Early airships used **hydrogen** as the lifting gas, since it was cheap and the lightest existing gas. But hydrogen was also extremely flammable.

    - Most **modern airships use helium**, which is non-combustible.

Challenges

- **Buoyancy Management:** A major hurdle for airships as cargo vehicles is managing buoyancy changes when loading or unloading freight.

- **Speed:** Airships are considerably slower than airplanes, which limits their use for time-sensitive transportation.

- **Helium Scarcity:** Helium is a non-renewable resource primarily obtained from natural gas extraction.

Need for Airships in Modern Times

- **Low Emissions:** Airships offer an inherently eco-friendly mode of transport as they do not burn fossil fuels for lift.

- **Freight Efficiency:** With a superior lift-to-drag ratio, airships can transport large amounts of cargo with significantly less fuel, offering a sustainable alternative to fuel-guzzling jets

- **Remote Accessibility:** Airships have the unique ability to access remote areas without requiring extensive infrastructure, such as runways or roads.

Source: IE

INDIA SHOULD BE PART OF RCEP AND CPTPP

Context

- Niti Aayog CEO stated that India should join the **Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP)** and **Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP)** trade blocs.

Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP)

- **The RCEP bloc** comprises;

    - **10 ASEAN group members:** Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Singapore, Thailand, the Philippines, Laos and Vietnam and

    - **Five FTA partners**: China, Japan, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand.

- These RCEP countries account for about **30%** of the global GDP and **30%** of the world population.

- **India pulled out of the RCEP in 2019** after entering negotiations in 2013, in view that reduced customs duty would result in a flood of imports from China and trade deficit with other RCEP nations.

    - The landmark agreement was signed in **November 2020.**

Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP)

- CPTPP is a free trade bloc **spanning five continents**, made up of Pacific rim countries of Canada, Mexico, Peru, Chile, New Zealand, Australia, Brunei, Singapore, Malaysia, Vietnam, the UK and Japan.

- The pact requires countries to **eliminate or significantly reduce tariffs** and make strong commitments to opening services and investment markets.

- It also has rules addressing competition, intellectual property rights and protections for foreign companies.

Need for Joining the trade blocs

- **Capturing the 'China Plus One' Opportunity:** As global businesses look to diversify beyond China, countries like Vietnam, Indonesia, Malaysia, Turkey, and Mexico have already capitalized on this trend.

- ◆ India has the potential to emerge as an attractive alternative destination.
- **Boosting the MSME Sector:** Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) contribute approximately 40% of India's exports.
  - ◆ Integrating into larger trade blocs like RCEP and CPTPP could enhance their market reach and growth prospects.
- **Economic Growth:** The World Bank's India Development Update emphasized that joining RCEP could boost trade, investment, and GDP growth.
- **Trade Expansion:** India's economy, projected to be the third largest by 2027, would benefit from greater integration into global markets, leading to long-term sustainable development.

Challenges of joining these blocs

- **Trade Deficit Concerns:** India's existing trade deficit with China is a major deterrent. In FY2023, bilateral trade with China stood at $118 billion, with a deficit of $85 billion.
- **Impact on Domestic Sectors:** MSMEs and some agriculture sectors will face increased competition from international imports, potentially affecting their viability.
- **ASEAN's trade deficit with China** has jumped from $ 135.6 billion in 2023 from $ 81.7 billion in 2020.

Way Ahead

- **India should adopt a phased approach** to tariff reduction and align its trade policies to be more globally competitive. Ensuring support for vulnerable sectors like MSMEs through subsidies, training, and infrastructure upgrades is needed.
- **Strengthening the manufacturing ecosystem** and enhancing quality standards can help Indian products compete effectively on the global stage.
- **Balanced Trade Negotiations:** While joining RCEP and CPTPP, India must negotiate terms that safeguard its economic interests.
  - ◆ This includes securing provisions that prevent dumping and protect strategic industries.

Source: BS

CSR CONTRIBUTIONS TO AGRICULTURE

In News

- According to the **National Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Portal**, from 2014 to 2023, ₹1.84 lakh crore of CSR funds were disbursed.

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

- It involves companies taking responsibility for their impact on environmental and social well-being, working to improve society and reduce negative impacts.
- **India's CSR Mandate**: India became the first country to legally mandate **Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)** under Section 135 of the Companies Act 2013.
  - ◆ It requires companies to undertake social welfare projects.
  - ◆ It aims to advance sustainable development goals and foster public-private partnerships to drive India's transformation.

Thrust Areas for CSR Initiatives

- **Education**: Investments in schools, scholarships, educational resources, and infrastructure improvements, especially in underserved communities.
- **Health**: Improving healthcare access through hospital construction, mobile clinics, and telemedicine for underserved areas.
- **Employment**: Creating job opportunities, skill training, and inclusive hiring to support marginalized groups.
- **Skill Development**: Programs for technical and vocational training, apprenticeships, and certifications.
- **Sports**: Supporting sports events, building facilities, and promoting participation among youth and marginalized groups.
- **Livelihood**: Enhancing livelihoods with support for income-generating activities, microfinance, and sustainable practices.
- **Environmental Sustainability**: Reducing ecological impact through conservation, eco-friendly practices, and resource management.

Need in Agriculture sector

- Agriculture employs nearly 47% of India's workforce and contributes 16.73% to GDP.
  - ◆ However, challenges include natural resource degradation, stagnant farmer incomes, and climate threats.

CSR Contributions to Agriculture

- Many companies are focusing CSR efforts on climate action and sustainability in agriculture.
- An outlook report showed that 23% of surveyed companies prioritize "environment and sustainability" for CSR.
- CSR funds support agriculture through projects like grain banks, farmer schools, livelihood projects, water conservation, and energy-efficient irrigation.

Main Challenges

- There is no precise way to track CSR funds specifically targeted at agriculture due to a lack of categorization in reporting mechanisms.

- Agricultural sustainability-related CSR activities can fall under 11 sectors listed in Schedule VII of the Companies Act. These categories are broad, making it hard to track agriculture-specific CSR spending.

Future Recommendations

- Developing a sector-specific CSR reporting framework would help address agricultural sustainability needs effectively and support India's sustainable growth and just transition goals.

- To ensure effective funding and impact, agriculture should be specified as a distinct sector in CSR reporting.

- This would enhance targeting, transparency, and assessment of CSR contributions to agriculture.

Source: TH

CENTRES OF EXCELLENCE FOR RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT OF NATIONAL GREEN HYDROGEN MISSION

Context

- Recently, the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE) has invited proposals for setting up 'Centres of Excellence (CoE) under Research and Development (R&D) Scheme' of **'National Green Hydrogen Mission'**.

About the Centres of Excellence for Research and Development on Green Hydrogen

- It is part of the **National Green Hydrogen Mission**, launched to propel India towards a low-carbon economy and enhance energy independence.

- The primary objective is to create world-class 'Centres of Excellence' that will serve as hubs for cutting-edge research, skill development, and knowledge dissemination in the field of Green Hydrogen.

- These centres aim to advance technologies related to the production, storage, and utilisation of Green Hydrogen, thereby accelerating the transition to a sustainable energy future.

> **Green Hydrogen**
>
> - It is generated through the **electrolysis of water**, a process powered by renewable energy sources such as wind, solar, or hydropower.
>
> - It ensures that the hydrogen produced is **free from carbon emissions**, distinguishing it from **grey hydrogen (produced from natural gas)** and **blue hydrogen (produced from natural gas with carbon capture and storage).**

Key Features of the Initiative

- **Integrated Research:** The CoEs will facilitate integrated research covering multiple areas within the Green Hydrogen value chain.
  - It includes innovations in production methods, storage solutions, and utilisation technologies.

- **Collaboration and Partnerships:** The initiative encourages collaboration among various stakeholders, including industry, academia, and government bodies.
  - Public and private entities, research institutions, and universities are expected to form partnerships to submit proposals.

- **Funding and Support:** The government has allocated Rs 100 crores for setting up these centres under the Green Hydrogen Mission.
  - It aims to support the establishment and operationalization of the CoEs, ensuring they have the necessary resources to drive significant advancements in Green Hydrogen technologies.

- **Long-term Goals:** The **National Green Hydrogen Mission**, with an outlay of Rs 19,744 crores up to FY 2029-30, aims to contribute to India's goal of becoming Aatma Nirbhar (self-reliant) through clean energy.
  - The mission is expected to lead to substantial decarbonization of the economy, reduce dependence on fossil fuel imports, and position India as a leader in Green Hydrogen technology and market.

Expected Outcomes

- **Enhance Innovation:** By fostering a collaborative environment, the CoEs will drive innovations that improve process efficiencies and lead to the development of new products.

- **Promote Sustainability:** Advancements in Green Hydrogen technologies will contribute to a significant reduction in carbon emissions, supporting global efforts to combat climate change.

- **Boost Economic Growth:** The initiative will create new opportunities for research and development,

leading to job creation and economic growth in the clean energy sector.

Conclusion

- The Government of India's call for proposals to set up Centres of Excellence for Green Hydrogen R&D marks a pivotal step towards a sustainable and energy-independent future.

- By leveraging the expertise and resources of various stakeholders, these centres will play a crucial role in advancing Green Hydrogen technologies and positioning India as a global leader in clean energy innovation.

Source: PIB

NEWS IN SHORT

INTERNATIONAL SEABED AUTHORITY (ISA)

In News

- Union Minister of State of Earth Sciences felicitated trainees nominated by the **International Seabed Authority.**

About International Seabed Authority

- **Establishment:** Formed under the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and the 1994 Agreement for Part XI implementation, the ISA was formally created on November 16, 1994, achieving full operational autonomy by June 1996.

- **Headquarters:** Located in Kingston, Jamaica.

- **Membership:** As per Article 156(2) of UNCLOS, all State Parties to UNCLOS are automatically members of the ISA. As of September 2, 2024, ISA has 170 members (169 countries and the European Union).

- **Purpose:** ISA is responsible for regulating and controlling mineral-related activities in "the Area" (the international seabed) for the benefit of humankind. It ensures environmental protection from deep-seabed mining activities.

- **Jurisdiction:** The ISA oversees the international seabed area beyond national boundaries, covering the seabed, ocean floor, and subsoil, which constitutes about 50% of the world's ocean area.

Source: PIB

CHABAHAR PORT

Context

- In a significant move, an Indian delegation met Afghanistan's Defence Minister, offering the use of Chabahar Port in Iran to business groups in Afghanistan.

  - Earlier this year, India signed a **10-year contract** with Iran to develop and operate the Chabahar Port which was built with its assistance.

About Chabahar Port

- **Meaning:** Chabahar is made of Persian words **Chahar** meaning four; and **bahar meaning spring.**

- **Location:** On the Makran Coast of Iran's Sistan-Baluchistan province, next to the **Gulf of Oman** and at the mouth of the **Strait of Hormuz**. It is the **only Iranian port** with direct access to the Indian Ocean.

  - Only about 170 kilometers west of Pakistan's **Gwadar Port**.

  - In India's context, **Kandla Port** in Gujarat is the closest port at around 550 nautical miles, while the distance between Chabahar and Mumbai is about 786 nautical miles.

- **Two terminals:** It comprises two terminals i.e **Shahid Kalantari and Shahid Beheshti**.

- **INSTC:** The port is also part of International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC), a multimodal transport project to connect the **Indian Ocean to Northern Europe**.

> **Do you know?**
>
> - India **does not recognise** the Taliban regime that has been ruling Afghanistan since 2021, but has been providing humanitarian aid, including wheat, medicines and medical supplies, to the Afghan people from time to time.

Source: IE

TEA PRODUCTION IN INDIA

Context

- The Asia Tea Alliance, responding to climate change's impact on global tea production, has collectively declared its stance against genetically modified tea.

Indian Tea Industry

- **India** is the **2nd largest** tea producer and largest black tea producer.

- Indian teas are exported to various destinations like Iran, Iraq, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Russia etc. and is the **4th largest** tea exporter in the World.

- The Indian tea Industry is employing **1.16 million workers** directly and an equal number of people are associated with it indirectly.

- Assam grows about **55%** of the teas produced in India. India's tea production has increased by **39%** in 2022 from 2008.

Geographical Condition for Tea production

- The tea plant grows well in **tropical and subtropical** climates. Tea bushes require a **warm and moist frost-free climate** all through the year.
- **Soil:** It requires deep and fertile well-drained soil, rich in humus and organic matter.
- **Temperature:** The average annual temperature for tea plants to grow well is in the range of **15-23°C.**
- **Precipitation:** The rainfall needed is between **150-200 cm.** Frequent showers evenly distributed over the year ensure continuous growth of tender leaves.
- **Major tea producing states** are Assam, hills of Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri districts in West Bengal, Tamil Nadu and Kerala.
    - Apart from these, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Meghalaya, Andhra Pradesh and Tripura are also tea-producing states in the country.

> **Asia Tea Alliance**
> - It is a **coalition of tea associations** from major tea-producing countries in Asia like India, China, Sri Lanka, Japan etc.
> - **It aims to promote the collective interests** of member nations, support sustainable practices, address challenges such as climate change, and enhance trade cooperation within the global tea market.

Source: TH

CV RAMAN BIRTH ANNIVERSARY

In News

- On November 7, 2024, India commemorated the 136th birth anniversary of **Sir Chandrasekhara Venkata Raman.**

About Sir Chandrasekhara Venkata Raman (1888–1970)

- **Initial Life:** Born in Tiruchirappalli, Tamil Nadu. He initially worked in the Indian Finance Service but transitioned to academia due to his passion for scientific research.
- **Discovery of the Raman Effect:** In 1928, he discovered the "Raman Effect," explaining the interaction between light and molecular vibrations. This breakthrough earned him the **Nobel Prize in Physics in 1930** and established the foundation

for advancements in spectroscopy. He also was awarded the **Bharat Ratna in 1954.**

- Institutional Contributions:
    - Founded Indian Journal of Physics in 1926 to promote scientific knowledge.
    - Established Indian Academy of Sciences in 1933.
    - Served as director of Indian Institute of Science (IISc), mentoring budding scientists.
    - Founded Raman Research Institute in 1948
- **National Science Day:** Celebrated annually on February 28 to honor Raman's discovery.

Source: PIB

ONE RANK ONE PENSION (OROP) SCHEME

In News

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently celebrated the **10th anniversary of the One Rank One Pension (OROP) scheme.**

About OROP

- The OROP scheme guarantees that personnel retiring at the same rank with identical service durations receive uniform pensions, irrespective of their retirement date.
- The scheme was **approved in 2015**, with its benefits applied **retroactively from July 1, 2014.**
- Under OROP, pensions are adjusted based on the average of the minimum and maximum pensions given to those who retired in 2013 with the same rank and service length.
- Arrears of pension were to be paid in equal half-yearly installments, although the arrears for family pensioners and gallantry awardees were paid in a single installment.
- The **Department of Ex-Servicemen Welfare, which is part of the Ministry of Defence** is the administering agency and Pension amounts are **revised every five years under this scheme.**

Source: PIB

SAGARMALA PARIKRAMA

In News

- Autonomous surface vessel completed a 1,500-km voyage from Mumbai to Thoothukudi.

About 'Sagarmala Parikrama'

- The journey, named 'Sagarmala Parikrama,' was virtually flagged off by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh at the NIIO's annual event, Swavlamban.

- **Support and Collaboration**: It is supported by the Indian Navy's Naval Innovation and Indigenisation Organisation (NIIO), Technology Development Acceleration Cell (TDAC), and the Innovations for Defence Excellence (iDEX) initiative under the Defence Innovation Organisation (DIO).
- **Significance**: This achievement underscores India's capabilities in developing autonomous systems for national security, aligning with the vision of Atma Nirbharta (self-reliance) in defense.
- **Applications**: The technology supports military and civilian missions, including coastal surveillance, littoral patrol, and anti-piracy, enhancing the Indian Navy's reach and operational capabilities.

Source: TH

SNOWFALL IN SAUDI ARABIA'S AL-JAWF DESERT REGION

Context
- Saudi Arabia's Al-Jawf region experienced heavy snowfall and rainfall for the first time in recorded history.

About Al-Jawf Region
- **Geography:** Al-Jawf is located in the northern part of Saudi Arabia and forms part of the Arabian Desert.
- **Climate:** The region is typically arid, with vast stretches of sandy terrain and a climate that predominantly features scorching summers and mild winters.

Reasons
- **Polar Vortex Disruptions:** Weakening or shifts in polar vortex patterns may result in the displacement of cold air masses towards lower latitudes, causing sudden drops in temperature and unusual weather in typically warm regions.
- **Climate Change Impact:** The rising global average temperature leads to erratic weather patterns.
- **Regional Wind Patterns:** Shifts in wind currents due to atmospheric changes could have steered moisture-laden clouds over the Arabian Peninsula, resulting in precipitation in the form of rain and snow.

Source: DTE

COMMISSION FOR AIR QUALITY MANAGEMENT (CAQM)

In News
- Following criticism from the Supreme Court regarding insufficient efforts to tackle **stubble burning**, the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) has doubled fines for farmers found engaging in this practice.

About
- **Increased Penalties:** Farmers with less than two acres: Fine increased from ₹2,500 to ₹5,000.
    - Farmers with two to five acres: Fine increased from ₹5,000 to ₹10,000.
    - Farmers with more than five acres: Fine increased from ₹15,000 to ₹30,000.
- **Implementation:** State-appointed nodal officers in Delhi, Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh are authorized to impose and collect these fines from farmers responsible for stubble burning.

About Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM)
- **About:** It is a statutory body established by the Indian government in 2021 to combat air pollution and improve air quality in the National Capital Region (NCR) and its surrounding areas.
- **Powers and Authority:** It has the authority to issue fines, impose penalties, and mandate shutdowns for non-compliant entities.
    - The commission can override state pollution boards within the NCR region and enforce stricter compliance.
    - **Composition:** Chairperson: A secretary rank official
    - **Full-Time Members:** One Joint Secretary-level official and three technical experts
    - **Ex-Officio Members:** Chief Secretaries or environment secretaries from Delhi, Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh; representatives from MoEFCC, NITI Aayog, CPCB, and ISRO.
    - Members from NGOs

Source: TH

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