



**UPSC
Mentorship**
A Unit of Mentorship India

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS

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SOURCES



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GS II

1. Do coalition governments slow down the economic reforms agenda?

Source: The Hindu, Page 9

Prelims: Coalition Government, Political Party Structure in India

Mains: Parliament and State Legislatures

Context: The article discusses whether coalition governments in India hinder the economic reforms agenda, especially in light of the recent political scenario where India has once again a coalition government.

Yes, It Slows Down!

- **Legislative Challenges:** Fitch mentioned that coalition politics and a weakened mandate for the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) could make passing ambitious reform agendas difficult.
- **Policy Concessions:** Coalition governments often make policy concessions, which can slow down decisive and swift reform implementations.
- **Multiple Veto Points:** As coalitions involve negotiations and compromises, there are multiple veto points that can hinder the swift passage of reforms.
- **Historical Setbacks:** Earlier coalition governments, despite commitments to social democratic agendas, experienced setbacks in social policy reforms.
- **State's Share of Taxes:** Political centralization and the introduction of cesses not shared with states have led to discontent and financial constraints for states under coalition governments.

No, It Doesn't!

- **Continuity in Policies:** There has been continuity in economic policies across coalition and single-party governments, with no major reversals observed.
- **Institutionalized Decision-Making:** Coalition governments have institutionalized mechanisms, such as committees and 'Group of Ministers', ensuring different voices are accommodated, leading to stable and gradual policy changes.
- **Transparent Processes:** Public bargaining in coalition governments indicates that different viewpoints are heard, making the decision-making process more transparent and inclusive.
- **Facilitation of Centre-State Relations:** Coalition governments activate institutions meant to promote Centre-State relations, ensuring informed policy-making.
- **Consensus-Driven Reforms:** The necessity for negotiations in coalition governments often results in more stable policies that facilitate long-term investments.



2. The allegations over NEET-UG, 2024

Source: The Hindu, Page 10

Prelims: National Testing Agency (NTA)

Mains: Issues Relating to Development and Management of Social Sector/Services

Context: The 2024 NEET UG exam, a crucial medical entrance test in India, has been marred by allegations of irregularities and a lack of transparency.

Charges

- **Technical glitches:** Several exam centers experienced issues like delays in question paper distribution, wrong question papers, and technical disruptions.
- **Grace marks controversy:** The National Testing Agency (NTA) awarded compensatory marks to 1,563 students due to technical problems, leading to accusations of arbitrariness.
- **Unusually high scores:** A record number of students scored perfectly (720) or achieved statistically improbable marks.
- **Possible question paper leak:** Cases of a question paper leak are under investigation by the Supreme Court.
- **Organizational shortcomings:** Past criticisms regarding poor exam organization and inconsiderate rules have resurfaced.

Impact

- **Student protests:** Students across the country demanded a fair investigation and a re-test due to concerns about an unfair advantage for some students.
- **Loss of faith:** The irregularities have shaken public trust in the integrity of the NEET exam and its ability to select qualified medical professionals.
- **Systemic failure:** Experts argue that the current system for conducting NEET is flawed and allows for manipulation.

Government Response

- **NTA committee:** The NTA formed a committee to investigate the allegations of irregularities.
- **Cancellation of scores:** The Supreme Court has ordered the cancellation of scores for the 1,563 students who received compensatory marks. A re-test will be conducted for them.

Unresolved Concerns

- **Limited action:** Students and experts believe cancelling scores for a select group is insufficient and a full re-test is necessary.
- **Preventing future issues:** The long-term solution requires stricter measures to prevent cheating and ensure smooth exam administration.



3. China's 'grey-zone' warfare tactics against Taiwan

Source: The Hindu, Page 10

Prelims: Grey Zone

Mains: Effect of Policies and Politics of Developed and Developing Countries on India's interests

Context: This article discusses China's strategy of employing "grey-zone" warfare to pressure Taiwan's new president and government.

Grey-Zone Warfare Tactics

- **Definition:** Grey-zone warfare involves actions that remain below the threshold of conventional warfare, designed to wear out the opponent through sustained pressure and cognitive strategies.
- **Military Drills and Simulations:**
 - Training drills by the PLA Eastern Theater Command (PLA ETC) to demonstrate China's readiness for high-intensity warfare.
 - Use of 3D animation videos to simulate an invasion, showcasing ballistic missile attacks on Taipei and Kaohsiung.
- **Aerial Sorties:**
 - Daily sorties by PLA fighter jets, UAVs, and strategic aircraft, exerting constant pressure on Taiwan's defense forces.
 - Intelligence operations by UAVs surrounding Taiwan.



Ideological Warfare (Propaganda and Psychological Operations)

- Distribution of fliers via drones on Kinmen Island, promoting the narrative of "one China" and warning against Taiwan independence.
- The use of social media to initiate public discussions and sway public opinion in favor of Chinese claims.

Political Tactics (Carrots and Sticks Approach)

- **Sticks:** Economic coercion targeting the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP).
 - Example: Suspension of preferential tax rates for Taiwanese chemical imports under the Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement (ECFA) in retaliation for pro-independence statements.



- **Carrots:** Engagements with the Kuomintang (KMT), Taiwan's primary opposition party known for its pro-mainland stance.
 - KMT's continued communication with the Communist Party of China (CPC) despite tensions between the DPP and CPC.

Impact on Taiwan's Defense and Politics:

- **Defense Pressure:** The continuous military pressure from China leads to the wear-out of Taiwanese forces even before any direct conflict.
- **Political Challenges:** President Lai Ching-te faces significant challenges in balancing Taiwan's stance on independence with the economic and political pressures exerted by China. The need for strategic handling of cross-strait relations while maintaining Taiwan's sovereignty and security.

4. Singular focus

Source: The Hindu, Page 8

Prelims: Departments and Ministries related to Education

Mains: Structure, Organization and Functioning of the Executive

Context: The portfolios of the newly sworn-in Ministers of the 18th Lok Sabha show little change from the previous regime, sparking discussions on the need for dedicated ministerial attention to key research and development sectors.

Continuity in Ministerial Portfolios

- The 18th Lok Sabha features continuity in ministerial portfolios, with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) retaining major portfolios such as Home and Telecommunications.
- Coalition allies have been allocated other portfolios, maintaining a similar distribution as the previous regime.
- The 18th Lok Sabha includes five Ministers of State with independent charge, highlighting the need for dedicated ministerial oversight in various sectors.

Diverse and Critical Responsibilities of Minister Jitendra Singh

- Jitendra Singh's extensive portfolio includes the Departments of Space (DoS) and Atomic Energy (DAE), the Ministries of Earth Sciences (MoES), Science and Technology (MST), and Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions.
- Each of these departments faces significant challenges and responsibilities:
 - **DoS:** Managing private sector participation in space, human spaceflight missions, and new launch vehicles.
 - **MoES:** Exploring seabed mineral resources and addressing climate adaptation and mitigation.
 - **MST:** Overseeing research in AI, quantum computing, multi-omics, and advanced energy storage.



- **DAE:** Advancing nuclear power with plans to commission one reactor facility annually.

Challenges in India's Research and Development Sector

- Persistent issues in the R&D sector include:
 - Delays in fellowship and grant disbursements for young researchers.
 - Localized and non-collaborative research facilities.
 - Inconsistent regulations hampering cutting-edge research.
 - Weak intellectual property rights protection.
 - Limited and sector-specific translational research.
- The gross domestic expenditure on R&D as a fraction of GDP has been declining since 2008-09, indicating a need for better capacity building to effectively utilize increased funding.

Need for Dedicated Ministerial Attention

- To address these challenges and foster meaningful advancements, India requires separate Ministers, ideally of Cabinet rank, for each major nodal research body.
- This dedicated ministerial attention is crucial for meeting the needs and solving the persistent problems of these sectors, especially during the complexities of coalition government rule.



Editorial, Ideas and Opinions

5. Ineffective dispute resolution

Source: IE, Page 15

On June 3, the Finance Ministry announced a significant policy change, deciding to drop arbitration clauses from future government contracts, with a few exceptions, aiming to resolve disputes amicably or through courts instead.

Policy Decision Overview

- **Announcement:** On June 3, Finance Ministry declared the removal of arbitration clauses from future government contracts, barring minor disputes under Rs 10 crore.
- **Objective:** To settle disputes amicably or through courts rather than arbitration.
- **Implementation:** High-level committees comprising former judges/retired officials to approve settlements.

Reasons for Policy Shift

- **Perception of Arbitrators:** Government believes arbitrators often lack integrity and collude with private parties, making arbitral awards hard to challenge.
- **Lack of Trust:** Mistrust in finding impartial arbitrators, despite often appointing former Supreme Court or High Court judges.
- **Settlement Preference:** Greater trust in government officials to negotiate settlements, although settlements remain voluntary and administrative.

Critique of the Policy

- **Flawed Assumptions:** Belief that adverse arbitral awards indicate compromised tribunals, rather than government failings.
- **Dysfunctional Replacement:** Replacing arbitration with court litigation is seen as impractical due to court overburden and inefficiency in handling commercial disputes.
- **Administrative Challenges:** Government's rule-driven nature and accountability to various authorities make large-scale dispute settlements unrealistic.
- **Vivad se Vishwas - II Scheme:** Even with arbitral awards, the government seeks settlements at a discounted rate, indicating reluctance to honor awards.

Implications and Recommendations

- **Economic Impact:** The policy may hinder infrastructural projects and economic growth by making dispute resolution more cumbersome.
- **Judicial Overload:** Courts are already overburdened, and handling additional commercial disputes will exacerbate delays.
- **Need for Reconsideration:** The article suggests a reversal of the policy and advocates for improving the arbitration process rather than abandoning it.



In Brief

6. GST Council to meet for the first time this year on June 22

Source: The Hindu, Page 12

Context: The Centre has decided to convene a meeting of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) Council on June 22, eight-and-a-half months after its last meeting.

Goods and Services Tax (GST) Council

- The GST Council is a constitutional body responsible for making recommendations on issues related to the implementation of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) in India.
- The first meeting of the GST Council was held on September 22-23, 2016, and since then, the Council meets periodically to deliberate and decide on various issues related to GST.
- GST Council takes decisions through a consensus-based approach every decision of the GST Council shall be taken by a majority of not less than three-fourths of the weighted votes of the members present and voting with a weightage of one-third of the total votes cast to the Centre and a weightage of two-thirds of the total votes cast to the States.
- As per Article 279A of the amended Constitution, the GST Council which will be a joint forum of the Centre and the States, shall consist of the following members: -
 - Union Finance Minister - Chairperson
 - The Union Minister of State, in-charge of Revenue of finance - Member
 - The Minister In-charge of finance or taxation or any other Minister nominated by each State Government - Members

7. DGFT wants interest equalisation scheme for exporters to continue post June 30

Source: The Hindu, Page 12

Context: Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) has concluded that there is merit in continuing the interest equalisation scheme for the export sector.

Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT)

- The Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) organisation is an attached office of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry and is headed by the Director General of Foreign Trade.
- This Directorate, with headquarters at New Delhi, is responsible for formulating and implementing the Foreign Trade Policy with the main objective of promoting India's exports.
- The DGFT also issues scripts/authorization to exporters and monitors their corresponding obligations through a network of 24 regional offices.
- Before 1991, DGFT was known as the Chief Controller of Imports & Exports (CCI&E).



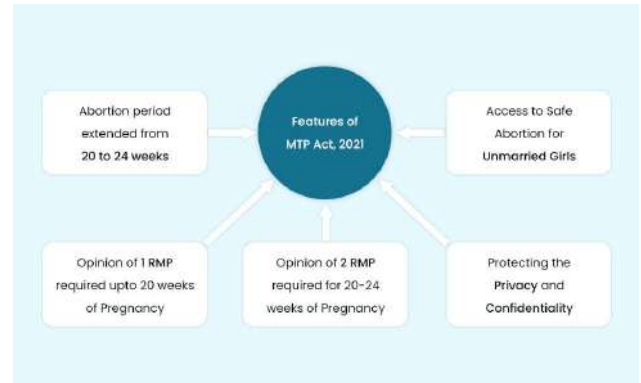
8. Court rejects bid to restrict abortion pill

Source: The Hindu, Page 14

Context: The U.S. Supreme Court on Thursday rejected a bid to restrict a pill widely used to terminate pregnancies.

Abortion in India

- Until the 1960s, abortion was prohibited in India, and violating this led to imprisonment or fines under Section 312 of the Indian Penal Code.
- The Medical Termination of Pregnancy (MTP) Act, 1971, allows abortion up to 20 weeks of gestation, with the consent of the woman and on the advice of one registered medical practitioner (RMP).
- The MTP Amendment Act, 2021 permits abortion from 20 to 24 weeks of gestation for specific cases like rape survivors, with approval from two doctors.



9. CCPA imposes 23 lakh penalty on edtech firm for 'false' ads

Source: IE, Page 13

Context: The Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) imposed a penalty of Rs 3 lakh on an edtech platform for publishing "false and misleading" advertisements.

Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA)

- Central Consumer Protection Authority is an authority provided by the Consumer Protection Act, 2019.
- It aims to regulate unfair trade practices and false or misleading advertisements which are prejudicial to the interests of public and consumers and to promote, protect and enforce the rights of consumers as a class.
- CCPA has an investigation wing headed by the Director General for conducting inquiry or investigation under the Consumer Protection Act, 2019.
- It has a Chief Commissioner as head, and only two other commissioners as members one of whom will deal with matters relating to goods while the other will look into cases relating to services.



10. POCSO court issues non-bailable arrest warrant against Yediyurappa

Source: IE, Page 5

Context: A special court for hearing cases filed under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012 Thursday issued a non-bailable arrest warrant against a former political leader.

Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act

- The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act was enacted in 2012 to provide legal protection to children from sexual abuse, exploitation and pornography.
- It defines various forms of sexual offences against children and prescribes stringent punishments for the perpetrators.
- “Children” according to the Act are individuals aged below 18 years. The Act is gender-neutral.
- Sexual assault is deemed to be “aggravated” under certain circumstances such as when the child is mentally ill. Also when the abuse is committed by the person in a position of trust such as a doctor, teacher, policeman, family member.



Daily Quiz

1. Consider the following statements regarding “National Testing Agency”:

1. The NTA was established in 2017.
2. It is registered under the Indian Societies Registration Act, 1860.
3. It also undertakes the reforms and training of school boards.

Which of the above given statements is/are correct?

- A. Only 1
- B. Only 2
- C. Only 3
- D. 1, 2 and 3

2. Consider the following statements about Taiwan:

1. Taiwan is located in the South China Sea, east of China.
2. The capital city of Taiwan is Taipei.
3. The Taiwan Strait separates Taiwan from the Philippines.
4. Taiwan is recognized by the United Nations as a sovereign state.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1, 2, and 4 only
- D. 2 only

3. Consider the following statements about the allocation of scientific departments in the Government of India:

1. The Department of Space (DoS) is under the Ministry of Science and Technology (MST).
2. The Department of Atomic Energy (DAE) is an independent department reporting directly to the Prime Minister's Office.
3. The Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES) oversees the activities of the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO).

Which of the following statements is/are correct?

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 3 only
- D. 1, 2 and 3

4. Which of the following statements about the Goods and Services Tax (GST) Council is correct?

- A. The GST Council is chaired by the Prime Minister of India and includes all Chief Ministers of the States as its members.
- B. The GST Council is responsible for formulating recommendations on issues such as tax rates, exemptions, and model GST laws, with decisions requiring a three-fourths majority.
- C. The decisions of the GST Council are binding on both the Central and State governments and cannot be challenged in any court.
- D. The GST Council meets once every six months to review the implementation of GST and make necessary recommendations.



5. Which of the following statements about the Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) is correct?

- A. The DGFT operates under the Ministry of Finance and is responsible for the regulation and promotion of foreign trade in India.
- B. The primary function of the DGFT is to implement the Foreign Trade Policy (FTP), which includes the issuance of import and export licenses.
- C. The DGFT is responsible for setting tariffs on all imported goods to protect domestic industries.
- D. The DGFT does not engage in any capacity-building initiatives for exporters and only focuses on regulatory functions.

6. Consider the following statements regarding the Medical Termination of Pregnancy (MTP) Amendment Act, 2021:

- 1. The MTP Amendment Act, 2021, increases the upper limit for lawful abortion from 20 weeks to 24 weeks for all women.
- 2. The Act allows for abortion up to 24 weeks for special categories of women, including rape survivors, minors, and women with disabilities.
- 3. The Act mandates that abortions beyond 20 weeks can only be performed in government hospitals.
- 4. The Central Government is responsible for framing the guidelines and regulations for implementing the MTP Amendment Act, 2021, through the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- A. 1 and 3 only
- B. 2 and 4 only
- C. 1, 2, and 4 only
- D. 1, 2, 3, and 4

7. Which of the following statements about the Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) is correct?

- A. The CCPA is established under the Consumer Protection Act, 2019, and is responsible for promoting and protecting the rights of consumers, including the power to initiate class action lawsuits.
- B. The CCPA operates under the Ministry of Home Affairs and focuses on protecting consumers from cyber fraud and online financial crimes.
- C. The CCPA has no authority to recall products or order reimbursement of the price paid by consumers for defective goods or services.
- D. The CCPA's jurisdiction is limited to addressing grievances related to food safety and standardization only.

8. Under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012, which of the following statements is NOT correct?

- A. The Act defines a child as anyone below the age of 18 years.
- B. The Act mandates reporting of suspected child sexual abuse by a person in a position of trust or authority.
- C. The Act provides for special courts to expedite trials of POCSO cases.
- D. The Act differentiates between punishment for offences based on the gender of the perpetrator



Solutions

Answer 1: D

Solution:

- Statement 1 is correct: The NTA was established in 2017.
- Statement 2 is correct: It is registered under the Indian Societies Registration Act, 1860.
- Statement 3 is correct: It also undertakes the reforms and training of school boards.

Hence, Option D is correct.

Answer 2: B

Solution:

- Statement 1 is incorrect: Taiwan is located in the western Pacific Ocean, not the South China Sea. It is east of China.
- Statement 2 is correct: The capital city of Taiwan is Taipei.
- Statement 3 is correct: The Taiwan Strait separates Taiwan from the mainland of China.
- Statement 4 is incorrect: Taiwan is not recognized as a sovereign state by the United Nations due to the One-China policy, which recognizes the People's Republic of China as the sole legal government of China

Hence, Option B is correct.

Answer 3: B

Solution:

- Statement 1 is incorrect. The Department of Space (DoS) is under the administrative control of the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) and functionally linked to the Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES).

- Statement 2 is correct. The Department of Atomic Energy (DAE) is an independent department with its own cabinet minister, currently separate from the Ministry of Science and Technology.
- Statement 3 is correct. The Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES) is responsible for overseeing the activities of several organisations, including the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM), the Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS), and the Indian Space Research Organisation.

Hence, Option B is correct.

Answer 4: B

Solution:

- The GST Council formulates recommendations on various aspects of GST, including tax rates, exemptions, and model GST laws. Decisions of the GST Council require a three-fourths majority, with the central government having one-third of the votes and the states collectively having two-thirds.

Hence, Option B is correct.

Answer 5: B

Solution:

- The primary function of the DGFT is to implement the Foreign Trade Policy (FTP), which includes the issuance of import and export licenses, among other responsibilities. The DGFT facilitates and regulates foreign trade by promoting exports and managing imports.

Hence, Option B is correct.



Answer 6: C

Solution:

- Statement 1 is correct: The MTP Amendment Act, 2021, increases the upper limit for lawful abortion to 24 weeks for special categories of women, including rape survivors, minors, and women with disabilities.
- Statement 2 is correct: The Act allows abortion up to 24 weeks for special categories of women such as rape survivors, minors, and women with disabilities.
- Statement 3 is incorrect: The Act does not mandate that abortions beyond 20 weeks can only be performed in government hospitals; it provides for the procedure to be performed in both government and recognized private hospitals.
- Statement 4 is correct: The Central Government, through the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, is responsible for framing the guidelines and regulations for the implementation of the MTP Amendment Act, 2021.

Hence, Option C is correct.

Answer 7: A

Solution:

- The CCPA was established under the Consumer Protection Act, 2019, and is responsible for promoting and protecting the rights of consumers. It has various powers, including the authority to initiate class action lawsuits, recall unsafe goods, and order the discontinuation of unfair trade practices.

Hence, Option A is correct.

Answer 8: D

Solution:

- The POCSO Act defines a child as anyone below the age of 18 years (Option A) irrespective of gender. The Act mandates mandatory reporting of suspected child sexual abuse by people in positions of trust or authority (Option B). Special courts are established under the Act for faster trial of POCSO cases (Option C). However, the Act does not differentiate between the punishment for offences based solely on the gender of the perpetrator (Option D). The severity of punishment depends on the nature of the offence committed.

Hence, Option D is correct.





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