

08 JULY 2024

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New private investment plans slumped to 20-year low in Q1

Just ₹44,300 crore of fresh outlays announced by corporates; the corresponding period in the past financial year recorded new investment announcements of nearly ₹7.9 lakh crore; investors adopting a wait-and-watch approach, says economist

GS Paper III:

Vikas Investment

NEW DELHI

In an exceptionally slow start to private capital expenditure in this financial year, new investment plans in the country slumped to a 20-year low in the April-to-June quarter, with just ₹44,300 crore of fresh outlays announced by corporates.

The first quarter of 2023-24 recorded new investment announcements of nearly ₹7.9 lakh crore, while outlays worth ₹12.35 lakh crore were announced in the January-to-March quarter. In all, last year had seen investment announcements worth ₹27.1 lakh crore, the second highest in 10 years.

“Since the economy has been growing steadily, the only reason to explain the sluggish investment plans in the last quarter could be that the industry has been

a wait-and-watch mode,” said Bank of Baroda chief economist Madan Sabnavis, who hoped that investments should pick up in the coming quarters.

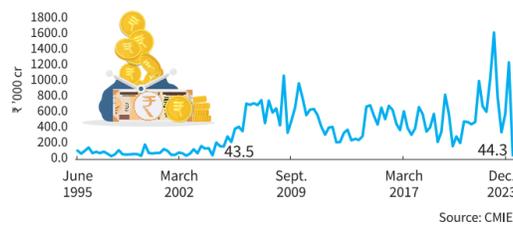
‘Exceptionally low’

While the April-June quarter tends to have lower investment announcements, it has been exceptionally low this year, the bank’s economic research department said in a note based on data from the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE).

While a part of the tepid investment levels in Q1 could be explained by investors adopting a wait-and-watch approach amid the Lok Sabha election, this tally is far lower than the corresponding quarters during the Lok Sabha elections in 2014 and 2019. New investment plans in Q1 of 2014-15 were at ₹2.9 lakh crore and ₹2.1 lakh crore in Q1 of 2019-20.

Investment dips

New investment announcements slipped to a 20-year low at ₹44,300 crore in the first quarter of the year



Another factor for the slowdown could be that the last two years have seen high investment announcements that are yet to run their course.

“It would need to be seen whether there is any major pick-up in the second quarter considering that the Budget will be announced only towards the end of July.... A good monsoon and steady demand during the festival season would be the time when investment could increase at

a faster pace,” the Bank of Baroda report concluded.

Data on corporate bond issuances as well as bank credit flows for Q1 seem to corroborate the trend of slowing investment plans, the report noted. Corporate bond issues fell sharply from ₹2.86 lakh crore in the first quarter of 2023-24 to ₹1.73 lakh crore in Q1 this year, with over three-quarters raised by financial services players.

Between April 1 and June 14, incremental bank

credit was ₹2.78 lakh crore as against ₹3.78 lakh crore last year, with growth slipping to 1.7% from 2.5% last year.

Within the ₹44,000-odd crore investments announced over Q1, manufacturing outlays dominated with a 46.4% share followed almost evenly by electricity and services.

“Interestingly, over the period between June 2023 and June 2024, the fall in value of investment announcements was ₹7.4 lakh crore. Of this, the major dip was accounted for by the transport services sector at 61%,” the report said, linking this to the airline industry’s plans to buy new aircraft announced last year.

This pattern would be observed in the coming quarters too as these plans are unlikely to be restored until the earlier orders are executed fully, the bank’s economists noted.

New private investment plans slumped to 20-year low in Q1 (08 July)

Just ₹44,300 crore of fresh outlays announced by corporates; the corresponding period in the past financial year recorded new investment announcements of nearly ₹7.9 lakh crore; investors adopting a wait-and-watch approach, says economist

- New investment plans in India hit a 20-year low in April-June 2023, with only ₹44,300 crore announced by corporates.
- In contrast, the first quarter of 2023-24 had nearly ₹7.9 lakh crore in new investment announcements.
- The previous quarter (January-March) saw ₹12.35 lakh crore in announcements.

- Last year, total investment announcements were ₹27.1 lakh crore, the second highest in a decade.
- Bank of Baroda chief economist Madan Sabnavis suggested the slowdown could be due to a wait-and-watch approach.
- April-June typically has lower investment announcements, but this year was exceptionally low.
- The Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE) data showed that Q1 2023-24 investment plans were far lower than in the same quarters during the Lok Sabha elections in 2014 and 2019.
- Other factors for the slowdown could include high investment announcements in the last two years that are still ongoing.
- Investment may pick up in the second quarter if the Budget is favorable, with a good monsoon and steady festival season demand.
- Corporate bond issuances and bank credit flows indicate slowing investment plans.
- Corporate bond issues fell from ₹2.86 lakh crore in Q1 2023-24 to ₹1.73 lakh crore in Q1 2024-25.
- Financial services players raised over three-quarters of these bonds.
- Incremental bank credit from April 1 to June 14 was ₹2.78 lakh crore, down from ₹3.78 lakh crore last year, with growth slipping from 2.5% to 1.7%.
- Of the ₹44,000 crore investments in Q1, manufacturing had a 46.4% share, followed by electricity and services.
- The value of investment announcements fell by ₹7.4 lakh crore from June 2023 to June 2024, mainly due to a 61% dip in the transport services sector.
- This dip is linked to last year's airline industry plans to buy new aircraft.
- This pattern is expected to continue as these plans are unlikely to be restored until previous orders are completed.

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Red flags raised over silver imports from UAE through GIFT City

GS Paper III:
Internal Security
NEW DELHI

In a major disruption for the bullion market, almost all of India's silver imports are now being handled by a few private players bringing the white metal from Dubai through the GIFT City exchange, which could cause significant revenue losses for the exchequer over time.

A trade research body has sought a probe into the relationships between export and import firms to identify and address any potential conflicts of interest, while warning that this silver market trend could extend to gold, platinum, and diamonds, further disrupting traditional import practices and market dynamics.

India's imports of gold

and silver from the UAE had jumped 210% in 2023-24 to \$10.7 billion. Total silver imports stood at \$5.4 billion.

In May, 87% of India's global silver imports came from Dubai at a reduced 8% duty and were cleared through the GIFT City exchange in Gandhinagar, which has been clearing all silver imports from UAE since December 2023. Imports from other countries and ports are virtually abandoned.

Earlier attempts by some banks to import silver from the UAE through other ports were questioned for not meeting rules of origin of the India-UAE free trade deal, think tank Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI) flagged in a report.

"The key concern is



India's imports of gold and silver from the UAE had jumped 210% in 2023-24 to \$10.7 billion. GETTY IMAGES/ ISTOCKPHOTO

how the imports cleared through GIFT City meet the rules of origin requirements specified in the India-UAE CEPA [Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement] when importers from other ports fail to meet these," it noted. India levies a 15% import duty on silver and

only allows institutions nominated by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and the Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) to import the precious metal. However, the GIFT City exchange does not limit imports to RBI/DGFT-nominated agencies, registers private traders, and has

found no rules of origin issues as flagged by customs elsewhere.

Zero tariff

Under the CEPA signed in 2022, India has agreed to reduce the duty on silver imports to 0% over 10 years, subject to Dubai exporters meeting the rules of origin conditions.

"As the tariff becomes zero over the next eight years, all silver imports will likely come from the UAE, resulting in a revenue loss of ₹6,700 crore. This trade is driven solely by the tariff arbitrage offered by India," GTRI warned.

"The key concern is how imports cleared through GIFT City meet the rules of origin requirements specified in the India-UAE FTA when importers from other port fail to

meet these. This is strange as the Dubai-based suppliers may be the same in both cases. There is apprehension that imports from GIFT City might violate rules of origin conditions," GTRI chief Ajay Srivastava said. GTRI has mooted a renegotiation of the CEPA terms to nullify the duty arbitrage, and more rigorous check on Dubai exporters' value addition claims by the GIFT City exchange and a "thorough investigation into the relationships between export and import firms to identify and address any potential conflicts of interest or familial ties".

It had also suggested restricting silver imports to nominated agencies authorised by the RBI and DGFT to minimise the risk of misdeclared imports.

Red flags raised over silver imports from UAE through GIFT City (08 July)

- India's silver imports are now mainly handled by a few private players through the GIFT City exchange in Gandhinagar.
- This shift could cause significant revenue losses for the exchequer.
- A trade research body has called for a probe into the relationships between export and import firms to address potential conflicts of interest.
- The trend could disrupt traditional import practices for gold, platinum, and diamonds.
- India's imports of gold and silver from the UAE increased by 210% in 2023-24, totaling \$10.7 billion; silver imports were \$5.4 billion.
- In May, 87% of India's silver imports came from Dubai at a reduced 8% duty and were cleared through the GIFT City exchange.
- Imports from other countries and ports have declined.
- Previous attempts to import silver from the UAE through other ports were questioned for not meeting rules of origin under the India-UAE free trade deal.
- The GIFT City exchange does not limit imports to RBI/DGFT-nominated agencies and registers private traders without rules of origin issues flagged by customs elsewhere.

Zero tariff

- Under the CEPA signed in 2022, India will reduce the duty on silver imports to 0% over 10 years, if Dubai exporters meet rules of origin conditions.

- As the tariff becomes zero over the next eight years, all silver imports will likely come from the UAE, potentially causing a revenue loss of ₹6,700 crore.
- This trade is driven by tariff arbitrage offered by India.
- GTRI is concerned about how imports through GIFT City meet rules of origin when other ports fail, suspecting possible violations.
- GTRI suggests renegotiating CEPA terms to nullify the duty arbitrage.
- GTRI recommends more rigorous checks on Dubai exporters' value addition claims by the GIFT City exchange.
- GTRI calls for a thorough investigation into relationships between export and import firms to address potential conflicts of interest.
- GTRI suggests restricting silver imports to agencies authorized by the RBI and DGFT to minimize the risk of miss declared imports.

Kerala varsity to launch genome editing mission to boost pearl spot production

GS Paper III: S&T

K.A. Martin
KOCHI

Pearl spot farmers in Kerala have for ages endured the drudgery of finding brood stocks in the wild, breeding them in vastly uncontrolled environments and releasing fingerlings into aquaculture ponds only to see the fish barely achieving body weight of 300 to 400 grams in a year.

That may soon be a thing of the past as the Kerala University of Fisheries and Ocean Studies (Kufos) prepares to launch a genome editing mission to see if the State fish can revolutionise aquaculture as



Genome editing will help enhance breeding and seed production of pearl spots, says Kerala University of Fisheries. H. VIBHU

genetically improved farmed tilapia (GIFT) did decades ago.

Genome editing will target the genetic make-up of the fish that inhibits a faster rate of growth. It will al-

so help enhance breeding and seed production of pearl spots, said Kufos Vice-Chancellor Pradeep Kumar T.

Achieving higher body weight at an enhanced rate

will be a great blessing for aqua farmers in the State because pearl spots fetch a premium in the market whereas tilapia does not. Pearl spots are sold in the retail market for about ₹650 to ₹700 a kg, while tilapia fetches between ₹250 and ₹300 a kg.

But, tilapia achieves a body weight of 600 to 700 grams in six months compared with 12 months needed for pearl spots to achieve 300 to 400 grams. According to data available for 2020, Kerala produces 2,000 tonnes of pearl spots annually against the market demand of 10,000 tonnes.

Kerala varsity to launch genome editing mission to boost pearl spot production (08 July)

- Pearl spot farmers in Kerala face challenges with finding brood stocks in the wild, breeding in uncontrolled environments, and achieving low body weight growth.
- The Kerala University of Fisheries and Ocean Studies (Kufos) plans to launch a genome editing mission to improve this situation.
- The mission aims to enhance the growth rate, breeding, and seed production of pearl spots by targeting their genetic make-up.
- Kufos Vice-Chancellor Pradeep Kumar T. mentioned that this initiative could revolutionize aquaculture, similar to the impact of genetically improved farmed tilapia (GIFT).
- Higher body weight at an enhanced rate for pearl spots would greatly benefit Kerala's aqua farmers.
- Pearl spots fetch a higher market price (₹650 to ₹700 per kg) compared to tilapia (₹250 to ₹300 per kg).
- Tilapia reaches a body weight of 600 to 700 grams in six months, while pearl spots take 12 months to reach 300 to 400 grams.
- In 2020, Kerala produced 2,000 tonnes of pearl spots annually, while the market demand was 10,000 tonnes.

PatrioticIAS

Pre-Budget consultations concluded, says Ministry (08 July)

- Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman concluded consultations with various stakeholders for Budget preparation.
- She will present her seventh Budget on July 23.
- Over 120 invitees across 10 stakeholder groups participated, including experts and representatives from:

- Farmer associations and agriculture economists
- Trade unions
- Education and health sector
- Employment and skilling
- MSME
- Trade and services
- Industry
- Economists
- Financial sector and capital markets
- Infrastructure, energy, and urban sector

- President Droupadi Murmu stated that major economic decisions will be made in the Budget session.
- The Budget will reflect the government's far-reaching policies and futuristic vision.

Pre-Budget consultations concluded, says Ministry

GS Paper III: Budget

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has concluded consultations with various stakeholders, including representatives of industry and social sectors, as part of the Budget preparation exercise. Ms. Sitharaman will present her seventh Budget on July 23.

More than 120 invitees across 10 stakeholder groups, including experts and representatives from farmer associations and agriculture economists; trade unions; education and health sector; employment and skilling; MSME; trade and services; industry; economists; financial sector and capital markets; and infrastructure, energy and urban sector, participated in the meetings, the Finance Ministry said in a statement.

President Droupadi Murmu earlier said that major economic decisions will be taken in the Budget session. "This Budget will be an effective document of the government's far-reaching policies and futuristic vision," she added.

'Take nation into confidence on border situation at LAC'

The H
NEW DELHI

GS Paper I:
Geography

Citing news reports of a Chinese military base being built near Pangong Tso, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge on Sunday attacked the Narendra Modi government demanding that the country be taken into confidence on the border situation with China.

Mr. Kharge shared a news report which said that the Chinese military had built bunkers to store weapons and fuel and hardened shelters for armoured vehicles in an area around Pangong Lake in eastern Ladakh.

Mr. Kharge asked, "How can China build a military base near Pangong Tso on land which was under Indian occupation until May 2020?"

He held the Modi government responsible for not maintaining the *status quo ante* at the LAC, with India losing possession of 26 patrolling points out of 65, including points in the Depsang Plains, Demchok and Gogra Hot Springs area.

"The Indian National Congress once again reiter-



Indian Army trucks near the Pangong Lake in Ladakh. AP

ates its demand to take the nation into confidence on the border situation at the LAC. We stand shoulder to shoulder with our valiant soldiers," Mr. Kharge said in a post on X.

He said this was the fifth year of giving clean chits to China.

He cited Mr. Modi's interview in the run-up to the elections on April 10 to foreign press where, according to Mr. Kharge, the PM failed to put forth India's case strongly. External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar also in an interview said "China has not occupied any of our land", ex-

posing the Modi government's "meek policy" towards China, he stated.

'Occupying territory'

Mr. Kharge underlined that on July 4, Mr. Jaishankar met his Chinese counterpart. During the meeting, he spoke about "respecting the LAC and ensuring peace and tranquillity in the border areas..."

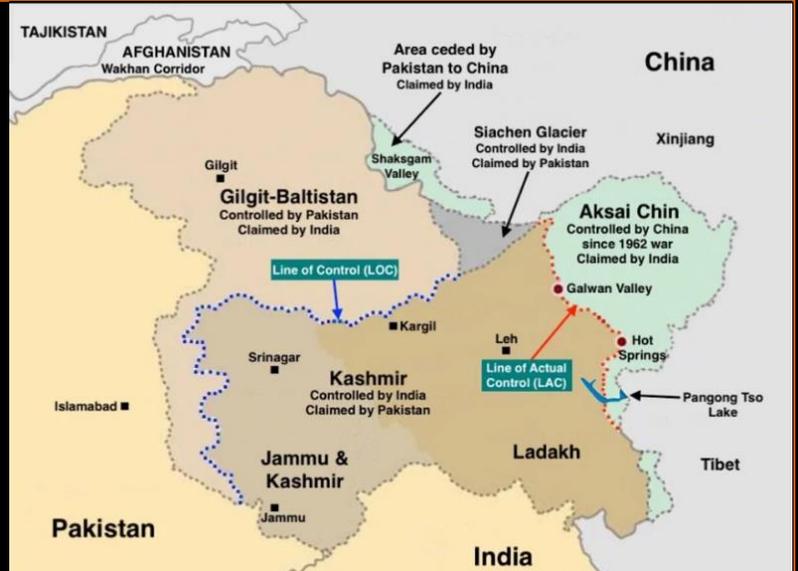
But parallelly, Mr. Kharge said, "China continues to be belligerent, occupying our territory and constructing a military base at Sirijap, reportedly land that was under Indian control."

Pangong Tso

- It is a high-altitude lake located in the Ladakh region of India, stretching from India to western Tibet which is administered by China.

Pangong Lake Overview:

- **Location:** Situated in Ladakh, Pangong Lake is the world's highest saltwater lake, located at an altitude of nearly 4,350m.
- **Geographical Distribution:** Extending over almost 160km, one-third of Pangong Lake is in India while the remaining two-thirds are in China.
- **Name Origin:** The name "Pangong Tso" is derived from Tibetan, meaning "high grassland lake".
- **Scenic Beauty:** Surrounded by arid mountains, the lake's blue-colored water contrasts vividly with its surroundings.
- **Color Variations:** Known for its changing hues, Pangong Lake can appear blue, green, and red at different times.
- **During winter:** The lake freezes completely, despite being saline water. It has a land-locked basin separated from the Indus River basin by a small elevated ridge, but is believed to have been part of the latter in prehistoric times.



Coffee-table book on over 1,200-year-old Samayapuram Mariamman temple released

GS Paper I: Histori

The Hindu Bureau
TIRUCHI

The Hindu Group of Publications has brought out a coffee-table book, *Samayapuram – The Sacred Seat of Shakti*.

The glossy book was placed at the feet of Goddess Mariamman on the premises of the Samayapuram temple near Tiruchi on Sunday to mark its release at a simple function.

Authored by Vrinda Ramanan, a qualified Bharatanatyam dancer and teacher, and J. Ramanan, a practising architect, the 190-page book describes every aspect associated with the Mother Goddess who reigns supreme in Samayapuram village.



From left: S. Kalyani, Joint Commissioner/Executive Officer, Arulmigu Samayapuram Mariamman Temple; Vrinda Ramanan, author; K. Manivasan, Additional Chief Secretary, Water Resources Department; M. Pradeep Kumar, Collector, Tiruchi; J. Ramanan, author; and Sridhar Aranala, Vice-President, Sales and Distribution, The Hindu Group, at the launch of the book on Sunday. M. MOORTHY

Divided into different sections, the book, with attractive images, has interesting stories about Goddess Mariamman – the Mother Goddess, the ancient legends, the festive celebrations of the temple,

pujas and *abhishekam* to the deity, the sacred *theerthams*, and extreme devotion exhibited by the devotees to Goddess Mariamman.

The temple, which is more than 1,200 years old,

has a historical past with interesting legends that are woven around Goddess Mariamman, believed to be an incarnation of Goddess Durga, Mahakali, Adi Shakti, or Nishumbha Sudhini.

The first copy of the book was handed over to K. Manivasan, Additional Chief Secretary, Water Resources Department, by Mr. Ramanan in the presence of Tiruchi Collector M. Pradeep Kumar; author Ms. Ramanan; Samayapuram temple Joint Commissioner/Executive Officer S. Kalyani; Sridhar Aranala, Vice-President, Sales and Distribution, The Hindu Group; and temple officials.

Priced at ₹2,999, the coffee-table book can be purchased online by visiting The Hindu Online Book Store – <https://publications.thehindugroup.com/bookstore/>

The launch offer of 20% is for a limited period.

Arulmigu Sri Mariamman Temple, Samayapuram:

- Located in Tiruchirappalli district, Tamil Nadu.
- The main deity is Samayapuram Mariamman, a form of Adi Parashakti and Mariamman, made of sand and clay infused with medicinal herbs.
- **Unique Rituals:** Abhishekam (sacred bathing) is performed on a small stone statue in front of the main deity, as the main deity itself is not bathed.
- **Offerings:** Devotees offer mavalakku (sweet dish made of jaggery, rice flour, and ghee), raw salt, and neem leaves to the Goddess.
- **History:**
 - The temple was extensively renovated in the early 18th century by King Vijayaraya Chakravarti II.
 - Legends suggest the deity was originally at Sri Ranganathaswamy Temple, Srirangam, and was moved due to illness attributed to the idol.
 - The area served as an army base during the Vijayanagar kings' rule in the 17th century, who built a shrine after a victorious war campaign.
- **Festivals:** The main festival, including temple chariot and lake processions, typically occurs in April, before summer, with Thai Pooam celebrated in the Tamil month of Thai.

PM's visit to Moscow will see discussions on energy, trade

Putin to host private dinner and spend personal time with Modi at his *Dacha* in a special gesture ahead of formal talks on Tuesday; both leaders will visit an exhibition venue for Rosatom on nuclear power-related technology developments

GS Paper II: India-Russia

Suhasini Haidar
MOSCOW

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will arrive here on Monday to a particularly warm and special welcome at a private dinner hosted by Russian President Vladimir Putin at his *Dacha*, or estate, in the Moscow suburb of Novo-Ogaryovo.

The two leaders are meeting for the first time since 2022. It is Mr. Modi's first visit to Russia since the war in Ukraine began and his own first visit abroad for bilateral talks after being re-elected to office in June. The two leaders will be together for most of the events during the approximately 26-hour visit.

Mr. Modi will land on Monday afternoon and receive a ceremonial welcome at the Vanukovo airport and travel to his hotel across from the iconic Red Square that houses the Kremlin, where schoolchildren and members of the Indian community will greet him. The one-on-one



Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Russian President Vladimir Putin at the sidelines of the SCO summit in Samarkand. FILE PHOTO

dinner with Mr. Putin will reciprocate the dinner Mr. Modi had hosted for the Russian President during his visit to Delhi the last time an India-Russia Summit was held, in December 2021. It is expected to set the tone for formal talks the next day.

On Tuesday, Mr. Modi will address members of the Indian community at a reception for about 500 people at his hotel. He will then pay respects at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, a memorial to Russian soldiers who had died in

war. Mr. Modi will be joined by Mr. Putin for a visit to an exhibition venue for Rosatom on nuclear power-related technology developments, a key segment of bilateral ties, after which they will go into formal meetings and delegation level-talks at the Kremlin.

Sources aware of the planning said that the dinner at the *Dacha* on Monday is a special gesture by the Russian President, extended only to a few global leaders. For Mr. Putin, Mr. Modi's visit, close on the

heels of his state visits to China and North Korea, meetings on the sidelines of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) summit in Astana last week, as well as hosting Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban a few days ago, adds to an effort to show that the while the "Western alliance" may wish to isolate him for the war in Ukraine, the "global majority", as the Kremlin refers to it, maintains close and personal ties with him.

When asked, Indian Ambassador Vinay Kumar said that the scheduling of Mr. Modi's visit should be seen in the "bilateral context" alone. "Since there have been no annual summits since 2021, it was a priority to resume the bilateral summit mechanism, and both sides have been working towards this," Mr. Kumar told *The Hindu* at the Indian Embassy in Moscow on Sunday.

Recovering ground lost over three years will be at the top of the agenda of the 22nd Annual Summit.

Officials said that official talks and delegation-level talks on Tuesday will focus on addressing trade and banking challenges due to western sanctions, the possibility of more predictable pricing and long-term contracts for Indian energy imports in oil and LNG, opportunities for investment, as well as connectivity projects such as the International North South Transport Corridor (INSTC), the Chennai-Vladivostok maritime route, and the North Sea corridor. Here too, sanctions against Russia as well as Iran are a factor and require discussion, and the two sides are expected to sign a separate agreement on cooperation in the Russian "Far East" region.

While no new defence procurement deals are on the anvil, Mr. Modi is expected to request expediting delayed deliveries. The issue of Indians in the Russian Army will feature, as Mr. Modi will press for early discharge or even a full waiver of the processes for those wishing to return.

PM's visit to Moscow will see discussions on energy, trade (08 July)

Putin to host private dinner and spend personal timewith Modi at his *Dacha* in a special gesture ahead of formal talks on Tuesday; both leaders will visit an exhibition venuefor Rosatom on nuclear power-related technology developments

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi is visiting Moscow for the first time since the Ukraine war began and his re-election in June 2024.

- Russian President Vladimir Putin will host Modi at his estate, Dacha, in Novo-Ogaryovo for a private dinner, marking their first meeting since 2022.
- Modi will arrive on Monday, receiving a ceremonial welcome at Vnukovo airport before staying near Red Square.
- The visit includes a reciprocal dinner to one hosted by Modi for Putin in Delhi during their last summit in December 2021.
- On Tuesday, Modi will address the Indian community in Moscow, visit the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, and join Putin to explore Rosatom's nuclear technology exhibition.
- Formal meetings and delegation-level talks between Modi and Putin will take place at the Kremlin during his 26-hour visit.
- Russian President Vladimir Putin's invitation for a dinner at his Dacha for Prime Minister Narendra Modi is a special gesture, reserved for select global leaders.
- Putin's recent engagements with leaders like Modi, alongside state visits to China, North Korea, and meetings at the SCO summit, aim to counter Western isolation efforts post-Ukraine conflict.
- Indian Ambassador Vinay Kumar emphasizes that Modi's visit is focused on bilateral relations, especially since annual summits have been on hold since 2021.
- The 22nd Annual Summit between Modi and Putin aims to regain ground lost over recent years, focusing on trade challenges due to Western sanctions, energy cooperation, investment opportunities, and connectivity projects like INSTC and Chennai-Vladivostok maritime route.
- Discussions will include cooperation in Russia's Far East, addressing sanctions impacts, and potential agreements on energy pricing and long-term contracts.
- Modi will discuss expedited delivery of delayed defence procurements and seek solutions for Indians in the Russian Army seeking early discharge or waivers.

Trade imbalance, Indians in Russian Army among key concerns for diaspora

GS Paper II: India-Russia

Sumasini Prasad
MOSCOW

Tackling issues arising from the Ukraine war will be at the top of the agenda for many members of the Indian diaspora who will attend a community event that Prime Minister Narendra Modi will address during his Moscow visit.

These include trade and payment imbalances as well as the danger to Indians recruited by the Russian military serving at the frontlines. Among the more than 500 invitees to the event to be held at a hotel on Tuesday morning will be businessmen, students and doctors, who form a part of the roughly 14,000-strong diaspora that works here, as well as 25,000-30,000 Indians estimated to be studying in Russia.

The post-Ukraine war situation should be a “golden era” for India-Russia relations, says Rameshwar Singh, who has lived in Russia for more than 40 years, and runs the NGO Disha. He says however, that the “vacuum” created



 We have raised this bilaterally earlier ... requesting an early military discharge for the Indians. The issue could be raised in Prime Minister’s meeting too

VINAY KUMAR
Indian Ambassador to Russia

by Western companies pulling out of the country has not yet been filled by Indian companies, and hopes the Modi-Putin meet will yield a breakthrough on the payment issues existing companies face.

Another issue for the diaspora is a possible strain in India-Russia ties over the problem of Indians being recruited by the Russian military, and sent to the warfront with Ukraine. With growing public pressure from their families in India for the Ministry of External Affairs to push for their early discharge, Indian Ambassador to Russia Vinay Kumar said that issue had become a “public concern” for India. “We have raised this bilaterally earlier including

in the meeting with Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, requesting an early military discharge for the Indians, many of whom have been misled or given false promises and found themselves in dangerous situations. The issue could be raised in PM’s meeting too,” he told *The Hindu*.

Beenish is one of dozens of students volunteering as interpreters during the PM’s visit. She and other students who spoke to *The Hindu* say they hope that India-Russia strategic ties that have seen a slowing in recent years will now pick up pace. “Russia is seeking more trusted partners like India. We hope to hear Mr Modi speak about how bilateral ties will be further strengthened,” she said.

Trade imbalance, Indians in Russian Army among key concerns for diaspora (08 July)

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi will address a community event in Moscow during his visit, attended by members of the Indian diaspora.
- Issues stemming from the Ukraine war will dominate discussions, including trade imbalances, payment issues, and concerns for Indians in the Russian military.
- The event will host over 500 invitees, including businessmen, students, and doctors among the Indian diaspora of approximately 14,000 working and 25,000-30,000 studying in Russia.
- Rameshwar Singh, an NGO leader in Russia, sees the post-Ukraine period as pivotal for India-Russia relations but notes a vacuum left by Western companies withdrawing, urging Indian companies to step in.
- He hopes the Modi-Putin meeting will address payment issues faced by existing Indian companies in Russia.
- The issue of Indians recruited by the Russian military and sent to the Ukraine warfront is causing concern among the Indian diaspora.
- Families in India are pressuring the Ministry of External Affairs to secure early discharge for these individuals.
- Indian Ambassador to Russia, Vinay Kumar, acknowledges this as a public concern and states that India has raised this issue bilaterally with Russia, including in meetings with Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov.
- Students like Beenish, volunteering as interpreters during PM Modi's visit, hope that India-Russia strategic ties, which have slowed in recent years, will strengthen.
- There is optimism among students that Russia sees India as a trusted partner and expects Prime Minister Modi to discuss enhancing bilateral relations during his visit.

Provisional answer key for CUET inaccurate: students

Ashna Butani

NEW DELHI

Hours after the National Testing Agency (NTA) released on Sunday the provisional answer key for the Common University Entrance Test for undergraduate courses (CUET-UG), students flagged issues in the answer key across subjects.

The NTA, in a notification, said students can challenge the provisional answer key by paying ₹200 a question by July 9.

“Challenges made by the candidates will be verified by a panel of subject experts. If the challenge of any candidate is found correct, the answer key will be revised and applied in the response of all the candidates accordingly. Based on the revised final answer key, the result will be prepared and declared. No individual candidate will be

The NTA said students can challenge the provisional answer key by paying ₹200 a question by July 9

informed about the acceptance/non-acceptance of his/her challenge,” it said.

Falak Ahuja, a student, said, “I had a score of 100 in psychology and legal studies in CBSE exams. But after checking the answer key in these subjects, my marks are negative because many questions are wrong. There are around 30 wrong answers in the subjects that I appeared for. The fee for challenging a question is too high.”

Her mother, Astha Ahuja, Assistant Professor of Economics at Delhi University’s Aryabhata College, said, “Such mistakes have been there in previous

years too... this is unfair on the students who were already stressed due to the delays.”

For instance, a question in the legal studies paper asks under which Article of the Constitution did the Government of India enact the Environment Protection Act of 1986, in the wake of the Bhopal Gas Tragedy. As per the NCERT books, the correct answer is Article 253 (option four on the question paper). However, the correct option as per the provisional answer key is Article 38 (option two).

Similarly, in the computer science paper, the answer for the full form of ARPANET, which according to the books is Advanced Research Projects Agency Networks, is marked as Automatic Research Practical Application Network in the answer key.

Provisional answer key for CUET inaccurate: students (08 July)

- The National Testing Agency (NTA) released the provisional answer key for the Common University Entrance Test for undergraduate courses (CUET-UG) on Sunday.

- Students have raised issues with the answer key across various subjects.
- NTA has allowed candidates to challenge the provisional answer key by paying ₹200 per question until July 9.
- Challenges will be verified by a panel of subject experts. If a challenge is upheld, the answer key will be revised for all candidates.
- The final result will be prepared based on the revised answer key, and individual candidates will not be informed about the acceptance or rejection of their challenges.
- Falak Ahuja, a student, expressed concerns about incorrect answers affecting their scores in psychology and legal studies. They claimed there were around 30 wrong answers in the subjects they appeared for and criticized the high fee for challenging a question.
- Astha Ahuja, an Assistant Professor of Economics at Delhi University's Aryabhata College, commented on errors in the CUET-UG provisional answer key.
- She criticized the recurrence of such mistakes over previous years, highlighting the unfair stress it causes to already anxious students.
- An example provided was a question in the legal studies paper regarding the enactment of the Environment Protection Act of 1986. The NCERT books cite Article 253 as the correct answer, but the provisional answer key indicated Article 38.
- In the computer science paper, there was discrepancy over the full form of ARPANET. While NCERT books state it as Advanced Research Projects Agency Networks, the answer key listed it as Automatic Research Practical Application Network.

Patriotic IAS

Graphene: a simple wonder

GS Paper III: S&T

Karthik Vinod

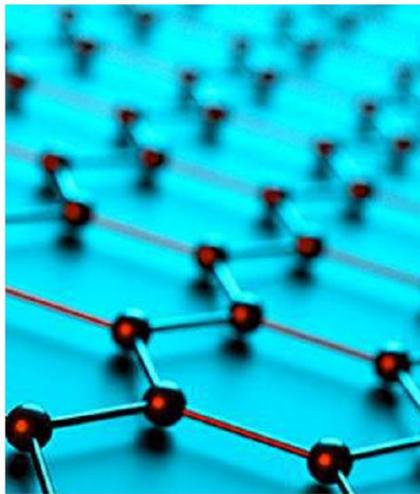
When the same element is able to exist in different forms, the forms are called allotropes. Graphene, thus, is an allotrope of carbon, along with diamond and graphite. It consists of a single layer of carbon atoms that are linked to each other in a honeycomb pattern.

Graphene is among the most versatile materials known to humankind. As a nanomaterial, it is stronger than diamond, more conductive than silver, more elastic than rubber, and lighter than aluminium. Many people called it a "wonder material".

It is simple to make graphene: use scotch tape to peel away the lead of a pencil for a while. Under a microscope, you should be able to see graphene residue left on the tape.

However, scientists use more sophisticated techniques in laboratories, like chemical vapour deposition, to deposit graphene in order to make stronger car tires or when making chips to replace those made of silicon in smartphones.

When graphene is mixed with concrete, the latter becomes 25% stronger and less carbon-intensive. Graphene also develops some unusual properties in a twisted bilayer form. In 2019, for example, physicists found that when one



Graphene is among the most versatile materials known to humankind. As a nanomaterial, it is stronger than diamond, more conductive than silver, more elastic than rubber, and lighter than aluminium. GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

sheet of graphene is placed above another and rotated by 1.1 degrees relative to the bottom layer, the stack becomes a superconductor at low temperature.

(Karthik Vinod is interning with The Hindu.)

For feedback and suggestions

for 'Science', please write to science@thehindu.co.in with the subject 'Daily page'



Graphene: a simple wonder (08 July)

- Graphene is an allotrope of carbon, like diamond and graphite, consisting of a single layer of carbon atoms arranged in a honeycomb pattern.
- It is considered one of the most versatile materials due to its exceptional properties.
- Graphene is stronger than diamond, more conductive than silver, more elastic than rubber, and lighter than aluminium.
- It can be produced simply by peeling graphite using scotch tape, leaving behind graphene residue visible under a microscope.
- Laboratories use advanced techniques like chemical vapour deposition to deposit graphene, used in applications such as strengthening car tires and replacing silicon in smartphone chips.
- Mixing graphene with concrete makes it 25% stronger and reduces its carbon footprint.
- Graphene exhibits unique properties in a twisted bilayer form, such as becoming a superconductor at low temperatures when layers are rotated relative to each other.

A law around low-carbon climate resilient development (08 July)

- Supreme Court of India recognized a right to be "free from the adverse impacts of climate change" in *M.K. Ranjitsinh and Others vs Union of India*.
- This right is derived from the right to life and the right to equality.
- Establishing climate jurisprudence in India raises questions about how this right will be protected.
- Judicial interventions alone are insufficient; a comprehensive climate legislation tailored to the Indian context is needed.
- Climate legislation should re-orient development towards low-carbon and climate-resilient futures.
- Law must ensure objectives are internalized in routine decision-making at all development levels.
- Climate change impacts the vulnerable, so climate action must advance social justice.
- Climate law should go beyond setting and achieving emission targets, focusing on developmental choices and their long-term impacts.
- The right to protection from adverse climate effects should be realized through well-defined legal procedures applicable across government levels.
- Effective climate action requires a well-designed institutional structure for strategizing, prioritizing, troubleshooting, and evaluating policies.
- 67 countries have used 'framework climate laws' to build governance capacity for climate change.
- These laws set government-wide goals and include processes and accountability measures.

- India's approach must be tailored to its context, starting with low per capita emissions but growing emissions.
- India's objective should be to maximize development from each ton of carbon and avoid high carbon futures.
- India is highly vulnerable to climate impacts, so climate resilience must be included in the law.
- Social equity considerations must be central in achieving low-carbon development and resilience.
- The law should help navigate developmental choices towards a low-carbon, resilient society.
- For example, rapidly growing Indian cities should aim for low-carbon, climate-resilient development.
- City planning should minimize flood risks and heatwave vulnerability.
- Transport needs should be met through electric vehicle adoption, improved public transport, and lifestyle changes.

Have a low carbon development body

- A framework climate law should create an institutional structure for crafting viable policy options.
- Immediate priority: establish a government knowledge body to rigorously analyze policy options.
- Recommend an independent 'low-carbon development commission' with experts and technical staff.
- This commission would offer practical ways for national and State governments to achieve low-carbon growth and resilience.
- The commission could also serve as a platform for deliberative decision-making, consulting vulnerable communities and those affected by technological changes.
- Example: South Africa's Presidential Climate Commission.
- Effective climate governance needs strategic direction and the consideration of low carbon choices within ministries.
- Recommend creating a 'climate cabinet' of core Ministers and Chief Ministers to drive strategy.
- A whole-of-government approach requires dedicated coordination mechanisms for implementation.
- The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change should play a central role, complemented by higher-level coordination.
- The Executive Committee on Climate Change, made up of senior bureaucrats from multiple Ministries, should be reinvigorated with clearly specified legal powers and duties.

Engagement with the federal structure

- The law must consider India's federal structure, involving State and local governments.
- Many crucial areas for reducing emissions and improving resilience are managed by subnational governments.
- Climate impacts are first felt at local levels.
- The law must engage subnational governments effectively.
- Establish channels for subnational governments to access national scientific capacity through the low-carbon development commission.
- Articulate ways to finance local action, aligning centrally-sponsored schemes with climate goals.
- Require national departments to climate tag expenditures towards local climate resilience.
- Establish coordination mechanisms for Centre and States to consult on major climate decisions.
- Require Centre and States to update medium-term climate plans with unified goals.
- Encourage States to build complementary institutions to those at the Centre for knowledge, strategy-setting, deliberation, and coordination.
- The proposed framework law should enable action across national Ministries and the federal structure.
- Complementary sectoral laws and amendments may be needed, informed by the framework law.
- The Supreme Court's pronouncement in M.K. Ranjitsinh paves the way for legal and governance changes to protect against the adverse effects of climate change.
- A well-suited climate law for India should steer development towards a low-carbon and climate-resilient future and advance justice.

The ANRF plan has got off on the wrong foot

GS Paper III: S&T

In 2023, both Houses of Parliament passed the Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF) Bill, marking a historic start to an initiative to seed, grow, and facilitate research in India, especially in India's universities and colleges.

The 2019 National Research Foundation (NRF) project report explicitly mentioned that "growing outstanding research cells already existing at State Universities" is one of the ANRF's top priority. The scientific community welcomed the Bill and was hoping that the ANRF would provide much-needed breathing space for Indian academia for research free from the bureaucracy, in addition to providing a funding boost and a chance to work together with industry partners.

Lack of industry representation

Nearly a year later and the ANRF has got off on the wrong foot. Recently, it announced a 15-member Governing Board and a 16-member Executive Council, which lack representation from organisations the ANRF envisioned aiding and facilitating.

For example, the ANRF aims to strengthen the research infrastructure of universities. Even acknowledging that more than 95% of students attend State universities and colleges in India, the board and the executive council do not have any members from Central or State universities or colleges. In addition to the Principal Scientific Adviser, they are represented by people who are usually in any high-powered committees of the Government of India – Secretaries from all science departments (Department of Science and Technology (DST), Department of Biotechnology (DBT), Department of Scientific and Industrial Research (DSIR), earth sciences, agriculture,



Binay Panda

Professor at the Jawaharlal Nehru University

The composition of the Anusandhan National Research Foundation's governing board and executive council shows that it could become just another government department

health research, atomic energy, new and renewable energy, electronics and information technology), higher education and defence research and development, directors of the Indian Institute of Science and Tata Institute of Fundamental Research, the Chair of the Indian Council of Historical Research, a Princeton mathematics professor, a science administrator and former Director of the United States National Science Foundation from Brown University and a Silicon Valley serial entrepreneur.

However, the board and the council need representatives who understand the bottlenecks in the current system, especially in the university system, and know how to get things done on the ground rather than being in an advisory role.

Most importantly, the ANRF needs to avoid the confusion that can arise from multiple committees. Therefore, creating a single committee to formulate and implement strategies on the ground is crucial. This emphasis on ground-level knowledge and experience among the committee members should reassure the research community and stakeholders that the ANRF's decision-making process will be informed, competent, and timely.

The lack of adequate industry representation and diversity is one of the most glaring omissions from the current board and council, especially when the ANRF plans to raise more than 70% of its funding from non-government sources and industry. The sole industry representative, Romesh T. Wadhvani, is an Indian-American businessman based in Silicon Valley, U.S., and the sole woman representative is the Secretary of the DSIR. There is no representation from Indian industry or any entrepreneurs from the country or eminent academics from the Central and State

universities on the committee.

R&D underfunding

India underfunds research and development. In addition to increasing the research and development budget to 4% of GDP, a significant overhaul of the current funding system is required to boost research and to make innovation coming out of Indian organisations globally competitive. To achieve this, the ANRF must: be adequately staffed; implement a robust grant management system; have an internal standard peer-review system with an incentive for reviewers; ensure timely disbursement of research grants and student fellowships with a quick turn-around time (less than six months) between application and fund disbursement; have a system free from bureaucratic hurdles both at the funding body and at grantee institutions; provide flexibility of spending money without following the government's stringent general financial rules (GFR), and permit purchases without going through the Government e-marketplace (GeM) portal.

The ANRF must function unlike any other current government science department. It should have more diverse representations of practising natural and social scientists from the university system, with more women and young entrepreneurs in its committee. Additionally, the future chief executive officer of the ANRF must have a background in both industry and academia, and be someone who can raise money for the ANRF and understand the global innovation ecosystem. A complete overhaul is required for the ANRF to avoid becoming like any other government department and to bridge research and teaching in our universities.

The ANRF plan has got off on the wrong foot (08 July)

- The Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF) Bill was passed in 2023 to enhance research in Indian universities and colleges.
- The 2019 National Research Foundation (NRF) report prioritized growing outstanding research cells at State Universities.
- The scientific community welcomed the Bill, expecting less bureaucracy, more funding, and industry collaboration.
- The ANRF has faced criticism nearly a year later due to its Governing Board and Executive Council lacking industry representation.
- No members from Central or State universities or colleges are included, despite most students attending these institutions.
- The board and council are mostly comprised of high-level government officials, directors from premier research institutes, and international experts.
- The board and council need representatives with ground-level knowledge of university system bottlenecks.

- Creating a single committee for strategy formulation and implementation is crucial to avoid confusion.
- Emphasizing ground-level experience should reassure the research community and stakeholders.
- The lack of adequate industry representation and diversity on the board and council is a major omission.
- The ANRF plans to raise over 70% of its funding from non-government sources and industry.
- Romesh T. Wadhvani is the sole industry representative, and the DSIR Secretary is the sole woman representative.
- There is no representation from Indian industry, local entrepreneurs, or academics from Central and State universities on the committee.

R&D underfunding

- India underfunds research and development; increasing the budget to 4% of GDP is needed.
- Significant overhaul of the current funding system is required to boost research and global competitiveness.
- ANRF must:
 - Be adequately staffed.
 - Implement a robust grant management system.
 - Have an internal peer-review system with incentives for reviewers.
 - Ensure timely disbursement of research grants and student fellowships within six months.
 - Be free from bureaucratic hurdles at both the funding body and grantee institutions.
 - Provide spending flexibility without following stringent government financial rules.
 - Permit purchases without using the Government e-marketplace (GeM) portal.
- ANRF should function differently from current government science departments.
- It should have diverse representation, including practising natural and social scientists, more women, and young entrepreneurs.
- The future CEO of ANRF should have a background in both industry and academia, be capable of raising funds, and understand the global innovation ecosystem.
- A complete overhaul is required for ANRF to bridge research and teaching in universities effectively.

Old traditions, new ties (08 July)

Narendra Modi must try and convince Vladimir Putin to end the Ukraine war

- PM Modi's visit to Moscow reaffirms the tradition of annual summits between India and Russia.
- This is Modi's first bilateral visit in his third tenure, prioritizing Russia over neighboring countries.
- The 22nd India-Russia Annual Summit marks the first Modi-Putin meeting since the Ukraine war.
- Their last meeting was at the SCO summit in Uzbekistan, where Modi emphasized this is not the "era of war".
- Russia's growing dependence on China due to the war is a concern for India, given LAC tensions.
- Talks will cover bilateral issues like trade, energy, space cooperation for Gaganyaan, and defense supplies.
- The summit will also review the impact of the Ukraine war, global security, food, fuel, and fertilizer shortages.
- India is concerned about the fallout on defense deliveries and spares from Russia.
- Efforts to "Make in India" have progressed (e.g., Russian assault rifles, BrahMos missile).
- Concerns over reliability of supplies and payment issues need discussion.
- Indian recruitments by the Russian army is another issue for discussion.
- PM Modi's visit to Moscow contrasts with the NATO summit in Washington.
- The NATO summit will include U.S. President Biden, NATO leaders, Ukrainian President Zelenskyy, and Indo-Pacific leaders, showcasing Russia's "isolation".
- Modi balances this with participation in the G-7 summit in Italy, meeting Zelenskyy, and sending a delegation to the Peace Conference in Switzerland.
- India maintains traditional ties with Russia, stemming from the 1971 Soviet Union Peace and Friendship treaty.
- India has not condemned the war at the UN and continues bilateral engagement with Russia and in groups like SCO, BRICS, and G-20.
- Modi's visit will focus on using India's multi-polar, unaligned position to promote "dialogue and diplomacy" and help end the conflict.

Winds of change (08 July)

The rest of the world must do more to engage with reformists in Iran

- Masoud Pezeshkian, a reformist, won Iran's presidential run-off.
- Pezeshkian opposes moral policing of women and advocates for engagement with the West.
- His victory indicates Iran's capacity for political surprises amid economic and social challenges.

- Previously, Iran's government branches were controlled by conservatives ('principalists').
- Recent years saw protests and state repression, making the revolution seem aged.
- Pezeshkian's election followed the death of conservative Ebrahim Raisi in a May helicopter crash.
- Pezeshkian had limited administrative experience, having served in the Khatami government over 20 years ago.
- His candidacy was supported by Iran's reformist coalition and endorsed by former Presidents Khatami and Rouhani.
- In the July 5 run-off, Pezeshkian won with 53.6% of the vote, defeating conservative Saeed Jalili.
- Recent Iranian elections saw declining voter turnout, reflecting dissatisfaction with the system.
- The first round had a 39.9% turnout, raising concerns about the system's legitimacy.
- A higher turnout in the run-off (nearly 50%) supported Masoud Pezeshkian's reformist agenda.
- Pezeshkian has criticized the handling of protests and supports dialogue with the West to revive the 2015 nuclear deal.
- Iran's presidency has limited powers under the Supreme Leader's control in the theocratic system.
- Despite constraints, Pezeshkian's strong mandate suggests potential for pushing gradual reforms.
- His victory is seen as a public message for the clerical establishment to consider reforms and engage cautiously with the world.

The problem of special packages

Coalition politics is back at the Union level in a substantial way. The Bharatiya Janata Party is dependent on the Janata Dal (United) of Bihar and the Telugu Desam Party of Andhra Pradesh for its parliamentary majority. This is in contrast to 2014 and 2019, when *de facto* single-party governments came to office. With single-party majority becoming a thing of the past, demand for State-specific discretionary grants, or ‘special packages’, are back with a bang in public discussion.

The positive aspect of single-party dominance being tempered by the presence of coalition partners that can act as a check if unitary trends surge cannot be underestimated. Nevertheless, this is the time to test the hypothesis that when single-party dominance at the Union level fades, federal tendencies bloom and when a single-party majority under a strong leader at the Union level prevails, federal tendencies wilt.

If a healthy federal structure is to be nurtured, the fiscal boundaries, principles of assignment of taxes, and the basis for grants have to be transparent and objective. A federal setup can be asymmetric in a country that is characterised by linguistic, cultural, and economic diversity. But issues of asymmetry should be addressed by means of constitutional provisions that have both transparency and stability.

The Constitution has provisions that address the issues of specific States, or States that have a special status with regard to certain matters mentioned in the Constitution. These provisions are covered, for instance, in Articles 371A to H (Article 370 for the erstwhile State of Jammu and Kashmir, of course, is abrogated).

Purely discretionary

On the contrary, special packages are purely discretionary. They may be need-based, but the need is not the proximate reason for granting a special package, which



R. Mohan

a former Indian Revenue Service officer

That the outcome of an election can determine the fiscal distribution of national resources to a State or States goes against the grain of fiscal federalism

is an additional grant under Article 282, which falls under ‘Miscellaneous Financial Provisions’. More often than not, they are the result of the bargaining power of some State-level political parties that can tilt the scales of parliamentary majority. What does this augur for the health of our federal set-up?

That the outcome of an election can determine the fiscal distribution of national resources to a State or States goes against the grain of fiscal federalism (or, more correctly, of federal finance). Some States may be justified in their demands for funds, but allocation has to be through the mechanism of the Finance Commission. The Commission is constituted by the President every five years or earlier to make recommendations regarding the distribution of a share of taxes collected by the Union to the States, and how this is to be distributed among the States, as per Article 280; and disbursement of grants to States in need of assistance, as provided in Article 275. The 16th Finance Commission, which is already in existence, cannot be bypassed solely on account of partisan political exigencies.

When the same political party is in power at the Union and State levels, it is called a ‘double-engine sarkar’. The main engine has lost the power to run on its own and the owners of smaller engines that are needed to pull the train along are making their own demands. While individual States may well need special packages, process is of the utmost importance. How have these events impacted the political and fiscal relations between the Union and the States?

Federal tendencies

The first issue here is the extent to which our polity is federal. The Constitution has been famously described as having a quasi-federal framework. C.H. Alexandrowicz, however, disputed this description in his work *Constitutional Developments in India* (1957),

stating that in situations other than an Emergency, it assumes a federal character. The Supreme Court has made the succinct observation that our polity is amphibian – it can assume unitary and federal characters depending on whether or not there is an Emergency under Articles 352 and 356 in force (*State of Rajasthan and Others v Union of India*, 1977).

Be that as it may, it is often argued that the prevailing political environment crucially determines whether federal tendencies bloom or wilt. Keeping this proposition in mind, the hypothesis stated above can be put to test.

How fiscal distribution is done is cardinal in the test of whether or not federalism is strong. In the recent past, some States raised concerns about their share in the divisible pool of Union taxes facing a decline. Tax distribution is formula-based, and it is for the 16th Finance Commission to address this issue and undertake the delicate task of balancing the interests of the States *inter se*, and with those of the Centre.

The focus here is on grants, in the disbursement of which scope for discretion is wider. In our constitutional framework, the primary task of recommending grants to States in need of assistance is that of the Finance Commission, until Parliament makes legislation in this regard.

But the fact now is that the flow of discretionary grants to the States through Article 282 have far overtaken (by almost a factor of four) that of the grants recommended by the Finance Commissions. Acceding to demands for special packages which are raised by State-based parties, holding the key to parliamentary majority, will weaken the foundations of fiscal federalism, as it will result in diverting national resources away from other States, which too may have pressing needs. If this is allowed to happen, we will see the paradox of federal tendencies wilting instead of blooming when single-party dominance fades.

The problem of special packages

- Coalition politics has returned significantly at the Union level.
- The BJP relies on Janata Dal (United) from Bihar and Telugu Desam Party from Andhra Pradesh for its parliamentary majority.
- This contrasts with 2014 and 2019 when single-party governments were in power.
- With single-party majorities fading, demands for State-specific discretionary grants or 'special packages' have resurfaced in public discussions.
- Coalition partners can act as checks on unitary trends, tempering single-party dominance.
- A hypothesis suggests that single-party dominance at the Union level diminishes federal tendencies, whereas coalition governments enhance them.
- To nurture a healthy federal structure, fiscal boundaries, tax assignments, and grant bases must be transparent and objective.
- A federal setup in a diverse country can be asymmetric but should be addressed through constitutional provisions that ensure transparency and stability.
- The Constitution has provisions for specific States with special status (Articles 371A to H and formerly Article 370 for Jammu and Kashmir).
- Special packages are discretionary and often result from the bargaining power of State-level political parties.
- These packages, granted under Article 282, are additional grants and not always based on need.
- This discretionary approach can undermine fiscal federalism and the principle of equitable resource distribution.
- States' demands for funds should be addressed through the Finance Commission, constituted every five years to recommend tax distribution and grants as per Articles 280 and 275.
- The 16th Finance Commission cannot be bypassed for partisan political reasons.
- When the same party governs both Union and State levels, it is termed a 'double-engine sarkar,' but now coalition partners are making their own demands.
- While individual States may need special packages, the process of granting them is crucial.
- These developments have impacted political and fiscal relations between the Union and States.

Federal tendencies

- The Constitution is described as having a quasi-federal framework.
- C.H. Alexandrowicz argued that except during an Emergency, the Constitution assumes a federal character.

- The Supreme Court described India's polity as amphibian, assuming unitary or federal characters based on whether there is an Emergency under Articles 352 and 356 (State of Rajasthan and Others v Union of India, 1977).
- The prevailing political environment significantly influences federal tendencies.
- The hypothesis that federal tendencies bloom or wilt depending on single-party dominance can be tested.
- Fiscal distribution is crucial in determining the strength of federalism.
- Some States recently raised concerns about their declining share in the divisible pool of Union taxes.
- Tax distribution is formula-based, and it is the task of the 16th Finance Commission to balance the interests of the States and the Centre.
- Disbursement of grants has more discretion compared to tax distribution.
- The Finance Commission primarily recommends grants to States in need of assistance unless Parliament legislates otherwise.
- Discretionary grants to States through Article 282 have surpassed grants recommended by the Finance Commissions by almost a factor of four.
- Special packages demanded by State-based parties can divert national resources from other States with pressing needs, weakening fiscal federalism.
- If this continues, federal tendencies may wilt instead of blooming as single-party dominance fades.

Patriotic IAS

Representation of women in the Lok Sabha

Not only did the Trinamool Congress field a large number of women but most of them also got elected

CS Paper II:
Parliament

DATE: _____

Sanjay Kumar
Yashodhara Ranjan

Representation of women in the Lok Sabha has increased significantly since the first parliamentary election in 1952 (Table 1). In the first Lok Sabha, there were 22 women MPs out of a total of 489, constituting a share of 4.5%. In 1957, of the 494 MPs, 27 were women (5.5%). In the 17th Lok Sabha, which had 543 MPs, 78 were women (14.4%). The 18th Lok Sabha constituted after the 2024 election has 74 women MPs out of a total of 543 (13.6%).

There was barely any difference among political parties between the 2019 and 2024 Lok Sabha elections when it came to fielding women candidates. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) gave a slightly higher proportion of tickets to women candidates in 2024 (15.7%) compared to 2019 (12.6%). The Congress fielded 41 women candidates in 2024 compared to 52 in 2019, but the share of women fielded was the same in both years (12.3%). This is because it contested fewer seats in 2024 compared to 2019. The Trinamool Congress fielded fewer candidates (12) too compared to 2019 (23) (Table 2).

The success rate of BJP women candidates declined to 44.9% in 2024 from 74.6% in 2019. The party fielded more women in 2024 compared to 2019. But the number of women who got elected in 2024 declined from 41 to 31. On the other hand, the success rate of Congress women candidates increased to 18.8% in 2024 from 11.5% in 2019. Of the 41 women candidates of the Congress, 13 got elected to the Lok Sabha in 2024. The Trinamool Congress fielded 12 women of which 11 got elected to the Lok Sabha (91.6% success rate). It is important to note that five of the 14 women contestants from the Samajwadi Party also got elected to the Lok Sabha (Table 3).

Women constituted 40.9% of all the Trinamool's MPs in 2019. In 2024, the share is 37.9%. This is much higher than any other political party. Women constitute 12.9% of the total number of BJP MPs in the current House, which is not very different from the 2019 share of 13.5%. Similarly, women MPs comprise 13.1% of all the Congress MPs in the current Lok Sabha election. Though the actual number of Congress MP was far less in 2019, the share was only marginally less at 11.5% (Table 4).

Many commentators have said that a large number of women voted for the BJP because they benefited from the party's welfare schemes. The National Election Study 2024 conducted by Lokniti-Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS) show that this is an overstatement. Women voters have voted for different parties in different States.

Among women voters in West Bengal, 53% voted for the Trinamool while only 33% voted for the BJP. This resulted in a stunning victory for the Trinamool. In Karnataka, 52% of the women voters voted for the Congress, while 46% voted for the BJP/National Democratic Alliance (NDA). In Bihar, 50% of the women voters voted for the NDA and only 37% voted for the INDIA bloc. In Haryana, 49% of women voters chose the Congress/INDIA while 42% voted for the BJP/NDA. In Madhya Pradesh, 60% of women voters chose the BJP compared to only 34% who choose the Congress. In Delhi, 57% of women voters chose the BJP, while 41% voted for INDIA. In Rajasthan, 55% of the women voters chose the BJP while only 39% chose the Congress. The women's vote was slightly tilted in favour of the INDIA bloc in Uttar Pradesh and Telangana, but marginally in favour of the NDA in Maharashtra.

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Women in the Lower House

The data for the tables were sourced from the Election Commission of India and the National Election Study (NES) 2024

Table 1: Representation of women from the 1st to the 18th Lok Sabha

LS	Women MPs	% Women MPs
1st	22	4.50%
2nd	27	5.47%
3rd	34	6.88%
4th	31	5.96%
5th	22	4.25%
6th	19	3.51%
7th	28	5.17%
8th	44	8.13%
9th	36	6.81%
10th	42	7.87%
11th	40	7.37%
12th	44	8.10%
13th	48	8.84%
14th	45	8.29%
15th	58	10.68%
16th	62	11.42%
17th	78	14.36%
18th	74	13.63%

Table 2: Party-wise proportion of women candidates in the Lok Sabha elections of 2019 and 2024

Party	2024		2019	
	Women	% Women	Women	% Women
BJP	69	15.7%	55	12.6%
Congress	41	12.3%	52	12.4%
Trinamool	12	25.5%	23	37.1%
SP	14	21.9%	6	16.2%
AAP	0	0.0%	3	8.6%
JD(U)	2	12.5%	2	11.8%
RJD	7	29.2%	3	14.3%
TDP	1	5.9%	3	12.0%
DMK	3	14.3%	2	8.7%
SHS(UBT)	2	9.5%	1	4.3%
BSP	38	7.8%	24	6.3%
CPI	2	6.7%	4	8.2%
CPI(M)	7	13.5%	10	14.5%

*Data for Maharashtra is for undivided Shiv Sena.
Source: Data compiled by authors from the Election Commission of India

Table 3: Party-wise success rate of women candidates in the Lok Sabha elections of 2019 and 2024

Party	2024			2019		
	Women candidates	Women who won	Success rate	Women candidates	Women who won	Success rate
BJP	69	31	44.9%	55	41	74.6%
Congress	41	13	18.8%	52	6	11.5%
Trinamool	12	11	91.6%	23	9	39.1%
SP	14	5	35.7%	6	0	0.0%
DMK	3	3	100.0%	2	2	100.0%
JD(U)	2	2	100.0%	2	1	50.0%
RJD	7	1	14.3%	3	0	0.0%
TDP	1	1	100.0%	3	0	0.0%

Table 4: Party-wise women elected in the Lok Sabha polls of 2019 and 2024

Party	2024		2019	
	Women MPs	% Women MPs	Women MPs	% Women MPs
BJP	31	12.9%	41	13.5%
Congress	13	13.1%	6	11.5%
Trinamool	11	37.9%	9	40.9%
SP	5	13.5%	0	0.0%
DMK	3	13.6%	2	8.7%
JD(U)	2	16.7%	1	6.3%
RJD	1	25.0%	0	0.0%
TDP	1	6.3%	0	0.0%



Representation of women in the Lok Sabha (08 July)

Not only did the Trinamool Congress field a large number of women but most of them also got elected

- Representation of women in the Lok Sabha has increased over the years:
 - In the first Lok Sabha (1952), 22 out of 489 MPs were women (4.5%).

- By the 17th Lok Sabha (2019), the number rose to 78 women out of 543 MPs (14.4%).
- In the 18th Lok Sabha (2024), there are 74 women MPs out of 543 (13.6%).
- Comparison between 2019 and 2024 Lok Sabha elections:
 - BJP increased the proportion of tickets to women candidates from 12.6% in 2019 to 15.7% in 2024.
 - Congress fielded 41 women candidates in 2024 (same as in 2019), maintaining a 12.3% share due to contesting fewer seats.
 - Trinamool Congress reduced its women candidates from 23 in 2019 to 12 in 2024.
- BJP's success rate among women candidates decreased to 44.9% in 2024 from 74.6% in 2019 despite fielding more candidates.
- Congress saw an increase in success rate for women candidates to 18.8% in 2024 from 11.5% in 2019, with 13 women elected.
- Trinamool Congress had a high success rate of 91.6% among women candidates in 2024, with 11 out of 12 getting elected.
- Samajwadi Party had a success rate of 35.7% among women contestants in 2024, with 5 out of 14 elected.
- Trinamool Congress had 40.9% women MPs in 2019, which decreased to 37.9% in 2024, the highest among all parties.
- BJP's women MPs constituted 12.9% in 2024, similar to 13.5% in 2019.
- Congress' women MPs constituted 13.1% in 2024, slightly lower than the 2019 figure of 13.5%.
- Women's voting patterns varied across states:
 - West Bengal: 53% of women voters favored Trinamool Congress, leading to its victory.
 - Karnataka: 52% of women voters favored Congress over BJP/NDA.
 - Bihar: 50% of women voters favored NDA, while 37% favored INDIA bloc.
 - Haryana: 49% of women voters favored Congress/INDIA, with 42% favoring BJP/NDA.
 - Madhya Pradesh: 60% of women voters chose BJP, while 34% chose Congress.
 - Delhi: 57% of women voters chose BJP, with 41% opting for INDIA.
 - Rajasthan: 55% of women voters chose BJP, while 39% chose Congress.
 - Uttar Pradesh and Telangana: Slightly favored INDIA bloc.
 - Maharashtra: Slightly favored NDA.

On expunction powers in Parliament

Why did the Opposition engage in a war of words with the government over expunging certain remarks? What is the process to expunge remarks in Parliament? Can a member of the Lok Sabha direct a remark against a Minister? What do the various rules state?

GS Paper:
Parliament

EXPLAINER

Sumeda

The story so far:

The first special session of the 18th Lok Sabha witnessed heated discussions, with the Opposition clashing with the government over a range of issues, ultimately concluding with a war of words over the expunction of the remarks of the leaders of Opposition in both Houses. Rajya Sabha Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar removed portions of Leader of Opposition (LoP) Mallikarjun Kharge's speech, which was critical of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh. Meanwhile, in the Lower House, parts of Rahul Gandhi's remarks on the PM and the BJP were expunged from the records on the orders of Speaker Om Birla, sparking allegations of different yardsticks being applied for different MPs.

When are remarks expunged?

Parliament maintains a verbatim record of everything that is spoken and takes place during proceedings. While Article 105 of the Constitution confers certain privileges and freedom of speech in Parliament on MPs, it is subject to other provisions of the Constitution and the rules of the House. On the orders of the presiding officer, that is, the Chairman in the Upper House and the Speaker in the Lower House, words, phrases and expressions which are deemed "defamatory, indecent, unparliamentary or undignified" are deleted or expunged from records. For this purpose, the Lok Sabha Secretariat maintains a comprehensive list of 'unparliamentary' words and expressions.

The rules of parliamentary etiquette, which are laid out to ensure discipline and decorum in the Rajya Sabha, say, "When the Chair holds that a particular word or expression is unparliamentary, it should be immediately withdrawn without any attempt to raise any debate



War of words: Leader Of Opposition in Rajya Sabha Mallikarjun Kharge speaks in the House. ANI

over it. Words or expressions held to be unparliamentary and ordered to be expunged by the Chair are omitted from the printed debates."

There have been recorded instances where the scope of expunction has been broadened. Speakers, at their discretion, have ordered the expunction of words deemed prejudicial to national interest or detrimental to maintaining friendly relations with a foreign State, derogatory to dignitaries, likely to offend national sentiments or affect the religious susceptibilities of a section of community, likely to discredit the Army, not in good taste or otherwise objectionable or likely to bring the House into ridicule or lower the dignity of the Chair, the House or the members, authors M. N. Kaul and S. L. Shakhder note in their book *Practice and Procedure of Parliament*. For instance, Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru once

objected when a member referred to the President of Pakistan while asking a supplementary question about the international situation. Mr. Nehru said it would "not be proper" for the Head of a foreign state to be mentioned in the language the member had used. The objectionable words were then expunged.

Members must withdraw objectionable remarks deemed irrelevant to the debate upon the Chair's request and failure to comply may lead to expunction. Similarly, quoting from an unreferenced document or speaking after being asked to desist can result in an expunction.

What about remarks against an MP?

If an MP makes an allegation against their colleague or an outsider, Rule 353 of the Lok Sabha outlines the procedural framework to be followed. "The Rule does not prohibit the making of any allegation.

The only requirement is advance notice, on receipt of which the Minister concerned will conduct an inquiry into the allegation and come up with the facts when the MP makes the allegation in the House," former Lok Sabha Secretary General P.D.T. Achary says. If the allegation is neither defamatory nor incriminatory, the above rule would not apply, he adds.

"The rule does not obviously apply to an allegation against a Minister in the government. Since the Council of Ministers is accountable to Parliament, the Members of the House have the right to question Ministers and make imputations against their conduct as Ministers," Mr. Achary adds.

How do officers expunge remarks?

The Chairman and Speaker are vested with the power to order the expunction of remarks under Rule 261, and Rule 380 and 381 of the Rules of Procedure of the Rajya Sabha and Lok Sabha, respectively.

Rule 261 states, "If the Chairman is of opinion that a word or words have or have been used in debate which is or are defamatory or indecent or unparliamentary or undignified, he may in his discretion, order that such word or words be expunged from the proceedings of the Council." The Lower House has a similar provision.

The expunged portions are marked by asterisks with an explanatory footnote stating 'expunged as ordered by the Chair'. If the Chair directs that nothing will go on record during a member's speech or interruption, footnote 'not recorded' is inserted. A comprehensive list of words and phrases is circulated through media outlets at the end of the day's proceedings. Once expunged, these words or phrases cease to exist on the official record. However, the relevance of the practice of expunging remarks has lately come into question, in a digital age where expunged content remains accessible due to the live telecast of proceedings and wider circulation of screenshots and videos on social media.

THE GIST

Rajya Sabha Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar removed portions of Mallikarjun Kharge's speech, which was critical of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the RSS. Meanwhile, in the Lower House, parts of Rahul Gandhi's remarks on the PM and the BJP were expunged from the records on the orders of Speaker Om Birla.

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However, the relevance of the practice of expunging remarks has lately come into question, in a digital age where expunged content remains accessible due to the live telecast of proceedings and wider circulation of screenshots and videos on social media.

On expunction powers in Parliament (08 July)

Why did the Opposition engage in a war of words with the government over expunging certain remarks? What is the process to expunge remarks in Parliament? Can a member of the Lok Sabha direct a remark against a Minister? What do the various rules state?

- The first special session of the 18th Lok Sabha was marked by heated debates between the Opposition and the government.
- Opposition leaders Mallikarjun Kharge and Rahul Gandhi faced expunction of their remarks critical of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the BJP.
- Rajya Sabha Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar and Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla ordered the expunctions, citing parliamentary rules against "defamatory, indecent, unparliamentary or undignified" language.

- Article 105 of the Constitution grants MPs freedom of speech in Parliament, but this is subject to constitutional provisions and House rules.
- The expunction process involves removing specific words, phrases, or expressions from the official record maintained by the Lok Sabha Secretariat.
- Allegations of different standards for expunctions have arisen, highlighting controversies over parliamentary conduct and free speech protections.
- Parliamentary etiquette in the Rajya Sabha emphasizes maintaining discipline and decorum.
- Unparliamentary words or expressions identified by the Chair must be withdrawn immediately without debate.
- Words deemed unparliamentary are expunged from the printed debates as ordered by the Chair.
- Expunctions can also extend to words prejudicial to national interest, detrimental to foreign relations, derogatory to dignitaries, offensive to national sentiments, or affecting religious susceptibilities.
- Instances include Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru objecting to mention of the President of Pakistan in a member's question, leading to expunction of objectionable words.
- Members are required to withdraw irrelevant remarks upon the Chair's request; failure to comply may result in expunction.
- Quoting from an unreferenced document or speaking after being asked to stop can also lead to expunction of remarks in Parliament.

What about remarks against an MP?

- Rule 353 of the Lok Sabha allows MPs to make allegations with advance notice, prompting an inquiry by the concerned Minister to present facts.
- Allegations not defamatory or incriminatory do not fall under Rule 353's purview.
- MPs have the right to question Ministers and criticize their conduct under parliamentary accountability.
- Expunction of remarks is governed by Rule 261 in the Rajya Sabha and Rules 380 and 381 in the Lok Sabha.
- Chairs can expunge words deemed defamatory, indecent, unparliamentary, or undignified from parliamentary records.
- Expunged remarks are marked with asterisks and footnotes stating 'expunged as ordered by the Chair' or 'not recorded'.
- Despite expungement, digital access through live telecasts and social media sharing raises questions about the effectiveness of expunging remarks.

On Kerala's four-year undergraduate programme

What is the intention behind the FYUGP? Can a student leave the programme after three years? What are some of the concerns raised by academics and activists?

GS Paper II: Education

The story so far:

On July 1, institutions of higher education in Kerala rolled out the Four-Year Undergraduate Programmes (FYUGP). Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan launched the academic reform that "intends to provide opportunities that can enable students to acquire competence in using digital technologies, computational methods, data analytics, and other skills essential to participate in the knowledge economy".

What is the FYUGP?

The FYUGP began with the formulation of the Kerala State Higher Education Curriculum Framework by the Kerala State Curriculum Committee headed by Suresh Das, former executive vice president of the Kerala State Council for Science, Technology and Environment. The programme has been introduced in affiliated colleges of the Kerala, Calicut,

Kannur and Mahatma Gandhi Universities for the 2024-25 academic year. These five-year integrated programmes directly run by the Cochin University of Science and Technology and Mahatma Gandhi University have also been restructured to provide a four-year exit option. Sree Sankaracharya University of Sanskrit, Kalady, and Thunchath Ezhuthachan Malayalam University, Tirur, are also offering these programmes.

What are its key features?

The Kerala State Higher Education Curriculum Framework for FYUGP is formulated with a student-centric approach and provides maximum flexibility in terms of choice of disciplines of study. It also allows a student to move from one discipline of study to another, according to the Kerala State Higher Education Council (KSHEC). Students will have the chance to determine their semester-wise academic load, and be allowed to learn at their pace, to the

extent possible.

The framework also offers flexibility for students to move from one institution to another as per their choice. It also offers flexibility to switch to alternative modes of learning (offline, distance learning, online and hybrid).

What are the pathway options?

The programme offers three pathway options. For the three-year undergraduate degree, students who wish to exit after three years will be awarded an undergraduate degree in the major discipline after securing a specific number of credits (133 or above) and satisfying minimum course requirements.

A four-year undergraduate honours degree in the major discipline will be awarded to those who complete a four-year degree programme with the specific number of credits (177 or above) and after satisfying minimum course requirements.

Additionally, students who are highly

motivated to opt for research as their career can choose honours with research stream in their fourth year. They should do a research project or dissertation under the guidance of a faculty member of the university/college. Students who secure 177 credits, including 12 credits from a research project/dissertation, are awarded the undergraduate degree (Honours with Research).

What are the concerns?

The core objective of the undergraduate curriculum stemmed from the government's intent to build a strong knowledge society that can help develop and sustain a knowledge economy. The Department of Higher Education hopes that the reform will equip students with the knowledge base and intellectual abilities that will make them effective citizens in a knowledge society and offer them multiple employment options.

However, a group of academic experts and cultural activists, have issued a joint statement against the 'unilateral' roll-out of the FYUGP, warning that the reform could "dismantle" the existing structure of arts and science courses including BA, BSc and BCom that have been in existence for several decades. They also alleged that it lacked in-depth study in any subject. A section of teachers have also pointed out the gaps in infrastructure in campuses and the lack of adequate training for teachers on various aspects related to the programme's implementation.

THE GIST

On July 1, institutions of higher education in Kerala rolled out the Four-Year Undergraduate Programmes.

The core objective of the undergraduate curriculum stemmed from the government's intent to build a strong knowledge society that can help develop and sustain a knowledge economy.

However, a group of academic experts and cultural activists, have issued a joint statement against the 'unilateral' roll-out of the FYUGP, warning that the reform could "dismantle" the existing structure of arts and science courses.

On Kerala's four-year undergraduate programme (08 July)

What is the intention behind the FYUGP? Can a student leave the programme after three years? What are some of the concerns raised by academics and activists?

- **FYUGP:** Four-Year Undergraduate Programme launched in Kerala's higher education institutions.
- **Launch:** Initiated by Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan to enhance digital skills and knowledge economy participation.
- **Implementation:** Rolled out in affiliated colleges of Kerala, Calicut, Kannur, and Mahatma Gandhi Universities for 2024-25.
- **Programme Structure:** Allows for a flexible curriculum with interdisciplinary study options.
- **Institutional Involvement:** Cochin University of Science and Technology, Mahatma Gandhi University, Sree Sankaracharya University of Sanskrit, and Thunchath Ezhuthachan Malayalam University offering the programme.
- **Flexibility:** Students can choose their disciplines, adjust semester-wise academic loads, and switch institutions or modes of learning as needed.

What are the pathway options?

- Kerala launched the Four-Year Undergraduate Programmes (FYUGP) on July 1, aimed at enhancing digital skills and preparing students for the knowledge economy.
- FYUGP introduced in affiliated colleges of Kerala, Calicut, Kannur, and Mahatma Gandhi Universities for the 2024-25 academic year.
- Cochin University of Science and Technology and Mahatma Gandhi University offer integrated five-year programs with a four-year exit option.
- Sree Sankaracharya University of Sanskrit, Kalady, and Thunchath Ezhuthachan Malayalam University also offer FYUGP.
- Features include student-centric curriculum with flexibility in choice of disciplines and learning pace.
- Allows students to switch disciplines and institutions, and offers alternative learning modes like offline, distance, online, and hybrid.
- Pathways include three-year undergraduate degree, four-year undergraduate honours degree, and honours with research stream.
- Concerns raised by experts and activists about unilateral rollout potentially dismantling existing arts and science courses.
- Criticisms include concerns about the lack of in-depth subject study and infrastructure gaps in campuses.
- Teachers' concerns about inadequate training for implementing the new programme.

PRELIMS PRACTICE QUESTIONS

Question 1: Consider the following statements about Pangong Tso Lake in Ladakh:

1. It is the largest freshwater lake in India.
2. Pangong Tso Lake is completely located inside the Indian side of Line of Actual Control (LAC) between India and China.
3. The lake acts as an important breeding ground for a variety of birds including a number of migratory birds.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 3 only
- (c) 1 and 2 only
- (d) 2 only

Question 2: What is a unique characteristic of Pangong Tso Lake?

- (a) It remains frozen throughout the year due to its high altitude.
- (b) The lake's water changes color due to the presence of different minerals.
- (c) It is a popular spot for water sports activities like boating and kayaking.
- (d) The lake is home to a specific species of fish not found anywhere else.

Question 3: Consider the following statements about the Samayapuram Mariamman Temple:

1. The temple is dedicated to Lord Shiva, one of the principal deities in Hinduism.
2. The temple is Tiruchirapaalli Distric located in the state of Tamil Nadu.
3. The presiding deity, Mariamman, is believed to possess healing powers.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 1 and 2 only
- (d) 3 only

Question 4: The Samayapuram Mariamman Temple is associated with which historical period?

- (a) Mughal Empire
- (b) Chola Dynasty
- (c) Gupta Empire
- (d) Vijayanagara Empire

Question 5: Consider the following statements about Rules of Origin in international trade:

1. Rules of Origin define the nationality of a good and determine eligibility for preferential trade agreements.
2. A good can only have one rule of origin.
3. Rules of Origin are established by individual countries and are not subject to international agreements.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 1 only
- (c) 2 and 3 only
- (d) 3 only

Question 6: What is a PRIMARY objective of enforcing Rules of Origin?

- (a) To simplify customs procedures for international trade.
- (b) To prevent the misuse of preferential trade benefits.
- (c) To generate additional revenue for governments through tariffs.
- (d) To promote competition among exporting countries

Question 7: How can countries determine the origin of a good under the Rules of Origin?

- (a) Solely based on the country where the raw materials are sourced
- (b) By considering factors like transformation processes and value addition
- (c) Through a combination of (a) and (b)
- (d) Countries have complete discretion in determining origin

ANSWERS AND EXPLANATION

<p>Question 1: Consider the following statements about Pangong Tso Lake in Ladakh:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. It is the largest freshwater lake in India.2. Pangong Tso Lake is the completely located inside the Indian side of Line of Actual Control (LAC) between India and China.3. The lake acts as an important breeding ground for a variety of birds including a number of migratory birds. <p>Which of the statements given above is/are correct?</p> <p>(a) 1 only (b) 3 only (c) 1 and 2 only (d) 2 only</p>	<p>Answer: (b) 3 only</p> <p>Explanation: Statement 1 is incorrect. Pangong Tso is a saltwater lake, not freshwater. The largest freshwater lake in India is Wular Lake in Jammu and Kashmir. Statement 2 is incorrect. The Line of Actual Control (LAC) separating Indian and Chinese territories runs through the eastern part of the lake. Statement 3 is correct. The lake serves as a crucial habitat where many birds, including migratory ones, come to breed and raise their young. This means that the environment around the lake provides the necessary conditions and resources, such as food and shelter, that birds need during their breeding season. (a), (c), & (d) - Include incorrect statements about the type of water, LAC, and bird population.</p>
<p>Question 2: What is a unique characteristic of Pangong Tso Lake?</p> <p>(a) It remains frozen throughout the year due to its high altitude. (b) The lake's water changes color due to the presence of different minerals. (c) It is a popular spot for water sports activities like boating and kayaking. (d) The lake is home to a specific species of fish not found anywhere else.</p>	<p>Answer: (b) The lake's water changes color due to the presence of different minerals.</p> <p>Explanation: Pangong Tso Lake is known for its unique ability to change colors, appearing turquoise, blue, or green depending on sunlight, salinity, and mineral content. Incorrect Options: (a) While the lake freezes in winter, it thaws during the summer months. (c) High altitude and remoteness make water sports uncommon. (d) There's no record of a unique fish species specific to the lake.</p>
<p>Question 3: Consider the following statements about the Samayapuram Mariamman Temple:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The temple is dedicated to Lord Shiva, one of the principal deities in Hinduism.2. The temple is Tiruchirapaalli Distric located in the state of Tamil Nadu.3. The presiding deity, Mariamman, is believed to possess healing powers. <p>Which of the statements given above is/are correct?</p> <p>(a) 1 only (b) 2 and 3 only (c) 1 and 2 only (d) 3 only</p>	<p>Answer: (b) 2 and 3 only</p> <p>Explanation: Statement 1 is incorrect. The temple is dedicated to Mariamman, a manifestation of the goddess Parvati. Statement 2 is correct. The temple is located in Trichy, Tamil Nadu. Statement 3 is correct. Devotees believe Mariamman can cure diseases and offer silver or steel impressions of affected body parts as an offering. Incorrect Options: (a), (c), & (d) - Include incorrect information about the deity and location.</p>

<p>Question 4: The Samayapuram Mariamman Temple is associated with which historical period?</p> <p>(a) Mughal Empire (b) Chola Dynasty (c) Gupta Empire (d) Vijayanagara Empire</p>	<p>Answer: (d) Vijayanagara Empire</p> <p>Explanation: While the temple's origins might be older, historians believe the Vijayanagara Empire period (14th-16th centuries) saw significant development and patronage of the temple.</p> <p>Incorrect Options: (a), (b), & (c) - These empires predate or don't geographically align with the temple's location.</p>
<p>Question 5: Consider the following statements about Rules of Origin in international trade:</p> <p>1. Rules of Origin define the nationality of a good and determine eligibility for preferential trade agreements.</p> <p>2. A good can only have one rule of origin.</p> <p>3. Rules of Origin are established by individual countries and are not subject to international agreements.</p> <p>Which of the statements given above is/are correct?</p> <p>(a) 1 and 2 only (b) 1 only (c) 2 and 3 only (d) 3 only</p>	<p>Answer: (b) 1 only</p> <p>Explanation: Statement 1 is correct. Rules of Origin define where a good is considered to be "from" for trade purposes. This is crucial for preferential trade agreements that offer lower tariffs or duty-free access for goods originating from member countries.</p> <p>Statement 2 is incorrect. A good can have multiple rules of origin depending on the specific agreement and its criteria (e.g., percentage of transformation, source of materials).</p> <p>Statement 3 is incorrect. Rules of Origin are often established through international agreements like Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) or regional trade blocs.</p> <p>Incorrect Options: (a) & (c) - Include incorrect statements about the nature and application of Rules of Origin. (d) - International agreements play a significant role in establishing these rules.</p>
<p>Question 6: What is a PRIMARY objective of enforcing Rules of Origin?</p> <p>(a) To simplify customs procedures for international trade.</p> <p>(b) To prevent the misuse of preferential trade benefits.</p> <p>(c) To generate additional revenue for governments through tariffs.</p> <p>(d) To promote competition among exporting countries</p>	<p>Answer: (b) To prevent the misuse of preferential trade benefits</p> <p>Explanation: Rules of Origin help prevent countries from simply routing goods through a member country of a preferential trade agreement to gain unfair advantage through lower tariffs. They ensure goods genuinely originate from the member country entitled to such benefits.</p> <p>Incorrect Options: (a) While streamlining procedures might be a secondary benefit, it's not the primary objective. (c) Rules of Origin are not primarily about raising revenue, but managing trade benefits.</p>

	(d) While competition can be influenced, preventing misuse is the primary focus.
<p>Question 7: How can countries determine the origin of a good under the Rules of Origin?</p> <p>(a) Solely based on the country where the raw materials are sourced</p> <p>(b) By considering factors like transformation processes and value addition</p> <p>(c) Through a combination of (a) and (b)</p> <p>(d) Countries have complete discretion in determining origin</p>	<p>Answer: (c) Through a combination of (a) and (b)</p> <p>Explanation: Rules of Origin often consider a combination of factors. The source of raw materials might be one element, but the extent of processing or transformation a good undergoes in a specific country is also crucial. The specific criteria vary depending on the agreement.</p> <p>Incorrect Options: (a) & (d) - These are not the only or universally applied methods for determining origin.</p>

PatrioticIAS