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MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY



MK Yadav Sir

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DTE June 13

HYDROCHLOROFLUOROCARBONS

(Syllabus: GS Paper 3 – Env & Eco)

Environmental milestone! Ozone-depleting HCFCs show drop in levels 5 years ahead of target year

Context: In a promising environmental development, a new study has reported the first significant decrease in atmospheric concentrations of potent ozone-depleting substances (ODS) known as hydrochlorofluorocarbons (HCFCs).

Hydrochlorofluorocarbons (HCFCs)

- **About**: HCFC-141b is one of the most powerful **ozone-depleting chemicals** after Chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs).
- **Usage**: It is mainly used as a blowing agent in the foam manufacturing industries.
- **Dependence on Imports:** HCFC-141b is not produced domestically, and all requirements were met through imports.
- **Non-Ozone Depleting Technologies:** India is one of the few countries pioneering the use of non-Ozone Depleting technologies and has a low Global Warming Potential (GWP).
- **Significant Phase-Out Achievement**: The complete phase-out of HCFC-141b from the foam sector in India is among the first at this scale in Article 5 parties (developing countries) under the Montreal Protocol.
    - Due to their ozone-depleting and greenhouse properties, HCFCs are being phased out globally under international agreements like the Montreal Protocol and its subsequent amendments.
- **Montreal Protocol:** The Montreal Protocol on substances that deplete the ozone layer is an international treaty designed to protect the ozone layer by phasing out the production of numerous substances that are responsible for ozone depletion. It includes CFCs, HCFCs, HFCs etc. Signed in 1987, it came into effect in 1989.

Ozone Depletion

- **About:** Some compounds release chlorine or bromine when they are exposed to intense UV light in the stratosphere.
- When chlorine and bromine atoms come into contact with ozone in the stratosphere, they destroy ozone molecules.
- **Ozone-Depleting Substances:** ODS that release chlorine include chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs), hydrochlorofluorocarbons (HCFCs), carbon tetrachloride, and methyl chloroform.
    - ODS that release bromine include halons and methyl bromide.

FINANCIAL EXPRESS

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GROUP OF SEVEN

(Syllabus GS Paper 2 – IR)

G7 agrees to tap frozen Russian assets for $50-bn aid to Ukraine

BY ALBERTO NARDELLI, VIKTORIA DENDRINOU & ANNMARIE HORDERN
June 13



Italian PM Giorgia Meloni, US President Joe Biden, French President Emmanuel Macron, Canadian PM Justin Trudeau, British PM Rishi Sunak, Japanese PM Fumio Kishida and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen participate in a working session during a G7 summit at Borgo Egnazia, Italy on Thursday AP

GROUP OF SEVEN nations have agreed on a loan structure based on the size of their economies to provide Ukraine with about $50 billion of fresh aid starting to flow by the end of the year, according to people familiar with the matter.

After months of discussions on how to use the profits generated by frozen Russian sovereign assets, the plan is set to win the backing of leaders at a summit in Italy this week. G-7 nations would give out loans to Ukraine that will be repaid using the profits generated by the roughly $280 billion of blocked funds, most of which lie immobilised in Europe.

The deal is expected to generate critical support for Ukraine in the medium term and help cover its financing needs. Under the mechanics to be signed off in Italy, the US, European Union and other participants will each provide a loan to Ukraine with the proceeds generated by the assets over time used to pay that money back, said the people, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

Canada is prepared to contribute C$5 billion ($3.6 billion) in funding to the initiative, a Canadian government official said.

The loans will be structured differently on the basis of each participant's internal procedures and each will carry the risk of the loans they provide, should the frozen assets generate fewer profits than envisioned.

The final technical details will be ironed out after the summit, the people said. The aid could be used for supporting Ukraine's defense, economy and reconstruction. The specifics of the deal could change when the leaders meet on Thursday.

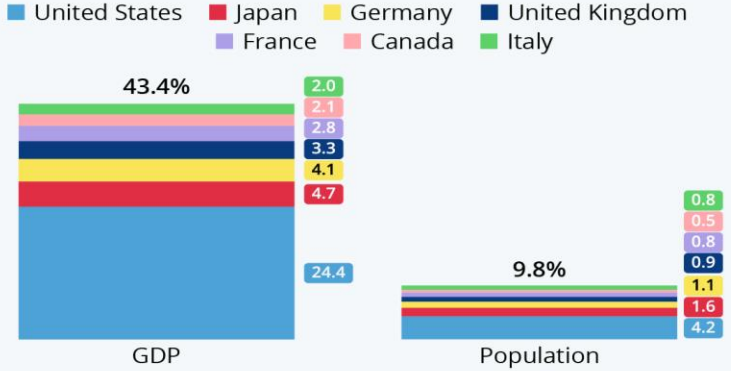
The proceeds from frozen assets are estimated to be worth between €3 billion to €5 billion annually.

For the G-7, this step sends a message to Russia that they are willing to stand by Ukraine for the long term as the war shows no signs of abating.

"I think we will have the major tentpoles of this decided, but some of the specifics left to be worked through by experts on a defined timetable," said US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan on Thursday in Italy. -BLOOMBERG

How Representative Is the G7 of the World It's Trying to Lead?

Aggregate GDP and population of G7 countries as a share of the world total in 2022*



may not add up due to rounding
* excluding the EU, which is a "non-enumerated member"
Sources: IMF, UNFPA

Context: Group of Seven nations have agreed on a loan syndicate based on the size of their economies to provide Ukraine with about $50 billion of fresh aid starting to flow by the end of the year.

Group of Seven (G7) Countries

- **About:** It is an intergovernmental organization. The bloc meets annually to discuss issues of common interest like global economic governance, international security and energy policy.
- **Formation**: 1975.
- **G7 countries:** UK, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and the US.
    - India is not a part of G7.
- **Membership**: Apart from the 7 member countries, the European Union (EU) has also participated fully in the G7 since 1981 as a "non-enumerated" member.
- **Presidency:** It rotates annually among the member countries, with each country hosting the summit and setting the agenda for the year.
- **Meetings:** The G7 holds annual meetings.
- **Informal nature:** The G7 does not have a formal charter or secretariat. Decisions are made through consensus, and there is no formal voting system or legal obligations.

INDIAN EXPRESS

Explained

PARDONING POWER OF THE PRESIDENT

(Syllabus: GS Paper 2 – Polity)



Red Fort case: standards for awarding death & President's 'mercy' power

AJOY SINHA KARPURAM

NEW DELHI, JUNE 13

PRESIDENT DROUPADI Murmu has rejected a mercy petition filed by Pakistani national Mohammed Arif who was sentenced to death for the December 22, 2000 terrorist attack at the Red Fort in which three people including two Army jawans were killed.

The President's decision, made on May 27, came after Arif failed to obtain relief from the Delhi High Court and Supreme Court in his appeals against a trial court order of October 2005. He can challenge the President's decision and prolong the proceedings further.

What standard do courts apply in death sentence cases?

In 1980, the Supreme Court (*Bachan Singh v. State of Punjab*) upheld the constitutionality of the death penalty, but established important guardrails. "Judges", the court said, "should never be bloodthirsty", and the death penalty should not be awarded "save in the rarest of rare cases when the alternative option is unquestionably foreclosed", and all possible mitigating circumstances have been considered.

The court has reaffirmed the "rarest of rare" standard in several decisions since then.

The Report of the 262nd Law Commission published in 2015 recommended the "absolute abolition" of the death penalty "for all crimes other than terrorism related offences and waging war".

On the President's power to "grant pardons, etc., and to suspend, remit or commute sentences in certain cases" (Article 72 of the Constitution), the Law Commission Report said these 'mercy powers' provided additional protection against possible miscarriage of justice and, "therefore, cases found unfit for mercy merit capital punishment."

What happened during the attack at the Red Fort? How was Arif arrested?

Late evening on December 22, 2000, two Lashkar-e-Tayyeba terrorists sneaked into the Red Fort and opened fire, killing two jawans of the Army's Rajputana Rifles regiment and a civilian security guard before escaping.

Investigators made a breakthrough after assault rifles were found abandoned outside the Red Fort, and four detonators with tags which said in Urdu: *"Khuburdar. Grenade firing ke dur tuisyan hai. Safety pin nikalne ke waqt nikalein,"* according to reporting by *The Indian Express*.

A polythene bag containing cash and a slip with a mobile phone number on it was also found, which led Delhi Police to Arif alias Ashfaq. He was arrested on December 26, along with his wife Rehmana Yusuf Farooqi.

Arif directed police to one Abu Shyamal alias Faizal, who was killed in an encounter at his hideout in Batla House, Okhla. Another alleged militant identified as Abu Sufian was killed in an encounter in Srinagar.

Delhi Police filed a chargesheet against Arif and 21 others on February 20, 2001, and a supplementary chargesheet on March 25 that year. The trial of 11 accused began on September 11, 2001. Over the next three years, the prosecution examined 235 witnesses, and the trial court reserved judgment on October 14, 2005. On October 31, the court found seven of the accused guilty, and sentenced Arif to death.

How did Arif's appeals process progress?

In 2007, the Delhi High Court confirmed the trial court's decision to sentence Arif to death. Arif then appealed to the Supreme Court. On August 10, 2011, a Bench of Justices V S Sirpurkar and T S Thakur rejected the appeal, calling the attack an "undeclared war by some foreign mercenaries".

Providing a historical overview of Red Fort to highlight its significance as a national monument, the Bench stated that "even without any reference to any other case law", the case satisfies the standard of the "rarest of rare".

Arif continued to file petitions at the Supreme Court against the death sentence. The first review petition was rejected in August 2012, and the following curative petition — where the apex court can only interfere if there is an obvious error in its decision — was rejected in January 2014.

That same year, Arif filed another writ petition, arguing that cases arising out of a death sentence should be heard by a Bench of three judges or more, and that his 2012 review petition should be heard afresh. A five-judge Constitution Bench in September 2014 agreed with his arguments, and held that "at least three judicially trained minds need to apply their minds at the final stage of the journey of a convict on death row".

The case was then placed before a three-judge Bench led by former Chief Justice of India (CJI) Lalit. On November 3, 2022, nearly 22 years after the attack, the Bench rejected Arif's plea, finding that "there was a direct attack on the unity, integrity and sovereignty of India."

The court set aside findings based on call data records, but held that "other circumstances on record do clearly spell out and prove beyond any doubt the involvement of the review petitioner in the crime...".

President Murmu received Arif's mercy petition on May 15, 2024.

What can happen here onward?

Arif has the option of challenging the President's rejection of his mercy petition.

At a procedural level, the apex court has held that the President's power must be exercised based on the aid and advice of the Council of Ministers, and can be challenged on multiple grounds — including that relevant material was not considered, the power was exercised based on political considerations, or that there was no application of mind.

The top court has also commuted the death sentence in cases of inordinate delay in deciding mercy petitions, such as in the case of Shatrugan Chauhan v. State of UP (2014).

The court also commuted the sentence of one Gurmeet Singh after he spent 27 years in custody (and 21 years on death row). The court found that there was an inordinate delay in deciding his mercy petition, which was disposed of in March 2013 more than seven years after the Supreme Court first upheld the death sentence.

In April 2023, the Supreme Court declined to interfere with an order of the Bombay High Court, which commuted the death sentence awarded to a woman and her sister on grounds of inordinate delay in deciding the mercy petitions of the accused.

Arif has spent over 23 years in custody, and close to 18 years under a death sentence.

In November 2022, the Supreme Court rejected Arif's review petition.

EXPLAINED LAW

Context: The President of India has rejected the mercy petition of Pakistani national Mohammed Arif, who was sentenced to death for the 2000 terrorist attack at the Red Fort that resulted in the deaths of three people, including two Army jawans.

Standard Do Courts Apply in Death Sentence Cases

- **Supreme Court Ruling**: In 1980, the SC upheld the constitutionality of the death penalty in the case of Bachan Singh v. State of Punjab but established significant guidelines.
- **Judicial Temperament**: The court emphasized that judges should not be bloodthirsty and must exercise great restraint when considering the death penalty.
- **"Rarest of Rare" Doctrine:** The death penalty should only be awarded in the "rarest of rare" cases where the alternative option is unquestionably foreclosed, and all mitigating circumstances have been thoroughly considered.
- **Law Commission Report 2015**: It recommended the absolute abolition of the death penalty for all crimes except for terrorism-related offenses and waging war.

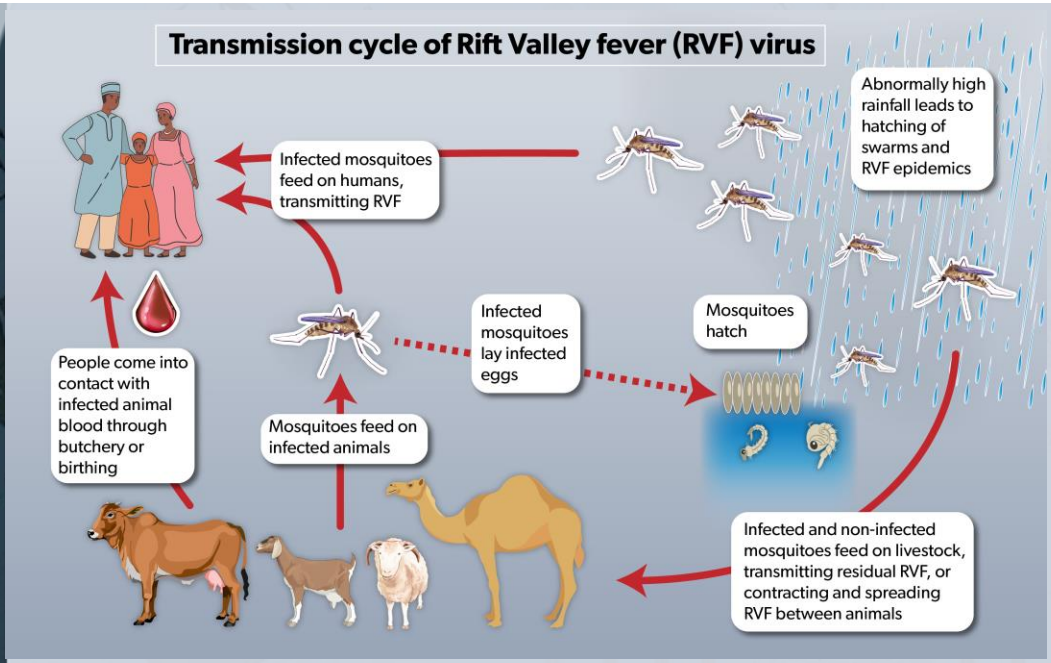
Pardoning Power of the President

- **Article 72**: It grants the President the power to grant pardons, suspend, remit, or commute sentences, providing additional protection against potential miscarriage of justice.
  - The President is empowered to grant pardons to individuals convicted of offences against Union Law.
  - The President can pardon those convicted and sentenced by a court martial (military court).
  - The President has the authority to pardon or commute sentences of death.
  - Under Article 161, the Governor in India too has pardoning powers.
- **Types:**
  - **Pardon**: It removes both the sentence and the conviction and completely absolves the convict from all sentences, punishments, and disqualifications.
  - **Commutation**: It denotes the substitution of one form of punishment for a lighter form. For example, a death sentence may be commuted to rigorous imprisonment, which in turn may be commuted to simple imprisonment.
  - **Remission**: It implies reducing the period of the sentence without changing its character. For example, a sentence of rigorous imprisonment for two years may be remitted to rigorous imprisonment for one year.
  - **Respite**: It denotes awarding a lesser sentence in place of one originally awarded due to some special fact, such as the physical disability of a convict or the pregnancy of a woman offender.
  - **Reprieve:** It implies a stay of the execution of a sentence (especially that of death) for a temporary period. Its purpose is to enable the convict to have time to seek pardon or commutation from the President.

DTE June 13

RIFT VALLEY FEVER
(Syllabus: GS Paper 3 – Sci and tech)

Climate change expanding geographical range of Rift Valley fever disease in eastern Africa



Context: A recent study published in the BMJ Global Health journal has revealed that the geographical range of Rift Valley fever disease clusters is expanding across eastern Africa.

Recent Findings:

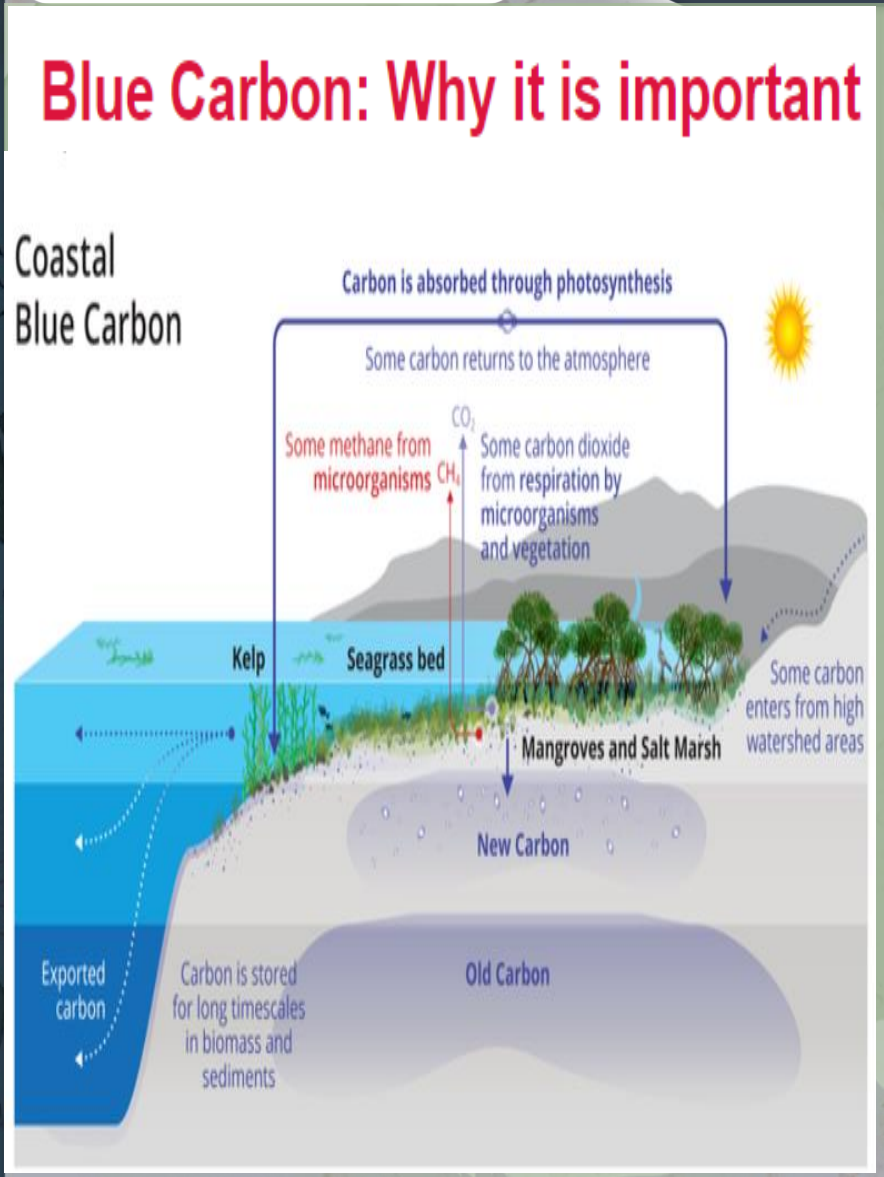
- A BMJ Global Health study challenges previous perceptions of RVF, suggesting it primarily occurs in small clusters rather than large outbreaks, and its association with El Niño is less pronounced than previously thought.
- The study analyzed factors like altitude, soil type, rainfall, temperature, vegetation index (NDVI), livestock systems, land-use changes, and climatic variations influencing RVF occurrence.

Rift Valley Fever Disease

- **About:** It is a viral zoonosis that primarily affects animals but also has the capacity to infect humans.
- **Transmitted by**: Mosquito
- **Caused by**: Rift Valley fever virus (RVFV)
- **Infection:** In humans, the disease ranges from a mild flu-like illness to severe haemorrhagic fever that can be lethal.
    - When livestock are infected the disease can cause significant economic losses due to high mortality rates in young animals and waves of abortions in pregnant females.
- **First identified in:** 1931 in Kenya.
- **First reported cases:** Saudi Arabia and Yemen.
- **Treatment and vaccines:** As most human cases of RVF are relatively mild and of short duration, no specific treatment is required for these patients. For the more severe cases, the predominant treatment is general supportive therapy.

BLUE CARBON

(Syllabus: GS Paper 3 – Env and Eco)



Context: Blue Carbon is gaining attention globally due to its crucial role in carbon sequestration and coastal ecosystem health, prompting increased conservation efforts worldwide.

Blue Carbon

- **About**: It refers to carbon captured by ocean and coastal ecosystems worldwide.
- **Storage in Ecosystem**: Mangroves, tidal marshes, and seagrass meadows contain substantial carbon stores from vegetation and natural processes over centuries.
- **Comparing with Terrestrial Forests:** Coastal ecosystems often sequester and store more carbon per unit area compared to terrestrial forests.
- **Role in Mitigation**: These vegetated coastal ecosystems act as significant carbon sinks, contributing to the mitigation of climate change.
- **Vulnerability:** Degradation of coastal ecosystems can compromise their carbon sink capacity, releasing stored carbon and contributing to climate change.
- **Importance**: Protection and restoration of blue-carbon ecosystems have added benefits for wildlife, water quality, storm surge protection, and local economies.
- **Global Policy Initiatives:** Countries are developing policies and programs, such as REDD+ and NDCs, to manage natural systems and reduce carbon footprints in support of sustainable development.
- **Other types:**
  - **Green carbon**: Carbon stored in the biosphere, taken up from the atmosphere by plants through the process of photosynthesis.
  - **Blue carbon:** Blue carbon refers to the carbon captured by the world's oceans and coastal ecosystems.
  - **Brown carbon:** Brown carbon refers to the brown smoke emitted by the combustion of organic matter.

THE HINDU Page 4

UPPER YAMUNA RIVER BOARD (UYRB)

(Syllabus: GS Paper 2 – Polity-Inter-state river dispute)

SC asks Upper Yamuna River Board to resolve water crisis in Delhi

Says it does not have the expertise to decide the 'complex and sensitive issue', pulls up Himachal govt. for 'erroneous' statement on surplus water

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday asked the Upper Yamuna River Board (UYRB) to consider and resolve the drinking water crisis in Delhi, saying it does not have the expertise to decide the "complex and sensitive issue" which involves sharing of Yamuna water among States which are signatories to a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) dating 20 years back.

A Vacation Bench headed by Justice P.K. Mishra said it did not want to either violate or tinker with the MoU settled among the States by even passing an interim order.

"The issue should be left to be considered by the Upper Yamuna River Board, a body constituted with the agreement of parties in the MoU of May 12, 1994," the Bench observed.

The court said the UYRB had already, in a meeting held on June 5, advised Delhi to apply to the Haryana government, by 5 p.m. on June 14, to supply 150 cusecs of water on "humanitarian grounds".



The UYRB has been asked to hold a meeting on June 14 and decide on giving water to Delhi "at the earliest". SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

The Bench also directed the UYRB to hold a meeting on June 14 and take a decision on the issue of giving Delhi water "at the earliest".

Haryana's stand

However, Haryana, represented by senior advocate Shyam Divan, said it did not have excess or surplus water. The State itself was going through heat wave conditions similar to Delhi.

The court also pulled up the Himachal Pradesh government for making an erroneous statement in a June 6 hearing that it had up to 137 cusecs surplus water and could release it from upstream through the Hathni Kund Barrage to enter Delhi via Wazirabad Barrage.

"When Haryana requested Himachal Pradesh to inform them about the release of additional 137 cusecs of water, the Jal Shakti Vibhag of Himachal Pradesh wrote back that the 137 cusecs is already flowing uninterruptedly from the territory of Himachal Pradesh to Tajewala [Hathni Kund Barrage]," the order noted. Justice Mishra said the court would have ideally considered contempt action against Himachal Pradesh for making the "incorrect statement".

Context: The Supreme Court has entrusted the Upper Yamuna River Board (UYRB) with addressing Delhi's drinking water crisis, citing a lack of expertise in navigating the complex and sensitive issue of Yamuna water sharing among signatory states to a 20-year-old Memorandum of Understanding (MoU).

Upper Yamuna River Board (UYRB)

- **About:** It is a subordinate office under Department of Water Resources, RD & GR, Ministry of Jal Shakti, Government of India.
- **Board Member**: The Board shall consist of Member, Central Water Commission as part time Chairman and one nominee each from the States of Utter Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Haryana, Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh, and National Capital Territory of Delhi.
    - The Board shall have a full time Member-Secretary who does not belong to beneficiary states.
- **Review Committee**: It comprises the Chief Ministers (or Governors during President's Rule) of Himachal Pradesh, Haryana, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, and the National Capital Territory of Delhi.
    - The committee is chaired by the Hon'ble Minister of Ministry of Water Resources, River Development & Ganga Rejuvenation, Government of India.
    - **Purpose**: To assess the functioning of the Upper Yamuna River Board (UYRB).
- **Functions:**
    - **Allocation of Flows**: The Board's primary function is to regulate the allocation of available water flows among the beneficiary States and monitor the return flows.
    - **Water Quality Management**: It monitors, conserves, and enhances the quality of both surface and groundwater within the basin.
    - **Project Monitoring**: The Board reviews and monitors the progress of all projects, including those up to and including the Okhla barrage, to ensure they meet defined objectives.
    - **Telemetry System Implementation**: To enhance monitoring capabilities, the Board has initiated the installation of a telemetry system. This system will enable real-time observation and dissemination of flow data across 11 locations within the basin.
    - **Minimum Flow Regulations**: In line with ecological considerations and regulatory mandates, the Board ensures that a minimum flow, currently set at 10 cumec downstream of Hathnikund Barrage and Okhla Headworks, is maintained throughout the year.

SECTION 21 OF CPA 2019

(Syllabus: GS Paper 3 – Economy)

CCPA imposes ₹3 lakh penalty on edtech firm for 'false' ads

New Delhi: The Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) imposed a penalty of Rs 3 lakh on an edtech platform for publishing "false and misleading" advertisements claiming 144 selections in Reserve Bank of India Grade B exam 2023.

The CCPA, headed by Chief Commissioner Nidhi Khare, in an order against EduTap Learning Solutions dated June 12, 2024, directed them to discontinue the impugned advertisement with "immediate effect." The company has also been asked to deposit the penalty amount and submit a compliance report to the consumer watchdog within 15 days from the date of the order. The CCPA issued the directions under the Section 21 of the Consumer Protection Act, 2019. Under Section 21 of the Act, the CCPA is empowered to issue directions to the advertiser of false or misleading advertisement to discontinue or modify the advertisement if necessary. Under the same section, the CCPA can also impose a penalty which may extend to Rs 10 lakh and for every subsequent contravention may extend to Rs 50 lakh. The CCPA had issued a notice to the company on January 10, 2024. ENS

Context: The Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) has imposed a penalty of `3 lakh on education institute, an edtech platform, for publishing "false and misleading" advertisements claiming 144 selections in the Reserve Bank of India Grade B exam in 2023.

- The CCPA issued these directions to the company under the Section 21 of the Consumer Protection Act, 2019.

Section 21 of the Consumer Protection Act, 2019

- **Issuance of Directions**: The Central Authority can issue directions to cease or modify any false or misleading advertisement that prejudices consumer interests or contravenes consumer rights.
- **Prohibition on Endorsers**: It may prohibit an endorser from endorsing any product or service for up to one year for a first contravention of misleading advertising. Subsequent contraventions may result in a prohibition period of up to three years.
- **Imposition of Penalties**: The Central Authority has the power to impose a penalty up to ten lakh rupees on manufacturers or endorsers for false or misleading advertisements. For subsequent violations, the penalty may extend to fifty lakh rupees.
- **Penalty for Publication of Misleading Advertisements**: Individuals involved in publishing misleading advertisements can be penalized by the Central Authority, with penalties extending up to ten lakh rupees.
    - No penalty applies if it can be proven that the advertisement was published in the regular course of business, except if the publisher had prior knowledge of a Central Authority order to withdraw or modify the advertisement.
- **Right to Hearing**: Before issuing any order under this section, the Central Authority ensures that the affected party is given an opportunity to present their case and be heard.

Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA)

- **About**: CCPA is a regulatory body established in 2020 based on the provisions of the Consumer Protection Act, 2019.
- **Establishment**: In 2020
- **Control by**: Ministry of Consumer Affairs.
- **Composition**: Chief Commissioner as head, and only two other commissioners as members.
- **Objective**: To promote, protect and enforce the rights of consumers as a class.

BUSINESS STANDARD

Page 6

PRADHAN MANTRI KAUSHAL VIKAS YOJANA

(Syllabus: GS Paper 2 – Govt Schemes)

150K women to get PMKVY skill training

SHIVA RAJORA
New Delhi, 13 June

The Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) is looking to train around 150,000 women under the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY), with a third of them acquiring new-age skills, in the first 100 days of the new government, sources in the know told *Business Standard*.

Along with skilling, MSDE will concentrate on promoting apprenticeship in the country, with around half a million new apprentices being engaged. The ministry will also be focussing on launching demand-based financing solutions for promoting adoption of skill courses. "The new government will be working with renewed interest and increased focus on skilling programmes. There is also going to be renewed focus on entrepreneurship and increased industry partnership in the setting up of new labs at Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) that are already in place," said a source. Besides, the government will also be focusing on operationalizing two new Indian Institute of Skills (IIS) — IIS Mumbai and IIS Ahmedabad —and expanding Skill India International Centres and Jan Shikshan Sansthan in the first 100 days.

Earlier on Thursday, new Union Skill Minister Jayant Chaudhary engaged with senior officials and stakeholders to assess the progress and impact of the schemes and initiatives of MSDE. The minister appreciated the ministry's efforts in creating building blocks for the skill ecosystem.

"It is necessary to have a unified effort to ensure successful implementation and expansion of skill development initiatives across the nation. We must focus on close collaboration and convergence with other ministries and states to bring scale and speed to the skill ecosystem," Chaudhary added.

ON THE ANVIL

- Skilling **150,000 women candidates**, and **50,000 in new-age** skills under PMKVY
- **500,000** new apprentices to be engaged
- Launch of **demand-based financing** solution for promoting increased adoption of skill courses
- Renewed focus on entrepreneurship
- Increased industry partnerships and setting up labs at Industrial Training Institutes
- Operationalising Indian Institute of Skills Mumbai and Ahmedabad, and Skill India International Centres
- Expansion of Jan Shikshan Sansthan

Source: Govt

Context: The Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) is looking to train around 150,000 women under the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY), with a third of them acquiring new-age skills, in the first 100 days of the new government.

Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY)

- **About**: PMKVY is the flagship scheme of the Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship (MSDE).
- **Launch**: 15th July, 2015
- **Implemented by**: National Skill Development Corporation.
- **Funding**: Centre and the State level with a 50:50 allocation of funds and targets with more enhanced involvement of District Skill Committees (DSC).
- **Objective**: To enable a large number of Indian youth to take up industry-relevant skill training that will help them in securing a better livelihood.
- **Components:** Short Term Training, Special Projects, Recognition of Prior Learning, Kaushal & Rozgar Mela, etc.
- **PMKVY 1.0:** To promote skill development by offering free short-term training and monetary rewards for youth achieving skill certification.
- **PMKVY 2.0**: PMKVY 2016-20 expanded its reach across sectors and geographies, aligning closely with national missions like Make in India, Digital India, and Swachh Bharat.
- **PMKVY 3.0**: Launched in 717 districts across 28 States and eight Union Territories, PMKVY 3.0 aligns with the vision of 'Atmanirbhar Bharat'.
    - Implements a decentralized structure with enhanced roles for States/UTs and Districts, facilitated by District Skill Committees (DSCs) under State Skill Development Missions (SSDMs).
- **PMKVY 4.0**: Local opportunities in the farm and non-farm sectors, as well as skilling requirements of the local industry within each district.
    - It will also seek to address the requirements of industry from emerging sectors such as drones, artificial intelligence (AI), robotics and mechatronics.

BUSINESS LINE June 13

GENERAL ANTI-AVOIDANCE RULE
(Syllabus: GS Paper 3 – Economy)

Telangana High Court's landmark decision: GAAR ruling impacts taxpayers



- **Legal Distinctions**:
  - Tax mitigation, where taxpayers use legal means to reduce tax liability, remains permissible under the Income Tax Act, unaffected by GAAR.
  - Tax evasion, however, constitutes illegal non-payment of taxes and is distinct from tax avoidance targeted by GAAR.
- **Impact and Enforcement**: GAAR broadens the scope of tax scrutiny to include all transactions with significant tax implications, regardless of their legality.

Context: The Telangana High Court has ruled against a taxpayer against whom the revenue department had invoked General Anti-avoidance Rule (GAAR).

General Anti-avoidance Rule (GAAR)

- **About**: GAAR is an anti-tax avoidance law in India designed to prevent tax evasion and minimize revenue losses.
- **Effective from:** 1st April 2017, GAAR operates within the framework of the Income Tax Act, 1961.
- **Scope:** The provisions of GAAR target aggressive tax planning strategies, particularly transactions aimed at circumventing tax liabilities.
  - It applies to transactions that, while legally permissible, result in significant tax reduction.
- **Objectives**: To curb revenue losses caused by companies engaging in aggressive tax avoidance practices.
  - It seeks to ensure that tax incentives provided by law are used in line with their intended purpose and economic consequences.

INDIAN EXPRESS Explained

NATIONAL TESTING AGENCY

(Syllabus: GS Paper 2 – Education)

Why NTA withdrew 'grace marks' awarded to 1,563 NEET candidates

DEEKSHA TERI
NEW DELHI, JUNE 13

THE NATIONAL Testing Agency (NTA) will re-conduct the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test for undergraduate medical studies (or NEET UG) for 1,563 candidates on June 23.

As first reported by *The Indian Express* on Wednesday, these candidates who were awarded 'grace marks' due to the loss of exam time now have two options before them: either to accept the NEET-UG score that they were originally awarded (without grace marks) or to re-appear for the exam on June 23. "The exam will be conducted in the same six cities but at different centres," a senior NTA official told *The Indian Express*.

Why were grace marks awarded in the first place?

After the exam on May 5, many candidates filed writ petitions before the High Courts of Punjab & Haryana, Delhi, and Chhattisgarh, alleging that they were not given enough time to complete. Exams started late in select centres — two in Chhattisgarh, and one each in Meghalaya, Surat, Haryana's Bahadurgarh, and Chandigarh.

A Grievance Redressal Committee (GRC) set up by the NTA to look into these allegations found merit in the students' grievances, and suggested that affected candidates be compensated for the time lost. They advised that the same normalisation formula be adopted which had been approved by the Supreme Court in relation to the CLAT examination in 2018, whene something similar had occurred.

Based on this, the NTA awarded grace marks to 1,563 candidates. Six of them, however, ended up getting a perfect 720/720 due to this, making them NEET-UG All-India toppers. After the results were announced, several students and other stakeholders approached the NTA and the Supreme Court, alleging that this was not a fair way to deal with the situation.

On June 8, the Ministry of Education (MoE) and the NTA set up a high-powered committee (HPC) to review the results of the 1,563 candidates in question.

What did the HPC recommend?

EXPLAINED EDUCATION

The HPC, which was asked to submit appropriate recommendations within seven days, comprised the four senior experts: NTA Chairman Prof Pradeep Kumar Joshi, Prof T C A Anant, Prof C B Sharma, and Dr (Prof) B Srinivas.

After holding meetings on June 10, 11, and 12, the panel suggested that the normalised scores of all 1,563 candidates be cancelled and withdrawn. It said that the inpacted students should be informed of their actual scores (without grace marks) through their registered email IDs, and also be given the opportunity to appear for a re-examination. Those who do not wish to appear for this retest, should be awarded their actual marks in the test conducted on May 5. Those who do appear for the retest would have their previous score invalidated. The NTA accepted these suggestions.

What was the HPC's rationale behind these recommendations?

The HPC concluded that the GRC had failed to consider a few points while adopting the normalisation formula of the CLAT 2018 Supreme Court verdict.

In its report submitted to the NTA, a copy of which is with *The Indian Express*, the HPC states that the GRC did not consider the fact that unlike computer-based tests, OMR-based exams such as NEET-UG do not have an automated system for time assessment (i.e. the timestamp of an examinee's activities during the exam).

The NTA had determined the time lost by candidates (due to delays on the part of the NTA's invigilators and staff) based on reports from exam invigilators, staff, observers, and the examination of CCTV footage. This, the committee felt, did not provide a level playing field in terms of determining the time lost across six centers.

Moreover, the HPC noticed that the GRC's recommended formula to compensate candidates for the time lost did not take into account that the compensation only had to be done for unattempted questions. This led to a "skewed situation" in which many candidates ended up scoring very high marks.

Thus, the HPC concluded that the "most appropriate, fair and reasonable solution to the issue would be to subject 1563 candidates to a retest at the earliest possible."

What happens now?

The NTA will now conduct a retest for these 1,563 candidates, and any other student for whom the directions of re-examination have been/ will be passed by Courts in individual cases filed. Official communication will be shared with the affected students via their registered email addresses, and fresh admit cards will soon be issued. Results for the retest will be announced on or before June 30.

The NTA also plans to start the registration process for NEET-UG in advance, next year onwards. "This time, we started the process a month ago, but now we will start much sooner to ensure we have enough buffer time between the registrations and the exam day to ensure that there's better planning as far as selection of test centres is concerned," a senior NTA official told *The Indian Express*.

More importantly, the NTA will focus more on better training for all the invigilators and officers involved to avoid the kind of delay experienced in six test centres this year. "We conduct training every year, but from now onwards we will put more focus on it. NTA's focus is on ensuring such situations do not arise in the future," the official added.

Context: The Supreme Court is scheduled to address three petitions regarding the controversy surrounding the NEET-UG 2024 medical entrance test.

National Testing Agency

- **About**: It is a premier, specialist, autonomous, and self-sustained testing organization.
- **Aim**: To conduct entrance examinations for admission/fellowship in higher educational institutions.
- **Establishment**: in 2017, as a **Society registered under the Indian Societies Registration Act, of 1860**.
- **Objectives**:
  - Conduct efficient, transparent, and internationally standardized tests to assess candidate competency for admission and recruitment purposes.
  - Undertake research on educational, professional, and testing systems to identify knowledge gaps and bridge them.
  - Identify experts and institutions for setting examination questions.
  - Produce and disseminate information and research on education and professional development standards.
- **Functions**:
  - Create a question bank for all subjects using modern techniques.
  - Establish a strong R&D culture and a pool of experts in different aspects of testing.
  - Assist colleges and universities in testing, and provide training and advisory services within India.
  - Undertake any other examinations entrusted by the Ministries/Departments of Government of India/State Governments.

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