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MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY



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KANNADA LANGUAGE BILL 2024

(Syllabus: GS Paper 2 – Polity)

Karnataka tables Bill making 60% Kannada mandatory on name boards

Boards of commercial, industrial and business undertakings, trusts, counselling centres should have text in Kannada in the upper half of the boards; Kannada outfits have been campaigning aggressively to promote use of Kannada on signboards

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The Kannada Language Comprehensive Development (Amendment) Bill, 2024, was tabled in the State Legislative Assembly on Tuesday, making it mandatory for all business establishments in Karnataka to display name boards with 60% of text in Kannada in the upper half of the boards.

The Bill makes a provision that the name boards of commercial, industrial and business undertakings, trusts, counselling centres, hospitals, laboratories, amusement centres, hotels, etc., should be 60% in Kannada.

The Bill said, "It is necessary to amend Kannada Basha Samagra Abhivruddhi Adhiniyama, 2022, to appoint the director, Directorate of Kannada and Culture, as the member and the secretary of Kannada Development Authority to be the convener of the State-level committee and to make a provision that name boards should display 60% in Kannada."



Strong move: A signboard of a business establishment vandalised by members of a Kannada outfit in Bengaluru. FILE PHOTO

The Bill makes display of 60% Kannada language in boards of State government departments, PSUs, cooperative and public undertakings, educational institutions, banks and other financial institutions, private industries, universities. It said display of officers' designations should also be primarily in Kannada.

It said all tender notifications, advertisements, application forms, digital forms, certificates and notifications issued by the government or local authorities for publication in the State should be in Kannada.

The pamphlets, banners, flex, electronic display boards, informations, notices, and other programmes conducted by the government, local authorities, aided and unaided institutions should be in Kannada.

Against English names

Kannada outfits such as Karnataka Rakshana Vedike (KRV) have launched an aggressive campaign to promote the use of Kannada on name boards and had earlier removed English name boards from several shops in Bengaluru and other parts of Karnataka. Following the protest, the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) started identifying establishments that do not display Kannada name boards, and sent them notices.

Returns Ordinance

The tabling of the Bill follows Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot recently returning an Ordinance on the 60% use of Kannada mandatory on signboards of commercial establishments, which was passed by the State Cabinet. The Raj Bhavan said the Governor returned the Ordinance to the government "with advice to present it before both Houses of the State legislature".

Context: The Karnataka government recently tabled a bill mandating Kannada on business signboards.

Kannada Language Comprehensive Development (Amendment) Bill, 2024

- **About:** The Kannada Language Comprehensive Development (Amendment) Bill, 2024 aims to modify the existing 2022 Act, emphasizing increased usage of Kannada on signboards.
- **Signage Requirements**: According to the bill, signboards must allocate 60% of space to Kannada, positioned in the upper half of the name board, impacting diverse sectors like commercial, industrial, and business establishments, trusts, counseling centers, hospitals, laboratories, amusement centers, and hotels.
- **Mandate for Entities**: Commercial entities are obligated to display 60% of their signage in Kannada, pending approval from government or local authorities.
- **Institutional Changes**: The Bill proposes appointing the director of the Directorate of Kannada and Culture as a committee member and designates the secretary of the Kannada Development Authority as the convener of the "State Level Committee."
- **State-Level Committee**: The newly formed committee, headed by the secretary of the Kannada Development Authority, will function as an enforcement authority overseeing the implementation of the official language.
- **Ordinance Rejection**: The Governor of Karnataka returned the January 5 ordinance, suggesting the Karnataka government pursue the bill's passage through the Assembly instead of resorting to an ordinance.
- **Trigger for Ordinance Proposal:** The decision to propose the ordinance was prompted by violent demonstrations by pro-Kannada groups on December 27, targeting businesses in Bengaluru for allegedly neglecting the state language.
- **Fringe Group Actions**: On December 27, a fringe language group vandalized numerous business establishments across the city, demanding a 60% usage of Kannada on signboards.

INDIAN EXPRESS

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WHAT DID TRUMP SAY ABOUT NATO FUNDING AND WHAT IS ARTICLE 5?

FORMER US President Donald Trump has raised a storm of criticism from the White House and top officials for suggesting he would not defend NATO allies who failed to spend enough on defence, and would even encourage Russia to attack them.

What is NATO?

Founded in 1949 to counter the Soviet Union with Cold War tensions rising, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization is a political and military alliance of countries from North America and Europe.

Which countries are in NATO?

NATO currently has 31 members — most of them European nations, plus the United States and Canada. The newest member is Finland, which joined last April.

What did Trump say about NATO?

As US President, Trump often lambasted NATO and members such as Germany, accusing them of not paying enough for their own defence and relying on Washington to protect them.

Trump took his criticism to a new level at a campaign rally on Saturday in South Carolina, when he recounted what he said was a conversation with the "president of a big country". "Well sir, if we don't pay, and we're attacked by Russia — will you protect us?" Trump quoted the unnamed leader as saying. "I said: 'You didn't pay? You're delinquent?...No, I would not protect you. In fact, I would encourage them (Russia) to do whatever the hell they want. You gotta pay," Trump said.

How is NATO funded?

Trump's statements give the impression that the alliance is like a club with membership fee. But NATO operates differently. It has some common funds, to which all members contribute. The vast bulk of its strength comes from members' own national defence spending — to maintain forces and buy arms that can also be used by NATO.



Donald Trump speaks at a campaign rally in South Carolina on February 10. *Reuters*

However, NATO members have committed to spending at least 2% of their Gross Domestic Product (GDP) every year on defence — and most of them did not meet that goal last year.

What is NATO's Article 5?

In Article 5 of the founding treaty, NATO members declared that an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America "shall be considered an attack against them all".

They agreed they would "assist the Party or Parties so attacked by taking... such action as it deems necessary, including the use of armed force."

However, Article 5 stops short of a commitment to an automatic military response to help an ally under attack. That means the strength of Article 5 depends on clear statements from political leaders that it will be backed up by action. This is one reason Trump's comments caused such a furore.

By suggesting he would not take military action to defend an ally, Trump undermined the assumptions that give Article 5 its power. REUTERS

ARTICLE 5 OF NATO

Syllabus GS Paper 2 – IR)

Context: The former U.S. President raised a storm of criticism from the White House and top Western officials for suggesting he would not defend NATO allies who failed to spend enough on defense and would even encourage Russia to attack them.

NATO

- **About: It is a military alliance** established by the North Atlantic Treaty (also called the Washington Treaty) of April 1949, by the United States, Canada, and several Western European nations.
- **Countries**: NATO currently has 31 members- most of them European nations, plus the United States and Canada. The newest member is Finland, which joined last April.
- **Founding members:** Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, the United Kingdom, and the United States.
- **Headquarters**: Brussels, Belgium.
- **Funding**: NATO is funded by its members. The U.S. contributes roughly three-fourths of NATO's budget

What Is NATO's Article 5?

- **About**: In Article 5 of the founding treaty, NATO members establish that an armed attack on any of them in Europe or North America is considered an attack against all.
- **Commitment to Assistance and Action**: The treaty outlines the commitment of NATO members to assist the attacked party promptly, both individually and collectively, using necessary actions, including armed force.
- **Limitations**: Article 5 falls short of guaranteeing an automatic military response to aid an ally under attack, relying instead on clear statements from political leaders to ensure its effectiveness.
- **Dependence on Political Endorsement**: The strength of Article 5 hinges on political leaders explicitly backing it with actionable support, emphasizing the importance of verbal affirmation to reinforce the commitment.
- **Trump's Controversial Comments**: During a time of heightened NATO concerns about Russia's intentions, Trump's remarks stirred controversy by suggesting a reluctance to take military action in defense of an ally, thereby undermining the assumed power of Article 5.

PIB Feb 13

PM SURYA GHAR MUFT BIJLI YOJANA

(Syllabus: GS Paper 3 – Economy)

PM announces Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana

Context: The Prime Minister of India recently announced the launch of PM Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana, a rooftop solar scheme for free electricity.

PM Surya Ghar: Muft Bijli Yojana

- **Announced:** It is a free electricity scheme that was earlier announced by the Finance Minister in her interim budget speech on February 1.
- **Launched**: To promote sustainable development designed to alleviate the financial burden on citizens, will offer substantial subsidies directly deposited into the beneficiaries' bank accounts.
- **Funding**: This initiative, backed by an investment exceeding Rs. 75,000 crores,
- **Aim:** To illuminate one crore households by providing up to 300 units of free electricity monthly.
- **Direct Subsidies and Concessional Bank Loans**: To ensure financial ease for citizens, the Central Government plans to offer substantive subsidies directly to individuals' bank accounts.
    - Additionally, heavily concessional bank loans will be provided, ensuring no undue financial burden on the people. The integration of all stakeholders into a National Online Portal will further enhance convenience.
- **Grassroots Promotion through Incentives:** To popularize the scheme at the grassroots level, Urban Local Bodies and Panchayats will be incentivized to promote rooftop solar systems within their jurisdictions. Simultaneously, the initiative is expected to result in increased income, reduced power bills, and the generation of employment opportunities for the population.

ALL INDIA RADIO

Feb 13

ONE NATION ONE STUDENT ID CARD

(Syllabus: GS Paper 2 – Social issues-Education)

Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan Inaugurates National Conference on APAAR: One Nation One Student ID Card

Context: The Education Minister of India said that the Automated Permanent Academic Account Registry (APAAR) will be the aspirational and global document for students in India.

Automated Permanent Academic Account Registry (APAAR)

- **About**: APAAR, which stands for Automated Permanent Academic Account Registry, is envisioned as a special ID system for all students in India, starting from childhood.
  - **Get** a lifelong APAAR ID, **making it easy to track academic progress** from pre-primary education to higher education.
- **Gateway:** APAAR would **also serve as a gateway to Digilocker**, a digital system where students can store their documents and achievements, such as exam results, and report cards.
- **Vision**: To create a positive change, allowing state governments to track literacy rates, dropout rates, and more, helping them make improvements.
- **Aim**: To reduce fraud and duplicate educational certificates by providing a single, trusted reference for educational institutions.
  - Only first-party sources that issue certificates will be allowed to deposit credits into the system, ensuring authenticity.

How will it work?

- Every individual **will have a unique APAAR ID**, which will be **linked to the Academic Bank** Credit (ABC), which is a digital storehouse that contains the information of the credits earned by students throughout their learning journey.
- **If the student changes schools**, all her **data in the ABC will be transferred** to her new school just by sharing the APAAR ID.

PIB

Feb 13

APEDA
(Syllabus: GS Paper 3 – Economy)

APEDA facilitates around 500 startups to market and export millet based value added products

Context: Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA) has facilitated around 500 startups in marketing and exporting millet-based value-added products.

APED

- **Established by:** Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority Act, 1985. It came into effect on 13th February 1986.
- **Headquarters:** New Delhi.
- **Composition:**
  - Chairman, appointed by the Central Government
  - The Agricultural Marketing Advisor to the Government of India, ex-officio;
  - One member appointed by the Central Government representing the NITI Aayog;
  - Three members of Parliament of whom two are elected by the House of People and one by the Council of States
  - Eight members appointed by the Central Government representing various Ministries of the Central Govt.
  - Five members appointed by the Central Government by rotation in the alphabetical order to represent the States and the Union Territories,
  - Seven members appointed by the Central Govt.

Functions performed by APEDA

- **Development of industries** relating to the scheduled products for export,
- **Registration of persons as exporters** of the scheduled products,
- **Fixing of standards** and specifications for the scheduled products for the purpose of exports;
- **Carrying out inspection** of meat and meat products in slaughter ouses, processing plants, storage premises, conveyances or other places,
- **Improving of packaging** of the Scheduled products;
- **Improving of marketing** of the Scheduled products outside India.

LIVEMINT Page 11

MSCI INDEX
(Syllabus: GS Paper 3 – Eonomy)

India gains on China in MSCI index



In comparison, China's weight in the index fell to 25.4% after the February revision. AFP

India has narrowed the gap with China in MSCI's Global Standard index, which tracks emerging market stocks for investors, after the latest revision.

Index provider MSCI raised India's weightage in the index to an all-time high of 18.2% on Tuesday, which could lead to inflows of about $1.2 billion, analysts said.

In comparison, China's weight in the index fell to 25.4% after the February revision, from 26.6% a year ago.

The convergence of weights between Indian and Chinese stocks has intensified since August 2020, when China's weightage was five times that of India's.

MSCI's revisions will come into effect after market close on 29 February. Indian shares had a 17.9% weight on the index ahead of the February review.

The gain for India can be attributed to a sustained rally in equities and relative underperformance of other emerging markets, especially China, Nuvama Alternative & Quantitative Research said in a note on Tuesday.

India could surpass a 20% weight on the MSCI index by early 2024, on consistent flows from domestic institutional investors and steady foreign portfolio investor participation, Nuvama said. REUTERS

Context: The gap in weightage between Indian and Chinese equities on the MSCI index is narrowing with several global investors preferring shares on Dalal Street over those in Shanghai.

- Since January 2021, India's weight in the MSCI Standard Index has more than doubled from 8.9% to 18.2%, whereas China's weight has declined from 40.1% to 25.4% during the same period

MSCI Index

- **About**: The MSCI World is a stock market index of 1,643 world' stocks.
- It is **maintained by MSCI Inc, formerly Morgan Stanley** Capital International, and is used as a common benchmark for 'world' or 'global' stock funds.
  - The index includes a collection of stocks of all the developed markets in the world, as defined by MSCI.
  - The index includes securities from 23 countries but excludes stocks from emerging and frontier economies making it less worldwide than the name suggests.
  - A related index, the MSCI All Country World Index (ACWI), incorporated both developed and emerging countries.
  - MSCI also produces a Frontier Markets index, including another 31 markets.
- **MSCI Index India**: As per the official definition, the MSCI Index India is used to evaluate the performance of large and mid-cap segments of the Indian market.
  - MSCI Global Investable Indexes (GIMI) Methodology is used for MSCI Index India.
  - Around 85 percent of the Indian equity universe is covered by the MSCI Index India.
  - There are four constituents: Largest, Smallest, Average and Median.
- **Significance**: It is considered to be one of the important indices that focus on different geographic areas and stock types such as small-caps, mid-caps, and large-caps.

ECONOMIC TIMES

Feb 15

HARMONISED SYSTEM OF NOMENCLATURE

(Syllabus: GS Paper 3 – Economy)

India Plans to Promote Export of Rice Varieties Not Consumed in India

Decision to be taken after stakeholder talks

Our Bureau

New Delhi: India is working to develop new tariff codes, called HSN codes in trade parlance, for certain rice varieties to enable exports of those which are traditionally not consumed by the people in the country, officials said on Tuesday.

At present, exports of all categories of non-basmati white rice are banned.

The Agricultural & Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA) is working on separate HSN codes for rice varieties which are GI (geographical indication) tagged such as red rice, black rice and Kalanamak rice.

Every product that is globally traded is coded as per the HSN system, which describes and classifies these goods. There are 40-50 varieties of non-basmati rice and when the government bans the export of non-basmati rice, all these varieties, including Sona Masuri, Govind bhog and Kalanamak, or normal white rice, get impacted, said Rajesh Agarwal, additional secretary in the commerce department.

He said new HSN code for some other varieties of rice is the demand of the industry and a decision would be taken after a detailed stakeholder consultation.

"We are trying to see whether there is merit in doing so because as a country, on one hand we would not like to impose a ban on rice, which we are not worried too much about, but at the same time, we need to see that there is enough incentive for farmers to keep on producing the normal varieties of rice also which is the core staple diet of the country," Agarwal said. Currently, there are six HSN codes for non-basmati rice and one for basmati rice.

The move assumes significance as the Red Sea crisis is expected to impact India's rice exports this year. Due to restrictions on exports of rice, sugar, and wheat, India's agricultural exports may fall 9%, but the country has started exports of commodities such as water chestnut and makhana (fox nut). "This year we will not be exporting... Non-basmati rice, we are not exporting, because we do not know whether there will be an exportable surplus or not," he said.

The move assumes significance as the Red Sea crisis is expected to impact India's rice exports this year

Tracking Exports

India now supplies fresh fruits to 111 countries

Talks on with Australia for grapes, okra, pomegranate

India shipped first batch of bananas to Russia on Jan



Basmati rice exports up 19% on-yr in Apr-Dec 2023

Parboiled rice exports up 9.36% on-yr in Apr-Nov 2023 in value terms

Talks on with global supermarket chains to promote agri products

Context: India is working to develop new tariff codes, called Harmonised System of Nomenclature or HSN codes in trade parlance, for certain rice varieties to enable exports of those that are traditionally not consumed by the people in the country.

Harmonised System of Nomenclature or HSN

- **About: The** HSN code is a 6-digit uniform code that classifies 5000+ products and is accepted worldwide.
- **Developed by**: World Customs Organization (WCO) and it came into effect in 1988.
- **Importance**: The main purpose of HSN is to classify goods from all over the World systematically and logically. This brings in a uniform classification of goods and facilitates international trade.

HSN in India

- **About**: India is a member of World Customs Organization(WCO) since 1971.
- It was originally using 6-digit HSN codes to classify commodities for Customs and Central Excise.
- Later Customs and Central Excise added two more digits to make the codes more precise, resulting in an 8-digit classification.

The Importance of HSN Under GST

- The HSN system serves beyond Customs agents, extending its significance to GST operations.
- HSN codes play a crucial role in streamlining the Goods and Services Tax (GST) framework.
- Utilizing HSN codes eliminates the necessity for exhaustive descriptions of goods in GST filings.
- Automation facilitated by HSN codes leads to significant savings in both time and financial resources for tax authorities.

BUSINESS STANDARD

Page 11

INSOLVENCY AND BANKRUPTCY BOARD OF INDIA

(Syllabus: GS Paper 3 – Economy)

Allotted houses to stay out of liquidation: IBBI

12 key changes to overall regulations introduced to ensure transparency

RUCHIKA CHITRAVANSHI & ANEEKA CHATTERJEE
New Delhi/Bengaluru, 13 February

In a relief to homebuyers, assets in a real estate project that have been handed over to the allottee would be kept out of the liquidation process of the company, the latest amendment to the rules by the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI) has said.

The notification dated February 12 said: "For the purposes of clause (e) of sub-section (4) of section 36, wherever the corporate debtor has given possession to an allottee in a real estate project, such asset shall not form a part of the liquidation estate of the corporate debtor."

Real estate experts call it a "pragmatic approach" by the regulator. "However, there are many cases where possession has not been given because the property is stuck in insolvency. The IBBI should look into that as well," said Rajive Kumar, former chairman, Real Estate Regulatory Authority (RERA), Uttar Pradesh.

In a discussion paper it released on November 7, 2023, the insolvency regulator had mooted the same idea along with project-based insolvency to get multiple bidders for different projects in real estate insolvencies. The IBBI had also batted for an increased role of RERA by proposing compulsory registration of all real estate projects undergoing corporate insolvency resolution with the regulator by the insolvency professionals.



Real estate consultant Anarock Capital said the new amendment would act as a significant relief when the homebuyers would have a say in the CoC (committee of creditors).

"This is particularly relevant when the homebuyers have a small say in the CoC. As a matter of process, this provision will also serve to reduce the litigation in the insolvency process," said Aashiesh Agarwaal, senior vice-president (research & investment advisory), Anarock Capital.

Dhananjaya Padmanabhachar, convenor of the Karnataka Home Buyers Forum, said the allottees of a real estate project would have first charges on the property. "If the promoters undergo insolvency and liquidation, homebuyers' property should be kept out of the process. Property in this case means the carpet area of the allottees along with undivided proportionate share in the common area. RERA 2016 Section 17 protects allottees' land rights."

The Amitabh Kant committee report on real estate projects had also recommended that "the IBC needs to be reformed to better accommodate the complexities of the real estate sector". Transfer of ownership and possession of a plot, apartment, or building to the allottees during the resolution process is one of the suggestions made in the report.

Through its February 12 notification, the IBBI has introduced 12 key amendments to the overall liquidation regulations to streamline the process, bringing more transparency and giving more power to the consultative committee.

Turn to Page 6

Context: Recently, the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI) amended rules to exclude assets in a real estate project handed over to the allottee from the company's liquidation process, offering relief to homebuyers.

Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI)

- **Establishment**: On 1st October 2016 under the provisions of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC), 2016.
- **Implementation**: It plays a pivotal role in the implementation of the IBC, amending and consolidating laws related to insolvency resolution across individuals, partnership firms, and corporate entities in a time-bound manner.
- **Functions**: The IBBI regulates professionals and processes associated with insolvency.
- It exercises regulatory oversight over insolvency professional agencies, insolvency professional entities, insolvency professionals, and information utilities.
- **Enforcement and Rulemaking**: The board enforces rules governing corporate insolvency resolution, individual insolvency resolution, corporate liquidation, and individual bankruptcy under the IBC.
- **Records and Information Dissemination**: The IBBI collects and maintains records related to insolvency and bankruptcy cases. It also plays a role in disseminating information concerning such cases.
- **Constitution and Membership**: The board's constitution involves members appointed by the Central Government, including a Chairperson, three members from among officers of the Central Government representing the Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Corporate Affairs, and Ministry of Law (ex-officio),
    - one member nominated by the RBI (Reserve Bank of India) (ex-officio), and five other members nominated by the Central Government, with at least three being whole-time members.
- **Term of Office**: The office for the Chairperson and members (excluding ex-officio members) is five years or until they reach the age of sixty-five, whichever is earlier, and they are eligible for reappointment.

MSP ISSUE

(Syllabus: GS Paper 3 – Economy)



MSP issue: what govt committee set up in 2022 has done so far

HARIKISHAN SHARMA
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 13

A MAJOR demand of the farmers who broke through police barricades and braved tear gas on their way to New Delhi on Tuesday is the enactment of a law to guarantee minimum support prices (MSP) for all crops, as per the formula recommended by the Dr M S Swaminathan Commission.

In the evening, Congress leaders Rahul Gandhi and Mallikarjun Kharge announced the party had made a "historic" decision to provide this legal guarantee to farmers.

This comes at a time when a committee appointed by the Centre in July 2022 continues to deliberate on ways to make MSP more "effective and transparent".

This panel was constituted seven months after farmers gathered at Delhi's border called off their year-long protest after Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced the repeal of the farm laws. The committee's terms of reference do not include a legal guarantee for MSP.

The committee

The committee, which was set up to "promote Zero budget based farming, to change crop pattern keeping in mind the changing needs of the country, and to make MSP more effective and transparent", was notified by the Union Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare on July 18, 2022.

The committee, which has 26 members, is headed by Sanjay Agrawal, a former agriculture secretary.

Its other members are (i) NITI Aayog member (Agriculture) Ramesh Chand, (ii) two agricultural economists, (iii) an award-winning farmer, (iv) five representatives of farmers' organisations other than the Samyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM), (v) two representatives of farmers' cooperatives/groups, (vi) one member of the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP), (vii) three persons from agricultural universities and institutions, (viii) five secretaries of the Government of India, (ix) four officers from four states, and (x) one joint secretary from the Agriculture Ministry.

Under the category of farmers' representatives, the committee had three positions for members of the SKM, the umbrella body of farmers' unions that had spearheaded the 2020-21 agitation, but they did not join it.

The SKM has not joined the ongoing protest so far. The farmers currently marching to Delhi belong to the Kisan Mazdoor Morcha (KMM) and Samyukta Kisan Morcha (non-political), a breakaway faction of the SKM.

Barricades at the Shambhu border between Punjab, Haryana. Gurmeet Singh

EXPLAINED AGRICULTURE

Purpose of panel

On November 19, 2021, PM Modi announced that the government had decided to withdraw the three farm laws – the Farmers Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act, 2020, the Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Act, 2020; and the Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act, 2020.

"A committee will be constituted to decide on matters like promotion of zero budget farming, i.e. natural farming, scientifically change the crop pattern keeping in mind the changing requirements of the country, and make MSP more effective and transparent. "The committee will include representatives of the central government, state governments, farmers, agricultural scientists and agricultural economists," Modi had said. The notification of the Agriculture Ministry was along the same lines.

Mandate of panel

The ministry's July 18, 2022 notification said the committee's "subject matter" has three points: MSP, natural farming, and crop diversification.

On the MSP, the committee has been asked for suggestions to "make available MSP to farmers of the country by making the system more effective and transparent". The panel is also supposed to make recommendations to strengthen the Agricultural Marketing System "as per the changing requirements of the country to ensure higher value to the farmers through remunerative prices of their produce by taking advantage of the domestic and export opportunities".

The body was asked for suggestions on the "practicality to give more autonomy to Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices and measures to make it more scientific".

Progress in panel

The committee on MSP had its first meeting on August 22, 2022.

The Agriculture Ministry has said the committee has been meeting on a "regular basis actively to deliberate" on the "subject matters assigned to it".

The July 18, 2022 notification did not specify the tenure of the Sanjay Agrawal committee. Therefore, the committee has no deadline by which it is required to present its report.

Context: Recently, farmers demanding enactment of a law guaranteeing minimum support prices (MSP) for all crops, as per the Dr M S Swaminathan Commission's formula, broke through police barricades and braved tear gas en route to Delhi.

Purpose of Panel

- **Farm Laws Withdrawn**: On November 19, 2021, the Prime Minister of India announced the government's decision to **repeal the three farm laws:**
  - Farmers Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act, 2020
  - Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Act, 2020
  - Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act, 2020
- **Committee Formation:** A committee will be constituted to address key agricultural issues:
  - Promotion of zero budget farming (natural farming)
  - Scientifically changing crop patterns to align with evolving national requirements
  - Enhancing the effectiveness and transparency of Minimum Support Price (MSP).

The Committee

- **Establishment**: The Union Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare established a committee on July 18, 2022.
- **Objective**: To promote Zero Budget Based Farming, alter crop patterns to align with the country's evolving needs, and enhance the effectiveness and transparency of Minimum Support Price (MSP).
- **Composition**
- **Chairperson:** The committee is led by Sanjay Agrawal, a former agriculture secretary.
- **Membership**: NITI Aayog member (ii) two agricultural economists, (iii) an award-winning farmer, (iv) five representatives of farmers' organisations other than the Samyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM), (v) two representatives of farmers' cooperatives/ groups, (vi) one member of the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP), (vii) three persons from agricultural universities and institutions, (viii) five secretaries of the Government of India, (ix) four officers from four states, and (x) one joint secretary from the Agriculture Ministry.

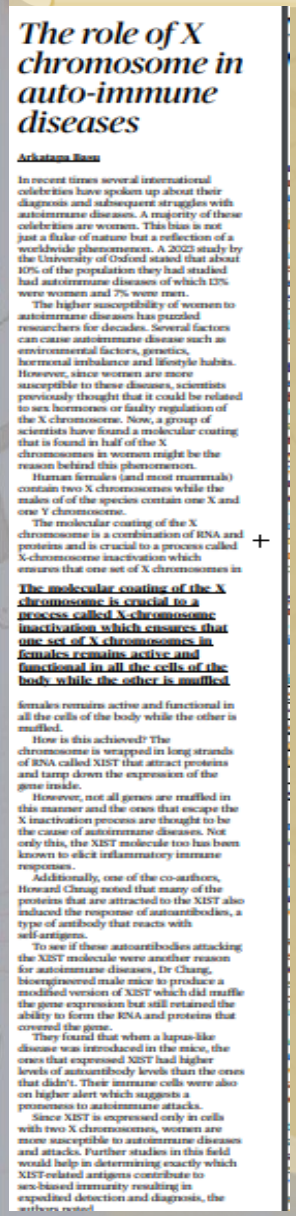
SKM's Stand

- **Non-Participation**: The SKM has chosen not to participate in the ongoing protest and did not join the committee despite allocated positions.
- These microheadings provide a structured overview of the committee's establishment, composition, specific members, representation of farmers, and the current scenario with a focus on the SKM's involvement.

THE HINDU Page 11

AUTOIMMUNE DISEASES

(Syllabus: GS Paper 3 – Sci and Tech)



The role of X chromosome in auto-immune diseases

Arkatapa Basu

In recent times several international celebrities have spoken up about their diagnosis and subsequent struggles with autoimmune diseases. A majority of these celebrities are women. This bias is not just a fluke of nature but a reflection of a worldwide phenomenon. A 2023 study by the University of Oxford stated that about 10% of the population they had studied had autoimmune diseases of which 13% were women and 7% were men.

The higher susceptibility of women to autoimmune diseases has puzzled researchers for decades. Several factors can cause autoimmune disease such as environmental factors, genetics, hormonal imbalance and lifestyle habits. However, since women are more susceptible to these diseases, scientists previously thought that it could be related to sex hormones or faulty regulation of the X chromosome. Now, a group of scientists have found a molecular coating that is found in half of the X chromosomes in women might be the reason behind this phenomenon.

Human females (and most mammals) contain two X chromosomes while the males of of the species contain one X and one Y chromosome.

The molecular coating of the X chromosome is a combination of RNA and proteins and is crucial to a process called X-chromosome inactivation which ensures that one set of X chromosomes in

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How is this achieved? The chromosome is wrapped in long strands of RNA called XIST that attract proteins and tamp down the expression of the gene inside.

However, not all genes are muffled in this manner and the ones that escape the X inactivation process are thought to be the cause of autoimmune diseases. Not only this, the XIST molecule too has been known to elicit inflammatory immune responses.

Additionally, one of the co-authors, Howard Chang noted that many of the proteins that are attracted to the XIST also induced the response of autoantibodies, a type of antibody that reacts with self-antigens.

To see if these autoantibodies attacking the XIST molecule were another reason for autoimmune diseases, Dr Chang, bioengineered male mice to produce a modified version of XIST which did muffle the gene expression but still retained the ability to form the RNA and proteins that crowned the gene.

They found that when a lupus-like disease was introduced in the mice, the ones that expressed XIST had higher levels of autoantibody levels than the ones that didn't. Their immune cells were also on higher alert which suggests a proneness to autoimmune attacks.

Since XIST is expressed only in cells with two X chromosomes, women are more susceptible to autoimmune diseases and attacks. Further studies in this field would help in determining exactly which XIST-related antigens contribute to sex-biased immunity resulting in expedited detection and diagnosis, the authors noted.

Context: In recent times several international celebrities have spoken up about their diagnosis and subsequent struggles with autoimmune diseases.

Autoimmune Diseases

- **About:** Autoimmune diseases are conditions in which your immune system mistakenly damages healthy cells in your body. Types include rheumatoid arthritis, Crohn's disease, and some thyroid conditions.
- **Target**: Some autoimmune diseases target only one organ. Type 1 diabetes damages your pancreas. Other conditions, such as systemic lupus erythematosus, or lupus, can affect your whole body.
- **Cause autoimmune disease**: Some drugs may cause changes in your body that confuse your immune system.
  - Some autoimmune diseases run in families, so you're at higher risk if your family has a history of them.
  - Microorganisms like viruses and bacteria could set off changes that make your immune system attack itself.
  - Several factors can cause autoimmune disease such as environmental factors, genetics, hormonal imbalance, and lifestyle habits.
- **Symptoms**: Fatigue, Fever, General ill feeling (malaise), Joint pain and Rash.
- **Most Common Autoimmune Diseases**: Inflammatory bowel, Rheumatoid arthritis (RA), Lupus, Type 1 diabetes, etc.

Women are more affected:

- A 2023 study by the University of Oxford stated that about 10% of the population they had studied had autoimmune diseases of which 13% were women and 7% were men.
- **Cause:** As per a group of scientists have found a molecular coating that is found in half of the X chromosomes in women might be the reason behind this phenomenon.
- **Women and Men chromosome**: Human females (and most mammals) contain two X chromosomes while the males of of the species contain one X and one Y chromosome.

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