

NOVEMBER

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FORTNIGHTLY ON POLITICS OF DEVELOPMENT,
ENVIRONMENT AND HEALTH

**Science
Reporter**



MK Yadav Sir

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Not enough done to control farm fires in Punjab: NGT

ABHINAVA HARIGOVIND
& KANCHAN VASDEV
NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 20

THE NATIONAL Green Tribunal (NGT) has noted that "adequate action has not been taken" to control farm fires in Punjab and that action taken has been "selective."

The Tribunal's Principal Bench noted, "We have taken note of satellite image as of 10 o'clock when the State of Punjab is completely shown in red." It also added, "We find even in respect of cumulative active fire incidents reported as per ISRO protocol, adequate action has not been taken."

The bench, headed by chairperson Prakash Shrivastava noted: "The chart (submitted by the State) discloses that all persons involved in farm fire incidents have not been treated uniformly, but selective action has been taken by registering FIRs against some, by prosecuting some under the Air Act, by imposing environmental compensation against others, and by making the red entry in some cases. Counsel for the state has failed to disclose why selective action has been taken though all the violators fall in the same category."

There was some reduction in fire incidents on the three days after the Tribunal's previous order was passed on November 8, but then incidents went up again, the bench further said.



As per the Punjab Pollution Control Board, till November 19, Punjab reported 34,459 farm fires. Praveen Khanna

"This chart reflects that consistent adequate measures have not been taken to prevent farm fires in spite of the fact that the matter is pending before the Tribunal and orders have been issued earlier, and also in spite of the fact that the issue is being considered before the Hon'ble Supreme Court," it stated.

The Tribunal has noted that the counsel for the State of Punjab has submitted that further efforts will be made to bring down farm fires and has sought time to file another report.

As per the Punjab Pollution Control Board, till November 19, Punjab reported 34,459 farm fires. In 32 cases, prosecution has been filed under section 39 of the Air Act; in 903 cases FIRs have been filed under IPC section 188; environmental compensa-

tion has been imposed in 7964 cases; while 'red entry' has been made in 628 cases.

As per the board, in 2021 and 2022, there were no cases in which prosecution was filed under the Air Act. In 2022, there were only five cases in which FIRs were filed under IPC section 188 while there were no such cases in 2021. Till November 30 last year, environmental compensation was imposed only in 6,695 cases while there were 10,244 cases in which it was imposed in 2021.

Meanwhile, Delhi's AQI remained in the 'very poor' category Monday with a 24-hour average of 355 at 9 pm. Hearing a separate matter on air quality in Delhi, the Tribunal has directed the authorities to take all possible measures to ensure an improvement in air quality.

Context: Recently, the **National Green Tribunal (NGT)** observed that there has been a **lack of adequate action to control farm fires in Punjab**, and the measures taken so far have been described as "selective."

National Green Tribunal (NGT)

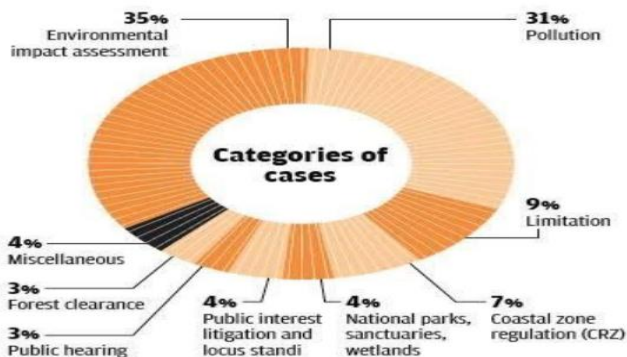
- **Established:** Under the National Green Tribunal Act 2010.
- **Principal Place of Sitting:** New Delhi.
- **The other four places:** Bhopal, Pune, Kolkata and Chennai
- **Composition:** Chairperson, the Judicial Members, and the Expert Members.
- **Tenure:** 5 years and are not eligible for reappointment.
- **Appointment:** The Chairperson is appointed by the Central Government in consultation with the Chief Justice of India (CJI).
- **Disposal of cases:** NGT is mandated to make disposal of applications or appeals finally **within 6 months** of the filing of the same.
- **NGT Powers:** The following are the Acts under which NGT can take actions and has the authority to take actions:
 - The Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974.
 - The Water (Prevention and control of Pollution) Cess Act, 1977.
 - The Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980.
 - The Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution), 1981.
 - The Environment (Protection) Act, 1986.
 - The Biological Diversity Act, 2002.

The NGT Act does not cover two important legislations related to environment, they are:

- The Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972
- The Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006

Types of cases NGT handles

Two-thirds of cases handled by NGT relate to environmental impact assessments and pollution



Governor can't withhold re-passed Bills, says SC

Court agrees with the Tamil Nadu government's argument that the Constitution does not provide Governor Ravi the 'discretion' to withhold the 10 Bills it re-enacted, or refer them to the President

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday took note of the Tamil Nadu government's argument that the Constitution does not provide Governor R.N. Ravi "discretion" to withhold the 10 Bills "re-passed" by the State Legislative Assembly.

"Once they have been re-passed, these Bills are put in the same footing as Money Bills. Then you [the Governor] cannot reject...", Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud, heading a three-judge Bench, remarked.

The court was reacting to arguments raised by the State, represented by senior advocates A.M. Singhvi, Mukul Rohatgi, P. Wilson and advocate Sabarish

These Bills have been pending since January 2020. The Governor took action only after we issued notice in the matter. Why should Governors wait parties to move the Supreme Court to start taking steps?
D.Y. CHANDRACHUD
Chief Justice of India



SC seeks Kerala Governor's reply

NEW DELHI
The Supreme Court has sought a response from Kerala Governor Arif Mohammed Khan on a petition by the State government that he is holding back Bills. » PAGE 5

Subramanian, that the first proviso of Article 200 states: "If the Bill is passed again by the House or Houses with or without amendment and presented to the Governor for assent, the Governor shall not withhold assent therefrom".

But, at one point, the Chief Justice asked whether the Governor had to mandatorily send the Bills back to the House for re-

consideration after withholding assent. "Can he simpliciter say 'I am withholding assent' without sending the Bills back to the House?" Justice Chandrachud asked. Mr. Singhvi responded that returning the Bills back to the House was a necessary corollary to the withdrawal of assent.

The court also acknowledged the State's submission that the Governor,

having withheld assent and sent back the Bills once, cannot refer the reiterated Bills to the President.

The State had complained to the court that the Governor was holding the Bills back indefinitely, defeating the rights of the people of Tamil Nadu to the benefits of crucial laws passed by the House.

CONTINUED ON
» PAGE 10

Context: Recently, the Supreme Court acknowledged the Tamil Nadu government's contention that the Constitution does not grant Governor the "discretion" to withhold the 10 Bills that were "re-passed" by the State Legislative Assembly.

Governor

- **About:** They serve as the **Chief Executive Head of a State**, similar to the role of the **President of India**.
 - In this capacity, they function as both a **nominal (titular or constitutional)** head and an agent of the central government, signifying a dual role for the office of the governor.
- **Appointment:** By the President.
- **Oath:** By the Chief Justice of the concerned State's High Court.
- **Tenure:** 5 Years.

Governor's Powers over State Bills

- **Article 200:** This Art of the Indian Constitution delineates the procedure for a Bill approved by the Legislative Assembly of a State to be presented to the Governor for assent.
 - The **Governor holds the authority to either assent to the Bill**, withhold assent, or reserve the Bill for consideration by the President.
 - Additionally, the **Governor has the option to return the Bill to the Legislative Assembly** with a message, requesting reconsideration.
- **Article 201:** It stipulates that **when a Bill is reserved for the consideration of the President, the President can either assent to or withhold assent from the Bill**.
 - Furthermore, the **President has the power to instruct the Governor to return the Bill** to the Legislative Assembly for reconsideration.
- **In Nabam Rebia and Bamang Felix vs Deputy Speaker:** The Governor cannot withhold assent to a Bill indefinitely but must return it to the Assembly with a message and this could include his recommendation for amendments to the Bill.

PRESIDENT OF INDIA INAUGURATES AN EKLAVYA MODEL RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL AT KULIANA

Context: The President of India, **recently inaugurated an Eklavya Model Residential School** at Kuliana, district Mayurbhanj, Odisha.

Eklavya Model Residential School

- **About:** The EMRS model was initially introduced in 1997-98 with the primary goal of providing quality education to tribal students.
- **Aim:** To offer residential facilities in remote corners, addressing the educational needs of tribal communities.
- **Established Institutions:** The overarching objective was to establish schools that matched the standards of Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas and Kendriya Vidyalayas.
 - This strategic approach aimed at ensuring that tribal students received education at par with their non-tribal counterparts.
- **Holistic Development Focus:** EMRS schools were designed to go beyond traditional academic education.
- **School Capacity:** Each EMRS has a specific capacity, accommodating up to 480 students.
- **Range:** These schools catered to students spanning from Class VI to XII, covering a crucial phase in their educational journey.
- **Funding Mechanism:** The funding for EMRS schools was intended to be sourced from grants under Article 275(1), charged to the Consolidated Fund of India.
 - These grants were allocated annually as aids to support the functioning and development of these educational institutions.
- **Guidelines and State Discretion:** Only specify the infrastructural requirement of 20-acre plots for each school. However, other criteria, such as specific operational details, were left to the discretion of State governments, allowing flexibility in implementation.

Union Minister Parshottam Rupala to inaugurate Global Fisheries Conference India 2023 on Tuesday

Context: Union Fisheries Minister of India is set to inaugurate the two-day **Global Fisheries Conference India 2023** in Ahmedabad.

Global Fisheries Conference India 2023

- **Location:** Gujarat Science City.
- **Theme:** Celebrate the Fisheries and Aquaculture Wealth.
- **Participants:** Foreign missions, experts, government officials, think tanks, academia, international organizations(such as the World Bank, FAO), industry associations, and other key stakeholders for the conference.
- **Objective:** It provides an opportunity for them to come together, exchange ideas, share information on relevant technologies, and explore market linkage opportunities.
- **World Fisheries Day:** Celebrated annually on November 21st.

India's Fisheries Sector

- India is the **third largest fish producing country** in the world accounting for 7.96% of the global production and **second largest producer of fish through aquaculture**, after China and **4th largest: exporter** in the world.
- **Inland fish production:** Increased 400 % between 2000-01 and 2021-22.
- **Freshwater fishing** consists of **55% of total** fish production.
- Koyilandy harbour in Kerala is the **largest fishing harbour** in Asia. It has the **longest breakwater**.

Draft Broadcasting Bill Raises New Questions on OTTs, Costs

Experts: Regulation by multiple ministries may increase compliance burden

Suraksha.P@timesgroup.com

PRITHA JHA
Partner, Pioneer Legal law firm

Regulators need to be careful about defining broadcasting OTTs vs. communication OTTs

Bengaluru: Communication over-the-top (OTTs) apps such as WhatsApp, Telegram and Signal among others may be included in the recently introduced draft Broadcasting Services Regulation Bill 2023, experts said, raising concerns they may be bundled with the broadcasting OTTs such as Netflix.

Experts have also sought clarity on whether such apps will be regulated by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (MIB), Department of Telecommunication (DoT) or in some cases

Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY). Regulation by multiple government organisations may increase their compliance burden.

Pritha Jha, a partner at Pioneer Legal law firm said that the regulations and the regulators need to be careful about defining broadcasting OTTs vs. communication OTTs. For e.g., a Netflix vs. a WhatsApp.

Meta-owned WhatsApp, Telegram Messenger, and Signal Private Messenger did not respond to queries from ET on the Bill. Instant messaging platforms offer services to broadcast audio visual messages to several users at a time, through WhatsApp Channels, Telegram Channels or Signal groups. Users can also add several users at once to a call where audio-visual communication takes place.

Context: Recently introduced, experts have indicated that communication over-the-top (OTT) apps like Whatsapp, Telegram, and Signal, among others, might be encompassed in the draft Broadcasting Services Regulation Bill 2023.

- This has raised concerns that they could potentially be bundled with broadcasting OTTs such as Netflix.

Draft Broadcasting Services (Regulation) Bill

- **Aim:** The objective is to establish a consolidated legal framework for the broadcasting sector.
- **Modernization:** The Bill aims to replace the Cable Television Networks (Regulation) Act, 1995, and other policy guidelines that currently govern the broadcasting sector.
- **Extension:** The regulatory scope is expanded to include OTT content, digital news, and current affairs, which are presently regulated under the Information Technology Act, of 2000.
- **Regulation:** The bill introduces regulatory provisions for various broadcasting services under a unified legislative framework.
- **Adaptability:** It responds to the dynamic landscape of OTT, Digital Media, DTH, IPTV, and more, fostering technological advancement and service evolution.
- **Differentiated Approach:** The bill allows for a varied approach to the Programme and Advertisement Code across different services. It mandates self-classification by broadcasters and robust access control measures for restricted content.
- **Inclusivity:** The goal is to enhance inclusivity and accessibility in broadcasting for people with disabilities by incorporating subtitles, audio descriptors, and sign language.
- **Penalty:** It provides statutory penalties for operators and broadcasters, such as advisory, warning, censure, or monetary penalties.

Prime Minister pays tributes to Rani Lakshmibai on her birth anniversary

Context: The Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi paid heartfelt tributes to the symbol of the bravery of Indian women power, Rani Lakshmibai on her birth anniversary.

Rani Lakshmibai

- **Early Life:** Born on November 19, 1828, in the city of Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh, Rani Laxmibai hailed from a family of Marathi Karhade Brahmins.
- **Family:** Her father was Moropant Tambe, and her mother was named Bhagirathi Bai. She, in turn, was given the name Manikarnika Tambe and affectionately nicknamed Manu.
- **Marriage:** At the age of 14, she was married to the Maharaja of Jhansi, Gangadhar Rao in 1842.

Contributions in the Indian Freedom Struggle

- **Doctrine of Lapse:** Lord Dalhousie, born on April 22, 1812, aimed to annex Jhansi using the Doctrine of Lapse after the Maharaja's death due to the absence of a natural heir.
 - According to this doctrine, the Rani was granted an annual pension and instructed to vacate the fort of Jhansi.
- **Revolt of 1857:** During the outbreak of the Revolt of 1857 in Meerut, Rani Laxmibai governed Jhansi as a regent for her minor son.
 - In 1858, British forces, led by Sir Hugh Rose, reached Jhansi with the intention of capturing the fort. He demanded the city's surrender, threatening destruction if refused.
 - Rani Laxmibai, dressed as a soldier, met her demise in Gwalior on June 18, 1858, at the age of 23, while actively engaged in combat.



Money laundering a threat to nation's financial system: SC

Utkarsh Anand

letters@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: Technology and Artificial Intelligence (AI) have aided economic offences such as money laundering and made them become a real threat to the financial system of the country, the Supreme Court said on Monday, adding that such crimes should be viewed with utmost seriousness.

Rejecting the bail plea of an accused in a money laundering case, the top court held that economic offences are a class apart and need to be visited with a different approach in the matter of bail. "The economic offences having deep-rooted conspiracies and involving huge loss of public funds need to be viewed seriously and considered as grave offences affecting the economy of the country... and thereby posing serious threat to the financial health of the country..." said the bench of justices Aniruddha Bose and Bela M Trivedi.

Writing the judgment for the



Tech advancement, AI, economic offences have become a great challenge for the probe agencies

SUPREME COURT

bench, justice Trivedi maintained that the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) clearly implicates a person for his involvement in criminal activities such as concealment, possession, acquisition, and use of proceeds of crime or projecting it as untainted property.

"With the advancement of technology and Artificial Intelligence, the economic offences like money laundering have become a real threat to the functioning of the financial system of the country and have become a great challenge for the investi-

gating agencies to detect and comprehend the intricate nature of transactions, as also the role of the persons involved therein," the court said.

The investigating agency (ED), the bench said, has to carry out exercises to ensure that no innocent person is wrongly booked and no culprit escapes from the clutches of the law. "When the detention of the accused is continued by the court, the courts are also expected to conclude the trials within a reasonable time..." added the bench, even as it rejected the bail plea of Tarun Kumar, vice-president (Purchases) in Shakti Bhog Limited a director in various Shakti Bhog Group Companies.

Kumar, who was arrested by ED in August 2022 on charges of bank fraud and benefiting from proceeds of crime, sought bail on multiple grounds while emphasising that the investigation with respect to his alleged role is complete and that the trial of the cases was likely to take a long time.

Context: The Supreme Court recently emphasized that technology and Artificial Intelligence (AI) have played a pivotal role in facilitating economic offenses like money laundering, posing a genuine threat to the country's financial system.

Money Laundering

- **Definition:** Money laundering is the process of hiding the source of money obtained from illegal sources and converting it to a clean source, for the purpose of avoiding prosecution, conviction, and confiscation of the criminal funds.
- **As per FATE:** The goal of a large number of criminal acts is to generate a profit for the individual or group that carries out the act.
- Money laundering is the processing of these criminal proceeds to disguise their illegal origin.
- **This process is of critical importance, as it enables** the criminal to enjoy these profits without jeopardizing their source.

Impact of Money Laundering

- **Distortion of Economic Sectors:** Money laundering disrupts fair competition and market integrity by injecting illicit funds into legitimate businesses.
- **Undermining Financial Stability:** Money laundering weakens the financial system, increasing the risk of crises and compromising the credibility of banks.
- **Undermining the Rule of Law:** Money laundering undermines the rule of law by allowing criminals to benefit from their illegal activities, eroding trust in legal systems.
- **Corruption and Capture of Institutions:** Money laundering infiltrates and corrupts institutions, compromising their integrity and effectiveness.

Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA)

- **Aim:** To prevent money-laundering and to provide for confiscation of property derived from or involved in money laundering.
- The Department of Revenue within the Ministry of Finance oversees the investigation of money laundering offenses under the PMLA through the Enforcement Directorate (ED).

Pulse mission to lift output, buffer soon

Nafed to encourage pulses farming, assure purchases in scheme

Rupa Das
rupa.das@livemint.com
NEW DELHI

The Union government is crafting a scheme to boost domestic production of pulses with a focus on select states, at a time when erratic weather and more remunerative crops have prompted many farmers to shift away from the kitchen staples.

The Bharat Dal Utpadan Swavlamban Abhiyan, or the Indian mission for self-sufficiency in pulse production, will aim to lift production, meet buffer norms and end import dependency, a government official aware of the plan said. The scheme, which will debut at a time of falling production and rising imports of pulses, will focus primarily on Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal, Telangana and Karnataka.

The government has decided to appoint the National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India (Nafed) as the primary implementing agency for the scheme, the official cited above said on condition of anonymity. The agency may pre-register farmers to buy their entire produce, in an attempt to raise tur output by 1.2 million tonnes (mt) and masur output by 500,000 tonnes. Currently, the buffer requirement for tur is 1mt and for masur is 500,000 tonnes; the government aims to achieve buffer stocks of 800,000 tonnes of tur and 400,000 tonnes of masur once the scheme is established, the official said.

"The government believes that pulses' growers are fully capable of replicating the production reported in 2016-17 for tur and further

FARM FRONT

Falling output and rising imports of pulses pose a threat to India's food security.

Production and imports of tur dal and masur dal (in thousand tonnes)



Financial year (April-March) for imports and crop year (July-June) for production figures

Source: Ministries of agriculture & farmers' welfare, commerce & industry and department of consumer affairs

ON THE ANVIL

GOVT to name Nafed as the implementing agency for the drive

NAFED to pre-register farmers, buy their entire produce

SCHEME to combine elements of existing PSS and PSF schemes

SARVESH KUMAR GHARNA/MINT

increasing the production of masur, given that they are adequately supported with the assured purchase of crops at MSP (minimum support price) or market rate, whichever is higher, and assured risk mitigation in case of crop damages due to weather conditions through the Fasal Bima Yojana. Support of quality input supply, including high-yielding seed, credit and local purchase through primary agricultural societies and storage at the Gramin Bhandaran points, will surely encourage farmers to enhance production," the official said.

The new scheme which will be

implemented by the agriculture ministry will integrate elements of the existing Price Support Scheme (PSS) and the Price Stabilisation Fund (PSF). At present, under the PSS, the agriculture ministry procures crops at MSP to support farmers when prices fall, whereas under PSF, the Department of Consumer Affairs purchases pulses and vegetables at the MSP or market price for buffer stocks for later use in market interventions.

The official added that funds available with the PSS and the PSF will be

TURN TO PAGE 6

Context: Recently, the Union government has initiated the crafting of a scheme to enhance domestic production of pulses, particularly targeting select states.

- This effort comes at a time when recently erratic weather patterns and the allure of more remunerative crops have prompted many farmers to shift away from these essential kitchen staples.

Indian Mission for Self-Sufficiency in Pulse Production

- **Aim:** To lift production, meet buffer norms, and end import dependency.
- **States:** Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal, Telangana and Karnataka.
- **Implementing Agency:** National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India (Nafed)
- NAFED to preregister farmers, and buy their entire produce.
- **Nodal Ministry:** Ministry of Agriculture
- They will integrate elements of the existing Price Support Scheme (PSS) and the Price Stabilisation Fund (PSF).

Pulses Production in India

- India is the largest producer (25% of global production), consumer (27% of world consumption) and importer (14%) of pulses in the world.
- Additionally, pulses cover approximately 20% of the foodgrain cultivation area and contribute around 7-10% to the overall foodgrain production within the country.
- **Top States:** Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Karnataka.

India-Australia ECTA utilisation rate at 77%

SHREYA NANDI

New Delhi, 20 November

The utilisation of the India-Australia Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement (ECTA) by Indian exporters has reached 77 per cent during the first nine months since the implementation of the interim deal, according to official data.

This means that during the January-September period, of the total value of trade eligible for concessional tariffs under the trade agreement, 77 per cent of the value of Indian goods is being exported using the preferential or ECTA route.

For Indian exporters, sectors that have benefited from the deal include iron and steel products, liners, agri products, and electrical conductors.

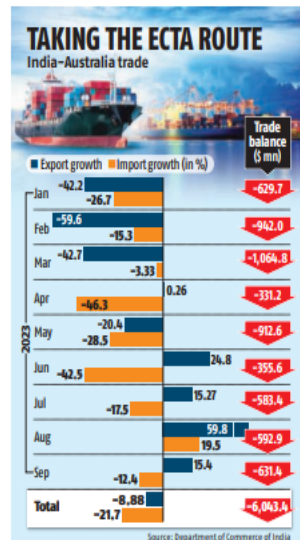
Through the deal — kicked in on December 29, 2022 — India hopes to benefit from preferential market access provided by Australia on 100 per cent of its tariff lines.

While 51 per cent of Australia's approximately 6,500 tariff lines attracted zero import duty even before ECTA kicked in, as part of the deal, duty for 3,185 tariff lines was brought down to zero with effect from December 2022. However, in the case of some products, the duty reduction will take place over five years.

In a free trade agreement (FTA), the utilisation rate is one of the key parameters to assess how a deal is faring or the real gains from it.

Utilisation for some tariff lines is even higher. For instance, the utilisation for some iron and steel products exported to Australia is 100 per cent, with the value of such products totalling \$109.4 million, according to official data. Similarly, the utilisation was nearly 90 per cent for some linen exports to Australia, totalling \$54.39 million, and almost 100 per cent in the case of electrical conductors valued at \$43.9 million.

FTA utilisation has been one of the key challenges with trade deals that India signed more than 10 years ago. The utilisation has been poor due to the cumbersome process of



India, Australia hold 2+2 ministerial dialogue to step up strategic ties

India and Australia on Monday held 2+2 Ministerial Dialogue in New Delhi to step up defence cooperation and deepen the strategic relationship in sectors such as critical minerals and trade and investment. Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar met Australian Deputy Prime Minister and Defence Minister Richard Marles and Foreign Minister Penny Wong as part of the second India-Australia 2+2 Ministerial Dialogue.

getting a certificate of origin and related verification since the process was manual, low awareness about FTAs in the industry, as well as few non-tariff barriers. According to a Delhi-based Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI), on average, the FTA use for exports is estimated in the range of only 20-30 per cent.

On the other hand, the use is much higher for imports and ranges between 60 per cent and 70 per cent, though India has never officially released any utilisation data with its

FTA partners such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, Japan, or South Korea. "FTAs lower the import duty, but if it is already zero, FTAs offer no benefit. This is the biggest reason for Indian firms not using FTAs for exports... On the contrary, India's most-favoured nation duties are high. When these come down to zero under an FTA, importers get high margins leading to higher utilisation of India's FTAs," GTRI said in a report released in November last year.

INDIA-AUSTRALIA ETCA (Syllabus: GS Paper 2 – IR)

Context: Recently, official data reveals that Indian exporters have utilized 77% of the India-Australia Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement (ECTA) during the first nine months following the implementation of the interim trade deal.

Economic Co-operation and Trade Agreement (ECTA)

- **About:** It is the first Free Trade Agreement (FTA) that India has signed with a major developed country in over a decade.
- **Scope of the Agreement:** The Agreement between India and Australia spans various aspects of bilateral economic and commercial relations, covering key areas such as:
 - Trade in Goods and Rules of Origin, Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT), Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) measures, Dispute Settlement and Movement of Natural Persons, Telecom and Customs Procedures and pharmaceutical products.
 - **Institutional Mechanism for Enhanced Trade:** The Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement (ECTA) establishes an institutional mechanism aimed at encouraging and improving trade between the two nations.
- **Inclusive Tariff Coverage:** The ECTA between India and Australia is extensive, covering almost all tariff lines dealt with by each country.
- **Preferential Market Access for India:** India stands to benefit from Australia's provision of preferential market access on 100% of its tariff lines.
- **Reciprocal Trade:** This includes vital sectors such as Gems and Jewellery, Textiles, leather, footwear, furniture, and more.
 - In return, India commits to offering preferential access to Australia on over 70% of its tariff lines, encompassing raw materials and intermediaries like coal, mineral ores, and wines.
- **Opportunities for Indian Graduates:** Under the agreement, Indian graduates in STEM fields (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) will be granted extended post-study work visas.
- **Professional Visas:** Australia will establish a program facilitating visas for young Indians seeking working holidays, and an annual visa quota of 1800 will be instituted for India's Yoga teachers and Chefs.

Air India 'threat': NIA files FIR against Sikhs For Justice founder Gurpatwant Singh Pannun

Context: Recently, the National Investigation Agency lodged a First Information Report (FIR) against Khalistani extremist and Sikhs For Justice founder Gurpatwant Singh Pannun over his threatening video towards passengers flying with Air India.

National Investigation Agency (NIA)

- **About:** NIA is India's primary Central Counter Terrorism Law Enforcement Agency.
- **Nodal Ministry:** It operates under the Union Ministry of Home Affairs.
- **Establishment:** NIA was established in response to the 2008 Mumbai terror attacks through the National Investigation Agency Act 2008.
- **Jurisdiction:** NIA has the authority to investigate and handle terrorism-related crimes across Indian states without requiring special permission from the states.
 - State Governments can request the Central Government to transfer cases to NIA if they involve offenses listed in the NIA Act's schedule.
 - **In 2019, the jurisdiction of the NIA was extended.** Consequently, the NIA is also empowered to probe the offences relating to **human trafficking, counterfeit currency or bank notes, manufacture or sale of prohibited arms, cyber-terrorism** and explosive substances.
- **Headquarters:** New Delhi.
- **NIA (Amendment) Act, 2019:**
 - It applied the provisions to persons who commit a scheduled **offence beyond India against Indian citizens** or affecting the interest of India.
 - It provided NIA officers with powers, duties, privies and liabilities in connection with the investigation of offences, not **only in India but also outside India.**
 - It empowered the central government, with respect to a scheduled offence committed outside India, to direct the NIA to register the case and take up investigation as if such offence has taken place in India.
 - It provided that the central government and the state governments may designate Sessions Courts as Special Courts for conducting the trial of offences under the NIA Act.
 - It inserted certain new offences in the Schedule of the NIA Act

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