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सत्यमेव जयते



MK Yadav Sir

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BUSINESS STANDARD

Page 4

EPCG SCHEME

(Syllabus: GS Paper 3 - Economy)

Allow MSMEs to pay liabilities in tranches: Exporters to govt

SHREYA NANDI
New Delhi, 24 May

Exporters have urged the government to allow small businesses availing themselves of the amnesty scheme to pay liabilities in instalments over a period of time instead of making the entire payment by September 30.

The amnesty scheme is aimed at the one-time settlement of defaults in export obligations under the Advance Authorization and Export Promotion Capital Goods (EPCG) schemes.

This is mainly because liquidity for micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSME) units is a big concern, especially at a time when interest rates are rising.

Moreover, making payments in one go will affect the working capital of small businesses to run the enterprise.

As a result, while a large number of MSMEs want to avail themselves of the amnesty scheme, they are concerned about paying the entire liability in one go until the time the amnesty scheme is valid (September 30).

If the government accedes to the industry's request, then small businesses will pay the first instalment before September 30.

The timeline for paying the residual amount can then be decided by the government, as the Federation of Indian Export Organisations (FIEO) has requested.

The apex exporters' body has also urged the Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) to take up the matter with the Ministry of Finance's Department of Revenue.

According to the amnesty scheme, all cases where traders failed to meet the export obligations under Advance Authorization and EPCG may be regularised by paying Customs duties and interest, subject to a ceiling of 100 per cent.

However, cases under investigation or adjudication involving fraud, misdeclaration, or unauthorised diversion of capital goods will not be covered by the scheme.

In addition, the Central Value Added Tax (CENVAT) credit or refund cannot be claimed. In the case of calculation mistakes, they will be dealt with on merit.

The scheme was announced by DGFT in the Foreign Trade Policy (FTP) on March 31 and is set to benefit 2,500–3,000 exporters.

FIEO also urged the government to expand the coverage of the scheme to cover all authorisations issued during the pre-goods and services tax regime — authorisations issued during FTP 2009–15 until June 30, 2017. It also requested that the present scheme cover all advance authorisations and EPCG authorisations issued during FTP 2004–09 or earlier without further conditions.

Context: Exporters have urged the government to **allow small businesses availing themselves of the amnesty scheme** to pay liabilities in instalments over a period of time instead of making the entire payment by September 30.

- The amnesty scheme is aimed at the one-time settlement of defaults in export obligations under the Advance Authorization and **Export Promotion Capital Goods (EPCG) schemes.**
- This is mainly because liquidity for **micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSME)** units is a big concern, especially at a time when interest rates are rising.

Export Promotion Capital Goods (EPCG) Scheme:

- **About**: It is a **trade promotion scheme** implemented by the Indian government.
  - It allows the **duty-free import** of capital goods for the purpose of export production in India.
  - It was first operationalized on 1 April 2015.
- **Objectives**: : To **encourage the production of goods** for export by providing import duty concessions on capital goods.
- **Nodal Agency**: The EPCG scheme is administered by the **Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT)** and is governed by the Foreign Trade Policy of India.
- **Features**:
  - EPCG Scheme **allows import of capital goods** for pre-production, production and post-production at zero customs duty.
  - It **covers manufacturer exporters** with or without supporting manufacturer(s), merchant exporters tied to supporting manufacturer(s) and service providers.
  - **Second-hand goods** of any nature will **not be permitted** under the EPCG scheme.

ECONOMIC TIMES
Page 10

SATELLITE SPECTRUM

(Syllabus: GS Paper 3 - Infrastructure)

DoT, Industry on Opposite Ends of Satellite Spectrum

DoT prefers auction while satellite and tech cos seek administrative allocation

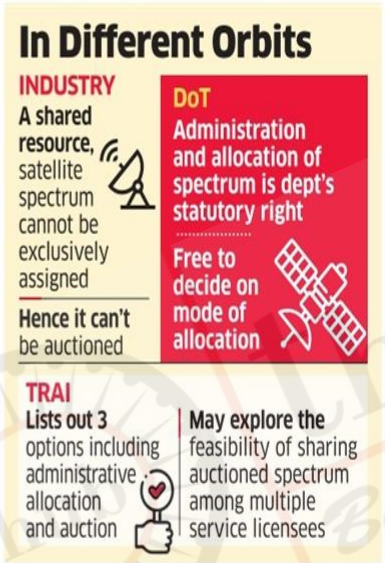
Kiran.Rathee@timesgroup.com

New Delhi: Allocation of spectrum to the satellite industry is at the centre stage once again in with satellite and technology companies opposing the Department of Telecommunications' plan to auction airwaves to them.

Telecom operators Reliance Jio and Vodafone Idea are backing DoT, while Bharti Enterprise-backed satcom firm OneWeb has joined the rest of the industry to demand administrative allocation of satellite spectrum.

Satellite spectrum has no territorial limits, is a shared resource, and is international in character with International Telecommunication Union (ITU) managing and coordinating its usage, and hence it can't be auctioned, industry body Indian Space Association (ISpA) said on Wednesday.

But officials at DoT told ET that administration and allocation of spectrum is its statutory right, and the department can decide what should be the mechanism—administrative or auction. "The ITU is involved in management of satellite spectrum. But whatever quantum has been specified for India, its allocation mechanism is to be decided by the government," said one official aware of the details.



DoT has sought Trai recommendations on modalities around auctioning such spectrum. But the sectoral watchdog listed out three options including administrative allocation and auction and sought stakeholder views.

ISpA said: "We request Trai to have a larger, wider, and comprehensive outlook, keeping in mind global practices of spectrum assignment as well as the technical challenges of auctioning." Other industry bodies including SIA-India and Broadband India Forum (BIF), too, have sought administrative assignment for space airwaves.

Context: Allocation of spectrum to the satellite industry is at the centre stage once again with satellite and technology companies opposing the Department of Telecommunications' plan to auction airwaves to them.

Key Points

- Telecom operators Reliance Jio and Vodafone Idea are backing DoT, while Bharti Enterprise-backed satcom firm OneWeb has joined the rest of the industry to **demand administrative allocation of satellite spectrum.**
- **Satellite spectrum has no territorial limits,** is a shared resource, and is international in character with International Telecommunication Union (ITU) managing and coordinating its usage, and hence it can't be auctioned, industry body Indian Space Association (ISpA) said.

Spectrum auctions

- **About**: A spectrum auction is a process whereby a government uses an auction system to **sell the rights to transmit signals** over specific bands of the electromagnetic spectrum and to assign scarce spectrum resources.
  - Devices such as cellphones and wireline telephones require signals to connect from one end to another.
  - These signals are carried on airwaves, which must be **sent at designated frequencies** to avoid any kind of interference.
- **Owner**: The **Union government owns all the publicly available assets** within the geographical boundaries of the country, which also include airwaves.
  - With the expansion in the number of cellphone, wireline telephone and internet users, the need to provide more space for the signals arises from time to time.
- **Nodal Department:** To sell these assets to companies willing to set up the required infrastructure to transport these waves from one end to another, the central government through the **Department of Telecom (Ministry of Communications)** auctions these airwaves from time to time.
  - These airwaves are called spectrum, which is subdivided into bands which have varying frequencies.
  - All these airwaves are sold for a certain period of time, after which their validity lapses, which is generally set at 20 years.

LIVE MINT

Page 2

BROKEN RICE

(Syllabus: GS Paper 3 - Agriculture)

India to ship grains to Indonesia, Nepal, Senegal, Gambia

Puja Das
puja.das@livemint.com
NEW DELHI

India will despatch around 1.05 million tonnes of food grains to Nepal, Indonesia, Senegal and Gambia as part of its economic diplomacy in the current financial year, waiving curbs on exports.

India banned wheat and broken rice exports and imposed a 20% export duty on non-basmati rice varieties last year to keep prices down.



The exports are part of India's economic diplomacy. BLOOMBERG

In what is likely to add heft to India's role in providing food security on the global stage, the department of food and public distribution has allowed exports of 300,000 tonnes wheat to Nepal; 200,000 tonnes of broken rice to Indonesia; 500,000 tonnes broken rice to Senegal, and 50,000 tonnes of broken rice to Gambia on a request by external affairs ministry. This comes despite low domestic wheat stocks.

The Food Corp of India (FCI) so far has procured a little over 26 MT wheat in the 2023-24 (October-March) rabi marketing year against a target of 34.5 MT. A hot February and heavy rains in March and April lowered wheat production to below the agriculture ministry's second estimate of 112.2 MT. As per government officials, the amount procured so far will be enough to meet wheat requirement for the public distribution system (PDS). After ensuring 18.5 MT for PDS, there will be 8.7 MT available in the central pool, which will be more than sufficient for the open market sale scheme if required. Hence, there is no cause for concern, the government claims.

In the case of rice, the government had 26.5 MT rice in its central pool as of 1 May. Up to 21 May, FCI had procured 77.2 MT paddy in the ongoing 2022-23 (April-September) kharif marketing season and 3.2 MT paddy in the current 2023-24 rabi marketing season against an estimated target of 15.7 MT.

In response to Mint's query, the Department of Food and Public Distribution said it deals with the "import and export of only wheat and non-basmati rice from central pool stocks available with FCI. WTO norms inter-alia restrict the export of foodgrains from public stocks procured for domestic consumption through welfare schemes.

However, humanitarian assistance, fully in grant form under the reference of the Ministry of External Affairs, to the deserving countries, is only allowed. During the 2022-23 financial year, no quantity of wheat and rice was supplied or exported to any foreign countries from the department's central pool stocks," the official said. Queries sent to the external affairs ministry remained unanswered.

Context: India will despatch around 1.05 million tonnes of food grains to Nepal, Indonesia, Senegal and Gambia as part of its economic diplomacy in the current financial year, waiving curbs on exports.

- **India banned wheat and broken rice exports** and imposed a 20% export duty on non-basmati rice varieties last year to keep prices down.

Broken rice

- Broken rice is **fragments of rice grains**, broken in the field, during drying, during transport, or during milling.
- **Mechanical separators** are used to separate the broken grains from the whole grains and sort them by size.
- Broken rice is fragmented, **not defective.**
- It is as **nutritious** as the equivalent quantity of unbroken rice.

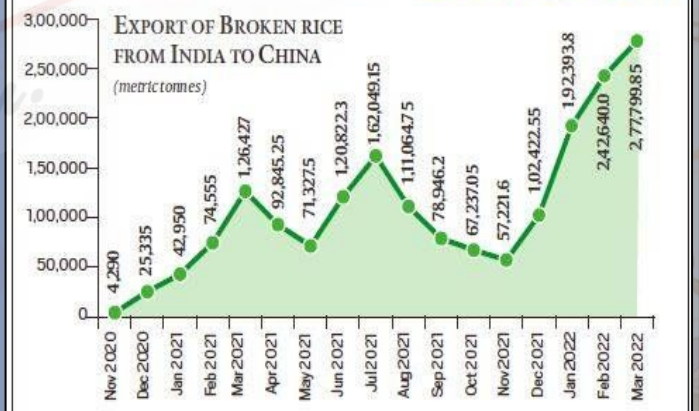
BROKEN RICE EXPORTS OVER THE YEARS

COUNTRY	FY19	FY20	FY21	FY22
China	----	----	2.73	15.85
Senegal	6.73	1.62	8.64	9.22
Vietnam	----	----	1.87	3.44
Djibouti	1.08	0.17	1.07	2.44
Indonesia	1.51	----	0.41	2.08
TOTAL	12.21	2.7	20.64	38.9

(Lakh metric tonnes)







WHAT IS BROKEN RICE?

If rice kernels are not sound, it is called broken rice. Generally, broken rice is classified into two sub-categories: big and small. As per Food Corporation of India specifications, "Pieces equal to or smaller than 3/4th, but bigger than one half of the average length of the unbroken kernels" are classified as big broken rice. The small broken rice is defined as "pieces that do not exceed 1/4 average length of unbroken kernel..."

NON-BASMATI VARIETY: TOTAL EXPORTS*

- 74.52 LMT — Rice parboiled
- 52.48 LMT — Non-parboiled rice (excluding basmati)
- 38.64 LMT — Broken rice
- 6.55 LMT — Other rice in husk
- 0.28 LMT — Rice in husk of seed quality
- 0.14 LMT — Husked (brown) rice

*category export in 2021-22

INDIAN EXPRESS

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RAYALA ELEPHANT RESERVE

(Syllabus: GS Paper 3 - Env & Eco)

NHAI gets nod to build e-way stretch through forest area

ESHA ROY
NEW DELHI, MAY 24

THE STANDING committee of the National Board for Wildlife (NBWL) has given a green signal for construction of the second phase of the four-lane Bengaluru-Chennai expressway, the Centre's ambitious 262-km project estimated to cost more than Rs 16,000 crore.

Starting from Hoskote on Bengaluru's outskirts, the greenfield expressway will pass through Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu, cutting travel time between the two metro cities by nearly three hours from the present five to six hours.

The NBWL's nod has come for the 7.1-km stretch of the project passing through the forests of Chittoor Forest Division and Rayala Elephant Reserve.

The expressway comes under Palamaner and Tekumanda reserve forests, including the Chittoor division, which is a part of the eco-sensitive zone (ESZ) of Koundinya Wildlife Sanctuary and Rayala Elephant Reserve under National Highways Authority of India's (NHAI) Bharatmala project. The NHAI has proposed use of 61.73 hectares of forest land for construction of the expressway.

In its meeting on April 25, the NBWL has kept certain conditions that NHAI, the project proponent, has to maintain, it is learnt. Among these stipulations is that the proposed area can only be utilised for the expressway, and not for any commercial purpose; diversion work will be executed under the Forest Department's supervision; the areas of diversion need to be demarcated by the agency before work begins; and the agency cannot carry out excavation work in surrounding forest land for collection of earth.

It said that a wildlife conservation plan for Rs 1,698 lakh will need to be deposited by the agency as well as 2% of project cost for conservation of the elephant habitat to tackle possible human-elephant conflicts.

The NBWL's earlier meeting in December 2022 led to the formation of a committee to examine the proposal. The committee recommended that an animal passage plan for the four-lane expressway along the 7.1-km stretch through the jungles of Chittoor Forest Division and Rayala Elephant Reserve should be "considerably strengthened following the guidelines issued by Wildlife Institute of India". It also recommended construction of underpasses to ensure free movement of elephants.

The NHAI had subsequently revised the length of clear passage for animals to 3,090 metres.

GREEN CORRIDOR

- 7.1-km stretch of the project passing through Chittoor Forest Division and Rayala Elephant Reserve gets wildlife board nod
- NHAI has proposed use of 61.73 hectares of forest land to construct expressway
- Entire 7.1-km stretch of proposed expressway "should not allow crossing of animals above ground", wildlife board says

Context: The standing committee of the **National Board for Wildlife (NBWL)** has given a green signal for construction of the second phase of the four-lane Bengaluru-Chennai expressway, the Centre's ambitious 262-km project estimated to cost more than Rs 16,000 crore.

- The NBWL's nod has come for the 7.1-km stretch of the project passing through the forests of **Chittoor Forest Division and Rayala Elephant Reserve.**
- Rayala Elephant Reserve (Andhra Pradesh) is part of of **"Project Elephant"** established in 2003.

National Board for Wildlife

- **About**: It is the **apex body** in India for all wildlife-related matters.
  - It is a **statutory body** constituted under **Section 5A of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 (WLPA).**
  - It **replaced the Indian Board for Wildlife,** which was formed in 1952 as an advisory board.
- **Functions**: It is primarily **responsible for the promotion of wildlife conservation** and the development of wildlife and forests.
  - It **approves projects** (including government projects) in and around the protected areas (national parks, wildlife sanctuaries, etc.).
  - It is an **advisory board** and advises the central government on policy matters concerned with wildlife conservation in the country.
- **Composition**: The **Prime Minister** of the country is the **ex officio chairperson** of the NBWL.
  - The **Minister of Environment, Forests and Climate Change** is the Vice-Chairperson of the Board.
  - As per the WLPA, every time a new government is formed, **a new NBWL has to be constituted** with the Prime Minister as the chairperson.

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MAY 25

TERMITES

(Syllabus: GS Paper 3 - Env & Eco)

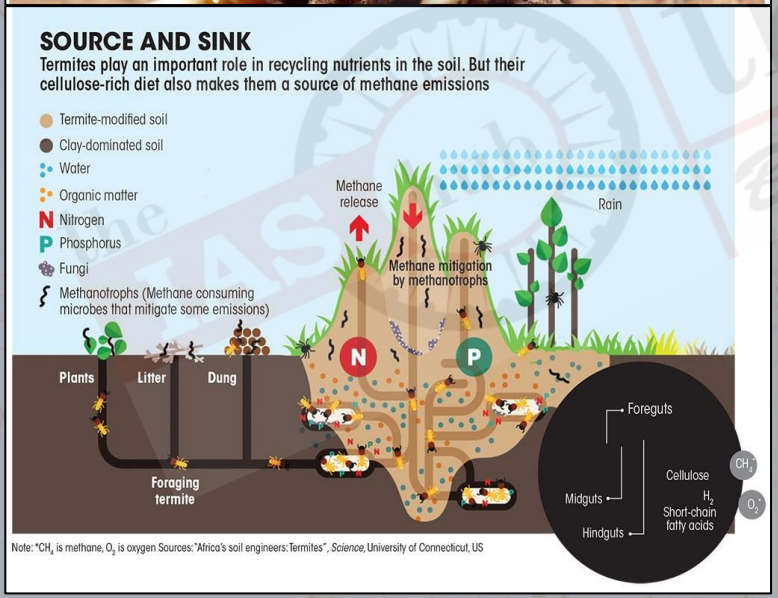
Termites emit methane. But the extent of their risk to global warming is uncertain; here is why

To establish certainty, there is a need to understand the relationship between termite colonies and methane

NEXT NEWS >

By Rohini Krishnamurthy
Published: Wednesday 24 May 2023





Context: Termites, who live in the mounds as colonies of 60,000-200,000, are not just skilled architects and engineers but also a surprising source of methane, a greenhouse gas more potent than carbon dioxide.

- Termites are counted among **natural sources of methane** like wetlands, wild animals, livestock and geological features like volcanoes, and are estimated to account for 1-3 percent of emissions globally.

Key Points

- Termites are known to wreak **havoc on agriculture, forests and construction,** due to their affinity for plants and wood. However, only 10-15 percent of 3,000 termite species identified globally are categorised as pests.
- In natural ecosystems, they **feed on and recycle the nutrients present in dead and decaying** plant and animal matter.
- It is this **cellulose-rich diet that causes their emissions.** Methanogenic microorganisms that live in the gut of termites break down the cellulose entering the body and release methane.
- Termites undo the damage partially by depositing in the mound a select group of microbes that can capture some emissions.
- Final emission depends on the balance between **methane-emitting bacteria** in the termites' gut and methane-consuming bacteria in the mounds.

Termite's impact on Climate Change

- It has found that **termites decompose wood** at a much higher rate in warmer conditions.
- For every 10 degrees Celsius **increase in temperature**, their decomposition activity goes up by almost seven times.
- According to the study, t**ermites release carbon** from dead wood in the form of carbon dioxide and methane, two of the most important greenhouse gases.
- So, an **increase in termite population** and their faster decomposing activity can cause more greenhouse emissions, resulting in a hotter planet.
- There are **around 3,000 species of termites across the world,** including the ones that consume plant material and even soil. However, the most famous are the wood-eating termites.
- Another research by scientists at the University of Florida found that two Floridian varieties of termites were able to interbreed during warmer winters and hybridise into new **"highly destructive super-termites".**

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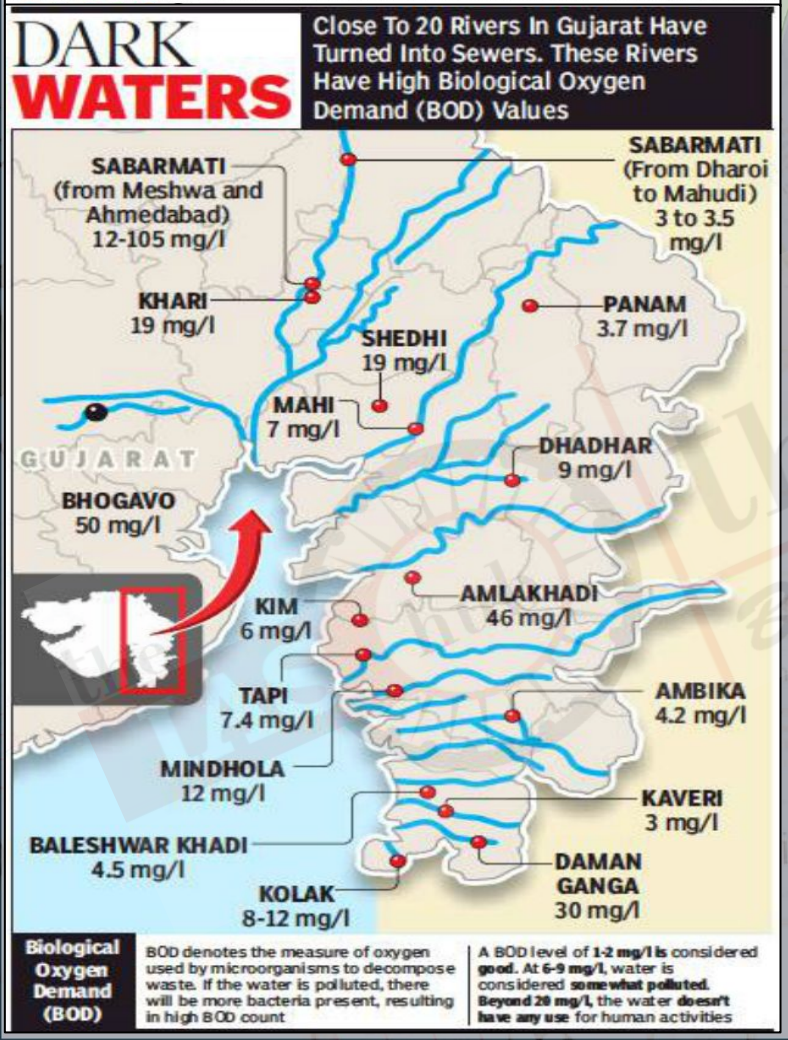
MAY 25

WASTEWATER MANAGEMENT

(Syllabus: GS Paper 3 - Env & Eco)

Critically polluted: Treated effluents from Vapi CETP don't meet safety standards, find pollution control boards

Industrial area's comprehensive pollution index score hasn't been calculated in 5 years, say activists



Context: A **yellow discharge** is always visible under the Daman Ganga Railway Underbridge, according to residents of Gujarat's industrial city, Vapi.

- **The discharge is from the only** Common Effluent Treatment Plant that serves the Gujarat Industrial Development Corporation (GIDC) industrial estate in Vapi comprising more than 500 industries.

Exceed safety standards

- According to the last update presented before the **National Green Tribunal (NGT)'**s Principal Bench in Delhi on December 27, 2022, most parameters of the Vapi CETP's inlet and outlet exceed safety limits.
- The individual ETPs are supposed to bring down the **chemical-oxygen demand** (COD, a measure of oxygen available in the water to break down pollutants) of effluents to 1,000 milligrams per litre (mg / l).
- Additionally, the CETP handles domestic sewage that often overflows into the Kolak River through Bill Khadi, a natural drain that runs parallel to the **Daman Ganga.**

Wastewater Management in India

- Under **Namami Gange Programme**, around 164 Sewage Treatment Plants are being constructed worth Rs. 25000 crores that will help to treat around 5000 MLD of wastewater, resulting in major savings of freshwater resources.
- The **Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974, amended in 1988:**
  - This legislation was introduced to provide for the prevention and control of water pollution and the maintaining or restoring of the wholesomeness of water.
  - It also provides for the establishment of boards for the control of water pollution.
- The **Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Cess Act, 1977, amended in 2003:**
  - This Act binds consumers who are carrying on an industry that falls within the provisions to affix meters for the purpose of assessing the quantity of water used in the act.
  - Industries also have to include operations or processes or treatment and disposal systems which consume water or give rise to sewage effluent.
- Only **one-third of India's wastewater is currently treated,** leading to the high burden of water-borne diseases.
- While urban water access is high on average, **significant gaps remain across the country,** and wastewater treatment remains stuck at the national average of around 33%.
- **Large wastewater generators** - Punjab, Maharashtra, Gujarat, and UP - can potentially treat 65-100% of their urban wastewater.
- Despite this, many populous states, such as **Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, and Andhra Pradesh**, have only enough installed capacity to treat less than half of their wastewater. Further, several North-Eastern and Himalayan states have low or no capacity for treatment.

PIB MAY 25

SUPERCOMPUTER 'AIRAWAT'

(Syllabus: GS Paper 3 - Sci & Tech)

AI Supercomputer 'AIRAWAT' puts India among top supercomputing league

Context: The **AI Supercomputer 'AIRAWAT',** installed at C-DAC, Pune has been ranked 75th in the world.

- It was declared so in the **61st edition of Top 500 Global Supercomputing List** at the International Supercomputing Conference (ISC 2023) in Germany.
- The system is installed under **National Program on AI by Government of India**.

AIRAWAT (AI Research, Analytics and Knowledge Assimilation platform)

- Budget 2018 mandated the **NITI Aayog to establish the national programme on AI** to guide research and development in new and emerging technologies.
- On 20th March, 2019, NITI Aayog circulated the cabinet note to establish a cloud computing platform called **AIRAWAT (Artificial Intelligence Research, Analytics and Knowledge Assimilation Platform).**
- The platform aims to guide the research and development of new and emerging technologies.
- AIRAWAT will be established based on the recommendations made by the National Strategy for Artificial Intelligence (NSAI).
- NITI's discussion paper 'National strategy on Artificial Intelligence' **identified five sectors for AI application** to serve societal needs: Healthcare, Agriculture, Education, Smart cities and infrastructure and Smart mobility and transportation.
- Under AIRAWAT, the Indian government plans to **tackle the challenges associated with lack of access to computing resources.**
- Going ahead, the government will be building AI-specific compute infrastructure that will help the computing needs of **Centres of Research Excellence (COREs), International Centers Transformational AI (ICRAIs) and Innovation Hubs.**

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ORGANIC NANOTUBES

(Syllabus: GS Paper 3 - Sci & Tech)

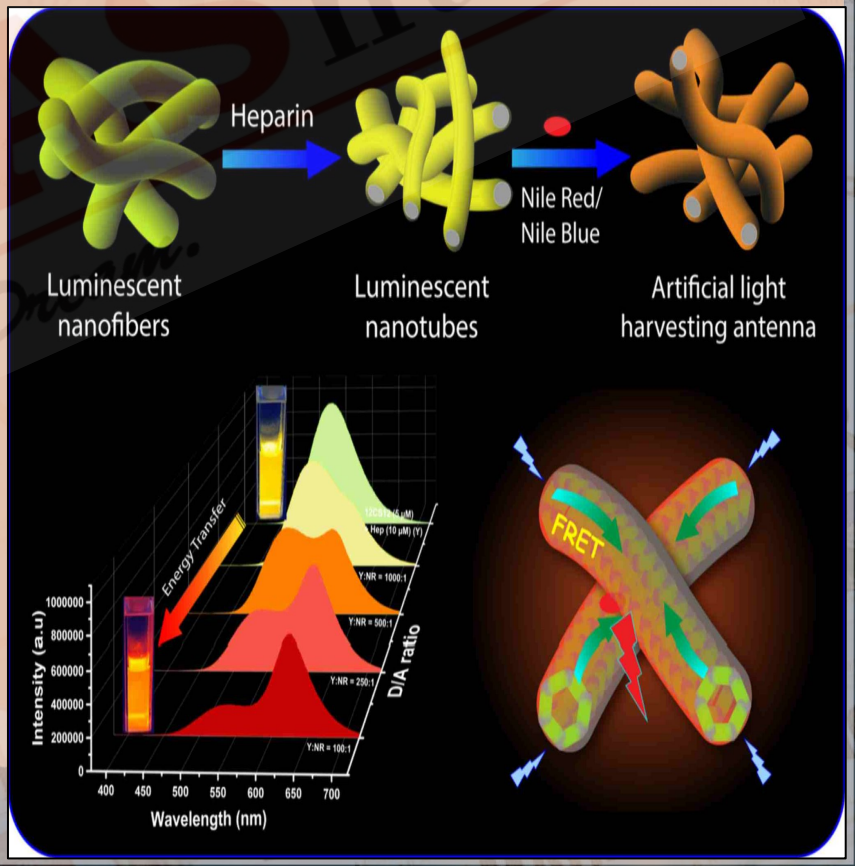
New artificial light-harvesting system using organic nanotubes useful for solar cells, photocatalysis, optical sensors & tunable multi-color light emitting materials

Context: Inspired by natural photosynthetic systems, researchers have developed a n**ew method of harvesting artificial light using organic nanotubes**, which can be utilized in solar cells, photocatalysis, optical sensors, and tunable multi-color light-emitting materials.

- **Mimicking natural photosynthetic systems** and understanding the fundamental processes of energy transfer has gained enormous interest in recent years, especially for systems that need energy conversion and storage.

New method of harvesting artificial light

- Scientists carried out experimental and computational investigations on **artificial light-harvesting** in organic nanotubes derived from the union of an organic fluorescent molecule and a therapeutically important biopolymer.
- The former is an **amphiphilic cationic molecule called cyano stilbenes** (an organic molecule with fluorescent properties that are known to exhibit enhanced emission in their aggregated state), and the latter is an **anionic therapeutically important bio-polymer called heparin** (used as an anticoagulant-during-surgery-and-in-post-operative-treatments) in aqueous media.
- In the presence of **heparin**, the cationic cyano stilbenes employed in this study formed nanotubes with bright greenish-yellow emission through an electrostatically driven co-assembly process.
- Just like the **antenna chromophores or pigmented (coloured) membrane-associated vesicles** used to perform photosynthesis in bacteria, the nanotubes acted as highly efficient energy donors (antennae) in a system that mimicked the natural photosynthetic process.
- They **donated energy to acceptor dyes** such as Nile Red and Nile Blue, resulting in emission color tuning from initial greenish-yellow to orange-red, including white light.
- The energy transfer phenomenon demonstrated in this study is known as **FRET (Förster resonance energy transfer),** which has significant importance in different applications such as the determination of DNA/RNA structures, mapping biological membranes, real-time PCR tests, and so on.
- The future is moving towards the **conversion of solar energy for storage as chemical or electrical energy**, and the process of energy transfer is a key factor for such applications.



THE HINDU

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MALAYAIHA TAMILS COMMUNITY

(Syllabus: GS Paper 1 - Population & Associated Issues)

'Remember our history, recognise our labour,' say Sri Lanka's Malaiyaha Tamils

Meera Srinivasan
COLOMBO



Overlooked lot: Estate workers from Sri Lanka's Malaiyaha Tamil group earn precious foreign exchange for the country. FILE PHOTO

Marking 200 years since their arrival in Sri Lanka from southern India, to work in the British-run plantations, members of the island nation's historically marginalised Malaiyaha [hill country] Tamil community have sought greater recognition, political rights, and improved living and working conditions.

"Design, resource, and implement a 10-year development plan that is explicitly based on the principle of affirmative action in response to the decades of structural exclusion that has resulted in poor human development indices of [the] Malaiyaha Tamil community when compared with all other communities," a key demand read, in a declaration released after a recent three-day public event held in the central Nuwara Eliya city.

The development plan must aim to reduce poverty, provide land and housing, enhance public health and education access, while ensuring labour rights, including a fair living wage and legal protection, the declaration said. Further, it asked the Sri Lankan government to recognise the Malaiyaha Tamils as a community with "a distinct identity and as equal citizens", and ensure appropriate political power sharing and proportional system of electoral arrangements.

Incessant injustices

Organised by the Institute of Social Development, an NGO working on addressing challenges facing the Malaiyaha Tamils, the event sought to highlight the centuries-long struggle of the much-neglected community, while demanding long-pending solutions to their enduring problems. From being deprived of their citizenship in 1948 – the struggle for citizenship continued until 2003 – to being subjected to discrimination and exploitation, the community has been enduring incessant injustices.

Around 1.5 lakh people from the million-strong community currently work in tea and rubber estates, bringing in crucial foreign exchange to Sri Lanka. A majority works outside the plantation ecosystem, including as professionals across sectors.

The estate-bound families, living in the Central, Southern and Uva provinces, are among Sri Lanka's poorest, with some still residing in colonial-era line rooms, without basic amenities. India committed financial assistance to build 14,000 houses in the estate areas, but the slow pace of the project has come under frequent criticism.

Along with Sri Lankan legislators, scholars, workers, artistes and activists from the Malaiayah Tamil community, popular Tamil rapper Arivu, of *Enjoy Enjaami* fame participated and performed at last weekend's event.

Context: Marking 200 years since their arrival in Sri Lanka from southern India, to work in the British-run plantations, members of the island nation's historically **marginalised Malaiyaha Tamil community** have sought greater recognition, political rights, and improved living and working conditions.

Malayaiha Tamils Community

- **Malayaiha Tamils (Hill Country Tamil community)** in Sri Lanka is connected to the colonial history where under the British regime people from South India were shipped to work in coffee, rubber and tea plantations in Sri Lanka.
- The workers in these plantations in Independent Sri Lanka despite their **contribution to foreign exchange earnings** from tea export, continue to live in poverty and conditions described as inhumane and degrading that may amount to contemporary forms of slavery.
- Besides **poverty, low wages, and difficulties** in accessing healthcare, housing, education, the workers are trapped in cycles of bonded labour due to debt bondage and increasingly trapped in labour migration both within the country and overseas.
- Further, **Sri Lanka's unravelling economic crisis** has widened the gnawing gap of the already existing socio-economic inequalities denying the communities from leading a fair and equitable life.
- Women and children continue to face **differentiated and disproportionate impact** from enjoying their agency to the fullest.
- **India has committed to building 14,000 houses in Sri Lanka's hill country,** but the construction is progressing at a slow pace amid private plantation companies' apparent reluctance to part with land.

PIB MAY 25

SENGOL

(Syllabus: GS Paper 1 - Indian Heritage)

At the inauguration of the new Parliament House, PM Modi will establish the historical and sacred "Sengol" in the Parliament House.

Context: On 28th May, Prime Minister will receive the sacred symbol of fair and equitable governance, **Sengol** and install it in the new Parliament House.

- This is the same **Sengol** that was accepted by the first Prime Minister of India at his residence on the night of 14th August, in the presence of several leaders.

Sengol

- **About**: On August 14, 1947, a momentous occasion unfolded as three priests from a religious body in **Tamil Nadu's Tanjore district carried the 'Sengol' sceptre with great reverence.**
  - This **sacred ceremony marked the transfer of power** from the British to an independent India, with Nehru receiving the 'Sengol' and symbolizing the nation's newfound sovereignty.
  - **Derived from the Tamil word 'semmai,'** which means excellence, the 'Sengol' represents the embodiment of power and authority.
- **C Rajagopalachari's role**: The idea of using the 'Sengol' sceptre for the s**ymbolic transfer of power** emerged when Lord Mountbatten, the then Viceroy of British India, inquired about a suitable symbol.
  - Seeking advice from **C Rajagopalachari**, the last Governor-General of India, it was Rajaji who suggested the use of the 'Sengol' sceptre.
- **Inspired by Chola dynasty**: A similar ceremony in the **Chola dynasty, where power was transferred between kings**, C Rajagopalachari believed the 'Sengol' would be a fitting symbol for India.
  - During the transfer of power ceremony, in addition to the presentation of the sceptre, an order called **'aanai'** in Tamil was bestowed upon the new ruler.
  - This order symbolizes the responsibility to govern with unwavering adherence to the principles of 'dharma,' ensuring justice and fairness in the realm.
- **Crafted by**: Chennai-based jewellers **Vummidi Bangaru Chetty**
  - They meticulously designed the five-foot-long sceptre, featuring the majestic figure of Nandi, the divine bull, atop it. Nandi symbolizes 'nyaya,' representing the ideals of justice and fairness.

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