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FORTNIGHTLY ON POLITICS OF DEVELOPMENT,
ENVIRONMENT AND HEALTH

**Science
Reporter**



MK Yadav Sir

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SUGAR DEVELOPMENT FUND**(Syllabus: GS Paper 3 - Economy)**

Centre may allow one-time settlement of SDF sugar dues

Puja Das

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The government is considering offering sugar mills a one-time settlement to recover ₹3,286 crore of unpaid loans taken out under the Sugar Development Fund (SDF).

As part of the plan, the Centre is considering waiving an additional interest amount of ₹797 crore due under the new loan restructuring, two officials aware of the matter said.

SDF enables sugar mills to take out loans for setting up heat treatment plants, irrigation schemes, modernizing mills and producing ethanol from alcohol. They get the loans at 2% below the bank rate.

Since the inception of SDF, the Centre has been able to recover about ₹8,851 crore so far, and is owed about ₹1,307 crore of principal amount and ₹1,181 crore as interest by 179 mills, according to the food and public distribution ministry.

"The policy is still in the conceptualisation stage. If finalised, the scheme will ask eligible sugar factories to clear only their principal and interest outstanding amount of nearly ₹2,500 crore within 3-6 months," one of the officials said.

"However, a final call on the timeline will be taken by the group of ministers."

The policy may take some time to be formulated as it is still to be discussed at a higher



Sugar Development Fund enables sugar mills to take out loans at 2% below the bank rate

BLOOMBERG

level, the official said.

"A one time settlement policy not only helps millers to exit from the defaulters list but also provides the government with an opportunity to recover outstanding amounts blocked for years," Prakash Naiknavare, managing director of National Sugar Federation of India, said.

"However, the government may have to sacrifice some amount by exempting penal interest."

If the government comes up with such a policy, it will help sugar mills to pay in a lump sum and get benefits under existing schemes for the growth of mills in future, he said.

However, some experts say that one time settlement does not address the issue of inefficiency in the sugar industry caused by delays in repayment of SDF loans. "One time settlement is very fashionable in India, but it promotes inefficiency, which is not good for the economy in the long run," a sugar industry expert said.

Context: The government is considering offering sugar mills a one-time settlement to recover ₹3,286 crore of unpaid loans taken out under the Sugar Development Fund (SDF).

Sugar Development Fund (SDF)

- About:** It was established in the year 1982 to provide monetary support to the sugar industry.
 - Set up under the Sugar Development Fund Act, the SDF allows sugar mills to obtain loans at nominal rates of interest.
 - Industrial Finance Corporation of India (IFCI), a public NBFC is a nodal agency for the disbursement of SDF loans to private or public sector factories.
 - For the cooperative sector, loans are routed through the National Cooperative Development Corporation (NCDC).
- Objective:** The objective of the fund is to offer financial assistance to tackle problems like:
 - Low yield
 - Outdated machinery
 - Low consumption
 - Short crushing season of sugarcane crop
 - Cyclical nature of the sugar sector
- Loan Schemes Available in SDF:** Factories may avail Sugar Development Fund loans for five purposes:
 - Modernisation and rehabilitation of the factory
 - Cane development in an area near factory: Extended for setting up any of the following facilities:
 - Heat treatment plant
 - Seed nursery
 - Drip irrigation system
 - Bagasse-based cogeneration power projects undertaken by a factory
 - Production of molasses-based ethanol or anhydrous alcohol
- Specific Conditions and Eligibility Criteria:** Common conditions for all categories of SDF loans are as follows:
 - No outstanding loans for the purpose applied for
 - No default on any other Levy Sugar Price Equalisation Fund (LSPEF) or Sugar Development Fund loan
 - Security may be presented as either
 - A bank guarantee from a scheduled bank
 - Mortgage on movable/immovable properties of the sugar mill
 - SDF loans are extended at an annual interest of 2% below bank rate (as per RBI).

No new incentive plan for services exports under FTP

SHREYA NANDI
New Delhi, 27 March

There may not be an incentive scheme for services exports under foreign trade policy (FTP) to be unveiled later this week. The government holds the view that all services sectors are 'self-sufficient' and can make healthy foreign exchange (forex) earnings without the need for incentives. Services Export Promotion Council Chairman Sunil H Talati told *Business Standard*.

"If the government is handing out production-linked incentive schemes to other production sectors, why should the services sector be sidelined? As far as the production of goods is concerned, it's a competitive market the world over. Many countries are competing with India. Therefore, they need incentives. (India's) services exports have an edge over the rest," said Talati, adding that the government is of the strong opinion that no incentive should be given to services exports. Even though there might not be any fiscal incentive, Talati said the government has been taking steps to increase business-to-business meetings to boost exports.

Talati's comments come against the backdrop of global uncertainty due to geopolitical tensions, high inflation, and recessionary trends in developed countries impairing merchandise exports.

Merchandise exports shrank for the third time in



'SELF-SUFFICIENT'

Foreign trade policy to be announced by March 31

Centre feels all services sectors are 'self-sufficient' and able to make healthy foreign exchange earnings even without incentives

Services exports expected to reach \$325-\$350 billion in 2022-23 versus \$254 billion in 2021-22

five months, contracting 8.8 per cent at \$33.88 billion in February.

Services exports, however, grew over 36 per cent in February at \$29.15 billion, according to the Department of Commerce's estimates.

"The demand for services has continuously increased. Nobody has been able to compete with India as far as information technology services are concerned. Other sectors, such as accounting and auditing, medical tourism, and hospitality and tourism, have gradually opened up, increasing our exports to a noticeable extent," he said.

Services exports could see 28-38 per cent growth by the end of the current fiscal year 2022-23) between \$325 and \$350 billion. During April-February, services exports grew 30.4 per cent to \$296.94 billion.

Last year, the Department of Commerce was working towards a revamp of the Services Exports from India Scheme (SEIS) to principally support pandemic-hit sectors, namely tourism, hospitality, education, and health care.

There has been no incentive scheme for services exports over the past two fiscal years — 2020-21 and 2021-22.

SEIS was rolled out in 2015 as part of the existing FTP. The scheme wasn't notified after 2019-20. Under it, the government gave a 3-7 per cent incentive on net forex earned in the form of duty credit scrips used for payment of basic and additional Customs duties on goods imported.

Financial constraints towards any such incentive scheme could also have been a factor in why the government was not keen on unfurling a new scheme.

Context: There may not be an incentive scheme for services exports under foreign trade policy (FTP) to be unveiled later this week.

- The government holds the view that all services sectors are 'self-sufficient' and can make healthy foreign exchange (forex) earnings without the need for incentives.
- In 2022, the Department of Commerce was working towards a revamp of the **Services Exports from India Scheme (SEIS)** to principally support pandemic-hit sectors, namely tourism, hospitality, education, and health care.
- There has been no incentive scheme for services exports over the past two fiscal years - 2020-21 and 2021-22.

Service Exports from India Scheme (SEIS)

- **About:** SEIS was rolled out in **2015** as part of the existing **FTP**.
- **Objectives:** Service Exports from India Scheme (SEIS) aims to **promote export of services from India** by providing duty scrip credit for eligible exports.
- **Duty Credit Scrip:** It is like a **credit certificate issued by the Director General of Foreign Trade (DGFT)** and can be used to pay various duties/taxes to the Central Govt.
 - Service providers of eligible services shall be **entitled to duty credit scrip at notified rates** on the net foreign exchange earned.
 - Duty credit scrips can be **used for the payment of custom duties, excise duties, GST** on procurement of services etc.
 - The SEIS scheme has given **relaxation to the actual user condition** and duty credit scrips and goods imported using duty credit scrips are freely transferable.
 - Duty credit scrip would be **valid for a period of 18 months** from the date of issue.
- **Implementing Agency:** The scheme is implemented and administered by the Government's **Ministry of Commerce and Industry**, in association with the Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT).

SC Dismisses DRI Plea Against CESTAT Orders on Adani Cos

Appellate tribunal had last year quashed cases related to alleged inflated invoicing of imports

Rashmi.Rajput
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Mumbai: The Supreme Court on Monday dismissed the petition filed by the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) challenging the orders issued last year by the Customs, Excise and Service Tax Appellate Tribunal (CESTAT) to quash the cases pertaining to over-invoicing allegations levelled by the agency against three Adani Group subsidiaries.

Between November 2022 and January 2023, the central agency had moved the Supreme Court against the relief granted to three companies — Adani Power Maharashtra Ltd (APML), Adani Power Rajasthan Ltd

(APRL) and Maharashtra Eastern Grid Power Transmission Company Limited (MEGPTCL) by CESTAT.

'Overvaluation Charges Unfounded' >> 12

Adani Looks to Rejig Terms of \$4b Debt



The Adani Group is seeking to renegotiate the terms of outstanding loans worth \$4 billion taken last year for the acquisition of ACC Ltd and Ambuja Cements. **Deborshi Chaki** reports. >> 12

Context: The Supreme Court dismissed the petition filed by the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) challenging the orders issued last year by the **Customs, Excise and Service Tax Appellate Tribunal (CESTAT)** to quash the cases pertaining to over invoicing allegations levelled by the agency against three Adani Group subsidiaries.

Customs, Excise and Service Tax Appellate Tribunal (CESTAT)

- **About:** It is an Indian quasi-judicial body that hears appeals against orders and decisions passed under the **Customs Act, 1962 and Central Excise Act, 1944** as amended from time to time.
- **Origin:** It was constituted as Customs, Excise and Gold (Control) Appellate Tribunal (CEGAT) under **section 129 of Customs Act, 1962**, as amended by section 50 and the Fifth Schedule of Finance Act, 1980.
 - These amendments became effective from 11 October 1982 and the Tribunal was also constituted on the same date.
 - Its initial mandate was under **Customs Act, 1962, Central Excise Act, 1944 and Gold (Control) Act, 1968**.
 - **Service tax** was introduced by Chapter V of Finance Act, 1994 and this also was added to the jurisdiction of CEGAT.
 - Accordingly, the name of the Tribunal was changed to **Customs, Excise and Service Tax Appellate Tribunal (CESTAT)** by amending section 129 of the Customs Act, by section 119 of Finance Act, 2003, effective from 14 May 2003.
- **Powers and Functions:**
 - **Grant compensation** owing to unlawful action of revenue authorities.
 - **Review its own order** (as any quasi-judicial authority cannot review its own order).
 - **Exercise powers** beyond statute (as it is a creature of statute only).
 - **Issue writs or grant relief** which ought to be granted by high court.
 - **Comment on legitimacy of statute.** Must presume legal validity of the provisions of Act and Rules.
 - **Punish for its own contempt** (must forward it to high court for its consideration).
 - **Act as a court** (as it is a tribunal and cannot be equated to a court. Members of tribunal are not judges and their decisions are orders, not judgments).
 - **Overrule any high court judgement** (as it is bound by judgements of high courts and Supreme Court).
- **Anti Dumping matters:** The Tribunal also has appellate jurisdiction in **Anti Dumping matters** and the Special Bench headed by the President, CESTAT, hears appeals against the orders passed by the Designated Authority in the Ministry of Commerce.

A Total of 926 industrial units registered under the NEIDS under The North East Industrial Development Scheme

Context: As on 15.03.2023, a total of 926 industrial units (including conditional registrations) have been registered under the **North East Industrial Development Scheme (NEIDS)**, 2017.

- As per information provided by **Department of Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT)**, there is no extension centre under the scheme.

North East Industrial Development Scheme (NEIDS)

- About:** In March, 2018, the Union Cabinet has approved **North East Industrial Development Scheme (NEIDS)**, 2017 to promote employment in North Eastern Region states including Sikkim.
- Implementing agency:** Department of Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT).
- Objectives:**
 - Promote industrialization:** It will **promote industrialization in North Eastern Region (NER) states** including Sikkim and will boost income generation and employment.
 - Promote employment:** For this, government is **incentivizing primarily MSME Sector** through this scheme. It is also providing specific incentive through scheme to generate employment.
 - Benefits to industrial units:** It will **provide various incentives and benefits** to all eligible industrial units. The overall cap for benefits under all components of incentives will be of Rs. 200 crores per unit.
- Incentives:**
 - Central Capital Investment Incentive for Access to Credit (CCIIAC):** Under it, **30% of investment in Plant and Machinery** with upper limit of Rs.5 Crore will be provided per unit.
 - Central Interest Incentive (CII):** It will be **3% on working capital credit** advanced by eligible Banks and Financial institutions for first 5 years from date of commencement of commercial production by unit.
 - Central Comprehensive Insurance Incentive (CCII):** It will **provide reimbursement of 100% insurance premium** on insurance of building and Plant & Machinery for 5 years from date of commencement of commercial production by unit.
 - Goods and Service Tax (GST) Reimbursement:** It will be up to **extent of Central Government share of CGST and IGST** for 5 years from date of commencement of commercial production by unit.
 - Income-Tax (IT) Reimbursement:** It will be of **Centre's share of income tax for first 5 years** including year of commencement of commercial production by unit.
 - Employment Incentive (EI):** Government will pay 3.67% of employer's contribution to Employees Provident Fund (EPF) in addition to its bearing 8.33% Employee Pension Scheme (EPS) contribution of employer in **Pradhan Mantri Rojgar Protsahan Yojana (PMRPPY)**.
 - Transport Incentive (TI):** Indian Railways will provide 20% of cost of transportation including subsidy.
 - Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI)** will provide 20% of cost of transportation for finished goods for movement through inland waterways.
 - Airport** nearest to place of production will provide 33% of cost of transportation of air freight on perishable goods (defined by IATA) to any airport within country.

PROCEDURES FOR DEHORNING CATTLE

(Syllabus: GS Paper 3 - Agriculture & Livestocks)

Centre lays down policy on cattle dehorning & castration 63 years after implementation of animal cruelty Act

Notification defines how to carry out painful procedures on animals; rearers say cattle at mercy of veterinarian



NEXT NEWS >

By Himanshu Nitware
Published: Monday 27 March 2023



Provisions of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960

- **About:** The Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960 (hereinafter PCA Act, 1960) is the first enacted law for **safeguarding the rights and protecting the animals** from pain and suffering inflicted by humans.
- **Key features:**
 - **Definition:** The Act has established the **definition of animals** to include any living creature other than human beings and different forms of animals.
 - **Offences & punishments:** In order to protect the animals from **lifetime agony and pain**, the Act has set forth **punishments** for offenders who cause unnecessary suffering and cruelty towards animals.
 - The Act further discusses **different forms of cruelty** inflicted on animals, its exceptions and the process of killing a suffering animal, when cruelty has been imposed, to avoid any further suffering for that animal.
 - **Guidelines for experimenting on an animals:** The Act underlines the **guidelines to be followed while experimenting on an animal** for scientific purposes and exhibition of performing animals along with their offences.
 - **Animal Welfare Board of India:** One of the features that the Act specifies is the establishment of the **Animal Welfare Board of India**.

Context: Sixty-three years after the implementation of The **Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act in 1960**, the central government recently laid down the procedures for dehorning cattle and castration, branding or nose-roping of any animal.

Background

- The procedures were earlier undefined under **Sections 11 and subsection 3** of the Act, which made it difficult to prevent cruelty against animals.
- **Section 11** defined the acts that amount to treating animals with cruelty. But subsection 3 allowed exceptions for animal husbandry procedures, which involve dehorning cattle and castration, branding and nose roping of animals in a prescribed manner.
- **Section 3(c)** of the law also offered exceptions in the extermination or destruction of any animal under the authority of any law for the time being in force.

New Procedures procedures for dehorning and castration

- All procedures are to be carried out with the **involvement of a registered veterinary practitioner**, along with the mandatory use of general and local anaesthetics, according to the notification.
- The existing methods involve pushing a bull to the ground to use a **castrator sans painkillers**.
- The **castration method** involves crushing the blood vessels, nerves and vas deferens to cause the testicles to become defunct.
- The rules also demand the **breeding of naturally hornless cattle** over dehorning and using face halters and other humane procedures for nose roping and preventing cold and hot branding on live tissues.
- The rules prescribe a **methodology for euthanasia** for ill animals to avoid a painful death.
- The rules also require using **pain-reducing methods** for dehorning and nose roping.
- The rules also demand animals be **blindfolded** to reduce stress levels, laid on soft ground, and given post-surgical care.
- **Tagging, branding and radio-telemetry devices** should be placed on dead tissues.

Affinity test is not a litmus test to decide caste claim: SC

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

An affinity test cannot be the litmus test to decide a caste claim, the Supreme Court has held in a judgment. A three-judge Bench, led by Justice Sanjay Kishan Kaul, said an affinity test is not an essential part of the process of the determination of correctness of a caste or tribe claim in every case.

An affinity test mandates the study and preparation of a report by authorities on caste/tribe claims based on the peculiar anthropological and ethnological traits, deities, rituals, customs, mode of marriage, death ceremonies, methods of burial of dead bodies, etc., of the particular caste or tribe and the applicants knowledge of them.

The judgment authored by Justice Abhay Oka pointed out that an applicant may have "good knowledge" about these traits without belonging to the particular caste or tribe.

Context: An **affinity test** cannot be the litmus test to decide a caste claim, the Supreme Court has held in a judgment.

- The SC said an affinity test is not an essential part of the process of the determination of correctness of a caste or tribe claim in every case.

Affinity test

- **About:** An affinity test **mandates the study and preparation of a report by authorities on caste/tribe claims** based on the peculiar anthropological and ethnological traits, deities, rituals, customs, mode of marriage, death ceremonies, methods of burial of dead bodies, etc, of the particular caste or tribe and the applicants knowledge of them.
 - Affinity Test is used to shift through **anthropological and ethnological traits** to link a person to a tribe.
 - There is the likelihood that contact with other cultures, migration and modernization would have erased the **traditional characteristics of a tribe**.
- **Grounds:** The claim by an applicant that he is a part of a **Scheduled Tribe** and is entitled to the benefit extended to that tribe, cannot per se be disregarded on the ground that his present traits do not match his tribes.
 - These include **peculiar anthropological and ethnological traits**, deity, rituals, mode of marriage, death ceremonies, method of burial of dead bodies etc.
 - **Worship is an integral part** of the life of a community and tribes have specific modes which need to be ascertained by the officers who decide the claims (for ST status).

When Section 144 helps regulate syrup sales, kite flying!

Abhinav Garg@timesgroup.com

New Delhi: An emergency provision that police historically used for maintaining law and order was used to regulate the sale of cough syrups, the flying of kites and stopping the sale of namkeen near liquor vends, a study has found.

A group of lawyers studied how police had used Section 144 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) between January 1, 2021, and January 1, 2022. They called the report *The Use and Misuse of Section 144 CrPC*.

The lawyers — Vrinda Bhandari, Abhinav Sekhri, Natasha Maheshwari and Madhav Aggarwal —

pointed out that historically Section 144 of the CrPC was invoked by the police to curb threats to public order because of a large assembly or a public gathering. Gatherings of persons in groups of five or more is not allowed where CrPC Section 144 is invoked. However, the team found that of the 5,400 instances of Section 144 being clamped, only 1.5% was because police wanted to check a threat to public order. The authors warned that “Section 144 has become a convenient and limitless tool to theoretically control everyday life. For example, it can prevent a child who is visiting a public park from carrying a tiffin box. Similarly, a woman watching a

AUTHORS SAY

Section 144 can prevent a child who is visiting a public park from carrying a tiffin box. Similarly, a woman watching a movie can be stopped from entering with her handbag.

movie can be stopped from entering with her handbag.”

Disobeying an order passed under Section 144 can attract a punishment of up to one month of simple imprisonment or a fine up to Rs 200

under Section 188 of the IPC, which relates to disobedience to an order passed by a public servant.

Speaking at the launch of the report, former Chief Justice of India U U Lalit said the finding was “shocking and disturbing” and termed the report an “eye opener”.

In the period of study, Section 144 was invoked 6,100 times. The lawyers sought records under the Right to Information Act. They were able to access 5,400 instances. Police refused to share the records for the other 700. The report said that in the South and South East districts, police declined the RTI request.

The report pointed out that the cops invoked the section to “regulate

a wide variety of activities”. These included activities which are not, per se, illegal such as “paan shops near educational institutions, laser and beam lights at banquet halls and farmhouses, flying kites with metallic or glass-coated manjhas, etc”, the report says.

The report said that the section was used to stop a namkeen stall from being set up within 100 metres of any liquor vend and for installing CCTVs to check if these thelas were functioning illegally. Police also issued Section 144 of the CrPC for establishing CCTV surveillance, to regulate businesses and for securing public order that included kite flying, firecrackers or hookah bars.

Context: A group of lawyers studied how police had used **Section 144 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC)** between January 1, 2021, and January 1, 2022. They called the report *The Use and Misuse of Section 144 CrPC*.

- The team found that of the 5,400 instances of **Section 144** being clamped, only 1.5% was because police wanted to check a threat to public order.

Section 144 CrPC

- **About:** It gives **power to a district magistrate, a sub-divisional magistrate or any other executive magistrate** empowered by the state government to issue orders so as to prevent any untoward incident related to law and order situation.
 - The order can be **specific to certain individuals** in a given area or the general public at large.
 - In emergency situations, the magistrate can issue the **order without giving prior notice** to the individual targeted in the order.
 - Its primary aim is to **prevent obstruction**, annoyance to the general public and to maintain peace and tranquility in the area.
- **Powers under the provision:** It empowers the executive magistrate to issue an order **prohibiting the assembly of four or more people** in an area. Members of such unlawful assembly can be booked for engaging in rioting.
 - Under the section, the magistrate can **direct any person to abstain from a certain act** or to pass an order with respect to a certain property in the possession or under the management of that person to maintain peace.
 - It can **restrict the movement of persons**, ability to carry arms and unlawful assembly.
 - It also gives power to the authorities to **block internet access**.
 - Moreover, obstructing law enforcement agencies from dispersing an unlawful assembly is a **punishable offence**.
- **Duration of Section 144 order:** The order remains in force for not more than **two months**.
 - The state government can **extend the same by another two months** subject to a maximum six months period.
 - The state government can **withdraw the order** at any point of time if it feels that the situation has come back to normalcy.

For private campuses, IOE tag gift-wrapped in red tape

Private campuses get no money under IOE scheme but are promised significant autonomy — that's only on paper

RITIKA CHOPRA
MANIPAL, NEW DELHI,
MARCH 27

WHILE FOUR private institutions remain stranded on a thorny path to get the coveted status of Institution of Eminence (IOE) despite getting the all-clear from the Government's empowered committee, it's not exactly been a bed of roses for the other four that made the cut.

On paper, these private IOEs, who don't get any funds under the scheme unlike Government institutions, are assured of autonomy and significant regulatory relief. But in practice, they continue to be weighed down by red tape and regulatory interference, an investigation by *The Indian Express*, based on official records, visits to campuses across the country and interviews with several university personnel and Government officials, has revealed.

Only four of the 10 private higher education institutions selected for the IOE status have received official recognition to date: Manipal Academy of Higher Education (MAHE), BITS Pilani, OP Jindal Global University and Shiv Nadar University. Of these, Shiv Nadar is the youngest IOE, having received the status just last year.

The *Indian Express* found that the three oldest private IOEs on many occasions had asserted

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Manipal Academy of Higher Education got IOE status in 2020 but can't choose name of a research centre. *File*

INTERVIEW M JAGADESH KUMAR

Our interventions are in public interest: UGC chief

RITIKA CHOPRA
NEW DELHI, MARCH 27

PRIVATE INSTITUTIONS of Eminence (IOEs), like all universities, have a social responsibility and should not perceive UGC's reminder to fulfil that responsibility as "interference," UGC Chairman M Jagadesh Kumar told *The Indian Express* in an interview. Excerpts from an interview on complaints by private universities and the UGC role.

Private IOEs have been struggling with autonomy. They currently have freedom from only one (UGC) regulator. Doesn't this make it difficult for the IOEs to achieve their goals?

I don't want to comment on



UGC chief M Jagadesh Kumar

other regulators. As for UGC, I can say we only want to encourage universities to become the best of their kind. Our interventions are only in the public interest.

Even though the IOEs have freedom to decide on the admission process and tuition fee they had to

CONTINUED ON PAGE 12

Context: Private campuses get no money under Institution of Eminence (IOE) scheme but are promised significant autonomy - that's only on paper.

Institution of Eminence (IOE)

- **About:** It is a **recognition scheme** to empower higher education institutes in India. It was first announced in 2016 Union budget.
- **Objectives:** To provide an **enabling regulatory architecture** to ten public and ten private Higher Educational institutions to emerge as world-class teaching and research institutions.
- **Selection Criteria:** UGC had constituted an **Empowered Expert Committee (EEC)** under Gopalasamy chairmanship; to recommend a list of institutions on the basis of following criteria:
 - Institutions, which have figured in the top 500 of QS World University Rankings or top 50 of the **National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF)** rankings, shall be recommended for the IoE status.
 - Yet to be established (Greenfield Institution) will also be recommended. They would **get 3-year period to establish and operationalise**, and thereafter, EEC will consider giving IoE status to such institutions.
- **Benefits:**
 - It will ensure complete **autonomy** to the selected institutions and facilitate them to grow more rapidly.
 - They will get more **opportunity to scale up their operations** with more skills and quality improvement so that they become World Class Institutions in the field of education.
 - Greater autonomy to **admit foreign students** up to 30% of admitted students.
 - To **recruit foreign faculty** up to 25% of faculty strength.
 - To offer **online courses** up to 20% of its programmes.
 - To enter into **academic collaboration** with top 500 in the world ranking Institutions without permission of UGC.
 - **Free to fix and charge fees** from foreign students without restriction.
 - The **flexibility of course structure** in terms of number of credit hours and years to take a degree.
 - Complete flexibility in **fixing of curriculum and syllabus**.

'India supports marine protected areas in Antarctica to conserve ocean life': Jitendra Singh to DTE

New designated regions be counted in 30X30 goal



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By Rohini Krishnamurthy
Published: Monday 27 March 2023



CCAMLR

- **About:** It is an international treaty between 25 nations that **seeks to manage Antarctic fisheries** with the goal of preserving species diversity and stability of the entire Antarctic marine ecosystem.
- **Origin:** The Convention for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources was established in **1982**.
 - It is part of the **Antarctic Treaty System**.
- **Limitations:** Although the aim of the Convention is to conserve marine life of the Southern Ocean, it **does not prohibit reasonable harvesting**.
- **India's Membership:** India has been a permanent member of the CCAMLR **since 1986**.
 - Work pertaining to the CCAMLR is coordinated in India by the **Ministry of Earth Sciences** through its attached office, the Centre for Marine Living Resources and Ecology (CMLRE) in Kochi, Kerala.

Context: India will continue to support setting up two **Marine Protected Areas (MPA)** in Antarctica to protect marine life and its ecosystem services, Minister of state (independent charge) for science and technology and earth sciences said.

Key Points

- The **Southern Ocean** that encircles Antarctica covers around 10 percent of the global ocean and is home to nearly 10,000 unique polar species
- The Southern Ocean has two MPAs - one in the **southern shelf of the South Orkney Islands and the other in the Ross Sea**.
 - All types of fishing, other than scientific research, are prohibited within the southern shelf of the **South Orkney Islands MPA**. Discharges and dumping from fishing vessels are also not allowed.
 - In the Ross MPA, 72 percent of the waters are closed to commercial fishing.
- In 2021, **India extended its support** for designating East Antarctica and the Weddell Sea as MPA.
- China and Russia blocked these efforts at the 41st annual meeting of the **Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR)**.

Marine Protected Areas (MPA)

- **About:** MPAs in India are defined as **geographical regions** that are set aside for conservation and sustainable use of marine and coastal biodiversity.
 - These areas are **designated for the protection and preservation of their unique ecosystems** and the species that depend on them.
- **Legislations:** India has enacted legislation for coastal and marine conservation including:
 - Environment (Protection) Act, 1986
 - Coastal Regulation Zone Notification, 1991
 - National Biodiversity Act, 2002
 - The Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 provides for the establishment of protected areas by state governments.
- **Examples of important MPAs in India:** Gulf of Kachchh Marine National Park, Gulf of Mannar National Park, Sundarbans National Park and Wandoor Marine National Park.

INNOVATIONS FOR DEFENCE EXCELLENCE (iDEX) SCHEME

Context: Up to 28 February 2023, 139 **Innovations for Defence Excellence (iDEX)** winners have been provided grants/fund.

- The Services, after successful trials, have placed supply orders on three iDEX winners.
- Moreover, the Ministry has also accorded **Acceptance of Necessity (AoN)** for 13 more iDEX products.

Innovations for Defence Excellence (iDEX)

- **About:** iDEX framework aims to **foster innovation and technology development** in Defence and Aerospace Sector by engaging Industries including MSMEs, startups, individual innovators, R&D institutes and academia and promote self-reliance.
- **Nodal Ministry:** Ministry of Defence.
- **Objective:** The objective of the IDEX scheme is to **provide financial support** to nearly 300 Startups/ MSMEs/individual innovators and about 20 Partner incubators through Defence Innovation Organisation (DIO).
- **Implementation:** iDEX will be funded and managed by Defence Innovation Organization (DIO).
 - iDEX will function as the executive arm of the Defence Innovation Organisation (DIO).
 - **Defence Innovation Organisation (DIO)** was formed as a “not for profit” company as per Section 8 of the Companies Act 2013 for this purpose.
 - DIO is **responsible for managing and funding** the Innovations for Defence Excellence (iDEX) Initiative
- **Funding:** The Government has approved a **central sector scheme for iDEX** with budgetary support of Rs. 498.78 crore for the next 5 years from 2021-22 to 2025-26.
 - For the current financial year 2021-2022, Rs. 45 crore have been released by the Government to iDEX-DIO.
- **Key Functions:**
 - **Create a culture of engagement** with innovative startups, to encourage co-creation for defence and aerospace sectors.
 - **Empower a culture of technology** co-creation and co-innovation within the defence and aerospace sectors.

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