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THE HINDU | ET | BS | TOI | The Indian EXPRESS | livemint | pib | DownToEarth – FORTNIGHTLY ON POLITICS OF DEVELOPMENT, ENVIRONMENT AND HEALTH | Science Reporter | विज्ञान एवं प्रौद्योगिकी मंत्रालय MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY



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LIVE MINT

Page 2

WTO SUBSIDIES

(Syllabus: GS Paper 3 - Economy)

WTO must review food subsidy rule, says Sitharaman

Gulveen Aulakh
gulveen.aulakh@livemint.com
INCHEON



Finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman. PTI

The World Trade Organization must revisit the prickly issue of food and fertilizer subsidies as both have become critical to developing economies but are not taken into account while deciding tariff and pricing rules, finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman said at the Asian Development Bank's annual general meeting.

Sitharaman, who was speaking at bank seminar on 'policies to support Asia's rebound', said the issue of food security had become even more critical owing to increasing uncertainties following the covid pandemic and the Russia-Ukraine war, which had made transit of goods difficult and led to rising commodity prices.

Therefore, the lopsided way in which agreements had been concluded without accounting for food and fertilizer subsidies needed a relook at the WTO.

"Since the time when WTO was founded, it has had these agreements that export of agricultural produce, and also generally the trade, (where) the voice of the South, or the emerging markets has not been heard at par with the voice of the developed countries. Subsidies for agriculture become critical for many of our economies, but those subsidies didn't get counted at all," she said.

"Now, in the context of covid and the Russia-Ukraine war, and legitimately, all of us have been feeling very sensitive about food security, fertilizer-security. Fertilizer security is important because it feeds into food security. We will all have to talk again (about food and fertilizer security) at the WTO with an open mind," she said.

"The lopsided way in which trade agreements have come about and the WTO is trying to grapple with the situation... sooner the solution is found the better it is for the world," she added.

Under global trade rules, a WTO member country's food subsidy bill should not breach the limit of 10% of the value of production based on the reference price of 1986-88.

The reporter is in South Korea on the invitation of the Asian Development Bank.

Context: The **World Trade Organization** must revisit the prickly issue of **food and fertilizer subsidies** as both have become critical to developing economies but are not taken into account while deciding tariff and pricing rules, finance minister said at the Asian Development Bank's annual general meeting.

Key Points

- Under global trade rules, a WTO member country's **food subsidy bill should not breach the limit of 10% of the value of production** based on the reference price of 1986-88.
- As part of permanent solution, India has asked for measures like amendments in the formula to calculate the food subsidy cap and inclusion of programmes implemented after 2013 under the ambit of **'Peace Clause'.**
- As an interim measure, the WTO members at the **Bali ministerial meeting** in December 2013 had agreed to put in place a mechanism popularly called 'Peace Clause' and committed to negotiating an agreement for a permanent solution.
- Under Peace Clause, **WTO members agreed to refrain from challenging any breach** in prescribed ceiling by a developing nation at the dispute settlement forum of the WTO. This clause will stay till a permanent solution is found to the food stockpiling issue.

Subsidies under WTO

- In WTO terminology, subsidies in general are identified by "boxes" which are given the colours of traffic lights: **green (permitted), amber (slow down - i.e. need to be reduced), red (forbidden)**. In agriculture, things are, as usual, more complicated.
- WTO's agreement on agriculture was concluded in 1994, and was aimed to r**emove trade barriers and to promote transparent market access and integration of global markets.**
- Subsidies regime included in the **Agreement on Agriculture** has three forms of subsidies, ranging from those that were considered "non-distorting" or "minimally distorting" (the "Green Box" and "Blue Box" subsidies), to those that seriously "distorted" markets (the "Amber Box" subsidies).

	Description	WTO constraint
Green box	Support with no, or minimal, trade distorting effects or effects on production, and that meets policy-specific criteria. (e.g. research programmes, pest and disease-control measures, agri-environment schemes. Also, the EU claims, decoupled income support including, the Basic Payment Scheme and its Greening component)	No expenditure limits apply
Blue Box	Direct payments under production limiting programmes (e.g. area payments or 'livestock payments ... made on a fixed number of head)	Currently no expenditure limits
Amber Box	Price support (e.g. milk will be sold at £X per litre) and aid coupled to production (e.g. a farmer will get £X for each beef cattle)	Support in this category must be within de minimis limits, unless the WTO member has negotiated additional entitlement, as the EU has.

ECONOMIC TIMES
Page 9

ASSET MONETISATION
(Syllabus: GS Paper 3 - Economy)

Coal Min Sets ₹50k-cr Asset Monetisation Target for FY24

Commercial coal mine auctions expected to fetch ₹40,000 cr while ₹10,100 cr of revenues are expected through Coal India, says ministry's FY24 action plan

Our Bureau

New Delhi: The coal ministry has set a ₹50,119-crore assets monetisation target for the current fiscal, much higher than the FY23 target of ₹30,000 crore.

Auction of commercial coal mines is expected to fetch ₹40,000 crore while ₹10,100 crore of revenues are expected through Coal India Ltd, as per the action plan for FY24 released by the ministry.

The Coal India component usually comes through revenue sharing of mine development operations, sale of abandoned mines, and long-term outsourcing contracts for hiring equipment for coal extraction, overburden removal and transportation.

Coal India has a ₹16,500-crore capital expenditure plan for FY24, while NLC India is expected to spend ₹2,880 crore and Singareni Collieries Company Ltd ₹1,650 crore.

The ministry has set the coal production target for FY24 at about 1 billion metric tonnes, as stated earlier.

The plan, apart from the expansion of Coal India's core business, also includes diversification of its operations into new areas such as aluminium, power, solar wafer, and renewable energy among others for sustainable future business operations.

Coal gasification and coal-to-hydrogen projects are also listed in the projection for the year.

The coal ministry, in consultation with the railway ministry, is closely monitoring the new railway line projects that are critical for coal evacuation.

The ministry also plans to launch the coal trading exchange, for which a consultant was appointed in 2020, in the current fiscal.



The ministry has set coal production target for FY24 at about 1 billion tonnes, as stated earlier

Context: The coal ministry has set a ₹ 50,119-crore **assets monetisation target** for the current fiscal, much higher than the FY23 target of ₹30,000 crore.

- The **Coal India component usually comes through revenue sharing** of mine development operations, sale of abandoned mines, and long-term outsourcing contracts for hiring equipment for coal extraction, overburden removal and transportation.

Asset monetisation

- Asset monetisation is the **process of creating new sources of revenue** for the government and its entities by unlocking the economic value of unutilised or underutilised public assets.
- A public asset can be any property owned by a p**ublic body, roads, airports, railways, stations, pipelines, mobile towers, transmission lines**, etc., or even land that remains unutilised.
- As a concept, **asset monetisation implies offering public infrastructure to the institutional investors** or private sector through structured mechanisms.
- Monetisation is **different from 'privatisation',** in fact, it signifies 'structured partnerships' with the private sector under certain contractual frameworks.
- Asset monetisation **does not involve the selling of land,** but it is about monetising brownfield assets.
- In India, the idea of asset monetisation was first suggested by a **committee led by economist Vijay Kelkar in 2012** on the roadmap for fiscal consolidation.
- **Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM)** deals with all matters relating to management of Central Government investments in equity including disinvestment of equity in Central Public Sector Undertakings.
- The Four major areas of its work relates to **Strategic Disinvestment, Minority Stake Sales, Asset Monetisation and Capital Restructuring.**
- DIPAM is working as one of the Departments under the **Ministry of Finance.**

PIB

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GREEN BONDS

(Syllabus: GS Paper 3 - Economy)

REC Limited lists its Green Bonds of USD 750 Million at GIFT IFSC Stock Exchanges

Context: REC Limited has undertaken an exclusive listing of its recently **issued Green bonds of USD 750 million** raised under its Global Medium Term Programme of USD 7 billion at **GIFT IFSC Stock Exchanges** in a primary listing ceremony held in GIFT IFSC, Gandhinagar.

- This is the largest ever senior USD tranche by an Indian NBFC (largest ever senior **Green Bond Tranche** by a South & South-East Asian issuer) and first Green Bond issuance by an Indian Company post India's G20 Presidency.
- The issue saw an **over-subscription of approximately 3.5 times** from 161 investors with active participation from quality accounts. Investors from across the globe participated in the issue with Asia Pacific (APAC) 42%, Europe, Middle East & Africa (EMEA) 26% and the US 32%.

Green bonds

- **Green Bonds**: These are like any other debt instrument except for the fact that the i**ssuer of the green bond pledges to use its proceeds to finance projects** that will have a positive impact on the climate and environment.
- **Origin**: The first green bond was issued in 2007 by the **European Investment Bank**, the EU's lending arm.
  - This was followed a year later by the World Bank.
- **Different from standard bonds**: Standard bonds proceeds can be used for various purposes as per the choice of the issuer, whereas proceeds of green bonds are **earmarked for green projects or projects** that benefit the environment.
- **Issuer**: Green bonds can be **issued by countries, companies and multilateral organisations** to only fund projects that have positive impacts on the climate and environment and provide investors with fixed income payments.
- **Green Bonds vs Climate Bonds**
  - The term **'labelled' green bonds** refers to bonds marketed by the **issuer as 'green',** where the proceeds are for climate / green assets or projects.
  - **'Climate-themed bonds'** are represented by a broader category of bonds whose proceeds are for climate projects but that are **not labelled as green**. It is much wider than the 'labelled green bonds market'.
- **Budget 2022-23**: The Finance Minister in the Budget 2022 announced that the government proposes to **issue sovereign green bonds** to mobilise resources for green infrastructure.

BUSINESS STANDARD

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STANDARDS FOR UAV

(Syllabus: GS Paper 3 - Infrastructure)

Govt set to roll out quality standards for drones, EVs

PRATIGYA YADAV & SHREYA NANDI
New Delhi, 3 May

The government is developing mandatory standards for unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), commonly known as drones, towards creation of a 'robust quality ecosystem' for such items in the country.

Standards for drones that are used extensively in the agriculture space — for soil analysis, irrigation, crop mapping and pest management — have already been formulated.

Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal told reporters that quality control orders on drones for the agriculture sector will help boost crop yields, thereby benefiting farmers.

Standards for other categories of drones are also under development, BIS director general Pramod Kumar Tiwari said.

The Bureau of India Standards (BIS) has already formulated standards and tests for emerging sectors,



such as electric vehicles (EV) and charging infrastructure.

Standards for battery-swapping systems are also in the offing. And, standards on general guidance and safety requirements of battery-swapping systems have already been rolled out.

standards have already been published. These were formulated for EVs, lithium-ion traction battery packs and systems, electric traction motor, measurement of range, energy consumption and net power in EVs, Tiwari said.

"Standards on specific requirements for electric powertrain and rechargeable electrical energy storage systems (REESS) of L, M & N category vehicles are under construction," an official statement said.

The standards authority is also working on norms for electric rickshaw E-Kart and approval of hybrid EVs.

"There is no resistance from the industry on electric vehicle standards except on battery swapping. On this, industry has raised concerns as the sector is still evolving. Consultations are being held with the stakeholders and it may take some time. Let's first come out with safety standards for electric vehicles and then for battery swapping," Tiwari said.

Quality control orders

Based on the discussion between concerned ministries and government departments, more products have been identified for notifying them under quality control orders (QCOs) and mandating compulsory certification of BIS, government officials said.

The upcoming QCOs are at various stages of processing and some of the draft QCOs have been hosted on WTO as well by the concerned ministries and departments

As many as 115 QCOs, covering 493 products have been notified for compulsory certification. Till May 2014, only 14 QCOs, covering 106 products, were notified.

Goyal also said that the government is introducing new quality control orders, which will help in increasing the income of people. They will provide a boost to exports and 'inculcate the spirit of quality'.

"QCOs will be equally applicable to Indian as well as foreign manufacturers and Indian consumers are assured of the quality of such products manufactured in India as well as imported to the country," Goyal told reporters.

Through the issuance of QCOs, the notified products will conform to the requirements of the relevant Indian standard. The manufacturers of these products have to compulsorily obtain certification from BIS.

Once a QCO is implemented, individuals will not be allowed to manufacture, import, distribute, sell, hire, lease or store such products without a standard mark from the BIS.

NEW DRONE RULES

- Number of forms reduced from 25 to **5**
- Types of fee reduced from 72 to **4**. Quantum of fee reduced as well
- Requirement of **import clearance** from DGCA abolished
- Coverage of drones under Drone Rules, 2021 increased from 300 kg to **500 kg**. This will cover drone taxis also
- Maximum penalty for violations reduced to **₹1 lakh**
- **Drone corridors** to be developed for cargo deliveries
- **Drone promotion council** to be set up



Context: The government is developing mandatory standards for **unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs),** commonly known as drones, towards creation of a ´robust quality ecosystem´ for such items in the country.

- **Standards for drones** that are used extensively in the agriculture space - for soil analysis, irrigation, crop mapping and pest management - have already been formulated.

Unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs)

- Unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), also known as **drones, are aircraft either controlled by 'pilots' from the ground** or increasingly, autonomously following a pre-programmed mission.
- There are three subsets of Unmanned Aircraft- **Remotely Piloted Aircraft, Autonomous Aircraft and Model Aircraft.**

Rules regulating drones in India

- In India, the **Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA)** governs the use of all (manned or automated) aerial vehicles.
- **'The Drone Rules, 2021'**, to regulate the use and operation of Drones or Unmanned Aerial Systems.

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NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON AGRICULTURE

(Syllabus: GS Paper 3 - Agriculture)

National Conference on Agriculture for Kharif Campaign- 2023

Context: Union Agriculture Minister inaugurated **National Conference on Agriculture for Kharif Campaign 2023-24** on 03-05-2023.

Objective of this conference

- The objective of this conference was to **review and assess the crop performance** during the preceding crop seasons and fix crop-wise targets for Kharif season in consultation with State Governments, ensure supply of critical inputs and facilitate adoption of innovative technologies with a view to enhance production and productivity of the crops.
- The priority of government is **agro-ecological based crop planning** for diversion of land from excess commodities like rice and wheat to deficit commodities like oilseeds and pulses and high value export earning crops.
- **Special Mustard programme** was initiated during rabi 2020-21 that has brought most spectacular results. Mustard production has jumped by 40% from 91.24 to 128.18 lakh tonnes in last 3 years.
- The productivity saw 11% increase from 1331 to 1447 kg/ha. The area under rapeseed & mustard enhanced by 29% from 68.56 lakh ha in 2019-20 to 88.58 lakh ha in 2022-23.
- **Timely action by central and state government** made this remarkable achievement possible.

Production of foodgrains

- As per **2nd Advance Estimates (2022-23)**, production of foodgrains in the country is estimated at 3235 lakh tonnes which is higher by 79 lakh tonnes than the production of foodgrains during 2021-22.
- **Record production** is estimated of rice, maize, gram, pulses, rapeseed and mustard, oilseeds and sugarcane.
- Total **production of sugarcane** in the country during 2022-23 is estimated at record 4688 lakh tonnes which is higher by 1553 lakh tonnes than the average sugarcane production.
- As per the **3rd Advance Estimates of Horticulture,** a record 3423.3 lakh tonnes of horticultural production are estimated in 2021-22 which is 77.30 lakh tonnes higher over production of 2020-21.

National Targets

- The Conference set the national **targets for production of foodgrains and other commodities**. National targets for total food grains production set at 3320 lakh tonnes for the year 2023-24.
- **Target for production of pulses** have been fixed at 292.5 lakh tonnes compared to 278.1 lakh tonnes this year and oilseeds production will be increased from 400 to 440 lakh tonnes in 2023-24.
- **Total Shree Anna production** has to be increased from 159.1 lakh tonnes in 2022-23 to 170.0 lakh tonnes in 2023-24. The strategy would be to increase area through inter-cropping and crop diversification and productivity enhancement through introduction of HYVs and adoption of suitable agronomic practices in low yielding regions.

THE HINDU

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WORLD PRESS FREEDOM INDEX

(Syllabus: GS Paper 2 - Polity & Governance)

India slips in press freedom index, ranks 161 out of 180 nations

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

India's ranking in the 2023 World Press Freedom Index has slipped to 161 out of 180 countries, according to the latest report released by the global media watchdog Reporters Without Borders (RSF). In comparison, Pakistan has fared better when it comes to media freedom as it was placed at 150, an improvement from last year's 157th rank. In 2022, India was ranked at 150.

Sri Lanka also made significant improvement on the index, ranking 135th this year as against 146th in 2022.

Norway, Ireland and Denmark occupied the top three positions in press freedom, while Vietnam, China and North Korea constituted the bottom three.



World Press Freedom Index is to compare the level of press freedom enjoyed by media.

dom as "the ability of journalists as individuals and collectives to select, produce, and disseminate news in the public interest independent of political, economic, legal, and social interference and in the absence of threats to their physical and mental safety".

Concerns arise

The Indian Women's Press

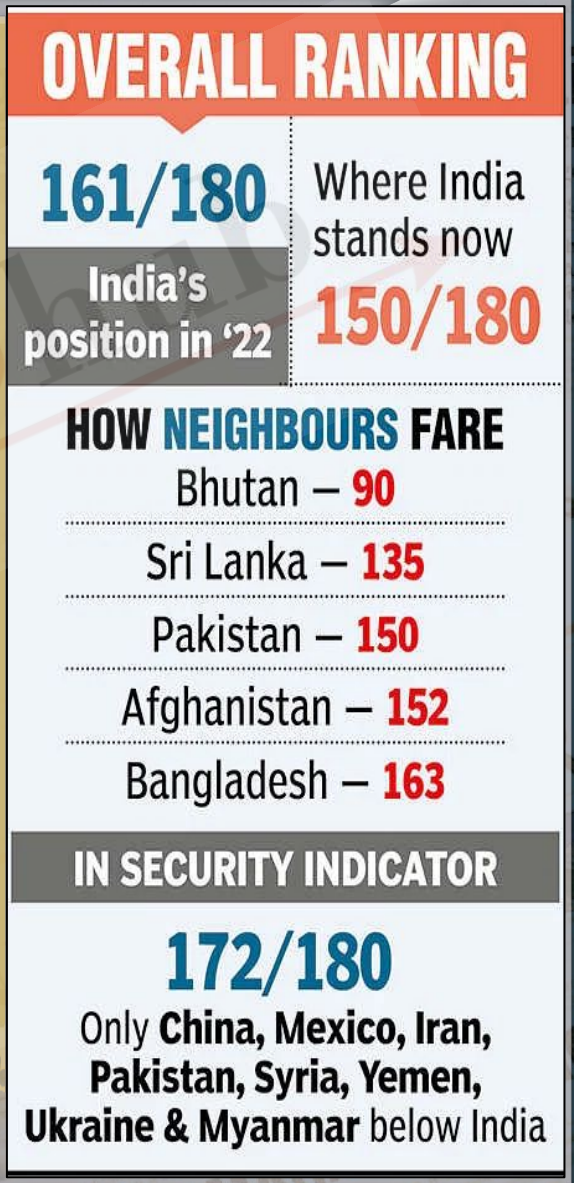
Context: India's ranking in the 2023 **World Press Freedom Index** has slipped to 161 out of 180 countries, according to the latest report released by global media watchdog Reporters Without Borders (RSF).

Key Points

- In comparison to India, **Pakistan has fared better** when it comes to media freedom as it was placed at 150, an improvement from last year's 157th rank. In 2022, India was ranked at 150.
- **Norway, Ireland and Denmark occupied the top three positions** in press freedom, while Vietnam, China and North Korea constituted the bottom three.

World Press Freedom Index

- **Reporters Without Borders (RSF)** comes out with a global ranking of press freedom every year.
- RSF is an **international NGO** whose self-proclaimed aim is to defend and promote media freedom.
- Headquartered in **Paris**, it has consultative status with the United Nations.
- The objective of the World Press Freedom Index, which it releases every year, "is to **compare the level of press freedom enjoyed by journalists** and media in 180 countries and territories" in the previous calendar year.
- RSF defines press freedom as **"the ability of journalists as individuals and collectives to select, produce, and disseminate news in the public interest** independent of political, economic, legal, and social interference and in the absence of threats to their physical and mental safety."



INDIAN EXPRESS Page 1

POSH ACT 2013

(Syllabus: GS Paper 2 - Social Justice)

Not just wrestling, half of national sports federations don't have sexual harassment panel as per law



IOA president PT Usha meets protesting wrestlers at Jantar Mantar on Wednesday. *Prem Nath Pandey* REPORT, PAGE 20

Surge in women in sports but 16 of 30 federations don't comply with sexual harassment law — from no Internal Complaints Committee to absence of external member

AMIT KAMATH & MIHIR VASAVDA
MUMBAI, MAY 3

PROTESTS, ALMOST 24x7, in Jantar Mantar for 11 days and counting; knocking on the door of the Supreme Court to get FIRs filed; repeated appeals to fellow sportspersons to lend their weight to their complaints of sexual harassment even as the prime accused digs his heels in.

On paper, and, by law, this didn't have to happen.

Indeed, the Government's MC Mary Kom-headed panel that looked into allegations of sexual harassment levelled by some of the nation's top wrestlers against Wrestling Federation of India chief and BJP MP Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh, red-flagged this as a "major finding": there was no Internal Complaints Committee (ICC), as mandated by the 2013 Prevention of Sexual Harassment (PoSH) Act.

The wrestling body isn't the only one violating the law.

As many as 16 of the 30 national sports federations — of disciplines in which India has participated in the 2018 Asian Games, Tokyo Olympics in 2021 and last year's Commonwealth Games — do not meet this mandatory compliance, an investigation by *The Indian Express* has revealed. And this, when there has been a record uptick in women's participation in sports. Their number in the Khelo India Games, an index of this growing trend, showed a 161 per cent increase from 2018 to 2020.

The ICC was designed to be the first port of call for any grievance under the PoSH Act, a key element needed to create a safe workplace environment for women. As per the law, it needs to have a minimum of four members — at least half of them women — of whom one shall be an external member, preferably from an NGO or an association that works for women's empowerment or a person familiar with issues related to sexual harassment, like a lawyer.

The Indian Express reviewed official declarations of all 30 federations and reached out to their office-bearers to find that five federations, including wrestling, don't even have an ICC; four don't have the stipulated number of members; another six lacked the mandatory external member and one federation had two panels but neither had an independent member.

The status of ICC in each and the response of the federation:

Gymnastics Federation of India

Status: No ICC; there's an "investigation committee" that has two women in a six-member panel, no external member.

Comment: "We have an investigation committee for all issues. We have been following the guidelines of the world body. Until a month ago, there was no committee at all but now we have one," said Sudhir Mital, president.

Table Tennis Federation of India

Status: No ICC.

Comment: "Since the new administration has just taken over a few months ago, we are going through legal procedures and an ICC will be in place in a month's time," said Kamlesh Mehta, secretary general.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

Probing WFI, Govt, in Jan this year, had flagged need to comply

MIHIR VASAVDA
NEW DELHI, MAY 3

NOT THAT the Government is unaware of the challenge.

On January 23, the day the Union Sports Ministry first formed the Mary Kom-led committee to investigate allegations of sexual harassment against Wrestling Federation of India president Brij Bhushan Singh, it sent a letter to all national sports federations flagging the importance of the internal complaints committee (ICC).

EXPLAINED

While it noted that "most bodies have the necessary structures in place," the letter called on sports federations to "re-examine their structures and policies" and make necessary changes to comply with the requirements of the PoSH law.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

Context: The Government looked into allegations of sexual harassment by some of the nation's top wrestlers against Wrestling Federation of India chief, red-flagged this as a "major finding": there was no Internal Complaints Committee (ICC), as mandated by the **2013 Prevention of Sexual Harassment (PoSH) Act.**

- As many as 16 of the 30 national sports federations - of disciplines in which India has participated in the 2018 Asian Games, Tokyo Olympics in 2021 and last year's Commonwealth Games - **do not meet this mandatory compliance.**

Protection of Women from Sexual Harassment (POSH) Act, 2013

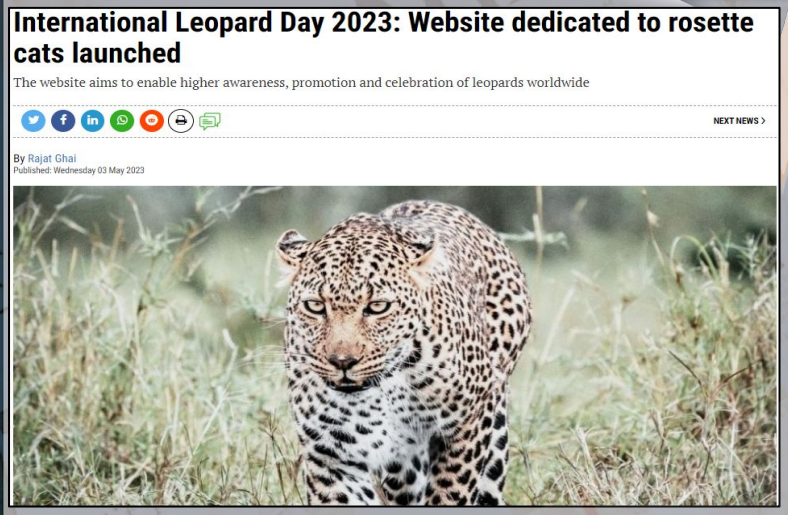
- **About**: The Act was passed in 2013 which **defines sexual harassment**, lay down the procedures for a complaint and inquiry, and the action to be taken.
- **Origin**: In the **Vishakha and others v State of Rajasthan 1997 case**, the Supreme Court gave 'Vishakha guidelines', a set of procedural guidelines for use in India in cases of sexual harassment.
  - These guidelines formed the basis for the The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 ("Sexual Harassment Act").
  - The **Visakha guidelines**, which were legally binding, defined sexual harassment and imposed three key obligations on institutions - prohibition, prevention, redress.
- **Key Features of the act**
  - **Definition of sexual harassment**: Sexual harassment includes "any one or more" of the following "unwelcome acts or behaviour" committed directly or by implication:
    - Physical contact and advances
    - A demand or request for sexual favours
    - Sexually coloured remarks
    - Showing pornography
    - Any other unwelcome physical, verbal or non-verbal conduct of sexual nature.
  - **Definition of a victim**: Aggrieved victim could be a woman "**of any age whether employed or not**", who "alleges to have been subjected to any act of sexual harassment".
    - This meant that the rights of all women working or visiting any workplace, in any capacity, were protected under the Act.
  - **Obligation**: Every employer is required to constitute an **Internal Complaints Committee** at each office or branch with 10 or more employees.
    - The District Officer is required to constitute a Local Complaints Committee at each district, and if required at the block level.
  - **Penal Provisions**: Penalties have been prescribed for employers.
    - Non-compliance with the provisions of the Act shall be punishable with a fine.
    - Repeated violations may lead to higher penalties and cancellation of license or registration to conduct business.

DTE

MAY 4

LEOPARD

(Syllabus: GS Paper 3 - Env & Eco)



International Leopard Day 2023: Website dedicated to rosette cats launched

The website aims to enable higher awareness, promotion and celebration of leopards worldwide

NEXT NEWS >

By Rajat Ghai
Published: Wednesday 03 May 2023

Context: A new portal dedicated to **leopards (Panthera pardus)** was launched by the Cape Leopard Trust (CLT), an active predator conservation working group, on **International Leopard Day (May 3, 2023)** to promote and celebrate leopards worldwide.

Leopard (Panthera pardus)

- **Smallest of the Big Cats** (Of genus Panthera namely the Tiger, Lion, Jaguar, Leopard, and Snow Leopard).
- Feeds on smaller species of herbivores found in its range, such as the chital, hog deer and wild boar.
  - A **nocturnal animal.**
- Occurs in a wide range in **sub-Saharan Africa, in small parts of Western and Central Asia,** on the Indian subcontinent to Southeast and East Asia.
  - The **Indian leopard (Panthera pardus fusca)** is a leopard widely distributed on the Indian subcontinent.
- **Conservation Status:**
  - **IUCN Red List**: Vulnerable
  - **CITES**: Appendix-I
  - **Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972**: Schedule-I

Human-leopard conflict

- In comparison to other large carnivores, l**eopards are quite adaptable with respect to their habitat needs and food** requirements, being found in agro-pastoral landscapes, plantations and near human habitation (both rural and urban).
- This trait of **easy adaptability** has in recent times caused much trouble for both humans and leopards.
- From **Srinagar in the Kashmir Valley to the Brahmaputra Valley** in Assam, Gir National Park in Gujarat and Kalakkad-Mundanthurai Tiger Reserve in southern Tamil Nadu, there is no area in the country that has not seen incidents of human-leopard conflict.

Status of Leopards

- In 2021 on **World Tiger Day**, union Environment Ministry has released a new report titled- **Status of Leopards, Co-predators and Megaherbivores-2018.**
- India's official leopard count has **increased 63 per cent from 2014-2018.** There were 12,852 leopards in the country in 2018 (7,910 in 2014).
- The largest number of leopards have been estimated in **Madhya Pradesh (3,421) followed by Karnataka (1,783) and Maharashtra (1,690).**

DTE

MAY 4

INDUSTRIAL WASTE POLLUTION

(Syllabus: GS Paper 3 - Env & Eco)



North America discarded over 5 billion kg of industrial waste in 2018 and most of it went to landfills

New study looks into waste disposal by 24,000 facilities in Canada, Mexico and the United States

NEXT NEWS >

By Nandita Banerji

Published: Tuesday 02 May 2023

Context: Industries in North America disposed of over five billion kilogrammes of **waste** in 2018, an **increase of about three per cent from 2014,** a new report has found. Close to half of it - 41 per cent or over 2 billion kgs - was discarded in landfills.

Key Points

- **Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC),** which implements the environmental side of the accord to the North American Free Trade Agreement, looked into data for 2014-2018.
- The **US was the biggest polluter** in North America and accounted for about 63 per cent of the total waste reported each year.
- Together, two categories - **on-site disposal or releases to land and off-site transfers** to recycling, accounted for approximately two-thirds of total releases and transfers reported in North America.

Commission for Environmental Cooperation

- It was **established by Canada, Mexico, and the United States** to implement the North American Agreement on Environmental Cooperation (NAAEC), the environmental side accord to the North American Free Trade Agreement.
- The CEC's mission is to **facilitate cooperation and public participation to foster conservation, protection and enhancement** of the North American environment for the benefit of present and future generations, in the context of increasing economic, trade and social links among Canada, Mexico and the United States.

North American Free Trade Agreement

- The North American Free Trade Agreement was an **agreement signed by Canada, Mexico, and the United States** that created a trilateral trade bloc in North America.
- The agreement came into force on January 1, 1994, and superseded the 1988 Canada - United States Free Trade Agreement between the United States and Canada.
- The NAFTA trade bloc formed one of the **largest trade blocs in the world by gross domestic product.**

Basel Convention

- **Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes** and their Disposal is a comprehensive treaty that was adopted in 1989 by the Conference of Plenipotentiaries.
- It aims to **protect the human environment from the adverse effects of hazardous waste** that is generated, managed and disposed of in the world community.
- It applies **Prior Consent Approval** procedure to regulate the transboundary movement of the hazardous and other wastes.
- **Non-parties** cannot transport hazardous waste to and from each other unless specially agreed. Basel Convention states such transportation, illegal.
- The **member nations to the convention** are required to have domestic legislation for both prevention and the punishment of the illegal trafficking of such hazardous wastes.
- It ensures that the member nations control the **generation, storage, transportation, treatment, reuse, recycling, recovery and final disposal** of hazardous wastes.
- **Conference of Parties (COP)** is a primary organ of the Basel Convention and is responsible to make decisions about the operations of the convention. It meets biennially.

TIMES OF INDIA

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ROCK-CUT CAVES IN INDIA

(Syllabus: GS Paper 1 - Art & Heritage)

2,000-yr-old 'modern society' unearthed in MP tiger reserve

1,500-Year-Old Painting Discovered In Rock-Cut Cave

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ARCHAEOLOGICAL TREASURE: Eleven rock-cut caves have surfaced during the second phase of exploration in the Tala range of Bandhavgarh. The survey started on April 1 and will continue till June 30

Bhopal: More and more archaeological treasures are being unearthed in Bandhavgarh. For the first time, a rock painting roughly 1,500 years old has been found in the famed tiger reserve in Madhya Pradesh's Umaria district, along with a 2,000-year-old waterbody and evidence of a "modern society".

The area that we call Bandhavgarh now was most likely part of a trade route, and traders passing this way would take shelter here, ASI superintending engineer, Jabalpur circle, Shivakant Bajpai, who is supervising the explorations, told **TOI**.

"The presence of numerous (man-made) waterbodies suggests a modern society. The waterbodies found this time were made at a height and used for collecting rainwater. They could be roughly 1,800-2,000 years old. Evidence suggests some sort of renovation around 1,000 years ago," he said.

What's unique about the rock art is that it was found in a rock-cut cave, Bajpai said. Usually, such rock art is found in natural caves or overhangs. "Rock painting has been found for the first time in the area. It is not a historic-era painting but could be roughly 1,500 years old. The painting is still being studied. It possibly depicts an animal," Bajpai said.

Eleven rock-cut caves have surfaced during the second phase of exploration in the Tala range of Bandhavgarh. The survey started on April 1 and will continue till June 30.

Last year, ASI had carried out extensive explorations in the same range between May 20 and June 27, discovering 26 ancient temples/relics, 26 rock-cut caves, two monasteries, two stupas, 24 inscriptions, 46 statues, 20 scattered remains and 19 water structures.

Unlike the caves discovered last year, which were Buddhist, the 11 found this time were cut out of rocks for dwelling purposes, he added.

"Fifty caves were discovered earlier, 26 were found last year and 11 so far this year. In one cave, holes for using wooden rafts are also found. The caves also reflect some sort of social hierarchy as some are big, some are small and some have distinct features," Bajpai said.

Context: More and more **archaeological treasures** are being unearthed in Bandhavgarh.

- For the first time, a **rock painting** roughly 1,500 years old has been found in the famed tiger reserve in Madhya Pradesh's Umaria district, along with a 2,000-year-old waterbody and evidence of a "modern society".
- it was found in a **rock-cut cave.** Usually, such rock art is found in natural caves or overhang.

Other Important rock-cut caves in India

- **Kanheri caves (Maharashtra)**: They belong to the **Hinayana** phase of **Buddhist architecture.**
- **Jogeshwari caves (Maharashtra):** They belong to the last stages of **Mahayana** Buddhism.
- **Montpezir or Mandapeswar caves (Maharashtra):** They are the only **Brahmanical** caves to be converted into a Christian shrine.
- **Karla caves (Maharashtra):** It belongs to the **Hinayana** period of the Buddhist architecture.
- **Bhaja caves (Maharashtra)**: It belongs to the **Hinayana** Buddhism sect in Maharashtra.
- **Ellora caves (Maharashtra)**: One of the largest rock-cut **Hindu temple cave** complexes in the world, featuring Hinduism in particular and few Buddhist and Jain monuments with Artwork dating from the 600–1000 CE period.
- **Ajanta caves (Maharashtra):** There are a total of 29 caves. All of these caves belong to the religion of **Buddhism**.
- **Elephanta caves (Maharashtra)**: Dedicated to the **Hindu god Shiva**, which have been designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site.
- **Udaygiri caves (Madhya Pradesh):** It contain iconography of **Vaishnavism** (Vishnu), Shaktism (Durga and Matrikas) and Shaivism (Shiva).

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