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ENVIRONMENT AND HEALTH

**Science
Reporter**



MK Yadav Sir

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WTO flags poor use of India's preferential scheme for LDCs



STATUS CHECK

Utilisation of India's preferential scheme by LDCs with covered imports higher than \$60 mn

Country	Utilisation rate (in %)	Preference margin (percentage points)
Bangladesh	0	17
Afghanistan	0	25
Guinea	8	15
Burkina Faso	8	15
Myanmar	18	21
Sudan	32	17
Togo	60	16
Zambia	63	9
Madagascar	70	21
Tanzania	78	14
Guinea-Bissau	81	18
Mozambique	87	12
Senegal	87	13
Benin	98	25

Source: WTO

85% of 11,000 products offered at zero tariff unutilised

ASIT RANJAN MISHRA
New Delhi, 21 June

About 85 per cent of about 11,000 products offered at zero tariff by India to least developed countries (LDCs) under the duty-free quota free (DFQF) scheme of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) remains unutilised, according to a report by the LDC Group at the multilateral trade body.

The decision to provide duty free quota free (DFQF) access for LDCs was first taken at the WTO Hong Kong Ministerial Meeting in 2005. The decision requires all developed and developing country members declaring themselves in a position to do so, to provide preferential market access for all products originating from all LDCs. India became the first developing country to extend this facility to LDCs in 2008, providing market access on 85 per cent of India's total tariff lines to better integrate LDCs into the global trading system and improve their trading opportunities.

The scheme was expanded in 2014 providing preferential market access on about 98.2 per cent of India's tariff lines to LDCs. India offers 11,506 preferential tariff lines to LDCs of which 10,991 are duty-free. Of the duty-free tariff lines, 1,129 are agricultural goods and the remaining 9,862 are non-agricultural goods.

According to WTO data for 2020 presented in the report, 85 per cent of the tariff lines show zero utilisation rate compared to 64 per cent by China and only 8 per cent demonstrate a utilisation rate of above 95 per cent against 17 per cent by China. "The remaining 7 per cent (99

out of 1,505 tariff lines) are distributed in between with a slight polarisation towards 0 and 95 per cent." "There is a significant variation between the beneficiary LDCs, and the two countries (Guinea and Bangladesh) showing the highest amount of eligible imports simultaneously have very low utilisation rates (8 per cent for Guinea and 0 per cent in the case of Bangladesh). Benin, on the other hand, reports a utilisation rate of 98 per cent, the highest of all beneficiary countries," the report said.

The report said as is the case for China, noteworthy amounts of LDC exports are entering under non-preferential (most favoured nation) tariff route into India even though they are covered by the Indian preference scheme.

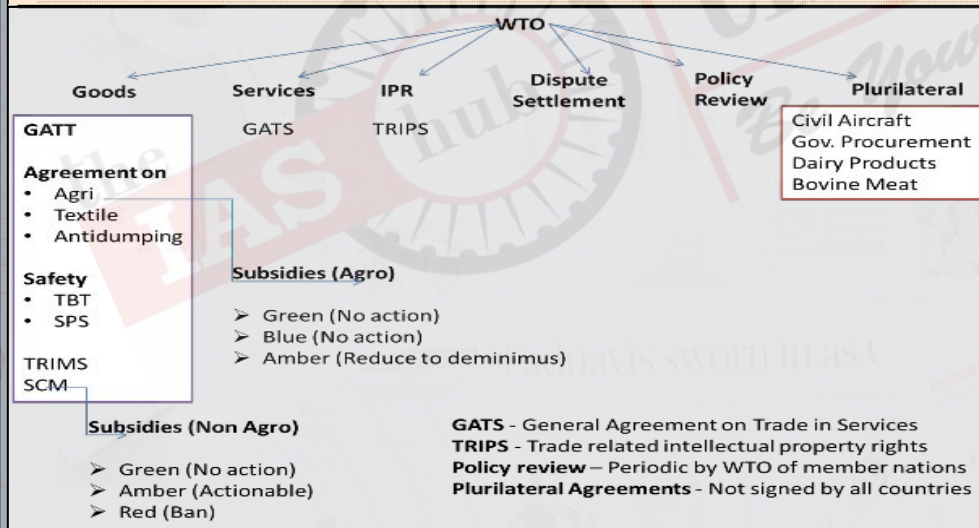
"The preference margins are important, which indicates major potential duty savings. In the case of fixed vegetables oil exported from Bangladesh to India, there is a preference margin as high as 77.5 percentage points, which would mean \$74 million duty savings if the preference scheme was used. Most likely, this is not due to lack of awareness from the exporters' side but rather existing barriers to make use of the preferences," the report stated.

"If the preferential treatment is granted, a potential duty saving of \$91 million could be possible. In case of Chad, exports of mineral fuels, oils and products, etc. from its chapter 27 to a value of \$48 million are entering India under MFN, and with a preference margin of 5 percentage points utilisation of the preferential treatment would implicate potential duty savings of \$2.4 million," it said. The report, however, contended that there may be data gaps.

Context: About 85 percent of about 11,000 products offered at zero tariff by India to least developed countries (LDCs) under the **duty free quota free (DFQF)** scheme of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) remains unutilised, according to a report by the LDC Group at the multilateral trade body.

Key Points

- The decision to provide **duty free quota free (DFQF) access for LDCs** was first taken at the WTO Hong Kong Ministerial Meeting in 2005.
- The decision requires all developed and developing country members declaring themselves in a position to do so, to **provide preferential market access** for all products originating from all LDCs.
- **India became the first developing country** to extend this facility to LDCs in 2008, providing market access on 85 per cent of India's total tariff lines to better integrate LDCs into the global trading system and improve their trading opportunities.
- The scheme was **expanded in 2014** providing preferential market access on about 98.2 per cent of India's tariff lines to LDCs.
- **India offers 11,506 preferential tariff lines** to LDCs of which 10,991 are duty free.
- Of the **duty free tariff lines**, 1,129 are agricultural goods and the remaining 9,862 are non agricultural goods.



Centre weighs financial aid for nascent floating solar projects

Rituraj Baruah
 rituraj.baruah@livemint.com
 NEW DELHI

The government plans to introduce a viability gap funding (VGF) scheme to support capital-intensive floating solar projects, two people familiar with the development said.

"The scheme would be designed to meet the gap of 25-30% in the overall cost that developers find difficult to spend on such projects. The sector would require some support to grow as it requires higher investments and is still in the nascent stage in the country," one of the people said, requesting anonymity.

The government aims to attract private investments in costly power generation technology to reduce the reliance on vast stretches of land to set up solar parks.

Queries mailed to the spokesperson for the ministry of new and renewable energy



India currently has less than 300MW of installed floating solar power capacity.

AP

remained unanswered.

Floating solar plants are environment-friendly and can help conserve water in drought-hit areas by reducing evaporation from water surfaces where they are set up, experts said. They also offer a solution to land acquisition issues, enabling the expansion of renewable energy capacity through projects on water bodies such as lakes and hydropower projects.

However, given the high cost involved in these projects, the tariff of power generated from these projects is also higher than that from terrestrial solar projects.

"The tariff of the power generated from floating solar projects bid out in the last year was ₹3.2-3.9 per unit, compared to ₹2.3-2.9 per unit of the power from land-based solar projects. There might be a consideration to scale up this segment by making the tariffs more competitive," said Vikram V., vice president and sector head of corporate ratings at Icra Ltd.

Amit Kumar, a partner at PwC, said although private investors have shown interest in these projects, it may be tough to find buyers for the power generated from floating solar projects due to the high tariffs.

India currently has less than 300 megawatts of installed floating solar power capacity,

TURN TO PAGE 13

Context: The government plans to introduce a **viability gap funding (VGF) scheme** to support capital-intensive **floating solar projects**.

- The scheme would be designed to **meet the gap of 25-30% in the overall cost** that developers find difficult to spend on such projects.

Floating Solar PV Project in India

- The largest floating solar power, **Ramagundam Floating Solar PV Project at Ramagundam, Telangana**, installation in India is now fully operating.
- It has a total capacity of **100 MW**.
- NTPC certified the project's last 20 MW of capacity to be **commercially operational**.
- The overall commercial operating capacity of solar panels output in the southern region **increased to 217 MW** with the completion of the Ramagundam 100-MW Solar PV Project.

Floating Solar Panels

- The term "floating solar" or "floating photovoltaics" (FPV), also known as "floatovoltaics," refers to **solar panels that are installed on a platform that floats on a waterbody**, typically a lake or a reservoir or, under the appropriate circumstances, the sea.
- The majority of the time, these structures are **anchored on calmer water bodies**, including ponds, lakes, or reservoirs.
- These systems **don't require land leveling or vegetation removal**, are comparatively quick to build, and operate quietly.

OTT players seek satellite bandwidth for better streaming

Aroon Deep
NEW DELHI

In a consultation about satellite spectrum pricing, OTT streaming players pitched for greater use of satellite bandwidth to reach viewers. "Hundreds of millions of Indians rely upon [the media industry] for entertainment, information, education, religious participation and so on," the Asia Video Industry Association (AVIA) said. "Reaching these consumers, now and in the future, requires satellite-based distribution. In this, India is like every other large country on the globe."

AVIA, which represents Netflix, Amazon, Disney+ Hotstar, and other Asian OTT players, was responding to a Telecom Regulatory Authority of India consultation paper. "There is no other country on the globe that actually auctions satellite frequency assignments," AVIA said, echoing the sentiment of other global satellite service operators.

Shared resource

"[U]nlike terrestrial communications, satellite spectrum is a completely

India currently only uses satellite broadband as 'backhaul' in places like Lakshadweep

shared resource among different satellite operator," AVIA said. "Satellite frequencies are today re-used many, many times at the same geographic location. This re-use is governed by ITU [International Telecommunication Union] international rules... By auctioning and granting exclusive rights to one user, all the current extensive re-use would be gone and the spectrum resources available to India would be greatly reduced compared with today," it added.

AVIA urged the government to encourage satellite broadband systems, which usually rely on a constellation of Internet-connected satellites to deliver Internet access to remote areas. India currently only uses satellite broadband as 'backhaul' in places like Lakshadweep, which is not yet connected terrestrially or with an undersea cable to the Indian mainland's networks.

Context: In a consultation about satellite spectrum pricing, OTT streaming players pitched for greater use of **satellite bandwidth** to reach viewers.

- They urged the government to **encourage satellite broadband systems**, which usually rely on a constellation of internet-connected satellites in the sky to deliver internet access to remote areas.
- **India currently only uses satellite broadband** as 'backhaul' in places like the Union Territory of Lakshadweep, which is not yet connected terrestrially or with an undersea cable to the Indian mainland's networks.

Satellite bandwidth

- It is a **measure of the capacity of a satellite communications system** to transmit data.
- It is typically **measured in bits per second (bps)** and is determined by the number of transponders on the satellite, the frequency of the transponders, and the amount of power used to transmit the signal.
- It is a **critical factor in determining the performance** of a satellite communications system.
- It **determines the amount of data** that can be transmitted at any given time, as well as the speed at which it can be transmitted.
- **Higher bandwidths allow for faster transmission** of data, which is important for applications such as streaming video and voice communications.
- It also **affects the cost** of satellite communications.
- Higher bandwidths require more transponders and more power, which increases the cost of the system.
- Additionally, **higher bandwidths require more spectrum**, which can be expensive to acquire.
- It is an important factor to consider when designing a satellite communications system.
- It is important to ensure that the system has **enough bandwidth to meet the needs of the application**, while also keeping costs in check.

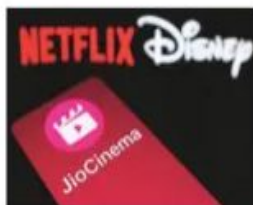
Streamers to challenge new tobacco rules

REUTERS

NEW DELHI, JUNE 2

STREAMING GIANTS Netflix, Amazon and Disney Friday privately discussed a possible legal challenge and other ways to stall India's new tobacco warning rules, amid fears they will need to edit millions of hours of existing web content, sources said.

The pushback is the latest headache for streaming giants in India, a top growth market. Companies often face legal cases and police complaints their content sometimes hurt religious sentiment, and many have self-



Netflix, Amazon, Disney and JioCinema Friday held a closed-door meeting.

censored content over the years.

The Health Ministry this week ordered streaming platforms to insert static health warnings during smoking

scenes within three months. Also, India wants at least 50 seconds of anti-tobacco disclaimers, including an audio-visual, at the start and in the middle of each program.

Executives of the three global streaming companies, and Viacom18 which runs JioCinema, held a closed-door meeting, where Netflix said the rules would hit customer experience and push production houses to block their content in India, according to two sources.

Executives in India also discussed ways of a possible legal challenge to assert that other ministries — IT and information

& broadcasting — have powers over streaming giants, and not the health ministry, said one source.

The firms and health ministry did not respond to a request for comment. Already, all smoking and alcohol drinking scenes in movies in India's cinemas and on TV, under the law, require health warnings, but so far there were no regulations for the streaming giants.

During the Friday meeting, Amazon and other companies made the point there was no way films can be edited in three months, said the second source.

Context: Streaming giants Netflix, Amazon and Disney privately discussed a possible legal challenge and other ways to stall India's new tobacco warning rules, amid fears they will need to edit millions of hours of existing web content.

- The Union Health Ministry made it **mandatory for OTT platforms** to display tobacco-related health warnings at the beginning and in the middle of streamed content.
- Health spots and tobacco-related warnings are already **mandatory for TV and films**.

India's new tobacco warning rules

- For content that **displays tobacco products or their use**, OTT platforms will be required to attach anti-tobacco health spots, lasting a minimum of thirty seconds each at the beginning and middle of the programme, and a static message when the product or its use is shown, as per the news guidelines.
- Additionally, an **audio-visual disclaimer** on the ill-effects of tobacco use, lasting a minimum of twenty seconds each, must be shown at the beginning and middle of the programme.
- The online content is further **prohibited from including the brands of cigarettes** or other tobacco products.
- The display of tobacco products or their use in **promotional materials is also strictly prohibited**.
- If a programme or platform fails to comply with the new guidelines, an **inter-ministerial committee** with representatives from the Health Ministry, the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, and the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, will be authorised to take action against violators.



Publishers of online curated content displaying tobacco products or their use shall display anti-tobacco health warnings starting September 2023

50 killed, 550 injured in 3-train pile-up in Odisha

Multiple Agencies Join Search For Bodies, Survivors

Riyan Ramanath &
Hemanta Pradhan | TNN

Bhubaneswar: At least 50 passengers were killed and more than 550 injured Friday evening in a triple train pile-up triggered by the Bengaluru-Howrah Superfast Express derailing at Bahanaga Bazar in Odisha's Balasore district and causing back-to-back collisions on adjacent tracks — first with the Shalimar-Chennai Central Coromandel Express and then with a stationary goods train.

The casualty count kept mounting as the night wore on, with multiple agencies joining the search for survivors and bodies trapped in the mangled coaches. "Only after we scour



Locals assisted emergency services personnel in rescue ops

► M Visveswaraya Terminal-Howrah Superfast Express derailed at Bahanaga Bazar Station at 7pm

► Coromandel Express coming from opp direction on parallel track rams into derailed coaches

► 12 Coromandel coaches derail, some of which hit stationary goods train on 3rd track

the entire debris, which could take a while, will we know the final toll. As of now, it looks like the number will go up," a railway official said.

"I was asleep in my berth when a big explosion happened, followed by people falling

on me. I somehow came out of the compartment. I saw many people trapped under a pile of coaches and screaming," said Swapan Kumar, a survivor from the Coromandel Express.

► Thrown out of train, P 28

Context: At least 50 passengers were killed and more than 550 injured in a triple train pileup triggered by the Bengaluru-Howrah Superfast Express derailing at Bahanaga Bazar in Odisha Balasore district.

Legal Provisions in Railway Accident

- In 2018, the Supreme Court of India rules in the case of **Union of India vs Rina Devi** that death or injury while boarding or disembarking a train constitutes an "untoward incident."
 - Untoward incident means something happens that is **unexpected and causes difficulties**.
- **Section 124A of the Railways Act of 1989** defines an "unwanted incident."
 - So, according to Section 124A of The Railways Act, if an untoward incident occurs while the railways are in operation, the railway administration must **compensate the victim or the victim's dependent**, regardless of whether or not the railway administration was negligent or made a mistake.
- **The Railways Act of 1989 provides compensation** to the following individuals:
 - People involved in **any type of railway accident**, including rail derailment, low-level crossing (only those boarding the train), and rail-car collision.
 - Any person involved in a subsequent railway accident that **causes injury or death to that person**.
 - Anyone who has been **exposed to hazardous chemicals** or involved in sabotage, terrorism, explosion, or fire.
- **Certain people are not entitled to compensation** under Section 124A of The Railways Act, and they are as follows:
 - If a person makes a **deliberate attempt to kill themselves**, this gets referred to as suicidal ideation.
 - **Any self-inflicted injury**.
 - Injuries caused by a **person's illegal act**
 - An action done by someone who is **intoxicated or insane**

RBI Issues Draft Cybersecurity Norms for PSOs

Our Bureau

Mumbai: The Reserve Bank of India on Friday released draft Master Directions on Cyber Resilience and Digital Payment Security Controls for payment system operators (PSOs) that cover governance mechanism for identification, assessment, monitoring and management of cybersecurity risks.

The central bank has invited comments from stakeholders before June 30.



As per the draft circular, the boards of payment system operators will be responsible for ensuring adequate oversight over information security risks, including cyber risk and cyber resilience.

However, the primary oversight can be delegated to a sub-committee of the board that will have to meet at least once every quarter.

"The PSO shall formulate a board-approved Information Security (IS) policy to manage potential information security risks covering all applications and products concerning payment systems as well as management of risks that have materialised," the draft note said.

DRAFT CYBERSECURITY NORMS (Syllabus: GS Paper 3 - Internal Security)

Context: The Reserve Bank of India released **draft Master Directions on Cyber Resilience and Digital Payment Security Controls** for payment system operators (PSOs) that cover governance mechanism for identification, assessment, monitoring and management of cybersecurity risks.

- A **payment system operator** means a legal entity responsible for operating a payment system. The PSO provides services by operating on certain models.
- They largely **outsource their payment and settlement-related activities** to various other entities. Examples of PSOs include Google Pay, Amazon Pay, NPCI, Paytm etc.

Key Points

- The draft directions issued by the regulator **covers robust governance mechanisms** for identification, assessment, monitoring, and management of cyber security risks.
- The directions will **also cover baseline security measures** for ensuring system resiliency as well as safe and secure digital payment transactions.
- The **existing instructions on security and risk mitigation measures** for payments done using cards, Prepaid Payment Instruments (PPIs) and mobile banking continue to be applicable as hitherto.
- According to the draft norms, the **PSO will define appropriate key risk indicators (KRIs)** to identify potential risk events and key performance indicators (KPIs) to assess the effectiveness of security controls.
- The board of the PSOs has been made **responsible for ensuring adequate oversight** over information security risk, though the primary oversight can be delegated to a sub-committee of the board, which should meet once in a quarter.
- The PSO should **undertake a cyber-risk assessment exercise** relating to launch of new product, services, technologies or undertaking major changes to infrastructure or processes of existing product, services.
- Action points emanating from such assessment will be **implemented under the oversight of the CISO** or equivalent executive.
- Existing instructions concerning security and risk mitigation for **card payments, prepaid payment instruments (PPIs) and mobile banking** will remain in effect.
- The PSO has been asked to **formulate a board approved Information Security (IS) policy** to manage potential information security risks covering all applications and products concerning payment systems as well as management of risks that have materialised. The policy should be reviewed annually.
- The draft norms mandated that the **PSO should develop a business continuity plan (BCP)** based on different cyber threat scenarios, including extreme but plausible events to which it may be exposed.
- The BCP **should be reviewed at least once a year** and include a comprehensive cyber incident response, resumption and recovery plan, to manage cyber security events or incidents.

PM lauds Asia's first demonstration for Performance-Based Navigation for helicopters

Context: The Prime Minister has lauded **Asia's first demonstration for Performance-Based Navigation** for helicopters for a flight from Juhu to Pune using GAGAN satellite technology.

Performance-based navigation (PBN)

- The PBN concept specifies that aircraft Area navigation(R-NAV) system performance requirements be defined in terms of **accuracy, integrity, availability, continuity and functionality** required for the proposed operations in the context of a particular airspace concept, when supported by the appropriate navigation infrastructure.
- In that context, the PBN concept represents a **shift from sensor-based to performance-based navigation**.
- R-NAV **based on performance requirements** for aircraft operating along an ATS route, on an instrument approach procedure or in a designated airspace.

GAGAN (GPS Aided GEO Augmented Navigation)

- It is a **Space Based Augmentation System (SBAS)** jointly developed by **ISRO (Indian Space Research Organisation)** and **Airports Authority of India (AAI)**.
- The GAGAN is designed to **provide the additional accuracy, availability, and integrity** necessary to enable users to rely on GPS for all phases of flight, from en route through approach for all qualified airports within the GAGAN service volume.
- GAGAN will also **provide the capability for increased accuracy** in position reporting, allowing for more uniform and high-quality Air Traffic Management (ATM).
- In addition, GAGAN will **provide benefits beyond aviation** to all modes of transportation, including maritime, highways, and railroads.
- GAGAN was **certified by DGCA (Directorate General of Civil Aviation) for Approach** with Vertical Guidance (APV 1) and en-route (RNP 0.1) operations.
- There are **only four Space-Based augmentation systems** available in the world namely India (GAGAN), US (WAAS) Europe (EGNOS) and Japan (MSAS).

FRAMEWORK ON SPACE RESOURCE

(Syllabus: GS Paper 3 - Sci & Tech)

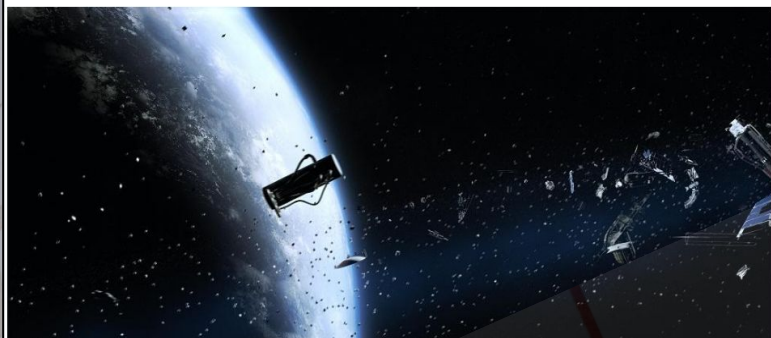
UN recommends new treaty to ensure peace & security in outer space

Currently, there is no agreed international framework on space resource exploration, exploitation & utilisation



NEXT NEWS >

By Rohini Krishnamurthy
Published: Friday 02, June 2023



Outer Space Treaty

October 10, 1967

Enacted to regulate the exploration and use of outer space and created the field of international space law.

The treaty declared that outer space and all celestial bodies were the common heritage of mankind and could not be claimed by any one nation.



Context: The United Nations (UN) has recommended a **new treaty for ensuring peace and security** as well as preventing an arms race in outer space.

- Minerals on the Moon, asteroids and planets can be attractive for countries. Moon, for example, has rich **deposits of helium-3**, which is rare on Earth.
- Similarly, **asteroids contain abundant deposits** of valuable metals, including platinum, nickel and cobalt.
- Some governments are in **favour of the exploitation of space resources**, including by the private sector.

Key Points

- Currently, there is **no agreed international framework** on space resource exploration, exploitation and utilisation, or a mechanism to support how it is implemented.
- Currently, **space traffic is coordinated by national and regional entities**.
 - Each has its own standards, best practices, definitions, languages and modes of interoperability. A lack of coordination among the entities could impact countries with less space capacity.

Existing treaties

- In 1959, the **United Nations established the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space** to review and enable international cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space.
- In 1963, **countries agreed to prohibit testing nuclear weapons in outer space**; in 1977, the **prohibition of altering the space environment** as a weapon was agreed upon.
- More recently, member states have **set up a series of guidelines, frameworks and recommendations** on issues such as mitigation of space debris, nuclear power source safety, the long-term sustainability of outer space activities and transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space activities.

WESTERN DISTURBANCES

(Syllabus: GS Paper 1 - Geography)

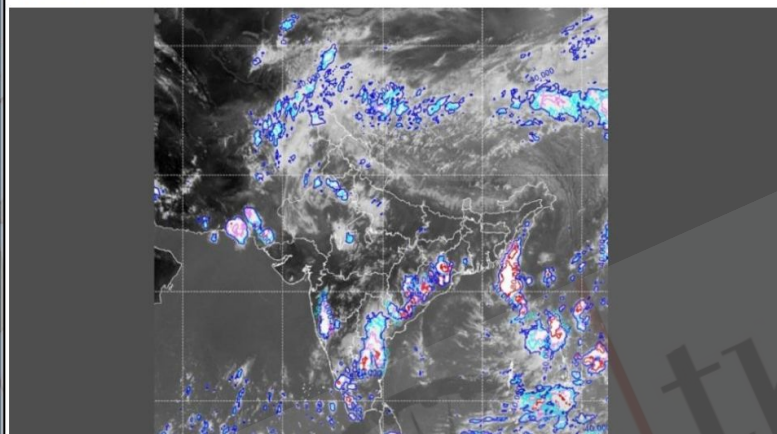
Unusual western disturbances in May could be indicative of changing climate

Heavy rain and hailstorms in May were due to six WDs, may interact with monsoon weather systems



NEXT NEWS >

By Akshitt Sangomla
Published: Friday 02 June 2023



Context: India has witnessed an unusually high number of **western disturbances (WDs)** in the last three months.

Key Points

- The trend of **decreasing activity of WDs** during winter months and their increasing activity in the summer months is a possible result of human-induced climate change.
 - It could **indicate changing characteristics of the typical weather conditions** during these seasons.
- The **negative impact of increasing WDs** during summer could be their possible interaction with monsoon weather systems, such as low-pressure areas and depressions in the Bay of Bengal and the Arabian Sea.
 - These systems **cause rainfall in southern and central India** during the monsoon.
- The WDs could **also possibly interact with the monsoon trough** - a low-pressure region that extends from northwest India to northeast India during the monsoon months.
- The continuous activity of WDs over India in the spring and summer months has meant **ample rainfall in many regions**.

Western Disturbances (WDs)

- WDs are **areas of low-pressure** that bring sudden showers, snow, and fog in northwest India.
- It **originate in the Mediterranean or Caspian Sea** and travel eastward towards India.
- It **bring moisture from the Mediterranean Sea and/or the Atlantic Ocean** and can bring winter and pre-monsoon rainfall.
- They are **important for the development of the Rabi crop** in the Northern subcontinent.
- The arrival of WDs is typically **associated with a drop in temperature**, particularly in northern and western parts of the country.
- Untimely rains and winds in India can have a **negative impact on wheat crops**, especially if they occur during the ripening and harvesting stage.

PM congratulates Indian Junior Men's Hockey Team for their victory at Men's Junior Asia Cup

Context: The Prime Minister has congratulated the Indian Junior Men's Hockey Team for their **victory at the Men's Junior Asia Cup**.

Men's Hockey Junior Asia Cup

- The Indian Junior Men's Hockey Team **defeated Pakistan** in Final match of the Men's Junior Asia Cup 2023 in Salalah, Oman.
- With this victory, India has created a new record of **winning the maximum titles** at the Men's Junior Asia Cup.
- The team had **previously won the title in 2004, 2008 and 2015** while Pakistan has won the tournament in 1988, 1992, 1996.
- The 2023 Men's Hockey Junior Asia Cup is the **10th edition** of the Men's Hockey Junior Asia Cup.
- It is a men's international under-21 field hockey tournament **organized by the Asian Hockey Federation**.
- The tournament has been held since 1988 and serves as a **qualification tournament for the Men's FIH Hockey Junior World Cup**.



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