

Attorney General (A-G)

❖ Context

- Recently, **Attorney General (A-G)** K.K. Venugopal has been **re-appointed** as the country's top law officer for a period of three months.

❖ Key Highlights

- In July 2017, Mr. Venugopal, 90, was appointed by the President of India to succeed **Mukul Rohatgi** as the A-G.
- He was an **eminent advocate** of the Supreme Court.
- He served as the **Additional Solicitor General** of India between 1979 and 1980.
- Mr. Venugopal was **conferred the Padma Bhushan in 2002 and Padma Vibhushan in 2015.**

❖ Attorney General (A-G)

- **About:** The Attorney General of India is the **highest law officer of the country.**
 - He is the **chief legal advisor** to the government of India.
- **Constitutional Provision:**
 - **Article 76** of the Constitution has provided for the office of the Attorney General for India.
- **Appointment:**
 - He is **appointed by the President** of India on the advice of the Union Cabinet of ministers.
 - The person appointed **must be a citizen of India.**
 - He must be **qualified to be a Supreme Court judge:**
 - He must either be a judge of a High Court for five years or an advocate in a High Court for 10 years or an eminent jurist in the President's opinion.

• Term and Removal:

- The term of office of the AG is **not fixed by the Constitution.**
- The Constitution **does not contain the procedure and grounds for his/her removal.**
- Thus, he/she **holds office during the pleasure of the president.**
- He/she may also quit his office by submitting his **resignation to the president.**

• Rights:

- The AG has the **right of audience** in all courts in the **territory of India.**
- He has the **right to speak and to take part** in the proceedings of **both the Houses of Parliament** or their joint sitting and any **committee** of the Parliament.
- He **enjoys all the privileges and immunities** that are **available to a member of parliament.**

• Duties: To advise the government on legal matters that are referred to him by the president.

- He is bound to perform any other functions conferred upon him by the constitution.
- Among the duties conferred upon him by the president are:
 - To **appear on behalf of the central government** Supreme Court
 - To **represent the central government** in any reference made to the Supreme Court under **article 143 by the president.**
 - To **appear in any High Court** for a case where the Government of India is concerned.

India Forum for Nature-Based Solutions

❖ Context

- Recently, **National Institute of Urban Affairs' (NIUA)** Climate Centre for Cities (NIUA C-Cube), **World Resources Institute India (WRI India)** and their partners have launched India Forum for Nature-Based Solutions.



❖ Key Highlights

- It is **India's first national coalition platform** for urban nature-based solutions (NbS).
- It has been **launched under Cities4Forest initiative.**
- Forum **aims** to create a **collective of NbS entrepreneurs, government entities and like-minded organisations**, to help scale urban nature-based solutions by-
 - **Defining a shared language** and by communicating benefits that inform actions at the local level including scaling up of existing NbS interventions.
 - **Driving investment and strengthening delivery mechanisms** through multi-stakeholder coordination.

- **Mainstreaming urban ecosystem-based services and nature-based solutions in India** through informing policy, plans and project interventions

• Cities4Forests Initiative:

- It is a **voluntary grouping** of more than **60 cities** from around the world involving mayors' offices and other city agencies such as public water utilities and offices of sustainability.
- It **aims at supporting cities around the world** to recognize their interdependence with the world's forests, and use their own political, economic, and cultural power to ensure forest health and vitality.
- **Three Indian cities** under this initiative are- **Mumbai, Hyderabad and Kochi.**

Face to Face Centres



‘Udyami Bharat’ Programme

❖ Context

- Recently, The prime minister of India launched several schemes and programmes at **Udyami Bharat Programme** in New Delhi.

❖ Key Highlights

- He launched key initiatives like:
 - ‘Raising and Accelerating MSME Performance (RAMP) scheme,
 - Capacity Building of First-Time MSME Exporters (CBFTE) scheme.
 - **New features** of the Prime Minister’s Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP).
- **Significance of MSME Sector:**
 - The MSME sector **contributes around 30% of India’s GDP**, over 48% exports, 45% of manufacturing output and creates 11.1 crore jobs through 6.34 crore enterprises.

❖ About the Initiatives

- **Raising and Accelerating MSME Performance (RAMP) scheme.**
 - **Outlay-** Rs 6000 crore.
 - **Aims:** To **scale up the implementation capacity** and coverage of MSMEs in the States, with **impact enhancement of existing MSME schemes.**
 - It will **complement the Aatmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan** by fostering innovation, encouraging ideation, incubating new business and entrepreneurship.

- **Capacity Building of First-Time MSME Exporters (CBFTE) Scheme.**

- **Aim:** To encourage MSMEs to offer **products and services of international standards** for the global market.

- This will enhance the participation of Indian MSMEs in the global value chain and help them realize their export potential.

- **New features of the Prime Minister’s Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP).**

- **New Features:**

- It includes an **increase in the maximum project cost** to Rs 50 lakhs (from Rs 25 lakhs) for the manufacturing sector and Rs 20 lakhs (from Rs 10 lakhs) in the service sector.
- **Inclusion of applicants from Aspirational districts & Transgenders** in the Special Category applicants for availing higher subsidies.
- Handholding support is being provided to applicants/entrepreneurs through the engagement of banking, technical & marketing experts.

Small Savings Instruments

❖ Context

- The government has released a notification keeping the interest rates on the instruments unchanged. The rates have not been revised since Q1 of FY: 21.

❖ About the Instruments

- Small Savings Schemes are a **set of savings instruments managed by the central government** with an aim to encourage citizens to save regularly irrespective of their age.
- They are **popular** as they not only provide **returns that are generally higher than bank fixed deposits** but also come with a sovereign guarantee and tax benefits.
- **Since 2016, the Finance Ministry has been reviewing the interest rates** on small savings schemes on a **quarterly basis.**
- All deposits received under various small savings schemes are pooled in the **National Small Savings Fund.** The money in the fund is used by the central government to finance its **fiscal deficit.**
- The schemes can be grouped under three heads:
 - **Post office deposits** - savings deposit, recurring deposit and time deposits with 1, 2, 3 and 5 year maturities and the monthly income account.
 - **Savings certificates** - National Savings Certificate and the Kisan Vikas Patra.
 - **Social security schemes** - Public Provident Fund, Sukanya Samriddhi Account and Senior Citizens Savings Scheme.
- **The interest rates are linked to yields on benchmark government bonds.**

❖ Concern

- On current interest rates, accounting for current inflation, all saving scheme instruments except PPF and Sukanya Samriddhi Yojana, are offering **negative real returns.**
- The retail inflation had hit 7.97% in April and 7.04% in May. While the 10-year benchmark bond yield has risen to 7.45%, the government has kept the rate unchanged.
- If rates are not increased, **banks would not also be forced to raise the interest rates on deposits** as the banking system has been sustaining a liquidity surplus since June 2019 due to higher growth in higher deposits versus credit offtake.

❖ What does Negative Real Rates Mean?

- Negative returns **discourage savings and boost consumption.**
- This in turn may fuel more inflation and lead to even more negative real rates.

Face to Face Centres

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Fugitive Economic Offender

❖ Context

- The Enforcement Directorate has sought permission from a special court in Bengaluru to declare US-based founder and CEO of Devas Multimedia Private Ltd., a fugitive economic offender (FEO).

❖ Who is FEO

- Defined by the **Fugitive Economic Offenders (FEO) Act, 2018**.
- Any individual against whom a warrant for arrest has been issued by any court in India, who:
 - **Has left India so as to avoid criminal prosecution**; or
 - Being abroad, **refuses to return to India to face criminal prosecution**.
 - The total value involved in the **offence is more than Rs. 100 crores**.
- The offences under different acts, as below, have been enlisted in the schedule of the Act.
 - Indian Penal Code, 1860.
 - Negotiable Instruments Act, 1881.
 - Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934.
 - Central Excise Act, 1944.
 - Customs Act, 1962.
 - Prohibition of Benami Property Transactions Act, 1988.
 - Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988.
 - Securities and Exchange Board of India Act, 1992.
 - Prevention of Money-laundering Act, 2002
 - Limited Liability Partnership Act, 2008.
 - Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act, 2010.
 - Companies Act, 2013.
 - Black Money (Undisclosed Foreign Income and Assets) and Imposition of Tax Act, 2015.
 - Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016.
 - Central Goods and Services Tax Act, 2017.

❖ Powers of ED

- The ED has same powers as vested in a civil court under Code of Civil Procedure 1908:
 - Discovery & inspection.
 - Enforcing attendance.
 - Compelling production of records.
 - Receiving evidence on affidavits.
 - Issuing commissions for examinations of witness and documents.

❖ Procedure for Declaration of an FEO

- The act mandates designation of a court of session as **special court** under Prevention of Money Laundering Act 2002.
- An application is filed before the court to declare a person an FEO.
- The special court may then issue notice to the individual to appear at a specified place, and drop the proceedings if the individual complies.
- If, however, the special court is satisfied that an individual is an FEO, it may record so in an order, along with reasons.

❖ Consequence

- The court can order the **confiscation of the properties of the accused individual in India or abroad**.
- The central government can appoint an **administrator of the properties** which are not to be disposed of for a period of 90 days.

News in Between the Lines

MultiAgency Maritime Security Group



❖ Context

- The National Security Advisor (NSA) recently inaugurated the **first meeting of the MultiAgency Maritime Security Group (MAMSG)** to discuss important policy matters impacting maritime security.

❖ About the Group

- The meeting was **chaired by the National Maritime Security Coordinator, Vice Admiral G Ashok Kumar (Retd)**, who assumed charge as the **country's first NMSC** on 16 Feb 22.
- The group has **members** from key Central Ministries, Agencies and Security Forces dealing with maritime affairs and State Maritime Security Coordinators representing all 13 coastal States and UTs.
- The **Cabinet had approved, in Nov-2021**, the creation of the post of NMSC, **under the NSA**, at the National Security Council Secretariat.
- 2001 Group of Ministers (GOM) Report** on 'Reforming the National Security System' had recommended its creation.
- The MAMSG is envisaged to provide a standing and effective mechanism to ensure coordination of all aspects of maritime security including coastal and offshore security, as well as fill the institutional, policy, technological and operational gaps in meeting present and future security challenges.
- The group will also address maritime contingencies requiring an urgent and coordinated response.

Face to Face Centres

Parivar Cards



❖ Context

- The UP chief minister has announced that the UP government would soon issue Parivar Cards to families.

❖ Key Highlights

- The government would **map each family** in the state to **connect one member of each household with job or self-employment**.
- The parivar cards would facilitate employment in such families.

Autonomous Flying Wing Technology Demonstrator



❖ Context

- **Maiden flight** of the Autonomous Flying Wing Technology Demonstrator was carried out successfully by the **Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO)** from the Aeronautical Test Range, Chitradurga, Karnataka.

❖ Key Highlights

- The **Unmanned Aerial Vehicle** operated in a **fully autonomous mode**.
- It is designed & developed by **Aeronautical Development Establishment (ADE), Bengaluru**.
- It is powered by a **small turbofan engine**. The airframe, undercarriage and entire flight control and avionics systems used for the aircraft were **developed indigenously**.

6th Caspian Summit



❖ Context

- Recently, the **sixth summit** of the heads of the **Caspian states** took place in the **capital of Turkmenistan**.
- The presidents of **Russia, Iran, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan met** in Turkmenistan's capital, Ashgabat, for a summit to discuss regional cooperation and international issues.

❖ About Caspian

- The Caspian Sea is the **world's largest water body** that is enclosed or bordered by land on all sides.
- This massive lake is **located between Asia and Europe**.
- **Five countries in Asia and Europe** share the Caspian Sea's coastline.
- It is bordered to the north and east by **Kazakhstan** and from north to the west by **Russia**. **Azerbaijan** borders the sea to the southwest, while **Iran** is in the south. **Turkmenistan** lies along the southern portion of the eastern coast.
- **The major rivers** - the **Volga** (Europe's longest river), **Ural**, and **Terek** - empty into the northern Caspian Sea, along with the **Sulak, Samur, Kura**, and a number of smaller rivers.

GOAL 2.0



❖ Context

- Recently, **Meta** (formerly Facebook) has extended its collaboration to launch the second section of **Going On-line As Leaders (GOAL)** programme with the **Ministry of Tribal Affairs** to provide **digital skill training** for 10 lakh **tribal youth and women in India**.

❖ Key Highlights

- It is an initiative of **Facebook** in partnership with **Digital Empowerment Foundation (India)**.
- In the GOAL 2.0, a **platform** will be created for **self-help groups and families** associated with **Tribal Co-operative Marketing Federation of India (TRIFED)** to take their products global.
- The programme will also include '**Facebook Live**' sessions in **nine languages** by master trainers on topics like **anti-scaming education, staying safe online, how to combat misinformation and being a good digital citizen**.
- India's massive digital transformation can be completed when even the most vulnerable communities of our society are digitally empowered.
- **Tribal population** constitutes about **8.6 per cent** of the total population in India.

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