Thiruvalluvar

Context: *The BJP referencing Thiruvalluvar in its manifesto aims to connect with Tamil culture and voters in Tamil Nadu.*

➢ **Sangam Era:**

- The Pandian kingdom is legendary for hosting all three Sangam institutions: the initial assembly, followed by the second and third academies.
- The Sangam literature we have today dates from the third and post-Sangam periods.
- Sangam literature was preserved as palm leaf manuscripts in Tamil academic houses and Shaiva Aatheenams near Kumbakonam before being lost by the second millennium CE.

➢ **Life of Thiruvalluvar:**

- Thiruvalluvar, also known as Valluvar, was not only a philosopher and poet but also an accomplished administrator.
- His residence is believed to have been in Mylapore, a neighborhood in modern-day Chennai, based on traditional narratives and linguistic analyses of his texts.
- Thiruvalluvar's exact birth and death dates remain uncertain, with varying estimates placing him anywhere from the 4th century BCE to the early 6th century CE.
- His most famous work, Tirukkural, is not only a literary masterpiece but also a profound philosophical and ethical guide for life.
- Thiruvalluvar's teachings emphasize the importance of ethics, self-discipline, honesty, and equality, making them relevant across generations and cultures.
- Despite the lack of concrete biographical information, Thiruvalluvar's influence on Tamil literature, culture, and society remains profound, with his legacy enduring through the ages.

➢ **Thirukkural:**

- Tirukkural, Thiruvalluvar's primary work, consists of 1330 couplets divided into 133 sections.
- It covers moral, political, economic, and pleasure-related topics, emphasizing virtues like integrity, kindness, duty, and nonviolence.
- Tirukkural has been translated into various languages, including Latin, and is celebrated for its timeless insights into human nature and ethical living.

➢ **Legacy of Thiruvalluvar:**

- Thiruvalluvar is highly revered in Tamil culture, with his writings known by various names reflecting their sacredness and importance.
- Many communities in South India consider Thiruvalluvar a god and saint, with temples dedicated to him, notably in Mylapore and Tiruchuli.
- Thiruvalluvar Day, celebrated in January as part of Pongal festivities, honors his contributions to literature and philosophy.

Windfall Tax

Context: *The Indian government raised the windfall tax on petroleum crude to 9,600 rupees ($114.99) per metric ton, effective April 16th, up from 6,800 rupees.*

- The tax, revised biweekly, remains at zero for diesel and aviation turbine fuel.
- On April 4th, the government hiked the windfall tax on petroleum crude from 4,900 rupees to 6,800 rupees per metric ton.
- India introduced the tax in July 2022 to regulate private refiners, preventing them from prioritizing overseas sales of gasoline, diesel, and aviation fuel over domestic sales to capitalize on favourable refining margins.

➢ **About Windfall Taxes:**

- Windfall taxes target profits resulting from external, unforeseen events, such as energy price rises due to geopolitical conflicts.
- These profits are considered unearned and unanticipated, not stemming from the company's active efforts.
- Governments impose one-off taxes retrospectively on such profits, aiming to redistribute unexpected gains and provide additional revenue streams.
- Windfalls are defined as unearned, unanticipated income gains without additional effort or expense by the company.
- They are typically levied as a supplementary tax over and above normal rates to capture profits from extraordinary events, like volatile oil markets.

➢ **Rationale for Windfall Taxes:**

- Governments introduce windfall taxes for various reasons, including redistributing gains from high prices, funding social welfare programs, and supplementing government revenue.
- Oil, gas, and coal prices surged due to factors like pandemic recovery and supply disruptions from conflicts like the Russia-Ukraine war, leading to record profits for energy companies.
- Calls for windfall taxes are supported by organizations like the IMF, aiming to mitigate the impact of excessive profits on vulnerable populations.

➢ **Issues with Imposing Windfall Taxes:**

- Windfall taxes create market uncertainty, as they are imposed retrospectively and influenced by unexpected events.

- They are often viewed as populist measures and may deter future investment due to concerns about potential taxes.
- Determining true windfall profits and deciding which companies to tax raises challenges, as it's unclear what level of profit is considered excessive and who should be taxed.
- Windfall taxes may reduce future investment as investors factor in the likelihood of potential taxes when making investment decisions.

Forecast of Rainfall during Southwest Monsoon Season, 2024

Context: *MoES Secretary informed the media today that the nation is expected to experience above-normal rainfall throughout the southwest monsoon period from June to September 2024.*

➢ **Summary of Southwest Monsoon Season Rainfall Forecast:**

- The forecast was presented at a press conference held at the National Media Centre in New Delhi.
- Predictions indicate above-normal rainfall for the southwest monsoon season from June to September 2024, with 106% of the Long Period Average (LPA) and a model error of ± 5%.
- The LPA for the season's rainfall over the entire country is 87 cm, based on data from 1971 to 2020.

➢ **Forecast Factors:**

- The forecast is based on both dynamical and statistical models.
- Above-normal rainfall is expected for most parts of the country, except for some areas in Northwest, East, and Northeast India, where below-normal rainfall is likely.
- Favourable conditions such as La Niña, positive Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD), and below-normal snow cover over the northern hemisphere contribute to the forecast.

➢ **El Niño and IOD Conditions:**

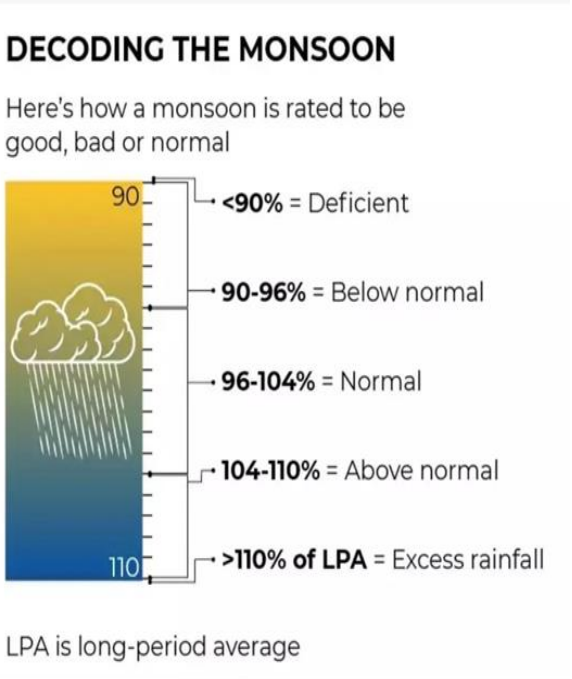
- Moderate El Niño conditions currently prevail over the equatorial Pacific region.
- Climate model forecasts indicate a transition to neutral conditions by the beginning of the monsoon season, with La Niña conditions expected during the second half.
- Neutral Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD) conditions are currently prevailing, with forecasts suggesting the development of positive IOD conditions during the monsoon season.

➢ **Snow Cover Extent:**

- Snow cover extent over the northern hemisphere during January to March 2024 was below normal, indicating above-normal rainfall for the monsoon season.
- Winter and spring snow cover over the Northern Hemisphere and Eurasia typically inversely correlate with subsequent monsoon season rainfall.

➢ **Forecast Issuance:**

- Updated forecasts for monsoon season rainfall will be issued in the last week of May 2024.
- The Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) employs both dynamical and statistical forecasting systems for issuing operational long-range forecasts (LRF) for the southwest monsoon season.
- Monthly and seasonal forecasts are issued, with the strategy revised in 2021 to incorporate a multi-model ensemble (MME) forecasting system based on coupled global climate models (CGCMs) for improved accuracy.



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NEWS IN BETWEEN THE LINES

Exercise DUSTLIK

The Indian Army contingent departed recently took part in the fifth edition of India-Uzbekistan joint military exercise DUSTLIK at Termez in Uzbekistan and it will be till 28th April 2024.

About Exercise DUSTLIK:

- Exercise DUSTLIK is an **annual joint military exercise between India and Uzbekistan.**
- The Indian contingent comprises **60 personnel,** while **Uzbekistan side will have 100 personnel** participating.
- It **aims to foster military cooperation between India and Uzbekistan** and enhance combined capabilities for **executing joint operations**, particularly in mountainous and semi-urban terrain.
- Key areas of focus during the exercise include **high physical fitness**, **joint planning**, **tactical drills** and basics of special arms skills.
- It facilitates the **sharing of best practices** and enhances interoperability between the armed forces of India and Uzbekistan for future joint operations.
- The exercise alternates between India and Uzbekistan, with the previous edition held in **Pithoragarh, Uttarakhand**, India, in February last year.

National Highways Authority of India

Recently, the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) has organised a daylong National Workshop on Environment and Forest Clearance including Eco-friendly Mitigation Measures in New Delhi.

About the National Highways Authority of India:

- The National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) is a **government agency that manages India's national highways**.
- Its goal is to oversee the **development and maintenance of a safe, efficient and high-quality** highway network across India.
- It was constituted under National Highways Authority of India Act, **1988** and it became an autonomous agency in **1995**.
- It is under the administrative control of the **Ministry of Road Transport and Highways.**
- It consists of a **full-time Chairman** and up to **five full-time Members**, along with **four part-time Members** appointed by the Central Government, including key officials such as the Secretary (RT&H), Secretary (Expenditure), Secretary (Planning), and DG (RD) & SS.

Forest Rights Act

Recently, it has been recognized that rights secured under the Forest Rights Act (FRA) surpass mere "enjoyment rights," highlighting the misinterpretation of forest title deeds as a barrier to the entitlements of title holders.

About the Forest Rights Act:

- The Forest Rights Act (FRA) of **2006 is a landmark legislation** that **recognizes the rights of traditional forest-dwelling communities over forest land and resources.**
- Its primary aim is to recognize and secure the individual and community **rights of tribals** and forest dwellers over forest lands.
- Titles are issued to individuals for habitation and self-cultivation and to **Gram Sabhas for community rights** and community resource rights.
- Rights recognized under FRA are heritable but not **alienable** or **transferable**, ensuring their intergenerational continuity within communities.
- DLC plays a crucial role in the implementation of FRA, finalizing the approval of forest rights records and issuing titles to rightful claimants.
- State governments are mandated to ensure livelihood opportunities on recognized forest lands by providing **post-claim support** for land development and productivity enhancement.
- It intersects with other legislations, such as the **Right to Fair Compensation Act, 2013,** which recognizes forest land title holders as "land owners" eligible for compensation.

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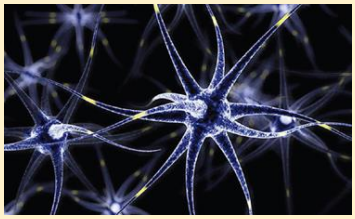
Parkinson's disease



Recently, researchers found that genetic susceptibility to nonfamilial Parkinson's disease varies, enabling the identification of characteristic cellular dysfunctions through genetic data analysis.

About Parkinson's disease:

- Parkinson's disease is a **progressive neurodegenerative disorder** that affects movement and often leads to immobility and **dementia**.
- Over a million **people in the United States are affected** by Parkinson's disease, with increasing numbers globally.
- Symptoms of Parkinson's disease include **tremors**, **rigidity**, **bradykinesia** (slowness of movement) and **postural instability.**
- Parkinson's disease has both genetic and environmental components.
- Recent research has identified a new genetic variant, **RAB32 Ser71Arg**, associated with Parkinson's disease, this variant impacts dopamine levels and cellular functions, providing insights into the disease's pathology.

Place in News

Greece

Recently, Greece has been facing an alarming population decline, raising concerns about becoming the first country in the world to experience "population collapse."

Greece (Capital: Athens)

Location: Greece, officially known as the Hellenic Republic is a country in Southeast **Europe**, located on the southern tip of the **Balkan peninsula**.

Boundaries: Greece shares its borders with **Turkey** and the **Aegean Sea** (East), **Ionian Sea** (West), **North Macedonia** and **Bulgaria** (North), **Albania** (Northwest) and **The Cretan and Libyan seas** (South).

Physical Features:

- **Mount Olympus** is the highest peak in Greece.
- The **Aliakmonas River,** also known as the **Haliacmon** is Greece's longest river.
- Greece is known for its rich mineral resources, including **bauxite, lignite, magnesite, marble, nickel, limestone, lead, zinc** and **gypsum**.

POINTS TO PONDER

- What pioneering achievement has been accomplished by Chinese scientists with the development of the Tiantong-1 satellite series, distinguishing it from traditional satellite communication systems? **– Enabling smartphone calls without reliance on ground-based infrastructure like cellular towers**
- Which ministry does India Post, the organization responsible for the recent opening of a post office at Bharati station in Antarctica, come under? **– Ministry of Communications**
- When was Operation Meghdoot launched, marking the Indian Army and Indian Air Force's 40th year of presence on the Siachen glacier? **– 13 April 1984**
- What are exo-atmospheric missiles primarily designed to counter, and by what other name are they commonly known? **– Surface-to-air missiles, also known as anti-ballistic missiles (ABMs)**
- Which country has recently taken a historic step in the fight against meningitis by introducing a new vaccine called Men5CV, recommended by the World Health Organization (WHO)? **– Nigeria**