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5 June, 2024

NOTA

Context: *In Indore, the NOTA option received the highest number of votes ever recorded in any constituency to date.*

- NOTA (None Of The Above) is a ballot option enabling voters to express disapproval of all candidates in a voting system.
- Its implementation in India followed the 2013 Supreme Court ruling in the People's Union for Civil Liberties v. Union of India case.
- Despite its introduction, NOTA in India does not grant a 'right to reject.'
- In Indian elections, the candidate with the highest number of votes wins, regardless of the quantity of NOTA votes cast.

➢ **Background of NOTA:**

- **History of NOTA:** The Law Commission's 170th Report in 1999 explored negative voting and a 50%+1 voting system but didn't finalize recommendations due to practical challenges.
- **Role of Election Commission of India (ECI):** ECI supported NOTA in 2001 and 2004 to address concerns about voter secrecy with EVMs, proposing to add "NOTA" as an option.

➢ **Landmark Cases Related to NOTA:**

- **Lily Thomas v. Speaker, Lok Sabha (1993):** The Supreme Court highlighted voting as a formal expression of will, allowing voters to remain neutral.
- **People's Union for Civil Liberties & Anr v. Union of India & Anr (2013):** The Supreme Court mandated adding a NOTA button on EVMs, empowering voters and promoting fair elections.
- **Shailesh Manubhai Parmar v. Election Commission of India Through the Chief Election Commissioner & Ors. (2018):** The Supreme Court eliminated NOTA from Rajya Sabha elections, expressing concerns about its impact on democracy and potential corruption.

➢ **Legal Provisions related to NOTA:**

- Article 21 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights ensures secrecy in voting, stressing periodic and genuine elections by universal suffrage and secret vote.
- Section 25(b) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights guarantees the right to vote and be elected at genuine periodic elections by universal suffrage and secret ballot.
- Section 79(d) in The Representation of the People Act, 1951 defines "electoral right" as the right to stand as a candidate, withdraw candidacy, vote, or refrain from voting at an election.

➢ **Casting a NOTA Vote:**

- The NOTA option is positioned at the bottom of the candidates' list on Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs).
- Previously, to cast a negative ballot, a voter had to inform the presiding officer at the polling booth.
- Now, voters simply press the NOTA option on the EVM.

➢ **Impact on Election Results:**

- NOTA holds no electoral significance in the Indian system.
- Regardless of the number of votes cast in favor of NOTA, the candidate with the highest number of votes, even if it's just one, will still be declared the winner.

Financing gap for universal social protection

Context: *According to an ILO, achieving universal social protection in low- and middle-income countries would necessitate an extra $1.4 trillion annually.*

➢ **Challenges in Achieving Universal Social Protection:**

- Africa faces the most significant challenge in achieving universal social protection coverage among regions.
- The financing gap for low-income countries amounts to over half (52.3%) of their annual GDP.
- International solidarity is essential to bridge this financing gap.

➢ **Breakdown of Financing Needs:**

- Majority of funds (60.1%) required for essential health care.
- Remaining portion allocated to social protection cash benefits:
  - 17.8% for child benefits.
  - 8.3% for old-age pensions.
  - 7.1% for disability benefits.
  - 5.2% for unemployment benefits.
  - 1.5% for maternity benefits.

➢ **Estimations and Methodology:**

- Estimations cover 133 low- and middle-income countries.
- Financing gap measured in absolute terms (billions of dollars) and relative terms (percentage of GDP).
- Gap compared to actual government expenditure and social protection expenditure.

➢ **Regional Analysis:**

- Africa faces the most significant challenge with a financing gap of 17.6% of the region's annual GDP.
- Arab States follow with 11.4%, then Latin America and the Caribbean (2.7%), Asia and the Pacific (2%), and Europe and Central Asia (1.9%).

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Country-Specific Challenges: Sudan has the largest financing gap among low- and middle-income countries due to various crises.

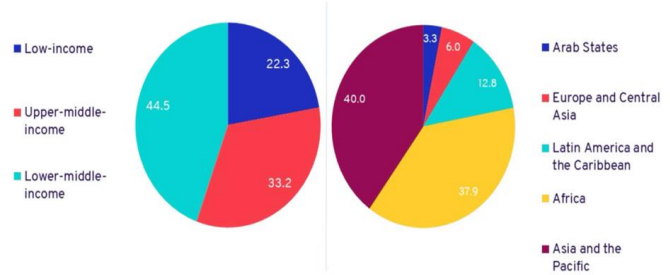
➢ **Strategies for Achieving Universal Coverage:**

- Low- and middle-income countries need to increase government spending by 10.6% of total annual spending.
- This can be achieved through domestic resources such as taxation and better sovereign debt management.

➢ **Addressing Climate Change Impacts:**

- Universal social protection is crucial in mitigating climate shocks and reducing vulnerabilities.
- Progressive taxation, including carbon taxes, and eliminating regressive fossil fuel subsidies are essential steps.
- International climate financing could strengthen social protection systems in low- and middle-income countries.

Figure 3. Distribution of the annual financing gap for achieving universal social protection coverage, by national income group, and by region, 2024



UN Global Supply Chain Forum

Context: *The inaugural United Nations Global Supply Chain Forum, co-hosted by UNCTAD and the Government of Barbados, concluded successfully recently.*

➢ **Event Overview**

- The inaugural edition of the forum occurred from May 21 to 24, 2024, in Barbados.
- Hosted by UNCTAD in collaboration with the Government of Barbados.
- Over 1,000 participants worldwide convened to address pressing global challenges affecting trade.
- Notable attendees included trade and transport Ministers from small island developing states (SIDS).
- Representatives from UN agencies, major ports like the Port of Seattle, and industry leaders in shipping and logistics were also present.
- The next forum is scheduled to take place in Saudi Arabia in 2026.

➢ **Themes and Discussions:**

- Discussions focused on global disruptions, geopolitical tensions, climate change, and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on global trade.
- Highlighted the complexities and opportunities in decarbonizing global shipping, particularly in developing countries with abundant renewable energy resources.

➢ **Outcomes:**

- Launch of the "Manifesto for Intermodal, Low-Carbon, Efficient and Resilient Freight Transport and Logistics," advocating for sustainable freight transport and logistics transformation.
- Emphasized the importance of efforts to incentivize low- or zero-carbon fuels, establish safety frameworks for new fuels, and enhance port readiness for handling various fuels.

➢ **Advocacy and Initiatives:**

- SIDS Ministers advocated for international financial support and investment in green and sustainable technologies.
- Significant achievement with the launch of the UN Trade and Development Trade-and-Transport Dataset, offering comprehensive global data on trade and transport costs.

➢ **Other initiatives to improve the Supply Chain**

- The Global Supply Chain Resilience Initiative aims to bolster supply chain resilience on a global scale.
- The Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity seeks to enhance economic cooperation and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific region, with India as a signatory.
- The PM Gati Shakti National Master Plan focuses on improving infrastructure and connectivity across India.
- The National Logistics Policy aims to streamline logistics and transportation networks to boost efficiency and reduce costs.
- Atmanirbhar Bharat initiative aims to promote self-reliance and indigenous manufacturing in India.
- Production Linked Incentive (PLI) schemes are designed to incentivize domestic manufacturing and boost production in key sectors.
- India's liberalized FDI policy aims to attract foreign investment and promote growth in the manufacturing sector.

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NEWS IN BETWEEN THE LINES

World Environment Day

The World Environment Day is being celebrated across the globe on June 5 every year.

About the World Environment Day:

- World Environment Day (WED) was established by the **United Nations General Assembly** in **1972**.
- It has been **celebrated since 1973** as part of the United **Nations Environment Programme** to build awareness to save life on planet Earth.
- It serves as a platform to raise awareness about environmental issues such as **climate change**, **biodiversity loss**, **pollution** and **deforestation**.
- The **Kingdom of Saudi Arabia** will **host the 2024 Environment Day celebration** this year.
- World Environment **Day 2024's theme**, **"Our Land. Our Future. We are #Generation Restoration",** underscores the global urgency for **land restoration, desertification mitigation** and **drought resilience.**
- Finland was the first country to establish a carbon tax in **1990** and decided to ban coal in **2019**.
- India has the **4th largest wind power** capacity in the world after China, the United States and Germany.

Greedflation

Recently, experts have noted that "greedflation" is contributing to high rates of inflation in Western countries.

About Greedflation:

- Greedflation is a term used to describe a situation **where inflation is driven not by genuine** economic factors **but by speculative greed** and **excessive risk-taking** in financial markets.
- It occurs **when investors** and **financial institutions engage in excessive speculation**, seeking quick profits without regard for the underlying economic fundamentals.
- It **can be fueled by the formation of asset bubbles**, such as in **real estate** or **stock markets**, where prices are driven higher by speculative demand rather than intrinsic value.
- It contributes to **inflationary pressures in the economy**, as **excessive speculation** drives up prices of goods, services, and assets.
- It **can lead to financial instability,** as **asset bubbles eventually burst**, causing market corrections, **economic downturns** and financial crises.
- Governments may implement regulations to control speculative activities, enhance market transparency, and prevent the formation of asset bubbles.
- The **dot-com bubble of the late 1990s and early 2000s is an example of greedflation,** where speculative frenzy drove up the prices of internet-related stocks to unsustainable levels.
- The housing **bubble of the mid-2000s, particularly in the United States,** was another instance of greedflation, with speculative demand leading to inflated home prices and eventual market collapse.

SU-30MKI

Recently, an SU-30MKI fighter jet of the Indian Air Force (IAF) crashed in Nashik, Maharashtra.

About SU-30MKI:

- The Su-30MKI, a variant of the **Sukhoi Su-30** is a **twinjet multirole air superiority fighter** developed by **Russia's Sukhoi**.
- It is built under license by **India's Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL)** for the Indian Air Force (IAF).
- It is a **heavy**, all-weather, **long-range fighter** with multirole capabilities.
- The IAF plans to enhance the **Su-30MKIs with new weapons**, **avionics**, **sensors** and engines to maintain their relevance for the next few decades.
- India had procured **272 Su-30s** from Russia.
- The IAF currently has **12 Su-30 squadrons in service**, indicating the significant role of these fighters in India's air defense.
- Approximately **40-50 Su-30MKIs** are under HAL's care for overhaul and repairs, highlighting the importance of maintaining the existing fleet.

Personality in News
Ahilya Bai Holkar

Recently, the 300th birth anniversary of Ahilya Bai Holkar was celebrated.

Ahilya Bai Holkar (31 May 1725-13 August 1795)

Ahilya Bai Holkar, the Maratha queen and a prominent ruler of the Holkar dynasty was born in the Chaundi village (present-time Ahmednagar district) of Maharashtra.

Contributions:

- Ahilya Bai Holkar was renowned for her wisdom, courage and administrative abilities.
- She established the Maheshwari saree industry in Maheshwar, contributing to economic development.
- She implemented policies focused on **justice** and **administration**, ensuring fair treatment for all citizens.

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- She initiated various infrastructure projects including **building and repairing roads**, **wells**, and **rest-houses across her kingdom**.
- She **maintained a strong military presence** to protect her kingdom from external threats and ensure internal stability.
- She formed **strategic alliances** with neighboring states to strengthen her position and protect her territories.
- She sponsored the construction of numerous temples, including the famous **Maheshwar temple** on the banks of **the Narmada river.**
- Revered as 'The Philosopher Queen' by British historian John Keay for her enlightened rule and governance.

Ethical Values: Integrity, Justice, Compassion, etc.

Place in News

Netherlands

Recently, the Commerce Ministry data revealed that Netherlands has emerged as India's third largest export destination after the U.S. and UAE during 2023-24, even as the country's merchandise shipments dipped by more than 3%.

Netherlands (Capita: Amsterdam)

Location: Netherlands, also **known as Holland** is a country located in northwestern **Europe**.
Boundaries: Netherlands shares its border with **Germany** (East), **Belgium** (South), **North Sea** (North and West).

Physical Features:

- The highest natural point in the Netherlands is the **Vaalserberg**.
- The Netherlands is intersected by rivers such as the **Rhine, Meuse and Scheldt** which play vital roles in transportation, agriculture and shaping the country's landscape.

India-Netherlands Relations:

- India and the Netherlands established diplomatic relations in **1947,** marking 75 years of diplomatic engagement in **2022**.
- The Netherlands ranks as India's 4th largest trading partner in Europe and it is also **the 4th largest investor in India.**
- India exported a diverse range of commodities valued at **USD 3.29 billion to the Netherlands** during April-May **2023-24,** including **petroleum** products, telecom instruments, **aluminum**, electronic instruments, **iron** and **steel**.

POINTS TO PONDER

- With whom did ISRO recently collaborate for sustainable space exploration through additive manufacturing? **– Wipro 3D**
- Which country provided the highest FDI to India in 2023-24, according to recent government data? **– Singapore**
- Which research institute recently developed a method for generating non-infectious Nipah virus-like particles (VLPs) in the laboratory? **– Institute of Advanced Virology**
- What sport does Dinesh Karthik, who recently announced his retirement, belong to? **– Cricket**
- Who was recently elected as the first woman President of Mexico? **– Claudia Shienbaum**