

24 June, 2024

GST Council

Context: The 53rd Goods and Services Tax (GST) Council convened in Delhi on Saturday, June 22, under the leadership of Nirmala Sitharaman, Union Minister for Finance and Corporate Affairs.

➤ Recommendations and Announcements:

- Proposed taxes on items like milk cans and solar cookers.
- Announced relief for students living in specific types of rented accommodation.
- Reduced GST on cartons from 18% to 12% to aid apple farmers in Himachal Pradesh and Jammu and Kashmir.

What is the GST Council?

➤ Formation and Purpose:

- GST regime began after the Constitutional (122nd Amendment) Bill was passed in 2016 and ratified by over 15 Indian states.
- Established to simplify and unify the tax structure in India, replacing multiple taxes levied by both the Centre and states.

➤ Structure:

- Set up under Article 279A (1) of the amended Constitution.
- Includes the Union Finance Minister (Chairperson), Union Minister of State (Finance), and a nominated minister from each state responsible for finance or taxation.

Functions of the GST Council

➤ Mandate:

- Makes recommendations on key GST-related issues.
- Determines goods and services subject to or exempt from GST, model GST laws, and various rate slabs.
- Significance:
- Acts as India's first genuinely federal and fully empowered institution.
- Facilitates intergovernmental cooperation and collective decision-making.
- Converts itself into a drafting committee to discuss and amend draft laws in real time.

Working of the GST Council

➤ Decision-Making:

- Decisions are made by a majority of not less than three-fourths of the weighted votes of the members present and voting.
- Minimum quorum for a meeting is 50% of the total number of members.

➤ Vote Weightage:

- Centre's Vote: One-third of the total votes cast.
- States' Votes: Two-thirds of the total votes cast.

➤ Validity of Proceedings:

- Proceedings or acts of the GST Council will not become invalid due to:
 - Any defect or vacancy in the constitution of the GST Council.
 - Any defect in the appointment of any member.
 - Any procedural irregularity that does not affect the merits of the case.

Changes Over the Years

➤ Supreme Court Judgment in 2022:

- Declared that GST Council's recommendations are not binding.
- Article 246A gives simultaneous power to Parliament and state legislatures to legislate on GST.
- The GST Council's recommendations result from collaborative dialogue between the Union and states.

➤ Implications:

- Recognized the unequal voting structure within the GST Council (two-thirds for states, one-third for the Union).
- States like Kerala and Tamil Nadu supported the judgment, advocating for more flexibility in accepting recommendations based on their suitability.

Oath-taking in Lok Sabha

Context: The first session of the 18th Lok Sabha will start on Monday, with new members taking the oath of Members of Parliament (MP), as provided in the Constitution.

Key Figures

- Bhartruhari Mahtab, elected for the seventh consecutive time from Cuttack, Odisha, will be the first to take the oath in Rashtrapati Bhavan in front of President Droupadi Murmu.
- Mahtab is entrusted with the duties of the Speaker (pro tem) under Article 95(1) of the Constitution until the election of the new Speaker.
- Mahtab will preside over the House as colleagues take their oaths.

Term of an MP

- The five-year term of a Lok Sabha MP begins when the Election Commission of India (ECI) declares the results, as per Section 73 of the Representation of the People Act, 1951.
- MPs start receiving their salary and allowances from the date of the ECI notification (June 6, 2024, for the latest election).
- The start of the term also implies that MPs changing party allegiance can be disqualified under the anti-defection law.

Significance of the Parliamentary Oath

- Winning the election and starting the term do not automatically allow an MP to participate in House proceedings.

Face to Face Centres





24 June, 2024

- MPs must take their seat by making and subscribing to an oath or affirmation prescribed in the Constitution (Article 99).
- A financial penalty of Rs 500 is specified if a person participates or votes in House proceedings without taking an oath (Article 104).
- Exception: An individual can become a minister without being elected to Parliament but must secure a seat within six months to vote in House proceedings.

➤ Multilingualism in Oath-Taking

- The oath can be taken in English or any of the 22 languages specified in the Constitution.
- Common languages for the oath include Hindi, English, Sanskrit, Tamil, Marathi, Kannada, Telugu, Bengali, Oriya, Gujarati, Punjabi, Assamese, Urdu, Malayalam, Kashmiri, Maithili, Nepali, Dogri, Santhali, Sindhi, Manipuri, Bodo, and Konkani.

➤ Parliamentary Oath Text

- The third schedule of the Constitution contains the oath text, which includes a commitment to uphold the sovereignty and integrity of India.

➤ Evolution of the Oath

- The original draft by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar did not invoke God.
- Amendments were made to include God for those who believe, while allowing others to solemnly affirm.
- The last change was in the Constitution (Sixteenth Amendment) Act, 1963, adding a commitment to uphold India's sovereignty and integrity.

➤ Oath Procedure

- MPs must submit their election certificate to Lok Sabha staff for verification.
- MPs can take the oath or affirmation in the language of their choice, as per the Constitution.
- MPs must use the name mentioned in their election certificate and adhere strictly to the oath text.

➤ Oath vs. Affirmation

- MPs can choose between swearing in the name of God or affirming allegiance to the Constitution.
- In the last Lok Sabha, 87% of MPs swore in the name of God, while 13% affirmed their allegiance.

➤ Special Circumstances

- MPs in jail can take the oath in Parliament if the court allows it, to avoid their seat being declared vacant after 60 days of non-attendance.
- Example: Atul Kumar Singh, an MP from Ghosi, Uttar Pradesh, took the oath in January 2020 while being in jail

Stages of India's Nuclear Programme

Context: On March 4, India entered the second stage of its nuclear power programme by starting the core-loading process of the prototype fast breeder reactor (PFBR) at the Madras Atomic Power Station, Kalpakkam.

Overview of India's Three-Stage Nuclear Program

➤ Stage 1: Pressurised Heavy Water Reactors (PHWRs)

- Fuel and By-product: Natural uranium is used as fuel to produce electricity and Plutonium-239 as a by-product.

➤ Reactor Choice:

- PHWRs were chosen for their efficient uranium utilization.
- India opted for heavy water production over uranium enrichment facilities.
- PHWRs use unenriched uranium, unlike Light Water Reactors (LWRs), which require enriched uranium.
- India could domestically produce PHWR components.

➤ Reactors in Use:

- Boiling Water Reactor
- Pressurized Heavy Water Reactor
- Pressurized Water Reactor

Stage 2: Fast Breeder Reactors (FBRs)

- Fuel: Plutonium-239 is used to produce mixed-oxide fuel for FBRs.

➤ Process:

- Plutonium-239 undergoes fission to produce energy.
- Enriched uranium and metal oxide react with mixed-oxide fuel to produce more Plutonium-239.
- Thorium is introduced to produce Uranium-233, essential for the third stage.

➤ Key Features:

- First reactor at Kalpakkam, Tamil Nadu.
- Uses Plutonium-239 as fuel, converting Uranium-238 into Plutonium-239.
- Known as Fast Neutron Reactor, using liquid sodium as coolant and no moderator.

Stage 3: Advanced Heavy Water Reactors

- Goal: Achieve a sustainable nuclear fuel cycle using a combination of Uranium-233 and Thorium.

➤ Challenges:

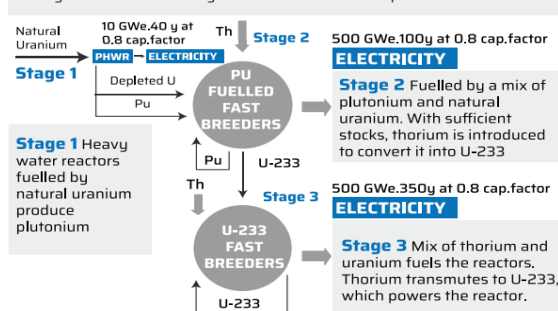
- Thorium cannot be used directly and requires enrichment with Uranium, Plutonium, or Uranium-233.
- Early use of Thorium would slow nuclear power generation growth.

➤ Deployment:

- Large-scale thorium deployment was postponed until the later part of the second stage.
- Thorium to be introduced during Fast Breeder Reactor operations and mainly used in the third stage.

INDIA'S THREE-STAGE NUCLEAR PROGRAMME

Homi Bhabha envisioned India's nuclear power programme in three stages to suit the country's low uranium resource profile



Face to Face Centres





24 June, 2024

Goals of the Third Stage

1. **Utilization:** Use thorium as fuel on a commercial scale.
2. **Deployment:** Large-scale deployment of nuclear power in India.
3. **Economic Performance:** Achieve good economic performance compared to alternative energy options.
4. **Safety:** Attain higher safety levels through inherent and passive safety features.
5. **Proliferation Resistance:** Utilize the proliferation-resistant potential of the thorium fuel cycle.
6. **Adaptability:** Ensure adaptability for non-electrical applications, such as desalination and high-temperature processing.

Recent Developments

- 2024 Milestone: Commencement of "Core Loading" at India's first indigenous Fast Breeder Reactor (500

MWe) at Kalpakkam, Tamil Nadu, marks entry into the second stage of the nuclear program.

- BHAVINI: Created in 2003 to construct and operate the Prototype Fast Breeder Reactor (PFBR).

➤ FBR Characteristics:

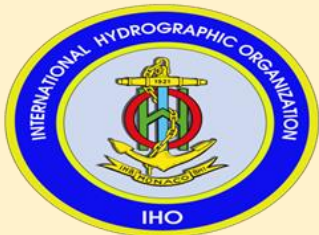
- Uses Uranium-Plutonium Mixed Oxide (MOX) fuel.
- Uranium-238 blanket produces more fuel through nuclear transmutation, earning the name 'Breeder.'
- Envisions using Thorium-232 as a blanket to create fissile Uranium-233 for the third stage.

➤ Safety and Waste Reduction:

- PFBR includes advanced passive safety features for prompt and safe shutdown in emergencies.
- Utilizes spent fuel from the first stage, significantly reducing nuclear waste and avoiding the need for large geological disposal facilities.

NEWS IN BETWEEN THE LINES

International Hydrographic Organization



Recently, on 21st June the World Hydrography Day was celebrated by the International Hydrographic Organization to raise awareness about hydrography.

About the International Hydrographic Organization:

- The International Hydrographic Organization (IHO) is an **intergovernmental organization established in 1921**.
- It is **responsible for coordinating global efforts in hydrography**, which involves the **measurement and description of the physical features of oceans, seas, coastal areas, lakes and rivers**.
- The main objectives of the International Hydrographic Organization include **promoting safe navigation**, ensuring the protection of **the marine environment**, and facilitating the development and standardization of nautical charts and publications.
- The organization **sets international standards and guidelines** for hydrographic surveys and data exchange among its member states to support maritime safety, efficiency, and environmental sustainability worldwide.
- It has a membership **composed of 100 member states**, including maritime nations from around the world.
- Its secretariat has been hosted by the **Principality of Monaco** since the creation of the organization in **1921**.

Laokhowa Wildlife Sanctuary



Recently, a gunfight at Laokhowa Wildlife Sanctuary in Assam between suspected poachers and forest patrolling parties resulted in the deaths of two poachers.

About Laokhowa Wildlife Sanctuary:

- Laokhowa Wildlife Sanctuary is **located on the southern bank of the Brahmaputra River in Assam**.
- It forms an integral part of the **Laokhowa-Burhachapori ecosystem**.
- Laokhowa Wildlife Sanctuary is a notified **buffer of the Kaziranga Tiger Reserve**.
- The sanctuary is centrally located among several key protected areas, including **Kaziranga National Park (East)**, **Orang National Park** and **Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary (West)**, **Pakke-Nameri National Parks (North)** and the **Karbi Anglong Reserve Forests (South)**.
- The Brahmaputra River flows through the northern boundary of the **Burhachapori Wildlife Sanctuary**, creating **numerous river islands**.
- **Flora:** Sanctuary's flora includes extensive **grasslands, mixed deciduous forests, wetlands and riparian vegetation**, etc.
- **Fauna:** The sanctuary is home to the **great Indian one-horned rhinoceros, elephants, Royal Bengal tigers, Asiatic water buffaloes, barking deer, fishing cats and wild pigs**.

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

Complex Post-traumatic stress disorder (cPTSD) was listed as a standalone diagnosis in the 11th edition of the International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems in 2018.

About Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder:

- Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is a **mental health condition** that can develop after someone experiences or witnesses a **traumatic event**.

Face to Face Centres



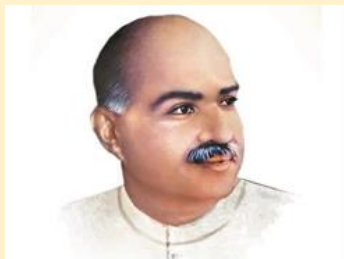
24 June, 2024



- It is commonly associated with **war veterans**, **survivors of sexual violence** and individuals who have lived through **life-threatening situations**.
- According to the **World Health Organization (WHO)**, 4% of the world's population has experienced this type of disorder at some point.
- Symptoms of Post-traumatic stress disorder include **flashbacks**, **nightmares**, detachment, **loss of interest**, **angry outbursts**, **worry**, **guilt**, **sadness**, frightening thoughts, trouble concentrating and **physical pain**.
- Its symptoms have also been observed in individuals subjected to **repeated bullying**, **emotional abuse**, **neglect** and long-term domestic abuse.

Personality in News

Syama Prasad Mukherjee



Recently, the Prime Minister of India paid tribute to Dr. Syama Prasad Mukherjee on his 71st death anniversary and praised his dedication to Mother India.

Syama Prasad Mukherjee (6 July 1901 – 23 June 1953)

Syama Prasad Mukherjee, an Indian politician, barrister and academician who served as India's **first Minister for Industry and Supply** (currently known as Minister of Commerce and Industries) in Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru's cabinet, was born in a Bengali Brahmin family in Calcutta (Now Kolkata), West Bengal.

Contributions:

- Dr. Syama Prasad Mukherjee became the **youngest Vice-Chancellor** of the University of Calcutta in **1934**.
- He strongly **opposed Article 370**, which granted special status to Jammu and Kashmir.
- His **slogan** was "**Ek desh mein do Vidhan, do Pradhan, aur Do Nishan nahi challenge**" (One country can't have two constitutions, two prime ministers, and two national emblems).
- He **demanding the partition of Bengal** to prevent the inclusion of its Hindu-majority areas in a Muslim-dominated East Pakistan in **1946**.
- He **founded the Bharatiya Jana Sangh (BJS)** in **1951**, which later evolved into the **Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)**.
- He was inspired by the **ideologies of Swami Pranavananda**, founder of Bharat Sevashram Sangha and considered him as his guru.

Honours:

- The Government of India issued **commemorative postage stamps** to honour Syama Prasad Mukherjee's legacy and his role in Indian politics.
- The Syama Prasad Mukherjee **National Memorial** was established in Delhi to honour his life and contributions. It serves as a research and educational center.
- The **Syama Prasad Mukherjee Marg** in Delhi and the **Syama Prasad Mukherjee Port** in Kolkata are named in his honour.

Ethical Values: Integrity, Patriotism, Courage, Dedication, etc.

Place in News

United Arab Emirates

Recently, the External Affairs Minister Dr S. Jaishankar held Productive Talks With his United Arab Emirates counterpart Sheikh Abdullah Bin Zayed.

United Arab Emirates (Capital: Abu Dhabi)

Location: United Arab Emirates is a country located in West Asia.

Boundaries: United Arab Emirates shares its borders with **Oman (East)**, **Persian Gulf (North)**, **Saudi Arabia (South and West)** and **Qatar (Northwest)**.

Physical Features:

- The highest point in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) is **Jebel Jais**.
- The **Burj Khalifa** in Dubai, the world's tallest building
- The UAE has a desert climate with very hot summers and warm winters.
- The United Arab Emirates is **rich in petroleum, natural gas, limestone, gypsum, marble, chromite, copper, sulfur** and abundant sand and gravel.

Membership: It is a member of various international organizations, including the **United Nations, OPEC** and the **Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)**.



Face to Face Centres

DELHI MUKHERJEE NAGAR: 9205274741, 42 | **LAXMI NAGAR :** 9205212500, 9205962002 | **RAJENDRA NAGAR:** 9205274743 | **UTTAR PRADESH PRAYAGRAJ:** 0532-2260189, 8853467068 | **LUCKNOW (ALIGANJ):** 0522-4025825, 9506256789 | **LUCKNOW (GOMTI NAGAR):** 7234000501, 7234000502 | **GREATER NOIDA:** 9205336037, 38 | **KANPUR:** 7887003962, 7897003962 | **GORAKHPUR :** 7080847474, 9161947474 | **ODISHA BHUBANESWAR:** 9818244644/7656949029



dhyeyaias.com

24 June, 2024

POINTS TO PONDER

- What is "Indiconema", recently seen in news? - **New genus of the Gomphonemoid diatom**
- Which institute recently signed an MoU with National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) to enhance road safety through AI? - **IIIT, Delhi**
- Recently, which institute has won joint second prize in the Trinity Challenge's second competition for addressing antimicrobial resistance (AMR)? - **IIIT, Delhi**
- Recently, a team of wildlife experts has documented the presence of a 'striped caecilian (Ichthyophis spp)' in which national park for the first time? - **Kaziranga National Park**
- Mudgal Fort, recently seen in the news, is located in which state? – **Karnataka**

Face to Face Centres

DELHI MUKHERJEE NAGAR: 9205274741, 42 | **LAXMI NAGAR :** 9205212500, 9205962002 | **RAJENDRA NAGAR:** 9205274743 | **UTTAR PRADESH PRAYAGRAJ:** 0532-2260189, 8853467068 | **LUCKNOW (ALIGANJ):** 0522-4025825, 9506256789 | **LUCKNOW (GOMTI NAGAR):** 7234000501, 7234000502 | **GREATER NOIDA:** 9205336037, 38 | **KANPUR:** 7887003962, 7897003962 | **GORAKHPUR :** 7080847474, 9161947474 | **ODISHA BHUBANESWAR:** 9818244644/7656949029



dhyeyaias.com