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Parliamentary Committee

Context: The Parliament joint committee will hold its first sitting on the Waqf (Amendment) Bill this Thursday.

➤ Constitution and Importance

- The Constitution mentions committees but does not specify their composition or functions. These are defined by the rules of the two Houses.
- Committees offer expertise on referred matters, provide a business-like and calm environment for deliberation, and allow public engagement through memoranda and testimonies.

➤ Criteria for Parliamentary Committees

- Appointed or elected by the house or nominated by the Speaker/Chairman.
- Operate under the direction of the Speaker/Chairman.
- Present reports to the house or to the Speaker/Chairman.
- Supported by a secretariat from Lok Sabha/Rajya Sabha.
- Consultative Committees, though consisting of MPs, do not meet these criteria and are not considered parliamentary committees.

➤ Classification of Parliamentary Committees

- **Standing Committees:** Permanent, operate on a continuous basis, and are constituted every year or periodically.
- **Ad Hoc Committees:** Temporary, cease to exist once their task is complete. Includes Inquiry Committees and Advisory Committees.

➤ Important Parliamentary Committees

- **Estimates Committee**
 - **Origin:** Established in 1950, tracing back to the 1921 standing financial committee.
 - **Composition:** 30 members from Lok Sabha, elected annually, ministers cannot be members.
 - **Function:** Examines the budget and suggests expenditure economies.
- **Public Accounts Committee**
 - **Origin:** Set up in 1921 under the GOI Act 1919.
 - **Composition:** 22 members (15 from LS, 7 from RS), elected for one year, Chairman from Opposition, ministers cannot be members.
 - **Function:** Examines CAG Audit reports, checks public expenditure for legal, economic, and propriety standards.
- **Committee on Public Undertakings**
 - **Origin:** Established by the Krishna Menon Committee in 1964.
 - **Composition:** 22 members (15 from LS, 7 from RS), ministers cannot be members.
 - **Function:** Reviews reports and accounts of public sector undertakings, with advisory recommendations.

• Departmental Standing Committees

- **Origin:** Recommended in 1993, expanded in 2004.
- **Composition:** 31 members (21 from LS, 10 from RS), appointed annually, ministers cannot be members.
- **Function:** Examines bills, demands for grants, and other matters assigned to them.

➤ Key Committees with Presiding Officers

• Rules Committee

- **Function:** Considers procedural and business rules of the House, recommends amendments.
- **Composition:** 15 members in Lok Sabha, 16 members in Rajya Sabha, including the Speaker/Chairman.

• Business Advisory Committee

- **Function:** Regulates the House's timetable, allocates time for legislative business.
- **Composition:** 15 members in Lok Sabha, 11 members in Rajya Sabha, including the Speaker/Chairman.

• General Purposes Committee

- **Function:** Advises on matters concerning the House not covered by other committees.

➤ Cabinet Committees in the Indian Government

• Origin and Structure

- Emerged extra-constitutionally, working under the Government of India Transaction of Business Rules, 1961, derived from Article 77(3) of the Constitution.
- Set up by the Prime Minister to reduce cabinet workload, typically includes 3-8 members, often chaired by the Prime Minister or senior ministers.

• Important Cabinet Committees

- **Cabinet Committee on Political Affairs:** Handles all policy matters related to foreign and domestic affairs.
- **Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs:** Coordinates and directs economic policies.
- **Appointment Committee of Cabinet:** Decides on high-level appointments in government and public enterprises.
- **Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs:** Manages the progress of government business in Parliament.
- **Cabinet Committee on Investment and Growth:** Focuses on investment and economic growth.
- **Cabinet Committee on Employment and Skill Development:** Addresses employment and skill development issues.
- **Cabinet Committee on Security:** Deals with national security matters.

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- **Cabinet Committee on Accommodation:** Oversees issues related to government accommodation.

India-Ukraine Relations

Context: On Wednesday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi began a state visit to Ukraine.

➤ Diplomatic Ties

- India recognized Ukraine's sovereignty in December 1991 following the Soviet Union's dissolution.
- The Indian Embassy in Kyiv was established in May 1992, and Ukraine opened its mission in New Delhi in February 1993.
- The nations maintain a cordial relationship, collaborating in education, legal aid, and space exploration.

➤ Defence Cooperation

- India has sourced military technology and equipment from Ukraine since its independence.
- The Indian Air Force utilizes R-27 air-to-air missiles produced by Ukraine on its SU-30MKI fighters.
- Recent developments include India exporting weapons to Ukraine, strengthening bilateral defence ties.

➤ Economic Exchange

- India is Ukraine's largest export destination in the Asia-Pacific and ranks fifth globally.
- Bilateral trade grew to \$3.386 billion in 2021-22 but has been impacted by recent conflicts.
- Indian exports to Ukraine are predominantly pharmaceutical products.

➤ Cultural Interactions

- Over 30 Ukrainian cultural groups are dedicated to promoting Indian dance forms.
- Approximately 18,000 Indian students are enrolled in medical programs in Ukraine.
- Indian professionals are engaged in sectors like pharmaceuticals, IT, engineering, and education in Ukraine.

➤ Humanitarian Assistance

- India has dispatched 15 shipments of humanitarian aid, including medical supplies, equipment, blankets, and tents.
- Contributions include rebuilding a school in Kyiv to support Ukraine's recovery efforts.

➤ Operation Ganga (2022)

- **Purpose:** Rescued Indian citizens stranded in neighboring countries during the 2022 Russia-Ukraine war.
- **Scope:** Approximately 20,000 Indian nationals, primarily students, were in Ukraine.

- **Evacuation:** Over 16,000 Indians were flown back to India in 76 flights from Romania, Hungary, Poland, Moldova, and Slovakia.
- **Supervision:** Four union ministers—Hardeep Singh Puri, Jyotiraditya Scindia, Kiren Rijiju, and V.K. Singh—oversaw the operation.
- **Humanitarian Aid:** India provided medical supplies, tents, blankets, and other essentials to Ukraine.
- **Final Evacuation:** On 10 March, about 600 Indians from Sumy were transported to Rzeszow, Poland, and flew back to India on 11 March.
- **Government Communication:** Advisories were issued to citizens, and a round-the-clock helpline and other communication channels were set up.
- **Special Envoys:** The Prime Minister sent high-level ministers to coordinate the evacuation from various neighboring countries.



Diplomatic Passports

Context: Bangladesh's interim government revoked Sheikh Hasina's diplomatic passport following her flight from a student-led uprising.

➤ About:

- Issued to individuals representing a country on official diplomatic missions or government business.
- Used by diplomats, government officials, and sometimes their immediate family members.
- Provides certain legal privileges and immunities under international law, including immunity from arrest and certain legal proceedings.

➤ Eligibility:

- Issued by the Ministry of External Affairs' Consular, Passport & Visa Division in India.

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- Given to government-appointed individuals, officers of the Indian Foreign Service (IFS), select official travelers like union ministers and Members of Parliament (MPs).

➤ **Revoking Power:**

- Revocation authority lies with the passport authority, with government intervention required only after a court order.
- Can be revoked under the Passport Act of 1967 for wrongful possession, suppression of information, threats to national interest, or criminal proceedings in India.

➤ **International Law:**

- Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations:** Defines the privileges and immunities of diplomatic passport holders.
- Visa Exemption Agreements:** Allows holders to visit certain countries without a visa for up to 90 days for official purposes. India has such agreements with 34 countries, including Germany.

➤ **Types of Passport:**

- Diplomatic and Official passports are maroon, valid for up to five years.

Passport Type	Validity	Colour	Issued To
Ordinary (Type P)	10 years (adults), 5 years (minors)	Blue	All Indian citizens
Official	Same as Ordinary passport	White	Government officials
Diplomatic	Five years or less	Maroon	Diplomats, senior government officials, their dependents
Emigration Check Required (ECR)	Same as Ordinary passport	Orange	Indian citizens who haven't completed 10th grade education
Emergency Certificate	Short validity	-	Indian citizens abroad in exigencies (Single journey to India when the passport is lost/expired)

➤ **Issued To:**

- Individuals with diplomatic status.
- Government officials on official business.
- IFS officers and their families.
- Selected individuals authorized for official travel.

➤ **Grounds for Revocation:**

- Wrongful possession.
- Obtained through suppression of material information.
- Threat to India's sovereignty or international relations.
- Conviction of a serious crime in India.
- Court orders related to criminal proceedings.

➤ **Difference Between Diplomatic and Regular Passport:**

- Issuance To:**
 - Regular: General citizens and VIPs.
 - Diplomatic: High-ranking government officials.
- Validity:**
 - Regular: 10 years for adults, 5 years for minors.
 - Diplomatic: Up to 5 years.
- Purpose:**
 - Regular:** Personal and business trips.
 - Diplomatic:** Official government-related trips.

➤ **Visa Requirements:**

- Visa Exemption:** India has agreements with 34 countries for diplomatic passport holders. Additionally, service and official passport holders have visa exemptions with 99 other countries for up to 90 days.

NEWS IN BETWEEN THE LINES

UDAN Scheme



Recently, the Civil Aviation Ministry introduced simplified rules for seaplanes, permitting non-scheduled operators to offer services under the UDAN scheme, which has seen limited uptake so far.

About the UDAN Scheme:

- The UDAN Scheme (Ude Desh ka Aam Nagrik) was **launched in October 2016** as part of the National Civil Aviation Policy.
- The primary objective of the UDAN Scheme is to **improve regional air connectivity** by linking small and medium cities with major cities, making air travel accessible to the common man.
- The UDAN Scheme **aims to provide affordable air travel** to 1 crore passengers annually, significantly enhancing connectivity and accessibility across the country.
- The first flight under the UDAN Scheme was flagged off by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in **April 2017**, from **Shimla to Delhi**.
- The **government provides Viability Gap Funding (VGF)** to airlines to cover losses incurred due to low fares under the UDAN Scheme.
- This Scheme offers air travel at a cost of approximately **Rs. 5 per km**, which is **cheaper than the average taxi fare of Rs. 10 per km**.
- The scheme is a significant employment generator, with each additional aircraft under UDAN **expected to create around 100 jobs**.

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Digital General Crop Estimation Survey



Recently, ahead of the nationwide implementation of the Digital General Crop Estimation Survey (DGCES), the Centre held a national conference with the States on Thursday to discuss improvements in crop production statistics.

About Digital General Crop Estimation Survey:

- The Digital General Crop Estimation Survey (DGCES) is a **nationwide initiative** that aims to accurately assess crop yields by using a survey methodology based on crop cutting experiments.
- It **uses a mobile application and portal** to record **Crop Cutting Experiment (CCE)** results directly from the field.
- The app includes features like GPS-enabled photo capture and automated plot selection to improve transparency and accuracy.
- It also uses other technologies like **remote sensing, geospatial analysis** and **artificial intelligence** to enhance the reliability of crop production data.
- It **provides plot-level data with geotagged areas of crops**, which serves as a single source of truth for estimating crop area.
- It also **involves young people in rural areas**, using advanced technology like geo-fencing to simplify the process of capturing crop images in the field.
- It also **serves as a central hub for agricultural data** that is accessible to policymakers and stakeholders.

Monetary Policy Committee



Recently, the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) decided to hold policy rates to align inflation with the 4% target, as per minutes released by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).

About Monetary Policy Committee:

- The Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) is a **statutory body** established under the amended **Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Act, 1934**, through the **Finance Act, 2016**, to provide a statutory framework for setting monetary policy in India.
- The primary function of the Monetary Policy Committee is to set the **benchmark policy rate (repo rate)** to **control inflation** within the target range set by the government, ensuring price stability and supporting economic growth.
- It **takes decisions by majority vote**, with the RBI Governor holding the casting vote in case of a tie, and its decisions are binding on the RBI.
- A **quorum of four members is required for a meeting**, including either the Governor or the Deputy Governor.
- It consists of six members including the **RBI Governor** (Chairperson), the **RBI Deputy Governor** in charge of monetary policy, **one official nominated by the RBI Board** and **three external members appointed by the Government of India**.

Place in News

Thailand

Recently, Thailand confirmed Asia's first known case of a new, deadlier strain of mpox in a patient who had travelled to the kingdom from Africa.

Thailand (Capital: Bangkok)

Location: Thailand is a country located in **Southeast Asia**.

Boundaries: Thailand shares its borders with **Myanmar** (Northwest), **Laos** (Northeast), **Cambodia** (Southeast), **Gulf of Thailand and Malaysia** (South), the **Andaman Sea** (Southwest).

Physical Features:

- Thailand boasts numerous islands in the Andaman Sea and the Gulf of Thailand, such as **Phuket, Koh Samui, Koh Phi Phi** and **Koh Tao**.
- The highest point in Thailand is **Doi Inthanon**, located in the Chiang Mai Province in the northern part of the country.
- The major rivers in Thailand include the **Chao Phraya, Mekong, Mae Klong, Nan** and **Ping**.
- Thailand generally experiences a **tropical climate** characterized by hot and humid weather throughout the year.



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POINTS TO PONDER

- Which organization released the 2024 report on sitting MPs/MLAs with declared cases related to crimes against women?
– **Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR)**
- Recently, which instrument on the Pragyan Rover of Chandrayaan-3 provided evidence supporting the Lunar Magma Ocean (LMO) Hypothesis? – **Alpha Particle X-ray Spectrometer (APXS)**
- Which court did the Supreme Court of India criticize for suggesting that the POCSO Act be amended to decriminalize consensual sexual acts involving adolescents above sixteen years? – **Calcutta High Court**
- Which community recently marched to the office of the sub-divisional officer in Khamgaon, Maharashtra, demanding a “grazing corridor” for their livestock? – **Dhangar**
- What has the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) recommended to develop innovative new technologies and services in the Tera Hertz band? – **Tera Hertz Experimental Authorization**

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