

EWS Quota

❖ Context

- A government committee report in the Supreme Court has said that “income” is a “feasible criterion” for defining the “Economically Weaker Sections” (EWS) in society
- Also it said that the annual family income of ₹8 lakh is a “reasonable” threshold to determine EWS in order to extend reservation in admissions and jobs.

❖ Key Highlights

- The committee did not agree with the notion that the Union government had “mechanically adopted” ₹8 lakh as a number because it was also used for the OBC creamy layer cut-off.
- It said the income criterion for EWS was “more stringent” than the one for the OBC creamy layer.

Supreme Court Observed:

“(a) The income criterion in respect of the OBC category is aimed at exclusion from a class while in the case of the EWS category, it is aimed at inclusion

(b) The OBC category is socially and educationally backward and, therefore, has additional impediments to overcome as compared to those belonging to the general category.

In these circumstances, would it be arbitrary to provide the same income limit both for the OBC and EWS categories.”

❖ About EWS Quota:

- The 10% EWS quota was introduced under the 103rd Constitution (Amendment) Act, 2019 by amending Articles 15 and 16.
- It inserted Article 15 (6) and Article 16 (6).
- It is for economic reservation in jobs and admissions in education institutes for Economically Weaker Sections (EWS).
- It was enacted to promote the welfare of the poor not covered by the 50% reservation policy for Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs) and Socially and Educationally Backward Classes (SEBC).
- It enables both Centre and the states to provide reservation to the EWS of society.

❖ Income Criteria for EWS

EWS, AS DEFINED

- Persons who are not covered under the scheme of reservation for SCs, STs and OBCs and whose family has gross annual income below Rs 8 lakh are to be identified as EWSs for benefit of reservation
- Income shall also include income from all sources i.e. salary, agriculture, business, profession, etc. for the financial year prior to the year of application
- Persons whose family owns or possesses any of the following assets shall be excluded from being identified as EWS, irrespective of the family income: 5 acres of agricultural land and above; Residential at of 1000 sq ft and above; residential plot of 100 sq yards and



The next hearing in the Supreme Court is on January 6. *Express Archive*

above in notified municipalities; residential plot of 200 sq yards and above in areas other than the notified municipalities

—DoPT, JAN 31, 2019

Census and NPR

❖ Context

- The first phase of the census and collection of details to update the National Population Register (NPR) have been postponed at least till September.

❖ Key Highlights

- The first phase of Census 2021 — the Houselisting and Housing Census along with updating the NPR — was scheduled to be held from April-September, 2020 but was postponed indefinitely due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The second and main phase of the decennial exercise — the population enumeration — was to be concluded by March 5, 2021.
- Freezing of boundary limits of administrative units (boundaries of districts, sub-districts, tehsils, talukas, police stations etc.), at least three months prior, is a prerequisite for conducting the census.

❖ About Census

- The census provides information on size, distribution and socio-economic, demographic and other characteristics of the country’s population.
- First started under British Viceroy Lord Mayo in 1872.
- It helped in framing new policies, government programs to uplift areas of improvement in the community.
- The first synchronous census in India was held in 1881. Since then, censuses have been undertaken uninterruptedly once every ten years.
- **Conduct By:** The Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner, India under the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India.

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❖ About NPR

- It's a **database containing a list of all usual residents of the country**. Its objective is to have a **comprehensive identity database** of people residing in the country.
- A usual resident for the purposes of NPR is a **person who has resided in a place for six months or more**, and intends to reside there for another six months or more.
- The NPR was **first collected in 2010 and then updated in 2015**.
- It already has a **database of 119 crore residents**.
- It is **generated through house-to-house enumeration** during the "house-listing" phase of the census, which is held once in 10 years.

PM Kisan

❖ Context

- Govt releases **10th installment** of financial benefit under PM-KISAN scheme.

❖ Key Highlights

- Under the scheme, an **amount of over ₹20,000 crore** was transferred to more than 10 crore beneficiary farmer families across the country.

❖ About the Scheme

- It was **launched in February 2019**.
- It is a **Central Sector Scheme** with **100%** funding from the Government of India.
- Implemented by the **Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare**.



❖ Features

- Under the scheme, the **Centre transfers an amount of Rs 6,000 per year, in three equal installments, directly into the bank accounts of all landholding farmers irrespective of the size of their land holdings**.
- Identification of Beneficiaries** - The entire responsibility of identification of beneficiary farmer families rests with the State / UT Governments.

❖ Objectives

- To **supplement the financial needs** of the Small and Marginal Farmers in procuring various inputs to ensure proper crop health and appropriate yields, commensurate with the anticipated farm income at the end of each crop cycle.
- To **protect them from falling in the clutches of moneylenders** for meeting such expenses and ensure their continuance in the farming activities.

KABIL

❖ Context

- Ministry of Mines** has created a joint venture company namely **Khanij Bidesh India Ltd** with participating interest of National Aluminum Company Ltd (NALCO), Hindustan Copper Ltd (HCL) and Mineral Exploration Corporation Ltd (MECL)

❖ Key Highlights

- Its mandate is to identify and acquire overseas mineral assets of critical and strategic nature
- The initiative will give further fillip to **Atma Nirbhar Bharat** and cater to the requirements of crucial sectors such as e-mobility, renewable energy, medicine, aerospace, aviation etc.
- Australia, Argentina, Bolivia and Chile** likely to be Source Countries
- Largest reserves of Lithium in world are in **Bolivia>Argentina>Chile>USA>Australia**.
- However, **Australia** is the **largest producer of Lithium** in the world.

❖ Critical and Strategic Minerals

- These minerals are important for the economic and national security of a country.
- Though these may differ from one state to another, some minerals are universally considered strategic because of their unique properties in application to a particular industry like lithium is used for batteries manufacturing which are critical in various forms of energy-storage, from smart grid to e-vehicles.
- In a report published in 2011, Planning Commission of India identified following strategic minerals - **Beryllium, Bismuth, Cobalt, Gallium, Germanium, Indium, Tantalum, Tin, Tungsten, Niobium, Selenium, Rare Earth Elements/Minerals**.



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Biophysical effects of Bioenergy crops

❖ Context

- According to a study, converting annual crops to perennial bioenergy crops can induce a cooling/warming effect on the areas where they are cultivated

❖ Key Highlights

- **Eucalyptus, poplar, willow, miscanthus and switchgrass** were the bioenergy crops used in the study.
- Cultivation area under bioenergy crops occupies 3.8 per cent $\pm$ 0.5 per cent of the global total land area
- However, they exert **strong regional biophysical effects**, leading to a global net change in air temperature of **-0.08 ~ +0.05 degrees Celsius**.
- Compared to the herbaceous crops, **changes in the energy fluxes induced by woody crops** in the cultivation regions are larger, and the cooling effect is stronger and healthier across different cultivation maps. **Energy flux is the rate of transfer of energy through a surface**
- Strong cooling effects in Eurasia, between 60°N and 80°N, may protect permafrost from thawing or reduce methane emissions from wetlands.
- **Cooling effects are more for eucalypt and the greatest warming effects are seen for switchgrass.**
- Replacing forests with switchgrass not only results in biophysical warming effects but could also release more carbon through deforestation than converting other short vegetation to bioenergy crops.

News in Between the Lines

New Plant Species



❖ Context

- Researchers have reported **two new plant species** from the biodiversity rich **Western Ghats regions** in Thiruvananthapuram and Wayanad districts of Kerala.

❖ Key Highlights

- They have been christened **Fimbristylis sunilii** and **Neanotis prabhuii**, and the findings by the research teams have been detailed in the plant taxonomy journal **Phytotaxa**.
- Collected from the grasslands of **Ponmudi hills**, Thiruvananthapuram, **Fimbristylis sunilii** has been named after plant taxonomist **C.N. Sunil**. It has been provisionally assessed as **data deficient (DD)** under the IUCN Red List categories.
- **Neanotis prabhuii** has been discovered in the **Chempra Peak grasslands of Wayanad**. It hails from the family Rubiaceae and grows on high-altitude grasslands. It has been categorised as **data deficient (DD)**.

Milan Exercise



❖ Context

- Indian **Navy's multilateral Milan Exercise** to take place next month.

❖ Key Highlights

- More than **40 plus navies** from across the globe are expected to enter the Indian waters starting next month.
- This time besides the member countries of the **QUAD (Japan, the US and Australia)**, the member nations of **AUKUS** (the UK, Australia & the US) too are going to be participating in this drill.
- Both **India and likeminded navies** are **getting together to find ways to counter the growing presence of China** in the Indian Ocean Region and Indo-Pacific.

❖ About Milan Exercise

- It is a **biennial, multilateral** naval exercise which **started in 1995**.
- Formerly, it was held at **Port Blair** and now is **shifted to Visakhapatnam**.
- The Navy has **held 10 editions of the Milan exercise**, with the theme of **“synergy across the seas”** to enhance professional interactions between friendly foreign navies and learn best practices from each other, since 1995.

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	➤ The areas of cooperation of the exercise includes capacity building, marine domain awareness, training, hydrography, technical assistance, and operational exercises.
ODF+ 	❖ Context ➤ Telangana tops Open Defecation Free plus list under Swachh Bharat Mission (Grameen) Phase-II programme till 31.12.2021 ❖ Key Highlights - The programme was launched by Department of Drinking water and sanitation, Ministry of Jal shakti in 2019 as an extension of the ODF programme Objective: To reinforce ODF behaviours and focus on providing interventions for safe management of solid and liquid waste in villages - The programme has four verticals - biodegradable waste management, plastic waste management, greywater management and faecal sludge management - Through ODF+ dashboard and Swachh Gram Darpan app people can monitor the working of programme at district and state levels - At least 700 Gobardhan plants will be set up one in each district
NEAT 3.0 	❖ Context ➤ Ministry of Education launched the NEAT 3.0 platform ❖ Key Highlights National Education Alliance for Technology is the single platform to provide the best developed ed-tech solutions and courses to students of the country 58 global and Indian startups (edtech companies) are onboard offering 100 courses and e-resources to boost employability of the youth - These solutions use Artificial Intelligence for a personalized and customized learning experience AICTE acts as facilitator and also ensure that solutions are freely available to a large number of socially and economically backward students
Kaziranga National Park & Tiger reserve 	❖ Context ➤ The Assam government is awaiting the Centre's clearance for a 35 km elevated road over nine corridors used by the animals of the Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve usually during high floods. ❖ Key Highlights Formed in 1908 on the recommendation of Mary Curzon (wife of then Viceroy Curzon), the park is located in the edge of the Eastern Himalayan biodiversity hotspots – Golaghat, Karbi Anglong and Nagaon district. 430 square kilometer area - home to more than 2200 Indian one-horned rhinoceros, approximately 2/3rd of their total world population. - In the year 1985, the park was declared as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO. - Along with the iconic Greater one-horned rhinoceros, the park is the breeding ground of elephants, wild water buffalo, and swamp deer. declared as Tiger Reserve in 2006. - It is also recognised as Important Bird Area by Birdlife International for conservation of avifaunal species