The Hindu

States

Population stabilisation should not spark demographic imbalance: U.P. CM (Page no. 4)
(GS Paper 3, Economy)
On World Population Day, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said that population stabilization should not lead to demographic imbalance and described the increase in the population of a particular group as a matter of concern. It could become a "matter of concern for religious demography" and leads to "disorder and anarchy". "So when talk of population stabilisation, should rise above caste, religion, region, and language.
The CM said in a particular group, both infant mortality and maternal mortality rates were high because of the inadequate gap between two pregnancies. Its cost has to be paid by the whole society. Population stabilization should not be the goal of only the Health Department, other departments such as Rural Development, Panchayati Raj and Education should work in tandem with each other, and awareness and enforcement should work together.
ASHA workers and Aanganwadi workers should work in sync with the Panchayati Raj officials in villages and cities and basic education teachers to spread awareness.

Editorial

The new 'normal' of political splits and shifts (Page no. 6)
(GS Paper 2, Polity and Governance)
Political parties sometimes break up like marriages, and like remarriages, individual legislators switch parties. In both cases, the consequences can be severe. When individual legislators or a group decide to leave a party, form another party, or join another party, it could have repercussions in terms of government formation, maintenance, and termination.
In Maharashtra, recently, and in **Madhya Pradesh**, a while ago, splits in the ruling party and a subsequent realignment of legislators inaugurated new governments.
Splits and switches are commonplace in legislatures across the globe, and India has witnessed at least three distinct waves.
The first wave occurred towards the latter half of the 1960s when challengers to the Congress attempted to displace it in the States. There was literally great shoving and pushing and a quick turnover of governments due to the free movement of legislators across political parties.
The next phase was inaugurated with an attempt to end the free movement and regulate the behaviour of legislators through the **anti-defection law**. While the law discouraged individual movement, it incentivised a collective movement of legislators since it laid down specific numbers to legitimise and validate party switches.
When legislators switch in groups, the costs are shared, and the move also appears less opportunistic, which in many ways defeats the purpose of the legislation. Though the law has placed hurdles before splits and switches, the activity has continued. To make matters worse, the implications of the law now influence the strategies of legislators and parties.
The third phase was inaugurated in 2014 with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on the ascendance when already-dominant parties began to use splits and switches to weaken and destroy their competitors.
Aided by friendly Governors, the BJP, like the Congress did earlier, benefited from a string of governmental changes, including Arunachal Pradesh (2016), Bihar (2017), Karnataka (2019), Madhya Pradesh (2020), and Maharashtra (2022), which were brought about by legislators switching sides. In Puducherry (2021), switches led to fresh elections, bringing a BJP alliance to power.
In Goa (2022) and Manipur (2017), though the Congress was returned as the single-largest party, it was outmanoeuvred by the BJP soon after. It was only in Uttarakhand that a Supreme Court of India intervention saved the Congress government.

The scam faultline is damaging Indian banking (Page no. 6)
(GS Paper 3, Economy)
The biggest banking scam in India has come to the forefront in the midst of celebrations of 'Aazadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav'; in this case, **Dewan Housing Finance Corporation Limited** (DHFL) has hoodwinked a consortium of banks driven by the Union Bank of India to the **tune of ₹35,000 crore** through financial misrepresentation.

The DHFL case was not an isolated case. In February this year, **ABG Shipyard Limited** of Surat had already taken a loan of about ₹23,000 crore in a fake manner.

On February 1, 2019, a consortium of banks had held a meeting to take cognisance of the serious allegations of loan repayment default against the **DHFL**.

Subsequently, a core committee of seven of the largest banks — the State Bank of India (SBI), the Bank of Baroda (BoB), the Bank of India, Canara Bank, the Central Bank of India, Syndicate Bank and the Union Bank of India (UBI) — was formed. KPMG (a 'global network of professional firms providing audit, tax and advisory services') was roped in as the evaluator to lead a unique survey review of the DHFL for the period April 1, 2015-March 31, 2019.

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), in its first information report, has shown that the State Bank of India was the most badly hit with a non-performing asset (NPA) base of ₹9,898 crore the very sum the DHFL acquired from it.

Essentially, the Bank of India and Canara Bank have been plundered to the tune of more than ₹4,000 crore each by the DHFL. Also, more than ₹3,000 crore each has been supposedly cleaned up by the DHFL from the Union Bank of India and the Punjab National Bank.

The banking system of any country is the backbone of its economy. Excessive losses to banks affect every person in the country because the amounts deposited in banks belong to the citizens of the country. The NPAs that banks incur are mainly due to bad loans and scams.

Data by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) show that around 34% of scams in the banking industry are on account of inside work and due to poor lending practices by and the involvement of the junior and mid-level management.

The data by the RBI also show that one of the fundamental problems in the way of the development of banking in India is on account of rising bank scams and the costs consequently forced on the framework. Strangely, as in a Global Banking Fraud survey (KPMG), the issue is not just for India alone; it is a worldwide issue.

Explainer

The search for dark matter (Page no. 8)
(GS Paper 3, Science and Technology)
Many physicists strongly believe that the entire visible part of the universe forms only 5% of all matter in it. They believe the rest is made up of dark matter and dark energy.

Once this was convincingly demonstrated through various indirect observations and calculations, experiments started being set up to hunt for these elusive particles.

The latest to hit the news in the field of dark matter is a dark matter detector experiment named LUX-ZEPLIN (LZ) in South Dakota in the U.S. As of today this is the most sensitive dark matter detector in the world.

To give an idea of the degree of difficulty in measuring evidence of a dark particle, it is said that the chamber of this LZ detector, can contain only one gram of dust if it is to detect a dark matter particle. This is the extent to which researchers have to go to rule out unwanted signals coming from other entities.

All interactions in the universe are a result of four fundamental forces acting on particles — strong nuclear force, weak nuclear force, electromagnetic force and gravitation.

Dark matter is made up of particles that do not have a charge — which means they do not interact through electromagnetic interactions. So, these are particles that are "dark", namely because they do not emit light, which is an electromagnetic phenomenon, and "matter" because they possess mass like normal matter and hence interact through gravity.

Gravitational force, besides not being fully integrated and understood by particle physicists, is extremely weak. For one thing, a particle that interacts so weakly becomes rather elusive to detect. This is because interactions from other known particles could drown out signals of dark matter particles.

There is strong indirect evidence for dark matter, and this evidence is reflected at various levels (or distance scales, as physicists would explain).

At the shortest distance scale, consider the rotation of galaxies. If you look at stars all the way from the centre of any galaxy to its rim, the way the velocities of the observed stars change may be plotted.

The new guidelines to prevent unfair trade practices (Page no. 8)
(GS Paper 2, Polity and Governance)
On July 4, the Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) announced five guidelines to prevent unfair trade practices and to protect consumer interests regarding the levy of service charges in hotels and restaurants.

The guidelines are in addition to the Centre's 2017 guidelines which prohibit the levy of service charges on consumers by hotels and restaurants, and terms the charging for anything other than "the prices displayed on the menu card along with the applicable taxes" without "express consent" of the customer as "unfair trade practices".

The CCPA has been established to regulate matters related to the violation of the rights of consumers. Under the Consumer Protection Act (CPA), 2019, the authority was established to regulate violations of consumer rights, unfair trade practices, and false or misleading advertisements that are prejudicial to the interest of the public.

The CCPA has authority under section 18 of the CPA, 2019 to protect, promote and most importantly enforce the rights of the consumers and prevent violation of their rights under the Act.

It also seeks to ensure that no person engages in unfair trade practices. It is also empowered to issue guidelines to enforce the rights of the consumers laid down in the Act.

The authority has issued a letter to the Chief Secretaries of the States on service charge imposition, asking them to ensure compliance with the new guidelines on service charges.

It has also been said that the State should instruct all the district magistrates to take appropriate action against violations of the guideline.

A service charge is a tip or a direct transaction between the customer and the restaurant staff, specifically the wait staff. It is a fee collected to pay for services associated with the purchase of a primary product or service. It is collected by hospitality sectors and food and beverage industries as a fee for serving customers.

Text and Context

Failing the forest (Page no. 9)
(GS Paper 3, Environment)
On June 28, the Environment Ministry notified the Forest (Conservation) Rules, 2022 under the Forest (Conservation) Act to replace the earlier rules. Rajya Sabha member and Congress politician Jairam Ramesh lashed out against the Centre stating that the government is trying to dilute the Forest Rights Act, 2006 with the new conservation rules.

Union Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav clarified that the new rules "do not dilute or infringe on" the provisions of the FRA. But has the FRA ever been a tool for forest conservation.

On February 13, the Supreme Court ordered the eviction of more than 10 lakh Adivasis and other forest dwellers from forestland across 17 States.

The petitioners, mainly wildlife NGOs, had demanded that State governments evict those forest dwellers whose claims over traditional forestland under the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006, known simply as the Forest Rights Act (FRA), had been rejected.

On February 28, the court stayed its controversial order and asked the States to submit details on how the claims of the dwellers were decided and the authorities competent to pass final rejection orders.

While the Supreme Court has now made it clear that there will be no forcible eviction, what the order has succeeded in doing is resuscitating a sharp binary between the human rights- and wildlife rights-based groups that have for decades tried to swing public opinion in their favour.

The wildlife groups who went to court argue that implementation of the FRA could lead to 'encroachments' and fresh clearance of forestland for human dwellings.

The human rights groups have argued that the FRA was passed by Parliament and is aimed at correcting historical injustices to traditional forest dwellers who, since colonial times, have been subject to a cycle of evictions

News

AI-based Mandarin translation devices for Army (Page no. 10)
(GS Paper 3, Science and Technology)
Indian soldiers patrolling on the Line of Actual Control (LAC), when they come face to face with Chinese soldiers, will soon be able to understand Mandarin and reply back instantly, with the help of a 600gm Artificial Intelligence-based device developed by an Indian start-up.

Currently under advanced trials with the Army, it was one of the 75 AI-enabled products and applications unveiled by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh at the 'AI in Defence' symposium.

"It is an offline handheld language translation system which works based on AI. It has been tested in the forward areas and Army has given lot of assistance. Its performance will improve as more data comes from the field.

We are currently working to make it smaller and wearable on the wrist, he said while showcasing the product at the exhibition.

It is bidirectional with a range of 5-10 feet and converts Mandarin to English. "We are also working on a Hindi version and trying to enhance the range to 20 feet," Mr. Iyengar said.

The first demonstration was done in 2017 and since then, there have been several trials. Stating that they are now working with the Army for deployment and orders, Mr. Iyengar added, "We have requested them to place orders with start-ups quickly."

Troops of India and China come face to face on various occasions during patrols and local commanders too interact at various levels as part of efforts to maintain peace on the ground. Language is a major hindrance and interpreters need to be present during occasions like flag meetings.

The exhibition also had several other AI-enabled products like robotic mine detector, intrusion detection system and integrated command fusion, remote weapon station, rail mounted robo, sensors for underwater domain awareness, and swarm drones, among others.

Three AI products developed by Defence PSUs having dual-use applications and good market potential, namely AI-enabled Voice Transcription/Analysis software developed by Bharat Electronics Limited, Driver Fatigue Monitoring System developed by Bharat Earth Movers Limited and AI-enabled evaluation of welding defects developed by Garden Reach Shipbuilders & Engineers, were screened during the event. These products are expected to open up new business avenues for the DPSUs.

India set to beat China in population: UN report (Page no. 12)
(GS Paper 2, International Groupings/reports)
India is set to surpass China as the world's most populous country in 2023, with each counting more than 1.4 billion residents this year, a United Nations report, warning that high fertility would challenge economic growth.

The world's population, estimated to reach 8 billion by November 15 this year, could grow to 8.5 billion in 2030, and 10.4 billion in 2100, as the pace of mortality slows, said the report released on World Population Day.

India's population was 1.21 billion in 2011, according to the domestic census, which is conducted once a decade. The government had deferred the 2021 census due to the pandemic.

The world's population was growing at its slowest pace since 1950, having fallen below 1% in 2020, UN estimates showed.

In 2021, the average fertility of the world's population stood at 2.3 births per wo- man over a lifetime, having fallen from about 5 births in 1950.

This is an occasion to celebrate our diversity, recognise our common humanity, and marvel at advancements in health that have extended lifespans and dramatically reduced maternal and child mortality rates.

Still, a growing population was a reminder of a shared responsibility of care for the planet and to "reflect on where we still fall short of our commitments to one another.

The UN said more than half of the projected increase in the global population up to 2050 will be concentrated in eight countries — Congo, Egypt, Ethiopia, India, Nigeria, Pakistan, the Philippines and the United Republic of Tanzania.

Business

RBI sets up system to settle international trade in rupees (Page no. 14)
(GS Paper 3, Economy)
The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has put in place a mechanism to facilitate international trade in rupees (INR), with immediate effect. However, banks acting as authorised dealers for such transactions would have to take prior approval from the regulator to facilitate this.

"In order to promote growth of global trade with emphasis on exports from India and to support the increasing interest of global trading community in INR, it has been decided to put in place an additional arrangement for invoicing, payment, and settlement of exports / imports in INR," the RBI said in a notification.

Before putting in place this mechanism, banks will be required to take prior approval from the Foreign Exchange Department of Reserve Bank of India, Central Office at Mumbai.

The RBI's move to set up International Trade Settlement mechanism in INR would facilitate trade with countries under sanction like Iran and Russia," said EEPC India Chairman Mahesh Desai.

Ever since sanctions were imposed on Russia, trade has been virtually at standstill with the country due to payment problems. As a result of the trade facilitation mechanism introduced by the RBI we see the payment issues with Russia easing.

The move would also reduce the risk of forex fluctuation specially looking at the Euro-Rupee parity. We see this as a first step towards 100% convertibility of Rupee.

All exports and imports under this arrangement may be denominated and invoiced in rupee (INR) and the exchange rate between the currencies of the two trading partner countries may be market determined, RBI said in the notification.

Indian importers undertaking imports via this mechanism will make payment in INR which will be credited into the Special Vostro account of the correspondent bank of the partner country, against the invoices for the supply of goods or services from the overseas seller.

Indian exporters using the mechanism will be paid the export proceeds in INR from the balances in the designated Special Vostro account of the correspondent bank of the partner country.