

The Indian Express

Front Page

14 of 15 states had asked for higher MSP for paddy than what Centre announced (Page no 3)

(GS Paper 3, Indian Economy)

Fourteen of 15 states and Union Territories which suggested a minimum support price for paddy recommended a higher MSP than the one declared by the Union government.

On June 8, the Centre announced the MSP at the rate of Rs 2,040 per quintal for paddy (Common) and Rs 2,060 per quintal for paddy (Grade A) for the kharif marketing season 2022-23.

A report of the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP), based on which the government announces the MSPs for various crops, shows that all 15 states and UTs had suggested the paddy MSP in the range of Rs 2,000 per quintal to Rs 4,513 per quintal, on the basis of their production cost projection.

These states and UTs are Andhra Pradesh, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Jammu and Kashmir, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra, Odisha, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, Telangana and West Bengal.

Question mark on Russia inputs, India evaluates French push at Jaitapur (Page no 3)

(GS Paper 3, Science and Tech)

Amid mounting uncertainties over the civil nuclear partnership with Russia in the wake of the Ukraine war, there are indications of fresh progress on the much-delayed deal with French power utility EDF for the supply of six EPR (European Pressurised Water Reactors) nuclear reactors.

The Department of Atomic Energy is actively examining a binding techno-commercial offer submitted by the French state-owned power company to help build six third-generation EPR reactors at Jaitapur in Maharashtra.

New Delhi had accorded an “in-principle” approval of the site at Jaitapur in Maharashtra for setting up of six reactors of 1650 MWe (megawatt electric) each as part of an umbrella nuclear deal signed with France in September 2008.

However, that proposal has been hanging fire on account of multiple factors, including the slowdown in nuclear projects globally post the Fukushima incident and internal reorganisation at French nuclear utility Areva (which was subsequently taken over by EDF).

Govt. and Politics

EC to govt: Limit seats a person can contest to one, ban opinion & exit polls (Page no 7)

(GS Paper 2, Polity and Governance)

Soon after taking charge as Chief Election Commissioner, Rajiv Kumar asked the Law Ministry to issue notifications for the linking of Aadhaar with voter IDs, allowing four qualifying dates for eligible people to register as voters, and also renewed the commission’s proposals for banning opinion polls and exit polls as well as limiting the seats from which a candidate can contest to just one.

The EC sent six key proposals to the Law Ministry. We have requested the government to notify the rules for linkage of Aadhaar to voter IDs and also for the four cut-off dates for eligible people to register as voters.

In December 2021, Rajya Sabha passed the Election Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2021 by voice vote, enabling “the linking of electoral roll data with the Aadhaar ecosystem” as the Opposition walked out in protest. Parties had alleged that the government passed the Bill in haste without adequate discussion.

The EC has also sought powers to deregister political parties, a long-standing demand of the poll panel, and sought the modification of Form 24A to mandate the disclosure of all donations above Rs 2,000 instead of Rs 20,000.

Editorial Page

Upper House, a question (Page no 10)

(GS Paper 2, Polity and Governance)

The objective of writing this piece is not to make a case for the abolition of the Rajya Sabha, for that would be a fool’s errand. It is, rather, to re-articulate a question that was uppermost even in the minds of members of the Constituent Assembly as they deliberated upon draft Article 67 corresponding to Article 80 of the Constitution of India, pertaining to the composition of the Council of States.

Lokanath Misra led the charge against a federal second chamber in the Constituent Assembly stating: “Sir,...I do not think there is any real need for the second chamber, nor do I think that it will serve any useful purpose.

Sir, so far as I have studied the Constitution and the constitutional precedents, it is now admitted almost on all hands that second chambers are out of date.

The only argument that is generally advanced in favour of such a chamber is that it will have a sobering effect on the decisions of the Lower House which is more representative of the people and that the people are now restive...

Its creation will only result in so much waste of public money and so much waste of time... I do not think that without a second chamber the country will be any the poorer for it, as now we stand.”

The Idea Page

A biased benchmark (Page no 11)

(GS Paper 3, Environment)

The 2022 Environmental Performance Index (EPI) released on World Environment Day (June 5) has triggered much consternation in India, as the country is ranked last (180th).

Indexes are inherently problematic, especially when applied to something as multi-dimensional and complex as environmental performance.

In trying to quantify, aggregate and rank, index makers have to make judgements about what issues count, how they are best measured individually, and how much importance to give to each issue and indicator in aggregating.

For example, indicators may focus on current rates of increase or decrease in environmental pressures (flows) — as the EPI does for carbon dioxide emissions and tree cover gains — but under-state the accumulated effect (stocks) that relates to actual harm, thereby ignoring past effects.

Moreover, when ranking countries, one is essentially applying the same standard across vastly different socio-ecological contexts – this involves difficult choices.

For example, the EPI leaves out arsenic in water, which is a major threat in Bangladesh. Arsenic is not counted by the EPI because it is not as widely prevalent as lead, which is included.

A steady hand (Page no 11)

(GS Paper 3, Economy)

All that could have possibly triggered higher inflation globally has already occurred — multiple waves of the pandemic, supply disruptions, an overdose of policy stimuli, war, sanctions, energy shocks, geopolitical adversity and weather disruptions.

In India, however, there are a few other triggers as well that will have a bearing on the inflationary trajectory, especially on the food side. Two of them relate to policy, while the other revolves around the weather gods.

The first is minimum support prices. Policymakers in India have often acted with alacrity to protect the interests of farmers over the years.

The MSP that is fixed by the government for kharif and rabi crops has been one of the key policy instruments.

The government has just announced MSP for Kharif crops and it is heartening to see that while the farmers are being compensated for higher cultivation costs, the urge to splurge or overcompensate them has been eschewed with the hike likely to have an impact of around 10 basis points on inflation going forward.

The backdrop was dire, given the persistence of negative terms of trade for farmers due to runaway prices of inputs, especially diesel and fertilisers.

Explained

BrahMos, 21 and developing (Page no 12)

(GS Paper 3, Defence)

On June 12, 2001, the BrahMos supersonic cruise missile was first tested from a land-based launcher in Chandipur.

In the 21 years since, BrahMos has been upgraded several times, with versions tested on land, air and sea platforms.

A look at the 21-year journey of the versatile asset, which recently bagged an export order from the Philippines.

Since the early 1980s, the Integrated Guided Missile Development Programme, conceived and led by Dr A P J Abdul Kalam, started developing a range of missiles including Prithvi, Agni, Trishul, Akash and Nag, with a wide spectrum of capabilities and ranges.

Ramsay Hunt Syndrome (Page no 12)

(GS Paper 3, Science and Tech)

Pop sensation Justin Bieber revealed that a viral disease has temporarily paralysed one side of his face. Speaking about the reason behind the recent cancellations of his shows, Bieber said he has developed a rare condition called the Ramsay Hunt Syndrome.

Ramsay Hunt Syndrome is neurological disease in which a virus – Varicella Zoster – causes inflammation of the nerves involved in facial movements.

When the nerves get inflamed, they lose their ability to function, leading to temporary facial palsy or paralysis.

What it means is that facial muscles in the infected person cannot receive necessary signals to function properly.

“There are 12 cranial nerves in the body. Ramsay Hunt Syndrome is the viral infection impacting the 7th cranial nerve that is involved in facial movements.

The inflammation caused by the Varicella Zoster Virus makes the nerve ineffective,” says Dr (Col.) JD Mukherji, Principal Director and Head of Neurology, Max Healthcare at Saket, Delhi.

Extra chromosome in 1 in 500 men, disease risk higher: study (Page no 12)

(GS Paper 3, Science and Tech)

Around one in 500 men could be carrying an extra X or Y chromosome, most of them unaware, according to researchers at the universities of Cambridge and Exeter.

This puts them at increased risk of diseases such as type 2 diabetes, atherosclerosis and thrombosis, the researchers report in a study published in Genetics in Medicine.

They analysed genetic data collected on over 200,000 men aged 40-70 from UK Biobank, a biomedical and anonymised database on half a million UK participants.

They found 356 men who carried either an extra X chromosome or an extra Y chromosome.

Food safety index: how it is worked out, how the states have performed (Page no 12)

(GS Paper 3, Indian Economy)

The SFSI is released annually for a financial year. For instance, the latest SFSI, released on World Food safety Day, June 7, is for the fiscal 2021-22.

This is the fourth edition of the SFSI since its inception in 2018-19.

Last week, the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) released the State Food Safety Index (SFSI) 2021-22. A look at how the index assesses and ranks states, and their performances.

Developed by the FSSAI, the index aims to measure the performance of states and Union Territories on selected “parameters” of food safety.

According to the FSSAI, the index is aimed at encouraging states and UTs to “improve their performance and work towards establishing a proper food safety ecosystem in their jurisdiction”.