



**Civil's IAS**  
Empowering Nation

# Weekly Current Affairs Compilations

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## Topic 1. MARATHAS QUOTA DEMAND

1. The Bombay High Court upheld the constitutional validity of reservation for the Maratha community in education and government jobs in Maharashtra but directed that it be slashed from the present 16 per cent to 12 per cent and 13 per cent respectively.
2. **Who are the Marathas?**
  - a. They are a Marathi-speaking, politically dominant community in Maharashtra.
  - b. They make up about one-third of the population of the state. Historically, they have been identified as a “warrior” caste with large landholdings.
  - c. Since the formation of Maharashtra state in 1960, of its 18 chief ministers, 11 have been from the Maratha community.
  - d. While division of land and agrarian problems over the years have led to a decline of prosperity among middle class and lower middle class Marathas, the community still plays an important role in the rural economy.
  - e. Based on its estimate of the Maratha population at 30% of Maharashtra’s total, the Commission had suggested for 12% and 13% reservation to Marathas but the state government of its own adopted 16% reservation. The Commission found that Marathas are about 30% of the state’s population. The court rejected the argument of the petitioners who had argued that 30% is not mathematically correct. If the population of SCs is 13%, that of STs is 11%, and that of OBCs as per Mandal Commission is 52% and if Maratha is added as 30%, it would take the total population over 100%, the petitioners had argued.
3. Following is the chronology of events pertaining to the Maratha quota case:
  - **June 2017:** Maharashtra government constitutes State Backward Class Commission to study the social, financial and educational status of Maratha community.
  - **July 2018:** Sporadic violence across Maharashtra by the Maratha community demanding quota in education and government jobs.
  - **November 15, 2018:** Commission submits its report to the Maharashtra government.
  - **November 30, 2018:** Maharashtra legislature passes a bill proposing 16 per cent reservation in education and government jobs for Maratha community, declared as socially and educationally backward class by the government.
  - **November 30, 2018:** Maharashtra Governor C Vidyasagar Rao approves and signs the bill.
  - **December 3, 2018:** Bunch of petitions filed in Bombay High Court challenging the quota decision, and terms it as violative of the Supreme Court orders which says that reservation in any state should not exceed over 50 per cent.
  - **December 5, 2018:** Bombay High Court refuses to grant interim stay on the quota decision but posts petitions for final hearing.
  - **January 18, 2019:** Maharashtra government files affidavit, standing by its decision to grant reservation to the Maratha community, and says it was meant to alleviate the “socially and economically” backward class.

- **February 6, 2019:** A division bench of Justices Ranjit More and Bharati Dangre commences final hearing into all petitions pertaining to the Maratha reservation issue.
- **March 26, 2019:** HC concludes hearing arguments in the petitions. Reserves its judgment.
- **June 24, 2019:** HC says it would pronounce its verdict on the petitions on June 27.
- **June 27, 2019:** HC upholds constitutional validity of reservation for the Maratha community, but asks the government to reduce it from 16 per cent to 12 to 13 per cent, as recommended by the State Backward Classes Commission.

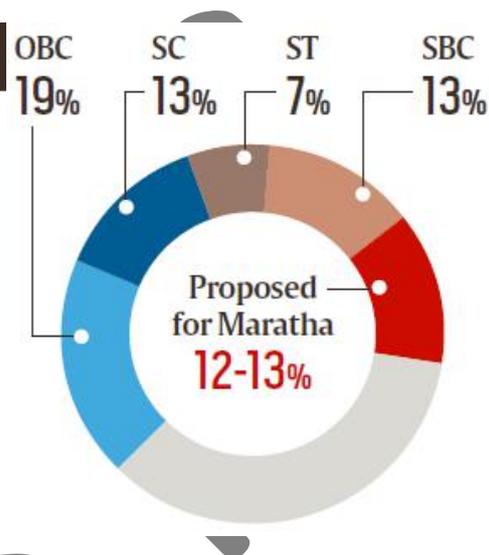
## MAHARASHTRA BREAKUP

**52%**

Existing reservation

**64-65%**

Reservation once Maratha quota is implemented. Government proposed 16% but HC saw merit in panel report that recommended 12% for education and 13% for jobs.



#### 4. History of Maratha Quota

- The demand for Maratha reservation was first mooted in the 1980s. In 1992, the Maratha Mahasangh had made a representation to the state government to provide reservation to the community. The NCP was the first party that had promised to provide reservation to the community in its 2009 election manifesto. In July 2014, the Congress-NCP government had brought in an ordinance for 16 per cent Maratha quota, but it failed the legal test. The subsequent BJP government in December 2014 came out with an Act to provide reservation for the community but the proposal also did not stand the scrutiny of the court.
- After largescale protests by the Marathas in November 2018, the state legislature again passed an Act proposing 16 per cent reservation in education and government jobs for the community, declared as socially and educationally backward class by the government. The Maharashtra State Reservations (of seats for admissions in educational institutions in the state and for appointments in the public service and posts under the state) for Socially and Educationally Backward Classes (SEBC) Act 2018 was then challenged in the Bombay High Court, terming it as violative of the Supreme Court order that reservations in any state cannot exceed 50 per cent.

#### 5. What is the existing quantum of reservation in Maharashtra?

- A nine-judge bench of the Supreme Court had ruled that total reservation for backward classes could not go beyond the 50 per cent mark.
- Maharashtra is one of the few states which is an exception to the rule.

- c. Following the 2001 State Reservation Act, the total reservation in the state is 52 per cent, out of which, the larger quotas are for SC (13%), ST (7%) and OBC (19%), with the rest going to Special Backward Class (2%) Vimukti Jati (3%), Nomadic Tribe (B) (2.5%), Nomadic Tribe (C) (Dhangar) (3.5%) and Nomadic Tribe (D) (Vanjari) (2%).
- d. The quotas given to the various Nomadic Tribes and Special Backward Classes, in fact, have been carved out of the total OBC quota.
- e. The addition of the 12-13 per cent Maratha quota will take the total reservation in the state to 64-65 per cent.

## **6. What did the court say?**

- a. The court relied on the findings of the Maharashtra State Backward Class Commission (MSBCC) headed by its chairman, retired Justice G M Gaikwad. The committee, in its 1,000-page report, had said that the Maratha community is socially, economically and educationally backward. The MSBCC surveyed 45,000 families from two villages from each of the 355 talukas with more than 50 per cent Maratha population. It found 37.28 per cent of Marathas living below the poverty line.
- b. The bench of Justice Ranjit More and Justice Bharati H Dangre on Thursday said that it was aware of SC's 50 per cent cap, however, in exceptional circumstances, the ceiling can be exceeded. It added that in this case, it agreed with the commission's findings that there are extraordinary and exceptional circumstances, based on quantifiable data. The court has, however, said that 16 per cent reservation is not justifiable and reservation should not exceed 13 per cent in employment and 12 per cent in education.
- c. In a landmark judgment in the case of Dr Jishri Laxmnarao Patil, a two-judge Bench of Bombay High Court has upheld Maratha reservation in Maharashtra. The judgment, reserved on March 26, was delivered on June 27 by Justices Ranjit More and Bharati Dongre. Since the Second National Backward Classes Commission, popularly known as the Mandal Commission, and two State Backward Classes Commissions had refused to recognise Marathas as a backward class and as many as 12 chief ministers belonged to the Maratha community, upholding of reservation in favour of Marathas has surprised many constitutionalists. Moreover, in the past, reservation on the basis of similar recommendations in favour of Jats, Gujjars, Patidars and Muslims had failed the judicial test.
- d. In the very first statement of 482-page judgment, the court talked of the challenge before modern democracies – "complex task of providing social justice to sections that have been traditionally discriminated against, while affirmative action does not hinder opportunities offered to the rest of the population".

## **7. Issues involved**

- a. The case involved several constitutional issues such as
  - i. determination of Marathas as a backward class on the basis of quantifiable data;
  - ii. constitutional validity of the Act providing for their reservation;
  - iii. validity of extraordinary circumstances that justify going beyond the judicially created 50% reservation rule;

- iv. limits of judicial review in examining affirmative action policies of the state and the effect of powers given to the National Commission for Backward Classes in 2018 after its conversion from a statutory authority to a constitutional body;
  - v. legality of creation of a new socially and educationally backward class and inclusion of just one caste in this class; and,
  - vi. assuming Marathas are backward, their non-inclusion in the existing OBC category.
- b. Backward or not
- i. The Mandal Commission, which listed 128 communities as backward, identified Marathas as 'forward'. The Khatri Commission (1995) constituted by the Maharashtra government held by majority that Marathas may not be included as Kunbis in the list of OBCs, but recommended that people entered as Kunbi-Maratha or Maratha-Kunbi may be given the same benefits as the Kunbi caste. The request of treating Marathas at par with Kunbis was not accepted even in 2000 and Marathas were not included in the central Backward Classes list. In 2008, the Bapat Commission by a 4-2 majority recommended that it would not be proper to include Marathas among OBCs from the viewpoint of principles of social justice.
  - c. The state government constituted a non-statutory committee under Narayan Rane, which concluded that the Bapat Commission's findings were not based on quantifiable data and should not be accepted. The Rane Committee independently collected data and concluded that the Maratha community is socially, educationally and economically backward, and recommended its inclusion among OBCs with separate 16% reservation.
  - d. The Governor of Maharashtra on July 9, 2014, promulgated the Maharashtra State Reservation (of seats for admissions in educational institutions in the State and for appointments or posts in the public services under the State) for Educationally and Socially Backward Category (ESBC) Ordinance, 2014. This was replaced with the ESBC Act of 2014 (Maharashtra Act No. 1 of 2015). The Bombay High Court in 2015 stayed implementation of this Act, which has now been upheld.

## **8. Quantifiable data**

- a. In 2017, a reference was made to the Maharashtra Backward Class Commission. When its chairman Justice S B Mhase passed away, he was replaced with Justice M G Gaikwad in November 2017. The Gaikwad Commission report submitted on November 15, 2018, found that Marathas are socially, educationally and economically backward and eligible to be included as a Backward Class.
- b. The High Court expressed its satisfaction on the authenticity of the data in the report. The court also discussed at length through comparative tabular analysis why denial of Backward Class status to Marathas by earlier Commissions was wrong.
- c. In social backwardness, the Gaikwad Commission found that 76.86% of Maratha families are engaged in agriculture and agricultural labour, around 70% live in kachcha dwellings, and only 35.39% have personal

tap water connections. In educational backwardness, it found that 13.42% of Marathas are illiterate, 35.31% primary educated, 43.79% HSC and SSC, 6.71% undergraduates and just 0.77% postgraduates and professionally qualified. In economic backwardness, the Commission found that 93% Maratha families have an annual income of Rs 1 lakh; 37.38% families are Below Poverty Line against the state average of 24.2%, and 71% own less than 2.5 acres land.

## **9. Breach of 50% ceiling**

- a. Though B R Ambedkar said in the Constituent Assembly that reservation must be confined to a minority of seats, the Constitution does not mention such a ceiling. The judgment quoted Indira Sawhney (1992) and other judgments to say that the Supreme Court permitted going beyond 50% in extraordinary circumstances, and this limit is not exhaustive of all categories of reservation. The High Court relied on Indira Sawhney which had laid down that "while 50% shall be the rule, it is necessary not to put out of consideration certain extraordinary situations inherent in the great diversity of this country and the people. It might happen that in far-flung and remote areas the population inhabiting those areas might, on account of their being out of the mainstream of national life and in view of conditions peculiar to and characteristic to them, need to be treated in a different way, some relaxation in this strict rule may become imperative. In doing so, extreme caution is to be exercised and a special case made out."
- b. In some cases, the courts have not permitted even 1% reservation in excess of 50%, for example Muslim reservation in undivided Andhra Pradesh. Neither is Maharashtra remote or far-flung, nor are Marathas seen as being out of the national mainstream. This portion of the High Court judgment will be challenged in the Supreme Court.
- c. Here the court accepted the Gaikwad Commission's recommendation that 85% people of the state have now become backward with the inclusion of 30% Marathas and thus are entitled to affirmative action. If the 50% rule is followed, the miniscule forward classes will benefit and their domination will continue.
- d. Maratha People celebrate after Bombay High Court awarded reservation to the Maratha community in government jobs and education, but said the quota percentage should be reduced from 16% to 12% to 13% as recommended by the State Backward Classes Commission (SEBC)

## **10. Separate Backward Class**

- a. Since 346 castes are already in the OBC list and entitled to 19% reservation, the court held that adding Marathas with 30% population will not be appropriate. Marathas will then take away the major chunk of seats, and it will adversely affect the interests of existing OBCs. Relying on Indira Sawhney where the Supreme Court had permitted classification between 'backward' and 'most backward', the High Court approved the creation of a new class for Marathas.
- b. The court also rejected the argument that Socially & Educationally Backward Class is now at par with SC and ST and comparison of Article 341 and 342 with Article 342A, inserted with effect from August 15, 2018,

means that this particular class will receive recognition only in the manner set out in the Constitution i.e. Article 342A. The court observed that the 102nd Constitutional Amendment has not taken over the powers of the state to set up its own Backward Classes Commissions and states may validly make reservations without the concurrence of National Commission for Backward Classes or Presidential order for inclusion of any caste.

### **11. The interim order**

- a. The court rejected the argument that the Maratha reservation is an overruling of the interim order by Bombay High Court in the case of Sanjeet Shukla which had held that in the absence of quantifiable data before categorizing the Maratha community as a backward class, the increase in reservation was not justiciable. The latest judgment upheld the reservation as a legitimate exercise of legislative power as the government has now collected quantifiable data and analysed it . With this exercise, the judgment concluded, the very basis of the interim order had been validly removed.
- b. The judgment will open the floodgates for reservation in favour of dominant castes in other states. If at all there was a legitimate reason to go beyond 50% reservation, as in the case of Tamil Nadu, it could have been inserted in the Ninth Schedule of the Constitution.

## Topic 2. KOREAN DEMILITARIZED ZONE

1. The Korean Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) is a region 4 km wide and 240 km long, dividing the Korean Peninsula into the Democratic People's Republic of Korea on the north and Republic of Korea on the south.
2. The DMZ was created after the 1953 Korean War Armistice Agreement, which ended the Korean War.
3. The site where the Armistice was signed is called the Joint Security Area (JSA), located 53 km to the north of Seoul.
4. It continues to be the venue where successive peace discussions concerning the region are conducted.
5. After it was first came into force in 1953, the DMZ has seen multiple skirmishes, but there has been a de-escalation in recent years. In 1968, a commando team from the North crossed over in a widely reported attempt to assassinate the then South Korean President. Relations between the two neighbours have thawed in recent years, with peace agreements signed in 1991 and in 2018.
6. The September 2018 agreement is the most comprehensive so far, with plans to convert the DMZ into a peace park. The pact included an initiative to rid the DMZ of more than 20 lakh landmines that remain embedded there.

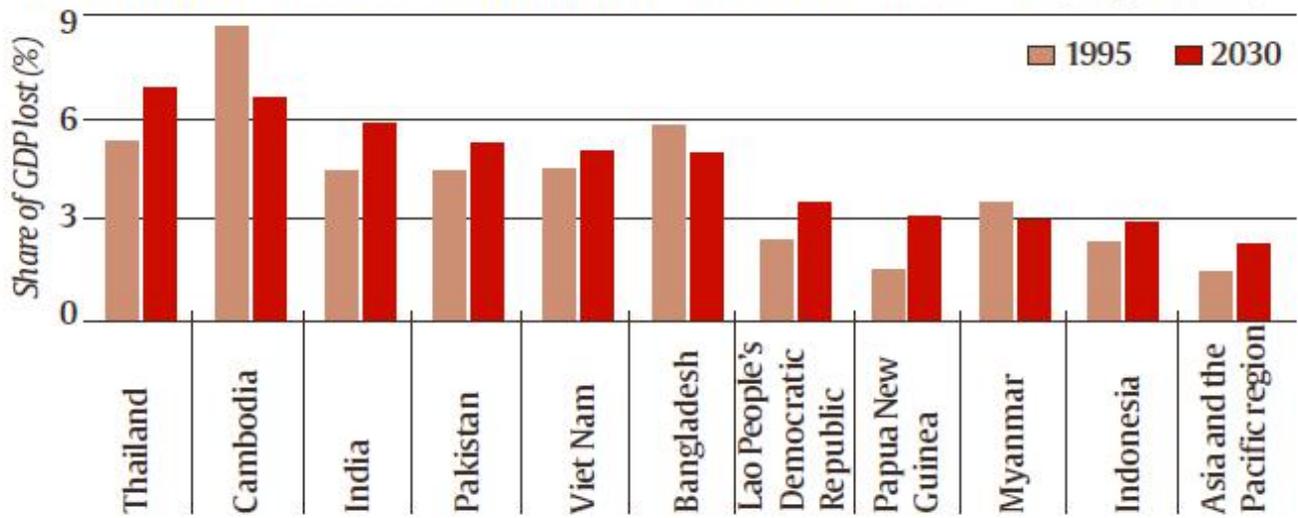
### Topic 3. OBC and SC

1. A move by the UP government to include 17 OBC groups among Scheduled Castes.
2. What is the distinction between an OBC and an SC?
  - a. The yardsticks for recognising specific castes as SC and OBC are distinct.
  - b. While extreme social, educational and economic backwardness are common qualifications for both groups, SCs draw such backwardness from untouchability.
  - c. For OBCs, apart from social, educational and economic backwardness, lack of adequate representation in government posts and services is a criterion.
  - d. The positive rights guaranteed under the Constitution to SCs are to correct the historical wrongs of untouchability, and critics argue that addition of other castes in the group dilutes that guarantee.
3. So, what are the procedures for listing a caste as an SC?
  - a. Between 1950 and 1978, six Presidential Orders were issued recognising specific caste groups as SCs.
  - b. The name 'Scheduled Caste' derives from the fact that this is annexed as a Schedule to the Constitution. Article 341(1) of the Constitution prescribes the procedure for regarding castes as "Scheduled Castes".
  - c. As per the procedure to make additions or deletions to the Schedule by amending the concerned Presidential Order for a state under Article 341(2), state governments first propose to modify the Schedule.
  - d. Only proposals agreed by both the Registrar General of India and the National Commission for Scheduled Castes are introduced as a Bill in Parliament.
  - e. This procedure was adopted by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment in 1999 and was amended in 2002.
  - f. A similar provision exists for Scheduled Tribes under Article 342.

#### **Topic 4. How GLOBAL WARMING could impact JOBS in India?**

1. By 2030, India is expected to lose an equivalent of 34 million jobs as a result of global warming, says a report released by the International Labour Organisation.
2. The report, 'Working on a warmer planet: The impact of heat stress on labour productivity and decent work' anticipates an increase in "heat stress" resulting from global warming.
  - a. It projects global productivity losses equivalent to 80 million full-time jobs in 2030, and the projection of 34 million jobs would make India the worst affected.
  - b. The report defines heat stress as heat in excess of what the body can tolerate without suffering physiological impairment.
  - c. It generally occurs at temperatures above 35°C, in high humidity.
  - d. Excess heat during work is an occupational health risk and restricts workers' physical functions and capabilities, work capacity and thus, productivity.
  - e. The report makes its projections based on a global temperature rise of 1.5°C by the end of the century, and also on labour force trends.
  - f. These projections "suggest that in 2030, 2.2 per cent of total working hours worldwide will be lost because of higher temperatures, a loss equivalent to 80 million full-time jobs.
  - g. This is equivalent to global economic losses of US\$2,400 billion.
  - h. The ILO says this is a conservative estimate, assuming that the global mean temperature does not rise more than 1.5°C.
3. The India projection
  - a. The region projected to lose the most working hours is southern Asia, at 5% in 2030, corresponding to around 43 million jobs, respectively.
  - b. A third of the southern Asian countries have already incurred losses greater than 4%, it said.
  - c. India, which lost 4.3% of working hours in 1995 because of heat stress, is projected to lose 5.8% of its working hours in 2030, which corresponds to 34 million jobs.
  - d. The impact of heat stress on labour productivity and decent work' anticipates an increase in "heat stress" resulting from global warming.
  - e. The report projects losses in working hours as 9.04% in agriculture (in shade), 5.29% in manufacturing, 9.04% in construction, and 1.48% in services.
  - f. Although most of the impact in India will be felt in the agricultural sector, more and more working hours are expected to be lost in the construction sector, where heat stress affects both male and female workers.
  - g. Globally, the two sectors projected to be hit worst are agriculture and construction, with agriculture worse affected.
    - i. The ILO says 940 million people around the world work in the agricultural sector, which is projected to account for 60% of working hours lost due to heat stress by 2030.
    - ii. In construction, an estimated 19% of global working hours is likely to be lost.

Percentage of GDP lost to heat stress under a 1.5°C global warming scenario, ten most affected countries in Asia and the Pacific, 1995 and 2030 (projections)



Source: ILO estimates based on data from the ILOSTAT database and the HadGEM2 and GFDL-ESM2M climate models.

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## Topic 5. COMPULSORY RETIREMENT OF GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS

# RULEBOOK AND GOVT SERVANTS

➤ Under Maharashtra Civil Service (Pension) Rules, 1982, sub-rules 10(4) and 65, state government has powers to compulsorily retire an official in public interest or if he is found to be of doubtful integrity

➤ Employees with state number 19 lakh



➤ Employees who have put in 30 years of service or crossed age of 50 years make up 4 lakh of these

### In NEWS:

The Minister for Personnel informed Lok Sabha that as per disciplinary rules, the government has right to proceed against corrupt officials on the basis of available evidence

### About:

- As per the applicable Disciplinary Rules, Government has the right to proceed against corrupt officials on the basis of available evidence.
- The Government also, has the absolute right to retire Government officials prematurely on the ground of lack of integrity and ineffectiveness, in public interest, as per the provisions of Fundamental Rules (FR) 56(j)(I), Rule 48 of Central Civil Services (CCS) Pension) Rules, 1972 and Rule 16(3) (Amended) of All India Services (Death-cum-Retirement Benefits) [AIS(DCRB)] Rules, 1958.
- These rules lay down the policy of periodic review and premature retirement of Government servants, which is a continuous process.
- For the period July 2014-May 2019, a total of 36,756 Group-A and 82,654 Group-B officers have been reviewed under Fundamental Rules (FR) 56(j)(I) and other provisions. Actions under the Rules have been recommended against 125 Group A and 187 Group B officials.

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<http://pib.nic.in/PressReleaselframePage.aspx?PRID=1578099>

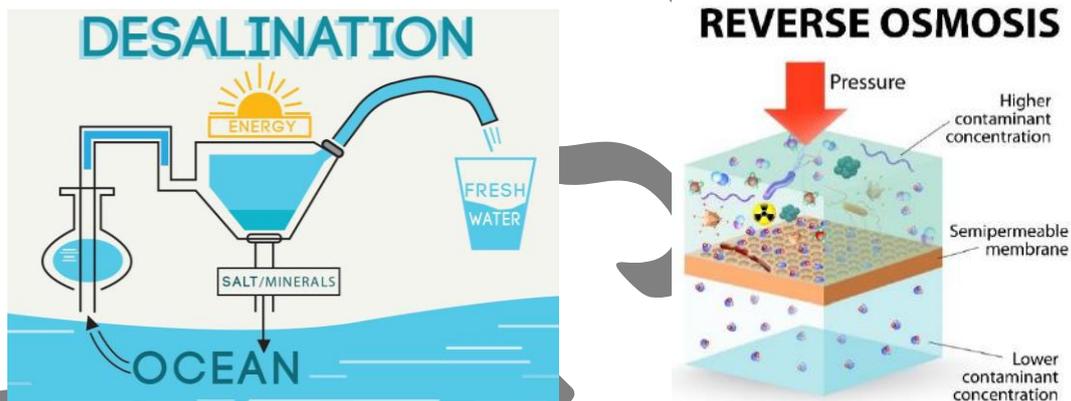
## Topic 6. DESALINATION

### In NEWS:

- With warnings from India's top policymakers and reports of major cities in India struggling to stave off a water crisis, there's talk about exploring technologies to harness fresh water.
- The one idea is desalination or obtaining freshwater from saltwater.
- Desalination technology is not an esoteric idea the city of Chennai already uses desalinated water. However, it only has a limited application, given the operation costs.

### What is desalination technology?

- To convert saltwater into freshwater, the most prevalent technology in the world is **Reverse osmosis (RO)**.
- **A plant pumps in salty or brackish water, filters separate the salt from the water, and the salty water is returned to the sea.**
- Fresh water is sent to households.
- Osmosis involves **a solvent (such as water) naturally moving from an area of low solute concentration, through a membrane, to an area of high solute concentration.**
- A reverse osmosis system applies an external pressure to reverse the natural flow of solvent and so seawater or brackish water is pressurised against one surface of the membrane, causing salt-depleted water to move across the membrane, releasing clean water from the low-pressure side'.



### Is RO water healthy?

- In the early days of RO technology, there were concerns that desalinated water was **shorn of vital minerals such as calcium, magnesium, zinc, sodium, potassium and carbonates.**
- They are collectively referred to as **Total dissolved solids (TDS)**.
- Higher quantities of these salts in desalination plants tend to corrode the membranes and filtration system in these plants.
- So ideally, a treatment plant would try to keep the TDS as low as possible.
- **Highly desalinated water has a TDS of less than 50 milligrams per litre, is pure, but does not taste like water.**
- Anything from **100 mg/l to 600 mg/l is considered as good quality potable water.**
- Most RO plants, including the ones in Chennai, put the water through a 'post-treatment' process whereby salts are added to make TDS around 300 mg/l.

### Are there technological alternatives?

- The alternative desalination technology used is thermal energy sourced from the ocean.

- There is a low-temperature thermal desalination (LTTD) technique for instance which works on the principle that water in the ocean 1,000 or 2,000 feet below is about 4° C to 8° C colder than surface water.
- So, salty surface water is collected in a tank and subject to high pressure (via an external power source).
- This pressured water vaporises, and this is trapped in tubes or a chamber.
- Cold water plumbed from the ocean depths is passed over these tubes and the vapour condenses into fresh water and the resulting salt diverted away.

#### **Is it economically viable?**

- The costs for desalination have decreased over the years.
- Water produced by desalination cost just a third of what it did in the 1990s.
- According to Desalination Association of India's estimate, production cost for sea water desalination plant varies between Rs 40 to 50 per cubic metre and the production cost of desalted water from effluent varies from Rs 15 to 50 per cubic metre.
- Similarly, the production cost of a brackish water desalination plant ranges between Rs 10 to 15 per cubic metre.
- According to Minister of Science and Technology, on an average, the cost of conversion of sea water into desalinated water is about 10 paise per litre water produce.
- The energy cost which is a major component could be brought down further if solar, wind or tidal wave are utilised.

#### **The way forward**

- National water policy should include utilisation of sea water resources for holistic development of country's water resources.
- The cost of sea water conversion plants may be shared by Centre, states, local bodies and private companies.
- Under the government's Sagarmala project where setting up of major development projects have been contemplated in coastal states, groundwater-based development should be discouraged.
- Instead, treated sea water should be used.
- The desalination plants should be established on public private partnership mode.
- This will ensure water security to the people on a long-term basis.

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<https://www.thehindu.com/sci-tech/is-desalination-realistically-a-help-in-harnessing-potable-water-from-the-sea/article28306470.ece>

<https://www.downtoearth.org.in/blog/water/desalinating-seawater-can-ensure-water-security-56908>

## Topic 7. Predicting HEAT WAVES three weeks in advance

### In NEWS:

- Researchers at Pune's Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM) have developed an extended range prediction system which enables Real time prediction of heat waves two to three weeks in advance.
- This system can predict heat waves with 70% accuracy.



### About:

- It has been developed by Pune's Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM).
- The prediction system has been successfully transferred to the Indian Meteorological Department (IMD), which has been using it since 2017. IMD used this system to predict heat waves this year.
- The system can predict heat waves with 70% accuracy, which is quite good considering that no real time prediction existed earlier.

### Functioning:

- This extended range prediction system enables Real time prediction of heat waves two to three weeks in advance.
- A heat wave day is identified when the maximum temperature is above 44 degree C or when all the three following conditions are seen.
  - i. When the region is facing unusually hot temperature.
  - ii. When the temperature is more than 36-degree C.
  - iii. When the departure from the normal temperature is more than 3.5-degree C.

### Findings:

- Based on observation data available from 1981 to 2017, the researchers found that places in two regions are prone to heat waves conditions:
  - i. Northwest India and
  - ii. Southeast coastal regions
- Based on the new criteria, between 1981 and 2018, the researchers identified 22 heat wave events in northwest region, and 14 in southeast coastal region.
- In addition, the researchers found nine events in a new region called northwest southeast.

### References:

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/iitm-pune-predicting-heat-waves-three-weeks-in-advance/article28306920.ece>

## Topic 8. INNER LINE PERMIT (ILP)

### Context:

- Manipur state government has decided to oppose the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2018, if there is no clause to protect the indigenous peoples of the North East (NE) region in general, and Manipur in particular.
- The Crisis in Manipur stems from the long standing demand of the people to introduce Inner Line Permit (ILP) System because of the vulnerability from outsiders to their ethnicity and livelihood.

### Understanding ILPS : An overlook at the past and the present

- ILPS (Innerline Permit System) is an Official travel document (Obligatory) issued by the Government of India to allow travel permit to Indian Citizen from outside states into a protected area for a limited period of time.
- It is obligatory for Indians residing outside those states to obtain permission prior to entering the protected areas.
- Visitors are not allowed to purchase property in these regions.
- The Provision for ILPS was made by British under an act called “Bengal Frontier Provision Act, 1873”.
- It is still prevalent in North Eastern States of India- Mizoram, Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh.
- The sole objective of this regulation is to protect indigenous ethnicity and livelihood of the local tribals.
- Manipur is also demanding for the immediate implementation of ILPS.

### Implications of ILPS :

- Outsiders can't have permanent residence as they are not given land purchasing right.
- ILPS can only be used for travel purpose.
- ILPS is not applicable to central government employees or security personnel.



### Manipur People's Protection Bill, 2018:

- It seeks to regulate the entry and exit of “outsiders” on the lines of the British-era inner-line permit system prevalent in three other north-eastern states — Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram and Nagaland.
- The bill sets 1951 as the base year to identify locals and prevent an influx of outsiders.

### Factors that push the people for ILPS :

Implementation of IRPS has certain favourable social, economic, political, cultural, educational and mental implications in Manipur.

### Economic:

- Protection of land and immovable properties.
- Manual work- It's clear that in the state most of the manual work is done by outsiders.
- If the outsiders in the state are bound by the ILP regulation then, the native people will not be deprived of manual works.

### Unemployment:

- If ILP comes into effect, the ever increasing issue of unemployment in the state would be lessen as outsiders in the state will not be able to get a domicile certificate.
- **Source of income**- Domestic tourist and outsiders who want to enter the state will have to take ILP and a minimal fee has to be paid by the person. This would be their source of income.

### Business and economy:

- If the ILP comes into effect, instead of some business class people who are seemingly controlling the market of Manipur only the indigenous Manipur is will become proprietors of shops and other business establishments.

#### **Demographic:**

- Illegal immigration and Stopping demographic change- Expert have the opinion that if we did not check the illegal influx in and around the bordering areas of the state, such as Jiribam bordering Bangladesh, More bordering Myanmar, it would be a sentimental issue resulting in the demographic change in the state.

#### **Cultural:**

##### **Cultural identity:**

- The cultural identity would be jeopardized if ILPS doesn't come into effect.
- Their indigenous ethnicity and culture is another reason of their fear and insecurity.

##### **Son of the Soil :**

- NE states like Manipur has strong ethnic nationalism and therefore they claim to be "son of the soil".
- Being conservative and isolated they generally feel vulnerable whenever there occurs influx of migrated people.
- **ILP as a prestige of the state-** ILP is not to prevent outsiders entering into Manipur, but it's sole purpose is to check the flow of undocumented immigrants in the state.
- It will enable to build an unique Manipuri identity, and gain respect from other societies.

##### **Security:**

- Preventing criminals from taking refuge- ILP is an effective tool to preventing criminals and anti-socials from entering the state and taking refuge here.
- The martial law AFSPA has also some elements of pushing factor that fuels the agitation.

##### **Fears and worries of the Manipuris**

- The influx of foreign tourists has increased exponentially, thus creating a demographic imbalance in the region.
- If this was not enough, illegal immigration from Bangladesh, Nepal and Myanmar has also contributed to the crisis.
- This has created fear among the locals over employment and availability of resources.
- At a time where there already exists stiff competition between the locals and outsiders over jobs, the outsiders mostly settle for low paid work.

##### **References:**

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/plea-in-sc-seeks-protection-for-non-nagas-in-dimapur/article28118917.ece>

<https://www.indiatoday.in/who-is-what-is/story/what-is-inner-line-permit-people-manipur-are-demanding-260803-2015-09-02>

## Topic 9. RIIN in Nagaland

### In NEWS:

- The Nagaland government has decided to set up a Register of Indigenous Inhabitants of Nagaland (RIIN) with the aim of preventing fake indigenous inhabitant's certificates.
- The exercise to prepare the Register of Indigenous Inhabitants of Nagaland (RIIN) will start from 10 July and will be completed in 60 days, according to a notification issued by Home Commissioner.

### Citizen check

A look at some key statistics of Nagaland, which is setting up a register of indigenous inhabitants

Population\*: 1,988,636

No. of tribal and non-tribal communities: 25

Population of 16 recognised tribes: 90%

Unlike other States, Nagaland's decadal population dropped by 0.47% between 2001 and 2011

Decadal growth in the 1980s: 56%

Decadal growth in the 1990s: 65%

\* Census 2011



### Review and Register of Indigenous Inhabitants of Nagaland (RIIN):

- The RIIN list will be based on "an extensive survey".
- It will involve official records of indigenous residents from rural and (urban) wards and would be prepared under the supervision of the district administration.
- The aim is to prevent fake 'indigenous inhabitants' certificates.
- The RIIN will be the master list of all indigenous inhabitants of the state.
- The process will be conducted across Nagaland and will be done as part of the online system of Inner Line Permit (ILP), which is already in force in Nagaland.
- The list will be prepared after an extensive survey of village-wise and ward-wise list of indigenous inhabitants under the supervision of district administration.
- The RIIN teams will visit each house and make a list of the indigenous inhabitants actually residing there.
- In addition, the state government will designate nodal officers of the rank of a Secretary to the state government.
- Their role will be to monitor the implementation and will have no say in the adjudication process.

### Review procedure:

- Respondents will be given an opportunity to make their case before the authorities.
- Eventually, respective Deputy Commissioners will adjudicate on the claims and objections based on official records and the evidence produced.
- This process will be completed before December 10, 2019.

### This unique identity is a part of the Inner Line Permit (ILP):

- Based on the adjudication and verification, a list of indigenous inhabitants will be finalised.
- Each person will be given a unique ID.
- The final list or the RIIN will be created and its copies will be placed in all villages and ward.
- Electronic copies of the list will also be stored in the State Data Centre and SMS-based authentication will be put in place.
- All indigenous inhabitants of the state would be issued a barcoded and numbered Indigenous Inhabitant Certificate.

### The RIIN updation:

- Once the RIIN is finalised, no fresh indigenous inhabitant certificates will be issued.
- Only new-born babies born to the indigenous inhabitants of Nagaland will be given fresh indigenous inhabitant certificates.

### What about those excluded from the list?

In case anyone who is left out of the RIIN, he/she will need to file an application before Home Commissioner who will get the matter verified and take necessary action for updating the RIIN if needed.

### References:

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/nagaland-census-nagaland-want-to-draw-up-a-list-of-all-indigenous-inhabitants-how-will-the-process-evolve/article28306085.ece>

<https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/assam-nrc-nagaland-register-of-indigenous-inhabitants-5809576/>

## Topic 10. KHARCHI PUJA

The Prime Minister greeted the people of Tripura on the start of the auspicious Kharchi Pooja.

### **About:**

#### **Region of celebration:**

Kharchi Puja is one of the most popular festivals in Tripura. It is celebrated at Agartala (Puran Agartala) in the temple premises of fourteen gods.

#### **Time:**

It's a week-long royal Puja which falls in the month of July on the eighth day of the new moon.

#### **Objective:**

- The word Kharchi is derived from the word Khya which means earth.
- Kharchi Puja is basically done to clean the post menstrual phase of mother earth's menstruation.

#### **Rituals:**

- On the day of the Puja, the fourteen gods are carried to river Saidra by the members of chantai.
- The gods are bathed in the holy water and are brought back to the temple.
- Animal sacrifice is also an important part of this festival.

#### **References:**

PIB

## Topic 11. SC to study Centre's query on 'refugee' status for illegal immigrants

### In NEWS:

- Two Rohingya men approach SC against the Centre's proposed plan to deport 40,000 members of the community to the land of their origin Myanmar.
- Thousands of Rohingya Muslims have been fleeing the Rakhine State on Myanmar's western coast for years, often caught between the military and Rohingya insurgents.
- The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) had also issued notice to the government on the proposed deportation.
- According to the petitions, the Centre's move violated the constitutional guarantee that the Indian State should "protect the life and liberty of every human being, whether citizen or not".



### Status of refugee in India:

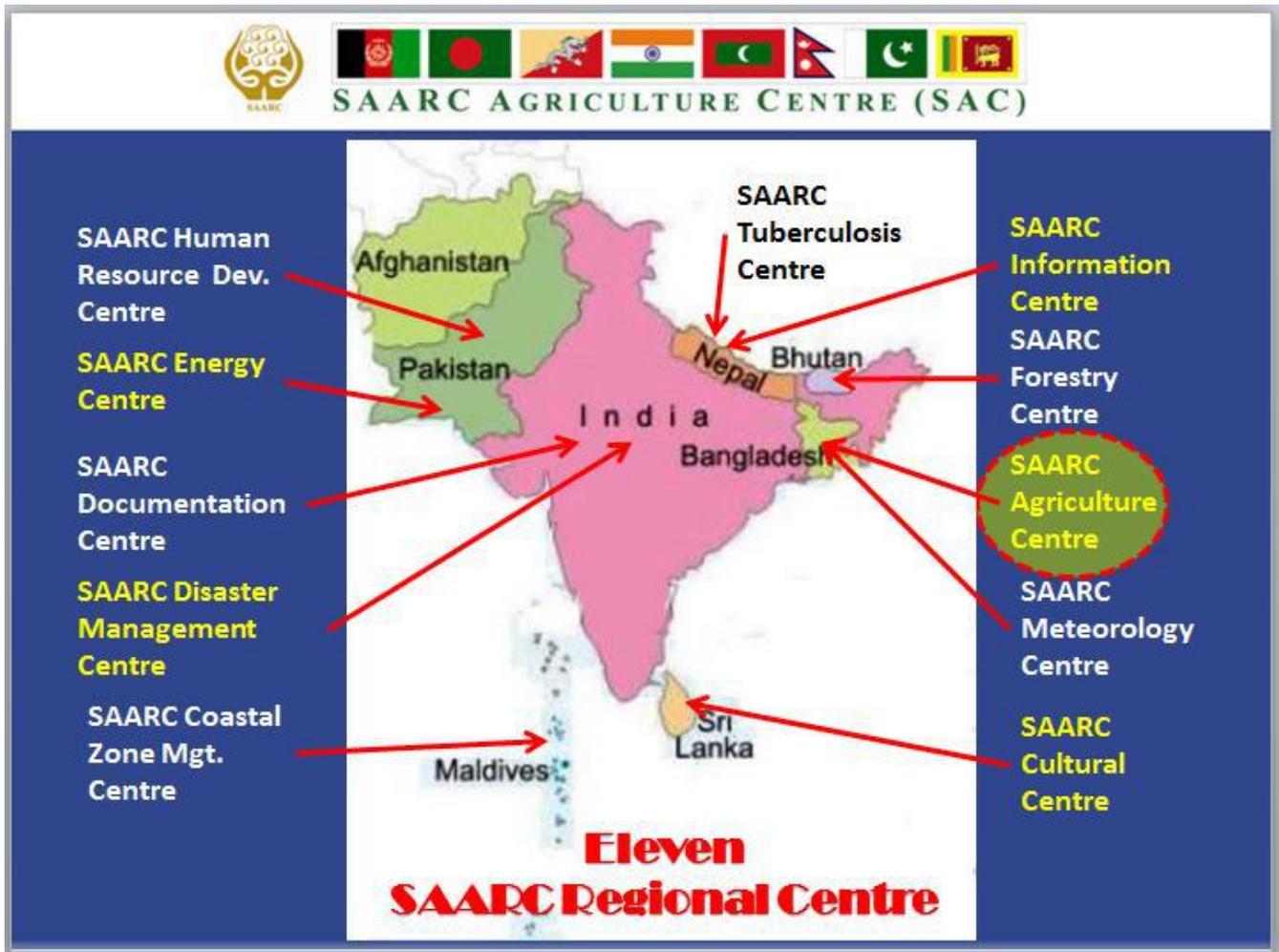
- India is not a party to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees or the 1967 Protocol, nor does it have a legal framework and national refugee status determination system.
- As a result, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) processes claims for refugee status in India.
- The UNHCR carries out a Refugee Status Determination (RSD) procedure, which starts with registration as asylum seekers.
- UNHCR will then conduct interviews with each individual asylum seeker accompanied by a qualified interpreter.
- This process provides a reasoned decision on whether refugee status is granted or not and gives the individual an opportunity to appeal a decision if the claim is rejected.
- The UNHRC report of 2016 on rights violations and abuses against Rohingya Muslims and other minorities in Myanmar had noted successive patterns of serious rights violations.
- Violations to the right to life, liberty and security of the Rohingya by State security forces and other officials in Myanmar.
- **The violations included summary executions, enforced disappearance, arbitrary arrest and detention, torture and ill-treatment, forced labour, arbitrary arrest and detention of hundreds of Rohingya, including women and children.**

### References:

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/on-rohingyas-centre-asks-sc-to-decide-if-illegal-immigrants-can-be-given-refugee-status/article28328569.ece>

## Topic 12. South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC)

- The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) is the regional intergovernmental organization and geopolitical union of nations in South Asia.
- Its member states include **Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, the Maldives, Pakistan and Sri Lanka**.
- Both **Myanmar and Thailand** are members of the **Association of South East Asian Nation (ASEAN)** and are **not the members of the SAARC**.
- Headquarters: Kathmandu, Nepal.



### Purposes:

- The SAARC seeks to promote the welfare of the peoples of South Asia, strengthen collective self-reliance, promote active collaboration and mutual assistance in various fields, and cooperate with international and regional organizations.
- SAARC provides a platform for the peoples of South Asia to work together in a spirit of friendship, trust and understanding.
- It aims to promote the welfare of the peoples of South Asia and to improve their quality of life through accelerated economic growth, social progress and cultural development in the region.

### Why SAARC is formed?

SAARC was formed as regional cooperation in 1985. The founding members of the SAARC organization are India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bhutan, Maldives & Afghanistan which joined them in the year 2005. The results act as an inspiration for the development of future projects in SAARC & South Asia.

### The major objectives of the SAARC:

SAARC was established with the following objectives:

1. 'Deeper Integration for **Peace and Prosperity**'.
2. To develop the welfare of the people of South Asia and to promote their quality of life.
3. To provide all individuals the opportunity to live in dignity and to realize their full potentials.
4. To promote and strengthen collective self-reliance among the countries of South Asia.
5. To contribute to mutual trust, understanding and appreciation of one another's problems.
6. To promote active collaboration and mutual assistance in the economic, social, cultural, technical and scientific fields.
7. To strengthen cooperation with other developing countries.
8. To strengthen cooperation among themselves in international forums on matters of common interests.
9. To cooperate with international and regional organizations with similar aims and purposes.

### Principles of SAARC

The principles of SAARC are as follows:

- a) Cooperation within the framework of the Association shall be based on respect for the principles of sovereign equality, territorial integrity, political independence, non-interference in the internal affairs of other states and mutual benefit.
- b) Such cooperation shall not be a substitute for bilateral and multilateral cooperation but shall complement them.
- c) Such cooperation shall not be inconsistent with bilateral and multilateral obligations.

### References:

<https://mofa.gov.np/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Revised-SAARC-Brief.pdf>

<http://saarc-sec.org/about-saarc>

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South\\_Asian\\_Association\\_for\\_Regional\\_Cooperation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South_Asian_Association_for_Regional_Cooperation)

## Topic 13. The National Medical Commission Bill, 2017

### Highlights of the Bill

- The Bill sets up the National Medical Commission (NMC).
- The NMC will regulate medical education and practice.
- It will determine fees for up to 40% seats in private medical institutions and deemed universities.
- The NMC will consist of 25 members.
- A Search Committee will recommend names to the central government for the post of Chairperson, and the part time members.
- Four autonomous Boards have been set up under the supervision of the NMC.
- These Boards will focus on undergraduate and postgraduate medical education, assessment and rating, and ethical conduct.
- There will be a National Licentiate Examination for doctors to obtain a licence to practice after graduation.
- This examination will also be the basis for admission to post-graduate medical courses.
- State Medical Councils will receive complaints relating to professional or ethical misconduct against a doctor.
- If the doctor is aggrieved of a decision of the State Medical Council, he may appeal to successively higher levels of authority.

### Key Issues and Analysis

- Two-thirds of the members in the NMC are medical practitioners. Expert committees have recommended that the regulator should consist of more diverse stakeholders in order to reduce the influence of medical practitioners in regulating medical education and practice.
- The NMC will determine fees for up to 40% of the seats in private medical colleges and deemed universities. There have been various arguments on fee capping by experts. It has been recommended by some experts that fees should be capped to enable access to medical education for all. On the other hand, it has also been suggested that fee capping would discourage entry of private colleges.
- In cases of professional or ethical misconduct by medical practitioners, the practitioners can appeal a decision of the NMC to the central government. It is unclear why the central government, and not a judicial body, is the appellate authority.
- There is no requirement for periodic renewal of the licence to practice. Some countries require periodic testing to ensure that practitioners remain up to date, fit to practice, and give good care to patients.
- The Bill proposes a bridge course for practitioners of AYUSH to enable them to prescribe modern medicines. There are differing views on this provision. While some emphasise the need for greater integration between traditional and modern schools of medicine, others consider this step harmful for the independent development of AYUSH.

### Key Features

#### **1. Composition and Functions of the National Medical Commission:**

- The Bill sets up the National Medical Commission (NMC).
- The NMC will consist of 25 members.
- A Search Committee will recommend names for the post of Chairperson, and part-time members.
- The term of the members of the NMC will be a maximum of four years, with no reappointment.

#### **Functions of the NMC include:**

- (i) Framing policies for regulating medical institutions and medical professionals
- (ii) Assessing the requirements of healthcare related human resources and infrastructure.
- (iii) Framing guidelines for determination of fees for up to 40% of the seats in the private medical institutions and deemed universities which are regulated as per the Bill.

#### **2. Autonomous Boards:**

- Four autonomous Boards have been set up under the supervision of the NMC. Each autonomous Board will consist of a President and two members, appointed by the central government.

#### **3. Medical Advisory Council:**

- The central government will constitute a Medical Advisory Council.
- The Council will be the primary platform through which the states/union territories can put forth their views and concerns before the NMC.
- Further, the Council will advise the NMC on measures to enable equitable access to medical education.

#### 4. **Qualifying examinations:**

- There will be a uniform National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test for admission to under-graduate medical education in all medical institutions regulated by the Bill.
- There will be a National Licentiate Examination for the students graduating from medical institutions to obtain the licence for practice.
- This examination will also serve as the basis for admission into post-graduate courses at medical institutions.
- The NMC may permit exceptions from National Licentiate Examination in certain cases.
- Foreign medical practitioners will be permitted temporary registration in India in such manner as may be prescribed.
- The NMC and the Central Councils of Homoeopathy and Indian Medicine may approve bridge courses for the practitioners of AYUSH to enable them to prescribe modern medicines at such level as notified by the central government.

#### 5. **Appeal on matters related to professional and ethical misconduct**

- State Medical Councils will receive complaints relating to professional or ethical misconduct against a registered medical practitioner.
- If the medical practitioner is aggrieved of a decision of the State Medical Council, he may appeal to the Ethics and Medical Registration Board.
- The State Medical Councils and the Ethics and Medical Registration Board have the power to take disciplinary action against the medical practitioner including imposing a monetary penalty.
- If the medical practitioner is aggrieved of the decision of the Board, he can approach the NMC to appeal against the decision.
- Appeal of the decision of the NMC lies with the central government.

#### 6. **Offences and penalties**

- No person is allowed to practice medicine as a qualified medical practitioner other than those enrolled in a State Register or the National Register.
- Any person who contravenes this provision will be punished with a fine between one and five lakh rupees.

7. The Indian Medical Council (Amendment Bill), 2019, is aimed at bringing in transparency, accountability and quality in the governance of medical education in the country and would provide for supersession of the Medical Council of India (MCI) for a period of two years from August 26, 2018.

#### **References:**

<https://www.prsindia.org/billtrack/national-medical-commission-bill-2017>

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/indian-medical-council-amendment-bill-cleared/article27891351.ece>

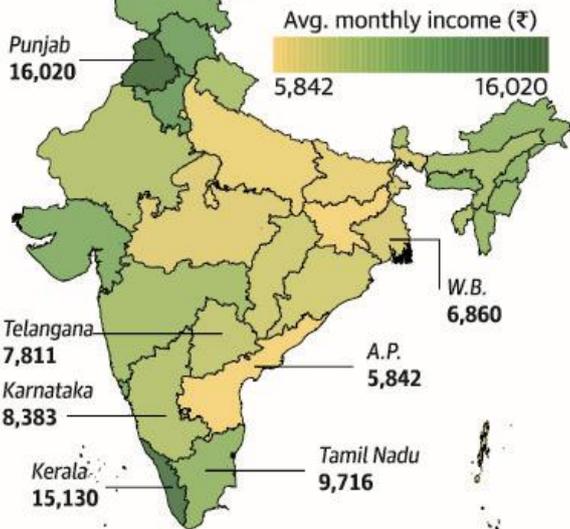
## Topic 14. INCOME INEQUALITY AMONG FARMERS

# Income inequality among farmers

The Centre aims to double farmers' income by 2022. A 2017 NABARD survey shows high levels of inter-State income inequality among agricultural households. By **Vignesh Radhakrishnan & Sumant Sen**

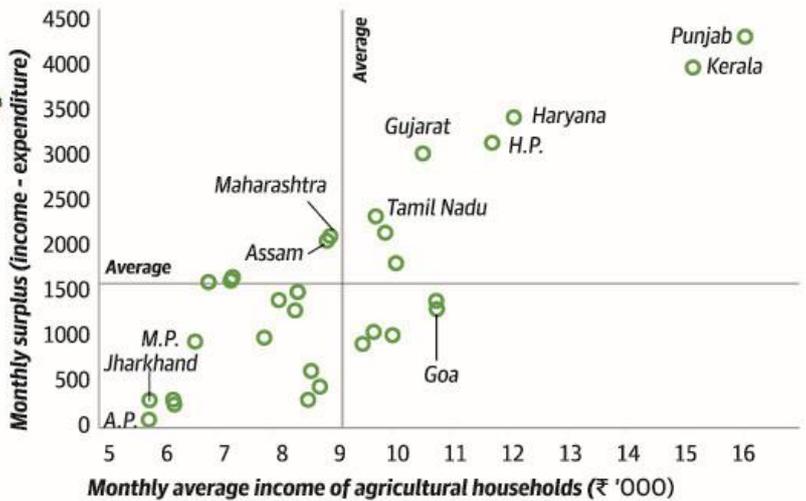
### Income inequality

The map depicts the average monthly income of agricultural households in 2017. Households in Punjab earned more than ₹16,000, the highest among States. Those in A.P. earned the least – ₹5,842 on an average



### What remains in the purse?

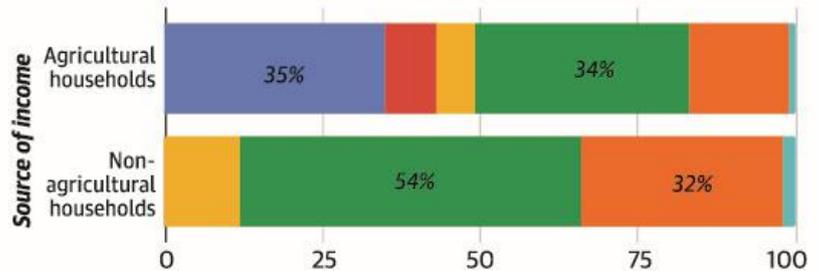
The graph plots the monthly average income of agricultural households against the surplus that remained after consumption expenditure in 2017. Consumption expenditure is measured because it is less volatile over time. Agricultural households in Andhra Pradesh ended up with a surplus of ₹95 on an average in 2017, which was the lowest among States, while households in Punjab had the highest: ₹4,314



### Sources of income

Among the Centre's plans to improve farmers' income was to shift farmers to non-farm jobs. The graph splits rural households across India by income sources. Cultivation, for instance, was the source of income for 35% of the agricultural households in rural India

- Cultivation   ■ Livestock rearing   ■ Other enterprises
- Wage labour   ■ Govt./Pvt service   ■ Other sources



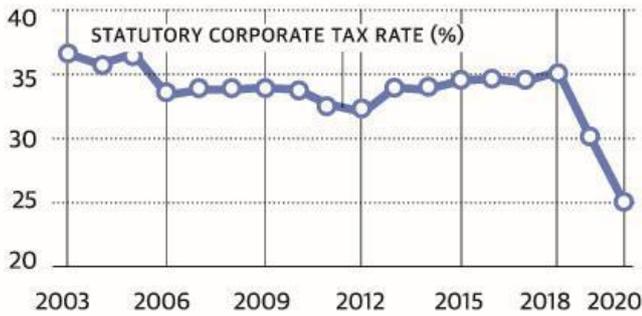
## Topic 15. TAXATION

# When gains and tax don't match

The Union Budget has pegged the statutory corporate tax in India at 25% for firms having an annual turnover of upto ₹400 crore, which covers 99.3% of all companies. Budget documents show the effective corporate tax rate is unevenly distributed among firms. By **The Hindu Data Team**

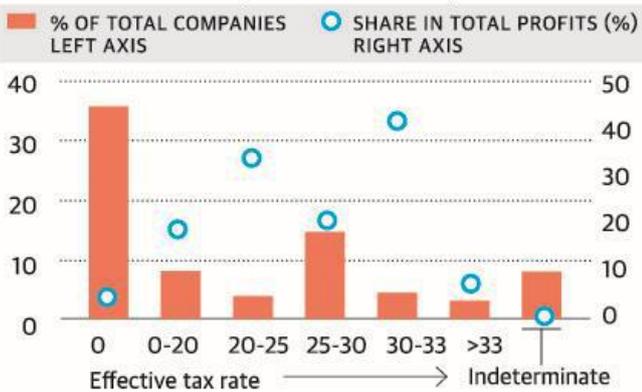
### Steep fall

India's statutory corporate tax has fluctuated over the years, with FY19 and FY20 seeing steep drops. However, it still remained above the global average of 23.79%



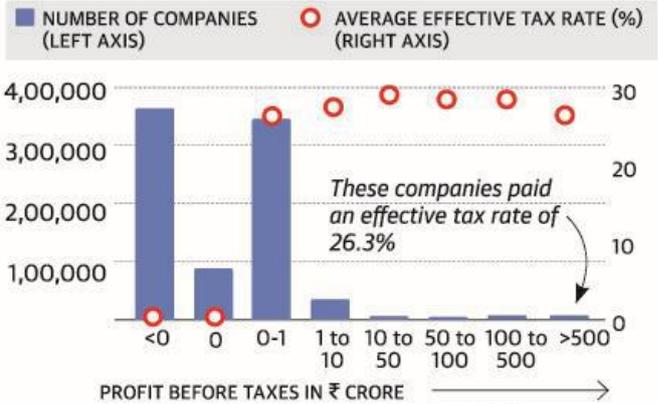
### Uneven distribution

Tax liability remains unevenly distributed. Over 60% of the firms paid an effective tax rate of <25% in FY18 despite having 45% share in the total profit of all the companies



### What do companies pay?

Firms with profits between ₹10 crore and 50 crore paid the highest effective tax rate (29.1%) in FY18



### Global front

In fiscal 2019, U.A.E recorded the highest corporate tax rate (55%). The global average was 23.79%. Among BRICS nations, India and China had the same statutory corporate tax rate



Source: FY20 Budget document, KPMG

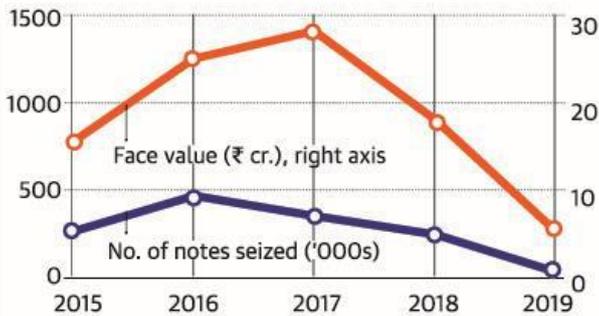
## Topic 16. FAKE CURRENCY NOTES

# Money, but not really

The number of seized fake currency notes and the cumulative face value of these notes declined from 2015 to 2019\*. Delhi accounted for the highest quantum of fake currency notes seized between 2015 and 2019. The ₹500 note is the most counterfeited note in terms of numbers. By **Varun B. Krishnan**

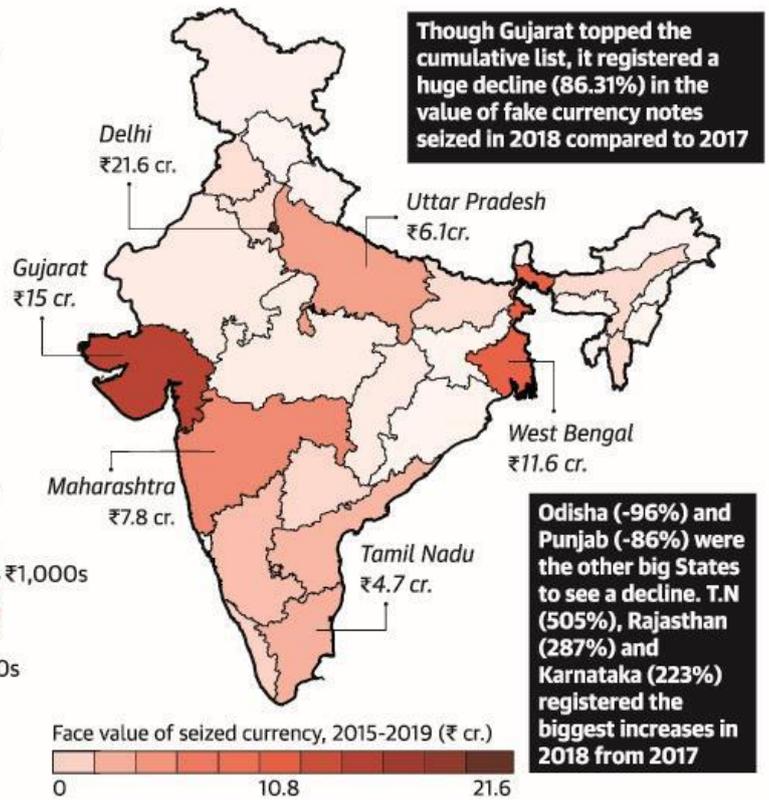
### Decline across the board

The year 2017 (after demonetisation) saw a dip in the number of fake currency notes but an upsurge in the face value of notes seized



### Fake currency hotspots

Apart from the national capital, Gujarat and West Bengal registered the highest quantum of fake currency seized in the past five years

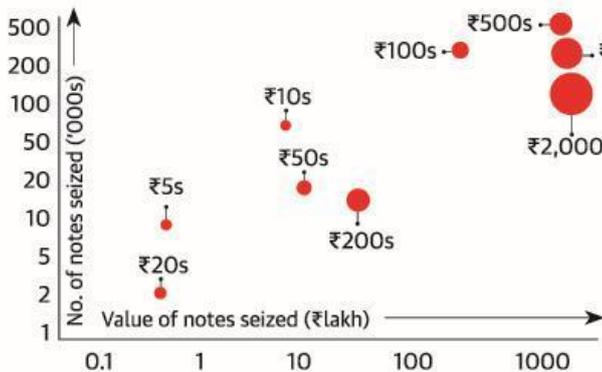


**Though Gujarat topped the cumulative list, it registered a huge decline (86.31%) in the value of fake currency notes seized in 2018 compared to 2017**

**Odisha (-96%) and Punjab (-86%) were the other big States to see a decline. T.N (505%), Rajasthan (287%) and Karnataka (223%) registered the biggest increases in 2018 from 2017**

### ₹2,000 notes catch up

Fake ₹1,000 notes continued to be seized post-demonetisation. The number and face value of fake ₹2,000s seized were high despite being introduced later



\*Up to 18/6/2019. Data given for January to December of each year

Source: Lok Sabha Question Hour

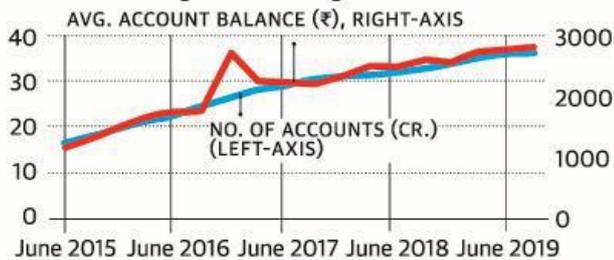
## Topic 17. PM JAN DHAN YOJANA

# Banking up better

The cumulative account balance in zero-balance bank accounts opened under the PM's Jan Dhan Yojana scheme crossed the ₹1 trillion mark on July 3. The average balance in each account now stands at ₹2,787. However, as of December 2018, 23% of the accounts were inoperative. By **Varun B. Krishnan & Sumant Sen**

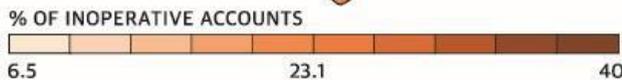
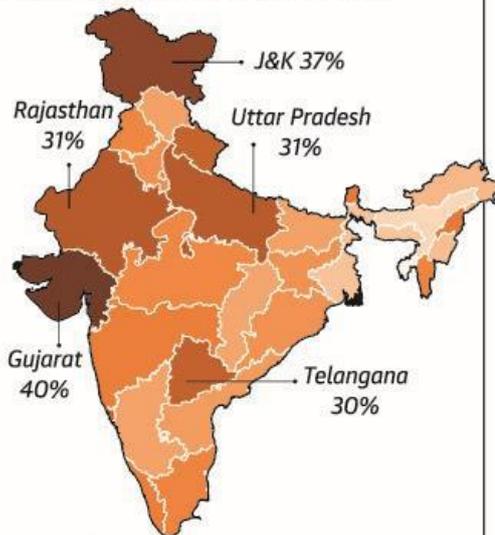
### Rapid climb

The number of accounts and the average account balance have steadily increased. Just after demonetisation, there was a sudden surge in the average account balance



### State of accounts

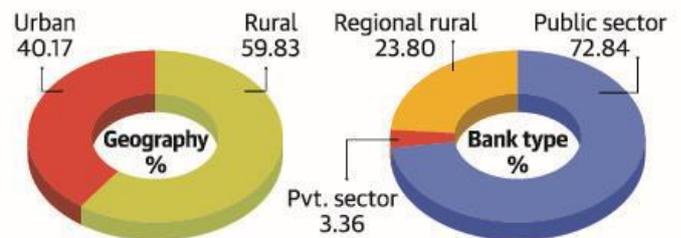
Gujarat topped the list of States with the highest % of inoperative accounts, with J&K standing second. Among the big States, West Bengal had the least % of inoperative accounts



Source: PM Jan Dhan Yojana archives, Parliament Question Hour; With inputs from Siddharth Rao T.

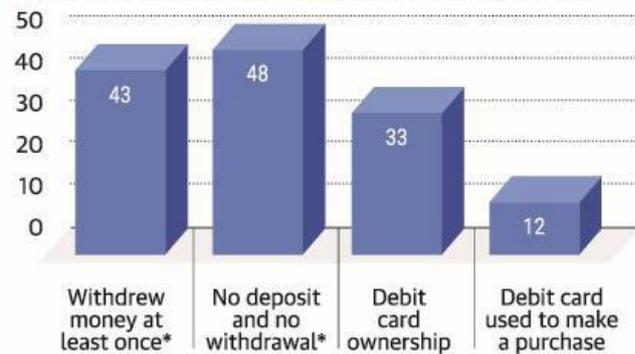
### Where the accounts are

Six out of 10 Jan Dhan accounts are in the rural areas and close to three-fourth are in public sector banks. Private sector banks account for just 3.4% of these accounts



### Measure of usage

While the country has made big strides in providing institutional access to the unbanked, a large share of people are not making use of the banking facilities, according to the Global Financial Index put out by the World Bank in 2017



\*In the year preceding the survey. Above numbers in percentage, for 2017. Respondents were aged 15+ and had a bank account

## Topic 18. JAIPUR declared WORLD HERITAGE SITE

1. A World Heritage Site is a location having an “Outstanding Universal Value”. The UNESCO World Heritage Committee meets at least once every year, generally in June/July, to deliberate the addition, removal, or modification of items on the list of World Heritage Sites.
2. On July 6, Jaipur residents had a reason to feel elated as the Pink City was inscribed as a World Heritage Site, making it the 38th Indian entry to be added to the list of 1121 such spots across the world.
3. So far, only China, Italy, Spain, Germany, and France have more locations on the list than India.
4. **What is a World Heritage Site?**
  - a. A World Heritage Site is a location having an “Outstanding Universal Value”. According to the World Heritage Convention’s Operational Guidelines, an Outstanding Universal Value signifies “cultural and/or natural significance which is so exceptional as to transcend national boundaries and to be of common importance for present and future generations of all humanity.”
  - b. The Sites fall into three categories: cultural heritage, natural heritage, and mixed heritage (cultural as well as natural). Cultural heritage entails an Outstanding Universal Value from the point of view of history, art or science, and includes monuments, groups of buildings, and sites which are the combined work of nature and human agency. Examples include the Taj Mahal, the Statue of Liberty, and the Sydney Opera House. The Sites under natural heritage are those having an Outstanding Universal Value from the point of view of science, conservation or natural beauty, such as the Sundarbans Natural Park or the Victoria Falls.
  - c. Of the 1121 World Heritage Sites in the world, 869 are cultural, 213 are natural, and 39 are mixed.
5. **Who selects the Sites?**
  - a. The UNESCO World Heritage Committee meets at least once every year, generally in June/July, to deliberate the addition, removal, or modification of items on the list of World Heritage Sites. The Committee comprises of 21 members selected from amongst 192 States Parties (signatories) of the 1972 Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, also called the World Heritage Convention.
  - b. The current session of the Committee which is in progress at Baku, Azerbaijan, is the 43rd such meet since the formation of the Committee in 1976.
6. **How do countries get their preferred spots included?**
  - a. According to the Guidelines, the State Parties prepare a Tentative List, or the “inventory of those properties situated on its territory which each State Party considers suitable for nomination to the World Heritage List.”. A nomination document is then prepared in this regard based on which the application is considered by the Committee.
  - b. In India, the Indian National Commission for Co-operation with UNESCO (INCCU), and the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) are the bodies which play a key role in this regard.
  - c. After receiving nominations from the State Parties, the Committee then puts them through a rigorous examination before any new location can qualify as a World Heritage Site.
7. **What happens after a World Heritage Site is declared?**
  - a. Most importantly, getting featured on the list of World Heritage Sites affords the location a coveted status, driving up demand for travel and tourism from around the world geared towards it.
  - b. At the same time, a heavy onus is placed on the government of the country in which the Site is located for its conservation and upkeep. The Committee conducts regular audits at declared Sites, and can place a spot that is seriously threatened on the List of World Heritage in Danger. If the Outstanding Universal Value of the property is destroyed, the Committee can consider deleting the property from the World Heritage List

## Topic 19. MERCHANT DISCOUNT RATE

1. Merchant Discount Rate (alternatively referred to as the Transaction Discount Rate or TDR) is the sum total of all the charges and taxes that a digital payment entails. If customers don't pay and merchants don't pay, some entity has to pay for the MDR costs.
2. It has been reported that several Non-bank payment service providers (PSPs) are claiming that they are staring at a shutdown thanks to a recent Budget announcement by the Finance Minister.
3. What was the Budget announcement?
  - a. In her speech, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced a slew of steps aimed at promoting digital payments and a less-cash economy. In particular, she said, "...there are low-cost digital modes of payment such as BHIM UPI, UPI-QR Code, Aadhaar Pay, certain Debit cards, NEFT, RTGS etc. which can be used to promote less cash economy. I, therefore, propose that the business establishments with annual turnover more than 50 crore shall offer such low cost digital modes of payment to their customers and no charges or Merchant Discount Rate shall be imposed on customers as well as merchants."
  - b. In other words, the government has mandated that neither the customers nor the merchants will have to pay the so-called Merchant Discount Rate (or MDR) while transacting digital payments.
  - c. Of course, it is good news for both customers and merchants because their costs of digital payments come down. However, the payment services providers are now complaining.
4. **What is MDR?**
  - a. Merchant Discount Rate (alternatively referred to as the Transaction Discount Rate or TDR) is the sum total of all the charges and taxes that a digital payment entails. For instance, the MDR includes bank charges, which a bank charges customers and merchants for allowing payments to be made digitally. Similarly, MDR also includes the processing charges that a payments aggregator has to pay to online or mobile wallets or indeed to banks for their service.
5. Who will bear the MDR costs?
  - a. If customers don't pay and merchants don't pay, some entity has to pay for the MDR costs. In her speech, the FM has said: "RBI and Banks will absorb these costs from the savings that will accrue to them on account of handling less cash as people move to these digital modes of payment...Necessary amendments are being made in the Income Tax Act and the Payments and Settlement Systems Act, 2007 to give effect to these provisions."
6. Then why are non-bank payment service providers complaining?
  - a. Contrary to public perception, the MDR has not been made zero. The FM's decision has just shifted its incidence on to the RBI and banks. However, if banks pay for the MDR it will adversely affect their likelihood to adopt the digital payments architecture. Moreover, many payments providers apprehend that the banks will find a way of passing on the costs to them. In turn, this will negatively impact the health of a sector that needs nurturing.

## Topic 20. H-1B VISAS

1. H-1B Visa, US h-1b visa, bench-and-switch scam, indians arrested in bench-and-switch scam, indians in us, us news, express explained,
2. The H-1B is a visa category that lets US employers recruit skilled foreign nationals in 'specialty occupations' where there is a lack of American workers. (File)
3. Last week, a crackdown by American investigating agencies on two IT staffing companies running "bench-and-switch" scheme led to the arrest of four Indian-Americans. The scheme is used to manipulate the process of acquiring an H-1B visa. According to the US Justice Department, the four face a maximum potential penalty of five years in prison and a \$250,000 fine.
4. **The H-1B visa**
  - a. The H-1B is a visa category that lets US employers recruit skilled foreign nationals in "specialty occupations" where there is a lack of American workers. According to the US Code of Federal Regulation, such occupations require "theoretical and practical application of a highly specialised body of knowledge and attainment of a bachelor's or higher degree in a specific specialty as a minimum for entry into the occupation."
  - b. Since such jobs are meant to be temporarily assignments, getting the H-1B requires going through a lengthy process.
  - c. A prospective employer first has to submit a Labor Condition Application (LCA) for Nonimmigrant Workers to the Department of Labor. Next, if the LCA is approved, the employer proceeds to submit Form I-129 to the Department of Homeland Security. Finally, if the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services approves the application at that stage, the H-1B visa is granted.
  - d. This prolonged procedure often takes several months until potential employees can know for sure whether their application has been favourably processed.
  - e. Legitimate hiring agencies specialising in H-1B workers help connect employers with prospective employees, and typically take a part of the worker's salary for a period of time as well as charge a service fee.
5. **The bench-and-switch scam**
  - a. The scheme has been used by staffing companies in order to cut back on waiting time and to score an unfair advantage in getting the H-1B visa. The IT sector, which has a greater demand for persons with specialised skills, is especially fraught by this scam.
  - b. A staffing agency engaging in this practice makes H-1B applications for its foreign worker clients without first securing jobs for them. The agency creates fake data about its clients to defraud the various authorities in the visa process. At face value, submitted documents such as false service contracts, statements of work, and employment-verification letters lead the authorities to believe that such a "specialty occupation" exists and that the applicant has already secured employment.
6. Thus, by manipulating the process, a "bench" of fraudulently authorised foreign workers is created. These can be "switched" to actual employers when they are in need, without them actually going through the time-consuming process ridden with formalities.
7. The Trump administration, while increasing the rate of rejection even for genuine H-1B applications, has also taken a tough stance on combating visa fraud and illegal migration.

## Topic 21. GM COTTON

1. With a few Haryana farmers symbolically defying a government restriction against sowing banned HT Bt Cotton in Hisar, and the government determined to curb its spread.
2. **What is HT Bt cotton?**
  - a. Herbicide-tolerant Bt (HT Bt) Cotton is genetically modified crop of unapproved genes which is not permissible in India. Technically, herbicide is like a poison which is used to destroy unwanted vegetation. The technique in the HT Bt Cotton makes the crop resistant to herbicide following modification in genes of the seeds.
  - b. Normally, when an herbicide is sprayed, then it destroys unwanted vegetation along with causing harm the cotton crop also. So, farmers use less herbicide in their fields. But with the introduction of HT Bt Cotton, there won't be any impact of herbicide on the cotton crop while the unwanted vegetation will be destroyed. This will lead to more use of chemicals in fields causing harm to other crops.
3. **What's the extent of HT Bt Cotton in India?**
  - a. In the absence of government approval, production of HT Bt seed is illegal, but farmers say it's available in those states where its being grown defying the laws.
  - b. A section of farmers have started sowing its seeds particularly in Maharashtra, Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana for the past few years.
  - c. A government panel had found that the HT Bt Cotton was grown in 15 per cent of the areas in these states during 2017-18 while this percentage was 5 per cent for Punjab.
  - d. According to supporters of HT Bt Cotton, its preferred to reduce the cost of labour as de-weeding is an extremely labour intensive activity involving 40 per cent of the total cost for growing cotton.
  - e. It is in this context the herbicide tolerant (HT), the new generation Bt cotton, has attracted the attention of many farmers.
  - f. The farmers have felt the impact of HT Bt Cotton in terms of lower costs and reduced crop losses leading to higher production and income.
4. **What do agitating farmers say?**
  - a. A section of farmers who demand approval for cultivation of HT Bt Cotton say that they should be allowed to use the latest technologies in the agriculture including genetically modified (GM) crops.
  - b. They say across the world a dozen GM crops have been approved so far, and these are being grown on over 185 million hectares in more than two dozen countries.
  - c. However, the Indian government in 2010 had imposed a moratorium, leaving Bt Cotton as the only genetically modified crop permitted for cultivation in the country.
  - d. Powered by Bt Cotton, our farmers, in just ten years, have made India the biggest cotton producer, and the second largest exporter of cotton in the world.
  - e. urges the government to allow the farmers to undertake field trial for HT Bt cotton to further improve their cotton production.
  - f. The farmers want improved seeds and technology for better crops.
5. **What do the opponents of HT Bt Cotton say?**
  - a. The protest by a group is just part of tactics of seed companies which are involved in the production of seeds of HT Bt Cotton and Bt Brinjal. They want to use their puppets to propagate demand for such seeds. Such seeds will cause more diseases among humans and animals apart from causing damage to the environment.
  - b. The government should probe how seeds of these illegal crops have reached the market.

6. What is the government's stand?
- This year in February, the Union Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare had informed the Lok Sabha that the major cotton growing states have been directed to file FIRs, seize stocks and issue show-cause notices to the companies concerned to stop production of HT Bt Cotton.
  - The police have already started filing FIRs against farmers in Maharashtra who have sown the HT Bt Cotton. Recently, over 200 farmers gathered at an agriculture farm of Sarangpur village in Hisar district to defy the law by sowing HT Bt cotton symbolically.
  - Haryana Agriculture and Farmers Welfare Department Joint Director (cotton) visited the farm on Saturday to ask the farmers to desist from sowing the HT Bt cotton till permission from the central government. "This was isolated case in Haryana.
7. What next?
- Leading farmer leaders have not come in the support of HT Bt Cotton in Haryana yet, hence no major agitation appears on this issue in near future.
  - It may take some time to test the plants of the crop to reach on a conclusion.

## Topic 22. WHERE TO PLANT A TRILLION TREES TO SAVE PLANET EARTH?

1. Researchers have quantified how much land around the world is available for reforestation, as well as the extent of carbon emissions these would prevent from being released into the atmosphere.
2. What has so far been unclear, however, is how much of this tree cover might be actually possible in the existing conditions on the planet.
3. Restoration of forests has long been seen as a potential measure to combat climate change. The latest special report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change suggests that **an increase of 1 billion hectares of forest will be necessary to limit global warming to 1.5°C by 2050.**
4. Trees, which absorb carbon dioxide, are a natural sink for the gas emitted into the atmosphere. According to the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, **trees absorb about 25% of the carbon dioxide released into the atmosphere by the burning of fossil fuels, while the oceans absorb another 25%.** The half that remains in the atmosphere contributes to global warming.
5. How they worked it out
  - a. The study, by researchers with the Crowther Lab of ETH Zurich university, has been published in the journal Science. On the basis of nearly 80,000 images from around the world, they calculated that around 0.9 billion hectares of land would be suitable for reforestation. “We are trying to restore a trillion trees,” Thomas Crowther, co-author of the paper and founder of the Crowther Lab, told The Indian Express by email. If an area of 0.9 billion hectares is indeed reforested, the researchers calculated, it could ultimately capture two-thirds of human-made carbon emissions.
  - b. Earth’s continuous tree cover is currently 2.8 billion hectares, and the researchers calculated that the land available could support 4.4 billion hectares, or an additional 1.6 billion hectares. Out of this, 0.9 billion hectares — an area the size of the US — fulfil the criterion of not being used by humans.
  - c. These new forests, once mature, could store 205 billion tonnes of carbon. That is about two-thirds of the 300 billion tonnes of carbon that has been released into the atmosphere as a result of human activity since the industrial age.
  - d. But we must act quickly, as new forests will take decades to mature and achieve their full potential as a source of natural carbon storage.
6. Where’s that land
  - a. In India, there is room for an estimated 9.93 million extra hectares of forest.
  - b. India’s existing forest cover makes up 7,08,273 sq km (about 70.83 million hectares) and tree cover another 93,815 sq km (9.38 million hectares), according to the Environment and Forest Ministry’s ‘State of Forest Report 2017’.
  - c. The study found that the six countries with the greatest reforestation potential are Russia (151 million hectares); the US (103 million hectares); Canada (78.4 million hectares); Australia (58 million hectares); Brazil (49.7 million hectares); and China (40.2 million hectares).
7. Criticism
  - a. authors do not consider how such reforestation might come about when the land proposed to be reforested is owned and managed by many private persons, companies, nongovernmental organizations, and governments.
  - b. authors’ estimate of carbon removal per area “remarkably high”.
  - c. research will likely be used to “argue that we can rely more on reforestation to reduce climate change, potentially displacing efforts toward other responses [including] emission cuts”.