



VAJIRAM & RAVI
Institute for IAS Examination

The Analyst

CURRENT AFFAIRS Handout

21st December 2024



CONTEXT: "The first winter session of 18th Lok Sabha ended on December 20 as one of the least productive and most acrimonious in history."

What is Parliament Productivity?

"WE, the people"

Amount of legislative work accomplished during a session

Factors

- Number of **sittings**
- **Length** of each Sitting
- Number of **members Present**
- **Disruption**

Decline of Parliament Productivity in Recent Years:

Parliament functioned for about half of its scheduled time

Lok Sabha

	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
Nov 25 - 29	2%		4%	4%	6%	
Dec 2 - 6	4%	123%	133%	24%	3%	
Dec 9 - 14	2%	6%	62%	123%	136%	146%
Dec 16 - 20	153%	99%	3%	1%	1%	

0%-30% 30%-60% 60%-90% 90% or more

Note: Each cell shows functioning time as a percentage of scheduled time for Lok Sabha discussed the Constitution on December 14, 2024 (Saturday).

Unutilised time

Rajya Sabha

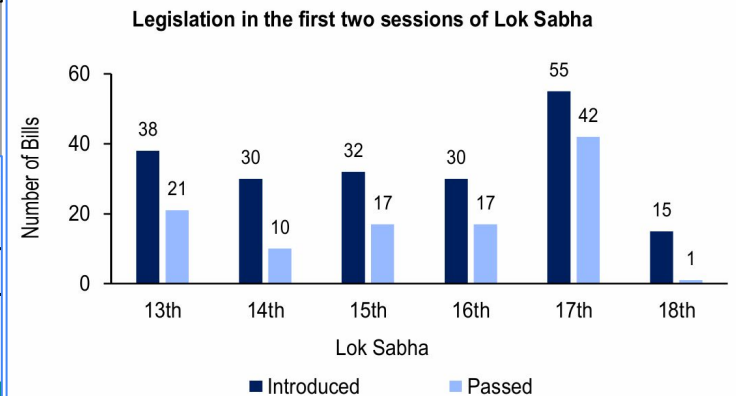
	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri
Nov 25 - 29	9%		4%	4%	4%
Dec 2 - 6	5%	100%	103%	85%	38%
Dec 9 - 13	20%	7%	5%	12%	15%
Dec 16 - 20	151%	153%	8%	6%	5%

at day; no sitting was held in either House on November 26, 2024. Lok

One Bill passed in the first six months of

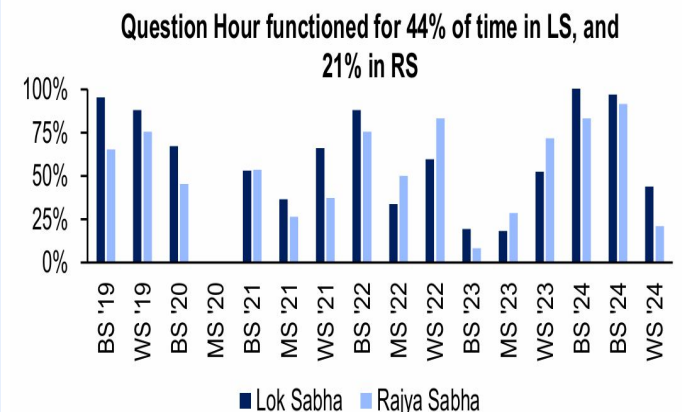
- Four Bills were introduced in this session. Two of these provide for simultaneous elections to Lok Sabha and state Assemblies. One Bill, the Bharatiya Vayuyan Vidheyak, 2024, was passed in both Houses. Five Bills were passed by one House and are pending in the other.
- During the 18th Lok Sabha, 15 Bills have been introduced, and three have been referred to Committees. Four Bills introduced retain most provisions of the Acts they seek to replace.

of the term; lowest in the last six Lok Sabha terms



Note: This excludes Finance and Appropriation Bills.

Functioning of Question Hour significantly affected



Note: BS - Budget Session, MS - Monsoon Session, WS - Winter Session. Question Hour was not held during MS 2020 due to COVID-19.



CONTEXT: "The first winter session of 18th Lok Sabha ended on December 20 as one of the least productive and most acrimonious in history."

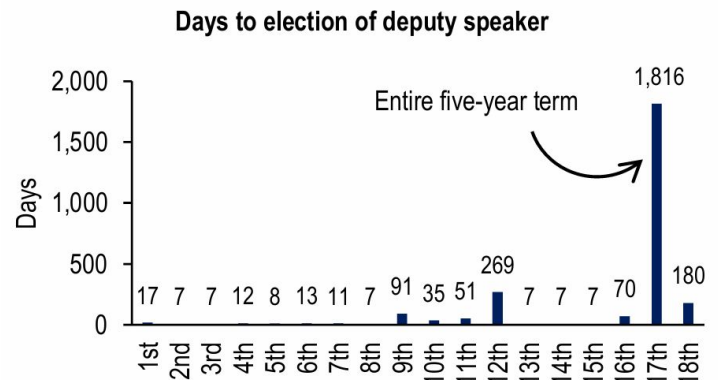
Resolutions for removal of Lok Sabha Speaker

Date	Lok Sabha	Speaker	Outcome
Dec 18, 1954	1st	G V Mavalankar	Negated
Nov 24, 1966	3rd	Hukum Singh	Notice admitted; Insufficient support for initiating motion
Apr 15, 1987	8th	Balram Jakhar	Negated

Motions for impeachment of judges in Parliament

Year	Judge	Outcome
1991	V Ramaswami (Supreme Court)	Motion did not pass in Lok Sabha
2011	Soumitra Sen (Calcutta High Court)	Passed in Rajya Sabha; the Judge resigned before Lok Sabha discussed motion

No Deputy Speaker since 2019



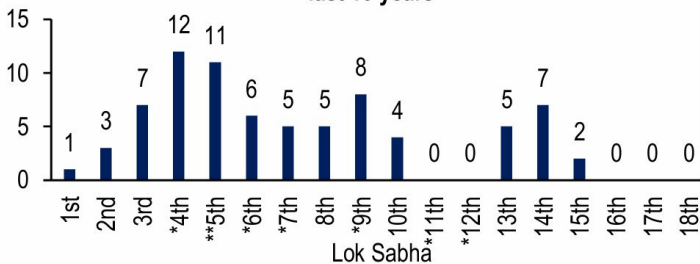
Quality of debate:

- No **half-an-hour** or **short duration discussions** were held
- Constitution discussed for 33 hours

Factors Contributing to Diminishing Productivity in the Indian Parliament:

- Frequent **disruptions**
- **Anti-defection** measures
- **Weak Committee culture**
- **Underrepresentation** of marginalized groups
- **Rushed passage** of bills

No adjournment motions discussed in Lok Sabha in the last 10 years



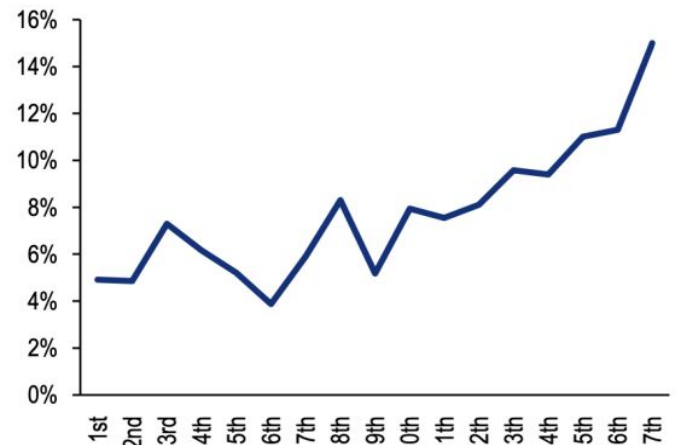
Note: * indicates a term less than five years; ** indicates a six-year term. Data for 18th Lok Sabha till December 20, 2024.

Pvt member business :

- Every Friday
- 2 ½ hours

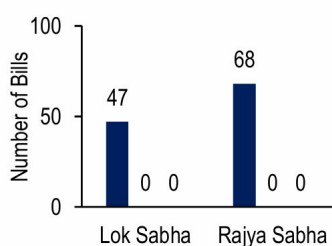
Slow rise in the representation of women in Lok

Percentage of women MPs in Lok Sabha

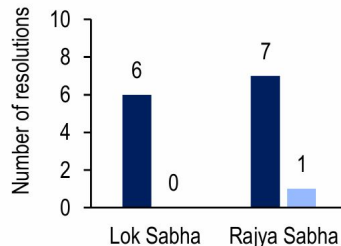


Sources: Gender-Wise Statistical List, Lok Sabha, 2019; PRS.

Private Members' Bills



Private Members' Resolutions



■ Listed for introduction
■ Introduced
■ Discussed

■ Listed in agenda
■ Discussed

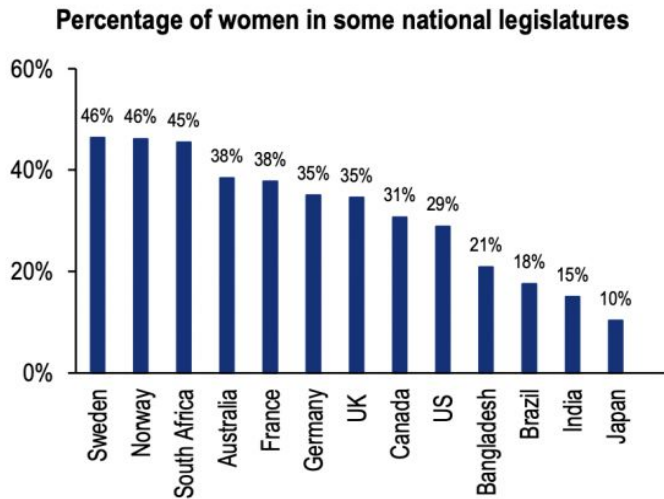


Productivity of the Indian Parliament

21st December, 2024

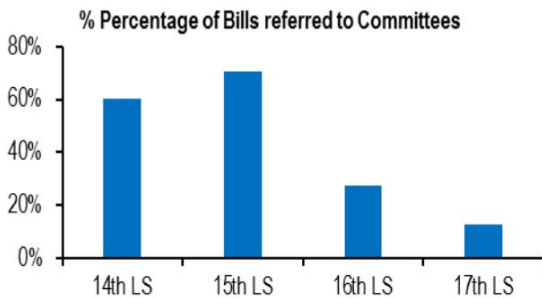
CONTEXT: "The first winter session of 18th Lok Sabha ended on December 20 as one of the least productive and most acrimonious in history."

Lok Sabha



Sources: Inter-Parliamentary Union Website as accessed on September 19, 2023; PRS.

Fewer Bills being referred to Standing Committees



Way forward:

- Leverage Technology
- Strengthening Role of the Presiding Officer
- Right to Information Act by public
- Youth Engagement in Politics
- Diversity and Representation
- Capacity-building
- Improve Preparation and Scrutiny of Bills
- Constructive and Consensus-based Politics

MAINS PRACTISE QUESTIONS:

To what extent, in your view, the Parliament is able to ensure accountability of the executive in India?



How Global crises are connected

21st December, 2024

CONTEXT: Key takeaway from NEXUS report by Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES).

What is Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services?

- Independent intergovernmental body
- "does not produce new science"
- Function: Similar to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
- India is a member country
- Headquarters: Bonn, Germany
- Informs multilateral environmental processes
- "Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework"

What does the latest report say?

- \$58 trillion of global GDP
- Unaccounted-for costs: at least \$10-25 trillion a year

Interlinkages: Influences and interactions between multiple elements in a system

Interdependencies: One or more elements in a system are dependent on another to function

Cascading impacts: When acting on one element results in a chain of negative impacts on other elements

Compounding impacts: When changes in one or several elements exacerbate negative impacts on another element

Feedback loops: Changes in the interlinkages among multiple elements that reinforce or balance the initial change

Synergy: Enhancement of a desirable outcome in one element leads to enhancement of another element

Trade-off: Enhancement of a desirable outcome in one element leads to deterioration of another element

Nexus: The interlinkages among two or more elements, sectors or systems.

Nexus approaches: Understanding the interlinkages and interdependencies between sectors and systems in a holistic manner to develop integrated and adaptive decisions that aim to maximize synergies and minimize trade-offs.

This may be contrasted with the siloed approaches.

Siloed approaches: Address issues in isolation and without regard to interlinkages, resulting in potential misalignment, unintended consequences or trade-offs.

Transformative Approaches to Nature Management:

- Sustainable diets and nature-based solutions
- Finance & Technology
- Economic Rationale: create \$10 trillion in opportunities and 400 million jobs by 2030
- Inclusive growth approach
- Restoration of carbon-rich ecosystems
- Reciprocal Human-Nature Relationships
- Ensuring fair access and benefits
- Sustainable diets and nature-based solutions



How Global crises are connected

21st December, 2024

CONTEXT : Key takeaway from NEXUS report by Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES).

Some Indian Government efforts:

Climate Action (NAPCC & State plans):

- National Solar Mission
- National Mission for Enhanced Energy Efficiency
- National Mission on Sustainable Habitat
- National Water Mission
- National Green India Mission

Biodiversity Conservation:

- National Biodiversity Action Plan
- Project Tiger + similar
- Eco-Sensitive Zones
- New NPs and TRs
- National Afforestation Programme

Food Security and Sustainable Agriculture:

- Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana
- Soil Health Card Scheme
- Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana
- ZBNF, Organic Farming

Sustainable Development and Pollution Reduction:

- National Electric Mobility Mission Plan
- National Green Hydrogen Mission
- PM eDrive
- BioFuel promotions
- State specific

Water Resource Management:

- Namami Gange Programme
- Atal Bhujal Yojana
- Jal Jeevan Mission
- Catch the Rain Campaign

Nature-Based Solutions and Urban Resilience:

- Smart Cities Mission
- Amrit Bharat Station Scheme
- National Urban Livelihoods Mission

International Commitments and Partnerships:

- Nationally Determined Contributions
- International Solar Alliance
- Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure
- BASIC group

Economic and Policy Incentives:

- Perform, Achieve, and Trade
- CAMPA
- National Legislations
- National Green Tribunal
- Subsidies for Renewable Energy

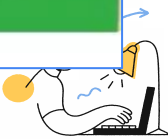
India's Contribution to ISA

NTPC to contribute **\$1 million** to the corpus fund of **\$15 million** that India is providing to the ISA

The Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency (IREDA) and the Solar Energy Corporation of India (SECI), both of them arms of the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE) have already committed **\$1 million each**

Coal India & NALCO are also likely to announce similar contributions soon

India has also set aside five acres of land in Gurgaon, next to the National Institute of Solar Energy, to house the headquarters of the ISA

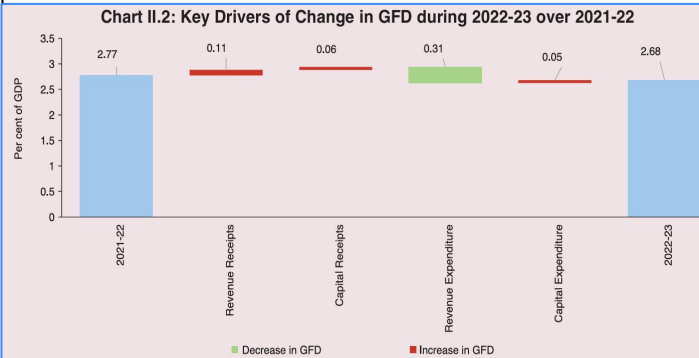


Syllabus: Prelims : Economic & Social Development

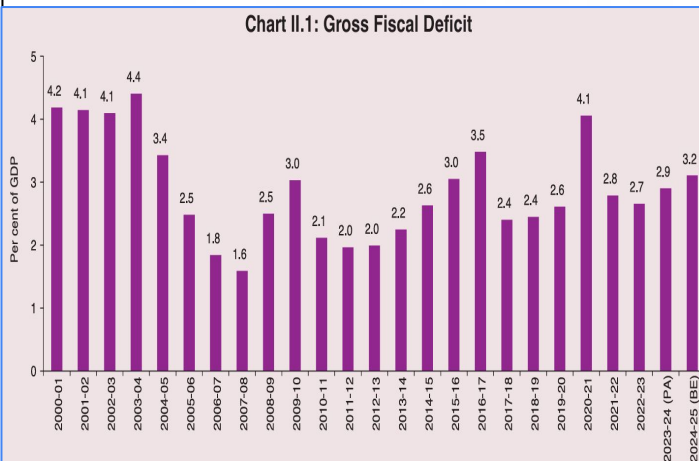
Newspaper: Indian Express **Page No: 10**

Some data:

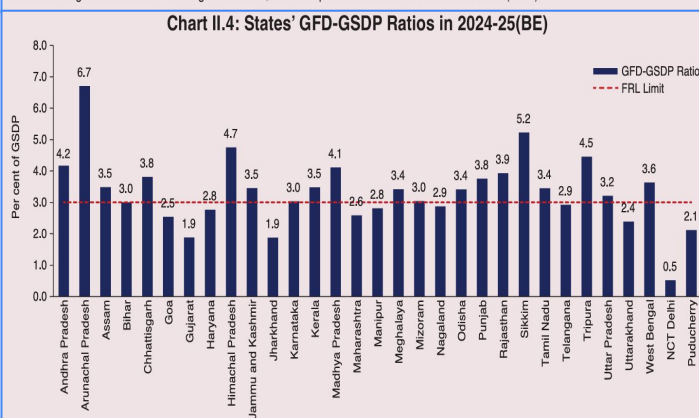
- Combined fiscal deficit **reduced from 2020-21**



- “state governments have in the years thereafter stuck firmly to the path of fiscal consolidation”
 - State Institutions of transformation u/NITI
 - Direct Benefit Transfers
 - Shift towards market borrowings



Sources: Budget documents of State governments; and Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG).



Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management Framework

Gen govt debt to 60% of GDP by 2024-25

Fiscal deficit to 3% of GDP

Formulation of fiscal policy strategies

Some Concerns:

However, the report also flags several areas of concern. For one, the power sector. The losses of power distribution companies stood at a staggering Rs 6.5 lakh crore by 2022-23, despite many attempts to improve their financial metrics over the years. To put this loss in perspective – its equivalent is around 2.4 per cent of GDP. In recent years, states have also seen a sharp increase in subsidies, due to “farm loan waivers, free/subsidised services (like electricity to agriculture and households, transport, gas cylinder and cash transfers to farmers, youth and women”. The amounts involved are significant. According to an Axis Bank report, 14 states now have income transfer schemes for women with a spending of Rs 2 lakh crore. This amounts to roughly 0.6 per cent of GDP. Such forms of spending will limit the resources available to governments for expenditure on more productive avenues. Then there are contingent liabilities. As per the RBI report, state guarantees have witnessed a steady increase, rising from 2 per cent of GDP at the end of March 2017 to 3.8 per cent by March 2023.



RBI report on State finances

21st December, 2024

Syllabus: Prelims : Economic & Social Development

Newspaper: Indian Express **Page No: 10**

As state debt remains considerably above the level recommended by the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management review committee, the RBI report calls for — rightly so — a “credible roadmap for debt consolidation.” In particular, it says that states with high levels of debt — these would include states such as Punjab, Bihar, Kerala and West Bengal — “may establish a clear, transparent and time-bound glide path for debt consolidation.” The report also calls for “next generation” fiscal rules which, while providing states the flexibility to deal with shocks such as the pandemic, would be guided by the objective of ensuring medium-term fiscal sustainability. These suggestions should generate more debate in the coming weeks and months.

Way forward:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Royalty Rates on Minerals● Rationalisation of Schemes● Independent debt management cell @States● 16th Finance Commission | <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Strengthening the role of Local Bodies● Capacity-building● Rationalizing Revenue Deficits; NOT Capital Receipts● Private Investments to Less Developed State |
|---|---|



Syllabus: Prelims : Economic & Social Development

Newspaper: Indian Express Page No: 17

<h3>What is the Goods and Services Tax Council?</h3>	Constitutional body (Ar. 279A)	<h2>55TH GST COUNCIL MEETING</h2> <h3>WHAT TO EXPECT?</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The 55th GST Council Meeting, scheduled for December 21, 2024, in Jaisalmer, Rajasthan. key updates on GST rates, insurance relief, and compliance are expected. Stay tuned for changes impacting taxpayers, businesses, and the economy! <h3>KEY HIGHLIGHTS</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✔ Insurance Relief: Proposed GST exemption for senior citizens' health insurance and term life insurance to reduce financial burdens. ✔ Rate Changes: Likely GST cuts on essentials and hikes for luxury items like shoes (₹15,000+) and watches (₹25,000+). ✔ Healthcare Costs: GST on critical cancer drugs may drop from 12% to 5%. ✔ Compliance Simplification: Introduction of B2C e-invoicing and measures to ease business operations.
	Objectives of GST Council	
	Composition	
	Functioning of Council	
	Dual GST model	

Mandates for the GST Council

Council Shall make Recommendation to The Union and The States, Regarding,

Taxes to be Subsumed	Taxed and Exempted Goods and Services	Model GST Law
Threshold Limit	Rates of Tax	Special Rate for Addl. Resources
Special Status for Some States	Any Other Matter	Inclusion of Petroleum Products

Guided by need for Harmonised Structure of GST, Development of Harmonised National Market

This meeting could reshape GST policies, offering potential relief to taxpayers while ensuring economic stability.

AS THE state finance ministers and Centre converge in Jaisalmer for the 55th Goods and Services Tax (GST) Council on Saturday, there is likely to be a renewed focus on lowering the tax burden for people by reducing rates on mass-consumption items such as food delivery services, insurance premiums, bicycles and

VOTING STRENGTH

Centre
1/3 VOTE IN COUNCIL

States
2/3 WEIGHT IN COUNCIL

DECISIONS NEED 75% VOTE SUPPORT

packaged drinking water. The Council, however, will also consider hiking rates for higher-end items such as wrist watches, shoes, expensive readymade garments as a move in the direction of pricing-based tax differential rates under the indirect tax regime that was introduced over seven years ago.



21st December, 2024

Syllabus: Prelims : Economic & Social Development

Newspaper: Indian Express Page No: 17

The Council is also expected to take up another key item for discussion that has remained outside the ambit of GST – aviation turbine fuel (ATF). Petroleum products including ATF are outside the GST regime and airlines are not able to utilise credit on taxes paid on ATF – a key input which comprises over 40 per cent of airlines' operating expenses. Currently, the Centre and states levy taxes on ATF including excise duty and value added tax. Additionally, the

The compensation cess was proposed to be levied for five years after the rollout of GST, till June 2022, to compensate states for revenue loss. In 2022, the Council decided to extend the levy till March 2026 to repay the interest and principal amount of the Rs 2.69 lakh crore of loans taken in 2021-2022 to pay off states' revenue loss during Covid years. At its meeting on September 9, the Council decided to set up a GoM to decide the future course of the cess.

The GST rates for some sin or demerit goods such as tobacco and aerated drinks are also going to be discussed in the Council as some items may face a special rate of 35 per cent in the future.

The GoM on compensation cess has sought an extension of its deadline to submit a report by December 31 this year to

What to expect wrt Compensation Cess?

What is the GST Cess?

Compensation for states

Non-lapsable fund

Shared in half wrt non utilisation

Levied on luxury, sin, and demerit goods

01

GST cess is levied on Both intrastate & inter-state supply of goods or services to provide compensation to the States for loss of revenue due to the implementation of GST.



The GST Compensation cess would be imposed for a period of 5 years from the day of GST implementation.

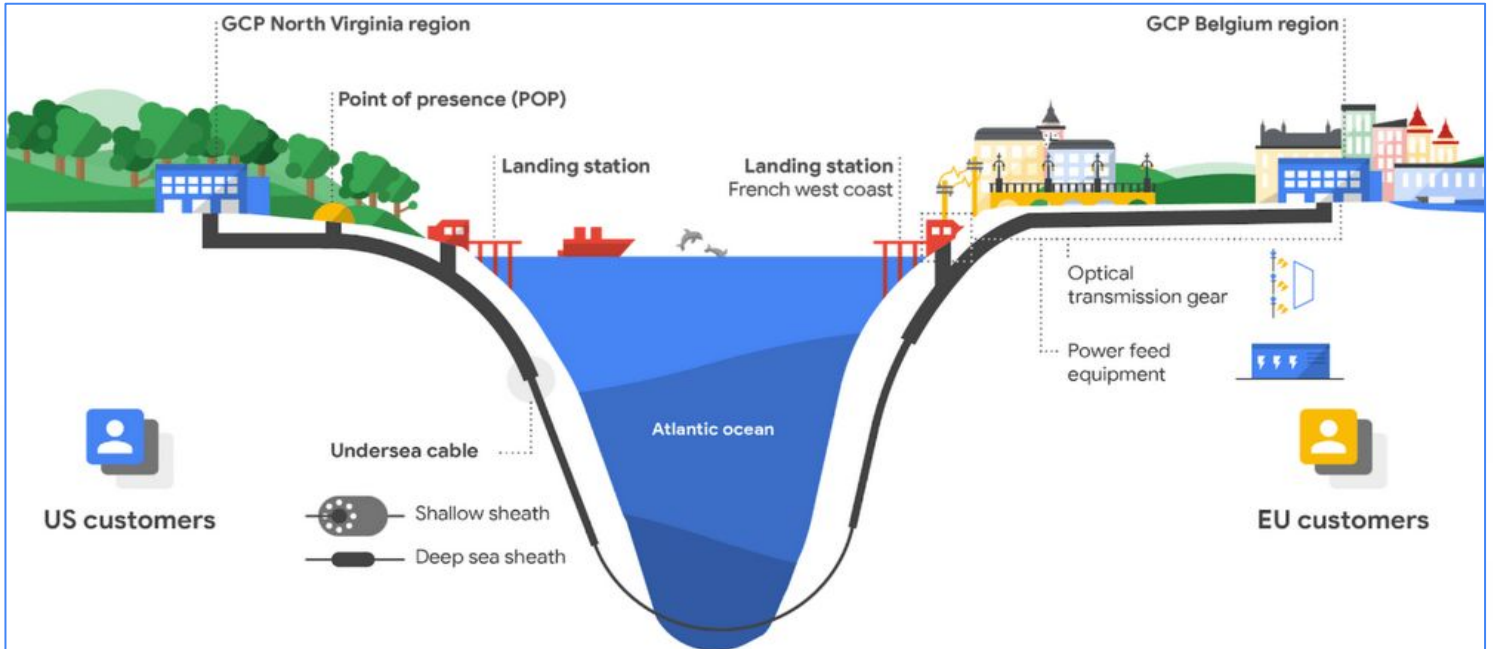
02



21st December, 2024

Syllabus: GS3 : Infrastructure

Newspaper: The Hindu **Page No:** 8



Decoding the news

With data use increasing year on year, India's undersea cable network is growing. Two new cable systems are set to be launched in the coming three months: the India Asia Xpress (IAX) and the India Europe Xpress (IEX), both connecting India with additional Internet links to the two continents. This

cently. The new cable systems bolster India's "defense strategy in terms of the resilience of the cables against physical damages or digital disruptions from cyberattacks by state or non-state actors", Mr. Panda wrote in a paper for the *Marine Policy* journal.

Both cable systems, cumulatively over 15,000 kilometres in length, are owned by Reliance Jio, with a strategic investment from China Mobile. The IAX connects Chennai and Mumbai with Singapore, Thailand, and Malaysia in Asia, and the IEX connects them with France, Greece, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Djibouti. This adds to the dozens of cables landing in India, mainly in Mumbai and Chennai.

Bangladesh connection

The Bangladeshi government recently put on hold plans by Internet service providers in that country to sell bandwidth to North-east India, according to reports from local media. This setback, however, has limited impact for India, said Suvesh Chattopadhyaya, an undersea cable industry veteran. North-east States are already served by fibre laid on top of the Power Grid Corporation of India's transmission lines, and this fibre accounts for "hundreds of gigabits" per second of connectivity, Mr. Chattopadhyaya said, sufficient for current connectivity needs.

21st December, 2024

Syllabus: Prelims : General issues on Environmental ecology, Bio-diversity & climate change

Newspaper: Indian Express **Page No:** 7

WESTERN GHATS facts:

- 1600 km long
- Tapi estuary to Kanyakumari in South
- UNESCO WHS & 36 Biodiversity Hotspots
- Meets Eastern Ghats @ Nilgiri
- Highest point: Anamudi



GADGIL REPORT

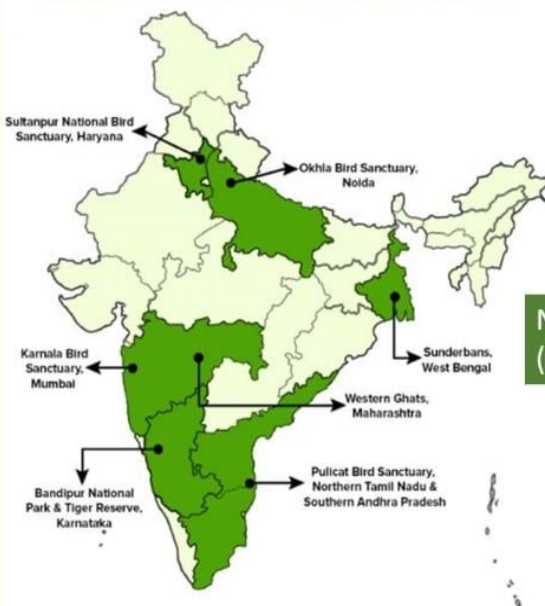
- Recommended that the entire stretch of the Western Ghats should be declared an **Ecologically Sensitive Area (ESA)**
- It divided the region into three zones – **ESZ1, ESZ2 & ESZ3** – and gave a broad outline of certain restrictions for each zone
- It recommended the determination of an area as ESZ1 or ESZ2 or ESZ3 be done at the block/taluka level
- No new polluting industries (red and orange category) were to be permitted in ESZ1 & ESZ2. Existing industries were to be phased out by 2016



KASTURIRANGAN REPORT

- Divided the Western Ghats into two: natural landscape and cultural landscape
- Of the natural landscape, it picked out merely 37% as **“biologically rich”** and **“with some measure of contiguity.”** Any restrictions were only placed in this area
- It proposed the demarcation of ESA be done at the village level
- Only red category industries (heavily polluting such as mining) were completely restricted

Major Eco-sensitive Zones of India



EnviroVigyan

Eco-Sensitive Areas (ESAs)

Notified by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) under Environment Protection Act 1986.

Located within 10 kms around Protected Areas, National Parks and Wildlife Sanctuaries.

Act as a transition zone from areas of high protection to areas involving lesser protection.

The purpose of declaring ESAs is to create some kind of **“shock absorbers”** to the protected areas by regulating and managing the activities around such areas.

21st December, 2024

Syllabus: Prelims : General issues on Environmental ecology, Bio-diversity & climate change

Newspaper: Indian Express **Page No: 7**

VETERAN ECOLOGIST Madhav Gadgil, who received the UN's highest environmental honour – the 'Champions of the Earth' award – for 2024 last week, emphasised the role of local communities in protecting the environment while speaking to The Indian Express.

He said that Gram Sabhas and locals should be part of the decision-making process regarding carrying out activities such as rock quarrying in ecologically sensitive areas in Western Ghats.

Gadgil was the chairman of the Western Ghats Ecology Expert Panel (WGEEP), which submitted a report in 2011 –

later came to be known as the Gadgil report – and recommended demarcating the Western Ghats into different levels of ecologically sensitive area.

Decoding the news

He said, "The approach for making decisions has to be bottom-up, and not vice versa. In low-sensitivity areas, rock quarrying can be allowed with suggestions from well-organised community groups such as Kerala's Kudumbashree [a community network and poverty eradication programme that aims to empower women]. These groups should be given the contract for rock quarries and asked to manage them."

"Most of these quarries are illegal and do not have adequate permission from the local district collectors. My friends in Kerala have told me that a large number of the quarries are owned by members of political

Gadgil also accused "tea estate owners and their friends" of building resorts and lakes in the area which are further increasing the pressure on the land and making it more vulnerable to landslides.

The ecologist also pointed out that India needs to revise its outlook on economic growth. He said that the country needs to focus on the development of four main components – natural capital, human capital, social capital, and man-made capital.

"We cannot just focus on man-made capital, which includes mining and polluting industries for economic growth. That is because man-made capital, in the long term, adversely impacts natural capital and human capital. It severely affects the environment and creates unemployment by destroying agriculture, etc... If we proceed this way, I am quite sure that we can pursue a path which will lead to overall development," he said.



Syllabus: Prelims : Current events of National & International importance

Newspaper: Indian Express **Page No:** 12

THE NORTHERN giant hornet, nicknamed the “murder hornet”, has been eradicated in the United States, the Department of Agriculture said on Wednesday. The insect was first spotted in Washington state near the Canadian border in 2019. Efforts quickly began to track down and get rid of the invasive species which poses a threat to bees and agriculture. Washington was the only state in the US that has had confirmed sightings of the northern giant hornets.

beehive of honeybees in just 90 minutes.

“The hornets can enter a ‘slaughter phase’ where they kill entire hives by decapitating the bees. The hornets then defend the hive as their own, taking the brood to feed their own young,” according to the Washington State Department of Agriculture. “They also attack other insects but are not known to destroy entire colonies of those insects.”

ABOUT:

- **Length:** ~ 2 in
- **Wingspan:** ~ 3 in
- **Invasive Species in North America**
- **Stings** are extremely **painful** and can be **fatal**
- Ability to quickly **decimate honeybee colonies**
- **Asian** giant Hornet
- **European** Hornet

Initiatives Related to the Management of Invasive Alien Species

Convention on Biological Diversity

Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (50% by 2030)

IUCN Invasive Species Specialist Group

Convention on Migratory Species of Wild Animals

Wild Life (Protection) Amendment, 2022

The big list of trouble makers...

Number of alien invasive species as per the NBA

Terrestrial plants: **53**

Aquatic ecosystem: **55**

Agriculture ecosystem: **47**

Island ecosystem: **14**

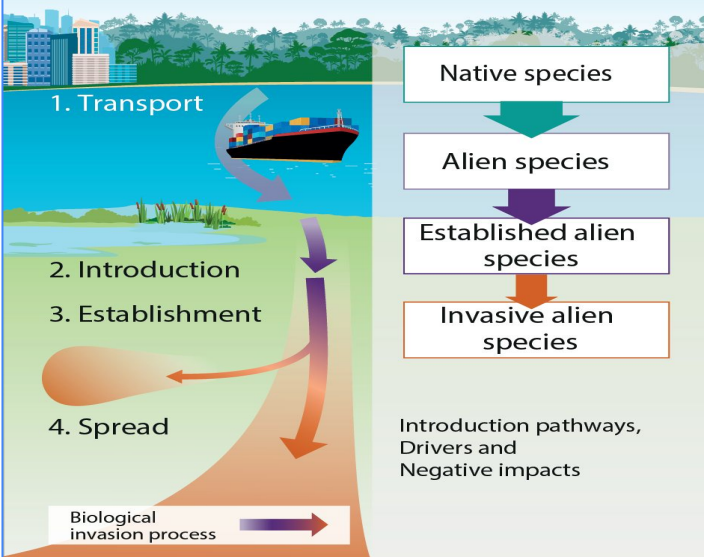


TOTAL ALIEN INVASIVE SPECIES → **169**

SOME PROMINENT NAMES

- Coconut eriophyid mite
- Spiralling white fly
- Woolly apple aphid
- Coffee berry borer beetle
- Cottony cushion scale
- Papaya mealybug
- Cotton mealybug
- Fall armyworm
- Pine woolly aphid
- Potato tuber moth

“ Biological invasion ”



21st December, 2024

Q1. Consider the following statements regarding the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity & Ecosystem Services (IPBES):

1. It is an independent intergovernmental body.
2. It functions similarly to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).
3. India is not a member country of the IPBES.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a) 1 and 2 only
- b) 2 only
- c) 1 and 3 only
- d) 1, 2, and 3

Answer: a

Q2. Consider the following statements regarding the Fiscal Responsibility & Budget Management Framework:

1. It directs the Government of India to restrict the general government debt to 60% of the GDP by 2024-25.
2. It directs the Government of India to restrict the fiscal deficit to 3% of the GDP.

Which of the statements given above is/are NOT correct?

- a) 1 Only
- b) 2 Only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: c

Q3. Consider the following statements regarding the GST Council:

1. It is a statutory body created under the Act by the Government of India.
2. Both Central & State Governments have equal voting power in the GST council.
3. Any decision to be passed in the council requires the support of the three-fourth majority.

How many of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a) Only One
- b) Only Two
- c) All Three
- d) None

Answer: a

Q4. Consider the following statements regarding the Western Ghats:

1. It starts from the Tapi estuary in the North & extends to the Nilgiri mountains in the south.
2. It meets the eastern ghats at the Nilgiri mountains.
3. Anamudi Peak is the highest mountain peak in the Western Ghats.

How many of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a) Only One
- b) Only Two
- c) All Three
- d) None

Answer: b

Q5. Consider the following statements regarding the Northern Giant Hornet:

1. It can quickly decimate honeybee colonies.
2. The insect was first spotted in the Eastern Ghats in India.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a) 1 Only
- b) 2 Only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: a





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