

Parliament adopts motion of thanks to President's Address

***Topic:** Indian Constitution- historical underpinnings, evolution, features, amendments, significant provisions and basic structure.*

The Parliament has adopted the Motion of Thanks to the President's address.

What is "Motion of Thanks" and what it contains?

The President makes an address to a joint sitting of Parliament at the start of the Budget session, which is prepared by the **government and lists its achievements**. The President's speech is a statement of the legislative and policy achievements of the government during the preceding year and gives a broad indication of the **agenda for the year ahead**. The address is followed by a motion of thanks moved in each House by ruling party MPs. During the session, political parties discuss the motion of thanks also suggesting amendments.

Amendments to the "Motion of Thanks":

Notices of amendments to Motion of Thanks on the President's Address can be tabled after the President has delivered his Address. Amendments may refer to matters contained in the Address as well as to matters, in the opinion of the member, the Address has failed to mention. Amendments can be moved to the Motion of Thanks in such form as may be **considered appropriate by the Speaker**.

Limitation:

The only limitations are that members **cannot refer to matters** which are not the direct responsibility of the Central Government and that **the name of the President cannot** be brought in during the debate since the Government and not the President is responsible for the contents of the Address.

Provisions governing them:

President's Address and Motion of Thanks are governed by **Articles 86 (1) and 87 (1) of the Constitution** ..

Sources: the hindu.

Ujjwala Yojana

***Topic:** Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and State*

The Cabinet has approved the increase in the target for the Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana, meant to provide LPG connections to rural women, to eight crore from the earlier five crore, adding that this has to be achieved by 2020. It also approved an additional allocation for the scheme of RS 4,800 crore.

About the Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana:

Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana aims to provide LPG (liquefied petroleum gas) connections to poor households. Under the scheme, an adult woman member of a below poverty line family identified through the Socio-Economic Caste Census (SECC) is given a deposit-free LPG connection with financial assistance of Rs 1,600 per connection by the Centre.

Eligible households will be identified in consultation with state governments and Union territories. The scheme is being implemented by the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas.

LPG adoption necessary is it ?

About 75 crore Indians, especially women and girls, are exposed to severe household air pollution (HAP) from the use of solid fuels such as biomass, dung cakes and coal for cooking. A report from the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare places HAP as the second leading risk factor contributing to India's disease burden.

According to the World Health Organization, solid fuel use is responsible for about 13% of all mortality and morbidity in India (measured as Disability-Adjusted Life Years), and causes about 40% of all pulmonary disorders, nearly 30% of cataract incidences, and over 20% each of ischemic heart disease, lung cancer and lower respiratory infection.

The PMUY is a bold and much-needed initiative, but it should be recognised that this is just a first step. The real test of the PMUY and its successor programmes will be in how they translate the provision of connections to sustained use of LPG or other clean fuels such as electricity or biogas.

Truly smokeless kitchens can be realized only if the government follows up with measures that go beyond connections to actual usage of LPG. This may require concerted efforts cutting across Ministries beyond petroleum and natural gas and including those of health, rural development and women and child welfare.

Sources: the hindu.

Minamata Convention

Topic: Important International institutions, agencies and fora, their structure, mandate.

The Union cabinet has approved a proposal for ratification of the Minamata Convention, a global treaty to protect human health and the environment from adverse effects of mercury. After joining the Convention, it will now be easier for India to get technological or financial assistance to address issues related to mercury.

About Minamata convention:

The Minamata Convention on Mercury is a multilateral environmental agreement that addresses specific human activities which are contributing to widespread mercury pollution. Implementation of this agreement will help reduce global mercury pollution over the coming decades.

The Minamata Convention is named after the Japanese city of Minamata, which experienced a severe, decades-long incidence of mercury poisoning after industrial wastewater from a chemical factory was discharged into Minamata Bay.

The wastewater contained methyl mercury, which bio-accumulated in fish and shellfish in the bay. Local people who consumed seafood from Minamata Bay became very sick, and many died or were left severely disabled.

Major highlights of the Minamata Convention include a ban on new mercury mines, the phase-out of existing ones, the phase out and phase down of mercury use in a number of products and processes, control measures on emissions to air and on releases to land and water, and the regulation of the informal sector of artisanal and small-scale gold mining.

The Convention also addresses interim storage of mercury and its disposal once it becomes waste, sites contaminated by mercury as well as health issues.

Background:

Till now, the convention has 88 ratifications and 144 signatories including India, which signed it on 30 September 2014. India had actively participated in the negotiating process, making significant contributions in finalizing the treaty text but had not ratified it till now.

India's neighbours – Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Nepal and Pakistan – are also signatories to the convention. But only Sri Lanka has ratified it.

Mercury pollution is a global problem that requires global action. It moves with air and water, transcends political borders, and can be transported thousands of miles in the atmosphere.

The Minamata Convention on Mercury is an opportunity for the global community to address this mounting problem before it gets worse. Over the next decades, implementation of this international agreement will help reduce mercury pollution from the specific human activities responsible for the most significant mercury releases to the environment.

Sources: pib.

MLCR

- The **Marginal Cost of Funds-based Lending Rate (MCLR)** refers to the minimum interest rate of a bank below which it cannot lend.

- Reserve Bank of India will link the base rate with the Marginal Cost of Funds based Lending Rates (MCLR).
- RBI decided to shift from base rate to MCLR because the rates based on marginal cost of funds are more sensitive to changes in the policy rates.

Operation Cactus

- In 1988 a group of Maldivians led by Abdullah Luthufi tried to overthrow then Maldivian Government.
- The attempt was a failure due to the intervention of the Indian Armed Forces.
- The operation was code named as Operation Cactus.
- INS Godavari and Betwa were used by the Indian Navy in the operation

The Great India Blog Train

- It is the **Social Media Key Influencer campaign** of Ministry of Tourism
- It involves the Bloggers across the world and they are invited to travel to destinations in the country on the Luxury Trains operating in different States.
- The objective of the campaign is to position luxury trains of India as a unique tourism product both in the domestic and overseas markets

Railway development Authority

- Rail Development Authority will help the Indian Railways take decisions on pricing of services, consumer interests, generating revenue and competition.
- Government has approved formation of a Rail Development Authority (RDA) comprising Chairman and three Members.
- The objective underlying RDA is to get expert advice/make informed decision on:
 1. Pricing of services commensurate with costs.
 2. Suggest measures for enhancement of Non-Fare Revenue.
 3. Protection of consumer interests, by ensuring quality of service and cost optimization.
 4. Promoting competition, efficiency and economy.
- Other than the above-mentioned objectives the authority also deals with resource allocation, setting service benchmark etc.,

ENCORE

- The **Eastern Naval Command Operational Readiness Exercise** (ENCORE), Theatre Level Readiness and Operational Exercise concluded on the Eastern Seaboard by the Indian Navy and Indian Air Force aircrafts.

- The exercise was conducted in phases to test various facets of war-fighting capabilities of the combat units.
- The exercise was conducted in real time covering a vast expanse of Indian Ocean Region (IOR)

Minmata Convention on mercury

- The Union Cabinet approved the proposal for ratification of Minamata Convention on Mercury.
- The Convention protects the most vulnerable from the harmful effects of mercury and also protects the developmental space of developing countries
- The objective of the convention's implementation to protect human health and environment from the anthropogenic emissions and releases of mercury and mercury compounds.
- The Convention is named after the Japanese city Minamata, as the city went through a devastating incident of mercury poisoning.

Prithvi-II

Topic: *indigenization of technology and developing new technology.*

India has successfully test-fired its indigenously developed nuclear capable **Prithvi-II** missile as part of a user trial by the Army from a test range in Odisha.

About Prithvi-II:

Inducted into the Armed forces of the country in 2003, the **nine-metre-tall, single-stage liquid-fuelled Prithvi-II** is the first missile to have been developed by the DRDO under the Integrated Guided Missile Development Programme (IGMDP).

- Prithvi-II is capable of **carrying 500-1,000 kilogram** of warheads and is trusted by liquid propulsion twin engines. The state-of-the-art missile uses advanced inertial guidance system with manoeuvring trajectory to hit its target.
- Prithvi-II is indigenously developed and is nuclear-capable surface-to-surface. With a strike range of 350 km, Prithvi-II is powered by twin-engines which use liquid propulsion. It also uses advanced inertial guidance system with manoeuvring trajectory to hit its target.
- Notably, Prithvi is India's first indigenously-built ballistic missile. It is one of the five missiles being developed under the country's Integrated Guided Missile Development Programme.

RBI holds rates on inflation risk

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) held the policy repo rate at 6% as the central bank's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) raised the estimate for fourth-quarter inflation and flagged concerns about the future outlook for price gains.

- Considering the factors such as sharp rise in domestic petrol and diesel prices etc., MPC estimated Inflation for Q4 to be 5.1%.
- The central bank also projected retail inflation in the range of 5.1-5.6% for the first half of 2018-19, while assuming a normal monsoon — effectively ruling out any rate reduction in the near future.
- For the second half of the next fiscal, inflation is projected at 4.5-4.6%, with 'risks tilted to the upside'.

Among the upside risks to inflation, the MPC noted that pick-up in global growth could exert further pressure on crude oil, with the higher minimum support price to farmers, announced in the Budget, adding to the uncertainty.

The RBI pared its 2017-18 GVA growth estimate to 6.6%, from December's 6.7%.

Ujjwala Yojana to benefit eight crore women now

The Union Cabinet approved the increase in the target for the PradhanMantriUjjwalaYojana, meant to provide cooking-gas connections to rural women, to eight crore from the earlier five crore.

- The Cabinet also approved an additional allocation for the scheme of Rs 4,800 crore.
- The deadline for achieving the target is 2020.

INTERNATIONAL

Nasheed, renews call for 'liberator' India's help

Maldivians see India's potential role in resolving the crisis gripping the island not as an occupation, but as "liberating assistance", exiled former President Mohamed Nasheed said, reiterating his earlier call for Indian intervention.

- Amid heightening political upheaval in the Indian Ocean island, culminating in President Abdulla Yameen declaring a state of emergency.
- Following the declaration of emergency rule, a wave of high-profile arrests were made which includes Supreme Court Chief Justice Abdulla Saeed and another judge of the court and Former President Gayoom.

- Mr. Nasheed sought Indian military intervention to release jailed dissidents, he said: “They [India] come, they sort out the situation, and they promptly leave... it is because a vast majority of our people want India to intervene that I sought India’s help”.
- He was referring to a coup attempt that India helped put down, on then President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom’s request in 1988.

Kim Jong-un’s sister to visit S. Korea

Kim Yo-jong, sister of North Korean leader Kim Jong-un will visit the South this week for the Pyeongchang Winter Olympics, — the first member of North Korea’s ruling family ever to do so.

- According to experts the visit will mark Kim Yo-jong’s debut on the international stage
- Kim Yo-jong, 30, was promoted in October to be an alternative member of the party’s powerful politburo, the decision-making body presided over by her brother.
- She will meet South Korean President Moon Jae-in and give him a personal letter from her brother, expressing his hopes for a successful hosting of the Olympics and a desire to improve inter-Korean ties.

The two Koreas have been divided by the Demilitarised Zone since the end of the Korean War in 1953, and Pyongyang’s pursuit of nuclear weapons has seen it subjected to multiple rounds of United Nations Security Council sanctions.

But the Olympics have triggered a rapid rapprochement on the peninsula.

STATE-TELANGANA

Foreign footfall in TS rose by 8% in 2017

Foreign tourist arrivals to the State rose modestly last year while domestic tourist arrivals fell sharply.

- Telangana registered 1.8 lakh foreign tourist arrivals in 2017, about 8% more than that of previous year. The trend in foreign tourist arrivals has increased since the State was created in 2014.
- In its year of creation, Telangana saw the arrival of only 75,000 foreign tourists.
- Domestic tourist arrivals, as shown by the tourism department data, fell by about 3 crore tourists compared to 2015 and 2016.
- Tourism Secretary B. Venkatesham attributed it to Godavari and Krishna Pushkaralu not being held last year. “Pushkaralu bring in large footfall. Without such events in 2017, the number dipped. This year, however, we expected the number to be higher due to Medaramjatara,” he said.
- The Sammakka-SarakkaJatara in Medaram, which concluded earlier this month, is expected to raise the number by 1 crore.

08-02-2018

While Hyderabad remained the most visited district for both Indian and foreign tourists, like previous years, RajannaSircilla district saw a big jump in domestic footfall, thanks to the attraction of the Vemulawada temple.

- Put together, Hyderabad, Ranga Reddy, Medchal and Vikarabad welcomed 1.4 crore domestic visitors.

Though foreign footfalls are on the rise, the department admits the numbers are mainly driven by arrivals for meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions (MICE).

The government aims to make Telangana a State with million-plus foreign tourist footfall by 2025