

Draft National Auto Policy

Why in news?

The Department of Heavy Industry, Ministry of Heavy Industries & Public Enterprises has recently released the draft National Auto Policy.

What are the objectives?

- The policy envisages propelling India as an automotive industry amongst the top three nations in the world.
- This is in terms of engineering, manufacturing and export of automotive vehicles and components.
- It aims at making India a globally competitive auto R&D and manufacturing hub.
- It also intends to make the automotive industry a major contributor to the country's manufacturing sector GDP.
- It is also to aid achieving the targeted objectives of green mobility.

What are the key provisions?

- **Import duty** - The Policy proposes lowering of import duties.
- This applies to capital goods, equipment and machinery for manufacture of new technology components.
- Companies will have to declare at the beginning of every financial year the volume of prototypes planned to be imported.
- The import duty exemption to companies will be given only on this pre-declared volume.
- **Green Mobility** - The policy emphasizes fast-tracking widespread adoption of green mobility in India.
- It calls for mandating a minimum share of green vehicles among those purchased by the government and municipal agencies.

Accordingly:

- central and state governments - 25% from 2023 and 75% from 2030
- municipal corporations in metros - 50% from 2023 and 100% from 2030
- ❖ **Emission** - The policy eyes adoption of a long-term roadmap for emission standards.

- ❖ It proposes to define emission standards that will be applicable after BS-VI.
- ❖ The standards will be with a target of harmonizing them with the most stringent global standards by 2028.
- ❖ Introduction of new norms will be initiated in 2026 with a 2-year phase-in period.
- ❖ It also envisions the Corporate Average Fuel Economy (CAFE) norms till 2025 and beyond.
- ❖ These norms are for improving the average fuel economy of vehicles, and fix incentives or penalties.
- ❖ **GeM portal** - The draft policy suggests utilising the Government e-Marketplace (GeM) portal.
- ❖ This is to aggregate all green vehicle orders with standard specifications and enable bulk procurement.
- ❖ **Infrastructure** - The policy recommends conducting a detailed study on requirement of public infrastructure for green vehicles.
- ❖ This is to make the necessary infrastructure investments for green mobility.
- ❖ **Skill development** - The policy proposes improving the skill development and training eco-system.
- ❖ It advocates increasing the accountability of Automotive Skills Development Council (ASDC) to achieve this.
- ❖ Performance based funding is suggested as a measure.
- ❖ Performance metrics include incremental employment generated, level of employment, curriculum coverage, etc.
- ❖ **Employment** - The draft policy suggests ASDC to implement a Labour Market Information System (LMIS).
- ❖ This is to facilitate aggregated information of certified candidates.
- ❖ It also serves as a marketplace to match demand and supply of skilled labour.
- ❖ It thereby helps boost employment creation in the sector.
- ❖ **Investment** - The policy entails incentivising Public Private Partnership (PPP) based industry investments.
- ❖ This is particularly for research and development of commercially viable technologies through a Hybrid Annuity Model (HAM).
- ❖ The policy also calls for encouraging FDI in the country's Automobile sector.
- ❖ This is proposed to be in coordination with Invest India to attract investments in identified areas.
- ❖ Initiating trade pacts with countries with attractive markets for Indian automotive exports is also called for.
- ❖ **Besides**, the draft auto policy also suggests setting up of a 'technology acquisition fund'.

- ❖ It proposes creation of a nodal body with a two-tier structure having an Apex Body supported by the National Automotive Council (NAC).
- ❖ The apex body will have government representatives as well as stakeholders nominated from the industry and academia.

Source: Business Standard, Economic Times

Reforming the Spectrum Auctions

Why in news?

Union government of India is rethinking its approach to spectrum auctions.

What does a Spectrum Auction means?

- ✓ Energy travels in the form of waves known as electromagnetic waves, these waves differ from each other in terms of frequencies, and this whole range of frequencies is called the spectrum.
- ✓ In Telecom electromagnetic waves of different wavelengths are used, they are divided into bands based on frequencies.
- ✓ A spectrum auction is a process whereby a government uses an auction system to sell the rights (licences) to transmit signals over specific bands of the electromagnetic spectrum and to assign scarce spectrum resources.
- ✓ Spectrum auctions makes use of natural resources for revenue raising and ensuring economic development.

What are the existing concerns in Indian spectrum auctions?

- Earlier spectrum was allotted to various companies which are favourable of government's choice at much cheaper prices or for free.
- At critical times, government demanded Telecoms to buy fresh spectrums to renew their licenses, telecoms also bought spectrums at high cost to sustain their markets.
- Once few reforms had brought in spectrum auctions, the prices of spectrums went sky high and even coal/iron ore allocations were cancelled for the same reason that they were not competitively bid.
- This High auction bids had caused mobile tariffs to rise, and now tariffs are decided by competition.
- These auctions tried to maximize government revenues instead of maximising development by bringing in greater benefits to citizens or to the private sector.

What measures needs to be taken by the government?

- Government need to remove the irrational excitement of the past to address the impact of bad policy like the shortage of spectrum.
- If government's design is right, it can auction even water while keeping tariffs affordable or even subsidised, thus a better policy design is crucial.
- The auction design must ensure the poor get a service at affordable price instead of concentrating on revenues.
- Reforms also need to be roped in to reduce the ridiculously high license/spectrum charges and address the problems faced by the industry for better ease of doing.

Source: Financial Express

Oxfam Scandal

What is the issue?

- Oxfam International is following an opaque mechanism in regulating its employers involved in Haiti scandal.
- Due to this agency faces an uncertain future for its International support and funding.

What is Oxfam International?

- ❖ Oxfam is a confederation of 20 independent charitable organizations around the world.
- ❖ It is based in UK but it has its operation across 90 countries.
- ❖ Oxfam international releases global inequality report annually.
- ❖ Around the globe, Oxfam works to find practical, innovative ways for people to lift themselves out of poverty and thrive.
- ❖ Oxfam works with partner organizations and alongside vulnerable women and men to end the injustices that cause poverty.

What was the role of Oxfam in Haiti?

- ❖ In 2010, A 7.1 magnitude earthquake devastated the island of Haiti, killing over 220,000 and injuring over 30,000.

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- ❖ During this disaster billions of dollars of aid poured in, with international aid organisations playing a pivotal role in the recovery and relief effort.
- ❖ Among those to take a lead role was Oxfam, the Oxford-based charity, which had a Rs.629 crore fund for its relief efforts in the country.



What are the scandals of Oxfam?

- During the relief operations in Haiti many employees of Oxfam has indulged in sexual abuse on women and children as young as 14.
- It also emerged that one of the alleged perpetrators had faced allegations while working in Chad for Oxfam, but had still been assigned to Haiti following the earthquake
- Moreover, some of the men were able to get jobs at other organisations in contact with vulnerable people.
- UK's Charity Commission had failed to report incidents of sexual exploitation and abuse and that the scale of abuse was likely to be far wider than was being reported to Oxfam.

What are the actions taken in this regard?

- ❖ The scandal has already triggered the resignation of the charity's deputy head, while corporate sponsors are urgently seeking clarity on the situation.
- ❖ The charity had allowed three senior male staff to resign following an inquiry into sexual transgression, and fired four others for gross misconduct and bullying.
- ❖ Recently Britain's charity regulator the Charity Commission opened a statutory inquiry into Oxfam.

- ❖ This includes concerns that the charity had not “fully and frankly” disclosed materials about the allegations at the time.

What are the challenges in taking actions on Oxfam?

- ❖ Oxfam has a “strong policy framework” for protecting staff and beneficiaries from sexual exploitation and abuse.
- ❖ The Oxfam aid is being used by the beneficial nations to expand their trade and national interests, so they are hesitant to take any action against the charity.
- ❖ The Charity Commission and government departments of UK are not even ready to any disciplinary action against the organisation even within their territory.
- ❖ The charity is strongly backed by UK’s political forces and no international proceedings has been initiated against the organisation.
- ❖ Thus it is hard to confront the issue of sexual abuse and exploitation across the aid sector in Britain and beyond.

Botanical Survey of India

Topic: Statutory, regulatory and various quasi-judicial bodies.



Botanical Survey of India (BSI) and Natural History Museum (NHM), UK have signed a Memorandum of Understanding for cooperation in the field of genetic/taxonomic studies, research and training, conservation in India, including species and habitat conservation assessments.

NHM will help BSI in capacity building in areas of systematic botany and long-term conservation of plant genetic resources in India.

About BSI:

The Botanical Survey of India (BSI) was established in 1890 with the objectives of exploring the plant resources of the country and identifying plant species with economic virtue. In 1954, the Government reorganised the BSI with the objectives of:

- ❖ Undertaking intensive floristic surveys and collecting accurate and detailed information on the occurrence, distribution, ecology and economic utility of plants in the country.
- ❖ Collecting, identifying and distributing materials that may be of use to educational and research institutions.
- ❖ Acting as the custodian of authentic collections in well planned herbaria and documenting plant resources in the form of local, district, state and national flora.

Open science and collaboration is a core goal of both Botanical Survey of India and Natural History Museum, signing of the Memorandum of Understanding between BSI and NHM is set to develop further to the benefit of both India and the UK. Capacity building and scientific exchange between India and the UK will also be central to future work under the Memorandum of Understanding and will enable learning from each other and work collaboratively to address important scientific questions and deliver benefit to humanity.

World Sustainable Development Summit

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

2018 World Sustainable Development Summit is being held in New Delhi.

About World Sustainable Development Summit:

The World Sustainable Development Summit (WSDS), TERI's flagship event, has been conceptualized as a single platform to accelerate action towards sustainable development and especially climate change. The event was earlier known as the Delhi Sustainable Development Summit (DSDS).

Theme: The theme of the Summit this year is 'Partnerships for a Resilient Planet'.

The WSDS series seeks to bring together the finest minds and leading thinkers of the world to focus attention on the challenge of sustainable development and has emerged as a landmark event addressing issues pertinent to the future of humanity.

About TERI:

The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI) is a leading think tank dedicated to conducting research for sustainable development of India and the Global South. TERI was established in 1974 as an information centre on energy issues. However, over the following decades, it made a mark as a research institute, whose policy and technology solutions transformed people's lives and the environment.

Way ahead:

India is ranked 116 out of 157 nations on a global index that assesses the performance of countries towards achieving the ambitious sustainable development goals (SDGs). India is ranked 116th on the index with a score of 58.1, behind countries such as Nepal, Iran, Sri Lanka, Bhutan and China. Pakistan is ranked 122. There is need for urgent action on the part of India in making sustainable development a reality both within and beyond its border. Also, if the world is to achieve the SDGs, all countries must take up the goals as part of their national development strategies, and ensure that they take responsibility for their impact on the rest of the world.

First large scale CO₂-injected project in Asia:

Context: Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) plans to introduce carbon dioxide injection in its Gandhar field to recover an extra 20 million barrels of crude oil under the enhanced oil recovery (EOR) programme which is being undertaken to improve India's energy security. While the technology is a proven concept in the West specially the US and Canada, ONGC's project would be the first large scale CO₂-injected project in Asia.

SC curtails T.N.'s share of Cauvery water

The Supreme Court awarded Karnataka 14.75 tmc ft (thousand million cubic feet) of Cauvery water from Tamil Nadu's share, reasoning that Karnataka has historically suffered "limited access to and use" of the river water.

- Out of the 14.75 tmc ft, Bengaluru will get 4.75 tmc ft for drinking water purposes.

Out of a total of 740 tmc ft available in the 802-km-long river, the Supreme Court determined that Karnataka would now get 284.75 (270+14.75) tmc ft, Tamil Nadu's share has been reduced from 419 tmc ft to 404.25 tmc ft, while Kerala and Puducherry would continue to be allocated 30 tmc ft and seven tmc ft, respectively.

The court gave the Centre six weeks' time to frame a Cauvery water-sharing scheme under Section 6A of the Inter-State Water Disputes Act of 1956. The scheme has to be in consonance with the CWDT's award and the changes introduced by the Supreme Court through this judgment.

- With this, the apex court dismissed the Centre's claims that it has complete discretion to decide whether or not to frame a scheme.
- The court held that subject to the formulation of a scheme, the water allocation arrangement should stand unchanged for the next 15 years. The court warned the States to not deviate from the judgment or use the allotted water for other than the designated purposes. It supported the tribunal's decision to exactly apportion lands for irrigation in Karnataka and Tamil Nadu and determine the water allocation to these lands.

How did system allow PNB fraud, asks CVC

The Central Vigilance Commission (CVC), India's apex body for checking corruption in the government, has summoned senior officials of the Reserve Bank of India and the Finance Ministry, along with the Chief Vigilance Officer of Punjab National Bank (PNB), to assess how the Rs 11,500 crore fraud reported by the government-owned PNB, slipped past all the in-built checks and balances in the banking system.

- the CVC would like to ascertain if there is a systemic issue that needs to be corrected, as it isn't convinced by the bank's claims that junior employees colluded with the fugitive diamond merchant Nirav Modi and other banks were to blame for not carrying out due diligence on the letters of undertaking (LoUs).
- Banks are audited at three levels — apart from an internal audit, there is an external auditor and a statutory audit undertaken by the RBI. The CVC is keen to understand how none of these audits picked up a red flag on the LoUs that seem to have been issued bypassing the system.

Meanwhile, the RBI broke its silence on the fraud and blamed internal control failures for PNB's woes in a statement, terming the incident as a 'case of operational risk' due to 'delinquent behaviour' by one or more employees.

'Show source of income to contest polls'

In a landmark move in poll reforms, the Supreme Court ruled that politicians, their spouses and associates must declare their sources of income, along with their assets, in order to qualify for contesting elections. It directed the government to set up a permanent mechanism to monitor the accrual of wealth of sitting MPs and MLAs, their spouses and associates.

- The judgment, said "manifold and undue accretion of assets" by legislators or their associates by itself becomes a good ground for disqualification.

The court made it mandatory for candidates contesting elections and their associates to declare their assets and source of income at the time of nomination.

- The obligation of a candidate to disclose both his assets and the source of income is a part of the fundamental right of a citizen to know, under Article 19 (1) (a) of the Constitution.
- The court said enforcement of a citizen's fundamental right needs no statutory sanction from the government or Parliament.

It held that "undue accretion of assets" is an independent ground for disqualifying an MP or an MLA.

- Amassing wealth is a "culpable offence" by itself and a lawmaker can be prosecuted even without charging him for offences under the Prevention of Corruption Act.
- The court said the amassment of unaccounted wealth by lawmakers is the mark of a failing democracy. If left unattended, it would inevitably lead to the destruction of democracy and pave the way for the rule of mafia.

The court said India as a "socialist republic" believes in the distribution of material resources and not in the concentration of wealth.

- If the assets of a legislator increase without bearing any relationship to their known sources of income, the only logical inference that can be drawn is that there is some abuse. The court pointed out how legislators use their position to secure loans from nationalised banks which turn into NPAs.

Iran, India will shine bright'

President of the Islamic Republic of Iran Hassan Rouhani said that his country is ready to share its rich natural resources with India. He also gave a call for Muslim unity and universal brotherhood while delivering a speech at the packed Mecca Masjid where he offered Friday prayers.

- “Iran announces from here that it will fully cooperate with India to share oil, gas and energy for the development and progress of India and its people,” Mr. Rouhani said.
- Iran will permit India to use the Chabahar Port as a transit point so that its goods can enter other countries in Central Asia, besides Afghanistan.
- India and Iran can work together in agriculture, industry and new technology sectors to enhance cooperation in areas of mutual interest. He also said that Iran wants peace in the region.

Mr. Rouhani said “enemies of Islam” want to divide Muslims. The Mecca Masjid, he said, bears testimony that Indian and Iranian Muslims are brothers. “All schools of thought are like rivers. They all flow into a sea,” he said urging the Muslim community to rise above sectarian differences.

Earlier, Mr. Rouhani visited the Qutb Shahi tombs complex on the foothills of Golconda Fort.

- The first Qutb Shahi king, Sultan Quli Qutb-ul-Mulk who ruled from Golconda, hailed from Hamadan in present day Iran. The dynasty which ruled till 1687 had continued contacts with the Persian empire.
- Mr. Rouhani offered prayers at the mausoleum of Sultan Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah. He reportedly seemed curious about the tile patterns still existing on Ibrahim Qutb Shah and Muhammad Qutb Shah’s tombs.

Chandrayaan-II to be launched in April

India’s second moon mission, Chandrayaan-II, which would land a rover on the lunar surface is expected to be launched in April.

- Chandrayaan-II would cost about Rs 800 crore. It presented many technological challenges as it had three components: an orbiter, a lander and a moon rover.
- The orbiter had a life of one year while the lander and the rover were designed to last a lunar day, which was 14 days, as they worked on solar power.
- A location had been identified at the Moon’s South Pole to drop the lander and rover.

Cauvery a national asset, no exclusive ownership’

An inter-State river like Cauvery is a ‘national asset’, and being in a state of flow, no State can claim exclusive ownership of its waters or assert a prescriptive right so as to deprive other States of their equitable share, the Supreme Court held.

- While it is common and equal to all through whose land it (river) runs and no one can obstruct or divert it, yet as one of the beneficial gifts of Nature, each beneficiary has a right to just and reasonable use of it, the court observed.

This principle of equitable apportionment, as is now intrinsically embedded generally in a pursuit for apportionment of water of an international drainage basin straddling over two or more States, predicates that every riparian State is entitled to a fair share of the water according to its need, and is imbued with the philosophy that a river has been provided by nature for the common benefit of the community as a whole through whose territory it flows even though those territories may be divided by frontiers as postulated in law.

- However, the court said the “principle of equality” among the riparian States does not imply equal division of water. The apex court said, equality here means “equal consideration and equal economic opportunity of the co-basin States.”
- To conceive that equality rests on equal sharing of water within an arithmetical formula, would be fundamentally violative of the established conception of equitable apportionment, the Supreme Court observed.

The court compared the sharing of inter-State river waters in India to the practices of sharing of international rivers among nations.

- The Supreme Court referred to the Helsinki Rules of 1966, which recognise equitable use of water by each basin State taking into consideration the geography and hydrology of the basin, the climate, past utilisation of waters, economic and social needs, dependent population and availability of resources.
- The judgment also refers to the Campione Rules in the context of the Cauvery dispute. These Rules hold that basin States would in their respective territories manage the waters of an international drainage basin in an equitable and reasonable manner.

The court referred to the National Water Policy, which had reiterated time and again that water is a “scarce and precious national asset.”

Plea to ban law practice of MPs, MLAs

The Supreme Court decided to examine a plea to ban Members of Parliament and State Legislative Assemblies from practising law.

- A Bench led by Chief Justice Dipak Misra asked Attorney-General K.K. Venugopal for assistance.

Petitioner, advocate Ashwini Kumar Upadhyay, said: “Under Section 21 of the IPC, MLAs and MPs are public servants. Hence, allowing them to practice as an advocate and restricting other public servants is arbitrary and irrational and violation of Articles 14-15 of the Constitution.”

Solar alliance biggest win since Paris accord, says PM

The biggest development on tackling climate change since the Paris Accord of 2015 has been the International Solar Alliance, said Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the inaugural session of the World Sustainable Development Summit.

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- India and France initiated the International Solar Alliance on November 30, 2015 in Paris, on the sidelines of COP-21, the UN climate conference.. It has 121 members(countries).
- The International Solar Alliance (ISA) that aims at increasing solar energy deployment in member countries, came into legal, independent existence in December and is the first treaty-based international intergovernmental organisation to be based out of India.
- The ISA aims to mobilise more than \$1,000 billion in investments by 2030 for “massive deployment” of solar energy, pave the way for future technologies adapted to the needs of moving to a fossil-free future and keep global temperatures from rising above 2°C by the end of the century.
- As part of the agreement, India will contribute \$27 million to the ISA for creating corpus, building infrastructure and recurring expenditure over five years from 2016-17 to 2020-21.

India has committed itself to having 175,000 MW of renewed energy in the grid by 2022.

TRAI to fine ‘predatory’ tariff

The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) said a “financial disincentive” of up to Rs 50 lakh for each service area can be imposed on a telco in case a tariff offered by the operator is found to be predatory.

In its new tariff order, aimed at ensuring transparency, non-discrimination and non-predation, TRAI said in the case of non- compliance with norms to report any new tariff to the regulator, the telco may be “liable to pay five thousand rupees, by way of financial disincentive for every day of delay subject to a maximum of Rs 2 lakh as the Authority may by order direct.”

TRAI added there was no need to impose restrictions on the number of promotional offers that an operator can provide to its subscribers.

STATE – AP

CM to inaugurate tourism complex

Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu will inaugurate a tourism complex on the foothills of Kotappakonda, lay the foundation stone for a ropeway project to Sri Koteswara Swamy temple.

JNTU campus at Kakani

The Chief Minister will also lay the foundation stone for the JNTU-Kakinada campus at Kakani village.

Krishna Pradeep's

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