DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS (DCA)

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AMENDMENT TO THE PUBLIC EXAMINATIONS (PREVENTION OF UNFAIR MEANS) ACT, 2024

Context

- The Union Cabinet cleared a proposal **to introduce amendments to the Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Act, 2024,** endowing the anti-paper leak law with tougher penalties and time-bound trial mechanisms.

About

- **The proposed amendments** to the anti-cheating law include **steeper jail sentences, higher financial penalties and the setting up of fast-track courts** for speedy trials.
- **Amendments in Penalties:** Imprisonment for those involved in organised examination fraud has been **hiked from the previous 3-5 year bracket to 5 to 10 years in prison.**
    - Maximum fines for those involved in **organised rackets have been hiked up to ₹10 crore.**
- **Fast Track Courts:** The law gives statutory backing **to set up dedicated fast-track courts empowered to expedite cases.**
    - **Fast-track courts** will be mandated to conclude investigations, dispose of cases, and pronounce judgments **within three months.**
    - Fast-track courts have already been notified in Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra, with the Delhi High Court notifying the establishment of a specialised court on July 23.
- **Institutional Rebuild:** The Education Ministry has issued advertisements for the appointment of senior professionals at the level of General Manager in the agency to oversee key functions such as its network of centres, operations, information security and vigilance.
    - It would engage 16 young professionals in various units of the NTA through the Pratibha Setu portal of the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC).

Public Examination (Prevention of Unfair Means) Act, 2024

- It was passed in 2024 and is aimed at **curbing leaks, malpractices in recruitment examinations** like UPSC, SSC etc and entrance tests such as NEET, JEE, and CUET.
- The Act broadly defines **"unfair means"** to include various malpractices, such as:
    - Leaking question papers or answer keys,
    - Assisting candidates during exams (unauthorized communication, providing solutions),
    - Tampering with computer networks or resources,
    - Impersonating candidates,
    - Conducting fake examinations or issuing fake documents,
    - Tampering with documents for merit lists or ranks.
- **Penalties and Punishments:**
    - **Individuals:**
        - Imprisonment ranges from 3 to 10 years depending on the offense's severity.
        - Fines up to Rs. 1 crore for organized crimes.
    - **Service providers:**
        - Fines up to Rs. 1 crore for involvement in malpractices.
        - Barring from conducting public examinations for 4 years.
        - Personal liability for directors/ management involved.
    - **Organized crimes:**
        - Harsher penalties, with imprisonment between 5 and 10 years and a minimum fine of Rs. 1 crore
        - The institution involved can face property attachment and forfeiture
- **Investigation:**
    - All offences under the Act are cognisable, non-bailable, and non-compoundable.
    - An officer not below the rank Deputy Superintendent or Assistant Commissioner of Police will investigate the offences under the Act.
    - The Central Government may transfer the investigation to any Central Investigating Agency.

Radhakrishnan Panel

- Following the NEET-UG 2024 controversy, the Ministry of Education formed a high-level committee headed by **former ISRO chairman K. Radhakrishnan.**

Key Recommendations of Panel for Exam Reforms

- **Examinations Conducted:** NTA from **2025** should conduct only entrance exams for higher education institutions and **not recruitment exams.**

- **Restructuring of NTA:** 10 new posts covering administration, digital infrastructure, IT security being created in an effort aimed at an **error-free examination process for students.**
- **Digi- Exam:** On the lines of Digi-Yatra, to make the examination process foolproof, authentication at the stages of application, test, admission.
- **Governing Body:** It recommended to set up an empowered and accountable governing body with three designated sub-committees to oversee test audit, ethics and transparency, nomination and staff conditions.
- **Coordination Committee:** It recommends that Coordination Committees at State and District levels may be set up with specified roles and responsibilities.
- **Test Centres:** The panel also recommended usage of **Kendriya Vidyalayas (KVs) and Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas (JNVs) across the country as test centres.**
- **Secure Question Paper Transportation:** This includes the use of secure courier services, sealed by authorized officials and validated by the NTA before dispatch.
  - Containers must be locked, monitored during transit, and handed over at test centers under CCTV surveillance and NTA supervision.
- **Online Examinations:** On the recommendations of the Panel, the government plans to introduce computer adaptive testing for future entrance exams.

About NTA

- **Established:** In 2017.
- It is an **autonomous body of the Department of Higher Education** of the Ministry of Education of India.
- **NTA conducts major entrance examinations** such as the
  - Joint Entrance Examination (JEE) Main for engineering;
  - the National Eligibility Cum Entrance Test-Undergraduate (NEET-UG) for medicine;
  - and the Common University Entrance Test (CUET) for general Undergraduate and Postgraduate programmes in central universities.
  - It also conducts **recruitment exams** for several government agencies including National Highway Authority of India (NHAI), Delhi High Court, Employment Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) and for several posts in central government universities.

Source: TH

NATO'S ANKARA SUMMIT

Context

- The 2026 NATO Summit, held in Ankara, Türkiye, reaffirmed the Alliance's commitment to collective defence and strengthening Europe's defence industrial base.

Key Outcomes of the NATO Ankara Summit

- **Reaffirmation of Collective Defence:** The NATO members unanimously reaffirmed their **"ironclad commitment"** to collective defence under **Article 5** of the **Washington Treaty.**
  - The members pledged to strengthen military preparedness against emerging threats, particularly from Russia.
- **Higher Defence Spending:** NATO members reaffirmed the Hague Defence Commitment, under which every member agreed to spend at least **5%** of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) on defence by **2035.**
- **Continued Support for Ukraine:** NATO declared its "unwavering support for Ukraine in defending its freedom, sovereignty and territorial integrity".
- **Revitalisation of Europe's Defence Industrial Base (DIB):** The alliance partners vowed to build a high technology, high capacity, Europewide defence industrial base , the network of firms, factories, laboratories and skilled workers needed to build and sustain a country's military power.

Challenges for India

- **Competition for Defence Equipment:** The decision of NATO members to increase defence expenditure will increase global demand for advanced military equipment and countries such as India may face longer delivery timelines.
- **Rising Costs Procurement:** Higher procurement costs will place additional pressure on India's defence budget and affect the pace of military modernisation.

- **Supply Chain Disruptions:** India continues to depend on foreign suppliers for several critical defence technologies.
  - For instance, delays in the supply of **GE F-404** fighter engines have already affected the production schedule of the **Tejas Mk-1A fighter aircraft.**

Way Ahead

- India should leverage its growing manufacturing capabilities to become a reliable exporter of defence equipment to friendly countries.
- The participation of private industry, startups, and MSMEs should be expanded through public-private partnerships, defence innovation programmes, and technology transfer initiatives.
- India needs to expand investments in emerging technologies such as **artificial Intelligence, robotics,hypersonic technologies** and cyber and electronic warfare.
- India should promote domestic production of critical defence components such as **semiconductors, sensors, advanced materials and electronic systems.**

About NATO

- NATO, or the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, is a military alliance of countries.
- **Establishment:** It was founded in **1949** with the signing of the North Atlantic Treaty, more popularly known as the **Washington Treaty.**
- **Aim:** To ensure the security and defense of its member countries through collective defense.
- **Founding Members:** The original members of NATO were **Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, the United Kingdom, and the United States**.
- **Collective Defense:** The cornerstone of NATO is **Article 5** of the North Atlantic Treaty, which states that an armed attack against one or more of its members is considered an attack against all members.
- **Decision-Making:** Decisions within NATO are made on the basis of consensus among member countries.
  - **The North Atlantic Council**, which includes the ambassadors of all member countries, is the principal political decision-making body.
- **Members:** It has **32 member countries, Finland and Sweden** became the 31st and 32nd members respectively.
  - On signing the Treaty, countries voluntarily commit themselves to participating in the political consultations and military activities of the Organization.

Source: TH

SC PROHIBITS UNAUTHORISED RECORDING, MONETISATION OF COURT VIDEOS ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Context

- The SC has **prohibited the extraction, editing, dissemination, reposting, uploading or monetisation** of **audio and video recordings of judicial proceedings** on social media and other digital platforms **without prior permission from the concerned court.**

About

- The court clarified that the **interim order** would **not affect fair news reporting of judicial proceedings.**
- The High Courts have also been asked to submit reports on the adoption of the **Supreme Court's model livestreaming guidelines and explain the impact of continuous livestreaming of proceedings.**

Live Streaming of Court Proceedings

- The SC began livestreaming proceedings before its Constitution Benches **in 2022.**
- **Aim:** To make judicial proceedings **more transparent and accessible** to the public.
- It followed the court's September 2018 ruling in **Swapnil Tripathi v. Union of India,** which had declared **live telecast of court proceedings part of the right to access justice under Article 21 of the Constitution.**
  - It stated that **livestreaming would "virtually" expand the court beyond the four walls of the courtroom.**
- Subsequently**, the Supreme Court's e-Committee, headed by then CJI** Chandrachud, came out with **model guidelines to regulate livestreaming of court proceedings in India.**
- In 2023, the Supreme Court became the **first court in India to introduce AI-assisted live transcription of its proceedings.**

- Announcing the initiative, then CJI Chandrachud said the **technology would create a reliable archival record of court proceedings** while serving as a **valuable resource for the judiciary.**

Concerns

- **Livestreaming** was introduced to **promote transparency and the principle of open justice, the absence of a regulatory framework** has enabled courtroom recordings to be clipped, edited and circulated with misleading captions.
    - Selectively edited clips were often used to **create misleading narratives about court proceedings.**
- **The misuse of recordings of judicial proceedings** has a **"chilling effect"** on the functioning of both judges and lawyers by exposing them to "character assassination" and "public trolling".
- Such circulation creates a climate of **hostility, misinformation, and deliberate sensationalism** around **judicial proceedings,** thereby **undermining public confidence in the administration of justice.**

Way Ahead

- **Frame a Comprehensive Regulatory Framework:** Establish clear legal and procedural guidelines governing the recording, reproduction, dissemination and commercial use of livestreamed court proceedings while balancing transparency with the integrity of the judicial process.
- **Strengthen Technological Safeguards:** Deploy digital watermarking, content authentication tools and AI-based monitoring systems to detect unauthorised editing, deepfakes and misuse of judicial recordings across digital platforms.
- **Ensure Uniform Implementation of Livestreaming Guidelines:** High Courts should adopt and periodically review the Supreme Court's model livestreaming guidelines.
- **Enhance Public Legal Awareness:** Conduct awareness campaigns highlighting the legal consequences of unauthorised circulation or manipulation of court proceedings and promote informed public engagement with the justice delivery system.

Source: TH

TECHNOLOGY DRIVEN RESPONSIVE TAX GOVERNANCE IN INDIA

Context

- On the occasion of **167th Income Tax Day**, the Union Finance Minister, unveiled the **5Rs of Responsive Tax Governance** and highlighted the **Income-tax Act, 2025,** indicating India's move towards a **simplified, technology-driven** and taxpayer-centric tax administration.

Tax Governance System of India

- It is the **institutional and legal framework** for the government to administer, collect and enforce taxes in a transparent, accountable and taxpayer-facilitating way.
- It aims to raise revenue for public spending, promote voluntary compliance and foster economic growth through a fair and efficient tax system.

Key Features

- **Department of Revenue (Ministry of Finance):** Devise tax policies, supervise tax administration.
- **Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT):** It looks after direct taxes such as Income Tax, Corporate Tax, etc. under the Income-tax Act.
- **Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC)**: It is responsible for **indirect taxes** like Goods and Services Tax (GST), Customs Duty and Central Excise (on certain products).
- **GST Council:** Constitutional body **(Article 279A)** that makes recommendations on GST rates, exemptions and other policy matters with a view to cooperative federalism.
- **Digital Tax Administration:** Faceless assessment and appeal, PAN 2.0 and AI-driven analytics and data integration through online services via e-Filing portal, all improve efficiency and reduce compliance costs.
- **Taxpayer-Centric Approach:** Emphasis on voluntary compliance, timely refunds, grievance redressal, tax certainty and simplified procedures; guided by the **Taxpayers' Charter.**
- **International Tax Cooperation:** India is committed to global standards on exchange of tax information through mechanisms such as **FATCA**, **Common Reporting Standard (CRS)** and tax treaties to combat tax evasion and improve transparency.

Recent Reforms

- **Income-tax Act, 2025:** Simplified tax laws, lesser compliance burden and greater tax certainty.
- **Faceless Assessment and Appeal:** Less physical interface, more transparency and less discretion.
- **Advance Pricing Agreements (APAs):** Ensure transfer pricing certainty for multinational companies.
- 5Rs of Responsive Tax Governance:
  - **Recognise:** Recognise honest taxpayers as partners in nation building; and promote trust based tax administration.
  - **Respond:** To taxpayer queries and grievances in a timely manner; and improve transparency and communication.
  - **Redress:** focus on effective grievance redressal; and addressing root causes than resolving individual complaints.
  - **Reflect:** Regularly review policies and administrative practices; and learn from taxpayers' feedback and implementation challenges.
  - **Reform:** Carry out systemic reforms for easier laws, lower compliance burden and greater tax certainty and encourage voluntary compliance through technology and better governance.
- **Technology-led Reforms:** CBDT mentioned various initiatives such as PAN 2.0, Income Tax Business Application (ITBA) 2.0, IEC 3.0, Kar Saathi and SAKSHAM NUDGE framework.
- **Capacity Building:** The Finance Minister stressed the need to build institutional capacity in emerging areas such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), Data Analytics, Forensic Accounting, International Taxation, Transfer Pricing, Digital Assets, Cybersecurity and Leadership Development.

Other Related Reforms

- **Faceless Assessment and Appeal:** Less personal interface, more transparency, less discretion.
- **e-Filing Portal:** Online filing and verification, faster processing of returns and a better experience for taxpayers.
- **Advance Pricing Agreement (APA) Programme:** Increases certainty in transfer pricing; and reduces disputes involving multinational enterprises.
- **Taxpayer Outreach:** PRARAMBH Samvaad and similar initiatives enhance awareness and improve taxpayer engagement.
- **International Tax Cooperation:** The Finance Minister issued a number of key publications relating to Foreign Tax and Tax Research (FT&TR); Exchange of Information; FATCA; Common Reporting Standard (CRS); Crypto Asset Reporting Obligations; and Advance Pricing Agreement Programme.

Significance

- **Promotes Voluntary Tax Compliance:** A trust-based approach results in voluntary compliance by taxpayers instead of reliance on enforcement.
- **Ease of Doing Business:** Simplification of laws and faster resolution of disputes are improving the investment climate in India.
- **Reduces Tax Litigation:** Greater tax certainty can reduce the number of disputes pending before the appellate authorities and courts.
- **Improves Fiscal Space:** Better compliance increases the tax base, thereby improving the government revenues for developmental expenditure.
- **Facilitates Digital Governance:** Technology-enabled administration enhances transparency, efficiency, and accountability.
- **Enhances India's Investment Climate:** Predictability in tax is a major factor in investment decisions of domestic and foreign investors.

Concerns

- **Implementation Challenges:** Extensive taxpayer awareness and administrative preparedness may be required in transition to the new Income-tax Act.
- **Digital Divide:** Smaller taxpayers and rural users may struggle to adapt to technology-based systems.
- **Data Privacy and Cybersecurity:** Increased use of AI and data analytics requires strong protections for taxpayer information.
- **Capacity Constraints**: Tax officers need to be continually trained in new technologies and sophisticated international taxation.
- **Balancing Technology with Human Interface:** An over-reliance on automated systems could lead to unfairness if there is not enough human supervision

- **Longstanding litigation:** Reforms may not solve legacy disputes and unequal interpretations that will continue to burden the judicial system.

What's Next

- Facilitate the smooth implementation of the **Income-tax Act, 2025** through extensive stakeholder consultation and awareness.
- Embed the 5Rs throughout all levels of tax administration.
- Further reduce tax litigation through advance rulings, mediation and policy clarity.
- Develop strong data protection safeguards for AI-enabled but accountable tax administration.
- Enhance taxpayer education and digital literacy, especially for MSMEs and first-time taxpayers.
- Develop expertise in emerging areas such as digital taxation, international taxation and forensic analytics.
- Continue to balance technology with a responsive, humane and service-oriented tax administration.

Source: DD News

SEBI PROPOSES COMPREHENSIVE REFORMS TO PORTFOLIO MANAGEMENT SERVICES (PMS) FRAMEWORK

Context

- The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has proposed a sweeping review of the SEBI (Portfolio Managers) Regulations, 2020, seeking to modernise the framework governing portfolio management services (PMS).

What's a portfolio management service (PMS)?

- Portfolio management service (PMS) is registered under the **SEBI (Portfolio Managers) Regulations, 2020.**
- It is a professional investment service where a qualified fund manager takes charge of the equity, debt and other securities portfolio of a customer, who is a high net-worth individual.
- Only corporate entities, companies or LLPs with SEBI registration can legally offer these services in India. SEBI mandates that no PMS provider can accept less than **Rs 50 lakh per client.**

Need for the Proposed Framework

- The proposal comes against the backdrop of a rapid expansion in the PMS industry and changing investor preferences.
- According to SEBI, assets managed by portfolio managers have more than doubled over the past six years, prompting the need for a fresh regulatory framework.
- The assets under management (AUM) of the PMS industry reached Rs 42.61 lakh crore as on May 2026 from Rs 18.07 lakh crore in 2019.
  - The total number of clients as of May 2026 stood at 2.19 lakh from 1.5 lakh in 2019.
  - The number of portfolio managers has more than doubled from 226 in 2020 to 515 as of May 2026.

Key Proposals of SEBI

- PMS managers will have to obtain a separate registration as a MF-PMS.
- The minimum investment would be reduced to **Rs 25 lakh,** potentially opening the door to a much wider base of affluent investors. Traditional PMS products require a minimum investment of **Rs 50 lakh.**
- SEBI has proposed a lower net worth requirement of **Rs 2 crore**, compared with **Rs 5 crore** for traditional PMS, along with simplified qualification requirements for principal officers and optional dealing room and staffing requirements.
- SEBI has proposed capping the fixed management fee at **2.5 percent** of the client's assets under management (AUM). Portfolio managers may also charge performance-linked fees or a combination of fixed and performance-based fees, but only with the explicit consent of the client.
- If an entity is both a mutual fund distributor and an MF-PMS provider, it must maintain an arm's-length relationship between the two businesses through separate divisions.
  - The same client cannot be offered both mutual fund distribution services and MF-PMS by the same entity.
- Unlike conventional PMS, where portfolio managers invest directly in stocks, bonds and other securities, the proposed MF-PMS would be restricted to investing only in direct plans of **mutual fund schemes, Exchange Traded Funds (ETFs) and Specialised Investment Funds (SIFs).**

Significance of the Proposed Reforms

- **Expands Investment Opportunities:** Allows portfolio managers to diversify investments across a wider range of domestic and international assets.

- **Improves Ease of Doing Business:** Simplifies compliance requirements and lowers operational barriers for portfolio managers.
- **Promotes Financial Innovation:** Introduces new investment structures, such as the Mutual Fund-based PMS and Independent Fund Manager Platform.
- **Aligns with Global Best Practices:** Modernises the PMS regulatory framework in line with evolving international investment management standards.

Source: IE

NEWS IN SHORT

BLACK SEA

Context

- India strongly condemned the attack on the commercial vessel MV OMORFI in the **Black Sea.**

Black Sea

- The Black Sea is a **large inland body** of water located in **southeastern Europe, bordered by six countries:** Bulgaria, Romania, Ukraine, Russia, Georgia, and Turkey.
- It is connected to the **Mediterranean Sea through the Bosporus Strait**, **the Sea of Marmara, and the Dardanelles Strait.**
    - It is the **largest inland body of water** and is also the **largest meromictic basin,** which means the **movement of water between the lower and upper layers of the Sea is rare.**
- The Black Sea deeper water is devoid of oxygen and rich in hydrogen sulfide, which makes it **unsuitable for most marine life.**
    - **The Black Sea does have marine life in its upper, oxygen-rich layers.**
- **Significance:** Ports like Odessa (Ukraine), Constanta (Romania), Varna (Bulgaria), and Novorossiysk (Russia) are vital for the countries bordering the sea.
    - The Black Sea is also important for fishing, energy resources (including natural gas and oil), and shipping.
    - It serves as a strategic point of control for access to the Mediterranean Sea and, historically, has been the site of many conflicts.

Source: DD

UNESCO ADDS WEST BANK, LEBANON SITES TO DANGER LIST

Context

- UNESCO has added Sebastia in the West Bank and five castles in Lebanon's Mount Amel region, including Beaufort Castle, to both the **World Heritage List** and the **List of World Heritage in Danger**.

About

- The **World Heritage List** recognises **cultural, natural and mixed heritage sites** of Outstanding Universal Value.
- The **List of World Heritage in Danger** includes sites threatened by **armed conflict, natural disasters, uncontrolled urbanisation, pollution, climate change or neglect**. Its objective is to mobilise international attention and conservation support.
- The emergency inscription of these sites reflects concerns over the impact of the ongoing conflict in the Middle East on their conservation.

Sebastia

- Sebastia, located near **Nablus in the West Bank**, is identified with the ancient city of **Samaria**, the capital of the biblical Kingdom of Israel.
- Its archaeological remains span the **Iron Age, Roman, Byzantine and Islamic periods**, reflecting its long historical significance.

Mount Amel Castles

- The inscription covers **five historic castles** in Lebanon's **Mount Amel (Jabal Amel)** region, including **Beaufort Castle**.
- These fortifications showcase a blend of **Crusader, Ayyubid, Mamluk and local architectural traditions**, illustrating nearly nine centuries of military and cultural history.

Source: DW

UNITED NATIONS COMMISSION ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE LAW (UNCITRAL)

In News

- The 60th anniversary of the **United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL) was observed.**

United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL)

- The United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL), established in 1966.
- It is a subsidiary body of the UN General Assembly and works to modernise and harmonise international trade law.
- It convenes annually in New York and Vienna in turn to promote its work in the field of international trade law.

Memebership

- It has 70 member States, elected by the UN General Assembly for six-year terms, with half the membership renewed every three years.
- It has grown from 29 members in 1966 to 70 in 2022 and its membership is balanced to reflect the world's various geographical regions and major economic and legal systems.
    - India is a member of the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law(UNCITRAL)

Functions

- It develops legal instruments such as conventions, model laws and legislative guides to ease international trade and business by setting common legal standards.
- Its work contributes to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by developing modern, harmonised and predictable international trade laws that strengthen the rule of law, promote sustainable economic growth, facilitate trade and investment and enhance access to markets and finance.

Do you know?

- UNCITRAL is not a WTO body. The WTO is an autonomous intergovernmental organization, whereas it is a subsidiary organ of the UN General Assembly.
    - The WTO deals with trade policy and state-to-state matters, such as trade liberalisation, tariffs, anti-dumping, import quotas, etc.
    - UNCITRAL develops legal frameworks for private international commercial transactions between businesses and individuals.

Source: Air

PM-YASASVI

Context

- The Government of India has reaffirmed its commitment to expanding educational opportunities under the **PM-YASASVI (Prime Minister Young Achievers Scholarship Award Scheme for Vibrant India) umbrella scheme.**

About PM-YASASVI

- It awards scholarships to **Other Backward Class (OBC), Economically Backward Class (EBC) and Nomadic and Semi-Nomadic Tribes Denotified Tribe(DNT) students.**
- **Ministry:** Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment.
- The Scheme is funded by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment on a **100% basis.**
- It comprises **four major scholarship components** designed to support students at different stages of education.
    - **These include** the Pre-Matric Scholarship Scheme, Post-Matric Scholarship Scheme, Top Class Education in Schools Scheme, and Top Class Education in Colleges Scheme.

- **The Pre-Matric Scholarship** is designed for students in **classes IX and X** attending government schools, offering an annual academic allowance of Rs. 4,000 to families with an income below Rs. 2.5 lakh.
- **Matric Scholarship** supports students pursuing **post-secondary education,** providing academic allowances ranging from Rs. 5,000 to Rs. 20,000 based on the category of the course.

- The scheme is specifically intended to **provide financial assistance to eligible students** from these **identified beneficiary groups,** enabling them to pursue **school and higher education without financial hardship.**

Source: PIB

INDIA CALLS FOR STRONGER SCO ACTION AGAINST TERRORISM

Context

- India urged the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) to adopt a firm and principled approach against terrorism during the SCO Council of Foreign Ministers meeting in Cholpan Ata, Kyrgyz Republic.

Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO)

- **Shanghai Five** emerged in **1996** from a series of border demarcation and demilitarization talks between **4 former USSR republics and China.**
  - **Kazakhstan, China, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Tajikistan** were members of the **Shanghai Five.**
  - With the accession of **Uzbekistan** to the group in **2001**, the Shanghai Five was renamed the SCO.
- **Objective:** To enhance regional cooperation for efforts to curb terrorism, separatism, and extremism in the Central Asian region.
- **Members (10):** China, Russia, India, Pakistan, Iran, Belarus and the four Central Asian countries of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan.
  - India became a full member in **2017** and assumed the rotating **chairmanship in 2023.**
  - Member countries contribute around **30% of the global GDP** and about **40% of the world's population**.
- **Observer status:** Afghanistan and Mongolia.
- **Language:** The SCO's official languages are Russian and Chinese.
- **Structure: The supreme decision-making body** of the SCO is the **Council of Heads of States (CHS)** which meets once a year.
  - **The Organization has 2 standing bodies** — the Secretariat in Beijing and the Executive Committee of the Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) in Tashkent.

Source: DD News

2026 COMMONWEALTH GAMES (CWG)

Context

- The **23rd Commonwealth Games (CWG)** have officially begun in **Glasgow, Scotland**, with a spectacular opening ceremony.

About

- First held in **1930** in **Hamilton, Canada**, as the **British Empire Games**, the Commonwealth Games are a **multi-sport international event modelled on the Olympics**, bringing together athletes from across the **Commonwealth of Nations**.
- The Commonwealth is a **voluntary association of 56 sovereign countries**, most of which were former colonies of the British Empire.
- The membership has evolved over time due to political changes and voluntary withdrawals or additions.
- Today, the Commonwealth Games feature athletes from **71 nations and territories**, making them the **world's second-largest multi-sport event** and the **fourth most-watched global broadcast sporting event**.

Do you know?

- India first hosted the Commonwealth Games in **New Delhi** in **2010**. The Games will return to the country in **2030**, when **Ahmedabad, Gujarat**, hosts the Centenary Commonwealth Games, commemorating 100 years since the inaugural edition in 1930.

Source: PIB