

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS (DCA)

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NO PROVISION IN FOREST RIGHTS ACT TO OBTAIN GRAM SABHA CONSENT FOR PROJECTS: MINISTRY

Context

- As per the Ministry of Tribal Affairs (MOTA), there is **no provision for obtaining consent of the Gram Sabha** for Stage-II forest clearance in the Forest Rights Act 2006.

About

- MOTA response came amid the **deliberations with the Union Ministry of Power over government projects delayed** due to the bottleneck of 100% gram sabha consent under the Act.
- The Law for Forest Clearance:** FRA itself does not have the language of Gram Sabha consent specifically with respect to diverting forest land for non-forestry purposes.
 - The **Forest Conservation Act of 1980** required the identification of potential FRA claimants, the recognition of their rights where applicable, the vesting of these rights, and then obtaining a No Objection Certificate from the Gram Sabhas concerned.
 - This procedure of obtaining an NOC from gram sabhas is what has commonly come to be known as the **procedure for gram sabha consent for forest clearance**.
 - The FRA explicitly states that the **Ministry of Tribal Affairs** is the nodal ministry responsible for the law's implementation.

Forest Rights Act

- The Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006 (Forest Rights Act or FRA) was introduced **to recognize the rights of forest-dwelling communities**, including Scheduled Tribes, over forest resources that they have been traditionally using.

Major Highlights:

- Recognition of Rights:** It includes individual and community rights such as Self-cultivation, Habitation, Grazing, Fishing and access to Water bodies in forests.
 - It also includes **Habitat Rights** for PVTGs, Traditional Seasonal Resource access of Nomadic and Pastoral communities, access to biodiversity, **community right to intellectual property and traditional knowledge**.

- Allocation of Forest Land:** It also provides rights to allocation of forest land for **developmental purposes** to fulfil basic infrastructural needs of the community.
 - In conjunction with the Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Settlement Act, 2013 **FRA protects the tribal population from eviction without rehabilitation and settlement**.
- Role of Gram Sabha:** The Act further enjoins upon the Gram Sabha and rights holders the **responsibility of conservation and protection of forests**.
 - The Gram Sabha is also a highly empowered body under the Act, enabling the tribal population to have a decisive say in the **determination of local policies and schemes impacting them**.

What is the PESA Act, 1996?

- PESA Act, 1996 stands for the Provisions of the **Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996**.
- It is a law enacted by the Parliament to extend the provisions of **Part IX** of the Constitution relating to the **Panchayats to the 5th Scheduled Areas** in a slightly modified form.
- Under the **Fifth Schedule** of the Constitution, regions with predominantly tribal populations are categorized as '**Scheduled Areas**', a territorial designation that recognises the **customary rights of the Scheduled Tribes (ST)**.

How has the PESA Act boosted forest conservation?

- Control Over Natural Resources:** The Act grants tribal communities control over the **management and utilization of natural resources**, such as land, water, and forests.
- Decentralized Decision-Making:** The Act decentralizes decision-making to the Gram Sabha and Panchayats, enabling more localized and contextually relevant governance.
- Land Rights and Preventing Alienation:** By requiring that any transfer of land in Scheduled Areas must be approved by the Gram Sabha, the PESA Act provides legal safeguards against the alienation of tribal lands.

Way Ahead

- Strengthen Gram Sabha-Centric Governance:** Ensure that implementation of the FRA, 2006 and PESA, 1996 remains rooted in the authority of Gram Sabhas, as envisaged by the laws.

- **Institutionalize Participatory Decision-Making:** Include representatives of tribal communities, traditional forest dwellers, women's groups, and civil society organizations in advisory and monitoring mechanisms.
- **Enhance Transparency and Accountability:** Publish regular reports on claims processed, rights recognized, and implementation status.
 - ♦ Establish independent grievance redressal mechanisms accessible to tribal communities.
- **Adopt Cooperative Federal and Constitutional Approaches:** States should frame rules and implementation strategies consistent with constitutional protections under the Fifth Schedule and the spirit of tribal self-governance.

Conclusion

- Effective implementation of FRA and PESA requires balancing administrative efficiency with constitutional principles of tribal self-governance.
- Strengthening Gram Sabhas, ensuring community participation, and making task forces accountable to local institutions can help achieve both development and democratic empowerment in Scheduled Areas.

Source: TH

10 YEARS OF INDIA'S INFLATION TARGETING FRAMEWORK

Context

- India has completed a decade of inflation targeting (IT) as a formal policy framework of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).

India's Inflation Targeting Framework

- India adopted a Flexible Inflation Targeting Framework (FITF) in **2016** on recommendation by an Expert Committee **headed by Dr. Urjit Patel**.
- As per **Section 45ZA of the RBI Act, 1934**, the Central Government, in consultation with the RBI, determines the inflation target once every five years.
 - ♦ The **Consumer Price Index (CPI)** — which measures retail inflation — is the chosen benchmark.
- **The Monetary Policy Committee (MPC)** is mandated to maintain inflation as set by the Government.

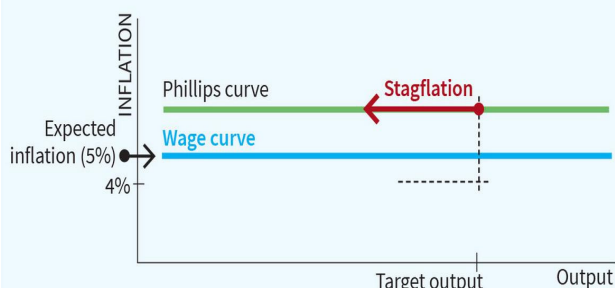
Working of Inflation Targeting

- **Demand channel:** To lower consumption and investment demand and manage inflation, the RBI raises the repo rate to increase the borrowing cost.
- **Expectations channel:** The RBI tries to anchor households' and firms' inflation expectations to its inflation target, so that expected inflation does not translate into increased salaries and prices.
- Both techniques rely heavily on the **New Keynesian Phillips Curve (NKPC)** which posits a positive link between output and inflation.

Concerns Regarding the Effectiveness of Inflation Targeting

- **Flat Phillips Curve:** Analysis of industrial output and CPI inflation for **April 2012–March 2026** indicates that **India's Phillips Curve is largely flat**.
 - ♦ This suggests that changes in output and employment may have a limited effect on inflation.
- **Limited Wage Bargaining Power:** A large proportion of India's workforce is employed in the informal sector and has limited bargaining power.
 - ♦ Hence higher output and employment may not necessarily lead to significant wage increases.
 - ♦ The assumed **wage-output-inflation mechanism** underlying the Phillips Curve may therefore be weaker in India.
- **Unanchored Inflation Expectations:** Household inflation expectations have regularly been beyond RBI's inflation estimates. On average, the margin has been roughly four percentage points.
- **Supply-side nature of Indian inflation:** Indian inflation is often supply-side driven due to food-price shocks, weather and climatic disasters, supply-chain disruptions; and global crude oil prices.
 - ♦ Increases in interest rates have little direct power to deal with such supply side limitations.
- **Risk to Growth:** Higher interest rates could dampen private investment and household borrowing, posing a risk to growth.
 - ♦ If inflation is unresponsive due to a flat Phillips Curve or supply side shocks, then monetary tightening may be costly in terms of lower output and employment.

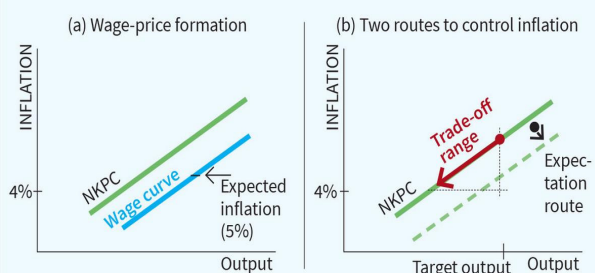
Graph 2: A flat curve means lower output without lower inflation



New Keynesian Phillips Curve (NKPC)

- The New Keynesian Phillips Curve (NKPC) explains the relationship between inflation, economic activity and inflation expectations.
- It states that current inflation is influenced by expected future inflation and the level of output or economic activity.
- When aggregate demand and output increase, employment and production costs may rise.
 - ♦ Higher costs, particularly wages, are passed on to consumers through higher prices.
 - ♦ Therefore, higher economic activity can lead to higher inflation.

Graph 1: The New Keynesian Phillips Curve (NKPC)



Source: TH

NBA ACHIEVES MILESTONE WITH OVER ₹200 CRORE IN ABS DISBURSEMENTS

Context

- The **National Biodiversity Authority (NBA)** has crossed the **₹200-crore** milestone in cumulative disbursements under **India's Access and Benefit-Sharing (ABS)** framework.

About

- **Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra** have emerged as the largest cumulative recipients

among the states and UTs receiving the ABS proceeds.

- The initiative also supports India's commitments under the **Convention on Biological Diversity**, the **Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit-sharing** and the **Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework**, particularly **Target 13** on equitable benefit-sharing from the utilisation of genetic resources.

What is Access and Benefit-Sharing (ABS)?

- ABS is a mechanism to ensure the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the utilisation of biological and genetic resources.
- It seeks to ensure that commercial users of biological resources contribute towards:
 - ♦ Biodiversity conservation;
 - ♦ Sustainable use of biological resources; and
 - ♦ Welfare of local communities associated with such resources.

Utilisation of ABS funds

- Under **Section 32(2)** of the **Biological Diversity Act, 2002**, the funds can support:
 - ♦ Preparation and updating of **People's Biodiversity Registers (PBRs)**;
 - ♦ **In-situ and ex-situ** conservation of biodiversity;
 - ♦ Restoration of degraded ecosystems;
 - ♦ Strengthening of Biodiversity Heritage Sites;
 - ♦ Capacity building of **Biodiversity Management Committees (BMCs)**; and
 - ♦ Improving the livelihoods of local communities.

Biological Diversity Act, 2002

- The Act was introduced to achieve the objectives of **United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), 1992**.
- It provides a framework for **access to biological resources and sharing the benefits arising out of such access and use**. It is in line with the **Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit Sharing**.
- The act envisaged a **three-tier structure** to regulate the access to biological resources: the National Biodiversity Authority (NBA), the State Biodiversity Boards (SBBs) and the Biodiversity Management Committees (BMCs).
- **The National Biodiversity Authority (NBA)**
 - ♦ It is a **Statutory Body** established in 2003 to implement India's Biological Diversity Act (2002).

- ♦ It advises the Central Government on matters relating to the conservation of biodiversity, sustainable use of its components and equitable sharing of benefits arising out of the utilization of biological resources.
- **The State Biodiversity Boards (SBBs)**
 - ♦ They are established under **Section 22** of the Act and focus on advising the State Governments, subject to any guidelines issued by the Central Government, on matters relating to the conservation of biodiversity.
- **The Biodiversity Management Committees (BMCs)**
 - ♦ As per the Act, **the local bodies constitute the BMC** within their area of jurisdiction for the purpose of promoting conservation, sustainable use and documentation of biological diversity.

Convention on Biological Diversity

- **Origin:** The Convention was opened for signature in **1992** at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (**Rio Earth Summit**).
- ♦ The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) entered into force on **29 December 1993**.
- **The first session of the COP** was scheduled in **1994 in the Bahamas**.
- **Secretariat:** Montreal, Canada.

Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework

- The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework was concluded at COP15 of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), held in **Montreal, Canada, in 2022**.
- This framework is a landmark agreement aimed at addressing the global biodiversity crisis.
- It features **23 targets to be met by 2030** and **four global goals for 2050** to preserve biodiversity for current and future generations.
- The agreement is **not binding** on members

Nagoya Protocol

- The Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilization (ABS) is a supplementary agreement to the **Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)**.

- It provides a transparent legal framework for the effective implementation of one of the three objectives of the CBD: **the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources**.
- It was adopted in **2010 in Nagoya, Japan** and entered into force in **2014**.

Source: AIR

RAJGHAT EXCAVATION

Context

- **Rajghat excavation** is important to go back to the **history of archaeological excavations in Varanasi**.

About Rajghat

- Rajghat today refers to a **neighbourhood located in eastern Varanasi**.
- But the Rajghat archaeological site more specifically refers to the ancient settlement located in the northeastern outskirts of the city, **near the confluence of the rivers Ganga and Varana**.
- **Rajghat** is identified as the **capital of the Kashi Janapada**.
 - ♦ **Janapadas** were territorial kingdoms or political units that emerged in ancient India, particularly **during the later Vedic period**.
 - ♦ Some of these janapadas grew into larger, more powerful kingdoms known as **mahajanapadas by the 6th century BCE**.
 - ♦ Early Buddhist and Jain texts mention **Kashi as one of 16 mahajanapadas** in the Indo-Gangetic plain.
- Sarnath emerged as a pilgrimage site, **Rajghat developed as the main urban centre**.
 - ♦ The remaining settlements, which are dated to be several centuries older, were peripheral, rural regions of Kashi.

Rajghat Excavation Findings

- **The credit of the discovery of Rajghat** goes to **Krishna Deva**, who took up trial excavation of the site on behalf of ASI in **1940**.
- The lowest, and therefore oldest, layer of the settlement yielded **pre-Northern Black Polished Ware (pre-NBPW)**, a type of pottery associated with an **earlier phase of the Iron Age**.
 - ♦ Based on this evidence, the **origins of the settlement** at Rajghat were dated to around **800 BCE**.

- Among the artefacts recovered from the site are **hundreds of seals and sealings**.
 - Many of them carry **Greek inscriptions**, names of the **administrative units and their officials**.
 - Ivory and iron objects**, punch-marked coins, and terracotta figurines have also been found.

Source: IE

NEWS IN SHORT

UN VOTES TO ADOPT NEW WORLD MAP

Context

- The UN General Assembly has voted to replace the traditional world map with one that more accurately reflects the size of Africa.

What led to the call for a new map?

- The **Mercator map**, which has been in common use since the **16th century**, has been criticised for showing Africa as being of similar size to Greenland, even though its landmass is actually **14 times larger**.
- First designed in **1569**, the map was created to help European explorers navigate across the world. The distortion of the map is based on the fact that the surface of a globe cannot be represented on a **two-dimensional chart**.
- In the Mercator map, the curvature of the Earth is accommodated by making countries near the equator seem smaller than they are and countries **near the poles appear larger**.
- To address this distortion, the **Equal Earth projection** was developed in **2018**. The map was recently put before the **United Nations by Togo**, with support from African countries. It received 164 votes in favour, including India, while the US voted against and six countries abstained.

Source: HT

VIBRANT VILLAGES PROGRAMME

In News

- The **Vibrant Village Programme (VVP)** is making the border communities active participants in India's growth via development of infrastructure, improvement of livelihood, and offering access to government schemes.

Vibrant Villages Programme (VVP)

- It was **launched in 2023**, and it seeks to speed up integrated development of targeted villages on the border with India.
- It aims to establish active, secure, and prosperous frontier towns and views the border people as the eyes and ears of the border-guiding forces.
- It is being implemented through **Village Action Plans** with interventions customised to the needs of each border, state, and village.
- It is based on a convergence approach for optimum coverage of current government projects, while all-weather road connectivity is provided under PMGSY-IV.
- The nodal ministry for coordination with the State Governments, district administrations and border guarding forces is the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA).

Phases

- The Government is implementing the Vibrant Villages Programme in two phases that together cover India's entire international land border.
 - VVP-I covers** villages along the northern border.
 - VVP-I is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme implemented with the States,
 - VVP-II extends** the same approach to the other international land borders.
 - VVP-II is a Central Sector Scheme funded fully by the Centre.

VIBRANT VILLAGES PROGRAMME (PHASE I&II) AT A GLANCE		
	Combined Outlay: Rs. 11,639 Crore	Total Sanctioned Projects (VVP-I): 2,903
Parameter	VVP-I	VVP-II
Ground launch	Kibithoo, Arunachal Pradesh, 10 April 2023	Nathanpur, Cachar, Assam, 20 February 2025
Type of scheme	Centrally Sponsored Scheme	Central Sector Scheme (100 per cent Central funding)
Outlay	Rs. 4,800 crore	Rs. 6,839 crore
Period	Currently 2026-27	FY 2024-25 to 2028-29
Border covered	Northern border	All land borders other than Northern border already covered under VVP-I
Coverage	662 Villages (Initial Phase), in 4 states and 1 UT	1,954 villages in 334 blocks, in 15 States and 2 UTs (Identified)

Source: Ministry of Home Affairs

Source: PIB

NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SAFAI KARAMCHARIS

In News

- The Department of Social Justice and Empowerment has made the appointment of the Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson and Members of

the **National Commission for Safai Karamcharis (NCSK)**.

National Commission for Safai Karamcharis (NCSK)

- It was constituted as a statutory body under the National Commission for Safai Karamcharis Act, 1993, in August 1994 for a period of three years in the first instance.
- It is continued as a non-statutory entity within the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.

Functions and Mandate of National Commission for Safai Karamcharis

- It is established for the care, dignity, safety, and socio-economic betterment of Safai Karamcharis.
- It promotes government programs to remove inequities, examines rehabilitation schemes, investigates grievances, takes suo motu action on non-implementation of welfare policies, and oversees working conditions, health, safety, and wages.
- It also presents reports and recommendations to the Central and State Governments on the problems encountered by the Safai Karamcharis.
- It oversees the implementation of the Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013
 - ♦ It investigates complaints and violations, advises governments on effective implementation, and takes suo motu notice of non-compliance.

Source: PIB

EMERGENCY CREDIT LINE GUARANTEE SCHEME (ECLGS) 5.0

Context

- The **Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme (ECLGS) 5.0** provides targeted credit guarantee support to businesses affected by external disruptions.

About

- The **ECLGS** was launched in **2020** under the Aatmanirbhar Bharat Package to help businesses overcome financial stress caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **ECLGS 1.0** covered Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), business enterprises, Mudra borrowers and individual business loans.
 - ♦ Borrowers with outstanding loans not exceeding ₹50 crore and days past due upto 60 days as on February 2020 were eligible.

- **ECLGS 2.0** expanded coverage to 26 stressed sectors identified by the Kamath Committee and the healthcare sector. It covered borrowers with outstanding loans above ₹50 crore and up to ₹500 crore with days past due upto 60 days as on February 2020.
- **ECLGS 3.0** extended support to the hospitality, travel & tourism, leisure & sporting and civil aviation sectors.
- **ECLGS 4.0** focused on strengthening healthcare infrastructure during the pandemic. It covered hospitals/nursing homes/clinics/medical colleges/ and manufacturers of liquid oxygen, oxygen cylinders etc.
- ECLGS 5.0 is operational until **31 March 2027**, or until guarantees amounting to **₹2.55 lakh crore are issued**, whichever is earlier. It covers **MSMEs, eligible non-MSME business borrowers and scheduled passenger airline companies**.
 - ♦ **Credit guarantee coverage:** 100% guarantee for loans extended to eligible MSMEs and 90% guarantee coverage for eligible non-MSMEs.
 - ♦ No guarantee fee is payable by MLIs under the scheme.

Source: PIB

ROAD MAP TO MAKE INDIA DRUG-FREE BY 2029

Context

- The Union Home Minister outlined a **three-year roadmap** to make India **drug-free by 2029**.

About the Roadmap

- The road map is based on four pillars.
 - ♦ **First** is intelligence and operation-based enforcement; second—precursor and synthetic drugs control; third—demand and harm reduction; and fourth—capacity building and coordination.
- **BSF, CISF, Indian Coast Guard, Customs and DRI** will carry out risk-based profiling and install scanners at land borders, ports, airports and cargo for sharper surveillance.
- The **CBI, Ministry of External Affairs and Interpol** will bring back the fugitives.
- The **Enforcement Directorate, Financial Intelligence Unit and the banking system** will catch the money trail.

Initiatives by the Government

- **Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985 (NDPS Act):** It prohibits the production, possession, sale, and consumption of illicit drugs and prescribes penalties for violations.
- **Nasha Mukt Bharat Abhiyaan:** Launched in 2020, this campaign aims to create awareness about the ill effects of drug abuse and promote a drug-free India.
- **India** has set a national goal of achieving a **Drug-Free India by 2047**.
- **India has signed Bilateral Agreements with 27 countries**, Memorandum of Understanding with 16 countries and Agreements on Security Cooperation with 02 countries for combating illicit trafficking of Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) and Chemical Precursors as well as related offences.
- **Anti-Narcotics Task Force (ANTF):** Many states have established ANTFs to strengthen drug law enforcement at the state level.
- **DarkNet Monitoring Cell** under **Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB)** tracks online drug sales.
- To monitor the investigation of important and significant seizures, a **Joint Coordination Committee (JCC) under the Chairmanship of Director General, Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB)** has been set up.
- In 2019, a four-tier **National Coordination Committee** for Countering Drug Trafficking (NCORD) mechanism was created at the executive, State and district levels to ensure coordinated action against the drug menace.

Source: AIR

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