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WHO SELECTS THE UNIVERSITY VICE-CHANCELLOR?

- The selection of Vice Chancellors (VCs) in Indian universities has long been a topic of contention, marked by overregulation, political influence, and lack of innovation.
- Despite significant strides in global academia, **India struggles to secure a place for its universities in the world's top rankings.**
- **The recent draft regulations** by the University Grants Commission (UGC), alongside the New Education Policy (NEP), **present opportunities for change but fall short of granting true autonomy to universities.**

The Recent Draft Regulations by the UGC, and Challenges in Search and Selection Process

- **The Recent Draft: Expanding the Pool of Eligible Candidates**
 - The new draft UGC regulations propose a welcome expansion of eligibility criteria to include distinguished individuals from fields like industry, public administration, and public policy.
 - **This aligns with past successes** where non-academic leaders excelled in the VC role.
 - For instance, **diplomats like G. Parthasarathy and K.R. Narayanan**, as well as **bureaucrats such as Syed Hamid and Mehmoodur Rehman**, led universities like **Jawaharlal Nehru University** and **Aligarh Muslim University** with distinction.
- **Transparency vs. Quality**
 - Advertising senior leadership positions **publicly democratises the application process but compromises efficiency.**
 - **While it ensures that no eligible candidate is excluded** due to lack of access to informal networks, it also opens the floodgates to unqualified or marginally qualified applicants.

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- **Underrated Virtues: The Case for Humility**
 - An often-overlooked quality in leadership assessments is humility.
 - **Effective Vice Chancellors must engage with diverse stakeholders**, including students, faculty, administrative staff, and policymakers, requiring a balanced and approachable demeanour.
 - **While academic brilliance and administrative competence are prerequisites, humility enhances a VC's ability to build consensus**, resolve conflicts, and foster an inclusive culture.
 - However, **the current frameworks for evaluation rarely prioritise such interpersonal virtues**, focusing instead on measurable credentials and achievements.
- **Consistency Across Institutions**
 - Another challenge lies in the **lack of standardisation across universities**.
 - While central universities have well-defined protocols, **state universities often lack clear guidelines, resulting in inconsistencies in how VCs are selected**.
 - **Establishing baseline criteria** for both search processes and candidate evaluations across all types of universities **can mitigate these disparities while allowing for contextual adaptations**.

Conclusion

- **Indian universities face a critical juncture in their pursuit of academic excellence and global recognition** and reforming the selection process for Vice Chancellors is essential to achieving this goal.
 - **By embracing autonomy**, expanding the pool of eligible candidates, and fostering a culture of meritocracy, **India can cultivate versatile leaders capable of steering universities toward innovation and inclusivity**.
 - **Trusting universities to make their own leadership choices is not merely a necessity but a prerequisite** for restoring their role as beacons of knowledge and progress.
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WHAT ARE SONOBUOYS?



- Sonobuoys are **expendable, electro-mechanical acoustic** sensors that **relay underwater sounds** emitted from ships and submarines.
- They **help in the detection, classification, and prosecution of adversarial ships and submarines.**
- A naval helicopter or fixed-wing **aircraft generally drops sonobuoys in a pattern.**
- They are **dropped in canisters** and are **deployed automatically upon impact with water.**
- An **inflatable system with a radio transmitter remains on the surface for communication** with the ship or aircraft tracking it while **sensors descend below the surface** to a predetermined depth.
- It then **relays acoustic information** back to those monitoring them.
- A **group of sonobuoys deployed in a pattern can find out the exact location of the submarine**, which then can be tracked by other systems.

Some sonobuoys are designed to be deployed in passive mode and some in active mode.

- **Active sonobuoys emit sound energy and receive the echo**, based on which they transmit information back to the aircraft.
- **Passive sonobuoys, on the other hand, only listen for sounds coming from ships or submarines.** They then transmit the sound back to the aircraft.
- There are also **Special Purpose buoys** that provide information about the environment, such as water temperature, ambient noise level, etc.
- **Other Applications:** In addition to anti-submarine warfare, they are used for **scientific research and environmental studies**, including studying the behavior of whales and other marine creatures.



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e-SHRAM PORTAL



- It is a flagship initiative, launched by the **Ministry of Labour and Employment** to support and empower the **unorganized workforce**.
- This portal is designed to create a comprehensive **National Database of Unorganised Workers (NDUW)**.
- The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology's (MEITY's) **Bhashini project** has been leveraged to upgrade the **eShram portal with 22 languages**. The previous version was available only in English, Hindi, Kannada and Marathi.

Objectives:

- Establish a **centralized database of unorganized workers** for effective policy implementation.
- **Enhance access to social security schemes** and benefits for workers in sectors such as agriculture, construction, domestic work, and street vending.
- Facilitate job matching and skill development opportunities.
- **Strengthen labor market resilience** by integrating unorganized workers into the formal economy.
- **Promote financial inclusion** through direct benefit transfers and digital payments.

Features:

- **Universal Account Number (UAN):** Registered workers receive a UAN linked to their Aadhaar, enabling seamless access to benefits.
- **Single Registration Process:** The portal streamlines the registration process, requiring minimal documentation such as Aadhaar and bank account details. The ease of **self-registration is also available** to the beneficiaries.

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- **Multilingual Support:** Workers from diverse regions can access the portal in multiple Indian languages, ensuring inclusivity.
 - **Grievance Redressal Mechanism:** A dedicated helpline and support system address workers' queries and grievances promptly.
 - **Integration with Employment and Skill Opportunities:** Registered workers can connect with employment opportunities, skilling, apprenticeship, pension schemes, digital skilling, and state-specific schemes through the portal.
 - **Data Sharing Portal (DSP):** A Data Sharing Portal has been launched to allow the secure sharing of e-Shram beneficiary data with State and Union Territory governments, facilitating the targeted implementation of social security and welfare schemes for registered unorganised workers.
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RAT-HOLE MINING: SEVERAL WORKERS STUCK IN A COAL MINE IN ASSAM

- It is a method of extracting coal from narrow, horizontal seams, widely prevalent in Meghalaya.
- The term “rat hole” refers to the narrow pits dug into the ground, typically just large enough for one person to descend and extract coal.
- Once the pits are dug, miners descend using ropes or bamboo ladders to reach the coal seams.
- The coal is then manually extracted using primitive tools such as pickaxes, shovels, and baskets.
- **Types**
 - Rat-hole mining is broadly of two types.
 - In the **side-cutting procedure**, narrow tunnels are dug on the hill slopes and workers go inside until they find the coal seam.
 - The coal seam in hills of Meghalaya is very thin, less than 2 m in most cases
 - The other type of rat-hole mining is called **box-cutting**.

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- In this type, a rectangular opening is made, varying from 10 to 100 sqm, and through that a vertical pit is dug, 100 to 400 feet deep.
- Once the coal seam is found, rat-hole-sized tunnels are dug horizontally through which workers can extract the coal.
- **Hazards of Rat-Hole Mining**
 - **Safety Concerns**
 - Lack of proper ventilation, structural support, and safety gear.
 - Frequent accidents resulting in injuries and fatalities.
 - **Environmental Impact**
 - Causes land degradation and deforestation.
 - Contributes to water pollution.
- **Challenges**
 - **Socioeconomic Challenges**
 - Practices persist due to economic factors.
 - Lack of alternative livelihoods for local communities hinders regulation.
 - **Regulatory Issues**
 - Mines are often unregulated despite efforts to ban or control them.
 - The practice continues to face severe criticism for its risks and environmental damage.

Ban on Rat-Hole Mining by NGT

- **NGT Ban and Observations**
 - The National Green Tribunal (NGT) banned rat-hole mining in 2014 and upheld the ban in 2015. Highlighted numerous fatalities caused by flooding in mining areas during the rainy season.
 - **Focus on Meghalaya**
 - The ban was specifically enforced in Meghalaya, where rat-hole mining was widely practiced for coal extraction.
 - Meghalaya's state government appealed the NGT's order in the Supreme Court.
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UNNAT JYOTI BY AFFORDABLE LEDS FOR ALL (UJALA) SCHEME



• In 2015, the Indian government introduced the UJALA scheme, which is also known as the **LED-based Domestic Efficient Lighting Programme (DELP)**, to promote energy efficiency in all households.

- The UJALA scheme is the **world's largest zero-subsidy LED lamp distribution scheme**. It is implemented by **Energy Efficiency Services Limited (EESL)** under the **Ministry of Power**.
- Through the UJALA scheme, the government aims to save 85 lakh kWh of electricity and 15,000 tonnes of CO₂ by **replacing 77 crore traditional bulbs & CFLs** and 3.5 crore streetlights with LEDs.

Eligible Households:

- Every **domestic household having a metered connection from their respective Electricity Distribution Company** is eligible to get LED bulbs under UJALA Scheme.
- The consumer can **purchase the LED on EMI payment** (monthly/bimonthly instalments in the electricity bill) **or on upfront payment by paying the full amount**.
- As part of its inclusive growth strategy to enable growth in lower-income communities, EESL has also **enrolled Self-Help Groups (SHGs) for the distribution of LED bulbs** under the UJALA programme.
- The **annual energy savings** from the scheme stand at 47,883 million kWh, with a reduction in peak demand by 9,586 MW and an **annual reduction of 3.87 crore tonnes in carbon dioxide emissions**.
- These savings were **achieved through e-procurement and bulk purchasing**, which **allowed LED bulbs to be made affordable** for millions of households.
- UJALA succeeded in **bringing down the retail price of LED bulbs** from INR 300-350 per bulb to INR 70-80 per bulb.

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INDIA'S GDP GROWTH SLOWS TO 6.4% IN FY25

India's real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is projected to grow at 6.4% in the financial year 2024-25 (FY25), marking a four-year low.

This slowdown is attributed to weak industrial and investment growth, according to the National Statistics Office (NSO).

The forecast is below the Reserve Bank of India's (6.6%) and the government's estimate (6.5-7%) for the same period.

Some Key Economic Concepts:

- **Gross Domestic Product (GDP):** It is defined as the total monetary or market value of all the finished goods and services produced within a country's borders in a specific time period.
 - It measures the value of total output in the economy by tracking the **total demand**.
- **GDP = C + I + G + NX**
 - **Consumption (C):** The biggest engine (56% of all GDP) is consumption demand from private individuals, technically known as Private Final Consumption Expenditure (PFCE).
 - **Investment (I):** The second-biggest engine (32%) is the investment demand generated by private sector businesses, also known as Gross Fixed Capital Formation (GFCF).
 - **Government (G):** The third engine (11%) is the demand for goods and services generated by the government and is known as the Government Final Consumption Expenditure (GFCE).
 - **Net Exports (NX):** This is calculated by subtracting Indian imports from the Indian exports.
- **Nominal vs Real GDP:**

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- **Nominal GDP** (GDP calculated using current market prices) is the actual observed variable. However, **Real GDP** (GDP calculated using constant 2011-12 prices, after taking away the effect of inflation) is a derived metric.
- **Real GDP = Nominal GDP - Inflation Rate.** Inflation is the rate at which the value of a currency is falling and consequently the general level of prices for goods and services is rising.
- From the **Budget-making perspective**, nominal GDP is important. However, from the **perspective of the common people**, real GDP is what matters.

GDP Projections for FY25:

- **Nominal vs. Real GDP:**
 - **Nominal GDP:** Expected at ₹324 lakh crore (9.7% growth), translating to \$3.8 trillion at an exchange rate of ₹85 per USD.
 - **Real GDP:** Estimated at ₹184.9 lakh crore, 57% of nominal GDP, accounting for inflation effects.
 - **Factors behind the sluggish growth:** (Economic slowdown drivers)
 - **Cyclical slowdown:** Indian economy faces a downturn in growth momentum over the past three quarters.
 - **Key influences:**
 - Strong base effect.
 - Impact of general elections.
 - Weak private sector capital expenditure (capex).
 - Monetary and fiscal tightening measures.
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