

THE DEBATE OVER APPROPRIATE AGE OF ADMISSION TO CLASS 1

Why in news?

- Schools in Delhi this year will continue to admit students to Class 1 below the age of 6 years.
- This is contrary to recent letters from the Union government to all states, urging them to align the age of entry to Class 1 with the new National Education Policy 2020.
- According to a response furnished by the Union government in the Lok Sabha, there are wide variations in the age criteria among states when it comes to admission to Class 1.
 - There were 14 States and Union Territories, as of March 2022, that allow Class 1 admission for children who have not completed six years.

What does the NEP 2020 say about the minimum age to admit students in Class 1?

- The new NEP pitches for a “5+3+3+4” design for formal schooling corresponding to:
 - the age groups 3-8 years (foundational stage),
 - 8-11 years (preparatory stage),
 - 11-14 years (middle stage), and
 - 14-18 years (secondary stage).
- This brings early childhood education (also known as pre-school education for children of ages 3 to 5 years) under the ambit of formal schooling.
- This effectively means that a child should be 6 years old to be eligible for admission into Class 1, after completing three years of early childhood education.

What does the Right to Education (RTE) Act, 2009 say about the age of entry for Class 1?

- The RTE Act guarantees education from the age of 6 years to 14 years.
- This means that a child is expected to begin elementary education (i.e., Class 1) at the age of 6 years.
- RTE Act had to specify the entry age for enforcement of formal compulsory education.
- This has been ignored even now by many States leading to the confusion of the actual age for admitting students grade1.

Opinions of academicians on this issue

- As per the academicians in India:
 - The age of 6 years was identified considering the universal age that most countries across the world have been following, i.e., to admit a child into grade one at the age of 6 or 7.
 - The age 6, which the RTE says is the age to begin Class 1, is simply a reiteration of what has already been a part of our Constitution.
 - This was also the same in **Gandhi's idea of basic education**.
 - It was also stated in the report of the **Sargent Commission** (on post-war education development in India), which goes back to the 1940s.

What is the age to start formal education across the world in various countries?

- Six is the standard age for starting primary school across East Asia, not just in Japan.
- This age is also common in most European countries.
- It is usual (though not compulsory) for younger children in these societies to attend some sort of preschool.
- However, in the USA and the UK children generally start school at 5.

PRADHAN MANTRI MUDRA YOJANA (PMMY)

The Union Finance and Corporate Affairs Minister recently said women entrepreneurs are accorded first priority under the Centre's flagship Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana scheme.



About Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana (PMMY):

- It is a **flagship scheme** of the Government of India to extend **affordable credit to micro and small enterprises**.
- Mudra schemes are designed to **bring enterprises into the formal financial system** or to “fund the unfunded”.
- It enables a **small borrower to borrow from all Public Sector Banks** such as PSU Banks, Regional Rural Banks and Cooperative Banks, **Private Sector Banks, Foreign Banks, Micro**

Finance Institutions (MFI), and Non Banking Finance Companies (NBFC) for loans upto Rs 10 lakhs for non-farm income-generating activities.

- **Eligibility: Any Indian citizen who has a business plan for a non-farm sector income-generating activity such as manufacturing, processing, trading, or the service sector and whose credit need is less than Rs 10 lakh can approach either a bank, MFI, or NBFC for availing of Micro Units Development & Refinance Agency Ltd. (MUDRA) loans under PMMY.**

Types of loans provided: Under the aegis of PMMY, MUDRA has already created the following products

- **Shishu:** covering loans up to 50,000/-
- **Kishor:** covering loans above 50,000/- and up to 5 lakh
- **Tarun:** covering loans above 5 lakh and up to 10 lakh
- **There is no subsidy for the loan given under PMMY. However, if the loan proposal is linked to some Government scheme wherein the Government is providing capital subsidies, it will also be eligible under PMMY.**

WHAT IS 'SCATTERED SPIDERS'?

The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) recently issued a warning to organisations about a hacking group called Scattered Spiders.



About Scattered Spiders:

- **It is a hacking group notorious for invading various organisations across the world.**
- **This hacker group is known by other aliases as well, including Starfraud, UNC3944, Scatter Swine, and Muddled Libra.**
- **The members are as young as 16 years old and primary English speakers.**
- **They break into the IT environments of victims, exfiltrate as much valuable data as possible, and then demand payment to keep a lid on that information and not leak or sell it.**
- **Modus operandi:**

- They use **fake profiles and impersonations** to trick a victim organisation's help desk into giving them access.
- After **gaining access** to an organisation's systems, hackers **keep an eye on internal communication channels**.
- They also keep a tab on emails or conversations that might show if their breach has been discovered.
- The criminals “**frequently join incident remediation and response calls and teleconferences**, likely to **identify how security teams are hunting them** and proactively **develop new avenues of intrusion in response** to victim defenses.

How to stay safe?

- **Maintain offline backups** of data.
- **Require all accounts to have password** logins.
- Use **longer passwords** consisting of **at least eight characters** and no more than 64 characters in length.
- Require **phishing-resistant multifactor authentication (MFA)**.
- **Keep all operating systems, software, and firmware up to date**.
- **Disable hyperlinks** in emails.
- **Keep all data encrypted**.

WHY HC HAS STRUCK DOWN HARYANA'S PRIVATE SECTOR QUOTA

Why in News?

- The Punjab and Haryana High Court (HC) quashed a law (The Haryana State Employment of Local Candidates Act 2020) passed by the Haryana government in 2020 that provided 75% reservation in private jobs to residents of the state.
- According to the HC, a government cannot discriminate against individuals simply because they do not belong to that state.

What was the Haryana State Employment of Local Candidates Act 2020?

- The law enacted by the Haryana government **reserved 75% of jobs** in the private sector that offered a monthly salary of less than Rs 30,000 (originally Rs 50,000) for residents of Haryana.
- **All companies**, societies, trusts, limited liability partnership firms, partnership firms, and large individual employers were covered under the Act.
- **Any person employing 10 or more people** on salary, wages, or other remuneration for manufacturing or providing any service, as well as any entity that may be notified by the government, were included.
- However, central or state governments or organisations owned by them were kept outside the ambit of the Act.

Why was the Law Challenged and What was the Govt's Argument?

- **The Faridabad Industries Association** and others went to court, contending that the Haryana government wants to introduce a policy of “**sons of the soil**”, which infringes the constitutional rights of employers.
- The petitioners argued that **private sector jobs are purely based on skills** and an analytical bent of mind, and **employees have a fundamental right to work** in any part of India.
- Therefore, forcing the employers to employ local candidates in the private sector **violates the federal structure** framed by the Constitution of India.
- **The Haryana government argued** that it had the power to create such reservations under **Article 16(4) of the Constitution**.
 - Article 16(4) says that the right to equality in public employment does not prevent the State from making reservation of appointments or posts in favour of any backward class of citizens.

What did the High Court Rule?

- The court held the law is **violative of Part III of the Constitution** (Fundamental Rights) and declared it to be **ineffective** “from the date it came into force”.
- The court ruled that the state’s action amounted to exercising “**absolute control over a private employer**”. These restrictions violate a person’s right to carry on occupation, trade, or business under **Article 19(1)(g)** of the Constitution.

WHAT IS GREENWASHING?



The Advertising Standards Council of India (ASCI) recently proposed guidelines that aim to check Greenwashing in ads.

About Greenwashing:

- It is the process of **conveying a false impression** or misleading information about how a company's products are environmentally sound.
- Greenwashing involves **making an unsubstantiated claim to deceive consumers into believing that a company's products are environmentally friendly** or have a greater positive environmental impact **than they actually do**.
- Companies can also greenwash initiatives **with vague claims that don't provide real data or scientific validation** for the claims.
- For example, a car vendor claims that a vehicle is eco-friendly because it is more fuel-efficient while failing to mention or consider the larger industrial impact of vehicle manufacturing on the environment.

Key Facts about the Advertising Standards Council of India (ASCI):

- It is a **voluntary self-regulatory organisation of the advertising industry in India**.
- Established in 1985, ASCI is **registered as a non-profit company under Section 25 of the Company Act**.
- It **comprises members from marketing, creative, media, and allied companies** in India.
- It is **committed to the cause of self-regulation in advertising**, ensuring the protection of the interests of consumers.
- ASCI **seeks to ensure that advertisements conform to its Code for Self-Regulation**, which requires advertisements to be **legal, decent, honest, truthful, and not hazardous** or harmful while observing fairness in competition.
- It **looks into complaints across all media**, such as Print, TV, Radio, hoardings, SMS, Emailers, Internet/website, product packaging, brochures, promotional material, and point-of-sale material, etc.

INDIRA GANDHI PEACE PRIZE

Recently, the Indira Gandhi Prize for Peace, Disarmament, and Development 2022 was jointly awarded to the Indian Medical Association and the Trained Nurses Association of India as representatives of the COVID-19 warriors in the country.



About Indira Gandhi Peace Prize:

- The Indira Gandhi Prize for Peace, Disarmament, and Development was instituted in the memory of the former prime minister by a trust **in her name in 1986**.
- It consists of a monetary award of **25 lakh rupees along with a citation**.
- The award is given to **individuals or organisations** that work towards ensuring **international peace and development**, ensuring that scientific discoveries are used to further the scope of **freedom and better humanity**, and creating a new international economic order.

Past recipients of this award include:

- **Mikhail Gorbachev**, former leader of the Soviet Union (1987);
- UNICEF (1989)
- **Jimmy Carter**, former president of the US (1997)
- UN and its secretary-general **Kofi Annan** (2003)
- **Angela Merkel**, chancellor of Germany (2013)
- Indian Space Research Organisation (2014)
- Former Prime Minister of India, **Manmohan Singh** (2017)
- Sir David Attenborough (2019)
- **Pratham NGO** (2021)

WHAT ARE FREEMARTINS?



In agricultural settings, freemartins can't reproduce; farmers often identify them through physical and/or behavioural traits.

About Freemartins:

- In animal husbandry, cattle that are born **exhibiting characteristics of both sexes** are called **freemartins**.
- Freemartins are sterile female cattle that result from the twinning of a male and a female within the same uterus.
- This phenomenon occurs in approximately 90% of such **twin pregnancies in cattle**.
- The key reason is the exchange of blood between the male and female foetuses during gestation.
- Genetically, freemartinism is attributed to **the sharing of cells carrying the Y chromosome from the male twin with the female twin**.
- This chromosome triggers the development of male reproductive organs in the male foetus, while the female foetus, affected by the presence of male hormones, experiences incomplete development of its reproductive system.
- The **end result** is that the freemartin has an **underdeveloped or non-functional reproductive tract**.
- Freemartins **can't reproduce**, so farmers often identify them through physical and/or behavioural traits to cull them from the breeding herd to improve reproductive efficiency.

Key facts about chromosome

- It is a **thread-like structure** located inside the nucleus of **animal and plant cells**.
- Each chromosome is made of protein and a single molecule of **deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA)**.
- It is passed from parents to offspring.
- DNA contains the specific instructions that make each type of living creature unique.
- In humans, in addition to **the 22 pairs of chromosomes** in each, we have a pair of sex chromosomes called X and Y. All biological males have X and Y chromosomes, and all biological females have two X chromosomes.

GOVERNOR'S RIGHT TO WITHHOLD ASSENT

- Tamil Nadu's Governor R N Ravi's decision to withhold assent to 10 pending Bills has raised fresh legal questions on the powers of the Governor.

What does the Constitution say about the Governor's role in giving assent to Bills?

- Although, Article 163 of the Constitution deals with the powers of the Governor generally, Article 200 specifically deals with the issue of granting assent to Bills.
- Both the provisions are read together to determine the contours of the power the Governor holds on this issue.
- When a Bill passed by the legislature of a state is presented to the Governor, the Governor has four options:
 - grant assent to the Bill;
 - withhold assent to the Bills;
 - return the Bills for reconsideration; or
 - reserve the Bill for the consideration of the President.
- Article 200 states that:
 - When a State Legislative Assembly passes a bill, or in a State with a Legislative Council, when both houses of the legislature pass the bill, the bill is then presented to the Governor.
 - The Governor has three options: to approve the bill (assent), reject the bill (withhold assent), or hold off on a decision and refer the bill to the President for consideration.
- However, the Article has a key provision. It says that the Governor “**may, as soon as possible**” return Bills other than money Bills, with a message requesting that the House reconsider it in parts or in whole.

Can a Governor in practice actually sit on a Bill forever?

- An indefinite timeline in deciding on Bills can in effect amount to paralysing the elected government.
 - Additionally, Article 200 uses the word “**shall**” which indicates that the framers of the Constitution intended a mandatory tone for the Governor on this aspect.
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