

WHAT IS SMISHING?



In today's digital age, where smartphones are practically an extension of ourselves, smishing poses a real and growing threat.

- It is a form of phishing that targets individuals **through text messages or SMS.**
- It is just like phishing emails, smishing messages aim to trick you into **divulging personal information** or downloading malware onto your device.
- It is done in through following ways:
 - **Fake alerts and warnings:** Scammers send texts pretending to be from legitimate institutions like banks, government agencies, or delivery services. They'll claim there's a problem with your account or a package delivery, prompting you to click on a link for more information.
 - **Urgent requests:** Smishers play on your emotions by creating a sense of urgency. They might promise prizes, warn of impending legal action, or claim your account is compromised, pressuring you to act quickly without thinking.
 - **Exploiting current events:** During tax season, scammers might pose as the income tax officers, offering tax refunds or threatening penalties if you don't respond immediately. Similarly, they might capitalise on natural disasters or health crises to solicit donations or spread misinformation.

How to identify and stay safe from smishing?

- **Poor grammar and spelling**
- **Unsolicited requests for personal information**
- **Suspicious links**
- **Verify the sender**
- **Keep software updated**

WHAT IS THE COMMITTEE OF PRIVILEGES IN PARLIAMENT?



The Supreme Court recently stayed the proceedings of the Lok Sabha Privilege committee against the Chief Secretary, Director General of Police and three other officials of the State of West Bengal.

What is the meaning of Parliamentary Privileges?

- Each House of Parliament and its Committees collectively and members of each House individually enjoy certain rights, privileges, and immunities without which they cannot perform their functions efficiently and effectively.
- The object of parliamentary privilege is to safeguard the freedom, authority and dignity of Parliament.
- They are enjoyed by individual members because the House cannot perform its functions without unimpeded use of the services of its members, and by each House collectively for the protection of its members and the vindication of its own authority and dignity.
- But they are available to individual members only insofar as they are necessary for the House to perform its functions freely without any let or hindrance.
- They do not exempt the members from the obligations to the society which apply to other citizens.

About the Committee of Privileges in Parliament:

- This committee consists of 15 members in Lok Sabha (10 in the case of Rajya Sabha) nominated by the Speaker (Chairman in the case of Rajya Sabha).
- In the Rajya Sabha, the deputy chairperson heads the committee of privileges.
- Powers and Functions:
 - The committee examines every question involving a breach of privilege of the House, or of the members, or of any Committee thereof referred to it by the House or by the Speaker/Chairman.
 - It also determines, with reference to the facts of each case, whether a breach of privilege is involved and makes suitable recommendations in its report.

WHAT IS THE SOLAR MAXIMUM?



- The sun is a huge ball of electrically charged hot gas. This charged gas moves, generating a powerful magnetic field.
- The sun goes through a natural solar cycle approx. every 11 years.
- Over the course of 11 years, the magnetic field between the Sun's northern and southern hemispheres winds up until it becomes so dense that the hemispheres flip. The north hemisphere becomes the south, and vice versa.
- This flipping point marks the Solar Maximum. It occurs approximately halfway through the solar cycle.

Impacts:

- This increased solar activity can cause extreme space weather events, including solar flares and eruptions.
- It can also disrupt radio communications and the power grid and have serious health consequences for astronauts.

What are Sunspots?

- Sunspots are dark, planet-size regions of strong magnetic fields on the surface of the sun.
- Sunspots form when concentrations of the magnetic field from deep within the sun well up to the surface.
- They consist of a central darker region, known as the umbra, and a surrounding region, known as the penumbra.
- These regions of the sun appear darker because they are cooler than their surroundings.

WHAT IS THE FAIR AND REMUNERATIVE PRICE?



Recently, the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs approved ₹340/quintal as the Fair and Remunerative Price (FRP) of sugarcane for the sugar season 2024-25 at a sugar recovery rate of 10.25%.

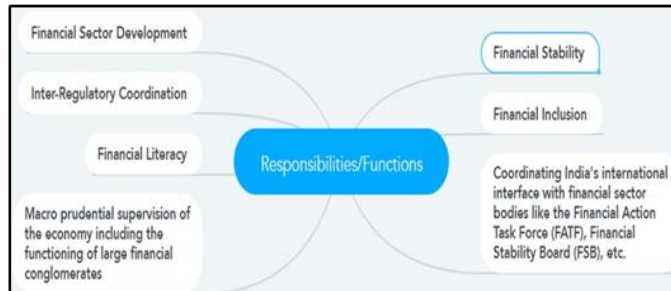
- It is the price declared by the government, which mills are legally bound to pay to farmers for the cane procured from them.
- **Who determines it?** The FRP is fixed by the **Union government** (Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA)) on the basis of **recommendations of the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP)**.
- The payment of FRP across the country is governed by **the Sugarcane Control Order, 1966** which mandates payment within 14 days of the date of delivery of the cane.
- Mills have the option of signing an agreement with farmers, which would allow them to pay the FRP in instalments.
- **Delays** in payment can attract **an interest of up to 15 per cent per annum**, and the sugar commissioner can recover unpaid FRP as dues in revenue recovery by attaching properties of the mills.
- The amended provisions of the Sugarcane (Control) Order, 1966 provide for fixation of FRP of sugarcane having regard to the following factors: -
 - cost of production of sugarcane
 - general trend of prices of agricultural commodities
 - availability of sugar to consumers at a fair price
 - price at which sugar produced from sugarcane is sold by sugar producers;
 - recovery of sugar from sugarcane;
 - the realisation made from the sale of by-products viz. molasses, bagasse and press mud or their imputed value
 - reasonable margins for the growers of sugarcane on account of risk and profits

UNAUTHORISED ONLINE LENDING APPS HIGH ON FSDC SCANNER

- Addressing the 28th meeting of the Financial Stability and Development Council (FSDC), Finance Minister asked financial sector regulators to take further measures to check spread of unauthorised lending through online apps.

Financial Stability and Development Council (FSDC):

- **About:**
 - It is an apex-level body constituted by the Government of India (**not a statutory body**) in 2010.



- It has been established under the Financial Stability Division of the Department of Economic Affairs (DEA), Ministry of Finance.

What is Digital Lending?

- Digital lending is the process of availing credit online.
 - It involves lending through web platforms or mobile apps, utilising technology in customer acquisition, credit assessment, loan approval, disbursement, recovery and associated customer service.
- Its increased popularity amongst new-age lenders can be attributed to expanding smartphone penetration, credit range flexibility and speedy online transactions.
- It includes products like Buy Now, Pay Later (BNPL), which is a financing option (or simply a short-term loan product).
 - BNPL allows one to buy a product or avail a service without having to worry about paying for it immediately.

Need to regulate digital lending

- **Illegal lending apps in India**
 - A report by the RBI, published in 2022, says that India has the maximum number of digital loan apps in the world.
 - The report has marked 600 loan apps illegal and said that the central bank.
- **Low-income and financial unsavvy Indians are the targets**
 - These apps mostly lend small sums between Rs 2,000 and Rs 10,000, targeting low-income and financial unsavvy Indians.

- These loans come with huge interest rates and extortionate terms and conditions, to which borrowers have no recourse.
 - **Harassment by recovery agents**
 - Such apps are dangerous as the harassment by recovery agents have driven many to suicide in the recent past.
 - In 2021, at least six people committed suicide in Hyderabad alone due to harassment by agents.
 - **Breach of privacy**
 - With just one tap, borrowers allow these lenders to access everything on their phone. The lender also get access to information such as PAN and Aadhar details.
 - **Acts as a tool for money laundering**
 - More than a hundred apps related to loans, betting and dating successfully collected thousands of crores in revenue and repatriated them to China.
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FINANCIAL DEVOLUTION AMONG STATES

What is Divisible Pool of Taxes?

- **Article 270** of the Constitution provides for the scheme of distribution of net tax proceeds collected by the Union government between the Centre and the States.
- The taxes that are shared between the Centre and the States include corporation tax, personal income tax, Central GST, the Centre's share of the Integrated Goods and Services Tax (IGST) etc.
- This division is based on the recommendation of the **Finance Commission** (FC) that is constituted every five years as per the terms of **Article 280**.
- Apart from the share of taxes, States are also provided grants-in-aid as per the recommendation of the FC.
- The divisible pool, however, does not include cess and surcharge that are levied by the Centre.

How is the Finance Commission Constituted?

- The FC is constituted every five years and is a body that is exclusively constituted by the Union Government.
- It consists of a chairman and four other members who are appointed by the President.
- The **Finance Commission (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 1951**, has specified the qualifications for chairman and other members of the commission.
- The Union government has notified the constitution of the **16th Finance Commission under the chairmanship of Dr. Arvind Panagariya** for making its recommendations for the period of **2026-31**.

What is the Basis for Allocation?

- The share of States from the divisible pool (vertical devolution) stands at **41% as per the recommendation of the 15th FC**.
- The distribution among the States (horizontal devolution) is based on various criteria.
- The table below lists the criteria for horizontal devolution among the States from the 11th to 15th FC.

The criteria as per the 15th FC can be briefly explained as follows.

- **‘Income distance’** is the distance of a State’s income from the State with highest per capita income which is Haryana.
 - **States with lower per capita income would be given a higher share to maintain equity among States.**
- **‘Population’** is the population as per the 2011 Census.
- **‘Forest and ecology’** consider the share of dense forest of each State in the aggregate dense forest of all the States.
- **‘Demographic performance’** criterion has been introduced to reward efforts made by States in controlling their population.
 - States with a lower fertility ratio will be scored higher on this criterion.
- **‘Tax effort’** as a criterion has been used to reward States with higher tax collection efficiency.

EMINENT JURIST FALI S NARIMAN PASSES AWAY

Why in News?

- Eminent jurist and Senior Advocate Fali S Nariman passed away at the age of 95.
- His career as a lawyer spanned over 75 years with the last half-century being spent as a senior advocate of the Supreme Court of India.

Who was Fali S Nariman?

- Nariman (born in 1929 in Rangoon [British India]) **began his legal career by enrolling as an advocate of the Bombay High Court** in 1950.
- His stature grew, and he was designated as a **senior advocate in 1961**. He moved to New Delhi to practice in **the Supreme Court of India in 1972**.
- In 1972, Nariman assumed the role of **additional solicitor-general of India**. However, he resigned a day after the Emergency was imposed on June 26, 1975.
- Nariman received the **Padma Bhushan** in 1991 and in 2007 he was awarded the Padma Vibhushan.

Nariman was not only a renowned legal figure but also a **prolific author**. Among his notable works are -

- "Before the Memory Fades,"
- "The State of the Nation,"
- "India's Legal System: Can it be Saved?" and
- "God Save the Hon'ble Supreme Court."
- His son, **Justice Rohinton F Nariman**, formerly served as a judge on the Supreme Court.