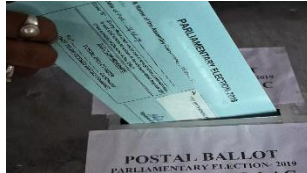


POSTAL BALLOT

The Election Commission has notified the facility of voting through postal ballot for polling personnel engaged in election duty.



Postal ballot is also known as **absentee voting**, is a method of voting in which electors cast their ballots by mail rather than in person at a polling station.

- **Eligibility:**
 - **Service voters:** Members of the armed forces, paramilitary forces and other government employees deployed on election duty far from their home constituencies.
 - **Absentee voters:** Individuals who are unable to vote in person due to reasons such as being away from their home constituency for work, illness or disability.
 - **Electors on election duty:** Government officials and polling staff who are assigned duties at polling stations other than their own.
 - **Electors under preventive detention:** Individuals who are detained under preventive custody orders during the election period.
- To apply for a postal ballot, eligible voters must submit an application to the **Returning Officer (RO)** of their respective constituency.
- The application form typically requires personal details, voter identification information, and the reason for seeking a postal ballot. The RO verifies the eligibility of the applicant and issues the postal ballot if the criteria are met.

Counting of Postal Ballot :

- Postal ballots are **counted separately** from votes cast at polling stations.
- The RO and election officials scrutinise the postal ballots to ensure their validity and integrity. Valid postal ballots are then added to the respective candidate's vote count.

SAINIK SCHOOLS

Recently, the Defence Ministry said that, the “political or ideological affiliation or otherwise” of the applicant institution does not influence the selection process for new Sainik Schools.



Sainik Schools are residential schools for students, providing Public School Education which are affiliated to **Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE)**, New Delhi.

Funding: These schools are funded by **Central and State governments**.

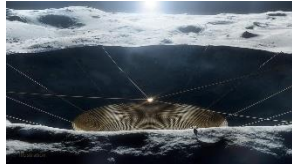
- The scheme to establish Sainik Schools **was introduced in 1961** with the primary aim of preparing students academically, physically and mentally for entry into the National Defence Academy.
- These schools are under the overall governance of **Sainik Schools Society** (registered under **Societies Registration Act XXI of 1860**) Ministry of Defence. It is established with the primary aim of preparing boys academically, physically and mentally for entry into the National Defence Academy.
- At present, there are 33 Sainik Schools located in various parts of the country. **Girls cadets** have also been given admission in Sainik School, from the academic session **2021-22**.

Recent initiative:

- Government of India has approved an initiative for **setting up of 100** new Sainik Schools under Sainik Schools Society, Ministry of Defence in partnership with **NGOs/Private Schools and State Govt**.
- It aims to create an academically strong, culturally aware, intellectually adept, confident, highly skilled, multi-dimensional, patriotic self-reliant youth community with leadership qualities focused on providing utmost priority to the nation.

PRATUSH TELESCOPE

Astronomers are looking forward to posting high-resolution telescopes on the moon and in orbit around it, including one from India called PRATUSH.



About PRATUSH Telescope:

- **Probing Reionization of the Universe using Signal from Hydrogen (PRATUSH)** is a radio telescope to be sited on the **moon's far side**.
- It is being built by the **Raman Research Institute (RRI)** in Bengaluru with active collaboration from the **Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)**.
- Initially, ISRO will place PRATUSH into orbit around the earth. After some fine-tuning, the space agency will launch it moonwards.
- **Main roles:** It will be to **detect signals** from the **first stars and galaxies**, reveal the cosmic dawn of the universe, answering the question when the first stars formed, the nature of the first stars and what was the light from the first stars.
- It will carry a **wideband frequency-independent antenna**, a self-calibrating analog receiver and a **digital correlator** to catch radio noise in the all-important signal from the Dark Ages.
- The target instrument sensitivity is at the level of a few millikelvin without being limited by any systematic features.

INDIAN LAUREL TREE

Recently, forest department authorities in Andhra Pradesh's Alluri Sitharama Raju district cut the bark of an Indian laurel tree, with water gushing out.



- **Scientific name:** Terminalia elliptica (syn. T. tomentosa)
- **Other names:** Asna; saj or saaj; Indian

CROSS & CLIMB ROHTAK

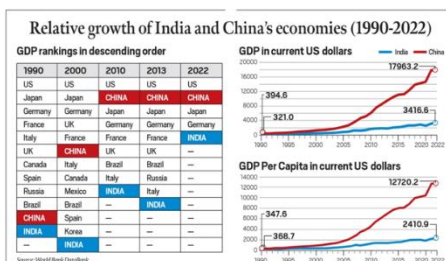
laurel; **marutham** (Tamil); **matti** (Kannada); ain (Marathi); taukkyan (Burma); asana (Sri Lanka); and casually **crocodile bark** because of the characteristic bark pattern.

- **Habitat:** It is mainly found in both **dry and moist deciduous forests** in southern India up to 1000 m.
- **Distribution:** It is principally native to southern and Southeast Asia in India, Nepal, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam.
- **Application:**
 - The wood of this tree is **used for furniture**, cabinetwork, joinery, paneling, specialty items, boat-building, railroad cross-ties (treated), decorative veneers and for musical instruments (e.g. for guitar fretboard).
 - Its leaves are used as **food by Antheraea paphia** (silkworms) which produce the tussar silk (Tussah), a form of commercially important wild silk.
 - The bark is used medicinally against diarrhoea. Oxalic acid can be extracted from it.
 - The bark and especially the fruit yield **pyrogallol and catechol** to dye and tan leather.

INDIA SHOULD TARGET PER CAPITA AND NOT AGGREGATE GDP

Why in News?

At current per capita GDP levels, India is a “lower-middle income” (\$1,136-4,465 range) country and China is an “upper-middle income” (\$4,466-13,845 range) country.



As India will be the world’s third largest economy by 2028 (even with a modest 6% annual GDP growth), it should focus on increasing per capita GDP to \$13,000-14,000 levels

on the road to Viksit Bharat (developed India) by 2047.

China’s Growth Story:

- After starting at almost similar levels in 1990, China surged ahead of India and the gap widened over time.
- **In 1990**, China's economy was just over 1.2 times India's, it became 3.6 times and 5.3 times India's in 2010 and 2022 respectively.
- **Since 2010**, China's annual growth has eased to an average of **7%** and to **5.3%** in the five years ended 2022.
- But the sustained double-digit growth of the 1990s and 2000s led to **China's per capita GDP crossing the \$10,000 mark by 2019**.
- At current growth rates, China (with economic size at \$18 trillion in 2022) could replace the US (\$25.4 trillion GDP in 2022) as the world's largest economy by the early to mid-2030s.

Where India Stands?

- India has seen its **real GDP growth** in dollar terms fall to an average of 5.9% during 2010-22 and **5.7%** for the nine years from 2014.
- **While India's nominal GDP** (at \$3.4 trillion in 2022) is just short of what China's was in 2007, there is no escaping the fact that India has been a **relative growth underperformer**.
- Even the improvement in its **overall GDP ranking from No. 10 to No. 5** between 2013 and 2022 has come on the back of a not-so-high average annual growth of 5.7%.
- To illustrate the point, Japan's and Germany's nominal GDP were \$4.3 trillion and \$4.1 trillion respectively in 2022.
- Therefore, India needs to grow at only 6% per year in current dollars (and the other two economies at 2%) to become the world's No. 3 economy by 2028.

Why India's Focus Must be on Per Capita?

- Aggregate GDP matters (being the world's No. 1 or No. 3 economy), primarily because it increases a country's geopolitical weight.

- For example, Monaco, Liechtenstein and Bermuda may be the top 3 countries by per capita GDP, but that obviously does not make them superpowers.
- However, for a country like India with its massive population and present levels of development, per capita GDP is as important as aggregate GDP.
- GDP growth has two basic components: population and per capita output. The first is demographic; the second is economic, reflective of the population's general standard of living.
- The Chinese story is extraordinary for -
 - Not just the almost 46-fold expansion in its economy between 1990 and 2022 (against India's 11-fold),
 - But also, because it has been accompanied by an increase in per capita GDP from \$348 (less than India's \$369) to \$12,720 (far more than India's \$2,411) during this period.
- As the World Bank's per capita GNI (gross national income) threshold for categorising a country as "high income" is \$13,846, India must touch this mark to become "Viksit Bharat" or developed India by 2047.

MARINE PRODUCTS EXPORT DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

Recently, officials asserted that the entire value chain for India's shrimp exports is certified by the Marine Products Export Development Authority (MPEDA) and there is no scope for abusive conditions at shrimp farms.



Marine Products Export Development Authority is a statutory body entrusted with the primary task of promotion of export of marine products.

- **History:** It was set up by an act of Parliament during 1972. The erstwhile Marine Products Export Promotion Council established by the Government of India in September, 1961 was converged into MPEDA on 24th August, 1972.
- **Functions:**

- **Developing and regulating** off-shore and **deep-sea fishing** and undertaking measures for the conservation and management of off-shore and deep-sea fisheries;
 - **Registering fishing vessels**, processing plants or storage premises for marine products and conveyances used for the transport of marine products; fixing of standards and specifications for marine products for purposes of export;
 - Regulating the export of marine products; registering of exporters of marine products on payment of such fees as may be prescribed;
 - It has set up five full-fledged **Quality Control Laboratories**, at Kochi, Nellore & Bhimavaram, Bhubaneshwar and Porbandar. In addition, fifteen **ELISA Screening Laboratories** set up by MPEDA in the maritime states.
 - In order to reach out to the exporters in different parts of the Country, it has set up 18 – Regional / Sub Regional Divisions / Desk offices.
 - **Headquarter:** Kochi, Kerala
 - It has **Trade Promotion offices** at New Delhi, Tokyo and New York.
 - **Nodal Ministry:** Ministry of Commerce and Industry
-

CARBON FIBRE



India is planning to manufacture carbon fibre as an alternative to metal which will help the country get around a proposed European Union carbon tax on steel, alloy and metal products.

Carbon fibre is a material consisting of **thin, strong crystalline filaments of carbon**, essentially carbon atoms bonded together in long chains.

- **Properties:**
 - It has high stiffness and stiffness-to-weight ratio.
 - It has high tensile strength and strength-to-weight ratio.
 - It has high-temperature tolerance with special resins.
 - It consists of low thermal expansion.

- It also has high chemical resistance.
 - The fibers are extremely stiff, strong and light, and are used in many processes to create excellent structural materials.
 - Currently, India does not produce any carbon fibre, relying entirely on imports from countries such as the US, France, Japan and Germany.
 - **Applications**
 - It is essential for various applications such as fighter planes' noses, civilian airplanes, drone frames, car chassis and fire-resistant building material.
 - It is a critical material in **technical textiles** and is known for its **high strength and lightweight** properties.
-

WHAT IS MYCGHS APP?



Recently, the secretary of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare launched the myCGHS app.

myCGHS app is designed to enhance access to **Electronic Health Records**, information and resources for **Central Government Health Scheme (CGHS)**

beneficiaries.

- It is developed by the technical teams of the **National Informatics Centre (NIC)** Himachal Pradesh and NIC Health Team.
- It is a convenient mobile application offering features aimed at enhancing information and accessibility for CGHS beneficiaries.
- It facilitates a wide range of services, including booking and cancellation of online appointments, downloading CGHS card and index card, accessing lab reports from CGHS labs, checking medicine history, checking medical reimbursement claim status, accessing referral details and locating nearby wellness centers etc.
- The app features security features like **2-factor authentication** and functionality of **mPIN** ensuring the confidentiality and integrity of users' data.



CROSS & CLIMB ROHTAK



Key facts about Central Government Health Scheme:

- It gives healthcare facilities to registered **employees** and **pensioners** of the **Central Government of India**.
 - The enrolled members are provided reimbursement and cashless facilities under this scheme.
 - It covers health care under different systems of medicine, such as **Allopathy, Homeopathy, Ayurveda and Unani**.
 - CGHS beneficiaries can undergo treatment at any empanelled private hospital of their choice.
-