

THE WOMEN'S RESERVATION BILL CANNOT WAIT ANY LONGER

Context

- Despite achievements in every sector, it is **still challenging for women to find space in political landscape.**
- **75 years after Independence**, Parliament lacks substantial representation from half the population, with **women holding just 14% of the seats.**
- It is **time to acknowledge the systematic exclusion of women from politics** and demand action to create a more equitable political landscape.

Background of political reservation for women in India

- **Pre-Independence,**
 - **In 1931**, leaders like Begum Shah Nawaz, Sarojini Naidu wrote to the British PM submitting the official memorandum jointly issued by 3 women bodies on the status of women in the new Constitution.
 - The issue of women's reservation came up in **Constituent Assembly** debates as well, but it was rejected as being unnecessary.
- **Post-Independence,**
 - **In 1955**, a government-appointed committee recommended that 10% of seats in the Lok Sabha and State legislative assemblies should be reserved for women.
 - **The National Perspective Plan for Women (1988)** recommended that 30% of seats in all elected bodies should be reserved for women.
 - These recommendations paved the way for the historic enactment of the **73rd and 74th Amendments to the Constitution** which mandate all State governments to reserve one-third of the seats for women in Panchayati Raj Institutions.
 - Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and Kerala have made legal provisions to ensure **50% reservation for women in local bodies.**

What is Women's Reservation Bill?

- The Women’s Reservation Bill proposes to reserve **33%** of seats in the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies for women.
- Reserved seats may be **allotted by rotation to different constituencies** in the states or union territories.
- Reservation **shall cease to exist 15 years after** the commencement of this Amendment Act.
- It was **first introduced in the Lok Sabha as the 81st Amendment Bill in September 1996**.
- The Bill failed to get the approval of the House and was referred to a joint parliamentary committee which submitted its report to the Lok Sabha in December 1996.
- But the Bill lapsed with the dissolution of the Lok Sabha.
- **In 1998**, the Atal Bihari Vajpayee-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government reintroduced the Bill in the 12th Lok Sabha.
- The Bill failed to get support and lapsed again. The Bill was reintroduced in 1999, 2002 and 2003.
- **In 2008**, the Manmohan Singh-led United Progressive Alliance government tabled the Bill in the Rajya Sabha and it was passed with 186-1 votes on March 9, 2010.
- However, the Bill was never taken up for consideration in the Lok Sabha and lapsed with the dissolution of the 15th Lok Sabha.

AGNI DAMAN-23

The Indian Army’s HQ, Southern Command, recently conducted a day-long fighting exercise, ‘Agni Daman - 23’ with 56 firefighting columns, including 32 from civil agencies.



About AGNI DAMAN-23:

- It is a **firefighting exercise** conducted under the **aegis of Indian Army’s HQ, Southern Command**.
- **Objective: Enhance synergy among firefighters** to work together in the event of major fire incidents.
- The exercise was **conducted at 29 Field Ammunition Depot (FAD) , Dehu Road, Pune**.

- A total of 56 **firefighting columns including 32 from civil agencies like National Disaster Relief Force (NDRF), State Disaster Relief Force (SDRF), MC Alandi, Fire Department Pimpri Chinchwad, PMRDA Akurdi, MIDC Ambi Talegaon, MC Talegaon Dhabade, Nagar Parishad Chakan, Main Fire Department Bhawani Peth, Tata Motors Ltd, Mahindra Vehicle Ltd & Bajaj Auto** participated in the exercise.
 - The exercise **provided impetus & opportunity to the combatant manpower** including central/state agencies to perform coordinated firefighting & **render maximum aid in minimum possible time to the affected areas** to save precious lives & valuable assets.
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WHAT IS MACHINE LEARNING?

A team of researchers used machine learning tools to recently confirm evidence of a previously unknown planet outside our solar system.



About Machine Learning:

- **What is it?** It is a branch of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and computer science which focuses on the use of data and algorithms to imitate the way that humans learn, gradually improving its accuracy.
 - **It gives computers the capability to learn** without being explicitly programmed.
 - **It enables computers to learn automatically from past data.**
 - Machine learning uses various algorithms for building mathematical models and making predictions using historical data or information.
 - **Features of Machine learning:**
 - It is a **data driven technology**. Large amount of data generated by organizations on daily bases. So, by notable relationships in data, organizations makes better decisions.
 - Machine **can learn itself from past data** and automatically improve.
 - From the given dataset it **detects various patterns on data**.
 - It is **similar to data mining** because it is also deals with the huge amount of data.
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GANGETIC DOLPHIN

Thickly knitted fishing gill nets have recently caused the death of another Gangetic Dolphin in the Bhagirathi River.



About Gangetic Dolphin:

- It is a **freshwater** species and one of the few **river dolphins** found in the world.
- It inhabits the **Ganges-Brahmaputra-Meghna** and **Karnaphuli-Sangu river systems** of **Nepal, India, and Bangladesh.**
- **Common Names:** **Blind dolphin, Ganges dolphin, Ganges susu, hihu, side-swimming dolphin, South Asian River Dolphin**
- **Scientific name:** **Platanista gangetica**
- The Gangetic Dolphin has been recognized as **India's National Aquatic Animal.**
- **Description:**
 - A **long thin snout, rounded belly, stocky body and large flippers** are characteristics of the Ganges River dolphin.
 - It **feeds majorly on fishes** and is are usually found in counter-current systems of the main river channel.
 - Its **eyes lack lens**, and as a result, this species is also referred to as the "blind dolphin".
 - They have a **highly developed bio-sonar system** that facilitates them to hunt for fish even in murky waters.
 - Being a mammal, the Ganges River dolphin **cannot breathe in the water** and must **surface every 30-120 seconds.** Because of the sound it produces when breathing, the animal is **popularly referred to as the 'Susu'.**
- **Conservation status:**
 - **IUCN: Endangered**
 - **Wildlife (Protection) Act: Schedule-I**
 - **CITES: Appendix I**

WHAT IS THE SUN HALO?

Recently, the people of Uttar Pradesh's Prayagraj were graced by an awe-inspiring phenomenon called Sun Halo.



About Sun halo:

- **What is it?** It is an optical phenomenon that occurs **due to sunlight refracting millions of hexagonal ice crystals** suspended in the atmosphere.
 - **How it is formed?**
 - When white light passes through **unique hexagonal ice crystals** found in **upper-level cirrus clouds**, causing the halo to have colours.
 - The clouds contain millions of tiny ice crystals, which refract, split and even reflect the light to give an impression of a circular rainbow ring.
 - The crystals have to be oriented and positioned just so with respect to your eye, for the halo to appear.
 - Light undergoes **two refractions** as it passes through the ice crystals and the bending that occurs depends on the ice crystal's diameter.
 - The two refractions **bend the light by 22 degrees** from its original point, producing a ring of light around the Sun or the Moon.
 - The **lunar halos** are mostly colourless as moonlight is not very bright.
 - In the case of the Sun, these colours are more noticeable and appear as bright as a rainbow.
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WHAT IS GUM ARABIC?

Sudan's eruption into conflict has left international consumer goods makers racing to shore up supplies of gum Arabic, one of the country's most sought-after products and a key ingredient in everything from fizzy drinks to candy and cosmetics.



About Gum Arabic:

- It is the **natural gum** exuded by various **species of Acacia trees**.
 - The main source of commercial gum Arabic is **Acacia Senegal L.willd.** and **Acacia seyal trees**.
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- **Distribution:**

- The trees are **native to North Africa** and grow mainly in the **sub-Saharan or Sahel zone of Africa** and also in Australia, India and South America.
- It is found in some parts of India mainly in the **dry rocky hills of southeast Punjab**, in the **northern Aravalli hills** and other drier parts of Rajasthan and Gujarat.

- **Major producing countries:** Cameroon, Chad, Mali, Nigeria and **Sudan** (market share of about 70%).

- **Method of harvesting:**

- The gum exudes from the cracks on the bark of the tree under difficult conditions such as **heat, dryness, wounds, and diseases**.
- The gum flows naturally from the bark of the trees in the form of a thick and rather frothy liquid and speedily concretes in the sun into tears.

- **Period of harvesting/collection:**The collection of gum Arabic takes place at intervals during the dry season from November to May. During the rainy season, no gum is formed since the trees are in full bloom.

- **Properties of Gum Arabic**

- It is a **neutral or slightly acidic salt** of a **complex polysaccharide** containing calcium, magnesium, and potassium cations.
- It is **non-toxic, odourless**, and has a bland taste and it does not affect the odour, colour or taste of the system in which it is used
- It is somewhat **yellowish in colour**.
- It is **insoluble in oils and in most organic solvents**, but usually **dissolves completely in hot or cold water** forming a clear, mucilaginous solution.
- It yields L-arabinose, L-rhamnose, D-galactose and D-glucuronic acid after hydrolysis.
- It is used in many industries like **Food, pharmaceuticals, cosmetics**

[WHAT THE LATEST NATIONAL HEALTH ACCOUNT FIGURES SAY ABOUT INDIA'S HEALTHCARE SECTOR?](#)

Why in News?

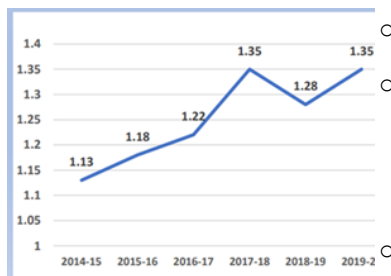
- Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has released the National Health Account Estimates 2019-20.

National Health Accounts (NHA):

- Report on National Health Accounts Estimates is published by the **National Health Systems Resource Centre (NHRSC)** under the Union Ministry of Health & Family Welfare.
 - The NHA for 2019-20 is the seventh round of estimates since 2013-14.**
- It is based on the globally accepted framework of ‘**System of Health Accounts, 2011**’ for inter-country comparison and learning.
 - System of Health Accounts (SHA) was originally developed by the **World Health Organization (WHO)**.
 - SHA is an internationally standardized framework that systematically tracks the flow of expenditures in the health system.
- NHA provides detailed information on overall health expenditure both by the public and private sector in the country.

Major Findings of NHA Estimates 2019-20:

- Government Expenditure on Health –**



- During this period, the share of Government Health Expenditure (GHE) in the overall GDP of the country has **increased from 1.13% in 2014-15 to 1.35% in 2019-20.**
- In per capita terms, GHE has doubled from Rs. 1,108 to Rs. 2,014 between 2014-15 to 2019-20.
- Out-of-Pocket Expenditure (OOPE) –**
 - The share of Out-of-Pocket Expenditure (OOPE) in total Health Expenditure (THE) **declined from 62.6% to 47.1%.**
 - The continuous decline in the OOPE in the overall health spending show progress towards ensuring financial protection and Universal Health Coverage for citizens.

- The increase in government spending on health has an important implication for the reduction of financial hardship endured by households.
- In the Total Health Expenditure (THE) of the country between 2014-15 and 2019-20, the **share of GHE has increased from 29% to 41.4%**.
- **Social Security Expenditure (SSE) –**
 - Another positive trend in the country's health financing space is the increase in Social Security Expenditure (SSE) on healthcare.
 - This increase in social security has a direct impact on reducing out-of-pocket payments.
 - A robust social security mechanism ensures that individuals will not face financial hardship and the risk of poverty as a consequence of accessing essential healthcare services.
 - The share of SSE on health, which **includes government-funded health insurance, medical reimbursement to government employees, and social health insurance programs**, in THE, **has increased from 5.7% in 2014-15 to 9.3% in 2019-20.**

Comparing India's Government Health Expenditure with other Countries':

- As per the NHA estimates for 2019-20, India spends 1.35% of total GDP on public health expenditure.
- Compare this with countries like the United Kingdom, Netherlands, New Zealand, Finland and Australia where all these countries **spend over 9% of their total GDP** in public healthcare system.
- Neighbouring countries like Bangladesh and Pakistan have over 3% of their GDP going towards public healthcare system.

Way Ahead:

- Increasing public spending on health –
 - An efficient and equitable health system cannot be developed without adequate public financing.
 - The National Health Policy (2017) recommends government expenditure on health to be **increased to 2.5% of GDP by 2025.**
- Improve Doctor-to-Patient ratio –



CROSS & CLIMB ROHTAK



- As of February 2021, **India's doctor-to-population ratio stood at 1:1404**, while the WHO recommends the doctor-to-population ratio to be 1:1000.
 - For people in the rural India who are completely dependent on government healthcare facilities, the doctor to patient ratio is abysmally low with **1:10,926 doctors**.
 - Optimizing the use of technology –
 - Technology-enabled community health workers, nurses and other frontline care providers can perform many functions in primary care.
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