

INDIAN RENEWABLE ENERGY DEVELOPMENT AGENCY (IREDA)

The Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency (IREDA) recently signed a performance-focused memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE).



About the Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency (IREDA):

- It is a **Mini Ratna** (Category-I) non-banking financial institution under the administrative control of the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE).
- It is a **Public Limited Government Company** established as a Non-Banking Financial Institution (NBFC) in 1987.
- IREDA has been notified as a “Public Financial Institution” under Section 4 ‘A’ of the Companies Act, 1956, and registered as NBFC with the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).
- IREDA is primarily engaged in promoting, developing, and extending financial assistance for setting up projects relating to new and renewable sources of energy and energy efficiency/conservation.
- Motto: **ENERGY FOR EVER**

Objectives:

- To give **financial support** to specific projects and schemes for generating electricity and/ or energy through new and renewable sources and conserving energy through energy efficiency.
- To maintain its position as a leading organisation by providing efficient and effective **financing for renewable energy** and energy efficiency/ conservation projects.

Funding: IREDA generates its revenue through the interest and principal repayments from the projects it finances, as well as by raising funds from the market and through borrowings.

TELECOM REGULATORY AUTHORITY OF INDIA (TRAI)

The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) proposes to use Artificial Intelligence (AI) to measure and monitor network quality in its new draft regulation for Quality of Service Standard.



About Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI):

- It was established by an Act of Parliament called the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India Act, 1997.
- **Purpose:** To regulate telecom services, including fixation/revision of tariffs for telecom services which were earlier vested in the Central Government.
- It is responsible for framing regulations, guidelines, and policies for the telecommunications sector in India. This includes setting rules related to tariffs, quality of service, and the allocation of spectrum.
- **Composition:**
 - It consists of a Chairperson and not more than two full-time members, and not more than two part-time members.
 - The chairperson and the members of TRAI are appointed by the Central Government, and the duration for which they can hold their office is three years or until they attain the age of 65 years, whichever is earlier.

Government Control over TRAI:

- TRAI is not a completely independent telecom regulator.
- Under section 25 of the Act, Central Government has the power to issue directions which are binding on TRAI.
- The TRAI is also funded by the Central Government.
- The recommendations made by the TRAI are not binding on the Central Government.
- Central Government has to mandatorily ask for recommendations from TRAI with respect to the need and timing of new service providers and the terms and conditions of the licence to be granted to the service provider.

- TRAI also has the power to notify in the official gazette of the rates at which telecommunication services are being provided in and outside India.
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PLI SCHEME FOR SMARTPHONE MANUFACTURING INDUSTRY & ITS EFFECTIVENESS

Why in News?

- Over the last few months, former RBI governor Raghuram Rajan and the Minister of State for Electronics Rajeev Chandrasekhar have sparred over how well a Central government scheme to boost electronics manufacturing has been faring.

Background:

- Former RBI governor Raghuram Rajan, along with two other economists, had released a brief discussion paper arguing that the **Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) programme isn't really pushing India towards becoming a self-sufficient manufacturing powerhouse.**
- They argued that the government is using taxpayer money to create an ecosystem of low-level assembly jobs that will still depend heavily on imports.

What is the Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) Programme?

- Around five years ago, the Government of India decided it wanted more companies to make things in India.
- Manufacturing is a key ingredient to economic growth and also comes with what economists call a **multiplier effect** — every job created and every rupee invested in manufacturing has a positive cascading effect on other sectors in the economy.
- To boost manufacturing in India, the Government introduced the production-linked incentive (PLI) scheme.
- Under PLI, the **government gives money to foreign or domestic companies that manufacture goods here.**
- The annual pay-out is based on a percentage of revenue generated for up to five years.

PLI Programme for Smartphone Manufacturing Industry:

- The industry that has shown the most enthusiasm for the scheme is smartphone manufacturing.
- Companies like Micromax, Samsung, and Foxconn (which makes phones for Apple) can get up to 6% of their incremental sales income through the PLI programme.
- With the scheme, **mobile phone exports jumped from \$300 million in FY2018 to an astounding \$11 billion in FY23.**
- **Imports** – while India imported mobile phones worth \$3.6 billion in FY2018, it dropped to \$1.6 billion in FY23.
- Central government Ministers, including Mr. Chandrasekhar, have regularly cited this data as proof of the PLI’s scheme’s success.

Union Government’s Response:

- Minister of State for Electronics Rajeev Chandrasekhar’s argument is two-fold.
- First, he said, Mr. Rajan **wrongly assumed that all imports of screens, batteries, etc. are used to make mobile phones.**
- It is possible these items are used also for computer monitors, DSLR cameras, electric vehicles etc.
- He also argued that **not all mobile phone production in India is supported by the PLI scheme, only around 22% so far.**
- The Minister’s overarching point is that the import dependency isn’t as bad as Mr. Rajan says it is.

THE BRICS TEST FOR INDIA’S MULTIPOLARITY STANCE

Context

- The upcoming BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) summit in Johannesburg, South Africa, from August 22 to August 24, will be an **important stress test for Indian diplomacy which will indicate the shape of geopolitics to come.**
- The challenge before New Delhi is to **choose between a China-centric or a West-centric world order, or balance the two.**

Challenges and Potentials of BRICS as a Bloc

- **Revisionist and Reactive than Proactive**
 - The ability of BRICS to reorder or steer the global economy in any significant manner is **deeply suspect**.
 - The appetite to create economic agreements amongst its own members is limited, and its historical **capability to influence global geopolitics appears to be overestimated**.
 - Moreover, as a bloc, it is hardly an attractive investment destination and the BRICS today sounds more revisionist and reactive, than proactive or clear headed, on what it wants to do.
- **Yet, it Could Influence the World Politics in Future**
 - The BRICS has the potential to become an entity **capable of influencing the future of world politics**.
 - The geopolitical developments of the past year or so and the **challenges faced by the United Nations system may have given another lease of life to BRICS**.
 - BRICS is also more globally represented than the UN Security Council (UNSC) and the G-7, though less than the G-20 which is dominated by the West.
 - In that sense, the choices that BRICS makes at the summit and thereafter could have major implications for the international system.

New Delhi's Dilemma

- **Unclear Geopolitical Choices**
 - For India, the geopolitical choices today are **neither crystal clear nor easy to make**.
 - For one, it is unclear as to where India belongs in the global geopolitical landscape.
 - For instance, there is a tendency in the West to view India's membership of BRICS and the SCO in the context of the Ukraine war and the United States/West versus the standoff with Russia.
 - One question always surfaces as to how can India be a part of the Quad [Australia, Japan, the U.S. and India], G-20, G-7 and BRICS, SCO, and global South at the same time.
- **To Balance the Emerging Geopolitical Faultline with China's Rise**
 - Developmentally, historically, and geographically, India belongs to BRICS, SCO, and the global South.

- Structurally and aspirationally, the G-20, G-7, Quad and the like are where New Delhi is headed.
- India, as a result, is located right in the middle of an emerging geopolitical fault-line with interests on either side, welcomed by either side, but fully belonging to neither.
- This could either make **India a bridge between the great divides or its lack of loyalty to neither could make it a victim of emerging geopolitical contestations.**
- The sharper the fault-line becomes, the harder it will be for New Delhi to balance it.
- **India's Stance of Multipolarity and Rising Competitive Blocs**
- One of the major dangers of the current churn in **global geopolitics is the rise of competing blocs in the international system.**
- With China and Russia aligning their global interests, the organisations they are part of whose membership they are attempting to enhance, are likely to be pitted against the status quo order led by the U.S. and its allies.
- India has traditionally opposed the creation of blocs as they go against the fundamental spirit of equitable global governance and multipolarity.
- **Multipolarity, in the Indian historical imagination, is about equity, inclusion and representation, not bloc rivalry, ideological or otherwise.**
- However, even if New Delhi vehemently opposes bloc politics, it will continue to get drawn into it.

Conclusion

- In global governance, more imperfect institutions reflecting the realities of today are better than one imperfect institution that is alien to the world of today.
- International politics should not be the place for hegemonic perfection, but of democratic imperfections.
- Therefore, **India needs to assert its rightful position in all international forums without being drawn into a bloc.**

WHAT IS AN IRREGULAR GALAXY?

The Hubble Space Telescope recently captured an image of irregular galaxy ESO 300-16, located at a distance of 28.7 million light-years in the southern constellation of Eridanus.



About Irregular Galaxy:

- An irregular galaxy is a galaxy that **does not have a distinct regular shape**, like a spiral or an elliptical galaxy.
- They **range from dwarf irregular galaxies with 100 million times the Sun's mass to large ones weighing 10 billion solar masses.**
- They also **contain abundant amounts of gas and dust.**
- **Formation:** There are many ways in which an irregular galaxy can be formed.
 - For example, one can **result from a collision between galaxies.** When this happens, **gravitational forces between separate galaxies interact**, which causes an **irregular type of rotation.**
 - A **young galaxy can also take an irregular form**, suggesting that **it has not yet reached a symmetrical rotation.**
- **Irregular galaxies born from galaxy interactions or collisions typically host a mix of older and younger stars.**

Hubble Space Telescope:

- It was built under the supervision of **the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA)** of the United States and was **named after Edwin Hubble**, the foremost American astronomer of the 20th century.
- The HST was **placed into orbit about 600 km (370 miles) above Earth** by the crew of the space shuttle **Discovery on April 25, 1990.**
- It is considered by many to be the **most important scientific tool ever to be built**, having churned out **more than 15 lakh observations** that have been used to publish around 18,000 research papers.
- It is **larger than a school bus in size**, has a **7.9 feet mirror**, and **captures stunning images of deep space**, playing a major role in helping astronomers understand the universe by observing the most distant stars, galaxies and planets.

INDIAN COUNCIL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH

The Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR) will soon announce the results of the research award proposals it had invited to study the impact of various schemes and public policy initiatives of the Union government.



Indian Council of
Social Science Resear

About the Indian Council of Social Science Research:

- It was established in the year of 1969 by the Government of India to **promote research in social sciences** in the country on the recommendation of Prof. V. K. R. V. Rao Committee.
- It is an **autonomous organisation** funded by the Ministry of Education.
- **Functions:** It provides grants for projects, fellowships, international collaboration, capacity building, surveys, publications etc., to promote research in social sciences in India.
- **The Council aims to:**
 - Review the **progress of social science research** and give advice to its users;
 - Sponsor social science research programmes and projects and administer grants to institutions and individuals for research in social sciences.

What are Public policy initiatives?

- It refers to **the actions, programs, and strategies that governments, organisations, and institutions implement** to address various social, economic, and environmental challenges.
- These initiatives are designed to **influence and guide the behaviour of individuals, communities, and businesses** while achieving specific policy goals.

PAK PRESIDENT DENIES SIGNING CONTROVERSIAL BILLS

Background:

- Few weeks ago, the Pakistan National Assembly and the Senate approved two bills and sent those bills for Presidential assent.
 - These bills were - the Official Secrets (Amendment) Bill, 2023 and the Pakistan Army (Amendment) Bill, 2023.

- The two bills that would further enhance the Pakistan Army's already considerable powers.
 - This Act confers more powers to the army chief and calls for imprisonment for those found guilty of defaming the army.
- According to critics of the government, these laws will expand the power of the army and the state to persecute opponents and activists.
- Also, these laws were passed swiftly (within a day) in the fag end of the Pakistani National Assembly's tenure, under questionable circumstances.
- Pak President Alvi was deemed to have given his assent to both of them. Later, he denied to have signed these bills.
- On the social media platform, the President claimed that he ordered his staff to return the bills unsigned within the stipulated time to render them ineffective.
- He alleged that his staff undermined his orders and failed to follow his instructions.
- In light of the President's latest comments, the legal status of these bills is now up in the air.

What does the Pak Constitution say about Presidential assent?

- **Under Article 75(1) of the Pakistani Constitution**, after a bill has passed through both the National Assembly and the Senate, it is presented to the President for his assent.
- The President, at this juncture, has two options – either to give assent within 10 days or to return the bill along with his objections to the legislature.
- If the legislature passes it again, with or without incorporating the President's objections, as per the Constitution, the President shall give his assent within ten days, failing which such assent shall be deemed to have been given.
- As per constitutional experts of Pakistan, the concept of deemed assent only kicks in with bills that have already been sent back to the Parliament by the President one time.
- No where does 75(1) provide that if President has not assented to the Bill within 10 days it will automatically be deemed that the President has assent and the Bill becomes an Act.