



## Current Affairs of the Day

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- U.P. ordinance on conversion not yet received by MHA

### GS Paper - III

- China is still the largest source of critical imports for India
- Govt. plans law to ban bitcoin, set up official digital currency
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## U.P. ordinance on conversion not yet received by MHA

The ordinance on unlawful religious conversions, promulgated by the Uttar Pradesh government last year, has not been sent to the Centre for examination, according to a reply from the Union Home Ministry to a query under the Right to Information Act (RTI).

### Highlights:

1. The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) examines bills passed by States that are repugnant to Central laws before they get the President's assent to become a law.
2. Similar legislation passed by the Rajasthan Assembly in 2008 under the then BJP government is still pending with the MHA. The UP conversion Law is yet to receive the President's nod as the MHA found that it deviated from national policy and sought clarification from the State.
3. The MHA sends State bills for inter-ministerial consultation before they get the President's nod, only in the following circumstances — when it has repugnancy with Central laws, deviates from national or central policy and when it can be challenged for legal and constitutional validity.

### Due process

- Home Ministry examines the Bills passed by the States that are repugnant to Central laws before they get the President's assent

- Not all State legislation are sent for the President's assent. Only those repugnant to Central laws, deviating from National or Central policy, or which can be challenged for legal and constitutional validity are sent

- Article 213 of the Constitution, under which the U.P. Ordinance was promulgated, says that the Governor shall not, without instructions from the President, promulgate any such Ordinance if a Bill would have "required the previous sanction of the President" for introduction in the State Legislature

## China is still the largest source of critical imports for India

### Key supplier and Sentiment of overdependence:

1. India's pharmaceuticals and electronics sectors are hugely dependent on China. China still remains the largest source of critical imports for India, from mobile phone components to pharmaceutical ingredients, and India is working on a multi-pronged strategy to reduce this reliance, which is a bigger concern than the imbalance in trade.



2. The trade deficit is not in dollars, it is in overdependence, that is a sentiment which raises concern.
3. India was working on a multi-pronged strategy to reduce this dependence, ranging from the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme to boost domestic manufacturing, a global effort involving India's foreign missions to find alternatives to China, and the use of free trade agreements (FTAs) with other trading partners.

## Govt. plans law to ban bitcoin, set up official digital currency

India plans to introduce a law to ban private cryptocurrencies such as bitcoin and put in place a framework for an official digital currency to be issued by the central bank, according to a legislative agenda listed by the government.

### Highlights:

1. The law will create a facilitative framework for the creation of the official digital currency to be issued by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).
2. The legislation seeks to prohibit all private cryptocurrencies in India, however, it allows for certain exceptions to promote the underlying technology of cryptocurrency and its uses.
3. In mid-2019, a government panel recommended banning all private cryptocurrencies, with a jail term of up to 10 years and heavy fines for anyone dealing in digital currencies.
4. The panel had, however, asked the government to consider the introduction of an official government-backed digital currency, to function like banknotes, through the RBI.
5. The central bank had in April 2018 ordered financial institutions to break off all ties with individuals or businesses dealing in virtual currencies such as bitcoin within three months.
6. However, in March 2020, the Supreme Court allowed banks to handle cryptocurrency transactions from exchanges and traders, overturning a ban that had dealt the thriving industry a blow.



## Tropical cyclones move closer to land except for Atlantic hurricanes

### Highlights:

1. Tropical cyclones across the globe, except Atlantic hurricanes, are moving closer to land in recent decades, a new study found.
2. Tropical cyclones generally have been moving westward by about 30 kilometres per decade since 1982, putting them closer to land and making them more dangerous, a study published in Science said. Each decade since the 1980s, an additional two cyclones have come within 200 kilometres of land, the study said
3. Past studies have found that the most intense storms are getting stronger and storms, in general, are getting wetter, shifting poleward, moving slower and are keeping their power long after hitting land.
4. Storms generally move east to west because of trade winds in the tropics, so a greater westward shift usually puts them closer to where the land is. It could be only partly explained by some natural long-term climate cycles.

## Saturn's tilting axis

The current tilt of Saturn's rotation axis is caused by the migration of its satellites, and especially by that of its largest moon, Titan.

### Highlights:

Recent observations have shown that Titan and the other moons are gradually moving away from Saturn much faster than astronomers had previously estimated. By incorporating this into their calculations, the researchers concluded that this process affects the inclination of Saturn's rotation axis: as its satellites move further away, the planet tilts more and more.

## What does 'green tax' mean for vehicle owners?

### The story so far:

1. Government has approved a 'green tax' on vehicles of specified vintage, as a means of dissuading people from using polluting vehicles. State governments must now comment on the proposal. The policy is scheduled to come into force on April 1, 2022.





2. Among the major features of the measure is a 10%-25% additional green tax on the road tax payable by commercial transport vehicles that are older than eight years at the time of fitness certification renewal, and for personal vehicles after 15 years.
3. The policy provides exemptions for tractors, harvesters and tillers used in farms, hybrid, electric, ethanol, liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) and compressed natural gas (CNG)-powered vehicles, and a lower green tax for public transport vehicles such as buses.
4. Conversely, a higher additional 50% of road tax is proposed for vehicles in highly polluted cities, as well as a differential tax based on fuel and vehicle type, such as diesel.
5. Vehicles of government departments and public sector units that are older than 15 years are to be deregistered and scrapped. Green tax funds are to be kept in a separate account to help States measure pollution and tackle it.

### Old vehicles scrappage benefits

1. It will give a boost to the automobile industry and related businesses by stimulating demand, and lead to a recovery of steel, aluminium, plastic and so on for recycling, on the other promoting circular economy.
2. Newer vehicles conforming to stricter emissions and fuel efficiency standards are more environment-friendly and have modern safety features.
3. The benefits from vehicle replacements can be gauged from Transport Ministry data: commercial vehicles making up 5% of the vehicle fleet but contribute an estimated 65-70% of total vehicular pollution.

### The Corporate Average Fuel Economy (CAFE)

In 2016, India notified the Corporate Average Fuel Economy (CAFE) Standard for passenger vehicles to boost efficiency. CAFE also regulates CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, while other pollutants such as carbon monoxide, oxides of nitrogen and sulphur are covered by Bharat Stage fuel standards.

### Global Best Practices

1. Globally, accelerated vehicle replacement schemes have been used in several countries. The most notable were those in Europe, besides the high-profile, \$3 billion “Cash for Clunkers” or CARS (or Car Allowance Rebate System) programme in the U.S. after the 2008 recession.



2. The official evaluation of the U.S. scheme was that it led to an average mileage efficiency increase of 58%, and upgraded vehicles generally were high on environmental benefits such as lower air pollution.

### Policy Analysis

1. For a clean-up, commercial transport vehicles are of highest concern: on fuel efficiency, emissions and safety.
2. The Centre could offer a green new deal with financing options such as loans and grants to smaller operators to scrap their junk vehicles while escalating the green tax annually to achieve the nudge effect.
3. Small operators such as autorickshaws could be offered low-interest loans, particularly to move to electric vehicles.
4. A second stimulus to bus companies could help green the fleet and cut pollution.

### Who should not take COVID-19 vaccines?

**The story so far:** On January 14, two days before India began the massive inoculation drive for COVID-19, the Health Ministry released a note on precautions and contradictions for the vaccines cleared so far, Covishield and Covaxin.

### Precautions:

1. Both India-made vaccines had emergency use approval and one of the points the circular clarified is that shots are to be given only to those 18 years and above. The Health Ministry note said there should ideally be a gap of at least 14 days between a COVID-19 vaccine shot and other vaccines.
2. It said it was not permitted to interchange the COVID-19 vaccines: under the two-dose regime, the second dose should be of the same vaccine which was administered the first time around.
3. Further, the vaccines should be administered with caution in persons with a history of any bleeding or coagulation disorder (clotting factor deficiency, coagulopathy or platelet disorder).



4. The Health Ministry press conference said the vaccine is safe for people on blood thinners as both the manufacturers of the vaccines had approached the Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI) for revision of this contraindication on their fact sheets.
5. Blood thinners are of two categories — antiplatelets and anticoagulants. For those on antiplatelets like aspirin, the vaccine causes no problem but with those on anti-coagulants in these patients, the tendency to bleed is much higher. This is also a relative contraindication and the anticoagulant can be stopped a day or two before administering the vaccine.
6. The Health Ministry advisory says pregnant and lactating women should not be given either vaccine for now. Pregnant and lactating women have not been part of any COVID-19 vaccine trial so far, it said.
7. People who have an allergic reaction to the first dose of the vaccine, immediate or delayed, should not take the second dose. For those who develop an allergy or other symptoms, the second dose can be taken in four to eight weeks after recovery.
8. This includes persons with active symptoms with SARS-CoV-2 infection and other acutely unwell. Also, SARS-CoV-2 patients who have been given the anti-SARS-CoV-2 monoclonal antibodies or convalescent plasma have been advised to defer.
9. For acutely ill or hospitalised patients due to any illness, vaccination can be deferred for four to eight weeks after recovery.

## Google exit threat

### The Story So Far

1. Australia is working on a law that seeks to make Internet platforms Google and Facebook pay news media companies for displaying their content as well as linking to their content.
2. Facebook said such a law could force it to block Australian news content on its feed and Google said it will shut down its search engine there if the law becomes a reality.



## The Fundamental Imbalance

1. There is a fundamental imbalance in the power between news media and internet platforms.
2. It also highlighted that media regulation hardly applied to platforms, though they have been increasingly playing much the same role as the media.
3. The last two decades have also seen the tremendous rise of the platforms and a sharp decline of the traditional news media, which forms the context in the report.
4. The Australian government, reportedly sensing how important it was to have a strong and independent media environment in a democracy.

## How does the Bill seek to correct the imbalance?

1. What is being proposed is a mandatory mechanism, under which news media companies will get to negotiate with Facebook and Google regarding payment for their content.
2. Shutting down its search engine in Australia is a real option because Google has taken such a step in the past. In 2014, Google shut its News Service in Spain, when the government introduced a law to make it pay a licence fee to use news content.
3. Google has proposed a different solution. It goes by the name, Google News Showcase, a licensing arrangement with publishers across the world, toward which it plans to spend \$1 billion globally in the next three years.