



## Current Affairs of the Day

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- India exported 3,850,431 litres of water since 2015, mostly to China: Govt
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## Registered unrecognised parties double in last 10 years

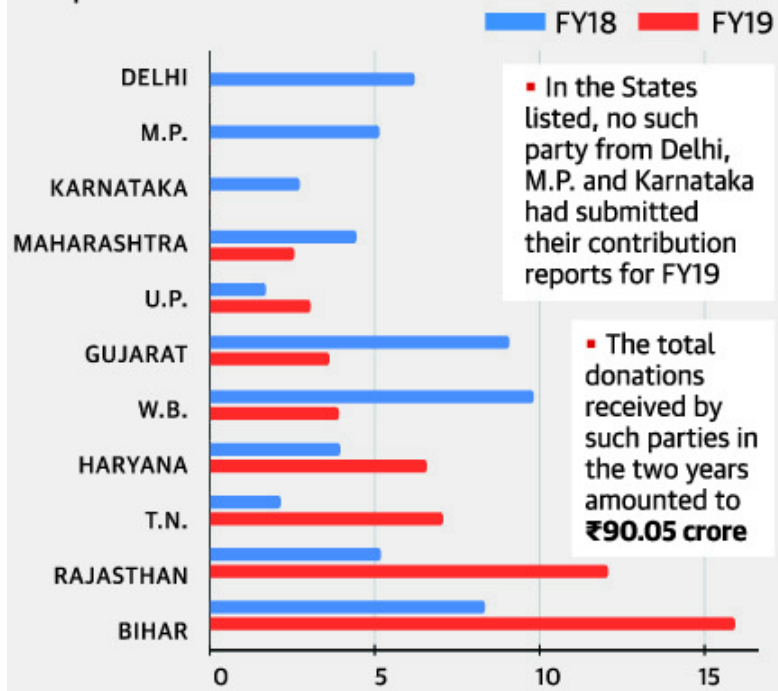
The contribution reports of only 78 (3.39%) of the total 2,301 registered unrecognised political parties are available in the public domain for 2018-19, while the reports of only 82 such parties (3.56%) for 2017-18 are uploaded on the respective State Chief Electoral Officers' websites, according to the Association For Democratic Reforms (ADR).

### Highlights:

1. The number of these parties increased two-fold in the last 10 years, from 1,112 in 2010 to 2,301 in 2019.
2. There are 2,360 political parties registered with the Election Commission of India and 2,301 or 97.50% of them are unrecognised.
3. Either newly registered parties or those which have not secured enough percentage of votes in Assembly or General Elections to become a State party or those which have never contested in elections since being registered are considered unrecognised parties. Such parties don't enjoy all the benefits extended to the recognised parties.
4. The reports analysed by the ADR declared 6,860 donations worth ₹65.45 crore during 2018-19 and 6,138 donations of ₹24.6 crore for 2017-18.
5. The contribution reports of none of the registered unrecognised political parties of 25 States/UTs including Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala,

### Missing records

Contribution reports for registered unrecognised parties were largely absent for FY2018 and FY2019 for major States. West Bengal and Bihar, with only 9.8% and 15.91% for FY18 and FY19 respectively, had the highest share of such parties. The chart shows the State-wise share (in %) of such parties for FY2018 and FY2019





Telangana, Himachal Pradesh etc. are available on the respective State CEO websites for 2018-19, for 2017-18, contribution reports of parties of 21 states/UTs are not available, said the ADR, terming it a violation of the ECI guidelines.

## Regulatory code for OTT content soon

Twenty-one MPs cutting across party lines have sought an answer from the government about the content on over-the-top (OTT) platforms such as Netflix and Amazon Prime, asking whether the Centre was aware that such platforms were full of content with “sex, violence, abuse, vulgarity and disrespect to religious sentiments”.

### Highlights:

1. The government would soon come up with a regulatory code on the content on these platforms. The government had urged the platforms to come up with the guidelines themselves.
2. The I&B Ministry said there are currently 40 OTT platforms operating in India. The government, as a first step towards regulation, amended the “allocation of Business Rules” in November last year, bringing all online platforms under the mandate of the I&B Ministry. All the platforms were told to register with the Ministry.

### Self regulation

The Ministry said they had several rounds of consultations with the Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI) impressing upon them the need for an appropriate self-regulatory mechanism for content over OTT platforms.

## Whopping 900% rise in rejection of crop insurance claims

The number of farmers’ crop insurance claims that were rejected by insurance companies under the Centre’s flagship Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY) multiplied 10 times in just two years.

### Highlights:

In 2017-18, the number of rejected claims was 92,869. In the next year, 2018-19, the figure more than doubled to 2.04 lakh. By 2019-20, it was 9.28 lakh, a whopping 900% increase.



## 'No blanket nod given for surveillance'

The Centre on Friday denied granting blanket permission to any agency for interception or monitoring of any messages or information under its surveillance programmes such as the Centralised Monitoring System, the Network Traffic Analysis, and the National Intelligence Grid.

### Highlights:

1. There is no blanket permission to any agency for interception or monitoring or decryption; and permission from the competent authority (Union Home Secretary) is required, as per due process of law and rules in each case.
2. The reply came in response to a petition seeking to constitute a permanent, independent oversight body for reviewing lawful interception and monitoring orders or warrants under the provisions of the Indian Telegraph Act and the Information Technology Act.
3. The Government, however, said the existing safeguards of oversight by a high-level committee chaired by Cabinet Secretary at the Central level and chaired by Chief Secretary at the State level, are adequate and provide effective supervision.

## 'Aero components sector to double to ₹60,000 cr. by 2024'

The aero components sector in the country is set to double from ₹30,000 crore today to ₹60,000 crore by 2024.

### Highlights:

1. The government's endeavour to bring down defence imports by at least \$2 billion by 2022 would remain.
2. We have signed 128 Memorandums of Understanding (MoU), 19 Transfer of Technology (ToT), four handing overs, 18 product launches and 32 major announcements, totalling a grand figure of 201 feats.
3. Further, of the 45 Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) participating in Aero India, 21 have bagged orders worth ₹203 crore. This is a major achievement,



4. India has a great potential to emerge as a global and regional Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul (MRO) hub, given the cost competitiveness of its manpower resources, the availability of abundant, specialist capabilities and geographical advantages.
5. The aerospace sector has an important role to play, if we have to reach our targets of domestic defence production of \$25 billion and exports of \$5 billion by 2025.

## 'PSUs playing a role in farm sector will be not be sold'

Public sector firms engaged in activities allied to the farm sector, such as provision of seeds to farmers, or procurement and distribution of food for the public distribution system, will not be up for sale under the new disinvestment policy announced in the Budget.

### Highlights:

1. While the policy has specified four strategic sectors where 'bare minimum' public sector presence will be retained.
2. NITI Aayog would be in charge of recommending the firms in strategic sectors that should be retained, considered for privatisation or merger or 'subsidiarisation' with another public sector firm, or simply closed.
3. DIPAM shall move proposals for obtaining 'in-principle' from the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs for strategic disinvestment of a specific PSE from time to time, on a case-to-case-basis.

## India exported 3,850,431 litres of water since 2015, mostly to China: Govt

**Bottom line:** India exported 3,850,431 litres of water between 2015-16 and 2020-21. Water is being exported even as the government has not been able to meet its own targets for drinking water supply.

### Highlights:

1. India exported three categories of water in this period: Mineral water (2,378,227 litres), aerated water (602,389 litres) and natural and other water (869,815 litres).



2. Most of this water in 2019-20, went to China. Beijing imported 63,580 litres of mineral water, 1,000 litres of aerated water and 20,000 litres of natural water. It imported the highest quantity of mineral and natural water.
3. Other major imports of Indian water were to the Maldives (38,380 litres), United Arab Emirates (35,510 litres), Canada (33,620 litres) Singapore (33,460 litres), United States (31,730 litres), Qatar (25,900 litres) and Saudi Arabia (29,020 litres).
4. Experts noted that while water was being exported on the one hand, on the other, the government had not been able to meet its own targets for drinking water supply.
5. All rural households in India are entitled to 55 litres of drinking water per person per day under the Jal Jeevan Mission. The mission, launched August 15, 2019, aims to provide safe and adequate drinking water. It has not been able to meet its target.
6. This water, which is exported, is pumped out of the ground. There is a decline in ground water in India and there is a need to sustainably manage it.
7. In rural areas, there is a lot of seepage and improper recharge of ground aquifers.

India is mostly dependent on groundwater and surface water is dependent on rains, which are becoming more erratic. We should be sustainably managing our ground water resources rather than exporting water.

## Union Budget 2021-22: India to launch Hydrogen Energy Mission

Union Minister for Finance announced that the Hydrogen Energy Mission will be launched in 2021-22, during her budget speech February 1, 2021.

### Opportunity and Potential:

1. The Govt proposed to launch a Hydrogen Energy Mission in 2021-22 for generating hydrogen from green power sources.
2. The rising interest in this supply option is driven by the falling costs of renewable power and by systems integration challenges due to rising shares of variable renewable power supply.



3. Green Hydrogen Mission is not only essential to decarbonise heavy industries like steel and cement, it also holds the key to clean electric mobility that doesn't depend on rare minerals.
4. Hydrogen can act as an energy storage option, which would be essential to meet intermittencies (of renewable energy) in the future.
5. Given the range of ways that green hydrogen energy could be produced and used, it allows the formation of a circular economy, which primarily focuses on ensuring energy security, by utilisation of all the resources possible.
6. The emphasis on hydrogen in the budget was in line with the technological development in the global north and with a long-term vision towards reduced dependency on minerals and rare-earth element-based batteries as energy storage.
7. Hydrogen from renewable power is technically viable today and is quickly approaching economic competitiveness according to the International Renewable Energy Agency. The energy source is seen as the next big thing as its usage would lead to zero emissions.

### Challenges:

1. In terms of challenges to green hydrogen specifically, the cost of renewable electricity is the major problem. Public investments need to strategize and channel well.
2. Electrolyser costs and supply chain logistics: This will require funding. Policy makers should also consider how to create legislative frameworks that facilitate hydrogen-based sector coupling.
3. Focussing on the production of green hydrogen in India would mean significantly ramping up the current renewable energy infrastructure across the country.

### Conclusion:

Green hydrogen energy is vital for India to meet its Nationally Determined Contributions and ensure regional and national energy security, access and availability.



## Economic Survey 2021 backs setting up of Social Stock Exchange in India

The Economic Survey released by the Union Ministry of Finance on January 29, 2021 highlighted the concept of setting up a social stock exchange (SSE) in India for raising capital by organisations working for the realisation of a social welfare objective. It will be under the regulatory ambit of the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI), the survey said.

### Highlights:

1. SEBI outlined its vision and made recommendations, which include participation of non-profit organisations (NPO) and for-profit enterprises (FPE) on SSE subject to committing to minimum reporting requirements.
2. The survey added that as of December 24, 2020, eight Environmental, social and corporate governance (ESG) mutual funds have been launched in India.
3. In 2017, to give push to Green Bonds issues in India, SEBI issued guidelines on green bonds including listing of green bonds on the Indian stock exchanges.
4. The launch of green indices such as S&P BSE CARBONEX (in 2012), MSCI ESG India (in 2013), and S&P BSE 100 ESG Index (in 2017) allows passive and retail investors to invest in 'green' companies.
5. Green bonds are debt instruments issued by an entity for raising funds from investors and the proceeds of a green bond offering are used towards financing 'green' projects.

## Only 2.8% plantation target achieved under Green India Mission: Economic Survey

The central government's afforestation scheme, Green India Mission (GIM), was able to only achieve 2.8% of its plantation target, according to the Economic Survey.

### Highlights:

1. The target of the 10-year scheme flagged off in 2015 is to increase forest/tree cover on 5 million hectares (m ha) of forest/non-forest land and improve the quality of forest cover on another 5 m ha area.





2. However, as of March 2020, plantation under the scheme was undertaken on only over 0.14 m ha land.
3. A 2018 parliamentary committee report on GIM found that the scheme was grossly underfunded. The scheme is proposed for 10 years with an outlay of Rs 60,000 crore. During 2017-18, Rs 47.8 crore was allocated for the scheme which is grossly insufficient as the committed liability .
4. The committee also pointed out that the afforestation done under the mission was only aimed at increasing tree count without considering the soil and weather conditions.
5. Trees like eucalyptus were planted which made environmental problems worse rather than solving it. Planting of unsuitable trees may cause drought and prevent biodiversity in the regions.
6. GIM was introduced with the aim to protect, restore and enhance India's forest cover. It takes a holistic view on greening and focuses on multiple ecosystem services along with carbon sequestration and emission reduction as co-benefits.