



Current Affairs of the Day

GS II

- Over 60% OBC, SC posts vacant in IIMs

GS III

- 'Bee fences' to ward off elephant attacks
- SC bats for Great Indian Bustard
- 'India's arms imports down by 33%'



Over 60% OBC, SC posts vacant in IIMs

News: More than half of the faculty positions reserved for the OBCs in Central institutions of higher education are vacant while about 40% of those reserved for the Scheduled Castes and Tribes also remain unfilled.

Empty seats

The table lists the share of vacant faculty positions in the posts reserved for OBCs, SCs and STs in central institutes of higher education. **For instance, in IIMs, 79% of faculty positions reserved for STs are vacant**



FILE PHOTO: IIM AHMEDABAD

Institution	SC	ST	OBC
42 Central Universities	39%	42%	52%
Sanskrit Central Univ.	12%	13%	13%
IGNOU	41%	49%	67%
IITs (Non-faculty)	36%	47%	42%
IIMs	62%	79%	63%
IISERs	39%	58%	44%
IISc	20%	55%	90%
Total	38%	43%	52%

Highlights:

1. Both the IITs and the IIMs have been lobbying for an exemption from such faculty quota requirements.
2. Within the Central Universities, vacancies were higher at the level of professors. Of 709 assistant professor positions reserved for the STs at the 42 universities, more than 500 have been filled.
3. However, when it comes to professors, only nine have been filled of the 137 reserved for the ST candidates. This means that 93% of these posts remain unfilled. Less than 1% of the 1,062 professors in Central universities are from the ST communities.
4. The Ministry of Education and University Grants Commission continuously monitor vacancies but put the final blame on universities themselves. However, the onus of filling up the teaching posts lies on Central Universities, which are autonomous bodies created under Acts of Parliament.



5. In fact, in June 2019, University Grants Commission had written to all Universities, giving them a six-month deadline to fill up their vacancies, and warning that grants would be withheld if their directions were violated.
6. According to the data presented in the Lok Sabha on Monday, there are now 6,074 vacant positions at the 42 universities, of which 75% are in reserved categories.

'Bee fences' to ward off elephant attacks

Jumbo project: Pilot project launched in Kodagu and south Karnataka to mitigate human-elephant conflict. Bee boxes installed across the elephant paths by the KVIC as part of Project RE-HAB in Kodagu.

Highlights:

1. Pitting the largest animal on land against a minute insect. That is how the authorities intend to mitigate the human-elephant conflict that seems to continue unabated in Kodagu and other parts of the south Karnataka region.
2. A pilot project launched in Kodagu entails installing bee boxes along the periphery of the forest and the villages with the belief that the elephants will not venture anywhere close to the bees and thus avoid transgressing into the human landscape. This idea stems from the elephants' proven fear of the bees.
3. An initiative of the Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC), Project RE-HAB (Reducing Elephant-Human Attacks using Bees) intends to create "bee fences" to thwart elephant attacks in human habitations using honeybees.
4. These spots are located on the periphery of the Nagarahole National Park and Tiger Reserve, a known conflict zone. The Project RE-HAB is a sub-mission of the KVIC's National Honey Mission.

Between 2015 and 2020, nearly 2,500 people have lost their lives in elephant attacks across India, of which 170 human fatalities have been reported in Karnataka alone, says the KVIC.



SC bats for Great Indian Bustard

Deathtrap: SC moots underground cables to prevent deaths due to collision with power lines. Power companies say a diminishing habitat is a bigger threat for the birds.

Highlights:

1. The Supreme Court intervened on behalf of the critically endangered Great Indian Bustards over the birds falling dead after colliding with power lines running through their dwindling natural habitats in Gujarat and Rajasthan.
2. The Supreme Court will examine on a priority basis whether overhead power cables can be replaced with underground ones to save one of the heaviest flying birds on the planet.
3. However, the government submitted that only low voltage lines can go underground but not the high voltage ones.
4. The court found further that an alternative mechanism — to install flight bird diverters — to guide the birds away from the power lines would be expensive.
5. The court discovered that the diverters, with their recurring costs, would end costing more than installing and maintaining underground lines. But the court suggested treading the middle path.
6. Wherever there are high voltage power lines, they can use flight bird diverters even if the recurring costs are high. Wherever there are overhead low voltage lines, these lines can be placed underground.

'India's arms imports down by 33%'

Bottom Line: Drop seems mainly due to the complex procurement process: Swedish think tank

Highlights:

1. Arms imports decreased by 33% between 2011–15 and 2016–20 while India continues to remain the second-largest arms importer after Saudi Arabia, according to a report from Swedish think tank Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI).
2. The overall drop in arms imports between 2011–15 and 2016–20 seems to be mainly due to its complex and lengthy procurement processes, combined with its attempts to reduce its dependence on Russian arms by diversifying its network of arms suppliers.



3. The report said Russia was the largest arms supplier in both years. However, Russia's deliveries dropped by 53% between the two periods and its share of Indian arms imports fell from 70 to 49%.
4. The U.S. was the second-largest arms supplier to India in 2011–15 but in 2016–20 India's arms imports from the U.S. were 46% lower than in the previous five-year period, making the U.S. the fourth-largest supplier in 2016–20.
5. France and Israel were the second and third largest arms suppliers in 2016–20. "India's arms imports from France increased by 709% while those from Israel rose by 82%," the report said adding that combat aircraft and associated missiles made up more than 50% of arms imports.

China-Pak axis

The report said as India perceives increasing threats from Pakistan and China and as its ambitious plans to produce its own major arms have been significantly delayed, it is planning large-scale programmes for arms imports. Based on its outstanding deliveries of combat aircraft, air defence systems, ships and submarines, India's arms imports are expected to increase over the coming five years.

Pak. imports

Arms imports by Pakistan between 2011–15 and 2016–20 decreased by 23%. China accounted for 61% of its imports in 2011–15 and for 74% in 2016–20.