



Current Affairs of the Day

GS II

- Supreme Court flags concern over misuse of electoral bonds.
- RS approves Bill empowering Delhi L-G amid Oppn. Walkout.

GS III

- TB notifications fall due to pandemic disruptions.
- Adding coal to the fire.



Supreme Court flags concern over misuse of electoral bonds

News: The Supreme Court flagged its concern that political parties could misuse crores of rupees received as donations through electoral bonds to bankroll violent protests or even terror. The court asked the government whether there was any “control” over how these donations were used by the political parties.

Highlights:

1. Only parties registered under the Representation of the People Act could receive donations through electoral bonds, and that they should not have secured less than 1% of the votes polled in the previous elections.
2. Buyers have to use white money. The purchase is through bank drafts, cheques or electronic transfer.
3. The exchange came during a virtual court hearing of an application filed by the Association for Democratic Reforms, represented by advocate Prashant Bhushan, to stay the sale of electoral bonds scheduled between April 1 and April 10, prior to the crucial Assembly elections in five states, including West Bengal and Tamil Nadu.
4. The electoral bonds scheme introduces anonymity in political donations. The sale of bonds in April should be stopped.

RS approves Bill empowering Delhi L-G amid Oppn. walkout

News: The Rajya Sabha on Wednesday passed the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi (Amendment) Bill that seeks to empower the Lieutenant-Governor in Delhi.

Highlights:

1. The Bill states that the government in the national capital territory of Delhi means the “Lieutenant-Governor”. The legislation says the L-G is “necessarily granted an opportunity” to give her/his opinion before any decision taken by the Council of Ministers (or the Delhi Cabinet) is implemented.
2. Congress said the Bill was unconstitutional. It said the Supreme Court judgment had stated that the “L-G of the State has more of an advisory role.” It said the powers of the Delhi Assembly were being diluted systematically.



TB notifications fall due to pandemic disruptions

News: In 2020, there were 18.05 lakh tuberculosis notifications, which was a fall of 24% from 2019 due to the disruptions caused by the pandemic, according to the India TB report released by the Health Ministry on Wednesday.

Highlights:

1. The report said between January and February 2020, the notifications were on an upward trajectory, with 6% more cases reported in the same period in 2019.
2. As a result of the lockdown, notifications in the public sector fell by 38% and 44% in the private sector in April and May. Of the reported 24.04 lakh, TB cases in 2019, treatment success were 82%, the mortality rate was 4%, 4% of patients were lost to follow up and treatment failure and regimen change after initiation of treatment was about 3%, said the report.
3. As per the report over 95% of all cases reported were initiated on treatment in 2020 and the treatment success rate for patients reported in 2019 was 82% (83% among patients in the public sector and 79% in the private).
4. The report said 20,892 (42%) of patients were initiated on a shorter MDR-TB regimen at the time of diagnosis. "This is a significant decline from 2019," said the report.

Adding coal to the fire

Context:

1. If India loses the fight against climate change, new investments in coal will be a decisive factor. India has reaffirmed its commitment to bold plans for switching to renewable energy.
2. Yet, one of the world's largest new coal investments is Adani's \$16.5 billion dollar **Carmichael coal mine project in Queensland**. That this project is going ahead despite coal's declining competitiveness raises valid concerns that the new coal investments are viable only because they are supported by the Australian government's subsidies or incentives.

Gains and losses

1. As India is the primary buyer of the Carmichael coal, the project will significantly add to its emissions. Australia's coal mining and coal exports generate incomes and jobs, but when the destruction from pollution, soil



erosion, and biodiversity loss is included, the net contribution for India is negative.

2. That the project might not be viable even financially — and this without considering the environmental, social and health impacts — is damning. It supports the worry that government subsidies underlie Adani’s decision to proceed with the project.
3. It bears mentioning that 17 international banks declined to fund the Carmichael mine based on its weak financials and environmental danger; the State Bank of India’s plan to provide financing is under scrutiny.
4. A report by the Australia Institute points out that the spillover harm from extracting and burning coal is not included in the true cost of coal projects.
5. One estimate puts the damage to health alone in Australia at \$2.6 billion annually. The mining of coal emits massive amounts of particle pollution, contributing to heart disease, lung disease and lung cancer. With exports of coal, India will be hurt too from burning coal, and the global harm is a multiple of Australia’s.



Leave coal underground

The Government of India is drawing up plans for carbon neutrality, following several others that have announced 2050 as their target date for this. Achieving a zero-carbon target will require vast investments in the production, storage, and



distribution of renewable energy. But the approval for Adani to mine and export coal to India makes reaching those targets much harder. It is time for India and Australia to leave coal underground.