

Current Affairs of the Day

'Gati Shakti' will boost infra projects: PM



1. Prime Minister Narendra Modi kicked off 'PM Gati Shakti', a national master plan for synchronising connectivity infrastructure projects across modes of transport, and said it will help India realise its dream of becoming the "business capital" of the world.
2. Gati Shakti — a digital platform — will bring 16 Ministries including Railways and Roadways together for integrated planning and coordinated implementation of infrastructure connectivity projects.
3. It will incorporate the infrastructure schemes of various Ministries and State Governments like Bharatmala, Sagarmala, inland waterways, dry/land ports, UDAN etc. Economic Zones like textile clusters, pharmaceutical clusters, defence corridors, electronic parks, industrial corridors, fishing clusters, agri zones will be covered to improve connectivity & make Indian businesses more competitive.
4. It will also leverage technology extensively including spatial planning tools with ISRO imagery developed by BISAG-N (Bhaskaracharya National Institute for Space Applications and Geoinformatics).



THE HINDU

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5. For that, multimodal logistics hubs would be built alongside, which would have a state-of-the-art railway terminus, inter and intra-State bus terminus, mass rapid transport system and other conveniences.

By building these across different parts of the country, India could achieve the dream of becoming the world's business capital," he underlined. "Because of this, many unfinished projects are being completed for decades now," he said, citing improved infrastructure outcomes in the past seven years across sectors, ranging from railway line electrification to gas pipelines, metro rail services and mega food parks.

A Giant Stride in India's \$5 Trillion Economy Goal

Gati Shakti National Master Plan

Multimodal Connectivity Infrastructure to various Economic Zones



Targets upto 2024-25 for Ministry of Shipping



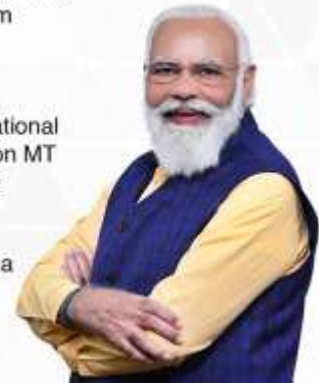
Increase in Cargo capacity at the Ports to 1,759 MMTPA from 1,282 MMTPA in 2020



Cargo movement on all National Waterways will be 95 million MT from 74 million MT in 2020



Cargo movement on Ganga to be increased from 9 to 29 million MT



India, Iran discuss ways to fight drug trafficking from Afghanistan

1. The illegal production of drugs in Afghanistan has impacted Iran severely for several decades, the Embassy of Iran said.
2. India-Iran discussed and examined ways and means of mutual cooperation in fighting drug trafficking which accordingly resulted in some positive outcomes.
3. The discussion is important because of the seizure of around 3,000 kg of heroin in the Mundra port managed by the Adani Ports.





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4. The operation led to the largest drug haul in the history of the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI). Initial reports had indicated that the containers carrying the substance originated from the Iranian port of Bandar Abbas.

Household-level asset ownership: just 3% in India, Delhi on top

An analysis of asset ownership data at the household level collected by Lokniti-CSDS indicates that no more than 3% of Indian households — that is, 1 in every 33 — own these five assets at the same time.

Prosperity in India

1. Defining Indian households in terms of prosperity has always been a tricky exercise for economists.
2. Gauging who can afford the five assets of a car, an air-conditioner at home, a desktop or laptop computer, a refrigerator, and a television set, has been seen as an important indicator of economic well-being in a fast-growing, aspirational economy
3. Apart from bigger assets such as a home or a piece of land, these five assets may be understood as ones that middle-class Indian households typically yearn to possess.

Ownership of assets

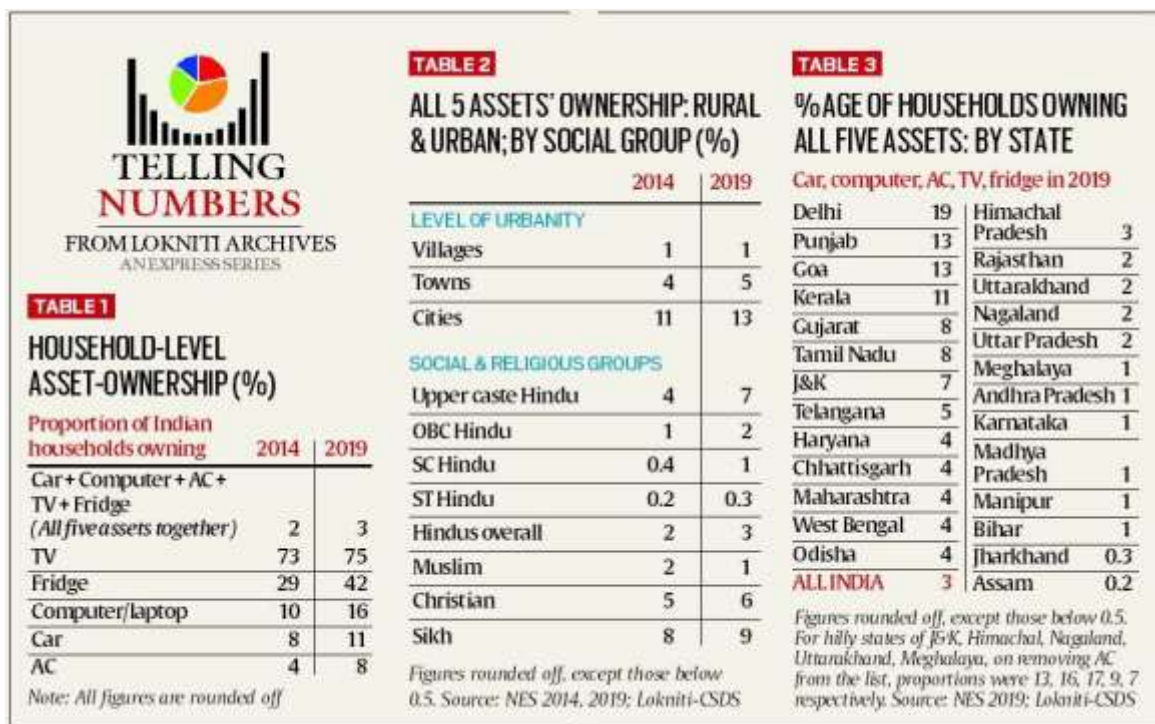
1. An analysis of asset ownership data at the household level collected by Lokniti-CSDS during its National Election Study in 2019 indicates that no more than 3% of Indian households — that is, 1 in every 33 — own all of these five assets at the same time.
2. The pace of growth of ownership of these assets has been unexceptional in recent years — five years previously, in 2014, the percentage of households that owned these assets was 2%, or 1 in every 50 households.

Unequal distribution

1. The data show major differences in asset ownership among the various social groups. Thus, upper-caste Hindu households are seven times more likely to own all the five assets, compared to Dalit (SC) and Muslim households.
2. Also, every fifth upper-caste Hindu family travels in a car, as against every twentieth Dalit family.



- Indian households continue to witness persistent inequality in asset distribution. The pattern of asset-ownership varies significantly with how urban the area is.
- As against about 13% of households in cities, only 5% of households in towns, and merely 1% in villages, could boast of having all of the five assets in 2019.



Explained: The China-Taiwan tussle

1949: Founding of the PRC

- Taiwan, earlier known as Formosa, a tiny island off the east coast of China, is where Chinese republicans of the Kuomintang government retreated after the 1949 victory of the communists — and it has since continued as the Republic of China (ROC).



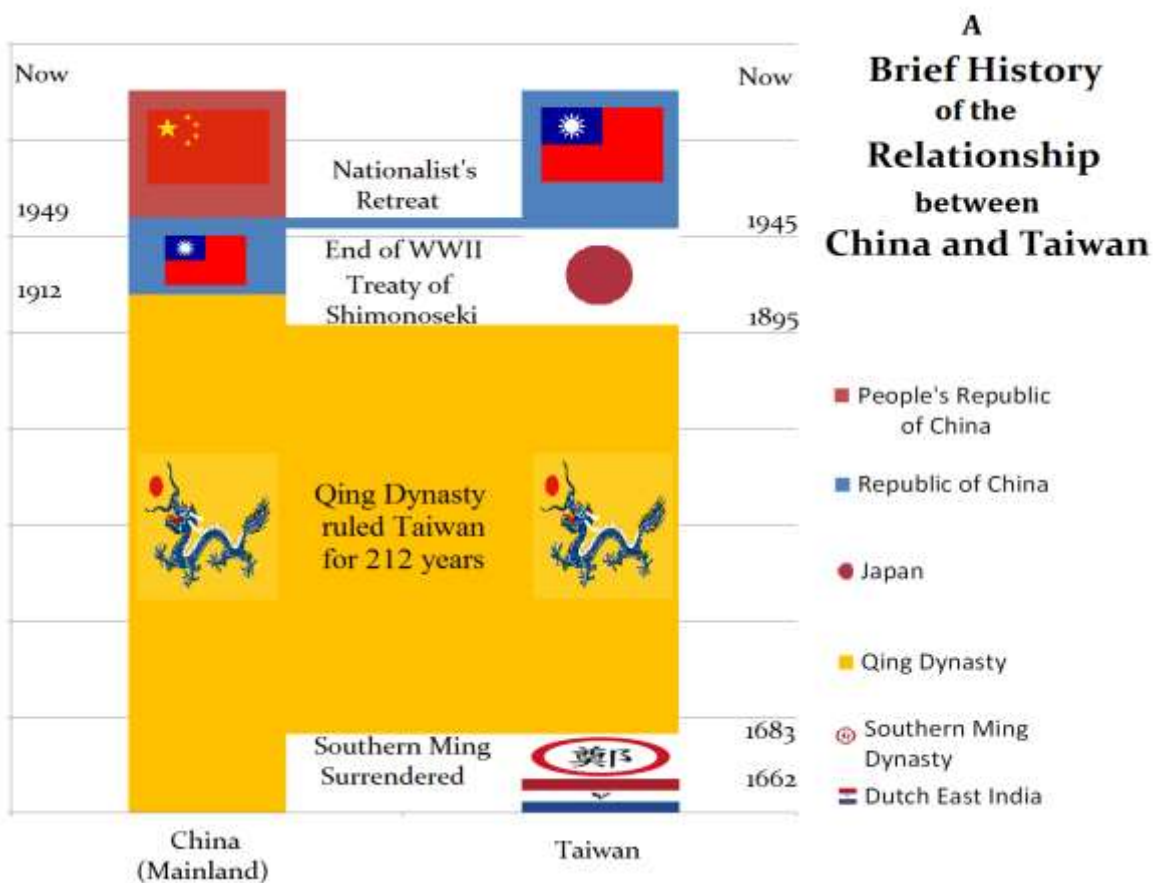


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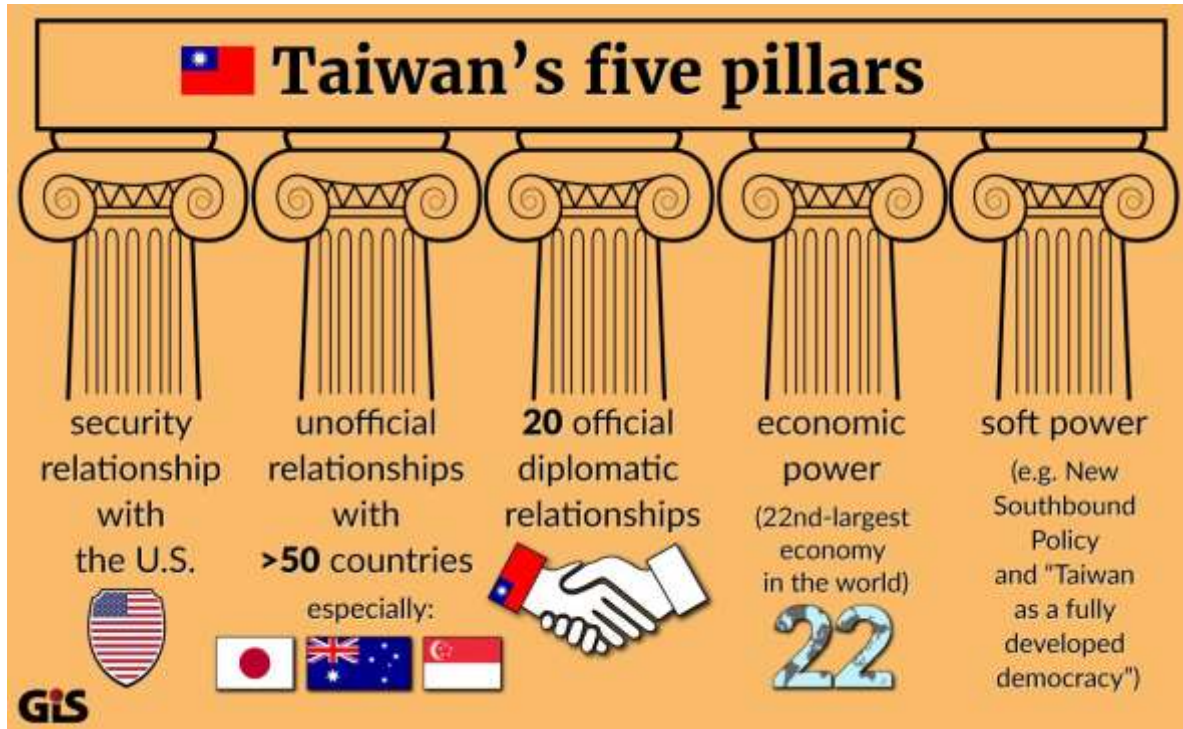


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- The island is located in the East China Sea, to the northeast of Hong Kong, north of the Philippines and south of South Korea, and southwest of Japan. What happens in and around Taiwan is of deep concern to all of East Asia.
- Taiwan observes October 10 — “double 10” — as its national day; it was on this day in 1911 that sections of the Manchu army rose in rebellion, leading ultimately to the overthrow of the Qing dynasty and the end of 4,000 years of the monarchy.



- The RoC was declared on December 29, 1911, and it found its feet in the 1920s under the leadership of Dr Sun Yat-sen, founder of the Kuomintang (KMT) Party.
- Since its founding in 1949, the PRC has believed that Taiwan must be reunified with the mainland, while the RoC has held out as an “independent” country.
- The RoC became the non-communist frontier against China during the Cold War, and was the only ‘China’ recognised at the UN until 1971.



Explained: Why govt proposes to redefine forests, and the concerns this raises

Last week, the Ministry for Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MoEFCC) published proposed amendments to the Forest Conservation Act, 1980, easing diversion of forests and exempting certain categories of development from the need to take clearance from the Ministry.

Why is the Act being amended now?

1. It has been amended only once before, in 1988. Ministry officials have said the current definition of forests has locked land across the country; even private owners cannot utilise their own property for non-forestry purposes.
2. Under the Act, any diversion of any forest land for any purpose, including assignment of leases, needs prior approval of the Centre.

T N Godavarman Thirumulpad v Union of India

1. In 1996, ruling in T N Godavarman Thirumulpad v Union of India, the Supreme Court had expanded the definition and scope of forest land to include all areas recorded as forest in any government record, irrespective of ownership, recognition and classification.



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2. Previously, the Act had applied largely to reserve forests and national parks. The court also expanded the definition of forests to encompass the "dictionary meaning of forests", which would mean that a forested patch would automatically become a "deemed forest" even if it is not notified as protected, and irrespective of ownership.
3. The order was also interpreted to presume that the Act is applicable over plantations in non-forest land.

Judiciary and Protection of Rights

- a. **M. C. Mehta v Kamal Nath** (1997) 1 SCC 388
The Public Trust Doctrine rests on the Principle that every natural resource has greater importance to the people as a whole than to make it a subject of private ownership.
- b. **T. N. Godavarman Thirumulpad v. Union of India**
AIR 1997 SC 1228
- "Forest" includes the area noted in the government records as forest, irrespective of ownership.
- c. **T. N. Godavarman Thirumulpad v. Union of India**
AIR 2003 SC 724
By destroying nature environment man is committing matricide, having in a way killed mother, Earth.

CASE SUMMARY

M.C. Mehta v. Union of India - Delhi Ridge Case

AIR 2004 SC 4016

The mining activity can be permitted only on the basis of sustainable development and on compliance of stringent conditions.

The Aravalli hill range has to be protected at any cost. In case despite stringent condition, there is an adverse irreversible effect on the ecology in the Aravalli hill range area, at a later date, the total stoppage of mining activity in the area may have to be considered.

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Rationale:

1. Ministry officials said the amendment is proposed to “streamline provisions of the Act”. It has said the identification of forest land is subjective and arbitrary and that the “ambiguity” has “resulted into lot of resentment and resistance particularly from private individuals and organisations”.
2. The Ministry has also cited “strong resentment in the Ministry of Railways, Ministry of Road, Transport & Highways”, which too require forest clearance. Officials said these clearances usually take several years, in turn delaying infrastructure projects

What are the proposed amendments?

1. The Ministry has proposed that all land acquired by the Railways and Roads Ministries prior to 1980 be exempted from the Act.
2. For individuals whose lands fall within a state-specific Private Forests Act or come within the dictionary meaning of forest as specified in the 1996 Supreme Court order, the government proposes to allow “construction of structures for bona fide purposes” including residential units up to 250 sq m as a one-time relaxation.
3. Defence projects near international borders will be exempted from forest clearance.
4. Oil and natural gas extraction from forested lands will be permitted, but only if technologies such as Extended Reach Drilling are used.

What are the concerns?

1. Activists and opposition leaders say the relaxation of forest rules will facilitate corporate ownership and the disappearance of large tracts of forests.
2. About the exemption of forests on private land, even former forest officials said many forests will disappear. For instance, 4% land in Uttarakhand falls under private forests.
3. What will happen to tribals and forest dwelling communities — an issue the amendments do not address.
4. Environmentalists say exemption for Roads and Railways on forest land acquired prior to 1980 will be detrimental to forests as well as wildlife — especially elephants, tigers and leopards.
5. Environmentalists say one time exemption for private residences on private forest will lead to fragmentation of forests, and open areas such as the Aravalli mountains to real estate.



MCQ

Q1. Earlier known as Formosa, a tiny island off the east coast of China, is where Chinese republicans of the Kuomintang government retreated after the 1949 victory of the communists — and it has since continued as the Republic of China (RoC). The island being discussed is

- a. Senkaku
- b. Hongkong
- c. Taiwan
- d. Paracel

MAINS DAWP

Q1. Discuss legal definition of forests in India. Discuss implication of the Supreme Court Judgement in the *T N Godavarman Thirumulpad v Union of India 1997* case.