

Current Affairs of the Day

The aim is to make India a military power on its own strength: PM

Under the initiative of Atmanirbhar Bharat, the goal is to make India a military power globally on its own strength and also develop a modern indigenous defence industry, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said

1. PM Formally launched seven new Defence Public Sector Undertakings (DPSU), incorporated after the dissolution of the Ordnance Factory Board (OFB). The decision to revamp 41 Ordnance Factories, the launch of seven new companies, is a part of that journey.

2. Today, there was more transparency, trust, and technology-driven approach in the defence sector than ever before, the Prime Minister said. Defence exports have increased by 325% in the last five years.

3. The Union Cabinet approved a long-awaited reform to corporatise the OFB, following which effective October 1, all its assets, employees and management were transferred to the incorporated DPSUs.

Aim is to make India a military power on its own strength: PM

Modi formally launches 7 DPSUs, incorporated after dissolution of the OFB

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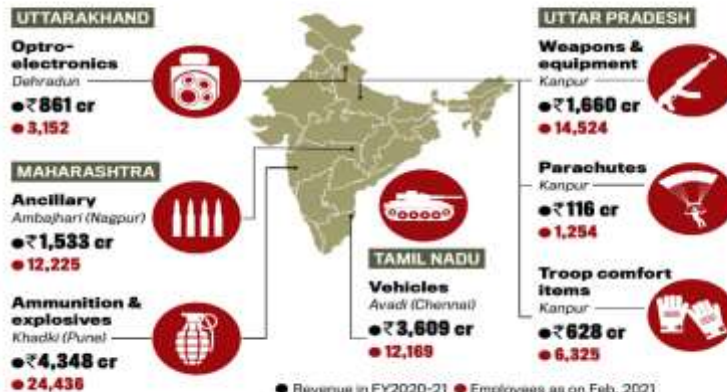
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BETTING ON THE NEW DPSUs

The seven defence public sector undertakings will be headquartered in five cities



THE NINE EXISTING ONES

1. Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd
2. Bharat Electronics Ltd
3. BEML
4. Bharat Dynamics Ltd
5. Mishra Chhatra Nigam Ltd
6. Goa Shipyard Ltd
7. Garden Reach Shipbuilders & Engineers Ltd
8. Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Ltd
9. Hindustan Shipyard Ltd

Graphic by TARMUJ DHAKRABORTY



16.10.2021 Saturday



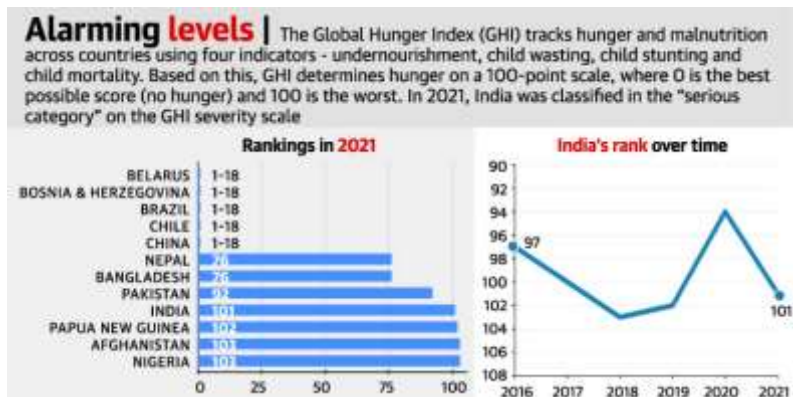
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Hunger Index: poor ranking devoid of ground reality and facts, says Govt.

Ranked at 101, India is behind neighbours like Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka

The Global Hunger Index 2021

1. The Government on Friday challenged India's poor ranking in the Global Hunger Index 2021 and the methodology used calling it "devoid of ground reality and facts".



2. The Index ranked India at 101 positions of 116 countries. India is also among the 31 countries where hunger has been identified as serious. India ranked 94 among 107 countries in the Global Hunger Index (GHI) released last year.

3. The publishing agencies of the Global Hunger Report, Concern Worldwide and Welt Hunger Hilfe have not done their due diligence before releasing the report. The methodology used by FAO is unscientific.



4. They have based their assessment on the results of a 'four question' opinion poll, which was conducted telephonically by Gallup," the Ministry of Women and Child Development said in a statement.



5. India was also behind most of the neighbouring countries. Pakistan was placed at 92, Nepal and Bangladesh at 76 and Sri Lanka at 65.

Components:

1. The GHI scores are based on the values of four component indicators — undernourishment, child wasting, child stunting and child mortality. Each country's GHI score is classified by severity, from low to extremely alarming.
2. Globally, India ranked among the worst in 'child wasting' or 'weight for height'. Its performance was worse than Djibouti and Somalia.
3. India had shown promise over the past decade in reducing maternal and child mortality. But, much more needed to be done, the report said. The response to the challenge of hidden hunger would require a sustained, long-term effort, it added.
4. However, India had progressed on other indicators including undernutrition, child stunting and child mortality, according to data in the report.

Questionable data?

1. Undernourishment data are provided by the Food and Agriculture Organisation and child mortality data are sourced from the U.N. Inter-agency Group for Child Mortality Estimation. Child wasting and stunting data are drawn from the joint database of UNICEF, the World Health Organization and the World Bank, among others.
2. It is the FAO report used for assessing undernourishment that the Government has questioned. This is also the only indicator in the report that has shown deterioration in India, the other three either show an improvement or have remained unchanged.

Proposed amendments to the Forest Conservation Act are a bad idea

Proposed amendments:

1. On October 2, the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change issued a letter documenting 14 aspects that it seeks to change in the key forest legislation, the Forest Conservation Act, 1980.
2. This law has been instrumental in reducing deforestation as it requires approval from the central government when forests have to be diverted for non-forestry purposes.



3. The regulatory mechanism of forest clearances allows the ministry to deliberate on whether deforestation should be permitted or not and what the conditions should be if such a permit is granted.

THE PROPOSALS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Bringing private forests out of ambit of FCA 	<p>Such lands would continue to attract provisions of FCA</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ MoEFCC to exempt Railways, NHAI, PWD, etc from FCA if lands acquired by them before Oct 25, 1980. Thus, they will not have to pay NPV, take up compensatory afforestation etc 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Exemption up to 0.05ha for strip plantations, rail lines, roads etc may be allowed to alleviate hardship of residents/business owners
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Bringing unattended lands under category of deemed forest. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Cos using new technologies like ERD, which enables exploration or extraction of oil & natural gas by making drilling holes from outside, will be out of FCA

- An essential part of the forest clearance process is the requirement that forest rights be recognised and the consent of the gram sabha be obtained.
- The set of issues that the ministry seeks to use as the basis for changing the law are mostly in the direction of deregulation. They show some intent of giving the law more teeth, as the identification of forest areas that are to be maintained as pristine areas for a prescribed period of time.
- In 2019, it proposed amendments to the Indian Forest Act, 1927, with disastrous provisions that gave the forest department-wide discretionary powers, including the power to shoot at sight.

What is Forest?

- The proposed amendments to the FCA, when seen in this light, work to restrict the scope of applicability of the Act.
- It does so by critiquing the current definition of forests, which includes land recognised as forest by the government as well as that which comes under the dictionary meaning of forest land based on the Supreme Court decision in the T N Godavarman case.
- It aims to implicitly define what does not constitute forests by creating a set of exceptions to the Act. These exceptions include forests in border areas where strategic projects need to be built, private land where plantations are to be established, and forest land which was acquired before 1980 for the construction of railways and highways.



4. The amendments seek to deregulate by reducing scrutiny over certain decisions to deforest like the use of extended oil drilling for the extraction of oil and gas, which the ministry says is environmental-friendly and thus qualifies for a legal exception. There have not been sufficient ecological studies to support this. Indeed, these exceptions enable deforestation as opposed to regulating it.

Limiting citizen partnership in decision making:

1. The proposed amendments are listed as a set of issues without detailing what the amendments are going to be. This makes it difficult for citizens and experts to partake in a public consultation process.
2. The proposed amendments are not translated into other languages and provide a very short window of 15 days to providing comments. This tactic of limiting citizen participation prevents citizen oversight on these anti-environmental decisions.
3. The creation of exceptions to the requirement of forest clearances directly results in the cancellation of the application of this progressive legal provision. This will be a step towards undoing a democratic decision-making framework and tilting power towards the state.

The changes being proposed to the FCA need to be done in consultation with forest-dwelling communities whose livelihoods and rights are likely to be affected by the remaking of this law. In conclusion, the deregulatory approach to changes being made to India's environmental laws needs to be scrutinised. As the climate crisis looms over us, limiting deforestation should guide regulatory decision-making, not compensating with plantations.

COVID-19 reverses decades of progress in TB elimination, India worst-hit: WHO

1. Detection of cases, diagnostics, treatment go for a complete toss; deaths increase for the first time
2. The world suffered huge reverses in progress towards tuberculosis (TB) elimination in 2020, thanks to the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. And, India has been the worst hit.



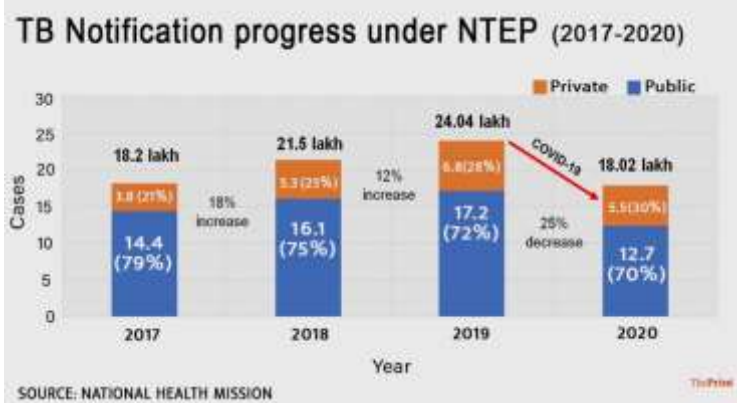


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- These are major findings of the Global TB report released by the World Health Organization (WHO) on October 14, 2021. The Philippines and Indonesia were also severely impacted.
- The biggest impact was felt in terms of the detection of new cases. This means a large number of cases went undetected due to highly curtailed access to diagnostics and restrictions imposed to contain the pandemic. From 2016-2019, the number of new cases rose continuously but fell dramatically to 20 per cent in 2020.
- The biggest fallout of the decline in the notification of new cases is that it has resulted in an increase in TB deaths. The report estimated that people dying with TB, who did not have an HIV co-infection, went up by 0.1 million in 2020 as compared to the previous year.
- Those who suffered from HIV co-infection registered an additional 5,000 deaths in 2020. Overall, the deaths have gone back to the level of 2017.



MCQ

- Q. The Global Hunger Report is released by
- The World Health Organization
 - The World Bank
 - The United Nations Development Programme
 - Concern Worldwide and Welt Hunger Hilfe

MAINS DAWP

Q. Forests are difficult geographies to regulate as they must meet the competing regulatory requirements of conservation, development, and recognition of forest rights. Discuss the proposed amendment to the Forest Conservation Act 1980 in light of the given statement.