



Current Affairs of the Day

Exports cross the \$400-bn annual target as goods shipments jump

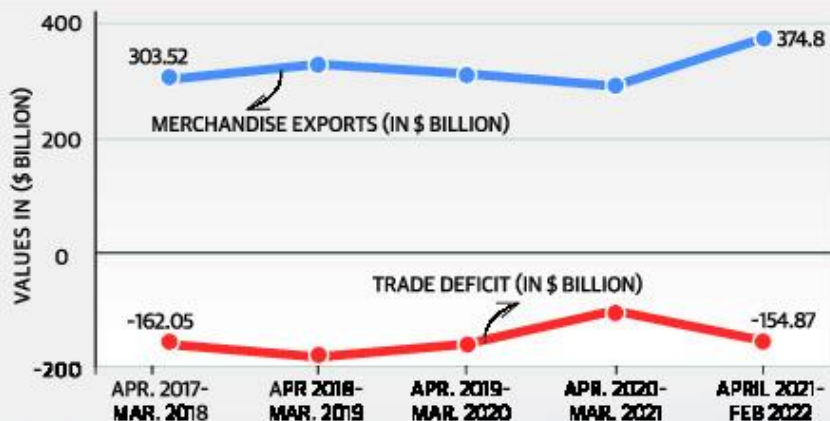
Prime Minister congratulates farmers, weavers and MSMEs on the achievement

1. India's annual goods exports crossed the \$400-billion mark for the first time ever, the government announced, buoyed by an increase in shipments of merchandise, including engineering products, apparel and garments, gems and jewellery and petroleum products.

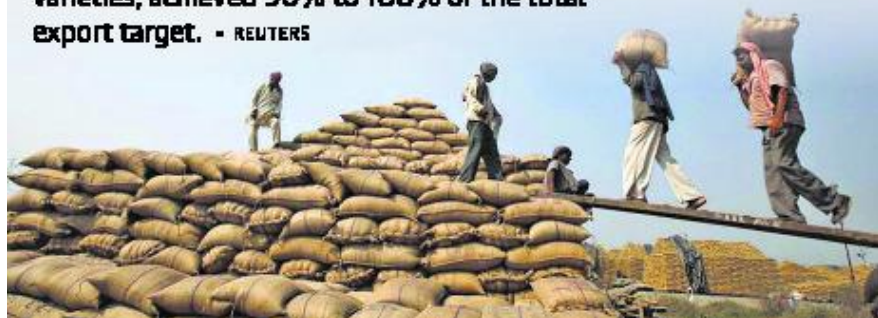
2. Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal asserted

that neither the COVID-19 pandemic nor the global uncertainties following the Ukraine crisis had affected India's ability to reach its export goals.

Export surge | India's merchandise exports have reached \$400 billion in FY22, nine days ahead of the target after registering a dip in FY21 due to the pandemic. Despite the surge, India's balance of trade remains negative



Agri boost: Rice, both basmati and non-basmati varieties, achieved 90% to 100% of the total export target. - REUTERS





Milestone, says Modi

1. India set an ambitious target of \$400 billion of goods exports and achieves this target for the first time ever. This is a key milestone in our Aatmanirbhar Bharat journey.
2. Commenting on the development, Mr Goyal said the boost in the exports was likely to bolster India's position in the ongoing negotiations for Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) with several trade partners.
3. Noting that the agriculture sector too had recorded its highest-ever export during 2021-22 with the help of export of "rice, marine products, wheat, spices and sugar", the govt termed the development a "Made in India blockbuster" and a "collective show of strength".

Centre to recall order on COVID containment

1. The provisions of the Disaster Management (DM) Act, 2005 will not be invoked in the country after March 31 due to the overall improvement in the COVID-19 situation and the preparedness of the government in dealing with the pandemic.
2. Local authorities and State police can still invoke fines and criminal cases against persons violating COVID-19 norms under the Indian Penal Code (IPC), a senior government official said.
3. The Union Health Ministry said the use of face masks and following hand hygiene will continue to guide COVID-19 management measures.

The Disaster Management (DM) Act, 2005

1. The DM Act, first enacted in the country in 2005 after the tsunami disaster, was for the first time invoked on March 24, 2020, after the onset of the pandemic.
2. The Act for the first time also introduced a legal framework for disaster management in the country, with the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) being the nodal Ministry.



3. From March 24, 2020, more than 100 orders under the DM Act were issued by the MHA on the directions of the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA).
4. The national lockdown in 2020 and the distribution of oxygen to various hospitals across the country during the second wave was controlled by the MHA under the provisions of the DM Act.

Few villages received waste disposal infrastructure: panel

1. Only 12% of the villages that were supposed to get infrastructure for liquid waste management this year have achieved their goal under the second phase of the Swachh Bharat Mission, according to the parliamentary standing committee report on water resources.
2. The implementation of solid waste management infrastructure also lagged behind, with only 22% of target villages covered during 2021-22.



The second phase of the Swachh Bharat Mission

1. In its first phase, the Swachh Bharat Mission aimed to provide a toilet in every rural household and claimed to have achieved its goal in 2019.
2. However, the second phase, which involves more complex community-level infrastructure — including facilities for collection and segregation of solid waste, compost pits and biogas plants for biodegradable waste, greywater management, soak pits, and treatment of faecal sludge — has not been able to meet targets, with the pandemic also slowing down progress.



Dismal performance

1. The panel sought answers from the Jal Shakti Ministry regarding what it described as a “dismal performance” for one of the Centre’s flagship schemes, but the Ministry’s response put the onus on the States instead, saying they had projected their own targets.
2. However, as revealed by the States in various review meetings that due to the complexity involved in taking up SLWM activities and also due to recurrence of COVID-19 pandemic, implementation of the programme hampered at ground level and progress has been low.
3. It urged the Ministry to launch awareness campaigns to motivate people to demand solid and liquid waste management facilities in their villages.

Low fund utilisation

1. With regard to the Ministry’s other flagship scheme, the Jal Jeevan Mission, which aims to bring potable tap water to all rural homes by 2024, the committee slammed the government for low fund utilisation.
2. While ₹50,011 crores were allocated in the Budget, the revised estimates for the scheme was reduced to ₹45,011 and the actual expenditure incurred so far is only ₹28,238 crore.
3. In fact, only three states — Himachal Pradesh, Manipur and Meghalaya — have fully used their allocation from the Centre.
4. Some of the largest States have the poorest performances, with Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Punjab, Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand, West Bengal and Tamil Nadu all using less than 25% of their funds from the Centre, the panel noted.

The \$1.5 bn goals: UN body to set up Early Warning System covering the entire world

1. The number of recorded disasters increased by a factor of five over the 50-year period between 1970 and 2019, driven by the climate crisis and improved reporting, the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) said.



2. Over the past 50 years (1970-2019), weather, climate or water-related disaster has occurred on average every day somewhere in the world - taking the lives of 115 people and causing \$202 million in losses daily, according to a 2021 WMO report on disaster statistics.
3. To deal with the increasing threat of the climate crisis, WMO announced a new United Nations goal - an early warning system that covers every person in the world in the next five years. The agency has estimated that the cost of covering everyone with an early warning system will be around \$1.5 billion.

Early Warning Systems (EWS)

1. The 2019 Global Commission on Adaptation flagship report “Adapt Now” found that Early Warning Systems provide more than a tenfold return on investment - the greatest of any adaptation measure included in the report.
2. The report also found that just 24 hours warning of a coming storm or heatwave can cut the ensuing damage by 30% and spending \$800 million on such systems in developing countries would avoid losses of \$3-16 billion a year.
3. The growing number of disasters due to climate change is endangering the implementation of a large number of Sustainable Development Goals.
4. Besides very critical mitigation it is growingly important to invest in climate adaptation. One of the highest returns of investments is reached by improving the weather, water and climate early warning services and related observing infrastructures.
5. There is a need to invest \$1.5 billion during the coming five years to improve the quality of the services and related infrastructures, especially in the least developed countries and small island countries.





Extreme weather events in India:

1. India Meteorological Department is aligned to the WMO target adding that the country is seeing a similar rise in extreme weather events. The number of severe cyclones over the Arabian Sea has risen by 1 per decade and the maximum temperature has increased by 0.99 degrees C since 1901 in India - small numbers that are big when it comes to weather.
2. There is a significant rise in heavy rainfall events also over India. In order to address this crisis, we have a goal of ensuring every household gets weather information.

EWS in INDIA:

1. To meet the goal, IMD, apart from issuing early warnings on traditional media like TV and radio, has developed three apps: **Mausam for general weather information; Meghdoot for farmers; and Damini for lightning alerts.** The last may surprise some but lightning strikes killed 787 in India in 2021.
2. Now, IMD is developing an app solely for fishermen which is already being piloted among them in Tamil Nadu.
3. All populations are not covered by smartphones. So, now IMD is also developing a common alert protocol so that those not using smartphones get SMS. These alerts will be in local languages.
4. IMD is collaborating with state governments to reach our information through their networks and apps. WhatsApp messages have become very popular with farmer groups so we try to reach them through stakeholder groups.
5. That's on the information dissemination front. On the information collection front, IMD plans to cover the entire country with 65 radars, of which 33 have already been installed.



MAINS DAWP

Q1. *To deal with the increasing threat of the climate crisis, WMO announced a new United Nations goal - an early warning system (EWS) that covers every person in the world in the next five years.* Discuss the crucial role of EWS in Climate adaptation and Disaster management in this context.

Q2. Discuss the salient features of the second phase of the Swachh Bharat Mission. Highlight various constraints and challenges in implementation.

Q3. Routinely freezing fuel prices is an unfair and distortionary poll ploy. Comment.

MCQs

Q1. Consider the following statements

1. The number of severe cyclones over the Arabian Sea has risen
2. The maximum temperature has increased by 0.99 degrees C since 1901 in India
3. There is a significant rise in heavy rainfall events also over India

Which of the above statements is/are *correct*?

- a. 1 and 2 only
- b. 2 and 3 only
- c. 1 and 3 only
- d. 1, 2 and 3