



## Current Affairs of the Day

### Ending AFSPA

AFSPA should go entirely because of the impunity it offers armed forces.

#### Highlights:

- Prime Minister has given the first authentic indication that the operation of the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA) may come to an end in the whole of the north-eastern region.

- Areas notified as 'disturbed areas' under AFSPA have been progressively reduced in the last few years, mainly due to the improvement in the security situation.
- PM cited "better administration" and the "return of peace" as the reasons for the removal of AFSPA in these areas in a region that has seen insurgencies for decades.

#### WHAT IS ARMED FORCES SPECIAL POWERS ACT?

➤ Introduced in 1958, AFSPA confers on members of the armed forces special powers to rein in suspects in areas declared "disturbed" on account of insurgent activities or similar threats. It has been in force in Manipur since 1980, and the alleged excesses committed under it are the reasons why activist Irom Sharmila has been on a hunger strike since 2000.

#### WHAT ARE SPECIAL POWERS?

AFSPA allows any commissioned officer, warrant officer and non-commissioned officer – or any other

person of equivalent rank – to:

➤ Fire upon or use force against any person acting 'in contravention of any law for the time being in force in the disturbed area'

➤ Arrest suspicious people without warrant

➤ Destroy any structure suspected to house an arms dump, shelter from which armed attacks are made or are likely to be made

➤ Conduct searches without warrants for evidence, to recover a wrongfully confined person or property or arms or explosives

➤ AFSPA bars prosecution or proceedings – except with Centre's nod – against personnel for action committed while exercising powers under the Act



#### Reconciliation post removal of AFSPA:

1. Alongside the gradual reduction in the areas under the Act, there should be serious efforts to procure justice for victims of past excesses too.
2. On the political side, it is indeed true that much headway has been made in moving towards a political solution to some of the multifarious disputes in the region, in the form of peace accords, ceasefire and creation of sub-regional administrative arrangements.
3. The removal of AFSPA from the entire region will be an inevitable step in the process. But irrespective of the security situation, AFSPA should not have allowed such impunity to the armed forces.



## Mercury rising

Heatwave deaths must be treated as a disaster that allows compensation by the state.

### Q. What is criterion for declaring heat wave?

Heat wave is considered if actual maximum temperature of a station reaches at least 40°C or more for Plains and at least 30°C or more for Hilly regions.

#### A. Based on Departure from Normal

Heat Wave	Departure from normal is 4.5°C to 6.4°C
Severe Heat Wave	Departure from normal is >6.4°C

#### A. Based on Actual Maximum Temperature

Heat Wave	When actual maximum temperature $\geq 45^\circ\text{C}$
Severe Heat Wave	When actual maximum temperature $\geq 47^\circ\text{C}$

If above criteria met at least in 2 stations in a Meteorological sub-division for at least two consecutive days and it declared on the second day.

### Q. What is a criterion for describing Heat Wave for coastal stations?

When maximum temperature departure is 4.5°C or more from normal, Heat Wave may be described provided actual maximum temperature is 37°C or more.

## An eternity of heatwaves

1. India has been in the grip of what seems like an eternity of heat waves. April temperatures over northwest and central India are the highest in 122 years.
2. A heatwave is declared when the maximum temperature is over 40° C and at least 4.5 notches above normal. A severe heatwave is declared if the departure from normal temperature is more than 6.4° C, according to the IMD.



3. The proximate causes for the searing heat are an absence of rain-bearing Western Disturbances or tropical storms that bring rain from the

Heat wave Scenario	40°C	30°C	
Maximum Temperature	Plains	Hills	
<b>Heat wave conditions prevail when...</b>	<b>Severe heat wave conditions prevail when...</b>		
Normal maximum temperature	Deviation from normal	Normal maximum temperature	Deviation from normal
Above	4-5°C or more	Above	6°C or more
40°C	5-6°C or more	40°C	7°C or more
At or below		At or below	
40°C		40°C	

Mediterranean over north India.

4. Cool temperatures in the central Pacific, or a La Niña, that normally aid rain in India, too have failed to bolster rainfall this year. This is an unusual occurrence.

### Monsoon and heatwaves: No link

1. The IMD has forecast a 'normal' monsoon or 99% of the Long Period Average (LPA) of 87 cm and is expected to forecast the monsoon's arrival over Kerala later in May.
2. On the surface, there is no direct bearing between the intensity of heat waves and the arrival and performance of the monsoon.
3. While individual weather events cannot be linked to greenhouse gas levels, a warming globe means increased instances of extreme rain events and extended rain-less spells.
4. What is better known is it helps to have disaster management plans in place that help States better deal with heatwaves and their impact on health.
5. The official toll due to heatwaves in the last 50 years is put at over 17,000 people, according to research from the IMD.



## Heatwaves as Disaster:

1. The heat island effect means urbanisation adds degrees to the already searing conditions; and so, heatwave deaths must be treated as a disaster that merits compensation.
2. Private and public workplaces too must be better equipped to factor in heatwave risk.

## April GST revenues go past ₹1.67 lakh crore

1. India's gross Goods and Services Tax (GST) revenues hit a fresh high of ₹1,67,540 crore in April, with revenues from goods imports rising 30% year-on-year and domestic transactions, along with services imports, rising 17%.

**Revenue check** | India's goods and service tax collections touched a record ₹1.68 lakh crore in April. The revenues were 20% higher than a year ago



2. The Finance Ministry said that April's revenues for transactions undertaken in March reflected a "faster recovery" of business activity, while industry experts attributed part of the surge to a massive uptick in input costs for producers, some of which is also visible in high retail prices as well as new and tighter input credit norms.

## e-Shram to help settle workers' accident claims

1. Top functionaries of the Union Labour and Employment Ministry said last week that the Ministry was working on a mechanism to process accident insurance claims by unorganised workers registered on the e-Shram portal, which has seen over 27 crore registrations so far.



2. The portal was launched six months ago with the aim of creating a national database of unorganised workers and facilitating social security schemes for them. Among the promises made then was that the workers would be eligible for ₹2 lakh as accident insurance.
3. A senior official of the Ministry said discussions were on to link the e-Shram portal with the Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana, the Centre's existing accident insurance scheme. The scheme would allow the workers to get the direct benefit transfer (DBT) through the e-Shram unique ID number.

<b>MAINS DAWP</b>	<p>Q1. Alongside the gradual reduction in the areas under the AFSPA Act, there should be serious efforts for reconciliation in the affected areas. Comment.</p> <p>Q2. Discuss the steps taken by the government to popularise AYUSH herbal systems in India and across the world.</p>
<b>MCQs</b>	<p>Q1. Consider the following statements</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Heatwaves are considered in plains when the actual maximum temperature is above 45 degrees</li><li>2. In Hilly areas temperatures above 30 degrees are considered a severe heatwave</li></ol> <p>Which of the above statements is/are correct?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. 1 only</li><li>b. 2 only</li><li>c. Both 1 and 2</li><li>d. Neither 1 nor 2</li></ol>