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Export Preparedness Index (EPI) 2022

Context: The Export Preparedness Index 2022 report was released in New Delhi by NITI Aayog.

Findings and Highlights

- Coastal States, including Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Karnataka, and Gujarat, demonstrated excellent performance in the Export Preparedness Index 2022 report.
- State governments' efforts in improving the policy ecosystem resulted in the creation of export promotion policies and district-level export action plans.
- Despite progress, many states need to enhance their business and export ecosystem to boost their export performance.
- The top five performers in order are Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Gujarat, and Haryana, while Lakshadweep ranked as the least performing state/UT.
- The report encourages state governments to address specific export challenges with context-specific solutions.
- State governments are advised to invest more in research and development and prioritize products unique to their regions.
- The report aims to promote competitive federalism in the country, fostering healthy competition and peer learning among states.

Category	Top Performers
Overall	Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Karnataka
Hilly/Himalayan States	Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Manipur, Tripura, Sikkim, Nagaland, Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram
Landlocked Regions	Haryana, Telangana, Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan
Union Territories/Small States	Goa, Jammu and Kashmir, Delhi, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Ladakh

About EPI

- The EPI serves as a comprehensive tool to assess the export preparedness of Indian States and Union Territories (UTs).
- Export plays a crucial role in driving economic growth and development within a nation, making it essential to grasp the factors influencing export performance.
- Through an in-depth analysis, the index evaluates States and UTs based on various export-related parameters, aiming to identify their respective strengths and weaknesses.
- **Pillars:**
 - **Trade Policy:** Strategic direction for exports and imports.
 - **Business Ecosystem:** Attracts investments and supports start-ups.
 - **Export Ecosystem:** Evaluates export-specific business environment.
 - **Export Performance:** Measures export footprints of States and UTs.
- The index also took into consideration **10 sub-pillars:** Export Promotion Policy; Institutional Framework; Business Environment; Infrastructure; Transport Connectivity; Export Infrastructure; Trade Support; R&D Infrastructure; Export Diversification; and Growth Orientation.

Key Takeaways

- Coastal states perform best across all indicators, with six out of the top states coming from coastal regions.
- Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Karnataka, and Gujarat excel in at least one pillar.
- Policy ecosystem is positive, with states adopting measures to boost exports.
- 73% of districts have an export action plan; over 99% are part of 'One District One Product' scheme.
- Transport connectivity lags, affecting goods movement, especially in landlocked regions.

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- R&D investment is low, hindering innovation in exports.
- Continued state support needed for struggling industries.
- 26 states show a decrease in manufacturing sector's gross value addition.
- 10 states experience a decline in Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) inflow.
- Lack of capacity-building workshops hampers global market penetration; 25 states organize fewer than 10 workshops per year.
- Timely project approval crucial for the effectiveness of government schemes.

New Guidelines for Supreme Court advocates

Context: New guidelines for designating senior advocates practicing in the Apex Court have been published by the Supreme Court.

Background

- The Supreme Court has published new guidelines for designating senior advocates practicing in the Apex Court.
- These guidelines were issued after a recent ruling by a three-judge bench in response to a case seeking modifications in the existing 'senior advocate' designation guidelines.
- The bench modified the guidelines that were originally issued by the Supreme Court in 2018.
- The 2018 guidelines were established in the aftermath of a ruling in the case of *Indira Jaising v. Union of India* in 2017.

Indira Jaising v. Union of India, 2017

- In October 2018, the Apex Court issued "Guidelines to Regulate the Conferment of Designation of Senior Advocates" in response to a plea filed by Indira Jaising for more transparency in the designation process.
- The guidelines discouraged the use of secret ballot voting, except when necessary.
- The ruling mandated the establishment of a "permanent committee" and a "permanent secretariat" to oversee the designation process.
- Permanent Secretariat:
 - Responsible for receiving and compiling all designation applications, including relevant data and information on reported and unreported judgments.
 - Publishes the proposals for designation on the court's official website, inviting suggestions and views from stakeholders.
 - Forwards the proposals to the permanent committee for evaluation and scrutiny.
- Permanent Committee:
 - Chaired by the Chief Justice of India (CJI).
 - Consists of the two senior-most Supreme Court judges, the Attorney General of India, and a "member of the Bar" nominated by the chair and other members.
 - Holds biannual meetings at a minimum.
 - Conducts interviews with candidates and evaluates them using a point system that considers years of practice as an advocate, district judge, or judicial member of an Indian tribunal, pro-bono work, judgments, publications, and a personality test.
- The candidate's name, once approved by the committee, is forwarded to the Full Court for a majority decision on designation.

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- The Full Court also has the authority to recall the designation of a senior advocate.

Why are the guidelines being changed?

- In February 2023, the Central Government filed an application to modify the guidelines for designating senior lawyers, which were issued by the Supreme Court after the 2017 ruling.
- The 2017 guidelines utilized a point-based system, where 40% weightage was given to publications, personality, and suitability assessed through interviews.
- The Central Government argued that this system is subjective, ineffective, and diminishes the traditional honor and dignity associated with the designation.

What are the new guidelines?

- The new guidelines for the 'senior advocate' designation set the minimum age to apply as 45 years. However, this age limit can be relaxed by the Permanent Committee, the Chief Justice of India (CJI), or a Supreme Court judge if they recommend an advocate's name.
- The previous guidelines allotted 15 marks for publications, whereas the new guidelines now grant only 5 marks for a combination of "publication of academic articles, experience of teaching assignments in the field of law," and "guest lectures delivered in law schools and professional institutions connected with law."
- The 2023 guidelines specify that the CJI, along with "any Judge of the Supreme Court," may recommend the name of an advocate for designation in writing.
- Additionally, the weightage for reported and unreported judgments (excluding orders that do not establish any legal principle) has been increased from 40 to 50 points in the new guidelines.

Crimean-Congo Haemorrhagic Fever (CCHF)

Context: Europe is currently experiencing a heat wave and wildfires, which has led to concerns about the potential spread of viral haemorrhagic fever, a disease not commonly found in colder climates.

- Crimean-Congo haemorrhagic fever is a viral disease transmitted by ticks.
- The virus can also spread to humans through contact with viraemic animal tissues during or after slaughtering animals.

- The disease was first detected among soldiers in the Crimean Peninsula near the Black Sea in 1944.

- In 1969, a similar ailment in the Congo Basin was found to be caused by the same pathogen, leading to the name Crimean-Congo haemorrhagic fever.

- Crimean-Congo haemorrhagic fever outbreaks can pose a threat to public health services due to its potential to cause epidemics and its high case fatality ratio, ranging from 10% to 40%.

➤ Transmission:

- The virus finds amplifying hosts in animals like cattle, goats, sheep, and hares.
- Humans can contract the virus by coming into contact with infected ticks or animal blood.
- Transmission between humans is possible through contact with infectious blood or body fluids like sweat and saliva.
- Migratory birds can also serve as hosts for the ticks carrying the virus.

Family of viruses	Vectors	Name of viral hemorrhagic fever
Bunyaviridae	Mosquito	Rift valley fever
	Tick	Crimean-congo hemorrhagic fever
	Rodent	Hantavirus fever
Flaviviridae	Mosquito	Dengue fever, yellow fever
	Tick	Omsk fever, kyzasnur forest disease
Arenaviridae	Rodent	Lujo virus fever, lassa fever, argentine fever, bolivian fever, venezuelan fever
Filoviridae	Bat	Ebola hemorrhagic fever, marburg hemorrhagic fever

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➤ **Symptoms:**

- Fever
- Muscle ache
- Dizziness
- Neck pain
- Backache
- Headache
- Sore eyes
- Sensitivity to light
- After 2–4 days, agitation may be replaced by:
 - Sleepiness
 - Depression
 - Lassitude

➤ **Treatment**

- No vaccine available for both humans and animals.
- Treatment primarily focuses on managing symptoms.
- The antiviral drug ribavirin has been used to treat CCHF infection with apparent benefit, according to the WHO.

NEWS IN BETWEEN THE LINES

Rudragiri Hillock



Recently, Rudragiri hillock in Andhra Pradesh gained attention for its celebrated historical past and remarkable archaeological monuments.

Historical Significance: The site boasts a celebrated historical past and remarkable archaeological monuments.

Artistic Treasures: It features prehistoric rock paintings from the Mesolithic period (around 5000 B.C.) and exquisite artwork from the Kakatiya dynasty (13th century A.D.).

Rock Shelters: Rudragiri has five naturally formed rock shelters facing westward, which served as living quarters during the Mesolithic age.

Kakatiya Murals: Two natural caves at the southern end of the hillock exhibit exceptional murals from the Kakatiya kingdom, showcasing captivating scenes from the epic Ramayana.

Artistic Brilliance: The Kakatiya paintings display artistic brilliance, with some sketches and outlines surviving despite exposure to the elements.

Hanuman Depictions: The murals feature a grand sketch of Hanuman carrying the Sanjivani hill and another unique portrayal of Hanuman in a divine offering posture.

Coexistence: The Ramayana figures from the Kakatiya period coexist with the Mesolithic drawings, adding to the site's scenic beauty.

GM Musturd



Recently, the environmentalists in India are opposing Delhi University's genetically modified herbicide-tolerant mustard in the Supreme Court.

What is GM Mustard?

GM Mustard is a genetically modified herbicide-tolerant (HT) crop developed by Delhi University. It has been altered to withstand the herbicide glufosinate, allowing farmers to spray the herbicide to kill all plants except the mustard, leading to higher yields.

Controversy in India: GM Mustard has been a subject of robust debate in India, with environmentalists, scientists, politicians and farmers questioning its safety, efficacy and necessity.

Regulatory Examination: Two Standing Committees of Parliament and a Technical Expert Committee have highlighted major weaknesses in the regulatory system and called for cautious assessment of GM food before its release.

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	<p>Concerns: Critics express concerns about potential environmental risks, impact on rural livelihoods, and long-term implications for sustainable agriculture.</p> <p>Government's Stance: Despite opposition and regulatory recommendations, the Indian government has been pushing ahead with the approval of GM Mustard.</p> <p>GEAC: GEAC (Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee) is an Indian regulatory body under MoEFCC. It assesses and approves proposals for genetically engineered organisms, including GM crops, following the rules set in 1989.</p>
<p>Prevention of Money Laundering Act</p> 	<p>Recently, the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) in 2002 granted significant authority to the Directorate of Enforcement (ED) officers.</p> <p>What is the Prevention of Money Laundering Act?</p> <p>The Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) is a crucial legislation in India aimed at combating money laundering and the financing of terrorism.</p> <p>Legal Framework: The Act was enacted in 2002 and amended in subsequent years to strengthen its provisions and align with international standards.</p> <p>Enforcement Agency: The Enforcement Directorate (ED) is the primary enforcement agency responsible for investigating and prosecuting money laundering cases under PMLA.</p> <p>Offences Covered: PMLA covers a wide range of offences, including those under the Indian Penal Code, Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, and various economic and financial laws.</p> <p>Reporting Entities: Various entities including banks, financial institutions and intermediaries are designated as "reporting entities" required to maintain records and report suspicious transactions to the Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU).</p>
<p>National Commission for Scheduled Castes</p> 	<p>Recently, Vijay Sampla, the National Commission for Scheduled Castes (NCSC) chairperson, has resigned.</p> <p>What is the National Commission for Scheduled Castes?</p> <p>The National Commission for Scheduled Castes (NCSC) is a constitutional body established under Article 338 of the Indian Constitution.</p> <p>Objective: NCSC's primary objective is to safeguard the rights and interests of the Scheduled Castes (SC) communities and promote their welfare.</p> <p>Composition: NCSC consists of a Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson and three other members, all appointed by the President of India.</p> <p>Functions: The Commission investigates and monitors matters related to the implementation of safeguards and constitutional provisions for SCs. It also inquires into specific complaints and grievances of SC individuals and communities.</p> <p>Powers: NCSC has the powers of a civil court while inquiring into complaints. It can summon witnesses, examine evidence, and request documents to fulfill its functions.</p>
<p>CRCS-Sahara Refund Portal</p> 	<p>Recently, Union Home Minister Amit Shah launched the 'CRCS-Sahara Refund Portal' in New Delhi.</p> <p>What is CRCS-Sahara Refund Portal?</p> <p>The CRCS-Sahara Refund Portal is an online platform for depositors of four Sahara Group cooperative societies. It aims to refund their money, providing relief to over 10 crore depositors.</p> <p>Online Refund Process:</p> <p>The portal facilitates the process of returning money to depositors, with an initial disbursement of up to Rs 5000 crore. Each depositor can claim up to Rs 10,000 in the first phase. The entire refund process will be conducted online.</p> <p>Number of Depositors:</p> <p>Approximately 4 crore depositors are eligible to claim refunds of up to Rs 10,000 through the portal.</p>
<p>Radio Collar</p> 	<p>Recently, in the cheetah reintroduction project at Kuno, two cheetahs died from suspected septicemia caused by festering neck wounds due to radio collars.</p> <p>Radio Collar: A radio collar is a tracking device equipped with a radio transmitter attached to the neck or body of wildlife animals to monitor their movements and behaviour.</p> <p>Purpose: Radio collars are used in ecological and wildlife research to study animal migration patterns, habitat use and social interactions.</p> <p>Data Collection: The radio transmitter emits signals that are received by researchers, helping them track the animals' location and gather valuable data remotely.</p> <p>Types: There are various types of radio collars, including VHF (Very High Frequency) and GPS (Global Positioning System) collars, each with different tracking capabilities.</p> <p>Wildlife Conservation: Information obtained through radio collars aids in understanding animal populations, contributing to wildlife conservation and management efforts.</p>

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Unearthing Pompeii



Recent excavations at the Pompeii Archaeological Park have uncovered intriguing artifacts, including a kitchen shrine adorned with serpents, a bakery, human skeletons and exquisite frescos.

Pompeii: Pompeii, a Roman town in Southern Italy's Campania region along the Bay of Naples, was buried in volcanic ash during Mount Vesuvius' eruption in 79 CE, over 2,000 years ago.

Snapshot of Ancient Rome: Pompeii, destroyed by Mount Vesuvius in AD79, offers a unique glimpse into a lost Roman world, with one-third of the city still unexcavated.

Fresco Discovery: A fresco depicting round flatbread, resembling pizza, surrounded by fruits caused a sensation, but it is not a pizza as we know it due to the absence of tomatoes and mozzarella in ancient Rome.

Human Tragedy: Pompeii's excavation reveals the human tragedy of the volcanic eruption, with evidence of victims seeking shelter under staircases and fatalities caused by collapsing roofs and fires.

Mythical Artwork: Astonishing frescos portraying mythical episodes, such as the disguise of Achilles as a woman and an elaborate kitchen shrine with serpents as symbols of good demons, have been uncovered.

Conservation Measures: Protective roofing and scaffolding are being erected to preserve the newly discovered artifacts, while future plans include a high walkway for tourists to witness emerging treasures.

Place in News

Port of Odesa

Recently, Russia attacked Ukraine's port of Odesa in retaliation for Ukraine's strike on a bridge to Crimea.

Geographical Location: The Port of Odesa is located in Odesa, a major city situated on the western coast of the Black Sea, in the southern part of Ukraine.

Importance: It is one of the largest and busiest ports in the Black Sea region, serving as a vital trade and maritime hub.

Connectivity: The port is well-connected to railways, enabling efficient transfer of cargo between sea routes and ground transportation.

Transportation Hub: Along with satellite ports of Chornomorsk and Yuzhne, it serves as a major freight and passenger transportation hub for Ukraine.

Economic Significance: The port handles various commodities, including grain, oil, coal and containers, contributing significantly to Ukraine's economy and international trade.



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