



DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS 10-02-2024

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RS passes bill to add certain communities to ST SC list

Syllabus: GS-2; The Parliament, The constitution of India

Context

*Paving way for addition of new communities to the list of **Scheduled Castes (SCs) & Scheduled Tribes (STs) for Union Territory (UT) of Jammu and Kashmir**, the Parliament cleared the Constitution (Jammu and Kashmir) Scheduled Castes Order (Amendment) Bill, 2024 and the Constitution (Jammu and Kashmir) Scheduled Tribes Order (Amendment) Bill, 2024.*

More to Know

- *While the SC Order Bill adds Valmiki community as a synonym of Chura, Balmiki, Bhangji, and Mehtar communities in the list of SCs for J&K, the ST Order Bill proposes to add four communities ie **Gadda Brahmin, Koli, Paddari Tribe, and Pahari Ethnic Group** to the list of STs for the UT.*
- *The latter Bill claims that reservations for existing communities such as Gujjars and Bakarwals will remain unaffected while providing reservation to the newly included STs.*
- *First introduced in the Lok Sabha by Minister of Social Justice and Empowerment Virendra Kumar, the SC Order Bill looks at amending the Constitution (Jammu and Kashmir) Scheduled Castes Order, 1956.*
- *The ST Order Bill, on the other hand, moved by Union Minister of Tribal Affairs & Agriculture and Farmer Welfare, is to amend the Constitution (Jammu and Kashmir) Scheduled Tribes Order, 1989.*

Other bills

- *The Rajya Sabha passed the Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order (Amendment) Bill, 2024 and the Constitution (Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes) Orders (Amendment) Bill, 2024.*
- *The Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order (Amendment) Bill, 2024 is intended to amend the Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order, 1950 to modify the list of Scheduled Tribes in relation to Andhra Pradesh to include **Bondo Porja, Khond Porja and Konda Savaras** communities in the list of ST.*
- *While the Constitution (Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes) Orders (Amendment) Bill, 2024 proposes to amend the Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order, 1950 and the Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order, 1950 to modify the list of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in relation to Odisha.*

- *Under it, four communities of primitive tribes- Pauri Bhuyan, Chuktia Bhunjia, Bondo and Mankidia and 46 others who have not been included in the ST list due to phonetic variations or spelling mistakes will be the part of ST list. Two communities will also be omitted from the ST list.*

Significant provisions of the Constitution of India related to Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs)

- **Article 17:** *Abolishes untouchability*
- **Article 46:** *Promotes the educational and economic interests of SCs, STs, and other weaker sections of society. It also seeks to protect them from social injustice and exploitation.*
- **Article 330:** *Reserves seats for SCs and STs in the House of the People.*
- **Article 332:** *Reserves seats for SCs and STs in the legislative assemblies of the states.*
- **Article 350:** *Grants the right to conserve distinct language, script, or culture. It also grants the right to instruction in the mother tongue.*
- **Article 24:** *Prohibits the employment of children under the age of 14 in factories, mines, or other hazardous activities.*
- *SCs and STs are specified under the provisions of **Articles 341 and 342** of the Constitution of India, respectively. The government laid down modalities in June 1999, as amended in June 2002, for processing modifications in the lists of SCs and STs.*

The criteria for inclusion in the Scheduled Tribes list

- *Indications of primitive traits*
- *Distinctive culture*
- *Geographical isolation*
- *Shyness of contact with the community at large*
- *Backwardness*

In central-government funded higher education institutions, 22.5% of available seats are reserved for SC and ST students. This includes 15% for SCs and 7.5% for STs.

India Sri Lanka LNG supply

Syllabus: GS-2: Bilateral Relations –India – Sri Lanka

Context:

- *India likely to start LNG supplies to Sri Lanka by 2025-end.*

What is the news?

- India plans to supply liquefied natural gas (LNG) to Sri Lanka by the end of next year.
- **Petronet LNG**, India's largest LNG terminal operator, will handle LNG supply and terminal construction.
- Petronet LNG aims to commission a **floating storage regasification unit (FSRU)** in Sri Lanka by 2028.
- The FSRU project's estimated cost is **approximately Rs 2,500 crore**.
- Petronet LNG will prepare a **feasibility report for the FSRU project** after formal approval from the Sri Lankan government.
- LNG supply to Sri Lanka will come from the **Kochi terminal in India**.
- Petronet LNG plans to increase gas sourcing **through long-term contracts**.
- The company extended its long-term LNG contract with **QatarEnergy** for another 20 years.

What is LNG?

- LNG stands for **Liquefied Natural Gas**.
- It forms when natural gas is **cooled to around -162 degrees Celsius** (-260 degrees Fahrenheit).
- Cooling reduces the volume of gas, **making it easier and cheaper to store and transport**.
- LNG is primarily **composed of methane**, with small amounts of other hydrocarbons.
- It is odorless, non-corrosive, and environmentally friendly.
- Commonly used as a fuel for power generation, heating, transportation, and industrial processes.

Why MPC kept Repo rate unchanged

Syllabus: GS-3: Indian Economy – Monetary Policy

Context:

- The Reserve Bank of India's **Monetary Policy Committee (MPC)** decided to maintain the repo rate at 6.5% in a 5:1 majority decision during its bi-monthly policy review.

More about MPC outcome:

- Interest rates on various loans (home, vehicle, personal, etc.) in the banking system will stay the same.
- The Reserve Bank of India's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) **decided to maintain the repo rate at 6.5% in a 5:1 majority decision** during its bi-monthly policy review.
- The stance of the monetary policy remains 'withdrawal of accommodation,' according to a 5:1 majority decision by the MPC.
- The central bank has kept the **headline inflation forecast at 5.4%** for the current fiscal year due to uncertainty regarding food prices.
- Jayanth Varma, a member of the MPC, disagreed with other members and proposed a 25 basis points reduction in the repo rate.
- He also advocated changing the policy stance to '**neutral**' from '**withdrawal of accommodation.**'

What will happen to lending, deposit rates?

- Lending rates, including those for retail loans, are **anticipated to remain steady for the time being.**
- Certain segments of **retail loans may become more expensive** due to recent actions by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), such as increasing risk weights on retail loans and banks raising marginal cost of fund-based lending rate (MCLR).
- **External benchmark lending rates** linked to the repo rate will not increase, providing relief to borrowers by preventing a rise in their equated monthly installments (EMIs).
- **Deposit rates may see an increase in specific categories** as banks face pressure on deposit growth, competing with mutual funds for funds from depositors.

Why has RBI kept the repo rate unchanged?

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI), led by Governor Shaktikanta Das, has opted to maintain the repo rate.
- The decision to keep the repo rate unchanged is **aimed at managing and balancing both retail inflation and economic growth.**
- One of the primary reasons behind the decision to hold the repo rate steady is that **retail inflation continues to exceed the RBI's target of 4%.**
- In November, retail inflation (CPI) rose to 5.55% from 4.87% in October, followed by 5.02% in September and further reaching 5.69% in December.
- Even for the fiscal year FY25, the RBI has projected a retail inflation rate of 4.5%, **indicating persistent inflationary pressures.**
- Shaktikanta Das emphasized that the future inflation trend will **depend significantly on the evolving food inflation scenario.**

- **Rabi sowing has exceeded last year's levels**, and there's ongoing seasonal adjustment in vegetable prices, though not uniform.
- However, uncertainty persists due to the **potential impact of adverse weather conditions on food prices**.
- This **marks the sixth consecutive monetary policy** where the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) has maintained the repo rate at 6.5%.
- The last adjustment was a raise from 6.25% to 6.5% in February 2023.
- **Recovery in rabi sowing**, sustained profitability in manufacturing, and the resilience of services sectors are expected to support economic activity in FY 2024-25.
- **Key drivers include improving household consumption**, a positive outlook for fixed investment due to an upturn in private capex, improved business sentiments, healthy balance sheets of banks and corporates, and continued government focus on capital expenditure.

What's the basis of 7 per cent GDP projection?

- The Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) has projected a **GDP growth rate of 7% for the financial year 2024-2025 (FY 2025)**, lower than the 7.3% projected by the National Statistical Office (NSO) for FY24.
- Governor Shaktikanta Das highlighted **potential challenges to the economic outlook**, including geopolitical tensions, volatility in international financial markets, and geoeconomic fragmentation.

Why there's no change in the policy stance?

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has chosen to retain its policy stance as the **'withdrawal of accommodation'**, despite recent liquidity deficits.
- Governor Shaktikanta Das clarified that this stance is in response to **incomplete transmission of policy changes and inflation persisting above the 4% target**, with efforts aimed at bringing it back to target levels on a sustainable basis.

What RBI says about inflation projection?

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has maintained its **retail inflation projection at 5.4% for the fiscal year 2023-24**, with a focus on containing inflation at the target of 4%.
- **The Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) remains committed to managing inflation at the target rate.**
- The MPC aims to sustainably bring down Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflation to around 4%.
- **Food inflation poses a significant risk to headline inflation in India**, particularly due to the ongoing impact of El Nino on agriculture.

- **Analysts anticipate food inflation** could keep overall retail inflation close to 6% over the next six months.
- Analysts expect proactive measures from the government to prevent a significant rise in food prices, especially before elections, to mitigate inflationary pressures.

World Pulses Day

Syllabus: GS-3; Agriculture

Context

- **World Pulses Day is celebrated every year on February 10th.**



Theme

- *The day also promotes the many health benefits of pulses. The theme for 2024 is "Pulses: nourishing soils and people".*

Significance

- *The United Nations General Assembly has designated this day **to recognize the importance of pulses as a global food.***

Pulses

- *Pulses are the edible **seeds of leguminous plants** that are cultivated for food. They are also known as **grain legumes.***
- *Pulses are a type of legume, which is a plant in the **Fabaceae family.** Pulses are grown for human consumption, for livestock forage and silage, and as soil-enhancing green manure.*
- *The most common types of pulses are beans, lentils, and chickpeas. Other types of pulses include:*
 - *Dry beans*
 - *Dry broad beans*
 - *Dry peas*
 - *Cow peas*
 - *Pigeon peas*
 - *Bambara beans*
 - *Vetch*
 - *Lupins*
 - *Pulses nes (minor pulses that don't fall into one of the other categories)*

Benefits

- **Protein:** *Pulses are a good source of protein, especially for people who don't get enough protein from meat, fish, or dairy.*
- **Fiber:** *Pulses are high in fiber, providing about a third of the daily recommended amount.*
- **Vitamins and minerals:** *Pulses contain vitamins and minerals like iron, zinc, folate, magnesium, calcium, and potassium.*
- **Cholesterol:** *Pulses are low in fat and cholesterol, and can help prevent cholesterol-based heart diseases.*
- **Blood pressure:** *Pulses are high in potassium and low in sodium, which can help regulate blood pressure.*
- **Glycemic index:** *Pulses have a low glycemic index.*
- **Sustainable food production:** *Pulses contribute to sustainable food production.*

GRAPES-3 Experiment

Syllabus: GS-3: Science and Technology – Physics.

Context:

- *GRAPES-3 experiment, based in Ooty, India, and managed by the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research, has unveiled a fresh feature within the cosmic-ray proton spectrum.*

About the GRAPES-3 Experiment:

- *Gamma Ray Astronomy PeV Energies phase-3 (GRAPES-3) aims to study cosmic rays utilizing an array of air shower detectors and a large muon detector.*
- **Location:** *Situated in Ooty, India.*
- *Operated by the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research.*
- *Focuses on investigating the acceleration of cosmic rays in various astrophysical environments.*

Objectives include:

- *Probing the origin, acceleration, and propagation of cosmic rays with energies exceeding 10^{14} electron volts (eV) within the galaxy and beyond.*
- *Investigating the existence of the "Knee" in the energy spectrum of cosmic rays.*
- *Examining the production and/or acceleration mechanisms of the highest energy cosmic rays, reaching around 10^{20} eV, in the universe.*
- *Studying the astronomy of **multi-TeV gamma rays** originating from neutron stars and other compact celestial objects.*

Key Facts about Cosmic Rays:

- *Discovered over a century ago.*
- *Considered the **most energetic particles** in the universe.*
- **Earth experiences a continuous bombardment** of cosmic rays from outer space, arriving uniformly from all directions at a consistent rate.
- *Upon entering Earth's atmosphere, **they initiate a cascade of particles** that travel to the ground nearly at the speed of light.*
- *These shower particles comprise electrons, photons, muons, protons, neutrons, among others.*
- *Observed across an **extensive energy spectrum** ranging from 10^8 to 10^{20} eV.*

