



DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS 11-03-2024

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GS-3

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India's first cooperatives museum

Syllabus: GS-2; Government policies and Interventions

Context

- *India's first museum dedicated to cooperatives is coming up in Kozhikode*

About

- **The International Cooperative Museum (ICM) in Kozhikode, Kerala, is India's first museum dedicated to cooperatives.**
- *The museum is a project of Karasseri Bank, a cooperative bank in the state.*
- *It will be the second cooperative museum in the world and the first in Asia.*

Significance

- *The museum aims to serve as an **educational and research hub.***
- *It will showcase the achievements of cooperatives **and promote the cooperative model** as a viable business strategy.*
- *The museum will also attract tourists, students, and scholars interested in cooperative movements.*

More to know

What is a cooperative museum?

- *A cooperative museum can be a **multifunctional center for history research, cultural assets, and places for people to gather.***
- *Cooperative museums can also apply cooperative principles to business organizations, such as:*
 - *Voluntary and open membership*
 - *Democratic control*
 - *Autonomy and independence*
 - *Member economic participation*

What are the benefits of a cooperative museum?

- **Partnerships**
 - *Museums can benefit from forming partnerships to work on projects that bring in more visitors and awareness to their organizations.*
- **Service-learning**
 - *Universities and faculty can use the museum as a context for service-learning, student development, and scholarly pursuits.*

➤ **Museum learning**

- *Museum learning can help students develop their ability to make interdisciplinary connections between concepts and ideas. This helps to build lateral thinking and problem-solving skills.*

TO KNOW

- *Cooperative societies in India are **voluntary associations of individuals or entities** that work together to achieve common economic, social, and cultural objectives.*
- *They operate based on the principles of cooperation, mutual benefit, and democratic control.*

Dak Karmayogi Project

Syllabus: GS-2: Governance

Context:

- *The ceremony, graced by **Minister of State for Communications**, witnessed the launch of 25 new courses and the completion of the **2nd phase of the Dak Karmayogi Project**.*

About Dak Karmayogi Project

- *The Dak Karmayogi Project is an **initiative by the Department of Posts (DoP)**, Government of India, aimed at **enhancing the skills and competencies** of its workforce.*

Objective:

- *Equip around 4 lakh **Gramin Dak Sevaks (rural postal operators)** and DoP employees with the necessary skills to effectively deliver **Government-to-Citizen (G2C) services**.*
- *Improve customer satisfaction through a more skilled and efficient postal workforce.*

Key Features:

- **E-learning platform:** *"Dak Karmayogi" is an online portal that provides access to standardized training content.*
- **Course access:** *Trainees can access the content online or through a blended learning approach that combines online modules with classroom sessions.*

- **Course completion:** Upon successful completion of the program, trainees receive a system-generated course completion certificate.

Benefits:

- **Enhanced skills:** Equips employees with the knowledge and skills required to navigate the evolving communications landscape.
- **Improved service delivery:** Enables postal staff to deliver G2C services more effectively, leading to higher customer satisfaction.
- **Continuous learning:** Fosters a culture of continuous learning and development within the DoP.

Mission Alignment:

- The **Dak Karmayogi project** aligns with the Government of India's Mission Karmayogi, a national program for civil service capacity building.

India's FTA pact with EFTA

Syllabus: GS-2: International Relations - Trade deals.

Context:

- India signs trade agreement with EFTA: What is the significance of the deal?

Major features of the deal:

- **Trade Agreement Signed:** India signed a trade agreement with the European Free Trade Association (EFTA), comprising **Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, and Switzerland.**
- **Investment Inflow:** The agreement is projected to bring in \$100 billion in investment over a span of 15 years.
- **Diversification of Imports:** EFTA aims to support joint ventures that would assist India in diversifying its imports, reducing dependence on China.

European Free Trade Association (EFTA)

- The **European Free Trade Association (EFTA)** is an intergovernmental organization comprising Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, and Switzerland.
- **Established in 1960** under the **Stockholm Convention**, the EFTA's primary objective is to foster free trade and economic integration among its member states.

- The **EFTA operates alongside the European Union (EU)**, with all four member states participating in the European Single Market and the Schengen Area.
- Notably, EFTA member states are **not part of the European Union Customs Union**.

The Association's key responsibilities include:

- **Maintaining and enhancing the EFTA Convention**, which governs economic relations among the four EFTA States.
- **Administering the Agreement on the European Economic Area (EEA Agreement)**, facilitating a single (internal) market between the EU and three EFTA States: Iceland, Liechtenstein, and Norway.
- **Expanding EFTA's global network of free trade agreements**.

Economic Relations Between the EFTA States and India:

- Over the past two decades, trade between the EFTA States and India has experienced consistent growth.

EFTA countries	Exports	Imports	Trade balance
Iceland	13	5	8
Liechtenstein	0	8	-8
Norway	484	782	-298
Switzerland	1,382	19,657	-18,275
TOTAL	1,879	20,452	-18,574

*CY2023

- By 2022, the total merchandise trade between EFTA and India exceeded USD 6.1 billion.
- **Key imports to the EFTA States** comprised organic chemicals (27.5%), machinery (17.5%), and pharmaceutical products (11.4%).
- Notably, **India's primary imports from Switzerland in FY23** included gold (\$12.6 billion), machinery (\$409 million), pharmaceuticals (\$309 million), coking and steam coal (\$380 million), among others.
- Additionally, **services trade and foreign direct investment (FDI)** have also reached significant levels.

About The Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (TEPA):

- The India-EFTA TEPA entails a significant commitment from the European bloc, pledging **an investment of \$100 billion in India over a span of 15 years**.
- This investment is designated for various sectors, including pharmaceuticals, food processing, engineering, and chemicals.
- Notably, the investment commitment, a pioneering move within an FTA, is expected to **primarily originate from provident funds in EFTA countries**.

- Among these funds is **Norway's \$1.6-trillion sovereign wealth fund**, which stands as the world's largest pension fund.
- It's important to note that while the investment commitment may not be legally binding, it falls under the category of "**investment promotion**."
- Furthermore, it's essential to clarify that this agreement differs from a **Bilateral Investment Treaty (BIT)**, such as those being negotiated with the UK and the EU.

Benefits of TEPA:

For EFTA:

- **Reduction in Indian tariffs:** India's historically high average tariffs (around 18%, among the highest globally) make trade agreements beneficial for EFTA countries.
- **Increased imports:** With the India-EFTA deal, there's potential for higher imports into India, particularly in machinery, pharmaceuticals, medical instruments, and machinery due to substantial tariff reductions.
- **Crucial investment commitment:** Given the significant trade surplus of the European grouping with India in goods, the investment commitment becomes crucial for sustaining and enhancing economic ties.
- **Example:** India's existing high trade deficit with Switzerland could widen further as India eliminates duties as part of the TEPA deal.

For India:

- **Attracting investments:** India aims to attract investments and secure improved market access for its service sector workforce, enhancing economic growth and job creation.
- **Joint ventures:** TEPA presents opportunities for joint ventures in sectors like pharmaceuticals (especially medical devices), chemicals, food processing, and engineering, fostering technology transfer and industrial development.
- **Diversification of imports:** India seeks to diversify imports away from China, especially in critical sectors like healthcare, reducing dependence and enhancing resilience in supply chains.

Practice Question

Q. Analyse the potential impacts of the India-EFTA TEPA on trade dynamics, investment flows, and import diversification strategies for both parties. (10 marks, 150 words)

Doddakalsandra lake

Syllabus: GS-3; Environmental Concern

Context

- *People in the south of Bengaluru who go on their regular morning walk around the Doddakallasandra Lake on Kanakapura Road were pleasantly surprised to see a flurry of wings in the water body.*



More into the news

- *As Karnataka reels under a drought induced by a failed monsoon, water in the lake has become confined to some patches where the birds had congregated.*
- *Among them were painted storks, black-headed ibis, little egrets, sandpipers, black-winged stilts, cormorants, grey-headed swamphens, peacocks and glossy ibises.*
- *Many of these are long-legged and long-billed birds that forage in flocks in wetlands, searching for fish and insects.*
- **Painted storks**, which have arrived in big numbers, is a large wader belonging to the stork family.
- *It is classified as “Near Threatened” on the IUCN Red List. It has distinctive pink flight feathers, making it a treat to watch.*
- *Purple swamphens can be seen chasing each other in the area.*

About

- *Doddakallasandra Lake is located off **Kanakapura Road**, Bengaluru and covers 21.16 acres.*
- *It's known for its biodiversity and is a **habitat for migratory birds**.*
- *The lake is home to 354 trees, 43 species of plants and shrubs, 37 butterfly species, and 71 bird species.*
- *Some of the birds that live in the lake include painted storks, black-headed ibis, little egrets, sandpipers, black-winged stilts, cormorants, grey-headed swamphens, peacocks, and glossy ibises.*
- *However, the lake is mainly **contaminated due to sewage flow**, which is the responsibility of BWSSB.*

Groundwater Contamination in India

Syllabus: GS-3: Environmental Pollution – ground water.

Context:

- *Groundwater contamination due to arsenic, fluoride not being effectively addressed: NGT*

Extent of Contamination:

- **Arsenic:** 230 districts across 25 states.
- **Fluoride:** 469 districts across 27 states.

Central Ground Water Authority (CGWA) Ineffectiveness:

- *CGWA has not effectively addressed the issue of toxic arsenic and fluoride in groundwater.*
- *National Green Tribunal (NGT) criticized CGWA's "very generic response" to the matter.*

Lack of Concrete Steps:

- *NGT observed no concrete actions taken by CGWA to address the problem.*
- *Requested CGWA to specify areas where steps have been taken or alternative drinking water provided.*

Sources of Groundwater Contamination in India:

1. Geogenic Sources:

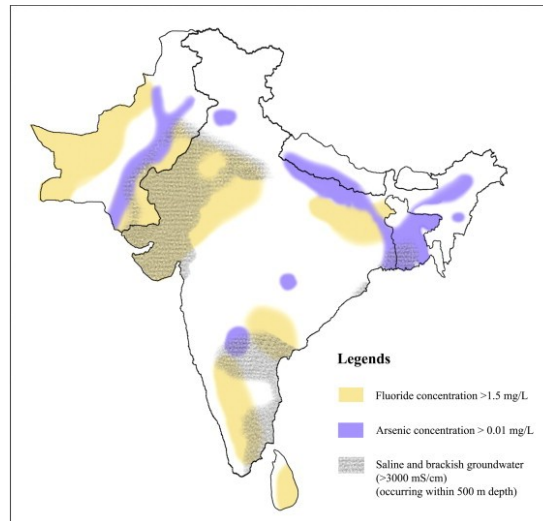
- **Arsenic:** Naturally present in rocks and sediments, arsenic dissolves in groundwater, particularly in regions with specific geological formations.
 - Several Indian states, including Punjab, West Bengal, and Bihar, are affected by this issue.
- **Fluoride:** High levels of fluoride naturally occur in certain rocks and groundwater, particularly in some parts of Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh, and Tamil Nadu.
 - While it can be beneficial in low doses, excessive fluoride intake can lead to health problems.
- **Saline water intrusion:** In coastal areas, overexploitation of groundwater can lead to seawater intrusion, increasing salinity levels in freshwater aquifers.
 - This is a growing concern in regions like Tamil Nadu and Gujarat.

2. Anthropogenic Sources:

- **Agriculture:** Excessive use of fertilizers, particularly nitrogen-based ones, can lead to nitrate leaching into groundwater.
 - This is a major concern in states like Punjab, Haryana, and Uttar Pradesh.
- **Industrial activities:** Untreated industrial effluents and improper waste disposal from industries can contaminate groundwater with heavy metals, chemicals, and other harmful pollutants.
 - Leather tanning, mining, and textiles are some polluting sectors.
- **Urbanization and sanitation:** Leaking sewage systems, improper waste disposal in landfills, and septic tank overflow can introduce pathogens, organic matter, and harmful chemicals into groundwater, particularly in densely populated areas.
- **Domestic waste:** Improper disposal of household chemicals, pharmaceuticals, and personal care products can also contribute to groundwater contamination, though to a lesser extent compared to other sources.

3. Other Sources:

- **Petroleum products:** Leaking underground storage tanks at petrol stations and improper disposal of used oil can contaminate groundwater with hydrocarbons.



Primary agents of GW contaminants and their health impacts:

Contaminant	Sources and Pathways	Health Effects
Arsenic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Naturally occurring and from human activities like agriculture, mining, and manufacturing - Seepage from industrial discharges and fly ash ponds 	Chronic exposure can cause black foot disease
Fluoride	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - High levels found in water sources, leading to fluorosis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Excessive intake can result in neuromuscular disorders, gastrointestinal problems, dental deformities, skeletal fluorosis, and knock-knee syndrome
Nitrates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Result from agricultural runoff and sewage contamination 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - React with haemoglobin, leading to methemoglobinemia (blue baby syndrome) - Contribute to carcinogen formation and eutrophication
Uranium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Occurs in concentrations exceeding WHO guidelines in certain areas - Found in alluvial aquifers and crystalline rocks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Elevated levels can cause kidney toxicity
Radon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Found in groundwater due to decay of radioactive granites and uranium 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Inhalation or ingestion can increase lung cancer risk

Contaminant	Sources and Pathways	Health Effects
		- Lung tissue damage
Other Trace Metals	- Lead, mercury, cadmium, copper, chromium, nickel	- Carcinogenic properties - Cadmium can cause Itai Itai disease - Mercury can cause Minamata syndrome

Government initiatives for GW management:

Initiatives	Descriptions
<i>Atal Bhujal Yojana (ABY)</i>	<i>Improve groundwater management in water-stressed areas.</i>
<i>Jal Shakti Abhiyan (JSA)</i>	<i>Promote water conservation and resource management at the local level.</i>
<i>National Aquifer Mapping and Management Programme (NAQUIM)</i>	<i>Create a comprehensive aquifer map for informed decision-making.</i>
<i>Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana (PMKSY)</i>	<i>Improve irrigation infrastructure and promote water-efficient practices in agriculture.</i>
<i>Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM)</i>	<i>Provide universal access to safe drinking water in rural households.</i>

Challenges Remain:

- **Large-Scale Issue:** Groundwater contamination is widespread, requiring extensive efforts for mitigation.

- **Data Gaps:** *Filling data gaps in under-sampled areas is crucial to understand the complete picture.*
- **Sustainable Practices:** *Promoting sustainable agricultural practices and proper waste management are essential for long-term solutions.*

Way forward:

Area of Focus	Strategies
Promoting Sustainable Agriculture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Nutrient Management: Soil testing, precision agriculture</i> - <i>Organic Farming: Shift to organic practices, use of biofertilizers</i> - <i>Water Conservation: Adoption of micro-irrigation techniques</i>
Improving Sanitation and Waste Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Upgrading Sewage Infrastructure: Preventing leaks, proper treatment</i> - <i>Decentralized Treatment: Implementation in areas with limited infrastructure</i> - <i>Solid Waste Management: Enforcing regulations, promoting recycling</i>
Strengthening Monitoring and Regulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Enhanced Data Collection: Expansion of groundwater monitoring programs</i> - <i>Stricter Regulations: Enforcement on waste disposal, agricultural practices</i> - <i>Community Awareness: Public education on responsible water usage</i>
Technological Solutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Precision Sensors: Real-time monitoring, automated irrigation</i> - <i>Bioremediation: Treatment of contaminated water</i> - <i>Artificial Recharge: Methods like rainwater harvesting</i>
Collaboration and Partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Government-Civil Society Collaboration: Joint development and implementation</i> - <i>Public-Private Partnerships: Utilization of private sector resources and expertise</i>

