DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS 11-03-2026

Mapping Perspective

1. **Kharg Island**

Prelims Perspective

2. **Women in Judiciary**
3. **LaBL 2.0 (Lighting a Billion Lives 2.0)**

Mains Perspective

4. **Farm Loan Waivers**
5. **Challenges to India's Renewable Energy Transition**

Kharg Island

Syllabus: Prelims Bits – Places in news & mapping

Context:

- The **United States** is reportedly considering the **seizure of Kharg Island**, Iran's main oil export terminal, to **disrupt Iran's oil revenues**.

Location and Physical Features

- **Kharg Island** is a **small coral island in Iran** located in the **northern Persian Gulf**.
- Lies about **30 km off the Iranian mainland**.
- Geologically composed of **rocky porous limestone**.

Unique Feature

- One of the **few Persian Gulf islands with freshwater reserves**, formed due to **water accumulation in porous limestone formations**.

Topography

- Highest point: **Mount Didehban (87 m above sea level)**.

Climate

- **Hot and humid summers**, typical of the Persian Gulf region.

Development as an Oil Hub

- **Early 1960s:** Discovery of **offshore oil fields near Kharg Island**.
- Led to development of **major petroleum and petrochemical infrastructure**.

Pipeline Connectivity

- Connected through pipelines to:
    - Offshore oil fields in the Persian Gulf
    - Onshore oil fields of Khuzestan Province (Iran).
- By the **early 1970s**, Kharg became **Iran's largest oil-loading terminal**.

Strategic and Economic Importance

- Handles **around 90% of Iran's oil exports**.
- Crucial to **Iran's economy and energy trade**.

Infrastructure

- **Storage capacity:** ~28 million barrels.
- **Loading capacity:** ~7 million barrels per day.
- Can **simultaneously load 8–9 supertankers**.

Supertanker Types

- VLCC (Very Large Crude Carrier)
- ULCC (Ultra Large Crude Carrier)

Historical Significance

- During the **Iran–Iraq War (1980–1988)**:
    - Kharg Island was **repeatedly bombed by Iraq**.
    - Oil facilities suffered **extensive damage**.
- Infrastructure was **reconstructed in the early 1990s**.

Strategic Importance in Global Oil Trade

- Located close to the **Strait of Hormuz**.

Significance of the Strait

- One of the **world's most critical maritime oil chokepoints**.
- Roughly **one-fifth of global oil trade** passes through it.

Implication

- Any disruption at **Kharg Island** can significantly impact:
  - **Iran's oil exports**
  - **Global energy markets**
  - **Persian Gulf geopolitical stability**

Why Kharg Island Matters Geopolitically

- Primary **export gateway for Iranian crude oil**.
- Potential **target during conflicts or sanctions enforcement**.
- Control or disruption could:
  - **Reduce Iran's oil revenue**
  - Affect **global crude oil supply**
  - Escalate **US–Iran tensions in the Persian Gulf**.

Women in Judiciary

Syllabus: GS-2: Gender equality in Judiciary.

Context:

- Addressing the **First National Conference of Indian Women in Law**, the **Chief Justice of India** emphasized the need for **greater representation of women in the judiciary**.
- Despite increasing participation of women in legal education and the lower judiciary, **their presence in higher courts remains limited**.

Current Status of Women in Judiciary

Supreme Court

- **1 woman judge out of 33 judges**.

- Historically low representation since the appointment of **Justice M. Fathima Beevi (1989)**, the **first woman judge of the Supreme Court**.

High Courts

- Women constitute **~14.85% of judges**.
- Only a few High Courts have had **women Chief Justices**.

District Judiciary

- Around **37% women judges**.
- Several states have **reservation policies for women** in the subordinate judiciary.

Key Trend

- **Higher representation at entry level (district courts)** but **sharp decline at higher levels** → known as the **"leaky pipeline" phenomenon**.

Reasons for Low Representation

1. Seniority-cum-Merit System

- Appointments to higher judiciary largely depend on **seniority and years of practice**.
- Historically, **men dominated the legal profession**, giving them longer tenures and advantage.

2. Structural Barriers

- **Male-dominated collegium system** for judicial appointments.
- **Limited representation of women in senior positions at the Bar**.

3. Workplace Challenges

- **Gender bias and stereotypes** in legal practice.
- **Inadequate infrastructure** (lack of childcare facilities, safety concerns).
- Difficulty balancing **work-life responsibilities**.

4. Leaky Pipeline Effect

- Many women **enter the judiciary or legal profession**, but fewer **advance to senior roles or higher courts**.

Importance of Women in the Judiciary

1. Ensuring Gender Equality

- Promotes **equal participation of women in governance and decision-making**.

2. Gender-Sensitive Justice

- Women judges can bring **diverse perspectives and lived experiences**, improving adjudication in cases involving:
  - Sexual violence
  - Domestic violence
  - Workplace discrimination

3. Enhancing Public Trust

- A **representative judiciary strengthens legitimacy and credibility** of the justice system.

4. Role Models

- Encourages **more women to join the legal profession** and aspire to judicial careers.

Measures to Improve Representation

Institutional Measures

- **Gender diversity as a criterion** in judicial appointments.
- Greater **transparency in collegium recommendations**.

Policy Measures

- **Reservation for women in subordinate judiciary** (already implemented in some states).
- Strengthening the **pipeline of women lawyers** to higher courts.

Workplace Reforms

- **Improved infrastructure in courts**.
- **Childcare facilities and flexible working arrangements**.

Mentorship & Capacity Building

- Encouraging **mentorship programs for women lawyers and judges**.

Way Forward

- Increase **representation of women in higher judiciary** through conscious institutional efforts.
- Promote **inclusive judicial appointments** while maintaining **merit and independence of judiciary**.
- A more **gender-balanced judiciary** is essential for **inclusive justice and constitutional values**.

LaBL 2.0 (Lighting a Billion Lives 2.0)

Syllabus: GS-3: Environment – Sustainable Practices.

Context:

- The The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI) launched **LaBL 2.0 (Lighting a Billion Lives 2.0)** in **New Delhi** to expand **decentralized renewable energy solutions** across India.

What is LaBL 2.0?

- **LaBL 2.0** is a **next-generation Decentralised Renewable Energy (DRE) programme** aimed at:
  - Expanding **clean energy access**
  - Supporting **rural livelihoods**
  - Promoting **climate action**
- It builds upon the earlier **Lighting a Billion Lives initiative** launched in **2008**, which focused on **solar lighting solutions for off-grid communities**.

Objectives

- **Expand decentralized renewable energy access** in rural and underserved regions.
- **Promote green livelihoods**, especially through productive energy use.
- **Encourage women-led clean energy enterprises**.
- **Integrate climate finance and carbon markets** into grassroots energy projects.

Key Features

1. Decentralized Renewable Energy (DRE) Expansion

- Deployment of **solar and other clean energy technologies** in off-grid and rural areas.
- Focus on **community-based and decentralized energy systems**.

2. Green Livelihoods Creation

- Promotes **productive use of energy** (e.g., agro-processing, rural micro-enterprises).

3. Women-led Entrepreneurship

- Encourages **women as clean-energy entrepreneurs** managing local energy services.

4. Carbon Accounting & Climate Outcomes

- Uses **Monitoring, Reporting and Verification (MRV)** frameworks to track **carbon emission reductions**.

5. Finance-Ready Models

- Connects DRE projects with **climate finance and carbon markets** to attract investment.

6. Flagship Initiatives

- **Hastinapur Model City**
- **HUDCO Model Solar Village**
- **GCC DRE Carbon Credit Program**
- Partnerships for **solar technology deployment**

Significance

- Contributes to India's **clean energy transition** and **Net-Zero target by 2070**.
- Strengthens **rural economic development and employment**.
- Enhances **energy access in off-grid regions** while promoting **sustainable development goals (SDGs)**.

Farm Loan Waivers

Syllabus: GS-3: Indian Economy – Agriculture issues.

Context:

- The Maharashtra government recently announced a **₹35,000 crore farm loan waiver scheme**, reviving the debate on its impact on fiscal discipline and agricultural credit culture.
- The scheme includes:
  - **₹20,000 crore** waiver for loan defaulters.
  - **₹15,000 crore incentive** (₹50,000 each) for farmers who regularly repaid loans.
- Institutions such as the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) have repeatedly cautioned against large-scale waivers.

Farm Loan Waivers: Overview

- Farm loan waivers aim to **reduce farmers' debt burden** and enable fresh investment in agriculture.
- However, RBI notes that **structural issues** like climatic risks, price volatility, and low farm income cannot be solved through waivers alone.
- Over the last **35 years**, governments have spent about **₹3 lakh crore** on such schemes.

Major Central Government Schemes

- **Agriculture and Rural Debt Relief Scheme (ARDRS), 1990**
  - First nationwide farm loan waiver.
  - Covered loans from **public sector banks and Regional Rural Banks**.
  - Relief up to **₹10,000 per farmer**.
- **Agricultural Debt Waiver and Debt Relief Scheme (ADWDRS), 2008**
  - Expanded coverage to **commercial banks, cooperative banks, and RRBs**.
  - **Greater benefits for small and marginal farmers (≤5 acres)**.
  - Fiscal cost: **₹52,500 crore**.

Trends in State-Level Waivers

- Since **2014–15**, around **10 states** have announced waivers worth **₹2.4 lakh crore (~1.4% of GDP)**.
- Major examples:
  - **Madhya Pradesh:** ₹36,500 crore
  - **Rajasthan:** ₹18,000 crore
  - **Chhattisgarh:** ₹6,100 crore
  - **Karnataka:** Expanded to ₹44,000 crore.

Implications

1. Fiscal Pressure

- Waivers increase revenue expenditure and affect **state fiscal deficits**.

2. Weak Credit Discipline

- Borrowers may delay repayment expecting future waivers (moral hazard).

3. Impact on Agricultural Credit

- Temporary slowdown in credit growth; **agricultural NPAs reached 8.44% (2019)**.

4. Limited Coverage

- Many distressed farmers lack access to formal credit and **do not benefit from waivers**.

Way Forward

- Experts including former RBI governors **Raghuram Rajan** and **Urjit Patel** advocate:
  - **Income support schemes** (e.g., direct transfers).
  - Greater investment in **irrigation, infrastructure, and crop insurance**.
  - Structural reforms to improve **farm incomes and market access**.

Conclusion

Farm loan waivers provide **short-term relief** but are **not a sustainable solution** to agrarian distress. Long-term strategies should focus on **income support, productivity enhancement, and resilient agricultural systems**.

Challenges to India's Renewable Energy Transition

Syllabus: GS-3: Environment - Sustainable Energy

Context:

- Recent reports highlight **grid congestion and stranded renewable energy capacity** in India, exposing operational challenges in the country's clean energy transition.
- Despite rapid expansion of renewable power, limitations in transmission infrastructure and grid management are restricting efficient power evacuation.

India's Renewable Energy Transition

- India is among the **global leaders in renewable energy expansion**, driven by:
  - Strong **government policy support** (solar missions, renewable purchase obligations).
  - **Competitive renewable energy auctions** lowering tariffs.
  - Rising **private sector investment** in solar and wind projects.
  - Rapid **decline in technology costs** for solar panels and wind turbines.
- Key national targets:
  - **500 GW non-fossil fuel energy capacity by 2030**
  - **50% of energy requirements from renewable sources**
  - **Net-zero emissions by 2070**
- Major renewable hubs: **Rajasthan, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka** due to favourable solar and wind resources.

Stranded Renewable Power

- **Stranded renewable power** refers to electricity generated but **unable to reach consumers due to transmission constraints**.
- Example:
  - Rajasthan has about **23 GW renewable capacity**, but **evacuation capacity is only ~18.9 GW**.
  - Over **4,000 MW remains stranded during peak hours** due to grid congestion.

- Consequences:
    - Curtailment of renewable power.
    - Financial losses for developers.
    - Reduced efficiency in energy utilisation.

Transmission Infrastructure Bottlenecks

- Renewable generation is geographically concentrated, whereas **electricity demand is widely distributed**, requiring strong transmission networks.
- Several **765 kV transmission corridors** designed to evacuate **~6,000 MW** operate at only **600–1,000 MW (<20% utilisation)**.
- Each corridor costs around **₹4,000–₹5,000 crore**, making underutilisation a **major public investment inefficiency**.

Institutional and Operational Issues

- Transmission planning is conducted by the **Central Transmission Utility (CTU)** based on projected renewable capacity.
- Developers obtain **General Network Access (GNA)** to connect to the grid.
- However, **operational restrictions by grid operators** often limit actual power flows, creating a mismatch between **planned and usable capacity**.

Curtailment and Financial Risks

- **Curtailment**: forced reduction of renewable generation due to grid constraints.
- Projects with **Temporary GNA (T-GNA)** face higher curtailment compared to those with permanent access.
- Leads to:
    - Revenue losses
    - Investor uncertainty
    - Reduced attractiveness of renewable investments.

Technical and Institutional Solutions

Technical Measures

- **STATCOMs and reactive power devices** to stabilise voltage.
- **Dynamic grid management systems** with real-time monitoring.

- **Adaptive line rating technologies** to increase transmission capacity.

Institutional Reforms

- Set **grid utilisation targets** for operators.
- Ensure **transparent and equitable curtailment mechanisms**.
- Enable **dynamic reallocation of unused transmission capacity**.
- Improve **coordination between transmission planning and grid operations**.

Conclusion

India's renewable energy expansion has been impressive, but **grid congestion and institutional coordination gaps** threaten efficient integration. Strengthening **transmission infrastructure, grid management technologies, and regulatory coordination** is crucial to sustain India's clean energy transition and meet its **2030 and net-zero targets**.