

2024

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS





Daily Current Affairs from *The Hindu*, *The Indian Express* & *The Assam Tribune*

13th Jan 2025

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GS 2: POLITY, GOVERNANCE, SOCIAL JUSTICE, INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS/INSTITUTIONS

1. Lifts to computers: 4 of 10 govt tenders can't comply with Make in India rules

Context: Rules framed under the Public Procurement (preference to make in India) Order prohibit tenders that restrict or discriminate against domestic suppliers either by specifying foreign brands or setting eligibility conditions around turnover or production capability that may put domestic firms at a disadvantage. However, over the last three years, an estimated 40% of over 3,500 high-value tenders, which accounts for 64,000 crores were flagged as “non-compliant” with these rules by the Department of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), which is the nodal agency for ‘Make in India’ push.

Key points

- **Overview:** The DPIIT's analysis, presented to a Committee of Secretaries (CoS), showed that when these violations were flagged to procuring entities and respective ministries, corrective action was taken in 180 tenders and no response was received in 706 cases.

- **Make in India:** Make in India is a Government of India scheme launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2014 intended to boost the domestic manufacturing sector and augment investment into the country.

Objectives - Raise in manufacturing sector growth to 12-14% per year. Creating required skill sets among the urban poor and the rural migrants to foster inclusive growth. A rise in the domestic value addition and technological depth in the manufacturing sector.

- **Pillars of 'Make in India':** *New Processes* - Recognized 'ease of doing business' as vital for entrepreneurship, implementing measures to improve the business environment for startups and established enterprises.

New Infrastructure - The government prioritised developing industrial corridors and smart cities to create world-class infrastructure.

New Sectors - Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) was significantly opened in various sectors including Defence Production, Insurance, Medical Devices, Construction, and Railway infrastructure.

New Mindset - The government embraced a role as a facilitator rather than a regulator, partnering with industry to drive the country's economic development.

- **Make in India 2.0:** The ongoing "Make in India 2.0" phase, encompassing 27 sectors, continues to propel the program forward, consolidating India's role as a significant player in the global manufacturing arena.

- **Challenges:** *Global Manufacturing Index* - As of 2023, India ranked 5th in the Global Manufacturing Index, trailing behind countries like China and the USA, indicating the need for enhanced competitiveness.

Manufacturing Contribution to GDP - The manufacturing sector contributed approximately 17% to India's GDP in FY 2022-23, highlighting the necessity for policies that stimulate growth in this area.

Skill Development Deficiencies - The India Skills Report 2024, indicate that around 60% of the workforce in India lacks relevant skills for manufacturing jobs, which hampers the potential growth of the sector.

Innovation and R&D - India's research and development (R&D) expenditure-GDP ratio of 0.7% is very low when compared to major economies and is much below the world average of 1.8%.

- **Way Forward:** *Streamlining Regulations* - Simplify bureaucratic processes and labour laws to create a more business-friendly environment.

Investment in Infrastructure - Upgrade transportation networks and logistics systems to improve manufacturing efficiency.

Skill Development Programs - Implement targeted skill development initiatives to address workforce skill gaps.

Incentivizing R&D Investment - Promote innovation through increased investment in research and development, including tax incentives.

Monitoring and Evaluation - Establish a framework for monitoring the initiative's impact to identify bottlenecks and areas for improvement.

Q. Evaluate the progress and challenges of the Make in India initiative ten years post-implementation.
(কাৰ্য্যকৰীকৰণৰ দহ বছৰৰ পিছত মেক ইন ইণ্ডিয়া পদক্ষেপৰ অগ্ৰগতি আৰু প্ৰত্যাহ্বানসমূহৰ মূল্যায়ন কৰক।)

GS 2: POLITY, GOVERNANCE, SOCIAL JUSTICE, INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS/INSTITUTIONS

2. Centralising control

Context: In a federal setup, attempts at undermining any stakeholder in the subject matter of education, which is in the Concurrent List, will prove disruptive. The Draft UGC (Minimum Qualifications for Appointment and Promotion of Teachers and Academic Staff in Universities and Colleges and Measures for the Maintenance of Standards in Higher Education) Regulations, 2025, seeks to do precisely this. Demonstrating the Centre's penchant for facilitating control over institutions through gubernatorial proxies, it proposes to divest State governments of their role in the selection process for Vice Chancellor (VC) of universities.

Key Highlights of the UGC Regulation 2025

- **Overview:** Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan introduced the UGC Draft Regulations 2025. It brings substantial reforms in the appointment process for Vice-Chancellors (VCs) and academic staff.
- **Flexibility:** Candidates can qualify for faculty positions through the NET/SET in a subject of their choice, even if different from their undergraduate and postgraduate degrees. Also, the subject of the Ph.D. degree will take precedence over prior degrees.
- **Appointment of Vice-Chancellors:** The draft has given the powers to Chancellors or Visitors to constitute the three-member search-cum-selection committee to appoint Vice-Chancellors.
 - So far, the State governments used to constitute the search committees for appointing Vice-Chancellors.
 - The regulation also opens the VC post to individuals from industry, public policy, public administration, or public sector undertakings, thus breaking from the tradition of selecting only academicians.
- **Easier hiring of contract teachers:** The draft regulation also removes the cap on contract teacher appointments. The 2018 regulations had limited such appointments to 10% of an institution's total faculty positions.
- **Promoting Indian Languages:** The regulation encourages the use of Indian languages in academic publications and degree programmes.
- **Holistic Evaluation:** It also does away with the Academic Performance Indicators (API) system— a score that determines the recruitment and promotion of teachers based on parameters such as publication in journals.
- **Diverse Talent Pool:** It creates dedicated recruitment pathways for experts in arts, sports, and traditional disciplines.
- **Inclusivity:** It provides opportunities for accomplished sportspersons, including those with disabilities, to enter the teaching profession.
- **Simplified Promotion Process:** Streamlines the criteria for promotions, emphasising teaching, research output, and academic contributions.
- **Focus on Professional Development:** Encourages continuous learning and skill enhancement for teachers through faculty development programs.
- **Enhanced Transparency and Accountability:** Promotes transparent processes for recruitment, promotion, and addressing grievances.

Context: Ahead of the Union Budget 2025-26, the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) on Sunday shared a 10-point agenda to further improve ease of doing business (EoDB) in the country where urgent policy interventions would be immensely helpful. The key areas of business reforms in the country needs a simplified regulatory framework, which will help in reducing compliance burdens and enhancing transparency should continue to remain our focus agenda for the next several years.

Ease of Doing Business Report

- **About:** Ease of Doing Business was a report published by the World Bank Group to provide a ranking of countries based on fixed parameters. It ranks economies from 1 to 190, with 1 being the best. The aggregate ease of doing business scores is sorted to determine the order of the economies. If a country receives the first rank, then the environment for doing business in that country is favourable.
- **Ease of Doing Business India Rank 2020:** India's performance in the Ease of Doing Business rankings for 2020 marked a significant milestone in the country's ongoing efforts to improve its business environment. Ranked 63rd out of 190 countries, India moved up 14 spots from its 2019 position of 77th. This continued upward trajectory highlights India's commitment to regulatory reforms and its focus on creating a more conducive environment for business operations.
- **Significance:** A higher rank signals a conducive business environment, attracting more foreign direct investment. Helps governments identify areas needing regulatory reform and improve business conditions. Enhances a country's global competitiveness by showcasing improvements in business regulations. Facilitates economic growth by improving the ease of conducting business operations, leading to higher productivity and job creation.
- **Shortcomings of the Ease of Doing Business Report:**
 - Urban bias* - The general evaluation made in the report is mainly based on two large cities (Mumbai and Delhi for India). It therefore may not best capture the situation in other parts of the country, especially rural areas. Such a concern might give a less realistic perception of the business environment.
 - Informal Sector* - The report tends to focus on formal businesses and perhaps overlooks the challenges that the large informal sector of India faces, which is part of the lion's share of its economy. Many small enterprises are informal; hence, their regulatory problems may not be captured in this report.
 - Legislation vs. Implementation* - Very often, the report focuses on legislative changes and not so much on their practical implementation. In terms of paper alone, laws and regulations look very encouraging, but their effective enforcement and the real experience of businesses are completely different.
 - Narrow scope* - It covers starting a business, dealing with construction permits, getting electricity, registering property, and paying taxes; other principal factors affecting the business environment, such as macroeconomic stability, infrastructure quality, workforce skills, and innovative capacity, are not involved.
- **Conclusion:** The World Bank decided to discontinue the Ease of Doing Business report in 2021 following data irregularities and allegations of manipulation. An internal audit revealed that data for certain countries had been manipulated to improve their rankings. These findings compromised the credibility and integrity of the report. This led to the decision to halt its publication.

Context: The Centre's wildlife panel has approved a proposal to carry out oil and gas exploration in the eco-sensitive zone of the Hoollongapar Gibbon Wildlife Sanctuary in Assam's Jorhat district. The Standing Committee of the National Board for Wildlife chaired by Union Environment minister Bhupendra Yadav, approved the proposal by Vedanta Group's Cairn Oil & Gas. Assam's principal chief conservator of forests had recommended clearance for the project in August last year emphasising on "national interest".

Key points

- **Overview:** The Union environment ministry has approved exploratory oil and gas drilling in parts of Assam. Cairn India, a subsidiary of Vedanta Ltd, seeks to use approximately 4.5 hectares of reserved forest land for drilling within the eco-sensitive zone of the Hoollongapar Gibbon Wildlife Sanctuary.
- **Hoolock Gibbon:** Gibbons, the smallest and fastest apes, live in Asia's tropical and subtropical forests. The hoolock gibbon, unique to India's northeast, is one of 20 gibbon species with an estimated population of 12,000.
 - *Gibbon Species in India* - Two distinct hoolock gibbon species are found in India's northeastern region: the eastern hoolock gibbon (*Hoolock leuconedys*) and the western hoolock gibbon (*Hoolock hoolock*).
- **Impact on Wildlife:** The area proposed for drilling is home to hoolock gibbons, elephants, and leopards. Experts warn that even small disruptions to the forest canopy can be harmful to these animals, particularly the hoolock gibbons, which are canopy dwellers. The Forest Advisory Committee (FAC) has deferred its decision and asked for comments from wildlife authorities and a wildlife conservation plan.
- **Conditions for Approval:** The regional office of the Union environment ministry has approved the project with certain conditions. These conditions include strict compliance with safety procedures and obtaining consent from the National Board of Wildlife. Special measures to prevent landslides and erosion have also been recommended.
- **Previous Incidents related to environmental damage:** The Baghjan oilfield gas blow-out in May 2020 caused extensive ecological damage, highlighting the risks associated with oil and gas exploration. The incident led to significant damage to local ecology, including the Dibru Saikhowa National Park and the Maguri-Motapung wetlands.
- **Conservation Status of the Hoolock Gibbon:** The hoolock gibbon is listed as "endangered" by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). The total population in northeastern India is estimated to be over 12,000, with around 2,000 in Assam.
- **Other Exploration Plans:** Cairn India has also applied for forest clearance for oil and gas exploration in the Namphei reserved forest. This area is within the Dihing Patkai Elephant Reserve and near the Kotha Elephant Corridor. This area is within the Dihing Patkai Elephant Reserve and near the Kotha Elephant Corridor.
- **Conclusion:** The approval for oil and gas exploration in Assam underscores the ongoing tension between economic development and environmental conservation. While the project promises economic benefits, it also poses significant risks to the endangered hoolock gibbon and other wildlife. The decision highlights the need for stringent environmental safeguards and comprehensive wildlife conservation plans to mitigate the potential impacts. It is crucial for stakeholders to strike a balance that ensures both sustainable development and the protection of biodiversity. The rejection of extended reach drilling in the Dibru Saikhowa National Park sets a precedent for prioritizing environmental conservation in sensitive ecological zones.