Prelim Bits 03-10-2021 & 04-10-2021 | UPSC Daily Current Affairs

Rise in GST Revenue Collection

Gross Goods and Services Tax (GST) revenue collections in September (for sales in August) rose 22.5% year-on-year to Rs 1,17,010 crore.

- **Components** - The latest data indicates a slowdown in collections from domestic transactions with central GST and state GST mop up rising under 1% in September, compared to the previous month.
- It was largely IGST, which saw a 10% rise compared to August, that drove up overall collections. Cess on imported goods saw a decline.
- **Reasons** - The GST collections have picked up pace in the 2nd quarter as the economy is recovering at a fast pace.
- Anti-evasion activities, especially action against fake billers have also contributed to the enhanced GST collections.
- It is expected that the positive trend in the revenues will continue and the second half of the year will post higher revenues.
- **Concern** - Though GST revenues are picking up pace after the impact of the Covid-19, revenue buoyancy under GST is being seen as a concern.

GST Collection

- The GST has five key tax slabs: zero, 5%, 12%, 18% and 28%.
- A compensation cess, ranging between 1% and 290%, is levied on demerit and luxury goods over and above the topmost rate of 28%.
- A merger of 5% and 12% slabs or 12% and 18% slabs has been deliberated upon earlier as well but has not been taken up formally for a decision.

ECI’s Power on Party Symbol

Election Commission of India (ECI) has frozen an election symbol of a party from Bihar, so that neither of the two factions of the party will be able to use it in the coming Assembly by-elections.

- Para 15 of the Symbols Order, 1968 talks about the powers of the ECI on the question of a split in a political party outside the legislature.
- The ECI can decide whether the rival groups or none of such groups of a recognised political party is eligible to get the party symbol.
- This decision shall be binding on all such rival sections or groups. This applies to disputes in recognised national and state parties.
- For splits in registered but unrecognised parties, the ECI usually advises the warring factions to resolve their differences internally or to approach the court.
- The first case decided under Para 15 of the 1968 Order was the first split in the Indian National Congress in 1969.

- Before 1968, the EC issued notifications and executive orders under the Conduct of Election Rules, 1961.
- **Testing** - In almost all disputes decided by the EC so far, a clear majority of party delegates/office bearers, MPs and MLAs have supported one of the factions.
- Whenever the EC could not test the strength of rival groups based on support within the party, it fell back on testing the majority only among elected MPs and MLAs.

Splinter group

Splinter group of a party is the group other than the one that got the party symbol.

- Until 1997, the Splinter groups were not recognised either state or national parties by the ECI.
- This is because the ECI has felt that merely having MPs and MLAs isn't enough, as the elected representatives had fought and won polls on tickets of their parent (undivided) parties.
- The EC introduced a new rule under which,
    1. The splinter group of the party had to register itself as a separate party, and
    2. The splinter group could lay claim to national or state party status only on the basis of its performance in state or central elections after registration.

Least Developed Countries Report 2021

The Least Developed Countries Report 2021 was released by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD).

- This **annual report** provides a comprehensive and authoritative source of **socio-economic analysis** and data on the world's most impoverished countries.
- It is intended for a broad readership of governments, policy makers, researchers and all those involved with LDCs' development policies.
- **Findings** - The 2021 report said that the growth performance of LDCs over the past 50 years has been characterized by an overall sluggish and uneven record.
- Real GDP for the LDC group increased 5-fold since the LDC category was created in 1971.
- The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita for LDC group is less than 10% of the world average (2019).
- Major shortcomings of the development experience of the LDCs over the past 50 years have been laid bare by the outbreak of the COVID-19 crisis.

Least Developed Countries

- There are **46 countries** are designated by the United Nations as LDCs.
- The list of LDCs is reviewed **every 3 years** by the Committee for Development Policy (CDP), a group of independent experts that report to the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).
- After a triennial review of the list, the CDP recommends to ECOSOC, countries for addition to the list or graduation from LDC status.
- This report will be sent later to the UN General Assembly (UNGA).
- Criteria for inclusion into the LDC category and for graduation from the LDC category - Per capita income, Human Assets Index, and Economic and Environmental Vulnerability Index.
- **Income criterion** is based on a 3-year average estimate of the Gross National Income (GNI) per capita in US dollars, using conversion factors based on the World Bank Atlas methodology.
- The threshold for inclusion and graduation is based on the thresholds of the World Bank's low-

income category.
- **Human assets index** (HAI), consisting of two sub-indices - Health sub-index and Education sub-index.
- **Economic and environmental vulnerability index** also has two sub-indices - Economic sub-index and Environmental sub-index.
- A country must achieve 2 of the 3 criteria at 2 consecutive triennial reviews to be considered for graduation.

Factors responsible for Sudden Rain

Bountiful rain in September has ensured that the water levels in India's main reservoirs are back to their optimum levels.

- This has happened despite the fact that the rainfall during this monsoon season had only marginal impact on the reservoir levels.
- **Factors** responsible for unexpectedly high rainfall in September are,
    1. Madden-Julian Oscillation, a moving equatorial wind-system,
    2. Weakening of the negative Indian Ocean Dipole, a phenomenon similar to the El Nino oscillations in the Pacific Ocean, and,
    3. Cyclone Gulab.
- **Regional variations** - Water levels in the reservoirs vary from region to region. This water level pattern is similar to the rainfall pattern that was witnessed during the monsoon months this year.

Reservoir Region	**Water Level**
Northern and Eastern states	Lower than normal
Southern and Western states	Higher than normal
Central region (UP, Uttarakhand, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh)	Normal levels

Weddell Sea as Marine Protected Area

Ministry of Earth Sciences said that India is co-sponsoring a proposal of the European Union for designating East Antarctica & Weddell Sea as Marine Protected Areas (MPAs).

- Weddell Sea is an embayment of the Antarctic coastline that forms a southward extension of the Southern Ocean. It has the Weddell Gyre.
- It is bounded on the west by the Antarctic Peninsula of West Antarctica, on the east by Coats Land of East Antarctica, and on the extreme south by ice frontal barriers of the Filchner and Ronne ice shelves.

Marine Protected Area

- A marine protected area provides protection for all or part of its natural resources.
- Certain activities within an MPA are limited or prohibited to meet specific conservation, habitat protection, ecosystem monitoring, or fisheries management objectives.

Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources

(CCAMLR)

- It is an international treaty to manage Antarctic fisheries to preserve species diversity and stability of the entire Antarctic marine ecosystem.
- It came into force in April 1982.
- It is responsible for the formulation, adaptation and implementation mechanisms of the MPAs.
- Since 2009, CCAMLR members have developed proposals for MPAs for various regions of the Southern Ocean.
- CCAMLR's scientific committee examines these proposals.
- After CCAMLR members agree upon them, elaborate conservation measures are set out by the commission.
- **India** has been a permanent member of CCAMLR since 1986.
- Work pertaining to CCAMLR is coordinated in India by the Ministry of Earth Sciences through its attached office, the Centre for Marine Living Resources and Ecology (CMLRE) in Kochi, Kerala.

Source: PIB, The Hindu, The Indian Express, Britannica, Times of India

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