Prelim Bits 09-12-2022 | UPSC Daily Current Affairs

National Party Status

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) became the ninth political outfit to secure national party status.

- The Election Commission of India (ECI) has laid down the technical criterion for a party to be recognised as a national party.
- A party may gain or lose national party status from time to time, depending on the fulfilment of these laid-down conditions.
- The ECI's **Political Parties and Election Symbols, 2019** handbook lays down the criteria for a party to be recognised as National Party.
- First a political Party has to be registered with ECI to be recognised as National or State party.
- **Criteria for National Party Status** - A party will be considered as a national party,

1. If it is 'recognised' in four or more states; or
2. If its candidates polled at least 6% of total valid votes in any four or more states in the last Lok Sabha or Assembly elections and has at least four MPs in the last Lok Sabha polls; or
3. If it has won at least 2% of the total seats in the Lok Sabha from not less than three states.

- **Criteria for State Party Status** - A party will be recognised as a state party, if

1. at least 6% vote-share in the last Assembly election and have at least 2 MLAs; or have 6% vote-share in the last Lok Sabha elections from that state and at least one MP from that state; or
2. at least 3% of the total number of seats or three seats, whichever is more, in the last Assembly elections; or
3. at least one MP for every 25 members or any fraction allotted to the state in the Lok Sabha; or
4. have at least 8% of the total valid votes in the last Assembly election or Lok Sabha election from the state.

AAP as the 9th National Party

- The AAP party has already fulfilled the criteria for recognition as a state party in 3 states (Delhi, Punjab and Goa).
- In 2022 Gujarat Assembly elections, AAP got the required votes to be recognised as State Party.
- Gujarat will be the 4th state where AAP is recognised as State party fulfilling the criteria to be recognise AAP as a National Party.

- After being recognised as a national party, the AAP can claim 'the broom' as a reserved symbol for itself across the country.
- To know about how symbols are allocated to Recognised and registered parties, Click here

The other 8 National Parties in India

1. BJP
2. Congress
3. Trinamool Congress
4. CPI(M)
5. CPI
6. Nationalist Congress Party (NCP)
7. Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP)
8. Meghalaya's National People's Party (NPP) (recognised in 2019)

References

1. India Express - National Party in India
2. NDTV - How AAP Became A 'National Party'
3. Deccan Herald - AAP to secure national party status

Atacama Desert

World's trash piles up at Chile's Atacama Desert making it the world's dumping yard.

- Mountains of discarded clothes, shoes, and scrapped tires have been dumped in the Atacama Desert.
- These trash are mostly second-handed and unsold clothing from Europe, Asia, and the US.



- Atacama Desert in Chile, South America lies to the west of Andes Mountains.
- The desert consists mainly of salt pans.
- The Atacama Desert is the driest nonpolar desert in the world.
- Though dry and arid the desert is relatively colder than other major non-polar deserts.
- The desert is extremely arid due to the cool north-flowing Humboldt Ocean current and to the presence of the strong Pacific anticyclone.
- The most arid region of the Atacama Desert is situated between the Andes and the Chilean Coast Range making it a two-sided rain shadow region.
- **Blooming Desert** - Atacama receives less than a millimetre of rain each year. It rarely receives heavy rainfall and a mass blooming happens after that.
- The '*desierto florido*' (literally, 'blooming desert') phenomena occurs at the Atacama Desert on average once every 5-10 years, from mid-September to mid-November.
- **Observatories** – Due to cloud less sky and high altitude an array of observatories are located in this desert.

- Atacama Large Millimetre Array/submillimetre (ALMA) and European Space Observatory's Very Large Telescope are located in this desert.

References

1. The Hindu - World's trash piles up at Chile's Atacama desert
2. Live Science - About the Atacama Desert
3. Hindustan Times - Atacama is blooming following heavy rains

Americium

The European Space Agency scientists are developing batteries made of Americium to power space missions.



- Americium (Am) is a synthetic chemical element of the actinoid series of the periodic table.
- It was the fourth transuranium element with atomic number 95.
- It is not found naturally in the environment and can be extracted from reprocessed nuclear fuel used in civil power plants.
- Americium has never been used as a fuel and now will be used to make new batteries.
- Americium, a by-product of plutonium decay is made into fuel pellets, which form the core of the batteries.
- This battery can be used as an alternative to solar cells in space.
- It is expected to operate space missions in the dark side of the Moon or areas far-off from the Solar System where solar power is limited.

Current batteries used in space rely on plutonium-238, which is challenging and expensive to produce.

Americium's advantage over plutonium-238 (Pu-238)

- It is cheaper and more abundant.
- It has a longer half-life than Pu-238, so it lasts longer.
- It is also easier and less expensive to produce than Pu-238.
- **Drawback** - Unfortunately it also yields less potential energy than Pu-238.

References

1. The Hindu - Battery from nuclear waste
2. Nature - How nuclear waste will help spacecraft explore the Moon
3. Live Science - Americium

Districts as Export Hub (DEH) Initiative

One District One Product Initiative (ODOP) is operationally merged with 'Districts as Export Hub (DEH)' Initiative.

- DEH is an initiative of the Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT), Department of Commerce, with the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) as a major stakeholder.
- Under the initiative, products and services (including GI products, agricultural clusters, toy clusters etc.) with export potential have been identified in all districts.
- Districts Export Action Plans are being prepared for identified products and services for overseas markets.
- These plans improves supply chains, market accessibility and handholding for increasing exports of identified products.
- Under DEH, State Export Promotion Committee (SEPC) and District Export Promotion Committee (DEPC) has been constituted in all the 36 States/UTs.

One District One Product (ODOP) Initiative

- Central Government has initiated One District One Product (ODOP) in all States/UTs of the country.
- It is a transformational step towards realizing the true potential of a district, fuelling economic growth, generating employment and rural entrepreneurship, taking us to the goal of Aatmanirbhar Bharat.
- ODOP has been identified for the prestigious Prime Minister's Award for Excellence in Public Administration in Holistic Development in April, 2022.

References

1. PIB - ODOP merged with DEH Initiative
2. Districts as Export Hubs - Official

Discontinued MANF Scholarship

The Centre stops Maulana Azad National Fellowship (MANF) scholarship for research scholars from minority communities, since MANF overlaps with various other schemes for higher education.

- The Maulana Azad National Fellowship (MANF) is a scholarship for students from minority communities.
- It was formulated as part of implementing the Sachar Committee recommendations. It is funded by Union Ministry of Minority Affairs.
- The scheme was open to candidates who
    1. belong to one of the Minority Community i.e. Muslim, Sikh, Parsi, Buddhist, Christian & Jain and
    2. Pursuing higher studies such as regular and full time M.Phil/Ph.D. degrees in Sciences, Humanities, Social Sciences and Engineering & Technology.
- The reservation for differently abled students shall be made as per provision laid down by the Government of India.
- **Selection** - Candidates are selected through Junior Research Fellow- National Eligibility Test (JRF-NET) exam conducted by the National Testing Agency.
- **Coverage** - The scheme covers all Universities/Institutions recognized by the

University Grants Commission (UGC) as under:

1. Central/State Universities (including constituent and affiliated institutions) included under Section 2(f) of UGC Act, 1956 and having valid accreditation from NAAC.
2. Deemed Universities under Section 3 of UGC Act i.e. Institution for higher education notified by Central Government to be deemed University, in consultation with UGC and having valid accreditation from NAAC.
3. Institution fully funded by State / Central Government and empowered to award degrees.
4. Institutions of National Importance as notified by Ministry of Human Resource Development (mhrd.gov.in/institutions-national-importance).

- **Implementation** - The Fellowship will be implemented by the Ministry of Minority Affairs through the University Grants Commission (UGC).

Reference

1. The Hindu - Centre stops Maulana Azad scholarship
2. MANF - Introduction
3. Minority Affairs - Maulana Azad National Fellowship

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