Prelim Bits 23-09-2022 | UPSC Daily Current Affairs

Moonlighting

After Wipro sacked its 300 employees who were moonlighting, the Nasscom said that its time for companies to reimagine employee engagement models.

- Moonlighting means taking up a second job or multiple jobs apart from one's full-time job, without informing their current employer about it.
- As the other job would usually be at night, hence the "moon" reference.
- People with low salaries would usually take it up for additional income as a means of sustenance.
- Remote working and projects across time-zones have now made it possible for high-salaried techies to do this too.
- Moonlighting arise from a **lack of transparency to the employers** from employees, as it breaks down the trust with their employer.

Food delivery platform Swiggy has an "industry-first" Moonlighting Policy, under which staff can take up external projects based on internal approvals.

Reference

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2. https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/cheating-plain-and-simple-wipro-boss-rishad-premji-stirs-debate-on-moonlighting-3366808
3. https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/wipro-sacks-employees-moonlighting-rashid-premji-it-companies-2003168-2022-09-22

DART Mission - Demonstration

In the first-of-its kind, save-the-world experiment, NASA is about to clobber a small asteroid named Dimorphos using its spacecraft DART at 22,500 kmph.

- The impact by the spacecraft Double Asteroid Redirection Test (DART) is about **asteroid deflection**, not disruption.
- This impact should be just enough to nudge the asteroid into a slightly tighter orbit around its companion space rock.
- This will demonstrate if a killer asteroid ever heads our way, we'd stand a fighting chance of diverting it.
- The DART mission carries the LICIACube (Light Italian Cubesat for Imaging of Asteroid), which is a 6U CubeSat project led by the Italian Space Agency (ASI).

- The main goal of LICIACube is to support DART mission goals by taking images of the impact effects on the surface and the generated ejecta plume.
- LICIACube will be deployed from DART in proximity of the target, before the impact, and will perform an autonomous fly-by of Didymos.
- **Related Links** - NASA's DART Mission

Target Asteroid

- Target asteroid is Dimorphos, which is about 9.6 million km from Earth.
- It is actually the puny sidekick of a 780-meter asteroid named Didymos, Greek for twin.

Asteroid Didymos and its small moonlet Dimorphos make ups a binary asteroid system - meaning Dimorphos (moon) orbits Didymos (larger body).

- Discovered in 1996, Didymos is spinning so fast that scientists believe it flung off material that eventually formed a moonlet.
- Dimorphos orbits its parent body at a distance of less than 1.2 km.
- The two asteroids are not a threat to Earth, but as they do pass relatively close to Earth, they were chosen as the target for DART mission.
- **Similar Links** - Apophis Asteroid

Reference

1. https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/explained-sci-tech/why-a-nasa-spacecraft-will-crash-into-an-asteroid-8167425/
2. https://www.nasa.gov/planetarydefense/dart/dart-news
3. https://www.freepressjournal.in/world/nasas-dart-to-hit-dimorphos-asteroid-scientists-to-test-the-kinetic-impact
4. https://solarsystem.nasa.gov/asteroids-comets-and-meteors/asteroids/didymos/in-depth/
5. https://ieeexplore.ieee.org/abstract/document/8869672

Khader Committee

Recently, the second report of the M.A. Khader committee on school education was handed over to the government.

The first report of the Khader committee mostly pertained to structural changes in school education such as merger of the three directorates under the department. The second report focusses on academic matters.

- The M.A. Khader **committee on school education** was set up by the government against the backdrop of the Right to Education Act to study various aspects of school education from preschool to higher secondary.
- **Changes to Schools** - The committee has recommended a change in school timings

from 8 am to 1 pm.
- Primary section to comprise Classes 1 to 7 and secondary section to comprise Classes 8 to 12.
- The main recommendation was to unify the classes from first through tenth, higher secondary and vocational higher secondary departments under **one directorate**.
- Other recommendations supplementing the unification included
    1. The appointment of the Principal as the School Head for the Higher Secondary Schools and
    2. Renaming High School Head Master as the Vice Principal.
- The Principal will be assisted by Vice-principal.
- **Teacher training -** It recommends a comprehensive change in teacher training to address the second generation challenges of education.
- It suggests a five-year integrated PG course that includes a teacher qualification and specialisation course that is intended to equip teachers with the changes in the world of education.
- The report calls for timely changes in approaches to learning so as to imbibe progressive thoughts academically and socially.
- **Medium of Instruction** - School education phase should be in the mother tongue.
- Since English was important for flow of information, study of English in schools had to make significant strides.
- The study of languages such as Hindi, Arabic, Urdu, and Sanskrit too had to improve.
- **Shift** - The report stresses the need for a shift from evaluation to assessment. Evaluation at present was a mechanical exercise.
- Without a change in this, no fundamental changes were possible in the education sector. Students should become free of examination fear.

Reference

1. https://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/khader-committee-moots-change-in-school-timings-from-8-am-to-1-pm/article65924565.ece
2. https://www.onmanorama.com/news/kerala/2022/08/04/khader-committee-minister-sivankutty.html
3. https://www.newindianexpress.com/states/kerala/2022/jul/25/edu-reforms-kerala-govt-seeks-public-opinion-on-khader-panel-report-2480299.html

REC is a 'Maharatna' Company

The REC Limited has been accorded with the status of a 'Maharatna' Central Public Sector Enterprise.

- The Rural Electrification Corporation Ltd (REC) is a state-owned company that comes under the Ministry of Power.
- It takes the role of public Infrastructure Finance Company in India's power sector and promotes rural electrification projects across India.
- Incorporated in 1969, the REC is a Non-banking Financial Institution (NBFC) focusing on Power Sector Financing and Development across India.
- It is a leading infrastructure finance company with a net worth of over Rs. 50,000 crore (as on 31st March, 2022).

- Its business activities involve financing projects in the complete power sector value chain, be it generation, transmission or distribution.
- Through our extensive network of 22 offices across the country, the REC provide financial assistance to
    1. State electricity boards,
    2. State governments,
    3. Central/state power utilities,
    4. Independent power producers,
    5. Rural electric cooperatives and
    6. Private sector utilities.

Maharatna Status

- An order to the effect of the 'Maharatna' status would be issued by the Department of Public Enterprises, under the Ministry of Finance.
- The grant of 'Maharatna' status will impart enhanced powers to the company's Board while taking operational and financial decisions.
- The Board of a 'Maharatna' CPSE can make equity investments to undertake financial joint ventures and wholly-owned subsidiaries.
- It can also undertake mergers and acquisitions in India and abroad, subject to a ceiling of 15% of the Net Worth of the concerned CPSE, limited to Rs. 5,000 crores in one project.
- The Board can also structure and implement schemes relating to personnel and Human Resource Management and Training.

Reference

1. https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1861501
2. https://recindia.nic.in/corporate-profile
3. https://recindia.nic.in/business-profile
4. https://www.climatebonds.net/certification/rural-electrification-corporation
5. https://blog.madeeasy.in/what-is-a-maharatna-company

Relaxed Assessment Fee Cap for CSR Projects

The Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA) has relaxed the impact assessment fee cap for corporate social responsibility (CSR) projects, allows companies to spend over Rs. 50 lakh.

- Companies making losses in the immediate preceding financial year will be exempted from undertaking CSR activity that year if they were eligible for CSR due to their net profit.
- However, companies will have to spend the carry forward or unspent CSR obligation of the previous year.
- This exemption will be available only to those companies eligible for CSR due to their profits.
- CSR applicability criteria
    1. If a company has a networth of more than Rs 500 crore or,
    2. Its turnover is more than Rs 1,000 crore or,

3. Net profit is more than Rs 5 crore

- Other key changes made are
  1. Look-back period (to assess CSR applicability) of 3 years removed
  2. Eligibility of a company to do CSR has to be checked every year (Earlier, if a company were eligible once, the CSR obligation fell upon you for the next three years.)
  3. 2% of CSR obligation or Rs 50 lakh on impact assessment
  4. e-form CSR-2 introduced

Reference

1. https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/fillip-to-csr-govt-relaxes-impact-assessment-fee-cap-for-csr-projects-allows-cos-to-spend-over-50-lakh/article65922986.ece
2. https://www.business-standard.com/article/companies/csr-exemption-for-firms-making-losses-eligibility-to-be-checked-every-year-122092300004_1.html
3. https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/policy/govt-amends-rules-governing-corporate-social-responsibility/articleshow/94381725.cms

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