Prelim Bits 28-06-2018

Repealing of UGC

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- Ministry of HRD has prepared a bill to repeal apex body University Grants Commission (UGC).
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- The bill is named as “Higher Education Commission of India (Repeal of University Grants Commission Act) Bill 2018”.
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- It provides for setting up of Higher Education Commission of India in place for UGC.
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- The focus of Higher Education Commission of India (HECI) will be on improving academic standards and the quality of Higher Education.
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- The new regulator will not have funding powers like its predecessor.
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- The grant functions would be carried out by the HRD Ministry, and the HECI would focus only on academic matters.
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- It will have powers to **ensure academic quality**.
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- It will develop norms for setting standards for opening and closure of institutions, provide for greater flexibility and autonomy to institutions.
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- It will lay **standards for appointments to critical leadership** positions at the institutional level irrespective of University started under any Law (including State Law).
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- The UGC published lists of bogus institutions. The HECI will be empowered to **shut down substandard/bogus institutions**.
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- **End of Inspection Raj** – UGC conducted inspections to assess institutions. The HECI will practically do away with these and shift to a regime of “transparent disclosures”.
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Strategic Petroleum Reserve (SPR)

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- The Union Cabinet has recently approved establishment of additional 6.5 Million Metric Tonne (MMT) SPR facilities at two locations, i.e. **Chandikhol in Odisha and Padur in Karnataka**.
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- India’s strategic crude oil storages are currently located at Visakhapatnam (1.33 MMT), Mangaluru (1.5 MMT) and Padur (2.5 MMT).
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Export Credit Guarantee Corporation (ECGC)

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- The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs has approved the capital infusion of Rs.2000 crore for strengthening of Export Credit Guarantee Corporation (ECGC).
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- ECGC is a premier export credit agency to provide export credit insurance services to facilitate exports from the country.
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- It offers credit insurance schemes to exporters to protect them against losses due to non-payment of export dues.
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- The capital infusion would enhance insurance coverage to MSME exports.
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- It will strengthen India’s exports to emerging and challenging markets like Africa, CIS and Latin American countries.
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SKOCH awards

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- The Skoch Awards recognize leadership and excellence in accelerating socio-economic changes.
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- It has become a benchmark of best practices in India in the fields of

governance, infrastructure, finance, banking, technology, corporate citizenship, economics and inclusive growth.
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- Recently, Sagarmala project received the ‘Gold Award’ in infrastructure sector in the 52nd Skoch Summit 2018 in New Delhi.
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- Sagarmala is the Ministry of Shipping’s flagship programme for port-led-prosperity.
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- It focuses on four pillars such as Port Modernization, Port Connectivity, Port-linked Industrialization and Coastal Community Development.
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- It aims to double the share of domestic waterways (inland & coastal) in the modal mix.
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Ryugu Asteroid

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- A Japanese Probe “Hayabusa2” has recently reached “Ryugu”, an asteroid 300 million km away from Earth.
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- Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency, JAXA has launched the probe in 2014.
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- The aim of the mission is to collect information about the birth of the solar system and the origin of life.
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- It identify suitable sites to take samples from once the probe touches down on the asteroid.
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- It will deploy a small lander and three rovers.
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- It will then blast an artificial crater to analyze material below the asteroid's surface. After that, the probe will head back to Earth, arriving near the end of 2020 with samples in tow.
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Enlightened Anthropocentrism

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- Anthropocentrism refers to a philosophical world view where human beings are superior to other living and non-living things.
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- It justifies the exploitation of nature for the sake of human welfare.
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- Enlightened anthropocentrism is a world view that says humans have ethical obligations towards the environment but those can be justified in terms of obligations towards other humans.
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- For instance, environmental pollution can be seen as immoral because it negatively affects the lives of other people.
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- Similarly, the wasteful use of natural resources is viewed as immoral because it deprives future generations of those resources.
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Source: The Hindu, PIB

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