

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS- BILATERAL, GROUPINGS, ORGANISATIONS**Services Trade Restrictiveness Index by OECD**

India has found problems with the current method under which the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) ranks countries based on their services trade policies, indicating the outcomes are biased and counter-intuitive.

Services Trade Restrictiveness Index

- Launched in 2014, the Services Trade Restrictiveness Index (STRI), computed by the OECD, is now available for 2018 for a total of 45 economies (36 OECD and the rest non-OECD) and 22 sectors.
- The STRI helps to identify which policy measures restrict trade.
- It provides policy makers and negotiators with information and measurement tools to improve domestic policy environment, negotiate international agreements and open up international trade in services.
- It can also help governments identify best practice and then focus their domestic reform efforts on priority sectors and measures.
- The STRI database is based on regulations currently in force. STRI indices take the value from 0 to 1, where 0 is completely open and 1 is completely closed.
- The STRI Simulator enables policy makers and experts to explore the impact of a change at a detailed level for each measure, and to compare a specific country with a range of other selected countries in a particular sector.

Issues with the Index

- Bit of impracticality in the index
 - The index has a large number of problems associated with it, including some significant design issues that render it impractical for use, a study commissioned by the Commerce Ministry found.
 - For example, the index seems to show the Indian services sector as one of the most restrictive, particularly in policy areas like foreign entry..
 - This seems surprising as since 1991, the one area that has seen maximum liberalisation in India is FDI.”
- Liberalisation of FDI not considered
 - There are both theoretical and empirical inconsistencies in the OECD methodology.
 - For example, change in regulatory measures in one policy area can lead to dramatic changes in the STRI in another policy area which is not very useful for policy purposes.
 - It seems obsolete that India’s foreign entry restrictions are being classified as being the most restrictive derecognizing the 1991 reforms.
 - In addition, the data seems to have been generated by rather arbitrary procedures and reflects a developed country bias.

INDIAN ECONOMY**7th Economic Census 2019**

In the run up to upcoming 7th Edition of Economic Census, a national training workshop of the Master Trainers was organized by the Ministry of Statistics and Program Implementation (MoSPI). The census is to begin in June this year.

7th Economic Census -2019

- The 7th Economic Census -2019 is being conducted by MoSPI to provide disaggregated information on various operational and structural aspects of all establishments in the country.
- MoSPI has partnered with Common Service Centres, CSC e-Governance Services India Limited, a Special Purpose Vehicle under the MEITY as the implementing agency for 7th Economic Census.
- An IT based digital platform for data capture, validation, report generation and dissemination will be used in this Economic Census.

About Economic Censuses

- In 1976, Government of India launched a plan scheme called Economic Census and Surveys.

- It is the census of the Indian economy through counting all entrepreneurial units in the country which involved in any economic activities of either agricultural or non-agricultural sector which are engaged in production and/or distribution of goods and/or services not for the sole purpose of own consumption.
- It provides detailed information on operational and other characteristics such as number of establishments, number of persons employed, source of finance, type of ownership etc.
- This information used for micro level/ decentralized planning and to assess contribution of various sectors of the economy in the gross domestic product (GDP).

Censuses till date

- Total Six Economic Censuses (EC) have been conducted till date.
- In 1977 CSO conducted First economic census in collaboration with the Directorate of Economics & Statistics (DES) in the States/UTs.
- The Second EC was carried out in 1980 followed by the Third EC in 1990. The fourth edition took place in 1998 while the fifth EC was held in 2005.
- The Sixth edition of Economic Census was conducted in 2013.

ISSUES RELATED TO INTERNAL SECURITY AND DISASTER MANAGEMENT

Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery (GFDRR)

India is unanimously chosen as co-chair of the Consultative Group (CG) of Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery (GFDRR) for the fiscal year 2020. The decision was taken during the CG meeting of GFDRR held in Geneva, Switzerland.

Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery

- GFDRR is a global partnership that helps developing countries better understand and reduce their vulnerability to natural hazards and climate change.
- GFDRR is a grant-funding mechanism, managed by the World Bank that supports disaster risk management projects worldwide.
- It is presently working on the ground with over 400 local, national, regional, and international partners and provides knowledge, funding, and technical assistance.

India and GFDRR

- India became member of CG of GFDRR in 2015 and expressed its interest to co-chair in last meeting of CG held in October 2018.
- India's candidature was backed by its consistent progress in disaster risk reduction (DRR) in the country and its initiative to form a coalition on disaster resilient infrastructure.
- This is the first time that India has been afforded the opportunity of co-chairing the CG meeting of GFDRR.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY- EVERYDAY SCIENCE, SPACE, NUCLEAR, DEFENCE ETC

NASA's Artemis to put first woman on Moon

NASA's plans for the first woman on the lunar surface in 2024 in its ambitious plan named Artemis.

Artemis Mission

- ARTEMIS stands for Acceleration, Reconnection, Turbulence and Electrodynamics of Moon's Interaction with the Sun.
- As the name suggests, the two spacecraft will measure what happens when the Sun's radiation hits our rocky moon, where there is no magnetic field to protect it.
- Artemis is also the Greek goddess of the Moon and twin sister of the god Apollo.
- The Apollo program famously put the first men on the lunar surface in the 1960 and 70s.

Work in progress for Artemis

- The program is still very much in its infancy.
- NASA has been developing a rocket and crew capsule to take people into deep space, those vehicles still have yet to actually carry any astronauts.
- NASA is developing new hardware including new lunar landers, in order for this project to be a success.
- Fifty years after the first person set his foot on the moon, NASA will also reveal three lunar rocks that Neil Armstrong picked using tongs to pile about 20 rocks into a specialized collection box.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

When you feel like quitting, think about why you started.