

POLITY & GOVERNANCE**Punjab's Claim on Chandigarh**

Recently, the Punjab Assembly passed a resolution reiterating the state's claim on Chandigarh.

About

- Recently, the Ministry of Home Affairs issued a notification stating that employees of Chandigarh UT administration will get the same pay and other benefits as those working under the central government.
- Under the rules, the retirement age of Chandigarh employees will increase from 58 to 60 years and women employees will get childcare leave of two years instead of the current one year.
- **Punjab's stand:**
 - ❖ The State accused the Centre of "trying to upset this balance" in the administration of the Union Territory and other common assets "through many of its recent actions.
 - ❖ Federalism is being hurt by superseding the powers of the Centre.

Punjab Reorganisation Act, 1966

- The resolution states that the reorganisation of Punjab was done through the Punjab Reorganisation Act, 1966.
- Further, Punjab was reorganised into the state of Haryana, UT of Chandigarh and parts of it were also given to then UT Himachal Pradesh.
- In administration, the balance was maintained for common assets including Bhakra Beas Management Board (BBMB) by providing management positions in some proportion to nominees of both the states.
 - ❖ Recently, the Centre advertised the BBMB posts to officers of all states and the central government. The issue is that earlier these posts were filled up by officers from Punjab and Haryana. This is being taken as that the centre is intervening in this maintained balance.
- Chandigarh is administered with a ratio of 60:40 officers of Punjab and Haryana

How Chandigarh came into being?

- **Nehru's idea:**
 - ❖ Before Chandigarh, the temporary capital of Indian Punjab was Shimla but PM Jawaharlal Nehru wanted to have a modern city as the capital. Thus, the idea of Chandigarh came into existence.
- **Punjab Government + Central Government:**
 - ❖ The Punjab government, in consultation with the Centre, decided the picturesque foothills of the Shivaliks to be the new capital of Punjab.
- **Official capital:**
 - ❖ In 1953, Chandigarh became the official capital of Punjab and was also inaugurated by then President Rajendra Prasad.
- **Birth of Haryana:**
 - ❖ Haryana was created through the Punjab Reorganisation Act of 1966.
 - ❖ Haryana was born on a linguistic basis.
 - ❖ Through the act, the centre took direct control over Chandigarh by creating a new Union Territory.
 - ❖ The hill territories of Punjab were transferred to Himachal Pradesh by the central government.
 - ❖ Technically, The Capital of Punjab (Development and Regulation) Act, 1952 identifies Chandigarh as the Capital of Punjab. The arrangements of the 1952 act were not changed even after the arrival of the States Reorganisation Act, 1966.
- **Aggressive Movements Claiming Chandigarh:**
 - ❖ Prime Minister Indira Gandhi announced that Haryana would get its own capital and Chandigarh would be given to Punjab.
 - ❖ Gandhi had to take the decision after a leader of the Punjabi Suba movement Fateh Singh threatened self-immolation if Chandigarh was not transferred to Punjab.
 - ❖ The partition of Chandigarh was also considered by the centre but later opposed.
 - ❖ Haryana was given office and residential accommodation in Chandigarh for use for 5 years until having its own capital.
- **Rajiv-Longowal Accord, 1985:**

- ❖ In 1985, the Rajiv-Longowal Accord was signed between then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and Akali leader Harchand Singh Longowal.
- ❖ One among other things was the transfer of Chandigarh to Punjab and the date of transfer was also fixed on 26 January 1986.
- ❖ Before the event took place, militants assassinated Harchand Singh Longowal.

Way Ahead

- The dispute needs a solution that will satisfy all the stakeholders without any biases.

Union Territories

- Unlike the states of India, which have their own governments, Union Territories (UTs) are federal territories, administered by the union government of India.
- In UTs, the central government appoints the Lieutenant Governor, who is the administrator and the representative of the President of India.
- However, as an exception, Puducherry and Delhi have an elected legislature and government, as they were granted partial statehood, under the special Constitutional amendment.
- Currently, India has eight Union Territories including, Delhi, Andaman and Nicobar, Chandigarh, Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu, Jammu and Kashmir, Ladakh, Lakshadweep, and Puducherry.

IMPORTANT FACTS FOR PRELIM**1. BHARATNET PROJECT**

- The implementation of BharatNet has slowed and is likely to miss the 2025 completion deadline owing to a number of factors.

Progress made so far

- As of February 2022, only about 1.72 lakh of the initially targeted 2.5 lakh gram panchayats had been connected to the central grid under BharatNet.
- Of these, 1.5 lakh gram panchayats had been connected by 2017, within the first three years of the project being re-christened 'BharatNet'.

About BharatNet Project

- It is a project envisioned by the Government of India to digitally connect all the Gram Panchayats (GPs) and Villages of India.
- It originally aimed to provide broadband services at 100 Mbps to around 2.5 lakh gram panchayats of the country.
- It is a highly scalable network infrastructure accessible on a non-discriminatory basis.
- It is the world's largest rural connectivity scheme to be connected by the Optical Fibre network.
- Aim: To provide on-demand, affordable broadband connectivity of 2 Mbps to 20 Mbps for all households of India especially in rural areas.
- Implementing Agency: The project is being implemented by Bharat Broadband Network Limited (BBNL) through a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV).
- Funding: The entire project is being funded by the Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF), which was set up for improving telecom services in rural and remote areas of the country.
- The scope of work under BharatNet PPP Project includes:
 - ❖ Connecting the remaining unconnected GPs under BharatNet project (Phase 1 & Phase 2) and all the inhabited Villages beyond the GPs.
 - ❖ Upgradation of the existing BharatNet Network from Linear to Ring topology.
 - ❖ Operation and Maintenance (O&M) and Utilisation of the existing as well as the newly deployed network.
- Support: Central Public Sector in Undertakings (CPSUs) BSNL, RailTel, and PGCIL are providing the optical fibre network for broadband connections for the BharatNet project.

Benefits:

- It would reduce the cost of broadband services in India.
- It would have advantages like easy maintenance, faster implementation, and utilisation of the present power line infrastructure.
- It would provide internet connectivity to citizens especially in rural areas via Wi-Fi Hotspots.
- It would provide a boost to the economy and would generate around 10 crore man-days of employment during the rollout of the project.
- It will help in the expedition of government's initiatives such as Make In India, Start-up India, Stand-up India etc

- It is considered to be the backbone of 'Digital India' aiming to reduce the digital divide between urban and rural India.

2. Near Field Communications (NFC)

- Google Pay has recently launched a new feature in India, 'Tap to pay for UPI', in collaboration with Pine Labs.

- ❖ The feature makes use of Near Field Communication (NFC) technology.

What is Near Field Communication (NFC)?

- It is a short-range wireless connectivity technology that allows NFC-enabled devices to communicate with each other and transfer information quickly and easily with a single touch — whether to pay bills, exchange business cards, download coupons or share a document.
- It transmits data through electromagnetic radio fields, to enable communication between two devices.
 - ❖ Both devices must contain NFC chips, as transactions take place within a very short distance.
 - ❖ NFC-enabled devices must be either physically touching or within a few centimetres from each other for data transfer to occur.
- In 2004, consumer electronics companies, Nokia, Philips and Sony together formed the NFC Forum, which outlined the architecture for NFC technology to create powerful new consumer-driven products.
 - ❖ Nokia released the first NFC-enabled phone in 2007

How does it work?

- Google Pay has been the first among UPI apps to bring the Tap to Pay feature to work on POS terminals.
- It will allow users with UPI accounts configured on Google Pay to make payments just by tapping their NFC-enabled Android smartphones on any Pine Labs Android POS terminal.
- Once users tap their phones on the POS terminal, it will automatically open the Google pay app with the payment amount pre-filled.
- Users can then verify the amount and merchant name and authenticate the payment, using their UPI PIN.
- They will be notified once the payment is successful.
- The process is much faster compared to scanning a QR code or entering the UPI-linked mobile number which has been the conventional way till now.

The other applications of NFC technology

- NFC tech has a wide range of applications besides driving payment services like Google Wallet and Apple Pay.
- It is used in contactless banking cards to perform money transactions or to generate contactless tickets for public transport.
- Contactless cards and readers use NFC in several applications from securing networks and buildings to monitoring inventory and sales, preventing auto theft, keeping tabs on library books, and running unmanned toll booths.
- It is present in speakers, household appliances, and other electronic devices
- It also has an application in healthcare, to monitor patient stats through NFC-enabled wristbands. NFC is used in wireless charging too.

Safety Level

- It is designed for an operation between devices within a few centimetres from each other.
- This makes it difficult for attackers to record the communication between the devices compared to other wireless technologies which have a working distance of several metres.
- The user of the NFC-enabled device determines by the touch gesture which entity the NFC communication should take place with, making it more difficult for the attacker to get connected.
- The security level of NFC communication is by default higher compared to other wireless communication protocols.
- The NFC Forum has also added Peer to Peer communication which is a mechanism to cipher all exchanged data to avoid external interpretation of recorded communication.

3. Digital Form J

The Punjab Mandi Board has decided to send a 'digital form J' on the WhatsApp number of farmers from this Rabi procurement season.

What is the ‘J form’ ?

- ‘J form’ is the sale receipt of a farmer’s agricultural produce in mandis (grain market).
- These forms were earlier issued manually by arthiyas (commission agents) because in Punjab, a majority of farmers sell their crops through such agents only.
 - ❖ Several arthiyas had the habit of keeping these forms with themselves, instead of providing it to the farmers, which was their right.
 - ❖ But by getting digitised J form, farmers will now have a clear record of the crop sold and income received in lieu of that and it will save their time as well, ensuring that they do not need to run to arthiyas to get copies of their sale.
- These forms will be delivered directly on a farmer’s WhatsApp number immediately after a sale is confirmed on the system by the arthiyas and buyers, who are mainly government procurement agencies

Benefits for Farmers:

- The move, aimed at bringing transparency as well as empowering farmers, will make Punjab the first state in the country to provide digitised form J in real-time.
- The move is expected to benefit around 9 lakh registered farmers who will be looking to sell their crop (wheat) at MSP during this procurement season.
- The ‘J form’ can be used for raising finance from financial institutions, IT waivers, subsidy claims, and farmer’s insurance.
- It can also help farmers get admission for their wards in educational institutes abroad.

How will the government benefit?

- The government will have a proper record of the land under cultivation for both the wheat and paddy crops in the state as well as an idea of their average per acre yield.
- People who are doing sales/purchases in the mandis for the other crops can be asked to log their purchases through the J form to have the accuracy of total land and production.
- The system can to a large extent check the sale of crops from other states in the mandis of Punjab.
- The J forms will ensure that the government has an idea of the total land under cultivation and total yield.
- In case of unusual procurements, the government will be able to identify accounts from which the fraudulent transaction was made.

DAILY ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE

Q1. Post COVID-19, the normalisation of the Indian economy has now been disturbed by the ongoing geopolitical uncertainties. Suggest steps India must take in order to achieve its growth objectives. (250 words)

Introduction

Fitch has slashed India’s growth forecast for next fiscal to 8.5% on high energy prices due to the adverse impact of the ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict on the global economy.

With the Omicron wave subsiding quickly, containment measures have been scaled back, setting the stage for a pick-up in GDP growth momentum. It needs to be seen if India’s recovery can be sustained amidst inflation.

Body

Geopolitical uncertainties and its impact

- **CAD deficit:** Other economic challenges emanating from global uncertainties may include a worsening of the current account balance due to higher import bills with a depreciating rupee.
- **Russia-Ukraine war:** There would also be some sectoral supply-side bottlenecks and cost escalation.
 - ❖ Sectors that draw heavily on petroleum products, such as fertilizers, iron and steel foundries, transportation, construction and coal, would be adversely affected.
 - ❖ Due to the discontinuation of transactions through SWIFT, there would be some disruption in trade to and from Russia and Ukraine.
- **Financial outflows:** There would also be some adverse effects with regard to financial flows.
 - ❖ Net foreign portfolio investment (FPI) outflows during October to December 2021 increased to U.S.\$6.3 billion.
 - ❖ Net foreign direct investment (FDI) inflows have also been falling during this period although they have remained positive.

Measures needed

- **RBI's monetary policy:** As developed countries are being forced to raise their interest rates and inflationary pressures continue to mount in India and abroad, the RBI may find it advisable to raise the policy rate with a view to stemming inflationary pressures and outward flow of the U.S. dollar even as the growth objective would be served by fiscal policy initiatives.
- **Controlling fuel prices:** Policymakers may have to exercise a critical choice regarding who bears the burden of higher prices of petroleum products in India among consumers and industrial users, oil marketing companies and the Government.
- **Consumption growth:** If growth is to be revived, maximum attention should be paid to supporting consumption growth and reducing the cost of industrial inputs with a view to improving capacity utilisation.
- **Managing the Elevated Inflation Levels:** India is at the risk of inflation; it is at an elevated level which is why the RBI has been conservative; it has projected the growth rate at 10.5% only.
- The RBI has also adopted a policy to support economic growth. It has increased the limit of ways and means advances to the states and has allowed them to borrow more amounts from the RBI.
- The growth projection also depends upon policies adopted by the government, especially the fiscal policy and monetary policies.
 - ❖ So far India has proved to adopt such policies more wisely as compared to other countries.
 - ❖ E.g. PLI Production Linked Incentive Scheme, Aatmanirbhar Yojana etc.

Conclusion

India as the fifth largest economy in the world has to focus on growth recovery that is more sustainable and by just drawing satisfaction from just the growth numbers would not do much. India is slowly but surely on the path to economic recovery and investment and policy push is the way to sustain this growth momentum.

DAILY QUIZ

Q1. Which of the statements is /are correct regarding Antarctica ?

1. The temperature in the middle of Antarctica is much colder than the temperature on the coasts.
2. It has no trees or bushes.
3. Himadri is the permanent research base station in Antarctica.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- (a) 1 and 3 only (b) 2 only (c) **1 and 2 only** (d) only 1

Q2. 'Digital Form J' recently seen in the news, it is related to which of the following?

- (a) **Agricultural produce**
- (b) Conservation of Biodiversity
- (c) School Education
- (d) Income Tax

Q3. Consider the following statements:

1. The Governor is the constitutional head of the state.
2. The President of India acts as the executive head of the union territory.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) Neither 1 nor 2 (b) 2 only (c) **1 and 2 only** (d) only 1

Q4. Arrange the following places from the West to East direction

1. Kalapani 2. Limpiadhura 3. Lipulekh

Select the correct answer using the codes given below.

- (a) 1-2-3 (b) 2-3-1 (c) 1-3-2 (d) **2-1-3**

Q5. Endosulfan, frequently seen in the news, is:

- (a) fertiliser (b) **an insecticide** (c) a drug for diabetes (d) a herbicide