

ECONOMY

❖ **What are the issues with the new Quality Control Orders for fibres?**

➤ **CONTEXT: Quality Control Orders (QCO) have been issued for fibres (cotton, polyester and viscose) that constitute the basic raw materials for majority of the Indian textile and clothing industry.**

- While the standards were available earlier too, these are now revised and made mandatory for a few, and yet to be finalised for others.

- International manufacturers of these fibres, who supply to India, are also mandated to get a certificate from the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS), which is the certifying authority for the QCOs.

➤ **Why are fibres covered under QCOs?**

- The Indian textile and clothing industry consumes both indigenous and imported fibres and filaments.

- The imports are for different reasons — cost competitiveness, non-availability in the domestic market, or to meet a specified demand of the overseas buyer.

- The main aim of the QCO is to control import of sub-quality and cheaper items and to ensure that customers get quality products.

- The entire supply chain, from the textile manufacturers to exporters, has so far focused on quality standards prescribed by the buyers.

➤ **What challenges does the new mandate bring?**

- India imports annually 50,000 - 60,000 tonnes of viscose fibre and its variants such as Modal and Tencel LF from nearly 20 countries. In the case of polyester, almost 90,000 tonnes of polyester fibre and 1.25 lakh tonnes of POY (Polyester Partially Oriented Yarn) are imported annually.

- The overseas fibre manufacturers sell not only to India but to other countries too. The supply of some fibres to India is in small quantities. Getting the certificate from the BIS involves a cost and hence not all are interested in getting the certificate.

- The Indian textile manufacturers who are dependent on these suppliers for the raw material will have to either look at other suppliers or lose orders. For instance, a bed linen exporter in Tiruppur district imports polyester filament with functional properties from Turkey based on the demand of his European buyers.

- Though the imported filament constitutes just 6% of the product, the buyer has specified the source for the filament. Since the Turkey company is not interested in getting the BIS certificate, the exporter in Tiruppur has lost an order to Pakistan.

- Furthermore, BIS officials have to visit the manufacturing unit abroad before issuing the certificate and this process is yet to be completed for all suppliers who have applied for the BIS registration. There is no clarity on the fibres that were shipped before the certification and which will reach India in the coming days.

- The textile buyers, be it domestic or international, have established a supply chain over the years and when there are constraints because of certification, the value chain is disrupted.

➤ **What is the way forward?**

- Be it viscose or polyester, some varieties of the fibre have special functional properties and separate HS (Harmonised Commodity Description and Coding System) code when imported. But, these are bundled in the QCO and thus have uniform quality standards.

- The textile industry imports just small quantities of such fibres and restricting its availability will deny Indian consumers of niche products. The textile industry is of the view that import of speciality fibres that are used as blends with other fibres should be made available without restriction. Also, any overseas applicant for the BIS certificate should get it without delay after inspection.

- Several textile units use lower grade fibres that are generated from rejects and wastes and these are not covered under the QCO. There is also a fear of costs going up for basic garments. Further, polyester spun yarn mills in the MSME sector need capital support to set up labs to test products. The QCO should be implemented only after the ambiguities are cleared and the anomalies set right, says the industry.

- The BIS standards are mandatory for **viscose staple fibre** from March 29 and for five polyester products, including polyester staple fibre and polyester spun yarn from April 3.

INDIA AND THE WORLD/DIPLOMACY

❖ **India and the Korean War**

➤ **CONTEXT: In its G20 year, India has declared it will represent the voice of the “Global South” for peace. Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s message to Russian President Vladimir Putin that “This is not the era of war” has won him plaudits from the Western alliance that is backing Ukraine.**

- It has given rise to expectations in some quarters that India, which often casts itself in the role of “Vishwaguru”, could use its good offices with both Kyiv and Moscow to help bring the war to an end.

- It has also rekindled interest in the only other diplomatic intervention by India in a distant war seven decades ago — one that revealed both its international heft as well as exposed its limitations.

➤ **Outbreak of the Korean war**

- As the 1950 Korean War pitted Cold War opponents against each other, Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru made a huge diplomatic push to prevent an escalation into another world war, and for the parties to arrive at a quick ceasefire.

- The efforts were only partially successful. Even so, India is counted among the countries that contributed to bringing the war to a close. India also discharged an important role in the months after the truce, as chair of a committee to repatriate prisoners of war.
 - ✓ In a 2013 essay, 'Between the Blocs: India, the United Nations, and Ending the Korean War', published in The Journal of Korean Studies, British historian Robert Barnes documented the efforts of Nehru and his envoys to bring the war to a "swift conclusion, prevent the UN from adopting a policy that might lead to its escalation, and to reconcile the divergent positions of the two superpower blocs".
- A couple of attempts by India to bring about a ceasefire ended in failure. However, its 1952 proposals for the exchange of prisoners enabled the July 1953 armistice agreement, which marks 70 years this year.
- On June 25, 1950, North Korean forces invaded South Korea. The peninsula had been divided at the end of World War II along the **38th Parallel**, with Soviet and US forces occupying the North and South respectively.
- In 1948, after the two Koreas declared themselves separate countries, and held their own elections, the occupying forces departed. However, neither the North nor the South accepted the other and to this day, both claim the entire Korean peninsula and the islands on either side.

➤ **India at the UN**

At the time of the invasion, India was among the six non-permanent members of the Security Council, and held its rotating presidency that month. Three resolutions on the war came up in quick succession.

- The USSR was boycotting due to the UN's refusal to replace Taiwan with the People's Republic of China in the Security Council — and with no threat of a Soviet veto, the US moved the first resolution on the same day as the invasion, calling for a withdrawal of North troops from South territory.
- ✓ India voted in favour, pleasantly surprising the US. India's UN representative Benegal Rau and the UK representative persuaded the US to tone down the language of the resolution, calling the North's action a "breach of peace" rather than an "act of aggression".
- A second US-sponsored resolution on June 27 asked UN members to offer "such assistance as may be necessary" to South Korea to repel the invasion. President Harry S Truman announced he would deploy the Seventh Fleet to the Taiwan strait, and step up assistance to the French in Indo-China.
- ✓ Rau initially refused to vote, but Nehru eventually accepted the resolution after the British High Commissioner in India conveyed there was "no room for neutrality when it came to aggression".
- India abstained on the third resolution on July 7, which gave US forces command over combined international forces under UN auspices. Not wanting to be seen as shirking an international call to duty by the UN, India sent the 60th Parachute Field Ambulance, which did outstanding work treating wounded soldiers.
- Nehru's view at this time was that giving the People's Republic of China admission into the Security Council could provide resolution in Korea. The USSR returned to the Security Council at the end of August, and blocked further US resolutions, including one on sanctioning China.
- Due to the Soviet vetoes, the US shifted the action to the UN General Assembly. Here India failed in an effort to block a US-British resolution for UN forces to cross into North Korea. As international troops crossed the 38th Parallel, Chinese forces entered the fray, and it seemed the crisis might spiral out of control.
- Nehru's proposal for a truce, and talks with the communist side on Korea and Taiwan after cessation of hostilities found traction at the UN. Rau was appointed to a three-member committee to come up with ceasefire proposals that were overwhelmingly approved by the General Assembly.
- ✓ But China rejected the proposals, and in February 1951, a US resolution in the General Assembly for sanctioning China was adopted with a decisive majority. Stung by repeated failure, Nehru cooled off.

➤ **India and Prisoners of War**

- Months later, in 1952, when the Panmunjom talks for an armistice between the UN and the communist side (comprising Chinese and North Korean officials) unravelled over the fate of the PoWs, India got into the act again.
- The UN negotiators insisted that no PoW would be repatriated against his will — by their count, only 70,000 of 170,000 prisoners in their custody wanted to be sent back. The communists wanted a full exchange.
- Nehru put the forceful V K Krishna Menon on the job of finding a way to break the impasse. Backed by Britain and Canada, Menon proposed a commission of four representatives, two from each bloc (Sweden, Switzerland, Czechoslovakia, and Poland) plus a fifth country as "umpire", that would take charge of all PoWs at war's end. Those willing to be repatriated would be sent home immediately; the fate of the unwilling would be decided over the next six months. The UNGA adopted the proposal, but with the Soviet bloc opposing and China rejecting, it had to be shelved.
- But when armistice negotiations resumed in April 1953, the proposal became the basis for the eventual solution on the PoWs. A Neutral Nations Repatriation Committee was set up with the same four member countries. India was selected to chair the committee; Nehru sent Lt Gen K S Thimayya for the job, and P N Haksar as his political adviser.
- The committee would hold the PoWs for 90 days; the Korean conference would discuss the fate of the unrepatriated for 30 days; after this the prisoners would be either released or handed over to the UN General

Assembly. Maj Gen S S P Thorat was appointed Commander of the Custodian Force India, which would take custody of over 22,000 PoWs who were unwilling to go back.

- The Armistice Agreement was signed on July 27, 1953.
- As the world grapples to find an end to the war in Ukraine, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's invitation to President Xi Jinping to visit his country has led to speculation that Beijing, after stitching up the Saudi-Iran peace deal, might be readying for a more high-profile peacemaking role.
- Brazil's President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva has said he wants to launch a "peace club" of countries, including China and India, that can work together to find a way out in Ukraine. Any role India might want to play is likely to be informed by its experience in trying to end another war, 70 years ago.

PRELIMS

1. National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT)

➤ **CONTEXT: The National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) upheld the ₹1,337 crore fine imposed on Google by the Competition Commission of India (CCI).**

➤ **About NCLAT**

- NCLAT is the Appellate Tribunal to hear and dispose of appeals against any direction issued or decision made or order passed by the Competition Commission of India (CCI).
- The tribunal was formed as appellate authority to the aggrieved persons against the orders of National Company Law Tribunal which were passed under Section 61 of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016.
- National Company Law Appellate Tribunal was formed on 1 June 2016 by the Central Government under Companies Act 2013.
- The NCLAT was formed as a body with an appellate jurisdiction at the same time when NCLT was established as a major reform as per powers granted to the Ministry of Corporate Affairs in India.

➤ **Mandate**

- The tribunal is responsible for hearing appeals from the orders of National Company Law Tribunal(s) (NCLT), starting on 1 June 2016.
- The tribunal also hears appeals from orders issued by the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India under Section 202 and Section 211 of IBC.
- It also hears appeals from any direction issued, decision made, or order passed by the Competition Commission of India (CCI) and the National Financial Reporting Authority (NFRA).

➤ **Benches and Appeal**

- National Company Law Appellate Tribunal has principle bench in Delhi and other one in Chennai.
- The decisions of National Company Law Appellate Tribunal are appealable in Supreme Court of India.

➤ **Structure of NCLAT**

- The NCLAT includes a Chairperson, 3 judicial members, and 2 technical members.
- It consists of a total of not more than eleven members.

➤ **Qualifications for Judicial member and Technical member :**

- Should be of 50 years old and Served at least 5 years as District Judge or High Court Judge or has a minimum 10 years' experience serving in any judicial authority.

➤ **Technical:**

- Should be of 50 years old.
- Any person practicing as a chartered Accountant, cost accountant or company secretary for a period of 15 years.
- Any person holding the rank of Secretary or Additional Secretary to the central government and is a member of the Indian Corporate Law Service or Indian Legal Service for more than 15 years.

➤ **Powers and functions**

- Hear appeals against orders issued by Competition Commission of India (CCI) and Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India.

2. Rising Antarctic ice melt will dramatically slow global ocean flows, study says

➤ **CONTEXT: Rapidly melting Antarctic ice is dramatically slowing down the flow of water through the world's oceans, and could have a disastrous impact on global climate, the marine food chain and even the stability of ice shelves, new research has found.**

- The "overturning circulation" of the oceans, driven by the movement of denser water towards the sea floor, helps deliver heat, carbon, oxygen and vital nutrients around the globe.
- But deep ocean water flows from the Antarctic could decline by 40% by 2050, according to a study published recently in the journal *Nature*.

➤ **What the study found**

- As temperatures rise, freshwater from Antarctica's melting ice enters the ocean, reducing the salinity and density of the surface water and diminishing that downward flow to the sea's bottom.
- While past research has looked at what could happen to similar overturning circulation in the North Atlantic – the mechanism behind the doomsday scenario that would see Europe suffer from an Arctic blast as heat transport falters – less has been done on Antarctic bottom water circulation.

- Scientists relied on around 35 million computing hours over two years to crank through a variety of models and simulations up to the middle of this century, finding deepwater circulation in the Antarctic could weaken at twice the rate of decline in the North Atlantic.
- **Disrupting the base of the food chain**
- The effect of meltwater on global ocean circulation has not yet been included in the complex models used by the IPCC to describe future climate change scenarios, but it is going to be considerable.
- Ocean overturning allows nutrients to rise up from the bottom, with the Southern Ocean supporting about three-quarters of global phytoplankton production, the base of the food chain.
- If sinking near Antarctica slow down, it ultimately slow down the whole circulation and so also reduce the amount of nutrients that get returned from the deep ocean back up to the surface.
- **Leaving more CO2 in the atmosphere**
- The study's findings also suggest the ocean would not be able to absorb as much carbon dioxide as its upper layers become more stratified, leaving more CO2 in the atmosphere. The study showed that warm water intrusions in the western Antarctic ice shelf would increase, but it did not look at how this might create a feedback effect and generate even more melting.

3. Rare diseases

➤ **CONTEXT: All drugs and food for special medical purposes, imported for personal use for the treatment of all rare diseases listed under the National Policy for Rare Diseases 2021, have been exempted from basic customs duty by the central government.**

➤ **Duty exemption**

• The exemption has been granted by the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC).

• It has been granted by substituting "Drugs, Medicines or Food for Special Medical Purposes (FSMP)" instead of "drugs or medicines".

• Now, in order to avail of this exemption, the individual importer has to produce a certificate from the central or state director health services or district medical officer/civil surgeon of the district.

• Exemptions have already been provided to specified drugs for treatment of spinal muscular atrophy or duchenne muscular dystrophy.

• Need for exemption:

✓ Drugs or special foods required for the treatment of these diseases are expensive and need to be imported.

✓ This exemption will result in substantial cost savings and provide much needed relief to the patients.

• What is the tax on life-saving drugs and medicines?

✓ Drugs/medicines generally attract basic customs duty of 10 per cent, while some categories of lifesaving drugs/vaccines attract a concessional rate of 5 per cent or nil.

➤ **What is a Rare Disease?**

- A rare disease is a health condition of low prevalence that affects a small number of people compared with other prevalent diseases in the general population.
- It is estimated that globally around 6000 to 8000 rare diseases exist with new rare diseases being reported in the medical literature regularly.
- However, 80% of all rare disease patients are affected by approximately 350 rare diseases.
- Rare diseases include genetic diseases, rare cancers, infectious tropical diseases and degenerative diseases.
- 80% of rare diseases are genetic in origin and hence disproportionately impact children.
- There is no universally accepted definition of a rare disease.
- Different countries define rare diseases differently.

Easing health costs

The government has announced policy changes in import duties to ease the healthcare costs of rare diseases. A lowdown:

■ Full exemption from basic customs duty on imported drugs and special medical foods for personal use in treating rare diseases

■ Certificate from health authorities required for individuals to get the exemption

■ Previously, drugs/medicines

attracted customs duty of 10%, with some lifesaving drugs having concessional rates

■ Pembrolizumab, used in cancer treatment, also fully exempted from basic customs duty

Annual treatment costs for rare diseases can range from ₹10 lakh to over ₹1 crore per year



THE SCENARIO IN INDIA

FROM OVER 7,000 IDENTIFIED RARE DISEASES, 95% DO NOT HAVE ANY FDA APPROVED ORPHAN DRUGS

80% of the diseases occur at birth and are genetic in nature

50% babies born with rare diseases die within a year of birth

ESTIMATES

9-10 crore | No. of people in India who suffer from rare diseases, which is 25% of global patients

5.4 to 6.5 lakh | No. of people in Hyderabad, of a population of 90 lakh, who suffer from rare diseases

40% | Chances of error in diagnosis during a patient's first visit

4.8 years | Average time taken for diagnosis

20 years | Maximum time taken to detect



SOME RARE DISEASES

- Thalassaemia
- Sickle cell anaemia
- Ataxia
- Lysosomal storage disorder
- Congenital insensitivity to pain (rarest of rare)
- Acquired aplastic anaemia
- Muscular dystrophy
- Multiple sclerosis
- Sweet syndrome
- Paediatric cardiomyopathy

ANSWER WRITING

Q. "Hate speech impedes pluralism and diversity by leading to polarisation in the society." In this context, discuss the reasons behind the increasing incidences of hate speech in India. Also, suggest certain measures for dealing with hate speech.

Hate speech refers to offensive discourse targeting a group, or an individual based on inherent characteristics such as race, religion or gender and that may threaten social peace. According to the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), there has been a six-fold increase in hate speech crimes in the country between 2014 and 2020. Supreme Court has time and again reiterated that there is no scope for hate crimes in the name of religion in a secular country like India and it is the primary duty of the state to protect its citizens from such crimes.

Reasons behind increasing incidences of hate speech in India:

- Negative stereotypes: The unfair practices in society generate discriminatory institutions, structures, and norms that validate and sustain unequal social relations. This leads to some people think of others as inferior and less worthy of respect.
- Nexus between religion and politics: Communalising agents often use hate speech to polarise the people in the name of religion for electoral gains. Because of communal hate speeches, India has witnessed many riots, and the most recent was the Delhi riots in 2020.
- Role of social media: The range and anonymity of social media platforms make them vulnerable to misuse. Fake narratives on the online platform lead to rumour-mongering and increasing incidences of hate speech.
- Lack of action by authorities on the ground: Victims rarely report incidents to the authorities for fear of retaliation or of not being taken seriously. Even when cases are reported lack of timely action by the authorities defeats the purpose.
- Lack of exclusive law for hate speech: In India, sections 153A and 505 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) are the main provisions that deal with inflammatory speeches and expressions which seek to punish 'hate speech'. The absence of a separate law to deal with hate speech has led to the misuse of existing loopholes.

Measures to deal with the problem of hate speech:

- Implementing T.K.Viswanathan Committee recommendations: In 2017, the committee submitted a report recommending stricter laws to curb online hate speech.
 - Each state should have a State Cyber Crime Coordinator, which should be an officer not below the rank of Inspector General of Police.
 - Each district should have a District Cyber Crime Cell.
 - It proposed a punishment of up to two years along with a ₹5,000 fine.
- Implementing law commission recommendations: The law commission in its 267th report suggested amendments to the Indian Penal Code by adding new provisions on 'Prohibiting incitement to hatred' following Section 153B of IPC and 'causing fear, alarm, or provocation of violence in certain cases' following Section 505 of IPC.
- Using an Alternate Dispute Resolution mechanism: It is a better way to address the problem of hate speech by means of negotiation, mediation, and arbitration.
- Education and Awareness: The education system in India can help to promote tolerance, compassion, and respect towards others. People should be made aware of the importance of diversity, a plural society, and how it contributes to India's unity.
- Regulating social media and mainstream media: The emergence of social media has created multiple platforms for the production, packaging, and dissemination of hate speech. Supreme court has also flagged concerns with respect to hate speech on TV debates. Therefore, steps should be taken for regulating these mediums.

Hate speech threatens two key doctrines of democracy: the guarantee of equal dignity to all and the public good of inclusiveness. There is a need for the adoption of a code of conduct by media, self-regulation by private and public institutions and raising public awareness about the importance of respecting pluralism and the dangers posed by hate speech.

MCQs

1. With reference to Geneva conventions consider the following
 1. Third Geneva Convention applies to prisoners of war,
 2. The Geneva Conventions have been ratified by all UN member states.
 3. Under the Rome Statute of the ICC, it is the ICC that has jurisdiction in respect of war crimes.

Which of the above statement/s is/are correct?

a) 1 and 2 only b) 2 and 3 only c) 1 and 3 only **d) 1, 2 and 3**
2. Which of the following is/are the effects of global warming?
 - a) Melting of polar ice caps
 - b) Increase in energy consumption
 - c) Rise of sea level
 - d) All of these**
3. Which of the following is/are correct about National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT)?
 1. It is a quasi-judicial body set up to govern companies established under the Companies Act, 2013
 2. It is based on the recommendations of Justice Eradi Committee

Choose the correct answer using the codes given below?

- a) 1 only b) 2 only c) **Both 1 and 2** d) Neither 1 nor 2
4. Pench Tiger Reserve often mentioned in news is one of the premier tiger reserves of India and the first one to straddle across two states, which of the following are that two states?
a) Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra
 b) Rajasthan and Gujarat
 c) Maharashtra and Karnataka
 d) Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh
5. Consider the following statements about rare disease
1. It is also known as Orphan Disease, affects only a small number of people
 2. Most of the rare diseases are genetic in origin and so disproportionately impact children.
 3. 'Matchmaker Exchange', is a platform launched by India to share rare disease data.
- Which of the above statements is/are correct?
 a) 1 only b) 2 and 3 only c) 3 only **d) 1,2 and 3**
6. Boundary line "38th Parallel" recently seen in news is between which of the following Countries?
 a) USA and Canada
 b) USA and Mexico
c) North Korea and South Korea
 d) Israel and Palestine
7. In the contexts of Indian history, which of the following statement/s is/are correct regarding Vaikom Satyagraha which was in news due to its centenary celebrations?
1. It was a satyagraha against untouchability and caste discrimination.
 2. Mahatma Gandhi participated in this Satyagraha.
 3. There is no participation of women in this Satyagraha.
- Select the correct answer using the codes given below.
a) 1 and 2 only
 b) 2 and 3 only
 c) 1 and 3 only
 d) 1,2 and 3
8. With reference to EOS-06 satellite consider the following
1. The EOS-06 third generation satellite in the Oceansat series.
 2. The EOS-06 is envisaged to observe ocean color data, sea surface temperature and wind vector data to use in Oceanography, climatic and meteorological applications
- Choose the correct statement/s using the codes given below?
 a) 1 only
 b) 2 only
c) Both 1 and 2
 d) Neither 1 nor 2
9. With reference to the new Bureau of Indian standards (BIS) Act 2016, consider the following:
1. The Act establishes the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) as the National Standards Body of India.
 2. It makes hallmarking of precious metal articles voluntary based on self-declaration.
 3. Quality Control Orders (QCOs) are issued by various Ministries/Departments of the Government of India in the exercise of the powers conferred by the Act stipulating conformity of the products to Indian Standards.
- Select the correct statement/s using the codes below.
 a) 1 only
b) 1 and 3 only
 c) 2 only
 d) 2 and 3 only
10. Consider the following statements:
1. The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation is an intergovernmental international permanent organization.
 2. China, Russia, and India are founding members of Shanghai Cooperation Organisation.
- Which of the above statements is/are correct?
 a) 1 only
 b) 2 only
 c) Both 1 and 2
 d) Neither 1 nor 2