

10th June, 2024**1. PM Modi Cabinet Formation 2024****Recent events of importance**

- **Why in news:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi allocated portfolios for the Modi 3.0 government with several key ministers retaining their portfolios. Despite the expansion to 72 ministers due to coalition needs, there was no change in the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS).

- **Cabinet committees**

- **About**

- ◆ Cabinet Committees are smaller groups of ministers within the Government of India, each focused on specific areas of governance.
 - ◆ They are instrumental in reducing the burden on the full Cabinet by enabling more focused discussions and faster decision-making in specialized areas.

- **Constitutional/legal provisions**

- ◆ Articles 74 and 77 provide the general framework for the executive's functioning.
 - **Article 74** establishes the existence of the Council of Ministers to aid and advise the President.
 - **Article 77** deals with the conduct of business of the Government of India and allows the President to make rules for the more convenient transaction of business.
 - ◆ Government of India (Transaction of Business) Rules, 1961 provides detailed mechanisms and empower the Prime Minister to constitute Cabinet Committees.
 - Rule 6 provides the Prime Minister with the authority to constitute standing or ad hoc committees of the Cabinet and assign functions to them.
 - Rule 7 specifies the procedure for the conduct of business in such committees.
 - Rule 8 allows for the Prime Minister to appoint a member of any such committee as its Chairman.

- **Membership**

- ◆ The membership of each committee varies from three to eight. Usually, only Cabinet ministers are members of these committees.
 - ◆ However, it is not unheard of for non-Cabinet ministers to be members or special invitees to committees.
 - ◆ If the Prime Minister himself is a member of any such committee, he acts as the head of that committee.

- **Process**

- ◆ After the Union Cabinet is sworn in and ministerial portfolios are allocated, the Prime Minister sets up high-profile Cabinet Committees.
 - ◆ These committees consist of selected Cabinet members and are assigned specific functions.
 - ◆ The Prime Minister has the authority to establish new committees, change the number of committees, and modify their assigned functions.

- **Function**

- ◆ The committees resolve issues and formulate proposals for the consideration of the Cabinet and take decisions on matters assigned to them.
 - ◆ The Cabinet is empowered to review such decisions.

- **Existing Cabinet Committees**

- ◆ There are eight Cabinet committees at present:
 - Appointments Committee of the Cabinet,
 - Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs,
 - Cabinet Committee on Political Affairs,
 - Cabinet Committee on Investment and Growth,
 - Cabinet Committee on Security,
 - Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs,
 - Cabinet Committee on Employment & Skill Development, and
 - Cabinet Committee on Accommodation.

72-member NDA Ministry takes charge

61 Ministers are from the BJP and it are from its alliance partners in the NDA | 27 Ministers are from OBCs, 10 from SCs; five each from STs, minority communities | 24 States get representation; 43 Ministers are third-term MPs, five are former CMs

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Narendra Modi took the oath of office as Prime Minister for a third successive term on Sunday, along with 71 other members of his Council of Ministers, at a ceremony held at the Bharatgauri at the Rashtrapati Bhavan.

The new Ministry comprises 30 Cabinet Ministers, five Ministers of State with Independent Charge and 36 Ministers of State.

The team appears to be a mix of old and new. Sixty-one Ministers are from the BJP and it from its partners in the National Democratic Alliance.

Five leaders of the allies — former Karnataka Chief Minister and Janata Dal(S) leader H.D. Kumaraswamy; former Bihar Chief Minister and Hindustan Awami Morcha leader Ram Manohar Lohia; former Jharkhand Chief Minister and Jharkhand Mukti Morcha leader Chirag Paswan; Ram Mohan Naik of the Telugu Desam Party (TDP); and Rajendra Prasad Singh 'Laloo' of the Janata Dal(J) — have been given Cabinet berths.

Great Chandrababur of the Rashtriya Lok Dal and Pratap Singh Jadhav of the Shiv Sena Shinde faction have been appointed Ministers



Begin again: President Droupadi Murmu with the newly sworn-in Ministers at the Rashtrapati Bhavan on Sunday. (A. K. SINGH)

of State (Independent Charge). Smriti Irani of the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), Ram Nath Kohli of the Janata Dal (JD), Chandrababur Pema of the TDP and Ram Das Athavale of the Republican Party of India, have been made Ministers of State. The All Jharkhand Students Union did not receive any representation.

The Ministers are drawn from 24 States, including the BJP's core and five other Lok Sabha members from Kerala, Suresh Gopi. The choices also reflect caste and community representation with 27 Ministers belonging to the Other Backward Classes (OBC), 10 to the Scheduled Castes (SC), five to the Scheduled Tribes (ST) and five to minority communities.

Veterans return
At least 10 Ministers who have been in the government for the past 10 years have made a repeat entry into the government, including Rajnath Singh, Nitin Gadkari, Nirmala Sitharaman, Piyush Goyal, Gaurav Singh and Kiren Rijiju.

The NDA government appears to be aiming at emphasising continuity and experience, with 43 Ministers being third-term MPs, and 39 having been Union Ministers before.

Former Chief Ministers too found a good representation with Shree Singh Choudhan from Madhya Pradesh, Manohar Lal Khattar from Haryana and Sarbananda Sonowal from Assam, apart from Mr. Nigam and Mr. Kumaraswamy, being sworn in.

Community representation and the upcoming Assembly polls in Maharashtra, Haryana and Jharkhand were also kept in mind.

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- ◆ The committees on investment and employment were innovations introduced by the Modi government in 2019.
- ◆ All committees except the Cabinet Committee on Accommodation and Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs are headed by PM.

● Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS)

■ About

- ◆ CCS deals with issues related to national security and defense policy.
- ◆ Major decisions with respect to the significant appointments, issues of national security, defence expenditure of India, are taken by the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) in India.

■ Members

- ◆ Prime Minister chairs the CCS;
- ◆ Minister of External Affairs;
- ◆ Minister of Home Affairs;
- ◆ Minister of Finance; and
- ◆ Defence Minister

■ Functions

- ◆ It is responsible for debates, discussions and appointments of/ in the national security bodies.
- ◆ Major decisions with respect to the significant appointments, issues of national security, defence expenditure of India are taken by CCS.
- ◆ The CCS also brainstorms on issues relating to law and order and internal security, and policy matters concerning foreign affairs on security-related issues.
- ◆ **It also considers matters relating to atomic energy.**

● PM Modi Cabinet Formation 2024

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi's new Cabinet reflects a message of continuity, with key ministers retaining their portfolios from the previous term.
- The focus remains on ensuring steady progress in critical areas.

<p>Taking CHARGE Cabinet Ministers and their portfolios</p>  <p>■ NARENDRA MODI: Prime Minister and also in-charge of Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions; Department of Atomic Energy; Department of Space; all important policy issues; and all other portfolios not allocated to any Minister</p>	<p>■ Rajnath Singh: Defence</p> <p>■ Amit Shah: Home Affairs; and Cooperation</p> <p>■ Nitin Gadkari: Road Transport and Highways</p> <p>■ J.P. Nadda: Health and Family Welfare; and Chemicals and Fertilizers</p> <p>■ Shivraj Singh Chouhan: Agriculture & Farmers Welfare; and Rural Development</p> <p>■ Nirmala Sitharaman: Finance; and Corporate Affairs</p> <p>■ S. Jaishankar: External Affairs</p> <p>■ Manohar Lal: Housing and Urban Affairs; and Power</p> <p>■ H.D. Kumaraswamy: Heavy Industries; and Steel</p> <p>■ Piyush Goyal: Commerce and Industry</p> <p>■ Dharmendra Pradhan: Education</p>	<p>■ Jitan Ram Manjhi: Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises</p> <p>■ Rajiv Ranjan Singh: Panchayati Raj; and Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying</p> <p>■ Sarbananda Sonowal: Ports, Shipping & Waterways</p> <p>■ Virendra Kumar: Social Justice and Empowerment</p> <p>■ K. Ram Mohan Naidu: Civil Aviation</p> <p>■ Pralhad Joshi: Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution; and New and Renewable Energy.</p> <p>■ Jual Oram: Tribal Affairs</p> <p>■ Giriraj Singh: Textiles</p> <p>■ Ashwini Vaishnaw: Railways; Information and Broadcasting; and Electronics and Information Technology</p>	<p>■ Jyotiraditya Scindia: Communications; and Development of North Eastern Region</p> <p>■ Bhupender Yadav: Environment, Forest and Climate Change</p> <p>■ Gajendra Singh Shekhawat: Culture; Tourism</p> <p>■ Annpurna Devi: Women and Child Development</p> <p>■ Kiren Rijiju: Parliamentary Affairs; and Minority Affairs</p> <p>■ Hardeep Singh Puri: Petroleum and Natural Gas</p> <p>■ Mansukh Mandaviya: Labour and Employment; and Youth Affairs and Sports</p> <p>■ G. Kishan Reddy: Coal; and Mines</p> <p>■ Chirag Paswan: Food Processing Industries</p> <p>■ C.R. Patil: Jal Shakti</p>
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■ Prime Minister's Oversight

- ◆ PM Modi retains key responsibilities, including the Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions, Atomic Energy, and Space.
- ◆ He oversees all important policy issues and any portfolios not assigned to other ministers.

■ Analysis

- ◆ The Cabinet's composition reflects a balance between continuity and addressing coalition needs, ensuring experienced leadership in critical ministries while integrating new members for strategic growth.
- ◆ The focus is on cumulative progress in governance, with stability in key security and economic areas.

2. The Baltimore ship accident, the high stakes for India GS 2 (International events of importance)

- **Why in News:** The maritime world was shaken by the crash of the container ship Dali into the Francis Scott Key Bridge in Baltimore, United States, on March 26, 2024. The accident resulted in at least six fatalities and millions of dollars in property damage. The incident has drawn attention to India's significant role in global shipping.
- **India's Stake in Global Shipping**
 - **India's Role:** India has become a key player in global shipping, with Indian seafarers manning many ocean-going ships. Remittances from these seafarers are equivalent to about 15% of all foreign direct investment that India receives annually.
 - **The Dali Incident:** The crew of the Dali, which caused the Baltimore accident, is almost entirely Indian. The ship is managed by Synergy Maritime Group, a Singapore-based company run largely by Indians.
 - **Potential Financial Fallout:** The Dali accident could result in the highest-ever marine insurance payout, surpassing the \$1.5 billion paid out for the Costa Concordia cruise vessel capsizing in 2012. If it is proven that the managers neglected or avoided maintaining proper operating conditions, leading to the collision, there could be financial consequences for Synergy.
- **Implications for Indian Seafarers**
 - **Reputation at Stake:** The actions of Indian seafarers in global shipping reflect on India as a whole. The Dali accident could potentially damage the reputation of Indian seafarers.
 - **Questioning Competence:** The final report on the Dali accident may question the competence and certification of Indian seafarers if it is found that botched or wrong operations by ship staff contributed to the accident.
 - **Government Intervention:** The Indian government acted swiftly to prevent any hasty and ill-founded damage to the reputation of Indian seafarers. It successfully implored India as a Substantially Interested State as per the Casualty Investigation Code of the International Maritime Organization.

The Baltimore ship accident, the high stakes for India

On March 26, 2024, when container ship Dali crashed into Francis Scott Key Bridge in Baltimore, United States, leaving at least six people dead and property worth millions of dollars destroyed, the maritime and shipping world was in a state of shock. The crash was a spectacular tragedy captured on video and spread across the globe. It happened in the U.S. also made it one of the most significant maritime accidents after the Exxon Valdez tanker accident, in 1989, that led to an unprecedented oil spill off Alaska, in turn triggering extraordinary changes in maritime regulations and industry practices as well as insurers on maritime pollution.

Why the country is an industry player India in the past, India has emerged as a key player in global shipping as its seafarers man many of the ocean-going ships bringing in vital foreign exchange as remittances. Indian seafarers are typically equipped to some 15% of all foreign direct investment that comes into the country every year. Through the lens of power in global shipping as well as ship building, creating and financing continue to be some of the domains of India and India, India inevitably figures in maritime events as a source of seafarers and a manager of ships. In the case with Dali, whose crew is almost all Indian.

Insurance experts have said that the Dali accident will equal or surpass the highest ever marine insurance payout of \$1.5 billion in the case of Costa Concordia cruise vessel capsizing in 2012. The high expected payout in the Dali case is due to the loss of lives, property, and the fact that the ship was carrying a large amount of cargo. The ship was managed by Synergy Maritime Group, a Singapore-based manager of Dali, a company founded by and run largely by Indians but with a global footprint. With a large operation in Chennai, it employs thousands of Indian seafarers and has built an Indian oceanic story in global shipping, managing more than 650 ships.

Though Synergy said that ship owner will not be held liable for \$1.5 billion and the actual payout will be borne by insurers and a club of over 80 insurers, there may well be an eventual financial fallout for Synergy especially if it is proven that the managers had neglected in or avoided keeping equipment in proper operating conditions, in turn leading to the collision. Synergy's rapid rise in shipping to the extent it has earned among ship owners - that it can operate ships worldwide and safely on port regulations at optimum costs. And that trust, which has helped Indian seafarers get lucrative jobs, is in danger of being eroded.

Indian seafarers in global shipping are Indians - representatives of a nation, not inevitably, but certainly, their actions reflect on India as a whole.

Costa Concordia's captain was found to be a disgrace to the profession. His final act of ignominy was to bail out of the ship early when the captain should be the last to abandon his ship. But, Francesco Schettino has been seen as an individual decision, not a representation of Indians.

The incident report on the Dali accident put out by the investigators made it a point to talk about the actions of two Indian seafarers working in Baltimore port for hours before the accident. One of the crew was reportedly a bonded operator in a vessel. There is a distinct possibility that the final report will point to pinpoint botched or wrong operations by ship staff contributors to, if not the causes of, the two accidents that led to the loss of steering controls and ship motor power, eventually leading to the collision.

This would put a question mark over the competence and certification of Indian seafarers which form the backbone of job opportunities of Indian seafarers. Those seafarers would need to be rigorously trained and knowledgeable people, are certified for various shipboard operations.

Swift moves The Indian government acted quickly in the case of Dali to prevent any hasty and ill-founded damage to the reputation of Indian seafarers. It successfully implored India as a Substantially Interested State as per the Casualty Investigation Code of the International Maritime Organization. Indian shipping officials are a part of the investigation on the Dali accident and are expected to submit a report on the investigation on the Dali accident. The public and counterparts in the Dali accident are aware. An act of god may not quite ensure a hefty insurance payout. Hence will need to be ascertained for that. But, at the same time, the U.S. government has taken in India officials in the investigation.

Soon after the accident, U.S. President Joe Biden issued Dali Indian seafarers who, after being control of the ship, properly alerted the authorities so that they could shut down the bridge. Though it was heard, eventually, that the seafarers were acting in a panic, the U.S. government was clear. He wanted to tamp down any Indian sentiments.

3. First Past The Post System Vs. Proportional Representation GS 2 (Elections)

- **Why in News:** The results of the Lok Sabha elections were declared on June 4. The ruling National Democratic Alliance (NDA) has won 293 seats with a 43.3% vote share while the Opposition bloc INDIA has secured 234 seats with a 41.6% vote share. Other regional parties and independents received about 15% of the votes but only won 16 seats in total. As a result, many experts are now advocating for India to switch to a proportional representation system.
- **First Past the Post (FPTP) system**
 - **About**
 - ◆ The FPTP system, also known as the simple majority voting system, is an electoral method where the candidate with the most votes in a constituency wins the election.
 - ◆ This system is widely used in countries like the United Kingdom, Canada, and India for legislative elections.
 - **Working**
 - ◆ **Single-Member Districts** - Each constituency elects one representative.
 - ◆ **Plurality Wins** - The candidate who receives the highest number of votes wins, regardless of whether they achieve an absolute majority (more than 50% of the votes).

Is it time for proportional representation?

Which are the countries which follow proportional representation in their electoral democracies? Will it work in a large and diverse country like India? What is the member proportional representation?

EXPLANATION

Reintroduction: The results of the Lok Sabha elections were declared last week. The ruling National Democratic Alliance (NDA) has won 293 seats with a 43.3% vote share while the Opposition bloc INDIA has secured 234 seats with a 41.6% vote share. Other regional parties and independents received about 15% of the votes but only won 16 seats in total. As a result, many experts are now advocating for India to switch to a proportional representation system.

What is First Past the Post system? The First Past the Post (FPTP) system is an electoral method where the candidate with the most votes in a constituency wins the election. This system is widely used in countries like the United Kingdom, Canada, and India for legislative elections.

What is proportional representation? Proportional representation (PR) is an electoral method where the number of seats a party wins is proportional to the number of votes it receives. This system is used in countries like Germany, France, and the Netherlands.

Why is there a need for proportional representation? The FPTP system is criticized for its lack of proportionality. A party can win a large number of votes but still lose the election. This can lead to a government that does not represent the will of the people. PR systems are seen as a more fair and representative way of electing a government.

What are the advantages of proportional representation? PR systems are seen as more fair and representative. They ensure that all parties have a chance of winning seats, even if they do not have the most votes. This can lead to a more diverse and inclusive government.

What are the disadvantages of proportional representation? PR systems can be more complex and costly than FPTP. They can also lead to coalition governments, which may be unstable. Additionally, PR systems may not always reflect the local will of the voters in a constituency.

Conclusion: The choice between FPTP and PR is a complex one. While PR has many advantages, it also has its own challenges. The Indian government is currently considering the merits of both systems and the impact of the recent Lok Sabha elections.

THE GIST

The First Past the Post System (FPTP) is an electoral method where the candidate with the most votes in a constituency wins the election. This system is widely used in countries like the United Kingdom, Canada, and India for legislative elections.

Advantages of FPTP:

- Simple and easy to understand.
- Clear winner-takes-all system.
- Encourages parties to focus on winning individual constituencies.

Disadvantages of FPTP:

- Lacks proportionality.
- Can lead to a government that does not represent the will of the people.
- May encourage coalition governments.

Proportional Representation (PR): PR is an electoral method where the number of seats a party wins is proportional to the number of votes it receives. This system is used in countries like Germany, France, and the Netherlands.

Advantages of PR:

- More fair and representative.
- Ensures all parties have a chance of winning seats.
- Can lead to a more diverse and inclusive government.

Disadvantages of PR:

- Can be more complex and costly than FPTP.
- Can lead to coalition governments, which may be unstable.
- May not always reflect the local will of the voters in a constituency.

Conclusion: The choice between FPTP and PR is a complex one. While PR has many advantages, it also has its own challenges. The Indian government is currently considering the merits of both systems and the impact of the recent Lok Sabha elections.

● Proportional Representation (PR)

■ About

- ◆ PR is an electoral system designed to allocate seats in the legislature in proportion to the number of votes each party receives.
- ◆ This system contrasts with the First Past the Post (FPTP) system, where the candidate with the most votes in each constituency wins.
- ◆ PR aims to create a **more accurate reflection of the voters' preferences** across the entire electorate.

■ Working

- ◆ **Party Lists** - Voters typically cast their vote for a party rather than an individual candidate.
- ◆ The party then allocates seats to candidates from their list based on the proportion of votes received.
- ◆ **Multi-Member Districts** - Each district elects multiple representatives, which allows for proportional allocation.
- ◆ **Thresholds** - Often, a minimum percentage of votes (threshold) is required for a party to gain representation, to prevent excessive fragmentation.

■ Types of Proportional Representation:

- ◆ **List PR** - Voters choose a party, and parties receive seats based on their share of the vote. Seats are filled by candidates from the party's list.
- ◆ **Mixed-Member PR** - Combines elements of FPTP and PR. Voters cast two votes: one for a candidate and one for a party.
- ◆ Some seats are filled by individual candidates, while others are allocated to parties based on their share of the vote.
- ◆ **Single Transferable Vote (STV)** - Voters rank candidates in order of preference.
- ◆ Seats are allocated based on the proportion of votes each candidate receives, with surplus votes and eliminated candidates' votes transferred according to voter preferences.

Advantages of PR	Disadvantages of PR
<p>Fair Representation: Parties receive seats in proportion to their share of the vote, leading to a more accurate reflection of electorate's preferences.</p> <p>Minority Inclusion: Smaller parties and minority groups have a better chance of gaining representation, promoting diversity in the legislature.</p> <p>Reduced Wasted Votes: Fewer votes are wasted as most votes contribute to the election of a candidate, increasing voter satisfaction and participation.</p> <p>Encourages Voter Turnout: Voters may feel their vote has more impact</p>	<p>Coalition Governments: While coalitions can be a strength, they can also lead to unstable governments if coalition partners frequently disagree, resulting in inefficiency or frequent elections.</p> <p>Complexity: PR systems can be more complex for voters to understand and for electoral authorities to administer compared to simpler systems like FPTP.</p> <p>Fragmentation: Can lead to a fragmented legislature with many small parties, making it difficult to achieve a majority consensus.</p> <p>Weaker Constituency Links: Representatives may be less accountable to specific geographic constituencies since they are elected on a party list basis rather than as individuals.</p> <p>Influence of Party Leadership: Party leaders often have significant control over candidate lists, which can centralize power within the party and reduce individual accountability of representatives.</p>

● What are international practices?

- **Presidential Democracies like Brazil and Argentina:** Party list Proportional Representation (PR) system.
- **Parliamentary democracies like South Africa, the Netherlands, Belgium, and Spain:** Also use the party list PR system.
- **Germany: Bundestag Structure**
 - ◆ Out of 598 seats, 299 seats (50%) are filled from constituencies under the First Past the Post (FPTP) system.
 - ◆ The remaining 299 seats (50%) are allocated to parties that secure at least 5% of the votes, based on their vote share.

■ New Zealand: House of Representatives Structure

- ◆ Out of 120 seats, 60% are filled through the FPTP system from territorial constituencies.
- ◆ The remaining 40% are distributed among parties that secure at least 5% of the votes, based on their vote share.

● Way forward for India

■ Law Commission's Recommendation (170th report, 1999)

- ◆ The Law Commission in its report, 'Reform of the electoral laws', recommended the introduction of the **Mixed-Member Proportional Representation (MMPR)** system on an experimental basis.
- ◆ It suggested that 25% of seats could be filled through a PR system by **increasing the strength of the Lok Sabha**.

■ Upcoming Delimitation Exercise and associated challenges

- ◆ A delimitation exercise to increase the number of Lok Sabha seats is due after the first Census conducted post-2026.
- ◆ The population growth in the last five decades has been uneven across regions.
- ◆ **Determining the number of seats in proportion to population alone may conflict with federal principles.**
- ◆ It could lead to disenchantment in States that might lose representation through such a method.

■ Way out through MMPR System

- ◆ Introducing the MMPR system for **incremental seats or at least 25%** of the total seats from each State/UT during the delimitation exercise could balance representation.
- ◆ This approach could mitigate concerns of southern, northeastern, and smaller northern States by preventing domination of larger States solely through the FPTP system.

4. Anamika Rajeev is Navy's first woman chopper pilot

Recent events of importance

- **Why in News:** Sub Lieutenant Anamika B. Rajeev became the Indian Navy's first woman helicopter pilot during a passing out parade held in the naval air station INS Rajali at Arakkonam in Ranipet district.

● Women in Defence Forces

■ Indian Army:

- ◆ Women officers now have opportunities for **Permanent Commission** in various branches, ensuring gender parity.
- ◆ Women candidates in **National Defence Academy (NDA)** has been opened, with cadets joining every six months.
- ◆ Women officers can now serve as pilots in the **Corps of Army Aviation**.
- ◆ Provision for enrolment of women as **Other Ranks (ORs)** in **Corps of Military Police**

■ Indian Navy:

- ◆ Women officers are recruited in all branches, **except Submarine specialisation**, since June 2023.
- ◆ Women officers serve on board warships and as **Specialist Naval Air Operations (NAO)**
- ◆ Women officers can join the **Remotely Piloted Aircraft (RPA) stream**.
- ◆ Entry for women cadets in **NDA and Indian Naval Academy (INA)** has been permitted, increasing vacancies for women cadets.

■ Indian Air Force:

- ◆ Facilities for women personnel are provided as per authorized scales.
- ◆ Recruitment of officers is gender-neutral, with women officers inducted in all branches and streams.
- ◆ Women officers can serve in combat roles without restrictions.
- ◆ Entry for women officers through NDA and NCC Special Entry has been initiated.
- ◆ Various induction publicity programmes are conducted to encourage women candidates to join IAF.



Sub-Lieutenant Anamika B. Rajeev receives the 'Golden Wings' from Vice-Admiral Rajesh Pendharkar. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Anamika Rajeev is Navy's first woman chopper pilot

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

Sub-Lieutenant Anamika B. Rajeev became the Indian Navy's first woman helicopter pilot during a passing-out parade held at the naval air station INS Rajali at Arakkonam in Tamil Nadu last week.

A total of 21 officers were awarded the prestigious 'Golden Wings' by Vice-Admiral Rajesh Pendharkar, Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Eastern Naval Command. A passing-out parade was held on June 7 to mark the graduation of the 102nd Helicopter Conversion Course.

5. Cashless health Claim Settlement GS 2 (Governance)

- **Why in News:** Starting August 1, 2024, insurance companies in India are mandated to settle health insurance claims through cashless methods. This move by the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) aims to streamline and expedite the process of hospital bill settlement for policyholders.
- **Key-highlights of IRDAI's decision:**
 - **Cashless Settlement:** Insurance companies must adopt cashless settlement of health insurance claims, ensuring smoother and faster processing of claims for policyholders.
 - **Procedures for Insurers:** Insurers must establish dedicated Help Desks at hospitals to assist with cashless requests and provide pre-authorization through digital means.
 - **Timely Settlement:** Insurers are encouraged to achieve 100% cashless claim settlement within a specified timeframe, minimizing the need for reimbursement except in exceptional circumstances.
 - **Claim Processing Timeframe:** Insurers are required to decide on cashless authorization requests promptly, within one hour of receipt, and grant final authorization within three hours of discharge authorization from the hospital.
 - **Compensation for Delays:** In case of delays beyond the stipulated timeframe, insurers are liable to cover any additional charges imposed by the hospital from their shareholder's fund.
 - **Dealing with Mortal Remains:** In unfortunate instances of the policyholder's death during treatment, insurers must promptly process the claim and facilitate the release of the mortal remains from the hospital.
- **What are the likely impacts?**
 - **Positive Impact:** The move towards cashless settlement of health insurance claims is expected to alleviate the burden on policyholders, making the process more efficient and less stressful, especially during times of illness or emergencies.
 - **Reducing Challenges:** With a significant percentage of policyholders facing difficulties in processing health insurance claims, the new mandate addresses concerns raised in surveys regarding claim rejection and time-consuming processes.
 - **Policyholder Rights:** IRDAI emphasizes policyholders' rights, including the option to port policies between insurers and ensuring seamless transfer of underwriting details and claim history.
 - **Regulatory Oversight:** The requirement for insurers to seek approval before repudiating claims and the establishment of clear procedures for claim processing aim to enhance transparency and accountability in the insurance sector.
 - **Improving Accessibility:** By eliminating the need for policyholders to submit documents directly, the process becomes more accessible and convenient for individuals seeking health insurance benefits.

6. Agnipath scheme and its opposition GS 2 (Governance)

- **Why in news:**
 - Agnipath scheme, announced in June 2022, has faced opposition from political parties and Armed Forces veterans.
 - The opposition's campaign in states like Punjab, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and Rajasthan, where the Armed Forces are a major employer,

Agnipath scheme: why it was introduced, the opposition to it

AMRITA NAYAK DUTTA
12/01/2024, 12:02 PM

AGNIPATH SCHEME (AGNIPATH) has been called for a review of the Agnipath scheme, even as they were set to be crucial alliance partners to the BJP in the new Lok Sabha. The scheme for military recruitment has found opposition from political parties and Armed Forces veterans alike, since it was introduced by the BJP-led government in 2022. During the recent Lok Sabha elections, the scheme was a key campaign issue in states such as Punjab, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Rajasthan, where the Armed Forces remain a significant employer.

What is the Agnipath scheme? Agnipath is a new recruitment scheme for the Indian Armed Forces, aimed at providing a career path for young men (between 17 and 21 years of age) who are not commission officers — the Indian Armed Forces for a period of five years. At the end of the tenure,

upto 25% of these recruits, the so-called 'Agnees', can join the services as permanent commission (PSC) officers, subject to merit and organizational requirements. Agnees between the ages of 17.5 years and 21 years (up to 20 years initially) are eligible to apply. In present, all salaries, allowances, medical facilities, and other benefits of the medical branch are provided to the recruits under the scheme.

How are Agnees different from soldiers with permanent commission? Agnees draw a basic salary of Rs. 30,000 to Rs. 40,000 per month, and are entitled to other perks and allowances. They contribute 30% of their monthly emoluments to the 'Sewa Nidhi' fund, which

of disability, and Agnees get up to Rs. 44 lakh as compensation. Unlike soldiers in regular service, Agnees do not draw pensions post-retirement. Only the 25% of Agnees who get selected into the force after four years will receive pensionary benefits, although the initial four years of service will be considered as permanent service.

Why was Agnipath introduced? Agnees from the armed forces are expected to reduce the Armed Forces' wage and pension bill, the government has argued that the scheme will ensure the force's 'youthful profile'. Defence Minister Rajendra Prasad said in January 2022 that "Agnipath is a game changer for the Armed Forces... and make them youthful, high-tech and ultra-modern".

Why has the scheme come under criticism? Critics say that the scheme creates a 'pent' of soldiers, who work on the same tasks as those with full commission, but with lower pay, benefits, and prospects. A day before Punjab and Haryana Pradesh went to polls in June 1, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi wrote an open letter to President Droupadi Murmu, "We're sorry... we will support you in providing justice to Agnees, who have been in the service for 20 years, which Agnipath will bring down to 20 years."

Why has the government decided to roll back the scheme? Recently, the government indicated that it is willing to alter the scheme of Agnees, but without compromising on the Armed Forces' youthful profile. The Indian Express reported last month that the forces are carrying out internal assessments on Agnipath's impact, based on which they will make recommendations to the government on possible changes.

Is the government willing to roll back the scheme? Recently, the government indicated that it is willing to alter the scheme of Agnees, but without compromising on the Armed Forces' youthful profile. The Indian Express reported last month that the forces are carrying out internal assessments on Agnipath's impact, based on which they will make recommendations to the government on possible changes.

All the services are being taken to be submitted to the Department of Military Affairs.

'SHOULD PROVIDE PRE-AUTHORISATION TO POLICYHOLDERS VIA DIGITAL MODE'

Cashless health claim settlement: Irdai asks insurers to deploy systems by July 31

GEORGE MATHEW
14 JUNE 2024

INSURANCE COMPANIES will have to go for cashless settlement of health insurance claims from August 1 this year, making hospital bill settlement of policyholders smoother and faster. The Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) has said necessary systems and procedures should be put in place by the insurer immediately and not later than July 31, 2024.

The regulator said insurers should arrange for dedicated Help Desks at hospital mode at the hospital to deal and assist with the cashless requests. "Insurers should also provide pre-authorization to the policyholder through the digital mode," it said.

Every insurer should strive to achieve 100 per cent cashless claim settlement in a time-bound manner, the Irdai said. The insurers should endeavour to ensure that the instances of claims being settled through reimbursement are at bare minimum and only in exceptional circumstances, it said.

"Insurers should decide the request for cashless authorization immediately but not more than one hour of receipt of request," it said in the Master Circular on health insurance business.

WHAT THE REGULATOR SAID

THE REGULATOR said insurers should arrange for dedicated Help Desks in physical mode at the hospital to deal and assist with the cashless requests. **INSURER SHOULD** grant final authorisation within three hours of the receipt of discharge authorisation request from the hospital.

IN NO CASE, policyholder should be made to wait to be discharged from the hospital. **IRDAI HAS** said no claim should be repudiated without the approval of Product Management Committee (PMC) or a three-member sub-group of PMC called the Claims Review Committee (CRC).

IRDAI has said insurers should grant final authorisation within three hours of the receipt of discharge authorisation request from the hospital. In no case, the policyholder should be made to wait to be discharged from the hospital, it said.

Claim settlement has been a

around trying to get their claim processed. "In several cases cited by policyholders on LocalCircles, it took 10-12 hours after the patient was ready for discharge for them to actually get discharged because the health insurance claim was still getting processed," the survey said.

IRDAI has said no claim should be repudiated without the approval of Product Management Committee (PMC) or a three-member sub-group of PMC called the Claims Review Committee (CRC). In case, the claim is repudiated or disallowed partially, details should be conveyed to the claimant along with full details giving reference to the specific terms and conditions of the policy document. Pursuant to intimation of the claim, insurers and Third Party Administrators (TPAs) should collect the required documents from the Hospitals. Policyholders shall not be required to submit documents rejecting claims by classifying a health condition as a pre-existing condition to only approving a partial amount," said the survey conducted by LocalCircles.

According to majority of those who commented on the subject, the process of claiming health insurance is extremely time-consuming with many policyholders losing their family members literally spending the last day of their hospital admission running

around trying to get their claim processed. "In several cases cited by policyholders on LocalCircles, it took 10-12 hours after the patient was ready for discharge for them to actually get discharged because the health insurance claim was still getting processed," the survey said.

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EXPLAINED Authorisation in three hours CLAIM SETTLEMENT has been a cumbersome procedure for policyholders. Now the Irdai has said that if there is any delay in granting final authorisation beyond three hours of the receipt of discharge authorisation request from the hospital, the additional amount if any charged by the hospital should be borne by the insurer from shareholder's fund.

diately but not more than 72 hours of receipt of request through Insurance Information Bureau of India (IIB). The acquiring insurer should decide and communicate on the proposal immediately but not more than 5 days of receipt of information from the existing insurer.

The policyholder is entitled to transfer the credits gained to the extent of the sum insured, no claim bonus, specific waiting periods, waiting period for pre-existing disease, moratorium period from the existing insurer to the acquiring insurer in the previous policy, Irdai said.

prominently featured criticism to this military recruitment scheme. The BJP's performance in these states suggests that this opposition resonated with voters.

- With the BJP now falling short of a majority in the Lok Sabha, key alliance partners like Janata Dal (United) and Lok Janshakti Party have also called for a review of the scheme.

- **Agnipath scheme**

- **About**

- ◆ It is a central government scheme launched in 2022 for recruitment to the armed forces.
 - ◆ It is a recruitment process for individuals **below the rank of officer**, with the goal of deploying fitter, younger troops on the front lines, many of whom will be on **four-year contracts**.
 - ◆ The armed forces would also have the option to retain some of the best 'Agniveers.'

- **Eligibility**

- ◆ Candidates between the age of 17.5 years to 21 years will be eligible for enrolling in the Agnipath scheme.
 - ◆ Girls under the given age limit are open for the agnipath entry, while there is **no such reservation for women under this scheme**.
 - ◆ The recruitment standards will remain the same, and recruitment will be done twice a year through rallies.

- **Pay & Benefits of Agniveers**

- ◆ If they die on duty, their family receives a lump sum of Rs 1 crore (including the Seva Nidhi package, and full pay for the period which the soldier could not serve).
 - ◆ In case of disability, an Agniveer can receive upto Rs 44 lakh as compensation, depending on the percentage of disability suffered which is attributed to, or aggravated by military service.

- **Agnipathis different from regular military service**

- ◆ Unlike soldiers in regular service, Agniveers do not draw pensions post-retirement.
 - ◆ Only 25% of Agniveers who are absorbed into the forces after four years will receive pension benefits, excluding their initial four years of service.
 - ◆ This scheme aims to reduce the Armed Forces' permanent force levels and significantly cut the defence pension bill, a longstanding concern for governments.

- **Agniveers recruited so far**

- ◆ In the Army, two batches of 40,000 Agniveers have completed training and are under posting.
 - ◆ The third batch of 20,000 began training in November 2023.
 - ◆ In the Navy, three batches of 7,385 Agniveers have completed training. In the IAF, 4,955 Agniveers have completed training.

- **Why was Agnipath introduced?**

- The Agnipath scheme, beyond reducing the Armed Forces' wage and pension bill, aims to ensure a **youthful profile for the forces**.
- Defence Minister described the scheme as a game changer, intended to make the Armed Forces youthful, high-tech, and ultra-modern.
- The average age in the Armed Forces, currently 32 years, will be reduced to 26 years with Agnipath's implementation.
- The government also argues that Agniveers, after completing their service, will positively contribute to civil society with their skills, discipline, and education.
- This is expected to enhance workforce quality, productivity, and overall GDP growth.

- **Why has Agnipath seen such strong opposition?**

- Critics argue that the Agnipath scheme creates a lesser cadre of soldiers who perform the same tasks as fully commissioned soldiers but with lower pay, fewer benefits, and limited prospects.
- Recently, an opposition leader wrote to President, highlighting the discrimination in benefits for the families of fallen Agniveers compared to regular soldiers, calling for urgent attention to this issue.
- This disparity has caused significant dissatisfaction among those who view military recruitment as a means to economic stability and upward mobility.

7. Operation Bluestar

Important events

- **Why in News:** Slogans favouring Khalistan (sovereign state for Sikhs) were raised recently in the premises of the Golden Temple complex in Punjab's Amritsar during the 40th anniversary of 'Operation Bluestar'.
- **About Operation Bluestar:**
 - It was an **Indian military operation** in June 1984 ordered by **Prime Minister Indira Gandhi** to **root out** a group of **militant Sikh separatists** who had **occupied the Golden Temple** in Punjab's Amritsar, the Sikhs' holiest shrine.
 - The leader of the group was Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale, a Sikh fundamentalist, former head of the Sikh seminary Damdami Taksal, and a key figure in the then-emerging **separatist Khalistan movement**.
 - The military operation was planned **to regain control of the complex** while minimizing civilian casualties.
 - **Timeline of the operation:**
 - ◆ June 1-3, 1984: The operation **began on June 1, 1984**, with the deployment of Indian Army troops around the Golden Temple complex. Bhindranwale and his followers fiercely resisted the army's advance, leading to intense gun battles.
 - ◆ June 3-6, 1984: The Indian Army intensified its assault on the complex, using heavy artillery, tanks, and helicopters. The fighting resulted in **extensive damage to the Akal Takht**, the highest temporal seat of Sikh authority, as well as other parts of the Golden Temple.
 - ◆ June 6, 1984: The operation officially concluded on June 6, 1984, when the **Indian Army gained control of the Golden Temple complex**.
 - While the army was successful in achieving its goals, some Sikhs were outraged as they saw the operation as an attack on their faith.
 - According to the Indian government, about 400 people were killed, including 87 soldiers.
 - Operation Blue Star **led to the assassination of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi**, who was killed by her Sikh bodyguards in revenge five months after the operation.

MCQ Current Affairs
10th June, 2024

1. Which one of the following is the theme for the World Oceans Day 2024?

- a) Save Our Seas
- b) Blue Planet, Green Future
- c) Ocean Conservation for All
- d) Awaken New Depth

2. Suhelwa Wildlife Sanctuary (SWS) lies in which one of the following states?

- a) Gujarat
- b) Odisha
- c) Uttar Pradesh
- d) Karnataka

3. Which one of the following was the objective of Operation Bluestar?

- a) A peacekeeping mission by the United Nations in the Middle East
- b) An Indian military operation to remove Sikh separatists from the Golden Temple.
- c) A military operation to rescue hostages in Mumbai.
- d) A counter-terrorism operation conducted by the Indian Army in Kashmir

4. The Cascadia Subduction Zone is an active convergent boundary where:

- a) Juan de Fuca Plate is subducting beneath the North American Plate
- b) Cocos Plate is subducting beneath the Caribbean Plate
- c) Nazca Plate is subducting beneath the South American Plate
- d) Pacific Plate is subducting beneath the Eurasian Plate

5. The Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) is chaired by which one of the following?

- a) Union Defence Minister of India
- b) Home Minister of India
- c) Prime Minister of India
- d) None of the above

Answers Current Affairs
10th June, 2024

1. d
2. c
3. b
4. a
5. c

