

24th June, 2024

1. Duties of a Speaker

GS 2 (Legislation)

- **Why in News:** The election of a new Speaker for the 18th Lok Sabha highlights the crucial role this position plays in India's parliamentary system. Understanding the duties and responsibilities of the Speaker is essential for comprehending the functioning of the lower house of Parliament.

● Constitutional Provisions

- **Presiding Officer:** The Speaker serves as the presiding officer of the Lok Sabha, as stipulated in Article 93 of the Constitution, and is responsible for maintaining order during proceedings.
- **Constitutional Functions:** The Speaker certifies Money Bills under Article 110 and decides on disqualification of members under the Anti-Defection Law (Tenth Schedule).
- **Rule Interpretation:** The Speaker interprets and enforces the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in Lok Sabha, making rulings on points of order and parliamentary procedures.

● Administrative Responsibilities

- **House Management:** The Speaker oversees the functioning of the Lok Sabha secretariat and determines the agenda of the House in consultation with the Business Advisory Committee.
- **Committee Appointments:** The Speaker nominates members to various parliamentary committees and serves as the ex-officio Chairman of certain committees.
- **Inter-Parliamentary Relations:** The Speaker represents the Lok Sabha in international parliamentary forums and hosts visiting delegations from foreign parliaments.

● Judicial and Quasi-Judicial Functions

- **Privilege Matters:** The Speaker adjudicates on matters of privilege and contempt of the House, issuing warrants for breach when necessary.
- **Disqualification Proceedings:** As the sole arbiter in cases of disqualification under the Anti-Defection Law, the Speaker conducts hearings and passes orders.
- **Notice Admissibility:** The Speaker decides on the admissibility of notices for various parliamentary devices like adjournment motions and calling attention notices.

● Guardian of Parliamentary Privileges

- **Rights Protection:** The Speaker protects the rights and privileges of members and the House as a whole, ensuring equal opportunities for participation.
- **Minority Rights:** The Speaker safeguards the rights of the minority and opposition in the House, maintaining a balance of power.
- **Impartiality:** Despite being elected on a party ticket, the Speaker is expected to conduct proceedings in a fair and unbiased manner.

What are the duties of a Speaker?

What does the office of the Speaker pro tem mean? What does the Constitution state? Who elects the Deputy Speaker of the Lok Sabha? How can the impartiality of the Speaker's office be preserved? What are the main roles of the Speaker?

EXPLAINER

Remember this:

The President has appointed someone MP Bhawukant Singh as the Speaker pro tem of the 18th Lok Sabha. The election of the Speaker is scheduled for June 26. There are also reports of the Deputy Speaker being offered to one of the allies of the ruling National Democratic Alliance (NDA), a post that has been held by the Speaker since the 16th Lok Sabha (2014).

What is Speaker pro tem? Article 93 of the Constitution states that the Speaker of the Lok Sabha shall not vacate his office until he or she is removed by the House. This is to ensure that the office of the Speaker is never left vacant. However, one MP who was the Speaker of the 16th Lok Sabha is that post left June 24 when the first meeting of the 18th Lok Sabha commenced.

However, the President appoints Speaker pro tem under this provision till the Speaker is elected. The term 'pro tem' means 'for the time being' or 'temporary'.

How are the Speaker and Deputy Speaker elected? Article 93 of the Constitution states that the Lok Sabha shall choose two members to be Speaker and Deputy Speaker. The election of the Speaker shall be on a date fixed by the President. All the members of the Lok Sabha are eligible for election. The Speaker is elected by the members of the Lok Sabha in a secret ballot. The Deputy Speaker is elected by the members of the Lok Sabha in a secret ballot.



Members of the Lok Sabha are seen during the election of the Speaker and Deputy Speaker.

What is the role of the Speaker? Apart from the conduct of business, the Speaker performs two important constitutional functions of certifying a Bill to the Rajya Sabha and certifying a Bill to the Rajya Sabha. He also presides over the House. The Speaker is also responsible for maintaining order in the House. He is also responsible for interpreting the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in Lok Sabha. He is also responsible for deciding on points of order and parliamentary procedures. He is also responsible for deciding on matters of privilege and contempt of the House. He is also responsible for issuing warrants for breach when necessary. He is also responsible for conducting hearings and passing orders in cases of disqualification under the Anti-Defection Law. He is also responsible for deciding on the admissibility of notices for various parliamentary devices like adjournment motions and calling attention notices. He is also responsible for protecting the rights and privileges of members and the House as a whole. He is also responsible for safeguarding the rights of the minority and opposition in the House. He is also responsible for conducting proceedings in a fair and unbiased manner.

THE GIST

● The President has appointed someone MP Bhawukant Singh as the Speaker pro tem of the 18th Lok Sabha.

● Article 93 of the Constitution states that the Speaker of the Lok Sabha shall not vacate his office until he or she is removed by the House.

● The Deputy Speaker is an important constitutional office who presides over the House in the absence of the Speaker.

● The Speaker is elected by the members of the Lok Sabha in a secret ballot.

● The Deputy Speaker is elected by the members of the Lok Sabha in a secret ballot.

● The Speaker is responsible for maintaining order in the House.

● The Speaker is also responsible for interpreting the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in Lok Sabha.

● The Speaker is also responsible for deciding on points of order and parliamentary procedures.

● The Speaker is also responsible for deciding on matters of privilege and contempt of the House.

● The Speaker is also responsible for issuing warrants for breach when necessary.

● The Speaker is also responsible for conducting hearings and passing orders in cases of disqualification under the Anti-Defection Law.

● The Speaker is also responsible for deciding on the admissibility of notices for various parliamentary devices like adjournment motions and calling attention notices.

● The Speaker is also responsible for protecting the rights and privileges of members and the House as a whole.

● The Speaker is also responsible for safeguarding the rights of the minority and opposition in the House.

● The Speaker is also responsible for conducting proceedings in a fair and unbiased manner.

2. European Union's 'Chat Control' Law: Balancing Security and Privacy

GS 2 (International Relations)

- **Why in News:** The European Union's proposed 'chat control' law, aimed at combating child sexual abuse online, has sparked controversy due to concerns over privacy and potential undermining of encryption.

- **Key-highlights of the Proposal**

- **Report Title:** Regulation on combating child sexual abuse online
- Proposed by European Commissioner for Home Affairs Ylva Johansson in May 2022
- Allows for mass scanning of private messages by breaking end-to-end encryption
- France, Germany, and Poland have opposed the clause on encryption breaking
- Spain and Ireland's Interior Ministers have supported the proposal
- A network of children's rights advocates criticize EU leaders for inaction on child sexual abuse

- **Privacy Concerns**

- **End-to-end Encryption:** Breaking encryption could create vulnerabilities exploitable by third parties, compromising user privacy.
- **Mass Surveillance:** The law could potentially be misused by governments for bulk surveillance of citizens.
- **Precedent Setting:** Implementation of such measures in the EU could encourage similar laws in less democratic countries.

- **Technical Challenges**

- **Feasibility Issues:** Scanning encrypted messages without compromising security remains a technical challenge.
- **False Positives:** Mass scanning could lead to a high rate of false positives, causing unnecessary intrusions.
- **Operational Costs:** Implementing and maintaining such systems could be expensive for tech companies.

- **Impact on Tech Industry**

- **Company Resistance:** Major tech firms and messaging apps threaten to leave markets if forced to implement such measures.
- **Innovation Hindrance:** Stringent regulations could stifle innovation in privacy-preserving technologies.
- **Market Fragmentation:** Differing regulations across regions could lead to fragmentation of digital services.

- **Child Protection Perspectives**

- **Advocacy Support:** Some children's rights organizations support the law as a necessary step to combat online child abuse.
- **Detection Improvements:** Proponents argue that the law could enhance the detection and prevention of child exploitation.
- **Balancing Act:** The challenge lies in balancing child protection with privacy rights.

Is the European Union's 'chat control' law undermining online privacy?

The EU's proposal to thwart child sexual abuse online could potentially create a backdoor for authoritarian governments to snoop on citizens. Some tech companies, along with trade associations, and privacy experts have all vehemently opposed the regulation

Background

The story so far: The European Union's proposed 'chat control' law has become a bone of contention between members of the bloc. First announced by the European Commissioner for Home Affairs Ylva Johansson in May 2022 as part of the bloc's push to combat child sexual abuse online, the framework of the bill has now come under fire, earning itself a derisive term 'Chat Control'. France, Germany and Poland have particularly refused to accept a clause that allows for mass scanning of private messages by breaking end-to-end encryption. Some tech companies, along with trade associations, and privacy experts have all vehemently opposed the regulation. On the other hand, the Interior Ministers of Spain and Ireland have supported the proposal. Separately, a network of organisations and individuals, advocating for children's rights in Europe, have lashed out at EU leaders for failing to tackle child sexual abuse online.

What are the concerns of those against the proposal? Scanning end-to-end encrypted messages has remained a controversial issue. That's because there is no way to do this without

opening risky backdoors that can be accessed by third parties who can exploit the vulnerability, in turn ending the promise of end-to-end encryption. Tech firms that have tread the encryption bypassing path have often been made to retreat. In 2020, Apple announced 'SecureMail', a feature that could automatically scan iCloud photo libraries of individual devices for Child Sexual Abuse Material (CSAM). Employees and activist groups expressed concerns over the loss of privacy. A year later, Apple said it had abandoned the initiative. Another looming issue the iPhone maker recognised in the process was how authoritarian governments could potentially misuse the feature by using it as a tool to target individuals who oppose the regime. Erik Neumeister, director of user privacy and child safety at Apple, admitted this in a new saying, "It would [...] inject the potential for a slippery slope of unintended consequences. Scanning for one type of content, for instance, opens the door for bulk surveillance and could create a desire to search other encrypted messaging systems across content types." When bringing in a similar clause through the U.K.'s Online Safety Bill, lawmakers attempted to make way for client-side scanning of private and

encrypted messages. The proposal was postponed after receiving pushback from encrypted messaging app owners like WhatsApp and Signal. The duo threatened to leave the U.K. if such a law was passed. In its final stages, in September 2023, the House of Lords considered the potential security threat that the clause would bring saying it would not implement scanning until it was "technically feasible."

What is the status of the EU's chat control law? On June 30, a new draft of the proposal is set to be reviewed. Legislators have left the idea of scanning text messages and audio, and are instead targeting shared photos, videos and URLs with an adjustment to appease the newspapers. Another remark in the making could be people's consent in sharing material being scanned before being encrypted. But this compromise has been largely called out as a farcical one. A report by Euractiv which has been confirmed by internal documents shows that if a user refuses the scanning, they will simply be blocked from sending or receiving images, videos and links hardly leaving them with a choice. Despite these measures, EU's enforcement of such legislation is there for seen exemptions to the rule. In November 2023, the European Commission

reportedly published a proposal to amend the regulation on a temporary derogation of the ePrivacy Directive against CSAM. Under the regulation, specific online communications service providers were allowed to sift through or scan messages to detect, report and remove online CSAM and content that reflects children. The regulation is set to expire in early August. The initial plan on the table was to simply extend this regulation for another three years. But, according to media reports, plans for further extension were stalled in February this year. Meredith Whitaker, President of Signal app called the measures to manage concerns as "concrete", and has signed a joint statement along with a group of over 40 other organisations like Mozilla, Proton, Surfshark and Tutanota, voicing out her concerns. Ms. Whitaker has echoed her earlier warning saying Signal will leave the U.K. rather than undermine end-to-end encryption. A blog, co-authored by Riana Pfefferkorn, a research scholar at the Stanford Internet Observatory and Callum Vague, director of government affairs and advocacy at the Internet Society, notes, "Government surveillance is a concern in an established democratic entity like the EU, what hope is there for beleaguered democracies like Turkey, India and Brazil, much less autocracies?"

● Proposed Compromises

- **Selective Scanning:** New drafts propose scanning only photos, videos, and URLs, not text messages.
- **User Consent:** Consideration of requiring user consent for scanning, though critics argue this is not a genuine choice.
- **Temporary Derogations:** Discussions on extending temporary exemptions for certain service providers to scan messages.

3. Industry Seeks Rethink on Chinese FDI Curbs and High Import Tariffs

GS 3 (Economy)

- **Why in News:** Indian industry is urging the government to reconsider restrictions on Chinese Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and high import tariffs on electronics components, arguing that these measures hinder India's competitiveness in the global electronics market.
- **FDI Restrictions**

- **Press Note 3 Reconsideration:** Industry argues the 2020 measure has outlived its utility and needs review with adequate safeguards.
- **Investment Environment:** Current restrictions send a message of non-friendly investment climate, hurting component ecosystem development.
- **Skilled Manpower Movement:** Easing restrictions on inward movement of skilled personnel from China suggested.

● Import Tariffs

- **Global Competitiveness:** High import duties make Indian electronic goods uncompetitive compared to Vietnam and China.
- **Localization Impact:** Tariffs haven't boosted local production of critical inputs as intended.
- **Tariff Rationalization:** Industry suggests bringing majority of tariff lines to 5% or lower to enhance competitiveness.

● Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme

- **Inadequate Support:** 4%-6% fiscal support under PLI deemed insufficient to offset cost disadvantages.
- **Effectiveness Concerns:** Tariff-induced costs may soon negate PLI scheme's benefits.
- **Scheme Revision:** Need for reassessment of PLI scheme in light of global competition.

● Electronics Manufacturing Ecosystem

- **Value Addition:** Need to transition from assembly-led manufacturing to component-level value-added manufacturing.
- **Import Dependence:** India's components demand largely met through imports from China.
- **Balanced Approach:** Industry suggests right balance between imports and exports of higher value-added products.

● Global Context

- **Interdependence:** Report highlights no country can produce all components domestically in an interdependent world.
- **China's Model:** Largest electronics manufacturer China relies on 42% imports despite \$1.6 trillion international electronics trade.
- **Competing Economies:** Need to align import tariffs with key competing economies emphasized.

Industry seeks rethink on Chinese FDI curbs and high import tariffs

Country's electronics sector heavily import-dependent for vital components; PLI scheme may no longer help and the curbs have hurt component ecosystem development and sent out a message of non-friendly investment environment, says CII

Vijay Iyengar
CII

Indian industry has urged the government to revisit its restrictions on investment inflows and the movement of skilled personnel from China, and slash high import duties on electronics components as they have made Indian electronic goods globally uncompetitive vis-à-vis rivals such as Vietnam and China, rather than boosting localisation of critical inputs.

Warning that the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme for large-scale electronics manufacturing, introduced in April 2020 to offset some cost disadvantages, may soon lose its effectiveness in the face of "tariff-induced cost", industry players have flagged that the 4%-6% fiscal support under PLI is "grossly inadequate to negate the overall disability as compared to

China and Vietnam". In a report on "Developing India as the Manufacturing Hub for Electronics Components and Sub-assemblies", the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) has outlined "critical actions required to transition India's electronics sector ecosystem from an 'import-dependent assembly-led manufacturing' to 'component level value-added manufacturing'.

"Adequate guardrails" On the restrictions imposed in 2020, through Press Note 3, on foreign direct investment (FDI) from countries during land borders with India, the report said the move aimed at preventing predatory acquisitions during the pandemic has now outlived its utility and merits reconsideration with "adequate guardrails".

"India should adopt a non-restrictive approach towards investments, component imports, openness towards technology transfer in deficient areas, ease of inward movement of skilled manpower and easing of non-trade tariffs," the report said, stressing these curbs have hurt India's component ecosystem development and sent out a message of "non-friendly investment environment".

In an interdependent world, no country can aspire to produce all components for domestic consumption and a right balance between imports and exports of higher value-added products is the recipe for long term industrial sustenance, the report argued. "The largest electronics manufacturer China with its \$1.6 trillion international electronics trade relies on 42% imports, it pointed out.



India's import duties on electronic-related tariff lines range from zero to 27.5%, burdening manufacturing costs, says CII

"India's components demand is largely met through imports from China and short-term strategies are likely to have adverse impact on potential expansion of domestic manufacturing... The import tariffs on priority sub-assemblies and components need to be urgently rationalised in line with key competing economies. Majority of tariff lines need to be brought under the level of 5% or lower to ensure that product manufacturers become competitive," the report mooted.

India's import duties on 188 electronic-related tariff lines range from zero to 27.5%, with the largest number of components falling in the 10%-20% range, burdening manufacturing costs. About 47.2% of the electronic imports pass through under zero tariff, the remaining 52.8% imports are subjected to varying tariff levels but largely over 10%.

● Production Linked Incentive Scheme (PLI)?

- The PLI scheme was conceived to scale up domestic manufacturing capability, accompanied by higher import substitution and employment generation.
- Launched in March 2020, the scheme initially targeted three industries:
 - ◆ Mobile and allied Component Manufacturing
 - ◆ Electrical Component Manufacturing and
 - ◆ Medical Devices.
- Later, it was extended to 14 sectors.
- In the PLI scheme, Domestic and Foreign companies receive financial rewards for manufacturing in India, based on a percentage of their revenue over up to five years.

4. Russia Approves Draft Logistics Agreement with India

GS 2 (International Relations)

- **Why in News:** After years of delay, Russia has approved the draft of a mutual logistics agreement to be signed with India, marking a significant step in military-to-military cooperation between the two nations.

- **What is RELOS?**

- The Reciprocal Exchange of Logistics Agreement (RELOS) is a long-awaited administrative agreement that would enable the militaries of both the countries (India and Russia) to access logistics and support facilities at each other's bases and ports.
- It would facilitate the replenishment of fuel, rations, spare parts and berthing for troops, warships and aircrafts while operating away from home ports and bases during the war and peacetime missions.
- RELOS would further ensure smooth use of the host nation's existing logistics networks which would reduce the overall costs of the mission and provide a strategic edge to each other's military operations.

- **Scope of the Agreement**

- **Military Exchanges:** Simplifies logistics for exercises, training, and port calls between the two militaries.
- **Humanitarian Assistance:** Facilitates cooperation in Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) efforts.
- **Operational Efficiency:** Aims to improve operational turnaround and increase interoperability, especially for the Indian Navy.

- **Broader Defence Cooperation**

- **Strategic Partnership:** Defence cooperation is a major pillar of India-Russia strategic ties.
- **Decadal Agreement:** A military technical cooperation agreement for 2021-2031 was signed in December 2021.
- **Navy-to-Navy Cooperation:** A separate agreement for naval cooperation is also in the works.

- **Global Context**

- **Similar Agreements:** India has signed comparable logistics agreements with several countries, starting with the U.S. in 2016.
- **Mutual Benefits:** These agreements have been advantageous for both parties involved.
- **Maritime Focus:** Indian Navy has been the biggest beneficiary of such administrative arrangements globally.

After years, Russia approves draft logistics agreement to be signed with India

Dinakar Peri
NEW DELHI

After being held up for several years, the India-Russia mutual logistics agreement is ready for conclusion, with Russia approving the draft agreement over the past week.

The agreement will simplify military-to-military exchanges for exercises, training, port calls and Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) efforts. It is similar to a series of such agreements that India has signed with a number of countries, beginning with the U.S. in 2016.

An official order dated June 20 was published on Russia's official legal information website, authorising the signing of the logistics agreement with India. The draft of the agreement was also published. "It's a Russian governmental decree that approves signing the agreement and makes relevant instruction to the MoD [Ministry of Defence]," a diplomatic source said, commenting

The agreement involves interaction between troops, and supply of weapons and military gear

on the order. Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin has instructed the MoD to hold negotiations with the Indian side on the draft document, sources said.

Delayed agreement
The conclusion of the Reciprocal Exchange of Logistics Agreement (RELOS) has been delayed for several years. Official sources said that this was the same agreement which has now been approved by the Russian side, and has to be signed by both sides before it can become effective. The agreement, as and when concluded, will be valid for five years and will be renewed automatically unless either party notifies the other of its desire to terminate it, sources said. Defence cooperation is

a major pillar of the India-Russia strategic partnership and is guided by the agreement on military technical cooperation. The agreement for the decade from 2021 to 2031 was signed during the inaugural meeting of India-Russia 2+2 dialogue held in December 2021.

The cooperation agreement involves interaction between troops, and also addresses issues of the supply and development of weapons and military equipment, the Russian Ministry of Defence explained.

A Navy-to-Navy cooperation agreement along the same lines has also been in the works for some time. Among the three services, the Indian Navy has been the biggest beneficiary of these administrative arrangements signed with several countries, improving its operational turnaround and increasing interoperability on the high seas. The agreements have been a win-win for both the parties involved.

- **Significance for India:**

- India has signed military logistics agreements with several countries in the past. This includes the India–US Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (**LEMOA**), India–Japan Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement (**ACSA**) and India–Australia Mutual Logistics Support Agreement (**MLSA**), demonstrating all the Quad countries.
- Apart from this, India maintains such military logistics agreements with France, Singapore and South Korea. It is currently in the process of finalising such an agreement with the UK and Vietnam.

- **Economic and Geo-Strategic significance:**

- **India's interests in the Arctic region** are increasing and it is keen to make investments particularly in the exploration of Russian oil, gas and other rare earth minerals in the near future.
- It is likely that these investments would increase further in future, therefore some kind of **strategic security backing** is required to safeguard India's investments in the Arctic.
- At present, India does not maintain any port facility or naval base in this region as a whole. An agreement such as RELOS would enable Indian Navy to have greater **operational reach in the Arctic**.
- It would provide logistics and other required facilities to Indian naval ships venturing through the region.
- Further, in case of any **hostile situation arising in the region**, RELOS would enable greater coordination between the Indian and Russian Navy to respond appropriately in the region.
- **Emerging Shipping Connectivity:**
 - ◆ The Arctic sea-ice along the Russian coast is receding drastically. The **Northern Sea Route** is humming with shipping activity that is significantly increasing annually.
 - ◆ India has openly called for supporting the Russian vision of developing the Northern Sea Route (NSR).
 - ◆ The signing of RELOS between India and Russia, would open **India's access to Russian Arctic naval ports and military bases** from Vladivostok to Murmansk and beyond.
 - ◆ India, does not have its own full-fledged base or naval docking or refuelling facility in the Arctic, but through RELOS it would have access to all such facilities in the near future.

- **Strategic Counterweight:**

- India has signed logistics agreements with all its partner **Quad countries**. Though Russia is openly critical of the Quad and has maintained distance from the alliance, RELOS could strategically act as **counterweight leverage** to both India and Russia in the Indo-Pacific.
- The similar lines on which RELOS would enable the Indian Navy's reach in the **Russian Far East** and the **Arctic region**, it would also provide logistics support and easy access of required facilities to the Russian Navy via Indian naval ports and military bases located in the **Indian Ocean**.
- RELOS in a way, without involving Russia in the Quad, would facilitate and strengthen **Russian naval presence in the Indo-Pacific** to any future hostile scenarios in the region.

5. ISRO's Reusable Launch Vehicle 'Pushpak'

GS 3 (Science and Tech)

- **Why in News:** ISRO completed the third Reusable Launch Vehicle (RLV) Landing Experiment (LEX) of its winged vehicle 'Pushpak', at the Aeronautical Test Range (ATR) in Chitradurga, Karnataka.
- **What is a RLV and How is it Different from Other Launch Vehicles?**
 - **Primarily, launch vehicles comprise three or four stages apart from the payload**, which needs to be launched into a polar or a geosynchronous orbit, depending on a mission's requirements.
 - **In ISRO's 3-stage rockets,**
 - ◆ The first/ lowermost stage has solid fuel/ up to 4 liquid strap-on boosters in the GSLV;
 - ◆ The second stage has the Vikas engine powered by liquid fuel; and
 - ◆ The third and uppermost stage has a cryogenic engine, which uses liquid oxygen and liquid hydrogen.

■ In the 4-stage PSLV,

- ◆ The first stage has a motor using solid fuel augmentable with up to six solid-fuel strap-on boosters,
- ◆ The second stage has a Vikas engine,
- ◆ The third stage again has a solid-fuel motor, and
- ◆ The fourth stage has two liquid engines.

■ The RLV that ISRO is building has only two stages to propel the vehicle into orbit.

- ◆ Once the fuel in the first stage has been expended, the vehicle will shed it and carry on with the second stage.
- ◆ The first stage will re-enter the atmosphere and land in an autonomous fashion at a predetermined location.
- ◆ After some maintenance, it will be available for reuse.

● What is the Significance of RLVs?

- **Low lift-to-drag (L/D) ratio:** In aerodynamics, the L/D ratio is the lift generated by an aircraft, divided by the aerodynamic drag caused by moving through air.
- **Cost-effective:** The use of two staged RLVs can reduce the cost of a launch by nearly 80% of the current cost.
- **Foundation for advanced technologies:** It has the potential to serve as the foundation for advanced technologies such as
 - ◆ Hypersonic flight,
 - ◆ Autonomous landing,
 - ◆ Return flight experimentation,
 - ◆ Powered cruise flight, and
 - ◆ Air-breathing propulsion systems.
- **Scientific, strategic and commercial advantages for India:** The building of RLVs will ensure that the country does not lag in important scientific and strategic areas and will also commercially help ISRO.

● What is the History of ISRO's RLV Missions?

- **In 2010**, ISRO began developing a winged reusable rocket, taking the first step towards realising a two-stage-to-orbit (TSTO) launch vehicle that could be fully reusable.
- **In 2016**, the winged vehicle successfully flew at hypersonic speed and touched down at a predetermined site 425 km east of Sriharikota, in the Bay of Bengal.
- While several other related technologies have been tested through the years, ISRO's RLV's autonomous landing was only tested successfully in **2023**.
- **Currently**, ISRO is working on the '**Orbital Reentry Experiment**' (ORE), which will be taken to orbit by a modified launch vehicle comprising existing GSLV and PSLV stages.
- The vehicle will stay in orbit for a stipulated period, re-enter, and finally land autonomously on a runway, with landing gear.

● What are the RLV LEX Missions?

- **The mission was accomplished by** Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre (VSSC) along with the Liquid Propulsion System Centre (LPSC) and the ISRO Inertial Systems Unit (IISU).
- **This is the third and final test in the series of LEX (03)**, following the success of the RLV LEX-01 and LEX-02 missions.
- **The third and final test** re-demonstrated the autonomous landing capability of the RLV under more challenging release conditions.
- **The mission simulated high-speed landing conditions** for a vehicle returning from space, reaffirming ISRO's expertise in acquiring the most critical technologies required for the development of a RLV.

Pushpak, ISRO's reusable launch vehicle, clears test

This was the third and final test of a series; the mission demonstrated the autonomous landing capability of the vehicle under more challenging release conditions, says the space agency

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The Indian Space Research Organisation successfully completed the third reusable launch vehicle landing experiment (RLV LEX) at the Aeronautical Test Range in Chitradurga, Karnataka on Sunday.

The third and final test in a series was conducted at 7:10 a.m. "Following the success of RLV LEX-01 and LEX-02 missions, RLV LEX-03 re-demonstrated the autonomous landing capability of the RLV under more challenging release conditions and more severe wind conditions," the ISRO said.

On Sunday morning, Pushpak, the space agency's winged vehicle, was released from an Indian Air Force Chinook helicopter at an altitude of 4.5 km. The ISRO said that from the release point 4.5 km away, Pushpak autonomously executed cross-range correction manoeuvres, approached the



Pushpak touchdown: Pushpak performed a special horizontal landing at runway centre line, the ISRO says. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

runway, and performed a precise horizontal landing at the runway centre line. "Due to this vehicle's low lift-to-drag ratio aerodynamic configuration, the landing velocity exceeded 320 kmph, compared with 260 kmph for a commercial aircraft and 280 kmph for a typical fighter aircraft. After touchdown, the vehicle velocity was reduced to nearly 100 kmph using its brake parachute, after which the landing gear brakes were employed for deceleration. During this ground roll phase, Pushpak utilises its rudder and nose-wheel steering system to autonomously maintain a stable and precise ground roll along the runway," it said. The space agency said this mission simulated the approach and landing interface and high-speed landing conditions for a vehicle returning from space, reaffirming its expertise in acquiring the most critical technologies

required for the development of an RLV.

"Through this mission, the advanced guidance algorithm catering to longitudinal and lateral plane error corrections, which is essential for the future Orbital Re-entry Mission has been validated," it said.

The ISRO said that the LEX used sensors such as an inertial sensor, radar altimeter, flush air data system and NavIC. Notably, the LEX-03 mission reused the winged body and flight systems from the LEX-02 mission without any modification, demonstrating the robustness of the ISRO's capability of design to reuse flight systems.

ISRO Chairman S. Somnath congratulated the team for its efforts in maintaining the success streak in such missions. S. Umakrishnan Naik, Director, Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre, emphasised that this "consistent success boosts ISRO's confidence in the critical technologies essential for future orbital re-entry missions".

6. Hajj Pilgrimage

Recent events of importance

- **Why in News:** At least 1,301 people died during Hajj, Saudi Arabia says, mostly unauthorised pilgrims who walked long distances in intense heat.

- **About:**

- The Hajj is a religious **pilgrimage** to the holy city of Mecca in Saudi Arabia that is **mandatory for all able-bodied Muslims** who can afford it. It is **one of the Five Pillars of Islam** and is considered a central part of Muslim religious life.

- **Five Pillars:**

- **Shahada (Faith):** The declaration of faith in the oneness of God and the acceptance of Muhammad as God's prophet.
- **Zakat (Charity):** Giving a portion of one's wealth to those in need
- **Salah (Prayer):** Performing the five daily prayers facing the Kaaba in Mecca.
- **Sawm (Fasting):** Fasting during the month of Ramadan.
- **Hajj (Pilgrimage):** Making a pilgrimage to the holy city of Mecca at least once in a lifetime if one is physically and financially able.

- **Rituals:**

- **Ihram:** State of spiritual purity marked by simple white garments.
- **Tawaf and Sa'i:** Circumambulation of the Kaaba and walking between Safa and Marwah.
- **Day of Arafat:** Standing in prayer and reflection.
- **Muzdalifah and Mina:** Collecting pebbles and symbolic stoning of the devil.
- **Eid al-Adha:** Festival of Sacrifice, animal sacrifice, and charity.
- **Final Tawaf:** Conclusion with a final circumambulation of the Kaaba.

Heat tragedy in Mecca, and what makes Hajj pilgrims vulnerable

ASAD REHMAN
NEW DELHI, JUNE 23

HUNDREDS of Hajj pilgrims have died in the intense desert heat of Saudi Arabia this year, with temperatures in the holy city of Mecca reportedly reaching above 51 degrees Celsius at times during the days of the pilgrimage. Although Islam was founded in the 7th century, Hajj is said to have been performed for much longer, and heat-related deaths have been recorded earlier too. However, climate change is making the pilgrimage increasingly difficult and hazardous, especially for the elderly who constitute a large section of pilgrims.

The pilgrimage
Hajj, literally, "to get out for a place", is one of the five pillars of Islam – every Muslim is supposed to undertake the pilgrimage at least once in their lifetime. According to the

Hadith (Quran), the beginnings of Hajj can be traced back to the time of the Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) in the 19th century. The pilgrimage involves a series of rituals and prayers, mostly in the holy city of Mecca, and is said to have been performed for much longer, and heat-related deaths have been recorded earlier too. However, climate change is making the pilgrimage increasingly difficult and hazardous, especially for the elderly who constitute a large section of pilgrims.

While the Hajj will gradually move towards a more regulated and controlled environment, it will continue to be a significant event in the lives of Muslims. The pilgrimage is expected to be significantly larger than ever, with the global temperature increase having gone past 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels.

The numbers
Hajj is considered to be the largest gathering of humans in the world – some 1.8 million Muslims performed the pilgrimage last year, and the number for this year is estimated to have reached close to 2 million.

The Ministry of Hajj and Umrah of Saudi Arabia is in charge of organising the pilgrimage and, over the years, the number of pilgrims has grown up. Saudi authorities have spent billions to improve infrastructure. Nonetheless, according to many pilgrims in one location

for a brief period of time is a massive logistical challenge. Each year, the Saudi government issues country-wise quotas, which are by and large based on the number of Muslims in that country. Countries also lobby diplomatically with Riyadh for larger national quotas.

This year, Saudi Arabia allowed 175,000 pilgrims to undertake the pilgrimage – 14 lakh went through the official Hajj Committee of India, and the rest were through more expensive private operators.

The tragedy
At least 1,301 pilgrims have died, according to an AFP report quoting an Arab diplomat. Many of the dead were "unregistered" pilgrims who were in Saudi Arabia in contravention of rules. Egypt's government said on Saturday it had received news that more than 200 of its nationals are among the dead, and

EXPLAINED GLOBAL

Local hospitals or mortuaries inform country representatives of the deaths of their citizens, following which the country's consulate confirms the dead person's identity and gets the approval of the family for burial in a properly marked grave in Saudi Arabia.

Indian deaths
MEA spokesperson Randeep Jaiswal has

said 98 Indians have died during the pilgrimage this year. "These deaths have happened on account of natural factors, natural causes, chronic illness and old age. Last year, the figure of Indians who died on Hajj was 187," Jaiswal said.

"We have heard that because it was very hot, on the day of Arafat, several people suffered. From our country, no people died on the day of Arafat," he said.

Indians Hajj mission in Jeddah, Jeddah, has put that review as the gateway for the pilgrimage. Indian officials oversee a medical mission, hospital, ambulances, and arrangements for Indian citizens.

The Health Ministry has said that almost 40,000 people over the age of 60 years undertake Hajj this year, due to their "harsh weather conditions", services were provided for the pilgrims and the check. A special protocol was made for the pilgrims and the check, and the services were provided.

7. 18th Lok Sabha session - Oath taking in Lok Sabha

GS 2 (Legislature)

- **Why in news:**

- The first session of the 18th Lok Sabha will start today. Before the House can begin its legislative functioning, the newly elected members will have to take the oath of Members of Parliament (MP), which is provided in the Constitution.
- Bhartruhari Mahtab, elected for the seventh consecutive time from Cuttack, Odisha, will be the first to take the oath as a Lok Sabha MP at Rashtrapati Bhavan in front of President Droupadi Murmu.
- The President has appointed him as the Speaker (pro tem) under Article 95(1) of the Constitution until the new Speaker is elected. Mahtab will preside over the House during the oath-taking ceremony of his colleagues.

- **Term of an MP**

- The five-year term of a Lok Sabha MP begins when the Election Commission of India (ECI) **declares the results** as per Section 73 of the Representation of the People Act, 1951.
- From that point, MPs are entitled to certain rights as elected representatives.
- For instance, they start receiving their salary and allowances from the date of the ECI notification
- Additionally, the start of their term means that if MPs switch party allegiance, their political party can request the Speaker to disqualify them from Parliament under the anti-defection law.

Oath-taking in Lok Sabha

Members of the 18th Lok Sabha will begin taking oath today. Lok Sabha terms begin from the day the EC declares the results of the elections, but to participate or vote in the House, MPs must first take oath

CHAKRAVORTY & MANJUNATH

NEW DELHI, JUNE 23

THE FIRST session of the 18th Lok Sabha will start today. Before the House can begin its legislative functioning, the newly elected members will have to take the oath of Members of Parliament (MP), which is provided in the Constitution.

The day will begin in Rashtrapati Bhavan, where Bhartruhari Mahtab – who has been elected for the seventh consecutive time from Cuttack, Odisha – will be the first to take the oath of a Lok Sabha MP in front of President Droupadi Murmu.

The President has appointed him as the Speaker (pro tem) under Article 95(1) of the Constitution until the new Speaker is elected. Mahtab will preside over the House during the oath-taking ceremony of his colleagues.

When will the term of an MP begin?

The five-year term of a Lok Sabha MP begins when the Election Commission of India (ECI) declares the results according to Section 73 of the Representation of the People Act, 1951. From that day onward, MPs are eligible to participate in House proceedings. In addition, they start receiving their salary and allowances from the date of ECI notification – after the 2024 general elections, the ECI will declare the results.

The start of their term also means that if MPs change their party allegiance, their political party can ask the Speaker to disqualify them from Parliament under the anti-defection law.

What is the significance of the oath-taking ceremony?

The oath-taking ceremony is a symbolic gesture that signifies the commitment of MPs to the Constitution and the people of India. It is a tradition that has been followed since the inception of the Lok Sabha.

How have the oath-taking ceremonies evolved over time?

The oath-taking ceremony has evolved over time, with the inclusion of more MPs and the use of a more formal language. It has become a significant event in the life of the Lok Sabha.

What is the significance of the oath-taking ceremony for the new Speaker?

The oath-taking ceremony is a significant event for the new Speaker, as it marks the beginning of their term in office. It is a tradition that has been followed since the inception of the Lok Sabha.

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- **Parliamentary oath**

- **About**

- ◆ The third schedule of the Constitution contains the parliamentary oath.
 - ◆ Through this, members swear or affirm to bear true faith and allegiance to the Constitution of India, uphold India's sovereignty and integrity, and faithfully discharge their duties.

- **Importance of the Parliamentary Oath Despite the Start of an MP's Term**

- ◆ Winning the election and starting the term does not automatically allow an MP to participate in House proceedings.
 - ◆ An MP must take an oath or affirmation, as prescribed by the Constitution (**Article 99**), to debate and vote in the Lok Sabha.
 - ◆ The Constitution imposes a financial penalty of Rs 500 (Article 104) if a person participates or votes without taking the oath.
 - ◆ An exception exists for ministers who are not yet elected to Parliament; **they can participate, but not vote**, in House proceedings for up to six months while they secure a seat in either Lok Sabha or Rajya Sabha.

- **Evolution of oath over the years**

- ◆ The draft Constitution, prepared by the committee chaired by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, initially did not invoke God in any oaths, emphasizing a solemn and sincere promise to uphold the Constitution.
 - ◆ During the Constituent Assembly discussions, members like K.T. Shah and Mahavir Tyagi proposed amendments to include God in the President's oath.
 - ◆ They argued that it would provide a divine sanction for believers while allowing non-believers to affirm solemnly.
 - ◆ Despite disagreements, Ambedkar accepted the amendments, recognizing the significance of invoking God for some individuals.
 - ◆ The last modification to the oath came with the Constitution (Sixteenth Amendment) Act, 1963.
 - ◆ This amendment added the commitment to uphold India's sovereignty and integrity, following recommendations from the National Integration Council.

- **Process**

- ◆ Before taking the oath or affirmation, MPs must submit their election certificate to the Lok Sabha staff.
 - ◆ This requirement was introduced after a 1957 incident where a mentally unsound individual posed as an MP and took the oath.
 - ◆ MPs can then take their oath or affirmation in English or any of the 22 languages specified in the Constitution.
 - ◆ About half of the MPs take their oath in Hindi or English, with Sanskrit also becoming popular in recent years.
 - ◆ MPs must use the name on their election certificate and adhere to the text of the oath.
 - ◆ Deviations, such as adding suffixes or phrases, are not recorded, and MPs may be asked to retake the oath.
 - ◆ While oaths and affirmations are a personal choice, 87% of MPs swore in the name of God in the last Lok Sabha, with the remaining 13% affirming allegiance to the Constitution.
 - ◆ Some MPs alternate between swearing by God and affirming across different terms.

- **Can MPs in jail take the oath?**

- ◆ The Constitution specifies that if an MP does not attend Parliament for 60 days, their seat can be declared vacant.
 - ◆ Courts have used this ground to allow MPs in jail to take an oath in Parliament.

8. Govt mulls new bank to bridge credit gap for MSMEs

GS 3 (Economy)

- **Why in news:** The government is considering a proposal to set up a separate bank for direct lending to the micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs). This is being planned to deepen credit flows to the under-penetrated sector and thereby boost economic activity and job creation.

- **MSMEs in India:**

- MSMEs are often called the **powerhouse of the Indian economy** as they contribute significantly to employment generation, exports, and overall economic growth.
- They reportedly account for **more than 11 crore jobs and contribute around 27.0% of India's GDP**.
- The sector consists of **around 6.4 crore MSMEs**, with 1.5 crore of them registered on the Udyam portal and employs around 23.0% of the Indian labour force, making it the **2nd-largest employer in India after agriculture**.
- They account for 38.4% of the total manufacturing output and **contribute 45.03% of the country's total exports**.
- **Significance of MSMEs and Problems Faced by Them:**

- **Significance of MSMEs for Indian economy:**

- ◆ Labour intensive sector, promotes inclusive growth, leads to financial inclusion and promotes innovation. The 64 million-strong MSMEs are the backbone of the Indian economy.

- **Problems faced by MSMEs:**

- ◆ **Problem of dwarfism:** While dwarfs (firms that continued to remain small despite ageing) consume vital resources (could possibly be given to infant firms), they contribute less to job creation and economic growth as compared to infant firms.
- ◆ **Lack of funding:** Most (90%) of the MSME funding comes from informal sources.
- ◆ **Poor integration of digital technologies:** Integration of technologies such as big data, AI and virtual reality (Industry 4.0) into manufacturing operations in the sector is still in its infancy.
- ◆ **Environmental impact:** The sector lacks cleantech innovation and entrepreneurship, which produce environment friendly products, promotes energy efficiency and has the potential to accelerate the transition to a circular and low carbon economy.

- **New bank to bridge credit gap for MSMEs**

- **Proposal**

- ◆ Government is planning to set up a separate bank for direct lending to MSMEs.
- ◆ Among the details to be worked out is the ownership structure of the bank, which might include a hybrid (public-private partnership) model.

- **Current scheme**

- ◆ The Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI) primarily provides refinance to banks lending to MSMEs, helping to lower the cost of finance for these units.
 - Established under an Act of Parliament in 1990, SIDBI's majority shareholders include:
 - Government of India (20.85%),
 - State Bank of India (15.65%), Life Insurance Corporation of India (13.33%), and
 - National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (9.36%).
 - SIDBI accesses low-cost funds from banks that fall short of their priority sector lending (PSL) targets.
 - SIDBI's growth prospects depend on the coverage achieved by scheduled commercial banks in meeting their PSL targets.
- ◆ Additionally, state financial corporations and state industrial development corporations, among others, lend directly to MSME units.

Govt mulls dedicated bank for MSMEs to enhance credit access, economic growth

PRASANTA SAHU
NEW DELHI, JUNE 23

THE GOVERNMENT is considering a proposal to set up a separate bank for direct lending to the micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs). This would help deepen credit flows to the under-penetrated sector, and boost economic activity and job creation. "There is a need to set up a separate bank for the MSME sector to help address the direct credit shortages," an official told FE, adding such a proposal is under consideration.

The government would soon take a call on the proposal, the official indicated. The ownership structure of the bank, which might include a hybrid (public-private partnership) model, is among the details to be worked out. Access to adequate, timely and low-cost finance is seen as a key bottleneck, stymieing MSMEs' growth to bigger enterprises.

Currently, the Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI) provides largely refinance to banks that lend to MSMEs, lowering the cost of finance to these units. State financial corporations and state industrial development corpora-



tions, among others, lend directly to units in the MSME sector. It has access to low-cost funds, which are made available by banks against their shortfalls in meeting their priority sector lending (PSL) targets. The micro and small enterprise (MSE) refinance allocation for FY24 was Rs 84,000 crore.

According to an EY report, MSME credit penetration is still 14 per cent in India compared with 50 per cent in the US and 37 per cent in China. There is a credit gap of Rs 25 trillion for the MSME sector in India, reflecting the large untapped credit market. The outstanding credit to the MSMEs by scheduled commercial banks (SCBs) expanded by 20.9 per cent annually to Rs 26 trillion at the end of December 2023.

The 64 million-strong MSMEs are the backbone of the Indian

economy. MSMEs employ over 110 million people or 23 per cent of the country's labour force, making it the second-largest employer in India after agriculture. They account for 27 per cent of India's GDP, 38.4 per cent for the total manufacturing output and 45 per cent for the country's total exports. "A separate bank which understands the needs and the working of the MSMEs is required," said Sandip Kishore Jain, president of the Federation of Indian Micro and Small & Medium Enterprises.

Large banks don't understand the requirements of the MSMEs, Jain said, adding that in some European countries, MSMEs are clubbed together with home loan customers as both are small borrowers. All India Association of Industries president Vijay G Kalantri said if not a new bank, SIDBI should be converted into a full-fledged bank for direct lending to MSMEs instead of focussing on just refinance.

Kalantri also said that MSMEs should be given loans at the same interest rate as housing, i.e., at the rate of 6 per cent for exports and 8 per cent for regular domestic production activities. Currently, he said, the bank interest rate for MSMEs is 11-13 per cent and for exports 8-9 per cent. FE

Revised Definition of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises

Parameters	Micro	Small	Medium
Investment in Plant and Machinery	< 1 Crore INR	< 10 Crore INR	< 50 Crore INR
Annual Turnover	< 5 Crore INR	< 50 Crore INR	< 250 Crore INR
No. of MSMEs (Based on NSS data)	6.3 Crore	3.3 Lakh	5 thousand
No. of MSMEs (Based on Udyam data as on 31st March 2023)	1.5 Crore	4.6 Lakh	41 thousand

- **Need for new bank**

- ◆ According to a report, MSME credit penetration is still 14% in India compared with 50% in the US and 37% in China.
- ◆ There is a credit gap of Rs 25 trillion for the Indian MSME sector, reflecting the large untapped credit market.
- ◆ The outstanding credit to the MSMEs by scheduled commercial banks expanded by 20.9% annually to Rs 26 trillion at the end of December 2023.
- ◆ Access to adequate, timely and low-cost finance is seen as a key bottleneck, stymieing MSMEs' growth to bigger enterprises.
- ◆ A separate bank which understands the needs and the working of the MSMEs is required.
- ◆ Large banks don't understand the requirements of the MSMEs.



MCQ Current Affairs
24th June, 2024

1. Namaqualand, recently seen in the news, lies in which one of the following regions?

- a) Southeast Asia
- b) Middle East
- c) Southwestern Africa
- d) South America

2. Barda Wildlife Sanctuary is located in:

- a) Rajasthan
- b) Madhya Pradesh
- c) Maharashtra
- d) Gujarat

3. With reference to Methane, consider the following statements:

- A. It is a short-lived greenhouse gas.
- B. It is a colorless, odorless and flammable water insoluble gas.
- C. It leads to ground-level ozone pollution.

How many of the above statements are correct?

- a) One only
- b) Two only
- c) All three
- d) None

4. Consider the following statements with reference to the Sensorineural deafness:

- A. It is caused due to prolonged exposure to loud noise.
- B. It can occur in persons who are infected with meningitis and mumps.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a) A only
- b) B only
- c) A and B
- d) Neither of two

5. Consider the following statements with reference to the Gas Flaring:

- A. It is the process of burning of the natural gas associated with oil extraction.
- B. It releases nitrogen oxides which impacts air quality.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a) A only
- b) B only
- c) A and B
- d) Neither of two

Answers Current Affairs
24th June, 2024

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

