

UPSC CURRENT AFFAIRS NOTES 06-02-2024

FISCAL GOALS



Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman outlined fiscal goals during the Budget speech.

Fiscal deficit targeted **to reduce to 5.1%** of GDP in 2024-25.

Ambitious goal of bringing fiscal deficit below 4.5% of GDP by 2025-26.

Revised estimate for fiscal deficit in 2023-24 lowered to 5.8% of GDP.

Fiscal Deficit Definition:

- Fiscal deficit signifies the gap between a government's expenditure and revenue.
- Occurs when government spending exceeds its income, necessitating borrowing or asset sales.
- Taxes constitute a vital revenue source for governments.

Government's Fiscal Health:

- Running a fiscal surplus, where revenue exceeds expenditure, is uncommon.
- Focus is on managing and controlling the fiscal deficit.
- Distinction emphasized between fiscal deficit and national debt.
- Typically expressed as a percentage of the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP).



Funding Fiscal Deficit:

- Primary method involves borrowing from the bond market.
- In the fiscal year 2024-25, the Centre is expected to borrow ₹14.13 lakh crore.
- Central banks, such as the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), contribute indirectly through open market operations.

Monetary Policy Impact:

- Central bank lending rates play a crucial role in determining government borrowing costs.
- Post-pandemic, rising lending rates increase government borrowing expenses.
- Government's commitment to reducing fiscal deficit aligns with monetary policy objectives.

Significance of Fiscal Deficit:

- Direct linkage between a country's fiscal deficit and inflation levels.
- Serves as an indicator of the government's fiscal discipline.
- Influences market perception, affecting bond ratings and borrowing costs.

Challenges and Public Debt:

- High fiscal deficit levels can strain overall public debt management.
- International Monetary Fund (IMF) cautioned about India's public debt potentially exceeding 100% of GDP.
- Government's interest in international bond markets; lower fiscal deficit enhances access to affordable credit.

Future Plans and Challenges:

- Centre's strategic plan to reduce fiscal deficit to 5.1% in 2024-25.
- Dependence on tax collections, expecting an 11.5% increase in 2024-25.
- Projections considered ambitious; uncertainty regarding achieving the fiscal deficit targets.

IEDSS SCHEME



The Karnataka government has suspended officers for dereliction of duty in implementing the Inclusive Education for Disabled at Secondary Stage (IEDSS) scheme.

Details

- **The scheme, sponsored by the Central and State governments, aims to enable students with disabilities to pursue four years of secondary schooling in an inclusive environment.**
- **Launched in 2009-10, it replaced the Integrated Education for Disabled Children (IEDC) scheme.**
- The primary aim of the IEDSS is to enable students with disabilities to pursue four years of secondary schooling (classes IX-XII) in an inclusive and enabling environment.
- The scheme has been subsumed under the Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) since 2013, with States/Union Territories (UTs) in the process of integrating it further under RMSA.

Objectives

- Enable all students with disabilities to pursue secondary education after completing eight years of elementary schooling.
- Cover children with disabilities in government, local body, and government-aided schools in classes IX to XII, including those with blindness, low vision, leprosy cured, hearing impairment, locomotory disabilities, mental retardation, mental illness, autism, cerebral palsy, and potential coverage of speech impairment, learning disabilities, etc.



- Focus on girls with disabilities to facilitate their access to secondary schools and provide information and guidance for their overall development.
- Envisage the establishment of Model Inclusive Schools in every State under the scheme.

Components

- **Student-oriented components:** This includes medical and educational assessment, books and stationery, uniforms, transport allowance, reader allowance, stipends for girls, support services, assistive devices, boarding and lodging facility, therapeutic services, teaching-learning materials, etc.
- **Other components:** Special education teachers' appointment, allowances for general teachers teaching children with disabilities, teacher training, orientation of school administrators, establishment of resource rooms, providing a barrier-free environment, etc.

Implementing Agency

- The School Education Department of State Governments/Union Territory (UT) Administrations is responsible for implementing the scheme.
- NGOs with experience in the education of disabled individuals may be involved in the implementation process.

Financial Assistance

- Central assistance covers 100 percent of the costs for all items under the scheme.
- State governments are required to make provisions for a scholarship of Rs. 600 per disabled child per annum.
- The IEDSS aims to create an inclusive and supportive environment for students with disabilities, ensuring that they have access to education and the necessary resources for their overall development.

Bharat Ratna



Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced that veteran BJP leader L K Advani will be conferred with the Bharat Ratna.

Bharat Ratna: India's Highest Civilian Award

Establishment:

Instituted: The Bharat Ratna, India's highest civilian award, was instituted on January 2, 1954.

First Awardees: The first recipients of the Bharat Ratna were politician C. Rajagopalachari, scientist C.V. Raman, and philosopher Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan in 1954.

Criteria for Award:

Field of Achievement: The award is given in recognition of exceptional service in any field of human endeavor, including art, literature, science, and public service.

Non-discrimination: It is open to anyone, regardless of nationality, race, occupation, or sex.

Notable Features:

Multiple Awardees: Individuals can receive the Bharat Ratna more than once. Notable multiple awardees include former Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and former President A.P.J. Abdul Kalam.

Posthumous Awards: The award can be conferred posthumously, honoring individuals who made significant contributions during their lifetimes.



Selection Process:

Recommendation: Nominations for the Bharat Ratna can be made by the Prime Minister, the President, or any citizen.

Screening Committee: A committee reviews the nominations and recommends candidates to the Prime Minister.

Final Decision: The Prime Minister makes the final recommendation to the President for approval.

Symbol and Privileges:

Medal and Certificate: Recipients receive a medal, a certificate, and a cash award.

Privileges: The award confers no formal title but grants the recipient certain privileges, including a stipend and free travel on Indian Airlines.

Controversies and Discussions:

Timing of Awards: The timing and choices of Bharat Ratna awardees have occasionally sparked debates and controversies.

Calls for Re-evaluation: Over the years, there have been discussions about reevaluating the criteria and expanding the categories for the award.

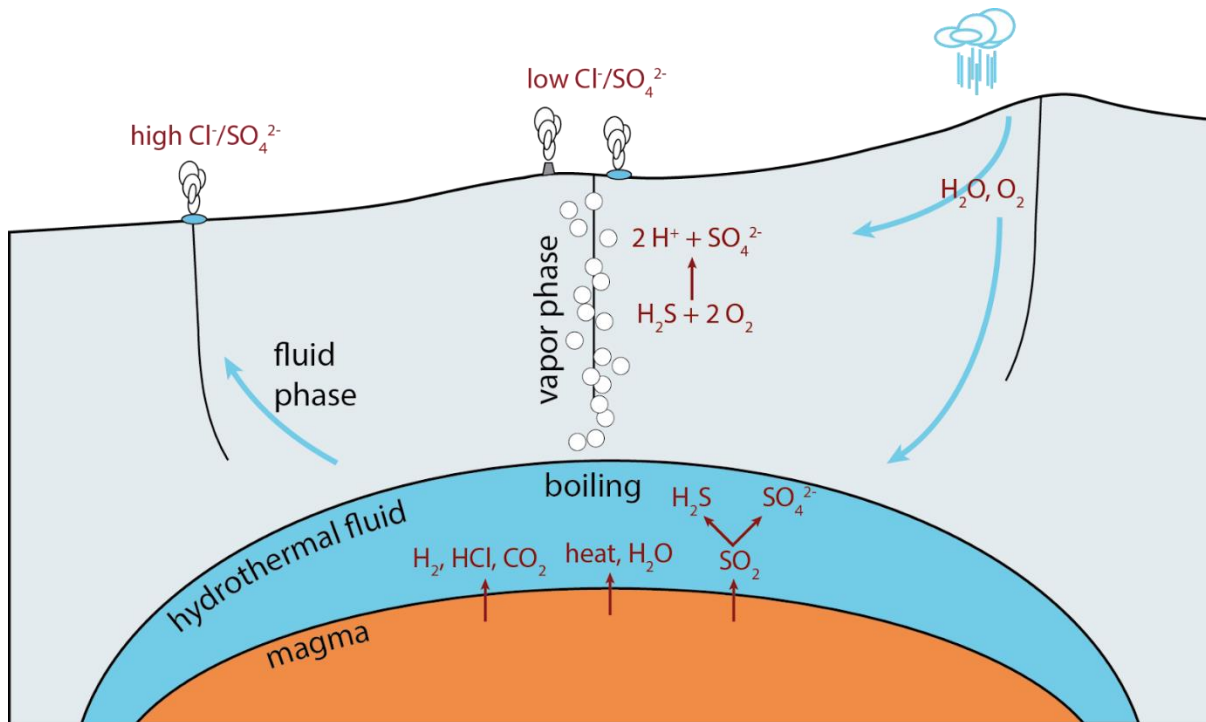
Prominent Recipients:

Diverse Fields: Bharat Ratna has been awarded to individuals from diverse fields, including politics, science, arts, and social service.

Contributions to Nation: Recipients are honored for their outstanding contributions that have significantly impacted the nation.

Hydrothermal Systems

New maps have revealed a hidden hydrothermal system **beneath Lake Rotorua**, which sits at the heart of a dormant volcano in New Zealand.



About Hydrothermal Systems:

- Hydrothermal systems **occur in areas with high heat fluxes, both on continents, near convergent plate boundaries, and on the ocean floor, near the mid-ocean ridges.**
- Their **formation requires** the existence of three important components: **fluids, heat, and permeability through rocks** so that fluids can circulate.
- These systems are **often found near mid-ocean ridges**, where tectonic plates diverge and new seafloor is created.
- **How hydrothermal systems work?**

Hydrothermal systems **occur when seawater percolates down** through fractures in the **oceanic crust, heating up** as it nears the earth's hot interior.

Descending seawater **interacts with the oceanic crust, removing chemicals from the rocks** as it heats to 350-400 degrees Celsius, about four times hotter than boiling water (the extreme pressure in the ocean's depths prevents fluids from boiling).

This interaction of seawater and crust **produces hydrothermal fluid**, chemically modified slurry of gases and dissolved elements, including metals.

The **superheated fluid** is then **ejected back up to the seafloor** and promptly **chilled by near-freezing ocean bottom waters.**

Chemicals dissolved in the fluid **precipitate at the vent, forming chimney-like deposits.**

These deposit supports deep-sea chemosynthetic communities—organisms that rely on chemicals rather than photosynthesis to fuel their metabolism

mid-ocean ridge

The massive mid-ocean ridge system is a continuous range of underwater volcanoes that wraps around the globe, stretching nearly 65,000 kilometers (40,390 miles). The majority of the system is underwater, with an average water depth to the top of the ridge of 2,500 meters. They occur along divergent plate boundaries, where a new ocean floor is created as the Earth's tectonic plates spread apart. As the plates separate, molten rock rises to the seafloor, producing enormous volcanic eruptions of basalt. The speed of spreading affects the shape of a ridge – slower spreading rates result in steep, irregular topography while faster spreading rates produce much wider profiles and more gentle slopes

Whip

Major political party issued a three-line whip to its Lok Sabha MPs asking them to be present in the House tomorrow as the Prime Minister of India will reply to the Motion of Thanks on the Presidential address delivered recently.

About Whip:

- A whip in parliamentary parlance **is a written order** that party members be present for an **important vote**, or that they vote only in a particular way.
- The term is derived from the old British practice of “whipping in” lawmakers to follow the party line.
- The importance of a whip can be inferred from the **number of times an order is underlined.**

Appointment:

In India all parties can issue a **whip to their members.**

Parties appoint a **senior member** from among their House contingents to issue whips — this member is **called a Chief Whip**, and he/she is assisted by additional Whips.

Types of whips:

One-line whip: A one-line whip, **underlined once**, is usually issued to **inform party members of a vote**, and allows them to abstain in case they decide not to follow the party line.

Two-line whip: A two-line whip directs them to be present during the vote.

Three-line whip: A three-line whip is the strongest, employed on important occasions such as the second reading of a Bill or a no-confidence motion, **and places an obligation on members to toe the party line.**

Defiance of whip

In India, rebelling against a three-line whip can put a lawmaker's membership of the House at risk.

The **anti-defection law** allows the Speaker/Chairperson **to disqualify such a member**; the only exception is when more than a third of legislators vote against a directive, effectively splitting the party.

INS SANDHAYAK



INS Sandhayak (Yard 3025), **the first Survey Vessel Large (SVL) ship**, was commissioned into the Indian Navy in the presence of Raksha Mantri Shri Rajnath Singh at an impressive ceremony held at the Naval Dockyard, Visakhapatnam recently.

INS Sandhayak

The keel was laid on March 12, 2019 and the ship was launched on December 05, 2021. It has undergone a comprehensive schedule of trials in harbour and at sea, leading up to commissioning.



The ship has a displacement of 3,400 tons and an overall length of 110 meters with a beam of 16m.

‘Sandhayak’ means the one who carries out a special search. The crest depicts the sixteen points of a mariner’s compass, enclosing a ‘divider’ and an ‘anchor’ riding the sea, symbolising the charting of oceans, which is the basic role of the survey ship.

The commissioning is an affirmation of India’s expertise in warship designing and construction.

Role

- The primary role of the ship is to carry out full scale hydrographic surveys of ports, harbours, navigational channels/routes, coastal areas and deep seas, towards enabling safe marine navigation.
- In its secondary role, the ship will be capable of undertaking a range of naval operations.

Capabilities

- INS Sandhayak is equipped with state-of-the-art hydrographic equipment including Deep & Shallow Water Multi-Beam Echo-Sounders, Autonomous Underwater Vehicle, Remotely Operated Vehicle, Side scan sonars, Data Acquisition and Processing System, satellite-based positioning systems and terrestrial survey equipment.
- The ship is propelled by two Diesel Engines and is capable of achieving speeds in excess of 18 knots.
- It has an indigenous content of over 80% by cost and is a tribute to the collaborative efforts between the Indian Navy and Industry, including MSMEs. Its induction underscores the growing maritime interests and capabilities of the nation.

The commissioning as historic, exuding confidence that INS Sandhayak will further strengthen India's role as a superpower in the Indo-Pacific region and help the Indian Navy in maintaining peace & security.