



UPSC CURRENT AFFAIRS NOTES 14-03-2024

Directorate General of Foreign Trade

The Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) has granted an exemption to the import of certain goods, including viscose staple fibre and numerous steel items, from quality control orders (QCOs) under the advance authorisation scheme.

About Directorate General of Foreign Trade

It is a government organization in India responsible for the formulation of exim guidelines and principles for Indian importers and Indian exporters of the country.

Before 1991, DGFT was known as the Chief Controller of Imports & Exports (CCI&E).

It is an attached office of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry and is headed by the Director General of Foreign Trade.

It has been assigned the role of "facilitator".

It is responsible for implementing the Foreign Trade Policy or Exim Policy with the main objective of promoting Indian exports.

The DGFT also issues scrips/authorization to exporters and monitors their corresponding obligations through a network of 24 regional offices.

Functions

To implement the Exim Policy or Foreign Trade Policy of India by introducing various schemes and guidelines through its network of dgft regional offices thought-out the country.

To Grant Exporter Importer Code Number to Indian Exporter and Importers. IEC Number is a unique 10 digit code required by the traders or manufacturers for the purpose of import and export in India.

It permits or regulate Transit of Goods from India or to countries adjacent to India in accordance with the bilateral treaties between India and other countries.

To promote trade with neighboring countries.

To grant the permission of free export in Export Policy Schedule 2.

Setting standard input-output norms is also controlled by the DGFT.

Headquarter: New Delhi



Index of Industrial Production (IIP)

The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation recently released the Quick Estimates of the Index of Industrial Production (IIP) for January 2024, revealing a growth of 3.8 percent.

About Index of Industrial Production (IIP)

It is one of the prime indicators of economic development for the measurement of trends in the behavior of industrial production over a period of time with reference to a chosen base year.

IIP is a short-term indicator measuring industrial growth until the actual result of detailed industrial surveys become available.

It indicates the relative change in physical production in the field of industries during a specified year as compared to the previous year.

It is computed and published by the Central Statistical Organisation (CSO), Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, on a monthly basis.

Calculation:

The IIP is a quantum index, the production of items is expressed in physical terms. However, the unit of reporting in respect of certain items like machinery, machine tools, shipbuilding, etc. is in value terms.

The IIP is compiled as a simple weighted arithmetic mean of production relatives by using Laspeyre's formula.

In order to remove the effect of price rises from the index, the production figures of such items are deflated on the basis of Wholesale Price Indices (Base 2011-12), compiled by the Office of Economic Adviser, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, before the compilation of the index.

Base Year:

The base year is always given a value of 100.

The current base year for the IIP series in India is 2011-12.

So, if the current IIP reads as 116, it means that there has been 16% growth compared to the base year.

Laspeyre's formula

It was proposed by German economist Étienne Laspeyres (1834–1913) for measuring current prices or quantities in relation to those of a selected base period.

A Laspeyres price index is computed by taking the ratio of the total cost of purchasing a specified group of commodities at current prices to the cost of that same group at base-period prices and multiplying by 100.

The base-period index number is thus 100, and periods with higher price levels have index numbers greater than 100.

INS Tushil

INS Tushil, India's latest naval asset, initiated its sea trials from Russia's Baltiysk naval base on March 5, 2024.



INS Tushil falls under the Talwar-class frigates category of stealth-guided missile frigates.

The Talwar-class guided missile frigates are the improved versions of the Russian Coast Guard's Krivak III-class frigates.

Currently, the Indian Navy operates six of these ships while 4 more are under construction including 2 in India's Goa shipyard.

Features

These ships feature "stealth technology" in terms of low radar and underwater noise signatures.

These ships are being equipped with major Indian-supplied equipment such as surface-to-surface missiles, sonar systems, surface surveillance radar, communication suites, and anti-submarine warfare systems, along with Russian surface-to-air missiles and gun mounts.

The frigates are designed to fight submarines and warships in brown and blue waters and repel air attacks both independently and within formations.

The displacement is 3620 tons, the length is 124.8 meters. The full speed is 30 knots, and the cruising range is 4850 miles.

The Project 11356M

India inked an Inter-Governmental Agreement (IGA) with Russia in October 2016, solidifying plans to acquire four Admiral Grigorovich-class (Project 11356M)

Under this pact, Russia pledged to deliver two frigates, including INS Tushil and INS Tamala, while India undertook the construction of the remaining vessels domestically, a testament to the burgeoning Indo-Russian defence partnership.

The construction of the ships is based on the Indian Navy's specific requirements to meet the entire spectrum of naval warfare in all three dimensions of air, surface, and sub-surface.

GULF OF OMAN





China, Iran and Russia have begun a joint naval drill in the Gulf of Oman.

Details

The Gulf of Oman covers an area spanning **115,000 square kilometres**. It is the western extension of the Arabian Sea and lies in the Middle East, bordered by the nations of **Oman, Iran, Pakistan and the United Arab Emirates**.

The Gulf of Oman, also known as the **Sea of Oman**, is in the northwestern Indian Ocean. It links the Arabian Sea with the Hormuz Strait, which eventually drains into the Persian Gulf. It runs 560 km when it connects to the Persian Gulf, going northwest to the Hormuz Strait.

The Gulf of Oman has some of the islands, such as the **Al Fahal Island, Sheytan Island, Sawadi and Dimaniyat Islands**. The islands support diverse fish and coral species.

Ancient trade routes

The Gulf of Oman was known by many different names, like the Makran Sea and the Akhzar Sea, by Arabian, Iranian and European geographers and travellers. It was called the **Makran Sea till the 18th century**, as evidenced by historical maps and manuscripts of the period.

A vital maritime chokepoint for oil shipments

The Western side of the gulf connects to the Strait of Hormuz, a strategic route through which a third of the **world's liquefied natural gas and 20% of global oil** consumption passes from Middle East producers.

Major ports

- Port of Fujairah, Fujairah, United Arab Emirates
- Khor Fakkan Container Terminal, Khor Fakkan, United Arab Emirates
- Port of Chabahar, Chabahar, Iran
- Port Sultan Qaboos, Muttrah, Oman

The Gulf of Oman has one of the world's largest marine dead zone

In 2018, scientists revealed that the Gulf of Oman has one of the biggest marine **dead zones** in the world, an area with little to no oxygen where marine flora and fauna cannot live.

The dead zone covers 165,000 km² of area, equal to the size of Florida in the U.S. It is caused by increased global warming and phosphorus and nitrogen runoff from fertilisers.



Ecology

The reefs of the Gulf of Oman stretch from the coast into the Arabian Sea. Critically endangered species of corals, including the **Dendrophyllia** and **Elkhorn corals**, can be found here.

International underwater rail tunnel

In 2018, a rail tunnel under the sea was suggested to link the UAE with the western coast of India. The bullet train tunnel would be supported by pontoons and be nearly 2,000 kilometres (1,200 mi) in length

Khelo India Rising Talent Identification (KIRTI) Programme Inauguration

Union Minister for Youth Affairs and Sports, Shri Anurag Singh Thakur, inaugurated the Khelo India Rising Talent Identification (KIRTI) program in Chandigarh.

Khelo India Rising Talent Identification (KIRTI) program

KIRTI aims to identify and nurture talent among school children aged nine to 18.

The nationwide scheme will have two main objectives: to hunt talent from every nook and corner of the country and to use sports as a tool to curb addiction towards drugs and other gadgetry distractions.

The nationwide programme, inaugurated across 50 centers, targets 50,000 applicants in its initial phase, focusing on 10 sports, including athletics, boxing, wrestling, hockey, football, and wrestling.

KIRTI aims to conduct 20 lakh assessments across the country throughout the year to identify talent through notified Talent Assessment Centres.

It aligns with the vision of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi to bolster a sports culture and secure global medals for India.

Shri Thakur emphasized early engagement in sports, aiming to make India a top 10 sports nation by 2036 and a top five by 2047.

Implementation and Methodology:

KIRTI utilizes transparent selection methods based on Information Technology and Artificial Intelligence for talent identification.

Collaboration with National Sports Federations and state governments is essential for the program's success.



Over Rs. 3000 Crore has been allocated for infrastructure, with 1000+ Khelo India Centres established nationwide.

Future Prospects:

India aspires to host the Youth Olympics in 2030 and the Summer Olympics in 2036.

KIRTI is poised to strengthen India's soft power through sports and aligns with the government's focus on ease of business.

ABOUT KHELO INDIA MISSION

The Khelo India Scheme is the flagship Central Sector Scheme of the Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports.

A brainchild of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi in 2017-18, the Khelo India Mission aims at infusing sports culture and achieving sporting excellence in the country thus allowing the populace to harness the power of sports through its cross-cutting influence.

Under the “Sports Competitions and Talent Development” vertical of the Khelo India Scheme, the “Talent Identification and Development” component is dedicated to working towards the identification and development of athletes at the grassroots and elite levels to develop the sports ecosystem in the country.

Reorganized Components

The Khelo India Programme, previously divided into 12 verticals, has been restructured to enhance efficiency and effectiveness.

1.Creation and Upgradation of Sports Infrastructure:

Focuses on developing and improving sports facilities across the nation.

2.Sports Competitions and Talent Development:

Includes annual sports competitions and talent search initiatives like the Khelo India Winter Games.

3.Khelo India Centres and Sports Academies:

Supports state-level Khelo India Centres and various sports academies for talent grooming.

4.Fit India Movement:

Introduces the Fit India Movement as a dedicated component to promote physical fitness.



5.Promotion of Inclusiveness through Sports:

Emphasizes promoting sports among women, people with disabilities, and rural communities.

The reorganization aims to streamline operations by merging similar components into larger ones.

This consolidation condenses the previous 12 components into five, facilitating better coordination and resource allocation.

Issues plaguing the Sports Sector in India

Financial constraints:The Indian government spends far less on international athletic events than China, the US, and other nations, with more significant results. This forces athletes to make private purchases for high-quality equipment, training, and travel, which puts disadvantaged people at a significant disadvantage due to the shortage of sports funding.

Lack of Resources:The nation lacks a sufficient amount of high-caliber athletic infrastructure. The government has built several excellent stadiums in metropolitan areas, but the situation is dire in rural areas.

Attitudinal Roadblocks:Sports are not seen as a viable professional path in our nation. Parents urge their kids to pursue careers in engineering and medicine rather than sports. The proverb “Kheloge Kudoge hoge kharab; Padhoge Likhoge hoge nawab” reflect this. This indicates that whereas academics will give you a life fit for a king, athletics will ruin yours.

Governance Problems:Multiple problems affect sports administration. For example, male athletes and metropolitan areas get far more sports funding than female athletes and rural places. Allegations of prejudice and nepotism in the selection process, particularly against lower castes, have been made.

Religious Restrictions:Several activities, such as swimming and athletics, demand clothing that does not entirely conceal a woman’s body, which is against the rules of some faiths.

Lack of Sports Culture:People do not actively support and enjoy sports in India. However, cricket receives the most excitement, which helps it draw investment and pay its players well.

High-Performance Pressure:A sportsperson is under a lot of stress to win a medal or be ready to lead a vulnerable existence. Sometimes, this puts individuals under too much mental strain or encourages them to use immoral tactics like doping.



Cricket Dominance: Cricket's immense popularity in India often overshadows other sports. The Indian Premier League (IPL) and international cricket events receive substantial media coverage and sponsorships, leading to cricket players becoming household names. This cricket-centric focus diverts attention and resources away from other sports.

Lack of Infrastructure and Investment: Many sports in India suffer from inadequate infrastructure, training facilities, and investment. Government support and funding are disproportionately allocated to cricket, leaving other sports underfunded and struggling to develop talent. This lack of resources hinders athletes' progress and success in international competitions.

Limited Media Coverage: The media plays a significant role in shaping public perception. While cricket receives extensive coverage, other sports often receive minimal airtime and newspaper space. This lack of exposure makes it challenging for non-cricket athletes to gain recognition and sponsorship deals.

Governmental Policies: Lack of prioritization: Historically, sports have not been accorded high priority in governmental policies, resulting in limited funding and support. **Bureaucratic hurdles:** Red tape and bureaucratic processes often delay or obstruct the implementation of sports-related initiatives. **Inconsistent policies:** Changes in government leadership lead to shifts in sports policies, resulting in inconsistency and discontinuity in long-term planning

Devin AI

A US-based company called Cognition has announced the launch of a new artificial intelligence chatbot called Devin which it claims to be world's first fully autonomous AI software engineer.

It is the world's first AI software engineer.

The AI agent comes with some advanced capabilities in software development, including coding, debugging, problem-solving, etc.

It uses machine learning algorithms to constantly learn and improve its performance and adapt according to new challenges.

In simple words, Devin can build and deploy apps end-to-end and can also train and fine-tune its own AI models.

It can plan and execute complex engineering tasks that would require thousands of decisions.



It can recall relevant context at each step, self-learn over time, and even fix mistakes.

This software engineer has the ability to proactively collaborate with the user.

It reports progress in real-time, is capable of accepting feedback, and works along with the user through design choices as needed.

Performance

On the SWE-Bench benchmark (a benchmark for evaluating large language models on real-world software issues found on GitHub), Devin correctly resolved 13.86 per cent of the issues without any assistance compared with the 1.96 per cent unassisted and 4.80 per cent assisted of the previous state-of-the-art model.

It is capable of augmenting efficiency and speed within software development processes by automating repetitive tasks, instantly generating code, expediting project timelines, and cutting down development expenses substantially.

It is immune to human errors or inconsistencies.

Vocal for Local' Initiative

NITI Aayog recently launched the 'Vocal for Local' initiative under its Aspirational Blocks Programme.

About 'Vocal for Local' Initiative

It is an initiative of NITI Aayog under its Aspirational Blocks Programme to encourage a spirit of self-reliance among the people and propel them towards sustainable growth and prosperity.

As a part of this initiative, local products from 500 aspirational blocks have been mapped and consolidated under the Aakanksha brand.

Aakanksha is an umbrella brand, which could be supplemented into multiple sub-brands that have the potential to create an international market.

In order to encourage these products, a dedicated window for the Aspirational Blocks Programme under the brand name Aakanksha has been established on the Government e-Marketplace (GeM) portal.

The partners will also provide technical and operational support for the facilitation of e-commerce onboarding, establishing linkages, financial/digital literacy, documentation/certification, and skill enhancement, among others.



Key Facts about Government e-Marketplace (GeM)

It is an online platform for public procurement, launched in 2016 by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Government of India.

It is a one-stop portal to facilitate online procurement of common use Goods & Services required by various Government Departments / Organizations / PSUs.

The purchases made through GeM by Government users have been authorised and made mandatory by the Ministry of Finance under the General Financial Rules, 2017.

The platform is owned by GeM SPV (Special Purpose Vehicle), which is a 100% Government-owned, non-profit company under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

Key Facts about Aspirational Blocks Programme

It is on the lines of the Aspirational District Programme that was launched in 2018 and covers 112 districts across the country.

This new programme is aimed at improving performance of blocks lagging on various development parameters.

This will enable holistic development in those areas that require added assistance.

The programme will initially cover 500 districts across 31 states and Union Territories.

Over half of these blocks are in six states: Uttar Pradesh (68 blocks), Bihar (61), Madhya Pradesh (42), Jharkhand (34), Odisha (29), and West Bengal (29).