

SC on freebies

- The Supreme Court said Parliament may not be able to effectively debate the issue of doing away with “irrational freebies” offered to voters during elections, saying the “reality” is that not a single political party wants to take away freebies.
- The court suggested specialized body composed of persons who can “dispassionately” examine the problem.
- The observations from a Bench led by Chief Justice of India N.V. Ramana came even as the Centre said these freebies were paving the way for an “economic disaster” besides “distorting the informed decision of voters.
- India follows a mixed economy model, where the state negotiates a free market capitalist economy with social welfare principles.
- The economists, Andrew Glyn, the author of Capitalism Unleashed and John Maynard Keynes, the propounder of ‘Keynesian economics’ argue that ‘unleashed’ capitalism leads to widening inequality, diminishing social welfare, lowering demand, and thus slower economic progress.
- In a mixed economy, private participation is encouraged in areas where government finds it difficult to perform, without making compromises on the social obligation of the state which is as important as a commercial viability.

THE HINDU

Assets sale

- According to Article 1 of the Constitution, India is a Union of States, i.e., the idea of India as a Union lies with the States, which are the owners of land and responsible for the maintenance of other infrastructure.
- Hence, any unilateral sale of assets by the Union without consulting States would only deepen the mistrust between the Union and the States.
- The role Air India played in the repatriation of Indians stranded abroad during the COVID-19 pandemic, its evacuation flights during wars and connecting remote areas to the mainland are some examples of social intervention that have to be kept in mind.
- By divesting the assets of Air India, the Government has stripped the assets and nationalised the debts to be serviced by citizens.

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Empowering demographic dividend

- The UN report, World Population Prospects 2022, forecasts that the world's population will touch eight billion this year and rise to 9.8 billion in 2050.
- What is of immediate interest to India is that its population will surpass China's by 2023 and continue to surge.
- "India's potential workforce to rise from 885 million to "1.08 billion people over the next two decades from today", and "remain above a billion people for half a century," betting that "these new workers will be much better trained and educated," than their existing counterparts.
- "Trends such as digitisation and automation, shifting supply chains, urbanisation, rising incomes and demographic shifts, and a greater focus on sustainability, health, and safety are accelerating" to "create \$2.5 trillion of economic value in 2030 and support 112 million jobs, or about 30% of the non-farm workforce in 2030.
- As the pandemic recedes, four pillars are clearly visible that will support growth in the next decade; the forging of a single national market, an expansion of industry owing to the renewable-energy shift and a move in supply chains away from

China, continued pre-eminence in IT, and a high-tech welfare safety-net for the hundreds of millions left behind by all this , India needs to invest massively in quality school and higher education as well as healthcare sectors it has neglected for decades across India on an unprecedented scale, literally in trillions of rupees between now and 2050 when it would have reached the apogee of its population growth.

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India ocean sea routes and Dhow

- A Chinese military vessel is scheduled to call at the Sri Lankan Port of Hambantota.
- The Indian Government, with their concerns for Indian security, has raised the issue with the Sri Lankan government.
- The Sri Lankan government is heavily in debt and distress partly because of the mega infrastructure of the Hambantota port and many other such projects.
- The Hambantota port is now the property of a Chinese corporation, having been swapped for part of Sri Lanka debt to a variety of Chinese entities.
- China's interests in the Indian Ocean grew in the context of the 'One Belt, One Road' initiative.

- The OBOR consists of two components; namely the Maritime Silk Road Initiative (MSRI) and the Silk Road Economic Belt (SREB).
- It constitutes a massive geopolitical project that aims to construct landscapes to enable flow of trade and investment by 'promoting economic cooperation and connectivity' between Asia, West Asia, Africa, and Europe.
- The recent Chinese attempts to consolidate the Indian Ocean trade routes under the road and belt initiative are yet to materialise.
- Host countries of the Belt and Road ports have gone or are going bankrupt, defaulting on their sovereign debt.
- Attempts to restructure the debt of the Indian Ocean port cities and proceed with the same mega infrastructure programmes must not be the future vision of the Indian Ocean states.
- In one form or another, the Indian Ocean states still maintain their maritime heritage.
- National and private shipping lines are plenty.
- Commodities to trade are in abundance.
- Ship type, wind, and fuel hybrid propulsion can bring in more efficiencies. Revitalizing regional trade networks will be for the advantage of not only the port city

economies in distress but also to maintain peace and stability in the Indian Ocean.

What are dhow?

- Dhow is the generic name of a number of traditional sailing vessels with one or more masts with settee or sometimes lateen sails, used in the Red Sea and Indian Ocean region.
- Typically sporting long thin hulls, dhows are trading vessels primarily used to carry heavy items, such as fruit, fresh water, or other heavy merchandise, along the coasts of Eastern Arabia, East Africa, Yemen and coastal South Asia (Pakistan, India, Bangladesh).
- Larger dhows have crews of approximately thirty, smaller ones typically around twelve.

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MONSOON DHOWS

- Sailors have harnessed the Indian Ocean's monsoon winds for at least two millennia. The Swahili term "dhow" encompasses a diversity of sailing ships, from coastal fishing boats to ocean-going vessels.
- Dhows drew the cosmopolitan urban communities of Indian Ocean world together. The seasonal patterns of monsoons meant that sailors would

stay in distant ports for months at a time.



- They took sojourns in the cities of east Africa and the Horn, the Arabian Peninsula, Persia, India, and beyond to China, Sumatra and Java. Dhow routes created intricate loops of cultural exchange gold and cotton, migrants and merchants, and marriages that tied together people from distant lands. Indian Ocean cities and their citizens continue to reflect the long duration of this cultural dynamism.

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Guidelines for state government foreign visit

- The story so far: Delhi Lieutenant-Governor (LG) Vinai Kumar Saxena recently advised Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal against attending the World Cities Summit in Singapore as it was for “mayors of cities.

Under which provisions are approvals required?

- On August 16, 1982, the Cabinet Secretariat had issued an office memorandum titled “Guidelines regarding foreign travel of Ministers of State government and Union Territories and State government officials”, stating that foreign visits by members of the State governments in their official capacity would require clearances from the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), Ministry of Home Affairs, Finance Ministry, and the Central Administrative Ministry.
- It issued another order on March 30, 1995, reiterating the same.
- The Secretariat circulated another order on September 3, 2004, modifying the provisions to the extent that the final orders were to be issued by the Finance Ministry.
- The following directive dated November 2, 2004, stipulated that Chief Ministers required further approval from the Prime Minister’s Office before an official visit.
- On August 26, 2010, yet another office memorandum made political clearances mandatory before private visits of Ministers in State governments, which was reiterated through an order on May 6, 2015.
- The petition seeks a quashing of the 2010 and 2015 office memoranda which require State government

Ministers to ask for political clearances for personal visits abroad.

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India's climate pledge

- The Union Cabinet approved an update to India's Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC).
- India had laid out five commitments, or Panchamrit, as the government references it, namely:
- India will increase its non-fossil energy capacity to 500 GW (gigawatt) by 2030; will meet 50% of its energy requirements from "renewable energy" by 2030; will reduce the total projected carbon emissions by one billion tonnes from now till 2030; will reduce the carbon intensity of its economy by more than 45%; and will achieve the target of "net zero" by the year 2070, when there will be no net carbon dioxide emitted from energy sources.
- A press statement, following the Cabinet approval, only mentions two of these promises, namely that India is committed to reduce emissions intensity of its GDP by 45% by 2030, from the 2005 level and achieving 50% cumulative electric power installed capacity from non-fossil fuel-based energy resources by 2030.