Curb on Rice export

- In a move to check domestic rice prices and ensure domestic food security, the Indian government has prohibited the export of white rice, levied a 20% export duty on par-boiled rice till October 15, and permitted the export of Basmati rice for contracts with value of $1,200 a tonne or above.
- Kharif sowing data show that rice is sown on 384.05 lakh hectares this year as of August 25 compared with 367.83 lakh hectares during the same period last year.
- But, in States such as Tamil Nadu where the Samba crop sowing usually starts in August in the Cauvery delta area, a section of farmers says there will be delayed sowing due to a shortfall in the southwest monsoon.
- Trade and rice millers say that new season crop arrivals will start after the first week of September and that El Nino effects will likely impact arrivals to some extent.

What can Indian farmers expect?

- The government has increased the Minimum Support Price (MSP) for rice, and the paddy procured now by rice millers is at a price
- Japan has started releasing treated radioactive water from the beleaguered Fukushima nuclear power plant into the ocean, stirring up a question that scientists and governments have been struggling to answer for decades: how to manage nuclear waste?
- Nuclear energy is one of many alternatives to carbon-based power on the path of climate change mitigation.
- Higher than the MSP. The fees will not decline for farmers.
- The restrictions on exports will ensure that there is no steep climb in rice prices in the market

What are exporters saying?

- Prices of Indian par-boiled rice in the international market is competitive even with the levy of a 20% duty.
- Countries such as Indonesia, which are rice exporters, are looking at imports (raw rice) now. “International demand is very high.

THE HINDU

Changes in SIM CARD

- On August 17, Union Minister for Telecommunications Ashwini Vaishnaw introduced two reforms.
- These entail a revision of norms for bulk procurement of SIM cards and registering the final point of sale (PoS) by the licensees (or providers).
- It would be mandatory for franchisees, agents, and distributors of SIM cards to be registered with

the licensees or the telecom network operator.

- The police verification (of the dealer) is mandatory. Mr. Vaishnaw observed that 20% of bulk -procured SIMs were misused.
- "In the guise of bulk connections, a lot of SIMs would be procured and then they would make automated calls using a SIM-box," he said.

What is Sanchar Saathi?

- Broadly, the citizen -centric portal allows citizens to check the connections registered against their names, block mobile phones that are stolen or lost, report fraudulent or unrequired connections, and verify the genuineness of a device (before a purchase) using the IMEI (International Mobile Equipment Identity).

THE HINDU

Radioactive regulation

- Japan has started releasing treated radioactive water from the beleaguered Fukushima nuclear power plant into the ocean, stirring up a question that scientists and governments have been struggling to answer for decades: How to manage nuclear waste?
- Nuclear energy is one of many alternatives to carbon-based power on the path of climate change mitigation.
- Currently, 10% of the world's electricity comes from nuclear energy. Aiming for net-zero emissions, many countries, including the U.S., India, and China, are mulling a higher contribution from nuclear as a way to transition to clean energy.
- However, using nuclear energy comes with its own challenges – one of the biggest being how the facility will store and dispose of nuclear waste in a safe, controlled manner.
- Temporary options include storing spent fuel in pools until they cool and in dry casks and burying them in near-surface disposal facilities at ground level or below.
- These facilities typically have a protective covering at least a few meters thick.
- The waste is placed in vaults and then backfilled with soil and clay.
- The volume is then covered with an impermeable material followed by topsoil.
- High-level waste has few options; the most feasible is deep geological disposal, and Finland seems to be showing the way.
- A facility in this Scandinavian country will become the first to realize this option when the Onkalo repository opens in 2025.
- The project started in 2000 and will use the Swedish KBS-3 concept, which proposes three layers of

protection: waste placed in copper canisters, wrapped in bentonite clay, and buried more than 400 meters below ancient bedrock.

- The repository, built by Finnish company Posiva, will also employ measures called release barriers to keep the waste isolated from its surroundings.

THE HINDU

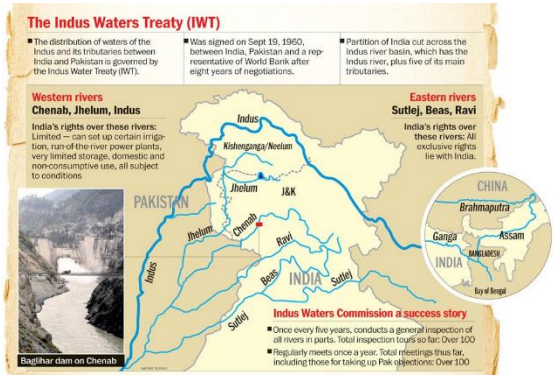
AI regulation

- Till recently, the greatest advances in the regulation of AI have been made in the European Union (EU), Brazil, Canada, Japan, and now, China. Countries in the EU, Brazil, and the United Kingdom
- The Western model focuses on a risk -based approach. First, lawmakers create a pyramid of risks and identify the risks posed by every type of AI -based application.
- The pyramid of risks then proceeds to be divided into four categories: 'unacceptable risk', 'high risk', 'limited risk', and 'low risk'
- As far as the Eastern models are concerned, the Japanese government's Integrated Innovation Strategy Promotion Council has framed a set of rules called the "Social Principles of Human- Human-Centric AI".
- It was published by the Japanese government in March 2019 and manifests the basic principles of an AI-capable society.
- The first part contains seven social principles that society and the state must respect when dealing with AI: human centricity; education/literacy; data protection; ensuring safety; fair competition; fairness, accountability and transparency, and innovation.
- The Chinese regulations are even more interesting.
- The opening lines of Article 4 of these regulations are: "The provision and use of generative artificial intelligence services shall abide by laws and administrative regulations, respect social morality and ethics, and abide by the following provisions".
- The law goes on to prescribe the kind of values that should be upheld and promoted by artificial intelligence services, and the ends that should be achieved through these AI-based applications and services.
- Systems based on AI must be regulated.
- It is for India to frame its regulations. Do we slavishly copy the West, and frame lengthy regulations, with labyrinthine procedures and procrustean punishments?
- The time has come for India to have regulations in a manner that is consistent with the Indian ethos, by and for Indians.

- Let us hope that AI regulation is done better than indications suggest. India must look east.

THE HINDU

Indus water Treaty



- The Indus Waters Treaty (IWT), brokered by the World Bank, which has again become a source of contention between India and Pakistan, considerably encapsulates the principle of equitable allocation rather than the principle of appreciable harm.
- Both India and Pakistan are granted exclusive rights to utilize the waters of the rivers allocated to them without harming others' interests.
- Under the IWT, India has unrestricted use of the three eastern rivers (Ravi, Beas, and Sutlej), while Pakistan enjoys similar rights over the three western rivers (Indus, Jhelum, and Chenab).
- India is allowed to store 3.60 million acre-feet (MAF) (0.40 MAF on the Indus, 1.50 MAF on the Jhelum, and 1.70 MAF on the Chenab) of water.
- The core of the issue now between India and Pakistan involves the Kishanganga and Ratle hydroelectric power plants in India's Jammu and Kashmir.
- India considers these projects crucial for energy needs and the region's development, while Pakistan has raised objections, citing violations of the treaty and potential negative effects on its water supply which goes against the provisions outlined in Annexure D of the treaty.
- In 2013, the CoA delivered the final judgment, ruling that the Kishanganga hydroelectric project is a run-of-river dam, and India, under the IWT, can divert water from the river Kishanganga/Neelum for power generation
- However, the court stated that India has to maintain a minimum flow of water in the Kishanganga/Neelum River to nine cusecs (cubic meters of water per second).
- Pakistan went to the World Bank accusing India of violating the IWT and the court's verdict. Islamabad also raised objections to the Ratle project.
- In 2016, Pakistan requested the World Bank to form a CoA.
- To this, India requested a neutral expert be appointed to deal with the dispute.
- On the question of its competence to take up such matters, the PCA, based

on its interpretation of paragraph 1 of Annexure G and Article IX of, unanimously said that it is competent to "consider and determine the disputes set forth in Pakistan's Request for Arbitration".

- After the PCA made its observations, India said that it cannot be "compelled to recognize or participate in illegal and parallel proceedings not envisaged by the Treaty".
- India has been participating in the neutral expert's proceedings whose first meeting was held at The Hague on February 27-28

Challenges

- Due to a wide trust deficit between the two countries, there is a remote chance of Pakistan accepting India's request to renegotiate to modify some of the provisions in the IWT.
- Second, there is a need to involve local stakeholders in any negotiation process between India and Pakistan on shared water issues.
- Third, to make the IWT work there is a need to explore cooperation arrangements mentioned in Article VII of the IWT.
- The two countries have to recognize their common interest in the optimum development of the Indus Rivers System.
- Finally, as the IWT was signed more than 60 years ago, an amendment or two or some may be needed due to changes in the situation in the Indus River Basin region.

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