

Current Affairs 4th January 2024 by Saurabh Pandey

Section 132 of income tax

- In August 2017, a nine-year judge Bench of the Supreme Court of India, in Justice K.S. Puttaswamy vs Union of India, declared to rousing acclaim that the Constitution of India guaranteed to persons, a fundamental right to privacy.
- Use of Section 132 of the Income Tax Act, 1961, which grants to the taxman, untrammelled police power to forcibly search persons and their properties, and seize goods found during such a search, including money, bullion, and jewelry.
- While this measure can be undertaken only where the authorities have, among other things, a “reason to believe” that a person has failed to disclose his income properly, the purported foundation underlying a search is subject to little safeguards under the statute.
- The Court ought to look not at the sufficiency or inadequacy of the reasons recorded for a search, but merely at whether the formation of the belief was honest and bona fide.
- This requires the court to review whether a measure is so “outrageous in its defiance of logic or of accepted moral standards that no sensible person who had applied his mind to

the question to be decided could have arrived at it,” and ask nothing more.

- To that end, a warrant for an income tax search must be founded on proper application of mind and must be amenable to the most penetrating rigours of judicial review.
- Any other interpretation would only bestow on the executive a form of extra-constitutional power, risking enormous public mischief.
- The Hindu

Debt vs development

- The IMF, in the report, states that India’s government debt could be 100% of GDP under adverse circumstances by fiscal 2028.
- According to them, “Long-term risks are high because considerable investment is required to reach India’s climate change mitigation targets and improve resilience to climate stresses and natural disasters.
- This suggests that new and preferably concessional sources of financing are needed, as well as greater private sector investment and carbon pricing or equivalent mechanism.

Current Affairs 4th January 2024 by Saurabh Pandey

- Government borrowings can play a vital role in accelerating development.
- However, the weight of debt can act as a drag on development due to limited access to financing, rising borrowing costs, currency devaluations and sluggish growth.
- As noted by the United Nations, "Countries are facing the impossible choice of servicing their debt or serving their people."
- According to the UN in 2022, 3.3 billion people live in countries that spend more on interest payments than on education or health. Global public debt has increased more than fourfold since 2000, while global GDP only tripled.
- Public debt has increased faster in developing countries compared to developed countries over the last decade.
- The rise of debt in developing countries is due to growing development financing needs, the cost of living crisis, and climate change, the burden of debt is asymmetric between developed and developing countries as the latter have to pay higher interest rates.

The challenge for India

- Apart from managing public debt deftly, India faces challenges in enhancing its credit ratings.
- Elevated debt levels and substantial costs associated with servicing debt impact credit rating.
- Even with the tag of being the fastest growing major economy, sovereign investment ratings for India have remained the same for a long time.
- Despite handsome growth in tax collections, there is the possibility of fiscal slippage in FY24, according to a report by India Ratings and Research (IR&R).
- IR&R attributes this to higher expenditure on employment guarantee schemes and subsidies.
- The Hindu

Detail agreement of ULFA

- According to the memorandum of settlement, the ULFA has agreed to renounce violence, disarm, disband the armed organisation, vacate their occupied camps, and participate in peaceful democratic process established by the law.
- Marking a shift toward nonviolence, it aims to ensure the integrity of the

Current Affairs 4th January 2024 by Saurabh Pandey

- country contrary to what the ULFA had initially demanded.
- The Ministry of Home Affairs will make a time bound programme to fulfil the demands of the outfit and a committee would be formed for its monitoring.
- The pact underlines a comprehensive package entailing an investment of ₹1.5 lakh crore for the all-around development of Assam.
- The Ministry of Home Affairs will make a time bound programme to fulfil the demands of the outfit and a committee would be formed for its monitoring.
- The pact underlines a comprehensive package entailing an investment of ₹1.5 lakh crore for the all-around development of Assam.
- The most significant part of the accord is the commitment to address the political demands of the ULFA.
- These include maintaining the territorial integrity of Assam through amicable settlement of boundary disputes with neighboring States in the Northeast and continuation of the "guidelines and methodology" adopted for the delimitation exercise conducted in 2023 in future delimitation processes.
- The pact envisages ensuring maximum representation for indigenous communities in the 126-member Assam Assembly by keeping non-original inhabitants, primarily migrant Muslims, out.
- The 2023 delimitation is said to have made it impossible for non-indigenous communities to contest 106 of these seats.
- Apart from the legislative safeguard, the pact seeks exemption for Assam from Section 3 of the Citizenship Act of 1955 dealing with people who have renounced Indian citizenship or whose citizenship has been terminated, to conditionally stop people of one constituency from being registered in another, and prepare an error-free National Register of Citizens, whose updated complete draft had put 19.06 lakh people out of 3.3 crore applicants on the rejection list.

• The Hindu

Upskilling Rural youth

How can migration be controlled?

- To control the migration of these youth to urban areas in search of meaningful employment, it becomes imperative to provide vocational training to students to imbibe relevant rural skills in them so that

Current Affairs 4th January 2024 by Saurabh Pandey

they can secure a living where they currently live

- The current vocational education landscape in rural India is interspersed with Industrial Training Institutes to upskill rural populations but with little to no placement opportunities

How can education be improved?

- Effective rural education should be tailored such that technical as well as life skills, needed to empower youth in these areas, become accessible to them through formal education.
- There are many ways this could be done, as educational evidence from other developing economies suggests such as Mexico's tele schools and Bhutan's well being infused curriculum.
- The tele schools provide lessons on subject matters as well as values, thereby providing a much higher level of access to value based secondary education for remote areas where secondary schools are scarce.
- This has shown to have trickling benefits in the local economy with improved attitudes and increased aspirations among children and parents.

- Closer to home, organisations such as NIIT Foundation and Pratham Institute are working with children in rural areas to provide upskilling opportunities.
- Hybrid life skilling programs are offered both by NIIT in collaboration with UNICEF through its self learning platform, and Pratham, which offers courses in both industry specific skills (such as in healthcare, electrical, and construction) and life skills.
- By offering rural populations skills in fields like agricultural mechanization, pollution monitoring, nursing and digital technologies via eLearning, rural India can boost employability in both traditional and nontraditional trades, leading to a vibrant economy
 - Six space missions in 2024

1. Europa Clipper

- NASA will launch Europa Clipper, which will explore one of Jupiter's largest moons, Europa.
- Europa is slightly smaller than the earth's moon, with a surface made of ice.
- Beneath its icy shell, Europa likely harbours a saltwater ocean, which scientists expect contains over twice as much water as all the oceans here on Earth combined.

Current Affairs 4th January 2024 by Saurabh Pandey

- With Europa Clipper, scientists want to investigate whether Europa's ocean could be a suitable habitat for extraterrestrial life
 - 2. Artemis II launch
 - The Artemis programme, named after Apollo's twin sister in Greek mythology, is NASA's plan to go back to the moon.
 - It will send humans to the moon for the first time since 1972, including the first woman and the first person of color.
 - Artemis also includes plans for a longer-term, sustained presence in space that will prepare NASA for eventually sending people even farther to Mars.
 - Artemis II is the first crewed step in this plan, with four astronauts planned to be on board during the 10-day mission.
 - The mission builds upon Artemis I, which sent an unscrewed capsule into orbit around the moon in late 2022.
 - Artemis II will put the astronauts into orbit around the Moon before returning them home. It is currently planned for launch as early as November 2024.
- ### 3. VIPER to hunt water on the moon
- VIPER, which stands for Volatiles Investigating Polar Exploration Rover, is a robot the size of a golf cart that NASA will use to explore the moon's south pole in late 2024.
 - This robotic mission is designed to search for volatiles, which are molecules that easily vaporize, like water and carbon dioxide, at lunar temperatures.
 - These materials could provide resources for future human exploration on the moon.
 - The VIPER robot will rely on batteries, heat pipes, and radiators throughout its 100-day mission, as it navigates everything from the extreme heat of lunar daylight.
- ### 4. Lunar Trailblazer and PRIME1
- NASA has recently invested in a class of small, low cost planetary missions called SIMPLEx, which stands for Small, Innovative Missions for Planetary Exploration.
 - These missions save costs by tagging along on other launches as what is called a rideshare, or secondary payload.
 - One example is the Lunar Trailblazer.
 - Like VIPER, Lunar Trailblazer will look for water on the moon.
 - But while VIPER will land on the moon's surface, studying a specific

Current Affairs 4th January 2024 by Saurabh Pandey

area near the south pole in detail, Lunar Trailblazer will orbit the moon, measuring the temperature of the surface and mapping out the locations of water molecules across the globe.

- PRIME1 will drill into the moon it's a test run for the kind of drill that VIPER will use. But its launch date will likely depend on whether earlier launches go on time.

5. JAXA's Martian Moon eXploration

- The JAXA MMX mission concept to study Phobos and Deimos, Mars' moons.

- The Japanese Aerospace Exploration Agency, or JAXA, has a robotic mission in development called the Martian Moon eXploration, or MMX, planned for launch around September 2024.

- The mission's main science objective is to determine the origin of Mars' moons.

- Scientists aren't sure whether Phobos and Deimos are former asteroids that Mars captured into orbit with its gravity or if they formed out of debris that was already in orbit around Mars.

6. ESA's Hera mission

- Hera is a mission by the European Space Agency to return to the

Didymos Dimorphos asteroid system that NASA's DART mission visited in 2022. But DART didn't just visit these asteroids, it collided with one of them to test a planetary defence technique called "kinetic impact."

- DART hit Dimorphos with such force that it actually changed its orbit.

- The kinetic impact technique smashes something into an object in order to alter its path.

- This could prove useful if humanity ever finds a potentially hazardous object on a collision course with Earth and needs to redirect it.

- The Hindu