

The Hindu

City

Dilli Bazaar e-portal to go live in Dec. (Page no. 2)

(GS Paper 3, Indian Economy)

The Dilli Bazaar eportal, a discovery platform for local markets, will go live with 10,000 vendors in December, the government. The government's ambitious project will enable shoppers across the globe to have a virtual tour of the city's key markets and shop on the lines of other ecommerce platforms.

Within six months of the launch, the Delhi government aims to bring over 1 lakh shops to the Dilli Bazaar portal, making them part of a 24x7 digital storefront.

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said the portal would be the first in India. "Every trader and retailer of Delhi will be able to sell his products to the world," he said following a review meeting.

States

Yoga becoming basis for global cooperation: PM (Page no. 5)

(GS Paper 2, Health)

Describing International Day of Yoga as a "global festival", Prime Minister Narendra Modi said that yogic energy is giving direction to global health.

Yogic energy, which has been nurtured for centuries by spiritual centres of India like Mysuru, is giving direction to global health, Mr. Modi said while addressing a gathering on the 8th International Day of Yoga event at Mysuru in Karnataka.

Pointing out that India was celebrating Yoga Day at a time when the country was celebrating its 75th year of Independence.

The widespread acceptance of Yoga Day is the acceptance of that 'Amrit spirit' of the country, which gave energy to India's freedom struggle.

That is why mass yoga demonstrations are being organised at 75 iconic locations across the country, which have been witness to the glorious history of India and have been the centre of cultural energy, while adding that the experience of collective yoga at the historical sites of India was like "tying together India's past, India's diversity and India's expansion.

Several Union Ministers participated in the International Yoga Day celebrations at 75 historical sites across the country. Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya joined the celebrations at the Statue of Unity in Gujarat's Kevadia.

Editorial

A wish list for reform in India's higher judiciary (Page no. 6)

(GS Paper 2, Judiciary)

Of late, there is a rumour doing the rounds between Raisina Hill and Tilak Marg. Twittering birds have it that the age of retirement of Supreme Court of India judges is to be increased to 67 years, not immediately but come a couple of months. This will fall during the tenure of Justice U.U. Lalit who by seniority is expected to take over as the Chief Justice of India (CJI) on August 27, 2022.

Dehors the increase, Justice Lalit would have had two months in the august office; come the amendment, his tenure goes on to November 2024.

This alteration in age would affect every successor notably Justice D.Y. Chandrachud who will see delay in his ascension from November 2022 to November 2024.

All in all, quite momentous for court watchers. Also momentous for political watchers since the next Lok Sabha election is due by May 2024. Much therefore hangs on age, especially the looks of the Court.

However, there are more important aspects relating to the retirement age of judges on which reform may be hung, and some of these go far deeper than a mere biennial increase.

For one, it is high time that we did away with the disparity between the retirement ages of High Court and Supreme Court judges; High Court judges now retire at 62 and Supreme Court judges at 65.

Progress without limits (Page no. 6)

(GS Paper 3, Science and Tech)

The Union Cabinet last week cleared the decks for the first auction of radio spectrum to facilitate the rollout of 5G telecommunication services. The Department of Telecommunications promptly issued a 159page ‘Notice Inviting Applications’, detailing the specifics of the auction including the frequencies that would be up for bidding starting on July 26, and their reserve prices.

The speed with which the Government has moved — from the initial announcement in the Union Budget to the telecom regulator’s recommendations, and finally notification of the auction — has been commendable and shows its keenness to ensure India is at the relative vanguard in the adoption of the potentially ‘transformative’ technology.

The Government has underscored that its primary motivation is to boost digital connectivity, a laudable objective given that the rapid growth of wireless telephony has perceptibly helped improve the delivery of services such as mobile banking, online education and telemedicine.

The rub, however, is in the details. While most of the specific frequency bands that telecom providers consider optimal for the introduction of 5G services have been made available, including in the sub 1 GHz range, a C Band frequency of 3.3 GHz, and the higher 26 GHz, the Government’s decision to set the reserve price for the spectrum based on the regulator’s recommendations reveals a prioritisation of revenue over the industry’s long-term health.

Even considering that an option for a staggered annual payout of the licence fee over its 20year term has been provided, the price is still high.

OPED

Analysing spectrum auction (Page no. 7)

(GS Paper 3, Science and Tech)

The Union Cabinet has cleared a mega auction of radio spectrum in various bands for commercial mobile services. Based on the recommendation of the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI), the government is planning to auction spectrum in the sub GHz bands of 600, 700, 800 and 900 MHz; in the midbands of 1,800, 2,100, 2,300, 2,500 and 3,300 MHz, and in the highfrequency band of 26 GHz.

The total spectrum to be auctioned is about 72 GHz, compared to about 2.2 GHz put on the block last year. The cumulative reserve price — and hence the potential revenue accrual to the government at reserve prices — is about ₹4,31,605 crore compared to about ₹3,90,000 crore last year.

However, the realised value in last year’s auction was just about 20% of the reserve price at ₹74,000 crore, with the 700 MHz and 2,500 MHz band not being sold.

While the 2021 auction could be considered a failure from the auctioneer’s point of view, will the auction scheduled for this month be successful? There are many factors that determine the success of spectrum auction.

A new global standard for AI ethics (Page no. 7)

(GS Paper 3, Science and Tech)

Artificial intelligence (AI) is more present in our lives than ever. From predicting what we want to see as we scroll through social media to helping us understand weather patterns to manage agriculture, AI is ubiquitous.

AI algorithms can also be partially credited for the rapidity with which vaccines were developed to tackle COVID19. The algorithms crunched complex data from clinical trials being undertaken in all corners of the world, creating global collaborations that could not have been imagined even a decade ago.

But AI related technology cannot be said to always be beneficial. The data used to feed into AI often aren't representative of the diversity of our societies, producing outcomes that can be said to be biased or discriminatory.

For instance, while India and China together constitute approximately a third of the world’s population, Google Brain estimated that they form just 3% of images used in ImageNet, a widely used dataset.

Similarly, there are problems emerging in facial recognition technologies, which are used to access our phones, bank accounts and apartments, and are increasingly employed by law enforcement authorities, in identifying women and darker skinned people.

For three such programs released by major technology companies, the error rate was 1% for light skinned men, but 19% for dark skinned men, and up to 35% for dark skinned women.

Biases in facial recognition technologies have led to wrongful arrests. These challenges are not surprising when we look at how AI is developed.

Only one in 10 software developers worldwide is a woman. These women come overwhelmingly from western countries.

Explainer

The textbook controversy in Karnataka (Page no. 8) (GS Paper 2, Polity and Governance)

A textbook revision committee headed by Rohith Chakrathirtha was set up in Karnataka following a memorandum submitted by the Karnataka Brahmin Mahasabha to the Primary and Secondary Education Minister B.C. Nagesh. The memorandum demanded revision of Class 6 Social Science textbooks on the ground that they “hurt the sentiments of the Brahmin community.”

The Karnataka textbook revision committee was initially set up to revise Social Science textbooks from Classes 6 to 8. However, it was eventually given the responsibility to revise all textbooks from Classes 1 to 10.

The committee submitted its report in March 2022 and as per the report, Social Science textbooks of Classes 6 to 10 in all mediums, Classes 1 to 10 Kannada first language (except Class 3) textbooks, Kannada second language textbooks of Classes 6, 7, and 9, and third language textbooks of all mediums of Classes 7, 8, and 9 were revised.

The revised textbooks have triggered opposition from various groups.

The judicial validity of the Talaq-e-Hasan mode of divorce (Page no. 8) (GS Paper 2, Polity and Governance)

A public interest litigation (PIL) seeking to invalidate Talaq Hasan, the prescribed Islamic way of divorce, has been filed in the Supreme Court.

The petition filed by Benazir Hina, a Ghaziabad based woman, through Advocate on Record Ashwani Kumar Dubey, seeks to make the prescribed Islamic way of divorce Talaq Hasan unconstitutional as it is violative of Articles 14, 15, 21 and 25 of the Constitution.

Ms. Hina, who claimed to have been unilaterally divorced through the Talaq Hasan mode by her husband Yousuf, also prayed that Section 2 of the Muslim Personal Law (Shariat) Application Act, 1937 that permits Muslims to practise unilateral divorce be declared void.

The apex court had declined an urgent hearing on the subject in May this year. However, on June 17 a vacation Bench of Justices A.S. Bopanna and Vikram Nath allowed a plea for urgent hearing of the matter.

It was argued that the aggrieved lady and her child would be left without a remedy if no intervention was made. The first talaq notice was given on April 19 and the second notice was issued on May 19.

The hearing comes almost five years after the five judge Bench headed by then Chief Justice J.S. Khehar, and including Justice R.F. Nariman, Justice Kurian Joseph, Justice U.U. Lalit and Justice S. Abdul Nazeer had invalidated instant triple talaq in their verdict in the Shayara Bano vs the Union of India and others case in August 2017.

The invalidation of instant triple talaq where the court held, “What is bad in theology is bad in law as well”, led to the enactment of the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Act 2019.

Text and Context

The absurdity of the anti-defection law (Page no. 9) (GS Paper 2, Polity and Governance)

In light of the events unfolding in Maharashtra, with the Uddhav Thackeray government facing internal dissent from a block of 22 MLAs led by Eknath Shinde, the anti-defection law has again come into the spotlight. In this article dated February 26, 2021, M.R. Madhavan explains how the law is antithetical to the representative purpose of elected government servants.

The events in Puducherry highlight, yet again, the absurdity of the anti-defection law. In what has now become the standard operating procedure, several MLAs from the treasury benches resigned, lowering the numbers required for a no-confidence motion to succeed.

This formula has been seen recently in other States such as Madhya Pradesh and Karnataka. The anti-defection law was included in the Constitution as the Tenth Schedule in 1985 to combat the “evil of political defections”. The main purpose was to preserve the stability of governments and insulate them from defections of legislators from the treasury benches. The law stated that any Member of Parliament (MP) or that of a State legislature (MLA) would be disqualified from their office if they voted on any motion contrary to the directions issued by their party.

Business

‘Non-bank PPI issuers can’t load via credit’ (Page no. 9)

(GS Paper 3, Indian Economy)

The Reserve Bank has asked nonbank prepaid payment instrument (PPI) issuers not to load their wallets and cards from credit lines or preset borrowing limits.

PPIs are instruments that facilitate purchase of goods and services, financial services, and remittance facilities, against the value stored therein.

As per the Master Directions on Prepaid Payment Instruments issued by the central bank, PPIs are permitted to be loaded /reloaded by cash, debit to a bank account, credit and debit cards, PPIs and other payment instruments issued by regulated entities in India and shall be in Indian rupees (INR) only.