



Daily Current Affairs



To The Point by Dhananjay Gautam

Table Of Content **12 Nov 2024**

1. **What is Asia-Pacific Telecommunity (APT)?**
2. **Aligarh Muslim University (AMU)**
3. **Reclassifying FPIs as FDI**
4. **NGOs to Lose FCRA License Over Conversions, Anti-Development Acts: MHA**
5. **Germany's Economic Struggles**
6. **Manipur Violence: 10 Militants Killed in Attack on CRPF Camp**



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1 What is Asia-Pacific Telecommunity (APT)?

Context: The Asia-Pacific Telecommunity (APT) is an intergovernmental organization established in February 1979 to promote the development of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in the Asia-Pacific region. It was founded as a result of joint initiatives by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) and the International Telecommunication Union (ITU).

**Key Details:**

- **Established:** February 1979
- **Headquarters:** Bangkok, Thailand
- **Membership:**
 - 38 Members (Governments)
 - 4 Associate Members
 - 140+ Affiliate Members (Private sector companies and academic institutions in the ICT field)

Fuctions of APT:

1. **Promotion of Telecommunication Development:**
APT facilitates the growth of telecommunication services and information infrastructure across the Asia-Pacific region.
2. **Policy Coordination:**
It harmonizes policies, regulations, and technical standards for ICT to ensure seamless development and integration across member nations.
3. **Preparatory Activities for Global Conferences:**
APT plays a significant role in regional preparations for key international events such as:
 - ITU Plenipotentiary Conference (PP)
 - World Radiocommunication Conferences (WRCs)
 - World Telecommunication Standardization Assemblies (WTSAs)
 - World Telecommunication Development Conferences (WTDCs)
 - World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS)
4. **Capacity Building and Pilot Projects:** The organization organizes capacity-building programs on ICT and implements pilot projects to encourage regional ICT growth.
5. **Specialized Working Groups and Forums:**
APT hosts forums and working groups to address specific ICT issues, such as:
 - Spectrum Management
 - Policy and Regulation Harmonization
 - Standardization
6. **Sub-Regional Platforms:**
APT establishes sub-regional platforms to promote collaboration on specific regional priorities. For example:
 - **South Asian Telecommunication Regulators' Council (SATRC):**
 - Composed of regulatory bodies from nine countries: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Iran, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka.
 - Discusses regulatory and technical challenges related to telecommunication and ICT.

Significance of APT

1. **Regional ICT Growth:**
APT facilitates the expansion of ICT infrastructure and services in the Asia-Pacific, benefiting governments, businesses, and communities.
2. **Global Integration:** By aligning regional policies with international standards, APT ensures member countries remain competitive in the global ICT space.
3. **Knowledge Sharing:** Through capacity-building programs and forums, APT fosters collaboration and knowledge exchange among members, addressing key ICT challenges.
4. **Spectrum and Policy Harmonization:** APT's efforts in spectrum management and regulatory standardization enhance regional cooperation and reduce conflicts over ICT development.

In summary, APT plays a pivotal role in shaping the ICT landscape of the Asia-Pacific region, fostering innovation, collaboration, and regulatory harmony.

2 Aligarh Muslim University (AMU)

Context: The Supreme Court recently revisited and overruled its 1967 judgment in the Azeez Basha case, which had denied minority status to the Aligarh Muslim University (AMU). This decision is seen as a significant step toward re-evaluating the university's minority status and its historical origins.

About Aligarh Muslim University:

Aligarh Muslim University (AMU) is a government-run educational institution located in Aligarh, Uttar Pradesh. It is one of India's oldest and most prestigious universities, offering a diverse range of traditional and modern courses.

**Historical Background:**1. **Founding:**

- Established in 1875 as the **Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental College** by Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, a visionary social reformer.
- Built with the aim of empowering **Muslims** through education after the 1857 War of Independence.

2. **Support:**

- Raja Jai Kishan** assisted Sir Syed in setting up the institution.

3. **Transition to AMU:**

- The institution was transformed into **Aligarh Muslim University** in 1920, under the **Aligarh Muslim University Act**.

4. **Inclusivity:**

- Since its inception, AMU has welcomed students from **all communities, castes, creeds, and religions**.
- It is recognized by the **University Grants Commission (UGC)** and the **Association of Indian Universities (AIU)**.

5. **Academic Offerings and Reach:**

- Offers **300+ courses** across diverse fields.
- Attracts students from across India and internationally, especially from **Africa, West Asia, and Southeast Asia**.
- Some seats are reserved for students from **SAARC and Commonwealth nations**.

6. **Off-Campus Centres:**

- AMU operates three centres:
 - Malappuram Campus, Kerala**
 - Murshidabad Centre, West Bengal**
 - Kishanganj Centre, Bihar**

Minority Status of AMU:1. **1967 Azeez Basha Case:**

- The Supreme Court ruled that AMU was a **central university** and thus **not a minority institution**.

2. **AMU (Amendment) Act, 1981:**

- Parliament restored AMU's minority status through this amendment.

3. **2006 Allahabad High Court Verdict:**

- Struck down the 1981 amendment, challenging AMU's minority status.

4. **Appeal in the Supreme Court:**

- The Supreme Court is currently re-examining the **minority status** issue.



- On **January 9, 2024**, a **seven-judge bench** commenced hearings, overruling the **1967 Azeez Basha judgment**.
- The court emphasized the importance of identifying AMU's "**genesis**" to determine its **minority status**.

Significance of Recent Developments:

- **Revisiting AMU's Legacy:** The court's decision to re-evaluate AMU's origins underscores its commitment to preserving the historical and cultural identity of institutions.
- **Impact on Minority Rights:** A favorable decision on AMU's minority status could set a precedent for other institutions seeking similar recognition.
- **Inclusivity in Education:** The debate highlights the importance of maintaining inclusivity while respecting the historical ethos of educational institutions.

This evolving legal discourse on AMU's status demonstrates the intricate balance between constitutional provisions, historical legacies, and modern interpretations of minority rights.



3 Reclassifying FPIs as FDI

Context: The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has issued new guidelines for **Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs)** who wish to reclassify their investments in Indian companies as **Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)**. This reclassification is necessary when FPI holdings exceed the threshold of **10% of the total paid-up equity capital**.

- **Requirements for Reclassification:**
 - Government approvals.
 - Consent from the investee companies.
 - Alignment with FDI norms and sectoral restrictions.

**What is Foreign Portfolio Investment (FPI)?**

FPI refers to short-term investments made by foreign investors in a country's **financial markets or assets**.

Key features include:

- **Nature of Investment:**
 - Includes securities (e.g., stocks, bonds) and financial assets (e.g., mutual funds, ETFs).
 - Does not grant direct ownership or control over a company.
- **Liquidity and Volatility:**
 - FPI is relatively liquid and subject to market fluctuations.
- **Impact on Economy:**
 - Forms part of a country's **capital account** and appears on its **Balance of Payments (BOP)**.
 - In India, FPIs contribute significantly to financial market growth.

What is Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)?:

FDI refers to investments where foreign entities acquire **controlling ownership** in a business. Key aspects include:

- **Nature of Investment:**
 - Includes mergers, acquisitions, building facilities, reinvesting profits, and intra-company loans.
 - Typically involves management control, technology transfer, and long-term participation.
- **Economic Contributions:**
 - Brings capital, skills, and technology to the host country.
 - Contributes to the development of sectors with growth potential.
- **Stock of FDI:**
 - Represents the cumulative net FDI (outward minus inward) for a given period.

Guidelines on Investment Limits for FPIs:

1. **Regulatory Framework:**
 - Under the **Foreign Exchange Management (Non-Debt Instruments) Rules, 2019**, FPI investments must not exceed **10% of paid-up equity capital** on a fully diluted basis.
2. **Breach of Threshold:**
 - If the limit is exceeded, FPIs must:
 - Divest the excess holdings, or
 - Reclassify the excess as **FDI** within **five trading days**.
3. **Reclassification Approval:**
 - Obtain approvals from the government and adhere to FDI norms, particularly for countries sharing land borders with India.
4. **Role of Investee Companies:**
 - Ensure sectoral caps and FDI prohibitions are followed.
 - Consent from the company is mandatory to verify compliance.



5. Sectoral Restrictions:

- Reclassification is prohibited in specific restricted sectors.

Significance of the Guidelines

- **Regulatory Consistency:** Ensures uniformity in applying FDI and FPI rules across sectors.
- **Market Integrity:** Strengthens compliance with FDI norms, sectoral caps, and entry routes.
- **Investment Confidence:** Enhances transparency and clarity for foreign investors.
- **Support for Economic Growth:** Aligns foreign investments with India's policy objectives and sectoral priorities.

By providing a clear framework, the RBI aims to streamline foreign investments while safeguarding India's economic and regulatory interests.



4 NGOs to Lose FCRA License Over Conversions, Anti-Development Acts: MHA

Context: The Central Government has announced that NGOs found engaging in **anti-development activities, forced religious conversions**, or actions disrupting **social or religious harmony** may face cancellation of their registration under the **Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA), 2010**.



Key Reasons for Cancellation:

- Misuse of foreign funds for **personal gain** or **undesirable activities**.
- Links to **terrorist** or **radical groups**.
- Divergence from the NGO's stated objectives while utilizing foreign contributions.

About Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA)

- **Enactment:**
 - First introduced in **1976** to regulate foreign funding of voluntary organizations and political groups.
 - Repealed and replaced by a stricter version in **2010**.
- **Objective:** To ensure that foreign contributions do not harm India's **sovereignty, security, or social harmony**.
- **Nodal Ministry:** Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA).
- **Applicability:** Applies to **associations, groups, and NGOs** intending to receive foreign donations.

Major Provisions Under FCRA, 2010:

1. **Mandatory Registration:** NGOs must register under FCRA, and registration is valid for **five years**, subject to renewal if they comply with norms.
2. **Annual Returns:** NGOs must file annual returns, similar to **income tax filings**.
3. **Utilization Restrictions:** Foreign funds must not be used in ways that:
 - Affect **sovereignty** and **integrity** of India.
 - Impact **friendly relations** with other countries.
 - Disrupt **communal harmony**.
4. **Core Banking Requirements:**
 - NGOs must operate accounts in banks with **real-time monitoring** capability for security agencies.

Permitted Purposes for Foreign Contributions:

Registered NGOs can utilize foreign contributions for the following purposes:

1. **Social**
2. **Educational**
3. **Religious**
4. **Economic**
5. **Cultural**

Who Cannot Receive Foreign Funding?

The following entities and individuals are **prohibited** from accepting foreign contributions:

- **Candidates** contesting elections.
- **Judges** and **government employees**.
- **Media persons**.
- **Political parties**.
- **Public servants** (as per the 2020 Amendment).

Foreign Contribution Regulation Amendment Act, 2020:

Key updates introduced under the amendment include:



1. **Addition of Public Servants:** Public servants are now prohibited from accepting foreign contributions.
2. **Prohibition on Fund Transfers:** Foreign contributions cannot be transferred to other entities or individuals.
3. **Mandatory Aadhaar:** Applicants for registration, renewal, or prior permission must provide their **Aadhaar number**.
4. **Account in SBI Delhi Branch:** NGOs receiving foreign funds must operate an account in the **State Bank of India's New Delhi branch**.
5. **Inquiry for Renewal:** The government may conduct an **inquiry** before renewing an NGO's registration certificate.
6. **Voluntary Surrender of Registration:** NGOs can surrender their FCRA registration if desired.

News Summary:

- NGOs involved in **activities against national development** or **forced conversions** will face stricter scrutiny under FCRA regulations.
- **Other Violations Leading to Cancellation:**
 - Misuse of funds for **personal benefits**.
 - Involvement in **terror-linked or radicalized activities**.
 - Failure to use funds as per their registered objectives.
- **Government Stance:** This measure is aimed at ensuring foreign contributions are used **transparently** and in line with national interests, preventing misuse and safeguarding **internal security**.

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5 Germany's Economic Struggles

Context: Why in News?

- **Chancellor Olaf Scholz** has indicated openness to face a confidence vote before Christmas due to economic management issues and a **collapsed coalition**, originally planned for January 15.
- Germany's economic growth in Q3 2023 was a modest **0.2%**, following a contraction.
- **Volkswagen**, Europe's largest employer, is considering shutting down three factories in Germany—unprecedented in its **87-year history**—highlighting the broader industrial and economic crisis.



Volkswagen's Crisis Highlights Germany's Industrial Decline:

- **Key Challenges for Volkswagen:**
 - Declining sales and **intensifying competition from China**, particularly in the electric vehicle (EV) market.
 - Lag in the **transition to EVs** due to dependence on internal combustion engines.
 - Rising **energy costs** and shrinking global markets.
- **Wider Implications:**
 - Volkswagen employs **800,000 people**, accounting for **5% of Germany's GDP**. Layoffs and factory closures could ripple across the German **automotive sector**.
 - The industry is Germany's largest, and its decline jeopardizes **20% of national industrial output by 2030**.

Economic Crisis in Germany:

Current State of the Economy:

- Germany was the **only G7 economy to shrink** in 2023 and is projected to remain the group's **slowest-growing economy** in 2024.
- Its **GDP per capita** declined by **1%** between 2019 and 2023, per the IMF.
- Post-pandemic global demand has shifted from **manufactured goods to services**, leaving Germany, reliant on manufacturing, vulnerable.

Key Indicators:

- **Shrinking output** in high-tech manufacturing, a sector once synonymous with German global leadership.
- Rising concerns about high **debt and deficits**, worsened by coalition-driven economic policies.

Reasons Behind the Crisis:

1. **Volkswagen's Struggles:**
 - Slow adaptation to EVs and competition from more agile markets, especially **China**.
 - High operating costs and **falling global demand** for traditional vehicles.
2. **Energy Dependence:**
 - Heavy reliance on **Russian gas** left Germany exposed after the **Ukraine war** caused energy prices to surge.
 - Terms of trade deteriorated as energy costs skyrocketed, reducing industrial competitiveness.
3. **Structural Issues:**
 - Over-dependence on manufacturing without sufficient integration of the **digital economy**.
 - Bureaucratic **over-regulation** and hurdles for **mid-sized enterprises** (Mittelstand), historically the backbone of Germany's economy.
4. **Global Shifts:**



- The pivot towards **services over manufacturing** post-pandemic has placed additional strain on Germany's manufacturing-heavy economy.

Germany's Fragile Coalition Amid Economic and Global Tensions:

- The coalition government struggles to navigate economic turmoil while addressing global tensions, including geopolitical dependencies on **Russia** and **China**.
- Internal disagreements within the coalition hinder the ability to implement effective reforms.
- High debt levels and the growing deficit have raised concerns within the **European Union**, given Germany's historical role as an economic stabilizer.

Implications:

Economic:

- Germany risks **losing its position** as Europe's industrial leader, with significant ramifications for the EU economy.
- Decline in the **automotive sector** could lead to widespread unemployment and further contraction in industrial output.

Political:

- Chancellor Scholz faces a credibility crisis amid political instability, risking **weakened governance** in tackling economic challenges.

Global:

- Germany's struggles may **undermine EU stability**, given its central role in **economic integration** and **policy coordination**.
- Competition from **China** and shifting global trade dynamics underscore the urgency for Germany to adapt its economic strategies.

Germany's recovery depends on addressing its **structural challenges**, diversifying its economy, and embracing innovation in **energy** and **digital technologies**.

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6 Manipur Violence: 10 Militants Killed in Attack on CRPF Camp Amid Rising Tensions

Why in News?

- **Recent Incident:** In **Jiribam district** of Manipur, **10 suspected militants** from the **Hmar tribe**, affiliated with the **Kuki-Zo** community, were killed in a **shootout with security forces** after armed attacks targeting Meitei settlements, a CRPF post, and a local police station. A CRPF constable was injured in the incident and hospitalized.
- The violence comes in the wake of **ongoing tensions** in Manipur between the **Kuki tribe** and the majority **Meitei community**.
- **Prohibitory orders** were imposed in Jiribam to curb further violence, and shutdowns were observed in Kuki-Zo-majority districts of Churachandpur and Kangpokpi.



Manipur Violence Background:

- **Ethnic Tensions:** Manipur has witnessed prolonged violence between **Meitei** (non-tribal) and **Kuki** (tribal) communities. The **Imphal Valley**, home to 64% of Manipur's population (Meitei), and the **hills** (inhabited by over 35% of recognized tribes) are at the heart of the ethnic divide.
- **Historical Tensions:** The violence escalated after the **Manipur High Court's directive** in February 2023, asking the state government to pursue granting **Scheduled Tribe (ST) status to Meitei community**, which triggered protests from tribal groups.

Key Factors Behind the Violence:

- **ST Status for Meiteis:** The Meitei community has been pushing for ST status since 2012, claiming it was recognized as a tribe before Manipur's merger with India in 1949 but lost that status thereafter.
 - **Meitei Argument:** The demand stems from a desire to **protect culture, language, and ancestral land**, arguing that the community has been marginalized over time.
 - **Tribal Opposition:** Tribal groups fear that granting **ST status** to Meiteis would undermine their political and economic standing, resulting in **job losses** and **land encroachments** by the Meitei community in hill areas.
- **Tribal Solidarity March:** In opposition to the Meitei ST demand, the **All-Tribal Students' Union of Manipur (ATSUM)** organized a **tribal solidarity march**, which led to **violent clashes** in various parts of the state.

The Hmar Tribe:

- **Ethnicity & Language:** The **Hmar** tribe, part of the **Kuki-Zo** umbrella, is primarily found in northeastern states, including **Manipur, Mizoram, Assam, and Tripura**. They belong to the **Sino-Tibeto-Burman** language family, with linguistic ties to **Mizo** and other related dialects.
- **Social Structure:** The Hmar society is traditionally **patriarchal** and follows the **ultimogeniture system** of inheritance, where the youngest child inherits the estate.
- **Economic Activities:** Primarily **agricultural**, the Hmar practice both **shifting cultivation (jhum)** and **settled farming**, growing crops like **rice, maize, vegetables, and cotton**.

Implications of the Violence:

- The violence in Manipur continues to escalate, impacting **ethnic relations, economic activities, and security** in the region.
- The **Hmar tribe's involvement** in the recent clashes underscores the **complexity** of the conflict, involving **cultural, political, and economic** grievances.
- The **Meitei demand for ST status** remains a flashpoint for further **ethnic polarization**, with broader **social and economic consequences** for the state.