



Daily Current Affairs



To The Point by Dhananjay Gautam

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1 GRAP-4 Restrictions in Delhi: What's Open, What's Shut?

Context: With Delhi-NCR engulfed in toxic air pollution, the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) has implemented Stage-IV (Severe+) measures under the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP).

Why the Need for GRAP-4?

Delhi's Air Quality Index (AQI) has hit a staggering **500**, placing it in the **Severe+** category. GRAP, created by the **Ministry of Environment, Forests & Climate Change (MoEF&CC)** in 2017, serves as a tiered action plan to counter air pollution. Stage-IV guidelines aim to limit pollution levels and protect public health.

The 4 Stages of GRAP:

GRAP defines actions based on the severity of air pollution:

Stage	AQI Range	Key Measures
Stage I	201-300	Public advisories, dust control, no open burning.
Stage II	301-400	Diesel generator restrictions, road cleaning, sprinkling water.
Stage III	401-450	Ban on non-essential construction, limits on heavy vehicle entry.
Stage IV	Above 450	Complete ban on construction, school closures, vehicle restrictions.



GRAP-4 Measures: What's Allowed & What's Banned?

1. Truck Entry Restrictions:

- **Allowed:**
 - Trucks carrying **essential goods**.
 - Vehicles powered by **CNG, LNG, electric energy**, or those meeting **BS-VI standards**.
- **Banned:**
 - Trucks carrying **non-essential goods**.
 - **Non-Delhi registered Light Commercial Vehicles (LCVs)** unless eco-friendly or carrying essential items.

2. Ban on Construction & Demolition (C&D) Activities

- **Allowed:**
 - **Small-scale personal construction projects**.
- **Banned:**
 - All large construction and demolition projects, including **highways, flyovers, pipelines, and telecom infrastructure**.

3. Shift to Online Education

- **Schools:**
 - Most schools have switched to **online classes**.
 - **Class 10 and 12** students preparing for board exams are exempted.
- **Workplaces:**
 - **50% work-from-home** policy advised for private and public sector offices.
 - Central government offices may also adopt these measures.

4. Potential Emergency Actions: Authorities may introduce further steps, such as:

- Suspending **non-essential commercial activities**.
- Shutting down colleges and universities.
- Implementing **odd-even vehicle schemes** to curb traffic emissions.

Health Guidelines for Residents: To minimize health risks, citizens, especially **children, the elderly, and individuals with respiratory or heart issues**, should:

- **Avoid outdoor activities** during peak pollution hours.
- **Stay indoors** whenever possible.

Citizen Involvement is Key: The success of GRAP-4 relies on **public cooperation**:

- Reduce non-essential outdoor activities.
- Support initiatives aimed at reducing pollution levels.

By adhering to these guidelines, we can collectively combat **Delhi's air pollution crisis** and safeguard public health. Let's breathe responsibly.

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2 India's First Hypersonic Missile Test: A Game-Changing Defence Milestone

Context: India has achieved a historic breakthrough in defence technology with the successful testing of its first **long-range hypersonic missile**, signifying a leap in national security and strategic deterrence.

Why Is This Significant?

On **November 17**, the **Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO)** conducted a successful flight test of a hypersonic missile off the coast of Odisha.



- **Range:** Capable of striking targets over **1,500 km**.
- **Development:** Built indigenously by the **Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam Missile Complex**, Hyderabad, in collaboration with other DRDO labs and industry partners.
- **Applications:** Designed for use across the **Army, Navy, and Air Force**.

What Are Hypersonic Missiles?

Key Features:

- **Definition:** Missiles that travel faster than **Mach 5** (five times the speed of sound).
- **Trajectory:** Unlike ballistic missiles, they can **manoeuvre mid-flight**, making them harder to detect and intercept.
- **Types:**
 - **Hypersonic Glide Vehicles (HGVs):** Launched by rockets and glide toward their targets.
 - **Hypersonic Cruise Missiles (HCMs):** Powered by high-speed **scramjet engines**.

Advantages:

- **Responsive Strike Capability:** Ideal for targeting time-sensitive or heavily defended threats.
- **Conventional Use:** Relies on **kinetic energy** for destruction without explosives.
- **Difficult to Detect:** Operates at lower altitudes, complicating radar tracking.

Challenges in Hypersonic Technology:

- **Extreme Heat:** Friction at high speeds generates immense heat, demanding advanced materials.
- **Precision Control:** Requires sophisticated manoeuvring systems at hypersonic speeds.
- **High Costs:** Development and deployment are resource-intensive.

India's Hypersonic Journey:

- **Initial Setbacks:**
 - In **2019**, the first test of the **Hypersonic Technology Demonstrator Vehicle (HSTDV)** faced challenges.
- **Breakthrough in 2020:**
 - A scramjet-powered vehicle achieved **Mach 6** for **23 seconds**, marking a critical milestone.
- **Continued Progress:**
 - Recent tests demonstrate India's growing expertise in long-range hypersonic weaponry.

India's First Hypersonic Missile Test: Highlights:

- **Speed & Agility:** The missile combines the speed of ballistic missiles with the manoeuvrability of cruise missiles.
- **Technical Specifications:**
 - **Speed:** Over **Mach 6**.
 - **Range:** Greater than **1,500 km**.
 - **Payload Versatility:** Designed for precision strikes across multiple domains.
- **Testing Location:** Launched from **Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam Island**, Odisha.

Global Context:

India joins an elite group of nations pursuing hypersonic missile technology:

- **Russia and China:** Leaders in deployment and operational capabilities.
- **United States:** Investing heavily in hypersonic systems, with recent advancements like the **Long Range Hypersonic Weapon (LRHW)**.
- **Others:** Countries like France, Germany, and Japan are actively developing hypersonic capabilities.

Future Implications:

The successful test reinforces India's status as a global leader in advanced defence technology. It paves the way for:

- **Enhanced Strategic Deterrence:** Strengthens India's ability to counter threats.
- **Technology Export Potential:** Opens avenues for defence collaboration and exports.
- **Further Innovations:** Accelerates research in **hypersonic weaponry** and related fields.

3

India-Nigeria Bilateral Relations: A Strengthening Partnership

Context: India and Nigeria share a rich and dynamic relationship rooted in shared history and aspirations. This partnership spans economic, strategic, and cultural dimensions, reflecting their commitment to mutual growth and global cooperation.

Historical Ties: A Legacy of Solidarity

- **Shared Colonial Struggles:** India and Nigeria's relationship traces back to their fight against colonialism.
- **Post-Independence Bond:** India's independence in **1947** and Nigeria's in **1960** laid the foundation for mutual solidarity.
- **Non-Aligned Movement (NAM):** Both nations have been staunch advocates of a **non-aligned world** during the Cold War.
- **Enduring Friendship:** Decades of cooperation have solidified a relationship based on **mutual respect and shared values**.

**Bilateral Trade: Economic Pillar of Partnership:****Key Highlights:**

- **Trade Volume:** Bilateral trade exceeds **USD 14 billion annually**, making Nigeria **India's largest trading partner in Africa**.
- **Exports to Nigeria:**
 - Pharmaceuticals, automobiles, engineering goods, textiles, and agricultural machinery.
- **Indian Investments in Nigeria:**
 - Companies like **Tata, Mahindra, and Bharti Airtel** have a significant presence, contributing to Nigeria's **economic development**.

Strategic Cooperation: A Multifaceted Partnership:**Key Areas of Collaboration:**

1. **Energy Security:**
 - Nigeria, as Africa's largest oil producer, plays a vital role in India's **energy requirements**.
2. **Defense and Security:**
 - Joint efforts in **counterterrorism, maritime security, and defense training programs** strengthen regional and global security.
3. **Agriculture and Technology:**
 - India aids Nigeria in **agricultural modernization and ICT development**, driving industrial growth.
4. **Education and Capacity Building:** Through programs like **ITEC**, India has offered scholarships and training to develop Nigeria's **human resources**.

Multilateral Engagement: Collaborating on Global Platforms:

- **United Nations (UN):** Advocating for reforms in global governance, including the **UN Security Council**.
- **Commonwealth Membership:** Facilitates cultural and political collaboration.
- **India-Africa Forum:** Aligning on shared development goals under platforms like the **African Union (AU)**.
- **South-South Cooperation:** Promoting growth in the **Global South** through avenues like **BRICS** and the **G-77**.

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Indian Diaspora in Nigeria: Strengthening Ties:

- **Population:** Over **60,000 Indians** reside in Nigeria.
- **Economic Impact:**
 - Indian-owned businesses significantly contribute to Nigeria's **GDP** and employment.
- **Cultural Exchange:**
 - Indian festivals, cuisine, and Bollywood have found a home in Nigeria, fostering **mutual appreciation**.
- **Healthcare Services:**
 - Indian doctors and healthcare professionals are widely respected for their contributions.

Challenges and Opportunities:

1. **Security Concerns:**
 - Issues like **piracy** and **insurgency** can impact investments and diaspora safety.
2. **Economic Diversification:**
 - A heavy reliance on oil necessitates greater focus on sectors like **renewable energy** and **infrastructure**.

Opportunities:

- **Expanding Trade:** Diversifying trade into **renewables, manufacturing, and technology**.
- **Enhanced Defense Cooperation:** Strengthening joint efforts in **security and defense manufacturing**.
- **Cultural Diplomacy:** Deepening cultural ties through the growing diaspora and Indian soft power.

Recent Developments: Strengthening the Bond

- **Historic Visit:**
 - Prime Minister Narendra Modi became the **first Indian PM to visit Nigeria in 17 years**, receiving Nigeria's **Grand Commander of the Order of the Niger (GCON)**.
- **Key Agreements:**
 - Signing of **three MoUs** covering cultural exchange, customs cooperation, and surveys.
- **Disaster Relief:**
 - India provided **20 tonnes of relief supplies** for flood victims in Nigeria.
- **Economic Contributions:**
 - Over **200 Indian companies** have invested **\$27 billion** in Nigeria.
- **Focus Areas:**
 - Discussions included **counterterrorism, developmental cooperation, and Africa's global role**.

Conclusion:

India and Nigeria's robust partnership, driven by **economic cooperation, strategic collaboration, and cultural exchange**, reflects their shared commitment to mutual growth. Recent developments have further cemented this multifaceted relationship, marking a new chapter in their enduring friendship.

4

Kerala Suspends Two IAS Officers for Misconduct: A Case of Rules and Reforms

Context: Two IAS officers from Kerala have been suspended over alleged violations of conduct rules, reigniting debates about the professional ethics of civil servants and the need for clarity in their code of conduct.

Why in News?

The Kerala government has **suspended two senior IAS officers, N. Prashant and K. Gopalakrishnan**, on charges of misconduct.



- The suspensions bring attention to the **rules governing civil servants' behavior**, particularly regarding **social media usage** and maintaining **professional integrity**.

Allegations Against the Officers:**1. N. Prashant**

- Accusation:** Made **derogatory statements** on social media against A. Jayathilak IAS, Additional Chief Secretary.
- Violation:** Statements were deemed inappropriate for a public servant, tarnishing the image of the administration.
- Defense:** Prashant claimed the allegations were **baseless** and accused Jayathilak of orchestrating false reports.

2. K. Gopalakrishnan

- Accusation:** Created a religion-based WhatsApp group, '**Mallu Hindu Officers**', allegedly promoting **communal divisions** within the IAS cadre.
- Suspicion:** Despite claiming his phone was hacked, Gopalakrishnan's decision to reset his device before the inquiry raised doubts.

Conduct Rules for IAS Officers:

The **All-India Services (Conduct) Rules, 1968**, outline ethical standards for IAS, IPS, and Indian Forest Service officers.

Key Provisions:

- Ethics and Integrity:** Officers must uphold **political neutrality, constitutional values**, and ethical behavior.
- Social Media Usage:** Officers may use public platforms but are prohibited from **criticizing government policies**.
- General Conduct:** Actions considered **unbecoming of an officer** are strictly prohibited.
- Legal Recourse:** Officers require **government approval** to approach the press or courts for redress of grievances related to their official roles.

Issues and Recommendations for Improvement:**Key Issues in the Current Framework:**

- Ambiguity in Social Media Guidelines:**
 - Rules lack clarity on what constitutes permissible or inappropriate content online.
- Vagueness in "Unbecoming Conduct":**
 - The term remains subjective, creating opportunities for **misuse** or **bias** in enforcement.
- Power Imbalance:**
 - Junior officers may face undue scrutiny from **senior officials**, leading to an unequal application of rules.

Recommendations for Reform:

- Clear Social Media Guidelines:**
 - Define acceptable and unacceptable content related to **official duties**.
 - Address **defamatory campaigns** targeting officers.
- Clarification of "Unbecoming Conduct":** Develop a **reference list of behaviors** based on past incidents to minimize ambiguity.
- Promoting Responsible Anonymity:** Encourage officers to **maintain anonymity** when disseminating information about government initiatives, ensuring **professional neutrality**.

Conclusion: The suspension of the two IAS officers underscores the urgent need for **clearer and more comprehensive rules** governing their conduct.

While **transparency and accountability** are vital, civil servants must strike a balance between **responsible communication** and **professional discretion** to uphold the **public image of the administration** and safeguard their integrity.

By revising and updating the **All-India Services Conduct Rules**, the government can ensure fairness, reduce ambiguity, and foster a more robust administrative framework.

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5 First-Ever Census of Indian Bisons (Gaurs) at Debrigarh Wildlife Sanctuary

Context: In a groundbreaking effort, the **first-ever census of Indian Bisons (Gaurs)** was recently conducted at the **Debrigarh Wildlife Sanctuary** in Odisha, marking an important milestone in the conservation of these magnificent creatures.

About Debrigarh Wildlife Sanctuary:

Nestled in the **Bargarh district of Odisha**, near the **Hirakud Dam** along the **Mahanadi River**, the **Debrigarh Wildlife Sanctuary** is a haven for a diverse array of wildlife.

Historical Significance:

The sanctuary is historically significant due to its connection with the **freedom fighter Veer Surendra Sai**, who used **Barapathara** within the sanctuary as his base during his rebellion against the British.

Protected Area Status:

Declared as a **wildlife sanctuary in 1985**, the sanctuary is home to a variety of flora and fauna.

- **Vegetation:** The area predominantly consists of **dry deciduous mixed forests**.
- **Flora:** The sanctuary boasts a wide range of trees, including **Sal, Asana, Bija, Aanla, and Dhaura**.

Fauna:

The sanctuary is home to a wide variety of animals, including **Tigers, Leopards, Sloth Bears, Hyenas, Spotted Deer, Antelopes, Nilgai, Langur Monkeys**, and the majestic **Indian Bison (Gaur)**, which was the focus of the recent census.

Key Facts about the Indian Bison (Gaur):

The **Indian Bison**, also known as the **Gaur**, is one of the largest wild cattle species in the world.

Physical Characteristics:

- **Size:** Adult gaurs can reach a **shoulder height of up to 220 cm**, making them one of the largest extant bovines.

Habitat and Distribution:

- **Habitat:** Gaurs are typically found in the **forested hills and grassy areas of South and Southeast Asia**.
- **Global Population:** The global population of Indian Bisons is estimated between **13,000 and 30,000**, with around **85% of the population found in India**. Other populations exist in **Burma and Thailand**.

Strongholds in India:

- The **Western Ghats**, particularly the **Wayanad, Nagarhole, Mudumalai, and Bandipur** complexes, serve as one of the largest strongholds of the gaur in India.

Cultural Significance

- The **Indian Bison** is the **State Animal** of both **Goa and Bihar**.

Conservation Status:

- **IUCN:** **Vulnerable**
- **CITES:** Listed in **Appendix I**, indicating a high level of protection.
- **Wildlife Protection Act:** The Indian Bison is included in **Schedule I**, offering it the highest level of protection under Indian law.

Conservation Efforts and Importance:

The census conducted at **Debrigarh Wildlife Sanctuary** highlights the importance of understanding and conserving the **Indian Bison**, a species that plays a crucial role in maintaining the ecological balance of the region. With the species classified as **vulnerable** by the **IUCN**, these efforts are essential to ensure the survival of this majestic animal in the wild.

The sanctuary, alongside other conservation initiatives across India, plays a pivotal role in protecting the **Indian Bison** and other endangered species, ensuring they thrive for generations to come.

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RBI Issues New Guidelines for Internal Risk Assessment on Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing

Context: On November 18, 2024, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) released its 'Internal Risk Assessment Guidance' to address Money Laundering (ML) and Terrorist Financing (TF) risks, marking a significant step in enhancing financial security.

Key Focus Areas of the Guidelines:

The new guidelines aim to implement a **data-driven, quantitative approach** to assessing and mitigating fraud risks.

The RBI emphasizes the following:

- **Risk-Based Framework:** Ensuring a comprehensive approach encompassing **compliance, due diligence, and continuous monitoring** to address ML/TF threats.

Relevance of the New Guidelines:

○ **Rising Incidents of Fraud:**

The **RBI Annual Report 2023-24** reveals a significant spike in fraud cases, with the number of incidents rising from **13,564 in 2022-23** to **36,075 in 2023-24**, signaling an urgent need for improved risk management.

○ **Global Economic Impact of Money Laundering:**

According to the **United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime**, global **money laundering** activities amount to between **\$800 billion and \$2 trillion annually**, accounting for **2-5% of global GDP**. This highlights the vast scale of the problem and the need for stringent controls.

• **Risks Associated with Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing:**

- **Political Risks:** Money laundering and terrorist financing can **weaken governments** and destabilize nations, affecting both domestic and international political environments.
- **Security Threat:** **ML and TF are linked to threats of terrorism, including groups such as ISIL and Al-Qaeda, creating** internal and external security concerns.
- **Economic Risks:** Frauds involving banks' resources for illicit activities can undermine the financial system, diverting funds from legitimate economic sectors.
- **Social Consequences:** Money laundering and terrorist financing activities can exacerbate **social tensions** and lead to increased **communal strife** and criminal activities.

Initiatives to Combat Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing:

Global Efforts:

- **The Palermo Convention (2000):** An international treaty aimed at curbing **transnational organized crime**.
- **FATF Framework:** The **Financial Action Task Force (FATF)** provides global standards and recommendations for **anti-money laundering (AML)** and **counter-terrorist financing (CFT)** measures.

India's Legal and Institutional Framework:

- **Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), 2002:** India's primary legislation for tackling money laundering.
- **Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU-IND) and Enforcement Directorate (ED):** Key institutions involved in combating ML/TF.
- **Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA), 2000:** Regulates foreign exchange markets and addresses illegal financial activities.

The **RBI's new guidelines** represent a critical move toward **strengthening the country's financial system** and preventing illicit activities that could destabilize both the economy and security. With growing incidents of fraud and increasing global risks, the guidelines set a clear path for a more robust and **data-driven approach** to safeguarding the financial ecosystem.

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