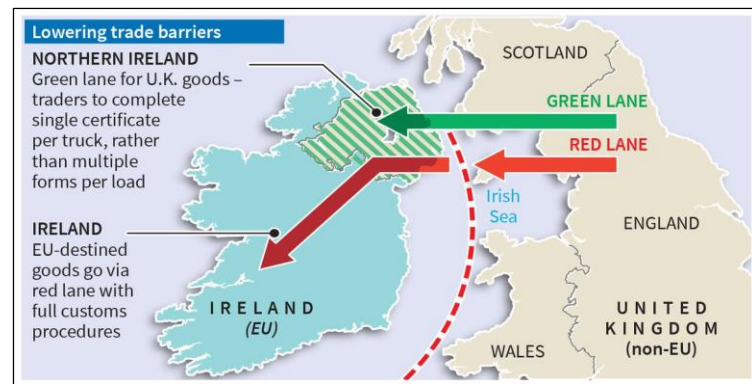


Windsor Framework

❖ Context

- Recently, the **UK government reached a landmark deal with the European Union (EU)** on post-Brexit trade rules related to governing the Northern Ireland.
- The 'Windsor Framework' will replace the Northern Ireland Protocol, which had proved to be among the thorniest of Brexit fall-outs, creating problems both economic and political.



❖ Northern Ireland Protocol:

• About :

- Northern Ireland Protocol is a **post-Brexit agreement** that created a trade border between Northern Ireland & the rest of the UK.

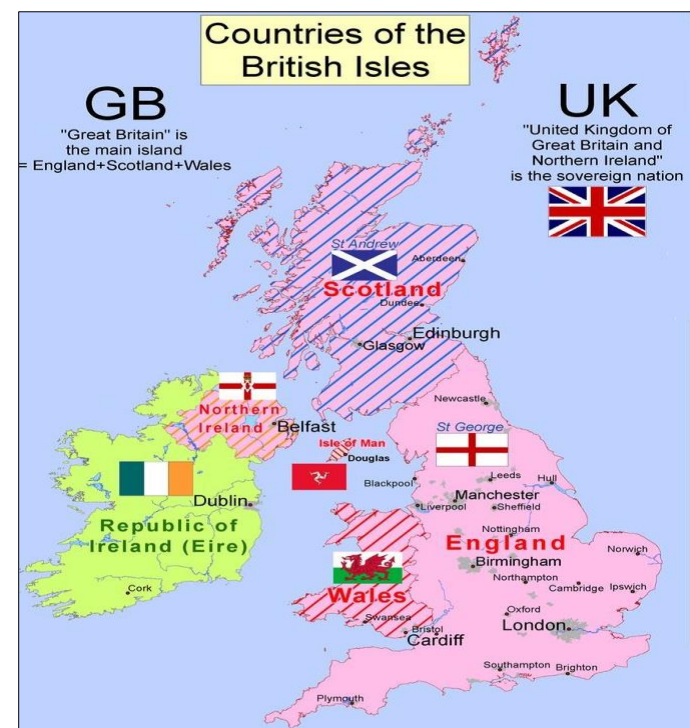
• Background :

- After Brexit, **Northern Ireland remained the UK's only constituent** that shared a land border with an EU member, the Republic of Ireland.
- EU and UK having different product standards, checks would be necessary before goods could move from Northern Ireland to Ireland.
- However, the two sides have had a long history of conflict, with a hard-fought peace secured only in 1998 under the **Belfast Agreement, also called the Good Friday agreement**.
- Fiddling with this border was thus considered too dangerous, and it was decided the checks would be conducted between Northern Ireland and Great Britain.
- This was called the Northern Ireland Protocol.

- **Significance** : Under the protocol, **Northern Ireland remains in the EU single market**, and trade-and-customs inspections of goods coming from Great Britain take place at its ports along the Irish Sea.

❖ Windsor Framework Proposes:

- The Windsor Framework Deal proposes two crucial aspects.
- **The first aspect** is the introduction of a green lane and red lane system for goods.
 - The green lane system will be for goods that will stay in Northern Ireland.
 - The red lane system will be for goods that will go to the EU.
- **The second aspect is the 'Stormont Brake'**.
 - It allows Northern Ireland lawmakers and London to veto any EU regulation.
 - The veto is applicable if they believe that the regulation affects the region adversely.



BIMSTEC

❖ Context

- Recently, India hosted the first meeting of the Governing Board of **BIMSTEC Energy Centre (BEC)**.



❖ Key Highlights:

- Considering the current energy scenario in BIMSTEC region, the Meeting recommended to add the additional following areas under the specialized Wings of BEC: (a) Cyber Security, (b) Green Hydrogen (c) Energy Transition

❖ About BIMSTEC:

- BIMSTEC is an **economic bloc** that came into being on **6 June 1997** through the **Bangkok Declaration**.
 - BIMSTEC is an international **organization of seven South Asian and Southeast Asian nations**.
 - It is **housing 1.73 billion people** and having a combined **gross domestic product of \$3.8 trillion (2021)**.

- **Members** :
 - Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Myanmar and Thailand.
 - Its members **lie in the littoral and adjacent areas of the Bay of Bengal** constituting a contiguous regional unity.
- **Headquarter** : Dhaka.
- **Aims** : To **accelerate economic growth and social progress** among members across multiple sectors — trade, technology, energy, transport, tourism and fisheries, agriculture, public health, poverty alleviation, counter-terrorism, environment, culture, people to people contact and climate change.
- **Meetings** : The grouping holds **annual meetings** hosted by member states **based on alphabetical rotation**.

Face to Face Centres



Social Stock Exchange (SSE)



❖ Context

- Recently, the **National Stock Exchange of India** received the final approval from the markets regulator **Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI)** to set up a **Social Stock Exchange (SSE)**.

❖ About Social Stock Exchange:

- SSE is a novel idea in India.
- A stock exchange of this kind is **intended to benefit the private and non-profit sectors** by directing more capital to them.
- During her Budget speech for the fiscal year 2019–20, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman first proposed the concept of SSE.
- The SSE would **function as a separate segment within the existing stock exchange** and help social enterprises raise funds from the public through its mechanism.
- It would serve as a medium for enterprises to seek finance for their social initiatives, acquire visibility and provide increased transparency about fund mobilisation and utilisation.
- Retail investors can only invest in securities offered by for-profit social enterprises (SEs) under the Main Board.
- In all other cases, only institutional investors and non-institutional investors can invest in securities issued by SEs.
- Countries like the UK, Canada and Brazil have SSEs.

- **Eligibility for Listing on SSE** : **Not-for-profit organisations (NPOs)** & for-profit social enterprises with social intent and impact as their primary goal will be eligible to participate in the SSE.
- The social enterprises will have to engage in a social activity out of **16 broad activities** listed by the regulator. The eligible activities include –
 - Eradicating hunger poverty, malnutrition & inequality.
 - Promoting healthcare, supporting education, employability and livelihoods.
 - Gender equality empowerment of women and LGBTQIA communities.
 - Supporting incubators of social enterprise.
- According to Sebi's framework, **minimum issue size of ₹1 crore** and a minimum application size for subscription of ₹2 lakh are currently required for SSE.
- **Minimum Requirement** :
 - NPO needs to be registered as a charitable trust and should be registered for at least three years.
 - Must have spent at least ₹50 lakh annually in the past financial year.
 - Should have received a funding of at least ₹10 lakh in the past financial year.

Press Council of India (PCI)



❖ Context

- Recently, **The Press Council of India (PCI)** advised the print media to follow the norms of Journalistic Conduct-2022 on 'paid news' during the elections in various States.

❖ About PCI :

- **The Press Council Act of 1978** created the Press Council of India (PCI).
- It's a **statutory organization**.
- It is the **highest body** to maintain the standards of the Print Media in India.
- **Structure** :
 - PCI comprises a **Chairman and other 28 members** who are:
 - 3 Lok Sabha members.
 - 2 Rajya Sabha Members.
 - 6 Editors of Newspapers, 7 Working Journalists (other than editors of newspapers), 3 people with specialised knowledge of public life, 1 person who handles the news agencies and 6 persons in the business of handling newspapers.
 - The Speaker of Lok Sabha, Chairman of Rajya Sabha and a member selected by the PCI choose the chairman of PCI through its procedure.

• Functions :

- It helps the newspaper to **maintain its independence**.
- It **builds a code of conduct** for the newspapers in accordance with the high professional standards.
- It works to **promote technical and other research** areas related to the news.
- It helps **provide proper training to new journalists**.

Appointments to the Election Commission



❖ Context

- Recently, a five-judge Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court unanimously ruled that a **high-power committee must pick the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) and Election Commissioners (ECs)**.
- SC stated that high-power committee must be consisting of the **Prime Minister, Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha and the Chief Justice of India**.

Face to Face Centres



❖ Election Commission:

• About :

- The Election Commission of India (ECI) is an **autonomous and permanent constitutional body**
- It is responsible for **organizing free and fair elections** in the Union and States of India.
- The Constitution grants the ECI with the power of **direction, superintendence, & control of elections to Parliament, state legislatures, the office of president of India & the office of vice-president of India.**

• Powers and Responsibilities :

- Determining the **Electoral Constituencies' territorial areas** throughout the country.
- Preparing and periodically **revising electoral rolls and registering all eligible voters.**
- **Notifying the schedules and dates of elections and scrutinizing nomination papers.**
- **Granting recognition** to the various political parties and **allocating them election symbols.**
- The Commission also has **advisory jurisdiction** in the matter of post-election disqualification of sitting members of Parliament and State Legislatures.
- It **issues the Model Code of Conduct** in elections for political parties and candidates.

• Composition :

- A chief election commissioner (CEC) and Other election commissioners (EC) (the **number is to be decided by the President** from time to time Art 324).
- Tenure- **Six years or up to the age of 65 years** whichever is earlier.

• Appointment of Election Commissioners :

- **Article 324 (2)** specifies that the Chief Election Commissioner and Election Commissioners will be **appointed by the President.**
- This is **subject to Parliamentary law** (if such law exists).
- In the absence of such a law, the President has been making appointments as per the **recommendations of the Prime Minister.**

EXISTING PROCEDURE

As of now, Centre has a free hand in appointment of ECs. Though Article 324(2) says appointment of CEC and other ECs shall be subject to provisions of any law made... by Parliament, no law has been framed so far

SC DIRECTION

> Appointment of CEC, ECs by President on recommendation of a committee comprising PM, leader of opposition and CJI to maintain 'purity of elections'
> 'It is desirable that the grounds for removal of the ECs shall be the same as that of the CEC that is on the like grounds as a judge of the apex court'



A person who is in a state of obligation or feels indebted to the one who appointed him fails the nation and **can have no place in the conduct of elections...** An EC should be one who holds the scale evenly in the stormiest of times by not being servile to the powerful... That would be true independence

The founding fathers clearly contemplated a law by Parliament and **did not intend the executive exclusively calling the shots in the matter of appointments** to the Election Commission

A near-insatiable quest to continue in the saddle requires a **pliable EC** who functions as an unfair and biased overseer... **perhaps offers an assured gateway to acquisition and retention of power**

One of the ways the executive can bring the EC to its knees is by starving it of requisite finances much needed for its independent functioning... **A vulnerable commission... may kneel to the pressure of the executive,** and that would result in an **insidious conquest...**

A brute majority generated by a democratic process must conform to constitutional safeguards and the demands of constitutional morality
An unrelenting abuse of the electoral process over a period of time is **the surest way to the grave of democracy**
—SC bench

• CEC and EC :

- Though the Chief Election Commissioner is the chairman of the election commission, his **powers are equal** to the other election commissioners.
- All the **matters in the commission** are **decided** by the **majority** amongst its members.
- The Chief Election Commissioner and the two other election commissioners **receive equal salary, allowances and other benefits.**
- They **enjoy the same status** and receive salary and perks as available to **Judges of the Supreme Court** of India.
- **Removal :** The CEC can be removed from office only through a process of **removal similar to that of a Supreme Court Judge by Parliament.**
 - The President of India can remove the other officers on the Chief Commissioner's recommendation.

News in Between the Lines

SWAYATT Initiative



❖ Context

- Recently, a function was held to commemorate the success of "SWAYATT".

❖ Key Highlights:

- The initiative to promote "Start-ups, Women and Youth Advantage Through eTransactions" (SWAYATT) on GeM was **first launched in February 2019.**
- **The intent of SWAYATT 2019 was :**
 - To promote inclusiveness of various categories of sellers and service providers on the portal, by taking proactive steps to facilitate their training and registrations of such specific category of manufacturers and sellers.
 - Develop women entrepreneurship and encourage participation of MSME sector and Start-ups in public procurement.
- **Government eMarketplace (GeM) :**
 - GeM is an Online Market platform that was **set up in 2016.**
 - GeM is a Section 8 company setup under the administrative control of the **Department of Commerce, Ministry of Commerce and Industry.**
 - **Purpose :** For procurement of goods and services by Central Ministries, State Departments, PSEs and Autonomous Bodies.

Face to Face Centres



Framework Mechanism for Mutual Recognition of Qualifications



❖ Context

➤ Recently, **India and Australia signed a Framework Mechanism for Mutual Recognition of Qualifications.**

❖ Key Highlights:

- It will **help ease the mobility of students and professionals** between the two countries.
- This agreement is part of the commitment by Prime Ministers of both countries at the 2nd India-Australia Virtual Summit held on 21 March 2022,
 - They had agreed to establish a Joint Taskforce for mutual recognition of qualifications.
 - A task force was accordingly set up consisting of senior officials of education and skill ministries and regulators on both sides.
 - It has come up with a comprehensive mechanism that covers both education and skill qualifications of the two countries.
 - It will help facilitate two way mobility of young people for education and employment purposes by mutually recognizing various levels of education and skill qualifications.

Erythritol

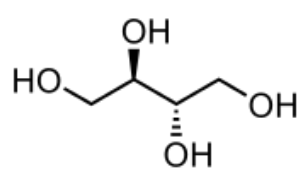


❖ Context

➤ Recently, a new research by Cleveland Clinic shown that Erythritol, a popular artificial sweetener, is associated with an increased risk of heart attack and stroke.

❖ Key Highlights:

• A sugar substitute is a food additive that duplicates the effect of sugar in taste but usually has less food energy, as per a 2011 study by National Center for Biotechnology Information (NCBI).



- Erythritol, just like sorbitol and xylitol, is a sugar alcohol that is naturally found in many fruits and vegetables.
- It is calorie-free and provides approximately 70% sweetness of sugar.
- The drawback is that it is artificially produced in large quantities.

World Wildlife Day (WWD)



❖ Context

➤ **March 3 is known as World Wildlife Day (WWD)**, marked annually to draw attention to issues of conservation of flora and fauna.

❖ Key Highlights:

- **Theme-** Partnerships for Wildlife Conservation.
- In 2013, the **United Nations General Assembly (UNGA)** proclaimed March 3 as the UN World Wildlife Day to celebrate and raise awareness of protecting the world's wild animals and plants.
- This was as the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) was signed in 1973 on this day.
- March 3 marks the **50th anniversary of CITES' establishment.**
- **CITES** : It is an international agreement between governments.
 - Its aim is to ensure that international trade in specimens of wild animals and plants does not threaten the survival of the species.
 - There are **184 parties to the convention**, including India.
 - The **CITES Secretariat is administered by UNEP** and is located in Geneva, Switzerland.

Shinyuu Maitri



❖ Context

➤ The **Indian Air Force (IAF)** is participating in Exercise Shinyuu Maitri with the **Japan Air Self Defence Force (JASDF).**

❖ Key Highlights:

- The exercise is being organised on the side-lines of the Indo-Japan Joint Army Exercise, **Dharma Guardian.**
 - Dharma Guardian is being conducted from 13 February 2023 to 02 March 2023 at Komatsu, Japan.
- The IAF contingent is participating in Exercise Shinyuu Maitri 23 with one C-17 Globemaster III aircraft.
- The exercise shall also enhance mutual understanding and interoperability between the IAF and the JASDF.

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