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# CIVIL SERVICES ACHIEVERS' POINT

A ONE STOP SOLUTION FOR UPSC/APSC/SSC & BANKING

## EDITORIAL ANALYSIS

of

# THE HINDU

9<sup>th</sup> July, 2021

For Preliminary and Mains examination

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*Leadership through knowledge...*

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## EDITORIALS

### G.S PAPER 2 – Polity and Governance

#### New phase

- The reconstitution of the Union Council of Ministers on Wednesday was guided by both political and administrative considerations. As many as 36 new faces were inducted and 12 dropped from the council, which now has 78 members, just three shy of the upper limit of 81.
- In 2014, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) began its rule advertising its 45-member Council of Ministers as an attempt at minimum government, but the restraint was quietly abandoned in the following years. The political aspirations of communities and regions are difficult to satiate in a country as vast and diverse as India.
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi has made an attempt to make his Council more diverse and representative, in a manner that fits his political priorities.
- The new composition of the Council is in step with the BJP's relentless efforts to rope in OBC groups, Dalits and tribes people under its Hindutva umbrella politics. This accommodation is crucial for the BJP to continue its dominance in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and other Hindi-speaking regions, where caste tensions are simmering.
- New inductions and elevations also signal a continued effort by the BJP to expand its influence to new areas such as West Bengal and the northeastern States. Barring the continuing under-representation of Muslims, the council is impressively representative of Indian diversity.
- Governance issues might have been a factor in the axing of some of the Ministers. Harsh Vardhan, Ravi Shankar Prasad and Prakash Javadekar were among those who got the marching orders, apparently for mishandling the pandemic, relations with global IT giants and governmental communication, respectively.
- New inductees such as Ashwini Vaishnaw and Jyotiraditya Scindia have administrative skills that could prove valuable in crucial ministries that they now head. Individual talent and accountability both can only be contextual, and in a highly centralised system they become immaterial.

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- The **Ministers must be empowered to plan and take decisions in their respective areas.**
- The notion of **collective responsibility of the cabinet must be infused with meaning.**
- **Discussions in the cabinet must be open.** Proposals that come for the cabinet's consideration must go through rigorous technical vetting and wide political consultations.
- The recomposition was intended to enhance governance, rev up the economy and fuel the BJP's political march ahead of crucial State elections and the 2024 Lok Sabha elections. All these would be possible only if all hands are on the deck. Assembling a team is indeed a crucial task of a captain; allowing them to flourish as individuals while playing as a team is equally critical.



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## G.S PAPER 2 – Polity and Governance

### Tracking fugitives everywhere

- Indian law on extradition is spread across the Indian Penal Code as well as various laws pertaining to narcotic drugs, Information Technology, hijacking, and so on.
- Procedural laws have the Code of Criminal Procedure as their backbone but there are other laws too, such as the Extradition Act, the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, the Prevention of Corruption Act, the Prevention of Money Laundering, and so on.

### Investigation and prosecution

- The bulk of the investigation and prosecution work happens at police stations in the States, while Central agencies take up the important cases. Central agencies have developed reasonable expertise because they are focussed only on investigation and prosecution work, whereas State police forces (except specialised wings) are engaged in law-and-order work as well as investigations.
- There is a tendency to close investigations once the accused have absconded, and an overwhelming tendency to bank on statements obtained from the accused or during interrogation before closing investigations.
- It would be interesting to know what proportion of arrest warrants obtained by investigation agencies of States pertain to persons who have absconded or are 'wanted', whether within India or abroad.
- Some police stations do initiate proceedings for attachment of property and declaration of the accused as proclaimed offenders, but the number of cases where coordinated efforts are made to pursue fugitives – domestically or internationally – are hardly documented.
- If the number of Red Corner Notices issued are of any indication, only about 750 such criminals are wanted by Indian agencies. The number of Blue Corner Notices issued is about 300. Theoretically there exists a system of tracking criminals worldwide – through Interpol Notices and the sharing of immigration databases of different countries – but there is no coordinated system or database for tracking criminals or wanted persons domestically.

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- In the absence of such a system, it is relatively easy for criminals from one police station/jurisdiction to melt into the population in any other area, almost undetected.

## Requirements

- The **creation of a nationwide database of wanted persons**, which could be accessible for police agencies, the public and others (like passport and immigration authorities), is imperative.
- The **Crime and Criminal Tracking Network and Systems and the National Intelligence Grid are efforts in the right direction, but more integration is desirable.**
- Perhaps a nationwide **system of 'Wanted Persons Notices'**, similar to Interpol Notices, is required, to help track fugitives domestically. Countries like the U.S. have **functional inter-State extradition and fugitive tracking systems; India needs to set up such dedicated 'fugitive tracking units'.**
- There needs to be **enhanced integration between immigration agencies, State police agencies, Interpol-New Delhi, the External Affairs Ministry and Home Ministry and central investigation agencies.**
- **Intelligence agencies also need to pool in.**
- What may also help India plug loopholes is sharing its **'wanted' database or providing access to it to foreign embassies on a reciprocal basis or through treaties or arrangements.**
- All this will help detect possible plans of criminals to abscond abroad. **Signing of more bilateral and multilateral conventions on criminal matters would help plug legal infirmities.**
- Signing **bilateral agreements on cooperation in policing matters would also help.**
- All relevant legal processes and requirements should be incorporated into one consolidated law on international cooperation. The entire gamut of activities pertaining to fugitives, from **investigation to extradition, needs to be incorporated into a specialised set-up with an Integrated International Cooperation Division (IICD) at the top.**
- The IICD should have linkages with proposed fugitive tracking units at the State level. This would ensure that requisite expertise and forward-and backward linkages are created. Making systems watertight would deter criminals from hoodwinking the law.

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## G.S PAPER 3 – Economy

### A blip

- Entering its fifth year, India's Goods and Services Tax (GST) system reported a blip in revenue collections for June, breaking an eight-month streak of over ₹1-lakh crore in tax receipts.
- **GST revenues tanked to a tad less than ₹93,000 crore last month — the lowest in 10 months** — after a record ₹1.41-lakh crore in April and a relatively tepid ₹1.02-lakh crore in May.
- Generally, the June revenue reflects transactions that occurred in May. With the second wave of the pandemic in full flourish and States enforcing rigorous restrictions on most activities in May, the numbers are not really surprising.
- However, as May GST compliance dates for smaller taxpayers were extended till early July, some of this revenue also reflects April's sales. Thus, the actual GST income attributable to May's economic activity would be lower than June's gross GST kitty.
- This is also reflected in the generation of e-way bills, which fell by a sharp 30% in May compared to April, while the sequential decline in revenues was not as steep.
- With caseloads declining over June and restrictions being pulled back gradually, revenues should pick up next month with 5.5 crore e-way bills generated in June from 3.99 crore in May.
- Despite the slowdown in May-June, **GST collections in the Q1 of 2021-22 have been healthier than pre-pandemic levels, confirming that this year's restrictions driven by States have inflicted less economic costs than the national lockdown at a few hours' notice, in 2020.**
- While the second wave setbacks have shaken up business and consumer sentiment, average monthly revenues of over ₹1-lakh crore — which Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has termed the 'new normal' for GST — could perhaps sustain through the year, if there is no dramatic resurgence of the pandemic and vaccinations are ramped up as promised.
- This should give some fiscal breathing room for the Centre and States, but neither can afford to sit back.
- **Structural corrections in the GST regime and the inclusion of petroleum and electricity may take longer, but there is enough that needs immediate attention.**

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- Industry has sought temporary rate cuts on some sectors to spur demand. It is plausible that a volume pick-up could make up for resultant revenue losses, just as an uptick in petrol consumption creates room for a revenue-neutral duty cut on fuels.
- The GST Council must be reconvened soon to take up such ideas to prod the economy's rebound, apart from holding the promised special session to discuss all the brewing concerns related to States' compensation.
- Delaying this will not only foster greater misgivings between the Centre and the States but also make it tough for States to plan their borrowings for the rest of the year.
- Clarity is also needed urgently on when the ₹1.58- lakh crore of back-to-back borrowings for States in lieu of compensation dues will begin. If the Centre plans to raise ₹5,000 crore a week, like it did last year, it will take roughly 32 weeks to complete such borrowings; so, any delay beyond early August may not be viable.



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