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1. The price of commercial cooking gas cylinders has been increased by Rs.195.50. The price of aviation fuel has been hiked by 8.56 percent.

(i) International crude oil prices have risen as the conflict involving Iran, Israel, and the United States continues into its second month. Consequently, the price of commercial cooking gas cylinders has been increased by Rs.195.50. Following this hike, a 19-kg commercial cooking gas cylinder is now being sold for Rs.2,078.50 in Delhi. This marks a second price hike; previously, on March 1st, the price of a 19-kg commercial cylinder had been raised by Rs.114.50.

(ii) Aviation Fuel Price Hike:

- For international airlines, the price of aviation fuel effectively doubled, with one kilolitre being sold for Rs.2.07 lakh. However, for domestic airlines, the price of aviation fuel was increased by only Rs.8,289 per kilolitre (an 8.56 percent hike).
- As a result, one kilolitre of aviation fuel is now being sold for Rs.1,04,927 in Delhi. Last month, the price stood at Rs.96,638.

(iii) Airfare Increase:

- Following the rise in fuel prices, IndiGo Airlines has announced that it will levy a "fuel charge" ranging from Rs.275 to Rs.10,000, in addition to its standard ticket fares. The airline, which had previously been collecting a fuel surcharge ranging from Rs.425 to Rs.2,300 since March 14th, has now further increased this fee. Consequently, ticket prices for the airline's flights—both for domestic travel within India and for international destinations—are set to rise.

(iv) No Change in Domestic LPG Cylinder Prices:

- The price of the 14.2 kg domestic cooking gas cylinder, which was hiked by Rs.60 on March 7th, remains unchanged. In Delhi, its price stands at Rs.913.
- In Delhi, petrol is being sold at Rs.94.72 per litre, and diesel at Rs.87.62 per litre.
- In March of last year, the prices of petrol and diesel were reduced by Rs.2 per litre; these prices have remained unchanged since then.

(v) How are Fuel Prices Determined?

- Based on international benchmarks and currency exchange rates, public sector undertakings—namely Indian Oil, Bharat Petroleum, and Hindustan Petroleum—determine the prices of LPG and aviation fuel on the first day of every month.
- For the first time in history, the price of a kilolitre of aviation fuel has crossed the Rs.2 lakh mark. Prior to this, the highest recorded price hike occurred in 2022, at the onset of the Ukraine war, when the price of a kilolitre of aviation fuel exceeded Rs.1.1 lakh.

2. The first phase of the 2027 Census has commenced in the country. On the inaugural day, approximately 55,000 households submitted their details. In this regard, a press release issued by the Union Ministry of Home Affairs stated the following:

(i) As the first phase of the Census, the process of House-listing and Housing Census has been initiated.

(ii) Through this census, for the first time in the country, data collection is being undertaken digitally, alongside a provision allowing citizens to voluntarily register their family details online.

(iii) The census officially began after the President, Smt. Droupadi Murmu, became the first individual to complete her details online.

(iv) Similarly, Vice President C.P. Radhakrishnan, Prime Minister Modi, and Union Home Minister Amit Shah also completed their census details online.

(v) Currently, the facility for citizens to voluntarily submit their census details online has been activated in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Goa, Karnataka, Lakshadweep, Mizoram, Odisha, Sikkim, the Cantonment Boards in Delhi, and the New Delhi Municipal Council areas.

(vi) In these states and Union Territories, approximately 55,000 households submitted their details on the very first day. In these regions, the online submission of details by citizens is scheduled to take place from April 1 to April 15, while the House-listing and Housing Census operations are slated for the period between April 16 and May 15.

(vii) It has been affirmed that the information collected under the provisions of the Census Act, 1948, will be kept confidential.

3. A bill providing for the legal recognition of Amaravati as the sole capital of Andhra Pradesh was passed in the Lok Sabha (the Lower House of Parliament) on Wednesday. The Congress, BJP, and Telugu Desam parties extended their support to the bill.

(i) Background:

- The unified state of Andhra Pradesh was bifurcated into two separate states: Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. At that time, the city of Hyderabad—which had served as the capital of the erstwhile Andhra Pradesh—was designated as the capital of the newly formed state of Telangana. Simultaneously, it was announced that Amaravati would serve as the capital of Andhra Pradesh. However, the YSR Congress Government, which was in power in Andhra Pradesh from 2019 to 2024, subsequently proposed a policy of having three capitals for the state.
- Following its victory in the 2024 elections and the subsequent formation of a new Government, the Telugu Desam Party reinstated Amaravati as the capital. A bill pertaining to this matter was subsequently introduced in Parliament. With the Lok Sabha having now accorded its approval to this bill, it must next secure the approval of the Rajya Sabha (the Upper House). Once approved by the Upper House, the bill will be forwarded to the President of India for assent. Upon receiving the President's assent, Amaravati will receive legal recognition as the capital of Andhra Pradesh, effective from June 2, 2024.

4. Adani Ports, India's largest private sector port operator, has set a new record by handling 500 million tonnes of cargo.

(i) Having commenced its journey in 1998 with just a single port, the company has now expanded its operations to encompass 19 ports and terminals across India and abroad.

(ii) While it took the company 16 years to reach its initial milestone of handling 100 million tonnes, it subsequently achieved successive 100-million-tonne targets within remarkably short periods.

(iii) Currently, Adani Ports has evolved beyond being merely a port management entity; it has transformed into a comprehensive logistics enterprise, integrating railways, road transport, warehousing facilities, and cargo terminals.

(iv) To facilitate connectivity across 95 percent of India's hinterland, the company currently manages 15 domestic ports, 4 international ports, and 12 multi-modal logistics parks.

(v) A Mega Target by 2030:

- Adani Ports, which currently commands a share of approximately 28 percent of India's total port trade, possesses the capacity to handle 630 million tonnes of cargo annually.
- Building upon this momentum, the company is now advancing towards a mega-target of handling 1 billion tonnes of cargo by the year 2030.

5. Taking into account the trade disruptions caused by the conflict in the Middle East, the Central Government has reduced the customs duty applicable to goods manufactured within Special Economic Zones (SEZs) and sold in the domestic market.

(i) The Union Ministry of Finance recently issued an official notification regarding this measure. It has been stated that this concession will remain in force throughout the current financial year.

(ii) Under the prevailing circumstances, instead of the standard customs duty rates typically levied on goods entering the Indian market from SEZ zones, only concessional duty rates ranging from 5% to 12.5% will henceforth be collected.

(iii) The Central Government has provided this temporary relief to mitigate the supply chain disruptions caused by international tensions and to help domestic manufacturers maintain their competitive edge in the market.

(iv) However, this tax concession does not apply to all SEZ units. A specific condition has been stipulated, limiting this benefit exclusively to those units that had commenced commercial production on or before March 31, 2025.

(v) For new production units established after this date, the previous tax rates will continue to apply. This deadline set by the Government is expected to serve as an interim incentive for eligible, established units.

(vi) Special Economic Zones are designated industrial areas specifically created to boost exports, attract foreign investment, and generate employment opportunities.

(vii) As of last year, approximately 280 SEZ zones were operational across India. In particular, these zones play a pivotal role in the IT and manufacturing sectors within the states of Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Telangana, and Andhra Pradesh.

6. Four-time champions Italy bowed out in disappointment after failing to qualify for the 2026 FIFA World Cup. Meanwhile, Sweden, Bosnia, Iraq, and Congo successfully qualified for the tournament.

(i) The World Cup tournament is set to take place across the United States, Mexico, and Canada. The final round of qualifying matches for this tournament—which will feature a total of 48 participating teams—have now concluded.

(ii) In a qualifying match held in Mexico, the Iraqi national team secured a 2–1 victory, thereby qualifying for the World Cup for the first time in 40 years. Iraq became the final—and 48th—team to secure a spot in the tournament. Despite the severe impact of ongoing conflicts in West Asia, the team delivered a magnificent performance to clinch this victory. This marks Iraq's first qualification since 1986.

(iii) The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DR Congo)—an African nation—has qualified for the World Cup for the first time in 52 years.

7. In the first phase, Israel has delivered 2,000 Light Machine Guns to India.

(i) While India plans to procure a total of 41,000 guns, Israel Weapon Industries (IWI)—through the Adani Group's subsidiary, PLR Systems—has delivered the first batch of 2,000 Light Machine Guns.

(ii) Furthermore, IWI stated that an additional 4,000 guns would be delivered by the end of this year. A press release issued by the company regarding this matter further noted the following:

- The 'Negev' guns delivered to India are 7.62mm caliber weapons, ranking among the lightest machine guns available. Featuring both semi-automatic and fully automatic firing modes, these guns are currently utilized by the Israeli military.
- They are designed to strike targets with exceptional precision. It was further stated that these guns can be mounted on helicopters, vehicles, and warships to engage targets.
- An agreement aimed at enhancing defense cooperation between India and Israel was signed in November of last year. As part of this initiative, PLR Systems has also secured a contract to supply 170,000 guns intended for use in close-quarter combat scenarios. In the initial phase of this specific contract, 18,000 guns are scheduled to be delivered by the end of this year.
- PLR Systems holds the distinction of being the first private sector company in India to manufacture small arms.

8. Reports suggest that the Parliamentary Budget Session is likely to be extended to facilitate the introduction of a bill aimed at increasing the number of Lok Sabha constituencies to 816.

(i) It is reported that the Central Government plans to introduce a bill in Parliament with the objective of increasing the number of Lok Sabha constituencies to 816, thereby reserving 33 percent—specifically 273 constituencies—for women.

(ii) Consequently, reports indicate that the Parliamentary Budget Session, which was originally scheduled to conclude on Thursday (April 2), is set to be extended by two or three days.

9. President Droupadi Murmu gave her assent to a legislative amendment bill that provides for the removal of the provision allowing transgender persons to self-identify their gender.

(i) Following this, the Union Ministry of Law issued a notification declaring that this Act came into force on March 30.

(ii) The Central Government introduced the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Amendment Bill, 2026, with the objective of providing a precise definition for the term "transgender persons" (transgender women and men), and of enhancing the penalties for crimes committed against them so as to reflect the severity of such offenses.

(iii) Under the 2019 Act, crimes committed against transgender persons were punishable by a maximum

imprisonment of two years. However, the current bill provides for a maximum imprisonment of 14 years, in addition to a fine.

(iv) This bill—which removes the provision for self-identification of gender by transgender persons and mandates the submission of appropriate medical evidence—was passed in the Lok Sabha on March 24. Subsequently, having been passed in the Rajya Sabha on March 25, it received the President's assent on March 30.

(v) It is noteworthy that this legislative amendment bill was passed amidst strong opposition from the opposition parties.

10. Vice President C.P. Radhakrishnan appealed to the public to cooperate with the Central Government's census efforts by completing the 2027 Census self-enumeration forms online.

(i) In connection with the census, Mr. Mrutyunjay Kumar Narayan, Registrar General and Census Commissioner of India, and Mr. Viswajit Das, Deputy Director General of the Office of the Registrar General of India, met with Vice President C.P. Radhakrishnan at his official residence in Delhi.

(ii) During the meeting, the Vice President completed the online self-enumeration form for the 2027 Census. The 2027 Census is being conducted in alignment with the Central Government's 'Digital India' initiative.

11. Delhi Air Pollution :-

(i) Chronological and Administrative Context :-

- Initial Government measures to control air pollution began in 1980 yet Delhi residents still lack clean air to breathe.
- The Supreme Court established a monitoring committee in October 2020 led by retired Justice Madan B. Lokur to oversee pollution control efforts.
- The President of India established the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) in April 2021 to implement strategies for Delhi and the National Capital Region (NCR).
- While international cities like London and Beijing reduced pollution by 20% to 40% through strict action, Delhi continues to face severe levels.

(ii) Factual Scientific Data :-

- PM 2.5 Particles: These are particles smaller than 2.5 microns, which is 25 times thinner than a human hair; they travel deep into the lungs and enter the bloodstream.
- Safety Limits: The World Health Organization (WHO) sets the safe limit at 5 micrograms per cubic meter.
- Delhi's Toxicity: The average concentration in Delhi ranges from 110 to 130 micrograms, spiking dangerously to 500 micrograms during winter months.

(iii) Causes of Pollution :-

- Vehicular Emissions: Delhi has between 1.25 crore and 1.30 crore vehicles emitting Nitrogen Oxide and Carbon Dioxide.
- Industrial Output: Approximately 25,000 small industries in Delhi release thousands of tons of PM 2.5 and PM 10 annually.

- Road and Construction Dust: Construction activity and dusty roads contribute 1.10 lakh to 1.45 lakh tons of PM 10 particles every year.
- Crop Residue Burning: Farmers in Punjab, Haryana, and Western UP burn 4.4 to 6.2 million tons of agricultural waste.
- Firecrackers: During festivals, 8,000 to 10,000 tons of firecrackers are exploded, releasing heavy smoke.
- Household Factors: Smoke from cooking fuels, incense sticks, and tobacco use increases indoor air toxicity.
- Waste and Sewage: The 302 crore liters of wastewater generated daily in Delhi releases toxic gases like Hydrogen Sulfide, Ammonia, and Methane.

(iv) Consequences of Pollution :-

- Air pollution causes approximately 30,000 premature deaths annually in Delhi alone; across India, the figure is 17 lakh, and globally it is 70 lakh.
- Chronic exposure increases the incidence of Asthma and heart diseases by 20% to 30%, with children and the elderly being the most vulnerable.

(v) Steps Taken and Proposed Solutions :-

- Setting up specialized commissions (CAQM) and monitoring committees to enforce regulations.
- Promoting Electric Vehicles (EVs), phasing out old vehicles, and significantly improving public transport infrastructure.
- Installing modern filters like Electrostatic Precipitators can reduce industrial smoke by 85% to 95%.
- Using mechanical road sweepers and sprinkling water can reduce road dust by 30% to 50%.
- Promoting "No-till" farming (using machines for direct seeding) to avoid burning waste, and using crop residue for power generation or mushroom cultivation.
- Enforcing the use of only "Green Firecrackers" and raising public awareness about their impact.
- A mature tree absorbs 20–25 kg of CO₂ annually; however, to neutralize Delhi's vehicular output, 90 crore trees would be needed, making large-scale planting a necessary supplementary measure.
- Purifying all wastewater to stop the release of toxic gases into the atmosphere.