

# KSG:NEWSPAPER CRUX

11<sup>TH</sup> MARCH, 2021

## NEWSPAPER HIGHLIGHTS

- The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Education has recommended that all government schools start providing free breakfast in the coming academic year as part of an expansion of the midday meal scheme envisaged by the National Education Policy. However, Education Ministry officials say a severe funding crunch is likely to delay the initiative.
- The country's biggest floating solar power plant till date, by generation capacity, which is being developed by the NTPC in the reservoir of its thermal plant at Ramagundam in Peddapalli district, Telangana, is set to be commissioned by May-June next.
- For the third day in a row, both Houses of Parliament could barely do any business, with the government refusing to concede the Opposition's demand of holding a debate on the farmers' agitation.
- The Kerala High Court on Wednesday restrained the Centre from taking coercive action against Live Law Media Private Ltd., which owns a legal news portal, for not complying with Part III of the new IT (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021.
- The Supreme Court asked the government to respond to a plea alleging discrimination against women by barring them from taking the exam for admission to the prestigious National Defence Academy and the Naval Academy.
- Manipur Chief minister N. Biren Singh said that schools may be arranged by the State government for "refugees from Myanmar," but since it was a bilateral issue, they were awaiting directions from the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA).
- American Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin will visit India from March 19 to 21 of his maiden visit abroad.

## INDEPENDENT ENVIRONMENT REGULATOR

1. Supreme Court (SC) asked the government **to explain the reasons for not setting up an "Independent Environment Regulator" to oversee green clearances.**
2. SC had ordered the setting up of a national environment regulatory body under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986 to ensure independent oversight of green clearances way back in Lafarge Umiam Mining Private Limited v. Union of India case (2011), commonly known as the Lafarge mining case.
3. The regulator will carry out independent, objective and transparent appraisal and approval of projects for environmental clearances.
4. It will also **monitor the implementation of the conditions laid down in the clearances and impose penalties on polluters.** While exercising such powers, the regulator will ensure the National Forest Policy, 1988 is duly implemented.

## RATIONALISATION OF RAILWAY FARES

1. The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Railways has suggested rationalisation of both freight and passenger fares.
2. Social Service Obligations: The losses incurred by the railways in passenger services purportedly due to the social service obligations which include pricing tickets at fares lower than costs and passenger concessions.
3. Committee's Suggestions: **Revisiting social service obligations and resuming services suspended during covid.** Adjust Passengers Fares: Undertake "prudent adjustment" of passenger fares to reduce the burden on freight segments.
4. Make Fares Demand-cum-Market Driven: **Both passenger fares and freight rates have to be demand-cum-market driven and fixed differently for different segments.**

## GROUP OF MINISTERS: MEDIA STRATEGY

1. The Editors Guild of India flagged the Group of Ministers (GoM) report on the government's media strategy as an example of the government's "increasingly draconian attitude" towards any criticism.
2. The Editors Guild was founded in 1978 with the twin objectives of protecting press freedom and for raising the standards of editorial leadership of newspapers and magazines.
3. Recommendations from Group of Ministers (GoM) Report on Media Strategy: **Identifying and engaging journalists - who had lost jobs but have been "supportive or neutral" to the present government** - in various ministries so that their services could be used to project the government's image positively.
4. Government **should have an increased engagement with journalism schools** as part of its long-term strategy since present students are future journalists.

## PLACES IN NEWS

1. **Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands**-These Islands have been an object of territorial disputes between China and Japan. New report highlights increased Chinese activity in the region.
2. **Mongla Port, Bangladesh**-It is the second largest sea port in Bangladesh. India and Bangladesh had signed MoU on the use of Chattogram and Mongla ports in 2015.
3. It envisaged transit of goods from mongla port to north eastern states of India through waterways, roads and railways.