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GSP Withdrawal

Why in News

The US has announced that it intends to “terminate” India’s designation as a beneficiary of its Generalized System of Preferences (GSP).

In Brief

What is GSP programme

- The GSP, the largest and oldest US trade preference programme, allows duty-free entry for over 3,000 products from designated beneficiary countries. It was instituted on January 1, 1976, and authorised under the US Trade Act of 1974.
- India has been the biggest beneficiary of the GSP regime and accounted for over a quarter of the goods that got duty-free access into the US in 2017.
- Exports to the US from India under GSP — at \$5.58 billion — were over 12% of India’s total goods exports of \$45.2 billion to the US that year. The US goods trade deficit with India was \$22.9 billion in 2017.

Indian Exports under GSP

INDIAN EXPORTS UNDER GSP

PRODUCT	VALUE (US\$)
Organic chemicals	1402.6 mn
Vehicle parts, accessories	1040.5mn
Furniture, household goods	591.5mn
Electrical apparatus	461.1 mn
Stone, sand, cement	410.5 mn
Bauxite and aluminum	359.1 mn
Iron or steel mill products	245.9 mn
Plastic materials	188.7
Wood, glass, plastic	60.1 mn
Synthetic rubber	34.3 mn
Nuclear fuel materials	6.3 mn
TV and video equipment	4.1 mn

EXPORTS TO THE US UNDER GSP (\$ BILLION)

	2015	2016	2017
Total GSP imports into US	17.54	18.66	20.77
Exports from India under GSP	4.58	4.68	5.58

(Source: US Dept of Commerce)

Possible impact

- India’s Department of Commerce feels the impact is “minimal”, given that Indian exporters were only receiving duty-free benefits of \$190 million on the country’s overall GSP-related trade of \$5.6 billion.
- Some experts feel the move will not have a major impact on India also because it has been diversifying its market in the Latin American and the African region and its trade with countries of the Global South has also been expanding at a “very competitive pace”.
- At the same time, the move could hit Indian exporters if it gives an edge to competitors in its top export categories to the US. The amount of price advantage India has versus competitor countries and what happens to their GSP privileges will determine the extent to which India’s exports will be impacted

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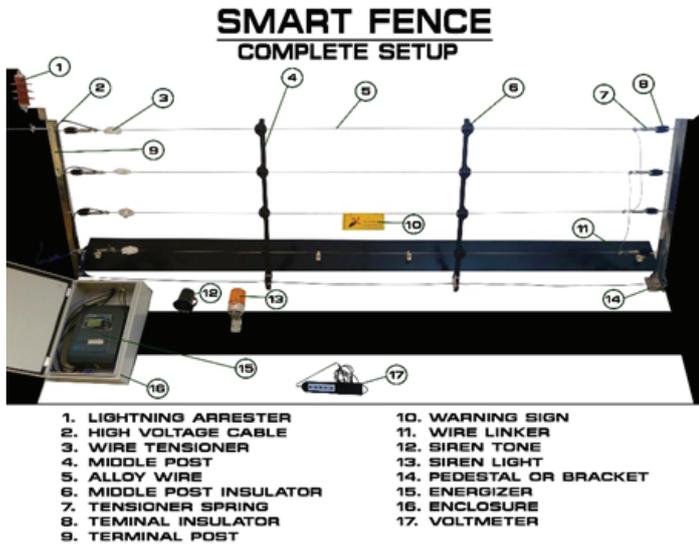
Smart Fence

Why in News:

Assam shares a 263 km border with Bangladesh. Much of the



border was fenced, but a 61 km stretch in Dhubri district remained open owing to the terrain dictated by the Brahmaputra. This stretch is where the vast Brahmaputra and its numerous channels with chars (sandbars) in between flow into Bangladesh. Infiltrators, cattle smugglers and others invariably took advantage of the difficulty in keeping vigil along this stretch, even on speedboats.



In Brief

Difference between Barbed Fencing, Smart Fence & Comprehensive Integrated Border Management System

- **Barbed Fence** – Refers to the securing of the border with physical fences that obstruct infiltration.
- **Smart Fence** – The smart fences have an addition of electronic systems to the barbed wire, which helps in detecting movement along the border.
- **CIBMS** – Lastly, when one cannot have a physical border security system due to the geographical reason, CIBMS is being used. CIBMS uses technology driven by sensors to detect any form of movement in the water, on the land surface and in the air.

About the Current Fence

- Current Fence Comprises of microwave communication, optical fibre cables, cameras, and an intrusion detection device, this system is called BOLD-QIT (Border Electronically Dominated QRT Interception Technique) and was established under the Comprehensive Integrated Border Management System.

CCR5 Delta 32

Why in News:

For just the second time since the global epidemic began, a patient appears to have been cured of infection with HIV, the virus that causes AIDS.

In Brief:

- This is the second Patient to be cured of HIV AIDS
- Both milestones resulted from bone-marrow transplants given to infected patients. But the transplants were intended to treat cancer in the patients, not HIV.
- The transplants were from a donor with a mutation in a protein called CCR5, which rests on the surface of certain immune cells. HIV uses the protein to enter those cells but cannot latch on to the mutated version.
- CCR5 is the protein that He Jiankui, a scientist in China, claimed to have modified with gene editing in at least two children, in an attempt to make them resistant to HIV — an experiment that set off international condemnation.

About CCR5-Delta 32 Mutation

- The remarkable research breakthrough that appears to have cured the

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anonymous “London Patient” of HIV is based on a stem cell transplant involving CCR5-delta 32 homozygous donor cells.

- This is the same treatment that cured Timothy Ray Brown, known as the “Berlin Patient” when he received two stem cell transplants in 2007 and 2008.
- HIV uses the CCR5 protein to enter immune cells, but it can’t latch on to cells that carry the delta 32 mutation. IciStem, a consortium of European scientists studying stem cell transplants to treat HIV infection, has a database of 22,000 donors with this HIV-resistant mutation.
- About 1% of people of Northern European descent, mainly Swedes, are born with a mutation known as CCR5-delta 32, which “locks ‘the door’ which prevents HIV from entering into the cell.
- This is only going to work if someone has a virus that really only uses CCR5 for entry. Patient would still be vulnerable to a form of HIV called X4, which employs a different protein, CXCR4, to enter cells.

Brown’s Case

- Dr Hütter put Brown through an allogeneic stem cell transplant, which involved replacing his immune system with donor hematopoietic stem cells (usually found in bone marrow) so that his immune system could be regenerated, with no malignant cells. Importantly however, the donor he chose carried what is called a CCR5-delta 32 mutation.

Form 26

Why in News

Law Ministry made it mandatory for election candidates to reveal their income-tax returns of the last five years, as well as the details of their offshore assets. This was done by amending Form 26, after the Election Commission of India wrote to the Ministry

In Brief:

What is Form 26?

- A candidate in an election is required to file an affidavit called Form 26 that furnishes information on her assets, liabilities, educational qualifications, criminal antecedents (convictions and all pending cases) and public dues, if any.
- The affidavit has to be filed along with the nomination papers and should be sworn before an Oath Commissioner or Magistrate of the First Class or before a Notary Public.

What has changed?

- Earlier, a candidate had to only declare the last I-T return (for self, spouse and dependents). Details of foreign assets were not sought.
- Offshore assets, as per the notification, means “details of all deposits or investments in foreign banks and any other body or institution abroad and details of all assets and liabilities in foreign countries”.
- It is now mandatory for candidates to reveal their own income-tax returns of the last five years rather than only one, and the details of offshore assets, as well as the same details for their spouse, members of the Hindu Undivided Family (if the candidate is a karta or coparcener), and dependents.

Objective

- The objective behind introducing Form 26 was that it would help voters make an informed decision. The affidavit would make them aware of the criminal activities of a candidate, which could help prevent people with questionable

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backgrounds from being elected to an Assembly or Parliament. With the recent amendment, voters will know the extent to which a serving MP's income grew during his five years in power.

What happens if a candidate lies in an affidavit?

- A candidate is expected to file a complete affidavit. Leaving a few columns blank can render the affidavit “nugatory”. It is the responsibility of the Returning Officer (RO) to check whether Form 26 has been completed; the nomination paper can be rejected if the candidate fails to fill it in full.
- If it is alleged that a candidate has suppressed information or lied in her affidavit, the complainant can seek an inquiry through an election petition. If the court finds the affidavit false, the candidate's election can be declared void.
- The current penalty for lying in an affidavit is imprisonment up to six months, or fine, or both. In May 2018, the EC had asked the government to make the filing of a false affidavit a “corrupt practice” under the election law, which would make the candidate liable for disqualification for up to six years. But nothing has been done by the government on this front.



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