

10 APRIL 2019**Centre defies SC order on CIC appointments****In News:**

The Centre has denied a Right to Information (RTI) request for details of the ongoing recruitment process for four vacancies in the Central Information Commission (CIC), despite a recent Supreme Court order mandating that such information be made public.

In Brief:

1. To Note: The CIC is the RTI Act's highest appellate body.
2. "The judgment of the Honourable Supreme Court given in WP No. 436 of 2018 is under consideration of the department," according to the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) in its reply to RTI activist Anjali Bhardwaj's request for information on the number, names and particulars of applicants, the process being followed to short-list them, and any search committee that has been constituted to fill these vacancies.

The SC's Order:

In an interim order as well as in its final order in the case the SC had directed the Centre and States to pro-actively disclose all information regarding the recruitment advertisement, the particulars of the applicants, the search and selection committees and the criteria for short-listing candidates on their websites.

About the CIC:**How is Central Information Commission constituted?**

1. Under the provision of Section-12 of RTI Act 2005 the Central Government shall, by notification in the Official Gazette, constitute a body to be known as the Central Information Commission.

Composition:

The Central Information Commission shall consist of the Chief Information Commissioner (CIC) and such number of Central Information Commissioners not exceeding 10 as may be deemed necessary.

What is the eligibility criteria and what is the process of appointment of CIC/IC?

Section 12(3) of the RTI Act 2005 provides as follows.

The Chief Information Commissioner and Information Commissioners shall be appointed by the President on the recommendation of a committee consisting of

1. The Prime Minister, who shall be the Chairperson of the committee.
2. The Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha.
3. A Union Cabinet Minister to be nominated by the Prime Minister.

Who can be CIC and ICs?

Section 12(5) of the RTI Act 2005 provides that the Chief Information Commissioner and Information Commissioners shall be persons of eminence in public life with wide knowledge and experience in law, science and technology, social service, management, journalism, mass media or administration and governance.

Note

Section 12(6) of the RTI Act 2005 provides that Chief Information Commissioner or an Information Commissioner shall not be a Member of Parliament or Member of the Legislature of any State or Union Territory as the case may be, or hold any other office of profit or connected with any political party or carrying on any business or pursuing any profession.

CIC- What is the term of office and other service conditions?

Section 13 of the RTI Act 2005 provides that the Chief Information Commissioner shall hold office for a term of five years from the date on which he enters upon his office and shall not be eligible for reappointment.

Section 13(5)(a) of the RTI Act 2005 provides that the salaries and allowances payable to and other terms and conditions of service of the Chief Information Commissioner shall be the same as that of the Chief Election Commissioner.

IC's - What is the term of office and other service conditions?

1. Section 13(2) of the RTI Act 2005 provides that the Information Commissioner shall hold office for a term of five years from the date on which he enters upon his office and shall not be eligible for reappointment as such Information Commissioners provided.

2. Provided that every Information Commissioner shall on vacating his office under this sub-section be eligible for appointment as the Chief Information Commissioner in the manner specified in sub-section (3) of section 12 of the RTI Act 2005:

3. Provided further that where the Information Commissioner is appointed as the Chief Information Commissioner, his term of office shall not be more than five years in aggregate as the Information Commissioner and the Chief Information Commissioner.

4. Section 13(5)(b) of the RTI Act 2005 provides that the salaries and allowances payable to and other terms and conditions of service of an Information Commissioner shall be the same as that of an Election Commissioner.

Atal Ranking Of Institutions On Innovation Achievements (ARRIA)

Why in news?

- IIT Madras also emerged as the 'Top innovative Institution' in the country in the maiden edition of the Atal Ranking of Institutions on Innovation Achievements (ARRIA), launched by the Innovation Cell of MHRD in 2018, bagging the Rank number 1 in Government Institutions category.
- Vellore Institute of Technology has secured the top spot among private institutions in the ARRIA.

About ARRIA:

- Atal Ranking of Institutions on Innovation Achievements (ARRIA) is an initiative of Ministry of Human Resource Development.
- Its purpose is to systematically rank all major higher educational institutions and universities in India on indicators related to "Innovation and Entrepreneurship Development" amongst students and faculties.
- ARRIA ranking will certainly inspire Indian institutions to reorient their mind-set and build ecosystems to encourage high quality research, innovation and entrepreneurship.



Note



Sri Lanka opens China-funded railway line

In News:

The Sri Lankan government officially opened a railway line constructed between Matara and Beliatta in the southern part of the island country.

In Brief:

This railway line is the first railway project undertaken by Chinese enterprises in the island country under the Belt and Road Initiative, also that it is the first newly built railway line since Sri Lanka's independence in 1948.

The Matara-Beliatta railway line includes the country's longest and second-longest railway bridges of 1.5 km and 1.04 km, respectively.



A train stops at the Matara Railway Station, preparing to depart for Beliatta in Sri Lanka on Monday. cna.lk/ / www.cna.lk/

Rise of Chinese Influence in Sri Lanka

With the end of the civil war, India is now slowly losing its momentum and is now on the brink of losing Sri Lanka to China.

Geopolitical importance of Sri Lanka

The Sri Lanka position is strategically location at the center of the Indian Ocean region.

Chinese presence in Sri Lanka

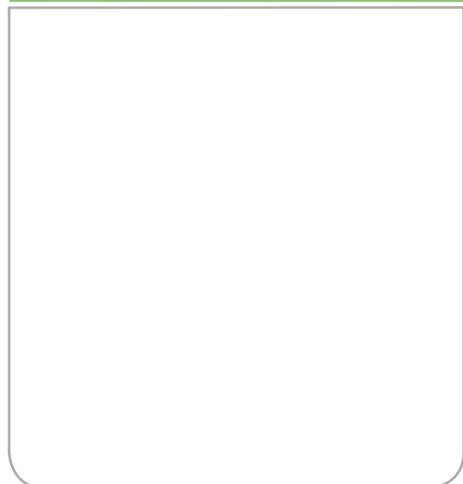


- Hambantota port is located right in middle of vital energy supply lines in Indian Ocean, connecting Middle East and East Asia.
- Sri Lanka has signed a US \$1.1 billion deal to sell a 70% stake of the strategic Hambantota deep-sea port to China.
- Hambantota port is a deep-water port in the southern tip of Sri Lanka.
- Under the 99-year lease agreement, China will invest up to US \$1.1 billion in the port and marine-related activities.
- The deal had fanned concerns of countries with competing strategic interests with China, particularly India and US.
- Local residents of Hambantota are also protesting selling of “national assets to foreign entities” leading to violent clashes.

Advantages to China:

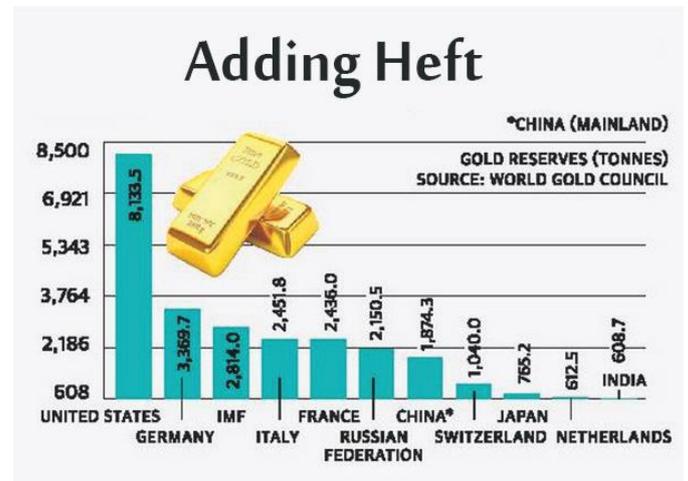
- The port is expected to play a key role in China's Belt and Road initiative (BRI), which will link ports and roads between China and Europe.
- It is also considered that, this deal gives an advantage to China in the bunkering business, which provides fuel to ships.

Note



India's gold reserves increase marginally

- According to the latest data from the World Gold Council (WGC), India has marginally increased its gold holding in February while maintaining the tenth position among countries in terms of yellow metal reserves.
- India added 1.7 tonnes in February while most other countries, barring Russia and China, saw their reserves unchanged in the recent past.
- India had total gold reserves of 608.7 tonnes in February, marginally up from the previous month's holding of 607 tonnes.
- Pakistan has 64.6 tonnes and is ranked 45 while Sri Lanka (19.9 tonnes) and Bangladesh (14 tonnes) are at 63rd and 66th positions.
- Nepal with 6.4 tonnes is at 82nd position.



IMF forecasts dip in global growth in 2019

In News:

India's growth projected to pick up from 7.1% last year to 7.3% this year and 7.5% in 2020

In Brief:

1. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has projected that global growth will be 3.3% in 2019, down from 3.6% in 2018 and 4% in 2017.
2. This lower projection is due to lower global expansion in the second half of 2018 caused by U.S.-China trade tensions, macroeconomic stress in Turkey and Argentina, tighter credit policies in China and financial tightening plus a normalisation of monetary policy in advanced economies.

'Robust consumption'

1. India's growth is projected to pick up (from 7.1% in 2018) to 7.3% in 2019 and 7.5% in 2020, "supported by the continued recovery of investment and robust consumption amid a more expansionary stance of monetary policy and some expected impetus from fiscal policy.
2. Nevertheless, reflecting the recent revision to the national account statistics that indicated somewhat softer underlying momentum, growth forecasts have been revised downward compared with October 2018 WEO by 0.1 percentage point for 2019 and 0.2 percentage point for 2020, respectively.
3. The IMF expects growth to pick up in the second half of the year driven by an accommodative policy stance in advanced economies, the prospects of easing of trade tensions between the U.S. and China and ramped up fiscal and monetary stimulus by China to counter the trade war's effects.
4. Global growth is therefore expected to return to 3.6%, but this is subject to a rebound in Argentina and Turkey and certain emerging market risks not manifesting. Brexit uncertainties and China's growth not being as high as expected (down from 6.6% in 2018 to 6.3% and 6.1%

Note



in 2019 and 2020 respectively) are risks that will impact these projections.

Moderation in expansion

1. Beyond 2020, global growth is expected to level out at 3.6% over the medium term, driven by a moderation in expansion in advanced countries (caused by weak productivity growth and slow labour force growth) and the stabilisation of emerging market expansion at 2020 levels.
2. Advanced economies are expected to slow down to 1.6% growth by 2022 and remain at that rate thereafter.
3. For emerging markets and developing countries, growth is expected to steady at 4.8% over the medium term and given that these groups are growing faster than advanced economies, their contribution to global growth is expected to increase from 76% to 85% over the next five years. However, there are “important differences” within emerging markets and developing economies.

For instance, China is expected to slow down to 5.5% by 2024 as it moves towards increasing private consumption and services and regulatory tightening. India’s growth is expected to stabilise at 7.75% over the medium term, driven by structural reforms and the easing of infrastructure bottlenecks.

4. In terms of policy priorities, the IMF has called for a “continued implementation of structural and financial sector reforms” in order to lower public debt and aid growth.
5. Specifically, it says a continued fiscal consolidation is needed to bring down public debt, strengthening goods and services tax compliance and lowering subsidies.
6. The report also notes “important steps” taken to speed up the resolution of Non Performing Assets (NPAs) and a simplified bankruptcy framework — measures that can be reinforced by stronger governance of public sector banks. The IMF also calls for laws around land reform to change, to expedite infrastructure development as well as changes to hiring and firing laws in order create jobs and “absorb the country’s large demographic dividend”.

China slowdown

1. Domestic regulations were tightened to constrain shadow financial intermediation, resulted in slower domestic investment, especially in infrastructure.
2. There was also weakened spending on consumer durables and automobiles, export orders fell as a result of the US-China trade actions, and growth fell to 6.0% in the second half of 2018, from 6.8% in the first half. China is projected to grow at 6.3% and 6.1% in 2019 and 2020 respectively.

TIT BITS:

DAVID MALPASS – An American economic analyst who recently became the President of World Bank.



Note

