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Institute of Research Based Learning & Competition

Current Affairs - 07 April 2025

UNIVERSITY GRANTS COMMISSION



The University Grants Commission (UGC) has notified the “Recognition and Grant of Equivalence to Qualifications Obtained from Foreign Educational Institutions Regulations, 2025”.

- These regulations were **finalised after public feedback** on the 2023 draft and aim to provide a **transparent, structured, and standardised process** for recognising **foreign academic qualifications**.
- This move aligns with the **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020**, which emphasises the **internationalisation of Indian higher education** and the need to **seamlessly integrate international students and returning Indian students** into India’s education and employment systems.

What are Equivalence Certificates?

- An **equivalence certificate** is an official document that **certifies a foreign qualification (degree/diploma/certificate)** as **equivalent to a corresponding Indian qualification**.
- These certificates are now to be issued by the **UGC**, replacing the previous system managed by the **Association of Indian Universities (AIU)**.

About the University Grants Commission (UGC)

Aspect	Details
Origin	Initiated based on the Sargeant Report 1944 , which recommended a University Grants Committee.
Formation year	First formed in 1945 , expanded in 1947 , restructured in 1948 under Dr. S. Radhakrishnan’s recommendation.

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Statutory status	Became a statutory body in 1956 , formally inaugurated in 1953 by Maulana Abul Kalam Azad .
Headquarters	Located in New Delhi .
Composition	Comprises a Chairman , Vice-Chairman , and 10 other members appointed by the Central Government .
Functions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Assess and allocate grants for universities. - Recommend improvements in higher education. - Assist in the implementation of reforms.

WORLD HEALTH DAY 2025



- World Health Day is observed on **April 07** every year.
- This day **marks the anniversary** of the **founding of the** World Health Organization (**WHO**) in **1948** and has been **celebrated since 1950**.
- **Each year**, World Health Day is used as an opportunity to draw attention to a **specific health topic** that affects people all over the world.
- By emphasizing one **particular theme every year**, World Health Day encourages governments, healthcare organisations, and individuals to work collectively toward improving health standards and access to healthcare.
- The **theme for World Health Day 2025** is '**Healthy beginnings, hopeful futures**.'
 - This year's theme will kick off a year-long campaign on **maternal and newborn health**.
 - This initiative will **encourage governments** and the healthcare sector to **intensify their actions** to eliminate preventable maternal and newborn deaths.

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- It will also focus on the long-term health and **well-being of women**.
- The campaign will aim to promote information and strategies that can help support healthy pregnancies and births, and **better postnatal health**.

HEALTH AND SANITATION AS THE PILLARS OF A HEALTHY INDIA

- **On World Health Day**, as the global community reflects on the foundations of human well-being, **India offers a transformative perspective: health and sanitation are inseparable.**
- Under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, **India has launched unprecedented nationwide movements in water and sanitation.**

Transformative Rural Missions: SBM and JJM

- **Swachh Bharat Mission**
 - **India's story of health transformation cannot be told without recognising the monumental achievements of SBM (Grameen) and JJM.**
 - These initiatives, **often misconstrued as simply providing toilets and tap water, are in fact emblematic of a deeper societal shift.**
 - Launched in 2014, the **SBM was envisioned as a Jan Andolan, a people's movement rooted in behavioural change.**
 - **By 2019, India declared itself Open Defecation Free (ODF), significantly ahead of the global Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6.2 deadline of 2030.**
- **Jal Jeevan Mission**
 - Building on the momentum of SBM, **the Jal Jeevan Mission was launched in 2019 with the aim of delivering clean drinking water to every rural household.**
 - This **initiative goes beyond infrastructure, it is a foundational investment in human potential.**

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- Research by Nobel Laureate Dr. Michael Kremer found that **universal tap water access could prevent 136,000 child deaths annually**, while WHO estimates suggest the potential to avert over 400,000 diarrhoeal deaths.
- The **mission has also had a transformative effect on gender roles**, saving 5.5 crore hours daily, time that was previously spent by women fetching water, and enabling increased female participation in agriculture and allied activities.

The Impact of India's Transformative Rural Missions

- According to the World Health Organisation, **over 300,000 diarrhoeal deaths were averted between 2014 and 2019**.
- Additionally, **children in non-ODF areas experienced 58% higher rates of wasting**, as noted by the Gates Foundation.
- UNICEF studies from 2017 highlight **improved safety and health, particularly for women**, with 93% reporting feeling more secure after gaining access to home toilets.
- The broader financial impact is equally significant, **with rural households saving approximately ₹50,000 annually in healthcare costs**.
- Moreover, **environmental benefits include significantly reduced groundwater contamination, contributing to long-term public health resilience**.

Conclusion

- As the world celebrates health on this special day, **India's example reminds us that the foundations of good health lie not just in hospitals or medicine, but in homes**, with access to clean water, safe sanitation, and empowered communities.
- Through SBM and JJM, India has demonstrated that **political will, community participation, and technological innovation can coalesce to transform public health**.
- As the nation continues its march towards a Viksit Bharat, its experiences, insights, and models stand as **valuable lessons for global cooperation and development**.
- India remains committed to sharing its journey and co-creating a **cleaner, healthier, and more resilient world**.

CORE GAPS IN INDIA'S START-UP PRIORITIES

Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal's remarks comparing the focus of Indian and Chinese start-ups have sparked a vital conversation.

While Indian start-ups largely concentrate on areas like online delivery and betting apps, Chinese counterparts are advancing in strategic sectors such as electric mobility and AI.

His comments underscore a deeper issue: despite being the world's third-largest start-up ecosystem, India's innovation priorities differ significantly from global leaders.

Food Delivery vs. Deep Tech: India-China Start-Up Divide

- Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal contrasts Indian and Chinese start-up ecosystems.
- Indian start-ups are largely focused on food delivery, instant groceries, influencer culture, and fantasy sports.
- Goyal questioned whether these ventures truly represent India's future potential.
- **The Chinese Model: Deep Tech and Global Innovation**
 - Chinese start-ups are focusing on advanced sectors such as electric vehicles (EVs), battery tech, semiconductors, AI, robotics, and logistics.
 - The minister highlighted this contrast to underscore India's missed opportunities in critical technologies.
- **Call for IP-Led Growth in India**
 - There is a need for India to develop its own intellectual property (IP).
 - India lacks significant IP in frontier sectors, especially when compared to China.
 - Government initiatives like the Design Linked Incentive (DLI) scheme for semiconductors aim to address this gap.
- **India's Technological Lag in Electric Mobility**
 - China leads in EV and battery technology, outpacing even Western companies.
 - India remains heavily dependent on Chinese innovations in this domain.

India's Growth in Domestic E-Commerce

- India has built major consumer-facing platforms like Flipkart, Zomato, Swiggy, Blinkit, Zepto, and Myntra.
- These firms leveraged increased internet access and urban discretionary spending.
- Many of them are publicly listed and dominate the Indian market.
- **Limited Global Reach of Indian Start-Ups**
 - Indian start-ups primarily serve the domestic market, which limits scalability.
 - Around 90% of India's population lacks spending power, posing growth challenges.
 - Global expansion is difficult due to strong existing competitors in international markets.

China's Lead in Deep Tech Start-Ups

- China has over 6,000 deep tech companies.
 - Deep tech involves the application of advanced scientific or engineering breakthroughs.
 - Focus areas include AI, biotechnology, quantum computing, robotics, aerospace, clean energy, and advanced materials.
 - These start-ups aim to solve complex, high-impact global problems.

UPI: A Recognised Innovation in Digital Payments

- India's Unified Payments Interface (UPI) has set a global standard in digital transactions.
- Initially driven by the government, it was later opened to private firms like PhonePe and Paytm.
- Despite its success, UPI remains free to use, making monetisation a challenge for service providers.

POLICE TORTURE AND UNACCOUNTABILITY IN INDIA

- A comprehensive study titled "**Status of Policing in India Report (SPIR) 2024**" was recently released by Common Cause (NGO), in collaboration with the Lokniti Programme of the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS).
- The report highlights **systemic issues of police violence, torture, and lack of accountability**, based on interactions with 8,276 police personnel across 17 states and Union Territories.

Understanding Torture - International and Indian Context:

- **Definition under UNCAT (1984):** Torture involves the intentional infliction of severe physical or mental pain by or at the behest of a public official, for purposes such as punishment, coercion, or discrimination.
- **India's position:** Signed the UN Convention Against Torture (UNCAT) in 1997, but **not ratified**, making it non-binding legally.

Structural Causes Behind Police Torture in India:

- **Colonial legacy** of policing.
- **Lack of accountability**
- **Political and bureaucratic pressure** for quick results.
- **Inadequate training and legal literacy.**
- **Public tolerance of extra-legal methods** due to delays in the criminal justice system.

Global Practices - A Comparative Perspective:

- **United States:** Brutal interrogation at Guantanamo Bay.
- **Iraq:** Torture at Abu Ghraib prison.
- **Russia, China, Pakistan:** Poor human rights records in custodial practices.

Recommendations and Way Forward:

- Enact a comprehensive **anti-torture law**.

- **Malimath Committee:** Suggested that confessions made before a senior police officer of the rank of Superintendent or above should be admissible in evidence with safeguards to prevent coercion.
- **The Law Commission of India (in its 69th Report (1977)):** Proposed introducing Section 26A in the Indian Evidence Act to make confessions before senior police officers admissible.
- **Ratify UNCAT.**
- **Implement Supreme Court directives** for insulating police from external pressures.
- Promote **professionalism, accountability, and human rights sensitivity** in policing.

Conclusion:

- The Common Cause-CSDS report **paints a sobering picture of the persistence of police torture** and the lack of institutional accountability in India.
- The findings reveal deep-rooted **structural and attitudinal issues** within the police force.
- Therefore, a **humane, rights-based, and professional police force** is not only essential for upholding the rule of law but also for rebuilding public trust in the criminal justice system.
- Addressing police torture is not just a legal or administrative imperative - it is a **moral and constitutional duty**.

HADEAN PROTOCRUST



A new international study led by Macquarie University, Australia, suggests that the chemical signatures attributed to plate tectonics were already present in the Hadean protocrust.

- The **Hadean protocrust** refers to the **earliest known crust** of the Earth—its **outermost solid layer**—that formed during the **Hadean aeon**, the planet's **first geologic era**, which began around **6 billion years ago**.

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- This period is named after ‘Hades’, the Greek god of the underworld, due to the extremely **hot, hostile, and unstable conditions** that prevailed on early Earth.

Geological conditions during the Hadean Aeon

- The Earth, within its **first 200 million years**, had a surface that was **partially molten**, with widespread **volcanic activity** and **constant meteorite bombardment** from space.
- During this time, the **magma ocean**—a vast reservoir of molten rock covering Earth’s surface—began to **cool gradually**.
- As the surface cooled, **early fragments of solid crust** began to form. These fragments were not stable and **often broke off**, while **new layers solidified**, creating a **flaky, unstable crustal layer**.
- Some **thicker segments** of this primitive crust eventually **consolidated into the first proto-continents**, floating on the underlying **asthenospheric mantle**—a **semi-fluid layer** extending up to **400 km beneath the surface**.

Birth of Plate Tectonics

- As these crustal plates **drifted across the mantle**, they began to **interact** in various ways: **colliding, sliding past, or subducting (diving under)** one another.
- These early **plate movements** laid the foundation for **plate tectonics**, a key process in shaping the Earth's geological features.
- Over time, these interactions left **distinct chemical signatures** in the Earth’s crust, enabling scientists to **reconstruct the history of tectonic activity**.