Macron to discuss stronger India-France defence ties

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India gets first tranche of Swiss account details under automatic exchange framework

The next exchange would take place in September 2020

India has received first tranche of details about financial accounts of its residents in Swiss banks a new automatic exchange of information framework between the two countries, marking a significant milestone in the fight against black money suspected to be stashed abroad.

India figures among 75 countries with which Switzerland’s Federal Tax Administration (FTA) has exchanged information on financial accounts within the framework of global standards on AEOI.

FTA spokesperson told PTI.

This is the first time that India has received details from Switzerland under the AEOI framework, which provides for exchange of information on financial accounts that currently active as well as accounts that were closed during 2018.

Part A—Preliminary Examination

Paper I - (200 marks) Duration: Two hours

• Current events of national and international importance.
• Indian and World Geography-Physical, Social, Economic Geography of India and the World.
• Indian Polity and Governance-Constitution, Political System, Panchayati Raj, Public Policy, Rights Issues, etc.
• Economic and Social Development-Sustainable Development, Poverty, Inclusion, Demographics, Social Sector Initiatives, etc.

Part B—Main Examination

PAPER-III

General Studies- II: Governance, Constitution, Polity, Social Justice and International relations.

• Important aspects of governance, transparency and accountability, e-governance- applications, models, successes, limitations, and potential; citizens charters, transparency & accountability and institutional and other measures.
• Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India’s interests.
• Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India’s interests, Indian diaspora.

PAPER-V

General Studies- IV: Ethics, Integrity and Aptitude

• Probit in Governance: Concept of public service; Philosophical basis of governance and probity; Information sharing and transparency in government, Right to Information, Codes of Ethics, Codes of Conduct, Citizen’s Charters, Work culture, Quality of service delivery, Utilization of public funds, challenges of corruption.

Civilspedia Team - Powered by Shankar IAS Academy
Automatic Exchange of Information (AEOI) framework; India and Switzerland

AEOI:

- Features of AEOI:
  - Exchange of financial account information
  - Participants get pre-agreed information annually
  - No specific request required

- Advantages:
  - More transparency
  - Govt to recover revenue - more tax
  - International cooperation to bring more transparency
  - Increase voluntary disclosures

- Based on Common Reporting Standards [CRS] - developed by OECD countries
  - To prevent offshore tax evasion

- India - Swiss AEOI agreement - Signed in 2016
  - Reciprocal sharing of tax matters since 2019
  - India received first tranche now

- Switzerland: a tax haven
  - Low taxation on foreign corporations and individuals
  - 'Secrecy' to account holders (Anonymity & numbered accounts)

- First tranche:
  - Active accounts
  - Accounts closed in 2018
 Significant Milestone: Fight against black money

* Other Measures by Government:
  1) Black Money (Undisclosed foreign income and Assets) and Imposition of Tax Act, 2015
  2) Demonetization - 2016
  3) Income declaration scheme
  4) PM - Griib Kalyan Yojana (PM-GKY)
Cement industry could see large financial gains by switching to plastic fuel source, says Cement Manufacturers Association president

The cement industry can reduce its fuel costs by as much as 20% or more by using single-use plastics as an alternative fuel source, Cement Manufacturers Association president “In the past, we have focussed on disposing of fly ash, which is the waste of power plants, and slag, which is the waste of steel plants,” Mr Singhi explained. “These are used as alternative fuels. A few cement plants have already started setting up some infrastructure so that they can dispose of plastic waste.”

The extremely high temperatures of the furnaces in cement plants allows the use of these alternative fuels because they get burned away without the release of any harmful contaminants or pollution.

“The model implemented in Europe and worldwide is for the polluter to pay,” Mr. Singhi said. “If India implements this scheme, then the producers of single-use plastics will pay us to dispose their waste. The cement industry should either get paid or the plastic should at least be free for us.”

“However, for a month or so we are not thinking on any financial impact,” he added. “But ultimately we are in the business of making profits and have responsibilities towards other stakeholders.”

The cement industry could replace as much as 15-20% of its fossil fuel usage by using single-use plastics, depending on the grade of the plastic. This means that — if it gets the plastic for free — then the cement industry stands to reduce its cost by at least 15-20%. If it gets paid for disposing the plastic, then the gain to the cement industry stands to be even larger.

**Part A—Preliminary Examination**

**Paper I - (200 marks)**

- Current events of national and international importance.
- General issues on Environmental ecology, Bio-diversity and Climate Change - that do not require subject specialization.

**Part B—Main Examination**

**PAPER-IV**

**General Studies-III: Technology, Economic Development, Bio diversity, Environment, Security and Disaster Management**

- Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment.
Context: Use of single use plastic as alternative fuel in cement industry

- About 6.60 lakh tonnes of plastic waste per annum

Ways to deal with plastic waste

- Land Filling
  - Filling low lying areas
  - Not a sustainable way
  - Accumulation of nano-plastic particles

- Recycling

- Bio-degradation
  - Giving second life
  - Recommendable
  - Efficiency depends on methods of collection, segregation and reuse, etc.

- Incineration
  - All types of plastic cannot be degraded
  - Used in cement industries
  - Combustion in the presence of oxygen at high temperature

Application of microorganisms
Other Examples:

* Fly Ash
  - by-product in thermal power plants
  - Fine powder; used in brick making

* Slag
  - also a by-product in Iron & Steel Industry
  - Contains metal sulfides and elemental metals
  - Used in metal smelting

Single Use Plastic Waste: As alternative fuel

* Alternative fuel in cement industry
* Fuel costs can be reduced about 20% or more
* Effective policy, dealing with challenges like plastic waste collection, segregation, transportation and use as alternative fuel.
Top 100 firms spent only 4% of CSR funds on women's economic empowerment, says UNDP report

Women comprise less than 10% of the permanent workforce of the majority of BSE 100 companies, says the report

Top 100 firms in the country spent a mere 4% of their total expenditure on corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities on women’s economic empowerment, according to a new report by United Nations Development Programme India prepared.

The study titled ‘Corporate Engagement in Women’s Economic Empowerment’ maps the efforts and initiatives of BSE 100 companies towards economic empowerment of women, identifies gaps and makes recommendations on how companies can work towards a more gender equitable India. The report has been prepared in partnership with a CSR consulting firm, Samhita.

It shows that the top 100 companies reported a total expenditure of ₹423.84 crore on women’s empowerment and ₹250.62 crore on their economic empowerment out of the total ₹6,314.30 crore spent on CSR activities in financial year 2017-2018. The average median per company was ₹1.97 crore.

Part B—Main Examination

PAPER-II

General Studies-I: Indian Heritage and Culture, History and Geography of the World and Society.

- Role of women and women’s organization, population and associated issues, poverty and developmental issues, urbanization, their problems and their remedies.
- Social empowerment, communalism, regionalism & secularism.

PAPER-III

General Studies-II: Governance, Constitution, Polity, Social Justice and International relations.

- Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States and the performance of these schemes; mechanisms, laws, institutions and Bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of these vulnerable sections.

PAPER-IV


- Inclusive growth and issues arising from it.
Corporate Engagement in Women's Economic Empowerment:

- Prepared by UNDP + Samhita
- Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)
  - Section 135 - Companies Act, 2013
  - Companies
    - networth ≥ 500 cr
    - turnover ≥ 1000 cr
    - net profit ≥ 5 cr
    - CSR - ≥ 2% of average net profits in last 3 years

Areas including etc.:
- Eradicating hunger
- Promotion of education
- Women's empowerment
- And poverty

- Report: Top 100 firms spent only 4% of their total CSR expenditure on women's economic empowerment!

- Gaps:
  1) Very less amount spent
  2) Bihar, Assam, Jharkhand - less female labour participation - little CSR intervention
  3) Lack of focus in all 3 stages of women's employment
  4) Women only 10% of permanent workforce
Suggestions:

- More comprehensive measures
  - More women employees
  - More women in leadership roles

- All stakeholders - a conducive ecosystem for women
  - entire life-cycle support
Fly ash leak from Madhya Pradesh’s NTPC plant spread to farmlands, claim villagers

A dyke of a fly ash pond at a power plant of the National Thermal Power Corporation (NTPC) in Singrauli district of Madhya Pradesh breached on Sunday evening, causing spillage in several acres of land.

Although it had led to environmental damage, there was no damage to human life, cattle and farms as the spillage occurred within the NTPC compound in Shahpur, said district Collector K.V.S. Choudary.

Preliminary assessment tells us that the breach may have been caused following excess rain, he said. "It has been raining for three-four days continuously. At this point, it's difficult to give an estimate of the volume of the spilled fly ash."

A team of the Pollution Control Board is visiting the site and collecting samples. It will impose a fine on the plant for environmental damage, he added.

All the plants in the district, including the three with the NTPC which have six dykes, had been asked to strengthen dykes by the district administration. "In the past, we met officials of plants and the Pollution Control Board to discuss the stability of dykes. We've repeatedly asked plants to check the strength of dykes," said Mr. Choudary

The height of the dyke was being increased when the breach occurred, he added.

The extent of the area affected has not been calculated yet, said Avijeet Kumar Ranjan, district Superintendent of Police, and there were no human settlements inside the compound.

Link in description box and comment section
Fly ash - by-product from burning pulverised coal - while burning - mineral impurities fuse in suspension - rises, cools & solidifies into spherical particles called fly ash
- consists of oxides of Silicon, aluminium, iron and calcium

Uses:
- Key component in cement-based products
  - Cement concretes, concrete blocks, cement-based bricks
- Manufacturing of tiles
- Construction of road embankments
- Development of low-lying areas
- Soil conditioner in agriculture

Health consequences
- Contain heavy metals including arsenic, lead, mercury, cadmium, etc...
  - if inhaled / drunk / eaten - can cause
    - cancer
    - affect nervous system
    - heart damage
    - lung disease
    - kidney disease
    - Reproductive problems
    - Birth defects
    - impaired bone growth in children
**News:**

- Madhya Pradesh - NTPC Plant - dyke collapsed - Fly ash spillage into Rihand Dam and nearby areas
  - Singrauli - one of the most important coal mining centres in India

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**Previous Year Question – Prelims (2015) (For Reference Only)**

Q. With reference to 'fly ash' produced by the power plants using coal as fuel, which of the following statements is/are correct?

1. Fly ash can be used in the production of bricks for building construction.
2. Fly ash can be used as a replacement for some of the Portland cement contents of concrete.
3. Fly ash is made up of silicon dioxide and calcium oxide only, and does not contain any toxic elements.

Select the correct answer using the codes given below.

- a) 1 and 2
- b) 2 only
- c) 1 and 3
- d) 3 only
Modi Xi summit at Mamallapuram shores

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping will be meeting at the coastal town of Mamallapuram near Chennai on October 11-13.

The historic coastal town of Mamallapuram on the scenic East Coast Road in Tamil Nadu is the venue for the second India-China informal summit between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping, scheduled to be held from October 11-13.

During the summit, besides holding talks, the leaders are likely to make a visit to the ancient monuments in the coastal town. The monuments there have been classified as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. During the first informal summit in Wuhan, the leaders had made a visit to the Hubei provincial museum.

Elaborate security arrangements will be in place around the hotel and roads which lead to the coastal town. The two leaders are likely to visit several monuments in Mamallapuram, including the Pancha Rathas, Shore Temple and Arjuna's Penance.

Mamallapuram, about 50 km from Chennai, was popularly known as "Seven Pagodas" to European travellers of the 16th century. It is known for its unparalleled works of architecture: rock-cut temples built by the Pallava rulers. The monuments can be grouped under four categories: rock-cut caves, monolithic structures, open air bas-reliefs and structural temples.

Link in description box and comment section

Part A—Preliminary Examination

Paper I - (200 marks) Duration : Two hours

- Current events of national and international importance.
- Indian and World Geography-Physical, Social, Economic Geography of India and the World.

Part B—Main Examination

PAPER-II

General Studies-I : Indian Heritage and Culture, History and Geography of the World and Society.

- Indian culture will cover the salient aspects of Art Forms, literature and Architecture from ancient to modern times.
Second Informal Summit - Scheduled to be held in Mamallapuram - October 11-13, 2019

Mamallapuram
- Coastal town
- Group of monuments - World Heritage Site in Mamallapuram (Cultural)
  - Rock-cut Caves
  - Monolithic Structures
  - Open air bas-reliefs
  - Structural temples
- Rock-cut rathas
- Rock-cut cave sanctuaries

Descent of the Ganges, Arjuna’s Penance, Seven Pagodas

- Once served as active seaport - extensive trade with Rome and other places
- Protected Monument/Site - under Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)
- Mamallapuram / Mahabalipuram Stone Sculpture -Gil Tag - 2017
Q1. Consider the following statements with reference to “Automatic Exchange of Information (AEoI)”.

1. It is an agreement that provides for the exchange of non-resident financial account information with the tax authorities in the account holders’ country of residence.
2. India has signed this agreement with all the P5 countries.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
   a) 1 only
   b) 2 only
   c) Both 1 and 2
   d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q2. Consider the following statements with reference to Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).

1. It was enacted under the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises Development Act, 2006.
2. The eligible companies have to spend at least 3% of their average net profits made during the three immediately preceding financial years.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
   a) 1 only
   b) 2 only
   c) Both 1 and 2
   d) Neither 1 nor 2
Q3. Consider the following statements.

1. National Thermal Power Corporation Limited is a Maharatna Central Public Sector Enterprise.

2. Fly ash can be used as a soil conditioner in agriculture.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

a) 1 only
b) 2 only
c) Both 1 and 2
d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q4. Which among the following sites in India are listed as World Heritage Sites in Natural Sites Category?

1. Western Ghats
2. Jaipur City
3. Group of Monuments at Mahabalipuram
4. Manas Wildlife Sanctuary

Select the correct answer from the options given below.

a) 1, 2, 3, 4
b) 1 and 3
c) 2 and 4
d) 1 and 4
Practice Question – Mains
GS - III

Q. “Use of single plastic waste as an alternative fuel may reduce fuel costs by about 20% in cement industries”. In the light of the above statement, Suggest different measures to deal with growing plastic waste generation in India. (150 words , 10 Marks)

Practice Question – Prelims
Answer

1. Option (a) – 1 only
2. Option (d) – Neither 1 nor 2
3. Option (c) – Both 1 and 2
4. Option (d) – 1 and 4