



## News Analysis (17 Nov, 2018)

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### Kg Gets a New Definition

At the General Conference on Weights and Measures (CGPM) in Versailles (France), delegates of International Bureau of Weights and Measures (BIPM) voted to **redefine the kilogram** in terms of a tiny but unchanging value called the "**Planck constant**".

- The new definition involves an apparatus called the **Kibble balance**, which makes use of the constant to measure the mass of an object using a precisely measured electromagnetic force.
- They also voted to update definitions for the ampere ( the unit of electrical current), the Kelvin ( the unit of temperature) and the mole (amount of a substance).
- The new definitions agreed by the BIPM will come into force from **May 20, 2019**.

### Background

- Since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, scientists have based their definition of the fundamental unit of mass on a physical object — **a shining platinum-iridium cylinder or Le Grand K (weighed exactly a kilogram)** known as the **International Prototype of the Kilogram**.
- It is housed at the headquarters of BIPM in Sevres, France.
- All modern mass measurements are derived from the kilogram, whether micrograms of pharmaceutical medicine or gold dust, kilos of fruit or fish or tonnes of steel.
- The problem is the **prototype doesn't always weigh the same**. Even inside its three glass bell jars it **picks up microparticles of dirt** and is affected by the atmosphere. Sometimes it needs cleaning, which **can affect its mass**.

### New Concepts

- Since 1967, **the second** has been defined as the **time it takes for a certain amount of energy to be released as radiation from atoms of Caesium-133**. This became the basis of all measures of time and is used in **atomic clocks**.

- Once the second was defined, **the metre** fell into place. This was based on another universal constant: the speed of light. Today, the metre is defined as **the distance travelled by light in vacuum in 1/299,792,458 of a second** (which is already defined).
- The kilogram comes next. The **Planck constant**, which Kilogram is based on, is **usually measured in joule seconds**, but this can also be **expressed as kilogram square metres per second**.
- By adding measurements of a second and a metre, along with an exact knowledge of Planck's constant, precise definition of the kilogram can be obtained.

## Conclusion

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- The new definition of the second helped ease communication across the world via technologies like GPS and the Internet. In the same way, experts say the change in the kilogram will be better for technology, retail and health.
- In daily life, however, the new SI units will have little immediate practical consequence
- Defining the units based on physical constants means that scientists will be able to measure them at any place or time, and on any scale.
- This will pave the way for far **more accurate measurements** and lays a more stable foundation for science.

## BIPM and CGPM

- The **Metre Convention** is the treaty that created **the International Bureau of Weights and Measures (BIPM)**, an **intergovernmental organization** under the authority of the **General Conference on Weights and Measures (CGPM)** and the supervision of the International Committee for Weights and Measures (CIPM).
- The Convention was signed in Paris on 20 May 1875 by representatives of seventeen nations. The Metre Convention established a permanent organizational structure for member governments to act in common accord on all matters relating to units of measurement.
- **In 1889 the 1<sup>st</sup> CGPM sanctioned the international prototypes for the metre and the kilogram.** Together with the astronomical second as the unit of time, these units constituted a three-dimensional mechanical unit system similar to the CGS system (centimetre–gram–second system).
- Following an international inquiry by the BIPM, which began in 1948, the 10th CGPM, in 1954, approved the introduction of the ampere, the Kelvin and the candela as base units, respectively, for electric current, thermodynamic temperature and luminous intensity.
- The name **International System of Units**, with the abbreviation SI, was given to the system by the **11<sup>th</sup> CGPM in 1960**.

- At the 14<sup>th</sup> CGPM in 1971, after lengthy discussions between physicists and chemists, the current version of the SI was completed by adding the mole as the base unit for amount of substance, bringing the total number of base units to seven.
  - **India** became a signatory to the General Conference on Weights and Measures (CGPM) in 1957.
  - As of 7 August 2018, there are **60 Member States of BIPM including India**.
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## India's Disputes At WTO

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Recently, Australia has referred India to the World Trade Organization (WTO) over subsidies paid to sugarcane farmers.

Many countries have filed complaints in WTO against various welfare and subsidy programs run by government of India.

### Complaints Against India

- On November 12 US filed a complaint against India alleging that India has paid out far more in cotton subsidies than the WTO rules permit.
- On November 7, India lost a trade dispute at the WTO after a settlement panel upheld Japan's complaint on the imposition of safeguard duty on imports of hot-rolled steel flat products during September 2015 and March 2018.
- In May 2018, the US submitted a communication under provisions of the WTO Agreement on Agriculture (AoA) on certain measures of India providing Market Price Support (MPS) to wheat and rice for the years 2010-11 to 2013-14.
- In this communication, US stated that India has "under-reported" its domestic support provided for wheat and rice and violated its commitments under the WTO Agreement on Agriculture.
- In 2016, the dispute settlement panel had ruled in favour of a US complaint against the requirement that power producers under the Jawaharlal Nehru National Solar Mission compulsorily procure a part of solar panels and modules for their projects from domestic producers.

### Australia Stand

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Australia has said that it will utilise the established global trading rules to defend the interests of its farmers and will continue to support the right of Australia's sugar industry to compete on equal terms with domestic Indian industry.

### India's Stand

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- On September 27, the government of India had approved a Rs 5,538-crore package for the sugar industry.
- India has maintained its stand that the country's sugar exports comply with WTO rules. India does not extend a subsidy to its farmers for exports, but instead gives a **production subsidy**.
- On the issue of MPS being violative of WTO norms, India has dismissed these allegations and has demanded that MPS should be calculated by using the recent reference period instead of 1986/88 prices, which was factored in at the time of the creation of the WTO.

### **Countervailing Duty and Anti-Dumping Duty**

- **Countervailing Duty:** It is imposed on imported goods to counterbalance subsidy provided by the exporter country.
- **Anti-Dumping Duty:** An antidumping duty is a protectionist tariff that a domestic government imposes on foreign imports that it believes are priced below fair market value.
  - Dumping is a process where a company exports a product at a price lower than the price it normally charges on its own home market.
  - To protect local businesses and markets, many countries impose stiff duties on products they believe are being dumped in their national market.

### **Agreement On Agriculture (AoA)**

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AoA is aimed to remove trade barriers and to promote transparent market access and integration of global markets. Agreement on agriculture stands on three pillars:

- **Domestic Support:** It calls for reduction in domestic subsidies that distorts free trade and fair price.
  - Under this provision, the Aggregate Measurement of Support (AMS) is to be reduced by 20% over a period of 6 years by developed countries and 13% over a period of 10 years by developing countries.
  - Under this, Subsidies are categorized into:
    1. **Green Box:** subsidies that **do not distort trade**, or at most cause minimal distortion.
      1. They are **government-funded** and must **not involve price support**.
      2. They also **include environmental protection and regional development programmes**.
      3. "Green box" subsidies are therefore **allowed without limits**, provided they comply with the policy-specific criteria.
    2. **Amber Box:** All domestic support measures considered to **distort production and trade** (with some exceptions) fall into the amber box as all domestic supports except those in the blue and green boxes.

These include **measures to support prices, or subsidies directly related to production quantities**.
    3. **Blue Box:** This is the "amber box with conditions". Such conditions are **designed to reduce distortion**.
      1. Any support that would normally be in the amber box is placed in the blue box if the support also **requires farmers to limit production**.
      2. At present, **there are no limits on spending on blue box subsidies**.
- **Market Access:** Market access for goods in the WTO means the conditions, tariff and non-tariff measures, agreed by members for the entry of specific goods into their markets. The market access requires that tariffs fixed (like custom duties) by individual countries be cut progressively to allow free trade. It also required countries to remove non-tariff barriers and convert them to Tariff duties.
- **Export Subsidy:** Subsidy on inputs of agriculture, making export cheaper or other incentives for exports such as import duty remission etc are included under export subsidies. These can result in dumping of highly subsidized (and cheap) products in other country and damage domestic agriculture sector of other country.

## Principle of Trade Without Discrimination at WTO

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- **Most Favored Nation (MFN):** Treating other nations equally. Under the WTO principle of trading system, countries normally are not allowed to discriminate between their trading partners.
- **National Treatment:** Treating foreigners and locals equally. Under this principle, foreign goods are given same treatment as one's own.
- **Free Trade:** Lowering trade barriers is one of the most obvious means of encouraging trade.
- **Predictability:** With stability, predictability and binding commitments, WTO principle seeks to encourage investment, create jobs and to accrue the benefits of competition to consumers in the form of choice quality and lower prices.
- **Promoting Fair Competition:** WTO agreements also aim to support fair competition in trade in agriculture, intellectual property, services etc.
- **Encouraging Development and Economic Reforms:** Developing countries that need flexibility to implement the system's agreements are given special assistance and trade concessions under WTO rules. This promotes economic reforms and development in these countries.

### Dispute Settlement Body (DSB)

- The Dispute Settlement Body (DSB) of the World Trade Organization (WTO) makes decisions on trade disputes between member countries.
- DSB consists of all WTO members.
- The DSB makes all its decisions by consensus.
- The DSB has the sole authority to establish panels of experts to consider the case, and to accept or reject the panels' findings or the results of an appeal.
- It monitors the implementation of the rulings and recommendations, and has the power to authorize retaliation when a country does not comply with a ruling.

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## Maternity Leave: Government for Incentive Scheme

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The Ministry of Labour & Employment has come up with clarification with respect to Maternity Leave Incentive Scheme.

- There were some media reports that this Scheme has been approved/notified. However, it is clarified that Ministry of Labour & Employment is in the **process of obtaining necessary budgetary grant** and approvals of Competent Authorities.
- The reports that it will be funded from Labour Welfare Cess, is also incorrect, as **no such cess exists under this Ministry.**

- The **Building and Other Construction Workers' Welfare Cess (BOCW) Act, 1996** provides for collection of cess for construction workers **by states/union territories**.
- The **State and the Local governments** collect the Cess and then **transfer to the State Welfare Boards**.
- The states/UTs should ensure that the welfare schemes funded from cess fund should be **exclusively for building and other construction workers only**.
- **Diversion of cess fund** for welfare of other category of workers is **not permissible** under the BOCW Act.

## Background

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- The Maternity Benefit Act, 1961 applies to **establishments employing 10 or more persons** in Factories, Mines, Plantation, Shops & Establishments and other entities.
- The main purpose of this Act is to regulate the employment of women in certain establishments for certain period before and after childbirth and to provide maternity benefit and certain other benefits.
- The Act was amended through the Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Act, 2017 which, inter alia, has **increased** the paid maternity leave to women employees **from 12 weeks to 26 weeks**.
- While the implementation of the provision is good in Public Sector, there are reports that it is **poor in Private Sector** and in **contract jobs**.
- There is also a wide perception that private entities are not encouraging the hiring of women employees because if they are employed, they may have to provide maternity benefit to them, **particularly 26 weeks of paid holiday**.
- Therefore, the extended maternity leave has become a deterrent for female employees who are asked to quit or retrenched on flimsy grounds before they go on maternity leave.

## Proposed Solution

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The Ministry of Labour & Employment is working on an **incentive scheme wherein 7 weeks' wages would be reimbursed to employers** who employ women workers with **wage ceiling upto Rs. 15000/-** and provide the maternity benefit of 26 weeks paid leave, subject to certain conditions.

## Impact

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- The proposed Scheme, if approved and implemented shall ensure the women in this **country an equal access to employment** and other approved benefits along with **adequate safety and secure environment**.
- The workplaces will be **more and more responsive to the family needs** of the working women.

## Important Facts for Prelims (17th November 2018)

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### Matua Community

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- Recently the Chief Minister of West Bengal conferred **Bengal's highest civilian award, the "Banga Bibhushan"** to **Binapani Devi** popularly known as 'Baro-Maa' **within the Matua community.**
  - Matuas are an **influential lower caste Hindu community** which had mostly migrated from East Pakistan (Bangladesh) to settle in West Bengal.
  - In the beginning Matua-mahasangha followed simplified rituals, but **later adopted Vaishnavism.**
  - It was founded in the **mid-1800s by Harichand Thakur, at Gopalganj in the Faridpur province of present-day Bangladesh.** He preached love, tolerance, gender equality and non-distinction irrespective of caste, class and creed.
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