

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS





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START-UP AGNIKUL LAUNCHES WORLD'S FIRST ROCKET WITH FULLY 3D-PRINTED ENGINE

Start-up Agnikul launches world's first rocket with fully 3D-printed engine

Sangeetha Kandavel **CHENNAI**

The Chennai-headquartered space start-up Agnikul Cosmos Private Ltd. launched the world's first rocket - Agnibaan Sub Orbital Technology Demonstrator (SOrTeD) - with a single-piece 3D-printed engine from Sriharikota at 7.15 a.m. on Thursday.

Agnibaan SOrTeD is India's first launch from a private launchpad, called 'Dhanush', established by Agnikul. It is also India's first semi-cryogenic engine-powered rocket launch and the world's first single-piece 3D-printed en-



Agnibaan, powered by the the world's first single-piece 3D-printed rocket engine, launched from Sriharikota on Thursday. ANI

gine designed and built indigenously.

According to the startup, the key purpose of this mission is to serve as a test flight, to demonstrate inhouse home-

grown technologies, gather crucial flight data and ensure optimal functioning of systems for Agnikul's orbital launch vehicle, the 'Agnibaan'.

"Congratulations @Ag-

nikulCosmos for the successful launch of the Agnibaan SoRTed-01 mission from their launch pad. A major milestone, as the first-ever controlled flight of a semi-cryogenic liquid engine realised through additive manufacturing," the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) posted on X, following the launch.

The IIT-Madras incubated start-up had originally planned the launch for April 7 but had to postpone it 129 seconds before the lift-off due to some technical glitches.

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→ semi-cryyogenic engrue → Question practice.

What is Agnibaan SOrTeD (Suborbital Tech Demonstrator)?

- Agnibaan SOrTeD is a single-stage launch vehicle powered by Agnikul's patented Agnilet semicryogenic engine.
- In contrast to traditional sounding rockets, Agnibaan SOrTeD's vertical take-off and precise trajectory enable orchestrated maneuvers during flight.



Distinct Features of Agnibaan:

- Customizability: The rocket offers custom launch configurations, either single or two-stage launches.
- Dimensions: Standing at 18 meters and weighing 14,000 kg, Agnibaan SOrTeD is a powerful presence.
- ❖ Payload Capacity: With a capacity for payloads of up to 100 kg, it can reach altitudes of 700 km in five different Lower Earth Orbits (LEOs).
- Engine Configuration: The first stage can house up to seven Agnilet engines, powered by Liquid Oxygen and Kerosene, dependent on the mission's requirements.
- ❖ Launch Pedestal 'Dhanush': AgniKul's built 'Dhanush' supports the rocket's mobility across configurations, ensuring compatibility with multiple launch ports.
- Agnilet Engine: Agnilet engine, a 3D-printed, single-piece, 6 kN semi-cryogenic marvel, drives Agnibaan's propulsion. The engine employs a novel blend of liquid kerosene and supercold liquid oxygen as propellants.

Questions:

Q.1 The "Agnibaan SOrTeD" is recently seen in news related to?

- (a) Private satellite launch vehicle
- (b) Missile rockets
- (c) Green hydrogen
- (d) Electric vehicle

Answer: A Notes:

Explanation:

- Agnikul Cosmos, an Indian space-tech startup, to carry out a sub-orbital test flight of its launch vehicle called Agnibaan SOrTeD.
- ❖ It is a single-stage launch vehicle powered by Agnilet engine, which is an entirely 3D-printed, single-piece, semi-cryogenic engine.
- Agnibaan can carry payloads of up to 100 kg to a low Earth orbit (LEO) of up to 700 km.

Q.2 With respect to the 'Agnibaan', consider the following statements:

- 1. It is a three-stage launch vehicle.
- 2. It is capable of taking payloads of up to 1000 kgs to low earth orbit and up to 100 kgs to geosynchronous orbit.
- 3. It uses a mixture of liquid kerosene and supercold liquid oxygen to propel itself.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) 2 and 3 only
- (d) 3 only

Answer: Only 3



Notes:

- Chennai-based space tech startup Agnikul Cosmos inaugurated India's first private space vehicle launchpadat the Satish Dhawan Space Centre (SDSC) in Sriharikota.
- Agnibaan is a two-stage launch vehicle that is capable of taking payloads of up to 100 kilograms to a low-earth orbit around 700 kilometres from the surface of the Earth.
- ❖ It will be powered by the company's 3D-printed Agnilet engines.
- Agnilet is the world's first single-piece 3-D printed engine fully designed and manufactured in India and was successfully test-fired in early 2021, making Agnikul the first company in the country to test its engines at ISRO.
- ❖ The Agnilet rocket is a "semi-cryogenic" engine that uses a mixture of liquid kerosene and supercold liquid oxygen to propel itself.
- ❖ The engine is very complex and it functions at very high temperatures.





REIGN OF FIRE (WHY DELHI IS ON FIRE-IS CLIMATE CHANGE TO BE BLAMED?)

Reign of fire

New Delhi's experience of high heat cannot be pinned on climate change

n May 29, the Mungeshpur automatic weather station north of New Delhi recorded a maximum of 52.9° C. While the India Meteorological Department has since suggested that the station's thermistor may be faulty, the country's north has clearly been suffering scorching weather. After the recording was reported, New Delhi's Water Minister imposed a fine of ₹2,000 on those washing vehicles with hoses and allowing water tanks to overflow, and said 200 teams would monitor for wastage. The temperatures people experience in a place are produced by a combination of factors, including public ventilation, density of built-up structures, and the availability of shade. How a person's body responds to such heat is also mediated by several forces. But it has become the norm to blame climate change as the all-encompassing cause of the consequences of extreme heat, and thus argue that the governments' only option is to react. The fact is that though New Delhi is large, it is smaller than the scale at which climate models reliably predict anomalous heat. Even if an attribution exercise concludes Mungeshpur's temperature was related to climate change, no interstate cooperation or heat response mechanism exists to act meaningfully on the finding.

According to New Delhi's new orders, the monitoring teams have been empowered to sever illegal supply lines, placing those in informal settlements at risk. For this to be fair, the city must already have ensured all its residents are sufficiently supplied with legal connections. Equally, 200 teams are too few for a city of its size. Together with there being no effective way to scrutinise water use in private properties, their mandate amounts to little. The city's peak power demand also crossed 8.3 gigawatt on May 29; high heat increases water consumption at power generation facilities. New Delhi has a heat action plan but the city's present response suggests it does not accommodate externalities such as the availability of water from neighbouring Haryana and illegal supply connections. Such plans should also include passive, long-term measures that ensure life can go on irrespective of the ambient temperature. With respect to water, for example, cities could maintain a reservoir for emergencies, a distribution system that resists tampering, and municipal body teams that conduct surprise wastage checks year-round rather than intermittently. Similarly, instead of shutting schools and offices to avoid peak heat, as many action plans stipulate, governments should facilitate cooling by (traditional) architectural methods, set up shaded pedestrian corridors, and incentivise the use of air-conditioned public transport. Governments are answerable to the terms on which they expect people to cope with the heat.



DOES THE MODEL CODE OF CONDUCT NEED LEGAL TEETH?

Does the Model Code of Conduct need legal teeth?

PARLEY

n May 22, the Election Commission of India (ECD) asked the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Congress to desist from raising divisive issues in the campaign. In recent years, and particularly during the campaign to the ongoing Lok Sabha elections, critics of the ECI have accused the body of being late or ineffective or partial in responding to alleged violations of the Model Code of Conduct (McC). Does the McC need legal teeth for better implementation? T.S. Krishnamurthy and P.D.T. Achary discuss the question in a conversation moderated by Sreeparna Chakrabarty. Edited excerpts:

Mr. Krishnamurthy, a lot of people have said that the ECI has not properly enforced the MCC during this election and that some violations have been overlooked. What is your opinion on these allegations?

T.S. Krishnamurthy: The media and political parties make vague allegations against the ECI, and this is common during every election. As far as political parties go, one set of parties or the other will always have a complaint. This is very common in every election. Parties have their own political reasons for making complaints. What is necessary is to know how genuine these complaints are and what action has been taken. It is for the people to decide whether the action taken has been free and fair.

Mr. Achary, do you think the MCC needs legal teeth for better implementation?

P.D.T. Achary: I don't look at this from the point of view of political parties but from the point of view of law and the Constitution. Legal enforceability is out of the question because it (the MCC) doesn't have legal teeth. But the point is that the ECI has been given a lot of powers. In fact, Justice Justice Krishna Iyer had said in one of his judgments that it (the ECI) is a reservoir of powers. That means the ECI has a lot of powers to act to ensure that elections are free and fair. So, it is not necessary to give legal teeth to the

The argument against giving it legal teeth is that once it (the ECI) goes to the courts, it will take a lot of time. The electoral process, once it starts, should be completed expeditiously. So, legal teeth should not be made a part of the Representation of the People Act (RPA), 1951. In the absence of this legal provision, the MCC can be enforced and that is for the ECI to deal with because Article 324 of the Constitution gives it enormous powers wherever there is no legal provision. Whether the ECI is actually using all its powers under Article 324 is the question.



A shop sells banners, flags and other election advertisement materials in Bengaluru. THE HINDU

People who do not favour statutory measures to implement the MCC also argue them a strict measure is taken, it disrupts the political process. Mr. Krishnamurthy, what do you think?

TSK: While I agree that the Supreme Court in one of its judgments observed that the ECI has a reservoir of powers under Article 324, it is only in respect of areas where there is a legislative vacuum. This is not an all-comprehensive power. The ECI is entitled to exercise this power without appealing to any other outside body, but even here, the restriction is that it has to be within the framework of the Constitution and the RPA. It is not as if the ECI has got extraordinary powers to go beyond the provisions of law. The ECI is accountable for its decisions in exercise of such power.

The main purpose of the MCC is to ensure a level playing field and ensure that elections take place in a free and fair manner. But the problem is that the MCC is only a code. Once it finds a violation, if the ECI can book them under the Indian Penal Code (IPC) or under the RPA, or file an FIR, that will take months and years to be decided by the courts. Moreover, the police which functions under the State government will be taking action against such complaints depending upon which party comes to power.

And if there are other violations not covered by the IPC or the RPA, all that the ECI can do is, say, ban a candidate from campaigning. But it has no wide-ranging powers as people assume, and that is where the problem lies. That is why I believe that some limited power should be given to the ECI to impose a monetary penalty or a temporary disqualification or something like that. There are some areas where I believe that it (the MCC) should be brought within the framework of law. I know there are differences of opinion among political parties and analysts.



Judicial proceedings are out of question. An election has to be completed expeditiously within a given time frame.

P.D.T. ACHARY

Some parties may not agree to such a change. But if you want to instill some fear in candidates and the political parties, at least some minimal power of imposing a monetary penalty [should be given]. Or disqualification for a short period would be ideal.

In recent times, has there been any discussion with parties on widening the ambit of the MCC or making it more efficient?

TSK: As far as I know, I don't think so.

Mr. Achary, what is the harm in including certain statutory provisions like penalties for violating the MCC within the RPA Act?

PDTA: See, once it becomes a part of the RPA Act, suppose the ECI moves in and uses that particular provision against any person who violates the MCC, that person will certainly go to court and challenge it. If there is a stay, then the matter will end there. So, quick executive action is what is required. Judicial proceedings are out of question. An election has to be completed

expeditiously within a given time frame.

I agree with Mr. Krishnamurthy that the reservoir of powers doesn't mean that the ECI is omnipotent and it can operate outside the Constitution and law. The Supreme Court has made it clear that if there is a statutory law, then the ECI will have to go by that. But if there is no statutory law to deal with the particular situation, the ECI can draw this power from Article 324. Let's suppose a very important person violates the MCC. In such cases, the ECI has, even during this election, taken a leader off campaigning for 24 hours or 48 hours. If the ECI can use this power and take a person off the campaign for 24 hours or 48 hours, it can take that person off the campaign for the duration of the election if it is a very serious offence or violation. That call has to be taken by the ECL

I would also like to draw your attention to Paragraph 16A of the Election Symbols Order, 1968. It says if there is a violation of the MCC, the ECI can even derecognise or temporarily suspend the recognition given to a party. So, it is not that the that the ECI does not have or cannot exercise its authority.

TSK: Yes, the ECI has the power under the Election Symbols Order to withdraw (recognition). But if the ECI starts withdrawing

the symbol for various violations that political parties are indulging in these days, I think most of the parties are likely to lose their symbol at one stroke. It cannot be invoked in all cases; it can only be invoked in very serious cases. Among the candidates and political parties, mere fear of withdrawal of the symbol or filing an FIR doesn't work. Thousands of cases of FIRS are filed and you know how the FIRs are treated.

Over the past few years, there has been a debate on whether the ECI has been able to ensure a level playing field. What do you think?

PDTA: Here, the point is whether the ECI is using all its powers to deal with situations where senior political leaders while campaigning seem to be violating the MCC. Whether the ECI (in such situations) is acting effectively and applying the MCC and its regulatory aspect uniformly to all the people, whatever position they may hold politically or otherwise, is the question that needs to be debated. It is a serious situation. And all of us know what has been happening during this election.

Social media has become a huge influence as far as campaigning goes. Do you think it needs regulation?

TSK: This is a complex issue. There is need for regulation. How that can be done needs to be discussed with all stakeholders. I'm not saying everything is hunky dory. We have to bring about some changes. The MCC was started with a good intention. It had a lot of positive effect initially, but parties are now becoming more and more aggressive. I think it is time for us to review the contents of the MCC and also to find out methods to improve the regulation of social media, hate speeches, and fake news. But let us clearly understand that the ECI does not have that kind of a power during the election process to swiftly deal with the violations.

PDTA: Social media is unregulated, so some muck also moves through it. But the point is that when there is a some kind of a control over the rest of the media – sections of electronic media and print media – people get a lot of information through social media. Therefore, yes, there should be some healthy regulation, but otherwise social platforms are certainly serving a very important purpose, particularly in a situation like this.



To listen to the full interview

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www.thehindu.com

Question

Q.3 Consider the following statement/s with reference to Model Code of Conduct

- The Code of Conduct does not have any statutory basis.
- 2. The Model Code of Conduct comes into force immediately on announcement of the election schedule by the commission.
- The objective of MCC is to ensure that the party in power is not able to use public money to improve its electoral prospects



Select the correct statement/s from the codes given below

- (a) 1 and 3
- (b) 2 and 3
- (c) 3 only
- (d) All are correct

Answer: (d)

UPSC PAST YEAR QUESTIONS:

- Q.1 Discuss the role of the Election Commission of India considering the evolution of the Model Code of Conduct. 2022
- Q.2 Discuss the procedures for deciding disputes arising from the election of a Member of the Parliament or State Legislature under The Representation of the People Act, 1951. What grounds on which any returned candidate's election may be declared void? What remedy is available to the aggrieved party against the decision? Refer to the case laws. 2022

Mains Question:

Q. What is the significance of the Model Code of Conduct, and how does the current digital era present challenges to its enforcement? Comment. (10M, 150 words

Introduction:

The Model Code of Conduct (MCC) serves as a set of ethical guidelines from the Election Commission of India, regulating the behavior of political parties and candidates during election campaigns. It upholds electoral integrity by fostering fairness and ethical conduct.

Body:

Understanding the Model Code of Conduct:

- Unbiased Administration: Directs neutral and non-partisan behavior from government and administrative authorities during elections.
- Prevention of Misuse: Prohibits the use of government resources for electoral gain, ensuring fairness.
- ❖ Public Order Maintenance: Promotes peaceful campaigns, discouraging actions that may incite violence.
- **t** Ethical Campaigning: Encourages policy-focused campaigns, discouraging divisive factors like caste and religion.
- Transparency: Mandates transparent campaign financing and reporting. Challenges in the Digital Age:
- Jurisdictional Obstacles: Digital platforms pose accountability challenges due to overseas jurisdiction.
- * Fake News Proliferation: Unverified digital media strains resources for enforcing and penalizing MCC breaches.
- Complex Perpetrator Identification: Difficulty in identifying those responsible for subtle online political messaging.
- Unregulated Digital Media: Lack of legally binding regulations for online election activities.



Way forward:

- Media Literacy: Promote awareness campaigns to combat fake news and reduce its impact.
- Enhanced Surveillance: Invest in advanced technologies to track election-related content on digital platforms.
- Stakeholder Engagement: Foster dialogue between digital companies, election commissions, and relevant authorities.
- Legal Reforms: Consider legislative changes for the enforceability of the Model Code of Conduct in the digital space.

Conclusion:

While the Election Commission has taken measures for overseeing digital election activities, effectively enforcing the Model Code of Conduct in the digital realm requires a fresh approach emphasizing accountability.





RATIO OF WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP ROLES STAGNATING IN INDIA' (NEED FOR WORK FROM HOME/HYBRID ROLES)

'Ratio of women in leadership roles stagnating in India'

The Hindu Bureau NEW DELHI

Representation of women in corporate roles, which has for long been below 30% in India, has been stagnating, and possibly declining in the post-pandemic years, according to a report by professional networking platform LinkedIn, 'Women in Leadership in Corporate India'.

The data is based on LinkedIn members in India, where the firm has more than 100 million registered users. Aparajita Bharti, co-founder of The that worked with LinkedIn on the report, said the reduction in the availability of hybrid or work-from-



home roles likely contributed to this shift, impacting the growth of female participation in the corporate labour market.

The company's data "shows that despite pro-Quantum Hub consultancy gress, women still face obstacles in reaching leadership roles due to bias, societal norms, and structural barriers," said Aditi

Jha, country head for legal and government affairs at LinkedIn India.

'Skills first approach'

LinkedIn in its report suggests a 'skills-first' approach to hiring (as opposed to making gendered assumptions on a prospective employee's capabilities), mentorship and networking opportunities, and shared parental leave.

"Industries such as education at 30% and government administration at 29% have the highest representation of women in leadership roles, followed by administrative and support services and hospitals and health care, each with 23%," LinkedIn said in the report.

Additional [Economic Times]:

- The LONGHOUSE report highlighted that women at the mid-managerial level aspiring for leadership. roles encountered various challenges, often resulting in career stagnation or departure from employment. About 80% of working women in India have taken career breaks, with 45% citing childcare and personal commitments in homemaking as the primary reasons. The challenges they face include resume gaps, skills obsolescence, lack of confidence, bias, stereotypes and lack of support. (which aminishes women's chances by 24.
- Some companies were taking initiatives to bring about changes like extended childcare leave policies, remote and flexible working culture, gender-neutral caregiver leaves for new parents, upskilling opportunities and more.

Contrast between rhetoric and action:

- There was a significatum contrast between rhetoric and action in gender diversity initiatives in corporate India, said a report by the Udaiti Foundation (TUF) in its report, Women in India Inc (WIIn) HR Managers Survey. The report released earlier this month was brought out in collaboration with the Center for Economic Data & Analysis (CEDA).
- The analysis showed that 34% of women exit firms over work-life balance, compared with just 4% of men. It also said despite 73% of surveyed organisations setting gender diversity goals, only 21% have supporting strategies. While 55% of the firms set goals for womens' advancement, only 37% tackled gender imbalances in hiring. It also highlighted legal compliance gaps: 59% of firms lacked the



mandatory internal complaints committee, 37% did not provide maternity leave benefits and only 17.5% provided childcare benefits.

Steps to removing gender blas in hiring:

The Udaiti report highlighted that career breaks diminish women's selection chances by 24 percentage points. Some of the issues it highlighted included instances such as hiring managers being more likely to consider a female applicant's marital status and age when considering her for a role, and women with career breaks facing challenges while returning to work.

Solution:

- It suggested that companies start bringing about changes right at the start of the hiring stage.
- The goal is to attract a diverse pool of applicants and to promote equality and inclusiveness in the hiring process; so a gender-neutral job description is necessary, it said.
- A job listing should be written in a way that it did not favour any gender. Avoid gender-coded words, such as aggressive' (often associated with male stereotypes) or 'supportive (often associated with female stereotypes), and use inclusive language to ensure that the job appeals to all candidates, regardless of their gender, it suggested.
- Udaiti's other recommendations to reduce unconscious bias included having a mixed-gender interview panel to ensure diverse perspectives in a candidate assessment process; and using resume screening software to automate the process and filter applicants based on keywords and skills

Glass Ceiling for Women and Others in India:

Q: What is the glass ceiling?

A: The glass ceiling refers to the invisible barriers that prevent women from reaching top positions in their careers. While women may progress through lower and middle management, they often face unseen obstacles that hinder their advancement to senior leadership roles.

Q: Does the glass ceiling exist in modern India?

A: There's ongoing debate, but evidence suggests a glass ceiling persists in India. While some women do reach leadership positions, statistics show a significant underrepresentation of women in senior management across various sectors.

Q: What are the signs of the glass ceiling in India?

- A: Here are some indicators:
 - ❖ Lower representation of women in senior management: Compared to men, significantly fewer women hold CEO, board member, or director positions in Indian companies.
 - Unequal pay: Women often earn less than men for comparable work, even with similar qualifications and experience.
 - Lack of mentorship and sponsorship: Women may have fewer opportunities to connect with senior leaders who can guide their careers.
 - Stereotypes and biases: Subconscious biases against women leaders or the perception that certain industries are not suitable for them can hinder their advancement.
 - Work-life balance challenges: The burden of caregiving and household responsibilities often falls disproportionately on women, making it difficult to manage demanding leadership roles.



Q: What are the consequences of the glass ceiling in India?

- A: The limitations placed on women's leadership potential have a ripple effect:
 - **Solution** Economic loss: Companies miss out on the skills and talent of a large pool of qualified women.
 - * Reduced innovation: Diversity in leadership fosters creativity and better decision-making.
 - Limited role models: The lack of women in senior positions discourages young women from aspiring to leadership roles.

Q: What can be done to break the glass ceiling in India?

- A: Several approaches are needed:
 - Policy changes: Quotas for women on boards, promoting flexible work arrangements, and tackling gender pay gaps can create a more level playing field.
 - Mentorship and sponsorship programs: Connecting women with experienced leaders who can guide their career development is crucial.
 - Unconscious bias training: Equipping companies and organizations to identify and address unconscious biases against women in leadership roles.
 - hifting societal norms: Challenging traditional gender roles and promoting shared responsibility in households can empower women to pursue demanding careers.
 - While the term "glass ceiling" originally focused on women's experiences, the concept can be extended to other social groups that face systemic barriers to advancement within organizations or broader societal structures.

All is not Bad:

India outperforms world in leadership with 50% HR directors & 40% CFOs as women: Survey

Currently, women hold 12% of board seats in India. The report underscores the importance of gender diversity in C-suite positions, revealing that 30% of such roles actively require female professionals to promote workplace equality.



The pervasive issue of women's underrepresentation in leadership roles persists across industries worldwide, despite strides made in gender equality initiatives. Women still encounter substantial barriers to reaching leadership positions. Notably, in India, 39% of companies have women occupying CXO positions, surpassing the global average of

According to LONGHOUSE consulting report titled The State of Women Leadership Hiring in India indicated that 98% of Indian businesses have at least one woman in senior management roles, exceeding the global average of 90%.