

CURRENT AFFAIRS : AUGUST 2022

PANCHAYATS (EXTENSION TO THE SCHEDULED AREAS) ACT, 1996

Recently, Chhattisgarh notified the rules for implementation of the Panchayats (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) (PESA) Act, 1996 on the occasion of World Tribal Day.

- With PESA rules being notified, Chhattisgarh became the seventh state in the country to frame rules and implement PESA after Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Telangana.

About PESA Act, 1996

- Based on the recommendations of Dileep Singh Bhuria Committee, PESA Act was enacted in 1996 for tribal empowerment and to bring them into the mainstream.
- Ministry of Panchayati Raj is the nodal Ministry for implementation of the provisions of PESA in the States.
- PESA Act is called a 'Constitution within the Constitution' as it provides for the extension of the provisions of Part

IX of the Constitution relating to the Panchayats to the Scheduled Areas of 10 States under Article 244(1) read with Schedule 5, with certain modification and exceptions.

o Ten states are Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Rajasthan, and Telangana.

o After the PESA Act was enacted, the Union government circulated model PESA Rules. So far, seven states have notified these Rules.

Objectives of PESA Act:

- o Ensure self-governance through Gram Sabhas for people living in the Scheduled Areas.
- o Gives special powers to the Gram Sabhas especially for the management of natural resources.

o Recognises the right of tribal communities and protects tribal people from money lenders, land alienation and provides them ownership on Minor Forest Produce (MFP), minor water bodies and community assets.

Other features of the PESA Act, 1996

- **State Legislation on Panchayats shall be in conformity with the customary law**, social and religious practices and traditional management practices of community resources.
- **Every village shall have a Gram Sabha** consisting of persons whose names are included in the electoral rolls for the Panchayat at the village level.
- Every Gram Sabha to **safeguard and preserve the traditions and customs of people**, their cultural identity, community resources and the customary mode of dispute resolution.
- **Gram Sabhas has roles and responsibilities in approving all development works** in the village, identify beneficiaries, issue certificates of utilization of funds; powers to control institutions and functionaries in all social sectors and local plans.
- Every panchayat to have **reservation of seats** in proportion to the community population (**minimum of 50 percent**) with **Chairperson of Panchayats** at all level to be **reserved for STs**.

SPORTS GOVERNANCE

After the dissolution of the Committee of Administrators (CoA) by the Supreme Court (SC), the Bureau of FIFA Council has lifted the suspension on All India Football Federation (AIFF).

- The CoA was appointed by the SC to manage the AIFF affairs and adoption of its constitution in line with the National Sports Code and Model Guidelines.
- Dissolution of CoA was a necessary condition from FIFA to lift the AIFF suspension as it gives AIFF full control on its daily affairs.

o Earlier, FIFA suspended the AIFF due to 'undue influence from third parties'- a serious violation under the FIFA Statutes.

- It will also help India to hold FIFA U-17 Women's World Cup 2022 (scheduled to take place in India in October 2022).

Sports Governance and Administration in India

- Sports governance is defined as the system by which sports organisations are governed. This includes defining of the strategic objectives and the framework, i.e.

- o The process of oversight (rules and policies).

- o The direction (mission, objectives and strategies), based on which decisions are made and implemented in a sports organisation.

- In India, this oversight and direction is broadly divided under two wings:

- o The Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports (MYAS) and its Subordinate organisations (e.g. Sports Authority of India (SAI); and

- o Sports Organisations under Olympic Charter, i.e. Indian Olympic Association (IOA), State Olympic Association (SOA), National Sports Federation (NSF) etc.

- o For non-Olympic sports such as Cricket, the organisations (Board of Control for Cricket in India) have direct affiliation from respective international federations.

PERSONAL DATA PROTECTION (PDP) BILL

Recently, Central government withdrew the Personal Data Protection (PDP) Bill that it had tabled in the Lok Sabha in 2019.

- In Justice K.S. Puttaswamy (Retd) vs Union of India case (2017), Supreme Court (SC) ordered that the right to privacy is an intrinsic part of the right to life and personal freedom guaranteed by the Indian constitution.

- In the light of this judgment, and the abounding concerns around how large tech platforms were handling the personal data of its Indian users, the Centre in 2017 set up an

expert committee chaired by retired Supreme Court Justice B.N. Srikrishna to formulate a regulatory framework for data protection.

- In 2018 Srikrishna committee submitted its report and a draft for the Data Protection Bill to the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology.
- In 2019, Bill was tabled in Parliament which was later sent to a Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC). JPC submitted its report in November, 2021.
- Government now stated that bill will soon be replaced by a comprehensive framework of Global standard laws including Digital Privacy laws for contemporary & future challenges.

Why the need for withdrawing the bill was felt?

- Radical overhaul suggested by JPC: In the face of significant number of amendments, recommendations, and corrections suggested by the JPC, government view was that it is better to bring in a new Bill.
- High compliance cost: Tech industry — specifically Indian start-ups — have raised the issue that the infrastructure needed to comply with the localisation rules in PDP Bill will be a huge drain on their resources.
- Balancing data protection and privacy: As per experts, many provisions of the Bill, such as data localisation, hardware authenticity clauses, and so on, went beyond data protection, and into the realm of privacy.
- Concerns raised by opposition: It was alleged that the law gave sweeping powers to the government to access personal data of individuals under opaque conditions, citing national security and other reasons.
- Not aligned with changing technology landscape: This has brought to the fore several other issues (such as ethics and AI, ransomware becoming more sophisticated, crypto and NFT's adding a commercial dimension to blockchain technology) that need to be legislated upon.

SOCIAL MEDIA-CENSORSHIP AND REGULATION

According to Twitter's global transparency report, there has been a rise in legal demands being made by India to remove content from Twitter between 2014 and 2020.

Key highlights of the report

- India is in the fourth spot to issue blocking orders between 2014 and 2020, after Japan, Turkey, and Russia.
- Between 2014 and 2020, the government ordered Google to take down numerous pieces of content from services like Search, YouTube, Gmail, and Blogger.
- o Reasons being criticism of the government, defamation, adult content, and impersonation among others.

Evolution of regulation via. Information Technology Act 2008.

- This Act applies to the whole of India, and its provisions also apply to any offense or contravention, committed even outside the territorial jurisdiction of the Republic of India, by any person irrespective of his nationality.
- The Act gives legal validity to electronic contracts and recognition of electronic signatures. This is modern legislation that makes acts like hacking, data theft, spreading of viruses, identity theft, defamation (sending offensive messages) pornography, child pornography, and cyber terrorism, a criminal offense.
- The 2008 amendment introduced the controversial Section 66A into the Act. Section 66A gave authorities the power to arrest anyone accused of posting content on social media that could be deemed 'offensive'.
 - o The Supreme Court, however, in 2015, struck down this section of the IT Act saying it was unconstitutional as it violated Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution (Shreya Singhal v. Union of India 2015).
- The data privacy rules introduced in the Act in 2011. The rules require firms to obtain written permission from customers before collecting and using their personal data.
- The Government of India in 2021 Notified Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules 2021.

Proposed draft amendment to the IT rules 2021

- Obligation of intermediaries: The 2021 Rules require the intermediary to "publish" rules and regulations, privacy policy, and user agreement for access or usage of its services.
 - o They specify restrictions on the types of content that users are allowed to create, upload, or share. They also require intermediaries to inform users about these restrictions.
- Expeditious removal of prohibited content: The 2021 Rules require intermediaries to acknowledge complaints regarding violation of Rules within 24 hours and dispose of complaints within 15 days.

- Appeal mechanism against decisions of grievance officers: The 2021 Rules require intermediaries to designate a grievance officer to address complaints regarding violations of the Rules.
- A Grievance Appellate Committee will be formed by the central government to hear appeals against the decisions of grievance officers.

PARLIAMENTARY PRIVILEGES

- On privileges enjoyed by MPs, RS chairman stated that MPs do not enjoy any immunity from arrest in criminal cases when House is in session and cannot avoid summons issued by law enforcement agencies.
- Parliamentary privileges are certain rights and immunities enjoyed by MPs, individually and collectively, so that they can “effectively discharge their functions”.
 - o These rights are also given to those individuals who speak and participate in any committee of the Parliament, which includes the Attorney General of India and the Union Ministers.
 - o When any of these rights and immunities are disregarded, offence is called a breach of privilege and is punishable under law of Parliament.
- Special privileges are enshrined under Article 105 (for Parliament) and Article 194 (for state legislature) of Constitution.
 - o One of the privileges is that a member of Parliament cannot be arrested in a civil case 40 days before the commencement of the session or committee meeting and 40 days thereafter.
 - o Parliament, till now, has not made any special law to exhaustively codify all the privileges.

14TH VICE-PRESIDENT (VP) OF INDIA

- Jagdeep Dhankhar has been elected as the 14th VP of India.

- VP is the second-highest constitutional post, provided under Article 63 of the constitution.
- He is elected by, method of indirect election, members of an electoral college consisting of the members of both Houses of Parliament.
- He holds office for a term of five years but can resign and can be removed before completion of 5 years.
- He acts as the ex-officio Chairman of Rajya Sabha.

ELECTORAL BONDS (EB)

- Data from State bank of India shows that since 2018, political parties have collected more than Rs 10000 cr. from EBs.
- Union Budget 2017-18 introduced EBs as interest-free bearer instruments to cleanse the system of political funding in the country.
 - o Rationale: To limit the use of cash in political funding, eliminate fraudulent political parties, protecting donor from political victimization, curb black money etc.
- Electoral bonds (valid for 15 days from the date of issue) can be purchased by a citizen of India or entities incorporated or established in India.
 - o Sold in multiples of Rs 1,000, Rs 10,000, Rs 1 lakh, Rs 10 lakh, and Rs 1 crore. SBI is the only bank authorised to sell them.
- Eligibility: Registered political parties that secured at least one percent of votes polled in the most recent General or Assembly elections.
 - o Buyers of bonds have to submit full KYC details at the time of buying. But the beneficiary political party is not required to reveal the identity of the entity that has given it the bond(s).

JAMMU AND KASHMIR (J&K) ELECTORAL ROLL

- J&K Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) announced that anyone “who is living ordinarily in J&K” can avail the opportunity to get enlisted as a voter in J&K in accordance with provisions of Representation of People Act, 1951 (RPA).

- o Electoral roll was last revised in 2019 under J&K RPA, 1957 which became null and void after abrogation of Article 370.
- o Under J&K RPA, 1957, only 'permanent residents' were eligible to vote.
- o RPA 1951, now determines the conduct of elections in J&K.
- o With Article 370 scrapped, there will be a single electoral roll now for assembly and parliamentary polls.
 - Ordinarily resident is determined by electoral registration officer of a constituency.
- o Such a person may be from another part of country but living in J&K for purpose of work, business or other reasons, provided the person gets their name deleted from electoral roll of their native constituency.
 - When Article 370 was in force, those 'ordinarily residing' in J&K were eligible to vote only in parliamentary polls (categorised as non-permanent resident (NPR)).
- o NPR includes West Pakistan refugees living in J&K since 1947.

Revision of electoral rolls in J&K

- o Election Commission of India is working on fresh electoral rolls in J&K after J&K Delimitation Commission carved out seven new Assembly constituencies (six to Jammu division and one to Kashmir) under J&K Reorganisation Act, 2019.
- o Fresh electoral rolls are essential to prepare the ground for any announcement of elections in J&K (last held in 2014).

RECOGNISING MINORITIES AT DISTRICT LEVEL

- Supreme Court, while hearing a petition to identify minorities district wise, stated that it cannot entertain such a prayer as it is contrary to the precedents which hold that such identification must be carried out at State level.
- o In **Re: Kerala Education Bill case (1958)**, SC had rejected the argument that minorities should be identified at block or district level.

o Also, in **TMA Pai Case (2002)**, SC held that linguistic and religious minority are determined by taking state as a unit and not by taking into consideration population of country as a whole.

Minority status in India

o Constitution does not define the word Minority and only refers to Minorities. Rights of minorities have been spelt out under Article 29 and 30.

✓ Also, Article 350B mentions about special officer for linguistic minorities.

o However, Centre, using National Commission for Minorities (NCM) Act, 1992, has declared Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains and Zoroastrians as 'minority'.

o National Commission for Minority Educational Institutions (NCMEI) Act, 2004 has been enacted to safeguard educational rights of minorities.

CONSTITUTION BENCH

• Recently, CJI assured that there will be at least one Constitution Bench functioning throughout the year in the SC.

o Presently, a total of 492 Constitution bench matters, involving 53 main cases involving key questions of law and constitutional interpretations, remains pending in the SC.

• A Constitution Bench is a bench of the SC having 5 or more judges on it.

o Presently, they are set up by the CJI on an ad-hoc basis as and when the need arises.

• Constitution Benches are set up only if one or more of the following circumstances exist:

o Article 143: Case involves a substantial question of law pertaining to the interpretation of the Constitution.

o Article 145(3): President of India has sought the SC's opinion on a question of fact or law under Article 143.

o Two or more three-judge benches of SC have delivered conflicting judgments on the same point of law, thus warranting a definitive pronouncement by a larger bench.

o A later three-judge bench doubts the correctness of a judgment delivered by a previous three-judge bench of SC, and decides to refer to a larger bench for a reconsideration of earlier judgment.

- In a related development, for the first time the SC livestreamed its proceeding.
- **Significance of live streaming:**
 - Ensure right of access to justice, guaranteed under Article 21.
 - Imbue greater transparency, inclusivity and foster access to justice.
- Currently, 6 of 25 High Courts (Gujarat, Orissa, Karnataka, Jharkhand, Patna, and Madhya Pradesh) live-stream proceedings.

BENAMI TRANSACTIONS (PROHIBITION) ACT OF 1988

- Supreme Court (SC) recently struck down certain provisions of Benami Transactions (Prohibition) Act of 1988.
- 1988 act was introduced to prohibit benami transactions and to recover property held as benami.

However, rules, regulations, and procedures for implementation of law could not be framed, which made it ineffective.

o Benami transaction means any transaction in which property is transferred to one person for a consideration paid or provided by another person.

o Benami transactions are used to disguise real ownership for reasons, including tax avoidance, maintain secrecy, parking unaccounted money etc.

- 2016 amendment expanded scope and punishment for benami transactions and also added a provision for confiscation of the property obtained as result of benami transaction.

Key highlights of the verdict

- o Section 3(2) of 1988 Act (accordingly of 2016 act also) is unconstitutional for being arbitrary and violative of Article 20(1) of Constitution (prohibits retrospective punishment for a crime).
- o Punitive provisions of 2016 amendments under section 5 shall not be applied retrospectively.
- ✓ Section 5 of the 2016 Amendment Act allows confiscation of any property which is subject matter of a benami transaction.
- o Prosecutions or confiscation proceedings (for transactions between 1988 and 2016) shall stand quashed.

INDIAN ANTARCTIC ACT, 2022

Recently, the Indian Antarctic Act, 2022 was enacted.

About Indian Antarctic Act, 2022

- This act aims to provide national measures for protecting the Antarctic environment and dependent and associated ecosystems and to give effect to the Antarctic Treaty, the Convention on the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources and to the Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty.

Key Objectives of the Act

- o Prohibit Indian expedition to Antarctica or carrying of certain activities in Antarctica without a permit;
- o Eliminating mining or illegal activities.
- o Fulfilling India's obligations under Antarctic Treaty and related conventions.
- o Facilitating India's interest and pro-active involvement in the management of growing Antarctic tourism and sustainable development of fisheries resources in Antarctic waters.

About Antarctic Treaty

- This treaty came into force in 1961 after ratification by 12 original members: Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Chile, France, Japan, New Zealand, Norway, South Africa, USSR (now Russia) the UK, and the US.
- **Parties:** Currently 54 countries have acceded it.
 - **India signed the treaty in 1983 and is one of the 29 Consultative Parties to the treaty.**
- **Objectives of the treaty**
 - **Demilitarize Antarctica**, making it free of nuclear tests and the disposal of radioactive waste.
 - **Establish it as a zone for peaceful research activities.**
 - **Set aside disputes over territorial sovereignty.**
- It **covers the area south of 60°S latitude.**
- The Treaty parties have also negotiated three international agreements which govern activities in Antarctica, collectively known as the **Antarctic Treaty System-**
 - **Convention for the Conservation of Antarctic Seals, 1972**
 - **Convention on the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR), 1980** (ratified by India in 1985)
 - **Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty (Madrid Protocol), 1991** (signed by India in 1998).

NUCLEAR NON-PROLIFERATION TREATY(NPT)

Recently, NPT's five-year review meeting took place.

- NPT completed 50 years in 2020.
- NPT's five-year review was supposed to take place in 2020 but was delayed because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

About NPT

- The treaty was signed in 1968 and entered into force in 1970.
- It is described as the “cornerstone of global nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament” and it is among the most widely-adhered-to global treaties.
- The Treaty represents the only binding commitment in a multilateral treaty to the goal of disarmament by the nuclear-weapon States.
- The treaty defines nuclear-weapon states (NWS) as those that have built and tested a nuclear explosive device before 1 January 1967; these are the United States, Russia, the United Kingdom, France, and China.
- o Four other states are known or believed to possess nuclear weapons: India, Pakistan, Israel and North Korea.
- All countries of the world except South Sudan and the above four are parties to the NPT.

SOUTH ASIAN ASSOCIATION FOR REGIONAL COOPERATION (SAARC)

Former Prime Minister of Bhutan expressed concerns about the current status of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and called for greater efforts to rejuvenate the organisation.

About SAARC

- SAARC is a regional intergovernmental organisation established with the signing of the SAARC Charter in Dhaka in 1985.
- SAARC comprises of eight Member States: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.
- Its secretariat is in Kathmandu, Nepal.
- The last SAARC summit was held in 2014 and subsequent summits could not be held after 2016 Summit scheduled in Pakistan got cancelled in the backdrop of terrorist attacks in Pathankot and Uri.
- o SAARC works on the principle of consensus and the summit cannot be held if even one member decides not to attend.

o In 2016, India along with Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives and Sri Lanka declined from participating in the Islamabad SAARC summit.

COMPETITION (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2022

The government recently introduced the Competition (Amendment) Bill, 2022 in the Lok Sabha to amend the Competition Act, 2002.

- The Competition Act, 2002 was enacted to provide for establishment of Competition Commission of India (CCI). CCI aims:
 - o to prevent practices having adverse effect on competition,
 - o to promote and sustain competition in markets,
 - o to protect the interests of consumers
 - o to ensure freedom of trade carried on by other participants, in India.
- A Competition Law Review Committee, chaired by Mr. Injeti Srinivas, was formed in 2018 to review the existing Competition law framework and make recommendations to further strengthen it to meet new economy challenges.
- The proposed amendments in the Bill are based on the report submitted by the committee to the Ministry of Corporate Affairs in 2019.

Key Provisions of the Bill

- Changes in certain definitions: Like “enterprise”, “relevant product market”, “Group”, “Control”, etc., to provide clarity.
 - o For instance, the scope of what “control” means has been expanded to include the ability to exercise ‘material influence’ over the management, affairs, or strategic commercial decisions.
- Reduction of time-limit for approval of combinations: From 210 days to 150 days and forming a prima facie opinion by the Commission within 20 days for expeditious approval of combinations.

o Combination includes acquisition, merger or amalgamation of entities.

- Expands the definition of combinations: This now includes transactions with a value above Rs 2,000 crore.

- Adds the provision of 'Deal value' threshold: Bill proposes to add a 'deal value' threshold which will be needed to notified to the CCI with a deal value in excess of ₹2,000 crore and if either of the parties has 'substantial business operations in India'.

o Also, the CCI shall frame regulations to prescribe the requirements for assessing whether an enterprise has 'substantial business operations in India'.

- Enhanced penalties: For instance, making false statement or omission to furnish information can attract a penalty of upto ₹5 crore as against ₹1 crore earlier.

o Nature of punishment for certain offences like failure to comply with orders of CCI and directions of DG is also changed from imposition of fine to penalty.

- Appointment of the Director General (DG): The Bill empowers the CCI to appoint the DG, with prior approval of the government.

o DG will have the power to conduct investigations, including search and seizure operations (raids).

o Earlier, Act empowered the central government to appoint a DG to CCI.

- Introduction of Settlement and Commitment framework: It will apply to anti-competitive agreements (except cartels) and abuses of dominant position.

o CCI's decision regarding commitment or settlement will not be appealable after hearing all stakeholders in the case.

BLUE BONDS

- SEBI has proposed the concept of blue bonds as a mode of sustainable finance.

- A blue bond is a relatively new form of debt instrument that is issued to support investments in healthy oceans and blue economies.

o Blue Economy is sustainable use of ocean resources for economic growth, improved livelihoods, and jobs.

- Blue bonds offer an opportunity for private sector capital to be mobilized to support the blue economy.

WORLD'S HIGHEST RAILWAY BRIDGE

- Recently, golden joint connecting two ends of overarch deck of the world's highest railway bridge over Chenab river was inaugurated.
 - o 1.3-km-long bridge is located 359 metres above Chenab riverbed and is 30 metres higher than Eiffel Tower.
- Chenab bridge will provide all-weather rail connectivity to Kashmir and forms a crucial link from Katra to Banihal, part of Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla section of the Kashmir Railway project.

WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION (WMD)

- Weapons of Mass Destruction and their Delivery Systems (Prohibition of Unlawful Activities) Amendment Act, 2022 was passed by Parliament.

About Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDs)

- While there is no single, authoritative definition of a WMD in international law, the expression is usually understood to cover nuclear, biological, and chemical (NBC) weapons.

Key features of the 2022 Act

- It amends the Weapons of Mass Destruction and their Delivery Systems (Prohibition of Unlawful Activities) Act, 2005.
- It prohibits financing of any activity in relation to WMD and their delivery system.
- It empowers the Central Government to:
 - o freeze, seize or attach funds or other financial assets or economic resources for preventing such financing.

o prohibit making available funds, financial assets or economic resources for any prohibited activity in relation to weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems.

INDO-NAGA CEASEFIRE AGREEMENT

National Socialist Council of Nagalim (Isak-Muivah) (NSCN (IM)) observed 25 years of signing the “IndoNaga” ceasefire agreement with the central government.

About “Indo-Naga” ceasefire agreement

- The NSCN-IM signed a ceasefire agreement with the Government of India on July 25, 1997, which became effective on August 1, 1997.
- o This heralded the start of Indo-Naga peace talks.
- It opened an avenue in the search for a solution to the long-standing political demands of Nagas living across the region between India and Myanmar.
- However, even after 25 years of this agreement, a final solution to the Naga conflict remains elusive.

NIDAAN (NATIONAL INTEGRATED DATABASE ON ARRESTED NARCOOFFENDERS)

- India's first portal (NIDAAN) on arrested narco offenders gets operational.
- NIDAAN is a first-of-its-kind database and one-stop solution for all narcotics offenders related data of arrested narcotics offenders for prosecution agencies.
- o It is developed by Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB).
- o It is part of earlier launched narcotics coordination mechanism (NCORD) portal.
- o It sources its data from the ICJS (inter-operable criminal justice system) and e-Prisons (a cloudbased application) repository.
- o It is planned to integrate with crime and criminal tracking network system (CCTNS).

EXERCISE IN NEWS

- VINBAX 2022: Vietnam-India Bilateral Army Exercise concluded recently.
 - o The exercise was unique as it was the first time that the Vietnam People's Army (VPA) was undertaking a Field Training Exercise with any foreign Army.
- Exercise 'Pitch Black': It is a biennial multi-national large force employment exercise conducted by the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF).
 - o India will take part in the exercise along with 16 other nations.
- Ex Vajra Prahar 2022: It is an Indo-US Joint Special Forces exercise.
- AL NAJAH-IV: It is a joint military exercise between Indian Army and Royal Army of Oman.

ETHANOL BLENDING

Prime Minister recently said that having achieved 10% Ethanol blending with petrol (E10) before schedule India has advanced the target of 20% blending by five years, to be accomplished by 2025. Ethanol Blending programme (EBP) in India

- Ethanol (ethyl alcohol) is a biofuel.

It is formed by the fermentation of sugar sourced from sugarcane or other organic matter like food grains.

Alternatives to ethanol as clean fuel

- **Methanol:** Blending of 15% methanol in gasoline can result in at least 15% reduction in the import of gasoline/crude oil.
 - o In addition, this would bring down GHG emissions by 20% in terms of particulate matter, NO_x, and SO_x, thereby improving the urban air quality.
- **Butyl alcohol, or butanol:**
 - o It has more energy than ethanol,
 - o It is easier to handle and more of it can be blended into each gallon of gasoline.

o But producing it will require costly retrofitting of ethanol plants, and plant capacity will be reduced.

- **Hydrogen:** It is one of the cleanest fuels, which on being burnt in air produces only water as a by-product and no carbon-based emissions are released.

o Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas has launched National Hydrogen Mission, which is the first scientific project in India to address all aspects of value chain of hydrogen-based mobility.

- India started ethanol blending programme in 2003 with an aim to blend 5% ethanol in petrol in nine States and four UTs.

- The 'National Policy on Biofuels', 2018 envisaged an indicative target of 20% ethanol blending in petrol (E20) by 2030. It has now been pre-poned to 2025.

NEW RAMSAR SITES

Recently, India has designated 26 new wetlands of international importance under the Ramsar Convention.

- With this designation, now India has a total of 75 Ramsar sites covering an area of 13,26,677 ha.

- Designation of these sites would help in conservation and management of wetlands and wise use of their resources.

NEW RAMSAR SITES IN INDIA



REVIEW OF GUARDIANSHIP AND ADOPTION LAWS

- Department-related Parliamentary Standing Committee on Personnel, Public Grievances, Law and Justice, presented the 118th Report on the Subject 'Review of Guardianship and Adoption Laws'.

Area	Observations	Recommendations
Review of Laws on Adoption	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hindu Adoptions and Maintenance Act, 1956 (HAMA) (applicable only to Hindus) and the Juvenile Justice Act, 2015 (JJ Act) (all religion) both deal with adoption yet have differing criteria. • Parents adopting a child under HAMA are not required to register with Central Adoption Resource Authority (CARA). • Parents are willing to adopt a child, but there are not many children available for adoption. • Unregistered Child Care Institution (CCI) and their poor functioning led to death of 762 children. • Adoption related matters are being dealt by Ministry of Law and Justice and Ministry of Women and Child Development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harmonize both the Laws and bring out a Uniform and comprehensive legislation on adoption. • New legislation should cover LGBTQ community. • Make registration with CARA mandatory. • A district level survey of orphaned/abandoned children. • A third-party study of all CCIs and empower DM to take down unregistered CCIs. • Need to bring Adoption Laws under a single Ministry for better monitoring and implementation.
Review of Laws on Guardianship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Hindu Minority and Guardianship Act makes use of the term 'illegitimate' in reference to a child born out of wedlock. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Word 'Illegitimate' should be omitted as no child is illegitimate. • Amend HMGA and accord equal treatment to both mother and father as natural guardians.

ANANG TAL LAKE

- Ministry of Culture has declared Anang Tal Lake as a monument of national importance under Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains (AMASR) Act, 1958.
- Anang Tal Lake, dated back to 1060AD, is situated to north of Jog Maya temple and northwest of Qutub Complex in South Delhi.

FUNCTIONALLY LITERATE DISTRICT

- Mandla district, a tribal dominated region in Madhya Pradesh has been reported as fully 'functionally literate' district.
- A person can be called functionally literate when he or she is able to write his or her own name, to count and read and write.
- It also refers to the capacity of a person to engage in all those activities in which literacy is required for effective function of his or her group and community.

5G SPECTRUM AUCTION

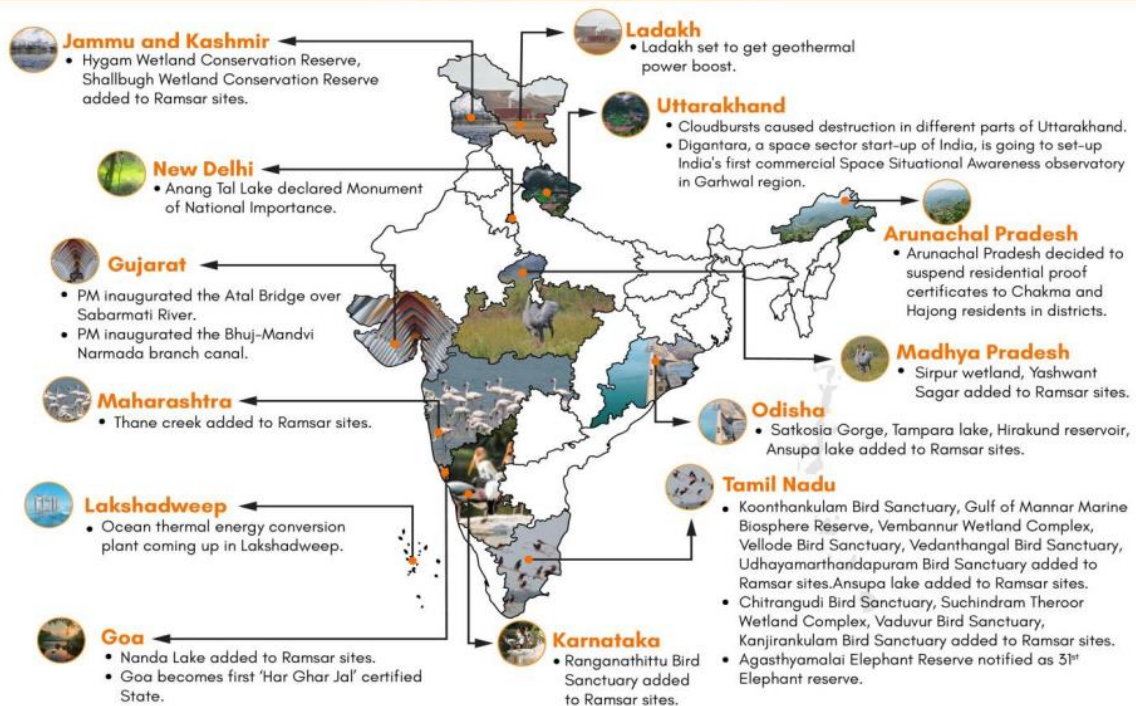
A record over ₹ 1.5 lakh crore worth of 5G telecom spectrum was sold in recently held auction.

- Government had put on offer spectrum in 10 bands but received no bids for airwaves in 600 MHz, 800 MHz and 2300 MHz bands.
- About two-thirds of the bids were for the 5G bands(3300 Mhz and 26 GHz), while more than a quarter of the demand came in the 700 Mhz band.
- Reliance Jio was the top bidder followed by Bharti Airtel and Vodafone Idea Ltd.

About 5G spectrum

- Spectrum relates to the radio frequencies allocated to the mobile industry and other sectors for communication over the airwaves.
- Spectrum is a sovereign asset. That is, use of the airwaves in each country is overseen by the government or the designated national regulatory authority, which manages it and issues the needed licenses.
- Operators will use a combination of different spectrum bands to deliver 5G services, and it will play a critical role in determining the speed and range of coverage.
- Operators around the world are most likely going to have to use a mix of low-band, mid-band, and high-band spectrum to deliver the type of 5G experience that their customers demand.

Places in News: India



Places in News: World

