



USAGE OF GENERIC MEDICINES: CRITICAL ANALYSIS

SPECIAL ISSUES

Liquor Ban on Highways: Critical Analysis

Supreme Court has ordered the ban on liquor sales along both national and state highways. Hereby, analyzing the positive and negative impacts of that.

Why India Needs a Data Security Policy

In today's world there is so much information being generated. So much data is being exchanged. Thus formation of Data Security Policy has become the need of the hour.

Wildlife Crimes in India

Over the past few years, sniffer dogs are becoming an indispensable asset for conserving the wildlife in India. Analyzing their advantages alongwith the forms of wildlife crimes in India.

Governance Issue

- ☞ Liquor Ban on Highways: Critical Analysis
- ☞ Repercussions of making Hindi Compulsory
- ☞ Election Commission Seeks Funds for Paper Trail Units
- ☞ Amendments Proposed in Child Labour Act
- ☞ Curb on VIP Culture
- ☞ Advocates (Amendment) Bill, 2017 Controversy
- ☞ SC for Equal Pay to Paramilitary Officers
- ☞ Supreme Court Proposes Broad Anti-torture Legislation
- ☞ Digital Sovereignty

Economic Issue

- ☞ Indian Railway Tourism Policy: 2017
- ☞ Consumer Get Free Hand on Paying Service Charge
- ☞ Proposal of Multi-modal Transport System
- ☞ Concept of Willful Defaulter
- ☞ Concept of Bad Bank

Social Issue

- ☞ Status of Widows

Environmental Issue

- ☞ Wildlife Crimes in India
- ☞ Status of Wind Energy in India
- ☞ Groundwater Level Depletion in India
- ☞ Melting of Antarctic and its Impact

International Issue

- ☞ Extradition and the United Kingdom
- ☞ China-Nepal Military Exercise

Science Issue

- ☞ Why India Needs a Data Security Policy

Internal Security

- ☞ Issue of Cattle Smuggling and UID



Contents

Issue II- April, (16-30, 2017)

Cover Story

5-9

USAGE OF GENERIC MEDICINES: CRITICAL ANALYSIS

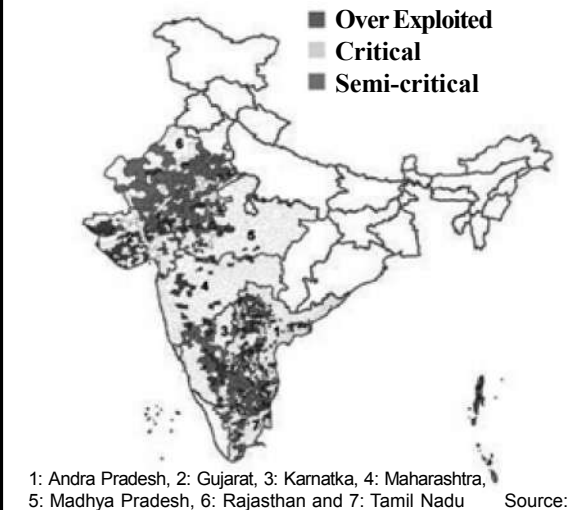


Special Issues

10-74

- Wildlife Crimes in India
- Liquor Ban on Highways: Critical Analysis
- Repercussions of making Hindi Compulsory
- Status of Wind Energy in India
- Groundwater Level Depletion in India

GROUND WATER STRESSED BLOCKS OF INDIA



- Why India Needs a Data Security Policy
- Election Commission Seeks Funds for Paper Trail Units

VOTER VERIFIABLE PAPER AUDIT TRAIL (VVPAT)

- 1 The EVMs currently display only the total number of votes polled, followed by votes secured by the individual candidates.
- 2 In the VVPAT system, when a vote is cast, a slip will be printed showing the name of the candidate, voter serial number and poll symbol.
- 3 Voter can see printout but not take it out. He can verify his vote was registered correctly. The paper trail can be used during a recount.

- Digital Sovereignty
- Amendments Proposed in Child Labour Act
- Curb on VIP Culture
- Issue of Cattle Smuggling and UID
- Indian Railway Tourism Policy: 2017
- Consumer Get Free Hand on Paying Service Charge
- Extradition and the United Kingdom
- Melting of Antarctic and its Impact
- Advocates (Amendment) Bill, 2017 Controversy
- Proposal of Multi-modal Transport System
- Concept of Willful Defaulter
- SC for Equal Pay to Paramilitary Officers
- Supreme Court Proposes Broad Anti-torture Legislation
- Concept of Bad Bank
- China-Nepal Military Exercise
- Status of Widows

Culture

- Chennakeshava Temple
- Heritage Mason Programme
- Bagha Nacha
- Basaveshwara
- Kumar Gandharva Award

Science and Environment

- Killed Virus Vaccine
- LHS 1140
- Aromatic Stamps
- 3D Printing
- Google Unveils Neural Translation Technology
- Indgeoid Version 1.0
- Artificial Womb
- NASA's Super Balloon
- Nickel-zinc (Ni-Zn) Batteries
- New Data Safety Regime Soon
- INS Chennai
- Noise Pollution

Polity and Governance

- Computer Emergency Response Team for the Financial Sector
- Air India Proposes Fine on Unruly Passengers
- Constitution (123rd Amendment) Bill, 2017
- Civil Services Day
- Joint Doctrine Indian Armed Forces
- Laws to Regulate NGOs Funds
- Civil & Criminal Justice Reforms
- Swachh Iconic List
- Test and Treat Policy for HIV Patients
- Common Duct Policy

Other Important News in Brief

- Startups Intellectual Property Protection (SIPP)
- Yash Bharti Awards
- Goldman Prize
- Dadasaheb Phalke Award–2016
- India-Bangladesh Friendship Bridge
- BBIN
- Digiyatra
- Wikitribune

COVER STORY

Usage of Generic Medicines: Critical Analysis

Context

Over centuries, capitalism has hardwired our brains into thinking that 'that's expensive is better in quality'. This is true even for medicines. But, this is only a myth. Experts say that, cheaper medicines are equally effective in dealing with diseases as their expensive counterparts.

Therefore Government is pushing for the use of generic drugs.

The country's apex medical regulator has warned the doctors of action if they fail to adhere to its guideline on prescribing the drugs only in generic names and writing prescriptions legibly.

The Medical Council of India (MCI) has also asked the medical practitioners to ensure that there is rational prescription and use of drugs, failing which "strict disciplinary action" will be taken if they fail to adhere to its orders.

Hereby analyzing the meaning of generic drugs, its significance in provision of universal healthcare.

What are generic drugs?

A generic medicine is a medicine that is similar to an original, brand-name medicine.

- ▶ It has the same active ingredient as the original medicine, and
- ▶ It is made to the same standard to make sure it is as safe and effective.

Why are generic medicines less expensive?

It costs pharmaceutical companies a lot of money to develop and market a new medicine, and these costs are then passed on to the people who buy the medicines. The company that makes the original medicine takes out a patent so they are the only one who can make this medicine, or make it using a particular process. This helps the company recover some of the costs associated with developing and marketing their new medicine. Since generic companies do not have to make the medicine from scratch or, in most cases, pay for the research, development and marketing of a new medicine, and do not have to carry out the same range of clinical trials that the original medicine has to go through, it costs less for them to put the medicine in the market. Generic medicines are also cheaper because of competition. When different makers of a medicine are competing against each other prices come down.

Who can develop a branded generic?

Branded generics, like regular generics, can only be developed after the patent expiration of the original brand name drug. However, branded generics can be made by any

pharmaceutical company willing to submit the Bureau of Pharma PSU of India (BPPI). In fact, many large pharmaceutical companies that typically only create brand-name drugs are now acquiring generic companies, or spinning one off, to delve into this lucrative business. According to the Generic Pharmaceutical Association, brand-name companies make about half of the generic drugs on the market.

An example of a generic drug, one used for diabetes, is metformin. A brand name for metformin is Glucophage. (Brand names are usually capitalized while generic names are not.) A generic drug, one used for hypertension, is metoprolol, whereas a brand name for the same drug is Lopressor.

Diazepam is an example of the chemical (generic) name of a sedative. It is marketed by some companies under its generic name and by other companies under brand names such as Valium or Vazepam.

Generic Drugs in India

- ▶ Indian pharmaceutical industry estimated to be US\$ 26 billion.
- ▶ Pharmaceuticals market is 3rd largest in volume and 13th largest in value.
- ▶ Branded generics capture 70-80 % of the Pharma market.
- ▶ India is the largest generic drugs provider accounting for 20% of the global exports.

Health care costs are the second most frequent reason for rural indebtedness. A major component of health care cost is medicines.

Studies show that in India the cost of medicines is anything between 50 to 80 percent of the total cost of treatment. Currently, many of the patients seeking care in Public Health Facilities have to buy medicines from retail shops and these medicines are very costly for a variety of reasons.

To meet this over the years India has developed a strong capability in producing quality branded and generic medicines in most of the therapeutic categories, evolving from mere Rs.1,500 crores industry in 1980 to a more than Rs.1,19,000 crores industry in 2012. However, these medicines are reasonably priced, as compared to the prices of their equivalent medicines in most other countries, yet a large population of poor people in the country finds it difficult to afford them. "Ensuring availability of quality medicines at affordable prices to all", has been a key objective of the Government but due to poor quality control it has failed.

World over, generic drugs are approved upon by simple showing of bio-equivalence: that the claimed molecule is the same as the one already approved. And therefore, there is no sense in having the generic applicant repeats all clinical trials afresh.

India has long resisted U.S. and EU pressure to institute data exclusivity norms, seeing it as a barrier to generic entry and more affordable drug prices.

So, the Indian government stressed on putting in places a legal framework to ensure that the doctors prescribe low cost medicines to the patients.

The government is also revising the 'National List for Essential Medicines' of 2015 to include more medicines. 'The Jan Aushadhi programme' under which the



government provides essential medicine at reasonable rates at specially established shop is also being reinforced.

Recent guidelines

The Medical Council of India (MCI) issued a circular drawing attention to the professional conduct of doctors: “Every physician should prescribe drugs with generic names legibly and preferably in capital letters and he/she shall ensure that there is a rational prescription of drugs.” Further, the circular said, “For any doctor found violating clause 1.5 of Ethics Regulation, suitable disciplinary action would be taken by the concerned SMC/MCI.”

Issues related to the guidelines

At least 90% of the Indian domestic pharmaceutical market, of Rs.1,00,000 crore and more, comprises drugs sold under brand names. There simply are not enough generic name equivalents of branded medicines sold. About half the market—Rs.50,000 crore and more—is for fixed-dose combinations (FDCs) of drugs, a further half of them irrational. Many FDC drugs contain even eight or nine medicines. To write, and remember, the constituents of FDC drugs in generic names are impractical, considering that there would be thousands of FDC brands.

Further making it incumbent on the doctor to prescribe a generic drug would mean that the prescription will give detail of the medicine’s composition — the salts — leaving the choice of the brand on the patient. However, for such a choice to be effective, the proposed law needs to go beyond the doctor-patient binary and target each link in the pharma industry’s chain of corruption.

Because even if the doctor manages to write a prescription in generic names for single-ingredient drugs, pharmacists will sell the brand that maximises their commission and will in all likelihood not stock the less costlier equivalent brand or generic medicine that is as good. This defeats the basic intention of making medicines affordable for consumers. Prescription by generic names merely shifts the focus of the pharmaceutical industry’s unethical drug promotion to the pharmacist; away from the prescriber, and resulting in business as usual. Medicines will continue to account for anything from 50% to 80% of treatment costs.

Also large number of patients in the country are illiterate and even many literate patients are not well-versed with medical terms and drug composition. A patient armed with a prescription detailing the composition of the medicine could still be dependent on a pharmacist to make the most suitable drug choice for her. And by all accounts, a pharmacist is likely to be even less sensitive to a patient’s medical and financial condition than the doctor.

Steps needed

- ▶ The U.S. and the European Union have ensured that generic drugs are therapeutically equal to the innovator drug by making bioequivalence (BE) testing compulsory. This means that generic formulations are tested on healthy volunteers to ensure that they have the same physiological characteristics as their innovator counterparts. Once bioequivalence is established, a generic drug is legally certified to be of the same quality to replace the innovator product and can therefore be interchanged for the innovator product. The government should require companies to self-certify their drugs to indicate whether they are in fact bioequivalent. A simple logo on the drug’s packaging to indicate whether a drug has been tested for proof of bioequivalence, along with the trial ID number listed on the Clinical Trials Registry of India, should be made mandatory.

- ▶ The government must consider using IT tools to network all 36 drug regulators into one integrated national database. This can then be accessed by every citizen over a smartphone. The essence of the 'Digital India' initiative is to empower the citizen.
- ▶ The government wants to ensure that doctors prescribe only generic or formulation name of a medicine. Thus medicines should carry generic names of drugs on their packs so that consumers can be empowered to asked for a generic drug from the chemist. This is expected to reduce medical bills.
- ▶ Government may resort for bulk procurement of medicines directly from manufacturers, quality generic medicines through a transparent bidding process. Same as case of Tamil Nadu.

In Tamil Nadu, since 1995 all patients visiting Public Health Facilities (which in Tamil Nadu, constitute 40% of the total number of patients as per NSSO 60th round figures) get all medicines free. This has been possible because of setting up of an autonomous corporation in the Public Sector, the Tamil Nadu Medical Services Corporation (TNMSC), which procures in bulk directly from manufacturers, quality generic medicines through a transparent bidding process. TNMSC then supplies these to the Public Health Facilities (PHFs) through a demand sensitive passbook system instead of the traditional 'supply driven' inflexible system of distribution. It supplies about 260 drugs to Public Health Facilities as per its Essential Drug List and 192 'specialty' drugs for secondary and tertiary care as per need. The TNMSC procurement prices of quality generic medicines are very low; for many medicines they are one tenth and sometimes even one fiftieth of the retail prices. Hence Tamil Nadu is able to provide free medicines to all indoor and outdoor patients in all PHFs (from all PHCs to all secondary and tertiary care hospitals under the State Government). The Government of Kerala has adapted the TNMSC model.

- ▶ Proper implementation of Jan Aushidhi campaign. A key initiative under the campaign would involve opening of Jan Aushadhi stores where, unbranded quality generic medicines would be sold which are available at lower prices, but are equivalent in potency to branded expensive drugs.

Conclusion

The challenge for the government is to balance its policy objectives of taking the power of the doctor away to prescribe brand name drugs with the reality that generic drugs in India are of questionable quality. The solution does not lie in more laws, but in providing more information to the consumer. Drug regulators in India have a vast trove of information on substandard drugs which they need to release a searchable database. This is easier said than done because India has 36 drug regulators one for each State/Union Territory and the Central regulator.

Each of them conducts periodic testing of samples drawn from pharmacies. This testing generates three data sets which need to be publicly available. The first is the laboratory test report, the second is the investigation report by drug inspectors of drugs which have failed testing, and the third is the criminal complaint filed in court against the manufacturer along with the final judgment of the court. If this information is made available over the Internet, the government will truly empower hospital procurement officers, pharmacists and patients with information required to avoid products of manufacturers with a poor quality record.

To ensure patients get the cheapest generic drugs. "It will require behavior change from the medical fraternity, which mistakenly associates expensive brands with quality; the government will also have to address the issue of high trade margins that retail

chemist shops enjoy. They stock the branded medicines of companies which offer them the biggest markups.

India needs a legal mechanism to ensure that all generics are of the same standard as the innovator product. Government's move will make it illegal for Indian doctors to write out a prescription for the trademark of the drug, forcing them to mention the chemical name instead. If implemented properly, the hope is that pharmacists will fill the prescription with the cheapest generic drug in the market rather than being forced to dispense a more expensive brand as prescribed.

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUE

Wildlife Crimes in India



Over the past few years, sniffer dogs are becoming an indispensable asset for conserving the wildlife in India. Dogs, with their phenomenal sense of smell, are extremely resourceful at tracking scents that are part and parcel of wildlife conservation. With the launch of the Super Sniffer Program by TRAFFIC in 2008, India aims to use dogs to strengthen the anti-poaching and anti-trafficking stance of the forest departments and other enforcement agencies; thus protecting the country's rich biodiversity.

Status of wildlife crimes

The illegal wildlife trade is a rapidly growing global industry run by highly organized criminal networks. Worth an estimated \$19 billion per year, it is perceived by poachers and traders as a potentially lower risk illegal activity. India is a country with rich biodiversity and has been facing the challenge of curbing illegal trafficking.

In general, wildlife crime is any action which contravenes current legislation governing the protection of the wildlife. These include poaching, collection of rhino horns, leopard skin, elephant ivory, mollusks, star tortoises, spotted black terrapins account for most of the exports or domestic sale/use. These are generally committed for financial gains as many wildlife parts like skin, bones, ivory has high international value, especially because of their medicinal purpose.

The **WPSI Wildlife Crime Database** has records of **over 15,300 wildlife crimes involving more than 400 species** that are targeted by wildlife traders and poachers. The population of elephants is declining in India because of wildlife crimes. Tiger population was also once sharply declining and has recovered in recent only.

What are the measures available to curb wildlife crime?

India has a strong legal and policy framework to regulate and restrict wildlife trade.

- ▶ Hunting and commercial exploitation of wild animals included in various schedules of the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972 is prohibited. Offences committed in respect of these species attract punishment prescribed under the Act.
- ▶ The Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972, has been amended and made more stringent. The punishments for offences have been enhanced. The Act also provides for forfeiture of any equipment, vehicle or weapon that is used for committing wildlife offence(s).
- ▶ Protected Areas, viz., National Parks, Sanctuaries, Conservation Reserves and Community Reserves covering important wildlife habitats have been created all over the country under the provisions of the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972 to conserve wild animals and their habitats.
- ▶ Financial and technical assistance is provided to the State/ Union Territory Governments under the Centrally Sponsored Schemes of 'Integrated

Development of Wildlife Habitats', 'Project Tiger' and 'Project Elephant' for providing better protection to wildlife and improvement of its habitat.

- ▶ The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has been empowered under the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972 to apprehend and prosecute wildlife offenders.
- ▶ The State/Union Territory Governments have been requested to strengthen the field formations and intensify patrolling in and around the Protected Areas.
- ▶ National Tiger Conservation Authority has been constituted with effect from September 2006, for strengthening tiger conservation by, inter alia, ensuring normative standards in tiger reserve management, preparation of reserve specific tiger conservation plan, laying down annual audit report before Parliament, constituting State level Steering Committees under the Chairmanship of Chief Ministers and establishment of Tiger Conservation Foundation.
- ▶ India has a bilateral understanding with Nepal on controlling trans-boundary illegal trade in wildlife and conservation, apart from a protocol on tiger conservation with China. A protocol has also been signed in September, 2011 with Bangladesh for conservation of the Royal Bengal Tiger of the Sunderbans.
- ▶ A sub-group on tiger/leopard conservation has been constituted for cooperation with the Russian Federation.
- ▶ A Global Tiger Forum of Tiger Range Countries has been created for addressing international issues related to tiger conservation.

The formulation of legislations, establishment of agencies has not been the issue in wildlife protection. The lax implementation in absence of political will has been the main reason for poor wildlife protection and illegal trade.

Wildlife Crime Control Bureau

It is mandated to collect and collate intelligence related to organized wildlife crime activities and to disseminate the same to State and other enforcement agencies for immediate action so as to apprehend the criminals; to establish a centralized wildlife crime data bank; co-ordinate actions by various agencies in connection with the enforcement of the provisions of the Act; assist foreign authorities and international organization concerned to facilitate co-ordination and universal action for wildlife crime control; capacity building of the wildlife crime enforcement agencies for scientific and professional investigation into wildlife crimes and assist State Governments to ensure success in prosecutions related to wildlife crimes; and advise the Government of India on issues relating to wildlife crimes having national and international ramifications, relevant policy and laws. It also assists and advises the Customs authorities in inspection of the consignments of flora & fauna as per the provisions of Wild Life Protection Act, CITES and EXIM Policy governing such an item.

Benefits of sniffer dogs

- ▶ Dogs have an **extraordinary sense of smell that** is almost one thousand times more sensitive than a human's. This gives them the ability to discriminate between the faintest odours and detect smells from both live species and raw materials, despite smugglers' efforts to mask scents.
- ▶ Sniffer dogs are **often trained to detect specific products such as tiger skin and bones** but they are also effective in detecting other wildlife contraband such as ivory, bear bile, live bird species, snakes and even weapons.
- ▶ Sniffer dogs are **often employed at airports, shipping ports, transportation centres** and national parks. They work alongside a handler to quickly scan cargo, luggage, packaging, vehicles or areas for illegal contraband.
- ▶ They not only **increase efficiency** and detect hard-to-find substances but their presence also provides a **strong deterrent** to traffickers and helps **raise awareness** in the public about the illegal wildlife trade.

- ▶ They are '**strength multipliers**' and their sense of smell works across long distances to detect a carcass or trafficked animal parts.
- ▶ The dogs also provide **protection to the forest guards** who often have to move alone. With the dog around, no one can touch the guard.
- ▶ **TRAFFIC** (the wildlife trade and monitoring network) **has assisted** law enforcement agencies in **training and implementing sniffer** dogs across the globe.
- ▶ Of the tiger range countries, TRAFFIC and WWF work with governments to use sniffer dogs in the following places; **Russia, China and India (to combat wildlife trafficking) and Nepal and India (to combat poaching).**

Way forward

There is need to conserve wildlife and protect them from poachers. Awareness generation among public about the importance of wildlife, their participation in wildlife protection and conservation programmes along with strict implementation of the present laws through innovative approaches is the need of the hour. As traders are using e-trade methodologies and different techniques to hoodwink authorities it becomes important for authorities to evolve their strategies and it should become a continuous process.

GOVERNANCE ISSUE

Liquor Ban on Highways: Critical Analysis



Taking cognizance of the road accidents and deaths because of drunken driving Supreme Court on 31st March refused to alter its 2016 order in which it banned liquor sales along both national and state highways. Though the ruling was in good faith to avoid avoidable deaths but because of economic importance of the liquor industry for employment, state finances and other administrative issues in the implementation of the decision a lot of confusion was created. Some even went to say that it was a case of judicial overreach.

About the Supreme Court ruling

Supreme Court in State of Tamil Nadu vs. K. Balu had in December 2016 issued a slew of guidelines to stop sale of liquor along highways which came into effect on 1st April. These guidelines were:

TIMELINE

- ▶ In 2013, the Supreme Court asked the national highways ministry to draft a policy asking states to shut shops along national highways.
- ▶ In December 2016, the court ordered the ban on liquor sales along both national and state highways.
- ▶ On January 18, the All Assam Indian Made Foreign Liquors Retailers Association asked the court to modify the 2016 order. Since the local statute's definition of state highways included all roads, the apex court's ban was a ban on all liquor shops in Assam.
- ▶ After a number of petitioners, including states, sought a modification of its order, the Supreme Court promised it would hear their plea on March 29.
- ▶ On March 31, the court refused to change its order.
 - ▶ All states and union territories shall forthwith cease and **desist from granting licences for the sale of liquor along national and state highways.**
 - ▶ The prohibition shall extend to and include stretches of such highways which fall within the limits of a municipal corporation, city, town or local authority.
 - ▶ No shop for the sale of liquor shall be visible, directly accessible and situated within a distance of 500 metres of the outer edge of the national or state highway or of a service lane along the highway.
 - ▶ All signages and advertisements of the availability of liquor shall be prohibited.
 - ▶ These directions issue under **Article 142 of the Constitution.**

However, modifying its order, it lowered the area limit for municipal areas falling along the highways with population of less than 20,000 to 220 metres from 500 metres. It also exempted Sikkim and Meghalaya from the 500-metre requirement.

Reasons behind the guidelines

There were a number of reasons like alarming rate of road accidents related fatalities, Constitutional provisions and international obligation and recommendations of a number of committees which were at action to bring out the said order.

- ▶ According to latest data compiled by **the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB)**, drunk driving was responsible for only 7,061 — **a mere 1.5%** — of the 4,64,674 road accidents in India in 2015.
- ▶ But the fatalities rates were significantly higher. Annually there are **1.5 lakh fatalities** in road accidents and **about 15,000-16,000 deaths** were caused because of driving under the influence of alcohol.
- ▶ In dry states number of road accidents related to drunken driving were less. Bihar – 8%, W. Bengal – 4%, UP – 2.6%, Kerala – 0.4% and Gujarat – 0.25%.
 - ▶ Supreme Court was alarmed at the large rate of deaths because of drunken driving while giving its order.
 - ▶ One of the pleas noted that, India being a signatory to the **Brasilia Declaration on Road Safety**, it is imperative that policy guidelines are framed to control road accidents.
 - ▶ Also, the excise policies of Indian states and Union territories should be amended to conform to the spirit of **Article 47 & Article 21** of the Constitution of India.
 - ▶ In 2004, the **National Road Safety Council (NRSC)** **unanimously agreed that licences for liquor shops should not to be given along the national highways**, and the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) has “consistently” advised state governments not to issue fresh licences and remove liquor shops from national highways.

Is it case of Judicial Over-reach?

Supreme Court decision has also raised issues of separation of power, suitability of the order, its implementation apart from the economic implications.

- ▶ Many argue that it is the classical case of judicial over-reach. The policy and law making are strictly in the domain of executive. Judiciary has entered into that domain through this action and alters the balance of power.
- ▶ If SC was so much concerned about the road accidents then most of the road accidents were caused by over-speeding, it should have asked for speed limiters in vehicles. Will it ask same by using its powers under Art. 142?
- ▶ It also shows the paternalistic attitude of the judiciary, which wants to dictate where to do and what to do.
- ▶ Alternatives like strict enforcement of the laws and rules related to drunken driving should have taken the precedence. In absence of strict enforcement even the present regulations can be violated. This may lead to cropping up of illegal liquor shops along the highways.

What could be the implications of the ruling?

The ruling had its financial, administrative implications, some of which are:

- ▶ **Finances of the states:** There is no denying the fact that liquor licenses, liquor sale provides a significant proportion of states revenues. A ban on sale will hurt states revenues and their investment plans.

- ▶ In urban areas pubs, bars provide a lot of employment opportunities. A number of persons will be left unemployed.
- ▶ **Tourism sector:** The move was expected to severely hit liquor and wine shops to tourist establishments, as well as hundreds of local bars and pubs in several metros. However, some states are coming up with alternative plans to circumvent the idea.
- ▶ **Policy uncertainty:** It also raises the question of who is responsible for policy making and alteration. Which policy the investor should believe and make their investments based on which policy. Such a climate may deter investments.
- ▶ **Implementation in letter and spirit:** Some States are **now re-classifying State Highways into local roads**. The Rajasthan government passed an order recently to convert a portion of their State Highway roads passing through populous areas into urban and district roads. Similarly, the Chandigarh administration issued a notification on March 16 to convert a significant portion of its State Highways into major district roads (MDRs). It raises the question whether the ruling will be implemented in letter and spirit.

Way forward

- ▶ There is no denying the fact the it is a case of judicial over-reach, but it has been forced by legislative and executive inaction. Along with this the decision is not talking of prohibition, but only asks for relocation of the shops, does not infringe on the personal choices of those who drink, and just asks them to remember their duty towards others safety while they drive.
- ▶ Though many have said about the potential loss of the revenue to states, loss of employment but it must be kept in mind that states like Gujarat are doing well in economic sectors with total prohibition. Also the decision talks of relocation only and not of shutting down. States revenue loss, family income loss due to health problems arising from drinking must also be taken into account when any talk of loss is being done.
- ▶ Another important point is that the decision was taken in December 2016, giving sufficient time to all.

Despite all these it can be said that a proper and thorough analysis of the implication of the decision in urban areas where most of the shops, pubs lie along the highways must have been done. It would have avoided the hue and cry. Along with this why the provisions of the Motor Vehicle Act are not implemented seriously must be considered and way should be found out.

SOCIAL ISSUE

Repercussions of making Hindi Compulsory


Context

Recently on 17th April, President has accepted most of the recommendations made in the ninth report of the Committee of Parliament on Official Language, which are aimed at promotion of Hindi. It will also promote national integration and unity as in due course of time people will be bound in common bond. However, India is a multicultural and multilingual country, has over 1000 languages including dialects out of which 22 most spoken language are given official status like Hindi, Marathi, Tamil, Gujarati etc. Therefore in this environment favouring any one language or supporting it can have serious repercussions on the national unity, and peace - as have been seen in past in other countries. Therefore, there is a need to move in this direction with caution.

What does the notification says?

The recent notification by the Department of Official Languages, Ministry of Home Affairs came out with the recommendations of Committee of Parliament on Official Language which were accepted by the President. Some of the important ones are:

- ▶ All dignitaries including Hon'ble President and all the Ministers especially who can read and speak **Hindi** may **be requested** to give their speech/statement in **Hindi** only.
- ▶ Making announcements on civilian flights in Hindi followed by English.
- ▶ On flights, half the reading material should consist of Hindi newspapers and magazines as "Hindi is grossly neglected by airlines".
- ▶ Maximum usage of Hindi should be ensured on all tickets of Air India and Pawan Hans helicopters.
- ▶ 100% availability of training material in bilingual at the Mussoorie-based Lal Bahadur Shastri National Administrative Academy.
- ▶ Universities and higher educational institutes situated in non-Hindi speaking states, where the students are not given an option for Hindi to appear in exams/ interviews, must be given an option to answer in Hindi.

The panel had also asked the ministry of human resource development to make serious efforts to make Hindi language compulsory in curriculum. This recommendation is accepted in principle.

- ▶ The **Committee of Parliament on Official Language** was constituted in 1976 and is working since then.
- ▶ This Committee has submitted 9 parts of its report.
- ▶ The 9th part of the Committee's report was submitted to the President of India on 2nd June, 2011.
- ▶ The then Chairman of the Committee and Deputy Chairman of the Committee had given 117 recommendations.

Why these new rules came up?

In a large and diverse country like India, there is always need to find certain mechanisms which can strengthen unity in diversity. Though India has many languages, but it is said that the substance of the literary works has been common to the great extent and thus promoting unity. The present notification is step further in this direction.

- ▶ No one is denying the need of having a common language for administrative purpose, as it will greatly reduce burden, will facilitate easy communication of ideas, knowledge, persons and in turn help in building sense of brotherhood and integrity.
- ▶ It is said that Hindi is the most widely spoken Indian language, with around 40 crore people using it. Therefore there is natural need to use it in official communications, so that the official decisions are easily understood by these people.
- ▶ English language which at present dominates official work, is foreign language and is a colonial legacy. Therefore it must be replaced with our own language.
- ▶ With greater use of Hindi for official purpose, it will get wider publicity, greater attention and focus which has been lost in recent. As result of new ideas, literature may be written in it and which in turn further help it.

Other steps taken to promote Hindi

- ▶ Recently there has been lot of focus on use of Hindi. Rajbhasha desks have been instituted in all govt. departments, naming of schemes has been done mostly in Hindi language, Prime Minister of India has most of the times used Hindi to address gathering or seminars. Along with this a PIL has come up in Supreme Court asking to make Hindi compulsory till 8th class in all schools.

Constitutional provisions related to languages:

- ▶ There is no national language as declared by the Constitution of India.
- ▶ The Constitution lists Hindi written in Devanagari script as well as English as the official language to be used for official purposes such as parliamentary proceedings, judiciary, communications between the Central Government and a State Government.
- ▶ States within India have the liberty and powers to specify their own official language(s) through legislation.
- ▶ The Constitution imposes a duty upon the Centre to promote the spread and development of the Hindi language so that it may become the lingua franca of the composite culture of India.
- ▶ The Eighth Schedule to the Indian Constitution contains a list of 22 scheduled languages. The Government of India is under an obligation to take measures for the development of these languages.

What may be its impact?

The official use of Hindi has always been a bit of a touchy topic, with the Southern states like Tamil Nadu having protested against mandatory Hindi education in the past. The present notification can be seen by some sections as an attempt to force Hindi upon them.

- ▶ Hindi is widely spoken in the north, but southern and eastern states have always opted for local languages or English. Five decades ago, efforts to impose Hindi as the country's only official language had triggered violent riots in the south.
- ▶ Language is regarded by people as closely connected with their culture. E.g. in Tamil Nadu, disinterest in Hindi stems from the pride of people in Tamil heritage.
- ▶ Hindi is of recent origin as compared to other languages like Tamil, Telugu, Kannad, Sanskrit etc. and therefore many states are not ready to accept it as main language superseding their regional languages.
- ▶ This issue continues to be exploited by the political parties for narrow political ends.
- ▶ Constitution also says that government must focus on development of all Scheduled languages, thus promoting Hindi will be discrimination against them.

It must be kept in mind that linguistic problems are not limited to India and have arisen in other parts of the world too. The language issue has led to civil war in Sri Lanka, students uprising and separation of Bangladesh from Pakistan. Therefore there is a great need to handle the language issue with care.

Way forward

There is no denying of the fact that there is a need to develop a lingua-franca for India, but it should neither be forced upon nor such feeling should come. It should be a natural process. It must be kept in mind that whenever a particular language has dominated a region or world, it has been because of knowledge creation in the language. English language was source of knowledge because of scientific discoveries in English speaking countries. Same has been with Sanskrit, Latin and Greek, Arabic in past. Therefore there is need to promote education, literary works, scientific development to be done in Hindi; so that speakers from other languages feel a natural desire to learn it and in the process it becomes a common language. All this requires long term vision and support system.

Till then a common official language, which reflects local culture, aspirations should be used only after consultation with all states. Along with this training facilities for officials, application of three language formula and other steps must be taken so that no one finds difficulty in understanding Hindi.

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUE

Status of Wind Energy in India



In India, which is the biggest greenhouse gas emitter after the US and China, renewable energy currently accounts for about 16% of the total installed capacity of 315,426 MW.

Energy Security and Sustainable Development are high in the global agenda due to the impact of volatile energy prices, high demand for energy security and concerns over environmental sustainability and the global climate change.

With an average growth rate of 30% wind energy is the fastest growing source of renewable energy in the world.

Recently India added record 5,400MW wind power in 2016-17. Of about 50,018 MW of installed renewable power across the country, over 55% is wind power.

What is wind energy?

- ▶ The differential heating of the earth's surface which creates imbalances in pressure system of air resulting into the blowing of wind from one direction to another.
- ▶ During the day, the air above the land heats up more quickly than the air over water. The warm air over the land expands and rises, and the heavier, cooler air rushes in to take its place, creating winds.
- ▶ At night, the winds are reversed because the air cools more rapidly over land than over water. In the same way, the large atmospheric winds that circle the earth are created because the land near the earth's equator is heated more by the sun than the land near the North and South Poles.
- ▶ Humans use this wind flow for many purposes: sailing boats, pumping water, grinding mills and also generating electricity. The moving air has huge amounts of kinetic energy which is being transferred into electrical energy using wind turbines. Wind energy is a clean, eco-friendly, renewable resource and is non-polluting.

India in the windy world

- ▶ The development of wind power in India began in the 1990s, and has significantly increased in the last few years. Although a relative newcomer to the wind industry compared with Denmark or the US, domestic policy support for wind power has led India to become the country with the fourth largest installed wind power capacity in the world.
- ▶ In 2008, India shared 6.58% of total wind energy installed capacity around the world, according to World Wind Energy Report-2008.

- ▶ During 2016-17, the leading states in the wind power capacity addition were Andhra Pradesh at 2,190 MW, followed by Gujarat at 1,275 MW and Karnataka at 882 MW.
- ▶ In addition, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Telangana and Kerala reported 357 MW, 288 MW, 262 MW, 118 MW, 23 MW and 8 MW wind power capacity addition respectively during the same period.
- ▶ India occupies the fourth place in the world in wind energy generation after USA, Germany and China and has an installed capacity of 32.17 GW (according to the Central Electricity Authority (CEA) monthly report for March 2017).

Recent developments

- ▶ The Ministry of New and Renewable Energy recently issued draft guidelines for the auction of wind energy projects to incentivize power distribution companies to increase procurement of wind power.
- ▶ As per the proposals of the Ministry, any wind energy developer can bid for a minimum of 5 megawatts capacity at a single site and at least 25 megawatts of capacity in an auction. The power distribution company looking to acquire electricity is free to choose the tariff structure for the auction.
- ▶ The power purchase agreement will not be for less than 25 years. In case of under-performance by the wind energy project, the developer will be liable for penalties.
- ▶ The first-ever wind energy auction in India (in the line of global market) yielded the lowest-ever tariffs of Rs. 3.46/kWh. Four companies — Mytrah Energy, Green Infra (owned by Sembcorp), Inox Wind, and Ostro Energy — were awarded 250 megawatts of capacity each, while Adani Green Energy secured rights to develop 50 megawatts of capacity. This tariff is significantly lower than the tariffs currently being paid by various power distribution companies across India.

Issues

- ▶ **Non-payment of dues** is perhaps the biggest challenge the Indian renewable energy sector faces today. Payment security measures proposed by the Indian government would lend much needed support to the project developers. These measures could include a Payment Security Fund and guarantees issued by the state governments themselves.
- ▶ Project developers may also receive compensation if they are unable to feed the grid due to lack of adequate transmission capacity at any given time. This will help address another major challenge faced by the renewable energy projects which are often forced to reduce generation by power distribution companies.
- ▶ **Sharp Fall in Wind Energy Tariff:** wind energy tariff bids could fall to as low as INR 4.00/kWh once the 1 giga-watts of wind energy capacity is auctioned and allocated to project developers. This will mark a 20% discount to the average wind energy feed-in tariffs determined by the various state regulators across India.
- ▶ The sharp fall in tariffs discovered through the auction has resulted in several states backing out from commitments to sign new power purchase agreements. Power distribution companies in the states of Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh have declined to sign any fresh PPAs with wind energy project developers. The power distribution companies in these states have expressed reluctance to the respective regulatory bodies in signing PPAs at feed-in tariffs higher than the recently discovered tariffs.

- ▶ The government has been concerned about squatters blocking good wind potential sites, inordinate delays in signing of power purchase agreements, timely payments and distribution firms shying away from procuring electricity generated from wind energy projects.

Conclusion

- ▶ Given the phenomenal prospects available in this sector, the chances of growing high is very much possible with renewable energy towards achieving sustainable development goal and protecting global environment from the effect of climate change.
- ▶ There is a need for technology upgradation to counter lower tariffs and at the same time grow generation capacity at a competitive cost to meet India's renewable energy target by 2022.
- ▶ The need of the hour is to harness the capacities of Private bidders by ensuring their effective involvement in this sector. Policies formulation, research and development, addressing all the issues related to non-payment of dues and policies implementation on the government part is more vital whereas, cooperation and acceptance from the part of the public will make this sector flourish.
- ▶ The ministry has also taken several other policy initiatives, including introducing bidding in the wind energy sector and drafting a wind-solar hybrid policy.
- ▶ It has also come out with a 'National Offshore Wind Energy Policy', aiming to harness wind power along India's 7,600 km coastline. Preliminary estimates show the Gujarat coastline has the potential to generate around 106,000 MW of offshore wind energy and Tamil Nadu about 60,000 MW.
- ▶ Government has to take initiatives to implement these policies at ground level to harness the wind Energy Potential of India.

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUE

Groundwater Level Depletion in India


Context

Ground water levels in various parts of India are declining as the country could not adequately recharge aquifers in deficit areas where it has been used for irrigation, industries and drinking water needs of the growing population over the years.

The dip in the water level is more pronounced in western and southern parts of the country where water level has gone to a considerable down raising the concern over water availability.

In India, a country driven by agriculture, it was found that the level of groundwater has been receding by as much as 0.3 meter each year over the past decade, especially in the northern areas. At this rate, India may become a 'water stressed' state by as early as 2020.

Hereby analyzing the reasons for Groundwater depletion and Solutions to meet the water crisis.

Causes of Groundwater Depletion

Groundwater is part of the Earth's water or hydrological cycle. When rain falls, a part infiltrates the soil and the remainder evaporates or runs off into rivers. The roots of plants will take up a proportion of this moisture and then lose it through transpiration to the atmosphere, but some will infiltrate more deeply, eventually accumulating above an impermeable bed, saturating available pore space and forming an underground reservoir. Underground strata that can both store and transmit accumulated groundwater to outlets in rivers, springs and the sea are termed aquifers.

Groundwater crisis in India is the result of:

- ▶ The bursting population is a reason for insufficient water per head. While it has been estimated that the amount of usable water should be between 700-1200 billion cubic meter, India has only 1000 cubic meters of water per head.
- ▶ Water in most rivers is polluted making it unfit for drinking or any other use. The poor quality rises from insufficient and delayed investment in urban water-treatment facilities. Industrial effluent rules are not implemented due to inadequate technical and human resource availability with the state pollution control boards.
- ▶ Excess extraction by farmers has led to the dwindling groundwater supplies. This is so because access to groundwater is free and anyone has a right to pump water from their own land.
- ▶ Poor monsoon due to climate change further aggravates the groundwater situation since the latter heavily depends on rains. Poor rainfall compels the farmers to dig

further down for groundwater to irrigate the field. This results in pushing the tables deeper down.

- ▶ Unrestrained urbanization has contributed in a big way and despite India being one of the richest nations in water supply; the government and citizens have exploited the water reserves to an extent.
- ▶ Ground water depletion can also occur naturally. However, the activities that lead to groundwater depletion come mostly from humans, but a portion of it also comes from changes in our climate and can speed up the process.

Effects of Groundwater Depletion

Pumping groundwater at a faster rate than it can be recharged can have some negative effects of the environment and the people who make use of the water:

Lowering of the water table: The most severe consequence of excessive groundwater pumping is that the water table, below which the ground is saturated with water, can be lowered. For water to be withdrawn from the ground, water must be pumped from a well that reaches below the water table.

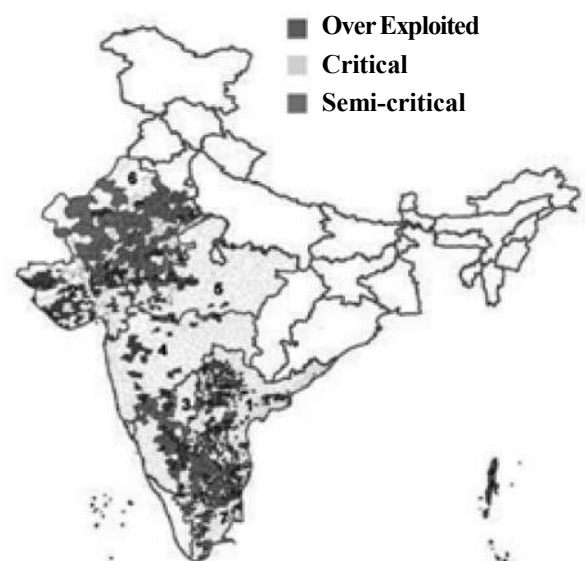
Increased costs for the user: As the depth to water increases, the water must be lifted higher to reach the land surface. If pumps are used to lift the water (as opposed to artesian wells), more energy is required to drive the pump. Using the well can become prohibitively expensive.

Reduction of water in streams and lakes: Groundwater contributes to streams in most physiographic and climatic settings. The proportion of stream water that comes from groundwater inflow varies according to a region's geography, geology, and climate. Groundwater pumping can alter how water moves between an aquifer and a stream, lake, or wetland by either intercepting groundwater flow that discharges into the surface-water body under natural conditions, or by increasing the rate of water movement from the surface-water body into an aquifer.

Land subsidence: The basic cause of land subsidence is a loss of support below ground. In other words, sometimes when water is taken out of the soil, the soil collapses, compacts, and drops. This depends on a number of factors, such as the type of soil and rock below the surface. Land subsidence is most often caused by human activities, mainly from the removal of subsurface water.

Deterioration of water quality: Under natural conditions the boundary between the freshwater and saltwater tends to be relatively stable, but pumping can cause saltwater to migrate inland and upward resulting in saltwater contamination of the water supply.

GROUND WATER STRESSED BLOCKS OF INDIA



1: Andhra Pradesh, 2: Gujarat, 3: Karnataka, 4: Maharashtra, 5: Madhya Pradesh, 6: Rajasthan and 7: Tamil Nadu

Source: IWMI

2016-17 Droughts in Tamil Nadu: A case study

The year of 2016 has faced the worst rainfall in last 140 years in Tamil Nadu. The average annual rainfall had gradually decreased 62% in 2016 in the region. The Northeast monsoon season had subdued over Tamil Nadu with the worse rainfall ever, just scattering rain in some areas. The highest deficit of normal rainfall in Indian states in 2016 is recorded in Tamil Nadu with 82% deficit.

This low rainfall has brought a thunder like hit since then it had left the crops and agricultural lands with no water for irrigational purposes. Also the Kaveri water issue became a huge headache for the farmers in Tamil Nadu, as no water is obtained from the tributaries of Kaveri River where it is the only source of irrigation for the Tamil Nadu farmers.

The crops had severely charred in lakhs of hectares. It is said that the harvest in the year will be the worst ever in Tamil Nadu. The depression due to lack of rain and produce has compelled many of them to take extreme steps of attempting suicide and each day death is occurring due to heart attack and other severe reasons.

Groundwater governance framework in India

The legal system for groundwater management in India falls within a complex, multilayered framework of constitutional and statutory provisions at the central and state levels.

The legal and institutional framework for groundwater protection is also complex. The Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act of 1974 and the Environmental (Protection) Act of 1986 deal with most pollution issues in India, but there are thirteen other related policy and legal ordinances. The Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB)—and at the state level the SGWAs and SPCBs—are the main responsible agencies, but fourteen other organizations also play a role. Within this framework, enforcement is not easy and state agencies are not well-equipped.

Lacunae in the legal framework are compounded by organizational deficiencies and weak governance. All the functions relating to water resources are vested with the government. These processes are neither transparent nor subject to any public scrutiny. Those directly affected and civic society organizations do not have any opportunity for participation or even consultation in these matters. Even the limited grievances and criticisms they voice are ineffective for lack of access to relevant information.

Another area of glaring failure of governance is in the implementation of water resource programmes for both large scale projects and in local water supply schemes, soil conservation, and watershed development. The use of contractors for construction of local works is the normal practice. They are closely linked to, or proxies for, locally influential people, often party functionaries. The procedures for award of contracts, inspections of implementation, and verification of works reported to be complete are very lax. Mostly they do not even exist. Instances of incomplete works, works of poor quality, and sometimes no work at all are numerous. Several instances have been reported in the press and documented in some evaluation studies.

Solution to Ground Water Depletion

- ▶ The water from businesses and private residences that run into the streets and sewage systems are commonly laden with chemicals. These chemicals find their way into larger bodies of water and absorb into the ground, poisoning animals and the soil. Proper sewage system should be maintained.
- ▶ Regulation on pumping of groundwater so that wastage of it can be minimised.
- ▶ Renovation of forest tanks in drought-prone regions will have a significant impact on wildlife and forest cover.

- ▶ Similarly, in some urban cities there is a need to regenerate groundwater aquifers because of the high degree of dependence on them for drinking water.
- ▶ Rainwater harvesting schemes have been taken up in many cities and even made compulsory in some of them.
- ▶ Temple tanks need to be renovated and urban wetlands protected. All these will contribute to a rise in the groundwater level and a reduction of salt water ingress.
- ▶ Community awareness and management of freshwater resources should be enhanced.
- ▶ The government should implement effective groundwater legislation and regulations through self-regulation by communities and local institutions.
- ▶ External support agencies should support freshwater resource management.

Conclusion

- ▶ Groundwater is critical for human survival as it makes up about twenty percent of the world's fresh water supply. The world is slowly realizing the importance of conservation of groundwater, the only sure way is to limit further population growth.
- ▶ Better technology innovation is needed to create more efficient irrigation techniques, such as drip irrigation as opposed to flooding, and genetically modifying crops that require less water like growing corn in place of rice.
- ▶ It is time to act now, to eliminate unnecessary wastage of water, before the very survival of our planet is threatened.

INTERNAL SECURITY

Why India Needs a Data Security Policy



Context

In today's world there is so much information being generated. So much data is being exchanged. There are questions about what is happening to this information, who is using this and for what purpose. It is natural that security is at the forefront of any conversation. For a country like India where large population is illiterate and unaware of the consequences of the theft of data, it becomes urgent for the government to ensure the safety of the data through Data Security Policy.

Need for Data Security Policy

With the penetration of internet and other networking technologies there is great deal of information that is available on network devices and network. So there is a need to have a policy that defines everything about the data security.

- ▶ **Defining Ownership of data:** Who owns the data, who is responsible for the security of data, what rights do the owners of data have, to what use data can be put etc. are some questions which needs to be answered.
- ▶ **Securing Economy growth:** Without any data security standards, development of new technologies and applications like IoT (internet of Things) is very difficult. Therefore it can hamper India's transformation to new high productivity tools which are essential for economic growth.
- ▶ **New and complicated and world of information technology:** With the emergence of new models like cloud the national boundaries and the distinction between companies are blurring. The development of security architecture for such technologies has become difficult, but needs to be done.
- ▶ **Survival of organization:** Data security is very critical to the survival of organization. If any breach happens, the trust and brand is lost and it can't be created back. Therefore there is need to have highly credible data security system for organizations. This needs a national data security policy.
- ▶ **Privacy concerns:** Data is associated with the privacy of the individuals and therefore Governments must be pro-active to address the privacy concerns through data security policy. The issue of Adhaar is example of this category.
- ▶ **National security concerns:** Breach of data can be very much detrimental to national security. If the classified data, financial data etc. which are critical are breached or tempered with the whole economy of the nation can be threatened.

The systems which are generating data and needs protection can be classified into two categories:

- ▶ Such asset that can be linked to a human being can be protected through passwords. For example laptop, mobile device, bank account, can be used for identity and access management.
- ▶ New areas of networking technologies like Operational technologies (things that cannot be tied to human beings but are connected to the Internet like a car or a plane or an assembly line), IoT (internet of Things) are emerging which will be generating huge amounts of information and the veracity and security of this information is very critical as any breach can create havoc for systems dependent on them.

Data security concerns of Aadhar

- ▶ There has been rumour of breach of Aadhar provisions in the Axis Bank case where a Banking Correspondent attempted to misuse his own biometrics to make transactions.
- ▶ Some banks and telecom companies hire unauthorized private agencies for the biometric authentications /e-KYC which leads to storage of data in parallel databases outside the purview of any privacy law and this data can be sold to interested organization.
- ▶ There is no legal remedy for the citizens if their data is stolen and only UIADI can approach for any legal remedy.
- ▶ Sec. 43 of IT Act makes body corporate responsible for the protection of information. But Aadhar Act does not mention whether UIADI, other agencies combined or individually is responsible for this and liable for breach of data.
- ▶ There is no provision for compensation for breach of data.

Which Areas should be covered in the Policy?

The policy clearly needs to address standards around:

- ▶ Identity and access management.
- ▶ Issues around data storage and data sovereignty.
- ▶ Standards on encryption.
- ▶ When developing products, how should test the products to make sure they are robust, particularly in the telecom space.
- ▶ How the hardware which is being imported should be tested.
- ▶ What are the rights of citizens, liabilities of organizations handling the data.

Way forward

Since India has ventured on the path of Digitization, where large amount of information related to demography, academics, health, finances, assets etc. will be available to different organizations which can be put to both beneficial and harmful use, there is urgent need that data security, privacy laws concerning to the data are passed. It will help in making the organizations, people aware of their rights and duties, will help government to take steps to ensure accountability for any misdemeanor and will help in early adoption of new technologies.

GOVERNANCE ISSUE

Election Commission Seeks Funds for Paper Trail Units


Context

After conclusion of assembly elections in five states many parties have questioned the functioning of the Electronic Voting Machines. Allegations of their tempering with have being flying thick and fast. In order to ensure the trust of the people and parties in election process, Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Nasim Zaidi has requested the Union Law Ministry for urgent release of funds, given the "prevailing environment," to facilitate procurement of VVPAT (voter verifiable paper audit trail) machines for the 2019 Lok Sabha elections.

Issues raised regarding Electronic Voting Machines

Election Commission has been using Electronic Voting Machines since 1998 and they have considerably improved the efficiency of the electoral process by reducing the time required for counting of votes. Apart from this, the practice of booth capturing, invalidation of ballot votes because of improper ink marks have also been controlled with the use of EVMs.

However, because of it being an electronic system the accusations of its manipulation by tempering with the chip, over-writing the code has been made time and again by different parties. Though ECI has taken up the accusations seriously in the past and challenged all parties, technicians, programmers to try to hack the machines during 2009, but the accusations have been made again and again.

Under such circumstances ECI has said that it is committed to deploying VVPATs along with EVMs in all future elections so that transparency of the electoral process is enhanced, integrity of the voting preserved, and the voters' confidence in the process is further strengthened.

Why there is need for VVPAT?

The Commission had recently received a memorandum from 16 parties demanding that the paper ballot system be reintroduced for greater transparency. The Bahujan Samaj Party, the AAP and the Congress have alleged tampering of EVMs. The Samajwadi Party has also raised doubts over EVMs.

But since taking a step back to paper ballot is not a rational way of solving the problem, VVPAT are seen as a good solution providing transparency, confidentiality, possibility of verifying the EVM tally.

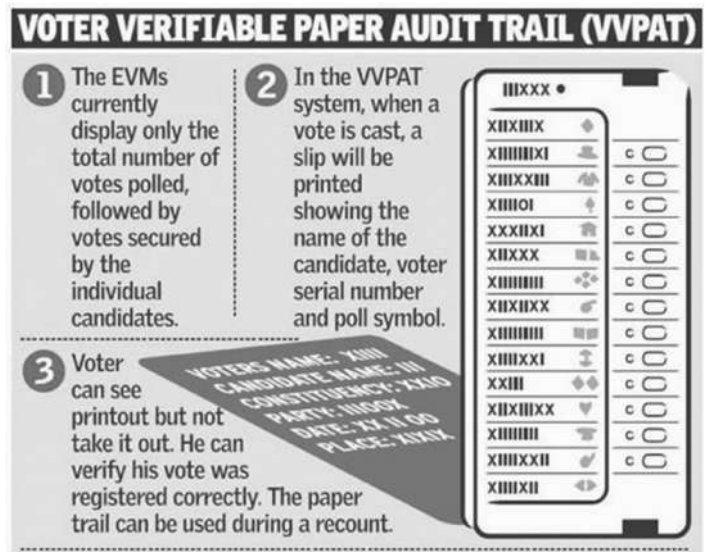
Over 16 lakh VVPATs would be required, at an estimated cost of Rs. 3,174 crore, to cover all polling stations in the next Lok Sabha polls. In response to Supreme Court questions regarding VVPAT, the commission had informed that the "required number of VVPATS can be manufactured from the date of release of funds in 30 months as per current capacity of the two manufacturers — **Bharat Electronics Ltd and**

Electronics Corporation of India Ltd". Since time is running out there is urgent need of funds for VVPAT. That's why ECI has asked for funds.

How VVPAT function?

The Voter Verified Paper Audit Trail is a method that provides feedback to voters. It is an independent verification printer machine and is attached to electronic voting machines. It allows voters to verify if their vote has gone to the intended candidate.

When a voter presses a button in the EVM, a paper slip is printed through the VVPAT. The slip contains the poll symbol and name of the candidate. It allows the voter to verify his/her choice. After being visible to the voter from a glass case in the VVPAT for seven seconds, the ballot slip will be cut and dropped into the drop box in the VVPAT machine and a beep will be heard. VVPAT machines can be accessed by polling officers only.



How the ECI budget is allocated?

- ▶ The Secretariat of the Commission has an independent budget, which is finalised directly in consultation between the Commission and the Finance Ministry of the Union Government. The latter generally accepts the recommendations of the Commission for its budgets.
- ▶ The budget of Election Commission is **voted upon in the Parliament**. Other Constitutional bodies like CAG have their expenditure charged upon the Consolidated Fund of India and therefore have greater financial autonomy.
- ▶ The major expenditure on actual conduct of elections is, however, reflected in the budgets of the concerned constituent units of the Union - States and Union Territories. If elections are being held only for the Parliament, the expenditure is borne entirely by the Union Government while for the elections being held only for the State Legislature, the expenditure is borne entirely by the concerned State.

The Government will provide Rs. 3173.47 crore to the Election Commission for procuring over 1.6 million Voter Verified Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT) machines which will be used in the forthcoming elections and the General Elections 2019.

The funds would be given to the Commission in two instalments — the first of Rs. 1,600 crore in this fiscal and the rest in the next fiscal.

The availability of the funds will help the Commission to ensure compliance of the order of the Supreme Court and its own commitment to use VVPATs with every EVM at all polling stations in General Elections 2019. The Cabinet decision brings to an end the Election Commission's seven-year-long struggle with the Government to secure funds so that an adequate number of VVPATs are made available at every election station during the elections. The Commission believes that this will help in stopping the electoral fraud.

GOVERNANCE ISSUE

Digital Sovereignty



Internet has been designed as a medium which was outside the control of the governments, providing unlimited freedom to individuals and focusing on self regulation. But with the pervading of internet into all spheres of life from personal, social, economical, intellectual to many others and misuse of it at large scale is also increasing. Thus internet is controlled by whom has gained significance. This becomes much more important in the wake of Snowden disclosures, emergence of new technologies like blockchain, crypto-currency, IoT (Internet of Things), big data, cloud computing etc which generated large data in a decentralized manner. All these new developments have brought the question of data sovereignty to the fore.

The Meaning of Digital Sovereignty

- ▶ Digital sovereignty means that a country has control over the cyberspace used by it and its citizens. It includes control over data and network.
- ▶ **Network Sovereignty** is the effort of a governing entity, such as a state, to create boundaries on a network and then exert a form of control, often in the form of law enforcement, over those boundaries.
- ▶ It also means user sovereignty, that internet users can freely and independently decide which data can be gathered, distributed, used and saved by them.

The concept stems from questions of how states can maintain law and control over an entity such as the internet for which the infrastructure exists in real space, but the entity itself exists in the intangible cyberspace.

Why digital sovereignty is needed?

- ▶ **Control of the large amount of data being generated:** Every time we use a free digital service, we leave a data trail behind. We do not know how the data – our data – is being used. This data can be used by corporations to run their businesses, by selling or sharing data on consumer behavior, their history. Therefore data has become a commodity.
- ▶ **Threat of misuse of data:** Apart from the conventional threats of identity theft, financial theft and other cybercrimes, the new types of threats of bullying the sovereign with data to change their policies, using data against the national policies by the corporations which are outside the territory of the country are emerging.
- ▶ **The Internet is dominated by oligopolies** that are becoming more powerful than countries, with consequences for individual freedoms and the exercising of rights.

- ▶ **Threat of surveillance:** There is always the threat of surveillance by other country using hardware and software tools, which undermines the sovereignty and security of the country.
- ▶ **Threat of interference in internal matters** through information war on internet, as being accused during US Presidential elections.
- ▶ **Asymmetry between the corporations and users:** The big players in the digital world have secured themselves a great amount of flexibility concerning the processing of data, and have taken away control from the user by virtually forcing them to accept their terms of use.
- ▶ **Digital domain being dominated by Western and especially US companies and government:** Most of the companies like facebook, twitter, google, Microsoft the giants in cyberspace are of US origin. Most of the governing structures of internet like ICANN is located in US, most of servers of companies are located in US, thus giving the country a clear edge compared to other countries in negotiations, designing control structures.
- ▶ **Respect for national laws:** Laws of countries differ but internet tries to eliminated boundaries and can lead to violation of laws like copyright laws and other laws. For example **Advertizing for sex selection on internet** was a violation of Indian law, but the advertisements were carries out by foreign companies.
- ▶ **E-commerce:** Emergence of e-commerce needs strict control over the digital space, which needs digital sovereignty.
- ▶ **Lack of transparency:** Even chancellor Angela Merkel mentioned that data is the commodity of the 21st century. It is a central element for new business concepts and the future of production. For companies, it is a way to optimise their products and make profit. But whilst it is great for the economy, the catch is that, there is no transparency in this area. Users are insufficiently informed which data is being collected and what happens with it. They cannot control their own data.
- ▶ It is also an attempt by government to control information on cyber space to control anti-government activities.

Different approached towards digital sovereignty

Many believe that the government has no right to be on the internet. As Law Professor David Post at the University of Georgetown argued “[States] are mapping statehood onto a domain that doesn’t recognize physical boundaries.” Many argue that current form of the internet is ungovernable and should remain as open as possible. They also say that when nearly 200 countries apply their laws to cyberspace which is not differentiated it creates nightmare condition. But still many countries have find out different ways to apply sovereignty to internet.

There are different approaches towards digital sovereignty:

- ▶ **Promoting domestic companies:** China, for instance, has systematically blocked most of Silicon Valley, and has instead encouraged the creation of its own Internet companies. The success of Alibaba at the New York Stock Exchange, as the Wall Street Journal put it, has only cemented how the Internet power balance is slowly turning towards Asia.
- ▶ **Protecting local data:** Brazil, on the other hand, is more concerned with how the data of its citizens are handled by companies such as Google and Microsoft. President Dilma Rousseff recently took the first steps in pushing for a law that would require foreign cloud service providers to store Brazilian data on servers hosted in Brazil.

- ▶ **Sovereign operating system and software:** A bill was introduced in French Parliament which called for developing a national operating system and softwares to come out of the dominance and surveillance threat of US. Though it was not passed because it would have amounted to building everything from scratch, but it has shown the threat perception emerging from governance architecture of internet.
- ▶ India, on the other hand, is far behind in terms of articulating a domestic vision on the topic and even lacks basics like domestic data security policy, encryption policy etc.

What should be done?

Digital sovereignty offers security and economic benefits and therefore should be the focus for new negotiations on cyberspace which must revolve around:

- ▶ **Internet governance: Multi-stakeholder based** (in which governments, civil society, business groups participate and decide) **or inter-government based.**
- ▶ **The question of ‘data residency’** — in other words, the principle of localizing data in the Internet user’s territory.
- ▶ A **Basic Digital Rights Charter** which would also include digital sovereignty for users.

The aim should be for more democracy and more freedoms. Whether it’s the stranglehold of unavoidable major companies or state surveillance, the battle should be against both. It’s about “giving the user sovereignty over their own data.” How to protect the rights of the citizen without giving too much powers to the governments should be the debating point.

GOVERNANCE ISSUE

Amendments Proposed in Child Labour Act

Context

In continuation of a number of steps to tackle child labour, the Labour Ministry has proposed draft rules to fix the working conditions for child artistes and for employing children in family enterprises. Last year Parliament has passed Child Labour Bill, which prohibited the child labour of any kind for below 14 year age (with exceptions of family business and entertainment industry) and in hazardous industries for 14-18 year aged.

What is child labour?

Child labour is the practice of engaging children in economic activity, on part or full-time basis. The practice deprives children of their childhood, and hampers their physical and mental development. Poverty, lack of good schools and growth of informal economy are considered as the important causes of child labour in India.

Child Labour Act, 2016

- ▶ The Act has completely banned employment of children below 14 in all occupations and enterprises, except those run by his or her own family, provided that education does not get hampered.
- ▶ The 1986 Act prohibited the employment of children under 14 years in certain occupations like bidi-making, mines, domestic work, power looms, automobile workshops, carpet weaving etc.
- ▶ Addition of a **new category of persons called “adolescent”**. It defines children between 14 to 18 years as adolescents and bars their employment in any hazardous occupations.
- ▶ The act makes child labour a **cognizable offence**. Employing children below 14 years will attract a jail term between 6 months to two years (earlier 3 months to 1 year) or a penalty between twenty-thousand to fifty thousand rupees or both for the first time.
- ▶ Repeat offenders will attract imprisonment between 1 year to 3 years (6 months to 2 years).
- ▶ The act has a provision of creating Rehabilitation Fund for the rehabilitation of children.
- ▶ The number of hazardous occupations has been brought down from 83 to 3. The three occupations are mining, inflammable substances, and hazardous processes under the Factories Act.
- ▶ It empowers Union Government to add or omit any hazardous occupation from the list included in the Act.

Why Regulations proposed for entertainment industry

The government had brought a new law to govern child labour, known as the **Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Amendment Act, 2016**, which put a blanket ban on employment of children below 14 years of age. However, it had made two exceptions in favour of child labour: children could work as child artistes (in the entertainment sector), and could “help” in their family enterprises. The present rules are meant to regulate their working in these sectors.

- ▶ Though working in entertainment industry brings much fame and money to the child artists, but still they are children and not trained professionals. Therefore they need separate treatment and protection from exploitation.
- ▶ Entertainment industry like reality shows, TV serials and others are accused of exploiting the children by forcing them to work on tight schedule, which several times contravenes the guidelines of child psychologists. Such tight schedule, more than 6 hrs of work stymies their mental, physical growth. It also effects their education.
- ▶ Several times they are not given fair share of their hard work. The money they receive is used by their parents for their own wellbeing and not for child's benefit.
- ▶ Many a times when a child becomes famous or is talented, is used by entertainment industry against his/her wishes, just for monetary gains.
- ▶ The pressure to perform according to the expectations of the professionals, the pressure from parents are some of the things which can hamper the psychological development of the children.

Therefore it was felt that there is a need for regulating the working conditions for the child artists in the entertainment industry, so that their rights are protected, they are not over-worked.

What are the proposed Guidelines?

According to the proposed amendments to the Child Labour Rules, 1986 the following regulations will apply:

- ▶ **Entertainment sector:**
 - At least 20% of the income earned by the child artiste will be required to be deposited in a fixed deposit account "in a nationalised bank". The money would be credited to the child after she/he turns 18.
 - The permission of the district magistrate would be mandatory for engaging a child artiste.
 - The production unit must nominate a person, who would be held responsible for the safety and security of the child artiste, according to the draft rules.
 - A child cannot take part in a "street performance for monetary gain".
 - Child artiste will not be allowed to work for more than five hours a day, and for not more than three hours without rest,
- ▶ **Family business:**
 - A child "assisting" in a family business can only work for three hours a day.
 - Children will be allowed to assist their family in running family enterprises "without affecting" their school education.
 - **The family would include parents**, real siblings, and "real brother and sister of the parents."
 - Such children will not be allowed to engage in any production, supply or retail chain which is "remunerative for the family and hazardous activities.

Way forward

The present rulings are a welcome step and will help in betterment of regulation of the working conditions of children in family businesses and entertainment sector. These will help in ensuring their healthy development; will ensure their education is not affected. Though to ensure all these there is need for strict implementation of all these regulations in letter and spirit.

GOVERNANCE ISSUE

Curb on VIP Culture



The Union cabinet has decided to put an end to the practice of using such beacons in a decision that covers all government vehicles, including those ferrying the Prime Minister, Chief Ministers, central and state ministers and judges of the Supreme Court and high courts.

Hereby analysing the new guidelines, misuse of VIP culture in India and its implications.

Introduction

Rule 108 clause III of Central Motor Vehicles Rules of 1989 governs law which governs the beacon and its colours.

Thus, the Union Cabinet has decided to amend the Motor Vehicle Rules to end the use of red or any coloured beacon by all, including the President, Vice President and the Prime Minister. This has raised the new slogan of equality in India i.e. “Every Indian is special. Every Indian is a VIP”.

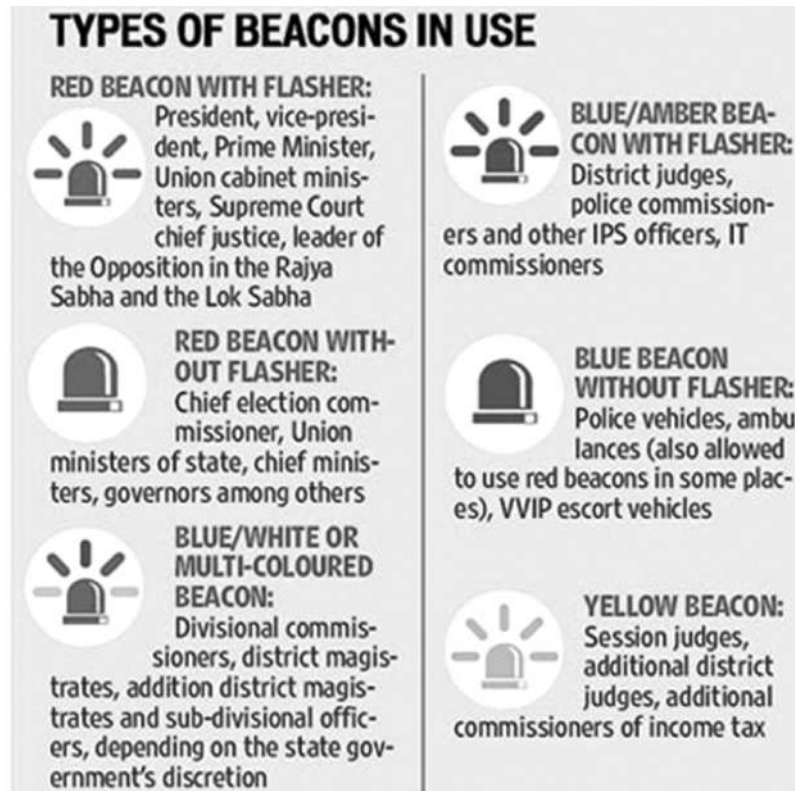
States which have already decided to curb red beacon?

- ▶ Aam Aadmi Party government in Delhi and recently Punjab CM Amarinder Singh and UP CM Yogi Adityanath have already decided to curb the use of red beacon.

About the guidelines

- ▶ **Red beacons discontinued:**
 - The Union Cabinet has decided to disallow the use of the red beacon on vehicles on Indian roads.
 - From May 1, 2017, no one including The President, The Prime Minister, Chief Justice, Governors, Speaker or the Chief Ministers of various states can carry red beacon lights on their vehicles.
- ▶ **Use of Blue beacons:**
 - From May 1, 2017, only vehicles on emergency services (police cars, ambulances and fire trucks) will be allowed to use a beacon — that too a blue-coloured one.
 - Officers in centre and state can carry blue beacons on their vehicle provided they are facilitated by ordinances ratified by the appropriate state governments especially for constitutional functionaries commuting intra state for official duties.

The government has taken forward a Supreme Court ruling of December 2013. It had sought to restrict the use of red beacons even with an amendment in the relevant law.



The Supreme Court, while hearing the petition on VIP culture, observed, “One of the issues highlighted in the note was that if the instinct of power is concentrated in few individuals, then naked greed for power will destroy the basics of democratic principles. But, what we have done in the last four decades would shock the most established political systems. The best example of this is the use of symbols of authority including the red lights on the vehicles of public representatives from the lowest to the highest and civil servants of various cadres. The red lights symbolize power and a stark differentiation between those who are allowed to use it and the ones who are not”.

The Amicus Curiae in the case had informed that the red beacon had actually become a status symbol and those using such vehicles treat themselves as a class different than ordinary citizens.

SC verdict: *Abhay Singh vs. Union of India-2014*

- ▶ **Defense for red beacons:** The second UPA government’s law officers defended the use of red beacons for its officials and politicians by arguing that –
 - Certain dignitaries and category of officials constitute a class by themselves, and
 - Red lights were “essential for effective discharge of their duties”.
- ▶ **Arguments by Supreme Court:** The court reacted by terming red beacons a “menace”. It argued that–
 - Red beacons are synonymous with the “Raj mentality” and are the “antithesis of the concept of a Republic.”
 - Red beacons symbolise power; it symbolises a stark differentiation between those who are allowed to use it and those who are not.
 - A large number of those using vehicles with red lights treat the ordinary citizens with contempt and have no respect for the laws of the country.
 - The use of red beacons by public servants has no parallel in the world democracies.

Significance of the move

- ▶ VIP beacon had become a status symbol, for which politicians and administrators aspire to.
- ▶ It is an important move to change the perception of the state functionaries from rulers to public servants which was the vision of our founding fathers.
 - Jawaharlal Nehru said: “The word ‘people’ means all the people. I am myself a servant of the farmers.
 - PM Modi while curbing the use of red beacons rightly declared that every Indian is a VIP.

Does it mean end of VIP culture?

However the red beacon is not the only expression of power on the move as can be seen below –

- ▶ VIPs’ cars are allowed to zip through toll plazas in special lanes, while public waits in endless queues; Pat-downs are avoided at the security gate at an airport.
- ▶ The power of official proximity is experienced by citizens the most while accessing government services like getting a bed at a state hospital, or a seat for one’s child in school etc.

Way ahead

To dismantle India’s VIP culture, doing away with status symbols such as red beacons is not enough. A lot needs to be done to make governmental authority people-oriented. Or to impart to it a benign makeover beyond the bayonets of armed guards used as status symbol by politicians across India.

The ground reality is that only those with serious threats are actually guarded. The rest are rewarded at considerable cost to the public exchequer; the patronage extended at times to people with the worst criminal records and private armies of their own.

We should take more pro-active steps like –

- ▶ Politicians and administrators should travel like ordinary people;
- ▶ Stripping the VIP’s of the massive security cover; and
- ▶ Reform procedures and the work culture to provide a level playing field to citizens to get what is theirs by right.

INTERNAL SECURITY

Issue of Cattle Smuggling and UID


Context

Along the largely porous boundary between Bangladesh and the Indian state of West Bengal, cattle-raids and cattle-smuggling, often conducted by criminal gangs, raise hundreds of millions of dollars annually in illicit profits. The activity is so lucrative and dangerous that it often costs the lives of the perpetrators and innocent bystanders.

To meet this crisis a Committee, led by a Joint Secretary of the Ministry of Home Affairs, has proposed issuing "Unique Identification Number Sequences" for cows and their progeny.

Hereby analysing the status of cattle smuggling and whether UID would be able to curb it or not.

Present status

The cattle trade on the India-Bangladesh border is worth \$500 million annually. The smuggling mainly takes place through North and South Bengal, Tripura, Assam and Meghalaya frontiers. A significant portion of the trade takes place in Murshidabad district of West Bengal. Cattle are brought from far-off places like Rajasthan, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, Haryana, Uttarakhand, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar.

Reason for cattle smuggling

- ▶ **Demand-supply:** The demand for beef in Bangladesh is quite high but the supply is limited. On the other hand, India is a cattle surplus country and the demand for beef is fairly low.
- ▶ **Profit:** The demand-supply equation keeps the price of cattle quite high in Bangladesh. A cattle head which fetches Rs.500 to 3000 in India gets as much as Rs.20,000 to Rs.40,000 in Bangladesh.
- ▶ **Export ban:** A major reason for the flourishing cattle smuggling is the export ban imposed by India due to:
 - **Article 48** of the Directive Principles of State Policy which tells state to prohibit the slaughter, of cows and calves and other milch and draught cattle.
 - Cow occupying a holy status in Hinduism.
- ▶ **Loopholes in laws (In India):** The smugglers also take advantage of loopholes in Indian laws. The law does not ban movement of cattle from one state to another. This is exploited by the smuggling networks to transport cattle from distant states in trucks and by rail to West Bengal. The cattle are transported purportedly for 'agricultural purposes'.

- ▶ **Cattle smuggling is not illegal in Bangladesh:** Bangladesh does not treat cattle smuggling from India as a crime. A cattle “smuggler” becomes a “trader” once he is in Bangladesh and pays Taka 500 (Rs. 383) as Customs charge. He only has to state that he found the cattle “roaming near the border”.
- ▶ **Difficult terrain:** In some parts of India-Bangladesh border, it is not easy to establish and maintain border pillars. This makes effective patrolling difficult in these areas.
- ▶ **Cultural links:** Also the communities who straddle the political boundary are of the same ethnic stock, with common language, traditions and culture. All this encourages smuggling of all kind including cattle.

Directive principle doesn't say anything about exports

- ▶ Directive Principles in Article 48 indicates that the state is required to enact laws to prevent “slaughter” of cattle. Export is neither banned nor recommended to be banned.
- ▶ States except Bengal and Kerala have enacted laws to ban slaughter.
- ▶ In spite of the laws, India is the biggest exporter of beef in the world since 2013 and is the fifth-largest consumer.

Consequence of cow smuggling

- ▶ **Killing of people, BSF personnel**
 - It has made the Indo-Bangladesh border a dangerous place for ordinary people.
 - To counter cattle smuggling Indian Border Security Force (BSF) fires on the smugglers which leads to killing of Bangladeshi citizens. NGOs in Bangladesh claim that over 1000 Bangladeshis have been killed on the border between 2001 and 2010.
 - In 2012, on the request of the Bangladesh government, BSF resorted to non-lethal weapons like rubber bullets and pump action guns. This led to reduction in killing of Bangladeshis but increased the number of BSF personnel injured in the attacks by smugglers. Thus India contends that the security forces resort to the use of lethal weapons in self-defence.
 - These accusations and counter-accusations have further deepened suspicion and bitterness between the two neighbours.
- ▶ **Linkages with organized crime and terrorists**
 - Cattle smuggling over the years has become a criminal enterprise with several networks involved in the trade. Cattle smuggling is part of a much bigger smuggling racket that includes human trafficking, guns and other contraband.
 - **Money laundering:** The smugglers obviously use the hawala route to transfer money and their activities have raised concerns about flow of fake currency and funding of terrorists.
 - **Terrorism:** Indian security and intelligence agencies have also found evidence of the link between cattle smuggling and terrorist groups operating out of Bangladesh, mainly Harkat-ul Jihad al Islami (HuJI).
 - **Illegal migration:** The cattle trade route is also linked to the problem of illegal migration.

Dilemma for Indian policy-makers

- ▶ Any steps by India to curb cattle smuggling could be interpreted as being anti-Bangladesh and further vitiate the atmosphere.

- ▶ But, if India fails to resolve the issue, more border killings could occur in the future.
- ▶ Also in India cattle trade is a highly emotive and sensitive issue.

Thus a Committee, led by a Joint Secretary of the Ministry of Home Affairs, has proposed issuing “Unique Identification Number Sequences” for cows and their progeny.

Objective

- ▶ To protect cows from cattle smuggling. (Stray, abandoned & retired cattle face high risk of falling into smugglers’ hands)
- ▶ To stop cattle smuggling at the source, instead of on the India-Bangladesh border at the cost of the lives of BSF jawans. Over the past three years, four BSF jawans were killed and 302 injured in skirmishes with cattle smugglers.

How will this happen?

- ▶ Each animal be tagged with polyurethane tags with Unique Identification Number Sequence which will include identification details like age, breed, sex, lactation, height, body, colour, horn type, tail switch and special marks.
- ▶ State level databank should be set up which may be linked with national online database for registered cattle.
- ▶ A nodal officer may be appointed as the Registrar of Cattle Premises appointed in each state under the Registration of Cattle Premises Rules, 1978, under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (PCA) Act.

Way Ahead

India should take a decision on this issue sooner to deny criminals and terrorists an easy source of funding and transit mode.

The most pragmatic, step would be to lift the export ban. This would make the trade legal, facilitate health check-ups of animals and generate revenue. It would also stop needless deaths on the border.

As an initial step, cattle trade can be allowed in specially organized ‘haats’ or markets on the West Bengal-Bangladesh border.

ECONOMIC ISSUE

Indian Railway Tourism Policy: 2017

Context

Indian Railways wants to position itself as the prime mover for tourism in the country operating more trains connecting tourists' destinations and also by providing an array of products starting from luxury tourist trains to budget catering tourist trains.

To meet this objective, it has proposed Draft Tourism Policy. Under this tourism will be one of the frontline activities of the Railways and the scope will be increased by focusing on domestic and international tourists and by making value-added tourism products especially designed for this segment.

About the Policy

The Railways is formulating a policy to promote tourism by connecting tourist spots across the country through trains.

The policy, a first-of-its-kind exercise by the Railways, aims at hassle-free and seamless movement of people across different tourist places and also by providing special train services ranging from luxury to budget sections.

Why needed?

India has a very rich cultural heritage. Further, Railways have presence in most parts of the country. It is also in the process of connecting more places especially the strategic locations that also are tourist places with limited connectivity at present. Hence, Railways can position itself to generate substantial revenue focusing on international and domestic tourists.

Presently, Indian Railways operates an extensive fleet of about 60,000 Coaches, 2.5 Lakh wagons and locomotives to serve the transport and logistics needs of the nation and is the single largest provider of transportation services in the country and is rightly referred the lifeline to the nation. However, its position of pre-eminence has been eroded in the past few years when compared to other modes of transport.

Studies have shown that for a country of India's size with nominal distances well over 400 Km, the road transportation may actually be detrimental to industry in general.

Despite the obvious advantages of rail transport, the relative share of Indian Railways in the transport and logistics sector within the country is on the decline. It is time to pause and reassess strategy for providing sustainable, assured and preferred logistics services to the nation and contribute towards nation building.

Indian Railways wants to position itself as the prime mover for tourism in the country operating more trains connecting tourists' destinations and also by providing an array of products starting from luxury tourist trains to budget catering tourist trains. The infrastructure on Railways can be leveraged for launching a diverse range of products and services to ensure bright business prospects with adequate profitability.

Basic features

Railways will position the following products for each segment - Luxury Tourist Trains, Semi-Luxury Tourist Trains, Buddhist Special Train, Bharat Darshan Trains, Astha Circuit Trains, State Tirth Trains, Flexi-package Tourist Trains, Ordinary Tourist Trains, Ordinary Tourist Coach, Dedicated Tourist Coaches, Hill Tourist Trains, Steam Tourist Trains, Value-added Tour package, and Foreign Tourist Quota.

IRCTC, the tourism arm of the Indian Railways, will position itself as an one stop shop for all the requirements of both domestic and international tourists. In addition to rail based tourism, IRCTC will strive to work out a link between railways, other infrastructure earning agencies and tour operators.

Booking of specialized tourism products will be done online through the websites of IRCTC or State Tourism Corporations. The charging principle of tourist trains will be decided separately on case-to-case basis.

Since tourist trains have special fares, the Railways can position itself to generate substantial revenue focusing on international and domestic tourists by launching more such services.

The infrastructure on railways can be leveraged for launching a diverse range of products and services to ensure bright business prospects with adequate profitability.

Additionally, the Railways plans to rope in several service providers, including Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC), to manage other services such as hotel accommodation and sightseeing for domestic and international tourists. The Railways also proposes to reserve special coaches for tourists on trains running through tourist spots across the country. It will auction such dedicated tourist coaches to tour operators at a premium based on which the tour operator may carry the passengers/tourists.

Tourism product:

- ▶ **Luxury Tourist Trains (LTT):** Luxury Tourist trains are specifically designed for up market foreign tourists. These trains should have specially designed coaches with luxurious interiors, an entertainment lounge, reading library, bar and very exclusive cuisines.
- ▶ **Semi-Luxury Tourist Trains (SLTT):** These trains will be operated using a fully air-conditioned rake comprising different classes of coaches. This service will offer an all inclusive tour package covering train journey, local transportation, sightseeing, food, etc. at a standard which can be considered as semi-luxury or a 3 star hotel level.
- ▶ **Buddhist Special Train (BST):** This will be similar to other semi-luxury tourist trains and will be operated on a popular Buddhist circuit.
- ▶ **Bharat Darshan Trains (BDT):** These will be tourist trains that will be run for the masses with sleeper class coaches and a pantry car. Such tourist trains will be at affordable rate so that ordinary citizens can use it.
- ▶ **Astha Circuit Trains (SCT):** These trains will be operated on the pattern of Bharat Darshan trains connecting famous religious places.

- ▶ **State Tirth Trains (STT):** These trains will be operated on the specific request from any State Government on a circuit and composition decided by the State Government concerned on the basis of full tariff rate. IRCTC will offer Value Added service to make it an all inclusive tour packages, the way the State Government desires. The entire cost will be borne by State Governments concerned.
- ▶ **Flexi-package Tourist Trains (FTT):** The requirements of tourists and their expectations vary in a wide range depending upon their financial affordability, expectations in terms of service on and off board. In order to meet the demand of different classes of tourists, a concept of tourist trains with differential tariff will be worked out.
- ▶ **Ordinary Tourist Trains (OTT):** These trains will be available on hire for specific religious or other purposes and to be run on Full Tariff Rates (FTR).
- ▶ **Hill Tourist Trains (HTT):** Hill Tourist Trains are specifically designed trains with varying composition and will be run on hill section. Their number will be increased during the season to meet the requirement of more tourists. An effort will be made to involve private participation in operating more trains and also to improve the financial conditions in hill railways in general through Public Private Partnership.
- ▶ **Steam Tourist Trains (ST):** Steam Tourist Trains are especially attractive for foreign tourists. Steam trains will be revived, to the extent possible, and will be operated in hill sections and also other sections where it is technically and commercially viable.

However, to meet the above stated objectives following steps will be needed for improving the overall customer satisfaction and services.

- ▶ Improving Reliability of Assets and Punctuality of Trains.
- ▶ Lowering unit cost of operation for passenger and freight transports to improve margins and providing room to maneuver competitive rates and services.
- ▶ Revenue enhancement by increasing modal share of Railways in Passenger and Freight transportation.
- ▶ Improving Cleanliness in Trains and at Stations.
- ▶ Enhancement in Security to prevent theft, pilferage and sabotage.
- ▶ Increasing average speeds of passenger and freight trains and reducing overall transit time.
- ▶ Improving efficiency including higher assets utilization, turnaround, failure mitigation and prediction.
- ▶ Running of more trains with intensive utilization of existing assets and efficient management of constraints.
- ▶ Improving Speed of execution for customers and delivery channels.
- ▶ Improving Quality of Services and management of perceptions.
- ▶ Energy Conservation.
- ▶ Improvement in Organizational and Human Resource Management.
- ▶ Better Accounting and Cost Management.

- ▶ **Hotels built above station platforms:** Railways stations are right in the middle of the cities and they don't utilize the precious space above the platforms. Travelers could stay in safe, convenient central locations, while railways could make huge revenues.
- ▶ **Multi-Modal Transit options:** A key to a good transportation system is the ability to switch between multiple transportation options easily. Direct connectivity between Airport- Railway station - Major Bus stops.
- ▶ **Information outlets:** As one land in a random station, he/she should be able to go to an "information booth" that just beams ones local information as a file to phone (through bluetooth/wifi). Or one can interact with the touch screen. It should contain all major tourist places and authorized hotels/travel guides/taxis as curated by the local station master. One don't want to miss out the important stuff when he/she is traveling.
- ▶ **Cover the tracks with solar panels:** Railway tracks are great pieces of real estate over which solar panels could be installed. The power could be consumed right under the panel by the electric trains. No need to store/transfer power too long.
- ▶ **Fast conversion to sitting trains:** One of the biggest problems with IR is the very low capacity. Because a lot of the trains are slow-sleeper trains. Those could be covered by high speed sitting trains, dramatically increasing capacity across the system.
- ▶ **Wifi connectivity on all trains:** Rajdhani already has Wifi. It should be extended to all trains. Let the nation be more productive by letting knowledge workers working right on the train, during long travel times.
- ▶ **Upgrade the sanitary experience:** The slow moving trains are a disaster in cleanliness. As the trains go longer, the stink goes higher. As you rapidly shorten the travel times, sanitary experience will be better. But, more importantly, new tech should be used for creating highly hygienic toilets. Similarly making the biodegradable toilets as pan India rail initiatives.

Conclusion

The Policy aims at connecting tourist spots across the country through trains. Its objective is a seamless movement of people across various tourist places with least possible hassles to tourists. However, the ideas should be scalable to cover wide variety of stations based on passenger volumes and diverse geographical locations.

The Challenge seems to encourage creation of innovative, easy to use products and solutions that can enable and drive access to services linked to passenger touch points right from entry to exit from the station related to convenient and seamless travel. Some of these critical services are ticketing, guidance, circulation and access.

ECONOMIC ISSUE

Consumer Get Free Hand on Paying Service Charge

Context

- ▶ *The Government of India has approved a new guideline giving consumer the right to decide service charge they wish to voluntarily pay on a hotel or restaurant bill.*
- ▶ *Service Charge in India worked quite differently historically. Instead of being a marker of appreciation, it was charity by the better-endowed, completely dependent on their whims and fancies. This cultural mindset is at odds with modern, businesses in a service economy. Restaurant service staff in India should not be expected to depend on the whimsies of the diners.*

The Meaning of Service

- ▶ The Dictionary explains the meaning of ‘Service’ as “A valuable action, deed, or effort performed to satisfy a need or to fulfill a demand or an action of helping or doing work for someone.”
- ▶ From the economic and taxation point of view, one can say that, service is an activity, (like transportation, communication, repair or maintenance etc.), carried on by one person for another for some consideration measurable in money.

What is Service Charge?

- ▶ The problem lies with a failure to understand **what really is “service charge”** in the Indian restaurant scenario. The world over, the practice of adding 5-10% to bills as “gratuity” is well established. But within Indian restaurants, service charge works a little differently.
- ▶ It is not merely the “extra” tip we pay as a thank you to servers for the efficient delivery of penne arrabiata. It is certainly not a feudal-style bakshish a person is doling out.
- ▶ Service Charges in Indian restaurants mean incentivizing the staffs. However, at most restaurants, only a portion of the service charge goes towards incentivizing staffs.
- ▶ Unlike cash tips that go to only frontliners, the percentage of service charge that is going to the staff is divided amongst all, according to a grade system. So the bottle washer has a share as also in some cases the accountant. Different percentages of the service charge earnings also account for overheads like breakages, staff welfare schemes etc depending on individual restaurant policies.

Service Charge and Tipping:

- ▶ Service Charge (also known as gratuity or a tip) is a sum of money customarily given by a client or customer to a service worker, in addition to the basic price.
- ▶ Service charge may be part of the restaurant's legit earnings and is taxed as such, but the right question to ask is '**why are restaurants so reluctant to not charge customers a single amount that reflects this true cost of product and services?**'
- ▶ What the department of consumer affairs has done is to equate service charge with tipping. The truth is that Indian restaurants treat this differently — as part of their legitimate earnings.
- ▶ For Example, **The Table** in Mumbai became one of the first high-profile restaurants to take service charge off their menu. To offset the loss in revenue, they increased the prices of the dishes and explained this to their customers in various communications, in an effort to increase transparency. Customers can still tip.

New Guidelines:

- ▶ As per the new guidelines now the service charge is totally voluntary and not mandatory. The column of service charge in a bill will be left blank for the customers to fill up before making final payment.
- ▶ A number of complaints from consumers have been received that hotels and restaurants were putting service charge in the range of 5-20% in lieu of tips. As per the new guidelines, if there is mandatory levy of service charge by hotels and restaurants, customers can file a complaint in the consumer court.
- ▶ As per the Consumer Affairs Ministry, there is no definition of service charge in law, but taking it without the discretion of the consumers is an unfair practice. Service charge is completely discretionary and should a customer be dissatisfied with the dining experience, s/he can have it waived off, therefore, it is deemed to be accepted voluntarily.
- ▶ The current consumer protection law does not empower the ministry to go for hefty fines and stringent action against violations. However, the new Consumer Protection Bill under which an authority will be set up will have powers to take action against such charges.

Implications

- ▶ Service charge may be a misnomer in the Indian context but making it discretionary will cause more heart-burn. Sensible restaurateurs who don't want to fight pitched battles every day seem to be gearing up to revise prices on their menus or it may be same.
- ▶ However, as an effort to spearheading the digital payment campaign, the Indian Government perhaps would not mind a limited deviation in favor of tips to the waiters being paid in cash because only that ensures that tipping remains voluntary in letter and spirit and reaches the intended beneficiary - the one who has attended on the table.
- ▶ In the restaurant scenario, the staffs are being paid wages. However, for efficient behaviour with customers and staffs, better serving practices, making customers feel easiness and dedication to serve require to provide incentives to the staffs for their motivation. These incentives should be completely voluntary which should go only to the staffs and not the restaurant owner's account.

Arguments against imposing service charge

- ▶ According to ministry, it is being wrongly charged, a component of service is inherent in provision of food and beverages ordered by the customer.
- ▶ It is only after the meal that the customer can assess quality of service (that whether they have been given more than the basic service) and decide on tip. Mere entry of customer to a hotel/restaurant doesn't entitle the owner to levy a service charge.
- ▶ Customers pay service charge under the impression that it is a tax imposed by government.
- ▶ Consumers have complained that hotels and restaurants were putting 'service charge' in the range of 5-20 per cent, in lieu of tips, which consumers have to pay even if they are not satisfied with the service.

Arguments in favour of imposing service charge

The Hotel and Restaurant Association of Western India (HRAWI) opposed the guidelines arguing that:

- ▶ Levying of service charge is a legitimate tax.
- ▶ Levying of service charge is a global practice.
- ▶ The charge is neither hidden nor disguised. It is categorically and boldly mentioned in the menu.
- ▶ Many other businesses apart from hospitality levy such charges.

Legal Aspect

- ▶ The Consumer Protection Act, 1986 stipulates that a trade practice which, for the purpose of promoting the sale, use or the supply of any goods or for the provision of any service, adopts any unfair method or deceptive practice, is to be treated as an unfair trade practice and that a consumer can make a complaint to the appropriate consumer forum established under the Act against such unfair trade practices.
- ▶ In accordance to the act, the department of Consumer Affairs called for clarification from the Hotel Association of India, which in response stated that the service charge is completely discretionary and, therefore, it is deemed to be accepted voluntarily.
- ▶ However, the current consumer protection law does not empower the ministry to impose penalty against violations. That's why a new Consumer Protection Bill will be passed soon, under which an authority will be set up which will have powers to take action.

INTERNATIONAL ISSUE

Extradition and the United Kingdom


Context

- ▶ *The Indian Government recently has sought extradition of Vijay Mallya accused of siphoning off a mammoth Rs. 9,000 crores of loans taken from different banks in India from United Kingdom.*
- ▶ *However, Mallya is not the first high-profile Indian based in the UK and wanted in India. The list of others whom India has sought to extradite includes Lalit Modi (for alleged financial offences), Ravi Sankaran (in the navy war room leak case), Nadeem Saifi (in the Gulshan Kumar murder case) and Tiger Hanif (in the Gujarat blasts case).*
- ▶ *But extradition is far more confusing and difficult a process than what it sounds like and has proven a tough nut to crack for the government to extradite many from different countries.*
- ▶ *The officials from India and UK have discussed the wide issue of clearing up bottlenecks in the extradition treaty which was inked in 1992 and focused on speeding up the process of extradition.*

What is Extradition?

- ▶ Bilateral, and usually reciprocal, treaty between sovereign states which (upon request) provides for the surrender of person(s) accused of a crime under the laws of the requesting state. Extradition may be barred for offences other than those punishable in the surrendering state, and (commonly) its courts must be convinced that a prima facie criminal case exists.
- ▶ Extradition plays an important role in the international battle against crime. It owes its existence to the so-called principle of territoriality of criminal law, according to which a State will not apply its penal statutes to action committed outside its own boundaries except where the protection of special national interests is at stake.
- ▶ In view of the solidarity of nations in the repression of criminality, however, a State, though refusing to impose direct penal sanctions to offences committed abroad, is usually willing to cooperate otherwise in bringing the perpetrator to justice lest he goes unpunished.

Position of Extradition in India

- ▶ In India the extradition of a fugitive from India to a foreign country or vice-versa is governed by the provisions of **Indian Extradition Act, 1962**. The basis of extradition could be a treaty between India and a foreign country. Under **Section 3** of this Act, a notification could be issued by the Government of India extending the provisions of the Act to the country/countries notified.

Procedure for Extradition in India

- ▶ Information regarding the fugitive criminals wanted in foreign countries is received directly from the concerned country or through the General Secretariat of the International Criminal Police Organisation (ICPO)-Interpol in the form of red notices. The Interpol Wing of the Central Bureau of Investigation immediately passes it on to the concerned police organizations. The red notices received from the General Secretariat are circulated to all the State Police authorities and immigration authorities.
- ▶ Action can be taken under the Indian Extradition Act Article No. 34 (b) of 1962. This act provides procedure for the arrest and extradition of fugitive criminals under certain conditions which includes receipt of the request through diplomatic channels and under the warrant issued by a Magistrate having a competent jurisdiction.
- ▶ Action can also be taken under the provisions of Section 41 (1) (g) of the Cr.P.C., 1973 which authorizes the police to arrest a fugitive criminal without a warrant, however, they must immediately refer the matter to Interpol Wing for onward transmission to the Government of India for taking a decision on extradition or otherwise.
- ▶ In case the fugitive criminal is an Indian national, action can also be taken under Section 188 Cr.P.C., 1973 as if the offence has been committed at any place in India at which he may be found. The trial of such a fugitive criminal can only take place with the previous sanction of the Central Government.

Position of Extradition in UK

- ▶ In UK the extradition of a fugitive from UK to a foreign country or vice-versa is governed by the provisions of The Extradition Act 2003.
- ▶ On 1 January, 2004 new extradition law came into force in the UK. This Extradition Act divides countries, with which the UK has extradition treaties, into two categories: Category 1 and Category 2. The extradition procedure varies depending on which category a country falls into. A third category exists in relation to countries with which the UK has an extradition agreement in relation to specific crimes.
- ▶ Many of the changes introduced under the new legislation were intended to address the increased global threat of terrorism in the post-9/11 world.

Procedure for Extradition in UK

- ▶ A country requesting extradition from the UK may either arrange their own legal representation or be represented by the UK's Crown Prosecution Service. All extradition requests to the UK start at the City of Westminster Magistrates' Court. Extradition cases were heard at the famous Bow Street Magistrates' Court until it closed in 2006.
- ▶ When a request for extradition is made the police apply to the court for a warrant in order to arrest the individual sought. The papers requesting extradition will then be checked by the Home Secretary to ensure the correct procedures have been followed. If satisfied, the Home Secretary will sign an Authority to Proceed. The case will then go before a judge who will decide whether extradition is justified. If the request is approved the individual facing extradition can appeal against the decision.
- ▶ To secure extradition from the UK, the country seeking extradition must usually show that there is sufficient evidence to bring a court case against the individual to be extradited.

- ▶ However, the UK has now entered into an agreement with some countries which means that they do not have to satisfy the UK court that there is sufficient evidence before extradition can take place. This rule applies to EU countries, the USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand.
- ▶ In most cases this arrangement is reciprocal meaning that the UK does not have to provide evidence in order to secure extradition of an individual from one of above mentioned countries. However, due to a hiatus in the implementation of the necessary law, there is no reciprocal arrangement between the USA and the UK. This means that whilst the UK must supply evidence to extradite from the USA, the USA does not have to provide evidence to extradite from the UK.

Bottlenecks in Extradition between India and UK

- ▶ It is difficult to persuade authorities in UK that committing a financial crime makes a person a fugitive. Also, their sensitivity towards any human rights violation makes extradition from England difficult for any country.
- ▶ The dual criminality clause is the key to initiating extradition proceedings, according to the experts. This means the accused has to be charged for an offence that is recognised as a crime in both countries.
- ▶ But the accused have several grounds of defence, as provided under Article 9 of the extradition treaty between the two nations. A person can challenge extradition citing possible persecution or the “trivial nature” of offence. For Example: Nadeem Saifi, wanted in the murder of T-Series founder Gulshan Kumar, managed to dodge extradition after a prolonged legal battle.
- ▶ The option to appeal at every level of judiciary, available to a person being extradited from UK, further complicates matters.
- ▶ There is also the aspect of UK’s crown prosecution arguing the case on behalf of India, “So it depends on how convinced they are”. And most importantly, the onus is on investigating agencies to make a water tight case to ensure extradition.
- ▶ India’s best chance of getting Mallya back through the extradition route will be to use ED’s money laundering case as Money laundering is a criminal offence in both India and UK.

Conclusion

- ▶ The wide issue of clearing up bottlenecks in the extradition treaty has been discussed between both the countries recently. While the laws of extradition are clear, there are other issues between India and UK which need to be worked upon. For example India has the death penalty while UK does not, in addition to which the issue of prison facilities was also brought up. These need to be addressed in due course.
- ▶ India’s best chance would be to persuade Mallya to come back. Otherwise, it is a risky, time-consuming as well as expensive process to follow on the path of extradition.

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUE

Melting of Antarctic and its Impact



The Antarctic ice sheet is 14 million sq km in area and holds a large amount of frozen fresh water.

In recent months, unprecedented rates of glacier melts have been reported in the Antarctica.

A massive crack in Antarctica's fourth-biggest ice shelf has surged forward by at least 10 kilometres since early January.

Glaciers cover the terrain in both these regions, which have the only permanent ice sheets that still exist on earth today.

Hereby, analysing the impact of melting of Antarctic Ice sheet.

Introduction

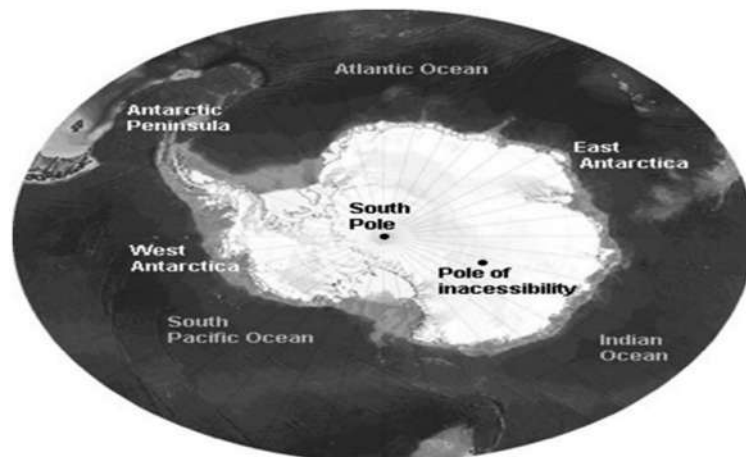
The earth has enjoyed a more or less stable temperature for the last 10,000 years. Prior to that there were several ice ages and periods of warmer temperature, also known as inter-glacials.

The ice ages are believed to have been caused by small shifts in the earth's orbit, but all the reasons for the temperature fluctuations observed are not yet entirely understood.

The melting Antarctic

- ▶ The Antarctic ice sheet is 14 million sq km in area and holds a large amount of frozen fresh water. (In comparison, the area of India's land mass is about 1.3 million sq km.)
- ▶ The Antarctic Peninsula is particularly sensitive to small rises in the annual average temperature, this has increased by nearly 3°C in the region in the last 50 years and this is about 10 times faster than the average in the rest of the world.
- ▶ The loss of ozone has also led to increased winds and storms, both in frequency and strength.
- ▶ If all the ice over the Antarctic were to melt, sea levels would rise by about 60 metres. Parts of the ice sheet also flow into the ocean and do so through ice shelves that protrudes into the water.
- ▶ The expanding rift or crack along the Larsen C shelf in the Antarctic has been observed, which is expected to break off at any time. Larsen A and B collapsed in 1995 and 2002 respectively. Normally, ice shelves lose mass by the breaking off, or calving of some of the portions and also by melting.
- ▶ Rising temperatures cause ice shelves to break up - as they are floating already this will not affect sea levels, it may cause the glaciers behind them to speed up their flow-rate considerably. These glaciers will add to sea-level rise if they melt.

- ▶ Thus, even though the Larsen C collapse by itself, since it is in the water, will not raise sea levels, but it will hasten the melting of the glacier it is connected to.



Impacts

- ▶ Over the past 50 years, the west coast of the Antarctic Peninsula has been one of the most rapidly warming parts of the planet.
- ▶ The warming of the Antarctic Peninsula is causing changes to the physical and living environment of Antarctica.
- ▶ The distribution of penguin colonies has changed as the sea ice conditions alter.
- ▶ Melting of perennial snow and ice covers has resulted in increased colonisation by plants.
- ▶ A long-term decline in the abundance of Antarctic krill in the SW Atlantic sector of the Southern Ocean may be associated with reduced sea ice cover.
- ▶ Large changes have occurred in the ice cover of the Peninsula. Many glaciers have retreated and ice shelves that formerly fringed the Peninsula have been observed to retreat in recent years and some have collapsed completely.
- ▶ Rise in sea levels: If all the ice over the Antarctic were to melt, sea levels would rise by about 60 metres. Parts of the ice sheet also flow into the ocean and do so through ice shelves that protrudes into the water.
- ▶ For India, the east coast, especially certain low-lying districts, are extremely vulnerable to intensive storms, which then lead to flooding, salt-water intrusion, and loss of land and livelihoods.
For example: Flooding in Chennai two years back did not affect just the land, but went through the economy as a whole and Swiss Re, the reinsurance company, has estimated losses to the economy due to the floods to be \$2.2 billion.
- ▶ On the west coast, while there are generally fewer storms, the concern is coastal erosion and flooding from sea level rise.

Way forward

Enforcing the coastal regulation zone, protecting vulnerable districts and the most vulnerable communities which rely on ecosystems and the sea for their livelihoods are areas that need strengthening.

Regional agreements related to refugees from climate effects need to be initiated. As a country which has generally been open to refugees from Tibet, Nepal, Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, initiating and taking forward the conversation on regional planning for extreme events such as sea level rise would be important for India.

GOVERNANCE ISSUE

Advocates (Amendment) Bill, 2017 Controversy



Law Commission of India has submitted its 266th report titled ‘The Advocates Act, 1961 (Regulation of Legal Profession)’ suggesting drastic changes in the Advocates Act 1961 to the Government. The Bar Council of India has opposed it.

Hereby, analysing the Bill and why it has been opposed by the Council.

Introduction

Supreme Court in Mahipal Singh Rana vs. State of Uttar Pradesh (July, 2016), had observed that there is an urgent need to review the provisions of the Advocates Act dealing with regulatory mechanism for the legal profession.

In this background, the Law Commission has reviewed the Advocates Act, because the conduct of the advocates, directly as well indirectly affects the functioning of the courts, and thereby contributes to the pendency of cases. The Commission felt that some provisions would be necessary to regulate the conduct of advocates in the court, which affects the functioning of the court as well as the expectations of the aggrieved, alike.

Recommendations of the Law Commission

The 266th Law Commission report has recommended comprehensive amendments in the Advocates Act. The Commission also submitted a draft of Advocate (Amendment) Bill, 2017.

Key recommendations are:

- ▶ Inclusion of non-advocate members on state Bar Councils and the BCI.
- ▶ Providing for the registration and regulation of law firms and foreign lawyers.
- ▶ It declares strikes by lawyers unlawful.
 - Some of the reasons sighted by lawyers to strike in the past five years are Kavisammelan, shraadh, heavy rains, etc.
 - Strikes have arrested judicial work. For example, In Tamil Nadu, subordinate courts work 220 days a year between 2011 and 2016.
- ▶ Defines the term ‘misconduct’ and provides clear penalties for professional misconduct.
- ▶ Increases the accountability by setting up grievance redressal mechanisms for litigants to complain against advocates.

- ▶ The commission recommended that at every district headquarters, the District Judge may constitute an Advocates' Grievance Redressal Committee headed by a Judicial Officer which will deal with the day to day routine matters, as large number of issues and grievances arise in the smooth working of the advocates. In case there is some grievance against a Judicial Officer, the Bar may raise the grievance before the Chief Justice of the concerned High Court.
- ▶ Law Commission recommends a specific rule making power for Bar Council of India to make rules for verification of certificates of Advocates and for periodical verification of antecedents, conduct, place of practice of Advocates; and to make a data based web-portal of all the advocates.
- ▶ Legal education in India should be structured in a manner where the BCI, along with legal academics may endeavour to innovate, experiment and compete globally.
- ▶ The Law Commission recommended a specific clause in section 7(1) of the Advocates Act to provide for the rule making power of the Bar Council of India for pre-enrolment training and apprenticeship before the induction of a person as an advocate.
- ▶ The Law Commission considers it necessary to have enabling provisions in the Advocates Act which will enable the Bar Council of India to frame rules to recognise and register foreign law firms and lawyers in India, as and when a decision is taken in this regard, particularly in view of the reciprocity provisions.

Bar council of India?

- ▶ **Type of body:** It is a statutory body established under the section 4 of advocates Act 1961.
- ▶ **Formed in:** 1961.
- ▶ **Objectives:** Regulating the legal practice and legal education in India.
- ▶ **Membership:** Its members are elected from amongst the lawyers in India.
- ▶ **Key functions:**
 - Prescribing standards of professional conduct and etiquettes,
 - Exercising disciplinary jurisdiction over the bar,
 - Setting standards for legal education, and
 - Granting recognition to Universities whose degree in law shall be a qualification for enrolment as an advocate.

Why lawyers protested?

- ▶ The proposed Bill "takes away the freedom of lawyers to act fearlessly in the court proceedings".
- ▶ Objections have also been raised against the proposal to provide for entry of foreign lawyers and law firms in the legal profession.
- ▶ To keep a check on the functioning of the BCI and state bar councils, the Law Commission has proposed that the bar council(s) should comprise one non-lawyer, so that effective action can be ensured against lawyers indulging in professional misconduct. Lawyers stated that this will destroy the autonomy of the state council and the Bar Council of India.

Way ahead

It is crucial for the Bar to appreciate the reformative exercise and engage with the policy-makers to come out with a comprehensive set of amendments.

ECONOMIC ISSUE

Proposal of Multi-modal Transport System

Context

All modes of the country's transport network are under severe pressure. As the country is poised for significant economic growth in the next two decades, it has become urgent to plan effectively the expansion of the existing network capacity, and the addition of new transport links and corridors.

Thus Centre has begun discussions on setting up of the 'Logistics and Integrated Transport Board'. It was earlier proposed by Prime Minister's Office (PMO).

About Logistics and Integrated Transport Board

- ▶ **Union government has proposed** a unified ministry to deliver a multi-modal system planned.
- ▶ It will be a national level nodal body for all transport-related matters across modes including Surface transport, railways, aviation and waterways.
- ▶ **The 'umbrella' Board will include:**
 - ▣ Top officials from other ministries concerned (Finance, Commerce & Industry, External Affairs and Home)
 - ▣ Senior representatives from the Indian industry and legal experts.
- ▶ It is likely to be chaired by a Union Cabinet Minister or a Secretary to Government of India.
- ▶ Initially it will work on improving inter-ministerial co-ordination to facilitate a multi-modal transport system.
- ▶ However, ultimate aim is to gradually set up a single unified transport ministry by merging the ministries of Aviation, Surface Transport, Railways and Shipping.

Why to have a single transport ministry?

- ▶ A single unified ministry can deliver a multi-modal transport system.
- ▶ **Benefits of multi-modal transport system includes:**
 - ▣ At times, Ministries of aviation, railways, surface transport and shipping work in "silos," in turn leading to **red-tapism**, as well as **time and cost delays** in transport and logistics, consequently hurting **India's trade**. Thus a multimodal transport system will boost India's internal and external trade.
 - ▣ **Other benefits includes:** contribution to high economic growth, expansion of employment, geographic expansion of opportunities, environmental sustainability, and energy security.

- ▶ Nearly all of the 100 largest economies, and BRICS countries have a Ministry of Transport (or similar integrated equivalent) instead of collection of mode-specific ministries found in India.
- ▶ It will compliment the Goods and Services Tax regime which aims to make India a unified market.
- ▶ It will implement 'minimum government and maximum governance'.

Other steps by government for multi-modal transport?

- ▶ Centre is planning to build 35 multi-modal logistics parks.
- ▶ Last month, Union Cabinet approved India's accession to the **United Nations TIR Convention**. This will help Indian traders to have access to hassle free global system for movement of goods by road or multi-modal means across the territories.

Meaning of Multimodal Transport:

- ▶ Multimodal Transport is essentially the use of more than one mode of the four modes of transport to carry goods from Point A to Point B.

Multimodal Transportation of Goods Act, 1993 (MMTG):

- ▶ This act provides for the regulation of Multimodal Transportation of Goods from any place in India to any place outside India involving two or more modes of Transport on the basis of a single Multimodal Transport Contract.
- ▶ This act came into force in 1993.

Conclusion

Though the formation of multimodal transport is just in proposal form but if implemented properly, it may help in boosting India's import and export.

ECONOMIC ISSUE

Concept of Willful Defaulter



- ▶ *There are some truant borrowers - corporate and individuals - who, despite having the capability to repay money, do not cough up money, these are termed as Willful Defaulter. SBI, United Bank of India and Punjab National Bank have declared Kingfisher and Mallya as willful defaulters.*
- ▶ *Hereby, analyzing the concept of Willful defaulter and steps taken against them.*

What is a Willful Default?

- ▶ Default means not meeting loan repayment obligations.
- ▶ According to a Reserve Bank of India, a default is willful when it fulfils one of the following four conditions:
 - A borrower (or an entity) does not pay up even when it has the capacity to pay,
 - A borrower has not used the loan for the purpose borrowed and diverted it elsewhere,
 - A borrower has siphoned off the funds and the money is not available with it in the form of other assets, and,
 - a borrower sells assets given as security against the loan without informing lenders.

Who can be Termed as a Willful Defaulter?

Following can be termed as willful defaulters

- ▶ Individuals,
- ▶ Juristic persons (groups of individuals, such as corporations) and
- ▶ All forms of business enterprises.

Penalties faced by Willful defaulters

- ▶ Being a willful defaulter means that the individual or company can attract certain penal measures.
- ▶ Banks and institutions are required to submit the list of suit-filed accounts of willful defaulters at the end of every quarter to the Credit Information Bureau (India) Ltd (CIBIL).
- ▶ Banks also report the names of current directors as well as directors who were associated with the company at the time the account was classified as defaulter. This helps to put other banks and institution on guard against such individuals. This list can also include independent and nominee directors.

- ▶ The worst thing that can happen if one is labelled a willful defaulter is it pretty much chokes off most credit channels since no additional lending facility is available from any bank or institution.
- ▶ Also, it shuts the door on any new ventures — a willful defaulter is not permitted to float any new business for a period of five years from the date of being declared a willful defaulter.
- ▶ Lenders are also expected to initiate legal process, which can include criminal proceedings if necessary, against the borrowers/guarantors and foreclosure of recovery of dues is expedited.
- ▶ But most importantly, banks and institutions have been given the right to change the management of willfully defaulting company.

What is the Case of Vijay Mallya's Willfull Default?

- ▶ Mallya and his companies have been embroiled in financial scandals, and controversies since 2012. Following charges have been leveled against him –

Willful default	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Kingfisher and United Breweries (Holdings) been named as willful defaulters. ▶ According to banks funds were diverted several times from Kingfisher Airlines to various UB Group companies and other firms. ▶ A group of 17 Indian banks are trying to collect approximately Rs. 9,000 crore (US\$1.4 billion) in loans which Mallya has allegedly routed to gain 100% or a partial stake in about 40 companies across the world.
Money Laundering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ The Enforcement Directorate of India also filed a money laundering case against him in March 2016 for allegedly sending abroad some Rs. 900 crore (US\$140 million) that had been loaned to his airline.
Cheque bounce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ In May 2016, the Hyderabad High Court issued a non-bailable warrant against Mallya regarding an allegation of cheating the GMR Hyderabad International Airport Ltd by issuing them a dishonoured cheque for Rs. 50 lakh.

How serious is the problem of willful default in India?

- ▶ According to a February 2016 report of the Standing Committee on Finance, willful defaulters owe state-owned banks at least Rs. 64,000 crore, That is about 21 per cent of the total Non-Performing Assets of Rs. 3 lakh crore.
- ▶ The top five willful defaulters in the country, the others being Winsome Diamonds & Jewellery, Zoom Developers, Kingfisher of Vijay Mallya, Suryavinayak Industries and Deccan Chronicle Holdings.

Steps taken

The Government has taken various measures to deal with both these categories of defaulters:

- ▶ In order to deal with default due to economic slowdown, the Government has taken various measures to revive the stressed sectors which mainly include steel, textiles, power and roads among others.
- ▶ The Government has also done recapitalization of banks by providing Rs. 25,000 crore in the last year Union Budget 2015-16 as well as in this year's budget 2016-17.
- ▶ Transparency and professionalism has been brought in appointment process for top management positions in the PSBs including Chairmen and Managing Directors.

- ▶ The Government has taken various measures to make the management professional, has given full autonomy to the banks in taking commercial decisions without any interference from the Government.
- ▶ Bankruptcy Law has been cleared by the Parliament.
- ▶ The SARFAESI Act and DRT Act have been amended to make the recovery process more efficient and expedient. Wherever it was observed that number of cases in which action taken by the banks against guarantors for recovery of defaulted loans is insufficient, the Government has advised the banks to take action against guarantors in the event of default by borrowers under relevant Sections of SARFAESI Act, Indian Contract Act and RDDB & FI Act.

Way ahead

Banks have been reluctant to resolve NPAs through settlement schemes or sell bad loans to asset reconstruction companies for fear of being hauled up by investigation agencies.

Thus the government is planning legislation that will empower the Reserve Bank of India to deal much more effectively with stressed assets than before as part of a broader plan to resolve banks' bad loans.

The reworked law will also empower RBI to set up oversight panels that will shield bankers from later action by probe agencies looking into loan recasts.

Once the law is amended, RBI will be able to give specific solutions for specific cases and also, if required, look at providing relaxation in terms of current guidelines, said a senior government official aware of the deliberations.

GOVERNANCE ISSUE

SC for Equal Pay to Paramilitary Officers


Context

Supreme Court in a recent judgement asked the Central Government to consider on the issue whether paramilitary forces - CRPF, BSF, ITBP, CISF, SSB - can be given monetary benefits like the 'organised services'.

The Supreme Court was hearing petitions filed by the Indian Police Services Central Association against a December 4, 2012 decision of the Delhi High Court seeking 'equal pay for equal work' for performing duties similar to that of group 'A' service officers.

The issues with Paramilitary Forces

- ▶ The paramilitary forces personnel were grieved by the non-grant of “**equal pay for equal work**”, a benefit granted to the organised defence services (Military, Navy, Air Force), and conferment of monetary benefits which can assuage their grievances.
- ▶ The paramilitary forces officers are not being given special allowances on the lines of defence forces even though they work in tougher conditions and round the clock.
- ▶ The paramilitary forces are engaged throughout the year in duties like elections, crowd control, rescue operations, VIP arrangements and other internal security managements. “For defense personnel, the commission has mentioned the words ‘trained for war like situations’ while for Central Paramilitary Forces (CPMFs) it has not narrated any such words.
- ▶ Forces like ITBP and BSF are placed as nation’s first line of defense round the clock on most inhospitable terrains ahead of army - at almost all forward locations apart from Siachen. They are also earmarked for deployment along with army in hot war situations but are still placed in ‘civil’ category straight way like civil officers and other similar civil jobs which is an abuse to the difficult service conditions of these forces.
- ▶ The paramilitary forces are still been placed in the ‘civil’ category even though their work profile ranges from guarding the border, managing tense situations, fighting the naxals and insurgent groups in different areas on the tough terrains.
- ▶ “There are about 38,000 officers in army while paramilitary forces have 16,000 men at officer rank as on 2014. A single army unit has four companies while one paramilitary battalion has more than six companies and officers of CPMFs have to command more troops than that of an Army officer. But CPMFs are still paid less in terms of allowances”.

- ▶ CPMFs are also ignored by the Commission in 'Contributory Pension Scheme' which was initiated for all those joining after January 1st, 2004. The CPMFs have been asking for pension on the lines of armed forces. This has also been ignored by the 7th Pay Commission which will down the morale of CPMFs.
- ▶ There are usually 6 to 10 Lt. Colonels in an army unit while a CPMF unit has only one second in command officer. The 7th Pay Commission while deciding the new pay matrix has not considered putting second in command (officers) of the CPMFs in the pay band 4 on the lines of Lt. Colonels of the Army.
- ▶ Officers of the three defence forces – Army, IAF and Navy – are paid 29% higher salary compared to their civilian counterparts from the IAS, IPS and other 'Group A' Services at the starting level.
- ▶ For post 2004 recruits, this pay differential has increased to 43% in favour of defence officers as civil servants who joined thereafter have to contribute towards pension benefits. This gap continues to remain wide at over 20% in favour of defence officers for the first nine years of service and remains uninterrupted higher for 32 years.
- ▶ Recently about 60 per cent of the officers selected for posting in the Border Security Force (BSF) have refused to join, citing reasons for second class treatment meted out to paramilitary forces as compared to the armed forces and stagnation of career.

What the Government thinks?

- ▶ As per the government, if the officers of Central Police Organisations were declared as Organised Group 'A' Services then there could not be any deputation from the Indian Police Service cadre and no one from there could come on deputation and it was likely to create a parallel system within the force establishment.

Way Ahead

- ▶ Non-Functional Upgrade system should be provided to the armed forces which allow 'Group A' from Civil Services including IAS, IPS and 47 others to draw the salary of their batch mates who get promoted. This gives them automatic time bound pay promotions till higher administrative grade (HAG) which is equivalent to Lt. Generals in the army.
- ▶ Separate Pay Commission for defence personnels which will be delinked with the civilian pay panel has been formed.
- ▶ Further, an expert committee should be formed to inquire into the change in status and command and control issues of the armed forces, vis a vis the bureaucracy, and recommend course corrections in a time bound manner.

Conclusion

- ▶ The army has played a crucial role in internal security as well. Be it a natural disaster or a riot, it is the army that is finally called in. It is one of India's most disciplined organizations—one which has achieved high standards of professional efficiency over time.
- ▶ Going above and beyond the call of duty whenever asked is the rare quality that our armed forces have shown time and again, winning the hearts of the people. And that too without speaking about their own issues. Therefore, it is imperative for us to go deeper into their issues and find the ways and means to resolve them.

- ▶ Further the governmental system and its bureaucracy must show due respect to the armed forces and the same should also be spread to the civilians. The government should take appropriate measures to address their issues in general and those arising out of the Seventh CPC report in particular. By doing so we can effectively give honour that the military holds dear.

Recent Initiative

Government has notified 7th Pay Commission for the military. It has approved increment in the pay matrix from 24 to 40 years, index of rationalisation for Lt. Colonels and Colonels from 2.57 to 2.67 and to pay protection for those promoted above Brigadier upwards because they lose the Military Service Pay. However, the key issue of Non-functional upgrade remains unaddressed.

NFU scheme ensures that all IPS and civil servants, at a minimum, retire at the HAG pay grade, a grade equated by Government with Lt Generals, Vice Admirals, and Air Marshals of Armed Forces.

GOVERNANCE ISSUE

Supreme Court Proposes Broad Anti-torture Legislation



Recently Supreme Court has given a statement that, "India may be finding it tough to secure extraditions because there is a fear within the international community that the accused persons would be subject to torture here".

It was a matter of both Article 21 (fundamental right to life and dignity) and of international reputation that the government must consider promulgating a standalone, comprehensive law to define and punish torture as an instrument of "human degradation". Such a law is in the national interest. The difficulty that India faces in matters of extradition may be because there is torture.

Thus, Supreme Court has referred the government for formation of broader Anti-Torture Legislation.

Background

- ▶ The court referred to the setback suffered by the CBI in its efforts to get Kim Davy — a Danish citizen and prime accused in the Purulia arms drop case of 1995 — extradited from Denmark. A Danish court had rejected the plea on the ground that he would risk "torture or other inhuman treatment" in India.

What is custodial violence?

The notion of 'custodial violence' includes all types of wanton acts that cover physical and mental torture inflicted upon a person in police custody. It is a brutal and inhumane treatment to a person that often includes death and torture in police lockups. Violence in police custody most likely includes slapping, kicking, beating, sexual harassment and rape. Keeping people in lock-up like animals, providing inadequate or no food or drink, keeping men, women, children together are also brutal and inhumane practice in police custody.

While custodial violence is common in the sphere of crime investigation to extract information/confession about crime and to recover property etc, it also occurs in maintenance of order situation particularly while dealing with political violence like terrorism, extremism etc. Unable to face the pressure from political extremists and in the absence of legal remedies to neutralize them, police often indulge in elimination of adversaries through illegal methods.

Law has prohibited use of custodial violence in unmistakable terms.

The **Indian Penal Code** makes it an offence to voluntarily cause hurt or extort confession or to compel restoration of property. The **Constitution of India** gives the fundamental right to the citizen not to be compelled to be a witness against himself.

Criminal procedure Code prohibits offering of threats, promises or inducements to extract information.

The **Indian Evidence Act** prohibits use of confession made before a police officer and the one obtained through inducement, threat or promise, in criminal trials.

The **Indian Penal Code** makes it an offence to wrongfully confine a person to extract confession or compel restoration of property.

The **Indian Police Act**, under which the entire police organisation in India derives its legitimacy and policemen, his power to function, prohibits unwarranted personal violence by police officer to any person in police custody. **Indian Penal Code** lays down minimum punishment for rapes occurring in police custody. There are punitive procedures both administrative and judicial in case of complaints of custodial violence against police officers.

Thus, it is clear that custodial violence is illegal and policemen, who are to uphold the law, cannot indulge in illegal acts. It undermines human dignity; brutalizes the police system; fortifies the trust of the people and the judiciary and also affects the image of police organisation as a whole.

Efforts in this regard

India has signed the UN Convention against torture way back in 1997. But it has still not ratified it. The Convention defines torture as a criminal offence.

A bill was also proposed in this regard. But, no steps had been taken to implement the Prevention of Torture Bill 2010 even six years after it was passed by the Lok Sabha on May 6, 2010 and recommended by a Select Committee of the Rajya Sabha.

The Centre had avoided an independent legislation on torture, saying that some States were not in favour of such a law and the Indian Penal Code and the Criminal Procedure Code were more than sufficient.

The petition filed pointed out that the Indian Penal Code did not specifically and comprehensively address the various aspects of custodial torture and was “grossly inadequate in addressing the spiralling situation of custodial violence across the country.”

Why should we enact the Law?

- ▶ To implement Article 21 (fundamental right to life and dignity). It will prevent abuse of custodial torture and ensure human dignity of citizen.
- ▶ To secure extraditions (it is because there is a fear within the international community that the accused persons would be subject to torture here as we saw in the Kim Davy case)
 - *CBI couldn't extradite Kim Davy from Denmark because a Danish argued that he would risk "torture or other inhuman treatment" in India.*
 - *Kim davy is a Danish citizen and prime accused in the Purulia arms drop case of 1995.*
- ▶ It is a matter of international reputation.
- ▶ Indian Penal Code is insufficient to deal with custodial torture
- ▶ 90% of the States had no objection for a special law on torture and even NHRC itself had strongly supported the need for such a law.

Conclusion

- ▶ Government has referred the matter of a special law on torture to the Law Commission of India.

- ▶ However, **the National Police Commission** recommended that there should be mandatory judicial inquiry in cases of deaths and rapes in police custody. The judicial inquiry should be held by an additional Session Judge nominated for this purposes in every district by the state government in consultation with the High Court. The nominated judge would be designated as the District Inquiry Authority (DIA) and assisted by assessor. The DIA shall send the report of the inquiry to the State Government. It will be mandatory on the part of government to publish the report and decisions taken thereon within two months of receipt of the report. The DIA shall also serve as an independent authority to oversee the ultimate disposal of complaints dealt with departmentally. To oversee the satisfactory implementation of the entire scheme, a public complaints Board should be set up that State level. At district level, surprise visits to police stations and similar units by the senior officers would help the immediate detection of person held in custody and subject to ill-treatment. Malpractices, if any, noticed during such visits should be met by swift and deterrent punishment. Unfortunately, the valuable recommendations of the National Police Commission were overlooked by the government.
- ▶ Custodial death is one of the worst forms of crimes and the most distressing part is that these types of violence are being committed by the people who are there for the protection. Rightly said by the French Scholar Blaise Pascal, “Justice without power is inefficient; power without justice is tyranny. Justice and power must therefore be brought together, so that whatever is just may be powerful, and what ever is powerful may be just.” So, no matter who passed the law and who is in power, the spirit of this enactment is just and it should be made powerful to prevent injustice.

ECONOMIC ISSUE

Concept of Bad Bank


Context

- ▶ *A bad bank is a new company created on a wholly owned subsidiary to buy poorly performing assets from another bank. In order to take care of the spiraling NPA level in banks, the concept of bad bank has been introduced which divides bank's assets into good and bad.*
- ▶ *By separating the two, a bank can avoid the contamination of good assets by the bad. It also alleviates the concerns of investors and helps the bank focus on future lending by improving health and transparency.*
- ▶ *The concept was pioneered at the Pittsburgh-headquartered Mellon Bank in 1988 in response to problems in the bank's commercial real-estate portfolio. According to McKinsey & Co, the concept of a "bad bank" was applied in previous banking crises in Sweden, France, and Germany.*

How It Works?

- ▶ Let's assume that Bank X has made an extraordinary number of loans to borrowers who can't pay them back. As time goes by, it becomes increasingly clear that a majority of Bank X's loans will not be repaid in full. The bad loans sitting on the bank's balance sheet are jeopardizing Bank X's ability to stay in business.
- ▶ Bank X decides to create a wholly-owned subsidiary to buy the nonperforming loans from Bank X. This new "bad bank" will buy the nonperforming assets and get them off Bank X's balance sheet, thereby improving Bank X's ability to start lending again. The 'bad bank' can either hold the nonperforming loans and hope borrowers start paying on them, or it can sell the nonperforming loans to other investors.

Why It Needed?

- ▶ Creating a bad bank is a way to segregate non-performing assets from a bank's core business. In theory, once the bad assets are removed from the balance sheet, the bank will be able to start lending again. The idea is that over time, the bank will earn enough interest from new, good loans to cover the losses from the bad loans it made before the financial crisis.
- ▶ The Financial Stability Report, produced by the RBI, had said that the gross non-performing advances ratio increased to 9.1 per cent from 7.8 per cent between March and September 2016, pushing the overall stressed advances ratio to 12.3 per cent from 11.5 per cent.

- ▶ As per Economic Survey 2016-17, India's NPA ratio is higher than any other major emerging market, barring Russia. High NPAs have weighed down the Indian banking system's capacity to lend money to the corporate sector, resulting in a drag on the country's growth.
- ▶ The Economic Survey 2016-17 also says, banks' credit to the corporate sector till November 2016 in FY17 was minus 8 per cent. A negative growth in corporate lending means the industry will not be able to invest in new projects to create jobs.
- ▶ Various countries such as Sweden, Finland and Ireland have used bad banks concept to help end financial crises which is always being encouraged by the Governments in order to stabilize a faltering financial sector.
- ▶ Even though the bad loans don't go away, getting the bad loans off a bank's balance sheet can give the bank additional time to repair itself.

Bad Bank in India

- ▶ The need for a government-owned bad bank has been felt for some time as the commercial banks are finding it difficult to deal with **NPAs or bad loans**.
- ▶ Considering the huge piling of **NPAs with the banks** draining on its profits, the idea of starting a bad bank by the government was recently proposed in the Economic Survey presented in January 2017 under the name Centralized Public Sector Asset Rehabilitation Agency (PARA) that could take charge of the largest, most difficult cases of non-performing assets (NPAs) in the banking system.
- ▶ The Indian government has not charted out any guidelines on the structure of a bad bank, such an institution would be largely based on the principles of an asset restructuring company (ARC), which would buy bad loans from the commercial banks at a discount and tries to recover the money from the defaulter by providing a systematic solution over a period of time. Since a bad bank specialises in loan recovery, it is expected to perform better than commercial banks, whose expertise lies in lending.

Critical analysis

- ▶ The issue arises here is that who will have the majority stake in the bad bank? Will it be the Government or the private investors?
- ▶ **In case of Govt. being the stakeholder:**
 - First, given the size of NPAs at PSBs, the capital required by a bad bank for acquiring NPAs will be substantial. If the Government is to be the majority owner, how does it find the required funds?
 - Second, a Government owned bad bank will be subject to the same constraints in managing bad loans as PSBs.
 - Third, managing the sheer size and diversity of bad loans acquired from multiple PSBs will be a tall order.
 - Fourth, a government entity may not be able to pay specialists what it takes.
 - Whichever way we look at it, a government-owned bad bank appears to be transferring the problem from one part of the government to another.
- ▶ **In case of Private Investors being the stakeholder:**
 - Investment in bad bank will be a long term investment such as sovereign wealth funds and pension funds. In this case, the price at which PSB loans are sold to the bad bank could become a major issue. If the price is too high,

the bad bank will not be viable. If it's too low, PSBs will be accused of selling their loans too cheaply to private investors — we will have the makings of an 'NPA scam'.

- ▶ Apart from this there are other issues with transferring NPAs to a bad bank. A big chunk of NPAs at PSBs pertains to projects that are viable. These projects have not gone through completion for reasons that are mostly extraneous to the project, such as problems in land acquisition or environmental clearance. With restructuring and additional funding, they can be completed and would create significant capacities.
- ▶ Selling these loans to a bad bank, on the other hand, would be a time-consuming process. It would impede fresh flow of funds into these projects. Their debt would rise as the interest piles up.
- ▶ This must be complemented with other steps. The government must infuse more capital into the better-performing PSBs. It must also create, through an act of Parliament, an apex Loan Resolution Authority for tackling bad loans at PSBs.
- ▶ The authority would vet restructuring of the bigger loans at PSBs. This would mitigate the paralysis that has set in at the PSBs because of the fear factor and get funds flowing into stalled projects.

Conclusion

- ▶ The stress in our banking sector must be eradicated by allowing the system to lend to small businesses and other growing sectors of economy. And the present health of our public sector banks does not allow them to do so. Therefore, a national bad bank is a good idea.
- ▶ However, resolution of bad loans and restoring the health of PSBs is among the biggest challenges the economy faces today. It's a challenge that requires a response on multiple fronts. A bad bank cannot be the sole response.

INTERNATIONAL ISSUE

China-Nepal Military Exercise

Context

Nepal and China completed their first ever military exercise with a special focus on combating terror and Disaster Relief. The joint military exercise was coincided with President Bhandari's visit to Delhi. China has promised continuity and support to the Nepal army in combating terrorism, and for keeping peace.

The China and Nepal relation may have impact on India and Nepal relations. Thus hereby analyzing it.

Introduction

The exercise code-named as "Sagarmatha Friendship 2017," started on April 16 at Nepal Army's Para Training School in Kathmandu. The drill lasted 10 days and its main purposes are counter terrorism and disaster relief. It was said the two countries initially planned to hold a battalion-scale military exercise. However, facing strong opposition from India, Nepal had to compress the size of the military exercise and changed the venue to a military school.

Nepal's point of view

Nepal maintained that it's a normal development for it to hold a military exercise with China as China is Nepal's friendly neighbor. In today's circumstances, when terrorism has widespread across the South Asian region, countries are holding joint military exercise with various countries.

Further, Nepal hopes to strengthen cooperation with countries around the world in security, improve the neighborly friendship pattern, promote the development of common destiny with surrounding countries, and work together to deal with various issues so as to realize the goal of sharing dignity, sharing fruits of development and sharing security.

Now that China and Nepal have developed closer economic relations, Nepal hopes to join China's Belt and Road initiative, for which regional security and stability is a necessity.

In addition, Nepal is located in an earthquake zone with frequent occurrence of natural disasters. In the 2015 earthquake, Nepal suffered a great loss. Nepal is citing that through the joint military exercise, Nepal can learn from China about disaster relief techniques, and thus, accumulating experience for dealing with disasters.

Strategic angle

Apart from terrorism and disaster relief, the exercise has strategic significance for Nepal as it is facing separatism at the domestic level and has in recent years ping-ponged between the sphere of influence of Delhi and Beijing as the Asian giants jostle for regional supremacy.

Deal with National Separatism: Nepal is not only worried about terrorism and extremism but also national separatism. It fears that Ethnic tribes such as Madhesis, which are pro-India and holding significant 37% of total population, can be utilized by India to contain Nepal. Therefore, it believes holding joint military exercises with China can effectively check India while at the same time contribute to deterring ethnic separatism in Nepal.

Balanced diplomacy-for Nepal, the joint military exercise has a deeper significance. For starters, it shows that Nepal moves forward in its pursuit of a balanced diplomacy among major powers. Since the 1990s, balanced diplomacy has become the basic principle of Nepal's foreign strategy. It has now started to look at China to balance its dependence on India in political, economic, cultural, military and other aspects. This urge for reducing dependence is critical especially in the context of 2015 blockade when supply of essential services and goods were affected in Nepal and that caused sour relations between India and Nepal.

India's concern

The joint military exercise between Nepal and China shows that the bilateral diplomatic relations has expanded from political, economic and cultural to the field of military defense. The increasing penetration of China into affairs of Nepal has become a cause of concern to New Delhi.

The joint training with China marks Nepal army's extension to military diplomacy. The Nepal armies have long been conducting joint military drills with Indian and American armies. This shows a significant departure of Nepali Army, which once used to be staunch supporter of India and was getting arms and ammunition from India.

However, that shift happened because of 3 factors.

- ▶ First, Nepali army got offended when the government of India stopped supply of arms and ammunition as part of its overtures to the Maoists to join the "peace process". The Nepal army was then fighting the Maoists.
- ▶ Second, since the joining the peace process the composition of Nepal armies has changed. It is now being under the influence of Maoist leaders who find themselves more close to China than India.
- ▶ Third, the continued instability and loss of credibility of the Nepalese state, and the failure of the "India-mediated and influenced political agenda" of 2005, has also created a legitimate space for other countries, mainly China, to enter Nepal as a stakeholder.

India views Nepal as its sphere of influence and a strategic buffer zone against China. Such military cooperation between them will affect India's influence on Nepal and bring it close to China thereby challenging India's supremacy in South Asian Region.

Nepal and China have started sharing a multi-faceted tie and a joint military exercise will only broaden that relationship. However, India is concerned about the impact of it on regional security and threat. China while using Nepal as a shield can cause widespread insecurity in Nepal. In future, China may weaken India-Nepal Treaty of Peace and Friendship signed in 1950.

India has an abiding interest in the stability and development of Nepal. The Government of India has been very supportive of efforts for building an inclusive agenda in its widest possible definition which will consolidate democracy in Nepal. India is suspicious that such military exercise can affect the democratic transition in Nepal.

India is also concerned about Nepal's peace, stability and prosperity. The first Chinese military exercise, most likely to be followed by Nepal joining the One Belt, One Road (OBOR) initiative soon, is seen as an indication of the events to come, which is something India is opposing. Neighbors like Nepal joining OBOR will isolate India at this front.

Ways ahead

India needs to amend its relationship with Nepalese army. Most importantly, the trust deficit has to be bridged for better cooperation with Nepali Army. India needs to take advantages of its geographic, political, economic, historic, religious and cultural relationships with Nepal. Close economic cooperation is essential to strengthen the relationships between them, and signing recent power agreement between them is one progressive step towards building trust that has been ruptured after 2015 blockade.

SOCIAL ISSUE

Status of Widows

Context

The status of widows in India is known to be vulnerable as a Poor, Lonely and Ostracised Citizenry.

Society is not positive even today for widow remarriage. Setting apart the laws societal norms are strong here that a widow has to die as a widow whatever her age and surroundings be.

Only about 28 percent of the widows in India are eligible for pensions and even among them less than 11 percent actually receive their dues.

Hereby analyzing the status of widows in India and critical analysis of the Swadhar Greh scheme.

Introduction

Indian family as a social institution is well known for the emotional and physical support that it provides, for its extended members, many a time but it fails to respond to the needs of women, especially for women in difficult circumstances e.g. for widows. She is stigmatized as women who have failed to safeguard her husband's life.

However, nowadays, various efforts taken by the civil organisations for improving livelihoods of widows.

Status of the widows

In India, widows are looked down upon as disgraceful, unlucky-even cursed. When a couple marries, the woman "divorces" her family and lives with her husband's family. Once the husband dies, relatives take away all of the property, sell it and divide the profits. They often leave the wife and the children with nothing. They are left on their own, living sad lives of destitution and poverty. Many widows turn to street begging or prostitution to support their families. Even then, widows are not allowed to attend their own children's weddings because they are so despised in the Hindu society.

They also face a variety of societal taboos everyday and practice austerity and self-denial. The traditional belief here is that once your husband dies, you must denounce worldly pleasures. They wear plain white saris as a sign of mourning for as long as they live and foregoing all cosmetics, no bangles, no nose rings flowers, Kukum and jewellery. Their presence at rituals, ceremonies and celebrations is considered inauspicious. Besides, must abide by severe diet restrictions as they have to live on vegetarian diet. They remain in seclusion avoiding social gatherings such as wedding ceremony and temple worship.

Those coming from orthodox families, in some cases, even shave their heads. Tradition necessitates that their countenance communicates solitude, destitution and sorrow.

The cities of **Vrindavan and Varanasi** – referred to as the "**widow cities**" of India – welcome thousands of widows every year; those who have no other place left to go. These cities are home to a large number of dingy, suffocated, guest houses and "ashrams" where impoverished and abandoned. Widows spend the remainder

of their lives. Most of the so-called homes run for these women do not even have running water in their bathrooms. The administration does not bother to provide them food. The women must beg or sing bhajans in the bhajan ashram to earn their only meal of the day. Once they become old and weak, they are confined to a corner and left to die.

In such places, young widows are often sexually exploited or enter prostitution. Elderly widows are reduced to begging outside temples or busy streets. Such widows don't have roofs over their heads. It's believed that about 15,000 of them live on the streets of Vrindavan, which makes a large majority of the 55,000 people who live there.

Some are fortunate enough to be allowed in bhajan ashrams where "they may sit in shifts to chant prayers – for a 4-hour shift they can earn a cup of rice and about 7 rupees". But most old widows suffer from ailments of all kinds and have nobody to look after them. They must fend for themselves in every way, whether it's earning or doing chores.

Leaving aside societal stigmas, economic problems could be addressed to some extent by formulating welfare schemes for widows. But facts reveal those that currently exist are poorly implemented. Only about 28 per cent of the widows in India are eligible for pensions and even among them less than 11 per cent actually receive their dues.

In the absence of financial independence, their hardships only increase. This is one of the major reasons behind their ouster from home — because they're seen as a financial drain on their families.

In May 2012, the Supreme Court took the first step in addressing the plight of these women by ordering a roster to be prepared on the widows here.

Analysis of Swadhar scheme

The Swadhar scheme was launched by the Union Ministry of Women and Child Development in 2002 for rehabilitation of women in difficult circumstances. The scheme provides shelter, food, clothing and care to the marginalized women/girls who are in need. The beneficiaries include widows deserted by their families and relatives, women prisoners released from jail and without family support, women survivors of natural disasters, women victims of terrorist/extremist violence, etc. The implementing agencies are mainly NGOs. An Evaluation Study conducted through Centre for Market Research and Social Development to assess the performance of the scheme.

NCW Study on Women Living in Swadhar Greh:

- ▶ In 2016, the Supreme Court asked the NCW to conduct a study of women living in widow homes.
- ▶ Subsequently, NCW conducted a study covering 35 widow homes in Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, West Bengal and Odisha. Earlier (in 2009-10) the NCW had conducted a study on Vrindavan widows.
- ▶ The National Commission for Women (NCW) submitted a report to Supreme Court
- ▶ In March 2017 NCW submitted its report to Supreme Court.

Key finding

- ▶ **Young widow:** More than 50 per cent of the women surveyed were widowed before the age of 45.
- ▶ **Average annual expenditure on a widow in Swadhar homes:**
 - Average annual expenditure on a widow was Rs 20,700 which comes to Rs 56 a day.

- ▣ This expenditure includes that on food, medicines, pocket money and vocational training.
- ▣ It is much less than Rs 81 a day spent on prison inmates.
- ▶ **Employment status:** 57 per cent of women surveyed were employed before coming to shelter homes.
- ▶ **Pension:** 70 per cent of them did not receive any widow pension.
- ▶ **Access to family property:** 84 per cent had no access to any family property or to any assets; 15 per cent of them had inherited property in their names but their family members and children denied them access to property.
- ▶ **Sanitation:** Sanitation facilities were extremely poor in most of the homes.
- ▶ **Counselling:** Counseling is neglected. No step is taken to assess their emotional and psychological needs.

Key Recommendations

- ▶ **Development of non-traditional skills:**
 - ▣ Young widows living in Swadhar Homes should be imparted trainings in **development of non-traditional skills.**
 - ▣ Non-traditional training (driving, computer training and micro-entrepreneurship), rather than stereotypical activities (tailoring and beauty culture) will go a long way in rehabilitating the young widows.
 - ▣ Have customised vocational training schemes which should be converged with Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana.
- ▶ **Self-defence:**
 - ▣ Young widows living in Swadhar Homes should be imparted **self defence** training.
 - ▣ Because their mobility was restricted due to safety concerns.
- ▶ **Sanctioned expenditure:**
 - ▣ It must be fair and appropriate keeping in mind the inflationary costs.
- ▶ The widow homes should be manned by **trained staff** and should have a **proper monitoring system.**

Conclusion

Recently the Supreme Court of India has appointed a seven-member panel to collect data on the socio-economic conditions of widows in Uttar Pradesh, taking note of their “pitiable condition”. The committee is to conduct an enumeration of the widows living in the city within eight weeks. The SC bench has taken note of the need for “immediate steps for their rehabilitation and better living”.

But the real voice for change must come from within the society, and the first step would be a change of the fatalistic and superstitious mindset that abhors widows and deprives them of their right to live. If we see human beings as disposable entities then we have done the greatest disservice to whoever we worship, for the message of the almighty power is that the greatest worship is serving and loving humanity.

Sensationalizing the issue yet, to date, there has been no condemnation by any religious leader or organisation of a practice that makes outcasts of widowed women in Hindu society. Neither have politicians bothered to ask why the government’s pension schemes for widowed women, such as the National Social Assistance Programme, Antodaya Scheme and Food Money Scheme, are not followed in shelter homes run by the union and state governments.

Prelims News



Hereby, compiling the important short notes of April (16 to 30), 2017.

Culture

CHENNAKESHAHA TEMPLE

Context

- ▶ Chennakeshava Temple, A Masterpiece of Hoysala Architecture, turns 900.

Chennakeshava Temple

- ▶ **When built?** Between 1106 and 1117.
- ▶ **Commissioned by:** Vishnu-Vardhana of Hoysala dynasty
- ▶ **Why built?** To commemorate the king's victory in 1104.
- ▶ **Architecture style?** Hoysala style.
 - It is considered to be the first temple of Hoysala style
- ▶ **Deity:** Chennakesava (literary meaning "handsome Kesava") is a form of the Hindu god Vishnu.
- ▶ **Where located?** Belur (Hassan district, Karnataka)



- Belur is 16 kms away from Halebidu (Hassan District), which was the capital of the Hoysala Empire.

- Belur, along with Halebidu, is proposed as a UNESCO heritage site.

- ▶ **Built on the banks of:** Yagachi River.

Distinctive features of this style

- ▶ **Star shaped base:** Temples have a star shaped base; main structure stands on a raised platform.
- ▶ **Three shrines:** Three shrines are structured around a central pillared hall, each with a tower.
- ▶ **Pillars with horizontal mouldings:** There are Pillars with horizontal mouldings, produced by a mechanical process.
- ▶ **Intricate grille windows:** There are intricate grill windows with an abundance of sculptural details.
- ▶ **Horizontal Tiers Sikharas:** The sikharas are constructed in well defined horizontal tiers unlike the northern style (parabolic).
- ▶ **Soap Stone:** The temples are almost entirely covered with intricate sculptural carvings. It was because temples were constructed out of a very fine grained soap stone (chloritic schist). It was much easier to work on this stone unlike granite or sand stone.

Names of other temples of this style

- ▶ Hoysaleswara temple, Halebidu
- ▶ Kesava temple, Somnathapura.

HERITAGE MASON PROGRAMME

Context

- ▶ Rajasthan government has launched the 'Junior Heritage Mistri (mason)' programme.

Objective of programme

- ▶ To raise workforce of masons for heritage sites.

How will it achieve the objective?

- ▶ Under the programme, training will be given to youths on indigenous building practices, crafts and arts, traditional structures and knowledge systems, with an emphasis on preservation of heritage architecture.
- ▶ On completion of training, they will get a certificate from the **National Council for Vocational Training**.

Significance

- ▶ It gives a boost to heritage masonry.
- ▶ This will help to help conserve the State's rich architectural heritage.
- ▶ It will positively affect sectors such as tourism, textiles and handicrafts while also creating more jobs.

Parent scheme

- ▶ This scheme comes under the Centre's **Heritage Mason programme**.
- ▶ Rajasthan was chosen as a pilot State for this scheme in view of its rich architectural heritage.

BAGHA NACHA**Context**

- ▶ Cultural experts at the Thakurani Jatra festival of Berhampur observed that the standard of '**Bagha Nacha**' has gone down as the performers are not showing interest.

What is Bagha Nacha?

- ▶ It is a traditional folk dance of Odisha (Performed mainly in Ganjam and Kandhamal districts).
- ▶ It is a tiger dance in which artists get their whole body painted like a tiger as a homage to Goddess Budhi Thakurani.
- ▶ Bhagaban Sahu had codified this tribal folk dance.
- ▶ It is showcased at the biennial Thakurani Jatra festival of Berhampur.
- ▶ The dance was the key element of the critically acclaimed movie Bagh Bahadur which won the National Film Award for the best feature film in 1989.

What is Thakurani Jatra festival?

- ▶ **Held at:** Berhampur.
- ▶ **Frequency:** It is held once in two years.
- ▶ **Duration:** The festival is 21-day-long.

- ▶ **Dedicated to:** Goddess Budhi Thakurani.
 - The Mother Goddess is worshipped in the Maa Budhi Thakurani Temple in Berhampur town in Orissa.
- ▶ **Ghata Parikrama:** It is the most important ritual of the festival, which begins on the third day. In this the garland dedicated to Goddess Budhi Thakurani is put inside a decorated earthen pot, called Ghata.

BASAVESHWARA**Who was Basavanna?**

- ▶ He is also known as Bhaktibhandari, Basavanna or Basaveswara.
- ▶ He was a 12th century philosopher, Kannada poet and a social reformer during the reign of the Kalachuri-dynasty king Bijjala I in Karnataka.
- ▶ He spread social awareness through his poetry, popularly known as **Vachanaas**.
- ▶ He rejected gender or social discrimination, superstitions and rituals.
- ▶ He introduced new public institutions such as the '**Anubhava Mantapa**' (or, the "hall of spiritual experience"), which welcomed men and women from all socio-economic backgrounds to discuss spiritual and mundane questions of life, in open.
- ▶ He was founder of the Lingayats sect.

Key works?

- ▶ **Basava purana**
 - It is a 13th-century epic poem.
 - It was written by Palkuriki Somanatha.
 - Language is Telugu.
 - It is a sacred text of Lingayat. The epic poem narrates the life story of philosopher and social reformer Basava.
- ▶ **Vachana Sahitya**
 - Basava literary works include the Vachana Sahitya.
 - Language is Kannada.

KUMAR GANDHARVA AWARD**Context**

- ▶ Kapila Venu was awarded Kumar Gandharva award this year.
- ▶ She is a Koodiyattam artist.

Koodiyattam?

- ▶ **What is it?** It is a dance drama conducted by the Chakkiyars (a caste among Hindus), who

provided the male cast and the Nangiars (women of the Nambiyar caste), playing the female roles.

- ▶ **Region:** Kerala.
- ▶ **Duration:** Koodiyattam performance lasts for several days ranging from 6 to 20 days.
- ▶ **Themes:** Based on Hindu mythology.
- ▶ Koodiyattam is enacted inside the temple theatre, known as the Koothambalam, with two or more characters onstage at the same time.
- ▶ Vidushaka explains the background of the story and gives a live image of characters in the minds of the spectators.
- ▶ **Language:** Koodiyattam is a dramatic presentation in Sanskrit, with the exception of the vidushaka, who is the only character speaking in Malayalam.
- ▶ **Makeup:** The make-up and costume of Koodiyattam are not so elaborate. Heroic

characters are distinguished by the green colour and the small curved paper frame on their face.

- ▶ **Music:** Mizhavu is the major musical instrument used in Koodiyattam.
- ▶ **UNESCO status:** UNESCO has honoured Koodiyattam by declaring the art form as one among the “Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity”.

What is Kumar Gandharva Award?

- ▶ It is an award instituted by the Madhya Pradesh government in 1992.
- ▶ It is presented to an actor of classical theatre.

Who was Kumar Gandharva?

- ▶ **Also known as:** Shivaputra Siddharamayya Komkalimath.
- ▶ He was a Hindustani classical singer. He was well known for his unique vocal style and his refusal to be bound by any Gharana.
- ▶ He was awarded Padma Vibhushan in 1990.

Science and Environment

KILLED VIRUS VACCINE

Context

- ▶ Bharat Biotech’s ‘killed Zika virus vaccine’ using an Asian and African strain has shown 100% efficacy against disease and mortality in animal studies. Bharat Biotech is based in Hyderabad.

About Killed virus vaccine

- ▶ A ‘killed virus vaccine’ contains virus that has been grown in culture and then killed using physical or chemical processes.
- ▶ Also known as inactivated vaccine.

Zika Virus

▶ What is the Zika virus?

- Zika virus is a mosquito-borne virus that is a member of the flavivirus group.
- This group includes several other viruses that cause serious, sometimes life-threatening diseases such as yellow fever, dengue fever, West Nile and Japanese encephalitis.

▶ Spread by:

- It is spread by daytime-active **Aedes** mosquitoes (such as *A. aegypti* and *A. Albopictus*).

▶ Etymology:

- It’s name comes from the **Zika Forest** of Uganda, where the virus was first isolated in 1947.

▶ History of virus:

- Very few cases of human disease were documented before 2007.
- In May of 2015, the first infection was confirmed in Brazil.
- Since then, more than 1 million people have been infected with Zika virus. Zika is now confirmed to be circulating in 31 countries and territories in the Americas, including Mexico, and is likely present in even more.

▶ Symptoms of Zika virus:

- In some cases, infection is mild i.e. flu-like symptoms, joint pain, eye inflammation and red rashes.
- In some cases, infection is associated with serious complications, including **Guillain-Barre syndrome**, a disorder where the immune system attacks the peripheral nerves and eventually causes paralysis.

▶ What is the link between Zika and microcephaly:

- **Microcephaly** is a neurological condition where a baby is born with an abnormally small head because its brain did not develop correctly.
- These children almost always have lifelong mental retardation.
- There have been reports in Brazil of **microcephaly** in babies of mothers who had been exposed to the Zika virus.

LHS 1140**Context**

- ▶ According to new research in the journal 'Nature', a "super-Earth" has been found 39 light-years away.

LHS 1140b

- ▶ It is the name for the small, faint red dwarf star it orbits.
- ▶ It is rocky.
- ▶ The planet was discovered by the MEarth Project.
- ▶ It's designated as a super-Earth because the planet is 40% larger than our home planet and has a much higher density.
- ▶ It is over 5 billion years old and has 15% of the mass of the Sun.
- ▶ It may even have an atmosphere. LHS 1140b's host star spins slower and emits less radiation which affects the planet's ability to maintain an atmosphere, water and stable compounds.

Significance

- ▶ It is located in the habitable zone of its star which means it could support liquid water, and potentially life.
- ▶ As of now, it is the most promising place yet to search for signs of life beyond the solar system, the astronomers.
- ▶ It may be one of the best candidates to look for habitable life by the James Webb Space Telescope, which will be launched by NASA in 2018.

Super Earth

- ▶ **What is it?** It is an extrasolar planet with a mass higher than Earth's, but substantially below the masses of the Solar System's ice giants, Uranus and Neptune.
- ▶ **What is it not?** This term refers only to the mass of the planet, and does not imply anything about the habitability or surface conditions.

AROMATIC STAMPS**Context**

- ▶ Department of Posts announced that, on April 23, 2017 it will release a 'coffee stamp' at the General Post Office, Bengaluru.

Technology involves

- ▶ The technology involves embossing or spraying the stamps with fine coffee granules, which will retain the aroma for long time.

Where are the stamps being printed?

- ▶ It is printed at India Security Press, Nashik.
- ▶ The India Security Press is a unit of **Security Printing and Minting Corporation of India Ltd. (SPMCIL)**
- ▶ **Security Printing and Minting Corporation of India Limited (SPMCIL)?**
 - It is a wholly owned company of the Government of India.
 - It is under the administrative control of Department of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Finance.

Why released?

- ▶ It signifies appreciation of coffee.
- ▶ It is also about philatelic interest. The stamp will be priced at Rs. 100. 1 lakh stamps will be ready for sale to collectors.

Previous stamps

- ▶ India introduced its first aromatic stamp in 2006 when we released a sandalwood-scented stamp.

Aromatic stamps introduced till now	Release year
Sandalwood-scented stamp	2006
Rose-scented stamps (in four varieties of the flower namely 1. Jawahar, 2. Neelam, 3. Delhi Princess and 4. Bhim	2007
Jasmine-scented stamp	2008

Which was the first country to introduce aromatic stamps?

- ▶ **Bhutan. In 1973**, Bhutan first introduced the concept of aromatic stamps.

3D PRINTING**Context**

- ▶ Scientists have developed a new way to 3D-print objects using glass.

How was it done?

- ▶ Researchers mixed nano-particles of high-purity quartz glass and a small quantity of liquid polymer and allowed the mixture to be cured by light at specific points. It was done by means of stereo-lithography.

What is Stereo-lithography?

- ▶ It is a form of 3D-printing technology used for creating models / parts in a layer by layer fashion using photo-polymerisation (a process by which light causes chains of molecules to link, forming polymers).
- ▶ The material, which remains a liquid, is then washed out in a solvent bath, leaving behind only the desired cured structure.
- ▶ The polymer still mixed in this glass structure is subsequently removed by heating.

Significance

- ▶ The 3D-printed glass can be used for many applications, including data technology.
- ▶ This advancement can be used to make very small optical components for complex computers.

GOOGLE UNVEILS NEURAL TRANSLATION TECHNOLOGY

Context

- ▶ Google announced that Google Translate will use a new ‘**Neural Machine Translation Technology**’ to translate between English and 9 Indian languages.

How will it work?

- ▶ Neural translation will translate full sentences at a time instead of pieces of a sentence which was done by the old phrase-based system.
- ▶ This will improve the quality of translation

Significance

- ▶ It will help Indian language users from to better use Internet.
- ▶ According to the report “Indian Languages – Defining India’s Internet”– by Google and consulting firm KPMG India, India had 234 million Indian language users who were online as compared to 175 million English web users. Another 300 million Indian language users will come online in the next four years.

Other steps by Google in this direction:

- ▶ Google also rolled out new Gboard (a keyboard for Android) in December 2016.
- ▶ It has transliteration support for languages such as Urdu, Tamil, Hindi and Bengali.

INDGEOID VERSION 1.0

Context

- ▶ India and Nepal have decided to remeasure Mount Everest in a joint exercise.

Why done?

- ▶ To address doubts expressed that the mountain’s height has reduced by few metres due to Nepal earthquake of April 2015.

Who all are involved in this project?

- ▶ India’s Ministry of Science and Technology, the Survey of India (SOI) and the government of Nepal.

How will it be done?

- ▶ This exercise will be done with the help of the Global Positioning System (GPS).
- ▶ Then a correction will be applied with the help of INDGEOID Version 1.0 model.

INDGEOID Version 1.0 model?

- ▶ It is a new mathematical model which was launched by Survey of India (SOI) in early 2017.
- ▶ It measures the height of objects above mean sea level.
- ▶ It gives the exact height of an object as it corrects for errors that arise while using GPS.
- ▶ Thus it is considered superior to the earlier methodology based on GPS satellites.
- ▶ It will take into account Geoid.

What is a Geoid?

- ▶ The Geoid is the shape that the surface of the oceans would take under the influence of Earth’s gravity and rotation alone, in the absence of other influences such as winds and tides.
- ▶ All points on a geoid surface have the same gravitational potential energy.
- ▶ **Geoid anomalies:** Variations in the height of the geoidal surface are related to density anomalous distributions within the Earth. Geoid measures help thus to understand the internal structure of the planet.

ARTIFICIAL WOMB

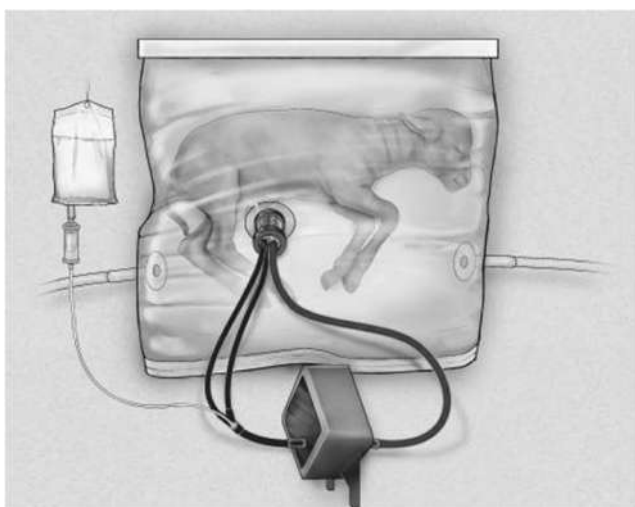
Context

- ▶ An artificial womb experiment was successfully carried out on a **pre-natal lamb**.

How does an artificial womb works?

- ▶ The new system mimics life in the uterus and could.
- ▶ The foetus lies in a clear-plastic sack filled with a synthetic amniotic fluid. A fluid environment is critical for foetal development
- ▶ The umbilical cord is attached via tubes to a machine outside the bag, which removes CO₂ and adds oxygen to blood passing through it.

- ▶ There are no mechanical pumps – it is the foetus heart that keeps things moving.



Significance

- ▶ The system if approved for human use in future it can help could help extremely premature babies avoid death or disability.
- ▶ Today, infants brought into the world after only 22 or 23 weeks of gestation rather than the full 40 have a 50/50 chance of living, and – for those that survive – a 90% change of severe and lasting health problems.
- ▶ After keeping these premature babies in artificial womb, we can avoid the above problems.

NASA'S SUPER BALLOON

Context

- ▶ NASA launched a huge Pressure balloon in New Zealand which has began collecting data in **near space**.
- ▶ The balloon was launched in Wanaka (In New Zealand's South Island).

Objective

- ▶ The balloon will collect data from 34 km above the earth.
- ▶ Objective is to detect **ultra-high energy cosmic particles** from beyond the galaxy as they penetrate the earth's atmosphere.

NICKEL-ZINC (NI-ZN) BATTERIES

Context

- ▶ Scientists have developed the nickel-zinc (Ni-Zn) batteries.

What are they and how do they work?

- ▶ In this a three-dimensional Zn "sponge" replaces the powdered zinc anode traditionally used.

Benefits

It has the following benefits over lithium-ion batteries (which at present are common in household devices such as smartphones and laptops)

- ▶ These are a safer alternative to lithium-ion batteries which are fire-prone.
- ▶ These battery provides better energy content
- ▶ These batteries have better rechargeability
 - Zinc-based batteries are not considered rechargeable due to their tendency to grow conductive whiskers (dendrites) inside the battery, which can grow long enough to cause short circuits.
 - But in these nickel-zin batteries, electric currents are more uniformly distributed within the sponge, making it physically difficult to form dendrites
 - With the benefits of rechargeability, these batteries can be deployed within the entire family of Zn-based alkaline batteries across the civilian and military sectors
- ▶ It has numerous applications in portable and wearable power, and manned and unmanned electric vehicles, while easing transportation restrictions.
- ▶ These batteries use earth-abundant materials.

NEW DATA SAFETY REGIME SOON

Context

- ▶ Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) is working on a new regulatory regime to ensure online data protection.
- ▶ Center informed a Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court that this regime will be ready by Deepavali.

Why there is a need of regime to ensure online data protection?

- ▶ It is required because of increasing of online transactions and presence
- ▶ Privacy and data protection is all the more important now because the less literate now use apps like PayTM and BHIM for cash transactions.

What about Right to be forgotten?

- ▶ Center also explained the need for online privacy in the light of 'right to be forgotten' of a person
- ▶ This right is practiced in the U.K., the U.S. and the E.U.

- ▶ This right is also called as ‘right to be erased’
- ▶ **What does it mean?** It means that citizens of these regions could request that search engines remove links to pages deemed private, even if the pages themselves remain on the internet. It deals with the person’s right to wipe out his past demeanours/crimes for which he has already suffered punishment.
- ▶ **What is the need of such right?** For example, a person commits a minor felony and is punished at the age of 20. But if he/she is searched on the Internet, then the information about this felony is the first to pop up on the screen despite the fact that in the real world it is long forgotten.

INS CHENNAI

Context

- ▶ INS Chennai was dedicated to the city of Chennai by Indian Navy.

What is INS Chennai?

- ▶ It is a P 15A Guided Missile Destroyer of Indian Navy.
- ▶ It is the third ship of the **Kolkata-class** stealth guided missile destroyers of the Indian Navy.
- ▶ It is named after the port city of Chennai in Tamil Nadu. It is the first naval ship to be named after Chennai.

Constructed at:

- ▶ Mazagon Dock Limited (MDL) located in Mumbai.

Timeline:

- ▶ **Launched in:** 2010
- ▶ **Commissioned in:** 2016
- ▶ **Dedicated to nation in:** 2017

What is Project 15 A?

- ▶ It is another name for ships built under Kolkata class destroyer.
- ▶ Under this three ships have been built which are under service. These are:
- ▶ The Kolkata class (Project 15A) are a class of stealth guided missile destroyers constructed for the Indian Navy.

Name	Commissioned in
INS Kolkata	2014
INS Kochi	2015
INS Chennai	2016

- ▶ All three ships were built by Mazagon Dock Limited (MDL) in Mumbai.

NOISE POLLUTION

Context

- ▶ Guwahati has declared ‘Silent Zone’ around all religious Places.

About Silent zone

The District Magistrate of Kamrup (Metro) district (which includes Guwahati city and its suburbs) has issued a notification under which

- ▶ The following five areas have been marked as silent zones in Guwahati. These include
 - all government and private hospitals;
 - educational institutions;
 - the high court, district and sessions court and the CJM’s court;
 - all government offices; and,
 - **“all prominent religious places inclusive of temples, gurudwaras, mosques, churches, monastery, math and naam-ghar, etc”.**
 - *It has declared a radius of 100 meters from “these five areas have been declared as silent zone.*
- ▶ State Pollution Control Board will have to submit a monthly report on noise pollution in these zones.
- ▶ The notification was issued in “compliance of the direction received from the Government of Assam”.

Underlying rules

- ▶ The decision was taken under Rule 3 (2) of the Noise Pollution (Regulation and Control) Rules, 2000, of the Environment Protection Act of 1986.
 - The Rule 3 deals with “ambient air quality standards in respect of noise for different areas/zones”.
 - Rule 3 (2) states that the “State Government may categorise the areas into industrial, commercial, residential or silence areas/zones for the purpose of implementation of noise standards for different areas”.

Polity and Governance

COMPUTER EMERGENCY RESPONSE TEAM FOR THE FINANCIAL SECTOR

Context

- ▶ The Sub-Committee of the Financial Stability and Development Council (FSDC) discussed the setting up of a Computer Emergency Response Team for the Financial Sector (CERT-Fin).
- ▶ This move comes in the backdrop of growing cyber attacks in the financial system.

What is C-SITE?

- ▶ RBI had already created a specialised cell (C-SITE) within its supervision to
 - conduct detailed IT examination of banks' cyber-security preparedness,
 - identify the gaps and
 - monitor the progress of remedial measures.

AIR INDIA PROPOSES FINE ON UNRULY PASSENGERS

Context

- ▶ Air India has planned to impose fines of up to Rs. 15 lakh on unruly passengers for causing flight delays.
 - A fine of Rs. 5 lakh will be imposed on unruly passengers causing a delay of up to one hour,
 - A fine of Rs. 10 lakh will be imposed on unruly passengers causing a delay between one and two hours and
 - A fine of Rs. 15 lakh will be imposed on unruly passengers causing a delay beyond two hours.
- ▶ Air India is now formulating a standard operating procedure to deal with unruly passengers.

CONSTITUTION (123rd AMENDMENT) BILL, 2017

Timeline

- ▶ The Bill was passed by Lok Sabha in second week of April 2017 and is pending in Rajya Sabha.
- ▶ The bill has been referred to a select committee which will submit its report in Monsoon Session.

Salient features of the bill

It inserts the following amendments in the Constitution

Article introduced	Description
Article 338B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ It accords constitutional status to the National Commission for Backward Classes by inserting Article 338B into the Constitution. ▶ By this it repeals the National Commission for Backward Classes Act, 1993. <p>Key functions?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ To monitor all matters relating to the safeguards provided for the backward classes by constitution or law. ▶ To handle grievances of backward classes. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ <i>Under clause (10) of article 338 of the Constitution, the National Commission for Scheduled Castes presently looks into the grievances and complaints of discrimination of Other Backward Classes also.</i> ▶ While inquiring into any complaint, it will have all the powers of a civil court. It will be able to summon any person, ask for a document or public record, and receive evidence on affidavits. ▶ Union and state governments will have to consult the Commission on all significant policy matters affecting the socially and educationally backward classes.
Article 342A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Any addition to the Central list of OBCs will need to be cleared by Parliament.
Clause 26C in Article 366	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ In Article 366 of the Constitution, clause (26C) will be inserted which will state that “socially and educationally backward classes” means the backward classes as are so deemed under article 342A for the purposes of this Constitution.

Significance

- ▶ It will give it a constitutional status at par with the National Commission for Scheduled Castes (NCSC) and the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes.
- ▶ Under the NCBC Act, the Commission merely has the power to recommend inclusion or exclusion of communities in the OBC list. The new Bill, once passed by Parliament, will allow it to look into all matters regarding the welfare and development of backward classes, as well as to investigate complaints.
- ▶ Now it will hear the grievances of backward classes which at present are dealt by National Commission for Scheduled Castes (NCSC).
 - The National Commission for the Scheduled Castes has recommended in its Report for 2014-15 that the handling of the grievances of the socially and educationally backward classes under clause (10) of article 338 should be given to the National Commission for Backward Classes.

CIVIL SERVICES DAY

When observed:

- ▶ 21st April every year.

Why 21st April?

- ▶ On this day, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel addressed the **first batch of probationers at the All India Administrative Service Training School** at Metcalfe House, New Delhi in 1947. In his speech he called civil servants as the steel frame of India.

Objective

- ▶ To make civil servants re-dedicate themselves to the cause of the citizens and renew their commitment to public service.

Prime Minister Award for Excellence in Public Administration

- ▶ **When presented?** On the occasion of Civil Services Day.
- ▶ **Instituted in:** 2006.
- ▶ All officers individually or as group or as organization are eligible.
- ▶ **Objective is** to acknowledge, recognize and reward the extraordinary and innovative work done by District/ organizations of the Central, State Governments.

Values to inculcate

On an event to mark Civil Services Day (21st April), Union Home Minister asked bureaucrats:

- ▶ To not become yes men
- ▶ Not to be afraid of the “political executive”;
- ▶ Refrain from signing orders that are illegal by showing them the rules.
- ▶ To be impartial as lack of impartiality affects our decision-making capabilities.
- ▶ To take decisions as “avoiding” taking decisions harm the country’s interests. “If necessary, discuss and deliberate with your seniors but there should be no hesitation in taking decisions.

JOINT DOCTRINE INDIAN ARMED FORCES

Context

- ▶ Joint Doctrine Indian Armed Forces was released.

Who prepared it?

- ▶ The Headquarters, Integrated Defence Staff

What does the joint doctrine proposes?

- ▶ The joint doctrine proposes the following:
 - Will facilitate the establishment of a broad framework for joint planning and conduct of operations.
 - Proposes joint training, unified command & control.
 - Lists the security threats India faces, including transnational threats, proxy-war in J&K and left-wing extremism. Radicalization of youth is a major threat.
 - Stresses that surgical strikes could be a key feature in counter-terror operations from now on.

Significance

- ▶ The doctrine will ensure application of military power in a “synergised manner leading to enhanced efficiency and optimum utilisation of resources”.
- ▶ As the doctrine proposes, surgical strikes are not a one-off event (*In the last two years, the Army had carried out surgical strikes across the border with Myanmar and Line of Control (LoC) Pakistan, targeting terrorist camps*).
- ▶ The first joint military doctrine was released in 2006.

LAWS TO REGULATE NGOs FUNDS

Context

- ▶ Supreme Court has sought a law to regulate NGO funds.

Background to SC verdict

View of CBI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ CBI records filed in 2016 in the SC show that only 2.9 Lakh NGOs file annual financial statements out of Nearly 30 Lakh NGO's registered under the Societies Registration Act. ▶ In some States, the laws do not even provide for the NGOs to be transparent about their financial dealings.
Guidelines by rural development ministry (April 4, 2017)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ In this background, On April 4, The Centre handed over to the Supreme Court the new guidelines for accreditation of NGOs in the country. ▶ Who framed the guidelines? The Union Rural Development Ministry. ▶ Objective of these accreditation guidelines? To regulate the "manner in which the VOs/NGOs, which are recipient of grants, would maintain their account, the procedure for audit of the account, including procedure to initiate action for recovering of the grants in case of misappropriation and criminal action".
SC verdict (April 2017)	<p>Suggestions made?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Government ought to frame a statutory law to regulate the flow of public money to the NGOs. ▶ NITI Aayog should be appointed as the nodal agency for NGO registration. <p>Why frame a new law?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Because the guidelines might not prove sufficient for "systematising the entire process of accreditation, fund utilisation and audit of NGOs".

Black list

- ▶ The court also gave the government the liberty to start civil and criminal proceedings against 703 NGOs, which according to CAPART, have defaulted.
- ▶ Council for Advancement of People's Action and Rural Technology (CAPART) works under the Rural Development Ministry.

CIVIL & CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORMS**Context**

NITI Aayog in its draft three-year action plan proposed the following reform in civil & criminal justice system -

- ▶ Judicial performance index proposed.
- ▶ Outsourcing non-core functions of police.
- ▶ Changes in criminal justice and procedural laws.
- ▶ Repeal of all irrelevant legislation by March 2019.
- ▶ Reforms in land ownership laws (which account for 67% of litigants in civil suits).
- ▶ India's police to population ratio should reach the United Nations norms of 222 per lakh population, over the next seven years, from the current level of 137.
- ▶ Increase hiring of women in the police force, with a target of 30% of all new recruits.
- ▶ Real-time judicial appointments.

Judicial Performance Index for courts

- ▶ The creating it could help High Courts and their chief justices keep track of the performance and processes at district courts and subordinate levels for reducing delay.
- ▶ It will entail fixing of 'non-mandatory time frames for different types of cases to benchmark when a case has been delayed.'

Outsourcing non-core functions of police

- ▶ Create a task force to identify 'non-core functions' that can be outsourced to private agents or government departments.
- ▶ Some non-core functions that can be outsourced are serving court summons, address verification for passport applications.
- ▶ This will reduce the workload of the police.

Real-time judicial appointments

- ▶ Streamline judicial appointments on the basis of online real-time statistics on the workload of pending cases.
- ▶ Such data will help enable “priority appointment of judges at the lower judiciary levels keeping in mind the number of judges needed to tackle pendency.

SWACHH ICONIC LIST

Context

Under phase-II of the Swachh Iconic Places (SIP) initiative, the Centre has decided to bring 10 iconic places in India.

The 10 places included under phase-II are:

- ▶ Gangotri,
- ▶ Yamunotri,
- ▶ Char Minar in Hyderabad,
- ▶ Mahakaleswar Temple in Ujjain,
- ▶ Church and Convent of St. Francis of Assisi in Goa,
- ▶ Gomateshwar in Shravanabelagola,
- ▶ Adi Shankaracharya’s abode Kaladi in Ernakulam,
- ▶ Baijnath Dham in Devghar,
- ▶ Gaya Tirth in Bihar, and
- ▶ Somnath temple in Gujarat.

The 10 iconic places already in Phase-I are:

- ▶ Ajmer Sharif Dargah,
- ▶ CST Mumbai,
- ▶ Kamakhya temple in Assam,
- ▶ Golden temple in Amritsar,
- ▶ Maikarnika Ghat in Varanasi,
- ▶ Shri Mata Vaishno Devi in Katra,
- ▶ Meenakshi temple in Madurai,
- ▶ Shree Jagannath temple in Puri,
- ▶ Taj Mahal and
- ▶ Venkateswara temple in Tirupati.

What is Swachh Iconic Places (SIP) initiative?

- ▶ It is an initiative under Swachh Bharat Mission.
- ▶ **Objective is** to make 100 places as a model Swachh Tourist Destinations which will enhance the experience for tourists.
- ▶ The initiative focuses on 100 iconic heritage, cultural and spiritual places in India.

- ▶ Agencies involved?
 - Union Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation is the coordinating Ministry
 - Other ministries involved are: Union Ministry of Urban Development, Union Ministry of Culture, Union Ministry of Tourism and the concerned State governments.

TEST AND TREAT POLICY FOR HIV PATIENTS

Context

- ▶ Health Ministry has launched ‘Test and Treat Policy for HIV’.

Salient features of the policy

- ▶ As soon as a person is tested and found to be HIV positive, he will be provided with ART irrespective of his CD count or clinical stage.
- ▶ This will be for all men, women, adolescents and children who have been diagnosed as a HIV+ case.
- ▶ Every person who tests positive for HIV is entitled to free treatment.

Steps under this direction

- ▶ **Testing:** Out of 21 lakh estimated with HIV, we know only 14 lakh. To detect remaining we have revised national HIV testing guidelines and are aiming to reach out to people in community and test them with proper counseling and consent.
- ▶ **Treatment:** to provide treatment, government is expanding treatment delivery sites.
- ▶ **90:90:90 strategy:** Health ministry has adopted the 90:90:90 strategy which will help to identify 90% of those infected, place 90% of these on treatment and ensure 90% have their virus under control. This strategy will help us in “ending AIDS by 2030” as a part of the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG).”

Significance of this policy

- ▶ It will improve longevity;
- ▶ It will improve quality of life of those infected;
- ▶ It will save them from many opportunistic infections, especially TB; and
- ▶ Without regular testing, it is not possible to determine what level of treatment (first line, second line or third line) a patient needs.

Way ahead

- ▶ The Health Minister also announced that India will soon develop a National Strategic Plan for HIV for next seven years and these seven years will be crucial for ending AIDS.

COMMON DUCT POLICY

Context

- ▶ The Centre has announced that it will soon come out with a common duct policy.

What will be done under this policy?

- ▶ Under this policy, a common duct will be laid across a city for about 20 years. Once the duct is made, no service provider will be allowed to dig the road
- ▶ Thereafter service providers such as digital TV and telcos players can lease these ducts to pass their fibre through it to offer services to consumers.

What will be the benefits of this policy (if launched)? It will

- ▶ reduce operational costs,
- ▶ reduce frequent digging of roads and
- ▶ ensure additional revenue for the municipalities and remove issues related to right of way.

Present status?

- ▶ For introducing this policy, Telecom Regulatory Authority of India is carrying out pilots in Deoghar in Jharkhand.
- ▶ Based on experience in Jharkhand, the proposal will be forwarded to the government.

Other Important News in Brief

STARTUPS INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY PROTECTION (SIPP)

Context

- ▶ The government has extended the Start-ups Intellectual Property Protection (SIPP) scheme for 3 years. Now it will run till March 2020.

What is Start-ups intellectual Property Protection (SIPP) scheme?

- ▶ **Objective:** To promote awareness and adoption of intellectual property rights amongst start-ups.
- ▶ **Significance:** It is crucial for start-ups to protect their intellectual property rights (IPRs) in a highly competitive world.
- ▶ **Facilitators:** For effective implementation of the scheme, facilitators shall be empanelled by the controller general of patent, trademark and design (CGPDTM).
- ▶ **Implementation period:**
 - The scheme was launched in 2016 on a pilot basis for a period of 1 year till March 31, 2017.

YASH BHARTI AWARDS

Context

- ▶ UP CM Yogi Adityanath has ordered the officials to thoroughly review the criteria and norms for Yash Bharti Awards
- ▶ He argued that giving them away to undeserving persons lowers the prestige of such an honour.

About Yash Bharti Award

- ▶ **What is it?** It is the highest Award of Government of Uttar Pradesh.
- ▶ **When instituted?** 1994.

- ▶ **Awarded to whom?** To people for their remarkable contribution in the field of literature, social work, medicine, film, science, journalism, handicrafts, culture, education, music, drama, sports, industry and astrology.

- ▶ **Prize money:** Commendation letter, shawl and rupees 11 lacs and pension Rs. 50,000 per month on demand.

Criticism?

- The award has been criticized for (a) wastage of tax payers money and (b) arbitrary distribution.
- There were allegations that the prize money of Rs. 11 lakh and Rs. 50,000 monthly pension was being handed out arbitrarily.

GOLDMAN PRIZE

Context

- ▶ Activist Prafulla Samantara was named as one of the six winners of the Goldman Environmental Prize for 2017.

Why is he awarded?

- ▶ Prafulla Samantara led a 12-year battle to stall Vedanta's bauxite mining to protect the
 - Indigenous Dongria Kondhs' land rights and
 - Niyamgiri Hills from a massive, open-pit aluminum ore mine."

What is Goldman Environmental Prize?

- ▶ **It is an annual prize.**
- ▶ **Awarded by:** Goldman Environmental Foundation
- ▶ **Objective:** To honour those grassroots environmentalists who risk their lives to protect the environment and empower those people who have the most to lose from industrial projects.

- ▶ **Instituted in:** 1990.
- ▶ Award includes a medal, citation and cash award (exact amount is not revealed).

Other Indians to win this award?

- ▶ Medha Patkar,
- ▶ M.C. Mehta,
- ▶ Rasheeda Bi,
- ▶ Champaran Shukla and
- ▶ Ramesh Agrawal – has won the award since it was instituted in 1990.

DADASAHEB PHALKE AWARD–2016

Context

- ▶ Kasinadhuni Viswanath has won the Dadasaheb Phalke award (for the year 2016) for his outstanding contribution to the film industry. He will be the 48 recipient of the award.

Who is Kasinadhuni Viswanath?

- ▶ He is a Renowned filmmaker and actor, best known for his award-winning movies in Telugu, Tamil and Hindi.

What is Dadasaheb Phalke award?

- ▶ It is India’s highest award in cinema.
- ▶ It is presented annually at the National Film Awards ceremony by the **Directorate of Film Festivals** (an organisation set up by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting).
- ▶ The award prize consists of a golden lotus, a cash prize of Rs. 10 lakh and a shawl.
- ▶ The award is given to people for their “outstanding contribution to the growth and development of Indian cinema”.
- ▶ It was first presented in 1969. The first recipient of the award was actress **Devika Rani**.

Who was Dadasaheb Phalke?

- ▶ Dadasaheb Phalke (1870–1944), was an Indian film-maker who directed India’s first full-length feature film, Raja Harishchandra (1913).
- ▶ He is regarded as “the father of Indian cinema”.

INDIA-BANGLADESH FRIENDSHIP BRIDGE

Context

- ▶ The Tripura government has started the land acquisition process for the construction of India-Bangladesh Friendship Bridge.

About the bridge

- ▶ **Connecting points:** The bridge will connect Sabroom of India and Ramgarh in Bangladesh.

- ▶ **Over which river it will be made:** The bridge will be built over **Feni River**

- ▶ **Location of Feni River:** The river demarcates boundaries between the two countries in south Tripura.

- ▶ **Funding:** Union Government is bearing the entire burden of expenditure towards the construction of the bridge.

Significance of this bridge

- ▶ The bridge would facilitate implementation of a protocol signed between the two countries which allows India to use Chittagong sea port as a ‘port of call’.
- ▶ The port is 72 kilometre away from Sabroom.

BBIN

Context

- ▶ Bhutan has backed out of BBIN. It asked the other members of the ‘BBIN’ grouping to continue to operationalise it without Bhutan.

What is BBIN?

- ▶ It is a proposed sub-regional motor vehicle agreement (MVA) between Bhutan, Bangladesh, India and Nepal.

Reason for Bhutan backing out?

- ▶ It is because of fear among the Bhutanese people that there will be environmental degradation and vehicular pollution if trucks from neighboring countries are given access to Bhutan.
- ▶ Bhutan prides itself on its “carbon neutrality” and preserving the environment.

Timeline and Present status of BBIN?

- ▶ The BBIN MVA agreement was signed on June 15, 2015.
- ▶ India, Bangladesh and Nepal have already ratified it.
- ▶ In Bhutan, it was ratified on its second attempt in the lower house in July 2016, but the upper house in Bhutan voted it down in November 2016.

DIGIYATRA

Context

- ▶ Centre is working on a DigiYatra plan.

What is DigiYatra?

- ▶ DigiYatra is a proposed plan which will allow paperless travel for air passengers, including digital boarding passes at airports

How will it work?

- ▶ Under this an appropriate identification proof will be associated with one's PNR number, whether its Aadhaar or passport. By this the person will be securely identified so that no documents are needed.

WIKITRIBUNE**Context**

- ▶ It is a news service launched by Wikipedia.

How will it work?

- ▶ It is a news website in which
 - professional journalists research & report news stories, and

- volunteers curate the articles by proofreading, fact-checking, and adding sources.

Significance

- ▶ It's objective is to help fight fake news online.
- ▶ It is an example of "evidence-based journalism".
- ▶ In words of its founder jimmy wales "This will be the first time that citizen journalists and professional journalists will work side-by-side as equals **writing stories as they happen, editing them live as they develop and at all times backed by a community checking**".