

www.vishnuias.com



OCTOBER

06.10.2021

CURRENT AFFAIRS

A MAGAZINE FOR CIVIL SERVICES PREPARATION

JOIN OUR TELEGRAM: <https://t.me/vishnuiasmentor>

**Articles of the day
THE HINDU & INDIAN EXPRESS**

UPSC

General Studies

Test Series

**Online &
Offline
classes**

**One-Stop
Solution**

**Free daily
materials**

GS 2 : Polity, Governance, International Relations

1. Ayushman Bharat Revised

In News The National Health Authority (NHA) has revised the Health Benefit Package (HBP) Master under the Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB PM-JAY) scheme.

Health Benefit Package (HBP 2.2)

- Rates of some packages have been increased by 20% to 400%.
- Rates of around 400 procedures have been revised
- One new additional medical management package related to black fungus has also been added.
- The revised packages for oncology will enhance cancer care for the beneficiaries in the country.
- **Benefit:** The rationalised HBP will further improve the uptake of schemes in private hospitals leading to reduced out-of-pocket expenditure.

National Health Authority (NHA)

- NHA has been set-up to implement PM-JAY.
- **Ministry:** Ministry of Health and Family Welfare
- It has full functional autonomy.
- NHA is governed by a Governing Board chaired by the Union Minister for Health and Family Welfare.
- It is headed by a Chief Executive Officer (CEO), an officer of the rank of Secretary to the Government of India, who manages its affairs.
- The CEO is the Ex-Office Member Secretary of the Governing Board.

About Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB PM-JAY)

- This scheme is a Centrally sponsored scheme with some Central sector components.
- PMJAY offers a sum insured of 5 lakh per family for secondary care (which doesn't involve a super specialist) as well as tertiary care. For the beneficiaries, this is a free scheme.
- It is an entitlement-based scheme that targets the beneficiaries as identified by latest Socio-Economic Caste Census (SECC) data

- The insurance cost is shared by the centre and the state mostly in the ratio of 60:40.

2. State of the World's Children Report: UNICEF

In News : The UNICEF report 'The State of the World's Children 2021; On My Mind: promoting, protecting and caring for children's mental health' details the significant impact of COVID-19 pandemic on children's mental health.

- Around 14 percent of 15 to 24-year-olds in India, or 1 in 7, reported often feeling depressed or having little interest in doing things.
- Almost 46,000 adolescents die from suicide each year, among the top five causes of death for their age group.
- More than 1.6 billion children have suffered some loss of education.
- Meanwhile, wide gaps persist between mental health needs and mental health funding. The report finds that about 2 per cent of government health budgets are allocated to mental health spending globally.

Way Forward: It calls for commitment, communication and action as part of a comprehensive approach to promote good mental health for every child, protect vulnerable children and care for children facing the greatest challenges.

- Urgent investment in child and adolescent mental health across sectors, not just in health, to support a whole-of-society approach to prevention, promotion and care.
- Integrating and scaling up evidence-based interventions across health, education and social protection sectors - including parenting programmes that promote responsive, nurturing caregiving and support parent and caregiver mental health; and ensuring schools support mental health through quality services and positive relationships.
- Breaking the silence surrounding mental illness, through addressing stigma and promoting better understanding of mental health and taking seriously the experiences of children and young people.

3. 'Must look at weaknesses and strengths of 13A'

In News:

- Indian Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla's official visit to Sri Lanka and meeting with Sri Lankan President Gotabaya Rajapaksa.

Details:

Bilateral projects:

- The need to **expedite bilateral projects** was emphasized during the meeting.
- This comes amid **considerable strain in relations over Sri Lanka's stance on bilateral projects**.
 - Sri Lanka had unilaterally cancelled a trilateral East Container Terminal (ECT) project at the Colombo Port, signed with India and Japan in 2019.
 - India had also raised concerns over the "slow pace" of India-backed development projects in Sri Lanka amid **China's increasing presence in Sri Lanka's economic and developmental spheres**.
 - The development of the **Trincomalee Oil Tank Farm** at the eastern tip of the island nation has been stalled.

13th amendment of the Sri Lankan Constitution:

- India has called for complete implementation of the provisions under the 13th Amendment to the Constitution, including devolution of powers and the holding of provincial council elections at the earliest.
 - The Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution of Sri Lanka is an amendment to the Constitution of Sri Lanka, **passed in 1987**, which created Provincial Councils in Sri Lanka. The 13th Amendment mandates a measure of **power devolution to the provincial councils** established to govern the island's nine provinces.
 - It is an outcome of the **Indo-Lanka Accord of July 1987**, signed by the then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and President J.R. Jayawardene, in an attempt to resolve Sri Lanka's ethnic conflict that had aggravated into a full-fledged civil war, between the armed forces and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, which led the struggle for Tamils' self-determination and sought a separate state.
- The Sri Lankan President has called for a more nuanced deliberation on the weaknesses and strengths of the 13th Amendment to the Sri Lankan Constitution.

Regional security:

- **India has raised concern over maritime security in the region**, particularly in the wake of Sri Lankan authorities recently apprehending **massive hauls of narcotics**. India has raised concerns over Sri Lanka becoming a conduit for drug trafficking in the region, which could have serious complications for the region including India.

- Any threat to Sri Lanka's peace and security is a threat to the region including India.
- Sri Lankan President has sought India's support in advancing the 1971 proposal made by then Sri Lankan Prime Minister Sirimavo Bandaranaike to **declare the Indian Ocean a peace zone.**

GS 3 : Economy, Science and Technology, Environment

4. Sovereign Credit Rating

In News: Rating agency Moody's Investors Service has upgraded India's sovereign rating outlook to 'stable' from 'negative', citing an decrease of risks from COVID-19.

- It retained India's rating at Baa3, reflecting the lowest investment grade rating.
 - Moody's considers a Baa3 or higher rating to be of investment grade, and a rating of Ba1 and below is speculative.
- It expects 2021-22 to record 9.3% growth in GDP, followed by 7.9% next year.
- The growth projections take into account structural challenges, including weak infrastructure, rigidities in labour, land and product markets that continue to constrain private investment and contribute to post-pandemic economic scarring.

Sovereign Credit Rating:

- A sovereign credit rating is an independent assessment of the creditworthiness of a country or sovereign entity.
- It can give investors insights into the level of risk associated with investing in the debt of a particular country, including any political risk. Another common motivation for countries to obtain a sovereign credit rating is to attract foreign direct investment (FDI).
- The Economic Survey 2020-21 has called for sovereign credit ratings methodology to be made more transparent, less subjective and better attuned to reflect an economy's fundamentals.
- In India, there are six credit rating agencies registered under Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) namely, CRISIL, ICRA, CARE, SMERA, Fitch India and Brickwork Ratings.

India's present scenario

- India has a higher debt burden and weaker debt affordability.

- However, India's narrower current account deficits and historically high foreign exchange reserves have reduced the country's vulnerabilities to external shocks.

5. The Draft Electricity (Rights of Consumers) Amendment Rules, 2021

In News : The Draft Electricity (Rights of Consumers) Amendment Rules, 2021 were recently published.

Overview of the new rules

- Distribution licensees should **ensure 24×7 uninterrupted power supply** to all consumers so that there is no requirement of running Diesel Generating (DG) sets.
- The electricity regulatory commission could consider a **separate reliability charge** for the distribution company, if it required funds for investment in infrastructure.
- The state electricity regulatory commission should also make a **provision of penalty** in case the standards laid down are not met by the distribution company.

Electricity (Rights of Consumers) Rules, 2020

- These rules serve to “empower” consumers with rights that would allow them to access continuous supply of quality, reliable electricity.
- The areas covered under the rules include metering arrangement; billing and payment; reliability of supply, etc.

Key Provisions

- States will have to implement these rules and discoms will be held more accountable for issues like delays in providing and renewing connections of electricity.
- They are also obligated to provide round-the-clock electricity to consumers, as per the Ministry of Power.
- To ensure compliance, the government will apply penalties that will be credited to the consumer's account.
- There are certain exceptions to these rules, especially where use for agricultural purposes is concerned.

6. Crackdown there, hope here

In News :

China has been taking some drastic measures for the overhaul of its tech sector.

Details:

- China has imposed sweeping regulations, antitrust and anti-monopoly lawsuits, cyber security probes, and algorithm controls on the entire tech segment, ranging from e-commerce websites, search engines, ride sharing and food delivery apps to e-learning portals.
 - These clampdowns are estimated to have wiped off over \$1.5 trillion of value from Chinese tech stocks.
- In 2020, China stopped Ant Group's blockbuster initial public offering (IPO). This came as a shock as Alibaba's fintech arm, was on track to raise \$37 billion and its valuation was reportedly nearing more than \$300 billion.
- This episode was perceived as an attempt to rein in the successful entrepreneur, Jack Ma. Prior to this incident, he had publicly criticised the government's tech policy for stifling innovation.
- In 2021, there is yet another high-profile crackdown on a Chinese tech company.
- China's obsessive efforts to ensure that no private entity gains enough data to ever be in a position to even remotely challenge Chinese Communist Party-led state dominance, and that no competing country gains access to the citizen database through any unforeseen means, is the major reason behind this overhaul.
- These efforts are not limited only to the consumer tech sector.
- State support to manufacturing and hard tech industries, which are perceived to be of higher value, including 5G/6G, semiconductor chips, artificial intelligence, biotechnologies, batteries, aviation and space tech, has also increased.
- A conscious redirection of efforts to areas that would maximise China's geopolitical and geo-economic gains is being witnessed.
- It would not be surprising to see more state-owned enterprises like ZTE and state-supported heavyweights like Huawei focus on strategic high technology and attempt to be pioneers in the global market.

How is it beneficial for India?

- China's sweeping overhaul of its tech sector could benefit India in the near future.

- The rate of digitisation accelerated during the pandemic in India and these developments could be beneficial for India.
- Start-ups here raised a record \$10.46 billion in the first half of this year alone. India's tally of unicorns has crossed 60.
- This trajectory and India's projected growth will make the country the first destination of the funds exiting Chinese stocks during these crackdowns.
- However, mirroring the U.S. start-up ecosystem, India's emphasis too is on consumer tech, from which China is tactically distancing itself. The U.S. also has a far-reaching system for research and development of strategic technology.

How can India take Advantage?

- The U.S. remains China's lone rival in the high-tech space, and the extent of this partnership will be important for India.
- U.S. interests will more likely be inclined towards the possibilities of market entry and penetration of its firms.
- India should strive to move beyond this to complementary collaborations.
- India should also remain open to partnerships with friendly nations, keeping the enhancement of its internal capacity as the objective.
 - E.g.: the ongoing talks with Taiwan to bring in a semiconductor chip manufacturing plant to India. If successful, this could drive next-generation industries, including 5G devices and electric vehicles.

Conclusion:

The progress India has made in sectors including biotech and space tech has shown that with the right political will and private participation, India could be self-sufficient and also reach global competitiveness. Concerted efforts to develop indigenous manufacturing and hard technology are important if India must retain its strategic autonomy. Only then can India securely reach its stated goal of being among the largest three economies by the end of this decade.

THE INDIAN EXPRESS

GS 2 : Polity, Governance, International Relations

1. On Digital Health ID, proceed with caution

Much recently, the Prime Minister had launched the Digital Health ID project (DHID), generating debate on issues related to the use of technology in a broken health system.

Good intents of the DHID

- The key objective of DHID is to improve the quality, access and affordability of health services by making the service delivery “quicker, less expensive and more robust”.
- The ambition is undoubtedly high. Given that health systems are highly complex, the DHID would hardly be able to address some of the issues plaguing it.

Why need DHID?

(a) Record maintenance

- The use of technology for record maintenance is not just inevitable but necessary. Its time has certainly come.
- A decade ago, the process to shift towards electronic medical records was initiated in the private sector.
- It met with limited success, despite the strong positives.
- With DHID, the burden of storing and carrying health records for every visit to the doctor is minimised.

(b) Better tracking of medical history

- The doctor has instant access to the patient’s case history –the treatment undertaken, where and with what outcomes – enabling more accurate diagnosis and treatment.
- As the DHID enables portability across geography and healthcare providers, it also helps reduce re-testing or repeating problems every time a patient consults a new doctor.

- That's a huge gain, impacting the quality of care and enhancing patient satisfaction and confidence.

(c) Better Diagnosis

- DHID can have a transformative impact in promoting ecosystems that function as paperless facilities.
- Paperless hospitals can promote early diagnosis before the patient reaches the doctor after spending long hours in queue.
- The doctor can already go through the patient's record and the pharmacist can make the drugs available by the time the patient reached its counter.

(d) Promoting medical research

- Digitisation of medical records is another important positive, given the problems related to space and retrieving huge databases.
- Well organised repositories that enable easy access to records can stimulate much-needed research on medical devices and drugs.
- This storehouse of patient data can be valuable for clinical and operational research.

Given our population, would this be an idealistic expectation?

- We need to conduct pilot studies to assess the use of technology for streamlining patient flows and medical records and thereby increase efficiencies across different typologies of hospitals and facilities.
- While technology helps smoothen processes and enhance patient experience, there is a cost attached.
- Investments have to be made upfront and results should not be expected overnight.

Issues with DHID

(a) A costly affair

- In the immediate short run, DHID will increase administrative costs by about 20 per cent, due to the capital investment in data infrastructure.
- Over the long run, the additional cost to healthcare is expected to be about 2 per cent.
- Any scaling up of this reform would require extensive fiscal subsidies and more importantly providing techno-logistical support to both government and private hospitals.

(b) Privacy concerns

- Most important is the issue of privacy, the high possibility of hacking and breach of confidentiality.
- The possibility of privacy being violated increases with the centralisation of all information.
- Though it is said that the patient is the owner of the information, how many of us deny access, as a matter of routine, when we download apps or programmes that seek access to all our records?
- How far is this “consent” practical for an illiterate, vulnerable patient desperate to get well?
- So, taking refuge behind a technical statement that access is contingent on patient consent is unconvincing.

Ground situation in India

- **Inherently unaffordable healthcare:** The costs in the Indian context can be high and that should lead to a careful assessment of the project.
- **Digital divide:** Such a scenario is not inconceivable and in the case of health, may cause immense hardship to the most marginalised sections of our population.
- **Infrastructure gap:** A large majority of facilities do not have the required physical infrastructure — electricity, accommodation, trained personnel.
- **Usual nature of technical glitches:** Cards getting corrupted, servers being down, computers crashing or hanging, and power outages are common in India.
- **Conformity over data synchronization:** The inability to synchronise biometric data with ID cards has resulted in large-scale exclusions of the poor from welfare projects.
- **Accuracy of records:** Besides, the efficacy of the DHID hinges on the assumption that every visit and every drug consumed by the patient is faithfully and accurately recorded.
- **Increased workload on Medical Professionals:** Moreover, while electronic mapping of providers may enable patients to spot a less busy doctor near their location, it is simplistic to assume that the patient will go there.

Plugging the existing gaps

- Patient preference for a doctor is dependent upon perception and trust. Likewise, teleconsultations need a huge backend infrastructure and organisation.

- Teleconsulting has certainly helped patients access medical advice for managing minor ailments, getting prescriptions on the phone and even getting drugs delivered home.
- But in handling chronic diseases that necessitate continuity of care, teleconsultations have been problematic and cannot be substituted for actual physical examination.
- Continuity of care is central to good outcomes in inpatient management of chronic diseases.
- The one serious shortcoming of using teleconsultation for such management is the high attrition rate of doctors within the context of an overall shortage of doctors.
- Technology can be of little use in the absence of doctors and basic infrastructure.

Way forward

- What is needed is building very robust firewalls and trust.
- Seeing the frequency with which Aadhaar cards have been breached, it is not unreasonable to be concerned with this issue and the implications it has at the family and societal levels.
- For this reason, instead of a big bang approach, it is better to go slow and steady.
- That's the only way to ensure that a good policy does not die along the way due to poor implementation.

GS 3 : Economy, Science and Technology, Environment

2. WTO raises 2021 goods trade outlook

The World Trade Organization (WTO) has upgraded its world merchandise trade growth outlook to nearly 11 percent for this year, higher than 8% estimated in March.

About WTO

- The World Trade Organization (WTO) is an intergovernmental organization that regulates and facilitates international trade between nations.
- Governments use the organization to establish, revise, and enforce the rules that govern international trade.

- It officially commenced operations on 1 January 1995, pursuant to the 1994 Marrakesh Agreement, thus replacing the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) that had been established in 1948.
- The WTO is the world's largest international economic organization, with 164 member states representing over 96% of global trade and global GDP.
- The WTO facilitates trade in goods, services and intellectual property among participating countries.
- It prohibits discrimination between trading partners, but provides exceptions for environmental protection, national security, and other important goals.

Report on Global trade

- According to a WTO, global goods trade is expected to grow by 10.8 per cent compared to the forecast of 8 per cent in March, but with varied recovery, depending on the region.
- The report said export volume growth in 2021 will be 8.7 per cent in North America, 7.2 per cent in South America, 9.7 per cent in Europe, 7 per cent in Africa, 5 per cent in West Asia and the highest for Asia at 14.4 per cent.
- On the other hand, imports are expected to grow at a faster pace as compared to exports. Inbound shipments into North America are set to grow by 12.6 per cent.
- It will be 19.9 per cent in South America, 9.1 per cent in Europe, 13.1 per cent in CIS, 11.3 per cent in Africa, 9.3 per cent in West Asia and 10.7 per cent in Asia.

Key highlights for India

- Exports from India have been rising consistently over the last few quarters, after plummeting for a few months as the outbreak of Covid-19 disrupted global trade.
- India's exports to its top trading partners such as the US, European Union, nations in West Asia, among others, are expected to rise.
- Exports data during the first six months of the current fiscal year is emblematic of the fact that external demand has been robust.
- Besides, supply-side disruptions can also be exacerbated by the rapid and unexpectedly strong recovery of demand in advanced and many emerging economies.

Competing with China

- Experts said with rising global demand, India should be able to compete in various segments vis-a-vis China.

- Currently, China is facing supply-side as well as demand-side issues owing to several internal challenges (energy, debt crisis).
- Therefore, India is in a good position to increase its exports, and can become a substitute for China across various product categories or sectors.
- India can take advantage of the increasing global demand, which can ultimately translate into demand for Indian exports.

3. First Nobel for Climate Science

Three scientists received the Nobel Prize in Physics for work that is essential to understanding how the Earth's climate is changing, pinpointing the effect of human behaviour on those changes and ultimately predicting the impact of global warming.

Who are the laureates?

- The winners were Syukuro Manabe, Klaus Hasselmann of Germany, and Giorgio Parisi from Italy.
- In 2015, at a UK-based climate-focused online publication sought to identify the three most influential climate change research papers ever published.
- The paper that received the most votes was one by Syukuro Manabe and Richard Wetherald way back in 1967.
- These reports for the first time, had described the impact of carbon dioxide and water vapour on global warming.

Citation for their Climate Model

- Manabe is a senior meteorologist and climatologist at Princeton University.
- In the 1960s, he led ground-breaking research into how increased levels of carbon dioxide lead to higher temperatures on the surface of the Earth.
- This laid the foundation for the development of current climate models.
- Hasselmann is a German physicist and oceanographer who greatly advanced public understanding of climate change through the creation of a model that links climate and chaotic weather systems.
- Parisi has focused on quantum field theory and complex systems.

Why it is significant feat?

- This is the first-time climate scientists have been awarded the Physics Nobel.
- The IPCC had won the Peace Nobel in 2007, an acknowledgement of its efforts in creating awareness for the fight against climate change.

- A Chemistry Nobel was also awarded to Paul Crutzen in 1995, for his work on the ozone layer, is considered the only other time someone from atmospheric sciences has won this honour.
- The recognition of Manabe and Hasselmann, therefore, is being seen as an acknowledgement of the importance that climate science holds in today's world.

4. National Road Safety Board

The Ministry of Road Transport & Highways has notified the constitution of the National Road Safety Board.

National Road Safety Board

- The NRSB will be constituted of a panel of seven members and a chairman, with the members having experience in the fields related to road safety, traffic regulation, urban planning, civil engineering and police enforcement and investigation.
- Additionally, the board will also comprise of technical committees to look into a variety of aspects of road safety from civil engineering to vehicle construction and safety equipment.

Why need such board?

- Along with the rapid expansion and up-gradation on the road network and the enforcement of higher safety standards for vehicles, the Government is now actively looking into the safety of roads too.

Terms of reference

- The Head Office of the Board shall be in the National Capital Region and the Board may establish offices at other places in India.
- The Board shall be responsible for promoting road safety, innovation and adoption of new technology and for regulating traffic and motor vehicles.

For this purposes, inter alia, the Board shall formulate

- specific standards for road safety, traffic management and road construction for hilly regions
- guidelines for capacity building and development of skills for traffic police, hospital authorities, highway authorities, educational and research organizations and other organizations

- guidelines for establishing and operating trauma facilities and para-medical facilities, for consideration by the Central Government
- provide technical advice and assistance to the Central Government, State Governments and local authorities on road safety and traffic management

Key provision: Protection of Samaritans

- The board aims to promote Good Samaritans and good practices in road safety and traffic management
- Good Samaritans who rescue victims of serious road accidents and rush them to a hospital within the golden hour will now be rewarded with ₹5,000.
- They will also be eligible for a cash prize of ₹1 lakh which will be given to 10 such Samaritans in a year.
- It has been felt that there is a need to motivate the general public through cash awards and certificates to help the road accident victims in emergency situation and to boost their morale.
- The categories of accidents that will make one eligible for the award will include those that result in a major surgery or minimum three days of hospitalisation or brain and spinal cord injuries.

5. Industrial Park Ratings System (IPRS) Report

The Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) has released the Industrial Park Ratings System Report.

Industrial Park Ratings System (IPRS)

- The IPRS pilot exercise was launched in 2018 with an objective of enhancing industrial infrastructure competitiveness and supporting policy development for enabling industrialization across the country.
- The IPRS report is an extension of the India Industrial Land Bank which features more than 4,400 industrial parks in a GIS-enabled database.
- It seeks to help investors identify their preferred location for investment.
- With this report, the investors can even remotely refer to this report to identify the suitable investable land area, as per the various parameters of infrastructure, connectivity, business support services and environment and safety standards.

Highlights of the report

- 41 Industrial Parks have been assessed as “Leaders” in the Industrial Park Ratings System Report released by DPIIT.
- 90 Industrial Parks have been rated as under the Challenger category while 185 have been rated as under “Aspirers”.
- These ratings are assigned on the basis of key existing parameters and infrastructure facilities etc.

6. Industrial Park Rating System Report 2.0

In News: 41 Industrial Parks have been assessed as “Leaders” in the Industrial Park Ratings System Report released by DPIIT.

- 90 Industrial Parks have been rated as under Challenger category while 185 have been rated as under “Aspirers”.
- These ratings are assigned on the basis of key existing parameters and infrastructure facilities etc. About 98% of these parks are from **western** (Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Gujarat) and **northern** (Uttarakhand) regions.
- With this system (GIS-enabled database), the investors can even remotely refer to this report to identify the suitable investable land area, as per the various parameters of infrastructure, connectivity, business support services and environment and safety standards and make informed investment decisions.
- The GIS-enabled IILB acts as a one-stop source of information on Industrial Infrastructure.

The IPRS pilot exercise was launched in 2018, with an objective of enhancing industrial infrastructure competitiveness and supporting policy development for enabling industrialization across the country as the Government pushes ahead a high-growth trajectory with an aim to scale the \$5 trillion mark for the Indian economy by 2025.

7. Changes to Forest Conservation Act:

Context:

The Union Government has proposed certain amendments to the existing **Forest Conservation Act (FCA)**.

Proposed changes:

1. Absolve **agencies involved in national security projects and border infrastructure projects** from obtaining **prior forest clearance** from the Centre. Such a permission is necessary under the Forest Conservation Act (FCA).
2. **Exempt land acquired before 1980** – before the FCA came into effect – by public sector bodies such as the Railways.
3. Facilitating **private plantations for harvesting and exploration or extraction of oil and natural gas** deep beneath forest land by drilling holes from outside the forest areas.
4. **Building in forests:** To ease the grievances of the individuals whose land fall in state specific private forests act or within the purview of dictionary meaning of forest, the ministry has proposed to allow them the right to construct structures for bonafide purposes including forest protection measures and residential units up to an area of 250 sq mtr as one time relaxation.
5. **Punishments:** Make offences under the modified Act punishable with simple imprisonment for a period which may extend to one year and make it cognisable and non-bailable.
6. It also has provisions for **penal compensation to make good for the damage already done.**

Why were these amendments necessary?

The essential tension in the FCA is that the state is committed to a principle of increasing forest cover, and this makes it harder to access land for infrastructure projects by States and private entities.

- Several Ministries have expressed resentment on how the Act was being interpreted over the right of way of railways, highways.
- As of today, a landholding agency (Rail, NHAI, PWD, etc.) is required to take approval under the Act and pay stipulated compensatory levies such as **Net Present Value (NPV), Compensatory Afforestation (CA)**, for use of such land which was originally been acquired for non-forest purposes.
- With more land coming under the definition of “forest”, it’s becoming harder for State Governments or private industry to use land that falls under the definition of “forest” for non-forestry purposes.
- Through the years, this has given rise to multiple instances of litigation, as well questions on the legal definition of “forest”.

- States have been told to provide a definition of what constitutes a forest, but several haven't given them because this has political consequences. All of this has led to conflicting interpretations of the FCA through the years.

The proposed amendment is part of a larger rationalising of existing forest laws.

When was the FCA enacted?

The FCA first came in 1980 and was amended in 1988.

While States had already notified forest land, the FCA made it **necessary to get the Centre's permission for using such forest land for "non forestry purposes" and the creation of an advisory committee** to recommend such re-classification.

The 1996 Supreme Court judgment (in **TN Godavarman Thirumulpad versus Union of India and Others case**) paved the way for the calculating:

1. The net present value, or the economic value of the portion of forest being razed for development work that had to be paid by project proponents.
2. The creation of a compensatory afforestation fund.
3. Providing non-forestry land in lieu of the diverted forest.

Definition of "Forest":

Before the 1996 Supreme Court judgement in TN Godavarman Thirumulpad versus Union of India and Others, forest land was only that as was defined by the 1927 Forest Act. But the court included all areas which are recorded as 'forest' in any government record, irrespective of ownership, recognition and classification.

Prelims Practice Questions

1. Which of the following deals with the specification, reservation, choice and allotment of symbols at elections in Parliamentary and Assembly Constituencies?

- a. Conduct of Elections Rules, 1961
- b. Article 324 of Indian Constitution
- c. Representation of the People Act, 1951
- d. Election Symbols (Reservation and Allotment) Order, 1968

Answer : d

Election Symbols (Reservation and Allotment) Order, 1968

- It is an order that provides for specification, reservation, choice and allotment of symbols at elections in Parliamentary and Assembly Constituencies, for the recognition of political parties in relation thereto and for matters connected therewith.

Allocation of Symbols after a party splits

- When the Commission is satisfied on information in its possession that there are rival sections or groups of a recognised political party each of whom claims to be that party, the Commission may, after taking into account all the available facts and hearing such representatives of the sections or groups, decide that one such rival section or group or none of such rival sections or groups is that recognised political party.
- The decision of the Commission shall be binding on all such rival sections or groups.
- This applies to disputes in recognised national and state parties.
- For splits in registered but unrecognised parties, the EC usually advises the warring factions to resolve their differences internally or to approach the court.

2. Which amongst the following statements is the best description of Ex Milan?

- a. India, Thailand and Singapore annual trilateral exercise
- b. Naval exercise between United Arab Emirates (UAE) and India

- c. Multilateral naval exercise hosted by the Indian Navy
- d. Naval exercise in the Indo-Pacific region by India, USA and Japan

Answer: c

Explanation:

- Exercise Milan is a multilateral naval exercise hosted by the Indian Navy under the aegis of the Andaman and Nicobar Command.
- It is a biennial event held in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, and features professional exercises and seminars, social events and sporting fixtures between participating nations.
- Milan was first held in 1995.

3. Least Developed Countries Report is an annual report published by?

- a. World Trade Organisation
- b. UN Development Programme
- c. UN Conference on Trade and Development
- d. UN Industrial Development Organization

Answer : c

Least Developed Countries Report, 2021

- The Least Developed Countries Report 2021 was released recently by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD).
- This annual report provides a comprehensive and authoritative source of socio-economic analysis and data on the world's most impoverished countries.

Highlights of the Report

- The growth performance of LDCs over the past 50 years has been characterized by an overall sluggish and uneven record.
- Real GDP for the LDC group increased 5-fold since the LDC category was created in 1971.
- The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita for LDC group is less than 10% of the world average (2019).
- Major shortcomings of the development experience of the LDCs over the past 50 years have been laid bare by the outbreak of the COVID-19 crisis.

Least Developed Countries

- There are 46 countries are designated by the United Nations as LDCs.
- The list of LDCs is reviewed every 3 years by the Committee for Development Policy (CDP), a group of independent experts that report to the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).
- After a triennial review of the list, the CDP recommends to ECOSOC, countries for addition to the list or graduation from LDC status.

Criteria for LDC category

1. Per capita income
2. Human Assets Index
3. Economic and Environmental Vulnerability Index

4. With respect to Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, which of the following statements is/are correct?

1. Every offence punishable under this Act shall be cognizable.
2. It is mandatory for the judge to award the Death penalty for certain offences after a previous conviction.

Options:

- a. 1 only
- b. 2 only
- c. Both
- d. None

Answer: a

Explanation:

- Under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, every offence punishable under this Act shall be cognizable.
- Cognizable offences are those where a police officer can arrest without a warrant.
- Non-cognizable offence, as the name suggests, is the offence in which the police has no authority to apprehend a person for crime on its own, as explicit permission of the court is required.

- The judge has an option to award the Death penalty for certain offences after a previous conviction. It is not mandatory.

5. The Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine 2021 was awarded jointly to David Julius and Ardem Patapoutian for their discoveries of

- a. how cells sense and adapt to oxygen availability
- b. receptors for temperature and touch
- c. cancer therapy by inhibition of negative immune regulation
- d. concerning a novel therapy against infections caused by roundworm parasites

Answer: b

Explanation:

The Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine 2021 was awarded jointly to David Julius and Ardem Patapoutian for their discoveries on receptors for temperature and touch.

6. Which one of the following case established the Right to Livelihood as part of the Right to Life?

- a) Maneka Gandhi vs. Union of India
- b) Justice K.S. Puttuswamy vs. Union of India
- c) Olga Tellis vs Bombay Municipal Corporation
- d) Vishakha vs. the State of Rajasthan

Answer: C

Solution:

- The judgment in the Olga Tellis vs Bombay Municipal Corporation (1985) case established the Right to Livelihood as part of the Right to Life under Article 21 of the Constitution of India.

Enrich Your Learning:

Olga Tellis vs Bombay Municipal Corporation (1985)

The judgment in the case established the Right to Livelihood as part of the Right to Life.

According to judgement:

The sweep of the Right to Life, conferred by Article 21 is wide and far reaching.

‘Life’ means something more than mere animal existence. It does not mean merely

that life cannot be extinguished or taken away as, for example, by the imposition and execution of the death sentence, except according to procedure established by law. That is but one aspect of the Right to Life. An equally important facet of that right is the right to livelihood because **no person can live without the means of living, that is, the means of livelihood.**

Mains Practice Questions

1. Examine the concept of cooperative farming, in light of problem of land fragmentation, in promoting the socio-economic welfare of farmers. (250 words)

Approach

- Write in brief about the concept of cooperative farming.
- Just give current status and challenges of land fragmentation.
- Examine how cooperative farming can be beneficial and enumerate its challenges and the solutions.
- Emphasize on the future need of the land consolidation and cooperative farming.

2. How are integrated steel plants different from mini steel plants? What problems does the industry face? What recent developments have led to a rise in the production capacity? (250 words)

Approach

- Write what are the integrated and mini steel plants in the introduction part.
- Differentiate between the two.
- Enumerate the problems and recent developments taken to increase the productivity.