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# CURRENT AFFAIRS

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## **GS 2 : Polity, Governance, International Relations**

### **1. When can an individual get Statutory Bail?**

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) has approached the Supreme Court against a Bombay High Court order granting bail to an advocate and activist.

#### **What is the case?**

- In its bail order, the court has asked the NIA Court to decide the conditions for her release.
- The activist was given 'default bail'.
- The case highlights the nuances involved in a court determining the circumstances in which statutory bail is granted or denied, even though it is generally considered "an indefeasible right".

#### **What is default bail?**

- This is enshrined in **Section 167(2) of the Code of Criminal Procedure**.
- Also known as statutory bail, this is a **Right to Bail** that accrues when the police fail to complete investigation within a specified period in respect of a person in judicial custody.
- When it is not possible for the police to complete an investigation in 24 hours, the police produce the suspect in court and seek orders for either police or judicial custody.

#### **When is the Bail granted?**

- For most offences, the police have 60 days to complete the investigation and file a final report before the court.
- However, where the offence attracts death sentence or life imprisonment, or a jail term of not less than 10 years, the period available is 90 days.
- In other words, a magistrate cannot authorise a person's judicial remand beyond the 60-or 90-day limit.
- At the end of this period, if the investigation is not complete, the court shall release the person "if he is prepared to and does furnish bail".

#### **How does the provision vary for special laws?**

The extension of time is not automatic but requires a judicial order.

- **Ordinary law (IPC/CrPC):** The 60- or 90-day limit is only for ordinary penal law.
- **Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act:** In NDPS Act, the period is 180 days. However, in cases involving substances in commercial quantity, the period may be extended up to one year.
- **Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act:** In UAPA, the default limit is 90 days only. The court may grant an extension of another 90 days, if it is satisfied that the progress made in the investigation and giving reasons to keep the accused in further custody.

### What are the laid-down principles on this aspect?

- **A matter of Right:** Default or statutory bail is an indefeasible right', regardless of the nature of the crime liberty under Article 21 of the Constitution.
- **Stipulated period calculation:** The stipulated period within which the charge sheet has to be filed begins from the day the accused is remanded for the first time. It includes days undergone in both police and judicial custody, but not days spent in house-arrest.
- **Voluntary:** There is no automatic bail.

## 2. Tribes in news: Konyak

An angry mob allegedly vandalized an Assam Rifles camp and the office of the Konyak Union in Nagaland's Mon district.

### Konyak Tribe

- With a population of roughly 3 lakh, the area inhabited by the Konyaks extends into Arunachal Pradesh, with a sizeable population in Myanmar as well.
- They are known to be one of the fiercest warrior tribes in Nagaland.
- The Konyaks were the last to give up the practice of head-hunting - severing heads of enemies after attacking rival tribes - as late as the 1980s.

### Significance in Naga Peace Process

- Mon is the only district in Nagaland where the separatist group has not been able to set up base camps, largely due to resistance from the Konyaks.
- The Konyaks therefore, are imperative for a smooth resolution of the peace talks, as well as the post-talk peace process in the state.

### 3. It's time to define limits of sedition, says SC

The Assam Police have charged the editor and co-owner of a local news portal in **the Barak Valley** with sedition (**under 124A**) for an editorial deemed to promote enmity between the Assamese and Bengali-speaking people of the State.

- The Barak Valley is dominated by Bengalis and the Brahmaputra Valley by the Assamese speakers.

#### Background:

The **sedition** law has been indiscriminately used against critics, journalists, social media users, activists and citizens for airing their grievances about the governments COVID-19 management, or even for seeking help to gain medical access, equipment, drugs and oxygen cylinders, especially during the second wave of the pandemic.

#### What is sedition?

**Section 124A of the IPC** states, "Whoever, by words, either spoken or written, or by signs, or by visible representation, or otherwise, brings or attempts to bring into hatred or contempt, or excites or attempts to excite disaffection towards, the government established by law in shall be punished with imprisonment for life, to which fine may be added, or with imprisonment which may extend to three years, to which fine may be added, or with fine."

#### Need for a proper definition?

The sedition law has been in controversy for far too long. Often **the governments are criticized for using the law – Section 124-A of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) – against vocal critics of their policies.**

- **Therefore, this Section is seen as a restriction of individuals' freedom of expression** and falls short of the provisions of reasonable restrictions on freedom of speech under **Article 19 of the Constitution.**

The law has been in debate ever since it was brought into force by the colonial British rulers in 1860s. Several top freedom movement leaders including **Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru were booked under the sedition law.**

1. Mahatma Gandhi described it as the “prince among the political sections of the Indian Penal Code designed to suppress the liberty of the citizen.”
2. Nehru had described it as “highly objectionable and obnoxious” which “should have no place in any body of laws that we might pass”. Nehru said, “The sooner we get rid of it the better.”

### **Relevant Supreme Court judgements:**

#### **1. The Kedar Nath Singh vs State of Bihar case (1962):**

While dealing with offences under Section 124A of the IPC, **a five-judge Supreme Court constitutional bench** had, in the **Kedar Nath Singh vs State of Bihar case (1962)**, laid down some guiding principles.

- The court ruled that comments-however strongly worded-expressing disapprobation of the actions of the government without causing public disorder by acts of violence would not be penal.

#### **2. The Balwant Singh vs State of Punjab (1995) case:**

In this case, the Supreme Court had clarified that merely shouting slogans, in this case Khalistan Zindabad, does not amount to sedition. Evidently, the sedition law is being both misunderstood and misused to muzzle dissent.

### **Recent views of Supreme Court:**

The Supreme Court, in June 2021, said “**it is time to define the limits of sedition**”.

- The observation was made while dealing with the writ petitions filed by two news channels seeking the quashing of FIR and contempt petitions.

### **General observations made by the Court on Sedition:**

- It is time we define the limits of sedition.

- Provisions of **124A (sedition) and 153 (promoting enmity between classes) of the IPC** require interpretation, particularly on the issue of the rights of press and free speech.

#### 4. How is Hong Kong administered?

Hong Kong authorities are pursuing new laws to tighten the city-state's grip on public discourse critical of its Beijing-aligned government.

##### Need for:

Residents are resorting to self-censorship and many feel that their city's progressive identity may have been permanently lost.

##### How is Hong Kong ruled?

It is ruled under **One Country Two Systems** approach.

As per the policy, **the Hong Kong and Macau Special Administrative Regions**, both former colonies, can have different economic and political systems from that of mainland China, while being part of the People's Republic of China.

Hong Kong returned to Chinese control on July 1, 1997, and Macau's sovereignty was transferred on December 20, 1999.

- The regions would have their own currencies, economic and legal systems, but defence and diplomacy would be decided by Beijing.
- Their mini-Constitutions would remain valid for 50 years – till 2047 for Hong Kong and 2049 for Macau. It is unclear what will happen after this term.

##### Chinese law in Hong Kong to respond to foreign sanctions:

- The law is proposed to be introduced through Hong Kong legislation rather than Beijing legislation, by adding it to an annex of **Hong Kong's mini-constitution**, known as **the Basic Law**.

### What's the law all about?

1. Beijing adopted a law in June under which individuals or entities involved in making or implementing discriminatory measures against Chinese citizens or entities could be put on a Chinese government anti-sanctions list.
2. Under China's law, such individuals could then be denied entry into China or be expelled.
3. Their assets in China may be seized or frozen. They could also be restricted from doing business with entities or people in China.

### Why was such a law introduced?

The law comes as the United States and European Union step up pressure on China over trade, technology, Hong Kong and the far western region of Xinjiang

### Concerns and issues associated with the law:

Critics have warned that Hong Kong's adoption of the law could undermine its reputation as a global financial hub.

### 5. The need to reopen anganwadis

This article discusses the need to reopen the Anganwadis since they are the focal point for the execution of all ICDS health, nutrition, and early learning programmes.

### What is Anganwadi?

- In Indian languages, the word anganwadi means "courtyard shelter."
- They began in 1975 as part of the Indian government's Integrated Child Development Services initiative to tackle child hunger and malnutrition.

### Significance of Anganwadis: -

- Anganwadis are part of the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) and provide childcare, health and nutrition, education, supplemental nutrition, immunisation, health check-ups, and referral services to households, particularly those from low-income families.
- ICDS covers over 88 million children aged 0 to 6 years in India.



- Anganwadi workers were a key source of nutrition advice for families, according to IDinsight surveys.

### **Impacts of Anganwadis Closure: -**

- Shutdown of Anganwadi services had a severe impact on service delivery and jeopardised a vital social security net.
- Even though anganwadis have reopened, their capacity to serve as childcare centres has been harmed.
- According to statistics from the National Family Health Service (NFHS)-5, less than 15% of five-year-olds attended any kind of pre-primary education in 2019-20.
- Home-schooling was indicated by 58 percent of women in our COVID-19 rural household surveys as the main cause of an increase in unpaid work.

### **Benefits of Reopening Anganwadis: -**

Anganwadis can help children reach their full potential by serving as platforms for early childhood education and nutrition support.

Women's time will be freed up, especially for economic activities, if younger children are sent to anganwadis.

The National Education Policy, 2020, places anganwadis at the centre of the push to universalise access to early childhood care and education (ECCE).

### **Myriad challenges before Anganwadis: -**

1. **Lack of Skill Set:**-Despite being the major source of nutrition advice, anganwadi staff may be lacking in technical skills. Knowledge of critical health behaviours such as complementary feeding and handwashing was poor among mothers listed as anganwadi workers.
2. **Lack of Resources:** Anganwadi personnel frequently lack the resources or training necessary to deliver ECCE.
3. **Lack of Time:** Administrative obligations consume a large amount of time, and fundamental services such as pre-school education suffer as a result.
4. **Lack of Infrastructure:** Infrastructure is frequently lacking in anganwadis. According to NITI Aayog, only 59% of anganwadis had enough seating for children and employees, and more than half were unsanitary.
5. **Issues in Urban Areas:** According to NFHS-4 statistics, the use of early childcare services at anganwadis in urban regions is just 28 percent, compared to 42 percent in rural areas.

### **Ways to increase the efficiency of Anganwadis:-**



- Prioritize and assess initiatives that have a track record of effectiveness.
- Increase the number of home visits where volunteers interact with children and caregivers to enhance cognition, language, and dietary intake.
- Execute seamless cooperation among anganwadi staff to provide efforts surrounding home-based newborn and young child care.
- Improve anganwadi staff' career incentives and compensation.
- Link Anganwadis and elementary schools to promote convergence, as well as the time of childcare at anganwadis would be extended.
- Reaching out to pregnant moms can enhance the chances that their children will receive ICDS programmes.

### Conclusion: -

Anganwadis, the world's biggest supplier of early childhood care, play a critical role in improving the lives of children in India. We need to spend more in anganwadis and use proven innovative approaches to enhance these results.

## 6. The Omicron response is not making sense

This article discusses the response of many countries against Omicron variant

### Background:

- The World Health Organization has identified a new SARS-CoV-2 variant, B.1.1.529, as a variant of concern (VOC) and given it the name Omicron.
- Many nations' responses were startlingly similar to the original pandemic reaction.
- Flights to the nations that had reported the new variant had been banned unilaterally.

### Concerns with Global Response

1. **Less Vaccination:** At this time, little over half of the world's population has gotten at least one vaccination. There is also a scarcity of appropriate testing and genomic sequencing capabilities.
2. **Inadequate Treatment:** In addition, the lack of availability of some new medications is a stronger indicator of inadequate treatment. All of these should have given the response some complexity and granularity.
3. **Scientific Reactions on Social Media:** Some so-called "experts" on social media and prime time television cross the line into what might be described as "public health malpractice." Concerns have been raised about scientific

breakthroughs that are giving extreme reactions which are not evidence-based.

4. **Inappropriate measures:** The South Africans have been sanctioned with a travel ban, which has compromised vital COVID-19 lab supplies. Compare this to the Netherlands, which discovered Omicron before South Africa and failed to disclose it.
5. **Political Challenges:** With the introduction of novel varieties, a few high-income nations have turned inwards and begun focusing on booster administration. Political challenges are also reflected in the flying limitations and booster injections.
6. **Vaccine inequality:** In terms of global solidarity in the pandemic response, which includes vaccine inequities, the affluent nations have generally failed the rest of the world.
7. **Limitations of Vaccinations:** Most notably, the existing COVID-19 vaccinations have a limited impact in preventing infections. As the worldwide pool of vaccinated persons grows, the absolute number of illnesses in this subgroup is projected to grow in lockstep, especially because mask use is far from ubiquitous and is declining.

### Concerns in Indian scenario

- The demand of a few Indian state chief ministers to ban all international flights is ineffective. This raises fundamental issues regarding their COVID-19 pandemic advisors.
- Science, not just political wisdom, will continue to be required to drive the pandemic response.
- This is a spurious claim that Omicron illnesses are more prevalent among vaccinated people.
- The impact of misinformation is well-known among Indians, where unsubstantiated claims that 'children would be affected in the third wave of COVID-19' could not be dispelled for long and continue to influence children.

### Recommendations

- All vaccinations and variations are prone to re-infection or breakthrough infections. As a result, a booster dose is not the answer.
- Increasing coverage with the initial two vaccination doses and focusing on improving adherence to COVID-19 acceptable behaviours is the way to go.
- The next logical step is for countries to become more aware of the need to address vaccine disparities.
- The measures that followed should have been evidence-based, developed from prior months' experience, and consistent with the knowledge and understanding.

## Conclusion:

- It's important to note that the influence of the Omicron variation, regardless of its new traits, will be determined by the context and conditions.
- In a well-vaccinated community, a highly transmissible variation is unlikely to change circumstances, but it may represent a significant threat to people with poor vaccination rates.
- The onus is on countries in the global south, such as India, South Africa, and many others, to take the lead and allow science and logic define the trajectory of the pandemic response.

## GS 3 : Economy, Science and Technology, Environment

### 7. Arms Race towards Hypersonic Weapons

China recently tested a nuclear-capable hypersonic missile while Russia announced that it had successfully test-launched a Tsirkon hypersonic cruise missile in early October.

#### What are Hypersonic Weapons?

- The speed of sound is Mach 1, and speeds upto Mach 5 are supersonic and speeds above Mach 5 are hypersonic.
- They are manoeuvrable weapons that can fly at speeds in excess of Mach 5, five times the speed of sound.
- A number of other countries - including Australia, India, France, Germany, and Japan – are developing hypersonic weapons technology.

#### Features of HSWs

- **Trajectory:** Ballistic Missiles are long-range missile that leaves the earth's atmosphere before re-entry, pursuing a parabolic trajectory towards its target
- **Maneuverability:** HSW travel within the atmosphere and can manoeuvre midway which combined with their high speeds make their detection and interception extremely difficult.
- **Stealth:** Radars and air defences cannot intercept them till they are very close. They can penetrate most missile defences and further compress the timelines for response by a nation under attack.

## Types of Hypersonic Weapons

There are two classes of hypersonic weapons:

1. **Hypersonic glide vehicles (HGV):** They are launched from a rocket before gliding to a target.
2. **Hypersonic cruise missiles (HCM):** They are powered by high-speed, air-breathing engines, or scramjets, after acquiring their target.

## Where does the US stand?

- The US has active hypersonic development programs.
- It is said to be lagging behind China and Russia because most US hypersonic weapons are not being designed for use with a nuclear warhead.
- It is in process of developing prototypes to assist in the evaluation of potential weapon system concepts and mission sets.

## Hypersonic program in India

- **HSTDV program:** India is developing an indigenous, dual-capable hypersonic cruise missile as part of its Hypersonic Technology Demonstrator Vehicle (HSTDV) program.
- **Capacity:** India operates approximately 12 hypersonic wind tunnels and is capable of testing speeds of up to Mach 13.
- **In-operation:** The DRDO has successfully tested a Mach 6 scramjet in June 2019 and September 2020 using the demonstrated scramjet engine technology.

DRDO has validated many associated crucial technologies such as:

1. Aerodynamic configuration for hypersonic maneuvers
2. Use of scramjet propulsion for ignition and sustained combustion at the hypersonic flow
3. Thermo-structural characterization of high-temperature materials
4. Separation mechanism at hypersonic velocities has been validated

## Conclusion

- There are rising tensions between the US, China and Russia worsening the geopolitical situation worldwide.
- The focus for hypersonic weapons is only set to accelerate more countries to invest significant resources in their design and development.

## 8. How is Gold Hallmarking being implemented?

The Government has made it mandatory for the introduction of a Hallmark Unique Identification (HUID) number in every piece of jewellery.

### What is HUID?

- HUID is a **six-digit alphanumeric code**, or one that consists of numbers and letters. It is given to every piece of jewellery at the time of hallmarking and is unique for each piece.
- It is being implemented by the **Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS)** in a phased manner.
- Hallmarking & HUID are mandatory for 14-, 18- and 22-carat gold jewellery and artefacts.
- Before buying any piece of gold jewellery, the buyer should check all these three symbols.

### Implementation of HUID

- **Symbols:** The hallmark consists of three symbols which give some information about the jewellery piece. The first symbol is the BIS logo; the second indicates purity and fineness; and the third symbol is the HUID.
- **A&H centre:** Jewellery is stamped with the unique number manually at the Assaying & Hallmarking centre.

### Why is it being introduced?

- **Authentication:** HUID gives a distinct identity to each piece of jewellery enabling traceability.
- **Credibility:** It is critical to the credibility of hallmarking and to help address complaints against adulteration.
- **Registration:** In HUID-based hallmarking, registration of jewellers is an automatic process with no human interference.
- **Prevents malpractice:** It also helps check malpractice by members of the trade.
- **Data privacy:** It is a secure system and poses no risk to data privacy and security.
- **Financial tracking:** HUID provides traceability and financial tracking of purchases.

### Issues with HUID

- **Time-consuming:** It is cumbersome to number each piece of jewellery
- **Intricate jewellery:** HUID cannot be engraved in tiny pieces.

- **Unnecessary expense:** Also it will increase cost for consumers.
- **Infrastructural issues:** there needs to be ample AH Centres.

### What does this mean for the consumer?

- **Consumer protection:** Given that gold plays a big role in the lives of Indians, mandating gold hallmarking is aimed at protecting consumer interests.
- **Assurance of quality:** It provides 'third-party assurance' to consumers on the purity of gold jewellery.

### Conclusion

- HUID concept is innovative, out-of-the-box thinking and more than makes up for stepping in late with mandatory hallmarking.
- It is the sort of global leadership India has and needs to show in gold-related reforms.

## 9. Dhawan-1: India's first privately developed Cryogenic Rocket

Skyroot Aerospace successfully tested Dhawan-1 last month. It became the country's first privately developed fully cryogenic rocket engine.

### Dhawan-1

- The indigenous engine was developed using 3D printing with a superalloy.
- It runs on two high-performance rocket propellants – liquid natural gas (LNG) and liquid oxygen (LoX).
- This was after successfully designing and developing the solid propulsion rocket engine, the first private firm in the country to do so.

### Other projects by Skyroot

- Skyroot is working simultaneously on different stages of both solid propulsion and liquid propulsion engines.
- It is named after eminent scientists, like Kalam (Abdul Kalam) series for the former and Dhawan (Satish Dhawan).
- The launch vehicles are named after Vikram Sarabhai.



## **GS 2 : Polity, Governance, International Relations**

### **1. What's in ART, Surrogacy Bills?**

Lok Sabha recently passed the **Assisted Reproductive Technology Regulation Bill, 2020**, which makes provisions for the safe and ethical practice of assisted reproductive technology (ART) services in the country.

#### **Overview and key features of the Bill:**

1. It would lead to the creation of a **national board** to lay down and implement a code of conduct for people working at IVF clinics.
2. Determines **the minimum standards of physical infrastructure, laboratory, diagnostic equipment and expert manpower** to be employed by ART clinics and banks.
3. The bill intends to make **genetic testing of the embryo mandatory** before implantation for the benefit of the child born through ART.
4. It also seeks to **streamline the cryo-preservation processes for sperm, oocytes and embryos**.
5. It also proposes to constitute a **national registry and registration authority** to maintain a central database and assist the national board in its functioning.
6. The bill proposes **stringent punishment** for those “practising sex selection, sale of human embryos or gametes and running agencies/rackets/organisations for such unlawful practices.

#### **Need for a legislation in this regard:**

The need to regulate the ART services is to protect the affected women and children from exploitation. Registration with the ICMR is a voluntary exercise at the moment because of which many clinics don't take the trouble and prefer opacity while offering infertility treatment.

#### **Significance:**



The major benefit of the act would be regulation of the assisted reproductive technology services in the country. Consequently, infertile couples will be more ensured and confident of the ethical practices in ART clinics.

### **What is ART? Why it is in demand?**

- Assisted Reproductive Technology (ART), as commonly understood, comprises procedures such as in-vitro fertilisation (IVF), intra-uterine insemination (IUI), oocyte and sperm donation, cryopreservation and includes surrogacy as well.
- Social stigma of being childless and lengthy adoption processes have increased the demand for ART in India. It is thus not surprising that the ART industry is expected to grow by a compounded annual growth rate of 10%.

### **Surrogacy vs ART in India:**

- The Surrogacy (Regulation) Bill relates to surrogacy, an infertility treatment, where a third person, a woman, is the surrogate mother. In ART, treatments can be availed by the commissioning couple themselves and it is not always necessary that a third person is involved.
- Surrogacy is allowed for only Indian married couples. ART procedures are open to married couples, live-in partners, single women, and also foreigners.
- A 2015 notification prohibits commissioning of surrogacy in India by foreigners or OCI or PIO cardholders, but NRIs holding Indian citizenship can avail surrogacy. Foreigners can visit India under medical tourism to avail ART services.

### **2. Anti-defection law:**

The Congress Party has written to the Speaker, Meghalaya Legislative Assembly seeking disqualification of 10 of the 12 MLAs that recently deserted the Party to join the All India Trinamool Congress (AITMC).

### **Why the 10th schedule might not apply here?**

The 10th Schedule of the Indian Constitution commonly referred to as the Anti-defection Act says that disqualification on ground of defection will not apply in case of a split.

- Where a member of a House claims that he/she and any other members of his/her legislature party constitute the group representing a faction which has arisen as a result of a split in the original political party and such group consists of not less than two-thirds of the members of such legislature party, he/she shall not be disqualified.
- From the time of such split, the faction shall be deemed to be the political party to which he/she henceforth belongs.

### **Relevance: the Tenth Schedule of the Indian Constitution:**

Popularly known as **the anti-defection law**.

- It specifies the circumstances under which changing of political parties by legislators invites action under the law.
- It was added to the Constitution by **the 52nd Amendment Act**.
- It includes **situations in which an independent MLA, too, joins a party after the election**.

The law covers three scenarios with respect to shifting of political parties by an MP or an MLA. These include:

1. When a member elected on the ticket of a political party “voluntarily gives up” membership of such a party or votes in the House against the wishes of the party.
2. When a legislator who has won his or her seat as an independent candidate joins a political party after the election.

In the above two cases, **the legislator loses the seat in the legislature on changing (or joining) a party**.

3. Relates to nominated MPs. In their case, the law gives them six months to join a political party, after being nominated. If they join a party after such time, they stand to lose their seat in the House.

### **Matters related to disqualification:**

- Under the anti-defection law, **the power to decide the disqualification of an MP or MLA rests with the presiding officer of the legislature.**
- **The law does not specify a time frame** in which such a decision has to be made.
- Last year, the Supreme Court observed that **anti-defection cases should be decided by Speakers in three months' time.**

However, **Legislators may change their party without the risk of disqualification in certain circumstances. Exceptions:**

1. The law allows a party to merge with or into another party provided that at least two-thirds of its legislators are in favour of the merger.
2. On being elected as the presiding officer of the House, if a member, voluntarily gives up the membership of his party or rejoins it after he ceases to hold that office, he won't be disqualified.

### **Loopholes in the law:**

Those against say that voters elect individuals in the election and not parties and hence the Anti-Defection law is infructuous.

### **3. How are MPs' questions allowed, disallowed?**

Over the last few sessions, MPs mainly from the Opposition have often alleged their questions have been disallowed in the Parliament.

Some of the questions that were disallowed include:

- Whether NRIs were harassed at airports and sent back.
- Whether the Chinese have crossed the LAC in Ladakh.

Reasons cited by Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha Secretariats for disallowing include lack of time and national security.

### MPs' right to question:

In both Houses, elected members enjoy the right to seek information from various ministries and departments in the form of starred questions, unstarred questions, short notice questions and questions to private members.

### **How are questions admitted?**

- Usually, MPs' questions form a long list, which then go through a rigorous process of clearance.
- The admissibility of questions in Rajya Sabha is governed by Rules 47-50 of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the Council of States.
- Once a question that fulfils the conditions of admissibility is received, the Secretariat sends it to the ministry concerned. Once the facts are received from the ministry, the question is further examined for admissibility.
- A final list of questions is circulated to ministers, on the basis of which they frame their answers.

### What are starred, unstarred and other categories of questions?

**STARRED QUESTION:** The member desires an oral answer from the minister. Such a question is distinguished by the MP with an asterisk. The answer can also be followed by supplementary questions from members.

**UNSTARRED QUESTION:** The MP seeks a written answer, which is deemed to be laid on the table of the House by the concerned minister.

**SHORT NOTICE QUESTION:** These are on an urgent matter of public importance, and an oral answer is sought. A notice of less than 10 days is prescribed as the minimum period for asking such a question.

**QUESTION TO PRIVATE MEMBER:** A question can be addressed to a private member under Rule 40 of Lok Sabha's Rules of Procedure, or under Rule 48 of Rajya Sabha's Rules, provided that the question deals with a subject relating to some Bill, resolution or other matter for which that member is responsible.

### **What kind of questions can be asked?**

- **In Rajya Sabha**, among various norms, the question “shall be pointed, specific and confined to one issue only; it shall not bring in any name or statement not strictly necessary to make the question intelligible; if it contains a statement the member shall make himself responsible for the accuracy of the statement; it shall not contain arguments, inferences, ironical expressions, imputations, epithets or defamatory statements”.
- **In Lok Sabha**, questions that are not admitted include: those that are repetitive or have been answered previously; and matters that are pending for judgment before any court of law or under consideration before a Parliamentary Committee.

#### 4. Uttarakhand’s Char Dham Act:

Uttarakhand government has announced the withdrawal of the **Char Dham Devasthanam Management Act**. The decision will lead to the abolition of Uttarakhand Char Dham Devasthanam Management Board, which has been facing protests from priests and other stakeholders of four shrines and Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP).

#### Environmental Concerns About the Project:

- The project may destroy about 690 hectares of forests with 55,000 trees and evacuate an estimated 20 million cubic metres of soil.
- Ruthless harvesting or uprooting of vegetation in the widening of roads can prove to be perilous for the biodiversity and regional ecology.

#### What is Chardham Project?

- The project comprises improvement as well as the development of 889 km length of national highways.
- The project will connect Badrinath Dham, Kedarnath Dham, Gangotri, Yamunotri, and part of the route leading to Kailash Mansarovar yatra.

#### Role in National Security:

This project can act as the strategic feeder roads which connect the India-China border with the Army camps in Dehradun and Meerut where missile bases and heavy machinery are located.

### **Supreme Court views on the project:**

Supreme Court (SC), in November 2020, had spoken of the need to balance national security concerns with environmental issues in the context of the Army's request to expand the **CharDham Project (CDP)** roads leading to the Indo-China border.

## **GS 3 : Economy, Science and Technology, Environment**

### **5. Project RE-HAB**

Buoyed by the success of its innovative Project RE-HAB (Reducing Elephant-Human Attacks using Bees) in Karnataka, Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) has now replicated the project in Assam.

#### **Project RE-HAB**

- Project RE-HAB is a sub-mission of KVIC's National Honey Mission.
- Under the project, "Bee-fences" are created by setting up bee boxes in the passageways of elephants to block their entrance to human territories.
- The boxes are connected with a string so that when elephants attempt to pass through, a tug or pull causes the bees to swarm the elephant herds and dissuade them from progressing further.
- It is a cost-effective way of reducing human-wild conflicts without causing any harm to the animals.

#### **How does it work?**

- It is scientifically recorded that elephants are annoyed by the honey bees.
- Elephants also fear that the bee swarms can bite the sensitive inner side of the trunk and eyes.
- The collective buzz of the bees is annoying to elephants that force them to return.

## 6. S-Gene Drop Out

**In News:** The Omicron variant of the SARS-CoV-2 virus has been confirmed in India and in at least 30 other countries by the World Health Organization (WHO).

**What is the S-gene drop out?**

- Tests usually look for three target genes related to parts of the virus: S (spike), N2 (nucleocapsid or inner area) and E (envelope or outer shell).
- The S-gene refers to the **gene that codes for the spike protein**, or the most distinctive part of the coronavirus.
- The SARS-CoV-2, like many other coronaviruses, has key protein-regions that define its structure: The envelope protein (E), the nucleocapsid protein (N), the membrane protein (M) and the **spike protein (S)**.
- To accurately identify the virus, diagnostic tests are made that can **identify characteristic genes that make these proteins**.
- While the variant can only be reliably confirmed with genome sequencing, the WHO has also recommended that certain commonly used COVID-19 detection tests, with 'S-gene dropout' capabilities, can be used to quickly screen for an Omicron infection.

## 7. Loktak Inland Water ways project

**In News:** Union Minister of Ports, Shipping & Waterways and AYUSH inspected the Inland Waterways of India (IWAI) Jetty at the iconic Loktak Lake.

**Loktak Lake**

- The only floating national park in the world
- The largest fresh water lake in North east located at Moirang in Manipur.
- One of the largest water bodies in Asia and its beauty, greenery, marine life, surrounded by blue mountains stand out.
- Loktak Lake is famous for the **phumdis** floating over it. Phumdis are a series of floating islands of entangled vegetation formed by the accumulation of organic debris and biomass with soil, exclusive to the Loktak Lake in Manipur. Its thickness varies from few centimeter to two meters. The humus of phumdi is black in colour and very spongy with large number of pores. It floats with 4/5 part under water.
- It has been designated as a **wetland** of international importance under the **Ramsar Convention** in 1990.



- It is also listed under the **Montreux Record** in 1993, “a record of Ramsar sites where changes in ecological character have occurred, are occurring or are likely to occur”.

### Prelims Practice Questions

#### 1. Colony collapse disorder an abnormal phenomenon is associated with

- a. Marine mammals, where underwater noise interferes with key life functions
- b. Birds, unable to trace their migratory paths
- c. Corals, resulting in Coral bleaching
- d. Honey Bees, where majority of worker bees disappear

**Answer: d**

#### Explanation

- Colony Collapse Disorder(CCD) occurs when the majority of worker bees in a colony vanish, leaving behind just a queen.
- Pesticides, mites, fungus, beekeeping methods ,malnutrition, low quality queens, hunger, various diseases, and immunodeficiencies are all being considered as possible causes of CCD.
- **Hence Option D is correct.**

#### 2. Identify the fields which cannot be patented:

1. Methods of agriculture and horticulture
2. Traditional knowledge
3. Computer Program
4. Discovery of scientific principle

Choose the correct option.

- a. 1 and 2 only
- b. 2 only
- c. 1, 2 and 3 only
- d. 1, 2, 3 and 4

Answer : d

## Patents

- Background: The Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers' Rights Authority (PPV&FRA) has revoked a plant variety protection (PVP) certificate granted to PepsiCo India Holding on a potato variety (FL-2027) on multiple grounds.
- A patent is an exclusive right granted for an invention, which is a new product or process that meets conditions of
  1. novelty
  2. non-obviousness &
  3. Industrial use
- A patent provides the owner with the right to decide how or whether the invention can be used by others.

## What cannot be patented?

- Frivolous Invention: Invention that harms public order/Morality/ health of animals, plants & humans
- Methods of agriculture or horticulture
- Traditional Knowledge
- Computer Program
- Inventions related to Atomic Energy
- Plants & Animals
- Mere discovery of scientific principle

## Criteria for issuing Patents in India

- Novelty: it should be new (not published earlier + no prior Public Knowledge/ Public Use in India)
- Non obviousness: It must involve an inventive step (technical advanced in comparison to existing knowledge + non-obvious to a person skilled in the relevant field of technology)
- Industrial use: It should be capable of Industrial application
- Patents in India are governed by "The patent Act 1970" which was amended in 2005 to make it compliant with TRIPS.

## Patent (Amendment) Rules, 2020

- The central government has published an amended Patent (Amendment) Rules, 2020.
- The new rules have amended the format of a disclosure statement that patentees & licensees are required to annually submit to the Patent Office.

- The format contains disclosing the extent to which they have commercially worked or made the patented inventions available to the public in the country.
- The disclosure is to be made in the Form 27 format as prescribed under the Patent Rules, 2003.
- The patentees & licensees as well as the Patent Office have blatantly disregarded this statutory requirement.
- There has been significant pressure from MNCs & the U.S. to do away with this requirement.

### 3. Which of the following is correct with respect to Public Choice Theory?

- a. Public choice refers to an economic approach towards the study of politics.
- b. It shows how self-interested behavior of people affects the outcomes of elections and other political processes.
- c. It predicts trends in public finance, which refers to how governments collect and spend tax money.
- d. All of the above

Answer : d

### Public Choice Theory in Economics

- Public choice refers to an economic approach towards the study of politics.
- Public choice theorists assume that politicians and bureaucrats who run the government of a country are self-interested individuals who primarily look after their own selfish interests.
- This is in contrast to the general assumption that public servants work to satisfy the interests of the general public.
- Public choice theorists, however, have argued that the risk of market failure should first be weighed against the risk of government failure before favoring any regulation of the marketplace.
- Public choice theorists also look into how self-interested behavior of people affects the outcomes of elections and other political processes.
- For instance, the fact that the power of a single vote to influence an election is essentially zero means that voters have very little incentive to educate themselves about candidates and their policies before voting.
- Public choice theory also predicts trends in public finance, which refers to how governments collect and spend tax money.

- It points to two important features of public finance in particular. One, ordinary citizens must pay taxes to their government whether they like it or not, or end up in jail.
- In other words, they cannot refuse to pay taxes if they are unhappy with the services provided by the government.
- This essentially means that taxpayers can expect very little accountability from the government. Even if tax revenues are spent on wasteful schemes, taxpayers still must pay taxes.

**4. With respect to Antarctic Fur Seals, which of the following statements is/are correct?**

1. Antarctic Fur Seals are widely distributed in the Southern Ocean near the Antarctic Convergence.
2. Its IUCN status is Vulnerable
3. They do have any natural Predators

**Options:**

- a. 1 only
- b. 1 and 2 only
- c. 3 only
- d. 1, 2 and 3

**Answer: a**

**Explanation**

- Antarctic Fur Seals can be found in large numbers at the Antarctic Convergence in the Southern Ocean. South Georgia, as well as other sub-Antarctic islands, are home to the majority of the inhabitants. **Hence Statement 1 is correct.**
- IUCN Status: Least Concern. **(NOT Vulnerable) Hence Statement 2 is incorrect.**
- Sharks and Killer Whales attack Antarctic Fur Seals, and the pups are vulnerable to Leopard Seals. **Hence Statement 3 is incorrect.**

**5. Which amongst the following is the string puppet native to the state of Rajasthan?**

- a. Kalasutri Bahulya

- b. Sakhi kandhei
- c. Putala Natch
- d. Kathputli

**Answer: d**

### **Explanation**

#### **Kalasutri Bahulya:**

- Kalasutri Bahulya comes from Maharashtra which has a long tradition of string puppet theatre.
- 'Kal' refers to the forefingers of the human hand, 'Sutri' to black thread, and 'Bahulya' to puppets.

#### **Sakhi kandhei:**

- 'Sakhi Kandhei Nacha' is a puppet dance from Odisha.
- The string puppetry show Sakhi kandhei is particularly in the Kendrapara area of Odisha.

#### **Putala Natch:**

- Putola Nach is a traditional Assamese string puppet theatre from North East India.
- It is typically used to perform episodes from epics like the Ramayana or Mahabharatha.
- Putala bhaona is another name for Putala nach.

#### **Kathputli:**

- Kathputli is Rajasthan's traditional string puppetry which is costumed in authentic Rajasthani dress.
- The Kathputli term originates from 'Kath' means wood and 'Putli' means doll.
- **Hence Option D is correct.**

### **6. India draws its human rights obligations from:**

1. Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993
2. Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the UN
3. Rights guaranteed by the Constitution

**Choose the correct option:**

- a. 1 only
- b. 1 and 3 only
- c. 2 and 3 only
- d. 1, 2, and 3

**Answer: d**

**Explanation:**

- There is an apparent impact of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights on drafting Part III (Fundamental Rights) of the Indian Constitution.
- Every citizen is guaranteed basic human rights under the Indian Constitution.
- India has acceded to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the UN.
- As per the provisions of the Protection of Human Rights Act of 1993, the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) was established in 1993 as an independent statutory body as a watchdog of human rights in the country.

## Mains Practice Questions

**1. The frequent promulgation of ordinances is an assault on the democratic structure of the Constitution. Critically analyse. (250 words)**

### Approach

- Introduce the concept of ordinances with constitutional articles (for both President and Governors) for the same.
- Briefly explain the need for the promulgation of ordinances.
- Discuss the issues with the frequent promulgation of the ordinances.
- Also give some examples to show the frequent promulgation and re-promulgation of the ordinances in the country.
- Conclude suitably on a positive note.

**2. The Minimum Support Price (MSP) scheme protects farmers from the price fluctuations and market imperfections. In the light of the given statement, critically analyse the efficacy of the MSP. (250 words)**

### Approach

- Introduce by defining Minimum Support price (MSP).
- Discuss the advantages of MSP scheme.
- Analyse the constraints or issues with the MSP system.
- Conclude with a way forward.