



Yojna IAS

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JULY 2023

WEEKLY CURRENT AFFAIRS

YOJNA IAS WEEKLY CURRENT AFFAIRS

17/7/2023 TO 23/7/2023

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CURRENT AFFAIRS

JULY 2023

ANTI DEFECTION LAW

This article covers "Daily Current Affairs" and the topic details "Anti Defection Law". The topic "Anti Defection Law" has relevance in the "Indian Polity" section of the UPSC CSE exam.

For Prelims:

What is Anti Defection Law

For Mains:

GS2: Indian Constitution and Issues related to it

Why in the news?

The Supreme Court recently issued a notice to a Legislative Assembly Speaker over inactions in a disqualification proceedings.

Anti Defection Law:

Defection is the act of voluntarily quitting one's allegiance to a person, cause, or party and giving one's support to another. It is often used to describe a politician who switched political parties.

- The original text of the Constitution of India did not include any provisions to prevent or protect against the act of defection.
- The **52nd Amendment Act of 1985** was introduced to establish rules regarding the **disqualification of members of Parliament and state legislatures** if they switch their political party affiliation. It brought about modifications in four Articles of the Constitution and introduced a new section called the Tenth Schedule. This legislation is commonly known as the 'anti-defection law'.
- Subsequently, the **91st Amendment Act of 2003** made a revision to the provisions outlined



in the Tenth Schedule. It eliminated an exception clause, specifically the exemption from disqualification in the event of a split within a political party.

Provisions of the Act:

Disqualification of Political Party Members

- A member of a House belonging to a political party loses their membership if they:
- **Voluntarily give up their party membership.**
- **Vote or abstain from voting against their party's directive** in the House without prior permission, and the party does not condone the act within 15 days.

Disqualification of Independent Members

- An independent member of a House, elected without the support of any political party, loses their membership **if they join a political party after the election.**

Disqualification of Nominated Members

- A nominated member of a House loses their membership **if they join a political party after six months from the date they took their seat in the House.**
- However, within the first six months of taking their seat, a nominated member can join a political party without facing disqualification.

Exceptions to Disqualification on Grounds of Defection

The disqualification for defection does not apply in the following cases:

- If a member leaves their party due to a **merger** of the party with another party, provided that two-thirds of the members of the original party agree to the merger.
- If a member, after being **elected as the presiding officer** of the House, voluntarily gives up their party membership or rejoins it after ceasing to hold that office.

The provision in the Tenth Schedule that allowed exemption from disqualification in case of a split by one-third of the members of the legislature party has been removed by the 91st Amendment Act of 2003.

Decision of the Presiding Officer

- The **presiding officer of the House** is responsible for deciding any question related to disqualification arising from defection.
- Initially, the decision of the presiding officer was considered final and not subject to judicial review.
- **Kihoto Hollohan case (1993)**
- The Supreme Court declared this provision unconstitutional.
- The Supreme Court ruled that the presiding officer, while deciding a question under the Tenth Schedule, functions as a tribunal. Therefore, the decision of the presiding officer, like any other tribunal, can be subject to judicial review based on factors such as mala fides and perversity.

Cases where Anti Defection Law cannot be used:

- **Rajya Sabha and Presidential Elections:** No political party can issue a whip to its MPs and MLAs for a particular candidate in these cases. However, they can take disciplinary action in case of cross- voting in Rajya Sabha Elections.

Evaluation of the Anti-Defection Law:

The law was enacted to curb political defections and promote stability in the political system. This law aimed to deter elected representatives from switching parties after their election, thereby preventing the collapse of governments and ensuring the people's mandate is respected.

Advantages of Anti-Defection Law:

- **Stabilised the political system:** The law has helped to prevent the frequent instances of legislators switching parties, which often led to the collapse of governments.
- **Strengthened party discipline:** The law has made it more difficult for legislators to vote against the wishes of their party, which has helped to strengthen party discipline.

Disadvantages of Anti-Defection Law:

- **Curbing Individual Freedom and Expression**
 - Critics argue that the law curtails the freedom of elected representatives to vote according to their conscience or in the best interest of their constituents.
 - It limits dissent within political parties and stifles individual opinions, potentially leading to a lack of diverse perspectives and healthy debates.
- **Concentration of Power with Party Leadership**
 - This concentration of power in the hands of a few individuals may undermine intra-party democracy and discourage dissent, hindering the growth and evolution of political parties.
- **Controversial Role of Speaker**
 - One of the contentious aspects of the Anti-Defection Law is the lack of clarity regarding the time-frame within which the House Chairperson or Speaker must act in anti-defection cases.
 - Some cases have taken as long as six months or even three years to be resolved.
 - In some instances, cases are disposed of only after the term of the elected representative is over, raising concerns about delayed justice and potential manipulation of the law's provisions.
- **Issue of Wholesale Defection:**
 - The Anti-Defection Law allows for wholesale defection. This means that if a large group of legislators defect to another party, they will not be disqualified from membership of the House. However, if a single legislator defects to another party, they will be disqualified.
 - This distinction has been criticised by some, who argue that it allows for political parties to buy out legislators and that it stifles dissent within political parties.

International Experience

- Most advanced democracies do not disqualify legislators for defecting against their parties.
- Such members may be subject to internal party discipline, including expulsion from the party. The seating arrangement of the person changing their party allegiance may be modified in the House

Potential Reforms and Improvements

- **Targeting Key Votes**
 - The anti-defection law could be made more effective by limiting its applicability to crucial votes that directly impact the stability of the government.
 - For example, the law could be invoked for votes on significant matters like the passage of the annual budget or no-confidence motions.
- **Involvement of Election Commission**

- The decision to disqualify a member should not rest solely with the Presiding Officer but should involve the Election Commission.
- The President (in the case of MPs) or the Governor (in the case of MLAs) could make the disqualification decision based on the Election Commission's advice.
- **Establishment of an Independent Authority**
 - An independent authority should be established to handle cases of defection.
 - This would ensure fair and impartial adjudication, enhancing the credibility of the process.
- **Promoting Intra-Party Democracy**
 - Political parties should foster a democratic environment internally, allowing for discussions and respecting the opinions of their members.
 - Encouraging healthy debates and providing freedom of speech and expression within parties would promote a more inclusive decision-making process and strengthen inner-party democracy.

Conclusion: Striking a balance between party discipline and individual freedom, strengthening intra-party democracy, and conducting regular assessments can contribute to the law's improvement. By addressing the concerns associated with its implementation, the Anti-Defection Law can continue to play a vital role in preserving the integrity and stability of democratic systems.

Q1. With reference to Defection Laws in India, consider the following statements:

1. The Original Constitution did not provide provisions for Anti- Defections.
2. An independent member can be disqualified if they join a political party before six months of taking oath in the house.
3. A nominated member can be disqualified if they join a political party after six months of taking oath in the house

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: (c)

Q2. Consider the following cases:

1. A member leaves their party as it merges with another party, with the approval of two-thirds of the original party's members.
2. A member of the house stays absent for 6 months.
3. A member leaves due to a case of a split with one-third of the members of the legislature party.
4. A member resigns from their party voluntarily.

In how many of the cases above, the member of the house can be disqualified under the Tenth Schedule ?

- (a) Only one
- (b) Only two
- (c) Only three
- (d) All Four

Answer: (b)

Q3. Analyse the Anti-Defection Law in India and discuss the reforms needed to ensure its effective implementation and safeguard democratic principles.

SIACHEN GLACIER

This article covers "Daily Current Affairs" and the topic details "Siachen Glacier". The topic "Siachen Glacier" has relevance in the Geography section of the UPSC CSE exam.

For Prelims:

About Siachen Glacier?

For Mains:

GS 2: Geography

Survey of Siachen Glacier?

Significance for India?

Pakistan's Claims and Actions?

Why in the news?

June-August 2023 marks the sapphire jubilee of a very important event in the history of the exploration of the Siachen glacier. V. K. Raina, a top Indian geologist, led the first Geological Survey of India expedition to the Siachen glacier. This event is of historical and geostrategic significance as it puts to rest all myths to the effect that Pakistan was in control of the glacier since the beginning.

Siachen Glacier:

- The Siachen Glacier is located in the Eastern Karakoram range in the Himalayas, just northeast of Point NJ9842 where the Line of Control (LOC) between India and Pakistan ends.
- It stretches from northwest to southeast and originates at the base of the Indira Col West, descending to an altitude of 3,570 meters.
- The entire Siachen Glacier, including major passes, has been under the administration of India since 1984 (Operation Meghdoot).
- It is the second-longest glacier in the world's non-polar areas after the Fedchenko Glacier in Tajikistan.
- The Siachen Glacier lies immediately south of the great drainage divide that separates the Eurasian Plate from the Indian subcontinent.
- The Nubra River originates from the Siachen Glacier.
- It is known as the world's highest battlefield due to the military presence and conflicts between India and Pakistan in the region.



Survey of Siachen Glacier:

- The first GSI survey of the Siachen Glacier was conducted in June 1958 by Assistant Geologist V. K. Raina from the Geological Survey of India (GSI).
- The survey was part of the International Geophysical Year activities and aimed to study the Himalayan glacier systems.
- The GSI team spent nearly three months at the base of the glacier, conducting various studies and establishing survey points.

Significance for India:

- The survey holds significance for India as it marks the official Indian exploration of the Siachen Glacier, which later became a disputed area between India and Pakistan.
- The GSI survey provides historical evidence of India's early knowledge and scientific engagement with the glacier, countering any claims of Pakistani control since the beginning.
- It highlights India's presence and understanding of the area before the conflict arose.

Pakistan's Claims and Actions:

- During the GSI survey in 1958, Pakistan did not raise any objections to the presence of Indian forces on the Siachen Glacier.
- In 1983, Pakistan unilaterally extended the Line of Control (LOC) from NJ 9842 to the Karakoram Pass, challenging the existing status quo.
- This extension of the LOC by Pakistan raised concerns in India regarding the region's security. In response, Indian forces proactively occupied the strategically important Saltoro Heights in April 1984.
- The occupation of Saltoro Heights aimed to secure India's position and prevent potential threats to its territory.
- Pakistan's claims and actions related to the Siachen Glacier are based on differing interpretations of historical agreements, such as the Karachi ceasefire agreement of 1949 and the Simla Agreement of 1972.

Source:

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/the-first-gsi-survey-of-the-siachen/article67077315.ece>

Q.1 Which of the following statements about the Siachen Glacier is correct?

- (a) The Siachen Glacier is located in the Western Himalayas.
- (b) The Siachen Glacier is the longest glacier in the world.
- (c) The Siachen Glacier has been under the administration of Pakistan since 1984.
- (d) The Siachen Glacier is known as the "Third Pole" due to its extensive glaciation.

ANSWER: D

Q.2 Which of the following statements about the Siachen Glacier is NOT correct?

- (a) The Siachen Glacier is located in the Karakoram range of the Himalayas.
- (b) The Siachen Glacier is the highest battlefield in the world.
- (c) The Siachen Glacier has been under the administration of India since 1984.
- (d) The Siachen Glacier is primarily known for its wildlife diversity.

ANSWER: D

Q.3 Discuss the geopolitical significance and challenges associated with the Siachen Glacier for India?

CLUSTER MUNITIONS

This article covers "Daily Current Affairs" and the topic details "Cluster Munitions". The topic "Cluster Munitions" has relevance in the "Defence and International Relations" section of the UPSC CSE exam.

For Prelims:

What are cluster munitions?

For Mains:

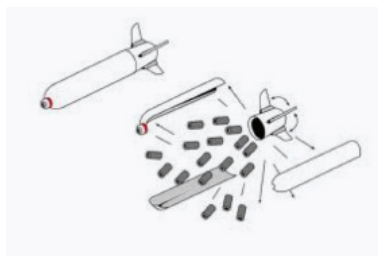
GS2: International Treaties and Agreements, Russia's Invasion of Ukraine.

Why in the news?

Recent headlines have highlighted the continued use of cluster munitions. In regards to the ongoing conflict in Ukraine, Russia emphasized that Russia possesses an ample supply of these munitions and maintains the right to employ them if they are deployed against Russian forces. This was in response to Ukraine's announcement that it had obtained cluster bombs from the US.

Definition of Cluster Munitions:

- According to the Convention on Cluster Munition, Cluster munitions are conventional explosive devices specifically created to disperse smaller explosive submunitions weighing under 20 kilograms.
- The ban on cluster munitions applies to both the container and the explosive submunitions it contains.
- Dispensers fixed to aircraft that release or disperse explosive submunitions, known as explosive bomblets, are included under the ban.
- The convention excludes munitions designed for flares, smoke, pyrotechnics, or chaff, as well as those designed for electrical or electronic effects.
- Various delivery systems like warships, aircraft, artillery, or rocket launchers have the ability to launch different types of munitions, including both banned cluster munitions and non-banned unitary munitions.
- The Convention on Cluster Munitions does not prohibit any specific delivery system, meaning States Parties are not obligated to remove or destroy them.



Function of Cluster Munitions:

- These weapons are intended to cause widespread harm, targeting both humans and infrastructure indiscriminately over a large area.
- They can be deployed by aircraft or launched through projectiles that scatter multiple bomblets during flight.
- Unfortunately, many of these submunitions do not detonate upon impact and remain on the ground, often concealed and difficult to detect, posing a long-lasting threat to civilians even after conflicts have ended.

Challenges Associated with Cluster Munitions:

- Cluster munitions pose significant challenges, including the violation of international humanitarian law through their indiscriminate harm to civilians and civilian objects.
- They have a high failure rate, leaving behind unexploded ordnance that continues to endanger lives and safety.
- Moreover, these weapons contaminate vast areas for extended periods, rendering them unfit for human use and placing burdens on healthcare systems and economies in affected nations.

Use of Cluster Munitions in Ukraine

- Russian forces have been reported to use cluster bombs in Ukraine, as confirmed by Ukrainian government leaders, observers, and humanitarian groups.
- Human rights groups have also accused Ukraine of using cluster bombs during the conflict.
- Instances of Russian cluster bomb attacks were documented in various locations, including near a preschool in Okhtyrka and multiple cluster attacks in Kharkiv, Ukraine's second-largest city.
- During March, urban areas were subjected to a Russian missile and drone assault, which included a continuous bombardment in Bakhmut located in the eastern Donetsk region.
- Shelling and missile strikes hit the Ukrainian-held city of Kostiantynivka, resulting in injuries and hospitalizations of at least four individuals.

Historical Usage of Cluster Munitions:

- During the Afghanistan War in 2001, cluster bombs played a significant role for the United States.
- The US last employed cluster bombs during the conflict with Iraq in 2003.
- In the Syrian civil war, Russian-supplied Syrian government troops frequently utilized cluster munitions.
- Israel also deployed cluster bombs in civilian areas during the 2006 war with Hezbollah in south Lebanon.
- The Saudi-led coalition in Yemen faced criticism for their use of cluster bombs in their conflict against the Houthi rebels.

Convention on Cluster Munitions:

- The Cluster Munitions Convention is a legally binding international agreement adopted by the UN that outlawed the use, production, transfer, and stockpiling of cluster munitions.
- It establishes a framework for cooperation and assistance to ensure proper support for survivors and affected communities, clearance of contaminated areas, risk reduction education, and destruction of stockpiles.
- The convention was adopted in Dublin, Ireland, in 2008, and was open for signature in Oslo,

Norway. It entered into force in 2010 after receiving the required 30 ratifications. To date, 110 countries have ratified the convention, and 13 others have signed it.

- Ratifying countries commit to never using cluster munitions, as well as refraining from developing, producing, acquiring, retaining, stockpiling, or transferring these weapons.
- Notably, India, the United States, Russia, China, Pakistan, and Israel, among others, have not signed or ratified the convention.

Role of the Cluster Munition Coalition:

- The Cluster Munition Coalition is an international civil society initiative committed to eliminating cluster munitions, reducing casualties, and putting an end to the suffering caused by these weapons.
- The Cluster Munition Monitor is a collaborative project of the Cluster Munition Coalition, Human Rights Watch, and Landmine Action. It publishes an annual report that provides comprehensive information on the status of the Convention on Cluster Munitions, as well as on the humanitarian impact of cluster munitions.

Sources:

Vladimir Putin says Russia has stockpiled cluster bombs and reserves right to use them in Ukraine – The Hindu

Q1. With reference cluster munitions, consider the following statements:

1. The Convention on Cluster Munitions does not prohibit any specific delivery system.
2. The cluster munitions have a minimal failure rate.
3. The ban on cluster munitions applies to both the container and the explosive submunitions it contains.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: (c)

Q2. Consider the following countries:

1. India
2. Afghanistan
3. Russia
4. Ukraine
5. Canada
6. United Kingdom

How many of the abovementioned countries have signed and ratified the Convention on Cluster Munition?

- (a) Only one
- (b) Only two
- (c) Only three
- (d) Only Four

Answer: (c)

Q3. Explain the impact of cluster munitions used in the Ukraine war. Discuss the consequences for civilians and the environment, as well as the Convention on Cluster Munitions

MISSION VATSALYA

This article covers "Daily Current Affairs" and the topic details "Mission Vatsalya". The topic "Mission Vatsalya" has relevance in the Social Justice section of the UPSC CSE exam.

For Prelims:

About Mission Vatsalya?

For Mains:

GS 2: Social Justice

Components of mission Vatsalya?

Support for Abandoned Minor Girls?

Why in the news?

Representatives of various child rights organisations have appealed to the government to extend the last date for applying for Mission Vatsalya Scheme, under which Centre will give ₹4,000, to each orphan child.

Mission Vatsalya: Overview and Implementation

Launch and Focus:

- Mission Vatsalya was launched in 2021 by the Ministry of Women and Child Development.
- It focuses on the protection and welfare of children in India.

Ensure Opportunities for Children:

- The scheme aims to provide children with opportunities to reach their full potential and flourish in all aspects of life.
- It seeks to create an enabling environment for their holistic development.
- Foster a Supportive Ecosystem:
- Mission Vatsalya aims to establish a sensitive, supportive, and synchronized ecosystem for child development.
- It strives to promote a comprehensive and collaborative approach among various stakeholders.

Components of Mission Vatsalya

Improving Statutory Bodies:

- The scheme focuses on enhancing the functioning of statutory bodies involved in child protection.
- This includes strengthening Child Welfare Committees (CWCs) at the district level.
- Strengthening Service Delivery Structures:

- Mission Vatsalya aims to strengthen the service delivery structures for effective child protection.
- It focuses on improving infrastructure, human resources, and capacity building of stakeholders involved in child protection services.



Upscaling Institutional Care and Services:

- The scheme emphasizes upscaling institutional care facilities and services for children in need of care and protection.
- This involves ensuring proper care, shelter, nutrition, education, and healthcare for children residing in institutions.

Encouraging Non-Institutional Community-Based Care:

- Mission Vatsalya promotes community-based care options such as sponsorship, foster care, and adoption.
- It aims to facilitate the placement of children in supportive families and provide necessary financial assistance.

Providing Emergency Outreach Services:

- The scheme includes provisions for emergency outreach services to promptly address situations requiring immediate intervention.
- This ensures swift support for children in crisis, such as rescue, medical assistance, and temporary shelter.

Training and Capacity Building:

- Mission Vatsalya focuses on training and capacity building programs for various stakeholders involved in child protection.
- This includes training for CWC members, child protection officers, and frontline workers to enhance their skills and knowledge.

Implementation of Juvenile Justice Act:

- The scheme assists states and union territories in effectively implementing the provisions of the Juvenile Justice Act, 2015.
- It seeks to strengthen the child protection framework in line with the Act's objectives and man-

dates.

- Achieve Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):
- Mission Vatsalya aligns with the SDGs, particularly Goal 16, which focuses on promoting peace, justice, and strong institutions.
- It contributes to building a robust child protection system and ensuring the well-being of children.
- Modes of Non-Institutional Care for Children

Sponsorship:

- Government Aided Sponsorship: Financial assistance provided through government funds.
- Private Aided Sponsorship: Financial assistance provided through private sources or individuals.

Foster Care:

- Children are placed under the care and rehabilitation of an unrelated family.
- Foster parents receive financial support for nurturing the child.
- Adoption:
- Suitable families are identified for children who are legally free for adoption.
- The Central Adoption Resource Authority (CARA) facilitates the adoption process.

Aftercare:

- Financial support is provided to children leaving a Child Care Institution upon turning 18 years old.
- This assistance aids their reintegration into society and self-dependency.
- Support may extend from 18 to 21 years, with the possibility of further extension up to 23 years.

POCSO Fast-Track Courts:

- As part of Mission Vatsalya, the government has established 415 POSCO fast-track courts across the country.
- These courts aim to provide speedy justice and assistance to minor victims of rape.

Child Care, Advocacy, and Awareness:

- Mission Vatsalya emphasizes child care, advocacy, and awareness.
- It seeks to create a supportive environment for children and ensure their care, protection, and overall development.
- The motto of the mission is "Leave No Child Behind."

Legal Framework:

- The implementation of Mission Vatsalya is based on the provisions of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015.
- The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012 (POCSO Act) is also a key basis for the mission's implementation.

Collaboration with State Governments and UT Administrations:

- Mission Vatsalya is a centrally sponsored scheme that works in collaboration with state govern-

ments and union territory administrations.

- The objective is to provide assistance and support to child victims of abuse, exploitation, and neglect.

Mission Vatsalya: Support for Abandoned Minor Girls

- The scheme aims to provide comprehensive support and assistance to minor girls who have been abandoned by their families.
- It focuses on addressing the needs of girls who have experienced forced pregnancy and lack other means of support.

Shelter and Basic Necessities:

- Mission Vatsalya aims to provide shelter, food, and daily necessities to the abandoned minor girls.
- The scheme focuses on creating safe and secure living spaces for the victims.

Transportation and Legal Aid:

- The scheme includes provisions for safe transportation of the girls to court hearings and other legal proceedings.
- Legal aid services will be provided to ensure that the rights and interests of the girls are protected.

Setting up Shelters:

- The fund allocated under Mission Vatsalya will be utilized to set up shelters specifically designed for the victims.
- These shelters will provide a conducive environment for the girls' well-being and development.

Integrated Support and Assistance:

- The new scheme aims to provide integrated support and assistance to the victimized girls.
- This includes access to education, ensuring their right to education is fulfilled.
- Police support will be provided to address any security concerns and protect the girls from harm.
- Healthcare facilities, including maternity care, neo-natal care, and infant care, will be made available to meet their medical needs.
- Psychological and legal aid services will be provided to help them cope with emotional trauma and seek justice.

SOURCE:

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/andhra-pradesh/child-rights-panel-urges-govt-to-extend-time-for-mission-vatsalya-scheme-till-april-30/article66740829.ece>

Q.1 Which ministry launched the Mission Vatsalya scheme.

- (a) Ministry of Home Affairs
- (b) Ministry of Women and Child Development
- (c) Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment
- (d) Ministry of Health and Family Welfare

ANSWER: B

Q.2 Under the Mission Vatsalya scheme, the government of India established 415 POSCO fast-track courts across the country. What is the primary objective of these courts?

- (a) To provide speedy justice and assistance to minor victims of rape
- (b) To address cases related to child trafficking and exploitation
- (c) To ensure access to education and healthcare for underprivileged children
- (d) To facilitate the adoption process for children in need of care and protection

ANSWER: A

Q.3 Discuss the key features and objectives of the Mission Vatsalya scheme launched by the Ministry of Women and Child Development in India.

DEFAMATION

This article covers "Daily Current Affairs" and the topic details "Defamation". The topic "Defamation" has relevance in the "Indian Polity" section of the UPSC CSE exam.

For Prelims:

Fundamental Rights, Criminal Defamation

For Mains:

GS2: Indian Constitution and Issues related to it.

Why in the news?

The Gujarat High Court's recent ruling on Rahul Gandhi's criminal revision petition has generated significant inquiries regarding the domains of defamation, disqualification, and electoral representation legislation.



Freedom of Speech and Defamation :

- Under Article 19(2) of the Indian Constitution, defamation is recognized as an exception to free speech, as validated by Sections 499 and 500 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC).
- There are two types of defamation in India: civil defamation and criminal defamation.
 - Civil defamation is a tort, which means that it is a wrong that can be remedied by a civil lawsuit.
 - Criminal defamation is a crime, which means that it can be punished by the government.

Maximum punishment for criminal defamation is two years.

- Criminal defamation is committed when a person makes an imputation with the intention of harming the reputation of another person, or with reason to believe that it will harm their reputation. The actual harm inflicted or suffering caused is not a condition for criminal defamation, as intention or knowledge is sufficient.
- Mr. Gandhi's comment was deemed defamatory under Section 499, which includes imputations regarding "a company or an association or collection of persons as such."
- The Magistrate Court held individuals with the surname Modi as an identifiable class, resulting in the accused being pronounced guilty with the maximum possible sentence.

Precedents on Defamation:

- Previous judgments have established criteria for determining a "collection of persons."

Year	Case	Summary
1965	Sahib Singh Mehra v. State of Uttar Pradesh	The Supreme Court established identifiability and definitiveness as criteria for a "collection of persons." It ruled that public prosecutors and assistant public prosecutors at Aligarh constitute a definite and identifiable category.
1967	Tek Chand Gupta v. R. K. Karanjia	The Allahabad High Court stated that the Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh (RSS), with its own constitution, is an association or collection of persons that is not indefinite and unidentifiable.
1972	G. Narasimhan v. T. V. Chokkappa	The Supreme Court quashed complaints against office bearers of certain newspapers, including The Hindu, regarding defamatory newspaper reports on a conference organized by the Dravida Kazhagam in 1971. The court ruled that the conference was not a determinate and identifiable body.

Related Constitutional Provisions:

- **Article 19(a)** states that all citizens shall have the right to freedom of speech and expression
- Reasonable restrictions on the exercise of this right can be enforced to safeguard the sovereignty and integrity of India, ensure state security, friendly relations with foreign States, public order, decency or morality or in relation to contempt of court, defamation or incitement to an offense.
- **Article 102** specifies the disqualifications for individuals aspiring to become members of either House of Parliament. These disqualifications include:
 - Holding any office of profit under the Government of India or the Government of any State.
 - Being declared of unsound mind by a competent court.
 - Being an undischarged insolvent.
 - Not being a citizen of India or voluntarily acquiring the citizenship of a foreign State, or having any acknowledgment of allegiance or adherence to a foreign State.
 - Being disqualified by any law enacted by Parliament.

Considering these precedents, the apex court will determine whether individuals with the surname Modi can be classified as an identifiable or definite class, constituting a "group of persons." It remains to be seen if the Supreme Court, employing its powers under Article 136, will grant indulgence to stay the conviction in this specific case to ensure substantive justice.

Sources:

On Rahul Gandhi's conviction – The Hindu

Q1. With reference to defamation laws in India, consider the following statements:

1. Under Article 21 of the Indian Constitution, defamation is recognized as an exception to free speech.
2. Civil defamation is a tort, which means that it is a wrong that can be remedied by a civil lawsuit.
3. Maximum punishment for criminal defamation is six years.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 2 only
- (d) None

Answer: (c)

Q2. Consider the following:

1. Interest of general public
2. Sovereignty and integrity of India
3. Protection of scheduled tribes
4. Incitement to an offense
5. Morality
6. Public health

How many of the abovementioned are exceptions to the freedom of speech and expression in the Constitution of India?

- (a) Only two
- (b) Only three
- (c) Only five
- (d) All Six

Answer: (b)

Q3. Discuss the constitutional provisions related to freedom of speech, defamation, and disqualification for electoral representation in India.

EXPORT PREPAREDNESS INDEX (EPI)

This article covers "Daily Current Affairs" and the topic details "Export Preparedness Index". The topic "Export Preparedness Index" has relevance in the Economy section of the UPSC CSE exam.

For Prelims:

About Export Preparedness Index (EPI) 2022?

For Mains:

GS 3: Economy

Key Learnings from EPI?

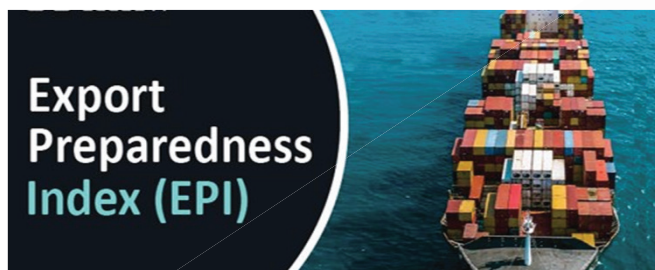
Recommendations?

Why in the news?

Tamil Nadu has been ranked the No. 1 State in Export Preparedness Index (EPI) for 2022. It is followed by Maharashtra and Karnataka. Gujarat has been pushed to the fourth slot this time. Tamil Nadu has been in the top 5 list among Large/Coastal States' categories in the past two years.

Export Preparedness Index (EPI) 2022

- The Export Preparedness Index (EPI), released by NITI Aayog, is a comprehensive tool that measures the export preparedness of Indian states and Union Territories (UTs).
- It analyzes export-related parameters to identify the strengths and weaknesses of different regions to stimulate economic growth and development through exports.



Key Highlights of EPI 2022:

Performance of States:

- Tamil Nadu secured the top spot in EPI 2022, followed by Maharashtra and Karnataka.
- Gujarat, which held the top position in EPI 2021, slipped to the fourth slot in EPI 2022.
- Tamil Nadu's strong export performance indicators contributed to its leadership, especially in automotive, leather, textiles, and electronic goods sectors.

Hilly/Himalayan States:

Uttarakhand topped among hilly/Himalayan states, followed by Himachal Pradesh, Manipur, and others.

Landlocked Regions:

Haryana emerged as the top performer among landlocked regions, showcasing its preparedness for exports.

Union Territories/Small States:

Goa ranked first among Union Territories and small states, with Jammu and Kashmir, Delhi, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, and Ladakh following.

Global Economy:

- Global trade in 2021 showed signs of recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic, driven by increased demand for goods, fiscal policies, vaccine distribution, and eased restrictions.
- The Russo-Ukrainian war in February 2022 impacted sectors like grain, oil, and natural gas, temporarily slowing down recovery.

India's Export Trends:

- Despite global slowdown, India's exports in 2021-22 crossed an unprecedented USD 675 billion,

with goods accounting for USD 420 billion.

- The increase in commodity prices and demand from developed countries boosted India's merchandise exports.

Key Learnings from EPI:

- **Coastal States Dominance:** Coastal states performed the best across all indicators, with Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Karnataka, and Gujarat leading the pack.
- **Policy Ecosystem:** States have shown positive progress in adopting necessary policy measures to drive exports.
- **Transport Connectivity:** The absence of air connectivity affects goods movement, particularly in landlocked or geographically disadvantaged states.
- **Research and Development:** R&D investments are crucial for driving product innovation, quality improvement, and efficiency enhancement in exports.
- **Leveraging Geographical Indication (GI) Products:** States should promote and improve the manufacturing and quality of unique GI products to establish a presence in the global market.
- **Export Market Diversification:** States should identify high-growth sectors and focus on information technology, pharmaceuticals, automotive, textiles, and renewable energy.

Recommendations:

- **Adoption of Good Practices:** States should learn from successful peers and adopt relevant practices to improve export performance.
- **Investment in Research and Development (R&D):** States should invest in R&D for product innovation and market-specific creation to boost exports.
- **Leveraging Geographical Indication (GI) Products:** States should capitalize on their unique GI products and enhance their manufacturing and quality for improved exports.
- **Export Market Diversification:** Identifying and promoting high-growth sectors can enhance India's export potential.

Conclusion:

The Export Preparedness Index serves as a vital tool to identify strengths and weaknesses, empowering states and UTs to enhance their export potential and contribute to India's economic growth and development. The recommended strategies can further support states in their export endeavors, contributing to India's global competitiveness.

SOURCE:

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/tamil-nadu/tamil-nadu-tops-niti-aayog-export-preparedness-index-2022-gujarat-skids-to-4th-slot/article67091437.ece>

Q.1 What is the Export Preparedness Index (EPI)?

- (a) A comprehensive tool to measure the export performance of countries globally.
- (b) An index that evaluates the export readiness of Indian states and Union Territories.
- (c) A report published by the World Trade Organization (WTO) on global trade trends.
- (d) A measure of a country's trade balance and current account surplus.

Answer: (b)

Q.2 Which state topped the Export Preparedness Index (EPI) 2022?

- (a) Maharashtra
- (b) Gujarat
- (c) Tamil Nadu
- (d) Karnataka

Answer: (c)

Q.3 Discuss the key findings and recommendations of the Export Preparedness Index (EPI) 2022 in enhancing India's export potential. How can states leverage their strengths and address the identified weaknesses to drive economic growth through exports?

DTP IMMUNIZATION

This article covers "Daily Current Affairs" and the topic details "DTP3 Immunization". The topic "DTP3 Immunization" has relevance in the "Science and Technology" section of the UPSC CSE exam.

For Prelims:

What is DTP Vaccine? What diseases does it protect from?

For Mains:

GS3: Science and Technology

Why in the news?

The WHO and UNICEF estimates for national immunisation coverage for 2022, were recently released showcasing India's record coverage of 93% in DTP3 Immunization.

What is DTP Vaccine?

The DPT vaccine is a trivalent combination of immunizations safeguarding against three distinct diseases: diphtheria, tetanus, and pertussis (whooping cough).

Diphtheria:

- Diphtheria is an infectious disease resulting from the bacterium *Corynebacterium diphtheriae*. Transmission typically occurs through direct person-to-person contact, respiratory droplets, or exposure to contaminated surfaces.
- The toxin produced by the bacterium can damage the heart, nerves, and other organs, making diphtheria potentially fatal, especially in young children.
- Diphtheria vaccine is available in various formulations and is effective for prevention.

Tetanus (lockjaw):

- Tetanus is an infection caused by the bacterium *Clostridium tetani* that lives in soil and dust.
- When these bacteria enter the body, they produce a toxin that leads to painful muscle contractions. It can also cause muscle spasms in the chest, back, and abdomen, making it difficult to breathe.

Pertussis:

- Pertussis, commonly referred to as whooping cough, is a respiratory tract infection resulting from the bacteria *Bordetella pertussis*. It manifests with a persistent and severe cough lasting for several weeks.
- Pertussis can be particularly dangerous for infants and young children, who may develop pneumonia or other complications as a result of the infection.

DPT is one of the 12 vaccine-preventable diseases that are covered by India's Universal Immunisation Programme (UIP), which provides free vaccinations.

India's Universal Immunization Program:

- India's Universal Immunization Programme stands as the largest in the world, catering to approximately 26.5 million infants and 29 million pregnant women each year.
- At the national level, it provides immunisation against 9 diseases,
 1. Diphtheria,
 2. Pertussis,
 3. Tetanus,
 4. Polio,
 5. Measles,
 6. Rubella,
 7. severe forms of Childhood Tuberculosis,
 8. Hepatitis B,
 9. Meningitis & Pneumonia caused by *Haemophilus Influenzae* type B.
- On a sub-national scale, the program also addresses 3 diseases:
 1. Rotavirus diarrhoea,
 2. Pneumococcal Pneumonia, and
 3. Japanese Encephalitis.
- Among these, the Rotavirus vaccine and Pneumococcal Conjugate vaccine are currently undergoing expansion efforts, whereas the JE vaccine is solely provided in districts endemic to the disease.

Mission Indradhanush:

- In December 2014, Mission Indradhanush (MI) was initiated with the goal of achieving a 90% full immunisation coverage for children.
- The primary focus of this initiative is on areas with low immunisation rates and in hard-to-reach regions where the number of unvaccinated and partially vaccinated children is highest.
- Throughout its implementation, Mission Indradhanush has successfully completed six phases, effectively covering 554 districts nationwide.
- Additionally, it has been recognized as a prominent program under both Gram Swaraj Abhiyan, encompassing 16,850 villages across 541 districts, and Extended Gram Swaraj Abhiyan, reaching 48,929 villages across 117 aspirational districts.



Intensified Mission Indradhanush:

Version	Time	Objective
IMI 1.0	October 2017 – January 2018	To achieve 90% full immunisation coverage with focus on districts and urban areas with persistently low levels.
IMI 2.0	December 2019 – March 2020	To ensure the vaccination of all available vaccines reaches those who have not been reached yet and to expedite coverage among children and pregnant women in the designated districts and blocks.
IMI 3.0	February 2021 – March 2021	To focus on the children and pregnant women who have missed their vaccine doses during the COVID-19 pandemic.
IMI 4.0	February 2022 – May 2022	To catch up on gaps that might have emerged due to the pandemic and cover 416 districts across 33 states/UTs in the country.

Benefits to Immunisation:

- **Preventing disease:** Vaccines can prevent people from getting sick. This is especially important for children, who are more vulnerable to certain diseases.
- **Reducing the severity of disease.** Even if someone does get sick after being vaccinated, the disease is often less severe than it would be if they were not vaccinated.
- **Community Protection:** When a large number of people are vaccinated, it creates what is known as herd immunity. This implies that individuals who have not received vaccination are also at a reduced risk of falling ill, as the disease finds it more challenging to spread.

Sources:

India recorded all-time high of 93% DPT3 immunisation coverage in 2022: WHO – The Hindu

Q1. With reference to DTP Vaccine, consider the following statements:

1. DPT vaccine is a combination of three vaccines that helps to protect against Diphtheria, Tetanus and Polio.
 2. Diphtheria is an infection caused by the bacteria while Polio is caused by a virus.
- Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
(b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2
(d) Neither 1 and 2

Answer: (b)

Q2. Consider the following:

1. Polio
2. Measles- Rubella
3. Childhood Tuberculosis
4. Hepatitis C
5. Covid-19
6. Pneumonia

How many of the above mentioned diseases are part of India's Immunization Program ?

- (a) Only three
(b) Only four
(c) Only five
(d) All six

Answer: (b)

Q3. Discuss the achievements, challenges, and future strategies of India's immunization program in the context of ensuring universal and equitable vaccine coverage for its diverse population.

GM CROPS

This article covers "Daily Current Affairs" and the topic details "GM Crops". The topic "GM Crops" has relevance in the "Science and Technology" section of the UPSC CSE exam.

For Prelims:

What are GM Crops? Their Legal Status

For Mains:

GS3: Science and Technology- Biotechnology

Why in the news?

Activists recently petitioned the Supreme Court to ban GM food crops, specifically Dhara Mustard Hybrid-11 (DMH-11), due to a number of concerns.

Genetically Modified (GM) Crops

- According to WHO, Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) are organisms (plants, animals, or microorganisms) whose genetic material (DNA) has been altered in a way that does not occur naturally through mating or natural recombination.
- This technology is known as "modern biotechnology," "gene technology," "recombinant DNA technology," or "genetic engineering."
- It enables the transfer of selected genes between organisms, even from unrelated species.
- Genetic engineering aims to cross the genus barrier by introducing an alien gene into seeds to achieve specific outcomes.
- The alien gene could come from a plant, an animal, or even a soil bacterium.
- Foods produced from or using GM organisms are commonly referred to as GM foods. GM variants of maize, canola, and soybean are widely available worldwide.

GM Crops in India

Bt Cotton

- Bt cotton is a genetically modified crop that contains two genes from the soil bacterium *Bacillus thuringiensis* (Bt). These genes produce a protein that is toxic to the common insect pink bollworm.
- The only GM crop that is allowed in India is Bt cotton.

HTBt cotton

- HTBt cotton is a genetically modified (GM) cotton variety that is resistant to the herbicide glyphosate. This means that farmers can use glyphosate to kill weeds without harming the cotton plants.
- HTBt cotton has been shown to increase yields and reduce pesticide use.
- But, there are concerns about the environmental impact of HTBt cotton, and it is not yet approved for commercial cultivation in India.
- However, there is some illegal cultivation of HTBt cotton in India.

Bt Brinjal

- The Bt brinjal plant has a gene that allows it to resist fruit and shoot borer infestations.

- The government has previously delayed the commercialization of genetically modified (GM) mustard due to strong opposition from NGOs and anti-GM campaigners.

GM Mustard

- The Delhi University Center for Genetic Manipulation of Crop Plants created DMH (Dhara Mustard Hybrid)-11, a genetically modified mustard variety.
- To develop a GM crop, biotechnologists insert specific genes at a random location in the DNA of a plant.
- The Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee (GEAC) approved the environmental release of Mustard DMH-11.
- Mustard is India's top crop for edible oil production.

Advantages of GM Crops

- It increases crop yields and farmer profits.
- It reduces the use of pesticides and insecticides, which can help to improve food security.
- It can help to feed a growing population due to its high yields.
- It can increase the productivity of small farms.

Disadvantages of GM Crops

- The production of genetically modified (GM) crops poses a high risk of disrupting ecosystems and biodiversity because the “better” traits produced from engineered genes can result in the favoring of one organism over others. This can lead to the extinction of other species and the disruption of the food chain.
- GM crops can increase the cost of farming and make farming more susceptible to marketization, which can lead to unethical profits.
- GM crops can endanger farmers, the environment, and trade.
- The current safety evaluations of GM crops do not capture all of the potential negative consequences of these crops.
- The production of GM crops poses a number of risks that need to be carefully considered before these crops are widely adopted.

Issues Regarding GM Mustard

- GM mustard is a genetically modified crop that is resistant to herbicides. Farmers and campaigners argue that spraying hazardous chemicals on this crop will have a negative impact on the health of those who consume it. They also argue that it is not suitable for the agricultural conditions in India and is not environmentally sustainable.
- Some environmentalists, scientists, lawmakers, farmers, consumers, and members of the higher court have questioned the necessity of GM food, as well as its safety and effectiveness.
- The committees associated with GM mustard have highlighted major weaknesses in the regulatory system and have called for utmost caution. The members of the committee have also pointed out the deficiencies in the safety assessment of GM crops.
- The government has not placed the full biosafety dossier of GM mustard in the public domain. The government has also claimed that it should not be considered as a herbicide-tolerant crop.

Indian Legal Framework for Genetically Modified crops

- The Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee (GEAC) in India is the top body that authorizes the commercial release of GM crops.
- In 2002, the GEAC authorized the commercial release of Bt cotton.
- Using an unapproved GM variant can result in a five-year prison sentence and a one-lakh-rupee

fine under the Environmental Protection Act of 1989.

- The central government has for the first time exempted certain types of genome-edited crops from the stringent regulations applicable to genetically modified or GM crops, paving the way for further research and development on them.
- On February 8, 2021, FSSAI issued an order setting the permissible limit for genetically modified organisms (GMOs) in imported food crops at 1%.

Mandate of Ministries/Departments	
Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primarily responsible for conservation and protection of environment, ensuring environmental and human health safety before release of GMOs / LMOs. • Nodal agency for implementing Rules, 1989 and the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety
Department of Biotechnology (Ministry of Science & Technology)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nodal department for promoting biotechnology programs • Provides scientific support in implementation of biosafety regulations • Provide services in areas of research, infrastructure, generation of human resource
Ministry of Agriculture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policies aimed at agriculture growth. • Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) responsible for monitoring agronomic benefits of GM technology. • Monitoring post-release performance of GM crops.
Ministry of Health and Family Welfare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policies aimed at protecting and monitoring human health. • Food Safety and Standards Authority of India responsible for regulating genetically engineered foods.
Ministry of Commerce and Industries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance trade with other countries through export/import policies. • Nodal agency for implementing DGFT notification on GMOs
Central Board of Excise and Customs, Department of Revenue, Ministry of Finance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enforcement of regulation pertaining to transboundary movement of GMOs/LMOs at point of entry

Way Forward

To move forward responsibly with GM crops like GM mustard, we need transparent evaluation of health, environmental, and biodiversity impacts. Balancing innovation and safety through dialogue, strict safety assessments, and regulatory adherence is vital for India.

Sources:

A push for GM mustard disregarding science, the law – The Hindu
Infographic Credits: The Hindu

Q1. With reference to Genetically Modified (GM) Crops, consider the following statements:

1. Genetically Modified Crops are produced by naturally crossing different plant species to achieve desired traits.
2. GM Crops involve altering the genetic material of organisms through genetic engineering techniques.
3. GM crops are known for their ability to increase biodiversity and promote ecological balance.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

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

Answer: (c)

Q2. Consider the following:

1. Bt brinjal
2. HtBt Cotton
3. DMH- 11
4. Golden rice

How many of the abovementioned GM crops are permitted for commercial cultivation in India?

- (a) Only one
- (b) Only two
- (c) Only three
- (d) None

Answer: (d)

Q3. Discuss the implications of genetically modified crops in India, with a specific focus on the recent controversies surrounding Dhara Mustard Hybrid-11 (DMH-11).

LIGHTNING FATALITIES IN INDIA

This article covers "Daily Current Affairs" and the topic details "Lightning fatalities in India". The topic "Lightning fatalities in India" has relevance in the Environment section of the UPSC CSE exam.

For Prelims:

*About Atmospheric Lightning ?
Current Scenario of Lightning in India?*

For Mains:

*GS 3: Environment
Causes?
Way Forward?*

Why in the news?

The Union government is not in favour of declaring lightning a natural disaster as deaths caused by it can be avoided through education and awareness. India is among the only five countries in the world with an early warning system for lightning and the forecast is available from five days to up to 3 hours. There have been demands by States such as Bihar and West Bengal that deaths due to lightning be covered as a natural disaster. The victims will be entitled to compensation from the State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF) once this is notified. As much as 75% of funds to SDRF are contributed by the Centre.

About Atmospheric Lightning:

Atmospheric lightning, also known simply as lightning, is a natural electrical discharge that occurs between clouds or between a cloud and the Earth's surface. It is a powerful and visible phenomenon that results from the buildup and release of electrical charges within the Earth's atmosphere.

Key Characteristics of Atmospheric Lightning:

- **Formation:** Lightning occurs due to the separation of positive and negative electrical charges within a cloud or between clouds and the ground. The exact mechanism of charge separation is complex and not fully understood, but it involves various processes such as collision, freezing, and convection within the cloud.
- **Electrical Discharge:** When the electrical potential difference between the charged regions becomes large enough, it leads to a rapid flow of electrons, creating a discharge known as lightning. This discharge is characterized by a brilliant flash of light and a rapid expansion of air, which generates the sound we hear as thunder.
- **Types of Lightning:** There are different types of lightning, including cloud-to-ground (CG) lightning, cloud-to-cloud (CC) lightning, intra-cloud (IC) lightning, and cloud-to-air (CA) lightning. CG lightning is the most well-known and dangerous type, as it can directly affect people and objects on the ground.
- **Frequency and Distribution:** Lightning occurs worldwide and is more common in regions with frequent thunderstorms, such as the tropics and subtropics. The geographical distribution of lightning activity varies depending on atmospheric conditions, including humidity, temperature, and atmospheric instability.
- **Dangers of Lightning:** Atmospheric lightning is hazardous due to its high electric voltage and current. It can cause injuries and fatalities if individuals or objects provide a more accessible path for the electrical discharge to flow, such as tall structures, trees, or open fields.



Current Scenario of Lightning in India:

Lightning Fatalities:

- In 2021, lightning accounted for 2,880 deaths, comprising 40% of all accidental deaths caused by “forces of nature,” according to National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) data.
- There has been an increase in lightning-related fatalities compared to other natural events.

Geographical Distribution:

- Lightning frequency is highest in northeastern states and West Bengal, Sikkim, Jharkhand, Odisha, and Bihar.
- However, the number of lightning-related deaths is higher in central Indian states like Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, and Odisha.

- Bihar is one of the most vulnerable states to lightning strikes, with a significant number of deaths reported annually. In 2023, till July 6, Bihar recorded 107 deaths due to lightning.

Union Government's View About Lightning:

The Union government opposes declaring lightning a natural disaster and believes that education and awareness can help prevent lightning-related deaths effectively.

Causes:

Climate Change:

- Global warming and climate change could potentially influence atmospheric conditions, leading to an increase in thunderstorms and lightning activity.
- Changes in the distribution of moisture, instability, and convective processes may favor more frequent lightning occurrences.

Urbanization:

- The expansion of urban areas can create the "urban heat island effect," making cities warmer than surrounding rural areas.
- These localized heat islands may lead to the formation of more thunderstorms and an increase in lightning strikes.

Land Use Changes:

Deforestation, changes in agricultural practices, and alterations of natural landscapes may disrupt local atmospheric conditions, contributing to the development of thunderstorms and more lightning.

Pollution and Aerosols:

- Air pollution, including aerosols and particulate matter, can affect cloud formation and electrical activity within storms.
- Anthropogenic emissions might influence the frequency and intensity of thunderstorms, potentially leading to more lightning strikes.

Way Forward:

Educational Campaigns:

Launch extensive educational campaigns to raise awareness about lightning safety, especially in rural areas, to inform people about the dangers of lightning and precautions to stay safe.

Lightning Prediction and Warning Systems:

Develop and implement lightning prediction and warning systems to provide advanced notice of lightning storms, helping people take necessary precautions and seek shelter in time.

Lightning-Resistant Infrastructure:

Encourage the construction of lightning-resistant infrastructure, including lightning rods on tall structures and surge protectors for electrical equipment, to reduce the risk of damage from lightning strikes.

Training for First Responders:

Train local emergency services and first responders on how to deal with lightning-related incidents and provide them with necessary equipment to handle such situations effectively.

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/can-deaths-due-to-lightning-be-considered-a-natural-disaster/article67087105.ece>

Q.1 Which of the following atmospheric factors plays a significant role in the formation of lightning and thunderstorms?

- (A) Wind Speed
- (B) Humidity
- (C) Temperature Inversion
- (D) Air Pressure

Select the correct option from the choices given above:

- (a) A and B only
- (b) B and C only
- (c) A, B, and C only
- (d) B, C, and D only

Answer: b

Q.2 During a thunderstorm, the thunder in the skies is produced by the:

- 1. meeting of cumulonimbus clouds in the sky
- 2. lightning that separates the nimbus clouds
- 3. violent upward movement of air and water particles

Select the correct answer using the codes given below:

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 and 3
- (c) 1 and 3
- (d) None of the above produces the thunder

Answer: d

Q.3 Discuss the challenges and measures to mitigate the impact of lightning-related fatalities in India.

RAJASTHAN MINIMUM GUARANTEED INCOME ACT, 2023

This article covers "Daily Current Affairs" and the topic details "Rajasthan Minimum Guaranteed Income Bill, 2023". The topic "Rajasthan Minimum Guaranteed Income Bill, 2023" has relevance in the "Governance" section of the UPSC CSE exam.

For Prelims:

What is Rajasthan Minimum Guaranteed Income Act, 2023?

For Mains:

GS2: Governance and Social Justice

Why in the news?

Recently, the Rajasthan state government has passed the Rajasthan Minimum Guaranteed In-

come Act, 2023, aiming to provide guaranteed wages or pensions to all adults in the state.

Rajasthan Minimum Guaranteed Income Act, 2023:

- The bill intends to provide all families in the state with guaranteed employment for 125 days every year.
- Additionally, the aged, disabled, widows, and single women will receive a minimum pension of Rs 1,000 per month. Importantly, the pension will be increased at the rate of 15 percent each year.
- The Bill comprises three broad categories: the right to minimum guaranteed income, the right to guaranteed employment, and the right to guaranteed social security pension.

Major Provisions:

Minimum guaranteed income:

1. The Indira Gandhi Shahri Rozgar Guarantee Yojana for urban areas and the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) for rural areas, implemented by the Rajasthan government, guarantee a minimum income for 125 days per year to every adult citizen of the state.
2. In an effort to enhance the employment guarantee, the Rajasthan Government has raised the number of guaranteed employment days for each family from 100 days to 125 days in its urban employment scheme.
3. In addition, the state will provide 25 more days of employment in rural areas, further supplementing the MGNREGA's 100 days of employment.
4. Furthermore, the government will provide a minimum pension of Rs 1,000 to eligible individuals falling within specified categories.

Guaranteed employment:

1. The right to employment dictates that after completing work in urban or rural employment schemes, the minimum wages should be paid either "weekly or, in any case, no later than a fortnight."
2. To implement the Act, the state will assign a program officer, who must hold a position not below that of a Block Development Officer in rural areas and an Executive Officer of the local body in urban areas.
3. One of the responsibilities of the Program Officer is to ensure that the work site is located within a five-kilometer radius of where the job card is registered, whether in rural or urban areas.
4. If the Program Officer fails to provide employment within 15 days of receiving the application, the applicant shall be entitled to receive an unemployment allowance on a weekly basis, and at the latest, within a fortnight.

Guaranteed social security pension:

1. Every individual who belongs to the categories of old age, specially-abled, widow, or single woman and meets the specified eligibility criteria will be eligible for a pension.
2. This pension will be increased in two instalments each financial year, beginning in 2024-2025, with a 5 percent increment in July and a further 10 percent increment in January.

Significance:

- The Rajasthan Minimum Guaranteed Income Act, 2023, holds significant importance as

it aims to provide comprehensive financial security to the entire adult population of the state.

- By guaranteeing employment for 125 days annually, offering a minimum pension to vulnerable groups, and increasing it annually, the bill seeks to uplift and support marginalised individuals, including the aged, disabled, widows, and single women.
- Additionally, the bill establishes a robust social security system, empowering citizens with a safety net to combat poverty and enhance their overall socio-economic well-being.

Implementation Challenges:

- The financial burden of providing guaranteed income and pensions to the entire adult population.
- Challenges in accurately targeting and identifying eligible beneficiaries.
- Managing administrative capacity and distribution logistics effectively.
- Ensuring transparency and minimizing corruption and leakages.
- Addressing geographic disparities and equitable resource allocation.
- Monitoring and evaluating the scheme's impact on an ongoing basis.
- Adapting to changing economic conditions and unforeseen events.
- Raising public awareness and encouraging active participation.
- Securing consistent political support for the scheme's success.

International Examples:

- Brazil's Bolsa Família represents the current social welfare initiative implemented by the Government of Brazil, operating within the Fome Zero network of federal assistance programs. It aims to offer financial aid to impoverished Brazilian families.
- On the other hand, Mexico's Oportunidades was the pioneering national conditional cash transfer program designed to assist impoverished and extremely poor households, integrating three fundamental social rights: healthcare, education, and nutrition.

Way forward:

- The Rajasthan Minimum Guaranteed Income Act, 2023, aims to provide financial security to the adult population, though challenges in funding, administration, targeting, and public awareness must be addressed for its success, benefiting the marginalised and establishing a robust social security system in Rajasthan.

Sources:

Rajasthan minimum income Bill: provisions, what makes it unique | The Indian Express
Rajasthan Assembly passes Bills on minimum income, higher punishment for paper leaks – The Hindu

Q1. With reference to the Rajasthan Minimum Guaranteed Income Act, 2023, consider the following statements:

1. The bill aims to provide guaranteed employment for 125 days every year to all families in the state.

2. The aged, disabled, widows, and single women will receive a minimum monthly pension of Rs 1,000, which increases by 15 percent annually.
3. The Bill encompasses the right to minimum guaranteed income, guaranteed employment, and guaranteed social security pension.

How many of the above statements are correct?

- (a) Only one
- (b) Only two
- (c) All three
- (d) None

Answer: (c)

Q2. Which one of the following is NOT a core objective of the Rajasthan Minimum Guaranteed Income Act, 2023?

- (a) Uplift and support marginalised individuals
- (b) Creation of productive assets
- (c) Enhancing livelihood security
- (d) Ensuring empowerment to women

Answer: (b)

Q3. Discuss the key provisions of the Rajasthan Minimum Guaranteed Income Act, 2023, and analyse its potential impact on poverty alleviation and socio-economic development in the state.

KATCHATHEEVU ISLAND

This article covers "Daily Current Affairs" and the topic details "Katchatheevu Island". The topic "Katchatheevu Island" has relevance in the "International Relations" section of the UPSC CSE exam.

For Prelims:

Where is Katchatheevu Island?

For Mains:

GS3: India and its neighbourhood relations

Why in the news?

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister called upon the Union government to launch diplomatic initiatives to reexamine the agreement that transferred the Katchatheevu islet to Sri Lanka.

Katchatheevu Island

Katchatheevu is a tiny, uninhabited island in the Palk Strait, which connects the Bay of Bengal and the Arabian Sea. It is a contested territory between Sri Lanka and India, with India claiming it until 1976 and Sri Lanka currently administering it.



Island's Timeline

Year	Event
14th century	Katchatheevu island is formed due to volcanic eruptions.
17th century	The Raja of Ramnad (present-day Ramanathapuram, Tamil Nadu) owns Katchatheevu island.
18th century	Katchatheevu island became a part of the Madras Presidency.
1921	Sri Lanka and India claim Katchatheevu island for fishing.
1974	Indira Gandhi signs the Indo-Sri Lankan Maritime Agreement, ceding Katchatheevu island to Sri Lanka.
1991	Tamil Nadu Assembly adopts a resolution demanding the retrieval of Katchatheevu island.

What is the Katchatheevu island issue?

- Fishermen from both countries fished in each other's waters peacefully until India-Sri Lanka signed maritime boundary agreements. These agreements established the international maritime boundary between the two countries.
- The aim of the agreements was to manage resources and enforce laws in the Palk Strait. Indian fishermen were only allowed to use an island for certain purposes, not for fishing. However, they continued crossing the Sri Lankan water boundary to find better catches.
- The situation worsened over the decades when fish and aquatic life in the Indian continental shelf decreased, leading to more Indian fishermen entering the region. They also used harmful modern fishing trolleys, impacting marine life and the ecosystem.

LTTE era and restrictions on movement

- During the LTTE era, the Sri Lankan government restricted Sri Lankan fishermen's movement in waters due to military concerns.
- In 2009, Sri Lanka increased security along its maritime boundary in the Palk Strait to prevent the return of Tamil insurgents.

- Indian fishermen saw this as an opportunity, but after the war ended in 2010, Sri Lankan fishermen resumed their movement in the Palk Bay and reclaimed their lost territory.

The central government and Tamil Nadu at odds

- In 1974, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi signed four Maritime Boundary Agreements with Sri Lankan President Srimavo Bandaranaike, which included giving Katchatheevu Island to Sri Lanka.
- In response, in 1991, the Tamil Nadu Assembly adopted a resolution demanding the retrieval of Katchatheevu island.
- In 2008, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Jayalalithaa took the matter to the Supreme Court, seeking to nullify the Katchatheevu agreements. She argued that the treaties giving Katchatheevu to Sri Lanka were unconstitutional.

Humanitarian and Livelihood Concerns

- The island, located about 10 miles northeast of Rameshwaram, is used by Indian fishermen to dry their nets, catch fish, and rest.
- Frequent arrests on the border have increased, and Sri Lankan authorities have said that they are protecting their maritime boundaries against poaching and securing the livelihood of Sri Lankan fishermen.
- Both sides have pledged not to use force under any circumstances. However, the situation remains tense.

Suggestions to resolve the issue:

- Both India and Sri Lanka should engage in diplomatic dialogue to address maritime boundary concerns and fishing rights.
- They should consider joint management of resources in the Palk Strait, implement sustainable fishing practices, and establish a mechanism to handle border disputes.
- Promoting cooperation and understanding is crucial for a peaceful resolution.



Sources:

Stalin writes to Modi: Raise issues of Katchatheevu island, fishermen's

Q1. With reference to Katchatheevu Island recently seen in news, consider the following statements:

1. Katchatheevu Island is an uninhabited island located in the Arabian Sea.
2. The Sri Lankan government ceded Katchatheevu Island to India through a maritime boundary agreement in 1974.
3. Katchatheevu Island plays a significant role in the cultural and religious history of both India and Sri Lanka.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: (c)

Q2. Arrange the following locations from North to South:

1. Katchatheevu Island
2. Rameshwaram
3. Jaffna
4. Palk Strait

Select the correct code from the options given below:

- (a) 4,3,1,2
- (b) 2,4,3,1
- (c) 3,4,2,1
- (d) 4,3,2,1

Answer: (a)