



Yojna IAS

योजना है तो सफलता है

JANUARY 2024

WEEKLY CURRENT AFFAIRS

YOJNA IAS WEEKLY CURRENT AFFAIRS
22/01/2024 TO 28/01/2024

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CURRENT AFFAIRS

JANUARY 2024

QUANTUM TECHNOLOGY

THIS ARTICLE COVERS 'DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS' AND THE TOPIC DETAILS OF "QUANTUM TECHNOLOGY" THIS TOPIC IS RELEVANT IN THE "SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY" SECTION OF THE UPSC CSE EXAM.

UPSC MAINS GS3 SYLLABUS: ACHIEVEMENTS OF INDIANS IN SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY, DEVELOPMENTS IN SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

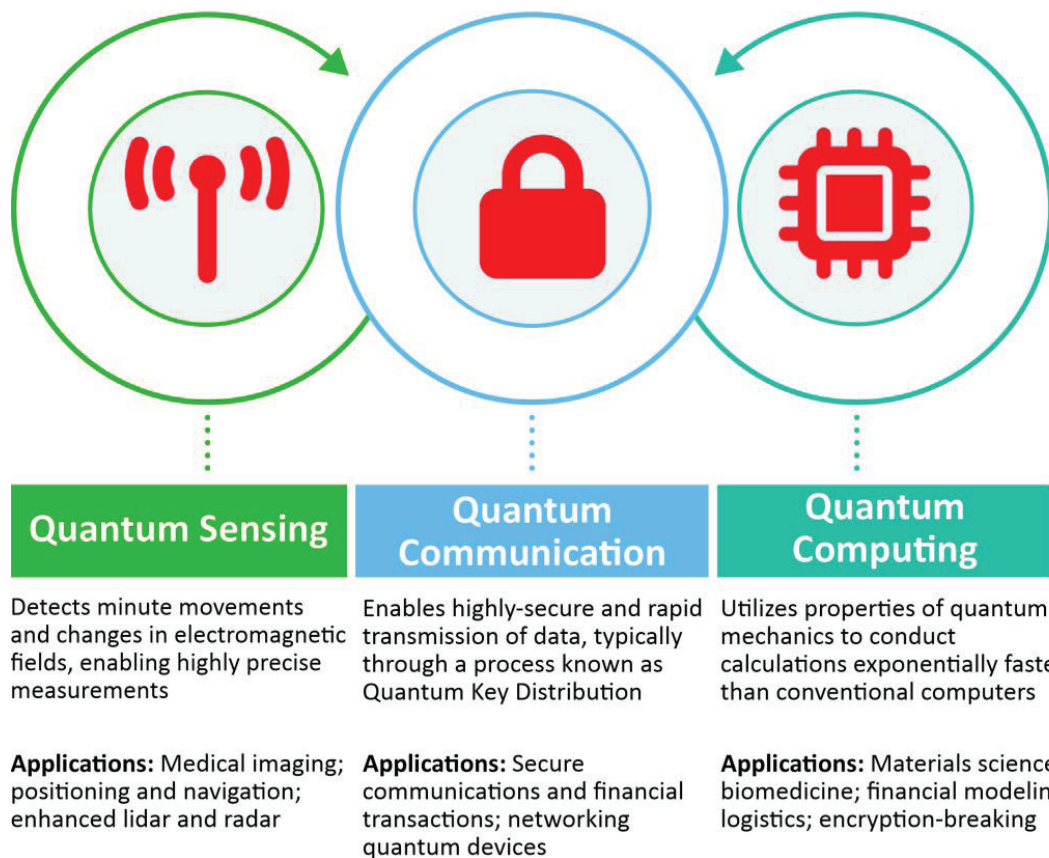
WHY IN THE NEWS?

The **Mission Governing Board (MGB)** of the National Quantum Mission (NQM) recently met to discuss NQM's execution strategy and deadlines, as well as the development of the **Mission Coordination Cell (MCC)**. The MCC will be established in an institution chosen by the Department of Science and Technology (DST) based on merit and existing infrastructure.

ABOUT NATIONAL QUANTUM MISSION:

- The **National Quantum Mission (NQM)**, scheduled for the period **2023-2031**, is a visionary initiative aimed at fostering scientific and industrial research and development (R&D) in Quantum Technology (QT).
- Under the purview of the Ministry of Science & Technology, the Department of Science and Technology (**DST**) will spearhead the implementation of this mission. India's adoption of the NQM makes it the seventh country globally, following in the footsteps of the US, Austria, Finland, France, Canada, and China.
- **Mission Objectives:** The **NQM** seeks to cultivate and amplify scientific and industrial **R&D in Quantum Technology**, with a specific focus on creating a dynamic and innovative ecosystem. Its overarching goal is to position India as a leading player in the realm of quantum technologies.

ADVANTAGES OF QUANTUM TECHNOLOGY



KEY FEATURES:

1. The mission outlines ambitious targets, including the development of intermediate-scale quantum computers featuring **50-100 physical qubits within five years** and scaling up to **50-1000 physical qubits within eight years**.
 2. Unlike traditional computers that process information using bits (1 and 0), quantum computers leverage 'qubits' or 'quantum bits' as fundamental processing units.
 3. The NQM envisions advancements in various facets of quantum technology. This includes the development of high-sensitivity magnetometers for applications such as **precision timing (atomic clocks), communications, and navigation**.
 4. Additionally, it will support the design and synthesis of quantum materials like superconductors, novel semiconductor structures, and topological materials for the fabrication of quantum devices.
- **Quantum Communications Development:** One of the key thrust areas of the mission is the establishment of **secure quantum communications**. This involves satellite-based quantum communication between ground stations within India over a 2000 km range, facilitating secure quantum communications with other nations, and implementing inter-city quantum key distribution

over 2000 km. The mission also envisions the creation of a multi-node Quantum network with quantum memories.

- **Four Thematic Hubs:** To facilitate focused research and development, the **NQM will establish four Thematic Hubs** (T-Hubs) in leading academic and National R&D institutes. These hubs will specialize in Quantum Computation, Quantum Communication, Quantum Sensing & Metrology, and Quantum Materials & Devices.

QUANTUM COMPUTING POWER:

Quantum computers have the potential to **execute complicated calculations** much quicker than traditional computers. This could lead to groundbreaking advancements in fields like cryptography, optimization problems, and drug discovery.

ENHANCED COMPUTATIONAL CAPABILITIES:

Quantum technology allows for the simultaneous processing of multiple possibilities, significantly enhancing computational capabilities. This could lead to solving intricate problems that were previously deemed unsolvable.

QUANTUM COMMUNICATION SECURITY:

Quantum communication ensures highly secure information transfer. **Quantum key distribution (QKD)** offers a level of security that is theoretically immune to hacking attempts, providing a robust solution for secure communications.

QUANTUM SENSORS AND IMAGING:

Quantum sensors exhibit **unprecedented sensitivity**, enabling precise measurements beyond classical limits. Quantum imaging technologies have the potential for enhanced resolution, benefiting fields such as medical imaging and geological exploration.

QUANTUM METROLOGY FOR PRECISION MEASUREMENTS:

Quantum technology facilitates precision measurements with minimal uncertainty. This can significantly impact areas such as navigation, timekeeping, and the development of advanced sensors.

QUANTUM MATERIALS AND DEVICES:

Quantum materials offer unique properties that can be harnessed for the development of novel devices. Superconductors and topological materials, for instance, hold promise for creating advanced electronics and quantum devices.

DISADVANTAGES OF QUANTUM TECHNOLOGY

TECHNICAL COMPLEXITY:

Quantum technology involves complex theoretical concepts and intricate experimental setups. The development and maintenance of quantum systems require specialized knowledge, making it challenging for widespread adoption.

QUANTUM DECOHERENCE:

Quantum systems are susceptible to decoherence, where the fragile quantum states become disrupted by external influences. Maintaining coherence over extended periods, essential for computing tasks, remains a significant challenge.

HIGH COST OF IMPLEMENTATION:

Building and maintaining quantum systems entail significant costs. The specialized equipment, ultra-low temperatures required for certain quantum operations, and the need for isolation from external factors contribute to the high cost of implementation.

LIMITED SCALABILITY:

Achieving scalability in quantum systems, especially in quantum computing, remains a formidable challenge. As the number of qubits increases, the probability of errors and the need for error correction mechanisms escalate, impacting the overall scalability.

SENSITIVITY TO EXTERNAL CONDITIONS:

Quantum systems are highly sensitive to their environment. Any interference, such as temperature fluctuations or electromagnetic fields, can lead to errors in quantum computations, posing a challenge for real-world applications.

LACK OF QUANTUM SOFTWARE AND ALGORITHMS:

The development of efficient quantum algorithms and software lags behind hardware advancements. The absence of a comprehensive suite of quantum software limits the practical utilization of quantum computers for specific applications.

CONCLUSION:

WHILE QUANTUM TECHNOLOGY PROMISES UNPRECEDENTED ADVANCEMENTS, ADDRESSING THE ASSOCIATED CHALLENGES IS CRUCIAL FOR REALIZING ITS FULL POTENTIAL. ONGOING RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS AIM TO OVERCOME THESE HURDLES, PAVING THE WAY FOR A FUTURE WHERE QUANTUM TECHNOLOGY TRANSFORMS VARIOUS ASPECTS OF COMPUTING, COMMUNICATION, AND SENSING.

PRELIMS PRACTICE QUESTIONS

Q1) Consider the following statements regarding the Quantum Technology

- 1) Qubit is the fundamental unit of information in quantum computing.
- 2) Superposition property allows qubits to exist in multiple states simultaneously.
- 3) Entanglement phenomenon is responsible for the secure communication offered by quantum key distribution (QKD)

How many statements given above is/are correct?

- a) One

- b) Two
- c) Three
- d) None

ANSWER: C

Q2) In the context of quantum sensing, what distinguishes quantum sensors from classical sensors?

- (a) Quantum sensors have lower sensitivity.
- (b) Quantum sensors can only measure one property at a time.
- (c) Quantum sensors exhibit unprecedented sensitivity, enabling precise measurements.
- (d) Quantum sensors are not affected by external factors.

Answer: C

MAINS PRACTICE QUESTIONS

- Q1) How can quantum communication help in bolstering national security, particularly in securing critical infrastructure and communication channels.**
- Q2) Assess the potential impact of quantum technology on healthcare, including advancements in medical imaging, drug discovery, and personalized medicine.**

POST OFFICE BILL 2023

SOURCE - THE HINDU AND PIB.

GENERAL STUDIES - MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING, POST OFFICE BILL 2023 PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM.

WHY IN THE NEWS?

- **The Post Office Bill 2023 was introduced in the Rajya Sabha on - 10 August 2023 and the Bill was passed by the Rajya Sabha on - 04 December 2023.**
- **Passed in Lok Sabha - 18 December 2023.**
- **On December 24, 2023, the President of India passed the Post Office Bill, 2023, which replaced the colonial-era Indian Post Office Act, 1898.**
- **During the debate in Parliament, the opposition expressed apprehensions about the provision**

over uncontrolled powers of interception of any item by post office authorities, including the conditions of interception.



भारत का राजपत्र The Gazette of India

Notification अधिसूचना

The POST OFFICE Act, 2023

- There are no procedural safeguards in the Act to prevent any liability in the event of arbitrary use or abuse of the power of detention by officials. The existing Post Office Act has unbridled powers of interception.
- **On December 24, the Telecommunications Bill, 2023 also received the assent of the President, which will replace two Central Acts the Indian Telegraph Act, 1885 and the Indian Wireless Telegraphy Act, 1933.**
- The Telecommunications Act contains a provision on interception of messages, i.e. section 20(2), which is identical to section 5(2) of the Telegraph Act of 1885, except that the contents of section 7(2)(b) of the Act of 1885 Which empowers the Central Government to notify rules on precautions to be taken to prevent unreasonable interception or disclosure of messages, has now been included in Section 20(2).
- Under this, unless such procedure and security measures are prescribed, Section 20(2) cannot be implemented. This is important because although there was a provision for making rules in the 1885 Act, the relevant rules (Section 419A) were notified only in March 2007.
- This Bill will replace the Indian Post Office Act, 1898. According to the provisions of the Bill, the government can stop any material sent by post for examination for special reasons including security.
- 'Post Office Bill-2023' has been brought to further expand the postal service network in the country.
- It aims to simplify the legislative framework to facilitate the development of India Post into a citizen-centric service network.

BACKGROUND OF POST OFFICE BILL :

- **Postal services come under the Union List of the Constitution.** The Indian Post Office Act, 1898 regulates postal services provided by the Central Government. It grants special privileges to the Central Government over the transmission of letters. Postal services are provided through India Post, a departmental undertaking.

- Even before the present Bill, a similar Indian Post Office (Amendment) Bill, 1986 was introduced. The Bill was passed by both Houses of Parliament and sent to the President for his assent in December 1986. However, President Giani Zail Singh neither gave his consent to this bill nor returned the bill. The bill was tabled in Parliament until he left office in July 1987. Later, President Venkataraman returned it to Parliament for reconsideration in January 1990, and the bill was withdrawn by the Vajpayee government in 2002. The bill which was introduced in 2002 and which was referred to the Standing Committee. That Act included amendments to regulate private courier services. Ultimately the bill died. In 2006 and 2011, draft bills were released which also proposed amendments to regulate private courier services under the Act. However, the relevant bills were not introduced in Parliament. In 2017, the Act was amended to delegate the power to decide tariffs to the central government. Earlier this power was with the Parliament only. Recently, the Public Trust (Amendment of Provisions) Act, 2023 has removed all the offenses and penalties under this Act.

COMMENDABLE STEP TAKEN BY POSTAL DEPARTMENT :



- Minister of State for Communications Devusingh Chauhan, while replying to the discussion on the bill, said that the Postal Department is doing commendable work towards fulfilling the concept of Antyodaya. Now its role has changed and changes are necessary accordingly. The postal department is now providing banking and other services. Changes in the bill will be helpful in this direction.

IMPORTANT CHANGES IN POST OFFICE :

- In the present times, postal services, post offices and postmen are not limited to mere correspondence but have turned into service providing institutions. Over the years, post offices have become banks in a way.



POSTAL DEPARTMENT IS THE BACKBONE OF THE COUNTRY IN THE FIELD OF COMMUNICATION :

- For more than 150 years, the Department of Posts has been the backbone of the country. It has played an important role in the field of communication in the country. It is connected with the lives of common citizens of India in many ways. Such as delivering mail, accepting deposits under small savings schemes, providing life insurance cover under Postal Life Insurance (PLI) and Rural Postal Life Insurance (RPLI) and providing retail services like bill collection, sale of forms, etc.
- The Indian Postal Department also acts as an agent for the Government of India in discharging other services to citizens such as Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) salary distribution and old age pension payments. With around 1,55,531 post offices, the Department of Posts has the most widely distributed postal network in the world.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE BILL :

- This Bill replaces the Indian Post Office Act, 1898. This Act regulates India Post, a departmental undertaking of the Central Government.
- There will be no special privilege of communicating letters to the Government. The services to be provided by India Post will be prescribed under the rules.
- The Director General of Postal Services will be appointed as the head of India Post. It will have powers to make rules on various matters including charges for services and supply of postage stamps.
- The Government may stop any article being circulated through India Post on specified grounds, including security of the State and public order.
- India Post will not incur any liability in respect of its services, except any liability prescribed through rules.

KEY ISSUES AND ANALYSIS :

- The Indian Postal Bill does not specify procedural safeguards for prevention of articles transmitted through. The lack of safeguards may violate the freedom of speech and expression and the right to privacy of individuals.
- Grounds for interception include 'emergency', which may go beyond reasonable restrictions under the Constitution.
- The Bill exempts India Post from liability for defaults in postal services. Accountability may be determined through regulations by the Central Government, which also administers India Post. This may lead to conflict of mutual interests.
- There is no mention of any crime and punishment in this bill. For example – There are no consequences for unauthorized opening of postal articles by a postal officer. This may adversely affect the privacy rights of consumers.

INTERCEPTION OF ARTICLES SENT THROUGH INDIAN POST :

THE POST OFFICE BILL, 2023 EMPOWERS THE GOVERNMENT TO STOP ANY ARTICLE BEING TRANSMITTED THROUGH POST ON THE FOLLOWING GROUNDS:-

(I) SECURITY OF THE STATE

(II) FRIENDLY RELATIONS WITH FOREIGN STATES

(III) PUBLIC ORDER

(IV) EMERGENCY

(V) PUBLIC SAFETY

(VI) VIOLATION OF THE PROVISIONS OF THE BILL OR ANY OTHER LAW.

KEY FEATURES OF POST OFFICE BILL 2023 :

- **Special Privileges of the Central Government:** This Act provides that wherever the Central Government establishes any post, it shall have the special privilege of sending letters by post as well as of incidental services such as receiving, collecting, sending and delivering letters . The Bill does not provide for such privileges. The Act provides for the issue of postage stamps as per prescribed rules. The bill also states that India Post will have the exclusive privilege of issuing postage stamps.
- **Services to be prescribed :** This Act specifies the services to be provided by Indian Post, including – **(i) delivery of postal articles including letters, postcards and parcels, and (ii) money orders. The Bill provides that Indian Post will provide services as prescribed by the Central Government.**
- **Director General to make rules regarding services :** This Bill provides for the appointment of a Director General of Postal Services. Under the Act, the Director General has the powers to decide

the time and manner of delivery of postal services. The Bill provides that the Director General may make rules in respect of any activity necessary for providing postal services. He may also make rules regarding charges for services, and the supply and sale of postal stamps and postal stationery.

- **Powers to intercept postal articles :** This Act allows interception of any article transmitted through post on certain grounds. Interception may be carried out in the event of any public emergency, or in the interest of public safety or peace. Such interception can be done by the Central Government, State Governments or any officer specifically authorized by them. Any detained material/shipment may be detained or disposed of by the officer in charge. The officer is also empowered to seize, detain or destroy goods/shipments carrying goods prohibited under the Act or any other law.
- **This bill provides that any article sent through post can be stopped on the following grounds – (i) security of the state, (ii) friendly relations with foreign states, (iii) public order, (iv) emergency, (v) public safety, or (vi) violation of the provisions of the Bill or any other law. An officer empowered by the Central Government through a notification can carry out the interception.**
- **Examination of postal articles prohibited under law or liable to duty:** Under this Act, an officer-in-charge may examine a postal article. If he suspects that it contains goods which are prohibited, or is liable to pay duty. The Bill removes the powers of examination. Instead it provides that in such cases, the Central Government may authorize an officer of the Indian Post to deliver the postal article to a customs authority or any other specified authority. After this the authority will deal with the concerned item.
- **Exemption from liability :** This Act exempts the Government from any liability relating to loss, mis-delivery, delay or damage to postal articles. It does not apply where the liability is assumed in express terms by the Central Government. Officials are also exempt from such liability unless they have acted fraudulently or willfully. The Bill retains these exemptions. It also provides that the Central Government may determine the liability in respect of the services of India Post under rules.
- **To remove offenses and punishments :** The Act specified various offenses and penalties, all of which have been removed by the Public Trust (Amendment of Provisions) Act, 2023. For example, there was a provision of imprisonment of up to seven years and fine for theft, misappropriation of postal articles, or destruction of any post office building by a postal officer. Sending certain prohibited items through post was punishable with imprisonment of up to one year, fine or both. The Bill does not provide for any offense or consequence except one. The amount not paid by the user will be recoverable as arrears of land revenue.

REGULATION OF POSTAL SERVICES OTHER THAN COURIER SERVICES :

- Currently, there are different frameworks for regulation of similar postal services by the public and private sectors. The Indian Post Office Act, 1898 establishes a monopoly of the central government on sending letters. Private courier services are not currently regulated under any specific laws. This creates some key differences. For example – the Act of 1898 provides a framework for intercepting articles transmitted through Indian Post. There is no such provision for private courier services. Another important difference is in the application of the consumer protection frame-

work. The Act of 1898 exempts the Government from liability for any default in services, except when such liability is made in express terms. The Consumer Protection Act, 2019 does not apply to the services of India Post, but it does apply to private courier services. The Post Office Bill, 2023, while seeking to replace the Postal Act 1898, retains these provisions.



PASSPORT SERVICES AND AADHAAR ENROLLMENT SERVICES WILL GET LEGAL FRAMEWORK :

- It will provide a legal framework to passport services and Aadhaar enrollment services run by the Department of Posts. At present there are more than 26 crore accounts in Post Office Savings Bank, in which Rs 17 lakh crore are deposited. Indian Post is an integral part of the lives of the people of the country and in the last few years the Government has made significant reforms in this department.
- This Act regulates India Post, a departmental undertaking of the Central Government. Under the said bill, in the interest of emergency or public safety or in the event of any violation, the Center has been given the power to stop, open or detain any item and hand it over to the customs authorities.

SOLUTION/ WAY FORWARD :

INCORPORATING STRONG PROCEDURAL SAFEGUARDS :

- There should be provision for procedural safeguards to prevent articles sent through India Post. This should include surveillance mechanisms, judicial warrants and adherence to constitutional principles to protect freedom of speech and expression and the right to privacy of individuals.
- To reintroduce specific offenses and penalties within the Bill, addressing unauthorized opening of postal articles by postal authorities. Establish a legal framework to protect consumers' right to privacy and hold individuals accountable for malpractice, fraud, theft and other crimes.
- The grounds for 'emergency' cannot go beyond the reasonable restrictions permitted under the Constitution:
- The Bill allows stopping of postal articles on the grounds of 'emergency'. The 1898 Act has a similar ground of 'public emergency' for interception. The Law Commission (1968) while examining the 1898 Act had observed that the word emergency was not clearly defined, and thus it provided

very wide grounds for obstruction. It was also observed that interception of postal articles may violate freedom of speech and expression in some cases, such as those involving letters, books, postcards and newspapers. It states that a public emergency cannot be a constitutionally acceptable ground for interception if it does not affect the security of the state, public order or any other ground specified in the Constitution.

The Supreme Court (2015) has held that arbitrary grounds for restricting freedom of speech and expression are unconstitutional.

RESPONSIBILITY FOR DEFAULT IN SERVICES SHOULD BE FIXED :

- The Bill states that, notwithstanding any other law in force, India Post shall not incur any liability in respect of the service provided by India Post. However, the Central Government may prescribe obligations in respect of a service through regulations. The question is whether the Bill itself should provide for liability. This fact also needs attention.
- While examining the application of the 1898 Act, the National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission (2023) had held that the Consumer Protection Act, 2019 does not apply to postal services provided by the government. The Bill retains the provisions regarding liability under the 1898 Act. This means that the rights of consumers of India Post's postal services cannot be adequately protected. Accountability may be determined through rules by the Central Government, which also administers India Post. This may lead to conflict of interest.
- The framework under the Bill is contrary to the law applicable in the case of Railways, which is also a commercial service provided by the Central Government. The Railway Claims Tribunal Act, 1987 establishes tribunals to adjudicate complaints of defects in services against the Indian Railways. These include complaints such as loss, damage, or non-delivery of goods, and refund of fares or freight charges.

POSSIBILITY OF VIOLATION OF FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS :

- The lack of procedural safeguards may violate the fundamental rights of individuals. The Bill does not specify any procedural safeguards against interception of postal articles. This may violate the right to privacy and freedom of speech and expression. In the case of telecommunications interception, the Supreme Court (1996) held that a fair and reasonable procedure must exist to regulate the power of interception. Otherwise, it is not possible to protect the rights of citizens under Article 19(1)(a) (freedom of speech and expression) and Article 21 (right to privacy as a part of the right to life and liberty). To address this, the Court mandated a number of safeguards, including: (i) establishing the necessity of interception, (ii) limiting the validity of interception orders, (iii) authorization by high-ranking officials, and (iv) the blocking order will be examined by a review committee headed by senior government officials.

IMPROPRIETY OF REMOVING ALL CRIMES AND PUNISHMENTS :

- The Postal Bill (Amendment of Provisions) Act, 2023 removed all offenses and penalties under the 1898 Act. These included various crimes committed by Post Office officials. The Bill retains this status, that is, it does not provide for any offense and penalty. The question is, is it fair? The Central Government needs to pay more attention to this.

- Under the Act prior to the present Bill, illegal opening of postal articles by a postal officer was punishable with imprisonment of up to two years, fine or both. Apart from postal officials, other persons were also punished for opening mail bags. In contrast, there will be no consequences against such actions under the Postal Bill 2023. This may adversely affect the right to privacy of individuals. Specific violations related to postal services are not covered under other laws such as the Indian Penal Code (IPC). The IPC punishes such crimes only when accompanied by theft or misappropriation (sections 403 and 461).

LACK OF CLARITY ON RESULTS :

- The Bill states that no officer shall incur any liability in respect of the service provided by India Post. This exemption will not apply where the officer has acted fraudulently or willfully caused loss, delay or wrong delivery of service. However, the Bill does not specify what the consequences will be if an officer commits such an act. Under the 1898 Act, before amendment under the Public Trust Act, these offenses were punishable with imprisonment of up to two years, a fine or both.

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE TO INDIA POST :

- The Financial Memorandum of the Bill states that the implementation of the Bill will not entail any recurring or non-recurring expenditure from the Consolidated Fund of India. However, India Post has consistently incurred losses, which have been adjusted and protected by the Consolidated Fund of India.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS FOR PRELIMINARY EXAM :

Q.1. Consider the following statements with reference to the Postal Bill 2023:

1. 'Post Office Bill-2023' has been brought to limit and cut the postal service network in the country.
2. In implementing the Post Office Bill-2023, expenditure is incurred not from the Consolidated Fund of India, but from the Consolidated Fund of India.
3. This Bill replaces the Indian Post Office Act, 1898. This Act regulates India Post, a departmental undertaking of the Central Government.
4. The Post Office Bill, 2023 will replace the colonial-era Indian Post Office Act, 1998.

Which of the above statement / statements are correct?

- (A) Only 1, 2 and 3
- (B) Only 2, 3 and 4
- (C) Only 1 and 4
- (D) Only 2 and 3

Answer - (D)

PRACTICE QUESTIONS FOR MAIN EXAM :

Q.1. Referring to the main provisions of the Post Office Bill 2023, discuss how this bill violates the fundamental rights of an individual like 'freedom of speech and expression' and 'right to privacy'?

FOREST FIRES IN HIMALAYAN REGION

THIS ARTICLE COVERS 'DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS' AND THE TOPIC DETAILS OF "FOREST FIRES IN HIMALAYAN REGION". THIS TOPIC IS RELEVANT IN THE "ENVIRONMENT" SECTION OF THE UPSC CSE EXAM.

UPSC MAINS GS3 SYLLABUS: CONSERVATION, DISASTER MANAGEMENT

WHY IN THE NEWS?

This winter, there have been multiple incidents of forest fires in the Himalayan region, particularly in Himachal and Uttarakhand, due to a lack of rainfall. According to the **Forest Survey of India (FSI)**, there have been 2,050 instances of fires in the forests between 16th October 2023 and 16th January 2024, whereas there were just 296 incidents of forest fires during the same period the previous year.

ANALYSIS OF THE CURRENT SITUATION

- Uttarakhand had the greatest number of fire alerts in India from January 9 and 16, 2024. A **shortage of snowfall and precipitation** in Uttarakhand has increased the frequency of forest fires.
- There wasn't any rain or snow from January 1 to 16. Nainital received only 0.8 millimetres (mm) of rain, compared to the 14 mm average. Almora and Bageshwar regularly have more than 15 mm of rain, Chamoli has 20 mm, and Rudraprayag and Uttarkashi have 28 and 26 mm, respectively.
- However, Chamoli, Uttarkashi, Pithoragarh, and other hill regions in Uttarakhand have recorded a 100% shortfall in rainfall this season, according to the **India Meteorological Department's** Dehradun centre.

REASONS BEHIND FOREST FIRES IN THE HIMALAYAN REGION:

- **LESS SNOWFALL AND PRECIPITATION:**

Snowfall and precipitation are critical for retaining soil moisture and keeping the forest floor from getting too dry.

- **DRY CONDITIONS:**

The absence of moisture in the soil and vegetation provides ideal conditions for forest fires. Dry leaves, when paired with dry soil, have the ability to spark a fire. Rising temperatures, presumably

due to climate change, lead to forest dryness. Higher temperatures increase evaporation rates, further diminishing soil moisture.

- **HUMAN ACTIVITIES:**

Human activity, such as carelessly discarding cigarettes or indulging in uncontrolled burning, can start a forest fire. Controlled burning by the forest department may also contribute to the problem if not handled correctly.

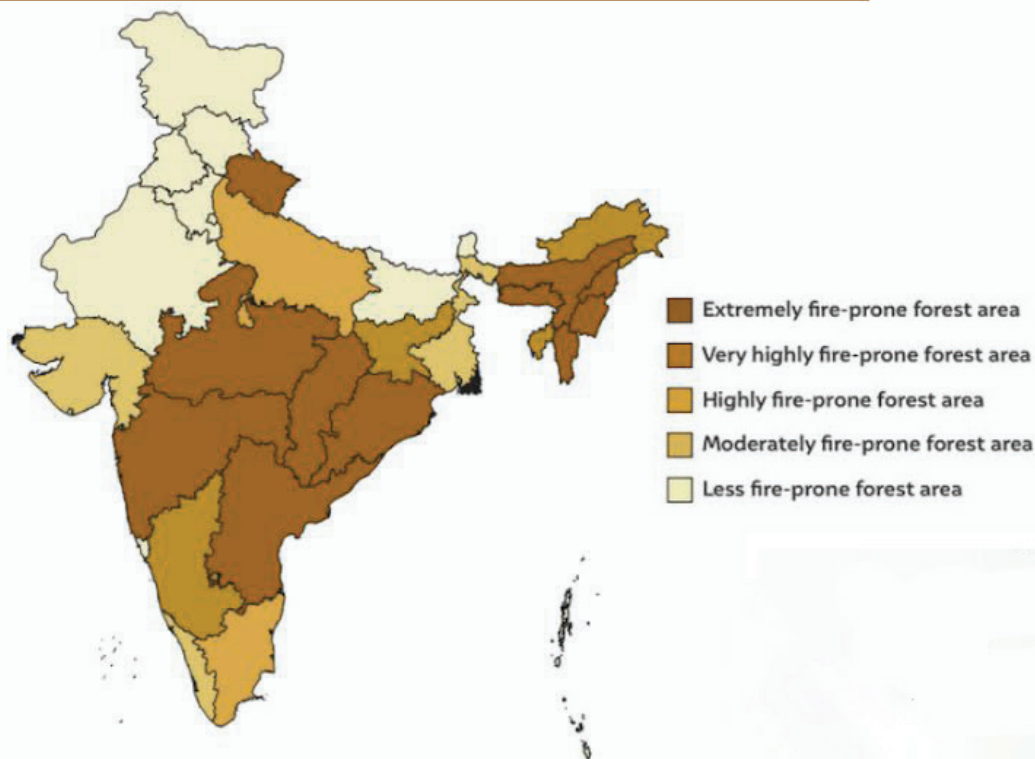
- **FIRE PRONED TREE SPECIES:**

Fire-prone and combustible trees, such as Chir pine, enhance the risk of forest fires. Chir pine accounts for around 15% of Himachal's forest area.

- **LONG DRY SPELL PERIOD:**

A lengthy dry spell occurs when there is no rain or snowfall for several months, increasing the risk of fires in the region.

More than 62% of Indian States are prone to high-intensity forest fire events (2000-19)



DIFFERENT TYPES OF FIRES

- **SURFACE FIRES:**

These fires spread throughout the forest floor, fueled by dry leaves, grass, and debris. They move slowly and help manage undergrowth, which contributes to ecosystem health.

- **CROWN FIRES:**

Crown fires are more intense, causing the burning of treetops and upper branches. They spread quickly and generate great heat, frequently causing substantial ecological damage and disrupting wildlife habitats.

- **GROUND FIRES:**

Ground fires occur in organic soils beneath the surface and are distinguished by the slow combustion of roots, peat, and other below-ground plants. They are difficult to extinguish and can remain smouldering over long periods of time.

- **SURFACE FIRES:**

These fires start on or near the forest floor and consume ground-level vegetation. They contribute to nutrient cycling and can benefit some types of ecosystems

NEGATIVE IMPACT OF FOREST FIRES ON HIMALAYAN REGION

- **BIODIVERSITY LOSS:**

Data from the Forest Survey of India suggests a gradual loss in forest cover in the Himalayan region owing to fires. For example, between 2017 and 2019, Himachal Pradesh recorded a loss of about 826 square kilometres of forest cover.

- **EROSION AND SOIL DEGRADATION:**

According to data from the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), forest fires have a substantial impact on soil erosion and degradation. Between 2015 and 2020, topsoil loss in Uttarakhand increased by 15%.

- **LOSS OF LIVELIHOODS:**

A World Bank study found that forest-dependent people in the Himalayan region are severely impacted. Loss of livelihoods owing to destroyed forests and disrupted ecosystems has made approximately 20 percent of the population in these regions prone to poverty.

- **HEALTH HAZARDS:**

Air quality reports from the Central Pollution Control Board show that in peak fire seasons, air quality in Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh deteriorates dramatically. Respiratory infections have significantly increased, harming the health of local inhabitants.

METHODS TO MITIGATE FOREST FIRES AND INITIATIVES TAKEN BY GOVERNMENT

- **PREVENTIVE MEASURES:**

According to data from the **National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA)**, preventive measures such as controlled burning and firebreaks are increasingly being implemented. States such as Himachal Pradesh have claimed a 30% drop in forest fire incidence since implementing preventive techniques.

- **COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION:**

Examples- **Uttarakhand's Van Panchayats** demonstrate the benefits of community involvement. These local forest management committees are active in fire prevention, resulting in a 25% reduction in fire incidence in their managed regions.

- **INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION:**

The **International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD)** promotes data and technology cooperation among Himalayan countries. Cooperation in early detection with satellite imagery has increased reaction times, reducing the spread of flames across borders.

- **TECHNICAL INTEGRATION:**

Real-time monitoring is carried out by the Indian Forest Survey using advanced technology such as satellite images and remote sensing. This technology integration has increased early detection rates by 40%, facilitating timely response and containment.

CONCLUSION :

The situation of forest fires in the Himalayas, reinforced by statistics and examples, emphasises the critical need for a comprehensive strategy. Policy initiatives, involving communities, and international collaboration, together with technical improvements, are critical for minimising the impact of forest fires and guaranteeing the Himalayan ecosystem's long-term viability.

PRELIMS PRACTICE QUESTION

Q1) Consider the following statements regarding National Disaster Management Authority:

- 1) The President is the head of the National Disaster Management Authority in India.
- 2) National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) was established in 2005
- 3) Disaster Management Act, 1999 provides the legal framework for the functioning of the National Disaster Management Authority in India

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

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

ANSWER: B

MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION

Q1) Examine the role of the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) in India. How

does NDMA coordinate disaster preparedness, response, and recovery efforts at the national level?

Q2) Analyze the role of technology, including geospatial mapping and remote sensing, in disaster management in India. How can these technologies enhance preparedness and response efforts?

LEFT WING EXTREMISM

THIS ARTICLE COVERS 'DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS' AND THE TOPIC DETAILS OF "LEFT WING EXTREMISM OR NAXALISM". THIS TOPIC IS RELEVANT IN THE "SECURITY" SECTION OF THE UPSC CSE EXAM.

UPSC MAINS GSI SYLLABUS:

ROLE OF NON-STATE ACTORS IN CREATING CHALLENGES TO INTERNAL SECURITY

WHY IN THE NEWS?

At a review meeting of Chhattisgarh's Left Wing Extremism (LWE) situation convened in Raipur on Sunday afternoon, the Union Home Minister, Amit Shah, underlined the importance of liberating the affected areas of the state within the next three years. He emphasised that the problem was limited to select areas of Chhattisgarh.

LEFT WING EXTREMISM (LWE)

- **Left-wing extremism** describes the activities of numerous militant groups that adhere to leftist ideals and strive to achieve a classless society via revolutionary means. The most visible of these organisations is the Communist Party of India (Maoist), also known as Naxalites. **Naxalism** began in the late 1960s and has grown to be a substantial security concern for the Indian government.
- These left-wing radicals are most active in central and eastern India, particularly in the states of **Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Odisha, and Maharashtra**. They use concerns like **land rights, tribal displacement, and economic inequities** to rally supporters and recruit cadres. The insurgents frequently use guerilla warfare methods, targeting security troops, government officials, and infrastructure.
- Naxalism's origins can be traced back to the **Naxalbari revolt** in West Bengal in 1967, when dissatisfied peasants and tribal tribes rose out against oppressive landlords. The movement was inspired by Maoist doctrine, which emphasised armed struggle and the establishment of a classless society. The initial movement in Naxalbari laid the groundwork for future communist insurgencies.

WHAT ARE THE REASONS BEHIND THE SPREAD OF LEFT WING EXTREMISM (LWE)?

- **SOCIO-ECONOMIC DISPARITIES:**

The regions affected by left-wing extremism are often characterized by deep-seated socio-economic disparities, with marginalized communities, tribal populations, and peasants facing landlessness, exploitation, and lack of access to basic resources. The insurgents capitalize on these grievances to garner support and recruit cadres.

- **TRIBAL DISPLACEMENT AND LAND RIGHTS:**

Many areas affected by left-wing extremism are home to indigenous tribal communities. The process of industrialization and infrastructure development has led to forced displacement and encroachment on tribal lands. The discontent arising from these issues becomes a fertile ground for extremist ideologies.

- **GOVERNANCE FAILURES:**

Weak governance, corruption, and inadequate provision of basic services in affected regions contribute to a sense of alienation and disillusionment among the local population. The inability of the government to address the root causes of discontent creates space for extremist groups to exploit the situation.

- **INEFFECTIVE DEVELOPMENT POLICIES:**

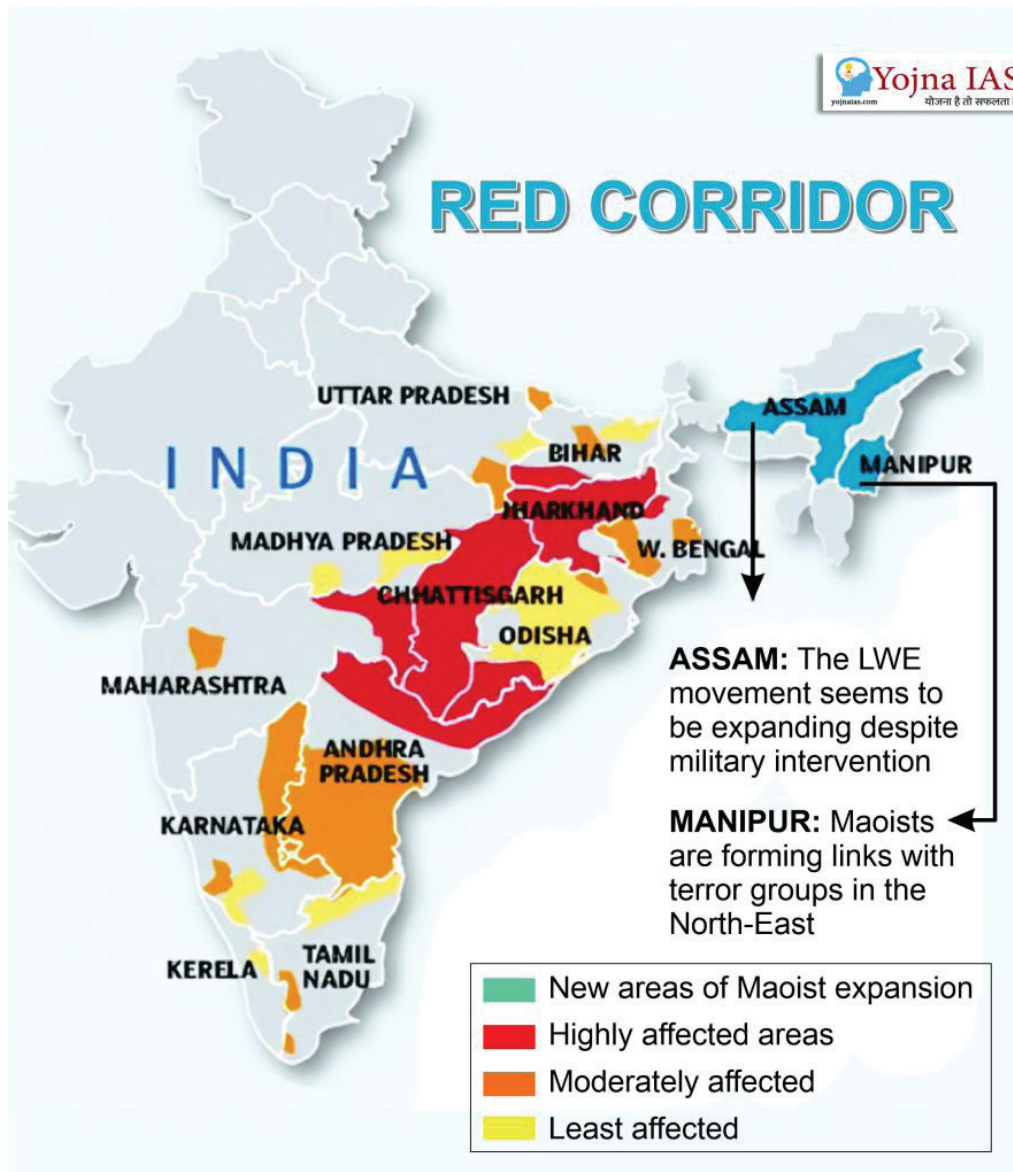
Development policies that fail to reach the grassroots level and address the specific needs of marginalized communities contribute to the appeal of leftist ideologies. In some cases, developmental projects are perceived as detrimental to the interests of the local population, further fueling resentment.

- **LACK OF INCLUSIVE GROWTH:**

The uneven distribution of the benefits of economic growth exacerbates social inequalities. Left-wing extremist groups position themselves as champions of the oppressed, promising to address the economic and social disparities that persist in these regions.

CURRENT SITUATION OF LEFT WING EXTREMISM IN INDIA

- The Ministry of Home Affairs reports that Maoist violence in the country has decreased by **77%** since 2010, with a **90%** reduction in deaths (security forces and civilians) from a high of 1,005 in 2010 to 98 in 2022. The government has reduced the number of districts considered Naxal-affected from more than **200** in the early 2000s to a mere **90** now.
- It says that the geographical extent of violence is actually limited to **45** districts. As per MHA, the arc of violence has been significantly reduced, with only 25 districts accounting for 90% of all LWE violence. The presence of Naxals is claimed to be nonexistent in Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, Jharkhand, and the state of Bihar which were once their strongholds.



REASON BEHIND STRONGHOLD OF LWE IN CHHATTISGARH.

- **LATE INVOLVEMENT OF STATE POLICE IN ANTI-MAOIST ACTIONS:**
 1. It is commonly believed in counter-Maoist strategy that the struggle against Left Wing Extremism can only be fought by state police rather than central forces.
 2. This is because state police have local expertise and networks, which are critical for intelligence gathering. States like Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal, Odisha, and Jharkhand were able to put a stop to their Maoist crisis thanks to the active involvement of local police.
 3. According to security sources, the procedure began late in Chhattisgarh. By this point, police in bordering states had driven Maoists from their territories to Chhattisgarh, creating a concentrated zone of Maoist dominance.
- **Dearth of roads in the interior of Bastar.** The paucity of roads in Bastar's interior has hampered security forces' activities. The administration's minimal presence in the interiors of South Bastar has guaranteed that Maoists maintain their influence in the region.

- **Social Injustice and Exploitation:** Social injustice, including issues related to caste discrimination, exploitation by local elites, and human rights abuses, further fuels resentment among the local population. Left-wing extremist groups exploit these grievances to build support.

INITIATIVES TAKEN BY GOVERNMENT TO CURB LWE

- **Operation Green Hunt:** It began in 2010, when a significant deployment of security personnel was carried out in Naxal-affected areas. In the nine years since 2010, the number of districts plagued by naxalism has decreased from 223 to 90
- The government even launched a '**Relief and Rehabilitation Policy**' aimed at bringing Naxalites into mainstream society
- **Aspirational Districts Programme:** Launched in 2018, it intends to rapidly reform the districts that have shown substantially poorer growth in key social sectors.
- For nearly two decades, the Centre has maintained a massive **CRPF** presence in the afflicted states.
- The Centre proposes **installing mobile towers** in interior areas to improve connectivity and create technical intelligence for locals.
- **National Rehabilitation and Resettlement Policy, 2007:** The main objective of this Act was to limit displacement of individuals in affected areas while also providing good alternatives for dispersal. The government implemented this programme for people whose land government had taken for industrial development.
- **Chhattisgarh Special Public Securities Act, 2006 :** This act defined the illicit acts that were common in these locations and labelled some organisations illegal. This act empowers the government to establish an advisory board wherever the state government deems it necessary. It also specifies the procedures for forming such a board, as well as the sanctions and punishments.

PRELIMS PRACTICE QUESTIONS

Q1) Consider the following statements regarding Naxalism in India

- 1) Maharashtra witnessed the birth of the Naxalite movement in 1967
- 2) Naxalites primarily follow the ideology of Capitalism
- 3) Naxalites generally use Guerrilla warfare in their operations.

How many of the following statements is/are correct?

- a) One
- b) Two
- c) Three
- d) None

ANSWER: A

MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION

- Q1) Examine the socio-economic grievances that often serve as a breeding ground for left-wing extremism in India. How do these grievances contribute to the recruitment and support for extremist groups?
- Q2) Critically assess the prospects for long-term resolution of left-wing extremism in India, considering the complexities involved in addressing socio-economic disparities, governance issues, and ideological motivations.

WILDLIFE (PROTECTION) LICENCING RULES, 2024

THIS ARTICLE COVERS 'DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS' AND THE TOPIC DETAILS OF "WILDLIFE (PROTECTION) LICENCING RULES, 2024". THIS TOPIC IS RELEVANT IN THE "ENVIRONMENT" SECTION OF THE UPSC CSE EXAM.

UPSC MAINS GS3 SYLLABUS: CONSERVATION

WHY IN THE NEWS?

The central government has enacted the **WildLife (Protection) Licencing (Additional Matters for Consideration) Rules, 2024**, which update the Wildlife Trade Rules, 1983, resulting in major modifications to the licensing process and the exclusion of some species.

ABOUT WILDLIFE LICENSING RULES 2024

- **SCHEDULE I:**

1. According to the guidelines established in **1983**, **no such permission** shall be granted to trade in a wild species designated in **Schedule I or Part II of Schedule II to the Wildlife Protection Act of 1972** unless the central government has previously consulted.
2. This criterion has been removed in the revised guidelines, which state that **no such licence** shall be issued if it relates to any wild animal listed in **Schedule I** to the Act, except with the prior consultation of the Central Government.
3. This implies that the limits on **Schedule I** species, which include creatures that require the highest protection, such as **tigers, elephants, rhinos**, and so on, remain in effect, with a provision for consultation.

- **SCHEDULE II:**

1. The revised guidelines make a substantial modification by removing licensing limitations for species classified in **Schedule II** of the Wildlife Protection Act of 1972.

2. This means that licences for trading **Schedule II** species can be awarded without the need for central government consultation or approval, as was previously needed.
- The new rules also specify the factors that authorised officers must consider when granting licences, such as the applicant's capacity, the source and method for acquiring supplies, the sheer number of existing licences in the area, and the repercussions for hunting or trade of the relevant wild animals.

CONCERNS REGARDING THE NEW RULES

- **Exemption from Schedule II Species:**
 1. The announcement does not explain why licensing restrictions for **Schedule II** species have been abolished.
 2. **Schedule II** includes key species such as endangered mammals, birds, turtles, geckos, and snakes. The omission of these species from licensing regulations raises worries about the extent of protection they will receive.
 3. The absence of clarity warrants additional inspection to ensure that the amended guidelines effectively address conservation objectives while not jeopardising the preservation of fragile wildlife.
- **Rationalisation of schedules**
 1. The Wildlife Protection Act of 1972's schedules were rationalised in The **Wild Life (Protection) Amendment Act of 2022**, resulting in modifications to species categorization.
 2. Prior to the 2022 amendment, timetables were based on species endangerment levels. The current rationalisation could have changed the criterion for categorising species.
 3. Experts argue whether the absence of certain species from Schedule II is consistent with the rationalisation process, or whether those species have gained in numbers, justifying a lower degree of protection.

WHAT IS THE WILDLIFE (PROTECTION) ACT, 1972?

- The **Wild Life (Protection) Act of 1972** establishes a legislative framework for **protecting diverse kinds of wild animals and plants**, managing their habitats, and regulating and controlling commerce in wild animals, plants, and products derived from them.
- The statute also establishes timetables for plants and animals that receive varied levels of government protection and supervision.
- Following the passage of the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, 2019, the Wildlife Protection Act of 1972 became **applicable to the UT of J&K and Ladakh**.

ABOUT LATEST AMENDMENT IS THE WILDLIFE (PROTECTION) AMENDMENT ACT, 2022.

There are now **4 schedules**, down from **6** previously.

1. **Schedule I** includes animal species that receive the greatest level of protection.
2. **Schedule II** includes animal species that have a lesser degree of protection.
3. **Schedule III** includes protected plant species.
4. **Schedule IV** for classified specimens under **CITES** (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora).

PRELIMS PRACTICE QUESTION:

Q1) Consider the following statements regarding the Wildlife Protection Act:

- 1) Wildlife Protection Act prohibits the use of Chemicals for agriculture
- 2) The Act allows for the establishment of Zoo and Safari parks
- 3) The Act provides legal safeguards to plants under Schedule I

How many statements given above are correct?

1. a) One
2. b) Two
3. c) Three
4. d) None

ANSWER: A

MAINS PRACTICE QUESTIONS

- Q1) Explain the significance of the Wildlife Protection Act in India. How does it contribute to the conservation and protection of biodiversity?**
- Q2) Discuss the role of different schedules in the Wildlife Protection Act. Provide examples of wildlife species listed under various schedules.**

GENOCIDE ISSUE AND THE INTERNATIONAL COURT OF JUSTICE

SOURCE - THE HINDU AND PIB.

GENERAL STUDIES - INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS, INTERNATIONAL COURT OF JUSTICE, GENOCIDE, HUMAN RIGHTS, INDIA'S STAND ON THE ISSUE OF GENOCIDE.

WHY IN THE NEWS ?



- 11 January 2024 Judges of the International Court of Justice have begun two days of legal arguments in a case filed by South Africa accusing Israel of genocide in the Gaza war. Israel has denied this allegation of genocide and called it a baseless allegation.
- South Africa's lawyers asked judges at a hearing on 11 January 2024 to issue a binding preliminary injunction on Israel, including an immediate halt to Israel's military operation in Gaza. Before the proceedings, hundreds of pro-Israel protesters protested in front of the International Court of Justice with banners reading **"Bring them home"**, referring to those still held hostage by Hamas. Protests held Israeli and Dutch flags during the protest. Outside the court, some other people were also protesting and waving Palestinian flags in support of South Africa.
- The controversy attacks Israel's national identity as a Jewish state created after the Holocaust. This also includes the identity of South Africa. Its ruling party, the African National Congress, has long compared Israel's policies in Gaza and the West Bank to its history under white minority rule apartheid, which confined most blacks to the "homeland" before it ended. Had given.
- Israel has sent a legal team to the International Court of Justice to defend its military operation launched following attacks by Hamas on October 7, 2023. South Africa immediately sought to expand the case beyond the limited scope of the ongoing Israel-Hamas war. South African Justice Minister Ronald Lamola said, **"Violence and destruction in Palestine and Israel did not begin on October 7. Palestinians have experienced systematic oppression and violence for the past 76 years."**
- Vusimuzi Madonsela, co-leader of the South African delegation, said that - **"At the outset**

South Africa acknowledges that genocidal acts and omissions by the State of Israel are essentially part of a continuation of the illegal acts committed against the Palestinian people since 1948 “ Ever since Israel declared its independence.

- Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu released a video statement defending his country's actions on the night of 10 January 2024. He said, **“Israel has no intention of permanently occupying Gaza or displacing its civilian population. Israel is not fighting the Palestinian population, but Hamas terrorists, and we are doing so in full compliance with international law.”** He said, **“The Israeli army is trying its best to minimize civilian casualties, while Hamas is trying its best to maximize them by using Palestinian civilians as human shields.”**
- Finding food, water, medicine and functioning bathrooms has become a daily struggle for Palestinians living in Gaza. On January 5, the UN humanitarian chief called Gaza “deserted” and said, **“people are facing the highest levels of food insecurity ever recorded (and) famine is imminent.”** Israel has always focused its attention on the October 7 attacks, when Hamas fighters attacked several communities in Israel and killed about 1,200 people, mainly civilians. They kidnapped about 250 other people, about half of whom have been released.
- US Secretary of State Antony Blinken dismissed the matter as **“baseless”** during a visit to Tel Aviv on January 9.
- The International Court of Justice, which adjudicates on disputes between different nations, has never held any country responsible for genocide. It ruled in 2007 that – “Serbia violated its obligation to prevent genocide in the massacre of more than 8,000 Muslim men and boys in the Bosnian enclave of Srebrenica by Bosnian Serb forces in July 1995.”
- The International Criminal Court, based in The Hague, prosecutes individuals for war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide.
- The case revolves around the Genocide Convention which was drafted in 1948 after World War II and the genocide in which six million Jews were murdered. Both Israel and South Africa are signatories to the Genocide Convention. South Africa says – **“It wants the International Court to hold Israel responsible for its violations of the Genocide Convention and to hold it fully accountable under international law for those violations.”**
- Balkis Jarrah, Associate of the International Justice Directors Group, said – **“South Africa's genocide case opens a legal process at the world's highest court to conduct a credible investigation of Israel's conduct in Gaza in the hope of reducing further suffering.”**
- Israel is back in the dock in the International Court of Justice in February when hearings begin on a UN request for a non-binding advisory opinion on the legality of Israeli policies in the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

BACKGROUND AND ROLE OF THE GENOCIDE CONVENTION :



- The treaty adopted for the first time as the first human rights treaty by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 9 December 1948 for the survival and fundamental rights of human beings around the world is known as the **Genocide Convention**.
- This Genocide Convention codified the crime of genocide for the first time and created an international law on the prevention and punishment of the crime of genocide.
- According to this Genocide Convention – **“Atrocity or genocide committed against human beings on any religious, ethnic, racial, color or linguistic basis by any country or society at the global level is a crime whether in time of war or on a global scale.” “In times of peace either can happen anytime and anywhere.”**
- It reflects the international community’s solidarity and commitment to **‘Never again’** repeat the atrocities committed against humans on a global scale during World War II.
- The definition set out in this Genocide Convention regarding the crime of genocide has been widely adopted at both national and international levels, including in the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC) in 1998.
- **India is the main signatory country of this convention.**
- To develop human rights and international criminal law at the international level and make them binding on all states at the international level. This provision establishes the obligation of States/Nations to take measures to prevent and punish the crime of genocide. Also ensures.
- According to Article IV of its Constitution – it mandates states/nations to enact relevant laws against genocide and to punish perpetrators **“whether they are constitutionally responsible rulers or public officials or private individuals.”**
- **It is mandatory and binding on all states/nations at the international level, regardless of**

whether that state or nation has ratified the Genocide Convention or not.



INTRODUCTION TO THE INTERNATIONAL COURT OF JUSTICE :

Establishment: It was established in the month of June 1945 by the Charter of the United Nations, but it started functioning from April 1946.

- **The International Court of Justice (ICJ)** is a principal judicial organ of the United Nations (UN).
- The International Court of Justice (ICJ) is the only organ of the United Nations that is not based in New York City.
- The International Court of Justice (ICJ) is the successor to its predecessor, the Permanent Court of International Justice (PCIJ), which came into its current existence through the United Nations.
- PCIJ held its first and inaugural meeting in February 1922 at the **Peace Palace in Hague, Netherlands**.
- The PCIJ and the League of Nations were replaced by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) and the United Nations after World War II.
- In April 1946, the PCIJ was formally dissolved and the ICJ was established and its last President, Judge Jose Gustavo Guerrero of El Salvador, was made the first President of the ICJ.

Official Languages: The official languages of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) are English and French only.



SELECTION PROCESS FOR JUDGES OF THE INTERNATIONAL COURT OF JUSTICE (ICJ) :

- **The total number of judges in the International Court of Justice (ICJ) is 15**, who are elected by the United Nations General Assembly and the Security Council. The tenure of judges of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) is for 9 years. These judges vote separately, but together.
- To become a judge in the International Court of Justice (ICJ), it is mandatory for any candidate to get a majority in both the bodies. The voting process continues several times until the judge is finally selected. The voting process ends only after a consensus is reached on the final selection of the judge.
- The President and Vice-President of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) are elected by a process of secret ballot for a three-year term.
- One-third of the judges of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) are elected every three years during the annual meeting of the UNGA at the headquarters of the United Nations in New York.
- Judges of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) are eligible to contest re-election and be re-selected through the voting process of the election.

JURISDICTION OF THE INTERNATIONAL COURT OF JUSTICE (ICJ) :

- All UN members are automatically parties to the ICJ statute, but this does not automatically give the ICJ jurisdiction over disputes involving them.
- The International Court of Justice (ICJ) gets jurisdiction only when both countries or both parties agree to it.
- The decision of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) is final and technically binding.
- The International Court of Justice (ICJ) has no way of ensuring compliance with its orders, and its authority derives from the willingness of countries to comply with them.

ROLE OF THE INTERNATIONAL COURT OF JUSTICE (ICJ) :

- The role of the International Court of Justice (ICJ), in accordance with international law, includes adjudicating any legal disputes submitted by states/nations and giving advisory opinions on legal questions related thereto by organs and specialized agencies authorized by the United Nations.
- It was first introduced by the UK in May 1947 against a dispute relating to the narrow strait of the Ionian Sea between the Greek island of Corsica and Albania on the European mainland, which was resolved by the International Court of Justice under international law.

INTERNATIONAL COURT ADMINISTRATION :

- The judges of the International Court of Justice are assisted by the Registry, the administrative organ of the International Court of Justice.

INTERRELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INTERNATIONAL COURT AND INDIA :

- The relationship between the International Court of Justice and India is very old.
- Sir Benegal Rao, who was an advisor to the Constituent Assembly of India a few years after the establishment/formation of the International Court, was a member judge of the International Court from 1952-53.
- Former Chief Election Commissioner of India Nagendra Singh was also a member of the International Court of Justice from 1973-88.
- Former Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of India RS Pathak also served as a member judge of the International Court of Justice from 1989-91.
- Former Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of India Dalveer Bhandari has also been serving as a member judge of the International Court of Justice since 2012.

INDIA'S HISTORICAL RELATIONSHIP WITH THE INTERNATIONAL COURT OF JUSTICE :

- Including the four disputes between India and Pakistan, India has appeared as a party in the International Court of Justice a total of six times, out of which the main disputes are as follows:
–
- The dispute between Portugal and India over the right to navigate through Indian territory had reached the International Court of Justice, which was settled in 1960 and the dispute was ended.
- An appeal between India and Pakistan regarding the jurisdiction of the ICAO Council was made in the International Court of Justice, which was settled in 1972.
- As a result of the war between India and Pakistan in East Pakistan, the case of Pakistani prisoners of war went to the International Court, which was settled in 1973.

- The air incident between India and Pakistan on August 10, 1999 was also referred to the International Court of Justice, which was also concluded or settled in the year 2000.
- The dispute between India and Marshall Islands regarding stopping the nuclear arms race and talks related to nuclear disarmament also went to the International Court, which was concluded in 2016.
- The Indian citizen Kulbhushan Jadhav case between India and Pakistan also went to the International Court of Justice, which was concluded in 2019.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS FOR PRELIMINARY EXAM :

Q.1. Consider the following statements with reference to the International Court of Justice and Genocide Convention.

1. The headquarters of the International Court of Justice is located in The Hague, Netherlands.
2. The official languages of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) are English, Spanish, German and French.
3. The total number of judges in the International Court is 25.
4. The President and Vice-President of the International Court of Justice are elected by a process of secret ballot for six years.

Which of the above statement /statements is correct ?

- (A). Only 1 and 4
 (B) Only 2 and 3
 (C) Only 3
 (D) Only 1

Answer – (D)

PRACTICE QUESTIONS FOR MAIN EXAM :

Q.1.Outlining the background of the Genocide Convention, discuss what is the current relevance of the International Court of Justice in the context of emerging economic power in the changing geopolitical perspective?

SWEDEN TO JOIN NATO (NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANISATION)

THIS ARTICLE COVERS 'DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS' AND THE TOPIC DETAILS OF "SWEDEN TO JOIN NATO". THIS TOPIC IS RELEVANT IN THE "INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND INSTITUTIONS" SECTION OF THE UPSC CSE EXAM.

WHY IN THE NEWS?

A significant obstacle was removed from Sweden's NATO membership bid when the Turkish parliament approved it. All of the current members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) must consent to a new member joining. Sweden's joining has been resisted by Turkey and Hungary for virtually the entire time.

REASON WHY SWEDEN WANTS TO JOIN NATO?

- Sweden remained neutral during the two World Wars and the Cold War, and has not engaged in combat for the past 200 years. Although it cooperated with NATO and joined the European Union in recent years, it never made it clear that it intended to join the military alliance.
- However, following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, this neutrality had to be given up. Sweden and Finland submitted applications for membership in NATO in 2022 as the general public's support for joining the alliance grew.
- Finland's proposal was approved, but Sweden faced strong opposition from Hungary and Turkey.

TURKEY'S OPPOSITION TO SWEDEN'S BID

- **Protests burning Qurans were held in Sweden.:** The government claims that laws pertaining to freedom of speech protect it. This made their relationship with Turkey even more strained.
- **Assistance to a terrorist Kurdish group:** Sweden, according to Turkey, has been softer on organisations that it considers terrorists, including the militant Kurdish militia.
- **US consents to provide Ankara with 40 F-16 fighter aircraft:** Experts have connected the US's agreement to supply 40 F-16 fighter jets to Ankara, the capital of Turkey, with Turkey's backing of Sweden. The transaction is now anticipated to proceed, even though the US had not stated that the agreement would be contingent on Turkey's conduct in Sweden.

BENEFITS TO NATO AFTER JOINING OF SWEDEN

- Nearly the whole Baltic Sea coastline—aside from the portion under Russian authority—will be a part of NATO if Sweden joins.
- This will simplify supply lines, give the alliance strategic locations near Russia, and facilitate the defence of maritime assets.

- Despite its small size, Sweden's military is up to date and has experience from previous NATO missions. Its superior aircraft and submarine capabilities are noteworthy.

ABOUT NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION (NATO)

- NATO is a **security alliance** of 31 nations from North America and Europe, which was established in 1949 following the signing of the **Washington Treaty**. Finland became the alliance's 31st member in April of 2023.
- NATO's **primary objective** is to use both military and political methods to protect the freedom and security of its members.
- It is an arrangement of **collective defence** in which sovereign member states consent to defend one another against external attacks.
- An attack on one ally is an attack against all, according to **Article 5 of the Washington Treaty**. The pledge of mutual defence found in this article serves as the foundation of the Alliance.
- **Functions:**
 1. In order to address concerns, foster trust, and ultimately avert conflict, NATO **encourages democratic values** and provides members with the opportunity to communicate and work together on defence and security-related matters.
 2. NATO is dedicated to **resolving conflicts amicably**. If diplomatic attempts prove fruitless, it possesses the military might to carry out crisis management actions.

PRELIMS PRACTICE QUESTION

Q1) Consider the following statements regarding NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization):

- 1) NATO was established in response to the Warsaw Pact during the Cold War.
- 2) The North Atlantic Treaty, which founded NATO, was signed in 1949.
- 3) Article 5 of the NATO treaty stipulates that an attack against one member is considered an attack against all.

How many of the above statements is/are correct?

- a) One
- b) Two
- c) Three
- d) None

ANSWER: C

MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION

Q1) Explain the significance of Article 5 in the NATO treaty. How does the principle of collective defense operate within the alliance?

