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CURRENT AFFAIRS

Date: 14 February 2024

WATER (PREVENTION AND CONTROL OF POLLUTION) AMENDMENT BILL, 2024

THIS ARTICLE COVERS 'DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS' AND THE TOPIC DETAILS OF "WATER (PREVENTION AND CONTROL OF POLLUTION) AMENDMENT BILL, 2024". THIS TOPIC IS RELEVANT IN THE "ENVIRONMENT & ECOLOGY" SECTION OF THE UPSC CSE EXAM.

WHY IN THE NEWS?

The Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Amendment Bill, 2024 has recently been passed by the Parliament.

KEY PROVISIONS MENTIONED IN THE WATER (PREVENTION AND CONTROL OF POLLUTION) AMENDMENT BILL, 2024

- The Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act of 1974 has long been a cornerstone of India's environmental legislation, ensuring the sustainable management of water resources.
- The recent modification aims to resolve several deficiencies and adapt regulatory structures to current demands.
- Amendments to the Water Act are also necessary to bring it in line with the Air Act, as both laws contain comparable provisions.

IMPORTANT AMENDED PROVISIONS:

1. The **decriminalization of minor offenses** in the context of water pollution is a key focus, aiming to **eliminate concerns about imprisonment for technical or procedural lapses**. The underlying rationale is to establish penalties that match the seriousness of offenses, fostering compliance without excessively burdening those involved.
2. **Specific types of industrial plants can be exempted from certain legal restrictions**, as per the revised bill, granting the central government the authority to make such exceptions. This includes provisions related to the establishment of new outlets and discharges outlined in **Section 25**. The goal is to **simplify regulatory processes, minimize redundancy in surveillance efforts, and reduce unnecessary challenges for regulatory agencies, ultimately enhancing efficiency**.
3. To **improve regulatory oversight and standardization across states**, the bill introduces measures that **empower the central government**. This includes the ability to set guidelines for appointing chairpersons of State Pollution Control Boards and issuing directives on the

approval, rejection, or revocation of industry-related consents. The legislation also **outlines specific mandatory qualifications, experience requirements, and procedures to ensure the fair appointment of chairpersons.**

4. The current modifications apply to Himachal Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Union territories (although the **original Act applies to 25 states only**). They substitute imprisonment for “minor” offences with **fin**es ranging from **₹10,000 to ₹15 lakh**.
5. However, operating or constructing an industrial unit without SPCB permission is still a serious offence punishable by up to six years in prison and a fine.

CHALLENGES ASSOCIATED WITH THE BILL

Lack of Supervision: The provision granting exemptions for specific industrial categories from obtaining consent may pose a risk of heightened pollution levels if not effectively regulated.

Questionable Adjudication Process: Allowing the central government to designate adjudication officers could raise concerns regarding the fairness and independence of the adjudication process.

Centralized Nomination Process Concerns: The centrally prescribed nomination procedures by the central government for appointing chairpersons of State Pollution Control Boards (SPCBs) may compromise the autonomy of state governments.

Diminished Deterrence: The replacement of imprisonment provisions with penalties for violations against pollution standards might lessen the deterrent impact.

Unchecked Discharge Hazards: Insufficient oversight may lead to uncontrolled discharge of pollutants into water bodies, jeopardizing water quality and public health.

Potential Administrative Inefficiencies: Expanding the entities authorized to file complaints may result in overlapping jurisdictions and administrative inefficiencies, potentially causing delays and bureaucratic obstacles.



ABOUT WATER (PREVENTION AND CONTROL OF POLLUTION) ACT, 1974

The Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, enacted in 1974, stands as a pivotal legislative framework in India designed to address and manage water pollution. This comprehensive legislation aims to prevent and control water pollution, emphasising the restoration and maintenance of water wholesomeness.

Constitution of Control Boards

Under this Act, the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) and State Pollution Control Boards (SPCBs) were established, playing crucial roles in the enforcement and implementation of pollution control measures. The CPCB, formed in September 1974, operates as a statutory body under the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.

Dual Responsibility under the Air Act, 1981

An important extension occurred in 1981 when the CPCB was entrusted with responsibilities under the Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act. This dual role underscores its significance in addressing both air and water pollution issues.

Amendments in past

The Act underwent amendments in 1978 and 1988, focusing on clarifying ambiguities and empowering the Pollution Control Boards. These amendments strengthened the regulatory framework and expanded the powers of the Boards to effectively address emerging challenges.

Key Provisions and Industry Compliance

The Act mandates industries and local bodies to obtain prior consent from State Pollution Control Boards before initiating operations that involve the discharge of domestic sewage or trade effluent into water bodies. The Boards may grant consent with specified conditions or refuse, accompanied by written reasons.

PRELIMS PRACTICE QUESTIONS

Q1. Consider the following statements

1. Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) operates under the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change
2. Under the Water Act, 1974, State Pollution Control Boards can grant or refuse consent with written reasons
3. Amendments in 1978 and 1988 to the Water Act primarily aimed at weakening the regulatory framework

How many of the above statements are correct?

1. Only one
2. Only two
3. All three
4. None

ANSWER: B

MAINS PRACTICE QUESTIONS

- Q1) Analyze the role of environmental impact assessments (EIAs) in the pollution regulatory framework of India. How do EIAs contribute to sustainable development and environmental protection?
- Q2) Evaluate the concept of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) as it relates to industries' responsibility in pollution control. How can CSR initiatives contribute to a sustainable and eco-friendly industrial landscape?

Himanshu Mishra

INDIA - UNITED ARAB EMIRATES (UAE) RELATIONS

SOURCE - THE HINDU AND PIB.

GENERAL STUDIES - POLITICS AND GOVERNANCE OF INDIA, INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS, INDIA'S NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES, COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT (CEPA), INDIA-UNITED ARAB EMIRATES RELATIONS, GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL (GCC), FREE TRADE AGREEMENTS (FTA), WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION (WTO), INTERIM TRADE AGREEMENT

WHY IN THE NEWS ?



- The visit of the Indian Prime Minister to the UAE in February 2024 is significant from the point of view that he has gone there to inaugurate a temple built by Shri Akshar Purushottam Swaminarayan, a resident of Bochasan in Abu Dhabi. This is the seventh visit of the Indian Prime Minister since 2015, reflecting the growing importance of bilateral relations.
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressed the Indian community at the '**Ahlan Modi**' event in Abu Dhabi, the capital of the United Arab Emirates, on 13 February 2024. During this, he interacted directly with about 65 thousand people of the Indian community living in the UAE. India's PM Modi said- "**Across the ocean, I have brought to you the fragrance of the soil in which you were born. I have come with a message, another message for your 140 crore Indian brothers and sisters that India is proud of you.**"

- The program organized in Abu Dhabi, the capital of the United Arab Emirates, started with the national anthems of both the countries. As Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi entered the open-air stadium, members of the Indian diaspora chanted '**Har Har Modi, Ghar - Ghar Modi**', '**We Love Modi**', '**Bharat Mata Ki Jai**', and '**Jai Shri Ram**'. He was welcomed with the proclamation of.
- The Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi, has visited the UAE for the third time in the last eight months. He paid a bilateral visit in July 2023 and then traveled to COP28 in November, where he was given the rare honor of being the only guest to address the formal opening session.
- Sheikh Mohammed also visited Delhi in September 2023 for the G-20 summit as one of India's special invitees.
- Sheikh Mohammed visited India to participate in the **Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit in January 2024** as the chief guest.
- At a time when diplomatic relations in global politics are widely considered important for mutual trade, the deep personal relationship between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan is a testament to India and the United Arab Emirates. The long standing bilateral relations between the Emirates are being viewed globally as a new relationship in the making.
- This is a relationship between India and the UAE where trust and credibility are more important than diplomatic reciprocity and protocol, where convergence of strategic interests is driven by regular interactions to lay the foundation of one of India's most dynamic and consequential bilateral relations. Get a boost.
- The Prime Minister greeted the people of Indian origin who participated in the 'Ahlan Modi' program by saying 'Namaskar' amid slogans of 'Modi Modi' at the Zayed Sports Stadium in Abu Dhabi. He said he was overwhelmed by the affection from the Indian community at the event.
- In the context of current global political and diplomatic relations, India and the UAE are partners in progress and the relationship between India and the UAE is one of talent, innovation and culture.
- Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been awarded the '**Order of Zayed**', the highest civilian honor of the United Arab Emirates.
- Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has gone on a two-day visit to the United Arab Emirates. He inaugurated the largest Hindu temple in Abu Dhabi, the capital of UAE on 14 February 2024.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE CURRENT VISIT OF THE PRIME MINISTER OF INDIA TO THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES :

- This current visit of the Prime Minister of India is also important because it is scheduled by the religious calendar for the '**inauguration of the grand Hindu temple**' in Abu Dhabi, UAE.
- The presence of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi was also seen as a reminder that during his first visit in August 2015, he had requested the UAE leadership to provide land for a Hindu temple in the UAE. Will cater to the religious and spiritual needs of the emirate's large Hindu community.
- The inauguration of the Hindu Temple by the Prime Minister of India in Abu Dhabi, UAE on 14 February 2024 has no doubt created excitement among the 3.5 million Indian people/Indian citizens in the UAE. A mega event named Ahlan (Welcome Modi) was also organized at the Zayed Sports City Stadium in Abu Dhabi.

- Also includes the Prime Minister of India's address as the guest of honor at the 11th World Government Summit in Dubai.
- Often referred to as Dubai's version of Davos, it is a major annual conference that attracts government leaders, heads of international organizations, leading industrialists and thinkers from around the world.
- The main theme of this year's summit is '**Shaping the Governments of the Future**' and provides an important platform for India to present its views to an influential global audience.

BILATERAL RELATIONS BETWEEN INDIA AND UNITED ARAB EMIRATES :



- In 1972, bilateral diplomatic relations were established between India and the United Arab Emirates.
- The visit of the Prime Minister of India to the UAE in August 2015 marked the beginning of bilateral relations and a new strategic partnership between the two countries.
- Following the visit of the Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi to India as the Chief Guest at the Republic Day celebrations of India in 2017, India and the UAE took forward bilateral relations and worked towards building a comprehensive strategic partnership. Started.
- Under this, the bilateral relations between India and the United Arab Emirates were given impetus to start negotiations for the **India-UAE comprehensive economic partnership agreement**.

BILATERAL ECONOMIC RELATIONS BETWEEN INDIA AND UNITED ARAB EMIRATES :



- Under the mutual bilateral relations between India and UAE, mutual economic partnership between India and UAE has increased. As a result, in the year 2022-23, bilateral trade between

India and UAE will reach US \$ 85 billion. UAE is India's third largest trading partner and second largest exporter.

- Under the mutual bilateral relations between India and UAE, a target has been set to increase bilateral goods trade to more than US\$ 100 billion and services trade to US\$ 15 billion in the coming five years.
- The UAE's investments in India are estimated to be around US\$11.67 billion, making it the ninth largest investor in India, as a trade agreement also enables two-way investment flows.
- Many Indian companies have set up their manufacturing units in the UAE as joint ventures or in Special Economic Zones (SEZs) for cement, building materials, textiles, engineering products, consumer electronics, etc.
- Many Indian companies have also invested in tourism, hospitality, catering, healthcare, retail and education sectors in the UAE.
- Under India's revised strategy of Free Trade Agreements (FTA), the Government of India has provided priority to at least six countries/territories, with UAE topping the list for Early Harvest Deals (or Interim Trade Agreements) . The UK, European Union, Australia, Canada, Israel and a group of Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries are some of the other such countries/regions.
- The UAE had also earlier announced plans to pursue bilateral economic agreements with India and seven other countries (UK, Turkey, South Korea, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Israel and Kenya).

TO REVIVE AND STRENGTHEN BILATERAL ECONOMIC RELATIONS BETWEEN INDIA AND UAE :



- Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi is also expected to launch the much-awaited Bharat Mart in Dubai, which is also a major initiative of Dubai-based DP World and India's Ministry of Commerce and Industry. Which will promote the exports of Indian micro, small and medium enterprises by providing them retail, warehousing and facilities.
- Logistics facilities in the Jebel Ali Free Zone area of Dubai, DP World to allow Indian manufacturers of machinery, electrical and electronics products, auto components, medical devices, furniture, apparel, processed foods, pharmaceuticals, cosmetics and handicrafts to ship their products. will build approximately 800 showrooms and 18 warehouses over the

next 24 months on a 1.3 million square feet plot to showcase and reach buyers and markets in Iran, Central Asia, Africa and the Middle East. ,

- The Bharat Mart project comes on the heels of the ambitious India-UAE Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA), which completed its first year in 2023 and has already seen India's trade with the UAE grow by 16% to \$85 billion. This has strengthened the UAE's position as India's third largest trading partner and second largest export destination.

REGIONAL ISSUES :

- The talks between Prime Minister of India Shri Narendra Modi and Sheikh Mohammed Bin Zayed also reviewed the ongoing war in Gaza, Houthi attacks on shipping in the Red Sea and the deteriorating situation in the region in the context of the clear and present danger.
- Longer shipping times, higher freight costs and a potential rise in oil prices could pose significant risks to India's economic growth in trade relations between India and the UAE.
- It is important for the Indian government to coordinate closely with key regional partners such as the UAE as well as countries such as Saudi Arabia. At the same time, Egypt will also have to ensure that India's interests are protected.
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi has described India and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) as 'partners in progress'. PM Modi, while greeting the people of Indian origin in an event organized in Abu Dhabi on 13 February 2024, described the relationship between the two countries as an ideal for other countries of the world. He said that both the countries are creating new history in the third decade of the 21st century. India wishes that our partnership continues to grow stronger every day.



CONCLUSION / SOLUTION:

- In the current global politics, the unique combination of the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) between India and the UAE and Bharat Mart has the potential to provide a strong boost to India's manufactured goods exports. Even though early steps to start trading in national currencies promise to reduce transaction costs. The MoU signed at the bilateral talks will further strengthen economic relations between India and the UAE.
- There are many other major achievements that both India and the UAE can legitimately take credit for.
- Indian Institute of Technology Delhi has launched its Master's Program in Energy Transition and Sustainability at its interim campus in Abu Dhabi.
- Growing investment from the UAE has made it the fourth largest source of foreign direct investment in India in 2022-23. Abu Dhabi Investment Authority (ADIA) will soon open an office in GIFT City, Gujarat. A 14-year agreement has been signed by Indian Oil Corporation

Limited to purchase 1.2 million metric tonnes of liquefied natural gas per year from Abu Dhabi National Oil Company during 2026-39 to boost India's energy security.

- Discussions on several sensitive areas of defense cooperation between India and UAE and joint military exercises between the two countries are progressing well.
- The UAE is now India's third largest trading partner and seventh largest investor.
- Today India is leading the global discussion on many fronts. Both India and UAE are partnering on ease of living and ease of doing business. Today the aim of every Indian is to make India a developed nation by 2047. In such a situation, the mutual relationship between India and the United Arab Emirates will prove to be a '**milestone**' in India's economic development.
- The mutual achievements of India and the UAE in terms of community and culture are serving as an exemplary model for other countries of the world.
- India and the United Arab Emirates have shared community and cultural ties between the two countries since ancient times.
- Both India and UAE are writing the script of a better future in the '**book of the world**' with the '**pen of time**'.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS FOR PRELIMINARY EXAM :

Q.1. Consider the following statements in the context of mutual relations between India and the United Arab Emirates.

1. The Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi, has visited the UAE four times in the last eight months.
2. Sheikh Mohammed visited India to participate in the Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit in January 2024 as the chief guest.
3. The Indian community was addressed by India's Defense Minister Rajnath Singh at the 'Ahlan Modi' event in Abu Dhabi.
4. India's Foreign Minister S. Jaishankar has been awarded the 'Order of Zayed', the highest civilian honor of the United Arab Emirates.

Which of the above statement / statements is/ are correct?

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

Answer - (D)

PRACTICE QUESTIONS FOR MAIN EXAM :

Q.1. Highlight the key provisions of the India-United Arab Emirates Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement and discuss how the economic, strategic and strategic relationship between India and the United Arab Emirates is playing a supporting role in making India a developed nation?

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