



Yojna IAS

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APRIL 2024

WEEKLY CURRENT AFFAIRS

YOJNA IAS WEEKLY CURRENT AFFAIRS

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CURRENT AFFAIRS

APRIL 2024

IMPACT OF KUNMING-MONTREAL GLOBAL BIODIVERSITY FRAMEWORK ON TRIBES

WHY IN THE NEWS?

A recent conference hosted by the University of Arizona shed light on apprehensions regarding the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) and its potential ramifications, specifically concerning the indigenous tribes of India.

ABOUT KUNMING-MONTREAL GLOBAL BIODIVERSITY FRAMEWORK

- In December 2022, at the 15th Conference of the Parties (COP15) to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity, a landmark agreement emerged – the **Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF)**.
- This framework builds on past efforts and seeks to achieve the ambitious goal of living in harmony with nature by 2050, aligning with broader sustainable development objectives.

TARGETS SET BY KUNMING-MONTREAL GLOBAL BIODIVERSITY FRAMEWORK

- The GBF outlines a clear path for a future where biodiversity thrives. **It establishes four overarching goals for 2050**, encompassing aspects like maintaining healthy ecosystems, reducing threats to biodiversity, ensuring sustainable use benefits everyone, and ultimately achieving a harmonious relationship between humans and nature.
- To translate these goals into action, the **GBF sets 23 specific targets to be achieved by 2030**. These targets **focus on key areas like mitigating threats to biodiversity, promoting sustainable use with fair benefit-sharing, and establishing effective tools** for implementation and mainstreaming biodiversity considerations.

LEGAL MANDATE OF THE FRAMEWORK

- Although GBF isn't a **legally binding treaty**, it serves as a powerful international instrument fostering collective action. All participating countries agree to set national targets aligned with the framework's goals and targets.
- This collaborative approach promotes a sense of shared responsibility and accountability for achieving a sustainable future.

INDIA'S PROGRESS IN ACHIEVING THE TARGETS TILL NOW

- **Target 3 – 30×30**: India has announced the inclusion of 22% of its terrestrial area and 5% of marine and coastal areas within the Protected Area Network.
- Although India demonstrates progress in expanding protected areas, concerns have surfaced regarding the legal definitions and potential diversion of these areas for non-conservation purposes.
- **India's Forest (Conservation) Amendment Act of 2023** broadened the scope of forest activities to incorporate commercial ventures such as zoos and ecotourism, indicating a commitment to sustainable development.
- Nevertheless, the Supreme Court has issued directives mandating that any proposals for establishing zoos and safaris within forest areas (excluding protected areas) must undergo prior approval from the court.
- **Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures (OECMs)**: India has identified 14 categories of OECMs, including initiatives led by citizens. However, the voluntary nature of their declaration raises questions regarding legal protection.

CONTROVERSY AROUND TARGET 3 OF THE KUNMING-MONTREAL FRAMEWORK

- **Target 3 of the GBF aims to ensure that by 2030**, at least 30% of the world's land, waters, and seas are preserved. Currently, protected areas (PAs) encompass approximately 16% of these areas. **This objective is commonly referred to as the "30 by 30" target.**
- Analysts argue that while this target appears beneficial, it often **prioritises corporate interests over those of indigenous communities, particularly in Southeast Asia.** For instance, in **Cambodia's Beng Per Wildlife Sanctuary**, an indigenous leader named Heng Saphen was unjustly convicted for cultivating her own land.
- Critics contend that **involving the private sector in forest conservation is problematic.** They point to India's Forest (Conservation) Amendment Act of 2023 as an example of this trend. The act expands the definition of forest activities to include zoos, safaris, and ecotourism facilities.
- According to experts, **colonial elites initially established protected areas for recreational and hunting purposes.** This legacy persists today, with ecotourism projects often treating indigenous peoples as attractions, showcasing their traditional cultures in contrived settings.

STEPS THAT CAN BE TAKEN TO PROTECT TRIBAL LANDS

- **Consent from tribals:** The Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act emphasises “free, prior, and informed consent” from tribals before any decisions affecting their land are made. Upholding this right is essential for ensuring their agency and protecting their cultural heritage.
- **Capacity Building:** Provide educational and training opportunities to equip tribal communities with the skills and knowledge needed to manage their lands effectively and advocate for their rights.
- **Considering them as Guardians of the forests:** Laws should be amended to formally recognise tribal communities as guardians of protected areas. Their deep understanding of the local ecosystem and traditional conservation practices make them invaluable partners in protecting biodiversity. This approach fosters a sense of ownership and empowers communities to manage their lands sustainably.
- **Community-Based Conservation:** Support collaborative conservation initiatives led by tribal communities, ensuring their knowledge and practices are integrated into land management strategies.
- **Legal Framework and Enforcement:** Strengthen the legal framework by enforcing existing legislations like the Forest Rights Act to secure individual and community ownership of land for forest-dwelling Scheduled Tribes and other traditional forest dwellers.
- **Incorporating Indigenous and Expertise Knowledge:** Governments have the opportunity to utilise the traditional wisdom held by indigenous communities, such as the Khasi and Jaintia tribes of Meghalaya, who possess a deep-rooted heritage in safeguarding “sacred groves” – regions of natural flora and fauna preserved through local customs and prohibitions.

PRELIMS PRACTISE QUESTION

Q1. Consider the following statements:

1. Forest rights can be asserted by individuals who have resided in the area for a minimum of two generations prior to the specified date.
2. The gram sabha holds the authority to commence the procedure for ascertaining the type and scope of forest rights.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

ANSWER: A

MAINS PRACTISE QUESTION

Q1. How can collaborative efforts between indigenous peoples and conservation organisations harness traditional knowledge to combat threats like deforestation and habitat degradation?

SUPREME COURT NULLIFIES 2020 EARTH EX-TRACTION EXEMPTION

WHY IN THE NEWS?

The Supreme Court has nullified a notification issued by the Ministry of Environment three years prior, which granted an exemption for obtaining Environmental Clearance (EC) for extracting ordinary earth used in linear projects such as road and railway construction. The exemption, initiated in March 2020, came under scrutiny by the National Green Tribunal (NGT), which directed the Ministry in October 2020 to review it within a three-month period.

WHAT WAS THE 2020 NOTIFICATION FOR LINEAR PROJECTS?

- The 2020 exemption pertained to the addition of “Extraction or sourcing or borrowing of ordinary earth for linear projects such as roads, pipelines, etc.” to the list of activities exempted from prior Environmental Clearance (EC). This exemption was introduced through a notification issued by the Environment Ministry under The Environment (Protection) Act, 1986.
- In 2006, the Environment Ministry initially issued a notification outlining activities requiring prior Environmental Clearance (EC). Subsequently, in 2016, another notification exempted certain categories of projects from this requirement.
- The rationale behind the 2020 notification was to align with amendments made to the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957, which **permitted lessees to continue mining for up to two years with the statutory clearances and licences issued to their predecessors.**

WHAT ARE THE LINEAR PROJECTS?

- Linear construction projects are those that involve **development stretching out in a long, narrow strip of land**. These projects typically involve repetitive construction activities carried out along the entire length. Some common examples of linear construction projects are:
 1. Highways, roads, and expressways
 2. Railways
 3. Airports
 4. Canals and irrigation channels
 5. Fences and border walls
 6. Communication lines
 7. Pipelines for oil, gas, water, and sewage
 8. Power transmission lines

WHY WAS THE 2020 NOTIFICATION AND EXEMPTION UNDER IT WERE CHALLENGED

- **Equality Under Threat (Article 14):** Critics argued that the exemption violated Article 14 of the Indian Constitution, which guarantees equal protection of the law. The notification, they claimed, allowed unrestricted earth removal without clear guidelines or safeguards, raising concerns about fairness and potential abuse.
- **Transparency Issues:** The Ministry's failure to justify waiving the requirement of public notice or issuing a blanket exemption raised questions about transparency and accountability. Critics pointed out the absence of proper justification for bypassing environmental assessments and scrutiny.
- **Favouritism:** The exemption was seen as potentially favouring private miners and contractors at the expense of public interest. Additionally, critics argued that the Ministry misused its power under the guise of public interest during the COVID-19 lockdown to benefit private entities, bypassing established legal procedures for environmental assessment.
- **Previous Judgments:** The case of Deepak Kumar vs State of Haryana (2012) was referenced, where the Supreme Court mandated prior EC for leases. This established precedent was seen as being violated by the 2020 exemption.
- **Environmental Concerns:** A major concern was the lack of environmental safeguards in the exemption. Without defined limits on extraction quantities or designated areas, the notification posed a risk to environmental conservation efforts.
- **NGT's Ruling and Delays:** The NGT acknowledged the need for balance and directed the Ministry to revise the exemption with appropriate safeguards, including regulations on excavation procedures and the amount of earth allowed for extraction. However, the Ministry's delay in revising the exemption led the issue to escalate to the Supreme Court.

CONCERNS RAISED BY SC

- The court highlighted that it violates **Article 14**.
- The Court deemed the **exemption given in the notification arbitrary due to:**
 1. Unclear definitions of key terms like "linear projects" and permissible extraction amounts.
 2. Lack of justification for waiving public notice requirements.
- A subsequent attempt by the Ministry to clarify the exemption in 2023 failed to address these concerns. The Court further **questioned the timing of the initial exemption, issued during a nationwide lockdown** that halted construction.
- This decision underscores the importance of environmental safeguards in infrastructure development. Clear regulations, defined terms, and limitations on earth removal are necessary to minimise environmental damage from such projects.

PRELIMS PRACTISE QUESTIONS

Q1. Which constitutional body in India is responsible for environmental impact assessment (EIA) of developmental projects?

- (a) Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change
- (b) National Green Tribunal
- (c) Pollution Control Boards
- (d) Central Pollution Control Board

Answer: A

Q2. The Supreme Court has interpreted the right to life under Article 21 to include the right to a healthy environment in which landmark case?

- (a) Kesavananda Bharati v. State of Kerala
- (b) Vishaka v. State of Rajasthan
- (c) Olga Tellis v. Bombay Municipal Corporation
- (d) M.C. Mehta v. Union of India

Answer: D

MAINS PRACTISE QUESTION

Q1. Discuss the concept of consumerism and its impact on environmental degradation, considering the relentless pursuit of material possessions and the consumption of resources beyond sustainable levels.

INDIA SEMICONDUCTOR CONUNDRUM

WHY IN THE NEWS?

Recently, Tata Electronics, a subsidiary wholly owned by Tata Sons Pvt. Ltd., is collaborating with Powerchip Semiconductor Manufacturing Corporation (PSMC) of Taiwan to establish India's first cutting-edge semiconductor fabrication facility, integrating artificial intelligence capabilities.

ABOUT SEMICONDUCTOR CHIPS?

- A semiconductor is a substance with electrical conductivity properties that lie between those of conductors like copper and insulators like glass.

- Semiconductor chips are tiny, wafer-like devices made from semiconductor materials, typically silicon, which possess unique electrical properties. Semiconductor chips serve as the building blocks for a wide array of electronic devices, from smartphones and computers to medical equipment and automotive systems.
- The fabrication process of semiconductor chips involves intricate layers of materials and precise patterning techniques. The most common type of semiconductor chip is the integrated circuit (IC), which contains interconnected electronic components such as transistors, diodes, and resistors.

DEVELOPMENT OF SEMICONDUCTOR CHIPS IN INDIA–

- A semiconductor facility in Morigaon, Assam, will be established by Tata Semiconductor Assembly and Test Pvt Ltd (TSAT) with an investment of Rs 27,000 crore. It is expected to produce 48 million chips daily, primarily serving the automotive and electric vehicle industries.
- Another semiconductor facility in Sanand, Gujarat, will be developed by CG Power in collaboration with Renesas Electronics Corp from Japan and Stars Microelectronics from Thailand, involving an investment of Rs 7,600 crore.
- Both Foxconn and Vedanta proposed to set up a fabrication facility independently in the coming years.

WHY GOVERNMENT IS FOCUSING ON SEMICONDUCTOR MANUFACTURING–

- **Rapidly growing Market**– India’s semiconductor consumption is on a swift ascent. Rajeev Chandrasekhar, the country’s Minister of State for IT and Electronics, anticipates an expansion to \$110 billion by 2030.
- **Import Dependence**- India depends significantly on imports to meet its domestic semiconductor needs, rendering it susceptible to coercion and supply chain interruptions, particularly with China’s dominance in the global semiconductor industry. Establishing local manufacturing facilities would shield India from potential future supply disruptions and facilitate self-sufficiency.
- **Strategic Significance**– Semiconductors are essential components in various critical industries such as telecommunications, defence, healthcare, and automotive. As such, having a robust domestic semiconductor manufacturing capability is crucial for national security and strategic autonomy.
- **High-skill Employment opportunities**—Semiconductor manufacturing has the potential to create high-skilled jobs and drive economic growth through technology innovation and ecosystem development.
- **Diversify Global supply chains of Semiconductor chips**– Currently, chip production is centralised in a limited number of nations. For instance, Taiwan alone accounts for more than 60% of global semiconductor manufacturing, while combined with South Korea, these two countries contribute to 100% of the production.

CHALLENGES FOR INDIA–

- **Huge initial investment**- Semiconductor production is a highly intricate and technology-driven industry demanding substantial capital investments, enduring risks, extended periods for development

and return on investment, and frequent technological advancements. These factors necessitate substantial and continuous financial commitments.

- **Infrastructure deficit-** Establishing a chip manufacturing ecosystem in a new area poses significant hurdles. It necessitates robust infrastructure, including a consistent power supply and ample clean water, alongside costly water purification setups. Moreover, the process involves numerous chemicals and gasses essential for chip fabrication, adding to the complexity and expenses.
- **Sophisticated technology-** Sophisticated technology is imperative for high-end chip manufacturing, a capability possessed by only a handful of corporations in India.
- **Lack of skilled manpower-** India tremendously lacks skilled human resources, which is imperative for semiconductor manufacturing.

INITIATIVES TAKEN BY INDIA TO PROMOTE SEMICONDUCTOR MANUFACTURING-

- **Modified Scheme for Setting up of Semiconductor Fabs in India-** The scheme intends to draw significant investments for establishing semiconductor wafer fabrication plants within the nation. Under this scheme, there is a provision of providing 50% fiscal assistance of the project expenditure equally, specifically targeting the establishment of Silicon complementary metal-oxide semiconductor (CMOS) based semiconductor fabrication facilities in India.
- **Design linked incentive Scheme-** It provides monetary benefits and supportive infrastructure for semiconductor design throughout its various developmental and deployment phases. This scheme provides incentives like “Product Design Linked Incentive” and “Deployment Linked Incentive.”
- **India Semiconductor Mission-** It aims to spearhead the formulation of enduring strategies for cultivating a resilient semiconductor and display ecosystem. This specialised and autonomous initiative will be overseen by leading experts from the global semiconductor and display sectors. Serving as the central authority, ISM will ensure the effective and seamless execution of schemes designed to establish Semiconductor and Display Fabrication facilities.
- **Semiconductor laboratory-** The Union Cabinet has sanctioned the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology to initiate the necessary measures for upgrading and commercializing the Semi-conductor Laboratory (SCL) located in Mohali. The Ministry will investigate the potential for a collaborative venture between SCL and a commercial fab partner to enhance the existing brownfield fab facility.

CONCLUSION-

Semiconductor chips are vital in modern electronics, yet India faces import dependency risks. Government initiatives like design-linked incentives and the India Semiconductor Mission aim for self-reliance and technological advancement. Strengthening domestic semiconductor capabilities is crucial for innovation, economic growth, and strategic autonomy in India’s tech-driven future.

PRELIMS BASED QUESTION-

Q1. Consider the following statements about semiconductor technology:

1. Silicon is predominantly used in the fabrication of semiconductor chips.
2. Transistor is a basic building block of a semiconductor device.

Choose the correct answer using the codes given below:

- (a) 1 Only
- (b) 2 Only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

ANSWER: C

MAINS BASED QUESTION-

Q1. What are the challenges hindering growth in India's semiconductor sector, and what policy measures and reforms could be implemented to overcome these obstacles and foster its development?

YEAR OF TECHNOLOGY ABSORPTION

WHY IN THE NEWS?

On Monday, The Chief of Army Staff extended his greetings on 76th Army Day. The Chief of Army Staff pointed out that the Indian Army will observe the year 2024 as the '**Year of Technology Absorption**' — a theme that underscores the Army's focus and efforts to leverage technology as a catalyst for transformative change.

"The character of warfare continues to change. To prepare ourselves for the future, we set into motion a holistic transformation process last year. We have made good progress, and many milestones have been achieved. Our capability development endeavours stand on the tower of Atmanirbharta, to which we are firmly committed. The transition towards becoming a modern, agile, adaptive and technology-enabled future-ready force shall continue as part of the Transformation Roadmap," He said.

WHAT IS TECHNOLOGY ABSORPTION?

Technology absorption refers to the process by which organizations acquire, assimilate, and effectively utilize new technologies to improve their products, services, processes, or capabilities. Technology absorption in the defence sector involves military organizations acquiring and integrating new technologies, such as weapons systems and communication networks, into their operations to improve their capabilities and effectiveness in national security. They integrate external technological knowledge, innovations, and practices into existing operations and systems to enhance performance, competitiveness, and efficiency.

DISRUPTIVE TECHNOLOGY IN THE DEFENCE SECTOR:

Disruptive technologies in the defence sector are innovations that significantly alter the way military organizations operate, fight wars, and maintain security. These technologies can potentially revolutionize military capabilities, strategies, and doctrines. Disruptive Technology plays a crucial role in Indian defence sectors.

DISRUPTIVE TECHNOLOGIES IMPACTING THE DEFENCE SECTOR INCLUDE:

- **Artificial Intelligence (AI):** AI enables autonomous decision-making, predictive analytics, and unmanned systems in defence. It can analyze vast amounts of data, enhance situational awareness, optimize logistics, and support decision-making processes on the battlefield.
- **Autonomous Systems:** Autonomous systems such as unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), unmanned ground vehicles (UGVs), and unmanned maritime vehicles (UMVs) are revolutionizing warfare by performing military tasks such as reconnaissance, surveillance, logistics, and offensive operations with little human intervention.
- **Cyber Warfare and Cybersecurity:** The growing dependence on digital systems has made cybersecurity and cyber warfare essential in today's conflicts. Innovations like advanced encryption, quantum computing, and machine learning are vital for detecting and responding to cyber threats.
- **Directed Energy Weapons (DEWs):** DEWs, employing lasers or microwaves, can disable or destroy targets with advantages like instant targeting, precision, and cost-effectiveness over traditional weapons.
- **Space-Based Technologies:** Space-based technologies, such as satellites, are vital in modern warfare for various purposes, including communication, navigation, and surveillance. Innovations like small satellites and constellations enhance global battlefield awareness.
- **3D Printing/Additive Manufacturing:** Additive manufacturing technologies facilitate the quick creation and production of parts and military equipment, supporting decentralized manufacturing, lowering logistical challenges, and enabling customizing military gear.
- **Biotechnology and Bioengineering:** Advances in biotechnology and bioengineering can significantly impact defence by creating new materials, medical treatments, and enhancements for soldiers. These biologically inspired innovations offer the potential for improved battlefield protection, sustainability, and performance.
- **Quantum Technologies:** Quantum technologies can significantly enhance defence capabilities through faster problem-solving, quantum computing, and secure communication via unbreakable quantum cryptography.
- **Electromagnetic Railguns and Advanced Munitions:** Electromagnetic railguns launch projectiles at high speeds using electromagnetic forces, providing greater range, accuracy, and lethality than traditional artillery. They also use advanced guided munitions for precise targeting.

HERE ARE SOME KEY CHALLENGES IN TECHNOLOGY ABSORPTION IN THE DEFENCE SECTOR:

1. **Security Concerns:** The technologies must adhere to strict standards to protect data integrity, confidentiality, and availability. The challenge lies in adopting emerging technologies such as AI, IoT, and cloud computing without jeopardizing security.
2. **Complex Procurement Processes:** The procurement process in the defence sector is lengthy and highly regulated. Bureaucratic hurdles, strict procurement guidelines, and lengthy approval cycles can delay the adoption of new technologies.
3. **Human Capital and Training:** Adopting new technologies in the defence sector is limited by the shortage of skilled personnel and the high costs of training programs.
4. **Cost Constraints:** Limited defence budgets and competing priorities make investing in and adopting new technologies challenging due to cost constraints.
5. **Regulatory Compliance:** Defence organizations face challenges in ensuring new and emerging technologies comply with various domestic and international regulations and standards.

Enhancing indigenous technology in the defence sector involves fostering domestic innovation, research, and development capabilities to create cutting-edge technologies that meet the unique requirements of national defence. “Atmanirbhar Bharat (self-reliant India) is a policy initiative launched by the Government of India to foster economic growth, promote indigenous manufacturing, and reduce import dependency. Atmanirbhar Bharat plays a significant role in India’s defence sector.

HERE’S A ROADMAP THAT INDIA COULD FOLLOW TO ENHANCE ITS SELF-RELIANCE (ATMANIRBHAR) IN DEFENCE:

- Develop a comprehensive policy framework that prioritizes indigenous defence production and technology development. This framework should include clear objectives, targets, and timelines for self-reliance in critical defence technologies and capabilities.
- Increase investment in defence R&D to foster innovation and technology development. Establish dedicated R&D institutions, laboratories, and centres of excellence focused on defence technologies. Encourage collaboration between the public and private sectors, academia, and research institutions to drive innovation. India spends only 0.8% of its GDP on all R&D, which is very low compared to other developed countries.
- Provide incentives and support for domestic defence manufacturing companies to produce a wide range of defence equipment and systems within India. This could include tax incentives, subsidies, and access to finance. Streamline regulatory processes and create a conducive business environment to attract investment in defence manufacturing.
- Facilitate technology transfer and collaboration with foreign defence companies to acquire advanced technologies and expertise. Establish partnerships, joint ventures, and technology-sharing agreements with global defence firms to leverage their capabilities and strengthen indigenous defence production.
- Invest in skill development programs to build a skilled workforce supporting indigenous defence pro-

duction and technology development. Establish specialized training institutes and apprenticeship programs to train personnel in designing, manufacturing, testing, and maintaining defence equipment.

- Simplify and expedite the defence procurement process to reduce delays and bureaucratic hurdles. Implement transparent and efficient procurement policies that prioritize domestically developed technologies and products. Encourage participation from domestic companies, including SMEs, in defence procurement initiatives.

CONCLUSION:

Successful technology absorption in the defence sector requires a strategic approach, comprehensive risk management, investment in human capital, and collaboration with diverse stakeholders to leverage emerging technologies effectively and maintain technological superiority in an evolving threat landscape.

Atmanirbhar Bharat initiative aims to transform India into a global manufacturing hub and a self-reliant economy across various sectors, including defence. By promoting indigenous manufacturing, technology development, and innovation, India seeks to strengthen its defence capabilities, promote economic growth, and enhance its strategic autonomy on the world stage.

PRELIMS PRACTISE QUESTIONS:

Q. Which of the following weapons in Indian defence are indigenously developed?

1. Pinaka Multi barrel rocket launchers.
2. ALH Dhruv choppers
3. Arjun tanks

Choose the correct answer using the code given below—

- A. Only one
- B. Only two
- C. All three
- D. None

ANSWER: C

MAINS PRACTICE QUESTIONS:

Q. How can India become self-reliant (Atmanirbhar) in the defence sector? Critically examine the challenges of emerging technology in the defence sector.

RIGHT OF THE VOTERS

WHY IN THE NEWS?

On Tuesday, the Supreme Court (SC) said that candidates contesting elections need not disclose every moveable property owned by them or their dependents. The apex court said that candidates need to disclose property information that is of substantial value or reflects a luxurious lifestyle. Moreover, the SC said a voter had no absolute right to know about each and every candidate's assets and that a candidate had the right to privacy regarding matters irrelevant to his/her candidature.

BACKGROUND OF THE JUDGEMENT:

- This observation came after the Supreme Court upheld the election of Karikho Kri from Tezu, an independent MLA, in the 2019 Arunachal Pradesh Assembly Elections.
- The apex court's decision overturned the Gauhati High Court's decision, which declared Karikho Kri's election null and void.
- The top court set aside the Gauhati High Court order that declared Karikho Kri's election from the Tezu assembly constituency in the Lohit district in 2019 as void.
- In the petition, Karikho Kri's opponent claimed that the MLA "exercised undue influence" by not disclosing three vehicles his wife and son owned while filing his nomination.
- The Gauhati High Court court gave the verdict in response to an election petition filed by Congress candidate Nuney Tayang, challenging the declaration of the 2019 Assembly election result. Tayang alleged that Kri made false declarations for not disclosing in Form 26 of the Conduct of Election Rules, 1961, that he occupied a government-allotted MLA cottage in Itanagar.
- SC ruled that defects were "insubstantial" in character.
- SC said that balancing the right of voters to know with the right to privacy of a candidate. Candidate's right to privacy will still survive in matters that are of no concern to voters or are irrelevant to his candidature for public office.

CERTAIN RIGHTS OF THE VOTERS IN INDIA:

In India, the Constitution and electoral laws protect several rights of voters. These rights ensure the integrity of the electoral process and empower citizens to participate freely and fairly. **Some of the key rights of voters in India include:**

- **Right to Vote:** Every Indian citizen who is 18 years of age or older has the right to vote in elections, Subject to certain conditions such as registration in the electoral roll.
- **Right to Know:** Voters have the right to access information about candidates for office, including their criminal background, educational qualifications, and financial assets.
- **Right to Secret Ballot:** Voters can cast their votes secretly without fear of coercion or intimidation. The secrecy of the ballot is maintained to ensure voters' freedom of expression.

- **Right to Recourse:** Voters have the right to recourse if they believe their rights have been violated or encounter any irregularities during the electoral process. They can file complaints with the Election Commission or approach the judiciary for redressal.
- **Right to Non-Discrimination:** Every voter has the right to exercise their franchise without facing any discrimination based on caste, religion, gender, or any other factor. The principle of universal adult suffrage ensures that every citizen's vote carries equal weight.
- **Voting Rights of Prisoners:** The Indian constitution and the guidelines of the ECI do not permit an imprisoned person to vote in the country's upcoming elections.
- **Voting rights of NRIs:** Voting rights for NRIs were introduced in 2011 after an amendment to the Representation of People Act 1950. Therefore, NRIs can now cast their vote in their place of residence, as mentioned in their passport. They can also opt for the postal ballot option.

The right to vote is vital for raising one's voice in a democracy. Voting ensures the spirit of democracy, as citizens shape the country's future and, thereby, their own.

WHO CAN VOTE IN INDIA?

The Indian Constitution grants the right to vote to all citizens of India irrespective of their race, caste, religion, gender and colour. **Some eligibility criteria are:**

1. The individual must be a citizen of India.
2. The minimum age of the individual should be 18 years old.
3. Citizens must register as voters in the electoral rolls of their respective constituencies to exercise their voting rights.
4. Individuals should not be convicted of certain offences and serve a sentence in prison or should not be declared disqualified by the Election Commission for electoral malpractices.

The right to vote is guaranteed under Article 326 of the Constitution of India. This article states that "the elections to the House of the People and the Legislative Assembly of every State shall be based on adult suffrage." Voting is a constitutional right and civic duty that is essential for democracy's functioning.

PRELIMS PRACTISE QUESTIONS

Q. Consider the following statements:

1. Prisoners can participate in voting because the right to vote is the fundamental right.
2. The 61st Constitutional Amendment Act reduced the voting age from 21 years to 18 years.
3. The Election Commission of India is authorized to conduct the State Assembly Elections.

How many of the above statement/s is/are correct?

- A. Only one
- B. Only two

C. All three

D. None

ANSWER: B

MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION:

Q. People's participation in the election process in India plays a critical role in ensuring a healthy democracy in the country. Critically examine.

EARTHQUAKE IN TAIWAN

WHY IN THE NEWS?

Taiwan experienced its most powerful earthquake in the past 25 years, registering a magnitude of 7.2. The epicentre of the seismic activity was pinpointed a mere 18 kilometres south-southwest of Hualien County, located in eastern Taiwan. This occurrence underscores Taiwan's vulnerability to earthquakes due to its location along the Pacific "Ring of Fire."

REASONS BEHIND EARTHQUAKES IN TAIWAN

- Earthquakes are a frequent occurrence in Taiwan due to its location along the Pacific "Ring of Fire," which accounts for around 90% of the world's seismic activity.
- This ring comprises a network of seismic faults encircling the Pacific Ocean, where the majority of earthquakes globally take place. Taiwan's vulnerability to earthquakes is exacerbated by the dynamic interaction of the Philippine Sea Plate and the Eurasian Plate, which accumulate tension and periodically release it through seismic events.
- The **mountainous terrain of Taiwan can intensify ground shaking**, leading to landslides. Recent incidents in Taiwan's eastern coast, close to the epicentre, saw landslides triggered by falling debris, resulting in the destruction of tunnels and highways, along with casualties from crushed vehicles.

ABOUT THE PACIFIC RING OF FIRE

- Alternatively referred to as the Pacific Rim or the Circum-Pacific Belt, denotes a region encircling the Pacific Ocean distinguished by active volcanoes and recurrent seismic activity.

BOUNDARIES OF PACIFIC RING OF FIRE

- This area encompasses **approximately 40,000 kilometres** and delineates the boundaries between several tectonic plates, including the Pacific, Juan de Fuca, Cocos, Indian-Australian, Nazca, American, and Philippine Plates.
- Its trajectory spans along the western coast of South and North America, traverses the Aleutian Islands in Alaska, extends down the eastern coast of Asia, passes New Zealand, and culminates at the northern coast of Antarctica. The Ring of Fire hosts roughly **75% of the world's volcanoes, with approximately**

90% of global earthquakes occurring within its confines.

VOLCANIC ACTIVITIES IN THE REGION

- The volcanic activity within the Ring of Fire arises from the movement of tectonic plates converging, leading to the creation of subduction zones where one plate is forced beneath another.
- This process occurs gradually, with plates shifting merely one or two inches per year. As subduction transpires, rocks undergo melting, transforming into magma that ascends to the Earth's surface, instigating volcanic eruptions.
- The Ring of Fire harbours a significant concentration of volcanoes primarily because the majority of the planet's subduction zones are situated within its bounds. Particularly noteworthy are the volcanoes in Indonesia, renowned for their high activity levels within the Pacific Ring of Fire. These volcanic formations stem from the interaction of three principal active tectonic plates: the Eurasian Plate, Pacific Plate, and Indo-Australian Plate, which undergo subduction processes in this region.

COOLING PATTERNS IN THE PACIFIC PLATE

- Recent scientific studies have illuminated the cooling trend observed in the Pacific Plate, which significantly influences the tectonic dynamics within the Ring of Fire. This cooling phenomenon may impact plate boundaries and subduction zones, potentially altering mountain-building processes.
- Researchers have discerned that the younger segments of the Pacific Plate, approximately 2 million years old, are cooling at an accelerated pace compared to older sections, around 100 million years old. This cooling process could heighten stress accumulation along plate boundaries, potentially leading to increased frequency and intensity of earthquakes.
- Notably, the most active regions within the Ring of Fire coincide with the northern and western extents of the Pacific Plate, where the younger portions are predominant.

ABOUT VOLCANISM

- Volcanism encompasses the eruption of molten rock, ash, and gases from beneath the Earth's crust onto its surface or into the atmosphere.
- It occurs in various types of volcanoes, including stratovolcanoes, shield volcanoes, and cinder cone volcanoes, each with distinct characteristics and eruption styles.

Causes of Volcanism

- **Tectonic Activity:** Volcanic eruptions often result from the movement and interaction of tectonic plates. Subduction zones are the regions where one tectonic plate is forced beneath another. It is the common sites of volcanic activity.
- **Hotspots:** Some volcanic eruptions are caused by hotspots, areas where magma from the mantle rises to the surface, creating volcanic features such as islands or volcanic chains.

Types of Volcanoes

- **Stratovolcanoes:** Tall, steep-sided volcanoes characterised by explosive eruptions of viscous magma.
- **Shield Volcanoes:** Broad, gently sloping volcanoes formed by the eruption of low-viscosity lava flows.

- **Cinder Cone Volcanoes:** Small, steep-sided cones composed of volcanic fragments ejected during explosive eruptions.

PRELIMS PRACTISE QUESTIONS

Q1. Which of the following best describes a stratovolcano?

- (a) A broad, gently sloping volcano formed by the eruption of low-viscosity lava flows.
- (b) A small, steep-sided cone composed of volcanic fragments ejected during explosive eruptions.
- (c) A tall, steep-sided volcano characterised by explosive eruptions of viscous magma.
- (d) A volcano formed by the accumulation of volcanic ash and debris around a central vent.

Answer: C

Q2. Consider the following statements:

- (a) Basic lava tends to have a lower content of Acidic lava
- (b) Tephra is the term used for the solidified remains of lava flows and other volcanic material
- (c) The San Andreas Fault in California is an example of a Subduction zone

How many of the statements given above are correct?

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

Answer: A

MAINS PRACTISE QUESTION

Q1. Analyse the role of hotspot volcanoes in the creation of island chains, such as the Hawaiian-Emperor seamount chain. How does the movement of tectonic plates over stationary hotspots lead to the sequential formation of volcanic islands?

CURATIVE PETITION

WHY IN THE NEWS?

Recently, the Supreme Court granted relief to the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) through the Curative Petition. A three-judge bench headed by Chief Justice DY Chandrachud allowed the curative petition of Delhi Metro Rail Corporation Ltd. (DMRC) against Delhi Airport Metro Express Pvt. Ltd. (DAMEPL). It set aside its judgment in the case of Delhi Airport Metro Express Private Limited v. Delhi Metro Rail Corporation Ltd. (2022).

CJI Chandrachud acknowledged that a **previous court decision was unjust**, halted the Delhi Airport Metro's legal action, and ordered refunds of payments made by DMRC to DAMEPL.

The Supreme Court's decision to support DMRC via a curative petition impacts PPPs, investor trust, and legal precedents, showcasing a commitment to justice.

BACKGROUND OF THE CASE:

- In 2008, the DMRC partnered with DAMEPL, a consortium led by Reliance Infrastructure Ltd, for the Delhi Airport Metro Express project through a Public Private Partnership (PPP).
- However, a dispute arose between the two parties, and the agreement was terminated by DAMEPL in 2013.
- An arbitration tribunal ruled in favour of DAMEPL and ordered DMRC to pay nearly eight thousand crore in 2017.
- DMRC challenged this in the Delhi High Court in 2019. The Delhi High Court overturned an arbitral award challenged by DMRC, but the Supreme Court reversed this decision in September 2021, upholding the original award in favour of DAMEPL.
- In November 2021, the Supreme Court dismissed a review petition filed by DMRC in the case, and subsequently, in August 2022, DMRC filed a curative petition against the arbitral award in the Supreme Court.

ABOUT THE CURATIVE PETITION:

- A curative petition allows for reviewing the Supreme Court of India's final judgment or order. The curative petition can be filed if the petitioner believes that principles of natural justice have been violated or if a fundamental error in the judgment has resulted in manifest injustice.
- This process was established through the **case of Rupa Ashok Hurra vs. Ashok Hurra & Anr. in 2002**, acknowledging that even final judgments might have mistakes that need correction. This mechanism is a critical safety valve to prevent miscarriages of justice, ensuring that every legal option is explored before a case is concluded.
- The Concept of a curative petition is based on Article 137 of the Indian Constitution. Article 145 of the Indian Constitution governs the making of laws and rules. This means that the Supreme Court has the authority to review every judgment that it makes.

- A curative petition may be filed after a review plea against the final conviction is dismissed. It must be filed within 30 days of the judgment or order. The Supreme Court's three senior judges, including the Chief Justice of India and the judges who dismissed the review petition, heard the petition.
- Once the Supreme Court passes a judgment on a curative petition, it is considered final, and no further recourse is available within the judicial system.

CONCLUSION:

The curative petition is the Indian judicial innovation. It safeguards against potential miscarriages of justice in exceptional cases where all other legal avenues have been exhausted. Curative petitions are rarely granted, and the Supreme Court exercises caution in admitting them. They are considered only in exceptional cases with a glaring error or a fundamental flaw in the judgment.

PRELIMS PRACTICE QUESTIONS:

Q. With reference to the curative petition, which of the following statements is NOT correct?

- The curative petition is the Indian judicial innovation.
- The constitutional bench constituted by the Supreme Court to review the Curative Petition.
- The curative petition must be filed within 30 days of the final judgment or order.
- It helps to minimize any abuse of the processes of law and prevent misuse of justice.

ANSWER: B

MAINS PRACTICE QUESTIONS:

- Q. Critically examine the importance of curative petitions in the Indian judicial system and how curative petitions play a critical role in making the judiciary more accountable.**

SPACE OPPORTUNITIES IN INDIA

Why in the News?

As per a recent study conducted by the World Economic Forum (WEF), it is projected that the worldwide space economy will attain a valuation of \$1.8 trillion by the year 2035, mirroring the magnitude of the global semiconductor sector. This analysis, titled '**Space: The \$1.8 Trillion Opportunity for Global Economic Growth**', is collaboratively authored by the WEF and consulting firm McKinsey & Co.

What constitutes the Space Economy?

The space economy encompasses all economic activities related to space exploration, satellite technology, and space-enabled services. It includes sectors such as satellite communication, Earth observation,

satellite navigation, space tourism, and space mining. Advancements in technology have expanded opportunities for commercial ventures in space, leading to the emergence of a thriving industry with significant economic potential.

HOW IS THE SPACE ECONOMY BECOMING SO ATTRACTIVE?

- **Economic expansion within the space sector**– The Space Report 2022 indicates that the space economy reached a value of \$469 billion in 2021, marking a 9% rise compared to the previous year. Forecasts suggest that the global space market is anticipated to surpass \$1 trillion by 2040.
- **State-supported investment**– As outlined in the Space Foundation report, there has been a noticeable surge in government-supported funding for space endeavours worldwide. Specifically, there was a significant 19% increase in total government expenditure allocated towards both military and civilian space programs during the year 2021.

FACTORS FUELING THE GLOBAL SPACE ECONOMY–

- **Reduction in Launch Costs:** There has been a significant and rapid decline in the costs associated with launching satellites and rockets, with a tenfold decrease observed over the past two decades.
- **Affordability of Data and Connectivity:** As demand for data and connectivity increases substantially, it is anticipated that prices will decrease by at least 10% by 2035, despite the surge in demand expected to reach 60%.
- **Commercial Innovations:** Notably, advancements such as enhanced resolution in Earth-observation technology have led to a reduction in the cost of accessing such technologies, fostering commercial innovations.
- **Cultural Impact:** Growing cultural awareness and enthusiasm surrounding space exploration are significant drivers of interest, particularly among future generations.
- **Emergence of New Space Entrepreneurship:** India has witnessed the emergence of numerous startups in the space sector, focusing on providing end-to-end services in both the Business-to-Business and Business-to-Consumer segments, utilizing New Space technologies.

Condition of Space economy in India–

- **Contribution to Global Space Economy**– Presently, India's space industry constitutes approximately two percent of the worldwide space economy. India's space sector holds the potential to achieve a valuation of \$44 billion by the year 2033, representing roughly 8 per cent of the global share. According to several market surveys, the space economy has experienced an average Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of 8%.
- **Increase in Space Start-Up Activity**- According to the DPIIT Start-Up India Portal, the number of space start-ups has surged from only one in 2014 to 189 in 2023.

Investment in Indian space start-ups reached \$124.7 million in 2023.

- **Growing Involvement of Private Sector:** Private companies are actively engaged in exploring solutions related to satellite-based communication, as well as providing satellite integration and testing facilities.

Additionally, the private sector is increasingly involved in the local manufacturing of satellite subsystems and ground systems. Prominent entities like Skyroot Aerospace, Pixxel, and Agnikul Cosmos are offering launch services and facilitating space tourism, demonstrating the expanding role of private enterprises in the space sector.

- **Rise in Satellite Launch Activity**– The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has witnessed a notable increase in the number of satellite launches. Out of the 424 foreign satellites launched by ISRO since the 1990s, more than 90% (389) were launched within the last nine years. India generated \$174 million in revenue from the launch of foreign satellites.

Challenges in Advancing the Space Economy–

- **Space Debris:** According to NASA, there are over 100 million pieces of space debris measuring one millimeter or larger orbiting Earth. This debris comprises non-functional spacecraft, discarded equipment, and remnants from missions, all moving at speeds of up to 17,500 miles per hour (28,160 kilometres per hour). Even minute debris poses a significant risk of damaging satellites or spacecraft.
- **Lack of Regulatory Clarity for Startups:** The space startup ecosystem in India faces hurdles due to the absence of clear regulations. These startups require a supportive environment encompassing accelerators, incubators, venture capitalists, and mentors, akin to the thriving ecosystem in Bengaluru, where most New Space startups have flourished. Transforming these startups into robust industries is crucial for accelerating India's prominence in the space sector.
- **Cybersecurity Threats:** The draft National Cyber Security Strategy overlooks space security, despite concerns raised by the Data Security Council of India regarding potential cyberattacks on critical infrastructure, including space agencies.
- **Limited Share in Global Market:** India's share in the global space market is merely 2%. Over one-third of transponders utilised for Indian services are leased from foreign satellites, a proportion expected to increase with rising demand. Collaborative efforts with partners are essential for India to enhance its market share in the global space industry.

Initiatives Taken by India to Boost Space Economy–

- **Indian Space Policy, 2023:** This policy facilitates the comprehensive involvement of Non-Governmental Entities (NGEs) across all facets of space endeavours.
- **Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) Regulations via Automatic Route:** The policy permits up to 100 percent investment via the automatic route for the manufacture of satellite components, systems, and subsystems for various segments including satellites, ground infrastructure, and user segments. Additionally, for the complete manufacturing and operation of a satellite, up to 74 percent investment is allowed through the automatic route.
- **Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) Regulations via Government Approval Route:** Investments exceeding the specified limit necessitate government approval. Presently, any foreign investment related to satellite manufacturing and operation mandates government approval under the current policy.
- **Establishment of Defense Space Agency (DSA):** In 2019, India inaugurated the Defense Space Agency (DSA) alongside the Defense Space Research Organisation (DSRO). Functioning akin to a U.S. fighter command, the DSRO oversees the coordination of space assets among various military branches. The

DSA, functioning as a research entity, incorporates civilian space technology into military applications.

- **Indian Space Station Project:** India aims to establish the 'Bharatiya Antariksha Station' (Indian space station) by 2035 and intends to conduct its first lunar mission with an Indian astronaut by 2040.
- **Indian National Space Promotion and Authorization Centre (IN-SPACe)**-It will serve as a centralized platform connecting the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) with all entities interested in engaging in space-related endeavours or utilizing India's space assets. Additionally, it will support, encourage, and provide guidance to private industries involved in space activities by implementing favourable policies and creating a conducive regulatory framework.
- **Indian National Space Promotion Board**– It is established to enhance the capabilities of the Department of Space and to foster the growth of private or non-governmental space entrepreneurs.
- **New Space India Limited**- NSIL serves as the commercial division of the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), tasked primarily with facilitating Indian industries to engage in advanced technology space-related endeavors. Additionally, NSIL is responsible for promoting and commercially leveraging the products and services generated by the space industry.

Way Forward-

- **Integration of Space into National Cyber Security Strategy:** It is imperative to incorporate robust cybersecurity measures into India's national space policy, aligning it with the National Cyber Security Strategy and National Security Strategy. Implementing a Purple Revolution strategy, which includes cybersecurity exercises such as red and blue teaming under the Ministry of Defence and Home Affairs, is essential to enhance both offensive and defensive capabilities. ISRO currently combats over 100 cyberattacks daily.
- **Increase in Indian Space Budget:** To bolster research facilities and elevate space standards, the allocation for the space budget should be raised from 0.04 per cent to a minimum of 0.5 per cent of the GDP.
- **Promoting Startup Initiatives:** India should strategically incentivize startups to develop innovative space logistics solutions akin to the success achieved in its satellite launch program.

Prelims based Question-

Q1. Consider the following statements with reference to IN-SPACE:

1. The headquarters of IN-SPACE is in Bopal, Ahmedabad.
2. It is an autonomous agency within the Department of Space dedicated to promoting, encouraging, and regulating space activities conducted by both government and private entities.

Choose the correct answer using the codes given below:

1. 1 Only
2. 2 Only
3. Both 1 and 2
4. Neither 1 nor 2

ANSWER: C

Mains based Question-

1. Discuss the significance of opening up the Indian space sector for private participation in enhancing the diffusion of space technology and fostering the growth of the space economy.

ADJUDICATING AUTHORITY UNDER THE PMLA PROVISIONS

WHY IN THE NEWS?

Recently, the adjudicating authority under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) upheld the Enforcement Directorate (ED) 's attachment of assets worth around ₹752 crore of Congress-run National Herald newspaper and associated firms, terming them "proceeds of crime" involved in money laundering.

These assets include prime properties in Delhi, Mumbai, and Lucknow owned by Associated Journal Limited (AJL) and Young Indian (YI), associated with Congress leaders Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi. According to the ED's findings, AJL possessed proceeds of crime valued at Rs.661.69 crore through immovable properties across various cities. In comparison, YI held proceeds totalling Rs.90.21 crore in AJL's equity shares.

BACKGROUND OF THE ENFORCEMENT DIRECTORATE (ED):

- The Enforcement Directorate (ED) is a domestic law enforcement and economic intelligence agency. It is responsible for enforcing economic laws and fighting economic crime in India.
- EDs originated in May 1956, when an "enforcement unit" was formed to handle Exchange Control law violations under the Foreign Exchange Regulation Act (FERA) 1947. In 1957, this unit was renamed 'Enforcement Directorate'.
- ED is controlled by the Department of Revenue, Ministry of Finance, and Government of India.
- The Enforcement Directorate's prime objective is to enforce three key Acts of the Government of India, mainly the Foreign Exchange Management Act, 1999 (FEMA), the Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002 (PMLA), and the Fugitive Economic Offenders Act, 2018 (FEOA).

ABOUT THE PREVENTION OF MONEY LAUNDERING ACT, 2002:

- The Enforcement Directorate (ED) enforces the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) by investigating to identify assets acquired from criminal proceeds. It has the authority to prosecute offenders and facilitate the confiscation of such assets by a Special Court.
- Section 3 of the Act defines money laundering as any direct or indirect involvement, assistance, or engagement in activities related to the proceeds of crime, presenting it as legitimate. PMLA defines money laundering offences and imposes penalties for them. These include imprisonment and fines for

offenders.

- PMLA allows certain entities, such as banks and financial institutions, to maintain records of transactions and report suspicious transactions to the ED. The Act establishes a Designated Authority to assist in investigating and prosecuting money laundering offences. Also, it provides for establishing an Appellate Tribunal to hear appeals against orders of the Adjudicating Authority.
- The Act was amended by the Prevention of Money Laundering (Amendment) Act, 2009 and the Prevention of Money Laundering (Amendment) Act, 2012. The recent PMLA was amended through the Finance Act of 2015 ('2015 Amendment'), Finance Act of 2018 ('2018 Amendment'), and Finance Act 2019 ('2019 Amendment').

POWERS OF ED UNDER THE PMLA:

- Sections 48 & 49 of the PMLA empower the ED officers to investigate cases of Money Laundering.
- Section 50(2) of the PMLA authorizes the ED to summon "any person" needed for evidence or record production during investigations or proceedings under the law.
- Section 50 (3) required the summoned individual to attend personally or via authorized agents, ensuring they provided truthful statements and relevant documents.
- The ED has special powers for confiscating property under the PMLA Act.



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