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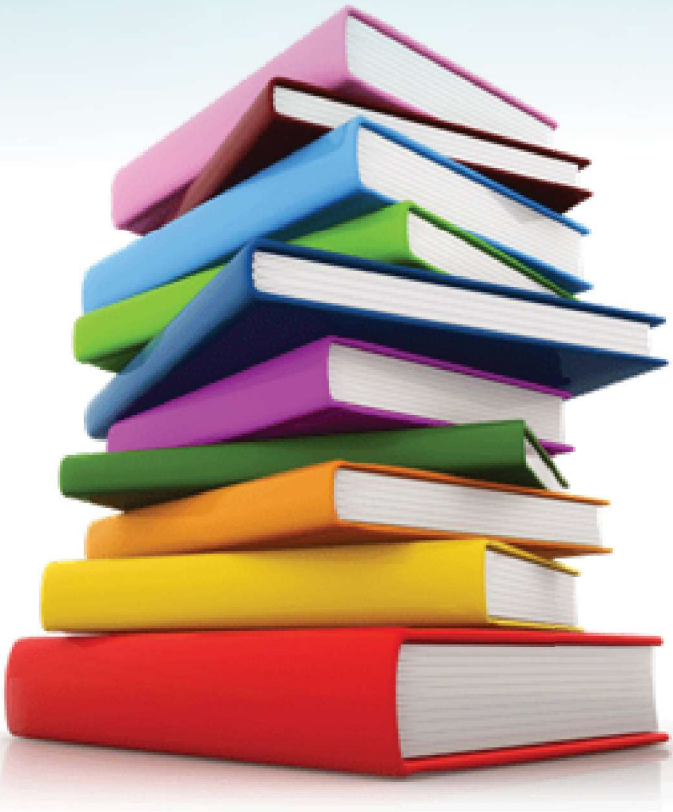
Weekly CURRENT AFFAIRS



PLUTUS IAS WEEKLY CURRENT AFFAIRS 25-07-2022 to 31-07-2022

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WIND ENERGY

WIND ENERGY – TODAY CURRENT AFFAIRS

- TOPIC IN NEWS :- Centre to stop 'reverse auctions' (THE HINDU)

OTHER IMPORTANT POINTS :-

- India has committed to installing 60,000 MW of wind power projects by 2022, but has met only two-thirds of the target.

WIND ENERGY : THE HINDU ANALYSIS

- Wind energy or wind power is mostly the use of wind turbines to generate electricity.
- It is one of the fastest-growing renewable energies and its usage also rises worldwide.
- If we look at the time frame of 2009-2013, the production of wind electricity doubled, and in 2016 wind energy accounted for 16% of the electricity generated by renewables.
- For the production of electricity by wind energy, there is transformation of kinetic energy created by air in motion into electrical energy using wind turbines or wind energy conversion systems. The Hindu Analysis
- The amount of power generated from wind depends on the size of the turbine and the length of its blades.
- Many parts of the world have strong wind speeds, but the best locations for generating wind energy are sometimes remote ones or where there are less population sites.
- Offshore wind power also offers tremendous potential.

ADVANTAGES OF WIND ENERGY : THE HINDU ANALYSIS

- Cost-effective. Land-based utility-scale wind is the lowest-priced energy source

available today. Wind is also freely and unlimitedly available. Any country can harness this energy as per its requirement without any cost.

- Clean Source of Energy. Wind energy doesn't pollute the air like thermal power plants which emit particulate matter, nitrogen oxides, and sulfur dioxide etc. These harmful toxic gasses causing human health problems and economic damages. Wind turbines don't produce such atmospheric emissions, as a result it helps to protect the environment aslo. The Hindu Analysis
- Creates jobs. It will also create manys jobs in different areas like manufacturing, installation, maintenance, and supporting services of wind energy plants.
- Doesn't impact Farmland Activities :- Farmers can also get extra income by giving their lands for installation of wind turbines and it takes up little space at the ground level, so it doesn't disrupt their farm's production.
- Reduces Dependence of Fossil Fuels :- Energy generated from fossil fuels not only contributes to global warming, but we'll one day run out of it. But renewable energy is unlimited and we can utilise this energy free of cost. Promotion of these energy at a large level will help to reduce the dependence of fossil fuels.

CHALLENGES OF WIND ENERGY : THE HINDU ANALYSIS

- Dangerous to Wildlife :- Birds, Bats have been killed by flying into spinning turbine blades. Nowadays research is ongoing to develop and improve solutions to reduce the impact of wind turbines on these species.
- Noisy :- Wind turbines can be quite noisy, that's why they're mostly found in those areas where most people don't live. Depending on the location of the turbine, such as offshore, noise isn't an issue. The Hindu Analysis
- High Initial Cost :- There is a high initial cost involved in this energy like massive structures are often hundreds of feet tall, large blades, installation cost, maintenance cost etc.
- Variation in wind speed :- Area where speed of the winds varies, for those locations wind energy is not suitable. Since wind can blow at various speeds, it's hard to predict the amount of energy it can collect at a given time.

STATUS OF WIND ENERGY IN INDIA : THE HINDU ANALYSIS

- India is committed to achieving 500 GW of installed electricity capacity from non-fossil fuel sources by the year 2030.
- As on 30th Nov-2021, India's installed Renewable Energy (RE) capacity stands at 150.54 GW (solar: 48.55 GW, wind: 40.03 GW, Small hydro Power: 4.83, Bio-power: 10.62, Large Hydro: 46.51 GW) and nuclear energy based installed electricity

capacity stands at 6.78 GW.

- India has the 4th largest wind power capacity in the world.
- In India northern, western and southern regions have the most wind power capacity. The Hindu Analysis
- According to the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE), 7600km of coastline can generate 127 GW of offshore wind energy. And states like Gujarat, Rajasthan, M.P, Karnataka, A.P, Maharashtra and T.N account for more than 95 percent of commercially exploitable resources.
- Government has set a goal of installing 5 GW of offshore wind by 2022 and 30 GW by 2030.

Government Initiatives : The Hindu Analysis

- National Wind-Solar Hybrid Policy- 2018 :- The main objective is to provide a framework for promotion of large grid connected wind-solar PV hybrid systems for optimal and efficient utilization of wind and solar resources, transmission infrastructure and land.
- National Offshore Wind Energy Policy- 2015 :-The main objective to develop offshore wind energy in the Indian Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) along the Indian coastline of 7600 km.

Major Wind Power Plants in India : The Hindu Analysis

- Muppandal Wind Farm :- Tamil Nadu
- Jaisalmer Wind Park :- Rajasthan
- Vankusawade Wind Park :- Maharashtra .
- Brahmanvel Wind Farm :- Maharashtra.

Anoop Singh

Assisting Sri Lanka

Assisting Sri Lanka

- (GS Paper-II, Polity,Constitution,Governance,Social Justice and International Relations)
- Source: The Hindu

Why in news?

- India, which hosted an all-party meeting on the Sri Lankan situation, made a commitment to help Sri Lanka, which is battling the destruction brought on by the economic crisis.

What are the causes of the crisis in Sri Lanka?

- Sri Lanka needed assistance from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) after the civil war with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam ended in 2009.
- The previous Sri Lankan governments have engaged in political corruption and economic mismanagement (fiscal and budgetary).
- The twin deficit issue of an unsustainable current account deficit and an unsustainable fiscal deficit is what led to the crisis.
- Following the Easter bombs and the epidemic, tourism completely dropped.
- Once more as a result of the epidemic, migrant workers' remittances decreased.
- Due to the conflict in Ukraine and the increase in oil prices, import costs increased.
- On the internal front, however, the Rajapaksa administration is solely to blame for the fiscal disaster. It was in charge of three things in particular:
- Unaffordable populism through tax cuts, erratic economic management, such as a sudden switch to organic farming, and a failure to approach the IMF early enough.
- The conflict was sparked by the significant tax holiday that Mr. Gotabaya Rajapaksa announced soon after becoming power.

Could the major nations have intervened to attempt to help sooner?

- No nation could have prevented Sri Lanka's catastrophe by itself since it was so severe.
- A nation would have taken on additional burdens without truly resolving the crisis if it had intervened unilaterally to address the issue.
- The only thing that nations can do bilaterally is offer a bridge loan, which is what India has done. However, the IMF must provide a structured solution.
- Therefore, in a crisis like this, the IMF is needed, as well as the backing of other nations for the IMF programme.

What assistance did India offer?

- At the end of 2021, Sri Lanka requested a rescheduling of the debt repayment with India.
- India recently provided Sri Lanka with aid of roughly $3.8 billion. India was unable to restructure all of Sri Lanka's debt or provide all of the funding Sri Lanka requested.

- India provided timely and ample aid, giving Sri Lanka the breathing room it needed to approach the IMF and come to an agreement.
- Other nations have only offered the tiniest amounts of humanitarian aid; India's generosity has been unmatched.
- The issue facing Sri Lanka cannot be resolved by the Indian Government alone. The IMF, the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, and all other creditors must band together to release some financial pressure off Sri Lanka.

The actions China took

- The debt issue in Sri Lanka has two grievous faults related to China's involvement.
- excessive reliance on China as a bilateral partner and foreign-currency sovereign borrowing.
- Due to the fact that many of these loans were used to fund infrastructure projects that took too long to complete or were underutilised, debt has accumulated without any income to cover it.
- To that extent, China is accountable for accruing debt, making reckless loans, and, most recently, for delaying help to Sri Lanka.

Are there any other resources that India should help Sri Lanka use instead of the IMF?

- Because of the worry that IMF conditionality is too strict and does not lead to long-term structural adjustment, nations all over the world have been looking for alternatives to the IMF.
- But neither bilateral agreements nor regional ones have shown to be a sufficient replacement for the IMF.
- The fact is that when a country is enrolled in an IMF programme, foreign creditors and investors feel more secure in returning to the nation.
- And because of this, Sri Lanka ought to have contacted the IMF earlier to prevent a decline in confidence.

How closely does Sri Lanka's position resemble that of Indian States?

- Some Indian States are taking out loans and spending the money on giveaways that don't increase productivity, future economic activity, or manufacturing capability.
- However, they increase current usage. They therefore do not encourage long-term growth.
- However, Indian States and Sri Lanka cannot be compared because the former is a member

of a national economic body while the latter is an independent economic entity.

- India's states don't have their own balance of payments, and unlike Sri Lanka, they don't owe money in foreign currencies.
- States in India cannot issue money to pay off internal debt, although Sri Lanka may, as it did.

How can India prepare for problems in the rest of South Asia?

- Given that Nepal is connected to us in numerous ways, India should pay close attention to it.
- The fact that Nepal's currency is tied to ours and that its trade is entirely dependent on India is a consoling fact.
- Sri Lanka will be able to economise on hard currency if we implement the regionalization of the Indian rupee and make it easy for us to transact with them in rupees.
- India has digital payment options like BHIM that can be utilised in neighbouring nations like Nepal and Bhutan.
- Those conversations with Sri Lanka have not been able to continue.

Vivek Raj

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Agnipath Scheme

- TOPIC IN NEWS :- Youth joining the defence forces under the Agnipath scheme will be valuable for the aviation industry, government told Parliament (THE HINDU)

OTHER IMPORTANT POINTS :-

- According to government, "Agniveers are expected to be fit, disciplined and motivated professionals, after four years of military service. Those involved in aircraft maintenance, flight safety, air-cargo, supply chain, administrative, IT and drones, etc. will have valuable experience after serving that will be of significant relevance to the aviation industry.
- Minister for Civil Aviation Jyotiraditya Scindia also said that the Ministry was "sensitising" all stakeholders in the civil aviation sector to give "preference" to Agniveers in employment.

AGNIPATH SCHEME

- Agnipath scheme for recruiting soldiers across the Three services (Army, Navy and Airforce).
- Under this scheme, the youth joining the duty will be called Agniveer.
- Duration of services is four years, however after four years, only 25% of the batch will be recruited back into their respective services, for a period of 15 years.
- Under this scheme, around 45,000 to 50,000 soldiers will be recruited annually, and most will leave the service in four years.

Eligibility Criteria:

- It is only for personnel below officer ranks (those who do not join the forces as commissioned officers).
- Aspirants between the ages of 17.5 years and 23 years will be eligible to apply.

Benefits for Agniveers:

- After the completion of the 4-years of service, a one-time 'Seva Nidhi' package of Rs 11.71 lakhs will be paid to the Agniveers that will include their accrued interest thereon.
- They will also get a Rs 48 lakh life insurance cover for the four years.
- In case of death, the payout will be over Rs 1 crore, including pay for the unserved tenure.
- The government will help rehabilitate soldiers who leave the services after four years. They will be provided with skill certificates and bridge courses.
- For those wishing to be entrepreneurs, priority under bank loans will be provided.
- Different bridging courses of their choice certificate will be provided for further growth & development.
- The agniveers will be given priority in CAPFs, Assam Rifles,, and police and allied forces in several states.

Advantages of the Agnipath Scheme

- Reduction of pension bill: The government has allocated or paid more than Rs. 3.3 lakh crore in defence pension since 2020. This scheme will reduce this heavy amount.
- Younger armed forces: Presently India armed force is around 13-lakh soldiers and the current average age profile is 32 years. It is envisaged it will come down by about 4-5 years by implementation of this scheme
- Better training and skilled force: A youthful armed forces will allow them to be easily

trained for new equipment, technologies etc.

- Enhance employment opportunities: Apart from job opportunities in the defence, youth will also get skills and experience during the four-year service as a result it will help them to get employment in various fields.

Anoop Singh

A plan to combat monkeypox

A PLAN TO COMBAT MONKEYPOX

(GS Paper-II, Polity,Constitution,Governance,Social Justice and International Relations)

Source: The Hindu

What's the problem?

Monkeypox was deemed a global public health emergency by the World Health Organization (PHEIC).

About Monkeypox:

A zoonosis is a disease that spreads from sick animals to humans, including squirrels, rats that were poached in Gambian, dormice, and several kinds of primates.

It is brought on by the monkeypox virus, a species of the Orthopoxvirus family.

The transmission and infection are thought to occur in African rodents and monkeys.

Transmission happens when contaminated things come into contact with bodily fluids, lesions on the skin or internal mucosal surfaces, or respiratory droplets.

Transmission from person to person is scarce.

Monkeypox was once considered one of the neglected tropical illnesses.

The monkeypox vaccines employed in the smallpox eradication operation also offered protection from that disease.

Typically, monkeypox is a self-limiting illness with symptoms that last between two and four weeks.

The case fatality rate has recently been between 3 and 6 percent.

PHEIC:

PHEIC is the highest degree of alert that the global health organisation can issue, and it is one

step away from being classified as a "pandemic."

Prior to monkeypox, only polio and SARS-CoV-2 were still being spread.

The WHO Director-General deemed monkeypox to be a PHEIC following a divided decision of the IHR Emergency Committee on the matter.

The decision's influencing factors

Information supplied by nations

Serious, abrupt, unusual, or unexpected bear ramifications for public health beyond the affected State's national boundary and may necessitate rapid international action are the three requirements for reporting a PHEIC under the International Health Regulations.

the Emergency Committee's recommendations

Uncertainty regarding scientific theories and data

There is a health risk.

Consequences

Several national leaders will now be alert for monkeypox and on the watch for it.

The choice to designate it as a PHEIC also creates opportunities for additional sources of funding.

The WHO may issue non-binding recommendations to nations, but if those nations deviate from them, they must provide a scientific justification.

What part did WHO play in keeping monkeypox under control?

Supporting nations conduct risk assessments and launch public health initiatives

developing and promoting testing capabilities

involving and safeguarding the impacted communities

stepping up public health and surveillance efforts

In hospitals and clinics, improving clinical management and infection prevention and control

accelerating study into the utilisation of medicines, vaccines, and other techniques

What approach needs to be taken to keep the disease under control?

The COVID-19 pandemic experience has demonstrated that governments take action to prevent "panic."

To appropriately summarise and distribute the nature of the threat, the government must start working in concert with the States.

In order to develop effective defences should the necessity arise, Indian labs and biotech

corporations must intensify their research and mine their armoury.

States that have recently imported instances of monkeypox in the human population must take action to stop the virus from spreading from person to person.

It is planned to consult behavioural scientists, elected officials, members of civil society, and representatives of affected communities on strategies to prevent stigmatising those who are afflicted.

It is necessary to step up surveillance for illnesses that are comparable to monkeypox and to report weekly updates to WHO.

For the screening, triage, isolation, testing, and clinical assessment of suspected cases of patients with monkeypox, it is necessary to follow the advised clinical care pathways and protocols.

Puneet Bhatia

Ramsar Convention on Wetlands

TOPIC IN NEWS :- India adds five more Ramsar sites (THE HINDU)

Other Important Points

- New ramsar site :- 3 from Tamil Nadu, 1 each is in Madhya Pradesh, Mizoram.
- Now in India total there are 54 Ramsar sites, or wetlands of international importance.
- New ramsar sites are Karikili Bird Sanctuary, Pallikaranai Marsh Reserve Forest and Pichavaram Mangrove in Tamil Nadu, the Sakhya Sagar in Madhya Pradesh and the Pala Wetlands in Mizoram.
- Total Ramsar wetlands in India are spread over 11,000 sq.km — around 10% of the total wetland area in the country — across 18 States.
- After designating a particular site as Ramsar site does not necessarily invite extra international funds, but the Centre & States government must ensure that these tracts of land are conserved and spared from encroachment.
- Acquiring this label also helps to boost the locale's tourism potential and its international visibility.
- National Wetland Inventory and Assessment compiled by the ISRO estimates India's wetlands to span around 1,52,600 square kilometers.

Ramsar Convention on Wetlands

- It is also known as the Convention on Wetlands. It is an international treaty for the conservation and sustainable use of Ramsar sites (wetlands).
- It is named after the city of Ramsar in Iran, where the convention was signed in 1971 and came into force in 1975.
- World Wetlands Day :- 2nd February.
- Presently 171 countries are the parties of ramsar convention. India is also a party, signed it on 1st February 1982.
- Any wetland site which has been listed under the Ramsar Convention that aims to conserve it and promote sustainable use of its natural resources is called a Ramsar Site.
- The Ramsar Convention works closely with six other organisations known as international organization partners (IOPs). These are: BirdLife International, International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), International Water Management Institute (IWMI), Wetlands International, WWF International, Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust (WWT). These organizations also support the work of the convention by providing expert technical advice, helping implement field studies, and providing financial support.
- The United Kingdom has the most number of Ramsar sites with 175. The country with the greatest area of listed wetlands is Bolivia, (148,000 square kilometers).

Ramsar site criteria

- A wetland can be considered internationally important if any of the following nine criteria apply:
    - It contains a representative, rare, or unique example of a natural or near-natural wetland type found within the appropriate biogeographic region.
    - It supports vulnerable, endangered, or critically endangered species or threatened ecological communities.
    - It supports populations of plant and/or animal species important for maintaining the biological diversity of a particular biogeographic region.
    - It supports plant and/or animal species at a critical stage in their life cycles, or provides refuge during adverse conditions.
    - It regularly supports 20,000 or more waterbirds.
    - It regularly supports 1% of the individuals in a population of one species or subspecies of waterbird."
    - It supports a significant proportion of indigenous fish subspecies, species or families,

life-history stages, species interactions and/or populations that are representative of wetland benefits and/or values and thereby contributes to global biological diversity."

- It is an important source of food for fishes, spawning ground, nursery and/or migration path on which fish stocks, either within the wetland or elsewhere, depend."
- It regularly supports 1% of the individuals in a population of one species or subspecies of wetland-dependent non-avian animal species."

- Source :- Ramsar.org

Ramsar Site in India

- Sundarbans is the largest Ramsar Site of India
- Chilika Lake (Orissa) and Keoladeo National Park (Rajasthan) were recognized as the first Ramsar Sites of India
- Uttar Pradesh has the most number of Ramsar Sites in India. It has 10 Wetlands.
- Renuka Wetland (Area – 20 ha) in Himachal Pradesh is the smallest wetland of India..

Anoop Singh

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Shanghai Cooperation Organisation

It is a Eurasian political, economic and military organisation, aka "alliance of the East". It was founded in 2001 in Shanghai by the leaders of Tajikistan, Russia, Uzbekistan, China, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan.

- These countries, except for Uzbekistan, had been members of the Shanghai Five, founded in 1990s; after the inclusion of Uzbekistan in 2001, the members renamed it to SCO.
- It is seen as a counter balance to NATO.
- India and Pakistan became full members in Astana Summit 2017.
- Its headquarters is located in Beijing, China.
- The SCO has established relations with the UN, where it is an observer in the UNGA, EU, ASEAN, Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and OIC.

Membership Criteria:

The system of consensus work in SCO for deciding on the admission of new members.

Current Membership:

- China
- India
- Kazakhstan
- Kyrgyzstan
- Pakistan
- Russia
- Tajikistan
- Uzbekistan

Changes in SCO:

- Iran and Belarus are set to be the two newest members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO).
- Varanasi has been chosen as the SCO region's first "Tourism and Cultural Capital," and India will host the summit in 2023.

The theoretical framework for regional organisation:

- In the light of Spykman's Rimland Theory– the coastal areas or littorals of Eurasia are vital in controlling the World and not the Heartland – the rimland nations like Pakistan and Iran, therefore, play a major role in restricting India's growing hegemony in the region.
- Mackinder's Theory of Heartland, stated that the nation in control of the Heartland had the potential to "command the world", but at the same time, it also highlighted the great natural barriers which surrounds the Heartland. India faces a challenge in getting access to the Eurasian heartland because of prevailing geopolitical tensions in the concerned region.

Analysis of India's Ambitions in SCO – Kabir Taneja:

- While counter-terrorism seems to be highly prioritised within the SCO's agenda, it seems that it is ideologically and geo-politically too fractured to have any collective mechanisms on issues such as terrorism.
- For example, Beijing for long opposed India's attempts to put a ban on the Mumbai attacks mastermind Masood Azhar of UN-designated terror group Jaish-e-Mohammed.
- New Delhi hopes to use the SCO as another multilateral platform to put pressure on Pakistan to stop supporting its asymmetric war but he believes that the platform

would not be able to achieve any of that.

Analysis of SCO by Kabir Taneja:

The SCO began in 2001 as a forum for addressing border disputes in Central Asia and has been expanding ever since to include more countries and cover other issues like trade.

- Modi made it clear that New Delhi is supportive of connectivity projects, but only those that respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of nations.
- On the spirit of Wuhan, the two sides reached a pact to share the hydrological data in 2018 with New Delhi agreed for the opening of a Bank of China branch in Mumbai and China agreed to provide market access to Indian pharmaceutical companies.

Its importance has increased at a time when the West remains divided and the US under Donald Trump is charting a unilateral course. He asserts that India should use this opportunity to assert it leadership by defending the ideal of rule based international world order.

Thus, it appears that in SCO, India would have to counter the double gang of China and Pakistan. Provided the clear creation of block arrangement in form of QUAD and Russia-China-Pakistan axis, the SCO is going to be further subdivided.

Vikas Gupta

INDIGENOUS AIRCRAFT CARRIER (IAC) 'VIKRANT'

DELIVERY OF INDIGENOUS AIRCRAFT CARRIER (IAC) 'VIKRANT'

Indian Navy has created maritime history today by taking delivery of the prestigious Indigenous Aircraft Carrier (IAC) 'Vikrant from her builder Cochin Shipyard Limited (CSL), Kochi. Designed by Indian Navy's inhouse Directorate of Naval Design (DND) and built by CSL, a Public Sector Shipyard under Ministry of Shipping (MoS), the carrier is christened after her illustrious predecessor, India's first Aircraft Carrier which played a vital role in the 1971 war.

Coinciding with the celebrations to commemorate 75th anniversary of India's independence 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav', the reincarnation of Vikrant is a true testimony to the country's zeal and fervor in pursuing capability build up towards enhanced maritime security.

The 262 mtr long carrier has a full displacement of close to 45,000 tones which is much larger and advanced than her predecessor. The ship is powered by four Gas Turbines totaling 88 MW power and has a maximum speed of 28 Knots. Built at an overall cost of close to Rs. 20,000 Crs, the project has been progressed in three Phases of contract between MoD and CSL, concluded in May 2007, Dec 2014 and Oct 2019 respectively.

The ship's keel was laid in Feb 2009, followed by launching in Aug 2013. With an overall indigenous content of 76%, IAC is a perfect example of the nation's quest for "Aatma Nirbhar Bharat" and provides thrust to Government's 'Make in India' initiative. With the delivery of Vikrant, India has joined a select group of nations having the niche capability to indigenously design and build an Aircraft Carrier.

Vikrant has been built with a high degree of automation for machinery operation, ship navigation and survivability, and has been designed to accommodate an assortment of fixed wing and rotary aircraft.

The ship would be capable of operating an air wing consisting of 30 aircraft comprising of MIG-29K fighter jets, Kamov-31, MH-60R multi-role helicopters, in addition to indigenously manufactured Advanced Light Helicopters (ALH) and Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) (Navy). Using a novel aircraft-operation mode known as STOBAR (Short Take- Off but Arrested Landing), the IAC is equipped with a ski- jump for launching aircraft, and a set of 'arrester wires' for their recovery onboard.

The ship has a large number of indigenous equipment and machinery, involving major industrial houses in the country viz. BEL, BHEL, GRSE, Keltron, Kirloskar, Larsen & Toubro, Wartsila India etc. as well as over 100 MSMEs. The indigenisation efforts has also led to development of ancillary industries, besides generation of employment opportunities and bolstering plough back effect on economy, both locally as well as pan-India.

A major spin-off of this is the development and production of indigenous warship grade steel for the ship through a partnership between Navy, DRDO and Steel Authority of India (SAIL), which has enabled the country to become self-sufficient with respect to worship steel. Today all the warships being built in the country are being manufactured using indigenous steel.

Several design iterations, including use of 3D Virtual Reality models and advanced engineering software were used by the Directorate of Naval Design in shaping the design of the carrier. CSL had also upgraded their shipbuilding infrastructure as well as enhanced productivity

skills during the building of the ship.

Delivery of Vikrant was marked by signing of acceptance documents on behalf of Indian Navy by the Commanding Officer Designate of Vikrant, representatives of Naval Headquarters and Warship Overseeing Team (Kochi) and by the Chairman and Managing Director on behalf of Cochin Shipyard Ltd., in the presence of Senior officers of Indian Navy and Cochin Shipyard.

Vikrant has been delivered to the Indian Navy by CSL following extensive user acceptance trials conducted between Aug 2021 and Jul 2022, during which ship's performance, including hull, main propulsion, PGD, auxiliary equipment, aviation facilities, weapon & sensors as well as sea keeping & maneuvering capabilities were proved satisfactory in accordance with trial protocols and system parameters.

The delivery of Vikrant today is the culmination of a long design, build and trials phase, during which both the Indian Navy and CSL had to overcome multitude of unprecedented technical and logistic challenges including COVID-19 pandemic and changed geo-political scenario. The successful delivery of the indigenous carrier, a major milestone activity and historical event, is testimony to the dedicated efforts of a large number of stakeholders within the Indian Navy, shipyard, industry, OEMs & MSMEs for over two decades.

The Indigenous Aircraft Carrier would soon be commissioned into the Indian Navy as Indian Naval Ship (INS) Vikrant which would bolster India's position in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) and its quest for a blue water Navy..

Puneet Bhatia

11th Agriculture Census in the country

11th Agriculture Census in the country

Ministry: Union Minister of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare launches the 11th Agriculture Census in the country

Objective: Prime Minister's focus is on increasing farmers income and empowering them by organizing small farmers

New Feature: For the first time, data collection for agricultural computations will be done on smartphones and tablets

Agriculture Census Overview:

Recognizing the importance of the agriculture sector in the economy, the Department of Agriculture, Cooperation & Farmers Welfare has been implementing the Agriculture Census Scheme since 1970-71.

Agriculture Census in India has been Conducting following broad guidelines of decennial World Census of Agriculture (WCA) evolved by Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of United Nations conducted at an interval of five years. In the Agriculture Census, operational holding has been taken as a statistical unit at micro-level for data collection as operational holding is the ultimate unit for taking agriculture-related decisions.

Periodic Agriculture Censuses are the main source of information on basic characteristics of operational holdings such as land-use, cropping pattern, irrigation status, tenancy and dispersal of holdings etc. This information is tabulated by different size classes and social groups and serves as an input for development planning, socio-economic policy formulation and establishment of national priorities. The Census also provides the basis for development of a comprehensive integrated national system of agricultural statistics.

So far, ten Agriculture Censuses since 1970-71 have been conducted in the country. The last Agriculture Census was held in 2015-16.

The Agriculture Census Scheme was converted from a Centrally-Sponsored Scheme to a Central Sector Plan Scheme in 2007-08. Accordingly, 100 percent financial assistance is provided to States/ UTs for payment of salaries, office expenses, honoraria, tabulation and printing of schedules, etc.

The Eleventh Agricultural Census (2021-22) was launched in the country by the Union Minister for Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Shri Narendra Singh Tomar.

This computation will bring huge benefits in a vast and agricultural country like India. Shri Tomar said that under the leadership of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi emphasis is being given on increasing farmers income. Besides, there is a need to change their standard of living, organize small farmers in order to empower them, attract them towards remunerative crops and ensure the quality of the produce at par with global standards.

During the programme, Shri Tomar conveyed his greetings for the Agriculture Census and said that the Agriculture sector is reaping the fruits of concrete steps taken by Prime Minister Modi, the country is rapidly moving towards digital agriculture. This is the time to make full use of technology in this computation. He said that the Agriculture Census should be thought of in a broader perspective. Agricultural computations can also contribute to the mapping of crops, so that the country gets its benefits. Shri Tomar asked the Central Departments, State Governments and concerned institutions to carry out this census with full dedication.

On the occasion, Shri Tomar released the Handbook on Operational Guidelines for Census for the use of States/UTs, and launched the Data Collection Portal/App.

Agriculture Census is conducted every 5 years, which is being undertaken now after delay due to the corona pandemic.

The field work of the agricultural census will start in August 2022.

The Purpose: Agricultural Census is the main source of information on a variety of agricultural parameters at a relatively minute level, such as the number and area of operational holdings, their size, class-wise distribution, land use, tenancy and cropping pattern, etc. This is the first time that data collection for agricultural census will be conducted on smartphones and tablets, so that data is available in time.

Most of the States have digitized their land records and surveys, which will further accelerate the collection of agricultural census data. The use of digitized land records and the use of mobile apps for data collection will enable the creation of a database of operational holdings in the country.

During the technical session, the salient features of the Agriculture Census Implementation Procedure and web portal and mobile app were demonstrated. The new initiatives highlighted in the presentation include use of digital land records like land title records and survey reports, collection of data through app/software using smart phone/tablet, complete enumeration of all villages in states with non-land records during Phase-I as done in states having land records, and real time monitoring of progress and processing.

Puneet Bhatia

Minority in India – issue and solutions

Article 29 and 30 of the constitution guarantees protection to the social and educational rights of minorities like their culture, script and language. But the constitution has not defined or identified any of the linguistic and religious minorities, per se.

Supreme Court Judgement:

- S.C. in N. Ammad vs The Manager, Emjay High School, had held that minority status is a matter of fact and does not require state recognition.
- S.C. in TMA Pai foundation vs state of Karnataka held that sates are the unit for the determining the status of minority, not the whole of India.
- Later on, parliament passed the National Commission for Minorities Act, which enables the central Government to identify minority at national level through a notification under the act.

Recognition by Government of India:

Accordingly, Government of India has notified Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains and Zoroastrians as minorities. Also, as per the Judgement of SC, Hindus are to be considered as minorities in seven states. However, none of the 7 states have notified Hindus as minority.

Bal Patil case 2003:

SC while refusing recognition of the Jains as a religious minority, said that the ideal of right of equality in a democratic society means the elimination of majority and minority and so-called forward and backward classes.

- However, prof. Faizal Mustafa (Vice-Chancellor, NALSAR University) has argued that it is one of the most backward judgement itself, as it doesn't give due recognition to the Multicultural space of the society. He further adds that Religion is still the alpha and omega of Indian life.
- He argues that the Article 25 (freedom of conscience), Right to privacy, right to dignified life etc essentially gives freedom to establish a new religion or come out of a particular religion [in context of Lingayatas demand]. He further supports his argument by supreme court judgement in R P Gandhi v. State of Bombay (1954), in which Supreme Court had admitted that "every person has fundamental right to entertain such religious beliefs as may be approved by his conscience."

- Assertion by Pratap Bhanu Mehta:

While identities matter as source of confidence, sense of security, but when they are carelessly ascribed, they become inimical to freedom, as visible by communalism, riots and violence.

Present status:

So basically, everyone in India has the potential to be recognised as a minority in one State or another because as per the Supreme Court religious and linguistic minorities are "State-dependent."

- In Ladakh, Mizoram, Lakshadweep, Kashmir, Nagaland, Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh, Punjab, and Manipur, adherents of Judaism, Baha'i, and Hinduism are unable to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice due to a lack of "minority" status at the state level, endangering their fundamental rights protected by Articles 29 and 30.

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Haj Subsidy Issue:

The policy to support Muslims in making the pilgrimage to Mecca in Saudi Arabia was done by British through Port Haj Committees Act 1932.

- In the ensuing decades, the Act has undergone numerous changes and now the Haj subsidy refers to discounted airfares given by the government-owned airlines, Air India.
- In 2012, a Supreme Court order directed the Haj subsidy to be gradually phased out.
- In 2017, a Central Haj Committee meeting decided to do away with the subsidy by the following year.
- Finally, the government has abolished the subsidy being given to Haj pilgrims every year. The government said it will use the subsidy funds to empower the minorities.

Criticisms:

- Monopoly of Air India, benefiting the airlines far more than the pilgrims.
- Some of the political parties have also called the subsidy as minority appeasement.
- A secular state must not fund religious endeavors.

What are the other religious pilgrimages that are offered government subsidy in India?

The Haj is not the only religious pilgrimage being funded by the State. For instance, the state

and central governments spend considerable amounts on the pilgrim facilities at the four Kumbh melas. The Kailash Manasarovar yatra from North India to the mountains of Tibet is yet another pilgrimage which is organised by the government.

Thus, it is evident in India recognition of the rights of minority is very disputed topic. It has various upsides and downsides. As emphasized by Sachar Committee, on the one hand minority assistance by state is called as "appeasement"; on the other the minority is tagged as anti-national. However, keeping Gandhi at the core, we should try to achieve and balance and work towards, the upliftment of all (Sarvodaya).

Vikas Gupta

More Opportunities for youth to become part of voters list

More Opportunities for youth to become part of voters list

Top News: 17+ year old youngsters can now apply in advance for having their names enrolled in Voters list and not necessarily have to await the pre-requisite criterion of attaining age of 18 years on 1st January of a year.

The Election Commission of India (ECI): is a constitutional body. It was established by the constitution of India to conduct and regulate elections in the country. Article 324 of the Constitution provides that the power of superintendence, direction, and control of elections to parliament, state legislatures, the office of the president of India, and the office of vice-president of India shall be vested in the election commission. Thus, the Election Commission is an all-India body in the sense that it is common to both the Central government and the state governments.

Structure of the Commission: The commission was established in 1950 and originally only had one Chief Election Commissioner. Two additional Commissioners were appointed to the commission for the first time on 16 October 1989 (on the eve of the 1989 General Election), but they had a very short tenure, ending on 1 January 1990. "The Election Commissioner Amendment Act, 1989" was adopted on 1 January 1990 which turned the commission into a multi-member body: a 3-member Commission has been in operation since then and the decisions by the commission are made by a majority vote

Recent Change in Voter List: ECI led by Chief Election Commissioner Shri Rajiv Kumar and

Election Commissioner Shri Anup Chandra Pandey have directed the CEOs/EROs/AEROs of all States to work out tech-enabled solutions such that the youth are facilitated to file their advance applications with reference to three subsequent qualifying dates i.e. 01st April, 01st July and 01st October and not just 1stJanuary. Henceforth, the Electoral Roll will be updated every quarter and eligible youngsters can be registered in the next quarter of the year in which he/she has attained the qualifying age of 18 years.

After getting registered, he/she will be issued an Electoral Photo Identity Card (EPIC). For the current round of annual revision of electoral roll, 2023, any citizen attaining the age of 18 years by April 1, July 1 and October 1 of 2023 can also submit an advance application for registration as a voter from the date of draft publication of electoral roll.

The Election Commission of India, in pursuance of the legal amendments in the Section 14(b) of the RP Act 1950 and consequent modifications in Registration of Electors Rules, 1960, has initiated the process for bringing about necessary changes for preparation/revision of electoral roll of Assembly/Parliamentary Constituency. It may be recalled that on the recommendations of ECI, the Ministry of Law & Justice recently amended the RP Act to provide for four qualifying dates i.e., 01st January, 01st April, 01st July and 01st October as eligibility for youngsters to register in electoral rolls as opposed to the earlier single qualifying date of 1st January only.

As per existing policy, revision of electoral rolls with reference to 1st January of the coming year as the qualifying date was done normally in the later part of each year in all States/ UTs (normally in the last quarter of a year) so that final publication of the electoral rolls is made in the first week of January of the succeeding year. This meant that a large number of young persons who completed 18 years after 1st January had to wait for Special Summary Revision of the next year for enrolment and were not able to participate in elections held in the intervening period.

The Commission has also made the registration Forms more user friendly and simpler. The newly modified Forms will come into force on 1st August, 2022. All applications (claims and objections), in old forms, received before 1st August, 2022 will be processed and disposed of and in such cases, there is no need to file application in new forms.

The Commission has ordered Annual Summary Revision with reference to 01.01.2023 as the qualifying date in all States except the Poll Going States. All the pre-revision activities are undertaken in accordance with the Commission's existing instructions and guidelines and Manual on Electoral Roll, 2016 and Manual on Polling Stations, 2020. The revision and pre-revision activities are done in such a manner that the Electoral Rolls are finally published

much before National Voters' Day (25th January of every year) so that EPICs generated for new electors especially young voters (18-19 years) can be distributed to them in ceremonial manner on the day of NVD.

Pre-revision activities include Rationalization/Re-arrangement of Polling Stations; Removal of discrepancies of demographically/Photo Similar Entries; Preparation of Supplements and integrated draft roll with reference to 01.10.2022 as the qualifying date. Commission has directed all efforts to ensure 100% removal of DSEs/PSEs from electoral roll and discrepancies in EPICs during the current round of pre-revision activities.

The revision activities to begin in November include disposal of claims and objections received after publication of integrated draft electoral roll. Under the Special Summary Revision, a one-month period is available to file claims and objections in the draft electoral roll. Special camps will be organized by CEOs on weekends for which the date will be publicized by concerned CEOs. The final electoral roll will be published on 5th January 2023.

Polling Station Rationalization

As part of the Annual Summary Revision, polling stations, having more than 1500 electors, shall be rationalized/modified as per the given schedule and before the draft publication of electoral rolls in accordance with instructions contained in Manual on Polling Station, 2020. A new Polling Station shall be created only after rationalizing the sections to the adjacent Polling Stations to the possible extent. Other objectives of rationalization of polling stations are to group all the family members and neighbors in a section.

EPIC-AADHAR linking

For linking of AADHAR number with Electoral Roll data, provision has been made in the modified registration forms to seek Aadhaar details of electors. A new Form-6B has also been introduced for collecting Aadhaar number of existing electors. However, no application for inclusion of name in electoral roll shall be denied and no entries in electoral roll shall be deleted for inability of an individual to furnish or intimate Aadhaar Number.

It has been emphasized that while handling Aadhaar number of the applicants, the provision under Section 37 of the Aadhaar (Targeted Delivery of Financial and other Subsidies, Benefits and Services) Act, 2016 must be adhered to. Under no circumstances should it go public. If the electors' information is required to put for public display, the Aadhaar details must be

removed or masked.

A Time bound drive is being started w.e.f. 01.8.22 for collection of Aadhaar number of the existing electors. Furnishing of Aadhaar number is purely voluntary. Objective of the programme is to establish the identity of electors and authentication of entries in Electoral Roll

Deleting Repeat/Multiple Entries from Electoral Roll

Detailed Procedure of Deletion of Repeat/Multiple Entries has been specified. In repeated/ multiple entries reported by individual citizens, BLAs of political parties or RWA representatives, field verification is mandatorily done in each and every case. Name of the elector would be deleted in the electoral roll only at the place where he/she is not found to be ordinarily residing.

Field Verifications and Super checking for Healthy Electoral Roll

For the purpose of improving the health of the electoral roll, the Election Commission has emphasized the need for field verification by the Booth Level Officers. There is a mechanism for supervision and checking for enforcing strict accountability of the work performed by different levels of electoral machinery, such as Supervisors, EROs and AEROs by field verification. Similarly, DEOs, Roll Observers and CEOs also check the work done by EROs before the final decision on claims and objections is taken. Besides, Officers from ECI and O/o CEOs are also deployed to further random checks and to supervise.

Participative Process- Involving BLAs

With a view to ensure more involvement of political parties, the Commission has allowed Booth Level Agents (BLAs) of recognized political parties to file applications in bulk, subject to the condition that a BLA shall not submit more than 10 Forms to BLO at one time/in one day. If a BLA files more than 30 Applications/Forms during the entire period of filing claims and objections, then the cross verification must be done by ERO/AERO themselves. Further, the BLA will also submit a list of application forms with a declaration that he has personally verified the particulars of the application forms and is satisfied that they are correct.

Puneet Bhatia

FCRA – A tool of Governance or Suppression

What is FCRA?

- Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act, 2010 repeals and replaces Foreign Contribution (regulation) Act, 1976. It regulates the acceptance and utilisation of foreign contribution by certain individuals or associations.
- For any suspicion of violation of the act viz., acts detrimental to the national interest, MHA can use any agency, including IB, for getting info over the association.

The following persons are prohibited from accepting foreign contribution:

- Candidate for election.
- Registered newspaper and any association involved in transmission of any news related item.
- Judge, government servant or employee of any entity controlled or owned by the government.
- Member of any Legislature.
- Political party or its office bearers.
- Organisations of a political nature as may be specified.

However, foreign contribution can be accepted by the above-mentioned persons in the following specific situation:

- By way of remuneration or payment for services rendered.
- As agent of a foreign source in relation to any transaction made by such foreign source with the Central or State Government.
- By way of gift or presentation as a member of any Indian delegation.
- From his relative.
- By way of any scholarship, stipend or any payment of like nature.

Why FCRA?

- It was brought by Indira Gandhi during the Emergency with ostensible aim to curb foreign interference in domestic politics (due to cold war). Actually the aim was to clamp down on political dissent.
- With the 1991 reforms, the Indian state had no problem accepting contributions from foreign donors such as the World Bank or IMF.

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Differences:

- Under FCRA 1976, FCRA registration was permanent but under 2010 law, it is for 5 years only. This gave a state an invisible whip to bring errant 'organisations' to heel.
- Only 50% of the foreign funds could be used for administrative expenses. Thus controlling their administrative capacities.
- FCRA 1976 primarily aimed at political parties but FCRA 2010 restate it as "organisations of a political nature". Viz., now it includes any organisation which engages itself in common methods of political action like 'bandh' or 'hartal', or 'jail bharo' etc in support of public causes.
- Individuals are permitted to accept foreign contributions without permission of MHA. However, the monetary limit for acceptance of such foreign contributions shall be less than Rs. 25,000.

Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Amendment, 2020:

- Restrictions on the transfer of foreign contribution money to other organizations.
  - It will severely limit interorganizational cooperation, and smaller, locally active NGOs risk running out of money.
  - This would also impair the flow of international finance and help for development.
- Restricts administrative expenses to 20% of an NGO's budget.
  - It will impact the salaries of employees and the ability of NGOs to draw various experts.
- Every organization must have its FCRA account in only one SBI branch in Delhi.
  - In an age of internet connectedness and computerised financial transactions, this may be a step backwards.
  - It will also affect the movement of funds in remote locations.
- Increased the power of government officers to investigate breaches.
  - Government interference may obstruct working in critical areas such as Tribal Welfare in LWE affected areas.
- Proposed National Council of Social Work (Education and Practice) Bill, which regulates social work education.
  - This council is intended to encourage social work professionals to act ethically, but it may make it much more difficult for those without degrees to get employment in the NGO sector.

Issue with FCRA:

- These changes are not in sync with the ideals of human rights, environmentalism, and civil liberties (important pillars of India's Soft Power) as these sectors receive

most of the foreign contributions.

- Oxfam's licence was not renewed because the Oxfam was publishing papers on the pandemic's effects on the poor and the hardship of migrant workers that were widely read.
- The Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative's licence was revoked after its FCRA clearance was briefly suspended.
- Attacks against NGOs that have tirelessly fought for minority rights, like Amnesty International and the Centre for Equity Studies, were made using the Enforcement Directorate (ED).

Noel Harper V/s Union of India:

Supreme court while upholding the FCRA 2020 has opined the following –

- It was decided that accepting foreign donations may be controlled by the Parliament and that they couldn't be an absolute right.
- Supreme court used the Drug vs. Alcohol Metaphor: As long as it is used discreetly and in moderation, Foreign Contributions acts as a medication. However, a free and unrestrained influx of foreign aid has the potential to be a depressant that threatens the sovereignty and integrity of the state.

Thus, it is evident that the amendment to FCRA and the original FCRA, though in principle may not be very bad. But in real life may become a case of chilling effect on free speech. It is necessary that the government must alley such fear and stop the alleged misuse of FCRA..

Vikas Gupta