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CURRENT AFFAIRS



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INSTITUTIONALIZING THE RIGHT FOR INCLUSIVE GROWTH OF TRIBAL PEOPLE: FOREST RIGHTS ACT (FRA) 2006

WHY IN THE NEWS?

Supreme Court hearing on challenges to the Forest Rights Act (FRA), 114 Adivasi rights bodies and environmental groups have urged Union Tribal Affairs Minister Jual Oram to defend the 2006 law, which protects forest rights of tribal and forest-dwelling communities. The FRA has been contested since 2008 by Wildlife First, an NGO advocating for the eviction of those whose FRA claims were rejected. In 2019, the Supreme Court ordered evictions, but after protests, the Ministry intervened, citing procedural errors and wrongful rejections of claims. The court stayed the eviction and called for detailed data on rejected claims.

WHAT IS THE FOREST RIGHTS ACT (FRA) 2006?

The Forest Rights Act (FRA), 2006, also known as the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, is a landmark legislation in India aimed at recognizing and securing the rights of forest-dwelling tribal communities and other traditional forest dwellers over forest resources. The Act was enacted to address historical injustices that these communities faced due to displacement and denial of their rights to forest land and resources.

KEY FEATURES OF FOREST RIGHTS ACT (FRA) 2006

- 1. Recognition of Rights:** The Forest Rights Act (FRA) 2006 grants several key rights to forest dwellers: Individual Rights for self-cultivation and habitation, Community Rights for grazing, fishing, and forest management, Habitat Rights for PVTGs to live in their traditional habitats, Nomadic and Pastoral Rights for access to seasonal resources and migratory routes, and Community Forest Rights to protect and manage forest resources sustainably.
- 2. Empowerment of Gram Sabha:** The Gram Sabha (village assembly) plays a key role in determining and protecting the rights of forest dwellers, empowering them to manage forest resources at the local level.
- 3. Prevention of Eviction Without Rehabilitation:** Ensures that tribal populations and forest dwellers are not evicted without proper rehabilitation, aligning with the Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation, and Settlement Act, 2013.
- 4. Protection of Biodiversity:** Forest dwellers are involved in conserving biodiversity and wildlife and maintaining ecological balance.

5. Developmental Rights: Provides rights to allocate forest land for essential infrastructure such as schools, healthcare centres, and community facilities.

ACHIEVEMENT OF FOREST RIGHTS ACT (FRA) 2006

1. Recognition of Rights: The FRA has successfully recognized the rights of forest-dwelling tribal communities and other traditional forest dwellers, granting them legal ownership of forest land and resources that they have depended on for generations.

2. Empowerment of Gram Sabha: The Act has empowered local communities through the Gram Sabha (village council), allowing them to actively participate in decision-making regarding forest management and resource allocation.

3. Prevention of Unlawful Evictions: The FRA has protected tribal and forest-dwelling communities from unlawful eviction, ensuring that they cannot be displaced without proper rehabilitation and compensation.

4. Sustainable Forest Management: The Act encourages sustainable forest resource management by recognizing the rights of communities to conserve and protect their forests, contributing to biodiversity conservation and ecosystem maintenance.

5. Improved Livelihoods: By granting rights to access forest resources like grazing, fishing, and minor forest produce, the FRA has improved the livelihoods and food security of forest-dwelling communities.

6. Protection of Vulnerable Groups: The Act has specifically addressed the needs of Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs), ensuring they retain access to their traditional habitats and resources.

7. Inclusive Development: The FRA has facilitated inclusive development by ensuring that tribal communities have access to basic services like education, healthcare, and infrastructure, promoting social and economic upliftment.

ISSUE WITH FOREST RIGHTS ACT (FRA) 2006 IMPLEMENTATIONS

1. Slow and Delayed Implementation: The process of recognizing and vesting forest rights has been slow due to delays in forming Forest Rights Committees (FRCs) and holding Gram Sabha meetings for verification and approval.

2. Lack of Awareness: Many forest-dwelling communities are unaware of their rights under FRA, leading to under-reporting of claims and missed opportunities for recognition.

3. Bureaucratic Hurdles: The involvement of multiple government agencies often causes delays and confusion in the implementation process. Bureaucratic inefficiencies can result in prolonged recognition of rights.

4. Opposition from Forest Departments: Forest departments sometimes resist the implementation of FRA, particularly in areas where it conflicts with conservation priorities or forest management strategies.

5. Disputes and Conflicts Over Land: Land disputes often arise, especially in cases where claims are unclear or contested. These disputes can lead to prolonged legal battles and uncertainty for forest communities.

6. Evictions Despite Legal Protections: In some cases, forest-dwelling communities are being evicted despite the legal provision that no evictions should occur until rights are recognized and verified.

7. Inadequate Monitoring and Enforcement: There is a lack of independent monitoring and accountability to ensure that the rights of forest communities are upheld and that the FRA is properly enforced.

8. Conflicts Between Rights and Conservation Goals: Balancing the rights of forest-dwelling communities with the need for conservation, especially in critical wildlife habitats, has led to conflicts regarding land use and resource management.

9. Inequities in Beneficiaries: The process of recognizing rights sometimes favours certain groups over others, leading to inequities in the distribution of forest rights, especially in areas with large tribal populations or diverse communities.

10. Lack of Support for Implementation: There is inadequate support, both financially and in terms of capacity-building, for Gram Sabhas and local authorities responsible for implementing FRA.

WAY TO MAKE THE FOREST RIGHTS ACT (FRA) 2006 TO PROTECT THE RIGHTS

1. Increase Awareness and Education: Conduct awareness campaigns to inform forest-dwelling communities, Gram Sabhas, and local authorities about the FRA's provisions and processes. This can help ensure that everyone is informed of their rights and responsibilities under the law.

2. Capacity Building for Gram Sabhas and Forest Rights Committees (FRCs): Train local communities, Gram Sabhas, and FRCs to effectively carry out the process of identifying and verifying claims. This includes providing technical assistance and resources to ensure proper documentation and decision-making.

3. Streamline the Verification and Recognition Process: Simplify and speed up the process for verifying claims by setting clear deadlines and guidelines. Introduce digital tools and geospatial technology to aid in the efficient verification and mapping of forest rights.

4. Strengthen Monitoring and Accountability Mechanisms: Establish independent monitoring bodies to track the implementation of FRA. These bodies should ensure that forest rights are being recognized fairly, that there is no corruption or bias, and that communities are not evicted without due process.

5. Create a Legal and Institutional Framework for Dispute Resolution: Set up dispute resolution mechanisms to handle conflicts related to the recognition of forest rights. This can include setting up local tribunals or committees that can quickly resolve disputes over land claims.

6. Ensure Protection Against Forced Evictions: Strictly enforce the provision that no forest-dwelling community should be evicted until their rights have been recognized and verified. In cases where evictions are necessary, a resettlement package should be provided, ensuring livelihood security.

7. Promote Co-Management of Forest Resources: Encourage co-management of forest resources by forest communities and the forest department. This would ensure that the conservation goals of the state are balanced with the livelihood and cultural needs of forest-dwelling communities, leading to more sustainable forest management practices.

8. Strengthen Legal Support and Advocacy: Provide legal aid and advocacy support to communities facing challenges in claiming or protecting their rights. Collaboration with NGOs and legal professionals can help ensure that forest communities have the resources they need to assert their rights and address any challenges in the process.

CONCLUSION

The Forest Rights Act (FRA) 2006 represents a critical step in recognizing and protecting the rights of tribal and forest-dwelling communities, addressing the historical injustices they have faced due to displacement and denial of their rights to forest land and resources. The Act aims to provide legal recognition to their rights over forests, ensuring they can continue their traditional lifestyles while contributing to forest conservation and sustainable management. However, despite the significance of the FRA, its implementation has been slow and fraught with challenges. These challenges include bureaucratic inefficiencies, lack of awareness among communities, resistance from forest departments, and issues with land disputes. The legal protections provided by the FRA, such as preventing evictions until rights are verified, have often been violated, leading to further insecurity for the affected communities.

PRELIMS QUESTIONS

Q. Consider the following statements about the Forest Rights Act (FRA), 2006:

1. The FRA grants Individual Rights to forest-dwelling communities for self-cultivation and habitation.
2. The FRA does not provide protection against eviction for forest-dwelling communities.

3. The Gram Sabha is not involved in the recognition of forest rights under the FRA.

Which of the above statements is correct?

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 1 and 3 only
- C. 2 and 3 only
- D. 1 only

Answer: A

MAINS QUESTIONS

Q. The Forest Rights Act (FRA) 2006 has been a significant legislation for forest-dwelling communities in India, but its implementation has faced several challenges. Discuss the issues in the implementation of the FRA and suggest measures to strengthen its enforcement. (250 words, 15marks)

REVITALIZING INDIA'S FISHERIES: PATHWAYS TO GROWTH AND SUSTAINABILITY

WHY IN THE NEWS?

Punjab produces over 1.81 lakh tons of fish annually from natural waters, private, and Panchayati ponds, with more than 43,900 acres dedicated to fish farming in the state. The State Fisheries Department has disbursed more than 30 crore rupees in subsidies to 618 families over the past four years under the centrally sponsored Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana to promote the Blue Revolution. During a seminar organized by the department to educate fish farmers about new technologies, best practices, and innovative methods of fish farming, State Minister of Animal Husbandry, Dairy Development, and Fisheries Gurmeet Singh Khudian highlighted that approximately 14 crore quality fish seed is produced annually at 16 government fish seed farms and distributed to farmers at subsidized rates. Additionally, Punjab is making progress in shrimp farming by utilizing thousands of acres of land that were previously unsuitable for agriculture due to waterlogging and salinity.



WHAT IS PM -MSY?

The Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY) is a flagship initiative launched by the Government of India to promote sustainable fisheries and aquaculture development in the country. It was launched in 2020 under the Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry, and Dairying, with the goal of boosting the fisheries sector and improving the livelihoods of fishers, fish farmers, and workers.

Key Objectives of PMMSY:

- 1. Infrastructure Development:** It focuses on developing modern infrastructure for fisheries, such as fish landing centres, cold storage facilities, and processing units.
- 2. Post-Harvest Management:** The scheme aims to improve the value chain from harvesting to processing and marketing, including cold chain facilities, which ensure better quality and reduced wastage.
- 3. Technological Advancement:** Encourages the use of modern and sustainable technologies in fishing, aquaculture, and post-harvest management.
- 4. Fishermen Welfare:** The scheme is designed to uplift the living standards of fishermen and fish farmers by providing them with necessary support, training, and subsidies.
- 5. Sustainability:** Focuses on environmentally sustainable practices and supports the development of climate-resilient coastal villages.

FISHERY SECTOR IN INDIA

Category	Data
Total Fish Production	Over 13 million metric tons annually (including inland and marine)
Marine Fish Production	3.8 million metric tons (approx.)
Inland Fish Production	9.4 million metric tons (approx.)
Fish Export Value	USD 8.5 billion (approx.) in 2021
Top Fish Exporting States	West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat
Total Area under Aquaculture	2.4 million hectares (approx.)
Fish Farming Area (Ponds and Tanks)	1.4 million hectares (approx.)
Number of Fishers/Fish Farmers	14 million people engaged in fishing and aquaculture
Aquaculture Production Growth Rate	7-8% per year
Contribution to GDP	Approx. 1.1% of the Indian GDP from the fisheries sector
Fish Consumption per Capita	10.2 kg per capita per year (approx.)
Fish Seed Production	Over 50 billion seeds annually (for aquaculture)
Marine Fish Export Share	Over 70% of India's fish exports are marine products
Top Fish Species Farmed	Carps, Catla, Rohu, Tilapia, Pangasius, Shrimp (Vannamei)

Category	Data
Fisheries' Share in Agriculture GDP	Approx. 5.23% (of the total agriculture GDP)
Fisheries Infrastructure Investment	Rs 20,050 crore (PMMSY investment over 5 years, 2020-2025)
Number of Fishing Harbors	150+ fishing harbours across India
Fisheries Startups	100+ start-ups promoted under PMMSY
Total Coastal Area	7,500 km of coastline, contributing significantly to marine fisheries

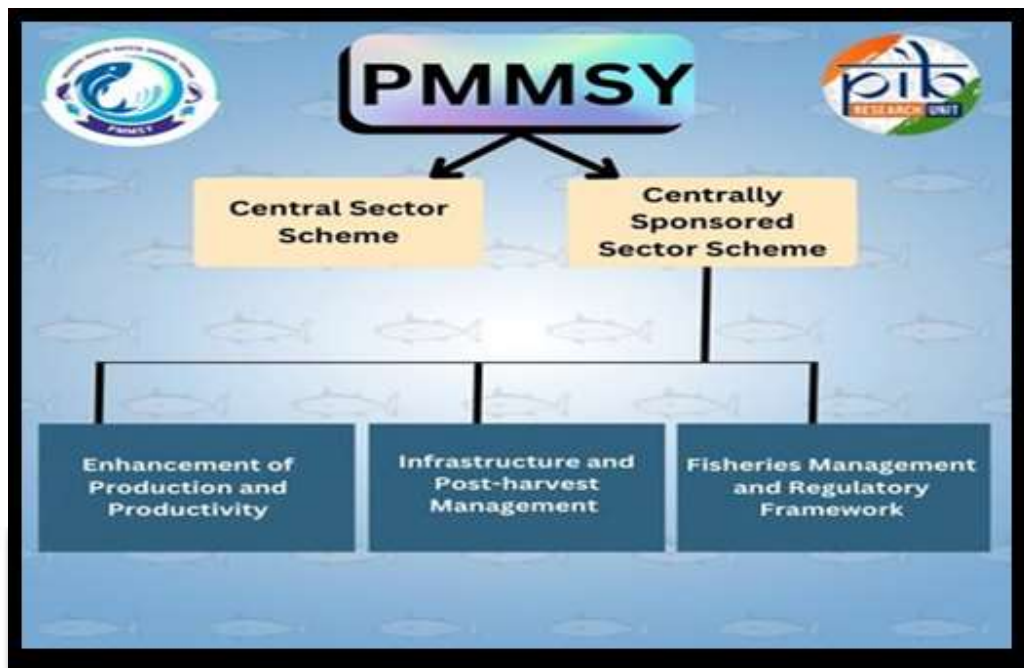
OBJECTIVES AND COMPONENTS OF PM-MSY

- 1. Increase Fish Production:** Boost both marine and inland fish production to ensure a steady supply of nutritious food and enhance food security.
- 2. Sustainability and Growth:** Promote environmentally sustainable fishing practices, minimize over-exploitation of marine resources, and develop aquaculture in a sustainable manner.
- 3. Infrastructure Development:** Build and upgrade infrastructure like fish landing centers, cold storage, and processing units to support the value chain.
- 4. Technological Innovation:** Encourage the use of modern technologies in fishing, fish farming, and post-harvest management to improve efficiency and reduce wastage.
- 5. Fishermen Welfare:** Improve the livelihoods of fishers, fish farmers, and workers by providing financial support, training, and access to credit and insurance.
- 6. Value Chain Enhancement:** Strengthen the entire fisheries value chain from production, processing, and marketing to enhance economic benefits.
- 7. Climate Resilience:** Develop climate-resilient fishing practices and support coastal villages in adapting to climate change challenges.
- 8. Formalization of the Sector:** Organize and formalize the fisheries sector, especially for small-scale fisheries, cooperatives, and entrepreneurs.

COMPONENTS OF PMMSY

PMMSY has two major components:

- 1. Central Sector Scheme (CS):** Fully funded and implemented by the central government. Focuses on the development of infrastructure, technology, and capacity building.
- 2. Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS):** Partially funded by the central government, with the balance funding provided by the state governments. Implemented by state governments and their agencies.



WHAT IS AN ISSUE IN INDIA'S FISHERY SECTOR?

- 1. Overfishing and unsustainable practices:** Depletion of marine fish stocks due to overfishing and illegal fishing methods.
- 2. Climate change:** Rising ocean temperatures, acidification, and extreme weather events impacting fish habitats and breeding.
- 3. Poor infrastructure:** Lack of modern fish landing centres, cold storage, and transport facilities leading to post-harvest losses.
- 4. Water pollution:** Industrial discharge, agricultural runoff, and plastic pollution degrade water quality and harm fish.
- 5. Outdated aquaculture:** Limited access to modern technologies, quality seeds, and efficient farming methods in rural areas.
- 6. Limited research:** Insufficient research on sustainable practices, breeding techniques, and fish health management.
- 7. Financial constraints:** Inadequate access to credit, insurance, and financial literacy for small-scale fishers.
- 8. Livelihood issues:** Low income, poor living conditions, gender inequality, and youth migration from fishing communities.

WAY TO MAKE THE FISHERY SECTOR MORE PRODUCTIVE, EFFICIENT AND SUSTAINABLE

- 1. Promote Sustainable Fishing Practices:** Implement and enforce sustainable fishing regulations, including setting fishing quotas, restricting illegal fishing, and using eco-friendly gear to prevent overfishing and protect marine ecosystems.
- 2. Modernize Aquaculture Practices:** Invest in modern aquaculture technologies such as recirculating aquaculture systems (RAS), better breeding techniques, and efficient feed management to increase production and reduce environmental impact.
- 3. Improve Infrastructure:** Develop and upgrade cold storage, fish landing centers, and processing facilities to reduce post-harvest losses, improve the shelf life of fish, and facilitate efficient supply chains.

4. Enhance Water Quality Management: Implement better management of water bodies and control pollution through improved waste disposal, agricultural runoff management, and water treatment systems for aquaculture farms.

5. Adopt Climate-Resilient Practices: Develop climate-resilient aquaculture and fisheries practices, including using saline or brackish water for aquaculture and improving disaster preparedness in coastal and fishing communities.

6. Increase Research and Development: Focus on R&D for breeding better fish species, improving disease management, and creating innovative farming techniques to boost productivity while reducing environmental degradation.

7. Strengthen Financial Access: Provide better access to credit, insurance, and subsidies for fishers and farmers, particularly small-scale producers, to improve their financial stability and enable investment in modern technologies.

8. Capacity Building and Skill Development: Organize training programs to enhance the skills of fishers, farmers, and stakeholders in adopting best practices, new technologies, and sustainable farming methods to improve efficiency and profitability.

CONCLUSION

The Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY) is a transformative initiative aimed at revolutionizing India's fisheries sector. By focusing on sustainable practices, infrastructure development, technological innovation, and the welfare of fishermen, PMMSY provides a comprehensive framework for addressing the sector's challenges. With an emphasis on increasing fish production, improving the value chain, and ensuring climate resilience, the scheme strives to enhance the livelihoods of millions of fishers and farmers across the country. However, India's fisheries sector still faces significant hurdles, including overfishing, climate change, poor infrastructure, and financial constraints.

PRELIMS QUESTIONS

Q. Consider the following statements regarding the Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY):

1. PMMSY was launched in 2020 with an investment of Rs. 20,050 crore to develop the fisheries sector in India.
2. The scheme exclusively focuses on improving marine fisheries and excludes inland aquaculture.
3. PMMSY aims to formalize the fisheries sector by supporting small-scale fisheries and promoting technological advancements.

How many of the statements given above are correct?

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

Answer: A

MAINS QUESTIONS

Q. Discuss the objectives and key components of the Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY). How does the scheme aim to address the challenges faced by the fisheries sector in India?

(250 words, 15marks)

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