

2020



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CURRENT AFFAIRS

POLITY AND NATION

2nd March - 7th March



1. Centre Cannot Brand Organisations ‘Political’: SC

Why in News?

Recently, the Supreme Court held that the central government cannot brand an organisation political and deprive it of its right to receive foreign funds for using legitimate forms of dissent to aid a public cause.

Background

- This move comes in the background of a petition filed by the Indian Social Action Forum (INSAF) challenging certain provisions of the **Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA), 2010** and the **Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Rules of 2011**.
 - The FCRA 2010 prohibited acceptance and utilisation of foreign contribution or foreign hospitality for any activities detrimental to the national interest.
 - Both the Act and the rules confer the Centre with ‘unguided and uncanalised power’ to brand organisations political and shut down their access to foreign funds.
- Section 5(1) of the FCRA was challenged for being vague as it allowed the Centre to decide freely whether a seemingly non-political organisation was actually political in nature.
 - The Court said that the provision was expansive and not vague.
- Section 5(4) of the FCRA was also questioned as it did not exactly identify the authority before which an organisation could represent its grievance.
 - This contention was dismissed by the apex court.
- Various clauses of Rule 3 of the 2011 Rules were also challenged.
 - This provision identified the various types of ‘political’ activities for which organisations whose foreign funding could be stopped by the government.

Supreme Court Observation:

- An organisation, which supports the cause of a group of citizens agitating for their rights without a political goal or objective, cannot be penalised by being declared as an organisation of a political nature.
- The central government cannot classify an organisation political for using legitimate forms of dissent like bandh, hartal, road roko or jail bhara to aid public cause.
 - However, foreign funding could be stopped if an organisation took recourse to these forms of protest to score a political goal.
 - Organisations with political objectives in their memorandum of association or bye-laws cannot be permitted access to foreign funds because of their clear political nature.
- Foreign funding can continue for organisations of farmers, workers, students, youth based on caste, community, religion, language, etc as

long as they work for the social and political welfare of society and not to further political interests.

Significance:

- It will make sure that the administration is not influenced by foreign-funded political organisations.
- A prohibition from receiving direct or indirect foreign aid ensures that the values of a sovereign democratic republic are protected.
- It will also protect the interests and fundings of voluntary organisations having no connection with either party politics or active politics.

2. Swachh Bharat Mission (Gramin) Phase -II

Why in News?

- Phase II of Swachh Bharat Mission (Gramin) was launched by the Union Minister for Jal Shakti.

Key Points:

- Phase – II of the SBM(G) will focus on sustaining the gains made under the programme in the last five years in terms of toilet access and usage, ensuring that no one is left behind.
- Phase II will ensure that effective solid and liquid waste management (SLWM) is instituted in every gram panchayat of the country.
- It will be implemented from 2020-21 to 2024-25 in a mission mode with a total outlay of 140881 crore.
- SLWM component of Open Defecation Free (ODF) Plus, will be monitored on the basis of output-outcome indicators for four key areas:
 - Plastic waste management,
 - Biodegradable solid waste management (including animal waste management)
 - Greywater management
 - Fecal sludge management
- **Significance**
 - SBM-II will continue to generate employment and provide impetus to the rural economy through:
 - a) Construction of household and community toilets
 - b) Infrastructure for SLWM like compost pits, soak pits, waste stabilisation ponds and material recovery facilities.

Swachh Bharat Mission (G) Phase-I:

- The rural sanitation coverage in the country at the time of launch of **SBM (G)** on Oct, 2 2014 was reported as 38.7%.
- More than **10 crore** individual toilets have been constructed since the launch of the mission.
- As a result, rural areas in **all the States have declared themselves ODF as on 2nd October, 2019.**

3. India Pharma and India Medical Device 2020 conference

Why in News?

- Recently, India Pharma 2020 & India Medical Device 2020 Conference was organised by the Department of Pharmaceuticals, Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers, in association with Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI).
 - This is the fifth edition, and is being organised for the first time in the State of Gujarat (which is also the partner state for this event).

Key Points

- **Theme:** “India Pharma: Meeting Challenges of Affordable and Quality Healthcare and India Medical Device: Promoting Affordable responsible and Quality Medical Device for Universal Health Care”
- **Objective:**
 - To promote consumer centric manufacturing by involving Medical Electronics, Devices, Health Diagnostics, Hospitals and Surgical Equipments etc.

Indian Pharma Industry

- The Indian pharmaceutical market is the **third largest in terms of volume** and **thirteenth largest in terms of value** and the **largest supplier of generic medicines** globally.
- From 2018-19, India’s pharmaceutical exports were worth USD 19.13 billion with a growth of 10.72% over USD 17.28 billion in pharma exports the previous year.

Medical Devices Sector in India

- The Medical Devices industry in India is valued at USD 5.2 billion, contributing about 4-5% to the USD 96.7 billion Indian healthcare Industry.
- India is among the top-20 markets for medical devices in the world.
- Indian medical devices industry is growing at a CAGR of 15.8%, vis-à-vis a CAGR of 4.1% for the Global medical devices industry.

4. Land Ports Authority of India

Why in News?

Recently, the 8th Foundation Day of the Land Ports Authority of India (LPAI) has been celebrated in New Delhi.

- LPAI is involved in the development of land ports (also known as Integrated Check Posts (ICPs)) to maintain regional connectivity across the international borders of India.
- Currently, the LPAI is building the Passenger Terminal Building at Dera Baba Nanak, Kartarpur Sahib Corridor.

Land Ports Authority of India

- The Land Ports Authority of India is a statutory body established under Land Ports Authority of India Act, 2010.
 - Under the act, it has powers to undertake joint ventures to discharge its functions.
 - It functions under the Ministry of Home Affairs.
 - The Committee of Secretaries in 2003 recommended setting up of ICPs at major entry points on India's land borders.
- These ICPs were planned to house all the regulatory agencies like Immigration, Customs, Border Security etc. together with support facilities in a single complex.
 - It will serve as a single-window facility as is prevalent at Airports and Seaports.
- LPAI intends to provide safe, secure and systematic facilities for movement of cargo as well passengers at its ICPs along the international borders of India.
- **Functions:**
 - It plans, constructs and maintains roads, terminals and ancillary buildings other than national highways, State highways and railways at an ICP.
 - It establishes and maintains warehouses, container depots and cargo complexes for the storage or processing of goods with the establishment of hotels, restaurants and restrooms at ICP.

5. Sukhna Lake

Why in News?

Recently, the Punjab and Haryana High Court declared Chandigarh's Sukhna Lake as a "Living Entity".

- The lake will now be treated as a "legal person" with rights, duties and liabilities.
- A legal entity means an entity which acts like a natural person but only through a designated person, whose acts are processed within the ambit of law.
- All the citizens of Chandigarh are declared as **loco parentis** (in the place of a parent) to save the lake from extinction.

Highlights of the Judgements

- The court has completely banned new construction in the catchment areas falling in the states of Punjab, Haryana and Union Territory Chandigarh as well as in the Sukhna Wetland and Sukhna Wildlife Sanctuary.
- Earlier, Uttarakhand High Court declared the rivers Yamuna and Ganga as legal or juridical persons, enjoying all the rights, duties and liabilities of a living person.

- The HC bench was hearing a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) petition filed in 2014 and gave a landmark judgment stating that the Ganga and the Yamuna must be treated as living entities.

Sukhna lake

- It is a man-made Sukhna Lake and was built in 1958 by Le Corbusier,
 - Le Corbusier was the architect of Chandigarh.
- It is located in the foothills of the Shivalik Hills, it was designed to collect runoff water from the Hills.
- The Lake is in the process of being officially notified as a wetland.
- It has a nearby wildlife sanctuary that is home to sambar, pangolin, wild boars, red jungle fowl, cobras and other species.

6. AYUSH GRID and NAMASTE Portal

Why in News?

The **Ministry of AYUSH** has initiated steps to set up a nationwide digital platform called AYUSH GRID.

- The Ministry also informed Lok sabha about NAMASTE Portal.

AYUSH Grid

- It aims to bring onboard all AYUSH (Ayurveda, Yoga and Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homoeopathy) facilities including hospitals and laboratories and to promote traditional systems of healthcare.
- The Ministry of AYUSH is collaborating with the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology for the digitisation of the AYUSH sector.

NAMASTE Portal

- National AYUSH Morbidity and Standardized Terminologies Electronic Portal (NAMASTE Portal) was launched in October, 2017.
- The portal provides standardised terminologies & morbidity codes for Ayurveda, Siddha and Unani systems of medicines.
- Morbidity codes provide a comprehensive classification of diseases described in the traditional medicines system.

7. Freedom in the World 2020 Report

Why in News?

Recently the **Freedom in the World 2020** report was released by **Freedom House**, a U.S. based watchdog, which has been tracking global political and civil liberties for almost half a century.

- The report has ranked India at the **83rd position**.

Key Points:

- The report derives its methodology from the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights**, adopted by the **United Nations General Assembly (UNGA)** in 1948. Awarding scores based on:
 - Political rights indicators:
 - a) Electoral process
 - b) Political pluralism and participation
 - c) Government functioning
 - **Civil liberties indicators:**
 - a) Freedom of expression and belief
 - b) Associational and organisational rights
 - c) Rule of law
 - d) Personal autonomy and individual rights

India's Performance

- India's score fell by 4 points to 71 (from last year), the worst decline among the world's 25 largest democracies.
- India is at bottom of the pile among the countries categorised as **Free**, with only Tunisia receiving a lower score.
- Reasons cited for declining freedom:
 - Scrapping of **Article 370**
 - Issues regarding **National Register of Citizens (NRC)** and the **Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019 (CAA)**
 - **Crackdown on mass protests**
 - Internet blackout in Kashmir (longest shutdown ever imposed by a democracy).
 - It highlighted that **freedom of expression (Article 19) is under threat in India.**

8. Ekam Fest

Why in News?

- The week-long (2nd March to 9th March, 2020) Exhibition-cum-Fair "EKAM Fest " organized by National Handicapped Finance Development Corporation (NHFDC) began in New Delhi.
 - It aims to promote entrepreneurship and knowledge among the Divyangjan community.

Key Points

- EKAM stands for Entrepreneurship, Knowledge, Awareness and Marketing.
- The new initiatives of NHFDC launched in fest are as follows:-
 - **NHFDC Swavalamban Kendra (NSK):** To establish PwD owned micro skill training Centers throughout the country for skill training of PwDs.

- **Safe Cabs:** NHFDC has made arrangements with Sakha Cabs where the PwD owned commercial vehicles will be driven by the Women drivers.
 - Such Safe cabs are already in operation at New Delhi and Indore Airport.
 - The vehicles here are financed by NHFDC under its scheme.
- **Safe Drinking Water E Carts:** NHFDC has recently agreed to finance E-carts fitted with RO water dispensing vending machines.

National Handicapped Finance Development Corporation

- It is under the aegis of the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (Divyangjan), Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment.
- It is registered as a company not for profit and has been working since 1997.
- It provides financial assistance to the Divyangjan/Persons with Disabilities (Divyangjan/PwDs) for their economic rehabilitation and provides a number of skill development courses.

9. Chief Information Commissioner

Why in News?

The President of India administered the oath of office to Bimal Julka as the Chief Information Commissioner (CIC) in the Central Information Commission.

- Later, CIC Julka administered the oath of office to Amita Pandove as Information commissioner.

Central Information Commission (CIC)

- CIC was established in 2005 by the Central Government under the provisions of Right to Information (RTI) Act, 2005.
- It is under the aegis of the Ministry of Personnel.
- The Commission consists of a Chief Information Commissioner and not more than ten Information Commissioner's.
 - They are appointed by the President on the recommendation of a committee consisting of the Prime Minister as Chairperson, the Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha and a Union Cabinet Minister.
- The Chief Information Commissioner and an Information Commissioner hold office for a term of 5 years or until they attain the age of 65 years.
 - However, the **RTI (Amendment) Bill, 2019** states that the **central government will notify the term of office** for the CIC and the ICs.
 - They are not eligible for reappointment.
- CIC submits an annual report to the Union government on the implementation of the provisions of RTI Act.
- The salary of the CIC and ICs (at the central level) is **equivalent to the**

salary paid to the Chief Election Commissioner and Election Commissioners, respectively.

- However, the **RTI (Amendment) Bill, 2019** states that the salaries, allowances, and other terms and conditions of service of the central and state CIC and ICs will be **determined by the central government.**



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