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Steps to Curb Abuse of Synthetic Drugs

Why in News

To deal with the problem of **abuse of synthetic drugs and New Psychotropic Substances (NPS)**, the government is considering generic scheduling of drugs to replace the practice of substance-by-substance scheduling.

Apart from this, the Narco Coordination Centre (NCORD) discussed the issue of large scale heroin trafficking from neighbouring countries, the diversion and abuse of pharmaceutical preparations, and poppy (Opium) cultivation in the country.

New Psychoactive Substances

- NPS are defined as “substances of abuse, either in a pure form or a preparation, that are not controlled by the United Nations drug conventions but which may pose a public health threat”.
- NPS are also known as “legal highs”, “bath salts” and “research chemicals”. For clarity, the **United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)** uses the term “New Psychoactive Substances”.

The term “new” does not necessarily refer to new inventions. Several NPS were first synthesized 40 years ago but the term “new” is used since they have recently become available in the market.

- NPS have similar effects as substances under international control such as cannabis, cocaine, heroin, Lysergic Acid Diethylamide (LSD), ecstasy (methamphetamine or MDMA).

- Since NPS are not controlled under the International Drug Control Conventions, their legal status can differ widely from country to country. **Eg.:**
 - Several countries where a large number of different NPS has rapidly emerged have adopted controls on entire substance groups of NPS using **generic approach**, or have **introduced analogue (similar) legislation** that invokes the principal of **chemical similarity** (i.e. drugs having similar narcotic/hallucinogenic effect with slight variations in chemical/structural composition) to an already controlled substance, so as to control substances that are not explicitly mentioned in the legislation.

Generic Scheduling of Drugs

Generic scheduling of drugs **provides flexibility to the government** to regulate **other substances (analogue) or a defined group of substances (generic)** which are not explicitly mentioned in the legislation, but which share some similarities with the controlled substances in terms of structure, effects, or both without appealing to a legislative reform.

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

- The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) was established in 1997.
- It acts as the Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention by combining the United Nations International Drug Control Program (UNDCP) and the Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Division of the United Nations Office at **Vienna**.
- It was named the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime in 2002.
- UNODC publishes **World Drug Report**.

India and the Issue of Drug Trafficking

- **National Security:** India is vulnerable to narcotic drug trafficking as it is located between two largest Opium producing regions of the world, i.e., Golden Crescent in the west and Golden Triangle in the east.
 - **Golden Crescent region of South Asia**—comprising of **Afghanistan, Iran, and Pakistan**—is a principal global site for opium production and distribution.
 - **Golden Triangle** represents the region coinciding with the rural mountains of **Myanmar, Laos, and Thailand**. It is Southeast Asia's main opium-producing region and one of the oldest narcotics supply routes to Europe and North America.

- **Social Issue:** Drug abuse and misuse is a major threat to the society. It largely affects the youths who once involved in it, find it difficult to overcome. Drug abuse not only impact drug abusers' lives but equally affect their families and the community at large.

Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment is responsible for spreading awareness regarding drug demand reduction and rehabilitation of drug addicts.

- **Constitutional Ethos: Article 47 of the Indian Constitution** directs the State to endeavour to bring about prohibition of the consumption except for medicinal purposes of intoxicating drugs injurious to health.
- **Legislative Provisions:** The broad legislative policy is contained in the three Central Acts, viz., Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940, The Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985, and The Prevention of Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1988.

The Narcotics Control Bureau is the apex coordinating agency under the Ministry of Home Affairs constituted through the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985.

- **Global Conventions:** India is a signatory to the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs 1961, the Convention on Psychotropic Substances, 1971 and the United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances, 1988.

Source: IE

Consultative Committees

Why in News

Farooq Abdullah and Pragya Thakur have been nominated as members of the consultative committee of Parliament for the Ministry of Defence.

The committee comprises 12 members from the Lok Sabha and 9 from the Rajya Sabha and is chaired by the Defence Minister.

Consultative Committees

- **Formation**
 - These committees are **constituted by the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs.**
 - These are normally constituted after the new Lok Sabha is constituted.
 - This implies that these committees stand dissolved upon dissolution of every Lok Sabha and thus, are **reconstituted upon constitution of each Lok Sabha.**

- **Composition**

- The guidelines regarding the composition, functions and procedures of these committees are formulated by the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs.
- The same Ministry also makes arrangements for holding their meetings both during the session and the intersession period of Parliament.
- These consist of **members of both the Houses of Parliament**.
- However, the **membership of these committees is voluntary** and is left to the choice of the members and the leaders of their parties.
- The **maximum** membership of a committee is **30** and the **minimum** is **10**.

- **Functions**

- These committees are **attached to various ministries/departments** of the Central Government.
- The **Minister/Minister of State in charge of the Ministry** concerned acts as the chairman of the consultative committee of that ministry.
- These provide a **forum for informal discussions** between the ministers and the members of Parliament on policies and programmes of the government and the manner of their implementation.

- The Consultative Committees are **not Parliamentary Committees**.

A parliamentary committee means a committee that:

- Is appointed or elected by the House or nominated by the Speaker/Chairman.
- Works under the direction of the Speaker/Chairman.
- Presents its report to the House or to the Speaker/Chairman.
- Has a secretariat provided by the Lok Sabha/Rajya Sabha.

Source: TH

Citizenship by Registration

Why in News

The **Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA)** has **cancelled the citizenship** of Chennamaneni Ramesh who is a Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) from Vemulawada in Telangana.

- The MHA held that Ramesh **obtained citizenship** under section 5(1)(f) of the Citizenship Act, 1955 in the year 2009 by means of fraud, false representation and concealment of facts and thus, his action attracts provisions of section 10(2) of the Act.
- It is to be noted that a person who is **not an Indian citizen** is **not eligible to contest or vote in any election**.

Section 5(1)(f)

- **Section 5** of the Citizenship Act 1955 deals with **acquisition of citizenship by registration**.
- **Section 5(1)(f)** states one of the categories eligible for the case of registration. That is, a person of full age and capacity
 - Who, or either of his parents, was **earlier citizen of independent India**, and
 - Has been **residing in India for one year immediately before making an application** for registration.

Section 10(2)

- **Section 10** deals with **deprivation of citizenship**.
- Section 10(2) provides that the Central Government may, by order, deprive a citizen (who is such by registration) of Indian citizenship, if it is satisfied that:
 - The registration was obtained by **means of fraud**, false representation or concealment of any material fact; or
 - That citizen has shown himself by act or speech to be **disloyal or disaffected towards the Constitution of India**; or
 - That citizen has, **during any war** in which India may be engaged, **unlawfully traded or communicated with an enemy** or been engaged in, or associated with, any business that was to his knowledge carried on in such manner as to assist an enemy in that war; or
 - That citizen has, within five years after registration or naturalisation, been sentenced in any country to **imprisonment for a term of not less than two years**; or
 - That citizen has been **ordinarily resident out of India** for a continuous **period of seven years**.
- The law, however, also provides for checks to ensure that citizenship is **not cancelled arbitrarily**.

Section 10(3) of the Act says that the Central Government shall not deprive a person of citizenship under this section unless it is satisfied that it is not conducive to the public good that person should continue to be a citizen of India.

Source:IE

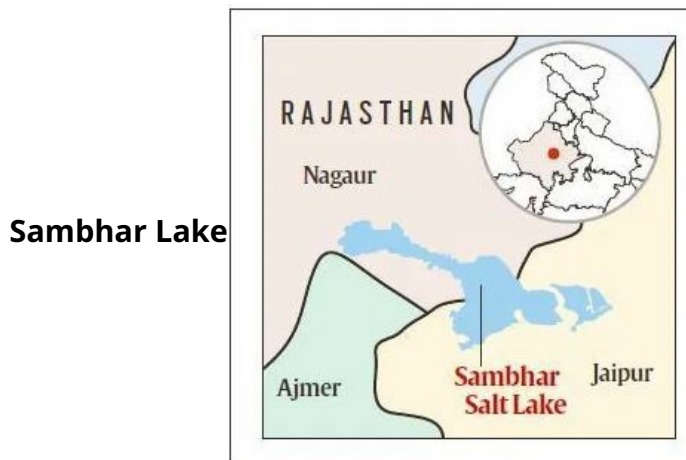
Avian Botulism at Sambhar Lake

Why in News

The Indian Veterinary Research Institute (IVRI), Uttar Pradesh has confirmed **avian botulism** as the reason for **mass mortality of birds**, at **Sambhar Lake** in **Rajasthan**.

Avian Botulism

- The avian botulism is a **neuro-muscular illness** caused by **Botulinum (natural toxin)** that is produced by a **bacteria — Clostridium botulinum**.
- The bacteria is **commonly found** in the **soil, rivers, and seawater**. It affects **both humans and animals**.
- The bacteria also need **anaerobic (absence of oxygen)** conditions and **do not grow** in **acidic conditions**.
- It affects the **nervous system** of birds, leading to **paralysis in their legs and wings**.
- The outbreaks of avian botulism tend to occur when **average temperatures are above 21 degrees celsius, and during droughts**.



- The Sambhar Salt Lake is India's **largest inland saltwater body** located near Jaipur in Rajasthan.
- The lake is **surrounded** on **all sides by the Aravali hills**.
- It is the source of most of **Rajasthan's salt production**.
- Sambhar has been designated as a **Ramsar site (recognized wetland of international importance)** because the wetland is a key wintering area for tens of thousands of flamingos and other birds that migrate from northern Asia.

Mass Mortality at Sambhar Lake

- The **possible causes** for avian botulism at Sambhar lake are:
 - **Reduced water levels:** This might have **increased** salinity levels leading to the **death of living organisms**.
The decaying plant or animal materials are capable of **hosting the bacteria for a longer period of time**.
 - **A bird-to-bird cycle:** Since only insectivorous and omnivorous birds were affected and not herbivores, the birds feeding on dead birds could have been a possible cause of such mortality.
- The **possibility of external factors** like water pollution and eutrophication are **ruled out** as **no farming** is being carried out in the **vicinity of sambhar lake**.

Way Forward

- Sambhar Lake is **not the first instance** where deaths due to botulism have been recorded. 7,000 water birds died in Lake Michigan in 2007 and 2008, In Hawaii, the toxin killed around 183 Laysan Ducks in 2008.
- The botulism outbreaks are **likely to become more frequent as climate change** alters wetland conditions to favour bacteria and pathogens.
- Thus, the **establishment of rescue and medical centres** along with the mitigation of **climate change** need to be considered by the government as a **precautionary measure** for the future.

Source:TH

Central Road and Infrastructure Fund

Why in News

The Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways informed about the **Central Road and Infrastructure Fund** in Lok Sabha during the winter parliamentary session (2019).

- The **Central Road and Infrastructure Fund** (earlier known as Central Road Fund) was established in **2000** under **Central Road Fund Act, 2000**.
- The fund comprises of a cess imposed along with excise duty on petrol and diesel.
- The **administrative control** of Central Road and Infrastructure Fund (CRIF) falls under the **Ministry of Finance**.

Earlier it was under the domain of Ministry of Road Transport and Highways.

Central Road Fund Act (Amendment), 2018

- The amendment **renamed** the Central Road Fund as Central Road and Infrastructure Fund (CRIF).
- It allowed using the proceeds of the road cess under CRIF **to finance other infrastructure projects** including waterways, some portion of the railway infrastructure and even social infrastructure including education institutions, medical colleges etc.

Source:PIB

Tear Gas

Why in News

The extensive use of tear gas by the police in Hong Kong's protests and the lack of government-led cleansing and decontamination procedures has generated mounting public concerns about potential short and long-term health effects of tear gas.

Definition: Tear gas, also called **lacrimator**, is a group of substances that irritates the mucous membrane of the eyes. This causes a stinging sensation and tears. They may also irritate the upper respiratory tract, causing coughing, choking, and general debility (physical weakness).

The effects of tear gases are **temporary and reversible** in most cases. Gas masks with activated charcoal filters provide good protection against them.

Background: It was first used in **World War I** in chemical warfare, but since its effects are short-lasting and rarely disabling, it came into use by law-enforcement agencies as a means of dispersing mobs, disabling rioters, and flushing out armed suspects without the use of deadly force.

Substances Used: The substances most often used as tear gases are **synthetic organic halogen compounds**. They are not true gases under ordinary conditions but are liquids or solids that can be finely dispersed in the air through the use of sprays, fog generators, or grenades and shells.

Other compounds used in tear gas include Oleoresin Capsicum (OC, or pepper spray), bromoacetone, benzyl bromide, ethyl bromoacetate, xylyl bromide, and α -bromobenzyl cyanide.

Types: The two most commonly used tear gases are:

- **1-chloroacetophenone (CN)**- is widely used in riot control which chiefly affects the eyes, and
 - **O-chlorobenzylidene malononitrile (CS)**- is a stronger irritant that causes burning sensations in the respiratory tract and involuntary closing of the eyes.
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Green Steel

The term 'Green Steel' refers to a **steelmaking process** that **lowers greenhouse gas emissions**, cuts costs and improves the quality of steel. This can be done through usage of gas in place of coal, recycling steel etc.

- To move towards 'Green Steel', the Petroleum and Natural Gas Ministry has launched Pradhan Mantri Urja Ganga project in the Eastern India, which can provide gas to all the Steel plants, located in the area.
- The gas will help in replacing coal in steel making process as **usage of coal leads to large amount of Carbon Dioxide (CO₂) emissions.**

Source: PIB
