



News Analysis (20 Feb, 2020)

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Assisted Reproductive Technology Regulation Bill, 2020

Why in News

The Union Cabinet has approved the **Assisted Reproductive Technology (ART) Regulation Bill, 2020** to monitor medical procedures used to assist people to achieve pregnancy.

The Bill will **regulate the Assisted Reproductive Technology services** in the country. Consequently, infertile couples will be more ensured/confident of the ethical practices in ARTs.

Assisted Reproductive Technology

- ART is used to **treat infertility**. It includes fertility treatments that handle both a woman's egg and a man's sperm. It works by removing eggs from a woman's body. The eggs are then mixed with sperm to make embryos. The embryos are then put back in the woman's body.
 - **In Vitro fertilization (IVF)** is the most common and effective type of ART.
- ART procedures sometimes use donor eggs, donor sperm, or previously frozen embryos. It may also involve a **surrogate carrier**.

Key Features of the Bill

- **Safe ART**
 - The bill makes provisions for safe and ethical practice of assisted reproductive technology services in the country.
 - The Bill will ensure confidentiality of intending couples and protect the rights of the child born through ART.

- **Pre-Genetic Implantation Testing Mandatory:** The test allows doctors to test embryos for any possible abnormal chromosomes before they are transferred to the uterus. This is **to avoid any genetic diseases** in the population born through these technologies.
- **A National Board** which will lay down a code of conduct to be observed by those operating ART clinics.
 - The Board will also formulate minimum standards for laboratory and diagnostic equipment and practices to be followed by human resources employed by clinics and banks.
 - **ART Bank** means an organization that is set up to supply sperm/semen, oocytes/oocyte donor and surrogate mothers to Assisted Reproductive Technology clinics or the patients.
- **Regulatory Boards at State Level**
 - The States and Union Territories will have to form State Boards and State authorities within three months of the notification of the proposed legislation.
 - The State Board shall have the responsibility to follow the policies and plans laid by the National Board for clinics and Banks in the State.
- **A national registry and registration authority**, which will maintain a database to assist the national Board to perform its functions.
- **Punishment**
 - The Bill proposes for a stringent punishment for those practising sex selection, sale of human embryos or gametes, running agencies/rackets/organisations for such unlawful practices.
 - The bill has a provision that those involved in trafficking and sale of embryos will be fined Rs 10 lakh at first instance and in second instance the person could be imprisoned for up to 12 years.

Need for the Bill

- **Exponential Growth:** Assisted reproductive technology (ART) has grown by leaps and bounds in the last few years. India is among countries that have seen the highest growth in the number of ART centres and ART cycles performed every year.

Clinics in India offer nearly all the ART services—gamete donation, IntraUterine Insemination (IUI), In Vitro Fertilization (IVF), IntraCytoplasmic Sperm Injection (ICSI), Preimplantation Genetic Diagnosis (PGD) and gestational surrogacy.
- **India has become one of the major centres of the global fertility industry** (ART), with reproductive medical tourism becoming a significant activity. This has also introduced a plethora of legal, ethical and social issues; yet, there is **no standardisation of protocols** and reporting is still very inadequate.

- The select committee of the Parliament that examined **the Surrogacy Regulation Bill, 2019** has said that it would be prudent to bring the ART Bill before the Surrogacy Bill, 2019, to establish a regulatory mechanism for ART clinics.
 - The ART Regulation Bill is supposed to be more overarching and the first step to regulate the sector. Without registration and a proper database of medical institutions and clinics providing such services, it is impossible to regulate services like surrogacy and abortion (**Medical Termination of Pregnancy Amendment Bill, 2020**).
 - It needs to be noted that all the three Bills are designed around **protecting and recognizing women’s reproductive rights**.

Source: TH

3rd Global Ministerial Conference on Road Safety

Why in News

Recently, the Minister of Road Transport & Highways represented India at the **3rd Global Ministerial Conference on Road Safety in Stockholm (Sweden)**.

It is organised by the **World Health Organization (WHO)** in association with the **World Bank** and minister-led delegations from more than 80 countries.

Key Points

- **Theme:**

The **theme** of the conference is **‘Achieving Global Goals 2030’**.
- **Objectives:**
 - It intends to **bring road safety on the global agenda** and renew the world community's commitment to safer roads.
 - It also aims to define ways to accelerate action on proven **strategies to save lives**.
- **Highlights:**
 - The conference adopted the **“Stockholm Declaration”** which calls for a **new global target for road safety for 2030** and a set of innovative solutions to save lives on the world’s roads.
 - It also aims to share successes and lessons from the implementation of the **Global Plan for the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011–2020**.
 - India has reaffirmed its commitment to the United Nations goal set under the **UN Decade of Action of drastically reducing road accidents by the year 2030** during the event.

Numerics on Road Accidents

- **Worldwide Scenario:**
 - **Number of Deaths:** The number of deaths on the world's roads remains unacceptably high, with an estimated 1.35 million people killed each year.
 - **Leading Cause of Deaths:** Road traffic crashes are the eighth leading cause of death globally for people of all ages, and the leading cause of death for children and young adults aged 5–29 years.
 - **Economic Burden:** The road accidents cost countries around 3% of their respective GDP.
- **National Scenario:**
 - **Number of Deaths:** It kills almost 1.5 lakh people annually in India.
 - **Drastic Drop:** The accidents, as well as accident-related deaths in the period 2010-2018, dropped drastically compared with the previous decades, despite the very high rate of growth of automobiles.
 - **Severity:** The road accident severity (the number of persons killed per 100 accidents) has increased by 0.6% in 2018 compared to 2017.

Global Initiatives for Road Safety

- **Brasilia Declaration on Road Safety**
 - The declaration was **signed in 2015** at the **second Global High-Level Conference on Road Safety held in Brazil**. The **first conference** was held in **Russia (2009)**.
 - Through the **Brasilia Declaration** countries plan to achieve the **Sustainable Development Goal 3.6** i.e. to half the number of global deaths and injuries from road traffic accidents by 2030.
 - The United Nations has also declared **2011-2020 as the decade of action for Road Safety**.
- **UN Global Road Safety Week**

It is celebrated every two years, the fifth edition of the UN Global Road Safety Week (6-12 May 2019) highlighted the need for strong leadership for road safety.
- **The International Road Assessment Programme (iRAP)**

It is a registered charity dedicated to saving lives through safer road

National Initiatives for Road Safety

- **4 E's for Road Safety:**

Ministry of Road Transport & Highways had formulated a multi-pronged strategy based on 4 `E's – **Education, Engineering, Enforcement, Emergency Care.**

- **Education:** Awareness is generated through various Road Safety Campaigns utilizing audio-visual and other print media and through NGOs.
- **Engineering:** The engineering measures are considered essential for adoption to help in improving road safety leading to reduction of accidents.
- **Enforcement:** The enforcement of road transport-related rules and regulations (like The Motor Vehicles Act 1988 and Central Motor Vehicles Rules 1989) is an important aspect to ensure road safety.
- **Emergency Care:** The scheme like National Highway Accident Relief Service Scheme (NHARSS) has been implemented to provide cranes and ambulances to States/UTs/NGOs for relief and rescue measures in the aftermath of accidents.

- **Justice K.S. Radhakrishnan Committee**

Supreme Court had set up the three-member KS Radhakrishnan panel on road safety in **2014**. The SC had termed the roads in India as **"giant killers"**.

- **Motor Vehicles Amendment Act, 2019**

- It hikes the penalties for traffic violations, defective vehicles, juvenile driving, etc.
- It provides for a Motor Vehicle Accident Fund, which would provide compulsory insurance cover to all road users in India for certain types of accidents.
- It also provides for a National Road Safety Board, to be created by the Central Government through a notification.
- The act also provides for the protection of good samaritans.

Source: PIB

National Commission for Scheduled Tribes

Why in News

The National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST) organised its 16th foundation day.

On this occasion, the NCST has also decided to institute a national award named as **"NCST Leadership Award"** which will be conferred for significant and exemplary services towards Scheduled Tribes (STs) in the country.

Schedule Tribes

- As per Census-1931, Schedule tribes are termed as "backward tribes" living in the "Excluded" and "Partially Excluded" areas. The Government of India Act of 1935 called for the first time for representatives of "backward tribes" in provincial assemblies.
- The Constitution does **not define** the criteria for recognition of Scheduled Tribes and hence the definition contained in 1931 Census was used in initial years after independence.
- However, **Article 366(25)** of the Constitution only provides process to define Scheduled Tribes: "Scheduled Tribes means such tribes or tribal communities or parts of or groups within such tribes or tribal communities as are deemed under Article 342 to be Scheduled Tribes for the purposes of this Constitution."
 - 342(1):** The President may with respect to any State or Union Territory, and where it is a State, after consultation with the Governor, by a public notification, specify the tribes or tribal communities or part of or groups within tribes or tribal communities as Scheduled Tribe in relation to that State or Union Territory.
- There are over **700 tribes** which have been notified.
- The **largest number** of tribal communities (62) are found in **Odisha**.
- **No Tribe** was identified in **Haryana, Punjab, Chandigarh, Delhi, and Pondicherry**.

Few Related Committees

- The **Lokur Committee (1965)** was set up to look into criteria for defining Schedule Tribes. The Committee recommended 5 criteria for identification, namely, **primitive traits, distinct culture, geographical isolation, shyness of contact with the community at large**, and **backwardness**.
- **Bhuria Commission (2002-2004)** focused on a wide range of issues from the **5th Schedule** to tribal land and forests, health and education, the working of Panchayats and the status of tribal women.
- A High-Level Committee (HLC) in 2013, under chairmanship of Prof. Virginius Xaxa was constituted to study the 5 critical issues related to tribal communities : (1) livelihood and employment, (2) education, (3) health, (4) involuntary displacement and migration, (5) and legal and constitutional matters.

Key Points

- **Formation:** NCST was set up with effect from 19th February, 2004 by amending Article 338 and by inserting a new article **338A** in the Constitution through the 89th Constitution Amendment Act, 2003. Hence, it is a **constitutional body**.
- **Objective:** Article 338A inter-alia gives powers to the to NCST **oversee the implementation of various safeguards provided to STs under the Constitution or under any other law for time being in force or under any other order to the Government and to evaluate the working of such safeguards**.

- **Composition** : It consists of a Chairperson, a Vice-Chairperson and 3 other Members who are appointed by the President by warrant under his hand and seal.
 - At least one member should be a woman.
 - The Chairperson, the Vice-Chairperson and the other Members hold office for a term of **3 years**.
 - The members are **not eligible for appointment for more than two terms**.
- The Chairperson has been given the rank of Union Cabinet Ministers, the Vice Chairperson has the rank of a Minister of State and other Members have the rank of a Secretary to the Government of India.

Duties and Functions

- To **investigate and monitor all matters relating to the safeguards provided for the STs** under the Constitution or under any other law for the time being in force or under any order of the Government.
- To **inquire into specific complaints** with respect to the deprivation of rights and safeguards of the STs.
- To **participate and advise** in the planning process of socio-economic development of the STs and to evaluate the progress of their development.
- To present to the **President**, annually and at such other times as the Commission may deem fit, **reports upon the working of those safeguards**.
 - To make in such reports, recommendations as to the measures that should be taken by the Union or any State for effective implementation of those safeguards and other measures for the protection, welfare and socio-economic development of the Scheduled Tribes.
- To discharge such other functions in relation to the protection, welfare and development and advancement of the Scheduled Tribes as the President may subject to the provisions of any law made by Parliament by rule specify.

Source: PIB

Revamp of the Crop Insurance Schemes

Why in News

Recently, the Union Cabinet has approved the revamp of the **Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY)** and the **Restructured Weather Based Crop Insurance Scheme (RWBCIS)**.

The revamped scheme will be effective from **2020 Kharif season**.

Key Changes

- **Reduced Share of the Centre:**
 - The Centre has slashed its share of the premium subsidy from the current **50% to just 25% in irrigated areas and 30% for unirrigated areas.**
 - Farmers pay a fixed share of the premium: 2% of the sum insured for Kharif crops, 1.5% for rabi crops and 5% for cash crops.
 - Currently, the Centre and State split the balance of the premium equally. However, the revamp now reduces the burden on the Centre and increases the share of States.
- **Voluntary Enrollment:**
 - The enrolment in these schemes has been made **voluntary for all farmers, including those with existing crop loans.**
 - When the PMFBY was launched in 2016, it was made mandatory for all farmers with crop loans to enrol for insurance cover under the scheme.
- **Flexibility to Select Risk Cover:**
 - It has also allowed states the **flexibility to select varied additional risk covers, with or without opting for the base PMFBY cover.**
 - Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal and Bihar had decided to exit the scheme citing high costs and the need to customise it based on geographical diversities.
- **Cut-off Dates for State to Release its Share:**
 - It has also introduced **cut-off dates for states to release its share of premium subsidy.**
 - If states don't release their share **before March 31 for the Kharif season and September 30 for rabi, they won't be allowed to implement the scheme.**
 - Data shows a large number of states that participate in the scheme don't release their share on time, which leads to a delayed compensation paid to farmers.
- **Compulsory Serving Time Period for Insurance Firms:**
 - The government has made it compulsory for the States to **allow crop insurance firms to operate for three years.**
 - Currently, the tenders floated by the States are for one-year, two-year or three-year periods.

Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY)

- The Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana was launched in **2016** and is being administered by the **Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare.**
- It provides a comprehensive insurance cover against the failure of the crop thus helping in stabilising the income of the farmers.
- **Scope:** All food & oilseed crops and annual commercial/horticultural crops for which past yield data is available.

- **Premium:** The prescribed premium is 2% to be paid by farmers for all Kharif crops and 1.5% for all rabi crops. In the case of annual commercial and horticultural crops, the premium is 5%.
- The scheme is implemented by empanelled general insurance companies. The selection of the Implementing Agency (IA) is done by the concerned State Government through bidding.

Restructured Weather Based Crop Insurance Scheme

- Restructured Weather Based Crop Insurance Scheme (**RWBCIS**) was launched in 2016 and is being administered by **the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare**.
- It aims to mitigate the hardship of the insured farmers against the likelihood of financial loss on account of anticipated crop loss resulting from adverse weather conditions relating to rainfall, temperature, wind, humidity etc.
- WBCIS uses weather parameters as “proxy” for crop yields in compensating the cultivators for deemed crop losses.

Source: TH

Swachh Bharat Mission (Grameen) Phase-II Approved

Why in News

The Union Cabinet has approved the Phase II of the Swachh Bharat Mission (Grameen) [SBM (G)].

It will focus on **Open Defecation Free Plus (ODF Plus)**, which includes **ODF sustainability and Solid and Liquid Waste Management (SLWM)**.

Key Points

- SBM (G) Phase-II will be implemented from 2020-21 to 2024-25 in a **mission mode** with a total outlay of Rs. 1,40,881 crores.
- **Funding Pattern and Norms:** The fund sharing pattern between Centre and States will be **90:10** for North-Eastern States and Himalayan States and UT of J&K; **60:40** for other States; and 100% for other Union Territories.
Funding Norms for Solid and Liquid Waste Management (SLWM) have been rationalized and changed to per capita basis in place of number of households.

- The SLWM component of ODF Plus will be monitored on the basis of **output-outcome indicators** for 4 key areas:
 - **Plastic waste management,**
 - **Biodegradable solid waste management (including animal waste management),**
 - **Greywater management**
 - **Fecal sludge management.**
- It will continue to generate employment and provide impetus to the rural economy through construction of household toilets and community toilets, as well as infrastructure for SLWM such as **compost pits, soak pits, waste stabilisation ponds, material recovery facilities etc.**

It will also help the rural India effectively handle the challenge of solid and liquid waste management and will help in substantial improvement in the health of the villagers in the country.
- **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.**

Source: PIB

22nd Law Commission of India

Why in news

Recently, the Union Cabinet has approved the constitution of the **22nd Law Commission of India** for a period of **three years**.

Key Points

- The Law Commission of India is a **non-statutory body** constituted by the Government of India from time to time.
- The first Law Commission of independent India was established in **1955** for a **three-year term**. Since then, twenty one more Commissions have been established.

The **first Law Commission** was established during the British Raj era in 1834 by the **Charter Act of 1833** and was **chaired by Lord Macaulay**.
- It works as an **advisory body** to the **Ministry of Law and Justice**.
- The Law Commission undertakes research in law and review of existing laws in India for making reforms therein and enacting new legislations on a reference made to it by the Central Government or suo-motu.

Important Recommendations by Law Commission of India

- Law Commission in its 262nd Report recommended **abolition of the death penalty** for all crimes except terrorism-related offences and waging war against the state.
- Its report on electoral reforms (1999) had suggested **simultaneous Lok Sabha and state assembly elections** to improve governance and stability.
- The 267th report of the Law Commission had drafted a new law — The Criminal Law (Amendment) Bill, 2017 — inserting new Sections to fortify democracy **against hate speeches**.
- The Law Commission had also recommended the **implementation of the Uniform Civil Code (UCC)** in the country.

Source: PIB

Historical Gastronomica - The Indus Dining Experience

Why in News

The National Museum, New Delhi is hosting a unique exhibition on India's ancient food history "Historical Gastronomica - The Indus Dining Experience" from 19th to 25th February, 2020.

- 'Indus Dining Experience' - organized jointly by the National Museum and One Station Million Stories (OSMS) - is based on archaeological research, museum artefacts and their characteristics.
 - One Station Million Stories is a Delhi-based organization that specializes in the craft of storytelling through extensive technical research.
 - The National Museum is under the administrative control of the **Ministry of Culture**.
- The exhibition in the National Museum features:
 - An illustrative story of man's food history since his evolution and continues to conclude at the Indus-Saraswati Civilization,
 - **Gallery Walk:** Use of Harappan pottery and artefacts,
 - **Food Tasting:** finger-food samplers and dinners.
 - A model of a Late Harappan Kitchen and other specially designed exhibits -- recreated by OSMS.
- Recently, **UNESCO's network of creative cities** has included **Hyderabad** as a creative **city of gastronomy**.

Indus Valley Civilization

- It is also known as **Harappan Civilization**.

- It flourished around 2,500 BC, in the western part of South Asia, in contemporary Pakistan and Western India.
- The Indus Valley was home to the largest of the four ancient urban civilizations of Egypt, Mesopotamia, India, and China.
- In the 1920s, the Archaeological Department of India carried out excavations in the Indus valley wherein the ruins of the two old cities, viz. Mohenjodaro and Harappa were unearthed.
- The Harappans were very well acquainted with the manufacturing and use of Bronze.
- The Harappan villages, mostly situated near the flood plains, produced sufficient foodgrains. Wheat, barley, rai, peas, sesame, lentil, chickpea and mustard were produced.

Source: PIB

Empowered 'Technology Group' on Emerging Technologies

Why in News

The Union Cabinet has approved the constitution of an **empowered "Technology Group"** to advise the Government on priorities and strategies for research on emerging technologies across sectors.

- **Composition:** It will be a **12-member group** with the **Principal Scientific Adviser to the Government of India** (Prof. K VijayRaghavan) as its **Chair**.
- **Mandate**
 - To render timely policy advice on latest technologies;
 - Mapping of technology and technology products;
 - Commercialisation of dual use technologies developed in national laboratories and government Research and Development (R&D) organisations;
 - Developing an indigenisation road map for selected key technologies; and
 - Selection of appropriate R&D programs leading to technology development.
- The group will also facilitate cross-sector collaborations and research alliances with universities and private companies and formulate "standards and a common vocabulary" to screen proposals for research and development.
- The **three pillars** of the work of the Technology Group include:
 - Policy Support;
 - Procurement Support; and
 - Support on Research and Development proposals.

Source: PIB

CHILDLINE India Foundation

Why in News

According to the data compiled by the CHILDLINE India Foundation (CIF), 35% of the total cases of sexual abuse were committed by neighbours.

CHILDLINE India Foundation

- CIF is the largest network of agencies involved in protection of children.
- CIF is the **nodal agency** appointed by the **Ministry of Women and Child Development** to manage CHILDLINE helpline 1098 - a free, emergency phone service for **children in need aid and assistance**.
- It is also the **sole agency/body** responsible for **establishing the CHILDLINE service across the country, monitoring** of service delivery and finance, training, research and documentation, creating awareness, advocacy as well as resource generation for the service.

Key Points

- **Number of Phone Calls:** The largest number of phone calls were made to seek **intervention for abuse cases** (17%), followed by those pertaining to **child labour (13%), education (12%),** runaways (11%) and **missing children (11%).**
- **Nature of Abuse:** The nature of abuse children suffered shows that 37% of the complaints were about child marriage, 27% about physical abuse and 13% regarding sexual abuse. The remaining 23% constituted emotional, corporal, domestic and cyber abuse.
- **Profile of Abusers:** The analyses show that 35% of the total 8,000 cases of sexual abuse were committed by neighbours, 25% by strangers and 11% by family members. The remaining 29% of perpetrators were friends, relatives, teachers, institutional staff, hospital staff, police and step parents.

Source: TH

Tirur Vettila

Tirur vettila has obtained a **Geographical Indication (GI) tag.**

- Tirur Vettila is a type of betel leaf which is grown in **Tirur and nearby areas of Malappuram district of Kerala.**



- Tirur Vettila is unique for its significantly **high content of total chlorophyll and protein** in fresh leaves.
- Tirur vettila possesses some special biochemical characters like **unique flavour and aroma.**
- **Eugenol** is the major essential oil in Tirur betel leaf contributing to its pungency.
- The leaves are **nutritive and contain anticarcinogens**, showing future opportunities in anticancer drugs.
- Betel vine was reported to have immunosuppressive activity and antimicrobial property.
- The Intellectual property rights (IPR) Cell of Kerala Agricultural University has received National IP Award, 2019 of Government of India its efforts in the facilitation of GI Registration.

Other GI Products from Kerala

Kaipad rice, Pokkali rice, Wayanad Jeerakasala rice, Wayanad Gandhakasala rice, Vazhakulam pineapple, Marayoor jaggery, Central Travancore jaggery and Chengalikodan nendran.