



News Analysis (22 Feb, 2020)

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GoM Reviews Amendments to the JJ Act, 2015

Why in News

Recently, a **Group of Ministers (GoM)** chaired by the Home Minister met to discuss **proposed amendments** to the **Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) (JJ) Act, 2015**.

The GoM meeting was convened **to create greater synergy** between ministries on the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Amendment Bill, 2018

Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015

- **Improvement Over the Act of 2000:**

The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 **replaced the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2000** to comprehensively address children in conflict with law and children in need of care and protection.

- **Change in Nomenclature:**

- The Act changes the nomenclature from **'juvenile'** to **'child'** or **'child in conflict with law'**. Also, it **removes the negative connotation** associated with the word "juvenile".
- It also includes several **new and clear definitions** such as orphaned, abandoned and surrendered children; and petty, serious and heinous offences committed by children

- **Special Provisions for Age 16-18 years:**

Included special provisions to tackle child offenders committing heinous offences in the **age group of 16-18 years**.

- **Mandatory Constitution of the JJ Board:**
It **mandates** setting up **Juvenile Justice Boards and Child Welfare Committees** in **every district**. Both **must have at least one woman** member each.
- **Adoption Related Clauses:**
 - A separate new chapter on Adoption to streamline adoption procedures for an orphan, abandoned and surrendered children,
 - Also, the **Central Adoption Resource Authority (CARA)** was granted the status of a statutory body to enable it to perform its function more effectively.
 - The Act states that the adoption of a child is final on the issuance of an adoption order **by the court**. Currently, there are **629 adoption cases pending** in various **courts**.
- **Inclusion of New Offences:**
The Act included several new offences committed against children (like, illegal adoptions, use of child by militant groups, offences against disabled children, etc) which are **not adequately covered under any other law**.
- **Child Care Institutions (CCI):**
All Child Care Institutions, whether run by State Government or by voluntary or non-governmental organisations are to be **mandatorily registered** under the Act **within 6 months** from the date of commencement of the Act.

The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Amendment Bill, 2018

- The Bill provides that instead of the court, **the district magistrate will issue adoption orders** to address the high pendency of adoption cases.
- The Bill also seeks **to transfer all pending matters related to adoption before any court to the district magistrate having jurisdiction over the area**.
- The proposed amendments intend to **expedite proceedings**.

Group of Ministers

- Groups of Ministers (GoMs) have been constituted from time to time to look into different issues/subjects.
- These are **ad hoc bodies** formed to **give recommendations** to the cabinet on certain emergent issues and critical problem areas.
- Ministers heading the concerned ministries are inducted into the relevant GoMs and when the advice is crystallised they are disbanded.
- Some of these GoMs have been also **empowered to take decisions on behalf of the Cabinet** known as **Empowered Groups of Ministers (EGoMs)**.

- But with time the constitution of a large number of GoMs has resulted in many GoMs not being able to meet regularly to complete their work thus leading to significant delays on many major issues. Thus. all the Groups of Ministers (GoMs) and Empowered Groups of Ministers (EGoMs) were **abolished in 2014**.
- Further in **2015, 16 informal** Groups of Ministers (GoMs) were formed to discuss key issues of the country.

Source: TH

Visit of Home Minister of Maldives

Why in News

The Home Minister of Maldives, Mr. Sheikh Imran Abdulla, met Indian Home Minister on 21st February, 2020.



- During the meeting, both the ministers discussed issues of mutual interest in the area of **security** and **law enforcement cooperation**.
- The Ministers welcomed the expansion of bilateral cooperation between India and Maldives in diverse fields including policing and law enforcement, counter-terrorism, counter-radicalization, organized crime, drug trafficking and capacity building.
- The Directorate of Enforcement will assist Maldives in setting up a probe agency like itself and guide the island nation on raising a Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002 (PMLA) infrastructure.

The **Directorate of Enforcement** is a multi disciplinary organization mandated with the task of enforcing the provisions of two special fiscal laws – Foreign Exchange Management Act, 1999 (FEMA) and Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002 (PMLA). It is headquartered in **New Delhi**.

India-Maldives

Significance of Maldives for India

- Maldives' **proximity to the west coast of India** - Maldives is barely 70 nautical miles away from Minicoy -the southernmost island of Lakshadweep.
Lakshadweep group is separated from Maldives by **Eight Degree Channel**.
- It is situated at the **hub of commercial sea-lanes** running through Indian Ocean. More than 97% of India's international trade by volume and 75% by value passes through the region.
- Its potential to allow a third nation's naval presence in the area.
- Since China's naval expansion into the Indian Ocean , Maldives significance has steadily grown and now it's at the heart of international geopolitics.
- Moreover, the Maldives is an important aspect of India's **'Neighbourhood First' policy**.
'India First' has been a stated policy of the Government of Maldives.
- Maldives is **a member of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC)** and the **South Asia Subregional Economic Cooperation (SASEC)**.
- There is a **significant Indian diaspora in the Maldives**. Innumerable Indians work across the hospitality, education, and health-care sectors of the Maldives economy.

South Asia Subregional Economic Cooperation

- The **South Asia Subregional Economic Cooperation (SASEC) Program, set up in 2001**, brings together **Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Nepal, and Sri Lanka** in a project-based partnership to promote regional prosperity by improving cross-border connectivity, boosting trade among member countries, and strengthening regional economic cooperation.
- The **Asian Development Bank (ADB)** serves as Secretariat to the SASEC Program.

Relations Between the Two Countries

- **History:** India and Maldives share ethnic, linguistic, cultural, religious and commercial links. India was among the first to recognize Maldives after its independence in 1965 and later established its mission at Male in 1972.
- **Defence:** India provides the largest number of training opportunities for Maldivian National Defence Force (MNDF), meeting around 70% of their defence training requirements.

‘**Ekuverin**’ is a **joint military exercise** between India and Maldives.

- **Disaster Management:** The Government of India has provided large-scale assistance to Maldives in the aftermath of the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami and during the 2014 Male water crisis.
- **Trade and Tourism:** India is Maldives’ 4th largest trade partner after UAE, China and Singapore. In 2018, India was the 5th largest source of tourist arrivals in Maldives.

The Maldivian economy is heavily dependent on its tourism sector, which is the major source of foreign exchange earnings and government revenue.

- **Operation Cactus:** In 1988, in response to a request from the Maldives, India activated Operation Cactus to deploy its military and ensure regime continuity in Male.

Source: TH

Global Health Security (GHS) Index, 2019

Why in News

According to the Global Health Security (GHS) Index, 2019, national health security is “fundamentally weak” around the world. The report gains significance in the context of the recent **Coronavirus (COVID19)** outbreak.

About the Index

- The **Global Health Security (GHS) Index**, a report from the Nuclear Threat Initiative, the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security and the Economist Intelligence Unit, was released in October 2019.
- The GHS Index is the first comprehensive assessment and **benchmarking of health security and related capabilities** across the **195 countries** that make up the States Parties to the **International Health Regulations (IHR, 2005)**.

The IHR, 2005 represents an agreement between 196 countries including all the **World Health Organization (WHO)** Member States to work together for global health security.

- The GHS Index assesses countries' health security and capabilities across **six categories**, 34 indicators, and 85 sub-indicators. The six categories are as follow:
 - **Prevention:** Prevention of the emergence or release of pathogens.
 - **Detection and Reporting:** Early detection and reporting for epidemics of potential international concern.
 - **Rapid Response:** Rapid response to and mitigation of the spread of an epidemic.
 - **Health System:** Sufficient and robust health system to treat the sick and protect health workers.
 - **Compliance with International Norms:** Commitments to improving national capacity, financing plans to address gaps, and adhering to global norms.
 - **Risk Environment:** Overall risk environment and country vulnerability to biological threats.
- The index **measures countries' capabilities from 0-100**, with 100 representing the highest level of preparedness. The GHS Index **scoring system** includes three tiers.
 - **Low Scores:** Countries that score between 0 and 33.3 are in the bottom tier.
 - **Moderate Scores:** Countries that score between 33.4 and 66.6 are in the middle tier and
 - **High Scores:** Countries that score between 66.7 and 100 are in the upper or "top" tier.

Key Findings

- **International Preparedness**
 - The GHS Index analysis finds that **no country is fully prepared for epidemics** or pandemics. Collectively, international preparedness is weak.
 - The **average** overall GHS Index score among all 195 countries assessed is **40.2** of a possible score of 100.
 - Overall, the GHS Index finds severe weaknesses in country abilities to prevent, detect, and respond to health emergencies; severe gaps in health systems; vulnerabilities to political, socioeconomic, and environmental risks that can hamper outbreak preparedness and response; and a lack of adherence to international norms.

- **Ranking of Different Countries**

- The **US is the “most prepared” nation** (scoring 83.5), with the UK (77.9), the Netherlands (75.6), Australia (75.5) and Canada (75.3) behind it. **Thailand is ranked sixth in the Index** — the highest ranking for an Asian country.
- Much of Europe, Russia, the Middle East, Asia and Central and South America are described as “more prepared,” with scores between 66 and 34.3, while the majority of countries ranked “least prepared” are in Africa.
- **India is ranked 57th** with a score of 46.5, falling in the middle tier.
- North Korea (17.5), Somalia (16.6) and Equatorial Guinea (16.2) are listed in the index's bottom three.
- **China** – which is at the centre of the recent coronavirus outbreak – is at the 51st place, scoring 48.2.

- **Recommendations**

- **Global Response:** The UN Secretary-General should convene a global summit by 2021 on biological threats including a focus on financing and emergency response.
- **National Commitment**
 - National governments should commit to take action to address health security risks.
 - Countries should test their health security capacities and publish after-action reviews, at least annually.
- **Financing Mechanism:** New financing mechanisms should be established to fill preparedness gaps, such as a new multilateral global health security matching fund and expansion of World Bank International Development Association allocations to include preparedness.
- **Institutional Approach:** A separate and permanent facilitator or unit for high-consequence biological events, should be designated at the earliest.
- **Capacity Development:** Governments and donors should take into account countries’ political and security risk factors when supporting health security capacity development.

India’s Response to Health Emergencies

- **Underprepared:** The influenza A (H1N1) outbreaks since 2009 in Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and other States have acutely underscored the need for better detection, awareness of symptoms and quarantining.
- **Low Expenditure: Health expenditure** by the government in India is less than **1.5% of Gross Domestic Product**, which is low for a middle-income country.
- **Availability of Health Professionals:** India has a low availability of health professionals. According to the WHO, India has only **80 doctors per 1,00,000 people**.

- **Impact of Climate Change:** India's health status is being worsened by **climate shocks**. An HSBC study of 67 countries ranks India as the most climate-vulnerable one because of the impact of severe temperature increases and declines in rainfalls.

Way Forward

- Each State in India needs to **expose crucial gaps** in areas such as adequacy and supply of diagnostic equipment, health facilities, hygienic practices, and prevention and treatment protocols.
- **Separate funding** for dealing with a health catastrophe.
- **Investing in health and education**
 - Kerala's experience in 2018 with the deadly **Nipah virus** shows the value of investing in education and health over the long term. Kerala's government efforts kept the mortality rate from the Nipah virus relatively low.
- **Protecting Biodiversity**
 - Nearly two-thirds of known pathogens and three-quarters of newly emerging pathogens are spread from animals to humans (recent example - SARS-CoV-2).
 - Reasons for the same can be traced to increased human encroachment on wildlife territory; land-use changes that increase the rate of human-wildlife and wildlife-livestock interactions; and climate change.

Source: TH

Habitable-Zone Planet Finder

Why in News

The Habitable-zone Planet Finder (HPF) has confirmed its first planet (**exoplanet**) called G 9-40b, orbiting a nearby low mass bright **M-dwarf star** (100 light years from Earth) with an orbital period of 6 Earth-days.

Earlier, **NASA's Kepler mission** had observed a dip in the host star's light, suggesting that the planet was crossing in front of the star during its orbit. To confirm the HPF was used.

Key Points

- **G 9-40b:** G 9-40b is amongst the top 20 closest transiting planets known.

- **Habitable-zone Planet Finder** : HPF is an **astronomical spectrograph**, built by Penn State University scientists, and recently installed on the 10m **Hobby-Eberly Telescope** at McDonald Observatory (US).
 - The HPF searches for **exoplanets** by using the **Doppler effect**.
 - A spectrograph is an instrument that splits light into its component wavelengths. Scientists measure the properties of light over a specific portion of the spectrum, and draw conclusions on what is responsible for the trends they observe.
 - The HPF provides the **highest precision measurements of infrared signals from nearby low-mass stars**, and astronomers use it to validate the candidate planet by excluding all possibilities of contaminating signals to a very high level of probability.
 - It is designed to detect and characterise planets in the habitable-zone also known as '**Goldilocks zone**'- **the region around the star where a planet could sustain liquid water on its surface**.
 - HPF is currently surveying the nearest low-mass stars, also called **M-dwarfs**, which are the most common stars in the galaxy - with the goal of discovering exoplanets in our neighborhood.

Doppler Effect

- An increase (or decrease) in the frequency of sound, light, or other waves as the source and observer move towards (or away from) each other.
- The effect causes the sudden change in pitch noticeable in a passing siren, as well as the red shift seen by astronomers.

Exoplanet

- An exoplanet or extrasolar planet is a planet outside the Solar System. The first confirmation of detection of exoplanet occurred in 1992.
- Exoplanets are very hard to see directly with telescopes. They are hidden by the bright glare of the stars they orbit.
- So, astronomers use other ways to detect and study exoplanets such as looking at the effects these planets have on the stars they orbit.

M-dwarfs

- M dwarf or M-type star, also called Red Dwarf Star are the most numerous type of star in the universe and the smallest type of hydrogen-burning star.
- These have masses from about 0.08 to 0.6 times that of the Sun.
- In the Milky Way Galaxy, about **70% of the stars are red dwarfs**.

Source:IE

Gold Deposits in Sonbhadra

Why in News

The **Geological Survey of India** has rejected the UP government's Department of Geology and Mining claims of discovering about 3,000 tonnes of gold deposits in **Uttar Pradesh's Sonbhadra district**, saying the actual estimated reserve stands at 160 kg.

Gold: Science

- Gold is a chemical element with the **symbol Au (from Latin: Aurum)** and **atomic number 79**.
- Some of the **unique properties** of gold are:
 - Conducts electricity.
 - Resistant to corrosion.
 - Exceptionally malleable and ductile.
 - Catalytic properties.
 - Biocompatible.
 - Nanogold.

Gold: Currency

- Owing to its unique qualities, gold has been the one material that is universally accepted in exchange for goods and services.
- Gold began to serve as backing for paper-currency systems when they became widespread in the 19th century and from the 1870s until **World War I**, the **gold standard** was the basis for the world's currencies.
- Although gold's official role in the international monetary system had come to an end by the 1970s, the **metal remains a highly regarded reserve asset and approximately 45% of all the world's gold is held by governments and central banks for this purpose**.
- Gold is still accepted by all nations as a medium of international payment.
- **India's Forex Reserve** also includes **Gold** along with **Foreign Currency Assets (such as dollar)** and **Special Drawing Rights**.

Why Gold

- There are five precious metals which can potentially be worked with: **platinum, palladium, rhodium, silver and gold**. Silver has been used as money but it tarnishes over time. Rhodium and palladium are more recent discoveries with limited historical uses.

- Platinum and gold are the remaining elements. Platinum's extremely high melting point makes it impractical to melt. Thus gold is the only option left. It melts at a lower temperature and is malleable, making it easy to work with.

Gold: Facts

- According to the **World Gold Council**, India has gold reserves of more than 600 tonnes, the **10th largest** in the world.
- **U.S has the highest** gold reserves with 8,133.5 tonnes of total gold reserves, **followed by Germany** with 3,366.8 tonnes and the **International Monetary Fund (IMF)** with a holding of 2,451.8 tonnes
- The weight of gold is measured in **troy ounces (1 troy ounce = 31.1034768 grams)**, however its **purity is measured in 'carats'**. 24 carat is pure gold with no other metals.

Sonbhadra

- Sonbhadra is the **second largest district (area-wise) of Uttar Pradesh** after **Lakhimpur Kheri**.
- It is the **only district in the country which shares borders with four states**. **Madhya Pradesh** to the west, **Chhattisgarh** to the south, **Jharkhand** to the south-east and **Bihar** to the east.
- Sonbhadra district is an **industrial zone** and has lots of minerals like **bauxite, limestone, coal, gold** etc.
- It is drained by tributaries of the Ganges including the **Belan** and **Karmanasha** rivers. **Son** river flows through the district from **west to east**. **Rihand** river rises to the south in the highlands of Surguja district of Chhattisgarh and flows north to join the Son in the centre of Sonbhadra.
 - The **Govind Ballabh Pant Sagar** (also known as **Rihand Dam**) is a reservoir on the Rihand, lies partly in the district and partly in Madhya Pradesh.
- **Kaimoor Wildlife Sanctuary** lies mostly within Sonbhadra, reaching generally east and west along the **Kaimur Range**, and extending to the Son river at its eastern end.
- Sonbhadra is known for its several **Cave painting sites found in the Vindhya region**.
 - The **Lakhania caves** are located in the Kaimur ranges and are known for their beautiful ageless **rock paintings**.
 - These historic paintings are about 4000 years old.
 - **Khodwa Pahar or Ghoramangar** is another well-known ancient cave painting site.



Source: IE

5G Hackathon

Why in News

The **Department of Telecommunications (DoT)** has launched **5G Hackathon** in association with various academic and industrial stakeholders. It will be spread across three phases beginning from February 2020 and culminating October 2020.

- It **aims at shortlisting India's cutting edge ideas** that can be converted into workable **5G** products and solutions.
- It is open to developers, students, start-ups, Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), academic institutions & registered companies in India and NRIs.

- Participants can develop 5G solutions from various categories including **Healthcare, Education and Governance, AgriTech and Livestock, Environment, Public Safety and Disaster Management Enterprise, Smart Cities and Infrastructure, Cyber Security, Banking, Finance and Insurance, Logistics and Transportation, Multimedia and Broadcast**, among others.

5G Technology

- 5G is the **fifth generation cellular technology** that apart from increasing the downloading and uploading speeds over the mobile network, also reduces the **latency** i.e. the **time taken by a network to respond**.
- 5G will provide a download speed of 1 Gbps, which is at least 100 times the existing data speeds.
- It also **increases energy efficiency** and **offers more stable network** connections.
- 5G will have a **wider area in the frequency spectrum** (range of frequencies) that will ensure no network congestion.
- In addition, it will also **ensure connectivity** to a full circle i.e. everything is connected to every other thing. Its **application in different economic verticals** is one of the most distinctive features of 5G technology.

Source: PIB

Upgradation of Online Chatbot Ask DISHA

Why in News

The Indian Railways Catering & Tourism Corporation Limited (IRCTC) has powered voice-enabled **Ask DISHA (Digital Interaction to Seek Help Anytime) Chatbot** to converse with customers in the **Hindi language**.

- The customers can now ask queries to Ask DISHA in Hindi by voice as well as text.
- IRCTC plans to launch Ask DISHA in more languages along with many other additional features in the near future.

Ask DISHA Chatbot

- It is an **Artificial Intelligence-based chatbot** which was initially launched in the **English** language in **October 2018**.
- It is a **first-of-its-kind initiative by IRCTC** which aims to benefit the users of the ticketing and tourism websites of IRCTC to resolve queries of railway passengers over the internet pertaining to various services offered.

- Since its initial launch, passengers seeking help on the reservation of tickets, cancellation, enquiry of refund status, fare, PNR search, train running status, enquiry about retiring rooms and tourism products have been benefited.



Source: PIB

Khelo India University Games 2020

Why in News

The Prime Minister will launch the **first-ever Khelo India University Games** in Cuttack (Odisha) on February 22, 2020.

Key Points

- The Khelo India University Games are being **launched by** the Government of India in association with the **Government of Odisha**.
- It is an aspirational competition for India's youngsters with the objective of helping them find the balance between sport and education.
- It is the **largest ever competition** held at the university level in India and will have about **3500 athletes from over 150 universities** across the country taking part in it.

- There will be a total of **17 sports** namely archery, athletics, boxing, fencing, judo, swimming, weightlifting, wrestling, badminton, basketball, football, hockey, table tennis, tennis, volleyball, rugby and kabaddi.

Khelo India

- The Khelo India programme has been introduced to **revive the sports culture in India** at the **grass-root level** by building a strong framework for all sports played in our country.
- It also aims to establish **India as a great sporting nation.**
- It is implemented by the **Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports.**
- Under the scheme, the talented players identified in priority sports disciplines at various levels (by the High-Powered Committee) will be provided **annual financial assistance of INR 5 lakh per annum for 8 years.**

Source:PIB

Kiliki Language

- On **International Mother Language Day (February 21)**, Kiliki, a **fictional language** was launched by the Karky Research Foundation of India.
- It now has evolved into a language with script grammar and more than 3000 words for everyday communication.
- It is considered as the world's easiest language.
- This language is not associated with any race, community or caste.

Source:TH
