GS SCORE

An Institute for Civil Services

CURRENT AFFAIRS
ANALYST
— WEEKLY —

Week - 3

MARCH, 2019

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However, this doesn't mean that Mains articles don't cover facts and PT articles can't have analysis. You are suggested to read all of them for all stages of examination.

CURRENT AFFAIRS ANALYST
WEEK-3 (MARCH, 2019)

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SECTION: A
(MAINS)

CURRENT AFFAIRS

INDIA: ILLICIT DRUG TRADE AND ASSOCIATED CHALLENGES

CONTEXT

- **According to a report released by the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB), India is one of the major hubs for illicit drug trade.**

- **The report stated that Opiates, cannabis and amphetamine-type stimulants remain the main substances of concern in the region, with record levels of cannabis herb seized in India in 2017.**

◉ BACKGROUND

- In 2017, authorities in India dismantled two illicit pharmacies selling drugs over the Internet. This incidence brought to the light enormous "demand" that is often neglected within the society. Non-medical use of pharmaceutical drugs, containing controlled substances, continues to be prevalent.

- Global trend of purchasing drugs over the Internet, particularly on 'dark net' trading platforms using crypto currencies has already spread across South Asia, including India.

◉ ANALYSIS:

- Drug trafficking is a global illicit trade involving the cultivation, manufacture, distribution and sale of substances which are subject to drug prohibition laws. Issues concerning Drug Trafficking can be divided into two broad categories:
  - ◉ The Demand Side (addiction factor)
  - ◉ The Supply Side (Golden Triangle and Golden Crescent)

Demand Side:

- According to professor at department of psychiatry, at the National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences in Bengaluru, drug addiction should be treated as an economic issue in India.

- Drugs follow disposable income. People started taking cocaine to reduce stress and anxiety about work.

- That being said, another categorization would be that of "posh" vs. "poor" drug supply.

- "Poor" denotes here low cost tobacco based substances which are enhancing the spread of cancer in the Country.

- Posh factors in Opiates, cannabis and amphetamine-type stimulants.

Supply Side

- The rise in cocaine busts reflects a wider trend in drug seizures across the country. India has become a trafficking center for other countries. The cocaine supplied here is not only meant for India; traffickers exploit this route to enter other countries.

- Moreover, India would not be used as a supply route if there wasn't already a high level of interest in the drug within the country.

- Golden Triangle: It is the area where the borders of Thailand, Laos, and Myanmar meet at the confluence of the Ruak and Mekong Rivers.

- Golden Crescent is the name given to one of Asia's two principal areas of illicit opium production (with the other being the Golden Triangle), located at the crossroads of Central, South, and Western Asia. This space overlaps three nations, Afghanistan, Iran, and Pakistan, whose mountainous peripheries define the crescent.

- There is another dimension to this drug trade. Drug trafficking also poses a challenge to India's security.
  - ◉ Being closer to the Golden Crescent and Golden Triangle, India has been vulnerable to the trafficking of narcotics and drugs such as heroin, hashish, and synthetic drugs produced in these areas.

- The trends observed at Golden Crescent and Golden Triangle paint a different picture
  - ◉ The quantity of the trafficked heroin through the India-Myanmar border into the Northeast has always been very small as it is meant for local consumption only.
  - ◉ The Golden Crescent, on the other hand, has remained the primary source of trafficked heroin in the country since the early eighties when traffickers started rerouting heroin from this region through India following the Iran-Iraq war.

- The end of the war and reopening of the Balkan trafficking route in the late eighties resulted in a dip in heroin trafficking in the country.

- But, it again picked up in 2012. Increased production of opium in Afghanistan, greater domestic demand in India, and connivance of state government officials and border guarding

forces together contributed towards this increase in heroin trafficking, especially in the Punjab sector (root cause behind 'udta Punjab').

- Apart from narcotics, India has been experiencing a significant rise in the use of psychotropic substances and medicinal preparations among addicts since late 1990.

- Stringent narcotics and drugs laws, rising price of heroin and easy availability of synthetic drugs have propelled this shift.

- Amphetamine Type Stimulant (ATS) and Methamphetamine produced in large quantities in South-east Asia especially in the Golden Triangle are trafficked into India through the porous India-Myanmar border.

- India also manufactures a lot of synthetic drugs and precursor chemicals which are smuggled out of the country:

  ◎ Pharmaceutical preparations containing Dextropropoxyphene and Codeine are trafficked to the neighboring countries.

  ◎ Ketamine is yet another medicinal preparation which is smuggled out of India.

  ◎ Ephedrine and Pseudoephedrine used for manufacturing ATS and Acetic Anhydride used for the manufacturing of heroin are smuggled into the Golden Crescent and Golden Triangle from India.

- This two-way illegal movement of narcotics and drugs pose a significant threat to the national security. The breach of the international borders of the country by drug traffickers implies that the same routes could be used for smuggling in weapons as well as terrorists into the country.

- The nexus between drug traffickers, criminal networks and terrorists are another potent threat. Composite seizures of drugs and arms by security forces at the borders points to a close nexus between drug traffickers and anti-national elements.

- The money generated by the illegal sale of narcotics and drugs is used for financing terrorist activities. The Kashmiri, Sikh and Northeast militants have used drug money to finance their 'struggle' against the Indian state.

Social angle of the Drug trade:

- Large-scale availability of narcotics and drugs encourages demand for narcotics and drugs by domestic population. Consumption of which produces dysfunctional behavior thereby creating law and order problem in the society.

- This causes a huge economic drain on the country through loss of production and diversion of resources for caring and rehabilitation of the drug addicts (Demographic dividend turning into burden).

- On a bigger note, drug trafficking also has a direct bearing on the political process as drug cartels subvert, penetrate and further corrupt state institutions to control the illegal drug trade.

How is India finding solution?

- Given these challenges, India has adopted a comprehensive approach to reduce supply as well as demand for narcotics and drugs. The approach comprises four elements:

  ◎ Enacting legislation such as the Narcotics Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act (NDPS).

  ◎ Ensuring physical security of the borders and coasts by strengthening patrolling and surveillance.

  ◎ Eliciting cooperation from neighbors by entering into several bilateral and multilateral agreements on prevention of illicit traffic of drugs and chemicals.

  ◎ Co-operating with voluntary organizations in the endeavor to prevent abuse of narcotics and synthetic drugs.

- Despite these measures, prevention of drug trafficking in India has achieved only partial success.

- Low priority accorded to the prevention of drug trafficking is one of the main reasons why concerned organization do not display required urgency in apprehending drug peddlers and subsequent investigation.

- Turf wars between various agencies, corruption, intelligence failure, lack of manpower and infrastructure, poor drug detection training, and procedural delays are other factors that hamper the effectiveness of the country's drug prevention efforts.

- Since drug trafficking has serious ramifications on the country's security, it is time India pays much more attention to the problem and formulates robust measures to overcome the loopholes in its strategy for prevention of drug trafficking.

📑 Practice Question

◎ **Breach of the international borders by drug traffickers implies that the same routes could be used for smuggling weapons and terrorists into the country. Elaborate in context of India.**

SOCIAL MEDIA AND ACCOUNTABILITY

CONTEXT

- Recently, Parliamentary panel on information technology told representatives of Facebook, WhatsApp and Instagram that they cannot operate like news media without accountability.

⊙ ABOUT:

- The Parliamentary panel on Information Technology had summoned Twitter head Jack Dorsey to appear before it and had refused to meet "junior officials" of the micro blogging site during its meeting.

- The meeting had been called against the backdrop of growing concerns about safeguarding citizens' data privacy and the possibility of social media platforms being used to interfere in the upcoming elections.

⊙ BACKGROUND:

- A surge of hate speech on Facebook and other social media sites in India has raised the political heat. Under basic User-Content agreements, offensive posts would have to be taken down within one week after a complaint is submitted.

- Companies would also be required to file quarterly reports on their efforts to crack down on hate speech.

- Of late, social media has gained wider attention. In fact, 2018 was the year of judgment for social media: Facebook had one of the worst years with issues being raised over data and user privacy, Google Plus was finally shut down as well.

- The government has been taking a strong view of misuse of social media platforms and is also proposing to amend IT rules to curb fake news and increase accountability of such apps.

> **Some important pointers about social media:**
> - Information and communication technology has changed rapidly over the past 20 years with a key development being the emergence of social media.
> - Across the globe, mobile devices dominate in terms of total minutes spent online. This puts the means to connect anywhere, at any time on any device in everyone's hand.
> - These instruments have also been accused of being a carrier of hate messages and fake news that incited mob violence.
> - And, now they stare at the prospects of stricter government rules, greater accountability, and regulatory scrutiny.

⊙ ANALYSIS

Why the issue is important:

- Hackers got access to the 50 million accounts by exploiting bugs in Facebook's code and stole "access tokens," or digital keys to gain access.

- The investigation showed that in some cases the device makers could pull information on users and their friends' relationship statuses, political leanings, locations, etc., even if explicit consent was not given.

What has happened now?

- The 31-member parliamentary panel is mulling over following pointers:
  - Whether social media platforms are aggregators or selectors of content
  - Have the social media acted as a lobby group in various countries?
  - What is the scope of human intervention in their processes?
  - Whether or not they had ombudsmen in place for grievance redressal.

- What is the difference between social media platforms as aggregators or selectors of content?
  - Social Media Aggregators are used for aggregating the content from the most popular social media accounts in order to be able to analyze, moderate, curate and display the social feed.
  - Selectors of content: When these social media platforms use algorithms to display the "user-specific" content. For example, a student of UPSC civil services examination gets to see various government schemes or ads from coaching institute's content material and/or coaching classes.

Highlights from the Report and Bill:

- **Restrictions on Processing and Collection of Personal Data:** Processing (collection, recording, analysis, disclosure, etc.) of personal data should be done only for "clear, specific and lawful" purposes. Only that data which is necessary for such processing is to be collected from anyone.

- **Processing of Personal Data for "Functions of the State":** Personal data may be processed by the government if this is considered necessary for any function of Parliament or State Legislature. This includes provision of services, issuing of licenses, etc. On the face of it, this looks extremely vague and could lead to misuse.

- **Right to be Forgotten:** Giving "data principals" (persons whose personal data is being processed) the 'right to be forgotten'. This means they will be able to restrict or prevent any display of their personal data once the purpose of disclosing the data has ended, or when the data principal withdraws consent from disclosure of their personal data.

- **Data Localization:** Personal data will need to be stored on servers located within India, and transfers outside the country will need to be subject to safeguards. Critical personal data, however, will only be processed in India.

- **Processing of Sensitive Personal Data to Require Explicit Consent:** "sensitive" personal data (such as passwords, financial data, sexual orientation, biometric data, religion or caste) should not be processed unless someone gives explicit consent – which factors in the purpose of processing.

- **Data Protection Authority:** The Authority shall have the power to inquire into any violations of the data protection regime, and can take action against any data fiduciaries responsible for the same.

Have the media platforms acted in the past to remedy certain ills?

- Social networking platforms in 2018, not only made country-specific changes -- be it labeling forwarded messages, limiting the number of people a user can send a message to at one go and launching public awareness campaigns against fake news. They also agreed to store user data belonging to Indians within the country.

  - Effect of Social Media on Politics: A new study from Pew Research claimed that 62 percent of people get their news from social media, with 18 percent doing so very often.

- Social media allows people to communicate with one another more freely, they are helping to create surprisingly influential social organizations among once-marginalized group. But a key question is whether the information being shared is "genuine" and if there has been any moderation whatsoever placed in its distributions network?

- While social media activism brings an increased awareness about societal issues, questions remain as to whether this awareness is translating into real change.

- Social media platforms have the potential to create division in society, incite violence, pose threat to India's security or let foreign powers meddle in Indian elections.

- Considering the need for clear regulation of this sector, the government has drafted a bill on data protection. It has liberally utilized recommendations of the Justice BN Srikrishna committee's report.

- While the two issues (use of social media as a news platform and data protection) are two different issues, however it is to be aptly considered as intertwined. The absence of clear data protection norms will let the media platforms slip away from the havoc which the malicious news content may produce.

Way forward:

- Facebook, Twitter and the WhatsApp have admitted that there is a scope for corrective measures and they would undertake these measures at the earliest.

- It would be worthy to see if these corrective actions are taken within the GDPR and Justice B.N. Srikrishna committee's report guidelines.

- The social media is a faceless leviathan. What it does has the capacity to impact millions. Within this context, it becomes all the more critical to evolve an ever encompassing and comprehensive framework to allow its run freely under competent accountability norms.

📑 Practice Question

- Recently, Indian Parliamentary House panel told social media platforms that they can't carry news without accountability as aggregators or selectors of content. Analyze the statement in the context of draft Data Protection Bill. Examine, how far the proposed action of the government can create a justified regulation within social media?

INDIA-PACIFIC REGIONAL DIALOGUE

CONTEXT

- In continuation of the process of engaging the global strategic community in an annual review of India's opportunities and challenges in the Indo-Pacific region, the second edition of Indo-Pacific Regional Dialogue (IPRD) - 2019 was held on 05 and 06 March 2019 at the Manekshaw Centre, New Delhi.

⊙ ABOUT:

- The idea of an Indo-Pacific Regional Dialogue (IPRD) was first conceptualized and conducted in 2018, as the apex level conference of the Indian Navy, organized by the National Maritime Foundation as the Navy's Knowledge Partner.

- Through this annual dialogue, the Indian Navy and the National Maritime Foundation, aim to provide a platform for substantive and insightful discussions pertaining to the geopolitical developments affecting the maritime domain of the Indo-Pacific, and provide policy-relevant inputs to the policy-makers and the public at large.

- The permanent theme of this annual dialogue is a review of India's opportunities and challenges in the Indo-Pacific region.

Highlights From the dialogue:

- India's SAGAR doctrine is an enabler for free, open and inclusive Indo-Pacific.

- India's opposition to OBOR because of the China Pakistan Economic Corridor which goes through Pakistan occupied Jammu and Kashmir.

- Assistance has been offered for projects with suspect financial viability, limited local participation, and unequal benefit for the recipients.

- Projects have also, arguably, been undertaken solely to support political and strategic designs with almost no benefit to locals. Such projects have been further enabled by the lack of any credible alternatives.

⊙ BACKGROUND:

- The 2018 edition of the IPRD sought to highlight the opportunities that lay before India's maritime policy-shapers, policy-makers, and, the practitioners of the country's maritime policies.

- The aim of Indo-Pacific Regional Dialogue (IPRD) is to focus attention on the Indo-Pacific, as a maritime geographical-entity, while deliberating aspects of great relevance to regional geopolitics.

⊙ ANALYSIS:

IPRD - 2019 examine five themes:

- 1. Practical solutions for achieving cohesion in the region through maritime connectivity

- 2. Measures to attain and maintain a free-and-open Indo-Pacific

- 3. A regional approach to the region's transition from a 'Brown' to a 'Blue' economy

- 4. Opportunities and challenges arising from the maritime impact of 'Industry 4.0'

- 5. How the twin conceptualizations of 'SAGAR' and 'SAGARMALA' might best be made mutually-reinforcing on a regional level

Relevance of free-and-open Indo-Pacific

- The core tenets of the concept include freedom of navigation, the rule of law, freedom from coercion, respect for sovereignty, private enterprise, and open markets, and the freedom and independence of all nations.

Transition from a 'Brown' (Carbon intensive) to a 'Blue' (carbon neutral and sustainable) economy:

- As the single largest natural asset on the planet which represents some 99% of the earth's living volume, the ocean delivers numerous benefits to humanity.

- It helps to slow climate change by absorbing 30 percent of carbon dioxide emissions and 90 percent of the excess heat trapped by greenhouse gases.

- It serves as the highway for some 90 percent of internationally traded goods, via the shipping sector.

- Millions of the world's poorest people depend heavily on the ocean and coastal resources for their sustenance and livelihoods.

- If the ocean were a country, at several trillion dollars per year of economic activity, the ocean would rank 7th on the list of largest nations by GDP.

- Blue Economy paradigm is a conceptualization and realization of sustainable human development. It mirrors the long-accepted definition of sustainable development as one that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Simply put, it is the utilization of ocean resources for human benefit in a manner that sustains the overall ocean resource base into perpetuity.

- This is in tune with the SDG 12: Responsible Consumption and Production.

Industry 4.0' and the linkage with the Ocean:

- New digital technologies will have a deep impact on four types of development: the first concerns the use of data, computing power and connectivity, including for instance Big Data, Internet of Things and m2m (machine-to-machine) communication.

- The second concerns analysis systems which allow to obtain value that is information, from the data collected.

- The third development category concerns the interaction between man and machine, which requires increasingly intuitive interfaces, and augmented reality.

- Finally there is this passage from digital to "real" which includes additive manufacturing, 3D printing, robotics, communication and new technologies to collect and use energy better.

Now, it is pertinent to link jobs that will be in demand by 2020 in maritime industry and greatly facilitated by application of Industry 4.0:

- Ship Automation Specialist: Totally Integrated Automation and Totally Integrated Power concepts not only reduce component life-cycle costs and increase levels of system reliability and safety.

- Cyber Security Specialist: The cyber security crisis is more rampant than ever, especially when it comes to maritime. Maersk and Clarksons cyber incidents during 2017 serve as examples. Shipping companies hire persons responsible for designing, testing, implementing and monitoring security measures for their systems in order to prevent potential cyber-attacks.

- Energy Efficiency Optimization Specialist

- Demand and supply linkages using Artificial Intelligence and faster transportation route when ships "talk to each other" (fuel and time savings)

SAGAR - Security and Growth for All in the Region:

- Vision for the Indian Ocean Region to preserve its organic unity while advancing cooperation.

- Using capabilities for the collective well-being, and the mutual benefit of maritime neighbors and island states in building their capabilities.

- India envisages the Indian Ocean as an engine for growth and prosperity in the region and beyond, it is of utmost importance that these waters remain safe and secure.

SAGARMALA

- The prime objective of the Sagarmala project is to promote port-led direct and indirect development and to provide infrastructure to transport goods to and from ports quickly, efficiently and cost-effectively.

Kind of development projects that could be undertaken in Sagarmala initiative are:

- Port-led industrialization
- Port based urbanization
- Port based and coastal tourism and recreational activities
- Short-sea shipping coastal shipping and Inland Waterways Transportation
- Ship building, ship repair and ship recycling
- Logistics parks, warehousing, maritime zones/ services
- Integration with hinterland hubs
- Offshore storage, drilling platforms
- Modernizing the existing ports and development of new ports
- Specialization of ports in certain economic activities such as energy, containers, chemicals, coal, agro products, Offshore Renewable Energy Projects with base ports for installations

- This strategy incorporates both aspects of port-led development viz. port-led direct development and port-led indirect development.

- Given the importance of Industry 4.0, SAGAR, SAGARMALA and Blue economy and the assertive rise of China, the imperatives behind Indo-Pacific Regional Dialogue gains wider attention.

- The Indo-Pacific Region holds great promise but its future is mired in the shifting plates of global politics and the fault lines of history.

⊙ WAY FORWARD:

- All countries must work to create an environment in the Indo-Pacific where multiple options are available to countries seeking financial assistance so that they are not entrapped by those with unscrupulous designs.

- In this context, India has aptly pitched for its clear and explicit SAGAR led SAGARMALA approach. Though the intention is concise, what India has to work on is to ensure effective implementation of the ideology - something on which China has earned a greater credibility (the implementation factor).

📑 Practice Question

- **The Indo-Pacific Region holds great promise but its future is mired in the shifting plates of global politics and the fault lines of history. Discuss and evaluate effectiveness of Indo-Pacific Regional Dialogue (IPRD) in bringing a culture of cooperation and shared growth.**

DRAFT EMIGRATION BILL, 2019

CONTEXT

- **The draft Emigration Bill 2019, recently released by the ministry of external affairs (MEA), and currently pending for parliamentary approval, proposes a new legislative framework for matters related to emigration of Indian nationals.**

◉ ABOUT:

- It provides for:
  - ◉ Comprehensive emigration management,
  - ◉ To institute regulatory mechanisms governing overseas employment of Indian nationals,
  - ◉ To establish a framework for protection and promotion of welfare of emigrants.

Key features of the bill:

- It is set to replace the extant one under the Emigration Act of 1983.
- The draft bill proposes a three-tier institutional framework, with the MEA as the nodal ministry.
  - ◉ At the top, a central Emigration Management Authority (EMA) has been proposed for policy guidance and supervision.
  - ◉ In the middle, a Bureau of Emigration Policy and Planning, and a Bureau of Emigration Administration shall handle day-to-day operational matters and oversee the welfare of emigrants.
  - ◉ At the bottom, nodal authorities in states and union territories shall coordinate aspects of management related to both emigrants and returnees.
- This could allow vertical policy coherence on emigration matters—particularly in promoting and managing safe, orderly and regular emigration.

◉ BACKGROUND:

Need for the Bill:

- India is among a handful of countries that has explicit legislation for promoting emigration.
- The intention of replacing the old Act is consistent with the government's effort to weed out anachronistic laws and update them in line with modern conventions.
- The 1983 Act, enacted in the specific context of large-scale emigration to the Gulf, falls short in addressing the wide geo-economic, geo-political and geo-strategic impact that emigration has today.

- The United Nations' "2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development", for the first time recognized migration as a core element of the global development agenda, and has set several targets that relate to it.
- These cover student mobility, human trafficking and exploitation, labour migration and employment, migration governance, remittances and migration data.
- One objective of the new legislation (While not explicitly stated in the draft bill) is to draw up appropriate regulations that would conform to the contemporary global agenda on these matters.

International Practices:

- Historically, countries which have enacted emigration laws—like the Soviet Union in the post-World War II period, restricting East-West migration in the Eastern Bloc, or North Korea today—have used such legislation to essentially prohibit international movement of their nationals.
- The laws of most countries today address only immigration.

◉ ANALYSIS:

Significance of the Bill

- The emigration bill assumes significance for two main aspects.
- First, since 1983, there has been a structural shift in the quantum, nature, pattern and direction of emigration from India.
  - ◉ As per the latest World Migration Report published by the International Organization for Migration, India features as the largest country of origin for international migrants (about 30 million in 2017);
  - ◉ The largest recipient of remittances (about $80 billion or ₹5.6 trillion in 2018); and
  - ◉ Figures in five of the top 20 migration corridors from Asian countries.
- Second, the government's attitude towards international migrants has changed over the time.
  - ◉ From labelling NRIs as "non-required

Indians" at the height of the "brain drain" in the 1970s and 1980s to addressing them as "India's brand ambassadors" and "symbols of our capacities and capabilities", as the Prime Minister did at this year's Pravasi Bharatiya Divas, India's position on the phenomenon has come a long way.

◉ The proposed bill, with its thrust on strengthening the institutional framework for emigration management, affirms that shift in outlook.

Issues with the draft Bill:

● **The Bill doesn't focus much on White-collared emigrants:**

◉ The contours of the new bill still appear to focus on managing blue-collar emigration, a la the 1983 Act.

◉ This is evident as the draft bill lists at length the duties and functions of recruitment agencies and sub-agents, which, inter alia include skill upgradation and pre-departure orientation programmes designed to serve only such emigrants.

◉ While the need for this is clear, since blue-collared workers are more vulnerable to exploitation and migration shocks, the bill must also offer management structures and policies that better reflect the current nature and pattern of emigration—specifically, concerning the aspirations of and challenges for white-collared emigrants.

● **The bill lacks cross-sectoral approach in emigration management:**

◉ As per the draft bill, the EMA shall have representation from only two other ministries: home affairs and human resource development.

◉ It notably excludes representation of the ministry of commerce and industry, the nodal ministry involved in Mode 4 negotiations (movement of natural persons) under the General Agreement on Trade in Services at the WTO.

◉ At a time when nativism has led to heightened protectionism in the labour markets of destination economies, policy formulation on migration will increasingly need integration with trade and investment agreements. This shall necessitate a cross-sectoral approach in emigration management.

◉ However, in its proposed form, such horizontal policy coherence is unlikely to be achieved.

Conclusion:

● The draft Emigration Bill 2019 does improve upon the extant legislative framework by adopting a whole-of-cycle migration approach. But, the current international paradigm relating to labour market protectionism demands a wider approach.

● We need to graduate from merely enacting emigration management legislation to practicing more broad-based diaspora engagement policies that could provide a cushion in these turbulent times.

📑 Practice Question

◉ **India is among a handful of countries that has explicit legislation for promoting emigration. Why does India need an Emigration Bill? Also, what are the major problem being faced by Indian emigrants?**

◉ **"If the country of origin is negligent about its duties towards its migrant workers, how can we have expectations from the destination countries?" In the light of the draft emigration bill, 2019 discuss the given statement.**

MODEL CODE OF CONDUCT

CONTEXT

- **Model code of conduct comes into effect across country with the announcement of LS elections.**

- **Election Commission has also ordered that social media posts of a poster showing Wing Commander Abhinandan, shared by a BJP leader, be taken down.**

⊙ ABOUT:

What is model code of Conduct?

- It is a consensus document i.e. political parties have themselves agreed to keep their conduct during elections in check, and to work within the code.

- Article 324 of the Constitution gives the EC the power to monitor the Centre, all the state governments, all the candidates and their respective political parties. The Election Commission of India releases these guidelines to conduct free and fair election in the country.

- Candidates and parties should-
  - ◎ Show respect to their opponents
  - ◎ Criticise their policies and programmes constructively
  - ◎ Not resort to mudslinging and personal attacks

- At the time of Lok Sabha elections, both the Union and state governments are covered.

- It contains 8 parts:
  - ◎ **Part 1:** Deals with general precepts of good behaviour expected from candidates and political parties.
  - ◎ **Part 2 and 3:** Focus on public meetings and processions.
  - ◎ **Part 4 and 5:** Describe how political parties and candidates should conduct themselves on the day of polling and at the polling booths.
  - ◎ **Part 6:** About authority appointed by the EC to receive complaints on violations of the MCC.
  - ◎ **Part 7:** About the political party in power.
  - ◎ **Part 8:** Manifestos must be pursuant to the directions of the Supreme Court.

⊙ BACKGROUND:

- Kerala was the first state to adopt a code of conduct for elections. It did so in 1960 assembly elections.

- The Election Commission decided to emulate Kerala's example and circulate the draft among all recognised parties and the state governments for the Lok Sabha elections 1962.

- In 1974, the EC released a formal Model Code of Conduct.

- The EC, just before the 1979 Lok Sabha elections, released a revised Model Code with seven parts, with one part devoted to the party in power and what it could and could not do once elections were announced.

- In 2014, EC introduced Part VIII on manifestos, pursuant to the directions of the Supreme Court.

⊙ ANALYSIS:

- MCC provisions for the political party in power:

- It forbids central and state government ministers from using official machinery for election work and combining official visits with electioneering.

- The government cannot announce any financial grants, promise construction of roads or other facilities.

- It can't make any ad hoc appointments in government or public undertaking during the time the code is in force.

- Ministers can't enter any polling station or counting centre except in their capacity as a voter or a candidate.

- But the code does not stand in the way of on-going schemes of development work or welfare, relief and rehabilitation measures meant for people suffering from drought, floods and other natural calamities. EC forbids use of these works for election propaganda.

Social media under MCC:

- In 2013 the EC laid down guidelines to regulate the use of social media by the parties and candidates.

- Under it, candidates have to provide their email address and details of accounts on Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, etc.

- Candidates have to add the expenditure on advertisements posted on social media to their overall expenditure for the election.

Extent of MCC application period:

- The code application starts from the day of announcement of election schedule and it lasts till the EC notifies the list of elected representatives after counting of votes.

- The commission can not make announcement more than three weeks ahead of issuing the formal notification of election.

Legality of MCC:

- It is not a legally enforceable document.

- The commission usually uses moral sanction to get political parties and candidates to fall in line.

- The commission is of the opinion that making the MCC legally enforceable would be self-defeating because any violation must be responded to quickly – and this will not be possible it the matter goes to court.

- Instances of EC taking punitive actions in past:

  - In the Assembly elections of Madhya Pradesh in 2003 the then Chief Minister of Punjab used state government aircraft to travel from Chandigarh to Indore for an official purpose. From there he travelled to Bhopal to campaign. The EC forced him to pay the government the cost of entire air journey from Chandigarh to Bhopal and back.

  - In 2013, the EC issued a notice to Union Minister Balram Naik for announcing a Rs 20 crore scheme for the construction of hostels specifically for OBC students in Madhya Pradesh, where polls had already begun. He was asked to reply explaining why punitive action should not be taken against him for violating the EC model code of conduct.

  - In Lok Sabha elections of 2014, EC banned BJP leader and Samajwadi Party leader from campaigning in Uttar Pradesh for making provocative and prejudicial statements while canvassing.

Recent recommendations to improve the existing MCC:

- In 2015, the Law Commission in its report on Electoral Reforms, noted that the MCC prohibits the issue of advertisement at the cost of public exchequer in newspapers during the election period. However, it observed that since the MCC comes into operation only from the date on which the Commission announces elections, the government can release advertisements prior to the announcement of elections giving an advantage to the ruling party.

- Therefore, the Commission recommended that a restriction should be imposed on government-sponsored advertisements for up to six months prior to the date of expiry of the House/Assembly.

- However, it stated that an exception may be carved out for advertisements highlighting the government's poverty alleviation programmes or any health related schemes.

⊙ WAY FORWARD:

- MCC should be provided with statutory backing. It should be made a part of the Representation of the People Act, 1951. The legal provisions will make the MCC more powerful.

- There should be establishment of special fast track courts to solve the election MCC violation cases at a faster rate.

- The law commission recommendation should be implemented. It will save the unnecessary spending of public money. That money instead should be used for the welfare of the people.

- Public need to be made more aware of the MCC, so they could punish those parties and candidates who does not adhere to it.

- The parties and candidates should themselves practice free and fair election campaign without the need of code enforcement body i.e. the Election Commission.

📑 Practice Question

- **Model Code of Conduct has improved a lot since its inception in 1974, in this context, discuss the new challenges coming up before the commission and how it should be dealt with.**

SECTION: B
(PRELIMS)

CURRENT AFFAIRS

FLOOD MANAGEMENT AND BORDER AREAS PROGRAMME (FMBAP)

◉ **CONTEXT**
- **Cabinet approves "FMBAP" for Flood Management Works in entire country and River Management Activities and works related to Border Areas during 2017-18 to 2019-20.**

◉ **ABOUT**
- The Scheme "FMBAP" has been framed by merging the components of two continuing XII Plan schemes titled "Flood Management Programme (FMP)" and "River Management Activities and Works related to Border Areas (RMBA)".

- The aim of the Scheme is to assist the State Governments to provide reasonable degree of protection against floods in critical areas by adopting optimum combination of structural and non-structural measures and enhancing capabilities of State / Central Government officials in related fields.

Features:

- The works under the scheme will protect valuable land from erosion and flooding and help in maintaining peace along the border.

- The Scheme aims at completion of the on-going projects already approved under FMP. Further, the scheme also caters to Hydro-meteorological observations and Flood Forecasting on common rivers with the neighbouring countries.

- The Scheme also includes survey and investigations, preparation of DPR etc. of water resources projects on the common rivers with neighbouring countries like Pancheshwar Multipurpose Project, Sapta Kosi-Sun Kosi Projects in Nepal which would benefit both countries.

Funding pattern:

- The funding pattern for FM Component for works in general category States will continue to be 50% (Centre) : 50% (State) and for projects of North Eastern States, Sikkim, J&K, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand, the funding pattern will continue to be 70% (Centre) : 30% (State).

Benefits

- It will be implemented throughout the country for effective flood management, erosion control and anti-sea erosion.

- The proposal will benefit towns, villages, industrial establishments, communication links, agricultural fields, infrastructure etc. from floods and erosion in the country.

- The catchment area treatment works will help in reduction of sediment load into rivers.

MARAYOOR JAGGERY

◉ **CONTEXT**
- **The Marayoor jaggery, the traditional and handmade product from Idukki district, has finally received the Geographical Indication (GI) tag from central government.**

◉ **ABOUT**

Marayoor Jaggery

- Marayoor/'Unda Sharkarai' is one of the sweetest jaggeries produced in Idukki.

- It is made using only traditional methods, it is dark brown in colour, high in sweetness, calcium and iron, with less sodium content and less insoluble impurities.

- It is not produced in modern factories or using modern equipment. It is prepared in sheds located on the sugarcane farm.

- No chemicals are added during the manufacturing process.

- The quality of jaggery is attributed to low temperature prevailing in the area, soil characteristics, quality of water used for irrigation and jaggery production, the traditional methods of production and sugarcane varieties used in cultivation.

- Over 1,000 farmers in Marayoor area engaged in sugarcane cultivation. A few years ago, places near Marayoor, like Pattam Colony, Mashi, Koodavayal and Meladi, too, started cultivating sugarcane widely. The jaggery produced from the geographical area has a higher market demand than that produced from other regions, since it is very sweet in taste and is of good quality.

⊙ **SIGNIFICANCE**

- The GI tag will provide more windows of opportunity, market and price to the traditional sugarcane farmers in Marayoor. One of the major challenges these farmers have been facing is the sale of fake jaggery from Tamil Nadu, which are being sold with the tag of Marayaoor jaggery. This has led to the constant fall in the price of the original jaggery, thus forcing several farmers not to take up sugarcane cultivation anymore. It will ensure getting farmers fair price for their produce.

GI Tag and its Regulation

- Geographical Indications of Goods are defined as that aspect of industrial property which refer to the geographical indication referring to a country or to a place situated therein as being the country or place of origin of that product.

- Typically, such a name conveys an assurance of quality and distinctiveness which is essentially attributable to the fact of its origin in that defined geographical locality, region or country.

- Under Articles 1 (2) and 10 of the Paris Convention for the Protection of Industrial Property, geographical indications are covered as an element of IPRs. They are also covered under Articles 22 to 24 of the Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) Agreement, which was part of the Agreements concluding the Uruguay Round of GATT negotiations.

- India, as a member of the World Trade Organization (WTO), enacted the Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration & Protection) Act, 1999 has come into force with effect from 15th September 2003.

- This Act is administered by the Controller General of Patents, Designs and Trade Marks, who is also the Registrar of Geographical Indications.

TRANSPORT AND MARKETING ASSISTANCE

⊙ **CONTEXT**

- **Department of Commerce of the Ministry of Commerce & Industry has notified a scheme for Transport and Marketing Assistance (TMA) for Specified Agriculture Products.**

⊙ **ABOUT**

Transport and Marketing Assistance for Specified Agriculture Products

- It aims to provide assistance for the international component of freight and marketing of agricultural produce.

- It will mitigate disadvantage of higher cost of transportation of export of specified agriculture products due to trans-shipment

- It also aims to promote brand recognition for Indian agricultural products in the specified overseas markets.

- The scheme will be included in the Foreign Trade Policy (2015-20).

Coverage

- All exporters, duly registered with relevant Export Promotion Council as per Foreign Trade Policy, of eligible agriculture products shall be covered under this scheme.

- The assistance, at notified rates, will be available for export of eligible agriculture products to the permissible countries, as specified from time to time.

Applicability

- The Scheme would be applicable for a period as specified from time to time. Presently the Scheme would be available for exports effected from 1.3.2019 to 31.03.2020

Pattern of Assistance

- Assistance under TMA would be provided in cash through direct bank transfer as part reimbursement of freight paid.

- Free On Board supplies where no freight is paid by Indian exporters are not covered under this scheme.

- The level of assistance would be different for different regions as notified from time to time for export of eligible products.

- The assistance shall be admissible only if payments for the exports are received in Free Foreign Exchange through normal banking channels.

- The scheme shall be admissible for the exports made through Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) ports only.

- The scheme covers freight and marketing assistance for export by air as well as by sea (both normal and reefer cargo).

Competent Authority

- Directorate General of Foreign Trade will lay down procedure for scrutiny of the claims, audit of the payments made, recovery of the ineligible/excess paid assistance, interest on such recoveries.

- The defaulters shall be liable for penal action under the provisions of Foreign Trade (Development & Regulation) Act, 1992, Rules and orders made thereunder.

Directorate General of Foreign Trade

- DGFT is an attached office of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry and is headed by Director General of Foreign Trade.

- Right from its inception till 1991, when liberalization in the economic policies of the Government took place, this organization has been essentially involved in the regulation and promotion of foreign trade through regulation.

- Keeping in line with liberalization and globalization and the overall objective of increasing of exports, DGFT has since been assigned the role of "facilitator".

- The shift was from prohibition and control of imports/exports to promotion and facilitation of exports/imports, keeping in view the interests of the country.

Electronic Data Interchange(EDI)Ports

- EDI comprises of many types of "messages" which when transmitted between two parties is designed to substitute other forms of data transfer.

- EDI messaging is also used to send the data to Customs (Manifest, Bill of Entry), Port (Container Stowage planning, Cargo Dues, Load/Discharge list, Container moves), Principals (Load/Discharge list, Container moves, Bookings).

WHITE LABEL ATMS (WLAs)

⊙ **CONTEXT**

- **The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has come up with a review of operations of White Label ATMs (WLAs) in the country.**

⊙ **ABOUT**

White Label ATMs

- Automated Teller Machines (ATMs) set up, owned and operated by non-bank entities are called "White Label ATMs" (WLAs). They provide the banking services to the customers of banks in India, based on the cards (debit/credit/prepaid) issued by banks.

- The recent guidelines are as follows:

  - To enhance the viability of WLAs, it has been decided to allow the WLA Operators to buy wholesale cash, above a threshold of 1 lakh pieces (and in multiples thereof) of any denomination, directly from the Reserve Bank (Issue Offices) and Currency Chests against full payment.

  - The central bank has also allowed the operators to source cash from any scheduled bank, including Cooperative Banks and Regional Rural Banks.

  - Operators can now offer bill payment and Interoperable Cash Deposit services, subject to technical feasibility and certification by National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI).

  - The display of advertisements pertaining to non-financial products / services anywhere within the WLA premises, including the WLA screen, except the main signboard has also been allowed. However, the bank noted that it shall be ensured that the advertisements running on the screen disappear once the customer commences a transaction.

  - The permission to WLA Operators to source cash from retail outlets, accorded vide circular dated December 30, 2016, stands repealed.

  - Banks may issue co-branded ATM cards in partnership with the authorized WLA Operators and may extend the benefit of 'on-us' transactions to their WLAs as well.

  - All guidelines, safeguards, standards and control measures applicable to banks relating to currency handling, and cyber-security framework for ATMs, shall also be applicable to the WLA Operators.

  - This directive is issued under Section 10(2) read with Section 18 of Payment and Settlement Systems Act, 2007 (Act 51 of 2007).

INDIA COOLING ACTION PROGRAMME

⊙ **CONTEXT**

- **Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change launched the India Cooling Action Plan (ICAP) recently in New Delhi.**

- **ICAP provides an integrated vision towards cooling across sectors encompassing inter alia reduction of cooling demand, refrigerant transition, enhancing energy efficiency and better technology options with a 20-year time horizon.**

⊙ **ABOUT**

The India Cooling Action seeks to:

- Reduce cooling demand across sectors by 20% to 25% by 2037-38.

- Reduce refrigerant demand by 25% to 30% by 2037-38.

- Reduce cooling energy requirements by 25% to 40% by 2037-38.

- Recognize "cooling and related areas" as a thrust area of research under the national S&T Programme.

- Training and certification of 100,000 servicing sector technicians by 2022-23, synergizing with Skill India Mission. These actions will have significant climate benefits.

Socio-economic benefits:

- Thermal comfort for all - provision for cooling for EWS and LIG housing.

- Sustainable cooling - low GHG emissions related to cooling

- Doubling Farmers Income - better cold chain infrastructure - better value of products to farmers, less wastage of produce.

- Skilled workforce for better livelihoods and environmental protection.

- Make in India - domestic manufacturing of air-conditioning and related cooling equipment's

- Robust R&D on alternative cooling technologies - to provide the push to innovation in a cooling sector.

- Cooling is also linked to human health and productivity.

- Linkages of cooling with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are well acknowledged.

- The cross-sectoral nature of cooling and its use in the development of the economy makes provision for cooling an important developmental necessity.

- The development of ICAP has been a multi-stakeholder inclusive process encompassing different Government Ministries/Departments/Organizations, Industry and Industry Associations, Think tanks, Academic and R&D institutions.

STAR LABELLING PROGRAMMES

⊙ **CONTEXT**

- **Star Labelling Programmes, formulated by Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE), has been expanded to air-conditioners and washing machines. Initially, it will be implemented on a voluntary basis and will be valid up to December 31, 2020.**

⊙ **ABOUT**

More on news

- This initiative will promote advancement of technology and energy efficiency in microwave ovens which is becoming a popular household gadget.

- For washing machines, BEE has also expanded the criteria for inclusion of water efficiency, in addition to energy performance for grant of Star Rating.

What is BEE Star Rating?

- Energy 'labelling' is one of the most cost effective policy tools for improving energy efficiency and lowering energy cost of appliances/equipment for the consumers.

- Star ratings are provided to all the major kind of appliances in the form of labels.

- These star ratings are given between 1- 5 and they provide a basic sense of how energy efficient each product is, just in a single glance.

- The manufacturers are officially required to put these labels as per the Standards and Labelling Program introduced in 2006.

Need for Ratings

- To educate and inform consumers about how energy efficient each product is.

- This also makes the manufacturer responsible for creating products which are highly energy efficient as consumers may eventually prefer better rated products.

- How do they decide the BEE Star Ratings?

- One of the most common myths about the BEE Star Rating is that it is solely based on the appliance's power consumption. A lot of factors contribute into formulating the final star rating on the product.

- Although the manufacturers rate and label the product, BEE sets all the standards and norms which need to be followed while rating an appliance. While some category of appliances necessarily have to be given a star rating, for others it's optional.

- Appliances which need to have an energy rating label mandatorily: Frost-free refrigerator, Tubular Fluorescent Lamps, Room Air-Conditioners, Distribution Transformer, Colour TV, CST AC, Direct Cool Refrigerator and Electric Geyser.

What are the two variants of the labelling?

- **Big energy rating label**

  ◉ It is aimed at appliances which have a constant usage and consume more electricity.

  ◉ These labels show additional information such as the yearly energy consumption of the product, brand name, product category and much more.

  ◉ For consumers, this big label is helpful as it allows one to calculate the actual money you would spend in electricity bills for that particular product.

  ◉ Products with a big label: Refrigerators, air-conditioners, geysers and washing machines.

- **Small energy rating label**

  ◉ Small labels can be found in appliances which usually don't consume more energy. These labels just give you a visual representation of the energy consumption levels by showing star ratings.

  ◉ Products with a small label: Ceiling fans, tube lights, computers/laptops and televisions.

Bureau of Energy Efficiency

- It was set up on 1st March 2002 under the provision of the Energy Conservation Act, 2001.

- Its mission is to assist developing policies and strategies with a thrust on self-regulation and market principles with the primary objective of reducing energy intensity of the Indian economy within the overall framework aforementioned act.

- This will be achieved with active participation of all stakeholders, resulting into accelerated and sustained adoption of energy efficiency in all sectors.

UN ENVIRONNENT ASSEMBLY

⊙ **CONTEXT**

- **Fourth UN Environment Assembly was held in Nairobi, represented by thousands of delegates, business leaders and campaigners.**

- **Assembly will provide the framework for shifting our global economic systems towards more sustainable trajectories that tackle our environmental challenges and bring us closer to the 'future we want'.**

⊙ **ABOUT**

More on news

- The theme of the fourth Assembly was 'Innovative Solutions to Environmental Challenges and Sustainable Consumption and Production".

- Major focus was to curb plastic waste, a source of long-term pollution and worsening contamination of the ocean's food chain.

- The 2019 Assembly will aim to build the policies, partnerships and a culture of innovation that will support the solutions and systemic change needed for sustainability to thrive.

Areas of focus:

- Tackling the environmental challenges related to poverty and natural resources management, including sustainable food systems, food security and halting biodiversity loss;

- Introducing life-cycle approaches to resource efficiency, energy, chemicals and waste management;

- Ensuring sustainable business development at a time of rapid technological change.

What is UN Environment Assembly?

- It is the world's highest-level decision-making body on the environment.

- It addresses the critical environmental challenges facing the world today.

- Understanding these challenges and preserving and rehabilitating our environment is at the heart of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

- It meets biennially to set priorities for global environmental policies and develop international environmental law.

- Through its resolutions and calls to action, the Assembly provides leadership and catalyses intergovernmental action on the environment.

- Decision-making requires broad participation, which is why the Assembly provides an opportunity for all peoples to help design solutions for our planet's health.

How did it come into being?

- The UN Environment Assembly was created in June 2012, when world leaders called for UN Environment to be strengthened and upgraded during the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, also referred to as RIO+20.

- It embodies a new era in which the environment is at the centre of the international community's focus and is given the same level of prominence as issues such as peace, poverty, health and security.

- The establishment of the Assembly was the culmination of decades of international efforts, initiated at the UN Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm in 1972 and aimed at creating a coherent system of international environmental governance.

Earlier Sessions:

- The first and second sessions tackled and adopted resolutions on major issues of illegal trade in wildlife, air quality, environmental rule of law, financing the Green Economy and the Sustainable Development Goals.

- It also aimed at "delivering on the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development".

- The Third Environment Assembly took place in Nairobi, in December 2017 Assembly under the overarching theme "Towards a pollution-free planet".

NATIONAL KNOWLEDGE NETWORK

⊙ CONTEXT	- India has decided to extend National Knowledge Network to Bangladesh.
	- Prime Ministers of India and Bangladesh unveiled e-plaques for supply of buses and trucks, inauguration of 36 community clinics, 11 water treatment plants, and extension of National Knowledge Network to Bangladesh.

⊙ **ABOUT**

More on news

- National Knowledge Network will connect scholars and research institutes in Bangladesh with India and the world.
- Buses and trucks would assist the efforts towards affordable public transportation; water treatment plants will help supply clean water; and community clinics will benefit about 2 lakh people in Bangladesh
- The government is in the process of extending India's National Knowledge Network to SAARC countries in order to enhance cooperation in the field of education.

What is National Knowledge Network?

- NKN is a state-of-the-art Pan-India network and is a revolutionary step towards creating a knowledge society without boundaries.
- NKN is intended to connect all the knowledge and research institutions in the country using high bandwidth / low latency network.
- In March 2010, the Cabinet Committee on Infrastructure (CCI) approved the establishment of the National Knowledge Network (NKN) to be implemented by National Informatics Centre over a period of 10 years.
- Establishing NKN is a significant step towards ushering in a knowledge revolution in the country with connectivity to 1500+ institutions.

NKN has been established keeping the following features in mind:

- Establishing a high-speed backbone connectivity which will enable knowledge and information sharing.
- Enabling collaborative research, development and Innovation.
- Facilitating advanced distance education in specialized fields such as engineering, science, medicine etc.
- Facilitating an ultra-high speed backbone for e-Governance.
- Facilitating integration of different sectoral networks in the field of research, education, health, commerce and governance.
- Link to Global Networks to collaborate with the research communities across the globe.
- NKN is designed as a Smart Ultra High Bandwidth network that seamlessly interconnects the leading Scientific and Technological institutions - which are pursuing world-class research and development.
- NKN design is inherently proactive; it takes into account the requirements that may occur in the near term and long term.

⊙ **SIGNIFICANCE**

- It will facilitate the development of India's information infrastructure, stimulate research, and create next generation applications and services.
- The purpose of NKN goes to the very core of the country's quest for building quality institutions with requisite research facilities and to create a pool of highly trained professionals.
- NKN is a significant step which will enable scientists, researchers and students from across the country to work together for advancing human development in critical and emerging areas.

National Informatics Centre(Rashtriya Suchna Vigyan Kendra)

- It is the premier science and technology organisation of the Government of India in informatics services and information and communication technology (ICT) applications.
- It is part of the Indian Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology's Department of Electronics & Information Technology.
- The NIC was established in 1976.

NATIONAL MISSION ON TRANSFORMATIVE MOBILITY AND BATTERY STORAGE

⊙ **CONTEXT**

- **The Union Cabinet chaired recently approved the setting up of a National Mission on Transformative Mobility and Battery Storage, to drive clean, connected, shared, sustainable and holistic mobility initiatives.**

⊙ **ABOUT**

- Other than setting up of a National Mission on Transformative Mobility and Battery Storage followings were also approved:

  ◎ Phased Manufacturing Programme (PMP) valid for 5 years till 2024 to support setting up of a few large-scale, export-competitive integrated batteries and cell-manufacturing Giga plants in India.

  ◎ Creation of a PMP valid for 5 years till 2024 to localize production across the entire Electric Vehicles value chain.

- Both PMP schemes will be finalized by the National Mission on Transformative Mobility and Battery Storage.

National Mission on Transformative Mobility and Battery Storage

- The Mission with an Inter-Ministerial Steering Committee will be chaired by CEO NITI Aayog.

- The Steering Committee will be comprised of Secretaries from Ministry of Road Transport and Highways, Ministry of Power, Ministry of New and Renewable Energy, Department of Science and Technology, Department of Heavy Industry, Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade, and Director General, Bureau of Industrial Standards.

- The Mission will recommend and drive the strategies for transformative mobility and Phased Manufacturing Programmes for EVs, EV Components and Batteries.

- A Phased Manufacturing Program (PMP) will be launched to localize production across the entire EV value chain. The National Mission on Transformative Mobility and Battery Storage will determine the contours of PMP, and will finalise the details of such a program.

- The details of the value addition that can be achieved with each phase of localisation will be finalised by the Mission with a clear Make in India strategy for the electric vehicle components as well as battery.

- The Mission will coordinate with key stakeholders in Ministries/ Departments and the states to integrate various initiatives to transform mobility in India.

- A phased roadmap to implement battery manufacturing at Giga-scale will be considered with initial focus on large-scale module and pack assembly plants by 2019-20, followed by integrated cell manufacturing by 2021-22.

- Details of the PMP for Batteries shall be formulated by the Mission. The Mission will ensure holistic and comprehensive growth of the battery manufacturing industry in India.

  ◎ It will prepare the necessary roadmap that will enable India to leverage upon its size and scale to produce innovative, competitive multi-modal mobility solutions that can be deployed globally in diverse contexts.

  ◎ It will define the roadmap for transformative mobility in "New India" by introducing a sustainable mobility ecosystem and fostering Make-in-India to boost domestic manufacturing and employment generation in the country.

⊙ **SIGNIFICANCE**

- The Mission will drive mobility solutions that will bring in significant benefits to the industry, economy and country.

- These solutions will help improve air quality in cities along with reducing India's oil import dependence and enhance the uptake of renewable energy and storage solutions.

- The actions in this regard will benefit all citizens as the aim is to promote 'Ease of Living' and enhance the quality of life of our citizens and also provide employment opportunities through 'Make-in-India' across a range of skillsets.

- It will further facilitate cooperative federalism, extensive stakeholder and inter-ministerial consultations and implement end-to-end policy framework for transforming the mobility landscape with particular focus on:

  - Manufacturing

  - Specification & standards

  - Fiscal incentives

  - Overall demand creation and projections

  - Regulatory framework

  - Research & Development

OFFICIAL SECRETS ACT

⊙ **CONTEXT**

- **In response to the earlier order of Supreme Court which rejected any independent inquiry in Rafale deal, a fresh petition has been filed to review the courts order.**

- **The fresh petition is based on the evidences collected from the Defence Ministry of India and those evidences/records come under the Official Secrets Act as per governments stand in the SC.**

⊙ **ABOUT**

More on news

- According to the government, these documents (evidences) were stolen or purloined by former or current officers in the ministry of defence.

- These are privileged documents under the Official Secrets Act (OSA) and even can not be accessed through Right to Information Act.

What is Official Secrets Act?

- An 'Official Secrets Act' is a generic term that is used to refer to a law designed to keep certain kinds of information confidential, including, but not always limited to, information involving the affairs of state, diplomacy, national security, espionage and other state secrets.

- Across multiple countries, the Official Secrets Acts follow a similar pattern: classifying certain categories of information as "official secrets," and then providing stiff penalties for any sharing, dissemination or publication of such information.

⊙ **BACKGROUND**

- The First Official Secrets Act was enacted in 1904 under the Viceroy Lord Curzon.

- This was replaced by Official Secrets Act 1923.

- After independence the Act was amended and renamed by the Parliament as Indian Official Secrets (Amendment) Act, 1967, it made the Act much more stringent than it was under British rule.

What are the main features of Indian Official Secrets Act?

- The 1923 Act includes penalties for spying under section 3 of the Act. This section provides for penalties for spying, where if any one approached, inspected, etc. any vicinity or place for making any sketch, plan, model, etc.

- It is liable to be punished under this provision with imprisonment which is maximum 15 years as provided under these provisions.

- The Section 4 of the Act makes the act of communicating or even attempting to communicate with foreign agents, is to be treated as relevant evidence for proving that such person communicating or attempting communication is against the safety or interests of State.

- Section 5 says that, if the person having possession of any secret official code, etc. used such secret stuff in prohibited place or otherwise in the manner which is likely to assist an enemy or otherwise is hazard to sovereignty and integrity of India then such person to be held guilty under this Act.

- Similarly, for all other acts relating to such secret official information which are provided under this provision of Section 5 of the Act are prohibited and if done, then persons doing this are liable to punishment which should include imprisonment and fine.

What is the criticism?

- The primary critique of the Act is that it flips the constitutive logic of a democratic republic, where the state is supposed to be transparent to its citizens.

- While it is nobody's case that all information ought to be made public – for example, troop movements in wartime or confidential trade negotiation positions, to take two examples, obviously need to be secret – there should be a heavy presumption against secrecy.

- Under the OSA, however, the state is given wide powers to place information off-limits to citizens, simply by stipulating that certain documents are secret — and then draconian powers to punish them in case it is made public, regardless of the public interest involved.

- This makes whistle-blowing and investigative journalism a perilous enterprise, no matter how critically important it might be to have the information public.

What about the Right to Information Act?

- Right to Information Act has diluted the scope of the OSA.

- Section 22 of the RTI Act explicitly says it overrides the OSA, i.e., it is not open to the government to deny access to a document demanded through an RTI question, on the basis that it has been marked secret under the OSA.

- The government will have to justify its decision to withhold information under the arguably narrower exception clauses of the RTI Act itself.

DICTIONARY OF MARTYRS

◉ **CONTEXT**
- **Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi, recently released the Dictionary of Martyrs of India's Freedom Struggle, in New Delhi.**

◉ **ABOUT**
- It is a five-volume dictionary, contains an account of the martyrs from India's First War of Independence in 1857, to India's Independence in 1947. This is the first attempt at compiling the names of martyrs on this scale, an effort, to not only cherish the past, but also a way to secure the future.

- Its aim is to nurture and recall the brave deeds of the heroes of our freedom struggle to have a positive influence on the future generations, and to inspire them to think of "India First."

- The project was commissioned by the Ministry of Culture to the Indian Council of Historical Research (ICHR) to commemorate the 150th anniversary of uprising of 1857.

- The publication of "Dictionary of Martyrs: India's Freedom Struggle (1857-1947)"has been brought out in five volumes (zone wise) as given below:
  - ◉ **Volume 1, Parts I & II:** More than 4400 martyrs of Delhi, Haryana, Punjab and Himachal Pradesh have been listed.

- ⊙ **Volume 2, Parts I & II:** More than 3500 martyrs of Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan and Jammu & Kashmir have been listed.

- ⊙ **Volume 3:** The number of martyrs covered in this volume is more than 1400. This volume covers the martyrs of Maharashtra, Gujarat and Sind.

- ⊙ **Volume 4:** The numbers of martyrs covered in this volume is more than 3300. This volume covers the martyrs of Bengal, Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha, Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Nagaland and Tripura.

- ⊙ **Volume 5:** The number of martyrs covered in this volume is more than 1450. This volume covers the martyrs of Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Kerala.

Martyr as per the "Dictionary of Martyrs"

- Martyr has been defined as a person who died or who was killed in action or in detention, or was awarded capital punishment while participating in the national movement for emancipation of India.

- It includes ex-INA or ex-military personnel who died fighting the British in addition to the martyrs of 1857 Uprising, Jallianwala Bagh Massacre (1919), Non-Cooperation Movement (1920-22), Civil Disobedience Movement (1930-34), Quit India Movement (1942-44), Revolutionary Movements (1915-34), Kissan Movements, Tribal Movements, Agitation for Responsible Government in the Princely States (Prajamandal), Indian National Army (INA, 1943-45), Royal Indian Navy Upsurge (RIN, 1946), etc.

- Information of about 13,500 martyrs has been recorded in these volumes.

- **Followings are other few efforts in this direction:**

  - ⊙ National War Memorial, or Rashtriya Samar Smaarak, New Delhi

  - ⊙ National Police Memorial

  - ⊙ The world's tallest statue, the Statue of Unity, in honour of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel

  - ⊙ In memory of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose and the Azad Hind Fauj, the Kranti Mandir has been established at Red Fort.

  - ⊙ Other museums are also being built to commemorate the brave deeds of the Adivasi heroes.

SMART INDIA HACKATHON 2019

⊙ **CONTEXT**
- **The Smart India Hackathon (SIH) 2019 – Software edition, was recently held at 49 different centers simultaneously across India where more than 34,000 ideas were evaluated.**

⊙ **ABOUT**
- The Smart India Hackathon is a nationwide initiative to provide students a platform to solve some of pressing problems we face in our daily lives, and thus inculcate a culture of product innovation and a mindset of problem solving.

- It is the largest ever Hackathon in the world and the only one to be held at the national level involving 1 Lakh+ technical students, 3000+ technical institutions, 200+ organizations from across India this year.

- In SIH 2019, the students also have the opportunity to work on challenges faced within the private sector organizations and create world class solutions for some of the top companies in the world, thus helping the Private sector hire the best minds from across the nation.

- In order to make development a comprehensive mass movement and innovate on all fronts, MHRD, AICTE, i4c, and Rambhau Mhalgi Prabodhini and Persistent Systems have come together to organize Smart India Hackathon (SIH) 2019 - a unique Open Innovation Model for identifying new and disruptive technology innovations to solve the challenges faced in our country. It's a non-stop product development competition, where problem statements are posed to technology students for innovative solutions. It can help to:
  - Harness creativity & expertise of students from IISc, IITs, NITs and AICTE/UGC approved institutions.
  - Spark institute-level hackathons
  - Build funnel for 'Startup India' campaign
  - Crowd source solutions for improving governance and quality of life
  - Provide opportunity to citizens to provide innovative solutions to India's daunting problems
- The Nodal Center for Grand Finale Hackathon 2019 was IIT Kanpur.
- With 96 industries and 18 Central Government Ministries and Departments, SIH 2019 is much bigger than its previous editions. It includes 2 sub-editions –
  - Software edition, which is a 36-hr software product development competition to be held on Mar 2 - 3, 2019 to build innovative digital solutions for problems posed by different industries and Central Ministries and Departments.
  - The Hardware edition, involving building of hardware solutions will be held later this year.

TRENDS IN INTERNATIONAL ARMS TRANSFER

⊙ **CONTEXT**

- **According to the latest 'Trends in International Arms Transfer' report published by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), India was the world's second largest importer of major arms in 2014–18 and accounted for 9.5% of the global total.**

⊙ **ABOUT**

Highlights of the report:

- India ceded the long-held tag as largest importer to Saudi Arabia, which accounted for 12% of the total imports during the period.
- Indian imports decreased by 24% between 2009-13 and 2014-18, partly due to delays in deliveries of arms produced under licence from foreign suppliers, such as combat aircraft ordered from Russia in 2001 and submarines ordered from France in 2008.
- Russia accounted for 58% of Indian arms imports in 2014–18, compared with 76% in 2009-13.
- Israel, the U.S. and France all increased their arms exports to India in 2014-18.
- The report noted that despite the long-standing conflict between India and Pakistan, arms imports decreased for both countries in 2014-18 compared with 2009-13.
- Pakistan stood at the 11th position, accounting for 2.7% of all global imports. Its biggest source was China, from which 70% of arms were sourced, followed by the U.S. at 8.9% and, interestingly, Russia at 6%.

Global Trend

- The five largest exporters in 2014–18 were the United States, Russia, France, Germany and China.
- Together, they accounted for 75 per cent of the total volume of arms exports in 2014–18. The flow of arms increased to the Middle East between 2009–13 and 2014–18, while there was a decrease in flows to all other regions.

- The volume of international transfers of major arms in 2014–18 was 7.8 per cent higher than in 2009–13 and 23 per cent higher than in 2004–2008.

- US arms exports grew by 29 per cent between 2009–13 and 2014–18, and the US share of total global exports rose from 30 per cent to 36 per cent.

- Arms exports by Russia decreased by 17 per cent between 2009–13 and 2014–18, in particular due to the reduction in arms imports by India and Venezuela.

- Between 2009–13 and 2014–18 France increased its arms exports by 43 per cent and Germany by 13 per cent.

- The combined arms exports of European Union member states accounted for 27 per cent of global arms exports in 2014–18.

SIPRI Data

- The SIPRI Arms Transfers Database contains information on all international transfers of major arms (including sales, gifts and production licences) to states, international organizations and armed non-state groups from 1950 to the most recent full calendar year, 2018.

- SIPRI data reflects the volume of deliveries of arms, not the financial value of the deals. As the volume of deliveries can fluctuate significantly year-on-year, SIPRI presents data for five-year periods, giving a more stable measure of trends.

Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI)

- It is an independent international institute dedicated to research into conflict, armaments, arms control and disarmament.

- Established in 1966, it provides data, analysis and recommendations, based on open sources, to policymakers, researchers, media and the interested public.

- SIPRI is regularly ranked among the most respected think tanks worldwide.

Mission

- Undertake research and activities on security, conflict and peace;

- Provide policy analysis and recommendations;

- Facilitate dialogue and build capacities;

- Promote transparency and accountability; and

- Deliver authoritative information to global audiences.

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