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IMPORTANT CURRENT AFFAIRS FOR PRELIMS VOL 42

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SCAN TO EXPLORE





IMPORTANT CURRENT AFFAIRS

FOR PRELIMS VOL - 42

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INDIAN POLITY

1) ARTICLE 355

IN NEWS: - Congress party in West Bengal has demanded that the law and order situation in West Bengal is completely broken and Article 355 should be invoked to ensure the State is governed as per the provisions of the Constitution.

ABOUT ARTICLE 355

- Article 355 refers to the provision in the Constitution that states that “It shall be the duty of the Union to protect every State against external aggression and internal disturbance and to ensure that the government of every State is carried on in accordance with the provisions of this Constitution”.
- There are several angles to the second part of this duty – to ensure that the Government of every State is carried on in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution.
 - **The law & order angle:** The “public order” and “police” are state subjects and states have exclusive power to legislate on these matters.
 - **Alleged justification of emergency:** Although this article has been seldom used; it is seen as an instrument to justify imposition of emergency under articles 352 and 356.
- While article 352 empowers the centre to impose emergency when an armed rebellion occurs, such proclamation cannot be for internal disturbance – thus said SC in SR Bommai Case.
- So, the Supreme Court interpretation was that article 355 itself does not give power to the centre to impose emergency because mere internal disturbance short of armed rebellion cannot justify a proclamation of

emergency under Art. 352 nor can such disturbance justify issuance of proclamation under Art.

2) LOKAYUKTA POWERS

IN NEWS: - Recently, the Kerala government proposed to amend the Kerala Lok Ayukta Act with an ordinance

ABOUT THE PROPOSAL TO LIMIT LOKAYUKTA POWERS

- The cabinet has recommended to the Governor that he promulgate the ordinance, which proposes to give the government powers to “either accept or reject the verdict of the Lokayukta, after giving an opportunity of being heard”.
- Currently, under Section 14 of the Act, a public servant is required to vacate office if directed by the Lokayukta.
- By this ordinance, the quasi-judicial institution will turn into a toothless advisory body, whose orders will no longer be binding on the government.

ABOUT LOKAYUKTA

- Lokayuktas are the state equivalents of the central Lokpal.
- Section 63 of the Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, 2013 states: “Every state shall establish a body to be known as the Lokayukta for the State, if not so established, constituted or appointed, by a law made by the State Legislature, to deal with complaints relating to corruption against certain public functionaries, within a period of one year from the date of commencement of this Act.
- Originally, the central legislation was envisaged to make a Lokayukta in each state mandatory. However, regional parties and the BJP, which was in opposition then, argued that this would be against the spirit of federalism.

- The law then created a mere framework, leaving it to the states to decide the specifics

3) SVAMITVA SCHEME

IN NEWS: - The Union Minister of Rural Development & Panchayati Raj has issued guidelines regarding the SVAMITVA scheme. The scheme was launched on the National Panchayati Raj Day (April 24).

ABOUT SVAMITVA SCHEME

- SVAMITVA (Survey of Villages and Mapping with Improvised Technology in Village Areas) scheme is a collaborative effort of the Ministry of Panchayati Raj, State Panchayati Raj Departments, State Revenue Departments and Survey of India.
- The aim is to provide an integrated property validation solution for rural India.
- It is a scheme for mapping the land parcels in rural inhabited areas using drone technology and Continuously Operating Reference Station (CORS).
- The mapping will be done across the country in a phase-wise manner over a period of four years - from 2020 to 2024.
- The scheme will help in streamlining planning and revenue collection in rural areas and ensuring clarity on property rights.
- The scheme will enable creation of better-quality Gram Panchayat Development Plans (GPDPs), using the maps created under this programme.
- The Gram Panchayats are constitutionally mandated for preparation of Gram Panchayat Development Plans (GPDP) for economic development and social justice.

- The GPDP is based on a participatory process in convergence with schemes of all related Central Ministries/Line Departments related to 29 subjects listed in the Eleventh Schedule of the Constitution.
- The program is currently being implemented in six states - Haryana, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

4) TEMPORARY PROTECTION DIRECTIVE OF 2001

IN NEWS: - EU Member States made the unprecedented decision to activate the European Union's Council Directive 2001, known as the Temporary Protection Directive (TPD).

ABOUT TEMPORARY PROTECTION DIRECTIVE OF 2001

- The Temporary Protection Directive was created in 2001 following conflicts during the 1990s in the Balkans to manage a 'mass influx of displaced persons'.
- It was meant to provide a tool to ensure a 'balance of efforts' between EU member states to alleviate pressure on national asylum systems.
- The resulting 'temporary protection' emergency mechanism provides displaced persons with the same rights across the EU, including:
- Rights to reside for up to three years, employment, housing, medical assistance and access to education for children.
- It is described as an "exceptional measure to provide immediate and temporary protection to displaced persons from non-EU countries and those unable to return to their country of origin".

- It is applicable when there is a risk that the standard asylum system is struggling to cope with demand stemming from a mass influx risking a negative impact on the processing of claims.
- It reduces disparities between the policies of EU States on the reception and treatment of displaced persons in a situation of mass influx.
- It promotes solidarity and burden-sharing among EU States with respect to receiving large numbers of potential refugees at one time.
- The war in Ukraine is the first time that the EU has invoked the TPD.
- This will be in place initially for one year with the possibility to automatically extend it for up to another year.
- It is being seen as another sign of European unity against Russia.
- Those eligible for this 'temporary protection' include Ukrainian nationals and third country nationals if they resided in Ukraine before or on 24 February 2022.
- The Council decision also mentions that Ukrainian nationals 'as visa-free travellers, have the right to move freely within the Union after being admitted into the territory for a 90-day period'.
- Also, they are able to choose the Member State in which they want to enjoy the rights attached to temporary protection' – this will help to facilitate 'a balance of efforts' between member states.

Common European Asylum System

- The European Union is an area of protection for people fleeing persecution or serious harm in their country of origin.
- Asylum is a fundamental right and an international obligation for countries, as recognised in the 1951 Geneva Convention on the protection of refugees.

- In the EU, an area of open borders and freedom of movement, member countries share the same fundamental values and joint approach to guarantee high standards of protection for refugees.
- EU countries have a shared responsibility to welcome asylum seekers in a dignified manner, ensuring that they are treated fairly and their case is examined following uniform standards. This ensures that, no matter where an applicant applies, the outcome will be similar.
- Procedures must be fair, effective throughout the EU, and impervious to abuse
- Asylum flows are not constant, nor are they evenly distributed across the EU. They have, for example, varied from over 1.8 million in 2015 to around 142,000 in 2019, a decrease of 92%.

5) MONTREUX CONVENTION

IN NEWS: - Turkey is set to implement Montreux Convention to limit the movement of Russian warships between the Mediterranean Sea and the Black Sea.

ABOUT MONTREUX CONVENTION

- The 1936 Montreux Convention Regarding the Regime of the Straits, often referred to as the Montreux Convention.
- Under this convention, Turkey has control over both the Bosphorus and Dardanelles straits.
- In the event of a war, the pact gives Turkey the right to regulate the transit of naval warships and to block the straits to warships belonging to the countries involved in the conflict.
- It regulates maritime traffic through the Black Sea.

- It guarantees "complete freedom" of passage for all civilian vessels during peacetime and permits Turkey to restrict the passage of navies not belonging to Black Sea states.
- Military vessels are limited in number, tonnage and weaponry, with specific provisions governing their mode of entry and duration of stay.
- Warships must provide advanced notification to Turkish authorities, which, in turn, must inform the parties to the Convention
- The Bosphorus and Dardanelles straits, also known as the Turkish Straits or the Black Sea Straits, connect the Aegean Sea and the Black Sea via the Sea of Marmara.
- It is the only passage through which the Black Sea ports can access the Mediterranean and beyond.



6) TREATY OF THE HIGH SEAS

IN NEWS: - The fourth meeting of the Intergovernmental Conference (IGC-4) was held in New York to conclude a draft of the instrument on the conservation and sustainable use of marine Biological diversity in areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ). The IGC-4 is convened under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

ABOUT TREATY OF THE HIGH SEAS

- The “BBNJ Treaty”, also known as the “Treaty of the High Seas”, is an international agreement on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction, currently under negotiation at the United Nations.
- This new instrument is being developed within the framework of the UNCLOS, the main international agreement governing human activities at sea.
- It will achieve a more holistic management of high seas activities, which should better balance the conservation and sustainable use of marine resources.
- BBNJ encompasses the high seas, beyond the exclusive economic zones or national waters of countries.

7) INTERNATIONAL FUND FOR AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

IN NEWS: - IFAD (International Fund for Agricultural Development) has committed to focus 30% of its climate finance to support nature-based solutions in rural small-scale agriculture by 2030.

ABOUT INTERNATIONAL FUND FOR AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

- IFAD is an international financial institution and specialized United Nations agency working in the field of poverty eradication in the rural areas of developing countries providing grants and loans with low interest for allied projects.
- It works with marginalized and vulnerable groups such as farmers with small holdings, foresters, Pastoralists, Fishermen and small scale entrepreneurs by giving them disaster preparedness, access to weather information, technology transfer and social learning.
- It was created in 1977, which is the outcome of the World Food Conference of 1974.
- Headquarters: Rome, Italy
- It has 177 member countries. India is also a member country.
- Objectives:
 - To increase the productive capacity of poor people.
 - To increase benefits for them from market participation.
 - To strengthen the environmental sustainability & climate resilience of their economic activities.
- It brings out the Rural Development Report every year.

8) WHITE PHOSPHOROUS BOMBS

IN NEWS: - Ukrainian police has accused Russian forces of launching phosphorus bomb attacks (chemical weapon) in the Lugansk and Donetsk regions of eastern Ukraine, collectively known as the Donbas.

ABOUT WHITE PHOSPHOROUS BOMBS

- White phosphorus munitions are weapons that use one of the common allotropes of the chemical element phosphorus.
- White phosphorus is pyrophoric (it is ignited by contact with air), burns fiercely, and can ignite cloth, fuel, ammunition, and other combustibles.
- Apart from this, it is also used in smoke, illumination, and burning elements of tracer ammunition.
- In addition to its offensive capabilities, white phosphorus is a highly efficient smoke-producing agent, reacting with air to produce an immediate blanket of phosphorus pentoxide vapour.
- In addition to direct injuries caused by fragments of their casings, white phosphorus munitions can cause injuries in two main ways: burn injuries and vapour inhalation.

CHEMICAL WEAPONS CONVENTION

- Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) is a multilateral treaty banning chemical weapons and requiring their destruction within the stipulated time.
- Negotiations for the CWC began in 1980 at the United Nations Conference on Disarmament.
- The convention was drafted in September 1992 and opened for signature in January 1993. It became effective from April 1997.
- It makes it mandatory to destroy old and abandoned chemical weapons.
- Members should also declare the riot-control agents (sometimes referred to as 'tear gas') in possession of them.
- India signed the treaty in January 1993. The Chemical Weapons Convention Act, 2000 was passed to implement the CWC.
- Convention Prohibits:

- The development, production, acquisition, stockpiling, or retention of chemical weapons.
 - Transferring of chemical weapons.
 - Using chemical weapons.
 - Assisting other States to indulge in activities that are prohibited by the CWC.
 - Using riot-control devices as 'warfare methods'.
- Apart from CWC, Australia Group seeks to check proliferation of chemical or biological weapons.

INDIAN ECONOMY

9) PRADHAN MANTRI FASAL BIMA YOJANA

IN NEWS: - The Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY) has successfully entered its seventh year of implementation with the upcoming Kharif 2022 season, completing six years of its implementation since its announcement on 18 February 2016.

ABOUT PRADHAN MANTRI FASAL BIMA YOJANA

- It is in line with the One Nation – One Scheme theme- It replaced National Agricultural Insurance Scheme (NAIS) and Modified National Agricultural Insurance Scheme (MNAIS).
- Launched in 2016.
- Coverage: All food & oilseed crops and annual commercial/horticultural crops for which past yield data is available.
- The prescribed premium is 2% to be paid by farmers for all Kharif crops and 1.5% for all rabi crops. In the case of annual commercial and horticultural crops, the premium is 5%.

- Objectives:
 - To provide insurance coverage and financial support to the farmers in the event of failure of any of the notified crops as a result of natural calamities, pests & diseases.
 - To stabilise the income of farmers to ensure their continuance in farming.
 - To encourage farmers to adopt innovative and modern agricultural practices.
 - To ensure flow of credit to the agriculture sector.
- Coverage: The Scheme covers all Food & Oilseeds crops and Annual Commercial/Horticultural Crops for which past yield data is available and for which requisite number of Crop Cutting Experiments (CCEs) are being conducted under General Crop Estimation Survey (GCES).

PMFBY 2.0

- **Completely Voluntary:** It has been decided to make enrolment 100% voluntary for all farmers from 2020 Kharif.
- **Limit to Central Subsidy:** The Cabinet has decided to cap the Centre's premium subsidy under these schemes for premium rates up to 30% for unirrigated areas/crops and 25% for irrigated areas/crops.
- **More Flexibility to States:** The government has given the flexibility to states/UTs to implement PMFBY and given them the option to select any number of additional risk covers/features like prevented sowing, localised calamity, mid-season adversity, and post-harvest losses.
- **Penalising the Pendency:** In the revamped PMFBY, a provision has been incorporated wherein if states don't release their share before March 31 for the Kharif season and September 30 for rabi, they would not be allowed to participate in the scheme in subsequent seasons.

- **Investing in ICE Activities:** Insurance companies have to now spend 0.5% of the total premium collected on information, education and communication (IEC) activities.

10) PREDATORY PRICING

IN NEWS: - The Competition Commission of India has dismissed allegations of predatory pricing against e-commerce platform Shopee.

ABOUT PREDATORY PRICING

- Predatory pricing is the illegal act of setting prices low to attempt to eliminate the competition.
- Predatory pricing violates antitrust laws, as it makes markets more vulnerable to a monopoly.
- Consumers may benefit from lower prices in the short term, but they suffer if the scheme succeeds in eliminating competition, as this would trigger a rise in prices and a decline in choice.
- Competition Commission of India eliminates such practices like Predatory Pricing.

ABOUT COMPETITION COMMISSION OF INDIA

- It is a statutory body established under the Competition Act, 2002, tasked with ensuring a fair and healthy competition in economic activities of the country.
- It is to act as an antitrust watchdog and ensure that there is no abuse of dominant position by a company in the market.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY**11) SOLAR CONJUNCTION EVENT**

IN NEWS: - A team of scientists from different units of ISRO used 'S-band' radio signals from Mangalyaan, the Indian Mars orbiter, to study the solar corona and locate the area of the sun where the temperature rises abruptly.

ABOUT SOLAR CONJUNCTION EVENT

- It is the period when Earth and Mars, in their eternal march around the Sun, are obscured from each other by the fiery orb of the Sun itself.
- The two planets are temporarily invisible to each other like dancers on either side of a huge bonfire.
- Solar conjunction occurs every two years.
- Mission controllers at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory respond in a variety of ways.
 - Before solar conjunction, the mission team sends up any necessary commands.
 - They turn off some instruments. They collect data from others and store it.
 - In some cases, they continue sending data to Earth, knowing that some data will be lost.
 - No one attempts to send new instructions to Mars during solar conjunction



12) DEEP OCEAN MISSION

IN NEWS: - The Ministry of Earth Sciences has launched the Deep Ocean Mission (DOM).

ABOUT DEEP OCEAN MISSION

- DOM is a mission mode project to support the Blue Economy Initiatives of the Government of India.
- Through this mission, the Government aims to conduct the exploration of the underwater world on similar lines as ISRO does for space.
- The aim is to explore the marine diversity in our country, which is still unexplored.
- This ambitious project will be managed by the Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES).
- However, India's Deep Ocean Mission will solely focus on studying and exploring the deepwater bodies in our country for undiscovered minerals, stones, living or non-living entities
- Both, man force and robotic machines will be used for the mission

- Tasks like deep-sea mining, energy exploration, survey of the objects found, and off-shore desalination will be taken up rigorously
- The technological developments done for the Deep Ocean Mission will be funded by the Government scheme “Ocean Services, Technology, Observations, Resources Modelling and Science (O-SMART)”
- Study and research on the climatic changes in the Ocean and other advisory services will be done through this mission
- The focus will also be given on underwater technologies for convenient research
- Two key projects have been included in the Deep Ocean Mission
 - A Desalination Plant
 - Submersible Vehicle, which can explore upto 6000 metres in depth
- The parts of the ocean which are yet to be explored and are hidden and undiscovered will all be covered through this mission.
- It is a central sector scheme.
- The major objectives of the Deep Ocean Mission are as follows:
 - Development of technologies for deep sea mining, underwater vehicles and underwater robotics;
 - Development of ocean climate change advisory services;
 - Technological innovations for exploration and conservation of deepsea biodiversity;
 - Deep ocean survey and exploration;
 - Proof of concept studies on energy and freshwater from the ocean; and
 - Establishing advanced marine station for ocean biology

13) CORONAL MASS EJECTIONS

IN NEWS: - Indian Scientists, along with international collaborators, have measured the magnetic field of an eruption from the Sun's atmosphere (solar corona), offering a rare peek to the interior of the Sun.

ABOUT CORONAL MASS EJECTIONS

- Coronal Mass Ejection (CME) is one of the biggest eruptions from the Sun's surface that can contain a billion tons of matter accelerated to several million miles per hour into space.
- The Sun is an extremely active object, spewing out vast quantities of gas and plasma in many violent events.
- A class of such eruptions are Coronal Mass Ejections (CMEs).
- CMEs are the most powerful explosions happening in the solar system.
- The underlying cause of CMEs is not well understood. Astronomers agree, however, that the sun's magnetic field plays a major role.
- Though CMEs can occur anywhere on the Sun, it is primarily those which originate from regions near the centre of the visible solar surface (called the photosphere) that are important for study, since they may propagate directly towards the Earth.
- This field of research helps to understand Space Weather.
- When a really strong CME blows past the Earth, it can damage the electronics in satellites and disrupt radio communication networks on Earth.
- When the plasma cloud hits our planet, a geomagnetic storm follows.
- A geomagnetic storm is a major disturbance of Earth's magnetosphere (space controlled by earth's magnetic field) that occurs when there is a very efficient exchange of energy from the solar wind into the space environment surrounding Earth.
- They can trigger intense light in the sky on Earth, called auroras.

- Some of the energy and small particles travel down the magnetic field lines at the north and south poles into Earth's atmosphere.
- There, the particles interact with gases in the atmosphere resulting in beautiful displays of light in the sky.
- The aurora in Earth's northern atmosphere is called an aurora borealis or northern lights. Its southern counterpart is called an aurora australis or the southern lights.

14) NASA's VOYAGER SPACECRAFT

IN NEWS: - Both Voyager spacecraft are rushing away from Earth and into interstellar space. Yet for a portion of every year, both spacecrafts' distances to Earth decrease.

ABOUT NASA's VOYAGER SPACECRAFT

Voyager 1

- The Voyager 1 was the first spacecraft to enter the heliosphere of the sun in 2012.
- The Voyager 1 was launched in 1977.
- It was launched to study the outer solar system and planets such as Saturn and Jupiter on its way.
- Voyager 2 is called the twin of Voyager 1.
- After operating for 44 years, it is still communicating with the Deep Space Network of NASA. The Deep Space Network of NASA is a worldwide space communication network located in the US, Spain and Australia.

Voyager 2

- Voyager 2 was launched in 1977, 16 days before Voyager 1, and both have travelled well beyond their original destinations.

- The spacecraft were built to last five years and conduct close-up studies of Jupiter and Saturn.
- As the spacecraft flew across the solar system, remote-control reprogramming was used to endow the Voyagers with greater capabilities than they possessed when they left Earth.
- It carries a working instrument that will provide first-of-its-kind observations of the nature of this gateway into interstellar space.
- It is slightly more than 18 billion kilometres from Earth. Its twin, Voyager 1, crossed this boundary in 2012.
- Their five-year lifespans have stretched to 41 years, making Voyager 2 NASA's longest running mission.

ENVIRONMENT

15) WORLD AIR QUALITY REPORT

IN NEWS: - The 2021 World Air Quality Report was released, the report presented an overview of the state of global air quality in 2021.

ABOUT WORLD AIR QUALITY REPORT

- Released by IQAir, a Swiss group that measures air quality levels based on the concentration of Particulate Matter (PM) 2.5.
- IQAir endeavours to engage, educate, and inspire governments, researchers, Non-Government Organisations, companies, and citizens to work together to improve air quality and create healthier communities and cities.

REPORT FINDINGS

- Bangladesh was the most polluted country in the world in 2021. Bangladesh recorded an average PM2.5 level of 76.9 micrograms per cubic

metre in 2021 against the World Health Organisation (WHO) recommended maximum permissible level of 5 micrograms per cubic metre.

- The data reveals that not a single country in the world managed to meet the WHO's air quality standard in 2021.
- Among the cities, Dhaka was the second most polluted city in the world with a PM 2.5 level of 78.1 just below New Delhi which had a PM 2.5 level of 85.1 in 2021.
- India's Performance :-
 - New Delhi continues to be the world's most polluted capital city for the fourth consecutive year.
 - 35 Indian cities have been listed by the index under the worst air quality tag for 2021.
 - Bhiwadi, Rajasthan topped this list and was followed Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh.

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