

**NATIONAL SOCIAL ISSUES- WOMEN, POPULATION, URBANISATION, EMPOWERMENT ETC****National Girl Child Day (NGCD)**

National Girl Child Day (NGCD) was observed on 24th January with objectives of generating awareness on the issue of declining Child Sex Ratio (CSR) and create a positive environment around valuing the girl child. The programme also observed anniversary of Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) Scheme. National Girl Child Day was first initiated in 2008. This year's theme: "Empowering Girls for a Brighter Tomorrow".

**Objectives:**

- To increase the consciousness of the people and offer new opportunities to the girl child in the society.
- To remove all the inequalities faced by the girl child.
- To ensure that the girl child should get all their human rights, respect and value in the country.
- To work regarding gender discrimination, to educate people.

**Beti Bachao Beti Padhao:**

- Launch and expansion: Launched in January, 2015 at Panipat in Haryana. All India Expansion of BBBP covering all 640 districts (as per Census 2011) was launched at Jhunjhunu, Rajasthan on 8th March 2018.
- It is a tri-ministerial effort of Ministries of Women and Child Development, Health & Family Welfare and Human Resource Development.
- It is a Central Sector Scheme with 100% financial assistance for District level component and the fund are directly released to the DC/DM's account for smooth operation of the Scheme. Main Objective of the scheme is to address the declining Child Sex Ratio (CSR) and related issues of empowerment of women over a life-cycle continuum. The specific objectives of the scheme include preventing gender biased sex selective elimination; ensuring survival and protection of the girl child and ensuring education and participation of the girl child.

**CONSTITUTION AND POLITY****Cabinet decides to strengthen northeast autonomous councils**

The Union Cabinet has approved a constitutional amendment to increase the financial and executive powers of the 10 autonomous councils in the Sixth Schedule areas of the northeast.

**Autonomous District Council:**

- As per the Sixth Schedule, the four states viz. Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram contain the Tribal Areas which are technically different from the Scheduled Areas.
- Though these areas fall within the executive authority of the state, provision has been made for the creation of the District Councils and regional councils for the exercise of the certain legislative and judicial powers.
- Each district is an autonomous district and Governor can modify / divide the boundaries of the said Tribal areas by notification.

**Proposed Modifications:**

- The amendment would impact a population of about 1 crore tribals living in Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram
- The Finance Commission would be mandated to recommend devolution of financial resources to the councils. Till now, the autonomous councils have depended on grants from Central Ministries and the State governments for specific projects.
- As per the proposed amendment, at least one third of the seats would be reserved for women in the village and municipal councils in the Sixth Schedule areas of Assam, Mizoram and Tripura.
- The amendment also provides for transfer of additional 30 subjects, including the departments of Public Works, Forests, Public Health Engineering, Health and Family Welfare, Urban Development and Food and Civil Supply to Karbi Anglong Autonomous Territorial Council and Dima Hasao Autonomous Territorial Council in Assam.

- The proposed amendments provide for elected village municipal councils, ensuring democracy at the grass-roots level.
- The State Election Commissions would hold elections to the autonomous councils, village and municipal councils in the areas of Assam, Mizoram and Tripura.

### **National Bench of the Goods and Services Tax Appellate Tribunal (GSTAT)**

Cabinet has approved creation of National Bench of the Goods and Services Tax Appellate Tribunal (GSTAT).

- It shall be situated at New Delhi.
- Composition: Presided over by its President and shall consist of one Technical Member (Centre) and one Technical Member (State).
- It is the forum of second appeal in GST laws and the first common forum of dispute resolution between Centre and States.
- The appeals against the orders in first appeals issued by the Appellate Authorities under the Central and State GST Acts lie before the GST Appellate Tribunal, which is common under the Central as well as State GST Acts.

Legal provisions: CGST Act provides for the Appeal and Review Mechanism for dispute resolution under the GST Regime. The Act empowers the Central Government to constitute, on the recommendation of Council, by notification, with effect from such date as may be specified therein, an Appellate Tribunal known as the Goods and Services Tax Appellate Tribunal for hearing appeals against the orders passed by the Appellate Authority or the Revisional Authority.

Significance: Being a common forum, GST Appellate Tribunal will ensure that there is uniformity in redressal of disputes arising under GST, and therefore, in implementation of GST across the country.

## **INTERNATIONAL NEWS AND BILATERAL RELATIONS**

### **Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty**

The Russian military has released the specifications of its new missile- SSC-8 ground-fired cruise missile (also known as the Novator 9M729), seeking to dispel the U.S. claim that the weapons violates the 1987 Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty.

Background: US in early December announced that it would suspend its obligations under the INF treaty by Feb. 2, citing Russian “cheating,” unless Moscow comes into compliance with the terms of the pact. The U.S. government says the new Russian missile violates provisions of the pact that ban production, testing and deployment of land-based cruise and ballistic missiles with a range of 310 to 3,400 miles.

Implications of the absence of treaty:

- It is unclear what INF-prohibited systems the United States could deploy to Europe or Asia in the near term. The U.S. military has not developed any land-based missiles within the prohibited ranges for decades and has only just started funding a new ground-launched cruise missile to match the 9M729.
- Moscow is in a very different position and could rapidly expand deployment. The number of operational 9M729 missiles has been quite limited, but released from its official obligations under the treaty, Moscow could deploy more units rapidly.
- Russia could also effectively reclassify the RS-26 Rubezh, an experimental system that has been tested just above the INF Treaty’s 5,500-kilometer limit. To avoid violating the INF, Russian officials previously described the RS-26 as an intercontinental ballistic missile. However, it could form the basis for a missile of a slightly shorter range if Moscow wished to boost its INF forces — without counting it under the U.S.-Russian New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty, or New START, governing longer-range systems.
- This move is also likely to undermine the 2010 New START treaty governing U.S. and Russian long-range nuclear systems. The INF Treaty’s demise will undercut New START by reopening questions on the relationship between intermediate and strategic systems that have been resolved for 30 years by the elimination of ground-based, intermediate-range missiles.

Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty:

- The Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF Treaty, formally Treaty between the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on the Elimination of

Their Intermediate-Range and Shorter-Range Missiles) is a 1987 arms control agreement between the United States and the Soviet Union.

- Under the INF Treaty, the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. agreed to eliminate within three years all ground-launched-missiles of 500-5,500 km range and not to develop, produce or deploy these in future.
- The U.S. destroyed 846 Pershing IIs and Ground Launched Cruise Missiles (GLCMs) and the U.S.S.R., 1,846 missiles (SS-4s, SS-5s and SS-20s), along with its support facilities.

#### **International forum for advancing global collaboration in Homoeopathy:**

The World Integrated Medicine Forum on the regulation of Homoeopathic Medicinal Products is being held in India with the Theme: 'Advancing Global Collaboration'. It is organised by Central Council for Research in Homeopathy (CCRH), with the support of Ministry of AYUSH and many others.

**Significance:** The Forum will be serving as the only truly global platform in which the public and private sector can meet and exchange ideas on how to ensure and increase the availability of safe and effective homeopathic medicines worldwide, now for the second time. The first forum on similar lines was organised by CCRH in 2017.

### **ENVIRONMENT- CONSERVATION, BIO-DIVERSITY AND ISSUES**

#### **CRZ Regulations**

The Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change has notified the 2019 Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) norms, replacing the existing CRZ norms of 2011. The new CRZ norms have been issued under Section 3 of the Environment Protection Act, 1986 which aims to promote sustainable development based on scientific principles.

#### **Objective of CRZ Regulations 2019:**

- To promote sustainable development based on scientific principles taking into account the natural hazards such as increasing sea levels due to global warming.
- To conserve and protect the environment of coastal stretches and marine areas, besides livelihood security to the fisher communities and other local communities in the coastal area.

#### **Salient Features of CRZ Regulations 2019:**

- Two separate categories for CRZ-III (Rural) areas:
  - CRZ-III A: The A category of CRZ-III areas are densely populated rural areas with a population density of 2161 per square kilometre as per 2011 Census. Such areas have a No Development Zone (NDZ) of 50 meters from the High Tide Line (HTL) as against 200 meters from the High Tide Line stipulated in the CRZ Notification, 2011.
  - CRZ-III B – The B category of CRZ-III rural areas have population density of below 2161 per square kilometre as per 2011 Census. Such areas have a No Development Zone of 200 meters from the HTL.
- Floor Space Index Norms eased: As per CRZ, 2011 Notification, the Floor Space Index (FSI) or the Floor Area Ratio (FAR) had been frozen. As per the latest notification, the government has decided to de-freeze the Floor Space Index and permit FSI for construction projects.
- Tourism infrastructure permitted in coastal areas: The new norms permit temporary tourism facilities such as shacks, toilet blocks, change rooms, drinking water facilities, etc. in Beaches.
- Streamlining of CRZ Clearances: The procedure for CRZ clearances has been streamlined. Now, the only such projects which are located in the CRZ-I (Ecologically Sensitive Areas) and CRZ IV (area covered between Low Tide Line and 12 Nautical Miles seaward) will be dealt with for CRZ clearance by the Ministry. The powers for clearances with respect to CRZ-II and III have been delegated at the State level.
- No Development Zone of 20 meters for all Islands: For islands close to the main land coast and for all Backwater Islands in the main land, No Development Zone of 20 meters has been stipulated in wake of space limitations and unique geography of such regions.
- Pollution abatement: To address pollution in Coastal areas, the treatment facilities have been made permissible in CRZ-I B area subject to necessary safeguards.

- Critically Vulnerable Coastal Areas (CVCA): Sundarban region of West Bengal and other ecologically sensitive areas identified as under Environment (Protection) Act, 1986 such as Gulf of Khambat and Gulf of Kutchh in Gujarat, Achra-Ratnagiri in Maharashtra, Karwar and Coondapur in Karnataka, Vembanad in Kerala, Gulf of Mannar in Tamil Nadu, Bhaitarkanika in Odisha and Krishna in Andhra Pradesh are treated as Critical Vulnerable Coastal Areas. These Critical Vulnerable Coastal Areas will be managed with the involvement of coastal communities including fisher folk.

### **SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY- SPACE**

#### **ISRO's first mission of 2019**

ISRO's first mission of 2019 will put into space a 130-kg military imaging satellite, Microsat-R. It will be launched from the older First Launch Pad at the Satish Dhawan Space Centre, Sriharikota.

#### **Details of Launch**

- The satellite would be placed within 15 minutes after take-off in a polar orbit 274 km away from Earth.
- This is much lower than any of its civil Earth observation spacecraft, which fly pole to pole over the globe at between 400 km and 700 km.

#### **Payload Details**

- **Microsat-R**
  - Microsat-R and its payload come assembled from a handful of laboratories of the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO).
  - It is meant for military use.
  - The satellite was assembled outside and ISRO only interfaced it with its own systems and the launch vehicle, just as it treats any customer satellite.
  - Other details are yet to be released by ISRO.
- **Kalamsat**
  - Kalamsat is a communication satellite with a life span of two months.
  - The nanosatellite is a 10cm cube weighing 1.2 kg.
  - The satellite cost was about Rs 12 lakh. Kalamsat will be the first to use the rocket's fourth stage as an orbital platform.
  - The fourth stage will be moved to higher circular orbit so as to establish an orbital platform for carrying out experiments.
  - It is named after former Indian president Dr APJ Abdul Kalam and was built by an Indian high school student team, led by Rifath Sharook, an 18-year-old from the Tamil Nadu town of Pallapatti.
  - It is the world's lightest and first ever 3D-printed satellite.

### **MISCELLANEOUS**

#### **National Voters Day 2019**

India is celebrating 9th National Voters Day on 25<sup>th</sup> January 2019 for enhanced participation of citizens in the electoral process. The main purpose of celebrating National Voters Day is to encourage, facilitate and maximize the enrollment, especially for the new voters.

- As per the proposal mooted by the Ministry of Law and Justice, the Union Cabinet headed by then Prime Minister approved the proposal to celebrate National Voters Day on 25th January. The National Voters Day was first celebrated on 25<sup>th</sup> January 2011. This day is celebrated as the National Voter's Day owing to the fact that it was on this day the Election Commission of India was constituted on 25<sup>th</sup> January 1950.
- India would be witnessing the parliamentary elections in 2019, in order to ensure an inclusive election process the theme of the National Voters Day is No Voter to be Left Behind.
- President Ram Nath Kovind would be the Chief Guest at the main function being organized by Election Commission in New Delhi. The event is also graced by Chief Election Commissioners and senior officials from Bangladesh, Bhutan, Kazakhstan, Maldives, Russia and Sri Lanka.