

**NATIONAL SOCIAL ISSUES- WOMEN, POPULATION, URBANISATION, EMPOWERMENT ETC****Jan Shikshan Sansthans**

Fee for SC/ST candidates, who join vocational training under Jan Shikshan Sansthans (JSS), has been waived off. These decisions aim to further strengthen the skill ecosystem benefiting those in the underprivileged sections of society.

**About Jan Shikshan Sansthan (JSS)**

- The scheme of JSS was initially launched in 1967 as Shramik Vidyapeeth, a polyvalent or multi-faceted adult education institution.
- Formerly under the Ministry of Human Resources Development, JSS was transferred to the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship in 2018.
- It was aimed at improving the vocational skills and quality of life of the industrial workers and their family members as well as those persons who had been migrating from rural to urban settings.
- Now it has challenging mandate of providing vocational skills to non-literate, neo-literates as well as school drop-outs by identifying skills that have a market in the region of their establishment.

**Scope of work of JSS includes:**

- Develop/Source appropriate curriculum and training modules covering vocational elements general awareness and life enrichment components.
- Wherever possible, JSSs are encouraged to undertake training equivalent to courses designed by the Directorate of Adult Education, National Institute of Open Schooling and Director General, Employment & Training.
- Provide training to a pool of resource persons and master trainers for conducting training as also availability of infrastructure and training – specific equipment.
- Administer simple tests and award certificates.
- Network with employers and industries for trainees to get suitable placements

**CONSTITUTION AND POLITY****Rule 49MA**

The Election Commission may “revisit” the rule for prosecution of a voter for making a false complaint of malfunction of an electronic voting machine or a voter verifiable paper audit trail machine- Rule 49MA.

**Background:** The Supreme Court, in April 2019, sought a response from the Election Commission on a plea seeking abolition of a provision in election rules that provides for prosecution of an elector if a complaint alleging malfunctioning of EVMs and VVPATs turns out to be false.

**What is rule 49MA?**

- Rule 49MA is mentioned under ‘The Conduct of Elections Rules’ .
- Under the rule, where printer for paper trail is used, if an elector after having recorded his vote under rule 49M alleges that the paper slip generated by the printer has shown the name or symbol of a candidate other than the one he voted for, the presiding officer shall obtain a written declaration from the elector as to the allegation, after warning the elector about the consequence of making a false declaration.
- The rules outline that if after investigation, the allegation of EVM malfunctioning is found to be false or incorrect, then the complainant can be prosecuted under Section 177 of the Indian Penal Code for “furnishing false information”.
- In such a case, a jail term of six months or a fine of Rs 1,000 or both is guaranteed.

**Arguments against Rule 49MA:**

- It is unconstitutional as it criminalises reporting of malfunctioning of Electronic Voting Machines and Voter Verified Paper Audit Trails.
- The obligation of proving an allegation cannot be on the voter when machines used for voting showed ‘arbitrary deviant behaviour’.

- Putting the responsibility on the elector in cases of arbitrary deviant behaviour of machines used in the election process, infringes upon a citizen's right to freedom of expression under the Constitution.
- When an elector is asked to cast test vote as prescribed under Rule 49MA, he may not be able to reproduce the same result which he was complaining about, one more time in a sequence, because of the pre-programmed deviant behaviour of the electronic machines.
- Therefore, holding an elector accountable for deviant behaviours of EVMs and VVPATs could deter them from coming forth and making any complaint, which is essential for improving the process.
- Since only an elector could be a witness to the secrecy of his vote cast, it would violate Article 20(3) of the Constitution which says that no person accused of an offence shall be compelled to be a witness against himself.

### **Cabinet committees**

The Government reconstituted eight key cabinet committees under the Transaction of Business Rules.

**Cabinet Committees:** The Cabinet Committee are organizations which are instrumental in reducing the workload of the Cabinet. These committees are extra-constitutional in nature and are nowhere mentioned in the Constitution.

#### **Types and Composition of Cabinet Committees:**

- **Standing Cabinet Committee:** These are permanent in nature with a specific job. The Cabinet Ministers are called its 'members' while the people without the rank of Cabinet Committee are called 'special invitees'.
- **Ad-hoc Cabinet Committee:** These are temporary in nature and are formed time to time to deal with specific tasks.
- **Composition:** The composition of a Cabinet Committee varies from 3 to 8 people. Even Ministers who are not the part of the Cabinet can be added to a Cabinet Committee. Usually, each cabinet committee has at least one Cabinet Minister. The members of the Cabinet Committee can be from both the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha.

## **INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS- BILATERAL, GROUPINGS, ORGANISATIONS**

### **The immediate neighbourhood**

The government has shown its commitment to its strategy of "Neighbourhood First" by inviting the leaders of neighbouring countries for the second time to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's swearing-in ceremony on May 30. . The focus will continue this week when he makes his first visit in this tenure to the Maldives and Sri Lanka, something that has become tradition for all Indian Prime Ministers.

### **Importance of SAARC**

- South Asian identity – SAARC, as an organisation, reflects the South Asian identity of the countries, historically and contemporarily.
- Geographically independent – This is a naturally made geographical identity. Equally, there is a cultural, linguistic, religious and culinary affinity that defines South Asia.

### **Common concerns –**

- As a result, since 1985 when the SAARC charter was signed, the organisation has developed common cause in several fields: agriculture, education, health, climate change, science and technology, transport and environment.

### **Modest growth –**

- Each area has seen modest but sustainable growth in cooperation.
- For example, from 2010, when the South Asian University began in Delhi, the number of applicants for about 170 seats has more than doubled.

### **Failure of SAARC –**

- SAARC's biggest failure, however, comes from the political sphere, where mainly due to India-Pakistan tensions, heads of state have met only 18 times in 34 years; it has been five years since the last summit in Kathmandu.

### BIMSTEC

- It is essentially a grouping of countries situated around the Bay of Bengal, and began in 1997 (Bhutan and Nepal joined in 2004), a decade after SAARC.
- While it has made some progress in technical areas, leaders of BIMSTEC nations have held summits just four times in 22 years.
- With India's growing frustration over cross-border terrorism emanating from Pakistan, it hopes to build more on BIMSTEC's potential.

### No alternative for SAARC

- One of BIMSTEC's two founding principles is: "Cooperation within BIMSTEC will constitute an addition to and not be a substitute for bilateral, regional or multilateral cooperation involving the Member States."
- Its official literature describes it as "a bridge between South and South East Asia" and a "platform for intra-regional cooperation between SAARC and ASEAN [Association of Southeast Asian Nations] members."

### India's SAARC aversion

- Terrorism emanating from Pakistan is clearly the biggest stumbling block cited by the government.
- This principled stand by India, however, doesn't extend to other organisations such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO).
- It is difficult to reconcile the staunch opposition to attending a SAARC summit where India is at least the largest country, with the acquiescence to the SCO, where Russia and China take the lead.
- Another reason offered by those declaring SAARC becoming defunct is the logjam because of Pakistan's opposition to connectivity projects such as the Motor Vehicles Agreement (MVA), energy sharing proposals and others such as the South Asia Satellite offered by Mr. Modi.

### Way Forward

- ASEAN minus X – Going forward, SAARC could adopt the "ASEAN minus X" formula — members who are unwilling to join the consensus can be allowed to join at a future date, while members who wish to go ahead with connectivity, trade or technology cooperation agreements are not impeded.
- An alternative to Chinese interference – In a region increasingly targeted by Chinese investment and loans, SAARC could be a common platform to demand more sustainable alternatives for development, or to oppose trade tariffs together, or to demand better terms for South Asian labour around the world.
- This potential has not yet been explored, nor will it be till SAARC is allowed to progress naturally and the people of South Asia, who make up a quarter of the world's population, are enabled to fulfil their destiny together.

### WTO moratorium on e-commerce customs duties

India and South Africa have asked the WTO to revisit the issues related with moratorium on customs duties on e-commerce trade, which is expiring in December this year.

### WTO moratorium

- Since about 75 countries, led by developed country members, have launched pluri-lateral talks on e-commerce at the WTO.
- It is a good time for developing countries to discuss common concerns related to e-commerce.
- The member countries will brainstorm on straightforward matters such as whether binding rules on e-commerce could result in concrete gains for poorer countries.
- In addition, nuanced issues, such as the possibility of developing nations influencing the outcome of negotiations, will also be explored.

### Why scrap WTO moratorium?

- The existing industries and tariffs play an important role in protecting infant domestic industries from more established overseas competitors until they have attained competitiveness and economies of scale.

- According to industry experts, India wants an end to the moratorium and imposition of import duties to protect domestic industry and revenue.
- Since 1998, the moratorium is being extended time and again for two years.
- The potential tariff revenue loss to developing countries is estimated at \$10 billion.
- The moratorium will negatively impact the efforts of many developing countries, which are laggards as far as digital industrialization is concerned, to industrialize digitally.

#### Impacting digital industry

- Customs duty-free imports of digital products may also hinder the growth of the infant digital industry in developing countries.
- This will also negatively impact digital industrialization, local employment creation and erode trade competitiveness of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in developing countries.

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

#### **Gujarat launches India's first trading programme to combat particulate air pollution**

Gujarat has launched India's first trading programme to combat particulate air pollution-the emission trading scheme (ETS) – on World Environment Day 2019, which has air pollution as its theme.

#### Key features of the programme:

- It is a market-based system where the government sets a cap on emissions and allows industries to buy and sell permits to stay below the cap.
- Being initiated in Surat by the Gujarat Pollution Control Board (GPCB).
- Gujarat programme is the first in the world to regulate particulate air pollution.

#### How it works?

- Under the cap and trade system, the regulator first defines the total mass of pollution that can be put into the air over a defined period by all factories put together.
- Then, a set of permits is created, each of which allows a certain amount of pollution, and the total is equal to the cap.
- These permits are the quantity that is bought and sold. Each factory is allocated a share of these permits (this could be equal or based on size or some other rule).
- After this, plants can trade permits with each other, just like any other commodity on the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange Limited (NCDEX).

#### Significance and benefits:

- The reason for trading is that in a cap and trade market, the regulator will measure pollution over a period of time and industries must own enough permits to cover their total emissions.
- Factories who find it very expensive to reduce pollution, will seek to buy more permits. Those who can easily reduce pollution are encouraged to do so because then they have excess permits to sell.
- Eventually, after buying and selling by plants that find it cheap to cut pollution and those for whom it is expensive, most pollution is taken care of. Whatever the final allocation, the total number of permits does not change so the total pollution is still equal to the predefined cap. And yet the costs to industry are decreased.

#### Current practice and issues associated:

- Under existing regulations, every industry has to meet a certain maximum concentration of pollutants when it is operating. They are tested occasionally and manually (one or two times a year). However, there is widespread non-compliance across India. This is partly because penalties are rarely applied, in large part because they involve punishments such as closing down the entire plant which is not necessarily appropriate for small violations.

### **QUOTE OF THE DAY**

**Don't tell people about your dreams. Show them.**