

NATIONAL SOCIAL ISSUES- WOMEN, POPULATION, URBANISATION, EMPOWERMENT ETC

Assisted Reproductive Technology Regulation Bill 2020

The Union Cabinet has approved the Assisted Reproductive Technology Regulation Bill 2020.

About:

- The bill makes provisions for safe and ethical practice of assisted reproductive technology services in the country.
- Under it, the National Board shall lay down code of conduct to be observed by persons working at clinics, to set the minimum standards of physical infrastructure, laboratory and diagnostic equipment and expert manpower to be employed by clinics and banks.
The State Board shall have the responsibility to follow the policies and plans laid by the National Board for clinics and Banks in the State.
- The Bill also provides for National Registry and Registration Authority to maintain a Central database and assist the National Board in its functioning.
- The Bill also proposes for a stringent punishment for those practising sex selection, sale of human embryos or gametes, running agencies/rackets/organisations for such unlawful practices.

Related Info:

- Assisted Reproductive Technology (ART) has given hope to a multitude of persons suffering from infertility, but also introduced a plethora of legal, ethical and social issues.
- Clinics in India offer nearly all the Assisted Reproductive Technology (ART) services—gamete donation, intrauterine insemination (IUI), In-Vitro Fertilization (IVF), ICSI, PGD and gestational surrogacy.
- ART Regulation Bill 2020 follows the introduction in Parliament of the Surrogacy Regulation Bill 2020, and the approval of the Medical Termination of Pregnancy Amendment Bill 2020. These legislative measures are path breaking steps to protect women's reproductive rights.

CONSTITUTION AND POLITY

22nd Law Commission Of India

The Union Cabinet has approved 22nd Law Commission of India for a period of three years from the date of publication of the Order of Constitution in the Official Gazette.

About:

- The Law Commission of India is a non-statutory body constituted by the Government of India from time to time.
- The Commission was originally constituted in 1955 and is re-constituted every three years.
- The first such Commission was established in 1834 under the Charter Act of 1833 under the Chairmanship of Lord Macaulay.
- The First Law Commission of Independent India was established in 1955 under the Chairmanship of the then Attorney-General of India, M. C. Setalvad.
- The 22nd Law Commission will consist of –
 - a full-time Chairperson;
 - four full-time Members (including Member-Secretary);
 - Secretary, Department of Legal Affairs as ex-officio Member;
 - Secretary, Legislative Department as ex officio Member; and
 - not more than five part-time Members.

Mandate:

- The Law Commission shall, on a reference made to it by the Central Government or suo-motu, undertake research in law and review of existing laws in India for making reforms therein and enacting new legislations.
- It shall also undertake studies and research for bringing reforms in the justice delivery systems for elimination of delay in procedures, speedy disposal of cases, reduction in cost of litigation etc.

GOVERNANCE- WELFARE SCHEMES, E-GOVERNANCE, SERVICES ETC.

Crop Insurance Schemes

The Union Cabinet has approved revamping of "Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY)" and "Restructured Weather Based Crop Insurance Scheme (RWBCIS)" to address the existing challenges in implementation of Crop Insurance Schemes.

It is proposed to modify following provisions of PMFBY and RWBCIS:

- Allocation of business to Insurance Companies to be done for three years (Both PMFBY/RWBCIS).
- Option shall be given to States/UTs to choose Scale of Finance or district level Value of Notional Average Yield (NAY) i.e. Minimum Support Price (MSP) as Sum Insured for any district crop combination (Both PMFBY/RWBCIS).
- Central Subsidy under PMFBY/RWBCIS to be limited for premium rates upto 30% for unirrigated areas/crops and 25% for irrigated areas/crops. Districts having 50% or more irrigated area will be considered as irrigated area/district (Both PMFBY/RWBCIS).
- Enrolment under the Scheme to be made voluntary for all farmers (Both PMFBY/RWBCIS).
- Central Share in Premium Subsidy to be increased to 90% for North Eastern States from the existing sharing pattern of 50:50 (Both PMFBY/RWBCIS).
- Provisioning of at least 3% of the total allocation for the Scheme to be made by Government of India and Implementing State Governments for administrative expenses. This shall be subject to an upper cap fixed by DAC&FW for each State (Both PMFBY/RWBCIS).
- These changes are proposed to be implemented from Kharif 2020 Season throughout the Country.

Soil Health Card (SHC) Scheme

The Soil Health Card Day was observed on February 19 to commemorate the day Soil Health Card Scheme was launched by the PM Modi on February 19, 2015 at Suratgarh, Rajasthan.

About:

- The objectives of the Soil Health Card scheme are to issue soil health cards to farmers every 2 years so as to provide a basis to address nutritional deficiencies in fertilization practises.
- Soil health card provides information to farmers on nutrient status of their soil along with recommendation on appropriate dosage of nutrients to be applied for improving soil health.
- Soil testing is developed to promote soil test based on nutrient management. Soil testing reduces cultivation cost by application of right quantity of fertilizer.

Impact

- A 2017 study by the National Productivity Council (NPC) found that the SHC scheme has promoted sustainable farming and led to a decrease of use of chemical fertilizer application in the range of 8-10%.
- Besides, overall increase in the yield of crops to the tune of 5-6% was reported due to application of fertilizer and micro nutrients as per recommendations available in the Soil Health Cards.

Related Info: The International year of soils was celebrated in 2015, the same year India's Soil Health Card (SHC) scheme was launched.

Dairy Processing And Infrastructure Development Fund (DIDF)

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) has approved upward revision of interest subvention from "upto 2%" to "upto 2.5% p.a." under the scheme Dairy processing and Infrastructure Development Fund (DIDF) with the revised outlay of Rs 11184 Crore.

About:

- Under DIDF, Government of India will provide Interest subvention upto 2.5% to NABARD from 2019-20 to 2030-31 and in case there is any further increase in the cost of funds, it shall be borne by the end borrowers themselves.
- The funding period (2017-18 to 2019-20) of the scheme is revised to 2018-19 to 2022-23 and the repayment period to be extended upto 2030-31 with spill over to first quarter of the FY 2031-32.

Background:

- The scheme is implemented by the Department of Animal Husbandry, Dairying and Fisheries (DADF).
- Under it, milk cooperatives are provided financial assistance at the interest rate of 6.5% in the form of financial assistance loan to be returned over a period of 10 years. With this investment, 95,00,000 farmers in about 50,000 villages would be benefitted.
- Major activities covered under DIDF are: Modernizations creation of new milk processing facilities and manufacturing facilities for Value Added Products, Chilling Infrastructure, Electronic Adulteration testing kit and Project Management & Learning.

Swachh Bharat Mission (Grameen) Phase-II

The Union Cabinet has approved the Phase II of the Swachh Bharat Mission (Grameen) [SBM (G)].

About:

Implementation period: SBM (G) Phase-II will also be implemented from 2020-21 to 2024-25.

Focus areas:

- It will focus on Open Defecation Free Plus (ODF Plus), which includes ODF sustainability and Solid and Liquid Waste Management (SLWM). The program will also work towards ensuring that no one is left behind and everyone uses a toilet.
- The ODF Plus programme will also converge with MGNREGA, especially for grey water management and will also complement the newly launched Jal Jeevan Mission.
- Budget: It will be implemented with a total outlay of Rs. 1,40,881 crores. Of this Rs.52,497 crore will be allocated from the budget of D/o Drinking Water and Sanitation.
- The fund sharing pattern between Centre and States will be 90:10 for North-Eastern States and Himalayan States and UT of J&K; 60:40 for other States; and 100:0 for other Union Territories, for all the components.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Alternative Investment Fund Managers Directive (AIFMD)

The Union Cabinet has approved updating of Alternative Investment Fund Managers Directive (AIFMD) MoU signed between Securities & Exchange Board of India (SEBI) and Financial Conduct Authority (FCA), UK.

About:

- The decision was taken pursuant to UK's exit from the European Union on 31st January 2020.
- FCA, UK had submitted to SEBI that no transitional measures would be available if the amended MoU is not signed before the date when the UK exits the European Union (Brexit), and requested SEBI to sign an updated MoU as early as possible.

Background:

- Alternative Investment Fund Managers Directive (AIFMD) is a major European Union (EU) regulatory initiative to extend appropriate regulation and supervision to the alternative investment fund management industry.
- To establish supervisory cooperation arrangements between EU and non-EU authorities under the European Union Alternative Investment Fund Managers Directive (AIFMD), a bilateral MoU was signed by SEBI with securities regulators of EU members including Financial Conduct Authority (FCA), United Kingdom in 2014.

Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs)

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) has approved a scheme for "Formation and Promotion of Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) " to form and promote 10,000 new FPOs.

About:

- The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) has given its approval for 10,000 FPOs to be formed in five years period from 2019-20 to 2023-24 to ensure economies of scale for farmers.
- Support to each FPO be continued for 5 years from its year of inception.
- Initially there will be three implementing Agencies to form and promote FPOs, namely Small Farmers Agri-business Consortium (SFAC), National Cooperative Development Corporation (NCDC) and National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD).
- FPOs will be formed and promoted through Cluster Based Business Organizations (CBBOs) engaged at the State/Cluster level by implementing agencies.
- FPOs will be promoted under "One District One Product" cluster to promote specialization and better processing, marketing, branding & export by FPOs.
- Benefits: Through formation of FPOs, farmers will have better collective strength for better access to quality input, technology, credit and better marketing access through economies of scale for better realization of income.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY- EVERYDAY SCIENCE, SPACE, NUCLEAR, DEFENCE ETC

Bhaskaracharya National Institute For Space Applications And Geo-Informatics (BISAG(N))

The Union Cabinet has approved Elevation of Bhaskaracharya Institute of Space Applications and Geoinformatics (BISAG), Gujarat as Bhaskaracharya National Institute for Space Applications and Geo-informatics (BISAG(N)) under Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology (MEITY), Government of India.

About:

- At present, BISAG is a state agency of Department of Science and Technology Government of Gujarat, located at Gandhinagar, Gujarat.
- It is registered as a Society and Trust with the Charity Commissioner of Ahmedabad.

- Its Governing body is chaired by the Chief Secretary, Government of Gujarat.
- The elevation of BISAG has been done to expand its scope of activities & research and to ensure efficient rollout of GIS projects. Now it will be an Autonomous Scientific Society under Government of India instead of State Government.

Empowered “technology group”

The Union Cabinet has approved the Constitution of an empowered “Technology Group”.

About:

Composition: The 12-Member Technology Group will be chaired by the Principal Scientific Adviser to Government of India.

Mandate: To render timely policy advice on latest technologies;

- mapping of technology and technology products;
- commercialisation of dual use technologies developed in national laboratories and government R&D organisations;
- developing an indigenisation road map for selected key technologies; and
- selection of appropriate R&D programs leading to technology development.

The three pillars of the work of the Technology Group include:

- Policy Support;
- Procurement Support; and
- Support on Research and Development proposals.

DAILY ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE

Qns. Discuss whether the frequent viral outbreaks can be termed as man-made disasters.

Ans:

The ongoing novel coronavirus outbreak has resulted in over 1300 mortality in China, surpassing the SARS outbreak. The 2018 Nipah virus outbreak in Kerala, frequent dengue, malaria in North-West India, Japanese Encephalitis cases in Bihar, Ebola in Western Africa substantiate these rising cases of viral outbreaks, especially in under-developed countries.

A disaster is a sudden occurrence of an event resulting in huge losses – lives, resources.

Reasons for viral outbreaks as man-made disasters

- Inefficient health infrastructure results in high mortality: Lack of medicines, doctors etc. lead to inaccessibility to timely treatment as evident in the case of dengue mortality in India even with available treatment. This is mainly due to public health expenditure and income inequality.
- Lack of Research and Development: Currently, for such outbreaks, countries depend on international bodies like WHO to develop vaccines/treatments due to lack of internal capacities like in case of Ebola virus. This leads to the unavailability of the local and immediate response to the outbreak.
- Lack of effective monitoring and quarantine measures results in rapid and uncontrolled spread of virus. Knee-Jerk measures employed at times of public health emergencies result in mobilisation of huge quantum of resources in a short time, thus affecting other sectors of the economy.
- Social and economic reasons due to high-density urbanisation, increasing globalisation, changing lifestyle, increasing human-wildlife (fruit bats in case of Nipah) contact result in the transmission of zoonotic diseases.

Since most cases have underlying reasons emanate from man’s changing role in the environment, they can be controlled by addressing such reasons.

- Following protocols with established capacity to tackle sudden outbreak like in case of Global Emergency declaration by WHO.
- Increasing investment in research and development – biotechnology like Human Genome Project, medical infrastructure, especially in public institutions in underdeveloped countries, aid and co-operation by developed countries.
- Effective monitoring: robust disease surveillance system – case of Delhi in bringing down dengue cases, implement laws strictly, especially related to wildlife, environment and health.
- Special resource allocation for handling emergency situations like Contingency Fund.

Conclusion: Though viral outbreaks can take the form of man-made disasters. Such situations can be managed given man’s own ability to identify both point and nonpoint sources resulting in such disasters and since most of them accrue due to man’s own created ecosystem, they can be mitigated.

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS MCQs

1. With reference to the empowered "Technology Group", consider the following statements:
 1. It will be chaired by the DRDO Chairman.
 2. One of the objective is to commercialize of dual use technologies developed in national laboratories and government R&D organizations.
 Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
 - (a) 1 only
 - (b) 2 only**
 - (c) Both 1 and 2
 - (d) Neither 1 nor 2
2. With reference to the Phase II of the Swachh Bharat Mission (Grameen) [SBM (G)], consider the following statements:
 1. It will be implemented from 2020-21 to 2024-25.
 2. It will focus on Open Defecation Free Plus (ODF Plus), which includes ODF sustainability and Solid and Liquid Waste Management (SLWM).
 Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
 - (a) 1 only
 - (b) 2 only
 - (c) Both 1 and 2**
 - (d) Neither 1 nor 2
3. With reference to the Bhaskaracharya Institute of Space Applications and Geoinformatics (BISAG), consider the following statements:
 1. The Union Cabinet has approved Elevation of Bhaskaracharya Institute of Space Applications and Geoinformatics (BISAG), Gujarat as Bhaskaracharya National Institute for Space Applications and Geo-informatics (BISAG(N)) under Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology (MEITY), Government of India.
 2. Its Governing body is chaired by the Cabinet Secretary.
 Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
 - (a) 1 only**
 - (b) 2 only
 - (c) Both 1 and 2
 - (d) Neither 1 nor 2
4. With reference to the Dairy processing and Infrastructure Development Fund (DIDF), consider the following statements:
 1. Under DIDF, Government of India will provide Interest subvention upto 2.5% to NABARD from 2019-20 to 2030-31.
 2. The scheme is implemented by the Department of Animal Husbandry, Dairying and Fisheries (DADF).
 Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
 - (a) 1 only
 - (b) 2 only
 - (c) Both 1 and 2**
 - (d) Neither 1 nor 2
5. With reference to the Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs), consider the following statements:
 1. The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) has approved a scheme for "Formation and Promotion of Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) " to form and promote 10,000 new FPOs.
 2. FPOs will be promoted under "One District One Product" cluster to promote specialization and better processing, marketing, branding & export by FPOs.
 Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
 - (a) 1 only
 - (b) 2 only
 - (c) Both 1 and 2**
 - (d) Neither 1 nor 2
6. With reference to the Alternative Investment Fund Managers Directive (AIFMD), consider the following statements:

1. It is a major OECD regulatory initiative to extend appropriate regulation and supervision to the alternative investment fund management industry.
2. The Union Cabinet has approved updating of Alternative Investment Fund Managers Directive (AIFMD) MoU signed between Securities & Exchange Board of India (SEBI) and Financial Conduct Authority (FCA), UK.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only**
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

7. With reference to the Soil Health Card Day scheme, consider the following statements:
 1. The objectives of the Soil Health Card scheme are to issue soil health cards to farmers every 2 years so as to provide a basis to address nutritional deficiencies in fertilization practises.
 2. The International year of soils was celebrated in 2015, the same year India's Soil Health Card (SHC) scheme was launched.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2**
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

8. With reference to the "Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY)" and "Restructured Weather Based Crop Insurance Scheme (RWBCIS)", consider the following statements:
 1. Central Share in Premium Subsidy to be increased to 70% for North Eastern States from the existing sharing pattern of 50:50 for both "Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY)" and "Restructured Weather Based Crop Insurance Scheme (RWBCIS)".
 2. Enrolment under the Scheme to be made voluntary for all farmers for both schemes.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only**
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

9. With reference to the 22nd Law Commission of India, consider the following statements:
 1. The Law Commission of India is a non-statutory body constituted by the Government of India from time to time.
 2. The Commission was originally constituted in 1935 and is re-constituted every three years.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only**
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

10. With reference to the Assisted Reproductive Technology Regulation Bill 2020, consider the following statements:
 1. The State Board shall have the responsibility to follow the policies and plans laid by the National Board for clinics and Banks in the State.
 2. The Bill provides for National Registry and Registration Authority to maintain a Central database and assist the National Board in its functioning.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2**
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2