

GOVERNANCE

Sexual Harassment and the Code on Wages

According to a provision in the Code on Wages 2019, 'conviction for sexual harassment' can be a ground for denying bonus payouts to employees.

The Central government published the Draft Code on Wages (Central) Rules, 2020 in July 2020 and placed it in the public domain inviting objections and suggestions.

Key Points

The Code lays down norms for annual bonus dues that accrue to employees, replacing the Payment of Bonus Act, 1965, which bars bonus dues only in case of fraud, violent conduct and theft or sabotage.

Payment of Bonus Act, 1965:

- The minimum bonus payable is 8.33% of the salary or wage earned by the employee during the accounting year subject to a maximum of 20% of such salary or wage and is applicable to all employees earning a salary of up to Rs. 21,000 a month.
- Section 29 of the Code states that "Notwithstanding anything contained in this Code, an employee shall be disqualified from receiving bonus under this Code, if he is dismissed from service for fraud or riotous or violent behaviour while on the premises of the establishment or theft, misappropriation or sabotage of any property of the establishment or conviction for sexual harassment."
- The salary and bonus payment limits are yet to be notified under the Code on Wages.
- Other disqualification triggers are explicitly restricted to actions on an employer's premises, the trigger referring to conviction under sexual harassment does not include such a condition about the location of the incident.
- As of now, it is not clear if sexual harassment incidents or related crimes against women outside the workplace could lead to dismissal of employees with loss of bonus payments but it should come under the purview irrespective of where it is done.

Significance of the Move:

- This is a huge step to get people to be on their best behaviour in the workplace as the prospect of losing one's benefits may make employees more careful of their conduct.
- This is also a step forward towards creating seriousness about instances of sexual harassment at the workplace and in general.
- This move will serve as an additional deterrent apart from the Prevention Of Sexual Harassment (POSH) law of 2013.

Code on Wages Act, 2019

- The new wage code removes the multiplicity of wage definitions, which can significantly reduce litigation as well as compliance cost for employers.
- It links minimum wage across the country to the skills of the employee and the place of employment.
- It seeks to universalise the provisions of minimum wages and their timely payment to all employees irrespective of the sector and wage ceiling.
- It seeks to ensure Right to Sustenance for every worker and intends to increase the legislative protection of minimum wage.
- A National Floor Level Minimum Wage will be set by the Centre and will be revised every five years, while states will fix minimum wages for their regions, which cannot be lower than the floor wage.

It subsumes the following four labour laws:

- Payment of Wages Act, 1936
- Minimum Wages Act, 1948
- Payment of Bonus Act, 1965
- Equal Remuneration Act, 1976
- Prevention Of Sexual Harassment Law 2013

Under it, sexual harassment includes any one or more of the following unwelcome acts or behaviour (whether directly or by implication):

- Physical contact and advances.
- Demand or request for sexual favours.
- Making sexually coloured remarks.

- Showing pornography.
- Any other unwelcome physical, verbal or non-verbal conduct of sexual nature.

As per the POSH law guidelines, firms are required to form an Internal Complaints Committee (ICC) to inquire into complaints of sexual harassment at the workplace.

ICC is required to make recommendations to employers on the action required pursuant to its inquiry in such complaints.

If the ICC upholds a complaint, it could be interpreted as a conviction and ICC has the powers to decide if someone is guilty and report it further to the police, though not all sexual harassment cases translate into a police case.

INDIAN ECONOMY

Provisions For Platform Workers

The Code on Social Security, 2020, for the first time in Indian law, attempted to define 'platform work' outside of the traditional employment category.

Background

- Labour falls under the Concurrent List of the Constitution. Recently, the Parliament passed three labour codes — on industrial relations; occupational safety, health and working conditions; and social security — proposing to simplify the country's archaic labour laws and give impetus to economic activity without compromising with the workers' benefits.
- These labour codes can have a transformative impact on labour relations in India. Along with the 'Code on Wages Act- 2019', these can significantly ease the conduct of business by amalgamating a plethora of Central and State laws on labour.

Code on Social Security , 2020 has the following provisions:

- This will replace nine social security laws, including Maternity Benefit Act, Employees' Provident Fund Act, Employees' Pension Scheme, Employees' Compensation Act, among others.
- The code universalizes social security coverage to those working in the unorganised sector, such as migrant workers, gig workers and platform workers.
- Aggregators, meaning "digital intermediaries or a market place for a buyer or users of a service to connect with the seller or the service provider", are specifically required to contribute to the social security fund.
- For the first time, provisions of social security will also be extended to agricultural workers also.
- The code also reduces the time limit for receiving gratuity payment from the continuous service of five years to one year for all kinds of employees, including fixed-term employees, contract labour, daily and monthly wage workers.

Key Points

Platform Work (as defined by the Code): Platform work means a work arrangement outside of a traditional employer-employee relationship in which organisations or individuals use an online platform to access other organisations or individuals to solve specific problems or to provide specific services or any such other activities which may be notified by the Central Government, in exchange for payment.

Significance of Platform Work:

- Platform work promises workers flexibility and ownership over delivery of work.
- Important for delivery of essential services as seen during pandemic.
- Employment Intensive Sector.
- Potential Sector for growth due to fast pace of Urbanisation.
- Development of rural areas due to remittances sent by platform workers.

Issues in the sector:

- Though platform work promises workers flexibility and ownership over delivery of work, they are still largely dictated by mechanisms of control wired by the algorithm. This affects pricing per unit of work, allocation of work, and hours.
- Entry into on-such platform work like ride sharing and food delivery requires vehicular assets which an average Indian worker lacks. Thus, to enter the platform economy, workers rely on intensive loan schemes, often facilitated by platform aggregator companies. This results in dependence on platform companies, driven by financial obligations, thus rendering flexibility and ownership.
- Leads to contractualisation of the workforce and promotes the Gig economy.

- Gig Economy is a free market system in which temporary positions are common and organizations hire independent workers for short-term commitments. The term "gig" is a slang word for a job that lasts a specified period of time.
- A company engaging in greater contractualisation often has a higher turnover rate of personnel, creating a disruptive operational environment and leading to higher costs of training and higher incidence in costs of errors.

Way Forward

Adopting International best practices- Ontario and California have shown a move towards granting employee status to platform workers, thus guaranteeing minimum wage and welfare benefits.

Further, the government needs to ensure easy availability of credit to platform workers.

BIODIVERSITY AND ENVIRONMENT

Translocation of Corals in Mumbai

The National Institute of Oceanography will carry out the translocation of 18 coral colonies from the coast of Mumbai for the Mumbai Coastal Road Project.

Key Points

Corals:

- Corals exhibit characteristics of plants, but are marine animals that are related to jellyfish and anemones.
- They are made up of genetically identical organisms called polyps, which are tiny, soft-bodied organisms.
- At their base is a hard, protective limestone skeleton called a calicle, which forms the structure of coral reefs.
- These polyps have microscopic algae called zooxanthellae living within their tissues. The corals and algae have a mutualistic (symbiotic) relationship. i.e.
- The coral provides the zooxanthellae with the compounds necessary for photosynthesis.
- In return, the zooxanthellae supply the coral with organic products of photosynthesis, like carbohydrates, which are utilized by the coral polyps for synthesis of their calcium carbonate skeletons.
- Zooxanthellae are also responsible for the unique and beautiful colors of corals.

There are 2 types of corals:

- Stony, shallow-water corals—the kind that build reefs.
- Soft corals and deep water corals that live in dark cold waters.

Coral Reefs:

- Reefs begin when a polyp attaches itself to a rock on the seafloor, then divides, or buds, into thousands of clones. The polyp calicles connect to one another, creating a colony that acts as a single organism.
- As colonies grow over hundreds and thousands of years, they join with other colonies, and become reefs.
- Coral reefs cover less than 1% of the ocean floor but they are among the most productive and diverse ecosystems on Earth. They are referred to as the rainforests of the sea for their biodiversity.
- Benefits: Coral reefs are like underwater cities that support marine life.
- According to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), they provide at least half a billion people around the world with food security and livelihoods.
- Coral reefs also act as 'wave breaks' between the sea and the coastline and minimise the impact of sea erosion.
- According to a recent study of University of Queensland (UQ), Australia, more life can be supported by dead coral remains than live corals.
- Protection: In India, they are under Schedule I of the Wildlife Protection Act (WPA), 1972.
- Threats: Climate change remains one of the biggest threats to corals.
- Around the world, this threat has been visible in the "bleaching" of corals.
- Coral Bleaching: It is a process during which corals, under stress from warm weather, expel the algae that give corals their brilliant colours and live in their tissues and produce their food.
- The Great Barrier Reef off the coast of Australia has suffered six mass bleaching events due to warmer than normal ocean temperatures in 1998, 2002, 2006, 2016, 2017, and now 2020.

- The Great Barrier Reef is a UNESCO World Heritage site and home to one of the largest collections of coral reefs on the planet.
- Biorock Technology: It is a method to restore coral reefs using biorock or mineral accretion.
- Under this low voltage electrical currents through seawater is applied, causing dissolved minerals to crystallize on structures, growing into a white limestone (CaCO_3) similar to that which naturally makes up coral reefs and tropical white sand beaches.
- Biorock, also known as Seacrete or Seament, refers to the substance formed by electro-accumulation of minerals dissolved in seawater.

Coral Translocation:

- The translocation of corals is at a nascent stage along the Indian coastline. It is difficult and has not been very successful in India.
- Pilot projects at various sites including, Lakshadweep islands and Andaman islands have been undertaken to study the survival rate, method and site of translocation, and creation of high heat-resistant coral colonies, etc.
- Transplanted corals are more susceptible to storm surges and bleaching from warming ocean waters.
- Experts are of the view that for a high survival rate, it is important to translocate corals in a place with similar environmental characteristics such as depth, current flow, amount of light, and pressure.

11 SPECIES OF CORALS IN MUMBAI

➤ Corals are invertebrate animals belonging to a group called Cnidaria, that can be found in rocky intertidal regions or on the ocean floor



➤ Corals are usually classified as 'hard' and 'soft' corals. Hard corals are reef-building ones. Soft corals, which include seas fans, don't have the rock-like calcareous skeleton; instead they grow wood-like cores for support and fleshy rinds for protection. Soft corals live in colonies that often resemble brightly coloured plants or trees



➤ The city has 11 species of corals, according to a survey by Marine Life of Mumbai, nine of which are hard corals. The National Institute of Oceanography identified 18 colonies at Haji Ali and Worli, comprising six species

➤ Coral restoration and translocation has been tried in many parts of the world with varied success. In India, there have been projects in Lakshadweep, Gujarat, Andaman & Nicobar Islands and Sindhudurg



SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Asteroid 16 Psyche

A recent study at National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) has found out that asteroid 16 Psyche, which orbits between Mars and Jupiter, could be made entirely of metal and is worth an estimated 10,000 quadrillion US dollars.

Key Points

About Asteroid 16 Psyche:

- Asteroid 16 Psyche is located 370 million kilometers away from earth between Mars and Jupiter and has a diameter of 140 miles.
- It was discovered in the year 1853 by the Italian astronomer Annibale de Gaspard and was named after the ancient Greek goddess of the soul, Psyche.
- Unlike most asteroids that are made up of rocks or ice, scientists believe that Psyche is a dense and largely metallic object thought to be the core of an earlier planet that failed formation.
- Psyche's shape is like a potato which takes about five earth years to complete one orbit of the sun but only a bit over 4 hours to rotate once on its axis.

Latest Findings:

- The latest study through the Hubble Space Telescope and ultraviolet observation gives a clearer picture of Psyche's composition.
- The Hubble Space Telescope was launched into low Earth orbit in 1990 and remains in operation.
- It was found that Psyche could be a unique asteroid composed of iron and nickel almost completely which is similar to earth's core. The iron alone would be worth more than 10,000 quadrillion US dollars.
- Scientists noted that the manner in which Psyche reflected ultraviolet light was very similar to the way iron reflects sunlight.

NASA's Psyche mission:

- The primary target of the Psyche mission to be launched in 2022 by NASA is to study this asteroid completely and confirm the assumptions being made by the scientists.
- Psyche mission will be the first mission to investigate this metallic asteroid. Psyche spacecraft will land on the asteroid in early 2026.
- As the composition of Psyche is very similar to earth's own core, its study will also give an insight to earth's violent history of collisions and accretion that created it.

IMPORTANT FACTS FOR PRELIM

National Unity Day 2020

- Every year, the National Unity Day (Rashtriya Ekta Diwas) is celebrated on 31st October to commemorate the birth anniversary of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel.
- The Prime Minister launched the seaplane service from Ahmedabad to the Statue of Unity, Kevadia.

Key Points

- The day was celebrated for the first time in 2014, when the Government of India decided to celebrate Patel's birthday as the National Unity Day to recognise his monumental contribution and service to the nation.
- On this day, several events like Run For Unity, a nationwide marathon to increase awareness about Patel's contributions, National Unity pledge, Ekta Parade, etc. are organised.
- In 2018, the Government unveiled the Statue of Unity in Gujarat in Patel's honour.
- It is the tallest statue (182-meter) in the world.
- In January 2020, it was added in the 'Eight Wonders' of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO).

Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel

- Born: 31st October 1875 in Nadiad, Gujarat.

Achievements:

- First Home Minister and Deputy Prime Minister of India.

Headed various Committees of the Constituent Assembly of India, namely:

- Advisory Committee on Fundamental Rights.
- Committee on Minorities and Tribal and Excluded Areas.
- Provincial Constitution Committee.
- Integrated the farmer's cause in Kheda Satyagraha (1918) and Bardoli Satyagraha (1928) with the national freedom movement.
- Women of Bardoli bestowed the title 'Sardar' on Vallabhbhai Patel, which means 'a Chief or a Leader'.
- Known as the "Iron Man of India" for playing an important role in unification and integration of Indian princely states into the Indian federation and for convincing princely states to align with the Indian Union.
- Requested the people of India to live together by uniting (Ek Bharat) in order to create a foremost India (Shresth Bharat).
- This ideology still reflects in the Atmanirbhar Bharat initiative which seeks to make India self-reliant.
- Remembered as the 'Patron Saint of India's Civil Servants' as he established the modern all-India services system.
- Death: 15th December 1950 in Bombay.

DAILY ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE

Qns. What do you understand by the phenomenon of the inversion of temperature? Examine how does it impact the atmosphere and the weather.(150 words)

Ans.

Temperature inversion is a reversal of the normal behavior of temperature in the troposphere. Under this meteorological phenomenon a layer of warm air lies over the cold air layer.

It is caused in static atmospheric conditions while some times, it occurs due to horizontal or vertical movement of air.

Temperature inversion is usually of short duration but quite common nonetheless

Favourable conditions for temperature inversion

- Long winter nights: Loss of heat by terrestrial radiation from the ground surface during night may exceed the amount of incoming solar radiation.
- Cloudless and clear sky: Loss of heat through terrestrial radiation proceeds more rapidly without any obstruction.
- Dry air near the ground surface: It limits the absorption of the radiated heat from the Earth's surface.
- Slow movement of air: It results in no transfer or mixing of heat in the lower layers of the atmosphere.
- Snow covered ground surface: It results in maximum loss of heat through reflection of incoming solar radiation.

Effects on atmosphere and weather

- Temperature inversion determines the precipitation, forms of clouds, and also causes frost due to condensation of warm air due to its cooling.
- Dust particles hanging in the air: Due to inversion of temperature, air pollutants such as dust particles and smoke do not disperse on the surface.
- Stops the movement of air: It causes the stability of the atmosphere that stops the downward and upward movement of air.
- Less rainfall: Convection clouds can not move high upwards so there is less rainfall and no showers. So, it causes a problem for agricultural productivity.
- Lower visibility: Fog is formed due to the situation of warm air above and cold air below, and hence visibility is reduced which causes disturbance in transportation.
- Thunderstorms and tornadoes: Intense thunderstorms and tornadoes are also associated with inversion of temperature because of the intense energy that is released after an inversion blocks an area's normal convection patterns.
- Diurnal variations in temperature tend to be very small.

Conclusion

To conclude, temperature inversion might be a desirable phenomena when it comes to cooler air temperatures, and comfort after an extremely hot and oppressive day, the after-effects on air quality are certainly not desirable.

DAILY QUIZ

1. With reference to Coral Reefs, consider the following statements:

1. Coral reefs are protected under Schedule II of the Wildlife Protection Act (WPA), 1972.
2. Biorock technology is a method to restore coral reefs.
3. Climate change leads to coral bleaching.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a) 1 and 2 only
- b) 2 and 3 only**
- c) 1 and 3 only
- d) 1, 2 and 3

2. Consider the following statements:

1. The Himalayan Brown Bear is found in India as well as in Nepal.
2. The Himalayan Brown Bear is listed as Critically Endangered in the IUCN Red List.

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. Which of the following is/are correct regarding Elephant population in India?

- 1. Karnataka has the highest population of Indian elephants.
- 2. The Indian elephant is listed as critically endangered in the IUCN Red List.
- 3. Shivalik Elephant Reserve is located in Himachal Pradesh.

Choose the correct answer using code given below:

- a) **1 only**
- b) 2 and 3 only
- c) 3 only
- d) 1, 2 and 3

4. With reference to Sustainable Action for Transforming Human Capital (SATH), consider the following statements:

- 1. It is a programme undertaken by NITI Aayog.
- 2. Odisha is one of the role model states selected by NITI Aayog for the project.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

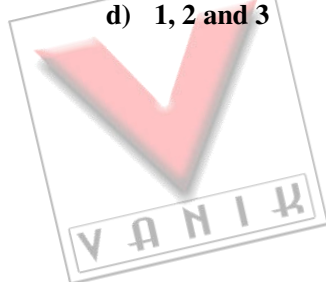
- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) **Both 1 and 2**
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

5. With reference to Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, consider the following statements:

- 1. He headed the Advisory Committee on Fundamental Rights in the constituent assembly.
- 2. He is Known as the Iron Man of India.
- 3. He is remembered as the Patron Saint of India's Civil Servants.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a) 3 only
- b) 2 and 3 only
- c) 1 and 2 only
- d) **1, 2 and 3**



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