

**GOVERNANCE****Cyber Crime Volunteers**

The Internet Freedom Foundation (IFF), a digital liberties organisation, has written to the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) that the cyber crime volunteers concept will lead to a “culture of surveillance and constant suspicion in society creating potential social distrust”.

**Key Points****About the Cyber Crime Volunteers Concept:**

**Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C)** has envisaged the Cyber Crime Volunteers Program to bring together citizens with passion to serve the nation on a single platform and contribute in the fight against cybercrime in the country.

- The programme targets to rope in around 500 persons to flag unlawful content on the Internet.
- Good Samaritans are welcomed to register as Cyber Crime Volunteers in the role of unlawful content flaggers for facilitating law enforcement agencies in identifying, reporting and removal of illegal/unlawful online content.
- Volunteers have been advised to study Article 19 of the Indian Constitution, which deals with freedom of expression.
- Further, the volunteer shall “maintain strict confidentiality of tasks assigned/carried out by him/her”. The State Nodal Officer of States/UTs also reserves the right to take legal action against the Volunteer, in case of violation of terms and conditions of the Program.

**Unlawful Content:** In general, content that violates any law in force in India. Such content may fall under **following broad categories:**

- Against sovereignty and integrity of India.
- Against defence of India.
- Against Security of the State.
- Against friendly relations with foreign States.
- Content aimed at disturbing Public Order.
- Disturbing communal harmony.
- Child Sex Abuse material.

**Concerns Raised:**

**Chances of Misuse:** There is no information available on how the Ministry will ensure that the program is not misused by certain elements to extract misguided personal or political vendettas. There is no process in place for withdrawal of complaints once submitted.

**Cyber-Vigilantism:** The programme will essentially result in a similar situation to the one which East Germany was in the 1950s.

The state asking citizens to report their fellow citizens would lead to cyber-vigilantism, and would lead to peers turning against their peers to snitch on them.

**No Clear Definition:** The Ministry has failed to clearly define unlawful content and content which would relate to “anti-national” activities.

This could allow the volunteers to exercise far more discretion than is necessary and report on citizens who are well within their rights to post content which is critical of the State.

Such a program seems to be in direct violation of the decision of the Supreme Court in Shreya Singhal v Union of India (2013) which highlights the need to ensure that overbroad restrictions on online speech are not used as a tool by the State to criminalise free speech on the internet.

**INDIAN ECONOMY****CRCL Recognized as Regional Customs Laboratory**

Central Revenues Control Laboratory (CRCL), New Delhi, under the Central Board of Indirect Taxes & Customs has been recognized as a Regional Customs Laboratory (RCL) of the World Customs Organisation (WCO) for Asia-Pacific Region.

- With its recognition as RCL, CRCL joins a select group of Customs Laboratories in the region like those in Japan & Korea.

**Key Points****About Central Revenues Control Laboratory (CRCL):**

**Established:** 1939.

With the introduction of instrument based testing, Revenue Laboratories are facilitating faster clearances, without compromising on law enforcement, and thereby playing a vital role in trade facilitation.

**Regional Customs Laboratory:**

- Their traditional work is the chemical analysis to determine tariff classification and the level of duties and other taxes.
- Their role has evolved over time with changes in trade patterns and technical evolution.
- Modern customs laboratories now play an important part in environmental protection (e.g., controlling the trade of ozone depleting substances), endangered species protection, control of dangerous goods such as pesticides, persistent organic pollutants, chemical weapons, as well as narcotics and drug precursors, etc.

**World Customs Organisation:**

- The World Customs Organization (WCO), established in 1952 as the Customs Co-operation Council (CCC) is an independent intergovernmental body whose mission is to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of Customs administrations.
- At present, it represents 183 Customs administrations across the globe that collectively process approximately 98% of world trade.
- India had become the vice-chair (regional head) of the Asia Pacific region of the WCO for a period of two years to June, 2020.
- It is the only international organization with competence in Customs matters and which can rightly call itself the voice of the international Customs community.
- It has its headquarters in Brussels, Belgium.

**Some Important Conventions/Mechanism under WCO:**

- The SAFE Framework of Standards to Secure and Facilitate Global Trade.
- The International Convention on the Harmonized Commodity Description and Coding System (HS Convention).
- The International Convention on the Simplification and Harmonization of Customs procedures (revised Kyoto Convention or RKC).

**INTERNATIONAL RELATION****West Container Terminal Offer to India-Japan: Sri Lanka**

Sri Lanka has decided to offer the West Container Terminal (WCT) to Indian and Japanese companies.

The decision comes a month after the Sri Lanka government ejected the two partners from a 2019 tripartite agreement to jointly develop the East Container Terminal (ECT), citing resistance to “foreign involvement”.

**Key Points****About:**

- Sri Lanka has approved the proposal to develop the WCT on Build, Operate and Transfer (BOT) basis for a period of 35 years as a public-private partnership with India's Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone Limited and its local representative in Sri Lanka. Japan is yet to name an investor.

**Stakes:**

- In the ECT project agreed upon earlier, the Sri Lanka Ports Authority (SLPA) was to hold a majority 51% stake, but in the WCT proposal, India and Japan will be accorded 85% stake.
- This is similar to the terms set for the Colombo International Container Terminal (CICT), where China Merchants Port Holdings Company Limited holds 85% stake.

**Significance:**

- The WCT is adjacent to the China-run CICT and just a couple of kilometres away from the China-backed Port City being built on reclaimed land, making it a strategically desirable spot for India, whose concerns over China's presence in Sri Lanka are well known.
- It will support India in accomplishment of its strategic vision (SAGAR) for the Indian Ocean, 'Neighbourhood First policy', and in countering China's String of Pearls strategy.

Colombo's alternative comes at a time when Sri Lanka is seeking support at the ongoing UN Human Right Council session, where a resolution on the country's rights record will soon be put to vote.

## SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

### National Cyber Security Strategy 2020

A National Cyber Security Strategy 2020 is being formulated by the Office of National Cyber Security Coordinator at the National Security Council Secretariat.

- Cyber Security is protecting cyber space including critical information infrastructure from attack, damage, misuse and economic espionage.
- The National Security Council (NSC) of India is a three-tiered organization that oversees political, economic, energy and security issues of strategic concern.

### **Key Points**

#### **National Cyber Security Strategy 2020:**

- To improve cyber awareness and cybersecurity through more stringent audits. Empanelled cyber auditors will look more carefully at the security features of organisations than are legally necessary now.

#### **About:**

- There will be table-top cyber crisis management exercises regularly to reinforce the idea that cyber attacks can take place regularly.
- It does call for an index of cyber preparedness, and attendant monitoring of performance.
- A separate budget for cybersecurity is suggested, as also to synergise the role and functions of various agencies with the requisite domain knowledge.

#### **Need:**

#### **Cyber warfare offensives:**

- The United States is just one of many countries that have invested significant amounts of money in developing not just defences against attack, but the ability to mount damaging cyber warfare offensives.
- The countries which are believed to have the most developed cyber warfare capabilities are the United States, China, Russia, Israel and the United Kingdom.

#### **Increased Digital usage Post-Covid:**

- Critical infrastructure is getting digitised in a very fast way — this includes financial services, banks, power, manufacturing, nuclear power plants, etc.

#### **For Protecting Critical Sectors:**

- It is particularly significant given the increasing interconnectedness of sectors and proliferation of entry points into the internet, which could further grow with the adoption of 5G.
- There were 6.97 lakh cyber security incidents reported in the first eight months of 2020, nearly equivalent to the previous four years combined, according to information reported to and tracked by Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In).

#### **Recent Cyber Attacks:**

- There has been a steep rise in the use of resources like malware by a Chinese group called Red Echo to target "a large swathe" of India's power sector.
- Red Echo used malware called ShadowPad, which involves the use of a backdoor to access servers.
- Chinese hacker group known as Stone Panda had "identified gaps and vulnerabilities in the IT infrastructure and supply chain software of Bharat Biotech and the Serum Institute of India.
- SolarWinds hack, impacted national critical infrastructure in the USA.

#### **Present Government Initiatives:**

- Cyber Surakshit Bharat Initiative.
- Cyber Swachhta Kendra.
- Online cybercrime reporting portal.
- Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C).

- National Critical Information Infrastructure Protection Centre (NCIIPC).
- Information Technology Act, 2000.
- National Cyber Policy, 2013.

**SOCIAL JUSTICE****Right To Education**

Delhi High Court asked the Central government to respond to a petition against the authorities for not deciding upon extension of free education under the Right To Education (RTE) Act to children of Economically Weaker Section (EWS) beyond Class 8 and up to Class 12 in school.

**Key Points****Constitutional Provisions for Right To Education:**

- Originally Part IV of Indian Constitution, Article 45 and Article 39 (f) of DPSP, had a provision for state funded as well as equitable and accessible education.
- The first official document on the Right to Education was the Ramamurti Committee Report in 1990.
- In 1993, the Supreme Court's landmark judgment in the Unnikrishnan JP vs State of Andhra Pradesh & Others held that Education is a Fundamental right flowing from Article 21.
- Tapas Majumdar Committee (1999) was set up, which encompassed insertion of Article 21A.
- The 86th Constitutional Amendment in 2002, provided Right to Education as a fundamental right in Part-III of the Constitution.
- It inserted Article 21A which made Right to Education a fundamental right for children between 6-14 years.
- It provided for a follow-up legislation Right to Education Act 2009.

**Feature of Right to Education (RTE) Act, 2009:**

- The RTE Act aims to provide primary education to all children aged 6 to 14 years.
- Section 12(1)(c) mandates that non-minority private unaided schools should reserve at least 25% of seats in entry-level grades for children from economically weaker and disadvantaged backgrounds.
- It also makes provisions for a non-admitted child to be admitted to an age appropriate class.
- It also states about sharing of financial and other responsibilities between the Central and State Governments.
- Education in the Indian constitution is a concurrent issue and both centre and states can legislate on the issue.
- It lays down the norms and standards related to: Pupil Teacher Ratios (PTRs), Buildings and infrastructure, School-working days, Teacher-working hours.
- It also provides for prohibition of deployment of teachers for non-educational work, other than decennial census, elections to local authority, state legislatures and parliament, and disaster relief.
- It provides for the appointment of teachers with the requisite entry and academic qualifications.

**It prohibits**

- Physical punishment and mental harassment.
- Screening procedures for admission of children.
- Capitation fee.
- Private tuition by teachers.
- Running of schools without recognition.
- It focuses on making the child free of fear, trauma and anxiety through a system of child friendly and child centred learning.

**Argument for Extension of Free Education under RTE beyond Class 8 for EWS:**

- The parents of children are required to pay hefty fees to unaided private schools in classes 9 and onwards which they can not afford.

Changing school from unaided private to government after class 8 may affect the children's state of mind and education and thus, an extension of the RTE benefits will ensure continuity in the education.

**ODISHA DEVELOPMENT****Similipal Biosphere Reserve: Odisha**

Recently, a massive fire broke out in the Similipal Biosphere Reserve in Odisha. The core area of the biosphere was untouched by the fire, however the fire is threatening damage to its rich biodiversity.

**Key Points**

- Similipal derives its name from 'Simul' (silk cotton) tree.
- It was formally designated a tiger reserve in 1956 and brought under Project Tiger in the year 1973.
- It was declared a biosphere reserve by the Government of India in June, 1994.
- It has been part of the UNESCO World Network of Biosphere Reserve since 2009.
- It is part of the Similipal-Kuldiha-Hadgarh Elephant Reserve popularly known as Mayurbhanj Elephant Reserve, which includes 3 protected areas i.e. Similipal Tiger Reserve, Hadagarh Wildlife sanctuary and Kuldiha wildlife sanctuary.
- It is situated in the northern part of Odisha's Mayurbhanj district. Geographically, it lies in the eastern end of the eastern ghat.

**Coverage:**

- The biosphere spread over 4,374 sq. km. has 845 sq. km. of core forest (tiger reserve), 2,129 sq km buffer area and 1,400 sq km of transition space.

**Vegetation:**

- Similipal has 1,076 flowering species and 96 species of orchids. It boasts of having tropical semi-evergreen forests, tropical moist deciduous forests, dry deciduous hill forests, high level sal forests and sprawling meadows.

**Tribes:**

- Two tribes, the Erenga Kharias and the Mankirdias, inhabit the reserve's forests and practise traditional agricultural activities (the collection of seeds and timber).

**Wildlife:**

- Similipal is home to a wide range of wild animals including tigers and elephants, besides 304 species of birds, 20 species of amphibians and 62 species of reptiles.
- Vulnerability to Forest Fires:
  - Natural: Natural causes such as lightning or even soaring temperatures can sometimes result in forest fires here.
  - Man Made Factors: Instances of poaching and hunting wherein the poachers set a small patch of forest on fire to divert the wild animals, can lead to forest fires.

**Mitigation Strategies:**

- Forecasting fire-prone days and including community members to mitigate incidents of fire, creating fire lines, clearing sites of dried biomass, and crackdown on poachers.
- The forest fire lines which are strips kept clear of vegetation, could help break the forest into compartments to prevent fires from spreading.

**ENVIRONMENT AND BIODIVERSITY****WWF Conservation Drive on World Wildlife Day**

Recently, on the occasion of World Wildlife Day (3rd March), the Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF) called on multiple stakeholders, including the European Union (EU), to save Europe's last old-growth forests.

- WWF was established in 1961 and is headquartered at Gland, Switzerland. Its mission is to conserve nature and reduce the most pressing threats to the diversity of life on Earth.

**Key Points**

- Europe's Old-Growth Forests (OGF) are primitive forests that are dominated by natural processes. They include virgin, near-virgin, long-untouched forests by humans, eg: Białowieża Forest in Poland.
- To date, 3,50,000 hectares (ha) of old-growth and virgin forests had been identified in Central and Southeastern Europe. Of these, only 2,80,000 ha were legally protected.

**Location:**

- The largest areas of surviving OGF and forest habitats in Europe (outside of Russia) were found primarily in Romania, Ukraine, Slovakia and Bulgaria.

**Ecological Importance:**

- They were home to Europe's largest surviving large carnivore populations, as well as thousands of other species of flora and fauna.
- These forests rendered important ecosystem services such as filtering and storing freshwater to regulating the climate and were thus essential to people and to the economy.

**Threats:**

- Increasing pressure on forests from both unsustainable legal and illegal logging, as well as the impacts of climate change.

- The fragmentation and destruction of forest habitats meant that both animals and disease vectors were inadvertently coming into more frequent contact and conflict with humans.

**Steps that can be Taken:**

- Developing and promoting sustainable compensation mechanisms.
- Developing forest-based local green business and investment schemes to support sustainable development of such forests.

**IMPORTANT FACTS FOR PRELIM**

**ICC Investigations into Israel-Palestine War Crimes**

International Criminal Court (ICC) has launched investigations into the war crimes in Palestinian territories occupied by Israel (West Bank and the Gaza Strip).

**Key Points**

- The decision for investigation is taken after a recent ruling that the court’s jurisdiction extends to territories occupied by Israel since the 1967 Six-day Arab- Israeli war.
- In this war, Israeli forces seized the Golan Heights from Syria, the West Bank & East Jerusalem from Jordan and Sinai Peninsula & Gaza strip from Egypt.
- The investigation is also expected to cover the 2014 Gaza war, the 2018 Gaza border clashes and Israeli settlement-building in the West Bank.
- The inquiry will also look at whether rocket fire by Hamas and other groups from Gaza amounts to war crimes.

**About ICC:**

- Governed by an international treaty called 'The Rome Statute', the ICC is the world’s first permanent international criminal court.
- Headquarters: The Hague, Netherlands.
- It investigates and, where warranted, tries individuals charged with the gravest crimes of concern to the international community: genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and the crime of aggression.
- Through international criminal justice, ICC aims to hold those responsible for their crimes and to help prevent these crimes from happening again.
- India is not a party to Rome Statute along with the USA and China.

**Golan Heights**

- The Golan Heights is a rocky plateau with an area of 1,800km<sup>2</sup> on the border between Israel and Syria in south-western Syria.
- It is a strategic location that Israel captured from Syria in the 1967 war. Israel effectively annexed the territory in 1981.
- Recently, the USA has officially recognized Jerusalem and Golan Heights as a part of Israel.



**DAILY ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE**

**Qns. Model Code of conduct has been a remarkable step in ensuring free and fair elections in India. However, the present digital era has posed challenges to it. Comment.**

Ans:

The Model Code of Conduct (MCC) is a document from the Election Commission of India that lays down the minimum standards of behavior for political parties and their candidates contesting elections, by defining their dos and don'ts in the electoral battle.

It ensures that the party in power doesn't gain an unfair advantage and free and fair elections can be conducted. However, the emergence of social media and other online platforms has posed challenges for the effective implementation of the Model Code of Conduct.

**Limitations Faced By Model Code Of Conduct In The Digital Age**

**Jurisdiction issues:** Digital companies like Facebook are run by companies located overseas. Holding them accountable has been difficult for Indian agencies. EC will face a similar challenge in preventing MCC violations.

**Fake News:** Digital media is a potent source of unverified and deliberate fake news. EC lacks resources as well as surveillance capacity to implement and punish the violation of MCC.

**Difficult to Identify Perpetrator:** Most of the information during elections is targeted through the algorithm of [online] platforms to push in much more subtle marketing messaging blended with political canvassing.

**Unregulated Nature of Digital Media:** All the current measures in place to regulate elections online are being implemented based on voluntary commitments made by online platforms.

So, there are no legally binding obligations on, for instance, Facebook or Twitter to take certain actions and there are no penalties prescribed for failing to do so.

**Conclusion**

The election commission recently has taken steps to regulate electioneering in the digital world. However, the effective implementation of MCC needs an entirely new approach with stringent focus on accountability of digital mediums.

**DAILY QUIZ**

1. Consider the following statements regarding the 'Freedom in the World 2021' Report

1. It is released by the United Nations Human Rights Council.
2. The report shows the declining trend of freedom in India since 2019.

Which of the statements given above is/are not correct?

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

2. Consider the following statements:

1. Article 45 provides education for children upto the 6 year of age.
2. The Ramamurti Committee presented the first official document on the Right to Education.
3. The Tapas Majumdar Committee recommended the universal participation of children in the age group of 6 to 14 years in school education.

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

3. Consider the following statements:

1. The Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C) is established under the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology.
2. I4C coordinates all activities related to implementation of Mutual Legal Assistance Treaties (MLAT) with other countries related to cybercrimes.

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 World Customs Organization (WCO), consider the following statements:

- 1. It is an independent intergovernmental body whose mission is to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of Customs administrations.
- 2. Central Revenues Control Laboratory (CRCL) of India has been recognized as a Regional Customs Laboratory (RCL) of the WCO for Asia-Pacific Region.

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 Similipal Biosphere Reserve, consider the following statements:

- 1. Some of its area lies in the Mayurbhanj Elephant Reserve.
- 2. It is mainly inhabited by the Dongria Kond tribes.

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**



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