

GOVERNANCE**MMDR Amendment Bill, 2021**

Recently, the Coal and Mines Minister introduced the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) (MMDR) Amendment Bill, 2021 in Lok Sabha.

The Bill seeks to amend the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957 which regulates the mining sector in India.

Key Points**Removal of restriction on end-use of minerals:**

- The Act empowers the central government to reserve any mine (other than coal, lignite, and atomic minerals) to be leased through an auction for a particular end-use (such as iron ore mine for a steel plant). Such mines are known as captive mines.
- The Bill provides that no mine will be reserved for particular end-use.

Sale of minerals by captive mines:

- The Bill provides that captive mines (other than atomic minerals) may sell up to 50% of their annual mineral production in the open market after meeting their own needs.
- The central government may increase this threshold through a notification.
- The lessee will have to pay additional charges for minerals sold in the open market.

Auction by the central government in certain cases:

- The Bill empowers the central government to specify a time period for completion of the auction process in consultation with the state government.
- If the state government is unable to complete the auction process within this period, the auctions may be conducted by the central government.

Transfer of statutory clearances:

- It provides that transferred statutory clearances will be valid throughout the lease period of the new lessee.
- Currently the new lessee has to apply for fresh clearances within two years of the transfer from the previous lessee.

Allocation of mines with expired leases:

- The Bill adds that mines whose lease has expired, may be allocated to a government company in certain cases.
- This will be applicable if the auction process for granting a new lease has not been completed, or the new lease has been terminated within a year of the auction.
- The state government may grant a lease for such a mine to a government company for a period of up to 10 years or until the selection of a new lessee, whichever is earlier.

Extension of leases to government companies:

- The Act provides that the period of mining leases granted to government companies will be prescribed by the central government and may be extended on payment of additional amounts prescribed in the Bill.

Non-exclusive reconnaissance permit:

- The Act provides for a non-exclusive reconnaissance permit (for minerals other than coal, lignite, and atomic minerals).
- Reconnaissance means preliminary prospecting of a mineral through certain surveys. The Bill removes the provision for this permit.

Significance:

Transparency: It would lead to greater transparency in the auction process as there is a perception that state governments may in some cases prefer some bidders, and try to delay or cancel mining rights if their preferred bidders do not win mining rights.

Maximization of Output: Increased flexibility would allow miners to maximise output from captive mines as they would be able to sell output in excess of their own requirements.

Ease of Doing Business: It will provide ease of doing business, simplification of procedure and benefit all the parties in areas where minerals are located.

It will also speed up the process of implementation of projects.

Efficient Energy Market: It will create an efficient energy market and bring in more competition as well as reduce coal imports.

Access to High-End Technology: It would also help India gain access to high-end technology for underground mining used by miners across the globe.

SOCIAL JUSTICE

Stop TB Partnership Board

Dr. Harsh Vardhan, Union Minister for Health and Family Welfare, has been appointed Chairman of the Stop TB Partnership Board.

He will serve a three year term, commencing July 2021, as the Chair of the Board of Stop TB Partnership.

Key Points

About the Stop TB Partnership Board:

- It was established in 2001 and is mandated to eliminate Tuberculosis as a public health problem.
- The organization was conceived following the meeting of the First Session of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Tuberculosis Epidemic held in London in March 1998.
- In its inaugural year itself, the Stop TB Partnership through the Amsterdam Declaration gave a call for collaborative action from ministerial delegations from 20 countries that bear the highest burden of TB.
- In 2019, it launched the updated Global Plan to End TB 2018-2022.
- The Kochon Prize is awarded annually by Stop TB Partnership to individuals and/or organizations that have made a significant contribution to combating TB.
- The Kochon Prize, which is endowed by the Kochon Foundation, a non-profit foundation registered in the Republic of Korea, consists of a USD 65,000 award.
- Its secretariat is based at Geneva, Switzerland.

High TB Burden Countries:

- In 2019, the 30 high TB burden countries accounted for 87% of new TB cases.
- Eight countries account for two thirds of the total, with India leading the count, followed by Indonesia, China, the Philippines, Pakistan, Nigeria, Bangladesh and South Africa (Global Tuberculosis Report: WHO)

Scenario in India:

- With an estimated 2.64 million TB patients, India has the largest burden of TB globally in terms of absolute numbers.
- Recently, the “Step Up for TB 2020” report by the Stop TB Partnership and Médecins Sans Frontières/Doctors Without Borders (MSF) has highlighted India’s conservative approach regarding the new medicines for Drug Resistant TB, putting lives of patients including children in danger.

Steps Taken by India:

- India has committed to eliminating TB in the country by 2025.
- Five years ahead of the global deadline of 2030.
- National Strategy Plan for TB Elimination 2017-2025:
- The requirements for moving towards TB elimination in India have been arranged in four strategic areas of Detect, Treat, Prevent & Build.
- There is also across all four areas, an overarching theme of the Private Sector. Another overarching theme is that of Key Populations.
- TB Harega Desh Jeetega Campaign, Nikshay Poshan Yojana, etc.

Global Efforts:

- The End TB Strategy of WHO.
- World Tuberculosis (TB) Day is observed on 24th March to raise public awareness about the devastating health, social and economic consequences of TB.

ECONOMY

ILO Report on Indian Workers

‘Global Wage Report 2020-21: Wages and minimum wages in the time of COVID-19’ was recently released.

Released by: International Labour Organisation

Key Points

- The Report comments on various issues including on Indian workers having low average wages, longer hours.
- It also reported that the workers in Asia and the Pacific enjoyed the highest real wage growth among all regions over the period 2006–19.
- The report has taken into account the National Floor Level Minimum Wage which is Rs.176/- per day.
- However, actual wages are far higher.
- If the median of the minimum wages in different states is drawn, it would be Rs.269/- per day in India.

Code on Wages, 2019

- It universalises and creates a statutory right of minimum wages for all workers whether in organized or unorganised sector.
- A new concept of statutory floor wage has also been introduced in the Code on Wages.
- The Code also provides that the minimum wages are to be ordinarily reviewed and revised by the appropriate Governments in intervals not exceeding five years.

NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Eastern Rajasthan Canal Project

The Chief Minister of Rajasthan has demanded the national project status for the Eastern Rajasthan Canal Project (ERCP).

The main advantage of a project which has received national project status is that 90% of the funding for the project will be given by the central government.

The estimated cost of the ERCP is around Rs. 40,000 crore.

Key Points

- According to the state Water Resources Department, Rajasthan, the largest state of India with a geographical area of 342.52 lakh hectares which amount to 10.4% of the entire country, holds only 1.16% of India’s surface water and 1.72% of groundwater.
- Among the state’s water bodies, only the Chambal river basin has surplus water but this water cannot be tapped directly because the area around the Kota barrage is designated as a crocodile sanctuary.
- Through the help of diversion structures, interbasin water transfers, linking channels and construction of pumping main feeder channels, the ERCP aims to create a network of water channels which will cover 23.67 % area of Rajasthan along with 41.13 % population of the state.

About the Eastern Rajasthan Canal Project:

- It aims to harvest surplus water available during rainy season in rivers in Southern Rajasthan such as Chambal and its tributaries, including Kunnu, Parvati, Kalisindh, and use this water in south-eastern districts of the state, where there is scarcity of water for drinking and irrigation.
- ERCP is planned to meet drinking and industrial water needs of the southern and south eastern Rajasthan, for humans and Livestock till the year 2051.
- It proposes to provide drinking water to 13 districts of Rajasthan and provide irrigation water for 2.8 lakh hectares of land through 26 different large and medium projects.
- 13 districts: Jhalawar, Baran, Kota, Bundi, Sawai Madhopur, Ajmer, Tonk, Jaipur, Karauli, Alwar, Bharatpur, Dausa and Dholpur.

Benefits:

- A significant area of land will get irrigation facilities.
- It intends to improve the ground water table in the rural areas of the state.
- Positively influencing the socio-economic conditions of the people.

- It adds special emphasis on the Delhi Mumbai Industrial Corridor (DMIC) and envisages that sustainable water sources will enhance and help industries grow in these areas.
- Resulting in investment and revenue.

ENVIRONMENT AND BIODIVERSITY**SC's order on Rule Curve for the Mullaperiyar dam**

The Supreme Court said the Tamil Nadu Chief Secretary will be personally responsible and appropriate action will be taken on failure to give information on the 'rule curve' for the Mullaperiyar dam to the Supreme Court-appointed Supervisory Committee.

Important value additions

- The 'rule curve' in a dam decides the fluctuating storage levels in a reservoir.
- The gate opening schedule of a dam is based on the 'rule curve'.
- It is part of the "core safety" mechanism in a dam.

Mullaperiyar Dam

- It is a masonry gravity dam built at the confluence of Mullayar and Periyar rivers.
- **Location:** Kerala
- Operated and maintained by: Tamil Nadu.
- It was constructed between 1887 and 1895 by John Pennycuik

IMPORTANT FACTS FOR PRELIM**Anangpal II: Tomar Dynasty**

Recently, a seminar highlighted the legacy of the long-forgotten Tomar king - Anangpal II.

Key Points

- Anangpal II, popularly known as Anangpal Tomar, belonged to the Tomar dynasty.
- He was the founder of Dhillika Puri, which eventually became Delhi.
- Evidence about the early history of Delhi is inscribed on the iron pillar of Masjid Quwaatul Islam, adjacent to Qutub Minar.
- Multiple inscriptions and coins suggest Anangpal Tomar was the ruler of present-day Delhi and Haryana in between the 8th-12th centuries.
- He had built the city from ruins and under his supervision, Anang Tal Baoli and Lal Kot were constructed.
- Anangpal Tomar II was succeeded by his grandson Prithviraj Chauhan.
- Delhi Sultanate was established in 1192 after Prithviraj Chauhan's defeat in the Battle of Tarain (present-day Haryana) by the Ghurid forces.

About Tomar Dynasty:

- Tomara dynasty is one of the minor early medieval ruling houses of northern India.
- Puranic evidence (writings of the Puranas) gives its early location in the Himalayan region. According to bardic tradition, the dynasty was one of the 36 Rajput tribes.
- The history of the family spans the period between the reign of Anangpal, who founded the city of Delhi in the 11th century CE, and the incorporation of Delhi within the Chauhan (Chahamanas) kingdom in 1164.
- Although Delhi subsequently became decisively a part of the Chauhan kingdom, numismatic and comparatively late literary evidence indicates that Tomara kings such as Anangapala and Madanapala continued to rule as feudatories, presumably until the final conquest of Delhi by the Muslims in 1192–93.

DAILY ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE

Qns. "The poverty line in India may not permit a comfortable existence, but allows above subsistence existence". Critically examine the concept of poverty line in India. (250 words)

Ans:

The conventional approach to measuring poverty is to specify a minimum expenditure (or income) required to purchase a basket of goods and services necessary to satisfy basic human needs. This minimum expenditure is called the poverty line.

The current official measures of poverty are based on the Tendulkar poverty line, fixed at daily expenditure of ₹27.2 in rural areas and ₹33.3 in urban areas.

The World Bank has classified India as a lower middle-income country and the corresponding poverty line set is PPP \$3.2 (about Rs 200).

As per the it, the poverty rate in India declined from 58 per cent in 2011-12 to 37 per cent in 2017-18.

Issues related with the concept of poverty line

- **Need to revisit the poverty line:** New analysis from the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) shows that hundreds of millions of people in India above the international poverty line of \$1.90 purchasing power parity (PPP) per person per day cannot afford a healthy or nutritious diet.
- This analysis confirms the fact that the problem of poor nutrition in India is largely on account of the unaffordability of good diets, and not on account of lack of information on nutrition or tastes or cultural preferences. The large majority of Indians cannot afford a balanced diet.
- **Components of Poverty Line Basket (PLB):** Determining components of Poverty Line Basket (PLB) is one of the main issues of poverty line estimation because of the price differentials (of constituents of basket) which vary from state to state and period to period.
- **Dynamics of Demography:** India's population has steadily increased through the years. This also increases the demand for consumption goods tremendously.
- Thus, the consumption patterns, nutritional needs and prices of components keep on changing as per dynamics of macro economy and demography.
- Lack of consensus among the states over the acceptance of Tendulkar and Rangrajan committee report.
- Some states such as Odisha and West Bengal supported the Tendulkar Poverty Line while others such as Delhi, Jharkhand, Mizoram etc. supported Rangarajan report.
- **Price Rise:** Price rise has been steady in the country and this has added to the burden on both the families of Below and Above Poverty Line. The lower income groups have suffered because of it, and are not even able to satisfy their basic minimum wants.
- **Social Factors:** Apart from economic factors, there are also social factors hindering the eradication of poverty in India. Some of the hindrances in this regard are the laws of inheritance, caste system, certain traditions, etc.
- The poverty line estimation is more or less economic and not taking into account the social factors.

Conclusion

Poverty alleviation has always been accepted as one of India's main challenges by the policy makers, regardless of which government was in power.

Despite rapid growth and development, an unacceptably high proportion of our population continues to suffer from severe and multidimensional deprivation.

If India wants to reduce malnutrition and food insecurity, we have to address the problem of affordability of healthy diets first. Thus, a more comprehensive and inclusive approach is required to eradicate poverty in India.

DAILY QUIZ

1. With reference to the Appropriation Bill, consider the following statements:

1. It enables the government to withdraw funds from the Consolidated Fund of India.
2. It is mandatory for the Government to accept the recommendations of the Rajya Sabha on the Appropriation Bill.

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. With reference to the Terai Arc Landscape (TAL), consider the following statements:

1. It is a stretch between the river Yamuna in the west and the river Bagmati in the east.
2. It is spread only in the state of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar.
3. The Corbett Tiger Reserve and Valmiki Tiger Reserve are part of this region.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

3. With reference to the Pilibhit Tiger Reserve, consider the following statements:

- 1. It received the TX2 award in 2020 for doubling the number of tigers in the past four years.
- 2. It forms the part of Terai Arc Landscape in the upper Gangetic Plain.

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. Arrange the following stages of budget enactment in the correct sequence:

- 1. General discussion
- 2. Passing of Appropriation Bill
- 3. Passing of Finance Bill
- 4. Voting on demands for grants
- 5. Presentation in Parliament

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- a) 1-2-3-4-5
- b) **5-1-4-2-3**
- c) 5-1-4-3-2
- d) 5-1-3-4-2

5. Consider the following statements about the Consolidated Fund of India (CFI):

- 1. It is constituted under Article 266 of the Indian constitution.
- 2. It consists of all types of tax and non-tax revenues received by the Central Government.

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**