

GOVERNANCE**Traceability Provision in New IT Rules 2021**

Recently, messaging platform WhatsApp has moved the Delhi High Court to challenge the traceability provision in the New IT Rules 2021. Earlier the Ministry of Electronics and IT (MeitY) had sent a notice to WhatsApp asking it to withdraw a controversial update to its privacy policy which might be a threat to Data Protection of Indians.

Key Points**Traceability Provision:**

- It requires intermediaries to enable identification of the first originator of information on their platforms.
- Rule 4(2) of the Intermediary Rules states that a significant social media intermediary providing services primarily in the nature of messaging shall enable the identification of the first originator of the information on its computer resource as may be required by a judicial order or an order passed by a competent authority under the Information and Technology (IT) Act 2000.
- Failure to comply with this requirement would take away the indemnity provided to social media intermediaries under Section 79 of the IT Act.

Concerns Raised:**• Infringes Rights to privacy and freedom of speech:**

1. This breaks end-to-end encryption and impermissibly infringes upon users' fundamental Rights to privacy and Freedom of speech.
2. Article 19(1)(a) of the Indian Constitution guarantees the freedom of speech and expression.
3. The right to privacy is protected as an intrinsic part of the right to life and personal liberty under Article 21 and as a part of the freedoms guaranteed by Part III of the Constitution (Puttaswamy Judgement 2017).
4. States throughout the world have recognised the "important benefits" of end-to-end encryption and the dangers of undermining that security protocol.

• Discourages Free Expression:

1. Freedom of Speech and Right to Privacy encourages users to express their ideas and opinions, report unlawful activities, and challenge popular views without fear of reprisal, whereas enabling the identification of the first originator of information in India subverts privacy and discourages free expression of views.

• Will Curb Freedom of Media:

1. Such a requirement would put journalists at risk of retaliation for investigating issues that may be unpopular, civil or for discussing certain rights and criticizing or advocating for politicians or policies.
2. Clients and attorneys who could become reluctant to share confidential information for fear that the privacy and security of their communications are no longer ensured.

• Traceability not Effective in Finding Originator:

1. Traceability would not be effective in finding the originator of a particular message because people commonly see content on websites or social media platforms and then copy and paste them into chats.
2. It would also be impossible to understand the context of how it was originally shared.

2.National Pension System and Atal Pension Yojana

Recently, the Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA) announced that Assets Under Management (AUM) under the National Pension System (NPS) and Atal Pension Yojana (APY), crossed the milestone of Rs. 6 trillion.

Key Points**National Pension System:****➤ About:**

- The Central Government has introduced the National Pension System (NPS) with effect from January 2004 (except for armed forces).
- In 2018 to streamline the NPS and make it more attractive, the Union Cabinet approved changes in the scheme to benefit central government employees covered under NPS.
- NPS is being implemented and regulated by PFRDA in the country.

- National Pension System Trust (NPST) established by PFRDA is the registered owner of all assets under NPS.
- **Structure:**
NPS is structured into two tiers:
 - **Tier-I account:** This is the non-withdrawable permanent retirement account into which the accumulations are deposited and invested as per the option of the subscriber.
 - **Tier-II account:** This is a voluntary withdrawable account which is allowed only when there is an active Tier I account in the name of the subscriber. The withdrawals are permitted from this account as per the needs of the subscriber as and when claimed.
- **Beneficiaries:**
 - NPS was made available to all Citizens of India from May 2009.
 - Any individual citizen of India (both resident and Non-resident) in the age group of 18-65 years can join NPS.
 - However, OCI (Overseas Citizens of India) and PIO (Person of Indian Origin) card holders and Hindu Undivided Family (HUFs) are not eligible for opening of NPS accounts.

Atal Pension Yojana:

- **About:** The scheme was launched in May, 2015, with the objective of creating a universal social security system for all Indians, especially the poor, the under-privileged and the workers in the unorganised sector. The scheme has been implemented comprehensively across the country covering all states and Union Territories with male to female subscription ratio of 57:43. However, only 5% of the eligible population has been covered under APY till date.
- **Administered By:** PFRDA through NPS.
- **Eligibility:** Any citizen of India can join the APY scheme. The age of the subscriber should be between 18-40 years. The contribution levels would vary and would be low if a subscriber joins early and increases if she joins late.
- **Benefits:** It provides a minimum guaranteed pension ranging from Rs 1000 to Rs 5000 on attaining 60 years of age. The amount of pension is guaranteed for lifetime to the spouse on death of the subscriber. In the event of death of both the subscriber and the spouse, the entire pension corpus is paid to the nominee.

INTERNATIONAL RELATION

Call for Permanent Commission for Israel and Palestinian Areas

Member states of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) are calling on the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) to set up a permanent commission to report on human rights violations in Israel, Gaza and the West Bank.

Key Points

About the Proposed Permanent Commission:

- It will be an independent, international commission of inquiry appointed by the UNHRC president to investigate violations of international humanitarian and human rights law in Israel and Palestinian areas. A commission of inquiry (COI) is the highest level of scrutiny that the council can authorize. Another COI, for example, has been regularly reporting on Syria's war nearly since its inception a decade ago – partially in hopes of collecting evidence that could be used in court one day.
- The commission would also investigate all underlying root causes of recurrent tensions, instability and protraction of conflict including discrimination and repression.
- Israel, backed at times by the United States, accuses the council of anti-Israel bias and has generally refused to cooperate with its investigators.

Organisation of Islamic Cooperation:

- OIC is the second-largest intergovernmental organization after the United Nations with a membership of 57 states. India is not a member of the OIC. However, India was invited as a guest of honour at the 46th Session of the Council of Foreign Ministers in 2019.
- It represents the collective voice of the Muslim world. It works for the protection of the interests of the Muslim world in the spirit of promoting international peace and harmony among various people of the world.
- It was established upon a decision of the historical summit which took place in Rabat, Kingdom of Morocco, in 1969.
- Headquarters: Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.

UN Human Rights Council:

- An inter-governmental body within the United Nations system responsible for strengthening the promotion and protection of human rights around the world.
- The Council was created by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in 2006. It replaced the former United Nations Commission on Human Rights.
- The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) serves as the Secretariat of the Human Rights Council. OHCHR is headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland.
- It is made up of 47 United Nations Member States which are elected by the UNGA on the principle of equitable geographical distribution. Members of the Council serve for a period of three years and are not eligible for immediate re-election after serving two consecutive terms. India was elected to the Council for a period of three years beginning 1st January 2019.
- **Mechanisms:**
 - Universal Periodic Review: UPR serves to assess the human rights situations in all United Nations Member States.
 - UN Special Procedures: These are made up of special rapporteurs, special representatives, independent experts and working groups that monitor, examine, advise and publicly report on thematic issues or human rights situations in specific countries.
- **Recent Developments:**
 - The United States has announced that it would rejoin the UNHRC that it left in 2018.
 - The Council has adopted a resolution to scrutinise the gross violations of human rights in Sri Lanka.

INDIAN ECONOMY

Registration of Unorganised Workers

The Supreme Court of India (SC) has directed the Central Government and the State Governments to complete the registration process of unorganized workers so that they can avail the welfare benefits given under various government schemes.

Key Points

SC's Observations:

- **Record of Migrant Workers:** It has asked states and Union territories to keep a record of the returning migrant labourers, including details about their skills, place of their earlier employment, etc so that the administration can extend necessary help to them.
- **Common National Database:** There should be a common national database for all organised workers situated in different states. The process initiated by the Ministry of Labour and Employment for creating a National Database for Unorganised Workers should be completed with collaboration and coordination of the States. It may serve registration for extending different schemes by the States and Center.
- **Mechanism for Supervision:** There should be a suitable mechanism to monitor and supervise whether the benefits of the welfare schemes reach the beneficiaries which may be from grassroot levels to higher authorities with names and places of beneficiaries.
- **Dry Ration to Stranded Workers:** The stranded migrant workers throughout the country should be provided dry ration under the AtmaNirbhar Bharat Scheme or any other scheme found suitable by the Centre and the states.

Migration in India:

- Migration is the movement of people away from their usual place of residence, across either internal (within country) or international (across countries) borders.
- The latest government data on migration comes from the 2011 Census. As per the Census, India had 45.6 crore migrants in 2011 (38% of the population) compared to 31.5 crore migrants in 2001 (31% of the population).
- Migrant workers keep moving from one place to another place in search of work and such workforce also keeps shifting from one sector to another depending upon the opportunities (such as more wages, duration, and continuity of work), hence, it is not easy to keep record/data of migrant labour workforce.
- The Covid-19 lockdown has led to an exodus of migrant workers from cities to rural areas and threw the spotlight on the vast number of Indians who live outside their home states. Lakhs of migrant workers were rendered jobless as urban areas were shut due to lockdown. Night shelters run by local authorities began overflowing, and supplies started dwindling.

Provisions Related to Migrant Workers:

- Section 112 of the Code of Social Security, 2020, registration of unorganised workers, gig workers and platform workers was contemplated.
- Section 21 of the Code on Occupational Health, Safety and Working Conditions enables the provision for maintaining a database of migrant workers to help in targeting, skill mapping and utilising government schemes effectively. The Code ensures that migrant workers get journey allowance once a year from employers to visit their hometowns.
- The Inter-State Migrant Workmen Act, 1979, required all establishments who hired inter-state migrants to be registered, as well as all contractors who recruited these workers to be licensed.

Related Initiatives Taken:

- Interoperability of Ration Card: Under the One Nation-One Ration Card (ONORC), the beneficiaries from one state can get their share of rations in other states where the ration card was originally issued.
- Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Ann Yojana (PMGKAY): PMGKAY is a part of Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Package (PMGKP) to help the poor fight the battle against Covid-19.
- Garib Kalyan Rojgar Abhiyan (GKRA): The scheme provides livelihood opportunities to the returnee migrant workers and rural citizens who have returned to their home states due to the Covid-19 induced lockdown. ASEEM Portal: The Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) has launched 'Atmanirbhar Skilled Employee Employer Mapping (ASEEM)' portal to help skilled people find sustainable livelihood opportunities.
- Database of labour migrants in Indian states and overseas citizens, who returned to India under the Vande Bharat Mission and filled SWADES Skill Card, has been integrated with the ASEEM portal.
- National Migrant Information System (NMIS): The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) has developed an online dashboard called 'NMIS'. It would maintain a central repository of migrant workers and help in speedy inter-state communication to facilitate the smooth movement of migrant workers to their native places.

2. New Rules for Increased FDI in Insurance Sector

Recently, the Ministry of Finance amended Indian Insurance Companies (Foreign Investment) Rules, 2015 and clarified on the final rules for increased FDI (Foreign Direct Investment) in the Insurance Sector. Parliament had passed the Insurance Amendment Bill 2021 to increase the FDI limit in the insurance sector to 74% from 49%. The Ministry of Finance has notified 'Indian Insurance Companies (Foreign Investment) Amendment Rules, 2021'.

Key Points

Highlights of New Rules:

- **Management Persons to be Resident Indian Citizens:** For an Indian insurance company having foreign investment - majority of its directors, key management persons, and at least one among the chairperson of its Board, its managing director and its chief executive officer - will be a resident Indian citizen.
- **Meaning of Foreign Investment:** Total foreign investment here would mean the sum of both direct and indirect foreign investment. Direct investment by a foreigner will be called Foreign Direct Investment, while investment by an Indian company (which is owned or controlled by foreigners) into another Indian entity is considered as Indirect Foreign Investment.

Significance:

1. The increase in foreign ownership to 74% can result in inclusion of global best practices in terms of insurance products going forward. It will also help in bringing down the cost of insurance products in India.
2. It is good for Indian Promoters, it will let them keep control of management and board, the additional capital inflow will help them with funds to push for growth.
3. It will benefit small insurance players or the ones where the sponsors don't have the ability to put in more capital and hence it will benefit in strengthening them and increasing competition across the industry.
4. It is likely to help local private insurers grow fast and expand their presence across India, which has one of the lowest insurance penetration levels globally.

Insurance Penetration in India:

- Insurance penetration in India is currently at 3.7% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) compared to the world average of 6.31%.
- Growth in the life insurance sector has slowed to 11-12% currently from 15-20% until fiscal 2020, as the pandemic pushed customers to save cash instead of spending on stocks or life insurance policies.
- As of 31st March, 2021, there were only 24 life and 34 non-life direct insurers in India, whereas there were 243 life insurance companies (1956) and 107 non-life insurance companies (1973) at the time of nationalisation.

Other Related Step (Model Insurance Villages):

- The Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) has mooted the concept of ‘Model Insurance Village (MIV)’ to boost insurance penetration in rural areas.
- The idea is to offer comprehensive insurance protection to all the major insurable risks that villagers are exposed to and make available covers at affordable or subsidised cost.

Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India:

- Following the recommendations of the Malhotra Committee report, in 1999, the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority (IRDA) was constituted as an autonomous body to regulate and develop the insurance industry.
- The IRDA was incorporated as a statutory body in April 2000.
- The key objectives of the IRDA include the promotion of competition so as to enhance customer satisfaction through increased consumer choice and lower premiums while ensuring the financial security of the insurance market.
- It is headquartered in Hyderabad.

Way Forward

- There should be sufficient appetite for investment from long term investors including sovereign wealth funds, global pension funds and insurance firms.
- The sector needs capital and larger participation of the international partner for evolution and availability of global products in India and for better penetration.

ENVIRONMENT & BIODIVERSITY

Van Gujjars

The Uttarakhand High Court has reprimanded the State government for stopping some Van Gujjar families on the way to Govind Pashu Vihar National Park and said their right to life is being violated by the authorities.

Key Points

Background:

- The Van Gujjars pursue seasonal migration from the Terai-Bhabar and Siwalik region of Uttarakhand to the higher bugyals in the Western Himalayas in summer and vice versa in winter.
- This phenomenon of transhumance pursued by the community is among the few climate-adaptive and resilience strategies that ensures their pastoral livelihood remains viable and sustainable.
- The Van Gujjars possess legitimate permits across their summer (Govind Pashu Vihar National Park) and winter homesteads. However, they are not permitted by authorities to enter the Park.

Rights of Pastoralists under Forests Rights Act 2006:

- It has ensured that even pastoralists possess rights to access grazing pastures in lieu of the Community Forest Resource right they are eligible for. Section 2 (a) prescribes for the rights of pastoral communities on customary common forest land within the traditional or customary boundaries of a village.
- It also prescribes the seasonal use of a landscape in case of pastoral communities, including in unclassified forests, reserve forests, un-demarcated forests, deemed forests, protected forests, sanctuaries and national parks.

High Court’s Order:

- Upholds the right of Van Gujjars to migrate to their summer homesteads in the bugyals (Himalayan alpine meadows) located within the Govind Pashu Vihar National Park.
- The court relied on Article 21 (Protection of Life and Personal Liberty) of the constitution.

Article 21 of the Constitution

- It declares that no person shall be deprived of his life or personal liberty except according to procedure established by law.

- This right is available to both citizens and non-citizens.
- The right to life is not merely confined to animal existence or survival but also includes the right to live with human dignity and all those aspects of life which go to make a man's life meaningful, complete and worth living.

About Van Gujjars:

- Van Gujjars are the forest-dwelling nomadic community inhabiting the foothills of Himalayan States such as Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh and Jammu and Kashmir.
- Usually, they migrate to the bugyals (grasslands) located in the upper Himalayas with their buffaloes and return only at the end of monsoons to their makeshift huts, deras, in the foothills.
- They traditionally practice buffalo husbandry; a family owns up to 25 heads of buffaloes. They rely on buffaloes for milk, which gets them a good price in Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh markets.

2. National Mission on use of Biomass in Coal Based Thermal Power Plants

Recently, the Ministry of Power has decided to set up a National Mission on use of Biomass in coal based thermal power plants.

Key Points

About: The proposed National Mission on biomass will also contribute to the National Clean Air Programme (NCAP). It would further support the energy transition in the country and our targets to move towards cleaner energy sources.

Aim: To address the issue of air pollution due to farm stubble burning and to reduce carbon footprints of thermal power generation.

Objective:

- Increase the level of biomass co-firing from present 5% to higher levels to have a larger share of carbon neutral power generation from the thermal power plants. Biomass co-firing stands for adding biomass as a partial substitute fuel in high efficiency coal boilers.
- Take up R&D (Research & Development) activity in boiler design to handle the higher amount of silica, alkalis in the biomass pellets.
- Facilitate overcoming the constraints in supply chain of biomass pellets and agro- residue and its transport upto to the power plants.
- Consider regulatory issues in biomass co-firing.

Proposed Structure:

- The Mission would have a Steering Committee headed by the Secretary (Ministry of Power) comprising all stakeholders including representatives from the Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas, Ministry of New & Renewable Energy etc.
- National Thermal Power Corporation Limited will play a larger role in providing logistics and infrastructure support.

Duration:

- The duration of the proposed National Mission would be a minimum 5 years.

Initiatives to Reduce Pollution from Coal Power Plants:

- Stringent emission standards for coal based thermal power plants have been notified. Compulsory adoption of emissions standards for installing Flue Gas Desulphurization (FGD) units that cut emissions of toxic sulphur dioxide.
- Approved automatic transfer of coal linkage from inefficient power plants to new supercritical plants subject to certain conditions to promote setting up of supercritical units in place of old ones.
- Thermal power plants within 50 km of sewage treatment facilities will mandatorily use treated sewage water.

Other Initiatives to Reduce Air Pollution:

1. Bharat Stage-VI (BS-VI) emission norms.
2. UJALA scheme.
3. International Solar Alliance.
4. National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC).

IMPORTANT FACTS FOR PRELIM

Kaleidoscope Effect

Recently, the people of Bangalore witnessed a bright rainbow ring around the sun for a few moments - a rare optical and atmospheric phenomenon called "22 degree circular Halo".

**Key Point**

- The phenomenon popularly known as the 22 degree circular halo of the sun or occasionally the Moon (also called a moon ring or winter halo), occurs when the sun's or moon's rays get deflected/refracted through the hexagonal ice crystals present in cirrus clouds. This is also called the Kaleidoscopic Effect.
- These halos are called 22-degree halos, as the halo or ring has an apparent radius of 22 degrees around the sun/moon.
- Circular halos specifically are produced by cirrus clouds, which are thin, detached, hair-like clouds. These clouds are formed very high up in the atmosphere, at a height of over 20,000 feet.
- Just like a rainbow, a halo is visible when viewed from the right angle — sometimes appearing just white but often with colours of the spectrum also clearly present. The halo is the brightest at the inner edge of the circular disk, with no light inside the disk as no light is refracted at smaller angles. Red light is refracted less than other colours of light, so the halo's inner edge is reddish. Other shades typically tend to overlap and wash out.

DAILY ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE

Qns. COVID-19 pandemic accelerated class inequalities and poverty in India. Comment.

Ans:

Introduction

Inequality was alarmingly high and destabilizing social and political order in much of the world even before the pandemic struck. According to Oxfam report 2019, In India the top 1% hold 51.53% of the national wealth, while the remaining 99% make do with almost 48%.

However, the Inequality Virus Report, released by Oxfam International, has found that the Covid-19 pandemic deeply increased the existing inequalities in India and around the world.

Body**Impact of the Pandemic on Class Inequalities & Poverty**

- India introduced one of the earliest and most stringent lockdowns in the face of the pandemic and its enforcement brought the economy to a standstill, triggering unemployment, hunger, distress migration, and untold hardship.
- The rich were able to escape the pandemic's worst impact; and while the white-collar workers isolated themselves and worked from home. However, a majority of the not-so-fortunate Indians (migrant workers) lost their livelihood. India's large informal workforce was the worst hit as it made up 75% of the 122 million jobs lost.
- The unemployment rate among women rose from an already high 15% before Covid to 18%.
- Beyond income and job losses, poorer women also suffered healthwise because of the disruption in regular health services and Anganwadi centers.
- A new study from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has found that an additional 207 million people could be pushed into extreme poverty by 2030 due to the severe

long-term impact of the coronavirus pandemic, bringing the total number of the world's extremely poor to more than a billion.

Conclusion

In order to combat the ill effects of Covid-19, the government has launched PM Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana and Atma-Nirbhar Bharat Abhiyan. However, undoing the impacts of Covid-19 will certainly not be a short-term process.

DAILY QUIZ

Q1. Consider the following statements

1. Since 2013, India enjoys 'Observer' status in the Arctic Council.
2. The Arctic Council was established by the twelve Arctic States.

Which of the given above statements is/are correct?

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

Q2. What is "Heavenly Harmony", sometimes mentioned in the news?

- a) A new antiviral drug to fight Covid-19
- b) The multi-stakeholder initiative formed by first world countries
- c) An all-weather air defense system developed by Israel
- d) **None of the above**

Q3. Mount Sinabung is located in

- a) Japan
- b) Thailand
- c) Malaysia
- d) **Indonesia**

Q4. Shuvuuia deserti was in news recently, it is a/an/the:

- a) small bird
- b) **nocturnal dinosaur**
- c) indigenous desert plant
- d) none of the above

Q5. With reference to the British colonial rule in India, consider the following statements:

1. Mahatma Gandhi was instrumental in the abolition of the system of 'indentured labour'.
2. In Lord Chelmsford's 'War Conference', Mahatma Gandhi did not support the resolution on recruiting Indians for World War.
3. Consequent upon the breaking of Salt Law by Indian people, the Indian National Congress was declared illegal by the colonial rulers.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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