

POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

AFSPA LIFTED FROM PARTS OF NAGALAND, ASSAM AND MANIPUR

Recently, The Union Home Ministry has considerably reduced the “disturbed areas” under the Armed Forces (Special) Powers Act (AFSPA) in Assam, Manipur and Nagaland.

- AFSPA remains in force in parts of these three states as well as in parts of Arunachal Pradesh and Jammu & Kashmir.
- The order, effective from April 1, would be applicable for six months.

Why has AFSPA been withdrawn now?

- The decision has come as the result of a combination of circumstances.
- Over the last two decades, various parts of the Northeast have seen a reduction in insurgencies, some of them up to 60 years old.
- It is a result of the improved security situation and fast-tracked development due to the consistent efforts.
- A number of major groups were already in talks with the Indian government, and these talks received traction during the current regime.
 - ❖ In Nagaland, all major groups — the NSCN(I-M) and Naga National Political Groups (NNPGs) — are at advanced stages of concluding agreements with the government.
 - ❖ In Manipur, insurgency as well as heavy militarisation have been on the decline since 2012, when the Supreme Court started hearing a PIL on extra-judicial killings.
 - ❖ In Nagaland, the killing of 14 villagers in Oting, Mon, is seen as having had a telling impact on reviving the demand to repeal AFSPA.

Why is the decision significant?

- The Northeast has lived under the shadow of AFSPA for nearly 60 years, creating a feeling of alienation from the rest of the country.
- The move is expected to help demilitarise the region.
- It will lift restrictions of movements through checkpoints and frisking of residents.
- It will also help the Centre calm the anger over the Mon killings in Nagaland.

About the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA)

- It was enacted by the Parliament and approved by the President in 1958.
- It confers certain special powers on members of the Armed Forces (military forces, air forces operating on the ground as land forces and any other armed forces of the Union (CRPF, BSF, ITBP etc) for carrying out proactive operations against the insurgents in a highly hostile environment.
 - ❖ They have the authority to prohibit a gathering of five or more persons in an area.

Provisions:

- Under Section 3, the Central Government or the Governor of the State or administrator of the Union Territory can declare the whole or part of the State or Union Territory as a disturbed area.
 - ❖ An area can be disturbed due to differences or disputes between members of different religious, racial, language or regional groups or castes or communities.
- Section 4 gives the Army powers to search premises and make arrests without warrants, to use force even to the extent of causing death, destroy arms/ammunition dumps, fortifications/shelters/hideouts and to stop, search and seize any vehicle.
- Section 6 stipulates that arrested persons and the seized property are to be made over to the police with the least possible delay.
- Section 7 offers protection of persons acting in good faith in their official capacity.
 - ❖ The prosecution is permitted only after the sanction of the Central Government.

Significance

- Armed Forces are deployed in counter-insurgency / terrorist operations when all other forces available to the State have failed to bring the situation under control.
- Armed forces operating in such an environment require certain special powers and protection in the form of an enabling law.
- Therefore, AFSPA is absolutely essential to combat insurgency in the country and protect the borders.

Criticism/Concerns

- It provides absolute powers to the security personnel without being accounted for.
 - ❖ This leads to various atrocities and human rights violations by security agencies.
- Critics say the undemocratic act has failed to contain terrorism and restore normalcy in disturbed areas, as the number of armed groups has gone up after the act was established.
 - ❖ Many even hold it responsible for the spiralling violence in areas it is in force.

- The Justice Jeevan Reddy Committee was set up in 2005 to review Afspa and make recommendations.
 - ❖ It recommended that Afspa should be repealed and the Unlawful Activities Protection Act strengthened to fight militancy.
- It has been a controversial one, with human rights groups opposing it as being aggressive.
- Terming the AFSPA as a "draconian law", renowned human rights activist Irom Chanu Sharmila of Manipur had fought for 16 long years till mid-2016, demanding its repeal.
- It has been alleged that since the 1970s, there have been 1,528 fake encounters in Manipur.
 - ❖ Human rights activists blame AFSPA for the killings, alleging that the law gives blanket protection to the Army and the Manipuri commandos to kill with impunity.
- In Nagaland, 60 years of living under the AFSPA regime has had psychological consequences, trauma and alienation of the people.

Checks and balances

- The Act gives powers to security forces to open fire, this cannot be done without prior warning given to the suspect.
- It says that after apprehension of suspects, the security forces have to hand them over to the local police station within 24 hours.
- It says the armed forces must act in cooperation with the district administration and not as an independent body.

Previous attempts to repeal AFSPA

- In 2000, the activist Irom Sharmila began a hunger strike that would continue for 16 years against AFSPA in Manipur.
- In 2004, the then central government set up a five-member committee under former Supreme Court Justice Jeevan Reddy, which submitted its report in 2005 recommending the repeal of AFSPA, calling it "highly undesirable", and saying it had become a symbol of oppression.
 - ❖ Subsequently, the Second Administrative Reforms Commission, headed by Veerappa Moily, endorsed these recommendations.
- Former home secretary G K Pillai too supported the repeal of AFSPA. Former home minister P Chidambaram has said that the Act, if not repealed, should at least be amended.

Position of state governments

- The Act gives powers to the central government to unilaterally take the decision to impose AFSPA, this is usually done informally in consonance with the state government.
- The Centre takes its decision after having received a recommendation from the state government. There have been instances where the Centre has overruled the state, such as the imposition of AFSPA in Tripura in 1972.

What has the Supreme Court said about AFSPA?

- In 2016, the Supreme Court delivered a stinging rebuke to the government over the continuation of AFSPA.
- The SC judgement clarified that the notion that the Act provides a free hand to security forces is flawed.
- Ruling on a petition filed by the ExtraJudicial Execution Victims Families Association (EEVFAM), a representative platform of people in Manipur whose kin have allegedly been killed by security forces, the Court held that due process needs to be followed in civilian complaints reported from areas under the AFSPA and that the Act doesn't provide blanket immunity to army personnel in anti-insurgency operations.
- The continuance of the Act in any region for extended periods symbolises, according to the apex court, "failure of the civil administration and the armed forces'".
- The apex court also ruled that over 1,500 cases of alleged fake encounters in Manipur, over the last 20 years, "must be investigated".

Way Forward

- AFSPA is required to counter insurgencies and lack of development in the Northeast region is also a major reason for the insurgency therefore the Government should take urgent steps to create new opportunities for growth and development.
- AFSPA should be made more comprehensive, with elaborate rules with respect to the method of investigations of alleged human rights violations to reduce the possibility of misusing it.
- The Army should carry out fresh investigations into all alleged cases of human rights violations.

IMPORTANT FACTS FOR PRELIM

1. OLIVE RIDLEY SEA TURTLES

As a record number of 4.92 lakh Olive Ridley turtles have crawled to the Rushikulya coast in Odisha.

- ❖ This is the highest nesting which has broken all records for the coast

About Olive Ridley Sea Turtles

- Scientific name: *Lepidochelys olivacea*
- Also known as the Pacific ridley sea turtle.
- Location: Found in warm waters of the Pacific, Atlantic and Indian oceans.
- Conservation Status
 - ❖ IUCN Red List: Vulnerable
 - ❖ Wildlife Protection Act, 1972: Schedule I
 - ❖ CITES: Appendix I

Features:

- They are the smallest and most abundant of all sea turtles found in the world.
- Known for their unique mass nesting called Arribada, where thousands of females come together on the same beach to lay eggs.
- These are carnivores and feed mainly on jellyfish, shrimp etc.

Major nesting sites:

- Rushikulya rookery coast (Odisha),
- Gahirmatha beach (Bhitarkanika National park) and
- Mouth of the Debi River.

Threats:

- **For Adults:** Dense fishing, especially ocean-going trawlers, mechanised fishing boats and gill-nets.
- **For Eggs:** Heavy predation of eggs, indiscriminate fishing with trawlers and gill nets, and beach soil erosion.

Government Efforts:

- Making mandatory use of Turtle Excluder Devices, a net specially designed to allow them to escape during the catch.
- 'Operation Oliva' Exercise of Coast guard.
- Every year, the Indian Coast Guard's "Operation Olivia", initiated in the early 1980s, helps protect Olive Ridley turtles as they congregate along the Odisha coast for breeding and nesting from November to December.

2. National Bee Board

- National Dairy Development Board in collaboration with the National Bee Board organised National Conclave on 'Production of BeesWax'

National Bee Board (NBB)

About:

- It is a registered society under Societies Registration Act XXI of 1860.
- It was reconstituted/ restructured by the Department of Agriculture, Cooperation and Farmers Welfare, Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Govt. of India under the Chairmanship of Secretary (AC&FW) in June, 2006.
- NBB is one of the National Level Agencies (NLAs) under Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture (MIDH).
- NBB has also been designated as a Nodal Agency for promotion of scientific beekeeping in the country. Presently, the main thrust of NBB is setting up of Integrated Beekeeping Development Centres (IBDCs)/Centres of Excellence (CoEs) on beekeeping, at least one in each State.

Objectives:

- Overall development of scientific beekeeping in India by popularising state of the art technologies through the governmental schemes of National Horticulture Mission and Horticulture Mission for North East and Himalayan States in the country.
- Development of nucleus stock production, capacity building programmes and training of bee breeders and beekeepers, processing, research work, etc. and conducting of seminars.
- Dissemination of information on technological advancement in the field of beekeeping through its various publications and the quarterly magazine "Bee World".
- Initiating steps for quality honey production and other bee hive products for overseas and domestic markets besides enhancing productivity of various crops through bee pollination.
- Increasing the employment opportunity in the rural sector.

3. Current Account Deficit

- India's Current Account Deficit (CAD) increased to \$23 billion (2.7 percent of GDP) in the third quarter (Q3) of 2021-22 from \$9.9 billion (1.3 percent of GDP) in Q2 of 2021-22 and \$2.2 billion (0.3 percent of GDP) in Q3 of 2020-21.

- The widening of CAD in Q3 of 2021-22 was mainly on account of higher trade deficit.

Current Account Deficit(CAD)

- It is the shortfall between the money flowing in on exports, and the money flowing out on imports.
- It measures the gap between the money received into and sent out of the country on the trade of goods and services and also the transfer of money from domestically-owned factors of production abroad.
- It is slightly different from the Balance of Trade, which measures only the gap in earnings and expenditure on exports and imports of goods and services.
- Whereas, the current account also factors in the payments from domestic capital deployed overseas.
- For example, rental income from an Indian owning a house in the UK would be computed in the Current Account, but not in the Balance of Trade.

Calculation:

- It is measured as a percentage of GDP.
 - ❖ Trade gap = Exports – Imports
 - ❖ Current Account = Trade gap + Net current transfers + Net income abroad

Causes:

- Existing exchange rate, consumer spending level, capital inflow, inflation level, and prevailing interest rate.
- For the Current Account Deficit in India, crude oil and gold imports are the primary reasons behind high CAD.

Implications:

- Current Account Deficit may be a positive or negative indicator for an economy depending upon why it is running a deficit.
- It may help a debtor nation in the short term, but it may worry in the long term as investors begin raising concerns over adequate return on their investments.

Method to deal:

- It could be reduced by boosting exports and curbing non-essential imports such as gold, mobiles, and electronics.
- Currency hedging and bringing easier rules for manufacturing entities to raise foreign funds could also help.
- The government and RBI could also look to review debt investment limits for FPIs, among other measures.

4. MATLAB ON I-STEM NATIONAL PORTAL

- For the first time in the country, academic users in India will be able to access the MATLAB software suite at no cost through the Indian Science Technology and Engineering facilities Map (I-STEM) portal.

About

- The MATLAB software suite is hosted on the cloud server of I-STEM to provide user-friendly access from anywhere in India.
- MATLAB is a proprietary multi-paradigm programming language and numeric computing environment developed by MathWorks.
- It is expected to assist many students and researchers in the country, especially those in the more remote and less-endowed institutions, thereby enhancing learning outcomes and promoting R&D efforts across India.

I-STEM Portal

About:

- I-STEM stands for Indian Science, Technology and Engineering Facilities Map.
- Launched in January 2020. It is an initiative of the Office of the Principal Scientific Adviser to the Government of India (PSA, GoI) under the aegis of the Prime Minister Science, Technology and Innovation Advisory Council (PM-STIAC).
- It is a National Web portal for sharing R&D (Research and Development) facilities.
- The portal facilitates researchers to access slots for the use of equipment, as well as to share the details of the outcomes, such as patents, publications and technologies.
- In July 2021, the I-STEM project was accorded an extension for five years, until 2026 and entered its second phase with added features.

Phase-II:

- The new phase will be designed as a dynamic digital platform that will provide a boost to research and innovation, especially for 2 tier and 3 tier cities and also for the emerging start-up ecosystem.

Significance of I-STEM

- Optimal Usage of R&D Resources
- Linking Researchers and Resources
- Strengthen the idea of "Equal Opportunities to All".
- This will minimize the downtime of the precious equipment/tools.
- Strengthen the initiative "Local to Vocal"

DAILY ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE

Q1. The National AYUSH Mission (NAM) is not only promoting AYUSH medical systems through cost effective AYUSH services but also playing an important in cultivations of medicinal species. Discuss. (250 words)

Introduction

AYUSH is the acronym of the medical systems that are being practiced in India such as Ayurveda, Yoga & Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homeopathy. The basic approach of all these systems on health, disease and treatment are holistic. The National AYUSH Mission (NAM) was launched during 12th Plan with the basic objective of promoting AYUSH medical systems through cost effective AYUSH services, strengthening of educational systems, facilitate the enforcement of quality control of Ayurveda, Siddha and Unani & Homoeopathy (ASU &H) drugs and sustainable availability of ASU & H raw-materials.

Body

Various features of The National AYUSH Mission (NAM)

- Co-location of AYUSH facilities at Primary Health Centers (PHCs), Community Health Centers (CHCs) and District Hospitals (DHs).
- Supply of essential drugs to AYUSH Hospitals and Dispensaries.
- Up gradation of exclusive State Government AYUSH Hospitals and Dispensaries.
- Setting up of up to 50 bedded integrated AYUSH Hospital.
- Upgradation of State Government Educational Institutions.
- Setting up of new State Government AYUSH Educational Institutions including Yoga and Naturopathy in the State where it is not available.
- Strengthening of State Government/ Public Sector Undertaking (PSU) Ayurveda, Siddha, Unani and Homoeopathy (ASU&H) Pharmacies and Drug Testing Laboratories (DTL).
- Cultivation and Promotion of Medicinal Plants.

Steps taken towards promotion and mainstreaming of AYUSH services (data from NAM website)

- Total 104 upto 50 bedded Integrated AYUSH hospitals in different States/UTs have been supported.
- Total 296 AYUSH Hospitals and 4717 AYUSH dispensaries have been supported for the Upgradation of infrastructure and other facilities.
- Total 2878 PHCs, 840 CHCs and 350 DHs have been supported under co-location for recurring assistance of medicines and contingency on an average in each year.
- 1965 Yoga Wellness Centres and 512 AYUSH Gram units supported.
- Grant in aid has been provided for the establishment of 11 New AYUSH Educational Institutions.
- Total 72 Under-Graduate and 33 Post-Graduate, AYUSH educational Institutes have been supported for Upgradation of infrastructure, Library and other things.
- 36 ASU & H Pharmacies and 29 Drug Testing Laboratories have been supported for strengthening.
- 4448 units of Ayush Health & Wellness Centres (HWCs) have been approved. 1041 HWCs are progressive functional.

Role of NAM in the promotion of cultivations of medicinal species

- Till date, the Ministry of Ayush has supported 59,350 farmers for cultivation of 84 medicinal plant species out of 140 prioritised medicinal plants, and covered 56,305 hectare area throughout the country from 2015-16 to 2020-21
- Under medicinal plants component of NAM, the Ministry had provided financial assistance in form of subsidy to encourage the farmers for cultivation of medicinal plants throughout the country from the 2015-16 to 2020-21.
- Under the scheme, a subsidy was provided to farmers at 30%, 50% and 75% of cost of cultivation.

Way forward

- It is important to gather scientific evidence for the safety and efficacy of AYUSH medicines and practices.
- Work towards capacity building and developing a critical mass of competent professionals in the AYUSH sector through quality education and training at national and international levels.
- True integration of traditional and modern systems is the need of the hour. This would require a concerted strategy for facilitating meaningful cross-learning and collaboration between the modern and traditional systems on equal terms.

- There is a need to ensure substantial groundwork with respect to the prerequisites of an effective integration.
- Building a strong traditional medicine evidence corpus.
- Standardizing and regulating AYUSH practices and qualifications.
- Delineating the relative strengths, weaknesses, and role of each system in an integrated framework.
- Negotiating the philosophical and conceptual divergences between systems.
- Accordingly, a medium- and long-term plan for seamless integration should be developed expeditiously in view of the massive drive for achieving universal health care already underway in the country and considering the vast potential of AYUSH to contribute to this cause.

DAILY QUIZ

Q1. With reference to the Balance of Payments (BoP) Account, consider the following statements:

1. All Transfer payments are part of the capital account of the BoP.
2. The Indian rupee is fully convertible in both the current account and the capital account for all transactions.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) Neither 1 nor 2

(b) 2 only

(c) 1 and 2 only

(d) only 1

Q2. With reference to World bank assisted programme on Raising and Accelerating MSME performance (RAMP), consider the following statements:

1. It was formulated on the basis of recommendations made by the Santhanam Committee and KV Kamath Committee .
2. It is a World Economic Forum assisted Central Sector Scheme.
3. It supports various COVID Resilience and Recovery Interventions of the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship.

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

(a) 1, 2 and 3

(b) 2 only

(c) 1 and 2 only

(d) only 1

Q3. With reference to Olive Ridley Turtles, consider the following statements:

1. They are the smallest and most abundant of all sea turtles found in the world.
2. They are found in only the Pacific and Indian oceans.
3. They are recognized as Vulnerable by the IUCN Red list.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

(a) 1 and 3 only

(b) 2 only

(c) 1 and 2 only

(d) 1, 2 and 3

Q4. With reference to Coal in India, consider the following statements:

1. There are no coal reserves in the state of Karnataka.
2. Dhanbad district is considered as the coal capital of India.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) Neither 1 nor 2

(b) 2 only

(c) 1 and 2 both

(d) only 1

Q5. With reference to the National Film Development Corporation (NFDC), consider the following statements:

1. The Films Division is tasked with organising National Film Awards.
2. The National Film Heritage Mission aiming at digitisation and restoration of films and documentaries will now be implemented by NFDC.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) Neither 1 nor 2

(b) 2 only

(c) 1 and 2 only

(d) only 1