

GOVERNANCE

❖ **Prevention of Child Sexual Abuse in India**

❖ **CONTEXT** Recently, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) conducted searches across States and Union Territories as part of a pan-India operation, “Megh Chakra” against the online circulation and sharing of Child Sexual Abusive Material (CSAM) using cloud-based storage.

- In November 2021, a similar exercise code-named “Operation Carbon” was launched by the CBI, with many being booked under the IT Act, 2000.

❖ **What is child sexual abuse?**

- The World Health Organisation (WHO) defines it as “the involvement of a child in sexual activity that he or she does not fully comprehend and is unable to give informed consent to, or for which the child is not developmentally prepared, or else that violate the laws or social taboos of society.”
- This means even someone showing a child a pornographic video, or befriending the child online and asking for pictures of say, the child’s private parts, is indulging in child sexual abuse.
- Consequences : Child sexual abuse is a significant public health problem and an adverse childhood experience.
- Experiencing child sexual abuse can affect how a person thinks, acts, and feels over a lifetime.
- This can result in short- and long-term physical, mental, and behavioural health consequences.

❖ **Status In India**

- In India, though viewing adult pornography in private is not an offence; seeking, browsing, downloading or exchanging child pornography is an offence punishable under the IT Act.
- However, Internet Service Providers (ISPs) are exempted from liability for any third-party data if they do not initiate the transmission. As the public reporting of circulation of online Child Sexual Abusive Material (CSAM) is very low and there is no system of automatic electronic monitoring,
- India’s enforcement agencies are largely dependent on foreign agencies for the requisite information.

❖ **India’s efforts so far**

- In India, the Supreme Court of India, in Shreya Singhal (2015), read down Section 79(3)(b) of the IT Act to mean that the ISP, only upon receiving actual knowledge of the court order or on being notified by the appropriate government, shall remove or disable access to illegal contents. Thus, ISPs are exempted from the liability of any third-party information.
- In the Kamlesh Vaswani (WP(C) 177/2013) case, the petitioner sought a complete ban on pornography.
- After the Court’s intervention, the advisory committee (constituted under Section 88 of the IT Act) issued orders in March 2015 to ISPs to disable nine (domain) URLs which hosted contents in violation of the morality and decency clause of Article 19(2) of the Constitution.
- The petition is still pending in the Supreme Court.
- ‘Aarambh India’, a Mumbai-based non-governmental organisation, partnered with the IWF, and launched India’s first online reporting portal in September 2016 to report images and videos of child abuse.
- The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) launched a national cybercrime reporting portal in September 2018 for filing online complaints pertaining to child pornography and rape-gang rape.
- This facility was developed in compliance with Supreme Court directions with regard to a public interest litigation filed by Prajwala, a Hyderabad-based NGO that rescues and rehabilitates sex trafficking survivors.
- The National Crime Records Bureau (MHA) signed a memorandum of understanding with the NCMEC in April 2019 to receive CyberTipline reports to facilitate action against those who upload or share CSAM in India.
- The NCRB has received more than two million CyberTipline reports which have been forwarded to the States for legal action.

- The ad hoc Committee of the Rajya Sabha, headed by Jairam Ramesh, in its report of January 2020, made wide-ranging recommendations on ‘the alarming issue of pornography on social media and its effect on children and society as whole’.
- On the legislative front, the committee not only recommended the widening of the definition of ‘child pornography’ but also proactive monitoring, mandatory reporting and taking down or blocking CSAM by ISPs.
- On the technical front, the committee recommended permitting the breaking of end-to-end encryption, building partnership with industry to develop tools using artificial intelligence for dark-web investigations, tracing identity of users engaged in crypto currency transactions to purchase child pornography online and liaising with financial service companies to prevent online payments for purchasing child pornography.

❖ **What more needs to be done?**

- According to the ninth edition (2018) report of the International Centre for Missing and Exploited Children on “Child Sexual Abusive Material: Model Legislation & Global Review”, more than 30 countries now require mandatory reporting of CSAM by ISPs. Surprisingly, India also figures in this list, though the law does not provide for such mandatory reporting.
- The Optional Protocol to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child that addresses child sexual exploitation encourages state parties to establish liability of legal persons.
- Similarly, the Council of Europe’s Convention on Cybercrime and Convention on The Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse also requires member states to address the issue of corporate liability.
- It is time India joins INHOPE and establishes its hotline to utilise Interpol’s secure IT infrastructure or collaborate with ISPs and financial companies by establishing an independent facility such as the IWF or NCMEC.
- The Jairam Ramesh committee’s recommendations must be followed up in earnest and the Prajwala case brought to a logical end.
- India needs to explore all options and adopt an appropriate strategy to fight the production and the spread of online CSAM. Children need to be saved.

❖ **‘Megh Chakra’:** The operation code-named “Megh Chakra” is being carried out following the inputs received from Interpol’s Singapore special unit based on the information received from the authorities in New Zealand.

❖ **Global Efforts**

- **American and British models:** The National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC), a non-profit organisation in the United States, operates a programme called **CyberTipline**, for public and electronic service providers (ESPs) to report instances of **suspected child sexual exploitation**.
- **In the United Kingdom**, the mission of the Internet Watch Foundation (IWF) ensures a safe online environment for users with a particular focus on CSAM, including disrupting the availability of CSAM and deleting such content hosted in the U.K.
- **INHOPE**, a global network of 50 hotlines (46 member countries), provides the public with a way to anonymously report CSAM.
 - It provides secure IT infrastructure, ICCAM (I- “See” (c)-Child-Abuse-Material) hosted by Interpol, and facilitates the exchange of CSAM reports between hotlines and law enforcement agencies.
- ICCAM is a tool to facilitate image/video hashing/fingerprinting and reduce the number of duplicate investigations.

PRELIMS

1. G20 Religion Forum

❖ *In a first-of-its-kind event, Indonesia will host a global summit of religious leaders modelled on the G20 forum.*

- It was called the ‘G20 Religion Forum’, or R-20.
- The first summit is scheduled on November 2 and 3, 2022, in Bali, Indonesia.
- It will be a parallel event to the annual G20 summit that Indonesia will host for 2022.

- It will be organised and hosted by Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), one of Indonesia's most influential Islamic think tanks.
- The R20 aims to facilitate harmonious relations between religious groups and to open new hopes for reconciliation, brotherhood and peace.
- The R20 this year will focus on four major topics
 - ✓ Historical grievances, truth-telling, reconciliation and forgiveness;
 - ✓ Identifying and embracing values shared by the world's major religions and civilisations;
 - ✓ Recontextualisation of obsolete and problematic teachings of religion; and
 - ✓ The values we need to develop to ensure peaceful co-existence

2. Regional Rural Banks (RRBs)

❖ **CONTEXT: RRBs will soon extend credit for education, housing and even small businesses in rural India.**

- Regional Rural Banks Act, 1976: Regional Rural Banks (RRBs) were set up as government-sponsored, regional based rural lending institutions under the Regional Rural Banks Act, 1976.
 - ✓ The RRBs were established as per the recommendations of the Narasimham Committee to cater to the rural credit needs of the farming and other rural communities.
 - ✓ The Prathama Grameen Bank was the first bank to be established on 02nd October 1975. The Syndicate Bank became the first commercial bank to sponsor the Prathama Grameen Bank RRB
- Operation: Regional Rural Banks (RRBs) are government owned scheduled commercial banks of India that operate at regional level in different states of India.
 - ✓ The area of operation is limited to the area notified by the government of India covering, and it covers one or more districts in the State.
 - ✓ Ownership
 - ✓ The equity of the Regional Rural Banks is held by the stakeholders in a fixed proportion. This proportion is 50:35:15, distributed as: Central Government – 50%, Sponsor Bank – 35%, State Government – 15%
- **Aim:** They were created to serve rural areas with basic banking and financial services. However, RRBs also have urban branches.
- **Functions:** RRBs perform various functions such as providing banking facilities to rural and semi-urban areas, carrying out government operations like disbursement of wages of MGNREGA workers and distribution of pensions, providing para-banking facilities like locker facilities, debit and credit cards, mobile banking, internet banking, and UPI services.
- **Objectives of RRBs:** To provide cheap and liberal credit facilities to small and marginal farmers, agriculture labourers, artisans, small entrepreneurs and other weaker sections. To save the rural poor from the moneylenders. To act as a catalyst element and thereby accelerate the economic growth in the particular region.
 - ✓ To cultivate the banking habits among the rural people and mobilize savings for the economic development of rural areas.
 - ✓ To increase employment opportunities by encouraging trade and commerce in rural areas. To encourage entrepreneurship in rural areas.
 - ✓ To cater to the needs of the backward areas which are not covered by the other efforts of the Government.
 - ✓ To develop underdeveloped regions and thereby strive to remove the economic disparity between regions.
 - ✓ Identify the financial need, especially in rural areas.

3. Pokkali Rice

- Pokkali is an heritage heirloom rice crop cultivated in the coastal regions of Kerala, including Ezhikkara, Ernakulam, and supported by Palliyakal Cooperative Service Bank (PCSB).
- Pokkali is an ancient farming practice where one season of rice farming is alternated with another season of prawn culture.
- The prawn seedlings, which swim in from the sea and the backwaters after the rice harvest, feed on the leftovers of the harvested crop.
- The rice crop, which gets no other fertiliser or manure, draws nutrients from the prawns' excrement and other remnants.
- Rice farming and prawn farming are mutually complementary.
- Pokkali has an excellent gene pool which is very useful for salinity tolerance.

History

- The story of Pokkali begins with a great flood that washed the seeds of this prolific grain from the Western Ghats to the low lying saline plains.
- There she evolved as a strong contender against the ravages of nature, to nurture the communities that lived harmoniously with the farming of Pokkali.
- Pokkali is the oldest variety of rice in Kerala which has a tradition of at least 3000 years in rice cultivation.
- It is also among the oldest known crops cultivated by organic farming methodologies in the world.

4. FATF Grey List

❖ **CONTEXT: Pakistan was taken off from the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) "Grey list" after four years.**

- After delisting Pakistan from the FATF grey list, 23 countries remain under this watch list.
- The list includes Philippines, Syria, Yemen, UAE, Cambodia, and South Sudan, and the tax havens of Barbados, Cayman Islands, and Panama.

❖ **Consequences of FATF grey list**

- Economic sanctions from IMF, World Bank, ADB
- Problem in getting loans from IMF, World Bank, ADB and other countries
- Reduction in International trade
- International boycott

❖ **Financial Action Task Force**

- Financial Action Task Force (FATF), commonly referred to as the world's terrorism financing watchdog, is an inter-governmental decision-making body.
- It was established in 1989 during the G7 Summit in Paris to develop policies against money laundering.
- Its Secretariat is located in Paris.
- It set standards and promotes effective implementation of:
- Legal, regulatory and operational measures for combating money laundering.
- Identify national-level vulnerabilities with the aim of protecting the international financial system from misuse.
- In 2010, India became the 34th member country of FATF.
- FATF maintains two types of lists.
- **Black List** - Countries known as Non-Cooperative Countries or Territories (NCCTs) are put in the blacklist.
- These countries support terror funding and money laundering activities.
- The FATF revises the blacklist regularly, adding or deleting entries.
- **Grey List** - Countries that are considered safe haven for supporting terror funding and money laundering are put in the FATF grey list.
- This inclusion serves as a warning to the country that it may enter the blacklist.

ANSWER WRITING

Q. Discuss the role of the Election Commission of India in the light of the evolution of the Model Code of Conduct.

The Election Commission of India (ECI) is an autonomous constitutional body responsible for administering Union and State election processes in India. In the context of free and fair elections, Model Code of Conduct (MCC) plays a crucial role.

The Model Code of Conduct is a set of guidelines issued by the Election Commission to regulate political parties and candidates prior to elections. MCC is operational from the date on which the election schedule is announced until the date of result announcement.

Evolution of Model Code of Conduct

- The origins of the Model Code of Conduct lie in the Assembly elections of Kerala in 1960, when the State administration prepared a 'Code of Conduct' for political factors.
- In the Lok Sabha elections of 1962, the Election Commission of India circulated the code to all recognized political parties and State Governments, and it was followed.
- In 1991, the Election Commission decided to enforce the Model Code of Conduct more strictly because of repeated flouting of the election norms and continued corruption.

- Role of ECI in the Enforcement of MCC
- As part of its mandate to conduct free and fair elections under Article 324 of the Constitution, the Election Commission ensures that ruling parties at the Centre and in States adhere to the code.
- In case of electoral offences, malpractices, and corrupt practices like inducements to voters, bribery, intimidation or any undue influence, the Election Commission acts against violators.
- The Election Commission has devised several mechanisms for efficient enforcement of MCC such as:
 - ✓ Joint task forces of enforcement agencies and flying squads.
 - ✓ Introduction of the c-VIGIL mobile app through which audio-visual evidence of malpractices can be reported.

Model Code of Conduct does not have any statutory backing, it has come to acquire strength in the past decade because of its strict enforcement by the Election Commission. The various technological advancement has presented new challenges in the path of ensuring fair elections, but initiatives took by the Election Commission regarding the enforcement of model code of conduct seem to have been fruitful.

MCQs

1. Consider the following statements about 'Central Bureau of Investigation'.
 1. For investigations of offences under the Prevention of Corruption Act, its superintendence vests with the Enforcement Directorate(ED).
 2. The committee for appointment of CBI Director comprises of PM as head, Leader of Opposition/ Leader of the single largest opposition party, Chief Justice of India/ a Supreme Court Judge.
 3. According to Section 6 of the Delhi Special Police Establishment Act of 1946 under which the CBI functions, the State's consent is not required to extend CBI investigation beyond Union Territories.
 4. It is also the nodal police agency in India which coordinates investigation on behalf of Interpol.

Which of the above Statements regarding CBI is correct?

a) 1 & 2 only b) 2 & 3 only c) **2 & 4 only** d) 1,2&3 only
2. Consider the following statements with respect to 'Financial Action Task Force'
 1. It is an intergovernmental organization founded on the initiative of the G7
 2. FATF monitors progress in implementing its recommendations through "peer reviews" ("mutual evaluations") of member countries.
 3. Countries known as Non-Cooperative Countries or Territories (NCCTs) are put in the grey list
 4. Recently, FATF puts Myanmar in its Grey list.

Choose the correct answer using the code given below

a) 1,2 & 3 only b) **1,2 & 4 only** c) 2 & 3 only d) 1, 2 ,3 & 4
3. Consider the following statements with respect to 'LVM3-M2/ Oneweb India – 1 Mission'
 1. It is a dedicated commercial space mission of the New Space India Limited (NSIL)
 2. The mission placed the satellites in the Low Earth Orbit 600 km above Earth
 3. The launch vehicle LVM3-M2 consists of three stages consisting of two solid propellant strap-ons

Choose the correct answer using the code given below

a) 1,2 & 3 b) 1 & 2 only c) **1 & 3 only** d) 1 only
4. Consider the following statements regarding Pokkali paddy cultivation.
 1. Pokkali is an ancient farming practice where one season of rice farming is alternated with another season of fish culture.
 2. It is saltwater tolerant rice variety, grown mainly in parts of North-East India.
 3. The brand Pokkali has received a GI tag.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

a) 1 only b) **1 & 3 only** c) 2 & 3 only d) 1, 2 & 3
5. Consider the following statements regarding the Regional Rural Banks (RRBs).
 1. Regional Rural Banks (RRBs) were set up as government-sponsored, regional based rural lending institutions under the Regional Rural Banks Act, 1976.
 2. Shareholding pattern of RRBs among the three sponsoring entities is 50: 35: 15 among the central government, sponsoring bank and state government, respectively.
 3. RRBs provide financial services to customers having income level more than 1 lakh per year.

Which of the above statements is/are not correct?

a) 1 & 2 only b) 2 & 3 only c) **3 only** d) All are correct.
6. Consider the following statement regarding G20.

1. G20 members represent more than 80% of world GDP, 75% of international trade and 60% of the world population.
2. Every year when a new country takes on the presidency, it works hand in hand with the previous presidency and the next presidency and this is collectively known as TROIKA.
3. The motto of G20, 2022 summit is Recover Together, Recover Stronger and the summit will be hosted by India.
4. India has hosted G20 summits twice since its inception.
5. Former NITI Aayog CEO Amitabh Kant is the current G20 Sherpa OF India.

Choose the correct answer using the code given below

- a) 1, 2 & 3 only b) 1, 2, 3 & 5 only c) **1, 2 & 5 only** d) 1, 2, 3 & 4
7. Consider the following statements with respect to 'Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act'
1. The Act requires every person or NGO wishing to receive foreign donations to be registered
 2. The Act prohibits receipt of foreign funds by candidates for elections, judges and government servants etc
 3. FCRA registration is valid for a period of three years and is expected to be renewed six months before expiry
 4. Ministry of Home Affairs is the nodal Ministry for handling FCRA registrations and all its orders can be challenged in High Court

Choose the correct answer using the code given below

- a) 1, 2 & 3 b) **1, 2 & 4** c) 1 & 4 only d) 1, 2, 3 & 4
8. Consider the following statements about Cyclones.
1. Cyclones are rapid inward air circulation around a low-pressure area.
 2. Tropical cyclones are formed over warm ocean water near the equator.
 3. The cyclones originating in the Arabian Sea are weaker than those originating from the Bay of Bengal. The formation of weak cyclones in Arabian Sea reasons back to the presence of cold water of the sea.
 4. The process of naming cyclones involves several countries in the region and is done under the aegis of UNEP.

Choose the correct answer using the code given below

- a) **1, 2 & 3** b) 1, 2 & 4 c) 1 & 2 only d) 1, 2, 3 & 4
9. Consider the Following statements regarding the 'Fair and Remunerative Price'
1. The proposal in respect of determination of 'Fair and Remunerative Price' (FRP) of sugarcane payable by sugar mills for a sugar season is approved by the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) chaired by the Finance Minister.
 2. The payment of FRP across the country is governed by **the Sugarcane Control order, 1966 issued under the Essential Commodities Act (ECA), 1955**
 3. The FRP is based on the Rangarajan Committee report on reorganizing the Sugarcane Industry.

Choose the correct answer using the code given below

- a) 1 & 2 only b) **2 & 3 only** c) 1 & 3 only d) 1,2 & 3
10. Consider the following statements about Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI):
1. It is India's premier investigating agency and counter-terrorist task force.
 2. It is functioning under the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India.
 3. It is governed by the Delhi Special Police Establishment Act that makes consent of a state government mandatory for conducting investigation in that state.
- Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
- a) 1 & 2 only b) **3 only** c) 2 & 3 only d) 1,2& 3