

UPSC Daily Current Affairs 29 Jul 2021

No immunity for acts of vandalism: SC

(Topic- GS Paper II- Polity, Source- The Hindu)

Why in the news?

- The Supreme Court has recently held that lawmakers cannot indulge in criminal acts on the Parliament or Assembly floors and then take cover behind the right to free speech.
- The court refused the Kerala government's plea to withdraw prosecution of top Left Democratic Front (LDF) leaders accused of vandalism and wanton destruction of public property on the Assembly floor during a Budget speech in 2015.

Court observation

- "Acts of vandalism cannot be said to be manifestations of freedom of speech and be termed as 'proceedings' of the Assembly.
- It was not the intention of the drafters of the Constitution to extend the interpretation of 'freedom of speech to include criminal acts by placing them under a veil of protest.
- Parliamentary privileges and immunities are not "gateways" for legislators to claim exceptions from the law of the land, especially criminal law, Justice Chandrachud, who authored the verdict.

Related Information

About Parliamentary Privileges

- These are certain rights and immunities enjoyed by members of Parliament, individually and collectively, so that they can "effectively discharge their functions".
- It is defined in Article 105 of the Indian Constitution and those of State legislatures in Article 194.
- When any of these rights and immunities is disregarded, the offence is called a breach of privilege and is punishable under the law of Parliament.
- Besides, Rule No 222 in Chapter 20 of the Lok Sabha Rule Book and correspondingly Rule 187 in Chapter 16 of the Rajya Sabha rulebook govern privilege.

About Committee of Privileges

- The functions of this committee are semi-judicial in nature.
- It examines the cases of breach of privileges of the House and its members and recommends appropriate action.

Members

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- The Lok Sabha committee has 15 members, while the Rajya Sabha committee has 10 members.

Gharib Nawaz Employment Scheme

(Topic- GS Paper II-Governance, Source- PIB)

Why in the news?

- Recently, the Union Minister for Minority Affairs replied in the Parliament that a total number of 371 training centres under the Gharib Nawaz Employment Scheme were opened across the country.

About Gharib Nawaz Employment Scheme

- It was launched by the Ministry of Minority Affairs in 2017.
- Maulana Azad Education Foundation, an autonomous body under the aegis of the Ministry of Minority Affairs, implements the Scheme.
- The main aim of this scheme is to provide short term job oriented skill development courses to minorities' youth to enable them for skill-based employment.
- This scheme is implemented as per common norms of the Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship (MSD&E) through the **empanelled Program Implementation Agencies (PIAs)**.
- The Empanelled Program Implementation Agencies is mandated to place a minimum of 70% of trainees out of total trained trainees.
- The monthly stipend for a maximum of three months and post-placement support for a maximum of two months after getting employment are also being paid to the beneficiaries directly into their account.

Other Schemes for Minority Communities

- Nai Manzil (for formal skilling of school dropouts)
- Nai Roshni (for leadership Development of Minority Women)
- Begum Hazrat Mahal Girls scholarships
- Usttad (Upgrading the Skills and Training in Traditional Arts/Crafts for Development)
- Garib Nawaz Kaushal Vikas Yojana

Parliament passes landmark 'Marine Aids to Navigation Bill 2021'

(Topic- GS Paper II-Governance, Source- The Hindu)

Why in the news?

- Parliament has recently passed the Marine Aids to Navigation Bill 2021.

Key highlights of the bill

- The bill aims to adopt state-of-the-art technologies of marine navigation that were not covered under the statutory provisions of the old Lighthouse Act 1927.

Application

- The Bill applies to the whole of India including various maritime zones including territorial waters, continental shelf, and exclusive economic zone.

Aid to navigation

- The Bill defines aid to navigation as a device, system, or service, external to the vessels designed and operated to enhance the safety and efficiency of navigation of vessels and vessel traffic.
- A vessel includes a ship, boat, sailing vessel, fishing vessel, submersible, and mobile offshore drilling units.
- Vessel traffic service is defined as a service to improve the safety and efficiency of vessel traffic and protect the environment.

Director-General of Aids to Navigation

- The Bill provides that the central government will appoint
 - a. Director-General
 - b. Deputy Director Generals
 - c. Directors for districts (which the centre may demarcate).
- The Director-General will advise the central government on matters related to aids to navigation, among others.

Central Advisory Committee

- The central government may appoint a Central Advisory Committee (CAC) consisting of persons representing the interests affected by the Bill, or having special knowledge of the sector.

Benefits:

- The new Act will facilitate harmonized and effective functioning of aids to marine navigation and Vessel Traffic Services along the Indian coastline.

The benefits include:

- Improved Legal Framework for Matters related to Aids to Navigation & Vessel Traffic Services and covers the future developments in the field of Marine Navigation.
- Management of 'Vessel Traffic Services' for enhancing the safety and efficiency of shipping and to protect the environment.
- Skill development through Training and Certification for the operators of 'Aids to Navigation' and 'Vessel Traffic Services' at par with international standards.
- Auditing and Accreditation of Institutes to cater to the need of Training and Certification at par with global standards.
- Marking of "Wreck" in general waters to identify sunken/stranded vessels for safe and efficient navigation.
- The development of Lighthouses for the purpose of education, culture and tourism, would tap the tourism potential of coastal regions and contribute to their economy.

Academic Bank of Credit

(Topic- GS Paper III- Education, Source- The Hindu)

Why in the news?

- Recently, Prime Minister has rolled out the Academic Bank of Credit, on the first anniversary of the National Education Policy (NEP).

About the Academic Bank of Credit

- Academic Bank of Credit referred to as ABC is a virtual storehouse that will keep records of academic credits secured by a student.
- It is drafted on the lines of the National Academic Depository.
- It will function as a commercial bank where students will be the customers and ABC will offer several services to these students. Students will have to open an Academic Bank Account and every account holder would be provided with a unique id and Standard Operating Procedure (SOP).
- The academic accounts of students will have credits awarded by higher education Institutes to students for the courses they are pursuing.
- However, ABC will not accept any credit course document directly from the students, and its institutes that will make the deposits in students' accounts.

Uses

- It will be responsible for opening, closing, and validating the academic accounts of students. It will also perform tasks including credit verification, credit accumulation, credit transfer/redemption of students, and promotion of the ABC among the stakeholders.

- The courses will also include online and distance mode courses offered through National Schemes like SWAYAM, NPTEL, V-Lab etc.
- The validity of these academic credits earned by students will be up to seven years.
- The validity can also vary based on the subject or discipline.
- **Students can redeem these credits.**

How does it work?

- For instance, if a student has accumulated 100 credits which are equivalent to say one year and they decide to drop out.
- Once they decide to rejoin they can redeem this credit and seek admission directly in the second year at any university.

Validity

- The validity will be up to **seven years**; hence, students will have to rejoin within seven years.

Impact on Education Institutes

- The participating HEIs in the ABC scheme will enable students to build their degrees as per their choices.
- The participating higher education institutes will have to amend their rules in terms of course registration, course requirements, acceptance for inter-disciplinary and multi-disciplinary courses, Credits to be offered to these courses, credit transfers, and credits acceptance from other approved institutions.
- As per UGC guidelines, the higher education institutes will have to allow students to acquire credits 50-70% of credits assigned to a degree from any institute.
- Students, depending upon their needs can take this opportunity.
- Students who opt to shift their institution will have to get the remaining 30-50% credits from the education institute they have registered with.
- UGC will ensure that students secured the minimum credits to be secured in the core subject area.

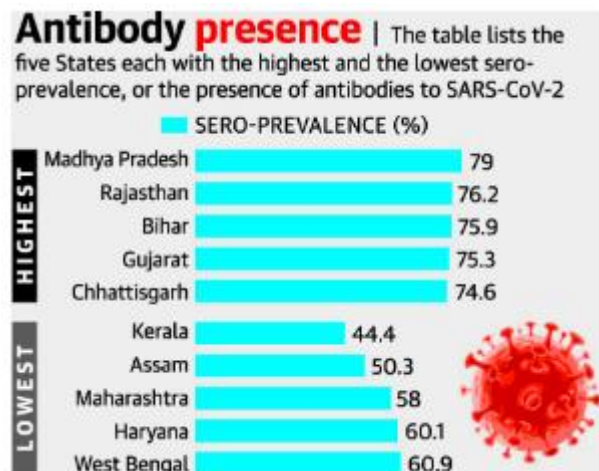
Fourth national serology survey

(Topic- GS Paper III-Science and Technology, Source- The Hindu)

Why in the news?

- Recently, the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) has released the fourth edition of the National Serology survey.

Key findings



- Madhya Pradesh has the highest seroprevalence or the presence of antibodies to the novel coronavirus %, followed by Rajasthan (76%) and Bihar (75%).**
- Kerala has the lowest among 21 States studied having only 44% of seroprevalence.**
- After Kerala, the least antibody prevalence was in Assam (50%) and Maharashtra (58%).

Test

- The ELISA test used to check antibodies also has a role in marking antibody prevalence.**

Antibodies in children

- The survey also noted that more than half of the children (six to 17 years) were seropositive and seroprevalence was similar in rural and urban areas.
- It was also found that 85% of healthcare workers (HCWs) had antibodies and nearly one-10th was unvaccinated.

Pneumonia

(Topic- GS Paper III-Science and Technology, Source- The Hindu)

Why in the news?

- Recently, as per the Sample Registration System Report (2010-13) of the Registrar General of India, Pneumonia contributes 16.9% of infant deaths and it is the 2nd highest cause of infant mortality.

About Pneumonia

- Pneumonia is an acute respiratory infection of the lungs.
- It is also a Pneumococcal disease caused by bacteria called Streptococcus pneumonia or pneumococcus.

Causes

- Pneumonia is caused by several infectious agents, including viruses, bacteria and fungi.

The most common are:

- Streptococcus pneumoniae** – the most common cause of bacterial pneumonia in children;
- Haemophilus influenzae type b (Hib)** – the second most common cause of bacterial pneumonia;
- Respiratory syncytial virus** is the most **common viral cause of pneumonia**;
- In infants infected with HIV, Pneumocystis jiroveci is one of the commonest causes of pneumonia, responsible for at least one-quarter of all pneumonia deaths in HIV-infected infants.

Government Initiatives

Integrated Action Plan for Prevention and Control of Pneumonia and Diarrhoea (IAPPD)

- It has been launched in 2014 to undertake collaborative efforts towards the prevention of diarrhoea and Pneumonia related under-five deaths.

Social Awareness and Actions to Neutralize Pneumonia Successfully (SAANS)

- It has been launched in 2019.
- The SAANS initiative encompasses three-pronged strategies:
 - Guidelines on treatment and management of childhood Pneumonia including the introduction of the use of Amoxicillin by ANM.
 - Capacity building of service providers for identification and standardized management of Pneumonia.
 - Communication campaign to ensure greater awareness of childhood Pneumonia among families and parents.

- The government aims to achieve a target of reducing pneumonia deaths among children to less than three per 1,000 live births by 2025.

Global initiative

Global action plan for the prevention and control of pneumonia (GAPP)

- WHO and UNICEF have launched the Global action plan for the prevention and control of pneumonia (GAPP).

Aim

- The aim is to accelerate pneumonia control with a combination of interventions to protect, prevent, and treat pneumonia in children.

Note:

- Every year on 12 November, World Pneumonia day has been celebrated.

Phosphatic rocks

(Topic- GS Paper III-Science and Technology, Source- AIR)

Why in the news?

- Recently, India explore indigenous deposits of phosphatic rock, a step towards becoming AatmaNirbhar in fertilizer production.

About Phosphatic rocks



- These ones have high phosphorus content in them.
- They are available in high, medium, and low grades. Some phosphate rocks are used for making calcium phosphate nutritional supplements for animals, while pure phosphorus is used to make chemicals for industrial use.

- **However, the most important use of phosphorus is for the production of fertilizers for agriculture.**

About phosphorus rocks

- Phosphorus rocks or phosphate rocks are unprocessed ores.
- Phosphate rock deposits can be sedimentary (formed from sediment deposited by water or air) or igneous (having solidified from lava or magma).
- However, the easiest way to obtain phosphorus is by way of mining and concentrating phosphate rock from the phosphate deposits.

Where is it found?

- Phosphate rock deposits can be sedimentary or igneous and are mined from sedimentary deposits formed by the deposition of phosphate-rich materials in marine environments.
- Large sedimentary deposits are located in **China, Middle East, Northern Africa, and the United States. Meanwhile, the igneous deposits are mined in Brazil, Canada, Finland, Russia, South Africa, and Zimbabwe.**

Phosphorus in India

- Phosphate rocks are majorly produced only from two States in India, namely Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh.
- These deposits are available in Rajasthan, the central part of peninsular India, Hirapur (Madhya Pradesh), Lalitpur (Uttar Pradesh), Mussoorie syncline, and Cuddapah basin (Andhra Pradesh).

Uses

Phosphorus in Plant

- It is important for plant's growth and helps in retaining decaying soil fertility.
- **It also facilitates the storage and transfer of energy throughout the plant.**

Importance of Phosphorus for agriculture

- Phosphorus cannot be substituted by any other mineral, as it is vital for several reasons in agriculture.
- It plays a major role in photosynthesis and energy transfer in plants.
- Further, it is essential for the production of seed and root formation.
- It promotes early plant maturity and stalks strength.
- It is also resistant to plant root diseases.

National Farmers Database

(Topic- GS Paper III-Agriculture, Source- The Hindu)

Why in the news?

- The Government of India has announced plans to set up a National Farmer's Database.

About National Farmers Database

- **The Government plans to set up a National Farmers Database which will consist of digitised land records and will facilitate online single sign-on facilities.**
- The aim is to increase farmers' income by leveraging the available data and developing solutions based on the data so that the input costs are reduced, ease of farming is ensured, quality is improved and farmers get a better price for their farm produce.
- The database will initially only include land-owning farmers.
- The landless and tenant farmers will be excluded from the database.

Significance

- The database can be used by the Government for targeted service delivery with higher efficiency and in a focussed and time-bound manner.
- It has universal access and provides services to them like direct benefit transfer, weather advisories, insurance facilities and information on neighbouring logistic facilities among other things.
- **The National Farmer's database would serve as the core of the Agristack.**

About Agristack

- It is a collection of technologies and digital databases that focuses on farmers and the agricultural sector.
- It will create a unified platform for farmers to provide them end to end services across the agriculture food value chain.
- It is in line with the Centre's Digital India programme, aimed at providing a broader push to digitise data in India, from land titles to medical records.
- The government is also implementing the **National Land Records Modernisation Programme (NRLMP)**.
- Under the programme, each farmer will have unique digital identification (farmers' ID) that contains personal details, information about the land they farm, as well as production and financial details.
- **Each ID will be linked to the individual's digital national ID Aadhaar.**