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19 March, 2024

Star ratings for State Environment Bodies

Context: *The Environment Ministry's plan for a star-rating system to assess states' efficiency in granting environmental clearances hasn't been put into action, as confirmed by the Ministry to the National Green Tribunal (NGT).*

➢ **Introduction of Star-Rating System:**
- The Ministry introduced a star-rating system in January 2022.
- The system was challenged in the NGT by Meenava Thanthai K R Selvaraj Kumar Meenavar Nala Sangam, a Tamil Nadu-based organization advocating for fishermen's rights.

➢ **Objective:**
- The primary objective is to enhance the ease of doing business in India.
- This initiative was formulated during a meeting of cabinet secretaries held in the year 2021.
- The overarching goal is to expedite and simplify the environmental clearance process across the country.

➢ **Assessment Criteria:**
- 1. Proposals pending for more than thirty days will be assessed.
- 2. Additionally, the evaluation will consider pending proposals for Terms of Reference for over 30 days.
- 3. The system will measure the percentage of new Terms of Reference disposed of within the last six months.
- 4. Evaluation will also focus on the number of environmental clearances pending for over 105 days.
- 5. Reassessment of complaints will be factored into the assessment criteria.
- 6. Furthermore, the number of site visits conducted by the authorities will be taken into account during the evaluation process.

➢ **System Implementation Details:**
- The ranking system was established following a meeting chaired by Cabinet Secretary Rajiv Gauba in November 2021, focusing on promoting 'ease of doing business.'
- SEIAAs grant clearances based on recommendations from Expert Appraisal Committees, which assess project proposals with significant environmental impacts.
- Under the star-rating system, SEIAAs earn points on a scale of 0 to 7 based on clearance timelines:
- Two points for clearances granted in less than 80 days.
- One point for clearances between 80 and 105 days.
- 0.5 points for clearances between 105 and 120 days.
- Zero points if clearance takes more than 120 days.

➢ **How does it hamper EIA?**
- Insufficient independent environmental experts within State committees currently leave decision-making to bureaucrats, potentially sidelining environmental concerns for economic gains.
- The Legal Initiative for Forest on Environment (LIFE) opposes the scheme, citing violations of the Environment (Protection) Act.
- The proposal reduces State Environment Impact Assessment Authorities (SEIAAs) to rubber stamp authorities, undermining their mandate for detailed scrutiny.
- It weakens regulatory oversight crucial for environmental protection, as highlighted in Supreme Court verdicts safeguarding the right to life.
- Implementation risks fostering unhealthy competition among states to expedite project clearances, potentially compromising thorough environmental assessments.

Trademarks Act, 1999

Context: *The Delhi High Court cancelled Mohammed Akram Khan's trademark registration for "Dolma Aunty Momos" after Dolma Tsering objected to its unauthorized use.*

➢ **Trademark:**
- A trademark, whether a symbol, design, word, or phrase, serves as a distinctive identifier for a business.
- Registering a trademark grants its owner exclusive rights to its usage.
- The Trademarks Act of 1999 governs trademarks and their registration in India, overseen by the Controller General of Patents, Designs, and Trademarks.
- Section 25 of the 1999 Act stipulates that a registered trademark remains valid for 10 years and can be renewed periodically by the owner.
- Unauthorized use of a registered trademark constitutes infringement, as does using a substantially similar mark for similar goods or services.
- Trademark infringement can occur in various ways, as evidenced by cases like the Dolma Aunty matter.

➢ **Trademark Law Before 1940:**
- Prior to 1940, India lacked specific trademark legislation.
- Issues of trademark infringement were addressed under Section 54 of the Specific Relief Act, 1877, and registration was adjudicated under the Indian Registration Act, 1908.

➢ **Trademark and Merchandise Act, 1958:**
- The Trademark and Merchandise Act, 1958 replaced the previous law.
- It aimed to provide better protection against fraudulent use of marks on merchandise and facilitated trademark registration for exclusive use.

➢ **Trademark Act, 1999**
- The government of India replaced the 1958 Act with the Trademark Act, 1999.
- This transition aligned with TRIPS obligations recommended by the World Trade Organization.
- The Trademark Act, 1999 aims to protect trademark users and regulate property conditions.
- It provides legal remedies for enforcing trademark rights.
- The Trademark Act, 1999 empowers authorities to arrest individuals involved in trademark infringement.
- The Act specifies punishments and penalties for offenders.

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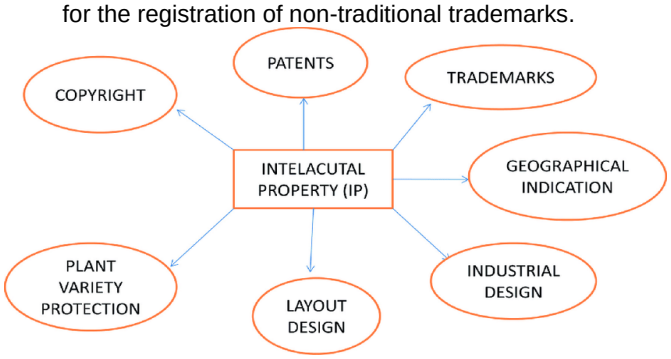
- The Act extends the registration duration and allows for the registration of non-traditional trademarks.



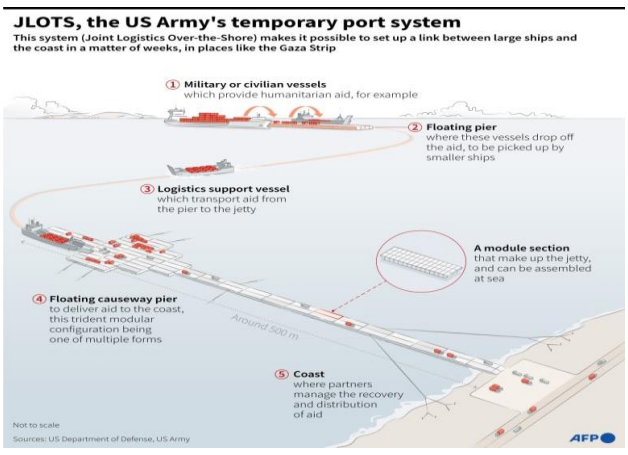
Types of Trademarks

- **Product Mark:**
  - Used on goods or products to identify their origin.
  - Helps in maintaining the reputation of a business.
  - Trademark applications filed under trademark class 1-34 represent goods.
- **Service Mark:**
  - Used to represent services rather than products.
  - Distinguishes its proprietors from owners of other services.
  - Trademark applications filed under trademark class 35-45 represent services.
- **Collective Mark:**
  - Used to inform the public about distinguished features of a product or service representing a collective.
  - Held by an association, public institution, or Section 8 Company.
  - Standards of products fixed by the regulator owning the mark.
  - Others associated with the collective adhere to certain standards while using the mark.
- **Certification Mark:**
  - Denotes a product's origin, material, quality, or specific details issued by the proprietor.
  - Ensures the standard and quality of the product to customers.
  - Used to uplift the product's standard among customers through standard tests.
- **Shape Mark:**
  - Protects the shape of a product, making it relatable to a certain manufacturer.
  - Examples include Coca-Cola and Fanta bottles with distinctive shapes identifiable with the brand.
- **Pattern Mark:**
  - Products with specific designed patterns serving as distinguishing factors.
  - Patterns must show evidence of uniqueness to be registered.
- **Sound Mark:**
  - Sound associated with a product or service originating from a specific supplier.
  - Sound marks easily identify the product, service, or show.
  - Popular examples include sound logos at the beginning or end of commercials, such as the IPL tune in India.

Joint Logistics Over-the-Shore (JLOTS)

Context: *Ships from the US Army departed from Virginia carrying equipment to construct a floating pier off the Gaza coast, facilitating the delivery of humanitarian aid to the region.*

- **JLOTS Military Project:***
  - JLOTS is a military project initiated by the US Department of Defense.
- **Objective:**
  - The main objective of JLOTS is to enhance the military's logistics capacity in regions lacking adequate fixed port facilities.
- **Operational Features:**
  - These operations involve collaboration among various military branches.
  - The navy handles transportation and security of goods, while the army or other agencies manage tasks such as infrastructure construction and delivery.
  - Specialized equipment like floating causeways and barges are utilized to move cargo between ships and shore, even in challenging areas.
- **Significance:**
  - JLOTS is particularly valuable during humanitarian and disaster relief efforts, ensuring swift delivery of aid.
  - The US military has previously utilized JLOTS in Kuwait, Somalia, Haiti, and Central America for disaster relief missions.
- **JLOTS in Gaza:**
  - The construction of the floating pier in Gaza will not involve direct US military participation.
  - Collaboration with Fogbow, a private company led by former military and intelligence personnel, will facilitate the project.
- **Components:**
  - The project comprises two main parts: a floating dock and a 548-meter-long pier with a causeway.
  - The steel floating dock will be transported by a roll-on, roll-off ship designed for heavy cargo.
  - The pier, connected to the shore, will feature a causeway extension to prevent vehicles transporting aid from getting stuck in soft sand.



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NEWS IN BETWEEN THE LINES

Indira Gandhi National Center for Arts

The 37th Foundation Day of Indira Gandhi National Center for Arts (IGNCA) will be celebrated from March 19, 2024 at the IGNCA premises in New Delhi.

About Indira Gandhi National Center for Arts:

- The Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA) is a **national institution** that studies the arts and culture and their connections to other fields of study.
- It was established in **1985** by Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi.
- It is an **autonomous institution under the Ministry of Culture** and is dedicated to research, academic pursuit and dissemination in the arts.
- The IGNCA explores various art forms, encompassing creative **literature**, **visual arts**, **material culture**, **photography**, film and performing arts such as music, dance and **theater**.
- It also organizes and participates in activities for the cultural rediscovery and enrichment of cities.

SAKHI App

Recently, the Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre (VSSC), the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) facility at Thumba in Thiruvananthapuram, has developed a SAKHI app.

About the SAKHI App:

- SAKHI (Space-borne Assistant and Knowledge Hub for Crew Interaction) is a **multi-purpose app** developed by the Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre (VSSC) **for assisting astronauts during the Gaganyaan spaceflight mission**.
- VSSC has successfully tested an **engineering model of the custom-built**, **hand-held smart device featuring SAKHI.**

Functionality:

- It allows astronauts to access vital technical information required for the mission.
- It **facilitates communication among crew members** for coordination and **information sharing.**
- It **monitors the health status of astronauts** to ensure their well-being during the mission.
- It **alerts astronauts about their dietary schedules** to maintain their health in space.

Mission Timeline: ISRO plans to launch the Gaganyaan human spaceflight mission in 2025, with the final crew to be selected from among the four astronaut-designates, all Indian Air Force (IAF) test pilots.

Plastic Chemicals

A recent report reveals that there are at least 3,000 more chemicals present in plastics than previously estimated.

About Plastic Chemicals:

- Plastics contain a vast array of chemicals, with recent findings revealing over **16,000 different chemicals present.**
- These chemicals are found in various plastic products, including **food packaging**, **toys** and **medical devices.**
- Approximately a quarter of these chemicals are deemed **hazardous to human health** and the environment, raising concerns about their widespread use in consumer products.
- Adverse health outcomes, including fertility issues and **cardiovascular diseases**, have been associated with exposure to these chemicals.
- Despite the large number of chemicals found in plastics, only a **small fraction (6%)** are internationally regulated.
- There is a growing recognition of the need to address plastic pollution comprehensively.

Liver Fluke Parasite

Recently, the scientists from the University of California, Riverside, confirm the presence of a dog-killing flatworm parasite (Liver Fluke) in the Colorado River in southern California, previously believed to be confined to the southeastern United States but now found in western parts of the country.

About Liver Fluke Parasite:

- **Heterobilharzia americana,** also known as the liver fluke parasite, is a flatworm that infects mammals, particularly **dogs and raccoons.**
- **Dogs become infected when they wade or swim** in freshwater habitats containing infected snails, which act as intermediate hosts for the parasite.
- The **parasite enters the dog's body through the skin** and migrates to the veins of the intestinal lining, where it matures into an adult and reproduces.
- Eggs laid by the adult parasite can cause severe damage to organs such as the **liver**, **spleen** and **heart**.
- Infection with H. americana can lead to **canine schistosomiasis**, characterized by symptoms such as **liver damage, intestinal issues, debilitation** and, in severe cases, death.

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Place in News

Bulgaria

Recently, Bulgarian President Rumen Radev thanked the Indian Navy on social media for rescuing the crew of the hijacked Bulgarian ship, MV Rouen, which included 7 Bulgarian citizens.

Bulgaria (Capital: Sofia)

Location: Bulgaria is a country in Southeastern **Europe**, located in the northeastern part of the Balkan Peninsula.

Boundaries: Bulgaria shares its borders with the **Black Sea** (East), **Serbia** and **North Macedonia** (West), **Romania** (North), and **Greece** and **Turkey** (South).

Physical Features:

- The highest point in Bulgaria is **Mount Musala**, located in the Rila Mountain range in southwestern Bulgaria.
- Major rivers in Bulgaria include the **Danube**, forming its northern border and the **Maritsa**, flowing through the southern region.
- Bulgaria is rich in mineral resources such as **coal**, **lead**, **zinc**, **copper**, and various industrial minerals including limestone, **marble** and **gypsum**.

Membership: Bulgaria joined the **European Union** in **2007** and became a member of **NATO in 2004,** aligning itself with Western institutions.

POINTS TO PONDER

- Noctis Volcano, a recently discovered massive volcano, was found on which planet? **– Mars**
- According to a report by TRAFFIC and WWF-India, which state has topped in the illegal trade of shark body parts? **– Tamil Nadu**
- Recently, the Indian Navy has set up its first independent headquarters named 'Nausena Bhawan' at which place? **– Delhi**
- Atapaka Bird Sanctuary, recently seen in the news, is located in which state? **– Andhra Pradesh**
- What is the theme of 'National Vaccination Day 2024'? **– Vaccines Work for All**