



21 June, 2024

Post Office Act, 2023

Context: The Post Office Act of 2023 has been implemented as of June 18 replacing the colonial Act of 1898.

- **Expanded Scope:** It aims to consolidate and amend laws pertaining to the Indian Post Office, which now extends beyond traditional mail services.
- **Interception Powers:** Section 9 empowers designated officers to intercept, open, or detain postal items in the interest of state security, public order, or to enforce other laws.
- **Continuity from 1898 Act:** Similar to Sections 19, 25, and 26 of the 1898 Act, it addresses interception, examination, and disposal of postal articles for public safety and emergencies.
- **Liability Exemptions:** Under Section 10, the Post Office and its officers are exempted from liability for losses or damages unless specified otherwise under rules.
- **Removal of Offences and Penalties:** The Act abolishes penalties outlined in the 1898 Act, such as those for postal officer misconduct, fraud, or theft.
- **Exclusivity of Postal Services:** It removes the exclusive privilege of the central government to convey letters, acknowledging the rise of private courier services.
- **Regulation of Private Courier Services:** For the first time, it regulates private courier services, ensuring interception powers apply broadly to postal articles.

➤ Key Issues and Analysis:

- **Lack of Procedural Safeguards:** The Act lacks specified procedural safeguards for intercepting postal articles, potentially conflicting with individual rights to privacy and freedom of expression.
- **Broad Grounds for Interception:** Grounds for interception include broad terms like 'emergency', which may not meet constitutional standards for reasonable restrictions.
- **Exemption from Liability Conflict:** The exemption from liability may lead to conflicts of interest, as liability can be prescribed by the same entity administering India Post.
- **Absence of Offences and Penalties:** There is no provision for offences or penalties, except for recovering unpaid charges as arrears of land revenue.

➤ Key Features:

- **Director General's Role:** The Director General of Postal Services is appointed to oversee regulations on service tariffs, postage stamps, and other operational matters.
- **Powers of Interception:** Authorized officers can intercept postal articles on grounds related to state

security, public order, emergencies, and contravention of laws.

- **Examination and Delivery of Prohibited Items:** Articles suspected to contain prohibited goods can be delivered to customs authorities for appropriate action under government notification.
- **Liability Provisions:** The Act maintains exemptions from liability for India Post, its officers, and specifies recoverable amounts for unpaid services.

Bihar Reservation struck down

Context: On Thursday, the Patna High Court overturned Bihar government notifications that raised reservation in government jobs and educational institutions from 50% to 65%.

➤ Indra Sawhney Ruling:

- The Supreme Court's 1992 Indra Sawhney v Union of India ruling established a 50% ceiling on reservations to ensure administrative "efficiency".
- It validated criteria based on "social and educational backwardness" for eligibility and reinforced the limit on vertical quotas set in earlier judgments.

➤ Challenges to the 50% Ceiling:

- Despite being upheld in subsequent cases, efforts to exceed the 50% limit persist in states like Bihar, gaining political traction.
- Congress leader Rahul Gandhi during the Lok Sabha campaign advocated for extending reservations and conducting a caste census.

➤ Legal Challenges and Recent Developments:

- The 50% reservation limit faces legal challenges in the Supreme Court.
- Exceptions like the 10% quota for Economically Weaker Sections (EWS) in 2019 have been upheld, suggesting flexibility in applying the ceiling.

➤ Reinterpretation and Future Implications:

- A 2022 Supreme Court verdict hinted at the 50% ceiling being applicable primarily to SC/ST and OBC quotas, leaving room for debate on its inflexibility.
- Critics argue the ceiling is arbitrary, while proponents view it as vital to preserving equality principles outlined by Dr. B R Ambedkar.

➤ State-specific Reservations and Constitutional Amendments:

- Tamil Nadu breached the 50% limit under the Ninth Schedule of the Constitution in 1994, providing legal protection from judicial scrutiny.
- Maharashtra's attempt to exceed the limit for the Maratha community was struck down by the Supreme Court in 2021, illustrating varying outcomes across states.

Face to Face Centres





21 June, 2024

➤ Constitutional Provisions Governing Reservation in India:

- **Part XVI:** Deals with reservation of SC and ST in Central and State legislatures.
- **Article 15(4) and 16(4):** Enable the State and Central Governments to reserve seats in government services for members of SC and ST.
- **Constitution (77th Amendment) Act, 1995:** Inserted clause (4A) in Article 16 to enable the government to provide reservation in promotion.
- **Constitution (85th Amendment) Act, 2001:** Modified clause (4A) to provide consequential seniority to SC and ST candidates promoted by reservation.
- **Constitutional 81st Amendment Act, 2000:** Inserted Article 16(4B) to allow the state to fill unfilled reserved vacancies for SCs/STs in the succeeding year, bypassing the fifty percent reservation ceiling on total vacancies for that year.
- **Article 330 and 332:** Provide specific representation through reservation of seats for SCs and STs in the Parliament and State Legislative Assemblies respectively.
- **Article 243D:** Provides reservation of seats for SCs and STs in every Panchayat.
- **Article 233T:** Provides reservation of seats for SCs and STs in every Municipality.
- **Article 335:** States that the claims of SCs and STs shall be considered consistently with the maintenance of administrative efficiency.

Lacking Biodiversity Finance

Context: A new report has highlighted that developed countries may struggle to meet their commitment to provide \$20 billion annually in biodiversity finance to developing countries by 2025.

Commitment and Report Findings

- **Commitment:** Developed countries committed to providing \$20 billion per year in biodiversity finance to developing countries by 2025 as part of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework adopted at COP16.
- **Report by Campaign for Nature:** A US-based non-profit's report flagged that developed countries may not meet this commitment.
- **Current Contributions:**
 - Only 2 out of 28 developed countries are contributing their fair share.

- Most developed countries need to at least double their funding.

Fair Share Contributions:

- **Norway and Sweden:** Contributing more than their fair share.
- **Germany:** 99% of fair share.
- **France:** 92% of fair share.
- **Australia:** 74% of fair share.

- **Largest Dollar Gaps:** Japan, the United Kingdom, Italy, Canada, Korea, and Spain, together accounting for 71% of the aggregate shortfall.

Methodology for Fair Share Calculation

Factors Considered:

- Historical impact on biodiversity.
- Ability to pay.
- Population size.

Recommendations

- **Increase Funding:** Developed countries should increase their biodiversity finance contributions.
- **Ministerial Level Initiative:** Establish a high-level initiative to coordinate funding delivery.
- **Mobilize Private Resources:** Use regulation and incentives to encourage private sector contributions, alongside public finance and philanthropic efforts.
- **US Contribution:** The US, despite not being a party to the Convention, should significantly increase its international nature finance due to its large economy and historical biodiversity impact.

Importance of Meeting the Target

- **Trust Building:** Critical for trust between the Global North and South, especially for COP16 in Colombia.
- **Economic Return:** Protecting biodiversity provides high economic returns; half of global GDP depends on nature.
- **Global Implications:** Continued ecological loss affects food and water supplies, climate, disease outbreaks, and global peace and security.
- **Economic Loss:** From 1997 to 2011, ecological loss resulted in \$4-20 trillion annual losses globally.

Consequences of Failing to Meet the Target

- **Undermines the Convention:** Failure to reach the target undermines the UN Convention on Biological Diversity.
- **Threat to Shared Prosperity:** Represents a genuine threat to prosperity, livelihoods, economies, and health.
- **Call to Action:** Laetitia Pettinotti, lead author, emphasizes the need for high-income countries to fulfill their obligations, as their contributions are critically important and must increase.

Face to Face Centres



21 June, 2024

NEWS IN BETWEEN THE LINES

International Day of Yoga



On account of the 10th International Day of Yoga today, Prime Minister of India led celebrations at the Sher-i-Kashmir International Conference Centre (SKICC) on the banks of Dal Lake.

About the International Day of Yoga:

- The International Day of Yoga is **celebrated annually on June 21**.
- The **United Nations General Assembly (UNGA)** declared **June 21** as the International Day of Yoga in **December 2014**.
- The initiative to establish an International Day of Yoga was **proposed by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi** during his speech at the UNGA on September 27, 2014.
- The objectives of the International Day of Yoga include **raising awareness** about the benefits of practicing yoga, **promoting physical, mental and spiritual well-being**, and fostering global harmony and peace.
- The resolution to adopt June 21 as the International Day of Yoga was passed with the **support of 177 nations**, making it one of the most widely supported resolutions in the history of the UNGA.
- The first International Day of Yoga was celebrated on **June 21, 2015 at Rajpath in New Delhi**.
- The International Yoga Day **2024 theme** is **"Yoga for Self and Society."**
- The theme for **2023** was **"Yoga for Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam"** which means **"Yoga for the World is One Family"**.
- Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India Ltd (**TRIFED**) collaborated with the **Ministry of Ayush** to **supply yoga mats exclusively made by tribal artisans**.

Summer Solstice



June 21 is the day of Summer Solstice in 2024.

About Summer Solstice:

- The Summer Solstice is an **astronomical event** that marks the **longest day** of the year, typically occurring around **June 21 in the Northern Hemisphere**.
- It derived from the Latin words **"sol"** (sun) and **"stitium"** (to stand still), referring to the Sun appearing to pause in its movement across the sky.
- On the Summer Solstice, the **Sun reaches its highest position** in the sky at noon.
- It happens **because the Earth's axial tilt** is inclined towards the Sun, at approximately **23.5 degrees**.
- The **Tropic of Cancer** (23.5°N latitude) experiences direct sunlight.

Striped Caecilian



Recently, a Limbless amphibian (Striped caecilian), recorded for the first time in Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve during a rapid herpetofauna survey conducted from June 14-17.

About Striped Caecilian:

- The striped caecilian (Ichthyophis spp) is a **limbless amphibian**.
- The name "caecilian" comes from the Latin word caecus, which means "blind".
- The **Western Ghats of India** is a biodiversity hotspot for caecilians, with 26 of the 39 described species in India being endemic to the region.
- Caecilian is generalist **predator** that **eats soil invertebrates** like **earthworms, ants, termites** and **beetle pupae**.
- It also **eats leaf humus** and other **plant fragments**.
- It **burrows under the soil**; found in diverse ecosystems such as **flood plains, wetlands, grasslands** and hill tracts on the **periphery of Kaziranga**.
- It has unique features like **tentacles, bullet-shaped skulls** and **two sets of jaw-closing muscles**.
- Some caecilian species are **eyeless**, while others have **small eyes hidden** under their skin.

MAVEN Orbiter



Recently, NASA's Mars Atmosphere and Volatile Evolution (MAVEN) orbiter captured a stellar display of purple-colored lights on Mars.

About MAVEN Orbiter:

- The Mars Atmosphere and Volatile Evolution (MAVEN) Orbiter is a **spacecraft** launched by NASA on **November 18, 2013**.
- Its primary objective is to study the upper atmosphere of Mars and its interaction with the solar wind.
- MAVEN entered orbit around Mars on September 22, 2014.
- It is equipped with instruments such as the **Imaging Ultraviolet Spectrograph (IUVS)**, **Neutral Gas and Ion Mass Spectrometer (NGIMS)** and **Solar Wind Electron Analyzer (SWEA)**.
- The mission aims to understand **how the Sun may have stripped Mars** of its atmosphere, affecting its climate and potential habitability.

Face to Face Centres



21 June, 2024

Place in News

Sri Lanka

Recently, the External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar reached Colombo as part of his official visit to Sri Lanka.

Sri Lanka (Capital: Colombo)

Location: Sri Lanka is an island country in South Asia, located in the Indian Ocean, south of India. It is separated from the Indian peninsula by the **Gulf of Mannar** and the **Palk Strait**

Boundaries: Sri Lanka shares its maritime borders with the **Maldives (Southwest)** and **India (Northwest)**.

Physical Features:

- The highest point of Sri Lanka is **Pidurutalagala**.
- The major rivers of Sri Lanka include **Mahaweli**, **Kelani**, **Walawe**, **Arivi**, **Aru**, **Kalunganga** and **Maduru Oya**.
- Sri Lanka is known for minerals resources including **Graphite**, **Gemstones** and **Ilmenite** (a source of titanium)

Membership: Sri Lanka is a member of various organisations including **United Nations (UN)**, **South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC)** and the **Commonwealth of Nations**.

Languages: **Sinhala** and **Tamil** are the official languages.



POINTS TO PONDER

- Who has recently been appointed as the Pro-tem Speaker of 18th Lok Sabha by President Droupadi Murmu? – **Bhartruhari Mahtab (seven-time MP from Cuttack, Odisha)**
- What innovative development was recently achieved by a team of scientists to potentially reduce the cost of producing biodiesel? – **Superhydrophobic (water-repellent) catalyst**
- What new central sector scheme (CSS) has been approved by the Union Cabinet to enhance forensic infrastructure in India? – **National Forensic Infrastructure Enhancement Scheme (NFIES)**
- Which organizations collaborated to develop the AI model AlphaFold-3, capable of predicting the structure of proteins, DNA, RNA, ligands, and their interactions? – **DeepMind and Isomorphic Labs**
- In the global Energy Transition Index released by the World Economic Forum, India was ranked: – **63rd**

Face to Face Centres

DELHI MUKHERJEE NAGAR: 9205274741, 42 | **LAXMI NAGAR :** 9205212500, 9205962002 | **RAJENDRA NAGAR:** 9205274743 | **UTTAR PRADESH PRAYAGRAJ:** 0532-2260189, 8853467068 | **LUCKNOW (ALIGANJ):** 0522-4025825, 9506256789 | **LUCKNOW (GOMTI NAGAR):** 7234000501, 7234000502 | **GREATER NOIDA:** 9205336037, 38 | **KANPUR:** 7887003962, 7897003962 | **GORAKHPUR :** 7080847474, 9161947474 | **ODISHA BHUBANESWAR:** 9818244644/7656949029



dhyeyaias.com