

Revocation of FCRA Licence of NGOs

❖ Context

- Recently, **The Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA)** has cancelled the **FCRA registration** of a Vadodara-based NGO that was accused by the Gujarat police of illegally converting members of the Hindu community, funding the anti-CAA protests and for criminal activities to strengthen Islam.
- The registration of two other Christian NGOs — the New Hope Foundation, based in Tamil Nadu, and Holy Spirit Ministries from Karnataka were also cancelled.

❖ Key Highlights

- Recently, **MHA had put 10 Australian, American and European donors on its watchlist**,
 - following which the **Reserve Bank of India wrote to all banks** that any funds sent by the foreign donors should be **brought to the notice of the Ministry** and not cleared without its permission.
- All the donors that were placed on the **watchlist or “prior reference category”** work in the field of climate change, environment and child rights.
- An FCRA registration is **mandatory for NGOs to receive foreign funds**. There are 22,591 FCRA registered NGOs.

❖ Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA), 2010

- **Foreign funding** of voluntary organizations in India is **regulated under FCRA act** and is **implemented by the Ministry of Home Affairs**.
- **Individuals are allowed** to accept foreign contributions **without permission of MHA** although the **limit** for such transactions shall be less than **25000**.
- Under the Act, **organisations require to register** themselves **every five years**
- Registered NGOs can receive foreign contributions for **five purposes** - **social, educational, religious, economic and cultural**

❖ Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Amendment Act, 2020

- The Bill adds **public servants** (as defined under the Indian Penal Code) to this list. Public servant includes any person who is in service or paid by the government, or remunerated by the government for the performance of any public duty.
- The **Bill prohibits the transfer of foreign contributions to any other person not registered to accept foreign contributions..** The term ‘person’ under the Act includes an individual, an association, or a registered company.
- The Act makes **Aadhaar number mandatory for all office bearers, directors or key functionaries** of a person receiving foreign contribution, as an identification document.
- The Act provides that **foreign contributions must be received only in an account designated by the bank as FCRA account** in such branches of the **State Bank of India, New Delhi** as notified by central govt
- **Renewal** of the certificate within **six months** of expiration is mandatory,
- **Not more than 20%** of the total foreign funds received could be defrayed for administrative expenses. In the FCRA Act 2010 **this limit was 50%**.
- The Bill adds that **suspension of registration** of a person **may be extended up to an additional 180 days**. In the 2010 Act this limit was up to 180 days only.
- Central government may permit a person to **surrender their registration certificate**.

Election Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2021

❖ Context

- The Election Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2021, which seeks to **link electoral rolls to Aadhaar** to weed out duplication was passed in the Lok Sabha.
- Opposition parties led by Congress opposed the bill, saying **it will infringe the fundamental rights of citizens** and demanded the Bill be sent to a Standing Committee.

❖ About the Bill

- Legislation will **end bogus voting** in the country and make the **electoral process more credible**.
- The Bill proposes to **allow electoral registration officers to seek the Aadhaar number** of people who want to register themselves as voters "for the purpose of establishing the identity".
- The bill also allows the electoral registration officers to ask for **Aadhaar numbers from "persons already included in the electoral roll for the purposes of authentication** of entries in the electoral roll, and to identify registration of the name of

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the same person in the electoral roll of more than one constituency or more than once in the same constituency".

- It seeks to insert sub-section (3) in Section 23 of the Representation of the People Act, 1950.
- Amendment to Section 14 will allow four "qualifying" dates for eligible people to register as voters. As of now, January 1 of every year is the sole qualifying date.
- The bill also seeks to amend Sections 20 and 60 of the Representation of People's Act, which will allow elections to become gender-neutral for service voters.
- The amendment will replace the word "wife" with the word "spouse" making the statutes "gender neutral."

Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative

❖ Context

The Breastfeeding Promotion Network of India (BPNI), in collaboration with the Association of Healthcare Providers of India (AHPI), which comprises more than 12,000 private hospitals, has launched an accreditation programme that will enable hospitals to get a "breastfeeding-friendly" tag.

❖ Key Highlights

- The BFHI programme is a worldwide programme of the WHO and UNICEF. Though India adopted it in 1993, it fizzled out by 1998 and is now being revived after more than two decades.
- The initiative is only for private hospitals and is based on the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare's MAA (Mother's Absolute Affection) programme for government hospitals launched in 2016.
- The tools for this evaluation process have been developed in partnership with the Health Ministry and World Health Organization.
- Early initiation of breastfeeding continues to be low in the country. According to the National Family Health Survey-5 (2019-2021), while there were 88.6% institutional births, only 41.8% of infants were breastfed within the first one hour, which has improved only marginally from 41.6% during NFHS-4 (2015-2016).
- In fact, many States such as Maharashtra, Karnataka, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh have shown a decline in the proportion of children breastfed within the first hour.
- Provision of mother's breast milk to infants within one hour of birth ensures that the infant receives the colostrum, or "first milk", which is rich in protective factors, according to the WHO.
- Lack of support and counseling for expectant mothers during pregnancy and at birth as well as aggressive promotion of baby foods are the reasons for poor early breastfeeding rates.
- A rise in cesarean sections is also known to negatively impact breastfeeding rates. "During cesarean operations everyone is focused on recovery, wound surgery, infection control and breastfeeding within the golden hour is missed. Evidence shows that improving breastfeeding rates in hospitals reduces neonatal mortality and infant mortality rates.

Concretization of Tree roots

❖ Context

- According to experts, Delhi is losing its trees due to concretisation, rule violation.
- Environmentalists blame that despite standing guidelines and rules banning concretisation around trees in the Capital, callous civil works undertaken by the authorities have caused extensive damage to several trees on the pavements of Delhi.

❖ Key Highlights

- open space is needed around a tree's base, so that it is able to take nutrients, conserve the nutrients, [undergo] good aeration -all of which contribute to the good health of the trees. The nutrients around the trees need to be recycled, but if they get washed away due to concretisation, the trees will get nothing. If the roots are not given breathing space, they will decay and easily get infested
- In 2000, the Urban Greening Guidelines came, which required one to leave six inches of areas un-cemented around the trunk of trees. This was increased by the National Green Tribunal (NGT) in 2013, when it ordered that the space around trees must be concrete-free by one metre. According to experts, a two-metre wide opening around the roots of trees, is necessary to promote the health of the trees
- In 1979, a study published in the Indian Biologist by T.M. Das of Calcutta University pegged the value of a tree during its lifespan of 50 years at ₹15,70,000, calculated at the market rate that prevailed in 1979.
- Over three decades later, Mr. Das re-evaluated all the calculations of the original papers as per the current market rate. For the study, a 'Pipul' tree, which grows luxuriantly with an average weightage of 6 tonnes was chosen. Mr. Das calculated the various environmental benefits received during its 50 years of growth at ₹3.55 crore. This estimation is also applicable to other tree species with identical tonnage,

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Benefits from a tree during 50 years of its lifespan

During 50 years of growth	Original (1979)	Revised (2011-12)
Production of oxygen	₹2,50,000	₹5,25,000
Conversion to animal flesh & bones	₹20,000	₹1,50,000
Controlling of soil erosion & soil fertility	₹2,50,000	₹5,00,000
Recycling of water and controlling humidity and air temperature	₹3,00,000	₹77,28,000
Sheltering of birds, squirrels & insects	₹2,50,000	₹64,85,000
Removal of SPM, CO ₂ , SO ₂ from air	₹5,00,000	₹2,01,25,000
Grand Total	₹15,70,000	₹3,55,13,000

SOURCE: REVALUATION OF SERVICES OF A TREE IN 2012, INDIAN BIOLOGIST

Thar Desert

❖ Context

According to a study conducted by central University of Rajasthan, Thar Desert is expanding fast with land degradation

❖ Key Highlights

- The study was undertaken as part of an **assessment** of the environmentally sensitive areas within the framework of the **UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)**.
- The **degradation of land** is posing a **threat to the desert ecology**, while **climate change has contributed to the spread of arid regions**.
- **Unchecked mining activities** have led to **erosion of Aravali Hills** which act as a 'natural green wall' or **ecotonal area** between the desert and the plains, the two ecosystems.
- Erosion of hills will not only lead to the **intensification of sandstorms** but also lead them to **travel as far as NCR**.
- **Over-exploitation of resources** had led to **reduction in vegetation cover** in the areas adjacent to the Thar desert, contributing to its **expansion** beyond four districts (Barmer, Jaisalmer, Bikaner and Jodhpur) in western Rajasthan. Other factors contributing towards it are **changes in the rainfall pattern, spread of sand dunes and unscientific plantation drives**.

❖ UNCCD

- It is known as **The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa (UNCCD)**. It is one of the three Rio Conventions - UNFCCC, CBD.
- It is the only convention **stemming from** a direct recommendation of the **Rio Conference's Agenda 21** and was adopted in Paris, France, on 17 June 1994 and entered into force in **December 1996**.
- It is the only **internationally legally binding** framework set up to address the problem of desertification.
- It is based on the principles of **participation, partnership and decentralization**—the backbone of Good Governance and Sustainable Development. It has 197 parties, making it near universal in reach.
- Its secretariat is located in Bonn, Germany

News in Between the Lines

Indian Desert Cat



❖ Context

- An **Indian desert cat has been spotted for the first time** in Madhya Pradesh's **Panna Tiger Reserve (PTR)**.
- Earlier, the presence of a desert cat was recorded in the state's **Nauradehi sanctuary**.

❖ Key Highlights

- The Indian Desert Cat is also known as the **Asiatic Wildcat** or the **Asian Steppe Wildcat**.
- This cat is **found in deserts of Gujarat, Rajasthan and also in Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra** and can survive without water.
- It **avoids vast deserts, dense forests and deep snow**.
- The **toes of the species have cushion-like hair** which help it balance the fluctuating desert temperatures.
- **Protection Status:**
 - **Wildlife protection Act's: Schedule-I.**
 - **IUCN Red List: Least Concern. CITES: Appendix-II**

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❖ Panna Tiger Reserve

- This is a prime tiger-land **Located in Vindhyan Hills in northern Madhya Pradesh** and was established in 1981
- It contains **fragile though dynamic dry deciduous forest** and extensive **plateaus and gorges**.
- **Ken river flows** through the reserve.
- The region is also **famous for Panna diamond mining**.
- **Ken-Betwa river interlinking project** will be located within the tiger reserve.

Visakhapatnam Harbour



❖ Context

- December 19, 1933 was the day when the **harbour was inaugurated 88 years ago**.
- The then **Viceroy Lord Willingdon**, had arrived to open the new harbour.
- Visakhapatnam was chosen for its **strategic location and geographical advantages**.

❖ Key Highlights

- The Port of Visakhapatnam is **one of the leading major ports** of India.
- It is **located almost midway between Kolkata on the North and Chennai towards the South on the East Coast**.
- The Port of Visakhapatnam is **notified as a Gateway port for the EXIM cargo of Nepal**.
- With a **capacity to handle more than 125 million tonnes per annum**, it is capable of handling **all types of cargoes** including iron ore, coal, crude oil, petroleum products, LPG, fertilizers, dry cargoes, liquid cargoes, and containers.
- The Port of Visakhapatnam is the **1st. Major Port to become self-sufficient** by generating the required electricity for its use.
- It is the **deepest port** of India.
- It handles the **export of iron ore to Japan**.
- It is a **natural harbour and protects the Monsoon spells** by a hill, named 'Dolphin Nose'.
- It is also famous for **building and repairing ships**.

Negamam Cotton Sari



❖ Context

- A GI tag application has set the spotlight on handloom **cotton sarees from villages around Negamam near Pollachi**, which are a practical balance of **softness and strength**

❖ Key Highlights

- The saree is **famous for its thickness**, which is on an average of 86 to 90 picks per inch (PPI), its **length, durability, contrasting colours and multicolour thread work of motifs, checks, designs, etc.** The border is woven with a rich thread work design as an extra weft.
- **Moisture-laden wind** from the Western Ghats also **adds up to the unique feature** of the Negamam Cotton Saree as the peak time for manufacturing this saree is from June to November.
- The main raw material used is the **80s combed cotton** to make the fabric thick making it perfect for any climate
- ❖ **About GI (Geographical Indications) Tags**
- A geographical indication (GI) is a sign used on products that have a **specific geographical origin and possess qualities or a reputation** that are due to that origin.
- This tag is valid for a period of **10 years** following which it **can be renewed**.
- The **Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999 (GI Act)** is a sui generis Act for the protection of GI in India.
- Geographical Indications protection is granted through the **TRIPS Agreement**.

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Gharials



❖ Context

➤ According to experts, Gharials reintroduced in Beas conservation reserve in Punjab are thriving and are expected to start breeding in next few years

❖ Key Highlights

➤ Gharials became **extinct in Beas river in 1960s**. While there is no documentation on the extinction of gharials from Beas, experts believe that **change in hydrology** due to construction of barrages, significantly **reduced water flow**, rapid **land use change of floodplains** and rampant **overfishing** were the reasons

➤ Since 2017, **94** gharials have been introduced by the Punjab government

❖ Gharials

➤ Derives their name from **ghara** (pot) because of the bulbous knob at the end of their snout.

➤ Historically, they were found in the river systems of India, Pakistan, Bangladesh & southern part of Bhutan and Nepal. But today it survives only in the **north Indian (Ramganga, Ganga, Son, Chambal, Girwa, Gandak, Mahanadi) and Nepal rivers**.

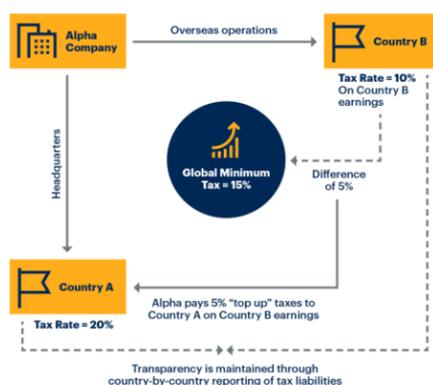
➤ Prefers **deep fast flowing rivers** but sometimes are also found in *jheels* and *kunds* at river bends and confluences.

➤ Protection Status:

- **Wildlife protection Act's: Schedule-I.**
- **IUCN Red List: Critically Endangered**
- **CITES: Appendix-I**

GloBE rules

Global Minimum Tax Illustration



❖ Context

➤ **OECD released Pillar - II model rules, Global Anti-Base Erosion (GloBE) Rules** for domestic implementation of 15% global minimum tax

❖ Key Highlights

➤ India is among 137 countries signatory to new global tax regime where Multinational Enterprise (MNE) will be subjected to **15% tax from 2023**

➤ The minimum tax will apply to **MNEs with revenue above Euro 750 MN** and is estimated to **generate around \$150 BN** in additional global tax revenue annually

➤ More specifically, the GloBE Rules provide for a **coordinated system of taxation** that imposes a top-up tax on profits arising in a jurisdiction whenever the effective tax rate, determined on a jurisdictional basis, is below the minimum rate.

All-India Quarterly Establishment Based Employment Survey (AQEES)



❖ Context

➤ The Government (Ministry of Labour and Employment) launched the All-India Quarterly Establishment Based Employment Survey (AQEES) in April, 2021.

❖ Key Highlights

➤ As per the result of the first round of Quarterly Employment Survey for the period **April to June 2021**, **employment increased to 3.08 crore** in the **nine selected sectors** of the economy against a total of 2.37 crores in these sectors taken collectively, as reported in the sixth Economic Census (2013-14) reflecting a growth rate of 29%.

➤ The **most impressive growth** of 152 percent has been recorded in the **IT/BPO sector**.

➤ As per annual **Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS)** reports, the details of the estimated **Unemployment Rate (UR)** for persons of **age 15 years and above on a usual status basis** in the country is **declining annually** (6 in 2017-18, 5.8 in 2018-19 and 4.8 in 2019-20).

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