



RACE IAS

Daily current affairs

26 April 2022

Anti-defection law:

Context:

Vice President Venkaiah Naidu recently said it is time for amending the anti-defection law to plug the loopholes.

Challenges:

- Despite a law in place, defection of legislators from one party to another is taking place as usual.
- The speakers, chairpersons and the courts are also dragging the anti-defection cases for years.
- There is no clarity in the law about the timeframe for the action of the House Chairperson or Speaker in the **anti-defection** cases.

What is anti defection law?

It is covered under the Tenth Schedule of the Indian Constitution:

- It specifies the circumstances under which changing of political parties by legislators invites action under the law.
- It was added to the Constitution by the 52nd Amendment Act, 1985.
- It includes situations in which an independent MLA, too, joins a party after the election.

The law covers the following scenarios with respect to shifting of political parties by an MP or an MLA. These include:

1. When a member elected on the ticket of a political party “voluntarily gives up” membership of such a party or votes in the House against the wishes of the party.

2. When a legislator who has won his or her seat as an independent candidate joins a political party after the election.

In the above two cases, the legislator loses the seat in the legislature on changing (or joining) a party.

1. Relates to nominated MPs: In their case, the law gives them six months to join a political party, after being nominated. If they join a party after such time, they stand to lose their seat in the House.

Matters related to disqualification:

- Under the anti-defection law, the power to decide the disqualification of an MP or MLA rests with the presiding officer of the legislature.
- The law does not specify a time frame in which such a decision has to be made.
- Last year, the Supreme Court observed that anti-defection cases should be decided by Speakers in three months' time.

However, Legislators may change their party without the risk of disqualification in certain circumstances. Exceptions:

1. The law allows a party to merge with or into another party provided that at least two-thirds of its legislators are in favour of the merger.
2. On being elected as the presiding officer of the House, if a member voluntarily gives up the membership of his party or rejoins it after he ceases to hold that office, he won't be disqualified.

Loopholes in the law:

- Those against say that voters elect individuals in the election and not parties and hence the Anti-Defection law is infructuous.
- In many instances, the Speaker (usually from the ruling party) has delayed deciding on the disqualification.
- The amendment does not recognise a 'split' in a legislature party and instead recognises a 'merger'.

Can the courts intervene?

Courts have, in certain cases, intervened in the workings of a legislature.

1. In 1992, a five-judge constitutional bench of the Supreme Court held that the anti-defection law proceedings before the Speaker are akin to a tribunal and, thus, can be placed under judicial review.
2. In January 2020, the Supreme Court asked Parliament to amend the Constitution to strip legislative assembly speakers of their exclusive power to decide whether legislators should be disqualified or not under the anti-defection law.
3. In March 2020, the Supreme Court removed Manipur minister Thounaojam Shyamkumar Singh, against whom disqualification petitions were pending before the speaker since 2017, from the state cabinet and restrained him “from entering the legislative assembly till further orders”.

Suggestions:

1. The Election Commission has suggested it should be the deciding authority in defection cases.
2. Others have argued that the President and Governors should hear defection petitions.
3. The Supreme Court has suggested that Parliament should set up an independent tribunal headed by a retired judge of the higher judiciary to decide defection cases swiftly and impartially.
4. Some commentators have said the law has failed and recommended its removal. Former Vice President Hamid Ansari has suggested that it applies only to save governments in no-confidence motions.

Sources: the Hindu.

Pradhan Mantri Jan-Aushadhi Yojana:

Context:

With a vision to provide quality medicines at an affordable rate for the common man especially the poor, Govt. has set a target to increase the number of **Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Kendras** (PMBJKs) to 10000 by March 2024.

Background:

Till 31.03.2022, the number of stores has increased to 8610. Under the PMBJP, all 739 districts of the country have been covered. New applications have been invited to cover 3579 blocks of these 406 districts.

*If you are taking medicines for Blood Pressure or heart care...
...Please check the prices at*

Pradhan Mantri Jan Aushadhi Kendra

A chain of medical stores initiated by the Government of India to make available **Quality Medicines** at affordable prices for all under Pradhan Mantri Jan Aushadhi Yojana (PMJAY)

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Amlodipine 5mg 10 Tablets Average Market Price ₹ 8.00 JAS Price ₹ 1.92	Atenolol 50mg 14 Tablets Average Market Price ₹ 16.00 JAS Price ₹ 3.58	Ramipril 5mg 10 Tablets Average Market Price ₹ 65.00 JAS Price ₹ 6.93	Losartan 25mg 10 Tablets Average Market Price ₹ 25.00 JAS Price ₹ 4.56	Metoprolol 50mg 10 Tablets Average Market Price ₹ 50.00 JAS Price ₹ 4.76	Telmisartan 40mg 10 Tablets Average Market Price ₹ 30.00 JAS Price ₹ 7.61	Atorvastatin 10mg 10 Tablets Average Market Price ₹ 25.00 JAS Price ₹ 4.76
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More than 500 quality medicines for Diabetes, Cardiac, Blood Pressure, Gastro, Vitamins, Antibiotics etc. available at Jan Aushadhi Kendra

If interested to open new Pradhan Mantri Jan Aushadhi Kendra, please visit our website: janaushadhi.gov.in or call us on +91-124-4556750/1800 180 8080 (Toll Free)

Department of Pharmaceuticals
Ministry of Chemicals & Fertilizers
Government of India
Shastri Bhawan, New Delhi-110001
Website: pharmaceuticals.gov.in

jan aushadhi
Quality Medicines at Affordable Prices for All

Bureau of Pharma PSUs of India (BPPi)
IDPL Corporate Office Complex,
Old Delhi-Gurgaon Road,
Dundahera, Gurgaon-122016 (Haryana)
Website: janaushadhi.gov.in

For more details, please contact PMJAY help line no. 1800 180 8080/+91-124-4556750 (10.00 am to 5.00 pm - Monday to Friday) or log on to janaushadhi.gov.in

About PMBJP:

It is a campaign launched by the Department of Pharmaceuticals of the Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers.

- It seeks to provide quality medicines at affordable prices to the masses through special kendra's known as Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Jan Aushadhi Kendra.
- Initially launched in 2008, the scheme was rechristened in 2015.

Key features of the scheme:

1. Ensure access to quality medicines.
2. Extend coverage of quality generic medicines so as to reduce the out of pocket expenditure on medicines and thereby redefine the unit cost of treatment per person.
3. Create awareness about generic medicines through education and publicity so that quality is not synonymous with only high price.
4. A public programme involving Government, PSUs, Private Sector, NGO, Societies, Co-operative Bodies and other Institutions.

5. Create demand for generic medicines by improving access to better healthcare through low treatment cost and easy availability wherever needed in all therapeutic categories.

Sources: PIB

Falklands Dispute:

Context:

“The Commission for Dialogue” with the United Kingdom on the Falkland Islands was recently inaugurated by India and Argentina.

- The commission seeks to settle the territorial dispute over the Islas Malvinas that are known as the Falkland Islands in the UK.

What's the issue?

- The British, in 1765, were the first to settle West Falkland, but they were driven off in 1770 by the Spanish.
- The British outpost on West Falkland was restored in 1771 after threat of war, but then the British withdrew from the island in 1774 for economic reasons, without renouncing their claim to the Falklands.
- Spain maintained a settlement on East Falkland (which it called Soledad Island) until 1811.
- In 1820 the Argentina Government, which had declared its independence from Spain in 1816, proclaimed its sovereignty over the Falklands.
- However, in 1841, a British civilian lieutenant governor was appointed for the Falklands.
- In February 1982, Argentina's military government invaded the Falklands. This act started the Falkland Islands War.
- The war ended with the surrender of the Argentine forces at Stanley to British troops who had forcibly reoccupied the islands.
- In a referendum held in March 2013, islanders voted nearly unanimously to remain a British overseas territory.

Despite wars and discussions at the United Nations, the issue of sovereignty remains a point of contention.

Location:

- Falkland islands are an overseas territory of the United Kingdom located to the southwest Atlantic Ocean at the southernmost point of South America.
- Positioned both in the southern and western hemispheres of the Earth.
- They are also called Malvinas Islands.



Overview

- Between Argentina and England
- Resulted from a long-standing dispute over the sovereignty of the Falkland Islands, South Georgia & Sandwich Islands
- Different claims to territories began in 1820
- 1965-1982: UN negotiations
- Conflict began on 2 April 1982, when Argentine forces invaded and occupied the Falkland Islands and South Georgia (claimed by England)
- Lasted 74 days and ended with the Argentine surrender on 14 June 1982 (islands were returned to England)
- Led to increased patriotism, fall of the military government in Argentina, success of Margaret Thatcher, and changing cultural perspectives.

Sources: the Hindu.

Panchayati Raj Ministry, UNDP sign pact on Sustainable Development Goals:

Context:

The Ministry of Panchayati Raj and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) have signed a joint statement of understanding on localisation of Sustainable Development Goals.

Need for understanding on localisation of SDGs:

- Panchayati Raj institutions (PRIs) have been a critical component of local self-governance across rural India.
- These institutions have achieved last-mile connectivity in execution of various schemes of different line departments/ministries. SDGs too can be achieved only if we actively involve PRIs.

- Also, about 65% of India's population lives in rural areas.

About UNDP:

- UNDP provides expert advice, training and grants support to developing countries, with an increasing emphasis on assistance to the least developed countries.
- It promotes technical and investment cooperation among nations.
- The UNDP Executive Board is made up of representatives from 36 countries around the world who serve on a rotating basis.
- It is funded entirely by voluntary contributions from member nations.
- The UNDP is considered an executive board within the UN General Assembly (UNGA).

Report:

The Human Development Report (HDR) is an annual report published by the Human Development Report Office of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

Sources: the Hindu.

Invasive species threatens wildlife habitats of Western Ghats:

Context:

Senna spectabilis is an invasive species found mostly in the forest areas of the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve (NBR).

- The dearth of effective steps to arrest the rampant growth of these invasive plants is a matter of serious concern to the conservation of wildlife habitats of the Western Ghats.

Concerns:

1. The invasive species has now spread through the most iconic wildlife habitats of the Western Ghats, destroying habitats of elephants, deer, gaur and tigers by pushing out native flora.
2. The allelopathic traits of the species prevent other plants from growing under it. Allelopathy is a biological phenomenon by which an organism

produces one or more biochemicals that influence the germination, growth, survival, and reproduction of other organisms.

3. This drastically affects primary productivity at the ground level. The forest floor is almost bare under the invasive species. Grasses and herbs get completely wiped out and herbivores are deprived of their forage.
4. The carrying capacity of forests to feed wildlife is drastically declining under the invasion, which accelerates man-animal conflict further.

Efforts to remove them:

The Kerala Forest Department attempted to remove the trees by uprooting, girdling, cutting, chopping the tree branches, and even testing the application of chemicals. However, all the efforts were in vain. Instead, multiple coppice shoots started growing from each cut tree stump. The situation is similar in the Karnataka and Tamil Nadu.

What are invasive species?

Invasive alien species are plants, animals, pathogens and other organisms that are non-native to an ecosystem, and which may cause economic or environmental harm or adversely affect human health.

- In particular, they impact adversely upon biodiversity, including decline or elimination of native species - through competition, predation, or transmission of pathogens - and the disruption of local ecosystems and ecosystem functions.

The impacts of invasive species include:

1. Reduced biodiversity.
2. Decreased availability and quality of key natural resources.
3. Water shortages.
4. Increased frequency of wildfires and flooding.
5. Pollution caused by overuse of chemicals to control infestations.

Efforts in this regard:

1. Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) recognize that there is an urgent need to address the impact of invasive species.
2. Aichi Biodiversity Target 9 and one clause of UN Sustainable Development Goal 15 - Life on Land specifically address the issue.

3. The IUCN SSC Invasive Species Specialist Group (ISSG) aim to reduce threats to ecosystems and their native species by increasing awareness of ways to prevent, control or eradicate IAS.
4. IUCN has developed knowledge platforms:
5. The Global Invasive Species Database (GISD) and the Global Register of Introduced and Invasive Species (GRIIS).

Sources: the Hindu.

Arunachal Pradesh - Assam border dispute:

Context:

Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu and his Assam counterpart Himanta Biswa Sarma have decided to form district-level committees for settling their inter-state boundary disputes.

- Recently, the Union government gave the seal of approval to an agreement to partially resolve the disputed sectors on the Assam-Meghalaya border.

Genesis of Assam - Arunachal Pradesh border dispute:

- Assam has had boundary disputes with all the north-eastern States that were carved out of it.
- Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram were separated from Assam as Union Territories in 1972 and as States in 1987.
- None of the new States accepted the “constitutional boundary” that they said was dictated by the partisan administration of undivided Assam without consulting the tribal stakeholders.
- The issue with Arunachal Pradesh has more to do with a 1951 report prepared by a sub-committee headed by Assam’s first Chief Minister, Gopinath Bordoloi.

The dispute:

Arunachal Pradesh and Assam have disputes at about 1,200 points along their 804 km boundary.

Efforts to resolve the dispute:

The apex court appointed a local boundary commission in 2006 headed by one of its retired judges.

- In its September 2014 report, this commission recommended that Arunachal Pradesh should get back some of the areas transferred in 1951 besides advising both the States to find a middle path through discussions. This did not work out.

Sources: the Hindu.

India Suspends Tourist Visas For Chinese Citizens:

India has suspended tourist visas issued to Chinese nationals.

- The move appeared to be a response to China's move which is preventing 22,000 Indian students enrolled in Chinese universities from going back to China to resume their studies.
- These students had to leave their studies in China and come to India when the COVID-19 pandemic began in the beginning of 2020.

What are tourist visas?

Tourist Visa is issued to visit India for tourism purposes. The visa is non-extendable and non-convertible. Change of purpose is not allowed.

Urja Pravaha:

- Indian Coast Guard Inducts New Vessel 'Urja Pravaha'.
- It was inducted at Gujarat's Bharuch.

Lata Deenanath Mangeshkar Award:

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is the first recipient of the Lata Deenanath Mangeshkar Award.

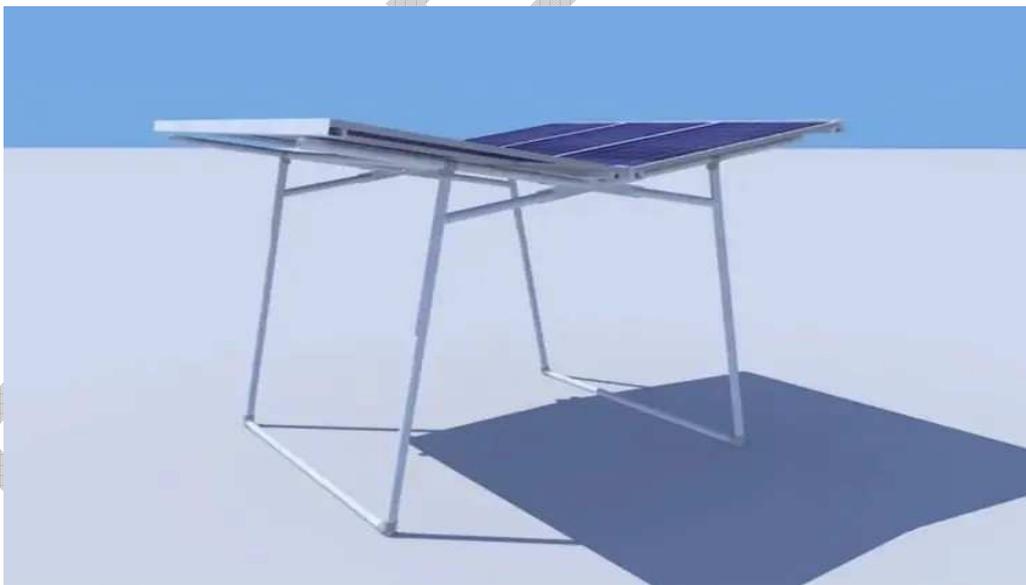
- Eligibility: The Lata Deenanath Mangeshkar Puraskar will be given every year to an individual who has made "path-breaking, spectacular and exemplary" contribution to the nation, its people and society.
- Master Deenanath Mangeshkar is the singing legend's father.

Twitter's new policy on climate change denial ads:

- Social media giant Twitter has announced that it will prohibit misleading advertisements on climate change.
- By misleading, Twitter means ads that “contradict” the scientific consensus on climate change.
- It is an attempt to curb climate change disinformation campaigns on its network.

Gujarat Gets India's First Portable Solar Rooftop System:

- The first portable solar rooftop system has now been installed in Gandhinagar, Gujarat.
- The new 10 PV Port system is designed to be highly cost-effective, requires low maintenance, and can be installed by a single person.

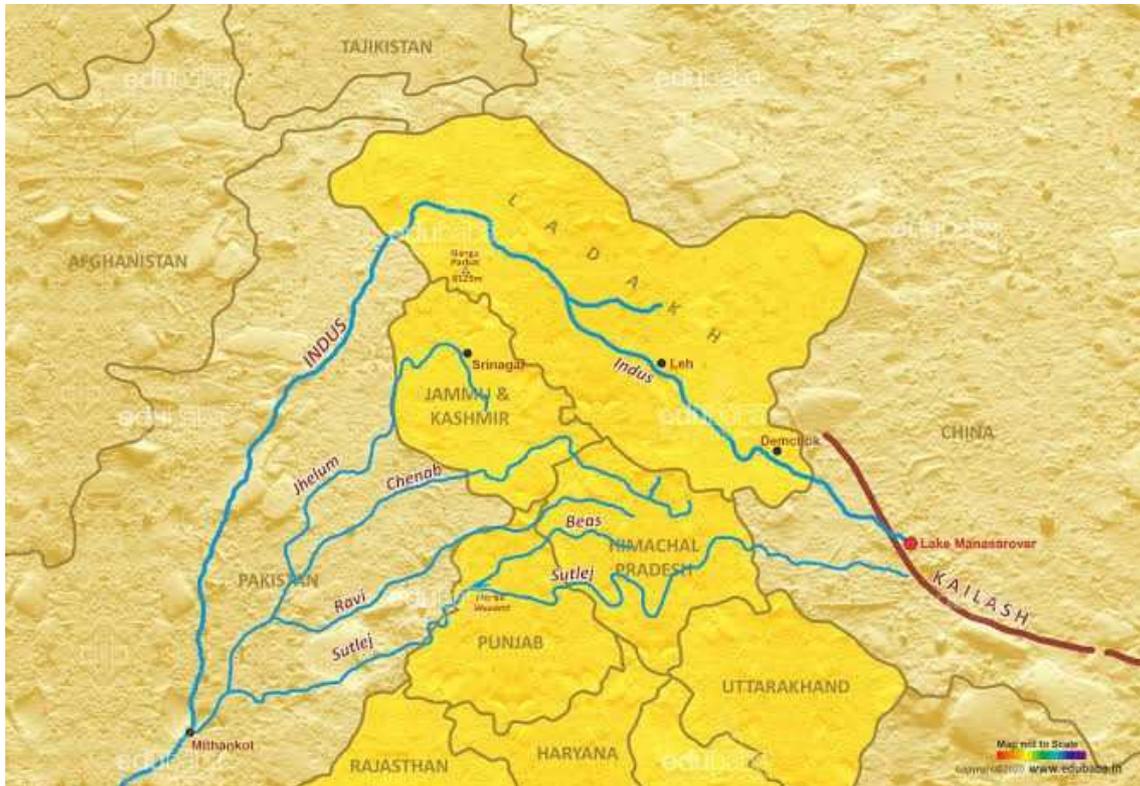


Ratle and Kwar Power Projects:

- The Prime Minister recently laid the foundation stone of 850 MW Ratle Power Project and 540 MW Kwar Hydro Project in J&K.
- These dams will be constructed on the Chenab river in Kishtwar District.

Banihal-Qazigund Road Tunnel:

- It is located in Jammu and Kashmir.
- The 8.45 Km long tunnel will reduce the road distance between Banihal and Qazigund by 16 km, and reduce journey time by around one and a half hours.



National Panchayati Raj day:

- Observed on 24th April every Year.
- The first National Panchayati Raj Day was celebrated in 2010.
- It marks a defining moment in the history of decentralisation of power, with the institutionalisation of Panchayati Raj, through the Constitution (73rd Amendment) Act, 1992 which came into force with effect from 24th April 1993.

Panchayati Raj in India:

- After the Constitution came into force, Article 40 made a mention of panchayats and Article 246 empowered the state legislature to legislate with respect to any subject relating to local self-government.

Every year, the Ministry of Panchayati Raj awards the best performing Panchayats/States/UTs. These are conferred under various categories namely:

1. Deen Dayal Upadhyay Panchayat Sashaktikaran Puraskar (DDUPSP).
2. Nanaji Deshmukh Rashtriya Gaurav Gram Sabha Puraskar (NDRGGSP).
3. Child-friendly Gram Panchayat Award (CFGPA).
4. Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPDP) Award.
5. e-Panchayat Puraskar (given to States/UTs only).

Balwant Rai Committee:

The establishment of the Panchayati Raj System in the country was recommended by the Balwant Rai Committee.

Household consumer spending survey:

The All-India Household Consumer Expenditure Survey is usually conducted by the National Statistical Office (NSO) every five years.

- It is designed to collect information on the consumption spending patterns of households across the country, both urban and rural.
- The data gathered in this exercise reveals the average expenditure on goods (food and non-food) and services.
- It is set to resume this year after a prolonged break.
- It is used to arrive at estimates of poverty levels in different parts of the country and to review economic indicators like the Gross Domestic Product (GDP).
- India hasn't had any official estimates on per capita household spending since 2011-12.

About NSO:

- The government has formed an overarching body NSO by merging the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO), Computer Centre and Central Statistical Office (CSO).
- NSO was first envisaged by Rangarajan Commission to implement and maintain statistical standards and coordinate statistical activities of Central and State agencies as laid down by the National Statistical Commission (NSC).
- Parent Ministry: It is the statistical wing of the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI).

- It Compiles and releases the Index of Industrial Production (IIP) every month in the form of 'quick estimates' and conducts the Annual Survey of Industries (ASI).

Palli in Jammu becomes India's first carbon-neutral panchayat:

Palli village in Jammu's Samba district has become the country's first panchayat to become carbon neutral, fully powered by solar energy and with all its records digitised and saturation of benefits of all the Central schemes.

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