

Current Affairs Webinar

11/07/18 to 17/07/18

1. Eat Right Movement

Context: Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has unveiled 'The Eat Right Movement' with a view to get the industry on board for implementation of draft food labelling regulation.

Eat Right Movement:

- The movement aims to cut down salt/sugar and oil consumption by 30% in three years.
- It is built on two broad pillars of 'Eat Healthy' and 'Eat Safe'.
- It also aims to engage and enable citizens to improve their health and well-being by making the right food choices.

About FSSAI:

- The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has been established under **Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006** which consolidates various acts & orders that have hitherto handled food related issues in various Ministries and Departments.
- It was created for laying down science based standards for articles of food and to regulate their manufacture, storage, distribution, sale and import to ensure availability of safe and wholesome food for human consumption.
- **Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India is the Administrative Ministry** for the implementation of FSSAI.
- **Composition:** The **Chairperson and Chief Executive Officer** of Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) are appointed by Government of India. The **Chairperson is in the rank of Secretary** to Government of India.

Food Safety and Standards (Labelling and Display) Regulations 2018:

- The proposed regulations will prescribe the labelling requirements of pre-packaged foods and display of essential information on premises where food is manufactured, processed, served and stored.
- The draft Regulation also states that **HFSS (high in fat, sugar or salt) food products shall not be advertised to children** in any form.
- It also introduces labelling of genetically modified (GM) food.

2. Mahatma Gandhi International Sanitation Convention

Context:

- In a bid to **eliminate the need for manual scavenging**, the **Centre has launched a challenge** asking innovators, NGOs, research institutions, companies and cities to **propose technology and business solutions to clean urban sewers and septic tanks without human entry**.
- The challenge will be part of **the Mahatma Gandhi International Sanitation Convention** to be held on **October 18** this year.
- The objectives are to identify technological and business process innovations, endorse viable business models suitable for cities of different sizes and geographies, and pilot test shortlisted technologies and solutions in select project cities and bridge the gap between innovators or manufacturers and beneficiaries such as urban local bodies and citizens.

Mahatma Gandhi International Sanitation Convention:

- It will be **launched at the 150th birth anniversary celebrations of Mahatma Gandhi**. It will be a **first-of-its-kind International Sanitation Convention**.
- Ministers from over 70 countries will be invited and taken on a **'Gandhi Trail' in Gujarat**.
- The government will use the occasion to **"showcase its performance" and "success story" in the Swachh Bharat programme** in the past four years, which was launched on October 2, 2014, and have a face-to-face dialogue with the world leaders to **share their experiences on sanitation programmes**.

3. Target Olympic Podium Scheme

Context: The **Mission Olympic Cell** has **included the entire Indian hockey team** in the Target Olympic Podium Scheme, rewarding the players for their silver medal-winning performance at the Champions Trophy.

Significance of the move:

Athletes from different sports have been included in Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOPS) individually but it is a **first instance that an entire team has been made beneficiary of the financial assistance scheme**.

Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOPS):

- It was launched by **Ministry of Sports within the ambit of National Sports Development Fund (NSDF)**.
- It aims at **identifying and supporting potential medal prospects** for upcoming Olympic Games.
- It will provide selected sportspersons customized training at institutes having world class facilities and also other necessary support is being provided to the elite athletes. It will also provide a benchmark for selection of athletes on par with international standards.

- Under it, Sports Authority of India (SAI) and federations, which are members of Mission Olympic Cell (MOC), will be nodal agencies for disbursement of fund. They will make **payments directly to beneficiary person and institution concerned on behalf of athletes.**

Key Points:

- **Abhinav Bindra Committee** was constituted to identify and support potential **medal prospects for 2020 and 2024 Olympic Games** under the scheme.
- The **Mission Olympic Cell** is a dedicated body created to assist the athletes who are selected under the TOP Scheme. The MOC is under the Chairmanship of the Director General, Sports Authority (DG, SAI). The idea of the MOC is to debate, discuss and decide the processes and methods so that the athlete receives best assistance. The MOC also focuses on selection, exclusion and retention of athletes, coaches, training institutes that can receive TOPS assistance.

4. Telecom Commission approves net neutrality

Context:

- Telecom Commission has approved the recommendations made by the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) on net neutrality.
- The move **aims to ensure that all web traffic is treated fairly, and that internet service providers won't block, throttle, or favour any content or services (with a few reasonable exceptions).**

The rules:

- As per the net neutrality rules in India, **mobile operators, internet providers and social-media and internet companies cannot engage in, or seek, preferential treatment** as there will now be **prohibition on any kind of interference in the treatment of content, including practices like blocking, degrading, slowing down or granting differential speeds** or treatment to any content.
- Any efforts to create **zero-rated platforms** have now been blocked. Zero-rated platforms, which had earlier been tried (by companies such as Airtel and Facebook) but barred, **offer only a certain category of services and websites as free, thus creating paid layers and stifling competition and innovation.**
- Under net neutrality, **online access is unrestricted and non-discriminatory. The only exceptions** are new and emerging services such as **autonomous driving, tele-medicine or remote-diagnostic services, which may require prioritised internet lanes and faster-than-normal speeds.**
- A **committee will look into the possible exceptions for "critical services"** which will also be defined keeping in view the basic tenets of net neutrality.

Significance of the move:

- It's a **huge win for those who favour free and fair internet access** in the country. It also **prevents programs like Facebook's Free Basics, which granted free access to mobile sites on the zero-rated platform that were allowed in by the company.**
- The government's decision is being seen as a **progressive step as it will not allow any mobile operator, internet service provider or online/social media giant to create monopolies** on the internet by getting specialized treatment by paying for it. The **rules of equal access** will be maintained and **no company can buy special treatment for itself or its services.**

Background:

Net neutrality has become a **contentious issue across the world as social media giants and mobile and internet providers seek greater control on delivery of content and services** to customers. It is feared that handing out greater and unchecked control to them **will lead to monopolies and situations of paid prioritisation, both of which will stifle the start-up culture and new innovations.**

Way ahead:

- As the internet economy gains in size and influence across the world, there have been increasing concerns with relation to the **potential for discriminatory treatment of internet traffic by the entities that control access to the internet.**
- All those who believe in a fair marketplace should welcome the reiteration that the principles of net neutrality will be upheld in India. This will ensure that those who control the pipes through which data flows – between providers and consumers of content – cannot favour some providers over others.
- The government now needs to ensure there are **no loopholes** that could result in an uneven playing field – **for instance, companies that own both broadband and produce content should not be allowed to distribute their content free, by not charging for the data.** Conversely, other content providers should have the same free access to distribution.

5. UNSC Resolution 2427 adopted

Context: The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) has adopted Resolution 2427. The resolution has won **unanimous approval of the 15 members** of the council.

What is Resolution 2427 all about?

The resolution is **aimed at further crystalizing the protection of children in armed conflicts, including by combating their recruitment by non-State armed groups and treating formerly recruited children primarily as victims.**

Highlights of the resolution:

- It **strongly condemns the recruitment and use of children by parties to armed conflict as well as their re-recruitment, killing and maiming, rape and other forms of sexual violence, and abductions.**

- It also **condemns attacks against schools and hospitals** and the denial of humanitarian access by parties to armed conflict and all other **violations of international law committed against children in situations of armed conflict**.
- It **demands that all relevant parties immediately put an end to such practices and take special measures to protect children**.
- It also **emphasizes the responsibility of all states** to put an end to impunity and to **investigate and prosecute those responsible for genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and other egregious crimes perpetrated against children**.
- The resolution reiterates the Security Council's readiness to adopt targeted and graduated measures against persistent perpetrators of violations and abuses committed against children.
- It calls on member states and the United Nations to **mainstream child protection into all relevant activities in conflict prevention, conflict and post-conflict situations with the aim of sustaining peace and preventing conflict**.

Background:

Over 21,000 cases of grave violations of children's rights in armed conflict have been verified by the United Nations for 2017, a drastic increase from the previous year with 15,500 violations, according to an annual report of the UN secretary-general on children and armed conflict that was released last week. Among the violations in 2017, some 15,000 were perpetrated by non-state armed groups and about 6,000 were committed by government forces, according to the report.

Way ahead:

- There is a need to **ensure that children continue to have access to basic services** during the conflict and post-conflict periods, including **education and health care**. In this regard, countries across the world, UN bodies and civil society need to **take specifically into account girls' equal access to education**.
- There is need for long-term and sustainable funding for **mental health and psychosocial programming in humanitarian contexts**. There is also need to ensure that all affected children receive timely and sufficient support.

6. European Bank for Reconstruction & Development

Context:

- **India has joined the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) as the 69th shareholder, paving the way for more joint investment with Indian companies across the EBRD's regions.**
- The **EBRD's board of governors**, which represents all existing shareholders, **voted unanimously in favour** of the country's application in March 2018.



Position of India:

- India takes a shareholding in the EBRD but will not be a recipient of EBRD financing.
- But it may benefit indirectly through EBRD projects or if Indian companies invest alongside the bank.

How will this membership help India?

- Membership of EBRD would **enhance India's international profile and promote its economic interests**. It will also **give access to EBRD's Countries of Operation and sector knowledge**.
- **India's investment opportunities would get a boost**. It would increase the scope of cooperation between India and EBRD through **co-financing opportunities in manufacturing, services, Information Technology, and Energy**.
- EBRD's **core operations pertain to private sector development** in their countries of operation. The membership **would help India leverage the technical assistance and sectoral knowledge of the bank for the benefit of development of private sector**.
- This would contribute to an **improved investment climate in the country**. The membership of EBRD would **enhance the competitive strength of the Indian firms**, and provide an enhanced access to international markets in terms of business opportunities, procurement activities, consultancy assignments etc.
- This would **open up new vistas for Indian professionals on the one hand, and give a fillip to Indian exports on the other**. Increased economic activities would have the employment generating potential. It would also **enable Indian nationals to get employment opportunities in the Bank**.

About EBRD:

- The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) is **an international financial institution that supports projects in over 30 countries, from Eastern Europe to central Asia and the southern and eastern Mediterranean**.
- **Investing primarily in private sector clients whose needs cannot be fully met by the market**, the EBRD **promotes entrepreneurship** and fosters transition towards **open and democratic market economies**.

Mandate of EBRD:

- The mandate of the EBRD stipulates that it **must only work in countries that are committed to democratic principles**.
- **Respect for the environment** is part of the strong corporate governance attached to all EBRD investments.

What support does the EBRD provide in the countries where it works?

- The EBRD provides **project financing for banks, industries and businesses, both new ventures and investments in existing companies**.
- It also works with **publicly owned companies, to support privatisation, restructuring state-owned firms and improving municipal services**.



- It uses close relationship with governments in the region to **promote policies that will bolster the business environment.**

Who owns the EBRD?

- The EBRD is **owned by 69 countries** and two intergovernmental institutions: **the European Union and the European Investment Bank (EIB).**
- It is headquartered in **London.**

How is the EBRD governed?

The powers of the EBRD are vested in the **Board of Governors** to which **each member appoints a governor, generally the minister of finance.** The Board of Governors delegates most powers to the **Board of Directors, which is responsible for the EBRD's strategic direction.** The President is elected by the Board of Governors and is the legal representative of the EBRD. Under the guidance of the Board of Directors, the President manages the EBRD's work.

7. Global Innovation Index

Context:

- **Global Innovation Index 2018 has placed India at the 57th position among 126 countries.**
- **GII is jointly released by Cornell University, INSEAD and World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO).**
- **GII ranks 126 economies based on 80 indicators.**

GII 2018:

- **The GII 2018 marks the 11th edition of the GII,** and the beginning of its second decade providing data and insights gathered from tracking innovation across the globe.
- **This year's edition is dedicated to the theme of Energizing the World with Innovation.** It analyses the energy innovation landscape of the next decade and **identifies possible breakthroughs in fields such as energy production, storage, distribution, and consumption.**
- It also **looks at how breakthrough innovation occurs at the grassroots level** and describes how small-scale renewable systems are on the rise.

Performance of India:

- This year, **India has moved up 3 places** as compared to 60th rank in GII 2017 and emerged as **top-ranked economy in Central and South Asia.** It has **consistently moving up on global ranking from 81st in 2015 to 57th this year.**
- India is a **top performer in the lower middle income group,** where it is ranked at fifth position. It is the most innovative country in its region of central and southern Asia.
- In the indicators that capture the **quality of innovation inputs and outputs, India is ranked second after China in the lower and upper middle income group combined.**
- However, **India has fared badly on indicators such as ease of starting business, political stability and safety, overall education and environmental performance.**

Other countries:

- **Switzerland is at the top.** Since 2011, Switzerland has been ranked at the top every year.
- This year, **Netherlands follows at second** place and **Sweden at third**. The US drops down to sixth from fourth last year.
- **Four of the top five innovation clusters are in Asia, based on patents and publishing. San Francisco is the only innovation cluster outside Asia among the top five.**
- Tokyo is at the top, and two of the top five clusters are in China.
- China, at 17, broke into the world's top 20 most-innovative economies.
- On a new indicator – mobile-app creation – Cyprus, Finland and Lithuania emerged as global leaders in development of mobile apps relative to GDP.

8. Section 497 of the IPC

Context: Opposing a plea which called for the Section 497 of the IPC to be scrapped, the **Centre recently told the Supreme Court that adultery must remain a punishable offence to protect the sanctity of marriage.**

What is Section 497?

Section 497 of the 158-year-old IPC says, *"Whoever has sexual intercourse with a person who is and whom he knows or has reason to believe to be the wife of another man, without the consent or connivance of that man, such sexual intercourse not amounting to the offence of rape, is guilty of the offence of adultery, and shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to five years, or with fine, or with both. In such case the wife shall not be punishable as an abettor."*

Government's defence of Section 497:

- The provisions of law, under challenge in the present writ, have been specifically created by the legislature in its wisdom, to **protect and safeguard the sanctity of marriage**, keeping in mind the **unique structure and culture of the Indian society**.
- Striking down Section 497 which **provides for punishment only to a man for having extra-marital sexual ties with the wife of another man**, will destroy the **institution of marriage**.
- Striking down section 497 of IPC and Section 198(2) of the CrPC will prove to be detrimental to the **intrinsic Indian ethos** which gives paramount importance to the institution and sanctity of marriage.
- The **apex court** had earlier on three separate occasions, in **1954, 1985 and 1988, upheld the constitutionality of Section 497**.

The plea:

- A plea has been filed in the Supreme Court which called for the Section 497 of the IPC to be scrapped, contending it **does not treat men and women equally**. It contended that Section 497 was **"prima facie unconstitutional on the grounds that it discriminates against men and violates Article 14, 15 and 21 of the Constitution"**.



- The plea also said the provision also **indirectly discriminated against women** by holding an **erroneous presumption that they are the property of men**.
- The petitioner had also challenged **Section 198(2) of CrPC, which deals with the prosecution for offences against marriages**.

Way ahead:

- **Many countries have decriminalised adultery**. IPC is the creation of British when they ruled over India for nearly 200 years and it is they who inserted Section 497 as a penal offence. What is more surprising is that **Britain itself has decriminalised adultery** and does not treat it as a criminal offence!
- It is **high time that this law is revisited even in India and amended to meet the present circumstances. Either both of them should be punishable or no one**. It cannot be anybody's case that the man alone should be sent behind bars for committing adultery while the woman be held just not liable at all and allowed to escape unpunished and unchecked.
- **Justice Malimath Committee** report on reforms in the criminal justice system had **suggested making section 497 gender-neutral**.

9. Bansagar canal project

Context: Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently inaugurated the Bansagar canal project in **Mirzapur in Uttar Pradesh**.

Bansagar canal project:

- Bansagar Dam project is a **joint venture between Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar**.
- Bansagar Dam is a **multipurpose river Valley Project on Son River** situated in the **Ganga Basin in Madhya Pradesh**.
- The total canal network under it is 171 kms long.
- Canals under this project will bring waters from Shahdol district in Madhya Pradesh for Adwa Barrage, Meza Dam and Jirga reservoir.
- The project **aims to provide a big boost to irrigation** in the region. It promises to be greatly beneficial for the farmers of Mirzapur and Allahabad districts of Uttar Pradesh.
- As per the projections, the project will benefit 1 lakh 70 thousand farmers of Mirzapur and Allahabad districts.

About Son River:

- **Son River of central India is the second largest of the Ganges's southern tributaries after Yamuna River**.
- The Son **originates near Amarkantak in Madhya Pradesh** just east of the headwater of the Narmada River, and **flows north-northwest through Madhya Pradesh state before turning sharply eastward where it encounters the southwest-northeast-Kaimur Range**.
- Son is an extension of the Narmada Valley, and the Kaimur Range an extension of the Vindhya Range.

10.SC lashes out at Centre on Petcoke and pollution

- The Supreme Court's Green Bench of Justices Madan B. Lokur and Deepak Gupta made clear to the government that the people of this country are more important than anything while hearing the **issue of ban on import of petcoke**.

Petcoke

- Petcoke is a **toxic fuel used in hazardous industries**.
- Petroleum coke or petcoke is one of the many consumer products produced during oil refining.
- During oil refining, the crude oil is first processed into various products such as gasoline, diesel, jet fuel, lubricating oils and waxes.
- After all these products have been created, a **residual crude** is further undergoes additional processing called "coking" to produce various fuels including pet coke. Thus **Petcoke is the last by-product of oil refining**.
- Pet coke is used as a source of energy and carbon for various industrial applications.

Hazards of Pet Coke

- Health and environment concerns are regarding the **Higher Sulphur content** in petcoke
 - Pet coke is used as a **substitute for coal** and has **higher heat content than coal**. Thus, less pet coke is required in comparison to coal for same industrial process.
 - Since less pet coke is able to replace an amount of coal; **pet coke is responsible for less CO2 emission in comparison to coal**.
 - Further, **emission of NOx depends on the technology used** in the industrial process.
- However, **Pet coke has more sulphur content than coal**. The largest use of pet coke is in **cement industry** where 90% sulphur compounds are absorbed in clinker.
- Pet coke is extremely polluting because of its higher sulphur content and because pollution is transferred from one product (coal) to another (pet coke).

Court Observations

- The court has been **urging the government since December 2017** to move forward towards a **nationwide ban on the use of petcoke** and furnace oil to power up industries, in a bid to fight pollution.
- The court had by then, in **October last year, already ordered a ban on the industrial use of petcoke and furnace oil in Uttar Pradesh, Haryana and Rajasthan**.
- The ban on use came after an EPCA Report, including the ban on sale, distribution and use of furnace oil and petcoke in the NCR. Their **use is already prohibited in Delhi**.
- Pursuant to the Supreme Court ban, both the **Environment Ministry and the Central Pollution Control Board had brought into immediate effect a prohibition on the use of petcoke and furnace oil by any industry, operation or processes within the States of Uttar Pradesh, Haryana and Rajasthan until further orders**.
- The court had even highlighted how **petcoke is being imported from countries like the United States and China, which have already stopped using them** after due consideration of its harmful effects on human beings and environment.