

26 June 2019: PIB Summary & Analysis

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Space Policy

Context

- Currently a 'Space Activities Bill' is being processed, which is under pre-legislative consultations.

UN Treaties

- The obligations under these treaties, such as international responsibility for national activities in outer space and liability for damages caused by its space activities and space objects are to be implemented through national/domestic legislations.
- The current Bill will enable the formulation of necessary Rules under the Space Activities Act, to deal with damages under the liability provisions and mode of securing financial guarantee for compensating the damages.

Space activities of non-governmental sector

- Consequent to enactment of Space Activities Act, space activities of non-governmental sector in India would be authorized through a licence issued by the Government on certain terms and conditions.
- It would address the liability issues arising from their space activities, in a suitable/ rational manner, at par with international practices.

Indigenous GPS

Context

- India's own regional navigation satellite system named as "Navigation with Indian Constellation (NavIC)" is established by ISRO and is functional.

About NavIC

- ISRO has completed all the necessary preparations with regard to establishment of Space Segment (currently Eight IRNSS satellites are in orbit) and Ground Segment (spread across India).
- The Seven satellites in the system are providing Positioning, Navigation and Timing (PNT) services and one satellite (IRNSS-1A) is providing messaging services.

Significance

- The potential of this indigenous system is being demonstrated in various application sectors viz. vehicle tracking system, mobiles, timing & power synchronization, fisheries, surveying etc.
- For example, all commercial vehicles registered from 1st April 2019 onwards are mandated to have vehicle trackers, which are also NavIC-enabled.
- Through the provision of these services, the dependence on the American-owned GPS could be obviated.

Thorium-Based Nuclear Reactors

Context

- Department of Atomic Energy (DAE) has planned the use of large deposits of Thorium available in the country as a long-term option.
- A three-stage nuclear power programme has been chalked out to use Thorium as a viable and sustainable option, right at the inception of India's nuclear power programme.

Three stage nuclear power programme

1. The programme aims to multiply the domestically available fissile resource through the use of natural Uranium in Pressurised Heavy Water Reactors

2. Followed by use of Plutonium obtained from the spent fuel of Pressurised Heavy Water Reactors in Fast Breeder Reactors.
3. Large scale use of Thorium will subsequently follow making use of the Uranium-233 that will be bred in Reactors.

Significance of the program

- The utilisation of Thorium, as a practically inexhaustible energy source, has been contemplated during the third stage of the Indian Nuclear Programme.
- As is the case with generation of electricity from Uranium, there will be no emission of green house gases from Thorium also and therefore, it will be a clean source of energy.

Challenges of using Thorium

- It is not possible to build a nuclear reactor using Thorium (Thorium-232) alone due to its physics characteristics.
- Thorium has to be converted to Uranium-233 in a reactor before it can be used as fuel.
- Commercial utilisation of Thorium, on a significant scale can begin only when abundant supplies of either Uranium-233 or Plutonium resources are available.
- Accordingly, the large scale introduction and utilization of Thorium in the programme has been contemplated after an adequate inventory of Plutonium becomes available from our Fast Breeder Reactors (FBRs), comprising the second stage of Indian nuclear power programme.
- In preparation for the utilisation of Thorium in Third Stage of India's Nuclear Power Programme, efforts towards technology development and demonstration are made now so that a mature technology for Thorium utilisation is available in time.

Relaxation of FDI Norms

Context

Review of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) policy is an ongoing process and changes are made in the FDI policy regime, from time to time, to ensure that India remains an attractive investment destination.

FDI Policy

FDI in various sectors is allowed in a calibrated manner after having intensive consultations with stakeholders including concerned Ministries and Departments, State Governments, apex industry chambers, associations and other organizations taking into consideration their views and comments.

FDI policy on various sectors, indicating therein sector-wise FDI limits is, provided in the 'Consolidated FDI Policy Circular

While FDI policy lays down an enabling framework for attracting foreign investment, Ministry of Home Affairs has laid down detailed guidelines for assessment of proposals from national security point of view.

In order to boost economic growth without compromising the security of the country, proposals are evaluated on the basis of their potential threat to nation's unity, territorial integrity and sovereignty.

Bilateral trade between India and US

Context

- The bilateral trade in goods and services registered a growth of 14.5% in the year 2018 with the US.
- The bilateral trade in goods registered a growth of 22.4% (DGCIS figure) and bilateral trade in services registered 9.3% (US Census Bureau) in 2018.

Analysis of trends in trade

- India exported goods to U.S. under the GSP programme during the calendar year 2018, which contributed 12.1% of India's total export to the US in the year.
- The impact will vary across products, depending on the individual product level concessions constituting the average duty concession of 3.8% on India's exports to the US in 2018 availing GSP benefits, and other factors specific to each product.
- The Minister of Commerce and Industry of India and the US Commerce Secretary recently held a bilateral meeting, issues covered various areas of mutual concern including a general consensus on taking the trade relationship to a higher level.
- Trade related issues are a part of any ongoing economic relationship, and will continue to be discussed and addressed as a part of the regular bilateral trade engagement between India and the US.

India's Global Trade

Context

- India's share in global trade was 2.1% for exports and 2.6% for imports in 2017
- Exports have been growing on a regular basis since 2016-17 for almost three years and total exports reached a new peak of more than half a trillion dollars, for the first time in 2018-19.

Steps taken by government to improve exports

- A new Foreign Trade Policy (FTP) 2015-20 was launched
 - The policy, inter alia, rationalised the earlier export promotion schemes and introduced two new schemes: one for Merchandise Exports for improving export of goods and Service exports.
- The Mid-term Review of the FTP 2015-20 was undertaken
- A new Logistics Division was created in the Department of Commerce to co-ordinate integrated

development of the logistics sector.

- Various measures for improving ease of doing business were taken. India's rank in World Bank 'Ease of doing business' ranking improved from 142 in 2014 to 77 in 2018 with the rank in 'trading across borders' moving up from 122 to 80.
- A new scheme called Trade Infrastructure for Export Scheme (TIES) was launched
- A comprehensive Agriculture Export Policy was launched, with an aim to double farmers' income by 2022
- A new scheme called Transport and Marketing Assistance (TMA) scheme has been launched for mitigating disadvantage of higher cost of transportation for export of specified agriculture products.
- A new scheme called Scheme for Rebate of State and Central Taxes and Levies (RoSCTL) covering export of garments and made-ups providing refund of duties/taxes at higher rates.

Challenges faced by exporters

- Technical and non-technical barriers to trade such as Sanitary and Phyto-Sanitary (SPS) standards imposed on agricultural items and quality standards on manufactured goods.
- Tariff advantages to the exporters of competing countries in key export markets due to trade agreements between their countries and destination countries/regions.
- Higher logistics and financing costs for Indian exporters.

Warship under Make in India

Context

The Government has taken initiatives in construction of warship under the "Make in India".

Steps taken by government

- Strengthening infrastructure of DPSU shipyards.
- Adoption of modular construction technologies to bring down construction period of warships.
- Policy intervention for participation of private shipyards in Naval projects.
- Policy intervention for promoting indigenisation of imported equipment for warships.
- Promoting Artificial Intelligence in warship construction activities.

Online Abuse and Stalking of Women

Context

- Incidents of misuse of social media to commit cyber crimes including online abuse and stalking of women are reported. “Police” and “Public Order” are State subjects under the Seventh Schedule to the Constitution of India.
- Ministry of Home Affairs is implementing a scheme namely Cyber Crime Prevention against Women and Children (CCPWC)

About the scheme

- Under the scheme an online cybercrime reporting portal, (www.cybercrime.gov.in) has been launched to enable public to report complaints pertaining to Child
- The Portal facilitates the States/UTs to view complaints of cyber-crime online and take appropriate action.
- Since inception of the portal, more than 16000 complaints, including other cyber crimes, have been received through this Portal.
- Steps have also been taken to spread awareness, issue of alerts/advisories, training of law enforcement agencies, improving cyber forensics facilities, etc.
- These steps help to prevent such cases and speed up investigation.

Cyber Coordination Centre

Context

- Cyber Coordination Centre (CyCord) portal was launched as a one-stop platform for sharing all cyber related matters amongst Law Enforcement Agencies (LEAs), government organizations and other stakeholders.

Cyber Coordination Centre

- Primary objective of the Cyber Coordination Centre is to provide a platform to the Law Enforcement Agencies and other stakeholders to collaborate and coordinate their efforts to resolve cyber-crime, and for other cyber related issues like sharing case studies/research findings, experience sharing, etc.
- Cyber Coordination Centre is an effective platform to deal with cyber issues.
- Ministry of Home Affairs issues advisories on cyber related issues to States/UTs from time to time.
- Further, safety advisories/messages are also issued by Ministry of Home Affairs through social media, FM radio and SMSes.

Gender Composition of Police Force

Context

- As per data on Police Organisation compiled by Bureau of Police Research & Development (BPR&D) the data shows women in police force is hardly 8.7% of the total police force.

Police force strength

- “Police” is a State subject falling in List-II of the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution of India.
- It is primarily the responsibility of the State Governments/UT Administrations to implement police reforms measures, including improvement of gender balance.
- The Centre also issues advisories to the States for increasing number of women in the police forces up to 33% in the States.
- It has also been advised to strengthen welfare measures such as provision of housing and medical facilities and restroom facilities for women police personnel in Police Stations to attract women to the Police Force and ensure safety.

Steps Taken to Reduce Train Accidents

Context

- Indian Railways have taken several key measures, as a result of which the number of consequential train accidents have decreased.
- Safety is accorded the highest priority by Indian Railways and all possible steps are undertaken on a continual basis to prevent accidents and to enhance safety of passengers.

Step taken to prevent accidents:

- Rashtriya Rail Sanraksha Kosh (RRSK) has been introduced in 2017-18 for replacement/ renewal/ upgradation of critical safety assets.
- Indian Railways has already adopted the technological upgradation in safety aspects of coaches and wagons by way of introducing Modified Centre Buffer Couplers Bogie Mounted Air Brake System (BMBS), improved suspension design and provision of Automatic fire & smoke detection system in coaches.
- Conventional ICF design coaches being replaced with LHB design coaches of Mail/Express trains in phased manner.
- A GPS based Fog Pass device is being provided to loco pilots in fog affected areas which enables loco pilots to know the exact distance of the approaching landmarks like signals, level crossing gates etc.
- In order to improve safety, modern track structure is used while carrying out primary track renewals.
- Long rail to minimize number of Alumino Thermit joints in the track.
- Provision of Thick Web Switches (TWS) is planned for all important routes of IR. To expedite provision

of TWS, procurement of Thick Web Switches has been decentralized to zonal railways.

- Ultrasonic Flaw Detection (USFD) testing of rails to detect flaws and timely removal of defective rails.
- Mechanization of track maintenance is being carried out to reduce human errors and track management system has been introduced on Indian Railways for development of database and decision support system and to decide rationalize maintenance requirement and optimize inputs.
- Electrical/Electronic Interlocking System with centralized operation of points and signals are being provided to eliminate accident due to human failure and to replace old mechanical systems.
- Train Protection and Warning System: Train Protection and Warning System (TPWS) based on European Technology ETCS Level-1, a proven Automatic Train Protection (ATP) System to avoid train accident /collision on account of human error of Signal Passing at Danger (SPAD) or over speeding, has been provided.
- Auxiliary Warning System (AWS): An ATP called Auxiliary Warning System (AWS) is presently functional in some parts
- Train Collision Avoidance System (TCAS): TCAS is an Automatic Train Protection (ATP) System being developed in association with 3 Indian manufacturers.

Yamuna Water Taxi Project

Context

The Minister of State (I/C) for Shipping Shri Mansukh Mandaviya inspected the Sonia Vihar site of the proposed Yamuna Water Taxi Project of Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI)

About the project

IWAI proposes to develop River Yamuna in Delhi for the purpose of tourism in a sustainable way.

The Yamuna Water Taxi Project has been conceived as an integrated development project combining several functions like terminal development and vessels operation.

The project covers a total length of 16 km and comprises five locations on the banks of River Yamuna in Delhi, including Fatepur Jat, Tronica City, Jagatpur, Sonia Vihar and Wazirabad.

It is proposed to be developed in two phases – Phase I: Sonia Vihar to Tronica City and Phase II: Wazirabad to Sonia Vihar and Tronica City to Fatehpur Jat.

The project also proposes to operate vessels on multi-fuel sources on the river, making it more environment friendly.

“17th Run against Drug Abuse”

Context

- Union Minister of Social Justice & Empowerment flagged off “17th Run Against Drug Abuse” on the occasion of “International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking”

“Run Against Drug Abuse”

- This annual event “Run Against Drug Abuse” to observe the “International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking” is being held successfully for past 16 years.
- The dignitaries led the ‘Symbolic Walk’ with Band display. A demo cultural show was organised and certificates prizes and awards of appreciation were distributed to the participants on the occasion.
- The event proved to be of great value for awareness on drug abuse. Marking the World Drug Day on 26th June, 2019 to raise awareness about drugs
- ‘Listen First’ is chosen as an initiative theme now to increase support for prevention of drug use that is based on science and is thus an effective investment in the well being of children and youth, their families and their communities
- Listening to children and youth is the first step to help them to grow healthy and safe. The event has great support from all Para Military Forces, Police, Running Clubs, Team Leaders, Schools, Colleges & NGOs with the maximum no of participation.

Expert Committee for revisiting Creamy Layer for OBCS

Context

- An Expert Committee has been constituted by the Government of India under the Chairmanship of Shri B.P. Sharma (former Secretary, DoPT to examine the issues related to Creamy layer equivalence among the Socially and Educationally Backward Classes (SEBCs).

Terms of Reference for the Expert Committee

- To examine issues arising from the implementation of the OM dated 08.09.1993 and to revisit the criteria evolved by the Expert Committee (Prasad Committee) and thereafter to give recommendations for redefining, simplifying and streamlining the concept of creamy layer while keeping in view the observations of the Supreme Court in the Indra Sawhney case.
- If then necessary, to give recommendations for establishing the equivalence of posts of employees in PSUs etc.
- To examine the issue of candidates of Civil Services Examination where cases have not been settled.
- To examine and recommend whether the Certificates of Equivalence issued by State Governments in respect of posts and services under the instrumentalities controlled by the State Government should be accepted for applying the test of equivalence for comparability.
- To examine the specific cases of candidates, who had submitted Equivalence Certificates from various authorities of States, which were not considered in absence of a policy in this regard in the Civil Services Examination 2017 and to make specific recommendation on each case

- Any other matter that is referred to the Committee by the Competent Authority.

MPLADS Funds For Rehabilitation Programme

Context

The objective of the MPLAD scheme is to enable Members of Parliament to recommend works of developmental nature with emphasis on the creation of durable community assets based on the locally felt needs to be taken up in their Constituencies.

MPLAD funds

A list of sectors which are permissible to get funds under Member of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme is provided in the 'Guidelines on Member of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme (MPLADS)'

In addition, certain special items of works and works of non-durable nature are also permitted under the 'Guidelines on MPLADS', such as convergence with, MGNREGA, Khelo India and for welfare of differently abled persons, etc.

The 'Guidelines on MPLADS' provides for utilizing the funds in the areas affected by the Natural and Man-made calamities for rehabilitation work as may be recommended by Members of Parliament.

Beekeeping Development Committee

Context

- The Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister set up a Beekeeping Development Committee under the Chairmanship of Professor Bibek Debroy. The Beekeeping Development Committee (BDC) has released its report.

Recommendations in the report include

- Recognizing honeybees as inputs to agriculture and considering landless Beekeepers as farmers.
- Plantation of bee friendly flora at appropriate places and engaging women self-help groups in managing such plantations.
- Institutionalizing the National Bee Board and rechristening it as the Honey and Pollinators Board of India under the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare. Such a body would engage in advancing beekeeping through multiple mechanisms such as setting up of new Integrated Bee Development Centres, strengthening the existing ones, creating a honey price stabilization fund and collection of data on important aspects of apiculture.
- Recognition of apiculture as a subject for advanced research under the aegis of Indian Council for Agricultural Research.
- Training and development of beekeepers by state governments.

- Development of national and regional infrastructure for storage, processing and marketing of honey and other bee products.
- Simplifying procedures and specifying clear standards for ease of exporting honey and other bee products.

