

16 Sep 2020: PIB Summary & Analysis

1. Institute of Teaching and Research in Ayurveda Bill 2020

Context:

The Institute of Teaching and Research in Ayurveda Bill 2020 has been passed by Rajya Sabha.

Details:

- The Bill was earlier passed by the Lok Sabha.
- This paves the way to establish a state-of-the-art Ayurvedic institution called the Institute of Teaching and Research in Ayurveda (ITRA) at Jamnagar, Gujarat, and to confer the status of Institution of National Importance (INI) to it.
- The ITRA is sought to be established by conglomerating the presently existing Ayurveda institutes at the Gujarat Ayurved University campus, Jamnagar.
- The Bill is expected to give further autonomy to the institute and also help it to demonstrate high standards of such education and to emerge as a lighthouse institution to the entire AYUSH Sector.
- ITRA will be the first institution with INI status in the AYUSH sector, and this will enable the institution to be independent and innovative in the matter of deciding course content and pedagogy.

To know more about the Institute of National Importance (INI) status, check [PIB dated Jan 8, 2020](#).

2. Export of Medical Items

Context:

The prohibition on the export of certain medical items that were required to fight the COVID-19 pandemic has been removed.

Details:

- The items include PPE coveralls, 2/3 ply masks, face shields, sanitizers (except when exported in containers with dispenser pumps), hydroxychloroquine API and its formulations, 13 other pharmaceutical APIs and its formulations and ventilators.
- The prohibition has been relaxed based on an assessment, from time to time, of the domestic requirement, production capacity and surplus available for export.
- Prior to March 2020, the requirement for PPE coveralls was largely met through imports as there was very limited domestic production suitable for COVID-19 requirements. The export ban on PPE coveralls was removed when their domestic production subsequently reached 1.5 crore units per month.
- Ventilator production has been ramped up to enable the export of domestically manufactured ventilators.

3. Defense Technology and Trade Initiative

Context:

Indian and U.S. Defense Delegations conduct Virtual Discussion on Defense Cooperation.

Details:

- The 10th Defense Technology and Trade Initiative (DTTI) Group Meeting was held virtually.

U.S.-India Defense Technology and Trade Initiative (DTTI):

- The DTTI is a mechanism by which senior leaders from the defence establishment of both India and the US meet and discuss challenges and opportunities for growth in defence cooperation.
- Generally, DTTI meetings are held twice a year.
- The aim of the DTTI Group is to bring sustained leadership focus to the bilateral defense trade relationship and create opportunities for co-production and co-development of defense equipment.
- Four Joint Working Groups focused on land, naval, air, and aircraft carrier technologies have been established under DTTI to promote mutually agreed projects within their domains.

Aims of the DTTI:

- Transform the bilateral defense relationship into one that is limited only by independent strategic decisions, rather than bureaucratic obstacles or inefficient procedures.
- Strengthen India's defense industrial base by moving away from the traditional "buyer-seller" dynamic towards a more collaborative approach.
- Explore new areas of technological collaboration from science and technology cooperation through co-development and co-production.
- Expand U.S.-Indian business ties.

4. G20 Environment Ministers Meet

Context:

Global Initiative to reduce Land Degradation and the Coral Reef program launched at G20 Environment Ministers Meet.

Details:

- The **Global Initiative on Reducing Land Degradation** aims to strengthen the implementation of existing frameworks to prevent, halt, and reverse land degradation within **G20** member states and globally, taking into account possible implications on the achievement of other SDGs and adhering to the principle of doing no harm.
- The **Global Coral Reef R&D Accelerator Platform** is an innovative action-oriented initiative aimed at creating a global research and development (R&D) program to advance research, innovation and capacity building in all facets of coral reef conservation, restoration, and adaptation, and strengthen ongoing efforts and commitments made to enhance coral reefs conservation and their further degradation.

Land Degradation

- Land degradation is the deterioration or loss of the productive capacity of the soils for the present and future.
- It is a global challenge that affects everyone through food insecurity, higher food prices, climate change, environmental hazards, and the loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services.
- Land degradation is one of the world's most pressing environmental problems and it will worsen without rapid remedial action.
- Globally, about 25 percent of the total land area has been degraded.
- When land is degraded, soil carbon and nitrous oxide are released into the atmosphere, making land degradation one of the most important contributors to climate change.
- Scientists opine that 24 billion tons of fertile soil were being lost per year, largely due to unsustainable agriculture practices. If this trend continues, 95 percent of the Earth's land areas could become degraded by 2050.

Also read: [United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification \(UNCCD\)](#)

5. Criminal Law Reform Committee

Context:

The Ministry of Home Affairs has constituted a **Committee for Reforms in Criminal Laws**.

About the Committee:

- The mandate of the committee is to recommend reforms in the criminal laws of the country in a principled, effective, and efficient manner which ensures the safety and security of the individual, the community and the nation; and which prioritises the constitutional values of justice, dignity and the inherent worth of the individual.
- The Committee is being headed by Chairperson Ranbir Singh (vice-chancellor, National Law University Delhi).
- The guiding principles of this committee are:
 - Primacy of Constitution
 - Primacy of human rights
 - Simplified, unambiguous and consistent procedure
 - Fair and time-bound investigation as well as trial
 - Transparency and accountability
 - Victim justice
 - Principled sentencing
 - Infusing techno-centricity
 - Revisiting the relationship between the state and the individual
 - Balancing the rights of the victims vis-à-vis the accused
- The Committee is required to look at substantive criminal law, procedural law and law of evidence.
 - Under substantive criminal law, it is looking at revising definitions of offences, punishments, reviewing amounts of fine, identifying offences requiring addition to the [IPC](#), identifying redundant offences and so on.
 - Under procedural law, the committee will largely look at restructuring the [Criminal Procedure Code \(CrPC\)](#) in line with the preferred model of criminal process and specifically looking at streamlining the trial process, strengthening the plea bargaining process, reforming punishments, developing a coherent sentencing policy, aligning the code with judicial decisions and so on.

- Under the law of evidence, it will look into exclusionary rules for admissibility of evidence, updating admissibility of electronic evidence and so on.

Concerns with the committee:

- A few concerns have been expressed by experts regarding the Criminal Law Reform Committee.
- There are criticisms that the members are all men, from two metro cities, no women, no Dalits, no Adivasis, no transgender or queer persons, no nomadic and de-notified tribes, no persons with disabilities and no religious minorities.
- There are also criticisms that the whole process is being carried out only in English, thus making it exclusive of people who can communicate only in regional languages.

For more on the committee, check [CNA dated July 11, 2020: Reform with caution](#).

6. National Clean Air Programme (NCAP)

Context:

The NCAP was launched with the aim of achieving a 20% to 30% reduction in Particulate Matter concentrations by 2024.

[For more on the National Clean Air Programme \(NCAP\), click on the linked article.](#)

7. Swamih Investment Fund

Context:

Special Window for Completion of Affordable and Mid-Income Housing (Swamih Investment Fund) Created.

Details:

- The fund has been created for funding stalled projects that are net-worth positive, including those projects that have been declared as Non-Performing Assets (NPAs) or are pending proceedings before the National Company Law Tribunal under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code.
- The objective is to give relief to homebuyers of stalled projects and provide last-mile funding to stressed affordable and middle-income housing projects.
- It is an alternative investment fund (AIF) to provide priority debt financing for the completion of stalled housing projects.
- It covers stalled, brownfield, RERA registered residential developments that are in the affordable housing/mid-income category, are net-worth positive and require last-mile funding to complete construction.

8. Electricity (Rights of Consumers) Rules, 2020

Context:

The Union Power Ministry has drafted the Electricity (Rights of Consumers) Rules, 2020.

Details:

- This is for the first time that rules have been drafted for the rights of electricity consumers.
- Under the draft rules, State Electricity Regulatory Commissions (SERCs) will fix the average number and duration of outages per electricity consumer per year for DISCOMs.
- Only two documents for connection up to a load of 10 kW and no estimation of demand charges for loads up to 150 kW are required expediting getting the connection.
- A new connection would be provided and the existing connection modified in not more than 7 days in metro cities, 15 days in other municipal areas and 30 days in rural areas.
- There will be an option to pay bills in cash, cheque, debit cards and net banking but bills of Rs. 1,000 or more have to be paid online.
- The draft recognises an emerging category of consumers known as “Prosumers”.
 - Persons who are consumers and have also set up rooftop units or solarised their irrigation pumps.
 - They will have the right to produce electricity for self-use and inject excess in the grid using the same point of the connection up to limits prescribed by the SERC.
- There are provisions for automatic compensation to the extent possible for delayed service by the DISCOMs.