

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS (DCA)

Time: 45 Min

Date: 16-07-2024

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MONEY BILL ROUTE FOR CONTENTIOUS AMENDMENTS

Context

- The Supreme Court of India agreed to list petitions challenging the Money Bill route taken by the Centre to pass contentious amendments in the Parliament.

Background

- The Money Bill case was referred to the supreme court in **2019** in the case of **Rojer Mathew vs. South Indian Bank Ltd.**
- The issue is whether such amendments could be passed as a Money Bill, circumventing the Rajya Sabha, in violation of **Article 110** of the Constitution.

What are the concerns?

- The case includes legal questions concerning amendments made from 2015 onwards in the **Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA)** through Money Bills, giving the Enforcement Directorate blanket powers of arrest, raids, etc.
- The present case raises questions about the passage of the **Finance Act, 2017**, as a money bill. The act had altered the appointments to 19 key judicial tribunals, including the National Green Tribunal and Central Administrative Tribunal.
- In the **Aadhaar (Targeted Delivery of Financial and Other Subsidies, Benefits and Services) Act, 2016**, the petitioners have argued that parts of the Act, passed through the two houses as a money bill, contained provisions unrelated to the subjects listed under **Article 110**.

Money Bill

- **Article 110** of the Constitution deals with the definition of money bills.
- It states that **a bill is deemed to be a money bill if it contains 'only' provisions dealing** with all or any of the following matters:
 - ♦ The imposition, abolition, remission, alteration or regulation of any tax;
 - ♦ the regulation of the borrowing of money or the giving of any guarantee by the Government of India, or the amendment of the law with respect to any financial obligations undertaken or to be undertaken by the Government of India;
 - ♦ The custody of the **Consolidated Fund** or the **Contingency Fund of India**, the payment of moneys into or the withdrawal of moneys from any such Fund;

- ♦ the appropriation of moneys out of the **Consolidated Fund of India**;
- ♦ The declaring of any expenditure to be expenditure charged on the Consolidated Fund of India or the increasing of the amount of any such expenditure;
- ♦ The receipt of money on account of the Consolidated Fund of India or the **public account of India** or the custody or issue of such money or the audit of the accounts of the Union or of a State; or
- ♦ Any matter incidental to any of the matters specified above.

Passing of Money Bills

- A Money Bill can be introduced only in the **Lok Sabha**, only by a minister, and only on the recommendation of the President.
- If any question arises whether a bill is a **Money bill** or not, the decision of the Speaker of Lok Sabha is final.
- After a Money bill is passed by the Lok Sabha, it is transmitted to the **Rajya Sabha**.
- **The Rajya Sabha has very restricted powers** w.r.t. Money Bills:
 - ♦ Rajya Sabha cannot reject or amend a Money bill.
 - ♦ Rajya Sabha can only make recommendations.
 - ♦ Rajya Sabha **must return the bill within 14 days**, with or without recommendations.
- **The Lok Sabha can either accept or reject** all or any of the recommendations of Rajya Sabha.
- If the Rajya Sabha does not return the bill within **14 days**, the bill is deemed to have been passed by both the Houses in the form originally passed by Lok Sabha.
- Once a Money Bill is passed by both the Houses, it is presented to the President.
 - ♦ He/she may either give the assent or withhold assent, but **cannot return the bill for reconsideration** by the Houses of Parliament.

Source: TH

SC SEEKS REPORT ON GRAM NYAYALAYAS FROM STATES

Context

- The Supreme Court has sought a full report from States and High Courts on the establishment and functioning of Gram Nyayalayas.

About

- **Mandate:** **Gram Nyayalayas** are aimed at providing inexpensive justice to people in rural areas at their doorsteps.
- **Background:** The Gram Nyayalayas Bill was passed by the **Parliament in 2008** and the **Gram Nyayalayas Act** came into force with effect from **2nd October, 2009**.
 - ♦ **The Law Commission of India**, in its **114th Report**, had suggested establishment of Gram Nyayalayas.
- **The Act extends** to the whole of India, except to the States of Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim and some tribal areas.
- **Appointment of Nyayadhikari:** The State Government shall, in consultation with the High Court, appoint a Nyayadhikari for every Gram Nyayalaya.
 - ♦ **Qualifications:** A person shall be eligible to be appointed as a Judicial Magistrate of the first class.

Salient features of the Gram Nyayalayas Act

- Gram Nyayalayas are deemed to be a **Court of Judicial Magistrate of First Class** with both **civil and criminal jurisdiction** to settle petty disputes at the village level.
- The **State Governments are responsible for establishing Gram Nyayalayas** in consultation with the respective High Courts.
- The Gram Nyayalaya shall not be bound by the rules of evidence provided in the Indian Evidence Act, 1872 but shall be guided by the **principles of natural justice** subject to any rule made by the High Court.
- The seat of the Gram Nyayalayas shall be located at the **headquarters of the intermediate Panchayat**.
- **The headquarters** of every Gram Nyayalaya shall be located at the headquarters of the intermediate Panchayat in which the Gram Nyayalaya is established or such other place as may be notified by the State Government.

Issues with Gram Nyayalayas

- **Judicial vacancies:** There is a significant shortfall of judicial officers willing to serve in rural areas due to challenging working conditions and lack of incentives.
- **Inadequate Facilities:** Many Gram Nyayalayas lack basic amenities such as dedicated court buildings, proper seating arrangements, and essential office equipment.

- **Pendency of cases:** Despite the aim to provide speedy justice, Gram Nyayalayas have a significant backlog of cases. The slow disposal of cases defeats the purpose of quick and accessible justice.
- **Lack of Proper Training:** Judicial officers and staff of Gram Nyayalayas often lack adequate training in rural jurisprudence and the socio-economic context of rural areas, affecting the quality of justice delivered.
- **Delay in Notification:** Many states have been slow to notify and establish Gram Nyayalayas despite the legal mandate, resulting in uneven implementation across the country.
 - ♦ Around **16,000 gram nyayalayas are required**, but only a little over **450 have been set up** with about 300 actually functional.
- **Coordination Issues:** There is a lack of proper coordination between state governments and the judiciary, leading to administrative and operational challenges in the functioning of Gram Nyayalayas.
- **Financial Constraints:** The financial allocations for the establishment and maintenance of Gram Nyayalayas are insufficient, affecting their operations and sustainability.

Way Ahead

- Addressing these issues requires comprehensive reforms such as:
 - ♦ **Filling Judicial Vacancies:** Streamlining the appointment process, providing adequate incentives, and offering specialized training to judicial officers.
 - ♦ **Case Management Systems:** Implementing effective case management systems to reduce pendency and streamline case handling.
 - ♦ **Public Awareness:** Conducting awareness campaigns to inform rural populations about the existence and functioning of Gram Nyayalayas and ensuring they are easily accessible.

Source: TH

LOGISTIC CHALLENGES IN TRADE

Context

- India's **goods exports** in June **grew 2.55 percent** year-on-year to \$35.2 billion amid continued demand recovery in **key export markets such as the US and the European Union (EU)**.

About

- **Trade Deficit:** As per the data released by the Commerce and Industry Ministry, a 20 percent jump in petroleum import bill year-on-year in June widened the **trade deficit to \$20.98 billion from \$19.19 billion** during the previous year.
- **India's exports gained** in the **four out of the top five export destinations**.
 - ♦ Exports to the US jumped 6 percent, outbound shipments jumped by 14 percent to the UAE, 6 percent to the Netherlands, 13 percent to the UK.
 - ♦ However, exports to Australia slipped by **18 percent**.
- **India's Import: China** continued to be India's top import source followed by **Russia, UAE and the US**.
 - ♦ Imports from China jumped 18.37 percent compared to the previous year, 18.57 percent from Russia and 48.15 percent from the UAE.
- **Future Projection:** Going by the ongoing situation, India will be crossing \$800 billion total exports during the current financial year.
 - ♦ Services exports are growing in a sustained manner.
 - ♦ The major drivers of growth are engineering goods, electronic, drugs and pharmaceutical, organic and inorganic goods.
- ♦ This efficiency is vital for businesses to meet consumer demand promptly and optimise production processes.
- **Connectivity and Accessibility:** Logistics networks enhance connectivity and accessibility, linking various regions and markets.
 - ♦ This connectivity contributes to economic integration by enabling businesses to reach a wider customer base and fostering trade between states and regions.
- **Cost reduction and competitiveness:** Efficient logistics operations contribute to cost reduction in transportation, storage, and distribution.
 - ♦ This, in turn, enhances the competitiveness of businesses as they can offer products at competitive prices in the market.
- **Job creation:** The logistics sector is a significant source of employment, providing jobs in transportation, warehousing, distribution, and related services. The sector is projected to add 1 crore jobs by 2027.
- **Technology adoption:** The industry's embrace of technology (such as GPS tracking, RFID, and advanced analytics) improves operational efficiency, reduces costs, and enhances overall productivity.
 - ♦ This technological advancement positively influences the broader economic landscape.
- **Economic integration:** A well-developed logistics sector facilitates economic integration by connecting various economic zones and promoting a seamless flow of goods and services.

Overview of India's Logistics Landscape

- The Indian logistics sector is one of the largest in the world and presents a huge addressable opportunity.
- The sector is critical for the **country's economic growth as it connects various elements of the economy** and consists of transportation, warehousing and other supply chain solutions ranging from suppliers to end customers.
- The industry is characterised by **dynamism**, undergoing rapid evolution to meet escalating demands.
- **Technological advancements**, infrastructure enhancements and governmental initiatives, including GST implementation and the National Logistics Policy (NLP), are precipitating substantial transformations within the sector.

Key Advantages of Efficient Logistics Infrastructure

- **Supply chain efficiency:** Logistics ensures a smooth and efficient supply chain, minimising delays and reducing lead times.

Logistics Challenges

- Indian Exporters are going through logistics challenges such as lack of container availability, shipping space, irregular shipping schedule and ships skipping Indian ports.
 - ♦ The exports would have recorded close to "double-digit growth" in June 2024 in the absence of these disruptions.
- The shortages have been accentuated due to the European Union's 37.6 percent tariffs on imports of Chinese electric vehicles that kicked in earlier this month.
 - ♦ India is dependent on Chinese-made containers for exports.
- There are other challenges such as infrastructural deficits and regulatory intricacies, the industry stands poised for significant expansion, presenting domestic and international entities with opportunities to flourish within India's burgeoning market.

Government Initiatives

- **Dedicated freight corridors:** To facilitate the seamless transportation of goods and commodities across India, high-speed, large-capacity railway corridors – known as dedicated freight corridors – have been established.
 - ♦ As of January 2023, 1,724 kilometres of dedicated freight corridors have been completed. These corridors connect Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, and Howrah, which are already part of the Indian Railways Network.
- **Multi-modal logistics parks:** Spread across at least 100 acres, these parks offer access to various modes of transportation, including road, rail, and air.
 - ♦ They also provide advanced storage solutions such as mechanised warehouses, cold storage facilities, and essential services like customs clearance and quarantine zones.
- **Parivahan portal:** To standardise processes and promote seamless information sharing across locations, the government has introduced the Parivahan portal.
 - ♦ This initiative streamlines administrative procedures and provides easy access to information related to registration cards and driver's licenses, facilitating smoother logistics operations.
- **Introduction of e-way bill:** Implementing the e-way bill system mandates using electronic documentation for truckloads valued above Rs. 50,000.
 - ♦ This digital documentation eliminates the need for physical paperwork and state boundary check posts, simplifying inter-state vehicle movement.
- **GatiShakti:** It was launched in 2021 and aims to improve logistics efficiency, and reduce costs by coordinating planning among different agencies.
 - ♦ PM GatiShakti seeks to minimise disruptions and enhance efficiency by focusing on multi-modal connectivity and timely project completion.
- **National Logistics Policy:** It was released in 2022 (NLP) and aims to boost economic growth by making the logistics sector more seamless and integrated.
 - ♦ It plans to create a single-window e-logistics market and make MSMEs more competitive.
 - ♦ This would lower logistics costs as a percentage of GDP.
- **Logistics Efficiency Enhancement Programme (LEEP):** LEEP is designed to improve freight transport efficiency.

- ♦ Associated cost, transportation time, and logistics practices like goods transferring and tracking through infrastructure technology and process interventions.

Way Ahead

- There is a need to take steps on the liquidity front with deeper interest subvention support and extension of interest equalisation scheme for 5 years.
- Besides addressing the Middle East geopolitical situation, Red Sea challenges by ensuring availability of containers, marine insurance and rationale increase in freight charges.
- The sector also needs easy & low cost of credit, marketing support and conclusion of some of the key FTAs with UK, Peru and Oman soon.

Source: IE

NEWS IN SHORT

CENTRAL INFORMATION COMMISSION

Context

- The Supreme Court has said that the Central Information Commission has powers to constitute benches and frame regulations, for its effective functioning.

About

- The Chief Information Commissioner's powers to frame regulations pertaining to the constitution of benches of the commission are upheld as such powers are within the ambit of **Section 12(4) of the RTI Act.**

Central Information Commission

- The Central Information Commission (CIC) is a **statutory body** in India, established under the provisions of the **Right to Information Act (2005).**
- The Central Information Commission consists of a **Chief Information Commissioner** and **not more than ten Information Commissioners.**
- The members are **appointed by the President** on the recommendation of a Committee consisting of:
 - ♦ The Prime Minister as the Chairperson,
 - ♦ The Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha, and
 - ♦ A Union Cabinet Minister nominated by the Prime Minister.

- **Term of office:** The Chief Information Commissioner, or Information Commissioners, as the case may be, shall hold office for a period of **three years** from the date on which he enters upon his office.

Powers and Functions

- While inquiring, the Commission has the **powers of a civil court** in respect of the following matters:
 - ♦ Summoning and enforcing attendance of persons and compelling them to give oral or written evidence on oath and to produce documents or things;
 - ♦ Requiring the discovery and inspection of documents;
 - ♦ Receiving evidence on affidavit;
 - ♦ Requisitioning any public record from any court or office;
 - ♦ Issuing summons for examination of witnesses or documents; and
 - ♦ Any other matter which may be prescribed.
- During the inquiry of a complaint, the Commission may **examine any record which is under the control of the public authority** and no such record may be withheld from it on any grounds.
- The decisions of the Commission are **final and binding**.

Source: TH

WORLD YOUTH SKILLS DAY 2024

Context

- The World Youth Skills Day is observed **on July 15 annually**.

About

- The initiative was designated by the **United Nations General Assembly** in **November 2014**, emphasizes the significance of **equipping youth** with necessary skills **to tackle unemployment and underemployment**.
- This year's World Youth Skills Day theme, "**Youth Skills for Peace and Development**," highlights the role of youth in peacebuilding and conflict resolution.
- The day also marks the **launch of Skill India Mission**.

Skill India Mission

- It has been launched to **empower the youth of the country** with skill sets which make them more employable and more productive in their work environment.

- Skill India **offers courses across several sectors** which are aligned to the standards recognised by both, the industry and the government under the **National Skill Qualification Framework**.
- The courses help a person focus on **practical delivery of work and help him enhance his technical expertise** so that companies **don't have to invest into training him for his job profile**.

Source: ET

WOLBACHIA BACTERIA

Context

- A study reports that Wolbachia bacteria had manipulated the wasp *Encarsia formosa* to entirely get rid of its males.

About

- Wolbachia are the common bacteria that occur naturally in **50 per cent of insect species**, including some mosquitoes, fruit flies, moths, dragonflies and butterflies.
- Wolbachia **lives inside insect cells** and is passed from one generation to the next through an insect's eggs.

Use for mosquito control

- Mosquitoes with Wolbachia can be used to reduce numbers of target mosquito species, for example, **Aedes Aegypti mosquitoes**.
- Mosquito control professionals release male *Aedes Aegypti* with Wolbachia into an area with wild *Aedes Aegypti*.
- When male *Aedes Aegypti* mosquitoes with Wolbachia mate with wild female mosquitoes that do not have Wolbachia, the eggs will not hatch.
- Because the eggs don't hatch, the number of *Aedes Aegypti* mosquitoes decreases.

Source: TH

MAKHANA (FOX NUT)

Context

- **The Bihar government** has urged the Centre to declare the **Minimum Support Price (MSP) for makhana**.

About

- Makhana (in Hindi) Fox nut & Gorgon Nut (in English) & *Euryale ferox* (Biological name), is a

high in demand **aquatic crop**, belonging to the Family of 'Nymphaeaceae'.

- This commonly known and widely-used crop is **unique, high on nutrition content, and a non-cereal food**.
- Although the crop is cultivated in **different parts of the world, India** is home to nearly **70-80%** of the global produce.
 - ♦ **Bihar** boasts of over **80% of the Makhana production of the country**.
 - ♦ Districts and cities including Darbhanga, Madhubani, Saharsa, Katihar, Purnea, Supaul, Kishanganj, Araria and Sitamari are major producers of Makhana.
- Countries including **Japan, Korea, China, Bangladesh and Russia** also grow Makhana in wild form.

Source: IE

INDIAN NEWSPAPER SOCIETY (INS)

Context

- The Prime Minister inaugurated the **INS Towers** on his visit to the **Indian Newspaper Society (INS)** Secretariat.

About

- The early beginnings of the Society can be traced back to **October 11, 1927**, with the name of **The India, Burma & Ceylon Newspapers' London Committee**.
- It was changed to **Indian & Eastern Newspaper Society (IENS) in 1935**.
- This was an organization based in London representing and acting solely under the authority of newspapers, magazines, reviews and other journals published in **India, Burma, Ceylon and other countries of Asia**.
- **Functions:** To act as a **central organization of the Press of India** and of any other country in Asia, which desires to associate itself with the Society.
 - ♦ To promote and safeguard the **business interests of its members**.
 - ♦ It plays a major role in **protecting and promoting freedom** of the press in India.
 - ♦ To collect information upon all topics having a practical business interest for its members and to communicate the same to them.

Source: PIB

BANCASSURANCE: BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN BANKING AND INSURANCE

Context

- Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority (IRDAI) is looking to perk up **Bancassurance** to meet its objective of **'Insurance for all' by 2047**.

About the Bancassurance

- It is a **strategic partnership** between **banks and insurance companies**, in which insurers can offer their products directly to the bank's customers.
- It provides better **market access, and cost efficiency** directly to customers.
 - ♦ But **Potential Mis-selling of insurance** may take place and IRDAI needs to examine aspects to ensure **consumer protection**.

Importance

- **Widening the Safety Net:** According to a **National Insurance Academy report**, nearly 60 to 70% of Indians remain uninsured. Bancassurance steps in to bridge this gap by leveraging the existing customer base of banks.
- **Customised Solutions:** Banks can tailor insurance products to suit their customers' needs. For instance, many banks offer health insurance to their account holders.
- **Simpler Sales Process:** Since customers already have established relationships with their banks, the sales process becomes smoother.
 - ♦ **Underwriting and KYC** (Know Your Customer) procedures are streamlined, reducing costs and risks associated with distribution.
- **Holistic Approach:** Banks can integrate insurance solutions into customers' overall financial planning, that ensures better customer experiences and a more comprehensive understanding of their needs.

Source: BL

PINK BOLLWORM

Context

- Recently, the **Central Institute for Cotton Research** of ICAR chose farmers for its pilot project that utilises Artificial Intelligence (AI) for real-time pest monitoring for **Pink Bollworm**.

About the Pink Bollworm (*Pectinophora Gossypiella*)

- It is a worm that destroys parts of the developing cotton fruit, such as the **square (flower bud)** and the **boll (rounded sac of seeds with cotton fibres)**.
 - ♦ Adult worms are thin grey moths that lay eggs on buds, flowers, and bolls.
- It is **native to Asia** and now recorded in nearly all the cotton-growing countries of the world.
- Its **cryptic nature** means that damage becomes apparent only when the bolls open, which is often too late for effective intervention.
 - ♦ It cuts through the lint and stains it in the process, resulting in a loss of quality.
- Its **infestations** can range from 30% to a whopping 90% of the cotton cropping area.

Do You Know?

- Cotton, often referred to as '**white gold**' holds immense economic importance worldwide. Farmers in India **cultivate all four cultivated species** of cotton and their **hybrids**.
- India introduced the **Genetically Modified** pest-resistant cotton variety **Bt Cotton (Bollgard II Seed)** to provide resistance **against the American, Pink, and Spotted Bollworms**.
 - ♦ However, the **Pink Bollworm** has developed **resistance to Bt Cotton** over time.

Source: DTE

KASHMIRI WILLOW

In News

- Bats made of Kashmiri willow have been attracting global attention after making an appearance in international games.

About

- The Kashmir willow, scientifically known as *Salix alba*, is a deciduous tree native to the Kashmir region of India.
- *Salix alba* is a deciduous tree capable of growing up to 30 meters tall.
- It is predominantly found in the Kashmir region, where it was introduced and cultivated extensively during the British colonial era.
- Willows possess a remarkable ability to convert solar radiation into chemical energy, leading to high growth rates.

- It forms beneficial relationships with mycorrhizal fungi, enhancing nutrient absorption and overall tree health.

Source: BL

CITES SEFINES GUIDELINES ON ROSEWOOD SPECIES

In News

- The **Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)** has issued guidelines for its members involved in the sustainable harvest and trade of rosewood specimens.

About

- The CITES emphasized the need to strengthen connections with the Module on **Non-Detriment Findings (NDF)** for tree species under the CITES-NDF Guidance.
- NDFs are crucial for ensuring sustainable global trade in **CITES-listed species**, supporting livelihoods in their countries of origin and industries in production and destination countries.

Rosewood Species

- **Origin:** Belong to the genus *Dalbergia*, which encompasses various species found in tropical regions worldwide.
- **Famous Varieties:**
 - **Brazilian Rosewood (*Dalbergia nigra*):** Revered for its strong, sweet scent and deep reddish-brown color.
 - **Indian Rosewood (*Dalbergia latifolia*):** Native to India and valued for its durability and straight grain.
 - ***Dalbergia sissoo* (Shisham or North Indian Rosewood)**
 - Species such as ***Dalbergia latifolia* (Malabar rosewood)** and ***Dalbergia sissoo* (Shisham)** are renowned for their use in high-quality furniture and musical instruments.
 - Malabar rosewood is classified as Vulnerable, Shisham is categorized as Least Concern, and African rosewood is listed as Endangered on the IUCN Red List.

About CITES

- **Adopted in 1973** and entered into force in 1975, CITES provides a framework for countries to regulate and monitor the trade of endangered species through a system of permits and certificates.

- The convention categorizes species into **three appendices**
 - ♦ **Appendix I:** Includes species that are most endangered and are threatened with extinction.
 - ♦ **Appendix II:** Includes species that are not necessarily threatened with extinction but may become so unless trade is closely controlled.
 - ♦ **Appendix III:** Contains species that are protected in at least one country, which has asked other CITES Parties for assistance in controlling the trade.
- Although CITES is **legally binding on the Parties** – in other words they have to implement the Convention – it does not take the place of national laws.
- India became the **25th party** — a state that voluntarily agrees to be bound by the **Convention — in 1976.**

Source: DTE

