

NATIONAL SOCIAL ISSUES- WOMEN, POPULATION, URBANISATION, EMPOWERMENT ETC**Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA)**

The Union Home Ministry has banned the Tehreek-ul-Mujahideen (TuM) under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act for promoting terrorism and radicalising and recruiting youth for terrorist activities in India.

Set up in the 1990s, TuM claims to be fighting for the “liberation of Kashmir.”

About the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA):

- This law is aimed at effective prevention of unlawful activities associations in India.
- Its main objective is to make powers available for dealing with activities directed against the integrity and sovereignty of India.
- The Act makes it a crime to support any secessionist movement or to support claims by a foreign power to what India claims as its territory.
- The UAPA, framed in 1967, has been amended twice since: first in 2008 and then in 2012.

The law is contested for few draconian provisions:

- The Act introduces a vague definition of terrorism to encompass a wide range of non-violent political activity, including political protest.
- It empowers the government to declare an organisation as ‘terrorist’ and ban it. Mere membership of such a proscribed organisation itself becomes a criminal offence.
- It allows detention without a chargesheet for up to 180 days and police custody can be up to 30 days.
- It creates a strong presumption against bail and anticipatory bail is out of the question. It creates a presumption of guilt for terrorism offences merely based on the evidence allegedly seized.
- It authorises the creation of special courts, with wide discretion to hold in-camera proceedings (closed-door hearings) and use secret witnesses but contains no sunset clause and provisions for mandatory periodic review.

GEOGRAPHY**River Information System**

To boost cargo movement on Ganga, the second phase of river information system (RIS) was recently inaugurated between Farakka and Patna.

RIS:

- It is a combination of modern tracking equipment related hardware and software designed to optimize traffic and transport processes in inland navigation.
- RIS is being implemented under the overall responsibility of Inland Waterway Authority of India, a statutory body administered by the Ministry of Shipping.
- The system enhances swift electronic data transfer between mobile vessels and shore (Base stations) through advance and real-time exchange of information. This would facilitate:
 - Enhancement of inland navigation safety in ports and rivers.
 - Better use of the inland waterways.
 - Environmental protection.
- RIS enables achievement of safe and efficient inland water transport by avoiding the following risks:
 - Ship- to – Ship collisions.
 - Ship – Bridge collisions.
 - Groundings

CONSTITUTION AND POLITY**Govt. grants divisional status to Ladakh**

Jammu and Kashmir Governor has granted Ladakh a divisional status, thus creating three administrative units of Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh in the State.

The Ladakh Division

- The J&K government has approved the creation of a separate administrative and revenue division for Ladakh.
- It will comprise Leh and Kargil districts, with headquarters at Leh.
- Earlier, Ladakh was a part of the Kashmir division.
- Ladakh will now get its own Divisional Commissioner and Inspector General of Police.
- Ladakh's Kargil and Leh districts already have separate hill development councils for local administrative powers.
- The move leaves the Kashmir valley geographically the smallest division at 15,948 sq. km, Jammu division at 26,293 sq. km and Ladakh, the biggest division, at 86,909 sq. km.

The remoteness and inaccessibility of the area makes it eligible for establishing a separate division.

During the winter months, the entire Ladakh region remains cut-off from the rest of the country for almost six months.

A section in Leh also has been demanding Union Territory status.

GOVERNANCE- WELFARE SCHEMS, E-GOVERNANCE, SERVICES ETC.

Ujjwala Utsav

Ujjwala Utsav observed recently to celebrate the stellar role played by various stakeholders in making PMUY a success. The event was organised under the aegis of Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas to encourage, motivate as well as felicitate all frontline field force for their outstanding contribution to PMUY.

The occasion also saw the launch of the PMUY anthem – Ujjwala Bharat Ujjwala – composed and developed by eminent singer and film industry personality Padma Shri Kailash Kher.

Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana:

- Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana aims to provide LPG (liquefied petroleum gas) connections to poor households.
- Under the scheme, an adult woman member of a below poverty line family identified through the Socio-Economic Caste Census (SECC) is given a deposit-free LPG connection with financial assistance of Rs 1,600 per connection by the Centre.
- Identification of households: Eligible households will be identified in consultation with state governments and Union territories. The scheme is being implemented by the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas.

Key objectives of the scheme are:

- Empowering women and protecting their health.
- Reducing the serious health hazards associated with cooking based on fossil fuel.
- Reducing the number of deaths in India due to unclean cooking fuel.
- Preventing young children from significant number of acute respiratory illnesses caused due to indoor air pollution by burning the fossil fuel.

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS- BILATERAL, GROUPINGS, ORGANISATIONS

The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria

The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (or simply the Global Fund) is an international financing organization that aims to “attract, leverage and invest additional resources to end the epidemics of HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria to support attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals established by the United Nations.”

- Founded in 2002, the Global Fund is a partnership between governments, civil society, the private sector and people affected by the diseases.
- The organization maintains its secretariat in Geneva, Switzerland.

Historical background: The Global Fund was formed as an independent, non-profit foundation under Swiss law and hosted by the World Health Organization in January 2002. In January 2009, the organization became an administratively autonomous organization, terminating its administrative services agreement with the World Health Organization.

Women's Global Development and Prosperity Initiative:

Launched by the US, it is an effort aimed at helping 50 million women in the developing world get ahead economically over the next six years.

- It is a government wide project led by the senior adviser and daughter to President Donald Trump- Ivanka Trump. The initiative will involve the State Department, the National Security Council and other agencies.
- It aims to coordinate current programs and develop new ones to assist women in areas such as job training, financial support, and legal or regulatory reforms.
- It seeks to reach 50 million women in the developing world by 2025 through U.S. government activities, private-public partnerships, and a new, innovative fund at USAID.

International IP Index 2019

The International IP Index 2019 released by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce's Global Innovation Policy Center (GIPC) makes the following observations related to India:

- India experienced its second consecutive year of growth in the IP global ranking, jumping eight places from 44th to 36th.
- The jump in the ranking is attributed to the recognition of international standards of copyright protection and incentives for intellectual property.
- The report notes that the improvement reflects important reforms implemented by Indian policymakers towards building and sustaining an innovation ecosystem for domestic entrepreneurs and foreign investors alike.
- India's overall score has also increased substantially from 30.07% (12.03 out of 40) in the 2018 index to 36.04% (16.22 out of 45) in 2019.
- India's score represents the largest gain of any country measured on the Index.
- The weakness of India as highlighted in the report are barriers to licensing and technology transfer, including strict registration norms, limited framework for the protection of biopharmaceutical IP rights, patentability rules outside international standards, lengthy pre-grant opposition proceedings and previously used compulsory licensing for commercial and non-emergency situations as key hurdles.
- The report notes that the most substantial movement can be seen from India, which has surged almost 20 per cent and climbed eight places in the IP Index rankings from 44th to 36th.

INDIAN ECONOMY

Startups to be listed for angel tax exemption

The Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) and the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) has agreed to compile a list of startups eligible for angel tax exemption, based on their audited financial statements and income tax returns of the previous year.

- Angel tax is imposed on the excess share capital raised by an unlisted firm, over and above the fair market value of its shares.
- This tax usually impacts startups and the angel investments they attract.
- While aimed at curbing money-laundering, the angel tax has also resulted in a large number of genuine startups receiving notices from the IT Department.

Criteria for Exemption

- The government has decided to raise the maximum time limit below which a firm would be deemed eligible for angel tax exemption to 10 years from the earlier seven.
- Further, the paid-up share capital threshold below which startups would be eligible for an exemption has been set at ₹25 crore.
- In cases where the investment exceeds ₹25 crore, the firms would be eligible for exemption if the angel investors can prove a net worth of ₹2 crore or more in the previous financial year.
- For investments below ₹25 crore, no questions would be asked.

Documentation

- Startups would have to furnish three types of documents in order to be registered with the government:
- Audited financials for the previous year,
- IT returns for the previous year, and

- A self-certified declaration.

The declaration is to certify that the firm does not have ownership or investments nor plans to deploy the angel investment in real estate holdings of any kind and assets, including premium cars of value above ₹10 lakh, gold and art, diamonds, precious metals or jewellery etc. The declaration has to also acknowledge that if the company possesses any of these items, then the exemption granted from Section 56(2)(viib) would be revoked with retrospective effect.

RBI Sixth bi-monthly Monetary Policy Statement

The important facts related to the RBI's sixth bi-monthly monetary policy statement for 2018-19 is listed below:

- RBI has relaxed the CPI or retail inflation forecasts for India in FY20.
- Because of the low inflation forecasts, RBI has decided to trim down policy repo rate by 25 basis points, taking the overall interest rate down to 6.25% now from previous 6.50%.
- The policy stance has also been changed from calibrated tightening to neutral.
- RBI data suggests that the 7th Pay Commission's HRA allowance impact on the inflation indicator has diminished.
- The reverse repo rate under the liquidity adjustment facility now stands adjusted to 6.0 per cent.
- The marginal standing facility (MSF) rate and the Bank Rate now stand at 6.5 per cent.

The lower inflation forecasts by the RBI are attributed to the following reasons:

- Food inflation has continued to be on the downside with continuing deflation across several items and a significant moderation in inflation in cereals. Food commodities are experiencing excess supply conditions domestically as well as internationally. Hence, the short-term outlook for food inflation appears particularly benign, despite adverse base effects.
- The moderation in the fuel prices was larger than anticipated. Inflation in items of rural consumption such as firewood and chips, which had remained sticky and at elevated levels, has collapsed in recent months. Electricity prices have also witnessed an unexpected moderation. This resulted in a softer outlook for the fuel group
- The recent unusual pick-up in the prices of health and education is seen as a one-off phenomenon.