

NATIONAL SOCIAL ISSUES- WOMEN, POPULATION, URBANISATION, EMPOWERMENT ETC**Dentists to practice as general physicians**

NitiAayog, has agreed to a Dental Council of India proposal to allow dentists to practice as general physicians after a bridge course. The development comes following a meeting in the Prime Minister's Office earlier this month in which it was urged that unconventional methods be adopted to address the shortage of doctors in the country, particularly in rural areas.

The proposal:

- The DCI has proposed a post Bachelor of Dental Science (BDS) bridge course running for 3 years.
- Admission would be either through a common entrance exam or through cumulative marks secured in the BDS course, or even a combination.
- The syllabus curriculum, scheme of examination, method of evaluation, degrees and registration all these criteria will be the same as recommended for MBBS.

Opposition from IMA:

- Country's largest body of private doctors—Indian Medical Association—which had earlier opposed a similar course for AYUSH practitioners has vehemently protested the proposed move too.
- What's the issue? Across India MBBS graduates were not being absorbed into post-graduate courses and there was also no creation of new posts, new primary health care centres etc with the government stating that budget was a constraint.
- The IMA demands that medical graduates be given their due, the health budget be flexed to include job creation for them.

CONSTITUTION AND POLITY**What happens when judges face allegations?**

Recently allegations of sexual harassment were made by a former employee of the Supreme Court against the CJI.

However it was later claimed by a litigant that he was offered to "frame" the CJI. While judges indeed require powerful protection against motivated accusations, due process demands that an expeditious, thorough, fair and impartial probe is carried out in the matter. The extraordinary developments at the country's highest seat of justice offer an opportunity to revisit some larger questions around its accountability.

The question of 'good behaviour'

- Constitution protects judges against the will of the masses, of Parliament, and of the all-powerful executives.
- A judge of the SC cannot be removed except by an order of the President passed after an address by each House of Parliament supported by a majority of the total membership of that House and by a majority of not less than two-thirds of the members of that House present and voting has been presented to the President in the same session.
- Such removal can be initiated on the ground of proved misbehaviour or incapacity. However, the Constitution does not define 'misbehavior' and 'incapacity'.
- The Judges (Inquiry) Bill, 2006 sought to establish a National Judicial Council to inquire into allegations of incapacity or misbehavior of judges of the HC and SC. It defined misbehavior as willful or persistent conduct which brings dishonour or disrepute to the judiciary; or willful or persistent failure to perform the duties of a judge; or wilful abuse of judicial office, corruption, lack of integrity; or committing an offence involving moral turpitude.
- The Judicial Standards and Accountability Bill, 2010, tried to lay down enforceable standards of conduct for judges.
- It proposed to widen the definition of 'misbehaviour' by adding "corruption or lack of integrity which includes delivering judgments for collateral or extraneous reasons, making demands for consideration in cash or kind", or "any other action... which has the effect of subverting the administration of justice".
- Failure to declare assets and liabilities, or wilfully giving false information was also included within the definition of 'misbehaviour'.

What should be the standard of proof for 'misbehaviour'?

- While rejecting the Opposition's notice for impeachment of CJI, RS chairman cited the "lack of substantial merit", and said the charges had not been proved beyond reasonable doubt.
- But impeachment is not a criminal trial.
- In all civil matters, the standard of proof is the "preponderance of probabilities".
- In Australia and South Africa, this is the standard of proof in the impeachment process of judges.
- India does not currently have a statutory mechanism to examine the misconduct of judges, and short of the complex process of impeachment, there is no mechanism available to make judges accountable.

Allegations against judges

- While no judge has so far been removed by impeachment, several have faced allegations of corruption, and a couple of them of sexual harassment as well.
- An allegation of corruption or sexual harassment, if proved, ought to count as misbehaviour or misconduct.

Addressing Sexual harassment at Courts

- In 1997, the Supreme Court noted that “the present civil and penal laws in India do not adequately provide for specific protection of women from sexual harassment in work places”, and laid down the ‘Vishakha Guidelines’.
- Sixteen years later, Parliament enacted The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013.
- The Supreme Court has a Gender Sensitization and Internal Complaints Committee headed by a woman judge, with a majority of woman members.
- The committee has a laid-down procedure for dealing with complaints of sexual harassment on the premises of the court.
- But it has no power to deal with complaints against the CJI or judges. In respect of misconduct by judges, the in-house process can be initiated only by the CJI.
- The Regulations are silent on a situation where the allegation is against the CJI himself.

No man is above the Law

- The rule of law demands judicial accountability. Accountability makes the exercise of power more efficient and effective.
- The British constitutional theorist A V Dicey wrote that “no man is above the law [and] every man, whatever be his rank or condition, is subject to the ordinary law of the realm and amenable to the jurisdiction of the ordinary tribunals”.
- Legal equality is the cardinal principle of the rule of law, and everyone including judges, must respect it.
- Should CJI undergo trial?
- To place judicial performance beyond scrutiny would be myopic, as liberty without accountability is freedom of the fool.
- Power without responsibility is the anti-thesis of constitutionalism. Accountability of public officials, including judges, is the very essence of a mature democracy.
- Way Forward
- Judicial accountability promotes at least three discrete values: the rule of law, public confidence in the judiciary, and institutional responsibility.
- Both judicial independence and judicial accountability are purposive devices designed to serve greater constitutional objectives.
- Though the independence of the judiciary is a part of the basic structure of the Constitution, it is not an end in itself.
- In fact, it is an instrumental value defined by the purposes it serves.

INDIAN ECONOMYInvestor Education and Protection Fund (IEPF)

In a major success, the IEPF Authority has been able to enforce a company to transfer deposits worth about Rs 1514 Cr to IEPF. This depositor’s money was pending with the company for the last 15 years.

Investor Education and Protection Fund (IEPF)

- IEPF is a fund where unclaimed dividend, refunded application money, matured company deposits and debentures, as well as the interest on them, is used, provided it is not claimed within seven years.
- It is a fund set up under the Ministry of Corporate Affairs to help promote investor awareness and protection of investor interests.

About IEPF Authority

- IEPF Authority has been set up under the Ministry of Corporate Affairs, Government of India as a statutory body under Companies Act 2013 to administer the IEPF with the objective of promoting Investor’s Education, Awareness and Protection.
- The Authority takes various initiatives to fulfil its objectives through Investor Awareness Programmes and various other mediums like Print, Electronic, Social Media, and Community Radio etc.
- Secretary Ministry of the Corporate Affairs is the Chairperson of the Authority.
- Joint Secretary Ministry of the Corporate Affairs is the Chief Executive Officer of the Authority.

ENVIRONMENT- CONSERVATION, BIO-DIVERSITY AND ISSUES**Global Deal for Nature (GDN)**

Saving the diversity and abundance of life on Earth may cost \$100 billion a year, say scientists who have proposed a policy to prevent another mass extinction event on the planet. There have been five mass extinctions in the history of the Earth.

Global Deal for Nature (GDN)

- Scientists have proposed new science policy to reverse the tide, called A Global Deal for Nature (GDN).
- It is a time-bound, science-based plan to save the diversity and abundance of life on Earth.
- The GDN campaign is being driven by One Earth, an initiative of the Leonardo DiCaprio Foundation that aims to gather support from international institutions, governments, and citizens of planet Earth to support ambitious conservation goals.
- The policy's mission is to save the diversity and abundance of life on Earth — for the price tag of \$100 billion a year.

What would GDN do?

- Societal investment in the GDN plan would, for the first time, integrate and implement climate and nature deals on a global scale to avoid human upheaval and biodiversity loss.
- The study outlines the principles, milestones and targets needed to avoid the disastrous extinction threats of a two degrees Celsius global warming forecast.

Why GDN?

- Scientists now estimate that society must urgently come to grips this coming decade to stop the very first human-made biodiversity catastrophe.
- Goals
- To protect biodiversity by conserving at least 30% of the Earth's surface by 2030;
- Mitigate climate change by conserving the Earth's natural carbon storehouses; and
- Reduce major threats.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY- EVERYDAY SCIENCE, SPACE, NUCLEAR, DEFENCE ETC**Ban on import of Milk and milk products**

The government has extended the ban on import of milk and its products, including chocolates, from China till laboratories at ports for testing presence of toxic chemical melamine are upgraded. Food regulator FSSAI had recommended extending the ban until all labs at ports are modernised to test the chemical. The ban was first imposed in September 2008 and extended subsequently from time to time.

Key facts:

- India is the world's largest producer and consumer of milk. It produces around 150 million tonne milk annually.
- Uttar Pradesh is the leading state in milk production followed by Rajasthan and Gujarat.
- Although India does not import milk, milk products from China, it has imposed the ban as a preventive measure.

Melamine:

- Melamine is an organic base chemical most commonly found in the form of white crystals rich in nitrogen.
- Melamine is widely used in plastics, adhesives, countertops, dishware, whiteboards.
- In China, where adulteration has occurred, water has been added to raw milk to increase its volume. As a result of this dilution the milk has a lower protein concentration. Companies using the milk for further production (e.g. of powdered infant formula) normally check the protein level through a test measuring nitrogen content. The addition of melamine increases the nitrogen content of the milk and therefore its apparent protein content.
- Addition of melamine into food is not approved by the FAO/WHO Codex Alimentarius (food standard commission), or by any national authorities.
- In 2007, melamine was found in wheat gluten and rice protein concentrate exported from China and used in the manufacture of pet food in the United States. This caused the death of a large number of dogs and cats due to kidney failure.
- Melamine contamination has also been found in a number of different brands of powdered infant formula, in one brand of a frozen yogurt dessert and in one brand of canned coffee drink. All these products were most probably manufactured using ingredients made from melamine-contaminated milk.

What are the health effects of melamine consumptions in humans?

- While there are no direct human studies on the effect of melamine data from animal studies can be used to predict adverse health effects. Melamine alone causes bladder stones in animal tests. When

combined with cyanuric acid, which may also be present in melamine powder, melamine can form crystals that can give rise to kidney stones.

- Melamine has also been shown to have carcinogenic effects in animals in certain circumstances, but there is insufficient evidence to make a judgment on carcinogenic risk in humans.

Emirates Mars Mission – Hope Probe

UAE has started its preparations for the upcoming Mars Mission named- HOPE. In July 2014, the UAE leadership announced the launch of the Emirates Mars Mission project by the President of the UAE. Subsequently, the President issued a decree establishing the UAE Space Agency.

HOPE Probe:

- The probe will be built by an Emirati team of engineers and experts and will be sent on a scientific voyage of discovery to the Red Planet.
- This will mark the Arab world's entry into the era of space exploration and place the UAE among the major scientific countries that have begun programmes to explore Mars.
- The probe will be sent to explore the Red Planet by 2020. Following a journey of several months, the probe is expected to enter the Red Planet's orbit in 2021, coinciding with the 50th anniversary of the formation of the UAE.

Scientific Objectives of the Probe Voyage:

- The Emirates Mars Mission project will answer scientific questions that have long puzzled scientists. These are questions about the Red Planet, which scientists have not been able to explain before because of the lack of data and information.
- The project will cover all aspects that have not been previously covered, whether scientific or knowledge-based, and it will work on drawing a clear and comprehensive picture of the Martian climate and the causes of the corrosion of its surface that has made it impossible for water to exist on the planet.
- The project will also provide insights about the weather on the Red Planet. It will observe weather phenomena such as dust storms and changes in temperature and how the atmosphere interacts with topography, from the highest volcano peaks to ice sheets to the vast deserts and the deepest canyons.

DEFENCE

Indian Army opens vacancies for women in military police

In a first, the Indian Army has begun online registration of women for recruitment as soldiers into the military police.

The move comes three months after the Government announced that women would be inducted into the force in the "Personnel Below Officer Rank" (PBOR) category in a graded manner to eventually comprise 20 percent of total Corps of Military Police.

Significance:

- So far, women were allowed in select areas such as medical, legal, educational, signals and engineering wings of the Army. The appointment of women in Military Police is a huge step towards further empowering women and improving their representation in the Indian armed forces.
- Those appointed under Personnel Below Officer Rank (PBOR) are given the responsibilities to investigate offences such as rape, molestation and theft; serve military operations where the Army needs police assistance; assistance in evacuation of villages during cross-border hostilities; and ceremonial as well as policing duties.

Role of Military Police:

- The Military Police is responsible for preserving "good order and discipline and to prevent breaches of the same by persons serving in or attached to the regular Army".
- The role of the military police includes policing cantonments and Army establishments, preventing breach of rules and regulations by soldiers, maintaining movement of soldiers as well as logistics during peace and war, handling prisoners of war and extending aid to civil police when required.
- Permanent commission of women officers in Indian Army:
- Defence Ministry has already announced that women officers recruited into the armed forces under the Short Service Commission will now have the option of taking up Permanent Commission in the Indian Armed Forces.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

If it doesn't challenge you, it won't change you.