

**POLITY**

➤ **On amending the cooperative societies Act**

➤ **CONTEXT:** The Bill to amend the Multi-State Cooperative Societies (MSCS) Act, 2002, was introduced in the Lok Sabha. Opposition parliamentarians alleged that the Bill's provisions encroached upon the rights of State governments, demanding that it be referred to a Standing Committee.

➤ **What are multi-State cooperatives?**

- According to the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA), cooperatives are people-centred enterprises jointly owned and democratically controlled by and for their members to realise common economic, social and cultural needs and aspirations.
- Multi-State cooperatives are societies that have operations in more than one State — for instance, a farmer-producers organisation which procures grains from farmers from multiple States.
- The board of directors are from all the States these collectives operate in and control all the finances and administration. There are close to 1,500 MSCSs registered in India with the highest number being in Maharashtra.

➤ **What are the issues with the cooperative sector?**

- The independent and autonomous character of cooperative societies was to be crucial in their functioning. Some experts point out that the inclusion of cooperatives in the planning process as development instruments made the sector an avenue for dispensing patronage to the supporters of ruling political parties.
- Moreover, the policy of State governments to contribute to the share capital of the cooperatives enabled governments, “in the name of public interest” to directly intervene in the working of cooperatives which are legally autonomous.
- Notably, the potency of cooperatives as an apparatus of political control can be seen in States such as Maharashtra, Kerala, Gujarat, parts of Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Madhya Pradesh and West Bengal.
- Besides, MSCSs were formed to ease the operation of collectives throughout the country. On the contrary, researcher points out that in spite of their potential, MSCSs are facing issues regarding trust, which is the very basis of cooperation. This has brought MSCSs under multiple controls from the Centre.
- Monitoring is one of the important institutional functions in a collective organisation but if monitored from much above, it takes a top-down approach as opposed to a grassroots one.
- In 1991, the Choudhary Brahm Perkash Committee of the planning commission made far-reaching recommendations to reorganise multi-State cooperatives but researchers point out how the Act has not been modified as per the report.

➤ **What does the Bill seek to change?**

- To plug the “loopholes” in the MSCS Act, the Centre introduced a Bill seeking to amend the 2002 law for more “transparency” and “ease of doing business”.
- The amendments have been introduced to improve governance, reform the electoral process, strengthen monitoring mechanisms and enhance transparency and accountability.
- The Bill also seeks to improve the composition of the board and ensure financial discipline, besides enabling the raising of funds in multi-State cooperative societies.
- The Bill provides for the creation of a central Co-operative Election Authority to supervise the electoral functions of the MSCSs. The Authority will have a chairperson, vice-chairperson, and up to three members appointed by the Centre.
- It also envisages the creation of a Co-operative Rehabilitation, Reconstruction and Development Fund for the revival of sick multi-State co-operatives societies. This fund shall be financed by existing profitable multi-State co-operative societies which will have to deposit either ₹1 crore or 1% of the net profit into the Fund.
- In order to make the governance of multi-State cooperative societies more democratic, the Bill has provisions for appointing a Cooperative Information Officer and a Cooperative Ombudsman. To promote equity and facilitate inclusiveness, provisions relating to the representation of women and Scheduled Caste/Tribe members on the boards of multi-State cooperative societies have also been included.

➤ **Objections**

- The Bill may lead to “the concentration of power of the Centre”, which could impact the “autonomy” of MSCSs and create potential for “misuse”. Notably, the constitutional domain of States in regulating cooperative societies was upheld by the Supreme Court 2022 when it struck down a part of the 97th Constitution Amendment.
- The creation of a Co-operative Rehabilitation, Reconstruction and Development Fund for the revival of sick multi-State co-operatives societies would put an additional burden on MSCSs.

➤ **Existing laws on religious conversions**

➤ **CONTEXT:** Recently, a Bench led by Justice M.R. Shah said acts of charity or good work to help a community or the poor should not cloak an intention to religiously convert them as payback.

➤ **Do States have laws on conversions?**

- In post-independent India, Odisha became the first State to enact a law restricting religious conversions, which later became a model framework for other States.

- Odisha's 1967 Act provides that no person shall directly or indirectly convert any person from one religious faith to another by force, inducement or any fraudulent means.
- Later, Madhya Pradesh brought in the Madhya Pradesh Dharma Swatantraya Adhiniyam (1968). This Act added a provision distinct from the Odisha law, requiring whoever converted any person, to intimate the District Magistrate that such a conversion had taken place. Failure to do so would attract punishment and fines. Subsequent Acts in other States over the past two decades see identical provisions.
- These laws also provide for greater punishment for forceful conversion of persons from Scheduled Castes or Scheduled Tribe communities, minors and women.
- More than ten Indian States have passed laws prohibiting certain means of religious conversions — Arunachal Pradesh (1978), Gujarat (2003), Chhattisgarh (2000 and 2006), Rajasthan (2006 and 2008), Himachal Pradesh (2006 and 2019), and Tamil Nadu (a law was enacted in 2002, but repealed in 2004), Jharkhand (2017), Uttarakhand (2018), Uttar Pradesh (2021), and Haryana (2022). The Karnataka Assembly also passed an anti-conversion Bill amid stiff opposition.
- Since 2017, multiple BJP-ruled States enacted or revised their anti-conversion laws, restricting religious conversions on the additional ground of marriage, supposedly to curb what has been described as “love jihad”.
- For instance, the Uttar Pradesh Prohibition of Unlawful Conversion of Religion Act, 2021, says that a marriage would be declared “null and void” if the conversion is solely for that purpose, and those wishing to change their religion after marriage need to apply to the District Magistrate.
- Madhya Pradesh also passed a new law in 2021— the Madhya Pradesh Freedom of Religion Act (MPFRA). While other States prescribe that an individual must inform a District Magistrate 30 days prior to an intended conversion, the MPFRA increases this to 60 days, and makes it mandatory for both the individual and the priest facilitating the conversion.
- **Have these laws been challenged?**
- The Himachal Pradesh High Court in 2012 struck down certain provisions of the State's 2006 law restricting conversions, holding them “unconstitutional”. The Court said that the individual converting their faith also enjoyed their right to privacy and the provision to give a month's prior notice to the District Magistrate violated this right.
- In 2021, the Gujarat High Court stayed some provisions of the Gujarat Freedom Of Religion Act, 2003, which the State amended in 2021 to add the grounds of marriage to prohibit conversions.
- In 2022, the Madhya Pradesh High Court also held certain provisions of the MPFRA unconstitutional.
- In November 2021, the Allahabad High Court allowed several interfaith couples to register their marriages despite not having sought the DM's approval.

## PRELIMS

### 1. World Bank's Flagship Gender Toolkit Launched

- **CONTEXT:** Recently, a Gender Toolkit based on “Enabling gender-responsive urban mobility and public spaces” was launched in a session conducted by the World Bank and the Chennai Urban Metropolitan Transport Authority.

- **What is Worldbank's Gender Toolkit?**

- The World Bank developed a two toolkit that outlines a four-pillar implementation structure for urban entities to construct a gender-responsive urban transportation and public spaces programme.
- Assessing the ground situation: The first pillar involves evaluating the current reality on the ground, which includes comprehending gender variations in mobility patterns, safety issues, and infrastructure and policy inadequacies.
- Strengthening planning and policies: The second pillar calls for improving planning and policies, which calls for incorporating gender as a lens into plans and encouraging gender inclusion among institutions and policymakers.
- Building awareness and capacity: The third pillar focuses on increasing knowledge and capability.
- Infrastructure: The fourth pillar prioritizes infrastructure improvement with a gendered lens.
- Additionally, the World Bank has provided guidance on each of the pillars.

- **What is the need?**

- The safety and unique travel requirements of women are not generally taken into account while designing public transportation systems.
- Their access to jobs, education, and lifestyle options are severely constrained by this.
- India has amongst the lowest female labor force participation rates globally, at 26.2 percent in 2020-21.
- In Indian cities, women make up a significant portion of the public transportation users.
- According to estimates, public, intermediate public, and non-motorized transportation accounted for 84 percent of the trips made by women for work.
- There are fundamental differences between how men and women travel. Comparatively, 45.4 percent of women and 27.4 percent of males typically walk to work.
- More women take the bus than men do, and they are more inclined to plan their trips after considering affordability. Due to the higher cost of speedier modes of transportation, they frequently select slower ones.

➤ **Recommendations**

- The research also suggests a number of transportation and public space improvements, particularly for women who frequently use non-motorized transportation, such as enough street lighting and enhanced walking and cycling paths.
- According to the survey, developing fair fare rules can increase the number of females and other genders.
- Setting up a good grievance redressal structure will assist in fast-track sexual harassment reports.

➤ **Significance**

- The toolkit from the World Bank attempts to highlight the gender-related problems with urban planning and mobility.
- Men, women, and gender minorities all have diverse perspectives on cities.
- The World Bank toolkit offers resources to help these groups better understand and address gender-disaggregated mobility patterns, reinforce policies, and create an infrastructure that will suit their requirements.
- This toolkit will be helpful in discussions on urban planning and mobility as Indian urban local bodies and transport agencies start to comprehend the demands of different commuters.

**2. India-Indonesia Coordinated Patrol**

➤ **CONTEXT: The 39<sup>th</sup> edition of India-Indonesia Coordinated Patrol (IND-INDO CORPAT) between the Indian Navy and the Indonesian Navy is being conducted from 08 – 19 December 2022.**

- Indian Naval Ship (INS) Karmuk, an indigenously built Missile Corvette participated in the pre-deployment briefing at Belawan, Indonesia. The CORPAT will be executed along the International Maritime Boundary Line (IMBL) from 15 to 16 December 2022 and will conclude with a debrief at Port Blair.
- Along with INS Karmuk, L-58 (indigenously built Landing Craft Utility vessel) and Dornier Maritime Patrol Aircraft will be participating in the CORPAT. KRI Cut Nyak Dien, a Kapitan Pattimura Class Corvette, would represent the Indonesian side.
- As part of Government of India's vision SAGAR (Security And Growth for All in the Region), Indian Navy has been proactively engaging with countries in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) to enhance maritime security in the region.
- India and Indonesia have been carrying out CORPATs twice a year since 2002, with an aim of keeping this vital part of the IOR safe and secure for commercial shipping, international trade and conduct of legitimate maritime activities.
- CORPATs help build understanding and interoperability between navies, and facilitate institution of measures to prevent and suppress Illegal Unreported Unregulated (IUU) fishing, drug trafficking, maritime terrorism, armed robbery and piracy. It further helps enhance the operational synergy by exchange of information for prevention of smuggling, illegal immigration and for conduct of Search and Rescue (SAR) operations at sea.
- India and Indonesia have traditionally enjoyed a close and friendly relationship covering a wide spectrum of activities and interactions. The 39<sup>th</sup> edition of IND-INDO CORPAT seeks to bolster the maritime cooperation between the two navies and forge strong bonds of friendship between India and Indonesia.

**3. Significance of NASA's Artemis 1 mission**

➤ **CONTEXT: NASA's Orion capsule splashed down back to Earth on, December 11, at 9:40 AM PST (11:10 PM IST). The Orion's landing in the Pacific Ocean marked the end of the inaugural Artemis 1 lunar mission exactly 50 years after Apollo's final moon landing.**

- As per NASA's, the "gumdrop-shaped Orion capsule, carrying a simulated crew of three mannequins wired with sensors", landed in the Pacific Ocean, off Mexico's Baja California peninsula.
  - It also performed a new landing technique called 'skip entry', designed to help the spacecraft accurately splash down at the landing site.
  - Orion entered the Earth's upper atmosphere and used the atmosphere and its lift to "skip" back outside the atmosphere only to re-enter once again.
- **'Throwing a football and hitting a penny'**
- In its 35-day mission, the Orion passed about 127 km above the moon in a fly-by. Orion entered Earth's atmosphere at a speed of over 40,000 kilometres per hour – more than 30 times the speed of sound – for a "fiery, 20-minute plunge to the ocean".
  - Artemis 1 was essentially an experimental mission, to check if the capsule can be trusted to ferry humans to the moon and back in future missions. Thus, safe re-entry was critical to the success of the whole initiative.
  - As it hurtled towards Earth, Orion experienced such friction and pressure that its forward-facing surface could have generated temperatures likely to reach around 3,000C. According to Orion propulsion senior manager "It's essentially like throwing a football 300 yards and hitting a penny."
  - After its success, a crewed Artemis II will go around the moon and back by 2024, followed in a few years by Artemis III, which will see astronauts, including a woman, land on the moon.

➤ **Aims of Artemis 1**

- It is the first in a series of missions that are planned to not only take humans back to the Moon, but to also explore the possibilities of extended stay there, and to investigate the potential to use the Moon as a launch pad for deep space explorations.

- With Orion safely returned to Earth it can begin to see next mission on the horizon which will fly crew to the Moon for the first time as a part of the next era of exploration and begins path to a regular cadence of missions and a sustained human presence at the Moon for scientific discovery and to prepare for human missions to Mars.
- The Artemis missions will build on the existing achievements of space technologies over the past few decades and lay the foundations for more complex and ambitious missions in the future.
- It will work towards extracting the resources found on the Moon, building from the materials available there, and harnessing hydrogen or helium as energy sources.
- **How is Artemis 1 different from NASA's earlier lunar missions?**
- Although their objective is to ensure the return of humans to the Moon, the Artemis missions (named after Apollo's mythological twin sister) are going to be qualitatively very different from the Apollo missions of 50 years ago.
- The Moon landings of the 1960s and 1970s were guided by Cold War geo-political considerations, and the desire of the United States to go one up on the Soviet Union — which had scored by launching the first satellite, Sputnik, and the first spacecraft, Luna 2, to crash on to the lunar surface, and sending the first man to space, cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin.
- So President John F Kennedy made a public announcement in 1961 that the US would put a man on the Moon before the decade was out. That deadline was met, due to a massive mobilisation of resources towards that end. But the technology ecosystem wasn't fully ready yet to fully realise the potential of that monumental scientific breakthrough — and the astronauts who landed on the Moon could do little more than bring back samples to Earth for investigations.
- 4. Kochi-Muziris Biennale 2022**
- **CONTEXT: Postponed twice due to the pandemic, as the fifth edition of the Kochi-Muziris Biennale opens on December 12, it will have on display the works of over 90 artists from across the globe in varied media.**
- In its tenth year, curated by Singapore-based Indian-origin artist Shubigi Rao, the central exhibition of the showcase will centre on the theme "In Our Views Flow Ink and Fire".
- Spread across multiple venues in Kochi, the four-month-long celebration of art is expected to attract tourists from the world over, and is scheduled to see several discussions, performances and film screenings.
- **What are art biennales?**
- An international large-scale showcase of art that takes place every two years at a particular site, biennales are usually non-commercial enterprises – unlike art fairs – that centre around a curatorial theme.
- One of the most prestigious and oldest biennales in the world, the Venice Biennale was established through a resolution by the city council in 1893 to celebrate national artistic talent. Coinciding with the silver anniversary of King Umberto and Margherita of Savoy, it had in attendance artists, critics, curators and patrons. With its rising popularity, the 1900s saw the emergence of Biennales across the world, with Bienal de São Paulo being instituted as the first non-European biennial in 1951.
- In 2009, a global Biennale Foundation was established with an "aim to create a platform for dialogue, networking, and knowledge sharing among contemporary art biennials around the world". It lists a directory of over 200 biennales that are held at present.
- **The significance of art biennales**
- Though most biennales do not allow for direct purchase of art, an invitation and participation in the global showcase is often viewed as a validation of an artist's work, and an assertion that they are being noticed. Frequented by the powerful and important in art, a Biennale participation can open opportunities for future museum exhibitions, gallery representation and acquisitions.
- Biennales, often named after the host city, become a reason for local pride, promoting cultural tourism and generating revenue through visitors.
- **A brief history of the Kochi-Muziris Biennale**
- An artist-led endeavour, the Kochi-Muziris Biennale was founded in 2011 by Kerala-born, Mumbai-based artists Bose Krishnamachari and Riyas Komu with an aim to "create a platform that will introduce contemporary, global visual art theory and practice to India."
- Borrowing from the location, it sought to "create a new language of cosmopolitanism and modernity that is rooted in the lived and living experience of this old trading port, which, for more than six centuries, has been a crucible of numerous communal identities. Kochi is among the few cities in India where pre-colonial traditions of cultural pluralism continue to flourish.
- While the first edition, which took place in 2012, was curated by its founding members, the subsequent editions had as its curators Jitish Kallat, Sudarshan Shetty and Anita Dube.

#### **ANSWER WRITING**

**Q: Do you think that granting constitutional status to national commission of scheduled tribes (NCST) has promoted the interest of tribal people in India?**

On the 89th Amendment of the Constitution coming into force on 19 February 2004, the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes has been set up under Article 338A on bifurcation of erstwhile National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes to oversee the implementation of various safeguards provided to Scheduled Tribes under

the Constitution. It also has the duty to protect and promote the rights of the scheduled tribes (STs) and to participate in the planning process of socio-economic development of the STs.

**Role played by NCST in promoting the interest of tribal people**

- NCST has raised issue of displacement and rehabilitation of STs due to developmental projects with MOEFCC and recommended measure to safeguard tribal rights. In this regard, it has presented two reports to the president, i.e., Indira Sagar Polavaram Project Affected Tribal People and Rourkela Steel Plant on Rehabilitation & Resettlement of Displaced Tribal.
- Representation in legal matters related to interest of tribals. For e.g., in Chhattisgarh HC regarding the denial of promotion of SCs & STs officers of Chhattisgarh State Electricity Board.
- It took Suo-moto recognition of Amendment if SC/ST (prevention of atrocities) act,1989 recommended for providing time bound disposal of cases by the special courts.
- It also contributed in policy issues related to Enumeration of Migrant STs, Implementation of Forest Right Act, etc.
- NCST helped institutionalizing the system of liaison officers and special ST cells in all central ministries and public sector enterprises for the speedy and effective resolution of the grievances of employees of ST communities.

The above improvements, though have been realized collectively by the programs of various governments and NCST. However, the real issues of the communities seem to be not addressed completely. For instance,

- NCRB data shows a spike in the number of cases filed under SC/ST prevention of atrocities act which shows the discrimination and atrocities are only increasing.
- NCST was helpless and ineffective in stopping the eviction of tribals in the name of development which deprived them of their basic human rights. For E.g., The commission was not able to safeguard the tribal rights of Dongria Kondh community of Odisha who faced eviction on a Vedanta development project.
- The rights of tribals over natural resources have been reduced over the years through the concepts of protected forests etc., and the commission has been lacking to secure the same.
- Tribal culture and identity have been declining. As per a report by People's Linguistic Survey of India, as much as 250 tribal languages have disappeared. NCST has failed to arrest the phenomenon.
- The commission decisions being only recommendatory, without strong follow-up mechanisms are mostly ignored. The annual Reports are often tabled two or more years after they have been submitted to the President. Further, they are not frequently discussed and hence mostly remain on paper.

Thus, NCST has taken many initiatives since its inception to protect the interest of tribal people but there is a need to take further reforms by giving them more powers to make discernible changes and address the real issues more effectively.

**MCQs**

1. With reference to India-Indonesia coordinated patrol consider the following
  1. India and Indonesia have been carrying out CORPATs semi-annually since 2002
  2. The 39th edition of India-Indonesia Coordinated Patrol was conducted from 08 – 19 November 2022.
  3. The Objectives of the Indo-Thai CORPAT are to ensure effective implementation of United Nations Conventions on Laws of the Sea (UNCLOS).

Which of the above statement/s is /are not correct?

- a) 1 and 2 only                      **b) 2 only**                      c) 2 and 3 only                      d) 1 and 3 only

2. Consider the following statement with reference to Kochi-Muziris Biennale recently seen in news
  1. Kochi-Muziris Biennale is India's first ever biennial of international contemporary art.
  2. "Possibilities for a non-alienated life", is the theme of the 2022 edition.

Which of the above statement/s is are correct?

- a) **1 only**  
b) 2 only  
c) Both 1 and 2  
d) Neither 1 nor 2

3. Which of the following pairs is/are correctly matched?

<b>Spacecraft</b>	<b>Purpose</b>
1. Cassini-Huygens:	Orbiting the Venus and transmitting data to the Earth.
2. Messenger:	Mapping and investigating the Mercury.
3. Voyager 1 and 2:	Exploring the outer solar system.
4. Themis Mission	To study the colourful display of high latitude skies.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- a) 1 and 3only  
**b) 2, 3 and 4 only**  
c) 1, 2 and 3 only  
d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

4. Consider the following statements regarding Cooperative societies in India.
  1. Cooperatives are enterprises which are owned, controlled and run by its members.

2. The cooperative societies emerged only after Independence in India.
  3. In India, majority of the cooperative societies are governed by laws in their respective states.
- Which of the above statements is/are correct?
- a) 1 only
  - b) 1, 2 only
  - c) **1, 3 only**
  - d) 1, 2, 3
5. Which of the following statements is/are correct regarding the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC)?
1. It decides the RBI's benchmark interest rates.
  2. It is a 12-member body including the Governor of RBI and is reconstituted every year.
  3. It functions under the chairmanship of the Union Finance Minister.
- Select the correct answer using the code given below:
- a) **1 only**
  - b) 1 and 2 only
  - c) 3 only
  - d) 2 and 3 only
6. With reference to National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG) consider the following?
1. National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG) was registered as a society on under the Societies Registration Act 1860.
  2. It acted as implementation arm of National Ganga River Basin Authority (NGRBA) which was constituted as a statutory body.
- Which of the above statement/s is are not correct?
- a) 1 only
  - b) 2 only
  - c) **Both 1 and 2**
  - d) Neither 1 nor 2
7. Recently a species was discovered and named as "Lisu Wren Babbler", it is a type of which of the following?
- a) **Bird**
  - b) Reptile
  - c) Plant
  - d) Mammal
8. India needs to bring down its fiscal deficit which is highest among G20 countries, which of the following can be used as measures to control the fiscal deficit in India:
1. Encouraging Foreign Direct Investment inflows
  2. Privatization of higher educational Institution
  3. Down-sizing of bureaucracy
  4. Selling/offloading the shares of Public Sector Undertaking
- Choose the correct answer using the codes given below
- a) 1, 2, and 3
  - b) **2, 3 and 4**
  - c) 1, 2 and 4
  - d) 3, and 4 only
9. Recently Apple announced it will be increasing the number of data points protected by end-to-end encryption on iCloud from 14 to 23 categories. In context of end to end encryption, consider the following statements:
1. It ensures privacy as the data can only be read on the two ends, by the sender, and by the recipient.
  2. Data can be accessed by a country's government and authorized intelligence agencies by using a private key.
- Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
- a) **1 only**
  - b) 2 only
  - c) Both 1 and 2
  - d) Neither 1 nor 2
10. With reference to SpaceTech Innovation Network (SpIN), consider the following statements:
1. SpaceTech Innovation Network (SpIN) is a one-of-its-kind public-private collaboration for start-ups and SMEs in the space industry.
  2. It is India's first dedicated platform for innovation curation and venture development for the burgeoning space entrepreneurial ecosystem.
- Which of the above statements is/are correct?
- a) 1 only
  - b) 2 only
  - c) **Both 1 and 2**
  - d) Neither 1 nor 2