

**POLITY/SOCIAL ISSUE**

➤ **What is the law on acid attacks in India?**

➤ **CONTEXT:** A 17-year-old girl was recently attacked with an acid-like substance in Delhi's Dwarka by three assailants while she was on her way to school. While the victim has suffered 8% burns and disfigurement of the face and neck area, the accused have been arrested by Delhi police. The incident has once again brought back to focus the heinous crime of acid attacks and the easy availability of corrosive substances.

➤ **How prevalent are acid attacks in India?**

- Though heinous, acid attacks on women are not as prevalent a crime as others against women.
- According to data compiled by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), there were 150 such cases recorded in 2019, 105 in 2020 and 102 in 2021.
- West Bengal and UP consistently record the highest number of such cases generally accounting for nearly 50% of all cases in the country year on year.
- The chargesheeting rate of acid attacks stood at 83% and the conviction rate at 54% in 2019. In 2020, the figures stood at 86% and 72% respectively.
- In 2021, the figures were recorded to be 89% and 20% respectively. In 2015, MHA issued an advisory to all states to ensure speedy justice in cases of acid attacks by expediting prosecution.

➤ **What is the law on acid attacks?**

- Until 2013, acid attacks were not treated as separate crimes. However, amendments carried out in the IPC, acid attacks were put under a separate section (326A) of the IPC and made punishable with a minimum imprisonment of 10 years which is extendable to life along with fine.
- The law also has provisions for punishment for denial of treatment to victims or police officers refusing to register an FIR or record any piece of evidence.
- Denial of treatment (by both public and private hospitals) can lead to imprisonment of up to one year and dereliction of duty by a police officer is punishable by imprisonment of up to two years.

➤ **What is the law on the regulation of acid sales?**

- In 2013, the Supreme Court took cognizance of acid attacks and passed an order on the regulation of sales of corrosive substances. Based on the order, the MHA issued an advisory to all states on how to regulate acid sales and framed the Model Poisons Possession and Sale Rules, 2013 under The Poisons Act, 1919. It asked states to frame their own rules based on model rules, as the matter fell under the purview of states.
- According to the MHA's directions and the model rules,
  - ✓ Over-the-counter sale of acid was not allowed unless the seller maintains a logbook/register recording the sale of acid. This logbook was to also contain the details of the person to whom acid is sold, the quantity sold, the address of the person and also specify the reason for procuring acid.
  - ✓ The sale is also to be made only when the buyer produces a photo ID containing his address issued by the government. The buyer must also prove he/she is above 18 years of age.
  - ✓ Sellers are also required to declare all stocks of acid with the concerned Sub-Divisional Magistrate (SDM) within 15 days and in case of undeclared stock of acid. The SDM can confiscate the stock and suitably impose a fine of up to Rs 50,000 for a breach of any of the directions.
  - ✓ The rules ask educational institutions, research laboratories, hospitals, government departments and the departments of Public Sector Undertakings, which are required to keep and store acid, to maintain a register of usage of acid and file the same with the concerned SDM.
  - ✓ Rule says "A person shall be made accountable for the possession and safe keeping of acid in their premises. The acid shall be stored under the supervision of this person and there shall be compulsory checking of the students/ personnel leaving the laboratories/place of storage where acid is used.
- In August 2021, MHA issued another advisory to all States/ UTs to review and ensure that the retail sale of acids and chemicals is strictly regulated in terms of the Poison Rules so that these are not used in crime.

➤ **Victim compensation and care**

- Based on Supreme Court directions, the MHA asked states to make sure acid attack victims are paid compensation of at least Rs. 3 lakhs by the concerned State Government/Union Territory as the aftercare and rehabilitation cost.
- Out of this, a sum of Rs 1 lakh is to be paid to the victim within 15 days of the occurrence of such an incident to facilitate immediate medical attention and expenses in this regard. The balance sum of Rs. 2 lakhs is to be paid "as expeditiously as may be possible and positively within two months thereafter".
- States are supposed to ensure that treatment provided to acid attack victims in any hospital, public or private, is free of cost. The cost incurred on treatment is not to be included in the Rs 1 lakh compensation given to the victim.

- The 2013 MHA advisory said “Acid attack victims need to undergo a series of plastic surgeries and hence 1-2 beds at the Apex State Tertiary Hospital could be earmarked for the treatment of acid attack victims so that the victims need not run from pillar to post to get these operations performed expeditiously,”.
- “In addition, private hospitals which have availed the facility of concessional land for setting up the hospital could also be persuaded to earmark 1-2 beds for treatment of underprivileged victims of acid attacks which the State Government can identify for treatment.
- Apart from this, MHA suggested states should also extend social integration programs to the victims for which NGOs could be funded to exclusively look after their rehabilitative requirements.

### **PRELIMS**

#### **1. Pradhan Mantri Virasat Ka Samvardhan (PM VIKAS) Scheme**

➤ **CONTEXT: The Minister of Minority Affairs informed that the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Ko Kaam Karyakram (PMKKK) has now been named as Pradhan Mantri Virasat Ka Samvardhan (PM VIKAS) Scheme.**

- The integrated scheme converges five erstwhile schemes of the Ministry viz.
- Seekho aur Kamao: Seekho aur Kamao (Learn & Earn) is a scheme implemented by Ministry of Minority Affairs since 2013-14 and is aimed at skill development of minorities.
- ✓ The scheme entails upgrading the skills of minority youth in various modern/traditional skills which can earn them suitable employment or equip them with skills to opt for self-employment.
- USTTAD: USTTAD (upgrading the skills and training in traditional arts/crafts for development) scheme focuses on the capacity building of the master craftsmen and artisans.
- ✓ Other than that this scheme will also focus on updating the traditional skills of the master craftsman and artisans.
- ✓ The trained craftsman and artisans will train the minority youth in various specific traditional arts and crafts.
- Hamari Dharohar: "Hamari Dharohar" scheme has been formulated to preserve rich heritage of minority communities of India.
- ✓ The scheme provides for curating rich heritage of minorities under overall concept of Indian Culture which includes curating exhibitions, preservation of literature/ documents etc.
- Nai Roshni: For women empowerment, the Ministry started “Nai Roshni”, a Leadership Development Programme for Minority Women in 2012-13. The objective of the scheme is to empower and instill confidence among minority women.
- Nai Manzil: The Scheme “Nai Manzil” aims to benefit the youth (both men & women) belonging to six notified minority communities of 17-35 years of age, who do not have formal school leaving certificate, i.e., those in the category of school –dropouts or educated in community education institutions like Madrasas.
- PM VIKAS aims to improve livelihoods of the minorities, particularly the artisan communities, using the components of skill development, education, women leadership & entrepreneurship.

#### **2. Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY)**

➤ **CONTEXT: Union Minister of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry & Dairying informed about the scheme to Rajya Sabha**

- The Department of Fisheries, Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying under the Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY) envisages to generate direct and indirect employment opportunities to about 55 lakh personnel in fisheries and aquaculture sector by 2024-25.
- It is a flagship scheme for focused and sustainable development of the fisheries sector in the country with an estimated investment of 20,050 crore for its implementation during 2020-21 to 2024-25 as part of Aatmanirbhar Bharat package.
- Aims: To bring about a blue revolution through sustainable and responsible development of the fisheries sector in India.
- ✓ To double the incomes of fishers and fish farmers, reducing post-harvest losses from 20-25% to about 10% and the generation of gainful employment opportunities in the sector.
- Implementation: It is implemented as an umbrella scheme with two separate components namely
- ✓ Central Sector Scheme: The project cost will be borne by the Central government. The entire project/unit cost will be funded by the Government of India (GoI) (i.e., 100% GoI Funding).
- ✓ Centrally Sponsored Scheme: All the sub-components/activities will be implemented by the States/UTs and the cost will be shared between Centre and State. North Eastern & Himalayan States: 90% Central share and 10% State share. Other States: 60% Central share and 40% State share.

A well-structured implementation framework would be established for the effective planning and implementation of PMMSY.

For optimal outcomes, 'Cluster or area-based approach' would be followed with requisite forward and backward linkages and end to end solutions.

Approach: 'Cluster or Area based approaches and many new interventions such as fishing vessel insurance, Aquaculture in saline/alkaline areas, Sagar Mitras, FFPOs, Nucleus Breeding Centres, etc.

Achievements:

- ✓ From 2019–20 to 2021–2022, the Fisheries sector had an incredible growth of 14.3%.
- ✓ Fish production has increased from 141.64 lakh tonnes in 2019-20 to 161.87 lakh tonnes (provisional) in 2021-22.
- ✓ The sector achieved all-time high exports of 13.64 lakh tonnes, reaching Rs 57,587 crores (USD 7.76 billion), topped by shrimp exports.

### **3. Sovereign Gold Bond Scheme 2022-23**

➤ **CONTEXT: Sovereign Gold Bonds 2022-23 (Series III) will be opened for subscription during the period December 19-23, 2022 with Settlement date December 27, 2022. The issue price of the Bond during the subscription period shall be Rs 5,409 (Rupees Five Thousand Four Hundred Nine only) per gram, as also published by RBI in their Press Release dated December 16, 2022.**

- The SGB scheme was launched in November 2015 with an objective to reduce the demand for physical gold and shift a part of the domestic savings – used for the purchase of gold – into financial savings.
- The Gold Bonds are issued as Government of India Stock under the Government Securities (GS) Act, 2006.
- These are issued by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on behalf of the Government of India.
- Bonds are sold through Commercial banks, Stock Holding Corporation of India Limited (SHCIL), designated post offices and recognised stock exchanges, National Stock Exchange of India Limited and Bombay Stock Exchange, either directly or through agents.
- The bonds are restricted for sale to resident individuals, Hindu Undivided Families (HUFs), trusts, universities and charitable institutions.
- Issue Price: Gold bond prices are linked to the price of gold of 999 purity (24 carats) published by India Bullion and Jewellers Association (IBJA), Mumbai.
- A fixed rate of 2.5% per annum is applicable on the scheme, payable semi-annually.
- The interest on Gold Bonds shall be taxable as per the provision of Income Tax Act, 1961.

#### ➤ **Investment Limit:**

- Minimum permissible investment is 1 gram of gold.
- Gold bonds can be purchased in the multiples of one unit, up to certain thresholds for different investors.
- The upper limit for retail (individual) investors and HUFs is 4 kilograms (4,000 units) each per financial year. For trusts and similar entities, an upper limit of 20 kilograms per financial year is applicable.

#### ➤ **Term**

- The gold bonds come with a maturity period of eight years, with an option to exit the investment after the first five years.
- Bonds can be used as collateral for loans.
- The capital gains tax arising on redemption of SGB to an individual has been exempted.

### **4. What is Agni-5, the long-range nuclear capable missile that India has tested?**

➤ **CONTEXT: A successful flight test of India's long-range surface-to-surface nuclear capable ballistic missile, Agni-5, was undertaken recently.**

- The Strategic Forces Command (SFC), which operates the Agni-5, carried out the test from A P J Abdul Kalam Island off the coast of Odisha. Agni-5 was earlier tested in October 2021 by the SFC independently for the first time, a few months after China had tested its hypersonic missile.
- The latest test comes a few days after Chinese and Indian troops clashed at the Line of Actual Control in Tawang, Arunachal Pradesh. Agni-5 can strike targets at ranges of 5,000 to 5,500 km, which puts major cities in China, including the capital Beijing, within its range.

#### ➤ **What is the Agni-5 missile?**

- The nuclear-capable missile, which uses a three-stage solid-fuelled engine, has been developed by India's Defence Research and Development organisation (DRDO).
- The development of Agni missiles started in early 1980 under the Integrated Guided Missile Development Programme spearheaded by scientist and former President Dr A P J Abdul Kalam, who was also a central figure in India's missile and space programmes.
- Medium to Intercontinental versions of Agni missile systems 1 to 5 have varying ranges — starting from 700 km for Agni-1 to 5000 km and above for Agni-5. In June 2021, DRDO successfully tested Agni P, a canisterised missile with a range capability between 1,000 and 2,000 km.
- This missile can be launched from road and rail platforms, making it easier for it to be deployed and launched at a quicker pace. Agni-6 is also said to be under development, with a range starting at 8000 km.

- **Agni-5 missile test: What was the latest test for?**
- Agni-5 has been successfully tested multiple times since 2012. The latest test was carried out primarily to validate various new technologies on board the missile. The flight performance of the missile was tracked and monitored by radars, range stations and tracking systems all through the mission including by the assets deployed in the sea.
- At the time of the previous test in October 2021, the Ministry of Defence in its statement had highlighted the posture of 'credible minimum deterrence' and 'No First Use' which are pivotal points of India's nuclear doctrine, first published in 2003.
- This basically means India would never use nuclear weapons first in a conflict situation but only as retaliation, and the arsenal maintained is to only deter the possibility of an attack on India.
- **Who undertook the test?**
- The SFC, which carried out the test, is a key tri-services formation that manages and administers all the strategic assets and falls under the purview of the Nuclear Command Authority of India.
- The Nuclear Command Authority is the sole body which can authorize the use of nuclear weapons. It comprises a Political Council and an Executive Council. The Political Council is chaired by the Prime Minister.
- The Executive Council, chaired by the National Security Advisor, provides inputs for decision-making by the Nuclear Command Authority and executes the directives given to it by the Political Council.

## **5. PM-KUSUM**

### ➤ **CONTEXT: PM-KUSUM Scheme has been extended till 2026.**

#### ➤ **About**

- It was launched in 2019 by the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE).
- It envisages income generation for farmers from their infertile land with the establishment of solar power plants. While the farmers can sell the power generated from the solar plants to the power distribution companies, the solar pumps can also be installed for irrigation of agricultural land.
- Its aim is to help farmers access reliable daytime solar power for irrigation, reduce power subsidies, and decarbonise agriculture.

#### ➤ **Components of Scheme:**

- **Component A:** 10,000 MW of Decentralized Ground Mounted Grid Connected Renewable Power Plants of individual plant size up to 2 MW.
- **Component B:** Installation of 17.50 lakh standalone Solar Powered Agriculture Pumps of individual pump capacity up to 7.5 HP.
- **Component C:** Solarisation of 10 Lakh Grid-connected Agriculture Pumps of individual pump capacity up to 7.5 HP.

#### • **Deployment Models:**

- ✓ They can use one of three deployment models: off-grid solar pumps, solarised agricultural feeders, or grid connected pumps.
- ✓ Off-grid pumps have been the most popular, but the nearly 2,80,000 systems deployed fall far short of the scheme's target of two million by 2022.

- **Implementation:** State Nodal Agencies (SNAs) of MNRE will coordinate with States/UTs, Discoms and farmers for implementation of the scheme.

- **2020 Amendment:** In November 2020, MNRE amended/clarified **implementation Guidelines** of Pradhan Mantri Kisan Urja Suraksha evam Utthaan Mahabhiyaan (PM-KUSUM) Scheme based on the learnings from the implementation of the Scheme during the first year.

#### ➤ **Amendments made:**

- The scope of the scheme has been increased by including pasturelands and marshy lands owned by farmers.
- The size of solar plants has been reduced so that small farmer can participate.
- Increased completion period from nine to **twelve months**.
- Penalty for the shortfall in generation removed for ease of implementation by farmers.
- Central Financial Allowance (CFA) will be allowed for solar pumps to be set up and used by Water User Associations (WUAs)/Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs)/Primary Agriculture Credit Societies (PACSS) or for cluster-based irrigation systems along with individual farmers.

## **ANSWER WRITING**

**Q: Explain how the use of information and communication technology can help in reducing corruption? Illustrate with examples.**

Information and communication technologies (ICT) is defined as a diverse set of technological tools and resources used to transmit, store, create, share or exchange information. These technological tools and resources

include computers, the Internet (websites, blogs and emails), live broadcasting technologies (radio, television and webcasting), recorded broadcasting technologies (podcasting, audio and video players, and storage devices) and telephony (fixed or mobile, satellite, video-conferencing, etc.)

Utilization of ICT in reducing corruption

- Sharing information: Technology can be used to provide a platform for sharing information on cases of corruption, which can raise awareness of these cases and may act as a deterrent. For instance, platforms such as “I paid a bribe” in India provide crowdsourced information on demand bribery in different contexts.
- Automation and digitization of government processes and services: Technology has been used to automate government processes and reduce the face time public officials in certain positions have with the public. Automation may limit the discretion of public officials, increase transparency and make it more difficult for corrupt transactions to be affected. For e.g., The introduction of e-Filing of ITR and faceless tax appeal has reduced the instances of tax terrorism and bribe culture in tax officials.
- Efficient delivery of services: the use of ICT can help in bringing efficiency in service delivery mechanism in many government schemes. For e.g., more than 40% of foodgrain under public distribution system (PDS) do not reach the fair price shops, this can be reduced through the application of ICT.
- Better Grievance redressal system: ICT enable citizens to register their grievance online without any interaction with the officials or intermediaries. In India, Centralised Public Grievance Redress and Monitoring System (CPGRAMS) is an online platform available to the citizens 24x7 to lodge their grievances to the public authorities on any subject related to service delivery.
- Better implementation and monitoring of schemes: ICTs along with blockchain technology, artificial intelligence etc. can help the government through better implementation and monitoring strategies. For e.g., PRAGATI is a platform in India is a multi-purpose and multi-modal platform that is aimed at addressing common man’s grievances, and simultaneously monitoring and reviewing important programmes and projects of the Government of India.

India is on an upward trajectory in terms of digitalisation, albeit there are more grounds to cover in rural India. Digital literacy programmes like the Pradhan Mantri Grameen Digital Saksharta Abhiyan (PMGDISHA) can also be ramped up in order to create greater transparency and accountability within delivery systems. Meanwhile, digitisation of internal processes of the government and data-driven tech innovations are areas that should be explored to further strengthen the integrity systems and disrupt corruption risks.

### MCQs

1. What is/are the purpose/purposes of Government’s ‘Sovereign Gold Bond Scheme’ and ‘Gold Monetization Scheme’?
  1. To bring the idle gold lying with Indian households into the economy.
  2. To promote FDI in the gold and jewellery sector.
  3. To reduce India’s dependence on gold imports.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

a) 1 only                      b) 2 and 3 only                      c) **1 and 3 only**                      d) 1, 2 and 3
2. With reference to the Indian economy, what are the advantages of “Inflation-Indexed Bonds (IIBs)”?
  1. Government can reduce the coupon rates on its borrowing by way of IIBs.
  2. IIBs provide protection to the investors from uncertainty regarding inflation.
  3. The interest received as well as capital gains on IIBs are not taxable.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

a) **1 and 2 only**                      b) 2 and 3 only                      c) 1 and 3 only                      d) 1, 2 and 3
3. Consider the following statements about Nuclear Command Authority::
  1. Nuclear Command Authority that includes a Political Council and an Executive Council.
  2. Chief of Defense staff of India chairs the Executive Council.
  3. Prime Minister of India chairs the political Council.

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

a) 1 and 2 only  
b) 2 and 3 only  
c) 1 and 3 only  
d) **2 only**
4. Consider the following statements
  1. PM-KUSUM scheme initiated in 2019 to help people in rural India construct off-grid solar pumps to ensure independence from the grid, in grid-connected locations.
  2. The goal of the plan is to assist farmers who have fields devoid of natural resources in developing solar power capacity on their land and selling it to the grid.

- Which of the above statement/s is/are correct?
- 1 only
  - 2 only
  - Both 1 and 2**
  - Neither 1 nor 2
5. With reference to the fish production, consider the following statements:
- India is the largest fish producing nation in the world.
  - The Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY) is an umbrella scheme with two separate components – Central Sector Scheme and Centrally Sponsored Scheme.
- Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
- 1 only
  - 2 only**
  - Both 1 and 2
  - Neither 1 nor 2
6. With reference to Pradhan Mantri Virasat Ka Samvardhan (PM VIKAS) Scheme consider the following
- It is an integrated scheme converges five erstwhile schemes of the Ministry of Women and child development viz Seekho aur Kamao, USTTAD, Hamari Dharohar, Nai Roshni and Nai Manzil.
  - PM VIKAS aims to improve livelihoods of the minorities, particularly the artisan communities, using the components of skill development, education, women leadership & entrepreneurship
- Which of the above statement/s is/are correct?
- 1 only
  - 2 only**
  - Both 1 and 2
  - Neither 1 nor 2
7. R2 Code of Practices” constitute a tool available for promoting the adoption of
- Environmentally responsible practices in the electronics recycling industry**
  - Ecological management of “Wetlands of International Importance” under the Ramsar Convention
  - Sustainable practices in the cultivation of agricultural crops in degraded lands
  - “Environmental Impact Assessment” in the exploitation of natural resources
8. With reference to National Clean Air Campaign (NCAP), consider the following statements:
- It was launched by the Center in 2019.
  - The goal is to reduce pollution by 40% over 2017 levels by 2026.
- Which of the above statements is/are correct?
- 1 only
  - 2 only
  - Both 1 and 2**
  - Neither 1 nor 2
9. Consider the following statements regarding Vijay Diwas:
- Vijay Diwas is celebrated every year on December 17.
  - The day commemorates Bangladesh's victory over Pakistan.
- Which of the statements given above is/are not correct?
- 1 only**
  - 2 only
  - Both 1 and 2
  - Neither 1 nor 2
10. Consider the following statements with respect to ‘Youth Co:Lab’
- It is an initiative launched by UNDP India in partnership with Atal Innovation Mission
  - Passionate young founders with solutions that solve real problems and/or create meaningful co-innovation opportunities will be supported under this programme
- Which of the above statement/s is/are incorrect?
- 1 only
  - 2 only
  - Both 1 and 2
  - Neither 1 nor 2**