



RACE IAS

## Daily current affairs

27 April 2022

### PIL against the lifetime status of 'Cabinet minister' to Goa's Pratapsingh Rane:

#### Context:

The BJP govt had honoured the veteran Congress leader - Pratapsingh Rane - for his 50 years as MLA by providing the "lifetime status of the rank of Cabinet minister".

- Pratapsingh Rane is a six-time Chief Minister of Goa and a legislator for a full 50 years.

#### What's the issue now?

A case in the HC now says this move violated the 91st Amendment.

Goa has a 12-member Cabinet, and the conferment of Cabinet status on Rane results in the number of Cabinet ranks rising to 13, which exceeds the ceiling mandated by the Constitution. There are 40 seats in the unicameral Goa Assembly.

- The Constitution (91st Amendment) Act, 2003 inserted clause 1A in Article 164, which says "the total number of Ministers, including the Chief Minister, in the Council of Ministers in a State shall not exceed fifteen per cent of the total number of members of the Legislative Assembly of that State provided that the number of Ministers, including the Chief Minister in a State shall not be less than twelve".

**Sources: Indian Express**

# Governor's powers to appoint VCs of state universities:

## Context:

Tamil Nadu has passed two Bills proposing to take away the Governor's powers to appoint VCs of state universities.

## Highlights of the Bill:

- The Bills stress that "every appointment of the Vice-Chancellor shall be made by the Government from out of a panel of three names" recommended by a search-cum-selection committee.
- Removal: The Bills also seek to empower the state government to have the final word on the removal of VCs, if needed.
- Procedure: Removal will be carried out based on inquiries by a retired High Court judge or a bureaucrat who has served at least as a Chief Secretary.

## Reasons behind the enactment of these legislations:

Chief Minister MK Stalin said the Bills were required as the Governor was disregarding the state government's opinion on the appointments of VCs.

The elected governments have repeatedly accused the Governors of acting at the behest of the Centre on various subjects, including education.

## Which other states have enacted such similar legislations?

Maharashtra and West Bengal.

- Kerala and Odisha have also tried to bring appointments to state universities under its control.

## What is the UGC's role in this?

- Education comes under the Concurrent List, but entry 66 of the Union List gives the Centre substantial authority over higher education.
- Here, the University Grants Commission (UGC) plays standard-setting role, even in the case of appointments in universities and colleges.

According to the UGC Regulations, 2018, “Visitor/Chancellor” – mostly the Governor in states – shall appoint the VC out of the panel of names recommended by search-cum-selection committees.

- Higher educational institutions, particularly those that get UGC funds, are mandated to follow its regulations.

#### **Observations made by the Supreme Court:**

The Supreme Court, in March 2022, quashed the appointment of Shirish Kulkarni as the Vice-Chancellor of Sardar Patel University in Gujarat.

#### **Judgment:**

- Any appointment as a Vice Chancellor contrary to the provisions of the UGC Regulations can be said to be in violation of the statutory provisions, warranting a writ of quo warranto”.
- Every subordinate legislation of the UGC flows from the parent UGC Act, 1956. Therefore, being a subordinate legislation, UGC Regulations become part of the Act.
- In case of any conflict between state legislation and central legislation, central legislation shall prevail by applying the rule/principle of repugnancy as enunciated in Article 254 of the Constitution as the subject ‘education’ is in the Concurrent List of the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution.

**Sources: Indian Express.**

## **IT Rules, 2021:**

#### **Context:**

The Information & Broadcasting (I&B) Ministry has blocked 16 YouTube news channels, including six from Pakistan.

- Previously, it had blocked 78 YouTube news channels, including 18 from India, on various charges.

#### **Why?**

On charges of spreading false and unverified information to create panic, incite communal disharmony and disturb public order in the country.

### **Legal basis:**

The action has been taken using emergency powers under Rule 18 of the **IT Rules, 2021**.

### **Overview of the IT rules, 2021:**

1. It mandates a grievance redressal system for over the top (OTT) and digital portals in the country. This is necessary for the users of social media to raise their grievance against the misuse of social media.
2. Significant social media firms have to appoint a chief compliance officer and have a nodal contact person who can be in touch with law enforcement agencies 24/7.
3. A grievance officer: Social media platforms will also have to name a grievance officer who shall register the grievance within 24 hours and dispose of it in 15 days.
4. Removal of content: If there are complaints against the dignity of users, particularly women - about exposed private parts of individuals or nudity or sexual act or impersonation etc - social media platforms will be required to remove that within 24 hours after a complaint is made.
5. A monthly report: They also will have to publish a monthly report about the number of complaints received and the status of redressal.
6. There will be three levels of regulation for news publishers – self-regulation, a self-regulatory body, headed by a retired judge or an eminent person, and oversight from the Information and Broadcasting Ministry, including codes of practices and a grievance committee.

### **What is a significant social media intermediary and benefits obtained under it?**

Social media companies with more than 50 lakh registered users will be considered 'significant social media intermediaries', as per the new norms.

### **What happens in case of non compliance?**

- Social media giants such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and WhatsApp messenger could face a ban if they do not comply with the new Information Technology rules.
- They also run the risk of losing their status as "intermediaries" and may become liable for criminal action if they do not comply with the revised regulations.

## Defence Acquisition Procedure:

### Context:

Defence Acquisition Procedure (DAP) 2020 has been amended based on the approvals accorded by Defence Acquisition Council (DAC) in respect of the following:

1. Going forward all modernisation requirements of the Defence Services and Indian Coast Guard are to be indigenously sourced irrespective of the nature of procurement.
2. Import of defence equipment/sourcing from Foreign Industry of capital acquisitions should only be an exception and undertaken with specific approval of DAC/Raksha Mantri.
3. Requirement of Integrity Pact Bank Guarantee (IPBG) has been dispensed with. Instead, Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) will be taken as a bid security for all acquisition cases with Acceptance of Necessity (AoN) cost more than Rs 100 crore.

### DAP 2020:

- The new policy superseded the Defence Procurement Procedure of 2016 from October 1.
- The DAP contains policies and procedures for procurement and acquisition from the capital budget of the MoD in order to modernise the Armed Forces including the Coast Guard.

### Highlights of the new policy:

#### 1. Reservations for Indigenous firms:

The policy reserves several procurement categories for indigenous firms.

DAP 2020 defines an “Indian vendor” as a company that is owned and controlled by resident Indian citizens, with foreign direct investment (FDI) not more than 49 per cent.

#### 1. New Buy (Global-Manufacture in India) category:

This stipulates indigenisation of at least 50 per cent of the overall contract value of a foreign purchase bought with the intention of subsequently building it in India with technology transfer.

#### **1. Greater indigenous content:**

It promotes greater indigenous content in arms and equipment of the military procures, including equipment manufactured in India under licence. In most acquisition categories, DAP-2020 stipulates 10 per cent higher indigenisation than DPP 2016.

#### **1. Import embargo list:**

The “import embargo list” of 101 items that the government promulgated last month has been specifically incorporated into DAP 2020. (An embargo is a government order that restricts commerce with a specified country or the exchange of specific goods.)

#### **1. Offset liability:**

The government has decided not to have an offset clause in procurement of defence equipment if the deal is done through inter-government agreement (IGA), government-to-government or an ab initio single vendor.

- The offset clause requires a foreign vendor to invest a part of the contract value in India.

**Sources:** the Hindu.

## **Haryana imposes ban on transportation of fodder:**

#### **Context:**

The authorities in Haryana have banned inter-district and inter-state transportation of wheat fodder.

#### **Rationale behind this move:**

- There may be a shortage of fodder for the animals in the district if the same is sent out from the district.
- The situation is likely to worsen in future in the absence of rains.

- More farmers opting for mustard crop in place of wheat in southern Haryana.
- There is less than usual production of wheat because of early onset of summer coupled with an exceptional rise in mercury this year.
- Because of geopolitical tensions amid the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war, a perception is building that the wheat prices would increase in near future.

In this environment, the authorities want to meet local needs of fodder before allowing the same for other states.

#### **Criticisms:**

The decision has drawn sharp criticism from the farmer groups and the Opposition.

- Farmer groups say, the authorities are not allowing the farmers to earn profit by selling their fodder at higher prices when they are already hit by low production of wheat this year.

**Sources: Indian Express.**

## **Self-replicating mRNA Covid-19 vaccines:**

#### **Context:**

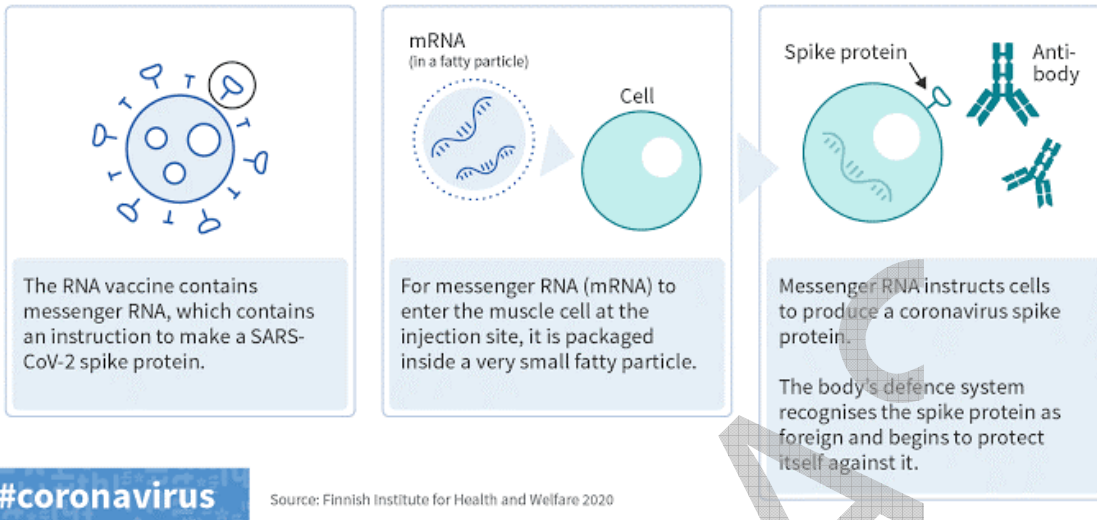
A California based pharmaceutical company has developed ARCT-154, a self-amplifying mRNA vaccine against Covid-19 infection.

#### **Benefits:**

It offered 95% protection against severe Covid-19 and 55% against Covid infection.

## How does the mRNA coronavirus vaccine work?

thl



### What are mRNA vaccines?

An mRNA vaccine uses messenger RNA that encodes the spike protein of the coronavirus.

- The mRNA directs the cell to produce copies of the spike protein, so that the immune system will recognise the spike if and when actual infection takes place, and mount a response.

Examples: Pfizer/BioNTech and Moderna.

### What are self-amplifying mRNA vaccines?

A self-amplifying mRNA vaccine is an improvement on the traditional RNA platform. It encodes four extra proteins in addition to the vaccine antigen, and these enable amplification of the original strand of RNA once inside the cell. The basic advantage is that it requires a smaller dose.

Sources: [the Hindu](#).

## Can climate change be solved by pricing carbon?

### Context:

Pennsylvania has become the first major fossil fuel-producing state in the US to adopt a carbon pricing policy to address climate change.



- It joins 11 states where coal, oil and natural gas power plants must buy credits for every ton of carbon dioxide they emit.

### **What is the Carbon Pricing Approach?**

Carbon pricing is an instrument that captures the external costs of greenhouse gas(GHG) emissions and ties them to their sources through a price usually in the form of a price on the carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emitted.

- These GHG emissions include the costs of emissions that the public pays for, such as damage to crops, health care costs from heatwaves and droughts, and loss of property from flooding and sea-level rise.
- A price on carbon helps shift the burden for the damage from GHG emissions back to those who are responsible for it and who can avoid it.

### **There are two main types of carbon pricing namely:**

**Emission Trading System :** It is a system where emitters can trade emission units to meet their emission targets.

**Carbon Tax:** It directly sets a price on carbon by defining a tax rate on greenhouse gas emissions or - more commonly - on the carbon content of fossil fuels.

Different approaches adopted by countries to address climate change:

**Social Cost of Carbon:** The United States has adopted a less direct approach known as the Social Cost of Carbon. This approach calculates future climate damages to justify tougher restrictions on polluting industries.

**Carbon Pricing approach:** On the other hand, countries like Canada have adopted a Carbon Pricing approach. For example, Canada imposes fuel charges on individuals and also makes big polluters pay for emissions. It's one of 27 nations with some kind of carbon tax.

### **Differences:**

- The social cost of carbon attempts to capture the value of all climate damage, centuries into the future.
- Carbon pricing reflects how much companies are willing to pay today for a limited amount of emission credits offered at auction.

In other words, the social cost of carbon guides policy, while carbon pricing represents policy in practice.

### **Significance of Carbon Pricing:**

1. Putting a price on carbon helps to incorporate climate risks into the cost of doing business.
2. Emitting carbon becomes more expensive, and consumers and producers seek ways to use technologies and products that generate less of it.
3. The market then operates as an efficient means to cut emissions, fostering a shift to a clean energy economy and driving innovation in low-carbon technologies.
4. Complementary renewable energy and energy efficiency policies are also critical to cost-effectively drive down emissions.

### **Issues related to Carbon Pricing:**

- Carbon prices now exist in 46 countries, covering about 22 percent of the carbon pollution that humans release each year. But these policies are riddled with loopholes.
- Big carbon polluters like fossil fuel companies, electric utilities, automakers, petrochemical companies, and other heavy industries, have used their structural power to receive policy exemptions.
- According to the World Bank, countries need policies between \$40 to \$80 per tonne to meet the Paris Agreement targets. Yet half of the world's carbon prices are less than \$10 per tonne.
- Some researchers suggested that it limits innovations. But there is no strong evidence that carbon pricing has rapidly induced the innovation we need in new, cleaner technologies.

**Sources: Indian Express.**

## **Kuril Islands:**

Japan's Diplomatic Bluebook for 2022 has described **the Kuril Islands (which Japan calls the Northern Territories and Russia as the South Kurils)** as being under Russia's "illegal occupation".

- This is the first time in about two decades that Japan has used this phrase to describe the dispute over the Kuril Islands.

### **Kuril Islands/ Northern Territories:**

- These are a set of four islands situated between the Sea of Okhotsk and the Pacific Ocean near the north of Japan's northernmost prefecture, Hokkaido.
- Both Moscow and Tokyo claim sovereignty over them though the islands have been under Russian control since the end of World War II.

### **Basis for these differing claims:**

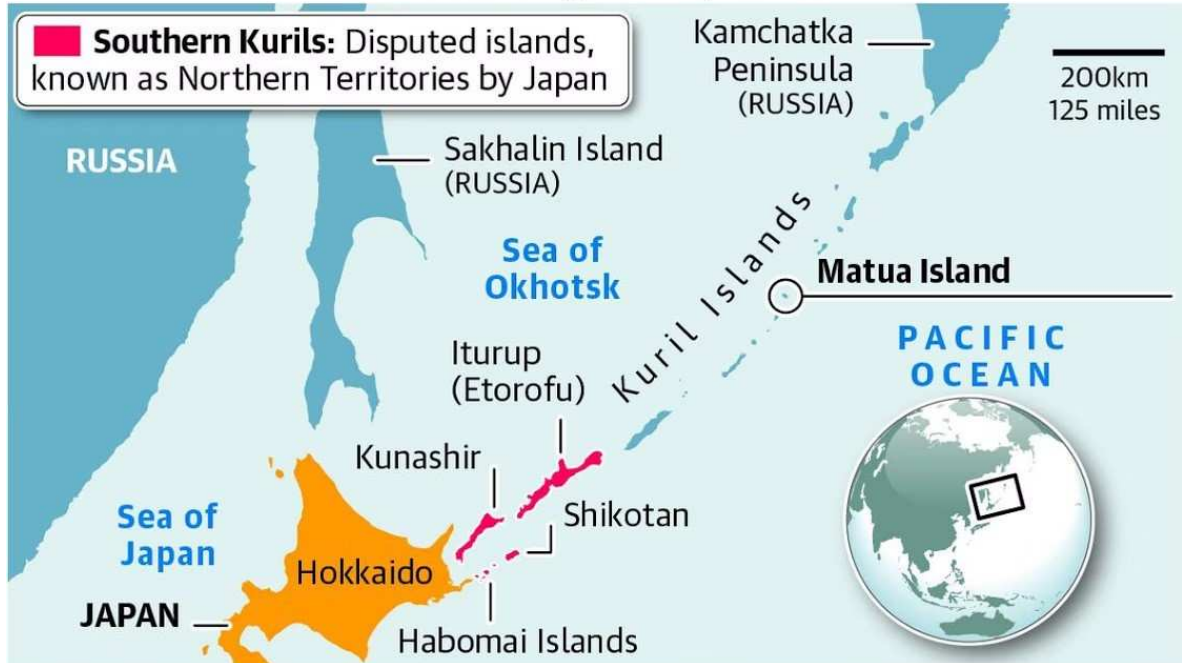
**According to Tokyo**, Japan's sovereignty over the islands is confirmed by several treaties like the Shimoda Treaty of 1855, the 1875 Treaty for the exchange of Sakhalin for the Kuril Islands (Treaty of St. Petersburg), and the Portsmouth Treaty of 1905 signed after the Russo-Japanese war of 1904-05 which Japan had won.

**Russia**, on the other hand, claims the Yalta Agreement (1945) and the Potsdam Declaration (1945) as proof of its sovereignty and argues that the San Francisco Treaty of 1951 is legal evidence that Japan had acknowledged Russian sovereignty over the islands.

RACE IAS

# The Kuril Islands kerfuffle between Russia and Japan

Post Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Japan has elevated its claim over the Kuril Islands which is currently under the control of Russia. On April 22, Japan's Diplomatic Bluebook for 2022 described the Kuril Islands as being under Russia's "illegal occupation."



## HISTORY OF THE KURIL DISPUTE

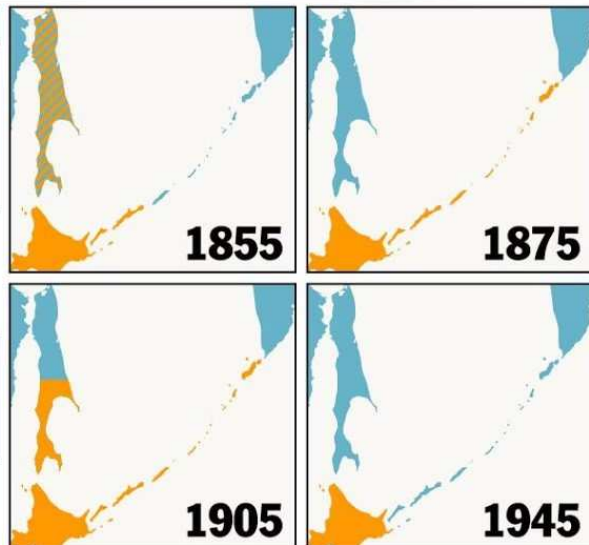
■ **1855:** The **Treaty of Shimoda** gives southern Kurils to Japan and rest of the island chain to Russia. Sakhalin Island to be under joint administration

■ **1875:** The **Treaty of St. Petersburg** cedes all Kurils to Japan in exchange for Russian jurisdiction over Sakhalin

■ **1905:** After Russia's defeat in the **Russo-Japanese War**, Japan gains control of southern Sakhalin

■ **1945:** The Soviet Union occupies the entire Kuril chain and southern Sakhalin after declaring war on Japan during the final days of **World War II**

■ **1951:** Japan renounces claim to Kurils in the **Treaty of San Francisco**, signed between Japan and the Allied powers. The Soviet Union does not sign, and Japan later claims that the four southern islands are not part of the Kuril chain



■ **1956:** The **Soviet-Japanese Joint Declaration** restores diplomatic ties between the two countries. The Soviet Union agrees to cede islands of Shikotan and Habomai to Japan after signing of formal peace treaty. Japan claims territorial rights to all four southern islands, so no agreement is signed

Sources: Stratfor, wire agencies

© GRAPHIC NEWS

RACE IAS