



RACE IAS

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The Goa civil code:

Context:

Goa chief minister Pramod Sawant recently said that the Goa civil code can be a model that other states can emulate. This statement comes amid the ongoing discussions for having a Uniform Civil Code for India.

What is Goa Civil Code?

In 1867, Portugal enacted a Portuguese civil code and in 1869 it was extended to Portugal's overseas provinces (that included Goa). It is considered a Uniform Civil Code.

- While when it comes to marriage and adoption, there is not complete uniformity, generally the Goa Civil Code is far more gender-just than other laws in the country.
- The law also doesn't recognise bigamy or polygamy, including for Muslims but grants an exception to a Hindu man to marry once again if his wife doesn't conceive a child by the age of 21 or a male child by the age of 30.

The law provides for:

- Compulsory registration of marriages before a civil authority, ensuring that the wife is an equal inheritor and is entitled to half of the "common assets" including those inherited by her husband in the case of a divorce.
- The parents must compulsorily share at least half of the property with their children including daughters.

Why does a civil code enacted by the Portuguese continue to exist even today?

The Portuguese Civil Code in Goa continued in India by virtue of Section 5(1) of the Goa, Daman and Diu Administration Act, 1962, through which the Indian Government ruled that “all laws in force in Goa, Daman and Diu or any part thereof shall continue to be in force therein until amended or repealed by a competent legislature or other competent authority.”

- Because of this, the Portuguese civil code continues to be in force in Goa.

What is UCC?

UCC essentially refers to a common set of laws governing personal matters such as marriage, divorce, inheritance and succession for all citizens of the country.

- Article 44 of the Constitution, which is one of the Directive Principles of State Policy, also advocates a uniform civil code.
- However, governments since Independence have allowed respective religion-based civil codes to respect the diversity of India.

Sources: Hindustan Times

Bhojshala:

The Madhya Pradesh high court has issued notices to the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), Centre and the state government on a petition pertaining to the dispute over the monument of Bhojshala in state's Dhar district.

- Bhojshala is an ASI protected 11th century monument, which Hindus claim is a temple of Vagdevi (Goddess Saraswati), while the Muslim community treats it as Kamal Maula Mosque.
- The name is derived from the celebrated king Bhoja of the Paramāra dynasty of central India, a patron of education and the arts, to whom major Sanskrit works on poetics, yoga and architecture are attributed.
- As per the arrangement made by the ASI on April 7, 2003, Hindus perform puja in the premises every Tuesday, while Muslims offer namaz in the complex on Fridays.

Regulators don't need constitutional status:

Context:

This article appeared in the Opinion section of Business Standard.

- It talks about the need for giving constitutional status to regulators, rationale behind the present arrangements by the constitution and what are the alternatives available.

Why should Indian regulatory agencies be given constitutional status? - arguments in favour:

- Too much political pressure on Indian regulatory agencies. This affects the way they perform their functions.
- Providing constitutional status would restore symmetry between regulatory agencies and the elected government.

Issues arising by providing constitutional status to regulatory bodies:

This gives rise to cascading effects.

- For instance, we detest government intervention in the affairs of higher educational institutions, stock exchanges (also mini-regulators) banks.
- Should we then confer constitutional status on the IITs, stock exchanges and public sector banks?
- Even if given, that would make for a bulky and potentially an easily amendable Constitution. This violates the original spirit of the Indian Constitution.

Why do some institutions need constitutional backing?

The Constitution fortifies institutions that are designed to exercise checks and balances on elected bodies and safeguard against majoritarian tendencies.

- For instance, it fortifies the position of the higher judiciary, the comptroller and auditor general's office and the election commission, all of them meant to exercise checks on an elected government.

Why do regulatory agencies not need constitutional backing?

Regulatory agencies do not comprise elected representatives of the people. In fact, many argue that they comprise technocratic elites who make regulations that have the binding effect of the law, license and regulate intermediating firms.

Why do we need regulatory bodies when there are elected bodies?

- To build-up expertise and capacity to regulate complex areas.
- Credible commitment: When the government sets up a regulator, it cedes its sovereign powers to govern that area of the economy. By doing so, it signals its commitment to policy stability.
- Public interest: Sticking to this credible commitment elicits confidence in the public that policymaking in that sector will be driven by public interest and not election cycles.

What are the alternatives available?

- Provide “fair contract terms” for these agencies under their governing law.
- Align the incentives of the persons heading the regulatory agencies with public interest.
- Require them to consistently explain their actions to the public.
- Transparency of conduct is one of the most effective ways of incentivising the agency to act in public interest.

Sources: Business Standard.

Legal Status of abortion in India:

Context:

A bill intended to codify abortion rights in the United States failed to advance in the Senate.

- The Women’s Health Protection Act, which had passed the House of Representatives, was voted down 49-51 in the upper chamber.

What’s the issue?

The bill would codify the right to an abortion into federal law.

- Republicans have criticised the bill, saying that it went further than most Americans would want to go on abortion rights.

Legal status of abortion in India:

Indian Penal Code:

- It says, voluntarily causing a woman with child to miscarry is an offence attracting a jail term of up to three years or fine or both, unless it was done in good faith where the purpose was to save the life of the pregnant woman.
- A pregnant woman causing herself to miscarry is also an offender under this provision apart from the person causing the miscarriage, which in most cases would be a medical practitioner.

Medical Termination of Pregnancy (MTP) Act, 1971:

This law is an exception to the IPC provisions above and sets out the rules for accessing an MTP.

- This law has been amended twice since, the most recent set of amendments being in the year 2021.
- However, the law does not recognise and/or acknowledge the right of a pregnant person to decide on the discontinuation of a pregnancy.

According to MTP Act 1971, when can MTP be accessed?

1. The continuation of the pregnancy would involve a risk to the life of the pregnant woman or result in grave injury to her physical or mental health.
2. If the pregnancy is as a result of rape or failure of contraceptive used by the pregnant woman or her partner to limit the number of children or to prevent a pregnancy.
3. The anguish caused by the continuation of such a pregnancy would be considered to be a grave injury to the mental health of the pregnant woman.
4. The other reason for seeking an MTP is the substantial risk that if the child was born, it would suffer from any serious physical or mental abnormality.

Procedure:

- The pregnancy can be terminated for any of the above reasons, on the opinion of a single registered medical practitioner up to 20 weeks of the gestational age.
- From 20 weeks up to 24 weeks, the opinion of two registered medical practitioners is required.
- Any decision for termination of pregnancy beyond 24 weeks gestational age, only on the ground of foetal abnormalities can be taken by a Medical Board as set up in each State, as per the law.
- No termination of pregnancy can be done in the absence of the consent of the pregnant person, irrespective of age and/or mental health.

Right to Health:

In various case, the courts had ruled that the right of a pregnant woman to decide on the continuation of her pregnancy is a part of her right to health and right to life. Therefore, right is non-negotiable.

Sources: the Hindu.

Shallow and deep ecologism:

Context:

Recent effects of climate change (Heatwaves, droughts etc.) have brought into focus two strands of environmental philosophy that reinvent the relationship between nature and humans – shallow and deep ecologism.

- The concepts emerged in the 1970s, when Norwegian philosopher Arne Næss sought to look beyond the popular pollution and conservation movements of his milieu to address environmental degradation.
- By placing humans at the heart of the environmental crisis, Næss outlines the difference between the two styles of ecologism.

What is shallow ecologism?

Also referred to as weak ecologism.

The powerful and fashionable fight against pollution and resource depletion is shallow ecologism or environmentalism.

Exponents of this philosophy believe in continuing our present lifestyle, but with specific tweaks aimed at minimising the damage to the environment.

- It may include the use of vehicles that cause less pollution or air conditioners that do not release chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs).

What is deep ecologism?

Deep ecologism believes that humans should radically change their relationship with nature.

- It aspires to sustain nature by making large-scale changes to our lifestyle.
- These may include limiting the commercial farming of meat to preserve forest areas and reduce the artificial fattening of animals, or the reshaping of transport systems which involve the use of internal combustion engines.

What it advocates?

- Robust policy formulation and implementation.
- Policy-making must be aided by the reorientation of technical skills and inventions in new directions that are ecologically responsible.
- Re-evaluate the 'survival of the fittest' doctrine. Survival of the fittest should be understood through the human ability to cooperate and coexist with nature, as opposed to exploiting or dominating it.

Deep ecologism thus prioritises a 'live and let live' attitude over an 'either you or me' approach.

Issues with shallow ecologism:

Its proponents reject shallow ecologism for prioritising humans above other forms of life, and subsequently preserving the environmentally destructive way of life in modern societies.

- Deep ecologism maintains that by sustaining this lifestyle, shallow ecologism further widens the inequalities between countries.
- For instance, despite constituting only five per cent of the world's population, the U.S. accounts for 17% of the world's energy consumption and is the second largest consumer of electricity after China.

Sources: the Hindu.

WMO Global Annual to Decadal Climate Update:

Context:

The global annual to decadal climate update report was recently issued by the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO).

- The annual update harnesses the expertise of internationally acclaimed climate scientists and the best prediction systems from leading climate centres around the world to produce actionable information for decision-makers.

Major Findings:

- There is a 50 per cent chance that the world may temporarily breach 1.5°C of warming in one of the next five years.
- There is a 93 per cent chance that at least one year between 2022 and 26 will replace 2016 as the warmest year on record.
- The chance of temporarily exceeding 1.5°C has risen steadily since 2015, when it was close to zero. For the years between 2017 and 2021, there was a 10% chance of exceedance. That probability has increased to nearly 50% for the 2022-2026 period.
- The annual mean global near-surface temperature for each year between 2022 and 2026 is predicted to be between 1.1 °C and 1.7 °C higher than preindustrial levels (the average over the years 1850-1900).
- The Arctic temperature anomaly, compared to the 1991-2020 average, is predicted to be more than three times as large as the global mean anomaly when averaged over the next five northern hemisphere extended winters.
- There is no signal for the El Niño Southern Oscillation for December-February 2022/23, but the Southern Oscillation index is predicted to be positive in 2022.

India Specific Findings:

- India could be among the few regions globally where below normal temperatures have been predicted for the year 2022 and the next four years.

- This may be because of the possible increase in rainfall activity in this decade. Many parts of India will receive above-normal rainfall. This will keep temperatures low.

Sources: Down to Earth.

Gallantry Awards:

Recently, President conferred 13 Shaurya Chakras, including six posthumous, to the personnel of Armed Forces during Defence Investiture Ceremony (Phase-1).

What are Highest Gallantry awards?

Param Vir Chakra: It is India's highest military decoration awarded for displaying distinguished acts of valor during wartime whether on land, at sea or in the air.

Maha Vir Chakra: It is the second highest gallantry award for acts of conspicuous gallantry in the presence of the enemy whether on land, at sea or in the air.

Vir Chakra: It is the country's third-highest wartime gallantry award after Param Vir Chakra and Maha Vir Chakra.

What is Open Radio Access Network (Open RAN)?

Context:

Short for Open Radio Access Network, Open RAN, is critical to 5G deployment. In India, the Open RAN architecture is essential but also fraught with challenges.

What is Open RAN?

Open Radio Access Network, or Open RAN, is a key part of a mobile network system that uses cellular radio connections to link individual devices to other parts of a network.

- It comprises antennae, which transmits and receives signals to and from our smartphones or other compatible devices. The signal is then digitised in the RAN-base station and connected to the network.
- O-RAN uses software to make hardware manufactured by different companies work together.

Advantages of Open-RAN:

1. An open environment expands the ecosystem, and provides more Options to the Operators.
2. It will boost new opportunities for the Indian entities to enter into the network equipment market.
3. It is expected to make 5G more flexible and cost-efficient.
4. The Open RAN architecture allows for the separation or disaggregation, between hardware and software with open interfaces.

How is Open RAN different from traditional RAN?

In the traditional set-up, Radio Access Network is provided as an integrated platform of both hardware and software. Therefore, it is difficult to mix vendors for the radio and baseband unit, and in most cases, they come from the same supplier.

- The idea of Open RAN is to change this, and enable operators to mix and match components.

Radio access network (RAN):

- It is a part of a mobile telecommunication system. It implements a radio access technology.
- Conceptually, it resides between a device such as a mobile phone, a computer, or any remotely controlled machine and provides connection with its core network (CN).
- RAN functionality is typically provided by a silicon chip residing in both the core network as well as the user equipment.

Sources: Business Standard.

Places in News - Odessa:

Russian forces recently attacked the vital port of Odessa as part of an apparent effort to disrupt supply lines and weapons shipments.

- Odessa is the third most populous city and municipality in Ukraine and a major seaport and transport hub.
- It is located in the south-west of the country, on the northwestern shore of the Black Sea.

- Odessa is sometimes called the “Pearl by the Sea”, the “Southern Capital”, “Odessa-mama” and “The Humour Capital”, as well as “Southern Palmyra”.
- Odessa is a warm-water port.



Himachal Pradesh is the first 'smoke-free state' in India:

Himachal Pradesh, in January 2022, became the first 'smoke-free state' in India.

- The major milestone was achieved while riding on the back of welfare schemes like 'Ujjwala Yojana' of Centre and 'Himachal Grihini Suvidha scheme of the state government'.
- It is also the 100 percent LPG-enabled state in the country. It simply refers to the fact that 100% of households in Himachal have LPG connections in their houses.

Why in the News?

In the last financial year, 90 lakh beneficiaries of Narendra Modi government's flagship welfare scheme Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana did not refill their cylinders,

according to a report. The same report appreciated Himachal Pradesh for its feat for becoming the first 'smoke-free state' in India.

Royal Gold Medal 2022:

Indian Architect Balkrishna Vitaldas Doshi was bestowed with the prestigious Royal Gold Medal 2022.

- Royal Gold Medal, one of the world's highest honours for architecture, by the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA), London, United Kingdom (UK).
- The Royal Gold Medal is approved personally by Queen Elizabeth II of the UK and the award is given to a person or group of people who have had a significant influence either directly or indirectly on the advancement of architecture.

Great Indian Bustards:

Context:

The Supreme Court of India had directed the governments of Rajasthan and Gujarat to ensure installation of bird-diverters on power lines before July 20, 2022.

- The move is aimed at protecting the Great Indian Bustard (GIB), the state bird of Rajasthan, and the lesser floricans in the area.

Great Indian Bustards (GIB):

IUCN status: critically endangered.

- Listed in Schedule I of the Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 and in the CMS Convention and in Appendix I of CITES.

Identified as one of the species for the recovery programme under the Integrated Development of Wildlife Habitats of the Ministry of Environment and Forests.

- Project Great Indian Bustard – state of Rajasthan – identifying and fencing off bustard breeding grounds in existing protected areas as well as provide secure breeding enclosures in areas outside protected areas.

Protected areas: Desert National Park Sanctuary – Rajasthan, Rollapadu Wildlife Sanctuary - Andhra Pradesh and Karera Wildlife Sanctuary- Madhya Pradesh.

Habitats in India:

- Only two districts in Rajasthan – Jaisalmer and Barmer – have a breeding GIB population in the wild.
- The bird can also be found in very small numbers in Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka, Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh.



Cyclone Karim:

Cyclone Asani, active now in the Bay of Bengal, has a twin – cyclone Karim – in the southern hemisphere.

- Both were formed in the Indian Ocean region.
- Both cyclones originated in the same longitude and now drifting apart.
- Cyclone Karim has created a path in the open seas west of Australia.

The name Karim was given by the South African country Seychelles.

SSR and SRIMAN Guidelines:

SSR and SRIMAN Guidelines were released on the occasion of Technology Day.

- Scientific Social Responsibility (SSR) is vital for strengthening science and society linkages for making S&T ecosystem responsive to societal needs.
 - The guidelines primarily involve bridging science-society, science-science and society-science gaps, thereby bringing trust, partnership and responsibility of science at an accelerated pace towards achieving social goals.
- Scientific Research Infrastructure Sharing Maintenance and Networks (SRIMAN) Guidelines aims to promote efficient utilisation and wider access of Research Infrastructure (RI) to scientists, researchers and industry professionals across the country.