Air Travel Bubbles

Why in news?

India has proposed establishing air travel bubbles with several countries.

What are travel bubbles?

- Travel bubbles join states that have largely eliminated the virus, and who trust in each other's testing and case numbers.
- It is also known as air bridges or Covid-safe travel zones.
- It is conceptualised by countries that have managed to fully or partially contain the outbreak.
- The concept of a travel bubble is **reciprocal** in nature.
- This means that both the departure point and the arrival point have to be on board.
- It also means that travel restrictions such as quarantining or testing of passengers have to be discarded among the countries in the bubble.

What are some proposed bubbles?

- Australia and New Zealand could lead the way with the proposed trans-Tasman bubble.
- The Baltic countries of Estonia, Lithuania, and Latvia too have created a bubble allowing free travel among them.

What is India's proposal?

- The Ministry of Civil Aviation (MoCA) is negotiating the setting up of travel bubbles to restart scheduled international passenger flights.
- It is looking at the possibility of establishing bilateral bubbles with US, France, Germany and UK.

What could be the hurdles for this proposal?

- The finalising of travel bubbles could be a huge step in the direction of resuming scheduled international air travel.
- But a lot depends on the destination country's perception of India in terms of being a Covid threat.
- The Indian government allowed outbound commercial travel on flights meant

to repatriate Indian citizens without allowing reciprocal benefits to countries like France and the US.
- This led to the US restricting Air India's repatriation flights.
- It is also threatening to suspend the third and fourth freedoms of flying.
- Also, France and the UAE too, have forced Air India to fly to Paris without any passengers.

What are some reversed decisions?

- New Zealand relaxed the restrictions on travel into the country as it had successfully controlled the spread of coronavirus.
- But, after the relaxation, it immediately started to record new cases.
- Following this, the country tightened border restrictions again.
- Similarly, several European Union countries that wanted to reopen travel are considering blocking American citizens from entering their borders.

Source: The Indian Express

SHANKAR IAS PARLIAMENT
Information is Empowering