Prelim Bits 22-04-2022 | UPSC Daily Current Affairs

Peer-to-Peer Lending

- Peer-to-peer (P2P) lending is a form of **direct lending of money** to individuals or businesses without an official financial institution participating as an intermediary in the deal.
- Due to some unique characteristics, peer-to-peer lending is considered as an **alternative source of financing**.
- It is also known as "social lending" or "crowd lending."
- P2P lending has only existed since 2005, but the crowd of competitors already includes Prosper, Lending Club, Upstart, and StreetShares.



- **P2P lending websites** are platforms that purely act as an intermediary or marketplace that connects borrowers and lenders.
- The site sets the rates and terms and enables the transactions.
- **P2P lenders** are individual investors who want to get a better return on their cash savings than a bank savings account or CD offers.
- **P2P borrowers** seek an alternative to traditional banks or a better rate than banks offer.
- **Loans provided** - P2P lending offers both secured & unsecured loans.
- However, most of the loans in P2P lending are unsecured personal loans.
- Secured loans are rare for the industry and are usually backed by luxury goods.
- **Advantages** - Higher returns to the investors, More accessible source of funding, Lower interest rates, etc
- **Disadvantages** - High credit risks, No insurance/ government protection, etc
- Some jurisdictions do not allow P2P lending or require the companies that provide such services to comply with investment regulations.
- **Related Links -** Peer-To-Peer Lending - CRED Mint

Reference

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3. https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/wealth/borrow/what-is-peer-to-peer-lending-here-are-5-things-to-know/articleshow/85921771.cms
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Two-finger Test

The Madurai Bench of the Madras High Court directed the State to ban 'two-finger test' on victims of sexual offences, particularly on minor victims.

In 2013, the Supreme Court had held that the Two-finger Test and its interpretation violated the right of rape survivors to privacy, physical and mental integrity and dignity (right to privacy).

- A "per vaginal" or two-finger test is an explicitly intrusive physical examination wherein a doctor inserts two fingers inside the vagina of a rape survivor to check if
    1. The hymen is intact or not, and
    2. The size of the vaginal opening and the laxity of vagina.
- It examines the laxity of vagina in order to determine if the woman has engaged in or has been subjected to sexual intercourse.
- As per WHO, the two-finger test cannot prove that a woman has had a vaginal intercourse or not.
- The technique is practised on the **assumption** that a hymen can be torn because of sexual intercourse and that the appearance of female genitalia can determine the sexual history of a woman.
- **Controversy** - Virginity testing is a patriarchal idea which transgresses ethics, ethical medical practices, as well as the **privacy** of the victim.
- For decades, however, the two-finger test was the only method of confirming rape.
- In addition to being medically uncalled-for, it is exclusively performed on women, mostly **without their consent**.
- The practice is rooted in **gender and power inequalities**, wherein a woman's body is a subject of archaic ideas and/or can be regulated as per men's desires.

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3. https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/iaf-officer-alleges-she-was-subjected-to-two-finger-test-what-does-sc-say-10163307598862html

Water Adalat

Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB) held a Water Adalat.

- Water adalat is a concept started by the **Bangalore Water Supply & Sewerage Board** (BWSSB).
- It was started to **resolve disputes** related to water billing, delay in provision of water supply, sanitary connection and conversion from non-domestic to domestic connection.
- It is arranged on every first Wednesday (Now, Thursday) of the month to solve the grievances of the public related to the mentioned water issues.

Reference

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Extension of Tenure of Environmental Clearances

Union Ministry of Environment has extended the tenure of environmental clearances (EC) granted for existing or new projects.

- An Environmental Clearance (EC) is a long-drawn process that is mandatory for projects beyond a certain size.
- It often involves an environment impact assessment of a potential project and sometimes public hearings involving the local populace who might be affected by the project.
- It is mandatory for **39 types** of developmental projects including mining, hydro power and thermal power among others.
- The process for clearance is outlined by the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) notification of 2006.

Project	**Extended Validity of the Environmental Clearances**
River valley projects	13 years
Nuclear power projects, or those involving the processing of nuclear fuel	15 years
Projects and activities other than the mining and river valley projects	10 years

- Explaining its rationale to extend the validity of the projects, the Ministry said that nuclear power projects and hydropower projects had **high gestation period**.
- High gestation period is due to geological surprises, land acquisition, delays in forest clearance, local issues, rehabilitation & resettlement, etc.
- One of the conditions of an EC is that a project must begin construction in the period that it has been granted an EC and if unable, a fresh process must begin. This leads to projects being financially unviable.
- Mining leases are now granted for a period of 50 years but the Environment Clearance is valid for 30 years.
- The Central Government deems it necessary to align the validity of mining ECs, subject to review & appropriate environmental safeguards.

Exemption

- Environment Ministry also proposed to **exempt highway projects** that would serve India's strategic interests from the EC process.
- The notification further stated that instead, project proponents should comply with a **set of standards to safeguard the environment**.

  In 2021, the National Board for Wildlife, which grants wildlife clearance, had also approved the construction of roads in border areas where there are wildlife sanctuaries for their "strategic importance".

- The same notification also proposed that 15 MW thermal power plants should be allowed to increase their capacity to up to 25 MW without the clearance. There is a condition that these thermal power plants must,
  1. Primarily function on biomass and solid waste, and
  2. Use up to 15% of petrol, coal or lignite as an auxiliary fuel.

- It also sought to exempt the expansion of ports for fishermen who use boats with less pollution potential, as well as allow expansion of terminal buildings within airports, provided they do not usurp more land.
- This involves only incremental environmental impacts which can be catered by providing for environmental safeguards built into the project's Environmental Management Plan.

Reference

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Draft Guidelines for Uniform Right of Way

The Department of Telecommunications (DoT) has released draft policy guidelines to bring consistency in Right of Way-related procedures across states and spur the deployment of telecom infrastructure ahead of 5G roll out.

Right of Way (RoW) is the legal right, allowing online filing of application.

Basically, this is a framework for setting up telecom towers, laying fibre cables, settling disputes, and improve coordination among companies.

- The 'Draft Policy Guidelines on Right of Way (RoW) for Establishment of Telecommunications Infrastructure' have been prepared for outlining general principles related to RoW permissions.
- The existing RoW policy has been adopted by about 18 states and the rest of the states are also close to aligning with the government's RoW policy.
- The draft guidelines has prescribed the methodology for
    1. Calculation of RoW area,
    2. Establishment of poles for the deployment of small cells,
    3. Usage of street furniture for the deployment of small cells,
    4. Mandatory in-building solutions (IBS),
    5. The provision of an online RoW portal and deemed approval, among other things.
- In the case of the establishment of poles for the deployment of small cells, the application fee shall not exceed Rs.1,000 per application.
- There shall be neither application fee nor compensation for using the street furniture for installing small cells and Optical Fibre Cable (OFC) required to connect small cells.
- [This street furniture may be either established by any person or entity over the immovable property of the local/government authority.]
- However, an applicant must submit a self-declared intimation to the authority on the online RoW portal for the usage of street furniture.
- Telecom Engineering Centre (TEC) shall issue guidelines in respect of the structural safety of the street furniture for installation of small cells.
- The central government authorities shall permit deployment of small cells on government buildings and structures free of cost.
- The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) has taken up a pilot programme to use

street furniture to accelerate the expansion of telecom infrastructure in the wake of impending 5G commercial roll outs.

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