Prelim Bits 31-07-2022 & 01-08-2022 | UPSC Daily Current Affairs

Living Lands Charter

At the 2022 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in Kigali, all 54 Commonwealth members have officially adopted the Living Lands Charter: A Commonwealth Call to action on Living Lands (CALL).

- All Commonwealth members have agreed to voluntarily dedicate a 'living land' in their respective countries to future generations.
- This Living Lands Charter is in line with the strategy set for the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2021-2030).
- The **non-binding** 'Living Lands Charter' mandates that member countries will
    1. Safeguard global land resources
    2. Arrest land degradation and
    3. Act against climate change, biodiversity loss and towards sustainable management.
- It will help to encapsulate the combined effort to hold the global average temperature increase to 1.5 degrees Celsius.

> *More than a third of land having been degraded in the last two decades and the vulnerabilities of the ecosystems to land degradation, biodiversity loss and climate change are closely interrelated.*

- The 'Living Lands Charter' aimed to support member countries to effectively deliver their commitments under the three Rio conventions
    1. UN Convention on Biological Diversity,
    2. UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) and
    3. UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

Commonwealth

- Headquartered in London, the Commonwealth is an international intergovernmental organization of 56 countries.
- It was established by the **London Declaration** in 1949.
- It is headed by the Monarch of the United Kingdom.
- **Membership** - The 56 member countries are mostly former territories of the British Empire and dependencies.
- But today any country can join the modern Commonwealth. The membership is based on free and equal voluntary co-operation.
- The two African countries, Gabon and Togo, were admitted to the Commonwealth of

Nations, as its members at the CHOGM 2022.

Reference

1. https://www.downtoearth.org.in/news/wildlife-biodiversity/commonwealth-adopts-living-lands-charter-for-future-generations-83458
2. https://www.decadeonrestoration.org/about-un-decade
3. https://thecommonwealth.org/news/commonwealth-adopts-historic-living-lands-charter
4. https://thecommonwealth.org/about-us

Ashadhi Bij

The Prime Minister has greeted everyone on the auspicious occasion of Ashadhi Bij.

- Ashadhi Beej is an auspicious day for **farming communities in North India** especially Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh and some other places.
- This is a small festival mainly celebrated to **predict the monsoon**.
- During Ashadhi Bij, the moisture in the atmosphere is checked to predict which crop would do best in the coming monsoon.
- Ashadhi Bij is the second day of Shukla paksha of Aashaadha month of the Hindu calendar, which associated with the beginning of rains in the Kutch region.
- Kutchi community of Gujarat celebrate their new year on this day.

Reference

1. https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1838399
2. https://hindupad.com/ashadhi-beej-2014-date/
3. https://theprint.in/india/pm-modi-extends-greetings-on-ashadhi-bij-kutchi-new-year/1019858/

National Road Safety Board

- The National Road Safety Board (NRSB) was constituted by the Ministry of Road Transport & Highways (MoRTH) in 2021.
- The Section 215B of the Motor Vehicles (Amendment) Act, 2019 provided for constitution of National Road Safety Board.
- It functions as the lead national agency to deal with matters relating to road safety.

The proposal for an apex board at the national level for road safety was first mooted in 2007 in the Sundar Committee report.

- The NRSB is aimed at integrating efforts in collaboration with states to **reduce road crashes and improve all aspects of safety**.
- The NRSB advices the Central Government or State Government on all aspects pertaining to road safety and traffic management including, but not limited to,
    1. the standards of design, weight, construction, manufacturing process, operation and maintenance of motor vehicles and of safety equipment, and road infrastructure;

2. the registration and licensing of motor vehicles;
3. the promotion of new vehicle technology;
4. programmes for educating and sensitising drivers and other road users; and
5. such other functions as may be prescribed by the Central Government from time to time.

- **Related links** - e-DAR Portal or Integrated Road Accident Database

Reference

1. https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1845883
2. https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/business/india-business/finally-india-gets-lead-agency-for-road-safety/articleshow/86052568.cms
3. https://pib.gov.in/Pressreleaseshare.aspx?PRID=1761051

Seekho aur Kamao Scheme

The 'Seekho Aur Kamao' scheme has met its target of earmarking 33% of the total trained beneficiaries for female beneficiaries.

> *The overall percentage of females trained under the scheme since its inception is 56.59%. This means that the scheme has surpassed the prescribed norm of 33% reservation for female beneficiaries.*

- The Seekho aur Kamao (Learn & Earn) Scheme is a 100% Central Sector Scheme for "**Skill Development of Minorities**", which is implemented from 12th Five Year Plan.
- The aim of this scheme is to upgrade the skills of minority youth (age group of 14-35 years) and ensure 75% placements, out of which 50% should be in the organized sector.
- The minimum qualification of trainee should be at least Class V.
- Post placement support of Rs. 2000/- per month is provided to placed trainees for two months as placement assistance.
- **Objectives of the Scheme**
  1. To bring down unemployment rate of minorities during 14th Finance Commission.
  2. To conserve and update modern and traditional skills of minorities and establish their linkages with JOB market.
  3. To improve employability of existing workers, school dropouts etc, and to generate means of better livelihood for marginalized minorities.
- The scheme will aim at upgrading the skills of the minority youths in various modern/traditional vocations depending upon the
  1. Educational qualification of the minority youths,
  2. Present economic trends and
  3. The market potential, which can earn them a suitable employment or make them suitably skilled to go for self employment.
- **Implementation** - This scheme is implemented by the Ministry of Minority Affairs (MoMA) through selected Project Implementing Agencies (PIAs).

- National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) has been assigned for the implementation of Seekho aur Kamao scheme for union territories of J&K and Ladakh.
- The pattern of funding and course will be as per the common norms issued by the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship.
- **Beneficiaries** - The scheme will be implemented for the benefit of the 6 notified minority communities under National Commission for Minorities Act 1992.
- The six minority communities are Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists, Parsis and Jains.
- However, in the States/UTs where some other minority communities notified by respective State/UT Governments exist, they may also be considered but they will not occupy more than 5% of the total seats.
- The scheme can be taken up anywhere in the country but preference will be given to organizations that impart training and propose the program for identified minority concentration districts/ towns/ blocks.
- **Related Links** - Welfare of Minorities

Reference

1. https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1845928
2. https://www.minorityaffairs.gov.in/sites/default/files/SEEKHO%20aur%20Kamao-eng.pdf
3. https://vikaspedia.in/social-welfare/skill-development/schemes-for-skill-development/skill-development-schemes/ministry-of-minority-affairs
4. https://nsdcindia.org/seekhoaurkamao

Blasphemy and Hate Speech - Difference

Experts say that there is a need to treat "blasphemy" and "hate speech" under the Section 295 (A) of the Indian Penal Code.

- **Blasphemy** is the act of insulting or showing contempt or lack of reverence for God.
- **Hate Speech** is an abusive or threatening speech or writing that expresses prejudice against a particular group or an individual, especially on the basis of race, religion, or sexual orientation.

Laws in India

- As far as laws in India go, there is no formal legislation against blasphemy.
- The closest equivalent to a blasphemy law is Section 295(A) of the Indian Penal Code (IPC).
- The Section 295(A) punishes any speech, writings, or signs that "with premeditated and malicious intent" insult citizens' religion or religious beliefs with a fine and imprisonment for up to 3 years.
- **Legality** - The legality of Section 295(A), which had been challenged in the Ramji Lal Modi case (1957), was affirmed by a five-judge Bench of the Supreme Court.

The Supreme Court said that while Article 19(2) allows reasonable limits on freedom of speech and expression for the sake of public order, the punishment

under Section 295(A) deals with aggravated form of blasphemy that is committed with the aim of offending the religious sensibilities of any class.

- In the case of *Superintendent, Central Prison, Fatehgarh vs Ram Manohar Lohia (1960),* the Supreme Court stated that the link between the speech spoken and any public disorder caused as a result of it should have a close relationship for retrieving Section 295(A) of IPC.
- By 2011, it concluded that only speech that amounts to "incitement to impending unlawful action" can be punished.
- **Current Situation** - The wording of Section 295(A) is considerably too wide. It cannot be stated that deliberate disrespect to religion or religious sensibilities is necessarily tantamount to incitement.
- As per the data given by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), there were only 323 hate speech cases registered in 2014, it had increased to 1,804 cases in 2020.
- This is because the Section 295(A) is now used to penalise religious dissent, satire, and any comedic content with religious references.

Reference

1. https://www.thehindu.com/news/explained-the-need-for-a-distinction-between-blasphemy-and-hate-speech/article65706903.ece?homepage=true
2. https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/blasphemy
3. https://www.un.org/en/hate-speech/understanding-hate-speech/what-is-hate-speech

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