UPSC Daily Current Affairs | Prelim Bits 17-03-2021

Medical Termination of Pregnancy Bill, 2020

- The Rajya Sabha passed the Medical Termination of Pregnancy (Amendment) Bill, 2020. The Bill was passed in March 2020 in the Lok Sabha, but the original Bill was framed in 1971.
- Currently, abortion requires the opinion of 1 doctor if it is done within 12 weeks of conception, and 2 doctors if it is done between 12 and 20 weeks.
- Also, women seeking to terminate a pregnancy beyond 20 weeks had to seek the permission of the court.
- The Bill allows abortion to be done on the advice of one doctor up to 20 weeks, and two doctors in the case of certain categories of women between 20 and 24 weeks.
- For a pregnancy to be terminated after 24 weeks in case of foetal abnormalities, the opinion of the State-level medical board is essential.
- To know more about the Medical Termination of Pregnancy (Amendment) Bill, 2020, click here.

Census and NPR Updation

- Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) said that the data for the latest Census and National Population Register (NPR) will be available before the next general elections in 2024.
- The last Census was conducted in 2011 and NPR, that has a database of 119 crore residents, was last updated in 2015.
- First phase of Census-House listing and Housing Census and NPR to be conducted from April 1, 2020, was postponed due to the pandemic.
- The fieldwork for the first phase of Census 2021 that will provide data on housing conditions, household amenities and assets possessed by the households is expected in 2021-22.
- The fieldwork for population enumeration phase to provide data on demography, religion, SC/ST, language, literacy and education, economic activity, migration and fertility etc will be done in 2023-24.
- A mobile application, which will be available in 16 languages, has been developed for collecting the Census details and NPR.
- The NPR database has been created by collecting family-wise data and it can be strengthened by linking Aadhaar to each member.

Maratha Quota Law

- There are petitions in the Supreme Court against the Maratha quota law i.e. the Maharashtra State Reservation for Socially and Educationally Backward Classes (SEBC) Act.
- Maharashtra State Reservation for SEBC Act provides reservation to Marathas in jobs and admissions in the state.
- [Marathas are politically dominant community in Maharashtra, and they form nearly one-third of the state's population.]
- The petitioners argument that the law was enacted without following the specific procedure laid out in Article 342A introduced by the 102nd Constitutional Amendment, 2018.
- Under Article 342A, it is only the President in consultation with the Governor can specify SEBC classes in a State.
- There was no Presidential notification issued in consultation with the Governor in the case of the Maratha reservation law.

102nd Constitutional Amendment Act, 2018

- The 102nd Constitutional Amendment Act is about recognising the socially and educationally backward classes in a State.
- The constitutional amendment had introduced Articles 338B and 342A.
- **Article 342A** empowers the President to specify the socially and educationally backward communities in a State in consultation with the Governor.
- **Article 338B** deals with the newly established National Commission for Backward Classes (NCBC).
- However, it is for the Parliament to include a community in the Central List for socially and backward classes for grant of reservation benefits.

World Energy Transitions Outlook Report

- This report, previewed at the Berlin Energy Transition Dialogue 2021, was released by the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA).
- It says that the Covid-19 crisis offers an unexpected opportunity for countries across the world to decouple their economies from fossil fuels and accelerate the shift to renewable energy sources.
- It proposes energy transition solutions for the narrow pathway available to contain the rise of temperature to 1.5°C and halt global warming.
- Emerging energy system must promote a more inclusive and equitable world, with resilience against economic and environmental shocks.
- IRENA estimates that by 2050, 90% of total electricity needs would be supplied by renewables, followed by 6% from natural gas and the remaining

from nuclear.
- The agency has identified 30 innovations for the integration of wind and solar PV in power systems.

Adenovirus-based Vaccine

- Unlike the mRNA vaccine platform used by Pfizer and Moderna, the vector-based vaccine platform technology used by AstraZeneca and Johnson & Johnson have shown lower vaccine efficacy.
- There are studies showing that there is a loss of potency of adenovirus-based vaccine if there are pre-existing antibodies towards the vector.
- Pre-existing antibodies against adenoviruses will stop the adenovirus particles from getting into cells and making the SARS-CoV-2 spike protein they carry the code for.
- The presence of pre-existing antibodies against adenovirus and those developed after first and second dose of the vaccine becomes particularly important when repeat vaccinations are needed.
- Sooner or later, anti-adenoviral antibodies will inevitably form, complicating the situation for subsequent vaccinations.
- While using the same adenovirus subtypes for repeat vaccinations might result in reduced efficacy in the case of vector-based vaccines, the inactivated vaccines do not face this problem.

Space Ties with Quad

- India is deepening its space ties with the members of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue or Quad grouping (An informal strategic dialogue between the US, Japan, Australia and India).
- **USA** - NISAR (NASA-ISRO SAR) is a joint collaboration between Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) and NASA for dual frequency Synthetic Aperture Radar (SAR) for earth observation.
- An ISRO built Airborne SAR (ASAR) was flown over the US aboard NASAs aircraft during 2019 and data acquisitions were made in 92 sites.
- ASAR repeat flight campaigns are being planned for the year of 2021.
- Both agencies are working for an implementing arrangement to carry NASAs Laser Reflectometer Array (LRA) in Chandrayaan-3.
- ISRO-NASA Joint Working Group on Human Spaceflight Programme (HSP) is exploring collaboration opportunities.
- **Japan** - LUPEX (Lunar Polar Exploration) is a joint mission between ISRO and Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA) to explore the Moon's South Pole in 2023.
- ISRO and JAXA are working on sharing earth observation data and establishing ISRO's NavIC reference station in Japan.

- [NavIC refers to the space segment consisting of the Indian Regional Navigation Satellite System (IRNSS) constellation of eight satellites.]
- **Australia** - ISRO and Australian Space Agency (ASA) inked an Amendment of the '2012 India Australia Inter-Governmental MoU for cooperation in Civil Space Science, Technology and Education'.
- This Amendment makes India's Department of Space and ASA as the Executive Organisations and provides scope for other related entities to conclude implementing arrangements for specific cooperation activities.
- The two agencies reviewed the status of ongoing cooperation activities in earth observation, satellite navigation, and establishing a transportable terminal in Australia to support Indias 'Gaganyaan' programme.

Source: The Hindu, The Indian Express

SHANKAR IAS PARLIAMENT
Information is Empowering