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Amendment to Consumer Protection (E-commerce) Rules, 2020

- The Government of India is sharing a draft of the proposed amendments to the Consumer Protection (E-commerce) Rules, 2020.
- These amendments aim to bring transparency in the e-commerce platforms and strengthen the regulatory regime to curb the prevalent unfair trade practices.
- It aims to ensure compliance of the Consumer Protection Act, 2019 and Rules, and to strengthen the grievance redressal mechanism on e-commerce entities, there is a proposal for the appointment of,
    1. Chief Compliance Officer,
    2. A nodal contact person for 24x7 coordination with law enforcement agencies, officers to ensure compliance to their orders
    3. Resident Grievance Officer for redressing of the grievances of the consumers on the e-commerce platform.
- Putting in place a framework for registration of every e-commerce entity with the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade for,
    1. Allotment of registration number,
    2. Invoice of every order placed the e-commerce entity.
- To protect the interests of consumers, mis-selling has been prohibited.
- [Misselling means goods and services entities selling goods or services by deliberate misrepresentation of information by such entities about such goods or services.]
- All sellers on marketplace e-commerce entities and all inventory e-commerce entities must provide best before or use before date to enable consumers to make an informed purchase decision.
- The e-commerce entities that sell imported goods or services shall,
    1. Incorporate a filter mechanism to identify goods based on country of origin and
    2. Suggest alternatives to ensure fair opportunity to domestic goods.
- The amendment ensures that consumers are not adversely affected in the event where a seller fails to deliver the goods or services due to negligent conduct by such seller in fulfilling the duties and liabilities in the manner as prescribed by the marketplace e-commerce entity
- This is ensured by the provisions of Fall-back liability for every marketplace

e-commerce entity.

Amendment to Food security (Assistance to State Government Rules) 2015

- The Department of Food & Public Distribution notifies amendment in Food security (Assistance to State Government Rules) 2015.
- This amendment would ensure right quantity to beneficiaries in distribution of subsidized foodgrains as per their entitlement under the National Food Security Act (NFSA), 2013.
- This would incentivise States who are operating their ePoS devices in a judicious manner and are able to generate savings from the additional margin of Rs.17.00 per quintal provided to them.
    - Distribution through ePoS devices ensures that subsidised foodgrains are provided to the rightful beneficiary through biometric authentication.
- Any savings accrued by State/UT from the additional margin provided towards the cost of purchase, operation and maintenance of the ePOS can be utilised for purchase, operations and maintenance of electronic weighing scales and their integration with the ePOS devices.
    - Integration of ePoS devices with electronic weighing scales would ensure that the beneficiary is given the right quantity of foodgrains by the Fair Price Shop dealer as per his entitlement.
- Food security Rules 2015 provides for additional margin to Fair Price Shop (FPS) Dealers for sale through ePoS devices as an incentive to ensure transparent recording of transactions at all levels.
    - The additional margin is payable for FPS which has installed a PoS device and shall be limited to the transactions made through it.

Chennai-Kanyakumari Industrial Corridor

- The Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the Government of India signed a $484 million loan to improve the Tamil Nadu Industrial Connectivity Project.
- This will improve transport connectivity and facilitate industrial development in the Chennai-Kanyakumari Industrial Corridor (CKIC) in the state of Tamil Nadu.
- CKIC is part of India’s East Coast Economic Corridor (ECEC), which stretches from West Bengal to Tamil Nadu and connects India to the production networks of South, Southeast, and East Asia.
- The Connectivity project is part of the priority infrastructure projects identified for corridor development under the ADB-supported CKIC comprehensive development plan.
- In addition, the project will help improve the planning capacity of Tamil Nadu’s Highways and Minor Ports Department.

- The overall objective is to spur industrial transformation through provisioning of essential transport, energy and urban infrastructure for holistic development of industrial growth centres.
- The project will upgrade about 590 km of state highways in the CKIC influence areas that cover 23 of the 32 districts between Chennai and Kanyakumari in Tamil Nadu.

East Coast Economic Corridor

- The East Coast Economic Corridor (ECEC) - India's first coastal corridor - is an example of an integrated economic development initiative.
- The key idea behind the corridor is port-based industrial development along the eastern coastal belt of India, in alignment with the goals of the Sagarmala initiative.
- It will integrate India's industrial clusters with value chains extending to Southeast Asia and East Asia.
- ECEC stretches from West Bengal to Tamil Nadu and connects India to the production networks of South, Southeast, and East Asia.
- ADB is the lead partner of the Government of India in developing ECEC.
- It covers West Bengal, Odisha, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. Vizag to Chennai segment of this Corridor has been taken as phase-1.
- Vizag-Chennai Industrial Corridor (VCIC) is the first coastal economic corridor in the country.
- It is aligned with the Golden Quadrilateral (India's longest road project that connects Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata and Chennai).
- It also plays a critical role in the "Act East Policy" of India.

Delimitation in Jammu and Kashmir

- The Union government has invited political leaders from Jammu and Kashmir for a meeting with the Prime Minister in Delhi. This may be related to the delimitation process that needs to be held in J&K.
- **Delimitation** is the act of redrawing boundaries of an Assembly or Lok Sabha seat to represent changes in population over time.
- This exercise is carried out by a Delimitation Commission, whose orders has the force of law and cannot be questioned before any court.
- The objective is to redraw boundaries (based on the data of the last Census) in a way so that the population of all seats be the same throughout the State.
- Aside from changing the limits of a constituency, the process may result in change in the number of seats in a state.
- **Frequency** - Delimitation exercises in J&K in the past have been slightly different from those in the rest of the country because of the region's special status - which was scrapped by the Centre in 2019.

- Until then, delimitation of Lok Sabha seats in J&K was governed by the Constitution of India, but the delimitation of the state's Assembly seats was governed by
    1. Jammu and Kashmir Constitution and
    2. Jammu and Kashmir Representation of the People Act, 1957.
- Assembly seats in J&K were delimited in 1963, 1973 and 1995.
- **Now** - In March 2020, the government set up the Delimitation Commission, headed by retired Supreme Court judge Ranjana Prakash Desai, which was tasked with winding up delimitation in J&K in a year.
- Apart from Desai, Election Commissioner and J&K State Election Commissioner are the ex-officio members of the delimitation panel. That apart, there are five associate members.
- After the abrogation of J&K's special status in 2019, delimitation of Lok Sabha and Assembly seats in the newly-created Union Territory would be as per the provisions of the Indian Constitution.
- As per the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Bill, the number of Assembly seats in J&K would increase from 107 to 114, which is expected to benefit the Jammu region.

Biotech-KISAN Programme

- The Department of Biotechnology (DBT) has issued a Special Call for North East Region (NER) as a part of its Mission Programme Biotech-Krishi Innovation Science Application Network (Biotech-KISAN).
- Biotech-KISAN programme is a scientist-farmer partnership scheme launched in 2017.
- This pan-India program was developed by and with farmers under the Department of Biotechnology, Ministry of Science and Technology.
- It was launched for agriculture innovation with an objective to connect science laboratories with the farmers to find out innovative solutions and technologies to be applied at farm level.
- It follows a hub-and-spoke model and stimulates entrepreneurship and innovation in farmers and empowers women farmers.
- Under this scheme, Biotech-KISAN Hubs have been established covering all 15 agroclimatic zones and 110 Aspirational Districts in the country.
- [Biotech-KISAN hubs would fulfil the technology required to generate agriculture and bio-resource related jobs and better livelihood ensuring biotechnological benefits to small and marginal farmers.]

UN High-Level Dialogue on Desertification, Land degradation and Drought

- The United Nations High-Level Dialogue on Desertification, Land

Degradation and Drought (DLDD) was convened with the support of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD).

- It assessed the progress made in fighting land degradation, and map the way forward on global efforts to revive and restore healthy land.
- It encourages all the member states to adopt and implement UNCCD's Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) targets and National Drought Plans.
- [LDN is a state whereby the amount and quality of land resources, necessary to support ecosystem functions and services and enhance food security, remains stable or increases within specified temporal and spatial scales and ecosystems.]
- **Challenges** - Globally, one fifth of land area (more than 2 billion hectares) is degraded, including more than half of agricultural land.
- Each year, more than 12 million hectares of land are lost to DLDD. Annually, 24 billion tons of fertile soil is lost due to dryland degradation.
- Land degradation currently undermines well-being of 3.2 billion people, more than 40% of the entire world population.
- Unless we change how we manage soil, 90% could become degraded by 2050.

Steps Taken by India

- India is on track to achieve its national commitment on Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) (SDG target 15.3).
- It is working to restore 26 million hectares of degraded land by 2030.
- India is assisting fellow developing countries to develop land restoration strategies.
- Over the last 10 years, around 3 million hectares of forest cover has been added.
- A Centre of Excellence is being set up at Indian Council of Forestry Research and Education (ICFRE) to promote a scientific approach towards land degradation issues.
- Based in Dehradun, ICFRE is an autonomous body of the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.

Terminologies

- Land degradation can be considered in terms of the loss of actual or potential productivity or utility as a result of natural or anthropic factors; it is the decline in land quality or reduction in its productivity.
- The UN says that desertification is a process, which is a consequence of severe land degradation in typically dry areas resulting from various factors, including climatic variations and human activities.
- Desertification creates arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas.

- The Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) estimates that over 70% of all natural, ice-free land has been transformed by human activity, devastating global biodiversity.

Source: PIB, The Hindu, The Indian Express, Down To Earth, Business Line, Live Science

