UPSC Daily Current Affairs | Prelim Bits 22-09-2020

International Convention of Road Traffic

- The Convention on Road Traffic is an international treaty promoting the development and safety of international road traffic by establishing certain uniform rules among the contracting parties.
- It is commonly known as the Geneva Convention on Road Traffic.
- The convention addresses minimum mechanical and safety equipment needed to be on board and defines an identification mark to identify the origin of the vehicle.
- The Convention was prepared and opened for signature by the United Nations Conference on Road and Motor Transport held at Geneva in 1949 and came to force on March 1952.
- Recently Union government has advised the States and UTs to stamp International Convention of Road Traffic on the first page of International Driving Permit, IDP issued by them.
- Many countries are not accepting the International Driving Permit issued to Indian citizens and that officials there ask for the validation of IDP in accordance with International Convention of Road Traffic.

Epidemic Diseases (Amendment) Bill, 2020

- Recently Parliament has passed the Epidemic Diseases (Amendment) Bill, 2020.
- The bill amends the Epidemic Diseases Act, 1897 to include protections for health care service personnel combating epidemic diseases and expands the powers of the Central Government to prevent the spread of such diseases.
- The bill repeals the Epidemic Diseases (Amendment) Ordinance that was promulgated in April this year.
- The legislation makes harm, injury, hurt or danger to the life of health care service personnel as a cognizable and non-bailable offence.
- It has provisions of imprisonment from three months to five years and a fine between 50 thousand rupees to two lakh rupees.
- Persons convicted of offences under the bill will also be liable to pay compensation to the health care service personnel whom they have hurt.

Feluda Covid-19 test

- Drugs Controller General of India has approved the commercial launch of FNCAS9 Editor Linked Uniform Detection Assay (FELUDA) Test.
- It is an accurate and low-cost paper-based test strip to detect Covid-19 in less than 30 minutes by the Drugs Controller General of India.
- It is developed by Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) and Tata Group,
- It uses indigenously developed CRISPR gene-editing technology to identify and target the genetic material of SARS-CoV2, the virus that causes Covid-19.
- According to CSIR, the test matches accuracy levels of RT-PCR tests, considered the gold standard in the diagnosis of Covid-19, has a quicker turnaround time and requires less expensive equipment.

Special Report on Sustainable Recovery

- Recently International Energy Agency (IEA), in collaboration with NITI Aayog, presented a 'Special Report on Sustainable Recovery'
- It is a part of IEA's flagship World Energy Outlook series.
- The report proposes a number of actions that could be taken over the next three years to revitalize economies and boost employment while making energy systems cleaner and more resilient.
- According to report, Post the 2008–09 financial crisis, green measures accounted for around 16% of the total stimulus measures.
- The report mentions key sectors for creating jobs: electricity, transportation, buildings, industry and sustainable biofuels and innovations.

CAROTAR

- The Customs (Administration of Rules of Origin under Trade Agreements) Rules, 2020 (CAROTAR, 2020), will come into force from 21st September 2020.
- It was notified on 21st August 2020.
- The importers and other stakeholders were given a 30-day period to familiarize themselves with new provisions.
- Earlier, merely a country of origin certificate, issued by a notified agency in the country of export was sufficient to avail the benefits of FTAs.
- This was exploited in many cases, i.e. the FTA partner countries have been claiming to have produced the goods in question without having the necessary technological capacity for the required value addition.

- Highlights of the regulation are as follows

1. Importers will have to ensure that imported goods meet the prescribed 'rules of origin' provisions for availing concessional rate of customs duty under Free Trade Agreements (FTAs).
2. Importers have to prove that imported products have undergone value addition of at least 35% in the countries of origin.

Free Trade Agreement

- It is an arrangement between two or more countries or trading blocs that primarily agree to reduce or eliminate customs tariff and non-tariff barriers on substantial trade between them.
- It covers trade in goods (such as agricultural or industrial products) or trade in services (such as banking, construction, trading etc.).
- It also covers other areas such as intellectual property rights (IPRs), investment, government procurement and competition policy etc.
- India has inked FTAs with several countries, including Japan, South Korea, Sri Lanka and ASEAN members.

Arsenic Poisoning

- Arsenic is naturally present at high levels in the earth crust and groundwater of a number of countries. It is highly toxic in its inorganic form.
- Contaminated water used for drinking, food preparation and irrigation of food crops poses the greatest threat to public health from arsenic.
- Long-term exposure to arsenic from drinking-water and food can cause cancer, skin disease, cardiovascular disease and diabetes.
- In early childhood exposure, it has been linked to negative impacts on cognitive development and increased deaths in young adults.
- According to the WHO's guidelines for drinking water quality (2011), the permissible limit of Arsenic in groundwater is 0.01 mg per liter.
- However, in India the permissible limit in drinking water has recently been revised from 0.05 mg per liter to 0.01 mg per liter.
- The most important action in affected communities is the prevention of further exposure to arsenic by provision of a safe water supply.
- According to data shared in the Parliament, the number of arsenic-affected habitations in India has increased by 145% in the last five years (2015-20).
- Most of the arsenic-affected habitations lie in the Ganga and Brahmaputra alluvial plains. i.e in Assam, Bihar, West Bengal, Punjab, and Uttar

Pradesh (UP).
- Assam had the highest share of such habitations (1,853), followed by West Bengal (1,383).

Fluoride Toxicity

- Excessive fluoride intake usually occurs through the consumption of groundwater naturally rich in fluoride, particularly in warm climates where water consumption is greater, or where high-fluoride water is used in food preparation or irrigation of crops.
- Such exposure may lead to dental fluorosis (tooth decay) or crippling skeletal fluorosis, which is associated with bone deformities.
- The number of fluoride affected habitations has significantly come down from 12,727 in 2015 to 5,485 as of September 2020.
- Rajasthan had the highest number of such habitations (2,956), followed by Bihar (861).

Source: PIB, AIR, the Hindu, Indian Express

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