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Report on Construction and Demolition Waste

- Construction and demolition waste is generated whenever any construction/demolition activity takes place, such as, building roads, bridges, fly over, subway, remodeling etc.
- It consists mostly of inert and non-biodegradable material such as concrete, plaster, metal, wood, plastics etc.
- Centre for Science and Environment (CSE), a Delhi based think tank has released a report on construction and demolition (C&D) waste.
- The Highlights of the report are as follows
- India recycles just one per cent of its construction and demolition (C&D) waste, i.e. meagre 6,500 tons per day.
- The country generates an estimated 150 million tons of C&D waste every year, according to the Building Material Promotion Council.
- Unofficial estimates of the total waste generated in the country put the figure at three-five times more than the official estimate.
- About 53 cities were expected to set up recycling facilities to recover material from C&D waste by 2017, but only 13 cities have done that by 2020.
- Heaps of concrete, bricks and metal waste from construction were choking waterbodies, green areas and public spaces in Indian cities.
- Toxic dust particles from the debris were polluting air at a time when cities had to reduce their particulate pollution by 20-30 per cent by 2024, under the ongoing National Clean Air Programme.

Building Material Promotion Council

- Building Materials & Technology Promotion Council (BMTPC) is an autonomous body under the aegis of the Ministry of Housing & Urban Affairs, established in 1990.
- BMTPC has been working towards cost effective, innovative, energy-efficient, environment-friendly and disaster resistant building materials and construction technologies from lab to field.
- It aims to promote development, standardization, mechanization and large scale field application of innovative and emerging building materials and

technologies in the construction sector.

Biochar

- Biochar is charcoal used as a soil amendment for both carbon sequestration and soil health benefits.
- Biochar technically defied as the solid material obtained from the thermochemical conversion of biomass in an oxygen-limited environment.
- Like most charcoal, biochar is made from biomass via pyrolysis (decomposition brought about by high temperatures).
- Biochar may increase the following

1. Soil fertility of acidic soils (low pH soils),
2. Agricultural productivity,
3. Protection against some foliar and soil-borne diseases.
4. Soil's water-holding capacity,
5. Nutrient supply and retention.

- A recent research in Ghana, an African nation proved biochar application could help promote cowpea growth and crop yield in the country as well as fight climate change impact on soil.

Code on Social Security Bill 2019

- Code on Social Security Bill 2019, seeks to consolidate the laws relating to social security of workers and subsume eight central laws.
- The Social Security Code will subsume 8 Central Labour Acts namely

1. Employees Compensation Act, 1923,
2. Employees' State Insurance Act, 1948,
3. Employees Provident Funds and Miscellaneous Provisions Act, 1952,
4. Maternity Benefit Act, 1961,
5. Payment of Gratuity Act, 1972,
6. Cine Workers Welfare Fund Act, 1981,
7. Building and Other Construction Workers Cess Act, 1996,
8. Unorganized Workers Social Security Act, 2008.

- **Social Security Schemes -** Under the Code, the central government may notify various social security schemes for the benefit of workers.
- In addition, the central or state government may notify specific schemes for gig workers, platform workers, and unorganized workers to provide various benefits, such as life and disability cover.
- Gig workers refer to workers outside of the traditional employer-employee

relationship (e.g., freelancers).

- Platform workers are workers who access other organizations or individuals using online platforms and earn money by providing them with specific services. Unorganized workers include home-based and self-employed workers.
- **Coverage and registration -** The Code specifies different applicability thresholds for the schemes.
- These thresholds may be amended by the central government.
- All eligible establishments are required to register under the Code, unless they are already registered under any other labour law.
- **Contributions -** The EPF, EPS, EDLI, and ESI Schemes will be financed through a combination of contributions from the employer and employee.
- All contributions towards payment of gratuity, maternity benefit, cess for building workers, and employee compensation will be borne by the employer.
- Schemes for gig workers, platform workers, and unorganized workers may be financed through a combination of contributions from the employer, employee, and the appropriate government.
- Social security organizations - The Code provides for the establishment of several bodies to administer the social security schemes.
- These include

a. **A Central Board of Trustees**, headed by the Central Provident Fund Commissioner, to administer the EPF, EPS and EDLI Schemes,
b. **An Employees State Insurance Corporatio**n, headed by a Chairperson appointed by the central government, to administer the ESI Scheme,
c. **National and state-level Social Security Boards**, headed by the central and state Ministers for Labour and Employment, respectively, to administer schemes for unorganized workers,
d. **State-level Building Workers' Welfare Boards**, headed by a Chairperson nominated by the state government, to administer schemes for building workers.

- **Inspections and appeals -** The Code also specifies judicial bodies which may hear appeals from the orders of the administrative authorities.
- For example, industrial tribunals (constituted under the Industrial Disputes Act, 1947) will hear disputes under the EPF Scheme.
- **Offences and penalties -** The Code specifies penalties for various offences, such as

a. Failure by an employer to pay contributions under the Code after

deducting the employee's share, punishable with imprisonment between one and three years, and fine of one lakh rupees,

b. Falsification of reports, punishable with imprisonment of up to six months.

Ekamravan Kshetra

- Ekamravan Kshetra or Lingaraj Temple was built in 11th century AD, is dedicated to Lord Shiva, it is the largest temple of Bhubaneswar.
- It is believed to have been built by the Somvanshi King Yayati I.
- It is built in red stone and is a classic example of Kalinga style of architecture.
- The temple is divided into four sections

1. Garbh Griha (sanctum sanctorum),
2. Yajna Shala (the hall for prayers),
3. Bhoga Mandap (the hall of offering)
4. Natya Shala (hall of dance).

- The sprawling temple complex has one hundred and fifty subsidiary shrines.
- The other attraction of the temple is the Bindusagar (a sprawling pond), that has religious relationship with the main temple.
- Odisha government has announced to give a facelift to the 11th century Lingaraj Temple, akin to its pre-350-year structural status.
- The proposed plan quoted to spend a total of ₹700 crore for bringing transformational changes in areas surrounding the Lingaraj Temple.

Restrictions on Public Procurement

- Recently, the Government of India imposed restrictions on public procurement from bidders of countries that share a land border with India, citing grounds of defence and national security.
- This was done by amending the General Financial Rules 2017.
- The government also amended Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) rules mandating prior approval for investment by entities in countries that share land borders with India.
- **Highlights of the regulation are as follows**
    - Bidders from these countries will be eligible only if they are registered with the Registration Committee (Competent Authority) constituted by the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT).
    - For national security reasons, the Registration Committee shall not

be required to give reasons for rejection/cancellation of registration of a bidder.
    - Bidders will also be required to take mandatory political and security clearance from the ministries of External Affairs and Home respectively.
    - The order will not apply to procurement by the private sector.
    - The Central government has invoked the provisions of Article 257(1) of the Constitution, directing the state governments to implement this order for all public procurement.
    - For State government procurement, the Competent Authority will be constituted by the states but political and security clearance from Central government ministries will remain necessary.
    - Relaxation will be provided for procurement of Covid-19 medical supplies till 31st December 2020.
    - Recently DPIIT has notified a format for potential bidders from China and Pakistan for participating in tenders for official procurement.
    - The bidders having beneficial ownership of up to 10% in Pakistan and China will be eligible to bid in public procurement in India, only if they are registered with the department for the promotion of industry and internal trade (DPIIT).
    - They are also required to submit application for "security clearance" in the format specified by the DPIIT.
    - Once the registration is done, it will be valid for 12 months.
    - However, in case of appointment of new director(s)/ new shareholders with more than 10% shares/ change in controlling ownership interest or control through other means, the registration shall stand cancelled.
    - In such cases, the bidders will have to apply for a fresh registration.
    - The list of registered bidders will be displayed on the DPIIT website.

Article 257(1)

- It states that the executive power of every State shall be so exercised as not to impede or prejudice the exercise of the executive power of the Union.
- It also authorizes the Union to give such directions to a State as may appear to the Government of India to be necessary for that purpose.
- In case if the state failed to comply with (or to give effect to) any directions given by the Centre under Article 257(1), it will be lawful for the President to impose President's rule under Article 356.

Naya Savera Scheme

- Naya Savera Schemeis being implemented under the Ministry of Minority Affairs.
- It aims to empower the students belonging to minority communities and prepare them for competitive examinations.
- It emphasis to increase the participation minority communities in government and private jobs improves.
- The scheme provides financial support for free coaching to notified minority students in selected coaching institutions.

Source: PRS India, the Hindu, Down To Earth

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