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LAKSHYA ACADEMY®

28 OCTOBER 2023

1 - Ethics Committee of Lok Sabha:

GS II

Parliament related issues

- **Context:**

- The Speaker of the Lok Sabha forwarded a complaint from a Member of Parliament to the House Ethics Committee, which is about to resume its work.

- **About:**

- **Participants:**

- The Speaker has nominated fifteen members to this committee.

- The Committee has a one-year term.

- **Purpose:**

- Its duties include investigating any complaints the Speaker refers to it regarding the unethical behaviour of a Lok Sabha member, formulating a code of conduct for Members, and periodically suggesting additions or changes to the code of conduct.

- **Have its proposals ever been implemented before?**

- 11 MPs were expelled in 2005 in connection with the infamous cash-for-query scandal, according to the P K Bansal Committee's findings.

- **The committee's establishment in the Rajya Sabha:**

- The concept of ethics committees for the two Houses of Parliament was initially proposed at a Presiding Officers' Conference held in Delhi in 1996.
- In 1997, K R Narayanan, the Chairman of the Rajya Sabha and Vice President, established the Upper House Ethics Committee.
- Monitoring members' moral and ethical behaviour and looking into misbehaviour reports were the goals.
- The ethics panel is subject to the same rules that govern the Committee of Privileges.

- **The committee's establishment in the Rajya Sabha:**

- In 1997, a study committee of the Lok Sabha's Committee of Privileges travelled to the US, UK, and Australia to investigate laws regarding the ethics and behaviour of lawmakers.
- Before the report could be presented, the Lok Sabha was dissolved, despite the fact that it had written a report for the creation of an Ethics Committee.
- The 12th Lok Sabha received it, but it was once more disbanded before the Committee of Privileges could consider it.
- During the 13th Lok Sabha, the Committee of Privileges ultimately proposed the creation of an Ethics Committee.
- An ad hoc Ethics Committee was established by the late Speaker G M C Balayogi in 2000, but it wasn't until 2015 that it became a permanent fixture of the House.

- **How it functions:**

- Anybody can file a complaint against a member of the Lok Sabha through another MP, providing full evidence of the misconduct and an affidavit attesting to the fact that the complaint is not baseless, pointless, or vexatious.
- A member does not require an affidavit to support their complaint about another member if they have supporting documentation.
- Complaints based solely on media reporting or items under consideration are not accepted by the Committee.
- Any complaint made against an MP may be referred to the committee by the Speaker.
- Prior to choosing whether to investigate a complaint, the committee conducts a prima facie investigation. Following the complaint's assessment, the committee issues recommendations.
- The Speaker receives the committee report and requests that the House decide whether to take up the report for consideration.
- Additionally, a half-hour discussion about the report is scheduled.

- **What distinguishes it from the Committee on Privileges?**

- There is much overlap in the work that the Privileges and Ethics Committees do.
- Since a corruption charge against a Member of Parliament entails a major breach of privilege and contempt of the House, it may be submitted to either body.
- The Committee on Privileges has the duty to protect Parliament's independence, power, and honour.
- Both the House as a whole and individual members take pleasure in these benefits.
- Therefore, in addition to MPs being investigated for alleged breaches of privilege related to corruption, non-MPs may also face charges of breach of privilege for activities that undermine the legitimacy and honour of the House.
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- However, in the Ethics Committee's case, only a Member can be investigated for misbehaviour.

- *Source → The Hindu*

2 - India's aspirational space objectives:

GS III

Science and Technology related issues

- **Context:**
- The Indian Prime Minister has given the Department of Space instructions to establish the Indian Space Station, or "Bharatiya Antariksha Station," by 2035 and to launch the country's first astronaut to the moon by 2040.
- **Important information:**
- **The Artemis programme:**
- India participates in the worldwide Artemis programme, which aims to send people back to the moon and maintain a long-term presence there.
- **Chandrayaan 3:**
- India's space aspirations received a boost when, only days after a similar Russian mission failed, it became the first nation to land a spacecraft close to the uncharted south pole of the moon and the fourth overall to accomplish a soft landing.
- **Aditya L1:**
- As part of its crewed space mission, India is planned to undertake a test and launched a rocket to study the sun.
- **Mission Shukrayaan-1:**
- In order to take on a daring new trip to Venus, the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) is getting ready.
- This expedition, known as Shukrayaan-1, aims to solve the mystery surrounding this fiery sister planet and provide insight into its possible habitability.
- *Source → The Hindu*

3 - Lymphatic Filariasis:

GS II

Health related issues

- **Context:**

- In 2023, Lao PDR surpasses Bangladesh as the second nation to eradicate lymphatic filariasis.

- **Important information:**

- The disease known as lymphatic filariasis (LF), which cripples sufferers and has a major negative social and economic impact on the people it affects, has been eradicated in the Lao People's Democratic Republic.
- Trachoma was declared a public health concern in 2017 and is the second neglected tropical disease (NTD) to be eradicated in the nation in six years.
- After Bangladesh, Lao PDR is currently the second nation to eradicate lymphatic filariasis (LF) by the year 2023.
- Nineteen nations have succeeded in eradicating LF.
- Eleven of the 19 nations are in the Western Pacific Region (WPR) of the WHO.
- Additionally, LF has been eradicated in four WHO South-East Asia member states:
 - Bangladesh; Sri Lanka; the Maldives; Thailand.
- Two nations in the WHO Africa region—Malawi and Togo—have completely eradicated the illness.
- Yemen in the WHO Eastern Mediterranean has also been free of the illness.

- **Taking on LF:**

- Mass medication administration (MDA) is the most economical way to treat all afflicted individuals of LF-endemic areas and prevent further transmission.
- For MDA against LF, the WHO suggests a triple therapy regimen consisting of ivermectin (I), diethylcarbamazine (D), and albendazole (A).
- Elephantiasis, or LF, is a preventable infectious illness spread by mosquitoes that is intended to be eradicated worldwide as a public health issue.
- It happens when one of the filarial parasites, *Brugia malayi*, *Wuchereria bancrofti*, or *B. timori* — are spread to people by mosquito bites.
- The lymph vessels are harmed by the parasites' nests there.
- Elephantiasis, lymphedema, and hydrocele result from this.

- **Regarding LF:**

- Filarial worms, a type of parasitic worm, are the cause of lymphatic filariasis.
- It is one of the main global causes of permanent impairment.
- The majority of instances show no symptoms, however some patients get elephantiasis, a condition characterised by extreme enlargement in the genitalia, limbs, or legs.
- It is the first disease known to be carried by mosquitoes.
- Mosquito bites carrying the worms' infection disperse them.

- **There are three recognised worm species that can cause the illness:**

- Bancrofti wuchereria,
- The Brugia malayi
- Timori Brugia
- The most typical type is Wuchereria bancrofti.

- *Source → The Hindu*

4 – White Phosphorus:

GS III

Environmental Conservation related issues

- **Context:**

- The Israel Defence Forces (IDF) have been accused by international human rights organisations Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch of violating international humanitarian law (IHL) for deploying white phosphorus weapons in Gaza and Lebanon.

- **How does white phosphorus work?**

- When white phosphorus is exposed to oxygen, it pyrophorically ignites, generating dense, light smoke and strong heat that reaches 815 degrees Celsius.
- Substances classified as pyrophoric are those that, when exposed to air, ignite spontaneously or very quickly—in less than five minutes.
- White phosphorus is classified as "Pyrophoric solids, category 1" in the Globally Harmonised System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals. This category comprises substances that ignite "spontaneously" when they come into contact with air.

- It is a globally accepted framework for categorising and communicating chemical hazards.
 - It is one of the pyrophoric chemicals that is least stable.
 - The smell of white phosphorus is distinctly garlic-like.
- **Uses of white phosphorous in warfare:**
 - Rockets, bombs, and artillery shells all include white phosphorus.
 - Another way to administer it is by felt (textile) wedges dipped in the substance.
 - Its main military application is as a smokescreen to conceal ground unit movements.
 - The smoke blocks out the light.
 - White phosphorous is also known to interfere with weapons tracking systems and infrared optics, shielding troops from guided missiles.
 - Munitions can be air-burst to cover a wider area or ground-burst for more concentrated smoke.
 - An incendiary weapon can also be made out of white phosphorus.
 - HRW claims that in the 2004 second assault of Fallujah in Iraq, US forces forced militants hiding from view by using white phosphorus weapons.
- **Effect of white phosphorus:**
 - White phosphorus can burn severely, often to the bone, when it comes into contact with it.
 - The burns are extremely painful, take a long time to heal, and are prone to infection.
 - If white phosphorus particles are still inside the body and come into touch with air, they may rekindle.
 - White phosphorus burns on merely 10% of the body can be lethal, according to HRW.
 - Smoke and particulates containing white phosphorus can damage internal organs and create respiratory problems.
 - Even those who survive their initial injuries can live a lifetime of agony and suffering due to their restricted mobility and terrible scarring.
 - In addition, white phosphorus can cause massive flames, especially in windy circumstances, that destroy buildings and infrastructure, harm crops, and kill livestock.
- **When were weapons containing white phosphorous first used?**
 - White phosphorous ammunition was initially employed by Irish nationalists in the late 19th century in a strategy known as "Fenian fire" (Fenian served as a catch-all word for the group).
 - The chemical was widely used in phosphorus grenades, bombs, shells, and rockets by the British and Commonwealth armies during World War I.
 - The most recent accusation against Russia was that it invaded Ukraine with white phosphorus munitions.
- **What is the legal standing of weapons containing white phosphorus?**

- While their usage is restricted under IHL, white phosphorus weapons are not outright prohibited.
- Because heat and smoke, not toxicity, are the main factors contributing to its operational utility, it is not classified as a chemical weapon.
- As a result, the Convention on Conventional Weapons (CCW), particularly Protocol III, which addresses incendiary weapons, governs its usage.
- While Israel has not ratified Protocol III, Palestine and Lebanon have done so.
- Protocol III has two major flaws even if it forbids the employment of incendiary weapons dropped from the air near civilian populations.
- First, it limits the employment of incendiary weapons launched from the ground, although not entirely, in areas where there are large populations of civilians.
- Second, it may be argued that versatile weapons like those that contain white phosphorus, which are usually thought of as smoking agents, are not included in the protocol's definition of incendiary weapons as they are primarily intended to burn and catch fire.
- *Source → The Hindu*

5 - Port of Vizhinjam Project:

GS III

Environmental Conservation related issues

- **Context:**
- The project's origins set to a verbal spat between the opposition party and the ruling party.
- **Concerning the International Seaport Project of Vizhinjam:**
- Adani Ports and SEZ Private Limited are constructing the transshipment deepwater multifunctional seaport using the design, build, finance, operate, and transfer (DBFOT) paradigm.
- The government of Kerala donated 500 acres.
- With provisions that last an additional 20 years, the DBFOT agreement is for 40 years.
- With a naturally occurring depth of more than 18 metres and the potential to reach 20 metres, Vizhinjam would be India's first international deepwater transshipment port—a critical feature for obtaining mother ships and huge vessels.
- It is made to handle break-bulk, multipurpose, and container transshipment freight.
- Ten nautical miles separate the port from the international shipping route.

- Other characteristics include almost no need for maintenance dredging and little littoral drift along the coast.
- The port is anticipated to contend for transshipment business with Colombo, Singapore, and Dubai.
- It has a one million TEU initial capacity and a 6.2 million TEU maximum capacity.
- In addition to boosting an industrial corridor and cruise tourism, the project is anticipated to create 5,000 direct job opportunities.
- With its state-of-the-art infrastructure and extensive automation, Vizhinjam Port can handle Megamax container ships quickly.
- **Requirement for a port to transship containers:**
 - There are thirteen important ports in India.
 - Nevertheless, the nation lacks the terminal facilities and landside mega-port needed to handle extremely big container ships.
 - As a result, ports outside of India handle about 75% of India's transshipment goods, primarily in Colombo, Singapore, and Klang.
 - Twenty-foot equivalent units, or TEUs, made up around 4.6 million of India's total transshipment cargo in the fiscal year 2021–2022, of which 4.2 million were handled outside the country.
 - **Principal advantages of converting a port into a transshipment hub include:**
 - currency savings
 - investment in foreign exchange,
 - higher revenue generation at other Indian ports,
 - creation of a corresponding logistics infrastructure,
 - creation of jobs,
 - increased efficiency in operations and logistics and
 - an expansion of revenue share.
 - **Extra advantages:**
 - Several such linked firms viz. The transshipment port also deals with ship chandlery, ship supply, ship repair, crew change facilities, logistics value-added services, warehousing, and bunkering.
 - There will probably be a decrease in the price of shipping containers abroad.
 - A significant portion of the container transshipment traffic that is currently being redirected to Colombo, Singapore, and Dubai can be drawn to a deepwater port.
 - It can also guarantee India's economic growth and provide a tonne of new job possibilities.
 - **Source → The Hindu**