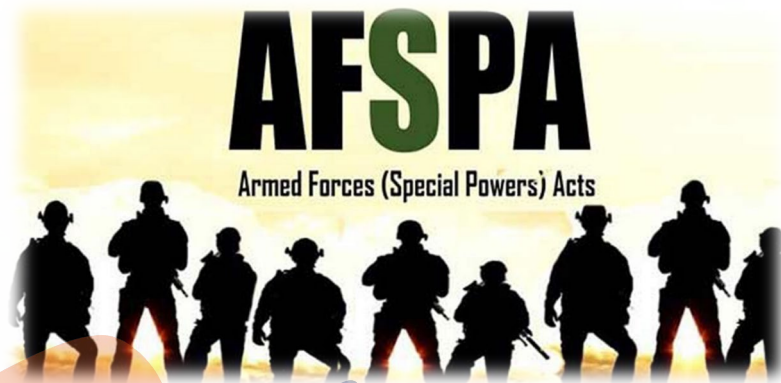


17th December, 2021 Current Affairs

1. Nagaland seeks AFSPA repeal:



In the aftermath of security forces' killing of 14 civilians in Mon district of Nagaland, the National People's Party MP Agatha Sangma asked in Lok Sabha to repeal the draconian Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act. The Chief Minister of Nagaland, Neiphiu Rio, also demanded to repeal the AFSPA.

Key Points:

- During the Zero Hour of the Lok Sabha, the MP noted that, this is not the first such incident where innocent civilians had to suffer due to draconian laws like the AFSPA.
- In the year 2000, an incident that took place in Manipur called as "the Malom Massacre". In the incident, more than ten civilians were shot dead.

What is the issue?

21 Para Commando Unit killed a group of daily wage workers who were returning to their village, following an information that some NSCN(K) terrorists were roaming in the area.

AFSPA in Nagaland:

In June 2021, Ministry of Home Affairs had declared the entire State of Nagaland as a "disturbed area" for six more months in accordance with the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA). The norms were extended for six

more months citing that, Nagaland is in such a “disturbed and dangerous condition” that it is necessary to use the armed forces in aid of civil power.

What is AFSPA?

- AFSPA provides power to the armed forces to maintain public order in disturbed areas.
- Under the act, armed forces have the power to prohibit a gathering of five or more persons in an area.
- They are free to use force or even open fire after giving warning, in case they feel the person is in contravention of the law.
- Armed forces are also empowered to arrest a person without giving warrant, ban the possession of firearms and enter or search premises without any warrant.

What is a “disturbed area”?

A disturbed area is declared by notification under Section 3 of the AFSPA. An area can be declared as “disturbed area” due to differences or disputes between members of different religious, language or regional groups, or castes or communities. Power to declare the whole or part of the State or Union Territory as disturbed area lies with the Central Government, or Governor of the State or administrator of the Union Territory.

2. Bills on ART and surrogacy passed in Rajya Sabha:



The Rajya Sabha passed the Assisted Reproductive Technology (Regulation) Bill, 2020 and the Surrogacy (Regulation) Bill, 2020 in the absence of of

Opposition on December 8, 2021. The bill has excluded single men, live-in couples, and the LGBTQ community.

Background:

Central Government was working on the bill to regulate the ART industry since 2008. The bill was first drafted by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR). It was first introduced in 2020 in the Lok Sabha but it referred the bill to a standing committee.

Provisions of the ART Bill:

- The Bill proposes to establish a “National Registry and Registration Authority for all medical professionals and clinics. The Authority will help in maintaining the database of all the clinics and professionals working in the field. Registration authorities will be appointed by state governments to facilitate registration process.
- Bill also seeks to regulate and supervise Assisted Reproductive Technology (ART) clinics and ART banks, adopt safe & ethical practices and prevent misuse.
- It also proposes to constitute a National Board. Board will set minimum standards of physical infrastructure, diagnostic equipment, expert manpower and laboratory.
- Bill further seeks stringent punishment people practicing sex selection, and sale of human embryos or gametes, or people found running agencies, organisations rackets for such practices in violation of the law.

Penalty on violation of Law:

- Bill provides for a penalty of Rs. 5 lakhs to Rs. 10 lakhs, for the first-time offenders.
- Subsequent Contraventions are punishable with imprisonment for 8 to 12 years and a fine between Rs. 10 to Rs. 20 Lakh.
- Any Clinic or Bank which are advertising or offering Sex-Selective ART would be punishable with imprisonment of 5-10 years or a fine between Rs. 10 lakh to Rs. 25 Lakh, or both.

What was the need of this bill?

The bill was needed to standardize protocols. There are several ART clinics that are running without regulation. Furthermore, there are implications on

health of those undertaking the procedure. Thus, a standard protocol is required to stop unethical practices.

3. **Parliament passes HC & SC Judges (Salaries and Conditions of Service) Amendment Bill, 2021:**



Parliament passed the “High Court and Supreme Court Judges (Salaries and Conditions of Service) Amendment Bill, 2021” on December 13, 2021.

Key Points:

The Bill was passed with the Rajya Sabha returning it to the Lok Sabha following the discussion. Bill was returned to Lok Sabha since it was a money bill.

About the Bill:

The Bill seeks to amend “Supreme Court Judges (Salaries and Conditions of Service) Act, 1958” as well as “High Court Judges (Salaries and Conditions of Service) Act, 1954”. These Acts regulate the conditions of services and salaries of High Courts & Supreme Court judges in India.

Provisions of the Bill:

- Bill provides for additional quantum of pension or family pension. Under it, all the retired judges of the Supreme Court and High Courts including their family members are authorized to pension or family pension.
- They are also authorized to an additional quantum of pension or family pension, after they attain a certain age in line with a specified scale.

- Specified scale comprises of five age brackets, with minimum age of 80, 85, 90, 95, and 100 years.
- The additional quantum increases with increasing age, from 20% to 100% of the pension or family pension.
- As per bill, a person will be authorized to the additional pension or family pension from the first day of that month in which they complete minimum age under concerned age bracket.
- Steps taken by central government to strengthen judiciary.
- Government has approved the extension of “Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS) for Development of Infrastructure Facilities for Judiciary” for additional five years, from April 1, 2021 to March 31, 2026 at the total cost of nine thousand crore rupees. This scheme will help in constructing Lawyer Halls, court halls & residential units for judicial officers of District and Subordinate Courts and toilet complexes.

4. Five Central Asian countries to be chief guest at Republic Day:



India has invited the five central Asian countries namely Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan, as the chief guest for Republic Day celebrations, 2022.

Key Highlights:

- This is for the first-time that representatives of all five Central Asian countries would be guest at the Republic Day celebrations.
- The last time they attended the ASEAN Summit together in 2018.
- India shares historical, cultural and civilisational linkages with these countries.
- Their presence at the Republic Day celebrations will help in strengthening the relationship between both the sides.

- Dignitaries at Republic Day celebrations in India.
- Ever since Prime Minister Narendra Modi took charge in 2014, India invited.
- Then-US President Barack Obama in 2015.
- Then-French President Francois Hollande in 2016.
- UAE's Md Bin Zayed Al Nahyan in 2017.
- All 10 ASEAN countries in 2018.
- Cyril Ramaphosa of South Africa in 2019 and
- Jair Bolsonaro of Brazil in 2020, for the Republic Day.
- United Kingdom Prime Minister Boris Johnson was expected to attend Republic Day celebrations in 2021, but he couldn't attend because of Covid-19 pandemic.

Central Asian-India Foreign Minister's meet:

India will also be hosting the Central Asian-India Foreign Minister's meet on December 18 and 19, 2021. Its first meeting was held in Samarkand, Uzbekistan, in January 2019. The second meeting was held virtually due to covid-19.

India's support to central Asian countries:

India has been providing its financial support to Central Asian countries. India has announced a line of credit worth US \$1 billion to support the development of projects in fields like energy, IT, connectivity, healthcare, agriculture and education for the central Asian countries, in the past. India has also pitched for Chabahar port in Iran to get an easier route for connectivity. During the discussion, terrorism was also raised as major concern.

5. 'Dilli ki Yogshala' programme has been launched:



Chief Minister of Delhi, Arvind Kejriwal, launched the 'Dilli ki Yogshala' programme on December 13, 2021.

Key Facts:

- The programme was launched at Delhi Secretariat for providing free of cost yoga classes to the people in the national capital.
- Yoga classes will start from January 2022.
- Under the Yogshala programme, at least 20000 people in Delhi will practice Yoga, at the current capacity of 400 yoga instructors.
- Launch of the programme will prevent people from falling ill and thus prevent from requiring treatment in first place.
- Under this, classes and teachers will be provided free of cost to the public.

What are the requirements?

To avail the benefits of the programme, people are required to get together a group of 25 people who are willing to learn Yoga, on an open space near their house, such as a park or a community hall. The group will be provided with an instructor by giving a missed call on 9013585858.

Background:

Delhi government had conceptualised the Yogshala programme in February 2021 and to implement this, it passed a budget as well.

Public Interest Scheme:

In the past seven years, Delhi government has carried out several experiments in governance field. Government has developed various hospitals and Mohalla Clinics in Delhi to reform the health sector.

Happiness Curriculum:

Delhi government also launched the Happiness Curriculum in government schools. With the launch of this, children have become more peaceful. Happiness Curriculum is an educational program, launched for children studying in nursery to grade eight in government schools of Delhi. This program was launched in July 2018. It was launched with the objective of improving the mental well-being of pupils. The programme teaches

mindfulness, critical thinking, social-emotional learning, relationship building and problem solving. It seeks to:

- Build emotional awareness.
- Support decision making with emotional awareness.
- Equip pupils with necessary skills & environment for becoming purpose-driven.
- Explore a nuanced idea of happiness.

After the successful implementation of this programme in Delhi, Indian states like Andhra Pradesh & Uttarakhand, as well as countries like Nepal, Afghanistan, and the United Arab Emirates are preparing to implement similar programs.

6. **Ladakh gets its First FM Radio Station:**



Recently, Ladakh has received its first ever FM radio station in the capital city Leh.

Key Highlights:

- The first-ever Top FM radio in Leh was launched by Advisor of Ladakh, Umang Narula.
- The frequency for Leh & Kargil will be 91.1 FM.
- It will cover 50 kilometres aerial distance in radius.

About FM broadcasting:

FM broadcasting is a method of radio broadcasting by means of frequency modulation (FM). American engineer Edwin Armstrong had invented it in

1933. Wide-band FM is used for providing high fidelity sound over broadcast radio across the world. FM broadcasting is capable of higher fidelity. FM is used for most broadcasts of general audio or music. FM radio stations uses very high frequency range of radio frequencies.

FM broadcasting in India:

FM broadcasting in India started in 1977. However, it boomed after 2001 when privatisation of FM broadcasting started in India. FM LRS (Local Radio Station) of All India Radio was inaugurated on July 1, 2001. It was set up in Kodaikanal in the frequency of 100.5 MHz. This channel covered a radius of around 200 km because of its location at 2200 meters above MSL. Currently, there are more than 369 operational private radio stations across 101 cities and towns in India. All India Radio has around 450 FM stations. It covers 39% of the area and 52% of the population in India.

History of FM in India:

FM broadcasting started on July 23, 1977 in Chennai. It was expanded during 1990s.

7. India, Iran and Uzbekistan discussed on Joint use of Chabahar port:



Recently, India, Iran and Uzbekistan held talks on joint use of the Chabahar Port. They also underlined the importance role played by the port in enhancing regional connectivity.

Key Highlights:

- During the meeting, the three countries discussed further development of transportation corridor across the port.

- It was the second such virtual meeting among them on developing the strategically important port.
- Participating countries also highlighted the increase in transit traffic between South Asia and Central Asia through the Shahid Beheshti Terminal at Chabahar Port. They also discussed the development of transportation corridor.

How this port is strategically important?

The Shahid Beheshti Terminal at Chabahar Port is strategically important as it has handled shipments and trans-shipments from countries like Russia, Brazil, Germany, Thailand, Oman, Ukraine, Bangladesh, Romania, Kuwait, Australia, Kuwait, UAE and Uzbekistan.

About Chabahar Port:

Chabahar seaport is in Chabahar located in Iran, on the Gulf of Oman. The port serves as the only oceanic port of Iran. It comprises of two separate ports namely, Shahid Kalantari and Shahid Beheshti. Each of the ports have five berths. It is located at around 170 kilometres west of Gwadar port in Pakistan.

Background:

Last Shah of Iran had put forward the proposal for developing this port was in 1973. Development was delayed due to 1979 Iranian Revolution. First phase of the port was opened in 1983 during Iran–Iraq War.

India-Iran agreement on Chabahar Port:

India and Iran had first agreed on plans to further develop Shahid Beheshti port in the 2003. However, this agreement could not be worked upon due to sanctions against Iran. Both the countries signed a bilateral agreement in May 2016, under which India would refurbish one of the berths at Shahid Beheshti port as well as reconstruct a 600-meter-long container handling facility there. India is keen to develop this port because it will provide India an alternative route for trade between India and Afghanistan. India's first shipment of wheat to Afghanistan was sent in October 2017, through the Chabahar Port. Finally in December 2018, India took over the operations of Chabahar port.

8. **Assam's Manohari Gold Tea auctioned for Rs 1 lakh/kg:**



A rare variety of Assam tea called Manohari Gold Tea set a record, as it was auctioned at a record price of Rs. 99,999 per kg.

Key Highlights:

- Manohari Gold Tea created history by breaking its own record.
- Saurav Tea Traders bought the Gold Tea, with the highest bid of Rs. 99,999 per kg.
- It is being considered as the highest price ever for tea in a public auction.

About Manohari Gold Tea:

Manohari Gold Tea is produced by Manohari Tea Estate. It is produced in upper Dibrugarh district of Assam.

Background:

Earlier, in August 2019, Golden Butterfly Tea had fetched Rs. 75000 per kg at Guwahati Tea Auction Centre (GATC). Golden Butterfly Tea is a rare variety of handmade Assam tea, produced by Dikom Tea Estate of Rossell Tea Industries.

Golden Butterfly Tea:

The Golden Butterfly Tea is produced by Dikom Tea Estate in the Dibrugarh town in Assam.

It is a hand-crafted tea. It is made from tender leaves and buds which are available around June-July.

The tea has been named so because only soft golden tops go into making this exceptionally rare and special tea. It has an extremely mellow and sweet caramel flavour.

Tea cultivation in Assam:

Assam is world's largest tea-growing regions. Industries in Assam continue to grow for 200 years now.

About Assam Tea:

Assam tea is a black tea. It has been named after the region of its production that is Assam. Assam tea is manufactured from Camellia sinensis var. assamica (Masters) plant. This tea is indigenous to Assam. Assam tea is mostly grown at or near sea level. It is known for its body, malty & briskness flavour and a strong & bright colour.