



PLUTUS ACADEMY

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Current Affairs

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Topic-1: **Abortion Law in Argentina**

Context:

- Recently, Argentina's Congress has **legalised abortions up to the 14th week of pregnancy**. It is being seen as a ground-breaking decision in a country that has some of the world's most restrictive abortion laws.

Why is this legislation historic?

- This change is historic and its implications may be witnessed beyond Argentina, in Latin America at large.

What does this bill mean?

- Prior to the passing of the bill, abortions were only permitted in cases of rape or when the woman's health was at serious risk. Activists have been campaigning for years, calling for an overturning of **this law that has been in existence since 1921**.
- Two years ago, the country had almost passed the abortion bill, which was narrowly defeated.
- The bill calls for **greater autonomy for women over their own bodies and control of their reproductive rights**, and also provides better healthcare for pregnant women and young mothers.

Why is it a landmark bill?

- Prior to this, girls and women were forced to turn to illegal and unsafe procedures because abortion was against the law in Argentina.



- For girls and women from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds, the scope of access to safe medical procedures for abortion was even narrower.
- **According to Human Rights Watch**, unsafe abortion was the leading cause of maternal mortality in the country.
- **The Catholic Church** and the **evangelical community** wield immense power and influence in Argentina and had strongly opposed the passing of this bill. In fact, for several decades, following the beliefs of the Catholic Church, even the sale of contraceptives was prohibited in the country.

What impact will this have in Latin America?

- The passage of this law will have an impact in other countries in Latin America.
- At present, abortions are illegal in Nicaragua, El Salvador and the Dominican Republic. In Uruguay, Cuba, Guyana, and in some parts of Mexico, women can request for an abortion, but only in specific cases, and each country has its own laws on the number of weeks of pregnancy within which the abortion is legal.
- The countries also have varying degrees of punishment and penalties meted out to girls and women, including jail.
- Women's rights activists have acknowledged that despite the new law in Argentina, the fight is far from over in the region.

Topic-2: Ordinance on Anti-conversion law

Context-

The Madhya Pradesh council of ministers cleared the 'Freedom of Religion Bill, 2020' in the form of an ordinance.

Key provision-

- The proposed law in MP will prohibit religious conversion or such efforts by misrepresentation, allurement, force, undue influence, coercion, marriage or any other fraudulent means.
- Abetment and conspiracy for religious conversion will also be prohibited under it.
- Any marriage solemnised in violation of the proposed law will be considered null and void.
- Those willing to convert will need to apply to the district administration 60 days in advance, according to provisions of the legislation.
- Religious leaders facilitating the conversion will also have to inform about it 60 days in advance.
- Violation of these provisions would attract a jail term of three to five years and a fine of Rs 50,000.
- In cases involving religious conversion of members of Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and minors, a provision has been made for imprisonment of two to 10 years and Rs 50,000 fine for violators.
- In case of mass conversions (of two or more persons), a provision of five to 10 years of imprisonment and minimum fine of Rs one lakh has been made for offenders.

Important supreme court verdict-

- In 1977, Reverend Stanislaus challenged the Madhya Pradesh Dharma Swatantrya Adhiniyam, 1968, and the Orissa Freedom of Religion Act, 1967, in the Supreme Court.
- The court held that the right to freely profess, practise and propagate religion as laid down in Article 25 of the constitution does not include the right to convert, and upheld the constitutional validity of both the state laws prohibiting conversion by force, fraud or allurement.

What is Ordinance?

- Ordinances are laws that are promulgated by the President of India on the recommendation of the Union Cabinet, which will have the same effect as an Act of Parliament.
- They can only be issued when Parliament is not in session. They enable the Indian government to take immediate legislative action.
- Ordinances cease to operate either if Parliament does not approve of them within six weeks of reassembly, or if disapproving resolutions are passed by both Houses.
- It is also compulsory for a session of Parliament to be held within six months.

Points given by its supporter-

- Laws which give equal marital rights to women of all communities, sects and faith will help them defeat exploitation through conversion.
- A gendered approach is important in framing laws to strengthen the independence of women, to insulate them from blackmailing, coercion and intimidation that has been the reported ploy in religious conversions commonly known as 'Love Jihad'.
- There have been many pertinent socio-cultural challenges in our society which have been brushed under the carpet for decades.
- This includes not only religious conversions which have been imposed on women and, at times, minor girls in interfaith relationships and marriages, but also those who have been hoodwinked by their spouses into legitimising polygamous relationships.

Points given by Critics-

- The bill doesn't have any provision to deal with past cases of forced conversions and there is no time limit for lodging a complaint with the police after the marriage. Like the Dowry Prohibition Act.
- According to critics the bill is targeting Muslim community with this bill, they stated that If Love-Jihad is really a big issue and a crime, then they should have mentioned this in the bill.

- Critics also pointed out that the violent incidents against the members of the Christian community will increase in the name of reconversion.

Way Forward-

However it is to be noted that the bill is against forced conversions and not against conversions. People are free to change their religion by just informing the district magistrate.

Topic-3: **Action Agenda for an AtmaNirbhar Bharat (AAAN) report**

Context:

- The Minister of Science & Technology, Earth Sciences and Health & Family Welfare Dr. Harsh Vardhan has released an **Action Agenda for an AtmaNirbhar Bharat (AAAN) report** prepared by the **Technology Information, Forecasting and Assessment Council(TIFAC)**.



About TIFAC:

- **TIFAC** is an autonomous organization set up in **1988** under the **Department of Science & Technology** to look ahead in the technology domain, assess the technology trajectories, and support innovation by networked actions in select areas of national importance.

Background:

- With the rise of Covid-19, the world including India started facing so many issues in every field and the economy got impacted disastrously, in order to deal with this situation, TIFAC came out with a white paper The White Paper highlighted five thrust sectors namely, Healthcare, Machinery, ICT, Agriculture, Manufacturing, and Electronics that would be critical for India's economic growth post-COVID.
- As a consequential follow-up, and in order to maximize the impact of the White paper on economic resilience, TIFAC followed a consultative approach and organised a series of brainstorming workshops involving key players of each sector covering Industry, Academia, R&D Institutes and Policy makers and the detailed deliberations and specific recommendations have been presented in this comprehensive report titled “**AAAN**” as an **Action Agenda for an AtmaNirbhar Bharat**.

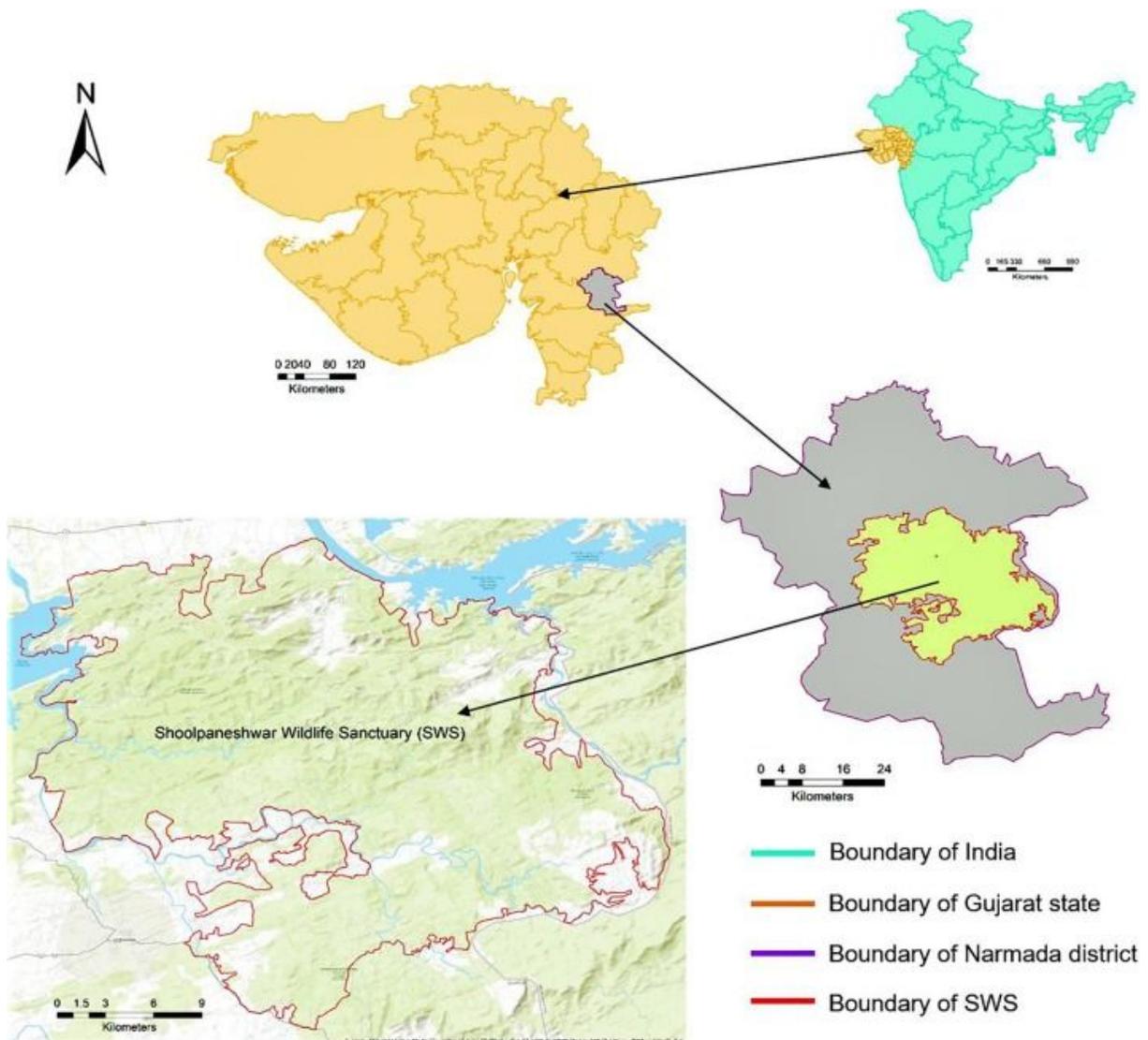
About the Report:

- The aim of the Action Report is to create a sense of **Scientific Social Responsibility** and to lay down imperatives for the future of technology in India. It looks at the challenges, possibilities and how to find solutions.
- This comprehensive action plan (AAAN) has been structured with reference to timeline, highlighting short/medium and long term interventions in various identified sectors.
- The document also specifically define policy recommendations with reference to technological inputs, focusing towards **Local to Global** that will revive Indian economy, in identified domains of Innovation and Technology development, Technology Adoption/Diffusion, Boosting up Manufacturing and Productivity, Trade and Globalization, Internet Policy and Data Management & Education and Training, AI etc.

Topic-4: Shoolpaneshwar Wildlife Sanctuary

Context:

- Recently, people from the Narmada District of Gujarat had protested against Centre's notification classifying 121 villages around the Shoolpaneshwar Wildlife Sanctuary in Narmada district as eco-sensitive zones.



What are eco sensitive zones?

- Eco-Sensitive Zones (ESZs) or **Ecologically Fragile Areas (EFAs)** are areas in India notified by the **Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MoEFCC)**, Government of India around Protected Areas , National Parks and Wildlife Sanctuaries.
- **The purpose of declaring ESZs** is to create some kind of "shock absorbers" to the protected areas by regulating and managing the activities around such areas. They also act as a transition zone from areas of high protection to areas involving lesser protection.

About Shoolpaneshwar WLS:

- Shoolpaneshwar Wildlife Sanctuary is a protected area in India's Gujarat state, located in the western Satpura Range south of the Narmada River and is 607.7 km² large.
- It **shares a common boundary** with **Madhya Pradesh** and **Maharashtra**.
- The sanctuary is made up of a mixed forest of teak, riverine forest and deciduous dry jungles that are inhabited by leopards, sloth bears, pangolins, barking deer and a number of birds and reptiles.
- It was originally established for the protection of sloth bears.

Brief History:

- The sanctuary was first declared a protected area in 1982. An area of 150.87 sq. km was called the 'Dumkhal Sanctuary', specifically created for the protection of sloth bears.
- In the years 1987 and 1989, more land was attributed to conservation and the area of the sanctuary enlarged to 607.70 sq km. It was then renamed 'Shoolpaneshwar Sanctuary'.

Topic-5: **Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunisation (GAVI)**

Context-

- Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan has been nominated by the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunisation (GAVI) as a member of the GAVI Board.
- Dr. Vardhan will be representing the South East Area Regional Office / Western Pacific Regional Office constituency on the GAVI Board. The seat is currently held by Myint Htwe of Myanmar.
- Dr. Vardhan will be representing India from January 1, 2021 till December 31, 2023.

What is Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunisation (GAVI):

- GAVI is a public–private global health partnership with the goal of increasing access to immunisation in poor countries.
- GAVI brings together developing country and donor governments, the World Health Organization, UNICEF, the World Bank, the vaccine industry in both industrialised and developing countries, research and technical agencies, civil society, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and other private philanthropists.
- It currently supports the immunization of almost half the world's children, giving it power to negotiate better prices for the world's poorest countries and remove the commercial risks that manufacturers faced in serving this market.
- It also provides funding to strengthen health systems and train health workers across the developing world.
- GAVI has observer status at the World Health Assembly.

GAVI Board-

- The GAVI Board is responsible for strategic direction and policymaking, oversees the operations of the Vaccine Alliance and monitors programme implementation.
- With membership drawn from a range of partner organisations, as well as experts from the private sector.
- The Board provides a forum for balanced strategic decision making, innovation and partner collaboration.

Topic-6: Emergency Use Authorisation (EUA)

Context:

- Recently, the Subject Expert Committee (SEC) in the **Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO)** had a meeting to consider the **Emergency Use Authorisation (EUA)** request of **Pfizer, Serum Institute of India (SII) and Bharat Biotech Pvt. Ltd.**

What is Emergency Use Authorisation?

- An Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) is a mechanism to facilitate the availability and use of medical countermeasures, including vaccines, during public health emergencies, such as the current COVID-19 pandemic.
- Vaccines and medicines, and even diagnostic tests and medical devices, require the approval of a regulatory authority before they can be administered. In India, the regulatory authority is the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO).

About CDSCO:

- The Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO) under Directorate General of Health Services, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India is the National Regulatory Authority

(NRA) of India.

- Under the **Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940** CDSCO is responsible for approval of Drugs, Conduct of Clinical Trials, laying down the standards for Drugs, control over the quality of imported Drugs in the country and coordination of the activities of State Drug Control Organizations by providing expert advice with a view of bring about the uniformity in the enforcement of the Drugs and Cosmetics Act.
- Further CDSCO along with state regulators, is jointly responsible for grant of licenses of certain specialized categories of critical Drugs such as blood and blood products, I. V. Fluids, Vaccine and Sera.

Topic-7: **‘Digital Ocean’ - the first of its kind digital platform for Ocean Data Management launched**

Context:

- Union Minister for Earth Sciences Dr. Harsh Vardhan launched ‘Digital Ocean’ - the first of its kind digital platform for Ocean Data Management developed by INCOIS.



Indian National Center for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS):

- It is an autonomous organization of the Government of India, under the Ministry of Earth Sciences.
- INCOIS was established as an autonomous body in **2007** under the Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES) and is a unit of the **Earth System Science Organization (ESSO)**.
- **ESSO- INCOIS** is mandated to provide the best possible ocean information and advisory services to society, industry, government agencies and the scientific community through sustained ocean observations and constant improvements through systematic and focussed research.

About Digital Ocean:

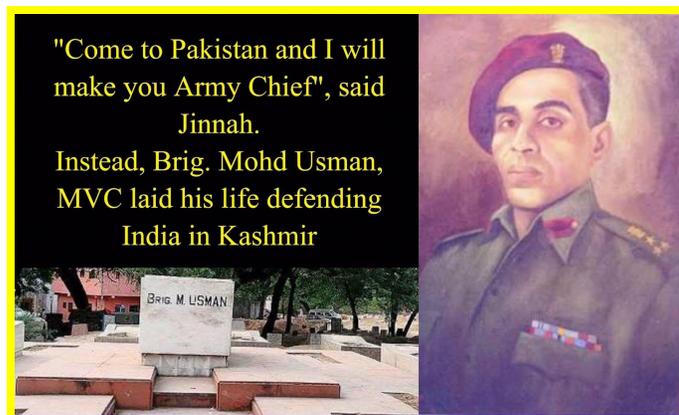
- This is the first of its kind platform for ocean data management and has a set of applications that present heterogeneous oceanographic data with geospatial technology.
- It will facilitate an online interactive web-based environment for data integration and 3D & 4D data visualisation.
- It facilitates data analysis to assess the evolution of oceanographic features obtained from multiple sources like on site monitoring devices, remote sensing and model data.
- Digital Ocean is a big step towards Digital India, will help expand 'Blue Economy' and promote Atmanirbhar Bharat.
- Digital Ocean is expected to bring a sea-change in how the oceanographic data is served for a better understanding of the oceans surrounding us. It will play a central role in sustainable management of our oceans and expanding the 'Blue Economy' initiatives.
- It is a one stop-solution for all data related needs of a wide range of users, including research institutions, operational agencies, strategic users, academic community, maritime industry, and the public.

Person In News -

Topic-8: 'Naushera ka sher' Brigadier Usman's grave found 'damaged'

Context:

- **Brigadier Mohammad Usman's grave was found damaged.** The grave, which is situated in **Jamia Millia Islamia** campus, was reportedly damaged by the miscreants. Military veterans have called for urgent attention to the 'damaged' grave of Brigadier Usman.



About Brigadier Usman:

- Mohammad Usman was born in Bibipur, Azamgarh, Uttar Pradesh on 15 July 1912.
- At the age of 12, he had jumped into a well to rescue a drowning child.
- Usman made up his mind to join the Army, and despite the limited opportunities for Indians to get commissioned ranks and despite intense competition.
- Brigadier Usman, often referred to as 'Naushera ka Sher' for the unparalleled bravery he displayed during the India-Pakistan war of 1947.
- As a Muslim, Usman became a symbol of India's "inclusive secularism."

