



# PIB, THE HINDU Newspaper and Editorial Current Affairs

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## **PIB**

### **Indian Council of Agricultural Research**

#### **Why in news?**

Recently Union Minister of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare explained the achievements of ICAR.

#### **About ICAR:**

- The Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) is an autonomous organisation under the Department of Agricultural Research and Education (DARE), Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare , Government of India.
- Formerly known as Imperial Council of Agricultural Research, it was established on 16 July 1929 as a registered society under the Societies Registration Act, 1860 in pursuance of the report of the Royal Commission on Agriculture.
- The ICAR has its headquarters at New Delhi.
- The Council is the apex body for co-ordinating, guiding and managing research and education in agriculture including horticulture, fisheries and animal sciences in the entire country.
- With 101 ICAR institutes and 71 agricultural universities spread across the country this is one of the largest national agricultural systems in the world.
- The ICAR has played a pioneering role in ushering Green Revolution and subsequent developments in agriculture in India through its

research and technology development that has enabled the country to increase the production of foodgrains by 5.4 times, horticultural crops by 10.1 times, fish by 15.2 times, milk 9.7 times and eggs 48.1 times since 1951 to 2017, thus making a visible impact on the national food and nutritional security.

- It has played a major role in promoting excellence in higher education in agriculture. It is engaged in cutting edge areas of science and technology development and its scientists are internationally acknowledged in their fields.

### **Mandate:**

- Plan, Undertake, Coordinate and Promote Research and Technology Development for Sustainable Agriculture.
  - Aid, Impart and Coordinate Agricultural Education to enable Quality Human Resource Development.
  - Frontline Extension for technology application, adoption, knowledge management and capacity development for agri-based rural development.
  - Policy, Cooperation and Consultancy in Agricultural Research, Education & Extension.
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### **Electoral Bonds**

#### **Why in news?**

Government of India has notified the Electoral Bond Scheme 2018 vide Gazette Notification No. 20 dated 02nd January 2018.

#### **Background:**

In order to “cleanse the system of political funding in the country” and in keeping with the government’s desire to move to a cashless economy, Union Finance Minister Arun Jaitley expanded on some of the details of

the electoral bonds scheme. The scheme, announced during the 2017 Budget, aims to account the donations made to all major political parties.

## **Electoral bond**

An electoral bond is designed to be a bearer instrument like a Promissory Note — in effect, it will be similar to a bank note that is payable to the bearer on demand and free of interest. It can be purchased by any citizen of India or a body incorporated in India.

## **How do you use it?**

The bonds will be issued in multiples of Rs. 1,000, Rs. 10,000, Rs. 1 lakh, Rs. 10 lakh and Rs.1 crore and will be available at specified branches of State Bank of India. They can be bought by the donor with a KYC-compliant account. Donors can donate the bonds to their party of choice which can then be cashed in via the party's verified account within 15 days.

## **What are the other conditions?**

- Every party that is registered under section 29A of the Representation of the Peoples Act, 1951 (43 of 1951) and has secured at least one per cent of the votes polled in the most recent Lok Sabha or State election will be allotted a verified account by the Election Commission of India. Electoral bond transactions can be made only via this account.
- The bonds will be available for purchase for a period of 10 days each in the beginning of every quarter, i.e. in January, April, July and October as specified by the Central Government. An additional period of 30 days shall be specified by the Central Government in the year of Lok Sabha elections.
- Electoral bonds will not bear the name of the donor. In essence, the donor and the party details will be available with the bank, but the political party might not be aware of who the donor is. The intention is to ensure that all the donations made to a party will be accounted

for in the balance sheets without exposing the donor details to the public.

### **Will it be tax deductible?**

- During the Budget presentation in February 2017, the Finance Minister had proposed that the maximum amount of cash donation that a political party can receive be capped at Rs.2,000 and that parties be entitled to receive donations by cheque or digital mode, in addition to electoral bonds.
  - A donor will get a deduction and the recipient, or the political party, will get tax exemption, provided returns are filed by the political party.
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### **Bilateral Swap Arrangement**

#### **Why in news?**

Reserve Bank of India and Bank of Japan have completed signing of the Agreement for Bilateral Swap Arrangement (BSA) between India and Japan.

#### **Highlights:**

- BSA was negotiated between India and Japan during the visit of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi to Tokyo on 29.10.2018. This BSA provides for India to access 75 billion in US dollars whereas the earlier BSA had provided for US \$50 billion. The BSA was approved by the Union Cabinet on 10.01.2019.
- The agreement for the BSA has become effective from today i.e. 28.02.2019. India can access the agreed amount of USD 75 billion for its domestic currency, for the purpose of maintaining an appropriate level of balance of payments or short-term liquidity.
- A part of the BSA can be accessed at the discretion of India. India has

comfortable level of foreign exchange reserves presently.

- The BSA provides India flexibility to use these reserves if at any point of time, in its judgment, there is need to use the resources available under BSA.
- Government of India welcomes BSA effectiveness and expresses its gratitude to Japan for agreeing to enter into this arrangement.
- This is in the spirit of strong partnership and carries out its strategic partnership further. This financial cooperation would further enhance the strong economic ties between India and Japan.

### **About Currency Swap:**

- A currency swap, sometimes referred to as a cross-currency swap, involves the exchange of interest – and sometimes of principal – in one currency for the same in another currency. Interest payments are exchanged at fixed dates through the life of the contract. It is considered to be a foreign exchange transaction and is not required by law to be shown on a company's balance sheet.
- Currency swaps were originally done to get around exchange controls, governmental limitations on the purchase and/or sale of currencies. Although nations with weak and/or developing economies generally use foreign exchange controls to limit speculation against their currencies, most developed economies have eliminated controls nowadays.

### **How a Currency Swap Works?**

- In a currency swap, the parties agree in advance whether or not they will exchange the principal amounts of the two currencies at the beginning of the transaction. The two principal amounts create an implied exchange rate.
- For example, if a swap involves exchanging €10 million versus \$12.5 million, that creates an implied EUR/USD exchange rate of 1.25. At maturity, the same two principal amounts must be exchanged, which creates exchange rate risk as the market may have moved far from 1.25 in the intervening years.
- Pricing is usually expressed as London Interbank Offered Rate

(LIBOR), plus or minus a certain number of points, based on interest rate curves at inception and the credit risk of the two parties.

- A currency swap can be done in several ways. Many swaps use simply notional principal amounts, which means that the principal amounts are used to calculate the interest due and payable each period but is not exchanged.
  - If there is a full exchange of principal when the deal is initiated, the exchange is reversed at the maturity date. Currency swap maturities are negotiable for at least 10 years, making them a very flexible method of foreign exchange. Interest rates can be fixed or floating.
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## **Heat Wave**

### **Why in news?**

Recently The two-day national workshop on Preparedness, Mitigation and Management of Heat wave concluded successfully in Nagpur with all stakeholders resolving to work towards reducing the adverse effects of Heat Wave 2019.

### **Heat Wave**

- A Heat Wave is a period of abnormally high temperatures, more than the normal maximum temperature that occurs during the summer season in the North-Western parts of India. Heat Waves typically occur between March and June, and in some rare cases even extend till July.
- The extreme temperatures and resultant atmospheric conditions adversely affect people living in these regions as they cause physiological stress, sometimes resulting in death.

The Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) has given the following criteria for Heat Waves :



- Heat Wave need not be considered till maximum temperature of a station reaches atleast 40°C for Plains and atleast 30°C for Hilly regions
- When normal maximum temperature of a station is less than or equal to 40°C Heat Wave Departure from normal is 5°C to 6°C Severe Heat Wave Departure from normal is 7°C or more
- When normal maximum temperature of a station is more than 40°C Heat Wave Departure from normal is 4°C to 5°C Severe Heat Wave Departure from normal is 6°C or more
- When actual maximum temperature remains 45°C or more irrespective of normal maximum temperature, heat waves should be declared. Higher daily peak temperatures and longer, more intense heat waves are becomingly increasingly frequent globally due to climate change.
- India too is feeling the impact of climate change in terms of increased instances of heat waves which are more intense in nature with each passing year, and have a devastating impact on human health thereby increasing the number of heat wave casualties.
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### **Health Impacts of Heat Waves:**

The health impacts of Heat Waves typically involve dehydration, heat cramps, heat exhaustion and/or heat stroke. The signs and symptoms are as follows:

- Heat Cramps: Edema (swelling) and Syncope (Fainting) generally accompanied by fever below 39°C i.e. 102°F.
- Heat Exhaustion: Fatigue, weakness, dizziness, headache, nausea, vomiting, muscle cramps and sweating.
- Heat Stroke: Body temperatures of 40°C i.e. 104°F or more along with delirium, seizures or coma. This is a potential fatal condition

## **Highlights of Work Shop:**

- This was the third annual workshop in a series that NDMA has been conducting since 2017 to build a momentum ahead of the start of the Heat Wave season. These workshops facilitate States to prepare and implement their Heat Action Plans.
  - In fact, with the combined efforts of all stakeholders, the number of heat-related deaths in the country came down to just 25 in 2018, a significant reduction from more than 2,000 deaths in 2015.
  - At the technical session on Capacity Building & effective response, operational issues of implementing Heat Action Plans were discussed. The session also discussed the why and how of city-specific heat wave thresholds and vulnerability assessments.
  - The session on Inter-agency coordination and effective governance discussed the importance of coordination amongst all agencies and regular monitoring of the heat wave situation. It also highlighted the significance of long-term mitigation measures, key interventions, review and updation of Heat Action Plans.
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## **Deendayal Disabled Rehabilitation Scheme**

### **Why in news?**

A National Conference on “Deendayal Disabled Rehabilitation Scheme (DDRS)” will be organized on 1st March, 2019 by the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.

### **About Deendayal Disabled Rehabilitation Scheme:**

- The umbrella Central Sector Scheme of this Ministry called the "Scheme to Promote Voluntary Action for Persons with Disabilities" was revised w.e.f. 2003 and was renamed as the "Deendayal Disabled Rehabilitation Scheme (DDRS)".
- However, while revision of the scheme took place in 2003, the cost



norms of 1999 had remained unchanged. The revision of the cost norms has become imperative to compensate for the price rise.

- The Consumer Price Index (CPI) for Industrial workers has risen by 38% from 1999 to 2007. It has been decided to revise the cost norms for honoraria, recurring items and nonrecurring items of expenditure. The scheme has also been revised to the extent that there has been widening of the scope of the model projects.

## **Objectives**

The objectives of the scheme are:

- To create an enabling environment to ensure equal opportunities, equity, social justice and empowerment of persons with disabilities.
- To encourage voluntary action for ensuring effective implementation of the People with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities and Protection of Rights) Act of 1995.

## **Approach and Strategy**

The approach of this Scheme is to provide financial assistance to voluntary organizations to make available the whole range of services necessary for rehabilitation of persons with disabilities including early intervention, development of daily living skills, education, skill-development oriented towards employability, training and awareness generation.

With a view to inclusion of persons with disabilities in the mainstream of society and actualizing their potential, the thrust would be on education and training programmes. In order to achieve the objectives of the scheme the key strategies will be as follows:

- To enhance educational opportunities at all levels and in all forms and enlarge the scope of vocational and professional opportunities, income generation and gainful occupations.
- To support all such measures as may be necessary for promoting formal as well as nonformal employment and placement opportunities.

- To implement outreach and comprehensive Community Based Rehabilitation programmes in urban and rural environments.
  - To support manpower development activities to train required personnel at different levels for all programmes/ projects/activities for persons with disabilities.
  - To support the development, publication and dissemination of information, documentation and training materials.
  - To set up well equipped resource centres at different levels. To promote and support the development of self-help groups, parent organizations and independent living.
  - To encourage coordination, cooperation and networking and multi-sectoral linkages.
  - To support people with disabilities in projects which are environment friendly and ecopromotive.
  - To support construction and maintenance of buildings, provision of furniture and fixtures and installation and maintenance of machinery and equipment.
  - To establish and support facilities for sport, recreation, leisure-time activities, excursions, creative and performing arts, cultural and socially inclusive activities.
  - To support and facilitate the availability of appropriate housing, homes and hostel facilities.
  - To support the conduct of surveys and other forms of epidemiological studies.
  - To promote research in various development areas, innovative strategies, assistive devices and enabling technologies and support production of such devices ensuring quality control.
  - To support effort to ensure protection of human, civil and consumer rights of persons with disabilities.
  - To support legal literacy, including legal counseling, legal aid and analysis and evaluation of existing laws.
  - To support such other measures, which may meet the needs of the persons with disability and fulfill the obligations as prescribed in the People with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities and Protection of Rights) Act of 1995.
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# **National Policy on Software Products - 2019**

## **Why in news?**

The Union Cabinet, chaired by the Prime Minister has approved the National Policy on Software Products - 2019 to develop India as a Software Product Nation.

## **Background:**

- The Indian IT Industry has predominantly been a service Industry. However, a need has been felt to move up the value chain through technology oriented products and services.
- To create a robust software product ecosystem the Government has approved the National Policy on Software Products - 2019, which aims to develop India as the global software product hub, driven by innovation, improved commercialisation, sustainable Intellectual Property (IP), promoting technology startups and specialized skill sets.
- Further, the Policy aims to align with other Government initiatives such as Start-up India, Make in India and Digital India, Skill India etc so as to create Indian Software products Industry of USD ~70-80 billion with direct & indirect employment of ~3.5 million by 2025.

## **Implementation strategy and targets**

The Policy will lead to the formulation of several schemes, initiatives, projects and measures for the development of Software products sector in the country as per the roadmap envisaged therein.

- To achieve the vision of NPSP-2019, the Policy has the following five Missions:
- To promote the creation of a sustainable Indian software product industry, driven by intellectual property (IP), leading to a ten-fold increase in India share of the Global Software product market by 2025.
- To nurture 10,000 technology startups in software product industry,

including 1000 such technology startups in Tier-II and Tier-III towns & cities and generating direct and in-direct employment for 3.5 million people by 2025.

- To create a talent pool for software product industry through (i) upskilling of 1,000,000 IT professionals, (ii) motivating 100,000 school and college students and (iii) generating 10,000 specialized professionals that can provide leadership. IV. To build a cluster-based innovation driven ecosystem by developing 20 sectoral and strategically located software product development clusters having integrated ICT infrastructure, marketing, incubation, R&D/testbeds and mentoring support.
- In order to evolve and monitor scheme & programmes for the implementation of this policy, National Software Products Mission will be set up with participation from Government, Academia and Industry.

### **Expenditure involved**

Initially, an outlay of Rs.1500 Crore is involved to implement the programmes/ schemes envisaged under this policy over the period of 7 years. Rs1500 Crore is divided into Software Product Development Fund (SPDF) and Research & Innovation fund.

### **Major impact:**

The Software product ecosystem is characterized by innovations, Intellectual Property (IP) creation and large value addition increase in productivity, which has the potential to significantly boost revenues and exports in the sector, create substantive employment and entrepreneurial opportunities in emerging technologies and leverage opportunities available under the Digital India Programme, thus, leading to a boost in inclusive and sustainable growth.

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**THE HINDU**

**National Mineral Policy 2019**

## Why in news?

The Union Cabinet has approved the National Mineral Policy 2019.

### About the Policy:

- The policy is aimed at bringing about more **effective regulation** to the sector as well as a more sustainable approach while addressing the issues of those affected by mining.
- The aim of the National Mineral Policy 2019 is to have a more effective, meaningful and implementable policy that brings in further transparency, better regulation and enforcement, balanced social and economic growth as well as sustainable mining practices.

### Reconnaissance permit:

- Some of the features in the policy include the introduction of the **right of first refusal** for the reconnaissance permit (RP) and prospecting license holders, encouraging the private sector to take up exploration and the auctioning of virgin areas on a revenue- sharing basis.
- In a separate decision, the Union Cabinet gave its ex-post facto approval for the creation of a special purpose vehicle (**SPV**) **for the disinvestment of Air India** and its subsidiaries and joint ventures.
- The SPV, named Air India Assets Holding Ltd. (AIAHL), has been created for the purpose of warehousing the accumulated working capital loan not backed by any asset along with four subsidiaries.

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## Development scheme for knitwear sector

### Why in news?

Union Ministry for Textiles launched a comprehensive programme for the development of knitting and knitwear sector in the country under the **PowerTex India scheme**.

### **About the Programme:**

- The programme, the outlay for which is ₹47.72 crore, would be in operation till the end of March next year.
- The total outlay for PowerTex India Scheme and the Knitwear Scheme is 487.07 crore. Of this, ₹439.35 crore is for powerloom units for three years from April 1, 2017 to March 31, 2020 and 47.72 crore for the knitwear scheme. Almost ₹170 crore were disbursed to the powerloom sector till January 31, 2019.
- Knitting is a major segment in the textile value chain, constituting 27% of the total fabric produced in the country.

### **Knitwear clusters:**

- Of the knitted fabric produced, 15% is exported. Some of the major knitwear clusters in the country are **Tiruppur, Ludhiana, Kanpur, and Kolkata.**
- The programme for knitting and knitwear units, catering to domestic and exports markets, has eight components where the industries would get support to install machinery under group work shed scheme, buy yarn, go in for solar energy, have common facilities and create new service centres under public private partnership mode.
- Since the scheme is for knitting and knitwear units, stitching machinery can also be installed under the group work shed scheme.
- The scheme will develop the industry in clusters. Units just coming up will benefit as there is support for joint investment.
- Since the knitting and knitwear industry is pre-dominantly MSME in size and mainly located in decentralised sector, the scheme will help develop this sector.

### **PowerTex Scheme:**

- The Government has launched PowerTex India, a comprehensive scheme for powerloom sector development, simultaneously at over 45 locations in the country.
- The powerloom sector alone employs over 44 lakh people and the scheme will especially benefit small powerloom weavers.

### **The comprehensive scheme has the following components:**



- In-situ Upgradation of Plain Powerlooms
  - Group Workshed Scheme (GWS)
  - Yarn Bank Scheme
  - Common Facility Centre (CFC)
  - Pradhan Mantri Credit Scheme for Powerloom Weavers
  - Solar Energy Scheme for Powerlooms
  - Facilitation, IT, Awareness, Market Development and Publicity for Powerloom Schemes
  - Tex Venture Capital Fund
  - Grant-in-Aid and Modernisation & Upgradation of Powerloom Service Centres (PSCs)
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## **FAME second phase**

### **Why in news?**

The Union Cabinet has approved the implementation of second phase of the **Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Electric Vehicles** or FAME with an outlay of 10,000 crore **for three years**, with effect from April 1, 2019.

### **About the scheme:**

- The first phase of the scheme was notified on April 1, 2015 with a total outlay of ₹895 crore.
- The main objective of the scheme is to **encourage faster adoption of electric and hybrid vehicles by way of offering upfront incentives on purchase of such vehicles** as well as by establishing necessary **charging Infrastructure**.
- While for three wheelers and four-wheelers, incentives will be applicable mainly to vehicles used for public transport or commercial purposes, in the two-wheeler segment the focus will be on the private vehicles.
- Through the scheme, it is planned to support 10 lakh e-2W, 5 lakh e-3W, 55000 4Ws and 7,000 buses.
- Additionally, the benefits of incentives will be extended to only those

vehicles which are fitted with advance battery like a lithium Ion battery and other new technology batteries.

- The scheme also proposes for setting up 2,700 charging stations.
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## **J&K ordinance**

### **Why in news?**

The Union Cabinet approved the Jammu and Kashmir Reservation (Amendment) Ordinance, 2019 that will pave the way to extend **reservation in jobs, promotions and education to people living 10 km from the International Border (IB) in Jammu.**

### **New Changes:**

- Earlier the benefits were only reserved for **people living 10 km beyond the Line of Control (LoC)** and affected by shelling and firing from across the border.
- The proposal to this effect came from the Jammu and Kashmir administration, which is at present under President's rule.
- The ordinance in no way affected the rights of people of the State nor did it tinker with Article 35-A, which provides special rights and privileges to permanent residents of J&K.
- **The 740 km LoC in J&K is under the operational control of the Army and 192 km IB in Jammu is manned by the BSF.**
- People living along the IB in Jammu live under similar conditions as those along the LoC. They also face continuous shelling and firing from across the border. While the population along the LoC was getting reservation benefits, those along the IB were not. Through this ordinance the anomaly has been corrected. It has nothing to do with altering 35A or Article 370.
- The State was under President's rule, the ordinance had to be cleared by the Centre. An ordinance to implement the 10% reservation quota for the economically weaker sections, as passed by the Parliament earlier this year, was also cleared by the President.
- A statement by the Press Information Bureau said the J&K

Reservation Act, 2004 and the 2005 Rules provide for vertical reservation in direct recruitment, promotions and admission in different professional courses to various categories Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Socially and Educationally Backward Classes.

- However, the reservation benefits are not extended to the persons residing in the areas adjoining IB. Due to continuous cross border tensions, persons living alongside the IB suffer from socio-economic and educational backwardness.
  - Shelling from across the border often compels these residents to move to safer places and is adversely impacting their education as Educational Institutions remain closed for long periods.
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## **India Provides proof for Pakistan's F-16 denial**

### **Why in news?**

A day after Pakistan claimed it never used American F-16s in its attempted air strike on military installations in the Rajouri sector, India presented parts of a fired AMRAAM missile which can only be fired from an F-16 aircraft.

### **Indian Response:**

- There is enough evidence to show that F-16s were used in this mission and Pakistan is trying to hide this fact. Also, parts of AMRAAM air-to-air missile, which is carried only on the F-16s in PAF, were recovered east of Rajouri within Indian territory.
- Pakistan Air Force (PAF) used four F-16s in its fleet that violated Indian airspace and attempted to hit military installations.
- The **AIM-120 Advanced Medium-Range Air-to-Air Missile** (AMRAAM) missile, manufactured by American firm Raytheon, is available in many variations, and has been sold to many countries including Taiwan, Finland, the UAE, Turkey and Pakistan. **This missile can only be fired from F-16s** which are among the aircraft

of the PAF.

- The debris presented was of AIM-120 C-5 AMRAAM missile, with markings showing the contract number of the missile as FA8675-05-C-0070 and serial number as CC12947.
- This is the contract number (FA8675-05-C-0070/P00028) placed by Headquarters Medium Range Missile Systems Group, Eglin Air Force Base for Foreign Military Sales to Pakistan on November 17, 2006.

### **F-16 fighter Jets:**

- The evidence is critical to establishing use of the F-16s in the air strike since the **US, which sold the fighter jets to Pakistan, does not allow these platforms to be used in an offensive role.**
  - India had strongly opposed the US decision to sell eight F-16s to Pakistan in 2016, which also could not pass the muster in US Congress for Foreign Military Funding. This meant that the order was never placed.
  - In June 2006, Pakistan had ordered 500 AIM-120C-5 AMRAAM missiles for \$269.6 million to equip its F16 fighters. The first batch of AMRAAMs was delivered to PAF on July 26, 2010. At that time, it was the largest order of AIM-120C-5 missile, and the first missile deal between Raytheon and Pakistan.
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## **SC stays order for eviction of tribals, forest dwellers**

### **Why in news?**

The Supreme Court on Thursday stayed its controversial February 13 order directing the eviction of lakhs of Scheduled Tribes and other traditional forest dwellers whose claims for forest land rights have been rejected under the Forest Rights Act (FRA) of 2006.

### **Recent Judgment:**

- The Bench said the mighty and the undeserving who have encroached on forest lands would be shown no mercy.

- The Bench acknowledged the need to further delve into whether due process was followed by gram sabhas and States' authorities under the FRA before the claims for forest rights of forest-dwelling Scheduled Tribes (FDST) and other traditional forest dwellers (OTFD) were finally rejected.
- Over 11 lakh ST and OTFDs across 16 States faced the brunt of the apex court's order of eviction on February 13.

### **Directions to States:**

- The apex court has now given the States four months' time to file affidavits responding to allegations that there was a high rate of rejection of claims, non-communication of rejection orders, unrealistic timelines in deciding claims, irregular holding of State Level Monitoring Committee meetings, lack of support from the district administrations concerned in providing revenue or forest maps, rejection of claims despite incomplete or insufficient evidence, etc.
- In fact, the court wants to know whether tribals and OTFDs were ousted from forest lands on the basis of sketchy, incomplete information and data.

### **Centre's Observations:**

- The order was passed by the Bench on the basis of an application by the Centre to modify the February 13 order.
  - The Centre said the States should first file proper affidavits on the procedure followed in the verification of forest rights claims before any such eviction.
  - The eviction of the tribals may be withheld and the eviction of tribals, without such information, would cause serious prejudice to them who have been residing in forests for generations. Many are poor and illiterate.
  - Justice Mishra observed that the February 13 order was only a follow-up of the court's order on January 29, 2016, which had also directed the eviction of encroachers into forest lands.
  - The court asked why there were no mechanism in place in the States or in the Centre to review the rejection orders.
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## **Rhinos without borders**

### **Why is the issue?**

**Asian wildlife protection experts place emphasis on expanding the Rhino species' domain to boost population**

### **Trans-boundary Rhino Conservation:**

- International boundaries will not come in the way of conservation of rhinos, said representatives of Asian countries where the one-horned herbivore thrives.
- The **New Delhi Declaration** adopted at the second meeting of the Asian rhino range countries underscored **trans-boundary collaboration among India, Nepal, and Bhutan** for the conservation and protection of the greater one-horned rhino.
- There are no rhinos in Bhutan, but some from the **Manas National Park in adjoining Assam or Buxa Tiger Reserve in West Bengal** are known to cross over occasionally.
- Emphasis was also laid on expanding rhino domains within a country or between rhino range countries. **Indonesia and Malaysia are the other Asian countries where the last of the rhinos live.**
- Among the other decisions taken at the New Delhi meeting of the Asian rhino range countries was “making the best use of all available individuals and technologies” to accelerate natural and conservation breeding of the critically endangered Sumatran rhino.

### **Global Rhino population:**

- The current global population of the Indian one-horned rhinoceros is 3,584. Assam's **Kaziranga National Park** has the bulk of 2,938 rhinos in India while Nepal 646.
- Once ranging from China to Bangladesh, the **Javan and Sumatran rhinos are nearing extinction.**
- The **Sumatran rhino, the smallest of all rhino species and the only Asian rhino with two horns, became extinct in the wild in Malaysia.**
- There is only one found now in the **Sabah island of Malaysia** while Indonesia has a few.



## **Emulating India:**

- Part of the plan has been to replicate or develop upon the **Kaziranga rhino conservation success story** for Sumatran as well as the Javan rhino. Kaziranga had less than 10 rhinos when it was declared a protected area for the **animal** in 1905.
  - On February 26, the **National Rhino Conservation Strategy** for India called for active engagement between India and Nepal to protect the species.
  - The plan said the single population of rhinos in **Sukla-Phanta (Nepal), Valmiki Tiger Reserve (India) and Chitwan National Park (Nepal) and Dudhwa (India)** is separated by the political boundary between the two countries.
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## **U.N. Security Council to ban Masood Azhar**

### **Why in news?**

Three permanent members of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), the U.S., U.K and France, have made a 'listing request' to the asking for **a travel ban, arms embargo and asset freeze** on Pakistan-based Jaish-e Mohammad (JeM) leader Masood Azhar.

### **International Ban:**

- The JeM had claimed responsibility for the February 14 suicide attack on an Indian security convoy in Pulwama in Kashmir that killed more than 40 Indian troops.
- Government sources in Delhi said India had shared the dossier given to Pakistan, on Azhar and Jaish-e Mohammad including specific details of the group's terror camps and links to the Pulwama attack and previous attacks carried out by them with all 15 members of the UN Security Council as well.
- Recent listing request will be considered as accepted by the UNSC 1267 Committee unless objections are raised by 3 p.m. on March 13, i.e., after a period of 10 business days.

#### **Fourth attempt:**

- China had used its veto power as a permanent member of the UNSC to block previous attempts at sanctioning Azhar (most recently in 2017). This week's attempt is the fourth since 2009 to list the JeM chief.
  - The request has been in the works since shortly after the Pulwama attack, but was expected to take longer. Given the escalating situation between India and Pakistan this week, some UNSC members were keen on getting the request finalised quickly, to help keep the peace.
  - The JeM had already been listed by the UNSC as being associated with al Qaeda in October 2001.
  - The listing request, in the "Statement of Case" section, links Azhar to the JeM, saying he founded it "upon his release from prison in India in 1999" and that, Azhar has also financially supported JEM since its founding.
  - Mr. Azhar is also cited as having a role in recruiting fighters in Afghanistan. The Statement of Case further links JeM to the February 14 Pulwama attack.
  - UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres has had contacts at "various levels, with all sides" and was following the situation with deep concern. The UN's message publicly and privately to both sides has been to urgently take steps to lower tensions through meaningful, mutual engagement.
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