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Supreme Court Dismissed Aadhaar Review Petitions

Why in News

Recently, the **Supreme Court (SC)** has **dismissed petitions seeking a review** of its **2018 judgment** upholding the constitutional validity of the **Aadhaar Act (2016)**.

Key Points

- **Background:**
    - In 2018, the SC upheld the country's biometric identity system and also cleared mandatory Aadhaar enrolment of recipients of government welfare benefits.
    - The court, in its verdict, had also **approved the passage of Aadhaar law by the Parliament as a money bill,** which **did not require an approval of the Rajya Sabha.**
    - Thereafter, **review petitions** were filed against the judgement.
- **Issue Involved:**
    - Whether the **decision of the Lok Sabha Speaker** under **Article 110 (3)** of the Constitution to certify a bill as a money bill under **Article 110 (1)** is final and binding, or **can be subject to judicial review.**
    - If the decision is subject to judicial review, whether the **Aadhaar Act, 2016** has been correctly **certified as a money bill.**

- **SC's Ruling:**
  - **Majority Decision:**
    - Majority of the bench (i:e 4 out of 5) held that **"no case for review"** of the 2018 judgment was made and **dismissed the petitions.**
    - The 2019 judgment in Rojer Mathew v South Indian Bank Ltd was not sufficient to press for a reconsideration of the 2018 Aadhaar judgment.
      Rojer Mathew v South Indian Bank Ltd 2019:
      - The judgment in this case said that the **speaker's decision was not beyond judicial review** though the scope was extremely restricted.
      - It had also said that the 2018 Aadhaar verdict had not answered conclusively **the question as to what constitutes a money Bill** under Article 110 (1) and had **directed that it be referred to a larger Bench which has not been constituted yet.**
  - **Dissenting Judgment:**
    - One of the five judges dissented with the majority view and said that **the 2019 judgment questioning the correctness of the Aadhaar verdict was a relevant fact and that the apex court must wait for the larger bench of seven judges to decide** these pertinent issues.
    - He also referred to the **Sabarimala case** where a nine-judge Bench in February 2020 had **referred certain questions of law arising in the context of an earlier decision** by a five-judge Bench in September 2019 **to a larger Bench while keeping the review petitions pending.**
    - He held that it is a constitutional **error to hold at this stage that no ground exists to review the judgment** and it would **have serious consequences not just for judicial discipline,** but **also for the ends of justice.**
  - **Final Judgement:**
    Even as one of the five judges on the bench termed it a "constitutional error," the SC by a **majority verdict has dismissed a clutch of petitions seeking a review of its 2018 judgment that validated the Aadhaar Act.**

Money Bill

- **Article 110** of the Constitution deals with the Money Bills. It states that a bill is deemed to be a money bill if it contains 'only' provisions dealing with all or any of the following matters:
  - The imposition, abolition, remission, alteration or regulation of any tax.
  - The **regulation** of the **borrowing of money by the Union government.**
  - The **custody of the Consolidated Fund of India or the contingency fund of India,**
    > The **payment of money** into or the **withdrawal of money from any such fund.**
  - The **appropriation of money** out of the Consolidated Fund of India.
  - **Declaration of any expenditure charged on the Consolidated Fund of India** or increasing the amount of any such expenditure.
  - The **receipt of money on account of the Consolidated Fund of India** or the public account of India or **the custody or issue of such money,** or the audit of the accounts of the Union or of a state.
  - Any **matter incidental to any of the matters specified above.**
- **Difference between Money and Financial Bills:**

Money Bills	Financial Bills	
	Financial Bill-I	**Financial Bill-II**
Article 110 deals with money bills.	Article 117 (1) deals with Finance Bill - I	Article 117 (3) deals with Finance Bills-II
They deal with **'only'** provisions mentioned in **Article 110.**	They contain not only any or all the matters mentioned in **Article 110,** but also **other matters** of general legislation.	They contain provisions involving expenditure from Consolidated Fund of India, but not included in Article 110.
Speaker decides whether a bill is a money bill or not.	Does not require certification of the speaker.	Does not require certification of the speaker.
They can be introduced only in Lok Sabha.	They can be introduced only in Lok Sabha.	They can be introduced in both houses.
President's recommendation is **needed** to introduce them.	President's recommendation is **needed** to introduce them.	President's recommendation **not** needed.
It cannot be amended or rejected by the Rajya Sabha.	It can be amended or rejected by the Rajya Sabha.	It can be amended or rejected by the Rajya Sabha.

President can either accept or reject a money bill but **cannot return it for reconsideration.**	President **can return** it for reconsideration.	President **can return** it for reconsideration.
No provision for joint sitting of both the houses to resolve the deadlock.	President can summon the joint sitting of the two houses.	President can summon the joint sitting of the two houses.

Source: IE

KIIFB Borrowings Issue

Why in News

Recently, the **Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG)** of India has opined that the **off-budget borrowings** made by the **Kerala Infrastructure Investment Fund Board (KIIFB)** for critical infra projects have **bypassed the limits set on government borrowings under Article 293 (1) of the Constitution** and such borrowings do not have legislative approval.

> **Off-budget borrowings** are a means by which the government keeps its fiscal deficit in check by making quasi-government entities borrow on its behalf, to partly fund its expenditure plan for the year.

Provisions of Borrowings under Constitution

- **Borrowing by Centre and the States:** Chapter II in Part XII of the Constitution of India deals with borrowing. Article 292 covers borrowing by the Central Government, and Article 293 covers borrowing by States.
- **Empowering State Legislatures:** Article 293(1) provides State legislatures the power by law to enable or limit the State's executive powers of borrowing and giving guarantees.
- **Consent of the Centre:** Under clauses (3) and (4) of Article 293, State Governments need to obtain the consent of the Centre for raising fresh loans in case they are indebted to the latter, and such consent may be granted subject to conditions.

Key Points

Issues:

- **Bypassed Constitutional Limit:** CAG reported that KIIFB has bypassed the limits set on government borrowings under Article 293 of the Constitution as these borrowings did not have legislative approval.
- **Encroachment on Powers of Centre:** The CAG said that **Entry 37 of the List 1 of the Seventh schedule of the Constitution** gives powers of raising foreign loans only to the Centre. Thus, KIIFB borrowings are in violation of the Constitution and encroachment on the powers of the Centre.
- **Lack of Transparency:** KIIFB borrowings have not been disclosed in the Budget documents or in the accounts.
  - It raises doubts on transparency, and of inter-generational equity of the borrowings, the State has to furnish to Centre all the financial statements showing the estimates of receipts and payments of all sources of borrowings, including Open Market borrowings.
- **Burdened State Finances:** KIIFB raised funds by issuance of bonds which were to be repaid from the petroleum cess and motor vehicle tax.
  - CAG reported that since the KIIFB has no source of income, the borrowings by the KIIFB for which the State stood as guarantor, may ultimately turn out to be a **direct liability of the State government.**
- **Risk of Mounting External Liabilities:** The RBI was criticised for granting approval to the state to float **masala bonds.** The CAG raised concerns that if this mode was followed by other States, the **external liabilities of the country** would rise substantially without the Centre's knowledge of such liabilities.

Kerala Infrastructure Investment Fund Board (KIIFB)

- **Establishment:** KIIFB came into existence in 1999 through the **Kerala Infrastructure Investment Fund Act.**
- **Aim:** To provide investment for critical and large infrastructure projects in the State of Kerala.
- **Features:**
  - KIIFB was the **first sub-sovereign entity** in India **to tap the offshore rupee international bond market.**
  - In 2019, KIIFB issued its **masala bond** of ₹2,150 crore on the **London Stock Exchange. Masala Bonds** are **rupee-denominated bonds** i.e. the funds would be raised from overseas market in Indian rupees.
  - **Attracted investments:** The bond issue helped Kerala government to get multinational corporations to invest in the state, which has traditionally been known for its unfriendly business policies, bureaucratic delays and recurrent industrial strikes.
- **Change in Role:** In 2016, the role of KIIFB was changed **from handler of investment bonds to an entity to mobilize the resources** for developmental projects over and beyond the budget.

Kerala Government's Concerns:

- **Detrimental to State development:** According to the government of Kerala, funds from KIIFB are being used to build public infrastructures such as schools, roads, hospitals etc. and such a move by CAG could hurt the interests of the State.
- **Unilateralism:** Kerala government raised concerns over not giving the State an opportunity to offer its comments, observations or explanation before publishing of the report by the CAG.
- **Already RBI Approved:** The Kerala government also highlighted the fact that the KIIFB Bonds were raised with the approval of RBI- which is a central body under Government of India, then how such borrowings can be unconstitutional.

  Role of RBI:
    - The **RBI** is authorised to act as **an agent of the Central and State Governments** for the issue and management of the latter's bonds and debentures.
    - The **Internal Debt Management Department** of the RBI has the power to float State Government loans, facilitating investment of surplus cash balances of State Governments in dated securities under various funds.
    - It is also authorised to make **Ways and Means Advances (WMAs)** to the Centre and States, and to fix the limits thereof.
- **Undermines Federalism:** For decentralisation of financial autonomy, it is necessary to provide a mechanism for regulation of state subnational debt.

  It could promote macroeconomic fiscal stability of the states. Hence, exercise of power conferred to the centre by the article 293 should be strictly confined to the purposes and circumstances.

Way Forward

- **Review of sub-national Fiscal Policy:** Since the state debt burdens have been rising because of recent fiscal shocks such as **demonetisation**, introduction of **GST** and **Covid 19 crisis**, sub-national fiscal policy of India needs to be reviewed to enable states for subnational borrowings. It shall provide them more opportunities to avail fiscal autonomy.
- **Validating State Fiscal Responsibility Laws:** Even the Kerala High Court in **Matthew vs Union of India** ruled that that Article 293 is an enabling provision authorising State borrowing and it empowers the states to pass their own **Fiscal Responsibility Laws (FRLs).**
- **Cooperative Federalism:** There is a need to address the legislative concerns of KIIB raised by CAG, and the Centre and Kerala government should take out remedial measures in public interest.

Source: TH

India Innovation Index 2020: NITI Aayog

Why in News

Recently, **India Innovation Index Report 2020** was released by **NITI Aayog** in which **Karnataka retained its top position** in the major States category.

India Innovation Index

- **Institutions Involved:**
  NITI (National Institution for Transforming India) Ayog with **the Institute for Competitiveness.**
- **Modelled on GII:**
  The index has been developed on the lines of the **Global Innovation Index (GII)**, to ameliorate the innovation ecosystem of Indian states and Union Territories (UTs) and to design policies to drive innovation across regions.
- **Approach:**
  - The index goes beyond traditional approaches by **considering the best parameters in measuring innovation** such as **patents per million** of population, **publication in scientific journals, percentage of GDP spending on research.**
  - It also adds parameters that are specific to the Indian economy (eg. Demographic dividend), to give it a more holistic coverage.
- **Indicators Used:**
  The indicators that the survey uses includes the level and quality of education on parameters such as:
    - **Number of PhD students** and **knowledge-intensive** employment.
    - Enrolment in **engineering and technology** and number of **highly skilled professionals.**
    - Investment in **R&D** and number of patents and trademark applications filed.
    - **Internet subscribers.**
    - **FDI inflows,** business environment and safety and legal environment.

Key Points

Categories: The Innovation Index is divided into three categories—**major states, Union Territories, and hill and North East states.**

Rank	Major States	Score
1	Karnataka	42.5
2	Maharashtra	38.03
3	Tamil Nadu	37.91
4	Telangana	33.23
5	Kerala	30.58
6	Haryana	25.81
7	Andhra Pradesh	24.19
8	Gujarat	23.63
9	Uttar Pradesh	22.85
10	Punjab	22.54

Best performers

Four of the five highest scoring major States in the India Innovation Index are from the south

- **Major States:**
  - **Top States: Karnataka topped with a score of 42.5** for the second year running.
    - The state's success has been attributed to a high number of **venture capital deals, registered GIs** and **ICT exports**, and high **FDI inflow**.
    - Four southern states – **Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Telangana and Kerala —occupy the top positions on the index,** apart from **Maharashtra which ranked second.**
  - **Bottom States: Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh and Bihar** scored the lowest on the index, which put them at the bottom in the "major States" category.
    - **Bihar raked last** with 14.5 points.
- **Hill and North-East States:**
  - **Himachal Pradesh topped the rankings** of hill and North-East states, followed by Uttarakhand, Manipur and Sikkim.
- **Union territories/Small States:**
  - **Delhi has scored the highest on the index** in the country with a score of 46.6, while **Lakshadweep has the lowest score at 11.7.**
    - Delhi recorded the highest number of **trademark and patent applications,** along with the establishment of **new start-ups and companies** in the last financial year.

- **Challenges:**
  - **Attracting Private Investment in Research:** The **Indian government is a major spender in R&D,** while the investment of the private sector is very low when compared to Israel where private companies account for 70% of private investment in R&D.
  - **Bridging North-South Divide:** In the findings of the report the southern states have fared much better than the North Indian states.
    - There is a need to establish to interlink innovative capacities of the states (with differential per capita GDP) to decrease regional disparity in innovation.
    - Best practices observed within the States should often be documented and disseminated to encourage peer-to-peer learning.
  - **Need for micro-analysis of State-level policies:** For a country as large as India, the state of innovation needs to be understood at the regional level for effective policy formulation.
    - Based on the index each state needs to formulate its own policy, based on its unique resources and strengths and which caters to its specific needs.
- **Suggestions:**
  - **Investing More in Research:** India needs to increase its spending on R&D which is around **0.6-0.7% of its GDP,** way below the expenditure level of countries like Israel (4.3%), South Korea (4.2%), the US (2.8%) and China (2.1%).
    - Increased spending on research and development with greater collaboration between the industry and educational institutions may help to enhance innovation capability.
    - It could broaden and improve the capability of top rung educational institutions in the country to produce greater innovation outputs.
  - **Establish a Collaborative Platform:** To link all the stakeholders of innovation - innovators, researchers, and investors from the industry, a common platform should be developed.
    - It will help to strengthen the industry-academia linkages and will ease the process of technology transfer by providing a platform for innovators to showcase their inventions.

Source:IE

Regulatory Compliance Portal: DPIIT

Why in News

Recently, the **Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT)** has launched a **regulatory compliance portal** that will act as a bridge for citizens, industries and the government **to minimise burdensome compliances.**

DPIIT comes under the **Ministry of Commerce and Industry.** It is acting as the **nodal department** for coordinating the exercise of minimizing regulatory compliance burden for citizens and businesses which have an adverse impact on time and cost of businesses.

Key Points

- **Objective:**
  - Reduce the **compliance burden,** simplify further the **citizen-government interface** whether online or offline, and **remove antiquated and obsolete acts** which don't add value.
  - To **boost manufacturing and make Indian industry competitive,** there are issues of quality and manufacturing of scale but the **compliance burden is a major cost.**
- **About the Portal:**
  - All **Central Ministries/Departments and States/UTs** would **examine laws**/regulations/rules under their purview and **implement an Action Plan to** rationalize and simplify all the processes and **remove burdensome compliances, decriminalize laws and repeal redundant Acts.** These **details would be captured and tracked on the Regulatory Compliance Portal.**
  - It will act as a **first-of-its-kind central online repository** of all central and State-level compliances.
  - **Industry stakeholders** from trade bodies such as **CII**, **FICCI and ASSOCHAM** would also **submit recommendations** to minimize the regulatory compliance burden.
  - **Customized reports** of action taken by each Ministry/Department and State/UT will also get generated for monitoring and evaluation.

- **Other Related Steps:**
  - **Business Reform Action Plan (BRAP) ranking of states** was started in 2015. BRAP 2019 contained a list of 80 reforms (187 reform action points) to be implemented by 19 State departments. These reforms covered 12 business regulatory areas such as Access to Information, Single Window System, Labour, Environment, etc.
  - **Industrial Corridors** are being developed with the objective of fast-tracking growth and facilitating development of a well-planned and resource-efficient industrial base served by world-class sustainable connectivity infrastructure, bringing significant benefits in terms of innovation, manufacturing, job creation and resource security to the nation.
  - **Invest India** is the National Investment Promotion and Facilitation Agency of India. It is transforming the country's investment climate by simplifying the business environment for investors. Recently it was even declared as **winner of the United Nations Investment Promotion Award 2020** announced by the **United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD).**
  - **Make in India initiative** was launched in 2014, along with action plans for 25 sectors with the objective of facilitating investment, fostering innovation, building best in class manufacturing infrastructure, making it easy to do business and enhancing skill development.
- **Significance:**
  - **Rise of India's rank in World Bank's Ease of Doing Business Report** from 142nd in 2014 to 63rd in 2019.
  - The steps taken will be instrumental in achieving the vision of **Atmanirbhar Bharat** and help usher ease of doing business for industry and ease of living for citizens.

Source: PIB

S-400 Triumf Missile System

Why in News

The first group of Indian military specialists are scheduled to depart for Moscow (Russia) soon to undergo training courses on the **S-400 Triumf missile defence system.**

Key Points

- **Background:**
    - In October **2018, India signed a 5.43 billion USD deal with Russia** for the **S-400 Triumf missile system despite** objections from the US and the threat of sanctions under **Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act** (CAATSA).
- **About the S-400 Triumf Missile System:**
    - The S-400 Triumf is a mobile, surface-to-air missile system (SAM) designed by Russia. It is the most dangerous operationally deployed modern long-range SAM (MLR SAM) in the world, considered much ahead of the **US-developed Terminal High Altitude Area Defense system (THAAD)**.
    - The system **can engage all types of aerial targets** including aircraft, unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) and ballistic and cruise missiles within the range of 400km, at an altitude of up to 30km.
    - The system **can track 100 airborne targets and engage six of them simultaneously.**
- **Significance for India:**
    - From India's point of view, **China is also buying the system.** In 2015, China signed an agreement with Russia to purchase six battalions of the system. Its delivery began in January 2018.
        - China's acquisition of the S-400 system has been viewed as a "game changer" in the region. However, its effectiveness against India is limited.
    - India's acquisition is **crucial to counter attacks in a two-front war,** including even high-end F-35 US fighter aircraft.

India Russia Defence Cooperation

- **Important Pillar:**
    Defence cooperation is an important pillar of the **India-Russia strategic partnership.**
- **Regular Meetings:**
    - The **two Defence Ministers meet annually,** alternately in Russia and India, to discuss and review the status of ongoing projects and other issues of military technical cooperation.
    - In 2008, the **High Level Monitoring Committee** (HLMC) was set up with **Defence Secretary** from the Ministry of Defence (India) and **Director of Federal Service** for Military Technical Cooperation (FSMTC - Russia) as its co-chairs.
- **Downturn:**
    While India and Russia's economic relationship has been a weak point in the **post-Cold War period,** the US emerged as the top arms supplier to India, pushing Russia to the second position based on data for the years 2011-13.
- **Current Scenario:**
    - The low of 2013-14 has since been corrected and the crucial deal of S-400 Triumf Air Defence Missile System was initiated despite fears of sanctions under CAATSA.
    - As India has been spreading its supplier base with Israel, US and France, Russia still remains a major supplier. This is indicated by following latest developments:
        - India has approved proposals to acquire **Mig29** and **Su30 MKI** fighter aircraft from Russia for 2.4 billion USD.
        - The two sides are successfully moving towards the implementation of a **AK-203 rifle contract** and **200 Ka-226T utility helicopters** supplies.
    - **According to a paper published** by **Stimson Center,** 86% of the equipment, weapons and platforms currently in military service in India are of **Russian** origin.
- **From Imports to Joint Production:**
    Over the years, cooperation in the military technical sphere has evolved from a **purely buyer-seller relationship to joint research, design development and production** of state of the art military platforms.
    Production of the **Brahmos cruise missile** is an example of this trend.
- **Joint Exercises:**
    Exercise INDRA, is a joint, tri services exercise between India and Russia.

- **Russia's Military Equipment Deployed by India:**
  - **Navy:**
    The Navy's only active aircraft carrier **INS Vikramaditya** is from Russia.
    A **nuclear attack submarine** **Chakra II** is also in service.
  - **Army:**
    Army's **T-90** and **T-72** main battle tanks.
  - **Air Force:**
    IAF's **Su30** MKI fighter.

Source:TH

5th India – Singapore Defence Ministers' Dialogue

Why in News

Recently, the **5th Defence Ministers' Dialogue (DMD)** between **India and Singapore** was successfully held through a video conferencing.

Key Points

- **Agreement Signed :**
  Implementing Agreement on Submarine Rescue Support and Cooperation between the two Navies was signed.

- **Joint Stand:**
    - **Bilateral Cooperation:**
        - Both the countries conveyed their full support towards the early conclusion of agreements to **facilitate conduct of live firings and to establish reciprocal arrangements for the cross-attendance of military courses.**
        - They welcomed the initiatives to expand bilateral defence cooperation including the implementing agreement on **Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR)** cooperation in August 2020.
        - The **cyber agencies** of both armed forces have also **stepped up engagements.**
    - **Impact of Covid-19:**
        - Both countries exchanged views on the impact of the global **Covid-19 pandemic** on the defence and security engagements, including the best practices adopted by their Armed Forces.
    - **Defence Exercises:**
        - Both the countries successfully conducted the **27th edition of Singapore-India Maritime Bilateral Exercise (SIMBEX)** and also participated in the second edition of the **Singapore-India-Thailand Maritime Exercise (SITMEX)**, both held in November 2020.
        - These **exercises enhance interoperability** amongst the navies and **underscore the shared responsibility** of the countries to **work together to keep sea lines of communications open.**
- **India's Stand:**
    - India **conveyed gratitude** for the role of the **Singapore Armed Forces,** in supporting foreign workers, many of whom were Indian Nationals, at the peak of pandemic.
    - India reaffirmed **Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)** centrality in the regional security architecture and pledged India's support to all endeavours of the **ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting (ADMM)-Plus.**
- **Singapore's Stand:**
    - Singapore complimented India's successes in bringing down the overall numbers of **Covid-19 cases** despite challenges of scale in terms of geography and population.
    - It also expressed **support for India's upcoming co-chairmanship** of the **ADMM-Plus Experts' Working Group on HADR.**

Note:

- **Singapore** has been **ranked 2nd** in the most powerful passport report **'Henley Passport Index 2021'.**

- The **first UN treaty to be named after Singapore**, the United Nations Convention on International Settlement Agreements Resulting from Mediation (or, **Singapore Convention on Mediation**) recently came into force.
- Recently, the **Hawker Culture in Singapore** was inscribed on the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity at the 15th session of the Intergovernmental Committee (IGC).

India-Singapore Relation

- **Defence and Security Cooperation:**
  - India and Singapore share **similar concerns** about **the challenges posed by terrorism and extremism** and have found it mutually beneficial to evolve a broad framework of security cooperation.
  - Singapore participates in **Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS)** and multilateral Exercise **MILAN** hosted by Indian Navy.
  - Singapore's membership of **Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA)** and India's membership of ADDM+ (ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting - Plus) **provides a platform for both countries to coordinate positions** on regional issues of mutual concern.
- **Science & Technology Cooperation:**
  - **Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)** launched Singapore's first indigenously built micro-satellite in 2011, 2 more in 2014 and 6 in 2015.
  - In June 2018, both the countries signed six Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in the area of **artificial intelligence**, **machine learning, cognitive computing and big data analytics** to improve **healthcare, cybersecurity, automation, mobility, smart energy systems and e-governance.**
- **Trade and Economic Cooperation:**
  - Singapore is **India's 2nd largest trade partner** among ASEAN countries.
  - **Total Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)** from Singapore into India was **USD 73.3 billion** (till June 2018) which was 19% of total FDI inflow.
  - The **outward Indian FDI to Singapore was USD 62.9 billion** (till August 2018), making Singapore one of the top destinations for Indian investments.
  - In 2018, the High Commission of India also launched a **startup engagement platform, India-Singapore Entrepreneurship Bridge (InSpreneur).**

- **Infrastructure and Connectivity:**
  - **Connectivity:** Singapore is directly connected to 18 Indian cities by 8 airlines, there are now **308 weekly services (616 weekly flights) by Indian and Singaporean airlines.**
  - <u>Smart Cities</u>: A consortium of Singapore companies is developing **Amaravati, the new capital city of Andhra Pradesh.** Singapore is also working with Rajasthan in preparing Concept Plans for **townships in Udaipur and Jodhpur;** with Himachal Pradesh for developing an integrated **township of Greater Shimla;** and with Maharashtra for **development of Orange Smart City and master planning of Pune Metropolitan Region.**
- **Cultural Cooperation:**
  - Singapore's large Indian diaspora through a number of cultural societies and Singapore's official support sustains a **high level of cultural activity in Singapore.**
  - They celebrated the 4th <u>**International Day of Yoga (IDY)**</u> through 173 yoga sessions and attended by approx. 8000 people.
  - Even on **<u>Mahatma Gandhi's 150th birth anniversary</u>**, celebrations were launched with a projection of Gandhiji's video on the world's largest HD video screen at Suntec Convention Centre.
- **Indian Community:**
  - Ethnic Indians constitute about **9.1% or around 3.5 lakhs of the resident population of 3.9 million in Singapore.**
  - **ASEAN-India <u>Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD)</u>** was held in Singapore on 6-7 January 2018 as part of commemoration of 25 years of **ASEAN-India Partnership.**

<u>**Source:PIB**</u>

Electronic Waste Management

Why in News

Citing huge gaps in compliance of **electronic waste-management rules,** the **<u>National Green Tribunal </u>**(NGT) has recently ordered that scientific disposal of **<u>e-waste</u>** should be ensured as per rules.

The direction has been issued to **central** and all **state pollution control boards.**

E-Waste

- E-Waste is short for Electronic-Waste and the term is used to describe old, end-of-life or **discarded electronic appliances.** It includes their components, consumables, parts and spares.

- It is categorised into 21 types under **two broad categories:**
  - Information technology and communication equipment.
  - Consumer electrical and electronics.
- **Laws to manage e-waste have been in place in India since 2011,** mandating that only authorised dismantlers and recyclers collect e-waste. **E-waste (Management) Rules, 2016** was enacted in 2017.
- **India's first <u>e-waste clinic</u>** for segregating, processing and disposal of waste from household and commercial units has been be set-up in **Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh.**

Key Points

- **E-waste Generation in India:**
  - According to the **<u>Central Pollution Control Board</u>** (CPCB), India generated more than **10 lakh tonnes of e-waste in 2019-20,** an increase from **7 lakh tonnes in 2017-18.** Against this, the **e-waste dismantling capacity** has not been increased from **7.82 lakh tonnes** since 2017-18.
  - In 2018, the Ministry of Environment had told the tribunal that **95% of e-waste** in India is **recycled by the informal sector** and **scrap dealers unscientifically dispose of it** by burning or dissolving it in acids.
- **NGT's Directions:**
  - **Further steps should be taken for scientific enforcement of E-Waste Management Rules, 2016 (EWMR)** in the light of the reports of the CPCB.
    - It **noted gaps in collection targets,** as the amount of e-waste collected in 2018-19 was 78,000 tonnes against a target of 1.54 lakh tonnes. There are **clear governance deficits** on the subject.
  - The CPCB **may consider steps for compliance of Rule 16 requiring reduction in the use of Hazardous substances** in the manufacture of electrical and electronic equipment and their components or consumables or parts or spares.
  - It took note that **a large number of accidents take place in residential areas on account of unscientific handling of e-waste.** This needs special attention for constant vigilance in such hotspots. This also requires **review and updation of siting norms for e-waste by the CPCB** which may be done within three months.
  - All the **state pollution control boards need to identify the hotspots** by constant vigil and to coordinate with the District Administration at local levels to prevent damage to the environment and public health and meaningful enforcement of rule of law.

E-Waste Management Rules, 2016

- The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change notified the **E-Waste Management Rules, 2016** in supersession of the **E-waste (Management & Handling) Rules, 2011.**
- Over 21 products (Schedule-I) were included under the purview of the rule. It included **Compact Fluorescent Lamp (CFL) and other mercury containing lamps,** as well as other such equipment.
- For the first time, the rules brought the **producers under Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR), along with targets.** Producers have been made responsible for the collection of E-waste and for its exchange.
- Various producers can have a separate **Producer Responsibility Organisation** (PRO) and ensure collection of E-waste, as well as its disposal in an environmentally sound manner.
- **Deposit Refund Scheme** has been introduced as an additional economic instrument wherein the producer charges an additional amount as a deposit at the time of sale of the electrical and electronic equipment and returns it to the consumer along with interest when the end-of-life electrical and electronic equipment is returned.
- The role of **State Governments has been also introduced** to ensure safety, health and skill development of the workers involved in dismantling and recycling operations.
- A provision of **penalty for violation of rules** has also been introduced.
- **Urban Local Bodies** (Municipal Committee/Council/Corporation) have been assigned the duty to collect and channelize the **orphan products to authorized dismantlers or recyclers.**
- Allocation of **proper space to existing and upcoming industrial units for e-waste dismantling and recycling.**

Source:IE

Bio Medical Waste

Why in News

The **National Green Tribunal** (NGT) has recently directed various authorities to ensure compliance from the **biomedical waste management facilities** in the country.

Key Points

- **Central Level:** The **Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB)** to ensure strict compliance of biomedical waste management rules and scientific disposal of the waste.
- **State Level:** The Chief Secretaries of all the States/UTs to oversee compliance and ensure that authorisation is secured by every health care facility in their respective jurisdiction and also there is adherence to the norms.

- **District Level:** The District Magistrates in accordance with the District Environmental Plans.
- **Groundwater Contamination:** While permitting deep burials, it may be ensured that groundwater contamination does not take place.
- **Segregation:** Ensure that hazardous bio-medical waste is not mixed with the general waste.
- **Frequent Violation of Rules:** The direction came as a result of regular fines being imposed on various healthcare facilities and biomedical waste treatment facilities
- **Earlier Observation:** The segregation of **Covid-19 biomedical waste** from general garbage is a must to avoid further contamination adversely affecting public health.

Bio-Medical Waste Management Rules, 2016

- **Definition:** Biomedical waste is defined as **human** and **animal anatomical waste, treatment apparatus like needles, syringes and other materials used in health care** facilities in the process of treatment and research.
    - **Objective:** The objective of the rules is to **properly manage** the per day bio-medical waste from **Healthcare Facilities** (HCFs) across the country.
- **Ambit:** The ambit of the rules has been expanded to include **vaccination camps, blood donation camps, surgical camps** or any other **healthcare activity.**
- **Phase Out: Chlorinated plastic bags, gloves and blood bags** has been phased out **within two years** starting **from March 2016.**
- **Pre-treatment:** Pre-treatment of the laboratory waste, microbiological waste, blood samples and blood bags through disinfection or sterilisation on-site in the manner prescribed by the **World Health Organization** (WHO) or by the **National AIDS Control Organisation** (NACO).
- **Categorisation:** Bio-medical waste has been classified into **4 categories instead of the earlier 10 categories** to improve the segregation of waste at source.
- **Stringent Standards for Pollutants:** The rules prescribe more stringent standards for **incinerators to reduce the emission** of pollutants in the environment.
- **Role of State Government:** The State Government provides the **land for setting up common bio-medical waste treatment and disposal facility.es**

- **Concerns:**
  - **Pandemic:** The pandemic has presented a challenge in terms of capacity to scientifically dispose of generated waste and a challenge for civic authorities in charge of its collection and disposal.
  - **Poor Compliance:** States are not following the **CPCB guidelines** on Covid-19 related waste.

    In some states, improper segregation of waste has been reported from **Covid-19 facilities and quarantine homes.**
  - **Non Segregation:** The non-segregation of waste results in the incineration of contaminated plastics producing toxic gases and adding to air pollution.
  - **Increase in Waste:** The **rise in residential biomedical waste** and its collection without adhering to safety protocols could also trigger a surge in caseload.
  - **Health of Workers Associated:** Without proper scientific management of such waste, it can potentially affect patients and can affect the **concerned workers and professionals.**

    Discarded masks and gloves risk the lives of thousands of **sanitation workers** who work often without any protection or training to handle such hazardous material.

- **Suggestions:**
  - **Proper Segregation:** Left-over food, disposable plates, glasses, used masks, tissues, toiletries, etc used by Covid-19 patients should be put in **yellow-coloured bags,** while used gloves should be put in **red bags** and sent for sterilisation and recycling at the CBWTFs.

    > Where waste is not going to incinerators, **deep burial systems** should be properly maintained as per protocols taking all due precautions to prevent harm to the environment. A deep burial system involves burying biomedical waste in **2-meter-deep ditches and covering them with a layer of lime and soil.**

  - **Awareness Campaign:** Initiatives like conducting an appropriate programme on Doordarshan, All India Radio and other media platforms to create mass awareness about the correct disposal of biomedical waste.
  - **Creating Infrastructure:** The government should set up recycling plants **across the country** (as envisaged under the **Smart cities project**) under the **Public-Private Partnership** (PPP) Model.
  - **Coherency in Rules:** The Centre should form a national protocol combining the Biomedical Waste Management Rules, 2016 with the guidelines on Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) for producers of plastic.
  - **Innovation:** Incentivise **start-ups** and **Small and Medium Enterprises** (SMEs) offering solutions for waste segregation and treatment.
  - **Monitoring:** There should be constant and regular monitoring by the central and state PCBs, Health Departments in the states/UTs and by the high-level task team at Central level with further coordination by CPCB.

Source:TH

Shaheen-III Missile

Why in News

Recently, Pakistan has successfully test-fired the **Shaheen-III missile.**

Key Points

- **Shaheen-III Missile of Pakistan:**
  - It is a **nuclear-capable surface-to-surface ballistic missile** which can strike targets up to **2,750 km.**
  - The launch of the missile was **aimed at revalidating various design and technical parameters** of the weapon system.

- **Other Recent Developments:**
    China had recently asked India to "objectively" view the **Eagle-IX (or Shaheen-IX) military exercise** taking place **between the Chinese and Pakistani air forces,** amid **increasing tensions** with India.

Source: TH