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## **Weekly Current Affairs**

**(13th march- 20th march 2021)**

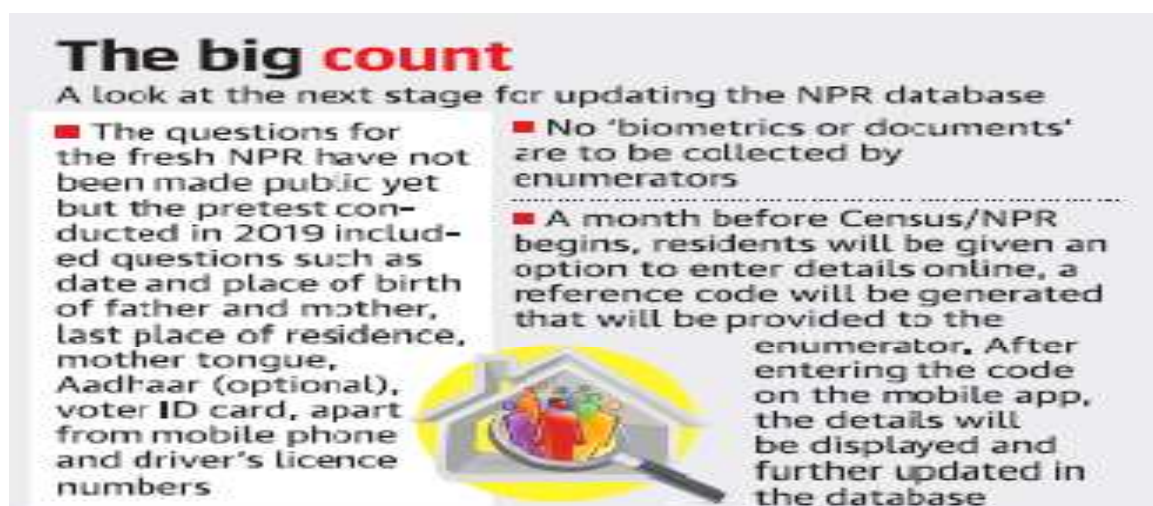
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## National Population Register

### What is the news?

The Central Government may allow the residents to fill the National Population Register (NPR) form on their own, through the online mode.



**The big count**  
A look at the next stage for updating the NPR database

- The questions for the fresh NPR have not been made public yet but the pretest conducted in 2019 included questions such as date and place of birth of father and mother, last place of residence, mother tongue, Aadhaar (optional), voter ID card, apart from mobile phone and driver's licence numbers
- No 'biometrics or documents' are to be collected by enumerators
- A month before Census/NPR begins, residents will be given an option to enter details online, a reference code will be generated that will be provided to the enumerator. After entering the code on the mobile app, the details will be displayed and further updated in the database

The infographic features a central illustration of a house with a magnifying glass over a colorful globe, symbolizing a detailed national count.

### About National Population Register (NPR):

It's a register of usual residents of the country. It is mandatory for every usual resident of India to register in the NPR. It includes both Indian citizens as well as a foreign citizen.

**Objective of the NPR** is to create a comprehensive identity database of every usual resident in the country.

**Usual resident:** According to the Citizenship (Registration of Citizens and issue of National Identity Cards) Rules, 2003, a usual resident is a person who has resided in a local area for the past 6 months or more or a person who intends to reside in that area for the next 6 months or more.

**The first National Population Register was prepared in 2010** and updating this data was done during 2015 by conducting door to door survey.

**Conducted by:** The process of updating NPR will be carried out under the aegis of the Registrar General and ex-Officio Census Commissioner, India.

## SC's rule over State Election Commissioners

### In news

- The Supreme Court has held that independent persons and not bureaucrats should be appointed as State Election Commissioners.

### Key takeaways

- Giving government employees the additional charge of State Election Commissioners is a "mockery of the Constitution".

- It directed that the States should appoint independent persons as Election Commissioners all across India.

#### **Important value additions**

##### **Article 243K**

- Article 243K deals with the Elections to the Panchayats.
- It states that the superintendence, direction and control of the preparation of electoral rolls for, and the conduct of, all elections to the Panchayats shall be vested in a State Election Commission.
- It shall consist of a State Election Commissioner to be appointed by the Governor.
- The conditions of service and tenure of office of the State Election Commissioner shall be such as the Governor may by rule determine.

### **Anti-defection law for nominated MPs:**

#### **In news**

Nominated MP Swapan Dasgupta has resigned from Rajya Sabha, a year before completion of his term.

#### **What is Anti Defection Law**

- Tenth Schedule, popularly known as the anti-defection law, was inserted by the 52nd Amendment (1985) to the Constitution to bring stability to governments by deterring MPs and MLAs from changing their political parties on whose ticket they were elected.

#### **Grounds for disqualification for nominated members:**

- If any nominated member joins any political party after the end of 6 months.
- The decision on disqualification questions on the ground of defection is referred to the Speaker or the Chairman of the House, and his/her decision is final.

### **World Air Quality report 2020**

**Launched by:** Swiss group, IQAir

The findings of this report are based on concentrations of particulate matter with a diameter of PM2.5, as this is the particle widely regarded as most harmful to human health.

#### **Key Takeaways:**

- Delhi remained the world's most polluted capital city for the third straight year in 2020.
- India is the third most polluted country in 2020 followed by Bangladesh and Pakistan.
- Amongst cities, Hotan in China was the most polluted.

- Ghaziabad near Delhi is the world's second most polluted city.
- Of fifteen most polluted cities, thirteen were in India
- The pollution levels are weighted averages, meaning that the population of a country influences the pollution values reported
- India, on the whole, had improved its average annual PM2.5 (particulate matter) levels in 2020 than in 2019.

**Major sources of India's air pollution:** transportation, biomass burning for cooking, electricity generation, industry, construction, waste burning, and episodic agricultural burning.

Transportation constitutes one of India's leading PM2.5 emission sources, responsible for emitting pollutants and re-suspending road dust.

### **'Rule Curve' for Mullaperiyar dam**

#### **In news**

The Supreme Court said the Tamil Nadu Chief Secretary will be personally responsible and appropriate action will be taken on failure to give information on the 'rule curve' for the Mullaperiyar dam to the Supreme Court-appointed Supervisory Committee.

#### **What is Rule Curve?**

The 'rule curve' in a dam decides the fluctuating storage levels in a reservoir. The gate opening schedule of a dam is based on the 'rule curve'. It is part of the "core safety" mechanism in a dam. Rule curves are used to guarantee the safety of the reservoir as well as water security

#### **Mullaperiyar Dam**

- It is a masonry gravity dam built at the confluence of Mullayar and Periyar rivers.
- Located in Kerala but **operated by Tamil Nadu following an 1886 lease agreement** for 999 years. It was signed between the Maharaja of Travancore and the Secretary of State for India during British Rule.

### **Electoral Bonds**

#### **In news**

SC agreed to hear a plea by NGO Association for Democratic Reforms to stay the sale of a new set of electoral bonds on April 1, before the Assembly elections in crucial States such as West Bengal and Tamil Nadu.

#### **What is an Electoral Bond:**

It is **like a promissory note** that can be bought by any Indian citizen or company incorporated in India from select branches of **State Bank of India**. The citizen or corporate can then donate the same to any eligible political party of his/her choice. The bonds are similar to bank notes that are payable to the bearer on demand and are **free of interest**. An individual or party will be allowed to purchase these bonds digitally or through cheque.

**Flow of funds**

A look at what the petition filed by the NGO says:

- The Finance Act of 2017 introduced the use of electoral bonds, which are exempt from disclosure under the Representation of the People Act, 1951, opening doors to unchecked, unknown funding to parties
- The amendments have removed the existing cap of 7.5% of net profit in the past three years on campaign donations by companies and have legalised anonymous donations
- Contribution received by any eligible political party in the form of electoral bonds will be exempt from income tax

The Election Commission vide letter dated May 26, 2017 and the RBI in letters on 31.01.2017, 14.09.2017, 27.09.2017 had objected to electoral bonds and advised against the issuance of electoral bonds as a mode for donation to political parties

#### Concerns:

- Illegal sale windows have been opened in the past to benefit certain political parties
- Illicit funding of political parties through shell companies.
- It has become an avenue for shell corporations and entities to park illicit money and even proceeds of bribes with political parties.
- Non Transparency in political funding.

## Project REHAB

#### What is the News?

**Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) has launched** a unique project called Project REHAB (Reducing Elephant – Human Attacks using Bees).

- **Objective:** The project aims to create “bee-fences” to thwart elephants attack in human habitations using honeybees. It will reduce the loss of lives of both, humans and elephants.

- **Where was it launched?** It was launched as a pilot project at four places located on the periphery of Nagarhole National Park and Tiger reserve in Karnataka.
- **Sub Mission:** The project has been launched as a sub-mission of KVIC's National Honey Mission.
- **Advantages:**

Dissuade elephants without causing any harm to them.

Cost effective as compared to other measures such as digging trenches.

## Great Indian Bustard

### What is the News?

The Supreme Court gave several suggestions to prevent deaths of Great Indian Bustards due to collision with power lines running through their natural habitats in Gujarat and Rajasthan.

### Key Takeaways:

- Placing underground, the overhead power cables. According to government only low voltage lines can go underground but not the high voltage ones.
- Installation of flight bird divertors to guide the birds away from the power lines, but it would be expensive due to its recurring cost.
- The court has suggested a middle path whereby the low voltage lines can be made underground. For the high voltage transmission lines that can't be made underground, the court could direct the installation of firefly bird diverters

**Fire fly Diverters** are flaps installed on power lines. They work as reflectors for bird species like the GIB. Birds can spot them from a distance of about 50 meters and change their path of flight to avoid collision with power lines.

### About GIB:

- The Great Indian Bustard (GIB), is one of the *heaviest flying birds*, and is found mainly in the Indian subcontinent. Barely 150 of these birds are estimated to be surviving now globally
- **IUCN Status-** Critically endangered
- **Habitat:** Experts say only two districts in Rajasthan — Jaisalmer and Barmer — have a breeding GIB population in the wild. The bird can also be found in very small numbers in Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka, Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh.

## **SIPRI Report:**

Swedish think tank Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) releases a report titled "Trends in International Arms Transfers Report". The report presents global trends in arms exports and arms imports.

### **Key Findings:**

**Largest Arms Importer:** India remains the second largest arms importer after Saudi Arabia

India's arms imports have decreased by 33 % between 2011-15 and 2016-20.

- **Reason:** The decrease in arms imports is mainly due to complex and lengthy procurement processes. Also, India is attempting to reduce its dependence on Russian arms by diversifying its network of arms suppliers.

**India's Arms Imports:** India's top three arms suppliers during 2016-20 were Russia France, and Israel. USA was the 4th largest arms supplier to India. Its imports to India reduced by 46% between 2016-2020.

## **Prompt corrective action (PCA)**

### **In news**

The Finance Ministry is likely to decide on infusion of ₹14,500 crores mainly in banks that are under the PCA

### **What is PCA**

Prompt Corrective Action or PCA is a framework under which banks with weak financial metrics are put under watch by the RBI. The PCA framework deems banks as risky if they slip below certain norms on **three parameters — capital ratios, asset quality and profitability.**

## **Diatom Test**

### **In news**

The Maharashtra (ATS) relied on a **forensic test known as diatom tests** for leads in the alleged murder case of Mansukh Hiran.

### **What is a diatom test?**

Diatoms are **photosynthesising algae** which are found in almost every aquatic environment including fresh and marine waters, soils, in fact, almost anywhere moist. **Diagnosis of death by drowning** is deemed as a difficult task in forensic pathology. A number of tests have been developed to confirm the cause of such deaths with the diatom test emerging as one of the most important tests. The test entails **findings if there are diatoms in the body being tested**

#### **What is the science behind the diatom test?**

- A body recovered from a water body does not necessarily imply that the death was due to drowning. **If the person is alive when he enters the water, the diatoms will enter the lungs when the person inhales water while drowning.**
- Diatom analysis is **considered positive only when the number of diatoms recovered from the body is more than a minimal established limit.**

### **New Vehicle Scrapping Policy**

#### **In news**

The Union Minister of Road Transport and Highways, Nitin Gadkari, has introduced the Vehicle Scrapping Policy. It was first announced by Finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman in her Union Budget Speech 2021-2022

#### **Key Takeaways**

- Personal vehicles will have to undergo the fitness tests at the automated centres after 20 years.
- The commercial vehicles will have to undergo the fitness test after 15 years.
- If the vehicles failed to pass the fitness test for three times, the owner would not be able to drive it on the road
- The government has announced several incentives, 25% rebate in road tax for personal vehicles and up to 15% rebate for commercial vehicles. The government will also offer waiver of registration fees on the purchase of new vehicles.

#### **Significance:**

- It would reduce pollution
- Improve fuel efficiency
- Increase government's revenue collection from the sale of new vehicles.
- Reduce Oil Import Bill
- provide boost to the automobile industry of the country




- With the implementation of the new vehicles, recyclable materials such as steel, plastic and copper can be reused

## National capital Territory of Delhi (Amendment) Bill 2021

**New rules of the game**

Salient provisions in the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi (Amendment) Bill, 2021

- The expression "Government" referred to in any law to be made by the Legislative Assembly shall mean the Lieutenant-Governor
- The Assembly shall not make any rule to enable itself or its committees to consider the matters of day-to-day administration of the Capital or conduct inquiries in relation to administrative decisions
- Before taking any executive action in pursuance of the decision of the Council of Ministers or a Minister, to exercise powers of government, State government, appropriate government, Lieutenant-Governor, administrator or Chief Commissioner, as the case may be, under any law in force in the Capital, the opinion of the Lieutenant-Governor in term of proviso to Clause (4) of Article 239AA of the Constitution shall be obtained on all such matters as may be specified, by a general or special order, by the Lieutenant-Governor



Arvind Kejriwal and Anil Bajjal

- When a Bill is passed by the Assembly, it shall be presented to the Lieutenant-Governor for his assent. He shall either approve the Bill or withhold it or he may reserve the Bill for the President's consideration
- All executive action of the Lieutenant-Governor whether taken on the advice of his Ministers or otherwise shall be expressed to be taken in the name of the Lieutenant Governor.

SOURCE: THE GOVERNMENT OF NATIONAL CAPITAL TERRITORY OF DELHI (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2021

Delhi is a Union Territory with a legislature and it came into being in 1991 under Article 239AA of the Constitution inserted by the Constitution (Sixty ninth Amendment) Act, 1991. As per the existing Act, the **Legislative Assembly has the power to make laws in all matters except public order, police and land.**

## Medical Termination of Pregnancy (Amendment) Bill, 2020

Ministry of Health and Family Welfare  
Government of India

**Cabinet Decision**

**Medical Termination of Pregnancy (Amendment) Bill, 2020**

**SALIENT FEATURES OF AMENDMENTS**

- Enhancing the upper gestation limit from 20 to 24 weeks for special categories of women which will be defined in the amendments to the MTP Rules.
- Upper gestation limit not to apply in cases of substantial foetal abnormalities diagnosed by Medical Board.
- Name and other particulars of a woman whose pregnancy has been terminated shall not be revealed except to a person authorised in any law for the time being in force.