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Daily News Analysis

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Meghalaya CM for entry permit

Why in News?

- The ordinance passed by the Meghalaya government for mandatory registration of outsiders entering the State.

Key points:

- The Amended Meghalaya Residents Safety and Security Bill (MRRSA) 2019, similar to the Inner Line Permit (ILP) system, was passed by the Meghalaya Cabinet in the form of an ordinance in November 2019 and is still awaiting the Governor's assent.
- In the backdrop of protests against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act in Northeastern states of India, Meghalaya has demanded that some "protection" on the lines of the Inner Line Permit (ILP) be also implemented in the State.
- Manipur, Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh, and Mizoram are under the ILP system and have been exempted from the Citizenship legislation.
- The government has stated that the proposed law does not bar outsiders from visiting the State. It is envisaged as an information collection mechanism and anyone who wants to visit Meghalaya has to register beforehand online or on arriving. This would ensure not only the security of the State and but also of the visiting person.

Inner Line Permit (ILP) system:

- Inner Line Permit (ILP) is an official travel document issued by the Government to allow inward travel of an Indian citizen into a protected area for a limited period.
- It is obligatory for Indian citizens from outside those states to obtain a permit for entering into the protected state.

Personal Data Protection Bill, 2019

Why in news?

The Personal Data Protection Bill, 2019 was introduced in Lok Sabha by the Minister of Electronics and Information Technology in December 2019.

Key points:

- The draft bill, the Personal Data Protection Bill, 2018, was prepared by a high-level expert committee headed by former Supreme Court judge B.N. Srikrishna.
- Personal data is data that pertains to characteristics, traits or attributes of identity, which can be used to identify an individual.
- The Bill seeks to provide for the protection of personal data of individuals.

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- The Bill categorizes certain personal data as sensitive personal data. This includes financial data, biometric data, caste, health data, religious or political beliefs, or any other category of data specified by the government, in consultation with the Authority and the concerned sectoral regulator.
- The Bill governs the processing of personal data by (i) government, (ii) companies incorporated in India, and (iii) foreign companies dealing with personal data of individuals in India.
- Broad guidelines on the collection, storage, and processing of personal data by data fiduciary have been laid out in the bill. For instance, personal data can be processed only for specific, clear and lawful purposes. It lays down a code of conduct.
- All data fiduciaries must undertake certain transparency and accountability measures such as (i) implementing security safeguards (such as data encryption and preventing misuse of data), and (ii) instituting grievance redressal mechanisms to address complaints of individuals. They must also institute mechanisms for age verification and parental consent when processing sensitive personal data of children.
- The Bill sets out certain rights of the individual (or data principal). These include the right to (i) obtain confirmation from the fiduciary on whether their personal data has been processed, (ii) seek correction of inaccurate, incomplete, or out-of-date personal data, (iii) have personal data transferred to any other data fiduciary in certain circumstances, and (iv) restrict continuing disclosure of their personal data by a fiduciary if it is no longer necessary or consent is withdrawn. This is the provision of the right to be forgotten, where the person shall have the right to restrict or prevent continuing disclosure of personal data.
- The Bill allows the processing of data by fiduciaries only if consent is provided by the individual.
- The consent needs to be informed, clear, and specific.
- However, in certain circumstances, personal data can be processed without consent. These include: (i) if required by the State for providing benefits to the individual, (ii) legal proceedings, (iii) to respond to a medical emergency.

Data Protection Authority:

- The Bill sets up a Data Protection Authority which may: (i) take steps to protect interests of individuals, (ii) prevent misuse of personal data, and (iii) ensure compliance with the Bill.
- It will consist of a chairperson and six members, with at least 10 years' expertise in the field of data protection and information technology. Orders of the Authority can be appealed to an Appellate Tribunal. Appeals from the Tribunal will go to the Supreme Court.

Indo Pacific region

- At the end of the joint Indian Ocean Dialogue held in New Delhi, External Affairs Minister officially announced that India is planning to expand its Indo-Pacific policy. So far, the Indo-



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Pacific covered Indian Ocean and the Arabian sea. With the expansion, the region will now include Gulf states and Africa.

- Indo-Pacific is a US construct that includes regions between the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean. According to the US, it ranges from the eastern shores of the African continent to the western shores of the US. The move of US was perceived to contain China's military expansion in the region.
- In June 2018, PM Modi outlined India's vision on the Indo-Pacific region while addressing the Shangri-La Dialogue
- The expansion will help India in its Act East Policy. It also clearly sets out message that India's focus is more on the Indian Ocean element of the Indo-Pacific rather than Pacific Ocean element.
- This is because with the expansion of the Indo-Pacific, ASEAN becomes the geographical centre of a greater perimeter and becomes heart of Indo-Pacific. This will also help India in moving beyond cultural, historical and economic linkages.

Three lakh rural habitations lack quality drinking water supply

Why in News?

- The data presented by the Ministry of Jal Shakti in the Lok Sabha.

Key points:

- To meet the domestic needs of every rural household, the JalJeevan Mission (JJM) has been launched in August 2019 which aims at providing potable water through Functional Household Tap Connection (FHTC) at a service level of 55 lpcd by 2024. This involves coordination between the center and the states.
- The aim and objective of National Rural Drinking Water Programme (NRDWP) is to provide every rural person with adequate safe water for drinking, cooking and other basic domestic needs on a sustainable basis, with a minimum water quality standard, which should be conveniently accessible at all times and in all situations. Achieving this aim and objective is a continuous process.
- The fund-sharing pattern between the Centre and the States/UTs for the National Rural Drinking Water Programme, a centrally sponsored programme, was 100% for the Union Territories, 90:10 for the Himalayan & the northeastern States and 50:50 for other States. It involves assistance from the World Bank.
- To provide safe drinking water to 27,544 identified arsenic and fluoride affected rural habitations, the National Water Quality Sub-Mission was launched.

Concerns:

- Over three lakh rural habitations across the country continue to be deprived of the government's minimum prescribed provision of 40 litre per capita per day (lpcd) of potable drinking water with assured quality.



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- As reported by States/UTs till Dec. 2019, 81.27% rural habitations having 76.61% population have provision of minimum 40 lpcd of potable drinking water and 15.56% rural habitations having 19.69% population have service level of less than 40 lpcd, whereas 3.17% rural habitations having 3.69% population are with water sources having quality issues.
- The Ministry noted that the coverage was monitored in terms of habitations having the provision of a minimum 40 lpcd with sources at a reasonable distance. This is not in line with the concept of Functional Household Tap Connection (FHTC) as envisaged.
- Rajasthan, West Bengal, Assam top the list in deprivation where the coverage is facing quality issues or seeing diminished supply. Bihar, Punjab, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, and Uttarakhand are the other States which are battling the problem.

ICMR to set up task force on Gene therapy

Why in News?

- The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) will set up a task force on gene therapy in order to encourage research in the field. The purpose of setting up the task force is to explore gene editing based therapeutic approaches that will treat illness.

Key points:

- The task force will work on genetic diseases affecting brain, eye disorders, muscles, heart, retina, cornea and blood disorders. The blood disorders include Thalassemia, Haemophilia and Sickle cell disease.
- The task force will also work on diseases such as diabetes, cancer and lung diseases. The work of the force will be completely abided to the guidelines on gene therapy released by ICMR.
- ICMR believes that many inherited disorders are not treated by existing drugs and therapies. While the western world has stridden far ahead in the field in the last 30 years, India is lagging in the field. Around 70 million Indians suffer from rare diseases whose cure can be achieved through gene therapy.
- Even with advancements, the countries leading in the field are still in the stage of clinical trials and have not yet proved the success of the therapies. To mention a few, ICMR states that drugs like Luxturna used to treat Retinitis Pigmentosa (illness that affects retinal cells of human eye) and Yescarta used to in cell therapy to treat cancer are still in clinical trial phase.
- Therefore, it is important to build a strong task force that will work exclusively on gene therapy.

Google's appreciation of India's Unified Payment Interface system.

Why in News?

In a thumbs up to India's Unified Payments Interface (UPI) scheme, Google has written to the U.S. Federal Reserve Board detailing the successful example of UPI-based digital payments in India in order to build 'FedNow' — a new interbank real-time gross settlement service (RTGS) for faster digital payments in the U.S.



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Key points:

- National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) deployed a real-time payment system Unified Payment Interface (UPI) in 2016.
- First, UPI is an interbank transfer system [there are now over 140 member banks, after initially launching with 9 participating banks].
- Second, it is a real-time system.
- Third, it is 'open' meaning technology companies can build applications that help users directly manage transfers into and out of their accounts held at banks.
- UPI was thoughtfully planned and critical aspects of its design led to its success.
- After just three years, the annual run rate of transactions flowing through UPI is about 10% of India's GDP, including 800 million monthly transactions valued at \$19 billion.
- According to the latest Worldline report titled 'India Digital Payments Report — Q3 2019', the total volume of UPI transactions in Q3 2019 in India touched 2.7 billion, a whopping 183% rise from a year ago. In value, UPI clocked ₹4.6 trillion, up 189% from Q3 2018.
- According to a recent ASSOCHAM-PWC study, digital payments in India will more than double to \$135.2 billion in 2023 from \$64.8 billion this year, with a compounded annual growth of 20.2%.

India and Maldives maritime security

Why in News?

India and Maldives agreed to expand their maritime security and boost their anti-terror cooperation in order to deal with the common challenges in Indian Ocean Region where China is expanding its military presence. The countries also held the 6th Joint Commission Meeting. It was co-chaired by the External Affairs ministers of the countries.

Key points:

- The countries discussed about implementation of 1.4 billion USD economic package that was pledged by India earlier.
- At the Joint Commission Meeting, the countries reviewed the ongoing construction of police training facility in the city of Addu and other building projects that are implemented in Maldives with India's assistance.
- It includes Composite Training Centre to train defence forces of Maldives, setting up of Coastal Surveillance Radar System (CSRS).
- It is to be noted that India had set up CSRS in Seychelles, Sri Lanka and Mauritius. The countries also agreed to partner Greater Male Area Connectivity Project. The project aims at connecting islands in the west of Male with the capital.

India-Maldives: Recent Developments

- The countries will hold Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief Exercise. They have also planned for the lease of Dornier aircraft. At the Goa Maritime Conclave that was held



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in October 2019, India offered to share real-time movement of maritime traffic in the Indian Ocean littoral states.

Prelims facts:

Military Literature Festival (MLF)

- The third edition of coveted Military Literature Festival (MLF) is being held from 13 to 15 December at UT Lake Club, Chandigarh. The military literature extravaganza was inaugurated by Punjab Governor and UT Administrator VP Singh Badnore.
- The festival would bring together the finest men from battle grounds and literary fields to discuss watershed of information on defence issues
- The Fest was led by Punjab Chief Minister Capt Amarinder Singh with discussions in various aspects of military and sharing his experiences of serving country in armed forces. All three days also had Clarion Call theatre events comprising of special audio visual shows on 'Josh', 'Jazbaaa' and 'Junoon' of being part of armed forces.

Lahore and Wagah railway station resumed operation

- The shuttle train service between Lahore and Wagah railway station resumed operation on 15 December 2019 after a gap of 22 years.
- The train would complete three round trips daily as well as will provide the travelling facility to over 1,000 passengers in three trips. The train service was operational between Wagah to Lahore since the partition of India in 1947 till 1997 but was closed due to certain operational and security reasons.

New Rajasthan industrial policy announced

- Rajasthan has announced the outlines of a new industrial policy, which will attract investments and offer one-stop solutions and timely disposal of grievances, besides introducing several innovative measures, including bridge finance, to promote micro, small and medium enterprises.
- The policy's "unique features" would generate employment and spur the State's growth.
- As many as 104 permissions for new industrial units from 17 departments will be available at a one-stop window.
- A plan of action had already been formulated for resolving issues related to power, water, pollution, and revenue.
- The State government has also announced State-level export awards, under which 30 exporters in various categories have been selected.

Sustainable Development Cell (SDC)

- The Coal Ministry announced that it is to establish "Sustainable Development Cell" (SDC) to promote environment friendly and sustainable coal mining.



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- The main objective of the cell is to address environmental concerns that arise during closure of mines. The cell will mentor, advise, plan and monitor mitigation measures to provide better environment to the people residing near the mines.
- The cell will act as a nodal point to minimize the adverse impacts of mining. It will also formulate future policy framework focusing in environmental mitigation measures. The SDC will focus on sustainable mine tourism, mine water management, air quality and sustainable overburden management. The cell will also set up Mine Closure Fund.

Accessible India Campaign

- The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment has recently informed the Lok Sabha that the deadline for the government's Accessible India campaign that aims at making public spaces friendly for persons with disabilities has been extended due to its slow progress.
- Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPwD) has launched Accessible India Campaign (Sugamya Bharat Abhiyan) as a nation-wide Campaign for achieving universal accessibility for Persons with Disabilities (PwDs).
- It has the following three important components:
 - Part A: Built Environment Accessibility
 - Part B: Transportation System Accessibility
 - Part C: Information and Communication Eco-System Accessibility
- The original deadlines under the Accessible India campaign were July 2016 for conducting an accessibility audit of 25-50 of the most important government buildings in 50 cities and making them completely accessible and March 2018.

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