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Daily News Analysis

04 December 2019

General studies:-2

1. Special Protection Group (Amendment) Bill, 2019

Why in News?

- Parliament passes the Special Protection Group (Amendment) Bill, 2019

Key points:

- The SPG Bill will amend the SPG Act of 1988.
- The proposed amendments in the Special Protection Group (SPG) Bill aims to reduce the financial burden of VIP security on the state exchequer.
- The reduction of SPG coverage will also help to eliminate the notion of a status symbol attached to it.

Amendments

Reduced SPG Coverage:

- The protection to be offered only to the Prime Minister, former Prime Ministers and their immediate family members that will reside with him at his official residence.
- Currently, the security cover is provided to the Prime Minister, former Prime Ministers and their immediate family members.

Time period:

- The security will be provided only for a period of five years to the former Prime Ministers and their immediate family after they leave the office.
- However, the immediate family members need to be residing with the former Prime Minister at the allotted residence.

Withdrawal:

- When the proximate security is withdrawn from a former Prime Minister such proximate security will also stand withdrawn from members of his immediate family.

Special Protection Group

- The SPG was raised in 1985 to provide security cover to the Prime Minister, former Prime Ministers and their immediate family members.
- The SPG comprises of the personnel from the CRPF, Border Security Force and other Central and State forces.

2. Merging of union territories

Why in news?

The Parliament on Tuesday passed a bill to merge two Union territories Daman and Diu, and Dadra and Nagar Haveli into one unit.

key points:

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- The Rajya Sabha passed the Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu (Merger of Union Territories) Bill, 2019 through voice vote.
- Lok Sabha has already passed this bill on November 27.
- The measure will help in strengthening administrative efficiency and fast track the development of the two union territories.
- Merging will also help in cutting down administrative cost.
- The move was supported by civil societies along with the elected member of Parliament of that area
- The merged Union Territory will be named as Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu.
- It would also continue the reservation provided to people in the two union territories and the Bombay High Court will continue its jurisdiction over the merged UTs
- The country currently has nine Union territories after the creation of the UTs of Jammu and Kashmir, and Ladakh. However, with the merger of Daman and Diu, and Dadra and Nagar Haveli, the number of UTs will come down to eight.

3. Political Parties Registration Tracking Management System (PPRTMS)

Why in news?

- Election Commission of India to implement “Political Parties Registration Tracking Management System” (PPRTMS)

key points:

- The Election Commission of India has reviewed the system and process of registration of political parties.
- The new guidelines will be effective from 1st January, 2020. Accordingly the “Political Parties Registration Tracking Management System” (PPRTMS) will be implemented through an online portal, to facilitate tracking of status of application by applicants.
- The salient feature in the Political Parties Registration Tracking Management System is that the applicant (who is applying for party registration from 1st January, 2020 onwards) will be able to track the progress of his / her application and will get status update through SMS and email.
- The applicant is required to provide contact mobile number and email address of the party / applicant in his application if he/she wishes to track the progress of the application.

General studies- 3

1. Arsenic and iron in water

Why in news?

- 30,000 rural habitations affected, 20,000 in two states

Key points:

- Iron is the most common contaminant of drinking water, with over 18,000 rural habitations affected, followed by salinity that affects roughly 13,000 rural habitations, arsenic (12,000),



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fluoride (nearly 8,000) and heavy metal.

- Among rural habitations in Indian states, 55,511 face quality issues with drinking water.
- As of November 27 this year, 3.22 per cent of rural habitations across all states and UTs, accounting for 3.73 per cent of the population, were consuming drinking water with quality issues, according to data tabled by the Ministry of Jal Shakti in Parliament.
- Rajasthan has the highest number of rural habitations affected by contamination overall, at 16,833. Most of these – 12,182 – are affected by salinity in drinking water, at 12,182.
- In terms of arsenic and iron pollution, West Bengal and Assam are the worst affected. Of the 30,000-odd rural habitations where drinking water is affected by either of these contaminants, over 20,000 are in West Bengal and Assam.

2.INDIA and ADB sign \$206 million loan why in News?

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the Government of India on 2nd December 2019 signed a \$206 million loan to develop water supply and sewerage infrastructure in 5 cities of Tamil Nadu and strengthen capacities of urban local bodies (ULBs) for improved service delivery.

key points:

- This is the second project loan for the ADB-supported \$500 million multi-tranche financing for Tamil Nadu Urban Flagship Investment Programme, approved in September 2018, that will overall develop climate-resilient water supply, sewerage, and drainage infrastructure in 10 cities of Tamil Nadu.
- The first project under the Programme with \$169 million financing is currently under implementation.
- The project is aimed at improving the lives of the urban people in the identified cities of Tamil Nadu by providing universal access to water supply and sanitation, and improving sewage treatment and drainage systems.
- Project initiatives are also expected to help the state develop the requisite ecosystem for



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economic growth

- The project will target four cities — Ambur, Tiruchirappalli, Tiruppur, and Vellore — for developing sewage collection and treatment and drainage systems by setting up or rehabilitating sewage treatment plants, pumping stations, and connecting all households in the project area to the sewerage network, including below poverty line households.

ADB:

- Established in 1966, it is owned by 68 members — 49 from the region.
- ADB is committed to achieving a prosperous, inclusive, resilient, and sustainable Asia and the Pacific, while sustaining its efforts to eradicate extreme poverty.
- In 2018, it made commitments of new loans and grants amounting to \$21.6 billion.

3. India and Sweden sign Memorandum for India-Sweden Healthcare Innovation Centre why in news?

- Union Minister for Health & Family Welfare as he presided over the signing of the Memorandum of Intent for the India Sweden Healthcare Innovation Centre at the event to celebrate ten years of successful implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Sweden,

key points

- India and Sweden signed an MoU in February, 2009 for collaboration in the field of healthcare and public health.

The priority areas of cooperation under the MoU are:

- Non Communicable Disease, including controlling the associated risk factors of tobacco, alcohol and unhealthy foods
- Communicable diseases and Anti Microbial Resistance (AMR)
- Public Health Policy
- Maternal and Child Health
- Health Resource Development, especially strengthening of midwifery and nursing skills
- Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
- Strengthening Health Systems, including e-Health and governance
- Indigenous Systems of Medicine
- Health and Medical Research
- Medical Equipment and Pharmaceutical Products and
- Health, Environment and Climate Change. Bilateral collaborations are on-going in respect of Maternal, Child and Adolescent Health

4. Swedish technology to solve stubble burning

- The pollution from stubble burning in winter is a major factor for the sharp decline in air quality in Delhi. To overcome this issue, India is testing Swedish technology — torrefaction that can convert rice stubble into 'bio-coal'.
- The government has funded a pilot project at the National Agri-Food Biotechnology Institute in Mohali (Punjab) with a Swedish company to evaluate the feasibility of the technology.

Torrefaction Technology - Stubble to Bio-coal

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- Torrefaction is a thermal process to convert biomass into a coal-like material, which has better fuel characteristics than the original biomass.
- The process involves heating up straw, grass, sawmill residue and wood biomass to 250 degrees celsius - 350 degrees celsius.
- This changes the elements of the biomass into 'coal-like' pellets. These pellets can be used for combustion along with coal for industrial applications like steel and cement production.

Advantages

- The project has a capacity of converting 150-200 kilograms of paddy straw to bio-coal every hour and reduce CO2 emissions by 95%.
- Torrefied biomass is more brittle, making grinding easier and less energy-intensive.
- Compared to fresh biomass, storage of the torrefied material can be substantially simplified since biological degradation and water uptake is minimized.
- The torrefied pellets are ideal for coal replacement because it has lower shipping and transport costs, lower sulfur and ash content (compared with coal), etc.

Disadvantages

- The volume of torrefied biomass is reduced only slightly, ~ 10-20% lower than the dried feedstock during the process.
- Despite higher calorific values, energy density is not improved significantly.
- Torrefaction does not reduce corrosion of machinery especially boiler tubes.

5. World Malaria Report 2019

Why in news?

World Malaria Report 2019 was recently released by the World Health Organization (WHO).

key points

- Malaria is mainly caused by Plasmodium falciparum and Plasmodium vivax parasites.
- It is transmitted to people through the bites of infected female Anopheles mosquitoes.
- Malaria is transmitted by blood, so it can also be transmitted through an organ transplant, a transfusion and use of shared needles or syringes.
- It is preventable and curable.
- Globally, malaria cases reported in 2018 is marginally lower than the number of cases in 2017.
- Africa and India saw the maximum dip in malaria cases between 2017 and 2018, but they still accounted for 85 per cent deaths.
- Nigeria, Democratic Republic of the Congo, the United Republic of Tanzania, Angola, Mozambique and Niger reported higher number of cases in the African region.
- The African region accounted for 94% of all malarial deaths
- India (58%), Indonesia (21%) and Myanmar (12%) accounted for the total reported deaths in the region

Prelims facts:



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Exercise Surya Kiran

- The 14th edition of bilateral annual military exercise SURYA KIRAN-XIV between Indian and Nepal Army commenced today at Nepal Army Battle School (NABS), Salijhandi, Rupendehi district of Nepal. The 13th edition of the joint military exercise was held at Pithoragarh, Uttarakhand in June last year.
- The aim of this exercise is to conduct a battalion level combined training between Indian Army and Nepal Army with a scope to enhance interoperability at military level in jungle warfare, counter terrorist operations in mountainous terrain, humanitarian assistance, disaster relief operations, medical and environmental conservation including aviation aspects

Typhoon Kammuri

- Recently, a typhoon struck the Philippines, bringing heavy rains and suspending air travel. The government issued the warnings of floods, storm surges and landslides.

Key Points

- It is known locally as Tisoy and is the 20th typhoon to hit the country this year.
- Cyclones are called 'Hurricanes' in the North Atlantic and Eastern Pacific, 'Typhoons' in South-East Asia and China and 'Tropical Cyclones' in the South-West Pacific and Indian Ocean Region.

NATO

- The leaders of NATO are going to meet in London to mark the 70th birthday of the organisation.
- NATO is an intergovernmental political and military alliance among 29 independent member countries across North American and European states.
- HQ - Brussels, Belgium.
- It was founded in 1949 for the collective defence of its members, linking the security of the United States with its European allies against the Soviet Union.