

Forest Conservation Rules

❖ Context

- The MoEFCC has notified new Forest Conservation Rules 2022 recently. It has repealed and replaced the earlier 2003 Forest Conservation Rules and its amendments in 2004, 2014 and 2017.

❖ Key Highlights

- The 2022 Forest Conservation Rules are to be placed for approval before Parliament for 30 working days in one or more sessions.
- The new rules prescribe **timeframes** within which different projects must be reviewed by a **project screening committee**.
- In case the forest land to be diverted in a hilly or mountainous state or a UT that has a forest cover of more than two-thirds of its geographical area, the **compensatory afforestation** may be taken up in another state or UT which has forest cover less than 20% of its total geographical area.

❖ Relevant Acts

- The **Forest Rights Act 2006** recognized and vested all forest rights (whether listed in the law or not), except hunting, in forest-dwellers on all forest lands, including unclassified forests, un-demarcated forests, existing or deemed forests, protected forests, reserved forests, sanctuaries and national parks.
- The **Forest (Conservation) Act 1980** prescribes procedures for the orderly approval and handing over of forest land to user agencies for diversion, de-reservation and lease for non-forestry purposes.

Old Rules	New Rules
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forest cannot be diverted unless the rights under the FRA, 2006 (a still-ongoing process) were settled. • This included acquiring a gram sabha NOC. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The new rules do not mention the earlier requirement of attaining a gram sabha NOC before diverting forest land for a project. • They also allow forest rights to be settled after the final approval for forest clearances has been granted by the Centre.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Union government was first required to verify the consent of forest-dwelling communities before forest land was approved to be handed over to private projects. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The onus of settlement of forest rights & rehabilitation of forest dwellers falls upon the state governments.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The environment ministry's regional office or the state would process all proposals to use forest land, depending on the extent of forest area to be diverted. • The environment ministry would then consider the advice of a committee set up for this purpose and decide on the proposal. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All activities except few have been delegated to lower bodies for faster clearance. • The ones that still need to approach the ministry's advisory committee pertain to : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ De-reservation ▪ Mining involving forest land of more than 5 ha ▪ Regularisation of encroachment ▪ Violation of the provisions of the Forest Conservation Act.

IS4OM

❖ Context

- **ISRO System for Safe and Sustainable Space Operation and Management (IS4OM)** facility was inaugurated at ISRO control centre, Bengaluru.

❖ Key Highlights

- It is conceived to ensure **safety and sustainability of outer space** while reaping the benefits of its **sustainable utilisation** for national development.
- It is a **multi-domain awareness platform** that will bring prompt, accurate and efficient information on on-orbit collision, fragmentation, atmospheric re-entry risk, space based strategic information, hazardous asteroids and space weather forecast.
- As part of it, dedicated labs have been set up for space debris mitigation and remediation, compliance verification of UN or **Inter-Agency Space Debris Coordination Committee (IADC)** guidelines.

❖ IADC

- It is an **international forum of 13 national and international space agencies** for the worldwide technical/scientific coordination of activities related to space debris in Earth orbit issues.
- ISRO has been one of its members since 1996.
- It is **not part of the United Nations**.

❖ Kessler Syndrome

- The ever-growing **space object population** including that of operational satellites and orbital debris pose a serious threat to the safe and sustainable use of outer space.
- The collisions among larger debris can trigger a **self-sustained cascading process** of further **collisions**, known as the Kessler syndrome.
- This could result in a **drastic increase in the density of space debris population**, rendering outer space inaccessible for future generations.

❖ Space Situational Awareness

- The facility will also aid India in achieving its SSA (Space Situational Awareness).
- SSA activities have many strategic implications such as:
 - Identifying and monitoring other operational spacecraft with close approaches,
 - Having overpass over Indian region,
 - Intentional manoeuvres with suspicious motives
 - Re-entry within the Indian region.

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The Sarfaesi Act of 2002

❖ Context

- Recently, banks have invoked the **Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest (Sarfaesi) Act** against telecom infrastructure provider GTL to recover their pending dues.

❖ The Sarfaesi Act

• About:

- It was brought in to **guard financial institutions against loan defaulters.**

• Features:

- To recover their bad debts, the banks under this law can take **control of securities pledged against the loan, manage or sell them to recover dues without court intervention.**

- **Applicability:** The law is applicable **throughout the country and covers all assets, movable or immovable, promised as security to the lender.**

• Need of the Law:

- Before the law, banks and other financial institutions **were forced to take a lengthy route to recover their bad debts.**
- The lenders would **appeal in civil courts** or designated tribunals to get hold of 'security interests' to recovery of defaulting loans,
- It in turn **made the recovery slow** and added to the growing list of lender's non-performing assets.

• Power of Banks Under the Law:

- The Act comes into play if a borrower **defaults on his or her payments for more than six months.**
- The **lender then can send a notice** to the borrower to clear the dues within 60 days.
- In case that doesn't happen, the **financial institution has the right to take possession of the secured assets** and sell, transfer or manage them.
- **Appeal:** The defaulter, meanwhile, has a recourse to **move an appellate authority** set up under the law within 30 days of receiving a notice from the lender.
- According to a 2020 Supreme Court judgement, **co-operative banks can also invoke Sarfaesi Act.**
- According to the Finance Ministry, the non-banking financial companies (**NBFCs**) **can initiate recovery in loan default cases more than 20 lakhs Rs.**

News in Between the Lines

Bonded Warehouse Scheme



❖ Context

- The **Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC)** has revoked the concessions to solar developers under the bonded warehouse scheme in the wake of blatant abuse of the scheme.

❖ Key Highlights

- A custom bonded warehouse is a facility that holds imported, duty payable finished and capital goods in storage.
- Under the scheme, both Basic custom duty (BCD) and IGST on imports of capital goods are deferred.
- For goods other than capital goods, both BCD & IGST are deferred till they are cleared for domestic consumption.
- In order to avoid payment of BCD of 25% on solar cells and 40% on solar modules, certain developers were declaring entire solar plants as a custom bonded warehouse.

❖ What is Deferred Duty Payment?

- It is a mechanism for delinking duty payment and customs clearance.
- It is based on the principle '**Clear first-Pay later**'.
- The aim is to have a seamless wharf to warehouse transit in order to facilitate **just-in-time manufacturing.**

Digital Nomads

❖ Context

- **Indonesia** has announced "Digital Nomad Visas" for travellers, to attract more foreign tourists.

❖ Key Highlights

- The announcement has been made to attract more foreign tourists in the wake of the economic impact of COVID-19.
- Digital Nomads are **people who work remotely while travelling to different places** and spending their earned income in the country they are travelling to.

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- The Digital Nomad Visa would allow **remote workers to stay in Indonesia, including Bali, tax-free.**
- The visa will be applicable for **five years.**
- This would make Indonesia's visa one of the longest digital nomad visas compared to other countries.
- Indonesia aims to bring in over 3.6 million overseas travellers into the country over the next year to explore spiritual retreats as well as the ecotourism of Indonesia.

❖ Other Countries

- **Italy** in March, released a new permit for non-EU nationals, or digital nomads, who can stay in the country for up to 90 days without a visa.
- **Antigua and Barbuda** offers a digital nomad visa for two years.
- **Barbados** offers a year-long remote working visa which can be extended further.
- Other countries offering nomad visas are **Croatia, Costa Rica, Georgia, Hungary, Iceland, Mauritius, Norway, and Spain** among many others.

IAC Vikrant



❖ Context

- Recently, the Indian Navy's **first indigenous aircraft carrier (IAC-1) completed its 4th phase** of sea trials successfully.

❖ Key Highlights

- According to an official statement the plan is to **deliver the IAC-1 by the end of this month.**
- The **commissioning is scheduled** to take place in August to commemorate **75 years of India's independence.**

❖ About IAC Vikrant

- **Designed by-** The Indian Navy's Directorate of Naval Design (DND).
- It is being **built at Cochin Shipyard Limited (CSL)**, a public sector shipyard under the Ministry of Shipping.
- The IAC-1, the biggest warship made indigenously, has an **overall length of 263 m and a breadth of 63 m.**
- It is **capable of carrying 30 assorted aircraft** including combat jets and helicopters.
- The ship would **operate a mix of MiG-29K fighter aircraft** and various helicopters, ranging from the **Kamov-31 Air Early Warning helicopters**, the soon-to-be inducted MH-60R multi-role helicopters and the indigenously developed Advanced Light Helicopter Mk III.

Nord Stream 1



❖ Context

- Recently, The **Nord Stream 1**, Germany's main source of gas from Russia, was **shut down on July 11 for 10 days of scheduled maintenance work.**

❖ Key Highlights

- There are growing **concerns in European countries** that **Russia would extend the temporary suspension of gas supplies** in retaliation against the current sanctions leveled against Moscow.

❖ About Nord Stream 1

- It was **inaugurated in November 2011.**
- It is a **1,224 km underwater gas pipeline** that runs from Vyborg in northwest Russia to Lubmin in northeastern Germany via the Baltic Sea.
- Majority owned by the Russian energy giant Gazprom.
- The pipeline is the **primary route through which its gas enters Germany.**
- It **transports 55 billion cubic meters of gas a year**, of which most goes directly to Germany.
- The rest travels west and southwards through onshore links to other countries and into storage caverns.



An Artificial Diet and Feeding Device for Mosquitoes



- **Germany is Russia's biggest European gas consumer**, and most of it comes through the Nord Stream Pipeline.
 - Its share of Russian gas supplies was 55% in 2021, and currently lies at 35%, according to Deutsche Welle.

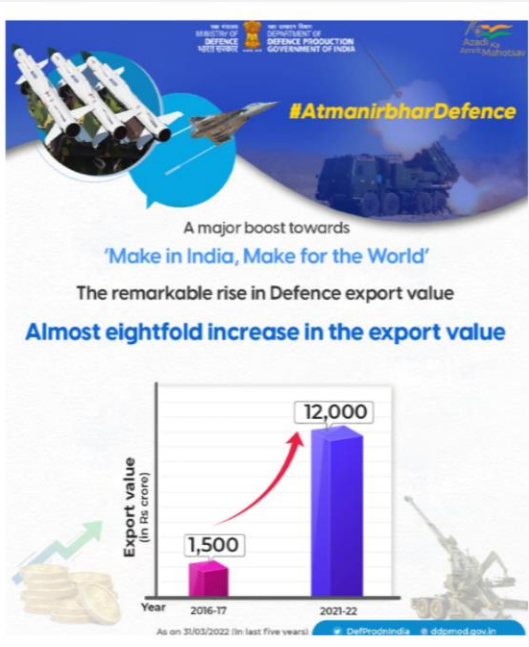
❖ Context

- Recently, ICMR - Vector Control Research Centre in Puducherry, has **invented four types of artificial diets for feeding mosquitoes** that will replace the 'blood diet' with a unique feeder device.

❖ About the Devices

- The two products allow **efficient and cost-effective mass-rearing of mosquitoes in laboratories**.
- These four diets prepared for female mosquitoes are like a baby formula food.
- They have all the **essential nutrients, which are present in the blood**.
- These diets **would attract hungry female mosquitoes** to accept the meal, taste like blood, **produce healthy and viable eggs** which should hatch like normal eggs, form **healthy offspring** useful for laboratory research and mass production whenever necessary.
- **Significance:**
 - Mosquito females **require animal or human blood diet** to produce eggs.
 - For this, blood has to be obtained from blood banks or live animals.
 - Regular supply of blood from blood banks is not easy.
 - Considering these challenges and huge potential demand, researchers have zeroed in on four artificial diets for feeding.
 - It is **important to keep these mosquitoes healthy to investigate basic facets of their biology** and to study vector-borne disease and measures to control it.
 - Both the mosquito feeding device and diet compositions are **great achievements and need of the hour** for vector research.

India's Defense Exports



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❖ Context

- **India's defense exports recorded nearly a six-fold increase** between 2017 and 2021, according to defense ministry data.

❖ Key Highlights

- It **shot up from ₹1,520 crore to ₹8,435 crore** during that period.
- The **private sector accounted for 70%** of the exports, while public sector firms accounted for the rest.
- India has **imposed a phased import ban on 310 different weapons** and systems during the last two years.
 - These weapons and platforms will be indigenised in phases over the next five to six years.
- **Exported Items:**
 - Military hardware being exported by India include missiles, the advanced light helicopter, offshore patrol vessels, personal protective gear, surveillance systems and a variety of radars.
- **Partners:**
 - **The US** was a major buyer of India's defense exports. Other countries were from **Southeast Asia, West Asia, and Africa**.
- **Recent Major Deals:**
 - In January 2022, **India's BrahMos Aerospace and the Philippines** signed a deal worth almost \$375 million .
 - In December 2020, the Union Cabinet gave its go-ahead to the **sale of Akash missile systems to friendly foreign countries**.
 - It also created a high-powered panel for swifter approvals to export of military hardware.
- India has set a target of clocking **defense exports worth \$5 billion by 2024**.

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