

## Karnataka Right to Freedom of Religion Bill, 2021



### ❖ Context

- The Karnataka legislative Assembly has passed **The Karnataka Right to Freedom of Religion Bill, 2021**, commonly referred to as the **anti-conversion Bill**.
- The Bill will now go to the **Karnataka Legislative Council**.

### ❖ Key Highlights

- **Arunachal Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand** have laws restricting religious conversion.
- After independence, **Parliament introduced a number of anti conversion bills** which were not enacted for want of majority approval.

### ❖ About the Bill

- The Bill proposes a **maximum punishment of 10 years** of imprisonment for forcible conversion of persons from **Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribe communities, minors and women to another religion**.
- The Bill **prohibits conversion by misrepresentation, force, fraud, allurements of marriage, coercion and undue influence**.
- Complaints of conversions can be **filed by family members of a person who is getting converted, or any other person who is related to the person who is getting converted, or any person associated with the person getting converted**.
- The offence of conversion is **cognisable and non bailable**.
- It will attract a **jail term of three to five years** and a fine of ₹ 25,000 for people found violating the law and a **jail term of three to 10 years, and a fine of ₹ 50,000 for people converting minors, women and persons from the SC and ST communities**.
- The Bill also envisages a compensation of ₹ 5 lakh to victims of forced conversions.

### ❖ About those wishing to convert willingly to another religion

- Any person intending to convert to another religion after the law comes into force will have to **notify the district magistrate two months in advance**. The person who is carrying out the conversion must provide **one month notice**, and the **district magistrate** must conduct an **enquiry through the police** on the real purpose of the conversion
- The Bill also requires the person who gets converted to **inform the district magistrate of the conversion within 30 days**, and he/she must appear before the district magistrate to **confirm their identity**. Not informing the district magistrate will lead to the conversion being declared **null and void**.
- Once the conversion is confirmed, the district magistrate will inform the **revenue authorities, social welfare, minority, backward classes and other departments of the conversion**.
- In turn, they take steps with respect to the entitlements that the person may receive in terms of reservations and other benefits.

### ❖ Criticism

- Critics have pointed to **Article 21** of the constitution which guarantees individuals the right to marry a person of one's choice. Also, under **Article 25**, freedom of conscience, the practice and conversion of religion of one's choice including not following any religion, are also guaranteed.

## Shakti Criminal Laws (Maharashtra Amendment) Bill, 2020

### ❖ Context

- State Home Minister Dilip Walse Patil **presented the report by a joint committee** of the State Assembly on the **Shakti Bill** in the State Assembly.
- A total of **13 meetings of the joint committee** were held and submitted the amendments to the original Bill.
- The Bill was sent to the **joint committee** in the budget session of the Assembly for scrutiny and is likely to be passed in this winter session.

### ❖ Recommendations made by the Committee

- **Capital punishment in rape cases**.
- **Time-limit of 30 days** to complete the probe since the day of registration of the complaint.

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24 December, 2021

- Onus on **social media platforms** as well as **Internet data providing companies** to share data for police investigation.
- The original Bill **did not have a provision for filing anticipatory bail pleas** in case of false complaints or if a person is harassed deliberately. The committee has decided to drop the Recommendation.



### ❖ About the Bill

- Bill's proposes to **increase the quantum of punishment** for offences such as rapes, acid attacks and capital, heavy fines and speedy trials for the perpetrators.
- The draft Bill proposes to **make changes to the Indian Penal Code, the Code of Criminal Procedure and the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act.**
- It recommends **death penalty in cases of rape, gang rape, rape by persons in authority, aggravated sexual assault of minors and in cases of acid attack** when grievous injury is caused.
- The **changes are proposed in existing sections of rape, sexual harassment, acid attack and child sexual abuse.**
- The death penalty is proposed in cases which are **heinous in nature** and where adequate conclusive evidence is available and circumstances warrant exemplary punishment.
- **Section 326** of the IPC applied in case of acid attack to be amended to make provision of **minimum 15 years to maximum life imprisonment** to the guilty along with monetary fine. The **expenditure of plastic surgery and face reconstruction operations** will be taken care of from the monetary fine to be charged on the guilty.

## Suspension of future tradings in agri products

### ❖ Context

- SEBI on 21 December issued directions to stock exchanges in derivative segments for immediately suspending trading in derivative contracts in key farm commodities - **paddy (non-basmati), wheat, chana, mustard seeds and its derivatives, soyabean and its derivatives, crude palm oil & moong, for 1 year.**
- Commodity futures were launched in India in 2003.

### ❖ Derivative contracts

- A contract between two or more parties where the value is derived from the value of the underlying asset - commodity, equity or any other asset.
- The contracts can be entered over the counter or through an exchange. The exchange contracts are standardized in terms of lot, expiry period etc.
- Types of derivative contracts are futures, swap, option
- **Example of a future contract** - a farmer may enter into a contract with a mill owner, at the time of sowing only, to sell 500 quintal of wheat at the price of Rs. 1000 per quintal after 6 months (after harvesting). Under the contract both parties will have the obligation to sell/buy the wheat at agreed price. If at the time of expiration of contract, the market price goes down to Rs. 800 per quintal (for reasons like surplus crop production), the farmer will still sell the wheat at Rs. 1000 per quintal only and the mill owner will have to buy. In this case, the farmer gains by entering into a future contract as he sells higher than market price while the mill owner loses.
- The situation may have been reversed in terms of gain/loss of the parties if the crops had failed due to untimely rains.



### ❖ Why SEBI ordered suspension

- While derivative contracts provide a genuine mechanism for parties to prevent their loss/ make investment it is often misused by speculators to earn profit by manipulating prices.
- Thus, high future prices of essential commodities, manipulated by speculators, will cause inflation in general
- In order to discourage speculators from influencing the prices of essential commodities, the government has banned future trading of them.
- Also, as the effect of the order, the stocks locked in future contract, will be released into the market and may ease the prices

### ❖ How alarming is inflation?

- CPI inflation rose 4.5% in October
- Core inflation (non-fuel, non-food) is persistent since June 2020 due consistent pressure of cost push pressure.

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- India's wholesale prices inflation peaked to a new high of **14.23%** in November from 12.54% in October

### ❖ Other measures taken by the government to rein in inflation

- Government reduced the import duty of palm, soy and sunflower oil recently. India import 70% of its vegetable oil demand
- Excise duty and VAT on petrol and diesel was reduced by both Centre and state governments to reduce fuel and transportation costs.

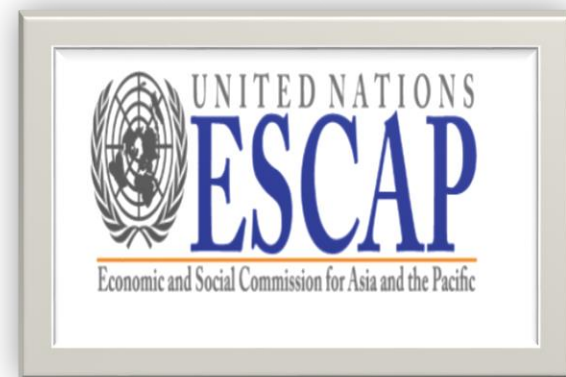
### ❖ Concerns of traders

- Traders may not be able to plan their trade, in absence of future contracts.
- They will remain clueless about the shortfall/excess of the stock in the market
- Thus, they will be forced to cut stocks, delay long term purchase and sale, even limit imports
- This may cause more volatility in prices.

## UN-ESCAP Report on climate related losses

### ❖ Context

- According to UN-ESCAP, potential losses from climate related risks in Asia-Pacific are estimated between **\$1.2 TN \$4.7 TN**
- As a percentage of GDP, countries that will have suffer the most are the Pacific small island developing states along with least Developed countries
- **Without mangrove cover**, total disaster-induced losses increase substantially by an estimated **\$11 billion in India**, \$2.25 billion in Bangladesh and \$0.18 billion in Pakistan.
- Commitments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions are central to the Glasgow Climate Pact adopted at the just-concluded COP26.



### ❖ COP26, Glasgow

- The Glasgow climate pact was the outcome of the COP meet.
- The Glasgow Climate Pact recognised the critical role of “**restoring nature and ecosystems in delivering benefits for climate adaptation**”.
- The **pledge to end deforestation by 2030** taken by over 120 countries, representing nearly 90 per cent of the world's forests, was an important milestone. **India was not among the countries**
- A COP26 report highlights that **infrastructure** accounts for **88 per cent of all adaptation costs** across a range of sectors.
- Further, **54 percent of all future adaptation costs need to be spent on the water sector.**
- A projection between 2015 and 2040 suggests that the world will invest close to \$90 trillion on this alone.
- COP26, **developed countries agreed to double the funding for adaptation by 2025**
- COP26 also witnessed pledges and commitments by governments and the private sector on building climate resilient infrastructure
- The Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure launched the **Infrastructure for Resilient Island States** in the presence of Heads of Governments from Australia, Fiji, India, Jamaica, Mauritius and the UK, aimed at addressing the many issues posed by infrastructure systems in SIDS.

### ❖ UN-ESCAP

- It is one of the five regional commissions under UN Economic & Social Council
- Founded in 1947, its headquarter is in Bangkok
- It act as regional hub for promoting cooperation among the regional countries

## News in Between the Lines

### Hong Kong's Pillar of Shame

#### ❖ Context

- **A construction crew has dismantled one of Hong Kong's most distinctive statues and works of art.**

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## Hong Kong's Pillar of Shame



- In October, HKU officials ordered the removal of the sculpture citing new but unspecified legal risks.
- ❖ **Key Highlights**
  - The Pillar of Shame statue was **made in remembrance of the June 4, 1989 Tiananmen Square Massacre**,
    - This is referred to as the **June 4 incident** by Chinese authorities.
  - The People's Liberation Army had **opened fire on student protestors** who had been protesting since mid-April in 1989 **against corruption, unemployment, inflation, etc.**
  - The statue shows **50 bodies — with anguish-ridden faces — piled up together commemorating unarmed student protestors** who were killed as Chinese troops opened fire on them.
  - The **8-metre high statue** has been placed within Haking Wong Building inside the Hong Kong University since **1997**.
  - With the new National Security Law — passed by China on June 30 last year before the 23rd anniversary of Hong Kong's transfer from Britain — **the Chinese government has heavily come down on dissenters.**
  - The Hong Kong University **sent a notice to remove the statues** from the University's premises.

## Pralay Missile



- ❖ **Context**
  - Recently, DRDO successfully conducted the **second flight test of indigenously developed surface-to-surface missile 'Pralay'** off the Odisha coast.
  - Pralay' is **India's first conventional quasi-ballistic (Largely ballistic+Low trajectory) missile** and is an answer to any conventional missile attack from northern or western borders.
- ❖ **Key Highlights**
  - For the first time, flight tests of a ballistic missile, developed by the DRDO, have been conducted successfully in **two consecutive days.**
  - The **'Pralay' missile** was **tested for heavier payload and different range** to prove the **precision and lethality** of the weapon.
  - Pralay is powered with a **solid propellant rocket motor** and other new technologies.
  - The missile guidance system includes **state-of-the-art navigation and integrated avionics.**
  - **Range: 150KM to 500KM**
  - It is a **derivative of the Prahaar missile programme**, which was first tested in 2011.
  - The missile has been developed in a way that it is able to **defeat the interceptor missiles** and also has the **ability to change its path** after covering a certain range mid-air.

## World Press Freedom Index (PFI)

- ❖ **Context**
  - The **Centre has disagreed with India's low rank** on the World Press Freedom Index
  - It is prepared by **Reporters Without Borders**
- ❖ **Reasons for disagreeing**
  - Center assumes that it has a **very low sample size and little or no weightage to fundamentals of democracy.**
- ❖ **About PFI**
  - It is **based upon the organization's own assessment** of the **countries' press freedom records** in the **previous year.**

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## 2021 World Press Freedom Index

(Selected countries and territories)

Ranking 2020	Ranking 2021	Country/territory	Ranking 2020	Ranking 2021	Country/territory
1	1	Norway	119	113	Indonesia
2	2	Finland	101	119	Malaysia
4	3	Sweden	140	137	Thailand
9	8	New Zealand	136	138	Philippines
26	25	Australia	139	140	Myanmar
42	42	South Korea	142	142	India
43	43	Taiwan	158	160	Singapore
45	44	U.S.	175	175	Vietnam
66	67	Japan	177	177	China
80	80	Hong Kong	180	179	North Korea

Source: Reporters Without Borders

- Published **annually since 2002**, measures the **level of media freedom in 180 countries**.
- It is based on an evaluation of media freedom that measures **pluralism, media independence, the quality of the legal framework and the safety of journalists**.
- It also includes **indicators of the level of media freedom violations** in each region.

### ❖ Performance of countries

- **India** being placed at **142 out of 180 countries**. (Ranked 133 in 2016)
- **India** was ranked in the “**bad**” category, along with **Brazil, Mexico and Russia**.
- As per the report India is one of the **world’s most dangerous countries for journalists** trying to do their job properly.
- In the South Asian neighborhood, **Nepal is at 106, Sri Lanka at 127, Myanmar (before the coup) at 140, Pakistan at 145 and Bangladesh at 152**.
- **China is ranked 177**, and is only above **North Korea at 179 and Turkmenistan at 178**.

## New logo for quality of Milk products



### ❖ Context

- PM launched a new logo and portal dedicated to the Conformity Assessment Scheme of milk products

### ❖ Key Highlights

- The portal and logo is developed by the **Bureau of Indian Standards** with the help of **National Dairy Development Board**
- **NDDB has been awarding ‘Quality Mark’** to the dairy plants of cooperatives adhering to the process standards across the dairy value chain helping in building the brand identity for cooperative dairies and enhanced consumer confidence.
- **BIS has a product certification scheme** for manufacturers, including dairy product processors which also ensured food safety at product level allowing licensees to use ‘ISI Mark’ on their products.
- However **there was no unification of product and process certification**- making it difficult for dairy plants to avail end to end certification. Further the consumer awareness was also lacking towards the quality of milk and products.
- This is a significant step towards ensuring Quality & Food safety of Milk and Milk products across the country as the Conformity Assessment Scheme will
  - **Simplify the certification process**
  - Create an **instantly recognisable logo for public** to be reassured about dairy product quality
  - **Increase the sales of milk and milk products** in organized sector and in turn enhancing income of farmers
  - **Develop a quality culture in the dairy sector**

## AERVs



### ❖ Context

- The first batch of next-generation **Armoured Engineer Reconnaissance Vehicles (AERV)** was formally inducted into the Indian Army

### ❖ Key Highlights

- **indigenously designed and developed by DRDO**
- **manufactured by the Pune unit of Bharat Electronics Limited** with more than **90% indigenous content**.
- It is a versatile **BMP-IK amphibious Infantry Combat Vehicle (ICV)** fitted with instruments for **water reconnaissance, land reconnaissance, navigation and data backup**.
- AERV is capable of **measuring soil bearing capacity** on riverbanks to determine if they are motorable for military vehicles on **Go-No-Go basis** (critical parameters for bridge-

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## AERVs

laying), dry and wet gaps in day and night conditions, slopes and height of river banks or canals

- AERVs can navigate terrain **using Military Grid Coordinate System**, measure and plot underwater beds and water currents of rivers or canals, store data from various instruments on Control Console for further analysis and decision-making

## UNSC Resolution 2615



### ❖ Context

- **UNSC adopts resolution to ease Afghan assistance**
- UN agency **UNICEF had warned** of “alarming disruptions in health and nutrition services” in Afghanistan and “a disastrous food crisis,” drought and the spread of diseases in a report published at the end of November.
- The U.S. and other countries had **frozen more than \$10 billion of aid** after the Taliban ousted the Ashraf Ghani government in August. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) had released a report in November saying the country’s banking and financial reports are “in disarray.”
- **Resolution 2593**, which, among other things, **called on the Taliban to not permit Afghanistan to become a training ground for terrorists.**

### ❖ Key Highlights

- The resolution (2615) mandates a **review of the carve-out (exemption) every six months.**
- it “strongly encourages” providers of **assistance** to try and ensure that benefits **do not accrue to entities designated on the 1988 Sanctions List.**
- It also requests that an Emergency Relief Coordinator brief the UNSC every six months on the delivery of assistance and any obstacles to implementation.
- It also “calls on all parties” to respect human rights and observe international humanitarian law

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