



Current Affairs for UPSC IAS Exam - 30th & 31st January 2021

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2. President launches Pulse Polio Programme
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INDIA TIGHTENS OVERSIGHT ON FUNDS RECEIVED BY NGOs

Context:

The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has laid down a charter for banks which says that “donations received in Indian rupees” by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and associations from “any foreign source even if that source is located in India at the time of such donation” should be treated as “foreign contribution”.

Relevance:

GS-III: Indian Economy



Dimensions of the Article:

1. Understanding what are Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) in India
2. Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act, 2010
3. Recently in news regarding changes in rules for donations to NGOs
4. Government's accusation against NGOs
5. Supreme Court Judgement on Government restricting funds to NGOs in 2020
6. Impact of prohibiting International funding of NGOs

Understanding what are Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) in India

- Worldwide, the term 'NGO' is used to describe a body that is neither part of a government nor a conventional for-profit business organisation.
- NGOs are groups of ordinary citizens that are involved in a wide range of activities that may have charitable, social, political, religious or other interests.
- In India, NGOs can be registered under a plethora of Acts such as the Indian Societies Registration Act, 1860, Religious Endowments Act, 1863, Indian Trusts Act, etc.
- India has possibly the largest number of active NGOs in the world.
- Ministries such as Health and Family Welfare, Human Resource Department, etc., provide funding to NGOs, but only a handful of NGOs get hefty government funds.
- NGOs also receive funds from abroad, if they are registered with the Home Ministry under the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA).

Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act, 2010

The Foreign Contribution (regulation) Act, 2010 is a consolidating act whose scope is to regulate the acceptance and utilisation of foreign contribution or foreign hospitality by certain individuals or associations or companies and to prohibit acceptance and utilisation of foreign contribution or foreign hospitality for any activities detrimental to the national interest and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.

Key Points regarding FCRA

- Foreign funding of voluntary organizations in India is regulated under FCRA act and is



implemented by the Ministry of Home Affairs.

- The FCRA regulates the receipt of funding from sources outside of India to NGOs working in India. It prohibits the receipt of foreign contribution “for any activities detrimental to the national interest”.
- The Act held that the government can refuse permission if it believes that the donation to the NGO will adversely affect “public interest” or the “economic interest of the state”. However, there is no clear guidance on what constitutes “public interest”.
- The Acts ensures that the recipients of foreign contributions adhere to the stated purpose for which such contribution has been obtained.
- Under the Act, organisations require to register themselves every five years.

Recently in news regarding changes in rules for donations to NGOs

- Recently, the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act, 2010, was amended by Parliament and a new provision that makes it mandatory for all NGOs to receive foreign funds in a designated bank account at the State Bank of India’s New Delhi branch was inserted.
- As per the existing rules, all banks have to report to the Central government within 48 hours, the “receipt or utilisation of any foreign contribution” by any NGO, association or person whether or not they are registered or granted prior permission under the FCRA.
- Recently the National Investigation Agency (NIA) registered a case against Sikhs for Justice (SFJ), a foreign based group that advocates secessionist and pro-Khalistani activities in India.

Government’s accusation against NGOs

- An Intelligence Bureau (IB) report, submitted to the PMO and National Security Adviser in 2019, alleged that several foreign-funded NGOs were stalling India’s economic growth by their obstructionist activism.
- In 2015, the Home Ministry had cancelled the FCRA licences of 10,000 organisations.
- A government could construe any disagreement with, or criticism of, any of its policies as being against public interest.
- For example, in 2014, several groups including Greenpeace were accused by the Intelligence Bureau of stalling India’s economic development.
- In the government’s narrow view, public interest is interpreted as being equivalent to its priorities. That is simply not the case.
- Thus, an environmental or human rights organisation criticising the government can be accused of “acting against public interest”.



Supreme Court Judgement on Government restricting funds to NGOs in 2020

- The Supreme Court ruled that the Centre cannot deprive NGOs of their right to receive foreign money by declaring them as political organisations if they use legitimate means of dissent to support public causes.
- The government cannot prevent NGOs and other social outfits from getting foreign funds just because they used political means to mobilise and awaken people.
- The statute that prevents organisations of a political nature from receiving foreign funds is to ensure that the administration is not influenced by foreign funds.
- On the other hand, voluntary organisations which have absolutely no connection with either party politics or active politics cannot be denied access to foreign contributions by enlarging the scope of the term 'political interests', it said.
- Any organisation which habitually engages itself in or employs common methods of political action like 'bandh' or 'hartal', 'rasta roko', 'rail roko' or 'jail bhara' in support of public causes can also be declared as an organisation of political nature, according to rules under the FCRA.
- The judges, however, said organisations which were not involved in active politics or party politics would not come under these rules.
- Support to public causes by resorting to legitimate means of dissent such as bandh and hartal cannot deprive an organisation of its legitimate right of receiving foreign contribution, the bench said. It is clear from the provision itself that bandh, hartals etc., are treated as common methods of political action, it added.
- The rule would, however, apply to organizations used by political parties for channeling foreign funds provided there was concrete material to prove that, the court said.

Impact of prohibiting International funding of NGOs

- The contribution of NGOs to human rights and public awareness is significant in India. For example, the recognition of the rights of homosexuals and transgender people, developments in the public provision of health and education are unlikely to come about without pressure by NGOs.
- However, most NGOs are neither politically powerful nor have great financial capacity. That's why International funding is crucial for NGOs to function.
- The FCRA restrictions have serious consequences on both the rights to free speech and freedom of association under Articles 19(1)(a) and 19(1)(c) of the Constitution.

The right to free speech is affected in two ways:



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1. By allowing only some political groups to receive foreign donations and disallowing some others, can induce biases in favour of the government. NGOs need to tread carefully when they criticise the regime, knowing that too much criticism could cost their survival.
 2. Similar to this on unclear guidelines on public interest, in *Shreya Singhal v. Union of India* (2015), the Supreme Court (SC) struck down Section 66A of the Information Technology Act. The SC held that the Act could be used in a manner that has a chilling effect on free speech.

-Source: The Hindu

PRESIDENT LAUNCHES PULSE POLIO PROGRAMME

Context:

Indian President Ram Nath Kovind launched the pulse polio programme for 2021.

Relevance:

GS-II: Social Justice

Dimensions of the Article:

1. What is Polio?
2. Recent Outbreaks
3. Polio in India
4. India's Pulse Polio Programme
5. Steps taken by the Government to maintain polio free status in India



What is Polio?

- The World Health Organization (WHO) defines polio or poliomyelitis as “a highly infectious viral disease, which mainly affects young children.”
- The virus is transmitted by person-to-person, spread mainly through the faecal-oral route or, less frequently, by a common vehicle (e.g., contaminated water or food) and multiplies in the intestine, from where it can invade the nervous system and can cause paralysis.
- Initial symptoms of polio include fever, fatigue, headache, vomiting, stiffness in the neck, and pain in the limbs.
- In a small proportion of cases, the disease causes paralysis, which is often permanent.
- There is no cure for polio, it can only be prevented by immunization.

There are three individual and immunologically distinct wild poliovirus strains:

1. Wild Poliovirus type 1 (WPV1)
2. Wild Poliovirus type 2 (WPV2)
3. Wild Poliovirus type 3 (WPV3)

Symptomatically, all three strains are identical, in that they cause irreversible paralysis or even death.

However, there are genetic and virological differences, which make these three strains separate viruses which must each be eradicated individually.



What is polio

- Poliomyelitis (polio) is a highly infectious viral disease, mainly affecting children
- According to WHO, the virus is transmitted from person-to-person, mainly through the faecal-oral route



STRAINS

- There are three types of polio virus strains — P1, P2 and P3
- P2 was eradicated globally in 1999
- India attained a polio free status in 2014 after successfully eliminating the wild P1 and P3 strains

VACCINATION SCHEDULE

OPV: At 6 weeks, 10 weeks and 14 weeks

IPV: At 6 weeks and 14 weeks

OPV booster: Between 16 and 24 months

Recent Outbreaks of Polio

- In 2019, polio outbreaks were recorded in the Philippines, Malaysia, Ghana, Myanmar, China, Cameroon, Indonesia and Iran, which were mostly vaccine-derived in which a rare strain of the virus genetically mutated from the strain in the vaccine.
- Afghanistan and Pakistan are the two countries that are having the most trouble in controlling the spread of Polio effectively.
- In 2018, a total of 8,60,000 children in Afghanistan did not receive polio vaccine due to security threats.

Polio in India

- **India received polio-free certification by the WHO in 2014**, after three years of zero cases.
- This achievement has been spurred by the successful pulse polio campaign in which all children were administered polio drops.
- The last case due to wild poliovirus in the country was detected on 13th January 2011.

India's Pulse Polio Programme

- With the global initiative of eradication of polio in 1988 following World Health Assembly resolution in 1988, Pulse Polio Immunization programme was launched in India in 1995. Children in the age group of 0-5 years administered polio drops during National and Sub-



national immunization rounds (in high-risk areas) every year.

- The Pulse Polio Initiative was started with an objective of achieving hundred per cent coverage under Oral Polio Vaccine.
- It aimed to immunize children through improved social mobilization, plan mop-up operations in areas where poliovirus has almost disappeared and maintain high level of morale among the public.

Steps taken by the Government to maintain polio free status in India

- Maintaining community immunity through high quality National and Sub National polio rounds each year.
- An extremely high level of vigilance through surveillance across the country for any importation or circulation of poliovirus and VDPV is being maintained.
- All States and Union Territories in the country have developed a Rapid Response Team (RRT) to respond to any polio outbreak in the country.
- To reduce risk of importation from neighbouring countries, international border vaccination is being provided through continuous vaccination teams (CVT) to all eligible children round the clock.
- Government of India has issued guidelines for mandatory requirement of polio vaccination to all international travelers before their departure from India to polio affected countries namely: Afghanistan, Nigeria, Pakistan, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, Syria and Cameroon.

-Source: The Hindu

CHINA STILL 'LARGEST SOURCE OF CRITICAL ITEMS' FOR INDIA

Context:

China still remains the largest source of critical imports for India, from mobile phone components to pharmaceutical ingredients, and India is working on a multi-pronged strategy to reduce this reliance, which is a bigger concern than the imbalance in trade.



Relevance:

GS-III: Indian Economy

Dimensions of the Article:

1. *Significance of the Sensitive nature of India's imports from China*
2. *India's steps to reduce dependence on Chinese imports*

Significance of the Sensitive nature of India's imports from China

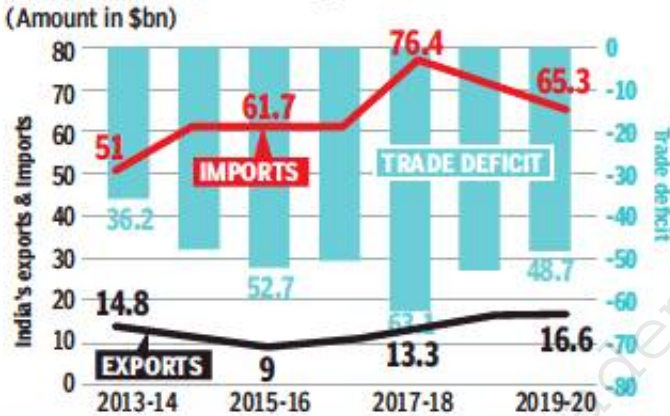
- China still remained the biggest source of India's imports, but imports in 2020 fell by more than 10%, the lowest since 2016.
- Two-way trade between India and China in 2020 reached dropped down by more than 5%, while the trade deficit declined to a five year-low.
- According to a recent study – just 327 products — ranging from mobile phones and telecom equipment to cameras, solar panels, airconditioners and penicillin — accounted for nearly 75% of the imports from China.
- The value of the “critically sensitive imports” is estimated at more than \$65 billion in 2018 in overall imports of a little over \$90 billion. - A product was considered sensitive if China accounted for over 10% share of imports or if the value of shipments was \$50 million or more.
- If China were to stop the active pharmaceutical ingredients (APIs) for penicillin, we would not be able to produce it in India.
- Key imports from China were electronics, organic chemicals and machinery.



Can India reduce its dependence on China?

India can find alternative sources to import several items on which it is critically dependent on China, a study by think tank RIS shows

1 India's imports from China increased faster than exports, widening the trade deficit



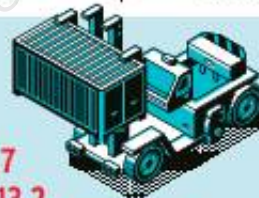
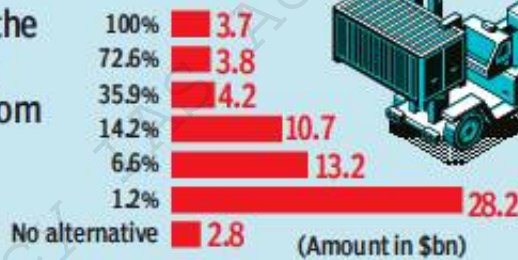
2 More competitive suppliers exist for 82% items



76% sensitive items are machinery or chemicals

86% is value of machinery, chemicals, base metals, autos

3 How much of the sensitive imports can be sourced from other countries?



In the first year, India can find alternative sources to replace imports from China for 16% of sensitive goods, and at the same price

4 What are the possible sources for top import items?

Product	Share in imports from China (%)	Existing suppliers	Potential sources
Phone sets, other apparatus for voice etc & cellphones	11.1	France, Germany, Finland, Thailand, Mauritius	UAE, Hungary, Czech Rep, Belarus, Columbia
Electrical apparatus- photosensitive (incl PV cells), LEDs	3.4	HK, Korea, Italy	Japan, Belarus, Armenia
Automatic data processing machines	3.2	HK, Netherlands, Canada	UK, Italy, Japan



Source: RIS, Govt; Graphic: Karthic R Iyer

India's steps to reduce dependence on Chinese imports

- India is working on a multi-pronged strategy to reduce this dependence, ranging from the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme to boost domestic manufacturing, a global effort involving India's foreign missions to find alternatives to China, and the use of free trade agreements (FTAs) with other trading partners.
- What offered opportunities for India was the push from many countries to not necessarily relocate from China - which still remains integral to global supply chains -



but to diversify, with future capacity expansion up for grabs, and the PLI scheme is hoping to capture that diversification.

- Production Linked Incentive Scheme (PLI) for Large Scale Electronics Manufacturing extends an incentive of 4% to 6% on incremental sales (over base year) of goods under target segments that are manufactured in India to eligible companies.
- A Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme for Domestic manufacturing of Medical Devices has been approved by the Cabinet for targeted sectors like Radiotherapy, Radiology, Anaesthetics, Implants etc., which will be a Big boost for manufacturing in India and promote Make in India, “Drug Security of Nation”.

-Source: *The Hindu*

MUSHROOMING RESORTS THREATEN TRIBAL COMMUNITIES IN WAYANAD

Context:

Mushrooming (mushrooming means rapidly growing, expanding, or developing) private resorts and home stays on the forest fringes in Wayanad district that flout government norms destroy the tranquillity of highly vulnerable tribal communities inside the forest.

Relevance:

GS-I: Indian Society, GS-2: Polity and Governance

Dimensions of the Article:

1. Issues faced by tribes due to increasing number of resorts and their activities in Kerala
2. What is Forest Rights Act?



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3. Rights under the Forest Right Act 2006
 4. Challenges in implementation of the Forest Right Act

Issues faced by tribes due to increasing number of resorts and their activities in Kerala

- Residents inside the Wayanad wildlife sanctuary complained that the increasing number of resorts and homestays inside the hamlets were not only posing a threat to the tribal people but also to the wildlife in the area.
- As per the Forest Rights Act, a road connecting the hamlets with outer world was permitted only for the use of residents. But resort owners were misusing it for their private purposes.
- The roaming of tourists in tribal huts, night parties, and camp fire in an intoxicated mood, supply of alcohol to tribal people, and round-the-clock working of diesel generators for generating power, were also posing threats to the tranquil life of residents as well as the wildlife.

What is Forest Rights Act?

- Schedule Tribes and Other Forest Dwellers Act or Recognition of Forest Rights Act came into force in 2006.
- **The Nodal Ministry for the Act is Ministry of Tribal Affairs.**
- It was enacted to recognize and vest the forest rights and occupation of forest land in forest dwelling Scheduled Tribes and other traditional forest dwellers, who have been residing in such forests for generations, but whose rights could not be recorded.
- This Act not only recognizes the rights to hold and live in the forest land under the individual or common occupation for habitation or for self-cultivation for livelihood, but also grants several other rights to ensure their control over forest resources.
- The Act also provides for diversion of forest land for public utility facilities managed by the Government, such as schools, dispensaries, fair price shops, electricity and telecommunication lines, water tanks, etc. with the recommendation of Gram Sabhas.

Rights under the Forest Right Act 2006

1. Title Rights- ownership of land being framed by Gram Sabha.
2. Forest management rights– to protect forests and wildlife.



3. Use rights- for minor forest produce, grazing, etc.
4. Rehabilitation– in case of illegal eviction or forced displacement.
5. Development Rights– to have basic amenities such as health, education, etc.

Challenges in implementation of the Forest Right Act

- Adivasi lands in Jammu and Kashmir have not been protected, nor have these communities been given ownership rights. Instead, evictions of Adivasis have intensified in the last few years.
- A series of legislations and amendments to the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, the Compensatory Afforestation Fund Act and a host of amendments to the Rules of the FRA- undermine the rights and protections given to tribal communities in the FRA, including the condition of “free informed consent” from Gram Sabhas for any government plans to remove tribal from the forests and for the resettlement or rehabilitation package.
- The process of documenting communities’ claims under the FRA is intensive — rough maps of community and individual claims are prepared democratically by Gram Sabhas. These are then verified on the ground with annotated evidence, before being submitted to relevant authorities.
- There is a reluctance of the forest bureaucracy to give up control with FRA being seen as an instrument to regularise encroachment. This is seen in its emphasis on recognising individual claims while ignoring collective claims — Community Forest Resource (CFR) rights as promised under the FRA — by tribal communities. To date, the total amount of land where rights have been recognised under the FRA is just 3.13 million hectares, mostly under claims for individual occupancy rights.
- In most of the States, instead of Gram Sabhas, the Forest Department has either appropriated or been given effective control over the FRA’s rights recognition process. This has created a situation where the officials controlling the implementation of the law often have the strongest interest in its non-implementation, especially the community forest rights provisions, which dilute or challenge the powers of the forest department.
- Saxena Committee pointed out several problems in the implementation of FRA. Wrongful rejections of claims happen due to lack of proper enquiries made by the officials.

-Source: *The Hindu*