

UPSC CURRENT AFFAIRS NOTES 03-01-2023

Genocide Convention 1948

Recently, South Africa moved the International Court of Justice (ICJ), for an urgent order declaring that Israel was in breach of its obligations under the 1948 Genocide Convention.



About Genocide Convention 1948:

The term ‘genocide’ is often loosely used when speaking of attacks against various communities across the world.

It has been defined using set criteria in the UN’s Convention on the **Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide**, moved in the General Assembly in 1948.

It says, “In the present Convention, genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such:

Killing members of the group;

Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;

Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;



Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;

Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.

As per this convention the genocide is a crime whether committed during wartime or peacetime.

India ratified the convention in 1959; there is no legislation on the subject.

Key facts about the International Court of Justice

It is the principal judicial organ of the UN established in June 1945 by the Charter of the United Nations.

French and English are the official languages of the Court.

Powers and Functions:

The Court may entertain two types of cases: legal disputes between States submitted to it by them (contentious cases) and requests for advisory opinions on legal questions referred to it by United Nations organs and specialized agencies (advisory proceedings).

Advisory proceedings before the Court are only open to five organs of the United Nations and 16 specialized agencies of the United Nations family or affiliated organizations.

The court's judgments in contentious cases are final and binding on the parties to a case and without appeal.

Unlike the Court's judgments, advisory opinions are not binding.

Composition:

It is composed of 15 judges, all from different countries, who are elected for terms of office of ***nine years*** by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) and the Security Council (UNSC).

A candidate must receive an absolute majority of the votes in both UNGA and UNSC.

One-third of the composition of the Court is renewed every three years.

Once elected, a member of the Court is a delegate neither of the government of his own country nor of any other State.



LEGISLATION ON HIT-AND-RUN CASES

The protests by truck, bus, and tanker drivers across several states in India are in response to the newly implemented Bharatiya Nyay Sanhita (BNS) for hit-and-run cases.

The law replaces the colonial-era Indian Penal Code and imposes stringent penalties on drivers causing serious accidents who flee without informing the police. Offenders could face up to **10 years in prison or a fine of Rs 7 lakh.**

Reasons for Protest

The new law imposes severe penalties, including up to 10 years of imprisonment or a fine of Rs 7 lakh, on drivers involved in serious road accidents who flee the scene without informing the authorities.

Transport operators argue that the **law may unfairly penalize drivers** and could **expose them to mob violence**, especially when attempting to transport the injured to hospitals. They believe this may discourage drivers and lead to unjust punishments.

Protestors are demanding that such significant decisions should involve consultations with stakeholders. They feel that there was no prior discussion or consultation regarding the implementation of these stringent regulations.

Impact of the Strike

Since January 1, protestors have blocked roads and highways, disrupting vehicle movement and impacting fuel supply.

In Madhya Pradesh, nearly five lakh vehicles were reportedly affected by the strike.

Long queues formed at petrol pumps in various states, including Himachal Pradesh and Maharashtra.

Highways were obstructed in several districts of Gujarat on Monday.

Demands of Protestors

The All India Motor & Goods Transport Association demands discussions and consultations with stakeholders before implementing such laws. They highlight the need for transparency and awareness among the public regarding the new regulations.



Protestors emphasize the importance of prior meetings and consultations before introducing laws that impact the transportation sector. They express concerns about the lack of awareness and understanding among the public regarding the implications of the new law.

Bharatiya Nyay Sanhita (BNS) for hit-and-run cases

Hit-and-run cases are those where the driver of the vehicle that caused the road crash flees the scene without reporting to authorities or helping the injured.

According to the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways, India recorded 1.51 lakh road deaths in 2019, of which 50,000 were due to hit-and-run incidents. Currently, the accused in hit-and-run cases are tried under Section 304A of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), which provides for penalties of up to two years in jail.

Features

The Bharatiya Nyay Sanhita (BNS) was passed by Parliament in December 2023 and replaced the IPC, aiming to curb the menace of hit-and-run accidents by introducing stricter penalties and incentives. The BNS has created two categories under "causing death by negligence":

Whoever causes death by doing any rash or negligent act not amounting to culpable homicide, shall be punished with jail of up to five years and a fine.

Whoever causes death by rash and negligent driving not amounting to culpable homicide, and escapes without reporting it to a police officer or a magistrate soon after the incident, shall be punished with up to 10-year imprisonment and fine.

The BNS also provides leniency for those who voluntarily inform the police and assist the injured. The law also empowers the police to seize the vehicle involved in the accident and suspend the driving license of the accused.

Significances

It will deter drivers from fleeing the scene of accidents and encourage them to report and help the victims.

It will increase the chances of identifying and prosecuting the offenders and provide compensation and relief to the victims and their families.

It will reduce the burden on the courts and speed up the disposal of cases.



It will create awareness among the public about their rights and duties as road users.

It will align India's laws with international standards and best practices on road safety.

Other Steps taken to improve its road safety

Amending the Motor Vehicles Act in 2019 to increase penalties for traffic violations and enhance protection for good samaritans.

Launching the National Road Safety Policy in 2014 to provide a framework for coordinated action by various stakeholders.

Implementing various schemes and programs such as Pradhan Mantri Surakshit Sadak Yojana, Bharatmala Pariyojana, Sukhad Yatra App, etc. to improve road infrastructure, technology, enforcement, and public awareness.

Ratifying international conventions such as the Brasilia Declaration on Road Safety in 2015 and the Stockholm Declaration on Road Safety in 2020.

Challenges

Lack of adequate data collection, analysis, and dissemination on road accidents and their causes, impacts, and trends.

Lack of coordination and cooperation among various agencies and departments involved in road safety management at different levels.

Lack of capacity and resources for effective enforcement, investigation, prosecution, adjudication, and compensation of road accidents.

Lack of awareness and compliance among road users about their rights and responsibilities as well as the existing laws and rules.

Lack of social support and empathy for the victims and their families as well as the good Samaritans who help them.

Way forward

To overcome these challenges and achieve the vision of zero road fatalities in India, there is a need for a holistic and multi-sectoral approach that involves all stakeholders such as government, civil society, private sector, media, academia, etc. Some of the possible actions that can be taken are:

Strengthening data systems and evidence-based policymaking on road safety issues.

Enhancing inter-agency coordination and collaboration at national, state, and local levels through dedicated bodies or mechanisms.

Building capacity and accountability of law enforcement agencies, judiciary, health sector, insurance sector, etc. for effective implementation of road safety laws and programs.

Increasing public awareness and education on road safety issues through campaigns, curriculum, media, etc.

Promoting a culture of road safety among all road users through behavioural change interventions, incentives, and recognition.

AADHAAR-BASED PAYMENT SYSTEM



The Union Government has made the Aadhaar-based payment system (ABPS) mandatory for the payment of wages to NREGS (National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme) workers. This system involves linking workers' 12-digit Aadhaar numbers with their job cards and bank accounts to ensure direct payment of wages.



Details

The transition to the Aadhaar-based payment system (ABPS) for the payment of wages to NREGS (National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme) workers has been a point of contention, with the government making it mandatory.

The ABPS links workers' Aadhaar numbers with their job cards and bank accounts to ensure direct payments. Initially made mandatory from February 1, 2023, it saw extensions until December 31, 2023, allowing a mixed route with NACH (an interbank payment system). However, from January 1, 2024, ABPS became compulsory.

The Rural Development Ministry announced that while ABPS is the preferred mode for wage payments, exemptions might be considered on a case-by-case basis if any gram panchayat faces technical or Aadhaar-related issues.

Aadhaar-Based Payment System (ABPS)

Aadhaar-based payment system (ABPS) is a digital payment system that enables users to access various banking services using their Aadhaar number and biometric authentication. It was introduced by the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) to promote financial inclusion and digital payments in India.

ABPS has the following features

Aadhaar-linked transactions: Users can make transactions through their Aadhaar-linked bank accounts, similar to debit/credit card transactions.

Biometric authentication: Transactions are completed by submitting the Aadhaar number and biometric details (iris or fingerprint scan) at PoS or micro ATMs, using Aadhaar authentication.

Bank account privacy: Users do not have to share their bank account details during the transaction, enhancing privacy and security.

Fund transfers: ABPS allows users to transfer funds between bank accounts, providing a convenient way to send and receive money.

Secure transactions: ABPS transactions are considered safe and secure as they require biometric authentication, ensuring the identity of the user.

ABPS has the following significance

Financial inclusion: ABPS enables financial inclusion by providing access to banking services to the unbanked and underbanked sections of society, especially in rural and remote areas.

Digital payments: ABPS promotes digital payments by reducing the dependence on cash and encouraging cashless transactions.

Direct benefit transfer: ABPS facilitates direct benefit transfer (DBT) of various government schemes and subsidies to the beneficiaries' bank accounts, eliminating intermediaries and leakages.

Financial literacy: ABPS creates awareness and education about financial products and services among the users, improving their financial literacy and empowerment.

Steps taken to implement and promote ABPS

- **Linking Aadhaar with bank accounts:** The government has made it mandatory for all bank account holders to link their Aadhaar numbers with their bank accounts to enable ABPS transactions.
- **Making ABPS mandatory for NREGS workers:** The government has made ABPS mandatory for the payment of wages to NREGS workers, ensuring timely and transparent payment of wages.
- **Providing incentives for BCs and users:** The government has provided incentives for BCs and users to adopt ABPS, such as commission for BCs and zero transaction costs for users.
- **Creating awareness and capacity building:** The government has created awareness and capacity building among the stakeholders, such as banks, BCs, users, and government officials, about the benefits and usage of ABPS.

ABPS faces the following challenges

- **Technical issues:** ABPS faces technical issues such as network connectivity, device malfunctioning, biometric mismatch, etc., affecting the smooth functioning of the system.

- **Aadhaar-related issues:** ABPS faces Aadhaar-related issues such as incomplete or incorrect Aadhaar data, lack of Aadhaar enrolment or updation, etc., affecting the verification and authentication of the users.
- **Behavioral issues:** ABPS faces behavioral issues such as resistance or reluctance from some users or BCs to adopt ABPS, due to a lack of trust, awareness, or convenience.
- **Regulatory issues:** ABPS faces regulatory issues such as a lack of clarity or consistency in the policies or guidelines related to ABPS, affecting its implementation and compliance.

Way forward for improving ABPS

- **Strengthening the infrastructure:** The infrastructure for ABPS should be strengthened by improving the network connectivity, device quality, biometric accuracy, etc., ensuring reliable and efficient transactions.
- **Updating the Aadhaar data:** The Aadhaar data should be updated regularly by enrolling or updating the Aadhaar details of the users, ensuring accurate and complete verification and authentication.
- **Enhancing awareness and trust:** The awareness and trust among the users and BCs should be enhanced by conducting campaigns, workshops, demonstrations, etc., highlighting the benefits and usage of ABPS.
- **Harmonizing the regulations:** The regulations related to ABPS should be harmonized by streamlining and simplifying the policies or guidelines related to ABPS, ensuring its implementation and compliance.

BUBBLE BABY SYNDROME



A two-month-old girl from Karnataka was diagnosed with 'bubble baby syndrome'.

Bubble Baby Syndrome

Bubble baby syndrome, also known as severe combined immunodeficiency (SCID), is a rare genetic disorder affecting newborns, where functional T cells and B cells, crucial components of the immune system, are absent.

Symptoms and Characteristics

Lack of symptoms at birth, with recurrent infections emerging within months.

Infections can affect various organs, including the lungs, skin, digestive tract, and nervous system.

Common signs include poor weight gain, chronic diarrhoea, oral thrush, pneumonia, ear infections, skin rashes, and meningitis.

Treatment

Bone Marrow Transplant (BMT): The only cure involves replacing defective stem cells with healthy ones from a compatible donor, restoring normal immune function.

Donors can be siblings, unrelated individuals with a similar tissue type, or umbilical cord blood.

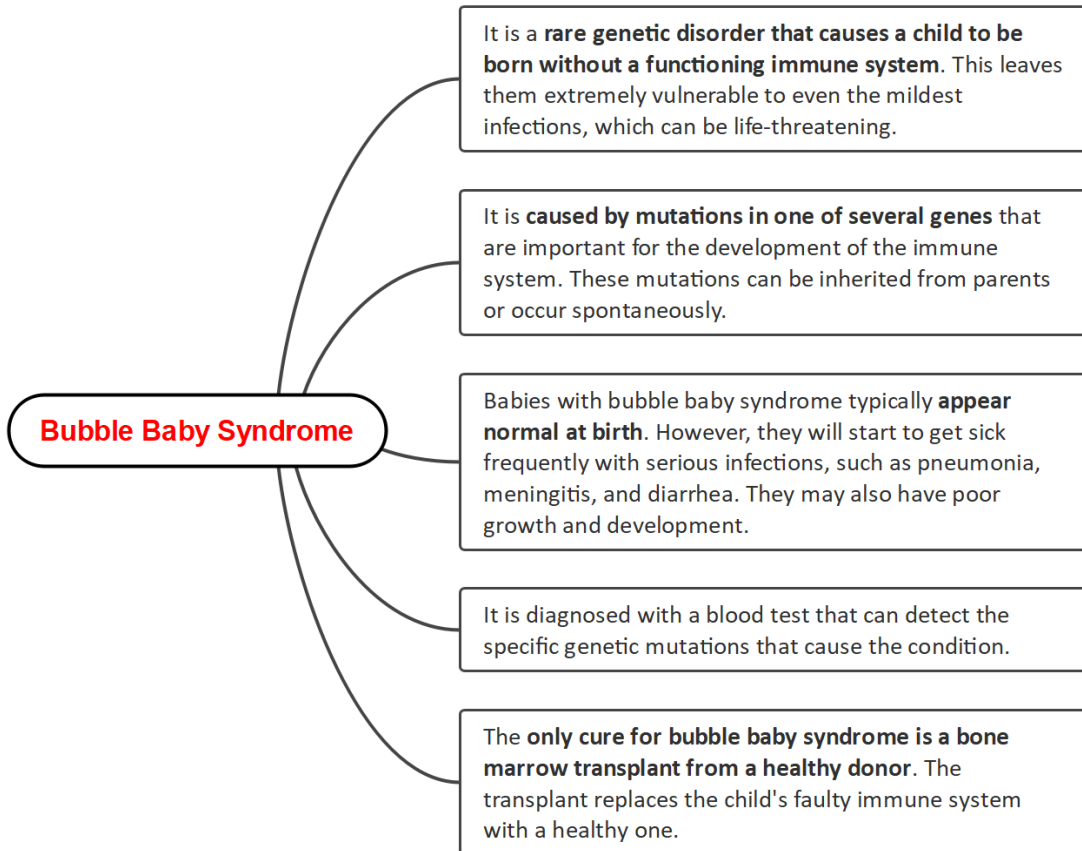
Success depends on factors like donor availability, timing, and potential complications (e.g., graft-versus-host disease).

Gene Therapy: An experimental approach correcting the defective gene in stem cells using a modified virus. Explored for certain SCID types but carries risks like cancer development or immune responses against the virus.

Diagnosis

Blood tests for T cells, B cells, antibodies, and specific gene mutations.

Early diagnosis is crucial, and newborn screening (mandatory in some countries) enables detection before symptoms manifest.



River Devika Project

North India's first river rejuvenation project, 'Devika', is in the final stages. and it will be soon dedicated to the nation by the Prime Minister.

About River Devika Project:

Built on the lines of 'Namami Ganga', the project was launched in February 2019.

It is north India's first river rejuvenation project.

The project is implemented along the Devika River in Jammu and Kashmir.

It has been included in the Government of India's National River Conservation Project (NRCP).

Under the project, bathing "ghats" (places) on the banks of the Devika River will be developed, encroachments will be removed, natural water bodies will be restored, and catchment areas will be developed along with cremation ground.



The project includes the construction of **three sewage treatment plants** with 8 MLD, 4 MLD and 1.6 MLD capacities, a sewerage network of 129.27 km, the development of two cremation ghats, protection fencing and landscaping, small hydropower plants, and three solar power plants.

Built at a cost of over Rs 190 crore, the sharing of fund allocation is in the ratio of 90:10 by the centre and UT, respectively.

On completion of the project, the rivers will see a reduction in pollution and an improvement in water quality.

It will offer a unique destination both for pilgrim tourists as well as recreation tourists, in addition to being a state-of-the-art cremation centre.

Key Facts about Devika River:

Devika River is considered the sister of the sacred river Ganga, and it has great religious significance.

Course:

It originates from the hilly **Suddha Mahadev temple** in the Udhampur district of Jammu and Kashmir.

It flows down towards western Punjab (now in Pakistan), where it merges with the Ravi River.

As it appears and disappears in many places, **Devika is also known as Gupt Ganga.**