

UPSC CURRENT AFFAIRS NOTES 16-03-2024

IMPLEMENTATION OF FRA



A fact-finding committee examined the implementation of the Forest Rights Act (FRA) 2006 in five states: Assam, Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra, Odisha, and Karnataka.

Key Highlights of the Report

The Forest Rights Act (FRA) of 2006 has been implemented differently in five Indian states—Assam, Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra, Odisha, and Karnataka—according to the findings of the fact-finding committee set up by Call for Justice.

Jhum cultivation

The current FRA does not recognise "jhum" (shifting cultivation) in the northeast, despite its cultural and ecological significance.

Jhum involves cutting down parts of forests for cultivation and then letting them lay fallow for several years while the flora regenerates. This cyclical activity has evolved to meet the region's unique ecological restrictions and is deeply rooted in the cultural character of many communities.

The committee emphasised the importance of finding a mechanism for integrating jhum cultivation into the FRA's framework.

Bureaucracy

Gram sabhas (village councils) have limited power to recognise rights. District committees exercise real authority, causing delays.



The governmental procedure of recognising forest rights can be slow and complicated.

The report highlights that this power imbalance causes delays since claims must be accepted by district-level committees, which may be far away and unresponsive to the concerns of local populations.

Slow Progress

Chhattisgarh has a slow decision-making process. The reasons are uncertain. The committee discovered that the process of recognising forest rights claims in Chhattisgarh's Kanker and Korba districts was severely delayed.

The report does not go into detail about the causes for the delay, but it indicates that a **lack of clarity or capacity at the district level could be a contributing factor.**

Uneven recognition

Recognition rates vary greatly. Gadchiroli in Maharashtra serves as an example for community rights, but Nashik falls behind. Recognition rates for forest rights claims differed greatly across the five states investigated.

Gap Between Claims and Recognition

In Odisha's Kandhamal and Sundargarh districts, there was a significant gap between the number of individual forest rights (IFR) and community forest rights (CFR) applications submitted and those that were ultimately recognised. This indicates that the **process of examining and approving claims may be backlogged or inefficient.**

Land Allocation Issues

Karnataka had the highest percentage of rejection of individual forest rights claims among the states surveyed. Even for granted claims, the average land allocation was about 0.8 acres. This small plot size makes it impossible for claimants to live on their property.

Limited attention to community rights

Many authorities are unclear about the distinction between community and individual rights. The report highlighted a lack of clarity among several

government institutions regarding the distinction between individual and communal forest rights. This misconception might cause claims to be processed slowly and incorrectly.

Exclusion of Other Traditional Forest Dwellers

People who are not classified as Scheduled Tribes are left out of the process. The FRA primarily acknowledges the rights of Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers. However, the report highlighted that people who qualify as Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (OTFDs) but are not classified as Scheduled Tribes are excluded from the FRA recognition procedure. **This raises issues of equity and justice for these communities.**

Rights for the dwellers

What the Forest Rights Act, 2006, entails

- Tenurial security over the forestland under occupation prior to December 13, 2005
- Recognition of community right over forest and forest products
- Protection and conservation of community forest resources
- Conversion of all forest villages and habitation located inside the forestland into revenue villages
- In situ rehabilitation of displaced persons evicted without compensation prior to December 13, 2005
- Recognition of ancestral domain (habitat) right to



Residents of Gunduribadi village in Odisha's Nayagarh district get ready for mapping their land boundaries for the Forest Rights Act implementation. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups

- Seasonal access to nomadic, pastoral and semi-nomadic communities over forestland
- Conversion of all leases granted by erstwhile governments, zamindars and king into permanent land records

Ethanol 100

Union Minister for Petroleum and Natural Gas Hardeep Singh Puri launched Ethanol 100.



Composition of E100 Fuel:

E100 now comprises 93-93.5% ethanol blended with 5% petrol and 1.5% co-solvent (binder).

Safety concerns addressed by ensuring visibility of flames in case of fire.

Pricing and Future Projections:

Current Pricing:

E100 priced equivalently to petrol: Rs 94.72/litre in Delhi, Rs 104.21/litre in Maharashtra, and Rs 100.75/litre in Chennai.

Future Outlook:

With wider adoption, E100 expected to be cheaper than petrol or diesel due to ethanol's lower cost.

Government's push for biofuels and crude oil import substitution to enhance competitiveness.

Ethanol production from agricultural feedstock contributes to farmers' income, aligning with decarbonization goals.

Vehicle Compatibility:

Flex Fuel Engine Cars:

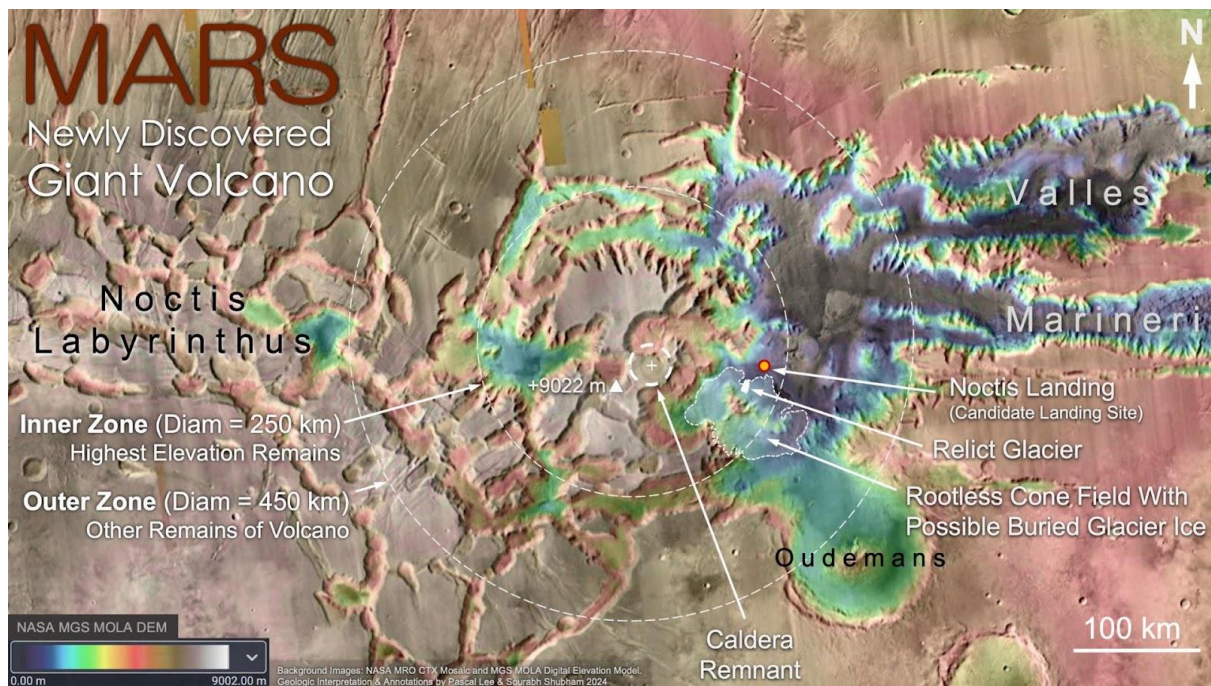
E100 suitable for flex fuel engine cars designed to run on multiple fuels.

Flex fuel cars equipped with internal combustion engines adaptable to petrol, ethanol, or methanol.

Minor modifications distinguish flex fuel vehicles from conventional petrol-only cars, offering consumers fuel choice at the point of sale.

Noctis Volcano

Scientists recently discovered a massive volcano on Mars, temporarily designated ‘Noctis volcano’, that has been active until recent times, with the possible remains of a relict glacier at its base.



About Noctis Volcano

It is a newly-discovered volcano located just south of Mars’ equator, in Eastern Noctis Labyrinth, west of Valles Marineris, the planet’s vast canyon system.

The volcano sits on the eastern edge of a broad regional topographic rise called Tharsis, home to three other well-known giant volcanoes: Ascraeus Mons, Pavonis Mons, and Arsia Mons.



The massive structure spans over 9,022 meters in elevation, higher than the highest peak, Mount Everest, on Earth.

The volcano is spread in a huge area with a width of over 450 kilometres.

The central summit area is marked by several elevated mesas forming an arc, reaching a regional high and sloping downhill away from the summit area.

The gentle outer slopes extend out to 225 kilometres (140 miles) away in different directions.

The caldera remnant—the remains of a collapsed volcanic crater once host to a lava lake—can be seen near the centre of the structure.

Lava flows, pyroclastic deposits (made of volcanic particulate materials such as ash, cinders, pumice, and tephra), and hydrated mineral deposits occur in several areas within the structure's perimeter.

It was active for a very long time on the Red Planet, and in its southeastern part lies a thin, recent volcanic deposit beneath which glacier ice is likely still present.

Gulf of Carpentaria

A new tropical cyclone warning has been recently issued for the Gulf of Carpentaria.

About Gulf of Carpentaria

It is a shallow rectangular sea on the northern coast of Australia and an inlet of the eastern Arafura Sea (a Pacific Ocean sea separating New Guinea and Australia).

The gulf has an area of 120,000 square miles (310,000 square km) and a maximum depth of 230 feet (70 metres).

It is 590 kilometers wide at the mouth and 675 kilometers wide near the southern coast. It is over 700 kilometers long, from north to south.

The gulf covers a continental shelf common to both New Guinea and Australia.

A ridge extends across Torres Strait, separating the floor of the gulf from the Coral Sea to the east.



It is a rare modern example of an epicontinental sea (a shallow sea on top of a continent), a feature much more common at earlier times in the Earth's geologic history.

At least 20 rivers empty into the gulf, including the Roper, Wilton, Walker, Calvert, Flinders, McArthur, and Norman Rivers.

There are several islands in the gulf, with Groote Eylandt, being the largest.

The gulf also contains fringing reefs and coral colonies.

It gained international recognition in the 20th and 21st centuries following the discovery and exploitation of several mineral resources, including manganese and bauxite.

Negotiable Instruments Act, 1881

The Supreme Court recently observed that mere filing of the cheque dishonor complaint under the Negotiable Instruments Act would not grant a right to a complainant to seek interim compensation.

About Negotiable Instruments Act, 1881

It came into force on 1st March 1881, and it extends to the whole of India.

It was enacted to provide a uniform legal framework for the use of negotiable instruments in India.

A negotiable instrument is a piece of paper that guarantees the payment of a certain sum of money, either immediately upon demand or at any predetermined period, and whose payer is typically identified.

It is a document that is envisioned by or made up of a contract that guarantees the unconditional payment of money and may be paid now or at a later time.

Section 13 of the Act states that, "A negotiable instrument means a promissory note, bill of exchange or cheque payable either to order or to bearer".

However, no section of this act affects the usage of paper currency, which is governed by the Indian Paper Currency Act of 1871.

The Act has been amended several times to ensure that it is in line with changing business practices and legal requirements.



It was amended in 1988 and now includes cheque defaulters as well. A person who issues cheques without sufficient balance in their account is considered a 'defaulter' and the act of 'cheque bounce' is a criminal offence.

The 2015 amendment allows filing cheque bounce cases in a court at a place where the cheque was presented for clearance and not the place of issue.

Promissory Notes:

It is a written promise to pay a specific amount of money to the person named in the document.'

It can be transferred by endorsement and delivery.

In the case of State Bank of India vs. Gangadhar Ramchandra Panse, the court held that a promissory note must contain an unconditional promise to pay a specific amount of money. If the promise is conditional, the document will not be considered a promissory note.

Bills of Exchange:

It is a written order by the maker to the payee to pay a certain amount of money to a third party.

The person who issues the bill is called the 'drawer,' and the person to whom the payment is to be made is called the 'drawee.' The person in whose favor the payment is to be made is called the 'payee.'

It can be transferred by endorsement and delivery.

In the case of Bank of India vs. O.P. Swarnakar, the court held that a bill of exchange is a negotiable instrument that can be transferred by endorsement and delivery. The transfer of a bill of exchange is valid even if the transferor does not own the instrument at the time of transfer.

Cheques:

A cheque is a written order by the drawer to the bank to pay a certain amount of money to the payee. The bank is required to pay the amount mentioned in the cheque to the payee or their authorized representative.

It can be transferred by endorsement and delivery.

In the case of Canara Bank vs. Nuclear Power Corporation of India Ltd, the court held that a cheque must be drawn on a specified bank and must not be expressed to be payable otherwise than on demand.



The court also held that the bank is under a legal obligation to pay the cheque amount to the payee or their authorized representative, even if the drawer has insufficient funds in their account.

A promissory note is a written promise by one party (the note's issuer or maker) to pay another party (the note's payee) a definite sum of money, either on demand or at a specified future date. A promissory note typically contains all the terms involved, such as the principal debt amount, interest rate, maturity date, payment schedule, the date and place of issuance, and the issuer's signature.

World Monuments Fund

The Eri (tank) network in the Kazhuveli watershed region in Villupuram district that comprises of an incredible network of tanks created thousands of years ago is to be proposed for nomination to the World Monuments Fund Watch 2025 programme.

About World Monuments Fund

It is the leading independent organization devoted to safeguarding the world's most treasured places to enrich people's lives and build mutual understanding across cultures and communities.

Since 1965, our global team of experts has preserved the world's diverse cultural heritage using the highest international standards at more than 700 sites in 112 countries.

Partnering with local communities, funders, and governments, WMF draws on heritage to address some of today's most pressing challenges: climate change, underrepresentation, imbalanced tourism, and post-crisis recovery.

Headquarter: New York City

In 2015, WMF India became the most recent entry to the World Monuments Fund family of affiliates, established under India's Companies Act, following the country's policy to include heritage conservation in corporate social responsibility programs

It is a nomination-based program that connects local heritage preservation to global awareness and action.



Every two years, the Watch rallies support to places in need and the people who care for them, spotlighting new challenges.

At its core, the Watch's call to action seeks to empower timely preservation efforts that improve the lives of communities.

The 2025 Watch will include 25 places, each telling an urgent local story with global relevance.

NUCLEAR WASTE

Context: Nuclear waste management is a critical component of nuclear power generation, and countries like India, which have ambitious nuclear energy programmes, must efficiently address this challenge.

Nuclear waste, also known as radioactive waste, is a byproduct of nuclear reactors, fuel processing plants, and institutions such as hospitals and research facilities.

Nuclear waste is mostly composed of wasted fuel from nuclear reactors. This used fuel contains highly radioactive fission products and transuranic elements generated during the fission process.

The management of nuclear waste is a critical issue due to its potentially harmful effects on the environment and human health.

Environmental and Health Impacts

Radiation Exposure: Radioactive emissions from nuclear waste can cause radiation exposure, leading to various health effects, including cancer, genetic mutations, and organ damage.

Contamination: Nuclear waste can contaminate soil, water, and food chains, affecting ecosystems and wildlife. Contaminated areas may require remediation and long-term monitoring.

Long-Term Risks: Some radioactive isotopes have long half-lives, remaining hazardous for thousands to millions of years. Long-term management and containment are necessary to prevent future risks.



Handling and Management of Nuclear Waste

Spent Fuel Management: Spent fuel is initially stored in underwater pools at nuclear plants to dissipate heat and radiation. After cooling, it can be transferred to dry cask storage or reprocessed for recycling.

Reprocessing: Involves chemically separating usable fissile material (e.g., plutonium, uranium) from spent fuel for reuse in reactors. Reprocessing also produces additional waste streams.

Treatment and Conditioning: Liquid waste from reprocessing is treated to remove radioactive contaminants. Solid waste may be compacted, solidified, or encapsulated in containers for safe storage and disposal.

Storage: Nuclear waste requires secure storage facilities to prevent leaks, contamination, and unauthorised access. Storage methods include on-site storage, interim storage facilities, and long-term repositories.

Disposal: Final disposal involves placing nuclear waste in deep geological repositories, where it is isolated from the environment for thousands of years. Geological disposal aims to minimise the risk of human exposure and environmental contamination.

Challenges and Concerns

Technical Challenges: Managing radioactive waste involves technical issues such as containment, storage, transportation, and long-term monitoring.

Safety and Security: Nuclear waste facilities have to comply with strict safety and security regulations to avoid accidents, leaks, and unauthorised access.

Environmental Impact: Improper disposal or management of nuclear waste can contaminate land, water, and air, endangering ecosystems and human health.

Public Perception: Nuclear waste disposal is frequently met with public opposition due to safety, environmental damage, and ethical issues.

Cost and Liability: Nuclear waste handling is expensive and can place a financial burden on governments, utilities, and taxpayers. Liability concerns for long-term management and disposal also arise.