

The Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA) Licence

❖ Context

- Recently, the Centre **suspended the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA) licence** of the Centre for Policy Research (CPR).

❖ Key Highlights:

- The licence was suspended following prima facie inputs regarding the violation of funding norms.
- CPR, is “recognised as a **not-for-profit society** by the Government of India, and contributions to the Centre are tax exempt.

❖ About FCRA:

- The FCRA was **enacted during the Emergency in 1976**.
- There was apprehension that foreign powers were interfering in India’s affairs by pumping money into the country through independent organisations.
- The law sought to **regulate foreign donations to individuals and associations** so that they functioned “in a manner consistent with the values of a **sovereign democratic republic**”.
- Broadly, the **FCRA requires every person or NGO** seeking to receive foreign donations to be-
 - Registered under the Act.
 - To open a bank account for the receipt of the foreign funds in **State Bank of India, Delhi**.
 - To utilise those funds only for the purpose for which they have been received and as stipulated in the Act.
 - To **file annual returns**, and must not transfer the funds to another NGO.
- **The Act prohibits the receipt of foreign funds by :**
 - Candidates for Elections.
 - Journalists or newspaper and media broadcast companies.

- Judges and government servants.
- Members of legislature and political parties or their office-bearers, and organisations of a political nature.
- **Granting FCRA Registration :**
 - FCRA registrations are granted to individuals or associations that have **definite cultural, economic, educational, religious, and social programmes**.
 - The **MHA** makes inquiries through the Intelligence Bureau into the antecedents of the applicant.
 - The MHA is required to **approve or reject the application within 90 days**.
 - Once granted, FCRA registration **is valid for five years**.
 - NGOs are expected to apply for renewal within six months of the date of expiry of registration.
 - The ministry also has powers to suspend an NGO’s registration for 180 days pending inquiry, and can freeze its funds.
 - All orders of the government **can be challenged in the High Court**.
- **Amendments :**
 - **An amended FCRA was enacted in 2010.**
 - It was aimed to “consolidate the law” on utilisation of foreign funds, and “to prohibit” their use for “any activities detrimental to national interest”.
 - **The law was amended again in 2020.**
 - It gave the government tighter control and scrutiny over the receipt and utilisation of foreign funds by NGOs.

Whip

❖ Context

- Recently, the Supreme Court observed that **members of a House are bound by the ‘whip’**, and if any section of MLAs within a political party that is part of a ruling coalition says it does not want to go with the alliance, **the MLAs will attract disqualification**.

❖ Whip

- In parliamentary parlance, a whip **may refer to both a written order to members** of a party in the House to abide by a certain direction, and **to a designated official** of the party who is authorised to issue such a direction.
- The term is **derived from the old British practice** of “whipping in” lawmakers to follow the party line.
- A whip may require that party members be present in the House for an important vote, or that they vote only in a particular way.
- In India, **all parties can issue whips to their members**.
- Parties appoint a senior member from among their House contingents to issue whips - this member is called a **chief whip**, and he/ she is assisted by additional whips.

- **Constitutional Status :** The office of ‘whip’, is **mentioned neither in the Constitution of India nor in the Rules of the House** nor in a Parliamentary Statute. It is based on the conventions of the parliamentary government.
- **Types of Whips :**
 - Whips can be of varying degrees of seriousness.
 - The importance of a whip can be inferred from the number of times an order is underlined.
 - **A one-line whip**, underlined once, is usually issued to inform party members of a vote, and allows them to abstain in case they decide not to follow the party line.
 - **A two-line whip** directs them to be present during the vote.

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- A **three-line whip** is the strongest, employed on important occasions such as the second reading of a Bill or a no-confidence motion, and places an obligation on members to toe the party line.

• **Violation of Whip :**

- In India, rebelling against a three-line whip can put a lawmaker's membership of the House at risk.
- The anti-defection law allows the Speaker/ Chairperson to disqualify such a member.
 - The only exception is when more than a third of legislators vote against a directive, effectively splitting the party.

- **Side Note :** In the United Kingdom, an MP can lose membership of the party for defying the whip, but can keep her/ his House seat as an Independent.

Coral Reefs

❖ **Context**

➤ Coral reefs are suffering from bleaching, overfishing and are being cooked by warming oceans.

❖ **Key Highlights:**

- The planet has already **lost about half of its shallow water corals in the past three decades.**
- At the current rate, up to 90% of them will disappear by the middle of the century.

❖ **Coral Ecosystem:**

- **Coral polyps** are tiny and fleshy sea anemones that live in **tropical and subtropical oceans and seas.**
- Corals have a **symbiotic relationship** with microscopic algae called **zooxanthellae** that live in their tissues.
- It assists the coral in **nutrient production** through its **photosynthetic activities.**
- The **host coral polyp** in return provides its zooxanthellae with a **protected environment to live within**, and a steady supply of carbon dioxide for its photosynthetic processes.
- The corals can feed by day through photosynthesis and by night through predation.
- **Corals are highly susceptible to quick changes.** They grow in regions where climate is significantly stable for a long period of time.

❖ **Coral Bleaching:**

- When the **symbiotic relationship becomes stressed** due to increased ocean temperature or pollution, the algae leave the coral's tissue.
- Coral is left bleached and vulnerable.
- **Without the algae, the coral loses its major source of food**, turns white or very pale, and is more susceptible to disease.
- The leading cause of coral bleaching is rising water temperatures.

❖ **Benefits of Corals:**

- **Flood protection :** Coral reefs act like low-crested breakwaters and **absorb 97% of wave energy.** This substantially reduces coastal flooding and erosion.
- **Biodiversity :** Coral reefs cover less than 0.5% of the earth's surface, but they are home to about 25% of all marine species.
 - Kind of like the rainforests of the sea.
- **Habitat :** Home to over 1 million diverse aquatic species, including thousands of fish species.
- **Economical Benefits :** It provides jobs for local communities, and offer opportunities for recreation.
 - Over half a billion people depend on reefs for food, income, and protection.
 - Fishing, diving, and snorkeling on and near reefs add hundreds of millions of dollars to local businesses.
- **Medicinal Values :** They are also are a source of food and new medicines.
- **Cultural Significance :** These ecosystems are culturally important to indigenous people around the world.

News in Between the Lines

QR-Code Based Coin Vending Machine (QCVM)



❖ **Context**

➤ Recently, RBI Governor had stated that the apex banking regulator, in collaboration with banks, would be launching a **pilot project to assess the functioning of a QR-code based coin vending machine.**

❖ **About the Project:**

- The vending machines would **dispense coins** with the requisite amount being debited from the customer's account **using United Payments Interface (UPI)** instead of physical tendering of banknotes.
- Customers would be endowed the option of withdrawing coins in required quantities and denominations.
- The central idea here is to **ease the accessibility to coins.**
- The machines are intended to be installed at public places such as railway stations, shopping mall and marketplaces.

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Right Against Self Incrimination



❖ Context

- Recently, The Supreme Court refused to hear a plea by Delhi Deputy Chief seeking bail in the excise policy case after a Delhi court remanded him in CBI custody till March 4, 2023

❖ Key Highlights:

- The Supreme Court disapproved of Deputy CM approaching it directly under **Article 32 of the Constitution** when the remedy of moving the High Court under Section 482 of the CrPC was available to him.
- The court had rejected his arguments that he had a right against self-incrimination.

❖ Individual's Right Against Self-Incrimination:

- The right against self-incrimination has its **origins in Roman law**, and evolved as a distinct right in the English jurisprudence.
- **Article 20(3) in Part III (Fundamental Rights) of the Indian Constitution** says, "No person accused of any offence shall be compelled to be a witness against himself."
- The right to be presumed innocent until proven guilty, and the right to remain silent in an interrogation essentially flow from this constitutionally guaranteed right against self-incrimination.
- This right also **ensures that police cannot coerce anyone to confess to a crime**, and obtain a conviction based on that confession.
- Obtaining photographs, fingerprints, signatures, thumb impressions, handwriting samples to include voice samples and DNA samples would not violate the right against self-incrimination of an accused.

Adopt a Heritage Scheme



❖ Context

- Recently one archaeologist from USA criticized "Adopt a Heritage Scheme" of India.

❖ Key Highlights:

- The '**Adopt a Heritage : Apni Dhरोhar, Apni Pehchaan**' scheme is an initiative of the **Ministry of Tourism**, in collaboration with the **Ministry of Culture and the Archaeological Survey of India**.
- It was **launched in September 2017** on World Tourism Day.
- The government invites entities, including public sector companies, private sector firms as well as individuals, to develop selected monuments & heritage & tourist sites across India.
- Development of these tourist sites calls for providing and maintaining basic amenities, including drinking water, ease of access for the differently abled and senior citizens, standardised signage, cleanliness etc.
- The sites/monument are selected on the basis of tourist footfall and visibility and can be adopted by private and public sector companies and individuals — known as Monument Mitras — for an initial period of five years.
- The government has signed 27 Memorandums of Understanding (MoU) with 12 public/private groups for 25 key heritage sites throughout the nation.

1,300-Year-Old Buddhist Stupa



❖ Context

- The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) stumbled upon a **1,300-year-old stupa right in the middle of a mining site in Odisha's Jajpur district**.

❖ Key Highlights:

- From the district **Khondalite** stones were supplied for the beautification project around the 12th Century Shree Jagannath Temple in Puri.
- The archaeological asset was found at **Parabhadi** which is situated near Lalitagiri, a major Buddhist complex, having a large number of stupas and monasteries.
- The stupa could be 4.5-metre tall and initial assessment showed it may belong to the 7 th or 8 th century.
- The Khondalite stone is used extensively in the ABADHA scheme.
 - **ABADHA** is the Augmentation of Basic Amenities and the Development of Heritage and Architecture scheme.
 - With the ASI taking over the sites, the ABADHA scheme implementation will be affected.

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The Grievance Appellate Committee (GAC) Portal



❖ Context

➤ Recently, The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology launched the **Grievance Appellate Committee (GAC) portal** under the IT Rules, 2021.

❖ Key Highlights:

- It allows people who are dissatisfied with complaints to social media companies on content takedown requests, to be heard by one of three Committees constituted by the government. **The Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021** were amended last year.
 - It requires social media companies to “respect all the rights accorded to the citizens under the Constitution, including in the articles 14, 19 and 21,”.
 - It is signaling that social media platforms may now have to allow speech that is not allowed on their platforms, but are otherwise legal to express in public.
- The appellate committees will deal with the pleas by users against the decision of the Grievance Officer appointed by the social media intermediary.
- The committee will have a chairperson and other members selected by the central government.
- **Timeline** : The Grievance Appellate Committee will answer the appeal quickly and try to decide on it **within 30 days** of the appeal's acceptance.

Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI)



❖ Context

➤ The **Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI)** is using in-house artificial intelligence technology to improve the “robustness” of fingerprint authentication.

❖ Key Highlights:

- This effort was being **undertaken to reduce “spoofing attempts,”** where duplicates of a fingerprint were being used to carry out Aadhaar transactions improperly.

❖ About UIDAI:

- The UIDAI is a **statutory authority** established under the provisions of the **Aadhaar Act, 2016**.
- **Nodal Ministry-** Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY).
- Prior to its establishment as a statutory authority, UIDAI was functioning as an **attached office of the then Planning Commission (now NITI Aayog)**.
- Under the Aadhaar Act 2016, UIDAI is responsible for : Aadhaar enrolment and authentication, including operation and management of all stages of Aadhaar life cycle.
 - Developing the policy, procedure and system for issuing Aadhaar numbers to individuals and perform authentication.
- It also required to ensure the security of identity information and authentication records of individuals.
- **Aadhar** : Aadhaar is a 12 digit individual identification number which **serves as proof of identity and proof of address for residents of India**.

Borthekera



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❖ Context

➤ In recent studies, the **medicinal plant** commonly called **Borthekera** in Assamese was found to have **cardioprotective potential**.

❖ About:

- **Garcinia pedunculata**, commonly called ‘Borthekera’.
- The tree is endemic to the **south-eastern regions of Asia** such as parts of **Myanmar & north-eastern parts of India**. It is traditionally **forbidden for raw consumption**.

❖ Uses of Borthekera :

- The administration of the **dried pulp** of its ripe fruit **reduces cardiac hypertrophy indicators, oxidative stress, and heart inflammation**.
- The **sun-dried slices** of the ripe fruit are used for **culinary and medicinal purposes** and are known to have **therapeutic properties** like **anti-inflammatory, anthelmintic, antibacterial, antifungal, antidiabetic, hypolipidemic, nephroprotective, and even neuroprotective activity**.
- Borthekera is a **rich source of antioxidants**.
- In Assam, such slices are used for **preparing delicacies** like “**tengadiyamasor jol**” meaning Assamese sour fish curry.

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