



DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS 11-10-2024

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Crackdown on NGOs under FCRA, 2010

Syllabus: GS-2: NGO and NGO Regulation

Context:

- The recent crackdown on five major NGOs under the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA), 2010, highlights concerns over financial irregularities and foreign funding objectives.
- These NGOs, including Oxfam India, Centre for Policy Research (CPR), Environics Trust (ET), Legal Initiative for Forest and Environment (LIFE), and Care India Solution for Sustainable Development (CISSD), have faced allegations ranging from stalling development projects, mismanagement of funds, to conspiring with foreign agents.

Key Allegations Against NGOs:

- **Stalling Development Projects:** LIFE is accused of being used by the US-based NGO EarthJustice to oppose coal mines and thermal power projects in India.
- **Protest Funding:** ET and Survival International allegedly collaborated with the European Climate Foundation to mobilise protests against coal industries, particularly in Jharkhand.
- **Fund Mismanagement:** CPR reportedly used foreign funds meant for its Namati-Environmental Justice Programme for litigation rather than specified research or educational purposes.
- **Conspiring with Foreign Agents:** Oxfam India allegedly worked with Oxfam Australia to halt Indian mining activities in Australia, thus undermining Indian interests.
- **Use of Other NGOs for Illegal Activities:** Oxfam India allegedly used NGOs with valid permissions to redirect funds after losing its FCRA licence.
- **Political Agenda:** NGOs are accused of promoting specific religious communities or castes rather than serving the broader public interest.
- **Financial Support for Protests:** Oxfam India allegedly supported ET financially in anti-coal campaigns, such as protests in Dinkia, Odisha.

FCRA's Role in Regulating NGOs:

- **Monitoring:** The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) oversees the implementation of the FCRA to ensure foreign contributions do not harm national security.

- **Registration:** NGOs must register under the FCRA to receive foreign contributions, with registration valid for five years and subject to renewal.
- **Utilisation and Restrictions:** Foreign funds must be purpose-bound, and registered NGOs are prohibited from transferring funds to other NGOs.
- **2020 Amendments:** Strengthened oversight, including a mandatory SBI account for receiving foreign funds and stricter conditions on how funds are used.
- **Government's Right to Cancel:** NGOs can have their registration canceled for violations, false statements, inactivity, or acts against national interest.

Criticism of FCRA:

The International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) has called the FCRA repressive and urged India to revise it, citing concerns that the law undermines civil society and restricts legitimate activities of NGOs.

Proposed Reforms:

- **Clarity in Definitions:** Clearly defining terms like "public interest" and "national security" can prevent the misuse of the FCRA against genuine civil society organisations.
- **Independent Oversight:** An independent regulatory body for NGO foreign funding could enhance transparency and reduce government control.
- **Tiered Regulation:** Stricter regulations could apply to NGOs dealing with national security, while easing rules for those involved in humanitarian and development work.
- **Alignment with International Standards:** Revising the FCRA to align with international human rights obligations can balance national security concerns with civil society's need for foreign funding.

Ni-Kshay Poshan Yojana

Syllabus: GS-2; Health

Context

- Union Health Minister JP Nadda announces enhanced nutrition support for TB patients

About

Ni-Kshay Poshan Yojana is a nutritional support initiative under the **National Tuberculosis Elimination Program (NTEP)** of the Government of India. Launched in **April 2018**, it aims to provide direct nutritional support to tuberculosis (TB) patients to aid in their recovery and help eliminate TB from India by 2025. Here's a detailed breakdown of the scheme for UPSC preparation:

Key Features of Ni-Kshay Poshan Yojana:

- **Objective:** To provide **financial assistance** for nutritional support to TB patients throughout their treatment duration.
- **Financial Aid:**
 - Every **TB patient** is entitled to receive **₹500 per month** for nutritional support.
 - This amount is provided via **Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT)** to the bank accounts of TB patients.
- **Coverage:**
 - The scheme covers **all TB patients** who are notified through the **NIKSHAY portal**, regardless of their treatment sector (public or private).
 - Patients diagnosed in both **public and private health facilities** are eligible.
- **Duration:**
 - The support continues for the **entire duration of TB treatment**, which can last for **6 months** or longer, depending on the type of TB (drug-sensitive or drug-resistant).
- **Implementation:**
 - Implemented by the **Ministry of Health and Family Welfare**, Government of India.
 - **NIKSHAY portal** serves as a platform for the management of TB patients, tracking their treatment and disbursing funds.
- **Impact:**
 - The scheme aims to **reduce treatment dropout rates** by addressing malnutrition, a major factor influencing treatment adherence.
 - It helps patients meet their **nutritional needs**, thus enhancing their **immune response** and recovery from TB.

Nobel Prize for Medicine 2024

Syllabus: GS-3; Science and Technology

Context

- The Nobel Prize in Medicine this year has been awarded to **Victor Ambros and Gary Ruvkun for their groundbreaking discovery of microRNA (miRNA)**, tiny molecules that play a crucial role in gene regulation.
- Their research uncovered a fundamental mechanism by which cells control which genes are active at any given time, an essential process for the proper functioning of organisms.



Why Did Ambros and Ruvkun Study microRNA?

- Ambros and Ruvkun were curious about the processes governing gene regulation—the system that allows cells to select specific genes for expression, despite having the same genetic toolbox.

- Their research led to the discovery of microRNA, which provided a new understanding of how gene activity is regulated, particularly in complex organisms like humans.

The Significance of Gene Regulation

- Gene regulation allows different tissues in the **body to produce specific proteins** depending on their functions, ensuring that the right genes are expressed in the right cells.
- This regulation is vital for maintaining healthy bodily functions and preventing diseases like cancer, diabetes, and autoimmune disorders, which can result from faulty gene regulation.
- Prior to their discovery, the process of gene regulation was thought to be mostly understood through the action of transcription factors, specialized proteins that turn genes on or off.
- However, Ambros and Ruvkun revealed a previously unknown layer of gene control involving microRNA.

Discovery of microRNA

- In the 1980s, Ambros and Ruvkun were studying the roundworm *C. elegans* in Nobel Prize-winning researcher Robert Horvitz's lab.
- They focused on two genes, *lin-4* and *lin-14*, which controlled the timing of cell maturation in the worm.
- Ambros discovered that *lin-4* produced a small RNA molecule that blocked the action of *lin-14*, but without coding for any proteins, unlike most other RNA molecules.
- Ruvkun's work further revealed that *lin-4* did not stop *lin-14*'s mRNA from being produced but prevented it from making proteins.
- The RNA from *lin-4* matched a specific region of *lin-14*'s mRNA, allowing it to attach and turn off protein production.
- This was the first identification of a microRNA and demonstrated a new mechanism for gene regulation.
- Initially overlooked, the discovery gained widespread attention in 2000 when Ruvkun's team found another microRNA, *let-7*, present in humans and other species, proving that microRNAs are a universal regulatory mechanism.

Impact of the Discovery

- The identification of microRNA has revolutionized our understanding of how cells function and opened new avenues for research into disease mechanisms and potential therapies.

- Today, hundreds of microRNAs have been identified, and they are recognized as key players in regulating gene activity in almost all multicellular organisms.

Progeria

Syllabus: GS-3; Science & Technology

Context

- Survivor of rare rapid-ageing disease progeria dies at 28.

About

- Progeria, also known as **Hutchinson-Gilford Progeria Syndrome (HGPS)**, is an extremely rare genetic disorder characterized by accelerated aging in children.
- It derives its name from the Greek words “**pro**” (**before**) and “**geras**” (**old age**).

Causes:

- Progeria is caused by a mutation in the **LMNA gene (Lamin A gene)**, which produces the lamin A protein.
- This protein is responsible for maintaining the structure of a cell’s nucleus.
- The mutation leads to the production of an abnormal form of lamin A, called progerin, which causes cellular instability, leading to the symptoms of premature aging.
- The condition is not inherited and typically arises from a spontaneous mutation.

Symptoms:

- **Growth retardation:** Children with progeria exhibit slowed growth and are much shorter and lighter than their peers.

Distinctive appearance:

- Thin, wrinkled skin, resembling elderly individuals.
- Hair loss (alopecia) including the scalp, eyebrows, and eyelashes.
- A small face with a pinched nose, prominent eyes, and a receding jaw.

Age-related conditions:

- Atherosclerosis (hardening of arteries).
- Heart disease (most common cause of death).
- Joint stiffness and hip dislocations.

- Delayed or absent sexual development.

Life Expectancy:

- The average lifespan of children with progeria is around 13 to 15 years.
- They typically die from complications related to heart disease (such as heart attacks or strokes).

Diagnosis:

- Genetic testing confirms the presence of the LMNA gene mutation.
- Diagnosis is usually based on physical symptoms that appear in the first two years of life.

Treatment:

- There is no cure for progeria, but treatments aim to reduce complications.
- **Lonafarnib:** A farnesyltransferase inhibitor drug has shown promise in reducing some of the symptoms of the disease. It helps improve vascular health and delays the progression of heart disease.
- Regular monitoring for heart health, physical therapy for joint problems, and good nutrition are important aspects of managing the condition.

Research and Recent Developments:

- Scientists are exploring gene therapy and medications to block the accumulation of progerin in cells, which may further improve the quality of life and life expectancy of those affected by progeria.
- The Progeria Research Foundation is actively involved in raising awareness and funding research for a cure.

92nd Indian Air Force Day

Syllabus: GS-3: Security forces

Context:

- The recent celebration of the **92nd anniversary of the Indian Air Force (IAF)** at Marina Beach, Chennai, highlighted the air force's journey and its modern strategic direction.

- The theme of the event, "**Bhartiya Vayu Sena: Saksham, Sashakt, Atmanirbhar**" (Potent, Powerful, and Self-Reliant), underscores the IAF's focus on enhancing self-reliance and modernization, aligning with India's broader vision of achieving self-sufficiency in defense capabilities.

Key Highlights:

➤ **Formation and Early Days:**

- The **Indian Air Force was formed on 18th October 1932** under British rule, and its first operational flight took place on **1st April 1933**.
- Initially, the IAF's primary role was to assist in the defense of India's territories, and its early operations were limited in scale.

➤ **Motto:**

- The motto of the IAF is "**Touch the Sky with Glory**" (**NabhahSparshamDiptam**), taken from the **Bhagavad Gita**, symbolizing courage and valor.

➤ **Modernization and Self-reliance:**

- The air force has embarked on an ambitious modernization plan to induct cutting-edge technologies, develop indigenous capabilities, and improve its operational readiness.
- This aligns with the government's focus on **Atmanirbhar Bharat (Self-Reliant India)**, particularly in the defense sector.

➤ **Chatfield Committee's Recommendations (1939):**

- The **Chatfield Committee**, established to reassess the defense strategies of British India, proposed raising five flights on a voluntary basis for the defense of major ports. This early focus on port defense reflects the strategic importance of coastal protection, a role that remains significant in the IAF's operations today.