



DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS 10-01-2025

GS-2

1. UGC's New Guidelines on Higher Education
2. Sonobuoys

GS-3

3. Electricity (Promoting Renewable Energy Through Green Energy Open Access) Rules, 2022
4. Tipeswar Wildlife Sanctuary
5. Environment Relief Fund (Amendment) Scheme, 2024

UGC's New Guidelines on Higher Education

Syllabus: GS-2: Social Sector – Education.

Context:

- University Grants Commission (Minimum Qualifications for Appointment and Promotion of Teachers and Academic Staff in Universities and Colleges and Measures for Maintenance of Standards in Higher Education) Regulations, 2025.

1. Revised Selection Process for Vice-Chancellors

- **Search-cum-Selection Committee:**
 - Chancellors/Visitors empowered to constitute a 3-member committee for appointing Vice-Chancellors.
 - Clears ambiguity regarding the appointment process.
- **Composition of Committee:**
 - Chairperson: Nominee of Visitor/Chancellor.
 - Member 1: Nominee of UGC Chairman.
 - Member 2: Nominee of the university's apex body(Syndicate/Senate/Executive Council/Board of Management).
- **Selection Process:**
 - Advertisement in all-India newspapers and public notification.
 - Applications via nomination or talent search by the committee.
- **Warning for Non-compliance:**
 - Institutions failing to implement guidelines may be debarred from UGC schemes or prohibited from offering degree programmes.

2. Conflict with Opposition-led State Governments

- **Background:**
 - States like Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, and Kerala were in conflict with Governors (acting as Chancellors).
 - Previously, State Governments appointed search committees.
 - Draft allows Governors to appoint search committees directly, leading to further conflicts.

3. Flexibility in Faculty Appointments

- **Cross-disciplinary Eligibility:**

- Faculty applicants can qualify based on performance in UGC-NET, regardless of undergraduate or postgraduate disciplines.
- Ph.D. subject takes precedence over prior degrees.
- **Objective:**
 - Promote multi-disciplinary ecosystems in universities (aligned with NEP 2020).
 - Break rigid subject boundaries.
- **Focus on Indian Languages:**
 - Emphasis on publishing in Indian languages for books, chapters, and academic contributions.

4. Relaxations and Inclusivity Measures

- **Relaxation in Marks:**
 - 5% relaxation at undergraduate (NCrF level 5.5/6) and postgraduate (NCrF level 6.5/7) levels for:
 - SC/ST/OBC (Non-Creamy Layer).
 - EWS.
 - Persons with Disabilities (PwD).
- **Criteria for Assistant Professors:**
 - Notable contributions include:
 - Innovative teaching methods.
 - Research or development of teaching labs.
 - Sponsored research/consultancy.
 - Contributions in Indian languages.

5. Public Consultation

- **Duration:** 30 days for stakeholders and the public to submit feedback.

Sonobuoys

Syllabus: GS-2; International Relations, GS-3; Defence Technology

Context

- India, U.S. to jointly manufacture interoperable sonobuoys for Navy



About

- **Definition:**
A sonobuoy is a compact, expendable, and typically air-dropped sonar system used by naval forces to detect underwater objects, particularly submarines.

Purpose:

- **Anti-Submarine Warfare (ASW):** Detecting and tracking submarines.
- **Oceanographic Data Collection:** Collecting data on sea conditions like temperature, salinity, and pressure.
- **Search and Rescue (SAR):** Locating wreckage or sunken objects.

Components:

- **Sonar Transmitter/Receiver:** Detects underwater sounds.

- **Battery Unit:** Powers the system.
- **Radio Transmitter:** Relays data to aircraft, ships, or shore stations.
- **Parachute Assembly:** Facilitates safe deployment from aircraft.

Types of Sonobuoys:

- **Active Sonobuoys:** Emit sound pulses and listen for echoes to detect objects.
- **Passive Sonobuoys:** Listen for sounds emitted by submarines.
- **Special Purpose Sonobuoys:** Used for communication or environmental monitoring.

Deployment Platforms:

- Maritime Patrol Aircraft (e.g., Boeing P-8I Poseidon used by the Indian Navy).
- Helicopters.
- Naval ships.

Recent Developments

1. India-U.S. Cooperation:

- **Co-Production Agreement:** India and the U.S. announced a partnership for the co-production of U.S. sonobuoys for Undersea Domain Awareness (UDA) for the Indian Navy.
 - Collaboration between **Ultra Maritime (UM)**, a U.S.-based leader in undersea warfare capabilities, and **Bharat Dynamics Limited (BDL)** under the "Make in India" initiative.
 - The sonobuoys will meet U.S. Navy standards, with production shared between the U.S. and India.
- **Advancements in Technology:** The partnership includes the development of new sonobuoy technologies optimized for the Indian Ocean's unique acoustic environment, enhancing wide-area search capabilities.

2. Strategic Importance:

- **Countering Chinese Naval Presence:** Both nations are growing wary of China's expanding influence in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR).
- **Interoperability:** The sonobuoys co-produced in India will be interoperable across platforms like the P-8I, MH-60R helicopters, and MQ-9B Sea Guardian aircraft, enhancing joint operational capabilities among Quad nations (India, U.S., Australia, Japan).

Electricity (Promoting Renewable Energy Through Green Energy Open Access) Rules, 2022

Syllabus: GS-3: Energy Sector & GS-2: Judgements.

Context:

- The High Court of Karnataka struck down the **Electricity (Promoting Renewable Energy Through Green Energy Open Access) Rules, 2022** framed by the Central government.
- The rules aimed to promote the generation, purchase, and consumption of green energy, including waste-to-energy plants, to meet India's **net-zero emission goal by 2070**.

Court's Rationale

Lack of Legislative Competence

- **Centre's Legislative Authority Questioned:** The court held that the Central government lacked legislative competence under the **Electricity Act, 2003**, to frame these rules.
- **State Commission's Exclusive Domain:**
 - Regulatory powers for transmission, determination, and open access lie exclusively with the **State Electricity Commissions** under **Sections 42(2) and 181** of the Act.
 - Framing open access rules was deemed outside the Centre's jurisdiction.

Role of Residual Powers

- The Centre's reliance on **Section 176(2)** of the Act to frame rules for carrying out provisions of the Act was invalidated.
- The **Karnataka Regulatory Commission (Terms and Conditions for Green Energy Open Access) Regulations, 2022**, based on the GEOA Rules, were also struck down.

International Climate Commitment and Constitutional Perspective

- **Centre's Argument:** The GEOA Rules were framed to meet India's **net-zero emission** commitment under the Paris Agreement, invoking **Article 253** of the Constitution.
- **Court's Response:**
 - **Article 253** allows Parliament to make laws for implementing treaties but does not empower the Centre to override an existing law.

- The **Electricity Act, 2003**, must be amended by Parliament to empower the Centre to frame rules under such international commitments.
- Without such an amendment, the Centre cannot transgress or contravene existing legislation.

Implications of the Judgment

➤ Liberty to Frame Regulations:

- The **Karnataka Electricity Regulatory Commission (KERC)** can frame new regulations or continue with the 2004 regulations on open access.

➤ Checks on Central Overreach:

- Reinforces the exclusive regulatory authority of **State Commissions** in electricity matters under the **Electricity Act, 2003**.

➤ Net-Zero Emission Policy:

- Central government must align future rules with legislative provisions or seek necessary amendments to existing laws.

Mains

➤ GS-II:

- Centre-State relations in regulatory matters.
- Judicial review and separation of powers.
- International agreements vs. domestic legislation.

➤ GS-III:

- Renewable energy promotion and policy challenges.
- India's commitment to **net-zero emissions**.

Tipeshwar Wildlife Sanctuary

Syllabus: GS-3; Biodiversity

Context

- In a remarkable journey across Maharashtra, a male tiger born in the Tipeshwar Wildlife Sanctuary in Yavatmal has travelled an unusual 500 kilometres, reaching Solapur district.



About

- Tipeshwar Wildlife Sanctuary is located in the Yavatmal district of Maharashtra, India. It is part of the larger Pench-Kanhan tiger landscape and is considered an important conservation area for both flora and fauna.

Location and Area:

- **District:** Yavatmal, Maharashtra
- **Coordinates:** 19°40' N, 78°50' E
- **Area:** Approximately 148.27 square kilometers.

History and Establishment:

- Tipeshwar Wildlife Sanctuary was established in 1994 with the aim to conserve the rich biodiversity in the region.
- It lies near the border of Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra and is connected to other important protected areas, including the Pench and Kanhan sanctuaries, thereby contributing to the overall biodiversity corridor.

Flora and Fauna:

- **Flora:** The sanctuary has a mix of dry deciduous forests with several species of trees such as teak, bamboo, mahua, and tendu. The vegetation is crucial for supporting the wildlife that inhabits the sanctuary.
- **Fauna:**
 - **Mammals:** The sanctuary is home to several species, including the Indian tiger, leopards, wild boar, sloth bear, Indian bison (gaur), spotted deer, sambar, and langur.
 - **Birds:** It also supports a variety of bird species like the Indian eagle owl, painted stork, and several species of vultures and other raptors.
 - **Reptiles:** The sanctuary is home to reptiles like the Indian cobra, Indian python, and various species of turtles.
- The sanctuary also plays an important role in protecting species like the Bengal Tiger, which is an endangered species.

Conservation and Challenges:

- **Protection Status:** The sanctuary is managed by the Maharashtra Forest Department and is vital for maintaining the tiger population in the region. The region faces several conservation challenges, such as poaching, human-wildlife conflict, and encroachment.
- **Project Tiger:** Tipeshwar is part of the Project Tiger initiative, aimed at conserving tiger populations in India. The sanctuary has been receiving attention for tiger conservation, especially with the growing tiger population in the area.

Environment Relief Fund (Amendment) Scheme, 2024

Syllabus: GS-3: Environment – Laws and Policies.

Context:

- The Central Government introduced amendments to the Environment Relief Fund Scheme, 2008, through the **Environment Relief Fund (Amendment) Scheme, 2024**, to enhance fund management, ensure efficient disbursement, and bolster environmental restoration initiatives.

Key Objectives:

- **Improved Fund Management:** Streamlining the administration and operations of the fund.
- **Efficient Disbursement:** Quick release of funds for timely action.

- **Enhanced Environmental Restoration:** Strengthened plans and execution for ecological recovery.

Key Features:

1. Fund Management:

- The **Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB)** is appointed as the Fund Manager for a period of **five years**, replacing the previous manager, United Insurance Company Limited.

2. Funding Sources:

- **Compensation** under Section 24 of the **National Green Tribunal (NGT) Act, 2010**.
- **Penalties** levied under Sections 14, 15, or 17 of the **Public Liability Insurance Act, 1991**.
- **Returns** on investments made using the fund corpus.

3. Digital Integration:

- An **online portal** is introduced to manage the scheme and track fund utilization in real-time, ensuring transparency and accessibility.

4. Disbursement Process:

- Funds must be released **within 30 days** of receiving orders from the District Collector or the Central Government.

5. Investment Strategy:

- The fund will be invested in **public financial institutions** and **savings accounts** to maintain liquidity and facilitate reinvestment.

6. Environmental Restoration:

- **Restoration Plans:** CPCB and State Pollution Control Boards (SPCBs) will prepare environmental restoration plans for approval by the Central Government.
- **Allocation of Funds:** Based on the approved restoration plans, funds will be allocated to execute restoration projects.

7. Auditing:

- An **independent auditor** will be appointed by the Central Government.
- Oversight by the **Comptroller and Auditor-General (CAG)** ensures accountability and financial transparency.

8. Administrative Allocation:

- Administrative expenses have been **increased from 1% to 2%** of the fund corpus to support operational requirements.

Significance:

- **Strengthened Accountability:** By transferring fund management to CPCB, a specialized regulatory body, the scheme ensures better oversight.
- **Faster Implementation:** Digital integration and streamlined processes expedite fund disbursement and project execution.
- **Improved Environmental Outcomes:** Dedicated restoration plans and targeted funding enhance the effectiveness of environmental recovery initiatives.
- **Transparency:** Independent audits and CAG oversight ensure public trust and fiscal responsibility.