



VAJIRAM & RAVI
Institute for IAS Examination

The Analyst

CURRENT AFFAIRS Handout

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CONTEXT: Centre publishes Rules

Labour Codes	Acts being subsumed
Code on Wages, 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Payment of Wages Act, 1936; • Minimum Wages Act, 1948; • Payment of Bonus Act, 1965; and • Equal Remuneration Act, 1976
Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code, 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Factories Act, 1948; • Mines Act, 1952; • Dock Workers (Safety, Health and Welfare) Act, 1986; • Building and Other Construction Workers (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act, 1996; • Plantations Labour Act, 1951; • Contract Labour (Regulation and Abolition) Act, 1970; • Inter-State Migrant Workmen (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act, 1979; • Working Journalist and other Newspaper Employees (Conditions of Service and Miscellaneous Provision) Act, 1955; • Working Journalist (Fixation of Rates of Wages) Act, 1958; • Motor Transport Workers Act, 1961; • Sales Promotion Employees (Condition of Service) Act, 1976; • Beedi and Cigar Workers (Conditions of Employment) Act, 1966; and • Cine-Workers and Cinema Theatre Workers (Regulation of Employment) Act, 1981
Industrial Relations Code, 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trade Unions Act, 1926; • Industrial Employment (Standing Orders) Act, 1946, and • Industrial Disputes Act, 1947
Code on Social Security, 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employees' Provident Funds and Miscellaneous Provisions Act, 1952; • Employees' State Insurance Act, 1948; • Employees' Compensation Act, 1923; • Employment Exchanges (Compulsory Notification of Vacancies) Act, 1959; • Maternity Benefit Act, 1961; • Payment of Gratuity Act, 1972; • Cine-workers Welfare Fund Act, 1981; • Building and Other Construction Workers' Welfare Cess Act, 1996; and • Unorganised Workers Social Security Act, 2008



CONTEXT: Centre publishes Rules

Need

- Complexity and plethora of laws
- Poor enforcement
- Constrained growth of enterprises
 - administrative burden
 - Exit option
- Promotion of capital intensive industries
- Contractualization of labour
- Collective bargaining rights of workers
- Coverage

Code of Wages, 2019:

- **Universal Minimum Wages**
- **Introduction of Floor Wage**
- **Criteria for Wage Fixation**
 - skill levels, geographic areas, job conditions
- **Gender Equality in Employment**
- **Universal Coverage for Wage Payment**
 - timely payment
 - No un-authorized deductions
- **Overtime Compensation**
- **Inspector-cum-Facilitator**
- **Compounding of Offences**
- **Decriminalization of Offences**

Industrial Relations Code, 2020:

- **Fixed Term Employment (FTE)**
 - Direct, time-bound contracts
 - Gratuity eligibility
- **Re-skilling Fund**
 - To train retrenched
 - Contribution + retrenchment compensation
- **Trade Union Recognition**
 - 51% membership as Negotiating Union
 - Else a Negotiating Council
- **Expanded Worker Definition:** sales promotion staff, journalists, supervisors
- **Broader Definition of Industry:** all systematic employer-employee activities, regardless of profit or capital

- **Higher Threshold for Lay-off/Retrenchment/Closure**
- **Women's Representation**
- **WFH Provision**
- **Industrial Tribunals:** 2-member: judicial and administrative
- **Notice for Strikes/Lockouts**
- **Expanded Definition of Strike**
- **Decriminalization & Compounding**

Code on Social Security, 2020:

- **Expanded ESIC**
 - pan-India
 - <10 employees voluntarily
 - Mandatory for hazardous occupation
- **Time-bound EPF Inquiries**
 - 5-year limit for initiating EPF inquiries
 - recovery proceedings to be completed in 2(+1) years
- **Reduced EPF Appeal Deposit**
- **Self-assessment for Construction Cess**
- **Inclusion of Gig and Platform Workers**
 - Aggregators to contribute 1-2% of annual turnover
- **Social Security Fund:** to finance schemes for unorganised, gig, and platform workers
 - Compounding of offences
- **Expanded Definition of Dependents**
- **Uniform Definition of Wages**
 - "Wages" = basic pay, DA, retaining allowance
 - 50% of total remuneration added back to compute wages, for calculating gratuity, pension, social security benefits



CONTEXT: Centre publishes Rules

- **Commuting Accidents Covered**
- **Gratuity for Fixed-Term Employees**
- **Inspector-cum-Facilitator System**
- **Digitization of Compliance:** electronic maintenance of records, registers, returns
- **Vacancy Reporting:** to specified career centres before recruitment

Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code 2020 :

- **Unified Registration**
 - A uniform threshold
 - One registration
 - Centralised database
- **Extension to Hazardous Work**
- **Simplified Compliance:** One license, one registration, one return framework
- **Wider Definition of Migrant Workers**
 - directly, through contractors
 - Must declare number of ISMW
 - Benefits: Annual travel allowance, portability of PDS and social security
- **Formalization via appointment letters**
- **Women's Employment:** all types of establishments; night hours with consent and safety measures
- **National Database for Unorganised Workers**
- **Victim Compensation:** Courts can direct; 50% of fines imposed
- **Contract Labour Reform**
 - Applicability threshold from 20 to 50
 - No contract labour board
 - Wages
- **Safety Committees:** >500 workers; employer-worker representation
- **National Occupational Safety & Health Advisory Board:** Tripartite

- **Revised Factory Thresholds:** 10 to 20 workers (with power) and 20 to 40 workers (without power)
- **Social Security Fund**
- **Working Hours & Overtime**
- **Free Annual Health Checkups**

Labour Codes :

Concerns

- **Code on Industrial Relations 2020**
 - Permission for lay-offs
 - Sole negotiating union
 - Regulations on strikes and lockouts
 - Legalises FTE
- **Code on Wages 2019**
 - Floor Wage
 - Fixing minimum wage - Consumption patterns change
 - Inspectors-cum-facilitators
 - Calorie calculation (min wages): $1+.8+.6+.6 = 3$ should be $1+1+.75+.75 = 3.5$ adult consumption units
 - Relative importance of non-food items
- **Other Concerns**
 - Universal coverage remains a mirage
 - Negligible gains for social security
 - Standards not specified but appropriate govt authority to notify
 - Opposition from Trade Unions
 - Implementation Challenges
 - Coverage and Awareness
 - Passed without parliamentary debate



CONTEXT: Centre publishes Rules

Suggestions:

- Transparency: White Paper before Parliament detailing enforcement capacity, adjudication machinery, inspectorate staffing, state-wise rule-making progress
- Update Social security thresholds
- Address erosion of inspection powers
- No transfer of law-making to executive notifications
- Implementation
 - HR, Inspectors training, technology
 - Awareness Campaigns: trade unions, NGOs
 - Grievance redressal
- SMEs hand holding
 - transitional financial support
 - incentives for compliance
- Review Mechanism
 - Tripartite body
 - Responsive to evolving conditions, sectors, technology

time to time. The number of hours of work for a normal working day “for an employee whose wage period is on a daily basis” shall be eight hours. For other employees, the total number of weekly working hours shall not exceed 48 hours. The Rules mandate that every employer shall issue wage slips, electronically or in physical form to the employees.

Mains Practise Question:

Discuss the need for the 4 labour codes in India. Examine the major concerns associated with their implementation and suggest measures to ensure a balanced labour reform framework

cial said, adding that the amendments were minor.

Minimum wages

On the controversial subject of minimum wages, the Rules of the Code on Wages said the criteria shall be separately specified by the Union government by a special or general order, and the rate of wages for a day is fixed, and “such amount shall be divided by eight for fixing

the rate of wages for an hour and multiplied by twenty six for fixing the rate of wages for a month...”

For fixing the floor wage, the Union government, according to the Rules, may consult a Central Advisory Board, taking into account the minimum living standard, including food, clothing, housing, and any other factors considered appropriate by the

(Conditions of Service) Rules, 1997.

The Code on Industrial Relations says where there is only one registered trade union operating in an industrial establishment having its membership not less than 30% of the total workers employed in the industrial establishment, the employer of such industrial establishment shall recognise such trade union as the sole negotiating un-



CONTEXT: Hung assembly in Tamil Nadu

Governor's Role :

Role if hung Assembly

- Article 164
- **No fixed procedure**
 - Constitutional conventions
 - Primary objective: formation of a stable government
- **Sources of guidance:**
 - Sarkaria Commission (1988)
 - 5-member Committee of Governors appointed by President
 - Conventions through SC rulings
 - **Not** Personal bona fide or any ipse dixit (own say-so)
- **Legal duty**
 - Maintain constitutional machinery
 - **'Reasonable time'**: Not defined; cannot wait indefinitely – horse-trading
 - **Article 356**: Only as last resort
- **B.R. Kapur, 2001 & Rameshwar Prasad, 2006**
 - can dissolve Legislative Assembly under Article 174(2)(b) even before first meeting of State Legislature
 - To avoid breakdown of constitutional machinery due to parties' inability to stake claim

Order of preference to extend invitation

- **First option (Sarkaria + SC)**
 - pre-poll alliance which has majority
- **Second option**
 - single largest party that could demonstrate majority support
- **S.R. Bommai**
 - No obligation that political party forming govt must have majority in Assembly
 - Minority govts also but confidence of the House

- **Third option**
 - Post-poll alliance that can demonstrate majority
 - Coalition govts norm
- **Last resort: A-356**

Floor test objective means to prove majority

- TN Governor insistence on physical letters of support
 - Writ petition
- **Committee of Governors**: Test of confidence via vote in the Assembly
- **S.R. Bommai**
 - floor test for incumbent CM alleged to have lost majority support
 - Not for formation of new govt
- **SC**: Fate of electorate's mandate not left to personal discretion of Governor

Governor. Earlier Pronouncements :

- **Rameshwar Prasad v. Uoi, 2006**
 - Article 361
 - not answerable to any Court for exercise
 - But Court can examine validity – malafide
 - Whimsical conduct subject to JR
 - Not Individual opinion for A356
- **BP Singhal v. Uoi, 2010**
 - President power to remove a Governor without giving any reason/opportunity to be heard
 - Not arbitrarily or unreasonably – can be challenged



CONTEXT: Hung assembly in Tamil Nadu

- **Nabam Rebia & Felix v. Deputy Speaker, 2016**
 - not broad discretionary powers - Article 174
 - could not summon, determine legislative agenda or address - without consultation
- **NCT of Delhi v. Union of India, 2018**
 - constitutional morality imposes obligations, responsibilities on constitutional offices
- **Kaushal Kishor v. State of Uttar Pradesh, 2023**
 - Parliament's wisdom - legislation or code to restrain public functionaries from making disparaging or vitriolic remarks - Article 19(2)

Office of Governor :

Challenges

- Appointment - consultation, retirement avenue
- Misuse of A-356
- Appointment of CM if hung assembly
- Power to grant sanction against state govt officials
- Reservation of Bills
- Withholding Assent
- Removal of Governor

Governor Recommendations:

- **Rajamannar Committee**
 - Not agent of centre
 - Constitutional head of state

- **Sarkaria Commission**
 - Appointment
 - i. consult CM
 - ii. eminent person
 - iii. Detached figure
 - iv. Not member of ruling party
 - Removal
 - i. Rare & compelling
 - ii. Allow explanation, grounds
 - Article 356
 - i. Sparingly, as a last resort
 - ii. Internal subversion, physical breakdown, non-compliance with Constitu directives of UoI
- **Venkatachaliah Commission**
 - Appointment Committee - PM, HM, Speaker, CM
 - Removal only after consulting CM
- **2nd ARC**
 - Appoint non-partisan
 - Inter State Council guidelines for discretion
- **Punchhi Commission**
 - Not Chancellor of Uni
 - Amend A356 - specific troubled area not whole state
 - Impeachment by State Assembly

Mains Practise Question :

Analyze the role of the Governor in the context of a hung assembly.

Refer to the relevant Supreme Court judgments.



SYLLABUS : PRELIMS : Current Events of National and International Importance
Newspaper : Indian Express **Page Number : 5**

Chief of Defence Staff :

- Created in 2019
- Highest-ranking military officer in India
- Four-star military officer equivalent in rank to the Chief of Army Staff, Chief of Naval Staff, and Chief of Air Staff
- Appointments Committee of the Cabinet chaired by PM
- 12th in the Indian order of precedence

Need

- Single-Point Military Advice
- Jointness Among Armed Forces: separate operational and administrative structures with limited coordination in logistics, training, communication, and planning
- Weakness of Chiefs of Staff Committee: on a rotational system headed by senior most service chief - continuity, strategic direction
- Lessons from the Kargil War: gaps in intelligence sharing, operational coordination
- Need for Integrated Theatre Commands: Modern warfare; geography-based and task-based commands
- Civil-Military Communication Gap: Service HQs functioned as "Attached Offices" of MoD
- Defence Resource Management: Independent budget prioritisation by individual services
- Global Military Reforms: US, UK, China
- New Warfare Domains: cyber, space, electronic
- Integrated Defence Procurement
- Defence Reform Committees: Kargil Review Committee, Group of Ministers Report, Shekatkar Committee

Duties & Functions

- head Department of Military Affairs in MoD and function as its Secretary as Principal Military Advisor to Def Minister on all Tri-Service matters
- as the Permanent Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff Committee
- To administer the Tri-Service organizations/agencies/commands
- member of Defence Acquisition Council
- Military Advisor to the Nuclear Command Authority
- To bring about jointness in operation, logistics, transport, training, support services, communications, repairs and maintenance of the 3 Services
- To implement Five-Year Defence Capital Acquisition Plan and Two-Year roll-on Annual Acquisition Plans
- To assign inter-services prioritisation to capital acquisition proposals based on the anticipated budget
- reforms in the functioning of 3 Services to augment combat capabilities by reducing wasteful expenditure

Lieutenant General N S Raja Subramani closely describe him. The decorated officer is set to become India's third Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) at the end of this month, the Ministry of Defence said early Saturday.

In addition to his role as CDS, he will also lead the Department of Military Affairs as secretary in the Ministry of Defence. His ap-



Dragonfly, Damselfly



SYLLABUS : PRELIMS : General issues on Environmental ecology, Bio-diversity and Climate Change

Newspaper : The Hindu **Page Number** : 5

- Insects in the order Odonata
- Insects in this group: large multifaceted eyes, two pairs of wings, an elongated body
- Excellent vision as unique structure
 - Eyes up to 30,000 “facets”
 - almost 360-degree vision
 - Advantage when hunting
- Among the fastest insects known
 - predators of flying insects: mosquitoes, flies
- Predate dinosaurs by >100 million years
- Found near freshwater habitats

A recent study has revealed an “alarming gap” in biodiversity across the Western Ghats, with researchers able to document only about 65% of the dragonfly and damselfly species historically recorded in the region, pointing to a potential shortfall of nearly 35% of these ecologically critical insects.

The survey recorded 143 odonata species – 76 dragonflies and 67 damselflies – of which 40 were endemic to the Western Ghats.

Damselflies

- close relative of dragonfly
- smaller and more delicate than dragonflies
- when at rest, damselflies hold their wings straight up and together above their body while the wings of dragonflies remain horizontal while at rest

Three species – *Elatoneura souteri*, *Protosticta sanguinostigma*, and *Cyclogomphus ypsilon* – are currently classified as vulnerable, while most of the observed species fall under the “data deficient” and “not evaluated” categories on the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List of Threatened Species, indicating



Dragonfly, Damselfly



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The Western Ghats is a 1,600-km mountain chain along India's west coast and a globally recognised biodiversity hotspot. The survey team, headed by Professor Koparde, suggests the Odonata species are highly sensitive to environmental changes as they depend on freshwater ecosystems for reproduction, and are widely regarded as "indicator taxa," meaning their presence, or absence,

The study claimed there are multiple threats across the Western Ghats, including linear infrastructure development, hydropower projects, severe pollution, large-scale land-use changes, unregulated tourism, recurring forest fires, and growing impact of climate change which is further fragmenting and degrading these ecosystems.

The presence of 22 species listed under "data deficient" category suggests the need for extensive surveys across the Western Ghats to uncover the status and distribution of many lesser known species.



SYLLABUS : PRELIMS: Economic and Social Development
Newspaper : The Hindu **Page Number : 12**

• Natural Rubber

- Polymer of Isoprene
- native of the Amazon basin
- introduced in Asia in 19th century
- equatorial crop - also in tropical and subtropical
- Harvested from the latex
- High tensile strength, vibration damping

Growing Conditions

- **Humidity** - 80%
- **Rainfall** - >200 cm
- **Sunshine** - 2000 hours
- **Soil** - Well-drained loamy - lateritic, alluvial, sedimentary
- **Temperature** - > 25°C
- **Elevations** - 300 to 450 meters above sea level on hill slopes - Yields decline at higher elevations as lower temperatures and less mature soils

The United Planters' Association of Southern India (UPASI) has urged the government to maintain status quo on the import duty on natural rubber as a section of the rubber user industry has sought reduction of the import duty on key inputs and raw materials.

Ajoy Thipaiah, the association's president, said in a statement that the rubber plantation sector sustains nearly 13.2 lakh growers and provides employment to about 4.2 lakh workers.

India presently has about 9.4 lakh hectares under natural rubber cultivation and the production in

Major Producers

• World

- Thailand
- Indonesia
- Malaysia

• India

- 3rd producer, 4th consumer, 90% smallholdings
- Kerala - 90%
- Tamil Nadu
- Karnataka

FY26 is estimated at approximately nine lakh tonnes.

The domestic rubber prices have shown a "modest upward trend" in recent months due to geopolitical developments and production shortages both globally and domestically.

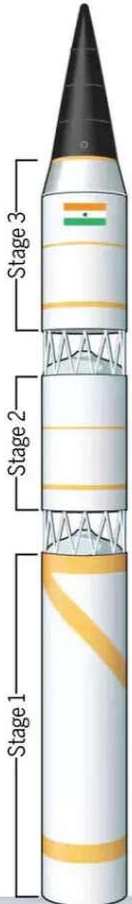
However, Indian rubber prices remained subdued in comparison with international prices over the last two years. The prices of major inputs such as fertilisers, plant protection chemicals, and skilled labour have increased at 8-12% over the past decade.



Agni Missile with MIRV



SYLLABUS : GS3 Paper : Defence
Newspaper : Indian Express Page Number : 5



DRDO tests Agni-5 missile with MIRV tech

- Operational range: **5,000km**
- Height: **17m**

What is MIRV tech?

- MIRV stands for Multiple Independently targetable Re-entry Vehicles
- This technology allows a single missile to carry multiple warheads, each capable of being aimed at a different target.

India joins select group of nations

- Only the US, UK, Russia, France and China have MIRV technology
- Development and deployment of MIRV tech is a closely guarded subject

5 missiles developed under IGMDP

- Prithvi**: Short range surface to surface ballistic missile
- Trishul**: Short range low level surface to air missile
- Nag**: Anti-tank guided missile
- Akash**: Medium range surface to air missile
- Agni**: Surface to surface ballistic missiles with different ranges

- Agni-I**: 700-800 Km
- Agni-II**: 2000 Km
- Agni-III**: 3000 Km
- Agni-IV**: 4000 Km
- Agni-V**: 5000 Km

- The Agni-V is an intercontinental range ballistic missile with three solid fuel stages.

What is MIRV technology?

MIRV enables single missiles to target multiple locations hundreds of kilometers apart

Agni missile: carries nuclear warheads, range over 5,000 km, aimed at countering China

Known countries with MIRV-equipped missiles include US, Russia, China, France, and UK

MIRV-equipped missiles can be launched from land or sea, including from submarines

Source: Center for Arms Control and Non-proliferation



Each re-entry vehicle can be independently targeted— they are all launched from one missile, but hit different targets



India's First Orbital Data Centre Satellite



SYLLABUS : GS3 Paper : Current Events of National and International Importance

Newspaper : The Hindu **Page Number** : 14

What is an orbital data centre?

- **Constellation of satellites:** same kind of GPUs as in terrestrial data centres
- **In-orbit AI capability:** Can train and run AI models in orbit rather than only relaying data to ground stations
- Edge computing = running computation close to data generation (not centralized cloud)
- **Pixxel's Pathfinder**
 - Single-satellite demonstrator
 - Designed to test whether ground-grade hardware can function reliably in harsh, hot environment of low Earth orbit

Why are global firms interested?

- **Constraints on terrestrial data centres:**
 - Limits on energy availability
 - Limits on land, water
 - Local regulation constraints
 - All amplified by demands of AI
- **Solar power advantage:**
 - In right orbit, solar power is effectively continuous
 - Offers free electricity
- **Earth observation data bottleneck:**
 - Earth observation satellites generate detailed, heavy image files
 - Expensive to downlink
 - Processing data in orbit and beaming down only conclusions
- **Competitive positioning:**
 - Elon Musk (SpaceX)
 - Jeff Bezos' Blue Origin
 - Microsoft's Azure Space

What are the challenges?

- **Heat management (vacuum eliminates convection):**
 - GPU chips powered by electricity from solar panels become hot
 - Space may be cold, vacuum eliminates convection
 - No air to carry heat off
 - **Only solution:** Radiation
 - heat to be pumped through ammonia-filled loops to deployable panels
 - Heat radiated as infrared light into space
- **Radiation damage:**
 - **'Bit flips':** Bits and bytes of computers randomly change due to cosmic rays
 - **Long-term semiconductor degradation** caused by cosmic rays
 - **Radiation-hardened chips** – typically lag commercial GPUs by years
- **Power storage:**
 - for eclipse periods
- **Maintenance impossibility:**
 - Only robotic servicing
 - Redundancy must be designed



Q1. Regarding the Orbital Data Centre, consider the following statements:

1. It consists of a constellation of satellites equipped with computing hardware similar to terrestrial data centres.
2. In-orbit AI capability enables satellites to train and run AI models directly in space.
3. Edge computing refers to centralised cloud-based computation performed only at ground stations.

How many of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a) Only One
- b) Only Two
- c) All Three
- d) None

Answer: b

Q2. Regarding natural rubber, consider the following statements:

1. Natural rubber is a polymer of isoprene obtained from latex.
2. It is native to the Congo Basin of Africa.
3. Rubber cultivation requires high humidity and annual rainfall exceeding 200 cm.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- a) 1 and 3 only
- b) 1 and 2 only
- c) 2 and 3 only
- d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: a

Q3. With reference to the Damselflies, consider the following statements:

1. Damselflies are closely related to dragonflies.
2. Damselflies are generally smaller and more delicate than dragonflies.
3. When at rest, damselflies hold their wings horizontally, whereas dragonflies keep their wings folded together above the body.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a) 1 and 2 only
- b) 3 only
- c) 1 and 3 only
- d) All of the above

Answer: a

Q4. Which of the following statements regarding the MIRV Technology, recently seen in the news, is not correct?

- a) It has an operational range of up to 5000 kilometres.
- b) It allows a single missile to carry multiple warheads.
- c) Only the USA, UK, Russia & China, besides India, have MIRV technology.
- d) Each re-entry vehicle can be independently targeted.

Answer: c

Q5. Consider the following statements regarding the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS):

1. The post of CDS was created in 2019.
2. The CDS is the highest-ranking military officer in India.
3. The appointment of the CDS is made by the Appointments Committee of the Cabinet, chaired by the Prime Minister.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a) 1 and 2 only
- b) 3 only
- c) 1 and 3 only
- d) All of the above

Answer: d





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