

**08– 10 – 2022**

**News:** Govt. may lift AFSPA in 4 States after Naga peace pact

- The uncertainty around the culmination of the Naga peace process is one of the reasons that led to the Armed Forces (Special) Powers Act (AFSPA) being retained in some parts of Assam, Manipur, Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh for another six months, according to government officials.
- Effective April 1, the Union Home Ministry and the State governments had considerably reduced “disturbed areas” in Assam, Manipur and Nagaland.
- The AFSPA was applicable in whole of Nagaland and Assam till March 31.

## **Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA)**

- Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) was enacted in **1958**, granting **extra-ordinary powers and immunity to the armed forces to bring back order in the disturbed areas.**
- A disturbed area is one which is declared by notification **under Section 3 of the AFSPA.** An area can be **disturbed due to differences or disputes between members of different religious, racial, language or regional groups or castes or communities.**

- Once a region is declared ‘**disturbed**’ then it has to **maintain the status quo for a minimum of three months**, as per The Disturbed Areas Act of 1976.
- The **state governments can suggest** whether the Act is required to be enforced or not. But under Section (3) of the act, their **opinion can be overruled** by the governor or the Centre.
- Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) is the authority that would decide on the imposition of AFSPA in the Union Territories of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) and Ladakh.
- Initially when the act came into force in 1958 the power to confer AFSPA was given only to the governor of the state. This **power was conferred on the central government with the amendment in 1978** (Tripura was declared a disturbed area by the central government, over the opposition by the state government).
- The act **does not explicitly explain the circumstances on which it can be declared as ‘disturbed area’**. It only states that “the AFSPA only requires that such authority be of the opinion that whole or parts of the area are in a dangerous or disturbed condition such that the use of the Armed Forces in aid of civil powers is necessary.
- The **Central Government, or the Governor of the State or administrator of the Union Territory can declare the whole or part** of the State or Union Territory as a disturbed area. A suitable notification would have to be made in the Official

Gazette. As per Section 3, it can be invoked in places where “**the use of armed forces in aid of the civil power is necessary**”.

Some of the Immunities / Powers include:

- **Fire upon anyone** after giving warning who is acting against law and order in disturbed areas.
- **Arrest anyone** without warrant.
- **Stop and search** any vehicle or vessel.
- **Legal immunity** for these actions.
- Presently, AFSPA is enforced in Area **under 8 police stations of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur (excluding 7 assembly constituencies of Imphal), Mizoram, Entire state of Nagaland and Jammu and Kashmir.**

**News:** MGNREGS to fund work to reverse desertification of land across the States

- With limited funds to deal with the gargantuan task of restoring degraded land and reversing desertification in the country, the government is now planning to bring convergence between the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) and the Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana (PMKSY).
- According to the Desertification and Land Degradation Atlas published by the Environment Ministry in 2021, at least 30% of India's total geographical area is under the category of "degraded land".

## **Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act Scheme (MGNREGS)**

- Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) of 2005 was enacted to give form to the **Article 41** of Indian Constitution. Article 41 of Directive Principles of the State Policy states that **State should strive to secure the right to work and to public assistance in cases of unemployment.**
- Mahatma Gandhi Employment Guarantee Act 2005 is an Indian labor law and social security measure that aims to guarantee the 'right to work'. This act was passed in September 2005.

- It aims to enhance livelihood security in rural areas by providing at least 100 days of wage employment in a financial year to every household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work.
- Any rural household willing to do manual work is eligible under the Act.
- NREGA was scoped up to cover all the districts of India from 1 April 2008. The statute is hailed by the government as "the largest and most ambitious social security and public works program in the world". In its World Development Report 2014, the World Bank termed it a "stellar example of rural development".
- Recently, Central government updated that; MGNREGA will be updated with inflation index CPI- Rural, instead of older CPI- Agricultural Labourers. The base wage will be set as previous year's national daily wages (179 in Rural).
- The revised wages are applicable from 1<sup>st</sup> April ever year.
- CPI–Rural (CPIR) calculation involves more non-food items such as healthcare and education compared to CPI–Agricultural Labourers (CPI-AL) involves more food items in consumption market.
- The Union Ministry of Rural Development's rules on Social Audit of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) state that the State Government shall facilitate conduct of social audit of the works taken up

under the Act in every Gram Panchayat **at least once in six months** in the manner prescribed under these rules.

- Social audit is an accounting tool which **measures, evaluates, identifies gaps in service delivery and elicits promises to rectify these gaps with the direct participation of intended beneficiaries**. In its essence, it empowers citizens to **gauge the effectiveness of a scheme by looking at its overall impact**. A realisation of what one is entitled to by law and the empowerment that comes along with demanding this rightful entitlement is a by-product of a social audit.
- **A summary of findings of such social audits conducted during a financial year shall be submitted by the State Government to the Comptroller and Auditor General of India**. A Social Audit Unit will be set up by the State Government to facilitate conduct of social audit by Gram Sabha.
- In 2017, **Meghalaya became the first State to pass and roll out a social audit law to cover all departments**.
- **Employment is to be provided within 5 km of an applicant's residence, and minimum wages are to be paid. If work is not provided within 15 days of applying, applicants are entitled to an unemployment allowance**. That is, if the government fails to provide employment, it has to provide certain unemployment allowances to those people. **Thus, employment under MGNREGA is a legal entitlement**.

- MGNREGA is to be **implemented mainly by gram panchayats (GPs)**. The **involvement of contractors is banned**.
- Apart from providing economic security and creating rural assets, NREGA can help in protecting the environment, empowering rural women, reducing rural-urban migration and fostering social equity, among others.
- Priority shall be given to women in such a way that at **least one-third of the beneficiaries shall be women** who have registered and requested for work under this Act.
- **More than 50% of workforce under MGNREGA is women**, says the Economic Survey. For the past 4 years since 2017 – 18, women are the majority beneficiaries of MGNREGA, although the percentage of women in MGNREGA has decline from 54.5 in 2019–20 to 52.4 in 2020–21.

## **Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana (PMKSY)**

- Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana (PMKSY) is a **Centrally Sponsored Scheme** (Core Scheme) launched in 2015. **Centre- States will be 75:25 per cent**. **In the case of the north-eastern region and hilly states, it will be 90:10**.
- The **Department of Agriculture Cooperation and Farmers' Welfare is implementing** the "Per Drop More Crop" component of PMKSY-PDMC.

- The scheme also aims at restoring the lost irrigation potential by improvement and restoration of existing water bodies.
- PMKSY is to be implemented in an area development approach, adopting decentralized state-level planning and project execution, allowing the states to draw their irrigation development plans based on district/blocks plans with a horizon of 5 to 7 years. States can take up projects based on the District/State Irrigation Plan.
- Micro Irrigation Fund corpus of Rs. 5000 crore has been created with NABARD.
- The objective of the fund is to facilitate the states in mobilizing the resources for expanding coverage of Micro Irrigation by taking up special and innovative projects and also for incentivising micro irrigation beyond the provisions available under PMKSY-PDMC to encourage farmers to install micro irrigation systems.
- The Government provides financial assistance @ 55% for small and marginal farmers and @ 45% for other farmers for installation of Drip and Sprinkler Irrigation systems.
- In addition, some States provide additional incentives/top up subsidy for encouraging farmers to adopt Micro Irrigation.



- The Long-Term Irrigation Fund (LTIF) was instituted under NABARD in 2016-17.
- Under LTIF, NABARD provides loan towards the central share, as well as, the state share with a tenor of 15 years.
- The central share is provided to National Water Development Agency (NWDA), whereas the loan towards the state share is availed by the State Governments.
- The corpus for the LTIF mainly comes from two sources- Budgetary allocations from the Central Government and market borrowings from NABARD. To borrow from the market, NABARD would issue bonds and the Central Government gives guarantee on repayment of such bonds.

## Objectives

- Convergence of investments in irrigation at the field level.
- To expand the cultivable area under assured irrigation (Har Khet Ko Pani).
- To improve on-farm water use efficiency to reduce wastage of water.
- To enhance the adoption of precision-irrigation and other water saving technologies (More crop per drop).
- To enhance recharge of aquifers and introduce sustainable water conservation practices by exploring the feasibility of reusing treated municipal based water

for peri-urban agriculture and attract greater private investment in a precision irrigation system. Peri-urban agriculture refers to farm units close to town which operate intensive semi- or fully commercial farms to grow vegetables and other horticulture, raise chickens and other livestock, and produce milk and eggs.

- It is formulated by amalgamating ongoing schemes:
- Accelerated Irrigation Benefit Programme (AIBP) -Ministry of Water Resources, River Development & Ganga Rejuvenation.
- Integrated Watershed Management Programme (IWMP) - Department of Land Resources, Ministry of Rural Development.
- On-Farm Water Management (OFWM) - Department of Agriculture and Cooperation (DAC).
- Implementation - Decentralized implementation through State Irrigation Plan and District Irrigation Plan.

# United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)

- United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) is a **legally binding environment convention that links development and environment to sustainable land management established in 1994.**
- UNCCD has its secretariat in **Bonn, Germany.**
- The UNCCD addresses particularly the arid, semi-arid & dry sub-humid areas, called drylands, where some of the most vulnerable ecosystems and peoples are found.
- Aim of UNCCD is to **combat desertification and mitigate the effects of drought through national action programs** that incorporate long-term strategies supported by international cooperation and partnership arrangements.
- Desertification is a type of land degradation in dry lands in which biological productivity is lost due to natural processes or induced by human activities whereby fertile areas become increasingly more arid.
- It is the spread of arid areas caused by a variety of factors, such as through climate change (particularly the current global warming) and through the overexploitation of soil through human activity.)

- To help publicize the Convention, 2006 was declared "**International Year of Deserts and Desertification**".
- CoP to the UNCCD was done once in every years from 1997-2001. Now it's done **once in every 2 years**.
- CoP 14 was held between 02/09/2019 and 13/09/2019 at New Delhi which led to the adoption of New Delhi declaration.
- CoP 15 was held on 2022 at Cote d'Ivoire (Western Africa) with the theme: "**Land. Life. Legacy: From scarcity to prosperity**".
- **Global Land Outlook** (GLO) is published by UNCCD. The **first edition of GLO was published at CoP 14 (New Delhi)**. The Global Land Outlook (GLO), the UNCCD flagship publication, underscores land system challenges, showcases transformative policies and practices, and points to cost-effective pathways to scale up sustainable land and water management.

### **Cop 14 to UNCCD: New Delhi**

- Theme of the CoP was "Restore land, Sustain future".
- **New Delhi declaration:** Commitment for a range of issues, including gender and health, ecosystem restoration, taking action on climate change, private sector engagement, Peace Forest Initiative and recovery of five million hectares of degraded land in India.

## Bonn Challenge

- Bonn Challenge is a global effort to bring 150 million hectares of the world's deforested and degraded land into restoration by 2020, and 350 million hectares by 2030.
- It was launched in 2011 by the government of Germany and IUCN.
- It was later extended by New York Declaration on Forests at the 2014 UN Climate Summit.