

**13– 08 – 2024**

**News: Maternity Leave and Surrogacy**

- Recently, the Government has notified an amendment to Central Civil Services (Leave) Rules, 1972 to grant maternity leave and other benefits to government employees in case of children born through surrogacy.

**Central Civil Services (Leave) Rules, 1972**

- This move aims to address the existing gap in the leave policies for government employees who opt for surrogacy.

**New Provisions under the Rule**

- **Maternity Leave for Surrogate and Commissioning Mothers:** It allows women government employees who have children through surrogacy to avail 180 days of maternity leave.
- This includes both the surrogate mother and the commissioning mother (the intended mother) with less than two surviving children.
- **Paternity Leave for Commissioning Fathers:** The new rules also grant 15 days of paternity leave to the "commissioning father" (the intended father) who is a male government servant with less than two surviving children.

- This leave can be availed within 6 months from the date of delivery of the child.

### **Child Care Leave for Commissioning Mothers**

- Additionally, the commissioning mother with less than two surviving children is eligible for childcare leave, as per the existing provisions in the Central Civil Services (Leave) Rules.

## **Surrogacy**

- Surrogacy is a practice where a woman gives birth to a child for an intended couple with the intention to hand it over to them after the birth.
- It is permitted only for altruistic purposes or for couples who suffer from proven infertility or disease.
- Surrogacy is prohibited for commercial purposes such as sale, prostitution or any other forms of exploitation.
- A child born through surrogacy will be deemed to be the biological child of the couple.
- Abortion of such a fetus is allowed only with the consent of the surrogate mother and the authorities as per provisions of the Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act 2021.

## **Criteria**

- To avail of surrogacy, a couple should be married for at least 5 years, with the wife aged between 25-50 and the husband between 26-55.
- They should not have any living child unless the child has disabilities or a life-threatening illness.
- The couple must also have certificates of eligibility and essentiality, proving infertility and a court order for parentage and custody of the surrogate child. Additionally, the intended couple must provide insurance coverage for the surrogate mother for 16 months.

## **Criteria for Surrogate Mother**

- She must be a close relative of the couple, a married woman with her own child, aged 25-35, and have only been a surrogate once.
- She also needs a certificate of medical and psychological fitness for surrogacy.

## **Regulation**

- The National Surrogacy Board and State Surrogacy Boards are responsible for regulating surrogacy clinics and enforcing standards.
- The Act prohibits practices like commercial surrogacy, embryo selling, and exploitation or abandonment of surrogate mothers or children.

- Violations can lead to imprisonment for up to 10 years and a fine of Rs. 10 lakh.

### **News:** Pink Flamingos

- Recently, climate change has altered water levels and salinity at Tanzania's Lake Natron, home to many pink flamingos, making nesting more difficult and causing their population to decline due to extreme weather and human encroachment.

## **Pink Flamingos**

- Pink Flamingos belongs to the family Phoenicopteridae.
- There are six species of flamingo namely the Greater flamingo (state bird of Gujarat), Chilean flamingo, Lesser flamingo, Caribbean flamingo, Andean flamingo, and Puna flamingo that inhabit lakes, mudflats, and shallow lagoons in the Americas, Africa, Asia, and Europe.
- Known for their vibrant pink feathers, flamingos have long legs and necks, webbed feet, and a distinctive downward-curving bill adapted for filter-feeding.
- Flamingos' habitats and food sources change by location and season, causing their colors to range from dark or bright pink to orange, red, or pure white.

- Flamingos have adapted to extreme environments with high salinity and temperatures, where their predators are limited.
- **Ecological Role:** They play a crucial ecological role by maintaining the health of their habitats through their feeding activities, which affect nutrient cycling and algae populations.

## Conservation Status

### IUCN Red List

- Vulnerable: Andean flamingo
- Near Threatened: Lesser flamingo, Puna flamingo, and Chilean flamingo
- CITES: Appendix II
- Wildlife Protection Act, 1972: Schedule II

## Lake Natron

- Lake Natron is a salt lake located on the border between Tanzania and Kenya, part of the eastern branch of the Rift Valley.
- The Great Rift Valley is a massive geological formation that stretches around 6,400 kilometers from northern Syria to central Mozambique in East Africa.

- The valley is home to the Jordan River, which flows through the Jordan Valley and eventually empties into the Dead Sea on the border between Israel and Jordan.
- Lake Natron Basin was included in the Ramsar List in 2001, recognizing Lake Natron as an internationally significant wetland under Article 2 of the Ramsar Convention.
- It has a unique composition of warm waters and salt, caustic soda, and magnesite deposits.
- Lake Natron's alkaline waters support a thriving ecosystem of salt marshes, freshwater wetlands, flamingos and other wetland birds, tilapia and the algae on which large flocks of flamingos feed.

