

# KSG:NEWSPAPER CRUX

20<sup>TH</sup> MARCH, 2021

## NEWSPAPER HIGHLIGHTS

- The Supreme Court on prima facie found no harm in State Legislative Assemblies, such as those in Kerala and West Bengal, passing resolutions against Central laws like the controversial Citizenship Amendment Act or the new agriculture laws. A Bench, led by Chief Justice Sharad A. Bobde, said these resolutions are merely “opinions” of the majority members of a Legislative Assembly and do not have the force of law.
- The Supreme Court decided to examine a plea to terminate the lease deed concerning the Mullaperiyar dam, originally signed between the Maharaja of Travancore and the British Secretary of State for India in Council for ‘Periyar Project’ in 1886.
- Union Minister of State for Agriculture Parshottam Rupala, in the Rajya Sabha on Friday, questioned the methodology and data accuracy of the Global Hunger Index (GHI) report, which has placed India at 94th among 107 countries in 2020. The Minister said the government had written to the NGO, Welthungerhilfe, which compiles the report, expressing concerns about their methodology, data accuracy and sample size and was yet to hear from them.
- The Centre asked the Delhi High Court to restrain WhatsApp from implementing its new privacy policy, which is likely to take effect on May 15. The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY), in an affidavit, said the policy was not in tune with the IT (Intermediary Guidelines) Rules, 2011.
- United States Secretary of Defence General (Retd.) Lloyd J. Austin met Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the start of a three-day visit to India, the first such outreach by the new U.S. administration less than two months after President Biden assumed office.

## EASTREN RAJASTHAN CANAL PROJECT

1. The Chief Minister of Rajasthan has demanded the national project status for the Eastern Rajasthan Canal Project (ERCP).
2. About the Eastern Rajasthan Canal Project: **It aims to harvest surplus water available during rainy season in rivers in Southern Rajasthan such as Chambal and its tributaries**, including Kunnu, Parvati, Kalisindh, and use this water in south-eastern districts of the state, where there is scarcity of water for drinking and irrigation.
3. It proposes to provide drinking water to 13 districts of Rajasthan and provide irrigation water for 2.8 lakh hectares of land through 26 different large and medium projects.
4. 13 districts: Jhalawar, Baran, Kota, Bundi, Sawai Madhopur, Ajmer, Tonk, Jaipur, Karauli, Alwar, Bharatpur, Dausa and Dholpur.

## VEHICLES SCRAPPING POLICY

1. The Union Road and Transport Minister announced the Vehicle Scrapping Policy in the Lok Sabha. It was first announced in the Union Budget for 2021-22.
2. The policy is estimated to cover 51 lakh Light Motor Vehicles (LMVs) that are above 20 years of age and another 34 lakh LMVs above 15 years of age.
3. Aim: **Reducing the population of old and defective vehicles**, bringing down vehicular air pollutants, improving road and vehicular safety.
4. Fitness Test: Old vehicles will have to pass a **fitness test before re-registration** and as per the policy government commercial vehicles more than 15 years old and private vehicles which are over 20 years old will be scrapped.

## MMDR AMENDMENT BILL, 2021

1. The Coal and Mines Minister introduced the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) (MMDR) Amendment Bill, 2021 in Lok Sabha. The Bill seeks to amend the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957 which regulates the mining sector in India.
2. Removal of restriction on end-use of minerals: The Act empowers the central government to reserve any mine (other than coal, lignite, and atomic minerals) to be leased through an auction for a particular end-use (such as iron ore mine for a steel plant). Such mines are **known as captive mines**.
3. Sale of minerals by captive mines: The Bill provides that captive mines (other than atomic minerals) may sell up to 50% of their annual mineral production in the open market after meeting their own needs.
4. Allocation of mines with expired leases: The Bill adds that mines whose lease has expired, may be allocated to a government company in certain cases.

## LAKE BAIKAL

1. Russia has **deployed underwater telescope, named Baikal-GVD in Lake Baikal. The telescope is designed to search for neutrinos, which are nearly massless subatomic particles with no electrical charge.** Neutrinos are everywhere, but they interact so weakly with the forces around them that they are hugely challenging to detect.
2. Lake Baikal is **situated in South-east Siberia**, and is the oldest (25 million years) and deepest (1,700 m) lake in the world.
3. It contains 20% of the world’s total unfrozen freshwater reserve. Known as the ‘Galapagos of Russia’.
4. It is a UNESCO World Heritage Site.