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Chanakya Weekly Current Affairs & Newspaper Analysis
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SECTION 69A OF IT ACT

Context :

- Recently Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology (MeitY) issued orders under Section 69 (A) of the Information Technology Act, 2000 to take down certain posts from Twitter .
- Twitter has moved to Karnataka High Court, claiming that many of the blocking orders are procedurally and substantively deficient under Section 69 (A) of the Act.

About Section 69A

- The Section 69A of the IT Act was introduced by an amendment to the Act in 2008.
- Powers: It allows the government to block public access to any intermediary in the interest of
 - Sovereignty and integrity of India
 - Defence of India
 - Security of the state
 - Friendly relations with the foreign States or
 - Public order or
 - Preventing incitement of any cognisable offence relative to the above.
- Intermediaries: The intermediaries under the Act include; telecommunication companies, internet service providers, network operators, web-hosting services, search engines, payment gateways and other relevant portals and services.
- Procedure: Section 69A provides the government with the power to block public access. But the procedure to do that is listed in the IT (Procedure and Safeguards for Blocking of Access of Information by Public) Rules, 2009.
- Penal Provisions: The Act says prescribes punishment for any intermediary (internet platform) for failure to comply with the government direction. Punishment can be imprisonment for up to seven years and shall also be liable to fine.

Article 19(1)(A) and section 69 A :

The mentioned legislations are to be read under the purview of Article 19 of the Indian Constitution guaranteeing freedom of speech and expression. However, Article 19(2) permits the State to impose 'reasonable restrictions' for the same reasons as those for Section 69A.

Issue with twitter

- According to the Ministry twitter has failed to comply with Section 69 (A) of the IT Act on multiple occasion.
- Twitter submitted a list of over 80 accounts and tweets that it had blocked based on a request from the government in 2021.
- Twitter claims that the basis on which multiple accounts and posts have been flagged by the Ministry are either "overbroad and arbitrary" or "disproportionate".
- According to Twitter, some of the content flagged by the ministry may pertain to official accounts of political parties, blocking which could be violative of the Right to Free Speech.

DIRECT-SEEDED RICE : A WATER SAVING METHOD

Context :

- Recently according to a report Direct-seeded rice method failed in Punjab as only 77,000 hectares (ha) was brought under direct-seeded rice (DSR), way below the 1.2 million ha (mha) target.

About Direct-seeded Rice method :

- Direct Seeded Rice(DSR), also known as the 'broadcasting seed technique,' is a water-saving method of sowing paddy.
- It refers to the process of establishing a rice crop from seeds sown in the field rather than by transplanting seedlings from the nursery.
- It has been recognized as the principal method of rice establishment since the 1950's in developing countries.
- Direct seeding can be done by sowing pre-germinated seed into a puddled soil (wet seeding) or standing water (water seeding) or prepared seedbed (dry seeding).

Advantage:

- Saving in water up to 25% in DSR
- Saving in energy up to 27% of diesel as pumping energy is saved for field preparation, nursery raising, puddling and reduced frequency of applying irrigation water
- Saving of labour -35 to 40 man days / ha
- Enhanced fertilizer use efficiency due to placement of fertilizer in the root zone
- Early maturity of crops by 7-10 days helps in timely sowing of succeeding crops
- Reduction in methane emissions and global warming potential

Constraints

- Emerging weeds are more competitive as compared to the simultaneously emerging DSR seedlings.
- The practice of direct seeding on large scale increased herbicide use for weed control in rice, which slowly resulted in the appearance of resistance in weeds against certain herbicides.
- Increase in soil-borne pathogens such as nematodes
- Higher emissions of nitrous oxide

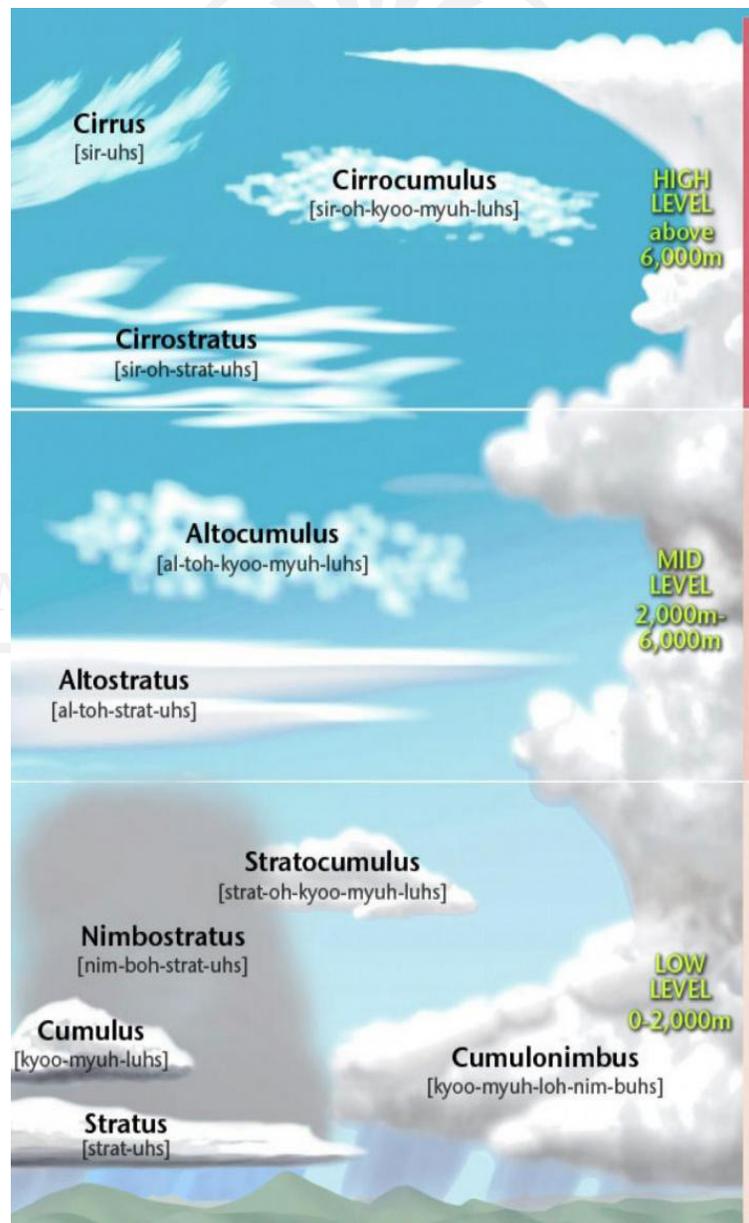
FLASH FLOODS IN AMARNATH

Context :

- Recently, there was a cloudburst near the holy cave shrine of Amarnath in south Kashmir Himalayas which triggered flash floods damaging the property and also killed several people.
- Amarnath yatra which began on June 30 has been temporarily suspended in view of the tragedy.
- The annual 43-day Amarnath yatra commenced from the twin base camps Nunwan-Pahalgam in south Kashmir's Anantnag and 14-km shorter Baltal in central Kashmir's Ganderbal.

Cloudburst

- **A cloudburst is a sudden aggressive rainstorm** falling for a short period of time, limited to a small geographical area.
- It usually **occurs in high-altitude areas** due to the formation of a **low-pressure area** on the top of a mountain.
- The low-pressure zone attracts clouds to the top of the mountain with great force. When they hit the peak, the **moisture content is released in the form of rain**.
- It can occur during heavy rainfall with **size droplets 4-6 millimetres** falling at a **speed of 10 metres per second**.
- **Cloudbursts are associated with thunderstorms** and the air currents rushing upwards in a rainstorm hold up a large amount of water.
- If these currents suddenly cease, the **entire amount of water descends** onto a small area with **catastrophic force all of a sudden and causes mass destruction**. This is due to a rapid condensation of the clouds.



Flash flood

- Flash Floods are highly localised events of short duration with a very high peak and usually have less than six hours between the occurrence of the rainfall and peak flood.
- The flood situation worsens in the presence of choked drainage lines or encroachments obstructing the natural flow of water.
- Flash floods have a different character than river floods, notably short time scales and occurring in small spatial scales, which make forecasting of flash floods quite a different challenge than traditional flood forecasting approaches.

Kashmir Himalayas

- Between the Indus and the Satluj rivers [560 km long].
- All the major rivers of Indus river system flow through Punjab Himalayas.
- Karakoram, Ladakh, Pir Panjal, Zaskar and Dhaola Dhar are the major ranges in this section.
- The general elevation falls westwards.

Impacts of such disasters :

- **Death or Serious Injury**
 - The very nature of flash floods makes them fast and very difficult to predict.
 - Since they can occur without warning, it is no surprise that people can be seriously injured or killed by these natural disasters.
- **Immediate Property Damage**
 - In addition to the force of the water, flash floods can carry large debris such as boulders. This combination can cause heavy structural damage to homes making them uninhabitable and can carry away large pieces of property such as vehicles.
- **Loss of Critical Infrastructure**
 - Large debris and flood waters can cause structural damage to bridges and roadways, making travel impossible.
 - Power, telephone, and cable lines can be taken out by flash floods as well.
 - Flood waters can disrupt or contaminate groundwater, making tap water unfit for consumption.
- **Deposited Sediment & Silt**
 - Floods can leave behind large amounts of silt and other debris that can make travel difficult and can be costly to remove.
- **Uninsured or Under-insured Homeowners**
 - Being infrequent and unpredictable, many homeowners do not consider flash floods when insuring their homes.
- **Economic Losses**
 - Depending on the damage caused, it may prevent local businesses from opening or keep customers from getting to those businesses.

Steps taken in this direction

● **Flash Flood Guidance Services**

- It is a robust system designed by the India Meteorological Department (IMD) to provide the necessary products in real-time to support the development of warnings for flash floods about 6-12 hours in advance at the watershed level for the flash flood-prone South Asian countries viz. India, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka.

● **South Asian Flash Flood Guidance System (FFGS)**

- The India Meteorological Department (IMD) launched the South Asian FFGS.
- It is aimed at helping disaster management teams.
- Helps governments make timely evacuation plans ahead of the actual event of flooding.

SEPTIC EMBOLI

- Septic emboli are bacteria containing blood clots that have broken free of their source and traveled through the bloodstream until getting lodged in and blocking a blood vessel.

Septic emboli represent a two-pronged attack on your body:

- They completely block or partially reduce blood flow.
- The blockage includes an infectious agent.

Causes of septic emboli

- Septic emboli typically originate in a heart valve. An infected heart valve can yield a small blood clot that can travel almost anywhere in the body. If it travels to the brain and blocks a blood vessel, it's called a stroke. If the clot is infected (septic emboli), it's classified as a septic stroke.

Along with heart valve infection, common causes of septic emboli include:

- Infected deep vein thrombosis (DVT)
- Endocarditis
- Infected intravenous (IV) line
- Implanted devices or catheters
- Skin or soft-tissue infection
- Perivascular infection
- Dental procedures
- Periodontal disease
- Mouth abscess
- Myxoma
- infected intravascular device, such as a pacemaker

Symptoms

The symptoms of septic emboli are similar to nonspecific signs Trusted Source of infection, such as:

- fatigue
- fever
- chills
- lightheadedness
- dizziness
- sore throat
- persistent cough
- inflammation
- sharp chest or back pain
- numbness
- shortness of breath

Risk for septic emboli

- People at higher risk include:
- elderly people
- people with prosthetic heart valves, pacemakers, or central venous catheters
- people with weakened immune systems
- people who use injection drugs

CRISIS IN SRI LANKA

Context :

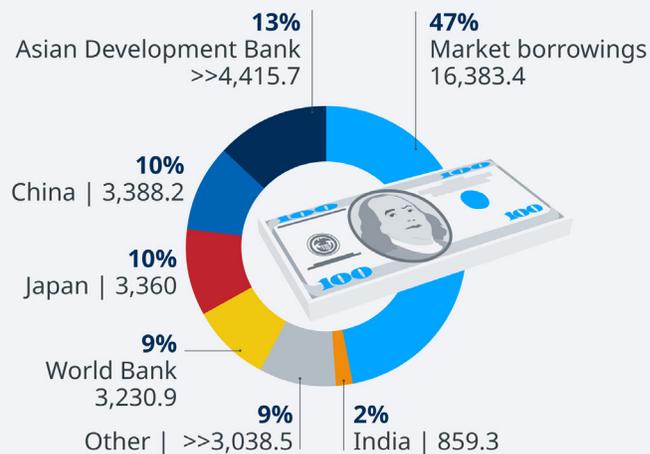
- Sri Lanka currently is facing an economic crisis where its economy is running low on forex reserves and thus is not able to pay for essential import bills such as fuel, food items and other essential goods.

Relief from India

- Relief from India so far has been USD 1.4 billion - a USD 400 currency swap, a USD 500 loan deferment and a USD 500 Line of Credit for essentials
- India has also extended an additional USD 1 billion short-term concessional loan to the island nation to help the country as it faces an unprecedented economic crisis.

Sri Lanka: Foreign debt summary

as of end April' 21 (by major lenders in million US dollars)



Source: Department of External Resources, Sri Lanka

Causes of crisis :

● **Historical imbalance:**

- In a run up to 2019 elections, Mahendra Rajapaksa announced deep tax cuts in his manifesto which led to a steep fall in revenues.
- This severely impacted Sri Lanka's capacity to service the import bills which ultimately led to plummeting of forex reserves by 70 percent.

● **Huge infrastructural debt:**

- Sri Lanka tried emulating the China led model of growth and development by rapidly developing the infrastructure for which it took huge long gestation loans without analysing the financial, ecological viability of the projects.
- This has led to a vicious cycle of debt and its interest payments.
- Dwindling tourism sector:
- Sri Lanka primarily is a tourism led economy. The Easter bombing in 2019 led to sharp downfall in tourists' arrival which got further aggravated due to covid crisis thus leading to huge unemployment and revenue loss.

● **Misguided policies:**

- In 2021, the Sri Lankan government declared that it would be opting for 100 percent organic farming thus wiping out conventional farming, deploying chemical fertilisers and HYV seeds at once.
- This led to sharp decline in grain production which compelled the government to import food items thus further aggravating the debt and balance of payment problem.
- Therefore, the President declared an economic emergency to contain rising food prices, a depreciating currency, and rapidly depleting forex reserves.

● **Impact of covid:**

- Covid further exacerbated the already fragile economic condition in Sri Lanka.
- Exports of tea, rubber further took a sharp dip and the tourism sector with various backward and forward linkages came to halt.

● **Remittances dropped .**

- Government expenditure rose while revenue took a hit.
- This has led to a drop in sovereignty rating which means Sri Lanka will face problems while seeking loans from multilateral institutions and inflow of foreign investment will be hampered in near future.

CUSTODIAL DEATH

Context :

The recent spate of custodial deaths in Tamil Nadu has yet again highlighted the methods used by the police during interrogation.

What is custodial death ?

- It is widely referred to as death that happens to a person who is under trial or has already been convicted of a crime.

Legal provisions

● **Article 20 :**

- Protection against Conviction or Enhanced Punishment under Ex-Post Facto Law: Article 20(1) of the Constitution of India provides that, no person shall be convicted of any offence except for violation of law in force at the time of the commission of the act charged as an offence.
- Protection against Double Jeopardy: Article 20(2) of the Constitution states that no person shall be prosecuted and punished for the same offence more than once.
- Right not to be a witness against himself: Article 20(3) of the Constitution provides that no accused person will be compelled to be a witness against himself.
 - Article 22 : It prohibits detention in custody without being informed as well as gives the detainee the right to consult and to be defended by a legal practitioner of his choice.
 - Criminal Procedure, 1973 : Section 163 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973 prohibits the investigating officers from making any inducement, threat or promise under Section 24 of the Indian Evidence Act (1872) but also prevents him from forcing any person to make any statement which he would like to make on his free will.

● **Custodial death in India :**

- India has a grim record in police brutality and custodial violence. Between 2001 and 2018, 1,727 persons died in police custody, but only 26 policemen were convicted for such deaths.

Steps needed to handle this :

- There is a need for the formulation of a multi-pronged strategy by the decision-makers encompassing legal enactments, technology, accountability, training and community relations.
- The Law Commission of India's proposition in 2003 to change the Evidence Act to place the onus of proof on the police for not having tortured suspects is important in this regard.
- Besides, stringent action must be taken against personnel who breach the commandments issued by the apex court in D.K. Basu v. State of West Bengal (1997).
- The draft bill on the Prevention of Torture, 2017, which has not seen the day, needs to be revived.
- Technology may make policing more convenient, but it can never be an alternative for compassionate policing established on trust between the police and the citizens.
- Policemen need to be sensitised and educated, and told that they should rely on scientific methods of investigation and a proper interrogation technique.

