

Daily Current Affairs

20 December 2023

Post Office Bill 2023

- The Indian Parliament recently approved the **Post Office Bill, 2023**, marking a significant overhaul of the **125-year-old Indian Post Office Act, 1898**.
- The new legislation **aims to modernize and consolidate the legal framework** governing post offices in India.
- The Bill grants **post office employees** the authority to open, detain, or intercept any item during transmission in the interest of national security or public safety. However, this power is subject to specific conditions.
- While providing **immunity for post office employees** from liability in delivering services, the Bill includes conditions. Officers are exempt unless they act fraudulently or willfully cause loss, delay, or misdelivery of services.
- The Central Government, through notification, can **empower officers** to intercept, open, or detain items in transit by the post office.



- This authority extends to situations involving security of the State, friendly relations with foreign states, public order, emergencies, or public safety.
- **Post office officers can deliver items**, suspected of duty evasion or being prohibited by law, to customs or relevant authorities. The handling of such items will follow legal provisions.

- The post office and its officers are **exempt from liability for any loss**, misdelivery, delay, or damage incurred during the provision of services, except in cases of fraudulent or willful misconduct.
- The Bill includes provisions for the **recovery of sums due in respect** of services provided by the post office. Failure to pay charges for services renders the amount recoverable as if it were an arrear of land revenue.
- The post office **retains the exclusive privilege of issuing postage stamps**.
- The Central Government may prescribe standards for addressing items, including address identifiers and the usage of postcodes.

Barracuda Nation's Fastest Solar Electric Boat

- In a significant stride towards **sustainable maritime technology**, India has unveiled '**Barracuda**,' the nation's fastest solar electric boat, at the Navgathi Yard in Panavally, Alappuzha.
- This cutting-edge vessel, named '**Saur Shakthi**,' is a collaborative effort between Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Ltd and Navalt, an eco-marine tech company.
- The Barracuda stands as a symbol of efficient and clean energy usage, showcasing India's commitment to a greener maritime future.



- The vessel's capabilities include a range of seven hours on a single charge, making it a formidable addition to eco-friendly maritime transportation.
- The Barracuda ensures a **serene and eco-conscious journey** for commuters with zero pollution, no noise, and vibrations. As a testament to its eco-friendly design, the vessel has been certified **under IRS** (Indian Register of Shipping). With the ability to navigate through waves as high as 4 meters, Barracuda is

well-suited for both passenger transport and cargo ferrying, accommodating up to 12 passengers comfortably.

- The collaboration between **Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Ltd and Navalt** **underscores the synergy** between traditional shipbuilding expertise and innovative eco-marine technology.
- This partnership has resulted in the creation of a vessel that not only meets high-performance standards but also adheres to the principles of environmental sustainability.

Governing Council of UNIDROIT

- In a momentous occasion for India, **Ms. Uma Sekhar** achieved a remarkable victory elections for the **Governing Council of the International Institute for the Unification of Private Law (UNIDROIT)** held in **Rome, Italy**.
- This historic win not only represents Ms. Sekhar's individual achievement but also elevates India to a prominent on the Governing Council for the term spanning 2024-28.



- With an overwhelming support of 45 votes, her victory underscores the confidence and trust vested in her capabilities.
- The Governing Council, comprising 25 positions occupied by distinguished legal experts, plays a pivotal role in shaping international legal frameworks.
- The competitive field of 32 contestants, including representatives from influential nations like the USA, China, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and France, adds weight to Ms. Sekhar's success. Notably, candidates from Russia, the USA and China failed to secure positions, emphasizing the significance of India's representation on the Governing Council.

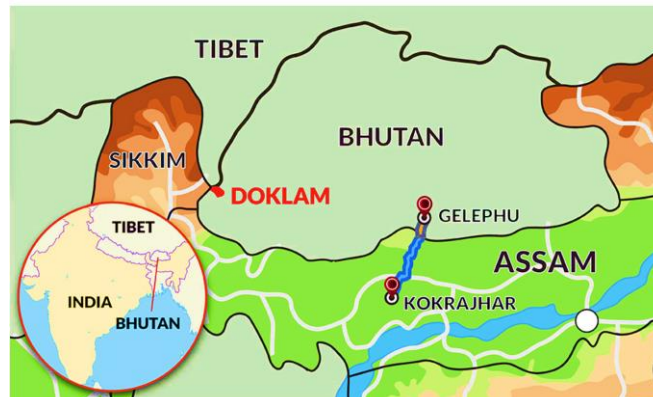
- **UNIDROIT, the International Institute for the Unification of Private Law,** operates as an independent intergovernmental organization headquartered in Rome, Italy.
- Its core mission involves studying the **needs and methods for modernizing, harmonizing and coordinating** private and commercial law among States and groups of States. UNIDROIT actively formulates uniform law instruments, principles and rules to achieve these objectives.

Green City On Assam Border

- **Bhutan, a picturesque Himalayan kingdom,** is set to embark on a transformative journey with the announcement of its ambitious **“Gelephu Smartcity Project.”**
- The **Bhutanese King, Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck,** revealed the plans for a massive “international city” spanning over 1,000 sq. km. on the border with Assam.



- King Jigme Wangchuck positioned the Gelephu project as an **“economic corridor connecting South Asia with Southeast Asia via India’s northeastern States.”**
- Expressing gratitude to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Government of India, he highlighted the significance of the **first India-Bhutan railway** line to Gelephu.
- This railway line is **expected to enhance connectivity** with roadways, border trading points into Assam and West Bengal, and eventually extend Bhutan’s reach to Myanmar, Thailand, Cambodia, and Singapore.
- The **Gelephu Smartcity Project aims** to adhere to environmental standards and sustainability goals.



- In addition to becoming Bhutan's second international airport, the plans include **"zero emission" industries and a "mindfulness city"** that capitalizes on Bhutan's strengths in tourism and wellness.
- Unlike a conventional special economic zone (SEZ), King Jigme Wangchuck emphasized that Gelephu would be a **"Special Administrative Region,"** governed by distinct laws to facilitate international investment.

NHAI Launched ERS Mobile App

- The **Motor Vehicles Act, 1988**, and **Central Motor Vehicle Rules, 1989**, shape traffic norms in India, evolving through amendments to enhance road safety.
- Crucial to this is the **enforcement of traffic laws**, primarily the responsibility of State Governments and Union Territory administrations.
- Strict enforcement is vital to deter violations, fostering a safer environment for all road users.
- In tandem with the **Computer Aided Dispatch System**, NHAI has unveiled the NHAI ERS (Emergency Response System) Mobile Application.



- Functioning as a cohesive platform, this application facilitates the smooth relay of dispatch-related information to on-road units.

- Leveraging mobile technology, **NHAI aims to enhance communication** and coordination during emergency situations, ultimately bolstering the efficiency of emergency response teams.
- This mobile application represents a progressive step towards a more connected and responsive emergency infrastructure.
- The Central Motor Vehicle **Rules-Technical Standing Committee** (CMVR-TSC) and the Automotive Industry Standards Committee (AISC) recognize the crucial role of technology in enhancing road safety.
- These committees have taken proactive steps by initiating the formulation of standards specifically tailored for Moving Off Information Systems (MOIS), emphasizing the commitment to incorporating advanced technologies for safer road experiences.

Safeguard Indian Laborers' Rights

- The **National Skill Development Corporation** (NSDC) has recently inked a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the **government of Saudi Arabia**, marking a significant step towards protecting the rights of skilled labourers from India.
- This collaboration **aims to enhance transparency** and ensure the well-being of Indian workers employed in Saudi Arabia.



- The **NSDC aims to track the whereabouts of workers**, the nature of their work, and the entities they are associated with. The registration process is open to skilled labourers across various categories, including AC mechanics and car painters, fostering inclusivity.

- Highlighting importance of **Skill India Mission launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi**, Tiwari mentioned that NSDC is currently collaborating with 13 countries.



- Tiwari emphasized that not **all agents facilitating travel to Saudi Arabia** from India are unscrupulous. However, those opting for agent-assisted journeys must register with NSDC.
- This **electronic system** aims to guarantee **timely payment for all workers**. Non-compliance with this system can result in the freezing of services for the concerned company or organization, preventing them from engaging with the government.

First Ever Winter Expedition To Arctic Base

- Maintaining a **constant human presence** in one of the coldest regions of the world has been a difficult task for long.
- However, India will have around-the-year manning of the Arctic with the launch of the first-ever winter expedition in this region.
- With this, **India's Himadri will be only the fourth research station** in the Arctic to be manned around the year.



- Scientific evidence has shown that the **Arctic ice and the sea ice** have the potential **to affect humans outside** the Arctic region, as sea levels rise, and to influence atmospheric circulations.
- Climate experts have found that on average, temperatures in the Arctic region have **risen by 4 degrees Celsius** over the last 100 years.
- The Arctic sea-ice extent (the ice formed by the freezing of seawater) is **declining at a rate of 13 per cent per decade**.
- At this rate, the Arctic Ocean could go ice-free sometime during the summer of 2040.



- With such unprecedented changes **owing to global warming**, the Arctic could become a more habitable and less hostile place.
- In no time, there could be a rush to explore and **exploit the region's resources and minerals**, and to gain supremacy over the trade, navigation and other geo-economic and strategic sectors.
- At the research base **Ny-Ålesund in Svalbard, Norway**, the mean temperature in February – the year's coldest month – is minus 14 degrees Celsius. On the other hand, the mean temperature during the warmest month, July, is 5 degrees Celsius.
- On December 18, a **team of four scientists** will embark on India's first-ever **winter expedition** to the Arctic.
- It is being funded by the Union **Ministry of Earth Sciences**. Scheduled between **December 19, 2023, and January 15, 2024**, the expedition comprises researchers from the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology, Pune, IIT-Mandi, Raman Research Institute, Bengaluru, and Goa-based National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research, the nodal agency for India's polar explorations.
- The winter expedition covers a **range of research areas**, from atmospheric sciences, astronomy and astrophysics to climate studies. The focus will be on

studying lightning over the Arctic in the winter, the role of precipitation on climate change, the characterisation of radio frequency environment and the role of aerosols on climate change.

- The team will be stationed at **Himadri, India's only research station** located in Ny-Ålesund. It is located about 1,200 kilometres from the North Pole.



- Starting this season, Himadri has been specially equipped for researchers to perform observations during **polar nights** (nights longer than 24 hours), with special winter gear/clothing, transport and logistics support from the Norwegian agencies.



REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Himadri Research Station Is Made In

- A. 2005
- B. 2006
- C. 2007
- D. 2008

ANSWER: D

2. Barracuda Seen In News Is

- A. Electric Boat
- B. Steam Boat
- C. Bullet Train
- D. Aircraft

ANSWER: A

3. ERS Mobile App Is Launched By

- A. Ministry Of Road & Transport
- B. NHAI
- C. BRO
- D. MeitY

ANSWER: B

4. HQ Of International Institute For The Unification Of Private Law

- A. Rome
- B. Geneva
- C. Paris
- D. New York

ANSWER: A

5. In Which State Was "Bhagwant Mann Sarkar, Tuhade Dwaar" Scheme

- A. Haryana
- B. Punjab
- C. Delhi
- D. Uttar Pradesh

ANSWER: B

6. Which Badminton Men's Doubles Pair Is In Line To Receive The Major Dhyan Chand Khel Ratna Award

- A. Pranav Jerry Chopra and Akshay Dewalkar
- B. Manu Attri and B. Sumeeth Reddy
- C. Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty
- D. Kidambi Srikanth and Parupalli Kashyap

ANSWER: C

7. Which Bank Partnered With Reliance Industries To Finance The Production Of Compressed Biogas From Crop Residue

- A. Citibank
- B. Deutsche Bank
- C. DBS Bank
- D. HSBC Bank

ANSWER: C

8. Exceptional Chemical Weapons Tribunal Has Been Recently Proposed By People Of

- A. Vietnam
- B. Palestine
- C. Syria
- D. Egypt

ANSWER: C

9. What Is Full Form Of GAGAN, Satellite-based Augmentation System By DRDO

- A. Geospatial Analysis and Geotagging Access Node
- B. Gyroscopic Aviation Guidance and Navigation
- C. Graphical Atmosphere Grid and Analysis Nexus
- D. GPS Aided GEO Augmented Navigation

ANSWER: D

10. Proposed Name Of India's Warehousing Facility In UAE To Promote Exports

- A. Bharat Hub
- B. Bharat Mart
- C. Hindustan Depot
- D. India Nook

ANSWER: B

11. Which Country Has Recently Implemented Online Safety Act, 2023

- A. Russia
- B. Australia
- C. United Kingdom
- D. USA

ANSWER: C

12. Sunburn Electronic Dance Music Festival In News, Is Related To Which State

- A. New Delhi
- B. Goa
- C. Karnataka
- D. Maharashtra

ANSWER: B

13. Which Bank Introduced UPI Based Digital Rupay Credit Card

- A. State Bank of India
- B. IDFC First Bank
- C. Equitas Small Finance Bank
- D. HDFC Bank

ANSWER: B

14. 1500 Year Old Ancient Sculptures With Gupta & Pala Artforms, Were Recently Discovered In Which State

- A. Punjab
- B. Uttar Pradesh
- C. Mizoram
- D. West Bengal

ANSWER: C

15. Which Union Ministry Is Associated With 'Rubber Bill, 2023'

- A. Ministry of MSME
- B. Ministry of Commerce and Industry
- C. Ministry of Labour and Employment
- D. Ministry of Power

ANSWER: B

16. Indian Activist Safeena Hussain, Has Been Awarded For Her Work Related To

- A. Girls' education
- B. Environment
- C. Poverty
- D. Women empowerment

ANSWER: A

17. Wolf Amendment Seen In News, Is Associated With Which Country

- A. Japan
- B. India
- C. Russia
- D. USA

ANSWER: D

18. De Winton's Golden Mole, Presumed Extinct Since 1936 Recently Rediscovered In Which Country

- A. South Africa
- B. Turkey
- C. UAE
- D. Australia

ANSWER: A

19. Report By UNDP, India Has Phased Out Which Ozone Depleting Chemical

- A. HCFC 141b
- B. CCl₃F
- C. Halon 1211
- D. CFC-112

ANSWER: A

20. What Is The Name Of Antiviral Medication That Zydus Lifesciences Recently Got USFDA Approval For

- A. Darunavir
- B. Tenofovir
- C. Raltegravir
- D. Dolutegravir

ANSWER: A