

## Current Affairs 20<sup>th</sup> October 2023 by Saurabh Pandey

### Special and Local Laws (SLLs)

Tabling of Bills on criminal laws has become a *causa celebre*.

Bills do well to amend the substantive criminal law as codified in the Indian Penal Code (IPC), Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) and Indian Evidence Act (IEA).

The offences and procedures outlined in the IPC or CrPC represent just one facet of a general criminal law and its vital to recognize that the most critical offences and procedures are encompassed within the Special and Local Laws (SLLs)

- Nearly 39.9% of all cognisable offences registered in 2021 were under SLLs.
- SLLs such as the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967 (UAPA) and the Maharashtra Control of Organized Crime Act, 1999 (MCOCA) suffer from glaringly deficient, ambiguous and vague definitions of offences and terms such as ‘terrorist act’, ‘unlawful activity’, ‘organized crime’, ‘organized crime syndicate’ etc.
- The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012 is increasingly being

criticized for its applicability to consensual sexual activities between minors.

- The IPC today is criticized for the retention of an archaic morality as well as the colonial roots which underpins many of its offences
- All SLLs which criminalize/seek to criminalize a conduct should find a place as separate chapters within the larger structure of the penal code.
- All SLLs which create a separate procedure for reporting of offences, arrest, investigation, prosecution, trial, evidence and bail must be included either as separate procedures within the CrPC or as exceptions to the general provisions provided therein.
- Non inclusion of the substantive and procedural aspects of the SLLs in the ongoing reform project is a serious limitation.

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### European Union’s top human rights prize

- Mahsa Amini, the 22 year old Kurdish Iranian woman who died in police custody

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in Iran last year, sparking worldwide protests against the country's conservative Islamic theocracy, was awarded the European Union's top human rights prize on Thursday.

- The EU award, named for Soviet dissident Andrei Sakharov, was created in 1988 to honor individuals or groups who defend human rights and fundamental freedoms. Sakharov, a Nobel Peace Prize laureate, died in 1989.

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### AI in health

- There are certain aspects of artificial intelligence that make it particularly useful in medicine.
- For instance, AI can analyse data from sensors and predict when equipment or machinery will require maintenance, reducing downtime.
- This, as you can imagine, will be massively useful in hospitals and clinics, particularly in procedures and diagnostics, where we constantly use some form of machinery to treat patients.

- Additionally, AI can be used, with machine learning, to analyse and interpret images and videos, making it useful in reading and coming up with interpretations of scans and other diagnostics, based on the data we have fed it already.
- Already, robotics has been employed in precision surgery, with good outcomes, and faster recovery periods.
- AI has made significant advancements in the field of ophthalmology, offering a range of potential applications that can improve patient care and enhance the efficiency of eye disease diagnosis and treatment.
- In fact, we are among the early adopters of AI for health care, and some of the key uses are:
  - Retinal disease diagnosis
  - Automated screening: A
  - AI is also being used to discover new drugs for ophthalmic conditions by analyzing vast datasets to identify potential therapeutic targets and compounds and in predicting whether individuals may develop eye

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diseases, based on their health records, lifestyle factors, and genetic data.

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### Draft Menstrual hygiene policy

- The Menstrual Hygiene Policy officially aims at addressing the longstanding challenges associated with menstruation in our country.
- The document records: “Historically, this biological phenomenon has been overlooked, resulting in negative impact on girls, women, families and the environment.
- This policy is essential for effectively addressing the needs of all who menstruate and promote a positive transformation within our society.
- First and foremost, it affects the mental health of the women, impacts on their confidence, development and So, if there is a policy that will be seriously implemented, and improve women’s access to hygiene and privacy, then it is a welcome measure,” she adds.

- The policy will adopt a “life cycle “approach and attempt to provide comprehensive support throughout the menstrual journey from menarche to menopause.
- The Menstrual Hygiene Policy document online reiterates its commitment to align with India’s aspirations to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals — particularly in relation to good health and wellbeing, quality education, gender equality, and clean water and sanitation.
- It has also pledged to make menstrual products more accessible and affordable, in addition to creating hygienic toilets in public areas, workplaces, and schools.
- The policy vows to serve as a catalyst to raise awareness, challenge societal norms and foster a society that embraces menstrual hygiene as a natural and normal part of life.

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### Climate justice and India & federalism

- The G20 summit that was held in Delhi (September 9-10) agreed on tripling renewable energy capacity and a voluntary

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doubling of the rate of energy efficiency improvement by 2030.

- Any energy transition initiative must embrace two normative ideals: first, internalizing cost requires those who emit greenhouse gases to pay the social and environmental costs.
- Climate justice is a concept that encompasses the just, fair and equitable distribution of the burdens of climate change and the efforts to mitigate it, and the responsibilities of countries, corporations and other groups to address and prevent the effects of climate change.
- Second, climate justice requires compensation for those who are harmed.
- Often, those who contribute to climate change are not the ones who are affected by it.
- Therefore, any mitigation effort must invert this carbon injustice by making the richer countries or richer classes within a country pay for the energy transition.
- India's stance on the matter has largely been framed through the lens of foreign

policy and its approach to common but differentiated responsibilities (CBDR) in international negotiations, which allows developing countries in the global south to prioritise economic growth and development over climate mitigation

- It is now well documented across the world that climate change and energy transition disproportionately affect the poor.
- The climate induced problems and droughts have compounded the agrarian crisis and allied economic activities
- Addressing both environmental and socio-economic inequalities simultaneously is essential for sustainable and equitable development.
- It is now evident that less equitable societies tend to have higher emission outputs per unit of economic activity.
- Given its highly unequal economic structure, India is falling in that trap.
- Global experience suggests that societal responses which are necessary to address climate change (such as public action and

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state capacity), are impeded in more unequal settings.

### Challenge for India

- India's Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) aim to ensure that 40% of the total installed power generation capacity is clean energy.
- The country has pledged to achieve NetZero emissions by 2070.
- Such an ambitious target necessitates careful study of its implications.
- As of 2021, coal was the major contributor to the total energy supply in India (accounting for 56.1%), followed by crude oil (it accounts for 33.4%).
- Similarly, the industrial sector was the largest consumer of energy, using more than half, i.e., 51% of the total final energy consumption, followed by transport (11%), residential (10%), and agriculture (3.6%) sectors.
- Data show that manufacturing is far more energy and carbon intensive than agriculture and services.
- Consequently, any increase in energy price is likely to lead to a contraction of manufacturing, which India cannot afford given its already low manufacturing level.
- Thus, a just transition entails a holistic approach that considers economic, social, and regional inequalities.
- While renewable energy adoption is crucial, this shift should not exacerbate existing disparities
- Transitioning to renewables requires a deliberate focus on protecting livelihoods, offering alternative job opportunities, and ensuring that vulnerable communities are not adversely impacted
- The emphasis in the Paris Agreement (2015) is: "taking into account the imperatives of a just transition of the workforce and the creation of decent work and quality jobs per nationally defined development priorities".
- The skill sets required and the jobs generated per unit of output in renewable vastly differ from fossil fuel industries.

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### Federalism and energy transition

- Coal, the cheapest source of energy, is located in the poorer regions in eastern and central India while renewable energy hubs, powered by wind and solar photovoltaics (PV) technologies, are located in the relatively wealthy southern and western India.
  - Despite the pollution it causes, the coal sector, owned by the public sector miners (85%), is the main source of revenue via taxes, royalties, and mining fees and employment for the State governments in Odisha, Jharkhand, and Chhattisgarh.
  - India's energy transition strategy must pay attention to these regional inequalities, transfer funds to States dependent on coal, and carve out State specific programmes for reskilling development and local rehabilitation needs.
  - Thus, the Green Deal needs to have a federal deal.
  - India's federal governance structure implies that subnational governments play a significant role in addressing climate concerns. However, their priorities can
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differ significantly from those of the Union government.

- Examining subnational responses reveals how State entities are vital in tackling the challenge of climate inequality mitigation.

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### India food system

- The primary goal of a food system is to ensure nutrition security for all, it can only be achieved sustainably if the producers producing the food make reasonable economic returns that are resilient over time.
- India faces a double burden of malnutrition
- A sizable proportion of Indians exhibit nutrient deficiencies. As in the National Family Health Survey, 201921, 35% of children are stunted, and 57% of women and 25% of men are anaemic.
- At the other end, due to imbalanced diets and sedentary lifestyles, 24% of adult women and 23% of adult men are now obese.
- India has been stepping up efforts to reduce malnutrition, which has included even the Prime Minister calling for a mass movement to eradicate it.
- On the production side, farm incomes are insufficient to meet the ends of marginal and small farmers.

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- According to a report by the Transforming Rural India Foundation, more than 68% of marginal farmers supplement their incomes with nonfarm activities.
  - The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) and other forms of casual labour are picking up the slack,
  - Further, depleting natural resources and changing climate are making India's food production highly vulnerable.
  - As in the 2023 soil health survey, almost half the cultivable land in India has become deficient in organic carbon, which is an essential indicator of soil health. Groundwater, the largest source of irrigation, is rapidly declining.
  - In States such as Punjab, more than 75% of the groundwater assessment locations are overexploited, threatening the resilience of farm incomes
- need to shift to a food plate that is healthier for people and the planet.
  - Second, to ensure resilient incomes, we must support farmers' transition towards remunerative and regenerative agricultural practices.
  - The National Mission on Natural Farming is a step in this direction, but the overall funding for sustainable agriculture is less than 1% of the agricultural budget
  - Third, shift farm to fork value chains towards more sustainable and inclusive ones.
  - A critical approach to enhance rural (farm) incomes is to enable more value addition of agricultural produce in rural areas.
  - Middlemen, such as corporations supplying raw and processed food to consumers, should prioritise direct procurement from farmers, incentivise procurement of sustainably harvested produce, and implement well established approaches such as fair trade.

### Steps needed

- First, consumer demand needs to be shifted towards healthy and sustainable diets. We

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### Why Earthquakes are prone to Afghanistan

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### How do earthquakes occur?

- The earth is made up of chunks of solid rocks called tectonic plates.
- Discontinuities in these rock masses, along which they have moved, are called fault lines.
- These fractures are a result of tectonic forces and stress that builds up in the earth's lithosphere, causing the rocks to break and slip.
- An earthquake occurs when blocks of lithosphere suddenly slip past one another, releasing energy and sending seismic waves through the ground.
- The surface where the lithosphere chunks slip becomes a fault plane.
- The point within the earth where the fault rupture starts and produces an earthquake is called the focus or the hypocentre.
- The point on the surface of the earth directly above it is called the epicenter.
- Tectonic plates are slow moving but are always in motion, mostly due to the heat energy generated inside the earth.

- The edges of these plates are called plate boundaries and consist of faults this is where most earthquakes occur.

### Why do frequent earthquakes occur in Afghanistan?

- Afghanistan is located over multiple fault lines in the region where the Indian and the Eurasian tectonic plates meet.
- These plates collide often, leading to significant tectonic activity. Afghanistan is located on the Eurasian plate.
- Towards western Afghanistan, the Arabian plate sub ducts northward under Eurasia, and towards eastern Afghanistan the Indian plate does the same.
- In southern Afghanistan, the Arabian and Indian plates adjoin and both sub duct northward under the Eurasian plate.
- The Hindu Kush mountain range and the Pamir Knot are geologically complex regions where tectonic plates meet.
- The collision and convergence of the Indian Plate and the Eurasian Plate result in the folding and faulting of the Earth's crust.

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- This geological complexity contributes to the occurrence of earthquakes in the region.
- The ongoing northward movement of the Indian Plate towards the Eurasian Plate also results in compression, leading to the uplift of the Himalayas and the transmission of tectonic stress across the entire region, including Afghanistan.
- The compression causes the crust to deform, and creates faults and fractures that can slip and generate earthquakes. These interactions at plate boundaries generate significant tectonic stresses and result in earthquakes.
- Afghanistan is also crisscrossed by various active fault systems like the Chaman Fault and the Main Pamir Thrust.

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