

25 APRIL 2019

INTERPOL

Why in news:

- Days just earlier Interpol conducted Operation Eprevier II to rescue dozens of child slaves from markets in West Africa.

About Interpol:

- The International Criminal Police Organization, more commonly known as Interpol, is an international organization that facilitates worldwide police cooperation.
- It was established in 1923 with its headquarters in Lyon, France.
- Around 181 countries are members of this organisation.
- India became its member from 1956 itself.
- To keep it politically neutral as possible, its charter forbids it from undertaking interventions or activities of a political, military, religious, or racial nature.
- Its work focuses primarily on public safety and battling transnational crimes against humanity, child pornography, cybercrime, drug trafficking, environmental crime, genocide, human trafficking, illicit drug production.
- It also battles against copyright infringement, missing people, illicit traffic in works of art, intellectual property crime, money laundering, organized crime, corruption, terrorism, war crimes, weapons smuggling, and white-collar crime.



Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers' Rights

In news:

PepsiCo sued four Gujarati farmers, asking them to pay 1.05 crore each as damages for 'infringing its rights' by growing the potato variety used in its Lays chips.

Alleging violation of farmers' rights under the Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers' Rights (PPV&FR) Act, 2001 by PepsiCo, nearly 200 civil society representatives and farm leaders have written to the Centre for intervention.

PepsiCo has invoked Section 64 of the Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers' Rights (PPV&FR) Act, 2001 to claim infringement of its rights.

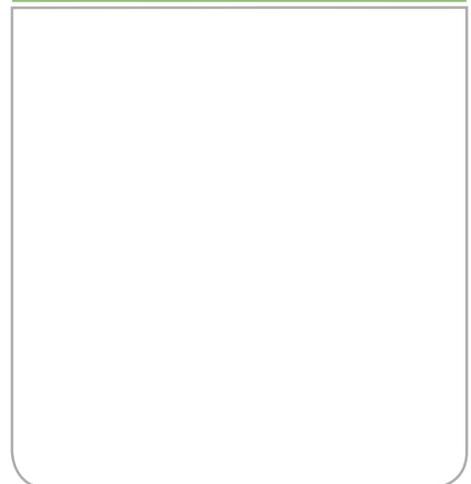
However, farmers groups cite Section 39 of the same Act, which specifically says that a farmer is allowed "to save, use, sow, resow, exchange, share or sell his farm produce including seed of a variety protected under this Act" so long as he does not sell "branded seed".

The Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers' Rights (PPV&FR) Act, 2001:

Objectives:

- To establish an effective system for the protection of plant varieties, the rights of farmers and plant breeders and to encourage the development of new varieties of plants.
- To recognize and protect the rights of farmers in respect of their contributions made at any time in conserving, improving and making available plant genetic resources for the development of new plant varieties.
- To accelerate agricultural development in the country, protect plant breeders' rights; stimulate investment for research and development both in public & private sector for the development of new plant varieties.
- Facilitate the growth of seed industry in the country which will ensure the availability of high quality seeds and planting material to the farmers.

Note



Rights under the Act

- **Breeders' Rights** : Breeders will have exclusive rights to produce, sell, market, distribute, import or export the protected variety. Breeder can appoint agent/ licensee and may exercise for civil remedy in case of infringement of rights.
- **Researchers' Rights** : Researcher can use any of the registered variety under the Act for conducting experiment or research. This includes the use of a variety as an initial source of variety for the purpose of developing another variety but repeated use needs prior permission of the registered breeder.
- **Farmers' Rights**
 - A farmer who has evolved or developed a new variety is entitled for registration and protection in like manner as a breeder of a variety.
 - Farmers' variety can also be registered as an extant variety.
 - A farmer can save, use, sow, re-sow, exchange, share or sell his farm produce including seed of a variety protected under the PPV&FR Act, 2001 in the same manner as he was entitled before the coming into force of this Act provided farmer shall not be entitled to sell branded seed of a variety protected under the PPV&FR Act, 2001.
 - Farmers are eligible for recognition and rewards for the conservation of Plant Genetic Resources of land races and wild relatives of economic plants.
 - There is also a provision for compensation to the farmers for non-performance of variety under Section 39 (2) of the Act, 2001.
 - Farmer shall not be liable to pay any fee in any proceeding before the Authority or Registrar or the Tribunal or the High Court under the Act.

Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers' Rights Authority:

- To implement the provisions of the Act the Department of Agriculture, Cooperation and Farmers Welfare, Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare established the Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers' Rights Authority on 11th November, 2005.
- Besides the Chairperson, the Authority has 15 members.
- Eight of them are ex-officio members representing various Departments/ Ministries, three from SAUs and the State Governments, one representative each for farmers, tribal organization, seed industry and women organization associated with agricultural activities are nominated by the Central Government. The Registrar General is the ex-officio Member Secretary of the Authority.

Functions of the Authority

- Registration of new plant varieties, essentially derived varieties (EDV), extant varieties;
- Developing DUS (Distinctiveness, Uniformity and Stability) test guidelines for new plant species;
- Developing characterization and documentation of varieties registered;
- Compulsory cataloguing facilities for all variety of plants;
- Documentation, indexing and cataloguing of farmers' varieties;
- Recognizing and rewarding farmers, community of farmers, particularly tribal and rural community engaged in conservation and improvement;
- Preservation of plant genetic resources of economic plants and their wild relatives;
- Maintenance of the National Register of Plant Varieties and
- Maintenance of National Gene Bank.

Plant Varieties Protection Appellate Tribunal (PVPAT):

- All orders or decisions of the Registrar of Authority relating to registration of variety and orders or decisions of the Registrar relating to registration as agent or licensee can be appealed in the Tribunal.
- All orders or decisions of Authority relating to benefit sharing, revocation

Note



of compulsory license and payment of compensation can also be appealed in the Tribunal.

- The decisions of the PVPAT can be challenged in High Court. The Tribunal shall dispose of the appeal within one year.

Mass execution in Saudi Arabia

In news:

Saudi Arabia beheaded 37 Saudi citizens, most of them minority Shiites, in a mass execution across the country for alleged terrorism-related crimes.

Amnesty International also confirmed the majority of those executed were Shiite men.

About Amnesty International:

- Amnesty International is a London-based non-governmental organization focused on human rights.
- It was founded in London in 1961.
- It is financed largely by fees and donations from its worldwide membership. It says that it does not accept donations from governments or governmental organizations.
- It publishes State of the World's Human Rights report. It covers Human rights violations in 159 countries and territories.

Location of Saudi Arabia:



Note

'Constitution of J. Bobde panel violates the law'

In News:

1. Women activists had claimed that the constitution of the in-house committee led by Justice S.A. Bobde, to examine the sexual harassment allegations levelled against Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi was in "complete violation" of the sexual harassment of women at workplace law.

2. The formation of the committee tilted the balance against the woman who had alleged sexual harassment against the CJI, according to their claims.



In Brief:

Justice Bobde’s Committee – A Violation of its own Guidelines?

1. Justice Bobde has appointed a committee with himself as chair and Justice N.V. Ramana and Justice Indra Banerjee as members.
2. The constitution of this committee with no external member is in complete violation of The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition, and Redressal) Act 2013.



‘Tilting the balance’

1. It seems to tilt the balance, thus violating the spirit of the Visakha judgement and The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition, and Redressal) Act 2013.

What could be possibly done now?

Keeping in mind the magnitude of the complaint, a special enquiry committee could be created for ensuring transparency and confidence.

**Vishaka and others V. State of Rajasthan
and others.**

(AIR 1997 SUPREME COURT 3011)

J.S. Verma C.J.I., Mrs. Sujata V.
Manohar and B.N. Kirpal. JJ.

About: MUST Read

Key Features:

1. It is the duty of the employer or other responsible persons in work places or other institutions to prevent or deter the commission of acts of sexual harassment and to provide the procedure for the resolution, settlement or prosecution of acts of sexual harassment by taking all steps required.
2. It also provided with the range to behaviour that would be termed as sexual harassment, which includes such unwelcome sexually determined behaviour (whether directly or implication) as :-
 - physical contact and advances;
 - a demand or request for sexual favours;
 - sexually coloured remarks;
 - showing pornography;
 - any other unwelcome physical, verbal or non-verbal conduct of sexual nature.
3. It also provided with Complaints mechanism by stating that-
 - All workplaces should have an appropriate complaints mechanism with a complaints committee, special counsellor or other support services.
 - A woman must head the complaints committee and no less than half its members should be women.
 - The committee should include an NGO/individual familiar with the issue of sexual harassment.
 - The complaints procedure must be time-bound.
 - Confidentiality must be maintained.
 - Complainants/witnesses should not experience victimization/ discrimination during the process.

The Details of the Visakha judgement, in which the Apex Court gave the guidelines, famously called Visakha guidelines is given below:

The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition, and Redressal) Act 2013.

Note



Vishakha Judgement - 1997

Supreme Court acknowledged that:

- Sexual harassment is a **human rights** violation
- Sexual harassment is a violation of the constitutionally guaranteed **fundamental rights**:
 - Articles 14 and 15: Right to equality
 - Article 21: Right to life - to live with dignity
 - Article 19(1)(g) - Right to practice any profession/trade/occupation/business, i.e., a right to a safe environment free from harassment
- The Judgement prescribed the guidelines and pursuant to the same The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 was enacted.

<p>Definition of sexual harassment</p>	<p>Sexual harassment includes “any one or more” of the following “unwelcome acts or behaviour” committed directly or by implication:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Physical contact and advances b. A demand or request for sexual favours c. Sexually coloured remarks d. Showing pornography e. Any other unwelcome physical, verbal or non-verbal conduct of sexual nature.
<p>Applicability</p>	<p>Covers all women, across formal and informal employment, including clients, customers, domestic workers, contractual employees, volunteers, probationers, trainees, and interns.</p> <p>At the “workplace”, which include “any place visited by the employees, arising out of, or during the course of employment, including transportation provided by the employer”</p>
<p>Employer’s Responsibility</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Provide a safe working environment. b. Constitute the Internal Complaints Committee (ICC) (organization with more than 10 employees must have ICC) c. Display the penal consequences of Sexual Harassment at a conspicuous place in the workplace. d. Organise orientation programmes for the members of the internal complaint committee. e. Organise awareness programmes for the employees. <p>Note: State governments are authorized to constitute Local Complaint Committee (LCC) in every district which will receive complaints from organizations having less than 10 workers or if the complaint is against the employer himself.</p>



The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition, and Redressal) Act 2013.

Note:

1. The Act was introduced in 2013, with the main objective of implementing the Vishakha guidelines and to ensure access to a safe workplace by woman.

Hong Kong leaders jailed over pro-democracy protests

In News:

Four prominent leaders of Hong Kong's democracy movement were jailed for their role in organising mass protests in 2014 that paralysed the city for months and infuriated Beijing.

In Brief:

Umbrella Movement had called for free elections

The prison terms are the latest hammer blow to the city's beleaguered democracy movement which has seen key figures jailed or banned from standing as legislators since their demonstrations shook the city but failed to win any concessions.

1. The Prison terms of the key figures or their banning from standing as legislators is the last blow to the democracy movement.
2. It is an alarm over the shrinking freedoms under an assertive China.
3. Two key leaders of the mass protests — sociology professor Chan Kin-man, 60, and law professor Benny Tai, 54 — received the longest sentences of 16 months in jail, sparking angry chants from supporters outside.
4. The jail terms are the steepest yet for anyone involved in the 79-day protest which vividly illustrated the huge anger — particularly among Hong Kong's youth — over the city's leadership.



History of the Umbrella Movement?

1. The Umbrella Movement is related to the political and social history and context of Hong Kong. Hong Kong used to be a British colony, but since the handover of 1997 it is a city of China.
2. According to the constitutional principle One Country, Two Systems, the Chinese Communist Government ensured Hong Kong will retain its own currency, legal and parliamentary systems (democratic institutions which have been developed since the British colonial period) and people's existing rights and freedoms for fifty years.

Why protests?

1. Protests were made against actions by the government which have been seen as prioritizing the interests of the Chinese Communist Government for instance through the spending of public funds for pro-China white elephant projects.
2. At the same time, many citizens have expressed dissatisfaction and anger over the neo-liberal economic policies of the Hong Kong government which have been seen as producing new social inequalities in the society.
3. Thus, already before the Umbrella Movement came into being, protests and social movements against the government policies already existed, and the unsolved political and social problems can be seen as the long-term causes for the appearance of the Umbrella Movement.

Note



Magic milk: fighting infections with a clue from the echidna

In News:

Scientists at the Council of Scientific & Industrial Research - Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CSIR-CCMB) here have isolated an anti-microbial protein found in the milk of an egg-laying mammal. The protein promises to serve as an alternative to antibiotics used on livestock.

“Scientists find novel way of tackling antibiotic-resistant bacterial strain”

In Brief:

1. Echidnas, also known as spiny anteaters, are unique egg-laying mammals found only in Australia and New Guinea.
2. Their young hatch from eggs at a very early stage of development and depend completely on mother’s milk.
3. But the mammary glands of the echidnas are devoid of nipples, forcing the young ones to lick milk from the mother’s body surface and potentially making them vulnerable to micro-organisms.
4. The milk of the echidna has a protein that can puncture the cell membranes of multiple bacterial species, thus destroying the source of infection.



Need?

1. There is a rise of superbugs due to the indiscriminate use of antibiotics by the animal husbandry industry to raise livestock.
2. The superbugs can cause mastitis, an infection of the mammary gland, in dairy animals.

China Plans to Build a Base near the Moon’s South Pole

In News:

The China National Space Administration (CSNA) intends to build the research station in the region of the moon’s south pole.

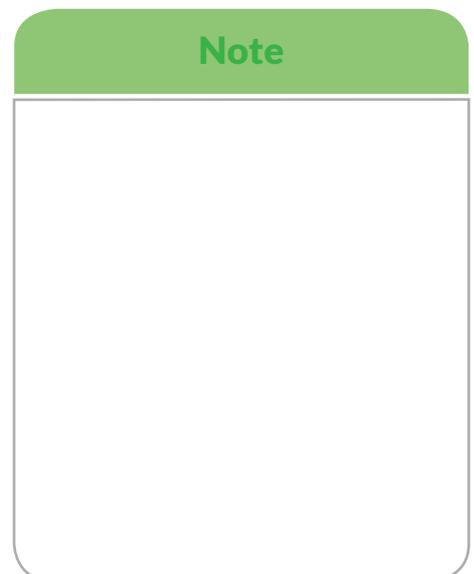
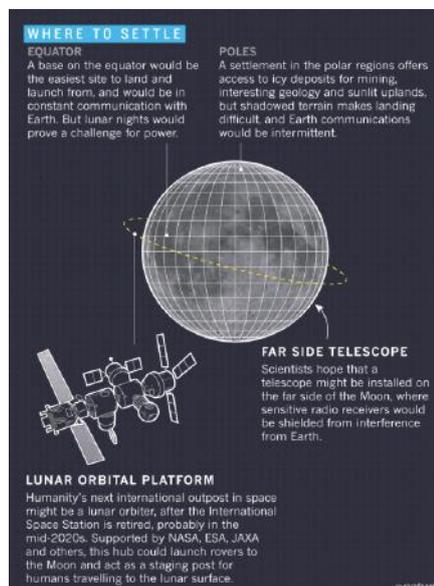
In Brief:

That’s a bit of a departure from the six successful NASA Apollo moon landings, which took place closer to the moon’s equator between 1969 and 1972.

Details of China’s long-term lunar plans are still sketchy, but CSNA has made significant steps toward lunar exploration.

Earlier this year, the Chinese successfully landed the uncrewed Chang’e-4 on the far side of the moon, and have also placed astronauts aboard two temporary space stations, Tiangong-1 and Tiangong-2.

Their space agency also plans to put a larger, more permanent station into orbit in the coming years.



The first parts of that permanent station will reach orbit aboard the country's new Long March-5B rocket in the first half of 2020, Agence France-Presse (AFP) reported; the mission will not be associated with the International Space Station. The ISS is reaching the end of its operational lifetime, plus the United States and China do not cooperate on spaceflight endeavors.

China currently spends more on spaceflight than any country except the U.S., according to AFP. At the moment, the U.S. is unable to put humans in space without hitching a ride on a Russian rocket; plans to change that model by using for-profit rockets – such as those owned by SpaceX – have hit some snags. Still, American officials have also suggested that there are plans to return to the moon and stay on the planet for an extended period in the near future.

RBI sells entire stake in NHB, Nabard to govt for 1,470 crore

In News:

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has divested its entire stake in Nabard and National Housing Bank (NHB) for 20 crore and 1,450 crore, on 26 February and 19 March, respectively.

In Brief:

Nabard is short for National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development.

The divestment was based on the recommendations of the Narasimham Committee-II, and the discussion paper prepared by the central bank on harmonizing the role and operations of development financial institutions and banks. "With this, the government of India now holds 100% stake in both the financial institutions.

NABARD:

- NABARD is an apex development bank in India.
- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) holds the majority stake in it.
- Headquarters: Mumbai, Maharashtra.
- Established: 1982 on the recommendations of Shivaraman Committee to implement the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development Act, 1981.
- It has been entrusted with matters concerning policy, planning and operations in the field of credit for agriculture and other economic activities in rural areas in India.
- It is active in developing financial inclusion policy and is a member of the Alliance for Financial Inclusion.

Mandate:

Facilitate credit flow for promotion and development of agriculture, small-scale industries, cottage and village industries, handicrafts and other rural crafts.

Support all other allied economic activities in rural areas, promote integrated and sustainable rural development and secure prosperity of rural areas.

Recent Amendments:

- Amendments in Act to increase authorized capital of NABARD from Rs. 5,000 crore to Rs. 30,000 crore and further increase it beyond Rs. 30,000 crore in consultation with RBI, as deemed necessary from time to time.
- It also includes certain other amendments including changes in long title and certain sections to bring Handlooms and Medium Enterprises in NABARD's mandate.
- Transfer of 0.4% equity of RBI in NABARD amounting to Rs. 20 crores, to the Union Government.

Note: Refer Narasimham Committee II Recommendations

Note

