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Changes to DRSCs

- Raja Sabha Secretariat is considering changing the rules governing the ' (DRSC) tenure.
- It aims to make it to two years from the present one year so that the panels have enough time to work on the subjects selected by them.
- The following options are being considered by Raja Sabha Secretariat
 1. To extend the term of the panels for a year.
 2. To form new committees with a fixed tenure of two years.
- This decision comes after the tenure of all the DRSCs of Parliament is ending on 11th September, 2020 and they can't hold deliberations till new panels are formed.
- A significant amount of the tenure of the committees was lost due to the Covid-19 pandemic.
- Many of the panels have not been able to complete reports on the subjects they were working on.

Departmentally-Related Standing Committees

- On the recommendation of the Rules Committee of the Lok Sabha, 17 Departmentally-Related Standing Committees (DRSCs) were set up in the Parliament in 1993.
- In 2004, seven more such committees were set up, thus increasing their number from 17 to 24.
- Out of the 24 standing committees, 8 work under the Rajya Sabha and 16 under the Lok Sabha.
- Each standing committee consists of 31 members (21 from Lok Sabha and 10 from Rajya Sabha).
- The members of the Lok Sabha are nominated by the Speaker, just as the members of the Rajya Sabha are nominated by the Chairman from amongst its members

- A minister is not eligible to be nominated as a member of any of the standing committees.
- In case a member, after his nomination to any of the standing committees, is appointed a minister, he then ceases to be a member of the committee
- The term of office of each standing committee is one year from the date of its constitution.
- They secure more accountability of the Executive (i.e., the Council of Ministers) to the Parliament.

Parliamentary Committees

- Constitution of India makes a mention of parliamentary committees at different places, but without making any specific provisions regarding their composition, tenure, functions, etc.
- Broadly, parliamentary committees are of two kinds
- **Standing Committees** - Permanent (constituted every year or periodically) and work on a continuous basis.
- They can be categorized into following broad groups

1. Financial Committees
2. Departmental Standing Committees (24)
3. Committees to Inquire
4. Committees to Scrutinize and Control
5. Committees Relating to the Day-to-Day Business of the House
6. House-Keeping Committees or Service Committees

- **Ad Hoc Committees** - These are temporary and cease to exist on completion of the task assigned.
- Ad hoc committees can be divided into two categories,

1. Inquiry Committee
2. Advisory Committee

JETRO Plan

- Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO) has recently announced that it would fund 10 Japanese companies.
- JETRO has made India and Bangladesh part of a larger subsidy programme, estimated at \$230 million.
- This plan is unofficially aimed at helping Japanese companies in China to relocate to other countries.
- The package was earlier aimed for relocation of Japanese companies to mostly South-East Asian countries including Vietnam, Thailand and

Myanmar, but now India and Bangladesh, too, have been added to the list.

- The recent plan includes Suzuki Motors and Olympus, to get into high-tech projects with Indian companies.
- Approximately \$1 million was set aside for the projects already identified, it would be a part of investments in machinery, factory, etc.

Business Reforms Action Plan-2019

- Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) has developed Business Reforms Action Plan for State Reforms since 2015.
- It has started an ambitious program for reforms in partnership with State Governments to make it easier, simpler and quicker for businesses to operate.
- The Plan is designed keeping in mind 2 factors viz. Measurability and Comparability across States.
- To support this initiative, an online portal (www.eodb.dipp.gov.in) showcasing rankings was developed and launched in April 2016.
- Recently Andhra Pradesh has bagged the first rank among all the states in the country in the state business reforms action plan-2019 (BRAP-2019).
- Andhra Pradesh has achieved 100 percent compliance to the 187 reform action points by DPIIT-World Bank as a part of BRAP 2019.
- The ReSTART package announced by AP government found a special mention in the BRAP 2019.
- While Uttar Pradesh stood in the second position, Telangana bagged the third spot in the overall ranking of the state business process reforms undertaken during 2019.

“ReSTART” Package

- Andhra Pradesh has launched a new programme ReSTART in May 2020, to support the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise (MSME) sector in the State.
- Under the plan the government will spend ₹1,100 crore on revival of the sector which is expected to benefit 98,000 units that provide employment to more than 10 lakh people.
- Other features of the plan includes
- A special fund of ₹200 crore to provide input capital loan to the firms at low interest rates.
- The minimum power demand charges of the MSMEs for the months of April, May and June, amounting to ₹188 crore to be waived off.
- The government will purchase around 360 products from the MSMEs, and

payments towards it would be cleared in 45 days.

- Of the total purchases, almost 25% would be done from the micro and small enterprises, 4% from the SC/ST community enterprises, and 3% from women entrepreneurs.

Sri Lanka's 13th Amendment

- The 13th Amendment is an outcome of the Indo-Lanka Accord of July 1987, signed by the then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and President J.R. Jayawardene.
- It was an attempt to resolve Sri Lanka's ethnic conflict that had aggravated into a full-fledged civil war, between the armed forces and the LTTE (which sought a separate state).
- It mandates a measure of power devolution to the provincial councils established to govern the island's nine provinces, including Sinhala majority areas, to self-govern.
- Till date, the 13th Amendment represents the only constitutional provision on the settlement of the long-pending Tamil question.
- Subjects such as education, health, agriculture, housing, land and police are devolved to the provincial administrations.
- But because of restrictions on financial powers and overriding powers given to the President, the provincial administrations have not made much headway.
- In particular, the provisions relating to police and land have never been implemented.
- Recently many social groups have openly called for the abolition of provincial councils after the new government took charge.

Clean Air Day for Blue Skies

- The very first International Day of Clean Air for blue skies will be held on September 7th, 2020.
 - The day aims for the following
1. Raise public awareness at all levels individual, community, corporate and government—that clean air is important for health, productivity, the economy and the environment.
 2. Demonstrate the close link of air quality to other environmental/developmental challenges such as most and foremost climate change and the global Sustainable Development Goals.
 3. Promote and facilitate solutions that improve air quality by sharing

actionable knowledge best practices, innovations, and success stories.

- The United Nations General Assembly On December 19, 2019, during its 74th session adopted the resolution to hold an International Day of Clean Air for blue skies every year.
- It invited the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to facilitate the observance of the International Day, in collaboration with other relevant organizations.

Sadikpur Sinauli Archaeological Site

- The 2018 Excavations from Baghpat district in UP, proved evidence of the existence of a warrior class around 2,000 BCE.
- Recently the archaeological site is at Sadikpur Sinauli, Baghpat District have been declared to be of “national importance” by the Archaeological Survey of India.
- The ASI’s notification under provisions of the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1958 brings the 28.67-hectare-site under Central protection.
- The site would now be maintained by the ASI and development works around it would be subject to Central rules.
- The notification comes two years after the ASI unearthed remains of chariots, shields, swords and other items indicating the presence of a warrior class at the site that is 68 km from Delhi.
- ASI termed the site the “largest necropolis of the late Harappan period datable to around early part of second millennium BCE”.

Source: The Hindu, Hindustan Times, UN



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