

UGC'S DRAFT REGULATIONS-2023: OPENING THE DOOR FOR FOREIGN PLAYERS

Context

- The University Grants Commission (UGC) recently released the draft UGC (Setting up and Operation of Campuses of Foreign Higher Educational Institutions in India) Regulations 2023.
- The article explains the key provisions, significance and concerns with respect to the draft UGC regulations to set up and operate campuses of Foreign Higher Educational Institutions (FHEIs) in India.

Need for such Regulations

- **To increase enrolment:** India despite having more than 1000 universities and 42,000 colleges has one of the world's lowest Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in higher education (27.1%).
- **To improve quality of education:** The lack of quality in Indian education is reflected in the QS World University Rankings 2022, with the IIT Bombay getting the best 177th
- **Facilitating interested varsities:** For example, London Business School, King's College in London, etc., are engaged in preliminary discussions with the GIFT City authorities and UGC to establish facilities at the GIFT International Financial Services Centre.

Salient Provisions in the Draft UGC Regulations

- **Application process:** Foreign varsities interested to open campus in India need to apply online at the UGC portal and the selected applicants henceforth will be given about 2 years to set up campuses.
- **Evaluation criteria:** A committee formed by UGC hence will decide upon these applications within 45 days based on following factors:
 - Credibility of the institution
 - Programmes to be offered by the institution
 - Varsity potential to strengthen academic opportunities in India
 - Proposed infrastructure
 - Once the necessary criteria have been fulfilled, the UGC will grant **approval for 10 years**.

- **Funding:** The cross-border funds required for setting up the varsity will be as per the Foreign Exchange Management Act, 1999 (FEMA).
- **Eligibility:** A foreign university should be ranked among the **top 500 global rankings** or will have to be “**highly reputed**” in its home jurisdiction.
- **Institutional autonomy:** The FHEIs will have autonomy to **decide their own admission process**, fee structure (in a reasonable and transparent manner) and have **freedom to recruit faculty** from India and abroad.
- **Types of courses to be offered:** Foreign universities with campuses in India will not be permitted to offer courses through online or ODL (open and distance learning) modes and only conduct offline classes (physical mode) will be allowed.
 - Foreign varsity will also not be allowed to offer any programs of study that **compromise national interests** or standards of higher education in India.
- **Supervision:** An **audit report** shall be submitted annually by the FHEIs to the UGC certifying that its operations are in compliance with UGC Act and related rules. Also, the UGC will have the right to inspect the campuses at any time.

Significance of the Draft

- Around 40 million students in India, currently pursuing higher education, will have access to **global quality education**.
- Allowing foreign universities will ensure **diverse courses**, such as in the fields of urban design and fashion design.
- In 2022, over 5 lakh Indian students went abroad to study, leading to an outflow of an estimated \$28-30 billion. Thus, the move is expected to **reduce forex reserve depletion**.
- The UGC move will push further **Atmanirbhar Bharat dream** by retaining the domestic talent and preventing **brain drain**.
- Opening the door for foreign universities can **improve India’s soft power** as it will provide further impetus to the government’s **Study in India programme** that seeks to attract foreign students.

Conclusion

- India is a young nation with an increasing need for higher education and an ever-increasing demand for foreign degrees.
- However, ensuring access, equity and quality of higher education as outlined in the vision of NEP-2020, should be ensured in this process to make Indian education match global standards.

MILITARY TATTOO & TRIBAL DANCE FESTIVAL

A Military Tattoo and Tribal Dance Festival - Aadi Shaurya - Parv Parakram Ka will be held at Jawaharlal Nehru stadium in New Delhi on the 23 January.



About:

- The two-day festival will showcase the prowess of the Armed Forces and the ethnic beauty of India's tribal culture.
- The programme comprises a Military Tattoo - Paramotor Gliding, Hot Air Balloon, Horse Show, Motor Cycle Display, Air Warrior Drill, Navy Band and traditional dance performances by tribal artists from across the country.
- The aim of the festival is to remember the sacrifices of the country's brave hearts and celebrate the rich cultural heritage which makes India so unique and diverse.
- **The objective** is to celebrate together the bravery of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, embrace the true spirit of India and renew the commitment to building a strong and prosperous New India.
- **The Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of Tribal Affairs** are jointly organising the event.

PARASNATH HILLS

Tribal bodies recently stepped up their demand to “free” the Parasnath hills in Jharkhand's Giridih district from the “clutches” of the Jain community.



Key Facts about Parasnath hills:

- Parasnath is a mountain peak in the Parasnath Range.
- It is located towards the eastern end of the Chota Nagpur Plateau in the Giridih district of the Indian state of Jharkhand.
- It has been named Parasnath after the 23rd Jain Tirthankara.
- It is a holy and revered sites for the Jain community, called it as “Sammed Sikhar”.
- Out of 24 Tirthankaras of Jains, 20 got NIRVANA on Parasnath Hills.
- On the mountain, A Jain temple is believed to be constructed by Magadha King Bimbisara (543-491 BCE.)

About Santhal Community:

- The Santhal tribe, one of the largest Scheduled Tribe community in the country, has a sizeable population in Jharkhand, Bihar, Odisha, Assam and West Bengal.
- Santhals call parasnath hill “Marang Buru”. They celebrate a hunting festival on the full moon day in Vaishakha (mid-April).

WHAT IS ASTRO TOURISM?

National Council of Science Museums in association with Nehru Memorial Museum and Library organised Astro Tourism - A Sky Gazing event at Delhi's India Gate recently.



About Astro tourism:

- Astro tourism is an experiential travel trend, that combines travellers interest in astronomy, night sky along with the love for exploring new remote locations.
- It also boosts nature-based travelling, tapping on growing interest of tourists to discover destinations that offer the luxury of being close to nature in a comfortable accommodation.
- The Astro Tourism event includes various activities



like Astro Talks by expert Astronomers, an Exhibition on Astronomy, Storytelling related to celestial objects, an Experience of using the telescope to see the craters of the Moon, Astronomy Activities, a Photographic Panel Exhibition, and Astro-Photography.

KHELO INDIA YOUTH GAMES-2022

Mascot, torch and anthem of Khelo India Youth Games recently unveiled in Bhopal.



Why in news?

- Madhya Pradesh is hosting the fifth edition of the Khelo India Youth Games. In this sports event, to be held from the 30th of January to the 11th of February, six thousand players will show their sports skills in eight different cities for 13 days.
- For the first time water sports namely **Kayaking Canoeing, Canoe Slalom and Fencing will be part of this edition of Khelo India Games.**

Khelo India Youth Games

- **Objective:** To revive the sports culture in India at the grass-root level by building a strong framework for all sports played in our country and establish India as a great sporting nation.
- It is an annual event. The first edition was held in 2018 in Delhi in which Haryana won 38 golds.
- Talented players identified in priority sports disciplines at various levels by the High-Powered Committee will be provided annual financial assistance of INR 5 lakh per annum for 8 years.

WHAT IS ONE WEEK ONE LAB CAMPAIGN?

Recently, the Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) Science & Technology launched this campaign at India Habitat Centre, New Delhi.

About One Week One Lab Campaign:



- The One Week One lab campaign of the Council of Scientific & Industrial Research (CSIR), will highlight India's global excellence in **technology, innovation and Start-ups**.
- In this campaign, each of CSIR's 37 constituent laboratories, spread Nationwide, will showcase their legacy, exclusive innovations and technological breakthroughs every successive week.
- During the campaign each CSIR lab shall be organizing week-long events including industry & start-up meet, students connect, society connect, display of technologies, etc.
- The campaign will also focus on **academia and skill development**, where interested students from varying domains get to know about the research activities and facilities of the CSIR laboratories and get a connection with prospects.
- Industries & MSMEs Meets are targeted to establish an understanding between Science and Industry based on the requirement of the society or regional needs and to identify potential industries for co-development of Next Gen technologies and products.
- It will be an opportunity to create networks of Govt- Academia-Industry for faster deliveries and deployments of technologies.

What is CSIR?

- It is the largest research and development (R&D) organisation in India which was set up in 1942.
- It is funded by the **Ministry of Science and Technology**

What is the Structure of the Organisation?

- The Prime Minister of India (Ex-officio) is the President of this organisation.
- Vice President: Union Minister of Science and Technology (Ex-officio)
- Governing Body: The Director-General is the head of the governing body. The other ex-officio member is the finance secretary (expenditures).

WHAT IS PRAVASI BHARATIYA DIWAS CONVENTION 2023?

Recently, Prime Minister's Office said in a statement that the 17th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) will be held on January 9, 2023, in Indore, Madhya Pradesh.



About Pravasi Bharatiya Divas Convention 2023:

at, Behind Huda City Park, Rohtak 9215649666

- Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) Convention is the flagship event of the Government of India.
- It provides an important platform to engage and connect with overseas Indians and to enable the diaspora to interact with each other.
- **What is the theme of 2023 PBD?**
 - Diaspora: Reliable partners for India's progress in Amrit Kaal.

What are the important events to be organised?

- A Commemorative Postal Stamp 'Surakshit Jaayen, Prashikshit Jaayen' will be released to underline the importance of safe, legal, orderly and skilled migration.
- The PBD Convention will have five thematic Plenary sessions
 - Role of Diaspora Youth in Innovations and new Technologies.
 - Role of Indian Diaspora in promoting Indian Healthcare Eco-system in Amrit Kaal: Vision @2047.
 - Leveraging the soft power of India - Goodwill through craft, cuisine & creativity.
 - Enabling global mobility of Indian workforce – Role of Indian Diaspora.
 - Harnessing the potential of diaspora entrepreneurs towards an inclusive approach to nation-building.

What are the Key facts about PBD?

- 9th January was chosen as the day to celebrate PBD, as it was on this day in 1915 that Mahatma Gandhi, who returned to India from South Africa, led India's freedom struggle.
- This convention is being held every year since 2003 but in 2015 it was revised and was decided to be celebrated every two years.
- It was then a theme-based conference that was set up every year during the interim period.
- PBD Conventions are held **once every two year**.

CENSUS TO BE DELAYED AGAIN

Why in news?

- The Census enumeration, which was scheduled to take place in 2021, has been further pushed to 2024-25 until further orders.
- The Census enumeration is to be preceded by house-listing enumeration where the exercise for National Population Register (NPR) is to be held.

Census in India

- Population Census provides basic statistics on state of human resources, demography, culture and economic structure at local, regional and national level.
- Beginning in the year 1872, when the first census was conducted non-synchronously, the census enumeration exercise in India is carried out in every 10 years.
 - The first synchronous census was taken under British rule in 1881, by W.C. Plowden, Census Commissioner of India.
- The responsibility of conducting the decadal census rests with the Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner of India, Ministry of Home Affairs.

Legal/Constitutional basis of Census

- Population census is listed in **Union List (entry 69)** of Seventh Schedule in Indian Constitution.
- Census is conducted under the provisions of the **Census Act, 1948**.

Process of census enumeration

- The Census Operations in India have been carried out in two phases:
 - House-listing and Housing Census and
 - Population Enumeration.
- The Population Enumeration follows the Housing Census within a gap of six to eight months.
- In Population Enumeration phase each person is enumerated and her/his individual particulars like Age, Marital status, Religion, Schedule Cast/Schedule Tribe, Mother tongue, Education level, Disability, Economic activity, Migration, Fertility (for female) are collected.

Some of the features of upcoming census

- The ensuing decadal Census of India will be the 16th in series and 8th after independence.

- In the history of Indian Census, for the first time, the Census data will be collected digitally i.e., on Mobile App in the ensuing census.
- Also, self-enumeration facility will be provided for the first time in the forthcoming Census.

National Population Register (NPR)

- The NPR is a register of usual residents of the country. It is mandatory for every usual resident of India to register in the NPR.
 - According to the Citizenship (Registration of Citizens and issue of National Identity Cards) Rules, 2003, a usual resident is:
 - a person who has resided in a local area for the past 6 months or more; or
 - a person who intends to reside in that area for the next 6 months or more.
 - It includes both Indian citizens as well as a foreign citizen.
- The objective of the NPR is to create a comprehensive identity database of every usual resident in the country.
- The first National Population Register was prepared in 2010 and updating this data was done during 2015 by conducting door to door survey.
 - The next National Population Register was to be held along with the Census 2021.
 - Due to the outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic, the work of NPR updation and other related field activities got postponed.
- NPR is conducted by the Office of the Registrar General of India (RGI) under the Home Ministry.

Legal basis of NPR

- NPR is prepared under Rule 3 of the Citizenship (Registration of Citizens and Issue of National Identity Cards) Rules, 2003.
 - These rules were framed under the Citizenship Act, 1955.
- The NPR is different from the National Register of Citizens (NRC)
 - NRC is a register containing details of **Indian Citizens** living in India and outside India.

WHY IS JOSHIMATH SINKING?

Why in News?

- Due to land subsidence, roads and over 560 houses in Joshimath - a key transit point for tourists travelling to Badrinath and Hemkund Sahib - developed cracks, causing panic and protests among the local population.
- Officials said the disaster management department is conducting surveys at locations where new cracks have developed.

Where is Joshimath located?



- Joshimath/ Jyotirmath is a hilly town in **Chamoli** District in the Indian state of **Uttarakhand**, located on the **Rishikesh-Badrinath National Highway (NH-7)** at a height of 6150 feet (1875 m).
- The town (fall in high-risk seismic Zone-V) is traversed by running streams with a high gradient from Vishnuprayag, a confluence of the **Dhauliganga and the Alaknanda rivers**.
- It is a gateway to several Himalayan Mountain climbing expeditions, trekking trails (Auli, Valley of Flowers) and pilgrim centres like **Badrinath and Hemkund Sahib**.
- Joshimath is also of **great strategic importance** to the Indian armed forces and is home to one of the Army's most important cantonments.
- It is home to one of the four cardinal maths or monasteries established by **Adi Shankara** - Sringeri in Karnataka, Dwarka in Gujarat, Puri in Odisha and **Joshimath** near Badrinath in Uttarakhand.
- A 2022 report (by the Wadia Institute of Himalayan Geology) stated that the area around Joshimath is covered with **thick layers of overburdened material**.

Why is Joshimath sinking?

- **Joshimath is located on the site of an ancient landslide:** This was found in a 1976 report (by government-appointed Mishra Commission), meaning scientists and geologists working in the area **have been sounding the alarm for decades.**
- **Geography of the town:** Scattered rocks in the area are covered with old landslide debris comprising boulders, gneissic rocks (highly weathered), and **loose soil** (due to seepage from streams uphill), with a **low bearing capacity.**
- **High rate of construction:** Increased construction, hydroelectric projects, and the widening of the NH have made the slopes highly unstable in the last couple of decades.
- **Erosion:** Due to the running streams from Vishnuprayag and sliding along the natural streams are the other reasons behind the city's fate.
- **The Rishi Ganga flood disaster:** This has worsened the situation, followed by incessant rainfall between August to October in 2021.

What can be done to save Joshimath?

- **The urgent need is to relocate** the residents to a safer place and **then reimagine the town's planning** to accommodate the new variables and the changing geographical factors.
- **Drainage and sewer planning** (as more and more waste is seeping into the soil, loosening it from within) is one of the biggest factors that needs to be studied and redeveloped.
- **Experts recommend a complete shutdown** of development and hydroelectric projects in the region.
- Experts have also suggested **replantation in the region**, especially at the vulnerable sites to **retain soil capacity.**
- **There is a need for a coordinated** effort between the government and civil bodies with the aid of military organisations like the **Border Roads Organisation (BRO)** to save Joshimath.
- A sufficient number of National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) and State DRF teams should be deployed and helicopter facilities should be provided, if required.