

RAISINA DIALOGUE



The ninth edition of the Raisina Dialogue will be held from February 21 to 23rd in New Delhi.

About Raisina Dialogue:

- It is an annual conference on **geopolitics and geoeconomics**, which aims to address the most challenging issues faced by the world.
- It is **held annually since 2016** in New Delhi.
- The conference is attended by people from political, business, media, and civil society backgrounds.
- The Dialogue is structured as a multi-stakeholder, cross-sectoral discussion, involving heads of state, cabinet ministers and local government officials, who are joined by thought leaders from the private sector, media and academia.

It is organised by the **Observer Research Foundation (ORF)** in partnership with the **Ministry of External Affairs**, Government of India.

- The **theme of the 2024** edition is “**Chaturanga: Conflict, Contest, Cooperate, Create,**”

During the three-day conference, the participants will engage with each other over six “thematic pillars”. These include:

- Tech Frontiers: Regulations & Realities
- Peace with the Planet: Invest & Innovate
- War & Peace: Armouries & Asymmetries
- Decolonising Multilateralism: Institutions & Inclusion
- The Post 2030 Agenda: People & Progress
- Defending Democracy: Society & Sovereignty,

MODEL CODE OF CONDUCT (MCC)



MCC is a set of guidelines intended to regulate political parties and candidates during elections to ensure that the conduct of polls by the Election Commission of India (ECI) is free and fair.

- This is something **political parties and candidates voluntarily agree to**.
- The ECI ensures observance of the MCC by a political party in power and contesting candidates for conducting free and fair elections under Article 324 of the Constitution of India.
- Salient features of the Model Code of Conduct lay down how political parties, contesting candidates and party(s) in power should conduct themselves during the process of elections i.e. on their **general conduct during electioneering, holding meetings and processions, poll day activities and functioning of the party in power etc.**
- MCC also ensures that **official machinery for electoral purposes is not misused**. Further, it is also ensured that **electoral offences, malpractices, and corrupt practices are prevented** by all means.
- The code comes into effect from the time the EC announces the schedule of elections and will be in force till the results are announced.

Applicability:

- During general elections to the Lok Sabha, the code is applicable throughout the country.
- During general elections to the Legislative Assembly of the state, the code is applicable in the entire State.
- During bye-elections, the MCC would be applicable in the area of the concerned Constituency only.
- **Is MCC Legally Enforceable?**
 - The MCC by itself is **not legally enforceable** but **certain provisions** of the MCC may be **enforced through** invoking corresponding provisions in **other statutes** such as the Representation of the People Act, 1951, IPC and CrPC.

NARCOTIC DRUGS AND PSYCHOTROPIC SUBSTANCES (NDPS) ACT, 1985

In a significant legal development, the Supreme Court recently overturned an order granting anticipatory bail to a respondent accused under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985 (NDPS Act).



About Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, 1985:

- The NDPS Act prohibits any individual from engaging in any activity consisting of the production, cultivation, sale, purchase, transport, storage, and/or consumption of any narcotic drug or psychotropic substance.
- Objectives:
 - To take measures for preventing, combating, and regulating operations relating to narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances.
 - To provide for the forfeiture of property derived from or used in, illicit traffic in narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances.
 - To implement the provisions of the international conventions on Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances and for all relevant matters.
 - To add or omit the list of psychotropic substances.

What are Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances?

- “Narcotic Drug” means coca leaf, cannabis (hemp), opium, poppy straw, and includes all manufactured drugs.
- “Psychotropic substance” means any substance, natural or synthetic, or any natural material or any salt or preparation of such substance or material included in the list of psychotropic substances specified in the Schedule.
- **Applicability:** The NDPS Act prohibits a person from manufacture/production/cultivation/ possession/sale/purchase / transport / store / consume any narcotic drug or psychotropic substance without due permission from the appropriate authorities.

WHAT IS THE GLOBAL INITIATIVE ON DIGITAL HEALTH (GIDH)?

Achieving one of the three priority areas agreed upon during India's G20 presidency in 2023, the World Health Organization (WHO) recently launched the Global Initiative on Digital Health (GIDH) virtually.



- It is a **WHO-managed network** aiming to amplify and align resources toward country-led digital health transformation through strengthened collaboration and knowledge exchange.
- It is a platform for **sharing knowledge and digital products among countries**.
- The initiative aims to achieve the **following objectives through collaborative efforts**:
 - **Assess and prioritise the country's needs** for sustainable digital health transformation.
 - **Increase the alignment of country-level digital health resources** and unfunded priorities.
 - Support the **accelerated achievement** of the strategic objectives of the **Global Strategy on Digital Health 2020-2025**.
 - **Build capacity and converge efforts** to encourage local development, maintenance, and adaptation of digital health technologies to continuously changing needs.

The initiative will be a **network of networks with four main components**:

- **country needs tracker**
- **country resource portal** (a map of resources available in a country)
- **transformation toolbox** that will share quality-assured digital tools
- **knowledge exchange**.
- GIDH will support countries in three ways: by listening to their needs, by aligning resources to avoid fragmentation and overlap, and by providing quality-assured products.

Membership: Membership is open to all institutions engaged in digital health.

HAVING PANCHAYATS AS SELF-GOVERNING INSTITUTIONS

Context

- It has been three decades since the implementation of the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments Acts, which aimed to establish local bodies as institutions of local self-government.
- Today, the status of devolution in India's Panchayati Raj institutions varies across states. While some states have made significant progress, others lag behind.
- Thus, it is crucial to analyse the fiscal devolution aspect, emphasising the importance of state government commitment in making Panchayati Raj institutions effective at the grassroots level.

The Current State of Fiscal Devolution and Own Source of Revenue

- **Reliance on External Funding**
 - The 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments Acts emphasised fiscal devolution, urging Panchayati Raj institutions and urban local bodies to be financially self-reliant.
 - These amendments specified the need for local bodies to generate their own revenues to reduce dependency on grants from higher tiers of government.
 - The current situation reveals that Panchayati Raj institutions are still heavily reliant on external funding, with only 1% of their revenue derived from taxes.

Panchayats Failure to Generate Own Income Through Taxation

- The data highlights that despite the constitutional provisions, Panchayats are not effectively leveraging taxation as a primary source of income.
- The data indicates that a mere 1% of revenue is earned through taxes, while a substantial 80% comes from the Central government and 15% from the States.
- This discrepancy raises questions about the commitment of state governments towards decentralisation and the overall success of the devolution initiatives undertaken over the past 30 years.

Way Forward

- **Enhanced Role of Gram Sabhas**
 - Gram Sabhas **play a crucial role in fostering self-sufficiency and sustainable development** at the grassroots level.
 - **They can engage in planning, decision-making, and implementation of revenue-generating initiatives**, ensuring transparency & inclusive participation.
 - **They have the authority to impose taxes, fees, and levies**, directing the funds towards local development projects, public services, and social welfare programmes.
 - **Through transparent financial management and inclusive participation, gram sabhas ensure accountability and foster community trust**, ultimately empowering villages to become economically independent and resilient.
 - Thus, **gram Sabhas need to promote entrepreneurship, and foster partnerships** with external stakeholders to enhance the effectiveness of revenue generation efforts
- **Overcoming the Dependency Syndrome**
 - To overcome the dependency syndrome and ensure self-sufficiency, **there is a need for concerted efforts at all levels of governance.**
 - **Elected representatives and the public must be educated** on the significance of raising revenue for the development of Panchayati Raj institutions.
 - Ultimately, **the dependency syndrome for grants has to be minimised** and in due course, panchayats will be able to survive on their own resources.

Conclusion

- **The constitutional amendments set forth specific details on fiscal devolution**, emphasising the generation of own revenues by Panchayati Raj institutions.
- **Dedicated efforts at the state and central levels are essential for Panchayati Raj institutions to achieve financial independence** and truly function as self-governing entities.

RHODAMINE-B

Recently, the Tamil Nadu government banned the sale and production of cotton candy in the state after it was found that the chemical Rhodamine-B was being used for making it.



About Rhodamine-B:

- It is a **water-soluble chemical compound**.
- While it **appears green in powder form**, it turns vivid fluorescent pink when it comes in contact with water.
- It is a chemical commonly used for **dyeing in the textile, paper, leather, and paint industries** as a colouring agent that helps in attaining the red and pink spectrum.
- "As per the Food Safety Standards Act, 2006, preparation, packaging, importing, selling and serving food items with Rhodamine-B in wedding ceremonies and other public events is a **punishable offence**."
- It is an **industrial dye** which is not allowed in food anywhere in the world as it is toxic.

Why is it harmful?

- Researchers have identified that if food containing this chemical is consumed regularly, it can **cause damage to the cerebellum tissue** in the brain and to the brainstem that connects the brain to the spinal cord.
- These damages can lead to functional abnormalities and can **hinder human motor functioning**.
- The chemical is toxic to humans and can **cause oxidative stress** on cells and tissues if ingested.
- It becomes particularly hazardous when it is mixed with food products, **leading to cancer and tumours over time**.

MCA UNVEILS REGIME TO CRACK DOWN ON CARTELS

Why in News?

- The Corporate Affairs Ministry (MCA) has notified the introduction of the 'Leniency plus' regime, which is already recognised in jurisdictions like the UK, US, Singapore and Brazil.
- This will pave the way for the **Competition Commission of India (CCI)** to roll out a **new Cartel detecting tool** that is expected to revolutionise Anti-Trust enforcement in the country.

Competition Commission of India (CCI)

The Competition Commission of India (CCI) was established in March 2009 (established in 2003 but became fully functional in 2009) by the Government of India under the Competition Act, 2002 for the administration, implementation, and enforcement of the Act.

It is a statutory and quasi-judicial body and works under the Ministry of Corporate Affairs.

Competition Act, 2002: it repealed and replaced the Monopolies and Restrictive Trade Practices Act, 1969 (MRTP Act).

Under the Act, the Competition Commission of India and the Competition Appellate Tribunal (COMAT) have been established.

The Act prohibits anti-competitive agreements, abuse of dominant position by enterprises, and regulates combinations (acquisition, acquiring of control, and Merger and acquisition), which causes or are likely to cause an appreciable adverse effect on competition within India.

In 2017, functions of the COMAT were subsumed under National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT).

Composition:

It has a chairperson and 6 Members appointed by the Central Government.

These members are appointed for 5 years or 65 years of age (whichever comes first).

However, these members are eligible for reappointment.

Objectives and functions of CCI

- To Eliminate practices having an adverse effect on competition
- To promote and sustain competition
- To protect the interests of consumers
- To ensure freedom of trade in the markets of India
- To Establish a robust competitive environment through:
- Proactive engagement with all stakeholders, including consumers, industry, government, and international jurisdictions.
- Being a knowledge-intensive organization with high competence level.

What is Cartelisation?

- According to the CCI, cartelisation is a practice in which a group of competitors (manufacturers, sellers, distributors, etc.) form an agreement to limit competition.
- **It reduces output while increasing prices**, driving customers out of the market (if they refuse to pay a higher price) and unknowingly transferring wealth (if they want to pay).
- **A cartel protects its members from full market exposure**, which reduces costs while harming overall economic performance and innovation.
- **Cartels vs monopoly:** A monopolist completely dominates a particular market (since there is no rival), whereas cartels are formed (with the goal of limiting competition) to dominate the market.
- **The Competition Act of 2002** intends to foster and preserve market competition, safeguard consumer interests, and secure market players' freedom to trade.
 - It created the CCI to eliminate practices that harm market competition.
- **The Competition (Amendment) Act 2023** codifies cartel facilitators' liabilities. The CCI can now impose fines of up to 10% of an enterprise's entire global turnover.