



## Current Affairs of the Day

### PAPER 3:

#### ➤ **Economy:**

1. 1 lakh loans sanctioned for street vendors
2. PM Street Vendor's Atma Nirbhar Nidhi (PM SVANidhi) scheme

#### ➤ **Environment & Biodiversity:**

1. NGT distance norm not for licensed quarries: HC
2. Forest loss threatens hornbills

#### ➤ **Health:**

1. Study finds poor access to abortion drugs



## NGT distance norm not for licensed quarries: HC

- The Kerala High Court has ruled that quarries during their valid period of licence or lease need not fulfil the distance norm of 200 metres from residential and inhabited areas set by the National Green Tribunal (NGT).
- They only need to maintain the distance norm of 50 metres as contemplated in Kerala Minor Mineral Concession Rules.
- However, the court made it clear that licence or lease of quarries whose period has expired and which did not follow the distance norms set by the NGT should not be renewed. Neither should fresh licence or lease be granted to quarries that did not maintain the NGT-set distance norm.
- The court ordered that fresh or renewal applications may be processed and such applications need not be rejected solely on the ground of non-fulfilment of the new distance norm stipulated by the NGT.

## Study finds poor access to abortion drugs

### Key findings:

- Over-regulation of drugs to curb gender-biased sex selection such as through government programmes like 'Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao' has hindered access to safe, legal and cost-effective abortion, according to a survey across six States which found an "overwhelming shortage" of abortion pills or medical abortion drugs.
- A study conducted among 1,500 chemists in six States by the Foundation for Reproductive Health Services India (FRHSI) indicated a severe shortage of medical abortion (MA) drugs in five out of the six States surveyed, with abysmal stocking in Madhya Pradesh (6.5%), Punjab (1%), Tamil Nadu (2%), Haryana (2%) and Delhi (34%). The only State that seemed to be better was Assam (69.6%).

### Legal barriers:

- The findings show that State-wise regulatory and legal barriers are the key reasons why 79% of the chemists surveyed refrained from stocking these



drugs. As many as 54.8% of chemists also reported that medical abortion drugs were over-regulated as compared to other prescription drugs.

- Abortion pills are different from emergency contraceptive pills. The latter are taken 72 hours after unprotected sex to prevent an unintended pregnancy. Abortion pills or MA drugs are abortifacients which terminate a pregnancy by expelling an embryo or foetus.
- The lack of availability of MA drugs forces many women to seek a surgical abortion from a facility, reducing her choice.
- It will also reduce access to safe abortion and force them to seek services from unsafe providers as there are only 16,296 approved abortion facilities in the private sector in the country, whereas MA drugs can be provided by an obstetrician or a gynaecologist, who are estimated to number about 60,000-70,000, the study highlights.
- A Lancet study on the incidence of abortion and pregnancy in 2015 estimated that 81% of abortions annually are medical abortions and nearly 90% of abortions are sought in the first trimester.

### Cost effective

- Moreover, MA drugs are also cost-effective. The cost of first trimester surgical abortion varies from ₹2,000-5,000 in Tier 2 and Tier 3 towns and smaller nursing homes or clinics. In these towns, the cost of abortion pills plus the consultation fee is in the range of ₹700-1,000.
- During COVID-19, the lack of access to abortion services is likely to have worsened as not only travelling to a surgical facility is challenging, but the cost of such a procedure may have gone up as clinics charge for PPE (personal protection equipment) and require a mandatory COVID-19 test.

### Forest loss threatens hornbills

- A study The study by Chintan Sheth of the Bengaluru-based National Centre for Biological Sciences and Aparajita Datta and Devathi Parashuram of the Mysuru-based Nature Conservation Foundation was published in *Silva Fennica*, a forest journal of Finland.



## Key findings:

- Based on satellite data has flagged a high rate of deforestation in a major hornbill habitat in Arunachal Pradesh.
- Using fine-scale satellite imagery, a trio of ecologists assessed the changes in forest cover of the 1,064 sq.km. Papum Reserve Forest (RF) adjoining the Pakke Tiger Reserve as well as a part of Assam affected by illegal felling and ethnic conflict.
- Papum RF is a nesting habitat of three species of the large, colourful fruit-eating hornbills: Great, Wreathed and Oriental Pied. The 862 sq.km. Pakke reserve houses a fourth species, the Rufous-Necked.
- The satellite data pointed to alarming deforestation rates in Papum RF with annual loss rates as high as 8.2 sq.km. as per estimates from 2013-2017 where forest cover declined to 76% of the total RF area.

## Illegal logging:

- Hornbills used to be hunted for their casques — upper beak — and feathers for headgear despite being cultural symbols of some ethnic communities in the northeast, specifically the Nyishi of Arunachal Pradesh. But a 20-year-old conservation programme entailing the use of fibre-glass beaks reduced the threat to the birds to a large extent.
- Illegal logging, however, has however led to fewer tall trees where the birds nest. While the protected areas such as Pakke are better guarded, the forests are often under pressure due to agricultural expansion, conversion to plantations or logging.
- According to the Global Forest Watch 2020 report, the State lost 1,110 sq.km. of primary forest from 2002-2019.

## 1 lakh loans sanctioned for street vendors

- The Union Housing and Urban Affairs Ministry on Wednesday said over 5 lakh applications had been received under the PM Street Vendor's



**AtmaNirbharNidhi (PM SVANidhi) scheme** for street vendors since it started on July 2 and 1 lakh loans had been sanctioned already.

### **Economic relief package:**

- The scheme, which was a part of the government's economic relief package announced in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, gives street vendors working capital loans of up to ₹10,000 to be paid back in one year.
- The MoHUA statement said the scheme was meant to benefit 50 lakh street vendors across the country resume work after the lockdown.

### **Value Added Information**

#### **PM Street Vendor's Atma Nirbhar Nidhi (PM SVANidhi) scheme:**

##### **Overview of the scheme:**

- It is a special micro-credit facility plan to provide affordable loan of up to ₹10,000 to more than 50 lakh street vendors, who had their businesses operational on or before 24 March 2020.
- The scheme is valid until March 2022.
- Small Industries Development Bank of India is the technical partner for implementation of this scheme.
- It will manage the credit guarantee to the lending institutions through Credit Guarantee Fund Trust for Micro and Small Enterprises.

##### **Loans under the scheme:**

- Under the scheme, vendors can avail working capital loan of up to ₹10,000, which is repayable in monthly instalments within one year.
- On timely/early repayment of the loan, an interest subsidy of 7% per annum will be credited to the bank accounts of beneficiaries through Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) on six-months basis.
- There will be no penalty on early repayment of loan.

##### **Eligibility:**

- The scheme is applicable to vendors, hawkers, the lewalas, rehriwalas, the liphad walas in different areas/contexts who supply goods and services. Street vendors belonging to the surrounding peri-urban/rural areas are also included.



## Need for:

- The lockdown has affected the lives and livelihoods of many especially daily wagers including street vendors who businesses were affected due to the restrictions.
- Street vendors usually work with a small capital base taken on very high interest rates from informal sources. Further, they might have consumed their savings and high cost capital during the lockdown.
- Therefore, there is an urgent need to provide affordable credit for working capital through formal banking channel to street vendors to help them resume the business.