



Current Affairs of the Day

GS Paper - III

- Meghalaya govt. talks tough on illegal coal mining
- Gehlot govt. brings M-sand policy for construction works
- 'Data privacy can take the form of non-price competition'
- India set to grow 11.5% in 2021: IMF



Meghalaya govt. talks tough on illegal coal mining

Meghalaya has said it would crackdown on illegal coal mining after the death of six workers in a 180-foot coal pit on January 21.

Highlights:

1. Six miners, all from Assam, died after a crane collapsed into the pit in East Jaintia Hills district on January 21. The site is not far from Ksan where at least 15 miners drowned in December 2018.
2. The National Green Tribunal banned illegal rat-hole coal mining in 2014.

Prelims:

Q. Consider the following about the item Safety, welfare and health of workers employed in mines as enumerated in Article 246

1. It comes under the Concurrent List
2. Mine Safety is enforced by Directorate- General of Mines Safety (DGMS), under the Union Ministry of Mines

Which of the above is/are correct?

- a. 1 only
- b. 2 only
- c. Both 1 and 2
- d. Neither 1 nor 2

Gehlot govt. brings M-sand policy for construction works

News: The Rajasthan government brought the much-awaited policy on manufactured sand (M-sand), giving industry status to the units producing it for construction work and reducing the dependence on riverbed sand saving critical riverine ecosystems. The Supreme Court had banned illegal mining on river beds in 2017.

Highlights:

1. The policy would help create employment opportunities through new units and resolve the issue of huge quantities of waste generated in the mining areas.



2. Sufficient quantity of sand for construction is not available in Rajasthan in the wake of judicial orders and environment-related procedures. The new policy will ensure availability of M-sand as a long-term alternative to river sand.
3. The policy will enable the investors to set up M-sand units by utilising the incentives offered by the State government. It will also help in environmental protection and generate faith among the public in the efficacy of M-sand for construction works.
4. The illegal sand mining is rampant in India destroying the environment, habitats, endangering water-food security. To deal with this issue M-sand promotion policy is needed for the whole country to meet the over ballooning construction sector demand.

Background:

Sand accounts for 35 per cent of the volume of concrete used in the building construction industry and as the country rides a growth trajectory, its demand has ballooned and led to the plunder of river beds.

The Enforcement and Monitoring Guidelines for Sand Mining 2020

1. Following a series of orders by the National Green Tribunal in 2018, the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change have for the first time released guidelines to monitor and check illegal sand mining in the country.
2. The Enforcement and Monitoring Guidelines for Sand Mining 2020 released by the Ministry this month include directions to states to carry out river audits, put detailed survey reports of all mining areas online and in the public domain, conduct replenishment studies of river beds, constantly monitor mining with drones, aerial surveys, ground surveys and set up dedicated task forces at district levels.
3. The guidelines also push for online sales and purchase of sand and other riverbed materials to make the process transparent. They propose night surveillance of mining activity through night-vision drones.

'Data privacy can take the form of non-price competition'

Data privacy can take the form of non-price competition and abuse of dominance can lower privacy protection, a study by the Competition Commission of India (CCI) has said.



Highlights:

1. The study also made observations about other non-price factors such as quality of service (QoS), data speeds and bundled offerings, which are likely to be the new drivers of competitive rivalry between service providers in telecom sector in addition to just price.
2. CCI noted that an aspect of data in the context of competition in digital communications market is the conflict between allowing access and protecting consumer privacy.
3. Abuse of dominance can take the form of lowering the privacy protection and therefore fall within the ambit of antitrust as low privacy standard implies lack of consumer welfare.
4. On other non-price factors of competition, CCI found that consumers ranked network coverage at the top followed by customer service, tariff packaging and lower tariffs as the most important factors for the preference of a particular network.

India set to grow 11.5% in 2021: IMF

The IMF on Tuesday projected an 11.5% growth rate for India in 2021, making the country the only major economy to register double-digit growth this year amidst the COVID-19 pandemic.

Highlights:

1. The International Monetary Fund's growth projections for India reflected a rebound in the economy, which is estimated to have contracted by 8% in 2020 due to the pandemic.
2. China is next with 8.1% growth in 2021 followed by Spain (5.9%) and France (5.5%). The IMF said that in 2020 China is the only major country which registered a positive growth rate of 2.3%.

'Faster pace of recovery'

1. India has seen a somewhat faster pace of recovery.
2. According to the IMF, India actually has taken very decisive action, very decisive steps to deal with the pandemic and to deal with the economic consequences of it.