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Tribunals Reforms Ordinance 2021

- The Tribunals Reforms (Rationalisation and Conditions of Service) Ordinance 2021 has been challenged in the Supreme Court as no judicial impact assessment was conducted prior to abolishing the tribunals.
- It has abolished appellate tribunals and authorities (such as the Film Certification Appellate Tribunal) under nine laws without stakeholder consultation and transferred their jurisdiction to other judicial bodies.
- The Nine laws amended are,
 1. The Cinematograph Act, 1952.
 2. The Trade Marks Act, 1999.
 3. The Copyright Act, 1957.
 4. The Customs Act, 1962.
 5. The Patents Act, 1970.
 6. The Airports Authority of India Act, 1994.
 7. The Control of National Highways (Land and Traffic) Act, 2002.
 8. The Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999.
- The Ordinance has amended the Finance Act 2017 to include provisions related to the composition of search-cum-selection committees, and term of office of members in the Act itself.
 1. It has incorporated the suggestions made in Madras Bar Association v. Union of India (2020) on the composition of the committee and its role in disciplinary proceedings.
 2. But, it has fixed four-year tenure for Chairpersons and members of tribunals and ignored the court's order for fixing a five-year term.
- The Centre is yet to constitute a National Tribunals Commission (NTC).

Judicial Impact Assessment

- Judicial Impact Assessment was introduced in the Supreme Court's order in Rojer Mathew v. South Indian Bank, 2019.
- It is a methodology to calculate the workload change that the judiciary has to bear due to procedural or substantive law changes and then calculating the expected indicative costs for the same change.
- It is a process whereby the government can anticipate the likely cost of

implementing legislation through the courts and help deliver timely justice to litigants.

- Technically, operational impact has the most obvious effect on the courts and it is the most frequently addressed impact in JIA.

National Tribunals Commission

- The idea of an NTC was first mooted in *L. Chandra Kumar v. Union of India* (1997).
- The NTC must be established vide a constitutional amendment or be backed by a statute that guarantees its independence.
- It is an independent umbrella body to,
 1. Supervise the functioning of tribunals,
 2. Function as an independent recruitment body to develop and operationalise the procedure for disciplinary proceedings and appointment of tribunal members.
 3. Take care of tribunals' administrative and infrastructural needs,
- The NTC could pave the way for the separation of the administrative and judicial functions carried out by various tribunals.
- A 'corporatised' structure of NTC with a Board, a CEO and a Secretariat will allow it to scale up its services and provide requisite administrative support to all tribunals across the country.
- As the Finance Ministry has been vested with the task for tribunals until the NTC is constituted, it must come up with a transition plan.

Film Certification Appellate Tribunal

- The Film Certification Appellate Tribunal (FCAT) is a statutory body constituted under the Section 5D of the Cinematograph Act, 1952.
- It was constituted by Ministry of Information & Broadcasting in 1983.
- Headquartered in New Delhi, the Tribunal is headed by Chairperson (generally a retired Supreme Court judge) assisted by four members.
- A Secretary is appointed by the Government of India to look after the day-to-day affairs of the Tribunal.
- The Tribunal hears the appeals filed under Section 5C of the Act.
- Under Section 5C, any applicant for a Certificate in respect of a film who is aggrieved by an order of the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC), can file an Appeal directly.

Winchcombe Meteorite

- A piece of the Winchcombe meteorite that touched down in the Winchcombe town in Gloucestershire in the UK in February 2021 will be displayed at the

National History Museum.

- Winchcombe Meteorite is a 103 gram fragment of black rock resembling coal. It is “astonishingly rare” as it is a carbonaceous meteorite.
 - Out of about 65,000 known meteorite types, only about 1,000 are of carbonaceous type.
- Winchcombe Meteorite dates back to the birth of the solar system nearly 4.5 billion years ago and therefore examining it may offer clues about the beginning of the solar system and maybe even the Earth.
- Space agencies have launched specific missions to asteroids to be able to study them - [OSIRIS-REx](#), [Hayabusa2](#) and [other missions](#).

Terminologies

- **Meteoroids** - They are objects in space that range in size from dust grains to small asteroids. They are “space rocks”.
- **Meteors** - When meteoroids enter the Earth’s atmosphere they are called meteors.
- **Meteorites** - If a meteoroid enters the Earth’s atmosphere and hits the ground, it is called a meteorite.

Asian Gracile Skink

- A new species of skink was discovered at Anaikatti hills in Coimbatore - Asian Gracile Skink.
- Named *Subdoluseps nilgiriensis*, the reptile is closely related to *Subdoluseps pruthi* found in parts of the Eastern Ghats.
- It was found in a dry deciduous area, showing that even the dry zones of our country are home to unrealised skink diversity.
- It is currently considered a **vulnerable species** under IUCN, as there are potential threats.
- **Threats** - Seasonal forest fires, housing constructions and brick kiln industries in the area, rapid urbanisation, which has increased the road networks in the area.

Skinks

- Most skinks are diurnal and usually secretive. They are non-venomous.
- They resemble snakes because of the often-inconspicuous limbs and the way they move on land. Such resemblance result in humans killing them.
- Skinks usually feed on insects like termites, crickets and small spiders.

Protein-Antibody Conjugates

- The researchers from University of Massachusetts, in the U.S. have designed

nanoparticles called Protein-Antibody Conjugates (PACs).

- The PACs combines two different approaches that can be used for targeted drug delivery to treat diseases. They are,
 1. **Biologics**, where the idea is to target a defective protein in the system by delivering proteins to it.
 2. **Antibody-drug conjugates** - Drug molecules can be attached to the antibody, forming drug-antibody conjugates.
- PACs have a protein attached to the antibody that can precisely deliver drugs to specific cells. This could have an impact on incurable diseases.
- PACs can be used to treat undruggable cases, because with proteins we can design drug molecules that will bind to the target.

Record High Rice and Wheat Exports

- In 2020-21, India exported close to 20 million tonnes (mt) (Rs 69,331.45 crore) of grains and also distributed a record 92 mt of rice and wheat.
- A 92 was distributed from the central pool included,
 - a. 60.32 mt under the National Food Security Act and other welfare schemes,
 - b. 31.52 mt under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana, Atmanirbhar Bharat Package (for returning migrant labourers) and assorted programmes launched in the wake of Covid-19 lockdown.
- The total grain channelled through the public distribution system (PDS) in 2020-21 was nearly 50% higher than in normal years.
- These twin records are a remarkable story of surplus production and stocks in public warehouses.
- Even after the unprecedented offtake, rice and wheat stocks in the central pool, at 77.23 mt on April 1, 2021, stood above the required minimum buffer of 21.04 mt.
- The competitiveness of Indian rice and wheat has been enabled by the following factors. They are,
 - a. Indian grains being available at sub-MSP,
 - b. Increase in international prices has made exports from India a viable proposition.
- The UN Food and Agricultural Organization's global cereal price index (2014-2016=100) is currently ruling at its highest since 2014.

FAO Food Price Index

- The FAO Monthly Cereal Price Index is part of the UN FAO Food Price Index (FFPI).
- The FFPI is a monthly measure of change in international prices of a basket

of five major food commodities - Cereals, Sugar, Dairy, Vegetable oil and Meat products.

- It consists of the average of five commodity group price indices weighted by the average export shares of each of the groups over 2014-2016.
- **Sub-indices** - FAO Cereal Price Index, FAO Vegetable Oil Price Index, FAO Dairy Price Index, FAO Meat Price Index, FAO Sugar Price Index.

Source: The Hindu, The Indian Express

