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Rights of OCI

- The government has notified a consolidated list of rights and restrictions of the Overseas Citizens of India (OCI).
- [Previously, these rights have been notified in 2005, 2007 and 2009.]
- OCI cardholders would need **prior permission** for a set of activities - research, journalism, mountaineering, missionary or Tablighi work, and visits to restricted areas.
- Foreign nationals granted any type of visa and OCI cardholders shall not be permitted to engage themselves in Tabligh work.
- There will be **no restriction in visiting** religious places and attending normal religious activities like attending religious discourses.
- But, **preaching** religious ideologies, making speeches in religious places, spreading conversion etc. **will not be allowed**.
- The OCIs have been granted the right of **multiple entry lifelong visa** to India for any purpose.
- They are exempted from registration with the Foreigners' Regional Registration Officer (FRRO) for any length of stay in India.
- They can enjoy this exemption provided they intimate the FRRO by email whenever there is a change in their permanent residential address and occupation.
- **Parity with Indian nationals** - OCI cardholders have been given parity with Indian nationals in the matter of domestic air fares, entry fees to monuments and public places.
- **Parity with NRIs** - They will enjoy parity with Non Resident Indians (NRIs) in adoption of children, appearing in competitive exams, etc.,
- This parity with NRIs is available in the purchase or sale of immovable property barring agricultural land and farmhouses, and pursuing professions like doctors, lawyers, architects, and chartered accountants.
- The OCIs can appear for **all-India entrance tests** such as NEET, JEE (Mains), JEE (Advanced) or such other tests to make them eligible for admission only against any NRI seat or any supernumerary seat.
- [The OCI cardholder shall not be eligible for admission against any seat reserved exclusively for Indian citizens.]
- The OCI cardholder shall have the same rights and privileges as a foreigner when,

1. All other economic, financial and educational fields not specified in this notification or
2. All the rights and privileges not covered by the notifications made by the Reserve Bank of India under the Foreign Exchange Management Act, 1999 (42 of 1999).

OCI Guidelines

- Now, people of Indian origin (PIO) and Indian diaspora having overseas citizens of India (OCI) card are not required to carry their old passports, along with the new passport and OCI card, for travel to India.
- As per the current OCI guidelines (in force since 2005), an OCI card is to be re-issued each time a new passport is acquired by the cardholder up to the age of 20 years or after completing 50 years of age.
- Now, the Indian government has decided to grant extension of time till December 31, 2021, to get the OCI cards re-issued.

Methanol as an Alternative

- Indian government's Department of Science and Technology (DST) explores methanol as an alternative to electric mobility, especially for heavy-duty commercial vehicles.
- Eight of the 18 points under 'DST's technology development' relate to reviews of methanol projects. They include,
 1. Utilisation of methanol and di-methyl ether (DME) in automotive engines using advanced combustion modes;
 2. Production of ultra-pure hydrogen from methanol for fuel cells;
 3. Development of an electronically controlled high-performance, hot-surface, methanol-powered ignition engine.
- **Production** - Methanol can be produced from natural gas, coal, carbon dioxide and by using biomass as feedstock.
- Most of the global methanol production comes from natural gas.
- As India has no natural gas, it could gasify coal (present abundantly in India) to make methanol and DME.
- BHEL and IIT Delhi are jointly working on a gasifier that is expected to produce a tonne of methanol a day, by the end of 2021.
- **Advantages** - Methanol is preferred as it is a clean liquid fuel (It betters diesel by 99% in SOx emissions, 60% in NOx, etc.)
- It boasts a high octane number (100), which means it 'knocks' less when ignited - it is easy to blend methanol with petrol (85).
- Methanol can be processed to make DME, a liquid fuel that closely resembles diesel. Existing diesel engines' compression ratios could be slightly modified

to use DME instead of diesel.

- It is also a feedstock for petrochemicals, which can be used to make olefins and propylene, among others.
- DME-blended LPG could be used for mass cooking.

African Elephants

- Based on latest population estimates, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) declares,
 1. African Forest elephants as 'Critically Endangered' and
 2. African Savanna elephants as 'Endangered'
- IUCN said that the threats to these species are poaching, and ongoing conversion of their habitats, primarily to agricultural and other land uses
- **African Forest Elephant (*Loxodonta cyclotis*)** live in forests of Central and West Africa.
- **African Savanna Elephant (*L. africana*)** live in the plains of sub-Saharan Africa.

Chilika Lake

- A study by the marine archaeology department of the National Institute of Oceanography (NIO) has found that the Chilika lake in Odisha was once part of the Bay of Bengal.
- **Formation** - The process of the formation of the Chilika, Asia's largest brackish water lake, might have begun in the later part of the Pleistocene epoch (20,000 years ago.)
- The sea is connected with the Chilika Lake near Satapada through a shallow and narrow connecting channel, which was obstructed by shoals, sand spits and sandbars.
- The lake became shallower due to the deposition of sediments brought by the Mahanadi as outflow from the lake was restricted.
- **History** - The Chilika once acted as a safe harbour for cargo ships bound for Southeast Asia and other parts of the world.
- Greek geographer Claudius Ptolemy (150 CE) described Palur or Paloura as an important port of Kalinga that is situated close to the 'point of departure' outside the southern tip of the Chilika lake at Kantiagarh.
- Stone anchors and hero stones from Manikapatna, Palur and the adjoining onshore regions of the Chilika suggest that the Chilika lake was in fact a part of the Bay of Bengal.
- Chinese pilgrim Xuanzang (7th century CE) recorded 'Che-li-ta-lo-Ching' as a flourishing port located at Chhatargarh on the banks of the Chilika.
- Brahmanda Purana says the Chilika was an important centre of trade and commerce, with ships sailing to Java, Malaya and Ceylon.

- Sanskrit poet Kalidas called the king of Kalinga 'Madhodhipati' or 'Lord of the Ocean'.

New Rules for Trusts and Non-profit Organisations

- The Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) has notified a new set of rules and application forms for trusts and non-profit organisations, which will help them to get tax exemption for their own income.
- Under the Section 10 of the Income Tax Act, there are incomes from certain funds, universities, educational institutions, hospitals, etc, that are not included in the total income for the taxation purpose.
- Contributions made to certain relief funds and charitable institutions can be claimed as a deduction under Section 80G of the Income Tax Act.
- But, only those donations made to the prescribed funds and institutions that have been defined in the notification qualify as a deduction.
- These rules and forms indicate the procedure and details to be complied in the forms for seeking registration of charitable & religious entities, hospitals, etc.
- As per Section 12A, the requirement for registration has been mandated for all the existing registered entities under 12AA as well as for the new entities seeking provisional registration.

Source: The Indian Express, Down To Earth, Business Line

