

## **1. Centre Amends Aadhaar Regulation**

**Prelims Syllabus:** Information Technology

**Mains Syllabus:** GS-III Awareness in the fields of IT, Space, Computers, Robotics, Nano-Technology, Bio-Technology and issues relating to intellectual property rights.

### **Why in News?**

- The Centre has recently amended Aadhaar regulations, advising card holders to update documents supporting their information at least once every 10 years from the date of enrolment to ensure the accuracy of the data.

### **What is Aadhaar?**

- A 12-digit unique identity for every Indian individual, including children and infants
- Enables identification for every resident Indian.
- Establishes uniqueness of every individual on the basis of demographic and biometric information.
- It is a voluntary service that every resident can avail irrespective of present documentation.
- Each individual will be given a single unique Aadhaar ID number.
- Aadhaar will provide a universal identity infrastructure which can be used by any identity-based application (like ration card, passport, etc.)

### **About the new regulations:**

- **Updating the documents:**
  - ✓ As per the regulations earlier, residents who were older than 15 years at the time of enrolment were recommended to update their biometric data every 10 years.
  - ✓ The process of updating documents is not mandatory.
- **Ensuring accuracy**
  - ✓ This process will help in ensuring the accuracy of information in the Central Identities Data Repository (CIDR).
- **Demographic information**
  - ✓ The amendment of the Aadhaar regulation is limited to updating demographic information and does not involve biometric data such as fingerprints.

### **Issues with Aadhar:**

- Aadhaar act allows cancellation of Aadhaar number for any reason by the government and citizens have no recourse.
- A Centralized database is a concern because once it is compromised everyone is at risk.

- There is no ID or address verification and there is no means of identifying fakes.
- There is no data protection law in place in India.
- Enrollment software hacks allowed foreign nationals to create Aadhaar numbers thus creating a national security risk.
- UIDAI does not have a monitoring mechanism but only an audit mechanism.
- Data goes to third parties vulnerability increases due to that.

### **Significance of Aadhar:**

- **Eliminate the leakages:** Increasing the accuracy of Aadhaar information is likely to help the government eliminate the leakage of benefit transfers from various schemes.
- **Jhan Dhan Yojana:** Aadhaar Card is used as the major document of proof when opening a bank account under the Pradhan Mantri Jhan Dhan Yojana in the nation.
- **Direct Benefit Transfer:** Aadhaar Card linked bank accounts will get their set of LPG Subsidy directly accredited in the bank account.
- **Monthly Pension and Provident Fund:** a person needs to link their Aadhaar Card to their respective pension account and provident fund.
- **Passport and Voter ID:** Aadhaar Card will relieve you of the lengthy procedure while obtaining Passport.

### **Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) & Aadhar:**

- **Aadhaar Act & Establishment of UIDAI:**
  - ✓ The UIDAI is a statutory authority established under the provisions of the Aadhaar (Targeted Delivery of Financial and Other Subsidies, Benefits and Services) Act, 2016 ("Aadhaar Act 2016") by the Government of India, under the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY).
- **Need of UIDAI: UIDAI was created to issue Unique Identification numbers (UID), named as "Aadhaar", to all residents of India. The UID had to be -**
  - ✓ Robust enough to eliminate duplicate and fake identities, and
  - ✓ Verifiable and authenticable in an easy, cost-effective way.
- **Under the Aadhaar Act 2016, UIDAI is responsible for:**
  - ✓ Aadhaar enrolment and authentication, including operation and management of all stages of Aadhaar life cycle,
  - ✓ Developing the policy, procedure, and system for issuing Aadhaar numbers to individuals and

- ✓ Perform authentication and the security of identity information and authentication records of individuals.

### **About Central Identities Data Repository (CIDR):**

- It is a central database that stores and manages identity information for individuals and organizations.
- It is used to authenticate and authorize individuals and organizations for access to government services and information.
- CIDR also supports the issuance of electronic identity cards and the management of identity information.

## **2. US Removes India from its Currency Monitoring List**

**Prelims Syllabus: International Relations & Organizations**

**Mains Syllabus: GS-II Important International institutions, Agencies and Fora- their Structure, Mandate.**

### **Why in News?**

- The United States' Department of Treasury has removed India from its Currency Monitoring List. India had been on the list for the last two years for alleged manipulation of Rupee.

### **What is Currency Manipulation?**

- Currency manipulation refers to actions taken by governments to change the value of their currencies relative to other currencies in order to bring about some desirable objective.
- It is a designation applied by the US Department of the Treasury, to countries that engage in what is called "unfair currency practices" that give them a trade advantage.
- The typical claim – often doubtful – is that countries manipulate their currencies in order to make their exports effectively cheaper on the world market and in turn make imports more expensive.

### **Why do countries manipulate their currencies?**

- In general, countries prefer their currency to be weak because it makes them more competitive on the international trade front.
- A lower currency makes a country's exports more attractive because they are cheaper on the international market.
- For example, a weak Rupee makes Indian exports less expensive for offshore buyers.

- Secondly, by boosting exports, a country can use a lower currency to shrink its trade deficit.
- Finally, a weaker currency alleviates pressure on a country's sovereign debt obligations.
- After issuing offshore debt, a country will make payments, and as these payments are denominated in the offshore currency, a weak local currency effectively decreases these debt payments.

### **US treasury's criteria for currency monitoring:**

- **To be labelled a manipulator by the U.S. Treasury:**
  - ✓ Countries must at least have a \$20 billion-plus bilateral trade surplus with the US
  - ✓ foreign currency intervention exceeding 2% of GDP and a global current account surplus exceeding 2% of GDP

### **Which are the countries under this list?**

- China, Japan, Korea, Germany, Malaysia, Singapore, and Taiwan are the seven economies that are a part of the current Currency Monitoring List.
- China's failure to publish foreign exchange intervention and broader lack of transparency around key features of its exchange rate mechanism.

## **3. Himalayan Gray Langur**

**Prelims Syllabus:** Environment

**Mains Syllabus:** GS-III Environment & Biodiversity | Conservation, Environmental Pollution & Degradation, Eia

### **Why in News?**

- A recent study published in the Journal of Threatened Taxa has found that differing elevations of habitation make one group of Himalayan Gray Langur prefer fruits and another group like flowers.

### **Himalayan Gray Langur:**

- The Himalayan Gray Langur or the Chamba Sacred Langur, scientifically known as *Semnopithecus ajax* is a species of colobine (leaf-eating monkeys).
- Before 2001, *Semnopithecus entellus* (Hanuman Langur) was considered only one species, with several subspecies. In 2001, these subspecies were separated as species under the genus *Semnopithecus*.

- Accordingly, seven different species have been recognised which include Semnopithecus ajax.
- The Himalayan Gray Langurs are widely distributed in the Indian subcontinent across Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, and other parts of Pakistan and Nepal.
- The distinguishing feature of the Himalayan Grey Langur is the adult male's shoulder mane.
- The Himalayan Grey Langurs are seen in a particular area only during some parts of the year as they change their locality during different seasons, depending upon the availability of food and environmental conditions.
- **IUCN Status:** Endangered
- **Wildlife Protection Act, 1972:** Schedule II

#### **4. Indian Judiciary: Issues of Accountability and Credibility**

**Prelims Syllabus:** Polity

**Mains Syllabus:** GS-II Polity | Indian Constitution - Executive & Judiciary, Governance, Transparency & Accountability, Citizens Charters

##### **Why in News?**

- The reach of India's highest court is all-pervasive. The Supreme Court sits in final judgment over decisions not only of the high courts in the states, but also over a hundred tribunals, central and state, functioning throughout India. Hence the accountability of apex court crucial for judicial system in India.

##### **Brief in other words: Significance of judiciary**

- **Decisions of Courts are binding on all:** The law declared by the Supreme Court, its pronouncements on the constitutional validity of enacted law, including constitutional amendments, is binding on all other courts and authorities in the country (Article 141).
- **Executive and legislature are under the scrutiny of Courts:** There is virtually no area of legislative or executive activity which is beyond the court's scrutiny.

##### **Why accountability of higher judiciary is necessary?**

- **High courts are not ready to reform themselves:** In the Salem Advocate Bar Association case, the justices had requested the high courts to implement the detailed blueprint on case management most of them have not.

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- **Limitations of supreme court to govern the High courts:** Supreme court could not direct the high courts to do so because under our constitutional scheme the latter are autonomous constitutional bodies not subject to administrative directions of the Supreme Court.
  - **Self-accountability in administrations of courts:** It is in the high courts that there are now left the largest number of roadblocks and delays; in their administrative functioning the high courts are answerable to no one but themselves. This often enables the Supreme Court to plead helplessness, hardly a good augury for integrated court-management.

### **How judiciary can maintain its credibility and accountability?**

- **Judiciary need to Preserve the independence:** the judiciary as an institution needs to preserve its independence, and to do this it must strive to maintain the confidence of the public in the established courts.
- **Judges should safeguard the judges:** The independence of judges is best safeguarded by the judges themselves through institutions and organisations that the law empowers them to set up, to preserve the image of an incorruptible higher judiciary that would command the respect of all right-thinking people.
- **Reform on case management:** A bench of three justices of the Supreme Court, in a judgment delivered in August 2005, had drawn up a fine blueprint on case-management, on how to make recent amendments in our procedural laws work on the ground, and how to get more cases moving along: For instance, on three different tracks, fast track, normal track and slow track.
- **Supreme court should directly administer High courts:** It is time that the Supreme Court be entrusted with direct responsibility for the functioning of the high courts: Only then can the highest court be an effective apex court, only then can the Supreme Court be made answerable, as it should be, for judicial governance for the entire country.
- **Public disclosure of income by judges:** Judges must make annual financial disclosure statements, not privately to their respective chief justices, but publicly. It is done by justices of the Supreme Court.



### How judiciary in USA maintain its credibility and accountability?

- **Judicial council act:** In the United States, under the Judicial Councils Act, 1980, task of judicial independence has been gladly undertaken by the judges. But regrettably, so far, there is no law in India to guide our judges only “guidelines”. There is a felt need for a law.
- **Judges investigate the judges:** The 1980 US Act confers powers on bodies comprised of judges to take such action against a federal judge “as is appropriate, short of removal.”
- **A case study of America:** Under this law, some time ago, a committee of fellow judges had investigated complaints against a federal district judge, John McBryde; the Judicial Council reprimanded him and suspended him from hearing new cases for a year.
- **Corruption Investigation Not violating the judicial independence:** McBryde challenged the decision. He argued that the 1980 law violated the judicial independence which the US Constitution had guaranteed to life-tenured federal judges; But a US Court of Appeals rejected all these pleas.
- **Oversight of judges is not interference:** It accepted the argument of the US Solicitor-General that judicial independence, protected by Article III of the US Constitution, was meant to insulate judges from interference from other branches of government and not from oversight by other judges.

### Conclusion:

- In India, in the past and in recent times, some things have gone wrong. And citizens need the reassurance of a system of judicial accountability a remedial mechanism which will protect the higher judiciary from some of its own members who have gone astray. Such reassurance can only be provided by enacting a law on the lines of the American model.