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**ON RECENT LEGISLATIONS
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PM-Surya Ghar Yojana & India's Role in Solar Energy

Introduction

The importance of solar energy in the contemporary world cannot be overstated. As global temperatures rise and the effects of climate change intensify, the need for sustainable energy sources has become paramount. Solar energy, one of the most abundant and accessible renewable resources, offers an unparalleled opportunity to mitigate the dependency on fossil fuels. Discussions at international forums, such as the ongoing COP 29, highlight the urgency of climate action and the need for nations to fulfil their commitments under the Paris Agreement. Renewable energy, particularly solar, plays a central role in achieving these targets. Harnessing the sun's power has the dual benefit of reducing carbon emissions and addressing the increasing energy demands of a growing global population.

Nations worldwide are investing in solar energy infrastructure, and India has emerged as a leader in this green transition. As a signatory to the Paris Accords, India has committed to a low-carbon growth trajectory. The country's Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) include an ambitious target to achieve 500 GW

of non-fossil fuel-based installed capacity by 2030. Solar energy is integral to this vision, with the government actively supporting its expansion through various policies and incentives. Strengthening its commitment, the Indian government recently launched guidelines for the PM-Surya Ghar Yojana, solidifying a transformative initiative to accelerate solar adoption in residential households.

India's Leadership in the Solar Revolution

India's leadership in renewable energy is exemplified by its role in the International Solar Alliance (ISA). Established in 2015 during COP 21, the ISA is a collective effort by solar-rich countries to promote solar energy and reduce dependence on fossil fuels. Headquartered in India, the ISA is a platform for knowledge sharing, capacity building, and financing solar projects in developing countries. The alliance embodies India's commitment to a sustainable energy future and its willingness to lead by example.

Domestically, India has launched several successful initiatives to promote solar energy. The National Solar Mission is a flagship program under the National Action Plan on Climate Change. set the stage for solar energy development in the country. Its initial target of 20 GW of solar capacity by 2022 was revised to 100 GW, reflecting the

rapid growth of the sector. Subsidy schemes for rooftop solar installations, solar parks, and solar pump programs have further accelerated adoption. States like Gujarat and Rajasthan have emerged as hubs for solar energy, with large-scale projects contributing significantly to India's renewable energy goals.

PM-Surya Ghar Yojana

Building on these successes, the government recently launched the PM-Surya Ghar Yojana, an innovative scheme aimed at transforming residential solar adoption. The initiative seeks to empower households by making solar energy more accessible and affordable. Under this scheme, homeowners can install solar panels on their rooftops with financial support from the government. The program is designed to promote self-sufficiency in energy, reduce electricity bills, and contribute to the national grid.

The Recent Guidelines Under PM-Surya Ghar Yojana

The Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE) has also notified guidelines for innovative projects under the PM-Surya Ghar Yojana, signalling a focused push towards advancements in solar rooftop technologies and

innovative business models. The scheme aims to enhance the share of rooftop solar capacity and empower residential households to generate their own electricity. To achieve this, the government has allocated ₹500 crore for innovative projects under the scheme.

The guidelines specify that the scheme is open to entities and individuals, including those involved in international collaborations for joint research. Projects under this initiative can have a maximum duration of 18 months, with financial assistance capped at 60% of the total project cost or ₹30 crore, whichever is lower.

A screening committee will evaluate proposals based on three criteria:

1. Relevance and cost-effectiveness,
2. Project concept and novelty,
3. Value to society.

The final selection of proposals will be made by a selection committee headed by the Secretary of the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy. This structured approach aims to ensure that innovative projects not only contribute to technological advancements but also align with broader societal and environmental goals.

Analysis of the Scheme

The PM-Surya Ghar Yojana is a cornerstone of India's vision for energy security and sustainability, addressing gaps in residential solar adoption by overcoming barriers like high upfront costs and lack of awareness. With ₹500 crore allocated to foster innovation, the scheme promotes research, advances in solar technology, and international collaboration to integrate global expertise. Its potential economic and social ramifications are significant, with its impact likely to be felt in boosting domestic manufacturing, generating employment, and decentralizing energy generation to benefit rural areas.

However, the scheme's success will depend on effective implementation. Awareness campaigns, streamlined procedures, and robust monitoring mechanisms are essential to ensure that the benefits reach the intended beneficiaries. The government must also address potential challenges, such as the disposal of solar panel waste and the integration of decentralized systems with the national grid in the solar sector. PM-Surya Ghar Yojana underscores India's proactive approach towards adoption of renewable energy and commitment to a sustainable future by overcoming the hurdles highlighted

above and setting a global benchmark for clean energy initiatives.



**Delhi Government
introduces a 21-point
Winter Action Plan to
combat air pollution**

Introduction

The Delhi government has released a 21-point Winter Action Plan to combat rising levels of air pollution. This persistent issue has been the result of several factors such as continuous stubble burning by the farmers and, release of hazardous industrial chemicals by established industries as well as the age-old source of vehicular emissions. It has significantly increased the AQI in the city with some areas recording readings of over 1,100. The Global Burden of Disease Study (2020) also attributed over 54,000 premature deaths in Delhi to air pollution. These alarming statistics underline the urgency of effective intervention.

A snapshot of Delhi's earlier interventions

Earlier measures by the Delhi government included the Odd-Even scheme and the creation of artificial rain. The Odd-Even scheme was a vehicle rationing measure implemented to reduce air pollution and manage vehicular traffic wherein vehicles were allowed on the road on odd and even dates based on the last digit of their registration numbers. Artificial rain was a weather modification technique that aimed to increase precipitation from clouds to wash away the pollutants

from the air and help improve air quality. Several other efforts included banning the bursting of firecrackers, closing coal-based power plants, etc. These have lessened the impact of air pollution but it has not been of much significance in effectively addressing the rising health concerns and the grave risk it poses to the residents of the city.

This year, the Delhi Government has planned to introduce the said action plan, in collaboration with the Central and other State Governments, while also seeking support from the public with the slogan, “Mil kar chale, pradushan se lade” (Work together to fight pollution), highlighting the need for collective action.

Highlights of the Plan: A brief overview

Firstly, the government has recommended using Pusa Bio-Decomposer, a microbial solution developed by the Indian Agricultural Research Institute (IARI) which quickens the decomposition of crop stubble directly in the fields, eliminating the need for burning. In 2023, the decomposer was used on over 5,000 acres in Delhi. Plans are being made to expand in the neighbouring states of Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh, where stubble

burning is a major contributor to the winter smog. Vehicular emissions are another significant contributor to pollution and hence, the government has proposed several measures to curb it which include enhancement of PUC Certification, stricter enforcement with the usage of drones, and phasing out of diesel vehicles older than 10/15 years.

Dust from construction and demolition sites is another significant contributor to Delhi's pollution levels and hence over 600 teams have been formed to inspect construction sites, monitoring the implementation of dust control which in turn is supplemented by heavy fines for the violators. Also recognizing that public participation is crucial, the government is investing in educating citizens about ways to combat pollution by urging them to avoid the burning of crackers, to switch to shared means of transport, and to report any instance of violations, giving way to accountability. Other than that, the government is promoting a cleaner environment through the continued promotion of electric mobility with buyers receiving financial incentives, such as reduced registration fees and road tax exemptions and installation of over 2,000 new charging stations, ensuring

accessibility. Lastly, to effectively combat pollution, authorities have implemented Stage IV of the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) which includes suspension of construction activities, transitioning schools to online classes, restrictions on specific vehicles, and a proposal for artificial rain to reduce particulate matter. While the Bill has been passed by the Legislative Assembly and was sent to the Governor of West Bengal CV Ananda Bose for his assent, the Governor has reserved the Bill for consideration of the President.

A Nuanced Analysis

The 21-point Winter Action Plan reflects the commitment of the Delhi government towards one of the most critical issues of the city—air pollution. It is, indeed, a proactive and ambitious framework that addresses issues through innovative solutions, strict enforcement, and public information campaigns. However, the agenda's success also depends on factors beyond mere policymaking. Such steps for cleaner air are applicable only when policymakers, enforcement agencies, and people come together and try to convert a plan for a set of policies into reality.

While stubble burning remains a persistent issue, with farmers continuing to stick to the practice due to the high costs of alternatives, general unavailability of equipment, and time mostly during the harvesting period, solving these problems requires improvements in subsidies, extensive publicity, and regional cooperation from Punjab, Haryana, and Uttar Pradesh. In fact, on closer inspection, this issue is temporary, with a more persistent factor being road and construction dust, which is a perennial problem throughout the year. The plan has incorporated ways to address the latter, but its enforcement largely depends on authorities appointed to oversee the compliance by construction sites.

Electric vehicles (EVs) are also one of the major initiatives Delhi is actively promoting under its wider agenda for clean energy solutions. In 2024, sales of EVs increased by a significant 50% in Delhi from what it was last year. Once again, this growth reiterates the level of public acceptance of such forms of transport and, at the same time, signifies the success of the government's initiatives through subsidies, tax exemptions, and low-interest loans available for purchasing EVs.

Coming to the finances, the Government has allocated ₹1,600 crores for 2024 for its control measures; which is a 15% increment from last year. However, there is a cost feasibility issue with large-scale intervention measures such as anti-smog guns, water sprinklers, decomposer sprays, and air monitoring systems. Earlier problems include delays in disbursement and being unable to fully utilize the allocated budget; which can act as a major hindrance to the scheme's success.

Even though the plan is believed to encourage more and more people to opt for public transport and thus reduce emissions through vehicles, it emphasizes more on action by the government rather than on public involvement in activities targeted at reducing pollution. Without clear campaigns or mechanisms to mobilize public support, the plan risks limited participation from the community.

Lastly, the government's identification and targeting of sources with unique, tailor-made interventions shows that relying solely on a point solution may not be sufficient to fight pollution successfully. Real-time monitoring of air quality and adherence to the regulations also becomes important, allowing the

authorities to take prompt corrective action. This allows the development of better policies and helps maintain accountability.

Even though the plan is ambitious, past experiences have shown big gaps between policy formulation and its implementation. Examples include campaigns against construction dust or control of vehicular pollution that often fail because of inadequate enforcement or logistical challenges. In the past, similar efforts like this one have had shortcomings because of shortages of personnel, swift release of resources, or bureaucratic constraints. Hence, it is of utmost importance that these be looked into more carefully before the government moves forward with the implementation. If done right, it will most definitely help the Capital turn its tide in air pollution.



Prime Minister's Internship Scheme

Presently, India stands at the threshold of a transformative era, propelled by its young and dynamic population. Despite this demographic advantage, the country faces a pressing challenge: a significant skills gap that leaves a substantial portion of its workforce ill-prepared for the demands of an evolving global economy. To truly leverage its potential and compete on the world stage, we must invest in equipping its youth with employable, industry-ready skills, bridging the gap between education and market needs. Recognizing this, the Indian government has launched several initiatives to position our nation as the Skill Capital of the world. In this direction, the Ministry of Corporate Affairs (“MCA”) recently released the guidelines for the Prime Minister’s Internship Scheme (“PMIS”) – Pilot Project. Announced in the Union Budget 2024-25, the scheme aims to provide internships to one crore youth over five years, with a pilot project targeting 1.25 lakh internships in the current financial year.

The internships will last for 12 months, with at least half of the program focusing on hands-on work experience. Interns will receive a monthly stipend of ₹5,000, (₹4,500 from the government and ₹500 from companies) and a

one-time grant of ₹6,000 for expenses (also covered by the government), with participating companies covering training costs through their CSR contributions. The eligibility criteria are designed to be inclusive, targeting youth aged 21–24 years who are neither employed full-time nor engaged in full-time education. However, certain groups are excluded, including graduates from institutions like IITs, IIMs, and NLUs; individuals with postgraduate or professional qualifications; and those from families with an annual income exceeding ₹8 lakh.

The PMIS represents a significant evolution in skill development, focusing on bridging the gap between academic knowledge and practical experience. Unlike existing short term schemes like the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana and the Digital India Internship Scheme, it emphasizes structured, hands-on internships facilitated by public-private collaboration. The inclusion of CSR funding encourages corporate participation, while the Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) model ensures financial accessibility through stipends and incidental grants. It is also necessary to appreciate the program's emphasis on diversity, which targets young people from underprivileged backgrounds and provides opportunities to the marginalized.

While it is encouraging that students aged 21 to 24 years can now apply for the scheme, excluding postgraduate (PG) degree holders risks significant drawbacks. These students, with their advanced knowledge and maturity, could greatly benefit from real-world exposure and contribute meaningfully to the program. Their involvement would enhance innovation, mentorship, and entrepreneurial growth, fostering a culture of collaboration with undergraduate interns. By restricting PG students, their expertise remains untapped, potentially pushing them to seek opportunities abroad and hindering India's goal of becoming a global knowledge hub.

While interns gain practical experience and industry exposure, boosting their career prospects, corporations benefit by meeting CSR goals and developing a skilled talent pool aligned with their needs. For the government, the scheme aligns with broader economic goals by addressing gaps in employment and fostering innovation, positioning India as a global Skill Capital. The Prime Minister's Internship Scheme reflects the government's dedication to equipping the youth with practical skills and fostering a culture of innovation. However, its current framework could benefit from greater inclusivity by extending opportunities to PG degree holders.

As a pilot project, this scheme offers valuable lessons for future iterations. By addressing its challenges and expanding its ambit, the PMIS has the potential to reshape India's workforce and position the nation as a global industrial leader



Draft National Sport Governance Bill

Introduction

On the 10th of October 2024, the Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports released a draft of the National Sports Governance Bill and called for comments by the stakeholders to be submitted by 25th October 2024. The Bill aims to consolidate multiple authorities governing Sports in India and seeks to develop a framework that benefits all the stakeholders involved.

The Bill's precursor, the 2013 Sports Bill, focused on overall sports development, whereas the current Bill proposes to systematize the existing sports governance framework in India by consolidating different government bodies. A key proposal is the establishment of a Sports Regulatory Body to oversee and regulate multiple National Sports Federations which currently exist in India. Additionally, the Bill mandates the implementation of a Safe Sport Policy, aligned with the POSH Act, to provide safety to the stakeholders. By addressing gaps in governance and introducing new safeguards, the Bill aspires to create a more transparent, accountable, and inclusive sports environment.

Key Features

- Establishment of an Appellate Sports Tribunal (“AST”) to address concerns and issues with the principal body.
- Reservation of positions in the Executive Committee for women
- Step towards the goal of hosting the 2036 Summer Olympics
- Comprehensive coverage of stakeholders, including NSFs, sportspersons and administrators.

Comments

The introduction of the Bill is a step in the right direction. Notably, in light of recent events that have highlighted the concerning state of women's safety in sports, the inclusion of a Safe Sport Policy is a significant achievement. This policy is intended to ensure the effective application of the POSH Act, thereby enhancing protections for women in the sports sector. However, as with many government initiatives, its success will depend on effective implementation. In the current Bill, while the AST adopts a classic structural method of grievance redressal, its ambition to handle numerous sports-related

issues under a single appellate authority seems a bit far-fetched.



**Supreme Court
upholds provision on
Citizenship for
Migrants from
Bangladesh to Assam**

Introduction

The state of Assam, owing to its proximity with Bangladesh, has always been prone to illegal immigration. In response to the socio-political turmoil caused on account of the constant influx of refugees in the state, Section 6A was added in the Citizenship Act, 1985, which withdrew limited the citizenship of the immigrants who arrived in such areas before 1971. Assam has long faced immigration challenges due to its proximity to Bangladesh, with large-scale refugee influxes particularly during and after the Bangladesh Liberation War in 1971. The Assam Accord, signed in 1985 between the Indian government and Assam-based organizations, aimed to address this issue. Section 6A was a legal reflection of this political accord, granting citizenship rights to refugees who entered Assam between January 1, 1966, and March 25, 1971, provided they registered themselves.

Section 6A of the Citizenship Act, 1985 allows the refugees who entered India between 1966 and 1971 to register as citizens of India. Recently, the Supreme Court granted and upheld the validity of Section 6A, which was

challenged through a petition that contended that the arrival of such refugees had disrupted the demographic balance of Assam.

Key Observations

- The Court allowed the citizens who entered into India between 1966-1971 to retain their citizenship
- It was held that Section 6A embodies a political resolution to the unique challenges posed by the refugee influx in Assam, which has significantly disrupted the state's cultural and demographic balance. Statistical data underscores the severe immigration-related displacement that has occurred in Assam, justifying the legislature's intent to limit the provision's application to the state.
- The cut-off date being set to March 25, 1971, was held reasonable as it was neither under-inclusive nor over-inclusive

Comments

The Supreme Court's decision to uphold Section 6A of the Citizenship Act, which grants special citizenship provisions to Assam residents based on the 1985 Assam Accord, reflect a recognition of Assam's unique socio-

political and demographical landscape. While the majority emphasized the provision's role in safeguarding Assam's interests and maintaining social harmony, Justice Pardiwala's dissenting view raises concerns over potential constitutional discrepancies and the impact on national integrity. He highlighted potential issues with the provision undermining the uniformity of citizenship laws across India and questioned whether it violated the principle of equality under Article 14. Justice Pardiwala also raised the risk of region-specific provisions impacting national integration, arguing that special treatment for Assam could set a precedent that might challenge India's federal unity. This ruling is pivotal as it highlights the delicate balance between regional autonomy and constitutional uniformity in India's complex federal structure.



TRAI's new directive for Unsolicited Web- Links

The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India has issued a directive to be implemented from 1st October, 2024 that provides all access providers power to block any traffic containing URLs (Uniform Resource Locators), APKs (Android Package Kits), or OTT (Over-The-Top) links that have not been whitelisted. TRAI is a regulatory body set up by the government under Section 3 of the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India Act, 1997. It consists of a Chairperson, not more than 2 full-time members, and not more than 2 part-time members. The TRAI Act was amended by an ordinance in the year 2000 establishing a Telecom Disputes Settlement and Appellate Tribunal to take over the adjudicatory and disputes functions. One of its main objectives is to provide a fair and transparent environment that facilitates fair competition in the market. TRAI issues orders and directions on subjects such as tariffs, interconnections, quality of service, direct to home services and mobile number portability.

The direction has been formulated to ensure smooth flow of SMS traffic containing URLs. As per the notification, the registered senders are supposed to promptly upload their approved links to the portal of the respective access

providers. Senders who fail to whitelist their links by the due date will not be able to transmit any messages containing such links. So far, over 3,000 registered senders have complied with this requirement by whitelisting more than 70,000 links. This initiative is designed to safeguard consumers from unsolicited messages containing fraud links while fostering a secure communication system. By complying with these new rules, both access providers and registered senders can help in creating a more reliable and safe messaging environment. This move will further reduce the risk of users being directed to malicious websites.

Before TRAI had enforced this new rule, links in SMS messages could lead to unknown sources, posing threats of financial loss or privacy breaches. Under these new rules, any link received via SMS will be from a verified source, enhancing user security. The initial compliance deadline was set for 1st September, 2024 but it had then been extended to 1st October, 2024 giving operators additional time to implement the necessary changes. Therefore, it is believed the directive will have some disruption in receiving messages from banking and other services that provide updates via SMS.

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