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Offshore Area Minerals (Development and Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2023

- Rajya Sabha recently passed the Offshore Minerals (Development and Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2023.
- The bill aims to amend the Offshore Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act 2002 (OAMDR Act). It was passed by the Lok Sabha on 01.08.2023. The bill will now be sent to the President for assent.
- The proposed amendment to the Act will bring about major reforms by introducing an auction mechanism as a method of allotting operating rights in offshore areas.
- OAMDR Act, 2002 was implemented in the year 2010. But so far no mining activity has taken place in the offshore areas. Therefore, the Central Government proposed the present Amendment Bill to bring several reforms in the offshore mining sector.
- Rights will be given to public undertakings to operate in reserved mineral areas by the central government. PSUs will also be given basically the operating rights of nuclear minerals.

- Atomic minerals mainly include minerals like uranium, thorium, and rare metals. Beach sand minerals along with niobium, tantalum, lithium, beryllium, titanium, zirconium and rare earth elements (REE).
- India's maritime position is unique. India's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of over 2 million square kilometres holds significant recoverable resources.
- The Bill increases fines for various offences, making punishment more stringent. For example, conducting any mining activity without a permit or licence, which is punishable by imprisonment of up to five years and a fine of up to Rs 50,000 under the Act, will now be fined from Rs five lakh to Rs 10 lakh.



Highway Travel App

- The National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) has taken a significant step towards improving the experience of highway users with the launch of a citizen-centric integrated mobile application 'Rajmargyatra'.
- This user-friendly app is now available for download on both Google Play Store and iOS App Store, which provides travellers with comprehensive information on Indian National Highways as well as an efficient complaint redressal system. The app is currently available in Hindi and English.
- The objective of this app is to provide comprehensive information and efficient grievance redressal for National Highway users, thereby making their journeys seamless and safe. Currently, it caters to users who are fluent in Hindi and English.

- It provides users with comprehensive information about Indian National Highways, keeping them updated with real-time weather conditions and timely broadcast information.
- This facility is essential for highway commuters to plan their journey better, keeping in view the weather variations and possible obstructions.
- One of the most valuable features of this app is its ability to connect users to essential services nearby.
- Information on toll plazas, petrol pumps, hospitals, hotels and other facilities ensures that highway commuters can easily access essential facilities during their journey, thereby enhancing convenience and safety on the roads.
- The app allows users to easily report issues related to the highway. By attaching geo-tagged videos or photos, users can provide clear evidence, streamlining the complaint process.

- Officers handle complaints promptly, and escalate system-generated complaints to higher authorities in case of any delay, thereby ensuring efficient grievance redressal.
- Apart from providing highway information and complaint facilities, HighwayYatra takes a step towards promoting cashless travel by integrating FASTag services. Users can recharge their FASTags, avail of monthly passes and access other related banking services from within the app. The move is in line with the government's vision of a digital and efficient transport system.



Alaknanda River

- Recently in Badrinath, the structure of the temporary bridge under construction under the Badrinath Master Plan suddenly collapsed in Alaknanda.
- The source of the Alaknanda River is the Satopatha Glacier above Badrinath. It is made up of Alaknanda, Dhauti and Vishnu Ganga streams, which meet at Joshimath or Vishnuprayag.
- Pindar is another tributary of Alaknanda. Which meets it in Karna Prayag. While Mandakini or Kali Ganga meets it at Rudraprayag.
- Ganga is the most important river of India. The river originates at an altitude of 3,900 meters from the Gangotri glacier near Gomukh in Uttarkashi district of Uttarakhand state.
- Here it is known as Bhagirathi. It cuts through the middle and small Himalayan ranges and passes through narrow gorges.

- Bhagirathi meets Alaknanda at Devprayag and after that it is called river Ganges.
- The river Ganges enters the plains at Haridwar. From here it flows first towards south then towards southeast and then towards the east. Finally, it turns south and bifurcates into two distributaries (streams) Bhagirathi and Padma.
- In Bangladesh, the Brahmaputra River is called the Jamuna River, and the Ganges River is known as the Padma River.
- The combined land of Padma river and Jamuna is known as Padma River. Later on, when Meghna river or Barak river (both these rivers originate from Manipur) joins the Padma river. So the mainstream of these two rivers is known as Meghna river.
- That is, the Meghna River itself discharges its water into the Bay of Bengal and forms the Sundarbans Delta.
- The length of this river is 2525 km. It covers 110 km in Uttarakhand, 1,450 km in Uttar Pradesh, 445 km in Bihar and 520 km in West Bengal.

- The Ganges basin is spread over an area of about 8.6 lakh square kilometres in India only.
- It is the largest drainage system of India, which includes perennial and ephemeral rivers originating from the Himalayas in the north and ephemeral rivers originating from the peninsula in the south.
- Yamuna, Chambal, Sindh, Betwa, Ken, Tons and Son rivers are the rivers which meet on the right bank of river Ganga. The only Himalayan tributary of the Ganges is the Yamuna River, which joins it on its right bank.



'AYUSH Visa' for Foreign Nationals

- The introduction of AYUSH Visa is part of the roadmap for India's "Heal in India" initiative. The initiative aims to promote India as a Medical Value Travel (MVT) destination.
- The size of the AYUSH based healthcare and wellness economy is expected to grow to \$70 billion by 2025. AYUSH includes systems of medicine like Ayurveda, Yoga and Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homeopathy.
- Medical tourism or Medical Value Travel (MVT) refers to foreign tourists coming to India for medical purposes to keep themselves healthy, improve their health or recover from illness to lead a healthy life.
- It is generally classified into 3 categories-
 - * Medical treatment to cure illness:
 - * Wellness & Rejuvenation and
 - * Alternative medicine, such as AYUSH in India.

● Following are the factors responsible for the development of MVT:

- Having a hospital with state-of-the-art medical facilities,
- Affordable health care services,
- Availability of excellent diagnostic equipment and trained doctors.
- Access to conventional treatment,
- No problem with long waiting periods for treatment etc.

● Challenges

Regulation and nodal body for the medical tourism sector do not exist.

- In this area, India is facing regional competition from countries like Malaysia, Thailand and Singapore.
- Insurers do not cover overseas medical care. Also, they do not include traditional systems of medicine.
- Lack of awareness about accreditation by the National Accreditation Board for Hospitals and Health Care Providers (NABH) internationally.

