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Probity in Governance

What is Probity in Governance?
- Probity (**Satyanishtha** in Hindi) means **complete** and **confirmed integrity**; having strong moral principles.
- Probity in Governance is defined as adherence to ethical and moral values like honesty, Integrity, rectitude, uprightness etc.

**What purposes does Probity in Governance seek to fulfil?**
- It **preserves public confidence** in Government processes
- It maintains **integrity** in public services
- It ensures **accountability** in governance. It ensures **compliance** with processes
- It seeks to avoid the potential for **misconduct**, **fraud** and **corruption**.

What are the measures to ensure Probity in Governance?
- A **dedicated unit** to oversee the implementation of the Code of Conduct and Code of Ethics by government officials to be set up at both state and national levels.
- Information must be made **accessible** to the common man through websites or other mediums.
- An **independent anti-corruption agency**.
- **Mandatory social audit** for all government programs. For example, Meghalaya has passed a law for social audits of government programs.
- **Citizen advisory boards** to implement ideas of the common public in improving governance.
- Mandatory **declaration of assets** and **liabilities** of government employees.
- **Grievance redressal mechanisms**
- **Institutional reforms** – Allow citizens to be part of public hearings, government contract committees, public watchdog groups, and independent anti-corruption agencies.
- Last but most important, **Moral education** is a must to ensure probity in governance. It is important to provide ethical training and teach moral values wherever possible.

Conclusion
- In addition to laws and policies, the government should also focus on bringing behavioural change in government employees so that they can easily empathize with the problem of the common mass so as to fulfil the democratic goal of "government by the people, for the people and to the people".
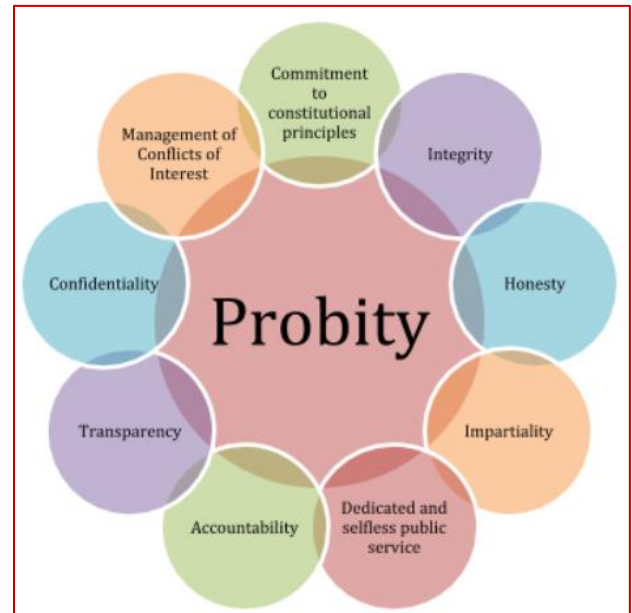
State of India's Environment 2023

News: On the occasion of World Environment Day celebrated on June 5, **Centre for Science and Environment** (CSE) and **Down to Earth** (DTE) has released their annual compendium of data "**State of India's Environment 2023**".

What is World Environment Day?
- World Environment Day is an annual global event celebrated on **June 05**.
- It is observed to raise awareness on the protection and preservation of the environment.
- The history of World Environment Day can be traced back to 1972 when the **United Nations Conference on the Human Environment** was held in Stockholm. As a result of this conference, the **United Nations Environment Programme** (UNEP) was established on June 15, 1972.
- Theme for World Environment Day 2023 is "**Beat Plastic Pollution**".

Key Findings:
- The report offers statistics on the state of climate and extreme weather, health, food and nutrition, migration and displacement, agriculture, energy, waste, water and biodiversity.
- For **overall environmental performance**, **Telangana** ranked at the top for its progress in increasing its forest cover and in municipal waste treatment. Gujarat, Goa and Maharashtra followed Telangana. The bottom rank was occupied by Rajasthan, Nagaland and Bihar.
- For **agriculture**, **Madhya Pradesh** takes the top slot for the highest share of net value added, and its jump in food grain production. Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Uttar Pradesh feature on the second, third and fourth spots.
- In **Health**, **Delhi** leads in public health — it has allocated the highest share of its budget to health and boasts of a robust network of healthcare facilities.
- In **public infrastructure** and **human development** - **Gujarat** leads the rankings in this category and it makes the cut for its performance in providing employment and tap water connections.
- The **average life expectancy** of an Indian is likely to **have shortened by four years and 11 months** due to **air pollution** in 2020.
- In 2020-21, India generated over 160,000 tonnes of municipal solid waste a day.
- Rural average life expectancy was cut short by five years and two months. The life expectancy of their urban counterparts is nine months longer.
- In 2022, India experienced **extreme weather events** on 314 of the 365 days leading to a loss of over 3,026 lives and damage to 1.96 million hectares of crop area. The states that were worst affected by extreme weather were Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, Punjab, Haryana, and Madhya Pradesh.

Source – Down to Earth

Lateral Entry

News: The Government has decided to recruit 17 senior officers in the Central government from the private sector through lateral entry.

Lateral Entry: A Timeline

2017 — Both NITI Aayog and a group of secretaries **recommend lateral induction of personnel** at senior level in GoI

2018 — **6,077 applications are received** for 10 posts of joint secretaries under the lateral entry scheme

2019 — **Nine joint secretaries** are selected and eight join

2022 — **Of the selected candidates,** 30 (3 JS, 18 directors and 9 deputy secretaries) join in 21 ministries, 1 drops out

2021 — **31 candidates, including** 3 joint secretaries, selected out of 2,031 applicants

Note: Lateral entrants inducted directly by NITI Aayog are not factored in

Source: GoI

Background:
- This is the 4th such instance where the government has resorted to lateral entry to bring a fresh pool of talent to improve governance.

What is Lateral Entry?

- The Lateral entry in the government of India refers to the appointment of specialists from the private sector in government organizations mainly at the level of joint secretaries or directors.
- The idea has been advocated by **Surinder Nath Committee** (2003), **Hota Committee** (2004) and **Second ARC** (2008).
- **NITI Aayog** in its 3-year Action Agenda (2017—2020), recommended the induction of personnel at middle and senior management levels in the central government.

THE APPOINTMENTS
➤ Amber Dubey, head of aerospace and defence at KPMG, to join civil aviation ministry
➤ Sujit Kumar Bajpayee, working with state-run NHPC, will join environment ministry
➤ Dinesh Dayanand Jagdale, CEO of Panama Renewable Energy Group, appointed to new and renewable energy ministry
➤ Others include Kakoli Ghosh (agriculture), Saurabh Mishra (financial services), Rajeev Saksena (economic affairs), Arun Goel (commerce), Suman Prasad Singh (road transport), and Bhushan Kumar (shipping)

What are the arguments in favour of Lateral entry?

- It can bring in **domain expertise** and **fresh perspectives** to the civil services thereby **ensuring Balance** in public service.
- It can augment the manpower thereby **addressing shortages of officers** in the Central government.
- It can enhance the **efficiency** and **effectiveness** of policy formulation and implementation. For example, Mr Montek Singh Ahluwalia (Economic Advisor in the Ministry of Finance) has been a successful appointment under the scheme.
- It will promote a **sense of competition** in Bureaucracy. It will induce them to develop expertise in their area of choice.
- Lateral Entry **solves major flaws in public service recruitment**. It gives an opportunity to potential administrators who didn't appear for exams at their younger age and some who may have not cleared exams may get another chance to fulfil their dreams.

What are the shortcomings in Lateral Entry?

- There is an **ambiguity in the recruitment process**. There is no clear policy on the determination of vacancies, shortlisting of candidates, evaluation procedure etc.
- Lateral entrants might have **less field experience**. The government officials reaching top positions serve 10-15 years at ground level.
- The lateral entrants would find it **difficult to adjust** to the bureaucratic structure within their **short contractual time**.
- The process **may discourage** motivated and talented officers.
- The short tenures for Lateral entrants are not conducive to holding accountability.

Way Forward

- The government must strike the right chords to ensure a fair and transparent recruitment drive for Lateral Entrants.
- There ought to be a fine balance between government officials and lateral entrants.
- Adequate training and support should be provided to lateral entrants to help them navigate the bureaucratic work culture.

KAVACH System

News: On 23 March 2022, the Ministry of Railways announced a significant step towards enhancing the safety of train operations in India with the development of the indigenous **Automatic Train Protection** (ATP) System called Kavach.

Background:
- Both the Shalimar-Chennai Coromandel Express and the Yeshwanthpur-Howrah Express were not fitted with KAVACH-TCAS.

About:
- Developed in collaboration with three Indian vendors by the **Research Designs and Standards Organisation** (RDSO), Kavach has been adopted as the National ATP System for Indian Railways.
- Kavach has been designed to assist locomotive pilots in avoiding **Signal Passing At Danger** (SPAD) and **overspeeding** while also providing support for train operations during adverse weather conditions such as dense fog.
- By **automatically applying brakes** when necessary, the system ensures better control over train speed and prevents potential accidents.

Key Features:
- The **Traffic collision avoidance system** (TCAS), with the help of equipment on board the locomotive and transmission towers at stations connected with Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) tags helps in two-way communication between the station master and loco-pilot to convey any emergency message.
- Automatic brake application in case the locomotive pilot fails to act, the provision of line-side signal display in the cabin for improved visibility in foggy conditions and at higher speeds, continuous updating of movement authority, automatic whistling at level crossings, collision avoidance through direct loco-to-loco communication, and the inclusion of an SOS feature to control trains in emergency situations.
- It is a state-of-the-art electronic system with Safety Integrity Level-4 (SIL-4) standards. Kavach' is one of the cheapest, SIL-4-certified technologies where the probability of error is 1 in 10,000 years.

About RDSO:
- Research Design and Standards Organization (RDSO) is an ISO 9001 research and development organization under the Ministry of Railways of India.
- It functions as a **technical adviser** and **consultant** to the **Railway Board**, the **Zonal Railways**, the **Railway Production Units**, RITES and IRCON International in respect of the design and standardization of railway equipment and problems related to railway construction, operation and maintenance.
- RDSO has recently become the **nation's first institution** to be declared as a **Standard Developing Organization** (SDO) under the mission called "**One Nation One Standard**" on the Bureau of Indian Standards.

Source – LiveMint

Derailment in Indian Railways

News: The tragic train accident that occurred on June 2, 2023, at Bahanaga Bazar railway station in Odisha's Balasore district, has highlighted the urgent need for effective safety measures to prevent such devastating incidents.

Background:

- The **Performance Audit on Derailment in Indian Railways** – a **CAG (2022) report** ascertains whether measures to prevent derailments and collisions were clearly laid down and implemented.

Key Findings:

- The CAG report reveals that **nearly 75%** of the consequential train accidents between 2017-18 and 2020-21 were **caused by derailments**.
- Factors responsible for derailments are maintenance of tracks, deviation of track parameters beyond permissible limits, bad driving and overspeeding, and faulty signalling system (suspected cause of the Odisha train accident).
- **The Rashtriya Rail SanrakshaKosh** (RRSK) – was created in 2017-18 with a corpus of **Rs 1 lakh crore** over a period of five years with an annual outlay of Rs 20,000 crore – Rs 15,000 crore of budgetary support and Rs 5,000 crore from Railways internal resources.
- The safety fund will be used for improved inspection and safety work at level crossing, track repair, bridge restoration, rolling stock replacement, human resource development, etc.
- The number of funds allocated for **track renewal projects decreased from Rs 9,607.65 crore (2018-19) to Rs 7,417 crore (2019-20),** and even this amount was **not "fully utilised"**.

Way Forward

- Expedite the implementation of the **KAVACH Project,** especially on the Howrah-Chennai line.
- Utilise **big data analytics** and **artificial intelligence** to analyse vast amounts of data collected from trains, tracks, and infrastructure.
- **CAG Report** on Derailments (2022) advocated for the timely implementation of maintenance activities, to prepare guiding principles for the deployment of RRSK funds for each item of safety work.