

Telecommunications Bill, 2023

- On December 18, the Centre introduced the Telecommunications Bill, 2023, in Parliament.

❖ Key Highlights

- ❑ The Bill seeks to replace the Indian Telegraph Act (1885), the Wireless Telegraphy Act (1933), and the Telegraph Wires (Unlawful Possession) Act (1950),.
- ❑ The government sees them as colonial-era archaic laws that need reforms, given that the telecom sector has changed significantly in the last few years.

❖ Key Provision of the Bill

❑ Simplification of Telecom Licensing Regime

- The Bill introduces a shift towards an authorisation system to simplify the current complex licensing structure in the telecom sector.
- The telecom department currently issues over 100 types of licenses, registrations, and permissions, prompting the need for streamlining.
- The Bill proposes consolidating various licenses into a single, more efficient authorisation process.

❑ Evolution in Spectrum Assignment Norms

- While spectrum auctions remain the primary method, the Bill outlines changes in spectrum allocation for specific sectors.
- For sectors like metro rails, community radio, defence, railways, and police, administrative allocation is proposed outside of satellite communications.
- The Bill empowers the government to reclaim unutilised spectrum and introduces provisions for sharing, trading, and leasing.

❑ Compliance and Dispute Resolution Framework

- A comprehensive mechanism is introduced to enhance compliance and resolve disputes efficiently.
- To encourage compliance, the Bill introduces a voluntary undertaking mechanism for the disclosure of inadvertent lapses.
- Dispute resolution involves an adjudicating officer, a designated committee of appeals, and the Telecom Disputes Settlement and Appellate Tribunal (TDSAT).

❑ Biometric Authentication Mandate and Privacy Concerns : Entities are mandated to conduct biometric authentication to counter fraud, but this provision raises concerns about user privacy.

❑ Powers in Public Emergency and National Security

- The Bill grants powers to central and state governments or authorised officers in case of public emergencies or national security interests.
- **Exemptions for Press Messages**
 - Press messages for publication in India and accredited to state or central governments are exempted from interception unless for national security reasons.

❑ Empowering the Centre in Extraordinary Circumstances : In unforeseen circumstances, the Bill empowers the Centre to assume control of telecommunication services and networks for national security or during war.

❑ TRAI Chairperson Eligibility Criteria : The Bill outlines eligibility requirements for the appointment of the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) chairperson from the private sector.

WHAT'S IN THE BILL

- It seeks to allow the central government to take over any telecom service or network in case of public emergency
- Defines telecommunications services as "any service for telecommunications"; doesn't specify internet-based calling or messaging
- Seeks to allow the central government to intercept any message between individuals
- Bats for allowing a senior private sector executive as Trai chairperson
- Calls for three-year jail or ₹2 crore fine or both for illegal phone
- Stays silent on taking back spectrum from insolvent telcos



Suspension of Member of Parliaments

- Recently, Thirty-three Lok Sabha members and 45 from Rajya Sabha, all belonging to the Opposition INDIA group, were suspended, the bulk of them for the remainder of the Winter Session.
- The MPs in both Houses were suspended for disrupting Parliamentary proceedings while protesting a recent Parliament security breach.

❖ Suspension of MPs

- ❑ The Presiding Officer — the Speaker of LS and Chairman of RS — plays the major role in meting out suspensions.
- ❑ In Lok Sabha, the Speaker acts in accordance with Rules 373, 374, and 374A of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business.



- ❑ In Rajya Sabha, the Chairman acts as per Rules 255 and 256 of the Rules.
- ❑ The procedure in both Houses is largely similar.
- ❑ First, the presiding officers can direct an MP to withdraw from the House for any disorderly conduct (Rule 373 in LS, 255 in RS).
- ❑ If that does not work and the said MP continues to disrupt the House proceedings, the presiding officer can “name” the legislator (Rule 374 in LS, 256 in RS).
- ❑ After that, the House can move a motion to suspend the MP until the end of the session.
- ❑ While these rules have mostly remained unchanged since 1952, in 2001, the Lok Sabha further empowered the Speaker to deal with “grave and disorderly conduct.”
- ❑ As per the new rule (Rule 374A), an MP “named” by the Speaker shall automatically stand suspended for a period of five days or the remaining part of the session.
- ❑ This rule removes the need for the House to pass a motion for suspension.
- ❑ Notably, the Rajya Sabha has not incorporated this provision in its procedures.

Indian Scientific Expedition to Arctic

- On December 18 India sent off its first winter expedition, comprising four scientists from four different institutions, to Himadri.
- Himadri, India’s Arctic Research Station at Ny-Ålesund in the Norwegian archipelago of Svalbard in the Arctic Ocean, will now remain operational throughout the year.



❖ Bases in the Arctic

- ❑ At least 10 countries have set up permanent facilities at the International Arctic Research base in Ny-Ålesund.
- ❑ It is a small town above the 78th parallel N, about 1,200 km from the North Pole.
- ❑ The Svalbard group of islands is the closest human habitation to the North Pole.
- ❑ The mean temperature in Ny-Ålesund in February, the coldest month, is minus 14 degree Celsius, and that in July, the warmest, is 5 degree Celsius.
- ❑ India will join a small group of countries that operate their Arctic research bases through the winter.

❖ Arctic research

- ❑ The polar regions, Arctic and Antarctica, offer pristine environments for scientists to study a range of natural phenomena for atmospheric, oceanic, biological, geological, glaciological and earth sciences research.
- ❑ In recent years, climate change research has been attracting scientists to the Arctic region.
- ❑ Scientific research in the Arctic region is governed by international legal instruments like the Svalbard Treaty of 1920 and the UN Convention on the Law of the Seas, apart from the individual jurisdictions of the Arctic countries.

❖ India in the Arctic

- ❑ India signed the Svalbard Treaty in Paris in 1920.
- ❑ But it took until 2007 for the first Indian expedition comprising five scientists to visit the International Arctic Research Facilities at Ny-Ålesund with the purpose of initiating studies in Arctic microbiology, atmospheric sciences, and geology. India’s permanent research station, Himadri, began operations in July 2008.
- ❑ Dakshin Gangotri in Antarctica was set up much earlier in 1983, two years after India’s first expedition there.
- ❑ Dakshin Gangotri is now submerged under ice, but India’s two other stations, Maitri and Bharti, are in use.

Nyholm Prize

- Recently, Professor Savita Ladage from Mumbai’s Homi Bhabha Centre for Science Education, Tata Institute of Fundamental Research, received the Royal Society of Chemistry’s Nyholm Prize.

❖ Key Highlights

- ❑ Prof. Ladage bagged the award for her advocacy of the significance of chemical education.
- ❑ Her efforts include mentoring chemistry educators and spearheading impactful teacher and student programs that advance chemistry education in the country.

❖ About the Nyholm Prize

- ❑ This prestigious award is granted to individuals or teams who have demonstrated inspiration, innovation, and dedication, creating a significant and enduring impact in the field of education.



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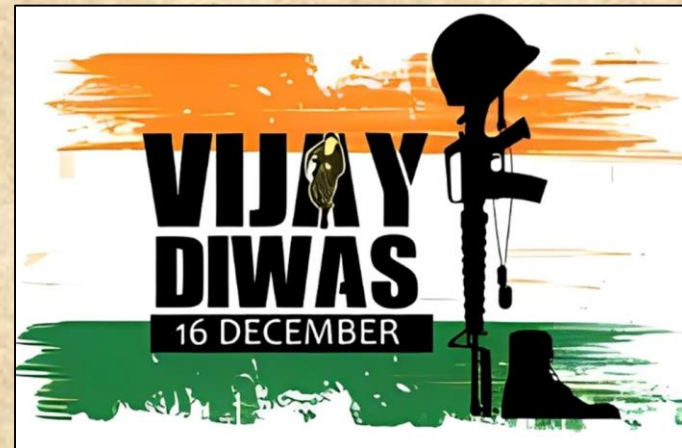
- ❑ It acknowledges the contributions of those working across various educational levels, including primary, secondary, further education, and higher education, encompassing roles such as teachers and technicians.
- ❑ The award specifically recognizes substantial national or international research and innovation in the realm of chemical science education.
- ❑ It was established in honor of Sir Ronald Nyholm, who served as the president of the Royal Society of Chemistry from 1968 to 1970.
- ❑ This annual prize alternates between eligibility for nominees in the UK and Ireland and international nominees.
- ❑ For the year 2023, nominations were accepted from anywhere in the world.
- ❑ The recipient(s) of the award, in addition to a £5000 prize, will be presented with a medal and a certificate.
- ❑ Furthermore, the awardee(s) will conduct a series of lectures or workshops in the UK. The selection of the winner(s) is entrusted to the Education Prize Committee.

Vijay Diwas

- Every year on December 16, India celebrates Vijay Diwas, in commemoration of its success in the 1971 Indo-Pakistani War.

❖ About

- ❑ Before 1971, Bangladesh was a part of Pakistan, which was known as 'East Pakistan'.
- ❑ Reports have claimed that the people of 'East Pakistan' were beaten, exploited, raped and murdered by the Pakistani Army.
- ❑ India supported Bangladesh against the persecution of Pakistan in 'East Pakistan'.
- ❑ In 'East Pakistan' there was heavy dissatisfaction against Pakistan's military ruler General Ayub Khan.
- ❑ On 3 December 1971, the Government of India ordered the Indian Army to declare war against Pakistan to save the people of 'East Pakistan'.
- ❑ This battle was fought under the leadership of Field Marshal Manekshaw.
- ❑ During this war, more than 1400 soldiers of India were martyred.
- ❑ On 16 December 1971, around 93,000 Pakistani soldiers surrendered to the Indian Army in Dhaka.
- ❑ This day was since then observed as Vijay Diwas, the word Vijay indicates Victory.
- ❑ Bangladesh celebrates its Independence Day on December 16 every year, which is known as Bijoy Diwas in Bangladesh.
- ❑ Vijay Diwas on 16th December is different from the Kargil Vijay Diwas as the latter is observed on July 26.



Radon

- According to information provided by the United States Environmental Protection Agency (US EPA), radon stands as the second primary contributor to lung cancer, leading to approximately 21,000 deaths annually in the United States.

❖ About Radon

- ❑ It is a naturally occurring radioactive gas, inert, colourless, odourless, naturally present in the atmosphere in trace amounts.
- ❑ This radon gas gets trapped indoors through cracks and other holes in the foundation and its exposure over time increases the risk of lung cancer.
- ❑ Radon is produced from the natural radioactive decay of uranium, which is found in all rocks and soils. Radon can also be found in water.
- ❑ Radon escapes from the ground into the air, where it decays and produces further radioactive particles.
- ❑ As we breathe, these particles are deposited on the cells lining the airways, where they can damage DNA and potentially cause lung cancer.
- ❑ Outdoors, radon quickly dilutes to very low concentrations and is generally not a problem.
- ❑ Radon gas usually exists at very low levels outdoors, but the gas can accumulate in areas without adequate ventilation, such as underground mines.
- ❑ According to the WHO, radon is estimated to cause between 3% to 14% of all lung cancers in a country, depending on the national average radon level and smoking prevalence.

Radon	
atomic number	86
symbol	Rn
electron configuration	[Xe]4f ¹⁴ 5d ¹⁰ 6s ² 6p ⁶
name	radon

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