

Unparliamentary Terms

(GS Paper 2, Polity and Governance)

Why in news?

- Recently, a **new booklet issued by the Lok Sabha Secretariat** has listed out a slew of terms that will be considered **unparliamentary in both Houses**.
- The booklet comes ahead of the Monsoon Session beginning on 18 July.
- Today there is much debate on language again after the Lok Sabha Secretariat compiled a list of 151 words, which have been expunged in 2021 and 2020 in Parliaments across the Commonwealth countries and State Assemblies in India.



What terms will be considered unparliamentary?

- The booklet lists terms such as jumrajeevi, baal buddhi, 'Covid spreader' and 'Snoopgate' and even commonly used words like 'ashamed', 'abused', 'betrayed', 'corrupt', 'drama', 'hypocrisy' and 'incompetent'.
- 'Anarchist', 'Shakuni', 'dictatorial', 'taanashah', 'taanashahi', 'Jaichand', 'vinash purush', 'Khalistani' and 'khoon se kheti' would also be expunged if used during debates or otherwise in both Houses.
- Among some of the English words listed by the secretariat as unparliamentary include 'bloodshed', 'bloody', 'betrayed', 'ashamed', 'abused', 'cheated', 'chamcha', 'chamchagiri', 'chelas', 'childishness', 'corrupt', 'coward', 'criminal' and 'crocodile tears'.
- Besides, words like 'danga', 'dalal', 'daadagiri', 'dohra charitra', 'bechara', 'bobcut', 'lollypop', 'vishwasghat', 'samvedanheen', 'foolish', 'pitthu', 'behri sarkar' and 'sexual harassment' would be considered as unparliamentary and would not be included as part of record.

How was the list compiled?

- The Lok Sabha Secretariat compiled words and expressions declared unparliamentary from time to time by the Chair in different legislative bodies in India as well as in Commonwealth Parliaments.
- The compilation contains references to words and expressions declared unparliamentary in Lok Sabha, Rajya Sabha and state legislatures in India during 2021, besides those disallowed in some of the Commonwealth Parliaments in 2020.

- The list states that some of the keywords may not appear unparliamentary unless read in conjunction with the other expressions spoken during the parliamentary proceedings.
- The list of expressions also includes any aspersions made against the chair in both the houses in either English or Hindi, which shall be considered as unparliamentary and are expunged from the records of Parliament.

Who declares the words unparliamentary?

- The **Rajya Sabha Chairman and the Lok Sabha Speaker** will have the last word in expunging words and expressions.
- The Rajya Sabha chairman or the Lok Sabha speaker vets the words spoken in the house during the session and unparliamentary words are expunged. Such words do not form part of the Parliament records of both the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha.

What happens when an MP uses unparliamentary language?

- First, it is important to understand that **action cannot be initiated against any MP** in any court for their unparliamentary language.
- Article 105(2) of the Constitution states that “no Member of Parliament shall be liable to any proceedings in any court in respect of anything said or any vote given by him in Parliament or any committee thereof.”
- Such unparliamentary from MPs can be **expunged or deleted from the official record under Rule 380** (“Expunction”) of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in Lok Sabha.
- It states: “If the Speaker is of opinion that words have been used in debate which are defamatory or indecent or unparliamentary or undignified, the Speaker may, while exercising discretion order that such words be expunged from the proceedings of the House.”
- “The portion of the proceedings of the House so expunged shall be **marked by asterisks** and an explanatory footnote shall be inserted in the proceedings as follows: ‘Expunged as ordered by the Chair’,” the rule says.

History behind such a custom:

- Britain’s Parliament has recorded ‘expunging’ of words or expressions during its proceedings as early as 1604.
- An entry in the Commons journal from 1604 is often referred to as the first time the House took action.
- British historian Paul Seaward explains that there exist two lengthy descriptions of the operation of the House of Commons from the sixteenth century, both of which implied that the House spontaneously enforced a collective sense of proper behaviour, though neither implied that the Speaker was empowered to intervene.

Govt dismisses Opposition outrage:

- It also contains a list of words considered unparliamentary in parliaments of Commonwealth countries. For instance, the word **“abused” was considered unparliamentary in Australia’s House of Representatives.**
- The word “childishness” was considered unparliamentary in Quebec’s National Assembly. ‘Lollipops in the budget’ was expunged from the Punjab Assembly.
- The Punjab Assembly also expunged the phrase ‘you have reached here telling a lie’.
- The words ‘anpadh, anargal’ were expunged from the Rajasthan Assembly.

‘Right to repair’

(GS Paper 2, Polity and Governance)

Why in news?

- Recently, the Department of Consumer Affairs has set up a **committee chaired by Additional Secretary Nidhi Khare** to develop comprehensive framework on ‘Right to repair’.

What is ‘Right to repair’?

- The manufacturers in general retain proprietary control over the design of the products and their spare parts.
- Warranty cards of several products such as TVs and cars state that getting them repaired from an outfit not recognised by the makers would lead to customers losing their warranty.
- As per the Centre, the rationale behind the 'Right to repair' is that when customers buy a product, it is inherent that they must own it completely "for which the consumers should be able to repair and modify the product with ease and at reasonable cost, without being captive to the whims of manufacturers for repairs."

- The government plans to make it mandatory for makers of cars, mobiles and other consumer goods monopolising repair and spare parts market to share with customers product details necessary for repair by self or by self or third parties.

Sustainable consumption:

- It will be mandatory for manufacturers to give the detailed drawings of the products at the time of sale.
- Repair is a critical function of **all forms of re-use and even for the sustainable life** of the products, the ministry said.
- **A product that cannot be repaired or falls under planned obsolescence** like designing a product with an artificially limited useful life, not only becomes e-waste but also forces the consumers to buy new products for want of any repair to reuse it.
- Thus, restricting the repair of products forces consumers to deliberately make a choice to purchase a new model of that product.



What is the aim of ‘Right to repair’?

- To empower consumers, harmonise trade between the original equipment manufacturers and the third-party buyers and sellers, and reduce e-waste.
- The move comes in a bid to put a greater emphasis on **Lifestyle for the Environment (LiFE) movement** through sustainable consumption which was launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Key sectors:

- The committee held its first meeting in which key sectors for 'Right to repair' including farming equipment, mobile phones/ tablets, consumer durables and automobiles/automobile equipment were identified.
- Further, the parts and tools to service devices, including diagnostic tools should be made available to third parties, including individuals so that the product can be repaired in case of minor glitches.
- Once rolled out in India, the framework will become a ‘game-changer’ for the sustainability of the products and serve as a catalyst for employment generation through Aatmanirbhar Bharat by allowing third-party repairs.

‘Right to repair’ abroad:

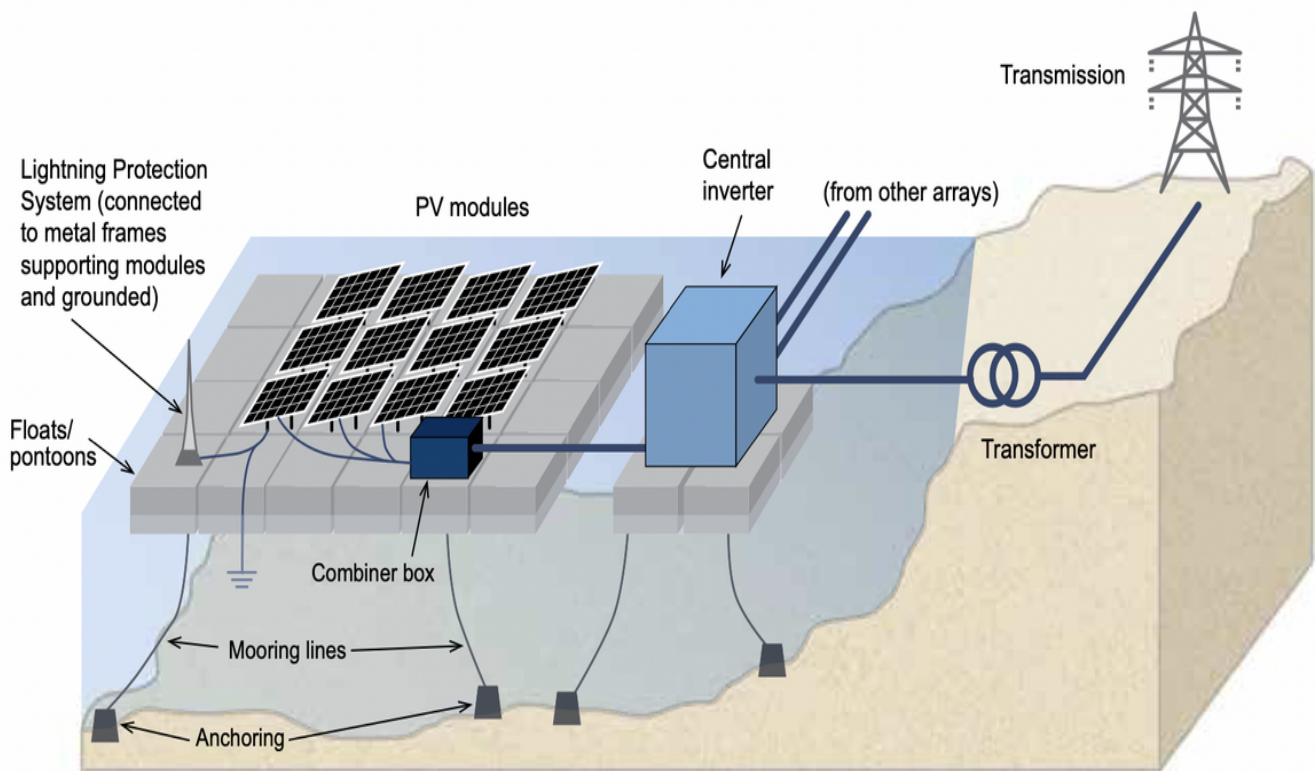
- The right to repair has been recognised in many countries across the globe, including the USA, UK and European Union.

- New York state recently passed the **Fair Repair Act**, which requires manufacturers to supply repair information, tools, and parts to independent repair shops and not just their own stores or partners.
- The Act gives consumers with the right to repair and refurbish their purchased goods as well as allows independent repair shops to access relevant tools and repair manuals and compete with manufacturers.
- Meanwhile, the UK has a law that mandates all electronic appliance manufacturers must provide consumers with spare parts for repair either by themselves or at local repair shops.
- Australia has free “repair cafes”, where technicians volunteer to share skills for free, while the European Union has made it legally mandatory for manufacturers to provide parts of products to professional repairmen for a period of 10 years.

Floating solar plants (GS Paper 3, Environment)

Why in news?

- Recently, **India’s largest floating solar power project**, spanning over 600 acres, is now fully operational at Ramagundam in Peddapalli district of Telangana.
- In recent years, floating solar power plants have become part of India’s plans to achieve a national target of 100 GW solar capacity by 2022.
- According to a 2020 study by think tank The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI), reservoirs cover 18,000 square kilometres in India and can generate 280 GW through floating solar panels.



Source: Solar Energy Research Institute of Singapore (SERIS) at the National University of Singapore (NUS).

Representation of a typical floating solar plant. Rise of the floating solar power technology

What is a floating solar plant and how does it work?

- A network of floating solar panels, or photovoltaics/floatovoltaics are mounted on a structure that is made to float on the surface of a water body, which could be a reservoir, lake, irrigation canal, or pond.
- Usually, a floating solar plant will have a floating system or pontoon, a mooring structure to prevent panels from moving freely in water and to keep it near the shore, a photovoltaic system to generate electricity using thermal energy, and an underwater cable to transfer the generated power to a substation.

Background:

- The first floating photovoltaic system was built in Japan in 2007. Several countries like the U.S, France, Italy and Spain followed, but the use was limited to research and demonstration.
- In 2008, the first commercial installation, though small in size, came up in California after which renewable technology was quickly adopted by other countries.
- Global research firm Wood Mackenzie has estimated that global demand for floating solar power will grow by 22 per cent year-over-year on an average from 2019 through 2024.
- Currently, the **world's largest floating solar farm is in Shandong, China**. The plant generates 320 MW per hour. Interestingly, China has turned collapsed coal mines into an opportunity by setting up floating solar farms in flooded areas.
- In 2021, Singapore unveiled a floating solar panel farm, spanning an area equivalent to 45 football fields.
- South Korea plans to build a massive floating solar farm in the province of North Jeolla. Its capacity, expected to be 1,200 MW, will be equivalent to about 0.9 per cent of the total capacity of the country's electricity generation.

How India is switching to floating solar projects?

- India launched the **National Solar Mission in 2010** to tap sources of renewable energy.
- According to a study done by TERI, 2.7 MW capacity floatovoltaic projects were in operation as of 2019, while over 1.7 GW were in various stages of development. The Government plans to establish a renewable energy capacity of 500 GW by 2030.
- **The NTPC, with a target to produce 60 GW capacity** through renewable sources by 2032, said it already commissioned 222 MW of floating solar projects, with another 40 MW in the construction stage. So far, the NTPC has installed floating solar plants on reservoirs at Kayamkulam in Kerala (92 MW) and Simhadri in Andhra Pradesh (25 MW).
- The **world's largest floating 600 MW solar energy project is being constructed on the Omkareshwar dam** in the Khandwa district of Madhya Pradesh, covering approximately 2000 hectares.
- Projects at Getalsud in Jharkhand, Rihand reservoir in UP, and Vaitarna in Maharashtra have also been cleared.

Ramagundam Project:

- The project in Ramagundam, Telangana is the country's largest floating solar power project. Built at a cost of Rs. 423 crore, the project is spread over 600 acres of the NTPC reservoir in Ramagundam.
- The 100-MW project uses **advanced technology and environment-friendly features** and was built through BHEL under aEPC (Engineering, Procurement and Construction) contract.
- The floating solar project has been divided into 40 blocks, each having a capacity of 2.5 MW. Each block consists of one floating platform and an array of 11,200 solar modules.
- The solar modules have been placed on floaters manufactured with **High Density Polyethylene (HDPE)** material.
- The project is unique since all the electrical equipment is on floating ferro-cement platforms, with deadweight concrete blocks acting as anchors. The NTPC has claimed that the 100MW project will save 2000 million litres of water per annum, sufficient to meet the yearly water requirements of approximately 10,000 households.

Are floating solar panel farms more efficient?

- Solar power is the cheapest electricity in history, as per an International Energy Agency (IEA) report. Besides constraints pertaining to land, scientists feel that ground-mounted solar panels are unable to function at their full potential as they heat up.
- This is where the floating solar technology has an edge even though such farms are comparatively more expensive.

Some advantages of floating solar power projects include:

Less use of land:

- Installation of solar panels on land or rooftops increases land pressure. For countries where the population density is high and land sparse, ground-mounted panels are not favourable.

- On the other hand, floating solar farms don't need land for installation. A solar farm can be set up on the surface of a water body which is otherwise not being utilised.

Higher efficiency:

- Like any other electrical equipment, solar panels operate more efficiently when kept cold. The floating solar farms can be up to 15 per cent more efficient than those on the ground due to the cooling effect of the water beneath panels.
- As a coolant, water maintains the temperature of solar panels which eventually prevents loss of energy due to higher temperatures.
- Also, since they are deployed on the water surface, it is convenient to clean and move the network in the direction of sunlight.

Better for the environment:

- Floating solar farms, if designed and deployed appropriately, reduce the threat posed by climate change to water bodies. Floating panels can offset climate change by 10 years.
- A floating solar farm that **reduces wind speed and solar radiation by 10 per cent** across the entire lake could offset a decade of warming from climate change.
- Designs that shaded the lake more than sheltered it, by reducing sunlight more than wind, had the greatest cooling effect. Evaporation fell and the lake was mixed more frequently, which helps oxygenate the deeper water.
- Also, solar panels **prevent the growth of algae in the water**, which improves its quality.

Challenges:

- There are, however, a few challenges too. Since the technology is relatively new, experts are worried about the **long-term ecological impact on water ecosystems**.
- Solar panels can block sunlight, which can affect aquatic life.
- There is lack of a robust track record; uncertainty surrounding costs; uncertainty about predicting environmental impact; and the technical complexity of designing, building, and operating on and in water (especially electrical safety, anchoring and mooring issues, and operation and maintenance).

The debate around the Forest Conservation Rules

(GS Paper 3, Environment)

Why in news?

- Recently, the Congress and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) sparred on the latest version of the Forest Conservation Rules.
- It is alleged that the latest version of the rules, allowed forest land to be diverted to industry without settling questions of the rights of forest dwellers and tribals who resided on those lands.
- The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change denied these claims.

What are the Forest Conservation Rules?

- The Forest Conservation Rules deal with the **implementation of the Forest Conservation Act (FCA), 1980**.
- They prescribe the procedure to be followed for forest land to be diverted for non-forestry uses such as road construction, highway development, railway lines, and mining.
- The broad aims of the Forest Conservation Act are to **protect forest and wildlife**, put brakes on State governments' attempts to hive off forest land for commercial projects and striving to increase the area under forests.

Forest Advisory Committee (FAC):

- **For forest land beyond five hectares**, approval for diverting land must be given by the Central government. This is via a specially constituted committee, called the **Forest Advisory Committee (FAC)**.
- This committee examines whether the user agency, or those who have requested forest land, have made a convincing case for the upheaval of that specific parcel of land, whether they have a plan in place to ensure that the ensuing damage will be minimal and the said piece of land doesn't cause damage to wildlife habitat.

- Once the FAC is convinced and approves (or rejects a proposal), it is forwarded to the concerned State government where the land is located, who then has to **ensure that provisions of the Forest Right Act, 2006**, a separate Act that protects the rights of forest dwellers and tribals over their land, are complied with.
- The FAC approval also means that the future users of the land must provide compensatory land for afforestation as well as pay the net present value (ranging between ₹10-15 lakh per hectare.)

What do the updated rules say?

- The latest version of the rules, which consolidates changes to the Act over the years from various amendments and court ruling, was made public on June 28, 2022.
- Parliament is scheduled to begin its monsoon session on July 18, 2022 and the law requires that the rules be placed before both the Houses.
- The new rules, according to the Centre, “streamline” the process of approvals. The rules **make a provision for private parties to cultivate plantations and sell them** as land to companies who need to meet compensatory forestation targets.
- This, according to the government, will **help India increase forest cover** as well as solve the problems of the States of not finding land within their jurisdiction for compensatory purposes.
- While this has invited its own controversy, the latest point of contention is the absence of wording, in the updated Forest Conservation Rules, of what happens to tribals and forest-dwelling communities whose land would be hived off for developmental work.



What is the current rule?

- Prior to the updated rules, state bodies would forward documents to the FAC that would also include information on the status of whether the forest rights of locals in the area were settled.
- After 2009, the Environment Ministry passed an order mandating that proposals would not be entertained by the FAC unless there was a letter from the State specifying that the forest rights in the place had been “settled” and the gram sabha, or the governing body in villages in the area, had given their written consent to the diversion of forest.
- However, there have been a series of orders by the Environment Ministry over the years, and frequently opposed by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, that have sought to skirt the necessity for consent from the gram sabha.
- The new rules formally codify this and say that a project, once approved by the FAC, will then be passed on to the State authorities who will collect the compensatory fund and land, and process it for final approval.
- Only in passing, is it mentioned that the States will ensure “settlement” of Forest Rights Acts applicable. This doesn’t automatically imply the consent of the resident tribals and forest dwellers.

What is the government's position?

- The Government says that fulfilling and complying with the FRA, 2006 was an independent process and could be undertaken by States “at any stage” of the forest clearance process and that complying with provisions of the FRA is mentioned in the rules before States order diversion of the land. However, it had to be completed before granting approval for land diversion.
- The purpose of updating these rules was to “streamline the approval process.

How well has the Forest Conservation Act (FCA) been implemented so far?

- A 2019 analysis by the Legal Initiative for Forests and Environment has found that the FAC generally approves land for diversion without examining questions around consent as it relies on the State government to ensure that this is done.
- In the first six months of 2019, of the 240 proposals that were considered for diversion of forest land for non-forestry purposes, 193 proposals were recommended, 40 proposals were deferred for later consideration and seven rejected.
- Recommendation for 193 proposals meant 9,220.64 hectares of forest land were recommended for diversion for non-forestry purposes such as roads, railways, mining, irrigation, infrastructure and hydel power.