

Supreme Court objects to frivolous PIL petitions

(GS Paper 2, Judiciary)

Why in news?

- A Public Interest Litigation (PIL) petitioner in the Supreme Court barely escaped having to pay Rs. 18 lakh for indulging in a “luxury litigation”.

Details:

- A Vacation Bench of Justices B.R. Gavai and Hima Kohli initially asked the litigant to pay Rs. 18 lakh, that is, Rs. 1 lakh for every one of the 18 minutes the case took up. However, the court later, in its order, slashed the amount to Rs. 2 lakh on the request of the litigant’s counsel.
- This case came up shortly after the same Bench had pronounced a judgment underlining how flippant PIL petitions both encroach into valuable judicial time and stall development work undertaken by the government.
- It observed that “the highly derogatory practice of filing frivolous petitions encroach on valuable judicial time which can otherwise be utilised for addressing genuine concerns”.

Esteem Properties Pvt. Ltd. vs Chetan Kamble :

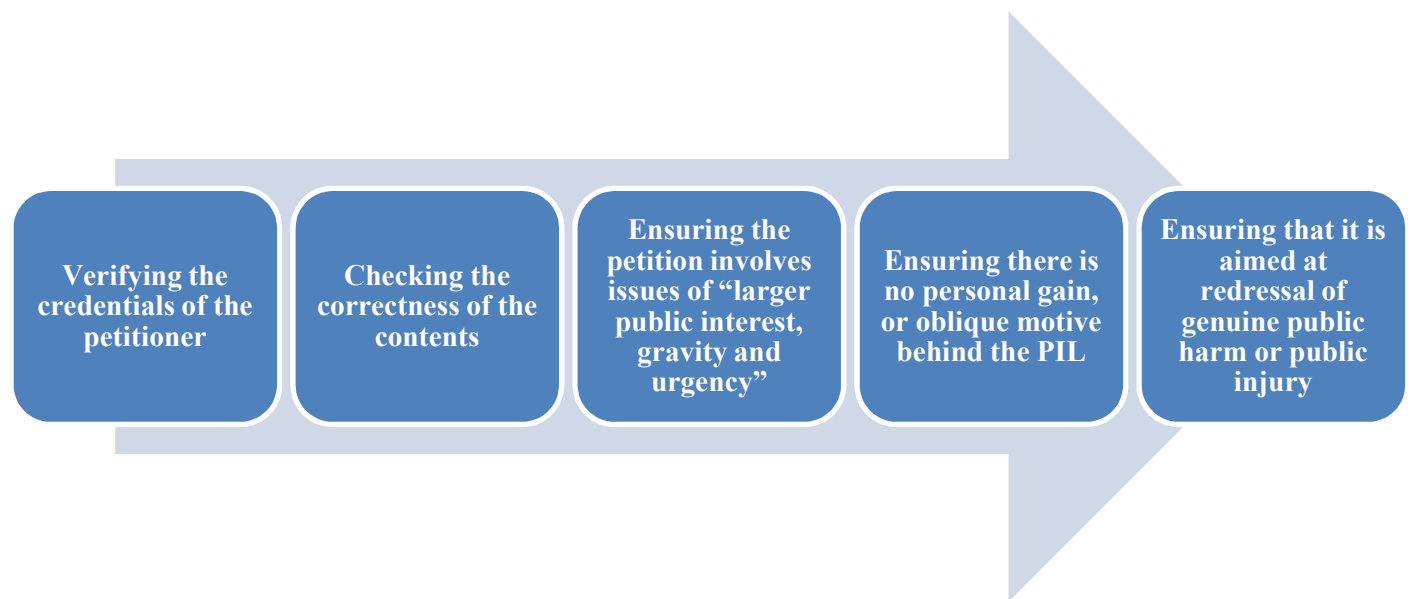
- However, in a February 2022 judgment in the case, *Esteem Properties Pvt. Ltd. vs Chetan Kamble* , a three-judge Bench led by Chief Justice of India N.V. Ramana takes a balanced view of the good and the bad in the PIL petitions.
- In that judgment, the top court had acknowledged that “thousands of frivolous petitions are filed, burdening the docket of both the Supreme Court and the High Courts”.

Positive side of PILs:

- But PIL petitions have also had a beneficial effect on the Indian jurisprudence and has alleviated the conditions of the citizens in general.
- The court in *Jaipur Shahar Hindu Vikas Samiti vs State of Rajasthan* had emphasised how such petitions “bring justice to people who are handicapped by ignorance, indigence, illiteracy.”

Directions for PILs:

- The Supreme Court had also **issued eight directions** in its *Balwant Singh Chauhan judgment* to help constitutional courts separate genuine PIL petitions from the barmy ones.
- It had **asked every High Court to frame its own rules to encourage bona fide PIL petitions** and curb the motivated ones.



What is a PIL?

- Public Interest Litigation (PIL) refers to such legal action which is initiated in a court of law in order to enforce the public interest or general interest in which the common people have some interest by which their legal right or liability is affected.
- The PIL is a **tool to safeguard the socially disadvantaged communities** who cannot represent themselves and claim justice in a court of law.

When can PIL be filed?

- Any Indian citizen can file a PIL, the only condition being that it should not be filed with a private interest, but in a larger public interest.
- PILs can be filed either in a high court or in the Supreme Court.

Who can file a PIL?

- Any individual or organisation can file a PIL either in his/her/their own standing i.e. to protect or enforce a right owed to him/her/them by the government or on behalf of a section of society who is disadvantaged or oppressed and is not able to enforce their own rights.
- The concept of “Locus Standi” has been relaxed in the case of PILs so as to enable the Court to look into grievances that are filed on behalf of those who are poor, illiterate, deprived or disabled and are unable to approach the courts themselves.
- However, only a person acting in good faith and who has sufficient interest in the proceeding will have the locus standi to file a PIL.

Are PILs often misused?

- The misuse or abuse of PILs is growing to be a serious concern for the Indian judiciary.
- In 2010, the Supreme Court came down heavily on frivolous PIL petitions for personal or extraneous reasons, and eventually laid down certain guidelines to be followed by courts in entertaining PILs.
- The filing of indiscriminate petitions “creates unnecessary strain on the judicial system and consequently leads to inordinate delay in the disposal of genuine and bona fide cases.
- Chief Justice N V Ramana in April said that the PIL was being widely misused and termed it as a "personal litigation system."

In a first, IIM-Ahmedabad brings out agriculture land price index

(GS Paper 3, Indian Economy)

Why in news?

- In a unique initiative, IIM-Ahmedabad (IIM-A) has joined hands with an e-marketplace for agricultural land, SFarms India, to develop a **farm land price index based on the sales and purchases** done on the platform.
- The index has been designed to record and present the “quality-controlled” data on prices of agricultural land in the country.

About SFarms India:

- SFarms India is an agricultural-land discovery platform, having more than 25,000 registered buyers and sellers.
- The platform has over 7,000 land listings, which are growing at around 15 per cent a month.

Salient features of the index:

- The Misra Centre for Financial Markets and Economy at IIM-A, under which this index is being launched, will host this on its official website and it will be called IIM-Ahmedabad SFarmsIndia Land Price Index (ISALPI).
- The index will track the price movements in the marketplace (SfarmsIndia) and come up with a composite pricing mechanism on a monthly basis, which **will be updated twice a year**.
- The index **will not have any correlation with circle rates** but will use the prices quoted in the online market place as their base value for research.

WHO STANDS WHERE

Ranking of states in comparative farmland prices

	Karnataka	Andhra Pradesh	Uttar Pradesh	Telangana	Maharashtra	Tamil Nadu
2019	1	2	3	4	5	6
2020	1	2	3	4	5	6
2021	1	2	3	4	5	6
2019-21	1	2	3	5	4	6

Source: ISALPI

Pilot basis:

- Given the complexity of developing an index for land parcels due to price differences, the index has been prepared to address the disparities and ensure accuracy.
- While ISALPI has started on a pilot basis in Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, and Uttar Pradesh, more data from other states of India is awaited.
- With more data, the index is expected to offer a superior representation of the national context and a more granular index at regional levels. In addition, the index will benefit stakeholders across the spectrum including policymakers, local governments, environmentalists, investors, real estate developers, and financiers.

Way Forward:

- The index will be a reliable source in benchmarking land prices in rural and semi-urban areas and help in signalling converting agricultural land into real estate.
- The index can be used by local governments to compensate people who lose land for highway expansion.

'eSanjeevani' integrated with NHA's Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM)

(GS Paper 2, Social Justice)

Why in news?

- The National Health Authority (NHA) announced the successful integration of eSanjeevani with its flagship scheme, Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM).
- Both versions; eSanjeevani AB-HWC and eSanjeevani OPD have been integrated with ABDM platform.

Aim:

- ABDM aims to build digital highways to bridge the gaps in existing digital health solutions and stakeholders in India.
- The integration of eSanjeevani with ABDM is one such example where the 22 crore ABHA holders can link and store their health records created via eSanjeevani directly in the health lockers of their choice.
- The users can also share their previously linked health records with the doctors on eSanjeevani making the entire consultation process paper-less.

Significance of the integration:

- This integration allows the existing users of eSanjeevani, the telemedicine service of Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW) to easily create their Ayushman Bharat Health Account (ABHA) and use it to link and manage their existing health records like prescriptions, lab reports, etc.
- The users would also be able to share their health records with doctors on eSanjeevani which will help in better clinical decision making and ensuring the continuum of care.

eSanjeevani Ayushman Bharat-Health and Wellness Centre (AB-HWC):

- eSanjeevani service is available in two variants. The first one is eSanjeevani Ayushman Bharat-Health and Wellness Centre (AB-HWC) – the Doctor-to-Doctor telemedicine service through which the beneficiaries visiting a HWC can virtually connect to doctors/ specialists in the Hub that could be at tertiary healthcare facility/hospital/medical college.
- This enables the government to provide general and specialised health services in rural areas and isolated communities.



eSanjeevani OPD:

- The second variant, eSanjeevani OPD is serving patients across the country, connecting them directly to doctors from the comforts of their homes.

Way Forward:

- The eSanjeevani telemedicine platform now joins other 40 digital health applications that have completed their ABDM integration.
- Together, these health tech services are building a robust, inter-operable and inclusive digital health ecosystem for the country.

Sagarmala Young Professional Scheme

(GS Paper 2, Social Justice)

Why in news?

- Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways has formulated scheme to engage talented, forward-thinking and dynamic young professionals in various divisions of the Ministry.

Focus:

- This scheme focuses on active on-the-ground learning for young professionals.
- The professionals will have the opportunity to learn about the functioning of the government as well as developmental policy concerns.

Salient features

Professionals will be required to deliver high-quality inputs in areas such as infrastructure, data analysis, project management, start-up, innovation, skill development, digital transformation and the environment, among others, in order to meet Ministry's needs.

The scheme will foster active involvement of young people in decision-making.

This will further contribute to social wellness at an individual level, by boosting self-esteem and a sense of empowerment, and bring about crucial benefits for societies such as an enhanced awareness for common concerns and a joint resolve to identify solutions that work in the long term.

Qualifications required:

- Initially, more than 25 young professionals will be hired under this scheme. Professionals will be required to have qualification in B.E/ B.Tech, B. Planning and/or MBA or equivalent degree in relevant subject/ field and minimum three year of relevant work experience.
- Professionals in Accountancy, Finance, Legal, Statistics, Economics/Commerce, Data Analytics will also be engaged based on requirement of the Ministry.

Initial engagement:

- The initial period of engagement shall be 2 years which can be extended to additional 2 years on the basis of performance
- The advertisement inviting application will be posted on Web-Portal of the Ministry and National Career Service Portal of Ministry of Labour and Employment.

Way Forward:

- Engaging young people in government initiatives can increase their understanding and interest in administrative functioning, as well as encourage active citizenship.
- It will also raise awareness about maritime sector among youth.