

Weapons of Mass Destruction and their Delivery Systems Amendment Bill

April 7, 2022

In news- The Weapons of Mass Destruction and their Delivery Systems (Prohibition of Unlawful Activities) Amendment Bill, 2022 was introduced in Lok Sabha recently.

Key features of the bill-

- The Bill amends the Weapons of Mass Destruction and their Delivery Systems (Prohibition of Unlawful Activities) Act, 2005.
- **The 2005 Act prohibits unlawful activities (such as manufacturing, transport, or transfer) related to weapons of mass destruction,** and their means of delivery.
- **The Bill bars persons from financing any prohibited activity** related to weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems.
- To prevent persons from financing such activities, **the central government may freeze, seize or attach their funds, financial assets,** or economic resources (whether owned, held, or controlled directly or indirectly).
- It may also prohibit persons from making finances or related services available for the benefit of other persons in relation to any activity which is prohibited.

Weapons of mass destruction and their regulation-

- The expression “weapon of mass destruction” (**WMD**) **is usually considered to have been used first by the leader of the Church of England, the Archbishop of Canterbury, in 1937** to refer to the aerial bombing of civilians in the Basque town of Guernica by German and Italian

fascists in support of General Franco during the **Spanish Civil War**.

- The expression WMD entered the vocabularies of people and countries around the world in the early 2000s after the **US under President George W Bush and the UK under Prime Minister Tony Blair justified the invasion of Iraq** on the grounds that the government of Saddam Hussain was hiding these weapons in the country. However, no WMDs were ever found.
- While **there is no single, authoritative definition of a WMD in international law**, the expression is usually understood to **cover nuclear, biological, and chemical (NBC) weapons**.
- According to the United States Department of Homeland Security, “a weapon of mass destruction is a nuclear, radiological, chemical, biological, or other device that is intended to harm a large number of people.”
- **India’s 2005 WMD Act** defines:
 - **“Biological weapons” as “microbial or other biological agents, or toxins...of types and in quantities that have no justification for prophylactic, protective or other peaceful purposes; and weapons, equipment or delivery systems specially designed to use such agents or toxins for hostile purposes or in armed conflict”;** and
 - **“Chemical weapons” as “toxic chemicals and their precursors”** except where used for peaceful, protective, and certain specified military and law enforcement purposes; “munitions and devices specifically designed to cause death or other harm through the toxic properties of those toxic chemicals” and any equipment specifically designed for use in connection with the employment of these munitions and devices.
- **The use of chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons is**

regulated by a number of international treaties and agreements. Among them are

- The Geneva Protocol, 1925, that banned the use of chemical and biological weapons.
- The Biological Weapons Convention, 1972.
- Chemical Weapons Convention, 1992, which put comprehensive bans on the biological and chemical weapons respectively.
- **India has signed and ratified both the 1972 and 1992 treaties.**
- The use and proliferation of nuclear weapons is regulated by treaties such as Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT).