

# CURRENT AFFAIRS

## WEEKLY

WEEK: 4

JANUARY  
2022

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The current affairs articles are segregated from prelims and mains perspective, such separation is maintained in terms of structure of articles. Mains articles have more focus on analysis and prelims articles have more focus on facts.

However, this doesn't mean that Mains articles don't cover facts and PT articles can't have analysis. You are suggested to read all of them for all stages of examination.

# CURRENT AFFAIRS ANALYST

WEEK- 4 (JANUARY, 2022)

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**SECTION: A**  
**(MAINS)**

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**CURRENT AFFAIRS**

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# DAUGHTERS TO INHERIT FATHERS' SELF-ACQUIRED, INHERITED PROPERTIES, TO GET PREFERENCE OVER OTHERS: SC

## CONTEXT:

In a significant verdict, Supreme Court said the daughters of a male Hindu, dying intestate, would be entitled to inherit the self-acquired and other properties obtained in the partition by the father.

## ◎ BACKGROUND

- The judgement, which came on an appeal against the Madras High Court verdict, dealt with the property rights of Hindu women and widows under the **Hindu Succession Act**.
- The bench was dealing with the legal issue concerning the right of the daughter to inherit the self-acquired property of her father, in the absence of any other legal heir.
- Justice Murari, writing the 51-page judgment for the bench, also dealt with the question of whether such property will devolve on to the daughter upon the death of her father, who died without a will, by inheritance or shall devolve on to father's brother's son by **survivorship**.

- This judgement comes almost 15 years after the initial amendment that removed discriminations against girls in allowing daughters coparcenary rights in ancestral property, similar to sons.

## What are the property rights of women in India (Hindu Law)?

- In India, daughters have equal right of inheritance as sons to their father's property. Daughters also have a share in the mother's property.
- The two important laws in regard to property share are the Hindu Succession Act, 2005 and the Indian Succession Act, 1925.

## ◎ ANALYSIS

### What did the verdict say?

- If a property of a male Hindu dying intestate (without a will) is a self-acquired property or obtained in the partition of a coparcenary or a family property, the same would devolve by inheritance and **not by survivorship**, and a daughter of such a male Hindu would be entitled to inherit such property in preference to other collaterals (such as sons/daughters of brothers of deceased father).
- Right of a widow or daughter to inherit the self-acquired property or share received in the partition of a coparcenary property of a Hindu male dying intestate is well recognized not only under the old customary Hindu Law but also by various judicial pronouncements.

### The landmark judgement

- On 11 August 2020, the Supreme Court of India delivered a landmark judgement.
- It held that daughters would have equal birth rights in Hindu Undivided Family properties, irrespective of whether the father was alive or not on 9 September 2005, when the Hindu Succession Amendment Act (HSAA) came into force.

## • Hindu Succession Act, 2005

- ▶ The **Hindu Succession (Amendment) Act, 2005 (39 of 2005)** came into force from 9th September, 2005.
- ▶ The Amendment Act removes gender discriminatory provisions in the Hindu Succession Act, 1956 and gives the following rights to daughters
  - The daughter of a coparcener shall by birth become a coparcener in her own right in the same manner as the son;
  - The daughter has the same rights in the coparcenary property as she would have had if she had been a son;
  - The daughter shall be subject to the same liability in the said coparcenary property as that of a son;
  - The daughter is allotted the same share as is allotted to a son

## • The Indian Succession Act, 1925

- ▶ Transfer of property of Hindus and Muslims by a will (testamentary succession), Christians, Parsis and Jews are governed by The Indian Succession Act.

### Women Rights in India: Constitutional Rights and Legal Rights

The rights entitled to women in India can be classified broadly into two categories namely constitutional rights and another one is legal rights but there is an exception in the case of fundamental rights.

- **Constitutional Rights:** The Constitutional Rights are the rights granted by the Constitution of India to the citizens of our country which are provided in the various provisions of the constitution. Any infringement of constitutional rights, we can approach the Supreme Court on its violation.
- **Legal Rights:** The legal rights, on the other hand, are those which are provided in the various laws (acts) of the Parliament and the State Legislatures. The legal rights are protected by an ordinary law, but they can be altered or taken away by the legislature by changing that law.
- **Fundamental Rights:** The Supreme Court is the guardian of fundamental rights. Further, all constitutional rights not fundamental rights e.g. right not to be subjected to taxation without authority of law (art. 265), right to property (art. 300a), and freedom of trade (art. 301). A fundamental right cannot be waived.

The various constitutional and legal rights for women enshrined in India are summarized in the below table:

Constitutional Rights	Legal Rights
Article 15(1): The state shall not discriminate against any citizen of India on the ground of sex.	<b>Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act (2005)</b> enacted to protect women in India from all forms of domestic violence. It covers women who have been/ are in a relationship with the abuser and are subjected to violence of any kind—physical, sexual, mental, verbal or emotional.
Article 15(3): The state is empowered to make any special provision for women. In other words, this provision enables the state to make affirmative discrimination in favor of women.	<b>Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act (1986)</b> prohibits indecent representation of women through advertisements or in publications, writings, paintings, figures or in any other manner.
Article 16(2): No citizen shall be discriminated against or be ineligible for any employment or office under the state on the ground of sex.	<b>Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act (1971)</b> provides for the termination of certain pregnancies by registered medical practitioners on humanitarian and medical grounds.
Article 39(a): The state to secure for men and women equally the right to an adequate means of livelihood.	<b>Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (Prohibition of Sex Selection) Act (1994)</b> prohibits sex selection before or after conception and prevents the misuse of pre-natal diagnostic techniques for sex determination leading to female feticide.
Article 39(e): The state is required to ensure that the health and strength of women workers are not abused and that they are not forced by economic necessity to enter avocations unsuited to their strength.	<b>Indian Penal Code (1860)</b> contains provisions to protect Indian women from dowry death, rape, kidnapping, cruelty and other offenses.
Article 243-D (3): One-third of the total number of seats to be filled by direct election in every Panchayat shall be reserved for women.	<b>National Commission for Women Act (1990)</b> provided for the establishment of a National Commission for Women to study and monitor all matters relating to the constitutional and legal rights and safeguards of women.
Article 243-T (3): One-third of the total number of seats to be filled by direct election in every Municipality shall be reserved for women.	<b>Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act (2013)</b> provides protection to women from sexual harassment at all workplaces both in public and private sector, whether organized or unorganized.

### The persistent challenges for women

- Despite significant advancement in inheritance laws, only a small percentage of women own land in rural landowning households.
- Even though laws recognise women's right to a fair share of the property, in reality, their right is being denied due to various social, cultural, and institutional reasons.
- There is no comprehensive and accurate data on land ownership in the country.

### Why do women face so many issues in Indian society?

- **Prevailing Patriarchy:** Indian Society has been a male-dominated society. This has led to inferior treatment to women in society in every front of life.
- **Considering Women as a Liability:** The constitution of India provided equal status or rights to women as the rights of men are concerned but strong patriarchal traditions persist in many different societal parts, giving them less opportunity to express their rights as they are bound by the old age tradition practiced by the Indian society. In this modern era, daughters are often regarded as a liability and conditioned to believe that they are inferior and subordinate to men, whereas sons might be idolized and celebrated.
- **Persistent of dowry tradition:** Dowries were made illegal in India in 1961 but the practice persists for most marriages as it is considered to be the utmost discrimination against women. But, this system is still persistent in society.
- **Discrimination:** The extent of discrimination against women varies from one social stratum to another and from state to state as India is the vast country where cultural backgrounds, religions, and traditions vary widely. Many Indian women face discrimination throughout all stages of their life beginning at birth, continuing as an infant, child, adolescent, and adult.
- **Poor socio-economic status:** Women's historical experience of discrimination puts them at a disadvantage position economically. Socio-economic status of women to a greater extent plays a significant role in enhancing their participation and representation in political decision making

bodies. Lack of economic resources is one of the biggest obstacles that prevent women from participating in politics in greater numbers.

- **Lack of education:** Various researchers found that female panchayats heads to be less acquainted with the functioning of the Panchayati system than their male counterparts.
- **Other barriers:**
  - ▶ weak implementation of policies, insufficient capacity to enforce laws, and a lack of political will
  - ▶ poor access to legal services
  - ▶ a lack of understanding of laws within communities and households

### What measures are required?

- Men are considered superior over women and males are also freer than females in this prevailing patriarchal, orthodox and tradition-bound Indian social system.
- While women have come a long way, freed to some extent from the discriminatory traditions of the past, are better educated, healthier and getting more paying jobs outside their homes, however, even today, they are fighting for freedom, safety, respect, and equality with men at home, and their workplace.
- The discrimination with women cannot be ended by just promulgating laws without any public support and awareness about women rights. There is a need to create an environment free from fear, prejudice, oppression, discrimination, and violence.
- Moreover, every woman must be well educated, healthy, aware of her rights, safe, and financially independent, because that is the only way to achieve freedom from gender disparity.

### ◎ CONCLUSION

Even after many progressive judgments and laws, there is still a long way for women to get their due property rights. Given these challenges, the government must take a 'gendered approach' in implementing these laws and also facilitate the women folk to access their rights.

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# SC DISMISSAL OF DEVAS PLEA TO HELP INDIA IN GLOBAL ARBITRATION

## CONTEXT:

The controversial deal between the Indian Department of Space’s commercial entity Antrix and Bengaluru-based start-up Devas Multimedia has been under the scanner for more than a decade now. The recent judgment bolsters the Union of India’s case against Devas internationally, especially against the arbitration award for Devas that is under consideration with the judiciary of the Netherlands.

## ◎ BACKGROUND:

- In 2005, Antrix Corporation, the government-owned commercial arm of ISRO, signed an agreement with Bangalore-based Devas Multimedia for a 12-year lease of 90% transponder space on two satellites, G-SAT6 and G-SAT6A that were yet to be launched.
- Of the 150 MHz of space that ISRO owned in the **S-band spectrum**, Devas was allowed the use of 70 MHz to launch satellite-based applications on mobile devices.
- Devas, which had a few former ISRO scientists in its top management, was supposed to pay \$300 million to Antrix over the 12 years.

The **S-band spectrum** is extremely valuable for mobile broadband services, in terms of usage as well as money. The frequency, also known as the 2.5 GHz band, is globally used for providing mobile broadband services using fourth-generation technologies such as WiMax and Long Term Evolution (LTE). It is less susceptible to rain fading compared to Ku and Ka bands.

- The deal was cancelled in 2011 and while doing so the Indian government did not even invoke the national security clause.
- In 2011, the UPA-2 government cancelled this agreement on the ground that it needed the S-band satellite spectrum for national security and other social purposes.
- This led to arbitration between Antrix and Devas at the **International Chambers of Commerce (ICC)** and two bilateral investment treaty (BIT) arbitrations. India lost all three disputes.

### International Chamber of Commerce (ICC):

- ICC is the world’s largest business organization working to promote international trade and responsible business conduct.
- It has been helping to resolve difficulties in international commercial and business disputes to support trade and investment since 1923.
- ICC headquarters is in Paris, France.

HOW IT UNFOLDED		
<p>▶ <b>Jan 2005:</b> Agreement between Antrix and Devas for former to launch two satellites and lease 90% of S-band to Devas</p> <p>▶ <b>2011:</b> UPA govt cancels deal on 'security' grounds after allegations of corruption</p> <p>▶ <b>Aug 2016:</b> CBI charge-sheets former ISRO chief G Madhavan Nair and other officials</p>	<p>▶ <b>Sept 2017:</b> International Chamber of Commerce awards Devas compensation worth \$1.3 billion</p> <p>▶ <b>Oct 2020:</b> A United States Federal Court confirms ICC's award</p> <p>▶ <b>Jan 2021:</b> Govt approaches NCLT to begin liquidation proceedings of Devas. NCLT admits case and appoints liquidator</p> <p>▶ <b>Sept 2021:</b> NCLAT upholds NCLT order to</p>	<p>liquidate Devas</p> <p>▶ <b>Dec 2021-Jan 2022:</b> A Canadian court allows seizing of Air India assets by Devas after latter alleges that India breached bilateral treaty with Mauritius. Antrix-Devas deal was signed under this treaty</p> <p>▶ <b>Jan 2022:</b> Supreme Court upholds NCLT decision, orders liquidation of Devas. Liquidator takes over Devas</p>

Timeline of the Antrix-Devas dispute

## ◎ ANALYSIS:

### Reasons for the government sighted for the scrapping of the deal:

- In 2011, Antrix issued a termination notice to Devas, which among other things stated that the policy decision was of the central government, acting in its sovereign capacity is the event of **force majeure** (*unforeseeable circumstances that prevent someone from fulfilling a contract*).
- The findings of a draft audit report pointed out discrepancies including financial mismanagement, conflict of interest, non-compliance of rules, and favouritism.
- The government also held that it needed the S-band satellite spectrum for national security and other social purposes.

### What did DEVAS do?

- This resulted in commercial arbitration before an ICC Tribunal in the Netherlands and investment arbitration under the India-Mauritius and India-Germany bilateral investment treaty. Each of these proceedings has led to adverse awards against the Union of India.
- Devas moved to the Supreme court and several other international courts against Antrix for “wrongful” termination of the deal.
- SC had then directed for a tribunal, which in its order on September 14, 2015, concluded that Antrix has wrongfully repudiated the agreement and asked it to pay \$562.3 million as damages to Devas along with interests’ rates which crossed the compensation amount to over \$1 billion.

### International Tribunal Arbitration:

- Devas Multimedia initiated arbitration against the annulment at the **International Chambers of Commerce (ICC)**.
- Under the **Bilateral Investment Treaty (BIT)**, two separate arbitrations were also initiated by Mauritius investors in Devas Multimedia under the India-Mauritius BIT and by Deutsche Telekom, a German company under the India- Germany BIT. **India lost all three disputes and has to pay a total of USD 1.29 billion in damages.**

### Outcome of international Tribunal Arbitration:

- Due to non-payment of compensation by the Indian Government, a French court has recently ordered the freezing of Indian government property in Paris, to enforce a \$1.3 billion arbitration award. A similar judgement has also been passed by a Canadian court.

### Arbitration Scenario in India:

- The Supreme Court has upheld the **National Company Law Appellate Tribunal’s** order to **wind up Devas Multimedia**. It has also upheld the **liquidation of Devas Multimedia**, and said the contention of Antrix that fraud had happened “stood established”.
- These tribunals directed the winding up of Devas Multimedia and appointed a provisional liquidator for the purpose.

#### Antrix Corporation Limited:

- Antrix Corporation Limited (ACL), Bengaluru is a wholly-owned Government of India Company under the administrative control of the Department of Space.
- It was incorporated as a private limited company owned by the Government of India in September 1992.
- It is a marketing arm of ISRO for promotion and commercial exploitation of space products, technical consultancy services and transfer of technologies developed by ISRO.
- Another major objective is to facilitate the development of space-related industrial capabilities in India.

### Why are AAI and Air India being targeted?

- AAI and Air India are being targeted because they are Indian public sector entities with overseas assets and serve as a proxy for the government of India.
- The Canadian court can do so through the concept of **Restrictive Immunity**.
- In the meanwhile, the **National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT)** ordered the liquidation of Devas Multimedia on the ground that the affairs of the company were being carried on fraudulently.

### Jurisdiction of Canadian court related to the attachment of Indian assets:

- **State immunity:** It is a well-established principle of international law-shields a state and its property against legal proceedings in the courts of other countries. This covers immunity from both jurisdiction and execution.
- However, there is no international legal instrument in force dealing with state immunity in the municipal legal systems of different countries, which has created an international void.
- Consequently, countries have filled this void through their national legislations and domestic judicial practices on state immunity.
- Typically, prominent jurisdictions such as Canada follow the concept of **Restrictive Immunity** (a foreign State is immune only for sovereign functions) and not

absolute immunity.

### Impact of Supreme Court latest judgement:

- The Supreme Court's dismissal of the appeal filed by Devas Multimedia against the decision of the **National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT)**, which had upheld the National Company Law Tribunal's decision to wind up the company, has **significant political and economic ramifications and India will likely use it while fighting against an international arbitration award won by Devas**, whose enforcement the company has been pushing for outside India.

### Key observation from Supreme Court's Judgement, that India will be putting forth to supports its arguments:

- The commercial relationship between Antrix and Devas was a product of the fraud perpetrated by Devas, every

part of the plant that grew out of these seeds, such as the agreement, the disputes, arbitral awards, etc are infected with the poison of fraud.

- Allowing Devas and its shareholders to reap the benefit of their fraudulent action, may nevertheless send the wrong message.

### ◎ CONCLUSION:

The Supreme Court's recent judgment can be seen in favour of the Union of India and it strengthens its case against Devas in global arbitration, especially against the arbitration award for Devas that is under consideration with the judiciary of the Netherlands. If India succeeds in defending its point in global arbitration, it also means that it will be saving on taxpayers money too as the Devas shareholders are pursuing Indian assets abroad to recover \$1.29 billion that international arbitration tribunals awarded over the satellite contract that was cancelled in 2011.

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# RECIPROCAL EXCHANGE OF LOGISTICS AGREEMENT: ROADMAP TO INDIA'S STRATEGIC ACCESS IN THE ARCTIC

## CONTEXT:

Several issues of mutual interest were discussed during the India-Russia annual summit but the agreement on an important Reciprocal Exchange of Logistics Agreement (RELOS) could not be reached.

- RELOS remains to be a crucial agreement between India and Russia as both the countries plan to increase their bilateral investments in the Arctic region and Russian Far East.

## ◎ BACKGROUND

### About Arctic region:

- The Arctic is a polar region located at the northernmost part of Earth.
- The Arctic consists of the Arctic Ocean, adjacent seas, and parts of Alaska (United States), Canada, Finland, Greenland (Denmark), Iceland, Norway, Russia, and Sweden.
- Land within the Arctic region has seasonally varying snow and ice cover.

### Ecological Impact of Warming of Arctic Region:

- Rising Sea Levels:** The loss of ice and the warming waters affects sea levels, salinity levels, and current and precipitation patterns.
- Deterioration of Tundra:** The Tundra is returning to swamp, the permafrost is thawing, sudden storms are ravaging coastlines and wildfires are devastating interior Canada and Russia.
- Threat to Biodiversity:** The phenomenally rich biodiversity of the Arctic region is under serious threat due to warming of the region. The absence of year-long ice and higher temperatures are making the survival of Arctic marine life, plants and birds difficult while encouraging species from lower latitudes to move north.
- Extinction of Indigenous Cultures:** The Arctic is also home to about 40 different indigenous groups, whose culture, economy and way of life is in danger of being swept away.
- Increasing **human encroachment** with its attendant stresses will only aggravate this impact and upset a fragile ecological balance.

### Commercial Importance of Arctic Region:

- Abundant Resources:** The opening of the Arctic presents huge commercial and economic

opportunities, particularly in shipping, energy, fisheries and mineral resources.

### ● Commercial Navigation:

- ▶ The **Northern Sea Route (NSR):** It is a shipping lane connecting the North Atlantic to the North Pacific through a short polar arc which could revolutionise the prospects of trade in Russia and Scandinavian countries.
- ▶ It is approximately 40% shorter than the Suez Canal route and 60% shorter than the Cape of Good Hope.
- ▶ It would cause substantial reductions in transportation time, fuel consumption, limit environmental emission and eliminate piracy risk.
- **Oil and Natural Gas Deposits:** Estimated to be 22% of the world's unexplored resources, mostly in the Arctic ocean, will be open to access along with mineral deposits including 25% of the global reserves of rare earths, buried in Greenland.

### India's Interests in Arctic Region:

#### ● Environmental Interest:

- ▶ India's **extensive coastline** makes it vulnerable to the impact of Arctic warming on ocean currents, weather patterns, fisheries and most importantly, the monsoon.
- ▶ Arctic research will help India's scientific community to study melting rates of the **Himalayan glaciers**, which are endowed with the largest freshwater reserves in the world outside the geographic poles.

#### ● Scientific Interest:

- ▶ **Research Stations:** India launched its first scientific expedition to the Arctic in 2007 and set up a research station '**Himadri**' in the international Arctic research base at Ny-Ålesund in Spitsbergen, Svalbard, Norway.



- ▶ India has two other observatories in Kongsforden and Gruevbadet in Norway.
- ▶ Studying Himalayan Glaciers: Scientific research in Arctic developments, in which India has a good record, will contribute to its understanding of climatic changes in the **third Pole, the Himalayas**.
- **Strategic Interest:**
  - ▶ **Countering Chinese Influence:** The strategic implications of an active China in the Arctic and its growing economic and strategic relationship with Russia are self-evident and need close monitoring.
  - ▶ **Arctic Council Membership:** Since 2013, India has had observer status in the Arctic Council, which is the predominant inter-governmental forum for cooperation on the environmental and development aspects of the Arctic.

## ◎ ANALYSIS

### What is RELOS?

- The **Reciprocal Exchange of Logistics Agreement (RELOS)** is a long-awaited administrative agreement that would enable the militaries of both the countries (India and Russia) to access logistics and support facilities at each other's bases and ports.
- It would facilitate the replenishment of fuel, rations, spare parts and berthing for troops, warships and aircrafts while operating away from home ports and bases during the war and peacetime missions.
- RELOS would further ensure smooth use of the host nation's **existing logistics networks** which would reduce the overall costs of the mission and provide a strategic edge to each other's military operations.

### Significance for India:

- India has signed military logistics agreements with several countries in the past. This includes the India-US Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (**LEMOA**), India-Japan Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement (**ACSA**) and India-Australia Mutual Logistics Support Agreement (**MLSA**), demonstrating all the Quad countries.
- Apart from this, India maintains such military logistics agreements with France, Singapore and South Korea. It is currently in the process of finalising such an agreement with the UK and Vietnam.

- **Economic and Geo-Strategic significance:**
  - ▶ **India's interests in the Arctic region** are increasing and it is keen to make investments particularly in the exploration of Russian oil, gas and other rare earth minerals in the near future.
  - ▶ It is likely that these investments would increase further in future, therefore some kind of **strategic security backing** is required to safeguard India's investments in the Arctic.
  - ▶ At present, India does not maintain any port facility or naval base in this region as a whole. An agreement such as RELOS would enable Indian Navy to have greater **operational reach in the Arctic**.
  - ▶ It would provide logistics and other required facilities to Indian naval ships venturing through the region.
  - ▶ Further, in case of any **hostile situation arising in the region**, RELOS would enable greater coordination between the Indian and Russian Navy to respond appropriately in the region.
- **Emerging Shipping Connectivity:**
  - ▶ The Arctic sea-ice along the Russian coast is receding drastically. The **Northern Sea Route** is humming with shipping activity that is significantly increasing annually.
  - ▶ India has openly called for supporting the Russian vision of developing the Northern Sea Route (NSR).
  - ▶ The signing of RELOS between India and Russia, would open **India's access to Russian Arctic naval ports and military bases** from Vladivostok to Murmansk and beyond.
  - ▶ India, does not have its own full-fledged base or naval docking or refuelling facility in the Arctic, but through RELOS it would have access to all such facilities in the near future.
- **Strategic Counterweight:**
  - ▶ India has signed logistics agreements with all its partner Quad countries. Though Russia is openly critical of the Quad and has maintained distance from the alliance, RELOS could strategically act as counterweight leverage to both India and Russia in the Indo-Pacific.
  - ▶ The similar lines on which RELOS would enable the Indian Navy's reach in the Russian Far East and the Arctic region, it would also provide logistics support and easy access of required facilities to the Russian Navy via Indian naval ports and military bases located in the Indian Ocean.

- ▶ RELOS in a way, without involving Russia in the Quad, would facilitate and strengthen Russian naval presence in the Indo-Pacific to any future hostile scenarios in the region.
- ▶ Strengthening India–Russia partnership on a framework such as RELOS could take the Russian vision of GEP (Great Eurasian Partnership) further from Vladivostok to the Indian Ocean and the Indian vision till the Russian high north.

### © CONCLUSION:

- The bilateral relationship between India and Russia has grown and matured over time, and needs to be carried forward in existing and new areas of mutual interest. The Arctic offers tremendous opportunities for enhancing this cooperation at the helm of which **RELOS could act as perfect leverage.**
- India has very limited polar infrastructure and shipping capabilities to operate in the Arctic waters. Russia on the other hand is the only country in the world that maintains a strong dominance over Arctic shipping and other polar infrastructure capabilities required to operate in the region. Therefore, partnering with Russia via an agreement such as RELOS would offer **tremendous support and opportunities to India in the Arctic.**
- India's primary engagements in the Arctic are focused on understanding scientific interconnections between Arctic sea ice melting and changes in Indian monsoon systems. India still cannot afford to lose the sight of **geopolitical and geo-economic transitions** emerging in the region, where states like China are pursuing dominant economic and strategic posturing in the region.

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# REVISITING RCEP, WORLD'S LARGEST TRADE PACT

## CONTEXT:

The Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) officially came into effect on the first day of the New Year. Even without India, which virtually at the last moment developed cold feet and refused to join the 15-nation trade pact, it is the world's largest free trade agreement.

## ◎ BACKGROUND

- The RCEP was first proposed at the 19th ASEAN meet in November 2011 with an aim to create a consolidated market for the 10 member countries and their trade partners.
- Negotiations to chart out this deal had been on since 2013, and India was expected to be a signatory until its decision last November.
- On November 4, 2019, India decided to exit discussions over "significant outstanding issues".
- India had been "consistently" raising "fundamental issues" and concerns throughout the negotiations and was prompted to take this stand as they had not been resolved by the deadline to commit to signing the deal.
- Its decision was to safeguard the interests of industries like agriculture and dairy and to give an advantage to the country's services sector.
- The current structure of RCEP still does not address these issues and concerns.

## ◎ ANALYSIS

### What is RCEP?

- Described as the "largest" regional trading agreement to this day, RCEP was originally being negotiated between 16 countries — ASEAN members and countries with which they have free trade agreements (FTAs), namely Australia, China, Korea, Japan, New Zealand and India.
- RCEP is essentially a China-led initiative for a regional trading bloc that will comprise one third of the world's population and 29% of the world's GDP.
- The purpose of RCEP was to make it easier for products and services of each of these countries to be available across this region.
- The purpose of this trading partnership is to give preferential treatment for trade between the member countries either through lower tariffs, preferential market access, customs union or free trade in specific sectors.

### How big is it in size?

- It is the world's largest free trade agreement. It covers a market of 2.3 bn persons or 30% of global population, with an annual output of US \$26 trillion and 25% of world's exports.
- That puts it way ahead in size of the Comprehensive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), which became operational in December 2018 and has the United States in it.
- China, Japan, Australia and a number of other Association of SouthEast Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries who are in the RCEP, are also its members.

### What categories are covered in the deal?

- The deal is extensive across 16 categories.
- These cover conventional items such as tariff reductions on goods and services, market access, investment, dispute settlement, customs and rules of origin, and newer items such as intellectual property rights, small and medium enterprises, and e-commerce.

### Why did India opt out of the deal?

- Since the beginning, RCEP presented a platform to India to further its strategic and economic status in the Asia-Pacific region. Since it brought the biggest economies of the region into a trading arrangement for the first time, India felt it would be a singular opportunity to enhance its exports to the region.
- India also did not secure the kind of benefits it had hoped for in the services sector.
- **China factor:** Escalating tensions with China are a major reason for India's decision. While China's participation in the deal had already been proving difficult for India due to various economic threats, the clash at Galwan Valley has soured relations between the two countries.

### How beneficial is the organization?

- **Increase in income:** By 2030, RCEP will increase the income of member economies by 0.6% while adding \$245 billion and 2.8 million jobs to the regional economy.

- **Greater cooperation:** It also stands to promote greater regional cooperation in trade and investment, addressing regulatory issues to ease cross-border movements.
  - **Increase in regional investment:** Regional investment may increase further as RCEP prohibits performance requirements—such as a specified percentage of domestic content or requirement of technology transfer—being placed on investors as conditions for market access, and locks in future easing of measures thus lowering risk of backtracking.
  - **Digital economy:** RCEP takes a pragmatic approach to the digital economy, a sector that rose in importance during the course of the pandemic.
- ◎ **WAY FORWARD**
- The ramifications of India's decision to opt out of RCEP will be tested. When India chose to stay out of the Belt and Road Initiative in 2017, there was much commentary that New Delhi might be isolating itself. Three years later, India's position has been recognised by like-minded democracies, and many have said that India's decision was prescient.

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# A CLOSER LOOK INTO FEMINIST FOREIGN POLICY IN INDIA

## CONTEXT:

India's commitments to international agreements towards gender equality show its tremendous potential to make crucial advances in feminist foreign policy. But there are remaining gaps that India needs to fix in order to realise its full potential.

## ◎ BACKGROUND:

- We have seen that during the last couple of years several countries around the globe have gained traction in terms of the merits and efficacy of the Feminist Foreign Policy (FFP).
- Analysing a little deeper reveals a very interesting aspect of it, which is how it gets influenced by the context in which it is discussed.

We shall be discussing how an ideal definition of Feminist Foreign Policy (FFP) in the Indian context could be and be instrumental in bringing reforms.

## ◎ ANALYSIS:

### Development of Feminist Foreign Policy (FFP) Framework:

- It took shape with *Sweden's adoption of a Feminist Foreign Policy (FFP) in 2014*. After that several countries have announced *gender mainstreaming* in their foreign policy.
- Feminist approaches to international affairs can be traced back to the 1980s, though largely rooted in traditional thinking and activism.
- The scenario started changing in the 1990s with the realisation that it is not only necessary to include women in peacebuilding and peacekeeping but also in the wider gamut of diplomacy and foreign and security policy.
- FFP builds on three central principles of feminist perspectives on diplomacy and security:
  - ▶ Broadening the understanding of security
  - ▶ Decoding internal power relations
  - ▶ Acknowledging women's political agency
- Since Sweden embarked on this path, several other countries — Canada, France, Germany and, more recently, Mexico — have forged their own, adopting either a feminist foreign policy or a gendered approach to aspects of policymaking.

### Demerits of Generalising the concept of Feminist Foreign Policy:

- There are merits in the conceptualisation of the approach how we look at the Feminist Foreign Policy, but at the same time deriving a universal definition also **narrows the scope of its applicability**.
- In order for foreign policies to thus be feminist in nature, **socio-political landscapes** and **lived experiences of each country** need to be taken into consideration.

### Dismantling Feminist Foreign Policy:

- As we have discussed, the idea of FFP needs to be personalised or tailored according to the specific political needs and background of each country. This also makes it all more important that India derive its own definition of the concept.
- An ideal way of evolving the definition of FFP involves dissecting the terms into '**Feminist**' and '**Foreign Policy**', and digging deeper into it in the light of Indian political attitudes and opinions.
  - ▶ "**Feminist**" **perspective**: It deals with dominating power structures that create policies benefitting a limited set of people. It seeks to "**challenge systems of oppression, marginalisation, and exclusion**" that perpetuate inequality.
  - ▶ "**Foreign policy**" **perspective**: It is more than how countries interact with one another. It takes into account how '**distinctive political culture**' and '**school of thoughts**' merge together for the larger good of society.

### Dimensions of Feminist Foreign Policy in Indian Context:

- **Deconstruction of power structures**:
  - ▶ Ending gender essentialist standards
- **Involvement of women and focus towards ensuring equality**:
  - ▶ Equal representation of women
  - ▶ Ending the idea of foreign policy being a male-dominated field

- ▶ Roles open to women remain highly gendered

- **Human security school of thought:**

- ▶ Securing peace
- ▶ Enhanced accessibility to basic human rights
- ▶ Specific allocation of resources to realise the outcomes

### Gender in India's foreign policy:

On paper, India's commitments towards gender equality seem highly impressive. **Ironically, in the recently released World Economic Forum's Gender Gap Report 2021, India had slipped 28 spots to rank 140 out of the 156 countries covered.** Still, some examples need to be appreciated.

- Ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (**CEDAW**) in 1993
- India's reiteration towards implementing the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (UN SDG) 5 on gender equality
- Providing financial aid and assistance to multilateral programmes focusing on women's empowerment;
- India's membership in the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women in 2020.
- India's contribution to UN peacekeeping efforts, especially in Liberia in 2007 (by sending an all-women peacekeeping contingent). It is often heralded by the international community as their way of supporting the ideas put forth by the WPS Agenda, even though India has not formally ratified it.]

The Women, Peace and Security ("WPS") agenda was formally initiated by the landmark UN Security Council (2000). The WPS agenda rests on four pillars:

- **Prevention:** Prevention of conflict and all forms of violence against women and girls in conflict and post-conflict situations.
- **Participation:** Women's equal participation and gender equality in peace and security decision-making processes at all levels.
- **Protection:** Women and girls are protected from all forms of sexual and gender-based violence and their rights are protected and promoted in conflict situations.
- **Relief and Recovery:** Specific relief needs of women are met and their capacities to act as agents in relief and recovery are strengthened in conflict and post-conflict situations.

### Work done so far is indicative and not comprehensive:

- India managed to appoint their first female Minister of External Affairs only in 2014 when Sushma Swaraj completed her full term of five years.
- India may have ratified the CEDAW, but it has not ratified its 'optional protocol' that allows people to directly approach the CEDAW committee if the national systems fail to uphold the principles mentioned in the agreement.
- India's performance in Liberia was also critiqued on being gender essentialist in nature since the women peacekeeping contingent was mostly involved in providing care and support.
- High numbers of women in the total workforce of the Indian Foreign Service (IFS) does not translate into high numbers of women being posted at high governance positions.

### Gaps need to be filled:

When it comes to India adopting an FFP and bringing gender parity in its foreign policy, the existence of visible gaps between commitments on paper and reality comes into the picture. This can be attributed to 2 reasons mainly:

- **Actions being determined by political considerations:**

- ▶ India's actions are determined more by its political considerations than by fulfilling its commitments. India justified not ratifying the WPS Agenda on the grounds of it "*not being applicable to their country context*", even though it is home to several militarised regions vulnerable to the internal conflict to this day.
- ▶ At the same time, this has also been seen as an outcome of India's concern on outside interference in their domestic affairs, which also explains why they might not have ratified the Optional Protocol of the CEDAW.

- **Patriarchal and Misogynistic thought processes:**

- ▶ The traditional misconceptions about women not being capable diplomats and foreign service agents hinder India's implementation of gender equality commitments. Interestingly, the IFS rules of service reflect their inherent assumption of having only men being appointed to different positions. There is no mention of female pronouns in the document as it chalks out the duties and responsibilities for diplomats.

© **CONCLUSION:**

- The gaps that exist between progressive policy intent and actual impact has much to do with a socio-cultural context held back by strong cultures of patriarchy. Adopting a feminist foreign policy means a commitment to have gender equality and women's rights present in both foreign and national policies including health, climate, education, nuclear, security, economic issues &

others. Both *Genders mainstreaming* in foreign policy and an *overarching feminist foreign policy* are equally important.

- **"More women means more peace. If women are around the table when peace deals are negotiated, then those peace agreements will last longer."** (*Margot Wallstrom, Former Deputy Prime Minister Former Minister for Foreign Affairs, Sweden*)

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## ASSAM-MEGHALAYA BORDER ROW

### CONTEXT:

A roadmap for amicable settlement of the border issues has been prepared with representatives from both states of Assam and Meghalaya.

### ◎ BACKGROUND

- In a bid to resolve the long-standing inter-state boundary disputes, chief ministers of the two states had met in December last year and decided to resolve the issues over six of the 12 areas.
- Six of the 12 areas of difference have been identified for resolution in the first phase.
- The areas of differences taken up for final settlement include Hahim, Gizang, Tarabari, Boklapara, Khanapara-Pillingkata and Ratacherra.
  - ▶ Assam has border tension with neighbouring Nagaland, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh.
  - ▶ Efforts to resolve the dispute with the three other states are also underway.

### Analysis

#### The border row

- The 884-km Assam-Meghalaya boundary witnesses flare-ups frequently.
- But the worst-ever violence along the Assam-Mizoram border was seen in July 2020 that left six Assam Police personnel dead and nearly 100 civilians and security personnel of the two neighbouring states injured.
- The trouble between the states is due to conflicting interpretations of their territorial position.
- Meghalaya was a part of Assam before attaining statehood on January 21, 1972. They share an 884.9km border and the dispute started after the creation of Meghalaya.
  - ▶ There are at present 12 points of dispute along the Meghalaya-Assam border covering an area of 2,765.14 sq. km. Now, six of the 12 areas have been taken for final settlement.
- While Mizoram says the boundary line is the one laid down in the **Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation Act of 1875**, Assam backs the **1933 demarcation**.

### Major inter-state disputes in India

#### Assam – Nagaland

- Boundary: 434 kilometer
- Area of dispute: Assam districts of Sivasagar, Jorhat, and Golaghat.

#### Gujarat – Rajasthan

- Area of dispute: Mangadh Hill, located on the border of the two states. Gujarat claims half of the hill, while Rajasthan claims the entire hill is theirs.

#### Karnataka- Kerala

- Area of dispute: district of Kasaragod

#### Orissa – West Bengal

- Area of dispute: 82 villages under Jaleswar and Bhogarai blocks in Balasore district

#### Arunachal Pradesh and Assam:

- Area of dispute: Arunachal Pradesh claims territory in Assam based on history.

#### Others

- **Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand:** Himachal Pradesh is contesting Uttarakhand over six places of Dehradun district, adjoining its Shimla district.
- **Bihar and UP:** The inter-state boundary between Bihar and Uttar Pradesh continued to fluctuate due to the frequent change in the course of rivers.
- **Haryana and UP:** Likewise, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh's fluctuating boundary was sought to be solved in the 1970s. But issues are still not resolved.
- **Haryana and Punjab:** Punjab and Haryana are locked over the transfer of Chandigarh to Punjab, and part of the Fazilka sub-district of Punjab to Haryana.
- **Orissa and Andhra Pradesh:** Between Orissa and Andhra Pradesh, the boundary dispute relates to 63 villages falling presently in Orissa. But neither government has asked for Central intervention.

- **Orissa and Jharkhand:** Similarly, Orissa and Jharkhand have a boundary dispute relating to seven villages of the Mayurbhang and Keonjhar districts. Orissa has claimed territories in the former princely states of Seraikela and Kharsuan, now in Jharkhand.
- **Orissa and Chattisgarh:** Orissa is locked with Chhattisgarh over three villages of Naupada district. Orissa and West Bengal are also stalemated over five villages of Balasore and Mayurbhanj districts of Orissa.

### How does the Constitution deal with inter-state disputes?

- At the time of independence in 1947, India consisted of 571 disjointed princely states and provinces directly governed by the British.
- The States Reorganization Commission (SRC) constituted in 1953 after nearly two years of study, merged them into 14 states and six union territories (UTs).
- Currently, they have grown into 28 states and eight UTs, making a total of 36 entities.
- The draftsmen of India's constitution had erred grievously in ignoring the problem of interstate disputes, especially interstate boundaries.
- The constitution makes no provision for a swift and binding decision of such disputes.
  - ▶ **Article 262** is on the adjudication of disputes relating to waters of inter-state rivers or river

valleys. There is no comparable provision on disputes on land.

### How does SC deal with disputes arising between States?

#### ● Article 131

- ▶ Article 131 of the Constitution of India vests the Supreme Court with original jurisdiction over any dispute arising between the states or between the center and state.
- ▶ SC has original jurisdiction in any dispute:
  - between the Government of India and one or more States
  - between the Government of India and any State or States on one side and one or more other States on the other; or
  - Between two or more States
- (if the dispute involves any question (whether of law or fact) on which the existence or extent of a legal right depends)

### ◎ CONCLUSION

The inter-state border disputes in the country have persisted for a long time. In such a scenario, it is important to solve the matter by spreading awareness about the benefits of settled and peaceful borders in terms of better infrastructure, connectivity. At the same time, efforts should be redoubled to find a political solution, mediated by the Union government, which is binding on all the states.

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# MLAS SUSPENSION, 'DANGER TO DEMOCRACY': SUPREME COURT

## CONTEXT:

12 MLAs from the Maharashtra legislative assembly have gone to the Supreme Court against their 1-year suspension from the state assembly.

## ◎ BACKGROUND:

- Last year, 12 BJP MLAs allegedly entered the chamber of MLA Bhaskar Jadhav, who was presiding over the Maharashtra Legislative Assembly and misbehaved with him.
- The issue was pertaining to the disclosure of the data on the OBCs.
- Subsequently, a resolution was moved for the suspension of 12 MLAs for one year.
- Now, those 12 MLAs had filed a writ petition in the Supreme Court for the quashing of the suspension.

## ◎ ANALYSIS:

### Argument laid by the suspended MLAs:

They consider the suspension as a "*grossly arbitrary and disproportionate*" one that amounts to:

- **Denial of the principles of natural justice**
- **Violation of laid-down procedure**
- **Violation of their fundamental right to equality (Article 14):** No hearing or furnishing of written explanations by the MLAs, who had committed contempt of the House.
- **Against Maharashtra Legislative Assembly Rules (53):** The power to suspend can only be exercised by the Speaker, and it cannot be put to vote in a resolution as was done in this case.

**Rules on the length of suspension of a Member of Parliament:** Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in Lok Sabha (Rules 373, 374, and 374A): It provides for the withdrawal of a member whose conduct is "grossly disorderly", and suspension of one who abuses the rules of the House or wilfully obstructs its business.

### Maximum suspension:

- **Lok Sabha:** it is for five consecutive sittings or the remainder of the session, whichever is less.
- **Rajya Sabha:** under Rules 255 and 256, the maximum suspension does not exceed the remainder of the session.

- **State legislative assemblies and councils:** Prescribe a maximum suspension not exceeding the remainder of the session.

### Suspension of MLAs beyond a session raises questions of rationality:

- There should be **some purpose of suspension** and the purpose is with regards to the session and should not go beyond that session.
- It **deprives the constituency of being unrepresented** for more than 6 months.
- **Election commission roles get undermined in such a situation as it cannot conduct election in case of suspension of an MLA**, wherein the same is possible in the case of a vacancy or expulsion of the MLA.
- **The fate of democracy gets endangered:** An outer limit on the period for suspending a member of the legislature is essential for democracy as a situation can be perceived in future where a ruling party having a *slender majority* resorts to such actions to keep the Opposition members out of the House.

### Observation and references made by the Supreme Court over the suspension of MLAs:

- **Worse than expulsion:** As the constituency will remain unrepresented and it is like punishing the whole constituency for no mistake and there is no means to fill the vacancy in such scenario. The Supreme court has described such a situation as worse than the expulsion of the MLAs.
- **Referred -Article 190(4) of the Constitution:** As per the relevant rules, the Assembly had no power to suspend a member beyond 60 days. SC observed that while the House has the power to suspend a member, it cannot be for more than 59 days. Also, each constituency has an equal amount of right to be represented in the House, and none can represent these constituencies in the absence of the elected MLAs.

Under **Article 190(4) of the Constitution**, if a member of a House is absent from all meetings without its permission for a period of 60 days, the House may declare the seat vacant.

- **Referred-Section 151 A of the Representation of People Act, 1951:** A constituency cannot go unrepresented for a period beyond 6 months. In suspension, re-election is ruled out and 151 A is also ruled out. Suspension is more onerous than expulsion. The spirit is that the Constituency cannot be left unrepresented for a long time.

◎ **CONCLUSION:**

- The suspension of MLAs from the Legislative Assembly for a year is worse than expulsion as the outcomes of

the latter are so dreadful and it undermines the right of the concerned constituency to remain represented in the House.

- Such punitive action by the legislature poses a grave threat to the democratic representation of the people of the constituency and results in a constitutional void. Each constituency has an equal amount of right to be represented in the House. The question we are considering is not just dealing with the individual rights of the MLAs or a constituency but concerns representative democracy as a whole.

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# INTER-STATE WATER DISPUTES IN INDIA

## CONTEXT:

Interstate (River) Water Disputes (ISWDs) are a continuing challenge to federal water governance in the country. Rooted in constitutional, historico-geographical, and institutional ambiguities, they tend to become prolonged conflicts between the states that share river basins.

- Given the significant nature of such disputes, it is essential to examine the constitutional complexities, contentious political federalism, and identity-based electoral political dynamics that fuel ISWDs.

## ◎ BACKGROUND

- India has 25 major river basins, with most rivers flowing across states.
- However, interstate rivers in India have become sites of contestations, fuelled by conflicting perceptions of property rights, flawed economic instruments for food security, the lack of an integrated ecosystems approach, and the prevalence of reductionist hydrology for water resource development.
- Such conflicts over the possession and control of river water have persisted since the inception of the Indian republic, with prolonged delays in resolution due to historical, institutional and political factors.
- In recent years, increasing water scarcity, a rapid rise in urban and rural demands for freshwater, and contentious political dynamics have further exacerbated the problem.

## ◎ ANALYSIS

### Water in the Constitution

- Water in the Constitution of India Water is a State subject as per entry 17 of State List and thus states are empowered to enact legislation on water.
  - Entry 17** of State List deals with water i.e. water supply, irrigation, canal, drainage, embankments, water storage and water power.
  - Entry 56** of the Union List gives power to the Union Government for the regulation and development of inter-state rivers and river valleys to the extent declared by Parliament to be expedient in the public interest.
- Within India's federal political structure, inter-state disputes require the involvement of the Union government for a federal solution at two levels:
  - between the states involved
  - between the Centre and the states
- Article 262** in the constitution which empowers the President to establish the Inter-State water Disputes Tribunal being and also states.

- Under this provision an **Inter-State Water Dispute Act, 1956 and River Boards Act, 1956** was created.

### What escalates water conflicts?

- The interstate water disputes emerge and recur due to their particular anatomy produced by three sets of characteristics:
  - legal ambiguities
  - antagonistic politics – a making of the nexus of water politics and democratic politics
  - due to their political ecology of asymmetries – deeply embedded as historically and geographically constructed
- Affected interests:** Water disputes arise when the action of one state affects the interests of one or more other states.
- Unsustainable use of water:** Economic factors like underpricing of irrigation waters, promotion of water-consuming crops through support pricing, etc., often lead to unsustainable use of water during lean seasons thereby escalating conflicts.
- Increasing demand, pollution and decreasing availability:** Water sharing disputes across the country (and even beyond) are only going to escalate with increasing demands, and also with increasing pollution & losses reducing the available water.
  - Climate change is likely to worsen the situation as monsoon patterns change, water demands going up with increasing temperatures, glaciers melt and sea levels rise.

### What prevents an integrated basin-level ecosystem-based approach?

- Shortsightedness in technocracy
- Fragmented approach to governance
- Over-reliance on structural engineering (without concern of externalities)
- The Centre's lack of initiative



**Water Disputes Tribunals**

Tribunal	States Concerned	Date of Constitution	Current Status
Godavari Water Disputes Tribunal	Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa	April 1969	Report and decision given in July 1980.
Krishna Water Disputes Tribunal – I	Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka,	April 1969	Report and decision given in May 1976.
Narmada Water Disputes Tribunal	Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Maharashtra	October 1969	Report and decision given in December 1979. Narmada Control Authority (NCA) was constituted to implement the decision.
Ravi & Beas Water Tribunal	Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan	April 1986	Report and decision given in April 1987. Further Report is pending.
Cauvery Water Disputes Tribunal	Kerala, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry	June 1990	Report and Decision given on 5 February 2007. The Supreme Court modified the decision on 16 February 2018. The Cauvery Water Management Authority (CWMA) and Cauvery Water Regulation Committee (CWRC) were constituted to implement the modified decision.
Krishna Water Disputes Tribunal -II	Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Telangana	April 2004	Report and decision given on 30 December 2010. SLPs filed pending in the Court. The term of the Tribunal has been extended after the bifurcation of Andhra Pradesh. The matter is under adjudication in the Tribunal.
Vansadhara Water Disputes Tribunal	Andhra Pradesh, Odisha	February 2010	Report and decision submitted on 13 September 2017. Further Report is pending.
Mahadayi Water Disputes Tribunal	Goa, Karnataka, Maharashtra	November 2010	Report and decision submitted on 14 August 2018. Further Report is pending.
Mahanadi Water Disputes Tribunal	Chhattisgarh, Odisha	March 2018	Under adjudication by the Tribunal. Report and decision are awaited.

**Why is greater Centre-States coordination essential?**

- There are a whole set of reasons- why a coordinated response from the Centre and states is vital. These include:
  - emerging concerns of long-term national water security and sustainability
  - the risks of climate change
  - the growing environmental challenges, including river pollution

- Greater Centre-states coordination is also crucial for pursuing the current national projects.

**Can the Supreme Court interfere?**

- Article 262 (1) bars the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court.
- But matters are still being taken there on legal, jurisdictional, environmental and constitutional issues.

### Required measures

- ◉ As river basins are shared resources, a coordinated approach between the states, with adequate involvement of the Centre, is necessary for the preservation, equitable distribution and sustainable utilisation of river water.

### The failed attempt

- The idea of building federal consensus for water reforms is not new. The need for such a political process and forum was felt before as well. For instance,
  - ▶ The National Water Resources Council has been created under the aegis of the Ministry of Water Resources.
  - ▶ The National Development Council is another forum for such federal deliberations.

- These forums failed to deliver for a variety of reasons. A key reason is their failure to assuage states about their neutrality and objectivity in enabling deliberations; they are perceived as politically subjective and serving the agendas of the particular political regimes in power.

- ◉ It is essential and necessary to have credible avenues for pursuing political solutions supplementing legal and institutional mechanisms.
- ◉ The strategy has to be multi-pronged, and legal approaches have to be supplemented with institutional and political solutions.

### ◎ CONCLUSION

In order to resolve the interstate water disputes, the focus should be on strengthening the existing and evolving institutional mechanisms, and accommodating political sensitivities to find a long-term and mutually amicable path for the governance of interstate river water.

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# WHY IS INDIA CHALLENGING WTO VERDICT ON SUGAR?

## CONTEXT:

India recently filed an appeal with the Appellate Body of the World Trade Organization (WTO) disputing a verdict by the WTO's dispute settlement panel last month on sugar subsidies.

- The WTO's dispute settlement panel had ruled that India, by subsidising sugar producers, was breaking rules framed under the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) which govern international trade.

## ◎ BACKGROUND:

### Who determines Sugarcane prices in India?

- Sugarcane prices are determined by the **Centre** as well as **States**.
- The Centre announces **Fair and Remunerative Prices (FRP)** which are determined on the recommendation of the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (**CACP**) and are announced by the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (**CCEA**), which is chaired by Prime Minister.
- The State Advised Prices (**SAP**) are announced by key sugarcane producing states which are generally higher than FRP.

### What factors are considered for determining FRP?

According to the provisions of the Sugarcane (Control) Order 1966, fixation of FRP of sugarcane is done keeping in mind the following factors:

- Cost of production of sugarcane
- Return to the growers from alternative crops and the general trend of prices of agricultural commodities
- Availability of sugar to consumers
- Price at which sugar is sold by sugar producers
- Recovery rate of sugar from sugarcane
- The realization made from the sale of by-products such as molasses, bagasse, press mud etc.
- Reasonable margins for the growers of sugarcane on account of risk and profits.

### What are the Agreements of WTO, for which India is being charged as violator?

- **WTO's Agreement on Subsidies and Countervailing Measures:**
  - The WTO Agreement on SCM regulates the use of subsidies, and it regulates the actions countries can take to counter the effects of subsidies.

- Under the agreement, a country can use the WTO's **dispute-settlement procedure** to seek the withdrawal of the subsidy or the removal of its adverse effects. Or the country can launch its own investigation and ultimately charge extra duty (countervailing duty) on subsidised imports that are found to be hurting domestic producers.

- **WTO's Agreement on Agriculture:**

- It is aimed to remove trade barriers and to promote transparent market access and integration of global markets.
- The WTO's Agriculture Committee oversees implementation of the Agreement and provides a forum for members to address related concerns.

- **General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade:**

- GATT traces its origins to the 1944 **Bretton Woods Conference**, which laid the foundations for the post-World War II financial system and established two key institutions, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank.
- GATT signed by 23 countries in Geneva in 1947 came into force on Jan 1, 1948 with the following purposes:
  - To phase out the use of import quotas
  - To reduce tariffs on merchandise trade,
- GATT became the only multilateral instrument governing international trade from 1948 until the WTO was established in 1995.
- The Uruguay Round of GATT, conducted from 1987 to 1994 culminated in the Marrakesh agreement, which established the WTO.

## ◎ ANALYSIS

### What is the complaint against India?

- In 2019, Australia, Brazil, and Guatemala complained against India at the WTO arguing that

subsidies offered by the Indian government to **sugar producers** were against the rules governing international trade.

- They argued that these subsidies, which include both domestic subsidies as well as export subsidies, exceed the limits imposed by WTO trade rules. According to WTO rules, subsidies **cannot exceed 10%** of the total value of sugar production.
- These countries believe that subsidies offered by India have led to **increased production of sugar** and caused the **price of sugar to drop significantly** in the global market.
- After two years, the WTO ruled in December that India's sugar policy was favouring domestic producers through subsidies to the detriment of foreign producers.
- The panel recommended that India withdraw its alleged prohibited subsidies under the Production Assistance, the Buffer Stock, and the Marketing and Transportation Schemes within 120 days from the adoption of this report.

### What is India's stand?

- India has stated that the WTO's dispute panel ruling has made certain "**erroneous**" findings about domestic schemes to support sugarcane producers and exports and the findings of the panel are completely "**unacceptable**" to it.
- India has argued at the WTO that it does not offer **direct subsidies to sugarcane farmers** and thus doesn't break any international trade rule.

- This argument, however, has not convinced other countries who point out that, among other things, the Centre and the State governments in India mandate the minimum price (the Fair and Remunerative Price, or FRP) at which sugar mills can buy sugarcane from farmers.
- The high procurement price for sugarcane set by the Government is believed to have led to a supply glut that in turn has caused sugar prices to drop. In fact, several sugar mills are caught in a debt trap as consumer demand for sugar has remained stagnant.
- To help the sugar sector, the Centre has even mandated the compulsory blending of ethanol derived from sugarcane with fuels such as petrol and diesel. According to the Food Ministry, the country's sugar production is likely to remain flat at 30.5 million tonnes in the next 2021-22 season as more sugarcane will be diverted for ethanol making.

### ◎ WAY FORWARD

- The WTO Appellate Body's decision will be considered final on the dispute. In case India refuses to comply with the decision, it might have to face retaliatory action from other countries. This could be in the form of additional tariffs on Indian exports and other stringent measures.
- Such retaliatory measures may benefit producers in these countries but affect consumers who have enjoyed lower sugar prices due to subsidies offered by India.

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# THREE ETHICAL ISSUES AROUND PIG HEART TRANSPLANTS

## CONTEXT:

A US man has become the world's first person to get a heart transplant from a genetically modified pig.

### ◎ BACKGROUND

- The case is of 57-year-old David Bennett, who doctors say was too ill to qualify for a human heart.
- After the surgery, he is doing well now.
- The surgery is being hailed by many as a medical breakthrough that could shorten transplant waiting times and change the lives of patients around the world.
- But some are questioning if the procedure can be ethically justified.
- They have pointed to potential moral trouble spots over patient safety, animal rights and religious concerns.

### ◎ ANALYSIS

#### How was it done?

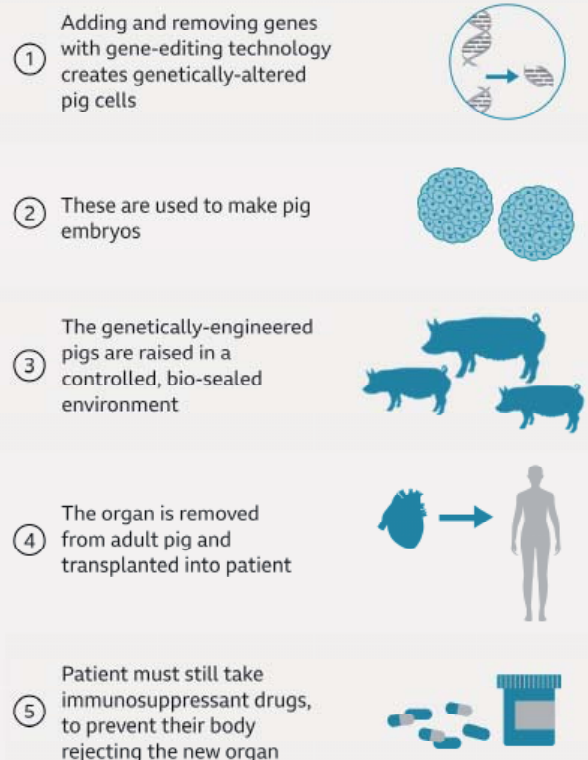
- The heart used in the transplant came from a pig with several genetic modifications, including some to knock out genes that trigger the human immune system.
- Since the human immune system rejects anything that is foreign, whether from another person who is immunologically matched to the recipient or from a different species such as a pig, scientists had to tweak the pig genome to make the organ less likely to be rejected.
- Scientists altered 10 genes in the pig whose heart was used for Mr Bennett's transplant so it would not be rejected by his body.
- The pig had its heart removed on the morning of the operation.

#### The science behind gene modification

- The genome-editing tool CRISPR/Cas9 allows precise removal of specific genes.
- A genetically modified pig cell is fused with a pig ovum that has its DNA removed.
- The ova that contain only the genetically engineered genome start dividing to become pig foetuses.

- This is the same technique that was used to clone Dolly, the sheep. The embryos are then implanted into surrogate mothers.
- The gestation period is just 114 days, unlike in the case of humans.
- Pigs have been preferred as ideal candidates for xenotransplantation despite their immune system being different from humans for the simple reason that the porcine organs are anatomically similar to those of humans.

### Genetically engineering pigs as organ donors



### What are the ethical issues involved in experimental surgery?

- **The medical implications**
  - This is an experimental surgery, and brings with it huge risks for the patient.
  - Even well-matched human donor organs can

be rejected after they are transplanted - and with animal organs the danger is likely to be higher.

- ▶ Doctors have been trying to use animal organs for what is known as **xenotransplantation** for decades, with mixed success.
- ▶ In 1984, doctors in California tried to save a baby girl's life by giving her the heart of a baboon, but she died 21 days later.
- ▶ While such treatments are very, very risky, some medical ethicists say they should still go ahead if the patient knows the risks.

#### Why was Mr Bennett's case justified by the doctor?

- Doctors who worked on Mr Bennett's case say the operation was justified because he had no other treatment options and would have died without it.
- Mr Bennett's transplant was not performed as part of a clinical trial, as is usually required for experimental treatments.
- And the drugs he was given have not yet been tested for use in non-human primates.

#### Animal rights

- Mr Bennett's treatment has also re-sparked a debate over the use of pigs for human transplants, which many animal rights groups oppose.

- One of them, People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) has condemned Mr Bennett's pig heart transplant as "unethical, dangerous, and a tremendous waste of resources".
- "Animals aren't tool-sheds to be raided but complex, intelligent beings," PETA said.
- It is wrong to modify the genes of animals to make them more like humans.
- Animals have a right to live their lives, without being genetically manipulated with all the pain and trauma this entails, only to be killed and their organs harvested.
- Some campaigners have concerns regarding the unknown long-term effects of genetic modification on the pig's health.

#### Religion

- Another quandary could emerge around those whose faiths might mean it is tricky for them to receive an animal organ.
- Pigs are chosen as the relevant organs are a similar size to humans' - and because pigs are relatively easy to breed and raise in captivity.
- But how does this choice affect Jewish or Muslim patients, whose religions have strict rules on the animal?
- Although Jewish law forbids Jews from raising or eating pigs, receiving a pig heart is "not in any way a violation of the Jewish dietary laws."

# **SECTION: B**

## **(PRELIMS)**

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### **CURRENT AFFAIRS**

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## GOAT HEAD YOGINI

- ◎ **CONTEXT:**
- A 10<sup>th</sup> century stone idol of Goat Head Yogini that had been illegally removed from a temple in Lokhari village in Banda district of Uttar Pradesh is being returned to India.
  - The stone idol had been stolen in the 1980s.
  - The Goat head Yogini received at the High Commission on the auspicious day of Makar Sankranti has been dispatched to the Archaeological Survey of India, New Delhi.
- ◎ **ABOUT:**
- The sculpture is of a goat headed Yogini that originally belonged to a group of stone deities in sandstone and installed in **Lokhari temple**.
  - Lokhari is a small village situated in the Mau sub-division in Banda district of Bundelkhand, Uttar Pradesh.
  - Yoginis are a group of powerful female divinities associated with the Tantrik mode of worship.
  - They are worshipped as a group, often 64 and are believed to possess infinite powers.

The idol was also studied by Indian scholar Vidya Dahejia on behalf of the National Museum in New Delhi in 1986. It was later published under the title, ***Yogini Cult, and Temples: A Tantrik Tradition***.

## HYDERABAD'S COLOSSAL STATUE OF EQUALITY

- ◎ **CONTEXT:** **Prime Minister Narendra Modi will unveil the statue, billed as the world's second-largest statue in a sitting position.**

### About the Statue

- The world's second tallest statue in a sitting position is currently being built on the outskirts of Hyderabad.
- This 216-foot-tall statue of 11th century social reformer and saint, Ramanujacharya.
- Construction of the statue began in 2014 and is meant to be a tribute to the 10th century Sri Vaishnavite saint Ramanujacharya commemorating his 1,000th birth anniversary.
- The inner sanctorum deity of Sri Ramanujacharya is made of 120 kilos of gold to commemorate the 120 years the saint spent on earth.
- The 216-ft 'Statue of Equality' is composed of 'panchaloha', a combination of five metals comprising gold, silver, copper, brass, and zinc.

### Sri Ramanujacharya

- Born in 1017 in Sri Perumbudur, Tamil Nadu, Sri Ramanujacharya is said to have liberated millions from social, cultural, gender, educational and economic discrimination with the foundational conviction that every human is equal regardless of nationality, gender, race, caste, or creed.
- Ramanujacharya was an avatara of Adishesha.
- He opened the doors of temples to all people, including those subjected to extreme discrimination.
- For many sections of society, he is a timeless icon of equality for social reformists around the world.



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## PM MODI PAYS TRIBUTES TO TAMIL POET THIRUVALLUVAR

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◎ **CONTEXT:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi paid tributes to Thiruvalluvar on the occasion of Thiruvalluvar Day, observed to mark the birth anniversary of Tamil poet and philosopher.

### About the Day

- Thiruvalluvar Day is observed to honour his contribution either on January 15 or 16 as a part of the Pongal celebrations.
- The day is quite similar to Raksha Bandhan where women pray for the well-being of their brothers.
- The women perform the rituals in the morning. Rice is put at the centre of a leaf as a part of the ritual while the women ask for the well-being of their brothers.
- This is followed by an Arati and turmeric water is sprinkled on the "kolam".

### Who was Thiruvalluvar (the personality profile)?

- Thiruvalluvar was a renowned philosopher and poet who was said to have lived in the **4<sup>th</sup> century BCE**.
- His contribution to Tamil literature is immense, which is echoed through his works that continue to inspire people to this day.
- Thiruvalluvar is regarded as a cultural icon. His most popular work is a collection of couplets on politics, ethics, economy, and love, called "**Thirukkuaaa**".
- A beautifully sculpted statue of the famed scholar exists in the city of Chennai.
- Recognised as the greatest Tamil scholar, a resolution to celebrate the day was passed on 17 January 1935.

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## KATHAK LEGEND BIRJU MAHARAJ PASSES AWAY

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◎ **CONTEXT:** Legendary Kathak dancer Brijmohan Mishra popularly known as Pandit Birju Maharaj passed away.

### Who was Pandit Birju Maharaj?

- Birju Maharaj (1938-2022) was a leading exponent and torch-bearer of Kathak dance form.
- He was a wonderful singer with a strong grip over Thumri, Dadra, Bhajan and Ghazals.
- He gave his first performance at the age of seven. Pandit Birju Maharaj is not only a Kathak dancer but also a sensitive poet and captivating orator.
- Pandit Birju Maharaj was an exponent of the **Kalka-Bindadin Gharana** of Lucknow. Pandit Birju Maharaj received India's second-highest civil honour, the Padma Vibhushan, in 1984 for his contributions in the field of dance.
- **Awards:** Padma Vibhushan, Sangeet Natak Akademi Award, Kalidas Samman, National Film Award for Best Choreography, Filmfare Award

**Important facts about Kathak dance form**

- Kathak is a major Indian dance which originates from the northern part of India. It is one of six Indian classical dance forms.
  - ▶ **Others are:** Bharatanatyam, Kathakali, Manipuri, Kuchipudi and Odissi.
- Kathak comes from the word Katha which means story.
- This form of dance has its origins to the time of the bards who used to occupy the ancient part of North India. Kathak in those days were the storytellers.
- Gradually the 16th century saw the performance being promoted to another art with the introduction of the Persian and Central Asian kind of dance forms in it. These originated from the era of the Mughals and thus the Kathak dance came to be.
- Kathak dance has three major important Gharanas –
  - ▶ **the Jaipur Gharana**
  - ▶ **the Lucknow and Banaras Gharana**
  - ▶ **the Rajgarh Gharana**
- The Gharana of Lucknow and Banaras was found in the Kachwaha Rajput king's courts and also in the kingdoms of the Nawab of Varanasi, Oudh, etc. the Rajgarh Gharana is a merged version of the techniques from the other two Gharanas.

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## STATEHOOD DAY OF MANIPUR, TRIPURA AND MEGHALAYA

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- ◎ **CONTEXT:** On January 21, 1972, the three states of Manipur, Tripura and Meghalaya became full-fledged states under the North Eastern Region (Reorganization) Act of 1971.

**Formation of three States**

- While Manipur and Tripura were princely states which were absorbed into India in October 1949, Meghalaya, on the other hand, was part of Assam.
- The states came into being through the North-Eastern Areas (Reorganisation) Act, 1971, enacted on December 30 that year.
- It resulted in a significant change in the boundaries of India's north-eastern region, dividing it into states and union territories.
- The Reorganisation Act mandated the creation of the states of Manipur and Tripura, which were union territories earlier.
- It also set in stone the formation of the state of Meghalaya.
- In addition, the then union territories of Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh also came into being courtesy of the Act.
- Earlier before the north-eastern region was turned into seven sisters with the statehood of Manipur, Tripura, Meghalaya, Assam, Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh, and Nagaland, the North Eastern composition consisted of Assam plains from the old Assam Province, the hill districts, and the North Eastern Frontier Tracts (NEFT) of the North-Eastern borderland.

**Meghalaya**

- Apart from accounts of the more essential Khasi kingdoms in the chronicles of the neighbouring Ahoms and Kacharis, little is known of Meghalaya prior to the British rule.

- In 1947, the rulers of the region acceded to the newly independent India.
- The region was given special protection in the Indian constitution along with other tribal areas, and it retained a great deal of autonomy.
- In 1970, Meghalaya became an autonomous state within Assam and achieved full statehood on January 21, 1972.

### Manipur

- Over 500 princely states had negotiated their accession to the Indian union before independence.
- The rulers of these states signed a document called the 'Instrument of Accession'.
- On August 11, 1947, Bodhachandra Singh, then Maharaja of Manipur, signed the document.
- The Maharaja signed a Merger Agreement with India in September 1949.
- Full-fledged statehood was granted to Manipur in 1972, together with Meghalaya and Tripura.

### Tripura

- Maharajas of the Manikya dynasty ruled the former princely state of Tripura.
- It was an independent administrative unit under the Maharaja even during British rule in India.
- In the royal chronology of Tripura, around 184 kings ruled over the state before it merged with the Indian Union on October 15, 1949.
- On January 26, 1950, Tripura was accorded the status of a 'C' category state, and on November 1, 1956, it was recognised as a Union Territory.
- With its people's sustained efforts and struggle, it gained full statehood on January 21, 1972, as per the North-East Reorganisation Act, 1971.
- Its democratic set-up further stretched to the village level in 1978 with an election to the local bodies that ultimately culminated in introducing a three-tier Panchayati Raj System.

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## UNDERWATER VOLCANO NEAR TONGA

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### © CONTEXT:

**The Hunga Tonga–Hunga Ha'apai volcano has caused significant damage in Tonga.**

### The country profile

- Tonga is a Polynesian country of more than 170 South Pacific islands, of which 36 are inhabited, and home to about 100,000 people.
- It's a remote archipelago that lies about 800 kilometers (500 miles) east of Fiji and 2,380 kilometers (1,500 miles) from New Zealand.

### Ring of Fire

- There are some 1,350 potentially active volcanoes around the world.
- Many are located along a 40,000km (25,000-mile) arc along the Pacific known as the "Ring of Fire", which is also where about 90 percent of all earthquakes occur.
- Tonga is home to several volcanoes, all along the Ring of Fire.



### Where is Tonga's Hunga-Tonga-Hunga-Ha'apai volcano?

- The Hunga-Tonga-Hunga-Ha'apai volcano, about 30 kilometers (20 miles) southeast of Tonga's Fonusu island, sits underwater between two small islands at about 2,000 meters (6,500 feet) high from the sea floor, with about 100 meters (328 feet) visible above sea level.

### How do underwater volcanoes occur?

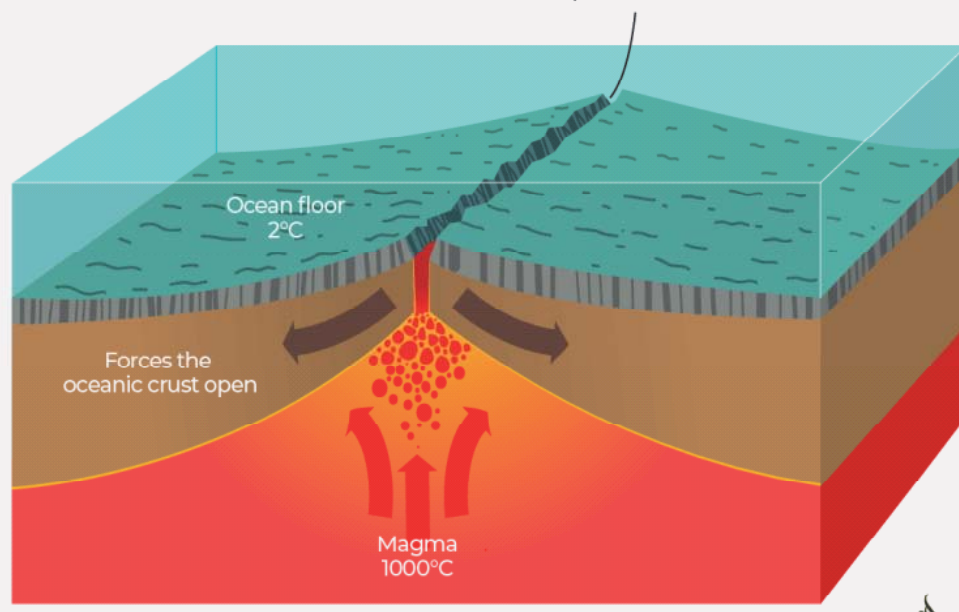
- There is no specific difference in the formation of submarine (underwater) and subaerial (on land) volcanoes.
- An undersea or submarine volcano is located below the ocean surface and mostly erupts underwater.
- Volcanoes form when molten rock is produced in the second layer of the Earth's interior — the mostly solid upper mantle — and makes its way through the crust.
- About "three-quarters of all volcanic activity on Earth actually occurs underwater".
- During an eruption, hot magma forces the oceanic crust open. This can lead to tsunamis – a series of ocean waves caused by the displacement of water.

## VOLCANOES

## How underwater volcanoes erupt

There are about **one million undersea volcanoes** - and most are extinct. Around **three-quarters of all volcanic activity** occurs underwater.

During an eruption, hot magma forces the oceanic crust open. This can lead to tsunamis - a series of ocean waves caused by the displacement of water.



## LOK ADALAT: MAKING JUSTICE DELIVERY FASTER, EASIER

◎ **CONTEXT:** Lok Adalat has emerged as the most efficacious tool of Alternative Dispute Resolution. A total number of 1,27,87,329 cases were disposed of in 2021. Due to technological advancement like E-Lok Adalats, Lok Adalats have reached the doorsteps of parties.

◎ **ABOUT:** **What are Lok Adalat?**

- The term 'Lok Adalat' means 'People's Court' and is based on Gandhian principles.
- As per the Supreme Court, it is an old form of adjudicating system prevalent in ancient India and its validity has not been taken away even in the modern days too.
- It is one of the components of the **Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) system** and delivers informal, cheap and expeditious justice to the common people.
- The **first Lok Adalat camp** was organized in Gujarat in 1982 as a voluntary and conciliatory agency without any statutory backing for its decisions.
- In view of its growing popularity over time, it was given statutory status under the **Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987**.
- The Act makes the provisions relating to the organization and functioning of the Lok Adalats.

### Powers of Lok Adalat

- The Lok Adalat will have similar powers of a Civil Court and is governed under the Code of Civil Procedure.
- It has the power to summon and enforce the attendance of a witness.
- Power to receive evidence regarding a particular case.
- The Lok Adalat has the power to follow its own procedure for determining any dispute.
- The proceedings of a Lok Adalat are considered to be judicial proceedings.

### Organization:

- The **State/District Legal Services Authority** or the **Supreme Court/High Court/Taluk Legal Services Committee** may organize Lok Adalats
- **Chairman and members:** Generally, a Lok Adalat consists of a judicial officer as the chairman and a lawyer (advocate) and a social worker as members.
- **National Legal Services Authority (NALSA)** along with other Legal Services Institutions conducts Lok Adalats.
- The **Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987** was amended in 2002 to provide for the establishment of the Permanent Lok Adalats to deal with cases pertaining to the public utility services.

### Jurisdiction of Lok Adalat

- A Lok Adalat shall have jurisdiction to determine and to arrive at a compromise or settlement between the parties to a dispute in respect of:
  - Any case pending before any court, or
  - Any matter which falls within the jurisdiction of any court and is not brought before such court.
- Matters such as matrimonial/family disputes, criminal (compoundable offenses) cases, land acquisition cases, labor disputes, workmen's compensation cases, bank recovery cases, etc. are being taken up in Lok Adalats.
- However, the Lok Adalat shall have no jurisdiction in respect of any case or matter relating to an offense not compoundable under any law. In other words, the offenses which are non-compoundable under any law fall outside the purview of the Lok Adalat.

### Significance of Lok Adalat

- There is no court fee and if court fee is already paid the amount will be refunded if the dispute is settled at Lok Adalat.
- There is procedural flexibility and speedy trial of the disputes. There is no strict application of procedural laws while assessing the claim by Lok Adalat.
- The parties to the dispute can directly interact with the judge through their counsel which is not possible in regular courts of law.

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## WORLD EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL OUTLOOK – TRENDS 2022 REPORT

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### © CONTEXT:

Global unemployment is expected to remain above pre-Covid-19 levels until at least 2023 and is estimated at 207 million this year, almost 21 million more than in 2019, according to a report from the International Labour Organisation that gives assessments on how labour market recovery has unfolded worldwide.



### Key-highlights of the Report

- The Geneva-based United Nations agency has downgraded its forecast for labour market recovery in 2022, projecting a deficit in hours worked globally equivalent to 52 million full-time jobs, relative to the fourth quarter of 2019.
- The previous full-year estimate in May 2021 projected a deficit of 26 million full-time equivalent jobs.
- While this latest projection is an improvement on the situation in 2021, it remains almost two per cent below the number of global hours worked pre-pandemic, according to the ILO World Employment and Social Outlook Trends 2022 report.
- The report warns of slow and uncertain recovery as the pandemic continues to have a significant impact on global labour markets.
- Global unemployment is expected to remain above pre-Covid-19 levels until at least 2023.
- The 2022 level is estimated at 207 million, compared to 186 million in 2019, the report said.
- It also cautions that the overall impact on employment is significantly greater than represented in these figures because many people have left the labour force.

### Impact of low access to vaccines

- Many low and middle-income countries have low access to vaccines and limited scope to expand government budgets to address the crisis.
- Thus, these countries are struggling more than high-income ones to get back to pre-pandemic levels of employment and job quality.
- Key labour market indicators in all regions — Africa, the Americas, the Arab States, Asia and the Pacific, and Europe and Central Asia — have yet to return to pre-pandemic levels.
- All regions face severe downside risks to their labour market recovery that stem from the ongoing impact of the pandemic. The outlook is the most negative for Latin America and the Caribbean and for southeast Asia.

### Reason behind the downgrade

- The downgrade in the 2022 forecast reflects, to some extent, the impact that recent variants of Covid-19, such as Delta and Omicron, are having on the world of work, as well as significant uncertainty regarding the future course of the pandemic.

### Who has been hit hard?

- Some sectors, such as travel and tourism have been particularly hard hit, while other sectors such as those related to information technology have thrived.
- Women have been worse hit by the labour market crisis than men and this is likely to continue. The closing of education and training institutions will have long-term implications for young people, particularly those without internet access.
- Many temporary workers lost their jobs at the start of the crisis. However, many new temporary jobs have also been created since.

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## DECREASE IN EASTERN SWAMP DEER POPULATION AT KAZIRANGA NATIONAL PARK

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© **CONTEXT:**

The Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve released the Wetland Bird Estimation Report for 2021-2022. And the Eastern Swamp Deer census has revealed a slight decrease in their numbers due to two high floods in 2019 and 2020.

### About Eastern swamp deer

- Eastern swamp deer (*Rucervus duvaucelii ranjitsinhii*), locally known as 'Dal horina' is the rarest recognised subspecies of swamp deer in India and Nepal.
  - The subspecies' scientific name *Rucervus duvaucelii ranjitsinhii* is named after MK Ranjitsinh, one of India's leading voices on conservation in India contribution towards the identification of it as a separate subspecies of swamp deer.
- The stronghold of the Eastern Swamp Deer is in Kaziranga, with a population of less than 1,000.
- The species is one of the three subspecies of swamp deer, commonly known as the barasingha.
- The other two subspecies are:
  - Wetland swamp deer (*R.d. duvaucelii*) found in Gangetic plains
  - Hardground swamp deer (*R.d. branderi*) found in central India

### ■ Conservation Status

- **IUCN Red List:** Vulnerable
- **CITES:** Appendix I
- **Wildlife Protection Act, 1972:** Schedule I

#### Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve

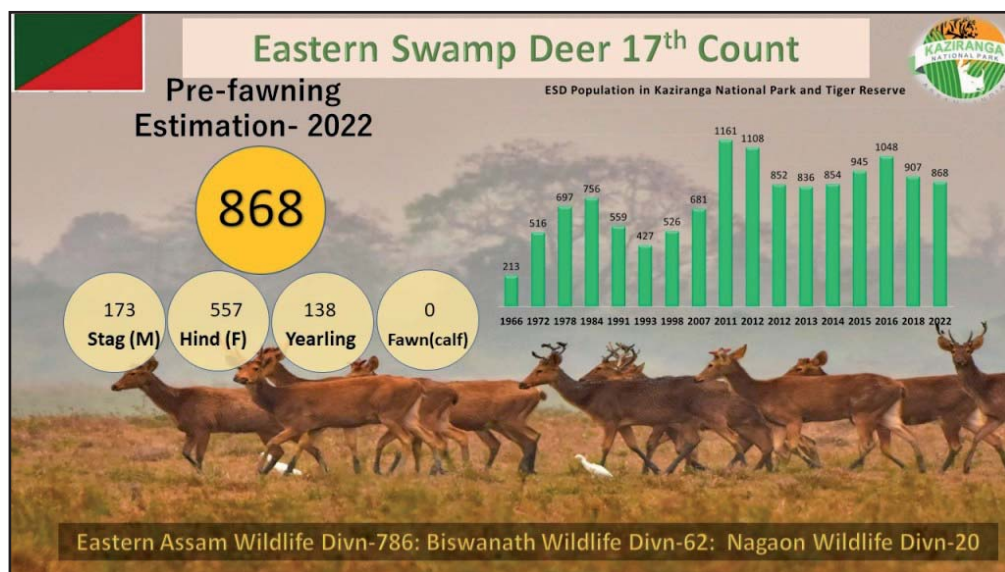
- Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve, one of India's seven UNESCO world heritage sites.
- It is home to one-horned rhinos, Royal Bengal Tigers, and Asian Elephants in addition to thousands of birds of over 125 species.
- Kaziranga lies in the floodplains of the Brahmaputra, a gargantuan river that crosses the international borders of Tibet, cuts through the mighty Himalayas, enters India through Arunachal Pradesh, and then turns south to reach Bangladesh.

### Key-highlights of the Report

- A total of 66,776 birds of 126 species were enumerated using the Point Count method.
- Out of this, 42,205 birds were counted in the Kaziranga National Park area while 24,571 birds were counted in Laokhowa and Burachapori Wildlife Sanctuaries.
- As per the report, the ten most populous species include:
  - Bar-headed Goose (16,552)
  - Northern Pintail (9,493)
  - Common Teal (5,631)
  - Little Cormorant (3,462)
  - Greylag Goose (3,453)
  - Lesser Whistling Duck (3,401)
  - Gadwall (2,430)
  - Ferruginous Duck (2,236)
  - Eurasian Coot (2133)
  - Eurasian Wigeon (1,731)



- This is also the first time that Eastern Swamp Deer was estimated in the whole of the region.
- Prior to this, it was only estimated in the Kaziranga National Park.
- **Eastern Swamp Deer Estimation, 2022:** In 2022, a total of 868 Eastern Swamp Deer have been recorded (including 173 male, 557 female, and 138 yearlings) compared to 907 in 2018.
  - A decline has been estimated in their population due to the two high floods in 2019 and 2020.



## 5G AND FLIGHT SAFETY

### ◎ CONTEXT:

Flights to the United States from India resumed as the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) cleared the landing of more aircraft even in low-visibility conditions, despite the rollout of C-band 5G technology.

- C-band spectrum range is very close to the 4.2-4.4 GHz range in which radio or radar altimeters operate.

### ◎ ABOUT:

#### What is the matter?

- The FAA warned that the rollout of new 5G technology by AT&T and Verizon (two of the biggest wireless communications service providers in the US) in the allotted 3.7-3.98 GHz (gigahertz) band could potentially lead to **interference with onboard instruments** such as **radar altimeters**.
- Commercial passenger and cargo airlines had also warned of an impending “catastrophic” aviation crisis if the rollout of 5G went ahead as planned.
- The deployment of 5G by AT&T and Verizon has triggered concern among airlines, who have said that the frequencies used by the telecom companies is very close to the frequencies used by onboard instruments such as radar altimeters, which operate in the 4.2-4.4 GHz range.

**Radar altimeters**

- The radio or radar altimeter is a very small, low-power radar system that operates in the 4.2-4.4 GHz frequency microwave C-band.
- The high frequency of these altimeters enable aircraft makers to install small antennae that produce powerful signals that can be relayed quickly and accurately.
- For all airborne vehicles — an aircraft, spacecraft, or even a missile — an altimeter is crucial to gauge the altitude and the distance covered.
- Altimeters are of three main kinds:
  - ▶ barometric
  - ▶ laser
  - ▶ radio or radar altimeters
- Most commercial passenger and cargo aircraft use a combination of all these altimeters along with a global positioning system (GPS) to determine their path, as well as factors such as:
  - ▶ height above sea level
  - ▶ presence of highrises, mountains, and other obstacles
  - ▶ the likely flying time

**Progress of 5G in India**

- In India, where 5G is yet to be rolled out, the frequency range for 5G telecoms operations is pegged around 3.3-3.68 GHz.
- It is learnt that the Federation of Indian Pilots has, in its meetings with the Department of Telecommunications (DoT), expressed concern about the frequencies being close together.
- The DoT however, assured them that there would be no interference as the frequencies for commercial 5G services were at least 530 MHz away from those used by altimeters.

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- ☑ Public Administration
- ☑ Anthropology

### MAINS COURSES

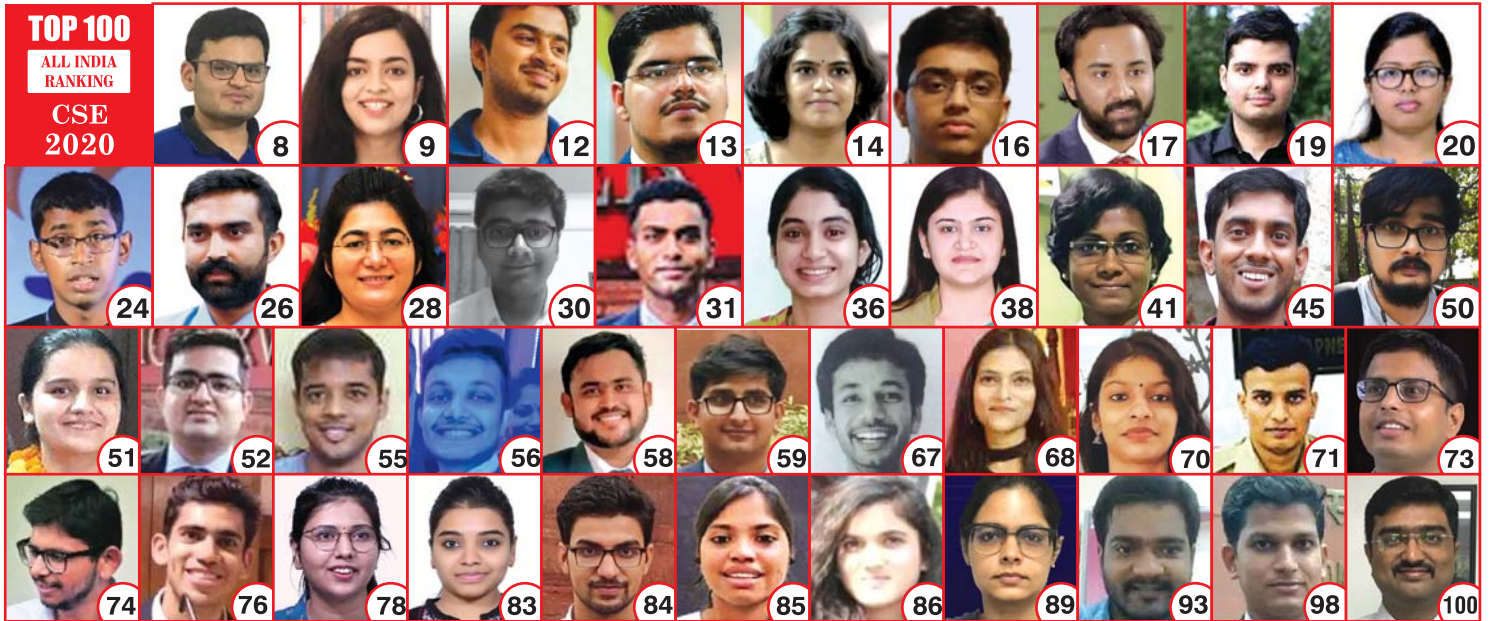
- ☑ GS Mains Advance
- ☑ Applied GS
- ☑ Ethics Integrity & Aptitude
- ☑ Essay Writing
- ☑ GS Paper 2
- ☑ GS Paper 3

### TEST SERIES

- ☑ Prelims Test Series
- ☑ GS Mains Test Series
- ☑ Essay Test Series
- ☑ Ethics Test Series
- ☑ Optional Test Series
  - Political Science
  - Geography
  - History
  - Public Administration
  - Anthropology

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