

CURRENT AFFAIRS : APRIL 2024

CONSTITUTIONALIZATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

The Supreme Court (SC), in a recent judgment, stated that the right to be free from the adverse effects of climate change should be recognised by **Articles 14 and 21** of the Constitution.

- Articles 14 and 21 of the Constitution of India guarantee the fundamental rights to equality and life respectively.
- The judgment was made under the writ Petition 'M.K. Ranjitsinh and Others v. Union of India and Others' regarding the protection of Great Indian Bustard and its habitat.
- It is an example where the SC has used its power to widen the scope of fundamental rights, particularly Articles 21 (right to Life), 14 (right to equality) and 19 (right to freedom of speech, etc.), under the Constitution to tackle environmental issues.

Other SC judgements regarding constitutionalization of environmental issues

- **Rural Litigation and Entitlement Kendra vs. State (1988)**: Recognised the right to live in a healthy environment as part of Article 21 of the Constitution.
- **M.C. Mehta vs. Union of India (1987)**: Treated the right to live in pollution free environment as a part of fundamental right to life under Article 21 of the Constitution.
- **Virender Gaur vs. State of Haryana (1995)**: Stated that protection and preservation of the environment, ecological balance free from pollution as part of Article 21.
- **T.N. Godavarman Thirumulpad vs Union Of India & Ors (1996)**: Expanded 'forest' meaning to preserve green expanses, irrespective of their nature, classification or ownership.
- **Vellore Citizens Welfare Forum vs. Union of India (1996)**: Observed that "the Precautionary Principle" and "the Polluter Pays Principle" are essential features of "Sustainable Development."

ELECTION INTRODUCES HOME VOTING COMMISSION

- Election Commission of India for the first time provides facilities of home voting in coming 2024 election.
- The step is in line with Election Commission (EC) motto '**No voter is left behind**'.
- **Home Voting Facility:**
 - o Under this, voting from home takes place with involvement of a full contingent of polling staff and security personnel with secrecy of voting diligently maintained.
 - o Beneficiaries:
 - ✓ Persons with disabilities (PwDs) meeting 40% benchmark disability.
 - ✓ Senior citizens aged above 85 years.
- Other Steps by EC to make voting inclusive:
 - o Ease of voting by abolishing Form-M for Kashmiri migrants residing at Jammu and Udhampur.
 - o **SVEEP** (Systematic Voter's Education and Electoral Participation) to engage PwDs and also sensitise their friends, families, polling officials, etc.
 - o **Proposed Multi-Constituency Remote Electronic Voting Machine (RVM):** It would enable migrant voters to exercise their vote from their current place of residence.
 - o **Postal ballot:** It allows votes being sent by post. following Persons are entitled to vote by post:
 - ✓ special voters.
 - ✓ service voters.
 - ✓ voters on election duty and.
 - ✓ electors subjected to preventive detention
 - o **Proxy voting:** It allows registered elector to delegate his voting rights to a representative he nominates. Available for service voters.

Service voters include:



Member of **armed forces**.



Member of **police force** of a State, who is serving outside that State.



Person who is employed under Government of India, in a **post outside India**.



Member of a **force to which Army Act, 1950** is applicable.

CRIMINALIZATION OF POLITICS

- 44% of sitting Member of Parliament (MPs) face criminal charges, 5% are billionaires according to the Association of Democratic Reforms (ADR) report.
- ADR report also highlights that:
 - o 50% of MPs facing criminal charge from Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Bihar, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, and Himachal Pradesh.
 - o Among sitting MPs with criminal charges, 29% face serious criminal cases including allegations of murder, attempt to murder, crime against women etc.

Supreme Court (SC) judgements to curb Criminalization of Politics

Lily Thomas Vs UOI (2013):

MPs, State Legislatures convicted of crime with a minimum sentence of 2 years imprisonment would cease to be members of the house.

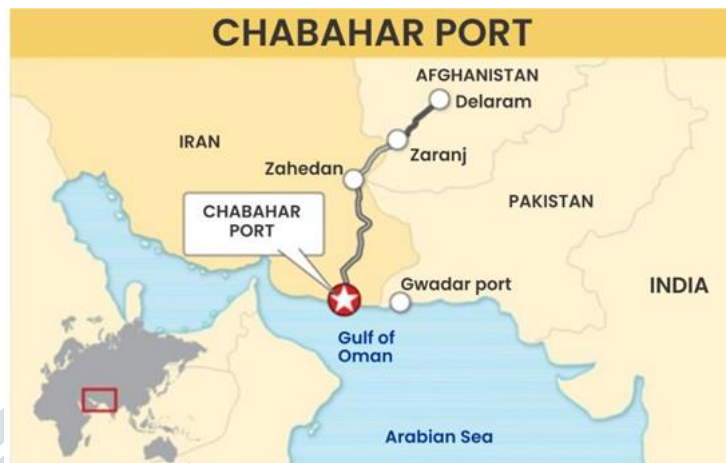
Public Interest Foundation v UOI (2018):

A person cannot be disqualified from membership in a legislative body on mere framing of criminal charges against them.

EOPOLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF PORTS

Recently, India signed a 10-year agreement with Iran for the development of the **Shahid Beheshti Port Terminal at Chabahar Port**.

- The contract was signed between India Ports Global Limited (IPGL) and Ports and Maritime Organization (PMO) of Iran.
 - o IPGL is a company which is 100% owned by Sagarmala Development Company Limited, a company under administrative control of Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways.
- India, Iran, and Afghanistan signed a trilateral agreement in 2016 for the development of the Chabhar port.
- The port will minimize the distance from India's west coast to landlocked Afghanistan, Central Asia and European nations bypassing Pakistan.



INDIA'S DEFENCE EXPORTS

India delivered the first batch of BrahMos to the Philippines.

- BrahMos Aerospace Private Limited (BAPL) had signed a contract in 2022 for supply of Shore Based Anti-Ship Missile System to Philippines.
- Recent years have witnessed a steady increase in India's defence exports to countries such as Seychelles, the Maldives, Mauritius and Ecuador.

Reasons for rise in India's Defence exports

- Financial push:
 - o **Enhanced Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) limit:**
 - ✓ Up to 74% through the Automatic Route for companies seeking new defence industrial licenses.
 - ✓ Up to 100% through the government route wherever it is likely to result in access to modern technology.
 - o **Venture Capital funds:** Agreement to facilitate infusion of Venture Capital into the defence ecosystem through the iDEX Innovators Hub (iIH).
 - o **Financing from Exim Bank for defence exports**

- Encouraging Private Sector Participation: Government has earmarked 25% of the defence research budget for the private sector in 2022-23.
- Initiatives to promote indigenous innovation: E.g.,
 - o **Innovation for Defence Excellence (iDEX)** was launched to achieve self-reliance and foster innovation and technology development in defence sector.
 - o **Mission Raksha Gyan Shakti** to inculcate and strengthen Intellectual Properties into defence manufacturing.
- Reduced dependence on foreign equipment manufacturers
- Defence diplomacy

ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENTS IN INDIA

2023 marked the 50th anniversary of the Chipko movement.

About Chipko movement

- The Chipko movement was a nonviolent resistance against forest cutting that began in the Reni village in Uttarakhand's Chamoli district.
- Meaning of '**chipko**': It comes from the word 'embrace', as the villagers hugged the trees and encircled them to prevent being hacked.
- **Origin of the movement:** Dates back to the 18th century and was started by Rajasthan's Bishnoi community.
 - o It was led by Amrita Devi against the orders of then King of Jodhpur.
 - o It resulted in passing of a royal decree that banned cutting of trees in all Bishnoi villages.
- **Movement's leaders and activists:** Primarily village women, acting to save their means of subsistence and their communities.
 - o Major leaders: Sunderlal Bahuguna, Chandi Prasad Bhatt, Gaura Devi, etc.
- It is renowned for its collective mobilization of women in the effort to conserve forests, manifesting the philosophy of **Eco-feminism**.

ARMED FORCES (SPECIAL POWERS) ACT (AFSPA)

The Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1958 (AFSPA) has been extended by the Centre to eight districts in Nagaland and three districts in Arunachal Pradesh.

- Currently, AFSPA is in effect in parts of Nagaland, Assam, Manipur, and Arunachal Pradesh.
- Also, AFSPA remains in force in Jammu and Kashmir through the Armed Forces (Jammu and Kashmir) Special Powers Act, 1990.
- However, it was lifted from Tripura in 2015, Meghalaya in 2018 and Mizoram in the 1980s.

About AFSPA, 1958

- An Act to enable certain special powers to be conferred upon members of the armed forces in disturbed areas in the State of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura that lies in the North Eastern sector.

- **Power to declare areas to be disturbed areas under Section 3 of the Act:** Governor of that State or the Administrator of that Union territory or the Central Government, as the case may be, may, by notification in the Official Gazette, declare the whole or such part of such State or Union territory to be a disturbed area.

o Disturbed area is an area in such a disturbed or dangerous condition that the use of armed forces in aid of the civil power is necessary.

- **Special powers of the armed forces under Section 4:** Any commissioned officer, warrant officer, non-commissioned officer or any other person of equivalent rank in the armed forces is given "special powers" under AFSPA, although they must be exercised with extreme caution.

o After giving due warning as considered necessary, Fire upon or use force, even causing death, against any person acting in contravention of laws:

✓ Prohibiting assembly of 5 or more persons

✓ Prohibiting carrying weapons or firearms/ammunition/explosives.

o If reasonable suspicion exists, can also arrest a person without a warrant; enter or search a premises without a warrant

o Unless otherwise authorized by the central government, Army soldiers operating under the AFSPA are shielded from all legal actions.

50TH YEAR OF ARYABHATA LAUNCH

- ISRO celebrated Satellite Technology Day (STD) commemorating the 50th year of the Aryabhata Launch in 1975.

- **About Aryabhata**

- o It was India's first satellite, named after the famous Indian astronomer in the 5th century.

- o It was built by the ISRO and launched by a Soviet Kosmos-3M rocket from Kapustin Yar (Russia).

SHOMPEN TRIBE

- Shompen cast their vote for the first time in Lok Sabha Election.

- **About Shompen Tribe**

- o One of the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups.

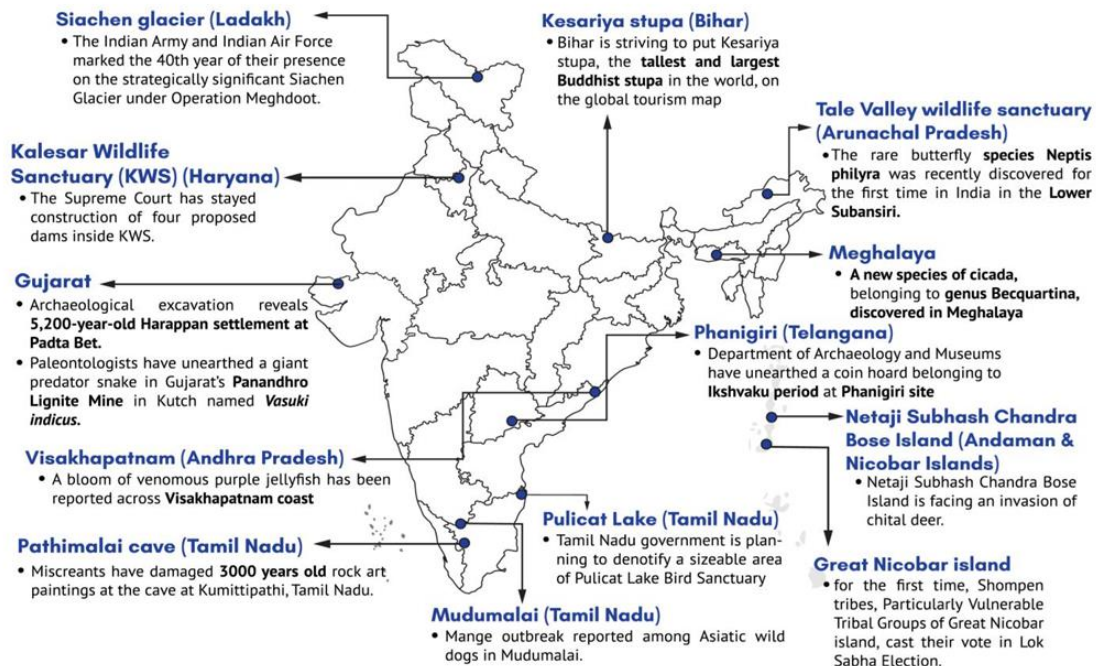
- o Reside in dense tropical rain forests of Great Nicobar island.

- o Belong to the Mongoloid group.

- o According to Census (2011), estimated population of Shompen is 229.

- o They are hunters and gatherers. They used to hunt wild pig, python, monitor Lizard, crocodile, etc.

Places in News: India



Places in News: World

