

## **Disturbing Order**

### **Why in news?**

Recently, Varanasi civil court ordered Archaeological Survey of India to conduct a survey to ascertain whether the Gyanvapi mosque was built over a demolished Hindu temple.

### **Why was the order issued now?**

- Earlier petitioners have filed a suit as representatives of Hindu faith to reclaim the land on which the mosque stands.
- Now they have succeeded in getting the court to commission an ASI survey to look for the evidence.
- This order has been issued despite the fact that the Allahabad High Court reserved its order and it is yet to pronounce the ruling.
- It is not clear why the civil judge did not wait for the ruling and went ahead with the directive to the ASI.
- The court also said that by an order in 1997 it decided that the suit was not barred by Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act, 1991.

### **What does Places of Worship Act, 1991 say?**

- The act says all pending suits concerning the status of places of worship will get abated and none can be instituted.
- It also froze the status of all places of worship, barring the then disputed site in Ayodhya, as on August 15, 1947.
- An exception to this act is- any place of worship that was an archaeological site or ancient monument covered by the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1958.

### **What will happen after this order?**

- It will open the floodgates for another prolonged religious dispute.
- It will likely give a fillip to majoritarian forces that earlier carried on the Ram Janmabhoomi movement over a site in Ayodhya.
- These forces conspired to illegally demolish the Babri Masjid Mosque.
- Moreover this order in gross violation of the explicit legislative prohibition on any litigation over the status of places of worship.

### What can we infer from this?

- Regardless of the merits of either side's case, attempts to revive disputes buried by law is a serious setback to the cause of secularism.
- It undermines harmony and peaceful coexistence.
- It is highly worrying that court admitted such contention over religious sites.
- It also poses new challenges to the wisdom of Parliament.

**Source: The Hindu**

