Prelim Bits 14-02-2024 | UPSC Daily Current Affairs

J&K Bills on Local Bodies and SC/ST lists

Recently, the Rajya Sabha has passed 3 bills related to reservation for Other Backward Classes (OBCs) and modification of the lists of SC and ST in Jammu & Kashmir.

- Since Lok Sabha had previously passed them, all 3 bills are deemed to be passed by the Parliament to become an Act.
- **J&K Local Bodies Laws (Amendment) Bill 2024** – It seeks to amend certain provisions of the
  - Jammu and Kashmir Panchayati Raj Act, 1989
  - Jammu and Kashmir Municipal Act, 2000
  - Jammu and Kashmir Municipal Corporation Act, 2000
- It seeks to provide ***reservation to the OBC*** in the Panchayats and the Municipalities and will empower State Election Commission of J&K to *conduct local body polls*.
- The *removal of state election commissioner* shall be similar to those of a judge of a high court as enshrined in the Constitution of India.

J&K Bills on SC/ST List

- **The Constitution (J&K) SCs Order (Amendment) Bill** – It seeks to amend the Constitution (J&K) SCs Order of 1956, which lists the castes deemed to be SC in J&K and Ladakh.
- It ***adds Valmiki community*** as a synonym of Chura, Balmiki, Bhangi, and Mehtar communities.
- **The Constitution (J&K) STs Order (Amendment) Bill** – It seeks to amend the Constitution (J&K) STs Order, 1989.
- It proposes the creation of ***separate lists of STs*** for the UTs of J&K and Ladakh.
- It also *adds Gadda Brahmin, Koli, Paddari Tribe, and Pahari Ethnic Group* communities in the list of STs in Jammu & Kashmir.

Reference

Hindustan Times| Parliament passes 3 bills relevant to J&K

The Alliance for Global Good – Gender Equity and Equality

Recently, India had launched the 'Alliance for Global Good- Gender Equity and Equality' at the annual World Economic Forum held in January, 2024

- A step towards enabling 'equity' and 'equality'.

- **Objectives** – To drive collective actions to augment women empowerment globally
- **Anchored by** – CII Centre for Women Leadership
- **Guided by** – Minister of Women and Child Development
- **Supported by** – Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation
- **Multi-stakeholder initiative** – It will have a global network of experts, think-tanks, industries and country leadership.
- World Economic Forum is one among the network partner.
- **Women empowerment** – An opportunity for industry across the globe to advance the entry & growth of women in workspace by
    - Sharing best practices
    - Making inclusion a business conversation.
    - Developing solutions through increased access to health care, education opportunities and economic opportunities.
- **India as a 'Global Leader'** – India to provide shared direction to stakeholders globally for accelerating the socio-economic cause as it will have a sustained global impact.
- Mainstreaming gender equality & equity has been a key development area for India for over a decade now.

Status of Women in India
• **Education** – Female enrolment in higher education has gone *up by 28% in the last 10 years*. • They constitute *43% of enrolment in STEM courses*, one of the highest in the world. • **Workforce** – An increase in India's female labour force participation rate, from 23.3% in 2017-18 *to 37% in 2022-23* as per annual Periodic Labour Force Surveys (PLFS). • Their participation is higher in agriculture and fishing sectors. • **Entrepreneurship** – *30 crore Mudra Yojana loans* have been given to women entrepreneurs. • **Digital democracy** – More than 24 crore women across the country have bank accounts. • **Rural Economy** – *Over 9 crore women participate* in 83 lakh SHGs, improving the socio-economic conditions in rural areas.

> *India passed the Women's Reservation Bill in 2023, ensuring reservation of a third of seats for women in Parliament and the State Assemblies and also allocated nearly $27 billion under the gender budget in 2023-24.*

References

1. The Hindu| Alliance for Global Good – Gender Equity & Equality
2. PIB| Status of Women in India
3. PIB| Momentum to Nari Shakti

NATO & its Funding

Former US President Donald Trump has once again attacked NATO with respect to member nation's lack of funding to the organisation.

- **NATO** – North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, was conceived to provide *collective security against the erstwhile USSR*.
- **Launched in** – ***1949***, with the passage of ***Washington Treaty***.
- **Headquarters** – In Brussels, Belgium since 1967.
- **Aim** – To guarantee the freedom and security of its members through political and military means.
    - **Political** – To solve problems, build trust and, in the long run, prevent conflict in defence & security-related issues.
    - **Military** – For peaceful resolution of disputes, if failed then using military power for crisis-management operations.
- **Membership** – ***31*** (most of European nations, US and Canada).
- It is *open to any other European state* that accepts this Treaty and accepts to contribute to the security of the North Atlantic area.

The newest member is Finland in 2023. Sweden has applied but is waiting for Hungary to ratify its application as the final major step before membership.

- **Decision making** – It is by consensus.
- **Collective defence** – An attack on 1 member is considered an attack on all of them as per ***Article 5*** of the treaty.

NATO derives its authority from Article 51 of the United Nations Charter, which reaffirms the inherent right of independent states to individual or collective defence.

- **Limitation** - Article 5 failed to commit automatic military response to help an ally under attack.
- It depends on clear statements from political leaders that it will be backed up by action.

NATO's Funding Mechanism

- It has *some common funds*, to which all members contribute.
- But it majorly depends on members' own national defence spending to maintain forces and buy arms that can also be used by NATO.
- **Funding commitment** – To spend *at least 2% of their Gross Domestic Product (GDP) every year on defence*.
- **Issues** – Most of the members did not meet their funding commitments in 2023.

References

1. The Indian Express| Funding Issue of NATO members
2. NATO| North Atlantic Treaty Organisation

BAPS Swaminarayan Temple

Prime Minister of India to inaugurate the BAPS Swaminarayan temple in Abu Dhabi in UAE, the 1st Hindu temple in the Gulf nation.

- A traditional *108 feet high Hindu temple*.
- Built by – ***BAPS***.

> *Bochasanwasi Akshar Purushottam Swaminarayan Sanstha (BAPS) is a denomination of the Swaminarayan Sampradaya (a Vaishnav sect of Hinduism). It has a network of around 1,550 temples across the world.*

- **Style** – ***Nagara*** style.
- **Construction material** – Its external facade uses *pink sandstone* from Rajasthan, while the interior uses *Italian marbles*.
- **2 central domes** – Dome of Harmony and Dome of Peace, emphasising human coexistence.
- **A Wall of Harmony** – 3D-printed wall, features a video showcasing key milestones of the temple's construction.
- **7 shikhars (spires)** – It represents of the 7 Emirates of the UAE.
- It also includes an assembly hall, a community centre, exhibitions, classrooms, and a majlis venue.
- **Inter-faith harmony** – It is *open to everyone*.
- A Muslim king donated land and it has participation of personalities from Christianity, Sikhism, Buddhism, Parsi and from Jainism.
- Temple's front panel *depicts universal values*, stories of harmony from different cultures, Hindu spiritual leaders and avatars.

> *The Indian diaspora is almost 3.3-million strong in UAE, a huge percentage of the country's population. Of these, some 150 to 200 families are BAPS Swaminarayan devotees.*

Key architectural features of BAPS Temple in UAE

- **Conception scene** – A stone carving of the scene of Pramukh Swami Maharaj envisioning the temple in Abu Dhabi in 1997.
- **Pillars** – Circular and hexagonal, a special pillar named ***Pillar of pillars*** which has around 1,400 small pillars carved into it.
- **Deities** – It has deities from *all 4 corners of India* like Lord Ram, Shiv, Jagannath, Tirupati Balaji and Lord Ayappa.
- **A 'holy river'** - It surround the temple, has waters of *River Ganga and Yamuna* with Varanasi-like ghat, where the 'Ganga' passes.
- The *river Saraswati* has been depicted in the form of white light.
- **Depiction of civilisations** – It depicts stories of Indian, Mayan, Aztec, Egyptian, Arabic, European, Chinese and African civilisation.

- **Other features** – Its surrounding buildings are modern and monolithic, with their *colour resembling sand dunes*.
- It has *96 bells and gaumukhs* around the path leading to the temple, a tribute to Pramukh Swami Maharaj's 96 years of life.
- *No ferrous material* is used, thereby prevent corrosion.
- *Nano tiles* allows devotees to walk even in the hot weather.

The BAPS temple of UAE was judged the Best Mechanical Project of the Year 2019 at the MEP Middle East Awards, and the Best Interior Design Concept of the Year 2020.

Reference

The Indian Express| Inauguration of BAPS Temple in UAE

Right to Disconnect

The Australian government is hoping to pass a Bill that will institute a 'right to disconnect' to ensure balanced work life for workers.

- **Aim of the bill** – To regulate whether bosses can *contact workers beyond their working hours* through calls, messages or e-mails.

Similar laws are in place in France, Italy and Belgium. France was the 1st country to have introduced a 'right to disconnect' for employees, in 2017.

- **Need** – With technology improving the communications, many people no longer have definite working hours.
- A lot of communication and work also happens when workers are not in the office.
- **Right to Disconnect** – An *employee may refuse* to monitor, read or respond to contact, or attempted contact, from an employer *outside of the employee's working hours* unless the refusal is unreasonable.
- **Reasonable contact** – It is based on factors such as the extent to which the employee is compensated for overtime work, the reason for the contact or attempted contact, and the level of disruption it causes to the employee.
- **Significance** – It will ensure the *distinction between work and home life*.
- **Criticisms** – This rigidity can *undermines the case for working from home*, which appeals to many employees with family responsibilities.

In India, a Private Member's Bill, the Right to Disconnect Bill of 2018 was drafted but was never taken up for discussion in the House.

Reference

[The Indian Express| Australia's 'Right to Disconnect' Bill]

Other Important Topics

Sanjay Agrawal Committee

Congress backs farmers' MSP demand.
• The committee, which has 26 members, is headed by Sanjay Agrawal, a former agriculture secretary.
• It was set up after the withdrawal of the farm laws by the government in July 2022.
• The committee, which was set up to promote Zero budget based farming, to change crop pattern keeping in mind the changing needs of the country.
• The aim of the committee was to deliberate on ways to make Minimum Support Price (MSP) more effective and transparent.

Other Members

• NITI Aayog member (Agriculture)
• 2 agricultural economists
• An award-winning farmer
• 5 representatives of farmers' organizations other than the Samyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM)
• 2 representatives of farmers' cooperatives/ groups
• 1 member of the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP)
• 3 persons from agricultural universities and institutions
• 5 secretaries of the Government of India
• 4 officers from four states
• 1 joint secretary from the Agriculture Ministry

IIT Madras Zanzibar

IIT Madras (IITM) Zanzibar, was inaugurated last year.
• The Dr K Radhakrishnan Committee has recommended the setting up of IIT campuses overseas.
• The Zanzibar campus of IIT Madras continues to be Indian, not African or Tanzanian.
• Zanzibar is a Tanzanian archipelago in the Indian Ocean off the East African mainland.
• IIT campuses are coming up in UK, UAE, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Thailand, Malaysia, and Qatar.

Acquittal of Indian Navy Men

Qatar frees eight former Indian Navy men.
• More than 3 months after they were sentenced to death, 8 former Indian Navy personnel have been released from custody in Qatar.
• The Indians had been working in their private capacity with Doha-based Dahra Global to oversee the induction of Italian small stealth submarines U2I2.

Pomegranate Cultivation

Maharashtra farmers are giving up on pomegranate cultivation.
• Pomegranate grows well under semi-arid conditions and can be grown up to an altitude of 500 m.
• It thrives well under hot, dry summer and cold winter provided irrigation facilities are available.
• The tree requires hot and dry climate during fruit development and ripening.
• Area under pomegranate cultivation across India has shrunk to 1.31 lakh hectares.

Sufalam

Union Minister of Food Processing inaugurates Sufalam.
• **Sufalam -** Start-Up Forum for Aspiring Leaders and Mentors Startup Conclave 2024.
• The conclave holds the promise of being a transformative event, propelling the sector towards a sustainable future.

Ahlan Modi

Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi addressed the Indian community in the UAE.
• The Ahlan Modi is a cultural programme at the Zayed Sports City Stadium, attended, Abu Dhabi.
• It is one of the key events during the Prime Minister's two-day visit to the Gulf country.

PM Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana

Prime Minister announced the launch of rooftop solar scheme for free electricity.
• It aims to light up 1 crore households by providing up to 300 units of free electricity every month.
• The substantive subsidies will be given directly to people’s bank accounts.
• All stakeholders will be integrated to a National Online Portal which will further convenience.

Shakti Warfare Systems

The defence ministry signed a contract with state-owned Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL) to purchase 11 Shakti warfare systems and associated equipment.
• The Shakti EW system is indigenously designed, developed and manufactured, and will be installed on-board capital warships of Indian Navy.
• The Shakti systems are capable of accurately intercepting electronic emissions and implementing countermeasures in a dense electromagnetic environment.

Automated Permanent Academic Account Registry (APAAR)

25 crore unique student IDs created.
• APAAR is a special ID system for all students in India, starting from childhood.
• Each student would get a lifelong APAAR ID and it is voluntary, not mandatory.
• **Umbrella programme -** ‘One nation, One Student ID’, which stems from the NEP 2020.

Drishyaa Drone

Haryana Police is first force to use drones for tear gas.
• These drones are made by Drone Imaging and Information Service of Haryana Limited (DRIISHYA).
• The company is located at Karnal.
• The drones are designed for surveying infrastructure projects, monitoring of agriculture and horticulture crops, and surveillance of sensitive areas for security purposes.



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