

1. S. R. Bommai v. Union of India Case 1994

Why in News?

The S. R. Bommai v. Union of India case, decided by a nine-judge bench of the Supreme Court of India in 1994, restricts the arbitrary dismissal of state governments under Article 356. Celebrating its 30th anniversary, its impact persists in shaping India's constitutional framework.

Background of S. R. Bommai v. Union of India:

In 1985, the Janata Party won the Assembly elections in Karnataka and formed the government with Chief Minister Ramakrishna Hegde. Hegde was later replaced by SR Bommai in 1988.

In September 1988 a legislator from the Janata Dal, defected from the party along with 19 other members of the Legislative Assembly, withdrawing support from the Bommai government.

The state government was dismissed by using Article 356 due to majority loss from defections. Bommai's request to test the majority was denied by the governor.

Bommai sought relief in the high court, which ruled against him, leading to an appeal to the Supreme Court.

Supreme Court Judgment:

A nine-judge bench of the Supreme Court emphasised that the Presidential Proclamation under Article 356 must be exercised with caution, as advocated by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and recommended by the Sarkaria Commission.

Both houses of Parliament must thoroughly analyse the Presidential Proclamation as per Article 356(3).

If the proclamation is issued without the approval of both houses, it lapses within two months, and the state assembly resumes its function.

The Supreme Court can subject the proclamation to judicial review and entertain writ petitions challenging its legality if they raise arguable questions.

Clarified that the President's power to dismiss a state government is not absolute but subject to limitations.

Recognised that while Article 356 does not explicitly address the dissolution of the legislature, such powers can be inferred from it.

Noted that Article 174(2), allowing the Governor to dissolve the Legislative Assembly, and Article 356(1)(a), enabling the President to confer upon himself the powers of the Governor and the state government, imply the power to dissolve the legislature.

Significance of S.R. Bommai v. Union of India Case:

The S.R. Bommai case gives one of the landmark judgment of the Supreme Court regarding the basic structure doctrine as well as recording the misuse of article 356.

The judgment provided clarity on the scope and limitations of Article 356, emphasising its use only in extraordinary circumstances.

The principles laid down by the Supreme Court were consistent with the recommendations of the Sarkaria Commission.

The case affirmed the principles of federalism, stating that state governments are not subordinate to the centre and advocating for cooperative federalism.

The judgement asserted the role of the judiciary in scrutinising the President's actions under Article 356, ensuring adherence to constitutional principles and preventing misuse of power.

It affirmed that the floor of the Assembly is the sole authority to test the government's majority, not the subjective opinion of the Governor.

Note

The Sarkaria Commission advocated for notifying the state before activating Article 356(1) under certain instances.

It stated that all other options should be first considered to solve the problem and Article 365 should only be used if there is no other option available that can be implemented to solve the problem at hand.

Cooperative federalism and Competitive federalism:

In Cooperative federalism the Centre and states share a horizontal relationship, where they "cooperate" in the larger public interest.

It is an important tool to enable states' participation in the formulation and implementation of national policies.

The Union and the states are constitutionally obliged to cooperate with each other on the matters specified in Schedule VII of the Constitution.

In Competitive federalism the relationship between the Central and state governments is vertical and between state governments is horizontal.

In Competitive federalism States need to compete among themselves and also with the Centre for benefits.

States compete with each other to attract funds and investment, which facilitates efficiency in administration and enhances developmental activities.

What is Article 356 of the Indian Constitution?

Background of Article 356:

Initial discussions in the Constituent Assembly deliberated on whether India should adopt a federal or unitary system of government.

Two schools of thought emerged, with proponents of federalism arguing for decentralised powers and others advocating for a more centralised unitary state.

Dr. Ambedkar clarified that India operates under both federal and unitary principles, with federalism prevailing under normal circumstances and unitary control during emergencies.

Despite warnings against misuse, subsequent governments frequently employed Article 356 for political reasons, resulting in its invocation 132 times.

Article 356:

Article 356 of the Constitution of India is based on Section 93 of the Government of India Act, 1935.

According to Article 356, the President's Rule can be imposed on any state of India on the grounds of the failure of the constitutional machinery.

President's Rule can be imposed in two situations: when the President receives a report from the state's Governor or is otherwise convinced that the state government cannot function according to the Constitution (Article 356), and when a state fails to comply with directions from the Union government (Article 365).

During the President's Rule, the state government is suspended, and the central government directly administers the state through the Governor.

Parliamentary approval is necessary for imposing the President's Rule, and it should be approved in both Houses of Parliament within two months through a simple majority.

Initially, the President's Rule is for six months and can be extended for up to three years with parliamentary approval every six months.

The 44th Amendment to the Constitution (1978) introduced constraints on extending the President's Rule beyond one year, allowing extension only in case of a national emergency or if the Election Commission certifies the necessity due to difficulties in conducting state assembly elections.

Based on the report of the Sarkaria Commission on Centre-state Relations (1988), the Supreme Court in the Bommai case, 1994, enlisted the situations where the exercise of power under Article 356 could be proper or improper.

Proper Use of Article 356	Improper Use of Article 356
Hung Assembly: No party secures a majority after elections.	The Ministry resigns without exploring alternative ministry formation.
The majority party declines to form a ministry , and no coalition ministry with a majority is available.	Governor imposes President's Rule without allowing majority test .
The Ministry resigns after defeat in the assembly, and no party can form a new ministry with a majority .	The ruling party suffers a significant defeat in the Lok Sabha elections.
Internal subversion or deliberate violation of the Constitution .	Internal disturbances not amount to subversion or breakdown.
The state government disregards the constitutional direction of the Central government.	Allegations of maladministration or corruption without proper warning.
Physical breakdown, endangering state security .	Misuse for intraparty issues or irrelevant purposes.
	The state government is not given prior warning, except in emergencies .

1st Small Scale LNG Plant Commissioned

Science and Technology

India's goal to turn India into a gas-based economy has accelerated with the initiation of the first-ever **Small Scale LNG unit**.

Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG)

Liquefied natural gas (LNG) is natural gas that has been chilled to a liquid form, typically around -260 degrees Fahrenheit, to enable its transportation and storage.

Benefits

- Acts as a transitional energy source.
- Produces fewer CO₂ emissions compared to oil and coal.
- Competitive pricing encourages adoption.
- Liquid form facilitates storage and transport.
- Enhances energy security through supply diversity.

Drawbacks

- LNG emits CO₂ despite being cleaner.

- It is more expensive than some fuels.
- Global supply controlled by a few countries poses a risk to security.
- lack of easy availability of LNG-powered vehicles,
- a virtually non-existent LNG retail network

Note: Petronet has set up several LNG filling stations, primarily located along highways.

India launches 1st Small Scale LNG Plant

- **GAIL (India) Ltd**, the country's biggest gas company, has commissioned this plant at its Vijaipur site in Madhya Pradesh.
- The Vijaipur facility has **SSLNG** skids capable of producing **36 tonnes of LNG daily**.
- It includes **treatment skids (ZPTS)** and **liquefaction skids (cryo boxes)** to convert natural gas into LNG.
- India plans to raise the proportion of natural gas in its primary energy mix to **15% by 2030**, up from slightly over **6%** currently, primarily because of its lower pollution emissions.

What is Small Scale LNG?

- SSLNG involves cooling and transporting natural gas on a **smaller scale than usual methods**.
- **Ensure delivery in remote areas:** It uses special trucks and small boats to deliver liquefied natural gas (LNG) to businesses and industries in areas without pipelines.
- **Management system:** The SSLNG unit is managed by an **automated SCADA system**.
- SSLNG provides LNG to businesses and industries either in its liquid form or when it's super-chilled.
- In more common situations like supplying CNG for vehicles or gas for homes, the LNG is turned back into gas before it's delivered to the users.
- **Establishment of SSLNG:** SSLNG can begin at big LNG places or by making small LNG factories where there are lots of natural gas.
- **Example:** GAIL's SSLNG unit at Vijaipur is one example of starting small to get LNG at more places.

Advantages of Small Scale LNG (SSLNG):

- **Enhanced Accessibility:** SSLNG facilitates gas distribution in areas without access to natural gas pipelines, overcoming delivery challenges and expanding the availability of cleaner fuel options.
- **Flexibility:** SSLNG units are modular and can be quickly deployed to meet local demand, making them suitable for remote areas, industrial settings, and transportation needs.
- **Promotes Sustainability:** SSLNG encourages the adoption of cleaner fuels, reducing emissions when used in vehicles like trucks, buses, and marine vessels.
- **Improves Energy Security:** By decentralizing distribution, SSLNG enhances energy security and diversifies the sources of fuel supply.

Challenges and Limitations:

- **Small Scale LNG Underdeveloped Retail Infrastructure:** A lack of extensive LNG retail networks makes it challenging for consumers to access LNG fuel easily.
- **Higher Initial Costs:** LNG vehicles are usually more expensive to buy upfront compared to regular diesel cars.
- **Financing Hurdles:** The absence of specialized financing options for LNG vehicles poses challenges for prospective buyers looking to invest in this technology.
- **Limited Pipeline Coverage:** SSLNG faces challenges in areas where there is no existing natural gas pipeline network, hindering its distribution to remote locations.
- **Regulatory and Permitting Issues:** SSLNG projects may face regulatory hurdles and permitting delays, including environmental and safety regulations, which can slow down implementation and increase project timelines and costs.
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PRELIM FACTS

1. Astronomical Grand Cycles

A recent study published in the journal Nature Communications has found evidence of erosion in the deep sea linking astronomical grand cycles with the orbits of Earth and Mars, and global warming or cooling.

Key Findings of the Study

- Geological sedimentary evidence in the deep sea has revealed a newly discovered 2.4-million-year cycle, known as "astronomical grand cycles," linked with the orbits of Earth and Mars.

- The cycle influences global warming or cooling trends and has been detected through erosion patterns in deep-sea sedimentary data.

Connection Between Mars' Orbit and Earth's Climate:

- The gravity fields of planets in the solar system interfere with each other, leading to changes in their orbital eccentricity (how circular their orbits are).
- The interaction between Earth and Mars' orbits causes variations in the amount of solar radiation received by Earth, resulting in cycles of warming and cooling over 2.4 million years.

Impact on Climate and Ocean Circulation:

- The vigorous deep-sea circulation driven by eddies (a circular current of water) during warmer cycles could potentially prevent ocean stagnation, even if the Atlantic Meridional Overturning Circulation (AMOC) slows or stops functioning.
- AMOC is a large system of ocean currents that carry warm water from the tropics northwards into the North Atlantic.
- Deep ocean eddies could help provide oxygen to the deep ocean and draw carbon dioxide from the atmosphere into the ocean in a warmer world.
- Intense deep-ocean eddies, described as giant whirlpools, play a vital role in ocean circulation dynamics, these sit at depths of 3,000 to 6,500 meters and where sunlight doesn't penetrate.
- These eddies contribute to seafloor erosion and the formation of large sediment accumulations known as contourites, resembling snowdrifts in their structure.

What are Astronomical Cycles?

Astronomical cycles refer to periodic variations in the Earth's orbit and orientation towards the Sun that impact the amount of solar radiation received by our planet over long periods. These cycles are caused by the gravitational forces between the Earth, Sun, and other planets in the solar system.

Some key astronomical cycles include

1. Eccentricity (100,000 years) - Changes in the elliptical shape of Earth's orbit around the Sun.
2. Obliquity (41,000 years) - Variations in the tilt of Earth's axis relative to its orbital plane.
3. Precession (23,000 years) - The shifting orientation of Earth's axis over time.

Other Astronomical Influences on Earth's Climate:

Sunspot Activity:

- Sunspots are dark and cooler patches on the sun that increase and decrease in a cyclical manner.
- The number and intensity of sunspots increase and decrease in a cyclical pattern, typically over an 11-year solar cycle.

Galactic Cosmic Rays:

Some studies suggest that increased cosmic ray flux from our galaxy could influence cloud formation on Earth, potentially leading to cooling effects.

However, the magnitude of this effect and the mechanisms involved are still subjects of ongoing research.

Asteroid/Comet Impacts:

Major asteroid or comet impacts on Earth, while extremely rare, can inject massive amounts of dust and gasses into the atmosphere, leading to temporary cooling periods.

The Cretaceous-Paleogene extinction (caused extinction of dinosaurs) around 66 million years ago is thought to have been caused in part by an asteroid impact and associated climate changes.

2. Kisan Credit Card (KCC) Fisheries Scheme

The Department of Fisheries has included the Kisan Credit Card (KCC) Fisheries scheme on the JanSamarth Portal to provide better access to credit for fishers, fish farmers, and stakeholders across the country.

Value addition

JanSamarth Portal

1. It is an innovative online platform that directly links lenders with beneficiaries.
2. Citizens can access loans through 13 Central government schemes across four loan categories.

KCC Fisheries Scheme?

1. About- In 2018-19, the Kisan Credit Card (KCC) facility was extended to fishers and fish farmers to support their working capital needs.
2. Coverage- The Scheme covers different categories of farmers, such as individuals, joint borrowers, Joint Liability Groups, and Self Help Groups.
3. Subsidy- It provides an annual interest subsidy of 2%, along with an extra subsidy of 3% for timely repayment.

About Kisan Credit Cards (KCC) Scheme

1. Launched- The KCC scheme started in 1998 to offer timely credit to farmers for farming and related needs. It was initiated based on the recommendation of R.V. Gupta committee.
2. Objective- KCC aims to fulfill short-term credit needs for farming, post-harvest costs, marketing, consumption, farm asset maintenance, and agriculture-related investments.
3. Implementing Entities: Commercial Banks, Regional Rural Banks (RRBs), Small Finance Banks, and Cooperatives participate in executing the scheme.
4. Features:
 - a. KCC offers an ATM-enabled RuPay debit card, streamlined processes, and inherent cost escalation.

b. The government helps farmers by reducing interest rates and offering rewards for prompt loan repayment to make agricultural loans more affordable. Farmers must link their Aadhaar to avail themselves of interest rate reductions.

5. Expansion of the scheme– The scheme expanded in 2004 to cover investment credit needs for farmers in various activities beyond farming. In 2018-19, it was extended to include fisheries and animal husbandry farmers.

3. SEBI Index Providers Regulations, 2024

Why in the News?

The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI), in its latest regulations, has mandated index providers overseeing “significant indices” linked to Indian securities to register with the SEBI. This measure aims to improve transparency in the governance of financial benchmarks indices.

What do the SEBI Index Providers Regulations of 2024 say?

1. The regulations necessitate index providers such as NSE Indices and Asia Index (AIPL) to register with SEBI. Additionally, they must publicly disclose their methodology documents and comply with a code of conduct.

2. Global index providers like MSCI, Nasdaq, and FTSE Russell might be exempted from registration requirements unless their indices are significantly utilized by domestic asset managers.

What are Indices?

1. Indices are statistical tools employed to monitor the performance of a collection of assets or securities within a specific market.

2. They act as reference points or signals for investors, offering insights into the overall performance and trends of a particular market segment.

3. Indices are composed of stocks, bonds, commodities, or other financial assets, allowing investors to track changes in different sectors or the overall market.

4. Examples– Sensex and Nifty 200 in India, and S&P 500, Dow Jones Industrial Average, and NASDAQ Composite in the United States.

4. Exercise Tiger Triumph – 24

Why in the News?

India and the United States will conduct a bilateral tri-Service Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) Exercise called Tiger Triumph – 24. It will take place on the Eastern Seaboard from March 18 to March 31, 2024.

Exercise Tiger Triumph

About– It is the first tri-service military exercise between India and USA. India has previously conducted tri-service exercises only with Russia.

First edition– 2019

About Exercise Tiger Triumph-24

1. Aim– The exercise aims to improve cooperation between the forces of both countries in conducting HADR operations and to refine Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for smoother coordination.

2. Phases of the exercise– The exercise will be conducted in two phases– Harbour Phase and Sea phase

a. Harbour Phase– It will be carried out at Visakhapatnam. Personnel from both navies will engage in Training Visits, Subject Matter Expert Exchanges, Sports Events, and Social interactions during this time.

b. Sea Phase– It will be carried out at Kakinada district of Andhra Pradesh. After the Harbour Phase, the ships, carrying troops, will sail for the Sea Phase and conduct Maritime, Amphibious, and HADR operations based on given scenarios.

5. Pandavula Gutta- Geo-heritage site

Why in the News?

Pandavula Gutta has recently gained official recognition as the exclusive Geo-heritage site in Telangana.

What is Pandavula Gutta?

1. About– It is an ancient geological marvel older than the Himalayas.

2. Location– It is located in Jayashankar Bhupalpally district in Telangana.

3. Discovery– The discovery of this site dates back to 1990.

4. Features:

a. The site is rich in paintings, rock shelters, and evidence of habitation, spanning from the Mesolithic to medieval periods.

b. The paintings exhibit geometric designs and impressions using green, red, yellow, and white pigments.

c. The rock art paintings show animals such as bison, antelope, tiger, and leopard. They also feature shapes like the swastika symbol, circles, squares, as well as weapons like bows, arrows, swords, and lances.

What are Geo-heritage sites?

1. About– Geo-heritage encompasses geological features that hold either intrinsic or cultural importance. It provides valuable insights into the Earth’s evolution or history for earth science or educational purposes.

2. Designated by– Geological Survey of India (GSI)

3. Protection– India, a member of the UNESCO Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, safeguards these sites with appropriate laws, following global standards.

ANSWER WRITING

Q. Discuss constitutionally enshrined role of CAG. What are the safeguards provided in the constitution for the effective functioning of CAG?

Ans: Article 148 of mentions for an independent Comptroller and Auditor General of India.

Role of CAG:

- Role of CAG is to uphold the constitution and laws of parliament in the field of financial administration.
- The CAG is an agent of parliament and conduct audit of expenditure on behalf of the parliament.
- CAG is responsible to the parliament.
- CAG has more freedom to audit the expenditure than the receipts.
- In relation to expenditure CAG decides the scope of audit and frames his own codes and manual.
- CAG has to ensure whatever the money disbursed was applicable to the purpose for which they have been applied.
- In addition to legal and regulatory audit the CAG has to conduct propriety audit and comment on the wastefulness and extravagance of such expenditure.

Safeguards for CAG:

The constitution of India provides some provisions to safeguard the CAG as the follow:

1. Securely of tenure President can remove the CAG only in accordance with the procedure mentioned in the constitution.
 2. His/her salary and other service condition is determined by the parliament.
 3. His/her salary, pension, age of retirement can't be altered to his disadvantage.
 4. Administrative expenses of the office of the CAG, salaries, allowances, pensions of persons serving in CAG office are charged upon Consolidated Fund of India.
 5. He is not eligible to hold positions under govt. of India or any state after his retirement.
- Though the constitution of India visualises CAG as comptroller and Auditor General, it fulfils the role of Auditor General only.
- Despite the CAG fullfills the role of auditor general only it is one of the bulwark of the democratic system of the govt. of India as it holds the central and state government accountable.

MCQs

1. Variations in the length of daytime and nighttime from season to season are due to
(a) the earth's rotation on its axis
(b) the earth's revolution around the sun in an elliptical manner
(c) the latitudinal position of the place
(d) **revolution of the earth on a tilted axis**
2. Consider the following statements regarding legislative powers of the Governor.
1.If a bill passed by the state legislature endangers the position of the state high court, the Governor must reserve the bill for consideration of the President.
2.If a bill sent by the Governor for the reconsideration of the State legislature is passed again without amendments, the Governor is under no constitutional obligation to give his assent to the bill.
Which of the above statements is/are incorrect?
(a) 1 only (b) **2 only**
(c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2
3. Consider the following statements about Model Code of Conduct (MCC):
1.The MCC comes into force from the date the election schedule is announced until the date that results are out.
2.It has no statutory backing.
Which of the above statements is/are correct?
(a) 1 only (b) 2 only
(c) **Both 1 and 2** (d) Neither 1 nor 2
4. Consider the following statements regarding Valmiki Tiger Reserve (VTR):
1.VTR is the only tiger reserve of Bihar.
2.The Reserve has been designated as an Important Bird Area (IBA) by the Indian Bird Conservation Network.
3.The Kali river flows through this tiger reserve.
How many of the above statements are correct?
a) Only one b) **Only two**
c) All three d) None
5. Which of the following are the properties of Asbestos?
1.Resistance to heat 2.Insulation Capability
3.Volatile 4.Chemical Inertness
Select the correct answer using the codes given below:
a) 1 and 2 only b) 2,3 and 4 only
c) **1, 2 and 4 only** d) 1, 2, 3 and 4
6. World Air Quality Report 2023, recently seen in the news, is published by which organization?
a)World Health Organization
b) **Swiss organisation IQAir**
c)United Nations Environment Programme
d) United Nations Development Programme
7. Mission 414 campaign, recently seen in the news, is launched in which state?
a) Uttar Pradesh b) **Himachal Pradesh**
c) Rajasthan d) Tamil Nadu
8. E-crop, a crop simulation model-based device, was developed by which one of the following institute?
a)Central Plantation Crops Research Institute, Kasargod
b) **Central Tuber Crops Research Institute, Kerala**
c) Central Island Agricultural Research Institute, Port Blair
d) National Rice Research Institute, Cuttack
9. Recently, which state government has agreed to implement the PM SHRI Schools scheme by signing an MoU with the Ministry of Education?
a)Maharashtra b) **Tamil Nadu**
c) Uttar Pradesh d) Gujarat
10. Bugun Liocichla, recently seen in the news, belongs to which one of the following species?
a) Spider b) Fish
c) **Bird** d) Butterfly