

CONSTITUTION AND POLITY**Voting rights of undertrials and convicts**

The Supreme Court is hearing a plea questioning an electoral law which denies undertrials and convicts their right to vote. The petition has been moved under Article 32 of the Indian Constitution.

Voting rights of Prisoners

- Section 62(5) of the RP Act of 1951 mandates that “no person shall vote at any election if he is confined in a prison, whether under a sentence of imprisonment or transportation or otherwise, or is in the lawful custody of the police”.
- The provisions however exempt a person held under preventive detention from this rigor.

Invokes violation of FR

- The petition highlights how the Section sees both an under-trial and a convicted person equally. The former’s guilt is yet to be proved in a court.
- A person is innocent until proven guilty by law. Despite this, it denies an under-trial the right to vote but allows a detainee the same. However, a person out on bail is allowed to cast his vote.
- The plea argued that the provision violates the rights to equality, vote (Article 326) and is arbitrary. It is not a reasonable restriction.

Article 32 of the Indian Constitution

- The right to move the SC by appropriate proceedings for the enforcement of the Fundamental Rights is guaranteed under this article.
- The SC shall have power to issue directions or orders or writs any of the FRs.
- Parliament can empower any other court to issue directions, orders and writs of all kinds (for HC, under 226).
- The right to move the Supreme Court shall not be suspended except by President during a national emergency (Article 359).
- Supreme Court has been vested with the powers for to provide a remedy for the protection of the FRs.
- Only FRs can be enforced under Article 32 and not any other like non-fundamental constitutional rights, statutory rights, customary rights etc.

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS- BILATERAL, GROUPINGS, ORGANISATIONS**China backs “Wuhan spirit” despite differences on BRI**

At Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation, Chinese authorities were emphatic that ties between India and China were insulated from their differences on the BRI. China said that it is preparing for a summit between their leaders as a follow-up to last year’s Wuhan informal summit between Prez Xi Jinping and PM Modi.

Wuhan Spirit

- The two leaders had a very successful meeting in Wuhan in April 2018.
- Particularly, they established mutual trust and they jointly planned for the future of improvement and the strengthening of the China-India relationship.
- India and China were currently limiting the threshold of their differences so that overall development of ties remained unhampered.
- They agreed to significantly enhance efforts to build on the convergences through the established mechanisms in order to create the broadest possible platform for the future relationship.
- They agreed to handle the differences through peaceful discussion within the context of the overall relationship, bearing in mind the importance of respecting each other’s sensitivities, concerns and aspirations.

DISASTER MANAGEMENT**The Face of Disasters 2019 Report**

The Face of Disasters 2019 report was recently published by Sustainable Environment and Ecological Development Society (SEEDS).

The Face of Disasters 2019 Report

- The ‘Face of Disasters 2019’ report released by SEEDS as part of its 25th anniversary, analyses past trends, looking at disasters from a broader perspective to capture their varied facets.
- The report talks about the need to look at disaster vulnerabilities that lie under the radar, waiting to strike.
- Eight key areas have emerged that will be critical to consider as we look ahead:

- Water and the changing nature of disaster risk: A ‘new normal’ of rainfall variability is bringing challenges of too much and too little water, often in parallel.
- No disaster is ‘natural’: Risks lurking under the radar slip through the cracks because they don’t meet the idea of a ‘natural disaster’.
- The silent events: The disasters that go unseen leave those affected at even greater risk.
- Land becomes water (and water becomes land): Changes to the coastline are already affecting livelihood sources and will be hotspots for vulnerability in the future.
- The complexity of disaster impact: Beyond official ‘damages’, the long-term and uncaptured disaster impacts have life-changing consequences for affected communities.
- The urban imperative: Risk is rapidly urbanising and will affect everyone.
- Transformations in the third pole: Himalayan glaciers are melting, with serious implications for the whole region.
- Planning for what you can’t see: Earthquake risk is looming large under the radar, but are we prepared?
- Significance of the report
- Analysis of past trends shows us that 2019 will see unusual flooding, as well as heatwaves and drought that are already ongoing.
- The complexity of disasters today requires a proactive and multi-pronged approach.
- A single mega-disaster can wipe out hard-won development gains and recurrent small-scale stresses keep vulnerable families in a cycle of poverty.
- While this multiple event pattern is repeated every year, only a few really capture the public attention. Other risks continue to intensify under the radar.

Sustainable Environment and Ecological Development Society (SEEDS)

- SEEDS, a non profit voluntary organization, is a collective endeavor of young professionals drawn from development related fields.
- It originated as an informal group of likeminded persons, getting together for the purpose of creative research projects of academic interest.
- The group was later formalized in early 1994 and has been active in the field ever since.
- It is involved in research activities in Community Development, Disaster Management, Environmental Planning, Transport Planning, and Urban and Regional Planning.
- Activities are carried out on behalf of government, semi – government and international development agencies. Independent programs on vital issues are also taken up.

Line of Control

MHA has issued orders to suspend the LoC trade in Jammu & Kashmir. This action has been taken as the Government of India has been receiving reports that the Cross LoC trade routes are being misused by the Pakistan based elements for funnelling illegal weapons, narcotics and fake currency etc.

Trade across LoC:

- LoC trade is meant to facilitate exchange of goods of common use between local populations across the LoC in Jammu & Kashmir.
- The trade is allowed through two Trade Facilitation Centres located at Salamabad, Uri, District Baramulla and Chakkan-da-Bagh, District Poonch.
- The trade takes place four days a week.
- The Trade is based on Barter system and zero duty basis.

Why is it being suspended?

- LoC trade is being misused on very large scale. It has been revealed that the trade has changed its character to mostly third party trade and products from other regions, including foreign countries, are finding their way through this route.
- Unscrupulous and anti national elements are using the route as a conduit for Hawala money, drugs and weapons, under the garb of this trade.
- Significant number of trading concerns engaged in LoC trade are being operated by persons closely associated with banned terrorist organizations involved in fuelling terrorism/separatism.
- Some individuals have crossed over to Pakistan, and joined militant organizations. Trading firms established by them are under the control of militant organizations and are engaged in LoC trade.

What is LoC?

- Originally known as the Cease-fire Line, it was redesignated as the “Line of Control” following the Simla Agreement, which was signed on 3 July 1972.

- The part of Jammu that is under Indian control is known as the state of Jammu and Kashmir. The Pakistani-controlled part is divided into Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Gilgit–Baltistan. The northernmost point of the Line of Control is known as NJ9842.
- Another ceasefire line separates the Indian-controlled state of Jammu and Kashmir from the Chinese-controlled area known as Aksai Chin.
- The Line of Control divided Kashmir into two parts and closed the Jehlum valley route.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY- EVERYDAY SCIENCE, SPACE, NUCLEAR, DEFENCE ETC**Genome sequencing to map population diversity**

In an indigenous genetic mapping effort, nearly 1,000 rural youth from the length and breadth of India will have their genomes sequenced by the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR). The project aims at educating a generation of students on the “usefulness” of genomics.

- The project is an adjunct to a much larger government-led programme, still in the works, to sequence at least 10,000 Indian genomes.
- Typically, those recruited as part of genome-sample collections are representative of the country’s population diversity. In this case, the bulk of them will be college students, both men and women, and pursuing degrees in the life sciences or biology.
- The project aims to reach out to a lot of collegians, educating them about genomics and putting a system in place that allows them to access information revealed by their genome.

Need for genome sequencing: Ever since the human genome was first sequenced in 2003, it opened a fresh perspective on the link between disease and the unique genetic make-up of each individual. Nearly 10,000 diseases — including cystic fibrosis, thalassemia — are known to be the result of a single gene malfunctioning. While genes may render some insensitive to certain drugs, genome sequencing has shown that cancer too can be understood from the viewpoint of genetics, rather than being seen as a disease of certain organs.

Significance of the project: Globally, many countries have undertaken genome sequencing of a sample of their citizens to determine unique genetic traits, susceptibility (and resilience) to disease. This is the first time that such a large sample of Indians will be recruited for a detailed study.

What are the uses of genome sequencing?

- A genome is an organism’s complete set of DNA, including all of its genes.
- Genomics is an interdisciplinary field of science focusing on the structure, function, evolution, mapping, and editing of genomes. Genomics also involves the sequencing and analysis of genomes through uses of high throughput DNA sequencing.
- Advances in genomics have triggered a revolution in discovery-based research and systems biology to facilitate understanding of even the most complex biological systems such as the brain.

Bubble boy disease:

US scientists claim that they used HIV to make a gene therapy that cured eight infants of severe combined immunodeficiency, or “bubble boy” disease.

Bubble boy disease: The inherited immune system disorder is technically called X-linked severe combined immunodeficiency (SCID), and it affects mostly boys. Bubble boy disease is the most common SCID condition, and the frequency of the illness isn’t known. If a child tests positive for the disease at birth, they can’t necessarily do activities that other children can do. A child with X-linked SCID can’t fight off infections the way a healthy child can because their immune system doesn’t function properly. They have to live inside a “bubble” to keep from coming into contact with germs that wouldn’t hurt a healthy person but could kill someone whose immune system doesn’t work.

What causes this?

Bubble boy disease is caused by mutations in a gene called IL2RG on the X chromosome. The IL2RG gene provides instructions for making a protein that is critical for normal immune system function. This protein is necessary for the growth and maturation of developing immune system cells called lymphocytes.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

You are a product of your decisions.