

POLITY

Special Category Status, government initiatives and policies for the advancement of diverse industries, as well as problems resulting from their conception and execution.

In News, why?

- The Bihar Cabinet has approved a resolution asking for Bihar to be granted Special Category Status (SCS).
- The "Bihar Caste-based Survey, 2022" results, which showed that over one-third of Bihar's population still lives in poverty, provide context for the need.

A Special Category Status: What Is It?

About:

- The Centre developed the SCS classification to aid in the development of states that experience socioeconomic and geographic disadvantages.
- SCS is not mentioned in the Constitution, and this classification was carried out based on suggestions made by the Fifth Finance Commission in 1969.
- In 1969, Jammu and Kashmir, Assam, and Nagaland were granted status for the first time.
- In the past, the National Development Council of the former Planning Commission approved SCS for plan assistance.
- The designation of a special category state has been granted to eleven states, namely Assam, Nagaland, Himachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Sikkim, Tripura, Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, Uttarakhand, and Telangana.
- After being divided from Andhra Pradesh, Telangana became the newest state in India and was granted this status.
- SCS only addresses the economic and financial aspects of a situation, as contrast to special status, which grants enhanced legislative and political privileges.
- For example, prior to the abolition of Article 370, J&K had Special status.

Parameters (Gadgil Formula Based):

- Hilly terrain; low population density and/or a sizable proportion of the tribal population; strategically located along borders with neighbouring countries; infrastructure and economic backwardness; and the unviability of state finances.

Advantages:

- According to the Gadgil-Mukherjee model, SCS states used to receive about 30% of central support.
- However, this support for SCS States has been absorbed into a greater devolution of the divisible pool funding for all States (raised to 41% in the 15th FC from 32%) in accordance with the recommendations of the 14th and 15th Finance Commissions (FC) and the abolition of the Planning Commission.
- States with special category status receive 90% of the funding needed for a Centrally-Sponsored Scheme from the Centre, compared to 60% or 75% for other states; the state governments provide the remaining amounts.
- Money that is not spent in a fiscal year is carried over and does not expire.
- These states receive significant breaks on income tax, corporation tax, and excise and customs taxes.
- States in Special Categories receive thirty percent of the Centre's Gross Budget.

For what reason does Bihar want Special Category Status (SCS)?

Economic Disparities:

- Bihar has a number of serious economic issues, such as a dearth of industrial growth and a scarcity of investment prospects.
- The state's split caused industries to relocate to Jharkhand, worsening Bihar's problems with employment and economic expansion.

Natural Disasters:

- The state is plagued by natural disasters such as severe droughts in the south and floods in the north.
- The agricultural activities are disrupted by these frequent calamities, which has an impact on livelihoods and economic stability.

Absence of Infrastructure

- Infrastructure is still insufficient, particularly when it comes to water delivery and irrigation systems.
- A significant section of the population depends on agriculture for their major source of income, and agricultural productivity is negatively impacted by inadequate resources for irrigation.

Social Development and Poverty

- There are a lot of families in Bihar who are below the poverty line, contributing to the state's high poverty rate.
- Bihar, which has a per capita GDP of about Rs 54,000, has always been among the poorest States. There are over 94 lakh impoverished families in Bihar, and the government will be able to obtain the about RS 2.5 lakh crore needed to pay for different welfare programs over the next five years with the aid of the SCS.

Money for Development:

- By applying for SCS, Bihar can also obtain significant financial support from the federal government, which will enable it to fund development initiatives and solve long-standing socioeconomic problems.

Does Bihar Meet the Requirements to Receive SCS?

- Bihar does not match the need of steep terrain and geographically problematic places, which is thought to be the key reason for difficulty in infrastructural development, even though it meets most of the conditions for the grant of SCS.
- The Centre-appointed Raghuram Rajan Committee categorized Bihar as being in the “least developed category” in 2013 and proposed a new devolution of funding approach based on a “multi-dimensional index” rather than a SCS, which can be reviewed to address the State's socio-economic backwardness.

Are other States in Favour of SCS?

- Andhra Pradesh has requested a SCS grant after its split in 2014, citing revenue losses as a result of Hyderabad moving to Telangana.
- Odisha has also been asking the SCS, citing its huge (almost 22%) tribal population and susceptibility to natural disasters like cyclones.
- Nevertheless, the Central government has consistently rejected their requests, citing the 14th FC report, which recommended to the Centre that no State be granted the SCS.

What worries about being in a special category?**Allocation of Resources:**

- Granting SCS requires the federal government to provide the state more money, which may put a pressure on its resources.
- It becomes imperative to distribute monies equitably throughout the states, and granting SCS may result in inequities or discontent among the non-SCS states.

Dependency on Central support:

- States that suffer from SCS frequently develop a strong dependency on central support. This might deter initiatives for autonomous economic growth plans and self-sufficiency.

Implementation Challenges:

- Despite the SCS award, there may still be obstacles to efficiently using the money because of incompetent administration, corruption, or inadequate planning.
- One major problem is making sure the allocated funds are used for what they were intended for.

The Way Ahead

- To maintain equity and openness, the standards for awarding SCS must be reviewed and improved. Clearly state the eligibility requirements based on infrastructural development, socioeconomic statistics, and other pertinent variables.
- States must be urged to draft comprehensive development plans with an emphasis on infrastructure development, employment creation, sustainable growth, and the development of human capital. SCS ought to be a component of a more comprehensive plan for all-around growth.
- Implement measures that encourage economic diversification and self-sufficiency in order to progressively lessen states' reliance on federal aid. Encourage the states to produce their own sources of income.

SECURITY**The numerous serious threats that the modern society faces****Introduction:**

While North and South America are beset by issues of varied degrees, Europe, Asia, and Africa appear to be in a perpetual state of dissonance today. The scene for multipolar disorder has been laid by all of this.

Multipolar disorder

- The attack on the State of Israel by Hamas, a Palestinian terror outfit, however, represents a new high in the evolution of terrorism. That a little acknowledged Palestinian terror outfit could take on Israel, which boasts of one of the most powerful armies in the world, is having a seismic impact across the world. Hence, there appears to be no end in sight to the challenges posed by fanatic groups intending to achieve their ends and reinforce their beliefs.
- The attack on Ukraine by Russia starting February 2022, though, falls into a different category, viz., of conventional conflicts, but is nevertheless highly disconcerting. The prolongation of the conflict, which was not expected to last for more than a few weeks, to well over 18 months, represents an even more disturbing trend.
- Neither Russia nor Ukraine, including NATO, are prepared to entertain the idea of pausing the conflict even while it rages on. Numerous novel technologies and tactics have proven inadequate in resolving conflicts in the battlefield. The likelihood of a larger conflict escalating increases with each passing month, and there are few indications that it will be resolved.
- Lately, a new front in the increasingly all-out conflict in West Asia has emerged in the wake of Hamas' terror attack on Israel. The possibility of an all-out war (in an area that has rarely experienced protracted peace) is very real several weeks into the fight. In response, the two-state solution to the Palestinian dilemma has been consigned to the annals of history, and the area is poised for a further fifty years of conflict.
- The Abrahamic and other peace deals have collapsed like a house of cards. Following the Hamas-Israel confrontation, a major US naval deployment from the Mediterranean to the Gulf of Oman could include Iran-backed Shia armed organizations. (like the Hezbollah) immediately into the battle, and Iran later on. This could have unanticipated repercussions and significantly change the nature of the war.

Uneasiness throughout the Indo-Pacific area

- Notwithstanding the quagmire in West Asia, there is even more potential for a broad battle in the Indo-Pacific area, one that may directly include the United States and China. Already, this area is synonymous with contestation and strategic competition.
- As things stand, there isn't much room for cooperation between the United States and China, as they both appear determined to intensify their dispute. The United States seems to believe that it currently has the upper hand because China's economy has stalled and it is unable to obtain cutting-edge technology from the West.
- Right now, the West is only interested in imitating the strategies it used in Ukraine to impede Russia's advancement in the Indo-Pacific region, without acknowledging the significant differences between the current circumstances in Europe and the Indo-Pacific.
- For example, the East lacks a military alliance like NATO and, at most, has a few shaky, unproven security mechanisms (like the Quad and AUKUS) to counter China. The fact that few Asian nations are prepared for a military conflict with China is equally significant.

Technology hazards

- Furthermore, a lot of the serious problems facing the globe today are related to technology, notably artificial intelligence (AI) and cyberspace. The established order is being mocked by digital uncertainty, even as the scene of digital threats has truly exploded.
- Many important facets of people's thinking and functioning will be influenced by AI as an increasing number of people become cognitively and psychologically dependent on digital networks. Experts believe that the true game-changer will be the development of generative AI, and that things may soon get far worse. The true danger lies in the possibility that it will change nation states fundamentally, causing the deepfake syndrome and truth itself to perish.
- The usage of AI is quite concerning, especially when it comes to military and security applications. Artificial intelligence (AI) has the potential to be tainted and vulnerable to various forms of "adversarial attacks," such as "evasion," "backdooring," and "poisoning," which are designed to impair a module's capacity to make pertinent predictions.
- Thus, the necessity of using the utmost caution cannot be stressed. Risks to security are posed by the cyber realm and the cyber threat once more. Threats like ransomware, phishing, and zero day vulnerabilities are widely known to the globe, but there is yet a lot more to come.
- In the meantime, another aspect that has the potential to change the world is quantum computing. Certain industries are already changing as a result of quantum's exceptional capacity to process massive amounts

of data. Although quantum AI simulation shows an astounding level of efficacy and efficiency, there are inherent risks involved as well.

- Health is another area of global risk since, as society develops, health is becoming more and more important to daily life. One of the worst epidemics in history has been called the COVID-19 pandemic. According to health forecasts, there will be additional epidemics of this kind.

Conclusion:

When it comes down to it, a lot of experts believe that one of the major global threats facing the 21st century will be climate change and the health problems associated with it.

PRELIM FACTS**1. Amplifi 2.0**

Context: Amplifi 2.0 portal was launched to facilitate the process of achieving sustainable development by making data available on the crucial issues pertaining to development.

- Assessment and Monitoring Platform for Liveable, Inclusive and Future-ready urban India
- It is a platform to provide raw data across 14 sectors for 440+ parameters for 250+ cities.
- Launched by –Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs.
- It is a platform to provide raw data across 14 sectors for 440+ parameters for 250+ cities.
- **Aim** – To enable research, analysis, and evidence-based policymaking for government, citizens, academia and industry.
- **Coverage** – Currently, 225 urban local bodies (ULB) have been on-boarded, and data for 150 cities is available on the portal.
- **Target** – To cover data from more than 4,000 ULB.

2. Gulf of Aden

Context: A U.S. Navy warship responded to a distress call from a commercial tanker in the Gulf of Aden that had been seized by armed individuals recently.

- It is an extension of the Indian Ocean, tucked between the Arabian Peninsula (north) and the African continent (South).
- The gulf is named after “Aden,” a port city on Yemen’s coast.
- **Borders:** It is bounded to the south by Somalia and the Socotra Islands (part of Yemen), to the north by Yemen, to the east by the Arabian Sea, and to the west by Djibouti
- The gulf is connected to the Somali Sea to the south by the Guardafui Channel and to the Red Sea on the west by the Strait of Bab el-Mandeb.
- **Size:** It is approximately 900 km long and 500 km wide and covers roughly 410,000 square kilometers.
- **Depth:** It has an average depth of 500 meters and a maximum depth of 2,700 meters.
- The dominant relief feature of the gulf’s terrain is the Sheba Ridge, an extension of the Indian Ocean ridge system, which extends along the middle of the gulf.
- It is also a critical part of the Suez Canal shipping route, which connects the Red Sea and the Mediterranean Sea.
- Some of the major cities near the gulf include Aden, Mukalla, Ahnwar, Balhaf, Berbera, Bosaso, and Djibouti City.

4. Narcoanalysis test**Context:**

In a ‘narco’ or narcoanalysis test, a drug called sodium pentothal is injected into the body of the accused, which transports them to a hypnotic or sedated state, in which their imagination is neutralised.

- In this hypnotic state, the accused is understood as being incapable of lying, and is expected to divulge information that is true.
- A polygraph test is based on the assumption that physiological responses that are triggered when a person is lying are different from what they would be otherwise
- A polygraph test does not involve injecting drugs into the body; rather instruments like cardio-cuffs or sensitive electrodes are attached to the suspect, and variables such as blood pressure, pulse rate, respiration, change in sweat gland activity, blood flow, etc., are measured as questions are put to them.

- A numerical value is assigned to each response to conclude whether the person is telling the truth, is deceiving, or is uncertain.
- In recent decades, investigating agencies have sought to employ these tests in investigation, which are sometimes seen as being a “softer alternative” to torture or “third degree” to extract the truth from suspects.
- However, neither method has been proven scientifically to have a 100% success rate, and remain contentious in the medical field as well
- In ‘Selvi & Ors vs State of Karnataka & Anr’ (2010), a Supreme Court Bench ruled that no lie detector tests should be administered “except on the basis of consent of the accused”. It said that the ‘Guidelines for the Administration of Polygraph Test on an Accused’ published by the National Human Rights Commission in 2000, must be strictly followed. The subject’s consent should be recorded before a judicial magistrate, the court said.

5. Piezoelectricity

- Piezoelectricity is the electric charge that accumulates in certain solid materials in response to applied mechanical stress.
- Piezoelectricity is indeed the phenomenon where certain materials generate electric charge in response to mechanical stress.
- Piezoelectricity is used in the production and detection of sound, generation of high voltage electricity, and as a clock generator in electronic devices
- Piezoelectricity is a reversible process: materials exhibiting the piezoelectric effect also exhibit the reverse piezoelectric effect, the internal generation of a mechanical strain resulting from an applied electric field

ANSWER WRITING

Q. Do you think marriage as a sacrament is losing its value in Modern India?

Introduction

Marriage, a legally and socially recognized partnership aiming to form families and follow social norms, is deeply rooted in Indian culture and religion. However, in modern India, its value as a sacrament is evolving.

Body

Arguments for Diminishing Value:

- **Changing Norms:** Society now accepts diverse relationships, reducing the emphasis on traditional marriage. Recent data shows an increase in the 'never married' youth population to 26.1% in 2019.
- **Individual Autonomy:** Personal freedom leads to autonomous choices in partnerships, challenging arranged marriages through Live-in relationships and fostering single lifestyles.
- **Rising Divorce:** Escalating divorce rates suggest a decline in the sanctity and permanence of marriage.
- **Economic Independence:** Call for women empowerment extends choices beyond traditional marriage, challenging patriarchy and reducing sanctity of marriage .

Arguments Supporting Marriage's Value:

- **Social Stability:** Marriage continues to be a cornerstone for social stability by providing a structured framework for family life.
- **Legal Protections:** It offers crucial legal rights in inheritance, property, and medical decisions.
- **Religious Significance:** Many view marriage as sacred, tied to their religion, instilling moral values.
- **Psychological Security:** Marriage reduces isolation, offering psychological security, vital for addressing mental health challenges.

Conclusion

In sum, while marriage adapts to modern needs, it remains significant in contemporary India, serving evolving societal aspirations

MCQs

- Consider the following statements about Amplifi 2.0 portal
 - It is a joint initiative of environment, Forest and Climate Change and NITI Aayog.
 - It is a platform to provide raw data to enable research and evidence-based policymaking for Liveable, Inclusive and Future-ready urban India.
- Consider the following statements about Gulf of Aden
 - It is bounded to the south by Socotra Islands and to the north by Yemen.

Choose the incorrect statements:

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2. The gulf is connected to the Red Sea on the west by the Guardafui Channel.
3. Sheba Ridge, an extension of the Indian Ocean ridge system is the dominant relief feature of the gulf's terrain.
- How many of the statements given above are correct?
- a) Only one
b) Only two
 c) All three
 d) None of the above
3. Consider the following statements regarding 'Piezoelectricity':
1. Piezoelectricity is the electric charge that accumulates in certain solid materials in response to applied mechanical stress.
2. Piezoelectricity is used in the production and detection of sound, generation of high voltage electricity, and as a clock generator in electronic devices.
3. Piezoelectricity is a reversible process, i.e. materials exhibiting the piezoelectric effect also exhibit the reverse piezoelectric effect.
- How many statements given above are correct?
- (a) Only One
 (b) Only Two
(c) All Three
 (d) None
4. Consider the following statements.
1. In a Narcoanalysis test, a drug is injected into the body of the accused, which transports them to a hypnotic or sedated state, in which their imagination is neutralised.
2. A polygraph test is based on the assumption that physiological responses that are triggered when a person is lying are different from what they would be otherwise.
3. Both Narcoanalysis test and polygraph test have been proved scientifically to have 100% success rate.
- Which of the above statements is/are correct?
- a) 2 only
b) 1, 2
 c) 2, 3
 d) 1, 2, 3
5. Hornbill Festival is the flagship festival celebrated mainly in
- a) Assam
 b) Meghalaya
c) Nagaland
 d) Sikkim
6. Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism is a plan to tax carbon-intensive products, such as iron and steel, cement, fertiliser, aluminium and electricity generation, is proposed by
- a) UN Environment
b) European Union (EU)
 c) Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)
 d) World Trade Organization (WTO)
7. Which one of the following statements is correct regarding the 'Golden Gate Declaration', seen in the news recently?
- (a) It is a comprehensive plan of action to be taken globally, nationally, and locally by organizations of the United Nations, governments, and major groups in every area in which humans impact the environment.
- (b) It outlines the rights that every child is entitled to, emphasizing the need for special protection and assistance.
- (c) It outlines eight Millennium Development Goals aimed at addressing global challenges such as poverty, hunger, gender equality, and health.
- (d) It is a significant step towards creating a more resilient, sustainable, interconnected, innovative, and inclusive Asia-Pacific region.**
8. Consider the following pairs:
1. Dhala Crater: It is India's oldest and largest impact crater.
2. Lonar Crater: It is a highly saline and alkaline water lake with no outflow.
3. Ramgarh Crater: It is located in Rajasthan's Baran district.
- How many of the above pairs are correct?
- (a) Only one
 (b) Only two
(c) All three
 (d) None
9. Markarian 421, recently seen in news is related with which of the following?
- (a) Black hole**
 (b) Asteroid
 (c) Crater
 (d) Satellite
10. There is a Parliamentary System of Government in India because the
- a) Lok Sabha is elected directly by the people
 b) Parliament can amend the Constitution
 c) Rajya Sabha cannot be dissolved
d) Council of Ministers is responsible to the Lok Sabha