

SOCIAL JUSTICE

Context: Bihar Reservation Law and Breaching 50% Limit, Government Policies and Interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.

In News, why?

- The Bihar Assembly recently passed Bihar Reservation Laws, which violate the 50% Rule affirmed by the Supreme Court (SC) by raising the percentage of reservations in the State to 75% in both jobs and education.
- The discussion on the appropriate boundaries for reservations in India has been triggered by this, especially in light of the "50%" limit that the Indian Supreme Court established in the Mandal Commission case (Indra Sawhney, 1992).

Which provisions of the Bihar Reservation Laws are the most important?

- These are the Bihar (in admission in educational institutions) Reservation Amendment Act, 2023, and the Bihar Reservation of Vacancies in Posts and Services (for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and Other Backward Classes) Amendment Act, 2023.
- The revised Act provides for a total reservation of 65% in both scenarios, with 20% going to Scheduled Castes, 2% going to Scheduled Tribes, 18% going to Backward Classes, and 25% going to Extremely Backward Classes.
- Aside from this, the 10% reservation for EWS (those from the economically weaker general group) that was previously granted under the Central Act will persist.

What does the 50% Rule entail?

- Regarding: Historically, the Supreme Court has maintained the 50% rule, which states that reservations for employment or education in India cannot surpass 50% of the total number of seats or positions.
- First instituted by a bench of seven judges in the 1963 M.R. In the Balaji case, reservations were limited to a maximum of 50% of available seats because they were deemed a "exception" or "special provision" under the constitutional framework.
- But when it was recognized in 1976 that reservations are a part of equality, not an exception, the concept of reservations changed. This change in viewpoint did not affect the 50% ceiling.
- In the Mandal commission case in 1990, a nine-judge court upheld the 50% limit and declared it to be a legally obligatory regulation and not merely a matter of prudence. However, it is not a rule without exceptions
- States may go overboard under certain conditions, most notably to grant reservations to underprivileged populations that are not part of the mainstream, no matter where they live.
- Furthermore, the 103rd Constitutional Amendment's recent confirmation by the Supreme Court supports an extra 10% reservation for Economically Weaker Sections (EWS).
- Accordingly, States may reserve up to 60% of the seats/posts, including EWS reservations, and the 50% cap will only apply to non-EWS bookings.

Other States Going Over the Boundary:

- Even with the EWS quota excluded, other states that have already exceeded the 50% threshold are Chhattisgarh (72%), Tamil Nadu (69%), several north-eastern states like Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Mizoram, and Nagaland (80% each), and Tamil Nadu (69%), which is protected by the Constitution's ninth schedule.
- For Scheduled Tribes, Lakshadweep possesses an astounding 100% of reserves.
- The courts have rejected Rajasthan's and Maharashtra's earlier attempts.

Reservation and Constitution

- The Indra Sawhney ruling had held that there would only be reservations for initial appointments, not for promotions, which led to the 77th Constitutional Amendment Act of 1995.
- However, the state now has the authority to reserve seats for SC/ST employees in matters of promotion if it believes they are underrepresented, thanks to the inclusion of article 16(4A) to the Constitution.
- Article 16(4B) of the 81st Constitutional Amendment Act, 2000, which states that unfilled SC/ST quotas from a given year will be handled independently and not combined with the ordinary vacancies of that year, was introduced.
- The 85th Constitutional Amendment Act, 2001, established a promotion reserve with "consequential seniority" for government employees who are members of the SC and ST groups, effective retroactively from June 1995.
- The 2019 Constitution's 103rd Amendment establishes a 10% reservation for the Economically Weaker Section (EWS).
- Article 335: It states that while appointing people to positions related to the Union's or a State's affairs, the demands of SCs and STs must be taken into account in their entirety while maintaining administrative effectiveness.

The Way Ahead

- The 50% reservation cap should be re-evaluated by courts in light of changing socioeconomic conditions, equality principles, and social dynamics.
- Think about extending the exclusions beyond social exclusion to more inclusive standards for historically disadvantaged populations, regardless of location.
- Examine the effectiveness, impact, and suitability of the current reservation policies in detail. Make sure they meet the needs of the society.

GOVERNANCE**Context: Letting down the states****Introduction:**

Concerns over India's federal system are only increased by the Supreme Court's decision in Article 370 of the Constitution, rendered on December 11, which upheld the repeal of Article 370, the division of Jammu and Kashmir, and its downgrade to a Union Territory.

The federalism debate

- In the event that the Union were able to completely and unilaterally abolish a state, what would "statehood" even imply in terms of the Constitution?
- The petitioners contended in J&K that the Union is not authorized to abolish "statehood" under Article 3 of the Constitution.
- The Union may rename states and alter their borders, but the Constitution forbids it from merely "downgrading" a state to a Union Territory.
- If the Constitution's fundamental component of federalism is true, then statehood cannot be arbitrarily abolished.
- This question is not addressed in any way in CJI Chandrachud's majority ruling.
- Regretfully, this is consistent with the SC's recent practice of avoiding deciding contentious issues.
- One possible explanation for the Union's "assurance" that J&K's statehood will be "restored" shortly is the rationale for this non-adjudication.
- This has no bearing at all on the question posed, which is whether the action was initially justifiable.
- Nevertheless, the court unintentionally supports the Union's claim that it can annihilate statehood by refusing to respond to this question.
- The SC maintains that the Union has the right to revoke statehood at any time, even though it acknowledges that federalism is a fundamental aspect of the Constitution.
- The court holds that the states of India, which are the country's federal subdivisions, should have their powers derived from the Constitution rather than the Union.
- However, regardless of what the Constitution states, it tacitly acknowledges that they are obligated to Parliament for their continued existence.
- As Article 3's authority can be used against any state, this portion of the ruling is not specific to Kashmir.
- The Supreme Court's ruling clearly implies that the Union can decide to declare any state a Union territory for any amount of time and for whatever purpose it pleases.

Can a state's citizens have a voice in how they are run?

- As the representatives of the former state's citizens, the petitioners claimed that the legislature of J&K had to be consulted before the state's statehood could be abolished.
- Instead of framing this as a democratic question, the ruling views it as a merely "procedural" matter pertaining to the exercise of power under Article 3.
- The President's declaration that the Union Parliament would be consulted rather than the J&K legislature when the state was under President's Rule, the court finds, is sufficient conformity with the "procedure" of Article 3.
- Furthermore, given that the President has previously issued a Proclamation declaring that the state legislature consultation obligation will not apply to J&K, the court holds that there was no "procedural violation".
- The basis for doing so is a somewhat convoluted reading of the SC's judgment in *SR Bommai v Union of India* (1994).
- Aside from a misinterpretation of the *Bommai* rulings, the court does not appear to recognize the irony of drastically undermining the same idea with a ruling that increased India's federalism.
- The court appears to be essentially saying that the people of a state have no control over whether or not their state becomes a state, and that the Article 3 constitutional requirement of consultation with the state government is meaningless.

Asymmetrical federalism's future

- The SC classifies Article 370 as belonging to a separate category than Articles 371-A and 371-J.

- According to this argument, Article 370 was meant to be "temporary" given its historical setting, placement, and wording.
- Article 370 does not imply that it was designed to be temporary, despite the fact that it was adopted with the intention of being temporary and was thus included in the section of the Constitution known as "Temporary and Transitional Powers."
- Its application is not restricted to a certain time frame or until another event occurs, in contrast to other clauses.
- Article 370 was meant to be in effect until it was altered by the Parliament in accordance with Article 368 or revoked by the President in accordance with the procedure provided for under clause (3) of Article 370 (that is consultation with the Constituent Assembly of J&K)
- The court's position regarding Article 370's "temporary" nature is not well-founded.
- However, because this strategy is restricted to the specific language of Article 370, it does not fundamentally undermine the concept of asymmetrical federalism.
- Naturally, individuals in J&K who thought they had special safeguards under the Indian Constitution will find little solace in that.

Conclusion:

As seems to have become the norm of late, the SC's Article 370 judgment displays a vast gap between the rhetoric in the writing of the verdict and the actual decision in the case.

PRELIM FACTS
1.The Cassiopeia A

Context: In the supernova remnant Cassiopeia A (Cas A), NASA's James Webb Space Telescope has taken a breathtaking new picture of a star that burst.

About Cassiopeia A:

- It is a piece of debris from a big supernova that burst some 340 years ago.
- It is the newest known human-made remnant of a big star in our galaxy.
- It is an example of a supernova remnant and has been thoroughly examined by several space and terrestrial observatories.
- The remnant is approximately 11,000 light-years away in the Cassiopeia constellation, and it spans roughly 10 light-years.
- It provides details on the intricacies of the supernovae phenomena.
- Principal details of the supernova explosion
- It is the explosion of a massive star.
- It takes place when the star's core undergoes a transformation. There are two possible methods for a transformation to happen, and both can lead to a supernova.
- The first kind of supernova occurs in systems of binary stars.
- Two stars that orbit the same position are called binary stars. A white dwarf star with a carbon-oxygen composition takes material from its partner star.
- The white dwarf eventually has too much substance on it. A supernova is produced when a star explodes due to an excess of stuff.
- When a single star reaches the end of its life, the second type of supernova occurs:
- A portion of the star's mass moves into its core as its nuclear fuel runs out. In the end, the core is so heavy that it cannot withstand its own gravitational force.
- The core collapses, which results in the giant explosion of a supernova.

2.Saiga Antelope

Context: Recently, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) upgraded the Saiga (Saiga tatarica) species category from Critically Endangered to Near Threatened.

About the Antelope Saiga:

- It is a large herbivore that migrates.
- Look: This antelope has a very peculiar appearance due to its large, flexible nose, which functions as a filter due to its internal anatomy.
- In the warm summer months, their big noses remove dust that the herd kicks up, and in the cold winter months, they warm the frigid air before it reaches their lungs.
- Its habitats include semi-arid deserts and wide, dry steppe grasslands.

Distribution:

- The antelope were once found throughout the Eurasian Steppe, the great band of grassland that stretches from Hungary in Europe to Manchuria in Asia.

- Presently it is found in fragmented populations within Kazakhstan, Mongolia, the Russian Federation and Uzbekistan. Hence statement 2 is not correct.
 - The Saiga has two subspecies: Saiga tatarica (found in most of the range) and Saiga tatarica mongolica (found only in Mongolia).
- Conservation status**
- IUCN: Near threatened
 - CITES: Appendix II
 - Threats: Hunting and habitat destruction.

3. Indian Scheme for Forest and Wood Certification

Context: The Indian Forest & Wood Certification Scheme was just introduced by the Ministry of Environment, Forests, and Climate Change.

About the Certification Scheme for Indian Forests and Woods:

- The goal of this national forest certification program is to support agro forestry and sustainable forest management in the nation by providing voluntary third-party certification.
- The program includes accreditation for chain of custody, tree outside forest management, and forest management.
- It can offer financial rewards to different organizations who conduct their activities using agro forestry and appropriate forest management.
- Parties in question: State forest departments, private farmers, Farmer Producer Organizations involved in agricultural forestry and agro forestry, and other wood-based businesses along the value chain are examples of this.
- The Indian Forest Management Standard, which consists of 8 criteria, 69 indicators, and 254 verifiers and is a crucial component of the National Working Plan Code 2023, which was introduced earlier this year, serves as the foundation for the Forest Management certification.
- The Indian Forest and Wood Certification Council, a multistakeholder advisory organization, will be in charge of overseeing it.
- Members from prestigious organizations, including the Ministries of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare and Commerce and Industry, State Forest Departments, Forest Development Corporations, and representatives from the wood-based industries, are represented on the Council.
- These organizations include the Indian Institute of Forest Management, the Indian Council of Forestry Research and Education, the Forest Survey of India, and the Quality Council of India.
- The Indian Institute of Forest Management, Bhopal will function as the organization in charge of running the plan and overseeing its general administration.
- The certification bodies that will conduct independent audits and evaluate various companies' adherence to the standards outlined in the program will be accredited by the National Accreditation Board for Certification Bodies, which is a division of the Quality Council of India.

4. Cinematic Vulture

Context: At the Asola Bhatti Wildlife Sanctuary, one of the biggest raptors in the world, the Cinereous Vulture (*Aegypius monachus*), has been observed recently.

Concerning Cinereous Vulture:

- It goes by the names monk vulture and Eurasian Black Vulture.
 - It is among the biggest and heaviest raptors on the planet.
 - It's one of the two biggest vultures from the Old World.
 - Being an altitudinal migrant, it moves from a higher altitude to a lower altitude.
 - **Habitat:** Throughout most of its range, this vulture is found in hilly, mountainous regions, with a preference for arid, semi-open environments like high-altitude meadows.
 - **Distribution:** This species is found in Eurasia. It is primarily found in central Asia, northern India, South France, inland Portugal, Spain, and northern Manchuria, Mongolia and Korea.
- Conservation status**
- IUCN: Near threatened
 - Wildlife Protection Act 1972: Schedule IV

5. Kawal Tiger Reserve

Context:

The smooth-coated otter, also known as "Neeti Pilli" in Telugu, is a fascinating aquatic animal that is finding a thriving home in the Kawal Tiger Reserve.

Important Details of the Kawal Tiger Reserve:

- Location: Adjacent to the Maharashtra border on one side and the Godavari River on the other, it is situated in the north-eastern region of Telangana.
- It is a component of the central highlands of the Deccan peninsula.
- Rivers: The Godavari and Kadam rivers, which flow south of the sanctuary, are caught by the reserve.
- Corridor: It connects to the Indravati Tiger Reserve in Chhattisgarh to the northeast and the Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve in Maharashtra to the north.
- Its ecosystems are varied and include meadows, rivers, streams, open spaces, and deep forests.
- Flora: Bamboo and teak are widely distributed.
- Up to 673 plant species have been identified; among the more significant ones are *Mitragyna parviflora*, *Terminalia crenulata*, and *Anogeissus latifolia*.
- Fauna: The diversity of its fauna is a hallmark of the Deccan Plateau.
- The nilgai, chousingha, chinkara, black buck, sambar, spotted deer, wild dog, wolf, jackal, fox, tiger, leopard, and the jungle cat are some of the more common wild creatures.

ANSWER WRITING

What was the difference between Mahatma Gandhi and Rabindranath Tagore in their approach towards education and nationalism?

Introduction

Important players in India's independence, Gandhi and Tagore, shared the desire to be free of British rule, but they approached nationalism and education differently.

Mahatma Gandhi and Tagore differed in:

1. Education
Mahatma Gandhi

- Gandhi's view on education was based on the idea of "Nai Talim," or "Basic Education."
- He promoted an all-encompassing educational approach that developed intellectual, moral, and practical abilities.
- In an effort to close the gap between the elite and the masses, he supported practical education.

Tagore:

- Tagore promoted an education that was more global and liberal.
- In order to foster the arts, creativity, and blending of cultures, he built Shantiniketan.
- His ideology aimed to develop well-rounded people who could appreciate and enhance the various cultures found around the world.

2. Nationalism:
Mahatma Gandhi:

- His nationalism was characterized by non-violence and 'Satyagraha'.
- Gandhi's nationalism was deeply rooted in the idea of self-reliance, self-sufficiency, and Swaraj.
- He promoted the idea of boycotting British goods and institutions as a way to weaken British rule.

Rabindranath Tagore:

- Tagore's approach was more cosmopolitan and less confrontational.
- He envisioned nationalism beyond borders, focusing on cultural unity and harmony.
- He saw India's heritage as a bridge between East and West and believed nationalism should unite, not isolate, India within global civilization.

Conclusion

While Gandhi focused on practical education and non-violence, shaping his nationalism. On the other hand, Tagore, with a liberal approach, had a universalistic view of nationalism.

MCQs

1. Consider the following statements about Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA)
 1. It aims to enhance the world's adaptive capacity, strengthening resilience and reducing vulnerability to climate change.
 2. It was proposed by the African Group of Negotiators (AGN) in 2013 and established in 2015 under Paris agreement.
 3. Glasgow-Sharm el-Sheikh work program (GlaSS) is an initiative under GGA.

How many of the statements given above are correct?

a) Only one b) Only two
 c) All three d) None of the above
2. Consider the following statements about Indian Forest & Wood Certification Scheme
 1. The scheme offers voluntary third-party certification to promote sustainable forest management and agro forestry in the country.

2. Indian Institute of Forest Management, Bhopal will be responsible for overall management of the scheme.
Choose the correct statements:
a) 1 only b) 2 only
c) **Both 1 and 2** d) Neither 1 nor 2
3. Which of the following are the advantages of Bioremediation?
1. By relying solely on natural processes, it minimizes damage to ecosystems.
2. It does not disrupt nearby communities as much as other clean-up methodologies.
3. It creates relatively few harmful by-products.
4. It is cheaper than most clean-up methods.
How many of the above statements is/are correct?
a) Only one b) Only two
c) Only three d) **All four**
4. Consider the following statements regarding 'A-HELP' initiative.
1. The 'A-HELP' initiative is being implemented in all Indian states and union territories through an MoU between the Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying and the National Rural Livelihoods Mission.
2. The program aims to empower women by engaging them as Accredited Agents who play a vital role in disease control, animal tagging, and livestock insurance.
3. It would enhance access to veterinary services at the farmer's doorstep.
How many of the above statements is/are correct?
a) Only one b) **Only two**
c) All three d) None
5. Consider the following statements.
1. Tanzania is a West African country known for its vast wilderness areas.
2. Serengeti National Park and Kilimanjaro National Park are located in Tanzania.
Which of the above statements is/are correct?
a) 1 only b) **2 only**
c) Both 1 and 2 d) Neither 1 nor 2
6. Recently, 'Cassiopeia A' was in the news. It is a
a) Black hole
b) Name of galaxy
c) **Remnant of a massive star**
d) Pulsar
7. Consider the following statements regarding 'Saiga Antelope'
1. It is a large migratory herbivore.
2. Presently, it is found in India and part of its neighbouring countries.
3. Recently, IUCN has degraded its status from Near Threatened to Endangered.
How many of the above-mentioned statements are correct?
a) **Only one** b) Only two
c) All three d) None
8. Consider the following statements regarding 'Indian Forest and Wood Certification Scheme'
1. The Ministry of Commerce launched it to approve India's exports of wood and goods related to wood.
2. The goal of this national forest certification program is to support agroforestry and sustainable forest management in the nation by providing voluntary third-party certification.
3. The program includes accreditation for chain of custody, tree outside forest management, and forest management.
How many of the above-mentioned statements are correct?
a) Only one b) **Only two**
c) All three d) None
9. Consider the following statements
1. Situated in the north-eastern region of Telangana, it shares a boundary with Maharashtra on one side and the Godavari River on the other.
2. It is a component of the central highlands of the Deccan peninsula.
3. The Godavari and Kadam rivers, which flow south of the sanctuary, are caught by the reserve.
4. It is connected to the Indravati Tiger Reserve in Chhattisgarh to the northeast and the Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve in Maharashtra to the north.
Which of the following tiger reserves is mentioned in the sentences above?
a) Amrabad Tiger Reserve
b) **Kawal Tiger Reserve**
c) Nagarjuna Sagar-Srisailem Tiger Reserve
d) Mundanthurai Tiger Reserve
10. Recently seen in news, 'Global Status Report on Road Safety 2023', was released by:
a) **World Health Organization**
b) World Bank
c) United Nations Development Programme
d) United Nations Security Council