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# WEEKLY CURRENT AFFAIRS

MARCH 2022

1st WEEK

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## POLITY

### Anti-Defection Law:

#### Why in news:

The High Court of Bombay at Goa in its judgement, delivered on February 25, held that the former members of the Congress Legislature Party (CLP) in the Goa assembly who had defected to the BJP are exempt from disqualification under paragraph 4(2) of the Tenth schedule of the Constitution.

#### What is Anti- Defection Law?

- It specifies the circumstances under which changing of political parties by legislators invites action under the law.
- It was added to the Constitution by the **52nd Amendment Act[1985]**.
- It includes situations in which an independent MLA, too, joins a party after the election. Paragraph (4) of the Tenth Schedule exempts defectors from disqualification if their original political party merges with another party and two-thirds of the members of that party in the legislature agree with the merger.

### SC's Landmark Judgement On Death Penalty:

More than four decades after a landmark ruling on death sentence cases, a bench in the Supreme Court has **made it mandatory for psychological evaluation** of the condemned prisoner. It has also sought a report on the inmate's conduct at the time of examining whether the gallows remains the only fitting punishment.

#### • **Bachan Singh vs State of Punjab (1980):**

- This verdict established the doctrine of "**rarest of rare**" crime in handing down capital punishment.
- **Supreme Court** mandated a comparative analysis of aggravating and mitigating circumstances in connection to the accused.
- A court must scrutinise both the crime as well as the criminal, and then decide whether death penalty is the only suitable punishment in the facts of the case.
- Emphasis is to be also laid on the **aggravating and mitigating factors** which are dependent upon the facts and circumstances of the case.
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#### • **Machi Singh vs State of Punjab (1983) :** In this case, the Supreme Court elucidated the doctrine of "**rarest of rare**" and **set down some guiding principles** in the death sentences cases. The **aggravating** circumstances include:

- **the manner** in which the crime was committed,
- **motive** for committing the crime,
- **severity** of the crime, and
- the **victim** of the crime.

The mitigating circumstances consist of:

- the possibility of reformation and rehabilitation of an accused,
- his mental health and
- his antecedents.



## What has the Supreme Court said on prolonging death sentences and review petitions?

- In 2014, the Supreme Court ruled that **unexplained delay in execution was a ground for commutation of death penalty**, and an inmate, his or her kin, or even a public-spirited citizen, could file a writ petition seeking such commutation.
- Prolonging execution of death sentence has a “**dehumanising effect**” on condemned prisoners who have to face the agony of waiting for years under the shadow of death during the pendency of their mercy plea. An inordinate delay would certainly have an **agonising effects on their body and mind**.
- A review petition by a death-row convict will be heard by a **three-judge bench** in open court. Such cases were earlier being considered by two-judge benches in the judges’ chamber without any oral arguments.

## A Proposal To Amend Article 80

The **Chandigarh Municipal Corporation** has approved a proposal to amend Article 80 of the Constitution. The proposed amendment says that its councillors could send a representative to the Rajya Sabha. A Private Member’s Bill in this regard has also been introduced.

### Article 80 :

- It deals with the composition of the **Council of States**, also called the Upper House and Rajya Sabha.
- Rajya Sabha members are elected indirectly by the people, that is, by the MLAs by method of proportional representation with the single transferable vote (STV) system.
- Each MLAs vote is counted only once. To win a Rajya Sabha seat, a candidate should get a required number of votes.
- That number is found out using the below formula:
- **Required vote = Total number of votes / (Number of Rajya Sabha seats + 1) + 1.**

**Challenge:** The elected Municipal Corporation Councillors do not form the electoral college for selecting a member for Upper house (Rajya Sabha) because it is beyond the powers of the Municipal Corporation (as defined by the Constitution). If the functions of the civic body are to be extended beyond the listed scope of functions, it would not be feasible and would go against the constitutional mandate of any such Municipal Corporation.

## Govt has no right to enact law for 3 capitals: AP HC

- The **Andhra Pradesh high court** has ordered to develop **Amaravati** as the state capital and ruled the government has no right to enact fresh legislation for three capitals.
- The state legislature lacks competence to make any legislation for shifting, bifurcating or trifurcating the capital and heads of departments of the three wings of the government, including the high court, to any area other than the capital city notified under **Section 3 of the Andhra Pradesh Capital Region Development Authority Act, 2014 (APCRDA)**, and the land pooled under the Andhra Pradesh Capital City Land Pooling Scheme Rules, 2015.
- Parliament alone is competent to deal with the setting up of legislature, executive and judicial organs of the state, and this was implicit in the language employed in Article 4 of the Constitution.
- **Article 4** declares that laws made for **admission or establishment of new states** (under Article 2) and formation of new states and alteration of areas, boundaries, or names of existing states (under Articles 3) are not to be considered as amendments of the Constitution under Article 368.



## Eighth Schedule of the Constitution

### **Why in news?**

Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar has said his government would revive its long-pending demand for inclusion of **Bhojpuri** in the **Eight Schedule**, so that it can be accorded the status of an Official Language. The state cabinet had sent a proposal to the Centre in this regard in 2017.

### **About 8<sup>th</sup> Schedule:**

Part XVII of the Indian constitution deals with the **Official Languages** from **Articles 343 to 351**.

The Constitutional provisions related to the Eighth Schedule are:

1. **Article 344:** Article 344(1) provides for the constitution of a Commission by the President on expiration of five years from the commencement of the Constitution.
2. **Article 351:** It provides for the spread of the Hindi language to develop it so that it may serve as a medium of expression for all the elements of the composite culture of India.

Assamese, Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi, Kannada, Kashmiri, Konkani, Malayalam, Manipuri, Marathi, Nepali, Oriya, Punjabi, Sanskrit, Sindhi, Tamil, Telugu, Urdu, Bodo, Santhali, Maithili and Dogri are the 22 languages presently in the Eighth Schedule to the Constitution.

## Voter Islands in Jammu & Kashmir Delimitation Exercise

### **Why in news:**

The Delimitation Commission for Jammu and Kashmir was constituted by the Centre on March 6 last year to redraw Lok Sabha and assembly constituencies of the union territory in accordance with the provisions of the **Jammu And Kashmir Reorganization Act, 2019** and **Delimitation Act, 2002**, passed by the Centre in August 2019 along with other J&K-specific Bills.

### **The Issue with the Delimitation Activity:**

- The Delimitation Act, 2002 says that apart from population, the constituencies have to be geographically compact areas and contiguous.
- Observers say this principle is not being followed in the ongoing Delimitation exercise.
- For example, a village in one tehsil would be completely surrounded by villages in another Tehsil. Geographical connectedness is not being considered here. This gives rise to the voter island.
- It is being said that the Commission “has carved out geographical islands and joined with the other Assembly segments without any proximity or connectivity”.

### **About Delimitation:**

Delimitation literally means the process of fixing limits or boundaries of territorial constituencies in a state that has a legislative body. Delimitation is undertaken by a highly powerful commission. They are formally known as Delimitation or Boundary Commission. These bodies are so powerful that their orders have the force of law and they cannot be challenged before any court.



## Data Protection Bill

### Why in news?

The government has said that it is studying the inputs received on the **Draft Data Protection Bill** and will carefully ensure that any legislation in the digital ecosystem will act as an enabler, fuelling the growth momentum. On December 16, 2021, the Joint Committee on Personal Data Protection Bill had tabled its report in both the Houses of Parliament, giving its views on various provisions

### **Key recommendations:**

- Remove the word '**personal**' from the existing title of 'Personal Data Protection Bill'. This is intended to reflect that the bill, in order to better ensure privacy, will also be dealing with non-personal data, such as personal data that has been anonymised.
- Amend the section restricting the transfer of personal data outside India to say "sensitive personal data shall not be shared with any foreign government or agency unless such sharing is approved by the central government.
- No social media platform be allowed to operate in India unless its parent company, which controls the technology powering its services, sets up an office in the country.
- It proposes a **separate regulatory body** to be set up to regulate the media.
- Jail term of up to 3 years, fine of Rs 2 lakh or both if de-identified data is re-identified by any person.
- The word 'personal' ought to be dropped from the name of the Bill.
- Central government may exempt any government agency from the legislation only under exceptional circumstances.

### How do these recommendations compare with EU regulation?

The JCP recommendations on the Personal Data Protection Bill are in some aspects very similar to global standards such as the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation.

### Similarities:

**Consent:** Users must have informed consent about the way their data is processed so that they can opt in or out.

**Breach:** Authorities must be notified of a breach within 72 hours of the leak.

Transition period: Two-year transition period for provisions of GDPR to be put in place.

**Data fiduciary:** Under EU law, a Data fiduciary is any natural or legal person, public authority, agency or body that determines purpose and means of data processing. In India, it also includes NGOs.

The committee has recommended the formation of a **Data protection authority ( DPA )** : The DPA will be dealing with privacy and personal data as well as non-personal data.

### Other Highlights of the Bill:

- The bill proposes to specify the flow and usage of personal data, protect the rights of individuals whose personal data are processed, as it works out the framework for the cross-border transfer, accountability of entities processing data, and moots remedies for unauthorised and harmful processing.
- It also seeks to provide the government with powers to give exemptions to its probe agencies from the provisions of the legislation, a move that has been strongly opposed by the opposition MPs who had filed their dissent notes.



## Haryana Anti- Conversion Bill

### Why in news?

Haryana has introduced 'Haryana Prevention of Unlawful Conversion of Religious Bill, 2022' aimed at prohibiting religious conversion through fraud or force by making it an offence.

### More About Anti-Conversion Law:

- There is no central anti-conversion law.
- The burden of proof lies on the accused and Marriages will be declared null and void.
- **Supreme Court** in **Rev. Stanislaus vs. Sate of Madhya Pradesh (1977)** held that Article 25 doesn't include Right to convert and also upheld anti- conversion laws of Madhya Pradesh and Orissa.

## Democracy Report, 2022

### Why in news:

- The latest edition of **Democracy Report** was released recently by the **V-Dem Institute** at Sweden's University of Gothenburg.
- The study was titled '**Democracy Report 2022: Autocratisation Changing Nature**' ,
- The report classifies countries into four regime types based on their score in the **Liberal Democratic Index (LDI)**:
  - Liberal Democracy,
  - Electoral Democracy,
  - Electoral Autocracy, and
  - Closed Autocracy.
- The LDI measures aspects such as protection of individual liberties and legislative constraints on the executive, while the EDI considers indicators that guarantee free and fair elections such as freedom of expression and freedom of association.
- In addition, the LDI also uses an **Egalitarian Component Index** (to what extent different social groups are equal), **Participatory Component Index** (health of citizen groups, civil society organisations), and **Deliberative Component Index** (whether political decisions are taken through public reasoning focused on common good or through emotional appeals, solidarity attachments, coercion).

**Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem)** produces the largest global dataset on democracy with over 30 million data points for 202 countries from 1789 to 2021. Involving over 3,700 scholars and other country experts, V-Dem measures hundreds of different attributes of democracy. V-Dem enables new ways to study the nature, causes, and consequences of democracy embracing its multiple meanings.

### General Observations:

- More than twice as many countries are undergoing **Autocratisation** as are witnessing democratization.
- The level of democracy enjoyed by the average global citizen in 2021 is down to 1989 levels, with the democratic gains of the post-Cold War period eroding rapidly in the last few years.
- Autocratisation is spreading rapidly, with a record of 33 countries autocratising.
- The level of democracy enjoyed by the average global citizen in 2021 is down to 1989 levels.
- While Sweden topped the LDI index, other Scandinavian countries such as Denmark and Norway, along with Costa Rica and New Zealand make up the top five in liberal democracy rankings.



### India's performance:

- It classifies India as an **electoral autocracy** ranking it **93rd** on the LDI, out of 179 countries.
- India is one of the top ten 'autocracizers' in the world says the report.
- India is part of a broader global trend of an **anti-plural political party** driving a country's Autocratisation.
- Ranked 93rd in the LDI, India figures in the "bottom 50%" of countries.
- It has slipped further down in the Electoral Democracy Index, to 100, and even lower in the Deliberative Component Index, at 102.
- In South Asia, India is ranked below Sri Lanka (88), Nepal (71), and Bhutan (65) and above Pakistan (117) in the LDI.

Comparison Element	Democracy	Autocracy
Meaning of Term	From Greek - Demos means "people" and Kratos means "power" or "authority".	From Greek - Auto means "self" and Kratos means "power" or "authority".
Government	The power and strength of the government are given to it by the people.	One person or group holds all the power, without the participation, or sometimes even the consent, of the people.
Freedoms & Rights	Identified in country's constitution and created by laws.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Determined by person or group in power</li> <li>▪ Often severely restrictive to suppress opponents.</li> <li>▪ Vary based on religion, sex, status etc.</li> <li>▪ Books, magazines censored by government</li> <li>▪ Ability to express one's point of view, to assemble etc. often limited.</li> </ul>



## ECONOMY

### Credit Scheme for Farmer Producer Organisations (FPO)

#### Context:

- NABARD has launched 'Formation and Promotion of FPO' promote FPO's on a large scale.
- The Union Agriculture ministry mentioned that the Govt may help FPO's access easy credit at subsidized interest rates currently available to farmers.

#### About FPO:

- An FPO is a producer organisation where members are farmers and incorporated/ registered either under Part IX A of Companies act,2013 or cooperative societies act to provide collective strength to the farmers.

### Participatory Notes

- Participatory Notes or P1-Notes (PNs) are *financial instruments* issued by a registered Foreign Institutional Investor (FII) to an overseas investor who wishes to invest in Indian stock markets without registering themselves with the market regulator, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI).
- P-Notes are Offshore Derivative Investments (ODIs) with equity shares or debt securities as underlying assets.
- They provide liquidity to the investors as they can transfer the ownership by endorsement and delivery.
- While the FIIs have to report all such investments each quarter to SEBI, they need not disclose the identity of the actual investors.

### Predatory Pricing

- Predatory pricing is the illegal act of setting prices low to attempt to eliminate the competition.
- Predatory pricing violates antitrust laws, as it makes markets more vulnerable to a monopoly.
- Establishing that a business is engaging in predatory pricing requires that:
  - The enterprise be a dominant player in the relevant market.
  - Its goods or services are being marketed below cost.
  - Sub-tactics are being used with the intention to eliminate competition.

### Competition Commission of India

- The Competition Commission of India was established under the **Competition Act, 2002** for the administration, implementation and enforcement of the **Competition Act**.
- It was duly constituted in March 2009.
- Chairman and members are appointed by the central government.

#### Functions of the commission:

- To eliminate practices having adverse effects on competition.
- Promote and sustain competition.
- Protect the interests of consumers and ensure freedom of trade in the markets of India.





## ENVIRONMENT

### Bomb Cyclone

**Context:** Another violent bomb cyclone is grazing north just west of Ireland and UK with violent, hurricane winds and major waves.

#### About Bomb Cyclone:

- “Bombogenesis” is the technical term. ‘Bomb cyclone’ is a shortened version of it.
- It is a mid-latitude cyclone that intensifies rapidly.
- It has low pressure at its center, weather fronts and an array of associated weather, from blizzards to severe thunderstorms to heavy precipitation.
- Generally, a bomb cyclone happens when atmospheric pressure in the middle of the storm drops at least 24 millibars over 24 hours, quickly increasing in intensity.
- The lower the pressure, the stronger the storm.
- Most cyclones don’t intensify rapidly in this way.
- Bomb cyclones put forecasters on high alert, because they can produce significant harmful impacts.

### IPCC Report

**Context:** The second part of the sixth assessment report was released recently.

This second part of the report is about climate change impacts, risks and vulnerabilities, and adaptation options. The first part of the report was released in August last year. That one was centred around the scientific basis of climate change.

#### More information:

The latest report has, for the first time, made an **assessment of regional and sectoral impacts** of climate change. It has included risks to, and vulnerabilities of, mega-cities around the world. For example, it has said Mumbai is at high risk of sea-level rise and flooding, while Ahmedabad faces serious danger of heat-waves.

#### Impact on health:

For the first time, the IPCC report has looked at the health impacts of climate change.

- It has found that climate change is increasing vector-borne and water-borne diseases such as malaria or dengue, particularly in sub-tropical regions of Asia.
- It has also said deaths related to circulatory, respiratory, diabetic and infectious diseases, as well as infant mortality, are likely to increase with a rise in temperature.
- Increasing frequency of extreme weather events like heat waves, flooding and drought, and even air pollution was contributing to under-nutrition, allergic diseases and even mental disorders.

#### India specific study:

- The report identifies India as one of the vulnerable hotspots, with several regions and important cities facing very high risk of climate disasters such as flooding, sea-level rise and heat-waves.
- Mumbai is at high risk of sea-level rise and flooding.
- Ahmedabad faces serious danger of heat-waves.
- Several cities, including Chennai, Bhubaneswar, Patna and Lucknow, are approaching dangerous levels of heat and humidity.



- Infrastructure, including transportation, water, and sanitation and energy systems has been compromised by extreme and slow-onset events, with resulting economic losses, disruptions of services and impacts to well-being.
- Urban India is at greater risk than other areas with a projected population of 877 million by 2050, nearly double of 480 million in 2020.
- At present, wet-bulb temperatures in India rarely exceed 31 degrees C, with most of the country experiencing maximum wet-bulb temperatures of 25-30 degrees C, according to IPCC.

## **SIMBA for ASIATIC LIONS**

### **What is SIMBA for ASIATIC LIONS?**

The Gujarat Forest department has developed an Artificial Intelligence (AI)-based photo-identification software, specially designed to distinguish patterns/marks to identify Asiatic lions individually. The software is named **SIMBA (Software with Intelligence Marking Based identification of Asiatic lions.)**

### **More Information:**

- The Asiatic lion has specific whisker spots on either side of the muzzle which will be identified by the photo-based AI tool SIMBA.
- Asiatic lions are found only in INDIA in five protected areas of Gujarat - GIR national park, Pania sanctuary, Mitiyala sanctuary, Girnar sanctuary. Females are the primary hunters of the pride. These are slightly smaller than African Lions and these are **Vulnerable** in IUCN Red list.

### **Conservation status:**

Schedule I - Wildlife protection act,1972

Appendix I - CITES

Endangered - IUCN Red list

## **FLCTD**

- **Facility For Low Carbon Technology Development** is a project financed by the **Global Environment Facility**, implemented by **United Nations Industrial Development Organization** in collaboration with the **Bureau of Energy efficiency**.
- This has identified six priority technology verticals for 'Innovation challenge' in the areas like waste heat recovery, space conditioning, Industrial resource efficiency and electrical energy storage.



## INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

### Operation Ganga :

- The Government of India has launched a 'multi-pronged' initiative named 'Operation Ganga'.
- It is an **evacuation mission** to bring back all the Indian nationals who are currently stranded in Ukraine.
- There were around 20,000 Indians including students stuck in Ukraine.

### INDIA - JAPAN Bilateral swap agreements:

- India and Japan have signed bilateral swap agreements of about 75 million \$.
- Bilateral swap agreement is a two way arrangement where two countries can swap their local currencies in exchange for Dollars.
- India can acquire dollars from Japan in exchange for rupees and Japan for yen.

### Montreux Convention

#### Why in News?

Turkey is set to implement the Montreux Convention, an international convention on naval passage through two of its strategic straits, which would allow them to limit the movement of Russian warships between the Mediterranean Sea and the Black Sea.

- The **Bosporus** and **Dardanelles** straits, also known as the **Turkish Straits** or the **Black Sea Straits**, connect the **Aegean Sea and the Black Sea** via the **Sea of Marmara**.
- It is the only passage through which the Black Sea ports can access the Mediterranean and beyond.
- Over three million barrels of oil, about three per cent of the daily global supply, mostly produced in Russia, Azerbaijan, and Kazakhstan, pass through this waterway every day.
- The route also ships large amounts of iron, steel, and agricultural products from the Black Sea coast to Europe and the rest of the world.



### International Court of Justice

#### Context:

Ukraine has filed an application before the International Court of Justice (ICJ), instituting proceedings against the Russian Federation concerning "a dispute relating to the interpretation, application and fulfilment of the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide" (the "**Genocide Convention**").

#### More Information

- ICJ was established in 1945 by the United Nations charter and started working in April 1946.
- It is the principal judicial organ of the United Nations, situated at the Peace Palace in The Hague (Netherlands).
- Unlike the six principal organs of the United Nations, it is the only one not located in New York (USA).
- It settles legal disputes between States and gives advisory opinions in accordance with international law, on legal questions referred to it by authorized United Nations organs and specialized agencies.



## SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

### International Monsoon Project Office

- **Union Minister of Science & Technology** has launched the International Monsoons Project Office (IMPO).
- IMPO will be hosted at the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM), Pune, an institution under the Ministry of Earth Sciences, Govt of India, initially for five years.
- It would encompass activities and connections related to international monsoon research that would be identified and fostered under the leadership of the World Climate Research Programme.

### INS Visakhapatnam:

- INS Visakhapatnam is the lead ship of the **P15B** class of **guided missile stealth destroyers** and was commissioned on 21st November 2021.
- The ship symbolizes India's matured shipbuilding capability and quest for the Make In India Initiative.
- Visakhapatnam class ships are follow-on of the **Kolkata class destroyers (P-15A)** commissioned in the last decade.

### What are the Features of P15B Ships?

- These ships are amongst the most technologically advanced Guided Missile Destroyers of the world, with state-of-the-art weapon/sensor package, advanced stealth features and a high degree of automation.
- These ships are equipped with Brahmos supersonic cruise missiles and long-range Surface-to-Air Missiles (SAM). The ship has several indigenous weapons systems like medium range Surface-to-Air Missile (SAMs), indigenous torpedo tube launchers, anti-submarine indigenous rocket launchers and 76-mm super rapid gun mount.

### ARTEMIS Program:

- Artemis stands for **Acceleration, Reconnection, Turbulence and Electrodynamics of Moon's Interaction with the Sun**.
- It is NASA's next mission to the Moon. NASA's first crewed landing of the ARTEMIS program on the moon is expected to take place in 2026.
- Meanwhile, NASA will launch Artemis 1 in May 2022. The Reason for the delay is NASA said it needed time to develop and test the human landing system and NASA's next generation spacesuits.
- **Artemis 1** is aiming to send an uncrewed spacecraft around the moon using a combination of the never-flown Space Launch System rocket, along with the once-flown Orion spacecraft.
- NASA hopes to extend the program with the moon-orbiting crewed Artemis 2 mission in 2024, then a landing on Artemis 3 in 2025, ahead of other crewed missions later in the 2020s

### Specific Objectives :

- Find and use water and other critical resources needed for long-term exploration.
- Investigate the Moon's mysteries and learn more about our home planet and the universe.
- Learn how to live and operate on the surface of another celestial body where astronauts are just three days from home.
- Prove the technologies we need before sending astronauts on missions to Mars, which can take up to three years roundtrip.



## ART & CULTURE

### Avalokiteshvara Padmapani :

The idol of Avalokitesvara Padmapani went missing two decades ago at the Devasthan Kundalpur temple in Bihar, was handed over to the Indian consulate in Milan. This was created between the 8-12th century and smuggled out of the country by 2000.

Avalokiteshvara means **one who can see all**, represents infinite compassion and mercy. He represents the ideal of welfare in which he postpones his own transformation into Buddha to help others. A **bodhisattva** is someone who has compassion within himself or herself and who is able to make another person smile or help someone suffer less.

### KONARK TEMPLE:

- The temple is dedicated to the sun god and located on the shores of Bay of Bengal.
- Built by the king **Narasimha Deva Varma I** of **Eastern Ganga dynasty** of 1238-1250 CE.
- This is of **Kalinga style architecture**, a sub style of Nagara style of architecture.
- It was declared as a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1984 and known as Black pagoda.
- Odisha is planning to make Konark temple and town as 100% solar town.