

TABLE OF CONTENTS

A. GS 1 Related

B. GS 2 Related

POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

1. [SC quashes a year's suspension of 12 Maharashtra BJP MLAs](#)

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. [Philippines inks \\$375 mn BrahMos missile deal](#)

C. GS 3 Related

D. GS 4 Related

E. Editorials

POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

1. [To the poll booth, with no donor knowledge](#)
2. [Graft talk and the top court's inexplicable silence](#)

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. [At the Centre](#)

F. Prelims Facts

1. ['Banks to transfer 15 NPAs worth ₹50,000 cr. to NARCL'](#)
2. [Study raises concerns on NeoCov](#)

G. Tidbits

1. [6% of MSMEs owned by SC entrepreneurs](#)
2. [India's largest electric vehicle charging station set up in Gurugram](#)

H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

A. GS 1 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

B. GS 2 Related

Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

1. SC quashes a year's suspension of 12 Maharashtra BJP MLAs

Syllabus: State Legislature – Structure, functioning, conduct of business, powers and privileges and issues arising out of these.

Prelims: Power of Speaker to suspend; Suspension of MLA;

Mains: Impact of irrational suspension on the democratic setup of the country.

Context: – The Supreme Court revoked the one-year suspension of 12 MLAs from the Maharashtra Assembly, calling it an “irrational” act that would impact the democratic set-up.

What was the plea before the Supreme Court?

- The 12 Maharashtra legislators were suspended for a year for “grossly disorderly conduct” in the House during the monsoon session in 2021.
- The suspended MLAs filed a writ petition in the Supreme Court against the Maharashtra Legislative Assembly and the State of Maharashtra and asked for the suspension to be quashed.

Know More About [The Issue of Suspension of MLAs in CNA dated Jan 23, 2022.](#)

What had both sides argued?

A. Arguments on behalf of the Suspended MLAs: –

- The suspension is “grossly arbitrary and disproportionate”.
- The suspension is a violation of laid-down procedure and is a denial of the principles of natural justice.
- The suspension violated their fundamental [right to equality](#) before the law under Article 14 as they were not given an opportunity to present their case.
- The MLAs have also contended that under Rule 53 of the Maharashtra Legislative Assembly Rules, the power to suspend can only be exercised by the Speaker, and it cannot be put to vote in a resolution as was done in this case.

Rule 53 of the Maharashtra Legislative Assembly Rules:

Rule 53 states that the “Speaker may direct any member who refuses to obey his decision, or whose conduct is, in his opinion, grossly disorderly, to withdraw immediately from the Assembly”. The member must “absent himself during the remainder of the day’s meeting”.

B. Arguments by Maharashtra Legislative Assembly and the state:-

- The action was taken due to the “undisciplined and unbecoming behaviour” of the MLAs.
- The state had also said that a seat does not automatically become vacant if the member does not attend the House for 60 days but it becomes vacant only if declared so by the House. It was submitted that the House is not obligated to declare such a seat vacant.
- It was argued that the House had acted within its legislative competence and that under Article 212, courts do not have jurisdiction to inquire into the proceedings of the legislature.

Article 212 (1): Courts not to inquire into proceedings of the Legislature

Article 212 (1) states that “the validity of any proceedings in the Legislature of a State shall not be called in question on the ground of any alleged irregularity of procedure”.

What did the court say about members being suspended beyond the ongoing session?

- **On Procedure of Suspension:**
 - The court agreed with the MLAs’ contention that the suspension had to follow the procedure laid down in Rule 53.
 - It said that Rule 53 only provides for the withdrawal of a member for the remainder of the day or in case of repeat misconduct in the same session, for the remainder of the session.
- **On Duration of Suspension:**
 - It said that the suspension of a member must be preferred as a short term or a temporary disciplinary measure for restoring order in the Assembly. Anything in excess of that would be an irrational suspension, the court said.
 - The court said that as per this rule, withdrawal of a member can only be done in case of the member’s conduct being “grossly disorderly”.
 - It termed the one-year suspension worse than “expulsion” or “disqualification” or “resignation” as far as the rights of the constituency to be represented in the House are concerned.
- **On Judicial Review of Legislative procedures:**
 - The court also considered whether the legislature had complete immunity from judicial review in matters of irregularity of procedure.
 - It ruled that procedures are open to judicial review on the touchstone of being unconstitutional, grossly illegal, irrational or arbitrary.

How the suspension beyond the ongoing session would impact the democratic setup?

- The court said that suspension beyond the ongoing session would mean the constituency the member represents in the House would remain unrepresented.
- It said that a thin majority coalition government could use such suspensions to manipulate the number of Opposition party members.
- In such cases, the Opposition will not be able to effectively participate in discussions/debates in the House fearing the suspension of its members for a longer period.
- Thus, it is violative of basic democratic values and would also impact the democratic setup.

Nut Graf

The Supreme Court has rightly revoked the one-year suspension of the MLAs from the Maharashtra Assembly citing it would impact the democratic set-up. Any move that would be violative of the basic democratic values should not be encouraged and the legislature should abstain from indulging in ‘party politics’ and uphold true democracy.

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**1. Philippines inks \$375 mn BrahMos missile deal**

Syllabus: Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India’s interests, Indian diaspora.

Prelims: BrahMos missile

Mains: Significance of India-Philippines Partnership

Context: – The Philippines signed a deal with BrahMos Aerospace Private Ltd. for the supply of a shore-based anti-ship variant of the [BrahMos](#) supersonic cruise missile.

Significance of India-Philippines Partnership

- **Strategic Relations:** Both states have expressed the significance and vitality of the India-Philippines strategic partnership. India-Philippines bilateral relations are now reaching new heights in the political, defense, and economic domains.
- **Economic Relations:** The Philippines is looking to strengthen its economic ties with India through expanded trade and a Preferential Trade Agreement. At the economic level, a significant push has also been made with the commencement of negotiations on a new bilateral investment treaty.
- **Countering China:** The continuous elevation of the India-Philippines partnership will have strong and positive implications for the strategic policy vis-à-vis China increasing assertion in the region.

Nut Graf

The deal with the Philippines for the supply of BrahMos supersonic cruise missiles is the first export order for the missile. As the world's fastest supersonic cruise missiles, the BrahMos missiles will provide deterrence against any attempt to undermine the sovereign rights of countries.

C. GS 3 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

D. GS 4 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

E. Editorials

Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

1. To the poll booth, with no donor knowledge

Syllabus: Important aspects of governance, transparency and accountability

Mains: Electoral bonds – Arguments against the scheme, government's and court's stand.

Context

As the states gear up for elections, the debate on electoral bonds has once again come into the limelight.

Electoral Bonds

- In 2021, the Union government authorized the State Bank of India to issue and encash a new tranche of electoral bonds.
- It is the 19th such arrangement since the scheme's notification in 2018.
- The electoral bond scheme is designed to allow an individual, or corporates, to purchase bonds issued by the State Bank of India during notified periods of time.

- These instruments are issued in the form of promissory notes, and in denominations of ₹1,000; ₹10,000; ₹1 lakh; ₹10 lakhs and ₹1 crore.
- The buyer can donate these purchased bonds to any political party of their choice and the party can then encash it on demand.
- The purchasers are not obliged to disclose to whom they presented the bond, and a political party encashing a bond is compelled to keep the donor's identity secret.

Read more on the [Electoral Bonds Scheme](#).

Arguments against Electoral Bonds Scheme

- **Anything but transparent**
 - Ensuring citizens have access to information is an essential feature of a democracy.
 - But the electoral bond scheme has tainted the democratic process, by destroying the notion of transparency in political funding.
- **No obligation on parties**
 - The parties and funding companies have no obligations to provide details to the public about the donations received or made by them through electoral bonds.
 - Companies are further under no obligation to disclose the name of the party who they have funded.
- **Weakened key restrictions**
 - Amendments removed a previous prohibition that disallowed a company from donating more than 7.5% of its net profits over preceding three years.
 - A mandate that a company should be in existence for at least three years before it could make donations, aimed at discouraging shell corporations from funnelling money into politics, was also lifted.

Government's stand

- The donor will know which party he is depositing money to and the political party will file a return with the [Election Commission](#).
- Which donor gave to which political party is the only thing that will be anonymous.
- Voters do not have a fundamental right to know how political parties are funded.
- The scheme helps eliminate the role of black money in funding elections.

Court's View

- According to the Court, since the transactions of the bonds are through banking channels, a person could look through every corporation's financial statement available with the Registrar of Companies to know about the donations.
- The Supreme Court has held that voters have the right to freely express during an election and are entitled to all pieces of information that give purpose to the right.
- To participate in the electoral process in a meaningful way and to choose one's votes, a citizen must be aware of the identity of those backing the candidates.

- The affidavits filed by the Election Commission of India in the Supreme Court have demonstrated that the scheme, if anything, augments the potential role of black money in elections; it does so by removing existing barriers against shell entities.

Need for Judicial Interventions

- One of the important functions of an independent judiciary in a democracy is to check the fundamentals of the democratic process.
- Governments derive their legitimacy from elections, and it is elections that grant governments the mandate to pursue their policy goals.
- The electoral legitimacy of the government is questionable if the electoral process is questionable. And since the government itself cannot regulate the process that it is subject to every five years, the courts remain the only independent body that can adequately enforce the ground rules of democracy.
- A delay in adjudication cannot be afforded as the integrity of the electoral process is at stake.

Read more on this topic covered in the [9th March 2021 Comprehensive News Analysis](#).

Nut Graf

The electoral bond scheme is fraught with issues of transparency and anonymity, and it goes against the basic tenets of democracy. Unless these issues are addressed and rectified, the fallout of anonymous and excessive corporate funding of political parties will undermine the democratic values enshrined in the Constitution.

2. Graft talk and the top court's inexplicable silence

Syllabus: Structure, organization and functioning of the Judiciary

Mains: Scandalization of judiciary and previous judgements against it.

Context

Recently, the former Chief Justice of India said that corruption has become an acceptable way of life in the Judiciary.

Background

- December 10, 2021, is considered a dark day in the history of the Supreme Court.
- In a televised interview, addressing a question on whether there is corruption in the Supreme Court of India, the former CJI, Ranjan Gogoi, said “Corruption is as old as society and Corruption has become an acceptable way of life and judges don’t fall from heaven.”
- The statements are said to be against the entire Supreme Court and scandalised the entire institution of the [Supreme Court](#).

Previous judgements against scandalisation of Judiciary

- **R. vs Almon case, 1765**
 - The court observed that “whenever men’s allegiance to the law is fundamentally shaken, it is the most fatal and most dangerous obstruction of justice and calls out for a more rapid and immediate redress”.
- **Brahma Prakash Sharma vs State of U.P., 1953**
 - The Constitution Bench held that “It would be only repeating what has been said so often by various Judges that the object of contempt proceedings is not to afford protection to Judges, personally from imputations to which they may be exposed as individuals; it is intended to be a protection to the public

whose interests would be very much affected if by the act or conduct of any party, the authority of the court is lowered and the sense of confidence which people have in the administration of justice by it is weakened.”

- **Prashant Bhushan case, 2020**

- The Supreme Court found the advocate guilty of shaking the confidence of the public in the institution as a whole and for creating an impression that Judges who presided in the Supreme Court in the period of last six years have a particular role in the destruction of Indian democracy.
- Court held that “it is not expected of a person who is a part of the system of administration of justice and who owes a duty to the said system, to make comments which are capable of shaking the confidence of the general public”.

Read more about **Contempt of Court**.

Controversies around the office of CJI

- The Chief Justice is the **Master of the Roster** and he alone has the right to constitute benches of the Court and allocate cases to the benches so constituted.
- The powers of CJI have been controversial and have come under criticism in the past.
- We have seen in the past that decisions running into crores of rupees have been made in questionable circumstances.
- Read more about **Issues in the Office of CJI – Master of Roster**.

Need for action

- Crony capitalism is a curse to the nation.
- The Supreme Court has come down heavily on corruption in public life and has directed time and again that action be taken against bureaucrats and politicians found guilty of corruption.
- The judiciary must be fiercely independent and free from any kind of influence.
- The comments of the former CJI has a huge impact on the reputation of the institution.
- In this regard, actions are needed against the former CJI.
- The Court has held that in such a situation, it must act on its own without waiting for the Attorney General or any person to move the Court. If not done, citizens’ faith in the integrity of the institution will be seriously eroded.

Nut Graf

The former CJI’s allegations against the judiciary have serious implications on the reputation of the judiciary and could gravely erode the faith in the institution’s integrity.

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. At the Centre

Syllabus: Bilateral, Regional and Global Groupings and Agreements involving India

Mains: Importance of Central Asia in India’s foreign policy.

Context

India hosted the first-ever India-Central Asia summit, with the attendance of Presidents from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

Details

- The joint statement at the end of the India-Central Asia virtual summit noted that,
 - The ties between India and the countries in the region have been historically close.
 - The ties are strengthened by civilisational, cultural, trade and people-to-people linkages.
 - The lack of access to land routes, and the situation in Afghanistan are the biggest challenges currently in the ties.

The problems of routing trade

- A mere **\$2 billion** has been spent on Kazakhstan's energy exports to India as compared to China's figures of **\$41 billion** apart from the billions of dollars invested in the **Belt and Road Initiative**.
- With Pakistan denying India transit trade, India's other option is to smoothen the route through Iran's **Chabahar port**.
 - This required greater investment in rail and road routes to Iran's northern boundaries with the Central Asian Countries, which India is hesitant to do in the face of U.S. sanctions.
- Another option is to use the Russia-Iran **International North-South Transport Corridor** via **Bandar Abbas port**, but this is not fully operational and two Central Asian countries namely Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan are not members.
- India has also been reluctant over the **Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) gas pipeline project**, due to the tensions with Pakistan.

The Afghanistan problem

- Afghanistan has been the link between Central Asia and South Asia.
- The Taliban takeover and presence of no official government, along with the rising humanitarian crisis, poses challenges of terrorism and radicalism spilling over the boundaries.
- This has serious ramifications on the regional stability and ties between the bordering countries.

Read more about – **India Central Asia Summit**.

Way forward

- The summit has recognised both the above problems as areas to work upon.
- There is a need for more structured engagement, including the creation of joint working groups, on Afghanistan and Chabahar.
- Steps need to be taken on creating more educational and cultural opportunities.
- With countries like Russia, China and Pakistan having been taking up outreach measures in Central Asia, India must try to increase the institutional exchanges, trade, investment and development partnerships with the Central Asian countries.

Conclusion

India must use its deep ties of the distant past with the Central Asian countries and act swiftly to ensure it stays a step ahead in the race to reap rich dividends in the domain of security, energy, economic opportunities, and geopolitics.

Nut Graf

It is important for India to stay in step with the changes in the Central Asian region to avail the potential benefits that the relationship offers.

F. Prelims Facts

1. 'Banks to transfer 15 NPAs worth ₹50,000 cr. to NARCL'

Context: – Banks have finalized plans to transfer 15 Non-Performing Asset (NPA) accounts to the National Asset Reconstruction Company Ltd. (NARCL), or the 'bad bank'.

What is a Bad bank?

- A 'bad bank' is a bank that buys the bad loans of other lenders and financial institutions to help clear their balance sheets.
- The bad bank then resolves these bad assets over a period of time.
- **Know More About [Bad Banks](#).**

National Asset Reconstruction Company Ltd. (NARCL):

- NARCL has been incorporated under the Companies Act and has applied to the Reserve Bank of India for a license as an Asset Reconstruction Company (ARC).
- NARCL has been set up by banks to aggregate and consolidate stressed assets for their subsequent resolution.
- **Know More About [National Asset Reconstruction Company Ltd. \(NARCL\)](#).**

2. Study raises concerns on NeoCov

Context: – The study has raised concern that NeoCov may lethally proliferate in people.

What is NeoCov?

- NeoCov is a new type of coronavirus which was first found in the bat population in South Africa and it then spread among animals.
- It is predicted to have a potentially high death and infection rate and may pose a threat to humans in future.
- The NeoCov is closely related to the Middle Eastern Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) coronaviruses.

G. Tidbits

1. 6% of MSMEs owned by SC entrepreneurs

- Generally, the proportion of enterprises owned by Scheduled Caste entrepreneurs in the overall national tally of MSMEs is 6%.
- Maharashtra tops India's list in the number of micro, small and medium enterprises (MSME) owned by entrepreneurs from the Scheduled Castes.
- Tamil Nadu and Rajasthan occupy the second and third slots respectively.

2. India's largest electric vehicle charging station set up in Gurugram

- India's largest [electric vehicle \(EV\)](#) charging station was commissioned in Gurugram.
- The pilot project is aimed at demonstrating the competitive advantage of owning a charging station business over petrol pumps and safety certifications.

H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Q1. Which of the following statements is/are correct?

1. The ASEAN Digital Ministers (ADGMIN) meeting is an annual meeting of Telecom Ministers of 10 ASEAN countries and ASEAN's dialogue partner countries.
2. Recently, the Ministers' meeting approved the India-ASEAN Digital Work Plan 2022.

Options:

- a. 1 only
- b. 2 only
- c. Both 1 and 2
- d. Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: c

Explanation:

- The ADGMIN is an annual meeting of Telecom Ministers of 10 ASEAN (Association of South-East Asian Nations) countries.
- The meeting discussed and deliberated various matters relevant to strengthening regional digital cooperation in the spirit of digital inclusion and integration.
- The Ministers' meeting approved the India-ASEAN Digital Work Plan 2022.
- The work plan includes a system for combating the use of stolen and counterfeit mobile handsets, WiFi Access network interface and Communication Technologies such as Internet of Things (IoT), 5G, Advanced Satellite Communication, Cyber Forensics, etc.
- **Hence both the Statements are Correct.**

Q2. Generally, an FTA between two countries covers which of the following areas?

1. Trade in Goods
2. Trade in Services
3. Investments
4. Intellectual Property Rights
5. Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures

Options:

- a. 1 and 2 only
- b. 1, 2 and 3 only

- c. 1, 4 and 5 only
- d. 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5

Answer: d

Explanation:

- A Free trade Agreement (FTA) is an agreement between two or more countries where the countries agree on certain obligations that affect trade in goods and services, etc.
- FTAs, a form of trade pacts, determine the tariffs and duties that countries impose on imports and exports with the goal of reducing or eliminating trade barriers, thus encouraging international trade.
- Such agreements include clauses on trade facilitation and rule-making in areas such as investment, intellectual property, government procurement, technical standards and sanitary and phytosanitary issues, etc.
- **Hence Option D is correct.**

Q3. Which of the following statements is/are correct?

1. The Protocol on Visits to Religious Shrines 1974 is a bilateral agreement between India and Pakistan facilitating both nationals to visit certain select religious shrines in both countries.
2. It provides visa-free travel to the pilgrims.
3. The protocol enables religious pilgrimage between the two countries without any discrimination on the lines of religion or sect.

Options:

- a. 1 only
- b. 1 and 2 only
- c. 1 and 3 only
- d. 1, 2 and 3

Answer: c

Explanation:

- The Protocol on Visits to Religious Shrines 1974 is a bilateral agreement between India and Pakistan facilitating Indian and Pakistani nationals to visit certain religious shrines in both countries. **Hence Statement 1 is correct.**
- It does not provide visa-free travel to the pilgrims. **Hence Statement 2 is not correct.**
- Under the 1974 protocol between countries, visits to religious shrines are being facilitated regularly. **Hence Statement 3 is correct.**

Q4. Which of the following statements is/are correct?

1. The BRT Tiger Reserve is located in Tamil Nadu.
2. It is a critical habitat providing connectivity for wildlife between the Eastern and the Western ghats landscape.

Options:

- a. 1 only
- b. 2 only
- c. Both 1 and 2
- d. Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: b**Explanation:**

- Bandipur Tiger Reserve is situated in the contiguous landscape spread in the two revenue districts of **Southern Karnataka** namely Mysore and Chamarajanagar. **Hence Statement 1 is not correct.**
- It is considered to be the wildlife corridor that connects the Eastern Ghats to the Western Ghats which in turn facilitates gene flow between the population species inhabiting both the mountain ranges. **Hence Statement 2 is correct.**

Q.5 Consider the following statements:

1. Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board (PNGRB) is the first regulatory body set up by the Government of India.
2. One of the tasks of PNGRB is to ensure competitive markets for gas.
3. Appeals against the decisions of PNGRB go before the Appellate Tribunals for Electricity.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- a. 1 and 2 only
- b. 2 and 3 only
- c. 1 and 3 only
- d. 1, 2 and 3

Answer: b**Explanation:**

- The Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board (PNGRB) was constituted under the Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board Act, 2006. PNGRB is not the first regulatory body set up by the Government of India. **Hence Statement 1 is not correct.**
- PNGRB Objectives: –
 - To protect the interests of consumers and entities engaged in specified activities relating to petroleum, petroleum products and natural gas.
 - To promote competitive markets and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto. **Hence Statement 2 is correct.**
- Currently, the electricity sector has state-level regulatory commissions:

- The Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board (PNGRB) is the first level of appeal for regulatory disputes.
- Appeals against the PNGRB order go to the Appellate Tribunal for Electricity.
- **Hence Statement 3 is correct.**

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. India's defence export potential is still largely unrealized. Comment. (250 words; 15 marks)[GS-3, Defence]
2. What is a 'Bad Bank'? List out the objectives behind setting up 'Bad Bank'? (250 words; 15 marks)[GS-3, Economy]

