

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS (27 JULY 2024)

TOPICS COVERED

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SC will examine if Governors' actions 'subvert' federalism

The court's decision comes on a petition by Kerala over the Governor sitting on crucial Bills and eventually referring them to the President

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday agreed to examine if Governors, by indefinitely sitting on crucial Bills only to eventually refer them to the President who solely acts on the advice of the Centre, are opening the doors for Union interference in the legislative domain of States, thereby subverting federalism.

The decision of the court to intervene came in a petition filed by the State of Kerala which brought in to focus the role of its Governor, who kept Bills pending for two years before reserving seven of them for the consideration of the President, who has no discretion and entirely depends on the aid and advice of the Centre. The President had subsequently withheld consent to four though none of the seven Bills had dealt with Centre-State relations.

Withholding assent

Kerala, represented by senior advocates K.K. Venugopal, Jaideep Gupta and advocate C.K. Sasi, said the Governor should have returned the Bills, which dealt with amendments to State cooperative societies, Lokayukta and university laws, to the State Legislative Assembly "as soon as possible" and given reasons for his objections.

Instead, the Governor had sat on them. He denied the people of Kerala the "benefits of the welfare



legislation" before referring the seven Bills to the President in November last year without mentioning the time-lapse.

Kerala said the Centre had withheld assent on four Bills without assigning any reasons.

Thus, the State said, the machinations of the Governor saw the Centre take decisions on issues exclusively coming within the ambit of the State's legislative domain.

It argued that the Governor's power to reserve a Bill for the consideration of the President is limited and confined to specific circumstances detailed in the proviso to Article 213 of the Constitution.

Chief Justice Chandrachud said the court would look into "when Governors can refer Bills to the President". The next hearing of the case has been posted on August 20.

The court issued notice to the Additional Secretary to the Kerala Governor and the Home Ministry.

"The actions of the Governor subvert the delicate balance envisaged by the Constitution between the three organs of State, by rendering the functioning

of the elected executive, which has drafted and introduced the Bills, and then the State Legislature, which has passed the Bills, wholly ineffective and otiose. The actions of the Governor also subvert the federal structure of the Constitution, by reserving for the President (acting on the aid and advice of the Union Cabinet) Bills which are wholly within the domain of the State under the Constitution," the State of

otiose/ts,s/adjective
1. serving no practical purpose or result.
"there were occasions when I felt my efforts were rather otiose"
2. archaic indolent or idle.

otiose," Mr. Venugopal addressed the Bench.

The court similarly issued notice to the Home Ministry and the Secretary to the West Bengal Governor.

The Chief Justice asked Mr. Venugopal, Mr. Gupta and senior advocate A.M. Singhvi, appearing for the State of West Bengal along with advocate Astha Sharma, to meet and frame the legal issues to be decided by the court.

SC will examine if Governors' actions 'subvert' federalism (27 July)

The court's decision comes on a petition by Kerala over the Governor sitting on crucial Bills and eventually referring them to the President

- The Supreme Court will review if Governors are delaying crucial Bills to refer them to the President, potentially allowing Union interference in State matters and undermining federalism.
- The case was brought by Kerala, which argued that its Governor delayed seven Bills for two years before sending them to the President.
- The President, who acts on the advice of the Centre, withheld assent on four Bills.
- Kerala contends that the Governor should have returned the Bills to the State Assembly with reasons for objections instead of holding them.
- The Centre did not provide reasons for withholding assent on the Bills, which were related to State laws on cooperative societies, Lokayukta, and universities.
- Kerala claims that the Governor's actions allowed the Centre to make decisions on State legislative matters.
- The Supreme Court will examine if Governors' power to refer Bills to the President is being misused and if this undermines State legislative processes.
- The Chief Justice stated the court will determine the conditions under which Governors can refer Bills to the President.
- The next hearing is scheduled for August 20.
- The court issued notices to the Additional Secretary to the Kerala Governor and the Home Ministry.
- Kerala argued that the Governor's actions disrupt the balance between the State's executive and legislature, and affect the federal structure by involving the President, who acts on the Union Cabinet's advice.
- Kerala's legal representatives requested the court to clarify the circumstances under which Governors can refuse or refer Bills.
- The court also issued notices to the Home Ministry and the Secretary to the West Bengal Governor.
- The Chief Justice asked legal representatives from

Kerala and West Bengal to meet and frame the legal issues for the court's decision.

Question: Which of the followings are the discretionary power given to the Governor of a State? (UPSC 2014)

1. Sending a report to the President for imposing the President’s rule.
2. Appointing the ministers.
3. Reserving certain bills passed by the State Legislature for the Consideration of the President of India.
4. Making of the rules to conduct the business of the State Government.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- (a) 1 and 2 only.
- (b) 1 and 3 only
- (c) 2, 3, and 4 only
- (d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

Question: Which one of the following suggested that the Governor should be an imminent person from outside the State and should be a detached figure without intense political links or should not have taken part in politics in the recent past? (UPSC 2019)

- (a) First Administrative Reforms Commission (1966)
- (b) Rajamannar Committee (1969)
- (c) Sarkaria Commission (1983)
- (d) National Commission to Review the Working of the Constitution (2000)

Ethics Committee of Lok Sabha

Appointment and Function:

- Members are appointed by the Speaker for a period of one year.
- The 15-member Committee examines every complaint related to unethical conduct of a Member of Lok Sabha referred to it by the Speaker and makes appropriate recommendations.

History:

- **1996:** A Presiding Officers’ Conference in Delhi first suggested the idea of ethics panels for Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha.
- **4th March 1997:** Then Vice President (and Rajya Sabha Chairman) K R Narayanan constituted the Ethics Committee of the Upper House to oversee the moral and ethical conduct of members and examine cases of misconduct referred to it.
- **1997:** A study group of the House Committee of Privileges in Lok Sabha recommended the constitution of an Ethics Committee, but it was not taken up.
- **13th Lok Sabha:** The Committee of Privileges recommended the constitution of an Ethics Committee.
- **2000:** Late Speaker G M C Balayogi constituted an ad hoc Ethics Committee.
- **2015:** The Ethics Committee became a permanent part of the House.

Procedure for Complaints:

- The **15-member Committee's** function is to examine every complaint relating to unethical conduct of a Member of Lok Sabha referred to it by the Speaker and make such recommendations as it may deem fit.
- Any person can complain against a Member through another Lok Sabha MP, along with evidence of the alleged misconduct and an affidavit stating that the complaint is not “false, frivolous, or vexatious.”
- If the Member himself complains, the affidavit is not needed.
- The Speaker can refer any complaint against an MP to the Committee.
- The Committee does not entertain complaints based only on media reports or on matters that are sub judice.
- The Committee makes a prima facie inquiry before deciding to examine a complaint and makes its recommendations after evaluating the complaint.
- The Committee presents its report to the Speaker, who asks the House if the report should be taken up for consideration.
- There is a provision for a half-hour discussion on the report.

Overlap with Privileges Committee:

- The work of the Ethics Committee and the Privileges Committee often overlaps.

RJD legislator expelled from House for his ‘derogatory’ remarks against Bihar CM

Amit Bhelari
PATNA

The Ethics Committee of the Bihar Legislative Council expelled Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) MLC Sunil Singh from the House on Friday for making ‘derogatory’ remarks against Chief Minister Nitish Kumar.

The committee, headed by legislative council member Rambachan Rai, expelled Mr. Singh, a close associate of party supremo Lalu Prasad, for his comments on the CM and for doing mimicry on the floor of the House in the last budget session in February.

The committee has also taken action against another RJD MLC, Quari Sohaib, for his ‘rude’ behaviour and has suspended him for two days in the next session.

Leader of Opposition in the Bihar Legislative Coun-



Opposition MLAs protest in Bihar Assembly over special status issue. ANI

cil Rabri Devi termed the action a “dark chapter”. She said that by taking action against the RJD legislators, the Nitish Kumar government has murdered democracy. Ms. Devi said a “dictatorial and mafia government” is in place in Bihar.

Speaker loses cool

Meanwhile, on the last day of the Monsoon session of the Bihar Assembly on Friday, Speaker Nand Kishore

Yadav lost his cool over Opposition MLAs trying to pull the reporter’s table in the House. Mr. Yadav dared the MLAs saying if anyone attempts to move the reporter’s table, they will be thrown out of the House with the help of marshals. It was for the first time that Mr. Yadav has used such harsh language against the Opposition.

As soon as the Assembly proceedings began, the Opposition entered the Well of the House and started shouting over Bihar not getting the Special Category Status (SCS) in the Union Budget and continued to create a ruckus during the proceedings.

During the question hour when Opposition members tried to pull the reporter’s table, Mr. Yadav warned that he would take action against them.

- An allegation of corruption against an MP can be sent to either body, but more serious accusations usually go to the Privileges Committee.
- The mandate of the Privileges Committee is to safeguard the “freedom, authority, and dignity of Parliament.”
 - These privileges are enjoyed by individual Members as well as the House as a whole.
 - An MP can be examined for Breach of Privilege; a non-MP too can be accused of breach of privilege for actions that attack the authority and dignity of the House.
- The Ethics Committee can take up only cases of misconduct that involve MPs.

Royal burial mounds of Assam now on UNESCO World Heritage List

GS Paper I: Art and Culture
 The Culture
 NEW DELHI/GUWAHATI

The Charaideo Moidams, a 700-year-old mound-burial system of the Ahom dynasty from Assam, were added to the UNESCO World Heritage List on Friday, making them the 43rd property from India to be included in the prestigious index.



An aerial view of the royal burial mounds built by the Ahom dynasty in Charaideo in eastern Assam. AP

The announcement was made at the 46th session of the World Heritage Committee being held in Delhi.

“This historic recognition brings global attention to the unique 700-year-old mound burial system of the Ahom kings at Charaideo, highlighting the rich cultural heritage of Assam and Bharat,” Union Minister for Culture and Tourism Gajendra Singh Shekhawat told the media after the announcement.

Similar to the pyramids

of Egypt, the Moidams are earthen burial mounds of the members of the Ahom royalty whose 600-year rule was ended by the British takeover of the region.

The Ahoms adopted the Hindu method of cremation after the 18th century and began entombing the cremated bones and ashes in Moidams at Charaideo.

The highly venerated

Moidams make the Charaideo district a tourist destination.

The Moidams are the first from the northeastern States to be recognised as a World Heritage Site in the cultural category. Assam has two other such sites in the natural category - Kaziranga National Park and Manas National Park, both upgraded to tiger reserves.

“THIS IS HUGE. The Moidams make it to the #UNESCO World Heritage list under the category Cultural Property - a great win for Assam. Thank You Hon’ble Prime Minister Shri @narendramodi ji, Members of the @UNESCO World Heritage Committee and to the people of Assam,” Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma wrote on X.

He said the Charaideo Moidam embodies the deep spiritual belief, rich civilisational heritage, and architectural prowess of Assam’s Tai-Ahom community.

The Moidams were nominated as India’s official entry in 2023.

Of the 386 Moidams explored so far, 90 at Charaideo are the best preserved, representative, and most complete examples of this tradition.

Royal burial mounds of Assam now on UNESCO World Heritage List (27 July)

- The Charaideo Moidams, a 700-year-old burial system from the Ahom dynasty in Assam, were added to the UNESCO World Heritage List.
- This addition makes the Moidams the 43rd property from India on the list.
- The announcement was made at the 46th World Heritage Committee session in Delhi.
- The Moidams are similar to Egyptian pyramids and are earthen mounds used for burying Ahom royalty after the 18th century.
- They are the first World Heritage Site in the northeastern states of India in the cultural category, joining Assam’s other natural World Heritage Sites, Kaziranga National Park and Manas National Park.
- Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma celebrated the inclusion, highlighting the Moidams' spiritual, cultural, and architectural significance.
- The Moidams were nominated as India’s official entry in 2023, and out of 386 Moidams, 90 in Charaideo are the best preserved.

Ahom Dynasty

- The Ahom Dynasty, which ruled Assam for nearly 600 years (1228-1826), played a significant role in shaping the region's history and culture.
- The dynasty was founded by **Chao Lung Siu-Ka-Pha, a Tai prince** from present-day Thailand, who established the first permanent capital at Charaideo.
- The Ahoms are renowned for their unique blend of Tai culture with the local traditions of Assam.

Political and Military Strength

- The Ahom kingdom is well-known for its strong military prowess, which allowed it to resist Mughal invasions multiple times.
- The kingdom maintained its independence by successfully repelling attacks, including notable battles like the **Battle of Saraighat in 1671**, where **General Lachit Borphukan's** leadership was pivotal in defeating the Mughals.

Administrative System

- The Ahoms had a well-organized administrative system.

- The kingdom was divided into various provinces called "**mouzas**," and local administration was handled by officials known as "**mohans**."
- Their administration also included a **unique land measurement system called "paik,"** which was a unit for manpower and land measurement, effectively integrating land revenue with military service.

Cultural Contributions

- The Sivadol temple in Sivasagar, dedicated to Lord Shiva, is one of the tallest Shiva temples in India.
- The **Rang Ghar**, an amphitheater used for sports and cultural events, and the **Talatal Ghar**, a multi-storied royal palace, are other notable examples of Ahom architecture.
- The Ahoms also patronized art and literature. **The Buranjis, historical chronicles written in Ahom and later in Assamese,** provide valuable insights into the history, culture, and administration of the Ahom kingdom.
- They celebrated festivals like Bihu, which has its roots in Tai traditions, reflecting their agricultural lifestyle and reverence for nature.

Social and Religious Practices

- The Ahoms practiced ancestor worship, which was central to their religious beliefs. The **festival of Me-Dam-Me-Phi**, where the ancestors are worshipped as gods, is still celebrated today.
- Over time, the Ahoms adopted Hinduism, particularly the Vaishnavite tradition, while maintaining their traditional practices.

Decline and Legacy

- The decline of the Ahom dynasty began in the late 18th century due to internal conflicts and external pressures from the Burmese invasions.
- The kingdom eventually fell to the British in 1826 following the **Treaty of Yandabo**, marking the end of Ahom rule.

World Heritage Sites in India

- The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) designates World Heritage Sites of outstanding universal value to cultural or natural heritage which have been nominated by countries that are signatories to the UNESCO World Heritage Convention, established in 1972.
- Cultural heritage consists of monuments (such as architectural works, monumental sculptures, or inscriptions), groups of buildings, and sites (including archaeological sites). Natural features (consisting of physical and biological formations), geological and physiographical formations (including habitats of threatened species of animals and plants), and natural sites which are important from the point of view of science, conservation, or natural beauty, are defined as natural heritage.
- India accepted the convention on 14 November 1977, making its sites eligible for inclusion on the list.
- There are 42 World Heritage Sites in India. Out of these, 34 are cultural, seven are natural, and one, **Khangchendzonga National Park, is of mixed type.** India has the sixth-most sites worldwide.
- The first sites to be listed were the Ajanta Caves, Ellora Caves, Agra Fort, and Taj Mahal, all of which were inscribed in the 1983 session of the World Heritage Committee.
- The most recent sites listed were **Santiniketan and the Sacred Ensembles of the Hoysalas, in 2023.**
- At different times, two sites were listed as **endangered**: the Manas Wildlife Sanctuary was listed between 1992 and 2011 due to poaching and the activities of Bodo militias, and the monuments at Hampi were listed between 1999 and 2006 due to risks from increased traffic and new constructions in surroundings.
- **One site is transnational: The Architectural Work of Le Corbusier is shared with six other countries.** In addition, India has 57 sites on its tentative list.

World Heritage Sites

- UNESCO lists sites under ten criteria; each entry must meet at least one of the criteria. Criteria i through vi are cultural, and vii through x are natural.

World Heritage Sites

Site	Image	Location (state)	Year listed	UNESCO data	Description
Ajanta Caves		Maharashtra	1983	242; i, ii, iii, vi (cultural)	The caves at Ajanta represent a collection of Buddhist art from two periods. The first monuments date to the 2nd and 1st centuries BCE and were created by the followers of Theravada Buddhism. Further monuments were added in the 5th and 6th centuries CE, during the Vakataka dynasty , by the followers of Mahayana Buddhism. The monuments are masterpieces of Buddhist art and exerted strong artistic influence in India and the broader region, especially in Java . ^[8]
Ellora Caves		Maharashtra	1983	243; i, iii, vi (cultural)	The Ellora Caves comprise 34 temples and monasteries that were cut into a 2 km (1.2 mi) long basalt cliff between the 7th and 11th centuries. As they were built by followers of Buddhism , Hinduism , and Jainism , they illustrate the religious tolerance of the period when they were constructed. The largest temple is the Kailasa Temple (pictured), which is

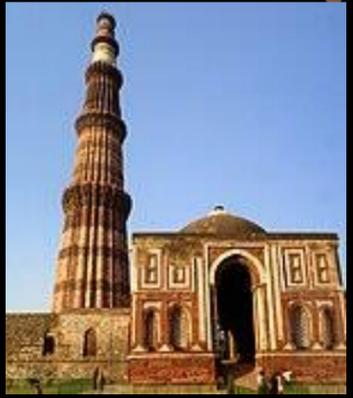
World Heritage Sites

Site	Image	Location (state)	Year listed	UNESCO data	Description
					elaborately decorated with sculptures and paintings. ^[9]
Agra Fort		Uttar Pradesh	1983	251; iii (cultural)	Agra Fort is a 16th-century Mughal imperial fortress in Agra . It got its present layout under the Emperor Akbar . The complex contains several palaces (Jahangiri Mahal pictured), audience halls, and two mosques. Stylistically, it is one of the high points of Indo-Islamic architecture , with influences of Persian and Timurid architecture . ^{[10][11]}
Taj Mahal		Uttar Pradesh	1983	252; i (cultural)	The Taj Mahal is considered the finest example of Indo-Islamic architecture . It was built in Agra on the bank of the Yamuna river as a mausoleum of Mumtaz Mahal , the Persian wife of the Mughal emperor Shah Jahan , between 1631 and 1648. It was designed by Ustad Ahmad Lahori and built in white marble inlaid with precious and semi-precious stones. The tomb is surrounded by four free-standing minarets . The complex also includes the main gate, a mosque, a guesthouse, and surrounding gardens. ^[12]
Sun Temple, Konârak		Odisha	1984	246; i, iii, vi (cultural)	This Hindu temple was built in the 13th century and is one of the finest examples of Kalinga architecture . It represents the chariot of the solar deity Surya : on the outer sides, it has 24 wheels carved of stone and richly decorated, being pulled by six horses. Other decorative motifs include lions, musicians, dancers, and erotic scenes. ^[13]
Group of Monuments at Mahabalipuram		Tamil Nadu	1984	249; i, ii, iii, vi (cultural)	The monuments around the town of Mamallapuram were built in the 7th and 8th centuries, under the Pallava dynasty . There are different types of monuments: the rathas , which are chariot-shaped temples (Dharmaraja Ratha); the mandapas (rock-cut temples); rock reliefs, including the giant Descent of the Ganges ; Shore Temple (pictured) and other temples and archaeological remains. The artistic expression of the monuments was influential in the broader region, including Cambodia, Vietnam, and Java . ^[14]
Kaziranga National Park		Assam	1985	337; ix, x (natural)	Kaziranga is located in the floodplains of the Brahmaputra River . It is one of the best wildlife sanctuaries in the world, home to the world's largest population of the Indian rhinoceros (pictured), as well as tigers , Asian elephants , wild water buffalo , and the Ganges river dolphin . The wetlands are important for migratory bird species. ^[15]
Manas Wildlife Sanctuary		Assam	1985	338; vii, ix, x (natural)	The sanctuary along the Manas River covers grasslands on floodplains and forests, both in lowlands and in hills. The area is a biodiversity hotspot and home to several endangered species, including the Indian rhinoceros , Asian elephant (pictured), wild water buffalo , tiger , sloth bear , pygmy hog , Gee's golden langur , and Bengal florican . The forests are constantly being renewed after floods and changes in the river courses. Between 1992 and 2011, the site was listed as endangered due to poaching and the activities of Bodo militias. ^{[16][17]}
Keoladeo National Park		Rajasthan	1985	340; x (natural)	Initially a duck-hunting reserve for Maharajas , Keoladeo is a man-made and man-maintained wetland . It is important both for migratory and resident birds, especially waterbirds. Over 350 species of birds have been recorded, including 15 species of herons , the Siberian crane , and the greater spotted eagle . Pictured here is a group of bar-headed geese and demoiselle cranes flying together in

World Heritage Sites

Site	Image	Location (state)	Year listed	UNESCO data	Description
					the park. The park is also protected under the Ramsar Convention . ^[17]
Churches and Convents of Goa		Goa	1986	234; ii, iv, vi (cultural)	Old Goa was the capital of Portuguese India , a colony that lasted for 450 years until 1961. The site comprises seven churches and convents that were built in the 16th and 17th centuries in the Gothic , Manueline , Mannerist , and Baroque styles, but which were also adapted to suit local techniques and resources. They spread architectural influences to Asian countries where Catholic missions were established. The Basilica of Bom Jesus , where Saint Francis Xavier is buried, is pictured. ^[18]
Khajuraho Group of Monuments		Madhya Pradesh	1986	240; i, iii (cultural)	This site comprises 23 temples, both Hindu and Jain , that were built in the 10th and 11th centuries, during the Chandela dynasty. The temples are built in the Nagara style. They are richly decorated with stone carvings and sculptures that depict sacred and secular motifs, including depictions of domestic life, musicians, dancers, and amorous couples. A detail from the Lakshmana Temple is pictured. ^[19]
Group of Monuments at Hampi		Karnataka	1986	241bis; i, iii, iv (cultural)	Hampi was the capital of the Vijayanagara Empire until its abandonment after its sacking and pillaging by the Deccan sultanates in 1565. For about 200 years, it was a prosperous multi-cultural city that left several monuments in the Dravidian style as well as the Indo-Islamic style . The remains include religious and secular buildings and defensive structures. The Vitthala Temple is pictured. A minor boundary modification of the site took place in 2012. Between 1999 and 2006, the site was listed as endangered due to risks posed by increased traffic and new constructions. ^{[20][5]}
Fatehpur Sikri		Uttar Pradesh	1986	255; ii, iii, iv (cultural)	For about a decade in the second half of the 16th century, Fatehpur Sikri was the capital of the Mughal Empire under Emperor Akbar , until the capital was moved to Lahore in 1585 and the city was mostly abandoned. The site comprises a large collection of monuments and temples in the Mughal style , such as the Jama Masjid (the gate to the mosque, the Buland Darwaza , pictured), the Panch Mahal palace, and the Tomb of Salim Chishti . ^[21]
Group of Monuments at Pattadakal		Karnataka	1987	239rev; iii, iv (cultural)	This site comprises nine Hindu temples and one Jain temple that were built in the 7th and 8th centuries under the Chalukya dynasty . They were constructed in the Badami Chalukya style that blends influences from northern and southern India. The Temple of Virupaksha is pictured. ^[22]
Elephanta Caves		Maharashtra	1987	244rev; i, iii (cultural)	The cave complex, located on Elephanta Island in Mumbai Harbour , was constructed mainly in the 5th and 6th centuries, with remains of human occupation dating back to the 2nd century BCE. The temples are dedicated to Shiva . The caves are decorated with stone carvings, some of them colossal. A statue of Trimurti Shiva, flanked by the dvarapalas , is pictured. ^[23]
Great Living Chola Temples		Tamil Nadu	1987	250bis; ii, iii (cultural)	This site comprises three Hindu temples built in the 11th and 12th centuries under the Chola dynasty . They represent some of the best examples of Dravidian architecture of the Chola period. They are made of stone and decorated with stone and bronze sculptures. Initially, only the Brihadisvara Temple (pictured) was listed as a World Heritage Site; two other temples, the Brihadisvara Temple and the Airavatesvara

World Heritage Sites

Site	Image	Location (state)	Year listed	UNESCO data	Description
					Temple were added in 2004, after which the site was renamed to its current name. ^{[24][25]}
Sundarbans National Park		West Bengal	1987	452; ix, x (natural)	The national park covers the Indian part of the Sundarbans , the delta of the Ganges and Brahmaputra rivers. It is the world's largest and richest mangrove forest , with about 78 recorded mangrove species. It is a biodiversity hotspot, home to a large population of Bengal tigers (one pictured), as well as an important habitat for the Irrawaddy dolphin and Ganges river dolphin , several species of birds and sea turtles. In Bangladesh, the Sundarbans is listed as a separate World Heritage Site. ^{[26][27]}
Nanda Devi and Valley of Flowers National Parks		Uttarakhand	1988	335bis; vii, x (natural)	This site comprises two areas in the West Himalayas , the Valley of Flowers National Park (pictured) and the Nanda Devi National Park . There are different types of high-altitude habitats, from high mountain peaks (Nanda Devi at 7,817 m (25,646 ft) is India's second-highest mountain) to alpine meadows. In addition to numerous mountain plant species, the area is home to the Asiatic black bear , snow leopard , brown bear , and bharal . Nanda Devi NP was originally listed alone in 1988; the Valley of Flowers NP was added in 2005. ^{[28][29]}
Buddhist Monuments at Sanchi		Madhya Pradesh	1989	524; i, ii, iii, iv, vi (cultural)	Sanchi is one of the oldest extant Buddhist sanctuaries and was instrumental in the spread of the religion through the Indian subcontinent. It became important under Emperor Ashoka of the Maurya Empire in the 3rd century BCE. The remains of a pillar from the period are preserved. Stupas (Stupa 1 pictured), palaces, temples, and monasteries are preserved in different states of conservation, mostly dating to the 2nd and 1st centuries BCE. The city declined in importance in the 12th century. ^[30]
Humayun's Tomb, Delhi		Delhi	1993	232bis; ii, iv (cultural)	The tomb of the Mughal emperor Humayun was constructed in the 1560s and represents the first example of a garden tomb on the Indian subcontinent, introducing the elements of Persian gardens . The monumental double-domed mausoleum represents a leap in Mughal architecture and is an architectural predecessor of the Taj Mahal . The complex includes several smaller tombs from the period. A minor boundary modification took place in 2016. ^[31]
Qutb Minar and its Monuments, Delhi		Delhi	1993	233; iv (cultural)	The complex comprises several early Islamic India monuments from the 13th and 14th centuries when the Delhi Sultanate established power there. They include the Qutb Minar , a 72.5 m (238 ft)-high minaret (pictured), the Alai Darwaza gateway, the Quwwat-ul-Islam Mosque where several stone pillars from previous Hindu temples were repurposed, the Iron pillar , and several tombs and other monuments. ^[32]
Mountain Railways of India		West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Himachal Pradesh	1999	944ter; ii, iv (cultural)	This site comprises three mountain railways built in the late 19th and early 20th centuries to provide access to towns in the highlands. They represent a technology transfer in a colonial setting; the construction involved building bridges and tunnels to cross difficult terrains. The railways supported further human settlement of the areas they linked to and are still fully operational. The Darjeeling Himalayan Railway was initially listed alone in 1999. The Nilgiri Mountain Railway was added in

World Heritage Sites

Site	Image	Location (state)	Year listed	UNESCO data	Description
					2005, and the Kalka–Shimla railway (pictured) in 2008. ^[33]
Mahabodhi Temple Complex at Bodh Gaya		Bihar	2002	1056rev; i, ii, iii, iv, vi (cultural)	The Buddhist temple complex marks the site where Buddha is said to have attained enlightenment under the Bodhi Tree . The present temple dates to the 5th and 6th centuries CE (during the Gupta period) and was built upon a previous structure commissioned by Emperor Ashoka in the 3rd century BCE. The temple is 50 m (160 ft) high and made of brick. It had a substantial influence on the development of architecture in the following centuries. After centuries of abandonment and neglect, the temple was extensively restored in the 19th century. ^[34]
Rock Shelters of Bhimbetka		Madhya Pradesh	2003	925; iii, v (cultural)	This site comprises five clusters of rock shelters in the foothills of the Vindhya Range . They contain rock paintings from the hunter-gatherer societies of the Mesolithic to the historical period. The nearby villages still maintain some cultural practices similar to those depicted in the paintings. ^[35]
Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus (for merly Victoria Terminus)		Maharashtra	2004	945rev; ii, iv (cultural)	The historic terminal train station in Mumbai was built in the late 19th century. It was designed by Frederick William Stevens in the Victorian Gothic style, drawing influences from Italian Gothic architecture and combining them with influences from Indian traditional buildings. It symbolized the wealth of Mumbai as a major commercial port within the British Commonwealth . ^[36]
Champaner-Pavagadh Archaeological Park		Gujarat	2004	1101; ii, iv, v, vi (cultural)	The site contains remains from several periods, from the Chalcolithic to the remains of Champaner , a short-lived capital of the Gujarat Sultanate in the 16th century. Important buildings include the Hindu temple Kalika Mata , Jain temples , and Jama Mosque (pictured) which features both Hindu and Muslim architectural elements, and the remains of water-managing systems, fortifications, and 14th-century temples. ^[37]
Red Fort Complex		Delhi	2007	231rev; ii, iii, vi (cultural)	The Red Fort was built under Mughal emperor Shah Jahan in the mid-17th century. It represents the zenith of Mughal architecture , blending the elements of Indo-Persian culture with Timurid elements. Its architecture had a strong influence on later palaces and gardens in the region. The Red Fort was also the setting of historical events; it was sacked and partially repurposed by the British , and it was the site where the independence of India was first celebrated. The Delhi Gate is pictured. ^[38]
The Jantar Mantar , Jaipur		Rajasthan	2010	1338; iii, vi (cultural)	The Jantar Mantar in Jaipur is India's most significant historic astronomical observatory. It dates from the early 18th century and was built by Rajput king Sawai Jai Singh . There are about 20 astronomical instruments that were designed and built for naked eye observations of the positions of stars and planets. It also served as a meeting point for different scientific cultures. ^[39]
Western Ghats		Maharashtra, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu	2012	1342rev; ix, x (natural)	The Western Ghats is a mountain range that runs along the western coast of the Indian subcontinent . It is covered with montane forests. The area is a biodiversity hotspot and home to endangered species such as the Bengal tiger , lion-tailed macaque , Nilgiri tahr , and Nilgiri langur . In terms of evolutionary history, the area is important given the breakup of Gondwana in the early Jurassic period, after which India was an isolated landmass until its collision with the Eurasian Plate . The World

World Heritage Sites

Site	Image	Location (state)	Year listed	UNESCO data	Description
					Heritage Site comprises 39 individual properties. ^[40]
Hill Forts of Rajasthan		Rajasthan	2013	247rev; ii, iii (cultural)	This site comprises six forts: the Chittor Fort , Kumbhalgarh Fort , Ranthambore Fort , Gagron Fort , Amber Fort (pictured), and Jaisalmer Fort , which were constructed between the 8th and 18th centuries by Rajput kingdoms. They are eclectic in style, with elements of Sultanate and Mughal architecture, and were influential on the later styles of the Maratha Empire . They are situated in different settings; for example, Ranthambore is in a forest, and Jaisalmer is in a desert. ^[41]
Rani-ki-Vav (the Queen's Stepwell) at Patan, Gujarat		Gujarat	2014	922; i, iv (cultural)	Rani-ki-Vav is one of the finest examples of a stepwell , an elaborate type of well where groundwater is accessed through several levels of stairs. It was constructed in the 11th century, during the Chaulukya dynasty , on the banks of the Saraswati River in the city of Patan . It has seven levels, each decorated with stone carvings and sculptures depicting religious and secular themes and literary works. After the change in the river course in the 13th century, it was no longer in use and got covered with silt , which allowed for its preservation. ^[42]
Great Himalayan National Park Conservation Area		Himachal Pradesh	2014	1406rev; x (natural)	The national park covers habitats from alpine peaks of the Himalayas above 6,000 m (20,000 ft) to alpine meadows and riverine forests below 2,000 m (6,600 ft). In total, there are 25 types of forests recorded, and they have rich floral and faunal assemblies, including numerous species of birds, mammals, reptiles, and insects. It is home to endangered species such as the western tragopan and musk deer . ^[43]
Archaeological Site of Nalanda Mahavihara at Nalanda, Bihar		Bihar	2016	1502; iv, vi (cultural)	Nalanda Mahavihara was a Buddhist ancient higher-learning institution established in the 5th century and lasting until its sacking in the 13th century. However, some archaeological remains also date back to the 3rd century BCE. The remains include shrines and stupas , viharas (residential and educational buildings), and artworks in different materials. Both the architectural solutions and educational approaches were influential in other similar institutions in the broader region. ^[44]
Khangchendzonga National Park		Sikkim	2016	1513; iii, vi, vii, x (mixed)	The national park is located around Mount Khangchendzonga , the world's third highest mountain (8,586 m (28,169 ft)). It is a sacred mountain in Tibetan Buddhism , where the area is considered a beyul , a sacred hidden land. It is home to ethnically very diverse Sikkimese communities. From the natural perspective, the area comprises various habitats, from high mountains with glaciers to old-growth forests, and is rich in animal and plant species. ^[45]
The Architectural Work of Le Corbusier, an Outstanding Contribution to the Modern Movement*		Chandigarh	2016	1321rev; i, ii, vi (cultural)	This transnational site (shared with Argentina, Belgium, France, Germany, Switzerland, and Japan) encompasses 17 works of Franco-Swiss architect Le Corbusier . Le Corbusier was an important representative of the 20th-century Modernist movement , which introduced new architectural techniques to meet the needs of the changing society. The Chandigarh Capitol Complex is listed in India. It is the central part of the city of Chandigarh and is designed in line with the principles of a radiant city . The Palace of Assembly is pictured. ^[46]

World Heritage Sites

Site	Image	Location (state)	Year listed	UNESCO data	Description
Historic City of Ahmadabad		Gujarat	2017	1551; ii, v (cultural)	The city of Ahmedabad was founded by Ahmad Shah I in 1411 to serve as the capital of the Gujarat Sultanate . It was the meeting place of many religions (Hinduism , Islam , Buddhism , Jainism , Christianity , Zoroastrianism , and Judaism), which resulted in a unique urban fabric. The architecture is based on timber, and the typical neighbourhoods are called pols , densely packed traditional houses with gated streets. Important buildings from the Sultanate period include the Bhadra Fort city walls, Sidi Saiyyed Mosque (pictured) and numerous mosques, tombs, and shrines. ^[46]
Victorian Gothic and Art Deco Ensembles of Mumbai		Maharashtra	2018	1480; ii, iv (cultural)	This site comprises two assemblies of buildings in Mumbai from the British Empire era. Public buildings in the Victorian Gothic style from the second half of the 19th century adapted Gothic Revival elements for the Indian climate, introducing features such as balconies and verandas . The Bombay High Court building is pictured. The Art Deco buildings date to the early 20th century and include cinema halls and apartment buildings. See also Art Deco in Mumbai . ^[47]
Jaipur City, Rajasthan		Rajasthan	2019	1605; ii, iv, vi (cultural)	Jaipur was founded by the Rajput ruler Jai Singh II in 1727. The city was built with a grid plan , inspired by ancient Hindu and Western ideals, in a departure from the medieval architecture of the region. It was a strong trade centre and home to craftsmen and artists. Important buildings and sites include the Hawa Mahal palace (pictured), Govind Dev Ji Temple , City Palace , and Jantar Mantar , which is listed as a separate World Heritage Site. ^[48]
Kakatiya Rudreshwara (Ramappa) Temple, Telangana		Telangana	2021	1570; i, iii (cultural)	The Hindu temple, dedicated to Shiva , was constructed in the first half of the 13th century under the Kakatiya dynasty . It is decorated with stone carvings and sculptures in granite and dolerite that depict regional dance customs. In line with Hindu practices, the temple is constructed in a way that blends harmonically with the environment. ^[49]
Dholavira: a Harappan City		Gujarat	2021	1645; iii, iv (cultural)	Dholavira was one of the centres of the Harappan Civilisation from the 3rd to mid-2nd millennium BCE, in the Bronze Age . The remains include a walled city and a cemetery, and there are remains of buildings and water management systems. The city's location was chosen because of nearby sources of precious minerals. The city had trade connections with other cities in the region and as far as Mesopotamia . The site was rediscovered in 1968. ^[50]
Santiniketan		West Bengal	2023	1375; iv, vi (cultural)	Santiniketan was founded as an ashram by Debendranath Tagore in the second half of the 19th century and then developed into a university town for Visva-Bharati University . It is connected to the life and philosophy of Debendranath's son Rabindranath Tagore , the leading figure of the Bengali Renaissance . The prayer hall is pictured. ^{[51][52]}
Sacred Ensembles of the Hoysalas		Karnataka	2023	1670; i, ii, iv (cultural)	Three Hoysala temples - the Chennakeshava Temple in Belur , the Hoysaleswara Temple in Halebidu and the Keshava temple (pictured) in Somanathapura , dating between the 12th and 14th centuries. Hoysala architecture combined the elements of Dravidian architecture with influences from northern India. The temples were built by the followers of Vaishnavism and Shaivism and they are richly decorated with stone sculptures and carvings.

World Heritage Sites					
Site	Image	Location (state)	Year listed	UNESCO data	Description
					The Chennakeshava Temple in Belur is still an important pilgrimage site. ^{[53][54]}
Moidams – the Mound-Burial system of the Ahom Dynasty		Assam	2024	1711; iii, iv (cultural)	Charaideo was the capital of the Ahom kingdom (1228–1826), and the tumuli were the burial sites of the royals and nobility. The tumuli create an undulating landscape reminiscent of hills, in line with the spiritual beliefs of the Tai-Ahom people . ^{[55][56]}

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आपके शहर गोरखपुर में



Patriotic IAS

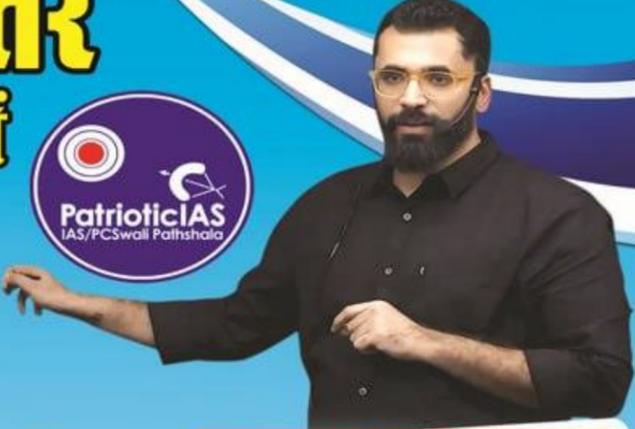
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Using children’s personal data legally and securely (27 July)

- The Indian school education system is extensive, with about 15 lakh schools, 97 lakh teachers, and nearly 26.5 crore students from pre-primary to higher secondary levels.
- The Ministry of Education launched the UDISE+ platform in 2018 to manage this vast system efficiently.
- UDISE+ collects real-time information on school infrastructure, teachers, student enrollment, and academic performance.
- This data helps the Ministry create outcome-based policies to improve the quality of education, allocate resources better, and monitor educational programs.
- The National Education Policy 2020 introduced the Automated Permanent Academic Account Registry identification (APAAR), which serves as a unique identifier for each student and collects academic credentials and demographic information.
- Measures are being taken to link APAAR and UDISE+ to enhance ease of schooling, automate student admissions, reduce dropout rates, and increase opportunities for continuing education.
- DigiLocker and ed-tech companies collaborate with State governments and are integral to the modern education system.
- Interlinking UDISE+ and APAAR exposes student data to these entities.
- The Education Ministry created a data-sharing policy for school education in 2020 but hasn't updated it to reflect the Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Act, 2023.
- Lack of clear regulations or standards, especially for ed-tech companies, raises questions about their compliance with the DPDP Act.
- Limited guidance exists on what constitutes verifiable parental consent for minors' data.
- Consent from parents for UDISE+/APAAR data may violate the DPDP Act's requirements.
- The DPDP Act emphasizes collecting personal data for specified legitimate purposes only.
- Sharing children's data under UDISE+ for purposes beyond the authorized one could violate the Act.

- The Ministry acknowledges the benefits of sharing student data to track migration and manage educational records.
- The DPDP Act mandates specific and voluntary consent for data collection and sharing.

The three-part test

- The Supreme Court recognized the right to privacy as a fundamental right in the Justice K.S. Puttaswamy (Retd.) v. Union of India (2018) case.
- A three-part test was established to assess the impact of state action on the right to privacy:
 1. Legitimate state interest in restricting the right.
 2. Restriction must be necessary and proportionate.
 3. Restriction must be imposed by law.
- Aadhaar integration in APAAR/UDISE+ must comply with these conditions.
- Data privacy and minimisation principles are crucial due to the sensitive nature of children's data.
- Specific protocols are needed for the exchange of children's personal data for unspecified purposes.
- Identifying actors as data fiduciary, data processor, and data principal is complex and not currently undertaken.
- The privacy policy for APAAR dictates certain security and integration requirements, but lacks protocols for sharing children's data for unmentioned purposes.
- The Ministry is not legally liable for data disclosure/accuracy on UDISE+, and there is no clear grievance redressal mechanism.
- Standard operating procedures under a governance framework are necessary for data authenticity and legal obligations.
- These protocols will help ensure lawful and secure sharing, using, and retaining of children's personal data.

Question: Right to Privacy is protected as an intrinsic part of Right to Life and Personal Liberty.

Which of the following in the Constitution of India correctly and appropriately imply the above statement? (UPSC 2018)

- (a) Article 14 and the provisions under the 42nd Amendment to the Constitution
- (b) Article 17 and the Directive Principles of State Policy in Part IV
- (c) Article 21 and the freedoms guaranteed in Part III
- (d) Article 24 and the provisions under the 44th Amendment to the Constitution

A new push in the Bay of Bengal

GS Paper II: IR

India hosted the 2nd BIMSTEC (Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation) Foreign Ministers' Retreat in New Delhi earlier this month with a focus on providing an "informal platform to discuss ways and means of cooperating and accelerating action in security, connectivity, trade, and investment within the Bay of Bengal." The retreat was held in preparation for the sixth summit meeting, scheduled for September, in which the BIMSTEC leaders will meet in person for the first time in the post-pandemic era. They are also expected to sign the BIMSTEC Agreement on Maritime Transport Cooperation to improve regional connectivity – a foundational aim of this grouping.

Strengthening ties with eastern neighbours
BIMSTEC is the regional organisation devoted to the Bay of Bengal, with a membership of five South Asian and two Southeast Asian countries, cooperating across seven diverse sectors. It allows New Delhi to engage multilaterally with the other countries of the Bay of Bengal region, which are its eastern neighbours and therefore vital for its economic development, security, and foreign policy imperatives. India also remains intent on solidifying relations with its eastern neighbours as China's growing presence in the Bay of Bengal poses a potential threat to regional stability and New Delhi's position as a preferred security partner in these waters.

Strengthening ties with Bangladesh and Myanmar accords India the advantage of providing its landlocked north-eastern region with access to the sea. Improved ties with Myanmar and Thailand will also lend India the opportunity to have a more profound presence in the Indo-Pacific, as it holds the ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations), in which these two countries are members, to be of



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The intent of BIMSTEC member states to push forth with a bold vision for the region was evident at the 2nd Foreign Ministers' Retreat

central importance in its vision of the Indo-Pacific. Thailand reinforced this idea at the retreat by identifying itself as a bridge between BIMSTEC and ASEAN. These priorities were reflected in the opening address by the Minister for External Affairs, S. Jaishankar, when he stated that BIMSTEC represents the intersection of India's 'Neighbourhood First' outlook, the 'Act East Policy', and the SAGAR (Security And Growth for All in the Region) vision.

Two parts of the retreat

The retreat was divided into two parts. In the first segment, participants assessed the current state of regional cooperation within BIMSTEC, building on a presentation by India on the implementation of key outcomes of the 1st Retreat. Multiple ideas were shared by the member states including the establishment of Centers of Excellence in member states, focusing on Agriculture, Disaster Management, and Maritime Transport. India announced support for cancer research, treatment, and issuance of e-visas for patients of all BIMSTEC states, while Sri Lanka proposed the inclusion of kidney disease. The need for involving the private sector in trade and promoting young entrepreneurs was also highlighted, as was the importance of connectivity, cyber-security, and countering the trafficking of narcotics and illegal arms.

In the second session, the expectations of each country from the forthcoming summit were discussed. Sri Lanka underscored the need to map mineral resources found in abundance in the BIMSTEC countries and create opportunities for the vertical integration of stages of production within specific sectors in the economies of the countries, enabling them to diversify their production structure. Bangladesh highlighted the need for cooperation in the Blue Economy and urged member states to ban fishing during the

breeding season to address the problem of depleting catch in the Bay. Bhutan expounded on the need for collaboration in tourism and cultural exchanges, while Nepal highlighted its 'whole of the region' approach to leverage synergies among member states and transform BIMSTEC into a results-oriented regional forum. Thailand underscored the need for cooperation in non-traditional security domains, and Myanmar added the need to combat online scamming to the list. These proposals will be presented to the heads of state before the September summit.

Bilateral merits

While the retreat was a multilateral milestone for India, it had its bilateral merits too. Mr. Jaishankar met several of his counterparts on the sidelines. He shared with Myanmar India's concerns over the flow of displaced persons, narcotics, and arms across the border and urged for the return of unlawfully detained Indians. He also held a meeting with the Bangladesh Foreign Minister, who requested him to ensure the smooth supply of daily essentials and send a technical team for the Teesta project, signifying another step towards easing this long-pending concern. At the end of the retreat, the Foreign Ministers called on Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

This year marks a decade of India's Act East and Neighbourhood First policies, and the thrust on BIMSTEC is a manifestation of New Delhi's efforts to continue nurturing collaborative growth for national and regional well-being. Thus, Mr. Jaishankar encouraged future collaborations through new energies, resources, and a renewed commitment to cooperation.

It remains to be seen how many of these proposals find culmination at the forthcoming Summit but the intent of the member states to push forth with a bold vision for the region was clearly evident at the retreat.

A new push in the Bay of Bengal (27 July)

- India hosted the 2nd BIMSTEC Foreign Ministers' Retreat in New Delhi, focusing on security, connectivity, trade, and investment.

- The retreat prepared for the sixth summit meeting in September, where leaders will sign the BIMSTEC Agreement on Maritime Transport Cooperation.
- BIMSTEC includes five South Asian and two Southeast Asian countries, cooperating across seven sectors.
- The organization allows India to engage with eastern neighbors, crucial for economic development, security, and foreign policy.
- India aims to strengthen ties with Bangladesh and Myanmar to provide its northeastern region access to the sea.
- Improved relations with Myanmar and Thailand enhance India's presence in the Indo-Pacific, aligning with ASEAN's central importance in India's vision.
- Thailand sees itself as a bridge between BIMSTEC and ASEAN.
- External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar highlighted BIMSTEC's alignment with India's 'Neighbourhood First', 'Act East Policy', and SAGAR vision.

Two parts of the retreat

- The retreat was divided into two parts.
- The first segment assessed regional cooperation within BIMSTEC, with India presenting on key outcomes of the 1st Retreat.
- Ideas shared included establishing Centers of Excellence in Agriculture, Disaster Management, and Maritime Transport.
- India announced support for cancer research, treatment, and e-visas for BIMSTEC patients; Sri Lanka proposed including kidney disease.
- Highlighted needs included involving the private sector in trade, promoting young entrepreneurs, connectivity, cyber-security, and countering narcotics and illegal arms trafficking.
- The second session discussed expectations for the forthcoming summit.
- Sri Lanka emphasized mapping mineral resources and creating production opportunities.
- Bangladesh called for cooperation in the Blue Economy and banning fishing during breeding season.
- Bhutan focused on tourism and cultural exchanges, while Nepal promoted a regional approach for synergies and a results-oriented forum.
- Thailand stressed cooperation in non-traditional security, and Myanmar highlighted combating online scamming.
- These proposals will be presented to the heads of state before the September summit.

Bilateral merits

- The retreat was a multilateral milestone for India with bilateral benefits.
- Mr. Jaishankar met several counterparts on the sidelines.
- He discussed concerns with Myanmar about displaced persons, narcotics, arms, and the return of unlawfully detained Indians.
- Met with the Bangladesh Foreign Minister, who requested smooth supply of daily essentials and a technical team for the Teesta project.
- Foreign Ministers called on Prime Minister Narendra Modi.
- This year marks a decade of India's Act East and Neighbourhood First policies, focusing on BIMSTEC for regional growth.
- Mr. Jaishankar encouraged future collaborations with new energies, resources, and renewed commitment.
- The intent to push forward with a bold vision for the region was evident at the retreat.

BIMSTEC: Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation

BIMSTEC is an international organization connecting seven South Asian and Southeast Asian countries bordering the Bay of Bengal.

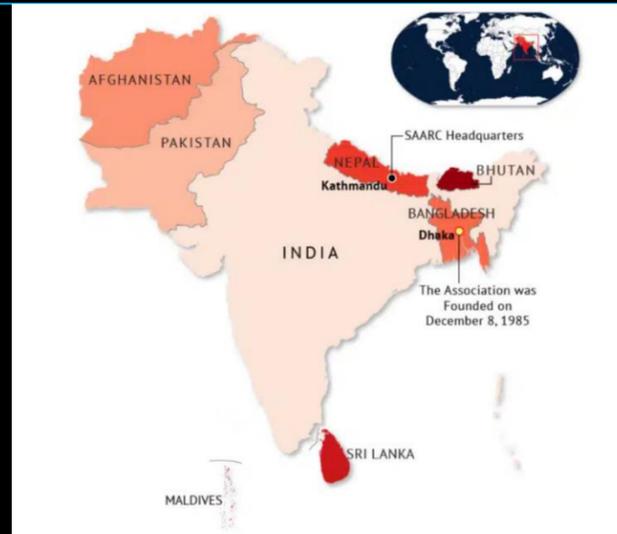
- **Founding:** Established on 6th June 1997, in Dhaka, Bangladesh.
- **Members:** The member countries of BIMSTEC are Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Thailand.
- BIMSTEC headquarters is located in **Dhaka, Bangladesh**.
- **Objectives:** BIMSTEC focuses on promoting regional cooperation in various sectors including trade, technology, energy, transport, tourism, fisheries, agriculture, counter-terrorism, environment, culture, and people-to-people contact.
- **Structure:** BIMSTEC summits are held every two years, with a Ministerial Meeting preceding each summit. The organization also has a permanent Secretariat located in Dhaka, Bangladesh.
- **Recent Activities:** The website highlights recent meetings of BIMSTEC Expert Groups on Cultural Cooperation and Fisheries and Livestock, finalizing plans of action in these areas



SAARC: South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation

SAARC is a regional intergovernmental organization and geopolitical union of states in South Asia.

- **Member States:** There are **eight member states**: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka.
- **Founding:** Established on December 8, 1985, in Dhaka, Bangladesh.
- **Headquarters:** Kathmandu, Nepal.
- **Goals:**
 - Promote the welfare of the peoples of South Asia and improve their quality of life.
 - Accelerate economic growth, social progress and cultural development in the region.
 - Provide all individuals the opportunity to live in dignity and to realize their full potentials.



Fiscal federalism (27 July)

The ruling on taxing mineral rights opens up resource avenue for States

- The Supreme Court ruled that States can tax mineral rights and mineral-bearing lands.
- This ruling protects the States' legislative domain from Parliament's interference.
- Historically, it was believed that States couldn't tax mineral resources due to the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957.
- Entry 50 in the State List allows States to tax mineral rights, but it was thought to be limited by Parliament's law on mineral development.
- The Union government argued that the 1957 law limited States' power to tax mineral rights.
- Chief Justice Dr. D.Y. Chandrachud concluded that the 1957 Act contained no such limitation.
- The Court determined that royalty under the 1957 Act is not a tax but a contractual consideration for mineral rights.
- States can also tax mineral-bearing lands under Entry 49, which allows for general taxation of lands.
- The Supreme Court judgment allows States a new taxation avenue for mineral rights, enhancing fiscal federalism and autonomy.
- The judgment notes that reducing States' taxation powers would harm their ability to deliver welfare schemes and services.
- Justice B.V. Nagarathna's dissent warns that not recognizing the central law as a limitation could lead to unhealthy competition among States for revenue, causing an uneven increase in mineral costs and higher prices for industrial products.
- This situation could exploit the national market for arbitrage.
- The Centre may amend the law to impose explicit limitations or prohibit States from taxing mineral rights.
- However, this could leave mining activities untaxed, as the majority ruled that Parliament lacks the legislative competence to tax mineral rights.

Special relationship (27 July)

- On the eve of PM Netanyahu's visit to Washington, the IDF issued a new evacuation order for several neighborhoods in Khan Younis, Gaza.
- Over 39,000 Palestinians, mostly women and children, have been killed by the IDF in less than 10 months.
- At least 90,000 Palestinians have been wounded, and almost the entire population of Gaza has been displaced multiple times.
- Dozens of journalists, private charities, UN aid workers, hospitals, ambulances, and tent camps have been bombed.
- Gaza lacks sufficient food, water, and medicines, and the UN warns of potential epidemics.
- Two UN Security Council resolutions and International Court of Justice rulings against Israel's conduct have been ignored.
- U.S. lawmakers applauded Netanyahu despite the humanitarian crisis.
- The war was triggered by Hamas's October 7, 2023, attack on Israel, killing 1,200 people, and over 100 hostages remain in Hamas's captivity.
- Israel continues to punish the entire Palestinian population in Gaza in the name of fighting Hamas.
- The Biden administration has voiced concerns over civilian casualties but continues to provide military assistance to Israel.
- Protests in Washington during Netanyahu's speech point to growing public criticism of the war and America's support for it.
- There are underlying tensions in the U.S.-Israel relationship, with dissenting voices among lawmakers and the public.

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