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INDIAN POLITY

SC TO EXAMINE IF GOVERNORS ARE 'SUBVERTING' FEDERALISM

CONTEXT: The Supreme Court will examine if Governors, by indefinitely holding bills and referring them to the President, are enabling Union interference in state legislation, thus undermining federalism.

BACKGROUND: The court intervened after Kerala's petition highlighted the Governor's delay in acting on Bills, keeping them pending for two years before sending seven to the President, who relies on the Centre's advice. The President withheld consent for four Bills, none of which concerned Centre-State relations.

 The machinations of the Governor saw the Centre take decisions on issues exclusively coming within the ambit of the State's legislative domain

STATE OF KERALA IN THE SC



Kerala Challenges Governor's Actions on State Bills in Supreme Court

- **Governor's Inaction:** Kerala argued that the Governor should have promptly returned the Bills to the State Legislative Assembly with reasons, instead of sitting on them.
- **State's Welfare Legislation:** The Governor's delay denied Kerala residents the benefits of welfare legislation, with seven Bills referred to the President without a time-lapse explanation.
- **Centre's Withholding Assent:** The Centre withheld assent on four Bills without reasons, interfering in the State's legislative domain.
- **Governor's Limited Powers:** Kerala contends the Governor's power to reserve Bills for the President is limited to specific circumstances under Article 213.
- **Constitutional Balance:** The actions of the Governor subvert the balance between the State's organs and the federal structure, necessitating Supreme Court intervention.

Governor's Powers Regarding Passage of State Bills

- **Assent:** The Governor may give assent to a bill, making it an act.
- **Withhold Assent:** The Governor may reject the bill by withholding assent.
- **Return for Reconsideration:** The Governor may return the bill (not a money bill) to the legislature with a request for reconsideration.
- **Mandatory Assent After Reconsideration:** If the legislature repasses the bill with or without amendments, the Governor must assent to it.
- **Reservation for Presidential Consideration:** The Governor can reserve the bill for the President's consideration, especially if it endangers the state high court or is against the Constitution or national interest.

CULTURE AND HERITAGE

ROYAL BURIAL MOUNDS OF THE AHOM DYNASTY FROM ASSAM MAKE IT TO UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE LIST

CONTEXT: The Charaideo Moidams, a 700-year-old burial site from Assam's Ahom dynasty, were added to the UNESCO World Heritage List, marking India's 43rd inclusion.

BACKGROUND: At the 46th World Heritage Committee session, the 700-year-old mound-burial system of the Ahom kings at Charaideo was globally recognized, drawing attention to Assam's rich cultural heritage. These Moidams, akin to Egypt's pyramids, are burial mounds of Ahom royalty, now a significant tourist attraction in Charaideo.

Moidams of Assam Recognized as World Heritage Site

- **First Northeastern Cultural Site:** The Moidams are the first from northeastern India to be recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in the cultural category.
- **Assam's Heritage Sites:** Assam now has three World Heritage Sites, including Kaziranga and Manas National Parks, both tiger reserves.
- **Significant Recognition:** Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma celebrated the recognition of the Moidams as a significant cultural achievement for Assam.
- **Tai-Ahom Heritage:** The Charaideo Moidams reflect the spiritual beliefs, heritage, and architectural skills of Assam's Tai-Ahom community.

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- **Official Nomination:** The Moidams, with 90 well-preserved royal burials out of 386 explored, were nominated as India's official entry in 2023.



Charaideo: The Shining Town of Tai-Ahoms

- **Etymology of Charaideo:** Derived from Tai Ahom words "Che-Rai-Doi," meaning "a shining town situated on a hilltop."
- **Historical Significance:** Established in 1253 AD by king Sukaphaa, Charaideo was the Ahoms' first capital and a symbolic power center.
- **Royal Resting Place:** Sukaphaa was buried in Charaideo in 1856, and subsequent Ahom royals chose it as their final resting place.
- **Tourist Attraction:** Charaideo's moidams attract tourists; over 150 exist, but only 30 are protected by the Archaeological Survey of India.
- **Unique Burial Sites:** The Charaideo moidams are unique in scale and concentration compared to other East and Southeast Asian burial sites.

INTERNAL SECURITY

QUOTA FOR AGNIVEERS IN POLICE, STATE ARMED FORCES, SAYS M.P. CM

CONTEXT: On Kargil Vijay Diwas, Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav announced reservations for Agniveer soldiers in police and state armed forces recruitment, as per PM Modi's wishes.

BACKGROUND: On Kargil Day, Madhya Pradesh CM Yadav announced via social media that Agniveer jawans will receive reservations in police and state armed forces recruitment, aligning with PM Modi's wishes. The Agniveer scheme aims to modernize the armed forces and maintain a young, capable military, with soldiers serving four-year terms.

Uttarakhand Increases Support for Soldiers and Martyrs

- **Scheme Criticism:** The 2022 scheme faced opposition criticism and protests, notably in Madhya Pradesh and Bihar.
- **Increased Ex Gratia:** Uttarakhand raises martyr families' ex gratia from ₹10 lakh to ₹50 lakh, enhancing support.
- **Job Reservations:** Agniveers will get extended government job reservation benefits, increasing from two to five years post-service.
- **Vacancy Expansion:** Martyr dependants now eligible for Group C and D posts across various departments, not just District Magistrate's office.
- **Soldier Welfare:** Contract workers in Sainik Welfare Department will receive leave benefits like permanent employees; Act for Agniveer reservations underway.

PAY & BENEFITS: WHAT THE AGNIVEERS GET

- In Hand (70%)
- Contribution to Seva Nidhi (30%)*

Similar contribution to corpus fund by Government of India**



All figures in ₹ (Monthly Contribution)

Exit After 4 Years } ₹11.71 Lakh as SevaNidhi Package (Including interest accumulated on the above amount as per the applicable rates)

Total contribution to Seva Nidhi after 4 yrs **10.04 Lakh** (₹ 5.02 Lakh* + ₹5.02 Lakh**)

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Overview of the Agnipath Scheme

- **Recruitment Scheme:** Launched in 2022, Agnipath recruits armed forces personnel on four-year contracts to deploy younger troops.
- **Eligibility Criteria:** Open to candidates aged 17.5 to 21 years; no reservation for women; recruitment biannually through rallies.
- **Pay & Benefits:** Families of fallen Agniveers receive ₹1 crore; disability compensation up to ₹44 lakh based on disability severity.
- **Service Differences:** Agniveers do not receive pensions post-service; only 25% retained after four years qualify for pensions.
- **Training Progress:** Army has 80,000 trained Agniveers; Navy and Air Force also have completed batches, with more in training.

- a tax, hence not limiting State powers.
- **State Taxation Powers:** States can tax mineral-bearing lands under Entry 49, a general power to tax lands.
- **Fiscal Federalism Impact:** Judgment supports State fiscal autonomy, enhancing their ability to fund welfare services.
- **Dissenting Opinion:** Justice Nagarathna warned that unrestricted State taxation could lead to uneven costs and market inefficiencies.
- **Possible Union Response:** The Centre might amend laws to limit State taxation or prevent taxation on mineral rights entirely.

ECONOMICS AND DEVELOPMENT

TAXING MINERAL RIGHTS BOOSTS STATES' RESOURCE REVENUE

CONTEXT: The Supreme Court's landmark 8:1 ruling affirms that states can tax mineral rights and lands, safeguarding their legislative powers from parliamentary interference.

BACKGROUND: For decades, it was assumed that states couldn't tax mineral resources due to the central Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957. Although states have the right to tax mineral rights under Entry 50 of the State List, this right was considered limited by central regulations.



Supreme Court Ruling on State vs. Union Taxation of Mineral Rights

- **State Taxation Rights:** States can tax mineral rights under Entry 50 of the State List, but with limitations.
- **1957 Act Limitation:** Union claimed its 1957 law limited States' taxing power; Court found no such limitation.
- **Royalty vs. Tax:** Court ruled royalty is a contractual payment, not

SOCIAL JUSTICE

USING CHILDREN'S PERSONAL DATA LEGALLY AND SECURELY

CONTEXT: India's school education system, one of the largest globally, includes about 15 lakh schools, 97 lakh teachers, and 26.5 crore students across various levels.

BACKGROUND: Under the National Education Policy 2020, the Ministry has launched the Automated Permanent Academic Account Registry (APAAR), a unique identifier for students. It consolidates academic credentials and demographic details, including Aadhaar information, with user consent.

UDISE+ Platform and Data Compliance Challenges

- **UDISE+ Platform:** Launched in 2018, UDISE+ collects real-time data on school infrastructure, teachers, and student performance.
- **Objective:** UDISE+ aims to enhance educational quality by improving resource allocation, monitoring programs, and mapping trends.
- **Ease of Schooling:** UDISE+ and APAAR linkage aims to automate admissions and reduce dropout rates, enhancing educational opportunities.
- **Data Sharing Policy:** The Ministry's 2020 policy is outdated and doesn't align with the Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Act, 2023.
- **Compliance Issues:** Challenges include ensuring verifiable parental consent and aligning data sharing practices with DPDP Act requirements for legitimate purposes.

Privacy, Protocols, and Accountability in Data Management

- **Three-Part Test:** The Supreme Court's 2018 test for privacy includes legitimate interest, necessity, and legality of state action.
- **Aadhaar Compliance:** Integration with APAAR/UDISE+ must adhere to the three-part test to protect privacy and prevent data breaches.
- **Data Fiduciaries:** Identifying roles like data fiduciaries and processors is crucial, but current protocols for third-party integration are lacking.
- **Legal Liabilities:** The absence of clear legal liability and grievance mechanisms in the privacy policy highlights gaps in accountability.
- **Need for Protocols:** Developing technical and legal protocols for data management is essential to ensure data authenticity and stakeholder responsibility.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

A NEW PUSH IN THE BAY OF BENGAL

CONTEXT: At the 2nd Foreign Ministers' Retreat, BIMSTEC member states demonstrated a strong commitment to advancing a bold regional vision, highlighting their intent to drive significant progress for the region.

BACKGROUND: India hosted the 2nd BIMSTEC Foreign Ministers' Retreat in New Delhi, focusing on enhancing security, connectivity, trade, and investment in the Bay of Bengal region. The retreat, held in anticipation of the sixth summit in September, aims to finalize the BIMSTEC Agreement on Maritime Transport Cooperation.

Strengthening Ties with Eastern Neighbours through BIMSTEC

- **BIMSTEC Membership:** BIMSTEC, with seven member countries, facilitates India's engagement in the Bay of Bengal region.
- **Regional Importance:** India aims to strengthen ties with eastern neighbours to bolster economic development, security, and foreign policy.
- **China's Presence:** China's growing influence in the Bay of Bengal drives India to enhance relations with regional partners.
- **Access to Sea:** Improved relations with Bangladesh and Myanmar provide India's northeast region with crucial sea access.
- **Indo-Pacific Presence:** Stronger ties with Myanmar and Thailand support India's Indo-Pacific strategy and its engagement with ASEAN.

Key Discussions from the BIMSTEC Retreat

- **Regional Cooperation:** The first part assessed BIMSTEC's current cooperation, focusing on Agriculture, Disaster Management, and Maritime Transport.
- **India's Support:** India offered to support cancer research, e-visas for patients, and endorsed new ideas such as kidney disease inclusion.
- **Second Session Expectations:** Countries discussed summit expectations, including mapping mineral resources and integrating production stages within BIMSTEC economies.
- **Bangladesh's Proposal:** Bangladesh called for cooperation on the Blue Economy and seasonal fishing bans to address catch depletion.
- **Member States' Highlights:** Bhutan suggested tourism collaboration, Nepal advocated a regional synergy approach, while Thailand and Myanmar proposed non-traditional security and online scam measures.



Bilateral Outcomes from the BIMSTEC Retreat

- **India-Myanmar Concerns:** Mr. Jaishankar addressed issues with Myanmar regarding displaced persons, narcotics, arms, and unlawfully detained Indians.
- **India-Bangladesh Discussions:** A technical team for the Teesta project was requested by Bangladesh, aiming to resolve a long-standing issue.
- **Bilateral Meetings:** Jaishankar met various counterparts, reinforcing India's commitment to bilateral relations during the retreat.
- **Policy Anniversary:** The retreat marked a decade of India's Act East and Neighbourhood First policies, emphasizing regional collaboration.
- **Future Collaboration:** Jaishankar highlighted the need for new energies, resources, and renewed commitment to enhance future regional cooperation.

Overview of BIMSTEC

- **Formation:** BIMSTEC, established in 1997, connects South and Southeast Asia, including 5 South Asian and 2 Southeast Asian members.
- **Genesis:** Originally named 'BIST-EC,' it was renamed to 'BIMSTEC' in 1997 with Myanmar's inclusion and expanded with Nepal and Bhutan.
- **Objectives:** BIMSTEC aims to foster economic development, encourage partnership, and promote collaboration in education, science, and technology.
- **Principles:** It upholds sovereignty, territorial integrity, non-interference, and peaceful coexistence, complementing rather than substituting other cooperations.
- **Potential:** With 1.5 billion people and a USD 3.8 trillion GDP, BIMSTEC is a major economic growth engine and strategic hub.

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INDIAN POLITY

219 PROPOSALS FOR HIGH COURT JUDGES' APPOINTMENT ARE BEING PROCESSED: CENTRE

CONTEXT: The Union government reported that 219 High Court judge appointments are in progress, with the Supreme Court Collegium having processed 82 of 90 proposals received.

BACKGROUND: Union Law Minister Arjun Meghwal reported that, as of July 19, the Supreme Court Collegium has processed 82 out of 90 proposals from the government and is handling 129 new proposals. However, 138 High Court vacancies remain unaddressed, partly due to delays in recommendations from High Courts.

Appointment of High Court Judges

- Article 217: High Court judges are appointed by the President, advised by the CJI, Governor, and CJI of the High Court.
- Consultation Process: Judges are recommended by a Collegium of the CJI and two senior judges, initiated by the High Court's Chief Justice.
- Recommendation Flow: Proposals go from the High Court Chief Justice to the Chief Minister, then to the Governor, and finally to the Union Law Minister.
- Ad-hoc Judges: Article 224A allows retired judges to be appointed ad-hoc to address case pendency, with Presidential consent.
- Recent Developments: The Supreme Court has advocated for retired judges' appointments to manage High Court case backlogs, outlining new guidelines.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

I WILL NOT BE SILENT ON GAZA, HARRIS TELLS PM NETANYAHU

CONTEXT: Kamala Harris signaled a shift in U.S. Gaza policy, urging Israeli PM Netanyahu to secure a peace deal and pledging to speak out on Palestinian suffering.

BACKGROUND: Vice President Kamala Harris, diverging from President Biden's behind-the-scenes approach, publicly condemned the ongoing conflict in Gaza after meeting with Prime Minister Netanyahu. She highlighted the devastating impact on civilians and emphasized the need to address the humanitarian crisis and end the war.



Recent Political Developments on Gaza

- Presumptive Nominee: The 59-year-old Democratic presidential nominee, following Biden's withdrawal, expressed serious concerns about the Gaza situation.
- Human Suffering: Ms. Harris criticized the scale of human suffering in Gaza, including civilian deaths, during her meeting with Netanyahu.
- Biden's Position: Biden urged Netanyahu to finalize a ceasefire deal and end the Gaza conflict, according to a White House statement.
- Ceasefire and Statehood: Harris called for a Palestinian state and urged both Netanyahu and Hamas to agree to a ceasefire and hostage release.
- Trump's Critique: Republican candidate Donald Trump criticized Democratic rivals and pledged to pursue peace in West Asia if re-elected, after meeting Netanyahu.

Kamala Harris signaled a significant shift in U.S. policy on Gaza, urging Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu to finalize a peace deal and openly criticizing the ongoing suffering in Gaza. This marked a departure from President Biden's more subdued approach, with Harris calling for a ceasefire and the establishment of a Palestinian state. Meanwhile, Donald Trump also criticized his rivals and pledged to work for peace in the region if re-elected.



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—Benjamin Franklin



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