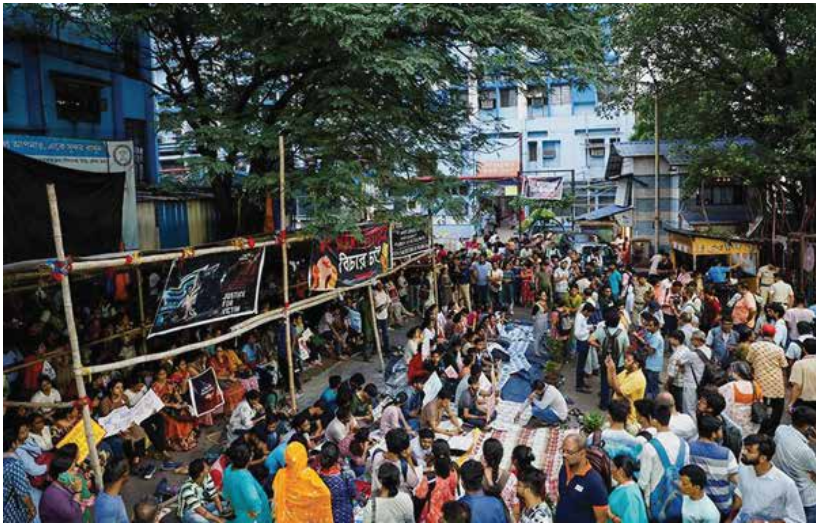


CBI TAKES OVER PROBE INTO KOLKATA DOCTOR'S MURDER

POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

CONTEXT: The Calcutta High Court has ordered a CBI investigation into the rape and murder of a doctor at a Kolkata medical college due to lack of progress in the police investigation.



CBI TAKES OVER INVESTIGATION INTO KOLKATA DOCTOR'S MURDER

Public Outrage and Lack of Progress: The rape and murder of a doctor at a Kolkata medical college sparked widespread protests and outrage. Despite the Kolkata Police's investigation, public and judicial concerns grew over the lack of significant progress in the case.

High Court Orders CBI Probe: The Calcutta High Court, citing the lack of progress and potential evidence tampering, ordered the transfer of the investigation to the Central Bureau of Investigation

(CBI).

Key Issues and Criticisms:

- The delay in registering a murder case instead of an unnatural death case raised concerns about the initial handling of the investigation.
- The role of the hospital principal in reporting the incident was questioned.
- The ongoing protests by doctors highlighted demands for improved safety and security for medical professionals.

Next Steps: The CBI is set to take over the investigation, with a team of experts arriving at the crime scene. The state government faces increased pressure to address the issues raised by the case and ensure justice for the victim.



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GLITCHES IN THE PORTAL HIT THE ISSUANCE OF BIRTH AND DEATH CERTIFICATES

POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

CONTEXT: The Civil Registration System (CRS), a central government portal for birth and death registrations, has been facing glitches for the past four months leading to delays in issuing certificates



Problems Plague Centralized Birth and Death Registration System in India New System Faces Glitches

The Civil Registration System (CRS), launched by the Indian government to centralize birth and death registrations, has been facing issues for the past four months. This malfunctioning has led to delays in issuing birth and death certificates across several states.

States Report Issues

Bihar, Nagaland, and Chhattisgarh are among the states that have reported problems with the CRS portal. These issues include:

- Extremely slow system response time
- Delays in generating OTPs
- Frequent error messages
- System crashes while entering data
- Inability to make corrections
- Portal outages

These glitches have caused a backlog in registration units and frustrated citizens seeking certificates.

Center Acknowledges Issues

The Union government acknowledges that there may be minor teething problems as states migrate to the new system. However, states argue that the problems go beyond minor hiccups and significantly disrupt the registration process.

Specific Issues Reported

States have identified specific problems such as:

- Loss of entered data due to page reloads
- Missing forms for reports
- Mandatory Aadhaar e-sign in for attaching documents
- Lack of daily registration number display
- Insufficient space for comments in the system

Need for Improvement

The central government needs to address these technical glitches and usability issues to ensure smooth functioning of the CRS portal. This will help streamline the registration process and provide timely birth and death certificates to citizens.

THE SHOCK EFFECTS OF SOUTH ASIAN TUMULT

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

CONTEXT: India's foreign policy challenges in South Asia, highlights the rapid political changes in neighbouring countries and their implications for India's regional standing.

South Asia's Tumultuous Decade and India's Lessons Regional Upheavals

Since the start of this decade, India has faced significant challenges in its neighborhood, including political upheavals in Myanmar, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, the Maldives, Nepal, and Bangladesh. These events have prompted India to reevaluate its diplomatic strategies.

One-Sided Diplomacy and its Pitfalls

India's tendency to align with specific political factions, such as its strong support for Bangladesh's Awami League under Sheikh Hasina, has led to vulnerabilities when political tides shift. The need for a more balanced engagement with all political stakeholders is evident.

Loyalty and Reputation

India's failure to support allies, like Afghan officials after the Taliban's takeover, has damaged its reputation. Maintaining loyalty to former partners, such as offering refuge to Sheikh Hasina, is essential for long-term diplomatic credibility.

Beyond Communal Binaries

India's approach of framing regional ties through a religious lens has been counterproductive, particularly with policies like the Citizenship Amendment Act. Good relations in South Asia require transcending communal biases and focusing on broader diplomatic principles.

Reviving Pan-South Asian Cooperation

India's diminishing influence in South Asia, particularly against China and the U.S., underscores the need to revitalize regional mechanisms like SAARC and BIMSTEC. Strengthening multilateral engagement without external interference is crucial for maintaining stability.

Addressing Root Causes of Unrest

The political instability in South Asia is partly driven by joblessness and inequality. While economic growth is important, sustaining democracy and allowing dissent are vital for long-term stability in the region.

ANALYSIS:

India's recent challenges in South Asia highlight the need for balanced diplomacy. The one-sided support to certain political regimes, such as Sheikh Hasina's in Bangladesh, has left India vulnerable to shifts in power. India must engage pragmatically with all political stakeholders, avoiding reliance on communal binaries, and fostering regional cooperation through mechanisms like SAARC and BIMSTEC. The erosion of pan-South Asian mechanisms and India's reputation as a reliable partner must be addressed. Additionally, economic progress should be paired with democratic stability to ensure long-term regional harmony and India's pre-eminence in the subcontinent.

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AN OVERVIEW OF GOVERNANCE IN DELHI

POLITY & GOVERNANCE

THE GIST

- The Supreme Court ruled that the Lieutenant Governor (LG) of the National Capital Territory (NCT) of Delhi can nominate 10 aldermen to the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) on his own without the aid and advice of its council of ministers.
- Since 2015, the Union government led by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Delhi government led by Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) have been at loggerheads on various issues.
- The judgments of the Supreme Court have resulted in amendments to the Government of NCT of Delhi Act that have curtailed the powers of the elected government in Delhi.

The Union versus Delhi

Since 2015, the Union government led by the BJP and the Delhi government led by AAP have been at loggerheads on various issues

Case / Amendment	Brief description	Implication
<i>Govt of NCT of Delhi vs Union of India (UOI) (2016)</i>	The Delhi High Court ruled that the LG of Delhi exercised complete control of all matters relating to the NCT of Delhi	It made the appointed LG the executive head, reducing the powers of the elected government of Delhi
<i>Govt of NCT of Delhi vs UOI (2018)</i>	On appeal against the Delhi HC judgment, the Supreme Court held that the LG was bound by the 'aid and advice' of the council of ministers headed by the Chief Minister of Delhi except on matters relating to public order, police and land	This restored the powers of the elected government of the NCT of Delhi in matters of day-to-day administration
Government of NCT of Delhi (Amendment) Act, 2021	It required the council of ministers to obtain the opinion of the LG before any executive action on matters specified by the LG	This amendment tilted the balance of power again in favour of the LG
<i>Govt of NCT of Delhi vs UOI (2023)</i>	A Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court in May 2023 had held that the Delhi assembly and government shall have legislative and executive powers over 'services' except in relation to public order, police and land	This restored the powers of the elected government of the NCT of Delhi in matters of day-to-day administration including postings and transfers
Government of NCT of Delhi (Amendment) Act, 2023	It created the National Capital Civil Service Authority for deciding on matters relating to 'services'. This authority will consist of the Chief Minister, the Chief Secretary and the Home Secretary of Delhi	This had the effect of again reducing the importance of the elected government and Chief Minister in decisions relating to 'services'

Delhi's Governance Conundrum A Complex Administrative Setup

Delhi's unique status as a National Capital Territory has led to a complex administrative structure involving the Union government, the Delhi government, and the Municipal Corporation of Delhi.

This division of powers has often resulted in friction and hindered effective governance.

The Power Struggle

The constant tussle between the Union and Delhi governments stems from overlapping jurisdictions and differing political ideologies. The Supreme Court's interventions have attempted to clarify the division of powers, but the underlying tensions persist. The Municipal Corporation of Delhi, with its own elected representatives, further complicates the governance landscape.

The Need for a Clear Division

To address these challenges, a clear demarcation of responsibilities between the Union and Delhi governments is essential. The Supreme Court's emphasis on accountability highlights the importance of a well-defined governance structure. While a constitutional amendment might be required for a more radical restructuring, immediate steps can be taken to adhere to the spirit of the Supreme Court's judgment and improve coordination among the different levels of government.

DOES INDIA HAVE LAWS ON THE MOVEMENT OF BALLAST WATER?

ECOLOGY

CONTEXT: India's lack of stringent regulations on ballast water discharge is contributing to the spread of invasive mussels, like the charru mussel, near Kamarajar Port, causing ecological damage and impacting fishermen's livelihoods.

THE GIST

- The Tamil Nadu Water Resources Department (WRD) has informed the National Green Tribunal that it has sought ₹160 crore from the Kamarajar Port in Ennore, Tamil Nadu, to facilitate the removing of invasive mussels on the coast near the port.
- When a ship discharges cargo, it rises up in the water and therefore, to keep a minimum level of immersion, ship staff take in sea water called ballast water inside tanks in the ship.
- The Ballast Water Management Convention of the International Maritime Organization came into force in 2017 to help prevent the spread of potentially harmful aquatic organisms and pathogens in ships' ballast water.

Ballast Water: A Silent Invader

Ballast water, used to stabilize ships, is inadvertently transporting harmful invasive species around the globe. The charru mussel, a prime example, has wreaked havoc on Indian coastal ecosystems. India's lack of stringent regulations on ballast water, unlike countries like Australia and New Zealand, has exacerbated the problem. This oversight is allowing invasive species to thrive, damaging marine life and impacting livelihoods.

The Problem of Invasive Mussels

The charru mussel, an invasive species, has proliferated near Kamarajar Port, Tamil Nadu, causing significant damage to marine ecosystems and hindering fishing activities. The Tamil Nadu Water Resources Department has sought ₹160 crore from the port to address the issue.

Ballast Water: The Culprit

Ballast water, taken in by ships to maintain stability, often carries harmful aquatic organisms and pathogens. Its discharge in new locations can introduce invasive species, as seen in the case of the charru mussel.

Global Efforts to Combat the Issue

The International Maritime Organization (IMO) introduced the Ballast Water Management (BWM) Convention in 2017 to regulate ballast water discharge. While many countries have adopted the convention, India is yet to sign on.

India's Stance on Ballast Water

India's lack of regulations on ballast water discharge has allowed ships to operate without restrictions, contributing to the spread of invasive species. Experts emphasize the need for India to join the BWM Convention to protect its marine environment.

MALAYSIAN PM, JAPANESE MINISTERS SET TO VISIT NEW DELHI NEXT WEEK

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

CONTEXT: India prepares for a flurry of diplomatic engagements, hosting the Malaysian PM and Japanese ministers in New Delhi while PM Modi plans visits to Poland and Ukraine.



DIPLOMATIC ENGAGEMENTS IN NEW DELHI Malaysian PM's Visit:

Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim is scheduled to visit New Delhi from August 19 to 21. This visit, his first since becoming Prime Minister in 2022, aims to strengthen India-Malaysia ties in strategic, trade, and defence cooperation. Discussions will also cover major developments in Bangladesh, Gaza, and Iran. Mr. Ibrahim's visit seeks to repair previous tensions between the two countries, which arose during the tenure of former Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad.

India-Japan 2+2 Dialogue:

Coinciding with Mr. Ibrahim's visit, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar and Defence Minister Rajnath Singh will host the India-Japan 2+2 talks in New Delhi on August 20. Japanese Foreign Minister Yoko Kamikawa and Defence Minister Minoru Kihara will join the discussions, focusing on India-Japan strategic ties, Indo-Pacific and Quad cooperation, and the situation in Bangladesh.

PM Modi's Upcoming Visits:

Following these engagements, Prime Minister Narendra Modi will travel to Poland and Ukraine from August 21-23. In Poland, he will hold bilateral talks with the Polish leadership. In Ukraine, on the "Day of the National Flag," he will meet President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, addressing concerns about India's stance on the Russia-Ukraine conflict and reinforcing India's neutral position.

ANALYSIS

India's diplomatic strategy showcases its expanding global influence, balancing regional partnerships with Malaysia and Japan while addressing geopolitical challenges in Europe. The visits aim to strengthen bilateral ties, enhance strategic cooperation in the Indo-Pacific, and clarify India's position on the Russia-Ukraine conflict, reflecting a nuanced, multipolar foreign policy approach.

TARANG SHAKTI EXERCISE TO BE BIENNIAL EVENT, SAYS IAF CHIEF

DEFENCE

CONTEXT: India's first-ever multilateral air exercise, Tarang Shakti, is set to become a biennial event as the IAF plans to expand its scope and frequency.

India's inaugural multilateral air exercise, Tarang Shakti, is concluding its first phase. Air Chief Marshal V.R. Chaudhari has announced plans to make the exercise a regular biennial event. The massive undertaking, involving 18 countries and 150 aircraft, aims to enhance international cooperation and showcase India's air power.

DRDO CARRIES OUT FLIGHT TESTS OF LONG-RANGE GLIDE BOMB

DEFENCE



India's Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) achieved a significant milestone on Tuesday with the successful maiden flight test of the long-range glide bomb, Gaurav. Launched from a Su-30 MKI fighter jet off the Odisha coast, the 1,000 kg bomb accurately hit its target on Long Wheeler's Island. Designed and developed indigenously by Research Centre Imarat, Hyderabad, Gaurav employs a precise hybrid navigation system to guide it to its target.

EGG OR SPERM DONOR HAS NO LEGAL RIGHT ON CHILD: BOMBAY HC

POLITY & GOVERNANCE



CONTEXT: Bombay High Court rules egg/sperm donors have no parental rights over child born through surrogacy.

The Bombay High Court has ruled that egg donors do not have parental rights over children born through surrogacy. In a case where a woman's sister donated her eggs to help her conceive, the court dismissed the sister's claim to motherhood. The court also granted visitation rights to the biological mother, who her estranged husband had denied access to her twin daughters. The judge referred to the National Guidelines for Accreditation, Supervision and Regulation of ART (Assisted Reproductive Technology) Clinics in India, enacted in 2005

The decision emphasizes the legal status of intended parents in surrogacy arrangements and underscores the importance of protecting the rights of biological parents.

FAR-RIGHT BEN-GVIR LEADS ISRAELIS TO AL-AQSA FOR PRAYERS

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

CONTEXT: Tensions rise as Israeli Minister Itamar Ben Gvir's visit to al-Aqsa mosque sparks controversy amid ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict.



MINISTERIAL VISIT:

Far-right Israeli National Security Minister Itamar Ben Gvir led hundreds of Israelis into the al-Aqsa mosque compound in annexed East Jerusalem on Tuesday, performing prayers to mark a Jewish holiday.

DEFIANCE OF GOVERNMENT BAN:

Mr. Ben Gvir, known for defying the Israeli government's longstanding ban on Jewish prayer at the site, vowed to "defeat Hamas" in Gaza in a video filmed during his visit.

CONTESTED HOLY SITE:

The al-Aqsa mosque compound is Islam's third holiest site and a significant symbol of Palestinian national identity. It is also considered the most sacred place in Judaism.

SPECIAL ARRANGEMENTS AT ALAQSA MOSQUE:

While Jews and other non-Muslims are permitted to visit the mosque compound during specified hours, they are not allowed to pray or display religious symbols. On Tuesday, Mr. Ben Gvir and approximately 2,250 other Israelis entered the compound in groups, singing Jewish hymns under the protection of Israeli police, according to an official from the Waqf, the Jordanian body that oversees the site.

AL-AQSA MOSQUE COMPOUND: A CONTESTED HOLY SITE

- The Al-Aqsa Mosque compound is a highly revered site for both Muslims and Jews.
- Muslims consider it the third holiest site in Islam.
- Jews regard it as the Temple Mount, their holiest place.
- Despite shared reverence, differing religious beliefs and historical tensions have made the site a focal point of conflict.
- Currently managed by Jordan's Waqf Department, the compound primarily serves as a Muslim place of worship.
- Non-Muslims can visit but cannot pray there.
- This arrangement, known as the "status quo," remains a contentious issue.

THE MELTING OF POLAR ICE DUE TO CLIMATE CHANGE IS MAKING DAYS LONGER

ECOLOGY & ENVIRONMENT

CONTEXT: There have been reports that melting polar ice due to climate change is causing the Earth to spin slower and lengthening days by milliseconds.



The coastline of a small island off the coast of Antarctica, seen from a window on a commercial flight in 2017. After the previous ice age, a large quantity of ice melted from the northernmost and the southernmost parts of the earth, causing the planet to spin faster.

MELTING ICE LENGTHENS DAYS, BUT IT'S NOT THE BIGGEST WORRY

The surprising consequence of melting polar ice: is a slight lengthening of our days.

The Science Behind It

- **Conservation of Angular Momentum:** As an ice skater spins faster with arms tucked in, Earth spins slower as polar ice melts and redistributes towards the equator, causing a bulge.
- **The Impact:** This bulge increases Earth's moment of inertia, slowing its rotation and lengthening days by milliseconds per century.

The Bigger Picture

- **Climate Change's Signature:** This effect highlights how profoundly climate change alters our planet, even affecting its rotation.
- **Milliseconds Matter for Technology:** Precise timekeeping for GPS, space travel, and other systems relies on matching Earth's rotation with atomic clocks. These minuscule changes can disrupt those systems.

A Race Against Time

- **Current Slowdown:** While lunar tidal friction already slows Earth's rotation, climate change is projected to become the dominant factor.
- **Curbing Emissions is Crucial:** Rising sea levels pose a far greater threat to coastal communities than a longer day. This emphasizes the urgent need to address climate change.

It's Not All Bad News

- **Balancing Act:** Earth's core rotation has a counteracting effect, speeding up rotation slightly. This complexity makes predicting leap seconds challenging.

Climate Change's Ripple Effect

This showcases how climate change isn't just about rising temperatures. It has far-reaching consequences for even fundamental aspects of our planet's behaviour. The call to action remains the same: we must act now to mitigate its effects.



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