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## 1.INDIA PULLS OFF A DIPLOMATIC COUP, WINS PRIZED ICJ SEAT

**Pride of place**  
India has managed to get its own man in The Hague court. A look into the process

- Five of the 15 judges of ICJ are elected every three years
- This year, there were six candidates for five places
- The winning candidates require a majority in both the General Assembly and the U.N. Security Council, in simultaneous voting through secret ballot
- While four candidates were elected smoothly, India's Dalveer Bhandari and U.K.'s Christopher Greenwood ended up in a deadlock as the former won in the UNGA and the latter won in the UNSC, in multiple rounds of voting
- U.K. wanted to end voting and move to a conference mechanism
- India opposed the move; U.K. could not gather adequate support
- U.K. withdrew its candidate



Dalveer Bhandari

India scored a major diplomatic victory as its nominee to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) Dalveer Bhandari was re-elected after the United Kingdom withdrew its candidate Christopher Greenwood. The U.K. chose to withdraw after it became clear that it would not win the contest in the General Assembly (GA) and it did not have adequate support in the Security Council (UNSC) for its attempts to derail the voting process itself.

### Many firsts

- ✚ This is the **first time in over seven decades** of the United Nations that the U.K. will not be represented in the ICJ; and this is the first time that one of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council lost out to an ordinary member in a race. This is also the first time that one sitting member of the ICJ lost out to another sitting member.
- ✚ The winning candidate required a majority in both the GA and the UNSC, but 11 rounds of voting until last week had ended with India winning in the GA and the U.K. winning in the SC.
- ✚ With the UK announcing its exit from the race, in the 12th round, Mr. Bhandari received 183 of the 193 votes in the GA and secured all the 15 votes in the Security Council after separate and simultaneous elections were held.
- ✚ The U.K. had nine of the 15 UNSC votes in the previous rounds, leading to a stalemate though India had an overwhelming majority in the GA. It initially wanted to suspend the voting process and move to a conference mechanism that has never been used in the history of the UN to break the stalemate. But this move needed approval by the UNSC in an open voting while the voting for the ICJ is through a secret ballot.

## **2.NO NEED FOR PRIVACY IN COURT, SAYS SC**

This was a follow-up to their March order to have CCTVs installed inside courtrooms and at vantage points within court complexes in at least two districts across States and Union Territories.



Dismissing apprehensions raised that such recordings would intrude into the privacy of judicial minds in action, Apex court responded, **“There is no privacy in a court. We are sitting here for all.”**

Appearing for the government, Additional Solicitor General submitted that the government has “already taken steps” and the financial outlay of the project is under preparation.

- ✚ The Bench had asked why the judiciary in India should be considered any different from the judges of other countries who do not consider recording of proceedings a violation of privacy of court proceedings.
- ✚ The Bench has even mulled the possibility of recording tribunal proceedings. The court has expanded the scope of a petition filed by Pradyuman Bisht for installing CCTV cameras in criminal courts as a measure to ensure fair trials.
- ✚ On March 28, the Supreme Court had directed that in at least “two districts in every State/Union Territory (with the exception of small States/Union Territories where it may be considered to be difficult to do so by the concerned High Courts) CCTV cameras (without audio recording) may be installed inside the courts and at such important locations of the court complexes as may be considered appropriate”.

### **Not under RTI**

- ✚ Monitor thereof may be in the chamber of the District and Session Judge concerned. Location of the district courts and any other issues concerning the subject may be decided by the respective High Courts. Apex court make it clear that the footage of the CCTV camera will **not be available under the RTI and will not be supplied to anyone without permission of the High Court concerned.**
- ✚ The court had ordered that the installation of such cameras should be completed within three months. It said the Registrar Generals of the respective High Courts should hand over a status report to the Secretary General of the apex court a month after the installations are completed.

### **3.MOVE TO SHIFT PROJECT TIGER OFFICE DRAWS FLAK**



The move to shift the office of the Additional Principal Chief Conservator of Forests - Project Tiger from Coimbatore to Chennai has drawn flak from nature enthusiasts and NGOs working in wildlife conservation.

✚ About four years ago, an office for Project Tiger was established in Coimbatore in a bid to have the official closer to the field. The objective of locating the office at Coimbatore **was to ensure instant, swift communication and co-ordination among the field directors of Project Tiger.**

✚ Coimbatore region in its close proximity has tiger reserves such as **Anamalai Tiger Reserve (ATR)**, **Mudhumalai Tiger Reserve (MTR)** and later came the **Sathyamangalam Tiger Reserve (STR)**. The only tiger reserve of Tamil Nadu which is located away is the **Kalakkad Mundanthurai Tiger Reserve (KMTR)** in Tirunelveli district.

✚ In addition, **accessibility to the nearest tiger reserve** of neighbouring States is also easy from Coimbatore for example the **Bandipur Tiger Reserve** in Karnataka is just abutting the MTR. On the other side, the **Parambikulam Tiger Reserve** of Kerala is just abutting the ATR. Even access to **Periyar Tiger Reserve** of Kerala is easy from Coimbatore.

#### **Several inadequacies**

✚ The office for tiger reserve is already plagued with so many infrastructural inadequacies and in the name of overcoming the same, shifting of the office to Chennai for the sake of infrastructure is not a solution. It is only shifting the problem. Keeping the office of a supervisory officer away from the field is not a prudent move. Effective, instant and swift interactions and remedial actions require that offices are situated closer to the field.

✚ The head of the project being closer to the field is far more important in the event of an incident or an offence. The person can reach the spot within two to three hours by road. Coimbatore is also well connected by air and rail. When the superior sits far away, the chances of slackness or complacency setting in among the field level staff is high, he expressed concern.

#### **4.DRONE MAPPING PROJECT BEGINS**

The Chennai Corporation started a project for mapping of utilities and private properties using **drones**, developing a **Geographical Information System (GIS)** based on the drone mapping.

The project will be **used for planning of development work** on a priority basis. The government will make major policy decisions based on the results of the survey. Chennai is the fourth largest local body in India. It has an area of 426 sq. km. and 75 lakh people. The World Bank has funded the project estimated at Rs.6.43 crore. Two unmanned aerial vehicles will be used to map the city.



- ✚ The civic body has obtained clearances from various agencies such as the Directorate General of Civil Aviation and district administrations of Chennai, Kancheepuram and Tiruvallur apart from the Home Ministry.
- ✚ The mapping is expected to be a tool to identify gaps in civic amenities. The project, proposed years ago, failed to take off because of the challenges in implementing modifications to the Ministry of Defence guidelines on digital map data handling.
- ✚ For the past few years, local bodies such as Chennai, Mumbai, Kolkata, Ahmedabad and Hyderabad have been appealing to the NIC on removal of restrictions, pointing to the several restrictions pertaining to key aspects of geo-reference maps, such as collecting and disseminating information on strategic areas.
- ✚ The removal of restrictions in many parts of the city is likely to be challenging, on account of strategic reasons. A more detailed digital mapping and a GIS based on the mapping would help plan the development of civic amenities. Each of the images **will be screened by the defence authorities** concerned and used only after clearance.

#### **5.KANNUR POLICEMEN UNWIND BY CULTIVATING PADDY**

- ✚ Policemen at Kannur have **joined hands with local residents** who have started a project to restore farmland lying fallow for several years. The policemen are farming a 2.5-acre paddy field, and in the process, giving themselves some time off from stressful law and order duties.
- ✚ Farmers of the Mundery panchayat have formed an agricultural development committee named 'Oruma,' whose aim is to revive paddy cultivation and other agricultural activities on 77 acres of land that have not seen rice seedlings for years. An initiative under **Haritha Keralam Mission**, the project envisions allocating plots of fallow land to groups ready to cultivate it.

- ✦ This mission found acceptance among different sections of the community, including the police. The personnel began working on the fields planting rice seedlings in the field, alongside farm workers.
- ✦ The policemen will join the farmhands in planting seedlings, removal of weeds, and other related activities during their weekly holidays, he said, adding that they would find it relaxing.

### **Their own money**

- ✦ The police will bear the cost of cultivating the 2.5-acre field they have been allocated. They can also sell the rice. The police station has introduced measures to give a facelift to its premises and offer a stress-free ambience to both the policemen and visitors. The policemen's involvement in the paddy initiative is part of a programme to wean youth away from divisive activities.

## **6.INDIA CALLS FOR STRONGER TREATIES TO PROTECT SPACE ASSETS**

- ✦ Stressing international cooperation in space as in all domains of global commons, Foreign Secretary called for strengthening **global treaties to protect space-based assets and prevent militarisation of outer space.**
- ✦ "International cooperation is critical in the space domain as in other global commons. Our approach therefore goes beyond national considerations. In fact, it is not an exaggeration to state that international cooperation is today hard-wired into India's space programme," Dr. Jaishankar said addressing a conference on the space programme jointly organised by the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) and the Federation of Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

### **Over 200 treaties**

- ✦ India had more than 200 international cooperation agreements with more than 40 countries and international organisations, and the maiden moon mission, **Chandrayaan-I**, is a successful example of international cooperation with international payloads.
- ✦ "The **South Asia satellite** is a matter of particular pride as it literally raises the heights to which we had taken our 'neighbourhood first' policy," the Foreign Secretary said.
- ✦ ISRO launched the communications satellite **GSAT-9**, also called SAARC satellite, meant to provide connectivity and disaster support to countries in South Asia. The satellite had a life span of 12 years.
- ✦ India is party to all the legally binding instruments on outer space. India has also noted with concern the growing diverse threats in this frontier and is sensitive to these challenges.

## **7.WTO: INDIA RESOLUTE ON FOOD SECURITY**

- ✚ At the upcoming meeting of the World Trade Organisation's (WTO) highest decision-making body, India **will not agree to severe restrictions on its right to give price subsidies to farmers through the Minimum Support Price (MSP)** to procure grains from them for food security purposes. The WTO's Ministerial Conference is slated to take place at Buenos Aires in Argentina next month.
- ✚ Currently, an interim mechanism called the '**Peace Clause**' is in place, as per which WTO members had agreed not to challenge developing nations at the WTO Dispute Settlement Mechanism if they breached the cap of the product-specific domestic support (which is 10% of the value of production).



**Peace clause:** The 'Peace Clause' is available to **developing nations**, including India, till a permanent solution is found to public stockholding for food security purposes. India would fight to ensure that at least the 'Peace Clause' is made the permanent solution, and will not accept any 'terribly stringent or onerous' conditions. However, the 'Peace Clause' is learnt to be difficult to invoke even in its current form because prior to using it, the country concerned will have to first admit that it 'is breaching' or 'is about to breach' the ceiling entitlement to give product-specific domestic support.

### **Difficult to invoke**

Also, the 'Peace Clause' can be used only for public stockholding programmes **that have been in existence** on the date at which it was agreed upon at the Bali Ministerial Conference in December 2013, and **not for new programmes** on public stockholding for food security purposes.

## **OTHER EVENTS**

### **1.LOW TARIFFS SLOWING NEW BIDS FOR WIND, SOLAR ENERGY PROJECTS: ICRA**

The renewable energy sector is in the **midst of a lull after the storm**, as bidding for wind and solar energy projects is seeing a short-term slowdown, said rating agency ICRA. With very limited progress on the firm bidding plans by the State-owned distribution utilities to award the wind energy projects, this particular sector is facing near term headwinds and the capacity addition in the near term remains adversely impacted due to migration from feed-in tariff to bid tariff route.

### **2.BOOST GAS SUPPLY TO PETCOKE BAN-HIT STATES**

India's Oil Minister asked state oil firms to boost the supply of gas and alternative fuels in States where petroleum coke and furnace oil are banned due to high emissions.

- ✚ India imports about half of its annual consumption of 27 million tonnes of petcoke.
- ✚ The country has banned use of petcoke and furnace oil in States around New Delhi and in the capital city to rein in pollution. Demand for petcoke has doubled in the past four years.

### **3.PENAL LAW SOON ON TRIPLE TALAQ**

The Union government has set up a ministerial committee to frame a new law that would attract penal provisions in the case of use of triple talaq or talaq-e-biddat for divorce between Muslim couples, and will be bringing the new Bill in the winter session of Parliament.

The Supreme Court had, in August this year, in a majority judgement **set aside the practice of talaq-e-biddat**, an arbitrary and unilateral decision by a Muslim husband to end the marriage by utterance of the word talaq three times.

### **4.LOWER IMPORT DUTY ON TEA WILL HIT SMALL GROWERS HARD**

Small tea growers see a major threat in the proposed **move to slash import duty on tea from 100% to 50%** by 2019. The organised industry too said the **proposal under the ASEAN Free Trade Agreement (AFTA)** may lead to a surge in imports to the world's largest black tea producing country.

Small tea growers express apprehension that a reduction in import tariff on tea will adversely affect the small tea growers community, who contribute 45% of India's tea output.

#### **Local populace**

- ✚ The economic uplift of the rural populace would be thwarted if tea from neighbouring countries like Indonesia and Vietnam was imported into India.
- ✚ Import liberalization on tea under AFTA will affect the livelihood of these people.
- ✚ The organised tea industry too apprehends a surge in imports. Also, the move would harm the Indian tea industry especially the segment that produces medium quality tea.