

03 MARCH 2018

1.Rajasthan's Gujjar quota faces a legal challenge:

Why in News?

The Assembly had unanimously passed the Rajasthan Backward Classes (Reservation of Seats in Educational Institutions in the State and of Appointments and Posts in Services under the State) Amendment Bill, 2019, on February 13, 2019, to give 5% reservation to Gujjars and four other nomadic communities in jobs and education in Rajasthan, citing them as being an “extremely backward class”, has run into rough weather.

The Bill had breached the 50% ceiling on reservation set by Supreme court in Indira Sawhney case. A public interest litigation petition filed in the High Court of Rajasthan.

Previous instance: In 2016 Rajasthan high court struck down, a Rajasthan government notification in October 2015 which gave 5% reservation to the special backward classes (SBCs), including Gujjars. This raised the reservation in the state to 54%, violating the 50%-limit set by the Supreme Court



About Gujjars:

- Gujjars are a pastoral agricultural ethnic group with populations in India, Pakistan, and a small number in northeastern Afghanistan.
- Gurjars have their own language, known as Gujari.
- They variously follow Hinduism, Islam, and Sikhism.
- The Hindu Gurjars are mostly found in Indian states of Rajasthan, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, Punjab Plains and Maharashtra
- The Gurjars are classified as Other Backward Class (OBC) in some of India's States and UTs. In Jammu and Kashmir and some parts of Himachal Pradesh they are categorised as a Scheduled Tribe

Indira Sawhney case, 1992:

A nine-judge Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court specifically answered the question “whether backward classes can be identified only and exclusively with reference to the economic criterion.”

“It may be a consideration or basis along with, and in addition to, social backwardness, but it can never be the sole criterion.

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The Indra Sawhney judgment **declared 50% quota as the rule** unless extraordinary situations “inherent in the great diversity of this country and the people” happen. Even then, extreme caution is to be exercised and a special case should be made out.

If the government proposes to bring a constitutional amendment to include the 10% quota for “unreserved economically weaker sections”, the 13-judge **KesavanandaBharati** judgment may stand in the way. The judgment held that constitutional amendments which offended the basic structure of the Constitution would be ultra vires. Neither Parliament nor legislatures could transgress the basic feature of the Constitution, namely, the principle of equality enshrined in Article 14.

2.DRDO Chairman won missile systems award

Why in News?

The American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics (AIAA) has selected G. Satheesh Reddy, the Secretary of India’s Department of Defence R&D and Chairman of the DRDO as the co-winner of the 2019 Missile Systems Award.

Dr. Reddy will share the prize with Rondell J. Wilson, a former Principal Engineering Fellow of Raytheon Missile Systems.

In brief:

He is the first person outside the U.S. to be awarded with this prestigious award in nearly four decades.

Over three decades he has significantly contributed towards indigenous design, development, and deployment of diversified strategic and tactical missile systems, guided weapons, advanced avionics, and navigation technologies in India, including an indigenous seeker.



3.U.S. seeks detail of ‘misuse’ of F-16s

Why in News?

The U.S. has asked more information from Pakistan on the potential misuse of American-made F-16 fighter jets by it against India in violation of the end-user agreement.

But, Pakistan categorically said that no F-16 fighter jets were used and denied the reports that one of its planes had been downed by the Indian Air Force.

The Indian Air Force displayed parts of an AMRAAM beyond visual range air-to-air missile as evidence to “conclusively” prove that Pakistan deployed U.S.-manufactured F-16 fighter jets during an aerial raid targeting Indian military installations.

F-16 Fighter jet:

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- It is a single-engine supersonic all-weather multirole fighter aircraft
- Developed by Lockheed Martin for the United States Air Force (USAF)
- It has advanced Active Electronically Scanned Array (AESA) radar, precision GPS navigation and the Automatic Ground Collision Avoidance System (Auto GCAS).
- It can achieve a speed of 2 Mach



4.ED questions Kochchars over loan scam:

Why in News?

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) quizzed Videocon Group MD Venugopal Dhoot, former ICICI MD and CEO Chanda Kochchar and her husband Deepak Kochchar for several hours in connection with a loan irregularity case registered against them.

Mr. Kochchar is alleged to have received kickbacks from Mr. Dhoot in exchange for subversion of rules and regulations while extending the loans worth several crores to Mr. Dhoot's company during Ms. Kochchar's tenure at helm of ICICI bank.

Enforcement Directorate:

- Directorate of Enforcement is a specialized financial investigation agency under the Department of Revenue, Ministry of Finance.
- It was formed in 1956, for handling Exchange Control Laws violations under Foreign Exchange Regulation Act, 1947.
- It is headquartered in New Delhi and has 5 regional offices at Mumbai, Chennai, Chandigarh, Kolkata and Delhi
- Currently it enforces the following laws:
 1. **Foreign Exchange Management Act, 1999** - A Civil Law, with officers empowered to conduct investigations into suspected contraventions of the Foreign Exchange Laws and Regulations, adjudicate, contraventions, and impose penalties on those adjudged to have contravened the law.
 2. **Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002** - A Criminal Law, with the officers empowered to conduct investigations to trace assets derived out of the proceeds of crime, to provisionally attach/ confiscate the same, and to arrest and prosecute the offenders found to be involved in Money Laundering.

5. "Abu Dhabi declaration":

Why in News?

Forty-Sixth Session of the Council of Foreign Ministers (CFM) of Member States of the OIC held in Abu Dhabi, capital of the UAE. It was attended by External affairs minister Sushma Swaraj, who was invited as a guest of honour.

It had issued the Abu Dhabi Declaration at the conclusion.

India had outrightly rejected the resolution by the Organisation of Islamic Countries (OIC) on Jammu & Kashmir.

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References contradictory to India:

- It has references such as “Indian terrorism” and “mass blindings”
- It had praised Pakistan for its “efforts” against terrorism and thrive for peace process
- Included a statement on “Muslim minorities” worldwide that called upon the Indian government to rebuild the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya.
- It condemns the trend of unprecedented escalation of ceasefire violations by Indian forces.
- It also included an appeal to OIC members to mobilise funds for humanitarian assistance to the Kashmiri people.

Organisation of Islamic Cooperation:

- It is the second largest inter-governmental organization after the United Nations with a membership of 57 states spread over four continents.
- It endeavors to safeguard and protect the interests of the Muslim world in the spirit of promoting international peace and harmony among various people of the world.
- Established in 25 September 1969 in Rabat, Morocco.
- Headquarters – Jeddah, Saudi Arabia

India has pushed for the OIC to accept India as a member, arguing that about 11% of all Muslims worldwide live in India. Pakistan opposes India’s entry into the OIC.

The reason for opposition to India’s entry into the OIC cited by Pakistan is due to the human rights issues and problems faced by the Kashmiris in the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir.

6.RCEP nations to intensify talks

Why in News?

The meeting of Trade Ministers of RCEP countries recently held in Cambodia.

It agreed to intensify ongoing negotiations for a proposed mega trade agreement to resolve all issues and conclude the talks

Members of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership want India to eliminate or reduce customs duties on maximum number of goods it trades with them. But, lower level of ambitions in services and investments, a key area of interest for India, does not augur well for the pact that seeks to be comprehensive.

About RCEP:

- The RCEP negotiations were launched by Leaders from 10 ASEAN Member States and six nations - **Australia, People’s Republic of China, India, Japan, Republic of Korea, and New Zealand** during the 21st ASEAN Summit in Phnom Penh, Cambodia in November 2012.
- It is the world’s largest economic bloc, covering nearly half of the global economy.

ASEAN nations:

Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Viet Nam

- It includes: trade in goods, trade in services, investment, economic and

Note



technical cooperation, intellectual property, competition, dispute settlement, e-commerce, small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and other issues.

Benefits for India:

RCEP is expected to provide market access for India's goods and services exports and encourage greater investments and technology into India.

It would also facilitate India's MSMEs to effectively integrate into the regional value and supply chains.

7.RBI slaps fines on four banks for 'violating norms':

Why in News?

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has imposed a penalty of Rs. 3 crore on Union Bank of India, Rs. 2 crore on Dena Bank and Rs. 1 crore each on IDBI Bank and the SBI for non-compliance with various directions.

They were penalised for the delay in adherence to RBI's directives on time-bound implementation and strengthening of SWIFT related controls.

Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication (SWIFT):

- It provides a network that enables financial institutions worldwide to send and receive information about financial transactions in a secure, standardized and reliable environment.
- It was founded in 1973.
- SWIFT is a cooperative society under Belgian law owned by its member financial institutions with offices around the world. It is headquartered in La Hulpe, Belgium, near Brussels.
- SWIFT assigns each financial organization a unique code that has either eight characters or 11 characters. The code is interchangeably called the bank identifier code (BIC), SWIFT code, SWIFT ID, or ISO 9362 code.
- It does not hold accounts for its members and does not perform any form of clearing or settlement.
- SWIFT does not facilitate funds transfer, rather, it sends payment orders, which must be settled by correspondent accounts that the institutions have with each other.

8.SpaceX astronaut capsule launched

Why in News?

SpaceX successfully launched a new astronaut capsule on a week-long round trip to the International Space Station.

A dummy named **Ripley** was placed inside the SpaceX's **Crew Dragon capsule** to test the forces that future astronauts will be subjected to while take-off and return to the Earth's atmosphere and then land in the Atlantic, braked by giant parachutes.

It was a key step towards resuming manned space flights from U.S. soil after an eight-year break, as NASA plans to put two astronauts aboard in July.

In another success, the rocket's first stage returned to Earth, landing on a platform 500 km off the Florida coast in the Atlantic. It marks the 35th such recovery by SpaceX.

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To Know:

After the shuttle programme was shut down in July 2011 following a 30-year run, NASA began outsourcing the logistics of its space missions. It pays Russia \$82 million per head for a round trip.

In 2014, NASA awarded contracts to SpaceX and Boeing for them to take over this task. But the programme has suffered delays as safety requirements are much more stringent for manned flights than for unmanned missions to deploy satellites.

Boeing also received a contract to develop a space vessel, the Starliner.



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