



News Analysis (20 Jan, 2021)

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Supreme Court Directive on Quota in Promotions

Why in News

Recently, the **Supreme Court** asked the **Attorney General** to compile the various issues being raised by States with regard to the application of a **Constitution Bench judgment of 2006 in M. Nagaraj case**.

- The directive is **based on a plea by the Centre to refer to a seven-judge Bench the question** whether creamy layer should apply or not to the Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribe community while providing them reservation in government promotions.
- The court in M. Nagaraj case had **upheld the application of creamy layer principle to members of the Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribe communities in promotions**.

Key Points

- **Creamy Layer:**
 - The term '**Creamy layer**' was first mentioned in the Supreme Court's landmark judgment in the **Indra Sawhney case (1992)**.
 - This term is used to describe some members of a backward class who are **socially, economically as well as educationally advanced** as compared to the rest of the members of that community.
 - They **lap up all the benefits of reservations** meant for that class, without allowing benefits to reach the truly backward members of that class.
- **Reason for Directing Compilation:**

The **issues raised by the states** regarding application of **creamy layer principle to members of the SC/ST communities** in promotions are not common, hence such issues should be compiled before considering referral to a seven-judge bench.

- **M. Nagaraj Case (2006):**
 - **Reversed the stance in the Indra Sawhney case:** In this case applying the creamy layer concept in SC/ST reservation in promotions, the Supreme court reversed its earlier stance in the **Indra Sawhney case (1992)**, in which it had excluded the creamy layer concept on SCs/STs (that was applicable on OBCs).
 - **Directives to the states:** The five-judges Bench in Nagaraj case upheld the constitutional validity of all **77th, 81st, 82nd, and 85th constitutional amendments** enabling reservation of SC/ST communities in promotions, but made certain directives for the states:
 - State is **not bound to make reservations** for SC/ST in the matter of promotions.
 - If a State wants to provide reservation to the SC/ST communities in promotions:
 - It has to collect **quantifiable data** showing backwardness of the class.
 - **Show inadequacy of representation of that class** in public employment **in addition to compliance of Article 335.**
 - State needs to ensure that its reservation provision **does not lead to excessiveness- breaching the ceiling-limit of 50%**, or destroying the creamy layer principle.
- **Other Related Judgements:**
 - In **Jarnail Singh v L.N. Gupta (2018) case**, SC refused to refer the Nagaraj judgment to a higher bench but later altered the decision by saying that **states will not be required to present quantifiable data of backwardness** of SC/ST communities.
 - **Reservation in Promotions is not a Fundamental Right:**
Reaffirming its stand in Nagaraj case, the Supreme Court in 2020 ruled that **reservation in the matter of promotions in public posts is not a fundamental right**, and a state cannot be compelled to offer the quota if it chooses not to.
- **Current Demand by the Centre:** The Centre asked the Court to review its stance of introducing the concept of creamy layer in SC/ST promotions on various issues:
 - **Could deprive backward classes from reservation:** The government believes that the 'creamy layer' will become a trick to deprive the backward classes of the benefit of reservation.
 - **Redundancy of proving backwardness again:** It is presumed that once they are added in the Presidential List under Articles 341 and 342 of the Constitution of India, there is no question of proving backwardness of the SCs and STs all over again.
The said List cannot be altered by anybody except Parliament under **Articles 341 and 342-** defining who will be considered as SCs or STs in any state or Union Territory.

Constitutional Provisions for Promotion in Reservation

- **Article 16 (4):** Provides that the State can make any **provision for the reservation of appointments or posts in favour of any backward class** of citizens who, in the opinion of the state, are not adequately represented in the services under the State.
- **Article 16 (4A):** Provides that the State can make any **provision for reservation in matters of promotion** in favour of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes if they are not adequately represented in the services under the State.

It was inserted by the **77th Constitutional Amendment Act, 1995**.

- **Article 16(4B):** Added by the **81st Constitutional Amendment Act, 2000** which enabled the **unfilled SC/ST quota of a particular year to be carried forward to the next year**.
- **Article 335:** It recognises that special measures need to be adopted for considering the claims of SCs and STs to services and posts, in order to bring them at par.
82nd Constitutional Amendment Act, 2000 inserted a condition at the end of Article 335 that enables the state to make any provision in favour of the members of the SC/STs for relaxation in qualifying marks in any examination.

Source: TH

SC Upholds Validity of IBC Amendment Act, 2020

Why in News

Recently, the **Supreme Court (SC)** has upheld the constitutional validity of the **Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) (Amendment) Act, 2020**.

Key Points

- **Background:**

- In its August 2019 order, the SC had **upheld the government decision to grant home-buyers the status of financial creditors.**

Financial creditor: It means any person to whom a 'financial debt' is owed and includes a person to whom such debt has been legally assigned or transferred to.

- Subsequently, the **government introduced the IBC (Amendment) Act, 2020, that mandated a threshold of at least 10% of home-buyers (or allottees) in a project or 100 of the total allottees** for initiating insolvency proceedings against the real estate developer.

- It means that **a single home-buyer is barred from approaching the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT)** under Section 7 of the IBC to initiate insolvency proceedings against the real estate developer/builder.
- Section 3 of the Amendment Act allows **home-buyers to seek the Corporate Insolvency Resolution Process (CIRP)** against builders **only when 100 allottees or at least 10% of allottees** make a joint application to NCLT.

The **allottees should be from the same real estate project.**

Aggrieved allottees drawn from different projects of the same developer cannot form the 100.

- A **30-day deadline** was given for existing applicants to find the requisite number of supporters to meet the threshold of 100, **else their plea pending in the tribunal even before the commencement of the 2020 Act would be deemed as withdrawn.**
- This was **done to prevent real estate projects from being stalled by few disappointed home-buyers/investors.**

- **SC's Ruling:**
 - **Threshold:**
 - SC said that insisting on a threshold in regard to these categories of creditors would **stop indiscriminate litigation.**
 - The court agreed with the legislature that **having a single allottee approach the tribunal would be risky**, considering that a corporate insolvency resolution may also entail a complete overhaul or replacement of the developer's company management.
 - Such an initiative by a lone allottee would **derail the plans of other allottees**, who still had faith in the existing developer or were pursuing other legal remedies.
 - The amendment reflects an attempt at **shielding corporate debtors (Real Estate Developers) from what it considers would be either for frivolous or avoidable applications.**
 - **Consensus of Creditors:**

The amendment is likely to ensure that the filing of the application is preceded by a **consensus at least by a minuscule percentage of similarly placed creditors.**
 - **Allotment:**
 - It does not matter whether a person has one or more allotments in his name or in the name of his family members.
 - **As long as there are independent allotments made to him or his family members, all of them would qualify as separate allottees and they would count both in the calculation of the total allotments**, as also in reckoning the figure of hundred allottees or one-tenth of the allottees.

Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code

- **Enactment:**

The IBC was enacted in **2016.**
- **Objective:**
 - To **streamline and speed up the resolution process** of failed businesses.
 - To **consolidate provisions of the existing legislative framework** to form a common forum for debtors and creditors of all classes to resolve insolvency.
 - To stipulate that the resolution process of a stressed company will have to be completed in a maximum of **270 days.**
- **Threshold Amount for Invoking Insolvency:**

In March 2020, the government raised the threshold for invoking insolvency under the IBC to **Rs. 1 crore from Rs. 1 lakh** with a view to prevent triggering of such proceedings against small and medium enterprises that are facing the heat of the Covid-19 pandemic.

- **Institutions to Facilitate Resolution of Insolvency:**

- **Insolvency Professionals:**

These professionals **administer the resolution process, manage the assets of the debtor, and provide information for creditors to assist them in decision making.**

- **Insolvency Professional Agencies:**

The agencies **conduct examinations to certify the insolvency professionals** and enforce a code of conduct for their performance.

- **Information Utilities:**

Creditors will report financial information of the debt owed to them by the debtor. Such information will include records of debt, liabilities and defaults.

- **Adjudicating Authorities:**

- The proceedings of the resolution process is **adjudicated by the NCLT**, for companies; and the **Debt Recovery Tribunal (DRT)**, for individuals.
- The duties of the authorities will include **approval to initiate the resolution process, appoint the insolvency professional, and approve the final decision of creditors.**

- **Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board:**

- The Board **regulates insolvency professionals, insolvency professional agencies and information utilities** set up under the Code.
- The Board consists of representatives of the **Reserve Bank of India**, and the Ministries of Finance, Corporate Affairs and Law.

Note:

- **Insolvency:** It is a situation where individuals or companies are unable to repay their outstanding debt.
- **Bankruptcy:** It is a situation whereby a court of competent jurisdiction has declared a person or other entity insolvent, having passed appropriate orders to resolve it and protect the rights of the creditors. It is a legal declaration of one's inability to pay off debts.

Source:IE

Domestic Systemically Important Banks

Why in News

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has retained **State Bank of India, ICICI Bank and HDFC Bank as Domestic Systemically Important Banks (D-SIBs)** or banks that are considered as “too big to fail”.

Key Points

- **Systemically Important Banks (SIBs):**
 - **Some banks, due to their size, cross-jurisdictional activities, complexity, lack of substitutability and interconnectedness, become systemically important.**
 - SIBs are perceived as banks that are ‘**Too Big To Fail (TBTF)**’. This perception of TBTF creates **an expectation of government support for these banks** at the time of distress.
 - SIBs are **subjected to additional policy measures** to deal with the **systemic risks** and **moral hazard** issues posed by them.
 - **Systemic risk** can be defined as the risk associated with the collapse or failure of a company, industry, financial institution or an entire economy.
 - **Moral hazard** is a situation in which one party gets involved in a risky event knowing that it is protected against the risk and the other party will incur the cost.
 - The disorderly failure of these banks has the **potential to cause significant disruption to the essential services** they provide to the banking system, and in turn, to the **overall economic activity**.
- **Background:**
 - **G-SIBs:** The **Financial Stability Board (FSB)**, in consultation with the **Basel Committee on Banking Supervision (BCBS)** and national authorities, has **identified Global Systemically Important Banks (G-SIBs)** since 2011.
 - **Financial Stability Board (FSB)** is an international body that monitors and makes recommendations about the global financial system. It was established in 2009. **India is a member.**
 - **BCBS** publishes the **methodology** for assessing and identifying G-SIBs.
 - **BCBS** is the primary global standard setter for the prudential regulation of banks. **RBI is its member.**
 - **G-SIIs:** The **FSB**, in consultation with the **International Association of Insurance Supervisors (IAIS)** and national authorities, began identifying **Global Systemically Important Insurers (G-SIIs)** in 2013.

IAIS, established in 1994, is a **voluntary membership organization** of insurance supervisors and regulators from more than 200 jurisdictions, constituting 97% of the world's insurance premiums.

Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) and the **International Financial Services Centres Authority (IFSCRA)** are its **members**.

- **Domestic Systemically Important Banks (D-SIBs):**

- The **BCBS** finalized its framework for dealing with **D-SIBs** in October 2012. The D-SIB framework **focuses on the impact that the distress or failure of banks will have on the domestic economy.**
- As opposed to the G-SIB framework, D-SIB framework is **based on the assessment conducted by the national authorities**, who are best placed to evaluate the impact of failure on the local financial system and the local economy.
- The **RBI** had **issued the framework for dealing with D-SIB in 2014.** The D-SIB framework **requires the Reserve Bank to disclose the names of banks designated as D-SIBs** starting from 2015 and place these banks in appropriate buckets depending upon their Systemic Importance Scores (SISs).
 - The **indicators** which are **used for assessment** are: **size, interconnectedness, substitutability and complexity.**
 - Based on their systemic importance scores in ascending order, banks are plotted into **four different buckets** and are required to have **additional Common Equity Tier 1 Capital (CET1)** requirements ranging from **0.20% to 0.80% of risk weighted assets (RWA).**
 - **CET1** is the highest quality of regulatory capital, as it absorbs losses immediately when they occur. It is a **capital measure introduced in 2014** globally as a precautionary means to protect the economy from a financial crisis.
 - **RWA**, are used to link the minimum amount of capital that banks must have, with the risk profile of the bank's lending activities (and other assets).
 - In case a **foreign bank** having branch presence in India is a **Global Systemically Important Bank (G-SIB)**, it has to maintain **additional CET1 capital surcharge** in India as applicable to it as a G-SIB, proportionate to its Risk Weighted Assets (RWAs) in India.

Domestic Systemically Important Insurers

- The **Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC), General Insurance Corporation of India** and **The New India Assurance Co** have been identified as **Domestic Systemically Important Insurers (D-SIIs)** for 2020-21 by **Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI).**
- **D-SIIs refer** to insurers of such size, market importance and domestic and global interconnectedness whose distress or failure would cause a significant dislocation in the domestic financial system.
- IRDAI, **just like the banking regulator RBI did to identify such “too big to fail” banks and NBFCs**, had endeavored to identify such companies in the insurance business in the March of 2019, in the **aftermath of the collapse of IL&FS** which triggered a massive liquidity crisis in the financial markets.

- The **International Association of Insurance Supervisors (IAIS)** has also asked all member countries to have a regulatory framework to deal with Domestic-SIIs.

Source: IE

Shadow Entrepreneurs

Why in News

There has been a **global rise of shadow entrepreneurship**, in various sectors such as **education** (certificates), **finance** (for easy loans), **the betting economy** (online games) and **healthcare** (e-pharmacies).

Key Points

- **About:**
 - **Shadow entrepreneurs** are individuals who manage a business that sells **legitimate goods and services** but they **do not register their businesses**.
 - This means that they **do not pay tax**, operating in a shadow economy where **business activities are performed outside the reach of government authorities**.
 - Types of businesses include **unlicensed taxicab services, roadside food stalls and small landscaping operations**.
 - In a study of 68 countries, the **Imperial College Business School** found that after Indonesia, India has the **second highest rate of shadow entrepreneurs**.
- **Causes for Rise in Shadow entrepreneurs:**
 - **Taxation & Enforcement:** **High tax rates** accompanied by **loose enforcement** induces **tax avoidance, discourage investment in formal businesses**, and drive entrepreneurial activity toward the informal sector.
 - **Impact of Covid-19:** Shadow entrepreneurs, offering **technology-mediated services**, bring complementary services that traditional service providers may be constrained to offer or consumers **might not be able to access** due to lockdown constraints.
 - **Technological Advancements:** Shadow entrepreneurship is also promoted through technology-enabled new markets and also entry of new and tech savvy consumers.

- **Benefits:**
 - Increase in employment: Most of Informal sector jobs come under shadow entrepreneurship.
 - Driver of economic development
 - Reduction in Poverty
 - Removes pressure on agriculture by providing non agricultural jobs.
 - Diversified options for consumers
- **Challenges of Shadow Entrepreneurs:**
 - **Decrease Competitiveness:**
Small firms will get acquired by large firms. First movers in the space with deep pockets could generate irrationally high valuations.
 - **Dubious & illegal:**
Recent events related to app-based loan providers who charge very high interest rates and dubious methods for recovery.
 - **Economic Loss:**
Loss of revenue as these businesses are not registered with the government.
 - **Corruption:**
They are beyond the reach of law making them vulnerable to corrupt officials.
 - **Asset Size:**
Informal entrepreneurs tend to invest in their businesses much less intensively than the formal ones, which implies that formality is positively correlated with asset size.
- **Suggestions:**
 - **Formalisation of Economy:** Where proper economic and political frameworks are in place, individuals are more likely to become 'formal' entrepreneurs and register their business, because doing so enables them to take advantage of laws and regulations that protect their company.
 - **Monitoring:** Strong monitoring of quality would be essential. This needs to be complemented with **non-compliance being punishable with a jail term**, clamping down on services and related strict consequences.
 - **Reward Compliance:** Those shadow firms that comply should be welcome to join the dominant mode of service delivery with non-shadow firms.
 - **Coordination among Agencies:** There also needs to be better coordination of **activities between authorities of governments** (for example the Ministry of Corporate Affairs in regulating shadow entrepreneurship and government departments in healthcare, education or finance).

Source: TH

Carbon Sequestration

Why in News

There has been **increasing investments to develop technology** in the field of **Carbon Sequestration** and fight the menace of **climate change**.

Key Points

- **Need:**
 - As Global Warming accelerates and society continues to emit greenhouse gases, the idea is gaining of investing in **artificial techniques of Carbon Sequestration**.
 - According to the **Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change**, nations may need to remove between **100 billion and 1 trillion tonnes of carbon dioxide** from the atmosphere this century to **avert the worst effects of climate change**, far more than can be absorbed by simply planting more trees.
- **About:**
 - Carbon sequestration is the **long-term storage of carbon in plants, soils, geologic formations, and the ocean**.
 - Carbon sequestration **occurs both naturally and as a result of anthropogenic activities** and typically refers to the storage of carbon.
- **Types:**
 - **Terrestrial Carbon Sequestration:**

Terrestrial carbon sequestration is the process through which CO₂ from the atmosphere is **absorbed by trees and plants through photosynthesis and stored as carbon** in soils and biomass (tree trunks, branches, foliage, and roots)
 - **Geologic Carbon Sequestration:**

CO₂ can be stored, including **oil reservoirs, gas reservoirs, unmineable coal seams**, saline formations and shale formations with high organic content.
 - **Ocean Carbon Sequestration:**
 - Oceans absorb, release and store large amounts of CO₂ from the atmosphere. This can be done in two ways- **enhancing productivity** of ocean biological systems through **Iron fertilization**, and **injecting CO₂** into the deep ocean.
 - The dumping of iron stimulates phytoplankton production, which in turn leads to enhanced photosynthesis from these microorganisms, helping in CO₂ absorption.

- **Methods:**

- **Natural Carbon Sequestration:**

- It is the process by which nature has achieved a **balance of carbon dioxide in our atmosphere suitable** for sustaining life. Animals expel carbon dioxide, as do plants during the night.
 - Nature provided **trees, the oceans, earth and the animals themselves as carbon sinks, or sponges**. All organic life on this planet is carbon based and when plants and animals die, much of the carbon goes back into the ground where it has little impact on contributing to global warming.

- **Artificial Carbon Sequestration:**

- Artificial carbon sequestration refers to a **number of processes** whereby **carbon emissions are captured at the point of production (e.g. Factory Chimneys) and then buried**.
 - One proposed method is ocean sequestration whereby carbon dioxide is **injected deep into the ocean**, forming **lakes of CO₂**. In theory, the CO₂ will stay down deep due to the pressure and temperature of the surrounding water, gradually dissolving into that water over time.
 - Another example is **geological sequestration** where the carbon dioxide is **pumped into underground chambers such as old oil reservoirs, aquifers and coal seams that are unable to be mined**.

- **Challenges of Artificial Carbon Sequestration:**

- **Lack of technology:**

- A growing number of corporations are pouring money into so-called engineered carbon removal techniques.
 - However, these technologies are at a **nascent stage** and need an **overhaul to be exploited**.

- **High Cost:**

- Carbon removal technologies remain **too expensive for widespread use**.
 - Artificial carbon sequestration is **costly, energy intensive, relatively untested** and has **no other side benefits**.

- **Environmental Concerns:**

- Carbon dioxide may be stored deep underground. Reservoir design faults, rock fissures, and tectonic processes may act to release the gas stored into the ocean or atmosphere leading to unintended consequences such as **ocean acidification** etc.

- **Potential of Artificial Carbon Sequestration:**

- **Faster Sequestration:**

- Natural sequestration is a slow process compared to artificial sequestration. Thus it can complement natural sequestering to achieve goals which are necessary to fight climate change.

- **Increase in Productivity:**

- Enhanced agricultural yield and better oil recovery as a result of stored carbon in underground chambers such as old oil reservoirs, aquifers and coal seams.

- **Employment Generation:**

- This new and emerging field is attracting private players and venture capitalists, which in turn can help in employment generation.

Open-RAN Architecture

Why in News

Recently, **Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI)** Chairman said that use of **Open-RAN (Radio Access Network)** and software defined telecom networks will open new opportunities for Indian entities to enter into the network equipment market.

Key Points

- **About:**

- **Open-RAN** is not a technology, but rather an **ongoing shift in mobile network architecture** that allows networks to be built using subcomponents from a variety of vendors.
 - O-RAN has an **open, multi-vendor architecture** for deploying mobile networks, as **opposed to the single-vendor proprietary architecture**.
 - O-RAN uses **software to make hardware manufactured by different companies work together**.
- The key concept of Open RAN is “**opening**” **the protocols and interfaces between the various subcomponents** (radios, hardware and software) **in the RAN**.

- **Radio Access Network (RAN):**

- It is the **part of a telecommunications system** that connects individual devices to other parts of a network through radio connections.
 - A RAN resides between user equipment, such as a mobile phone, a computer or any remotely controlled machine, and **provides the connection with its core network**.
 - As a technical matter this is what the industry refers to as a **disaggregated RAN**.

- **Elements of RAN:**

- **The Radio Unit (RU)** is where the radio frequency signals are transmitted, received, amplified and digitized. The RU is located near, or integrated into, the antenna.
- **The Distributed Unit (DU)** is where the real-time, baseband processing functions reside. The DU can be centralized or located near the cell site.
- **The Centralized Unit (CU)** is where the less time-sensitive packet processing functions typically reside.

- **Functioning of Open RAN:**

- It is the interface between the **RU, DU and the CU that are the main focus of Open RAN**.
- By **opening and standardizing these interfaces** (among others in the network), and incentivizing implementation of the same, **networks can be deployed with a more modular design** without being dependent upon a single vendor.
- Making these changes can also allow the DU and CU to be run as virtualized software functions on **vendor-neutral hardware**.

- **Traditional RAN:**

- In a traditional RAN system, **the radio, hardware and software are proprietary.**

This means that nearly **all of the equipment comes from one supplier** and that operators are unable to, for example, deploy a network using radios from one vendor with hardware and software from another vendor.

- **Problems:**

- Mixing and matching cell sites from different providers typically leads to a **performance reduction.**
- The result is that most network operators, while supporting multiple RAN vendors, will deploy networks using a single vendor in a geographic region which can create vendor lock-in with high **barriers to entry for new innovators.**

- **Advantage of O-RAN:**

- **Innovation and Options:**

An open environment expands the ecosystem, and with more vendors providing the building blocks, there is more innovation and more options for the Operators. They can also add new services.

- **New Opportunities:**

It will open new opportunities for Indian entities to enter into the network equipment market.

- **Cost Saving:**

- The benefits of this approach also include increased network agility and flexibility, and cost savings.
- It's expected to make **5G** more flexible and cost efficient.

Source:IE

Bandipur Tiger Reserve

Why in News

A stranded wild elephant was rescued in Nugu reservoir, close to **Bandipur Tiger Reserve** in Karnataka.

According to the **Tiger census 2018**, Karnataka has the second highest number of tigers in the country after Madhya Pradesh.

Key Points

- **Establishment:** It was established in 1973 under **Project Tiger**. In 1985, by including adjacent areas from **Venugopala Wildlife Park**, it was enlarged and named as Bandipur National Park.
- **Location:** It is situated in two contiguous districts (Mysore and Chamarajanagar) of Karnataka and is located at the **tri-junction area of the States Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Kerala**. It forms a part of **Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve**.
- **Ecological Diversity:** It lies in one of the richest biodiversity areas of the country. It is surrounded by
- **Biodiversity:** It is endowed with rich floral and faunal diversity and is recognized as one of the **Mega Biodiversity Areas in the country**.
 - The Bandipur along with Nagarahole, Mudumalai, Sathyamangalam & Wayanad constitutes the single **largest Wild population of Tigers in the world**.
 - This Landscape is also home to the **single largest Asian Elephant population** in the world and is part of the **Mysore Elephant Reserve (MER)**.
- **Rivers and the Highest Point:** The park is located between the **Kabini river** in the north and the **Moyar river** in the south. The **Nugu river** runs through the park. The highest point in the park is on a hill called **Himavad Gopalaswamy Betta**.
- **Other Tiger Reserves in Karnataka:**
 - Bhadra Tiger Reserve
 - **Nagarahole Tiger Reserve**
 - **Dandeli-Anshi Tiger Reserve**
 - Biligiriranganatha Swamy Temple(BRT) Tiger Reserve
 - Besides, **Malai Mahadeshwara Wildlife Sanctuary** has been proposed to be made a tiger reserve.

Asian Elephants

Subspecies: There are **three subspecies** of Asian elephant which are the Indian, Sumatran and Sri Lankan.

Source: TH

Indo-French Joint Exercise Desert Knight-21

Why in News

Indian Air Force (IAF) and **French Air and Space Force** will conduct a **bilateral Air exercise, Ex Desert Knight-21** at Air Force Station **Jodhpur** from 20 to 24th Jan 2021.



Key Points

- The exercise is unique as it includes fielding of **Rafale aircraft by both sides** and is indicative of the **growing interaction between the two premier Air Forces**.
- Presently, the French detachment for Ex Desert Knight-21 is deployed in Asia as part of their '**SKYROS Deployment**'.
 - Rafale fighter jets of India and France are carrying out **wargames codenamed Exercise SKYROS**.
 - Beginning September 2020, the IAF has inducted and operationalised eight Rafale fighter jets of the 36 jets contracted from France in a 7.87-billion euro deal in 2016.
- **Defence Exercises between India and France:**
 - Varuna – Naval exercise
 - Garuda – Air exercise
 - Shakti – Army exercise

Note:

- **Gagan Shakti** is conducted by the **Indian Air Force** to showcase its air dominance over the **entire extended area of the Indian Ocean Region**.
It includes all terrain operations – **desert, high altitude, maritime scenarios and special operations** – in real time with specific focus on key areas like aerial combat, air to surface combat, paratrooper assault and medical evacuation.
- **Garuda Shakti** is the **joint military exercise** between **India and Indonesia**.
- **Mitra Shakti** is the joint military exercise between **India and Sri Lanka**.

Source:PIB

Guru Gobind Singh

Why in News

Recently, the Prime Minister paid homage to **Guru Gobind Singh** on his birth anniversary.

Key Points

- **About:**



- **The last of the ten Sikh Gurus**, Guru Gobind Singh was born on **22nd December, 1666 in Patna, Bihar.**

His birth anniversary is based on the **Nanakshahi calendar** according to which it will fall on January 20 in 2021 while for the last year, it was celebrated on January 2.

- He **became the Sikh guru at the age of nine**, following the demise of his father, **Guru Tegh Bahadur, the ninth Sikh Guru.**
- He was **assassinated in 1708.**

- **Contributions:**
 - **Religious:**
 - He is known for his **significant contributions to the Sikh religion**, including the introduction of the **turban to cover hair**.
 - He also founded the **principles of Khalsa or the Five 'K's**.
 - The Five K's are **kesh** (uncut hair), **kanga** (wooden comb), **kara** (iron or steel bracelet), **kirpan** (dagger) and **kachera** (short breeches).
 - These were the five articles of faith that a **Khalsa must always adorn**.
 - He also laid down many other rules for the Khalsa warriors to follow like **abstaining from tobacco, alcohol, halal meat, etc.** The Khalsa warrior was also duty-bound to **protect innocent people from persecution**.
 - He named **Guru Granth Sahib**, the religious text of the Khalsas and the Sikhs, as the next Guru of the two communities.
 - **Martial:**
 - He fought against the Mughals in the battle of Muktsar in 1705.
 - In the Battle of Anandpur (1704), the Guru lost his mother and two minor sons who were executed. His eldest son also died in battle.
 - **Literary:**
 - His literary contributions include the **Jaap Sahib, Benti Chaupai, Amrit Savaiye, etc.**
 - He also wrote the **Zafarnama** which was a letter to the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb.

Source:TOI
