



Allahabad High Court Declares UP Madrasa Education Act Unconstitutional | Uttar Pradesh | 26 Mar 2024

Why in News?

Recently, the Allahabad High Court ruled that the **Uttar Pradesh Board of Madarsa Education Act, 2004**, is "unconstitutional" and violates the principle of secularism, and ordered the state government to accommodate current students in the formal schooling system.

Key Points

- The petitioner had challenged the **constitutionality of the UP Madarsa Board** as well as objected to the management of madarsa by the **Minority Welfare Department**, rather than the education department.
- The petitioner and his counsel submitted that the Madarsa Act **violates the principles of secularism**, which is the **basic structure of the Constitution**, fails to provide quality compulsory education up to the age of 14 years/Class-VIII as is mandatorily under **Article 21-A**; and fails to provide universal and quality school education to all the children studying in madarasas.
 - There are about **25,000 madrassas in UP** of which 16,500 are recognised by the UP Madrasa Education Board. Of them, 560 madrassas receive grants from the government. Apart from this, there are 8,500 unrecognized madrassas in the state.
- In 2004, the Madarsa Education Act was enacted by the government. Similarly, the **Sanskrit Education Council** has also been formed in the state.
 - The objective of both the boards was to **promote languages like Arabic, Persian and Sanskrit**.
- According to the UP Madrasa Education Board Chairman the board will study the decision and decide the further course of action.

UP Madrasa Education Act, 2004

- The legislation was **enacted in 2004 to streamline madrasa education**, defining it as education in Arabic, Urdu, Persian, Islamic studies, Tibb (traditional medicine), philosophy and other specified branches.
- The board was then reconstituted, comprising a **chairperson, director, principal** of the state-run Oriental College in Rampur, a **legislator** each representing the **Sunni and Shia sects**, an **NCERT representative**, heads and teachers of Sunni and Shia institutions, and a science or Tibb teacher.

Article 21 (A)

- Right to Education declares that the State shall provide free and compulsory education to all children of the **age of six to fourteen years**.
- This provision makes only elementary education a Fundamental Right and not higher or professional education.
- This provision was added by the **86th Constitutional Amendment Act of 2002**.
- Before the 86th amendment, the Constitution contained a provision for free and compulsory education for children under **Article 45 in Part IV** of the constitution.

Singapore President Arrives in Jodhpur | Rajasthan | 26 Mar 2024

Why in News?

Recently, **Singapore President** Tharman Shanmugaratnam **arrived in Rajasthan's Jodhpur**. His visit to India comes at a time when **External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar is on a visit to Singapore**.

- Indian-origin economist, **Tharman Shanmugaratnam was sworn in as the 9th Singapore President in September 2023**.

Key Points

- According to the sources, the External Affairs Minister started his Singapore visit by paying homage to [Subhash Chandra Bose](#) and the brave [Indian National Army](#) soldiers.
 - He also engaged in discussions with prominent corporate figures from the country who offered positive feedback on India's growth story derived from their investment experiences.
- According to the High Commission of India in Singapore, the [ties between India and Singapore](#) have a history rooted in **strong commercial, cultural and people-to-people links**. India was one of the **first countries to recognise Singapore in 1965**.
 - The relations between India and Singapore are based on shared values and approaches, economic opportunities and convergence of interests on key issues.
 - There are more than **20 regular bilateral mechanisms, dialogues and exercises**.
 - The two nations have great convergence on a broad range of international issues and both are members of a number of forums, including the [East Asia Summit](#), [G20](#), [the Commonwealth](#), [Indian Ocean Rim Association \(IORA\)](#) and the [Indian Ocean Naval Symposium \(IONS\)](#).

Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA)

- It is an intergovernmental organisation established to promote economic cooperation and regional integration among countries bordering the **Indian Ocean**.
- IORA member states **work on various initiatives related to trade, investment, and sustainable development** in the Indian Ocean region (IOR).

Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS)

- The IONS is a **voluntary and inclusive initiative that brings together navies of IOR littoral states** to increase maritime co-operation and enhance regional security.
- It also serves to develop an effective response mechanism and Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) against [natural disasters](#).

ONGC to Drill Well in Bihar | Bihar | 26 Mar 2024

Why in News?

[Oil and Natural Gas Corp \(ONGC\)](#) plans to drill a well in Bihar to look for oil and gas.

- A **commercial discovery** will put the state on India's oil map and also open up for exploration the entire [Ganga basin](#) stretching from **Bihar to Uttar Pradesh and Punjab**.

Key Points

- The company has **acquired 3D seismic data for 300 sq. km** for its block in **Samastipur** and is set to drill two exploratory wells.
 - The first drilling will be carried out in 2024.
 - Besides this, the oil and gas producer also plans to drill an exploratory well in another block in the **Ganga basin in Ballia**, Uttar Pradesh.
- Data from the first well's drilling will help guide the company's plans for the rest of the exploration block, including drilling of the second well.
 - Both blocks in Samastipur and Ballia were obtained in the fourth [Open Acreage Licensing Policy \(OALP\)](#) round a few years ago.

Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC)

- It is a [Maharatna Public Sector Undertaking \(PSU\)](#) of the Government of India.
- It was **set up in 1995** and is under the **Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas**.
- It is the largest crude oil and natural gas company in India, **contributing around 70% to Indian domestic production**.

Ganga Basin

- The headwaters of the Ganga called the '**Bhagirathi**' are **fed by the Gangotri Glacier** and joined by the Alaknanda at Devprayag in Uttarakhand.
- At Haridwar, **Ganga emerges from the mountains** to the plains.
- The Ganga is joined by many tributaries from the Himalayas, a few of them being major rivers such as the Yamuna, the Ghaghara, the Gandak, and the Kosi.



Bihar Diwas 2024 | Bihar | 26 Mar 2024

Why in News?

Bihar day or Bihar diwas is **marked on 22nd March every year**. It is a public holiday across the state as offices, organisations, banks, and educational institutions under the central and state government remain shut.

Key Points

- The Bihar Day 2024 marks the **fulfilment of 111 years since the state was founded**, making it a critical achievement for individuals of Bihar to consider their history and celebrate their identity.
 - The Bihar government has coordinated a line of multicultural events and programs to celebrate the entire day.
 - The celebration was held with the intention of restoring the people's pride in the state of Bihar.
- Bihar Diwas marks the development of the state from the Bengal presidency. The state was shaped on **22nd March, 1912**, when the British government partitioned the Bengal Province.
 - The celebration of Bihar Diwas is marked by gaiety and enthusiasm. This is due to the fact that it denotes the foundation of their way of life as a particular state with a **unique cultural legacy**.
 - The day also gives the people of Bihar a chance to show off their **history, culture, traditions, and heritage**.
- Apart from India, it is celebrated in nations including the United States, Canada, Bahrain, Qatar, United Arab Emirates, Germany, Britain (Scotland), Australia, Trinidad and Tobago and Mauritius.



Over 700 Yoga Exponents Participated in Global Fest in Uttarakhand | Uttarakhand | 26 Mar 2024

Why in News?

Recently, more than 700 yoga exponents and practitioners from across the country and abroad participated in the week-long annual [International Yoga Festival](#) in Uttarakhand's Rishikesh.

Key Points

- Organised by the **Uttarakhand Tourism Development Board**, the festival was held at the **Yog Bharat Ganga Ghat at Muni-Ki-Reti**.
 - The state government has been promoting the International Yoga Festival with an intent to provide a common platform for yoga enthusiasts, trainers, experts and students within India and beyond. **Rishikesh has become the global yoga capital** and this festival plays a vital role to further that.
- Yoga and religious institutions like **Ramamani Iyengar Memorial Yoga Institute, Isha Foundation, Shivanand Ashram, Manav Dharma Ashram and Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram** also participated in the festival.

International Day of Yoga (IDY)

- It is celebrated on **21st June**, every year. The idea of IDY was proposed by India during the opening of the 69th session of the **United Nations General Assembly (UNGA)**, held in 2014.
- The **first Yoga Day celebrations in 2015** at Rajpath in New Delhi created two Guinness World Records.

Chhattisgarh HC Rules Against Exemption of Economic Offenses Bureau | Chhattisgarh | 26 Mar 2024

Why in News?

Recently, in a significant judgment, the Chhattisgarh high court has ruled that the notification dated **7th November, 2006**, exempting the **Chhattisgarh State Economic Offenses Investigation Bureau** from the provisions of the [Right to Information \(RTI\) Act, 2005](#) contradicts the first proviso to **Section 24(4)** of the said Act.

Key Points

- According to the judgment, the impugned notification issued by the **General Administration Department of the Government of Chhattisgarh** cannot allow the government to withhold information pertaining to allegations of corruption involving the Bureau, except for information relating to sensitive and confidential activities undertaken by the said Bureau.
- In light of this ruling, the court directed the state government to issue a clarificatory notification within three weeks.
- On 15 November, 2016, the RTI activist and the petitioner had filed an application seeking information from the Economic Offenses Investigation Bureau.

- In response, the Economic Offenses refused to provide information, stating that the state government had exempted the agency from providing information under the Right to Information Act through the notification issued on 7th November, 2006.
- Challenging this notification, the RTI activist filed a petition before the division bench of the Chhattisgarh High Court, stating that **Section 24(4) of the Right to Information Act, 2005 mentions that no institution can be exempted from providing information** related to corruption and violations of human rights.

Right to Information (RTI) Act, 2005

- It is a legislative framework that empowers Indian citizens to **access information held by public authorities**. Enacted in 2005, the act aims to promote **transparency, accountability, and participation in government processes**.
- It replaced the **Freedom of Information Act 2002**.
- According to Section 22 of RTI Act, the provisions of this Act will be **effective regardless of any contradictions with the Official Secrets Act of 1923**, existing laws, or any agreements established through laws other than this Act

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