FINDER
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Restoring the 'menace' of unfettered discretion

Prelims: General Studies Paper - 1
Indian Polity and Governance - Constitution, Political System, Panchayati Raj, Public Policy, Rights Issues

Mains: General Studies - 2
Functions and responsibilities of the Union and the States, issues and challenges pertaining to the federal structure, devolution of powers and finances up to local levels and challenges therein.

1. Background

- In April 2025, the Supreme Court in **State of Tamil Nadu vs Governor of Tamil Nadu** addressed **indefinite delays by Governors in assenting to State Bills.**
- The Court **fixed definitive timeline**s, allowed judicial intervention, and recognised **deemed assent** for unexplained inaction under **Article 200.**
- The verdict strengthened **legislative supremacy** and **reduced policy paralysis** in Opposition-ruled States.
- Soon after, in **Special Reference No. 1 of 2025**, a Constitution Bench led by then CJI B.R. Gavai **diluted this framework.**
- The advisory opinion held that **timelines lack constitutional text,** deemed assent is impermissible, and assenting powers allow delays.
- Though advisory, the opinion carries **high persuasive value**, weakening the April ruling.

Article 200 of the Constitution

- Article 200 governs the **Governor's role in the State law-making process** after a Bill is passed by the State Legislature.
- The Governor may **assent to the Bill, withhold assent**, or **reserve** it for the President's consideration.
- For **non-Money Bills**, the Governor may **return the Bill** once with recommendations for reconsideration as soon as possible.
- If the Legislature **repasses the returned Bill**, with or without amendments, the **Governor cannot withhold assent.**
- The Governor is **mandated to reserve a Bill** for the President if it **endangers the constitutional position of the High Court.**

2. Issues

- Article 200 is framed as a **constitutional dialogue**, but **silence by Governors** is effectively legitimised.
- **Judicial relief for delay is limited** to directing a decision, with no enforceable consequence.
- Removal of timelines **enables procedural limbo** for State legislation.
- The **binding nature of re-enacted Bills** under the first proviso to Article 200 is diluted.
- Governors can now **refer Bills to the President even after reconsideration**, creating a **constitutional black hole.**
- The principle that **what cannot be done directly cannot be done indirectly** is abandoned:
- Prolonged inaction is criticised, yet **unlimited referral power** achieves the same result.
- Unchecked referral discretion disregards long-standing State concerns noted by the **Sarkaria Commission.**
- By invoking **checks and balances**, the Court **wrongly elevates assent into a quasi-judicial safeguard**, even though courts are the proper forum to test legislative validity.
- **Delay** or **denial of assent** lacks effective remedy, thereby **distorting federal balance in favour of the Union.**

The Oman visit is more than a routine diplomatic trip

Prelims: General Studies Paper - 1
Current events of national and international importance

Mains: General Studies - 2
India and its neighborhood- relations.

1.Background

- **PM Modi's visit to Oman on December 17, amid regional geopolitical flux post-Gaza ceasefire, tariff wars, conflicts, energy transitions, and connectivity corridors, aims to bolster bilateral ties** during uncertainties.
- The **trip marks 70 years of India-Oman diplomatic relations**, highlighting enduring partnership.
- This is Modi's second Oman visit since 2018, following Sultan Haitham bin Tariq's India trip on December 16, 2023.

2. Oman: India's Trusted Partner

- **Oman kept doors open to India when the region favored Pakistan, serving as an island of peace** with a foreign policy of moderation, mediation, and neutrality.
- **Key to India's West Asia policy since the 2008 agreement;** Oman was India's G20 guest in 2023.
- **MoU since 2005 enables joint exercises with all three Indian defence wings**; Indian naval ships on anti-piracy duty since 2012-13; **Duqm Port logistics deal (2018)** for naval basing; overflight facilities.
- **Bilateral trade hit $10.613 billion in FY 2024-25**; $605.57 million FDI from Oman (2000-2025); Oman-India Joint Investment Fund invested $600 million, including $300 million in 2023.
- **The 2022 MoU between Oman's Central Bank and NPCI links payments, launching RuPay cards in Oman** to promote India's Digital Public Infrastructure globally.

3. Key Areas of Future Collaboration

- **Trade Boost:** Likely Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) signing (second after UAE) to diversify amid US tariffs.
- **Connectivity**: Oman's key role in the **India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor** (IMEC) from G20 2023.
- **Energy Ties:** Navigate energy transition through Green hydrogen, renewables, minerals; strategic petroleum reserves like UAE.
- **Defence Expansion:** Joint facilities, Tejas jets, patrol ships, radars; Jaguar spares deal.
- **Tech & Security:** Space cooperation renewal; counter-terror, anti-piracy enhancement.
- **Education:** Likely setup of Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) and Indian Institute of Management (IIM) campuses in Oman.

4.Way Ahead

- **Reaffirms Oman as India's most trusted strategic partner** in a rapidly changing Gulf region.
- **Aligns India's expanding regional footprint with cooperation in trade, green energy,** connectivity, and defence.
- **Sets the stage for a deeper, future-oriented partnership** shaping India's West Asia engagement.

Why were IndiGo operations disrupted?

Prelims: General Studies Paper - 1
Economic and Social Development-Sustainable Development, Poverty, Inclusion, Demographics, Social Sector Initiatives, etc.

Mains: General Studies - 3
Infrastructure: Energy, Ports, Roads, Airports, Railways etc.

1. Context

- In **early December**, **IndiGo Airlines** witnessed a **near-total operational meltdown**, cancelling **over 5,000 flights** in the first 10 days of the month.
- This followed **nearly 900 cancellations in November**, affecting around **12.5 lakh passengers**.
- The crisis brought renewed attention to **Flight Duty Time Limitations (FDTL)** and long-standing tensions between **airlines and pilots**.

2. Immediate Causes of the Disruption

- Severe **planning gaps in pilot rostering** and **misjudgement of pilot availability** under the **new DGCA rest and duty rules** effective from **November 1**.
- Operational chaos included **crew at wrong stations**, **pilots without duty assignments**, **misplaced baggage**, and **call centre failures**.
- Contributing factors:
  - **Shortage of 65 pilots-in-command**
  - **Minor technical glitches**
  - **Winter schedule changes**
- **Adverse weather** and **aviation system congestion**
- IndiGo sought and received **DGCA exemptions until February 10**, alongside **₹1,100 crore in refunds** and **₹10,000 vouchers** for severely impacted passengers.

3. Regulatory and Structural Backdrop

- The dispute traces back to **FDTL rules**, shaped by:
  - The **2010 Mangalore air crash**, which highlighted pilot fatigue during the **"Window of Circadian Low" or the period between 2 am to 6 am when the ability to stay awake reduces**.
  - The **2011 Nasim Zaidi Committee Report**, drawing on **NASA fatigue studies**.
- **2011 rules**:
  - Barred **consecutive night duties**
  - Capped **night landings at 2 hours**
  - Limited **maximum duty hours to 9**
- But **these were reversed in the 2019 rules**, which allowed up to **two consecutive nights of duty, and used vague language** to define maximum flying hours and duty hours for night shift
- After **pilot bodies approached the Delhi High Court**, the **DGCA issued revised rest and duty norms in January 2024**, which were largely welcomed for being **more pilot-friendly and safety-oriented**.
- However, airlines warned that implementing them immediately would lead to **flight cancellations and pilot shortages**, resulting in a pause in rollout.
- The matter returned to the **Delhi High Court**, which in **April 2025 directed phased implementation** of the revised rules.:
  - Most clauses from **July 1**
  - **Night-duty rules from November 1**, the very provisions for which **IndiGo obtained exemptions**.
- Other airlines avoided disruptions due to **surplus pilots from grounded aircraft or delayed deliveries**, unlike IndiGo's **tight cost-efficiency model**.

4. Way Forward and Policy Concerns

- Need to:
  - **Rebuild employee morale** across pilots, cabin crew, and ground staff.
  - Expand the regulator's focus on **human factors in aviation safety**, not just labour disputes.
- Structural issues in **pilot training**:
  - **Exorbitant training costs** (₹1.2–1.5 crore) leading to **long-term debt bondage**.
- Policy recommendations:
  - Strengthen the **Passenger Charter of Rights**.
  - Ensure **transparent disclosure** of delay and cancellation policies on the **DGCA website**.
  - Promote **greater market competition** and address **high operational costs** in aviation.

Does India need to upgrade its biosecurity measures?

Prelims: General Studies Paper - 1
General issues on Environmental ecology, Biodiversity and Climate Change

Mains: General Studies - 3
Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment

1. Background

- Advances in **new-age biotechnologies** increase human ability to understand and **manipulate biology**, raising risks of **intentional misuse.**

- **Biosecurity** involves systems to prevent **deliberate misuse of biological agents,** covering human, animal, and agricultural health,
- It differs from **biosafety**, which prevents **accidental leaks.**
- Global concern led to the **Biological Weapons Convention (1975)**, banning development and **stockpiling** of biological weapons.

2. Why Biosecurity Matters for India

- India's **geography, ecology, large population**, and **agricultural dependence** heighten vulnerability to bio-risks.
- Though n**o confirmed biosecurity attack** has occurred, reports of alleged **Ricin** ((derived from castor oil) **preparation** for a terror attack highlight risks from **non-state actors.**
- **Rapid diffusion of biotechnology** increases the probability of malicious experimentation with biological agents.
- India ranks **66th on the Global Health Security Index;** while biothreat detection has improved, **response capacity has declined**, exposing **systemic gaps**.

3. Existing Framework and Gaps

- **Multiple agencies** address bio-risks:
  - **Department of Biotechnology** (research governance and lab safety),
  - **National Centre for Disease Control** (outbreak surveillance),
  - **Department of Animal Husbandry** and Dairying (livestock and transboundary diseases),
  - **Plant Quarantine Organisation of India** (agricultural biosecurity).
- **Legal and policy tools** include:
  - **Environment (Protection) Act, 1986**,
  - **Weapons of Mass Destruction** and their Delivery Systems (Prohibition of Unlawful Activities) Act, 2005,
  - Biosafety Rules, 1989,
  - Recombinant DNA Research and Biocontainment Guidelines, 2017,
  - **National Disaster Management Authority guidelines** on biological disasters.
- India participates in global biosecurity regimes such as the **Biological Weapons Convention** and the **Australia Group**.
- Despite this, a **unified national biosecurity framework is still evolving,** limiting coordinated response.

Way Forward

- Develop a **national biosecurity framework** to coordinate across agencies and sectors.
- Use this framework to **identify infrastructure and capability gaps**,

KEYWORDS

Sarkaria Commission

- The Sarkaria Commission was **constituted in 1983** by the Central Government to **examine Centre - State relations**.
- It was **chaired by Justice R.S. Sarkaria**, a retired Supreme Court judge, and was a three-member commission.
- The Commission **reviewed the working of existing constitutional arrangements** and suggested improvements across all spheres.
- Though initially given one year, its **term was extended four times,** and the final report was submitted in 1988.
- It upheld the **soundness of existing constitutional structures** and opposed major **structural changes.**
- The Commission stressed **functional and operational reforms**, viewing **federalism** as a cooperative, dynamic arrangement.
- It **rejected demands to curtail Centre's powers**, arguing that a strong Centre is vital for national unity and integrity.
- At the same time, it warned that **over-centralisation weakens States**, noting that a strong Centre does not mean excessive centralisation.

Biological Weapons Convention (BWC)

- The Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) bans the **development, production, stockpiling, transfer** and use of biological and toxin weapons.
- It is the **first multilateral treaty prohibiting an entire category of weapons of mass destruction** (WMDs).
- Negotiated in Geneva, it opened for signature on 10 April 1972 and **entered into force on 26 March 1975**, supplementing the 1925 Geneva Protocol.
- The Convention has **near-universal membership** with 189 States Parties and 4 Signatory States
- It provides for consultation, **UN Security Council investigation** of violations, **assistance** to affected States, and **peaceful biological cooperation**
- **India is a State Party** to the BWC and supports its objectives

Atomic Energy Regulatory Board (AERB)

- The Atomic Energy Regulatory Board **was constituted on November 15, 1983, by the President of India by exercising the powers conferred by the Atomic Energy Act, 1962 to carry out certain regulatory and safety functions** under the Act.
- The regulatory authority of AERB is derived from the rules and notifications promulgated under the Atomic Energy Act and the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986.
- It **ensures safe use of ionizing radiation and nuclear energy,** minimizing risks to health and environment
- It is a six-member board: Chairman (executive head), one whole-time member (Executive Director), four eminent experts.
- It is **headquartered in Mumbai and accountable to the Atomic Energy Commission.**
- **AERB license is a mandatory certification for entities involved in the use of ionizing radiation** and nuclear energy in India.

Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS)

- The Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) is **conducted by the National Statistical Office to assess employment and unemployment trends in India.**
- It provides key labour market indicators such as the **Labour Force Participation Rate, Worker Population Ratio, and Unemployment Rate.**
- **Previously PLFS provided quarterly labour market indicators for urban areas** only; **now it will be available for both rural and urban areas.**
- **From the year 2025, annual PLFS results will be based on the calendar year i.e. survey period of January – December** (July-June cycle previously) of a specific year.
- The overall LFPR increased to 55.8% in November, the highest since April, the survey found.

Places In News

Angkor

- **Angkor**, located in **Siem Reap province of northern Cambodia**, is one of the **most significant archaeological sites in Southeast Asia**.
- Spread across nearly **400 sq. km**, including extensive **forested areas**, the **Angkor Archaeological Park** preserves the grand remains of the **Khmer Empire's capitals** dating from the **9th to the 15th centuries**.

- The site includes iconic monuments such as the **Angkor Wat temple** and the **Bayon Temple at Angkor Thom**, renowned for its **elaborate sculptural reliefs**.
- The **urban layout and architectural planning** of these capitals reflect a **highly organised and hierarchical social structure** of the Khmer Empire.
- While **Khmer architecture** drew heavily from the **Indian subcontinent**, it gradually evolved into a **distinct architectural tradition**, incorporating **indigenous innovations** and **regional cultural influences**.
- This synthesis gave rise to a **unique artistic and architectural tradition**, contributing significantly to the **development of oriental art and architecture**.

Species In News

Artemisia annua

- **Artemisia annua L.**, commonly known as **"Qing Hao,"** is a **traditional Chinese medicinal plant** used in China for **over 2,000 years**, mainly to treat **fever, especially malaria**.
- It is **native to temperate Asia**, but has been **naturalised worldwide**, and belongs to the **Asteraceae family**.
- The plant is also used in **aromatic products** and as a **source of essential oils**.
- It contains several bioactive compounds, most notably **artemisinin**, along with other **anti-malarial, anti-cancer, anti-tuberculosis, and anti-microbial substances**.
- The **rising global demand for artemisinin** is driven by its **high efficacy against multidrug-resistant malaria parasites**.