

13th Dec – 19th Dec Weekly Compilation

(The Hindu+ Indian Express + PIB + Other World Wide News)

Delimitation Commission

(Source: The Hindu)

Why in news:

The National Conference (NC) has, in a letter to the **Jammu and Kashmir Delimitation Commission** (headed by retired Supreme Court Judge Justice Ranjana Prakash Desai), sought details of the agenda of the upcoming meeting with parties from the Union Territory.

Background:

The **Jammu and Kashmir Delimitation Commission** has said that it will base its final report on **the 2011 Census** and will also take into account the topography, difficult terrain, means of communication and convenience available for the ongoing delimitation exercise.

- The commission is mandated to carve out seven additional seats for the 83-member Assembly of the Union Territory (UT).

Delimitation exercise in J&K- a timeline:

1. The **first delimitation exercise**, carving out 25 assembly constituencies in the then state, was carried out by a Delimitation Committee in 1951.
2. **The first full-fledged Delimitation Commission** was formed in 1981 and it submitted its recommendations in 1995 on the basis of 1981 Census. Since then, there has been no delimitation.
3. In 2020, the Delimitation Commission was constituted to carry out the exercise on the basis of 2011 Census, with a mandate to add seven more seats to the Union Territory' and grant reservations to SC and ST communities.
4. Now, the total number of seats in Jammu and Kashmir will be raised to 90 from the previous 83. This is apart from 24 seats which have been reserved for areas of PoK and have to be kept vacant in the Assembly.

MAP OF UT OF JAMMU & KASHMIR AND UT OF LADAKH



What is delimitation and why is it needed?

The **Delimitation Commission for Jammu and Kashmir** was constituted by the Centre on March 6 last year to redraw Lok Sabha and assembly constituencies of the union territory in accordance with the provisions of the **Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, 2019** and Delimitation Act, 2002, passed by the Centre in August 2019 along with other J&K-specific Bills.

What is Delimitation?

Delimitation literally means the process of fixing limits or boundaries of territorial constituencies in a state that has a legislative body.

Logistics agreements and their benefits

(Source: The Hindu)

Why in news:

India is all set to conclude the bilateral logistics agreement with Russia (the Reciprocal Exchange of Logistics Agreement (RELOS)) soon.

About RELOS:

RELOS will be an important step forward in the military sphere as it aims at fostering interoperability and sharing of logistics. The “long overdue” agreement was to have come up for signing in 2019 but that was put off pending finalisation of its terms.

Does India Have Similar Arrangements With Other Countries?

India has logistical exchange agreements with six other countries, including Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, or Quad, partners US, Japan and Australia. Singapore, France and South Korea are the other countries with which similar arrangements have been effected.

What are logistics agreements?

The agreements are administrative arrangements facilitating access to military facilities for exchange of fuel and provisions on mutual agreement simplifying logistical support and increasing operational turnaround of the military when operating away from India.

India has signed several logistics agreements with all Quad countries, France, Singapore and South Korea beginning with the Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA) with the U.S. in 2016.

Benefits of such logistics agreements:

The Navy has been the biggest beneficiary of these administrative arrangements, signed with several countries, improving operational turnaround and increasing inter-operability on the high seas.

What is LEMOA?

It is a tweaked India-specific version of the Logistics Support Agreement (LSA), which the U.S. has with several countries it has close military to military cooperation. It is also one of the three foundational agreements — as referred to by the U.S.

LEMOA gives access, to both countries, to designated military facilities on either side for the purpose of refuelling and replenishment.

Privilege Motion

(Source: The Hindu)

Why in news:

Two Trinamool Congress MPs and three of the Congress have moved a privilege motion against former Chief Justice of India and Rajya Sabha member Ranjan Gogoi over his remarks that he attended the House when he felt like doing so.

Since he joined the House in March 2020, Mr. Gogoi, a nominated member, has attended proceedings only six times.

What do rules say?

According to the rules, a member should attend at least one day during the session and if not, the member should apply for leave which has to be sanctioned by the House.

What's the issue now?

During a recent interview to the NDTV, Ranjan Gogoi was asked about his attendance in Parliament. The former CJI had cited Covid curbs and discomfort with the lack of social distancing and seating arrangements.

The motion says the statements constitute a breach and undermine the dignity of the House.

What are Parliamentary Privileges?

Parliamentary Privileges are certain rights and immunities enjoyed by members of Parliament, individually and collectively, so that they can “effectively discharge their functions”.

Article 105 of the Constitution expressly mentions two privileges, that is, freedom of speech in Parliament and right of publication of its proceedings.

Apart from the privileges as specified in the Constitution, the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908, provides for freedom from arrest and detention of members under civil process during the continuance of the meeting of the House or of a committee thereof and forty days before its commencement and forty days after its conclusion.

Motion against breaches:

When any of these rights and immunities are disregarded, the offence is called a breach of privilege and is punishable under law of Parliament.

A notice is moved in the form of a motion by any member of either House against those being held guilty of breach of privilege.

Role of the Speaker/Rajya Sabha (RS) Chairperson:

The Speaker/RS chairperson is the first level of scrutiny of a privilege motion.

The Speaker/Chair can decide on the privilege motion himself or herself or refer it to the privileges committee of Parliament.

If the Speaker/Chair gives consent under relevant rules, the member concerned is given an opportunity to make a short statement.

Applicability:

The Constitution also extends the parliamentary privileges to those persons who are entitled to speak and take part in the proceedings of a House of Parliament or any of its committees. These include the Attorney General of India.

The parliamentary privileges do not extend to the President who is also an integral part of the Parliament. Article 361 of the Constitution provides for privileges for the President.

Char Dham

Why in news:

(Source: PIB)

The Supreme Court has allowed carriageways of three highways to be widened to 10m as part of the Char Dham roads project after modifying its earlier order limiting the width to 5.5m.

What Has The Supreme Court Said?

A three-judge Supreme Court bench modified an earlier, September 2020 order by another three-judge bench directing that three highways being laid as part of a 899-km road network in Uttarakhand should stick to a width of 5.5 metres for the carriageway.

Following a review sought by the Defence Ministry, the Supreme Court has now decreed that the width of the roads can be of 10m as sought by the Centre, paving the way for their double-laning.

Acknowledging the strategic importance of the three highways — which act as feeder roads for connecting with the China border — the top court also noted the need for balancing such priorities with environmental concerns.

It also ordered the setting up of an oversight committee led by former Supreme Court judge AK Sikri to ensure that the works were executed in an environmentally conscious manner, incorporating the recommendations of a high-powered committee in this regard.

Developments so far wrt the Chardham Project:

The foundation stone for the Char Dham road project was laid by PM Narendra Modi in December 2016.

But the project was challenged on environmental grounds in courts with petitioners alleging irregularities vis-a-vis environmental clearances for the project and that it was being pursued in violation of existing norms.

The National Green Tribunal (NGT) cleared the project in September 2018, but its order was challenged for being passed by a bench different from the one that had heard the matter. Supreme Court stayed the NGT order in October 2018.

In September 2020, it passed an order on a writ petition stating that highways for the Char Dham project should not exceed 5.5m in width as prescribed in a 2018 circular of the Union Road Transport Ministry. But the Defence Ministry had in December that year sought a modification in the order to allow the width to be of 10m.

The top court then asked its high-powered committee (HPC) to look into the contentions raised by the Centre on the width of the highways.

Governor's Role in Universities

(Source : IE)

Why in News

Recently, a controversy has erupted in Kerala over the reappointment of Gopinath Ravindran as the Vice Chancellor of Kannur University.

The appointment was against the decision of the Governor as the Chancellor of State Universities.

While the Governor's powers and functions as the Chancellor are laid out in the statutes that govern the universities under a particular state government, their role in appointing the Vice Chancellors has often triggered disputes with the political executive.

Key Points

Role of Governors in State Universities:

In most cases, the Governor of the state is the ex-officio chancellor of the universities in that state.

While as Governor he functions with the aid and advice of the Council of Ministers, as Chancellor he acts independently of the Council of Ministers and takes his own decisions on all University matters.

Case of Central Universities:

Under the Central Universities Act, 2009, and other statutes, the President of India shall be the Visitor of a central university.

With their role limited to presiding over convocations, Chancellors in central universities are titular heads, who are appointed by the President in his capacity as Visitor.

The Vice Chancellor too are appointed by the Visitor from panels of names picked by search and selection committees formed by the Union government.

The Act adds that the President, as Visitor, shall have the right to authorise inspections of academic and non-academic aspects of the universities and also to institute inquiries.

Constitutional Provisions Related to Governor:

Governor has a dual role vis-s vis State Government:

He is the constitutional head of the state, bound by the advice of his council of ministers (CoM).

He functions as a vital link between the Union Government and the State Government.

Article 153 says that there shall be a Governor for each State. One person can be appointed as Governor for two or more States.

A Governor is appointed by the President and is a nominee of the Central Government.

Article 163: There is a CoM with the CM at the head to aid and advise the Governor in the exercise of his functions, except some conditions for discretion.

Article 200: Governor assents, withholds assent, or reserves the bill for the consideration of the President passed by the Legislative Assembly.

Article 213: Governor may promulgate the Ordinances under certain circumstances.

Controversies Related to Governor's Role:

Abuse of Power by the Centre: There are numerous examples of the Governor's position being abused, usually at the behest of the ruling party at the Centre.

The process of appointment has generally been the cause behind it.

Biased Ideology: In several cases, politicians and former bureaucrats identifying with a particular political ideology have been appointed as the Governors by the central government.

This goes against the constitutionally mandated neutral seat and has resulted in bias, as appears to have happened in Karnataka and Goa.

Puppet Rulers: Recently, the Governor of Rajasthan has been charged with the violation of the model code of conduct.

His support of the central ruling party is against the spirit of non-partisanship that is expected from the person sitting on constitutional posts.

Due to such incidents, negative terms like an agent of the Centre, Puppet and rubber stamps are used to describe a governor of the state.

Why in News

Recently, several banks have entered into co-lending 'master agreements' with registered Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFCs), and more are in the pipeline. In 2020, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) allowed the co-lending model based on a prior agreement.

However, there are some criticisms associated with the co-lending.

Key Points

About the Co-Lending Model:

Background: In September 2018, the RBI had announced co-origination of loans” by banks and NBFCs for lending to the priority sector.

The arrangement entailed joint contribution of credit and sharing of risks and rewards. Co-lending or co-origination is a set-up where banks and non-banks enter into an arrangement for the joint contribution of credit for priority sector lending.

These guidelines were later amended in 2020 and rechristened as co-lending models (CLM) by including Housing Finance Companies and some changes in the framework.

Under priority sector norms, banks are mandated to lend a particular portion of their funds to specified sectors, like weaker sections of the society, agriculture, MSME and social infrastructure.

Objective: The primary focus of the 'Co-Lending Model' (CLM) is to “improve the flow of credit to the unserved and underserved sector of the economy.

It also envisages making available funds to the ultimate beneficiary at an affordable cost.

Underlying Idea: CLM seeks to better leverage the respective comparative advantages of the banks and NBFCs in a collaborative effort.

The lower cost of funds from banks, Greater reach of the NBFCs.

For example, CLM will enhance last-mile finance and drive financial inclusion to MSMEs.

Example of CLM: SBI, the country’s largest lender, signed a deal with Adani Capital, a small NBFC of a big corporate house, for co-lending to farmers to help them buy tractors and farm implements.

Risk in Co-lending:

Majority of Responsibility Lies with the Banks: Under the CLM, NBFCs are required to retain at least a 20% share of individual loans on their books.

This means 80% of the risk will be with the banks — who will take the big hit in case of a default.

In effect, while the banks fund the major chunk of the loan, the NBFC decides the borrower.

Corporates in Banking: While the RBI hasn't officially allowed the entry of big corporate houses into the banking space, the NBFCs are mostly floated by corporate houses.

This is risky, especially when four big private finance firms — IL&FS, DHFL, SREI and Reliance Capita have collapsed in the last three years despite tight monitoring by the RBI.

Limited Reach of NBFCs: While the RBI has referred to “the greater reach of the NBFCs”, the small NBFCs with 100-branch networks will fall short in serving underserved and unserved segments.

Way Forward

There is a need to give greater powers to the bank's board in order to drive, review & oversight the decision-making process. And for that, the best talent must be recruited.

Also, there is the requirement of a much stronger risk handling mechanism.

Durga Puja on UNESCO's ICH

(Source: PIB)

Why in News

Recently, Durga Puja in Kolkata has been inscribed on the UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) of Humanity.

It is the first festival in Asia to achieve recognition as UNESCO ICH of Humanity.

Earlier, UNESCO announced the Harappan city of Dholavira in Gujarat as India's 40th world heritage site.

Key Points

Durga Puja:

Durga Puja is a five-day festival which begins on the fifth night of the nine-day Navratri festival and ends on the tenth day, which is Dashami.

During this time, people collectively worship and invoke Goddess Durga, who is regarded as the feminine energy of the cosmos, also known as 'Shakti'.

It is one of the largest cultural carnivals and street art festivals of the country.

During this time, intricately-designed clay models of the Goddess are worshiped in 'pandals' and pavilions where people get together.

Folk music, culinary, craft, and performing arts traditions are a part of the celebration.

Though originating in West Bengal, which has the largest Bengali community in the country, the festival is celebrated in many other parts of India, and also the world.

Significance:

It acknowledges the festival's contribution in sustaining and safeguarding a multitude of traditional arts and crafts, well-being and economic empowerment of communities, and energizing creativity.

Earlier this year (2021), the British Council in India had mapped the creative economy of Durga Puja to over Rs. 32,000 crore for the year 2019 and added that the festival contributes 2.58% of West Bengal's Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

UNESCO's List of Intangible Cultural Heritage:

This coveted list is made up of those intangible heritage elements that help demonstrate diversity of cultural heritage and raise awareness about its importance.

According to UNESCO cultural heritage does not end at monuments and collections of objects.

It also includes traditions or living expressions inherited from our ancestors and passed on to our descendants, such as oral traditions, performing arts, social practices, rituals, festive events, knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe or the knowledge and skills to produce traditional crafts.

Programme for Development of Semiconductors and Display Manufacturing Ecosystem (Source: PIB)

Why in News

Recently, the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) has approved a comprehensive Program for the Development of Semiconductors and Display Manufacturing Ecosystems in the country.

The government proposes to provide incentives worth Rs 76,000 crore for the development of semiconductors and display manufacturing ecosystems over the next six years.

Semiconductors

Any of a class of crystalline solids intermediate in electrical conductivity between a conductor and an insulator.

Semiconductors are employed in the manufacture of various kinds of electronic devices, including diodes, transistors, and integrated circuits. Such devices have found wide application because of their compactness, reliability, power efficiency, and low cost.

As discrete components, they have found use in power devices, optical sensors, and light emitters, including solid-state lasers.

Key Points

Incentives Under the Programme

Semiconductor Fabs and Display Fabs:

It would provide fiscal support of up to 50% of the project cost for setting up semiconductor and display fabrication units.

The Union government will work with the States to set up high-tech clusters with the required infrastructure such as land and semiconductor-grade water.

Semi-conductor Laboratory (SCL):

MeitY will take requisite steps for modernization and commercialization of Semi-conductor Laboratory (SCL).

MeitY will explore the possibility for the Joint Venture of SCL with a commercial fab partner to modernise the brownfield fab facility.

India and Vietnam Relation

(Source: PIB)

Why in News

Recently, India and Vietnam signed a letter of intent (LOI) to collaborate in the field of digital media, paving the way for further strengthening the partnership between the two countries.

A LOI is a document that declares the initial commitment of two parties as they enter into a business deal with each other. It outlines the chief terms of the prospective deal.

Earlier in 2020, Defence Ministers of India and Vietnam discussed collaboration in defence industry capability building, training and cooperation in United Nations (UN) peacekeeping operations, etc.

Key Points

Letter of Intent: It recognises the joint objectives of both the countries to facilitate cooperation in the field of Posts and Telecom.

Promote sharing of information and experience, cooperate to implement projects in Human Resource Development.

Promote enhanced cooperation of postal designated operators and service providers of both the countries.

It will shape bilateral cooperation in the field of new technologies and challenges, such as the 'infodemic', which all countries are grappling with during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Scope of Discussion: Vietnam appreciated the efforts of India for developing indigenous 5G network under "AtmaNirbhar Bharat".

The Vietnamese Minister of Information and Communications suggested that India should collaborate in the field of 5G to produce world class India has been developing indigenously designed 5G telecom equipment.