

● POLITY

● ECONOMICS

● TECHNOLOGY

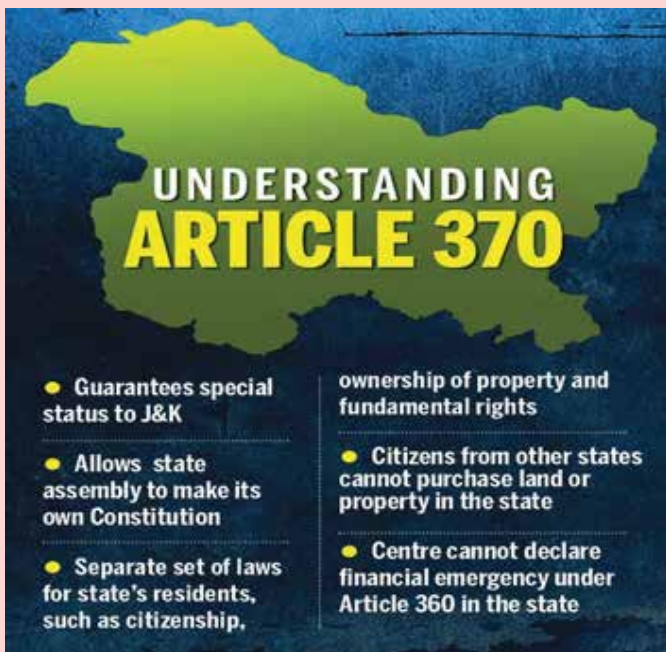
● ECOLOGY

POLITY

EC begins work on polls in J&K and three States

CONTEXT: The Election Commission (EC) has kicked off preparations for holding Assembly elections in Haryana, Maharashtra, Jharkhand and Jammu and Kashmir by updating electoral rolls in these States. It will be the first Assembly election since abrogation of Article 370, division of J&K into two UTs. The terms of the existing legislative Assemblies will end on November 3 (Haryana), November 26 (Maharashtra) and January 5, 2025 (Jharkhand) and polls are required to be conducted before the completion of their terms.

Assembly elections in Jammu and Kashmir are also to be conducted for constituting a new House after delimitation of constituencies, the EC said in a statement on Friday.



What was Article 370 About?

- Article 370 in the Indian constitution gave special status to Jammu and Kashmir, a region disputed by India, Pakistan and China.
 - It was drafted by N Gopalaswami Ayyangar, a member of the Constituent Assembly of India, and was added to the constitution as a 'temporary provision' in 1949.
- It allowed the state to have its own constitution, flag and autonomy over most matters except defence, foreign affairs and communications.
- It was based on the terms of the Instrument of Accession, which was signed by the ruler of Jammu and Kashmir, Hari Singh, in 1947 to join India after an invasion by Pakistan.

How did the Government Repeal Article 370?

- **Presidential Order:** In the 2019 Presidential orders, Parliament brought a provision giving new meaning to "constituent assembly of Jammu and Kashmir", to mean "Legislative Assembly of Jammu and Kashmir", and then assumed the powers of the Legislative Assembly through the President's rule to revoke Article 370.
- **Resolutions in Parliament:** Concurrent resolutions were passed by both houses of the Parliament, the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha, on 5th and 6th August 2019, respectively. These resolutions revoked the remaining provisions of Article 370 and replaced them with new provisions.
- **Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act:** The Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, 2019, was passed by Parliament on 5th August 2019. This act bifurcated the state of Jammu and Kashmir into two Union Territories: Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh.

Why was the Article 370 Abrogated?

- **Integration and Development:** Article 370 hindered the complete integration of Jammu and Kashmir into the Indian Union, creating a sense of separatism and impeding its development.
 - It was believed that full integration would allow for better access to resources, infrastructure, and opportunities for the people of J&K.
- **National Security:** Article 370 was exploited by Pakistan to support terrorism and separatism in the region. The abrogation would strengthen national security by allowing the Indian government to have more control over the region and crack down on terrorist activities.
- **Ending Discrimination:** Article 370 discriminated against women, Dalits, and other marginalized groups in Jammu and Kashmir. The abrogation would bring them under the umbrella of Indian laws and provide them with equal rights and opportunities.
- **Transparency and Accountability:** Article 370 created a lack of transparency and accountability in the governance of Jammu and Kashmir. The abrogation would bring the state under the purview of the Central Vigilance Commission and the Right to Information Act, leading to better governance and accountability.
- **Economic Prosperity:** Article 370 hindered economic development in Jammu and Kashmir. The abrogation would allow for greater investment, tourism, and job creation in the region.



"Education is the ability to listen to almost anything without losing your temper or your self-confidence." - Robert Frost

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Patent filings credit BBIL as 'inventor' of Covaxin, omit ICMR

CONTEXT: India's first indigenously developed coronavirus vaccine, Covaxin, was a joint collaboration between the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) and the Hyderabad based Bharat Biotech International Limited (BBIL) with intellectual property (IP) rights jointly shared between the two organisations. That is what the public record states. However, filings by the BBIL at patent offices in India, the United States and Europe suggest that only its scientists and personnel are credited as 'inventors' of the vaccine with no mention of ICMR scientists.

The ICMR said that while it had not funded the BBIL for Covaxin development, one of its institutes, the ICMR National Institute of Virology (NIV), Pune had spent "funds for Covaxin development.



COVAXIN

India's indigenous COVID-19 vaccine by Bharat Biotech is developed in collaboration with the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) - National Institute of Virology (NIV).

The indigenous, inactivated vaccine is developed and manufactured in Bharat Biotech's BSL-3 (Bio-Safety Level 3) high containment facility.

The vaccine is developed using Whole Virion Inactivated Vero Cell derived platform technology. Inactivated vaccines do not replicate and are therefore unlikely to revert and cause pathological effects. They contain dead virus, incapable of infecting people but still able to instruct the immune system to mount a defensive reaction against an infection.

Why develop Inactivated Vaccine?

Conventionally, inactivated vaccines have been around for decades. Numerous vaccines for diseases such as Seasonal Influenza, Polio, Pertussis, Rabies, and Japanese Encephalitis use the same technology to develop inactivated vaccines with a safe track record of >300 million doses of supplies to date. It is the well established, and time tested platform in the world of vaccine technology.

ECONOMY

'Ele-fence' in Kerala seeks to end man-animal conflict

CONTEXT: The installation of country's first artificial intelligence-based smart fence, 'Ele-fence', is under way in Kerala's Wayanad to mitigate the burgeoning cases of human-wildlife conflict in the region.

The pilot project is being implemented by White Elephant Technologies, a Kochi based R&D firm, with support from the Kerala Forest Department at Chelakkolly, near Pambra, in the Chethalth forest range of the south Wayanad forest division.

The proposed 70-metre Ele-fence incorporates an effective blend of surveillance, real time monitoring, and control as well as preventive and protective features, says Parrakkal Mohan Menon, CEO, White Elephant Technologies.

The fence is duly equipped with AI based logical trip wires, which enable early warning of intrusive elephant movements. There are 4K cameras for real time video and audio dissemination to control rooms and the Rapid Response Teams of the Forest Department.

The fence has sound and alarm lights installed to keep the elephants from approaching the regions around the barrier.



What is Man-Animal Conflict?

Meaning:

It relates to the interaction between wild animals and humans, as well as the negative consequences for people, their resources, wild animals, and their habitats.

Human wildlife conflict has reached alarming levels in states across India. For example,

In Maharashtra, human wildlife conflict led to the death of 86 people in 2021 and 105 in 2022 a sharp increase compared with the last decade when average human deaths were around 40.

Causes:

Growing populations of human or animal overlap with established wildlife or human territory, resulting in a loss of resources.

Habitat and corridor fragmentation as a result of legal and unlawful land use changes, such as mining clearances or agricultural encroachment.

Changing cropping patterns attract wild animals to agriculture.


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Habitat destruction as a result of the spread of invasive alien species, etc.

India currently has more than 700 protected areas. However, 70% of elephant ranges, 40% of lion ranges and 35% of tiger ranges are outside protected areas (WWF).

Ecologist Madhav Gadgil said the Wildlife Protection Act 1972 has enabled an atmosphere where wild animals can invade human habitations with impunity.

He explained the optimal foraging theory in ecology, which states that animals try to maximise nutrient intake while minimising time, effort and risks.

Solutions:

Better enforcement and a pragmatic policy: To address the issue will lessen incidences of man animal conflict.

Involvement of local communities: According to the Future for All Report 2021 (by WWF and UNEP), involving local communities will foster coexistence between humans and wildlife, as it is impossible to completely eliminate human wildlife conflicts.

Awareness campaigns: To educate, guide, and advise the general public about man animal conflict, including information dissemination via various types of media.

Skill development initiatives: People living in and around the forest would benefit from reduced pressures on both agricultural and forest land.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Economic ties, connectivity, energy likely to dominate Hasina's India visit

CONTEXT: Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina of Bangladesh arrived here on Friday for a two day visit that is being watched keenly as it is the first state visit by a foreign head of government just 10 days after Prime Minister Narendra Modi was sworn in for a third term in office. External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar was the first to call on Ms. Hasina soon after she reached Delhi.

There is an expectation that the two sides may enter into an arrangement to conduct trade without dollars. Bangla Tribune, a prominent news outlet in Dhaka has reported that Bangladesh may seek assistance from New Delhi to reschedule some of the international loans that Dhaka has taken.



What is the significance of Bangladesh to India?

Bangladesh is important to India for several reasons, including

- **Geopolitical:** Bangladesh is India's neighbour and shares a long land, riverine and maritime boundary. This makes it important for India's security and foreign policy. For example, India needs cooperation from Bangladesh to counter the Chinese 'String of Pearls'.
- **Economic:** India Bangladesh have close economic ties, with India being one of Bangladesh's largest trading partners. For example, The bilateral trade in 2021-2022 was USD 18.2 billion.
- **Cultural:** India and Bangladesh have a shared history, culture, and heritage. The people of the two countries are linked by strong cultural and familial ties, and there is a large population of Indian origin people living in Bangladesh.
- **Strategic:** Bangladesh is located at the crossroads of South Asia and Southeast Asia and is important for India's Act East Policy, which aims to build closer ties with the countries of Southeast Asia.
- **Environmental concerns:** Bangladesh and India share transboundary rivers and ecological systems, making it important for the two countries to cooperate on issues such as water management and flood control. For example, coordinated efforts are needed for the conservation of Sunderbans.

What are the existing challenges in India Bangladesh relations?

India Bangladesh relations have been generally cordial, but there are a few challenges, including

Geopolitical challenges: Border disputes: Long standing disputes over the demarcation of the shared border, particularly in the regions of Assam and Tripura.

Illegal immigration: The flow of migrants across the Bangladeshi border as a result of the country's unrest has further strained the relationship between the two countries.

The inhabitants of the Indian states bordering Bangladesh have experienced substantial socio-economic-political challenges as a result of the significant influx of migrants.

Economic challenges:

Non-tariff barriers: Both face non-tariff barriers, such as lengthy customs procedures and bureaucratic red tape, which have hindered trade.

Sharing river water: One of the main issues is the disagreement over river water sharing. There are 54 rivers cross border rivers.

Connectivity challenges:

Border disputes: Tensions along the border between Bangladesh and India are nothing new. A 4,096 km long land border and a 180 km long marine border separate India from Bangladesh. The Comilla Tripura land border, which stretches for 6.5 kilometers, has not been demarcated, leaving the border dispute unresolved.

Lack of infrastructure: Insufficient infrastructure and connectivity, hindering the development of economic ties between the two countries.

Security challenges:

Terrorism: India has accused Bangladesh based terrorist groups of carrying out attacks in India and has called for greater

cooperation in combating terrorism.

Insurgency: According to media sources, the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA), the National Democratic Front of Bodoland, and the National Liberation Front of Tripura all run camps in Bangladesh.

Additionally, there are suspicions that the ULFA has a number of successful income-generating ventures in Bangladesh that it uses to fund its insurgent operations in India.

China factor: China has been increasing its investments in Bangladesh, particularly in the areas of infrastructure development, energy, and telecommunications. For example, BRI and investment in Chittagong port.

Energy challenges:

Water-sharing: Tension over the distribution of the waters of common rivers, particularly the Brahmaputra and the Ganges.

POLITY

Kuki-Zo tribal bodies urge boycott of polls to district councils

CONTEXT: Kuki-Zo tribal bodies from across several hill districts in Manipur issued a joint statement on Friday opposing elections to the Autonomous District Council, which the State Cabinet said last week would be held in September this year. The tribal bodies urged members of the public not to participate in the elections “unless political demands are met”.

TRIBAL AREAS VIth SCHEDULE (Art 244(2))

MEGHALAYA

- Khasi Hills Autonomous District Council
- Jaintia Hills Autonomous District Council
- Garo Hills Autonomous District Council

MIZORAM

- Chakma Autonomous District Council
- Lai Autonomous District Council

- Mara Autonomous District Council

TRIPURA

- Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council

ASSAM

- Dima Hasao Autonomous Council
- Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council
- Bodoland Territorial Council

About Autonomous District Councils (ADC):

The Sixth Schedule provides a list of ten tribal areas in Assam (3), Meghalaya (3), Tripura (1) and Mizoram (3).

Each of these tribal areas constitutes an autonomous district. Each autonomous district has an Autonomous District Council (ADC).

Membership: ADCs have up to 30 members with a term of five years, of whom four are nominated by the governor and the remaining 26 are elected on the basis of adult franchise.

Tenure: Term of the District Councils is for five years from the date of their constitution.

Functions: The functions of ADCs as defined in schedule 6 of the constitution included –

- making laws on land,
- management of forests, except reserved forests,
- appointment of traditional chiefs and headmen,
- making rules regulating the inheritance of property, marriage, divorce, the constitution of village courts,

It can establish, construct or manage primary schools, dispensaries, markets, ferries, fisheries, roads and so on in the district.

It can also make regulations for the control of money lending and trading by non-tribals. But such regulations require the assent of the governor.

Revenue source: The main Revenue Sources of ADCs, as specified in the Sixth Schedule, were:

- taxes on professions, trades, callings and employment;
- taxes on animals, vehicles and boats;
- taxes on the entry of goods into a market and sale therein, and tolls on passenger and goods carried on ferries; and
- taxes for the maintenance of school, dispensaries or roads.

What is Its Background of Origin?

- India’s population consists of 100 million tribal people who have constitutionally been addressed via two distinct avenues i.e Fifth and Sixth Schedule.
- Fifth and Sixth Schedules were discussed and passed by Constituent Assembly between September 5-7, 1949.
- The Fifth Schedule applies to the overwhelming majority of India’s tribes in nine States, while the Sixth Schedule covers areas that are settled in the north eastern States bordering China and Myanmar.
- The Sixth Schedule gives tribal communities considerable autonomy; the States of Assam, Tripura, Meghalaya, and Mizoram are autonomous regions under the Sixth Schedule.
- The District Council and the Regional Council under the Sixth Schedule have real power to make laws, possibility on the various legislative subjects, receiving grants-in-aid from the Consolidated Fund of India to meet the costs of schemes for development, health care, education, roads and regulatory powers to state control.
- The mandate towards devolution, deconcentration and divestment determines the protection of their customs, better economic development and most importantly ethnic security.
- However, the Sixth Schedule has its own shortcomings; breakdown of law and order, elections not being contested, rather than empowerment there is exclusion that fails to provide much-needed protection to tribes in the absence of political will, and live by the mercy of government funds.

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“If you invest more in your education, then you are likely to get more interest in it.”

–Benjamin Franklin

ECONOMY

RBI's Rao stresses on customer protection in NBFC sector

CONTEXT: Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Executive Director R. Lakshmi Kanth Rao on Friday stressed the importance of compliance and customer protection in the non-banking financial company (NBFC) sector.

NBFCs are a critical part of the financial system, contributing to diversification and innovation. However, their growing size necessitates a shift from pure activity based regulation to a framework that considers both activity and scale to effectively manage risk," he said, addressing the Assocham 10th National Summit on NBFCs & Infrastructure Financing in Mumbai.

Significance of NBFCs



About Non-Banking Financial Company (NBFC):

A NBFC is a company registered under the Companies Act, 1956, engaged in the business of loans and advances, the acquisition of shares/stocks/bonds/debentures/securities issued by the Government or local authority or other marketable securities of a like nature, leasing, hire purchase, insurance business, chit business.

It does not include any institution whose principal business is that of agriculture activity, industrial activity, the purchase or sale of any goods (other than securities) or providing any services and sale/purchase/construction of immovable property.

A non-banking institution which is a company and has the principal business of receiving deposits under any scheme or arrangement in one lump sum or in instalments by way of contributions, or in any other manner, is also a NBFC (Residuary non-banking company).

Generally, these institutions are not allowed to take traditional demand deposits from the public. They can only accept time deposits, and they do not provide savings or current account facilities.

They cannot accept deposits for a period less than 12 months and more than 60 months.

NBFCs cannot offer interest rates higher than the ceiling rate prescribed by RBI from time to time. The present ceiling is 12.5 per cent per annum.

NBFCs also provide a wide range of monetary advice like chit reserves and advances.

NBFCs lend and make investments, and hence their activities are akin to that of banks; however, there are a few differences as given below:

- NBFCs do not have a banking license;
- NBFCs cannot accept demand deposits;
- NBFCs do not form part of the payment and settlement system and cannot issue cheques drawn on itself;
- Deposit insurance facility of Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation is not available to depositors of NBFCs, unlike in the case of banks.

Unlike banks, NBFCs are not subjected to stringent and substantial regulations.

Regulation:

The functions of the NBFCs are managed by both the Ministry of Corporate Affairs and the RBI.

The RBI has the authority to issue licenses to NBFCs, regulate their operations, and ensure that they adhere to the established norms and regulations.

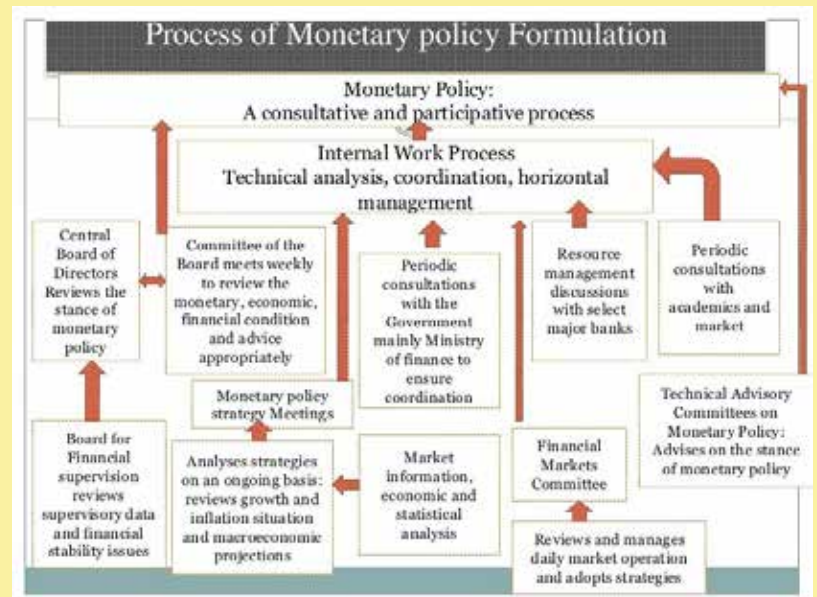
NBFCs are categorized

- in terms of the types of liabilities into Deposit and Non-Deposit accepting NBFCs,
- Non-deposit taking NBFCs by their size into systemically important and other non-deposit holding companies (NBFC-NDSI and NBFC-ND) and
- By the kind of activity, they conduct.

ECONOMY

'Growth sacrifice' view grows in MPC

CONTEXT: Ashima Goyal joined Jayanth R. Varma as the two external members of the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) voted as a minority for a 0.25% rate cut at the latest MPC meeting, warning against the rising risks of 'status quosim' and 'growth sacrifice' as a result of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) persisting with its tight monetary policy approach, the minutes of the June 5-7 meeting released on Friday show.



About Monetary Policy Committee (MPC):

The Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934 (RBI Act) has been amended by the Finance Act, 2016 to provide for a statutory and

institutionalized framework for a MPC.

Under Section 45ZB of the amended RBI Act, 1934, the central government is empowered to constitute a six-member MPC.

Function: The MPC is entrusted with the task of fixing the benchmark policy rate (repo rate) required to contain inflation within the specified target level.

Composition:

MPC will have six members - the RBI Governor (Chairperson), the RBI Deputy Governor in charge of monetary policy, one official nominated by the RBI Board, and the remaining three members would represent the Government of India.

The external members hold office for a period of four years.

The quorum for a meeting shall be four Members, at least one of whom shall be the Governor and, in his absence, the Deputy Governor, who is the Member of the MPC.

The MPC takes decisions based on a majority vote. In case of a tie, the RBI governor will have the second or casting vote.

The decision of the MPC would be binding on the RBI.

Authorities said that as of June 7, 299 people have been arrested for national security crimes under various laws

Political System of Hong Kong

Political system

Hong Kong is a special administrative region of China located on the Delta of eastern Pearl River in South China.

It has its own currency, political system and cultural identity but it belongs to China.

Background

The city was a colony of the United Kingdom, until the British handed it back over to China in 1997.

Qing dynasty leaders ceded Hong Kong Island to the British Crown in 1842 after China's defeat in the First Opium War.

At the time of handover, the Chinese Communist leadership had agreed to a unique arrangement – “One Country, Two Systems”.

This was agreed upon to maintain Hong Kong's prosperity, and its legal system and culture.

One Country, Two Systems

Under this policy, Hong Kong maintains a de-facto constitution, known as the Hong Kong Basic Law.

It guarantees freedoms that are unavailable to Chinese mainlanders, such as the right to protest, the right to a free press and freedom of speech.

But in recent years, Beijing has repeatedly reinterpreted the Basic Law and now it says it has "complete jurisdiction" over Hong Kong.

Background - 2019 Pro-Democracy Protests and a Security Law

2019 pro-democracy protests

In 2019, a large number of people in Hong Kong wore white and marched through the streets in one of the largest protests since the Umbrella Revolution in 2014.

They were protesting against a proposed law change that would allow suspects accused of serious crimes to be sent to mainland China for trial.

2019 Security law

Following the protests in 2019, Beijing had already imposed a national security law four years ago.

The new law was used to prosecute several leading activists.

Beijing and the Hong Kong governments said the law brought about stability in the region.

What is Safeguarding National Security Bill?

About

The 'Safeguarding National Security Bill' will come into effect on March 23.

It extends the government power to curb any future dissent or challenges that might arise.

This includes expanding the scope of punishing treason and insurrection up to life imprisonment.

The law allowing criminal prosecution for specific acts committed anywhere in the world.

It also incorporates provisions for imposing tougher penalties on people convicted of working with governments in foreign countries to commit crimes.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Hong Kong charges two under the new national security law

CONTEXT: Hong Kong has charged two persons in the span of a week with “sedition” over social media posts and clothing slogans, under a new national security law.

The city passed a home grown security law in March, commonly known as Article 23, which the United States and Britain have criticised for curbing rights.



The legislation is Hong Kong's second national security law and follows the one imposed by Beijing in 2020 after huge, sometimes violent pro-democracy protests a year earlier.

History of law

Under Article 23, the maximum jail term for sedition — an offence created during British colonial rule has been upped from two years to seven.

The offence was also revamped to cover inciting hatred against China's Communist leadership and socialist system.



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