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Kerala Challenges Constitutionality of CAA

Why in News

Kerala has become the **first state to move the Supreme Court challenging the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019** - CAA, 2019.

The Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019 seeks to provide citizenship to illegal migrants from Buddhist, Hindu, Sikhs, Jain, Parsi and Christian faiths, who have come to India from the neighbouring countries of Afghanistan, Pakistan and Bangladesh, on or before 31st December, 2014.

Key Points

- The suit has been filed under **Article 131 of the Constitution**.
 - Under Article 131, the **Supreme Court has “original” jurisdiction** in disputes between States or the Centre and State(s). The Article allows the court to directly take cognisance of such a dispute.
 - Kerala has said in its suit that it would be compelled under **Article 256** to comply with the CAA, which it considers manifestly arbitrary, unreasonable, irrational and violative of fundamental rights.

Article 256 of the Constitution states that the executive power of every State shall be so exercised as to ensure **compliance with the laws made by Parliament**.
 - Thus, there **exists a dispute, involving questions of law and fact**, between the State of Kerala and the Union of India, regarding the enforcement of legal rights as a State and as well for the enforcement of the fundamental, constitutional and other legal rights of the inhabitants of the State of Kerala.

- The Kerala Government has asked for the law to be declared unconstitutional and in violation of:
 - **Article 14** (equality before law),
 - **Article 21** (protection of life and personal liberty) and
 - **Article 25** (freedom of conscience and free profession, practice, and propagation of religion).
- It has also sought directions to declare the **Passport (Entry into India) Amendment Rules, 2015, and Foreigners (Amendment) Order, 2015**, to be “**ultra vires the Constitution of India and to be void**”.
- As per the petition, the amendments also **violate India’s international obligations under**:
 - **Article 14 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights** (which provides that everyone has the right to seek and enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution).
 - **Article 15 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights** (which provides that everyone has the right to a nationality and that no one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his nationality nor denied the right to change his nationality) and
 - **Article 26 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights** (which provides that all persons are equal before the law, that all persons are entitled without any discrimination to the equal protection of the law and that the law shall prohibit any discrimination and guarantee to all persons equal and effective protection against discrimination on any ground such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status).

Article 131 of the Constitution (Original Jurisdiction of the Supreme Court)

- The Supreme Court has **original jurisdiction** in any dispute:
 - between the Government of India and one or more States; or
 - between the Government of India and any State or States on one side and one or more other States on the other; or
 - between two or more States.
- **Notable Points**
 - The dispute **must involve a question (whether of law or fact)** on which the existence or extent of a legal right depends.
 - Any suit brought before the Supreme Court by a **private citizen** against the Centre or a state **cannot be entertained under this**.
- The **original jurisdiction** of a court means the power to hear a case for the first time, as **opposed to appellate jurisdiction**, in which the court reviews the decision of a lower court.

- **Different from Article 32**

Unlike the original jurisdiction under Article 32 (which gives the Supreme Court the power to issue writs, etc.), the jurisdiction in Article 131 is exclusive, meaning it is **only the Supreme Court which has this authority**. Under Article 226, the High Courts too have the power to issue writs, directions etc.

- **Supreme Court's Stand on Article 131**

- There have been **two conflicting judgments** from the Supreme Court on whether a State can file an original suit under Article 131 to challenge the constitutionality of a central law.
- The **first judgment reported in 2012** - State of Madhya Pradesh vs Union of India - held that States cannot challenge a central law under Article 131.
- The **second judgment - State of Jharkhand Vs State of Bihar - took the opposite view in 2015** and referred the question of law to a larger Bench of the Supreme Court for final determination. Kerala's plaint relies on the 2015 verdict.

Source: TH

CRZ Rules Eased for 'Blue Flag' Beaches

Why in News

Recently, the **Ministry of Environment and Forest** has **relaxed Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) rules**.

CRZ rules restrict construction near beaches. Relaxation in the rules will allow States to construct infrastructure and enable the beaches to receive **'Blue Flag' certification**.

Key Points

- The Ministry selected **13 beaches** in India for the Blue Flag certificate in 2019.
- India's **CRZ laws do not allow the construction of infrastructure on beaches and islands**.
 - However, the Blue Flag certification requires beaches to create infrastructures like portable toilet blocks, greywater treatment plants, a solar power plant, seating facilities, CCTV surveillance, etc.
- The government notified that construction activities and facilities shall be permitted in the CRZs, including Islands, for the purpose of Blue Flag Certification in beaches.
 - However, these activities are **subject to maintaining a minimum distance of 10 meters from the High Tide Line (HTL)**.

High Tide Line: HTL means the line on the land up to which the highest water line reaches during the **spring tide**.

Low Tide Line: Similarly, it means the line on the land up to which the lowest water line reaches during the **spring tide**.

Spring tides: The position of both the sun and the moon in relation to the earth has direct bearing on tide height. When the **sun, the moon and the earth are in a straight line**, the **height of the tide will be higher**. These are called spring tides and they occur twice a month, one on full moon period and another during new moon period.

Blue Flag Certification

- It is an **international recognition** conferred on beaches that meet certain criteria of cleanliness and environmental propriety.
- The **'Blue Flag' beach** is an **'eco-tourism model'** and marks out beaches as providing tourists and beachgoers clean and hygienic bathing water, facilities/amenities, a safe and healthy environment and sustainable development of the area.
- The **Blue Flag Programme** was started in **France** in **1985** and has been implemented in **Europe since 1987** and in areas **outside Europe since 2001** when South Africa joined.

The Blue Flag Programme is run by the **Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE)** which is an international, non-governmental, non-profit organisation.

- The certification is accorded by the **Denmark-based Foundation for Environment Education, with 33 stringent criteria under four major heads for the beaches**, that are-
 - Environmental Education and Information
 - Bathing Water Quality
 - Environment Management and Conservation
 - Safety and Services
- **Spain** tops the list with **566 such beaches; Greece and France** follow with **515 and 395** Blue Flag beaches, respectively.
- **Japan and South Korea** are the only countries in the **south and southeastern Asia** to have Blue Flag beaches.

Source: TH

Indigenous TB Diagnostic Tool

Why in News

Recently, the **World Health Organisation (WHO)** has endorsed **TrueNat** which is an **indigenous molecular diagnostic tool for tuberculosis (TB) diagnosis**.

Key Points

- WHO's approval is important for India because it has the most number of TB patients in the world.
- According to the **Global Tuberculosis Report 2019**, India had 26.9 lakh TB patients in 2018.
- According to the **National Strategic Plan for TB Elimination 2017-2025**, TB kills an estimated 4,80,000 Indians every year and over 1,400 every day.
- India also has over a million 'missing' cases every year that are not notified. Most of the cases remain either undiagnosed or inadequately diagnosed and treated in the private sector.

TrueNat

- It was developed by **Goa-based Molbio Diagnostics**.
- TrueNat is a **polymerase chain reaction (PCR)-based test** that, by assaying the genes present in the TB bacteria, can not only detect the presence of the bacteria but can also detect **drug resistance** with the use of chips.
- The DNA of the TB bacteria is extracted from the **sputum samples** collected from the patient and the test can easily and cost-effectively be done in the primary health care setup.
- It was found to be comparable in accuracy to similar tests currently in use and has been recommended as a replacement for sputum microscopy tests.

Mandatory Gold Hallmarking Norms in India

Why in News

The Department of Consumer Affairs will release the notification regarding **mandatory hallmarking of Gold jewellery & artefacts** in India.

Earlier, it was **optional** for the jewellers and thus only **40%** of gold jewellery was getting hallmarked. Gold Hallmarking is a **purity certification** which started in **2000**.

Key Points

- The notification will make hallmarking of gold jewellery **mandatory from January 15, 2021**.

- The jewellers have been given **one year time to register** with the **Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS)** and clear their stocks if not hallmarked yet.
- Hallmarked gold jewellery will be only in **three grades – 14-carat, 18-carat and 22-carat** instead of current availability of ten grades.
- It will contain **four marks**: BIS mark, purity in carat, assay centre's name and jewellers' identification mark.
- The **rule is applicable only on sales by retailers and not to consumers**.
- However, it is **available for consumers who want to get their old jewellery hallmarked**.
- Anybody found violating the provision, will have to pay a **minimum fine of Rs 1 lakh or 5 times the price of the article**.
- The government had informed about these hallmarking norms to the **World Trade Organisation (WTO)**, which will help exporters get to know the changes in advance in importing country like India.

India is the **world's largest importer of gold**, with annual imports of 700-800 tonne.

Reasons for Gold Hallmarking

- The mandatory hallmarking will protect the public against lower caratage and ensure consumers do not get cheated while buying gold ornaments.
- It will also help to get the purity as marked on the ornaments.
- It will bring in transparency and assure the consumers of quality.
- The new system will weed out anomalies and corruption in the system of manufacturing of jewellery.

Source:TH

Indian Army Day

Why in News

Army Day is celebrated every year on **15th January** in India to commemorate the jawans and the Indian Army.

- The Army Day celebrations, which began in 1949, will be observed for the 72nd time in 2020.
- Army Day is celebrated to mark Lt Gen K M Cariappa taking over as commander-in-chief of the Indian Army in 1949 from General Francis Butcher, the last British commander-in-chief of India.
- The Indian Army was established on April 1, 1895. It's motto is

- "Service before self."
- **Difference in 2020**
 - The Army Day parade in New Delhi will see for the first time a woman, Captain Tania Shergill, leading an all-men contingent.
 - Apart from the three service chiefs, India's first chief of defence staff General Bipin Rawat will also attend the parade.

Battle of Asal Uttar

- The battle of Asal Uttar was a very key turning point during the **Indo-Pakistan war of 1965**, which set the course of India's victory. It was fought from 8th-10th September, 1965.
- It is described by historians as one of the largest tank battles in history since World War II.
- Asal Uttar is a village 12 km from the international border with Pakistan in Punjab's Tarn Taran district.

MQ-9B Sky Guardian

- It is the next generation Remotely Piloted Aircrafts Systems (RPAS).
- It is a highly modular aircraft and is rapidly configurable with a variety of payloads and weapons.

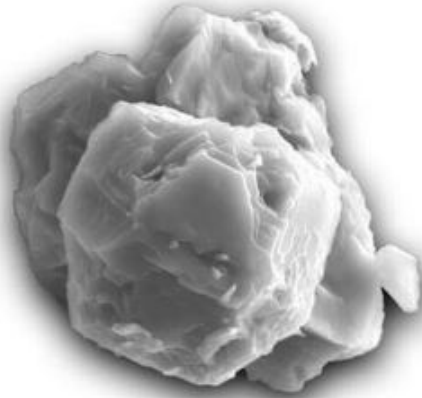
Source: IE

Oldest Material on Earth

Why in News

Recently, scientists have found **4.6 to 7-billion-year-old presolar grains of Silicon Carbide (SiC)** in the **Murchison meteorite** which fell in Australia in 1969.

Key Points



- The presolar grains of Silicon Carbide is the **oldest solid materials ever found**.
 - These grains are formed before the solar system's formation and thus termed as “presolar grains”.
 - The presolar grains are **very rare**, found only in about **5% of meteorites** that have fallen to Earth.
- It **may reveal the phenomenon of formation of stars** in the Milky Way Galaxy. As the presence of Silicon Carbide in the meteorite are **samples of stardust**.
- It also provides clues about the **rate of star formation** in the Milky Way galaxy.

Stardusts

- Stardust is formed by the material ejected from stars and carried by stellar winds, getting blown into interstellar space.
 - The stellar wind is a flow of gas ejected from the upper atmosphere of a star.
 - Interstellar space is defined as that which lies beyond a magnetic region that extends about 122 Astronomical Unit (AU) from the sun.
- During the solar system's birth, this dust was incorporated into everything that formed including the planets and the sun but survived intact until now only in asteroids and comets.

Silicon Carbide (SiC)

- Silicon carbide also known as **Carborundum** is a compound of silicon and carbon.
- Silicon carbide is a **semiconductor material** and is an emerging material for applications in semiconductor devices.
- It is one of the most important industrial ceramic materials.
- It is widely used as an abrasive and steel additive and structural ceramic.

Source: TH

Rojgaar Sangi

Why in News

Recently, the Chhattisgarh State Skill Development Authority (CSSDA) has launched a **mobile phone app - 'Rojgaar Sangi'** to help skilled and trained candidates find jobs.

- The app has been developed with the help of **National Informatics Centre (NIC)**.
- The app will also help start-up companies to hire an office staff.
- It will **increase accessibility** for skilled and trained candidates, which in turn will **increase job opportunities**.
- The app is expected to benefit 7 lakh students who were trained under the 705 courses offered by CSSDA.

National Informatics Centre

- NIC of the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology provides network backbone and **e-Governance** support to the Central Government, State Governments and UT Administrations.
- It was established in 1976 and is located in New Delhi.

Source:IE

Taal Volcano

Why in News

A volcano called Taal on the island of Luzon, 50 km from Manila, Philippines erupted on 12th January, 2020.

- **Compound Volcano:** Taal is classified as a “complex” volcano by the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (PHIVOLCS).



A complex volcano, also called a compound volcano, is defined as one that doesn't have just one main vent or cone but several eruption points. Another such example is Mount Vesuvius on the west coast of Italy.

- **Unpredictable:** Taal has erupted more than 30 times in the last few centuries, the most recent was in 1977.
- It needs to be noted that the Philippines is situated at the boundaries of two tectonic plates — the Philippines Sea Plate and the Eurasian plate — thus susceptible to earthquakes and volcanism.

Source: IE
