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## News Analysis (11 Aug, 2021)

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### Supreme Court on Criminalisation of Politics

#### Why in News

Recently, the **Supreme Court** in the two different judgements has raised concerns about the menace of criminalisation in politics.

- In one case, it found **nine political parties** guilty of **contempt** for not following in letter and spirit its **February 13, 2020** direction.
- In another case, it has issued directions that **no criminal case against MPs or MLAs** can be withdrawn without an **approval of the high court** of the concerned state.

## Supreme Court cracks down

The Supreme Court took up the issue of criminalisation in Indian politics in two separate cases on Tuesday. Key takeaways:

**CASES AGAINST POLITICIANS:** State govts cannot withdraw criminal cases against legislators without permission by the high courts, the court ruled

**PARTIES PUNISHED:** Nine parties – including the BJP, Congress, JD(U) and RJD – held guilty of contempt for incomplete disclosure on candidates ahead of 2020 Bihar elections. Eight of them also fined

The political parties refuse to wake up from deep slumber... Cleansing the polluted stream of politics is obviously not one of the immediate pressing concerns of the legislative branch of govt – **SUPREME COURT**

A special bench at SC may be formed to monitor the cases involving accused MPs and MLAs, the apex court indicated

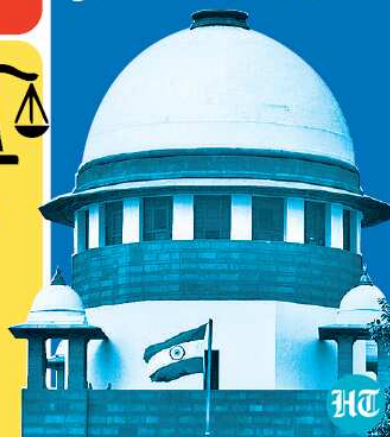


Modifying a 2020 order, SC said parties must make public criminal antecedents of candidates within 48 hours of their selection, and not prior to two weeks before nomination



Election Commission to create a mobile app for info on criminal antecedents of candidates

Country is “losing patience” as appeals have “fallen on deaf ears” to bring stricter laws to decriminalise politics, SC observed



## Key Points

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- **Case I: Political Parties Penalised for Contempt:**
  - **February 13, 2020 Order:**
    - The February 2020 order **required political parties to publish details of criminal cases against its candidates** on their **websites**, a local **vernacular newspaper**, **national newspaper** and **social media accounts**.
    - This is to be done within **48 hours of candidate selection** or not less than two weeks before the first date for filing of nominations, whichever is earlier.
  - **Supreme Court's Directive:**
    - The court took a lenient view of the matter, as it was the first elections (Bihar assembly Elections 2020) conducted after issuance of its directions.
    - Directed political parties to have a caption “**candidates with criminal antecedents candidates**” on their homepages.
    - It asked Election Commission of India (ECI) to create a **dedicated mobile application containing information published by candidates regarding their criminal antecedents**.
    - The court appealed to the conscience of the lawmakers to **come up with a law tackling the criminalization of politics**.

- **Case II: Approval of High Court for Withdrawing Criminal Cases against MPs/MLAs:**
  - **Background:**
    - The Bench was hearing a **pending PIL (Public Interest Litigation)** seeking **establishment of fast-track courts for cases against legislators.**
    - In **November 2017**, the **Supreme Court** had ordered **setting-up of Special Courts in each state to try the pending cases.**
    - Accordingly, **12 such courts** were set up across the country.
  - **Supreme Court's Directive:**
    - Examine the withdrawals, whether pending or disposed of since last year.
    - **High court Chief Justices** to constitute **Special Benches to monitor the progress of criminal cases against sitting and former legislators.**
    - **Judicial officers** presiding over **Special Courts or CBI Courts** involving prosecution of **MPs or MLAs** shall **not be transferred until further orders.**
    - Asked all the **high courts** to **furnish details of posting of judges** and the **number of pending and disposed cases before them.**
  - **Significance of the Judgment:**

It was a move that **significantly clips the powers of the state governments** at a time when the **top court has expressed grave concern over the criminalisation of politics.**
  - **Section 321 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973:**

Under this provision, the **public prosecutor or assistant public prosecutor** may, with the **consent of the court**, withdraw from the **prosecution of a case** at any time before the judgment is pronounced.

**Several states have withdrawn cases** against legislators, under **this section.**

## **Criminalisation of Politics**

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- **About:**
  - It means the **participation of criminals in politics** which includes that criminals can contest in the elections and **get elected as members of the Parliament and the State legislature.**
  - It **takes place primarily** due to the **nexus between politicians and criminals.**

- **Reasons:**
  - **Lack of Political Will:**  
In spite of taking appropriate measures to amend the **Representation of the People Act, 1951** there has been an **unsaid understanding among the political parties** which **deters Parliament** to make strong law curbing criminalisation of politics.
  - **Lack of Enforcement:**  
**Several laws and court judgments have not helped much**, due to the lack of enforcement of laws and judgments.
  - **Narrow Self-interests:**  
**Publishing of the entire criminal history** of candidates fielded by political parties **may not be very effective**, as a **major chunk of voters tend to vote through a narrow prism of community interests** like caste or religion.
  - **Use of Muscle and Money Power:**
    - **Candidates with serious records seem to do well despite their public image, largely due to their ability to finance their own elections** and bring substantive resources to their respective parties.
    - Also, sometimes voters are left with no options, as all competing candidates have criminal records.
- **Effects:**
  - **Against the Principle of Free and Fair Election:**
    - It **limits the choice of voters** to elect a suitable candidate.
    - It is **against the ethos of free and fair election** which is the bedrock of a democracy.
  - **Affecting Good Governance:**
    - The **major problem** is that the **law-breakers become law-makers**, this **affects the efficacy of the democratic process** in delivering good governance.
    - These unhealthy tendencies in the democratic system reflect a poor image of the nature of India's state institutions and the quality of its elected representatives.
  - **Affecting Integrity of Public Servants:**  
It also leads to **increased circulation of black money** during and after elections, which in turn increases corruption in society and affects the working of public servants.
  - **Causes Social Disharmony:**  
It **introduces a culture of violence in society** and sets a bad precedent for the youth to follow and reduces people's faith in democracy as a system of governance.

## Landmark Decisions in Decriminalising Politics

- In 2002, the Supreme Court, in ***Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) v. Union of India***, mandated the **disclosure of information relating to criminal antecedents, educational qualification, and personal assets** of a candidate contesting elections.
- The Supreme Court in ***Lily Thomas v. Union of India (2013)*** case, struck down as **unconstitutional Section 8(4) of the Representation of the People Act** that allowed convicted lawmakers a three-month period for filing appeal to the higher court and to get a stay on the conviction and sentence.
- In ***People's Union for Civil Liberties v. Union of India (2013)***, the SC recognised **negative voting as a constitutional right** of a voter and directed the Government to provide the **'NOTA' option** in electronic voting machines.
- In ***Public Interest Foundation and Ors. v Union of India (2014)*** based on recommendations made by the **Law Commission in its 244<sup>th</sup> report**, the SC had **ordered that trials, in relation to sitting MPs and MLAs be concluded within a year of charges against them being framed.**
- The Supreme Court's decision on information disclosure (***Lok Prahari v. Union of India, 2018***) paves a way for **future constitutional interventions in India's political party funding regime**, including the scheme of electoral bonds.

## Way Forward

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- The **nature of the government machinery** needs to change to **make it more transparent, accountable and pervade.**
- **Awareness among people (voters)** about their rights and they should vote for the right person should be created.
- Given the **reluctance by the political parties** to curb criminalisation of politics and its growing detrimental effects on Indian democracy, **Indian courts must now seriously consider banning people accused with serious criminal charges from contesting elections.**

**Source: IE**

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## Minority Institutions and RTE: NCPCR Survey

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### Why in News

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Recently, the **National Commission for the Protection of the Rights of the Child (NCPCR)** conducted a **Nationwide Assessment of Minority Schools**. The report was **titled "Impact of Exemption under Article 15 (5) with regards to Article 21A of the Constitution of India on Education of Minority Communities"**.

- The aim was to assess **how the 93<sup>rd</sup> Amendment to Indian Constitution, which exempts minority institutions from otherwise mandatory provisions of the Right to Education, affected children belonging to minority communities.**

- The report **highlights the disproportionate number of minority institutions or dominance of non-minority category in Minority institutions.**

### **National Commission for Protection of Child Rights**

- NCPCR is a **statutory body** set up in March 2007 under the **Commissions for Protection of Child Rights (CPCR) Act, 2005.**
- It is under the administrative control of the **Ministry of Women & Child Development.**
- The Commission's mandate is to ensure that all laws, policies, programmes, and administrative mechanisms are in **consonance with the child rights perspective** as enshrined in the Constitution of India and also the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- It inquires into complaints relating to a child's right to free and compulsory education under the **Right to Education Act, 2009.**
- It monitors the implementation of **Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012.**

### **Key Points**

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## Highlights of the Report:

- **Minority Schools Catering to the Non-Minorities:** Overall, **62.5% of the students in these schools belonged to non-minority communities.**  
Only **8.76%** of the students in minority schools belong to **socially and economically disadvantaged backgrounds.**
- **Disproportionate Numbers:** In West Bengal, 92.47% of the minority population is of Muslims and 2.47% are Christians. On the contrary, there are 114 Christian minority schools and only two schools with Muslim minority status.
  - Similarly, in Uttar Pradesh, though the Christian population is less than 1% there are 197 Christian minority schools in the state.
  - This disproportion **takes away the core objective of establishing minority educational institutions.**
- **Non-Uniformity in Madarasas:** It found that the **largest number of out-of-school children – at 1.1 crore – belonged to the Muslim community.**
  - According to the report, there are three kinds of madrasas in the country:
    - **Recognised Madrasas:** These are registered and impart both religious as well as secular education;
    - **Unrecognised Madrasas:** These have been found deficient for registration by state governments as secular education is not imparted.
    - **Unmapped Madrasas:** These have never applied for registration.
  - According to the NCPDR, the **Sachar Committee report 2005**, which says 4% of Muslim children (15.3 lakh) attend madrasas, has only taken into account the registered madrasas.
  - Further, the syllabi of madrasas, that have evolved over centuries, **are not uniform, and that “being left ignorant of the world around them”.**
    - Many students develop an inferiority complex, being alienated from the rest of society and unable to adjust with the environment.
    - It also says that madrasas do not have any teachers training programmes.

## Article 15(5), 30, 21A Linkage

- **Minority Institutions:** Minority institutions have the fundamental right under Article 30 of the Constitution to establish and administer their educational institutions according to their choice.
  - However, they cannot ignore the regulations recommended by the state.
  - Further, the Supreme Court in the **TMA Pai Foundation case, 2002** said that Article 30(1) was neither absolute nor above the law.
  - **Muslims, Sikhs, Christians, Buddhists, Jain and Zoroastrians (Parsis) have been notified as minority communities** under Section 2 (c) of the National Commission for Minorities Act, 1992.

- **Article 15 (5) (93<sup>rd</sup> Amendment to Indian Constitution):** It empowers the **state to make special provisions for the socially and educationally backward classes** or the Scheduled Castes or the Scheduled Tribes in **educational institutions** including private educational institutions (whether aided or unaided by the state), **except the minority educational institutions.**
- **Right to Education (RTE):** In order to implement Right to Education under **Article 21A**. The Act mandates 25% reservation for disadvantaged sections of the society where disadvantaged groups include:
  - SCs and STs
  - Socially Backward Class
  - Differently abled
- **Using Article 30 to Bypassing RTE:** Minority schools are outside the purview of the RTE Act. Further, in 2014, the Supreme Court in ***Pramati judgment*** made the whole RTE Act inapplicable to minority schools.
 

The NCPDR survey highlighted that **as many schools** and institutions have **registered as minority institutions, simply because they don't have to implement RTE.**

#### **Suggestions:**

- The government should bring all such schools, including madrasas, under the purview of the Right to Education and **Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan campaign.**
- The NCPDR also **backed reservation for students** from minority communities in such schools after its survey found a large proportion of non-minority students studying there.
 

There is a need to lay down **specific guidelines regarding the minimum percentage of students** from the minority community to be admitted to the institution.
- There is a need to **review the exemption made under RTE with respect to minority institutions.**
  - **Article 30** of Indian constitution ensures the right of minorities to open their own institutions for cultural, linguistic and religious protection.
  - However, it should not contravene with **Article 21(A)** which protects a child's fundamental right to education.

**Source: IE**

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## **Global Youth Tobacco Survey-4**

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### **Why in News**

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Recently, the **fourth round of Global Youth Tobacco Survey (GYTS-4)** was released by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW).



## Key Points

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- **About:**

- GYTS-4 was **conducted in 2019** by the **International Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS)** under the MoHFW.
  - **IIPS**, Mumbai, formerly known as the Demographic Training and Research Centre (DTRC) till 1970, **was established in July 1956** under the joint sponsorship of Sir Dorabji Tata Trust, the Government of India and the **United Nations**.
  - It serves as a regional centre for Training and Research in Population Studies for the the **Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)** region.
- The survey was designed **to produce national estimates of tobacco use among school going children aged 13-15 years** at the state level and Union Territory (UT) by sex, location of school (rural-urban), and management of school (public-private).
- The **first three rounds** of GYTS were conducted in **2003, 2006 and 2009**.
- A total of **97,302 students from 987 schools** participated in the survey.

- **Objective of the Survey:**

To provide **information on tobacco use**, cessation, second-hand smoke, access and availability, exposure to anti-tobacco information, **awareness and receptivity to tobacco marketing, knowledge, and attitudes**.

- **Major Findings:**
  - **Decline in Tobacco Use:**
    - There has been a **42% decline in tobacco use among 13-15 year-old school going children in the last decade.**
    - Nearly **one-fifth of the students aged 13-15 used any form of the tobacco product** (smoking, smokeless, and any other form) **in their life.**
  - **Gender Based Usage:**

Use of any form of tobacco was **higher among boys.** Prevalence of tobacco use among boys was 9.6% and among girls was 7.4%.
  - **State Wise Data:**

Tobacco **use among school going children was highest in Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram and lowest in Himachal Pradesh and Karnataka.**
  - **Initiation Age:**
    - **38% of cigarettes, 47% of bidi smokers and 52% of smokeless tobacco users initiated the use before their tenth birthday.**
    - The **median age of initiation** to cigarette and bidi-smoking, and smokeless tobacco use were 11.5 years, 10.5 years and 9.9 years respectively.
  - **Awareness:**
    - **52% of students noticed anti-tobacco messages** in the mass media and **18% of students noticed tobacco advertisements** or promotions when visiting points of sale.
    - **85% of school heads were aware of the Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products Act (COTPA), 2003** and 83% of schools were aware of the policy to display 'tobacco-free school' boards.

- **Measures towards Tobacco Control in India:**
  - **Adoption of WHO FCTC:**

India adopted the tobacco control provisions under **World Health Organisation (WHO) Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC)**.
  - **COTPA, 2003:**
    - It replaced the **Cigarettes Act of 1975** (largely limited to statutory warnings- 'Cigarette Smoking is Injurious to Health' to be displayed on cigarette packs and advertisements. It did not include non-cigarettes).
    - The 2003 Act also **included cigars, bidis, cheroots, pipe tobacco, hookah, chewing tobacco, pan masala, and gutka.**
  - **Promulgation of the Prohibition of Electronic Cigarettes Ordinance, 2019:**

Which **prohibits** Production, Manufacture, Import, Export, Transport, Sale, Distribution, Storage and Advertisement of e-Cigarettes.
  - **National Tobacco Quitline Services (NTQLS):**

Tobacco Quitline Services have the potential to reach a large number of tobacco users with the sole objective **to provide telephone-based information, advice, support, and referrals** for tobacco cessation.
  - **mCessation Programme:**
    - It is an initiative using mobile technology for tobacco cessation.
    - India launched mCessation using text messages in 2016 as part of the government's **Digital India initiative.**
- **Global Initiatives:**
  - **World No Tobacco Day-** 31<sup>st</sup> May.
  - **WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control:** Governments adopt and implement the tobacco control provisions of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC).

## Way Forward

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- The **role of teachers is most crucial in creating awareness** among children and their parents about harm due to tobacco use and for shaping the attitude of children in this regard.
- The more and the **sooner awareness is created among children** about harms due to tobacco use, the **better will be the outcomes in terms of reduction in prevalence** of tobacco use among children and consequently among adults.
- Harmful **effects of tobacco use should be incorporated in school curricula** at various levels starting right from the primary school level.

**Source: TH**

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## Women in Combat Role in ITBP

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## Why in News

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For the first time, the **Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP)** inducted women officers in the combat role. Two women officers joined it as Assistant Commandants (AC).

### Indo-Tibetan Border Police Force

- **ITBP** is a **Central Armed Police Force** functioning under the **Ministry of Home Affairs**, Government of India.  
Other Central Armed Police Forces are: **Assam Rifles (AR)**, **Border Security Force (BSF)**, **Central Industrial Security Force (CISF)**, **Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF)**, **National Security Guards (NSG)** and **Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB)**.
- The ITBP was raised on **24<sup>th</sup> October, 1962** during the **India-China War** and is a **border guarding police force** specializing in **high altitude operations**.
- Presently, ITBP is deployed on border guarding duties from **Karakoram Pass in Ladakh to Jachep La in Arunachal Pradesh** covering 3488 km of **Indo-China Border**.
- The Force is also deployed for **Anti Naxal operations** and other internal security duties.
- ITBP was initially raised under the **Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) Act, 1949**. However, in **1992, parliament enacted the ITBPF Act** and the rules were framed in 1994.

### Key Points

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- **About:**
  - Women officers joining the ITBP as officers have served in combat roles earlier as well.
  - However, it was only in 2016 when the appointment of women as combat officers through the Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF) entrance exam conducted by the UPSC (**Union Public Service Commission**) was approved.

- **Status of Women in the Indian Armed Forces (under the Ministry of Defence):**

- The **Army, Air Force and Navy** began **inducting women as short-service commission (SSC) officers in 1992.**

This was the first time when women were allowed to join the military outside the medical stream.

- One of the turning points for women in the military came **in 2015 when Indian Air Force (IAF) decided to induct them into the fighter stream.**
- In **2020**, the **Supreme Court (SC)** ordered the central government to grant **Permanent Commission (PC) to women officers in the Army's non-combat support units** on par with their male counterparts.
  - The SC had **rejected the government's stand of women officers' physiological limitations** as being based on "sex stereotypes" and "gender discrimination against women".
  - Women officers have been granted PC in the Indian Army in all the ten branches where women are inducted for SSC.
  - Women are **now eligible to occupy all the command appointments**, at par with male officers, which would open avenues for further promotions to higher ranks for them.
- In early **2021**, the **Indian Navy deployed four women officers on warships** after a gap of almost 25 years.

India's aircraft carrier INS Vikramaditya and fleet tanker INS Shakti are the warships that have been assigned their first women crews since the late 1990s.
- In **May 2021**, the **Army inducted the first batch of women into the Corps of Military Police**, the **first time that women joined the military in the non-officer cadre.**

However, Women are **still not allowed in combat arms like Infantry and Armored Corps.**

- **Issues with Women in Combat Role:**

- **Physical Issues:** The natural physical differences in stature, strength, and body composition between the sexes make women more vulnerable to certain types of injuries and medical problems.
  - Pre-entry physical fitness levels tend to be lower in most women recruits compared with men.
  - Hence, when standards of training remain same for the two genders, there is a higher probability of injuries among the women.
- **Physiological Issues:** The natural processes of menstruation and pregnancy make women particularly vulnerable in combat situations.
  - Lack of privacy and sanitation can result in an increased incidence of genitourinary infections.
  - The effect of prolonged deployment in difficult terrains and grueling physical activity on the reproductive health of women is still unknown.
- **Social and Psychological Issues:** Women tend to be more attached to their families, particularly their children.
  - This translates into greater mental stress and requirement of social support to sustain themselves during prolonged separations from family.
  - The issue of military sexual trauma (MST) and its effect on the physical and mental well-being of women combatants is grave.
- **Conventional Barriers:** Cultural barriers in society may be the biggest impediment to induction of women in combat.

Another major question that needs to be studied is the acceptance of orders of the women officers by the jawans.

- **Counter-Arguments:**

- **Gender is not a Hindrance:** As long as an applicant is qualified for a position, one's gender is arbitrary. In the modern high technology battlefield, technical expertise and decision-making skills are increasingly more valuable than simple brute strength.
- **Military Readiness:** Allowing a mixed gender force keeps the military strong. The armed forces are severely troubled by falling retention and recruitment rates. This can be addressed by allowing women in the combat role.
- **Effectiveness:** The blanket restriction for women limits the ability of commanders in theater to pick the most capable person for the job.
- **Tradition:** Training will be required to facilitate the integration of women into combat units. Cultures change over time and the masculine subculture can evolve too.
- **Global Scenario:** When women officially became eligible for combat positions in the American military in 2013, it was widely hailed as another step towards the equality of sexes. In 2018, the UK military lifted a ban on women serving in close combat ground roles, clearing the way for them to serve in elite special forces.

## Way Forward

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- Women were being kept out of command posts on the reasoning that the largely rank and file will have problems with women as commanding officers. Thus, changes have to take place in the culture, norms, and values of not only the rank and file of the Army but also that of society at large. The responsibility to usher these changes lies with the senior military and political leadership.
  - The United States, Israel, North Korea, France, Germany, Netherlands, Australia and Canada are among the global militaries that employ women in front-line combat positions.
  - It is the right of every woman to pursue a career of her choice and reach the top since Equality is a constitutional guarantee.

**Source: TH**

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## Ujjwala 2.0

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### Why in News

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Recently, the Prime Minister launched the **second phase of Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY) or Ujjwala 2.0 Scheme.**

- He mentioned plans to promote “**gobar dhan**” – **tapping cow dung for energy** on the occasion of **World Bio Fuel Day (10<sup>th</sup> August)**.
- Ujjwala is part of the ambitious agenda for behavioural change that **will help India transit to a \$5 trillion economy by 2024.**

### Key Points

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- **About:**
  - **PMUY-I:**

Launched in May 2016 to provide LPG (liquefied petroleum gas) connections to poor households.
  - **PMUY-II:**
    - It is aimed **to provide maximum benefit to the migrants** who live in other states and find it difficult to submit address proof.
    - Now they will only have to give “**Self Declaration**” to avail the benefit.
- **Objectives:**
  - Empowering women and protecting their health.
  - Reducing the number of deaths in India due to unclean cooking fuel.
  - Preventing young children from a significant number of acute respiratory illnesses caused due to indoor air pollution by burning fossil fuel.

- **Features:**
  - The scheme provides a **financial support of Rs 1600 for each LPG connection to the BPL households.**
  - Along with a deposit-free LPG connection, **Ujjwala 2.0** will provide the first refill and a hotplate free of cost to the beneficiaries.
- **Target:**
  - Under **Ujjwala 1.0**, the target was to provide LPG connections to 50 million women from the below poverty line (BPL) households, by March 2020. However, in August 2018, women **from seven other categories were brought under the purview of the scheme:**
    - **SC/ST**, those under the **Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY)**, beneficiaries of the **Antyoday Anna Yojana (AAY)**, **Forest Dwellers**, most backward classes, tea gardens and Islands.
  - Under **Ujjwala 2.0**, **an additional 10 million LPG connections** will be provided to the beneficiaries.
    - Government has also fixed a target of **providing piped gas to 21 lakh homes in 50 districts.**
- **Nodal Ministry:**
  - Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas (MoPNG).
- **Achievements:**
  - In the first phase of the PMUY, **8 crore poor families**, including from the Dalit and tribal communities, were given free cooking gas connections.
  - The **LPG infrastructure has expanded** manifold in the country. In the last six years, more than 11,000 new LPG distribution centres have opened across the country.
- **Challenges:**
  - **Low Consumption of Refills:**
    - Encouraging the sustained usage of LPG remains a big challenge, and low consumption of refills hindered recovery of outstanding loans disbursed under the scheme.
    - The annual average refill consumption on 31st December 2018 was only 3.21.
  - **System Anomalies:**
    - There are deficiencies such as the issuance of connections to unintended beneficiaries, and problems with the software of the state-run oil marketing companies for identifying intended beneficiaries and inadequacies in the deduplication process.

## Way Forward

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- The scheme should be extended to poor households in urban and semi-urban slum areas.



- There is a need for achieving a higher LPG coverage of the population by providing connections to households that do not have LPG.
- Entering **Aadhaar** numbers of all adult family members of existing as well as new beneficiaries to make deduplication effective and appropriate measures in distributors' software to restrict issuance to ineligible beneficiaries.

**Source: TH**

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## **National Mission on Edible Oil-Oil Palm**

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### **Why in News**

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Recently, the Prime Minister has announced a new national initiative on palm oil production to help increase farm incomes.

The scheme, called National Edible Oil Mission-Oil Palm (NMEO-OP), **for self-reliance in edible oil** involves investment of over Rs. 11,000 crore (over **a five year period**).

### **Key Points**

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- **Aims:**
  - To **harness domestic edible oil prices** that are dictated by expensive palm oil imports.
  - To **raise the domestic production of palm oil** by three times to 11 lakh MT by 2025-26.
    - This will involve **raising the area under oil palm cultivation** to 10 lakh hectares by 2025-26 and 16.7 lakh hectares by 2029-30.
- **Features:**
  - The **special emphasis of the scheme will be in India's north-eastern states and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands** due to the conducive weather conditions in the regions.
  - Under the scheme, **oil palm farmers will be provided financial assistance** and will get remuneration under a price and viability formula.

- **Significance of the Scheme:**

- **Reduction in Import dependence:**

- It is expected to incentivise production of palm oil to reduce dependence on imports and help farmers cash in on the huge market.
- India is the **largest consumer of vegetable oil in the world**. Of this, palm oil imports are almost 55% of its total vegetable oil imports.

- **Rise in Yields:**

- India **produces less than half of the roughly 2.4 crore tonnes of edible oil that it consumes annually**. It imports the rest, buying palm oil from Indonesia and Malaysia, soyoil from Brazil and Argentina, and sunflower oil, mainly from Russia and Ukraine.
- In India, **94.1% of its palm oil is used in food products**, especially for cooking purposes. This makes palm oil extremely **critical to India's edible oils economy**.

## Palm Oil

- Palm oil is currently the **world's most consumed vegetable oil**.
- It is used extensively in the production of detergents, plastics, cosmetics, and biofuels.
- **Top consumers** of the commodity are India, China, and the **European Union (EU)**.

## Edible Oil Economy

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- There are **two major features**, which have significantly contributed to the development of this sector. One was the **setting up of the Technology Mission on Oilseeds in 1986** which was **converted into a National Mission on Oilseeds and Oil Palm (NMOOP) in 2014**.

Further it was **merged with NFSM (National Food Security Mission)**.

- This gave a thrust to Government's efforts for augmenting the production of oilseeds. This is evident by the very impressive **increase in the production of oilseeds from about 11.3 million tons in 1986-87 to 33.22 million tons in 2019-20**.
- The **other dominant feature** which has had significant impact on the present status of edible oilseeds/oil industry has been the **program of liberalization under which the Government's economic policy allows greater freedom to the open market and encourages healthy competition and self regulation** rather than protection and control.
- The **Yellow Revolution** is one of the colour revolutions that was launched to increase the production of Edible oilseeds in the country to meet domestic demand.
- The government has also launched the **Kharif Strategy 2021 for oilseeds**.

It will bring an additional 6.37 lakh hectare area under oilseeds and is likely to produce 120.26 lakh quintals of oilseeds and edible oil amounting to 24.36 lakh quintals.

- **Oils Commonly Used in India:** Groundnut, mustard, rapeseed, sesame, safflower, linseed, niger seed, castor are the major traditionally cultivated oilseeds.
  - Soybean and sunflower have also assumed importance in recent years.
  - Coconut is most important amongst the plantation crops.

Source: TH

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## World Lion Day, 2021

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### Why in News

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Every year, World Lion day is observed on **10<sup>th</sup> August** to raise awareness about the conservation of lions.

### Key Points

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- **About:**
  - The **initiative to protect the big cats started in 2013** and the first World Lion Day was celebrated that year.
  - There has been a **decline in 80% of the population of lions** in the past 100 years.
    - This is the major reason for the observance of the day to protect these wild cats in their natural habitat.
  - This also works on the **safety measures of the lion communities.**

- **Lion:**
  - **Scientific Name:** *Panthera leo*
    - The lion is divided into two subspecies: the **African lion** (*Panthera leo leo*) and the **Asiatic lion** (*Panthera leo persica*).
  - **Role in the Animal Kingdom:**
    - Lions hold an indispensable place in the ecosystem, they are **an apex predator of their habitat**, responsible for checking the population of grazers, thus helping in **maintaining the ecological balance**.
    - Lions also **contribute to keeping the population of their prey healthy and resilient** as they target the weakest members of the herd. Thus, **indirectly helping in disease control** in the prey population.
  - **Threats:** Poaching, genetic inbreeding arising from a single population inhabiting one place, diseases such as plague, canine distemper or a natural disaster.
  - **Protection Status:**
    - **IUCN Red List:** Vulnerable  
**Asiatic Lion - Endangered.**
    - **CITES:** Appendix I for populations of India, all other populations are included in Appendix II.
    - **Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972:** Schedule I
  - **Status in India:**
    - India is **home to the majestic Asiatic Lion**, who inhabit the protected territory of **Sasan-Gir National Park (Gujarat)**.
    - According to the **data from 2020**, there are **674 lions in India**, which were **523 in 2015**.
- **Conservation Efforts:**
  - **Project Lion:** Six new sites apart from the Kuno-Palpur Wildlife Sanctuary (Madhya Pradesh) have been identified under Project Lion that was announced in August 2020, on the lines of Project Tiger and **Project Elephant**.  
The programme has been launched **for the conservation of the Asiatic Lion, whose last remaining wild population is in Gujarat's Asiatic Lion Landscape (ALL)**.
  - Earlier, the **"Asiatic Lion Conservation Project"** was launched by the **Union Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MoEFCC)**. It was approved **for three financial years from 2018 to 2021**.  
It envisaged **scientific management with the involvement of communities** in coordination with multi-sectoral agencies for disease control and veterinary care for overall conservation of Asiatic lions.
  - The **Lion census is conducted once every five years**.
- The **other biggest cats** found mostly in India, including the **Royal Bengal Tiger**, **Indian leopard**, **Clouded Leopard**, and **Snow leopard**.

**Source: HT**

# Marburg Virus

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## Why in News

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Recently, West Africa's first case of the extremely contagious and deadly **Marburg virus** was confirmed in Guinea.

- Its first case was first identified just **two months after the country was declared free of Ebola**.
- Both the **Marburg case and this year's Ebola cases were detected in Guinea's Gueckedou district**.
- The **first cases of the 2014-2016 Ebola epidemic, the largest in history, also were from the same region in Southeastern Guinea's forest region**.



## Key Points

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- **About:**

- Marburg virus disease is a highly virulent disease that causes **haemorrhagic fever**, it is **carried by bats with a fatality ratio of up to 88%**.
- It is in the **same family as the virus that causes Ebola virus disease**.
- **Two large outbreaks** that occurred simultaneously in **Marburg and Frankfurt in Germany**, and in **Belgrade, Serbia, in 1967**, led to the initial **recognition of the disease**.

The outbreak was associated with laboratory work using **African green monkeys** (*Cercopithecus aethiops*) imported from Uganda.

- Subsequently, outbreaks and sporadic cases have been reported in Angola, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya, South Africa and Uganda.
- There have been **12 major Marburg outbreaks since 1967**, mostly in southern and eastern Africa.

- **Human- Infection:**

Human infection with Marburg virus disease initially results from prolonged exposure to mines or caves inhabited by **Rousettus bat colonies**.

**Rousettus** is a genus of Old World fruit bats or megabats. They are sometimes referred to as **dog-faced fruit bats, or flying foxes**.

- **Transmission:**

Once an individual is infected with the virus, **Marburg can spread through human-to-human transmission via direct contact** (through broken skin or mucous membranes) with the blood, secretions, organs or other bodily fluids of infected people, and with surfaces and materials (e.g. bedding, clothing) contaminated with these fluids.

- **Symptoms:**

- **Headache, vomiting blood, muscle pains and bleeding** through various orifices.
- Symptoms become increasingly severe and can include **jaundice**, inflammation of the pancreas, severe weight loss, liver failure, **massive hemorrhaging**, and **multi-organ dysfunction**.

- **Diagnosis:**

- Since many of the disease's symptoms are similar to those of **malaria** and typhoid fever, making a diagnosis is difficult.
- However, **Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR)** and **Enzyme-Linked Immunosorbent Assay (ELISA)** testing can be used to confirm a case.

- **Treatment:**

- There is no specific treatment or approved vaccine for Marburg hemorrhagic fever. **Supportive hospital therapy** should be utilized.
- Supportive hospital therapy includes balancing the patient's fluids and electrolytes, maintaining oxygen status and blood pressure, replacing lost blood and clotting factors, and treatment for any complicating infections.

**Source: IE**

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# 100 Years of Madras Legislative Council

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## Why in News

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Recently, the President addressed the **commemoration of the 100<sup>th</sup> year of the Tamil Nadu Assembly**, formerly known as the **Madras Legislative Council (MLC)** in Chennai.

## Key Points

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- **History:**
  - The Madras Legislative Council was **set up in 1921 under the Government of India Act 1919**.  
The term of the Council was **for a period of three years**. It consisted of 132 Members of which **34 were nominated by the Governor and the rest were elected**.
  - It **met for the first time** on the 9<sup>th</sup> January 1921 **at Fort St. George, Madras**.
  - The Council was inaugurated by the Duke of Cannaught, a paternal uncle of the King of England, on the 12<sup>th</sup> January 1921 on the request made by the **Governor Wellington**.
  - The **Second and Third Councils**, under this Act were constituted **after the general elections held in 1923 and 1926 respectively**.
  - The **fourth Legislative Council** met for the first time **in November 1930** after the general elections held during the year and its life was extended from time to time and it **lasted till the provincial autonomy under the Government of India Act, 1935** came into operation.
- **Significance:**
  - This legislature **became the fountainhead of many progressive legislations** which were subsequently replicated across the country to empower the weaker sections of society and strengthen Democracy.
  - Abolition of the **Devadasi system**, **widow remarriage**, **mid-day meals in schools** and **distribution of agricultural land to the landless** were some of the revolutionary ideas that transformed the society.
  - The concept of the **Welfare State** has taken deep roots in this legislature.

## State Legislature

- **About:**

The primary function of the State Legislature, like the Union Parliament, is **law-making**. The State Legislature is **empowered to make laws on State List and Concurrent List**.

- **Types of Legislature:**

- Just as Parliament has two Houses, the **states can also have a Legislative Council in addition to the Legislative Assembly.**
- Therefore there can be **two types** of legislatures i.e **Unicameral or Bicameral** on the basis of the number of houses to implement laws for the state.
  - **Unicameral:** Legislative Assembly
  - **Bicameral:** Legislative Assembly and Legislative Council.
- Presently, there are Six States having a Legislative Council: **Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Maharashtra, Karnataka.**

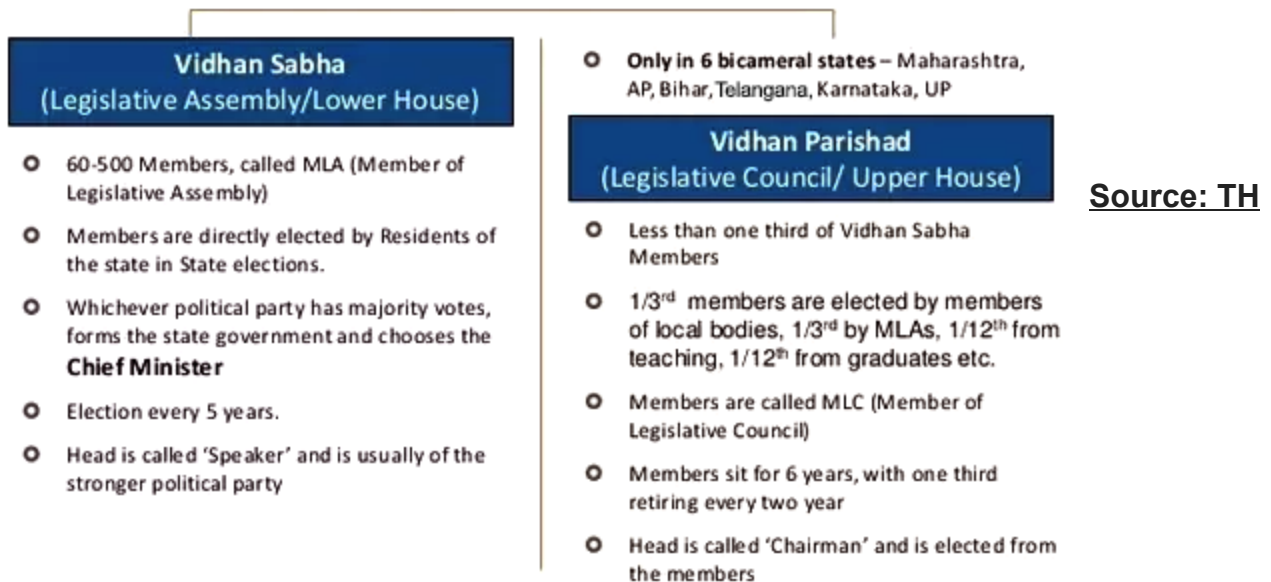
- **Constitutional Provisions:**

**Articles 168 to 212 in Part VI** of the Constitution deal with the organisation, composition, duration, officers, procedures, privileges, powers and so on of the state legislature.

- **Article 168** states that for **every State there shall be a Legislature** which shall consist of the **Governor.**
- **Article 169** states that notwithstanding anything in article 168, **Parliament may by law provide for the abolition of the Legislative Council** of a State having such a Council **or for the creation of such a Council** in a State having no such Council, if the Legislative Assembly of the State passes a resolution to that effect.

## Political System at State Level

### State Government



Source: TH