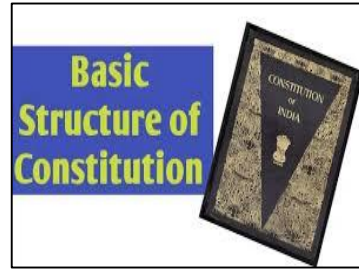


Basic Structure of the Indian Constitution



❖ Context

- The seminal ruling in Kesavananda Bharati, in which the Supreme Court laid down the “basic structure” doctrine on the limits of Parliament’s power to amend the Constitution, completed 50 years on 24th April 2023.

❖ About Basic Structure

- The Doctrine of Basic Structure is a form of **judicial review** that is used to test the legality of any legislation by the courts.
- The doctrine was **evolved by the Supreme Court** in the 1973 landmark ruling in **Kesavananda Bharati v State of Kerala**.
- A 13-judge Constitution Bench ruled that the ‘**basic structure**’ of the Constitution is **inviolable**, and could not be amended by Parliament.
- If a law is found to “damage or destroy” the “basic features of the Constitution”, the Court declares it unconstitutional.
- **Significance :**
 - The test is applied to constitutional amendments to ensure the **amendment does not dilute the fundamentals of the Constitutional itself**.
 - The test is widely regarded as a **check on majoritarian impulses** of the Parliament since it places substantive limits on the power to amend the Constitution.
 - It **protects the fundamental rights** of the citizens against arbitrariness and **authoritarianism of the legislature**.
 - It **strengthens the cause of democracy** and maintains the sanctity of the vision of our founding fathers.

- The doctrine **has not been specifically defined** but the various court judgements have helped in formulating a scope of the same and it includes the following:
 - Supremacy of the Constitution.
 - Republican and democratic form of government.
 - Secular character of the Constitution.
 - Separation of powers between the legislature, executive and the judiciary.
 - Federal character of the Constitution.
 - The mandate to build a welfare state contained in the Directive Principles of State Policy.
 - Unity and integrity of the nation.
 - Rule of law
 - Sovereignty, liberty and republic nature of Indian polity.
 - Judicial review
 - Harmony and Balance between fundamental rights and directive principles.
 - Parliamentary system.
 - Rule of equality.
 - Free and fair elections.
 - Powers of SC under Article 32,136,142,147.
 - Power of HC under Article 226 and 227.
- Limited power of parliament to amend the constitution.
- Freedom and dignity of an individual.

100 Food Streets

❖ Context

- The **Union Health Ministry, in collaboration with the Ministry of Housing** and Urban Affairs, has launched an innovative initiative to establish 100 food streets in 100 districts throughout India.



❖ Key Highlights:

- This pilot project aims to improve overall health outcomes by promoting safe and healthy practices that reduce food-borne illnesses.
- The initiative will also **enhance tourism potential**, create local employment opportunities, and boost the economy.
- The **National Health Mission (NHM)** will implement the initiative with the support of the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI).
- States and Union Territories will receive financial assistance of **₹1 crore** for each food street or district.
- To ensure the highest standards of hygiene and safety, the FSSAI will oversee the project's implementation and provide technical support.

- **Municipal Corporations and District Collectors** will facilitate the effort to align financial resources and physical infrastructure.
- ❖ **Significance:**
 - **The food streets initiative** will encourage citizens to make healthier food choices by providing easy access to safe and hygienic food.
 - Additionally, training programmes for street vendors on food safety, hygiene maintenance, and waste disposal will help them adopt safe and hygienic practices.
 - The initiative will also **establish standard protocols** for modernizing food streets, independent third-party audits, **certification of Eat Right Street Food Hubs**, and training of food handlers, which will further enhance the safety and hygiene standards of the food streets.
 - It will also create local employment opportunities and enhance tourism potential, thereby contributing to the overall economic development of the country.

Face to Face Centres



Small Savings Instruments

❖ Context

- The returns on five out of 11 small savings instruments (SSIs) in India are still lower than the **formula-based rates calculated** for them, despite successive interest rate hikes.



❖ Key Highlights:

- The interest rates on most SSIs were raised by 10-70 basis points in the current quarter, except for **Public Provident Fund (PPF)**.
- According to calculations by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), there is a gap of 5 to 82 basis points **between formula-based rates** and current rates for five SSIs, including PPF.
- The **Recurring Deposit Account** offers 6.2% to depositors instead of the 7.02% prescribed by the formula for SSIs.
- The government's preference for **using market borrowings** instead of small savings schemes to cut down costs might be the reason for not following the committee's guidance.
- Three of 11 SSIs are exactly on par with the formula-based rate for them, while three others trail by **one or two basis points**.

❖ What are Small Saving Instruments?

- Small savings schemes are investment options offered by the Indian government to encourage individuals to save money and **provide them with secure and guaranteed returns**.

- These schemes are aimed at individuals who want to save money for the long term, such as for retirement, children's education, or marriage.
- Small savings schemes include options like **Public Provident Fund (PPF)**, **National Savings Certificate (NSC)**, **Senior Citizens Savings Scheme (SCSS)**, Kisan Vikas Patra (KVP), Sukanya Samridhi Yojana (SSY), and various other post office schemes. These schemes offer varying rates of interest, lock-in periods, and withdrawal rules.
- They are popular among conservative investors who **prioritize safety and steady returns over high-risk investments**.
- The returns on these schemes are reviewed and revised by the **government every quarter**, based on the prevailing market conditions.
- The interest rates on these schemes are generally higher than the rates offered by **commercial banks**.
- The small savings schemes play an essential role in channelizing household savings and promoting financial inclusion in India.

Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV)

❖ Context

- Recently, ISRO's **Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV)** successfully placed two Singapore satellites into their intended orbits.



❖ Mechanism of Launch Vehicle

- The launch vehicle rockets have **powerful propulsion systems** that generate the huge amount of energy required to lift heavy objects like satellites into space, **overcoming the gravitational pull** of the earth. Satellites, or payloads as they are often called, sit inside the rocket and are ejected once they reach near their intended orbit in space.
- Rockets have several **detachable energy-providing parts**.
- They burn different kinds of fuels to power the rocket.
- Once their fuel is exhausted, they detach from the rocket and fall off, often burning off in the atmosphere due to air-friction, and getting destroyed.
- Only a **small part of the original rocket** goes till the intended destination of the satellite.
- Once the satellite is finally ejected, this last part of the rocket either becomes part of space debris, or once again burns off after falling into the atmosphere.

❖ PSLV

- After its **first successful launch in October 1994**, PSLV emerged as a reliable and versatile workhorse launch vehicle of India. The vehicle has launched numerous Indian and foreign customer satellites.
- Besides, the vehicle successfully launched two spacecraft, Chandrayaan-1 in 2008 and Mars Orbiter Spacecraft in 2013, that later travelled to Moon and Mars respectively.

• PSLV has four parts :

- **PS1**, a solid rocket motor augmented by **6 solid strap-on boosters**;
- **PS2**, a storable liquid rocket engine, known as the **Vikas engine**;
- **PS3**, a solid rocket motor that provides the upper stages high thrust after the atmospheric phase of the launch;
- **PS4**, the uppermost stage consisting of two Earth storable liquid engines.
- As technology evolves, the effort is to make the various parts of a rocket reusable. PSLV's PS4 has been able to achieve this.
- ❖ **PSLV Orbital Experimental Module (POEM)**
- As part of POEM, PS4, instead of being discarded, is now utilised as a "stabilised platform" to perform experiments.
- POEM has a dedicated **Navigation Guidance and Control (NGC)** system for attitude stabilisation, which stands for controlling the orientation of any aerospace vehicle within permitted limits.
- The NGC acts as the platform's brain to stabilise it with specified accuracy.
- It derives its power from solar panels mounted around the PS4 tank, and a Li-Ion battery.

Face to Face Centres





eGramSwaraj–GeM Integration

❖ Context

- Recently, on the occasion of **National Panchayati Raj Day**, which is celebrated every year on 24th April, Prime Minister inaugurated an integrated **e-GramSwaraj and Government eMarketplace (GeM) portal for public procurement at the Panchayat level.**

❖ Key Highlights

- This year's National Panchayati Raj Day is special as it **marks 30 years of Panchayati Raj in India.**
- It is a defining moment in the history of decentralization of power to the grassroots through the Constitution (73rd Amendment) Act, 1992.

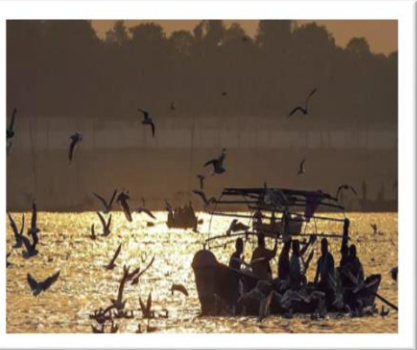
❖ eGramSwaraj–GeM Integration

- The eGramSwaraj–GeM Integration is aimed at enabling Panchayats to procure their goods and services through GeM leveraging the eGramSwaraj platform.
- The integration will **encourage Panchayats to adopt digital procurement and payment platforms**, and will also benefit local sellers by opening new markets for them.

- This initiative will give a major **boost to the rural economy** and entrepreneurship, and will also strengthen the Digital India Program.
- **eGramSwaraj Platform ;**
 - It was **launched on National Panchayati Raj Day in 2020.**
 - It was designed to operate as a **single-window solution for all day-to-day functioning of Panchayats**, from planning to online payments.
 - The platform has almost 100% usage and adoption across the country, with more than 2.3 lakh Gram Panchayats and Traditional Local Bodies using it for online payments.

News in Between the Lines

PRAYAG Platform



❖ Context

- **Jal Shakti Ministry** recently launched **PRAYAG Real-time Monitoring Centre for Clean Ganga Mission.**

❖ What is PRAYAG?

- PRAYAG (Platform for Real-time Analysis of Yamuna, Ganga and their Tributaries) is a real-time monitoring centre that will help in planning and monitoring various projects related to the Clean Ganga Mission.
- This will ensure better monitoring and timely implementation of projects.

❖ National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG):

- The National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG) is a government body established in 2011 under the **Ministry of Jal Shakti** to manage and restore the river Ganga (also known as the Ganges) and its tributaries to their pristine condition.
- The mission aims to **rejuvenate the river by focusing** on various aspects such as wastewater management, solid waste management, afforestation, and public awareness campaigns.

World Earth Day



❖ Context

- Recently, on 22nd April 2023, the 53rd anniversary of Earth Day was celebrated.

❖ About Earth Day

- It is a reminder to **protect the environment, restore damaged ecosystems and live a more sustainable life.**
- **Theme-** The Earth Day 2023 theme is 'Invest in our Planet'. The theme emphasizes saving our planet far and wide through making efforts.
- First celebrated in 1970, **this year marks its 53rd anniversary.**
- It was **first observed in the United States**, when some 20 million people took to the streets to protest against the 1969 Santa Barbara oil spill.
- Since then, the occasion has **played an important role in raising awareness on other environmental issues.**
- The landmark **Paris Agreement was signed on Earth Day in 2016.**
- In 2009, the United Nations designated April 22 as '**International Mother Earth Day**'
 - According to the UN, International Mother Earth Day is celebrated as a reminder that the Earth and its ecosystems provide us with life and sustenance.
- **Side Note :** Earth Hour, celebrated every year on **March 26**
 - It is the **largest global grassroots movement for the environment.**
 - It has inspired the world to save electricity.

Face to Face Centres

Pushkaralu Festival



❖ Context

- The 12-day Pushkaralu festival of Telugu-speaking people commenced recently in Varanasi.

❖ Key Highlights:

- The festival, in which pilgrims will worship their ancestors and the river Ganga, is being organised in Kashi this year after a gap of 12 years due to a special combination of **planetary transits**.
- It is the second event of the recent past to be organised in Varanasi, after the **Kashi-Tamil Sangamam**.

❖ Mythological Importance:

- As per legend, the devotee Pushkara was blessed by Lord Shiva with the ability to live in water and purify holy rivers.
- Each year, one of the 12 sacred rivers is chosen based on **Brihaspati's travel from one zodiac sign to another** - Ganga, Yamuna, Godavari, Krishna, Kaveri, Bhima, Tapti, Narmada, Saraswati, Tungbhadra, Sindhu, and Pranhita.

Exercise INIOCHOS-23



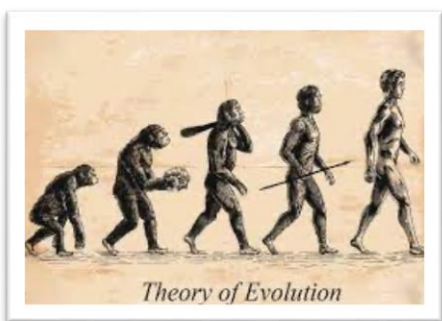
❖ Context

- Exercise INIOCHOS-23 is a multinational air exercise hosted by the **Greece Air Force** aimed at strengthening international cooperation, synergy, and interoperability among the participating Air Forces.

❖ Key Highlights:

- The exercise will be held from April 24 to May 4 2023 at the Andravida Air Base in Greece, where multiple types of air and surface assets will participate in a realistic combat scenario, allowing the participating air forces to test their capabilities, tactics, and strategies in a challenging environment.
- The Indian Air Force (IAF) will be taking part in Exercise INIOCHOS-23 with four Su-30 MKI aircraft and two C-17 aircraft.
- **The Su-30 MKI** is a state-of-the-art multi-role fighter aircraft known for its versatility, speed, and agility.
- **The C-17 aircraft** is a strategic airlifter that can transport heavy equipment, troops, and cargo over long distances.
- **Significance:** The exercise provides a platform for different countries to come together, share their knowledge, expertise, and best practices, and learn from each other's experiences.

Charles Darwin's Theory of Evolution



❖ Context

- Recently, over 1,800 scientists, teachers, educators and science popularisers across the country have written an open letter criticising the National Council of Educational Research and Training's (NCERT) latest move to remove Charles Darwin's Theory of Evolution from classes 9 and 10 textbooks.

❖ About Theory of Evolution

- The Theory of Evolution by natural selection was first **formulated in Charles Darwin's book "On the Origin of Species" published in 1859**.
- In his book, Darwin describes how organisms evolve over generations through the inheritance of physical or behavioral traits.
- According to the theory, individuals with traits that enable them to adapt to their environments will help them survive and have more offspring, which will inherit those traits.
- Individuals with less adaptive traits will less frequently survive to pass them on.
- Over time, the traits that enable species to survive and reproduce will become more frequent in the population and the population will change, or evolve.
- Through natural selection, Darwin suggested, **genetically diverse species could arise from a common ancestor**.
- **Natural Selection** : Darwin chose the term "natural selection" to be in contrast with "artificial selection," in which animal breeders select for particular traits that they deem desirable.
 - In natural selection, it's the natural environment, rather than a human being, that does the selecting.

MCQ Quiz

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