

GEOGRAPHY**GI tag for Kandhamal and Erode Turmeric**

‘KandhamalHaldi’, a variety of turmeric indigenous to southern Odisha, has earned the GI tag. Earlier this month, Erode turmeric also got a GI tag from the Geographical Indication Registry.

KandhamalHaldi

- Kandhamal in Odisha’s southern hinterland is famed for its turmeric, a spice that enjoys its pride of place in an array of cuisines.
- The agricultural product also stands out for its healing properties and arresting aroma.
- The GI tag was primarily developed with the purpose of recognising the unique identity connecting different products and places.
- For a product to get GI tag it has to have a unique quality, reputation or characteristic which is attributable to its geographic origin. ‘KandhamalHaldi’ has been placed under Class-30 type
- Other associated facts
- The Kandhamal turmeric was accorded the tag on the state’s Foundation Day.
- Odisha, on April 1 1936, was carved out as a separate state in the then British India on a linguistic identity.

Erode turmeric

- Erode turmeric is a rhizome, both finger and bulb obtained from the Erode local cultivar.
- In its claim for uniqueness, the application said the mean length of the fingers of Erode turmeric was about 4.15cm and the mean circumference was about 3.03cm.
- The mean bulb length of the mother rhizome is about 4.54cm and the mean circumference is 6.54cm.
- Quality parameters of the turmeric included 2.5 to 4.5% of curcumin content, a golden yellow colour and resistance to pests after boiling.

CONSTITUTION AND POLITY**Poll-time censorship**

The Bengaluru civil court’s blanket order restraining 49 newspapers, television channels and other media outlets from publishing anything ‘defamatory’ about Tejasvi Surya, the BJP’s candidate for the Bengaluru South Lok Sabha constituency, is contrary to the law and the Constitution.

Violation of free speech

- The temporary injunction violates the basic principle in free speech law that bars ‘prior restraint’ or pre-censorship of any publication, including the media.
- As recently as in 2017, a Supreme Court Bench made it clear that pre-broadcast or pre-publication regulation of content was not in the court’s domain.
- In R. Rajagopal (1994), the court noted that there is no law that authorises prior restraint.

Failing Injunction Test

- The existence of a prima facie case is a precondition for an interim injunction, and a restraining order may be obtained only if some material deemed defamatory has been published, and when further publication ought to be prevented.
- Arraying print and electronic media outlets that had not previously disseminated anything defamatory about an individual fails this test, rendering any injunctions obtained against them illegal.

Not substantial objections

- The allegations that have aggrieved Mr. Surya seem to originate in an individual’s opinion on him on Twitter
- It is possible that this piece of information was or is likely to be used against him by his electoral rivals.
- However, this cannot be a reason for a public figure — and a candidate of a major political party, even a debutant, is definitely one — to claim a right to gag the entire media from writing about him.
- Even if the argument is that the order only prevents ‘defamatory’ content and not responsible reporting or criticism, that doesn’t justify a judicial gag order, as it may be used to prevent the media from writing anything adverse to his campaign.
- It may also prevent defendants in a future proceeding from using ‘publication of the truth in the public interest’ as a defence.

Conclusion: Requests for omnibus restraining orders against media outlets seem to find favour with some civil judges in Karnataka. The Karnataka High Court or the Supreme Court must examine this trend and strike down such blanket gag orders.

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS- BILATERAL, GROUPINGS, ORGANISATIONS
India gains access to Bolivian Lithium Reserves

India and Bolivia have signed an agreement for the development and industrial use of lithium, a prime component used to power electric vehicles and cell phones.

Key facts:

- India and Bolivia agreed to forge a mutually beneficial partnership to facilitate Bolivian supplies of lithium Carbonate to India and foster joint ventures for lithium battery/cell production plants in India.
- This agreement will make Bolivia, which is known to have one-fourth of the world's lithium reserves, one of the major provider of metal for India's e-mobility and e-storage needs.
- The agreement facilitates mechanisms for the commercialization of Lithium Carbonate and Potassium Chloride produced in Bolivia by Yacimientos de Litio Bolivianos Corporación (YLB – Corporación).

Significance of the agreement:

- Bolivia is estimated to hold over 60% of the world's reserves for lithium but has not yet started producing it commercially.
- India is the second largest manufacturer of mobile phones in the world and has the ambitious goal of 30 per cent electric vehicles by 2030. But India imports all its lithium-ion batteries since India has no known sources of lithium, and zero lithium-ion battery manufacturing capabilities currently.
- As a result, India is heavily dependent on China, Taiwan and Japan for import, especially of batteries required for portable electronics.
- With this agreement, number of Indian companies setting up production capabilities in Bolivia goes up, as well as the import of lithium to India.
- Domestic production is also set to see a boost, from the automotive perspective. Further, the arrival of hybrids and electric vehicles from as early as 2020 onwards, will force manufacturers to look at local production.
- This agreement could also turn out to be the backbone for the recently launched FAME India policy (Faster Adoption and Manufacture of (Hybrid and) Electric Vehicles) and will also give a substantial push to India's ambition to have at least 30 per cent of its vehicles run on electric batteries by 2030.

INDIAN ECONOMY
RBI circular to banks on loan defaulters quashed

The Hon'ble Supreme Court has struck down a Feb-2018 RBI circular giving lender banks six months to resolve their stressed assets or move under the Insolvency Code against private entities who have defaulted in loans worth over Rs. 2000 crore.

About the RBI circular

- Through a notification issued on Feb 12, 2018 the RBI laid down a revised framework for the resolution of stressed assets, which replaced all its earlier instructions on the subject.
- Banks were required to immediately start working on a resolution plan for accounts over Rs 2,000 crore, which was to be finalised within 180 days.
- In case of non-implementation, lenders were required to file an insolvency application.
- RBI termed it necessary to substitute the existing guidelines with a harmonized and simplified generic framework for resolution of stressed assets.

What did the revised framework replace?

- The circular went into effect on the same day that it was issued, and all existing schemes for stressed asset resolution were withdrawn with immediate effect.
- The circular was ostensibly intended to stop the "evergreening" of bad loans the practice of banks providing fresh loans to enable timely repayment by borrowers on existing loans.
- The RBI warned banks that not adhering to the timelines laid down in the circular, or attempting to evergreen stressed accounts, would attract stringent supervisory and enforcement actions.

Issues with the circular

- The companies argued that the circular was arbitrary and discriminatory, and therefore, violative of Article 14 of the Constitution.
- Several companies from the power and shipping sectors had challenged the circular, arguing that the time given by the RBI was not enough to tackle bad debt.
- The government had earlier asked the RBI to make sector-specific relaxations in the timeline for the implementation of the circular.
- Power producers, for instance, had argued that the RBI's 'one-size-fits-all' approach was impractical since the sector had to confront external factors that were beyond its control.

- These factors included the unavailability of coal and gas, and problems arising out of the failure of state governments to honour power purchase agreements.

Impact of SC's relaxation

- The order provides immediate relief to companies that have defaulted in repayments, especially those in the power, shipping and sugar sectors.
- However, many financial sector experts argued that the verdict could delay the process of stressed assets resolution, which had of late picked up pace.
- Since banks will have the choice of devising resolution plans or going to the National Company Law Tribunal under the IBC, the urgency that the RBI's rules had introduced in the system could be impacted.

SEBI mulls SRO for investment advisers

The SEBI has proposed a self regulatory organisation (SRO) for the growing number of investment advisers to address issues related to the quality of advice given to investors by such entities.

What is Self Regulatory Organisation?

- An SRO is the first-level regulator that performs the crucial task of regulating intermediaries representing a particular segment of securities market on behalf of the regulator.
- An SRO would be seen as an extension of the regulatory authority of the SEBI and would perform the tasks delegated to it by the SEBI.
- The role of an SRO is developmental, regulatory, related to grievance redressal and dispute resolution as well as taking disciplinary actions.

Why need SRO?

- SEBI is in receipt of a large number of complaints alleging charging of exorbitant fees, assurance of returns, misconduct etc. by investment advisers.
- Incidentally SEBI has said that there was a need for an SRO for mutual fund distributors — that currently register with Association of Mutual Funds in India (AMFI).
- It was aimed to bring in consistency in industry practices and also to take disciplinary action against alleged malpractices such as mis-selling of products and churning of portfolio.

Expected functions

- SEBI has proposed the strengthening of the existing regulatory framework for SROs by introducing features such as a governing board with public interest directors and a clear policy for arbitration and dispute resolution.
- The regulator has proposed a governing board with at least 50% public interest directors along with 25% representation each of shareholder directors and elected representatives.
- Further, the governing board can appoint a managing director or chief executive officer to manage the daily affairs of the SRO.

ISSUES RELATED TO INTERNAL SECURITY AND DISASTER MANAGEMENT

AFSPA partially withdrawn from Arunachal Pradesh

- The controversial AFSPA was partially removed from Arunachal Pradesh, 32 years after it was imposed, said MHA.

Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA)

- AFSPA enacted by Parliament in 1958, is declared in areas where armed forces are required to operate in aid to civil authorities.
- Armed Forces (Special Powers) Acts (AFSPA) are Acts of the Parliament of India that grant special powers to the Indian Armed Forces and the state and paramilitary forces in areas classified as "disturbed areas".
- It gives powers to the army, state and central police forces to shoot to kill, search houses and destroy any property that is "likely" to be used by insurgents in areas declared as "disturbed" by the home ministry.
- AFSPA is invoked when a case of militancy or insurgency takes place and the territorial integrity of India is at risk.
- Security forces can "arrest a person without warrant", who has committed or even "about to commit a cognizable offence" even based on "reasonable suspicion".
- It also provides security forces with legal immunity for their actions in disturbed areas.
- While the armed forces and the government justify its need in order to combat militancy and insurgency, the Act has been associated with several human rights violations including fake encounters, rape, torture, abduction etc.

Background

- The AFSPA – like many other controversial laws – is of a colonial origin. The AFSPA was first enacted as an ordinance in the backdrop of Quit India Movement launched by Mahatma Gandhi in 1942.
- A day after its launch on August 8, 1942, the movement became leaderless and turned violent at many places across the country. Leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, VB Patel and a host of others had been put behind the bars.
- Shaken by the massive scale of violence across the country, the then Viceroy Linlithgow promulgated the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Ordinance, 1942.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY- EVERYDAY SCIENCE, SPACE, NUCLEAR, DEFENCE ETCEMISAT MISSION

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has launched the country's first electronic surveillance satellite, EMISAT. It was launched on-board PSLV-C45. As many as 28 small satellites of international customers were also put in space as secondary riders.

How does EMISAT work?

- EMISAT is an advanced electronic intelligence (ELINT) satellite jointly developed by ISRO-DRDO. It is meant for electromagnetic spectrum measurements.
- It is modelled after a famous Israeli spy satellite called SARAL (Satellite with ARGos and ALtika). Both these satellites have the SSB-2 bus protocol — the core component for their sharp electronic surveillance capabilities across the length and width of a large country like India.
- EMISAT also has a special altimeter (a radar altitude measuring device) called 'AltiKa' that works in the Ka-band microwave region of the spectrum. The electronic surveillance payload of EMISAT was developed under a DRDO's project called KAUTILYA.
- The main capability of EMISAT is in signal intelligence — intercepting signals broadcasted by communication systems, radars, and other electronic systems. The Ka-band frequency that EMISAT is sensitive to, allows the 436-kg EMISAT — India's newest spy in the sky — to scan through ice, rain, coastal zones, land masses, forests and wave heights with ease.

Many First In The Launch:

- First time ISRO is launching satellites in three different orbits.
- The PSLV-C45 launch vehicle is also the first PSLV rocket to use four strap-on motors. The four strap-on motor rockets are from the PSLV-QL range.
- This is the first time it has been envisaged to provide a microgravity environment for research organizations and academic institutes to perform experiments.
- The PSLV-C45 is also the first launch to use solar panels to make the fourth stage last longer in orbit. Using the solar panels in the fourth stage, the PSLV can provide power to attached payloads almost indefinitely.
- PSLV-C45: First Launch Vehicle to Use Solar Propulsion.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

There is no shortcut to a place worth going.