

**POLITY & GOVERNANCE****STRUCKING DOWN VANNIYARS QUOTA**

- Recently, the Supreme Court (SC) struck down 10.5% reservation within MBCs for Vanniyars in Tamil Nadu.

**About**

- The Supreme Court upheld the Madras High Court judgement which struck down the law brought in Tamil Nadu last year.
- It provided 10.5 per cent reservation to Vanniyars, within the Most Backward Classes (MBC) community, in government jobs and admissions to educational institutions.
- The recommendations of the Tamil Nadu Backward Classes Commission chairman on the basis of which it made the law were based on the Janarthanam Commission Report.

**Apex court's stand**

- Earlier, it was done solely on the basis of numbers without adequate data to show the relative backwardness of the Vanniyar community.
- Upholding the HC judgement, the top court said it is of the opinion that the law did not provide any substantial basis to treat Vanniyar as a separate group compared to others among MBCs.
  - Thus, the 2021 Act is ultra vires the Constitution.
- Taking cue from Indra Sawhney Case:**
  - On the issue of caste based classification, the court in the Indra Sawhney case had stated that caste can be the starting point but not the sole basis.
  - Similarly, caste can be the starting point for providing internal reservation but it is incumbent on the State Government to justify the reasonableness of the decision and to demonstrate that caste is not the sole basis.

**Vanniyars as a Community**

- Even as backward communities such as Thevars and Gounders are largely seen as Tamil Nadu's socially and politically powerful communities, Vanniyars were one of the largest and most consolidated backward communities that had a consistency in retaining political representation from 1940s and 1950s.
- Politically also more represented:**
  - In the political act of bargaining for community representation too, Vanniyars had been far ahead of other backward and Most Backward Communities (MBC) for decades, which includes their organised state-wide agitations in the mid-1980s demanding an exclusive 20 per cent reservation in the state and 20 per cent in central services.
- Vanniyakula Kshatriyas:**
  - SC refers to in its order comprises seven caste groups including Vanniyars, Gounders, Padayachi, among others.
  - They are categorised as MBC, which was carved out of the Other Backward Classes category and made separate in the 1980s.

**Vanniyar Movement****Massive protests:**

- Vanniyars are one of the largest and most consolidated backward communities in the state. They had raised massive protests in the mid-1980s demanding 20% reservation in the state, and 2% in central services.

**Political backing:**

- Their movement was backed by the Justice Party as well as the Self-Respect Movement.
- Organised protests began with the formation of Vanniyar Sangam, headed by S Ramadoss, a medical practitioner who later founded the political party PMK.

**On ground protest:**

- The agitation began in 1986 with activists sending hundreds of letters and telegrams to then Chief Minister M G Ramachandran seeking an audience. As there was no response from MGR and the then Rajiv Gandhi government, agitators started demonstrations in community strongholds, then went on to blockading rail and road traffic.
- The blockades were effective because community members in each village would block busy highway stretches on their village borders. They would cut revenue trees on either side of the state highway.

- One blockade in May 1986 brought traffic in the entire state to a halt, and thousands were arrested. A one-day blockade of trains followed in December 1986. The peak was in September 1987, when road traffic in northern Tamil Nadu came to a halt for an entire week.

**Reservation granted:**

- After the DMK government of M Karunanidhi came to power in 1989, the OBC quota was split into two:
  - ❖ Backward Castes and
  - ❖ Most Backward Castes.
- Vanniyars were categorised among the MBCs with 107 other communities, with 20% reservation.
- Three decades later, the then AIADMK government passed a Bill, and the current DMK government has implemented it with a Government Order ensuring 10.5% reservation for Vanniyars within the 20% MBC quota.

**Tamil Nadu and Reservation**

- The State Government said Tamil Nadu was a pioneer in granting reservation.
- The Most Backward Classes (MBC) within the Backward Classes were identified in Tamil Nadu as early as in 1957, when they were considered equivalent to the Scheduled Castes, but without the factor of untouchability.
- It said some of these communities were impacted by the criminal tribes laws of the British and enlisted as MBCs.

**Way Ahead**

- According to the government bill, 10.5 percent reservation was given to Vanniyakula Kshatriars.
- MCBs have a reservation quota of 20 percent in the state. If the government order was not struck down by the Supreme Court, the remaining 115 communities would be left with 9.5 per of the reservation between all of them. Environmental Facility (GEF) and others.

**IMPORTANT FACTS FOR PRELIM****1. ANNUAL DOLPHIN CENSUS**

The dolphin population along Odisha's coast and in its water bodies has increased but the number of Irrawaddy dolphins in Chilika lake has fallen according to the Annual dolphin census.

**Major Points**

- A total of six species of dolphins — Irrawaddy, bottlenose, humpback, striped, finless and spinner dolphins — have been recorded.
- As per the 2022 dolphin census, Gahirmatha Marine Sanctuary and nearby areas in Bhitarkanika saw dolphin count skyrocket to 540 from 342 last year. These included 45 Irrawaddy, 135 bottlenose, 332 humpback, 13 striped and 15 spinner dolphins.
- Chilika lake, which is a major tourist attraction for its Irrawaddy dolphins, saw the numbers of its flagship aquatic animal drop sharply from 162 in 2021 to 151 this year. There has also been a fall in the number of bottlenose dolphins at Chilika, from 26 in 2021 to 16 in 2022.
  - ❖ Odisha now has a total of 208 Irrawaddy dolphins.

**About Irrawaddy Dolphins**

- Scientific Name: Orcaella brevirostris
- Habitat: Irrawaddy dolphins are found in coastal areas in South and Southeast Asia, and in three rivers: the Ayeyarwady (Myanmar), the Mahakam (Indonesian Borneo) and the Mekong.
- The Mekong River Irrawaddy dolphins inhabit a 118-mile stretch of the river between Cambodia and Lao PDR.
- These dolphins have a bulging forehead, short beak, and 12-19 teeth on each side of both jaws.
- Conservation Status: Irrawaddy dolphins fall under Schedule I of the Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 and are mentioned in the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List of Endangered Species.

**Chilika Lake**

- It is a brackish water lagoon that is spread over the Puri, Khurda and Ganjam districts of Odisha on the east coast of India.
- It is Asia's largest salt-water lagoon and is separated from the Bay of Bengal by a sandy ridge.
- It is the largest wintering ground for migratory birds on the Indian subcontinent.
- Chilika Lake is selected as a wetland of international importance under the Ramsar Convention.

- The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat is an international treaty for the conservation and sustainable use of wetlands.

### **Gahirmatha Marine Sanctuary**

- It is a marine wildlife sanctuary located in Odisha.
- It is the world's largest nesting beach for Olive Ridley Turtles.
- It extends from Dhamra River mouth in the north to Brahmani river mouth in the south.
- Gahirmatha was declared a turtle sanctuary in 1997 by the Odisha after considering its ecological importance and as part of efforts to save the sea turtles.

### **2. FASTER SOFTWARE**

- Recently, The Chief Justice of India launched 'Fast and Secure Transmission of Electronic Records' (FASTER).

#### **About FASTER**

- It is a software to transmit Court Orders swiftly, securely through electronic mode.
- It proposes transmission of e-authenticated copies of the interim orders, stay orders, bail orders and record of proceedings to the duty-holders for compliance and due execution, through a secured electronic communication channel.
- These orders may vary from stay of execution of a person to freeze on the demolition of a slum to bail orders for undertrial prisoners.
- **Origin of concept**
  - ❖ The concept of FASTER took shape after reading a news report regarding prisoners not being released despite the Supreme Court granting them bail three days ago as the physical copies of the orders were not delivered to the prison officials.
    - After that, the CJI-led bench took up a suo motu case and directions were issued to develop the electronic system.
- It will communicate bail orders and it will have the digital signature of SC officers for authentication.
  - ❖ Communication is restricted to the email id holders which ensures privacy, safety and security.
- It is developed on war footing by the Registry in collaboration with the National Informatics Centre.

#### **Benefits**

- ❖ FASTER would aid the cause of quick and effortless justice.
- ❖ The timely delivery of the court's orders to the authorities would also prevent unnecessary arrests and custody of people who have already been granted anticipatory bail.

### **3. WRIGHT MONS VOLCANO IN PLUTO**

- Pluto has giant ice volcano like Wright Mons that could hint at the possibility of life
- As per report which shows that icy lava flows have recently covered substantial tracts of its surface

#### **About Wright Mons Volcano**

- It was spotted on the surface of Pluto by the New Horizons spacecraft in July 2015.
- It was informally named by the New Horizons team in honour of the Wright brothers.
- It is about 150km across its base and has a central depression (a hole) 40-50km wide, with a floor at least as low as the surrounding terrain.
- It rises 4-5km above its surroundings.
- Its volume exceeds 20 thousand cubic kilometres.
  - ❖ It is considerably less than the volume of Mars's biggest volcanoes.
- The slopes of Wright Mons and much of its surroundings are seen to be crowded with hummocks up to 1km high and mostly 6-12km across.
  - ❖ These hummocks are made primarily of water-ice, rather than nitrogen- or methane-ice that covers some other young regions on Pluto.
  - ❖ The hummocks were likely created by some sort of ice volcanism, known by the technical term "cryovolcanism" — erupting icy water rather than molten rock.

#### **Other volcano**

- Piccard Mons : It is less well characterised than Wright Mons because, by the time New Horizons made its closest approach, Pluto's rotation had carried Piccard Mons into darkness.

- The flyby was so fast that only the side of Pluto facing the Sun at the right time could be seen in detail.
- However, New Horizons was able to image Piccard Mons thanks to sunlight weakly reflected onto the ground by haze in Pluto's atmosphere.

**Pluto**

- It is a dwarf planet.
  - ❖ A dwarf planet travels around, or orbits, the sun just like other planets. But it is much smaller.
- Clyde Tombaugh discovered Pluto in 1930. He was an astronomer from the United States.
  - ❖ Venetia Burney named Pluto that same year. She was an 11-year-old girl from England.
- Pluto is not very big. It is only half as wide as the United States.
  - ❖ Pluto is smaller than Earth's moon.
- This dwarf planet takes 248 Earth years to go around the sun.
- Pluto is in an area of space called the Kuiper (KY-per) Belt.
  - ❖ Thousands of small, icy objects like Pluto but smaller are in the Kuiper Belt.
- Pluto is very, very cold. It is much colder than Antarctica.
  - ❖ It is so cold that Earth's air would freeze into a kind of snow there.
- Pluto has less gravity than Earth. This means a person would weigh much less on Pluto than on Earth.

**4. SHRINKFLATION**

- Companies are resorting to the strategy of Shrinkflation to reduce the impact of rising input costs.

**About**

- **Meaning:**
  - ❖ Downsizing a product while keeping its price the same is called "shrinkflation"
  - ❖ It is a combination of the words shrink and inflation.
- **Ways of shrinking:**
  - ❖ Reducing size,
  - ❖ Reducing quantity,
  - ❖ Reformulating the products, or
  - ❖ Removing ingredients from a product while maintaining the same price.
- **Causes of Shrinkflation**
  - ❖ Increased Costs making it more expensive for companies to produce their products.
  - ❖ Intense competition in the market compelling companies to maintain or reduce their prices.
  - ❖ Changing demands from customers which may force companies to reformulate their products which, in turn, can lead to size changes.
- **Benefits:**
  - ❖ Maintained profits: Downsizing a product reduces costs for manufacturers.
  - ❖ More Affordability for customers.
- **Disadvantages:**
  - ❖ It is an unfair practice for consumers.
  - ❖ Loss of trust if companies do not properly communicate with their consumers.

**DAILY ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE**

**Q1. India and Australia, two of the largest powers among the littoral states of the Indian Ocean, play important geopolitical roles in the security and stability of the Indian Ocean Region (IOR). Elaborate. (250 words)**

**Introduction**

- India and Australia have several commonalities, which serve as a foundation for closer cooperation and multifaceted interaction, on lines similar to what India has developed with other Western countries. Both are strong, vibrant, secular and multicultural democracies.
- The relationship has grown in strength and importance since India's economic reforms in the nineties and has made rapid strides in all areas – trade, energy and mining, science & technology, information technology, education and defence.

**Body**

**India-Australia cooperation in Indian Ocean Region**

- Technology and Research: The two nations are working on a new and renewable energy partnership, to support the development of technologies such as green hydrogen and ultra-low cost solar.
  - ❖ Australia is also supporting research and investment to unlock Australian critical minerals for Indian advanced manufacturing.
- Defence and security cooperation: Both signed Strategic Partnership, including a Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation in 2009.
  - ❖ Civil Nuclear Cooperation Agreement was signed 2014 between two, enabling India to secure uranium from Australia.
- **On China:** Chinese aggression and assertive foreign policy are common concerns and has brought both the democracies closer.
  - ❖ Both have shared interests in vision of a free, open, inclusive and rules-based Indo-Pacific region.
  - ❖ Both are part of QUAD, and also proposed Supply Chain Resilience Initiative.
  - ❖ Australia's Pacific Step Up and India's Forum for India-Pacific Islands Cooperation (FIPIC) reaffirm their cooperation in the South Pacific region.

**Issues that persist**

- Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA) still remains inconclusive after 9 rounds of negotiations.
- India opted out from Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP).
  - ❖ Among other things, India and Australia could not agree regarding market access over agriculture and dairy products.
- Australia's economy is heavily dependent on China, with China being Australia's largest trading partner, accounting for 26 % of its trade with the world.

**Conclusion**

- The prospects for bilateral relationship are recognized in both countries as strategically useful, economically productive and aligned with each other's new agenda. However, it is recognized that the natural synergy has so far not been exploited fully. Countries should conclude CECA at the earliest, to realize the economic opportunities.
- Based on several commonalities and closely aligned values in principles of democracy, liberty, the rule of law, human rights, freedom of speech, free press and multiculturalism both shall enhance the bilateral relationship by expanding engagement in various sectors like defence industry and commercial cyber activity etc

**DAILY QUIZ**

- Q1.** With reference to State of World Population Report, consider the following statements:
1. It is an annual flagship publication of the World Bank.
  2. It highlights emerging issues in the field of sexual and reproductive health & rights.
- Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
- (a) Neither 1 nor 2    **(b) 2 only**                      (c) 1 and 2 only                      (d) only 1
- Q2.** World Energy Transitions Outlook is released by which organization?
- (a) **International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA)**     
(b) World Energy Council  
(c) Energy Foundation  
(d) Sustainable Energy for All
- Q3.** Armed Forces (Special) Powers Act (AFSPA) is in force in which of the following states?
1. Assam                      2. Manipur                      3. Nagaland                      4. Punjab                      5. Chhattisgarh
- Select the correct answer using the code given below:
- (a) 1, 5 and 3 only    (b) 2, 4 and 5 only    **(c) 1, 3 and 2 only**                      (d) 1, 2, 3 and 4
- Q4.** Consider the following statements regarding Mullaperiyar dam
1. It is built on the Krishna River.
  2. It is situated in the Eastern Ghats, adjacent to Periyar wildlife sanctuary.
- Which of the following statements is/are correct?
- (a) Neither 1 nor 2**    (b) 2 only                      (c) 1 and 2 only                      (d) only 1
- Q5.** Wright Mons Volcano recently seen in the news ,it is related to which of the following ?
- (a) Mars                      (b) Jupiter                      **(c) Pluto**                      (d) Saturn