



1. Three decades of India's decentralisation venture

Topic: Polity and Governance



In News: The 73rd constitutional amendment, which came into effect on April 24, 1993, accorded panchayats a constitutional status as the third tier of local self-governance in India.

More on the Topic

- **Achievements of Panchayati raj Institutions:**
- The 73rd and 74th Amendments required that no less than one-third of the total seats in local bodies should be reserved for women.
- At 1.4 million, **India has the most women in elected positions.**
- Seats and sarpanch/pradhan positions were also reserved for SC/ST candidates.
- This is the only level of government, **where SC/ST candidates have a genuine voice in governance** (unlike the candidates from reserved constituencies at the parliamentary level).
- **PRIs have created healthy competition among various states** regarding devolution (3Fs: funds, functions, and functionaries).



Challenges:

- The first failure of the 73rd Amendment was that **the transfer of various governance functions—like the provision of education, health, sanitation, and water was not mandated.**
- Instead the amendment listed the functions that could be transferred, and left it to the state legislature to actually devolve functions.
- There has been **very little devolution of authority and functions in the last 25 years.**
- The second failure of the 73rd Amendment is the **lack of finances for PRIs.**
- Local governments can either raise their own revenue through local taxes or receive intergovernmental transfers. The 73th Amendment recognized both forms of public finance, but did not mandate either.
- The 73rd Amendment let this be a choice open to the state legislatures—a choice that most states have not exercised.
- **Low level of awareness, prevalence of caste, class and gender hierarchies** is another problem PRIs are facing.

Way Ahead:

- The challenges needed to be resolved by taking innovative solutions by the government so that the impact of decentralised governance reach the masses at grassroots level.
- The institutional framework for local governance in India needs to be strengthened by providing them with more **autonomy, resources and powers.**
- Local government officials and elected representatives need to be trained and equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively carry out their roles and responsibilities.
- Community participation in PRIs should be **enhanced through awareness campaigns, public meetings and consultations.**

Source: Indian Express

2. 50 years of Kesavananda Bharati Judgment

Topic: Polity and Governance



In News: India has begun celebrating the golden jubilee of Kesavananda Bharati (KB) prescribing the doctrine of basic structure (BS).

More on the Topic:

Background:

- The case was filed by Kesavananda Bharati, a seer of a religious mutt in Kerala, who challenged the constitutionality of some land reform laws enacted by the state government.
- He argued that these laws violated his fundamental right to property and to manage his religious affairs.
- The case was heard by a **13-judge bench, the largest ever in the history of the Supreme Court**. The main issue before the court was whether Parliament had unlimited power to amend any part of the Constitution, including the fundamental rights.
- Kesavananda Bharati case in which a 13-judge Bench, the largest constituted in the court's history, through a majority of 7:6, held that the Parliament cannot amend the 'Basic Structure' of Constitution.
- The Kesavananda Bharati judgment held **that Parliament cannot use its constituent power to alter the essential features of the Constitution.**



- The basic structure or framework of the Constitution was its living spirit, holding up the body of its text. Its existence cannot be pin-pointed to any particular provision of the text. It was the “soul” of the Constitution.

Significance of the Judgement:

- It established the limits of parliamentary sovereignty and preserved the core values of the Constitution.
- It also paved the way for subsequent judgments that upheld and expanded the doctrine of basic structure, such as;
- **Minerva Mills case (1980), struck down a constitutional amendment that gave primacy to the Directive Principles of State Policy over Fundamental Rights.**
- **Indira Gandhi vs Raj Narain case (1975),** invalidated an amendment that sought to immunise the election of the Prime Minister from judicial scrutiny.
- A check on the authoritarian tendencies of the government and a safeguard for democracy and civil liberties.
- It reflects the dynamic and evolving nature of constitutional interpretation and adjudication in India, as well as the complex interplay between law, politics and society.
- SC has tested constitutional amendments against doctrine of basic structure in several cases including,
- Quota for OBC and Economically Weaker Section (EWS), reservations in promotions, where SC upheld constitutional amendments challenged on grounds of violation of basic structure doctrine.
- SC struck down The Constitution (Ninety-ninth Amendment) Act, 2014, which established National Judicial Appointments Commission (NJAC).

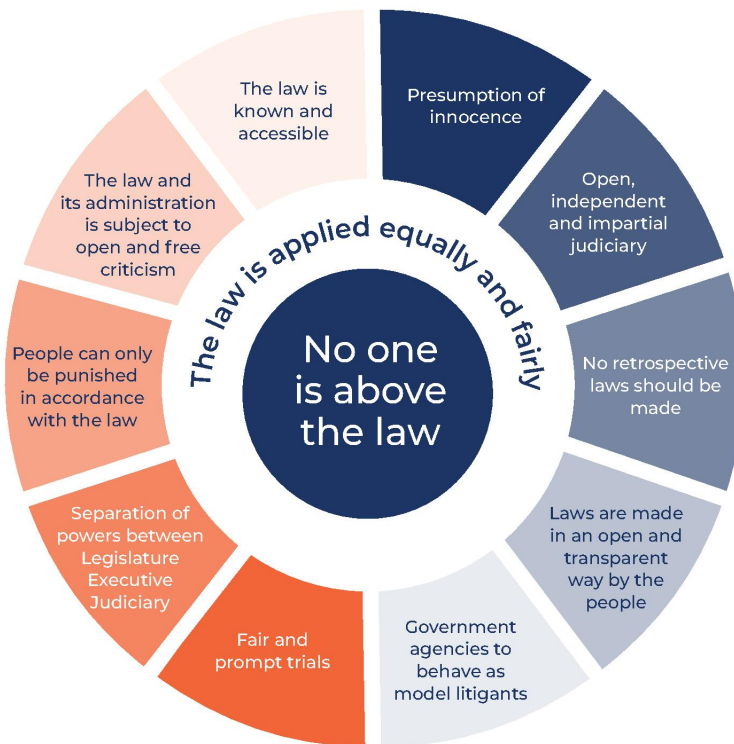
Source: PIB

3. Rule of law

Topic: Polity and Governance

THE RULE OF LAW

All people should be ruled by just laws
subject to the following principles:



The rule of law must be supported by informed and active citizens



RULE OF LAW
EDUCATION CENTRE

In News: Rule of Law is in discussion following the recent killings of criminals by the Police.

More on the Topic:

- For the United Nations (UN), the rule of law “is a principle of governance in which all persons, institutions and entities, public and private, including the State itself, are



accountable to laws that are publicly promulgated, equally enforced and independently adjudicated, and which are consistent with international human rights norms and standards”.

- The World Justice Project (WJP), which is an independent, multidisciplinary organisation working to advance the rule of law worldwide, lays out four broad outcomes, as it were, if the rule of law prevails in a country.
- These are:
- **Accountability:** Implying that the government as well as private actors are accountable under the law.
- **Just Law:** Implying that the law is clear, publicised, and stable and is applied evenly. It ensures human rights as well as property, contract, and procedural rights.
- **Open Government:** Implying that the processes by which the law is adopted, administered, adjudicated, and enforced are accessible, fair, and efficient.
- **Accessible and Impartial Justice:** Implying that justice is delivered timely by competent, ethical, and independent representatives and neutrals who are accessible, have adequate resources, and reflect the makeup of the communities they serve.

About rule of law index:

- The index measures people’s perceptions and experiences of the rule of law in 140 countries and jurisdictions.
- To build this index, the World Justice Project looks at eight factors, which are further subdivided into 44 sub-factors.
- The eight main factors are as follows:**Constraints on government powers:** This includes things like how effectively does the legislature or the judiciary deal with the government.
- **Absence of corruption:** This essentially ascertains if public offices are being used for private gains.
- **Open Government:** This includes things such as the right to information and laws and government data are well publicised.
- **Fundamental rights:** This also includes whether the due process was followed.
- **Order and security:** Whether crime is effectively controlled and civil conflict limited etc.
- **Regulatory enforcement:** Things like whether regulations are effectively enforced etc.
- **Civil justice:** Includes factors such as whether people can afford and access civil justice,
- **Criminal justice:** Includes factors such as whether due procedures are followed etc.
- The index values range between 0 and 1 with 1 being the score for complete adherence to the rule of law.

Why does the rule of law matter?

- Research shows that a stricter adherence to the rule of law is positively correlated to higher economic growth, better educational attainment, improved health outcomes, and greater peace among other benefits.

Source: IE

4. Gandhisagar Sanctuary

Topic: Environment and Ecology



In News: Gandhisagar Sanctuary will be developed as a second home for cheetahs within six months to retain the tag of cheetah state.

More on the Topic:

- The move comes after experts suggested that Kuno National Park (KNP) does not have enough space for all cheetahs.
- After increasing the number of cheetahs in Kuno National Park in Sheopur, the area would not be sufficient for them, hence it is necessary to relocate a few.
- Gandhi Sagar Sanctuary is a wildlife sanctuary situated on the northern boundary of Mandsaur and Nimach districts in Madhya Pradesh, India.
- It is spread over area adjoining Rajasthan state in India.
- Gandhi Sagar Wildlife Sanctuary and the reservoir is also a designated Important Bird and Biodiversity Area (IBA) as it boasts a large bird diversity with healthy populations.
- **River Chambal** flows through the sanctuary.

Source: Indian Express

5. Calcium Carbide

Topic: Science and Technology



In News: The Food Safety and Standards Authority (FSSAI) of India (FSSAI) on Thursday urged food commissioners of all states and Union Territories (UT) to take action against the unauthorised use of artificial fruit ripening agents like Calcium Carbide.

More on the Topic:

- Calcium carbide, also known as 'masala', is commonly used in mining and metal industries as well as in the production of acetylene gas.
- It is a highly reactive compound and releases acetylene gas which is used to artificially ripen fruits.
- The use of calcium carbide, one of the harmful artificial fruit ripening agents, has been prohibited as per the provision in sub-regulation of Food Safety and Standards (Prohibition and Restriction on Sales) Regulation, 2011.
- The use of 'masasla' in fruits is highly toxic and can cause health damage including respiratory problems and skin irritation, which may lead to cancer.
- FSSAI warned that the used of this chemical compound can lead to the formation of arsenic and phosphorus that are poisonous in nature.

Source: Business Standard



6. Basaveshwara

Topic: Personalities in News



In News: PM Modi has paid tribute to Social Reformer Basaveshwara On His Birth Anniversary.

More on the Topic:

- Known for Socio-Religious Reforms, Anubhava Mantapa, Vachana Literature and Lingayat Movement in south India. **Basavanna** was Born 1105 CE Basavanna Bagewadi, in Bijapur district, Karnataka, India Died in 1167 CE Kudalasangama, Karnataka, India.
- **Basavanna was a 12th-century philosopher**, statesman, Kannada poet in the Shiva-focussed Bhakti movement and a social reformer during the reign of the Kalachuri-dynasty king Bijjala I in Karnataka, India.
- **Basavanna spread social awareness through his poetry**, popularly known as Vachanaas. Basavanna rejected gender or social discrimination, superstitions and rituals but introduced Ishtalinga necklace, with an image of the Shiva Linga, to every person regardless of his or her birth, to be a constant reminder of one's bhakti (devotion) to Shiva.
- As the chief minister of his kingdom, he introduced new public institutions such as the Anubhava Mantapa (or, the "hall of spiritual experience"), which welcomed men and women from all socio-economic backgrounds to discuss spiritual and mundane questions of life, in open.

Source: Business Standard



7. International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)

Topic: International Relations



IFAD

INTERNATIONAL
FUND FOR
AGRICULTURAL
DEVELOPMENT

In News: The International Fund of Agricultural Development (IFAD) will set up a new framework to facilitate cooperation between small agricultural producers in developing nations and businesses in Japan and elsewhere.

More on the Topic:

- The International Fund for Agricultural Development is an international financial institution and a specialised agency of the United Nations that works to address poverty and hunger in rural areas of developing countries.
- Its projects and programmes are carried out in remote and environmentally fragile locations, including least developed countries and small island developing States.
- The IFAD assists vulnerable groups such as smallholder farmers, pastoralists, foresters, fishers and small-scale entrepreneurs in rural areas by providing, among others, access to weather information, disaster preparedness, social learning and technology transfer that enables farmers to feed growing populations and increase the climate resilience of rural farming systems.

Source: Business Standard
