

# 1. Armed Forces Special Power Act

## Topic: Polity and Governance

**In News:** The Central government has significantly reduced the footprint of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA), 1958 in the Northeast, withdrawing it entirely from 23 districts in Assam; and partially from seven districts in Nagaland, six districts in Manipur, and one district in Assam.

### More on the Topic:

- Once the decision is notified in the gazette, **AFSPA remains in force in parts of these three states as well as in parts of Arunachal Pradesh and Jammu & Kashmir.**
- The Armed Forces Special Powers Act, 1958 is an act of Parliament that gives the armed forces the power to maintain public order in “disturbed areas”.
- It gives the armed forces the authority to use force or even open fire after warning a person who is found to be in contravention of the law.
- A disturbed area is one where the “use of armed forces in aid of civil power is necessary”.
- Under section 3 of the AFSPA, any area can be declared disturbed due to differences or disputes between members of different religious, racial, language, or regional groups or castes or communities.
- The power to declare any territory “disturbed” initially lay with the states, but passed to the Centre in 1972.
- The Act also allows the forces to arrest a person and enter and search premises without a warrant.
- The AFSPA also protects security forces from legal proceedings unless cleared by the centre. The Act applies not only to the three armed forces but also to paramilitary forces such as the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) and the Border Security Force.
- The move by the Centre to reduce the “disturbed” areas comes at a time when calls to repeal the Act have resurfaced in the aftermath of the death of 14 people in a botched anti-insurgency operation and retaliatory violence in Nagaland's Mon district on December 4, 2021.

### Review of the Act:

- In 2004, the Central government appointed a **five-member committee headed by Justice B P Jeevan Reddy** to review the provisions of the act in the north eastern states.
- The committee submitted its report in 2005, which included the following recommendations:

### WHAT IS ARMED FORCES SPECIAL POWERS ACT?

➤ **Introduced in 1958, AFSPA** confers on members of the armed forces special powers to rein in suspects in areas declared “disturbed” on account of insurgent activities or similar threats. It has been in **force in Manipur since 1980**, and the alleged **excesses committed under it are the reasons why activist Irom Sharmila has been on a hunger strike since 2000.**

**WHAT ARE SPECIAL POWERS?**  
 AFSPA allows any commissioned officer, warrant officer and non-commissioned officer – or any other

person of equivalent rank – to:

- Fire upon or use force against any person acting ‘in contravention of any law for the time being in force in the disturbed area’
- Arrest suspicious people without warrant
- Destroy any structure suspected to house an arms dump, shelter from which armed attacks are made or are likely to be made
- Conduct searches without warrants for evidence, to recover a wrongfully confined person or property or arms or explosives
- **AFSPA bars prosecution or proceedings – except with Centre’s nod – against personnel for action committed while exercising powers under the Act**



- (a) AFSPA should be repealed and appropriate provisions should be inserted in the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967
- (b) The Unlawful Activities Act should be modified to clearly specify the powers of the armed forces and paramilitary forces
- (c) grievance cells should be set up in each district where the armed forces are deployed.
- The 5th report of the **Second Administrative Reforms Commission on public order** has also recommended the repeal of the AFSPA.

#### **Supreme Court Observations:**

- **In the case of Naga People's Movement of Human Rights vs. Union of India**, the validity of AFSPA was challenged before the Supreme Court and the five-judge bench concluded that the act cannot be considered as violative of the Constitution and the powers conferred under the section 4 and 5 of the Act are not arbitrary and unreasonable and therefore not in violation of the provisions of the Constitution.
- **The SC has provided guidelines to restrict AFSPA.** These are including, the army personnel are required to strictly follow minimum force, person arrested and taken to custody has to be handed over to the nearest police station within 24hours of such arrest. And the act has to be reviewed every six months by the state.

#### **Arguments in Favour of AFSPA:**

- The AFSPA is applied to an area only when the ordinary laws of the land are found to be inadequate to deal with the extraordinary situation perpetrated by insurgents spreading terror.
- Insurgent movements in India have more or less been proxy-wars being waged against India by external actors and this necessitates the deployment of armed forces in a counter-insurgency role with enhanced legal protection.
- The army has, repeatedly, made it clear that it cannot operate without the AFSPA. It needs special powers to tackle homegrown and as well as foreign terrorists.

#### **Arguments Against AFSPA:**

- **The Act has been called draconian as it gives sweeping powers to the armed forces.** It allows them to open fire', even causing death, against any person in contravention to the law or carrying arms and ammunition.
- It gives them **powers to arrest individuals without warrants**, based on "reasonable suspicion", and also search premises without warrants.
- The Act further provides blanket immunity to security personnel involved in such operations: There can be no prosecution or legal proceedings against them without the prior approval of the Centre.

**Source: Indian Express**

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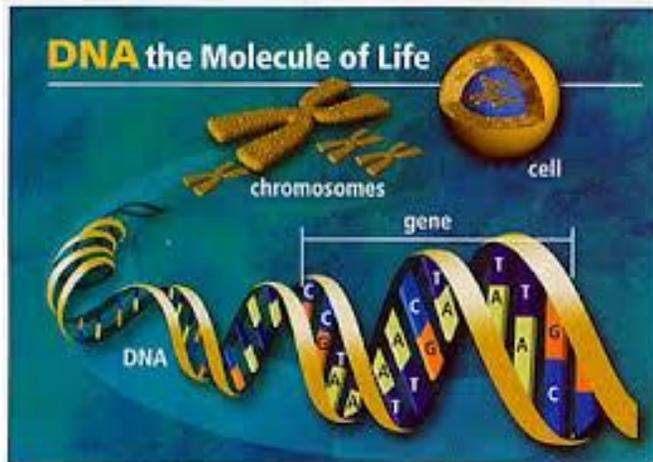
## 2. Sequencing human genome

**Topic: Science and Technology**

**In News:** An International publication has shared information on complete human genome sequencing.

**More on the Topic:**

- Nearly two decades ago, when scientists published the map of the human genome for the first time, it was hailed as a breakthrough. That was incomplete, however: about 8% of the human DNA was left unsequenced.
- Now, in a series of papers published in Science, a large team has accounted for that 8%, completing the picture of the human genome for the first time.
- Now, the fully sequenced genome is the result of the efforts of a global collaboration called the **Telomere-2-Telomere (T2T) project**.
- The invention of new methods of DNA sequencing and computational analysis helped complete the reading of the remaining 8% of the genome.



**What is in the new 8%:**

- The new reference genome, called T2T-CHM13, includes highly repetitive DNA sequences found in and around the telomeres (structures at the ends of chromosomes) and the centromeres (at the middle section of each chromosome).
- The new sequence also reveals long stretches of DNA that are duplicated in the genome and are known to play important roles in evolution and disease.

**Significance of Human Genome Sequencing:**

- A complete human genome **makes it easier to study genetic variation between individuals or between populations.**
- A genome refers to **all of the genetic material in an organism**, and the human genome is mostly the same in all people, but a **very small part of the DNA does vary between one individual and another.**
- By constructing a complete human genome, scientists can use it for reference while studying the genome of various individuals, which would help them **understand which variations, if any, might be responsible for disease.**

- The new T2T reference genome will complement the standard human reference genome, known as **Genome Reference Consortium build 38 (GRCh38)**, which originated from the Human Genome Project and has been updated since.
- **The complete sequence will be valuable for studies that aim to establish comprehensive views of human genomic variation.** Many research groups have already started using a pre-release version of the complete human genome sequence for their research.

Source: Indian Express

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### 3.FASTER (Fast and Secured Transmission of Electronic Records)

#### Topic: e Governance

**In News:** Supreme court has launched digital platform 'Fast and Secured Transmission of Electronic Records'.

#### More on the Topic:

- This move will **eliminate endless waiting to get a hard copy of a Supreme Court order.**
- The platform would be **used by the court officials to instantly to send e-copies** of the orders through a secured electronic communication channel to intended parties.
- Through the use of this software orders that were passed by the **high courts (HC) and the Supreme Court (SC) will be transmitted safely without any third-party interference.**
- Bail orders will be communicated via FASTER and for authentication purposes, it will have the digital signatures of the notified nodal officers of the SC as well as the Institutional digital signatures.
- In this manner, without much loss of time, **bail orders would be received by all the concerned parties and quick necessary actions will be taken at their end.**

Source: PIB



## 4. Dam Rehabilitation and Improvement Project

### Topic: Economy

**In News:** The government has inked a loan pact with the World Bank for Dam Rehabilitation and Improvement Project.

### More on the Topic:

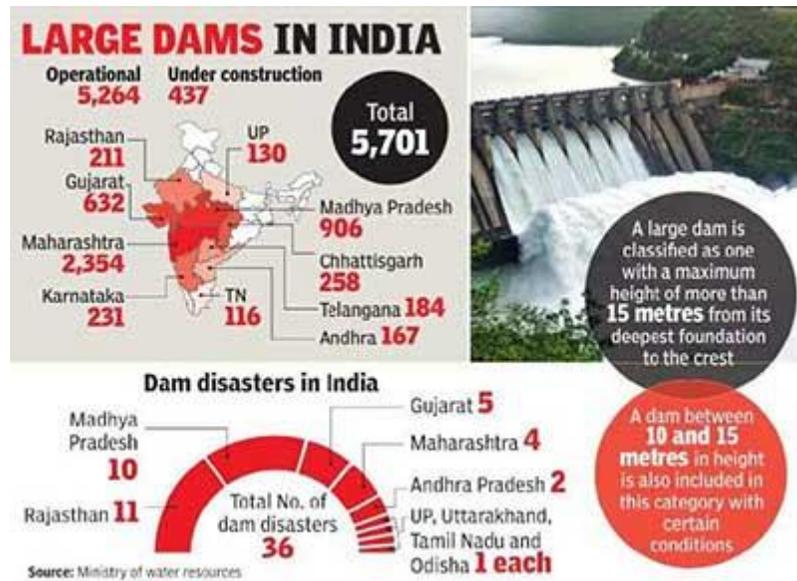
- The Central Water Commission as well as the government representatives from 10 participating states are part of the loan agreement.
- The funds will be used **to make the existing dam infrastructure safe in the country.**
- The USD 250 million project for the long-term is for **dam safety programme and improving the safety and performance of existing dams across various states of India.**
- The Second Dam Rehabilitation and Improvement Project (DRIP-2) will strengthen dam safety by building safety guidelines, bring in global experience, and introduce innovative technologies.

### DRIP Phase II & Phase III envisages the following objectives:

- To improve the safety and performance of selected existing dams and associated appurtenances in a sustainable manner.
- To strengthen the dam safety institutional setup in participating states as well as at central level.
- To explore the alternative incidental means at a few selected dams to generate the incidental revenue for sustainable operation and maintenance of dams.

### Significance of the Scheme:

- This new Scheme will **strengthen dam safety initiatives taken by Government of India** through physical rehabilitation of selected dams by addressing various concerns to improve safety and operational performance, institutional strengthening in various ways, incidental revenue generation for sustainable operation & maintenance of dams etc.



- The Scheme is designed to infuse global know-how, innovative technologies in dam safety.
- Another major innovation envisaged under the project, that is likely to transform dam safety management in the country, is the introduction of a **risk-based approach to dam asset management** that will help to effectively allocate financial resources towards priority dam safety needs.
- Also, Scheme implementation **will equip the Indian dam owners to gear up their human resources** to comprehensively handle many important activities envisaged in proposed Dam Safety Legislation.

Source: Indian Express

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## 5. Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI)

**Topic: Polity and Governance**

**In News:** Chief Justice of India has criticised CBI's credibility.

**More on the Topic:**

- The role of the CBI, along with the likes of the ED, the income tax department, and even the Election Commission of India has come under the scanner, especially in the last seven years.
- CJI has suggested that the need of the hour is to **“reclaim social legitimacy and public trust”** and the first step towards that “is to break nexus with political and executive.”



**Reforms Suggested:**

- CJI expressed there is an immediate need for the creation of an autonomous umbrella organisation, to bring various central agencies like the CBI, Enforcement Directorate and the Serious Fraud Investigation Office under one roof.
- **This umbrella institution will end the multiplicity of proceedings.**
- The CJI stated that there is **a need to separate autonomous wings for prosecution and investigation**, to ensure total independence.
- CJI also suggested **to ensure a reasonable check and balance in the institution's performance.**
- The State agencies must also be equipped to deal with increasing challenges in the field of investigation.

**Central Bureau of Investigation:**

- Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) is the premier investigating police agency in India.



- It functions under **the superintendence of the Deptt. of Personnel, Ministry of Personnel, Pension & Public Grievances, Government of India** - which falls under the prime minister's office.
- However, for investigations of offences under the Prevention of Corruption Act, its superintendence vests with the Central Vigilance Commission.
- **It is also the nodal police agency in India which coordinates investigation on behalf of Interpol Member countries.**
- Its conviction rate is as high as 65 to 70% and it is comparable to the best investigation agencies in the world.

**Source: Hindu**

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