

1. Simultaneous parliamentary and Assembly polls

Topic: Polity and Governance



In News: The issue of holding simultaneous parliamentary and Assembly polls has been referred to the Law Commission.

More on the Topic:

- The idea of “One Nation, One Election” envisages a system **where elections to all states and the Lok Sabha will have to be held simultaneously.**
- This will involve the restructuring of the Indian election cycle in a manner that elections to the states and the centre synchronise.
- This would mean that the voters will cast their vote for electing members of the LS and the state assemblies on a single day, at the same time (or in a phased manner as the case may be).

Comments of Law Commission:

- In its draft report, the 21st Law Commission had said it was convinced that “there exists a viable environment, necessitating the holding of simultaneous elections to the House of the People and the State Legislatures.
- **Simultaneous elections can be seen as a solution to prevent the country from being in constant election mode.”**

Pros of Simultaneous Election:

- Simultaneous polls will **reduce enormous costs** involved in separate elections.
- The system will **help ruling parties focus on governance** instead of being constantly in election mode.
- Simultaneous polls will **boost voter turnout**, according to the Law Commission.
- **Reduce Policy paralysis** as Imposition of Model Code of Conduct (MCC) over the state for a longer period of time leads to stoppage of developmental programs.

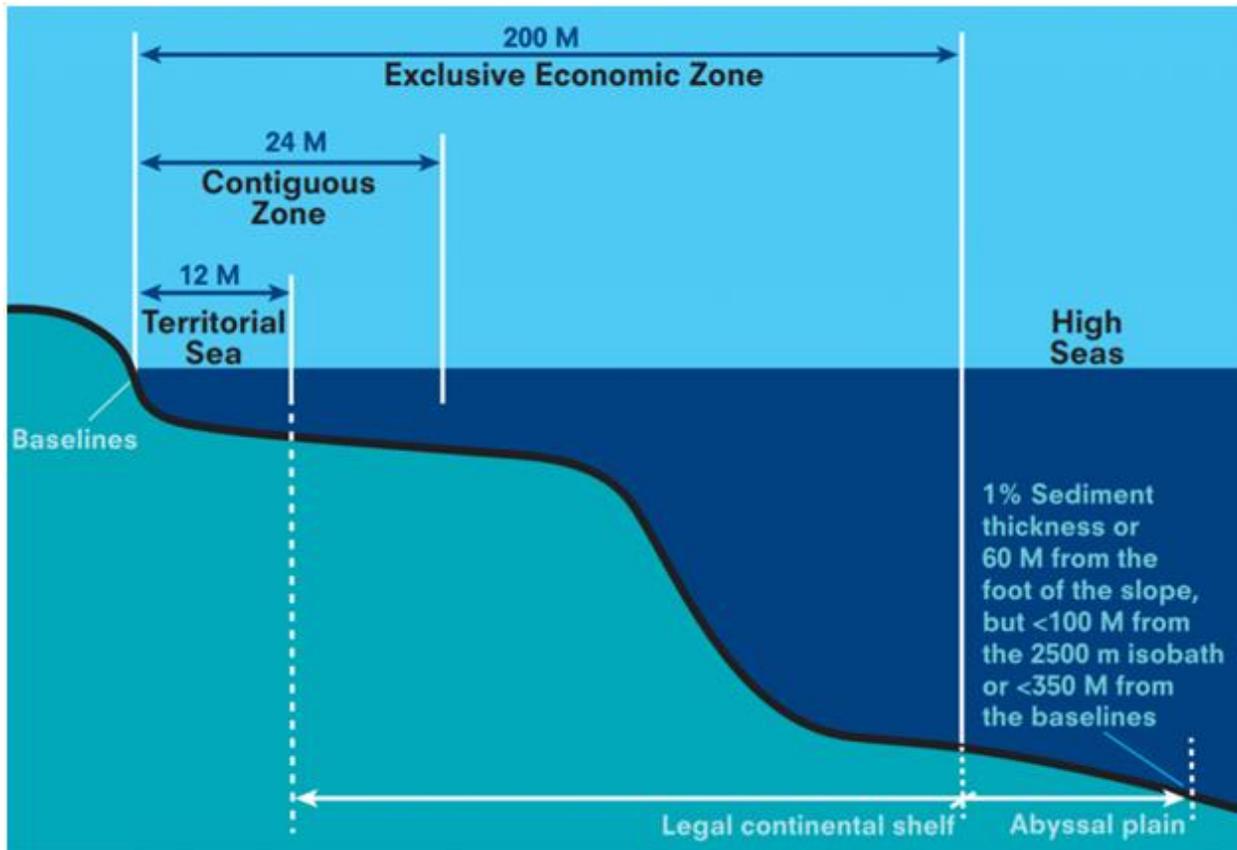
The arguments against Simultaneous Election:

- National and state issues are different, and **holding simultaneous elections is likely to affect the judgment of voters.**
- Since elections will be held once in five years, **it will reduce the government's accountability to the people.** Repeated elections keep legislators on their toes and increases accountability.
- When an election in a State is postponed until the synchronised phase, **President's rule will have to be imposed in the interim period in that state.** This will be a blow to democracy and federalism.

Source: Indian Express

2. Anti-Maritime Piracy Bill, 2019

Topic: Governance



In News: The Anti-Maritime Piracy Bill, 2019 has been listed for consideration and passing during the Monsoon session of the Parliament.

More on the Topic:



- The Bill enables **Indian authorities to take action against piracy in the high seas**. The Bill brings into law the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea. It applies to the sea beyond the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), i.e., beyond 200 nautical miles from India's coastline.
- The Bill **defines piracy as any illegal act of violence, detention or destruction against a ship, aircraft, person or property, for private purposes, by the crew or passengers of a private ship or aircraft**.
- Piracy also includes inciting and intentionally facilitating such acts of violence, and voluntarily participating in the operation of a pirate ship or aircraft.
- **Committing an act of piracy will be punishable with:** (i) life imprisonment; or (ii) death, if the act of piracy causes or seeks to cause death.
- Participating, organising, aiding, supporting, attempting to commit, and directing others to participate in an act of piracy will be punishable with up to 14 years of imprisonment, and a fine.

Applicability of Bill:

- The Bill will apply to all parts of the sea adjacent to and beyond the limits of the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of India, i.e., beyond 200 nautical miles from the coastline.
- The question is whether the Bi should cover the EEZ also, that is the area between 12 nautical miles and 200 nautical miles (from the coastline of India).

Context of the Bill:

- India currently does not have legislation on matters of piracy on the high seas.
- India ratified the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea in 1995 but was yet to enact it through the bill.
- Previously, pirates were prosecuted under the Indian Penal Code, 1860 (IPC). However, India's sovereignty is delimited by the outer boundary of its territorial waters— 12 nautical miles from the coast. **Acts of piracy committed by a foreigner outside India's territorial waters cannot be an offence under the IPC**, and those accused in piracy cases have been acquitted due to the lack of jurisdiction.

Source: Indian Express

3. Low Temperature Thermal Desalination (LTTD) technology

Topic: Science and Technology

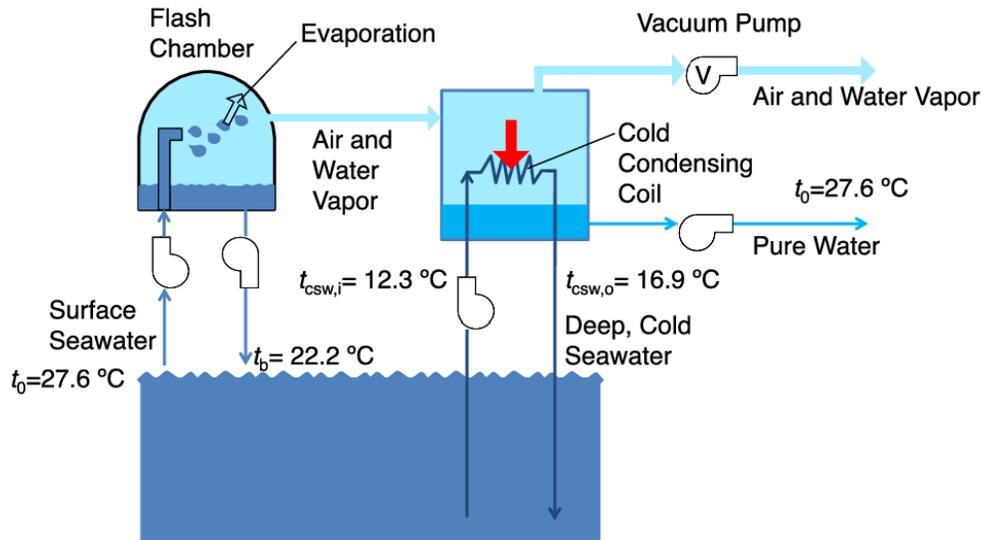


Figure 1. Diagram of LTTD system

In News: The National Institute of Ocean Technology (NIOT) Chennai has developed a Low Temperature Thermal Desalination (LTTD) technology for conversion of sea water to potable water and this has been successfully demonstrated in the Lakshadweep islands.

More on the Topic:

- The Desalination Plant is based on Low Temperature Thermal Desalination (LTTD) technology which takes away the salt or saline water and converts it into potable water.
- It works on the notion that; **water evaporates at lower temperatures, at low pressures.**
- It utilizes **vacuum pumps for creating a low pressure and low-temperature environment**, resulting into evaporation of water at a temperature gradient of 8°C .
- Cooling water is supplied from deep sea depths, which is pumped up to condense evaporated water vapor. We get purified water from the resulting condensate.

Source: Hindu

4.Somnathpur Keshava Temple

Topic: Art and Culture



In News: UNESCO team will inspect the Somnathpur Keshava Temple for giving the status of World heritage site.

More on the Topic:

- Soma, commander-in-chief of the Hoysala king Narasimha III (1254-1291 AD) built the shrine in 1268 AD.
- Built using a soft stone (greenish schist stone), every inch of the temple is adorned with various sculptures and the entire shrine is raised on a star-shaped moulded platform.
- It is a **Vaishnava Hindu temple on the banks of River Kaveri** at Somanathapura.
- It had been built in Hoysala Architectur style.

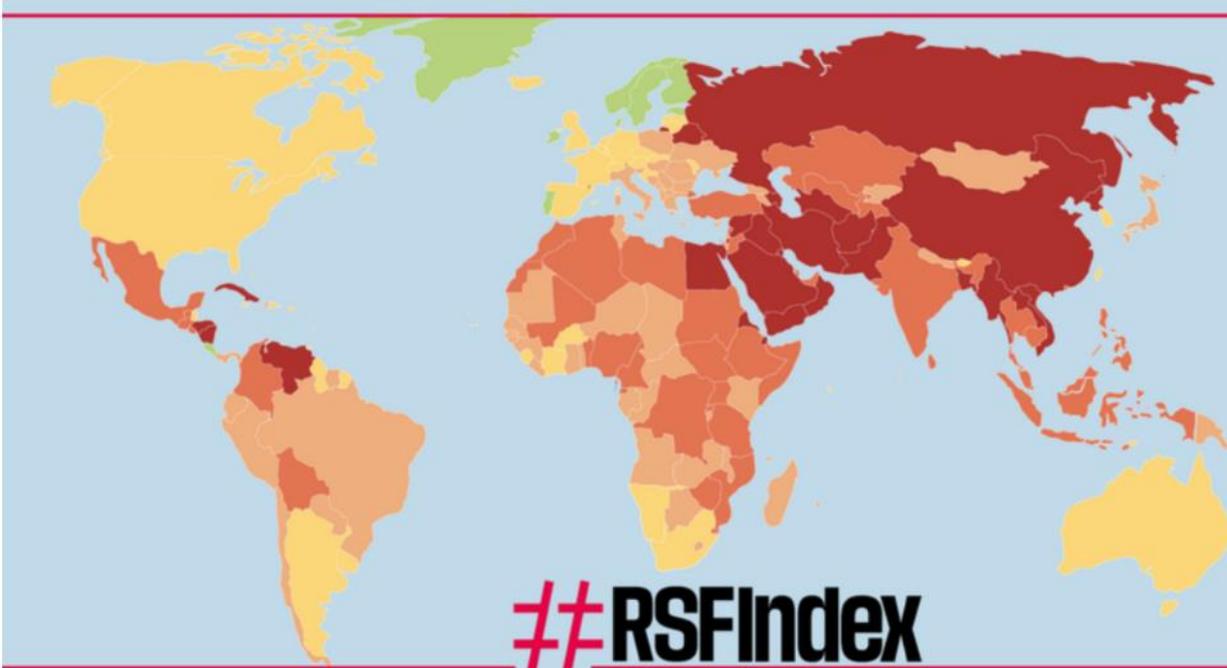
Hoysala architecture:

- Hoysala architecture is the building style developed under the rule of the Hoysala Empire between the 11th and 14th centuries, mostly concentrated in southern Karnataka.
- Hoysala temples are sometimes called **hybrid or vesara as their unique style seems between Dravida and Nagara styles.**
- The Hoysala temples contain **multiple shrines grouped around a central pillared hall and laid out in the shape of an intricately-designed star.**
- They are made out of soapstone which is a relatively soft stone.
- They are easily distinguishable from other medieval temples by their highly original star-like ground-plans and a profusion of decorative carvings.

Source: Indian Express

5. World Press Freedom Index

Topic: Reports and Indices



In News: Press Freedom Index was released by the Paris-based non-profit organisation Reporters Without Borders (RSF) recently.

More on the Topic:

- The report placed India at 150 out of 180 countries.
- The first World Press Freedom Index published in 2002 positioned India at 80.
- India's ranking was on a continuous decline since 2010.
- RSF has pointed out three important factors such as **politically controlled media, the safety of journalists, and the concentration of media ownership behind the downward spiral of press freedom in India.**
- **The government doesn't agree with the findings of the report: Reasons cited by the government are:- "very low sample size, little or no weightage to fundamentals of democracy, adoption of a methodology which is questionable and non-transparent".**

Source: Business Standard

6. Fallback liability

Topic: Economy



In News: Prliamentary Standing Committee on Commerce has dismissed e-commerce players' argument that they have no control over the items sold on their platform.

More on the Topic:

- Known as “fallback liability”, the Draft e-commerce rules (released in 2021) held e-commerce marketplace responsible if a seller on its platform failed to deliver the goods or services ordered by a consumer “due to negligent conduct, omission or commission of any act by such seller”, causing loss to the consumer.
- Fall-back liability makes the e-commerce firms liable in case a seller on their platform fails to deliver goods or services due to negligent conduct, which causes loss to the customer.

Source: Business Standard
