

## Current Affairs

### Assam to destroy stored rhino horns

#### Reference news:

- Assam's Environment and Forest Department has decided to destroy the rhinoceros horns, elephant tusks (ivory) and body parts of other protected animals stored in the district treasuries.
- About 5% of the specimens would be preserved for education, awareness and scientific purposes.
- The destruction of the horns and other animal articles **would be in conformity** with a relevant section of the **Wildlife (Protection) Act of 1972**.
- A State-level committee has been constituted for this purpose and a public hearing will be held soon.

#### Next Analysis-

- The Assam government had in 2016 constituted the Rhino Horn Verification Committee to study the specimens kept in 12 treasuries.
- The exercise was a bid to allay public apprehensions about tampering and allegations that officials were illegally trading the horns collected from dead rhinos or retrieved from poachers and smugglers.

### Ubharte Sitaare Alternative Investment Fund

#### Reference News:

Recently, the Ministry of Finance has launched 'Ubharte Sitaare' Alternative Investment Fund to facilitate debt and equity funding to export-oriented MSMEs (Micro Small and medium Enterprises).

#### About the scheme

- Under the scheme, an identified company is supported even if it is currently underperforming or may be unable to tap its latent potential to grow.
- The scheme diagnoses such challenges and provides support through a mix of **structured support covering equity, debt and technical assistance**.
- It will also have a Greenshoe Option of Rs 250 crore.

- A Greenshoe option is an over-allotment option, which is a term that is commonly used to describe a special arrangement in a share offering for example an IPO
- The fund has been set up **jointly by Exim Bank and SIDBI** (Small Industries Development Bank of India) which will invest in the fund by way of equity and equity-like products in export-oriented units, in **both manufacturing and services sectors**.

### What are the Criteria for Selecting Companies?

- Companies will be selected for support based on their unique value proposition in technology, products or processes that match global requirements.
- Fundamentally strong companies with acceptable financials with an annual turnover of up to approx. Rs 500 crore.
- Companies with a good business model, strong management capabilities, and focus on product quality.

### What are the Objectives?

- To enhance India's competitiveness in select sectors through finance and extensive handholding support.
- Identify and nurture companies having differentiated technology, products or processes, and enhance their export business;
- Assist units with export potential, which are unable to scale up their operations for want of finance.
- Identify and mitigate challenges faced by successful companies which hinder their exports.
- Assist existing exporters in widening their basket of products and target new markets through a strategic and structured export market development initiative.

### What is an Alternative Investment Fund?

- Anything alternative to traditional forms of investments gets categorized as alternative investments.
- In India, AIFs are defined under [Securities and Exchange Board of India](#) (Alternative Investment Funds) Regulations, 2012.
- It refers to any privately pooled investment fund, (whether from Indian or foreign sources) which are not presently covered by any governing fund management of SEBI nor coming under the direct regulation of any other sectoral regulators in India.
- It includes venture Capital Fund, hedge funds, private equity funds, commodity funds, infrastructure funds, etc

## Language in Indus Valley Civilization

### Reference news:

A new research paper has provided some new insight on the linguistic culture of the Indus Valley Civilization (IVC).

- Earlier, a study found that the diet of the people of IVC had a dominance of meat, including extensive eating of beef.
- In July 2021, UNESCO announced the [Harappan city of Dholavira](#) in Gujarat as India's 40th world heritage site.

### Key findings

- IVCs have their language roots in **Proto-Dravidian**, which is the ancestral language of all the modern Dravidian languages.
- The speakers of ancestral Dravidian languages had a greater historic presence in northern India including the Indus Valley region from where they migrated.
- Proto-Dravidian was one among several languages being spoken in the Indus Valley region.
- The research claims that there were more than one or one group of languages spoken across the one-million square kilometre area of IVC.
- Since people of ancient Persia had functioned as intermediaries between Mesopotamia and IVC traders, while exporting IVC's ivory, they had arguably spread the Indic words to Mesopotamia as well.

### What is Indus Valley civilization?

- It is the earliest known urban culture of the Indian subcontinent.
- It is also called Harappan Civilization after the first city to be excavated, Harappa (Punjab, Pakistan).
- It was established around 3300 BC. It flourished between 2600 BC and 1900 BC.
- It extended from Sutkagendor (in Balochistan) in the West to Alamgirpur (Western UP) in the East; and from Mandu (Jammu) in the North to Daimabad (Ahmednagar, Maharashtra) in the South. Some Indus Valley sites have also been found as far away as Afghanistan.

**Important sites:**

- Kalibangan (Rajasthan), Lothal, Dholavira, Rangpur, Surkotda (Gujarat), Banawali (Haryana), Ropar (Punjab).
- In Pakistan: Harappa (on river Ravi), Mohenjodaro (on Indus River in Sindh), Chanhudaro (in Sindh).

**Yuktdhara**

**Reference News:** New portal under Bhuvan “Yuktdhara” has been released that will facilitate planning of new MGNREGA assets using Remote Sensing and GIS based information.

**About**

- The “Yuktdhara” is a new Geospatial Planning Portal that will serve as a repository of assets (Geotags) created under various national rural development programmes, i.e., MGNREGA, Integrated Watershed Management Programme, Per Drop More Crop and Rastriya Krishi Vikas Yojana etc., along with field photographs using remote sensing and geographic information system-based data.
- The name given is very apt as word ‘Yukt’ is derived from Yojanam, the planning and ‘Dhara’ indicates the flow.
- It is a culmination of untiring joint efforts of ISRO and Ministry of Rural development made towards realizing a G2G service for rural planning in support of decentralized decision making.
- This portal integrates wide variety of thematic layers, multi-temporal high resolution earth observation data with analysis tools.
- Planners will analyse previous assets under various schemes and facilitates identification of new works using online tools.
- Plans prepared will be evaluated by appropriate authorities under State Departments. Thus, Yuktdhara based plans will be prepared by grassroot functionary and verified by appropriate authorities for relevance and resource allocation.
- This would ensure quality of plan and enable a long-term monitoring of the assets created over the years.

## Recent Cases

### Breaking the logjam, handing over the baton

#### Reference News:

- For the first time ever, the Supreme Court Collegium led by the Chief Justice of India (CJI) recommended/selected as many as nine persons at one go to be appointed to the apex court.
- With the appointment later of the nine judges by the President of India, barring one vacancy which arose after the Collegium met, all the nine vacancies in the Supreme Court will be filled up.
- The purpose of the collegium system is to ensure that the opinion of the Chief Justice of India (CJI) is not his individual opinion, but the one formed collectively by a body of judges of the highest integrity in the judiciary.
- The highest court in the country having its near full strength will ease the pressure on it considerably.

## NJAC VS COLLEGIUM SYSTEM

### WHAT'S COLLEGIUM SYSTEM

- Collegium system based on Three Judges Cases
- Under it, appointment of judges are made by Chief Justice of India and four most senior Supreme Court judges.
- Has no constitutional backing.
- Constitution of India's Article 124 says appointments to be made by President in consultation with judges as President may deem necessary.
- Critics say it is a closed-door system which lacks transparency

### WHAT'S NJAC

- NJAC was a body created to end the two-decade-old Supreme Court Collegium system of judges appointing judges.
- Was passed by Lok Sabha on August 13, 2014. Was passed by Rajya Sabha a day later.
- Will consist of six people - CJI, two senior-most Supreme Court judges, Law Minister and two 'eminent' persons.
- Critics say judges in NJAC will need support of others to push a name through. They fear judicial independence being compromised.

#### Collegium System in Judiciary: Appointment of Judges:

1. The Collegium System is a system under which appointments/elevation of judges/lawyers to Supreme Court and transfers of judges of High Courts and Apex Court are decided by a forum of the Chief Justice of India and the four senior-most judges of the Supreme Court.'
2. There is **no mention of the Collegium** either in the **original Constitution** of India or in successive amendments.
3. The recommendations of the Collegium are **binding on the Central Government**, if the Collegium sends the names of the judges/lawyers to the government for the second time.

4. Collegium considers the names or suggestions made by the Central Government and resends the file to the government for final approval.
5. If the Collegium resends the same name again then the government has to give its assent to the names. But time limit is not fixed to reply. This is the reason that appointment of judges takes a long time.

#### Evolution of the Collegium System in Judiciary:

- **First Judges Case (1981):** It declared that the “primacy” of the Chief Justice of India (CJI)s recommendation on judicial appointments and transfers can be refused for “cogent reasons.”
- The ruling gave the Executive primacy over the Judiciary in judicial appointments for the next 12 years.
- **Second Judges Case (1993):** Supreme Court introduced the Collegium system, holding that “consultation” really meant “concurrence”.
- It added that it was not the CJI’s individual opinion, but an institutional opinion formed in consultation with the two senior-most judges in the SC.
- **Third Judges Case (1998):** Supreme Court on President’s reference expanded the Collegium to a five-member body, comprising the CJI and four of his senior-most colleagues.

#### Constitutional Provisions regarding appointments of Judges:

- **Article 124(2)** of the Indian Constitution provides that the Judges of the Supreme Court are appointed by the President after consultation with such a number of the Judges of the Supreme Court and of the High Courts in the States as the President may deem necessary for the purpose.
- **Article 142 (1)** contains the **concept of ‘complete justice’** in any cause or matter which the Supreme Court is enjoined to deliver upon.
  - The Supreme Court has gone into this fundamental normative matrix in which the whole exercise of selection of judges is performed.
- **According to Article 217**, the Judge of a High Court shall be appointed by the President in consultation with the CJI and the State Governor, and, in the case of appointment of a Judge other than the Chief Justice, the Chief Justice of the High Court.

#### Present appointment criteria:

- The Bench observed: “There can be no denial that there is a vital element of **public interest** in knowing about the norms which are taken into consideration in selecting candidates for higher judicial office and making judicial appointments”.

- Thus, the **essence of the norms** to be followed in judicial appointments is a **judicious blend** of merit, seniority, interests of the marginalized and deprived sections of society, women, religions, regions and communities.
- It is also a **matter of public knowledge** that many of those selected have zealously upheld **citizens' freedoms and public interest**.
- The contributions of a few of them in waking up governments from their slumber in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic is well documented.
- **A high level of social consciousness** possessed by a Judge enhances the quality of justice.
- The present CJI can be credited with **recognizing this crucial factor in the selection of judges**.

#### Much-awaited move:

- India is a country of **bewildering diversity**. In this **cacophonous democracy**, language, region, religion, community, caste, are all realities which the state cannot ignore while identifying people to man its various organs.
- Every CJI during his tenure has taken up the **filling up of vacancies** as a **matter of highest priority**, but many could not succeed.
- It is indeed a happy augury that the present CJI, Justice N.V. Ramana, could, along with his colleagues in the Collegium, select the judges within a short period of his assumption of office.
- It is almost a truism that the selection of judges for appointment to the higher courts, particularly the top court is a **complex exercise**.
- The citizens of the country look up to the Supreme Court **for complete justice**. So, while selecting a judge to adorn the Bench, the fundamental consideration should be **his/her ability to do complete justice**.

#### Reforms in Judiciary: Need for transparency:

- The **National Judicial Appointments Commission (NJAC)** could guarantee the independence of the system from inappropriate politicization, strengthen the quality of appointments and rebuild public confidence in the system.
- The decision was struck down by the SC in 2015 on the ground that it posed a threat to the independence of the judiciary.
- The other area of concern is the composition of the higher judiciary. While data regarding caste is not available, women are fairly underrepresented in the higher judiciary.
- India is perhaps the **only country** where the **judges select judges to the higher judiciary**.
- It is, therefore, necessary to make the **norms of selection transparent**. The Supreme Court has emphasized the need for **maintaining transparency** and **an openness** with regard to the norms of selection.

- In 2019, a five judge Bench of the Supreme Court, of which the present CJI was also a member, laid emphasis on this point.
- The collegium members often face the **issue of mutual consent** regarding appointment of judges.
- The **shadow of mistrust** between the members of the collegium exposes the fault lines within the judiciary.

### Conclusion:

- Amongst the constitutional institutions **designed to protect democracy**, the pride of place is enjoyed by the Indian judiciary.
- The nation, citizens and the **judiciary** must **guard against the dilution of its independence**.
- There is no doubt that there are meritorious people outside this group too. But in a **population of 1.3 billion**, to select just nine suitable persons to man the highest judiciary is not without difficulty.
- Considering the merit of the selected persons, one can undoubtedly say that the Collegium has done a good job.
- With seven names (district judges) cleared by the Collegium for the Telangana High Court in one go, we can safely trust Team Ramana to speedily fill up all judicial vacancies. The Collegium has started doing its job.
- Now, it is time for the Government to **match the pace** and take the **process of appointments** to its logical conclusion at the earliest.



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## QUIZ

1. Which among the following article of the Constitution of India says that all public places are open to all citizens?

- [A] Article 15 (2)
- [B] Article 16 (2)
- [C] Article 17
- [D] Article 18

**Answer: A**

2. 73rd Amendment of the Constitution of India, is related to which among the following?

- [A] Townships
- [B] Panchayat
- [C] Municipalities
- [D] District Boards

**Answer: B**

3. How many members can be nominated to Lok Sabha by President?

- [A] 0
- [B] 2
- [C] 3
- [D] 4

**Answer: A**

4. From which country, the method of Impeachment of the President of India is adopted from?

- [A] USA
- [B] UK
- [C] USSR
- [D] France

**Answer: A**

5. The amendment of the constitution can be initiated in which of the following?

1. Lok Sabha
2. Rajya Sabha

3. State Assemblies

Select the correct option from the codes given below:

- [A] Only 1
- [B] Only 1 or 2
- [C] Only 1 or 3
- [D] 1 or 2 or 3

**Answer: B**

6. "Riksdag" is the name of parliament of which of the following?

- [A] Iran
- [B] Norway
- [C] Sweden
- [D] Kazakhstan

**Answer: C**

7. Which among the following is true regarding amendments of the constitution with provisions which affect the federal character of the constitution?

- [A] They can be amended by a simple majority
- [B] They can be amended by a 2/3 majority of both the houses of parliament
- [C] They can be amended by not only a 2/3 majority of the parliament but also ratification by at least 1/2 of the states
- [D] All are correct

**Answer: C**

8. For which of the following purpose, Rajamanar Committee was constituted ?

- [A] Industrial Licensing
- [B] Direct taxes
- [C] Centre State Fiscal Relations
- [D] InDirect taxes

**Answer: C**

**9. Which among the following is an incorrect statement regarding Money Bill?**

- [A] It can be introduced only in Lok Sabha
- [B] It can be introduced only on the recommendation of the President

[C] The Rajya Sabha is given 1 months time period to make recommendation on a Money Bill

[D] All are correct

**Answer: C**

**10. How many Former Presidents have been awarded "Bharat Ratna" till now?**

- [A] 2
- [B] 3
- [C] 6
- [D] 5

**Answer: C**

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