

IMPORTANT NEWS

The Authority of the Governor to Withhold Assent

Inside Story of the News:

Governor R N Ravi of Tamil Nadu has refrained from granting his approval to a set of 10 Bills. Meanwhile, at least four states led by opposition parties have approached the Supreme Court, seeking relief from the growing trend of Governors impeding the legislative activities of duly elected governments.

- The recent decision by Tamil Nadu's Governor, R N Ravi, to withhold assent to 10 pending Bills has prompted new legal inquiries into the extent of the Governor's powers.
- This development occurs concurrently with at least four states led by opposition parties, including Tamil Nadu.
 - It is approaching the Supreme Court to seek intervention in defining the Governor's powers in the legislative process.
- While **Article 163** of the Constitution addresses the Governor's powers generally, **Article 200** specifically pertains to granting assent to Bills.
- Both provisions are considered together to delineate the Governor's authority in this matter.
- When a bill passed by a state legislature is presented to the Governor, they have four options:
 - Grant assent,
 - Withhold assent,
 - Return for reconsideration, or
 - Reserve for the President's consideration.
- Importantly, once the Legislative House reconsiders and sends the Bill to the Governor again, the Governor "shall not withhold assent."
- The ongoing contention between the government and Governors in opposition-ruled states revolves around the interpretation of the proviso.
- The proviso suggests that the Governor must return the Bill "as soon as possible" without specifying a definite timeframe.
- Exploiting this ambiguity, Raj Bhavans have been able to withhold Bills indefinitely without returning them to the state legislature.

Governor's Ability to Prolong the Consideration of a Bill:

- An undetermined timeframe for deciding on Bills can effectively cripple the functioning of the elected government.
- Granting assent to Bills represents one of the few areas where the Governor can exercise discretion.
- However, this discretion must not be applied arbitrarily or based on personal preferences.
 - It should adhere strictly to Constitutional terms and be accompanied by cogent reasons.

- Furthermore, the use of the word "shall" in Article 200 suggests that the framers of the Constitution intended to convey a mandatory tone.
 - It is indicating that the Governor is obliged to act in a certain manner in this context.

The Supreme Court's Perspective on This Matter:

- In its landmark 2016 ruling in the Arunachal Pradesh Assembly case (Nabam Rebia and Bamang Felix vs Deputy Speaker), the Supreme Court addressed this aspect briefly.
- The Court emphasized that **the Governor cannot withhold assent to a Bill indefinitely but must return it to the Assembly with a message.**
- This message could include the Governor's recommendations for amendments to the Bill.

Current Actions Taken by the Supreme Court:

- Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Telangana, and Punjab have sought the intervention of the Supreme Court on this issue.
- Several aspects dealing with the Governor's powers, such as
 - recommending President's Rule,
 - inviting the majority party to form the government, or during a trust vote,have been extensively litigated, resulting in settled law on these matters.
- The Supreme Court is now tasked with deciding a new aspect — whether it can establish a timeline for Governors to give assent to Bills.
- This involves determining whether the court has the authority to prescribe limits to an office exercising constitutional powers.
- In the past, the court has reluctantly imposed timelines for the Speaker's office to decide disqualification cases.
- As Governors cannot be made parties before the Supreme Court, the court typically issues notices to the Secretary of the Governor in such disputes.

The '2+2' Format: India-US Dialogue Explained

Inside Story of the News:

Over the years, the strategic bilateral relationships with its partners, including dialogues held in the 2+2 format, have yielded tangible and far-reaching results for India.

- The 2+2 dialogue is a meeting format involving the foreign and defence ministers of India and its allies to discuss strategic and security issues.
 - This format facilitates a deeper understanding and appreciation of each other's strategic concerns and sensitivities.
- India engages in 2+2 ministerial dialogues with a select group of countries, including the US, Japan, and Russia.
- Apart from Russia, the other three countries are also India's partners in the Quad.

The Genesis of the India-Australia '2+2' Dialogue:

- The Hon'ble Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi, and the Hon. Scott Morrison MP, Prime Minister of Australia, jointly participated in an India-Australia Leaders' Virtual Summit on June 4, 2020.
- During this summit, both leaders engaged in discussions on various bilateral and global issues.
- Affirming their commitment to strengthening India-Australia ties for the long term, they pledged to elevate the bilateral Strategic Partnership concluded in 2009.
 - The aim is to transform it into a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (CSP).
- To pursue the CSP, the Foreign and Defence Ministers of both countries will meet in a '2+2' format to discuss strategic issues at least every two years.

Key Areas of Discussion:

- India and Australia engaged in talks focused on enhancing military cooperation in
 - critical areas, including anti-submarine warfare and air-to-air refueling,
 - bolstering security in the expansive Indo-Pacific region amidst increasing Chinese influence.
 - hydrography cooperation and
 - the strengthening of ties in sectors such as critical minerals, space, education, science, and technology.
- Both nations addressed pressing geopolitical issues, including the crises in West Asia and the conflict in Ukraine.
- Security concerns in the vast Indo-Pacific region have gained prominence due to China's expanding influence.
- This includes the establishment of military bases and exerting pressure on countries to acknowledge its maritime claims.
- Singh emphasized the importance of collaboration in niche training areas like artificial intelligence, anti-submarine and anti-drone warfare, and the cyber domain.
- Areas of potential collaboration suggested by Singh included shipbuilding, ship repair and maintenance, and aircraft maintenance, repair, and overhaul.

Exploring Tantalum: The Rare Metal Discovered in the Sutlej River

Inside Story of the News:

A group of researchers from the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Ropar, has **identified the presence of tantalum, a rare metal, in the sand of the Sutlej River in Punjab.**

- Tantalum, with the atomic number 73, is **a rare metal known for its grey color, high density, and extreme hardness.**
- It is one of the most corrosion-resistant metals and has a high melting point, surpassed only by tungsten and rhenium.
- This metal exhibits exceptional resistance to corrosion due to the formation of a protective oxide layer when exposed to air.
 - This oxide layer makes tantalum highly durable even in harsh chemical environments.

- In its pure form, tantalum is ductile, allowing it to be stretched into thin wires without breaking.
- It remains almost completely resistant to chemical attack at temperatures below 150°C and is primarily affected by hydrofluoric acid.
- Tantalum was discovered by Swedish chemist Anders Gustaf Ekenberg in 1802 in minerals obtained from Ytterby, Sweden.
- Initially, it was thought to be a different form of niobium, an element chemically similar to tantalum.

Usage of Tantalum:

- Tantalum holds significant importance in the electronics industry, particularly in the production of capacitors.
- Tantalum capacitors exhibit the capability to store more electricity in smaller sizes with minimal leakage.
 - This makes them ideal for use in portable electronic devices such as smartphones, laptops, and digital cameras.
- Given its high melting point, tantalum is often employed as a cost-effective substitute for platinum.
- The rare metal finds applications in various sectors, including the manufacturing of components for chemical plants, nuclear power plants, airplanes, and missiles.
- Tantalum's non-reactivity with bodily fluids makes it suitable for producing surgical equipment and implants, such as artificial joints.
 - This characteristic is highlighted by the US Department of Energy.
- Notably, a composite comprising tantalum carbide (TaC) and graphite is recognized as one of the hardest materials known.
 - It is utilized on the cutting edges of high-speed machine tools for enhanced durability and performance.

Uncovering Tantalum: The Discovery:

- The detection of tantalum in the Sutlej River is not only significant for Punjab but also for India as a whole.
- This importance arises from the essential role of tantalum in the electronics and semiconductor industries.
- Following this discovery, the research team from IIT-Ropar has presented a proposal to the Punjab government.
- The proposal recommends gathering river samples from a minimum of 125 locations along the Sutlej River to further investigate and identify rare components.
- Leading the research, Dr. Sebastian suggests that the presence of tantalum traces has the potential to contribute to the state's economy.
- This contribution could come from encouraging the extraction of these valuable metals through mining.

The Investor Risk Reduction Access Platform: Benefits and Overview

Inside Story of the News:

The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has inaugurated the Investor Risk Reduction Access (IRRA) platform at the Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE). The IRRA platform serves as a **'safety net' for investors in the event of technical glitches experienced by a trading member or a stockbroker registered with SEBI.**

- The IRRA platform was developed to minimize risks for investors in case of technical issues at the primary and disaster recovery sites of trading members.
- Investors can utilize this platform to close existing positions and cancel pending orders in the event of disruptions at the stockbroker's end.
- Essentially, the IRRA platform serves as a solution for technical glitches or unforeseen outages that make the trading member's site inaccessible.
 - It aims to decrease risks for market participants.
- It is not intended for initiating new positions or orders but solely for the cancellation of pending orders.
- IRRA is a collaborative effort among major stock exchanges, including BSE, NSE, NCDEX, MCX, and MSE.
- Prior to urging stock exchanges to transition to the IRRA platform, trading members must focus on restoring the primary and disaster recovery sites.
- Trading members can communicate their desire to switch to the IRRA platform via email.
- Upon receiving the trading member's request and confirmation from all exchanges, the IRRA system services will be halted.
- This pause enables the trading member to resume operations using the original trading system.
- The securities market's increasing reliance on technology has led to a rise in trading members' system glitches.
 - It often results in disruptions to trading services and investor grievances.
- In such circumstances, investors with open positions face the risk of being unable to close their positions, especially during periods of market volatility.

Functioning of the IRRA Platform:

- Trading members have the authority to invoke IRRA in the event of a technical glitch, impacting their ability to serve clients across exchanges.
 - This applies to both the primary and disaster recovery sites when applicable.
- Stock exchanges have the authority to independently activate the IRRA service, monitoring factors such as connectivity, order flow, and social media posts.
 - This activation can occur even without a specific request from the trading member.
- Once investors are granted access to the IRRA platform, they gain the capability to view and cancel pending orders across all segments and stock exchanges.
 - This access allows them to efficiently manage their transactions and positions.
- Additionally, investors can square off or close open positions across various segments and exchanges, as well as cancel pending orders across segments at the exchanges.

Renaming the IAF as Air and Space Force

Inside Story of the News:

Air Chief Marshal RKS Bhadauria, former chief of air staff expressed that the **proposed redesignation of the Indian Air Force (IAF) as the Indian Air and Space Force is a positive move, describing it as a "work in progress."**

- The IAF is **contemplating a substantial transformation, considering a redesignation as the Indian Air and Space Forces (IASF).**
- This strategic shift, gaining momentum in recent years, reflects the increasing significance of space warfare and the IAF's commitment to adapting to the evolving battlefield.
- Advocates for the redesignation **argue that it would better align the IAF with the future of warfare.**
- This is particularly relevant in the space domain, where satellites play a crucial role in military operations, providing communication, navigation, and intelligence capabilities.
- Additionally, redesignating the IAF and IASF would signify India's dedication to emerging as a major space power.
- This **would showcase the country's achievements in space exploration and technology development.**
- While there are concerns about the potential bureaucratic challenges that may arise from the proposed redesignation, with some experts fearing a silo effect hindering coordination across space and air domains, the proposal continues to gain traction.
- If approved, the redesignation would mark a significant milestone for the IAF.
- Also, it is a noteworthy advancement in India's pursuit of becoming a leading space power.

India's Reaction to Nijjar vs. Pannun Incidents in the US and Canada

Inside Story of the News:

Shortly after news emerged that the US had prevented a plot to assassinate a Khalistan separatist on American territory, Delhi promptly acknowledged the seriousness of such information. Relevant departments are already scrutinizing these inputs.

- The Indian response to the recent incident contrasts significantly with its reaction to Canadian Prime Minister's credible accusations.
- The accusations pertained to a potential involvement of Indian government agents in the killing of Canada-based Khalistan separatist Hardeep Singh Nijjar.
- In response to the Canadian PM's statements, there was a strong and angered reaction from India, with the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) dismissing the allegations as **"absurd and motivated."**
- The MEA went on to characterize Canada as a "safe haven" for "terrorists, extremists, and organized crime" – using language typically reserved for countries like Pakistan and Afghanistan rather than Western nations.
- Following Canada's expulsion of an Indian diplomat in Ottawa, India reciprocated by expelling a Canadian diplomat based in New Delhi.

- India also compelled Canada to withdraw 41 of its diplomats from its High Commission in New Delhi.
- In response, India issued a travel advisory for Indian nationals heading to Canada, particularly cautioning students, professionals, and tourists.
- Visa services in Canada were suspended, including the halt of e-visa services, which had been recently resumed.
- In response to inquiries from the media regarding reports of discussions between India and the USA on security matters, the Official Spokesperson, Shri Arindam Bagchi, stated:
 - In recent discussions concerning India-US security cooperation, the US side provided information related to the interconnection between organized criminals, gun runners, terrorists, and other entities.
 - This exchange aimed to enhance collaborative efforts in addressing shared security challenges.
 - These inputs have raised concerns for both countries, leading to a joint decision to undertake necessary follow-up actions.
 - India, in turn, treats such information seriously, as it directly impacts our national security interests.
 - The issues arising from the US inputs are currently under examination by the relevant departments.
- In the case of Canada, an individual was killed, prompting an ongoing murder investigation.
- Meanwhile, in the US case, the intended target of the alleged assassination plot remained unharmed.
- In Canada, the Canadian PM directly implicated the Indian government.
- However, in the US case, there has been no direct link to the Indian government as of yet.
- In response to the FT report, the US administration did not deny the allegations.
- Instead, they emphasized treating the issue with the utmost seriousness and stated that it had been raised with the Indian Government.
- In contrast, Delhi rejected and refused to cooperate with the allegations in the Canadian case, while in the US case, India has demonstrated a cooperative response.
- While India-Canada relations are primarily economic and people-oriented, the Indo-US ties encompass a broader and more profound spectrum.
- From strategic and defense collaboration to space and technology partnerships, and from economic ties to people-to-people connections, the relationship with the US is significantly more extensive.
- India has more at stake in this multifaceted relationship.
- The outcome of investigations in both the US and India will shape the trajectory of their ties, serving as a test of the durability and strength of their relationship.
- Officials in both Washington and Delhi are expected to demonstrate diplomatic maturity in handling this new crisis.