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सत्यमेव जयते



MK Yadav Sir

Table of Contents

1. Iran
2. Consumer Protection Act, 2019
3. Cyclone Amphan
4. Venezuela's Glacial Decline
5. Capital punishment in India
6. South China Sea
7. Calcium Carbide
8. International Criminal Court (ICC)
9. Summer Solstice
10. Antarctic Treaty

THE HINDU

Page 1

IRAN

(Syllabus: GS Paper 2 – IR)

Helicopter crash kills Iran President, Foreign Minister

Agence France-Presse
TEHRAN

Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi and Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian were confirmed dead on Monday after search and rescue teams found their crashed helicopter in a fog-shrouded mountain region, sparking mourning in the Islamic Republic.

Supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei declared five days of mourning and assigned Vice-President Mohammad Mokhber, 68, to assume interim duties ahead of elections which will be held on June 28.

Earlier on Monday, state TV announced that "the servant of the Iranian nation, Ayatollah Ebrahim Raisi, has achieved the highest level of martyrdom" and broadcast pictures from Raisi's life as a voice recited the Koran.

Condolences flooded in from Palestinian militant group Hamas, Lebanon's Hezbollah and Syria, all members of the so-called Axis of Resistance against Israel and its allies, at a time of high West Asia tensions over the Gaza war.

Mr. Khamenei had urged Iranians on Sunday, as the search was still ongoing, to "not worry" about the leadership of the country, saying "there will be no disruption in the country's work".

Iran's one-time top nuclear negotiator Ali Bagheri was appointed Acting Foreign Minister.

A black flag was hoisted at a major Shia shrine in the city of Qom as a sign of mourning for Raisi, whom many had considered a favourite to one day succeed the Supreme Leader.

CONTINUED ON
» PAGE 10
STATE MOURNING IN INDIA
» PAGE 10
A HARDLINE CLERIC
» PAGE 14



Rescue team members recover the body of a victim from the helicopter crash site in Varzaghan of Iran on Monday. AFP



Context: President of Iran recently died in a helicopter crash in East Azerbaijan province.

Iran

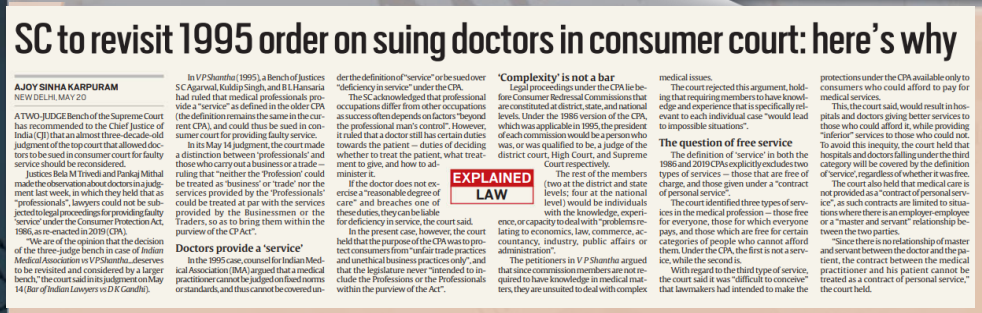
- **About:** Iran, officially the Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI), is situated in West Asia.
- **Bordering Countries**: It shares borders with Iraq to the west, Turkey to the northwest, Azerbaijan, Armenia, the Caspian Sea, and Turkmenistan to the north, Afghanistan to the east, Pakistan to the southeast, and the Gulf of Oman and the Persian Gulf to the south.
- **Geographic Features**: Iran is characterized by its mountainous, arid, and ethnically diverse landscape in southwestern Asia.
- **Capital**: Tehran
- **Mountain**: Elburz Mountains.
- **Lake**: Lake Urmia is an internationally registered protected area as both a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve and a Ramsar site.

India – Iran Relations

- **Historical Relation:** India and Iran share ancient ties dating back to the Indus Valley and Mesopotamian civilizations, with historical trade via the Persian Gulf and Arabian Sea.
- **Political Relations**: On 15 March 1950, a friendship treaty was signed, followed by the Tehran Declaration, envisioning an equitable, pluralistic, and cooperative international order.
- **Trade Relations:** India has been among Iran's five largest trade partners in recent years.
- Iran was the third-largest source of crude oil supplier for India till 2018-19.
    - **Indian Exports to Iran**: Rice, tea, sugar, pharmaceuticals, manmade staple fibres, electrical machinery, and artificial jewellery.
    - **Indian Imports from Iran**: Dry fruits, inorganic/organic chemicals, and glassware.
- **Connectivity:** India and Iran signed a 10-year development and operation contract for Chabahar Port in southeastern Iran, on the Gulf of Oman.
    - The International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) was initiated by India, Iran, and Russia in 2000, later expanding to include 10 Central and West Asian countries.
- **Cultural Relations**: The Indian Cultural Centre, established in 2013 and renamed the Swami Vivekananda Cultural Centre (SVCC) in 2018, helps to further these cultural ties.

CONSUMER PROTECTION ACT, 2019

(Syllabus GS Paper 3 – Economy)



SC to revisit 1995 order on suing doctors in consumer court: here's why

AJOY SINHA KARPURAM
NEW DELHI, MAY 20

A TWO-JUDGE Bench of the Supreme Court has recommended to the Chief Justice of India (CJI) that an almost three-decade-old judgment of the top court that allowed doctors to be sued in consumer court for faulty service should be reconsidered.

Justices Bela M Trivedi and Pankaj Mithal made the observation about doctors in a judgment last week, in which they held that as "professionals", lawyers could not be subjected to legal proceedings for providing faulty 'service' under the Consumer Protection Act, 1986, as re-enacted in 2019 (CPA).

"We are of the opinion that the decision of the three-judge bench in case of *Indian Medical Association vs V P Shantha*...deserves to be revisited and considered by a larger bench," the court said in its judgment on May 14 (*Bar of Indian Lawyers vs D K Gandhi*).

In *V P Shantha* (1995), a Bench of Justices S C Agarwal, Kuldip Singh, and B L Hansaria had ruled that medical professionals provide a "service" as defined in the older CPA (the definition remains the same in the current CPA), and could thus be sued in consumer court for providing faulty service.

In its May 14 judgment, the court made a distinction between 'professionals' and those who carry out a business or a trade — ruling that "neither the 'Profession' could be treated as 'business' or 'trade' nor the services provided by the 'Professionals' could be treated at par with the services provided by the Businessmen or the Traders, so as to bring them within the purview of the CP Act".

Doctors provide a 'service'

In the 1995 case, counsel for Indian Medical Association (IMA) argued that a medical practitioner cannot be judged on fixed norms or standards, and thus cannot be covered under the definition of "service" or be sued over "deficiency in service" under the CPA.

The SC acknowledged that professional occupations differ from other occupations as success often depends on factors "beyond the professional man's control". However, it ruled that a doctor still has certain duties towards the patient — duties of deciding whether to treat the patient, what treatment to give, and how to administer it.

EXPLAINED LAW

If the doctor does not exercise a "reasonable degree of care" and breaches one of these duties, they can be liable for deficiency in service, the court said.

In the present case, however, the court held that the purpose of the CPA was to protect consumers from "unfair trade practices and unethical business practices only", and that the legislature never "intended to include the Professions or the Professionals within the purview of the Act".

'Complexity' is not a bar

Legal proceedings under the CPA lie before Consumer Redressal Commissions that are constituted at district, state, and national levels. Under the 1986 version of the CPA, which was applicable in 1995, the president of each commission would be a person who was, or was qualified to be, a judge of the district court, High Court, and Supreme Court respectively.

The rest of the members (two at the district and state levels; four at the national level) would be individuals with the knowledge, experience, or capacity to deal with "problems relating to economics, law, commerce, accountancy, industry, public affairs or administration".

The petitioners in *V P Shantha* argued that since commission members are not required to have knowledge in medical matters, they are unsuited to deal with complex medical issues.

The court rejected this argument, holding that requiring members to have knowledge and experience that is specifically relevant to each individual case "would lead to impossible situations".

The question of free service

The definition of 'service' in both the 1986 and 2019 CPAs explicitly excludes two types of services — those that are free of charge, and those given under a "contract of personal service".

The court identified three types of services in the medical profession — those free for everyone, those for which everyone pays, and those which are free for certain categories of people who cannot afford them. Under the CPA, the first is not a service, while the second is.

With regard to the third type of service, the court said it was "difficult to conceive" that lawmakers had intended to make the protections under the CPA available only to consumers who could afford to pay for medical services.

This, the court said, would result in hospitals and doctors giving better services to those who could afford it, while providing "inferior" services to those who could not. To avoid this inequity, the court held that hospitals and doctors falling under the third category will be covered by the definition of 'service', regardless of whether it was free.

The court also held that medical care is not provided as a "contract of personal service", as such contracts are limited to situations where there is an employer-employee or a "master and servant" relationship between the two parties.

"Since there is no relationship of master and servant between the doctor and the patient, the contract between the medical practitioner and his patient cannot be treated as a contract of personal service," the court held.

Context: The Supreme Court recently ruled that lawyers, as professionals, are exempt from legal proceedings for faulty services under the Consumer Protection Act, 2019, echoing its decision nearly 30 years ago for the medical profession.

Consumer Protection Act, 2019

- **Replacement:** The Consumer Protection Act 2019 replaces the more than three decades old Consumer Protection Act, 1986.
- **Establishment:** The new Act, 2019 came into force on 20th July 2020.
- **Empowerment of Consumers**: The Act aims to empower consumers and protect their rights through various notified rules and provisions.
- **Product liability**: It means the responsibility of a product manufacturer or product seller, of any product or service, to compensate for any harm caused to a consumer by such defective product manufactured or sold or by deficiency in services relating thereto
- **Definition of a Consumer**: A consumer is defined as a person who buys any good or avails a service for a consideration.
    - The definition does not include a person who obtains a good for resale or a good or service for commercial purposes.
- **Six Consumer Rights**: Right to Safety, Right to be Informed, Right to Choose, Right to be Heard, Right to Seek Redressal, and Right to Consumer Education.

Supreme Court Judgement

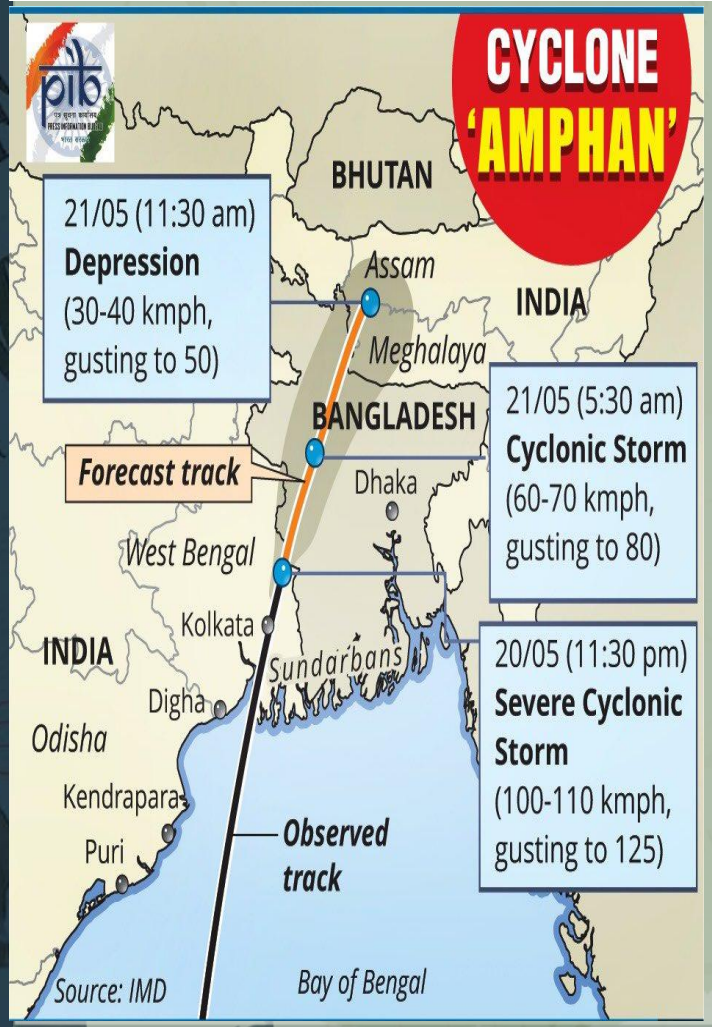
- **Indian Medical Association vs V P Shantha (1995):** Supreme Court ruled that medical professionals provide a "service" as defined in the older Consumer Protection Act (CPA), making them liable to be sued in consumer court for faulty service.
- **Skilled Professional Work**: In 1995, the court recognized that professional occupations, such as those in medicine, often involve "skilled" work requiring "mental rather than manual" effort, differentiating them from other occupations.
- **Duties Owed by Doctors to Patients**: The court held that doctors owe specific duties to their patients, including deciding whether to treat the patient, determining the appropriate treatment, and how the treatment is administered.
- **Liability for Breach of Duty**: If a doctor fails to exercise a "reasonable degree of care" and breaches one of these duties, they can be held liable for a deficiency in service.
- **Supreme Court's 2024**: Supreme Court appeared more sympathetic to the notion that medical practitioners, as "professionals", should not be held to the same standard as other occupations.
- **Purpose of the Consumer Protection Act (CPA)**: The Bench held that the CPA's purpose was to protect consumers from "unfair trade practices and unethical business practices," and the legislature never intended to include professionals within the Act's purview.

DTE May 20

CYCLONE AMPHAN

(Syllabus: GS Paper 3 – Disaster Management)

Bangladesh scarred by Super Cyclone Amphan even after four years, with displaced people still refugees & land uncultivable



Context: It has been four years since Cyclone Amphan wreaked havoc along the coastlines of Bangladesh and India, causing widespread destruction.

Cyclone Amphan

- **About:** It was an extremely powerful and destructive tropical cyclone.
- **Frequency of Supercyclones**: It is the fourth supercyclone to hit West Bengal and Kolkata since 2015.
- **Landfall Location**: It made landfall somewhere between the Hathiya Islands in Bangladesh and Digha in West Bengal.
- **Causes**: Warm sea surface temperatures, Favorable atmospheric conditions and Low-level convergence.
- **Origin of the Name**: The cyclone's name, Amphan, which is pronounced "UM-PUN," was given by Thailand.
- **Comparison:** Amphan is thought to be the strongest tropical storm to have hit the coast, surpassing the Phailin typhoon that struck the Bengal-Odisha coast in 2013.
- **Landfall Impact**
  - Amphan traveled toward West Bengal and Bangladesh when it made landfall as a powerful storm at Sagar Island in West Bengal and the Island of Hatiya in Bangladesh.
  - It was the strongest tropical cyclone to strike the Ganges Delta since the 1999 Odisha cyclone.

VENEZUELA'S GLACIAL DECLINE

(Syllabus: GS Paper 1 – Geography)

HOW VENEZUELA LOST ITS LAST GLACIER, AND WHY THIS MATTERS

ALIND CHAUHAN
NEW DELHI, MAY 20

VENEZUELA HAS likely become the first country in modern history to lose all its glaciers. This comes after scientists reclassified the Humboldt glacier, the country's last remaining glacier, as an ice field earlier this month.

Venezuela used to be home to six glaciers, located at about 5,000 metres above sea level in the Andes. By 2011, five of them had vanished. Scientists had expected Humboldt to last another decade, but it has shrunk to an area of less than 2 hectares, leading to its downgrade to an ice field.

Like Humboldt, other glaciers around the world are shrinking and disappearing faster than researchers thought. Two-thirds of them are projected to melt out of existence by 2100 at current climate change trends, according to a 2023 study.

Creeping rivers of ice

Glaciers are essentially large and thick masses of ice that are formed on land due to the accumulation of snow over centuries. According to the United States Geological Survey (USGS), they usually exist in areas where mean annual temperatures reach near the freezing point; winter precipitation leads to significant snow accumulations; and temperatures throughout the remaining year do not cause the complete loss of the previous winter's snow accumulation.

Due to their mass and gravity, glaciers tend to flow like very slow rivers. Although there is no consensus on how large a mass of ice has to be to qualify as a glacier, the USGS says a commonly accepted guideline is around 10 hectares.

Disappearing glaciers

The global average temperature has increased by at least 1.1 degree Celsius since 1880, and glaciers are melting and disappearing at unprecedented levels.

The Andes, which run through parts of Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and Venezuela, have witnessed a temperature increase of 0.10 degree Celsius in the past seven decades. That is one of the major reasons why Venezuela has lost all of its glaciers.



The Humboldt glacier, also known as La Corona, in 2019. AP

In the case of the Humboldt glacier, the melting was accelerated by El Niño, which developed in July 2023. El Niño refers to an abnormal warming of surface waters in the equatorial Pacific Ocean and leads to warmer temperatures.

Why glacier loss matters

Glaciers are a crucial source of freshwater for local communities, plants, and animals. Without them, one would be entirely dependent on spot rainfall for freshwater.

Cold glacier runoffs keep downstream water cooler, which is key to the survival of many aquatic species that are an essential part of the food web, according to USGS.

Melting glaciers can contribute to rise in sea levels. Melting of the Greenland and Antarctic ice sheets — they too, are considered 'glaciers' — are the largest contributors to global sea level rise.

For Venezuela, the biggest impact of losing all of its glaciers will be cultural, Luis Daniel Llambi, an ecologist, told *The Guardian*. "Glaciers were a part of the region's cultural identity, and for mountaineering and touristic activities," he said.

Context: Venezuela recently became the first modern country to lose all its glaciers, following scientists' reclassification of the Humboldt glacier as an ice field earlier this month.

Venezuela's Glacial Decline

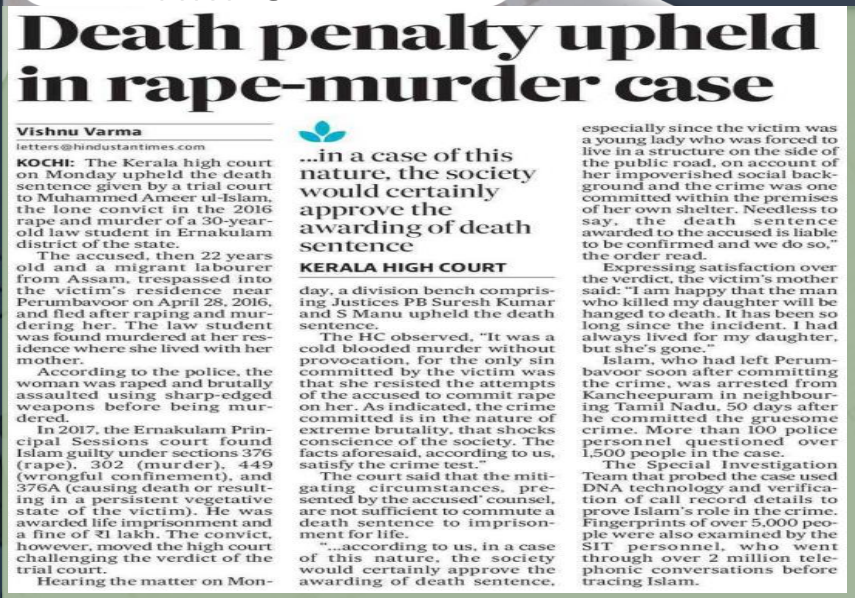
- **Former Glacial Abundance**: Venezuela once boasted six glaciers nestled in the Andes mountains, approximately 5,000 meters above sea level.
  - By 2011, the number had dwindled to one as five of Venezuela's glaciers vanished, leaving only the Humboldt glacier.
- **Melting Pace**: Scientists had estimated the Humboldt glacier would endure for another decade, but it melted faster than anticipated.
- **Drastic Reduction**: The Humboldt glacier has now diminished to less than 2 hectares, prompting its reclassification from a glacier to an ice field.
- **Dire Projections**: According to a 2023 study, if current climate trends persist, around two-thirds of the world's glaciers could vanish by 2100.
- **Reason of disappearing:** It is global warming. Like an ice cube melts when exposed to heat, glaciers are melting due to warmer temperatures.
  - The Andes a mountain range running through parts of Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and Venezuela — has witnessed a temperature increase of a high rate of 0.10 degree Celsius in the past seven decades. That is one of the major reasons why Venezuela has lost all of its glaciers.
  - India is also at the risk of losing its glaciers. They are melting at unprecedented rates across the Hindu Kush Himalayan mountain ranges and could lose up to 80% of their volume this century if GHG emissions are not drastically reduced, according to a 2023 report.
- **Glaciers:** these are essentially large and thick masses of ice that are formed on land due to the accumulation of snow over centuries.

HINDUSTAN TIMES

Page 15

CAPITAL PUNISHMENT IN INDIA

(Syllabus: GS Paper 2 – Polity)



Death penalty upheld in rape-murder case

Vishnu Varma
letters@hindustantimes.com

KOCHI: The Kerala high court on Monday upheld the death sentence given by a trial court to Muhammed Ameer ul-Islam, the lone convict in the 2016 rape and murder of a 30-year-old law student in Ernakulam district of the state.

The accused, then 22 years old and a migrant labourer from Assam, trespassed into the victim's residence near Perumbavoor on April 28, 2016, and fled after raping and murdering her. The law student was found murdered at her residence where she lived with her mother.

According to the police, the woman was raped and brutally assaulted using sharp-edged weapons before being murdered.

In 2017, the Ernakulam Principal Sessions court found Islam guilty under sections 376 (rape), 302 (murder), 449 (wrongful confinement), and 376A (causing death or resulting in a persistent vegetative state of the victim). He was awarded life imprisonment and a fine of ₹1 lakh. The convict, however, moved the high court challenging the verdict of the trial court.

Hearing the matter on Monday, a division bench comprising Justices PB Suresh Kumar and S Manu upheld the death sentence.

...in a case of this nature, the society would certainly approve the awarding of death sentence

KERALA HIGH COURT

The HC observed, "It was a cold blooded murder without provocation, for the only sin committed by the victim was that she resisted the attempts of the accused to commit rape on her. As indicated, the crime committed is in the nature of extreme brutality, that shocks conscience of the society. The facts aforesaid, according to us, satisfy the crime test."

The court said that the mitigating circumstances, presented by the accused' counsel, are not sufficient to commute a death sentence to imprisonment for life.

"...according to us, in a case of this nature, the society would certainly approve the awarding of death sentence, especially since the victim was a young lady who was forced to live in a structure on the side of the public road, on account of her impoverished social background and the crime was one committed within the premises of her own shelter. Needless to say, the death sentence awarded to the accused is liable to be confirmed and we do so," the order read.

Expressing satisfaction over the verdict, the victim's mother said: "I am happy that the man who killed my daughter will be hanged to death. It has been so long since the incident. I had always lived for my daughter, but she's gone."

Islam, who had left Perumbavoor soon after committing the crime, was arrested from Kancheepuram in neighbouring Tamil Nadu, 50 days after he committed the gruesome crime. More than 100 police personnel questioned over 1,500 people in the case.

The Special Investigation Team that probed the case used DNA technology and verification of call record details to prove Islam's role in the crime. Fingerprints of over 5,000 people were also examined by the SIT personnel, who went through over 2 million telephonic conversations before tracing Islam.

Context: The Kerala High Court recently affirmed the death sentence handed down by a trial court to, the sole perpetrator in the 2016 rape and murder case of a 30-year-old law student in Ernakulam district.

Capital punishment in India

- **About**: Also known as the death penalty, is legally imposed in India only for heinous offenses.
- **History of Capital Punishment**:
  - **Mauryan Era**: In this era, individuals who violated the law faced various punishments based on the nature of their offense. The dynasty adhered to the principle of "an eye for an eye, a hand for a hand" to penalize wrongdoers.
  - **British Era:** In this era, Indians were frequently sentenced to death and executed, often following a trial or even without one. However, post-independence, India entered a new phase in its judicial system.
  - **After Independence**: When India became a republic nation and got its independence from the British era, and that brings a huge change in the system of passing death penalties to accused.
  - The United Nations formally denounces capital punishment, regarding it as a violation of fundamental human rights.
- **Section 368 of Criminal Procedure Code, 1973**: It provides the authority to High Courts for confirmation of death sentence.
- **Article 39A**: Inspired by Article 39A of the Indian Constitution, aiming to promote equal justice and equal opportunity by removing socio-economic barriers.
- **Sessions Courts in 2022:** 165 death sentences imposed by Sessions Courts in India during 2022.
- **Highest Convicts**: Uttar Pradesh led with 32 death sentences imposed in 2022, followed by Gujarat (61) and Jharkhand (46).
- **Majority Cases**: Sexual offenses constituted the majority (51.28%) of cases resulting in the death penalty imposed by trial courts in 2022.

Judgements Related Death Penalty

- **Deena Vs. Union Of India**: The court affirmed the constitutionality of hanging as a mode of execution under section 354(5) of the Indian Penal Code, considering it fair and just under Article 21.
- **Bachan Singh v State of Punjab**: The Supreme Court upheld the constitutional validity of the death sentence, emphasizing its applicability only in the "rarest of rare cases."
- **Machhi Singh Vs. State of Punjab**: This case introduced exceptions to the rarest of rare rule, allowing the death penalty when a murder is exceptionally brutal, driven by total depravity, or when the crime is of enormous proportion.

TIMES OF INDIA

Page 11

SOUTH CHINA SEA

(Syllabus: GS Paper 2 – IR)



Indian warships reach Philippines on SCS tour

Comes Amid Manila Tensions With Beijing

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: Amid heightened tensions between an aggressive China and the Philippines, three Indian warships have now reached Manila as part of the ongoing long-range deployment to the South China Sea to strengthen maritime partnerships with friendly countries.

Guided-missile destroyer INS Delhi, fleet tanker INS Shakti and anti-submarine warfare corvette INS Kiltan, under the command of Eastern Fleet chief Rear Admiral Rajesh Dhankhar, docked at Manila on Sunday after similar goodwill visits to Singapore, Malaysia and Vietnam in the region.

The visit comes soon after India began deliveries of three anti-ship coastal batteries of the 290-km BrahMos supersonic cruise missiles to the Philippines last month, under the $375 million contract in Jan 2022, which New Delhi hopes will pave the way for more such deals with ASEAN countries.

"India and the Philippines share common interests particularly in maintaining peace and order in the Indo-Pacific region. The two navies share strong bonds of friendship, and both have endeavored to participate in maritime partnership exercises at every available opportunity," said Rear Admiral Dhankhar.

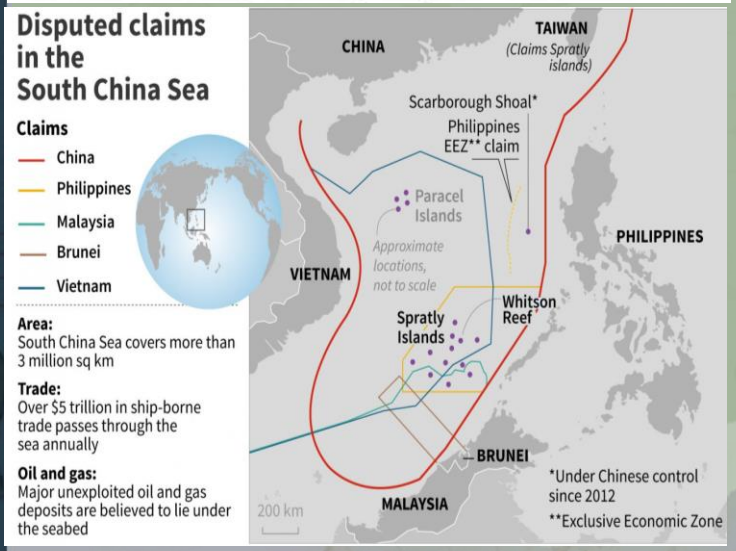
Personnel from the two navies will take part in an exercise as well as engage in a wide range of professional interactions, including subject matter expert exchange, cross-deck visits, cultural visits, and collaborative community outreach programmes, during the visit. "We are visiting friendly foreign countries to share our experiences and best practices with their navies," Rear Admiral Dhankhar said.

The deployment to the South China Sea, where China is locked in territorial disputes with its neighbours, is also taking place when the Indian Navy is closely monitoring expanding operations of Chinese satellite and missile tracking ships in the Indian Ocean Region. Such dual-use ships map oceanographic and other data useful for navigation and submarine operations of the Chinese Navy.

India has been steadily upgrading defence ties with ASEAN countries like Singapore, Vietnam, Indonesia and the Philippines through regular joint exercises, military exchanges and training programmes.

Towards this end, the first-ever ASEAN-India maritime exercise (AIME) was also conducted in May last year. Warships from India, the Philippines, Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Brunei and Vietnam had then conducted joint drills in the South China Sea.

Indian naval ship INS Delhi in Manila



Context: Recently, amid escalating tensions with China, three Indian warships have arrived in Manila as part of a continuous long-range deployment in the South China Sea to bolster maritime alliances with allied nations.

South China Sea

- **About**: It is one of the world's busiest waterways and plays a crucial role in global trade and merchant shipping.
- **Location**: The South China Sea is a marginal sea of the Western Pacific Ocean
- **Bordering Countries**: The People's Republic of China, the Republic of China (Taiwan), the Philippines, Malaysia, Brunei, Indonesia, Singapore and Vietnam.
- **Straits**: Taiwan Strait, connecting to the East China Sea; the Luzon Strait, linking to the Philippine Sea; straits surrounding Palawan, connecting to the Sulu Sea; the Strait of Singapore, providing access to the Strait of Malacca; and the Karimata and Bangka Strait, connecting to the Java Sea.
- **Major rivers that flow into South China Sea**: Pearl, Min, Jiulong, Red, Mekong, Menam, Rajang, Baram, Kapuas, Batang Hari, Musi, Kampar, Indragiri, Pahang, Agno, Pampanga and Pasig Rivers.
- **Reason for Dispute**: The South China Sea disputes involve claims over maritime territories and islands by various sovereign states in the region.
- **Countries Party dispute**: China, Brunei, Taiwan, the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, Indonesia etc.

Claims Over Islands

- **The Paracel Islands**: Claimed by China, Taiwan and Vietnam.
- **The Spratly Islands**: Claimed by China, Taiwan, Malaysia, Vietnam, Brunei and the Philippines.
- **The Scarborough Shoal**: Claimed by the Philippines, China and Taiwan.

PIB May 20

CALCIUM CARBIDE

(Syllabus: GS Paper 3– Sci and Tech)

FSSAI Alerts Fruit Traders to Ensure Compliance with Prohibition of Calcium Carbide in Fruit Ripening

Context: Recently, the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) issued a warning to traders, fruit handlers, and Food Business Operators (FBOs) managing ripening chambers, emphasizing strict adherence to the ban on calcium carbide for artificial ripening of fruits, especially during the mango season.

Calcium Carbide

- **About**: It also known as calcium acetylide, is a chemical compound with the chemical formula of CaC_2.
- **Release of Harmful Gases**: Calcium carbide, commonly used for ripening fruits like mangoes, releases acetylene gas which contains harmful traces of arsenic and phosphorus.
- **Health Effects**: These substances, also known as 'Masala', can cause serious health issues such as dizziness, frequent thirst, irritation, weakness, difficulty in swallowing, vomiting, and skin ulcers, etc.
- **Hazards for Handlers**: Additionally, acetylene gas is equally hazardous to those handling it.
- **Regulatory Measures**: Due to these dangers, the use of calcium carbide for ripening fruits has been banned under the Food Safety and Standards (Prohibition and Restrictions on Sales) Regulations, 2011.

Ethylene Gas

- **FSSAI Approval**: FSSAI has permitted the use of ethylene gas as a safer alternative for fruit ripening in India.
- **Safe Concentrations**: Ethylene gas can be used at concentrations up to 100 ppm (100 µl/L), depending upon the crop, variety, and maturity.

THE HINDU

Page 14

INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT (ICC)

(Syllabus: GS Paper 2 – IR)

Plea for warrant against Netanyahu, Hamas leaders at ICC

Agence France-Presse
THE HAGUE

The prosecutor of the International Criminal Court on Monday applied for arrest warrants against Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and top Hamas leaders on suspicion of war crimes and crimes against humanity.

The landmark request was greeted with outrage in Israel, whose Foreign Minister Israel Katz slammed the application as "a historical disgrace that will be remembered forever."

'Starvation', 'murder'

Prosecutor Karim Khan said he was seeking warrants against Mr. Netanyahu and Israeli Defence Minister Yoav Gallant for crimes including "starvation", "wilful killing", and "extermination and/or murder".

"We submit that the crimes against humanity charged were committed as part of a widespread and systematic attack against the Palestinian civilian population pursuant to State policy. These crimes, in our assessment, continue to this day," Mr. Khan said in reference to Mr. Netanyahu and Mr. Gallant.

The charges laid against the Hamas leaders including Yahya Sinwar, the head of the movement in Gaza, and Ismail Haniyeh, the movement's political chief, include "extermination", "rape and other acts of sexual violence", and "taking hostages as a war crime".

Mr. Khan alleged that the two Hamas leaders, plus Mohammed Deif, who

The crimes charged were committed against the Palestinian civilian population pursuant to State policy, the ICC prosecutor said

wing, were "criminally responsible for the killing of hundreds of Israeli civilians" during the attacks of October 7, 2023.

Hamas said it "strongly condemns" the ICC prosecutor's application for arrest warrants against it leaders, but said it supported the ICC's move against Mr. Netanyahu and Mr. Gallant.

The ICC prosecutor in 2021 opened a probe into Israel as well as Hamas and other armed Palestinian groups for possible war crimes in the Palestinian territories.

Mr. Khan has said this investigation now "extends to the escalation of hostilities and violence since the attacks that took place on October 7, 2023".

ICC judges will now decide whether the application meets the threshold for the warrants to be formally issued – a process that could take some weeks or even months.

Symbolic in nature

If granted, the warrant means that technically any of the 124 ICC member states would be obliged to arrest Mr. Netanyahu if he travelled there.

But while the warrant could complicate some travel for Mr. Netanyahu, the court has no mechanism to enforce its warrants, relying on its members to play

Context: The International Criminal Court recently declared its intention to pursue the arrest of the Israeli Prime Minister and other leaders, charging them with war crimes and crimes against humanity.

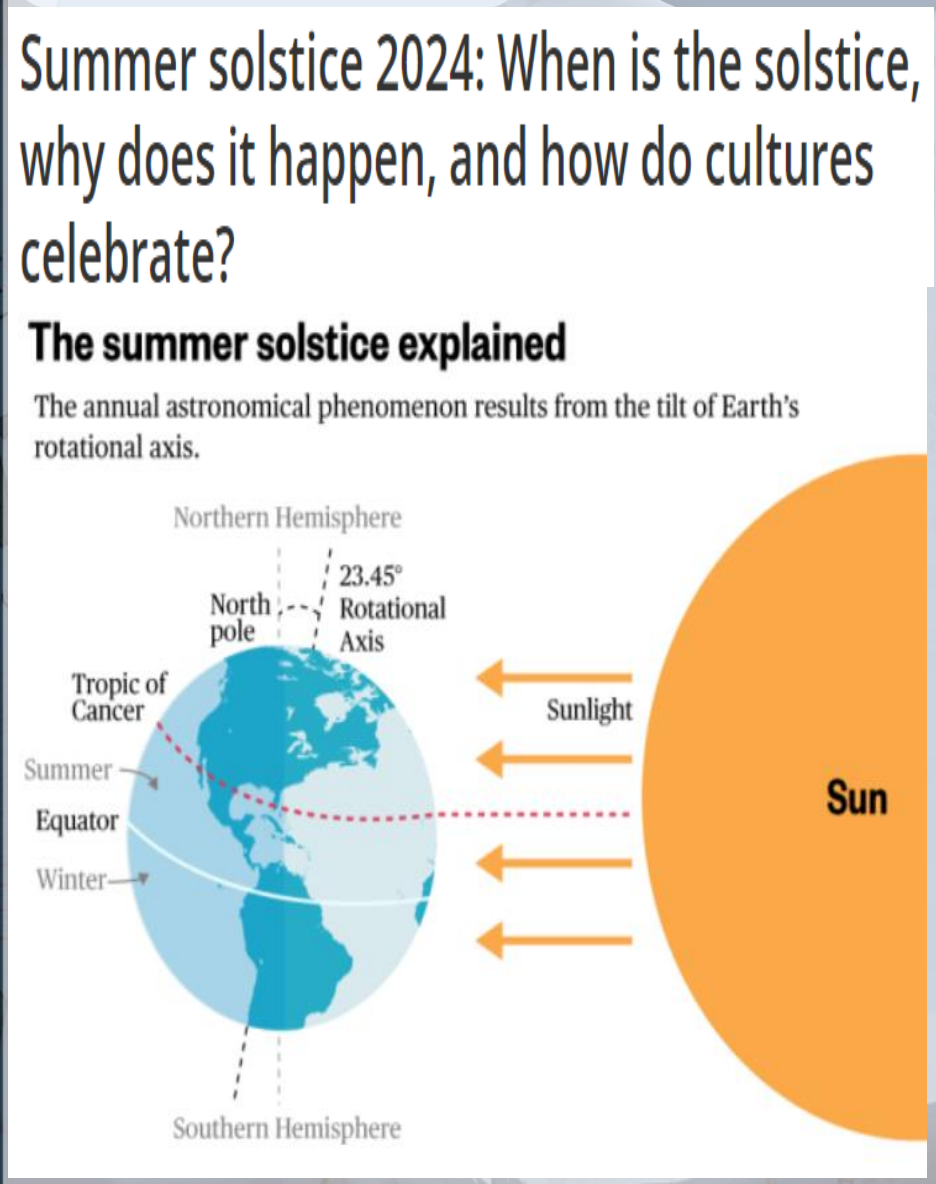
International Criminal Court (ICC)

- **About**: It is the first and only permanent international court with jurisdiction to prosecute individuals for the international crimes like - genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and the crime of aggression.
- **Establishment**: In 2002 pursuant to the multilateral Rome Statute.
- **Headquarter:** The Hague, Netherlands.
- **Members**: 123 countries. Countries like – India, China and Pakistan have not signed the treaty and not a party.
- **Organisation Structure**:
  - **Presidency**: Manages external relations with States, coordinates judicial affairs, and oversees Registry administration.
  - **Judicial Divisions**: Comprising Pre-Trial, Trial, and Appeals, these divisions (with 18 judges across three) conduct judicial proceedings.
  - **Office of the Prosecutor**: Conducts preliminary examinations, investigations, and prosecutions.
  - **Registry:** Manages non-judicial tasks including security, interpretation, outreach, and support for defense and victims' lawyers.
- **Jurisdiction**: The ICC's jurisdiction is limited only to natural persons (unlike the International Court of Justice, which hears disputes between states) with minimum age of the alleged perpetrator should be 18 years at the time of the commission of the crime.
- **Relation with UN**: The ICC is not part of the UN. The Rome Statute was negotiated within the UN; however, it created an independent judicial body distinct from the UN.

LIVE SCIENCE May 20

SUMMER SOLSTICE

(Syllabus: GS Paper 1 – Geography)



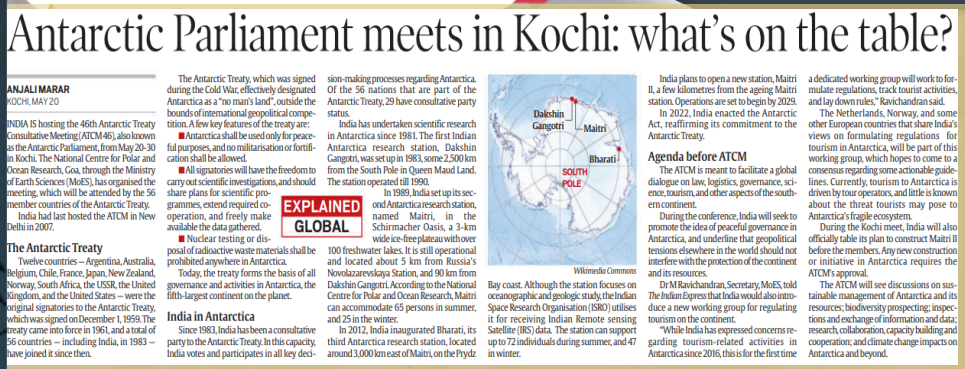
Context: Recently, the summer solstice marked the onset of astronomical summer in the Northern Hemisphere, coinciding with the day boasting the most daylight of the year.

Summer Solstice

- **About:** The summer solstice marks the point when the sun is positioned farthest north, 23.5 degrees from the celestial equator.
- **Etymology**: The term "solstice" originates from the Latin words "sol" for sun and "sistere" for "to stand still," indicating the sun's apparent pause in its journey.
- **There are two solstices every year**: one in June and one in December.
- **Occurrence**: During the 21st century, the summer solstice falls on either June 20th or 21st, varying slightly due to astronomical factors.
- **Daylight Duration:** In the Northern Hemisphere, daylight length on the summer solstice varies by latitude.
    - Near the equator, it's approximately 12 hours, while at mid-northern latitudes, like 40 degrees north, it extends to about 15 hours. Beyond the Arctic Circle (66.5 degrees north), daylight persists for a full 24 hours.
- **Longest Day in the North:** The North Pole's tilt toward the Sun is greatest at the solstice, so this event marks the longest day of the year north of the equator.
- **Shortest Day in the South**: The day of the June solstice is the shortest day of the year in the Southern Hemisphere.
- **Meaning of Solstice:** The word solstice is derived from the Latin word solstitium which translates to "sun stands still."

INDIAN EXPRESS Page 13

ANTARCTIC TREATY
(Syllabus: GS Paper 2 – IR)



Antarctic Parliament meets in Kochi: what's on the table?

ANJALI MARAR
KOCHI, MAY 20

INDIA IS hosting the 46th Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting (ATCM 46), also known as the Antarctic Parliament, from May 20-30 in Kochi. The National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research, Goa, through the Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES), has organised the meeting, which will be attended by the 56 member countries of the Antarctic Treaty.

India had last hosted the ATCM in New Delhi in 2007.

The Antarctic Treaty

Twelve countries — Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Chile, France, Japan, New Zealand, Norway, South Africa, the USSR, the United Kingdom, and the United States — were the original signatories to the Antarctic Treaty, which was signed on December 1, 1959. The treaty came into force in 1961, and a total of 56 countries — including India, in 1983 — have joined it since then.

The Antarctic Treaty, which was signed during the Cold War, effectively designated Antarctica as a "no man's land", outside the bounds of international geopolitical competition. A few key features of the treaty are:

- Antarctica shall be used only for peaceful purposes, and no militarisation or fortification shall be allowed.
- All signatories will have the freedom to carry out scientific investigations, and should share plans for scientific programmes, extend required cooperation, and freely make available the data gathered.
- Nuclear testing or disposal of radioactive waste materials shall be prohibited anywhere in Antarctica.

Today, the treaty forms the basis of all governance and activities in Antarctica, the fifth-largest continent on the planet.

EXPLAINED GLOBAL

India in Antarctica

Since 1983, India has been a consultative party to the Antarctic Treaty. In this capacity, India votes and participates in all key decision-making processes regarding Antarctica. Of the 56 nations that are part of the Antarctic Treaty, 29 have consultative party status.

India has undertaken scientific research in Antarctica since 1981. The first Indian Antarctica research station, Dakshin Gangotri, was set up in 1983, some 2,500 km from the South Pole in Queen Maud Land. The station operated till 1990.

In 1989, India set up its second Antarctica research station, named Maitri, in the Schirmacher Oasis, a 3-km wide ice-free plateau with over 100 freshwater lakes. It is still operational and located about 5 km from Russia's Novolazarevskaya Station, and 90 km from Dakshin Gangotri. According to the National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research, Maitri can accommodate 65 persons in summer, and 25 in the winter.

In 2012, India inaugurated Bharati, its third Antarctica research station, located around 3,000 km east of Maitri, on the Prydz Bay coast. Although the station focuses on oceanographic and geologic study, the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) utilises it for receiving Indian Remote sensing Satellite (IRS) data. The station can support up to 72 individuals during summer, and 47 in winter.

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India plans to open a new station, Maitri II, a few kilometres from the ageing Maitri station. Operations are set to begin by 2029.

In 2022, India enacted the Antarctic Act, reaffirming its commitment to the Antarctic Treaty.

Agenda before ATCM

The ATCM is meant to facilitate a global dialogue on law, logistics, governance, science, tourism, and other aspects of the southern continent.

During the conference, India will seek to promote the idea of peaceful governance in Antarctica, and underline that geopolitical tensions elsewhere in the world should not interfere with the protection of the continent and its resources.

Dr M Ravichandran, Secretary, MoES, told *The Indian Express* that India would also introduce a new working group for regulating tourism on the continent.

"While India has expressed concerns regarding tourism-related activities in Antarctica since 2016, this is for the first time a dedicated working group will work to formulate regulations, track tourist activities, and lay down rules," Ravichandran said.

The Netherlands, Norway, and some other European countries that share India's views on formulating regulations for tourism in Antarctica, will be part of this working group, which hopes to come to a consensus regarding some actionable guidelines. Currently, tourism to Antarctica is driven by tour operators, and little is known about the threat tourists may pose to Antarctica's fragile ecosystem.

During the Kochi meet, India will also officially table its plan to construct Maitri II before the members. Any new construction or initiative in Antarctica requires the ATCM's approval.

The ATCM will see discussions on sustainable management of Antarctica and its resources; biodiversity prospecting; inspections and exchange of information and data; research, collaboration, capacity building and cooperation; and climate change impacts on Antarctica and beyond.

Context: India is hosting the 46th Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting (ATCM 46), also known as the Antarctic Parliament, from May 20-30 in Kochi.

Antarctic Treaty

- **Origin**: The Antarctic Treaty was signed in Washington on December 1, 1959, by 12 countries involved in the International Geophysical Year (IGY) of 1957-58.
- **Countries**: Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Chile, France, Japan, New Zealand, Norway, South Africa, the USSR, the United Kingdom, and the United States were the original signatories.
- **Global Acceptance:** The treaty came into force in 1961, and a total of 56 countries including India, in 1983 have joined it since then.
- **Diverse Representation**: The Treaty's signatories encompass a diverse range of nations worldwide, emphasizing a global consensus on its principles.
    - The Antarctic Treaty, which was signed during the Cold War, effectively designated Antarctica as a "no man's land", outside the bounds of international geopolitical competition.
- **Key features of the treaty:**
    - Antarctica shall be used only for peaceful purposes, and no militarisation or fortification shall be allowed.
    - All signatories will have the freedom to carry out scientific investigations, and should share plans for scientific programmes, extend required cooperation, and freely make available the data gathered.
    - Nuclear testing or disposal of radioactive waste materials shall be prohibited anywhere in Antarctica.

India in Antarctica

- **Party Status**: Since 1983, India has been a consultative party to the Antarctic Treaty, allowing active participation in decision-making processes concerning Antarctica.
- **Scientific Research Initiatives**: India initiated scientific research in Antarctica in 1981, marking a significant step towards understanding the region's ecology and geology.
- The establishment of research stations has facilitated continuous exploration and study.
- **Establishment of Research Stations:**
    - **Dakshin Gangotri:** India's first Antarctica research station, operational from 1983 to 1990, was situated in Queen Maud Land, approximately 2,500 km from the South Pole.
    - **Maitri:** Established in 1989 in the Schirmacher Oasis, Maitri serves as a vital hub for scientific endeavors, benefiting from the area's unique geography.
- **Bharati**: Inaugurated in 2012, Bharati, located on the Prydz Bay coast, emphasizes oceanographic and geologic research, enhancing India's multidisciplinary approach to Antarctic studies.

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