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PIB

Feb 7

SCHEDULE TRIBE STATUS

(Syllabus: GS Paper 2 – Vulnerable Section)

Lok Sabha passes the Constitution (Jammu and Kashmir) Scheduled Tribes Order (Amendment) Bill, 2024

Context: In a landmark development, the Lok Sabha has passed the Constitution (Jammu and Kashmir) Scheduled Tribes Order (Amendment) Bill, 2024, marking a significant stride towards empowering marginalized tribal communities in the region.

About Constitution (Jammu and Kashmir) Scheduled Tribes Order (Amendment) Bill, 2024: Salient feature

- Granting Scheduled Tribe status to the **Pahari Ethnic Group, Padari Tribes, Koli, and Gadda** Brahmin in Jammu and Kashmir.
- The inclusion of these communities in the list of Scheduled Tribes in Jammu and Kashmir will have absolutely no impact on current level of reservations available to the existing Scheduled Tribe communities such as Gujjars and Bakarwals. They will continue to get reservation like before.

Constitutional provision for providing ST status:

- **Addition:** Under **Article 342(1), the President** may with respect to any State or Union Territory, and where it is a State, after consultation with the Governor, by a public notification, **specify the tribes or tribal communities or part of or groups within tribes or tribal communities as Scheduled Tribe** in relation to that State or Union Territory.
- **Removal:** Under **Article 342(2), the Parliament** may be law include in or exclude from the list of Scheduled Tribes specified in a notification issued under clause (1) any tribe or tribal community or part of or group within any tribe or tribal community, but save as aforesaid a notification issued under the said clause shall not be varied by any subsequent notification.

PUBLIC EXAMINATION BILL
(Syllabus: GS Paper 2 –Social Issues)



LS passes bill to curb paper leaks, cheating in public exams; 10-yr jail, fine up to ₹1cr proposed

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: Lok Sabha on Tuesday passed a bill that lays down strong punitive measures to curb paper leaks and other malpractices in competitive examinations, with the central govt clarifying that students and examinees will not be under the purview of the proposed law.

Replying to the debate on The Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Bill, 2024, Union minister Jitendra Singh said govt will not allow "meritorious candidates to be sacrificed at the altar of organised crimes". He said students and job applicants won't be hurt by its provisions.

The bill was passed after rejecting the amendments proposed by RSP MP N K Premachandran. He demanded that in the definition of organised crime, "any malpractice for wrongful gain" should include "favouritism and nepotism". He sought deletion of the provision that states any official who proves he is not guilty would be exempted from punishment. He called the penal provisions as violative of criminal jurisprudence and demanded the bill be sent to the standing committee.

The bill lays down a maximum jail term of 10 years and a fine of up to Rs 1 crore for malpractices defined in its provisions. As members lamented that candidates are left stranded after exams are stalled for long durations after cancellations over paper leaks, Singh said it was not possible to set a timeline for re-examinations, but added the effort will be to hold them at the earliest.

►Bengal, Raj leaks, P 26

WON'T HURT STUDENTS, SAYS GOVT

- Central govt said **students, examinees will not be under proposed law's purview**
- **Amendments** proposed by RSP MP Premachandran **demanding that 'malpractice for wrongful gain' should include 'favouritism** and nepotism' were **rejected**
- **Opposition members accused minister of politicising bill** by mentioning only West Bengal, Rajasthan to cite instances of paper leaks
- Some members raised **concerns about implementation** of proposed law and criminalisation of all those involved in conduct of exams

Context: In a significant move aimed at ensuring the integrity and fairness of public examinations, the Lok Sabha passed the **Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Bill, 2024.**

Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Bill, 2024

- **Objective: T**he Act aims to prevent the use of unfair means in public examinations conducted by specified authorities.
- **Key Feature of the Act:**
- **Definition of Public Examinations:** Public examinations refer to exams conducted by authorities listed in the Schedule to the Act or notified by the central government. These include UPSC, SSC, Railway Recruitment Board, NTA, IBPS, and departments of the central government for recruitment.
- **Offences Defined:** The Act defines various offences related to public examinations, including collusion, leakage of question papers, assisting candidates, tampering with documents, conducting fake exams, etc.
- **Penalties:** Offences under the Act carry imprisonment between **three and five years**, along with fines up to Rs **10 lakh.**
- **Responsibilities of Service Providers**: Service providers, offering computer resources or support to examination authorities, must report violations to the police and concerned authorities. Failure to report is an offence. Shifting exam centers without permission is prohibited.
    - Offences by service providers attract fines up to **one crore rupees**. They may also be barred from conducting public exams for **four** years.
- **Organized Crimes:** Higher penalties apply to organized crimes related to public examinations. Offenders face imprisonment between five and ten years, along with fines of at **least one crore rupees.**
- **Inquiry and Investigation**:All offences under the Act are **cognizable, non-bailable, and non-compoundable**. Investigations are conducted by officers not below the rank of **Deputy Superintendent or Assistant Commissioner of Police**.

PIB

VIDYANJALI PROGRAMME

(Syllabus: GS Paper 2 – Education)

Shri Dharmendra Pradhan launches EdCIL Vidyanjali Scholarship Programme

Context: Union Minister of **Education and Skill Development & Entrepreneurship**, has launched the **EdCIL Vidyanjali Scholarship Programme.**

Vidyanjali Scholarship Programme

- **About:**
  - Aligned with the National Education Policy 2020.
  - Aims to revolutionize opportunities for quality education and access to higher education institutions.
  - Goes beyond mere enrolment to ensure access to high-quality learning systems.
  - Facilitates seamless transition from secondary to higher education.
- **Financial Support for Meritorious Navodaya Vidyalaya Students:**
  - Extends financial assistance to economically marginalized and meritorious students of Navodaya Vidyalayas.
  - Targets students who lack means but show academic promise.
- **Encouragement of Private Sector Involvement:**
  - Leverages Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives to involve the private sector.
  - Encourages corporates to contribute towards educational inclusivity and socio-economic upliftment.
  - Establishes a collaboration between the Government and corporates towards the goal of an educated India.

National Education Policy 2020

- **Universal Access:** NEP 2020 emphasizes universal access to school education, covering pre-school to secondary levels, ensuring education for all.
- **Early Childhood Education**: It proposes a shift from the existing 10+2 structure to a 5+3+3+4 system, integrating 3-6-year-olds into the formal schooling system with a focus on **Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE).**
- **GER Enhancement**: NEP 2020 targets increasing the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) from the current **26.3% to 50% by 2035 in higher education**
- **Public Funding:** NEP 2020 aims to increase public investment in **education to reach 6% of GDP.**

HINDUSTAN TIMES Page 1

UNIFORM CIVIL CODE
(Syllabus: GS Paper 2 – Polity)

Uttarakhand 1st state to bring uniform code bill

Neeraj Santoshi and Amit Bathla
letters@hindustantimes.com

DEHRADUN: Uttarakhand became the first state in the country to take a first step towards a Uniform Civil Code (UCC), with chief minister, Pushkar Singh Dhami on Tuesday introducing the state Uniform Civil Code Bill 2024 in the state assembly amid chants of "Jai Shri Ram".

The bill, which seeks to standardise laws governing marriage, divorce, inheritance and maintenance, will subsume customary laws across faiths and tribes, and has been a long-standing objective of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), and may serve as a template for other states.

"Our government, taking all sections of the society along with full responsibility, has presented the Uniform Civil Code Bill in the assembly. The historic moment is near for Devbhoomi when Uttarakhand will become a strong pillar of respected Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi's vision of 'Ek Bharat, Shrestha Bharat' (One India, Great India)," Dhami said.

The bill , with 392 sections divided into four parts and seven chapters provides for equal rights to women in marriage, divorce, alimony and inheritance of property, proscribes certain kinds of relationships, bans polygamy, sets the marriageable age for men and

continued on →6

Salient features of the bill

The law will be applicable for all residents of Uttarakhand, defined as one staying in the state for one year or more and getting benefit of govt schemes



MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE

- Minimum age of marriage is **21yrs for men, 18yrs for women**
- Marriages can't be performed under prohibited relationships – immediate family of father, mother, grandfather, grandmother
- Nikah (Muslim marriage), Saptpadi (Hindi marriage), Anand Karaj (Sikh marriage) and other forms of religious marriages recognised
- Marriages **must be registered within 60 days**
- Marriage **can't be dissolved** without a court order

LIVE-IN RELATIONSHIP

- Live-in relationships **must be registered** with govt
- Children from live-in relationships **to have legal rights**
- If any partner is under 21, registrar must inform parents
- Not registering can result in upto 3 months jail and/or ₹10,000 fine

INTESTATE SUCCESSION

- Immediate family of person who died without will to get equal share of property
- In case of no immediate family, assets to be equally shared between paternal cousins
- Sons and daughters have equal share and special provision protecting HUF has been provided

From marriage to divorce to live-in partners: UCC provisions & context

Utkarsh Anand
letters@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: The Uniform Civil Code (UCC) bill, which the Uttarakhand government introduced in the House on Tuesday, will be the first of its kind to be implemented in a state following independence if it is passed.

The 192-page bill contains a variety of new provisions that the state government has envisaged for applying to the residents of the state irrespective of their religion. An analysis of the bill, while juxtaposing it with the concept of UCC, becomes relevant to analyse how Uttarakhand has tried to navigate through the muzzle of personal laws and whether the bill can withstand a constitutional validity test, should it be challenged in court.

Such an exercise is also important given that several other states have already indicated their predisposition to a similar law.

→P2

Context: The Uttarakhand government introduced the **Uniform Civil Code (UCC) bill** in the House, aiming to establish a uniform legal framework governing personal matters irrespective of religion.

Key Provisions of the UCC Bill:

- **Scope of the Law:** The UCC bill covers various personal matters including marriage, divorce, live-in relationships, and succession, regardless of religion.
- **Compulsory Registration:**The bill proposes mandatory registration of marriages under the state government's official mechanism.
  - Live-in relationships are also recognized and must be registered within a month, failing which could lead to imprisonment and fines under the legislation.
- **Criminalization of Unregistered Live-in Relationships:** Staying in a live-in relationship for over a month without registration is criminalized, punishable with up to three months of imprisonment.
- **Restrictions on Polygamy and Early Marriage:** The bill prohibits polygamy and early marriage, aligning with the proposed uniform civil code standards.
  - It sets the legal age for marriage at 18 years for girls and 21 years for boys.
- **Divorce and Dissolution of Marriage:** Extra-judicial forms of divorce, including various forms of 'talaq,' are criminalized under the bill, with penalties of up to three years in jail.
  - Only court orders are recognized for the dissolution of marriage, ensuring legal processes are followed.

Uniform Civil Code (UCC)

- **Meaning:** The Uniform Civil Code (UCC) calls for the formulation of **one law for India**, which would be **applicable to all religious communities** in matters such as marriage, divorce, inheritance, adoption.
- **Article 44**: Of the Constitution, under **Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSP),** lays down that the state shall endeavour **to secure a Uniform Civil Code** for the citizens throughout the territory of India.
- **Supreme Court judgment:**
  - **SC empahised the need of UCC in cases like:** Shah Bano case (1985), Sarla Mudgal Case(1995) etc.
  - **Shayara Bano v. Union of India (Triple Talaq Case)**: SC held triple talaq as unconstitutional and un-Islamic, raising the question of the Uniform Civil Code to stop such personal law practices.

BUSINESS STANDARD Page 1

PRODUCTION LINKED INCENTIVE

(Syllabus: GS Paper 3 – Economy)

CLAIM PAYOUT DELAYS

PLI nodal agencies under review

SHREYA JAI & SHREYA NANDI
New Delhi, 6 February

Concerned over "considerable delays" in issuing incentives to eligible companies under the flagship production-linked incentive (PLI) scheme for various sectors, the Cabinet secretary-led committee has advised the government's think tank, NITI Aayog, to review the functioning of the nodal agencies involved with the scheme.

In a recent meeting of the empowered group of secretaries (EGoS) chaired by Cabinet Secretary Rajiv Gauba, an institutional mechanism headed by the Aayog was suggested to review the project management agencies (PMAs) involved with the PLI scheme. PMAs offer support to relevant ministries towards scheme implementation, scrutinising applications, determining eligibility for incentives, and conducting site visits of manufacturing units.

Turn to Page 6 ▸



STATUS CHECK

Disbursement under PLI for FY24 (in ₹ cr)

	Target	Revised target	Disbursement achieved*
Pharmaceutical drugs	2,203	1,600	263
Large-scale electronics	6,212	4,499	1,134
Telecom & networking products	863	367	NIL
Food prodcuts	1,127	1,291	NIL
Bulk drugs	52	21	NIL
Manufacturing of medical devices	121	75	NIL
White goods	79	79	NIL
Drones & drone components	60	32	NIL
IT hardware	321	321	50
Automobile & auto components	604	Tenure extended by 1 year	NIL

* As on Dec 2023

Source: Minutes of the meeting of PLI scheme review

Context: The Cabinet secretary-led committee has raised concerns regarding significant delays in disbursing incentives to eligible companies under the under the production-linked incentive (PLI) scheme.

Pproduction-linked incentive (PLI) scheme

- **Objectives of PLI Schemes:**
  - Attract investments in key sectors and cutting-edge technology.
  - Ensure efficiency and economies of size and scale in the manufacturing sector.
  - Make Indian companies and manufacturers globally competitive.
- **Incentives:** The incentives under the scheme are calculated **based on incremental sales**, with specific sectors like **advanced chemistry cell batteries, textile products, and the drone industry also factoring in sales performance and local value addition over a five-year period.**
- **Funding: O**utlay of Rs. 1.97 lakh crore (over US$26 billion) to enhance India's Manufacturing capabilities and Exports.
- **14 sectors covered under the scheme:** (i) Mobile Manufacturing and Specified Electronic Components, (ii) Critical Key Starting Materials/Drug Intermediaries & Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients, (iii) Manufacturing of Medical Devices (iv) Automobiles and Auto Components, (v) Pharmaceuticals Drugs, (vi) Specialty Steel, (vii) Telecom & Networking Products, (viii) Electronic/Technology Products, (ix) White Goods (ACs and LEDs), (x) Food Products, (xi) Textile Products: MMF segment and technical textiles, (xii) High efficiency solar PV modules, (xiii) Advanced Chemistry Cell (ACC) Battery, and (xiv) Drones and Drone Components.

AB-PMJAY
(Syllabus: GS Paper 2 – Health)

Standardisation a critical pulse for better govt health care access

SOHINI DAS
Mumbai, 6 February

More than 3 million Accredited Social Health Activist (ASHA), *anganwadi* workers, and helpers will now be covered under the Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY). Work is underway to develop the required modalities for providing Ayush (Ayurveda, Yoga, Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha, and Homeopathy) coverage by insurance companies and the extension of cashless coverage to non-empanelled hospitals by medical insurers.

Three major moves announced in a span of the last 10 days or so can potentially shake up the hospital sector in India and alter access to health care for millions. However, industry stakeholders say that standardisation is key to ensuring these moves help the actual beneficiaries.

For starters, data from the AB-PMJAY dashboard reveals that almost one in five hospitals empanelled under the scheme is not active. Of the 28,523 hospitals under the scheme, around 6,030 are not active.

AB-PMJAY, the world's largest publicly funded health assurance scheme, which provides health care coverage of ₹5 lakh per family per year, has so far covered 62.2 million hospitalisations worth ₹79,174 crore.

Hospitals, however, say that the rise in Ayushman Bharat beneficiaries can strain hospital resources.

Dr Shuchin Bajaj, founder and director of Ujala Cygnus Hospitals, said, "The rise in Ayushman Bharat beneficiaries can strain hospital resources, potentially leading to increased patient load, financial challenges due to reimbursement rates, and concerns about maintaining the quality of care."

He added that "small hospitals may face infrastructure strain, necessitating careful monitoring, evaluation, and system strengthening to ensure effective health care delivery".

Hospital industry sources claim that the increase in beneficiaries should be balanced by appropriate funding. As such, the rates under the scheme are low, say hospitals, who recommend a co-payment option by patients.

Meanwhile, sensing the growing demand and popularity of Ayush treatments, the insurance regulator has asked general insurers to engage with the core group of experts for the insurance sector constituted by the Ministry of Ayush and develop the required modalities for providing Ayush coverage.

The Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India has also asked companies to modify products that contain limitations for Ayush treatments and ensure compliance.

Rajiv Vasudevan, chief executive officer (CEO) of Apollo AyurVAID Hospitals in Bengaluru, told *Business Standard* that of their total patient pool (they run 200-odd beds), 85-90 per cent have some sort of coverage under central government health scheme or medical insurance.

"What happens is there are tariff differences in reimbursement with allopathic counterparts, or certain procedures are not covered. Now the regulator wants these disparities to be ironed out," he said.

Vasudevan said that people in the age bracket of 25-45 years are warming up to the idea of ayurveda and integrated care.

"Accreditation and standardisation would help the industry. Now there are 200 national accreditation boards for hospitals-accredited ayurvedic hospices in the country," he added.

In all, there are 700-odd ayurvedic hospitals. These could significantly reduce the burden on allopathic care if medical insurance coverage is improved and standardised.

Vasudevan feels that almost two-thirds of medical care includes pre-procedure and post-procedure care — be it cardiac, neurological, trauma, rheumatism, etc. This is where Ayush's stream of medicines plays a role.

The managing director (MD) and CEO of one of India's largest hospital chains said that the move can help reduce the burden on conventional (allopathic) hospitals, especially, to ensure better coverage in the hinterland.

Southern states are likely to benefit the most.

Ajith Kumar, general secretary of the Ayurvedic Medical Association of India, said that in Kerala alone there were 4,000-5,000 ayurvedic practitioners and there are around 100 government hospitals in the state.

The homeopathic industry, however, feels that unless outpatient treatment is covered by medical insurers, the move may not benefit them.

Dr A K Gupta, national secretary-general of the Homeopathic Medical Association of India, said that most homeopathic treatment is covered under daycare.

"Outpatient needs to be covered by insurers to encourage people. There are 277 homeopathy hospitals where we even do surgeries (with a combined approach with allopathic medicines like anaesthesia), and around 10 million people use homeopathy treatment in clinics and hospitals. But the majority of treatment is in outpatient," he explained.

Taking things a step ahead, the General Insurance Council (GIC), which represents general insurance companies, recently launched an initiative providing cashless treatment available to policyholders even in non-empanelled hospitals that are registered under The Clinical Establishments (Registration and Regulation) Act, 2010.

This move, however, has been met with some scepticism.

The MD quoted above said that there are standard tariffs that are agreed upon between an insurance provider and a network hospital.

"Now, what will be the rate at which a non-network hospital will charge a patient is a matter which is not clear. If they charge at rack rates, then there will be disputes between hospitals and insurance companies and the patient would ultimately suffer," he said, adding that clarity and standardisation are required here.

K Singh, DGM, operations, PSRI Hospital in Delhi, said: "Hospital patient volumes and revenue streams are expected to be significantly impacted by the project. It is anticipated that the number of patients choosing cashless services will rise significantly from the present 63 per cent of patients to possibly reaching 90 per cent with the implementation of 'Cashless Everywhere'."

With inputs from Sanket Koul & Anjali Singh

ILLUSTRATION: BINAY SINHA



VITAL SIGNS

- **Standard operating procedures being worked out** between insurance companies and Ayush industry
- **Better fund allocation and co-payment options** needed to add more beneficiaries to Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY)
- **The homeopathic industry** wants outpatient covered under medical insurance
- **Cashless treatment in non-network hospitals** needs standardisation of tariff

Context:More than 3 million Accredited Social Health Activist (ASHA), Anganwadi workers, and helpers will now be covered under the Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY).

Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY).

- **About: "**World's largest government funded healthcare program" targeting more than 50 crore beneficiaries.
- **Nodal ministry**: Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.
- **Benefits under the scheme:**
  - Ayushman Bharat- Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PMJAY) will provide a cover of up to Rs. 5 lakhs per family per year, for secondary and tertiary care hospitalization.
  - Over 10.74 crore vulnerable entitled families (approximately 50 crore beneficiaries) will be eligible for these benefits.
  - PMJAY will provide cashless and paperless access to services for the beneficiary at the point of service.
  - PMJAY will help reduce catastrophic expenditure for hospitalizations, which impoverishes people and will help mitigate the financial risk arising out of catastrophic health episodes.
- **Components:**
  - Creation of 1,50,000 Health and Wellness Centers which will bring health care closer to the homes of the people.
  - Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PMJAY) which provides health protection cover to poor and vulnerable families for secondary and tertiary care.

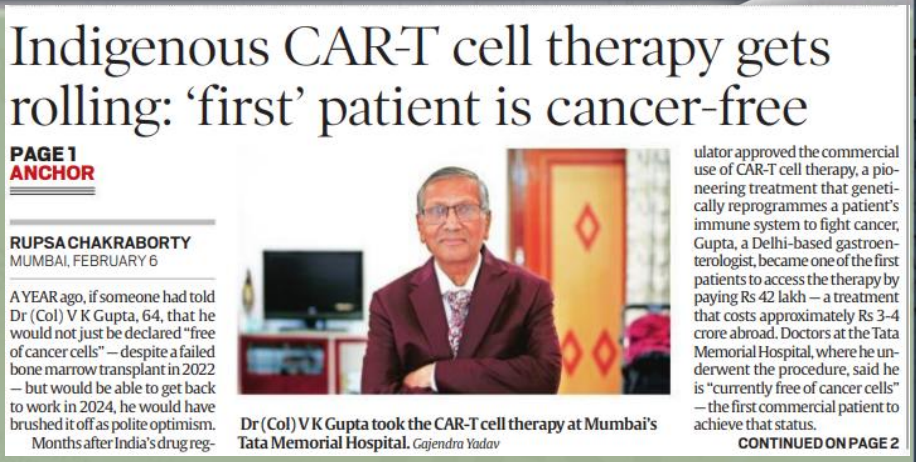
INDIAN EXPRESS

Page 1

CART-T CELL THERAPY

(Syllabus: GS Paper 3 – Science and tech)

Context: Indigenous CAR-T cell therapy now available for commercial use: 'first' patient declared free of cancer.



Indigenous CAR-T cell therapy gets rolling: 'first' patient is cancer-free

PAGE 1
ANCHOR

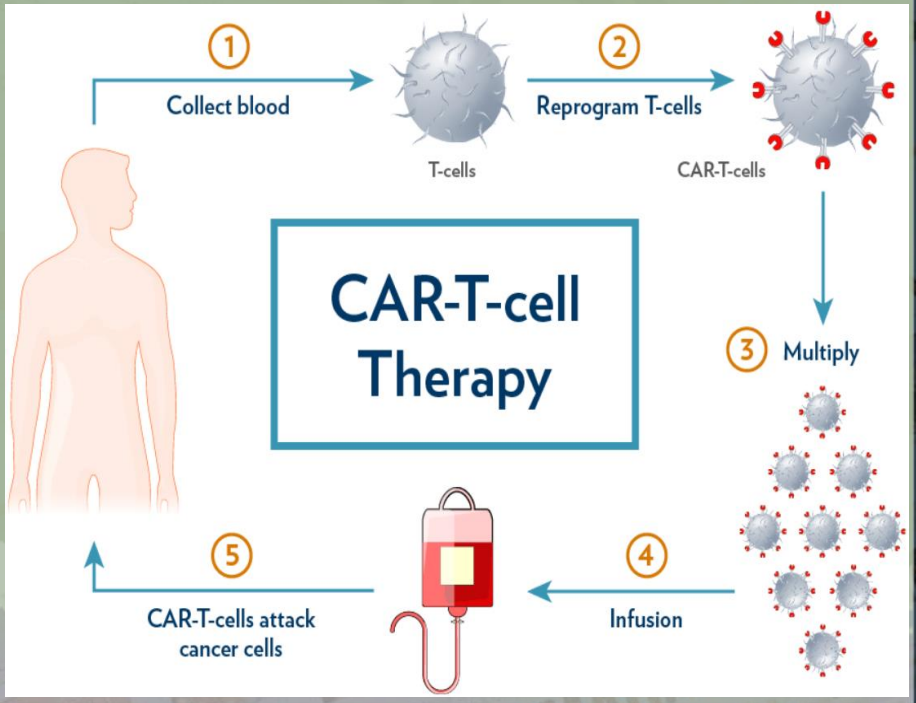
RUPSA CHAKRABORTY
MUMBAI, FEBRUARY 6

A YEAR ago, if someone had told Dr (Col) V K Gupta, 64, that he would not just be declared "free of cancer cells" — despite a failed bone marrow transplant in 2022 — but would be able to get back to work in 2024, he would have brushed it off as polite optimism.

Months after India's drug regulator approved the commercial use of CAR-T cell therapy, a pioneering treatment that genetically reprogrammes a patient's immune system to fight cancer, Gupta, a Delhi-based gastroenterologist, became one of the first patients to access the therapy by paying Rs 42 lakh — a treatment that costs approximately Rs 3-4 crore abroad. Doctors at the Tata Memorial Hospital, where he underwent the procedure, said he is "currently free of cancer cells" — the first commercial patient to achieve that status.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Dr (Col) V K Gupta took the CAR-T cell therapy at Mumbai's Tata Memorial Hospital. *Gajendra Yadav*



CART- T cell therapy

- **About**: - Chimeric antigen receptor (CAR) T-cell therapy is a kind of cancer treatment that uses cells from your own immune system.
- **Procedure:** Doctors take a type of white blood cell from the patient's body and genetically change the cells in a lab so they can better find your cancer. Then millions of these target-seeking cells are put back into patient body
- **Significance:**
  - CAR T-cell therapies are even more specific.
  - It directly stimulate the patient's immune system to fight cancer, leading to greater clinical efficacy.
  - Also called as "living drugs."
- **Challenges:**
  - CAR T-cell therapy may not be cost-effective as it will still be unaffordable for most people.
  - Difficulty of preparing CAR T-cell therapies has been a major hindrance to their widespread use.

THE HINDU

Page 5

AGNIPATH SCHEME

(Syllabus: GS Paper 2 – Govt scheme)

Congress to reach out to lakhs of Agnipath scheme aspirants

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Congress has assured that it would press for a rollback of scheme if it came to power

Promising a rollback of the Agnipath scheme, the Congress, as part of the *Jai Jawan* campaign, is planning to reach out to more than 35 lakh young men and women who, on average, appear for recruitment rallies every year.

Under the scheme, men and women in the age group of 17.5-21 years are recruited for the Army, the Navy and the Air Force for a four-year period. Only 25% personnel of a retiring batch would be selected for permanent commission.

"Each year, 35-40 lakh personnel appear for the recruitment rallies. But since the Agnipath scheme has been launched, this number has drastically reduced. In 2023-24, only 10 lakh persons appeared for the rally. It clearly shows the simmering discontent and a feeling of betrayal," a source in Congress said.

On January 31, during the course of the Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra, former Congress president Rahul Gandhi met a group of aspirants in Bihar.

The Congress uploaded a short video of the interaction, where Mr. Gandhi assured that, if his party came to power, they would press for a rollback of the scheme, and if not, then at least ensure that Agniveers received the same benefits as the permanent cadres, which is currently denied.

While the party insists that this outreach is not aimed at electoral gains alone, by the Congress's own estimates, the scheme could help them target first-time voters.

Context: Promising a rollback of the Agnipath scheme, the Congress, as part of the Jai Jawan campaign, is planning to reach out to more than 35 lakh young men and women.

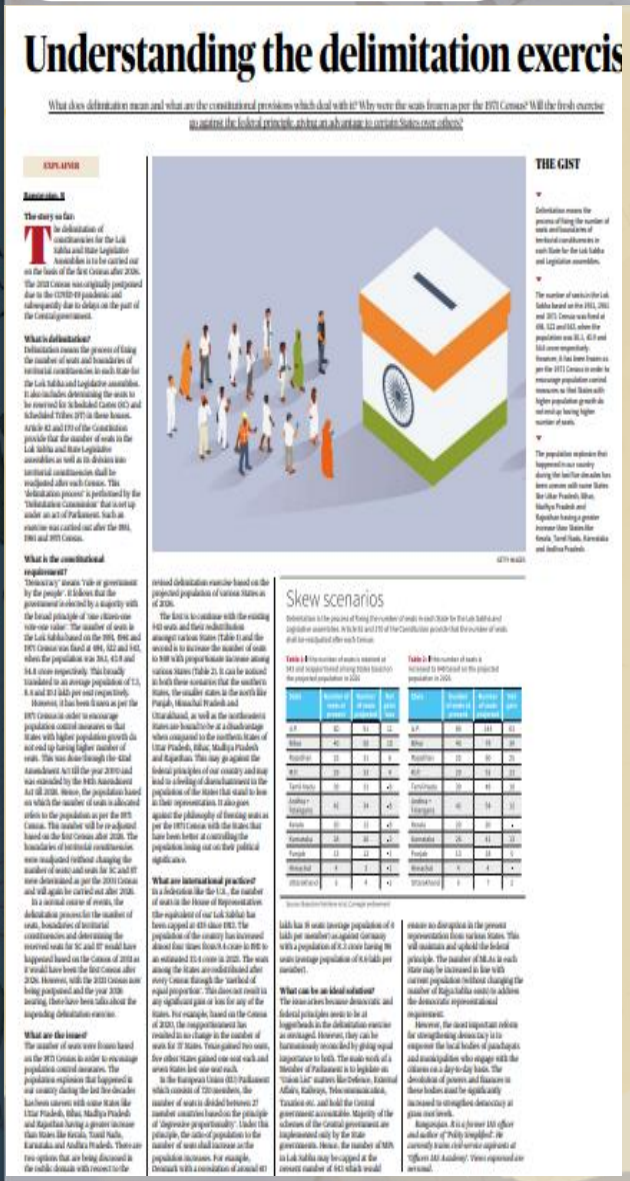
Agnipath scheme:

- **About:** In this scheme patriotic and motivated youth to serve in the Armed Forces for a period of four years.
- **Agniveer:** Under this scheme, the youth joining the army.
- **Age group:** Candidates between the age group of 17.5 to 21 years are eligible to apply for the scheme.
- **Maximum limit:** Every year 45,000 to 50,000 soldiers will be recruited annually, and most will leave the service in just four years. Out of that only 25% will continue for 15 years.
- **Objective:**
  - To enhance youthful profile of the Armed Forces so that they are at their fighting best at all times with increased risk taking ability.
  - To attract young talent from the society to effectively exploit, adopt and use emerging modern technologies with enhanced technical thresholds of intake while leveraging Technical Institutions of the country.
  - To provide an opportunity to the youth who may be keen to serve the Nation in uniform albeit for a short period of time.
  - To imbibe The Armed Forces ethos, cotzraye, camaraderie, commitment and teamwork in the youth.
  - To provide abilities and qualities such as discipline, dynamism, motivation and work-skills so that the youth remains an asset.

THE HINDU Page 10

DELIMITATION COMMISSION

(Syllabus: GS Paper 2 – Polity)



Understanding the delimitation exercis

What does delimitation mean and what are the constitutional provisions which deal with it? Why were the seats frozen as per the 1971 Census? Will the fresh exercise go against the federal principle, giving an advantage to certain States over others?

EXPLAINER

The story so far:

The delimitation of constituencies for the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies is to be carried out on the basis of the first Census after 2026. The 2021 Census was originally postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequently due to delays on the part of the Central government.

What is delimitation?

Delimitation means the process of fixing the number of seats and boundaries of territorial constituencies in each State for the Lok Sabha and Legislative assemblies. It also includes determining the seats to be reserved for Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST) in these houses. Article 82 and 170 of the Constitution provide that the number of seats in the Lok Sabha and State Legislative assemblies as well as its division into territorial constituencies shall be readjusted after each Census. This 'delimitation process' is performed by the 'Delimitation Commission' that is set up under an act of Parliament. Such an exercise was carried out after the 1981, 1991 and 2001 Census.

What is the constitutional requirement?

'Democracy' means 'rule or government by the people'. It follows that the government is elected by a majority with the broad principle of 'one citizen-one vote-one value'. The number of seats in the Lok Sabha based on the 1991, 1981 and 1971 Census was fixed at 494, 522 and 543, when the population was 36.1, 43.9 and 54.8 crore respectively. This broadly translated to an average population of 7.3, 8.4 and 10.1 lakh per seat respectively.

However, it has been frozen as per the 1971 Census in order to encourage population control measures so that States with higher population growth do not end up having higher number of seats. This was done through the 42nd Amendment Act till the year 2000 and was extended by the 84th Amendment Act till 2026. Hence, the population based on which the number of seats is allocated refers to the population as per the 1971 Census. This number will be re-adjusted based on the first Census after 2026. The boundaries of territorial constituencies were readjusted without changing the number of seats and seats for SC and ST were determined as per the 2001 Census and will again be carried out after 2026.

In a normal course of events, the delimitation process for the number of seats, boundaries of territorial constituencies and determining the reserved seats for SC and ST would have happened based on the Census of 2031 as it would have been the first Census after 2026. However, with the 2021 Census now being postponed and the year 2026 nearing, there have been talks about the impending delimitation exercise.

What are the issues?

The number of seats were frozen based on the 1971 Census in order to encourage population control measures. The population explosion that happened in our country during the last few decades has been uneven with some States like Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan having a greater increase than States like Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. There are two options that are being discussed in the public domain with respect to the revised delimitation exercise based on the projected population of various States as of 2026.

The first is to continue with the existing 543 seats and their redistribution amongst various States (Table 1) and the second is to increase the number of seats to 848 with proportionate increase among various States (Table 2). It can be noticed in both these scenarios that the southern States, the smaller states in the north like Punjab, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand, as well as the northeastern states are found to be at a disadvantage when compared to the northern States of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan. This may go against the federal principles of our country and may lead to a feeling of disenfranchisement in the population of the States that stand to lose in their representation. It also goes against the philosophy of freezing seats as per the 1971 Census with the States that have been better at controlling the population losing out on their political significance.

What are international practices?

In a federation like the U.S., the number of seats in the House of Representatives is the equivalent of our Lok Sabha) has been capped at 435 since 1912. The population of the country has increased almost four times from 8.8 crore in 1910 to an estimated 33.6 crore in 2020. The seats among the States are redistributed after every Census through the 'method of equal proportion'. This does not result in any significant gain or loss for any of the States. For example, based on the Census of 2020, the reapportionment has resulted in no change in the number of seats for 37 States. Texas gained two seats, five other States gained one seat each and seven States lost one seat each.

In the European Union (EU) Parliament which consists of 720 members, the number of seats is divided between 27 member countries based on the principle of 'degressive proportionality'. Under this principle, the ratio of population to the number of seats shall increase as the population increases. For example, Denmark with a population of around 83 lakh has 14 seats (average population of 6 lakh per member) as against Germany with a population of 8.3 crore having 96 seats (average population of 8.6 lakh per member).

What can be an ideal solution?

The issues arises because democratic and federal principles seem to be at loggerheads in the delimitation exercise as envisaged. However, they can be harmoniously reconciled by giving equal importance to both. The main work of a Member of Parliament is to legislate on 'Union List' matters like Defence, External Affairs, Railways, Telecommunication, Taxation etc. and hold the Central government accountable. Majority of the schemes of the Central government are implemented only by the State governments. Hence, the number of MPs in Lok Sabha may be capped at the present number of 543 which would ensure no disruption in the present representation from various States. This will maintain and uphold the federal principle. The number of MLAs in each State may be increased in line with current population (without changing the number of Rajya Sabha seats) to address the democratic representational requirement.

However, the most important reform for strengthening democracy is to empower the local bodies of panchayats and municipalities who engage with the citizens on a day-to-day basis. The devolution of powers and finances to these bodies must be significantly increased to strengthen democracy at grass root levels.

Rangarajan. R is a former IAS officer and author of 'Polity Simplified'. He currently trains civil service aspirants at Vajirao IAS Academy. Views expressed are personal.

THE GIST

Skew scenarios

Context: The delimitation of constituencies for the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies is to be carried out on the basis of the first Census after 2026.

Delimitation Commission:

- **About:** It is the fixing of the boundaries of a country's territorial constituencies to represent changes in population. The redrawing of these boundaries is based on the recent census.
- **Constituted 4-times in India:** In 1952, 1963, 1972, and 2002.
- **Nodal Agency:** Ministry of Law and Justice.
- **Related Constitutional Provisions:**
  - Articles 82: Parliament enacts a Delimitation Act after every Census.
  - Article 170: States also get divided into territorial constituencies as per the Delimitation Act after.
  - Article 330: Provides for reservation of seats for the Scheduled Castes (SCs) and the Scheduled Tribes (STs) in Parliament.
  - Article 332: Provides for reservation of seats for the SCs and the STs in the Legislative Assemblies of the States.
- **Structure of the Commission**: It consists of retired Supreme Court judges, Chief Election Commissioner, and Respective State Election Commissioners.
- **Appointment:** It is appointed by the President of India and works in collaboration with the ECI.
- **Functions:**
  - Determine the number and boundaries of constituencies in a way that the population of all seats, so far as practicable, is the same.
  - Identify seats reserved for SCs and STs wherever their population is relatively large

INDIAN EXPRESS

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ATMOSPHERIC RIVER

(Syllabus: GS Paper 1 – Geography)

WHAT IS THE 'ATMOSPHERIC RIVER' BRINGING HEAVY RAIN TO CALIFORNIA

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 6

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA has been inundated with massive rainfall, with the risk of landslides rising on the soaked ground. The rainfall has been caused by an 'atmospheric river', and is likely to bring in both positives and negatives for the region.



A home destroyed in a mudslide in Los Angeles Monday. *Reuters*

What is an atmospheric river?

According to the US government's Department of Energy, "atmospheric rivers are large, narrow sections of the Earth's atmosphere that carry moisture from the Earth's tropics near the equator to the poles. On average, the Earth has four to five active atmospheric rivers at any time. Each moves the equivalent of the liquid water that flows through the mouth of the Amazon River. When they reach land, atmospheric rivers release this moisture, producing heavy snow and rain."

The rain that has hit California is part of a weather system called the Pineapple Express, which is an atmospheric river that originates in the subtropical waters around Hawaii.

How will it help the region?

Before two consecutive wet years including the present one, California had experienced drought conditions for decades. California's water year is measured from October to September. The rainfall, thus, is welcome, but could have chosen its location better.

According to *Reuters*, the current storm is mostly affecting Southern California, which lacks the storage capacity of the northern part of the state and the resources to capture storm water before it drains into the Pacific Ocean. So while all the state's reservoirs are virtually at or above historic average levels, they are not topping off like they did last year when a parade of atmospheric rivers landed mostly in Northern California.

The rainfall is also good news for aquatic life, such as the Chinook salmon, which had suffered during the dry years.

What risk could it bring?

The additional moisture is generally good for wildfire resistance, but the rain also promotes growth of grasses and bush that will become fuel for future fires when the weather turns dry again, reported *Reuters*.

"You'll have that beautiful green hillside in July and August but subsequently that fuel will die off, which promotes rapid fire growth and what we call light flashy fuels," *Reuters* quoted Nick Schuler, spokesperson for the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, as saying.

WITH INPUTS FROM REUTERS

Context: California has experienced an exceptionally wet winter with 11 atmospheric rivers battering the state since late December .

Atmospheric River:

- **About:** A narrow corridor or filament of concentrated moisture in the atmosphere. **Other names:** For this phenomenon are tropical plume, tropical connection, moisture plume, water vapor surge, and cloud band.
- **Total Atmospheric river:** On an average the earth has four to five atmospheric river at any time.
- **Size:** Several thousand kilometers long and only a few hundred kilometers wide, and a single one can carry a greater flux of water than Earth's largest river, the Amazon Rive
- **Formation**:
  - Atmospheric rivers usually begin over tropical regions. Warm temperatures cause ocean water to evaporate and rise into the atmosphere. Strong winds help to carry the water vapor through the atmosphere.
  - As atmospheric rivers move over land, the water vapor rises up farther into the atmosphere. It then cools into water droplets, which fall as precipitation.
- **Impacts:**
  - Heavy rainfall leading to flooding, landslides, and mudslides.
  - Develop drought-like conditions.
- **Significance:**
  - Not all atmospheric rivers cause damage.
  - Most are weak systems that often provide beneficial rain or snow that is crucial to the water supply.

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