

1st MAY, 2018

NEWS ANALYSIS

THE HINDU

AFSPA WILL CONTINUE IN NAGALAND

- **CONTEXT:** Minister of State for Home Kiren Rijiju said the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA), 1958, will continue in Nagaland as it is a "special case" and the "peace agreement" hasn't been finalised there yet.
- Nagaland, Manipur and Assam are the only three States in northeast India that continue to be under the AFSPA.
- AFSPA was withdrawn from Tripura in 2015, was revoked entirely from Meghalaya on 1 April, 2018.
- The AFSPA gives powers to the Army and the Central forces deployed in "disturbed areas" to kill anyone acting in contravention of law, arrest and search any premises without a warrant and provide cover to forces from prosecution and legal suits without the Centre's sanction.

- Nagaland is the only State in the northeast India, apart from eight police stations in Arunachal Pradesh, where the AFSPA continues to be imposed by the Union Home Ministry. In 2017, the Home Ministry gave up its powers and asked Assam to take a decision on continuing the AFSPA in the State.
- The NSCN-IM signed a framework agreement with the Centre on August 3, 2015 to find a solution to the Naga issue. The NSCN-IM has been fighting for 'Greater Nagaland' or Nagalim — it wants to extend Nagaland's borders by including the Naga-dominated areas in neighbouring Assam, Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh, to unite 1.2 million Nagas.

POWER MINISTRY FEELS NO NEED TO CHANGE ELECTRIFICATION DEFINITION

- The government is not considering modifying the current, much-criticised definition of an electrified village, which counts a village as electrified if at least 10% of its households have an electricity connection, according to a senior official in the Ministry of Power. As per the definition, in place since October 1997, a village is deemed to be electrified if basic infrastructure such as a distribution transformer and distribution lines are in place in the inhabited locality, electricity is provided to public places like schools, panchayat office, health centres, dispensaries, community centres, and at least 10% of the households in the village are electrified.
- The government had in September 2017 launched the Pradhan Mantri Sahaj Bijli Har Ghar Yojana (Saubhagya), aimed at covering the last-mile connectivity of taking electricity to the household level. The target for the scheme is March 31, 2019.

- The Saubhagya scheme defines the electrification of a household as including a service line cable, energy meter, and single point wiring. For unelectrified households in remote areas, electrification will involve the provision of power packs of 200 to 300 W (with battery bank) with a maximum of 5 LED lights, 1 DC Fan, and 1 DC power plug.
- According to data from the Ministry of Power and the Central Electricity Authority, so far 84.3% of households have been electrified. 15% of the villages so far electrified have been done so using off-grid solutions such as solar, while the remaining 85% are connected to the grid.
- Of the many deficiencies found, the analysis revealed that while several villages were deemed to be electrified in the official data, the on-ground engineers had registered complaints that key components such as transmission wires had been stolen, leaving the village unelectrified.

A DANGEROUS INCURSION

- Context: Elevation of CJ of Uttarakhand High Court, Justice K.M. Joseph to SC.
- Centre has objected to this giving the following reasons. Justice Joseph is junior in All India List of judges, i.e. he is not sufficiently senior and about 11 CJ of HC are ranked above him. His appointment would augment imbalance in regional representation, i.e. Kerala HC is too small to be represented by two judges.
- As per author flawed objections are as follows-
Seniority is not sole consideration for elevation to SC Judge. The recc. is based on unanimity from collegium system. Merit supercedes representation and also Recc. is in line with Third Judges Case.

A SHARED HERO FOR INDIA AND PAKISTAN

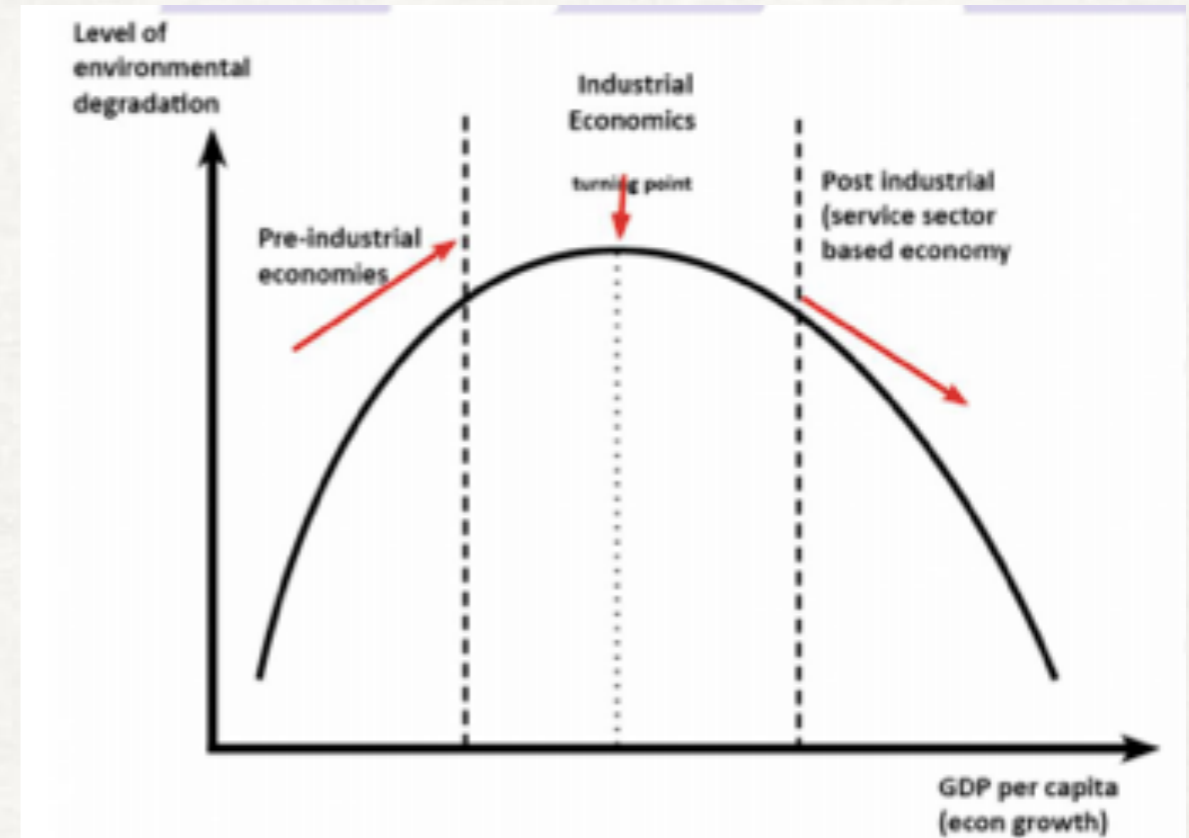
- Context: Bhagat Singh is being accepted as a nationalist hero of Independence movement in Pakistan.
- But his views and ideals are not reflected in politics in both the nations where he stood for egalitarianism, pluralism and non-sectarian governance.

Facts for prelims:

- ✓ Bhagat Singh was born in Lyallpur, Punjab in 1907 and died in Lahore in 1931.
- ✓ He began Naujawan Bharat Sabha and later became involved with Socialist Republican Association.
- ✓ With B.K. Dutt he bombed Central Legislative Assembly in Delhi in 1929 to protest the implementation of Defence of India Act.
- ✓ His major works are "*Why I am an Atheist*", "*Punjab: The problem of language and script, Communal problem and its solutions, Universal brotherhood: Indian perspective*", etc.

THE COST OF POLLUTION

- Environmental Kuznets Curve- states that a country's environment tends to degrade as the country grows richer. But after the country reaches a certain level of economic development, the quality of its environments begins to improve.
- Supporters of this hypothesis believe that countries need to reach a particular average income level before they can afford to allocate the resources needed to protect the environment. In other words, poor countries do not care much about the environment as they have more pressing problems to solve



EKZ

- India's developmental activities are affecting the environment through over-exploitation of natural resources and indiscriminate discharge of waste.
- India is on the upward part of the EKC. For achieving sustainable development, it must move to the second stage. However, it is not wise to wait for that stage. India can't ignore the environmental consequences of its rapid growth.
- Over the last few decades, water-intensive and polluting industries such as textiles, leather, sugar and paper have shifted from developed to developing countries. They withdraw huge quantities of water and discharge effluents without adequate treatment.
- One of the factors attributed to this shift is that there are relatively less stringent environmental policies in developing nations. Countries like India are now manufacturing products which contribute to pollution for domestic and international markets.

LOCAL DEMOCRACY IN DISARRAY

- In 1993 by virtue of 73rd and 74th Amendment in Constitution it was compulsory for the states to bring democratic decentralisation by creating Local Self governing Institutions.
- Aim of these amendments was:
 1. To make inclusive, responsive and participatory democracy.
 2. To deliver Economic Dev. And Social Justice at grass-root level.
- Part IX and IXA led to standardisation of Local Self Govt. i.e 5 year elections, Establishment of State Fin. Commission, Reservation for women, SC's and ST's, Creation of DPC's and MPC's, etc.

- *Problems that can be seen in recent times*
- 1. Panchayat reforms have not received support from political class and bureaucracy and many states have violated many constitutional features such as postponing elections, failure to constitute Distt. planning committees, etc.
- 2. States continue to ill-define roles and responsibilities of local governance and thereby states continue to control funding, functions and functionaries of local government thereby eliminating autonomy of local governance.
- 3. Several states have formed parallel bodies such as Rural Development Agency in Haryana which have entered in the functional domain of Panchayats, thereby weakening mandate of local institutions.
- 4. MPLADS and MLALADS funds have taken the financial capabilities that should have shifted to local bodies.

5. There is no mandate to create District Planning Committees. States such as Gujarat have misused this provision by not constituting DPC's
6. Recommendation to strengthen resources of local bodies hasn't had much success.
7. Reservation provisions have not resulted into desired social change(women empowerment or empowerment of marginalised sections).
8. Expenditure on local self government as percentage of total public expenditure is only about 7% in India as compared to 24% in Europe.

NO EXCISE DUTY CUT ON FUELS FOR NOW

- Context: The government is not considering cutting excise duty on petrol and diesel yet as rates have not touched levels that could trigger such an action.
- The Central Government levies Rs. 19.48 excise duty on a litre of petrol and Rs. 15.33 per litre on diesel. State sales tax or VAT varies from state to state.
- Every rupee cut in excise duty on petrol and diesel will result in a revenue loss of Rs. 13,000 crore.
- India has the highest retail prices of petrol and diesel among South Asian nations as taxes account for half of the pump rates.

PHARMA EXPORTS CLIMB TO \$17.25 BILLION

- Context: Pharmaceutical exports from India, a key component of the country's foreign trade basket, are estimated to have grown to \$17.25 billion in the current financial year which is almost 2.5% higher than the previous fiscal.
- The growth assumes significance in the context of challenges under which it was achieved, from increased competition in the mainstay generics space, particularly in the U.S., pricing pressure as well as heightened regulatory scrutiny.
- The run-up and roll-out of Goods and Services Tax (GST) also did not make things easy for the industry.
- Markets wise, the major growth drivers were Asia (excluding West Asia), CIS and Latin American countries. Despite a negative growth in the U.S., the largest market contributing to over 31% of the revenue our exports increased for the first time.

HEAVY RAIN SPELLS DOOM FOR BABY TURTLES

- Context: Hundreds of thousands of Olive Ridley turtle hatchlings were found buried alive after four days of persistent thundershowers in Odisha's Gahirmatha Sanctuary compacted their sand-pit nests.

Facts on Olive ridley sea turtle (*Lepidochelys olivacea*)

- ✓ They are also known as the Pacific ridley sea turtle, are smallest and most abundant of all sea turtles found in the world and are a species of sea turtle found in warm and tropical waters, primarily in the Pacific and Indian Oceans.
- ✓ They can also be found in warm waters of Atlantic ocean.
- ✓ These turtles, along with their cousin the Kemps ridley turtle, are best known for their unique mass nesting called Arribada, where thousands of females come together on the same beach to lay eggs.
- ✓ Olive ridley gets its name from its olive-colored carapace, which is heart-shaped and rounded. Males and females grow to the same size; however, females have a slightly more rounded carapace as compared to the male.
- ✓ Historically, this species has been widely regarded as the most abundant sea turtle in the world, yet globally they have declined by more than 30% from historic levels.
- ✓ These turtles are considered endangered because of their few remaining nesting sites in the world. The olive ridley is classified as vulnerable according to the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN).
- ✓ The coast of Odisha in India is the largest mass nesting site for the olive ridley, followed by

LAKE VICTORIA SPECIES UNDER THREAT

- Context: Three quarters of freshwater species endemic to East Africa's Lake Victoria basin face the threat of extinction,
- A fresh report backed by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) assessed the extinction risk of 651 freshwater species like fish, molluscs, dragonflies, crabs and aquatic plants native to Africa's largest lake and found that a full 20% of these species were threatened with extinction.
- The report pointed for instance to the African Lungfish, a long eel-like fish, which it said has seen its numbers dwindle largely due to overfishing, poor fishing practices and environmental degradation as wetlands are converted to agricultural land.
- The lake, which stretches into Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda and whose catchment also touches Burundi and Rwanda, is known for its high-level of unique biodiversity.

NASA MISSION TO THE HEART OF MARS

- NASA's first-ever mission to study the deep interior of Mars is on schedule to launch in May 2018.
- The Interior Exploration using Seismic Investigations, Geodesy and Heat Transport (InSight) is the first planetary mission to take off from the West Coast of U.S.
- Launching on the same rocket is a separate NASA technology experiment known as Mars Cube One (MarCO), which consists of two mini-spacecraft and will be the first test of CubeSat technology in deep space. A cubesat is a type of miniaturised satellite for space research with a volume of exactly one litre and has a mass of 1.33kg.
- The lander will study the deep interior of Mars to learn how all rocky planets formed, including Earth and its Moon.