
THE HINDU

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SC tells HCs to setup panels to monitor POCSO Act trials

- ❖ Context: Shocked by the high rate of pendency of child sexual assault cases, the Supreme Court directed High Courts to set up panels of its judges to regulate and monitor trials under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012.
- ❖ The Supreme Court, which had ordered a review of the backlog under POCSO, found that States such as Uttar Pradesh have over 30,000 cases pending.
- ❖ Many States have not yet even set up Special Courts to try POCSO cases as mandated by the law.
- ❖ In February 2018, a three-judge Bench led by Chief Justice of India Dipak Misra found the implementation of POCSO in a shambles and decided to review the issue.

- ❖ The court said the POCSO statistics showed that children and victims in many States were still waiting in the corridors of courts for justice.
- ❖ The government recently promulgated an ordinance allowing courts to pronounce death penalty to those found guilty of raping children up to 12 years of age.
- ❖ The Bench issued a series of directions which supplement the ordinance which include :
 - The State police chiefs should constitute special task forces to investigate cases,
 - High Courts should ensure that they are tried and disposed of by the designated Special Courts under the Act;
 - POCSO judges will give no adjournments and make every effort to fast-track trial,
 - Witnesses should be produced in court on the day of the hearing and
 - High courts should make every effort to provide a child-friendly atmosphere in tune with the spirit of the Act.

Soon make calls, browse while flying to India

- ❖ Flyers on board an aircraft will be able to make calls and remain connected to the Internet while travelling through the Indian airspace in the next three to four months.
- ❖ This will also be applicable to communication on ships.
- ❖ However, the satellites used for providing services should be the Department of Space-approved satellites and the gateway should be in India.
- ❖ The regulator had recommended that the onboard Internet traffic be routed to a satellite gateway on Indian soil as it provides an effective mechanism for legal interception and monitoring.
- ❖ Mobile communication on aircraft (MCA) systems can be operated once the plane reached an altitude of 3,000 metres to avoid causing harmful interference to ground-based mobile networks.

End of celebrations with party poppers

- ❖ Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) has banned party poppers - a popular decorative used at parties and celebrations, including at IPL matches - on the grounds that the devices posed a health risk.
- ❖ The low-intensity explosive used in popper is often composed of red-phosphorous, potassium chlorate and potassium perchlorate, are harmful to human health and environment.
- ❖ They get mixed with food items and may cause severe eye trauma or facial injuries.

Jinnah portrait sparks row

- ❖ Context: A BJP MP has asked Aligarh Muslim University to explain why it displays a portrait of Muhammad Ali Jinnah.
- ❖ AMU spokesman defended the portrait, apparently hanging there for decades, saying that Jinnah was a founder member of the University Court and granted life membership of the students' union in 1938.
- ❖ AMU students' union has a long tradition of granting life membership to prominent people in politics, social and educational fields. The first recorded life membership by the students' union was granted to Mahatma Gandhi on October 29, 1920, which was followed by a long list of luminaries, including C. Rajagopalachari, Jawaharlal Nehru, Sarojini Naidu, C.V. Raman and British writer E.M. Forster.

Mohammad Ali Jinnah (25 Dec 1876- 11 Sept 1948)

- Jinnah was a lawyer, politician, and the founder of Pakistan.
- Jinnah rose to prominence in the Indian National Congress in the first two decades of the 20th century.
- In these early years of his political career, Jinnah advocated Hindu–Muslim unity, helping to shape the 1916 Lucknow Pact between the Congress and the All-India Muslim League.
- Jinnah became a key leader in the All India Home Rule League.
- In 1920, however, Jinnah resigned from the Congress when it agreed to follow a campaign of Satyagraha, which he regarded as political anarchy.
- By 1940, Jinnah had come to believe that Muslims of the Indian subcontinent should have their own state.
- Jinnah achieved Pakistan's independence on 14 August 1947, and served as Pakistan's first Governor-General until his death in 1948 at an age of 71
- He is revered in Pakistan as *Quaid-i-Azam* ("Great Leader") and *Baba-i-Qaum* ("Father of the Nation").

SC admits petition to quash section 377

- ❖ As per court's decision in the recent Hadiya case judgment which upheld the fundamental right to determine the "choice of one's intimate partner, within or outside marriage" criminalising Section 377 is a direct violation of this right.
- ❖ A Bench, led by Chief Justice of India, issued notice to the government and tagged the petition with a series of petitions to be heard by a Constitution Bench.



THE STORY SO FAR

1860s: Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code deems homosexual intercourse as a criminal offence.

2001: Naz Foundation files a writ petition in Delhi High Court challenging Section 377.

July 2, 2009: The Delhi High Court passes a landmark judgment decriminalising Section 377. Following this, 15 special leave petitions are filed in the Supreme Court on behalf of mostly faith-based and religious groups from all parts of the country.

December 11, 2013: The Supreme Court sets aside the 2009 order decriminalising Section 377.

May 8, 2014: A new rights group based in New Delhi, LGBT Professionals' Network, decides to appeal against the SC order. Plans class action suit.

DNA Profiling Bill in Monsoon Session

- ❖ In 2017, the Law Commission of India, in its 271st report, prepared the draft Bill named, The DNA Based Technology (Use and Regulation) Bill, 2017, after examining various judicial pronouncements and constitutional provisions.
- ❖ The Commission recorded that DNA profiling was indeed used for **disaster victim identification, investigation of crimes, identification of missing persons and human remains and for medical research purposes**. It, however, also flagged that **privacy concerns and the ethics** involved in this scientific collection of data.

National Human Rights Commission

- ❖ NHRC is a statutory body as it was established under *The Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993*.
- ❖ Objectives of NHRC
- ❖ Composition of NHRC = Chairman + Members (Appointment, tenure, further re-employment)
- ❖ Functions of the Commission
- ❖ Working of the Commission

Iran Nuclear Deal

- ❖ Also known as Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action it is an international agreement on the nuclear program of Iran reached in Vienna in 2015 between **Iran**, the **P5+1** (the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council—**China, France, Russia, United Kingdom, United States**—plus **Germany**), and the **European Union**.
- ❖ The deal placed restrictions on Iran's civilian nuclear activity, thereby limiting how much fissile material Iran would be able to produce for a bomb, and also put into place one of the strongest inspections regimes seen anywhere in the world.
- ❖ The deal is important for international peace as under the accord, Iran slowed its nuclear program in exchange for an easing of international economic sanctions.

- ❖ If the U.S. walks away from its commitments, Iran would be free to reinstall advanced centrifuges, pile up enriched uranium, and revert to less intrusive inspections.
- ❖ If the deal were to collapse under this mounting pressure, it would come at an extraordinarily sensitive time in West Asia. As Iranian forces bed down in southern Syria, Israel is aggressively trying to root them out. Recent Air strikes - almost certainly carried out by Israel - struck several airbases in Syria used by Iranian forces, including a depot for surface-to-surface missiles, reportedly killing almost a dozen Iranians. Such raids are becoming weekly occurrence. Tensions between Saudi Arabia and Iran are also growing, with Mohammed bin Salman, the kingdom's Crown Prince and de facto ruler, repeatedly comparing Iran's leader to Hitler.
- ❖ In the light of these recent developments in West Asia the breaking of this deal would make Iran free to develop and use nuclear weapons and thus will affect peace and stability in the already disturbed region.

Centre extends EoI date for Air India

- ❖ Context: The deadline for submission of expression of interest in Air India's stake sale has been extended.
- ❖ The Centre has proposed to sell 76% of Air India along with low-fare subsidiary Air India Express and 50% stake in AISATS, a ground-handling joint venture with Singapore Airport Terminal Services, as a single entity.
- ❖ The new owner will have to take on the debt and liabilities of Rs.33,392 crore.
- ❖ The government aims to complete the transaction by the end of 2018 and it would retain a 24% stake in AI.
- ❖ On obligations to Air India staff, the Ministry said employee concerns were being "suitably addressed" and the exact cost to be borne towards related liabilities was being currently determined.

India rejects U.S.A's request on medical device price caps

- ❖ Context: India has told the United States it won't abstain from capping prices for more medical devices, after price controls on heart stents and knee implants spoiled the market for some U.S. firms.
- ❖ Equating high trade margins on some medical devices with "**illegal profiteering**", the government, in 2017, capped prices of some high-end heart stents — small wire-mesh structures used to treat blocked arteries — at about \$450, compared to \$3,000 charged earlier. In September 2017, the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's office and Commerce Minister Suresh Prabhu urging them "**to not expand price controls to additional medical devices**".
- ❖ India's National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA) has been pushing for more price controls.

- ❖ The regulator wrote to the health ministry, asking for three other devices used to treat heart ailments - cardiac balloons, catheters and guide-wire **AND** intraocular lenses, which are used during eye surgery to be added to a list of products eligible for price controls.
- ❖ Medical device manufacturers argue that India's price control mechanism hurts innovation, profits and future investment, and the USTR described India's policy as "very troubling."
- ❖ The USTR is currently reviewing India's eligibility under its Generalized System of Preferences (GSP), a programme that allows duty-free imports of certain goods. India was the largest GSP beneficiary at \$5.6 billion, the USTR said in April 2018.

Generalized System of Preferences

Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) is a preferential tariff system extended by developed countries (also known as preference giving countries or donor countries) to developing countries (also known as preference receiving countries or beneficiary countries). It involves reduced MFN Tariffs or duty-free entry of eligible products exported by beneficiary countries to the markets of donor countries. It involves reduced MFN Tariffs or duty-free entry of eligible products exported by beneficiary countries to the markets of donor countries.

Irani urges review of jute packaging rule

- ❖ Context: Union Textiles Minister Smriti Irani has sought the intervention of her counterpart at the Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution ministry to help stave off the risk of jute mill closures by increasing orders for jute sacks for packaging food grains.
- ❖ The problem had its genesis in the request made by the Consumer Affairs ministry to the Textiles ministry seeking dilution of the Jute Packaging Mandatory Order (under the Jute Packaging Material Act, 1987) in favor of the HDPE / PP bags sector.
- ❖ Responding to the February 2018 request from the Consumer Affairs ministry, the Textiles Ministry had granted a relaxation of 2.58 lakh bales for HPDE / PP bags based on a projection of bag requirement for food grains packaging and an anticipated shortage of supply of jute bags.

- ❖ The Textiles ministry contends that the total bag requirement (including HDPE) was now being put at only 15.6 lakh bales and that unless the order allowing the use of HDPE bags was withdrawn the jute industry could be hit.

PACKAGE PROD

■ **Mandatory** packaging in jute bags: 90% foodgrain, 20% sugar products



■ **Additional mandate:** 100% packaging of foodgrain in jute bags if the industry is able to supply the required jute

■ **Benefits:** Sustain demand for jute and support livelihood of jute workers