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SC slams Ladakh administration for dragging its feet over allotment of party symbol to National Conference



Relevance: Prelims & Mains Paper II; Governance

Why in news?

- The Supreme Court recently reprimanded the Lieutenant Governor's administration of the Union Territory (UT) of Ladakh for procrastinating in reserving the 'plough' as a party symbol for those candidates contesting on the National Conference's (NC) tickets in the Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council-Kargil (LAHDC-K) elections.
- The SC also set aside Ladakh's earlier election polling date of September 10 and directed the UT administration to re-notify election dates.
- It observed that the NC reserved the right to be "entitled to the exclusive allotment of the 'plough' symbol for candidates proposed to be put up by it".
- The SC, while dismissing the appeal of the Ladakh administration, put 'costs of ₹1 lakh on it' for wasting the court's time. A fresh notification issued by the Ladakh administration has fixed October 4 as the new polling date.

Reasons behind this reprimand

- The SC came down hard on the L-G administration because of its failure to abide by two orders of the J&K High Court and Ladakh — first issued by a single bench on August 9 and the second by a double-bench on August 14 — allowing the NC to retain 'plough' as its party symbol in Ladakh.
- 'Plough' is already a registered party symbol of the NC with the Election Commission of India (ECI). The apex court hinted at a deliberate delay by the administration.

The reason behind the legal tussle

- The UT of Ladakh listed parties and symbols in July this year through an official notification but didn't register NC as a party there.
- Ladakh, which was part of the Kashmir division of the erstwhile State of J&K, was carved out as a separate UT in 2019 after the Parliament adopted the J&K Reorganisation Act.
- After that, in 2019 itself, the ECI recognised the NC as a party for the UT of Jammu and Kashmir.
- The Ladakh administration denied the party symbol on the grounds that the reserved symbol 'plough' has to be notified by the ECI itself for Ladakh, and not by the UT of Ladakh.
- At present, the UT of Ladakh has no State Election Commission but an Election Authority to conduct the hill council polls.

NC's arguments

- The NC is the current political party in power in the LAHDC-K. It won 10 seats in the 30-member LAHDC-K to emerge as the single largest political party in the 2018 hill council elections.
- The NC accused the Election Authority of Ladakh of bias in denying them the party symbol, saying that "the same Election Authority granted the Aam Aadmi Party its party symbol for the 2020 LAHDC-Leh polls".
- Quoting rules, the NC argued that if a political party, which is recognised as a State party in some State or States, sets up a candidate at an election in a constituency in any other State or UT in which it is not a recognised State party, then such candidate may be allotted the symbol reserved for that party.

Ladakh's political landscape

- The BJP carved out Ladakh as a UT largely on the long pending demands made by the Buddhist population of the region, which is split between the Muslim-majority Kargil district and the Buddhist-majority Leh district.
- The BJP may not like the return of any regional force to Ladakh that will revive the politics in favour of the restoration of provisions of Article 370 or reunification of J&K with Ladakh.
- The Gupkar alliance, steered by NC president Dr. Farooq Abdullah, has repeatedly demanded reunification and restoration of the special constitutional status to erstwhile J&K.
- In case the NC returns to power at the LAHDC-K in these polls, it will sell the victory as a vote for reunification and special status. Notably, the BJP managed to win only one seat in the 2018 polls.

IAF takes delivery of the first C295 aircraft from Airbus

Relevance: Prelims & Mains Paper III; Science & Technology



Why in news?

- The Indian Air Force (IAF) recently received the first of the 56 C295 aircraft at the Airbus production site in Seville, Spain.
- These planes are set to replace its ageing Avro-748 fleet.
- This marks the beginning of a new era where military aircraft would be manufactured in India.
- This is also the first time that Airbus is building a complete production system outside Spain, which was unprecedented given the time and various supply chain constraints.



What is the C295 aircraft?

- The C295 is a versatile tactical transport which can perform a variety of missions, such as carrying troops and cargo, maritime patrol, airborne warning, surveillance and reconnaissance, armed close air support, medical evacuation, VIP transport, and airborne firefighting.
- The aircraft can carry up to nine tonnes of payload or up to 71 personnel at a maximum cruise speed of 260 kts. It is also equipped for air-to-air refueling of fixed-wing aircraft and helicopters.
- It can cruise at altitudes up to 30,000 ft and can quickly take off from and land at unpaved, soft, and sandy/grassy airstrips.
- With 283 orders from 41 operators, the aircraft have logged a combined 500,000 flight hours.

The deal

- India formalised the acquisition of 56 Airbus C295 aircraft at a cost of Rs 21,935 crore in 2021.
- The first 16 C295s will be assembled in Seville, with the second aircraft due to be delivered in May 2024 and the next 14 rolled out at a rate of one per month until August 2025. They will be delivered in fly-away condition.
- The remaining 40 will be manufactured and assembled – in partnership with Tata Advanced Systems Limited (TASL) – at a Final Assembly Line (FAL) in Gujarat's Vadodara.
- Six IAF pilots have already received training and a batch of 20 maintenance crew of the IAF is currently being trained at the Airbus facility in Seville.

Significance of this acquisition

- The acquisition of the aircraft is significant for **two reasons**:
First, it will replace the legacy Avro fleet of the IAF, which was acquired in the 1960s, and thus provide a fillip to the IAF's air transport duties in carrying troops and material to different parts of the country.
- Secondly, the acquisition sets into motion India's first-ever 'Make in India' Aerospace programme in the private sector, under which the aircraft will be manufactured.
- So far, the state-owned Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) has had a monopoly over the manufacture of military aircraft in India.
- This will boost India's aerospace sector with 15,000 high-skilled jobs and 10,000 indirect jobs in the next 10 years.

The indigenous factor

- Barring major components such as the engine and avionics – which have been sourced from the US-based Pratt & Whitney and Collins Aerospace – there will be a transfer of manufacturing technology to TASL by Airbus on most other components so that 95% of the aircraft could be made in India within the next few years.
- The aircraft will be equipped with indigenous radar warning receivers and missile approach warning systems.
- It is expected that the 32nd aircraft, which is scheduled for delivery in the first quarter of 2029, will be nearly a fully Indian C295.
- Airbus would provide spares support for 10 years and a performance-based logistics contract for five years, ensuring the availability of 85% of the aircraft fleet to the force at any given time.

Global Stocktake Report calls on countries to do more to tackle the climate crisis



Relevance: Prelims & Mains Paper III; Environment

Why in news?

- Ahead of the just concluded G-20 summit, that saw several world leaders converge in New Delhi, the United Nations climate secretariat made public a 'synthesis report' on the results of three meetings held so far to discuss progress achieved by countries in achieving the goals of the Paris Agreement of 2015.



Etymology

- This synthesis report is based on a larger exercise called the 'global stocktake,' that is expected to take place once in five years.
- In 2015, when countries committed in Paris to keep global temperatures from rising beyond 2 degrees Celsius by the end of the century and "as far as possible" below 1.5 degrees Celsius, they also agreed to periodically review, or take stock of efforts, made by individual countries in containing greenhouse gases and transitioning their fossil-fuel dependent energy systems to renewable sources.
- The first report this year is expected to significantly influence discussions in November when country representatives converge in Dubai for the 28th edition of the UN climate Conference of Parties (COP).
- While countries have laid out their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC), they are expected to — but not obliged to — increase their ambitions every five years.
- While the latest NDC were submitted in 2020, a stocktake also aims to push countries to set higher targets before the next NDCs are publicised in 2025.

An overview

- This report lays out 17 'key findings' that overall suggests that the world is not on track to achieve Paris Agreement targets, though there was still a "rapidly narrowing" window for countries to get their act together.
- Notably, the 2022 synthesis report in which the NDCs of 166 countries were analysed also concluded that they were inadequate to meet Paris-agreed targets.
- The United Nations Emissions Gap Report, also released last year, reported that 23 billion tonnes of CO2 were required to be cut to keep emissions in line with Paris agreements, whereas current pledges by countries even if fully implemented would only cut 2-3 billion tonnes, leaving an emissions gap of around 20 billion tonnes.

- The 17 headline statements in this report say that the Paris Agreement has galvanised countries into setting goals and signalling the urgency of the climate crisis.
- Govts need to support ways to transition their economies away from fossil fuel businesses and that states and communities must strengthen efforts. While rapid change could be “disruptive,” countries should work on ensuring that the economic transition be equitable and inclusive.
- It stated that much more ambition was needed to reduce global greenhouse gas emissions by 43% by 2030 and further by 60% in 2035 and reach net zero CO2 emissions by 2050 globally.
- Renewable energy has to be scaled up and all ‘unabated fossil fuels’ (for example, coal plants without carbon capture and storage mechanisms) were to be rapidly eliminated.
- Deforestation and land-degradation have to be halted and reversed and agricultural practices critical to reducing emissions and conserving and enhancing carbon sinks have to be encouraged.
- Averting, minimising and addressing ‘loss and damage,’ requires urgent action across climate and development policies to manage risks comprehensively and provide support to impacted communities.
- Financial flows needed to be made consistent with climate-resilient development to meet urgent and increasing needs.

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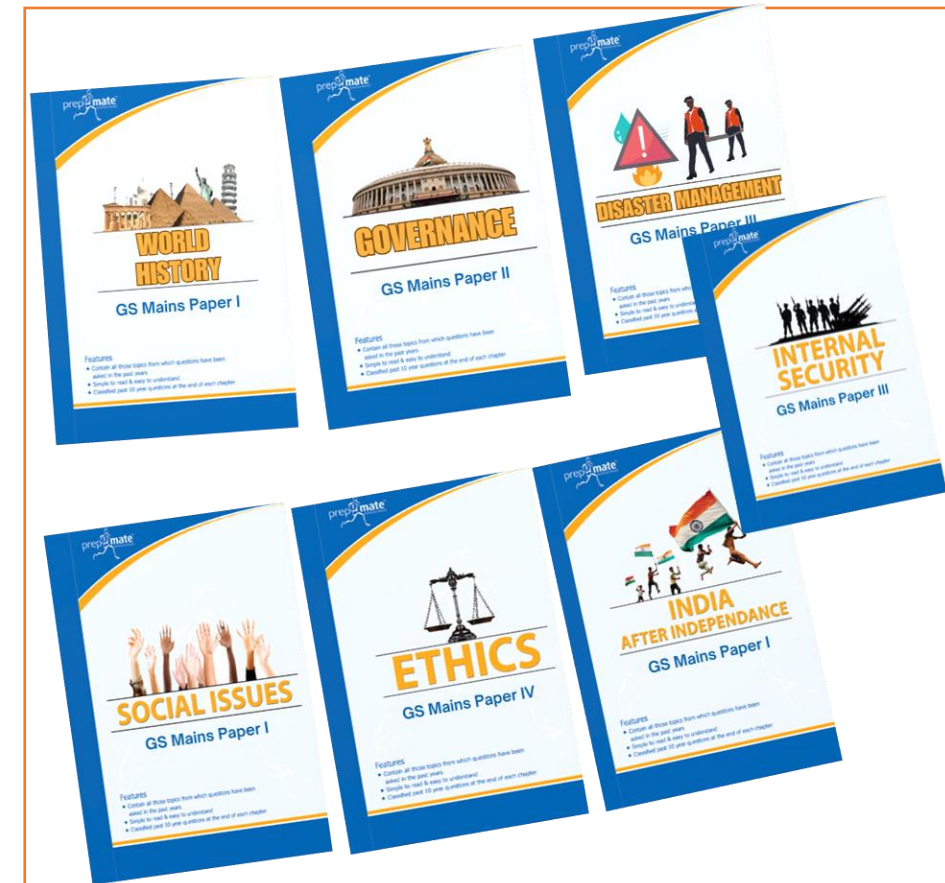
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