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Daily News Juice

1. Women's Reservation Bill gets passed, but a long road lies ahead in its implementation
2. India-Canada ties hit rock-bottom over India's alleged role in Khalistani leader's murder
- 3 Oldest yet fossils of a plant-eating dinosaur found in Rajasthan

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Women's Reservation Bill gets passed, but a long road lies ahead in its implementation

Relevance: Prelims & Mains Paper II; Governance

Why in news?

- In a historic development, The Constitution (One Hundred and Twenty-Eighth Amendment) Bill, 2023, seeking to reserve 33% of seats in Lok Sabha and state Assemblies for women, was recently passed unanimously by Rajya Sabha, a day after it was approved in the Lok Sabha.
- The Women's Reservation Bill, the first legislation to be cleared by both Houses in the new Parliament building, secured 214 votes in its favour with none against it in the Rajya Sabha.
- Notably, in March 2010, Rajya Sabha passed this bill but the legislation was not taken up by Lok Sabha.



Details

- As per the aforesaid Bill, “as nearly as maybe, one-third (including the seats reserved for women belonging to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes) of the total number of seats to be filled by direct election to the House of People shall be reserved for women”.
- The Bill proposes a similar provision for Assemblies in the states and Delhi.
- Like the previous Bill, this Bill proposes to introduce new articles — 330A and 332A — in the Constitution. These new provisions will introduce the changes for Lok Sabha and Assemblies respectively. It also has a sunset clause, mandating that the reservation will be for a period of 15 years from the date of commencement of the Act.
- The key difference, however, is that the Bill makes the implementation of women’s reservation contingent upon the delimitation process.
- Notably, the women’s reservation may not effectively be operationalised in Lok Sabha before the general elections of 2029.
- The 42nd Amendment froze the delimitation exercise until the results of the first Census after 2000 was published. In 2001, this was further extended for 25 years. And now, delimitation would happen after the results of the first Census after 2026 is published.

Identification of the reserved seats

- The Bill states that one-third of the seats in Parliament and state Assemblies will be reserved for women. However, it doesn't specify how these seats will be identified. It's important to remember that this proposed constitutional amendment is enabling in nature. In other words, it will grant the govt the power to enact a law for its implementation. Hence, it is expected that the determination of seats will be addressed by a separate law that the govt will introduce.
- Notably, when the UPA tried to amend the Constitution in 2010, its amendment Bill also didn't specify the method to identify which seats would be set aside for women. However, the govt at the time had proposed that constituencies reserved for women would be obtained through a draw of lots to ensure that no seat was reserved more than once in three consecutive elections.
- The NDA-III govt's Bill also proposes the rotation of reserved seats. It's not yet clear how exactly the Modi govt intends to identify the 33% of seats.

The current procedure to decide reserve seats for SCs and STs



- The Delimitation Act, 2002 lays down broad principles for reserving seats. The Delimitation Commission appointed under the Act is responsible for deciding the number of Parliamentary and Assembly constituencies to be reserved based on the population.
- Section 9 (1)(c) of the Act says "Constituencies in which seats are reserved for the Scheduled Castes shall be distributed in different parts of the State and located, as far as practicable, in those areas where the proportion of their population to the total is comparatively large".
- Similarly, for the Scheduled Tribes, the criteria are those areas "where the proportion of their population to the total is the largest."

Constitutional amendments needed to operationalise the scheme of women's reservation

- For delimitation — which is a precondition for the implementation of reservation — Articles 82 and 170(3) of the Constitution would have to be amended.
- Article 82 provides for the readjustment of constituencies (number and boundaries) of both Lok Sabha and state Assemblies after every Census. Article 170(3) deals with composition of the Legislative Assemblies.

Reservation for women in Panchayati Raj institutions and Urban Local Bodies



- Article 243D of the Constitution provides for reservation of seats for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and women in Panchayats.
- It also says that nothing in this part shall prevent the legislature of a state from making any provision for reservation of seats in any Panchayat or offices of Chairpersons in the Panchayats at any level in favour of the backward classes of citizens.
- As per the provisions of Article 243D, not less than one-third of the total number of seats reserved for SCs and STs shall be reserved for women.
- As per the latest data, in at least 18 states, the percentage of women elected representatives in Panchayati Raj institutions was more than 50%.
- The highest proportion of women representatives was in Uttarakhand (56.02%) and the lowest was in Uttar Pradesh (33.34%). Overall, there were 45.61% women representatives in Panchayati Raj institutions in the country.

India-Canada ties hit rock-bottom over India's alleged role in Khalistani leader's murder



Relevance: Prelims & Mains Paper II; International Relations

Why in news?

- India and Canada are dealing with an unprecedented diplomatic crisis, which can have political as well as geopolitical consequences.
- It started after Canada's Prime Minister Justin Trudeau dropped a bombshell allegation earlier this week, telling Parliament that it is possible the Indian govt had a hand in the murder of a Khalistani separatist - Hardeep Singh Nijjar in Canada in June.
- He said he had taken up the issue with PM Narendra Modi during his recent visit for the G20 Leaders' Summit. At their bilateral meeting in New Delhi, Modi had raised the concerns about pro-Khalistan elements in Canada.
- The Ministry of External Affairs called Trudeau's accusation "absurd and motivated". It said he had made similar allegations during his meeting with the PM, which had been "completely rejected".



INDIA AND CANADA, IN NUMBERS

Canada accounts for just 0.56% of the total FDI in India.



DPIIT data show total FDI equity inflow between April 2000 to June 2023 was \$645,386.0884 mn, of which only \$3,642.5243 mn came from Canada.

But Canada is home to 5.26% of overseas Indians



Of the 3,21,00,340 overseas Indians, 5.26% (16,89,055) are in Canada, including 1,78,410 NRIs and 15,10,645 PIOs, according to MEA data.

And every 7th Indian student abroad is in Canada



In 2022, of the estimated 13,24,954 Indian students abroad, 13.83% (1,83,310) were in Canada, according to Ministry of External Affairs data.

Canada is 4th largest source of tourists in India (2021)



Canada accounted for 5.3% (80,437) of Foreign Tourist Arrivals (FTAs) in India in 2021; 72.6% of Canadian FTAs were members of the Indian diaspora. FTAs from Canada rose to 3,51,859 in the pre-pandemic year 2019 from 88,600 in 2001. Arrivals from Canada fell sharply post pandemic.

Bilateral trade is tiny; its balance is in India's favour



India's trade with Canada was \$8,161.02 mn during FY 2022-23, just 0.70% of India's total trade of \$1,165,000.88 mn. Canada was India's 35th biggest trading partner. The balance of trade is in India's favour; in 2022-23, India's exports to Canada stood at \$4,109.74 mn, and imports at \$4,051.29 mn.

HARIKISHAN SHARMA

Diplomatic moves and countermoves

- Canada took the first step, expelling an Indian diplomat posted in Ottawa. The official was identified as the head of the Indian intelligence agency, and his identity was revealed. India responded by expelling a Canadian diplomat based in New Delhi.
- India then issued a travel advisory for Indian nationals travelling to Canada, as well as a caution for the Indian community in Canada. Students, professionals, and tourists were asked to be cautious because, the advisory said, the Indian community could be targeted.
- Soon, India suspended visa services in Canada. E-visa services were stopped too, and Canadian citizens who apply from other countries will also not get a visa for India.
- India asked Canada to cut the number of its diplomats in India, saying there are more Canadian diplomats in India than there are Indian diplomats in Canada.

Potential consequences!

- India has in essence been accused of the extra-judicial killing of a foreign citizen in a foreign land. If Canada can provide compelling evidence in this regard, it could potentially damage India's post-G20 reputation as a strong voice for democracy and a global consensus builder. But India remains innocent until proven guilty.
- Canada has asked India to cooperate in the investigation. India has said it would "look into" any "specific information shared" by Canada.
- But it has also called Canada a "safe haven" for "terrorists, extremists and organised crime". Such descriptions are usually reserved for Pakistan and Afghanistan, and it is rare for India to use them for a western democracy.
- India has had diplomatic standoffs earlier — with the U.S. on the Devyani Khobragade issue, with Italy on the Italian marines issue, with Norway on the child services issue, and with Denmark over the extradition of the Purulia arms drop accused. But the current situation is qualitatively different and much more serious because of the nature of the allegation that Canada has made.

The Khalistan problem

- The aforesaid crisis underlines the resurfacing of the problem of Khalistan in India-Canada relations after having gone under the radar after the 1980s.
- Over the past few decades, the challenges in the relationship were different — a low point came after the nuclear tests in 1998 when Canada, an advocate of nuclear non-proliferation, criticised India heavily.
- The big issue for India is the safe haven that Canada has provided to separatist Khalistani groups, and what India sees as the Liberal Party's pandering to these groups for votes.
- Estimates suggest there are 20-25 constituencies where these votes are crucial — and that explains the Trudeau government's soft-peddling on India's concerns. Jagmeet 'Jimmy' Dhaliwal, whose New Democratic Party supports Trudeau's minority govt in Parliament, is viewed with suspicion by the Indian establishment for its pro-Khalistan sympathies — some in India even call him an activist.
- The so-called Khalistan "referendum", supported by Pakistani intelligence agencies, has been a major irritant in recent years. India objected to Canada permitting the secessionist "referendum" among the Sikh diaspora and warned against hate crimes — however, Canada chose not to act, citing freedom of expression and the right to protest.
- Diplomats who have dealt with Canada say the country — which is home to large numbers of immigrants from various countries — is hostage to immigrant interests in its foreign policy. Thus, Ukrainian and Russian immigrants and refugees often shape Canada's Russia policy; Hong Kong and Taiwan immigrants shape its China policy; and Sri Lankans influenced its Sri Lanka policy during the LTTE conflict.

(more ahead)

Cont'd

- These diplomats say the pro-Khalistan elements — who are actually a small minority in the Canadian Sikh community — have hijacked the Trudeau government's India policy.
- Estimates suggest that of the about 20 lakh Indian diaspora, only about 8 lakh are Sikhs. Of which, Indian estimates say, only about 1% — 8,000-9,000 people — are pro-Khalistan radicals.
- But this small population of Khalistanis control 12-15 gurdwaras, where they generate funds and organise political mobilisation by voting collectively for Canadian political candidates. The constituencies in which they have a say are mostly in Brampton in Ontario province, and Vancouver and Surrey in British Columbia.

The geopolitical scenario

- Canada is an important strategic partner for major western powers — it is part of the G7 grouping and shares the table with the US, UK, Germany, France, Italy, and Japan. It also shares intelligence with the Five Eyes grouping — with the US, UK, Australia, and New Zealand.
- All these countries are also close strategic partners of choice for India. India has the Quad partnership with the US, Australia, and Japan, and strong and growing bilateral ties with each of them.
- The diplomatic standoff has put these countries in a spot — they don't want to be in a position where they have to choose between Canada and India. The US, Australia, and UK have issued measured and nuanced statements; the rest haven't responded yet.

Oldest yet fossils of a plant-eating dinosaur found in Rajasthan

Relevance: Prelims & Mains Paper III; Environment

Why in news?

- Dinosaur fossils from the Middle Jurassic period have been found in the Thar desert near the Jaisalmer Basin.
- As per scientists, these remains are of a sauropod dinosaur, which is the same sub-family as the long-necked herbivores in Jurassic Park. These also happened to be the oldest known fossils of this particular kind of sauropod.
- Belonging to the family Dicraeosauridae and from the superfamily Diplodocoidea, these fossils are the first dicraeosaurid sauropods to have been found in India.
- At 167 million years old, they are the oldest known diplodocoid fossils in the world.
- The scientists named the dinosaur Tharosaurus indicus, with Tharo deriving from the Thar desert; saurus from the Greek 'sauros', or lizard; and indicus from its Indian origin.



Size and existence timeline of Sauropods

- As per scientists, the sauropods can grow more than a hundred feet. There are many sauropod groups that are even longer than the blue whale.
- Sauropods first appeared on the earth during the Jurassic period, about 200 million years ago. They were one of the most dominant clades of dinosaurs, surviving until the late Cretaceous period 65 million years ago, when dinosaurs went extinct.

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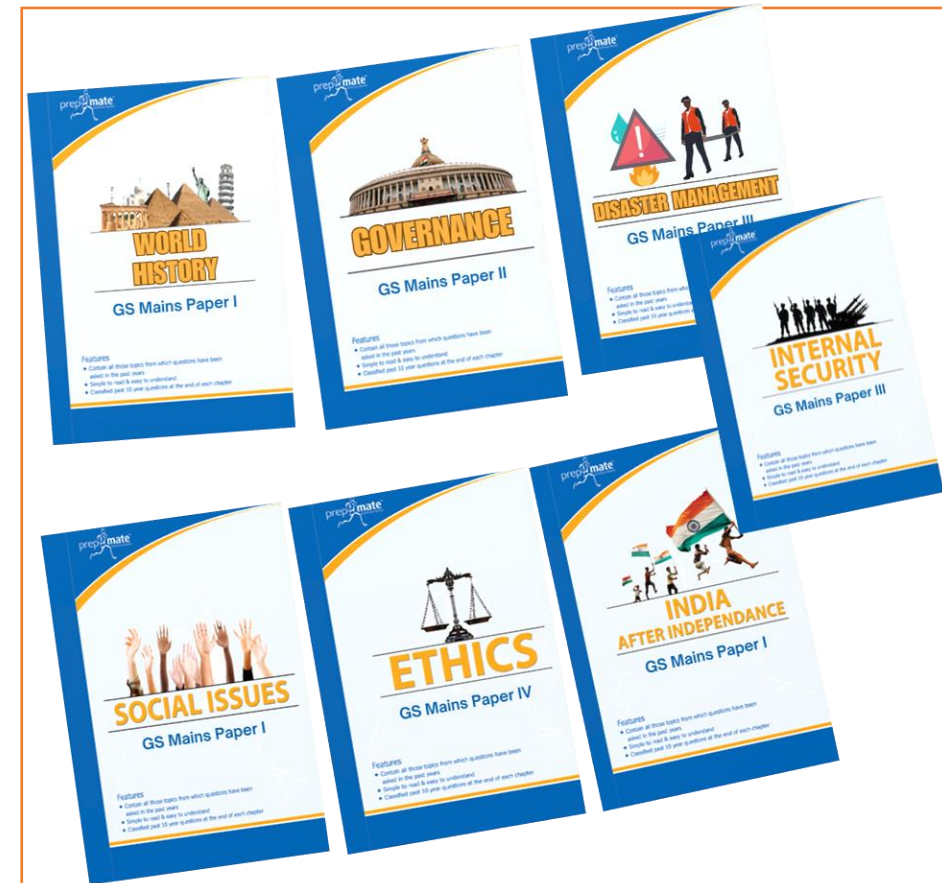
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