

1. Lok Sabha Ethics Committee Recommends Disqualification of Mahua Moitra

Introduction

The Lok Sabha Ethics Committee recently proposed the expulsion of Trinamool Congress MP Mahua Moitra from the Lower House, citing a "cash-for-query" allegation.

BJP MP Nishikant Dubey had approached Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla against Moitra, accusing her of asking questions in Lok Sabha to target the Adani Group at the behest of businessman Darshan Hiranandani, in exchange for gifts.

Ethics Committee

The Ethics Committee of Rajya Sabha was established in 1997. This committee was established to oversee the moral and ethical conduct of the Members and to examine the cases referred to it with reference to ethical and other misconduct of Members. The Ethics Committee of Lok Sabha was established later on, in 2000, with the similar objective.

Committee's Decision and Opposition

Six members, including suspended Congress MP Praneet Kaur, voted in favor of the expulsion recommendation, while four Opposition MPs opposed it. Dissenting members labeled it a "fixed match," asserting that the complaint lacked evidence.

Future Steps and Parliamentary Vote

The report, set to be presented in the Winter Session starting on December 4, requires approval from the Lok Sabha for Moitra's expulsion. This marks the first time, since the committee's establishment in 2000, that it has suggested the expulsion of a Parliamentarian.

Criticism of the Decision

Some view the committee's recommendation as politically motivated and an attempt to stifle government critics. Critics argue that the process lacks transparency and principles, emphasizing the need for a fair and thorough investigation.

Questioning the Investigation

Opposition members point out that Moitra's online credentials were used from Dubai to access the Parliament portal, a routine practice handled by MPs' aides. They stress the importance of solid evidence before assuming any wrongdoing.

Inconsistencies in Parliamentary Oversight

Critics note the selective investigation and urge the committee to scrutinize how other MPs prepare and submit parliamentary questions. They argue that the focus on Moitra appears to be an act of intimidation, contrasting with the slow response to other serious complaints within the parliamentary system.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; Governance
Source: The Hindu

2. Ben Gurion Canal — an alternative to the Suez Canal

Ben Gurion Canal Project

The Ben Gurion Canal Project, named after Israel's founding father David Ben-Gurion (1886-1973), remains one of the most ambitious infrastructure projects ever planned on paper.

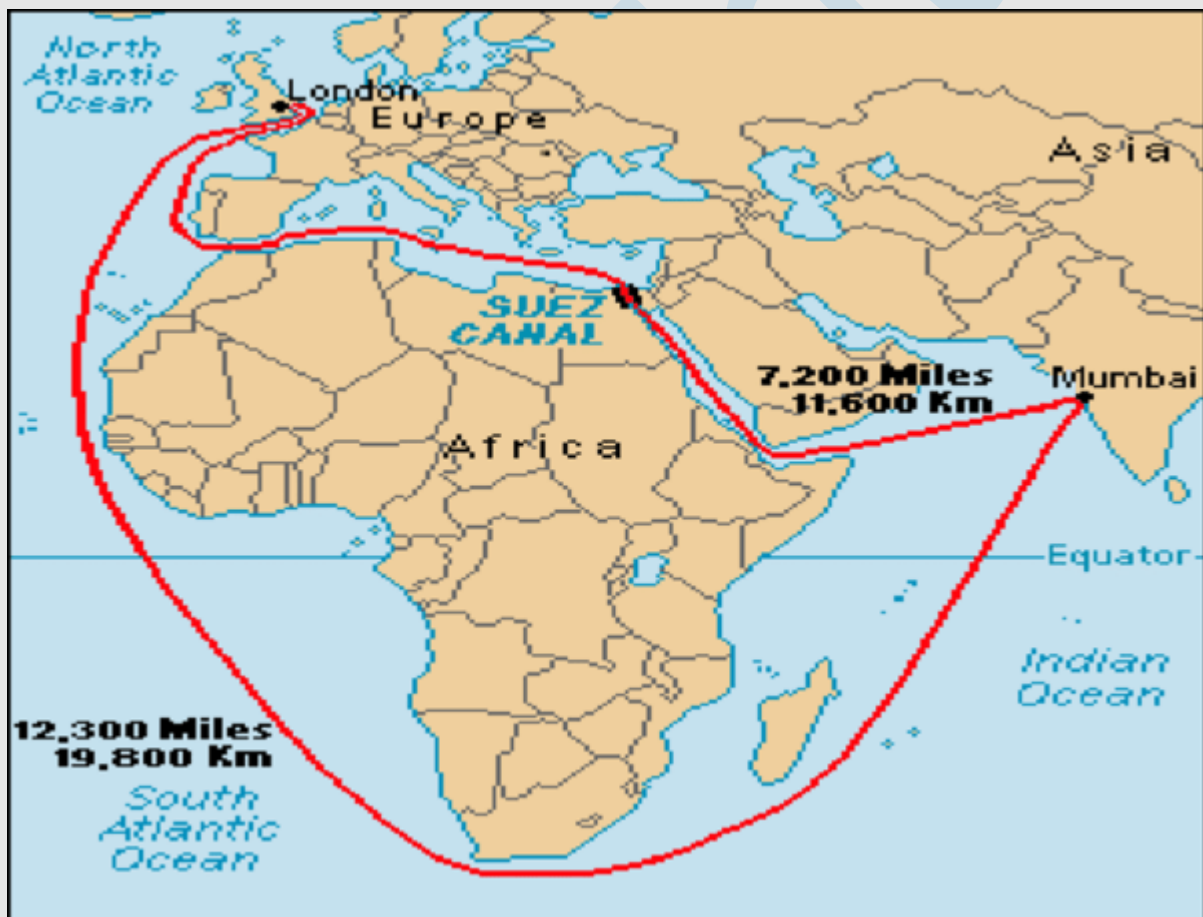


The idea is to cut a canal through the Israeli-controlled Negev Desert from the tip of the Gulf of Aqaba — the eastern arm of the Red Sea that juts into Israel's southern tip and south-western Jordan — to the Eastern Mediterranean coast, thus creating an alternative to the Egyptian-controlled Suez Canal.

Ben Gurion Canal Project, which was first envisioned in the 1960s would, if it were to be actually completed, transform global maritime dynamics by taking away Egypt's monopoly over the shortest route between Europe and Asia.

Suez Canal

When it opened in 1869, the Suez Canal revolutionised global maritime trade. By connecting the Mediterranean and Red Seas through the Isthmus of Suez, it ensured that ships travelling between Europe and Asia would not have to travel all the way around the continent of Africa. The canal cut the distance between London and Bombay (now Mumbai) by a more than 41 per cent.



The Suez Canal shortened the distance between London and Bombay by well over 4,000 nautical miles (1 nm = 1.852 km)

In the 2022-23 fiscal year, around 26,000 vessels crossed the Suez Canal, accounting for approximately 13 per cent of global shipping.

Issues with Suez Canal

First, the 193 km-long, 205 m-wide, and 24 m-deep Suez Canal is the world's biggest shipping bottleneck. Despite being widened and deepened over the years, it remains perennially congested, with long queues at either end. In March 2021, the mammoth cargo ship Ever Given got stuck in the canal, blocking passage for more than a week. It was estimated that the resulting "traffic jam" held up an estimated \$ 9.6 billion of goods every day.

Also, Egypt's control over the waterway has been a source of conflict for almost 70 years now. In 1956, after President Gamal Abdel Nasser (1918-70) decided to nationalise the canal, war broke out, with the UK, France, and Israel attacking Egypt in order to regain control.

The Suez Crisis ended in a military victory for the aggressors but an overwhelming political victory for Egypt, which kept control over the canal, which was shut for more than six months due to the conflict.

The Suez Canal was also the focal point of both the 1967 and 1973 Arab-Israeli wars, and was shut from 1967-75.

Importance of Suez Canal for Egypt

The canal is, of course, critical to Egypt's economy. It collects all the toll revenue generated, in addition to the benefits it brings to its local economy. In the 2022-23 fiscal year, Egypt's Suez Canal Authority saw toll revenues reach a record \$ 9.4 billion — accounting for nearly 2 per cent of Egypt's GDP of \$ 476.8 billion.

What has stopped Israel from constructing the canal?

First and foremost, such a project would be extremely complex and almost prohibitively expensive. The estimated cost of such a project may be as high as the \$ 100 billion, much more than what it might take to widen the Suez Canal and solve its traffic problem.

Costs aside, the planned route of the Ben Gurion Canal is over 100 km longer than the Suez Canal, primarily due to limitations of the terrain and topography. Even if built, many ships might still favour the older, shorter route.

Most importantly, however, a canal which will potentially transport billions of dollars worth of freight daily cannot run in land under constant military threat, from Hamas rockets or Israeli attacks.

It has been speculated that one of the reasons behind Israel's desire to eliminate Hamas from the Gaza Strip and completely control the Palestinian enclave is to give itself the chance to better explore a dramatic economic opportunity that has been

talked about for several decades, but for which peace and political stability in the region is an essential prerequisite.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; Bilateral Relations

Source: The Indian Express

3. World's biggest bank, China's ICBC, hit by ransomware

Introduction

The US arm of the Industrial and Commercial Bank of China (ICBC) was hit by a ransomware attack. Immediately after discovering the hack, ICBC isolated impacted systems to contain the incident.

What is ICBC?

ICBC, a Chinese state-owned commercial bank, is China's — and the world's — largest lender in terms of assets (over \$ 6 trillion), and one of the most profitable companies in the world, according to Forbes. It is also the 3rd largest bank in the world (behind JPMorgan Chase and Bank of America) by market capitalization, at \$ 194.57 billion, according to a Fobes article from August.

What are ransomware attacks?

Ransomware is a type of malicious software (commonly referred to as malware) that either blocks access to, or threatens to publish sensitive data until the victim pays a ransom fee to the attacker. It is a type of a cyber attack that has become increasingly popular among bad actors in recent years.

What is Lockbit 3.0?

A ransomware called Lockbit 3.0 was behind the attack. LockBit 3.0 was created by Lockbit, a group which effectively sells its malware bad actors on the dark web. Lockbit 3.0 is the most popular strain of ransomware. The group previously claimed responsibility for ransomware attacks on Boeing last month. It is said to have Russian origins, though this has never been confirmed.

Relevance: GS Prelims; S&T

Source: The Indian express