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1. How Indian states fare on logistics: What the Centre's latest survey says

Introduction

At a time when India is increasingly pitching itself as a possible alternative to China, greater competitiveness in logistics could help the country fend off the challenge from competitors such as Vietnam and Indonesia and improve overall manufacturing competence. While the Centre has stepped up its spending on infrastructure, deep-seated problems in logistics continue to hurt Indian manufacturing and efforts to boost exports.

We take a look at the challenges in logistics and states performance flagged by the Logistics Ease Across Different States (LEADS) perception survey released by the Commerce and Industry Ministry.

How are landlocked states doing?

The government's perception survey based on responses from 7,321 respondents said that average scores across parameters such as quality of roads, terminal, cost of logistics and availability of skilled workforce have improved in landlocked states as compared to 2019.

However, official data shows that only five states namely Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Maharashtra and Telangana continue to make up for 70 per cent of exports.

Over the years this has caused a widening gap in income and job generation between the landlocked states and coastal states.

How has the North-East Group performed?

The North Eastern states that have seen considerable social unrest during the last year contribute barely 2.8 per cent towards India's GDP and require the maximum logistics-related upliftment. The survey said that there has been a marked improvement in all parameters compared to the 2019 survey.

Odisha, West Bengal lag among coastal states

Indian coastal states including Andhra Pradesh, Goa, Gujarat, Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra, Odisha, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal account for 75 per cent of total exports from the country and have fared well in logistics historically. Gujarat accounts

for 33 per cent followed by Maharashtra with 16 per cent and Tamil Nadu with 9 per cent share.

However, the survey showed that Goa, Odisha and West Bengal continue to perform below the average among coastal states. In the case of Odisha, the survey said that there has been an improvement in the overall perception of the state's logistics ecosystem since 2019 but despite this, the indicator averages for this year have remained below the Coastal Group average.

Relevance: GS Prelims; Economics

Source: The Indian Express

2. What was discussed about cities at COP-28?

Why special attention to urban areas?

When the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) initiated the COP in 1995, 44% of people lived in cities. Currently, 55% of the global population is urban and this is expected to reach 68% by 2050. The urban world today consumes nearly 75% of primary energy and is responsible for roughly 70% of CO₂ (76% of total GHG) emissions. Hence, the desired results of the Paris commitments are not possible without addressing urban issues.

Role to subnational governments in climate negotiations

At this year's COP, there was a special day dedicated to a ministerial meeting on urbanisation and climate change. This meeting convened Ministers of housing, urban development, environment finance, and other portfolios; local and regional leaders, financial institutions, non-government organisations; and other stakeholders. Such moves forced some of the city representatives and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), to raise their voice and emphasise on the principle — "nothing for us without us".

City representatives have been arguing for multi-level green deal governance and for revising the governance and regulation of energy and climate action. Likewise, some European city groups argued for formally recognising the role of subnational governments in global climate change negotiations, accelerating and scaling up climate action by working across all levels of governance and sectors, and providing direct financing and technical assistance to cities and regions. This will require an 'out of the box' imagination as it would mean transgressing the authorities of federal governments. Nevertheless, the moot point is that cities and regions are key actors in driving climate ambition forward and in creating green jobs, reducing air pollution, and improving human health and well-being. The efforts of city governments should be formally recognised in COP decision documents.

What can be done in the Global South?

The cities of the Global South are far more vulnerable than their western counterparts. The city leaders are hardly empowered, the major employment is in the informal sector, adaptation is key as most cities are vulnerable to climate induced disasters and the pent up drive to attract investments to cities has further widened the gap between the rich and the poor. In most countries, and in India particularly, 40% of the urban population live in slums. Pollution is a major contributor in reducing life expectancies and social and economic inequities are quite inherent in their systems. So, to ensure fair participation in climate action plans and to claim loss and damage compensation, etc., there has to be a radical shift in the processes governing the cities.

One of the ways of achieving progress, even if that is too little, can be through creating a climate atlas of these cities, mapping them and identifying hotspots. Here, a major support system from existing financial architecture including the outcome of COPs is required.

This does not discount the fact that some cities like Chennai are spearheading their climate action plan and have decided to meet their zero emission targets by 2050, even before the Indian national government's stipulated time period of 2070.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper III; Environment

Source: The Hindu

3. Gyanvapi mosque case: What is the 1991 suit, why it was revived?

Why in news?

The Allahabad High Court Tuesday dismissed five petitions by the UP Sunni Central Waqf Board and the Gyanvapi mosque committee, holding that a suit filed in 1991 over the Varanasi mosque is not barred under provisions of the Places of Worship Act.

The case will now be heard by the Varanasi Civil Judge's court, which has been directed "to proceed with the matter expeditiously and conclude the proceedings" within six months.

The Waqf Board and the Gyanvapi mosque committee had challenged the maintainability of the original suit — Ancient Idol of Swayambhu Lord Vishweshwar and others vs. Anjuman Intezamia Masajid and another — filed in 1991, saying it was barred by the Places of Worship Act.

This suit is different from the case filed by Rakhi Singh and others, in which the Archaeological Survey of India recently submitted a 1500-page report to the Varanasi district court.

What is the title suit of 1991?

This is the original title suit in the Gyanvapi issue filed on behalf of the deity Adi Vishweshwar, like in the Ayodhya case.

In 1995, Civil Judge (Senior Division), Varanasi, had framed eight key issues to be adjudicated in the plea. Among these was the crucial aspect of whether the suit would be barred under the Places of Worship Act, 1991.

The trial court initially decided that the suit was barred under the 1991 Act. However, the Hindu side filed a revision application, and the revisional court set aside the trial court order and directed that the suit had to be decided on merits.

On appeal, the Allahabad High Court on October 13, 1998 stayed the revision order and effectively the suit, which meant that the proceedings were stalled. This prompted the petitioners to file several new pleas in 2021 to revive their claim over the Gyanvapi mosque. These pleas have been filed on behalf of other deities, including Maa Shringar Gauri, seeking the right to worship.

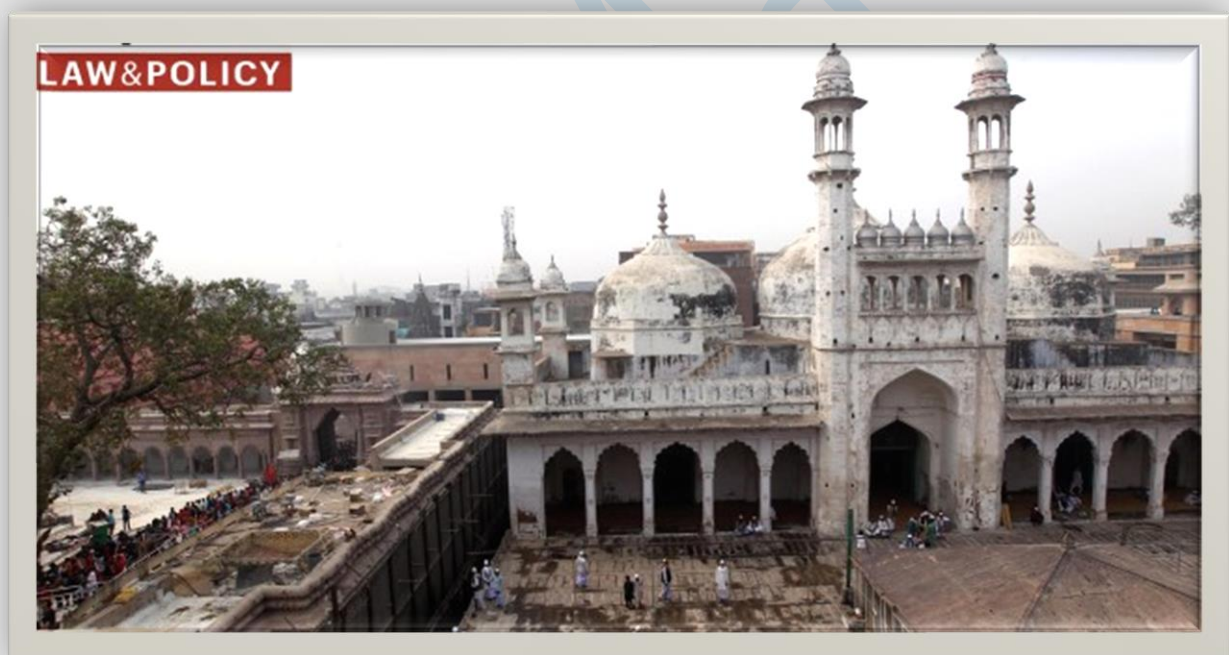


Figure 1 The Gyanvapi mosque in Varanasi

How has the suit now been revived?

In 2018, a two-judge Bench of the Supreme Court in the case of Asian Resurfacing of Road Agency P Ltd Director Vs CBI held that the interim order of stay granted by courts other than the SC itself will stand vacated automatically after six months unless they are specifically extended.

The ruling was aimed at ensuring that criminal and civil trials are not unduly delayed due to an indefinite stay. This judgement is now being reconsidered by a larger five-

judge Bench since several instances of miscarriage of justice have been noticed when the stay is automatically vacated.

Relying on this 2018 verdict, the Hindu side argued that the stay was not in operation and that the case must be heard again. This was challenged by the Muslim side before the High Court.

What does the Places of Worship Act, 1991 say?

The Places of Worship Act states that the religious character of any place of worship as it existed on August 15, 1947, must be maintained. The long title describes it as "An Act to prohibit conversion of any place of worship and to provide for the maintenance of the religious character of any place of worship as it existed on the 15th day of August, 1947, and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto."

Section 3 of the Act bars the conversion, in full or part, of a place of worship of any religious denomination into a place of worship of a different religious denomination — or even a different segment of the same religious denomination.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; Governance

Source: The Indian Express