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1. Ladakh, Article 371, and the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution

Why in News?



In a meeting with representatives from Ladakh, which has been witnessing protests recently, Union Home Minister Amit Shah offered to extend Article 371-like protections to the region. Shah is learnt to have told the Leh Apex Body (ABL) and the Kargil Democratic Alliance (KDA) that their concerns related to jobs, land, and culture would be taken care of, but the government would not go as far as to include Ladakh in the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution.

What is the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution?

Following the repeal of Article 370 in August 2019 and the subsequent enactment of the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, 2019, Ladakh has been recognised as a separate Union Territory "without legislature". UTs like New Delhi and Pondicherry have their own Legislative Assemblies.

Ever since the separation, organisations like the ABL and the KDA have demanded that Ladakh be included under the Sixth Schedule. This Schedule contains provisions regarding the administration of tribal areas in the states of Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram.

Inclusion under this Schedule would allow Ladakh to create Autonomous District and Regional Councils (ADCs and ARCs) — elected bodies with the power to administrate tribal areas. This would include the power to make laws on subjects such as forest management, agriculture, administration of villages and towns, inheritance, marriage, divorce and social customs. A majority of the population in Ladakh belongs to Scheduled Tribes.

The ADCs and ARCs may also constitute village councils or courts to decide disputes between parties from Scheduled Tribes, and appoint officers to oversee the administration of the laws they enact. In cases where the offences are punishable with death or more than five years of imprisonment, the Governor of the state can confer upon the ADCs and ARCs the power to try them under the country's criminal and civil laws.

The Schedule also gives ARCs and ADCs the power to collect land revenue, impose taxes, regulate money lending and trading, collect royalties from licences or leases for the extraction of minerals in their areas, and establish public facilities such as schools, markets, and roads.

What protections are offered under Article 371?

Articles 371 and 371-A through J provide “special provisions” for specific states, often to give representation to certain religious and social groups and to allow these groups to exercise autonomy over their affairs without interference from the state and central governments.

Special provisions under Article 371 would allow protections to be extended to the local population of Ladakh, while stopping short of the widespread autonomy that is provided to ADCs and ARCs under the Sixth Schedule.

When the Constitution first came into force, Article 371 stood alone, requiring the creation of “development boards” in Maharashtra and Gujarat for certain regions in order to assess their overall development and the need for government expenditure. As new states were created, more special provisions were introduced.

Under Article 371-A, which contains provisions related to Nagaland, Parliament cannot enact laws that affect the social, religious, or customary legal practices of Nagas, or the transfer and ownership of land without concurrence from the state Assembly. Similar protections have also been extended to Mizos from Mizoram under Article 371-G.

Articles 371-B and C allow the creation of special committees in the Legislative Assemblies of Assam and Manipur. These committees comprise MLAs elected from tribal areas and Hill areas respectively.

Special provisions have also been introduced to provide reservations in the Sikkim Legislative Assembly (Article 371-F), in order to protect “the rights and interests of the different sections of the population”.

Notably, the special provisions for Nagaland, Manipur, Sikkim, Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh (371-H), and Goa (371-J) were introduced shortly after each of these states was officially created. If special provisions are introduced for Ladakh, it would be the first time they are introduced for a Union Territory as opposed to a state.

Shah reportedly assured the Ladakh delegation that the government would ensure representation and participation of locals through hill councils and was willing to provide up to 80% reservation in public employment.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; Governance

Source: The Indian Express

2. Why is ISRO building a second rocket launchport?

Why in news?

Prime Minister Narendra Modi laid the foundation stone of the second rocket launchport of the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) at Kulasekarapattinam. Situated at a geographically advantageous location in coastal Tamil Nadu’s Thoothukudi district, the facility costs Rs 986 crore. It will be extensively and exclusively used for commercial, on-demand, and small satellite launches in the future.

Why does India need a new launchport?

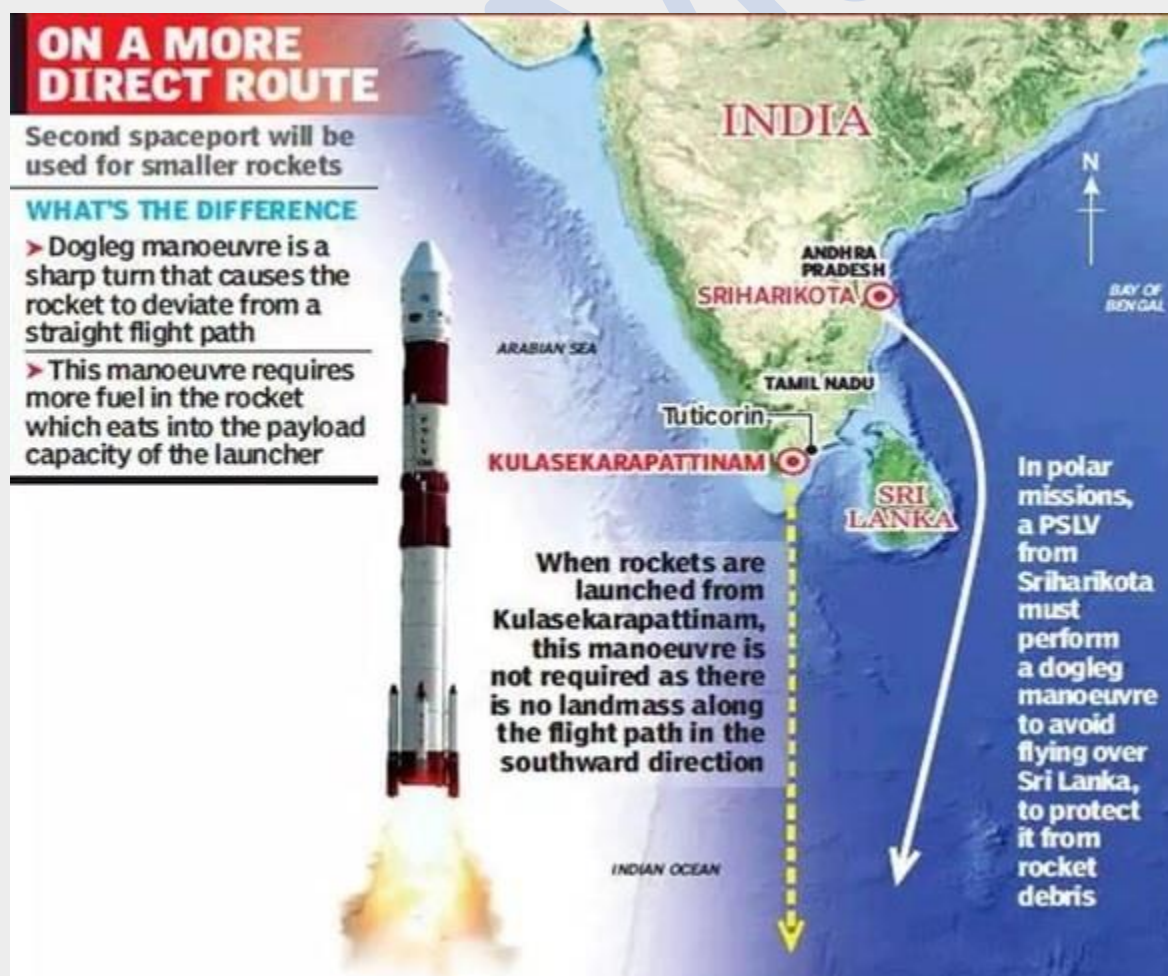
With the Union government's recent policy announcing the opening of the space sector to private players, a sharp rise in the number of commercial launches is certain. To ensure that ISRO's first launchport, the Satish Dhawan Space Centre (SDSC) SHAR in Sriharikota, is not overburdened with a high number of launches, the space agency has decided to build another facility.

While SHAR will be only used for launching bigger and heavy-lift-off missions, the Kulasekarapattinam launchport will be used to launch smaller payloads. SHAR will also be available for India's big ticket missions to the Moon, Venus, and much touted human-flight mission, the Gaganyaan.

Why is the new launchport located in Tamil Nadu?

Geographically, scientifically, and strategically, the Kulasekarapattinam launchport provides a natural advantage to ISRO's future launches pertaining to the Small Satellite Launch Vehicle (SSLV).

Allowing a direct southward and smaller launch trajectory for the light weight SSLVs carrying less fuel, the Kulasekarapattinam facility will boost ISRO's attempts to enhance payload capacities.



Currently, the trajectory followed by all launches from SHAR are longer as they follow a path which requires the vehicle to skirt eastwards around Sri Lanka before taking the actual southward flight. This consumes additional fuel. However, the same would not be required for future launches from Kulasekarapattinam, which is geographically located several kilometers to the west of Colombo, thereby allowing a straight southward flight and simultaneously saving the already limited fuel available onboard SSLV.

Notably, both the launchports are located on Southern India, near the equator. For a launch site close to equator the magnitude of the velocity imparted due to Earth's rotation is about 450 m/s, which can lead to substantial increase in the payload for a given launch vehicle. Geostationary satellites must necessarily be in the equatorial plane. So, for such satellites, closer the launch site is to the equator the better it is.

What is the status of the new launchport?

The Tamil Nadu government has completed the acquisition of over 2,000 acres of land in Kulasekarapattinam. This has now been handed over to ISRO.

S Somanath, chairman, ISRO, informed last week that it may take up to two years for the completion of the construction at the site. The new facility could permit anywhere between 20 to 30 SSLV launches, annually.

What are SSLVs and what are they used for?

SSLV is the new small satellite launch vehicle developed by ISRO to cater for the launch of small satellites. It has a three-stage launch vehicle, having a lift-off weight of about 120 tonnes and is 34 metres in length and 2 metres in diameter. SSLV is designed with a three-stage solid propulsion and a liquid propulsion stage, which is the terminal stage.

The SSLV missions are useful to launch small-sized satellites weighing anywhere between 10 to 500kg into the Low Earth Orbit. Going by their size and weight, these are typically referred to as mini, micro or nano satellites. They are low on cost and intended satellite insertion into orbits takes a shorter flight time.

SSLV are best suited for commercial and on-demand launches. Previously, satellite projects built by college students and private players involved in the space sector have benefitted from SSLV missions.

How has India's SSLV journey been so far?

SSLV is a relatively new development by ISRO, which is expanding its launch capabilities. The first SSLV mission — SSLV-D1 — carrying two satellites, including EOS-02 and AzaadiSat, in August 2022, was a failure. Despite a text-book launch, perfect lift-off and smooth transitioning into subsequent stages, the insertion of the two satellites after their separation took place into a 356 km circular orbit instead of the intended elliptical orbit.

Six months later, in its second attempt with the SSLV-D2 in February 2023, ISRO tasted success. The rocket inserted three satellites onboard into the intended 450 km circular orbit following a 15 minute flight.

Both these launches were from SHAR.

What are the features of SHAR?

SHAR is situated along the east coast of Andhra Pradesh and is located 80 km off Chennai. It currently provides launch infrastructure to all ISRO missions. It is equipped with a solid propellant processing setup, static testing, and launch vehicle integration facilities, telemetry services — tracking and command network to oversee the launch — and a mission control centre.

SHAR has two launch complexes that are routinely used to launch the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV), the Geosynchronous Space Launch Vehicles (GSLV) and the Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle Mk-III, now renamed as LVM3. The maiden launch from the First Launch Pad, built in the early 1990s, was in September 1993. Operational since 2005, the Second Launch Pad saw its maiden launch in May 2005.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper III; Science & Technology

Source: Indian Express

3. Cuttack's famed silver filigree work, which recently received GI tag

Why in News?

The famous Rupa Tarakasi, or silver filigree work of Odisha's Cuttack, has received the geographical indication (GI) tag.

The Odisha State Cooperative Handicrafts Corporation Limited (Utkalika) had applied for the tag.



Why is GI Tag conferred?

A GI tag is conferred upon products originating from a specific geographical region, signifying unique characteristics and qualities. Essentially, it serves as a trademark in the international market.

Rupa Tarakasi

Odisha's Cuttack is known for its silver filigree work, of intricate design and fine craftsmanship. In Odia, "tara" means wire and "kasi" means to design. Thus, as part of Rupa Tarakasi, silver bricks are transformed into thin fine wires or foils and used to create jewellery or showpieces.

Relevance: GS Prelims; Economics

Source: The Hindu