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1. Limiting Governors' Power to Refer Bills to the President

Issue at Hand

Some Governors have been using their powers to delay or block state legislation, which undermines the Constitution. Despite the Supreme Court's intervention in cases involving Punjab, Tamil Nadu, and Telangana, the problem persists. Governors, finding their ability to withhold assent curtailed, now send disapproved Bills to the President for consideration. As per Constitution, When the President, advised by the Union government, refuses assent, State legislatures have no recourse, raising concerns about misuse of this provision to subvert federalism.

Article 200:

- Article 200 of the Indian Constitution outlines the process for a Bill passed by the Legislative Assembly of a State to be presented to the Governor for assent, who may either **assent, withhold assent or reserve the Bill for consideration** by the President.
- The Governor may also return the Bill with a message **requesting reconsideration by the House** or Houses.

Article 201:

- It states that when a **Bill is reserved for the consideration** of the President, the President may assent to or withhold assent from the Bill.

Supreme Court's Role

Kerala has challenged this practice in a writ petition, questioning the Governor's action of sending Bills to the President and the subsequent refusal of assent. It is an appropriate time for the Court to adjudicate and place limitations on this practice.

Previous Court Rulings

- **Punjab Case:** The Court ruled that Governors do not have a veto over Bills. If they withhold assent, they must return the Bills to the Assembly. If the Assembly re-adopts the Bills, the Governor is bound to grant assent.
- **Telangana Case:** The Court emphasized that Governors should act on Bills "as soon as possible," highlighting the significant constitutional content of this phrase.

Ongoing Issues

Governors of West Bengal and Kerala continue to ignore these rulings. Seven Bills from Kerala, which may not normally require the President's assent, were sent to Rashtrapati Bhavan, with four refused without explanation. Delays range from 10 to 23 months. West Bengal also faces similar issues, challenging the inaction on some Bills referred to the President.

Core Concern

This issue goes beyond political motivations and addresses whether the Constitution allows such indirect central intervention in the legislative domain of the States.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; Governance

Source: Indian Express

2. 8 key takeaways from Hamas chief's assassination

Overview

Ismail Haniyeh, the Qatar-based public face of Hamas, was assassinated in Iran in what might mark a defining moment in the ongoing war between Israel and the Palestinian militant group. Haniyeh was killed in Tehran, where he had gone to attend the inauguration of the newly-elected Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian. While New Delhi is yet to issue a response with regards to the assassination, Union Transport Minister Nitin Gadkari is also in Tehran at the moment for Pezeshkian's inauguration.

Here are 8 key takeaways from the Hamas leader's assassination.

1. For Israel, a success

On October 7, 2023, Hamas killed at least 1,200 Israeli civilians and military personnel, and took about 250 hostages. Since then, the Israeli military has pounded Gaza with air strikes and ground operations, with the stated aim of going after Hamas leaders. More than 40,000 people have been killed in the process.

From the Israeli point of view, this is a major victory in its mission to neutralise Hamas — a stated objective behind launching the Operation Swords of Iron. Haniyeh is the most highly placed Hamas figure to have been killed so far.

2. For Hamas, a provocation



From Hamas' perspective, however, this is a major provocation since Haniyeh was the head of its political bureau, based in Qatar. He was the public face of Hamas, and was negotiating the terms of the hostages deal and the ceasefire, while Yahya Sinwar is the military leader who was responsible for the October 7 attacks.

In a statement, Hamas mourned the death of Haniyeh, saying he was killed in "a treacherous Zionist raid on his residence in Tehran" after attending the swearing-in ceremony of the new Iranian president. Hamas official told that the assassination of Haniyeh in Iran is a grave escalation.

3. Message that Iran not safe

The fact that the targeted strike took place in Tehran will be seen as a major escalatory move, both by Hamas and Iran. For Israel, this is a signal that Hamas leaders are not safe in Iran and in Iran's protection.

In April this year, Iran and Israel had exchanged a round of missile and drone attacks at each other. Temperatures had cooled since then, but this assassination has the potential to trigger further hostilities.

4. Pressure on Pezeshkian

Within Iran and Hamas, there will now be calls for avenging Haniyeh's death, which are certain to put pressure on the newly-elected moderate President Pezeshkian. The president's election campaign focussed on beginning negotiations with the West, primarily for economic reasons given how damaging Western sanctions have been for Iran. He would have hoped to restart dialogue with Europe, to begin with.

But, with Haniyeh's assassination, Pezeshkian will be under pressure and the hardliners in the Iranian establishment will be emboldened.

Iran will "defend its territorial integrity, dignity, honor, and pride, and will make the terrorist occupiers regret their cowardly act" of assassinating Haniyeh in Tehran, President Pezeshkian said. The next few days and weeks will test his skills as a politician, particularly in negotiating with the Supreme Leader on how to respond to the crisis.

5. Lifeline for Netanyahu

This assassination gives a lifeline to Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Bibi has been facing questions about his leadership, and his political survival was at stake. There has been growing pressure on him to finally strike the hostage deal with Hamas, which was being brokered by the US, Egypt and Qatar, among others.

The assassination has the potential to upend all such efforts for the time being, and it is expected to prolong the war in Gaza. This will mean that Netanyahu will likely stay till the war is over.

6. Questions for Kamala

The campaign for the US elections in November is now at a pivotal stage with Vice President Kamala Harris now the prospective Democratic nominee. She has signalled that she will be tougher on Netanyahu, and his war in Gaza, as compared to her predecessor Joe Biden. This is especially crucial as Harris is focussed on getting the support of younger Democratic voters.

The assassination complicates things for her. She will now have to think and formulate a response, in case there is an escalation in the region.

7. West Asia a tinderbox

For the region as a whole, the assassination is not good news, especially if Iran and Hamas escalate. Such an escalation will impact all of West Asia.

Qatar, Turkey, and the Yemeni Houthis have already condemned the assassination, and the top regional players like Saudi Arabia, UAE are watching the events closely. After more than nine months of war in Gaza, this is a defining moment — after the development in April when there was a risk of escalation — when the region might get drawn into a broader conflict.

8. India to carefully frame its response

India is still processing the developments, with the South Block mindful of the sensitivities of a response. While New Delhi does not harbour any positive sentiments about the Hamas leaders, it will be careful in its framing — since the matter involves a targeted assassination in a foreign soil. The immediate Indian concern will be the peace and stability in the region which is home to about nine million Indian expats, apart from supplying almost two-third of India's crude.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; International Relations

Source: Indian Express

3. What is 'AXIS of resistance'?

Why in News?

Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh was assassinated in an air strike in Tehran. Although Israel has not claimed responsibility for Haniyeh's killing, Hamas and Iran have blamed Israel for the strike, and promised "major repercussions".

Experts believe that Iran could hike up attacks against Israel through its allies — a coalition of Iranian-backed groups known as the 'axis of resistance'. Hezbollah, Hamas, the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), and the Houthis are some of the major groups in the alliance.



How was the coalition formed?

The roots of the 'axis of resistance' go back to the Iranian Revolution of 1979, which paved the way for radical Shia Muslim clerics to come to power. To expand its political and military influence in a region where most powers — such as US-ally Saudi Arabia — are Sunni-majority nations, Iran's new regime began to support non-state actors. Another reason for this was to deter threats from Israel and the US — Iran has seen Israel's creation in 1948 as a means for the US (and the West) to influence the region for its strategic interests.

The coalition's name is said to be inspired by former US President George W Bush's use of the term 'axis of evil' — referring to Iran, Iraq and North Korea — in his 2002 State of the Union address.

Which groups are part of the Iran-led 'axis of resistance'?

- Set up by Iran's Revolutionary Guards in the early 1980s, Hezbollah (meaning 'Party of God') is a Shiite militant organisation. It was formed to fight Israeli forces that had invaded Lebanon in 1982. Hezbollah is the biggest and most powerful member of the axis . It is believed to possess a significant arsenal, and has 30,000 to 45,000 members. Hezbollah and Israel have clashed with each other on many occasions. They fought a war for the first time in 2006, and have since then often exchanged fire, especially after October 7.
- Hamas, a Palestinian Sunni militant group, has been running the region of Gaza since 2007. It emerged during the first Intifada, or Palestinian uprising, against Israeli rule in 1987. Hamas opposes Zionism, the 19th-century political project that advocates for an ethnic homeland for the Jewish people. Iran is known to supply funding, weapons, and expertise to the militant group.
- PIJ is a Sunni Islamist militant group, which aims to establish an Islamic state in Palestine. According to the US government, "It is the second-largest militant group in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, founded in 1979 as an offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt".
- Houthis are a Zaydi Shia militant group which has been involved in the civil war in Yemen for over a decade. They seized Sana'a, Yemen's capital, in 2014, and today control northern Yemen. They also have a presence in most regions of the country. In response to Israel's onslaught on Gaza after October 7, the group began to attack ships crossing the Red Sea, demanding an end to the invasion of the Palestinian enclave.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; International Organisations

Source: Indian Express