

1. SC sets aside Tamil Nadu Governor's move of withholding assent to Bills: The ruling, impact**Why in News?**

In a significant ruling on the powers of a Governor, the Supreme Court set aside Tamil Nadu Governor R N Ravi's decision to withhold assent to 10 pending Bills, terming it illegal and erroneous in law.

The decision has a bearing on the Governor's role in Opposition-ruled states, which share a politically fraught relationship with the Centre. The current ruling will have a bearing on how similar cases are decided.

Constitutional Provisions

Article 200 specifically deals with the issue of granting assent to Bills. When a Bill passed by the legislature of a state is presented to the Governor, the Governor has four options: (1) grant assent to the Bill; (2) withhold assent to the Bill; (3) return the Bill for reconsideration; or (4) reserve the Bill for the consideration of the President.

However, the Article has a key proviso.

It says that the Governor "may, as soon as possible", return Bills other than money Bills, with a message requesting that the House reconsider it in parts or in whole. If the Legislative House after reconsidering the Bill sends it to the Governor once again, the Governor "shall not withhold assent therefrom".

Ambiguity

The tug-of-war between the government and the Governor in Opposition-ruled states essentially lies in the wordplay in the proviso. While the Governor must return the Bill "as soon as possible", no timeframe is specified. Raj Bhavans have exploited this ambiguity to sit on Bills indefinitely without returning them to the state legislature. An indefinite timeline in deciding on Bills can in effect, amount to paralysing the elected government.

What did the court say?

Recent decision by the Supreme Court:

- First, it prescribed a time limit for the Governor to exercise his powers under Article 200.

As a general rule, it is not open for the Governor to reserve a Bill for the consideration of the President if it has been considered for the first time only by the Governor. The only exception to this general rule is when the Bill presented in the second round is different from the one presented to the Governor in the first instance.

In case of reservation of Bills for the consideration of the President, the Governor shall make such reservation within a maximum period of three months. In case of presentation of a Bill after reconsideration, the Governor must grant assent forthwith subject to a maximum period of one month.

- The ruling is also significant because the court exercised powers under Article 142 of the Constitution and declared the 10 Bills as having received assent given "the unduly long period of time for which these Bills were kept pending by the Governor before the ultimate declaration of withholding of assent and in view of the scant respect shown by the Governor" to the court's decision in similar matters earlier.

Article 142 provides a unique power to the Supreme Court — to do "complete justice" between the parties where, at times, the law or statute may not provide a remedy. In those situations, the court can extend itself to put an end to a dispute in a manner that would fit the facts of the case.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; Governance

Source: Indian Express

2. 'De-extinction': American company brought back the dire wolf

De-Extinction



A United States-based bioscience company named Colossal Biosciences recently claimed that it had revived an extinct species of animal, the dire wolf. Colossal Biosciences was founded by billionaire Ben Lamm and geneticist George Church.

A month ago, this same company had announced the birth of "woolly mice" in an effort to bring back the woolly mammoth.

The dire wolf

Dire wolves (*Aenocyon dirus*) were large canines that dominated southern Canada and the US before they went extinct about 13,000 years ago. They resembled

the grey/ gray wolves (*Canis lupus*) of today, but were larger, with white coats. A dire wolf could be 3.5 feet tall, more than 6 feet in length, and weigh up to 68 kg.

Company's claim

The company has reported the birth of three genetically modified grey wolf pups, which it claims are functional copies of dire wolves.

'De-extinction' process

Scientists at Colossal contacted museums and laboratories for dire wolf specimens and got access to a tooth thought to be about 13,000 years old, and a 72,000-year-old skull.

From these two specimens, they were able to recover enough DNA to create two dire wolf genomes — an organism's complete set of genetic information. They then compared these genomes to those of other similar species.

Using the genetic data, researchers could confirm the grey wolf as the closest living relative of the dire wolf — they share 99.5% of their DNA code. The scientists then used gene editing to make 20 unique edits to 14 genes in the grey wolf genome. Of those, 15 were meant to reproduce extinct dire wolf gene variants such as a light-coloured coat, hair length, coat patterning, body size and musculature. Subsequently, fertilised "dire wolf" eggs were implanted into surrogate dog mothers.

Relevance: GS Prelims; Science & Technology

Source: Indian Express

3. Why is active mobility necessary in India?

Why in News?



Sporadic reports of accidental deaths and injuries of pedestrians, cyclists, street-hawkers, and others in the metro cities of India are on the rise. While urban development in various metro cities include patches of dedicated service lanes for pedestrians and cyclists, motor vehicles tend to ply on them as well. As a result, the risk of accidents are as high on these pathways as on the main roads with vehicular traffic. In such a grim situation, active mobility is the need of the hour.

What is active mobility?

Active mobility refers to modes of transportation that use human power instead of a motorised form of mobility. Active modes of transport include walking, cycling, skateboarding, and other non-motorised modes that are used for travel and not recreational activities.

Push for Active Mobility

Bengaluru's first Bicycle Mayor, Sathya Sankaran, has been a key advocate for cycling and pedestrian-friendly infrastructure since 2018. His efforts contributed to the drafting of the Karnataka Active Mobility Bill, 2022. In 2020, Karnataka recorded the highest number of pedestrian deaths in the country at 13%. Therefore, the Bill aims to promote urban mobility through the protection of the rights of pedestrians and cyclists. The inherent goal of this bill is to provide a legal structure protecting and promoting active mobility, and ensuring equal access to public space. Several other States are also giving attention to active mobility.

Delhi is expanding cycling tracks and pedestrian-friendly streets under its Delhi EV policy. Pune has implemented a Comprehensive Bicycle Plan and developed over 300 km of cycling lanes.

Chennai is redesigning roads under the SCM to improve pedestrian safety, while Kochi has introduced a Public Bicycle Sharing (PBS) system to enhance last-mile connectivity.

What is its significance?

As stated by the World Health Organization (WHO), active mobility in all its forms has economic, social, environmental, and health benefits. The economic benefits include reduced household expenditure on fuel and transportation and lower healthcare costs due to enhanced public health. It also boosts local businesses since pedestrian-friendly infrastructure attracts higher foot traffic.

Walking and cycling are sustainable modes of transport as compared to motorised vehicles due to their marginal carbon emissions. They enhance energy security and significantly reduce India's 12% carbon emissions from road transportation. Cities with well-developed infrastructure for active transport report cleaner air and reduced traffic congestion. Moreover, active modes of transport are known to reduce the risk of chronic diseases, improve cardiovascular health, promote mental well-being, and enhance public health among citizens. It is a mode of transportation that makes cities more vibrant and climate-conscious.

What are the barriers?

Active mobility remains severely underutilised because urban infrastructure actively discourages it. The lack of adequate pedestrian and cyclist-friendly infrastructure hinders active mobility as a primary mode of transport. As of 2021, more than 85% of roads do not meet the minimum safety requirements for walking and cycling. This is also accompanied by the availability of low-cost, alternative modes of motorised transport. Additionally, extreme weather conditions and long distances of travel discourage people from adopting active modes of transport.

Moreover, social perceptions act as significant barriers. In many regions, cars and bikes are associated with a higher social status. India has a burgeoning number of privately owned motor vehicles plying on the road. According to the Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers, over 12,000 cars are sold every day in India. High traffic congestion, along with weak enforcement of traffic regulations, makes walking and cycling unsafe.

How have other countries fared?

With more than 35,000 km of dedicated cycling lanes, The Netherlands is a global leader in promoting active mobility through cycling. The European Union's Mobility and Transport department prioritises promoting walking and cycling as a means of transport to enable more sustainable mobility. This is accompanied by Vision Zero, which aims to mitigate the number of incidents between pedestrians, cyclists, and motor vehicles. Germany's Berlin Mobility Act mandates wider sidewalks and dedicated cycling lanes, reduced speed limits for motorised vehicles within city limits, and prioritises pedestrians/cyclists in urban planning.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper III; Economics

Source: The Hindu

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