

1. Why Was a Ship 'Arrested' in Kerala?

Introduction

The Kerala High Court has ordered the conditional arrest of the Liberian ship MSC Akiteta II, currently at Vizhinjam port. This comes after the Kerala government filed a case (admiralty suit) seeking ₹9,531 crore in compensation for environmental damage caused by the sinking of another ship, MSC Elsa III, on May 25.

MSC Elsa III, operated by the same group that runs MSC Akiteta II, capsized off the Kerala coast with over 600 containers, some carrying hazardous substances, plastic pellets, and diesel, allegedly polluting the marine ecosystem.



What Is an Admiralty Suit?

An admiralty suit is a legal case related to maritime disputes. In India, these are governed by the Admiralty (Jurisdiction and Settlement of Maritime Claims) Act, 2017.

Under this law, High Courts can handle claims related to:

- Ship damage or ownership disputes
- Loss of life at sea
- Wages of seafarers
- Environmental damage caused by vessels

Which Courts Can Hear Maritime Cases?

Initially, only the High Courts in Bombay, Calcutta, and Madras could hear such cases.

The 2017 law extended jurisdiction to:

- Kerala
- Karnataka
- Odisha
- Telangana
- Andhra Pradesh

These courts have authority up to 12 nautical miles into the sea, including the seabed, subsoil, and airspace above.

How Is Environmental Damage Addressed?

Section 4 of the Admiralty Act allows courts to decide on claims for environmental damage caused by a ship, including costs of clean-up and compensation.

Other relevant laws include:

- Merchant Shipping Act, 1958 – holds shipowners responsible for oil pollution
- Environment Protection Act, 1986 – enables action against polluters
- National Green Tribunal (NGT) – can impose environmental fines (e.g., ₹100 crore penalty in a 2016 oil spill case)

Kerala's Compensation Claims: A Breakdown

In its suit, Kerala demanded that MSC Akiteta II be detained until the ship owners pay or provide security for ₹9,531 crore. The claim includes:

- ₹8,626 crore – for environmental damage
- ₹378 crore – for clean-up and remediation work
- ₹526 crore – for economic losses of fishermen

The court found enough merit in Kerala's case to order the detention of the vessel.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; Governance

Source: The Hindu

2. PM Modi Visits Namibia: A Historic Step

Introduction

- First visit by an Indian PM in nearly 30 years to Namibia, a key African partner.
- Final stop in Modi's five-country tour of the Global South.
- Aims to boost ties in technology, healthcare, energy, development, infrastructure, and security cooperation.

India–Namibia Ties: A Shared Journey

- India was among the first countries to support Namibia's independence movement.
- 1946: India raised Namibia's case at the United Nations General Assembly.
- 1986: The SWAPO (liberation movement) opened its first embassy in New Delhi.
- India provided military training, material aid, and diplomatic support to SWAPO.
- After independence in 1990, the Indian mission was upgraded to a High Commission.
- SWAPO leader and first Namibian President Sam Nujoma visited India 11 times, praising India's crucial support.

India's Last PM Visit & Strategic Engagement

- Atal Bihari Vajpayee visited in 1998 before the Durban NAM summit.
- His visit was crucial to avoid criticism of India's 1998 nuclear tests in the NAM declaration.
- Pranab Mukherjee's 2016 visit reaffirmed India's commitment to South-South cooperation and development partnership.



Why Namibia Matters to India

- Rich in critical minerals:
 - 3rd-largest producer of uranium
 - Major reserves of lithium, zinc, and rare earth metals

Trade and Investment Highlights

- India–Namibia trade hit \$654 million (April–Nov 2023), up 178% year-on-year.
- India's exports: \$418 million (pharma, machinery, cereals)
- Imports from Namibia: \$235 million (mainly mineral oil and ores)
- \$800 million in Indian investments, mainly in zinc mining, diamond processing, and minerals.

Development, Aid, and Skill Building

- India Wing at University of Namibia, built with a \$12 million grant.
- India has trained Namibian defence officers, diplomats, doctors, and cricketers under the ITEC program.
- Supplied 30,000 Covishield doses in 2021 and rice aid during droughts in 2017 and 2019.
- Namibia has backed India's bid for permanent UN Security Council membership.

Cheetah Diplomacy: A Unique Partnership

- In 2022, India and Namibia signed an MoU to reintroduce cheetahs into Indian forests.
- 8 cheetahs were flown to India — the world's first intercontinental large carnivore translocation.
- Symbolic of deepening ecological and wildlife cooperation.

India's Expanding Role in Africa

- India–Africa trade: ~\$100 billion in 2023, making India Africa's 4th largest trading partner.
- India is 10th largest FDI source, with \$76 billion invested since 1996.
- Has completed 206 development projects in 43 African countries, with 65 more underway.
- Promotes local ownership, capacity building, and mutual development, avoiding exploitative models.

India vs China: Two Models in Africa

- China's trade with Africa: Over \$200 billion.
- Concerns over Chinese debt traps and foreign control of African resources.
- Two of Namibia's uranium mines are Chinese-owned.
- India's approach is non-exploitative and humanitarian, focused on trust, empowerment, and solidarity.

Security & Global Engagement

- India conducts regular military exercises with African nations:
 - AF-INDEX (Africa-India Field Training Exercise)
 - India-Africa Defence Dialogue (2022)
- Promotes maritime security via SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region).
- Under India's G20 presidency, the African Union became a permanent G20 member.
- India leverages NAM legacy, ITEC programs, and defence diplomacy to strengthen Africa ties.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; International Relations

Source: Indian Express

3. Melting Glaciers Could Trigger More Volcanic Eruptions

Introduction



As glaciers and ice caps melt due to global warming, they could increase the frequency and intensity of volcanic eruptions, according to a new study presented at the 2025 Goldschmidt Geochemistry Conference in Prague.

Why This Happens: Less Ice, More Pressure on Volcanoes

- Ice adds pressure on underground magma chambers, keeping volcanic activity suppressed.
- When glaciers melt, this pressure drops,

allowing magma and gases to expand, which can lead to explosive eruptions.

- This effect is not new: volcanic activity in Iceland increased 30 to 50 times after major deglaciation around 15,000 years ago.

Climate Change Also Affects Precipitation & Eruption Triggers

- Rainfall patterns (also changing due to climate change) can penetrate deep underground and react with magma, triggering eruptions.

Volcanic Eruptions: Cooling or Warming?

- Short-term cooling: Ash and sulfur dioxide block sunlight and reduce temperatures.
 - Sulfur dioxide forms sulfuric acid aerosols, which reflect sunlight.
 - These aerosols can remain in the stratosphere for up to 3 years, causing global cooling.
- Long-term warming: Prolonged volcanic activity can emit greenhouse gases like CO₂ and methane, contributing to global warming.

A Dangerous Climate Feedback Loop

- Melting glaciers → More eruptions → More CO₂ and methane → More warming → More ice loss
- This vicious cycle could worsen climate change unless global emissions are curbed.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper III; Environment

Source: The Hindu

4. Government Claims India Is Among the Most Equal Countries

Introduction

- The government cited a World Bank report stating India has a Gini Index of 25.5, placing it as the fourth most equal country, after Slovakia, Slovenia, and Belarus.
- It claimed this shows the benefits of economic growth are being evenly distributed.

- But this claim has been challenged by experts who say the full context and limitations of the data were not considered.

What Is the Gini Index?

- The Gini Index (or coefficient) measures inequality on a scale of 0 (perfect equality) to 1 (complete inequality).
- A lower score means more equality.
- It's widely used, but has serious limitations, especially when used alone or without context.

What the Government Missed

- The World Bank report itself included a warning:
"Inequality may be underestimated due to data limitations."
- The World Inequality Database, which uses income tax data, showed India's income Gini Index rose from 52 (2004) to 62 (2023).
- It also found the top 10% earned 13 times more than the bottom 10% in 2023–24.
- These facts were left out of the government's release.

Why Consumption-Based Gini Underestimates Inequality

- India's Gini Index is based on consumption data, not income.
- Most countries use income-based Gini, making direct comparisons misleading.
- Why this matters:
 - Richer people save more, so their consumption doesn't fully reflect their income.
 - This leads to lower inequality estimates in consumption-based measures.

Survey Limitations: The Rich Are Often Missing

- Surveys often miss the top 1% of earners — the ones driving most inequality.
- Two key reasons:
 1. Rich people avoid surveys (called differential non-response).
 2. Sampling methods rarely include the ultra-rich.
- As a result, surveys understate inequality, even if everyone else is improving.

A Better Approach: Combine Surveys With Tax Data

- Studies in countries like the US and UK found that income tax data helps fix the gaps in survey data.
- The World Inequality Lab uses this method to estimate India's Gini more accurately.
- Their findings suggest inequality is much worse than what consumption-based measures show.

Limitations of the Gini Index

- Even the Gini Index itself is imperfect.
- It's more sensitive to changes in the middle of the population than at the extremes.
- This means it can miss the growing gap between the top 1% and bottom 50%.

Inequality Today: Worse Than Colonial Times

- Studies using income tax data show that:
 - Inequality today is worse than during British rule.
 - The top 1% earn more than the bottom 50% combined.

Why Measuring Inequality Accurately Matters

- Knowing the real extent of inequality helps shape better public policies.
- Misleading numbers can lead to poor or harmful decisions that widen inequality.
- If ignored, inequality can lead to social unrest and slow down long-term economic growth.

The Takeaway

Relying only on a consumption-based Gini Index, especially without full context, gives a distorted picture of India's inequality.

For accurate assessment, India needs to use income-based data, including tax records, and adopt more sensitive inequality measures.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper III; Economics

Source: Indian Express

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