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Current Affairs : 11 October 2023

SC TO HEAR PETITION CHALLENGING ELECTORAL BONDS

Why in news?

- The Supreme Court has said that it will hear petitions challenging the electoral bonds scheme on October 31.
- The petitions were filed by two NGOs — Common Cause and Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) — challenging the scheme.
- As per the petitioners, anonymous funding through electoral bonds promotes corruption and violates the citizens' right to have a corruption-free nation.

What are Electoral bonds (EBs)?

- **About**
 - Electoral bonds are a financial instrument introduced by the Government of India in 2018 to facilitate anonymous political donations.
 - An electoral bond is a bearer instrument, like a promissory note, that is payable to the bearer on demand to donate their contributions to political parties.
- **Who are eligible to receive electoral bonds?**
 - Only registered political parties are eligible to receive electoral bonds.
 - However, there are certain criteria that political parties must meet to be eligible to receive electoral bonds. These are:
- **Recognition:** The political party must be **registered under Section 29A** of the Representation of the People Act, 1951.
- **Recent Election Performance:** The party must have secured **at least 1%** of the votes polled in the most recent Lok Sabha or State Assembly election.
- **Available denominations**
 - The Government of India has specified various denominations for electoral bonds, ranging from Rs. 1,000 to Rs. 1 crore.
- **Authorized bank**
 - SBI is the only bank authorised to sell these bonds.



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- **Working**
 - A citizen of India or a body incorporated in India is eligible to purchase the bond.
 - EBs are issued/purchased for any value, in multiples of Rs 1,000, Rs 10,000, Rs 1,00,000, Rs 10,00,000 and Rs 1,00,00,000 from the specified branches of SBI.
 - EBs have a life of only 15 days during which it can be used for making donation only to the registered political parties.
 - The bonds shall be available for purchase for a period of 10 days each in the months of January, April, July and October as may be specified by the Central Government.
 - The bond can be encashed by an eligible political party only through a designated bank account with the authorised bank.
 - The political parties have to disclose the amount to the Election Commission.

What are the Key features of electoral bonds?

- **Anonymity:**
 - Electoral bonds provide anonymity to the donor by not revealing the identity of the donor to the public or the recipient political party.
- **Purchase and Redemption:**
 - Electoral bonds can be purchased from authorized banks using legal tender.
 - They are available in fixed denominations, and the minimum value of an electoral bond is set by the government.
 - These bonds can be redeemed only by registered political parties within a specified time frame.
- **Validity:**
 - Electoral bonds are valid for a limited period, typically 15 days, during which they can be used for making donations to eligible political parties.
- **Exclusivity:**
 - Only political parties that have secured at least 1% of the votes in the most recent Lok Sabha or State Assembly election are eligible to receive electoral bond donations.
- **Transparency:**



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- While the names of donors remain anonymous, the political parties receiving the electoral bond donations are required to disclose details of the donations in their financial statements to the Election Commission of India.
- **Concerns raised by RBI and EC**
- RBI and the ECI have raised concerns about electoral bonds. They said that electoral bonds could:
 - Increase black money circulation, money laundering, cross-border counterfeiting, and forgery;
 - Set a bad precedent by encouraging money laundering and undermining faith in Indian banknotes;
 - Erode a core principle of central banking legislation;
 - Legitimize opacity in how elections are funded;
 - Become vehicles for money laundering for shell companies and foreign donations.

WHY GANDHI OPPOSED A JEWISH NATION-STATE IN PALESTINE

Context

- Mahatma Gandhi's article 'The Jews' has been the subject of intense debate over the years. It has been cited as evidence of his naivety by some, while others have seen it as further proof of his deep commitment to non-violence, regardless of consequences.
- Amidst the latest bloody chapter in the history of Israel and Palestine, it is important to look back and assess what Gandhi had to say on this.

Mahatma Gandhi's Views on Jews and A Separate Jewish Homeland

- Showed Great Sympathy for Jews
- The Mahatma always made it clear that he had deep sympathies for the Jewish people who had historically been unjustly persecuted for their religion.
- He said in his article, "My sympathies are all with the Jews. They have been the untouchables of Christianity. Religious sanction has been invoked for the justification of the inhuman treatment meted out to them."



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- He further said that the **German persecution of the Jews** seems to have no parallel in history and expressed his **concern with Britain's policy of placating Adolf Hitler** at the time (**before World War II broke out**).
- The Mahatma declared that **for the cause of humanity and to prevent the persecution of the Jewish people, even a war with Germany would be completely justified.**
- **Yet, Gandhi was Against a Zionist State in Palestine**
- He held the view that it is **wrong and inhumane to impose the Jews on the Arabs.**
- He believed it would be a **crime against humanity to reduce the proud Arabs so that Palestine can be restored to the Jews** partly or wholly as their national home.

Reasons Behind His Opposition to A Jewish Homeland

- **Religious Text Cannot be A Pretext for the Creation of a Separate State**
- Mahatma Gandhi believed Palestine was already home to Arab Palestinians, and the **settlement of Jews, which Britain actively enabled, was fundamentally violent.**
- A religious act [the act of Jews returning to Palestine] cannot be performed with the aid of the bayonet or the bomb.
- Gandhi felt that the **Jews can settle in Palestine only with the goodwill of Arabs and for that they had to forgo the British bayonet.**
- **A Jewish Homeland was Against the Idea of Jews' Struggle Across the Globe**
- Gandhi felt that the **idea of a Jewish homeland was fundamentally antithetical towards their fight for greater rights elsewhere in the world.**
- And he was not unique in sharing this position at the time.
- He wrote in his article if the Jews have no home but Palestine, **will they relish the idea of being forced to leave the other parts of the world in which they are settled.**
- He further said that the **Jewish claim for a national home afforded a colourable justification for the German expulsion of the Jews.**

Conclusion



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- Mahatma Gandhi held his views on the Palestine-Israel problem till his death, blaming the singling out and wronging the Jews.
- At the same time, he always reiterated his long-held opposition to a separate nation for the Jewish Community.
- For many decades, his views dominated the Indian foreign policy until recently when India dehypheneted the India-Israel-Palestine relations and established strong ties with Israel.

KEY FACTS ABOUT GAZA STRIP

Israel recently ordered a full siege of the Gaza Strip and vowed to obliterate Hamas after its all-out offensive entered the next phase.



About Gaza Strip:

- The Gaza Strip is a self-governing Palestinian territory located on the eastern coast of the Mediterranean Sea.
- The territory takes its name from Gaza, its main city.
- It forms the smaller of the two Palestinian territories — the other being the West Bank.
- Bordering Countries: It is bordered by Israel to the north and east and Egypt to the south.
- Size: It is a 41km (25-mile) long and 10km-wide territory.
- Climate: It has a temperate climate, with mild winters, and dry, hot summer.
- Population:
 - It is one of the most densely populated areas in the world. More than 2 million people live in the territory.
 - The population is predominantly Palestinian, with the majority being Sunni Muslims.

History:

- After Israel declared its statehood in 1948, Egypt controlled the Gaza Strip for nearly two decades
- Israel then gained control of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank after its victory in the 1967 Six-Day War against its Arab neighbours.



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- For the **next 38 years**, **Israel controlled the strip** and enabled the construction of 21 Jewish settlements.
- **In 2005**, under international and domestic pressure, **Israel withdrew** around 9,000 Israeli settlers and its military forces **from the Gaza Strip**, leaving the enclave to be governed by the **internationally recognised Palestinian Authority**, which also controlled parts of the occupied West Bank.

Who controls it now?

- **Hamas**, a Palestinian Islamist organisation, currently **governs the Gaza Strip**.
- It **took control in 2007** after it **won elections** there the year before. Since then, no elections have been held.
- **Hamas**, unlike the Palestinian Authority, **doesn't recognize Israel's right to exist**.
- **Israel has maintained a land, air and sea blockade** on Gaza since 2007.

WHAT ARE WHITE GOODS?

The government recently tightened its oversight over the selected applicants under the Production Linked Incentive for white goods.



About White Goods:

- White goods are **large home appliances** such as stoves, refrigerators, freezers, washing machines, tumble driers, dishwashers, and air conditioners.
- They are **large consumer durables** for the house which were **traditionally available only in white**.
- Even though you can purchase them today in a wide range of different colors, they **continue being called white goods**.
- White goods are known for their **durability and longevity**, as they are designed to withstand the demands of daily use.
- The term may also refer to **white fabrics**, especially **linen or cotton** – articles such as curtains, towels, or sheets that historically used to be made of white cloth.



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- In the beverage industry, white goods are colorless spirits, such as vodka or gin.

What are Brown Goods?

- They are **relatively light electronic consumer durables** such as **computers, digital media players, TVs and radios**.
- Unlike large household appliances (white goods), brown goods are **more focused on entertainment, communication, and convenience**.
- These devices **often have electronic components**, and their **primary function is to provide audio, video, or data-related services**.

INDIAN OCEAN RIM ASSOCIATION (IORA)

Sri Lanka set to take over chairmanship of Indian Ocean Rim Association during 23rd Council of Ministers' Meeting.



About Indian Ocean Rim Association:

- It was **established in 1997** as an **intergovernmental organisation** of States on the rim of the Indian Ocean.
- **Member countries:**
 - It has members from **Africa, West Asia, South Asia, Southeast Asia** , Europe and Oceania.
 - The Association's membership has expanded to **23 member states** and 11 dialogue partners.
 - **Asia:** India, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Iran, Malaysia, Maldives, Oman, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand, United Arab Emirates and Yemen.
 - **Africa:** Kenya, Madagascar, Mozambique, Somalia , South Africa, Tanzania, Comoros, Mauritius, Seychelles.
 - **Oceania:** Australia.
 - **Europe:** France
- Its apex body is the **Council of Foreign Ministers** (COM) which **meets annually**.
- IORA has identified **six priority areas** namely: Trade and Investment, Maritime Safety and Security, Fisheries Management, Disaster Risk Management and Blue Economy.



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- The secretariat is based in Ebène Mauritius and is overseen by a secretary-general who is appointed for a three-year period.

BAIGA TRIBAL GROUP GETS HABITAT RIGHTS IN CHHATTISGARH

Why in news?

- The Baiga Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG) became the second to get habitat rights in Chhattisgarh, after the Kamar PVTG.
- There are seven PVTGs in Chhattisgarh, who live in 17 of the state's 33 districts.
- These are Kamar, Baiga, Pahadi Korba, Abujhadiya, Birhor, Pando and Bhujia.
- A total of 19 Baiga villages with a population of 6,483 people (2,085 families) have been given the habitat rights.

What is a Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG)?

- PVTGs are more vulnerable among the tribal groups.
- Due to this factor, more developed and assertive tribal groups take a major chunk of the tribal development funds, because of which PVTGs need more funds directed for their development.
- In this context, in 1975, the Government of India declared 52 tribal groups as PVTGs on the recommendation of Dhebar commission.
- Currently, there are 75 PVTGs out of 705 Scheduled Tribes.
- The PVTGs are spread over 18 states and one UT, in the country (2011 census).
- Odisha has the highest number (more than 2.5 lakh) of PVTGs.

Characteristics of PVTGs:

- Population – stagnant/declining
- Technology – pre-agricultural
- Literacy Level – extremely low
- Economy – Subsistence level

Baiga PVTG

- About



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- The Baiga are an ethnic group in central India. They are one of the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs).
- The Baiga live in the following states:
 - Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Bihar, Odisha, West Bengal.
- They have **sub-castes** – Bijnhar, Narotia, Bharotiya, Nahar, Rai Bhaina, and Kadh Bhaina.
- **Occupation:**
 - Traditionally, the Baiga lived a semi-nomadic life and practised slash-and-burn cultivation.
 - Now, they are mainly dependent on minor forest produce for their livelihood.
 - They practice a form of shifting cultivation called, "Bewar."
- **Features**
 - Mahua is an important aspect of Baiga's food and drink.
 - It is an intoxicant prepared from the fermentation and distillation of the flowers of the Mahua tree.
 - Tattooing is an integral part of Baiga culture, every age and body part has a specific tattoo reserved for the occasion.
 - It was below the dignity of a Baiga to become a labourer.
 - Members of the Baiga tribe do not interact even with other tribals like the Gonds, as interaction with any other tribe is a crime for them.
 - After a death in the family, the Baigas leave the house and build another one.

What are habitat rights?

- Recognizing habitat rights means giving a community the authority over where they live traditionally, their customs, how they make a living, their knowledge about nature, and how they use natural resources.
- It also involves safeguarding their environment and cultural heritage.
- Habitat rights safeguard and promote traditional livelihood and ecological knowledge passed down through generations.