

CTBT & WHY HAS INDIA REFUSED TO SIGN THE TREATY

Why in News?

- Russia indicated that it was moving swiftly towards revoking its ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) after President Vladimir Putin held out the possibility of resuming nuclear testing.

About Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT):

- The Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty **prohibits “any nuclear weapon test explosion or any other nuclear explosion” anywhere in the world.**
- The treaty was opened for signature in September 1996, and has been signed by 187 nations and ratified by 178.
- The treaty cannot formally enter into force until it is ratified by 44 specific nations, eight of which have yet to do so: **India, China, Pakistan, North Korea, Israel, Iran, Egypt,** and the **United States.**
- In order to verify compliance with its provisions, the treaty establishes a global network of monitoring facilities and allows for on-site inspections of suspicious events.
- Since the conclusion and opening for signature of the CTBT, nuclear testing has become taboo.
- Today, even those nuclear-armed states that have not signed or not ratified the CTBT, including India, Israel, and Pakistan, observe nuclear testing moratoriums.
- Only one country has conducted nuclear test explosions in this century, and even that country—North Korea—halted nuclear testing in 2017.
- Although the CTBT has not formally entered into force, the treaty has, for now, achieved its primary goal: ending nuclear weapon test explosions.

Did CTBT Stop Nuclear Testing?

- Since the CTBT, 10 nuclear tests have taken place.
- India conducted two in 1998, Pakistan also two in 1998, and North Korea conducted tests in 2006, 2009, 2013, 2016 (twice) and 2017.

- The United States last tested in 1992, China and France in 1996 and the Soviet Union in 1990.
- Russia, which inherited most of the Soviet nuclear arsenal, has never conducted a nuclear test.

Why has India Refused to Sign the CTBT?

- India advocated a test ban years before it came into being.
- Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru made the first call for an “immediate standstill” agreement on nuclear testing between the United States and the former Soviet Union as early as 1954.
- However, this call was sabotaged by the nuclear weapons states (NWS) on the ground that it was “difficult to evolve a fool proof verification system”.
- Post the 1964 Chinese nuclear test, an Indian debate began on the pros and cons of advocating a test ban and nuclear disarmament.
- Subsequent developments including **China’s attainment of ballistic missile capability** and America’s attempt to intimidate India during the course of the **1971 War** only reinforced Indian security concerns.

India’s Stand on CTBT:

- India’s decision to not sign the CTBT is primarily based on national security considerations.
- India views nuclear weapons as a deterrent against potential security threats from neighbouring countries, especially Pakistan and China.
- India also feels that signing the CTBT would undermine its national security and strategic autonomy, as it would constrain its ability to conduct nuclear tests.
- India’s decision is rooted in its desire for equitable and universal nuclear disarmament, as well as its national security concerns.

WHAT IS A CONSTITUTION BENCH OF THE SUPREME COURT?

The Supreme Court (SC) recently said it is considering having a sign language interpreter for the hearing impaired during Constitution bench hearings.



About Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court:

- Generally, **most of the cases before the SC are heard by a division bench** (2 or 3 judge members).
- If a case is likely to have a larger national impact or it is likely to decide the law for good, a **constitution bench is formed.**
- Constitution bench **gives an overarching view on a question of law** and defines a path the law will take in the future.
- **Article 145(3)** of the Constitution makes it clear. It says “**any case involving a substantial question of law as to the interpretation of the Constitution**” must be **decided by a Bench of at least five judges.**
- In India, these benches are **temporary and are dissolved once** a legal question or issue is settled.

Size:

- It will have **five or more judges of the SC.**
- A **larger bench is constituted** either depending on the importance of the issue or if there is a **need to review the judgment** of a smaller bench.
- For instance, a seven-judge bench is constituted if a need is felt to review the judgment of a five-judge bench.
- To date, **the largest-ever Constitution Bench was that of 13 judges in the case Kesavananda Bharati v. State of Kerala.** The Kesavananda Bharati judgment, delivered on 24 April 1973, in a historic 7:6 majority decision, propounded the basic structure doctrine of the Constitution, which holds that certain fundamental features of the Constitution cannot be amended by parliament.

Who forms the Constitution bench and when?

- The **Chief Justice of India** has the power to **set up a Constitution bench**, and he is the one who refers cases to it.
- Currently, there are **four situations when such a bench can be formed.**

- First, if a case involves a “substantial question of law” related to the interpretation of the Constitution.
 - Second, a bench can be formed **if the President seeks SC’s opinion on a law or fact**. In this case, however, the apex court’s **decision is not binding on the President**, and they can take a different point of view.
 - Third, a Constitution bench can be formed **when a two-judge bench and later a three-judge bench deliver conflicting judgements** on the same issue.
 - Lastly, it can be formed **if a three-judge bench delivers a judgement** that is **different from the judgement delivered by a previous three-judge bench on an issue**.
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WHEN CAN A BILL BE DESIGNATED AS A MONEY BILL

Why in news?

- Chief Justice of India said that a seven-judge bench will soon be set up to hear a batch of pleas challenging the Centre’s use of the money bill route to pass certain key legislations.
- CJI’s observation about setting up a seven-judge bench came during the hearing challenging set of amendments to the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA).

Finance Bill

- In a general sense, any Bill that relates to revenue or expenditure is a financial Bill.
 - A money Bill is also a specific type of financial Bill, that must deal only with matters specified in Article 110 (1) (a) to (g).
- Financial bills are responsible for the fiscal matters such as government spending or revenue.
- It specifies the amount of money to be spent by the government and the way it is to be spent.
- More specifically, Article 117 of the Constitution deals with the special provisions relating to financial Bills.
- Financial bills are a component of the constitution and the union budget.

Money Bill

- Article 110 defines a money Bill as one containing provisions dealing with taxes, regulation of the government's borrowing of money, and expenditure or receipt of money from the Consolidated Fund of India, among others.
- Article 109 delineates the procedure for the passage of such a Bill and confers an overriding authority on the Lok Sabha in the passage of money Bills.
- **The Speaker certifies a Bill as a Money Bill, and the Speaker's decision is final.**
- Over the last seven years, the government has introduced multiple legislations through the money Bill route, the most notable of which are the **Aadhaar Act, 2016**, and the Finance Act, 2017.

What is the difference between money Bills and financial Bills?

- While all Money Bills are Financial Bills, all Financial Bills are not Money Bills.
 - E.g., the Finance Bill which only contains provisions related to tax proposals would be a Money Bill.
 - However, a Bill that contains some provisions related to taxation or expenditure, but also covers other matters would be considered as a Financial Bill.
 - The Compensatory Afforestation Fund Bill, 2015, which establishes funds under the Public Account of India and states, was introduced as a Financial Bill.
- The procedure for the passage of the two bills varies significantly.
 - **The Rajya Sabha has no power to reject or amend a Money Bill.**
 - After being passed by the Lok Sabha, money Bills are sent to the Rajya Sabha for its recommendations.
 - Within 14 days, the Upper House must submit the Bill back to the Lower House with its non-binding recommendations.
 - If the Lok Sabha rejects the recommendations, the Bill is deemed to have passed by both Houses in the form in which it was passed by the Lok Sabha without the recommendations of the Rajya Sabha.
 - Even if the Rajya Sabha doesn't respond with its recommendations within 14 days, the same consequences would follow.

- However, a Financial Bill must be passed by both Houses of Parliament.
 - While an ordinary Bill can originate in either house, **a money Bill can only be introduced in the Lok Sabha**, as laid down in Article 117 (1).
 - Additionally, no one can introduce or move money Bills in the Lok Sabha, except on the President's recommendation.
 - Amendments relating to the reduction or abolition of any tax are exempt from the requirement of the President's recommendation.
 - The two prerequisites for any financial Bill to become a money Bill are that
 - It must only be introduced in the Lok Sabha and not the Rajya Sabha.
 - These bills can only be introduced on the President's recommendation.
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PROTEIN BINDERS

Recently, the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) clarified that addition of protein binders in milk and milk products are not permitted.



Why in news?

- This clarification came at a time when certain players are adding protein binders to offer **thicker texture in dairy products** such as curd.

About Protein binders:

- These are biological agents have emerged as an important and required class of ingredients to manufacture a wide range of **new food products, especially semi-solid or solid foods**.
- These are known to **affect the digestibility of the protein** bound and thus can affect the biological and nutritive value of milk proteins.
- Protein binding also influences the bioavailability and distribution of active compounds.

What is milk protein?

- It is a good source of **essential amino acids**.

- They are **easily digestible** and do not contain any **anti-nutritional factors** like many plant-based proteins.

Key facts about FSSAI

- It is a **statutory body** established under the **Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006** (FSS Act).
- FSS Act, of 2006 consolidated various acts & orders that had earlier handled food-related issues in various Ministries and Departments.
- **Nodal ministry:** Ministry of Health & Family Welfare.

WHAT IS PUSA-44?

Recently, Punjab Chief Minister announced that the state will ban the cultivation of the PUSA-44 paddy variety from next year onwards.



About PUSA-44:

- It is a **paddy variety** which was developed in 1993 by the **Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR)**.
- By the end of 2010s, it had gained widespread popularity among farmers across the Punjab, covering approximately **70 to 80% of the area under paddy cultivation**.
- Farmers claim that PUSA-44 yields nearly 85 to 100 mann (34 to 40 quintals) per acre, while other varieties' yield average is 28 to 30 quintals per acre.

Concerns

- It is a **long-duration variety**, taking around 160 days to mature.
- This is around 35 to 40 days more than other varieties, requiring 5-6 extra cycles of irrigation.
- With Punjab facing **severe groundwater depletion** and the availability of short-duration paddy varieties, the government aims to conserve one month of irrigation water by banning the variety.
- Moreover, this variety is also known to **exacerbate** the long-running issue of **stubble burning in the state**.

- This variety generates around **2 per cent more stubble** than short varieties, which becomes a significant concern when cultivated on a large scale.

Key facts about the ICAR

- It is an **autonomous organisation** under the Department of Agricultural Research and Education (DARE), **Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare**, Government of India.
- It was formerly known as Imperial Council of Agricultural Research.
- It was established on 16 July 1929 as a registered society under the **Societies Registration Act, 1860** in pursuance of the report of the Royal Commission on Agriculture.
- The Council is the apex body for **co-ordinating, guiding and managing research** and education in **agriculture** including horticulture, fisheries and animal sciences in the entire country.
- With 113 ICAR institutes and 71 agricultural universities spread across the country this is one of the largest national agricultural systems in the world.
- **Headquarters:** New Delhi.

WHAT IS PM VISHWAKARMA SCHEME?

- It is a **Central Sector Scheme** launched on 17th September, 2023, with a financial outlay of **Rs.13,000 crore**.
- **Time period:** Five years (FY 2023-24 to FY 2027-28).
- **Aim:**
 - **This initiative supports** small businesses, focusing on **traditional artists and craftspeople**.
 - It **provides small workers and craftsmen with financial help, training, improved methods, and skill mentoring**.
 - It also **aims at improving the quality as well as the reach of the products** and services of artisans and craftsmen.
- Under this scheme, the artisans and craftspeople **will be provided recognition through the PM Vishwakarma certificate and ID card, credit support upto 1 lakh (first tranche) and Rs.2 lakh (second tranche), with a concessional interest rate of 5%**.

PM SVANIDHI SCHEME:

- Pradhan Mantri Street Vendor's AtmaNirbhar Nidhi (PM SVANidhi) Scheme was launched by the Government of India in June, 2020.
 - **Objective:** To **empower street vendors** by not only **extending loans to them** but also for their holistic development and economic upliftment.
 - The scheme intends to **facilitate-collateral free working capital loans of up to Rs.10,000/- of one-year tenure, to approximately 50 lakh street vendors.**
 - **Nodal Ministry:** Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs
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