

LOK SABHA CLEARS ANTARCTIC BILL, THIS SESSION'S FIRST

In News:

- The Indian Antarctic Bill, 2022, which seeks to extend the jurisdiction of Indian courts to the icy continent, became the first Bill to be cleared by the Lok Sabha during the ongoing monsoon session of the Parliament.
- The Bill seeks to give effect to the Antarctic Treaty.

Antarctic Treaty System:

- The Antarctic Treaty and related agreements, collectively known as the Antarctic Treaty System (ATS), are a set of arrangements made for the purpose of regulating relations among states in the Antarctic.
- Major components of the ATS include:
 - Antarctic Treaty (1959)
 - Convention for the Conservation of Antarctic Seals (1972)
 - Convention on the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (1980)
 - Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty (1991)

About Antarctic Treaty:



- The Antarctic Treaty was signed in Washington D.C. in 1959 and came into force in June, 1961.
- This legally binding treaty was signed to ensure the peaceful use of the continent to

promote interests of all mankind.

- In order to achieve this goal, the Antarctic Treaty:
 - Prohibits military activity, except in support of science;
 - Prohibits nuclear explosions and the disposal of nuclear waste;

- Promotes scientific research and the exchange of data;
- Holds all territorial claims in abeyance.
- The Treaty applies to the area south of 60° South Latitude, including all ice shelves and islands.
- **Headquarters:** Buenos Aires, Argentina

Membership:

- The original signatories were the 12 countries active in Antarctic during the International Geophysical Year (IGY) of 1957–58:
 - Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Chile, France, Japan, New Zealand, Norway, South Africa, the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom, and the United States.
 - India signed the treaty in 1983.
- Currently 54 member states are signatories to the Antarctic Treaty.

Madrid Protocol:

- The Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty was signed in Madrid and came into force in 1998.
- It harmonised and expanded on a range of earlier provisions relating to protection of the Antarctic environment.
- The Parties to the protocol commit to comprehensively protect the environment of the Antarctic region and dependent and associated ecosystems.
- 42 member states (**including India**) are parties to the Madrid Protocol to the Antarctic Treaty.

India in Antarctic:

- The Indian Antarctic Programme is a multi-disciplinary, multi-institutional programme under the control of the National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research, Ministry of Earth Sciences.
- India's first research station in Antarctic, named Dakshin Gangotri, was commissioned in 1983.
 - It was decommissioned in 1990 after half of it got buried under the ice.
- India currently has two active research stations in Antarctic:
 - **Maitri** (commissioned in 1989)
 - **Bharati** (commissioned in 2012)

News Summary:

- The Indian Antarctic Bill 2022 has been passed in Lok Sabha. This bill is set to become the first domestic legislation with regard to Antarctica in India.

Need for such Legislation:

- While India has been sending expeditions to Antarctic for the past 40 years, these expeditions have been circumscribed by international law.
- The Bill now puts into place a comprehensive list of regulations related to Antarctic, for such scientific expeditions, as well as for individuals, companies and tourists.
- The Ministry of Earth Sciences has explained that it expects activity in Antarctic to increase in the coming years, making the enforcement of a domestic set of protocols essential.

Key Provisions of the Bill:

- The Bill is a comprehensive document of regulations, particularly keeping in mind environmental protection and the fragile nature of the region.
- **Requirement of Permit:**
 - No person in an Indian expedition shall enter or remain in Antarctic without a permit or the written authorisation of another party to the Protocol.
- **Commercial Fishing:**
 - Every country has an allotted quota for commercial fishing in Antarctic. However, India does not carry out commercial fishing in the area.
 - The Bill, in accordance to the Antarctic Treaty, now permits commercial fishing activity for Indians in Antarctic.
- **Tourism Activity:**
 - India does not carry out any tourism activity in the region, and very few Indian tourists visit Antarctic through foreign tour operators.
 - The Bill now enables Indian tour operators to operate in Antarctic, although, like for commercial fishing, this is circumscribed by strict regulations.
- **Environmental Protection:**
 - The Bill prohibits drilling, dredging, excavation or collection of mineral resources or even doing anything to identify where such mineral deposits occur — the only exception is for scientific research with a granted permit.

- The introduction of animals, birds, plants or microscopic organisms that are not native to Antarctica are also prohibited.
- **Prohibited Activities:**
 - The Bill prohibits certain activities in Antarctica including:
 - Nuclear explosion or disposal of radioactive wastes,
 - Introduction of non-sterile soil, and
 - Discharge of garbage, plastic or other substance into the sea which is harmful to the marine environment.
- **Penal Provisions:**
 - A law officer would be appointed to ensure that no unlawful activity takes place in territories occupied by Indian research stations.
 - The draft Bill proposes the setting up of a separate designated court to try crimes committed in Antarctic.
 - The Bill further sets high penal provisions — the lowest penalty comprising an imprisonment between one-two years and a penalty of Rs 10-50 lakh.

HAR GHAR TIRANGA

The Centre is organising the Har Ghar Tiranga initiative on the occasion of India's 75th year of Independence.

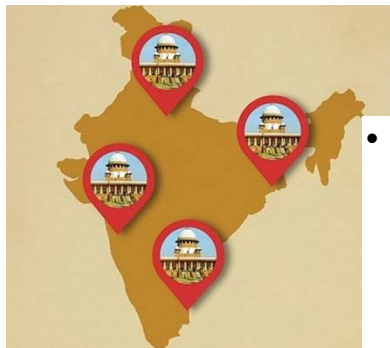


About:

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi took to Twitter to ask Indians to hoist or display the National Flag at their homes from August 13 to August 15 as part of the Har Ghar Tiranga initiative of the government.
- In a series of tweets, which marked the anniversary of the adoption of the National Flag in 1947, Mr. Modi said, 22nd July has a special relevance in our history. It was on this day in 1947 that our National Flag was adopted.

REGIONAL BENCHES OF SUPREME COURT

The Union Government today said the setting up of the Regional Benches of the Supreme Court in different parts of the country is under examination of the Constitutional Bench of the Supreme Court and the decision is awaited.

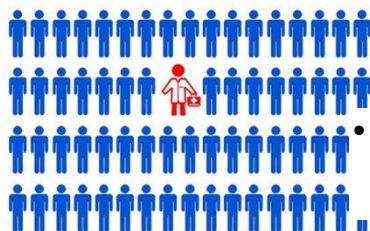


About:

- The Eighteenth Law Commission in its 229th Report suggested that a Constitutional Bench be set up at Delhi and four Cassation Benches be set up in the Northern region at Delhi, the Southern region at Chennai/Hyderabad, the Eastern region at Kolkata and the Western region at Mumbai.
- The Chief Justice of India in 2010, found that there is no justification for setting up benches of the Supreme Court outside Delhi. However, the Apex Court, in another writ petition has found it proper to refer the matter to Constitutional Bench for authoritative pronouncement.
- The matter is sub-judice.
- Article 130 of the Constitution of India provides that the Supreme Court shall sit in Delhi or in such other place or places as the Chief Justice of India may, with the approval of the President, from time to time, appoint.

DOCTOR-POPULATION RATIO

The Government said the doctor-population ratio in the country is better than the standards set by the World Health Organisation (WHO).



About:

- In a written reply to the Lok Sabha, Minister of State for Health and Family Welfare, Dr Bharati Pravin Pawar said the doctor-

population ratio in the country is 1:834 whereas WHO standard is 1:1000.

- The Minister said as per the National Medical Commission, there are 138009 registered allopathic doctors besides 565000 AYUSH doctors. The Minister said there are over 34 lakh registered nursing personnel and 13 lakh allied and healthcare professionals in the country.
- The Minister further said the government is taking all possible measures for increasing the availability of doctors in the country, which include increasing UG and PG medical seats.

68th NATIONAL FILM AWARDS

The 68th National Film Awards were announced by Information and Broadcasting Ministry.



About:

- Bollywood actor Ajay Devgan and Tamil actor Suriya have jointly bagged the National Film Award for the year 2020 for best actor for their roles in Tanhaji: The Unsung Warrior and

Soorarai Pottru.

- Aparna Balamurali won the award of best actress for her role in the Tamil film Soorarai Pottru.
- The award for Best Hindi film went to Toolsidas Junior and award for Best Feature Film was given to Soorarai Pottru.
- Tanhaji: The Unsung Warrior won the Award for Best Popular Film Providing Wholesome Entertainment.
- Testimony of Ana bagged the Best Non-Feature Film award.
- Best film on Social Issues award went to 'Justice Delayed but Delivered' and Three Sisters.