

03/03/24 - 08/03/24

CURRENT AFFAIRS



NATIONAL DAM PANEL TO EXAMINE KALESHWARAM PROJECT



- An expert committee set up by the National Dam Safety Authority (NDSA) will examine the Kaleshwaram Lift Irrigation Project (KLIP) on March 6.
- The State government, alarmed at the sinking of piers of the Medigadda barrage of the KLIP, had written to the NDSA to conduct a thorough probe into the other barrages, including Sundilla and Annaram.
- The NDSA team had already inspected the damaged Medigadda barrage as part of preliminary investigation and advised releasing water. It also suggested emptying Sundilla and Annaram barrages as well.
- The committee has been asked to submit its report to the NDSA within four months.

Kaleshwaram Project

- The Kaleshwaram Lift Irrigation Project on the Godavari River is considered to be one of the world's largest multi-purpose projects.

- Aims to provide water for irrigation and drinking across 45 lakh acres in 20 out of 31 districts in Telangana, including Hyderabad and Secunderabad.

National Dam Safety Authority

- The National Dam Safety Authority seeks to maintain standards related to dam safety, prevent dam-related disasters and resolve inter-State issues in this regard.
- The Dam Safety Act, passed by Parliament, states that a National Dam Safety Authority will liaise with State-level dam safety organisations and owners of dams for standardising safety-related data and practices.



SC ENDS IMMUNITY FOR LEGISLATORS TAKING BRIBES

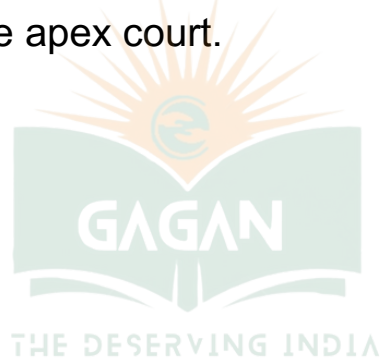


- A seven-judge Bench of the Supreme Court recently declared that parliamentary privilege or immunity will not protect legislators who take bribes to vote or speak in Parliament or State Legislative Assemblies from criminal prosecution.
- The unanimous verdict authored by the Chief Justice of India overruled a 25-year-old majority view of the Supreme Court, laid down in the JMM bribery case judgement of 1998.
- The judgement said that the lawmakers who took bribes were immune from prosecution for corruption if they go ahead and vote or speak in the House as agreed.

Key Points

- The shield of immunity or parliamentary privilege could be claimed in two circumstances.

- One, if the actions of a legislator were meant to enhance the dignity and authority of the House and its members as a collective body and, secondly, if they were in the exercise of his rights to free speech, protest and freedom from arrest, among others.
- A claim for immunity would not survive if it failed this two-fold test.
- Criminal courts and Houses of the legislature have parallel jurisdiction over allegations of bribery. One cannot negate the jurisdiction of the other.
- The reference came in an appeal filed by JMM leader Sita Soren, who was accused of taking a bribe to vote for a particular candidate in the Rajya Sabha elections of 2012.
- Though she later denied culpability on the ground that she voted for the official nominee of her own party, the CBI had filed a chargesheet in the case.
- The Jharkhand High Court had refused to quash the chargesheet, following which she had moved the apex court.



INDIAN TROOPS PULL OUT OF MALDIVES



- Days after a technical team from India arrived in the Maldives, to replace troops that President Mohamed Muizzu wanted removed, the Maldivian Defence Ministry announced signing a military pact with China.
- The Maldivian Minister of Defence and Deputy Director at China's Office for International Military Cooperation, recently signed an agreement on "China's provision of military assistance gratis to the Republic of Maldives".
- The two sides also held bilateral talks on military cooperation.

Key Points

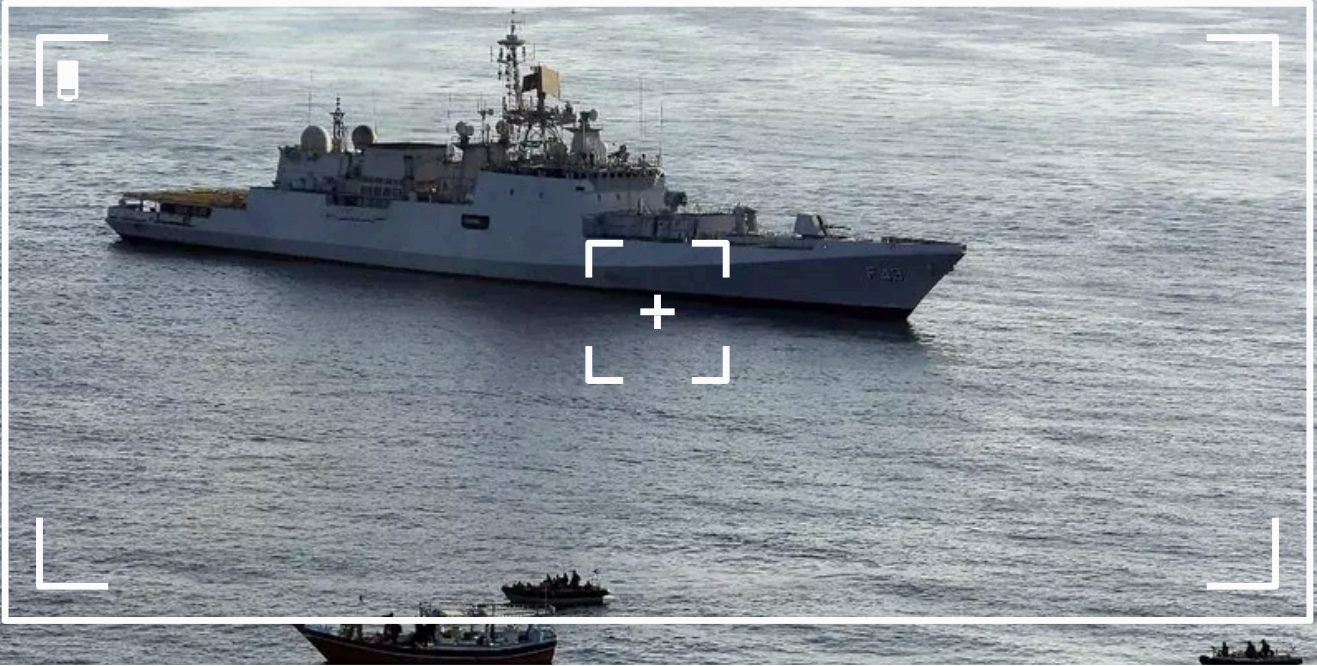
- The move coincides with New Delhi's apparent compromise with Male, agreeing to withdraw its troops stationed in the island nation, instead replacing them with a technical team to help operate India-gifted aircraft.
- The decision was made amid Mr. Muizzu's persistent calls for the removal of Indian troops, a campaign promise-turned-official pledge made by the leader.

GAGANTHEDESERVINGINDIA

- Following bilateral discussions between a high-level core group, the two sides in early February reached a consensus on Indian troops leaving the Indian Ocean archipelago by May 10, 2024, in phases.
- During his China visit, the Maldivian leader also urged Chinese travellers to reclaim their top spot in tourist arrivals to the island nation.
- India was the largest source market last year, but has since moved to the sixth spot, following the “boycott Maldives” campaign that went viral on Indian social media earlier this year.
- According to the Maldivian Tourism Ministry’s latest figures, China accounts for 12.8 % of the total number of visitors — 4,31,002 as of March 3 — recorded in 2024, while India accounts for 6.4 %.



INS JATAYU



- Recently, the Indian Navy commissioned INS Jatayu, at Minicoy island in the Lakshadweep Islands, its second base in Lakshadweep after INS Dweeprakshak in Kavaratti.
- Later in the day, the Navy commissioned its first MH-60R multi-role helicopter squadron INAS 334 'Seahawks' at Kochi, a major capability boost for its rotary fleet and its anti-submarine warfare capabilities.

Key Points

- INS Jatayu is the beginning of a phased expansion plan to strengthen India's surveillance and security posture in the strategically located islands close to the Nine Degree channel and critical sea lanes of communication.
- The establishment of a naval base at Minicoy will augment connectivity with the mainland, focusing on the comprehensive development of the islands.

- The move will strengthen the Indian Navy's foothold and extending operational reach in the region needed, with China increasingly exercising influence over Maldives.
- The First base on the island, INS Dweep prakshak in Kavaratti, was commissioned in 2012.
- The event marks an important milestone in the Navy's resolve to incrementally augment security infrastructure at the strategically important Lakshadweep Islands.

About Minicoy Islands

- Minicoy island is the southernmost island of Lakshadweep.
- It straddles vital Sea Lines of communications(SLOCs) - the world's main highways including the Eight Degree channel (between Minicoy and Maldives) and Nine Degree Channel (between minicoy and the main cluster of lakshadweep Islands).



POLITICAL PARTIES GOT 60% OF FUNDS FROM UNKNOWN SOURCES



- Almost 60% of the funds received by political parties cannot be traced and come from “unknown” sources, including electoral bonds, according to a report by the Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR).

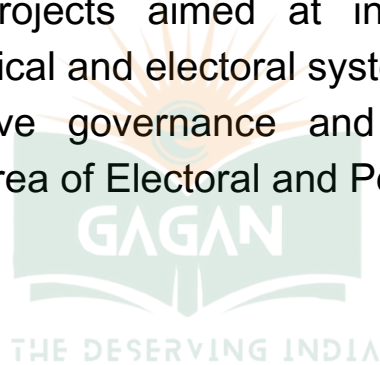
Key Points

- The ADR, which analysed the audit reports and the donations declared in statements filed by political parties with the Election Commission of India each year, said that between the financial years 2004-05 and 2022-23, the country's six national parties collected ₹19,083.08 crore from unknown sources.
- At present, political parties are not required to reveal the names of individuals or organisations giving them less than ₹20,000. As a result, three-fifths of the funds received cannot be traced and are from ‘unknown’ sources.

- Of the ₹3,076.88 crore declared as income by national parties in 2022-23, ₹1,832.87 crore — or more than 59% — came from unknown sources. Of this, the share of income from electoral bonds was ₹1,510.61 crore, or 82.42%.

Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR)

- The ADR was established in 1999 by a group of professors from the Indian Institute of Management (IIM) Ahmedabad.
- The first election watch was conducted by ADR in 2002 for Gujarat Assembly Elections whereby detailed analysis of the backgrounds of candidates contesting elections was provided to the electorate in order to help the electorate make an informed choice during polls.
- Since then ADR has conducted Election Watches for almost all state and parliament elections in collaboration with the National Election Watch.
- It conducts multiple projects aimed at increasing transparency and accountability in the political and electoral system of the country.
- The goal is to improve governance and strengthen democracy by continuous work in the area of Electoral and Political Reforms.



ZERO-FOOD CHILDREN



- A recent study had ranked India as having the third-highest percentage of children who had not eaten any food for 24 hours.
- Key Findings of the Report
- A study published recently in the peer-reviewed JAMA Network Open journal found the prevalence of zero-food children in India at 19.3%, drawing attention to extreme food deprivation among children.
- The study ranks India as having the third-highest percentage of zero-food children, above only Guinea (21.8%) and Mali (20.5%).
- In terms of numbers, India has the highest number of zero-food children at more than six million.
- Another study published in 2023 in eClinical Medicine, part of the noted Lancet Discovery Science, found that Uttar Pradesh alone accounts for 28.4% of zero-food children in India.

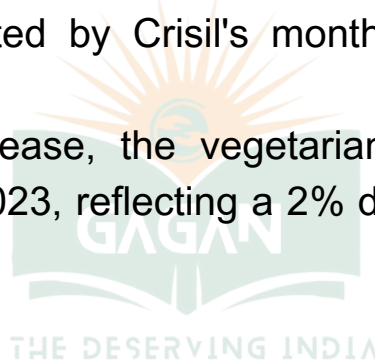
- The States of Uttar Pradesh (28.4%), Bihar (14.2%), Maharashtra (7.1%), Rajasthan (6.5%), and Madhya Pradesh (6%) account for nearly two-thirds of the total zero-food children in India.
- Reasons
- Alongside poverty and marginalisation in economic backgrounds, it is rapid urbanisation and nuclearised families that have contributed to such a large number of “zero food children” in India’s most populous State.
- Lack of awareness about the nutritional needs of children, and misconceptions, also contribute to the numbers.
- With rapid industrialisation, nuclear families have grown in both urban and rural areas, so there is no one to invest the time and energy required to feed a child, apart from the mother.



ROTI RICE RATE



- In the month of February, there was a notable 7% increase in the prices of vegetarian food plates.
- This upward trend was chiefly propelled by a substantial spike in onion and tomato prices, as reported by Crisil's monthly analysis titled 'Roti Rice Rate.'
- Despite the annual increase, the vegetarian plate costs reached their lowest level since July 2023, reflecting a 2% decrease from January levels to ₹27.5.



Key Points

- Conversely, non-vegetarian plate costs exhibited a contrasting trend by sliding 9% from the preceding year.
- This dip was primarily attributed to a significant 20% year-on-year decrease in broiler prices, a key component constituting nearly half of the cost of a non-vegetarian thali.

GAGANTHEDESERVINGINDIA

- The report shed light on the noteworthy escalation in onion and tomato prices, registering an alarming 29% and 38% surge, respectively. These factors played a pivotal role in driving up the overall costs of vegetarian food plates.
- Further analysis revealed that the prices of rice and pulses, accounting for a substantial 21% of the representative home-cooked vegetarian food plate, witnessed a surge of 14% and 20%, respectively, contributing significantly to the overall cost increase.
- Crisil's analytics unit employed a comprehensive approach, computing the average cost of preparing a thali based on input prices prevailing in different regions of India, namely north, south, east, and west.

