

Topics - MINDS MAPS included (Daily current affairs 27th November 2024



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- **MAINS**



By saurabh Pandey



THE HINDU

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Six decades since Thumba launch, slew of private entities prepare for flight

The Departments of Space and of Biotechnology have signed agreements to conduct biological experiments on the forthcoming Bharatiya Antariksh Station: while researchers will be able to conduct experiments on other missions as well, the agreement pertains to experiments onboard the station

Pradeep Mohandas

November 21 was 61 years since the birth of the Indian space programme. On this date in 1963, scientists launched a Nike-Apache sounding rocket from Thumba in Kerala. These rockets helped the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) master the solid propellant technology powering India's launch vehicles today. Around the same time as this anniversary, India launched its first satellite onboard a SpaceX rocket even as multiple Indian private sector entities geared up for launches of their own.

Launches of merit

NewSpace India, Ltd. launched the 4,700-kg GSAT-N2/GSAT-20 satellite onboard a SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket from Florida. N2 wasn't launched onboard an Indian launch vehicle because its weight exceeded the payload capacity of the country's most powerful rocket, the LVM-3, which can place satellites weighing up to four tonnes in the geostationary transfer orbit (GTO). INSAT-1D was the last such satellite launched from Florida, in 1990.

GSAT-N2 is a Ka-band high throughput communication satellite built by ISRO to enhance broadband services in underserved areas, including the northeast, Andaman & Nicobar Islands, and Lakshadweep. It will also support services like in-flight internet connectivity and the Smart Cities Mission.

The satellite was placed in a GTO with a perigee of 250 km, an apogee of 59,730 km, and at a 27.5° inclination. From here, the satellite will use its thrusters to move to a geostationary orbit at 63° E longitude over the next few days.

Next, ISRO is preparing to launch its PSLV-C59 mission bearing the European Proba-3 mission. The Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV) will fly in its extended length configuration (XL), which was last used to launch Aditya-L1 in September 2023.

The twin Proba spacecraft to study the Sun arrived in Chennai on November 6 and will be integrated with the launch vehicle. Liftoff is currently scheduled for 4 p.m. IST on December 4.

India's astronaut designate Shubhanshu Shukla, who is set to fly to the International Space Station in 2025, is undergoing training at the European Space Agency's European Astronaut Centre. This part of the training is to familiarise astronauts-to-be with the European modules of the space station.

From the private sector

Four Indian private companies are preparing to launch their payloads/satellites into orbit.



A Nike-Apache two-stage rocket on its launcher at Thumba, Kerala. THE HINDU ARCHIVES

Pixxel, which is Indian-American, unveiled 'Fireflies', its six hyperspectral satellites expected to be launched early next year. Each satellite weighs around 50 kg, has a native 5 m spatial resolution, and scans 40 km swaths for data in more than 150 spectral bands. These satellites constitute the first batch in what is eventually expected to become a constellation of 24 satellites. These satellites are capable of providing data that can help detect crop diseases, water-stressed areas, real-time deforestation, and ocean pollution early.

Second, GalaxEye Space is flying its "It's NOT a Satellite, It's Just a Tech Demo" on board the PSLV's Orbital Experimental Module (POEM) platform. This is when the final stage of a PSLV finishes deploying its payload and enters earth orbit, becoming an orbital platform where onboard instruments can run experiments. The Tech Demo will test subsystems of a synthetic aperture radar (SAR).

PierSight Space will also fly a mission on a PSLV POEM called 'Varuna', which will demonstrate a deployable reflectarray antenna and test SAR and aeronautical information service avionics in orbit.

HEX20 will fly its 'Nila' satellite onboard SpaceX's Transporter 13 mission in February 2025. 'Nila' is a 5-kg cubesat that can host different payloads and provide data-processing services. A ground station will be built in Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala, to control and receive data from the satellite.

India recently launched its first satellite onboard a SpaceX rocket even as multiple Indian private sector entities geared up for launches of their own

Catalyx Space's SR-O satellite launched onboard the third developmental flight of the Small Satellite Launch Vehicle mission re-entered the earth's atmosphere on November 3. The company announced the satellite had achieved all its objectives in its three-month lifespan.

AAKA Space Studio launched India's first Space Analog Mission in Leh, Ladakh, in collaboration with the ISRO Human Spaceflight Centre, IIT-Bombay, and the University of Ladakh. The site was chosen for its similarity to surfaces where onboard instruments can run experiments. The Tech Demo will test subsystems, and the human experience of isolation.

One person from AAKA Space Studio will stay in the habitat in Leh for 21 days to test habitat sustainability, life-support systems, and the human experience of isolation.

SatSure is working with the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology for "automated image feature extraction models for building footprints, roof type, roads, and water bodies among other classes for more than two lakh villages". This is the Indian government's largest programme to map rural property.

Drones under the government's 'Svamitva' programme will capture images of 3-5 cm resolution and SatSure will use its machine-learning tools

developed for satellite data to extract and classify the relevant features.

Space science updates

India celebrated its full membership of the Square Kilometre Array Observatory (SKAO), an international effort to build the world's most advanced radio telescope in Australia and South Africa. India will contribute cash as well as advanced electronics and engineering for telescope components in exchange for scientific data collected by the telescope.

The first scientific result from the Visible Emission Line Coronagraph onboard the Aditya-L1 spacecraft was published in the *Astrophysical Journal Letters*.

A team led by researchers at the Indian Institute of Astrophysics, Bengaluru, used data from the coronagraph to accurately predict the time of a coronal mass ejection on July 16. Coronal mass ejections affect satellites in orbit, electricity grids on the ground, and radio communications when they blow past the planet.

Finally, the Departments of Space and of Biotechnology have signed agreements to conduct biological experiments on the forthcoming Bharatiya Antariksh Station. While researchers will be able to conduct experiments on other missions (including the uncrewed Gaganyaan flights), the agreement pertains to experiments onboard the Indian space station.

Pradeep Mohandas is a technical writer and space enthusiast in Pune. pradeep.mohandas@gmail.com

THE GIST

NewSpace India Ltd. launched the 4,700-kg GSAT-N2/GSAT-20 satellite onboard a SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket from Florida

Pixxel, which is Indian-American, unveiled 'Fireflies', its six hyperspectral satellites expected to be launched early next year

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HEX20 will fly its 'Nila' satellite onboard SpaceX's Transporter 13 mission in February 2025

Topic → India's Space Program: A Journey of 61 Years

61st Anniversary of India's Space Program

Launch Date: November 21 marks 61 years since the inception of India's space program.

Initial Launch: Began with the Nike-Apache sounding rocket in 1963.

First Satellite Launch with SpaceX

Collaboration: India launched its first satellite aboard a SpaceX rocket.

Significance: Highlights the partnership between Indian private entities and international collaborators.

GSAT-N2 Satellite Launch

Organization: NewSpace India, Ltd.

Satellite Details: 4,700-kg GSAT-N2/GSAT-20.

Purpose: Enhance broadband services in underserved regions of India.



GSAT-N2 Satellite Specifications

Type: Ka-band high throughput communication satellite.

Services Supported: In-flight internet, Smart Cities Mission.



Geostationary Orbit Placement

Orbit Details: Placed in a geostationary transfer orbit (GTO).

Final Position: Will maneuver to a geostationary orbit at 63° E longitude

Upcoming PSLV-C59 Mission

Mission Details: ISRO is preparing for the PSLV-C59 mission.

Payload: Will carry the European Proba-3 mission.

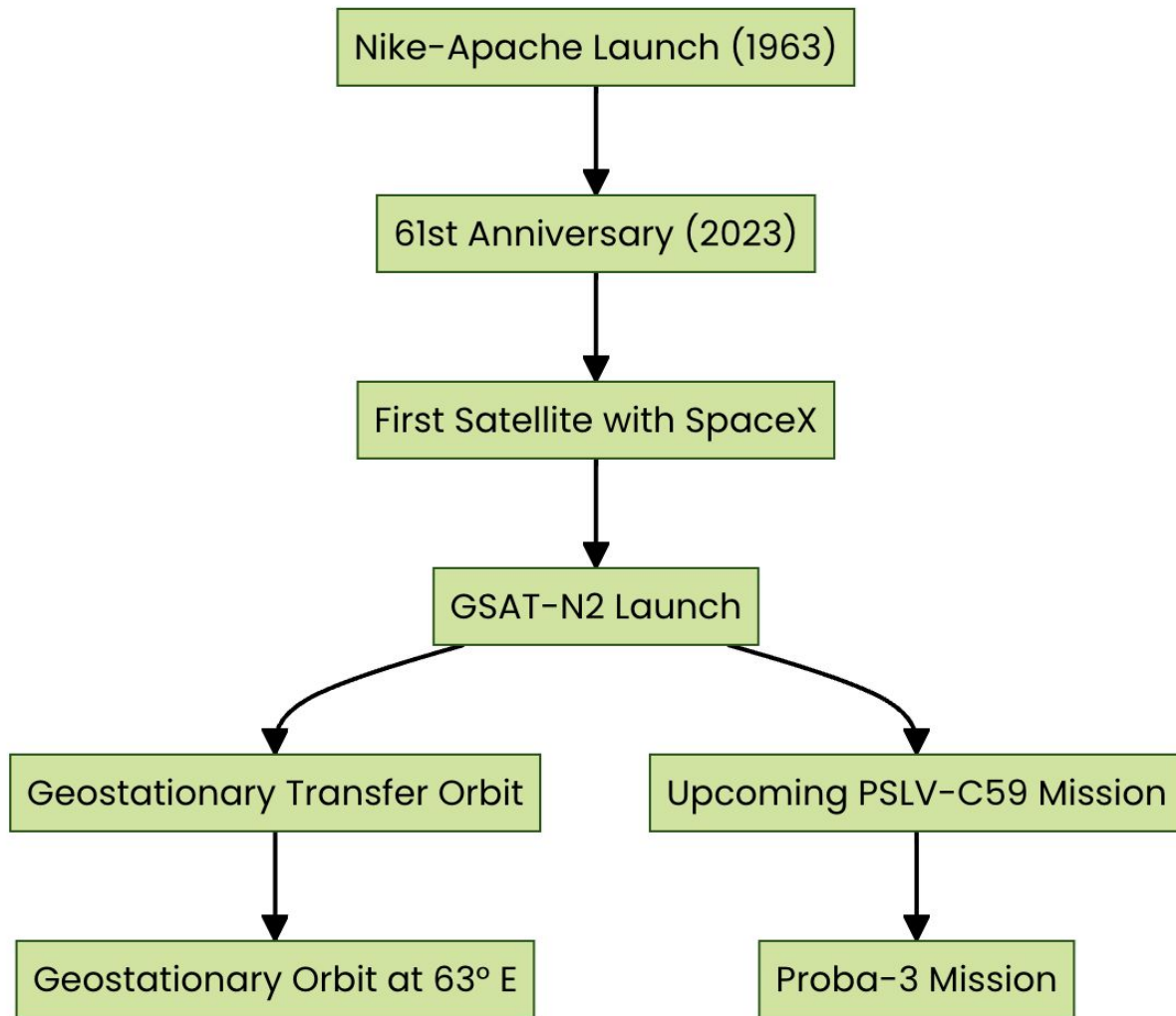
Launch Date: Scheduled for December 4, 2023.

Proba-3 Mission

Objective: Twin Proba spacecraft designed to study the Sun.

Current Status: Arrived in Chennai for integration with the PSLV launch vehicle.

Summary: Celebrating 61 years, India's space program continues to make strides with significant satellite launches and upcoming missions, reflecting technological advancements and international cooperation.



India's Space Advancements



Shubhanshu Shukla's Training

Indian astronaut-designate Shubhanshu Shukla is undergoing training at the European Space Agency.

The mission is scheduled for 2025 to the International Space Station.

Pixxel's Hyperspectral Satellites

Pixxel, an Indian-American company, plans to launch six hyperspectral satellites named 'Fireflies'.

Launch scheduled for early 2024 to monitor environmental conditions.

GalaxEye Space's Tech Demo

GalaxEye Space is testing a synthetic aperture radar (SAR) subsystem. The test is aboard the PSLV's Orbital Experimental Module (POEM)



PierSight Space's Varuna Mission

PierSight Space will demonstrate a deployable reflectarray antenna.

Testing SAR technology on a PSLV POEM mission



HEX20's Nila Satellite

HEX20 plans to launch a 5-kg cubesat 'Nila' in February 2025.

The satellite will provide data-processing services from a ground station in Kerala



AAKA Space Studio's Analog Mission

AAKA Space Studio launched India's first Space Analog Mission in Leh.

The mission tested habitat sustainability and life-support systems for 21 days




SatSure's Rural Mapping Initiative





SatSure collaborates with the Indian government.


The initiative aims to automate image feature extraction for mapping over 200,000 villages using drone technology

UPDATE

 India has joined the Square Kilometre Array Observatory (SKAO), contributing cash and advanced technology for a global radio telescope project.

 The SKAO aims to build the world's most advanced radio telescope in Australia and South Africa, enhancing global astronomical research.

 The first scientific result from the Aditya-L1 spacecraft's Visible Emission Line Coronagraph was published in the Astrophysical Journal Letters.

 Researchers from the Indian Institute of Astrophysics successfully predicted a coronal mass ejection event using data from the coronagraph.

⚡ Coronal mass ejections can disrupt satellites, electricity grids, and radio communications, highlighting the importance of accurate predictions.

🧪 The Departments of Space and Biotechnology in India have signed agreements for biological experiments on the upcoming Bharatiya Antariksh Station.

🚀 The agreement allows for experiments on the Indian space station and other missions, including the uncrewed Gaganyaan flights.

Summary: India is advancing its space science initiatives by joining the SKAO, publishing significant findings from the Aditya-L1 mission, and preparing for biological experiments on its future space station

BIG SHOT



Taking stock: A man looks at the flooded Inca Llojeta area in the aftermath of landslides caused by intense rain and illegal earth movements, in La Paz, Bolivia on Sunday. At least 26 people have been injured and more than 40 houses damaged by the flood. Some 300 military personnel were deployed to help evacuate residents. REUTERS

Topic → La Paz, Bolivia.



Intense rain has led to landslides in La Paz, Bolivia.



The Inca Llojeta area is specifically mentioned as being flooded.



Illegal earth movements contributed to the severity of the situation.



The event took place on a Sunday.



The location of the incident is La Paz, Bolivia.



The situation highlights the risks associated with illegal land alterations.

Summary: A man surveys the flooded Inca Llojeta area in La Paz, Bolivia, following landslides caused by heavy rain and illegal earth movements.

SC ruling on socialism, secularism



What was the original Preamble and how has it evolved? What has been the court's stand earlier and how has it changed? What was the current case about? What bearing will it have on the society?

EXPLAINER

Rangarajan R

The story so far:

A Division Bench of the Supreme Court led by the Chief Justice of India dismissed pleas challenging the inclusion of the words 'socialist' and 'secular' in the Preamble to our Constitution.

What is the history of Preamble?

The original Preamble adopted on November 26, 1949, declared India a sovereign, democratic, republic. Our Constituent Assembly consciously avoided the word 'socialist' as they felt that declaring the economic ideal of a country in its Constitution's preamble was not appropriate. People should decide what suits them according to time and age.

Likewise, Indian secularism is different from western secularism. In the latter, the state and religion are strictly separated and the government does not interfere in religious affairs. However, in India, the state enjoys the power to regulate the economic, financial, political and secular aspects associated with religious practice. It can also provide for social welfare and reform in religious practices. Further, various provisions of the Constitution that include right to practise any religion, non-discrimination on the basis of religion in any affairs of the state embodied the 'secular' values of our Constitution. Hence, in the Constituent Assembly, the amendment to introduce the word 'secular' in the Preamble was not accepted.

In *Berubari* case (1960), the Supreme Court opined that the Preamble is not a part of the Constitution and thus not a source of any substantive power. Subsequently, in *Kesavananda Bharati*



Guiding book: Indian National Congress (INC) party workers carry a model of the Indian Constitution during rally on the occasion of Constitution Day celebrations in Kolkata on Tuesday. AFP

case (1973), the Supreme Court reversed its earlier opinion and said that the Preamble is part of the Constitution and that it should be read and interpreted in the light of the vision envisioned in the Preamble. It also held that the Preamble is subject to the amending power of Parliament as any other provision of the Constitution. The 42nd Constitutional Amendment in 1976 inserted the words 'Socialist', 'Secular' and 'Integrity' in the Preamble.

What was the current case?

The current case was filed by former Rajya Sabha MP Subramanian Swamy, Advocate Ashwini Upadhyay and others. Mr. Upadhyay and others had opposed the insertion of the words 'socialist' and 'secular' in the Preamble. They argued that these were included during the Emergency and forced the people to follow specific ideologies. They felt that since the date of adoption by the

Constituent Assembly was mentioned in the Preamble, no additional words can be inserted later by Parliament. Mr. Swamy was of the view that subsequent amendments to the Constitution including the 44th Amendment in 1978 during Janata Party rule after emergency had supported and retained these two words. Nevertheless, he was of the view that these words should appear in a separate paragraph below the original Preamble.

What did the court rule?

The court dismissed the pleas and held that 'socialism' and 'secularism' are integral to the basic structure of the Constitution. It observed that the Constitution is a 'living document' subject to the amending power of Parliament. This amending power extends to the Preamble as well and the date of adoption mentioned in it does not restrict such power. The court opined that 'socialism'

in the Indian context primarily means a welfare state that provides equality of opportunity and does not prevent the private sector from thriving. Similarly, over time India has developed its own interpretation of 'secularism'. The state neither supports any religion nor penalises the profession and practice of any faith. In essence, the concept of secularism represents one of the facets of right to equality.

Why is it important?

The initial years after Independence fostered 'democratic socialism' characterised by centralised planning and many industries being established by the state. The period of 1960s and 70s saw nationalisation of banks and insurance, higher tax rates and various regulations. The economy, though declared as mixed economy where public and private enterprises would co-exist, displayed the characteristics of classical socialism with license controls and regulations. Starting from 1991, our economy has evolved from such socialistic pattern to a market-oriented model. The ensuing growth has uplifted vast majority of people from abject poverty in the last three decades. However, there is also growing inequality that needs to be addressed. As the court observed, our socialism continues to address the needs of the poor through schemes such as MGNREGA, subsidised food grains, direct benefit transfers for women and farmers etc. Hence, it is imperative that such socialism continues to guide the actions of the state for the welfare of the needy while private enterprise flourishes resulting in increased employment and strong economic growth. The spirit of our 'unity in diversity' should be equally preserved by upholding the values of secularism.

Rangarajan R is a former IAS officer and author of 'Polity Simplified'. Views expressed are personal.

THE GIST

▼ The original Preamble adopted on November 26, 1949, declared India a sovereign, democratic, republic. Our Constituent Assembly consciously avoided the word 'socialist' as they felt that declaring the economic ideal of a country in its Constitution's preamble was not appropriate.

▼ Indian secularism is different from western secularism. In the latter, the state and religion are strictly separated and the government does not interfere in religious affairs. However, in India, the state enjoys the power to regulate the economic, financial, political and secular aspects associated with religious practice.

▼ The current case was filed by those opposed to the insertion of the words 'socialist' and 'secular' in the Preamble. They argued that these were included during the Emergency and forced the people to follow specific ideologies.

Topic → SC ON SECULARISM AND SOCIALISM

The Preamble of India: Evolution and Significance

Key Developments in the Preamble



Adoption Date: The original Preamble was adopted on November 26, 1949, marking India as a sovereign, democratic republic.



Economic Ideals: The term 'socialist' was initially omitted, as the Constituent Assembly believed economic ideals should not be constitutionally enshrined.



Secularism: Indian secularism allows state regulation of religious practices, differing from Western secularism.



Judicial Interpretation:

Berubari Case (1960): The Supreme Court initially ruled the Preamble was not part of the Constitution.

Kesavananda Bharati Case (1973): The Court later affirmed its significance.



Amendment: The 42nd Constitutional Amendment in 1976 added 'Socialist', 'Secular', and 'Integrity' to the Preamble.



Constitutional Status: The Preamble is now considered part of the Constitution and can be amended.





Values: It embodies values of secularism, non-discrimination, and religious freedom.


The Supreme Court of India's Stance on Secularism and Socialism





Key Highlights


 The Supreme Court of India has upheld the characterization of the country as 'secular' and 'socialist' in the amended Preamble to the Constitution.


 Right-wing groups have historically opposed the identification of secularism as a core attribute of India, labeling it as "pseudo-secular."


 The original Constitution emphasized equality before the law and the right to practice any religion, establishing an inherently secular framework.


 Dr. B.R. Ambedkar opposed the inclusion of 'socialist' in the Preamble, arguing against binding future generations to a specific economic model.


 The 42nd Amendment, which added 'secular' and 'socialist' to the Preamble, was enacted during the Emergency but was deemed valid by the Supreme Court.


 The Court has previously ruled that secularism is a basic feature of the Constitution, ensuring equal treatment of all faiths.


 The term 'socialism' in the Preamble is interpreted as a commitment to economic and social justice, allowing for open market competition.


 The courts are reviewing the inclusion of 'secular' and 'socialist' in the Constitution based on writ petitions filed in 2020, 44 years after the amendment.


 The S.R. Bommai case (1994) established that secularism is a fundamental feature of the Indian Constitution.

 Secularism in India is defined as treating all faiths equally and without discrimination.

 The term 'socialist' in the Preamble has not hindered the adoption of open market policies and competition.

 The Indian interpretation of secularism ensures the State neither supports nor penalizes any religion.

 The principle of socialism aims for economic and social justice, ensuring no citizen is disadvantaged by their circumstances.


 The Supreme Court's recent verdict reaffirms the importance of 'secular' and 'socialist' as fundamental attributes of the Constitution as it marks its 75th anniversary


Summary


The Supreme Court of India reaffirmed the inclusion of 'secular' and 'socialist' in the Constitution's Preamble, emphasizing their fundamental importance despite historical opposition.


Socialism and Indian economy





 Democratic Socialism: Post-independence, India adopted democratic socialism with a focus on centralized planning and state-run industries.


 Nationalization Era: The 1960s and 70s were marked by the nationalization of banks and insurance sectors, accompanied by high tax rates and stringent regulations.

 Mixed Economy: Despite being termed a mixed economy, it leaned towards classical socialism with rigorous license controls.

 Shift to Market Economy: Since 1991, India has shifted towards a market-oriented economy, which has played a significant role in poverty reduction over the past thirty years.

 Growing Inequality: Economic growth has been accompanied by rising inequality, which remains a pressing issue.

 Welfare Schemes: The government continues to support the underprivileged through initiatives like MGNREGA, subsidized food grains, and direct benefit transfers.

 Unity in Diversity: Emphasizing secular values and unity in diversity is crucial alongside the expansion of private enterprises.

Summary: The narrative outlines India's economic journey from democratic socialism to a market-driven model, underscoring the need to balance economic progress with social welfare.

Between hope and hurdles on the high seas



India's recent signing of the Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) Agreement – better known as the High Seas Treaty – has drawn both praise and scepticism from maritime observers. Hailed as a landmark step in ocean governance, the treaty seeks to protect marine ecosystems and promote the sustainable use of resources in areas beyond national jurisdiction. However, despite its laudable intentions to address critical gaps in international maritime regulation, the pact's structural complexities and potential challenges warrant examination.

As the third implementing agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), the BBNJ treaty follows earlier accords on deep-sea mining and fisheries management. Its provisions focus on three objectives: conserving marine biodiversity, ensuring equitable sharing of benefits from marine genetic resources, and mandating environmental impact assessments for harmful activities. Yet, like many ambitious multilateral agreements, it risks faltering against geopolitical rivalries, jurisdictional overlap, and weak enforcement mechanisms.

Fraught with challenges

The treaty's ambitious goals are tempered by its lack of a clear implementation roadmap. With only 14 of its 104 signatories having ratified the agreement, it remains far from the required threshold of 60 needed to come into force. Much of the hesitation stems from disputes over maritime territories, particularly in regions such as the South China Sea, where overlapping claims complicate consensus on Marine Protected Areas (MPAs). Southeast Asian nations remain divided on whether high-seas "national parks" could affect territorial claims or limit economic opportunities for coastal communities that depend on



Abhijit Singh
Head of the Maritime Policy Initiative at ORF, New Delhi

India's signing of the Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction Agreement has won praise but there is also scepticism as there are structural complexities and challenges

marine resources. Bay of Bengal states echo similar apprehensions about MPAs affecting livelihood and resource access, underscoring the broader regional hesitations surrounding the treaty's implementation. Critics argue that the treaty's emphasis on the "high-seas principle" risks overshadowing the "common heritage of mankind" concept, which prioritizes preservation over access. One of the treaty's most contentious provisions involves marine genetic resources. The treaty obligates nations to share the profits derived from exploiting these resources through a global fund. However, without robust accountability measures, this provision risks being undermined by wealthier nations underreporting their activities. The pact also risks conflicting with regimes like the Convention on Biological Diversity, potentially disadvantaging smaller states and fragmenting enforcement.

Capacity-building and technology transfers present yet another challenge for low and middle-income countries. The treaty calls for equitable partnerships in ocean science, but lacks enforceable mechanisms, leaving less capable nations vulnerable to being sidelined. Asymmetry threatens to perpetuate inequalities in maritime research and governance.

The treaty's focus on the high seas overlooks the interconnectedness of marine ecosystems, where harmful activities in EEZs often cascade into international waters. The 2021 X-Press Pearl disaster off Sri Lanka, which spilled hazardous chemicals into the Indian Ocean, is a stark reminder of how localised incidents can have global repercussions. Similarly, overfishing within the EEZs in West Africa has depleted fish stocks far beyond national jurisdictions, exacerbating marine resource scarcity on the high seas.

While the BBNJ Agreement aspires to reshape global ocean

governance, its potential hinges on bridging the gap between ambition and action. Its greatest limitation lies in failing to reconcile high-seas governance with coastal regulations, assuming international waters can be managed in isolation despite the impact of pollution, overfishing, and habitat destruction in EEZs.

More troubling is the reluctance of coastal states to assume greater responsibility for activities within their waters. While the treaty mandates environmental impact assessments (EIAs) for planned activities, it remains silent on the damaging harms during oil and gas exploration – that the pact does not cover – and which constitutes an important economic interest of states. This gap, compounded by the disinclination of states to accept an international review of EIAs, exposes the inherent weaknesses in the treaty's enforcement framework, particularly in regions with weak institutional capacity and conflicting domestic and international legal standards.

Bridging the divide


For the High Seas Treaty to succeed, it must overcome its structural and political limitations. This requires a radical shift in maritime governance – one that integrates high-seas and coastal regulations into a cohesive framework. Coastal states, particularly those in the Global South, need incentives to align their domestic laws with international norms, while wealthier nations must commit to providing technical and financial support to ensure the treaty's benefits are equitably shared.


The treaty's success ultimately hinges on fostering a collective commitment among nations to safeguard the oceans as a shared global resource. Without political consensus, clear strategies, and enforceable mechanisms, the BBNJ risks becoming an ineffective instrument – an outcome the oceans, already under immense stress, cannot afford.


Topic → India's Signing of the BBNJ Agreement




Overview


 India's Signing: India has recently signed the Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) Agreement, also known as the High Seas Treaty.

 Landmark Step: This treaty is a significant advancement in ocean governance aimed at protecting marine ecosystems.

 Sustainable Resource Use: It promotes the sustainable use of resources in areas beyond national jurisdiction.

Treaty Details

 UNCLOS Agreement: The BBNJ treaty is the third implementing agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

 Key Objectives:

Conserving marine biodiversity

Ensuring equitable sharing of benefits from marine genetic resources

Requiring environmental impact assessments for harmful activities

Challenges and Reactions



Challenges Ahead: The treaty faces potential challenges such as:

Geopolitical rivalries

Jurisdictional overlaps


Weak enforcement mechanisms



Mixed Reactions: The agreement has received both praise and skepticism from maritime observers regarding its effectiveness.

BBNJ Agreement Challenges

Overview of Challenges

Ambitious Goals 

Lack of Implementation Roadmap 

Insufficient Signatories 

Territorial Disputes

Maritime Territories 

South China Sea Claims


Overlapping Claims and Consensus on MPAs

Economic Implications 

Impact on Coastal Communities

Resource Access Concerns

Critiques of the Treaty

High-Seas Principle vs. Common Heritage 

Preservation vs. Access

Marine Genetic Resources 

Profit Sharing Challenges

Accountability Issues

Capacity and Technology Transfer

Challenges for Low/Middle-Income Countries 

Equitable Partnerships

Vulnerability to Being Sidelined

Asymmetry in Research and Governance 

Ecosystem Interconnectedness

Pollution and Overfishing 

Effects on High Seas from EEZ Activities

Case Studies: X-Press Pearl and West Africa

Governance and Enforcement Issues

High-Seas vs. Coastal Regulations 

Isolation Assumption Risks

Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) 

Gaps in Coverage


Weak Enforcement Framework


Future Considerations


Bridging Ambition and Action 


Need for Stronger Collaborations


Addressing Institutional Weaknesses


 Structural and Political Limitations: The High Seas Treaty faces significant challenges that must be addressed for its success.


 Need for Cohesive Framework: A radical shift in maritime governance is necessary to integrate high-seas and coastal regulations.

 Incentives for Coastal States: Coastal states, especially in the Global South, require incentives to align their laws with international standards.

 Support from Wealthier Nations: Wealthier countries must provide technical and financial support to ensure equitable sharing of treaty benefits.

 Collective Commitment: The treaty's success depends on nations working together to protect the oceans as a shared resource.

 Political Consensus Required: Without political agreement, clear strategies, and enforceable mechanisms, the treaty may become ineffective.

 Urgency of Action: The oceans are under significant stress, making the need for effective governance and action critical.

Summary: The success of the High Seas Treaty relies on overcoming political and structural challenges through cohesive governance, incentives for coastal states, and collective international commitment

What is the controversy around the Sambhal mosque?

How did the issue around the 16th Century Jama Masjid in Sambhal break out? Are there common threads with the Gyanvapi and Ayodhya Ramjanmabhoomi disputes?

Ziya Us Salam

The story so far

A petition was filed by Hari Shanker Jain and others in the court of the civil judge of the district and sessions court, Sambhal on November 19. The petitioners alleged that the 16th Century Jama Masjid in Sambhal was built at the site of an ancient Hari Har Mandir. The claim was similar to those made in the case of Gyanvapi mosque in Varanasi and Eidgah Masjid Mathura in Uttar Pradesh and Kamal-Maula Masjid in Dhar in Madhya Pradesh. Mr. Jain is the petitioner in the Varanasi, Mathura and Dhar cases too. The Sambhal mosque is a protected national monument.

How were the surveys carried out?

After a hearing on the same day, the civil judge ordered a photographic and videographic survey of the mosque and asked for its report to be presented before

it on November 29. The mosque's *intezamia* committee was not consulted by the court. Following the order, a survey was carried out peacefully in the presence of the Superintendent of Police, members of the mosque committee and Sambhal's district magistrate.

However, a second survey carried out on November 24 led to large scale violence. Conducted in the morning, the survey team was preceded by a local *mahant* (priest), one of the petitioners, and followed by some members chanting Jai Shri Ram slogans. A police party accompanied the surveyors. A large number of protestors gathered near the mosque. It soon resulted in stone pelting from the crowd. The police allegedly resorted to opening fire in which five men, including two teenagers, died. The police denied the allegation, arguing it used lathi-charge to control the crowd. The local MLA rubbished the police claims, arguing the dead included unarmed persons who had gone out for

their daily chores. The residents alleged the police ransacked their homes.

What is the mosque's history?

Unlike Ayodhya or Varanasi, the Sambhal dispute cropped up only this year. For centuries, people of different communities have lived peacefully here. The Jama Masjid in Sambhal is one of the three mosques built by Mughal Emperor Babur during his reign between 1526 and 1530; the other two being the mosque in Panipat and the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya which was demolished in 1992. The Sambhal mosque was built by Babur's general Mir Hindu Beg around 1528. While most historians attribute this mosque to Babur's general Hindu Beg, some believe the mosque is actually a Tughlaq-era monument.

The Hindu tradition, however, holds that the mosque incorporates parts of an ancient Vishnu temple. They believe the tenth avatar of Vishnu, Kalki, will descend in Sambhal.

What is the Places of Worship Act?

The Sambhal dispute has once again cast fresh spotlight on the Places of Worship Act 1991 under which the religious character of all places of worship as it existed on August 15, 1947, has to be maintained. The only exception was the then ongoing dispute around the Babri Masjid-Ramjanmabhoomi. The Act was aimed at shutting out the possibilities of any further contestations around places of worship. The Act's Section 3 leaves no room for debate by clearly barring the conversion in full or part of a place of any religious denomination into a place of worship of a different religious denomination.

What are the challenges to the Act?

The petition filed in Sambhal seeks to change the basic character of the place of worship, in contravention of the 1991 Act. The petitioners quote the oral observation of Justice D.Y. Chandrachud who said in 2022 that the "ascertainment of a religious character of a place, as a procedural instrument, may not necessarily fall foul of the provisions" of the Act. Incidentally, four petitions have challenged the Places of Worship Act in the Supreme Court. The courts have admitted petitions seeking to alter the religious character of the places of worship in Varanasi, Mathura, Dhar, and now Sambhal even as the Supreme Court is yet to decide on the challenges to the Places of Worship Act itself.

THE GIST




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Topic → The Places of Worship Act, 1991

Overview

-  Definition of the Act: Enacted in 1991, the Act mandates maintaining the religious character of all places of worship as they existed on August 15, 1947.
-  Exceptions: The Babri Masjid-Ramjanambhoomi dispute is the sole exception.
-  Purpose: Aims to prevent disputes by prohibiting conversion of religious sites to different denominations.

Current Challenges

-  Legal Petitions: A petition in Sambhal seeks to alter the religious character of a worship place.
-  Judicial Observations: Justice D.Y. Chandrachud noted in 2022 that determining a place's religious character may not breach the Act.
-  Supreme Court Cases: Four petitions challenging the Act are pending, involving sites in Varanasi, Mathura, Dhar, and Sambhal.
-  Pending Decisions: The Supreme Court has yet to rule on these challenges.

Norway's apology to Sami and other minority groups for assimilation policies

A century-long process of Norwegianisation of indigenous peoples and migrant groups commenced in the 1850s. These policies finally came to an end in the 1960s, with laws formally repealed or replaced in 1963. Yet, discrimination has continued the groups have been adversely affected

EXPLAINER

Shruthi Darbhama

The story so far-
Last week, Norway's Parliament, the Storting, issued an unreserved apology for its assimilation policies towards Sami, Kven and Forest Finn peoples. It also laid out a series of resolutions to address the continuing discrimination faced by these communities. *The New York Times* reported.

A century-long process of Norwegianisation of indigenous peoples and migrant groups commenced in the 1850s and did not officially end till the 1960s. It saw the suppression of indigenous languages and traditional culture. Further, Sami children were separated from their parents and sent to boarding schools all across the Sapmi – 'the land of the Sami' which corresponds with present-day northern Russia, Finland, Norway and Sweden.

Who are the Samis, Kvens and Forest Finns?

Norway has designated certain groups with long standing attachment to the country as national minorities, including the Kvens/Norwegian Jews, Forest Finns, Roma and the Romani people. The Sami, meanwhile, are an indigenous people spread across northern Europe, including Finland, Sweden, Norway and Russia. This region has been called Lapland; however the terms Lapps/Lapländers are considered derogatory by some Sami. Only about 100,000 Sami remain. The largest Sami population is concentrated in Norway – considered the heart of Sapmi – in areas such as Finnmark county.

Inhabiting this chilly terrain for centuries, the Sami have developed their own culture and unique way of life. Many are reindeer herders, and the Norwegian government has designated reindeer herding as an activity exclusive to the Sami, issuing herding licenses based on ancestral lands.

Sami languages are any of three languages (sometimes considered dialects of one overarching language) belonging to the Finno-Ugric group of the Uralic language family – North Sami, East Sami and South Sami.

Both Kvens and Forest Finns are much smaller groups (than the Sami) which migrated to present-day Norway around 500 years ago.

Kvens are the descendants of migrants from the Torne River Valley, part of present-day Sweden and Finland, who historically practiced slash and burn farming, fishing and blacksmithing. The Kven language, a Finnic language closely related to Meänkieli and Finnish, was recognised as an independent language in Norway in April 2005. Forest Finns, meanwhile, are descendants of immigrants from eastern Finland who settled in Sweden in the 1500s, before making their way to Norway in the early 1600s.

What were the Norwegianisation policies?

Indigenous peoples and minority groups historically faced discrimination from Scandinavian governments, and laws in the second half of the nineteenth century gave this historical prejudice a more solid form in Norway.



Many Samis are reindeer herders, and the Norwegian government has designated reindeer herding as an activity exclusive to the Sami.

Norway engaged in a century-long process of "Norwegianisation" and assimilation, which intensified after the nation gained independence in 1905.

Policies to integrate and assimilate these groups by suppressing their native language and culture emerged. These policies used education and religion as a tool to erase local language and culture. Traditional practices such as 'yokling', a traditional call of the Samis, were forbidden during this time. Young Sami children were taken away from their parents and forced to live in foster homes and state-run boarding schools in the 1900s. The government demarcated some regions for "suitable populations," where these groups were not allowed to settle. Groups also lost access to grazing land and fishing grounds.

Native cultural beliefs were suppressed by Christian mission churches belonging to the Evangelical Lutheran and Catholic denominations. The Sami were forced to give up their earlier shamanistic rituals.

Social discrimination persisted under the guise of scientific research. Members from these communities were made to undergo anthropological tests by scientists, and their burial grounds were exhumed to study their ethnic characteristics of their predecessors.

These Norwegianisation policies finally came to an end in the 1960s, with laws formally repealed or replaced in 1963.

What is the Truth and Reconciliation Committee?

Measures at the community and government level were taken up to address the past oppression. Today, the Sami have a university as well as schools teaching the Sami language, and a mostly symbolic independently elected Sami Parliament established in 1989, with which the Norwegian parliament has a working relationship. The Education Act of 1969 gave Sami students the right to compulsory and upper-secondary education in their own languages, and policies have also sought to integrate the language in school curricula.

Community efforts to have persisted to preserve the unique identity of these groups. For example, Young Forest Finns work to revive the group's culture and also has a museum under development.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission was launched in 2018 to investigate the historical injustice and suggest measures for inclusion and re-education versus earlier policies of Norwegianisation and assimilation.

The Committee released a 700-page report on June 1, 2023. The current apology and a set of 17 resolutions to address prejudice against these groups stem from this report, which took 35 hours to read aloud in parliament, and was broadcast nationally. Recommendations in the report included the establishment of a centre for reconciliation work, preservation of minority and indigenous languages and language training.

Other Nordic nations too have launched similar commissions, including the Truth Commission for the Sami People in Sweden and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Concerning the Sami People in Finland. Both are expected to present their reports sometime next year.

What is the current apology?

The unreserved apology was tendered last week to the Sami, Kvens and Forest Finns by the Norwegian parliament following on the heels of last year's Truth and Reconciliation Commission report. The move was approved by the Parliament and the apology read out loud on November 11.

All lawmakers except one group – a bloc from the right-wing Progress Party – voted for the resolution. This cited possible conflict among communities as a reason for voting against it. In a debate held in May, the party's leader, Bard Hoksrud, said it was "fundamentally wrong to give special privileges to some groups at the expense of others," adding that they believed that "history should remain history."

In a written response to a question from a journalist, Conservative party member Svein Halberg said, "The assimilation policy that was historically pursued continues to be both the root of the lack of transparency about land rights and groups that were subject to this policy, and a source of conflict today." Silje Karine Marsha, a Sami leader, called it "a day with many emotions," in a

written statement. "Going forward, we expect an active policy of reconciliation... The decision from today ensures long-term follow-up, and it has both financial and legal repercussions. But unfortunately, no settlement is made with ongoing injustice and conflicts over land and water," she wrote.

In 1977, King Harald V apologised to the Sami people, and Sami People's Day has been celebrated since 1993 on February 6 (the first Sami National Congress was held on February 6, 1977 in Trondheim, Norway). However, this is the first instance of a public apology to the Kvens and Forest Finns.

What are the continuing challenges?

Even after the formal repealing of the laws, prejudice in the nation has continued. The report by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission found that members of these groups have less access to health care in Norway, a country with a robust social security net.


The Sami have had a longstanding dispute with the Norwegian government


over the use of their land, although some laws exist over the Sami's right to grazing land. A 2007 law sought to change the size of reindeer herds, ostensibly to prevent overgrazing, a move opposed by some Sami herders. Indigenous and minority languages, too, remain critically endangered. Bullying, hate speech and harassment has persisted, as have negative stereotypes.


As reported by *The New York Times*, a 2021 survey was conducted as part of an Arctic University of Norway project which studied the efficacy of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. According to the results of this survey, 60% of Norway residents said they thought most people knew little to nothing about how the assimilation policies affected the Sami. That figure rose to 88% when it came to how the practices affected Forest Finns and Kvens. The project was led by Eva Josefsson, a political scientist at the Arctic University who is Sami herself. She highlighted that the personal hardship about land rights was a sticking point, saying that there was a "general implementation gap between legal rights and what is actually delivered."


Topic -- Indigenous people of Norway





 Indigenous and Minority Groups: The Sami are an Indigenous people in northern Europe, while Kvens and Forest Finns are recognized national minorities in Norway.


 Sami Culture: The Sami have a unique culture, primarily known for reindeer herding, which is legally restricted to them by the Norwegian government.

 Sami Languages: The Sami speak three languages (North Sami, East Sami, South Sami) that belong to the Finno-Ugric group of the Uralic language family.

 Kvens and Forest Finns: Kvens are descendants of migrants from the Torne River Valley, while Forest Finns are from eastern Finland, both groups migrating to Norway around 500 years ago.

 Norwegianisation Policies: From the late 19th century to the 1960s, Norway implemented policies aimed at assimilating Indigenous and minority groups, suppressing their languages and cultures.

 Cultural Suppression: Traditional practices, such as the Sami's 'yoiking,' were forbidden, and children were taken from their families to be educated in state-run institutions.

 End of Discrimination: The discriminatory Norwegianisation policies were officially repealed or replaced in the 1960s, marking a significant change in the treatment of these groups.

Summary: The Sami, Kvens, and Forest Finns are distinct groups in Norway with rich cultural heritages, but they faced severe discrimination and assimilation policies until the 1960s.



The Santa Claus Village near Rovaniemi in Finnish Lapland devoid of snow with a month to go until Christmas. AFP

With Arctic climate warming, Santa runs short of snow

Agence France-Presse
ROVANIEMI

With a month to go until Christmas, Santa Claus is busy preparing, but the warming climate and lack of snow in his Arctic hometown have him worried. By this time of year, the town of Rovaniemi in Finnish Lapland – marketed by tourism officials since the 1980s as the “real” home of Santa Claus – should be white and pretty.


But on a recent visit, rain poured down from a gloomy slate sky and the temperature was well above freezing, with the thermometer showing 2C.


“My reindeer can fly, so that is no problem,” said the man in the red suit and long white beard, resting his weary legs after a long day of meeting excited children and adults. But “we can see that climate change is real. And it is affecting the reindeer. It is affecting life here in the Arctic,” added the man, whose employers declined to identify him by his real name.

Herders say milder and more unpredictable winters have left reindeer struggling to dig up their main food, lichen. Snow and ice have melted and refrozen, burying it under layers of packed ice.


The Arctic is warming faster than other parts of the world due to climate change – nearly four times as fast, according to research published by

Topic → SANTA AND ARCTIC CLIMATE


 Santa Claus is preparing for Christmas but is concerned about climate change affecting his Arctic hometown.


 Rovaniemi, marketed as Santa's "real" home, is experiencing a lack of snow and warmer temperatures, with recent readings at 2°C.


 Rainfall has replaced the expected winter snow, leading to a gloomy atmosphere in the region.

 Reindeer are struggling to find food due to milder winters and changing weather patterns, impacting their ability to dig for lichen.



 The Arctic is warming nearly four times faster than other regions, as highlighted by Finnish research published in Nature in 2022.

 Climate change is visibly affecting life in the Arctic, including the well-being of reindeer and the local ecosystem.

 Santa acknowledges the reality of climate change and its impact on his operations and the environment.

Summary: Santa Claus is worried about climate change's impact on his Arctic home, where warmer temperatures and lack of snow are affecting reindeer and the local ecosystem

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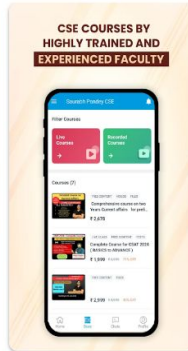
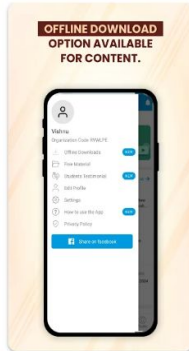
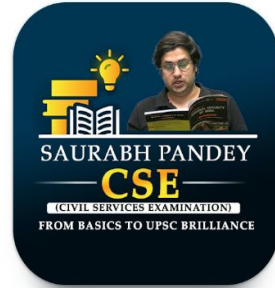
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