

**25 August 2018****Dialy News Pedia*****SCO Peace Mission Exercise***

(GS- Prelims and Mains 2 –International Relations.)

SCO Peace Mission Exercise is conducted biennially for SCO member states.

Recent news: The joint exercise for the year 2018 will be conducted by **Central Military Commission of Russia**. This will be a historic occasion due to the maiden participation of India post becoming a full member of the SCO in June 2017.

The exercise will involve tactical level operations in an international counter insurgency or counter terrorism environment under SCO Charter.

The joint exercise will strengthen mutual confidence, interoperability and enable sharing of best practices among armed forces of SCO Nations. It will be a landmark event in the history of SCO defence cooperation.

Note: SCO is a Eurasian economic, political and security organization headquartered in Beijing, China. The Declaration on establishment of SCO was signed in Shanghai (China) in June 2001 by six founding states – Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

The groupings main objective is military cooperation between members. It also works towards intelligence-sharing, counter-terrorism operations in Central Asia. It is primarily centered on its member nations' Central Asian security-related concerns, often describing main threats it confronts as being terrorism, separatism and extremism.

Odisha approves proposal for legislative council

(GS -Prelims and Mains 2 – Constitution, Polity)

Recent news: Odisha is all set to get a Legislative Council like several other States in the country. A resolution will be brought in the monsoon session of the Assembly beginning September 4th for formation of the Odisha Legislative Council. The Odisha government had set up a committee in 2015 to study the Legislative Councils in other States and recommend for establishment of one in the State.

Legislative Council in India [Formation and Function]

India has a bicameral system i.e., two Houses of Parliament. At the state level, the equivalent of the Lok Sabha is the Vidhan Sabha or Legislative Assembly; that of the Rajya Sabha is the Vidhan Parishad or Legislative Council. The Vidhan Parishad or Legislative Council is the upper house in those states of India that have a bicameral legislature. While most states have a unicameral legislature with only legislative assembly but as of 2017, seven (out of twenty-nine) states have a LC .They are *Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Jammu and Kashmir, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Telangana, and Uttar Pradesh.*

In 2010 the Parliament passed an Act to re-establish a Legislative Council for an eighth state, Tamil Nadu, but the implementation of the Act has been put on hold pending legal action; the state government has also expressed its opposition to the council's revival. Union Cabinet of India has cleared the State of Assam to form a Legislative Council on 28 November 2013

Union Parliament has the power' to create or abolish the Legislative Council in various states on the basis of resolutions adopted by special majority in the Assemblies. Andhra Pradesh had a Legislative Council from 1958, abolished it in 1985, and reconstituted it in 2007.

Article 169 in the Constitution of India 1949

169. Abolition or creation of Legislative Councils in States

(1) Notwithstanding anything in Article 168, Parliament may by law provide for the abolition of the Legislative Council of a State having such a Council or for the creation of such a Council in a State having no such Council, if the Legislative Assembly of the State passes a resolution to that effect by a majority of the total membership of the Assembly and by a majority of not less than two-thirds of the members of the Assembly present and voting

(2) Any law referred to in clause (1) shall contain such provisions for the amendment of this Constitution as may be necessary to give effect to the provisions of the law and may also contain such supplemental, incidental and consequential provisions as Parliament may deem necessary

(3) No such law as aforesaid shall be deemed to be an amendment of this Constitution for the purposes of Article 368.

Strength of the Legislative Council

As mentioned in the Article 169:

The size of the Vidhan Parishad cannot be more than one-third the membership of the Vidhan Sabha. However, its size cannot be less than 40 members (except in Jammu and Kashmir, where there are 36 by an Act of Parliament.). Legislative Council is a permanent body in which each Member of the Legislative Council (MLC) serves for a six-year term, with terms staggered so that the terms of one-third of a Council's members expire every two years. This arrangement parallels that for the Rajya Sabha, the upper house of the Parliament of India.

Powers or Functions of Legislative Council

Vidhan Parishad is the upper house of a state legislature. It has no powers in terms of passing bills; be it money bills or ordinary bills, unlike Rajya Sabha which has equal powers as that of Lok Sabha in terms of Ordinary bills and Amendment bills. This is the reason; it is generally optional to have Vidhan Parishad. But the salary, emoluments and other allowances of a Member of Vidhan Parishad is same as that of his counterpart in Vidhan Sabha.

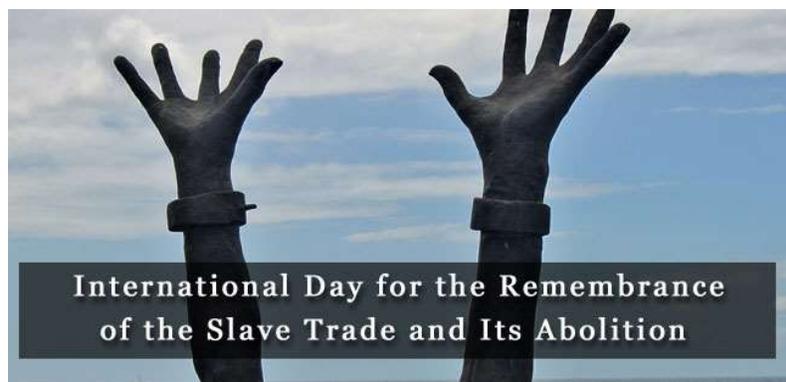
The purpose of having a bicameral legislature is to re-check the decisions taken by the lower house. Even though the upper house has no power to totally reject the bill (even if it rejects, the state assembly can go ahead with the bill after governor's approval), it can delay the bill for some time. The delay will be the time given to the assembly to revise its decision and make any changes to the proposed bill. It will cool down the rush of the hour feeling in the popularly elected house and paves way for much rational thoughts. As there are no powers for Vidhan Parishad to block any bills, there is not much harm in having such a house.

The Council has no powers to advise a bill passed in the Assembly. It can only delay the passage of the bill for 3 months in the first instance and for one month in the second. There is no provision of joint sitting as in case of disagreement in Parliament over ordinary bills. In the ultimate analysis, the Legislative Council is a dilatory chamber so far as ordinary legislation is concerned. It can delay the passage of the bill maximum for a period of four months.

United Nations International Day for the Remembrance of the Slave Trade and its Abolition



(GS Prelims and Mains – 2 – Government Policies, Governance, International Relations)



Recent news: The International Day for the Remembrance of the Slave Trade and Its Abolition was on 23 August 2016 observed across the world.

The aim of the day is to pay tribute to the people who, on 22 to 23 August 1791, revolted against the system of slavery and started the Haitian Revolution. Men and

women, torn from Africa and sold into slavery, revolted against the slave system to obtain freedom and independence for Haiti, which was gained in 1804. This uprising was a turning point in human history.

Background

The night of 22 to 23 August 1791 in Santo Domingo (today Haiti and the Dominican Republic) saw the beginning of the uprising in the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade.

The UNESCO Executive Board adopted Resolution 29 C/40 to observe the International Day for the Remembrance of the Slave Trade and Its Abolition every year on 23 August. The day was first celebrated in a number of countries, in particular in Haiti (23 August 1998) and Goree in Senegal (23 August 1999). The year 2001 saw the participation of the Mulhouse Textile Museum in France in the form of a workshop for fabrics called Indianans de Traite which served as currency for the exchange of slaves in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

NITI Aayog holds the first Samavesh meeting

(GS Prelims and Mains – 2 – Government Policies, Governance)

Recent news: In pursuance of the Prime Minister's call for a New India 2022, the first meeting of the National Steering Group and other knowledge partners was held in NITI Aayog.

The meeting was aimed at bringing together 32 premier educational and policy research institutions to catalyze the development process, enhance institutional capacity development and a field level interface with the community for New India 2022.

This network will enable efficient knowledge sharing and information exchange among all partners to fulfill their role in transformative policy reform so as to achieve a sustainable and more inclusive development in line with the National Development Agenda, Sustainable Development Goals as well as the 15 year Vision, 7 year strategy and 3 year action plan.

The meeting was also attended by representatives of four State Governments viz. Kerala, Assam, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan.

EDITORIAL

TO READ

A BLASPHEMOUS LAW

The Punjab government's proposal to amend Article 295 of the Penal Code is deeply regressive and will have deep ramifications beyond Punjab. The proposed amendment gives life

imprisonment for whoever causes injury, damage or sacrilege to the Guru Granth Sahib, the Bhagwad Gita, the Quran and the Bible.

As we have seen in the case of neighboring Pakistan, the progressive strengthening of anti-blasphemy laws during the Seventies was a sign of a toxic combination of greater intolerance and authoritarianism. Does India want to traverse the same road?

Holy books like the Adi Granth are sacred. They are sacred not just for their content. They express the highest truths about Ultimate Reality. The “Sat” in “Ek Omkar Sat Nam” brilliantly combines both Truth and Existence. But in the Sikh tradition, the Book is also treated iconically, with elaborate rituals around its sacred treatment, often to the point where it is not easily disseminated. But using state power to enforce the sacred, both defiles the sacred and messes with the secular.

The article defiles the sacredness of the Book, the eternity of the Word because the status of the Book now becomes an artifact of state power. It is if the song of Krishna, or the word of Mohammad, or the teaching of the Gurus, now needs the imprimatur of state violence to secure their sacredness.

Rather than being luminous, potent and transcendent texts, their status is now reduced to a section of the Indian Penal Code. It also gives defilers of these texts more power: It is in effect saying these books can, in fact, be defiled by some rearrangement or even a burning of a copy. So much for the indestructible Word. The greatest heresy is to think that the word of God needs protection from the mortal state. The sacrilege to the book is not its burning, it is this law.

But this law also messes with secularism. A liberal state needs two sensibilities. The first is that many good things are good and derive their authentic meaning precisely from the fact that there is no coercion behind them. The second is that my beliefs and faith, even if entirely sound, do not by themselves provide sufficient ground for the state using its coercive power to enforce them. The argument that the state needs to use coercive power in deference to religious sentiments (however sincere those sentiments might be), is a piece of illiberal and dangerous nonsense. I may respect something, but it does not give sufficient warrant for the state to enforce this belief or sentiment on others. Religious sentiments need not be illiberal; but they become illiberal when they become the basis for the state enforcing the idea that everyone has to defer to those sentiments. In India, we are constantly expanding the circle of deference to religious sentiment. Contrary to what the Punjab government says, making religious sentiments the basis for law, is a recipe for competitive political mobilisation and conflict, not of peace. This law is also deeply authoritarian. The idea of life imprisonment for acts of injury to the book is neither about deterrence, nor piety. It is simply about the state making a show of its power because it can.

The law also messes with history in bizarre ways. In order to show that the law was not directed at a particular religion, the act includes texts like the Bhagwad Gita in its ambit. The law is still sectarian in that it protects four texts, and the state has decided which texts get protection. But whatever the glories and importance of the Bhagwad Gita, the idea that the state now creates a new liturgy of respect around that text in the same way as the AdiGranth or the Koran, is the state taking over the right to define the significance of these texts in its own way. It is in effect converting the text to what it has never been.

Defenders of the amendments say that the text will not lead to the closing of spaces for criticism, since the act of injury to the text is narrowly defined. But this is plain nonsense. One of the tragedies of modern Sikhism is simply that the religion of extraordinary ecumenism and wondrous detachment has become often seriously internally intolerant. Part of this is political: The SGPC wanting to maintain as much of its monopoly over the religious organization as possible. But if you talk to serious Sikh scholars you will quickly find out just how difficult it is to do serious critical scholarship in this area: Scholars have been traumatized by their communities. I have personally known scholars who will not write critically on intra-Sikh politics for fear of reprisals.

Often the issue is simply that the scholarship dealing with the character of the text is considered “injurious” to the text, defilement. In another context, even our courts have held rearranging BasavaVachanas in a different order (to give a more “feminist” reading) was offensive to the Lingayats. Given this context, any law that empowers the state to give up to life imprisonment for injury to the book is about nothing but creating a pall of fear. Its effect will not be the number of prosecutions; its effect will be more palpably felt in people not even daring to push the boundaries of protest.

When the original IPC was discussed in the 1920s, our leaders were far more conscious of its possible infringement on liberty. Now the political class legitimises any infringement on liberty with the imprimatur of majoritarian sentiment behind it. It is true that in Punjab there were acts of desecration of several religious texts. But there are enough existing laws to deal with those who would want to maliciously generate enmity between communities. Second, the motives of these desecrators are mixed. But if they have a political purpose, it is to make sure that they can use religious sentiments to destroy India's liberal democracy. By caving into those fears, by treating Indian citizens as infantile creatures of passion who cannot be educated for liberty, we are unwittingly aiding their political agenda.

It should also worry a democracy that no political party has opposed or called out the authoritarian character of this bill. Congress and AAP are now both legitimising “religious sentiment” as itself a valid argument (think Ayodhya). For, caving in to some nebulous argument

about religious sentiments does not just make us destroy both religion and the state, it also produces political cowardice of the highest order.

PRELIMS QUESTIONS

1. Choose the correct statement regarding SCO Peace Mission Exercise.
 - a. SCO Peace Mission Exercise is conducted biennially for SCO member states only.
 - b. India post becoming a full member of the SCO in June 2017.
 - c. The joint exercise for the year 2018 will be conducted by Russia.
 - d. All the above

2. Choose the correct statement regarding International Day for the Remembrance of the Slave Trade and its Abolition.
 - a. Every year on August 23 observed as International Day for the Remembrance of the Slave Trade and its Abolition
 - b. It was first celebrated in many countries, in particular in Haiti, on August 23, 1998.
 - c. both a and b
 - d. none of the above

3. Choose the correct statement regarding Samavesh meeting
 - a. NITI Aayog holds the first meeting of Samavesh.
 - b. The meeting was attended by representatives of four State Governments-Kerala, Assam, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan.
 - c. both a and b
 - d. none of the above

4. Choose the correct statement regarding first block chain bond
 - a. World Bank has launched world-first block chain bond.
 - b. Block chain Operated New Debt Instrument as well as a reference to Australia's most famous beach.
 - c. Both a and b.
 - d. None of the above.

Mains Answer writing

Q: Secularism as philosophy of the constitution. Explain?

YesUPSC