



RACE IAS

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What is a heatwave?

Context:

A heatwave has gripped the Vidarbha and Marathwada regions of Maharashtra. This is the fourth heatwave in the last two months, and the second in April. In fact, on April 26, Vidarbha was the hottest region in the country.

What is a heatwave?

- A region is considered to be under the grip of a heatwave if the maximum temperature reaches at least 40 degrees Celsius or more in the plains and at least 30 degrees Celsius or more in hilly regions.
- When the maximum temperature departure ranges between 4.5 and 6 degrees, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) declares a heatwave.
- A severe heatwave is declared when the recorded maximum temperature of a locality departure from normal is over 6.4 degrees Celsius.
- Also, if an area records over 45 degrees and 47 degrees Celsius on any given day, then the IMD declares heatwave and severe heatwave conditions, respectively.

Reasons:

The lack of pre-monsoon showers has also led to an increase in the overall maximum temperature. Maharashtra recorded 63 per cent deficient rainfall from March 1 to April 26.

Reasons why overall India is experiencing more heat waves are:

1. Magnified effect of paved and concrete surfaces in urban areas and a lack of tree cover.

2. Urban heat island effects can make ambient temperatures feel 3 to 4 degrees more than what they are.
3. More heat waves were expected as globally temperatures had risen by an average 0.8 degrees in the past 100 years. Night-time temperatures are rising too.
4. Higher daily peak temperatures and longer, more intense heat waves are becoming increasingly frequent globally due to climate change.
5. High intensity of UV rays in medium-high heat wave zones.
6. Combination of exceptional heat stress and a predominantly rural population makes India vulnerable to heat waves.

Way ahead for India- How should India deal with heat waves?

1. Identifying heat hot-spots through appropriate tracking of meteorological data and promoting timely development and implementation of local Heat Action Plans with strategic inter-agency co-ordination, and a response which targets the most vulnerable groups.
2. Review of existing occupational health standards, labour laws and sectoral regulations for worker safety in relation to climatic conditions.
3. Policy intervention and coordination across three sectors health, water and power is necessary.
4. Promotion of traditional adaptation practices, such as staying indoors and wearing comfortable clothes.
5. Popularisation of simple design features such as shaded windows, underground water storage tanks and insulating housing materials.
6. Advance implementation of local Heat Action Plans, plus effective inter-agency coordination is a vital response which the government can deploy in order to protect vulnerable groups.

The most heatwave prone areas – known as the Core Heatwave Zone (CHZ) are:

Rajasthan, Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh, Delhi, West Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Orissa, Vidarbha in Maharashtra, parts of Gangetic West Bengal, Coastal Andhra Pradesh, and Telangana.

Sources: Indian Express.

Basic structure and the Kesavananda Bharati case:

Context:

Exactly forty nine ago, on April 24, 1973, Chief Justice Sikri and 12 judges of the Supreme Court assembled to deliver the most important judgment in its history. The case of Kesavananda Bharati v State of Kerala had been heard for 68 days, the arguments commencing on October 31, 1972, and ending on March 23, 1973.

- By a 7-6 verdict, a 13-judge Constitution Bench ruled that the 'basic structure' of the Constitution is inviolable, and could not be amended by Parliament.
- The basic structure doctrine has since been regarded as a tenet of Indian constitutional law.

Background of the case:

All this effort was to answer just one main question: was the power of Parliament to amend the Constitution unlimited? In other words, could Parliament alter, amend, abrogate any part of the Constitution even to the extent of taking away all fundamental rights?

- In the early 1970s, the government of then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi had enacted major amendments to the Constitution (the 24th, 25th, 26th and 29th) to get over the judgments of the Supreme Court in RC Cooper (1970), Madhavrao Scindia (1970) and the earlier mentioned Golaknath.
- In RC Cooper, the court had struck down Indira Gandhi's bank nationalisation policy, and in Madhavrao Scindia it had annulled the abolition of privy purses of former rulers.
- All the four amendments, as well as the Golaknath judgment, came under challenge in the Kesavananda Bharati case- where relief was sought by the religious figure Swami Kesavananda Bharati against the Kerala government vis-à-vis two state land reform laws.

What constitutes the basic structure?

The Constitutional Bench ruled by a 7-6 verdict that Parliament should be restrained from altering the 'basic structure' of the Constitution.

The court held that under Article 368, which provides Parliament amending powers, something must remain of the original Constitution that the new amendment would change.

The court did not define the 'basic structure', and only listed a few principles – federalism, secularism, democracy – as being its part. Since then, the court has been adding new features to this concept.

'Basic structure' since Kesavananda:

The 'basic structure' doctrine has since been interpreted to include the supremacy of the Constitution, the rule of law, Independence of the judiciary, doctrine of separation of powers, federalism, secularism, sovereign democratic republic, the parliamentary system of government, the principle of free and fair elections, welfare state, etc.

What do critics say?

Critics of the doctrine have called it undemocratic, since unelected judges can strike down a constitutional amendment.

At the same time, its proponents have hailed the concept as a safety valve against majoritarianism and authoritarianism.

Outcomes and implications of the judgment:

If the majority of the Supreme Court had held that Parliament could alter any part of the Constitution, India would most certainly have degenerated into a totalitarian State or had one-party rule.

At any rate, the Constitution would have lost its supremacy.

- The 39th Amendment prohibited any challenge to the election of the President, Vice-President, Speaker and Prime Minister, irrespective of the electoral malpractice. This was a clear attempt to nullify the adverse Allahabad High Court ruling against Indira Gandhi.
- The 41st Amendment prohibited any case, civil or criminal, being filed against the President, Vice-President, Prime Minister or the Governors, not only during their term of office but forever. Thus, if a person was a governor for just one day, he acquired immunity from any legal proceedings for life.

If Parliament were indeed supreme, these shocking amendments would have become part of the Constitution.

Hepatitis B:

Context:

A series of unexplained cases of Hepatitis B in children has taken over the world. Many countries including the US and UK reported mysterious cases of a few children being diagnosed with Hepatitis B.

- Hepatitis B is an infection in the liver which happens because of the Hepatitis B virus or HBV.
- The virus usually spreads through blood, semen or other body fluids.

Prevention:

It can be prevented or protected against through vaccination.

Symptoms:

- The most common symptoms of Hepatitis B are jaundice, fever, fatigue that lasts for weeks or even months, vomiting, loss of appetite, and pain in joints or belly.
- When it is acute, the virus lasts a small time and doesn't always necessarily need treatments although it can get serious and lead to life-threatening diseases like organ scarring, liver failure and even cancer.

What is adenovirus and how is it leading to Hepatitis B in children?

Adenovirus is a group of viruses that commonly cause cold or flu-like symptoms, fever, sore throat, acute bronchitis, pneumonia, conjunctivitis, acute inflammation of the stomach, diarrhoea, vomiting, nausea and stomach pain.

- Adenovirus is known to spread from one person to another through close contact, coughing, sneezing and even by touching an object containing adenovirus and then further touching the mouth, nose or eyes.
- Type 41 adenovirus is suspected of causing Hepatitis B in children.
- While there are more than 50 types of adenoviruses, it is type 41 that causes diarrhoea, vomiting and fever along with respiratory problems.

Type of Hepatitis

virus	A	B	C	D	E
Source of	feces	blood/ blood-derived body fluids	blood/ blood-derived body fluids	blood/ blood-derived body fluids	feces
Route of transmission	fecal-oral	percutaneous permucosal	percutaneous permucosal	percutaneous permucosal	fecal-oral
Chronic infection	no	yes	yes	yes	no
Prevention	pre/post- exposure immunization	pre/post- exposure immunization	blood donor screening; risk behavior modification	risk behavior modification	ensure safe drinking water

Sources: Indian Express.

Karnataka sets 2027 target to become malaria-free:

Context:

Karnataka has set a target to eliminate malaria by 2027, three years before the 2030 target set by the Union government.

- Karnataka has received national recognition and appreciation for its efforts to eliminate malaria in the past six years, between 2015 and 2021, as part of the National Framework for Malaria Elimination in India (NFMEI) initiative.

About Malaria:

Malaria is a life-threatening disease caused by parasites that are transmitted to people through the bites of infected female Anopheles mosquitoes.

Malaria burden across the world:

- Malaria is most endemic in Africa, with Nigeria, Congo, Tanzania, Mozambique, Niger and Burkina Faso together accounting for over half the yearly deaths.
- Even now, the disease kills over four lakh every year, according to WHO figures.
- Children aged under 5 years are the most vulnerable group affected by malaria; in 2019, they accounted for 67% (274,000) of all malaria deaths worldwide.
- In 2019, India had an estimated 5.6 million cases of malaria compared to about 20 million cases in 2020.

WHO malaria-free certification:

1. WHO grants the certification when a country has demonstrated that the chain of indigenous malaria transmission by Anopheles mosquitoes has been interrupted nationwide for at least the past three consecutive years.
2. A country must also demonstrate the capacity to prevent the re-establishment of transmission.
3. The final decision on awarding a malaria-free certification rests with the WHO Director-General, based on a recommendation by the independent Malaria Elimination Certification Panel (MECP).

Key findings of the WHO World Malaria Report 2020:

- India has made considerable progress in reducing its malaria burden.
- India is the only highly endemic country which has reported a decline of 17.6% in 2019 as compared to 2018.

Reasons for the failure to develop a malaria vaccine so far:

1. The complexity of the life-cycle of the malaria-causing parasite, a part of which is spent in the human host.
2. These parasites are also able to hide inside human cells to avoid being recognised by the immune system, creating further challenges.
3. Lack of funding and interest in developing a malaria vaccine.
4. The vaccine manufacturers have little incentive for malaria vaccines.

Sources: the Hindu.

Section 144 CrPC:

What is it?

This colonial-era law, which has been retained in the Code, empowers a district magistrate, a sub-divisional magistrate, or any other executive magistrate empowered by the state government, to issue orders to prevent and address urgent cases of apprehended danger or nuisance.

- The written order by the officer may be directed against an individual or individuals residing in a particular area, or to the public at large.
- In urgent cases, the magistrate can pass the order without giving prior notice to the individual targeted in the order.

Powers under the provision:

- The provision allows the magistrate to direct any person to abstain from a certain act, or to pass an order with respect to a certain property in the possession or under the management of that person.
- This usually means restrictions on movement, carrying arms, and unlawful assembly.
- It is generally understood that an assembly of three or more people is prohibited under Section 144.

Duration:

Orders passed under Section 144 remain in force for two months, unless the state government considers it necessary to extend it. But in any case, the total period for which the order is in force cannot be more than six months.

Criticisms:

- The section is sweeping, and allows the magistrate to exercise absolute power unjustifiably.
- Under the law, the first remedy against the order is a revision application that must be filed to the same officer who issued the order in the first place.
- Aggrieved individuals argue that in many cases their rights would have already been violated by the state even before the High Court had intervened.

- Imposing prohibitory orders over a very large area is not justified because the security situation differs from place to place and cannot be dealt with in the same manner.

Supreme Court rulings:

1961 'Babulal Parate vs State of Maharashtra and Others': Supreme Court refused to strike down the law, saying it is "not correct to say that the remedy of a person aggrieved by an order under the section was illusory".

In 1967, the court rejected a challenge to the law saying "no democracy can exist if 'public order' is freely allowed to be disturbed by a section of the citizens".

In 1970 ('Madhu Limaye vs Sub-Divisional Magistrate'), the court said the power of a magistrate under Section 144 "is not an ordinary power flowing from administration but a power used in a judicial manner and which can stand further judicial scrutiny".

- The court, however, upheld the constitutionality of the law, ruling that the restrictions imposed through Section 144 are covered under the "reasonable restrictions" to the fundamental rights laid down under Article 19(2) of the Constitution.

Why in the News?

Uttarakhand government has invoked Section 144 after the Supreme Court instructed the Uttarakhand government to give a commitment that there would be no "untoward situation" or "unacceptable statements" during a mahapanchayat that had been planned by Hindu religious leaders in the village on April 27.

Need for:

Incendiary speeches against Muslims have been made by Hindu religious leaders at such gatherings previously, including one organised in Haridwar in December last year.

Sources: Indian Express.

What is the iRAD?

- iRAD is an initiative of the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH), with an objective to improve road safety in the country.

- The main idea behind it is to create a Centralised Accident Database to host and access all accident related data by various departments/stakeholders.
- It was launched in Chandigarh recently.
- The iRAD application is an initiative of the MoRTH to capture relevant details about the accident prone areas throughout India.

India Post Payments Bank:

The union cabinet has approved ₹ 820 crore financial support for India Post Payments Bank.

IPPB:

- IPPB was launched by the Prime Minister in 2018 with 100% equity owned by the Government of India.
- It is a payments bank of the Indian postal department which works through a network of post offices and nearly 4 lakh postmen. It is governed by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).
- The bank has been set up with the vision to build the most accessible, affordable and trusted bank for the common man in India. The fundamental mandate of IPPB is to remove barriers for the unbanked and under-banked and reach the last mile.
- IPPB is committed to providing a fillip to a less cash economy and contribute to the vision of Digital India