



DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS 03-02-2024

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NHRC

Syllabus: GS-2: Statutory bodies.

Context:

- *NHRC to Hold Public Hearing on J&K Human Rights Violations, a Year After SC Directions.*

Public Hearing on Human Rights in Jammu and Kashmir:

- *Union government to conduct a public hearing on human rights in Jammu and Kashmir from February 7 to February 9.*
- *National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) panel will hold the hearing in Srinagar.*
- *NHRC notice requested people to register complaints by January 29 against public servants for negligence or involvement in human rights violations.*

Background and Context:

- *This is the first such official-level discussion on human rights in Jammu and Kashmir since the reading down of Article 370.*
- *The NHRC hearing follows a disturbing incident in Poonch where three civilians were allegedly tortured to death in Army custody in December.*

Legal and Institutional Changes:

- *In March 2020, NHRC was empowered to handle human rights concerns in Jammu and Kashmir.*
- *State Human Rights Commission (SHRC) ceased to exist on October 31, 2019, following the Jammu & Kashmir Reorganisation Act.*
- *Dozens of legislations, including the J&K Protection of Human Rights Act, 1997, were repealed after the Reorganisation Act.*

Petition and Supreme Court Involvement:

- *In 2022, a petition highlighted the absence of statutory bodies, including a human rights commission, in J&K.*
- *The Supreme Court directed the government to establish a mechanism for people in Jammu and Kashmir to file complaints with NHRC.*

Past SHRC Records and UN Panel's Criticism:

- *The SHRC was investigating over 630 complaints of abuses when it was shut down in 2019.*

- *Unofficial figures, quoting the SHRC's annual report for 2017-18, suggested over 8,000 pending cases of abuses.*
- **A UN panel criticized the closure of SHRC in September 2020 and called for investigations into enforced disappearance and mass graves.**

Human Rights Groups and Arrests:

- *Khurram Pervez, convenor of **Coalition of Civil Society (CCS)**, was accused of "terror funding" and arrested by the **National Investigations Agency in 2021.***
- *CCS, a conglomerate documenting rights abuses, became defunct after the arrest.*

Supreme Court's Recommendation for Truth and Reconciliation:

- *In 2023, the Supreme Court recommended setting up a 'Truth and Reconciliation Committee' to investigate human rights abuses in Jammu and Kashmir since the 1980s.*
- *The committee would report on violations by both state and non-state actors and recommend measures for reconciliation.*

About NHRC:

- *The **National Human Rights Commission of India** (abbreviated as NHRC) is a statutory body constituted on 12 October 1993 under the Protection of Human Rights Ordinance of 28 September 1993.*
- *It was given a statutory basis by the **Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993 (PHRA).***
- *The NHRC is responsible for the protection and promotion of human rights, defined by the act as "Rights Relating To Life, liberty, equality and dignity of the individual guaranteed by the constitution or embodied in the international covenants and enforceable by courts in India".*

EXERCISE 'SADA TANSEEQ'

Syllabus: GS-2; International Relations

- **Context**
*Recently, The inaugural edition of **India-Saudi Arabia** Joint Military Exercise 'SADA TANSEEQ' commenced at Mahajan, Rajasthan.*



Aim

- *Aim of the Exercise is to train troops of both sides for Joint Operations in **Semi Desert terrain** under Chapter VII of the **United Nations Charter**.*

More to Know

- *The Exercise is scheduled to be conducted from 29th January to 10th February 2024.*
- *The Saudi Arabian contingent comprising 45 personnel is being represented by Royal Saudi Land Forces.*
- *The Indian Army contingent also comprising 45 personnel is being represented by a Battalion from the Brigade of the Guards (Mechanised Infantry).*
- *The Exercise will involve Establishment of Mobile Vehicle Check Post, Cordon & Search Operation, House Intervention Drill, Reflex Shooting, Slithering and Sniper Firing.*

Significance

- *The Exercise will provide an opportunity to both the contingents to **strengthen their bond**.*
- *It will act as a platform to achieve shared security objectives, enhance the level of **defence cooperation** and foster **bilateral relations** between the two friendly nations.*
- *The Exercise will enable both the sides to share their best practices in the **tactics, techniques and procedures** of conducting operations in sub-conventional domain.*
- *It will facilitate developing interoperability, bonhomie and camaraderie between troops from both the sides.*

Ongoing tensions in Korean peninsula

Syllabus: GS-2: International events/developments.

Context:

- *North Korea has increased provocative actions, severing its goal of Korean reunification and labeling South Korea as an adversary.*
- *There is a rise in the frequency and diversity of North Korea's missile tests, expanding its strategic capabilities.*
- *South Korea, along with the U.S. and Japan, responds through joint military drills.*
- *Concerns are growing about the deterioration of international security and an increase in major power rivalry in the Korean peninsula.*

Historical context:

World War II aftermath (1945):

- *Korean peninsula divided into North and South after the defeat of imperial Japan.*
- *North Korea under Soviet influence, South Korea under U.S. influence.*
- *Creation of ideologically different regimes reflecting Cold War divisions.*

Korean War (1950-53):

- *North's attempt to take over the South led to the first "hot war" of the Cold War.*
- *Ceasefire but no formal peace agreement, leaving the Korean Peninsula divided.*

Post-Cold War era:

- *Continued ideological and geopolitical differences: North an authoritarian regime allied with China and Russia, South a liberal democracy allied with the U.S.*

De-nuclearization efforts:

- *Ongoing tension over North Korea's nuclear ambitions.*
- *Various international efforts to halt and reverse North Korea's nuclear weapons program.*

1994-2002:

- *"Agreed Framework" halts North Korea's nuclear program temporarily.*
- *Deal unravels; North Korea conducts nuclear test in 2006.*

Six-Party Talks (2003-2009):

- *Involving two Koreas, China, Japan, Russia, and the U.S.*
- *Pledges by North Korea to forgo nuclear ambitions, followed by a nuclear test in 2006.*
- *Talks break down in 2009, with North Korea vowing not to return.*

Kim Jong Un era (since 2011):

- *Annual missile tests with a consistent increase.*
- *Trump administration's peace talks attempt (2018-19) fails to achieve de-nuclearization.*
- *Kim returns to developing and testing delivery systems.*

North Korea's nuclear capability:

- *Demonstrated nuclear weapons capability through six tests.*
- *Development, testing, and deployment of delivery vehicles, space launchers, and satellites.*
- *Provocative actions include military drills, shelling South Korean islands, and nuclear threats.*

Current situation (as of the given context):

- *North Korea's ability to target the U.S. mainland with nuclear arsenal.*
- *Involvement in global cyber-attacks.*
- *South Korea enhances military alliance with the U.S., hosting troops and advanced missile defense systems.*

What led to recent aggravation?

North Korean Policy Shift (January 2024):

- *Kim announces the **abandonment of the goal of reunifying** with the South.*
- ***Rebrands the South as an enemy state**, orders the rewriting of the North Korean constitution.*
- ***Offices related to reunification closed**, reunification monument in Pyongyang demolished.*

Military Aggression by North Korea:

- **Multiple missile tests** in the first month of 2024, including a significant one involving a solid-fueled missile carrying a hypersonic warhead.
- **Hypersonic weapons are a global military race**; U.S., Russia, China, India, and Iran are also developing them.
- North Korea's actions prompt **joint naval drills by the U.S., South Korea, and Japan.**

Joint Naval Drills (Response to North Korea):

- U.S., South Korea, and Japan conduct joint naval drills featuring nine warships.
- Aimed at enhancing joint effectiveness against North Korea's missile and underwater threats.
- North Korea alleges offensive intent, tests nuclear-capable underwater drone and strategic cruise missile in retaliation.

South Korean Government Strategy:

- Newly elected conservative **President Yoon Suk Yeol** leads the government.
- **Hawkish stance towards North Korea**, unlike the predecessor Moon Jae-in.
- Strategy involves **close coordination with the U.S. and Japan** to counter North Korea's aggressive moves.

Trilateral Cooperation Meeting (August 2023):

- Historic meeting at **Camp David** involving the U.S., South Korea, and Japan.
- Aims to initiate a new era of trilateral cooperation.
- Significant step given historical tensions between South Korea and Japan due to imperial Japan's occupation.

Growing Concerns of Conflict:

- High probability of tit-for-tat measures leading to unintended consequences.
- International community expresses growing concern that tensions may escalate into conflict between North and South Korea.

What does the situation portend for international security?

Global Strategic Competition:

- Occurring amidst other historically rooted conflicts such as **Russia-Ukraine and Israel-Palestine.**
- Ongoing tensions between **China-Taiwan and India-China.**

Key Stakeholders and Nuclear Powers:

- *Involvement of major nuclear powers in global strategic competition: **U.S., China, and Russia.***
- *Alliances and nuclear weapons involvement **may prevent a major conflict** but increase the risk of violent incidents.*

Potential for Violent Incidents:

- *Past instances like North Korea torpedoing a South Korean warship in 2010 indicate potential for violent incidents or skirmishes.*

Deepening Ties and Linkages:

- *North Korea aligns more with the Sino-Russian axis, enhancing ties with China and Russia.*
- *South Korea strengthens its position in the U.S. alliance system.*
- *Significant linkages with ongoing global conflicts.*

North Korea's Engagement with Russia:

- *North Korea's deepening ties with Russia, including arms supplies and collaboration on short-range ballistic missiles.*
- *Russia's increased engagement with North Korea, especially following the Russia-Ukraine war.*

China's Consistent Support for North Korea:

- *China, North Korea's largest trading partner, expresses unswerving support amid rising tensions.*
- *Potential opportunism by North Korea to conduct provocative actions during the U.S.' preoccupation with conflicts elsewhere.*

Potential Distraction Strategy:

- *North Korea's actions could serve as a distraction for the U.S. amidst conflicts in Europe and West Asia.*
- *Russia and China may benefit from North Korea creating a "third front" as they share common interests in other global conflicts.*

Old Smoker

Syllabus: GS-3; Science and Technology

Context

- *A decade-long survey of the night sky has revealed a **mysterious new type of star** astronomers are referring to as an “old smoker.”*



More to know

- *These stars are a type of red giant, which are created during the final stages of medium-sized stars.*
- *These stars are aging giant stars that are located near the center of the Milky Way galaxy. They are named "old smokers" because they have been observed "**puffing**" out **clouds of gas**.*
- *Astronomers have discovered these stars through a 10-year project led by the University of Hertfordshire that has studied almost a billion stars in the Milky Way.*

The Discovery

- *Astronomers revealed that they discovered this mysterious **new type of star** **hiding in the heart of the Milky Way**.*

- *During their 10-year survey, the international team of scientists behind the discovery was not looking for such old stars.*
- *They were using the **VISTA telescope in Chile** to look for newborn stars or protostars, which often erupt frequently.*
- *They discovered 32 such newborn stars, which the researchers described as the “largest number anyone has ever found before in one batch.”*
- *But in the background was a “nice surprise” a lot more interesting — an old smoker puffing away in a densely packed and metal-rich region at the centre of the Milky Way called the **Nuclear Stellar Disc**.*
- *The leading theory is that the **star’s brightness is temporarily obscured by puffs of smoke**.*
- *This also makes sense since there are many more heavy elements in that region of the galaxy, which could create more dust in the star’s atmosphere.*
- *If the theory is correct, the amount of puffed out by the stars could help explain how heavy elements spread through the galaxy and beyond.*

Significance

- *This new discovery provides new insights into **stellar evolution and elemental distribution**.*

Laughing Gull

Syllabus: GS-3; Biodiversity

- **Context**
*Laughing gull, a migratory bird from North America, has been sighted for the first time in the country at the **Chittari estuary in Kasaragod district**.*



About

- The laughing gull (*Leucophaeus atricilla*) is a medium-sized, **omnivorous bird** that lives in **North and South America**.
- It is named for its call, which sounds like human laughter.
- The laughing gull is usually active during the day, but will forage at night during breeding season.

Food

- Laughing gulls are opportunistic eaters, consuming a variety of foods including **fish, insects, mollusks, and garbage**.
- It can be found along beaches at night, or hovering over lights to catch insects.
- In the spring, they will hover over freshly plowed farm fields to search for grubs. They may also eat the eggs of other birds, but not as often as other gull species.

Appearance

- The laughing gull is medium gray on top and white on the bottom. In the summer, adults have a black hood, white arcs around their eyes, and a reddish bill. In the winter, the hood becomes a blurry gray mask on a white head, and their legs are reddish black to black.

Breeding pattern

- *Laughing gulls **breed in large colonies** along the Atlantic coast of North America, the Caribbean, and northern South America. Birds north of North Carolina usually migrate south for the winter.*

Inference

- *The laughing gull's presence in **Kasaragod** adds a new chapter to the region's rich **biodiversity**.*
- *Birdwatchers and researchers are eager to conduct further studies to understand the **migratory patterns** and the reasons behind this extraordinary visit.*