



DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS 24-02-2024

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1. Mahamastakabhisheka

GS-2

2. Should India have regional benches of Supreme court?
3. New rules on surrogacy

GS-3

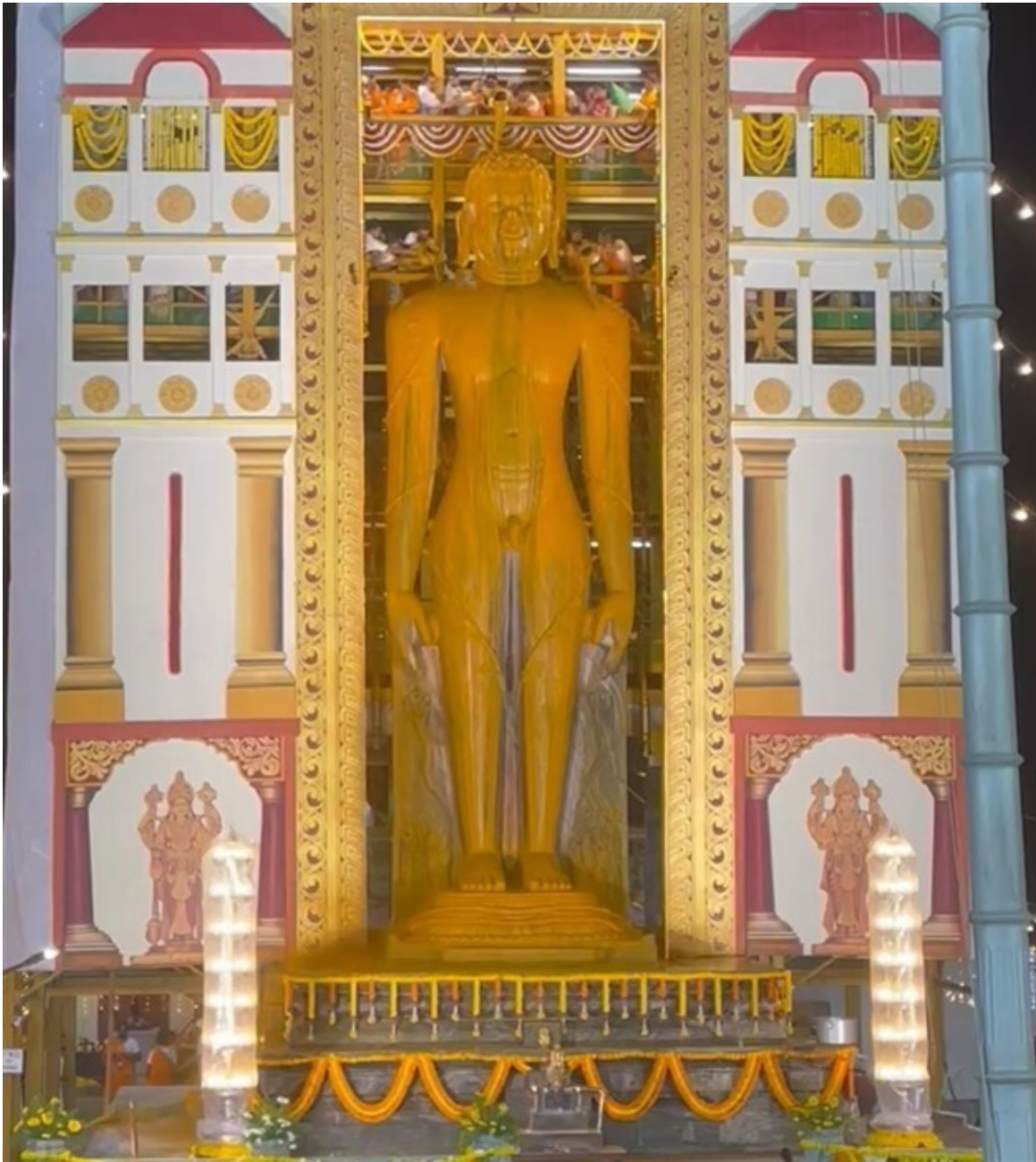
4. Guinea worm disease
5. CE20 cryogenic engine

Mahamastakabhisheka

Syllabus: GS-1; Art and Culture

Context

*The spectacular Mahamastakabhisheka ceremony for **Lord Bahubali** commenced in **Venoor village**, casting vibrant hues upon the 35 feet tall monolith.*



More to know

- Situated on the banks of the **Phalguni River in Belthangady Taluk**, about 50 km from Mangaluru, Venoor holds historical significance as a thriving center of Jainism and the erstwhile capital of the **Ajila Royal Dynasty**.
- The 17th-century monolith, a towering tribute to Lord Bahubali, was erected by the Ajila Rulers.

- During the Maha Mastakabhisheka, the statue undergoes a ceremonial anointment with a range of sacred substances, including Ksheera (milk), Haritha, Srigandha, Astagandha, Chandana, Kesara, tender coconut, Kashaya, Sugarcane Juice, Shwetha Kalka Churna and Rajata Pushpa Vristi.
- What sets the Bahubali statue in Venoor apart is its distinctive feature – a smiling face, making it the only one of its kind in the region.

Bahubali

- Bahubali, the **son of Rishabhanatha**, the first of the twenty-four Jain Tirthankaras, is worshipped for living with exceptional qualities that he displayed during all stages of his life from conception, birth, renunciation, enlightenment and salvation.

Other Mahamastakabhishekas

- Gommateshwara statue at Shravana Belgola
- Dharmasthala Mahamastakabhisheka
- Karkala Mahamastakabhisheka
- Kumbhoj Mahamastakabhisheka

Jainism

- Jainism also known as **Jain Dharma**, is an Indian religion.
- Jainism traces its spiritual ideas and history through the succession of **twenty-four tirthankaras** (supreme preachers of Dharma), with
 - the first in the current time cycle being **Rishabhadeva**, whom the tradition holds to have lived millions of years ago,
 - the twenty-third tirthankara **Parshvanatha**, whom historians date to the 9th century BCE, and
 - the twenty-fourth tirthankara **Mahavira**, around 600 BCE.
- Jainism is considered an eternal dharma with the tirthankaras guiding every time cycle of the cosmology.

Principles/Pillars of Jainism

- The three main pillars of Jainism are **ahimsā (non-violence)**, **anekāntavāda (non-absolutism)**, and **aparigraha (asceticism)**.

Five vows

- Jain monks take five main vows: **ahimsā (non-violence)**, **satya (truth)**, **asteya (not stealing)**, **brahmacharya (chastity)**, and **aparigraha (non-possessiveness)**.

Sects

- *Jainism is one of the oldest religions still practiced today. It has two major ancient sub-traditions, **Digambaras and Śvētāmbaras***
- *Both sub-traditions have mendicants supported by laypersons (*śrāvakas and śrāvikas*). The Śvētāmbara tradition in turn has three sub-traditions: **Mandirvāsī, Deravasi, and Sthānakavasī.***

Beliefs and philosophy

- *Jainism is transtheistic and forecasts that the universe evolves without violating the law of **substance dualism**, and the actual realization of this principle plays out through the phenomena of both **parallelism and interactionism.***

Scriptures and texts

- *Jain canonical scriptures are called **Agamas.***
- *The earliest surviving Sanskrit text by **Umaswati**, the **Tattvarthasūtra** is considered authoritative by all traditions of Jainism.*
- *In the Digambara tradition, the texts written by **Kundakunda** are highly revered and have been historically influential, while the oldest being **Kasayapahuda and Shatkhandagama** attributed to **Acharya pushpdanta and Bhutbali.***
- *Other important Digambara Jain texts include: **Samayasara, Ratnakaranda śrāvakācāra, and Niyamasara.***

Should India have regional benches of Supreme court?

Syllabus: GS-2: Judiciary – Supreme Court.

Context:

- *Parliament panel says govt has accepted its recommendation that SC should have regional benches.*

What are regional benches of the Supreme Court?

- *In India, **regional benches of the Supreme Court** refer to the concept of establishing additional benches of the highest court in different parts of the country, outside of its current seat in New Delhi.*
- *This is **distinct from the existing High Courts**, which are subordinate to the Supreme Court and have their own jurisdictions within states.*

Background:

- **A 2011 study by legal scholar Nick Robinson** found that most cases before the Supreme Court come from High Courts near Delhi.
- The **question arises** whether establishing regional benches could reduce this geographical bias and improve access to justice for more Indians.
- **People are increasingly seeking legal recourse** against arbitrary state actions, leading to more cases reaching the Supreme Court.
- **For individuals living far from Delhi**, accessing the Supreme Court becomes challenging, hindering their ability to pursue justice.
- While it's argued that physical presence isn't necessary in appellate forums, litigants often prefer to visit their lawyers and witness court proceedings.

Need for regional benches of the Supreme Court in India:

- **Enhanced access to justice:** Traveling to Delhi for legal proceedings can be expensive and time-consuming, especially for underprivileged citizens.
- Regional benches would bring justice closer to people, making it more accessible and affordable.
- A common argument for regional benches is that they could focus on appellate functions while the **principal bench in Delhi concentrates solely on constitutional matters**.
- **Reduced caseload:** The Supreme Court currently faces a massive backlog of cases, leading to delays in justice delivery.
- Regional benches could share the burden, processing appeals from their respective regions and ultimately reducing the overall pendency.
- The **pendency of cases in the Supreme Court of India** is a major concern, with the number of pending cases **reaching an all-time high of 80,439 in 2023**.
- **Diverse perspectives:** Judges in regional benches could bring a wider range of experiences and legal interpretations based on local contexts, enriching national jurisprudence and potentially leading to fairer outcomes.
- **Increased efficiency:** With judges stationed closer to cases, regional benches might be able to conduct hearings more efficiently, saving time and resources compared to centralized proceedings in Delhi.
- **Decentralization of power:** A dispersed judicial system could reduce the perception of Delhi-centric power and foster a sense of greater regional participation in the legal system.

Law commission recommendation:

- The **18th Law Commission, in its 229th Report**, proposed the establishment of a Constitutional Bench in Delhi and four Cassation Benches across different regions:

Northern (Delhi), Southern (Chennai/Hyderabad), Eastern (Kolkata), and Western (Mumbai).

Supreme Court's Stand:

- In 2010, the **Chief Justice of India** determined that there was no valid rationale for creating Supreme Court benches outside Delhi.
- Nevertheless, the Supreme Court, in response to another writ petition, **decided to refer the issue to a Constitutional Bench** for a definitive ruling.
- The issue is currently under judicial consideration.
- **Article 130 of the Indian Constitution** stipulates that the Supreme Court shall convene in Delhi or in other locations as **designated by the Chief Justice of India** with the **President's approval**.

Arguments Against regional benches:

- **National Unity and Consistency:** Opponents fear that regional benches could lead to inconsistencies in legal interpretations and undermine the national unity of the judiciary. This could create confusion and unequal application of laws across regions.
- **Judicial Expertise and Infrastructure:** Establishing and maintaining competent benches across the country would require significant resources and qualified judges.
- Concerns exist about ensuring uniform standards of judicial expertise and infrastructure in all regional branches.
- Creating regional benches might lead to an increase in frivolous petitions due to easier access to justice.
- **Political Interference:** There is a risk of increased political influence over the judiciary if judges are appointed to specific regional benches based on their geographical origin or political leanings.
- **Workable Implementation:** Defining the jurisdiction and powers of regional benches, ensuring coordination with the main court, and managing logistics pose significant challenges.

Alternative solutions:

- Implementing a mechanism to **scrutinize petitions before admission** to the Supreme Court.
- This mechanism would help **filter out frivolous petitions** and ensure that only legitimate cases are heard at the top court.
- The **success of virtual hearings during the pandemic** suggests that hybrid hearings could be an alternative to regional benches.

- *A system inspired by France, involving a **separate court of appeal and courts of cassation**, as recommended by the Law Commission of India.*
- *The **permanent appellate court** would hear constitutional cases, while the cassation courts would handle appeals related to non-constitutional matters.*

Conclusion:

- *The debate surrounding regional benches for the Supreme Court is complex, with valid arguments on both sides.*
- *Ultimately, the decision requires careful consideration of the potential benefits and drawbacks, ensuring that any implementation upholds the principles of judicial independence, national unity, and efficient access to justice for all.*

Practice Question

Q. Critically examine the need of regional benches of supreme court. (15 marks, 250 words)

New rules on surrogacy

Syllabus: GS-3: Science and Technology – laws and policies.

Context:

- *Donor gametes are allowed: what the new rule on surrogacy says.*
- *New hope for couples aspiring for parenthood through surrogacy.*
- *Central government amends Surrogacy (Regulation) Rules, 2022.*
- *Allows the use of donor gametes – ova or egg cells and sperm.*

About Surrogacy

- *A surrogate, also known as a **gestational carrier**, carries and delivers a child for intended parents.*
- *The **surrogate agrees to give the child** to the intended parents after birth.*

Types of Surrogacies:

- **Commercial Surrogacy:**
 - *Surrogacy undertaken for monetary benefit exceeding basic medical expenses and insurance coverage.*
- **Altruistic Surrogacy:**

- *No monetary compensation to the surrogate except for medical expenses and insurance coverage.*

Surrogacy in India

- *Surrogacy practiced since 1978.*
- *India known for "reproductive tourism" and fertility industry.*
- *Commercial surrogacy legalized without explicit rules, leading to uncontrolled surrogacy.*
- *Surrogacy Regulation Bill, 2021 passed to regulate surrogacy.*

Key Provisions of the Surrogacy (Regulation) Act, 2021

Regulation of Surrogacy:

- *Prohibits commercial surrogacy; allows altruistic surrogacy.*

Eligibility Criteria for Surrogate Mother:

- *Close relative of the intending couple, ever-married, 25-35 years old, with no prior surrogacy experience.*
- *Registration of Surrogacy Clinics required.*
- *National and State Surrogacy Boards established.*

Offences & Penalties:

- *Includes commercial surrogacy, exploiting the surrogate, selling/importing human embryo/gametes, and abandoning a surrogate child.*

Modifications in Surrogacy Rules

- *Central government allows married couples opting for surrogacy to use donor gametes.*
- *Previously restricted, now permitted under certain conditions.*
- *Notification issued by Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare on February 21.*
- *District Magistrate Board certification required for using donor gametes due to medical condition.*
- *Only one partner permitted to use a donor gamete.*
- *At least one gamete from intending parents required for surrogacy.*
- *Modifications prompted by Supreme Court's doubts on existing rules.*
- *Filed applications by married women unable to conceive due to medical issues.*

Guinea worm disease

Syllabus: GS-3: General Science - Diseases

Context:

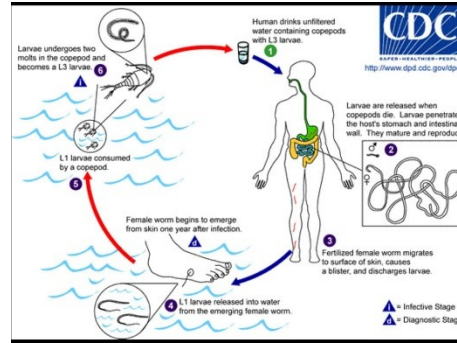
- *Race to global eradication of Guinea worm disease nears finish line.*

More details from WHO:

- *In the 1980s, there were over 3.5 million cases of Guinea worm disease.*
- *According to the World Health Organization (WHO) report:*
 - *In 2021, there were 14 cases.*
 - *In 2022, there were 13 cases.*
 - *In 2023, there were only six cases.*
- *This marks a significant reduction in cases over the years, indicating progress toward eradication.*
- *The world is close to eradicating Guinea worm disease, with a significant decrease in cases from over 3.5 million in the 1980s to just six in 2023.*
- *Unlike many viral diseases, **Guinea worm disease doesn't offer immunity, can't be prevented by vaccines, and resists most cures.***
- ***India successfully eliminated Guinea worm disease in the late 1990s through surveillance, water safety interventions, and community education.***
- ***Smallpox remains the only human disease eradicated entirely.***

About Guinea worm disease:

- *Guinea worm disease, **caused by the Guinea worm (*Dracunculus medinensis*)**, is characterized by painful blisters, usually on lower limbs, and can result in debilitation.*
- *The adult worm, **which can be up to a meter long**, emerges from the skin lesion, causing intense pain, swelling, and sometimes secondary infections.*
- ***Symptoms include fever, nausea, and vomiting, hindering daily activities and work.***
- *Over 90% of Guinea worm **infections occur in the legs and feet**, causing excruciating pain when the adult female worm emerges through the skin.*
- *The disease affects **people of both sexes** and is symbolic of the broader struggle against **diseases of poverty**.*
- *Guinea worm disease **thrives in areas with limited access to clean water and healthcare resources.***



India's achievement:

- India successfully eliminated Guinea worm disease in the late 1990s through surveillance, water safety interventions, and community education, **receiving WHO certification in 2000.**
- **The eradication strategy involved intersectoral coordination, community participation, and a focus on prevention through health education.**
- **Key components of the strategy included ensuring access to clean water, spreading awareness through community workers, and tracking cases to contain outbreaks.**
- **In 2023, the WHO recorded only six cases of Guinea worm disease, with notable progress in countries like South Sudan and Mali, while challenges persist in Chad and the Central African Republic.**

In animals:

- In 2020, researchers found **Guinea worms in animal reservoirs, especially dogs, in Chad, adding complexity to the final stages of eradication.**
- This discovery highlights the **disease's resilience** and reminds previously endemic countries like India to remain cautious.
- Governments need to **maintain adaptable public health strategies** to prevent the resurgence of Guinea worm disease and ensure continued progress toward eradication.

Challenges:

- Significant progress towards eradicating Guinea worm disease is **threatened by human and political factors, including civil unrest and poverty.**
- These challenges are **deeply rooted in the socio-political fabric** of affected areas, exacerbating vulnerability to disease and disrupting public health campaigns.
- **Conflict disrupts the basic infrastructure** needed for sustained eradication efforts, delaying progress by up to a decade.
- The relationship between **health and peace is evident**, where stability and security directly impact eradication efforts.

Way forward:

- *Eradicating Guinea worm disease would not only defeat a single parasitic adversary but **signify a triumph for humanity**.*
- *It highlights a **collective moral responsibility** toward vulnerable populations and demonstrates the impact of addressing health disparities.*
- *This eradication would showcase the potential of global efforts to uplift communities from preventable afflictions.*

CE20 cryogenic engine

Syllabus: GS-3: Science and Technology –Satellite launch vehicles.

Context:

- *Cryogenic engine for human spaceflight mission, Gaganyaan, tested successfully: ISRO.*

About CE20 cryogenic engine:

- *The CE20 is a powerful cryogenic rocket engine developed by the **Liquid Propulsion Systems Centre (LPSC)** of the **Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)**.*
- *It's designed to power the upper stage of the **LVM3 launch vehicle** and is crucial for India's ambitious Gaganyaan human spaceflight program.*

Key Features:

- **Gas-generator cycle:** *The first Indian cryogenic engine to use this cycle, offering higher efficiency and thrust compared to older expander cycle engines.*
- **High thrust:** *Delivers a nominal thrust of 200 kN in vacuum, but can operate in a range of 180 kN to 220 kN, making it one of the most powerful operational upper stage cryogenic engines.*
- **Liquid propellants:** *Burns liquid hydrogen (LH2) and liquid oxygen (LOX), offering high specific impulse and efficiency.*

Development and Testing:

- *Extensive testing program ensured reliability and human-rating.*
- **Human-rating achieved:** *Successfully qualified for the Gaganyaan program, demonstrating its ability to safely power human spaceflight missions.*

Applications:

- *Primarily powers the **upper stage of the LVM3 launch vehicle**.*

- *Crucial for the **Gaganyaan human spaceflight program**, enabling India to send astronauts to space.*
- ***Potential for future applications** in other high-thrust launch vehicles and space missions.*