

Prelim Bits 11-08-2023 | UPSC Daily Current Affairs

Diversity Deficit

Parliamentary panel highlights 'diversity deficit' in Supreme Court, High Courts.

- The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Personnel, Public Grievances, Law and Justice released its 133rd report on Judicial Process and their Reforms.

Only 3% High Court Judges appointed since 2018 belong to SC category, 1.5% to ST & 5.3% to minority; Parliamentary Committee calls it 'Diversity Deficit'.

Findings

- The data provided by the Government on the social status of the Judges of the High Courts reveals the judiciary suffers from a 'diversity deficit'.
- The representation of SCs, STs, OBCs, Women, and Minorities in the higher judiciary is far below the desired levels
- The representation does not reflect the social diversity of the country
- In recent years there has been a declining trend in the representation from all the marginalized sections of Indian society.

There is no provision for reservation in the judicial appointments at High Courts and Supreme Court level.

| Sl.No | Year | No. of Appointments | General | SC | ST | OBC | Women | Minority | NA |
|-------|------|---------------------|---------|----|----|-----|-------|----------|----|
| 1 | 2023 | 61 | 37 | 3 | 2 | 15 | 9 | 4 | 0 |
| 2 | 2022 | 165 | 137 | 6 | 0 | 17 | 34 | 5 | 0 |
| 3 | 2021 | 120 | 85 | 2 | 4 | 16 | 17 | 13 | 0 |
| 4 | 2020 | 66 | 52 | 2 | 0 | 11 | 13 | 1 | 0 |
| 5 | 2019 | 81 | 64 | 2 | 1 | 8 | 7 | 3 | 2 |
| 6 | 2018 | 108 | 82 | 2 | 2 | 5 | 11 | 6 | 11 |
| Total | | 601 | 457 | 18 | 9 | 72 | 91 | 32 | 13 |

Recommendations

- While making recommendations for appointments to the Higher Judiciary, both the SC and the HC, the respective Collegiums should recommend an adequate number of women.
- The Collegiums should also recommend candidates from the marginalized sections of the society including minorities.
- This provision should be clearly mentioned in the Memoranda of Procedure (MoP), which is presently under finalization.
- Adequate representation of various sections of Indian society will further strengthen the trust, credibility, and acceptability of the Judiciary among

References

1. [Live Law - Parliamentary Committee calls out Diversity Deficit in SC & HC](#)
2. [The Tribune - Parliamentary panel highlights 'diversity deficit' in Supreme Court, High Courts](#)

Eris

EG.5.1 variant, a new Covid Strain, code-named Eris, is in circulation and has been behind almost 15% cases in the UK, may not be a concern in India.

Eris

- A new strain of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) was identified in the United Kingdom.
- Patients in the United States, Europe and Asia have also been found infected with Eris.
- In the UK, about 39.4% of the cases are due to the XBB.1.16 strain, also known as Arcturus.
- EG.5 is a descendent lineage of Omicron subvariant XBB.1.9.2.
- It carries an additional mutation in the spike protein, which the SARS-CoV-2 uses to enter and infect the human cells, compared to the parent subvariant.
- Within the EG.5 lineage, the subvariant EG.5.1 has an additional spike mutation and represents 88% of the available sequences for EG.5 and its descendent lineages
- As a strain of Omicron, the variant symptoms include runny nose, headache, fatigue, sneezing and a sore throat.

India has reported only one case of EG.5 so far from Pune.

WHO & Eris

- The public health risk posed by EG.5.1 is evaluated as low at the global level.
- The World Health Organisation (WHO) has classified the EG.5 strain of the SARS-CoV-2 virus circulating in different parts of the world, including India, as a variant of interest (VOI).
- The variant has been designated as a variant under monitoring (VUM).
- Variants are broadly categorised into three categories:
 1. Variants of interest

2. Variants of concern
3. Variants of high consequence

References

1. [Down To Earth - New Covid strain in circulation, may not be a concern for India](#)
2. [The Hindu - WHO classifies 'Eris' COVID strain as 'variant of interest'](#)

East Container Terminal (ECT) Project

More than two years after Sri Lanka cancelled a joint India-Japan MoU for the East Container Terminal (ECT) project in Colombo, the three countries are studying ways of restarting trilateral cooperation.

The issue - China factor

- Earlier the Sri Lankan Cabinet unanimously agreed to run the ECT as a fully-owned operation of the state-run SLPA.
- The cancellation of the MoU with India, worth about \$500 million as well as the suspension of the Japanese-funded light rail transit (LRT) project had led to a freeze in ties between Tokyo and Colombo.
- A state-run Chinese firm had clinched the contract to develop the Colombo Port's eastern container terminal.
- **Present scenario** - With India and Japan coming to Sri Lanka's rescue during economic crisis, it has sought the return of infrastructure project plans as well as investment from both countries.

The project

- In 2019, India and Sri Lanka signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) for "co-operation on economic projects".
- The development and operation of the container terminal was one of the projects in the MoU:
 1. A Container Terminal in Colombo Port as a Joint Venture
 2. Includes Indian investments considering that majority of transshipment in Colombo Port is related to India
- The MoU did not mention the Eastern Container Terminal.
- Nevertheless, India and Sri Lanka had already been in discussion for its development and operation.

Significance for India

- India had been offered the Western Container Terminal earlier, but had refused.
- The ECT is already operational, while the WCT has to be built from scratch.
- For India, the ECT deal was important as 60%-70% of transshipment that takes place through it is India-linked.
- The ECT is also considered more strategic than any other in Colombo Port.
- It is located next to the Colombo International Container Terminal (CICT) project, a joint venture between China Merchants Port Holdings Company Ltd. and SLPA.



Reference

1. [The Hindu - India-Japan look to restart trilateral cooperation with Sri Lanka](#)

Maui Island

At least 36 people have died as fast-moving wildfires tear through the Hawaiian island of Maui.

The forest fires

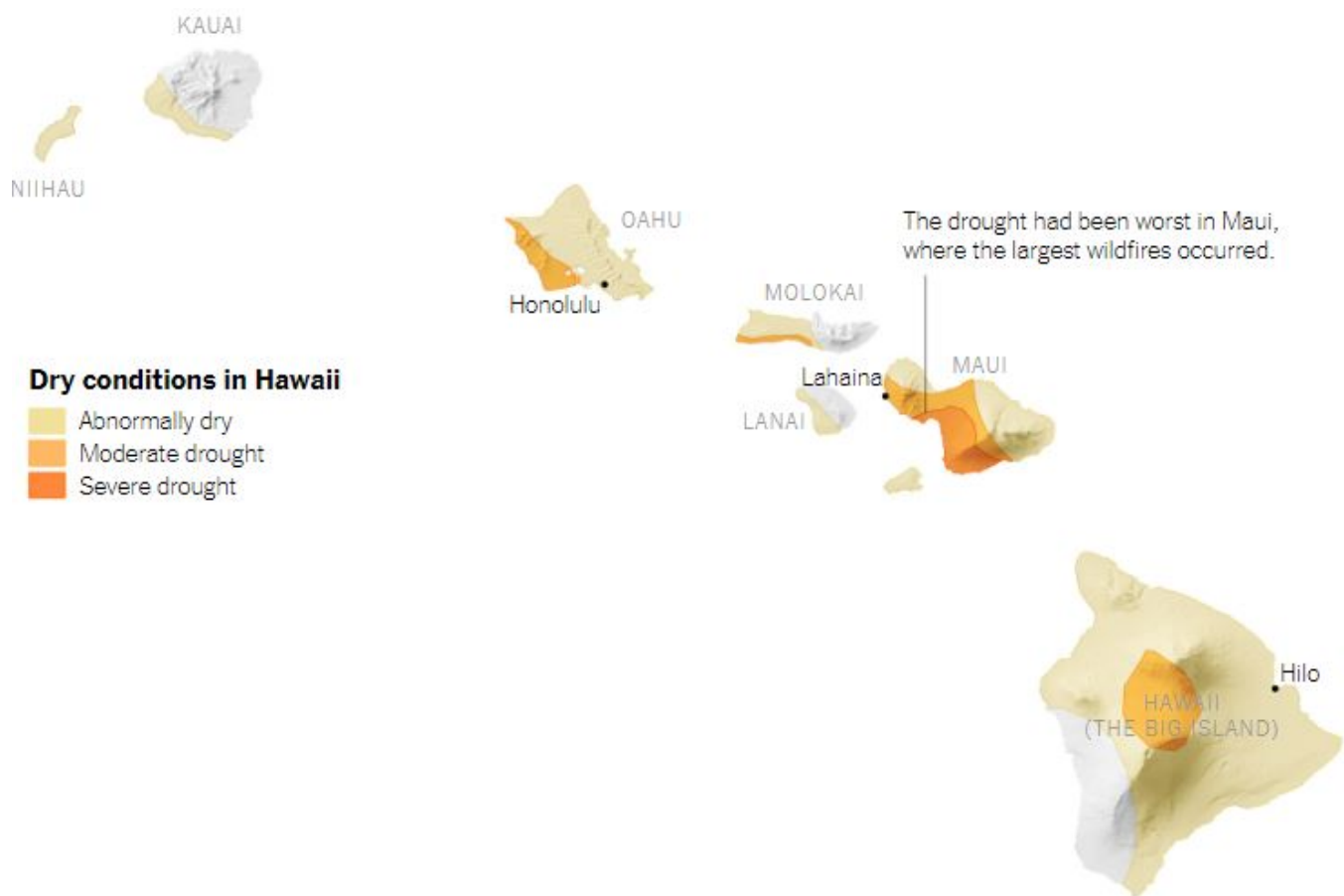
- Wind-fueled wildfires that tore through the island of Maui forced the evacuation of thousands and decimated Lahaina, a historic tourist town.
- Satellite imagery of parts of Lahaina showed that the fires destroyed streets and leveled hundreds of structures, a number of them heritage sites.
- Invasive grasses that are highly flammable have taken over native vegetation and climate change has exacerbated dry and hot conditions that have allowed many wildfires to spread more quickly.
- Worsening drought conditions in recent weeks most likely contributed to the latest blaze.

The Island

- Maui, volcanic island, Maui county, Hawaii, U.S.
- It is separated from Molokai by the Pailolo Channel, from Hawaii by the Alenuihaha Channel, and from the small islands of Lanai and Kahoolawe by the Auau and Alalakeiki channels, respectively.
- Maui takes its name from a Polynesian demigod.
- It was created by two volcanoes, Puu Kukui and Haleakala, which constitute east and west peninsulas connected by a 7-mile wide valleylike isthmus that has earned Maui

the nickname of the valley isle.

- The island was first settled by Polynesians c. AD 700.



References

1. [BBC - Maui Fires](#)
2. [Reuters - Maui Wildfires](#)

Suswagatam Portal

CJI Chandrachud announces launch of 'Suswagatam' portal for e-passes to enter Supreme Court.

- Suswagatam is a web-based and mobile-friendly application that allows users to register themselves online.
- The app enables advocates, visitors, interns and others to register themselves online and get e-passes to enter the apex court.
- The users can request for e-passes for various purposes such as attending court hearing, meeting etc.
- The CJI Chandrachud announced about the new digital facility in presence of a five-judge bench hearing the matter related to abrogation of Article 370 of the Constitution.

References

1. [The Hindu - CJI Chandrachud announces launch of Suswagatam portal](#)
2. [The Economic Times - CJI Chandrachud launches SuSwagatam portal](#)



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