

The Hindu Important News Articles & Editorial For UPSC CSE

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The Union Home Ministry has reimposed the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA) in six police station limits of Manipur due to ongoing ethnic violence.

- The re-imposition, effective until March 2025, aims to assist security forces in controlling insurgent activities.

AFSPA back in six violence-hit areas of Manipur

Six police station limits in five districts declared 'disturbed areas'; Manipur govt. had withdrawn the Act in 2022 as the situation had improved; this time, Home Ministry has issued notification; officials say increase in the number of armed insurgents is a cause of concern; so far, over 240 people have been killed in the violence since May 2023

Vijaita Singh
NEW DELHI

The Union Home Ministry on Thursday reimposed the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA) in Manipur, declaring six police station limits in five districts "disturbed areas", in the wake of the ethnic violence in the State.

The Sekmai and Lam-sang police station limits in Imphal West, Lam-lai in Imphal East, the Jiribam station limits in Jiribam, Moirang in Bishnupur and Leimakhong in Kangpokpi districts have been declared disturbed areas to "carry out well-coordinated operations by the security forces" and contain activities of insurgent groups.

The AFSPA, which gives unbridled power to the armed forces, was withdrawn from these areas in April 2022 by the Manipur government as the security

situation improved instilling a "large sense of security among the general public". The fresh order will be effective till March 31, 2025.

A notification issued by the Home Ministry said that on September 26, the Manipur government extended AFSPA in all the 10 hill districts of Manipur, excluding the 19 police station limits in six districts, mostly in the valley.

Volatile state

The Ministry said that after a review of the security situation in consultation with the stakeholders, it is noted that the "situation continues to remain volatile amidst ongoing ethnic violence..."

A senior government official explained that the Army and the Assam Rifles would be able to conduct operations without waiting for the arrival of a Magistrate and the State police.



Tension rises: A truck damaged after armed militants set it on fire in Jiribam district on Thursday. PTI

"AFSPA has been reimposed in the fringe or buffer zones, areas where Kuki-Zo and Meitei villages converge. These areas are being guarded by Central armed police forces. While the Army could freely operate in the hills, after revocation of AFSPA from the valley districts, they were facing issues as they had to wait for civil assistance while armed miscreants

took advantage of the order to cross jurisdictions," said the official.

The Hindu reported on September 23 that there are differing views in the Union and the State governments over the inclusion of more areas under AFSPA.

Officials said that a substantial increase in the number of armed insurgents, particularly in the

Calls for release of 6 abductees grow louder in strife-torn State

The Hindu Bureau
GUWAHATI

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in Manipur joined the Congress in mounting pressure on the government for the safe return of six women and children missing since November 11.

State BJP president A. Sharda Devi appealed for the immediate release of the six missing persons — three women and three children, including a 10-month-old infant — from Jiribam district.

FULL REPORT
» PAGE 4

ers were abducted. In June, violence had spread to new areas such as Jiribam, which had largely remained unaffected by the ethnic violence in the past year.

Both the State and Central governments can concurrently issue disturbed area notification under Section 3 of AFSPA. The periodic six-month notification for extending AFSPA in Assam and Manipur have been issued by the State governments since 1972, when the law was amended.

The latest notification for Manipur signed by the Governor was issued by the Home Department of the State on September 26 when AFSPA was extended in all the ten hill districts till March 31, 2025.

The provisions of the Act were withdrawn from Imphal Municipality area in 2004. Manipur has 16 districts.

valley districts was a cause of concern and the rising cases of extortion and abductions were also being taken into consideration.

Other than 22,000 Central Armed Police Force (CAPF) personnel, around 140 columns of the Army are deployed in Manipur. Each column can have up to 40 men.

So far, more than 240 people have been killed in

the ethnic violence between the Meitei people who live in the valley and the tribal Kuki-Zo-Hmar people in the hills that started in May 2023.

At least 14 killed

In the recent spell of violence since November 7, at least 14 people have been killed, including three men and women who were burnt to death and six others

Analysis of the news:

- The Union Home Ministry reimposed AFSPA in Manipur on Thursday due to ethnic violence.
- Six police station limits in five districts have been declared "disturbed areas" for security operations.
- These areas include parts of Imphal West, Imphal East, Jiribam, Bishnupur, and Kangpokpi.
- AFSPA was withdrawn in April 2022 due to improved security, but the situation remains volatile.
- The reimposed AFSPA will be effective until March 31, 2025.
- The Army and Assam Rifles can operate freely without waiting for Magistrates or police.
- Ethnic violence between Meitei and Kuki-Zo people has led to over 240 deaths since May 2023.
- Recent violence since November 7 has killed at least 14 people.
- Central and State governments can issue disturbed area notifications under AFSPA.

Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1958 (AFSPA)

- **AFSPA Act Overview :** The Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA) is an Indian law that grants special powers to the armed forces in regions declared "disturbed areas." The Act is designed to enable the military to act with more authority and less restriction in areas facing internal disturbances or insurgency.

Daily News Analysis

- **Imposition of AFSPA** : AFSPA is imposed by the state or central government, based on the assessment of the security situation. A region is declared a "disturbed area" by the government, typically after an evaluation of violence, insurgency, or unrest. The government can impose AFSPA in such areas to allow security forces to operate more freely, even without a Magistrate's permission.
- **Who Can Impose** : AFSPA The state or central government can declare areas as disturbed and impose AFSPA. The power to impose AFSPA lies with the Governor of a state or the central government.
- **Need for AFSPA** : It is seen as essential for maintaining law and order in areas facing insurgencies, militancy, or severe civil unrest. AFSPA allows security forces to act swiftly against insurgents and militants.
- **Issues Associated with AFSPA** : The law has been criticised for empowering security forces with excessive powers, leading to human rights abuses. Allegations of arbitrary arrests, extrajudicial killings, and torture are often raised against the military and police. Calls for its repeal stem from concerns over the violation of civil liberties, particularly in regions like Kashmir and Northeast India. Prolonged imposition of AFSPA in regions has sparked debates on its effectiveness and its negative impact on local populations.

Mains PYQ : 2015

Ques : Human rights activists constantly highlight the view that the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1958 (AFSPA) is a draconian act leading to cases of human rights abuses by the security forces. What sections of AFSPA are opposed by the activists? Critically evaluate the requirement with reference to the view held by the Apex Court.

The article highlights the discovery of insulin, a pivotal medical breakthrough that transformed diabetes treatment.

- It traces the journey from early research to the development of recombinant DNA technology for mass insulin production, commemorating Sir Frederick Banting's legacy on World Diabetes Day.

The discovery of insulin and the 'Flame of Hope'

Sir Frederick Banting's birth anniversary is observed as World Diabetes Day on November 14 every year as a tribute to the history behind the discovery of insulin, one of medicine's greatest breakthroughs; the eternal Flame of Hope burns in Canada to honour Banting's achievement

C. Aravinda

In human physiology, the endocrine glands act by releasing chemical messengers called hormones. They are produced in extraordinarily small quantities, ranging from 10^{-10} to 10^{-12} grams. They travel through the bloodstream to influence distant organs and tissues guiding bodily functions. Nervous and endocrine systems carry out a common mandate: to transmit the brain's instructions to peripheral organs and tissues. Unlike the nervous system, which operates through a network of neurons, the endocrine system executes the brain's orders across the body without an anatomical network.

The pancreas holds a unique position as both an endocrine and exocrine organ. It plays an important role in managing blood sugar levels through insulin.

Sir Frederick Banting's birth anniversary is observed as World Diabetes Day on November 14 every year as a tribute to the history behind the discovery of insulin – one of medicine's greatest breakthroughs.

Type 1 DM

Type 1 diabetes mellitus (T1DM) is an autoimmune disease where the immune system attacks insulin-beta cells in the pancreas, leading to high blood sugar resulting from insulin deficiency. Unlike type 2 DM, which is common in adults, T1DM often affects children and young adults. Globally, around 9 million people have T1DM. The incidence in India is 4.9 per 1,00,000 annually, per the information from PIB in 2022. The exact cause remains unknown, but genetic and environmental factors, including viral infections, are suspected.

Humans were fighting this illness till the last century without a clue. Symptoms of diabetes like, excessive thirst, frequent urination, and "sweet urine", were found in all major civilisations. It was not until the mid-19th century that meaningful progress began to decrypt the mystery. In 1869, Paul Langerhans discovered specialised clusters of cells within the pancreas – later known as the "islets of Langerhans" – and discovered the endocrine role in this organ.

In 1889, German physiologists Oskar Minkowski and Joseph von Merin experimented by surgically removing the pancreas from a healthy dog to investigate its role in digestion. Post-surgery, they observed that the dog developed symptoms characteristic of diabetes, notably, elevated blood sugar levels and the presence of sugar in the urine. This experiment established a direct link between the pancreas and blood sugar regulation. Despite these insights, between 1890 and 1920, several researchers tried, with many unsuccessful attempts, to discover the pancreas's role in diabetes.

Climax at the University of Toronto
After serving as an orthopaedic surgeon in the First World War, Frederick Banting returned to Canada as a war veteran. Driven to pursue research, he approached John Macleod, head of the physiology department at the University of Toronto, in 1920, with the idea of identifying the pancreatic secretion responsible for carbohydrate metabolism. Macleod, though hesitant, provided laboratory space and assigned Charles Best, a medical student, to assist him. Together, Banting and Best conducted experiments on dogs, leading to the successful isolation of insulin from the islets of Langerhans.



Insulin is not a cure but a treatment, allowing people with diabetes to live near-normal lives. GETTY IMAGES

James Collip, a biochemist, played another important role in the practical application of insulin therapy. In 1921, he joined Banting and Best at the university. While Banting and Best had successfully extracted insulin, their preparations were impure and caused adverse reactions in patients. Collip developed a method for purifying insulin, removing toxic impurities, and ensuring its safety and efficacy, as the insulin was prepared mostly from dogs and cows. This was crucial as without Collip's efforts, insulin could not have been administered to patients, and Banting's discovery might have remained theoretical.

On January 11, 1922, Leonard Thompson, a 14-year-old boy with diabetes, became the first person to receive an injection of insulin. Unfortunately, the initial extract was impure, leading to an allergic reaction and minimal reduction in blood glucose levels. Recognising the need for improvement, Collip refined the purification process, producing a more potent and safer insulin extract. A second injection on January 23, 1922, resulted in a significant drop in blood glucose without adverse effects, marking a milestone for humanity. In 1923, the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine was awarded to Frederick Banting and John Macleod for discovering insulin, in a rare instance of the prize being granted so soon after

Symptoms of diabetes, like excessive thirst, frequent urination, and 'sweet urine', were found in all major civilisations, but humans fighting this illness till the last century without a clue

discovery. Macleod provided Banting with laboratory space and assigned an assistant. However, the award sparked controversy as Banting felt that Best, who had been instrumental in the research, deserved recognition instead of Macleod. Conversely, Macleod believed Collip, who refined the insulin extraction process, deserved credit. In response, Banting shared half of his Nobel Prize money with Best, and Macleod did the same with Collip. Decades later, the Nobel Committee acknowledged the oversight in not including Best, expressing regret for his exclusion from the original award.

Despite these conflicts, Banting, Best, Macleod, and Collip got to share their prize money among themselves. In a remarkable gesture, Banting sold the patent rights to the University of Toronto for just \$1, ensuring that insulin could be produced widely and remain affordable. Collip's extraction techniques to purify insulin were viable for human use but not scalable for mass production. As diabetes

cases increased since then, it became clear that a more efficient method was essential. Enter recombinant DNA technology in the 1980s; scientists developed a method to insert the human insulin gene into *Escherichia coli* bacteria using plasmids – small DNA molecules capable of self-replication. This approach enabled bacteria to produce large quantities of insulin identical to that made by human bodies. The recombinant process allowed for mass production to keep up with the demand.

Flame of Hope

In 1989, Queen Elizabeth kindled the Flame of Hope in Sir Frederick G. Banting Square, London, Ontario, Canada, to honour Banting's discovery of insulin. This eternal flame stands as a hope for millions affected by diabetes worldwide, representing the commitment to continue research until a definitive cure is found. The flame will remain lit until a cure is discovered. As we consider Banting's legacy, we realise that insulin is not a cure but a treatment, allowing people with diabetes to live near-normal lives. His spirits might be happier when the flame of hope is extinguished after discovering a cure.

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Endocrine Glands and Insulin Discovery

- Endocrine glands release hormones in small quantities to regulate bodily functions.
- The pancreas is both an endocrine and exocrine organ, controlling blood sugar through insulin.
- World Diabetes Day is observed on November 14 to honour Sir Frederick Banting.

Type 1 Diabetes Mellitus (T1DM)

Daily News Analysis

- Type 1 diabetes (T1DM) is an autoimmune disease attacking insulin-producing cells in the pancreas.
- T1DM commonly affects children and young adults, with 9 million global cases.
- In India, the incidence of T1DM is 4.9 per 100,000 annually.
- The cause remains unclear, but genetic and environmental factors are suspected.

Historical Insights and Early Research

- Symptoms of diabetes were known in ancient civilizations but lacked scientific understanding.
- Paul Langerhans discovered the islets of Langerhans in the pancreas in 1869.
- In 1889, research linked the pancreas to blood sugar regulation.

Climax at the University of Toronto

- Frederick Banting, John Macleod, and Charles Best isolated insulin in 1921.
- James Collip purified insulin for human use, making it safe and effective.
- Leonard Thompson received the first successful insulin injection in 1922.
- Banting and Macleod were awarded the Nobel Prize in 1923, amidst credit controversies.

Mass Production and Modern Advances

- Banting sold insulin's patent to the University of Toronto for \$1 to ensure widespread production.
- Recombinant DNA technology in the 1980s enabled mass production of human insulin from bacteria.

Prelims PYQ 2023

Ques : Microsatellite DNA' is used in the case of which one of the following?

- a) Studying the evolutionary relationships among various species of fauna
- b) Stimulating 'stem cells' to transform into diverse functional tissues
- c) Promoting clonal propagation of horticultural plants
- d) Assessing the efficacy of drugs by conducting series of drug trials in a population

Ans : a)

Portugal is facing a significant migration crisis, particularly among young professionals, due to low wages, high taxes, and a housing crisis.

- ➔ In response, the government has proposed tax breaks and housing assistance to retain talent.
- ➔ However, many remain sceptical about the effectiveness of these measures in improving job opportunities.

Borderless Europe fights brain drain as talent heads to the wealthier north

Portugal is the latest country in Europe to seek to tackle a brain drain holding back its economy; talent flight to wealthier countries of the north is a problem Portugal shares with several other European countries, as workers take advantage of freedom of movement rules within the trade bloc

NEWS ANALYSIS

Reuters
LISBON

Until recently aerospace engineer Pedro Monteiro figured he'd join many of his peers moving from Portugal to its richer European neighbours in the quest for a better-paid job once he completes his master's degree in Lisbon.

But tax breaks proposed by Portugal's government for young workers—up to a temporary 100% income tax exemption in some cases—in addition to help with housing are making him think twice.

"Previous governments left young people behind," said Mr. Monteiro, 23, who is studying engineering and industrial management at the Higher Technical Institute in the Portuguese capital.

"The country needs us and we want to stay but we need to see signs from the government that they are implementing policies that will help."

Mr. Monteiro cites in particular the cost of buying or renting a home amid a housing crisis aggravated by the arrival of wealthy foreigners lured by easy residency rights and tax breaks.

He is doubtful the government's new measures will be enough.



Desperate move: The Portuguese government is offering tax exemptions as high as 100%. REUTERS

"Some of my friends are now working abroad and earn substantially more money... and have better career development opportunities," he said. "I'm a little bit sceptical concerning my job opportunities here in Portugal."

Portugal is the latest country in Europe to seek to tackle a brain drain holding back its economy. Tax breaks for young workers in the budget currently going through parliament will take effect next year and could benefit as many as 400,000 young people at an annual cost of 525 million euros.

Talent flight to wealthier countries of the north is a problem Portugal shares with several others in southern and central Eu-



Portugal is experiencing a true demographic hell because it is unable to create conditions to retain young talent

PEDRO GINJEIRA DO NASCIMENTO
Executive director, Business Roundtable Portugal

rope, as workers take advantage of freedom of movement rules within the trade bloc. Countries including Italy have tried other schemes to counter the flight, with mixed results. By exacerbating regional labour shortages and depriving poorer countries of tax revenues, it is yet another hurdle for the EU as it tries to im-

prove its ebbing economic growth while addressing population decline and lagging labour productivity.

Donald Trump's victory in U.S. elections this month raises the stakes, with the risk of across-the-board trade tariffs on European exports of at least 10%—a move that economists say could turn Europe's anaemic growth into outright recession.

About 2.3 million people born in Portugal, or 23% of its population, currently live abroad, according to Portugal's Emigration Observatory. That includes 850,000 Portuguese nationals aged 15-39, or about 30% of young Portuguese and 12.6% of its working-age population.

More concerning still is

that about 40% of 50,000 people who graduate from universities or technical colleges emigrate each year, according to a study by Business Roundtable Portugal and Deloitte based on official statistics, costing Portugal billions of euros in lost income tax revenue and social security contributions.

Demographic hell

"This is not a country for young people," said Pedro Ginjeira do Nascimento, executive director of Business Roundtable Portugal, which represents 43 of the largest companies in the nation of 10 million people. "Portugal is experiencing a true demographic hell because the country is unable to create conditions to retain and attract young talent."

Internal migration within the EU is partly driven by the disparity in wages between its member states. Some economic migrants also say they are looking for better benefits such as pensions and healthcare and less rigid, hierarchical structures that give more responsibility to those in junior roles.

Concerns are mounting over the long-term viability of Europe's economic model with its rapidly ageing population and failure to win substantial shares of high-growth markets of the future, from tech to renewable energy.

Presenting a raft of reform proposals aimed at boosting local innovation and investment, former European Central Bank chief Mario Draghi said in September the region faced a "slow agony" of decline if it did not compete more effectively.

Since Brexit, the Netherlands has replaced Britain as a preferred destination for Portuguese talent while Germany and Scandinavian countries are also popular. Many Europeans still head to the United States in search of better jobs—about 4.7 million were living there in 2022, according to the Washington-based Migration Policy Institute, which notes nonetheless a long-term decline since the 1960s.

In 2023, 4,892 Portuguese emigrated to the Netherlands, surpassing Britain for the first time, which in 2019 received 24,500 Portuguese.

At home, they face the eighth-highest tax burden in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) even as house prices rose 186% and rents by 94% since 2015, according to property specialists Confidencial Imobiliário.

A single person in Portugal without children earned an average of 16,943 euros after tax in 2023 compared with 45,429 euros in Holland, according to Eurostat.

Portugal's Efforts to Retain Young Talent

➔ Government Measures

- The government is offering tax breaks for young workers, including a potential 100% income tax exemption.
- Additional housing assistance is being provided to make staying in Portugal more attractive for young people.

➔ Tax and Wage Disparities

- Portugal has the eighth-highest tax burden in the OECD.
- The average after-tax income in Portugal is much lower than in countries like the Netherlands, incentivizing migration.

➡ **Concerns Over Housing and Job Opportunities**

- Many young people are sceptical about job prospects and housing affordability.
- The housing crisis is worsened by wealthy foreigners attracted by tax breaks and easy residency rights.

➡ **The Brain Drain Problem**

- About 850,000 Portuguese nationals aged 15-39 currently live abroad.
- Emigration results in significant loss of tax revenue and social security contributions, costing Portugal billions each year.

➡ **EU-Wide Issue**

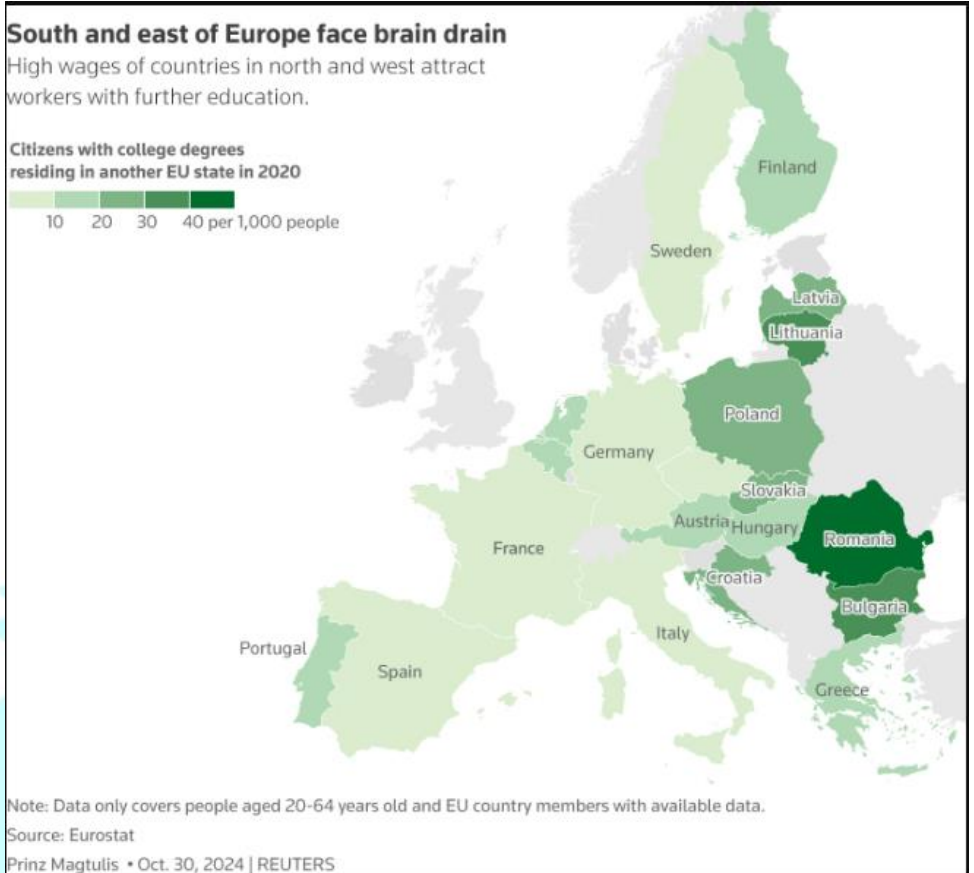
- ➡ Portugal's talent flight is part of a broader issue affecting Southern and Central Europe.
- ➡ Workers migrate to wealthier northern European countries for better wages and career opportunities.
- ➡ This migration contributes to regional labour shortages and hampers economic growth.

South and east of Europe face brain drain

High wages of countries in north and west attract workers with further education.

Citizens with college degrees residing in another EU state in 2020

10 20 30 40 per 1,000 people



Page 15 : Prelims Fact

Scientists recently discovered the world's largest coral near the Solomon Islands in the Pacific Ocean, spanning over two basketball courts.

- ➡ This unique 300-year-old coral highlights the resilience of marine life amidst the global coral crisis, offering hope for conservation efforts.

Bubbling with life



Fresh hope: Divers swimming over the world's largest coral located near the Pacific's Solomon Islands. In an announcement on Thursday, scientists announced its discovery, saying it's 'pulsing with life and colour'. AFP

Analysis of the news:

Daily News Analysis

- A massive coral, the largest ever discovered, has been found near the Solomon Islands in the Pacific Ocean.
- The coral stretches over an area larger than two basketball courts.
- Initially mistaken for a shipwreck, it is believed to be about 300 years old.
- Unlike coral reefs made of multiple colonies, this coral is a single, solitary structure.
- It serves as an essential habitat for various marine species, from small crustaceans to larger fish.
- The discovery is significant amid the global coral crisis, which has been worsened by climate change.
- The coral's resilience offers hope for the survival of similar ecosystems.
- Scientists hope the discovery will inspire more research and conservation efforts to protect coral habitats.

Prelims PYQ

Ques : Consider the following statements :

1. Most of the world's coral reefs are in tropical waters.
2. More than one-third of the world's coral reefs are located in the territories of Australia, Indonesia and Philippines.
3. Coral reefs host far more number of animal phyla than those hosted by tropical rainforests.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct ?

- a) 1 and 2 only
- b) 3 only
- c) 1 and 3 only
- d) 1, 2 and 3

Ans : d)

In News : Birsa Munda

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will launch a commemorative stamp and coin to honour tribal icon Birsa Munda's 150th birth anniversary.

- He will also inaugurate and lay the foundation for tribal welfare projects worth over ₹6,640 crore in Jamui, Bihar.

More About Birsa Munda (1875–1900):

- Birthplace: Ulihatu, Ranchi, Bihar (now Jharkhand)
- Ethnicity: Munda tribe
- Movement: Led the Ulgulan (Munda Rebellion) against British colonial rule.
- Key Objective: Fought for the rights of tribal communities, land rights, and against exploitation by landlords and the British.
- Role: Considered a freedom fighter, social reformer, and religious leader.
- Religious Influence: Promoted the Birsait religion, encouraging Munda tribes to reject foreign influence.
- Major Achievements: Revived tribal culture and resistance, became a symbol of tribal pride.
- Legacy: Revered as "Dharti Aba" (Father of the Earth), and his contribution is honoured across India.

PM to launch stamp, coin on Munda's birth anniversary

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is set to launch a commemorative stamp and coin on Friday to mark the 150th birth anniversary of tribal icon and freedom fighter Birsa Munda at an event scheduled in Jamui district of Bihar.

The Centre in 2021 decided to celebrate November 15, the birth anniversary of Birsa Munda, as Janjatiya Gaurav Divas every year. According to a government statement, Mr. Modi is also set to inaugurate and lay the foundation stone for components of a slew of tribal welfare projects worth over ₹6,640 crore.

Page : 08 Editorial Analysis

A 2024 election result that leaves many astounded

"Since Plato's Republic 2,300 years ago, philosophers have understood the process by which demagogues come to power in free and fair elections, only to overthrow democracy and establish tyrannical rule. The process is straightforward, and we have now just watched it play out." – Jason Stanley, 'The End of US Democracy Was All Too Predictable'.

India and the United States, two of the world's most prominent democracies, are facing significant challenges. India, despite being the most populous democracy, struggles with systemic issues that hinder its ability to function fairly and freely.

On the other hand, the U.S., the most prosperous democracy, guarantees its citizens life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, but still grapples with issues of race, religion, gender, and sexual orientation that undermine the true spirit of democracy. The recent U.S. presidential election has clearly exposed democracy's vulnerabilities, sparking concerns about its effectiveness when voters choose leaders with tainted records.

Breaking down the voter demographic

Donald Trump's polarising personality may have captured the headlines, but it is the American electorate that has propelled him to victory. According to Pew Research Center, white voters without a bachelor's degree were more likely to associate with the Republican Party, with 63% identifying as Republicans. In comparison, 33% would align with the Democratic Party. This educational divide has become more pronounced over the past two decades, with white voters without a college degree favouring the Republican Party and those with a college degree moving toward the Democratic Party.

Mr. Trump's 2024 presidential campaign visibly resonated with millions, securing him another term in office. This outcome can be attributed to several factors, including his ability of creating a multi-ethnic working-class coalition, which proved successful as he made strides among Latinos and African-Americans, especially men. This raises important questions about the values and the priorities of the American people, and whether they are willing to overlook Mr. Trump's controversies in favour of his policy agenda.

The stakes of the 2024 U.S. election could not be higher, especially its make-or-break moment for American democracy. Trump's return to power has sent jitters across the globe, and for good reason. Many countries are anxious about the potential implications of his presidency, particularly when it comes to international relations and global stability. Within the U.S., non-white minorities, legal settlers, African-Americans, and undocumented immigrants are bracing themselves for the impact of hard right-wing policies driven by nationalist sentiment. The uncertainty surrounding the citizenship status of newborn children is a significant concern. The potential consequences



Shelley Wadia

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of his presidency on global relations, domestic policy, and marginalised communities are indeed significant.

Authoritarian rise

Moreover, we are witnessing a disturbing global trend where even robust democracies are buckling under authoritarian pressure. Hungary, once a beacon of democratic success in the post-Communist world, has evolved into the European Union's sole absolutism in just over a decade. Countries such as Turkey, Israel, or South Asian democracies have seen authoritarian tendencies rise over the years; 37 out of 104 democracies worldwide have experienced significant relapse since 2016. The red flags are clear: wearing away of democratic institutions, manipulation of information, and the rise of acrimonious politics. Experts warn that democratic decline is often incremental, with autocratic leaders exploiting democratic institutions to consolidate power.

Bertram Gross, a former presidential adviser, ominously warned, "As I look at America today, I am not afraid to say that I am afraid." His concern stems from America's alarming drift towards authoritarianism, fuelled by a deeply divided and distracted citizenry. The "Deep State" strategists have subtly erected the framework for tyranny, leveraging militarised law enforcement and bureaucratic red tapism. This alarming drift has persisted across the last five decades, outdoing party lines. Though this renders the resident of the White House relatively insignificant, there is a growing concern about the potential consequences of Mr. Trump's return.

Given his past actions, campaign promises, and the Supreme Court's decisions effectively granting him legal immunity, many fear his administration would target liberal democracy's core principles without any culpability. The Republican Party, the Senate, the House of Representatives and the judiciary are now in his firm grip, thereby cementing a G.O.P. trifecta. This could lead to a concentration of power and diminished checks on Mr. Trump's actions. The question to ask is: Will the U.S. follow Hungary's path, or will it find a way to strengthen its democratic foundations? The 2024 election, which seemed to be a pivotal moment in determining the answer, has left many astounded by the result.

Mr. Trump's statements and policy documents, including Project 2025, reveal a systematic plan of a demagogue to transform the government into an extension of his personal will, emulating the authoritarian approach of Hungarian leader Viktor Orbán. A key proposal is the revival of Mr. Trump's Schedule F order, which would allow the firing of about 50,000 career civil servants, undermining the merit-based civil service system. This move would grant Mr. Trump unprecedented control over the bureaucracy, enabling him to replace nonpartisan civil servants with loyalists. The stakes are high, as politicising the civil service would hinder essential government functions that millions rely on,

thereby paving the way for autocracy. His plans would degrade federal employment, and potentially lead to bullying tactics by hounding the minorities that he has throughout dehumanised or ruthlessly penalised those who have been his antagonists. With Mr. Trump's team prepared to implement these changes swiftly, the consequences for democracy and the civil service are alarming.

A message for the democratic world

As is obvious from the election outcome, Mr. Trump's enduring grip on the American right is a phenomenon that has puzzled observers for nearly a decade. Despite the turmoil and the controversy surrounding his first term, culminating in his refusal to concede the 2020 election, Mr. Trump remained a formidable force throughout the current election. His unwavering appeal can be attributed to various factors, including his unapologetic stance on key issues. His campaign has consistently emphasised a "return" to fossil fuel dominance, pledging to boost oil and natural gas production, and roll back environmental regulations. This is broadly appreciated by voters seeking energy, independence and job creation.

To improve democracy's effectiveness, it is essential to address challenges and ensure that democratic governments prioritise citizens' welfare, equality, and accountability. The 2024 U.S. presidential election, particularly the Trump campaign, highlights his divisive rhetoric and policies that seem to have resonated with a specific demographic: disgruntled, underemployed or unemployed, and undereducated white males who feel threatened by immigration and societal shifts. Mr. Trump's popularity reveals a desire among many Americans for a homogeneous world order rooted in whiteness, bigotry, misogyny, and heterosexuality. Despite his pomposity, he has tapped into deep-seated anxieties and frustrations among certain segments of the population. His message of economic nationalism, immigration reform, and an "America First" rhetoric has struck a chord with many who feel left behind by globalisation and cultural shifts. A political landscape driven by contentious magniloquence has led many to feel that democracy under him will fail to deliver on its promise of inclusivity, equality, and protection for all citizens, regardless of race, colour, gender, or creed.

Donald Trump's rise to prominence exposes a concerning truth: many voters, particularly the mindless uneducated lot, may not fully understand the responsibilities of democratic citizenship or the risks of electing an unqualified leader, thereby emphasising that democracy as an idea might be flawed. This highlights the need for a socially aware and civically informed electorate, willing to look beyond personal biases and prioritise the greater good. It is time the American public saw the importance of reining in their runaway government, reclaiming their freedoms, and restoring justice in America.

Donald Trump's rise to prominence highlights a democratic flaw – the absence of a socially aware and informed electorate that focuses on the greater good

GS Paper 02 : Governance & International Relations

UPSC Mains Practice Question: Discuss the factors contributing to the rise of authoritarian tendencies in modern democracies. Analyse the impact of these tendencies on India's democratic institutions and suggest measures to strengthen democratic resilience in the country. (150 words/10m)

Context :

- In recent years, democracies worldwide, including India, face rising authoritarian pressures that challenge institutional independence, media freedom, and civic rights.
- Factors such as socioeconomic disparities, identity politics, and populism fuel this trend, undermining democratic ideals.
- Safeguarding India's democratic framework requires vigilance, institutional resilience, and public commitment to core democratic values.

Challenges Facing Indian Democracy

- **Systemic Obstacles to Fair Functioning:**
 - Despite being the world's largest democracy, India faces complex systemic issues that challenge its democratic institutions.
 - Social inequalities, economic disparities, and regional divides often complicate governance and weaken the public's trust in democratic systems.
- **Polarisation and Identity Politics:**
 - Growing polarisation along caste, religion, and regional lines impacts the spirit of democracy.
 - This focus on divisions can create an environment conducive to authoritarian tendencies.

Democratic Backsliding in Global Context

- **Global Rise of Authoritarianism:**
 - In recent years, several democracies worldwide have experienced a drift toward authoritarianism.
 - Nations like Hungary and Turkey, once praised for their democratic structures, have witnessed a tightening of control by leaders, who exploit existing institutions to centralise power and undermine checks and balances.
- **Lessons for India:**
 - The experience of these nations serves as a cautionary tale for India.
 - Independent courts and a free press uphold democracy, but leaders often undermine them for personal power.
 - Democratic safeguards like judiciary and press freedom weaken when leaders use populism to consolidate unchecked authority.

Socioeconomic Inequality and Democratic Vulnerabilities

- **Socioeconomic Disparities:**
 - Economic inequality in India poses a significant risk to democratic health.
 - The growing divide between urban and rural populations weakens democratic representation and fuels political resentment.
 - Socioeconomic inequalities often lead to resentment, which political leaders exploit to gain support and power.
- **Impact on Voter Demographics:**

Daily News Analysis

- A large segment of the population, particularly the rural and economically marginalised, is susceptible to populist promises.
- Leaders who prioritise identity-based appeals over developmental policies can exploit these divisions to consolidate power, as seen globally.

Erosion of Democratic Institutions

➡ **Weakening of Institutional Independence:**

- Over time, democratic institutions in India, such as the judiciary, the Election Commission, and investigative agencies, have faced accusations of politicisation.
- This politicisation can dilute the neutrality of these bodies, making it difficult to ensure fair governance and eroding public trust in democracy.

➡ **Media Control and Information Manipulation:**

- An independent press is essential to a functioning democracy, yet concerns over media ownership, government influence, and censorship are increasing.
- The concentration of media ownership and pressure on journalists restricts critical coverage, allowing leaders to control narratives and shape public opinion.

Authoritarian Tendencies in Indian Governance

➡ **Centralization of Power:**

- The increasing centralization of authority within the executive branch has led to concerns over the weakening of federalism.
- While centralised decision-making can provide quick responses in crisis situations, unchecked central authority risks undermining state autonomy and creating a lopsided power structure.

➡ **Restrictive Policies on Civil Liberties:**

- The use of restrictive laws and regulations, such as those related to national security or sedition, raises concerns about stifling dissent.
- Democracies thrive on open debate and criticism, yet limitations on civil liberties in the name of order and security may limit the scope for healthy public discourse.

➡ **Populism and Identity Politics:**

- Populist narratives that exploit religious and caste-based identities have gained traction, often sidelining critical issues.
- While such promises can secure electoral wins, they undermine the democratic ideal of governance that serves all citizens equally.

The Need for Strengthening Democratic Principles

➡ **Reinforcing Institutional Independence:**

- Safeguarding the autonomy of democratic institutions is crucial to ensuring accountability and transparency.
- Strengthening the judiciary, Election Commission, and other key institutions can reinforce public trust and help prevent power consolidation.

➡ **Media Freedom and Transparency:**

- Ensuring freedom of the press and supporting independent journalism are essential for maintaining transparency and accountability.
- A robust and unbiased media enables informed citizenry, critical discourse, and checks on power.

Lessons from Global Democratic Decline

➡ **Importance of Vigilance Against Authoritarian Drift:**

- The experiences of other democracies demonstrate the gradual nature of authoritarian shifts.
- By remaining vigilant and fostering a culture of accountability, India can mitigate the risks of democratic backsliding.

➡ **Encouraging Social Cohesion:**

- In a country as diverse as India, promoting social cohesion and unity across different communities is critical to a healthy democracy.
- Policies that prioritise inclusivity over identity politics help reduce divisions that can be exploited by authoritarian forces.

Conclusion

- ➡ Democracy is India's strength, rooted in its Constitution and values of freedom, equality, and secularism.
- ➡ Upholding these principles amidst challenges requires a commitment from both leaders and citizens to protect democratic ideals.