

DAILY PT POINTERS

27th May, 2024



HEADLINES OF THE DAY

The Hindu-Geography(GSI)Page 1

Severe cyclonic storm Remal makes landfall; one lakh evacuated in Bengal

Shiv Sahay Singh
KOLKATA

The severe cyclonic storm Remal started its landfall process between Sagar Island in West Bengal and Khepupara in Bangladesh around 9.15 p.m. on Sunday, as it intensified and moved northwards. By 11.30 p.m, the eye of the cyclone touched the land.

To prevent loss of life, the West Bengal administration had evacuated people from low-lying and coastal areas of South 24 Parganas, North 24 Parganas and Purba Medinipur to storm shelters. By 3 p.m., over one lakh people were shifted from coastal and vulnerable areas.

The storm has resulted in disruptions in air, rail, and road transportation in Kolkata and other parts of south Bengal.

Eastern and Southeastern Railways cancelled



The India Meteorological Department has issued a red alert cyclone warning for the West Bengal coastline. DEBASISH BHADURI

several trains for Sunday and Monday. Ferry services in Kolkata and the Sundarbans had been suspended. The Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose International Airport suspended flight operations for 21 hours from Sunday noon, affecting 394 flights in both international and domestic sectors. The Syama Prasad Mookerjee Port in Kolkata suspended cargo and container handling operations

for 12 hours from Sunday evening.

Earlier, Prime Minister Narendra Modi chaired a meeting to review response and preparedness for the cyclonic storm. Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee urged people to remain indoors.

Governor C.V. Ananda Bose also called an emergency meeting at the Raj Bhavan to ascertain cyclone preparedness. Kolkata

and adjoining areas received heavy rainfall and gusty winds. Gale winds with speeds of 80 kmph to 100 kmph hit the coastal areas of Digha; Haldia in East Medinipur; and Sagar, Fraserganj, Dhamakhali, Kakdwip and other coastal areas of South 24 Parganas.

Issuing a red alert cyclone warning for the State coastline, the India Meteorological Department said Remal will have a maximum sustained wind speed of 110-120 kmph, gusting to 135 kmph.

A red alert for heavy (7-11 cm) to very heavy rain (12-20 cm) was issued for a few places over North 24 Parganas, South 24 Parganas, East Midnapore, Kolkata, Howrah and Hooghly districts.

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SEVERAL SEEK SHELTER

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The severe cyclonic storm Remal started its landfall process along the coast of Bangladesh and adjoining West Bengal

- The name Remal, meaning 'sand' in Arabic, was chosen by Oman.

How the naming convention works

- There are some basic guidelines that countries needed to follow while sending in their proposals. These include ensuring that the proposed name is neutral to (a) politics and political figures (b) religious beliefs, (c) cultures and (d) gender;
- does not hurt the sentiments of any group of population over the globe;
- is not very rude and cruel in nature;
- is short, easy to pronounce, and not offensive to any PTC member;
- is at most eight letters long;
- is provided with its pronunciation and voice over; and is not repeated (not before, not after).

The Hindu-Welfare Schemes (GSII)-Page 6

A door to a housing scheme, tribals find hard to open

India is home to numerous Adivasi groups, with 75 identified as Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) across States. According to official data, they comprise around 14.6 lakh households. These tribes reside in scattered, remote, and often inaccessible areas, characterised by their reliance on methods and tools for their livelihood that predate the advent of agriculture, low literacy rates, economic backwardness, and stagnant populations.

Recognising their backwardness, the Government of India announced the Pradhan Mantri PVTG Development Mission in 2023-24 to improve the socio-economic conditions of PVTGs. In line with this initiative, the Pradhan Mantri Janjati Adivasi Nyaya Maha Abhiyan (PM-JANMAN) was launched in November 2023, with a budget of ₹24,000 crore.

The PM JANMAN seeks to provide essential services to PVTGs, which includes safe housing, clean drinking water, and sanitation through 11 critical interventions. The PVTGs and frontline officials face challenges in using a mobile application to register for the 'Housing scheme', the biggest Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) scheme in the PM JANMAN which aims to reach 4.90 lakh PVTG households by 2026. Its objective is to ensure that every PVTG household has access to secure and habitable housing, safeguarding them from environmental challenges and providing them with a sense of security. Households under the scheme are entitled to receive ₹2.39 lakh each in three instalments.

The fallout of data mismatch

Data collection (registration) in DBTs is a key factor that dictates the delivery of entitlements to citizens. This is evident in instances such as the widespread wrongful deletions of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) workers and the suspension of Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM KISAN) entitlements, often due to mismatches between the details entered during registration and Aadhaar records.

We recorded the registration process and interviewed community members and frontline



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If set right, the PM JANMAN will be yet another opportunity to transform the lives of India's Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups

officials involved in implementing the scheme in Andhra Pradesh, Jharkhand, and Odisha. The findings show that PM JANMAN Housing encounters inclusivity and accessibility challenges for PVTGs and frontline officials.

App use and confusion

The Government of India has provided an 'Awaas' mobile app to block/panchayat-level officials to register PVTG households for the PM JANMAN Housing scheme. The app gathers beneficiaries data in three primary areas – it records the geographical location of households, noting their block, panchayat, and village; it captures household profiles, incorporating geo-tagging for planned construction locations, and then collects bank account details for cash transfers.

Having a jobcard is mandatory for PM JANMAN Housing registration. However, the widespread deletion of over eight crore MGNREGA workers in the past two years – some are from PVTGs – has led to their ineligibility to register for the scheme. Additionally, numerous beneficiaries have reported cases of someone else registering with their jobcards, further exacerbating the issue.

A notable aspect of the mobile app provided for registration is the pre-populated list of villages. However, we found discrepancies in the number of villages populated in the app and MGNREGA jobcards, leading to confusion among beneficiaries and officials. For instance, the app's dropdown has 22 villages while the MGNREGA Management Information System (MIS) has 31 villages for 'Vanjari' Panchayat in Alluri Sitharama Raju (ASR) district in Andhra Pradesh.

The app requires the names of the family members as in Aadhaar but does not provide guidance on what name should be provided in the absence of Aadhaar. Moreover, the app does not capture any explicit information about PVTGs, including in the social category field which has a default 'ST' (Scheduled Tribe) option. This results in non-PVTGs registrations as well. These ineligible registrations have prompted local officials asking PVTGs to submit certification from *sarpanches/mukhtias* in some areas. In

villages where PVTGs and non-PVTGs coexist, we have come across instances of non-PVTG *sarpanches/mukhtias* acting against the interests of PVTGs in providing certification. We also discovered that the geo-tagging option is causing chaos due to network issues.

The app prompts the enumerator to choose from three options – Cooperative Bank; Commercial Bank, or Regional Rural Bank. Upon selection, a dropdown list of banks corresponding to the chosen category appears. For example, selecting 'Commercial Bank' presents over 300 options. Additionally, upon choosing a specific option, such as 'State Bank of India', for registration in Andhra Pradesh, the dropdown shows over 500 options for its branches. This cumbersome process introduces unnecessary complexity for both PVTGs and officials.

Leaving out a key bank

Despite the Government of India's initiative to establish an India Post Payments Bank (IIPP) to improve banking services, especially in areas with limited banking infrastructure, the app does not include the IIPP in the list of banks. This omission is puzzling, since the Union Government has repeatedly emphasised the role of IIPP in facilitating financial inclusion.

Streamlining the registration process, updating the mobile app, and incorporating the IIPP as an option are essential steps to facilitate a greater participation of PVTGs in the scheme. Proactive measures to reinstate deleted jobcards and also community engagement initiatives such as involving *gram sabhas*, can improve the effectiveness of the scheme.

Despite numerous initiatives aimed at addressing their vulnerabilities, the narrative of PVTGs in independent India persistently echoes the words of Adivasi rights activist B.D. Sharma, who described the plight of Adivasis as an "unbroken history of broken promises". If set right, the PM JANMAN presents yet another opportunity to transform the lives of PVTGs, albeit a small step, in enabling them to access the benefits from India's growth story.

Pradhan Mantri Janjati Adivasi Nyaya Maha Abhiyan (PM-JANMAN) was launched in November 2023, with a budget of ₹24,000 crore. The PM JANMAN seeks to provide essential services to PVTGs, which includes safe housing, clean drinking water, and sanitation through 11 critical interventions. The PVTGs and frontline officials face challenges in using a mobile application to register for the 'Housing scheme', the biggest Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) scheme in the PM JANMAN which aims to reach 4.90 lakh PVTG households by 2026.

Do you Know?

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The great significance of the ICC's step

In May 20, the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC), Karim Khan, made public his application to a pre-trial chamber of the ICC to issue arrest warrants against five individuals linked to the conflict in Gaza. The five are Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Israeli Defence Minister Yoav Gallant, and three Hamas leaders, including Yahya Sinwar, the leader of the outfit. The announcement caused a furor, which could have possible adverse consequences for the ICC. But in all the bluster and fury, it is important to ask what the legal basis for this request is, and the implications.

The ICC was established by the Rome Statute, a treaty negotiated more than 20 years ago, to ensure legal redress for grave international crimes, including genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity. The ICC builds on the legal legacies and jurisprudence of international courts before it, including the ad hoc United Nations tribunals for Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia, in order to address individual criminal responsibility. It is not a determination of culpability of a nation or group, but rather of individuals.

The nature of crimes
The Prosecutor alleges in his statement that Hamas officials are responsible for an array of war crimes and crimes against humanity including murder, extermination, taking hostages, rape and sexual violence, torture, cruel treatment, outrages upon personal dignity, and other inhumane acts. These are allegations that stem from Hamas' attacks against Israel on October 7, 2023. The Prosecutor's case against the Israeli officials are that since October 8, 2023, they bear responsibility for war crimes and crimes against humanity such as persecution, extermination and/or murder including deaths caused by starvation, starvation of civilians as a method of warfare.

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willfully causing great suffering, or serious injury to body or health, willfully killing, intentionally directing attacks against a civilian population, and other inhumane acts. These applications for warrants are supported by an independent panel of experts. Based on the Rome Statute and the procedures of the ICC, the judges of the pre-trial chamber must now make a decision regarding whether to issue the arrest warrants requested. This determination is based on the evidence that the Prosecutor submits to the judges. To issue the warrants, the judges must be satisfied that there are "reasonable grounds to believe" that the individuals have committed a crime, within the jurisdiction of the court.

An argument against the Prosecutor's actions is that Israel is not a state party to the Rome Statute and so the ICC cannot exercise jurisdiction over it. This is incorrect. There are other situations where the ICC has exercised jurisdiction over a non-state party. For instance, in Bangladesh/Myanmar, the court held that even though Myanmar is not a state party, the court has jurisdiction by virtue of particular crimes committed on the territory of a state party (Bangladesh). Another example is the arrest warrant issued against President Vladimir Putin, when Russia is not a state party. According to the ICC statute, the court has jurisdiction over crimes committed in the territory of a state party or a state which has accepted its jurisdiction, and Ukraine falls under this category. The court asserted jurisdiction which would apply to occupied and annexed territories. It is worth noting that this decision was met with acclaim by many states in the West, in contrast to the current situation regarding Israel.

Specifically addressing the jurisdiction of the court in this instance, a pre-trial chamber in 2021 affirmed that the ICC can exercise criminal jurisdiction in the Situation in the State of Palestine, and that this scope includes Gaza, the West Bank, and East Jerusalem. This would include any actions on and since October 7 last year.

Obligation to cooperate
An immediate consequence of a positive decision on these warrants relates to obligations on all states that have ratified the Rome Statute to cooperate on matters, including arrest. When arrest warrants by the ICC were issued in relation to Omar al-Bashir of Sudan, states failed to follow through on their obligations. When Mr. Bashir was in South Africa for a summit, legal proceedings were brought to initiate the arrest in the country. However, South Africa decided not to arrest Mr. Bashir, a decision that was excoriated by the Supreme Court of Appeal of South Africa as well as judges of the ICC. While this was a failure to arrest, it is worth noting that the arrest warrant hampers scope of activity and remains an obligation for over a hundred states that are a party to the Rome Statute.

It is also important to note that there are separate, distinct proceedings before another court in the Hague, the International Court of Justice (ICJ). There, South Africa is alleging violations of the Genocide Convention by Israel with regard to its actions in Gaza. The ICJ has already issued decisions indicating provisional measures, akin to injunctions in domestic law. Proceedings at the ICJ are to determine the legal responsibility of a state and are not about individual criminal responsibility.

The decision by the ICC Prosecutor is of great significance. International law is being severely tested in this crisis. While this step may not be an immediate panacea, it signals that there is value in the rule of law, in the idea that no one should be able to commit international crimes with impunity, and that accountability should not be a mere mirage.

- Arrest warrants are being sought for the leaders of Hamas and Israel for alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity linked to the war in Gaza,
- The ICC was established by the Rome Statute, a treaty negotiated more than 20 years ago, to ensure legal redress for grave international crimes, including genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity. The ICC builds on the legal legacies and jurisprudence of international courts before it, including the ad hoc United Nations tribunals for Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia, in order to address individual criminal responsibility. It is not a determination of culpability of a nation or group, but rather of individuals. The International Criminal Court (ICC) investigates and, where warranted, tries individuals charged with the gravest crimes of concern to the international community: genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and the crime of aggression.

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An overview of Europe's AI convention

What is the scope of the Framework Convention on Artificial Intelligence and Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law? What is the difference between a framework convention and a protocol? How does the convention address national security concerns?

EXPLAINER

Krishna Ravi Srinivas

The story so far:

The global governance of Artificial Intelligence (AI) is becoming more complex even as countries try to govern AI within their borders in various ways, ranging from acts of law to executive orders. Many experts have articulated a global treaty to this effect, but the obstacles in its path are daunting.

What is Europe's AI convention?

Although there are many ethical guidelines, 'soft law' tools, and governance principles enshrined in many documents, none of them are binding or are likely to result in a global treaty. There is also no ongoing negotiation for an AI treaty at the global level anywhere. Against this background, the Council of Europe (COE) took a big step by adopting the Framework Convention on Artificial Intelligence and Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law, also known as the 'AI convention', on May 17. The COE is an intergovernmental organisation formed in 1949, with currently 46 members. The agreement is a comprehensive convention covering AI governance and links to human rights, democracy, and the responsible use of AI. The framework convention will be opened for signature on September 5.

What is a framework convention?

A 'framework convention' is a legally binding treaty that specifies the broader commitments and objectives under the convention, and sets mechanisms to achieve them. The task of setting specific targets is left to subsequent agreements. Those agreements that are negotiated under the framework convention will be called protocols. For example, the Convention on Biological Diversity is a framework convention while the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety is a



(ISTOCKPHOTO)

protocol under it that deals with living modified organisms.

The framework convention approach is useful because it allows flexibility even as it encodes the core principles and processes by which the objectives are to be realised. Parties to the convention have the discretion to decide the ways in which to achieve the objectives, depending on their capacities and priorities. The AI convention can catalyse the negotiation of similar conventions at the regional level in other places. Then again, as the U.S. is also a member of the COE, the convention can indirectly affect AI governance in the U.S. as well, which matters because the country is currently a hotbed of AI innovation.

What is the scope of the convention?

Article 1 of the convention states: "The

Does it address national security?

The exemptions in Articles 3.2, 3.3, and 3.4 are broad and pertain to the protection of national security interests, research, development and testing, and national defence, respectively. As a result, military applications of AI are not covered by the AI convention. While this is a matter of concern, it's a pragmatic move given the lack of consensus on regulating such applications. In fact, the exemptions in Articles 3.2 and 3.3 – while broad – don't completely rule out the convention's applicability vis-a-vis national security and testing, respectively.

Finally, the 'General Obligations' in the convention pertain to the protection of human rights (Article 4), the integrity of democratic processes, and respect for the rule of law (Article 5). While disinformation and deep fakes haven't been addressed specifically, parties to the convention are expected to take steps against them under Article 5. In fact, the convention indicates (in Article 32) that parties can go beyond the commitments and obligations specified.

Why do we need the AI convention?

The AI convention doesn't create new and/or substantive human rights specific to AI. Instead, it asserts that existing human and fundamental rights that are protected by international and national laws will need to stay protected during the application of AI systems as well. The obligations are primarily directed towards governments, which are expected to install effective remedies (Article 14) and procedural safeguards (Article 15). In all, the convention takes a comprehensive approach to mitigating risks from the use of AI systems for human rights and democracy. There are bound to be challenges to implementing it, particularly at a time when AI regulation regimes are yet to be fully established and technology continues to outpace policy.

Krishna Ravi Srinivas is Adjunct Professor of Law, NALSAR University of Law, Hyderabad, and Associate Faculty Fellow, C-DRI, IF, Mysore.

THE GIST

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India records trade deficit with 9 of top 10 trading partners in 2023-24

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

India has recorded a trade deficit, the difference between imports and exports, with nine of its top 10 trading partners, including China, Russia, Singapore, and Korea, in 2023-24, according to official data.

The data also showed that the deficit with China, Russia, Korea, and Hong Kong increased in the last fiscal compared to 2022-23, while the trade gap with the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Russia, Indonesia, and Iraq narrowed.

The trade deficit with China rose to \$85 billion, Russia to \$57.2 billion, Korea to \$14.71 billion and Hong Kong to \$12.2 billion in 2023-24 against \$83.2 billion, \$43 billion, \$14.57 billion and \$8.38 billion, respectively, in 2022-23.

China has emerged as India's largest trading partner with \$118.4 billion of two-way commerce in



2023-24, edging past the U.S.

The bilateral trade between India and the U.S. stood at \$118.28 billion in 2023-24. Washington was the top trading partner of New Delhi during 2021-22 and 2022-23. India has a free trade agreement with four of its top trading partners – Singapore, the UAE, Korea and Indonesia (as part of the Asian bloc). India has a trade surplus of

\$36.74 billion with the U.S. in 2023-24. America is one of the few countries with which India has a trade surplus. The surplus is also there with the U.K., Belgium, Italy, France and Bangladesh. India's total trade deficit in the last fiscal narrowed to \$238.3 billion as against \$264.9 billion in the previous fiscal.

According to trade experts, a deficit is not always bad, if a country is import-

ing raw materials. However, it puts pressure on the domestic currency.

"A rising trade deficit can cause the country's currency to depreciate because more foreign currency is needed for imports. This depreciation makes imports more expensive, worsening the deficit," Economic think tank Global Trade Research Initiative Founder Ajay Srivastava said.

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WHAT IS IT?

Astronomical transients: burning bright in the blink of an eye

Vasudevan Mukunth

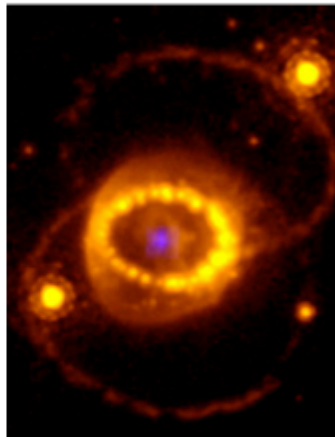
In astronomy, a 'transient' is any celestial object whose brightness changes in short spans of time. There are many kinds of astronomical transients, all of them united by phenomena that are violent in some measure. Astronomers study transients to understand where their violence comes from and what that can tell us about non-transient events.

On May 21, in fact, the Indian-American astronomer Shrinivas Kulkarni was awarded the Shaw Prize for Astronomy in 2024 for his work on the physics of astronomical transients.

One of the most well-known such transients is supernovae — when the outer layers of large stars blow up while their cores implode because the stars have run out of elements to fuse. Many a supernova has been known to become so bright that it emits light more intensely than the stars in the rest of its host galaxy combined.

Another famous transient is the active galactic nucleus (AGN). The centres of massive galaxies host supermassive black holes. Sometimes, these black holes actively feast on matter in their orbit. Interactions between the black holes and the matter in this process cause the latter to acquire energy and glow with a changing brightness.

In 2007, astronomers discovered a mysterious new transient called a fast



Moment of shine: The aftermath of supernova 1987A. Supernovae are one of the most well-known astronomical transients. AP

hundreds of FRBs even though they're hard to spot: they can emit more than 10-times as much energy as the Sun in a few milliseconds. We don't know what causes them.

For feedback and suggestions
for 'Science', please write to
science@thehindu.co.in with the
subject 'Daily page'

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LVM3 commercialisation is a big step forward, at right time for India, say experts

ANONNA DUTT
NEW DELHI, MAY 26

ISRO'S RECENT invitation to private firms to build India's heaviest rocket is a long-awaited step to ensure greater participation of the private sector in the country's space programme. And it will help India emerge stronger in the international space market amid a rapidly-increasing demand for satellite launches, according to experts *The Indian Express* spoke to.

Earlier this month, ISRO's commercial arm, New Space India Limited (NSIL), invited applications from private firms for "end-to-end" manufacturing of Launch Vehicle Mark-III or LVM3, the rocket that was used in the Chandrayaan-2 and Chandrayaan-3 lunar missions.

Previously called GSLV-MkIII, the LVM3 is ISRO's most powerful rocket so far. It can carry up to 4-tonne satellites into the geostationary orbit and up to 8-tonne satellites into the lower earth orbits.

According to the offer, ISRO's plan is to have a 14-year collaboration with the selected private entity. The first two years would be the "development phase" for



LVM3 is ISRO's most powerful rocket so far. File

next 12 years, it is envisaged that the private partner would be able to build four to six LVM3 rockets each year.

"With the commercialisation of LVM3, Indian companies will now have a wider array of launch vehicles to offer in the global market. It will increase the country's share in the global market," Lieutenant General Anil Kumar Bhatt (retd), director general, Indian Space Association, told *The Indian Express*.

And, Lt Gen Bhatt added, it will allow ISRO to focus on the NGLV (Next Generation Launch Vehicle), a much bigger launch vehicle being developed as part

to the Moon.

Akshat Johri, assistant general manager of IIFCL, a government-owned project advisory company which has assisted NSIL in finalising the commercialisation procedures, said the decision to allow private manufacturing of LVM3 has come at a "very opportune moment".

"As of now, Falcon 9 of SpaceX is the only significant launch vehicle taking heavy payloads to space. Chinese launch vehicles are busy with their country's own missions and Russian vehicles like Soyuz are not being used by many due to war-related sanctions. The Ariane Group (of Europe) is still testing its new Ariane 6 rocket, after having retired Ariane 5 in July last year, and JAXA of Japan has just finished testing its H3 rocket.

"This is a very opportune moment for India to grab some space for LVM3. There is a growing market for satellites in the lower earth orbits as well," he said.

Besides the LVM3, ISRO has also given private players a chance to make the recently developed Small Satellite Launch Vehicle (SSLV) and its main workhorse, PSLV. The first privately manufactured PSLV is likely to take flight in August this

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- Previously called GSLV-MkIII, the LVM3 is ISRO's most powerful rocket so far. It can carry up to 4-tonne satellites into the geostationary orbit and up to 8-tonne satellites into the lower earth orbits.
- ISRO's plan is to have a 14-year collaboration with the selected private entity. LVM3 will be capable of placing the 4 tonne class satellites of the GSAT series into Geosynchronous Transfer Orbits. LVM3 is the new heavy lift launch vehicle of ISRO for achieving a 4000 kg spacecraft launching capability to GTO (Geosynchronous Transfer Orbit) in a cost effective manner. LVM3 is a three stage launch vehicle

Indian Express:IR/S&T (GSIII)

Overlapping territorial claims, Cold War: what led to the Antarctic Treaty

ALIND CHAUHAN
NEW DELHI, MAY 26

MINISTER OF Earth Sciences Kiren Rijju, on May 21, inaugurated the 46th edition of the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting in Kochi, Kerala.

The meeting, scheduled to go on till May 30, is being attended by all 56 member states of the Antarctic Treaty, which provides the framework for peaceful coexistence and scientific cooperation in Antarctica.

Tussle over territory

Parts of mainland Antarctica were first spotted by British, American, and Russian ships in the 1820s. But it was the race to reach the South Pole – between Captain Robert Scott from the United Kingdom and Roald Amundsen from Norway, which Amundsen won on December 15, 1911 – that piqued the world's interest in the continent.

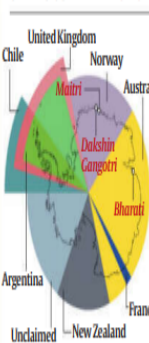
By the 1950s, Argentina, Australia, Chile, France, New Zealand, Norway, and the UK had made formal territorial claims over Antarctica. Some of these claims were overlapping, and led to conflict. The US, the USSR, Belgium, Japan, and South Africa explored the continent but made no territorial claims.

"Only five claimants (Australia, France, New Zealand, Norway, and the United Kingdom) mutually recognised each other's claims. Of particular concern, [were] the claims of

Argentina, Chile, and the United Kingdom," scholar K M Shusterich wrote in *The Antarctic Treaty System: History, Substance, and Speculation* (1984).

Between 1947 and 1955, Argentina and Chile twice rejected the British proposal to go to the International Court of Justice to sort out their overlapping claims, insisting that their sovereignty was unquestionable. Several unsuccessful attempts were

CLAIMS OVER ANTARCTICA



made to enact an international agreement over the control of Antarctica. In 1956, India requested the UN to include "the question of Antarctica" on the provisional agenda of the General Assembly. But opposition from Argentina and Chile, and scant support from the US and USSR doomed the effort.

Treaty amidst Cold War

A major breakthrough came during the 1957-1958 International Geophysical Year (IGY), where 12 nations – Argentina, Australia, Chile, France, New Zealand, Norway, the UK, the US, the USSR, Belgium, Japan, and South Africa – agreed to not let their differences hinder scientific research in Antarctica, and allowed countries to place scientific stations anywhere on the continent, regardless of territorial claims.

The IGY was an international endeavour to further scientific collaboration among countries notwithstanding their political relations during the Cold War. Both the US and USSR had not asserted territorial claims in

Antarctica." Donald R Rothwell, Professor of International Law at the Australian National University, told *The Indian Express* in an email. They wanted to ensure that their rivalry did not spill over to the continent, he said.

On May 2, 1958, the US invited IGY participants to Washington to negotiate "a treaty designed to preserve the continent as an international laboratory for scientific research and ensure that it be used only for peaceful purposes," Shusterich wrote. The Washington Conference went on from October 15 to December 1, 1959 and culminated with the signing of the Antarctic Treaty by all 12 members. It came into force in 1961.

It contains 14 articles and froze all territorial disputes in Antarctica. It barred countries from making new territorial claims, banned militarisation and nuclear testing in the continent, and promoted scientific research.

Today, 56 countries are a part of the Antarctic Treaty – 29 of which (including the 12 original signatories) are Consultative Parties, part of the decision making process.

India joined the treaty in 1983, and is a Consultative Party.

A success story

According to Shusterich, "the treaty has been able to survive over the years as it strikes a fine balance between specificity and vagueness." It promotes "compromise rather than conflict... instils a sense of exclusivity for the consultative parties, yet invites all nations to join," he wrote.

Another reason for its success is that the treaty has been able to evolve to address new challenges. Rothwell said several additional conventions and other legal protocols have dealt with issues like marine conservation, prohibition on mining, and protection of Antarctica's environment.

But the treaty faces a bumpy road ahead. With Antarctica witnessing record-breaking high temperatures and low ice coverage, climate change is the biggest challenge in front of it. A spike in tourism-related activities in and around the continent is also a concern.

- The 46th edition of the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting, also known as the Antarctic Parliament, kicked off on Monday (May 20) in Kochi, Kerala. It is scheduled to go on till May 30 and will see a wide range of Antarctica-related discussions, especially the rise of tourism in the continent, and its implications.
- The Antarctic Treaty was signed in Washington on 1 December 1959 by the twelve countries whose scientists had been active in and around Antarctica. The Antarctic Treaty was signed in Washington on 1 December 1959 by the twelve countries whose scientists had been active in and around Antarctica during the International Geophysical Year (IGY) of 1957-58. It entered into force in 1961 and has since been acceded to by many other nations. The total number of Parties to the Treaty is now 57.