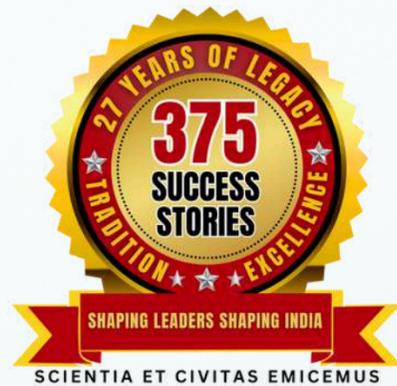


THE PALA CIVIL TIMES DAILY NEWS ANALYSIS



Presented by:
Amala Francis

Date: July 23, 2025

TOP STORIES

1. SC notice to Centre, States on President, Governors' powers
2. After glorious career, MiG-21 fighter jets to retire in September
3. Poll panel has to hold election of Vice-President immediately
4. A beetle-fungi combo threatens plantations in rubber capital Kerala
5. How different constitutional drafts imagined India
6. Explained: Biostimulants that aid plant growth, now under the Centre's scrutiny
7. Mains Practice Question

SC notice to Centre, States on President, Governors' powers

Supreme Court's Focus:

A Constitution Bench led by Chief Justice D.Y. Chandrachud is examining questions referred by the President concerning the powers of the President and Governors, especially in granting assent to Bills passed by State legislatures.

Broad Implications:

The issue affects all States. The Supreme Court has issued notices to the Centre and all States and Union Territories.

The outcome will have nationwide constitutional significance.

Presidential Reference:

The reference was made under Article 143 of the Constitution (which allows the President to seek the Supreme Court's opinion on questions of law or fact of public importance).



Key Constitutional Issues:

- The delay or refusal by Governors to grant assent to State Bills.
- The practice of reserving Bills indefinitely, which affects State autonomy.
- Tensions between State laws and Centre's approval processes.

Judicial Process:

- The matter has been scheduled for final hearing in October.
- The court will also examine prior cases related to Governor's roles and delays in granting assent to Bills (e.g., Punjab, Kerala cases).

Attorney General's Role:

- Attorney General R. Venkataramani and Solicitor General Tushar Mehta have been asked to assist in the matter.

These points reflect a crucial constitutional debate about the federal structure and the limits of gubernatorial and presidential powers in India.

After glorious career, MiG-21 fighter jets to retire in September

- The MiG-21 Bison fighter jets of the Indian Air Force (IAF) will retire in September 2025.
- A ceremonial send-off will be held at the Chandigarh airbase, attended by veteran pilots.
- First produced in 1963, the MiG-21 is a single-engine supersonic jet fighter and interceptor.
- Played a key role in: 1971 war with Pakistan, Kargil War (1999), Balakot air strikes (2019), Operation Sindoor
- Famously used by Wing Commander Abhinandan Varthaman during the Balakot air strike response to shoot down a Pakistani F-16.



Off the skies: First procured in 1963, the MiG-21 is a single-engine supersonic jet fighter and interceptor aircraft. PTI

The IAF plans to replace MiG-21s with indigenously developed Tejas Mk1A fighter aircraft.

- India produced around 700 MiG-21s.
- Only two squadrons currently remain: No. 23 Squadron ("Panthers"), No. 3 Squadron ("Cobras") – both based at Nal airbase, Rajasthan.
- After retirement, the IAF's total number of combat squadrons will reduce from 31 to 29.
- MiG-21 aircraft involved in several accidents over the years.
- At one point, they were nicknamed "Flying Coffins" due to frequent crashes.

Poll panel has to hold election of Vice-President immediately.

- Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankhar has resigned due to health reasons.
- This creates a rare mid-term vacancy, as the Vice-President normally serves a five-year term.

Constitutional Mandate

- The Constitution does not allow the Vice-President's post to remain vacant.
- It also does not provide a method of succession apart from a fresh election.
- In the interim, the Deputy Chairman of Rajya Sabha will head proceedings.



Next steps: The Vice-President is elected by an electoral college that comprises members of the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha, both elected and nominated. ANI

Election Process

- The Election Commission must hold elections immediately.
- The Vice-President is elected by an electoral college comprising:
- Members of Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha (both elected and nominated).

Voting Rules & Procedure

- Voting is by secret ballot under Article 66(1) of the Constitution.
- The system used is proportional representation by single transferable vote.
- Unlike Presidential elections, each MP's vote has equal value.
- Members of the electoral college can vote freely, not bound by any party whip.

Nomination Process

- Nomination papers must be signed by:
 - At least 20 proposers and 20 seconders.
- A security deposit of ₹15,000 is required.
- Papers are submitted to the Returning Officer (by convention, the Secretary-General of Lok Sabha or Rajya Sabha).

Returning Officers

- The Returning Officer is appointed by rotation between Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha Secretariats.
- Two Assistant Returning Officers assist in the process.

A beetle-fungi combo threatens plantations in rubber capital Kerala

Rubber plantations in Kerala are under threat from a beetle-fungi alliance, causing: Severe leaf fall ,Dieback
Reduced productivity.

The ambrosia beetle (*Euwallacea perbrevis*) is associated with the fungus *Fusarium euwallaceae*.

This is the first report of such a beetle-fungus association in India.

- The beetles bore tunnels into tree trunks to grow the fungi for food.
- Fungi then invade the plant's vascular system, leading to death of trees.
- They have likely arrived in Kerala through imported planting material.
- These beetles are known pests in Central and South America, and now pose a risk in India.



- The infection causes: Tree death, Yield decline, Economic losses
- The beetle-fungus association is considered among the world's most destructive, affecting not only rubber but also other crops.
- 72% of India's rubber cultivation occurs in Kerala, increasing the threat's significance.
- This kind of pathogen combo is a concern globally; other beetle-fungus partnerships affect avocado, coffee, cacao, mango, etc. The infection makes other economically important plants vulnerable, such as: Mango, Guava, Jackfruit, Papaya
- Research is ongoing under the ICAR-funded Holistic project at Kerala Forest Research Institute (KFRI).
- Scientists recommend: Monitoring tree health, Blocking beetle entry points, Removing infected trees, Using fungal-resistant varieties
- There is an urgent need for action, collaboration among policymakers, farmers, and scientists, and development of prevention and mitigation plans.

In Summary

- The article calls for immediate policy-level attention and preventive research to:
- Control the current outbreak
- Avoid further economic and ecological damage
- Protect India's crucial rubber production sector
- It is a warning signal about emerging pest-pathogen threats and highlights the need for coordinated, science-based responses.

How different constitutional drafts imagined India

- Between 1885 and 1948, several constitutional drafts were proposed for India, reflecting contrasting ideologies – from liberalism and decentralisation to radical socialism.
- These drafts were part of India's struggle to define its postcolonial identity, political system, and values.



Early drafts emphasized liberal democratic ideals, inspired by British constitutionalism.

- Examples include the 1895 Constitution of India Bill and Commonwealth of India Bill (1925), which proposed: A parliamentary system, Fundamental rights, Equality before law, Abolition of untouchability, Universal adult suffrage.

Homogeneous vs. Pluralistic Nation

- The 1931 Karachi Resolution adopted by the Congress, and constitutional drafts by M.N. Roy and Tej Bahadur Sapru, reflected visions of a homogeneous secular India.
- These emphasized:
 - Uniform civil code
 - Religious neutrality of the state
 - Social justice and civil liberties
- The Sapru draft (1945) tried to balance between individual and minority rights.

Gandhian Decentralism vs. Centralised Power

Gandhi's vision, expressed in "Hind Swaraj", focused on:

Decentralised village republics , Self-reliant communities , Opposition to industrialisation and Western political models

The Constituent Assembly's final Constitution (1950) diverged from Gandhi's ideal by endorsing a centralised framework, with planning and industrialisation.

Socialist and Radical Alternatives

The Socialist Party, Indian Federation of Labour, and the Communist Party of India proposed radical drafts, envisioning: Public ownership of key industries , Abolition of landlordism , State planning , Guaranteed employment and welfare

Constituent Assembly Synthesis

- The final Constitution (1950) was a synthesis of multiple ideologies:
 - It adopted a parliamentary democracy.
 - It included fundamental rights, directive principles, and secularism.
 - It aimed to protect individual liberty, promote social justice, and ensure national unity.

Contrasting Legacies

- Though it did not fully adopt Gandhian decentralism or radical socialism, the Constitution kept many progressive ideals intact.
- The article stresses the rich ideological diversity of India's constitution-making process and how it reflects the political aspirations of a diverse population.

Explained: Biostimulants that aid plant growth, now under the Centre's scrutiny.

What are Biostimulants?

Biostimulants are substances that stimulate physiological processes in plants.

They enhance growth, yield, nutrient uptake, tolerance to stress, and crop quality.

Derived from natural sources like plant waste, seaweed extracts, and biochemicals, but do not include pesticides or plant growth regulators.

Why Government Scrutiny Now?

- Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan urged states to stop the "forced tagging" of nano-fertilisers or biostimulants with subsidised fertilisers like urea and DAP.
- Complaints were raised by farmers over:
 - Retailers bundling subsidised fertilisers with biostimulants.
 - Ineffectiveness of many biostimulant products.

Unchecked Market & Regulatory Gap

- Previously, biostimulants were sold freely as they didn't fall under fertiliser or pesticide laws.
- Around 30,000 products were in circulation; now reduced to 650 due to stricter regulation.
- The 1985 Fertiliser Control Order (FCO) was amended in 2021 to bring biostimulants under regulation.

Legal & Regulatory Developments

The Punjab and Haryana High Court (2011) ordered states to vet bioproducts before sale.

In 2017, NITI Aayog recommended formal regulations.

The FCO (2021) defines biostimulants into 8 categories (e.g., botanical extracts, seaweed, antioxidants).

Manufacturers/importers must submit:

Product chemistry, Source (natural/synthetic), Bio-efficacy reports, Toxicity data

Latest Government Action (March–June 2024)

- Biostimulants could be sold only with provisional registration for 2 years.
- In March 2024, an extension was granted until June 16.
- After expiry, companies without full registration cannot sell their biostimulants.

New Guidelines

- On May 26, 2024, the Ministry issued “Specifications of Biostimulants” for crops like tomato, chilli, potato, cucumber, paddy, brinjal, cotton, and others.

This article highlights the need for transparency, farmer protection, and scientific regulation in the booming biostimulant market in India.

Subject: GS 2
Syllabus: International Relations

Evaluate the efficacy of India's Neighbourhood First policy in fostering a peaceful and amicable subcontinent. (150 Words, 10 Marks)

Introduction:

The "Neighbourhood First" policy is an important factor of India's foreign policy that focuses on frequent high-level political exchanges and a policy of non-reciprocity towards neighbours in the subcontinent.

It is based on the Gujral Doctrine, which is a set of five principles to guide the conduct of foreign relations with India's immediate neighbours to maintain stability and growth in the region.

Main Body:

Effectiveness of India's Neighbourhood First Policy:

- Balancing India's image and culture: "Neighbourhood First" policy follows India's vision of Vasudhaiva kutumbakam while making it a leader of the southern world developing countries.
- Continuous Dialogue involves vigorous regional diplomacy by engaging with neighbouring nations and building political connectivity through dialogue.
 - For example, all heads of government of SAARC countries were invited to the oath-taking ceremony of the Prime minister in 2014.
- Resolving bilateral issues: This policy helps India solve bilateral issues through mutual agreements without conflict. For example, India and Bangladesh had agreed on the historic Land Boundary Agreement (LBA).

- **Technical Cooperation in Subcontinent:** The policy also focuses on technical cooperation among like-minded developing countries without many technological advancements. For example, the SAARC satellite was developed to share technology like telemedicine, e-learning etc., with people across South Asia.
- **Disaster management:** India's cooperation in disaster response, weather forecasting etc., has created a positive image worldwide while increasing soft power. For example, operation Insaniyat, recent vaccine support during covid19 pandemic etc.
- **Connectivity:** to ensure a free flow of resources, energy, goods, labour, and security information across borders. For example, the Kaladan project with Myanmar.

Challenges to Neighbourhood First Policy:

- **Role of Pakistan:** Normalising equations with Pakistan remains India's biggest challenge, as it openly uses terror as an instrument of state policy.
- **Unstable Afghanistan:** Fragile politics and state-sponsored external threats from Pakistan make maintaining relations with Afghanistan a challenge too.
 - The recent role of the Taliban and the Non-inclusion of India as a major member in talks shows the weakness of the "Neighbourhood First" policy.
- **Dominant and Expansionist China:** China's policies towards Pakistan, such as constructing Gwadar Port and Diamer Bhasha dam, have raised suspicions.
- Additionally, China's OBOR initiative has attracted smaller nations, further increasing concerns.

- Anti-Indian sentiments: Increasing anti-Indian sentiments in Nepal, fueled by local political tactics and accusations of a big brotherly attitude from India, challenge India's Neighbourhood First policy. Nepal's utilisation of China as a bargaining chip adds further complexity to the situation.

Conclusion:

- To quote Former Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee, You can change your friends but not neighbours.
- Hence, to play a dominant role in the emerging multipolar world politics, India must develop good relations with its neighbours while not compromising its national aspirations.



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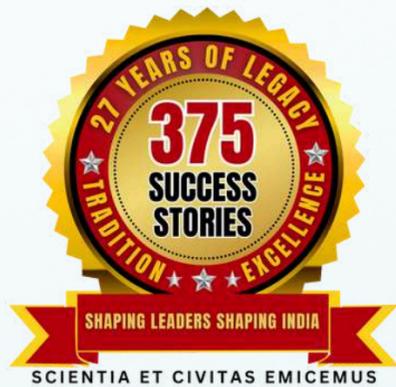
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