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# **DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS**



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S.NO.	TOPIC
1.	FROM WARP SPEED TO RESET, THE STATE OF INDIA-U.S. TIES
2.	A PUSH FOR MORE CLIMATE ACTION
3.	ON SPECIAL CATEGORY STATUS FOR ANDHRA
4.	UNDERSTAND THE INDIAN OCEAN AND YOU'LL UNDERSTAND MUCH ABOUT EARTH

## FROM WARP SPEED TO RESET, THE STATE OF INDIA-U.S. TIES

# From warp speed to reset, the state of India-U.S. ties

This month marks a year since Prime Minister Narendra Modi's state visit to the United States, where U.S. President Joseph Biden rolled out the red carpet and the U.S. offered to restart the decade-old plan to transfer technology for jet engines to India. The visit was marked by many such announcements of strategic and high-tech cooperation, with the U.S.-India initiative on Critical and Emerging Technology (iCET) considered a major success for bilateral relations that would set the stage for a whole new phase in ties.

However, one year later, the pace of the relationship has not matched those ambitions for a number of external and internal reasons. As the newly sworn-in Indian Prime Minister will engage once again with the U.S. President this week at the G-7 outreach summit in Italy, and senior U.S. officials are set to arrive in Delhi, the "good, the not-so-good, and what could-become ugly" (to paraphrase the Hollywood western) in the relationship must be studied closely.

### The crests

It is clear where the 'good' and even 'great' in the India-U.S. relationship lies. Last September marked 25 years of the turnaround in ties post-Pokhran, that was heralded by Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's famous Asia Society speech in New York, on September 28, 1998, where he called India and the U.S. "natural allies in the quest for a better future" for the world in the 21st century. Since then, Delhi and Washington have built up strategic ties year on year, with dialogues in a growing number of spheres – from climate change and green energy to critical and emerging technologies and outer space.

Over the past decade, the growth is seen in strategic trust in particular, with the conclusion of all foundational agreements, a plethora of military exercises, growing inter-operability and coordination on maritime operations, not to mention the considerable purchases in the pipeline of military hardware. A broader mutual understanding has been sparked by many of the old irritants going away from relations: the de-hyphenation of U.S.-India ties with Pakistan, silence over old concerns on Jammu-Kashmir that once roiled ties, India's increased engagement with the Quad (India, Australia, Japan and the U.S.) and the U.S.'s Indo-Pacific strategy, and shared concerns over China's aggression have brought Delhi and DC increasingly on the "same page", internationally.

While the bilateral engagement has been thriving, much of it due to dozens of official-level conversations that continue, some of the "not-so-good" or work-in-progress areas lie in the areas of multilateral cooperation on global conflicts. Russia's war in Ukraine has been one major area of difference, especially as the U.S. has framed the war purely in terms of the



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international rule of law and humanitarian principles. India has chosen a more historical frame that also considers the disruption to other players like the Global South on issues such as food, fertilizer and energy security. There have been some compromises: the U.S. has withdrawn its objections to India's continued purchase of oil and other Russian exports and held off any talk of sanctions, while India has put over the annual India-Russia summit for two years now. It remains to be seen how the newly-elected Prime Minister manages engagements with Russian President Vladimir Putin in the next few months, with a possible meeting at the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Summit in Kazakhstan in July and the BRICS Summit in Russia's Kazan in October. Some of the edge of the U.S.'s moralistic posture has also been taken off by its support of Israel's bombardment of Gaza and the continued killing of civilians despite calls from the United Nations, the International Criminal Court and the International Court of Justice to stop.

### The China factor

On the other multilateral front and growing concerns over China's threats against Taiwan, with the latest conflagration over the Philippines in the South China Sea too, India-U.S. cooperation at the Quad has flagged somewhat. This has mainly been a factor of logistics. Mr. Biden's decision to decline the invitation for India's Republic Day in 2024 meant that the Quad Summit was foregone, and the U.S. has indicated that it will not be rescheduled until after the U.S. elections in November. Planned visits by U.S. National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan were cancelled twice this year, at the last moment, due to the Gaza crisis, in turn affecting the iCET review. As a result, so has the visit by the U.S. Deputy Secretary of State, Kurt Campbell (nicknamed 'Quadfather' or 'Asia Czar' for his role as Biden's Indo-Pacific Coordinator), who has instead focused on "Quad-Plus" meetings with the Republic of Korea and the Philippines over the past few months. All eyes are also on the Quad Foreign Minister's meeting to be scheduled in Japan this year, but much will depend on U.S. Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken being available for it.

There has been no Indian Ambassador in Washington for months, and South Block's ties with the U.S. Ambassador in India Eric Garcetti have been somewhat strained after his comments on Manipur and human rights. The State Department's comments on the state of democracy in India before the general election 2024 as well as consistent bad reviews for India in the State Department's Religious Freedom report enraged India's Ministry of External Affairs leading to the summoning of a senior US diplomat, and in turn widening the gap. Washington has been sounding excessively offensive and interfering and New Delhi prickly

and reactive. The decision by the U.S. to wait for the "final results" of the general election before congratulating Mr. Modi, and then issue a statement commending civil society and journalists for their "their commitment and vital contributions to India's democratic processes and institutions", will no doubt chafe the South Block-State Department equation.

### Tensions over 'plots'

Amid this discourse, the elephant in the room remains the attempted assassination of Khalistani separatist and U.S. citizen Gurpatwant Singh Pannun in New York, allegedly ordered by Indian security officials. June 2024 also marks a year since the plot in the U.S. was unearthed, along with transcripts linking the plot to the killing of Canadian citizen Hardeep Singh Nijjar outside Toronto, the same month (June 2023). Although details of the allegations became public only in November last year, it is clear that the discomfort over the perception that India is behind the killing of foreign citizens in friendly countries had begun to seep into the relationship even as Prime Minister Modi touched down in the U.S. last year. During a visit to Washington this summer, this writer saw signs that those concerns have broadened, particularly with U.S. intelligence agencies, the Department of Justice, and at the U.S. Congress, where lawmakers now routinely raise concerns from that section of the diaspora that feels most targeted by India, including those accused of terrorism by India. While the U.S.'s demand that India bring senior officials "to account" publicly for the alleged plot is a non-starter, the Government of India must realise that its theory of "rogue actors" being responsible for such a high profile plot will not wash either. It should proceed more quickly with its high-level investigation. Either way, one can expect the issue to come to a slow boil over the next few months as the trial in New York brings forth more details of what the U.S. believes, and passes on to the Canadian authorities too for the trial set to begin there.

Given the government's need to adjust to new coalition realities after the shock of the results of the general election as well as the fast-closing window of engagement with the U.S. government as Washington heads into "lame-duck" season, officials and leaders have their task cut out for them. While a possible Trump presidency in November might resolve many of the problems between them, it will most certainly introduce much more uncertainty to their ties as well. The opportunity for a Biden-Modi meeting this week then, followed by the visit by Mr. Sullivan to Delhi soon to complete the iCET review, as decided by the leaders during their phone call, is both desired and necessary for the restart they require, a year after it seemed that the relationship had reached "warp speed".

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A close look at the 'good, the not-so-good, and what could-become ugly' in the relationship

Points To note → iCET

Brighter side in India-US Relations

Irritants in " " " "

Recent developments



### The iCET:

- ❖ It was announced by India and the US in May 2022 and was officially launched in January 2023 and is being run by the National Security Council of both countries.
- ❖ Under iCET, both countries have identified six areas of cooperation which would include co-development and co-production, that would gradually be expanded to QUAD, then to NATO, followed by Europe and the rest of the world.
- ❖ Under iCET, India is ready to share its core technologies with the US and expects Washington to do the same.
- ❖ It aims to promote collaboration in critical and emerging technology areas, including AI, quantum computing, semiconductors, and wireless telecommunication.

### Focus Areas of the Initiative:

- ❖ AI research agency partnership.
- ❖ Defense industrial cooperation, defense technological cooperation, and defense startups.
- ❖ Innovation Ecosystems.
- ❖ Semiconductor ecosystem development.
- ❖ Cooperation on human spaceflight.
- ❖ Advancement in 5G and 6G technologies, and adoption of OpenRAN network technology in India

### Question:

**Q.1 With reference to Initiative on Critical and Emerging Technologies (iCET), consider the following statements:**

1. Its aim is to expand partnership in critical and emerging technologies between India and the US.
2. It will help India to find an alternative to the dependence on Russian military technology.

Select the correct statement using the code given below:

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

**Answer: C**

**Notes:**

- ❖ Explanation –
- ❖ Statement 1 and 2 are correct. iCET's aim is to expand partnership in critical and emerging technologies between India and the US. It will help India to find an alternative to the dependence on Russian military technology because India is looking produce more weapons at home and in partnership with the western countries.





**A PUSH FOR MORE CLIMATE ACTION**

# A push for more climate action

International climate change litigation reached a milestone on May 21, 2024 when the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS) delivered an advisory opinion (the Opinion) sought by the Commission of Small Island States on Climate Change and International Law (COSIS) concerning the specific obligations of the Parties to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) on climate change mitigation. The COSIS is an association of small island states set up in 2021. The ITLOS advisory opinion generates more attention in the context of the advisory proceedings to be decided by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in the near future on the "Obligations of States in respect of Climate Change".

**New elements**

The ITLOS took a radical step by accepting the request of COSIS with the aim of identifying the obligations of states that are not parties to the COSIS Agreement. That is when the request touches principally upon the obligations of states that are not party to the agreement authorising the request. The Tribunal, in its Opinion, laid down very clearly that under Article 194(1) of the UNCLOS, "the Parties have specific obligations to take all necessary measures to prevent, reduce and control marine pollution from anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions (GHG)".

The Opinion has also removed doubts whether the release of carbon dioxide by man, directly or indirectly, into the marine environment qualifies to be in the category of substance or energy having potential deleterious effects on the marine environment within the meaning of Article 1(1)(4) of the UNCLOS.

The ITLOS clarification on carbon as pollutant bolsters the position taken by the scientific community that the surface ocean absorbs around a quarter of the CO<sub>2</sub> emitted into the atmosphere, at increasingly rapid rates, resulting



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The advisory opinion by the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea is a high point in international climate change litigation

in the progressive acidification of sea water. Other greenhouse gases (GHGs) do not have this effect. In addition, the sea also absorbs over 90% of the excess heat ('energy') generated by global warming, resulting in higher ocean temperatures and, ultimately, in sea-level rise.

**Understanding its legal importance**

The principle of prevention or no harm rule which governs state behaviour towards regulation of shared natural resources (between two or more states) so as to avoid transboundary harm of a significant nature in another state has its two main limitations when the rule is sought to be applied to regulate climate crisis: its anchoring in a bilateral frame, and, the principle is not helped due to obstacles relating to attribution and standing in establishing a breach of obligation to climate change.

The Opinion, by siding with the principle for climate change (which is a collective interest as compared to bilateral ones), adds a new chapter. The necessary measures are to be decided in the light of the best available science and the relevant international rules and standards contained in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Paris Climate Change Agreement 2015, and also 1.5° Celsius rather than 2° C as the global average temperature goal.

The Opinion describes the obligation relating to the taking of necessary measures as due diligence obligation but the standard of it in the eyes of the Opinion is stringent one given the high risks of serious and irreversible harm to the marine environment from such emissions. But the Parties' obligations in terms of taking all necessary measures to reduce anthropogenic GHG emissions within Article 194 (1) are very general in nature. This can be interpreted to mean that neither the release of all pollution (GHGs) must be prevented nor that anthropogenic GHG emissions must cease

immediately or even eventually.

Measures that gradually reduce marine pollution by lowering GHG emissions over a period of time would be sufficient. Still, the identification of a general obligation by the ITLOS underlines one thing – that states do not have unfettered discretion in addressing climate change. Mere identification of general obligation will be of symbolic value and is inadequate.

Christina Voigt, an expert on environmental law, says as "most states are already implementing some action on climate change mitigation, the crux of the matter is not the existence of an obligation to mitigate climate change, but rather its content, in particular the standard of conduct applicable in relation to this obligation". The example to substantiate this point is the decision of the Netherlands Supreme Court, in *Urgenda Foundation vs The Netherlands*, where the court held that to comply with a general mitigation obligation inferred from the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) in light of the standard of due care, the Netherlands had to reduce GHG emissions to 25% below 1990 levels by 2020 (as opposed to the government's insufficient existing pledge of 17%).

The court identified this target largely by relying on scientific estimates and the least cost method of achieving the 2° C temperature goal in the Paris Agreement. The Opinion has not been able to identify the methodology concretely that can be used to assess a state's requisite level of mitigation action – as in the *Urgenda* judgment. Moreover, the necessary measures to be taken, as per the Opinion, are to be subject to the means available to the states and their capabilities, which means that the principle of equity cannot be ignored in deciding the requisite level of mitigation action, if any.

Though advisory opinion lacks legal force, it does not necessarily affect its political pull as authoritative judicial pronouncements.

Points To Note-

ITLOS

COSIS

UNCLOS

International courts and climate change



### International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS):

- ❖ Established by the UNCLOS, the international Tribunal for the Law of the Sea is an independent judicial body that adjudicates disputes arising out of the convention (UNCLOS).



- ❖ ITLOS is a multi-governmental establishment formed by the mandate of the 3rd UN Conference on the Law of the Sea.
- ❖ It was created by the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea which was signed at Jamaica on the 10th of December 1982.
- ❖ The convention became effective on 16th November 1994

### International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS) Functions:

- ❖ The Convention establishes a comprehensive legal framework to regulate all ocean space, its uses and resources.
- ❖ It works to safeguard the various marine resources and protect the different species
- ❖ It also has provisions related to territorial occupancies of seas, continental shelf, exclusive economic zones (EEZ)
- ❖ It also helps to promote and leverage scientific research for the development and transfer of marine technology.

### Members of the international Tribunal for the Law of the Sea:

- ❖ The Tribunal is composed of 21 independent members elected by secret ballot by the States Parties to the Convention.
- ❖ ITLOS Members are elected for a period of 9 years and may be re-elected.
- ❖ Every 3 years the term of one-third of the members expires
- ❖ Also, there shall be more than 3 members from each geographical group on established by the und Nations Genemi Asumibly
- ❖ No two members may be nationors of the name State and in the Tribunal os o whose in is necessary to assure the representation of the principal legal systems at the world and equitable geographical distribution



### International Courts and Climate Change:

- ❖ Vanuatu - an island country in the South Pacific Ocean, recently led a draft UN resolution requesting an advisory opinion from the International Court of Justice (ICJ) on state's legal obligation for climate action.
- ❖ The article however put emphasis to exercise caution while seeking such advisory opinions as these may turn out to be doubleedged swords depending on the kind of verdict delivered.

### More about the Draft Resolution:

- ❖ The draft resolution requests the ICJ's opinion on legal obligations of states to ensure the protection of the climate system based on a number of global treaties and principles of international law.
  - ☛ These include the UN Charter, the UN climate convention, the Paris Agreement and the UN Convention of the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).
- ❖ It also asks ICJ to lay out legal consequences for the countries that "by their acts and omission" have caused significant harm to the climate system.
  - ☛ The resolution thus aims to establish the legal avenues for climate justice for present and future generations.
- ❖ It was prepared with a broad coalition of 16 countries, including Angola, Bangladesh, Germany, Mozambique, New Zealand, Portugal and Vietnam and a number of small island states.

### What was the Need for Draft Resolution?

- ❖ Vanuatu is facing sea level rise and increasingly powerful cyclones that periodically cripple its economy and threaten its population of just over 3 lakh people.
  - ☛ As emissions rise and the world remains off track to meet its climate goals, overheating is threatening the archipelago's ecology, livelihoods and infrastructure.
- ❖ Earlier this year, in its updated 2030 climate plan, Vanuatu set out \$178 million worth of measures it wants to take to respond to loss and damage.
  - ☛ For example, including affordable micro-insurance, essential healthcare, relocation of communities away from threats.
- ❖ The international community has fallen short of delivering concrete solutions and acting together on the issue of climate change.
  - ☛ For instance, the recently concluded 27th UN Climate Change Conference (COP-27) failed to resolve differences of nations on critical issues such as reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

### Jurisdiction of ICJ:

- ❖ The ICJ has two types of jurisdictions as follows:
- ❖ Contentious jurisdiction: It refers to resolving legal disputes between consenting states and decisions given under it are binding.
- ❖ Advisory jurisdiction: Under this, the UN General Assembly (UNGA), the Security Council (SC) and other specialized bodies of the organization can request the ICJ for an opinion on a legal question.
  - ☛ The ICJ's advisory opinions are non-binding, yet they carry normative weight and clarify international law on a relevant issue.





- ❖ Thus, ICJ's advisory opinion on climate change could be a powerful way of driving countries globally to take stronger climate action.
  - ☛ It will also strengthen vulnerable countries' position in international negotiations and come handy in climate-related litigation at the national level.

#### What are the Other Advisory Options Sought?

- ❖ The Commission of Small Island States on Climate Change and International Law (COSIS), comprising countries like Antigua and Barbuda and Tuvalu, has also sought the advisory opinion of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS).
  - ☛ ITLOS is a Hamburg-based self-governing judicial body established by the 1982 UNCLOS.
- ❖ ITLOS has been requested to determine the specific obligations of the countries under UNCLOS about preventing, controlling, and reducing pollution of the marine environment.
  - ☛ This is because the challenges of ocean warming, sea level rise and ocean acidification are all linked to the marine environment.

#### Conclusion:

- ❖ As part of a multi-pronged approach to save planet, the role of international courts should be welcomed. Developed countries and groupings like the G-20 should also support these laudable initiatives of the SID states.
- ❖ Environment and climate sustainability being important themes of G-20, India, as its president, should take a lead given its relentless emphasis on LiFE (developing environment-friendly lifestyle) campaign.





**ON SPECIAL CATEGORY STATUS FOR ANDHRA**

# On Special Category Status for Andhra

Why is the demand for special status for Andhra Pradesh back in the political limelight? Why did Chandrababu Naidu, back in 2018, settle for a special package? Is the State qualified to be granted special status? What did the 14th Finance Commission state?

**EXPLAINER**

**Sumit Bhattacharjee**

**The story so far:**

The Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation Act, 2014, which bifurcated unified Andhra Pradesh into two States, was notified on March 1, 2014 and had come into force from June 2, 2014. While the Act had specified many things, there was no mention of giving a Special Category Status (SCS) to Andhra Pradesh. Now with the completion of the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, the demand for SCS to Andhra is again gaining attention.

**What is the history?**

Shortly after the reorganisation, in a debate in the Rajya Sabha on February 20, 2014, the then Prime Minister Manmohan Singh had said that "SCS would be extended to the State of Andhra Pradesh for a period of five years". This was appreciated and seconded by Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader M. Venkaiah Naidu.

But after Prime Minister Narendra Modi took over the reins of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA)-led Union Government, the SCS was put on the back burner. When it was raised in both Houses by the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) and opposition MPs, it was said that Andhra Pradesh does not qualify for the SCS, firstly as per norms and secondly due to the dissolution of the Planning Commission in August 2014. The 14th Finance Commission had equated SCS with the general category status and had annulled SCS for new States.

**Why does AP not qualify for the SCS?**

The concept of SCS was first brought into existence through the recommendations made by the Fifth Finance Commission in 1969. It was done to benefit a few States through special grants from the Centre. The focus was on States that had socio-economic issues and geographical



**In progress:** Ongoing construction of the bridge at Amaravathi, Andhra Pradesh on June 10. RAO G.N.

disadvantages, such as hilly States. Five factors stood as the qualifying benchmark for the granting of SCS – States that comprise a majority tribal population, low density of population, hilly States and close to international borders. States that have socio-economic and industrial backwardness, and lack of adequate State finances. At present, the States that have the SCS include Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim, Tripura, and Uttarakhand. It was debated that Andhra Pradesh, based on the above strictures, does not

qualify for the SCS and that the Finance Commission had already annulled it. However, the Centre offered Andhra Pradesh a special package (SP).

**What did the special package entail?**

Having been convinced that the SCS was ruled out by the Union Government, the first Chief Minister of residual Andhra Pradesh (2014-2019), Chandrababu Naidu of the TDP, who was then part of the NDA alliance, agreed for the SP. The SP included the recognition of the Polavaram irrigation project as a national project with full funding from the Union Government, tax concessions and special

assistance. Though Mr. Naidu accepted the SP, it was termed as a betrayal by the Opposition parties, including the Yuva Jana Samika Rythu Congress Party (YSRCP).

In 2018, Mr. Naidu walked out of the alliance and also moved a no-confidence motion which failed. Political analysts say that Mr. Naidu had succumbed to pressure from the opposition, who were building up a strong campaign against the TDP, based on the SCS issue. His volte-face from SCS to SP was being publicised as a 'betrayal of the State'.

**Does Andhra still qualify for SCS?**

N.K. Singh, Chairman of the 15th Finance Commission, in his book *Portraits of Power*, stated that the 14th Finance Commission had never said that SCS cannot be given and that it was up to the Union Government to take a call.

The 14th Finance Commission instead of SCS had increased tax devolution to the State to 42% and also introduced revenue deficit grants for States facing a revenue gap, which Andhra had already received.

SCS, which has an arrangement of funding States in a ratio of 90:10 (90% the Centre and 10% the State), may not be a ruled out chapter for Andhra Pradesh. The Union Government can take a call and refer it to the 16th Finance Commission and the NITI Aayog, and can get back to the arrangement.

**Why is SCS in the limelight again?**

Ever since the bifurcation of the State, it has been facing a revenue deficit. Additionally, the debts of the State have shot up enormously. Most of its projects and development have come to a standstill and on top of that the building for a new greenfield capital at Amaravati is pending and needs funding.

People are hopeful that since the TDP is again part of the NDA alliance which does not have a clear majority in the Centre, and is dependent on the MPs from Andhra Pradesh, it would be the right time to press for the SCS, for the overall development of the State.

**THE GIST**

The concept of SCS was first brought into existence through the recommendations made by the Fifth Finance Commission in 1969. It was done to benefit a few States through special grants from the Centre.

Five factors stood as the qualifying benchmark for the granting of SCS – States that comprise a majority tribal population, low density of population, hilly States and close to international borders, States that have socio-economic and industrial backwardness, and lack of adequate State finances.

Ever since the bifurcation of unified Andhra Pradesh, the residual State has been facing a revenue deficit. Additionally, the debts of the State have shot up enormously.

- ❖ Special Category Status(SCS) is a classification given by Centre to assist in the development of those states that face geographical and socio-economic disadvantage.
- ❖ History of Introduction and Aim- SCS mechanism was introduced in 1969, on the recommendation of the Fifth Finance Commission of India. It was based on the Gadgil formula. The mechanism of SCS was developed to assist certain states in their development and fast-tracking growth, if they faced historical economic or geographical disadvantages.

**Factors considered for according SCS (According to Gadgil Formula):**

- a. Difficult and hilly terrain
- b. Low population density and/ or a sizable tribal population
- c. Strategic location along borders
- d. Economic and infrastructural backwardness
- e. Non-viable nature of state finances





- ❖ The 14th Finance Commission has done away with the 'special category status' for states, except for the Northeastern and three hill states. According to the 14th Finance Commission, the resource gap of the states should be filled by increasing the devolution of tax to 42% from the existing 32%.
- ❖ This includes the Assam, Nagaland, Himachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Sikkim, Tripura, Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, Uttarakhand and Telangana. What are the reasons behind Andhra Pradesh's and Bihar's Demand for Special Category Status?

#### **Andhra Pradesh Special Category Status Demand:**

1. Bifurcation of Andhra Pradesh to create Telangana- Andhra Pradesh had to suffer a loss of revenue and the loss of developed capital around Hyderabad due to AP Reorganisation Act, 2014.
2. Increased debt level of Andhra Pradesh- The debt of the residuary state of Andhra Pradesh, which was Rs 97,000 crore at the time of bifurcation, has reached Rs 2,58,928 crore by 2018-19.
3. Reduced Post-devolution revenue deficit- The 14th Finance Commission had estimated that post-devolution revenue deficit for AP for the five-year period 2015-20 would be Rs 22,113 crore. However, the actual post-devolution revenue deficit has been Rs 66,362 crore.
4. Unjust and inequitable Distribution- The successor state of Andhra Pradesh has inherited nearly 59% of the population, debt, and liabilities of the original state, but only 47% of its revenues.

#### **Bihar Special Category Status Demand:**

1. Economic Backwardness- About one-third of Bihar's population lives in poverty. The state has a low per-capita GDP of around ₹54,000, marking it as one of India's poorest states.
2. Impact of Bifurcation- Bihar's bifurcation led to industrial decline, with many industries moving to Jharkhand, resulting in fewer employment opportunities.
3. Natural Challenges- The state faces regular floods in the north and droughts in the south, impacting agriculture and livelihoods.
4. Need for Welfare Funding- Bihar's Chief Minister highlighted the need for SCS to secure approximately ₹2.5 lakh crore for various welfare measures over five years.
5. Lack of Resources- Bihar argues its lack of natural resources and continuous water supply for irrigation contributes to its underdevelopment.

#### **What are the benefits associated with the special category status?**

- ❖ Special category status provides significant financial and tax benefits to the recipient states from the central government. This aims to aid their development, to overcome their geographical and socio-economic disadvantages.
1. Higher grants-in-aid- Higher grant-in-aid provided to the state government of the special category states from the Centre. For ex- Per capita grants to Special Category States is Rs 5,573 crore per year, whereas Andhra Pradesh (AP) which is pushing for SCS receives only Rs 3,428 crore.
  2. Enhanced Central Funding- In the Special Category States, the Central government funds 90% of the Centrally sponsored scheme, compared to 70% in non-SCS states. The unspent money in a financial year does not lapse and is carried forward.



3. Tax Exemptions and incentives- The SCS states enjoy special industrial incentives such as Income-tax exemptions, custom duty waivers, reduced excise duty, corporate tax exemption for a certain period, concessions and exemptions relating to GST, and lower state and central taxes.
4. Improvement of employment opportunities- Special incentives to the special category states provide resources which are vital for the rapid industrialization of the primarily agrarian state. It also leads to improved employment opportunities for the youth and overall development of the state.
5. Investment in infrastructure- Granting of SCS encourages investments in specialty hospitals, five-star hotels, manufacturing industries, high-value service industries such as IT, and premier institutions of higher education and research.

#### What are the Concerns with Special State Status?

- ❖ The 14th finance commission had opposed the continuation of special state status on the following grounds.
1. Increased Burden on Central Finances- Provision of additional funds, tax concessions and other benefits to SCS states puts a significant financial burden on the central government's budget. This also leads to concerns about fiscal sustainability.
  2. Inequitable Distribution of Resources- Allocation of Special Category Status to some states while denying it to other states can lead to an inequitable distribution of resources.
  3. Increase in Dependency and Reduction of Accountability- There are concerns that the SCS states may become overly dependent on central assistance. This also reduces their incentive to mobilize their own resources and hinder the development of a self-sustaining economy.
  4. Permanent continuation of temporary SCS Status- Some states which had received SCS only for a temporary period have continued to enjoy it for decades. There is lack of periodic impact assessment and re-evaluation.
  5. Lack of Constitutional Basis- SCS lacks a clear constitutional or legal foundation. It is granted by the administrative decision of the National Development Council or the central government, making it vulnerable to changes.

#### What Should be the Way Forward?

1. Reassessment Criteria for SCS- There is a need to revisit the criteria for SCS. It can be expanded to consider the revenue deficit.
2. Alternative Funding Models: Following the Raghuram Rajan Committee's suggestion, we must explore new funding models based on a multi-dimensional index.
3. Increased Devolution by Finance Commission- There must be an increase in the devolution by the finance commission to address the poverty alleviation, focused aid for disaster management and agriculture, and policies that attract new industries and create job opportunities.

#### Question:

**Q.2 Special Category Status is the right of Andhra Pradesh that no one could deny.' Do you agree with the statement? What are the criteria involved and assistance received by Special Category Status (SCS) States? (GS-2) (250w/15m)**





**UNDERSTAND THE INDIAN OCEAN AND YOU'LL UNDERSTAND MUCH ABOUT EARTH**

# Understand the Indian Ocean and you'll understand much about earth

The Indian Ocean is among the fastest warming oceans, with dire consequences for heatwaves and rain over the subcontinent. Marine heatwaves are also a concern now for corals and fisheries. The Indian Ocean is also playing a role in how well the Pacific Ocean can control global warming

Raghu Murtugudde

**W**orld Oceans Day was on June 8. For the occasion, let's take in the wonders of the smallest of the three major oceans right in our front yard. The Indian Ocean has been getting a lot of attention recently for its rapid warming and the outsized influence it continues to have on its peers.

As it happens, the Indian Ocean is critical today to understand the earth's overall ocean response to increasing greenhouse gases and global warming.

**Home to the deadliest storms**

The Indian Ocean is famous for its dramatic monsoon winds and the bountiful rain it brings to the Indian subcontinent. The winds and the rain have evoked prose and poetry for millennia. More than a billion people depend on the moisture it supplies to quench their thirst, to replenish fisheries, and to produce food and energy.

The warm summer months are characterised by the rapid warming of the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal as well as the southern tropical Indian Ocean. The winds begin to turn around from a land-to-ocean direction during winter to an ocean-to-land direction as summer commences.

The scorching heat on the subcontinent also comes with the threat of pre-monsoon cyclones. The North Indian Ocean doesn't generate as many cyclones as the Pacific or the Atlantic Oceans, but the numbers and their rapid intensification have been growing ominously. The relatively small North Indian Ocean ensures cyclones don't grow into the sort of hot powerhouses hurricanes and typhoons can be. But also the developing countries along the rim of South Asia, East Africa, and West Asia are sitting ducks in their path. Thus, cyclones tend to be the deadliest storms by mortality.

The warm ocean supports fisheries, big and small, and fish such as anchovies, mackerel, sardines, and tuna. Dolphins are a tourist attraction; some whales have also been sighted in the Arabian Sea. Tourists also flock to popular beaches and the corals from Lakshadweep to the Andaman-Nicobar Islands, all the way down to Reunion Island off Madagascar.

**A unique configuration**

The northern boundary of the Indian Ocean is closed off by the Asian landmass, minus tiny connections to the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea.

The southern Indian Ocean is also different from the other oceans thanks to two oceanic tunnels that connect it to the Pacific and the Southern Oceans.

Through the first tunnel – the Indonesian seas – the Pacific Ocean dumps up to 20 million cubic metres of water every second into the eastern Indian Ocean. These waters also transport a substantial amount of heat. They stay mostly in the top 500 m and move through the Indian Ocean towards Madagascar. The Pacific waters, called the Indonesian Throughflow, wander around the Indian Ocean and affect the circulation, temperature, and salinities.

The other tunnel connects the Indian Ocean to the Southern Ocean with two-way traffic. Colder, saltier and thus



The Indian Ocean is famous for its dramatic monsoon winds and the bountiful rain it brings to the Indian subcontinent. JOHN CAMERON/UNSPASH

heavier waters flow into the Indian Ocean from the Southern Ocean below a depth of about 1 km. Due to the closed northern boundary, the waters slowly mix upward, and with the waters coming from the Pacific. The waters in the top 1 km eventually exit to the south.

The mix of heat and water masses in the Indian Ocean confer some mighty abilities to affect the uptake of heat in the world's oceans.

**The little ocean that could**

The Indian Ocean is a warm bathtub despite the underwater tunnels because it is heavily influenced by the Pacific Ocean through an atmospheric bridge as well. The atmospheric circulation, dominated by a massive centre of rainfall over the Maritime Continent, creates mostly sinking air over the Indian Ocean. The atmosphere also warms the Indian Ocean year after year.

The Indian Ocean thus gains heat that it must get rid of via the waters moving south. With global warming, the Pacific has been dumping some additional heat in the Indian Ocean. The cold water coming in from the Southern Ocean is also not as cold as before.

The net result: the Indian Ocean is among the fastest warming oceans, with dire consequences for heat waves and extreme rain over the Indian subcontinent. Marine heat waves are also a major concern now for corals and fisheries.

The warming Indian Ocean is affecting the wind circulation in a way that's also affecting the amount of heat the Pacific is able to take up. The Pacific Ocean takes



Despite being the smallest tropical ocean, the Indian Ocean's influence has become impossible to understate. Oceans take up over 90% of the additional heat more greenhouse gases in the atmosphere are trapping

up heat in its cold, eastern tropical region, and this is crucial to determine the rate of global warming. The Indian Ocean is thus playing a role in how well the Pacific can control global warming.

The other region where the ocean can draw down the heat and lock it away in deeper waters is in the North Atlantic. This is where surface waters become so dense that they sink like a rock into the depths. If the sinking of the water slows due to global warming – which seems to be the case – the heat doesn't sink away from the surface as quickly as it used to.

Indeed, researchers have found that the Indian Ocean's warming is actually helping accelerate the sinking of the heat, thus modulating global warming directly!

This is why, despite being the smallest tropical ocean, the Indian Ocean's influence has become impossible to understate. Recall that the oceans take up over 90% of the additional heat more greenhouse gases in the atmosphere are trapping.

**A hand in human evolution**  
If this isn't wondrous enough, the reconfiguration of the Indian Ocean may

have played a role in the evolution of our ancestors as well.

Until about three million years ago, Australia and New Guinea were well south of the equator and the Indian Ocean was directly connected to the Pacific Ocean. And this Indo-Pacific Ocean was in a warm state known as a 'permanent El Niño' – a state that was associated with permanently plentiful rain and lush green forests over East Africa. Today, this part of Africa is arid.

The northward drift of Australia and New Guinea, which is still ongoing, separated the Indian and the Pacific Oceans around three million years ago. As a result, the eastern Pacific Ocean became cooler and the El Niño went from a permanent state to an episodic one, like the ones we've been seeing.

This transition aridified East Africa, turning its rainforests into grasslands and savannahs. Researchers have also hypothesised that these changes forced our ancestors, such as chimpanzees and gorillas, to move farther and run faster. In the rainforests, they had an abundance of food and hiding places and didn't have to.

If these hypotheses are borne out, it's possible the transformation also had a hand in the birth of bipedal movement – the ability to walk on two legs – which is much more efficient than moving on all four across larger distances.

The storied history of our neighbourhood ocean is thus a worthy thing to celebrate – and study – on World Oceans Day.

(The author is a Professor, IIT Bombay, and Emeritus Professor, University of Maryland.)



