

# Topics

- Health and economics ,
- WHO FCTC
- Strategic autonomy in foreign policy
- Finance commission and state finance
- Foreign tribunals
- Mains



By saurabh Pandey



THE HINDU

**Target Mains -2024/25 -**

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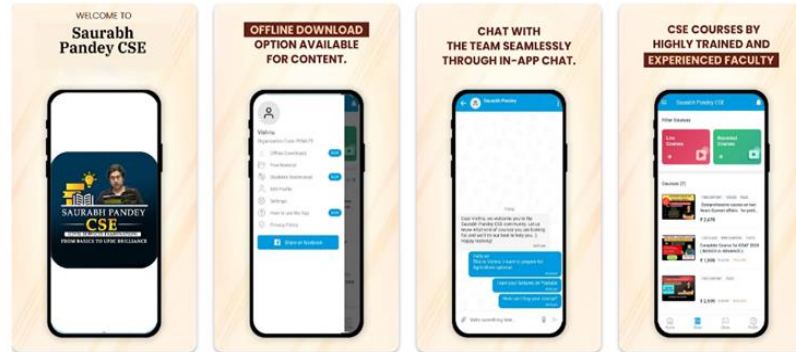
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# Vasco da Gama's toxic legacy is now a 'pandemic' that kills 8 million globally

Tobacco has profound and multifaceted effects on the body, contributing to a range of issues, including cancers, respiratory diseases, cardiovascular problems, and conditions such as diabetes, infertility, a weakened immune system, and complications in pregnancy. Its consumption can also lead to severe addiction due to the presence of nicotine

C. Aravinda

**W**hat does the voyage of Vasco da Gama have to do with a commodity that is the cause of much grief and ill health across the world? The answer, in a word, is tobacco, but the story is as follows: on July 8, 1497, began the historic voyage of Vasco da Gama. This journey reshaped global maritime routes and left an indelible mark on trade and culture. Among the myriad exchanges catalysed by this era of exploration was the introduction and dissemination of tobacco, a commodity that has since impacted societies profoundly and multifacetedly.

Tobacco has a pernicious effect on the human body, contributing to a range of health issues including various cancers (lung, mouth, throat, oesophagus, pancreas, and bladder), respiratory diseases (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, emphysema, chronic bronchitis), cardiovascular problems (heart disease, stroke, hypertension), and other conditions such as diabetes, infertility, a weakened immune system, and complications in pregnancy). Its consumption can lead to severe addiction due to the presence of nicotine, a highly addictive substance. The pervasive nature of tobacco consumption and its severe health consequences make it a global public health crisis that requires urgent and coordinated action.

Despite its "Pan Indian" use, tobacco, originally cultivated by Native Americans, was brought to Europe in the 16th Century and, soon after, introduced to South Asia by European traders and colonisers. The Portuguese, followed by the Dutch and the British, were instrumental in spreading tobacco use. Tobacco quickly embedded itself into the cultural and social fabric of South Asian societies. Yet, it is essential to remember that smoking was alien to Indian ethos and culture. Despite the linguistic diversity in India, with as many as five linguistic families (thousands of languages), none of the Indian languages have a native or original word for "tobacco". The exception in Dravidian languages is due to the functionality – or descriptions-related coinage – for "tobacco", and there is no literary evidence about the use of tobacco before the European arrival.

Surprisingly, the economic dimensions of the tobacco menace have not been subject to debate since the colonial era. There has not been a riotous enough critique of the British Raj for tobacco. Indeed, it isn't the Kolbinator that should symbolise European exploitation, but the countless lives lost to smoking that should be the true emblem of colonial greed. The introduction of tobacco in India left a lasting legacy of addiction and disease.



An exhibit on the impact of tobacco consumption set by a hospital in Mumbai. P. B. HINDRABAI NATIONAL HOSPITAL

**Ethical and revenue considerations**  
Tobacco, being a drought-tolerant, hardy crop, is economically significant to the underprivileged. Today, tobacco accounts for 2% of India's agri-exports and employs more than 45 million people. The industry is a major source of revenue through taxation and exports exceeding ₹22000 crore. However, this benefit comes at a tremendous human and financial cost. The total economic cost of smoking in India, including health expenditure and productivity losses, amounts to ₹8.82 trillion annually.

Tobacco use is responsible for over 1.2 million deaths in India each year, with smoking-related diseases accounting for the majority. Tobacco is a significant contributor to the country's cancer burden, with 27% of all cancers in India attributable to tobacco use. This aspect of colonial legacy – where tobacco was a tool of economic gain for colonial powers but a source of health devastation for local populations – deserves more attention in historical discourse.

**Stacking up priorities**  
The contemporary landscape of tobacco research in India is marked by a conflict of priorities between two premier institutions: the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) and the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR). The ICMR advocates for the elimination of tobacco to mitigate its public health impact, and investing in research and policies aimed at reducing tobacco use. In stark contrast, the ICAR focuses on increasing tobacco crop yields and employing modern genetic techniques to enhance the productivity of tobacco farmers. ICAE's Central Tobacco Research Institute (CTRI) in Rajahmundry is at the forefront of this research. The



Vasco da Gama's journey reshaped global maritime routes and left an indelible mark on trade and culture. Among the myriad exchanges catalysed by this era was the introduction of tobacco

organisation interest is to enhance tobacco productivity and commerce while ensuring the sustainability and quality of tobacco-related industry in India, creating a significant policy and ethical dilemma.

However, the law is quite clear. Article 21 of the Indian Constitution guarantees the right to life and personal liberty, including the right to health, as an integral part of this fundamental right. Furthermore, the Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSP) under Articles 39(e), 39(f), 41, 42, and 47 mandate the state to work towards improving public health, ensuring social justice, and raising the standard of living. These provisions compel the state to prioritise the health and well-being of its citizens over the economic benefits of tobacco farming.

**Will CRISPR make a difference?**  
In scientific innovation, gene editing techniques (CRISPR clustered regularly interspaced short palindromic repeats) presents a potential solution to the tobacco epidemic. Researchers are using CRISPR to develop genetically-modified tobacco plants that are less harmful or harmless to consumers. This technology could potentially alter the nicotine content and other harmful substances in tobacco leaves, providing a safer alternative for consumers.

Recent studies have shown promise in using CRISPR to knock out specific genes in tobacco plants, thereby reducing nicotine content significantly. For example, targeting the transcription factor genes *EPF159* and *EPF189* resulted in an ultra-low nicotine phenotype, with nicotine levels reaching only 2.5% of wild-type levels. Knocking out the *Q72* gene drastically reduced nicotine production but caused severe growth inhibition, making it unsuitable for agricultural use.

Additionally, targeting all six members of the *BHL* gene family reduced foliar nicotine levels by 94%. These developments highlight the potential for CRISPR to create tobacco lines with dramatically reduced nicotine content. However, further characterisation is needed to ensure these modifications do not negatively impact other important agronomic traits. The collaboration between ICMR and ICAR is crucial. By working together, these institutions can develop tobacco crops that reduce health risks while maintaining economic viability.

**Surrogate advertising**  
The tobacco industry has shown remarkable resilience and ingenuity in circumventing regulations to curb its influence. Despite stringent advertising bans under the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC), the tobacco lobby has employed surrogate advertising to promote its products. This involves using brand names on non-tobacco products, sponsoring events, and creating tobacco-related imagery in media and entertainment. Such tactics undermine public health efforts and perpetuate tobacco consumption.

There is a popular misconception that "epidemic" and "pandemic" apply exclusively to infectious diseases. However, tobacco consumption perfectly fits the existing definition of a pandemic. A pandemic is characterised by its widespread prevalence, severe consequences, and the ability to affect a significant portion of the population across multiple countries. Tobacco use meets these criteria, causing over 8 million deaths worldwide annually and affecting millions more through chronic diseases and disabilities.

The scale and severity of tobacco-related diseases, coupled with its pervasive presence across the globe, justify the classification of tobacco consumption as a pandemic.

This perspective could galvanise international efforts and resources to combat tobacco use more effectively, treating it with the urgency and harshness that have been reserved for infectious disease outbreaks.

*(Dr. C. Aravinda is an academic and public health professional. aravinindakim@iitgohatmail.com)*

## THE GIST

Originally cultivated by Native Americans, tobacco, was introduced to South Asia by European traders. They were instrumental in spreading tobacco use in the region though smoking was alien to Indian ethos and culture

The cultivation of tobacco yields over ₹22000 crore. However, this comes at a tremendous human and financial cost. The total economic cost of smoking in India, including health expenditures and productivity losses, amounts to ₹8.82 trillion annually

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# Health vs economics



- **the law is quite clear. Article 21 of the Indian Constitution guarantees the right to life and personal liberty, including the right to health, as an integral part of this fundamental right.**
- **Furthermore, the Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSP) under Articles 39(e), 39(f), 41, 42, and 47 mandate the state to work towards improving public health, ensuring social justice, and raising the standard of living.**
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# CRISPR AND TOBACCO



- **In scientific innovation, gene editing technique CRISPR (clustered regularly interspaced short palindromic repeats) presents a potential solution to the tobacco epidemic.**
- **Researchers are using CRISPR to develop genetically-modified tobacco plants that are less harmful or harmless.**
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- **For example, targeting the transcription factor genes ERF199 and ERF189 resulted in an ultra-low-nicotine phenotype,**
- **Knocking out the QPT2 gene drastically reduced nicotine production but caused severe growth inhibition, making it unsuitable for agricultural use.**



## **(WHO FCTC)**

- **The WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC) is the first international treaty negotiated under the auspices of WHO.**
- **It was adopted by the World Health Assembly on 21 May 2003 and entered into force on 27 February 2005.**
- **It has since become one of the most rapidly and widely embraced treaties in United Nations history.**
- **The WHO FCTC was developed in response to the globalization of the tobacco epidemic and is an evidence-based treaty that reaffirms the right of all people to the highest standard of health.**
- **The Convention represents a milestone for the promotion of public health and provides new legal dimensions for international health cooperation**

# India and a case for strategic autonomy



On July 11, 2024, two days after Prime Minister Narendra Modi had concluded his first visit to Moscow since Russia invaded Ukraine on February 24, 2022, Eric Garcetti, the United States Ambassador to India, said, "In times of conflict there is no such thing as strategic autonomy; we will, in crisis moments, need to know each other." When Mr. Modi was in Russia, on the eve of a North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) summit in Washington, the Joe Biden administration had expressed its "concerns" publicly. "We have expressed those [concerns] privately, directly to the Indian government and continue to do so," a U.S. State Department spokesperson said.

President Joe Biden's National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan joined the debate on July 13 by telling MSNBC that "a bet on Russia as a long-term, reliable partner is not a good bet... Russia would side with China over India any day of the week". There were reports in the U.S. media that U.S. officials had asked New Delhi to postpone Mr. Modi's Moscow visit as the NATO summit was to begin on July 9, but India decided to go ahead with the plan, which "disturbed" the Biden administration.

## Stress points, historical overview

While the overall trajectory of the strategic partnership between India and the U.S. seems steady, stress points have appeared in the relationship in recent years. Of these, the most consequential was India's refusal to toe the western line *vis-à-vis* Russia on the Ukraine war. While the U.S. and its allies imposed economic sanctions on Russia and supplied weapons worth billions of dollars to Ukraine to fight the invading troops, India maintained its strategic partnership with Moscow, expanded its energy cooperation and refused to condemn the invasion at international fora, even as it called for bringing the war to an end and show respect towards the territorial sovereignty and integrity of all countries. For India, this was a neutral position, but in the West, this was seen as economic support for the Russian President Vladimir "Putin's war". This caused wrinkles in the India-U.S. partnership, which has widened over the past two and a half years. The public comments by top U.S. officials earlier this month were the sharpest manifestation of the persisting stress points.

Ambassador Garcetti's comment that strategic autonomy is meaningless during the time of crises goes against the very premise of strategic autonomy. A simple definition of the concept is that countries should be able to make decisions that best serve their national interests, irrespective of the pulls and pressures from other parties. There are two elements in this concept. The first is the inherent conviction that a nation is capable of taking decisions that serve its interests. The second is that the nation should have the will



Stanly Johny

and the resources to take those decisions even in the face of high pressure. So, if India is not able to take autonomous foreign policy decisions during the times of "conflict" and "crisis moments", as Mr. Garcetti has said, it is not exercising its strategic autonomy.

All Indian governments since Independence have followed strategic autonomy in one form or the other, whether it is called non-alignment, multi-alignment, multi-directional foreign policy or strategic autonomy. And they did not follow this as a dogma but as a foreign policy approach to the country's interests in a choppy international system. A conventional understanding about India's foreign policy was that it was too idealistic in the initial years to understand the currents of power politics. But non-alignment and Asian solidarity, as envisaged by Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and others, helped India, a newly decolonised republic that was born into a bipolar global order, mobilise voices in the Third World and stay out of both blocs and pursue its interests and those of the newly decolonised countries. This gave both a moral footing and pragmatic levers to India's foreign policy.

India initially stayed equidistant to both the capitalist and the communist blocs. But after the U.S. formed new treaty alliances in Asia (Pakistan became a member of both the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization, or SEATO and the Central Treaty Organization, or CENTO) and China moved closer towards the U.S. after breaking up with the Soviet Union, India began building stronger ties with Moscow, but without forfeiting its strategic autonomy. And when the Soviet Union and the communist bloc collapsed by 1991, India chose greater integration with the global economy and closer strategic partnership with the West.

## Great power rivalry

From India's point of view, the global order is again changing. The U.S. remains the world's most powerful country but the world order is no longer unipolar. China, already the world's second largest economy, is rising as a strong competitor to America's global primacy. Russia is challenging the western security architecture in Europe, militarily. In West Asia, a shadow war between Israel, an American ally, and Iran, a close Russian strategic partner, is heating up. In an anarchic order, India wants to strike a balance between great powers without joining any alliance system. And for this, maintaining its strategic autonomy is essential.

The Russia policy is a case in point. While energy ties with Russia are largely opportunistic and driven by cheap prices (India's crude imports from Russia jumped from \$2.4 billion in 2021-22 to \$46.5 billion in 2023-24), the defence partnership is structural. Russia is the source of over 40% of India's defence imports, and 86% of the Indian military's equipment is of Russian

origin. This cannot be undone overnight. Russia is also an important partner in continental Asia where India works with Eurasian powers for economic progress, connectivity and tackling security challenges.

To be sure, Russia's deepening ties with China alter the essence of India's historical partnership with Moscow. But it is also an opportunity to recast the India-Russian partnership as a more equal bilateral partnership – during the Cold War it was heavily lopsided – where both sides would be mindful of each other's sensitivities. India would not like to see Russia, cut off from the West, going completely into the Chinese embrace, and Moscow would like to have multiple options rather than putting all its eggs in one basket of the "Middle Kingdom". If India were part of any alliance systems, such as Germany, for example, which had to silently accept the destruction of the Nord Stream pipeline which it part owns, India would not have the strategic space to pursue its partnership with Russia, while staying a closer partner of the West. Here, autonomy plays a major part.

## Positive-sum game

The U.S. need not see this as an unfriendly foreign policy choice. India is not a disruptive, revisionist power. It supports a multilateral global order, and that is because it wants the international system to be more representative in line with the geopolitical realities of the present. The world is already multipolar, economically, but a similar transition has not taken place in its power dynamics. India wants to improve the system where its voice, and that of the Global South, would be heard with greater interest. For New Delhi, strategic autonomy does not call for isolationism. It calls for greater engagement with different power centres rooted in informed national interest. Theorists of strategic autonomy do not look at foreign policy as a zero-sum game, where one party gains something at the expense of others. For them, it is a positive-sum game, where everyone gains. For example, India's energy trade with Moscow made sure that Russian crude kept flowing into the market, helping steady global oil prices. Its close cooperation with Russia can also act as a speed breaker in Moscow's quasi-alliance with China, which the West sees as the only "revisionist" power that has the capability to rewrite the existing global order.

Unfortunately, India's partners in the West, who are agitated over New Delhi's Russia ties and its emphasis on strategic autonomy, do not appreciate the bigger picture. This is the unipolar mentality – you are either with us or against us. This approach was not quite successful even during the unipolar era, as the two-decade-long war against terror would testify. How is it going to work, post-unipolarity?

India's partners in the West must understand that New Delhi wants the international system to be more representative in line with geopolitical realities



# Strategic autonomy in foreign policy

- A simple definition of the concept is that countries should be able to make decisions that best serve their national interests, irrespective of the pulls and pressures from other parties.
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- **and the resources to take those decisions even in the face of high pressure.**
- **So, if India is not able to take autonomous foreign policy decisions during the times of “conflict” and “crisis moments”, as Mr. Garcetti has said, it is not exercising its strategic autonomy.**
- **All Indian governments since Independence have followed strategic autonomy in one form or the other, whether it is called non-alignment, multi-alignment, multi-directional foreign policy or strategic autonomy**

- **From India's point of view, the global order is again changing.**
- **The U.S. remains the world's most powerful country but the world order is no longer unipolar. China, already the world's second largest economy, is rising as a strong competitor to America's global primacy.**
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- **In an anarchic order, India wants to strike a balance between great powers without joining any alliance system.**
- **And for this, maintaining its strategic autonomy is essential.**
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- **Russia is also an important partner in continental Asia where India works with Eurasian powers for economic progress, connectivity and tackling security challenges.**
- **To be sure, Russia's deepening ties with China alter the essence of India's historical partnership with Moscow.**
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# What is the role of the Finance Commission?



How is horizontal devolution of taxes between States decided? For how long do the recommendations of the Commission last? Why do States complain that the Centre does not give them an ample share of the tax revenue? From where do States get their funds?

## EXPLAINER

**Prashanth Perumal**

### The story so far:

The sixteenth Finance Commission headed by former Niti Aayog Vice-Chairman Arvind Panagariya has begun its work by inviting suggestions from the public on the mandate set for it by the Centre. The latest Finance Commission, which consists of five members including the chairman, was constituted in December last year and is expected to submit its recommendations by October, 2025. Its recommendations will be valid for five years starting from April 1, 2026.

### What is the Finance Commission?

The Finance Commission is a constitutional body that recommends how tax revenues collected by the Central government should be distributed among the Centre and various States in the country. The Centre, however, is not legally bound to implement the suggestions made by the Finance Commission. The Commission is reconstituted typically every five years and usually takes a couple of years to make its recommendations to the Centre.

### How does the Commission decide?

The Finance Commission decides what proportion of the Centre's net tax revenue goes to the States overall (vertical devolution) and how this share for the States is distributed among various States (horizontal devolution). The horizontal devolution of funds between States is usually decided based on a formula created by the Commission that takes into account a State's population, fertility level, income level, geography, etc. The vertical devolution of funds, however, is not based on any such objective formula. Nevertheless, the last few Finance Commissions have recommended greater vertical devolution of tax revenues to States. The 13th, 14th and 15th Finance



GETTY IMAGES

Commissions recommended that the Centre share 32%, 42% and 41% of funds, respectively, from the divisible pool with States. It should be noted that the Centre may also aid States through additional grants for certain schemes that are jointly funded by the Centre and the States.

The 16th Financial Commission is also expected to recommend ways to augment the revenues of local bodies such as panchayats and municipalities. It should be noted that, as of 2015, only about 3% of public spending in India happened at the local body level, as compared to other countries such as China where over half of public spending happened at the level of the local bodies.

### Why is there friction between the Centre and States?

The Centre and the States have been at loggerheads over the issue of sharing tax

revenues for a while now. The Centre collects major taxes such as the income tax, the corporate tax, and the goods and services tax (GST) while the States primarily rely on taxes collected from the sale of goods such as liquor and fuels that are beyond the ambit of GST. The States, however, are responsible for the delivery of many services to citizens, including education, healthcare and the police. This has led to complaints that the Centre has reduced the power of the States to collect taxes and that it does not give enough funds to the States to match with the scale of their responsibilities.

### What are the disagreements?

The States and Centre often disagree on what percentage of the total tax proceeds should go to the States and about the actual delivery of these funds.

States argue that they should receive

more funds than what is recommended by the Finance Commission as they have greater responsibilities to fulfil than the Centre. They also point out that the Centre does not even share the amount of funds recommended by the Finance Commissions, which they believe is already too low. For example, according to analysts, the Centre has devolved an average of only 38% of funds from the divisible pool to the States under the current Fifteenth Finance Commission as against the Commission's actual recommendation of 41%.

Further, States have complaints about what portion of the Centre's overall tax revenues should be considered as part of the divisible pool out of which the States are funded. It is believed that cesses and surcharges, which do not come under the divisible pool and hence not shared with the States, can constitute as much as 28% of the Centre's overall tax revenues in some years, causing significant revenue loss for States. So, the increased devolution of funds from the divisible pool, as recommended by successive Finance Commissions, may be offset by rising cess and surcharge collections. In fact, it is estimated that if cesses and surcharges that go to the Centre are also taken into account, the share of States in the Centre's overall tax revenues may fall to as low as 32% under the 15th Finance Commission.

More developed States such as Karnataka and Tamil Nadu have also complained that they receive less money from the Centre than what they contribute as taxes. Tamil Nadu, for example, received only 29 paise for each rupee that the State contributed to the Centre's exchequer while Bihar gets more than ₹7 for each rupee it contributes. In other words, it is argued that more developed States with better governance are being penalised by the Centre to help States with poor governance. Some critics also believe that the Finance Commission, whose members are appointed by the Centre, may not be fully independent and immune from political influence.

## THE GIST

▼ The sixteenth Finance Commission headed by former Niti Aayog Vice-Chairman Arvind Panagariya has begun its work by inviting suggestions from the public on the mandate set for it by the Centre.

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# Finance commission and state finance

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- **The Finance Commission decides what proportion of the Centre's net tax revenue goes to the States overall (vertical devolution) and how this share for the States is distributed among various States (horizontal devolution).**
- **The horizontal devolution of funds between States is usually decided based on a formula created by the Commission that takes into account a State's population, fertility level, income level, geography, etc.**

- **The vertical devolution of funds, however, is not based on any such objective formula. Nevertheless, the last few Finance Commissions have recommended greater vertical devolution of tax revenues to States.**
- **The 13th, 14th and 15th Finance Commissions recommended that the Centre share 32%, 42% and 41% of funds, respectively, from the divisible pool with States.**
- **It should be noted that the Centre may also aid States through additional grants for certain schemes that are jointly funded by the Centre and the States.**

- **The 16th Financial Commission is also expected to recommend ways to augment the revenues of local bodies such as panchayats and municipalities.**
- **It should be noted that, as of 2015, only about 3% of public spending in India happened at the local body level, as compared to other countries such as China where over half of public spending happened at the level of the local bodies**



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## THE GIST

On July 5, the Assam government asked the Border wing of the State's police not to forward cases of non-Muslims who entered India illegally before 2014 to the Foreigners Tribunals (FTs).

According to the 1964 order, an FT has the powers of a civil court in certain matters such as summoning and enforcing the attendance of any person and examining him or her on oath and requiring the production of any document.

The Assam Police Border Organisation was established as a part of the State police's Special Branch in 1962 under the Prevention of Infiltration of Pakistani (PIP) scheme.

# How do Assam's Foreigners Tribunals function?

How do these tribunals decide whether a person is Indian or not? Does the Border police play a role?

## Rahul Karmakar

### The story so far:

On July 5, the Assam government asked the Border wing of the State's police not to forward cases of non-Muslims who entered India illegally before 2014 to the Foreigners Tribunals (FTs). This was in keeping with the Citizenship (Amendment) Act of 2019 that provides a citizenship application window for non-Muslims – Hindus, Sikhs, Christians, Parsis, Jains, and Buddhists – who allegedly fled persecution in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, and Pakistan.

### How did the FTs come about?

The FTs are quasi-judicial bodies formed through the Foreigners (Tribunals) Order of 1964 under Section 3 of the Foreigners' Act of 1946, to let local authorities in a State refer a person suspected to be a foreigner to tribunals. The FTs are currently exclusive to Assam as cases of "illegal immigrants" are dealt with

according to the Foreigners' Act in other States. Each FT is headed by a member drawn from judges, advocates, and civil servants with judicial experience. The Ministry of Home Affairs told Parliament in 2021 that there are 300 FTs in Assam but the website of the State's Home and Political Department says that only 100 FTs are currently functioning, beginning with 11 established before the Illegal Migrants (Determination by Tribunals) Act of 1983 was scrapped in 2005.

### What is the role of the Border police?

The Assam Police Border Organisation was established as a part of the State police's Special Branch in 1962 under the Prevention of Infiltration of Pakistani (PIP) scheme. The organisation was made an independent wing in 1974 and is now headed by the Special Director General of Police (Border). After the liberation war of Bangladesh, the PIP scheme was renamed Prevention of Infiltration of Foreigners or PIF scheme. The Centre has sanctioned the posts of 3,153 out of the 4,037

personnel of this wing under the PIF scheme while 884 are sanctioned by the Assam government. The members of this wing are tasked with detecting and deporting illegal foreigners, patrolling the India-Bangladesh border with the Border Security Force, maintaining a second line of defence to check the entry of illegal foreigners, and monitoring people "settled in riverine and char (sandbar) areas". This is apart from referring people of suspicious citizenship to the FTs to decide whether they are Indian or not based on documents. Cases of 'D' or doubtful voters can also be referred to an FT by the Election Commission of India and people excluded from the complete draft of the National Register of Citizens (NRC) released in August 2019 can appeal to the FT concerned to prove their citizenship. Some 19.06 lakh out of 3.3 crore applicants were excluded from the NRC, whose process has been on hold.

### How does an FT function?

According to the 1964 order, an FT has

the powers of a civil court in certain matters such as summoning and enforcing the attendance of any person and examining him or her on oath and requiring the production of any document. A tribunal is required to serve a notice in English or the official language of the State to a person alleged to be a foreigner within 10 days of receiving the reference from the authority concerned. Such a person has 10 days to reply to the notice and another 10 days to produce evidence in support of his or her case. An FT has to dispose of a case within 60 days of reference. If the person fails to provide any proof of citizenship, the FT can send him or her to a detention centre, now called transit camp, for deportation later.

### Why are some FT orders under fire?

On July 11, the Supreme Court set aside an FT order declaring Rahim Ali, a deceased farmer, a foreigner 12 years ago. The apex court called the order a "grave miscarriage of justice" while pointing out that the Foreigners' Act does not empower the authorities to pick people at random and demand that they prove their citizenship. In September 2018, an FT member in central Assam's Morigaon observed that foreigners' cases have assumed the form of an industry where everyone involved is "trying to mint money by any means". The member also noted that notices are "hung up on some trees or electric pole" without the suspected non-citizens unaware of such a case against them.

## How did the FTs come about?

- The FTs are quasi-judicial bodies formed through the Foreigners (Tribunals) Order of 1964 under Section 3 of the Foreigners' Act of 1946, to let local authorities in a State refer a person suspected to be a foreigner to tribunals.
- The FTs are currently exclusive to Assam as cases of “illegal immigrants” are dealt with according to the Foreigners' Act in other States.
- Each FT is headed by a member drawn from judges, advocates, and civil

## How does an FT function?

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- **Such a person has 10 days to reply to the notice and another 10 days to produce evidence in support of his or her case.**
- **An FT has to dispose of a case within 60 days of reference. If the person fails to provide any proof of citizenship, the FT can send him or her to a detention centre, now called transit camp, for deportation later**

## *Frozen feast*



**Cooling off:** A tamarin monkey eats frozen fruits to cool off at the Bioparco di Roma zoo during a heat wave in Rome, Italy on Thursday. AFP

# Tamarins Monkey



- The tamarins are squirrel-sized New World monkeys from the family Callitrichidae in the genus *Saguinus*.
- They are the first offshoot in the Callitrichidae tree, and therefore are the sister group of a clade formed by the lion tamarins, Goeldi's monkeys and marmosets

- Tamarin species vary considerably in appearance, ranging from nearly all black through mixtures of black, brown and white. **Mustache-like** facial hairs are typical for many species.
- Tamarins range from southern **Central America** through central **South America**, where they are found in northwestern **Colombia**, the **Amazon basin**, and **the Guianas**.







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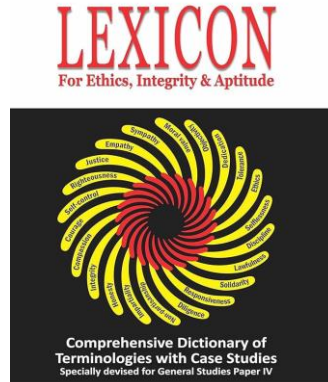
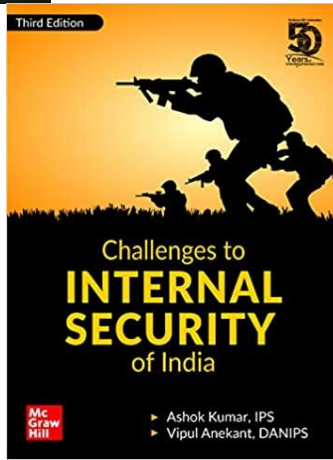
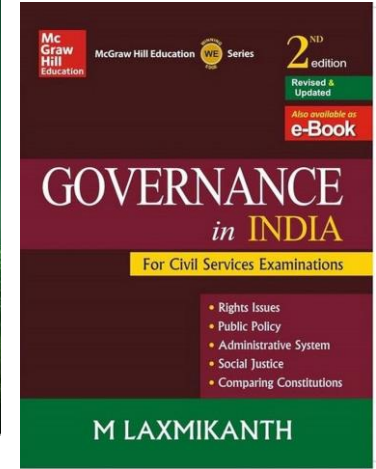
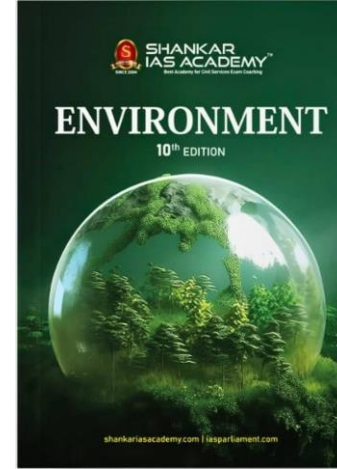
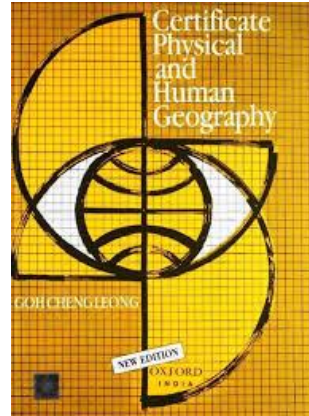
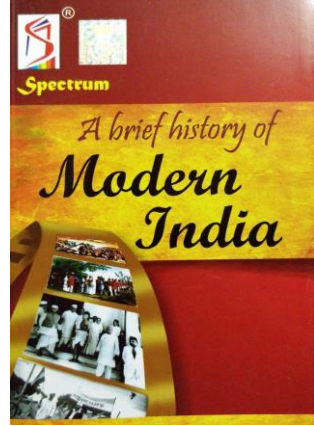
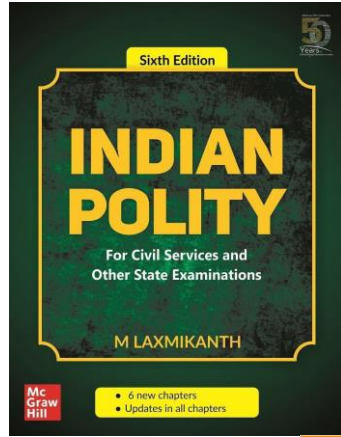
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