

DAILY PT POINTERS

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The Hindu-GS2(IR)Page12

Why has Trump called the Panama treaty ‘foolish’?

Has transit fees to cross the Panama canal increased? What are the treaties under which the canal was transferred to Panama by the US? How has China responded?

Vaneeta

The story so far:

On December 22, 2024, Donald Trump threatened to take back the Panama canal, calling the transfer treaty “foolish”. He said, “Our Navy and Commerce have been treated in a very unfair and injudicious way...we will demand that the Panama canal be returned to us, in full, and without question.” Panama’s President José Raúl Mulino rejected Trump’s threat, and said, “I want to express precisely that every square metre of the Panama canal and its adjacent area belongs to Panama, and will continue to

(Panama Canal Authority). In 2023, Lakes Gatun and Alhajuela experienced severe drought affecting the shipping and navigation of the canal as it relies on these reservoirs to operate its locks. Therefore, the ACP reduced the number of slots for crossing ships by 36%. This led to the increase in transit fees. The second cause of worry has been the increased Chinese presence in the Panama canal. In 2017, Panama became the first Latin American country to sign a Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) agreement, and ever since then, Chinese investment has increased significantly. Hutchison Ports PPC, a subsidiary of a Hong Kong-based company, operates two ports near the

80-kilometre canal connecting the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, reducing cost, time and distance for international shipping. The canal is crucial for the global supply chain, and 6% of maritime world trade goes through it. The canal also symbolises U.S.’s technological prowess and economic power. It opened in 1914 after the U.S. finished construction, and was controlled by the U.S. until December 31, 1999.

The canal was handed over to Panama in 1999 under the Torrijos-Carter Treaties. The first, called the Panama Canal Treaty, cancelled the Panama Canal Zone and turned the canal over to the Panamanians on December 31, 1999. Under the second

What has been Panama’s response?

Panama’s President José Raúl Mulino has rejected Mr. Trump’s accusations. He addressed the accusations by defending the transit rates and clarifying the concerns about external influence over canal operations. He stated that the transit rates are set according to international standards and decided by a procedure. He denied any involvement of external powers such as China or the European community while emphasising the importance of sovereignty for Panamanians. He responded to Mr. Trump’s accusation of Chinese soldiers operating the canal, saying, “There is not a single Chinese soldier in the canal, and on the other hand, there will not be”.

What next?

The concerns over fee hikes and operations logistics will likely be discussed diplomatically, despite Mr. Trump’s threats. While the U.S. might attempt to influence Panama and pressure the latter with renegotiations, Panama will look for international support to reaffirm its sovereignty. China has also responded to the accusations. Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning

THE GIST



The first and major reason for the U.S. President-elect’s upset is the high transit fees applied on U.S. vessels by the ACP (Panama Canal Authority).



Panama’s President José Raúl Mulino rejected Trump’s accusation. He stated that the transit rates are set according to international standards and decided by a procedure.



China’s Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said that the Panama canal was a great creation for the Panamanian people and a neutral passageway.

- Donald Trump threatened to take back the Panama canal, calling the transfer treaty “foolish
- The Panama canal is an artificial 80-kilometre canal connecting the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, reducing cost, time and distance for international shipping. The canal is crucial for the global supply chain, and 6% of maritime world trade goes through it. The canal also symbolises U.S.’s technological prowess and economic power. It opened in 1914 after the U.S. finished construction, and was controlled by the U.S. until December 31, 1999.
- The canal was handed over to Panama in 1999 under the Torrijos-Carter Treaties. The first, called the Panama Canal Treaty, cancelled the Panama Canal Zone and turned the canal over to the Panamanians on December 31, 1999. Under the second, the Permanent Neutrality Treaty, the canal was declared neutral and open to vessels of all nations. Under this treaty, the U.S. has the right to defend the neutrality of the canal and have priority passage in military emergencies.

The Hindu –GS3(Agriculture)-Page 16

Experts on GM crop panels to declare conflict of interest

Ministry of Environment amends rules governing selection of experts to the Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee; it calls for details of professional affiliations in past 10 years to be declared

Jacob Koshy
NEW DELHI

The Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change has amended the



the crop to a future Bench. Two judges ruled differently on whether the Centre was right in according approval to GM mustard. Among the directives

The Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change has amended the rules governing the selection of experts to the Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee (GEAC), the apex technical body regulating genetically modified (GM) seeds in India.

Under the new rules, an “expert member” ought to disclose their “interest” that could conflict with their duties. The expert is also expected to take all steps necessary to ensure that any conflict of interest does not affect any decision of the GEAC.

An expert member with any direct or indirect association with a matter being discussed in a meeting of the committee is obliged to disclose this prior to the meeting. Unless specifically requested by the committee, the expert is expected to recuse their selves from the meeting. All selected members would also have to fill out a form detailing their professional affiliations to a decade prior to joining the committee.

Split verdict

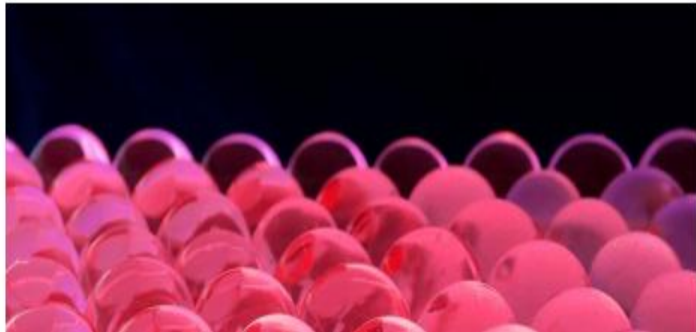
These rules come on the back of a Supreme Court order in July 2023 requiring that the Centre form a national policy on GM crops.

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Indian researchers develop injectable hydrogel for targeted cancer treatment

The Hindu Bureau
GUWAHATI

Researchers from the Indian Institute of Technology-Guwahati (IIT-G) and the Bose Institute, Kolkata have developed an ad-



Researchers from the Indian Institute of Technology-Guwahati (IIT-G) and the Bose Institute, Kolkata have developed an advanced injectable hydrogel for localised cancer treatment. hydrogel serves as a stable reservoir for anti-cancer drugs, releasing it in a controlled manner while sparing healthy cells from harm.

Hydrogels are water-based, polymer networks capable of absorbing and retaining fluids. Their unique structure mimics living tissues, making them suitable for biomedical applications.

The hydrogel, composed of ultra-short peptides is designed to remain insoluble in biological fluids, ensuring it stays localised at the injection site. It responds to elevated levels of glutathione (GSH), a molecule abundant in tumour cells.

Indian Express –GS1(History)-Page 6

Why 20th-century reformer Narayana Guru is caught in a very contemporary row

ARUN JANARDHANAN
CHENNAI, JANUARY 2

THE RULING CPI(M) in Kerala and BJP have locked horns now over Sree Narayana Guru. Under contention are Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan's remarks that the towering social reformer and spiritual leader was not a proponent of "Sanatan Dharma". The BJP which has been trying to make inroads into Kerala has seized on the statement to claim that it again reflects the CPI(M)'s disdain towards Hinduism.

What did Vijayan say?

Speaking at a gathering in connection with the Sivagiri pilgrimage to Narayana Guru's samadhi in Varkala, Kerala, Vijayan said there was an organised effort to portray Guru as the face of Sanatan Dharma. "Guru was never a propagator or practitioner of Sanatan Dharma. Instead, he was someone who tried to reconstruct Sanatan Dharma for the new age," he said. Vijayan added that the essence of Sanatan Dharma lies in its Varnashrama system, which Guru explicitly challenged. "Guru was someone who stood against casteism. His new age dharma was not something defined by religion but

ple, irrespective of their religion. Tying (him) within the framework of Sanatan Dharma would be a sin against Guru."

What has the BJP said?

The BJP accused Vijayan of "disrespecting" Hindu faith, and of exploiting Guru's legacy for political gain. Former Union minister and BJP leader V Muraleedharan said the CM had insulted the entire "Sree Narayaneeya" community, a reference to the OBC Ezhavas, who are traditionally pro-Left and comprise about 23% of Kerala's population.

"Vijayan's comment is a continuation of the remark of DMK leader Uthayamithi Stalin that Sanatan Dharma needs to be



A BJP protest against the CM in Thiruvananthapuram on Thursday.

eradicated," Muraleedharan said. Trying to catch up on the debate, Congress leader V D Satheesan criticised Vijayan for

Sanatan Dharma and Varnashrama, describing the latter as an inflexible set of responsibilities based on the adherent's caste-based social station. Sanatan Dharma, in contrast, the Kerala Leader of the Opposition said, professes "universal welfare" and is "the collective culture of India".

Who was Narayana Guru?

Highly regarded across Kerala for blending spiritualism with a commitment to social reform, Guru's teachings - dating back to the early part of the last century - have come to be known as Advaita Vedanta. It is a doctrine of "non-duality", in which Guru says that the "ultimate reality" or "brahman" is singular and indi-

vidual, or "Atman" is one with this universal essence.

His "ignorance" that creates an illusion of "duality", leading to divisions based on caste, religion and other superficial identities, Guru said. His simple, but revolutionary, proclamation was "One Caste, One Religion, One God for Man", and he encouraged throwing open of consecrated temples to all castes.

Why is he relevant?

For the Ezhavas, he is a revered figure, with the community's main outfit, Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam, carrying political heft.

For long, the SNDP headed by



portive of the ruling regimes in Kerala. However, his son Thushar Vellappally, the national president of the SNDP's political wing BQJS, backs the BJP. For the CPI(M), which fears it has already lost a significant upper caste Hindu vote to the BJP, this is worrying. The BJP has long been trying to make a base among the Ezhavas, and the CPI(M) started featuring Guru in its campaigns only after the national party began doing so while presenting him as the Guru of Kerala.

What do scholars say?

As the controversy plays out, scholars of Guru's teachings and writings have largely stayed away. He also believes that the ground prepared by Guru paved the way for Communist parties in Kerala.

ated with both Sivagiri and Narayana Gurukula in Varkala. Guru into a figure that fits their template of a mere social reformer. "They want a Periyar," he said, pointing to Guru's blend of spirituality and social reform in action. B Rajeevan, who has written extensively on Guru, said: "Guru was not rejecting Sanatan but capturing it from the majority to make it accessible to the oppressed... Making it compatible for them, to use as a weapon for their resistance, is what Guru did with Sanatan," Rajeevan said.

He also believes that the ground prepared by Guru paved the way for Communist parties in Kerala.

- Highly regarded across Kerala for blending spiritualism with a commitment to social reform, Guru's teachings and philosophy – dating back to the early part of the last century – have come to be known as Advaita Vedanta. It is a doctrine of "non-duality", in which Guru says that the "ultimate reality" or "Brahman" is singular and indivisible, and that the "individual self" or "Atman" is one with this universal essence.
- It is "ignorance" or "Maya" that creates an illusion of "duality", leading to divisions based on caste, religion and other superficial identities, Guru said. His teachings call for individuals to turn inwards, recognise their "divine nature", and embrace "the interconnectedness of all beings".
- His simple, but revolutionary, proclamation was "One Caste, One Religion, One God for Man", and he encouraged throwing open of consecrated temples to all castes.

Indian Express –GS2(Governance)-Page 6

BENGALURU-MYSURU INFRASTRUCTURE CORRIDOR PROJECT

No one can be deprived of property without adequate compensation: SC

Says date of fixing valuation can be shifted to recent one in exceptional cases

ANANTHAKRISHNANG
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 2

THE RIGHT to property is a human right and a constitutional right and no person can be deprived of his or her property without being paid adequate compensation, the Supreme Court ruled Thursday while also holding that in exceptional circumstances of inordinate delay in disbursement of compensation, the date of fixing the valuation can be shifted to a more recent one.

“Right to Property ceased to be a Fundamental Right by the Constitution (Forty-Fourth Amendment) Act, 1978, however, it continues to be a human right in a welfare State, and a constitutional right under Article 300-A of the Constitution. Article 300-A of the Constitution provides that no person shall be deprived of his property save by authority of law.

The State cannot dispossess a citizen of his property except in accordance with the procedure established by law,” a bench of Justices B R Gavai and K V Viswanathan said in its judgement. The decision came on an appeal against the November 22, 2022 judgement of a Division Bench of the Karnataka High Court dismissing the challenge to the judgement of a single judge of the HC on the question of acquisition of land for the Bengaluru-Mysuru Infrastructure Corridor Project in 2003.

On a plea by some of the land owners who said they had not been given compensation, the Special Land Acquisition Officer (SLAO), Bengaluru, by order dated April 22, 2019, decided to postpone the date of Preliminary Notification for acquisition from January 29, 2003 to 2011 and accordingly ordered the rates for that year. An amount of

₹32,69,45,789 was awarded for 11 acre 1.25 guntas of land.

The project proponents challenged this before the HC and a single-judge bench quashed the award and directed that fresh awards be passed in accordance with the law. The Division Bench dismissed the appeal against this following which the land owners moved the SC.

Writing for the SC bench, Justice Gavai said: “We do not find any error in the approach adopted by the learned Single Judge of the High Court in holding that the SLAO could not have shifted the date and it could have been done only by this Court in exercise of powers under Article 32/142 of the Constitution of India or by the High Court under Article 226 of the Constitution of India. However, the learned Single Judge of the High Court instead of relegating the appellants to again go through the rigors of determina-

tion by SLAO, ought to have exercised powers under Article 226 of the Constitution to do complete justice.” The SC accordingly said “it is a fit case...” for exercise of Article 142 of the Constitution to “direct shifting of the date for determination of the market value of the land in question of the appellants”.

The court said that “if the compensation to be awarded at the market value as of the year 2003 is permitted, it would amount to permitting a travesty of justice and making the constitutional provisions under Article 300-A a mockery”.

The SC directed the SLAO to “determine the compensation to be awarded to the appellants herein on the basis of the market value prevailing as on 22nd April 2019. The appellants shall also be entitled to all the statutory benefits as are available to them under the 1894 Land Acquisition Act”.

- The right to property is a human right and a constitutional right and no person can be deprived of his or her property without being paid adequate compensation, the Supreme Court ruled Thursday while also holding that in exceptional circumstances of inordinate delay in disbursement of compensation, the date of fixing the valuation can be shifted to a more recent one.
- “Right to Property ceased to be a Fundamental Right by the Constitution (Forty-Fourth Amendment) Act, 1978, however, it continues to be a human right in a welfare State, and a constitutional right under Article 300-A of the Constitution. Article 300-A of the Constitution provides that no person shall be deprived of his property save by authority of law. The State cannot dispossess a citizen of his property except in accordance with the procedure established by law,”

Indian Express –GS2(Governance)-Page 16

Why Uttarakhand government is promoting the winter Char Dham circuit

AISWARYARAJ
DEHRADUN, DECEMBER 2

THE UTTARAKHAND government on December 8 inaugurated the winter Char Dham circuit, aimed at drawing tourists to the state in the off-season winter months.

Char Dham's winter seats

Nestled in the Garhwal Himalayas in Uttarakhand, are four revered Hindu shrines or dhams — Gangotri, Yamunotri, Kedarnath, and Badrinath — collectively known as Char Dham.

Each year, from May to November, lakhs of pilgrims visit these shrines. According to data from the Government of Uttarakhand, more than 48 lakh pilgrims and 5.4 lakh vehicles visited Char Dham this year, account-

ing for roughly 8.4% of Uttarakhand's annual domestic tourist footfall. The Char Dham Yatra (pilgrimage) thus drives the state's economy.

But during the winter months, heavy snowfall leaves these shrines inaccessible, and their gates are shut. In fact, during the cold months, the presiding deities of these temples are brought to shrines at lower altitudes. Mukhba in Uttarkashi district is the

winter seat of Gangotri Dham; Kharsali, also in Uttarkashi, is the winter seat of Yamunotri Dham; Kedarnath's winter abode is the Omkareshwar temple in Ukhimath in Rudrapur district; and Badrinath's is at Pandukeshwar in Chamoli district.

The winter Char Dham circuit is being promoted by the Uttarakhand government with the aim of drawing pilgrims to these

THE WINTER DHAMS



shrines, and attracting tourist footfall to the state during off-season months. As of December 30, the shrines recorded a footfall of 15,314 pilgrims — with 6,482 pilgrims

visiting the Omkareshwar temple, 5,104 visiting Pandukeshwar, 3,114 visiting Mukhba, and 614 visiting the Kharsali temple.

Changing perceptions

According to the Uttarakhand tourism department, the Char Dham nets the state more than Rs 200 crore daily. However, this inflow is yet to take off during the winter season.

Sachin Kurve, the state's tourism secretary, said the winter Char Dham programme will help rectify this, and change the image of Uttarakhand as just a summer destination.

"Since Char Dham occupies most of the tourism prospects in the state, once the shrines close, people have a perception that winter is not an apt time to visit the state. However, with the launch of winter Char Dham, people can visit lesser-known desti-

nations in the vicinity of the four winter abodes," he said.

"When the entire North India is blanketed by smog in winters, we would like to tap into this crowd as we popularly call it 'sun tourism'. The winter Char Dham will reinvigorate tourism," Kurve added.

Some concerns

Environmentalists and activists say that the yatra needs proper management, and must be promoted keeping sustainability in mind.

"Looking at pilgrimage numbers as records is leading to unnecessary overcrowding, environmental degradation, and commercialisation of the sacred sites. The increased footfall is straining local infrastructure, degrading fragile ecosystems, and disrupting the sanctity of the holy places," Dehradun-based environmentalist Anoop

Nautiyal said.

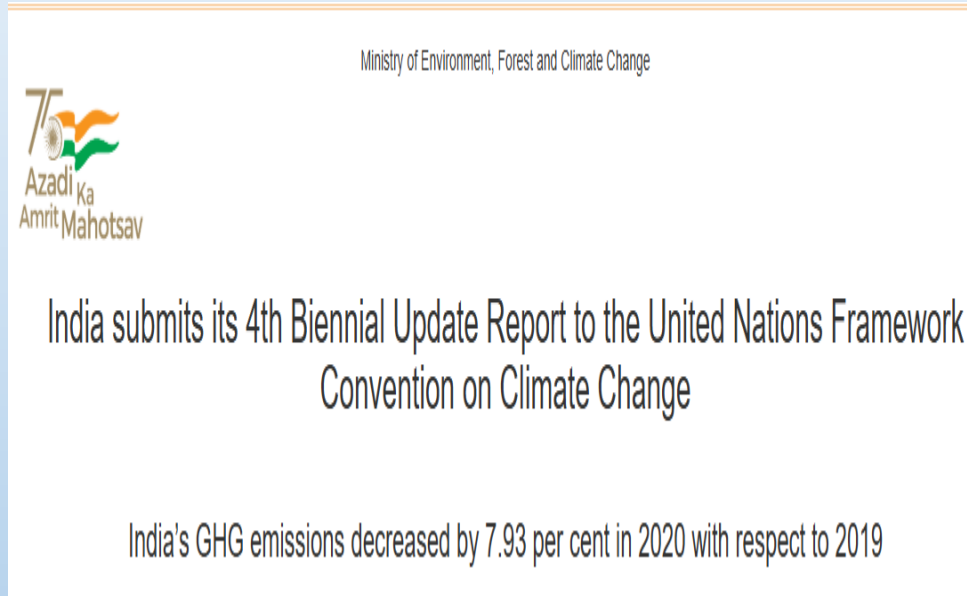
"The Uttarakhand government's decision to initiate the winter Char Dham Yatra is a significant and positive move... [but] this decision comes with concerns that must be addressed with care and foresight. The primary concern is one of safety, security and public health given the terrain and harsh weather in the mountain areas of Uttarakhand," he told *The Indian Express*.

Ravi Chopra, the former chairman of the Supreme Court appointed High Powered Committee (HPC) on the Char Dham project, said that during winter, rare and threatened animals on the high mountain slopes and crests come down for food and water. "In the final report of the HPC to the SC, we had specifically made a mention that the traffic during winters can cause disturbance for wildlife like snow leopard and mountain sheep, as these are shy animals," Chopra said.

- The Uttarakhand government on December 8 inaugurated the winter Char Dham circuit, aimed at drawing tourists to the state in the off-season winter months.
- Here is all you need to know about winter **Char Dham**, why the Uttarakhand government is promoting it, and what are some concerns surrounding it.
- **Winter seats of Char Dham**
- Nestled in the Garhwal Himalayas in Uttarakhand, are four revered Hindu shrines or *dhams* — Gangotri, Yamunotri, Kedarnath, and Badrinath — collectively known as Char Dham.
- Each year, from May to November, lakhs of pilgrims visit these shrines. According to Government of Uttarakhand data, more than 48 lakh pilgrims and 5.4 lakh vehicles visited Char Dham this year, accounting for roughly 8.4 per cent of Uttarakhand's annual domestic tourist footfall.

HEADLINES OF THE DAY

PIB-Environment (GSIII)



- **India's 4th Biennial Update Report (BUR-4)** to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) was submitted on 30th December, 2024. The BUR-4 updates the Third National Communication (TNC) and contains the National Greenhouse Gas (GHG) inventory for the year 2020. The report also embodies information on India's national circumstances, mitigation actions, an analysis of the constraints, gaps, related finance, technology, and capacity-building needs.
- In 2020, India's total GHG emissions decreased by 7.93 per cent with respect to 2019. The emissions, excluding Land Use, Land-Use Change and Forestry (LULUCF), were 2,959 million tonnes of CO₂e and net emissions of 2,437 million tonnes of CO₂e with the inclusion of LULUCF. The energy sector contributed the most to overall emissions (75.66 percent), followed by the agriculture (13.72 percent), Industrial Processes and Product Use (8.06 percent), and Waste (2.56 percent).

HEADLINES OF THE DAY

PIB-Economy(GSIII)

Ministry of Textiles



India's share of global trade in textiles and apparel stands at 3.9%.

Ready Made Garments (RMG) with export of \$ 8,733 Mn has the largest share (41%) in the total exports (\$ 21,358 Mn) followed by Cotton Textiles (33%, \$ 7,082 Mn), Man- Made Textiles (15%, \$ 3,105 Mn) during the period of April-October of FY 2024-25.

Import of textiles and apparel products by India during FY 2023-24 (\$ 8,946 Mn) has decreased by approximately 15% in comparison to FY 2022-23 (\$10,481 Mn).

- India is the 6th largest exporter of Textiles & Apparel in the world in 2023. The share of textile and apparel (T&A) including handicrafts in India's total exports stands at a significant 8.21% in 2023-24. Our country has a share of 3.9% of the global trade in textiles and apparel. Major textile and apparel export destinations for India are USA and EU and with around 47% share in total textile and apparel exports. India is a major textile and apparel exporting country and enjoys trade surplus. Bulk of import takes place for re-export or for industry requirement of raw material.