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TOPICS COVERED

1. Permanent Status (20 April) (GS Paper II: IR)
2. Scientists and a wish list for the incoming government (20 April) (GS Paper III: S&T)
3. The battle over Adivasi identity (20 April) (GS Paper I: Society, History of Modern India)

Permanent Status (20 April) (GS Paper II: IR)

UNSC

- Charged with maintaining international peace and security, making it a central organ of the **United Nations**.
- **Power of Authorization:** The UNSC can authorize **peacekeeping missions, impose sanctions, and even authorize the use of military force** to address threats to peace.

Composition:

- **15 Members:**
 - Five permanent members:
 - China
 - France
 - Russia
 - The United Kingdom
 - The United States
 - **Ten non-permanent members:** Elected by the UN General Assembly for two-year terms, based on regional representation.

Key Functions

- **Investigating Disputes:** Examines situations that could lead to international unrest.
- **Peacekeeping Missions:** Establishes and oversees peacekeeping operations to help maintain or restore peace in conflict zones.
- **Sanctions:** Can impose economic, diplomatic, or military sanctions to enforce its resolutions.
- **Use of Force:** Authorizes the use of force by UN member states to confront aggression or threats to peace.
- **Security Council Reform:** Ongoing discussions about reforming the Council's membership structure and decision-making procedures.

Decision-Making

- **Resolutions:** Decisions on substantive matters require nine affirmative votes.

- **The Veto Power:** Each permanent member holds veto power, meaning a single "no" vote can block a resolution on substantive matters, even if it has majority support.
- The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) considered a resolution to grant Palestine full-member status at the UN.
- This resolution was proposed by **Algeria**.
- It aimed to fulfill the **promise made in 1947 when the UN General Assembly partitioned Palestine into two states: one Jewish and one Arab**.
- Only Israel became a full member of the UN in 1949.
- Palestine has been seeking full membership for years, having received permanent observer status in 2012.
- The resolution was supported by 12 out of 15 UNSC members.
- However, the **United States vetoed the resolution**.
- The U.S. argued that Palestine's membership should be achieved through direct negotiations between the parties.
- The **Israeli Ambassador** criticized the resolution, especially following recent terror attacks by Hamas, stating it would reward crimes.
- The recent events involving Israel's military actions against Palestinians highlight the urgency of recognizing Palestine's rights.
- Despite a UN ceasefire resolution, Israel continued military operations, indicating the need for Palestine to have a stronger voice on the global stage.
- **The US's unwavering support for Israel should be reconsidered**, as it hampers progress towards a fair resolution.
- The argument that Palestine can only achieve statehood through dialogue is flawed, as Israeli leadership has rejected the idea of a Palestinian state.
- **UN membership for Palestine would hold it to the same standards as other nations, promoting accountability and peace.**
- It's unfair to equate all Palestinians with terrorist acts, disregarding the suffering of innocent civilians.
- As a global leader, the US should prioritize building consensus rather than favoring one country, in line with the UN's principle of sovereign equality.

Scientists and a wish list for the incoming government (20 April) (GS Paper III: S&T)

Supporting science and scientists is essential in India's quest to become a major economic powerhouse

- Scientists are closely watching India's ongoing general election.
- They have five key issues they want the new government and elected representatives to address urgently:
 - Scientific research funding.
 - Education and skill development.

- Environmental conservation.
- Public health infrastructure.
- Science-based policy making.

Increase spending

- Increase in the nation's gross domestic expenditure on research and development (R&D) is crucial.
- Current expenditure on R&D is below 0.7% of GDP.
- Government and private players contribute to R&D spending, with private contribution less than 40%.
- Government spending on R&D should increase by **at least 50% year-over-year in the next five years.**
- Aim to reach **nearly 4% of GDP by the end of the incoming government's term.**
- Private sector spending on R&D can increase through avenues like the **Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF).**
- Implementation of detailed plans and establishment of mechanisms for funding assurance are necessary.
- Public Sector Institutions' physical and intellectual infrastructure, including universities and research institutions, need improvement.
- **Modernizing science laboratories** in colleges, universities, and research institutions is essential.
- **Providing better infrastructure for students and scientists** is crucial.
- **Hiring more quality teachers and researchers** is necessary to fill sanctioned positions.
- Doubling the number of teachers and researchers effectively over the next five years is required.
- **A robust and unbiased system** for hiring and promoting talent in science is essential.

Focus on merit

- **Standardizing hiring processes in educational and research institutions** globally is essential.
- Hiring criteria should be based strictly on merit.
- **Competent committees** should be responsible for selecting candidates free from outside influence.
- **Appointment letters should be provided within six months** from the time of application.
- Following established global norms for hiring quality teachers and scientists is crucial.
- Implementing a robust **science grant management system** is necessary.
- The system should reduce red tape in grant submission and ensure timely disbursement of grants and student fellowships.
- Submission of hard copies should be eliminated.
- **Scientists should have autonomy in deciding how to spend their research funds.**
- Departments within science ministries should spend their allocated budgets before the end of each financial year.
- **Flexibility in purchasing** from sources other than the government's e-marketplace is needed.
- Scientists should be **allowed to deviate from general financial rules** when necessary.

- Accountability measures should ensure that funds are spent effectively on necessary research materials.

Ensure freedom

- Scientists seek freedom to express their findings based on evidence without interference.
- A **flourishing start-up ecosystem** is essential for innovation in academia.
- Governments have **promoted innovation and entrepreneurship on Indian campuses**, but true innovation requires full autonomy for scientists.
- Autonomy includes the ability to take leave to form companies, hire scientific staff without excessive paperwork, and spend research funds autonomously.
- Scientists should also have **the freedom to travel to national and international conferences**.
- Accountability measures should ensure the quality of science, products, and knowledge imparted to younger minds.
- India's goal to become the second-largest economy by 2050 requires improving the ease of conducting scientific research.
- The government should **invest in fundamental science and knowledge creation alongside supporting innovation and entrepreneurship**.
- Scientists represent an important electoral block that can influence decision-making for the larger public good.

The battle over Adivasi identity (20 April) (GS Paper I: Society, History of Modern India)

The BJP-led Union government is making several efforts to “reclaim” the lost stories of Adivasi resistance movements in order to build a nationalistic tribal identity. Believing that the Adivasi identity is being appropriated by the Sangh Parivar, the indigenous communities of Rajasthan and Jharkhand are attempting to counter these narratives, reports Abhinay Lakshman

- In the tribal belt of Udaipur, Banswara, and Dungarpur in Rajasthan, signboards are appearing along the dusty highways leading to settlements of the **Bhil Adivasi people**.
- These signboards, often hand-painted and featuring a drawing of the **16th-century tribal icon Rana Punja Bhil**, denote the residents as part of the "Adivasi Parivar" or Adivasi family.
- The "Adivasi Parivar" is described as a larger ideology aimed at awakening the conscience of the people in these settlements.
- The Bharat Adivasi Party, formed by MLA Rajkumar Roat in September 2023, is associated with this movement.
- Amit Kharadi, a 27-year-old worker of the Bharat Adivasi Party, mentions that the residents themselves have started putting up these signboards in recent years, indicating a grassroots involvement in the movement.

Many narratives

- The Bharat Adivasi Party (BAP) emerged from the demand for a separate Bhil State for the Bhil Adivasi people.
- Senior party leader Bhanwarlal Parmar states that the party's mission is to "take control" of the narrative surrounding Adivasi identity.
- The BAP's emergence was partly in response to Adivasi communities facing attacks from the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS)-affiliated **Akhil Bharatiya Vanvasi Kalyan Ashram** and its federated outfits for decades.
- Narratives on Adivasi identity created by the Sangh Parivar are now merging with efforts by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led Union government to reclaim lost stories of Adivasi resistance movements to build a nationalistic Adivasi identity.
- The **National Commission for Scheduled Tribes** is leading this project initiated by the Union government, **aiming to replace existing literature on Adivasi histories, communities, and resistance movements with literature created by indigenous people about their own communities.**
- The BAP views this initiative as an appropriation of their identity by the government.
- Amit Kharadi, aged 27, attributes the concept of "Adivasi Parivar" for securing 40,000 votes in the Rajasthan Assembly elections in November 2023, despite lacking resources.
- Kharadi highlights the importance of preserving the history of the Adivasi community, expressing concern that their footsteps are being erased, and their history denied.
- Signboards declaring "Adivasi Parivars" are being erected across the Bhil belt of southern Rajasthan, reflecting a grassroots movement to reclaim Adivasi identity and history.
- The BJP's campaign for tribal voters utilizes the imagery of leaders like Punja Bhil and Govind Guru to emphasize the government's efforts to recognize and honor forgotten heroes from Adivasi communities.
- Kharadi criticizes the BJP and RSS for offering superficial gestures, referring to them as "lollipops," and questions their continued use of terms like "Vanvasi" and "Janjati" instead of "Adivasi."
- He argues that the **Adivasi identity predates Hinduism** and expresses discontent with the portrayal of figures like Govind Guru in mainstream narratives.

A tool for the BJP

- On November 15, which marks tribal icon Birsa Munda's birth anniversary, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, and Madhya Pradesh were in the midst of Assembly election campaigning.
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi attended an event commemorating Birsa Munda's birth anniversary at Ulihatu, Jharkhand, where he inaugurated government projects and addressed the crowd.
- Modi lamented the lack of recognition given to tribal heroes in India's freedom struggle since Independence and highlighted the opportunity presented by the Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav initiative to share their stories.
- He acknowledged the contributions of "Adivasi warriors" such as **Birsa Munda, Tilka Manjhi, Rani Durgavati, and Alluri Sitarama Raju**, emphasizing their role in defending the land.

- Modi specifically mentioned the sacrifice of Govind Guru at the Mangarh massacre in 1913 in Rajasthan.
- Prior to Modi's remarks, the BJP's Scheduled Tribe Morcha posted a photo of Govind Guru on X (formerly Twitter) along with a description of his struggle, resembling information published by the National Commission of Scheduled Tribes in a book titled Contributions of Tribal Leaders in the Freedom Struggle.
- **The BJP is utilizing a book titled "Contributions of Tribal Leaders in the Freedom Struggle" to establish Adivasis as equal partners in India's polity before British rule.**
- The BJP Scheduled Tribe Morcha posted about Govind Guru, describing him as a leader of a significant movement against British rule in India.
- Govind Guru was depicted wearing a **white kurta with a rudraksh mala (divine beads) around his neck**, symbolizing his leadership role.
- The post highlighted Govind Guru's fight against British rule for 20 years and his desire to establish self-rule, noting the massacre of his Bhil followers at Mangarh during a gathering called "Sump Sabha."
- Scholarly work contradicts the post's portrayal of the Mangarh massacre's date and the reason for Govind Guru's presence at the Mangarh fort.
- According to Vijay Kumar Vashishth's research, the Ruler of the Idar kingdom attempted to arrest Govind Guru to diminish his influence among the Bhils of Banswara, Dungarpur, and Sunth States due to his preaching.
- **Govind Guru's teachings emphasized rationality, shunning superstition, monotheism, and equality with higher Hindu castes, challenging social hierarchies.**
- He advocated a religion involving worship at Dhunis (firepits), wearing rudraksh beads, and carrying iron tongs, with special worship on Sundays.
- Govind Guru encouraged his followers to consider themselves equal to higher Hindu castes, challenging the prevailing social order.
- Jitendra Meena, national spokesperson for BAP and Assistant Professor of History at Delhi University, criticizes the portrayal of Govind Guru wearing a rudraksh in government imagery.
- Meena emphasizes that Govind Guru's battle was against the caste-based social structure imposed by upper caste rulers, not just about wearing rudraksh beads.
- **He argues that Govind Guru fought to break free from social restrictions and create a new social order for the Adivasi community.**
- As an Adivasi researcher and member of academic bodies like the Indian History Congress and the Rajasthan History Congress, Meena is personally committed to countering the government's narratives on Adivasi leaders.
- He is working on analyzing and dissecting the stories promoted by the government about at least a dozen Adivasi leaders.
- Meena highlights the challenges faced by tribal reformers, including economic, social, and cultural pressures from colonizing administrations, landlords, and missionaries.
- He acknowledges that some tribal reformers may have drawn inspiration from each other, but their collective effort aimed at establishing something new for their communities.

Fighting against misrepresentations

- Bandhan Tigga, a Sarna thinker and spiritual leader in Jharkhand, has been opposing the Akhil Bharatiya Vanvasi Kalyan Ashram for around a decade.
- Tigga asserts that Sarna, the distinct religion of Adivasis, predates all other religions, and movements like Birsa Munda's aimed to create a social order exclusive to Adivasi communities.
- He criticizes the Vanvasi Kalyan Ashrams for their campaigns to build Hindu temples in tribal villages, often accompanied by indoctrination.
- Handu Bhagat, a worker of the Kendriya Sarna Samiti in Jharkhand, notes the Sangh Parivar's efforts to convince Adivasis that Hindu and Adivasi rituals are similar, distorting the stories of leaders like Birsa Munda in the process.
- Bhagat points to villages like Sugakatta, where the Vanvasi Kalyan Kendra has built a Hanuman temple, leading to a blurring of distinctions between traditional Adivasi religion and Hinduism.
- Jharkhand-based writer and journalist Jacinta Kerketta highlights that tribal leaders are often portrayed as fighting the British and Mughals, while their struggles against Hindu landlords and moneylenders working for the British are overlooked.
- Jacinta Kerketta highlights the historical context of Adivasi struggles against the British and Hindu landlords, emphasizing the exploitation faced by tribal people from landlords and moneylenders.
- She cites the Hul movement of the Santhal people, led by brothers Sido, Kanhu, Chand, and Bhairav, which originated from dissatisfaction with landlords and moneylenders' oppression.
- The movement began with the killing of a police inspector who was holding a village head hostage, leading to a widespread uprising and subsequent British military intervention resulting in many tribal deaths.
- Ranendra Kumar criticizes the use of the National Commission of Scheduled Tribes' book for studying Adivasi rebellions, considering it introductory and insufficient for understanding the complexities of Adivasi resistance movements.
- Kumar asserts that most Adivasi resistance movements were responses to oppression from upper caste landlords and local rulers collaborating with colonial administrations to maintain social hegemony.
- He stresses the importance of recognizing Adivasi resistance to caste structures and acknowledges that while resistance often targeted the British administration, it also addressed societal injustices perpetuated by landlords and rulers.
- Kerketta emphasizes that tribal people continue to face oppression despite independence, describing them as victims of an oppressive system, regardless of the ruling government.