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Mount Adams

Syllabus: GS-1; Geography- Mapping

Context

➢ Scientists have detected unusual seismic activity around Mount Adams in southern Washington.

Geographical Location:

➢ **Elevation**: 12,281 feet (3,743 meters), making it the second-highest peak in Washington after Mount Rainier and the third-highest in the Cascade Range.
➢ **Coordinates**: Mount Adams lies about 50 kilometers (31 miles) east of Mount St. Helens and 55 kilometers (34 miles) north of Mount Hood, in the eastern part of the Cascade Range.

Geology:

➢ **Volcanic Type**: It is a stratovolcano, which means it is built up by many layers (strata) of hardened lava, tephra, pumice, and volcanic ash.

- ➤ **Last Eruption**: Mount Adams has not erupted in modern times, with its last known eruption estimated to be about 1,000 years ago during the Holocene epoch.
- ➤ **Potential Activity**: Although it is not currently erupting, Mount Adams is considered a potentially active volcano with the possibility of future eruptions.

Features:

- ➤ **Glaciers**: Mount Adams is home to several large glaciers, including the Adams, Klickitat, and Lyman glaciers, which feed into surrounding rivers.
- ➤ **Crater and Lava Flows**: It has a summit crater with lava flows extending down its slopes, and the volcanic field covers an area of over 500 square miles.
- ➤ **Flora and Fauna**: The area around the mountain features lush forests, alpine meadows, and diverse wildlife, including black bears, mountain goats, and various bird species.

Chief Justice of India appointment

Syllabus: GS-2; Supreme Court- Judiciary

Context

- ➤ CJI Chandrachud names Justice Sanjiv Khanna as successor.

About

- ➤ The appointment of the Chief Justice of India (CJI) follows a set of established procedures rooted in the Indian Constitution and conventions.

1. Constitutional Provisions:

- ➤ The appointment of the Chief Justice of India is governed by **Article 124(2)** of the Indian Constitution, which states that the CJI is appointed by the President of India.
- ➤ There are no specific guidelines mentioned in the Constitution about how the senior-most judge of the Supreme Court is to be selected, but over time, conventions have been established.

2. Seniority Principle:

➢ By convention, the **senior-most judge** of the Supreme Court is appointed as the Chief Justice of India. This has been followed for several decades, ensuring a transparent and predictable process.
➢ Seniority is determined based on the date of appointment to the Supreme Court.
➢ The outgoing CJI typically recommends the name of the senior-most judge to the government as his or her successor.

3. Process of Appointment:

➢ **Consultation**: The Law Ministry initiates the process by seeking the recommendation of the incumbent CJI for the next appointment.
➢ **Recommendation**: The CJI then recommends the name of the senior-most judge of the Supreme Court as the next CJI.
➢ **Approval**: The recommendation is sent to the President of India, who appoints the new Chief Justice.
➢ **Oath of Office**: The appointed Chief Justice takes an oath of office, administered by the President of India, before assuming duties.

4. Tenure:

➢ The Chief Justice of India holds office until the age of **65 years**, as specified in Article 124(2) of the Constitution.
➢ Upon reaching the age limit, the CJI retires, and the next senior-most judge is appointed as the successor.

5. Role and Responsibilities:

➢ The Chief Justice of India heads the judiciary and the administrative functions of the Supreme Court.
➢ The CJI is responsible for the allocation of cases and formation of benches in the Supreme Court.
➢ The CJI plays a crucial role in the appointment of judges to the higher judiciary through the **Collegium System**.

6. Collegium System:

➢ The CJI leads the **Collegium**, a five-member body of senior judges responsible for recommending appointments and transfers of judges to the Supreme Court and High Courts.

➤ The Collegium's recommendations are sent to the President of India, who acts based on the recommendations for judicial appointments.

Significant Judgments on Appointment Process:
1. **First Judges Case (1981) – SP Gupta v. Union of India:**

➤ In this case, the Supreme Court interpreted **Article 124(2)** and **Article 217** (regarding appointment of Supreme Court and High Court judges).
➤ **Judgment**: The Court held that the term **"consultation"** with the Chief Justice of India does not mean **"concurrence"** and that the executive has the final say in the appointment of judges. This gave greater power to the executive in judicial appointments.
➤ **Impact**: This judgment allowed the government to play a significant role in appointing judges, reducing the judiciary's autonomy in this regard.

2. **Second Judges Case (1993) – Supreme Court Advocates-on-Record Association v. Union of India**:

➤ The Supreme Court revisited the issue of judicial appointments in this case, primarily because of the dissatisfaction with the First Judges Case.
➤ **Judgment**: It overruled the First Judges Case, holding that the **Chief Justice of India** should have the **"primacy"** in judicial appointments. The court introduced the **Collegium System**, wherein the CJI must consult the two senior-most judges of the Supreme Court for appointments and transfers of judges.
➤ **Impact**: This judgment curtailed the executive's role in judicial appointments, making the judiciary more independent. It established the **Collegium** as the dominant body in appointments.

3. **Third Judges Case (1998) – Presidential Reference on Appointment of Judges**:

➤ In response to doubts about the Collegium system and the extent of the CJI's primacy, the President of India sought the Supreme Court's advisory opinion under **Article 143** of the Constitution.
➤ **Judgment**: The Supreme Court expanded the **Collegium** to include the CJI and **four senior-most judges** of the Supreme Court, instead of just two. It also clarified that the executive could send back the Collegium's recommendations for reconsideration but would have to accept it if re-sent.
➤ **Impact**: This judgment strengthened the Collegium system, providing more clarity on how the consultation process should take place and minimizing executive intervention.

4. Fourth Judges Case (2015) – Supreme Court Advocates-on-Record Association v. Union of India (NJAC Case):

➤ The **National Judicial Appointments Commission (NJAC)** was created by the **99th Constitutional Amendment** and sought to replace the Collegium system with a body where the executive would have greater representation in judicial appointments.

➤ **Judgment**: The Supreme Court struck down the NJAC as **unconstitutional**, declaring that the NJAC undermined the independence of the judiciary. The Court emphasized that the **independence of the judiciary** was part of the **basic structure** of the Constitution, and the executive could not have the final say in judicial appointments.

➤ **Impact**: The Collegium system was restored, reaffirming the primacy of the judiciary in appointments and transfers, and reinforcing judicial independence.

5. Criticism and Reforms Post-NJAC:

➤ Despite restoring the Collegium system in 2015, the Supreme Court acknowledged its flaws in transparency and accountability. Consequently, the judiciary introduced some reforms, such as putting Collegium decisions and recommendations on the Supreme Court's official website to promote transparency.

➤ However, there is ongoing debate about whether further reforms to the appointment system are needed to ensure both transparency and judicial independence.

6. K. Ashok Reddy Case (1994):

➤ This judgment reinforced the principle that the senior-most judge of the Supreme Court is to be appointed as the Chief Justice of India, barring exceptional circumstances. This has since become a strong convention.

Five Eye Alliance

Syllabus: GS-2; International Relations

Context

➤ Canada's Five Eyes partners back probe into Nijjar's killing

About

➢ The **Five Eyes Alliance (FVEY)** is an intelligence-sharing partnership among five Anglophone countries: the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand.

➢ It was established during World War II and has evolved into one of the most comprehensive intelligence-sharing agreements in the world.

Historical Background

➢ **Origin:** The alliance began with the **UKUSA Agreement** in 1946, primarily to share signals intelligence (SIGINT). The agreement originally involved the U.S. and the U.K., but later included Canada (1948), Australia, and New Zealand (1956), forming the Five Eyes.

➢ **World War II Roots:** Cooperation began during WWII when the U.S. and the U.K. collaborated in breaking German and Japanese codes.

Member Countries

1. **United States**
2. **United Kingdom**
3. **Canada**
4. **Australia**
5. **New Zealand**

Primary Focus Areas

➢ **Signals Intelligence (SIGINT):** The core of the alliance's activities involves the interception and sharing of electronic communications.

➢ **Intelligence Sharing:** The five nations share a wide range of intelligence, including communications, cyber activities, and counterterrorism data.

➢ **Cybersecurity and Surveillance:** With the rise of digital threats, the alliance plays a significant role in countering cyberattacks and monitoring global communications for threats.

➢ **Counterterrorism:** Intelligence on global terrorist networks is shared among member nations to enhance collective security.

Key Operations and Mechanisms

- ➢ **ECHELON:** A global surveillance network operated by the Five Eyes to intercept and monitor communications, including phone calls, emails, and satellite transmissions. It has raised privacy concerns due to its global reach.
- ➢ **National Security Agency (NSA):** The U.S. NSA is a major player within the alliance, collaborating with its counterparts: GCHQ (U.K.), CSE (Canada), ASD (Australia), and GCSB (New Zealand).

Relevance in Current Geopolitics

- ➢ **Countering China and Russia:** The Five Eyes have taken a collective stance on issues related to cybersecurity, data protection, and political interference from China and Russia.
- ➢ **Focus on Indo-Pacific Region:** Recently, the alliance has increased focus on the Indo-Pacific, collaborating on security issues in this region.
- ➢ **Huawei Controversy:** The U.S. and other members have expressed concerns over Chinese tech giant Huawei's involvement in 5G infrastructure, citing security risks.
- ➢ **Expansion:** There have been discussions about expanding cooperation to other democratic nations, especially in the context of cybersecurity and global surveillance.

Recent Developments

- ➢ **2020 Statement on China:** The Five Eyes released a joint statement criticizing China's actions in Hong Kong, showing their growing involvement in political issues beyond intelligence.
- ➢ **Increased Cyber Intelligence Sharing:** With the rise of cyber threats, the alliance has deepened collaboration on cybersecurity.

Challenges and Criticism

- ➢ **Privacy Concerns:** Global surveillance programs like ECHELON have raised concerns about the violation of privacy rights.
- ➢ **Trust Issues:** While the alliance has been strong, occasional tensions arise, especially over differing national interests.
- ➢ **Exclusivity:** The alliance excludes non-Anglophone countries, which some view as a limitation in addressing global threats.

Importance for India

- **Strategic Relevance:** India, while not a member, shares intelligence with some Five Eyes nations, especially the U.S. and U.K., to counter terrorism and cyber threats.
- **Potential Collaboration:** As India's strategic ties with the U.S. and other members deepen, there may be potential for more structured intelligence sharing in the future.

Direct Taxes in India

Syllabus: GS-3; Economy

Context

- Direct tax mopup rises 294 percent in a decade.

About

- **Definition:** Direct taxes are taxes levied directly on individuals or organizations, based on their income or wealth. The taxpayer pays these taxes directly to the government.

Key Features:

- **Progressive Taxation:** The tax rate increases as the taxable amount increases, promoting equity.
- **Paid Directly by Taxpayer:** Unlike indirect taxes (like GST), direct taxes are paid by the individual or entity directly to the government.
- **Taxpayer Identification:** Each taxpayer is assigned a Unique Identification Number (PAN) to track tax payments.

Types of Direct Taxes:

1. **Income Tax:**
   o **Levy:** Imposed on the income of individuals, Hindu Undivided Families (HUFs), and companies.
   o **Tax Slabs:** Progressive tax rates based on income levels.

o **Deductions and Exemptions:** Various deductions under Section 80 (like 80C for investments in specified instruments) and exemptions under Section 10.

2. **Corporate Tax:**
   o **Levy:** Charged on the income of corporations.
   o **Rates:** Different rates for domestic and foreign companies. The Finance Act usually announces the rates annually.

3. **Capital Gains Tax:**
   o **Levy:** Tax on profits from the sale of capital assets.
   o **Classification:**
     ▪ **Short-Term Capital Gains (STCG):** Assets held for less than 36 months.
     ▪ **Long-Term Capital Gains (LTCG):** Assets held for more than 36 months, taxed differently, often with exemptions up to a certain limit.

4. **Wealth Tax:**
   o **Levy:** Tax on the net wealth of individuals and HUFs (now abolished as of FY 2015-16).
   o **Applicability:** Previously applied to wealth exceeding a specified threshold.

5. **Securities Transaction Tax (STT):**
   o **Levy:** Charged on the value of securities transactions made on stock exchanges.

Administration:

➢ **Income Tax Department:** Under the Ministry of Finance, it is responsible for the administration and enforcement of income tax laws.

➢ **Assessment and Collection:** Income tax is assessed based on self-assessment and audited by tax authorities.

Water chestnut (Goer)

Syllabus: GS-3; Agriculture

Context

➢ Water chestnut, known as *goer* in Kashmir, is an aquatic vegetable that grows in the Wular Lake, one of the largest freshwater lakes in Asia. The grass-like sedge is in high demand during autumn in Kashmir. For hundreds of families living around the

lake in Bandipora district of northern Kashmir, it's one of the main sources of income in the season.

About

➢ **Scientific Name**: *Trapa natans*
➢ **Common Names**: Water chestnut, Goer (in India)
➢ **Family**: Trapaceae

Description

➢ **Habitat**: Water chestnut is an aquatic plant that thrives in shallow freshwater bodies such as ponds, lakes, and marshes. It is commonly found in Asia, Europe, and North America.
➢ **Morphology**:
  o **Leaves**: Floating leaves are oval to heart-shaped, with a glossy green surface.
  o **Flowers**: The plant produces white to pink flowers, which bloom above the water surface.
  o **Fruit**: The fruit is a hard, nut-like structure that is edible and has a distinctive taste and crunchiness.

Cultivation

➢ **Climate**: Prefers warm climates and is cultivated in areas with sufficient sunlight.
➢ **Soil**: Thrives in nutrient-rich, muddy soil.

- **Propagation**: Grows from seeds and can also propagate vegetatively through runners.

Nutritional Value

- **Edibility**: The water chestnut is valued for its crunchy texture and is often used in various culinary dishes.
- **Nutrients**: Rich in carbohydrates, dietary fiber, vitamins (especially B vitamins), and minerals (like potassium and magnesium).

Economic Importance

- **Culinary Uses**: Commonly used in Asian cuisines, especially in stir-fries, salads, and soups. It is also consumed raw or boiled.
- **Medicinal Uses**: Traditionally used in folk medicine for its supposed health benefits, including anti-inflammatory properties.

Environmental Importance

- **Ecological Role**: Provides habitat for aquatic life and helps in maintaining the ecosystem balance in freshwater bodies.
- **Water Quality**: Contributes to water purification and can help reduce algae growth by competing for nutrients.

Challenges

- **Invasiveness**: In some regions, water chestnut can become invasive, outcompeting native plants and disrupting local ecosystems.
- **Management**: Requires careful management in cultivated areas to prevent overgrowth and maintain ecological balance.