



TM
INDIA 4 IAS

For success in a changing world

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS 30-09-2024

GS-1

1. Taiwan strait

GS-3

2. Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS)
3. Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB)
4. Kasturirangan Committee on Western Ghats
5. Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA)

Taiwan strait

Syllabus: GS-1; Geography-Mapping

Context

- *China On "High Alert" After Japan Warship Sails Through Taiwan Strait*



Geographical Significance

- **Location:** The Taiwan Strait is a body of water separating Taiwan from mainland China. It lies between the East China Sea to the north and the South China Sea to the south.
- **Length & Width:** The strait is approximately 180 km wide at its narrowest point and stretches about 350 km in length.
- **Strategic Importance:** It forms part of the Western Pacific region, connecting major shipping lanes between the Pacific Ocean and the Indian Ocean.

Geopolitical Importance

- **Cross-Strait Relations:** The Taiwan Strait is at the heart of tensions between China and Taiwan. While Taiwan is self-governed, China considers it a breakaway province and has maintained a long-standing claim over it.

- **US Involvement:** *The United States has a policy of strategic ambiguity, wherein it supports Taiwan's defense capabilities through arms sales, without officially recognizing Taiwan as an independent nation.*
The US military also regularly conducts freedom of navigation operations (FONOPs) in the Taiwan Strait, which China views as provocative.
- **Military Drills:** *The Taiwan Strait often witnesses military exercises by both China and Taiwan. China's People's Liberation Army (PLA) conducts large-scale drills near the strait as a demonstration of power.*
Taiwan also reinforces its defense through military training.

Economic & Trade Routes

- *The Taiwan Strait is a crucial maritime route, handling a large portion of global trade, especially for goods coming from Japan, South Korea, and China to Southeast Asia and beyond.*
- *Any disruption in the strait could impact global supply chains, especially in sectors like semiconductors, in which Taiwan is a key player.*

Historical Context

- **First Taiwan Strait Crisis (1954-55):** *Triggered by the Chinese bombardment of islands controlled by Taiwan, it led to US intervention to protect Taiwan.*
- **Second Taiwan Strait Crisis (1958):** *Similar circumstances arose with another round of military hostilities between China and Taiwan.*
- **Recent Tensions:** *Modern tensions continue, particularly as Taiwan strengthens its democratic governance, which China sees as a threat to its sovereignty claims.*
The Chinese government has repeatedly warned against Taiwanese independence and foreign interference.

Environmental Considerations

- *The strait is also home to diverse marine ecosystems, but the increasing militarization and trade activities have raised concerns about marine pollution and potential disruptions to marine life.*

International Law

- *The Taiwan Strait falls under international waters, with the **United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)** ensuring that international ships, including military vessels, have freedom of navigation in the strait.*

Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS)

Syllabus: GS-3; Environmental Concern

Context

- *The Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) has delivered a clear and urgent message to the international community: statehood and sovereignty must not be eroded by climate change, no matter the rising tides.*

About

- *The Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) is a coalition of 39 low-lying and coastal small island countries, primarily from the Caribbean, Pacific, Indian Ocean, and African regions.*
- *It was established in 1990 to advocate for the unique environmental and developmental challenges faced by small island nations, particularly in the context of climate change and sea level rise.*

Objectives

- **Climate Advocacy:** AOSIS actively voices concerns about climate change, calling for stronger global action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and limit global temperature rise to below 1.5°C, in line with the Paris Agreement.
- **Sustainable Development:** The alliance advocates for sustainable development policies that address the vulnerabilities of small island states, including disaster risk reduction, energy access, and ocean preservation.
- **Climate Finance:** AOSIS calls for climate finance and adaptation support from developed nations to help small island states build resilience against climate impacts.

Key Features

- **Vulnerability to Climate Change:** Member states are highly vulnerable to rising sea levels, extreme weather events, and other climate-induced challenges, which threaten their economies, ecosystems, and populations.
- **Global Negotiations:** AOSIS plays a significant role in international climate negotiations, such as the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the Kyoto Protocol, and the Paris Agreement.
- **Loss and Damage:** AOSIS has been a strong advocate for the inclusion of "Loss and Damage" provisions in climate agreements to address the irreversible impacts of climate change on small islands.

Significance

- **Leadership in Global Climate Talks:** AOSIS is a key leader in advocating for the most ambitious climate goals, particularly during annual UN climate conferences (COP meetings).
- **Multilateral Collaboration:** AOSIS collaborates with other international groups such as the Least Developed Countries (LDC) group and the G77 to push for climate justice and equity in global forums.
- **Blue Economy:** The alliance promotes the sustainable use of ocean resources and the blue economy as a critical avenue for the economic development of island nations.

Challenges

- **Limited Resources:** Small island states often have limited financial and technological resources to address the impacts of climate change.
- **Climate-Induced Migration:** Rising sea levels and other environmental stressors may lead to displacement and migration from small island nations.

Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB)

Syllabus: GS-3; Environment and Ecology

Context

- *Nearly half the sanctioned posts in the State Pollution Control Boards (SPCBs) and Pollution Control Committees in Union Territories (PCCs) across the country are lying vacant. While 11 states have over 60% vacancies, Sikkim tops the list with all posts yet to be filled.*
- *The Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) submitted these details in an affidavit to the National Green Tribunal (NGT).*

About

- *Established: September 1974.*
- *Governing Law: It was set up under the Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974.*
- *It was later given additional responsibilities under the Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981.*
- *CPCB functions under the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC).*

Objectives

- *To promote cleanliness of streams and wells, and to control pollution of air and water.*
- *To implement environmental laws and create awareness about pollution control measures.*
- *To coordinate with State Pollution Control Boards (SPCBs) and ensure uniform environmental standards across India.*

Functions

- **Air and Water Quality Monitoring:** *CPCB is responsible for monitoring the quality of air and water in India. It sets standards for pollution levels in coordination with the SPCBs.*
- **Regulatory Role:** *It acts as a regulatory body for the prevention and control of air, water, and noise pollution.*
- **Advisory Role:** *CPCB advises the Central Government on matters related to pollution control.*
- **Environmental Assessment:** *Conducts environmental impact assessments and advises industries on pollution reduction.*
- **Data Collection and Research:** *It collects, compiles, and publishes technical and statistical data related to air and water pollution.*

Key Programs and Initiatives

- **National Air Quality Monitoring Program (NAMP):** *Monitors the air quality in major Indian cities and provides air quality index (AQI) data.*
- **National Water Monitoring Program (NWMP):** *Assesses water quality in various rivers, lakes, and groundwater resources.*
- **Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP):** *Implemented in Delhi-NCR to tackle severe air pollution, particularly during the winter months.*
- **Noise Pollution Control:** *CPCB also sets standards and monitors noise pollution levels in urban and industrial areas.*
- **Clean Ganga Program:** *Plays a role in monitoring pollution levels in the Ganga River and ensuring compliance with water quality standards.*

Composition

- *The CPCB consists of a chairman, a member secretary, and various members representing central and state governments, industries, and environmental experts.*

Powers and Penalties

- **Powers to Inspect:** *CPCB can inspect any premises to assess whether environmental standards are being maintained.*
- **Legal Action:** *It has the power to initiate legal proceedings against industries and other entities violating pollution standards.*

- **Impose Penalties:** CPCB can recommend penalties and fines for polluters.

Challenges

- **Insufficient Resources:** CPCB often faces resource constraints in terms of manpower and technology to enforce regulations effectively.
- **Coordination with SPCBs:** Cooperation between CPCB and SPCBs sometimes lacks coordination, which affects the uniform implementation of policies.
- **Implementation Issues:** Despite its powers, ensuring compliance from industries and dealing with widespread pollution, particularly in urban areas, remains a challenge.

Recent Developments

- **Air Quality Early Warning System:** CPCB has developed a system to provide early warnings about pollution levels.
- **Polluter Pays Principle:** CPCB enforces the "polluter pays" principle, making polluters financially accountable for environmental damage.
- **Emission Trading Scheme (ETS):** In 2019, CPCB initiated the ETS for particulate matter in Gujarat, the first of its kind in India.

Kasturirangan Committee on Western Ghats

Syllabus: GS-3; Environmental Committees

Context

- **Karnataka cabinet rejects Kasturirangan panel's recommendations for protecting Western Ghats.**

CATCH 22

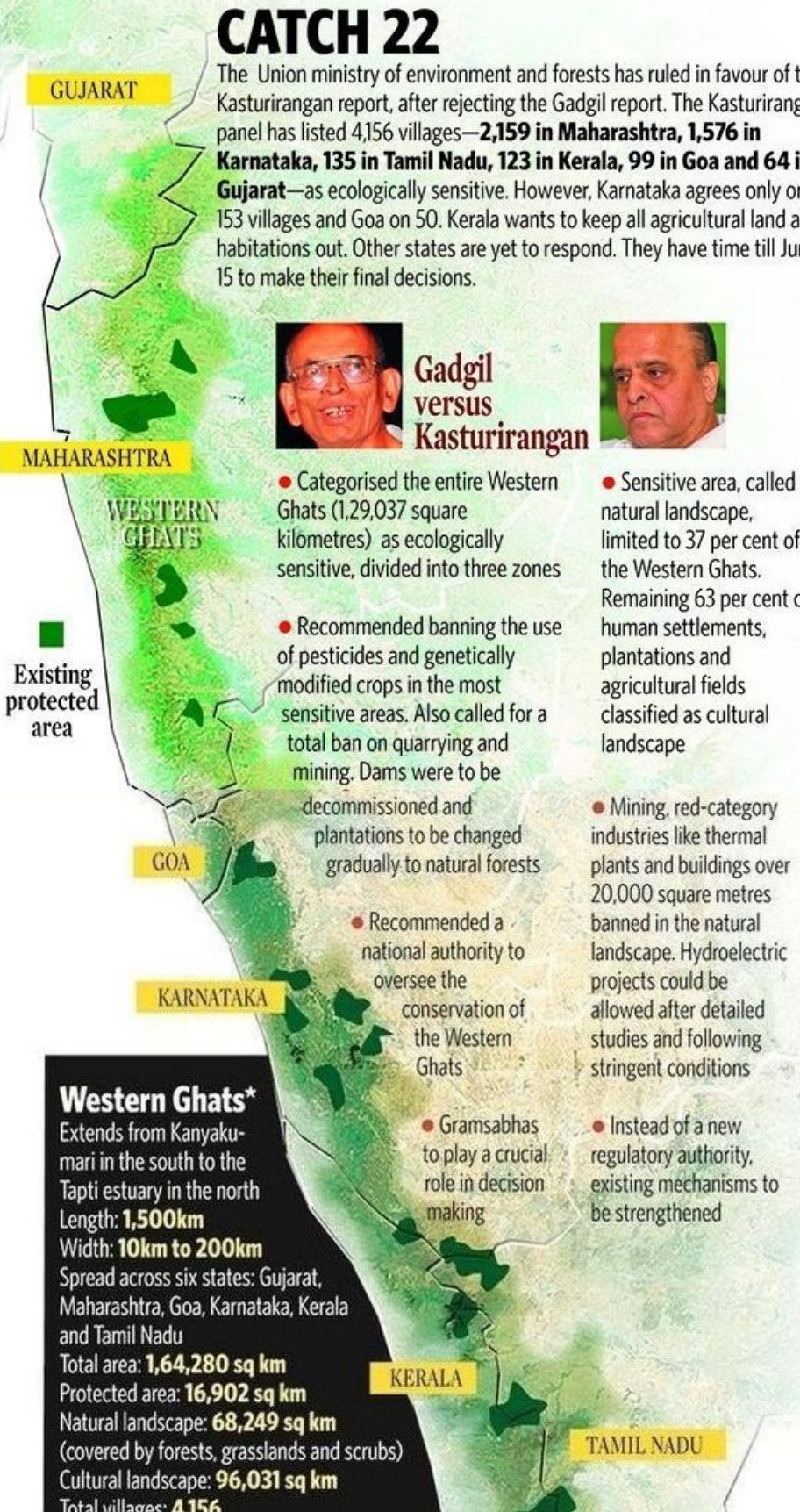
The Union ministry of environment and forests has ruled in favour of the Kasturirangan report, after rejecting the Gadgil report. The Kasturirangan panel has listed 4,156 villages—**2,159 in Maharashtra, 1,576 in Karnataka, 135 in Tamil Nadu, 123 in Kerala, 99 in Goa and 64 in Gujarat**—as ecologically sensitive. However, Karnataka agrees only on 153 villages and Goa on 50. Kerala wants to keep all agricultural land and habitations out. Other states are yet to respond. They have time till June 15 to make their final decisions.



Gadgil versus Kasturirangan



- Categorised the entire Western Ghats (1,29,037 square kilometres) as ecologically sensitive, divided into three zones
- Recommended banning the use of pesticides and genetically modified crops in the most sensitive areas. Also called for a total ban on quarrying and mining. Dams were to be decommissioned and plantations to be changed gradually to natural forests
- Recommended a national authority to oversee the conservation of the Western Ghats
- Gramsabhas to play a crucial role in decision making
- Sensitive area, called natural landscape, limited to 37 per cent of the Western Ghats. Remaining 63 per cent of human settlements, plantations and agricultural fields classified as cultural landscape
- Mining, red-category industries like thermal plants and buildings over 20,000 square metres banned in the natural landscape. Hydroelectric projects could be allowed after detailed studies and following stringent conditions
- Instead of a new regulatory authority, existing mechanisms to be strengthened



Background

- **Western Ghats:** *The Western Ghats are a mountain range that runs along the western coast of India and are one of the eight "hottest hotspots" of biological diversity in the world.*
They cover six states: Gujarat, Maharashtra, Goa, Karnataka, Kerala, and Tamil Nadu.
- **Gadgil Committee:** *Before the Kasturirangan Committee, the Western Ghats Ecology Expert Panel (WGEEP), headed by Madhav Gadgil, submitted a report in 2011, suggesting the conservation of 64% of the Western Ghats as an Ecologically Sensitive Area (ESA) and recommending the involvement of local communities in the process.*

Objectives of the Kasturirangan Committee

- **The Kasturirangan Committee was set up to review the Gadgil Committee report and provide a balanced approach between ecological conservation and developmental needs.**

Key Recommendations

- **Ecologically Sensitive Area (ESA):** *The committee identified 37% of the Western Ghats (approximately 60,000 sq. km) as Ecologically Sensitive Area (ESA).*
- *This includes regions of high biodiversity and areas important for water conservation.*

Ban on Activities in ESA

- **No mining and quarrying in the ESA.**
- **Ban on thermal power plants and high-impact industries in these sensitive regions.**
- **Restrictions on hydropower projects**—only small, community-based hydropower plants are allowed.
- **Agriculture:** *Agricultural activities, including horticulture and plantations, were allowed, as they are not considered high-impact activities.*
- **Developmental Projects:** *The committee allowed the development of infrastructure like roads and railways, but with sustainable and environmentally-friendly practices.*
- **Involvement of States:** *State governments were asked to demarcate the ESA and prepare action plans for their respective regions.*

Major Differences Between Gadgil and Kasturirangan Committees

- *Gadgil Report recommended that 64% of the Western Ghats be declared ESA, whereas Kasturirangan reduced it to 37%.*
- *The Gadgil Report favored a bottom-up approach involving local communities, while Kasturirangan suggested a more centralized approach with government oversight.*

Criticism and Issues

- **State Opposition:** Several states, especially Kerala, opposed the report due to concerns over development restrictions and the livelihoods of people living in these areas.
- **Implementation Delays:** Due to state opposition and concerns over livelihoods, the implementation of the Kasturirangan report has faced delays and challenges.

Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA)

Syllabus: GS-3; Internal Security

Context

- The Centre has extended the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA) in eight districts of Nagaland and three districts of Arunachal Pradesh for six months after a review of the law-and-order situation in the two northeastern states.

About

Enactment and Purpose

- The AFSPA was enacted in 1958, primarily to combat insurgency in the northeastern states of India. It provides the armed forces the authority to maintain public order in areas declared "disturbed" by the state government.

Key Provisions

- **Special Powers:** Under AFSPA, officers of the armed forces can:
 - Arrest without a warrant.
 - Use force, even to the point of causing death, against individuals acting against the law.
 - Enter and search premises without a warrant.
- **Disturbed Areas:** The act can be invoked in areas designated as "disturbed" by the government.
- This includes regions experiencing armed conflict, terrorism, or severe law and order issues.

Implementation

- The Act has been primarily implemented in states like Jammu and Kashmir, Assam, Manipur, and Nagaland, where insurgency and militancy are prevalent.

Controversies and Criticism

- **Human Rights Violations:** *The AFSPA has faced criticism for leading to human rights abuses. Allegations of extrajudicial killings, torture, and enforced disappearances have been reported.*
- **Legal Challenges:** *Various petitions have been filed in the Supreme Court of India challenging the constitutionality of the AFSPA. The court has acknowledged the need for the armed forces to operate in disturbed areas but has also emphasized the importance of human rights.*

Judicial Interpretations

- *The Supreme Court has upheld the constitutional validity of AFSPA but called for accountability and the need to protect human rights in its implementation.*
- *In 2016, the court reaffirmed that the armed forces should follow the law and respect human rights while discharging their duties.*

Recent Developments

- *There have been calls for repealing or amending AFSPA, particularly in the context of growing demands for greater autonomy and peace in the northeastern states and Jammu and Kashmir.*
- *Some states, like Tripura and Arunachal Pradesh, have lifted AFSPA due to improved law and order conditions.*
- *local identity.*