



DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS-

1. Citizenship Determination and Foreigners' Tribunals
2. Gene Drives: Genetic Engineering for Population Control
3. Extension of LAHDC to All Districts of Ladakh
4. ANEEL Thorium Fuel for India's PHWRs
5. Supreme Court's Special Benches for Old Pending Cases.

1.Citizenship Determination and Foreigners' Tribunals

Why in News?

- The **Supreme Court** set aside **27 Gauhati High Court judgments** declaring individuals as foreigners and held that decisions relating to **citizenship and foreigner status** must follow a **fair, lawful and reasoned procedure** consistent with constitutional guarantees.

Key Highlights

- The Supreme Court remanded **27 cases** to the respective **Foreigners' Tribunals (FTs)** for fresh adjudication.
- It held that proceedings declaring a person as a foreigner **cannot be mechanical, one-sided or devoid of application of mind.**
- It directed Foreigners' Tribunals to provide a **fair opportunity of hearing**, disclose the grounds of reference and consider the supporting evidence.
- It ordered that fresh adjudication be completed **within six months.**
- It directed that **no coercive action** be taken against the appellants until the Tribunals deliver fresh opinions.

- It clarified that the judgment **does not confer Indian citizenship**, but ensures fairness and legality in the adjudication process.

Citizenship in India

Aspect	Details
Constitutional Provisions	Articles 5–11 (Part II)
Legislative Framework	Citizenship Act, 1955
Authority to Legislate	Article 11 empowers Parliament to regulate citizenship
Citizenship Principle	Single Citizenship
Modes of Acquisition	By Birth, Descent, Registration, Naturalisation and Incorporation of Territory
Modes of Loss	Renunciation, Termination and Deprivation

Foreigners' Tribunals (FTs)

Aspect	Details
Established Under	Foreigners (Tribunals) Order, 1964 under the Foreigners Act, 1946
Purpose	Determine whether a person is an Indian citizen or a foreigner
Major Jurisdiction	Primarily operates in Assam
Burden of Proof	Lies on the person whose citizenship is questioned (<i>Section 9, Foreigners Act, 1946</i>)

Significance & Challenges

Significance

- It has reaffirmed **Article 21**, ensuring that citizenship determination follows **due process of law**.
- It has strengthened the principles of **natural justice**, including fair hearing and reasoned decisions.

- It has reinforced judicial scrutiny over administrative actions affecting fundamental rights.
- It has protected individuals from arbitrary deprivation of citizenship, which carries grave civil consequences.

Challenges

- It has highlighted procedural deficiencies in the functioning of Foreigners' Tribunals.
- It has raised concerns regarding ex parte proceedings and inadequate appreciation of evidence.
- It has underscored the need for greater transparency and consistency in citizenship adjudication.

UPSC Prelims MCQ

Q. With reference to citizenship determination in India, consider the following statements:

1. Parliament derives its power to regulate citizenship from **Article 11** of the Constitution.
2. Foreigners' Tribunals are constituted under the **Foreigners (Tribunals) Order, 1964**.
3. Under the Foreigners Act, 1946, the burden of proving Indian citizenship lies upon the person whose nationality is questioned.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) **1, 2 and 3**
- (d) 1 and 3 only

Answer: (c)

UPSC Mains Question (15 Marks)

Citizenship determination has profound constitutional and human rights implications. Discuss the role of due process and natural justice in the functioning of Foreigners' Tribunals in India

2. Gene Drives: Genetic Engineering for Population Control

Why in News?

- **Gene drives**, enabled by **CRISPR-Cas9** technology, have emerged as a transformative genetic engineering tool for controlling disease vectors and invasive species. However, they have also raised concerns over ecological risks, biosafety, ethics and global governance.

Key Highlights

Feature	Details
Definition	Genetic engineering technology that biases inheritance to spread a desired gene rapidly through a population
Principle	Super-Mendelian inheritance (gene inherited by more than 50% of offspring)
Key Technology	CRISPR-Cas9 gene editing
Main Targets	Mosquitoes, invasive species, agricultural pests
Objective	Population modification or population suppression

Applications & Significance

- It has the potential to **control vector-borne diseases** such as **malaria, dengue and Zika** by making mosquitoes sterile or resistant to parasites.
- It has supported the control of **invasive species**, thereby protecting biodiversity and fragile ecosystems.
- It has reduced dependence on chemical pesticides through targeted pest management in agriculture.
- It has accelerated research in **drug discovery, diagnostics and biotechnology**.
- It has provided new tools for **biodiversity conservation** and ecosystem restoration.
- It has enabled long-term, self-sustaining biological interventions with minimal repeated human intervention.

Challenges & Regulatory Concerns

Challenges

- It has increased the risk of **unintended spread** beyond target populations due to the absence of a simple recall mechanism.
- It has raised concerns regarding **ecological imbalance** through irreversible changes in ecosystems.
- It has created the possibility of **genetic resistance**, reducing long-term effectiveness.
- It has generated concerns over **biosafety, biosecurity and potential misuse**.
- It has raised ethical issues related to irreversible modification of wild species and intergenerational impacts.
- It has highlighted the need for informed **public participation and community consent** before deployment.

Regulatory Measures

- It has encouraged the development of **self-limiting drives, split-drive systems** and **reversal drives** to minimise unintended consequences.
- The **World Health Organization (WHO)** has recommended **phased testing** supported by ecological risk assessment and community engagement.
- The **U.S. National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine (NASEM)** have advocated a **step-wise regulatory framework** before environmental release.
- It has underscored the need for robust national and international governance mechanisms for responsible deployment.

How Gene Drives Differ from Conventional Genetic Modification

Gene Drive	Conventional Genetic Modification
Biases inheritance to spread a gene rapidly through populations	Alters genes in an individual organism without biased inheritance
Can modify or suppress wild populations	Primarily affects only the modified organism and its descendants through normal inheritance

Based on super-Mendelian inheritance	Follows normal Mendelian inheritance
Difficult to reverse once released	Effects remain largely confined to modified organisms

UPSC Prelims MCQ

Q. With reference to Gene Drives, consider the following statements:

1. Gene drives promote **super-Mendelian inheritance**, allowing a genetic trait to spread rapidly through a population.
2. CRISPR-Cas9 technology has made the development of synthetic gene drives feasible.
3. Gene drives are being explored for controlling disease vectors such as mosquitoes.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) **1, 2 and 3**
- (d) 1 only

Answer: (c)

UPSC Mains Question (15 Marks)

Gene drives have the potential to transform disease control and biodiversity conservation, but they also raise significant ecological, ethical and regulatory concerns. Discuss.

3.Extension of LAHDC to All Districts of Ladakh

Why in News?

- The **Ladakh Administration** has announced the creation of **17 new tehsils** and decided to extend the **Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council (LAHDC) Act**

to **all seven districts** of the Union Territory. However, the **Kargil Democratic Alliance (KDA)** has alleged imbalance in the allocation of new administrative units.

Key Highlights

Feature	Details
New Tehsils Created	17
Total Tehsils	32
Districts Covered	Leh, Kargil, Sham, Nubra, Changthang, Zaskar and Drass
New Districts	Sham, Nubra, Changthang, Zaskar and Drass (Notified in April 2026)
Major Decision	Extension of LAHDC Act to all seven districts

Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council (LAHDC)

Aspect	Details
Established	LAHDC Act, 1995
First Council	Leh (1995)
Second Council	Kargil (2003)
Composition	30 Members (26 elected + 4 nominated)
Executive Head	Chief Executive Councillor (CEC)
Objective	Decentralised governance, local planning and socio-economic development
Current Status	Proposed extension to all seven districts of Ladakh

Significance

- It has strengthened **grassroots governance** by bringing administration closer to remote and border areas.

- It has improved the delivery of public services through the creation of new **PHE, Flood Control, PWD and PMGSY divisions**.
- It has promoted decentralised planning and local participation in development.
- It has enhanced administrative efficiency in geographically vast and sparsely populated regions.
- It has supported balanced regional development across the Union Territory.
- It has complemented ongoing discussions on **constitutional safeguards** for protecting Ladakh's **land, culture and identity**.

Concerns & Way Forward

Concerns

- The **Kargil Democratic Alliance (KDA)** has alleged an unequal distribution of new tehsils between Leh and Kargil regions.
- It has raised concerns that **Drass** did not receive any additional tehsils despite its strategic significance.
- It has highlighted demands for equitable administrative and developmental representation.
- It has revived demands for stronger constitutional protection through a **sui generis model under Article 371** and other institutional safeguards.

Way Forward

- It requires balanced allocation of administrative units based on **population, geographical area and developmental needs**.
- It needs timely implementation of the **LAHDC Act** across all districts with adequate financial and administrative powers.
- It needs continued dialogue between the **Union Government** and stakeholders on constitutional safeguards.
- It needs greater focus on infrastructure, connectivity and public service delivery in remote border districts.

UPSC Prelims MCQ

Q. With reference to the Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council (LAHDC), consider the following statements:

1. The first LAHDC was established in **Leh** in 1995.
2. Each LAHDC consists of **26 elected and 4 nominated members**.
3. Ladakh presently has a Legislative Assembly that exercises control over the LAHDCs.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 1 and 2 only
- (c) 2 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (b)

UPSC Mains Question (15 Marks)

Discuss the role of the Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Councils (LAHDCs) in promoting decentralised governance and inclusive development in the Union Territory of Ladakh. Also examine the demand for constitutional safeguards in the region.

4.ANEEL Thorium Fuel for India's PHWRs

Why in News?

- US-based **Clean Core Thorium Energy (CCTE)** has countered safety concerns raised by **Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC)** regarding the use of its **ANEEL thorium fuel** in India's **Pressurised Heavy Water Reactors (PHWRs)**.

Key Highlights

Aspect	Details
Developer	Clean Core Thorium Energy (CCTE), USA
Fuel	ANEEL (Advanced Nuclear Energy for Enriched Life)
Fuel Composition	Thorium + High-Assay Low-Enriched Uranium (HALEU)
Target Reactors	Existing Pressurised Heavy Water Reactors (PHWRs)
Indian Partner	NTPC Ltd. (Strategic partnership signed in December 2024)

Regulatory Requirement	Subject to approval by Indian nuclear regulators
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About ANEEL Fuel

Feature	Details
Fuel Type	Patented thorium-based nuclear fuel
Composition	Thorium mixed with HALEU
Design	"Plug-and-play" fuel bundle with dimensions similar to conventional PHWR fuel
Claimed Energy Output	Nearly 6 times higher than natural uranium fuel
Burn-up	Over 60 GWd/MTU , significantly higher than conventional PHWR fuel
Objective	Improve fuel efficiency, safety and reduce nuclear waste

BARC's Concerns

- It has argued that ANEEL deployment may require **reactor redesign** and modifications to reactor control systems.
- It has cautioned that accident scenarios could pose additional safety challenges.
- It has emphasized the need for extensive testing before commercial deployment.
- It has highlighted the importance of maintaining compatibility with India's indigenous PHWR technology.

CCTE's Response

- It has claimed that ANEEL can be used in existing PHWRs **without reactor modifications**.
- It has stated that the fuel improves reactor safety through better thermal characteristics.
- It has argued that higher fuel burn-up increases energy generation while reducing fuel consumption.

- It has maintained that ANEEL can support India's long-term thorium utilisation strategy.

About Pressurised Heavy Water Reactor (PHWR)

Feature	Details
Moderator	Heavy Water (D ₂ O)
Coolant	Heavy Water
Conventional Fuel	Natural Uranium
Developed By	Canada (CANDU design); extensively indigenised by India
Role in India	Backbone of the First Stage of India's Three-Stage Nuclear Programme

India's Three-Stage Nuclear Power Programme

Stage	Fuel	Objective
Stage I	Natural Uranium in PHWRs	Produce electricity and plutonium
Stage II	Fast Breeder Reactors (Plutonium + Uranium-238)	Generate more fissile material and produce U-233
Stage III	Thorium (U-233 based reactors)	Utilize India's vast thorium reserves for long-term energy security

Challenges

- It requires comprehensive safety validation by **BARC, Atomic Energy Regulatory Board (AERB)** and other regulatory authorities.
- It depends on the availability of **HALEU**, which currently has limited global production.
- It requires compatibility assessment with India's existing PHWR fleet.
- It involves regulatory, technological and geopolitical considerations in fuel supply.

Way Forward

- It requires extensive irradiation testing and independent safety evaluation before deployment.
- It needs phased demonstration projects under regulatory supervision.
- It should strengthen indigenous capabilities in thorium fuel fabrication and HALEU supply chains.
- It should complement—not replace—India's indigenous Three-Stage Nuclear Programme.

UPSC Prelims MCQ

Q. With reference to ANEEL fuel, consider the following statements:

1. It is a thorium-based nuclear fuel developed by a US company.
2. It combines thorium with High-Assay Low-Enriched Uranium (HALEU).
3. It is proposed for use in India's existing Pressurised Heavy Water Reactors (PHWRs).

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 1 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (d)

UPSC Mains Question (15 Marks)

India possesses one of the world's largest thorium reserves. Discuss the significance of advanced thorium-based fuels such as ANEEL for India's nuclear energy programme. Also examine the technological and regulatory challenges associated with their deployment.

5. Supreme Court's Special Benches for Old Pending Cases

Why in News?

- The **Chief Justice of India (CJI) Surya Kant** has constituted **four dedicated benches** to exclusively hear the **oldest pending civil and criminal cases** in the Supreme Court, aiming to reduce long-standing judicial backlog and improve the efficiency of justice delivery.

Key Highlights

Aspect	Details
Initiative	Constitution of four special division benches
Effective From	13 July 2026
Objective	Expeditious disposal of oldest pending cases
Total Pendency (2026)	96,045 cases
Civil Cases Pending	74,244
Cases Pending for Over 30 Years	24 civil cases and 2 criminal cases
Working Days	Non-miscellaneous days (Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday)

Special Benches Constituted

Bench	Responsibility
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Justice P.K. Mishra Bench	Oldest civil cases
Justice S.V.N. Bhatti Bench	Oldest civil cases
Justice Manoj Misra Bench	Oldest criminal cases
Justice Ujjal Bhuyan Bench	Oldest criminal cases

Need for the Initiative

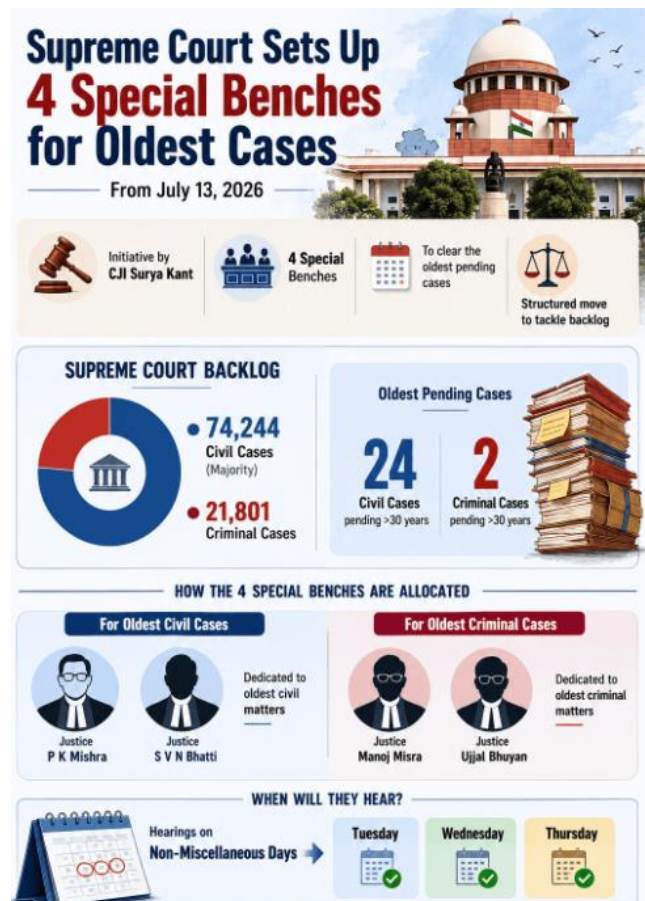
- It addresses the growing backlog of long-pending cases affecting timely justice.
- It strengthens the constitutional principle that **justice delayed is justice denied**.
- It improves public confidence in the judicial system.
- It enables regular benches to focus on fresh and routine matters.
- It ensures uninterrupted hearings by reserving specific working days for old cases.

Reasons for Rising Pendency

- It has witnessed a continuous rise in fresh case filings, with **75,402 new cases filed in 2025**.
- It has faced shortages of judges and judicial vacancies.
- It has experienced lengthy hearings and repeated adjournments.
- It involves increasing complexity of constitutional, commercial and criminal litigation.
- It faces inadequate judicial infrastructure and support staff.

Challenges

- It requires filling vacancies in the higher judiciary.
- It requires greater use of technology for case management.
- It needs better judicial infrastructure and trained manpower.



- It requires limiting unnecessary adjournments and procedural delays.
- It requires balancing disposal of old cases with rising fresh litigation.

Way Forward

- It should strengthen digital case management and AI-based case listing.
- It should ensure timely appointment of judges and court staff.
- It should promote Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) to reduce court burden.
- It should streamline procedural laws for faster adjudication.
- It should institutionalise dedicated benches for long-pending and priority matters.

About the Supreme Court of India

Feature	Details
Constitutional Provision	Articles 124–147
Established	28 January 1950
Seat	New Delhi
Composition	Chief Justice of India and a maximum of 33 other judges
Jurisdiction	Original, Appellate, Advisory, Review and Writ Jurisdiction
Constitutional Role	Guardian of the Constitution and Fundamental Rights

UPSC Prelims MCQ

Q. With reference to the Supreme Court of India, consider the following statements:

1. The Supreme Court exercises original, appellate and advisory jurisdiction under the Constitution.
2. Article 32 empowers the Supreme Court to enforce Fundamental Rights.
3. The Supreme Court can constitute special benches for efficient disposal of cases.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
(b) 2 and 3 only

(c) 1 and 3 only

(d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (d)

UPSC Mains Question (15 Marks)

Judicial pendency remains one of the biggest challenges to India's justice delivery system. Discuss the causes of case backlog in Indian courts and examine the significance of recent institutional measures adopted by the Supreme Court to ensure timely justice.

