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## 1) Everything about Sabarimala issue



### **A-Z of Sabarimala case till date:**

**Why in news:** Chief Justice of India (CJI) S.A. Bobde on Thursday orally remarked that a September 2018 judgment of the Supreme Court allowing menstruating women to worship at the Sabarimala temple may, at the moment, not be the “last word” as the issue has been referred to a larger Bench of seven judges.

### **Background**

As per traditions and customs, women between 10 and 50 years of age (menstruating women) were not allowed to enter into Sabarimala Temple.

The restriction finds **its source in the legend that the temple deity, Swami Ayyappa, is a “Naisthik Brahmachari”** and women entry will affect the celibacy of the deity

**The ban on ‘menstruating women’ was enforced under Rule 3(b) of the Kerala Hindu Places of Public Worship (Authorization of Entry) Rules 1965.**

### **Brief timeline:**

**1990:** A petition was filed in the Kerala High Court seeking a ban on the entry of women inside the Sabarimala temple.

**1991:** The Kerala High Court imposed a restriction on women aged 10 to 50.

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**2006:** A petition was filed in the Supreme Court by the Indian Young Lawyers Association seeking entry of women aged between 10 and 50. The matter was referred to a three-judge bench two years later.

**January 2016:** The court questioned the ban, saying it couldn't be done under the Constitution.

**April 2016:** The United Democratic Front government of Kerala, led by Chief Minister Oomen Chandy, informed the top court that it was duty-bound to protect the right to practice the religion of Sabarimala devotees.

**November 2016:** The Kerala government told the Supreme Court that was in favour of allowing women inside the sanctum sanctorum of the temple.

**2017:** The Supreme Court referred the case to a Constitution bench.

**September 2018:** A five-judge bench of the Supreme Court struck down the entry ban and paved the way for the entry of women of all ages into the Ayyappa temple at Sabarimala.

**The Kerala government sought time to implement the verdict.**

**February 2019:** The court reserved its judgment on a plea seeking a review of its **September 2018 verdict.**

**November 2019:** The Supreme Court referred the case to the 7-judge bench but did not stay its earlier verdict allowing the entry of women of all ages into the Ayyappa temple at Sabarimala.

**Why the matter is referred to the 7-judge bench:**

The debate about the constitutional validity of practices entailing into restriction of entry of women generally in the place of worship is not limited to this case, but also arises in respect of:

- Right of Muslim women to enter dargah/mosque,
- Right of Parsi women who is married to a non-Parsi into the holy fireplace of an Agyari,
- Issue of female genital mutilation practised by the Dawoodi Bohra community.

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Court has to also answer the questions like:

- Up to what extent can a court intervene in an essential religious practice?
- Whether practices considered essential should be given constitutional protection?
- Whether courts can invoke the notions of rationality in the matters of religion?

### **The doctrine of essentiality:**

The doctrine of essentiality was invented by a 7-judge bench of the supreme court in the '*Shirur Mutt*' case in 1954. The court held that the term "religion" will cover all rituals and practices "integral" to a religion and what constitutes an essential part of religion will be ascertained with reference to the tenets and doctrines of that religion itself. Court took upon itself the responsibility of determining the essential and non-essential practices of a religion.

### **Constitutional articles involved:**

#### **Article 15**

- Article 15: No person shall be discriminated on the basis of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth.
- Article 15(b): Every person shall have equal access to public places like public parks, museums, wells, bathing ghats and temples etc.

#### **Article 25**

- It states that every individual is "equally entitled to freedom of conscience" and has the right "to profess, practice and propagate religion" of one's choice.

#### **Article 26 - Freedom to manage religious affairs subject to public order, morality and health, every religious denomination or any section thereof shall have the right.**

- to establish and maintain institutions for religious and charitable purposes;
- to manage its own affairs in matters of religion;
- to own and acquire movable and immovable property; and

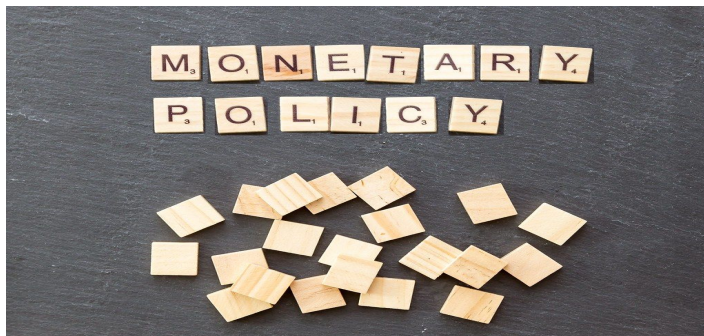
- to administer such property in accordance with law

### Article 51A (e)

- Article 51A(e) states that it is the duty of everyone to promote harmony and the spirit of common brotherhood amongst all the people of India transcending religious, linguistic and regional or sectional diversities; to renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of women.

**Note: In India, the legitimate principled intervention of the state in religion is constitutional**

## 2) Monetary policy committee



Monetary Policy Committee:

### Why in news:

The **Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** has decided to keep the **repo rate unchanged at 5.15% in the recent bi-monthly policy review**. This is the first bi-monthly monetary meeting in the year 2019 in which **the repo rate has been kept unchanged**. Since February 2019, the RBI has cumulatively cut rates by 135 basis points (bps). The market was expecting the central bank to cut the repo rate further owing to the weak economic growth rate.

### Reasons for unchanged repo rate:

- **Inflation pressure: The RBI has revised its inflation forecast for the second half of the 2019- 20 to 4.7-5.1% from earlier projected at 3.5-3.7%**. RBI's concerns over inflation mainly come from food prices apart from an increase in tariff by telecom players.

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•RBI probably wishes to see the impact of **135 basis points Repo Rate cut during the year 2019**. Currently, banks reduced the marginal cost of funds based lending rate only by **49 basis points in response to the 135 basis points repo rate cut**.

•The RBI has also slashed its **GDP growth forecast for 2019-20 from 6.1% projected earlier to 5%**.

•There are indications that considerable slippage may happen in **the fiscal deficit target of 3.3%** and the Government's approach to fiscal deficit glide path is still unclear.

#### **About Monetary Policy Committee(MPC):**

The **Monetary Policy Committee is a statutory and institutionalized framework under the Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934**, for maintaining price stability, while keeping in mind the objective of growth.

The MPC determines **the policy interest rate(repo rate) required to achieve the inflation target (4%)**.

MPC was established based on recommendations of **the Urjit Patel Committee in 2014**. Prior to this, **the BN Srikrishna headed Financial sector legislative reforms Commission (FSLRC) had also suggested framing an MPC**

#### **Composition:**

Monetary Policy Committee is an **executive body of 6 members**. Of these, **three members are from RBI while three other members are nominated by the Central Government**. Each member has one vote. **The Governor of RBI is ex-officio Chairman of the committee**. In case of a tie, the RBI governor has the casting vote to break the tie.

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### 3) firepower by India, from India

# Firepower by India, for India

Defence deals worth ₹33,000 crore have been placed with the Ordnance Factory Board and Bharat Electronics Limited in the last two months, according to the Ministry of Defence

#### IN PIPELINE:

A contract for modernisation of airfield infrastructure, to be executed through Indian vendors, is set to be signed soon

#### MAKE IN INDIA:

MoD has signed over 180 contracts, valued at over ₹1,96,000 crore, with Indian industry since 2014, while a few are set to be signed

**Supplier:** Ordnance Factory Board

T-90 tanks are built by OFB under license from Russia



464 T-90S/  
SK tanks  
**₹19,100  
crore**

**Supplier:** Bharat Electronics Limited

Akash has been indigenously developed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation

Akash surface  
to air missiles  
**₹6,300  
crore**

**Supplier:** Bharat Electronics Limited

Integrated  
Advanced  
Command & Control  
System Nodes  
**₹7,900  
crore**

**Sky high:** An Akash missile being tested at the Integrated Test Range, Chandipur in 2014





## 4) Bail basics

### **The order in Chidambaram case restates fundamental principles on granting bail**

The Supreme Court has restated the basic principles of granting bail while ordering the conditional release of **former Union Minister P. Chidambaram in the INX Media 'money laundering' case**. That these principles required fresh iteration indicates a problem in the way courts have been handling certain applications for bail in recent times. In a case largely turning on documentary evidence — and one being probed by two agencies concerning the same transactions — **it was quite astonishing that the former Minister was incarcerated for over 100 days, even after being subjected to prolonged custodial interrogation**. As rightly pointed out by the three judge Bench, bail remains the norm and its refusal the exception.

courts considering bail are required to conduct **a triple test to find out if a person is likely to hinder the trial by fleeing from justice, tampering with evidence, or influencing witnesses**. The apex court has conceded that sometimes the gravity of the offence may be an additional consideration, but underscored that it cannot be used to deny bail based on allegations yet to be tested in a trial. **The Supreme Court has now formally disapproved of courts using purported material contained in sealed cover to record findings**. What the Supreme Court was concerned about was whether such untested material could be used as a ground to deny bail. It is a matter of concern that larger issues of due process have to be revisited each time a **public figure is arrested in the course of investigation, giving rise to a perception of political vendetta**. The legal system is already in place for expedited trial against political leaders through special courts. **There is no necessity to vitiate the process through dramatic arrests and prolonged pretrial imprisonment**.



## 5) Lessons from Ambedkar

Unless they remain united, the Dalits will be denied their due share of political power



**B.R. Ambedkar is remembered on his 63rd death anniversary today**, principally as the chief draftsman of the Indian Constitution. His strategies to achieve the goal of empowering Dalits shifted with changing contexts but the goal always remained the same: attaining equality with caste Hindus in all spheres of life.

Separate electorate - It was in pursuit of this goal that in the early 1930s he advocated a separate electorate for the Dalits. This demand was accepted by **British Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald in his Communal Award of 1932**, which granted **Dalits 18% of the total seats in the Central legislature and 71 seats in the Provincial legislatures to be elected exclusively by Dalits. Mahatma Gandhi's fast unto death against a separate electorate for Dalits**, which he saw as a British ploy to divide Hindu society. Ambedkar gave up his demand in return for an increased number of seats reserved for Dalits but elected by the general Hindu population.

Hindus and Dalits as well as the huge disparity in their socioeconomic status, very few of the elected Dalits would be able to genuinely represent Dalit interests. **Both Gandhi and Ambedkar abhorred untouchability, but the terms they used to describe the "untouchables" demonstrated the wide gulf in their approaches to the issue.** Gandhi called them **"Harijan" (God's children)** in order to persuade caste Hindus to stop discriminating against them. the nomenclature Dalit both to describe the reality of

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oppression and to galvanise his people to challenge and change the status quo.

After Independence **Ambedkar made his peace with the Congress leadership believing that he could enhance Dalits' rights from within the power structure.** He became Law Minister and Chairman of the Constitution Drafting Committee. He resigned from the Cabinet in 1951.

Although he died a frustrated man, **Ambedkar's devotion to the cause of Dalit empowerment has continued to galvanise Dalits until today.** However, there are three major problems that continue to bedevil Dalit activism. First, intraDalit differences based on subcastes allows forces opposed to Dalit empowerment to divide Dalits and deny them the clout that they can wield in the Indian polity. Second, interpersonal rivalry among Dalit politicians leads to the same result. Third, the inability of the Dalit leadership to stick with their nonDalit allies, especially in times of political adversity, makes them appear as unreliable political partners. **The most important lesson to learn from Ambedkar's repeated exhortations is that unless they remain united, the Dalits will be denied their due share of political power.**

## 6) India's forex reserves cross \$450 billion for the first time

**Central bank buys dollars to check sharp appreciation of rupee**



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India's forex reserves fell to \$274.8 bn in September, 2013, during the 'taper tantrums' of that year

first time ever on the back of strong inflows which enabled the central bank to buy dollars from the market, thus checking any sharp appreciation of the rupee.

“India's foreign exchange reserves were at \$451.7 billion on December 3, 2019 — an increase of \$38.8 billion over endMarch 2019,” RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das said at the post monetary policy press conference. Foreign investment Net foreign direct investment rose to \$20.9 billion in the first half of 2019-20 from

\$17 billion a year ago while net foreign portfolio investment was \$8.8 billion in April-November 2019 as against net outflows of \$14.9 billion in the same period last year. India's foreign exchange reserves fell to \$274.8 billion in September of 2013, prompting the Centre and RBI to unleash measures to attract inflows. It has been a steady rise for the reserves since then, with \$175 billion added in the last six years.