

CURRENT AFFAIRS

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Supreme Court Overrules 1967 Verdict on Aligarh Muslim University's Minority Status

The Supreme Court of India has delivered a landmark judgment on Aligarh Muslim University (AMU), revisiting its minority status nearly 60 years after a previous ruling denied it.

Highlights

- **Verdict Overturned:** In a 4:3 majority decision, the Supreme Court overturned its 1967 judgment in the *S. Azeez Basha vs Union of India* case, which had denied AMU the status of a minority institution.
- **Majority Opinion:** Chief Justice of India (CJI) D.Y. Chandrachud led the majority opinion, joined by Justices Sanjiv Khanna, J.B. Pardiwala, and Manoj Misra. Justices Surya Kant, Dipankar Datta, and Satish Chandra Sharma dissented.
- **Referral to Lower Bench:** The Supreme Court has referred the matter of AMU's minority status to a regular three-judge bench for further deliberation.
- **Criteria for Minority Status:** The court emphasized that the founding entity is the primary factor in determining an institution's minority status, while the administration by non-minority members does not negate its minority character.
- **Regulation Limits:** The ruling clarified that government regulation of minority institutions is permissible, provided it does not infringe upon their minority rights.

Background

- **1967 Azeez Basha Case:** In this case, a five-judge bench held that since AMU was established through a central law, it could not be considered a minority institution, given that it derived its character from the state.
- **1981 Act Amendment:** In response, Parliament passed the AMU (Amendment) Act, 1981, restoring AMU's minority status.
- **2006 Allahabad High Court Ruling:** The Allahabad High Court struck down AMU's minority status granted by the 1981 law, prompting the government to appeal the decision.

- **Appeal Withdrawal in 2016:** Then government announced its decision to withdraw the appeal, arguing that AMU's minority status limited access for certain groups, including SC, ST, and SEBC.

Explanation and Implications

- **Central Issue – Establishment by Minority:** The court's recent ruling emphasizes that minority status should be based on who established the institution rather than on the administrative body or whether it operates under a state law.
- **Impact on Admissions and Reservations:** AMU's minority status affects its admissions policies, particularly regarding reservations for SC, ST, and SEBC. Without minority status, AMU would need to allocate seats for these groups.
- **Significance for Minority Rights:** This ruling is significant for interpreting minority rights in educational institutions, as it may influence similar cases involving minority-run universities.

Article 30(1) Significance:

- Article 30(1) grants minorities the right to establish and manage educational institutions to preserve their educational and cultural values.
- The right to administer does not require community members to manage the institution but ensures its autonomy to maintain community-specific educational goals.

Tamil Nadu Deputy Chief Minister Launches New Initiatives to Boost Start-up Ecosystem

Tamil Nadu's Deputy Chief Minister, Mr. Udhayanidhi Stalin, announced multiple initiatives aimed at strengthening the state's start-up ecosystem, emphasizing support for social enterprises, international exposure, and expansion in underrepresented regions.

News Highlights

- **Support for Start-ups:** At an event hosted by the Tamil Nadu Startup and Innovation Mission (StartupTN), the Deputy Chief Minister launched initiatives designed to provide resources and global connections to local start-ups.
- **International Coordination Centres:** To enhance global connectivity, Tamil Nadu established the Global Startup Coordination Centre in Dubai, with plans to open similar hubs in Singapore and the United States.

- **Showcasing at Global Events:** The Tamil Nadu government recently sponsored 19 start-ups to participate in Dubai's prestigious GITEK event, and 18 more will be attending a grand start-up event in Finland.
- **New Initiatives:** The Deputy Chief Minister inaugurated the Periyar Social Justice Venture Lab and Thozhil Nayam design studio, both aimed at supporting social enterprises, D2C start-ups, and SC/ST founders.
- **Pre-Incubation Centres (PICs):** Sanction letters were issued to establish PICs across the state, particularly in Tier II and Tier III cities, to help young entrepreneurs and students develop and prototype innovative ideas.

Background

- **Tamil Nadu's Growing Start-up Ecosystem:** Tamil Nadu has seen a rise in start-ups, especially in technology, social entrepreneurship, and D2C segments. Through StartupTN, the state aims to foster a supportive ecosystem for entrepreneurs and increase start-up representation across sectors and regions.
- **Global Exposure for Start-ups:** Recognizing the importance of international exposure, Tamil Nadu has been actively supporting local start-ups in participating in major global events. This approach seeks to create international linkages and opportunities for expansion.
- **Social Entrepreneurship Focus:** By introducing initiatives like the Periyar Social Justice Venture Lab, Tamil Nadu emphasizes supporting social enterprises and promoting inclusivity within the start-up ecosystem.

Devotees in Nepal Celebrate Haribodhini Ekadasi

Haribodhini Ekadasi, a major Hindu festival in Nepal, celebrates the awakening of Lord Vishnu from his four-month slumber. Devotees gather at revered temples to perform rituals and seek blessings, with the Tulsi plant, a symbol of life and purity, playing a central role.

Highlights

- **Festival Observance:** In Nepal, devotees celebrate Haribodhini Ekadasi, which marks the end of Lord Vishnu's four-month rest period, with rituals honoring his divine awakening.
- **Worship of Tulsi Plant:** The Tulsi plant, sacred in Hinduism, is specially worshipped on this day. Rituals involve unifying Tulsi with Amla branches or Shaligram stones, symbolizing the union of Lord Vishnu and Goddess Lakshmi.

- **Temple Visits:** Many devotees in Kathmandu Valley visit Vishnu temples, such as Budhanilkantha and Changunarayan, to offer prayers and participate in festivities.

Background

- **Significance of Haribodhini Ekadasi:** Also known as Dev Uthani Ekadasi, this festival marks an important day in the Hindu calendar when Lord Vishnu is believed to awaken from his four-month cosmic slumber, initiating the marriage season and other auspicious events.
- **Tulsi and Lord Vishnu:** The Tulsi plant holds immense spiritual value in Hinduism. Haribodhini Ekadasi celebrates the symbolic wedding of Tulsi with Lord Vishnu, representing purity, devotion, and the unity of nature and divinity.
- **Connection with Nature:** The festival underscores the connection between humans and nature, as represented by the worship of Tulsi and Amla plants.

Alix Didier Fils-Aime Sworn in as Haiti's New Prime Minister

Alix Didier Fils-Aime has taken office as the new Prime Minister of Haiti, pledging to address the nation's severe security challenges and facilitate credible elections amid ongoing crises.

Highlights

- **New Leadership:** Alix Didier Fils-Aime was sworn in as Haiti's Prime Minister, replacing Garry Conille, who was dismissed by the Transitional Presidential Council.
- **Focus on Security and Elections:** In his inauguration speech, Fils-Aime committed to tackling Haiti's escalating security issues, primarily gang violence, and to organizing free and fair elections, despite describing the current situation as chaotic.
- **Humanitarian Crisis:** The inauguration occurs amid severe humanitarian and security crises in Haiti, where around 2,500 people have been killed or injured due to gang violence in the first quarter of 2024.

Background

- **Security Crisis in Haiti:** Haiti has faced an intensifying wave of gang violence and political instability over the past few years, contributing to a sharp decline in security and living conditions. Gangs have reportedly seized control over

large parts of the capital, Port-au-Prince, causing widespread fear and displacement.

- **Humanitarian Concerns:** As gang violence escalates, Haiti's citizens have endured shortages of food, healthcare, and essential services, creating a pressing humanitarian crisis. International aid organizations have struggled to operate safely in the affected areas.
- **Political Turmoil:** The Transitional Presidential Council, formed in April, aims to oversee a peaceful political transition and establish stability through elections. The Council's appointment of Fils-Aime reflects a continued effort to guide the nation out of its ongoing crises.

Explanation and Significance

- **Challenges Ahead:** Fils-Aime's administration faces formidable obstacles in curbing gang violence, stabilizing the political landscape, and addressing the immediate needs of Haiti's citizens amid limited resources and complex challenges.
- **Election Roadmap:** The Prime Minister's commitment to organizing "uncontested elections" could be pivotal for restoring public trust and international confidence, as Haiti has not held elections since 2016. Transparent elections are seen as essential for breaking the cycle of violence and instability.

Magnitude 6.8 Earthquake Strikes Eastern Cuba

A powerful 6.8-magnitude earthquake hit eastern Cuba, causing significant damage in Santiago de Cuba and nearby regions. The tremor disrupted daily life, triggering landslides and power outages.

Highlights

- **Earthquake Details:** A magnitude 6.8 earthquake struck eastern Cuba, with its epicenter located in Granma province, along the southeastern coast of the island.
- **Impact on Santiago de Cuba:** The quake caused widespread damage in Santiago de Cuba, Cuba's second-largest city, and also affected surrounding rural areas, leading to landslides and structural damage.
- **Presidential Response:** Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel addressed the situation, reporting significant landslides, damaged homes, and power outages. He emphasized that the country's top priority was saving lives, and emergency teams were deployed to assess and address the immediate damage.

Background

- **Geological Context:** Cuba is located in a seismically active region, and earthquakes of varying magnitudes are not uncommon. However, the recent quake's intensity has led to more severe consequences, particularly in urban and rural areas near the epicenter.
- **Historical Context:** Earthquakes have periodically affected Cuba, with the island experiencing significant seismic events in the past. The Cuban government and emergency services are accustomed to responding to such natural disasters, though the widespread impact of this quake is a significant challenge.

Explanation and Significance

- **Immediate Consequences:** The earthquake caused structural damage, including collapsed buildings, landslides, and disruptions to the power supply. These events are compounded by the rural nature of many affected areas, which can slow the response time for recovery.
- **Emergency Response:** The Cuban government is focusing on saving lives and providing emergency aid, including medical assistance and restoring power in affected areas. Rescue operations are being coordinated by local authorities and emergency teams.

DRDO Successfully Conducts Maiden Test of Long-Range Land Attack Cruise Missile

India's Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) has successfully carried out the first flight test of its indigenous Long-Range Land Attack Cruise Missile (LRLACM), marking a significant milestone in India's defense capabilities.

Highlights

- **Successful Maiden Test:** DRDO conducted the inaugural flight test of the Long-Range Land Attack Cruise Missile (LRLACM) from the Integrated Test Range in Chandipur, Odisha. The missile was launched from a mobile articulated launcher and met all primary mission objectives.
- **Defense Minister's Response:** Defence Minister Rajnath Singh congratulated DRDO, the Armed Forces, and the defense industry for this achievement, calling it a step forward in India's indigenous missile development.
- **Monitoring and Performance:** The test was monitored by multiple sensors, including radar, electro-optical tracking systems, and telemetry, to ensure

comprehensive data collection throughout the flight path. The missile, designed with advanced avionics and software, performed as expected.

Background

- **Development of LRLACM:** The Long-Range Land Attack Cruise Missile was developed by DRDO's Aeronautical Development Establishment in Bengaluru, with collaboration from other DRDO labs and Indian industries. It forms a part of India's ongoing effort to enhance its long-range strike capabilities with indigenous technologies.
- **Significance of Indigenous Cruise Missiles:** Indigenous development of cruise missiles boosts India's self-reliance in defense and minimizes dependence on foreign suppliers. Cruise missiles like LRLACM enhance the country's strategic capabilities by providing precise, long-range attack options.

Explanation and Significance

- **Advancement in Defense Technology:** The successful test highlights DRDO's growing expertise in missile technology, particularly in developing long-range, precision-strike systems. This capability is crucial for India's strategic defense and deterrence posture.
- **Strengthening Indigenous Capabilities:** The development of LRLACM aligns with India's "Atmanirbhar Bharat" (Self-Reliant India) initiative, promoting indigenous defense production. This success could pave the way for further advancements in cruise missile technology and development programs.
- **Enhanced Surveillance and Accuracy:** Equipped with sophisticated avionics and software, LRLACM ensures better accuracy, reliability, and real-time tracking, enabling India to conduct more effective and precise military operations.

Practice questions:

1. Consider the following statements regarding the minority status of educational institutions:

1. The founder's identity is critical in determining an institution's minority status.
2. Government regulation of minority institutions is permissible if it does not infringe minority rights.

Which of these statements is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

2. Consider the following statements regarding Tamil Nadu's initiatives to support its start-up ecosystem:

Statement-I: The Tamil Nadu government is establishing Global Startup Coordination Centres internationally to connect local start-ups with global markets.

Statement-II: These centres will be set up only in European countries to ensure maximum reach and market expansion.

Which one of the following is correct in respect of the above statements?

- (a) Both Statement-I and Statement-II are correct, and Statement-II explains Statement-I.
- (b) Both Statement-I and Statement-II are correct, but Statement-II does not explain Statement-I.
- (c) Statement-I is correct, but Statement-II is incorrect.
- (d) Statement-I is incorrect, but Statement-II is correct.

3. In Haiti, the Transitional Presidential Council was created to:

- (a) Implement new education policies
- (b) Oversee political leadership transitions and elections
- (c) Rehabilitate the national economy
- (d) Regulate the country's media industry

4. With reference to Aligarh Muslim University's minority status, consider the following events:

1. The 1967 Supreme Court ruling in S. Azeez Basha vs Union of India
2. The AMU (Amendment) Act, 1981, passed by Parliament
3. The recent Supreme Court judgment revisiting AMU's minority status

What is the correct chronological sequence of the above events?

- (a) 1-2-3
- (b) 2-1-3
- (c) 3-2-1
- (d) 1-3-2

5. Which of the following statements about Haribodhini Ekadasi is correct?

- (a) It is exclusively celebrated in India
- (b) It emphasizes the unity between humans and nature
- (c) It marks the birth of the Tulsi plant
- (d) None of the above

