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KERALAM

Context

- The Kerala Legislative Assembly, in a unanimous decision, passed a resolution proposing a **Constitutional amendment** to change the **name of the State from 'Kerala' to 'Keralam'**.

About

- The resolution called **for invoking Article 3 of the Indian Constitution** to effectuate this change in the First Schedule.
- Despite **'Keralam' being the Malayalam** name of the State, it continues to be officially recorded as 'Kerala'.
 - The resolution aims to align the **official name with the Malayalam pronunciation**.

Background

- Origin of the name:** The earliest epigraphic record that mentions Kerala is emperor **Asoka's Rock Edict II of 257 BC**.
 - The inscription refers to the local ruler as **Keralaputra** ("son of Kerala"), and also "**son of Chera**" referring to the Chera dynasty.
- At present the **First Schedule** of the Constitution also specifies the name of the State as 'Kerala.'

Formation of the Modern State

- The people speaking Malayalam had been ruled by various kings and princely states in the region.
 - In the **1920s, the Aikya (unified) Kerala movement** gathered momentum and a demand for a separate state for Malayalam-speaking people came up.
 - It aimed at the integration of Malabar, Kochi and Travancore into one territory.
- After independence**, merger and integration of princely states was a major step towards the formation of the state of Kerala.
 - On 1 July, 1949, the two states of Travancore and Kochi were integrated, heralding the birth of the Travancore-Cochin State.
- When it was decided to reorganize states on a linguistic basis, the **State Reorganisation Commission** of the Union Government recommended creation of the state of Kerala.
- Later the **State Reorganisation Commission (Fazl Ali Commission)** recommended reorganizing states on a linguistic basis and creation of the state of Kerala.

- The state of Kerala came into being on **November 1, 1956**. In Malayalam, the state was referred to as Keralam, while in English it was Kerala.

Process to rename a state in India

- Article 3** authorizes the Parliament to:
 - form a new state by separation of territory from any state or by uniting two or more states or parts of states or by uniting any territory to a part of any state;
 - increase the area of any state;
 - diminish the area of any state;
 - alter the boundaries of any state; and
 - alter the name of any state.
- However, **Article 3** lays down two conditions in this regard:
 - a bill contemplating the above changes can be introduced in the Parliament only with the prior recommendation of the President;
 - and before recommending the bill, the President has to refer the same to the state legislature concerned for expressing its views within a specified period.
- The **President (or Parliament) is not bound** by the views of the state legislature and may either accept or reject them.
- Moreover, the **Indian Constitution (Article 4)** itself declares that laws made for alteration of names of existing states (under Articles 3) are not to be considered as amendments of the Constitution under **Article 368**.
 - Such laws can be passed by a simple majority and by the ordinary legislative process.

Source: TH

MATERNITY LEAVE IN SURROGACY

In News

Central Civil Services (Leave) (Amendment) Rules, 2024 has been notified to allow Maternity leave in case of **surrogacy**.

Maternity leave in case of surrogacy : Latest Developments

- Maternity Leave for Surrogate Mothers:** The **Central Civil Services (Leave) Rules, 1972**, have been updated to allow 'commissioning mothers' who opt for surrogacy 180 days of maternity leave.

- ◆ It is now extending childcare leave to commissioning mothers with less than two surviving children.
- ◆ Now both the surrogate mother and the commissioning mother can now avail 180 days of maternity leave.
 - This provision applies if either or both of them are government servants.
- **Paternity Leave for Commissioning Fathers:** The commissioning father who is a male government servant with less than two surviving children may be granted 15 days of paternity leave within six months from the date of delivery of the child.
- **Child Care Leave:** The existing rules allow child care leave for a maximum period of 730 days during an entire service.
 - ◆ This leave is granted to female government servants and single male government servants for taking care of their two eldest surviving children, including education, sickness, and other needs.

Do you know ?

- The "**surrogate mother**" shall mean the woman who bears the child on behalf of the commissioning mother
- The expression "**commissioning father**" would mean the intending father of the child born through surrogacy, the Personnel Ministry clarified in the amended rules.
- "**Commissioning mother**" means the intended mother of the child born through surrogacy.

Importance and Need

- As societal norms and family structures evolve, the concept of maternity leave has expanded to encompass situations where the biological mother may not be the one giving birth.
- The amended rules recognize the unique circumstances surrounding surrogacy and aim to provide equitable benefits to government employees.
- It is aimed at supporting mothers during the crucial period surrounding childbirth, ensuring their health and facilitating bonding with their newborns.
- It marks a pivotal step towards enhancing flexibility, promoting work-life balance, and ensuring efficient administration within the civil services sector.

Challenges

- Government started to acknowledge the need for maternity leave provisions in surrogacy

arrangements, there can still be **ambiguity or varying interpretations** across different jurisdictions or within organisations.

- A concern relates to potential workplace discrimination or **stigma** faced by women who opt for surrogacy.
- **Practical challenges** can also arise in the administration of maternity leave for surrogacy.
 - ◆ Documentation requirements, such as proof of surrogacy arrangements and birth certificates, can vary and may not always align seamlessly with existing leave policies.

Conclusion

- Maternity leave in cases of surrogacy presents unique challenges that require thoughtful consideration and proactive measures to address effectively. By ensuring legal clarity, providing robust emotional support, combating discrimination, streamlining administrative processes, and promoting public awareness, stakeholders can work towards creating an environment where all mothers, regardless of their method of childbirth, receive the necessary support and recognition they deserve.
- Ultimately, fostering inclusivity and understanding is essential in navigating the evolving landscape of family dynamics and reproductive rights in modern society.

Other related to laws

- The Maternity Benefits (Amendment) Act, 2017 extended the period of maternity leave for biological mothers
 - ◆ It also inserted a provision extending maternity leave for the first time to adoptive mothers.
 - ◆ The amendment revised Section 5 of the Act to **allow 26 weeks of paid leave** after childbirth to biological mothers who were previously entitled to only 12 weeks of maternity leave.
 - ◆ It is also inserted in Section 5(4) which stipulates that surrogate or adoptive mothers legally adopting a child below three months would be entitled to a maternity benefit period of 12 weeks from the date the child is handed over to the mother.
 - Notably, a woman adopting a child older than three months is not entitled to any such maternity leave.

Source:BS

STATE VISIT OF THE PRIME MINISTER OF BANGLADESH TO INDIA

Context

- The Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Haseena is on a state visit to India.

About

- The two sides signed key pacts including, increasing rail connectivity, boosting trade and having a 'green partnership'.
- India and Bangladesh pledged to **start negotiations on a comprehensive economic partnership agreement (CEPA)**; decided to launch a **medical e-visa facility** for Bangladesh citizens; agreed to send a technical team to discuss **Teesta river water-sharing**.

Highlights of India Bangladesh Relations

- **Independence and Liberation War:** India played a crucial role in Bangladesh's independence in 1971, supporting the Bengali nationalist movement against Pakistani rule.
 - ♦ This historic event laid the foundation for strong bilateral ties.
- **Land Boundary Agreement (LBA):** In 2015, both countries resolved long-standing border issues by exchanging enclaves and simplifying their international border, which had remained unresolved since partition in 1947.
- **Connectivity:** Five pre-1965 rail links have been rehabilitated between India and Bangladesh.
 - ♦ There are currently three railway trains operating between the two countries – Maitri Express ; Bandhan Express ; and Mitali Express.
 - ♦ The inauguration of Akhaura-Agartala cross-border rail link is a crucial step towards enhancing connectivity of northeastern India with Bangladesh.
- **Economic Relations:** Bangladesh is India's biggest trade partner in South Asia and India is the second biggest trade partner of Bangladesh in Asia.
 - ♦ India is Bangladesh's largest export destination in Asia, with approx USD 2 billion of Bangladeshi exports to India in FY 2022-23.
 - ♦ In FY 2022-23, the total bilateral trade has been reported as USD 15.9 billion.

- **Trade Agreements:** The two countries are members of various regional trade agreements such as the **Asia Pacific Trade Agreement (APTA)**, the **SAARC Preferential Trade Agreement (SAPTA)** and the **Agreement on South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA)** which govern the tariff regimes for trade.
- **Regional Cooperation:** Both countries are active members of regional organizations like SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation) and BIMSTEC (Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation), promoting regional integration and cooperation.
- **Various Joint exercises** take place between the two countries:
 - ♦ **Exercise Sampriti** (Army) and
 - ♦ **Exercise Milan** (Navy).
- **In the energy sector**, Bangladesh imports nearly 2,000 megawatts of electricity from India.

Challenges

- **Border Issues:** Although the Land Boundary Agreement in 2015 resolved many longstanding border disputes, there are still occasional issues related to border security and illegal crossings that strain relations.
- **Water Sharing:** Disputes over the sharing of common rivers, such as the Teesta River, remain unresolved.
- **Rohingya issue:** The Bangladesh government aims for the peaceful repatriation of Rohingyas to Myanmar, but it's talks with the military junta have been unsuccessful so far.
 - ♦ Bangladesh seeks India's cooperation to influence Myanmar, but the government, asserts that it will deport Rohingyas from its mainland.
- **Trade Imbalance:** While trade between India and Bangladesh has grown significantly, there remains a trade imbalance where India exports more to Bangladesh than it imports.
 - ♦ This led to economic tensions and protectionist measures.
- **Security Concerns:** Issues related to border security, cross-border smuggling, and occasional incidents involving extremist groups pose security challenges for both countries, requiring continued cooperation and vigilance.

- **China Factor:** India's concern is the deepening relationship between Bangladesh and China, marked by the substantial Chinese investments in infrastructure in recent years.

Way Ahead

- India considers **Bangladesh a critical ally in the region.**
 - ♦ a 4,096-km border, the India-Bangladesh border is the longest land boundary India has with any of its neighbours.
- Over the years, India and Bangladesh have forged a multifaceted relationship, marked by a shared history, culture, and geographical proximity.
- The foreign policy alignment between the two nations promises increased collaboration in traditional and new areas, and provides an opportunity for the two countries to address unresolved conflicts.
- Both the countries are poised to take forward discussions on a FTA to enhance their economic partnership and boost investments

Source: TH

- The main objective of the **World Crafts Council** is to strengthen the status of crafts in cultural and economic life.
- The Council aims to promote fellowship among craftspersons by offering them encouragement, help, and advice.

Source: TH

UNESCO RECOGNITION FOR KOZHIKODE

Context

- Recently, **Kozhikode** in north Kerala, known for its rich cultural heritage, was officially declared as **India's first UNESCO 'City of Literature'**.

About the UNESCO Recognition

- Earlier, in October 2023, Kozhikode secured a place in the **'Literature' category** of the **UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN)**. It acknowledges the city's profound cultural and literary contributions.
- **Kozhikode** joins the ranks of other global cities recognized by UNESCO for their commitment to culture and creativity.

Kozhikode's Literary Legacy

- Kozhikode (aka **Calicut during British rule**) has a vibrant literary tradition. It served as a gateway to the coast for various civilizations, including Persians, Arabs, Chinese, and Europeans.
 - ♦ The city is renowned for its role as an ancient trading hub and the place where Portuguese explorer **Vasco da Gama first landed in India in 1498.**
- Over 500 libraries, and 70 publishing houses, which bring out 400 to 500 books a year, operate in Kozhikode, fostering a love for literature and knowledge.
- The city is committed to promoting its writers: the **P.A. Lalitha Award**, the **S.K. Pottekatt Literature Award** and the **Mathrubhumi Literary Award** are all ceremonies that highlight local talent and encourage creative innovation.
 - ♦ Legendary Malayalam writer **M. T. Vasudevan Nair** has strong ties to the city, contributing significantly to its literary landscape.

NEWS IN SHORT

SRINAGAR GETS TAG OF 'WORLD CRAFT CITY'

Context

- Srinagar has become the **fourth Indian city** to be recognised as a 'World Craft City' by the World Craft Council (WCC).
 - ♦ Previously **Jaipur, Malappuram and Mysore** have been recognised as **World Craft Cities from India.**

About

- The WCC listed a number of craft products of Kashmir including **Papier-Mache, Hand Knotted Carpets, Pashmina Shawls, Kani and Sozni work.**
- The achievement follows Srinagar's recognition as a United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) **Creative City for Crafts in 2021.**

World Craft Council (WCC)

- The World Crafts Council was founded at the **1st World Crafts Council General Assembly in New York in 1964.**

Celebrating 'City of Literature' Day

- Starting next year, **June 23** will be celebrated as the **'City of Literature' Day** in Kozhikode.

- On this day, special awards will be announced in six categories, honouring literary achievements.

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

- It was formed in 1945, is a specialised agency of the United Nations (UN) based in Paris.
- It has 195 member states and ten associate members. **India is a founding member of the Organisation.**
- It contributes to **peace and security** by promoting international cooperation in **education, sciences, culture, communication and information.**
- It promotes **knowledge sharing** and the **free flow of ideas** to accelerate mutual understanding and a more perfect knowledge of each other's lives.

UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN)

- It was created in 2004 **to promote cooperation among cities** that have identified creativity as a strategic factor for sustainable urban development.
 - It now includes 350 cities in over a hundred countries.
 - Prague was the first city** to be honoured with the title of 'City of Literature' by UNESCO in 2014.
 - Before Kozhikode, UNESCO listed **Gwalior, Mumbai, Chennai, Hyderabad, Varanasi, Jaipur, and Srinagar** to the Creative Cities Network (UCCN).
- It was launched to promote UNESCO's goals of cultural diversity and strengthen resilience to threats such as climate change, rising inequality, and rapid urbanisation.

Source: ET

BIRTH ANNIVERSARY OF SANT KABIR DAS

Context

- Recently, the Prime Minister of India paid his respectful tribute to Sant Kabir Das on his birth anniversary.

About the Kabir Das Jayanti (aka Kabir Prakat Diwas)

- It is celebrated annually on the **full moon of Jyeshtha**. The exact details of Kabir's birth are

obscured by time, but most scholars **estimate it to be around 1398 CE.**

- Kabir's enduring legacy lies in his poignant poetry, written in simple yet profound Hindi.
- Influenced by the **Bhakti movement**, his compositions—known as **'Bhajans'** and **'Dohas'**—explore themes of universal love, social justice, and self-realisation.
 - He was best known for his **two-line couplets, known as 'Kabir Ke Dohes'**.
- Kabir Granthawali, Anurag Sagar, Bijak, Sakhi Granth, Panch Vani;
- The **major part** of his work was **collected by the fifth Sikh guru—Guru Arjan Dev.**

Teaching of Kabir

- Kabir's teachings were based on a **complete, indeed vehement, rejection of the major religious traditions.**
- His teachings openly ridiculed all forms of external worship of both Brahmanical Hinduism and Islam, the pre-eminence of the priestly classes and the caste system.
 - Kabir believed in a formless Supreme God and preached that the only path to salvation was through Bhakti or devotion.

Legacy

- Kabir's legacy is still going on through a sect known as **Panth of Kabir**, a religious community that considers him as the founder.
 - Kabir Das Jayanti honours Kabir's enduring legacy of love, tolerance, and social harmony.
- His teachings, which emphasise the unity of God and the futility of religious divisions, continue to inspire people across generations.

Source: IE

KAMAKHYA TEMPLE

Context

- Devotees from across the nation are flocking to the Kamakhya temple in Assam's Guwahati for the **commencement of the annual Ambubachi Mela.**

About

- Kamakhya Temple is **one of 51 Shaktipeeths** in India that is located atop **Nilachal Hills in Assam.**

- The temple is dedicated to **Mother Goddess Kamakhya**, who is another form of Goddess Parvati.
- The Ambubachi Mela is an annual Hindu fair organised at Kamakhya Temple. This fest marks the celebration of the yearly menstruation course of goddess Maa Kamakhya.
- **Architecture:** It had been modelled out of a combination of two different styles, namely, the traditional nagara or North Indian and saracenic or Mughal.
 - ♦ Thus, being an unusual combination which came into its existence on this famous sakti shrine of India, it has been named as the **Nilachala Style** of Architecture.

Source: TOI

'TWIN TEST' FOR GRANTING BAIL UNDER PMLA

Context

- The Delhi High Court stayed the bail granted to Delhi Chief Minister by trial court under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA).
 - ♦ The ED challenged the trial court's order on the ground that the court had **failed to apply the 'twin test'** for granting bail under PMLA.

About

- **Section 45 of the PMLA**, which deals with bail, first states that **no court can grant bail for offences under this law**, and then proceeds to mention a **few exceptions**.
 - ♦ The negative language in the provision itself shows **that bail is not the rule but the exception under PMLA**.
- The provision makes it **mandatory to hear the public prosecutor** in all bail applications, and when the prosecutor opposes bail, the **court is required to apply a twin test**.
 - ♦ These two conditions are: (i) that there are "reasonable grounds for believing that [the accused] is not guilty of such offence"; and (ii) that "he is not likely to commit any offence while on bail".
- There are **similar provisions in several other laws** that deal with serious offences — for example, Section 36AC of The Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940, Section 37 of The Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985,

and Section 43D(5) of the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act, 1967.

Source: IE

GOODS AND SERVICES TAX (GST) COUNCIL

In News

- The 53rd meeting of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) Council recently concluded.

About Goods and Services Tax (GST) Council

- The GST Council, established in **2016** through the **101st Constitutional Amendment Act**, is a unique constitutional body that plays a pivotal role in shaping the GST framework and ensuring its smooth implementation.
- The GST Council is **enshrined in Article 279A of the Constitution**, solidifying its authority and importance.
- It is **chaired by the Union Finance Minister and includes the Union Minister of State (Revenue)**, along with the Finance or Taxation Minister or any other nominated minister from each state government.
- Decisions are made through voting, with the Centre holding one-third of the voting power and states holding two-thirds. This ensures a cooperative federalism approach.
- The Council's primary mandate is to make recommendations to the Union and state governments on various aspects of GST, including tax rates, exemptions, thresholds, and procedures.

Source: TH

RBI REVISED PRIORITY SECTOR LENDING GUIDELINES

In News

- RBI has revised its **priority sector lending guidelines** to encourage banks to provide small loans in economically disadvantaged districts with low average loan sizes.

About Priority Sector lending

- Priority sector lending (PSL) in India refers to the mandatory lending targets set by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) for banks and financial institutions to ensure that certain sectors of the economy receive adequate credit and financial support.

- The objective of priority sector lending is to promote inclusive growth, reduce regional imbalances, and support marginalised sections of society.
- **Specified sectors Agriculture**, MSMEs, social infrastructure, renewable energy, and others as priority sectors based on their social and economic significance.

Latest Guidelines

- The central bank has assigned a higher weight of **125% to the incremental priority sector credit in the districts** with per capita priority sector credit less than Rs 9000, with effect from FY25.
- This effectively means that if a bank gives Rs 100 loan in low credit flow district, it will be considered as Rs 125 priority sector loan.
 - ♦ Earlier from FY22 onwards till date, RBI followed a rule of higher weight of 125% in districts where per capita priority sector credit flow was Rs 6000.
- There is also a **dis-incentive framework** for districts with comparatively higher flow of priority sector credit in which a lower **90% weight** is assigned for districts where the per capita priority sector credit flow is greater than Rs 42,000.
 - ♦ This threshold was revised from Rs 25000 earlier.
- The weight is maintained at 100% for all other districts not mentioned by the central bank.

Source: TOI

INDUS WATER TREATY

Context

- A delegation from Pakistan was flown to Jammu and Kashmir's Kishtwar district to inspect power projects set up on the rivers covered under the Indus Water Treaty (IWT) of 1960.

About

- The delegates will visit 850 megawatts (MW) **Ratle hydroelectric power project** site at **Drabshalla** and the 1,000 MW Pakal Dul project on **river Marusudar**.
 - ♦ Both these projects are over a tributary of the **Chenab river**.
- Pakistan has formally raised objections to other projects in the Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh, which include 10 hydroelectric power

projects of **Durbuk Shyok, Nimu Chilling, Kiru, Tamasha, Kalaroos-II, Baltikulan Small, Kargil Hunderman, Phagla, Kulan Ramwari and Mandi**.

What is the Indus Water Treaty?

- In **1960**, India and Pakistan signed the Indus Waters Treaty with the **World Bank** as a signatory of the pact.
- Under the treaty, **India got control** over the three eastern rivers **Beas, Ravi, and Sutlej** while **Pakistan got control** of the western rivers **Indus, Jhelum, and the Chenab**.
- According to the treaty, India has the right to generate hydroelectricity through the **run-of-the-river (RoR) projects on the western rivers** which are subject to specific criteria for design and operation.

Division of rivers as per Indus Waters Treaty

Eastern rivers to India: Sutlej, Beas, Ravi | Western rivers to Pakistan: Chenab, Jhelum and Indus



Source: TH

BANNING LTTE UNDER UAPA

In News

An **Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA)** tribunal has issued show cause notice to the **Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE)**.

About Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE)

- It is a militant organisation which was established in 1976 by Velupillai Prabhakaran.
- From 1983 onwards, it was fighting an armed struggle with the army of Sri Lanka in pursuit of their demand for a **'Tamil Eelam'** or **separate country for the Tamilians of Sri Lanka**.
- India signed an accord with Sri Lanka and sent troops to stabilise relations between the Sri Lankan government and the Tamils.
 - ♦ Eventually, the Indian Army got into a fight with the LTTE.

- In 1989, the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) pulled out of Sri Lanka without attaining its objective. The Sri Lankan crisis continued to be violent.
- However, international actors, particularly the Scandinavian countries such as Norway and Iceland tried to bring the warring groups back to negotiations.
 - ♦ Finally, the armed conflict came to an end, as the **LTTE was vanquished in 2009**.

Ban in india

- In May 2024 ,the Union Government issued a notification banning the LTTE saying it was of the

opinion that the organisation was still indulging in the activities which were prejudicial to the integrity and security of the country.

- The Union Government constituted the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Tribunal, under section 5 of the **Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act 1967** for adjudicating whether or not there was sufficient cause for declaring the LTTE as an unlawful association.
- The Government of Tamil Nadu also notified the ban on LTTE

Source:TH

