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CLASSICAL STATUS FOR FIVE LANGUAGES

In News

- The Union Cabinet recently approved classical status for five languages—Marathi, Bengali, Assamese, Pali, and Prakrit.

About classical status

- The designation of a language as classical aims to honor its historical significance and its role in preserving India's cultural heritage.

- These languages have been crucial in safeguarding ancient knowledge, philosophies, and values over thousands of years.

  - **Previous Declarations:** Other classical languages declared include Tamil, Sanskrit, Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam, and Odia.

Criteria for Classical Languages:

- Initially established in 2004, classical languages must have:

- A history of over a thousand years.

- A body of ancient literature viewed as valuable.

- An original literary tradition.

- **Changes:** In 2005, criteria were modified to require a history of 1,500 to 2,000 years and acknowledged potential discontinuity with modern forms.

  - **Revised Criteria:** The Linguistic Experts Committee modified criteria in July 2024, allowing for a broader definition, including:

    - Knowledge texts beyond poetry.
    - Historical inscriptional evidence.
    - Acknowledgment of modern languages' connections to classical forms.

Significance:

- The recognition of languages as Classical Languages will create significant employment opportunities, particularly in academia and research.

- It will also generate jobs in archiving, translation, publishing, and digital media through the preservation and digitization of ancient texts.

- This initiative encourages scholarly research and revitalization of ancient knowledge systems, reinforcing India's intellectual and cultural identity. Additionally, it fosters pride and ownership among language speakers, promoting national integration and supporting the vision of a self-reliant, culturally rooted India.

- Central government funding is provided for research, translation, and preservation efforts across classical languages.

Related Steps

- The Ministry of Education has implemented several initiatives to promote Classical Languages:

  - **Central Universities:** Three were established in 2020 to promote Sanskrit.

  - **Central Institute of Classical Tamil**: Created to facilitate the translation of ancient Tamil texts, promote research, and offer courses for students and scholars.

  - **Centres for Excellence:** Set up for Kannada, Telugu, Malayalam, and Odia studies under the Central Institute of Indian Languages in Mysuru.

  - **Awards:** National and international awards have been introduced to recognize achievements in Classical Languages.

  - **Additional Benefits**: Includes National Awards for Classical Languages, university chairs, and dedicated centers for promotion.

Conclusion and Way Forward

- The Union Cabinet's decision to grant Classical Language status to Marathi, Pali, Prakrit, Assamese, and Bengali highlights their vital role in India's cultural and intellectual heritage.

- This recognition not only celebrates their historical and literary importance but also demonstrates the government's commitment to preserving linguistic diversity.

- By safeguarding these languages for future generations, the government reinforces a vision of cultural self-reliance and national integration, aligning with the goals of Atmanirbhar Bharat and a culturally rooted India.

Source :TH

RELIEF UNDER ARTICLE 21 SUPERIOR TO PMLA CONDITIONS

Context

- A Delhi court granted bail to AAP leader Satyendar Jain, under **Article 21** of the Constitution, arrested in a money laundering case.

About

- The Delhi court order highlighted that the constitutional conditions had a mitigating effect on the statutory conditions under **Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA)** when liberty was at the core.

- The relief granted under **Article 21 (right to life and personal liberty)** of the Constitution pertaining to delay in trial and long incarceration is superior to the twin conditions under **Section 45** of the **PMLA.**
  - Article 21 applies irrespective of the nature of the crime.

Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) 2002

- It was enacted by Parliament of India under **Article 253 of Constitution in 2002** to prevent money laundering and provide for the confiscation of property derived from or involved in money laundering.
- PMLA and the Rules notified there under came into force with effect from **2005,** and it was further **amended in 2009 and in 2012.**
- **Provisions:**
  - **Sec. 3 of PMLA defines the offense of money laundering** as any process or activity connected with the proceeds of crime and projecting it as untainted property.
  - **Prescribe obligation:** PMLA prescribes the obligation of banking companies, financial institutions and intermediaries for verification and maintenance of records of the identity of all its clients.
  - **Empowerment of officers:** PMLA empowers **Directorate of Enforcement** to carry out investigations in cases involving offense of money laundering and also to attach the property involved in money laundering.
  - **Special Courts:** It envisages the designation of one or more courts of sessions as Special Court to try the offenses punishable under PMLA.
  - **Agreement for Central Government:** It allows the Central Government to enter into an agreement with the Government of any country outside India for enforcing the provisions of the PMLA.

Bail Provisions under PMLA

- The twin conditions of bail under **Section 45** of the PMLA pose stringent thresholds for an accused.
- **For one,** the person has to prove in court that he or she is prima facie innocent of the offense.
- **Secondly,** the accused should be able to convince the judge he would not commit any offense while on bail.
  - The burden of proof is entirely on the incarcerated accused.

Supreme Court's Take on the Law

- The Supreme Court recently held that constitutional courts cannot allow provisions of the PMLA to become instruments in the hands of the **Enforcement Directorate** to continue incarceration for a long time.
- **To address concerns raised by ED** regarding possible tampering with witnesses or evidence, the court imposed strict conditions on bail, including:
  - regular appearance before the deputy director of ED;
  - appearance before the investigating officer of the scheduled offenses;
  - restraint against contacting any prosecution witnesses or victims related to the scheduled offenses;
  - full cooperation with the trial and a refrain from asking for adjournments.

SC knocks back on law

On incarceration
These stringent provisions regarding the grant of bail, such as Section 45(1)(iii) of the PMLA, cannot become a tool which can be used to incarcerate the accused without trial for an unreasonably long time.

On speedy trials
The expeditious disposal of the trial is also warranted considering the higher threshold set for the grant of bail. Hence, the requirement of expeditious disposal of cases must be read into these statutes.

On courts granting bail
If the judges conclude that there is no possibility of a trial concluding in a reasonable time, the power of granting bail can always be exercised by the constitutional courts.

On constitutional rights
If constitutional courts do not exercise their jurisdiction in such cases, the rights of the undertrials under Article 21 of the Constitution will be defeated.

Conclusion

- The court decision underscores the importance of preventing prolonged incarceration and delayed trials, balancing statutory conditions with constitutional rights.
- Ultimately, the balance between law enforcement powers and individual rights remains a critical aspect of this legal framework, ensuring justice while safeguarding fundamental liberties.

Source: TH

INDIA'S SPORTS CULTURE AND CHALLENGES

Context

- The Union Minister for Youth Affairs and Sports said that **India is set to become one among the top ten performing countries** in the world in the field of sports.

India's Sports Landscape

- **Traditional games** like wrestling, kabaddi, archery, and various forms of martial arts were not just physical activities but also cultural rituals.

- **During the colonial era,** the British introduced modern sports like cricket, football, hockey, and tennis to India.
  - As a result, infrastructure for these sports began to develop.

- **Post-independence,** India witnessed unsteady growth in sports infrastructure.
  - However, the pace of development remained relatively slow, and the infrastructure was limited primarily to a few metropolitan areas.

- **During the late 20th and the early 21st century** India started recognizing the importance of sports infrastructure in nurturing talent.
  - India hosted major international events such as the **Asian Games in 1982** and the **Cricket World Cup in 1987,** which necessitated the construction of world-class sporting infrastructure.

- Over time, with the **advent of technology,** the approach towards sports infrastructure underwent a remarkable transformation.

India's Performance in International Events

- The **Paris Olympics** ended with India securing **six medals** — one silver and five bronze — to place **71st in the medals tally**.
  - It was ranked below nations with much smaller populations including **Georgia, Kazakhstan and North Korea.**
  - **The United States,** with less than a quarter of India's population, topped the charts with **126 medals followed by China with 91.**

- India has now won just **41 Olympic medals** in total since its debut in **1900**, all at the Summer Games.

- The country's performance led to **many questions about the need for a sporting culture.**

Reasons for the Lack of success by Indian Athletes

- **Lack of Infrastructure and Training Facilities:** While improvements have been made, many areas still lack quality sports infrastructure and training facilities, access to modern training equipment and coaching is essential for developing elite athletes.

- **Insufficient Funding:** Many athletes struggle to secure adequate funding, which limits their training opportunities and participation in international competitions.

- **Focus on Popular Sports:** The overwhelming focus on cricket often overshadows other sports, leading to a lack of resources and attention for disciplines like athletics, swimming, and others.

- **Lack of Grassroots Development:** There's a need for a stronger grassroots sports culture that identifies and nurtures talent from a young age.

- **Competition Level:** Indian athletes often face stiff competition from countries with a more established sports culture and better funding, making it challenging to achieve podium finishes.

Initiatives Taken by Government

- **Khelo India:** To promote sports at the grassroots level. It includes talent identification, coaching, sports infrastructure development, and organizing competitions at school and university levels.

- **National Sports Policy:** To enhance the quality of sports training, promote participation, and increase the number of athletes competing internationally.

- **Sports Authority of India (SAI):** A key institution responsible for nurturing young talent and providing training facilities.

- **National Sports Awards:** The awards are given annually to recognize and reward excellence in sports.

- **Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay National Welfare Fund For Sportspersons (PDUNWFS):** It was set up in 1982 with a view to assisting outstanding Sportspersons of yesteryear.

- **National Sports Development Fund:** The Fund helps sportspersons excel by providing them opportunities to train under coaches of international repute.
  - It also provides financial assistance for development of infrastructure and other activities for promotion of sports.

- **Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOPS):** To identify and support athletes with potential to win medals at the Olympic Games.
  - It provides financial assistance for training, coaching, and participation in international competitions.

- **Mission Olympic Cell (MOC):** A body within the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports to monitor and provide support for athletes' training and preparation for the Olympics under the TOPS.

- **National Sports Federations (NSFs):** The government recognizes and funds NSFs, which are responsible for promoting and developing their respective sports.

Measures that can be taken

- **Funding:** Increase investment in sports facilities, especially in rural and underserved areas.

- **Identification of Talent:** Implement sports programs in schools to identify and nurture talent from a young age.

- **Encouragement to other sports:** Promote a wider variety of sports beyond cricket, such as athletics, swimming, and indigenous sports.

- **Leagues and Competitions:** Establish professional leagues and competitions in lesser-known sports to boost participation and viewership.

- **Corporate Sponsorships:** Encourage partnerships between private companies and sports organizations to provide financial backing.

- **Role Models:** Highlight successful athletes to inspire youngsters to pursue sports.

Conclusion

- It is good to be **critical about our performance** because it fuels the hunger in athletes and also pushes administrators to do better.

- In recent years, the **paradigm shift in India's approach** towards sports infrastructure has been remarkable.

- The concerted efforts by the government, private entities, and various sports bodies reflect a commitment to bolstering the country's sporting ecosystem.

- This evolution signifies **India's aspiration to emerge as a global powerhouse in sports** and marks a pivotal moment in the nation's sporting history.

Source: PIB

8 YEARS OF REGIONAL CONNECTIVITY SCHEME (RCS) – UDAN

Context

- The UDAN scheme has completed **8 years of Implementation**.

About

- The Regional Connectivity Scheme (RCS) - UDAN (Ude Desh Ka Aam Nagrik) is a component of **India's National Civil Aviation Policy (NCAP) 2016**, launched by the Ministry of Civil Aviation (MoCA) in 2016, with a 10-year vision.

- It aims to **improve infrastructure and connectivity** in India, especially in remote and underserved regions.

- The first UDAN flight took off in 2017, **connecting Shimla to New Delhi**.

Features of the UDAN Scheme

- **A Market-Driven Approach:** Airlines assess demand on specific routes and submit proposals during bidding rounds.

  - The scheme incentivizes airlines to connect underserved regions by offering them support through Viability Gap Funding (VGF) and various concessions.

- **Support Mechanisms:**

  - **Airport Operators:** They waive landing and parking charges for RCS flights, and the Airports Authority of India (AAI) does not levy Terminal Navigation Landing Charges (TNLC) on these flights.

  - **Union Government:** For the first three years, excise duty on Aviation Turbine Fuel (ATF) purchased at RCS airports capped at 2%.

  - **State Governments:** States have committed to reducing VAT on ATF to 1% or less for ten years and providing essential services such as security, fire services, and utility services at reduced rates.

Significance of the Scheme

- **Fuelling Growth of the Aviation Industry:** Over the past seven years, it has catalysed the emergence of many new and successful airlines.

  - It has also generated a rising demand for new aircraft of all sizes, broadening the spectrum of planes deployed on RCS routes.

- **Promoting Tourism:** Initiatives like UDAN 3.0 have introduced tourism routes connecting several destinations in the Northeast region, while UDAN 5.1 is focused on expanding helicopter services in hilly areas to stimulate tourism, hospitality, and local economic growth.

- **Boosting Air Connectivity:** RCS-UDAN has connected 34 states and Union Territories across the country.

  - A total of 86 aerodromes have been operationalized, including ten in the Northeast region and two heliports.

- **Number of Airports Increased:** The number of operational airports in the country has doubled from 74 in 2014 to 157 in 2024 and the aim is to increase this number to 350-400 by 2047.

Conclusion

- UDAN is not just a scheme; it is a movement aimed at empowering every Indian with the gift of flight.

- Enhancing regional connectivity and ensuring affordability has fulfilled countless citizens' aspirations while stimulating economic growth and job creation.

- The UDAN scheme remains a game changer for Indian aviation, contributing significantly to India's vision of a connected and prosperous nation.

Source: PIB

STRESS FACTORS FOR INDIAN RAILWAYS

Context

- The recent series of train accidents in India has highlighted the urgent need for a series of reforms in Indian railways.

About

- The number of railway accidents dropped from 1,390 per year in the 1960s to **80 per year** in the last decade.

- However there were still 48 **consequential accidents** in 2022-23, and 40 in 2023-2024.
  - A consequential accident injures and/or kills people, damages railway infrastructure, and disrupts rail traffic.

Stress factors for Indian Railways

- **High Operating Ratio (OR):** The OR for 2024-2025 estimated at ₹98.2, meaning the Railways spends ₹98.2 for every ₹100 earned, leaving little for capital expenditure (capex).

- **Accidents and Safety Issues:** Despite a drop in accidents from 1,390 per year in the 1960s to 80 per year recently, there were around 40 consequential accidents in 2023-2024.
  - Human error is a major cause, with 55.8% of accidents due to Railway staff failures, 28.4% due to non-staff errors, and 6.2% due to equipment failures.

- **Delays in Dedicated Freight Corridors (DFCs):** Only the eastern DFC is fully operational; the western DFC is partly ready.
  - East coast, east-west, and north-south corridors are still in the planning stage, limiting freight capacity expansion.

- **Financial Losses in Passenger Services:** In 2019-2020, passenger services earned ₹50,000 crore but faced a **loss of ₹63,364 crore.**

- The challenge of balancing affordable travel with profitability persists, especially with growing costs from wages, pensions, and fuel.

- **Stressful Working Conditions:** Locomotive pilots face 12-hour shifts, especially in high-freight zones, leading to stressful conditions.
  - Increased congestion and operational pressures add to the difficulties in maintaining physical capacity.

- **Reliance on Freight Services:** According to **NITI Aayog**, the rates for freight service which accounts for **65%** of total revenue has increased more than three times as fast as passenger rates between 2009 and 2019.

Steps Taken by the Government

- **Integration of Railway and Union Budget:** In 2016-2017, the government merged the Railway budget with the Union budget, providing easier access to gross budgetary support.

- **Improved Safety Measures:** Investments in modern signaling systems, better track maintenance, and upgraded safety protocols.

- **Introduction of New Trains:** Introduction of high-speed Vande Bharat trains to increase passenger revenue and improve service on high-traffic routes.

- **Automatic Train Protection (ATP) system** to help a vehicle steer clear of another vehicle or obstacles.

What is a collision avoidance system?

- It is a collection of technologies to **help a vehicle steer clear of another vehicle** or obstacles.
  - For example, a CAS device fit on a train will be designed to help that train avoid colliding with another train.

- Most CAS devices **require two types of information**, preferably in real-time: the locations of all the other vehicles and the location of this vehicle relative to those vehicles.

What is 'Kavach'?

- Kavach is an indigenously developed **Automatic Train Protection (ATP) system**.

- It is a set of **electronic devices and Radio Frequency Identification devices** installed in locomotives, in the signaling system as well the tracks, that talk to each other using **ultra high radio frequencies** to control the brakes of trains and also alert drivers, all based on the logic programmed into them.

- **It activates the train braking system automatically** if the driver fails to control the train as per the speed restrictions.

Way Ahead

- **Infrastructure Investments:** Increase capital expenditure for track renewal and maintenance, as the current outlay of 7.2% is insufficient.

- **Lowering Operating Ratio:** Enhance internal revenue generation through better pricing models for both passenger and freight services.

- **Improved Working Conditions:** Ensure better scheduling and training for staff to minimize human error and prevent accidents.

- **Reduce fuel costs** by increasing electrification and exploring alternative energy sources to lower operational costs.

Source: TH

═══ NEWS IN SHORT ═══

INDIA'S PROGRESS FOR ELIMINATING KALA-AZAR DISEASE

In News

- India is on track to eliminate Kala-azar as a public health problem; it has maintained case numbers below one per 10,000 people for two consecutive years, in line with WHO criteria for elimination certification.

Kala-azar

- Visceral leishmaniasis, commonly known as kala-azar, is a slow-progressing disease caused by the protozoan parasite **Leishmania donovani** in India.

- Leishmania parasites are **transmitted by the bites of infected female phlebotomine sandflies**, which feed on blood to produce eggs.
  - These parasites can be sourced from around 70 animal species, including humans.

- The term **"kala-azar," meaning "black disease**," refers to the skin discoloration associated with the infection.

- The parasite primarily targets the **reticuloendothelial system**, particularly affecting the bone marrow, spleen, and liver.

- The disease's elimination target has shifted over the years, with earlier goals set for 2010, 2015, 2017, and 2020.
  - The WHO now aims for elimination by 2030.

- Historically, states like Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal, and parts of Uttar Pradesh have reported the highest cases, particularly Bihar, which accounts for over 70%.

Source :TH

2ND INDIAN LIGHTHOUSE FESTIVAL

Context

- The Union Minister of Ports, Shipping & Waterways, dedicated key maritime projects to the nation during the **2nd Indian Lighthouse Festival.**

About

- The new **Kalwan reef Lighthouse** in Gujarat as well as **two projects in Odisha** were inaugurated.

- The festival is organised by the **Ministry of Ports, Shipping, and Waterways (MoPSW).**

- It is aimed to **explore the vast potential of lighthouse tourism** and strategies for preserving these maritime structures, **blending tourism development with heritage conservation.**

- Lighthouse tourism has been providing employment to many people and at the same time informing our next generations about the country's maritime history.
  - With an investment of Rs 60 crore, **75 iconic lighthouses across 9 coastal state**s and **one union territory** have been developed.

Source: PIB

ESHRAM-ONE STOP SOLUTION

Context

- The Union Minister of Labor & Employment and Youth Affairs & Sports launched the **'eShram-One Stop Solution' .**

About

- It will act as a **mediator** to ensure that **unorganized workers** have easy access to a **variety of Government schemes/programs.**
  - It will help unorganized workers become **aware of the schemes designed for them.**

- It will facilitate in **identification and implementation** of the **Social Security & Welfare Schemes** for the unorganised worker and to help saturation of the schemes in the fast and effective manner.

- Consequently, **12 schemes** of different Central Ministries / Departments have already been integrated/ mapped with the eShram.

Source: PIB

USE OF MINING DUST TO ENHANCE CARBON CAPTURE

In News

- Alt Carbon, a company based in Darjeeling, is using crushed basaltic rock from mining to enhance **carbon sequestration** through a process called **enhanced rock weathering.**

About Process

- It is a **geo-chemical method**, where rocks naturally break down over time, allowing atmospheric carbon to react with minerals and form bicarbonates.
- It uses crushed basaltic rock, rich in calcium and magnesium, sourced from mining regions like Maharashtra and West Bengal, which significantly increases the surface area for weathering.

Need and Importance

- Oceans capture about 30% of CO2 from human activities. However, natural weathering processes are slow, taking thousands of years.
  - Due to rising CO2 levels, there's a push from governments and businesses to expedite carbon removal processes, leading to the concept of "enhanced" rock weathering.
- Enhanced rock weathering accelerates the natural process by crushing basaltic rock, increasing its surface area, and speeding up bicarbonate formation.
- The crushed basalt dust is applied to tea estates in Darjeeling, enriching the soil and enhancing carbon sequestration.
- Each tonne of sequestered carbon generates a carbon credit, which can be sold to companies for offsetting emissions.

Challenges

- There are concerns regarding the accuracy of carbon sequestration measurements across different projects, with significant variations reported in studies.

> **Do you know?**
>
> - **Carbon sequestration** is the process of capturing carbon dioxide (CO2) emissions from industrial facilities and power plants or removing it directly from the atmosphere, followed by safely transporting and permanently storing it in geological formations.
> - This practice is becoming increasingly vital as CO2 emissions are contributing to climate change, leading to wildfires, floods, and storms, while also threatening marine life due to rising ocean acidity.

Source: TH

PLANKTON BLOOM

Context

- Researchers have described a species of bioluminescent phytoplankton, called **Pyrocystis noctiluca,** that balloons to six times their original size of a few hundred microns.
  - P. noctiluca cells behave more like little submarines which can **control their density** so they can choose where they want to reach the ocean's surface.

What are Planktons?

- Plankton are tiny organisms that drift in oceans, seas, and freshwater bodies. They are categorized into two main types:
  - **Phytoplankton:** These are microscopic plants, primarily algae, that perform photosynthesis and are crucial for producing oxygen and serving as the base of aquatic food webs.
  - **Zooplankton:** These are small animals or the larval stages of larger animals. They feed on phytoplankton and other zooplankton.
- Plankton can vary in size from tiny bacteria to larger organisms like jellyfish.
- They are important for nutrient cycling and serve as food for many marine species, including fish and whales.

Plankton Bloom

- **A plankton bloom** refers to a **sudden increase in the population of plankton**—both phytoplankton and zooplankton in aquatic ecosystems.
  - **Physical conditions and nutrient levels** can lead to high abundances of particular plankton types.
  - Blooms can be quick events that begin and end within a few days or they **may last several weeks.**
  - They can occur on a relatively small scale or cover hundreds of square kilometers of the ocean's surface.

Source: TH

PYROMES

In News

- Carbon dioxide emissions from forest fires increased by 60% between 2001 and 2023: Study
  - The increase is attributed to climate change, which has caused a geographical shift in forest fire patterns, raising the carbon combustion rate by 47% across all forest regions.

About

- 'Pyromes' are defined as regions where forest fire patterns are affected by similar environmental, human, and climatic factors, thereby revealing the elements pushing recent increases in forest fires.

- Grouping forests into pyromes isolates the impacts of climate change, apart from other influencing drivers such as land use and vegetation.

Source: DTE

EUROPEAN SKY SHIELD INITIATIVE (ESSI)

In News

- Switzerland has officially joined the European Sky Shield Initiative (ESSI)

About European Sky Shield Initiative (ESSI)

- It is a collaborative project aimed at building a **unified air and missile defense system across Europe.**

- The initiative was introduced by **German Chancellor Olaf Scholz** in August 2022, following Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

- The initiative facilitates better **coordination among European nation**s regarding air defense and creates opportunities for shared resources and expertise. It will **strengthen NATO's integrated air and missile defence.**

Source: Print

QUAD COUNTRIES PARTICIPATION IN MILITARY EXERCISES

In News

- The Quad, consisting of India, Australia, Japan, and the U.S., conducted back-to-back naval exercises to enhance interoperability and anti-submarine warfare skills.

About the Exercises

- **Exercise Malabar:**
  - **Evolution**: Originally a bilateral drill between India and the U.S. in 1992, Malabar has transformed into a key multilateral event focusing on interoperability and shared maritime challenges in the Indian Ocean and Indo-Pacific.
  - **Objectives**: Malabar aims to improve collaboration and engagement in maritime

security amid complex challenges, as stated by the Indian Navy.

- **Exercise Kakadu**: Prior to Malabar, Exercise Kakadu was held from September 9 to 20, hosted by the Royal Australian Navy, involving around 3,000 personnel from 30 nations and significant naval assets.
  - Exercise Kakadu highlighted Australia's dedication to regional maritime security and international partnerships through collaboration with multiple nations.

Source :TH

CARBON EMISSIONS FROM FIRE

Context

- A study revealed that the Carbon dioxide (CO_2) emitted from forest fires grew by 60 per cent across all forests globally since 2001.

About

- **Global Scenario:** Globally, wildfires contributed significantly to CO emissions.
  - Wildfires across 11 countries have produced over **375 million tonnes** of CO_2 emissions till the first half of 2024.

- **Indian Scenario:** India's Third Biennial Update Report to UNFCCC states that the country's emissions from forest fires contribute a mere **1-1.5%** of all global emissions from wildfires, despite being home to about 2% of the total global forest area.

Implications

- **Climate Change:** Wildfire emissions exacerbate climate change by adding more greenhouse gasses to the atmosphere.
  - As temperatures rise and droughts become more common, the risk of wildfires increases, further contributing to global warming.

- **Air Quality:** Wildfire smoke contains harmful pollutants, including fine particulate matter (PM .) and volatile organic compounds (VOCs).

Source: DTE

SHIROMANI GURDWARA PARBANDHAK COMMITTEE (SGPC)

Context

- The Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) elections, mandated to be held every five years, were last conducted in 2011.

About

- **The Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC)** is an important Sikh religious organization responsible for **managing and overseeing the affairs of Sikh gurdwaras** (places of worship) in the state of Punjab, as well as other parts of India and abroad.

- **Origin:** The SGPC was created in response to demands by Sikhs for control over their religious institutions, which were under the influence of **corrupt mahants (priests) appointed by the British** colonial government.

- The SGPC operates under the **Gurdwara Act of 1925**, which grants it authority to manage Sikh religious affairs and institutions.

- **Structure:** It is a democratically elected body with members elected by Sikh voters.

- The SGPC also plays a key role in promoting Sikh teachings and spreading awareness about Sikhism.

Source: IE

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