

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS (DCA)

Time: 45 Min

Date: 16-11-2024

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GURU NANAK JAYANTI

Context

- Recently, the **555th** birth anniversary of Guru Nanak was celebrated across India.

About

- Guru Nanak is the **founder of Sikhism** and the first of the ten Sikh Gurus.
- He lived in the **15th century** and was the contemporary of the Mughal Emperor - **Babur**.
- His teachings are encapsulated in the **Guru Granth Sahib** (the holy scripture of Sikhism), and continue to hold great relevance in contemporary times.

Key teachings of Guru Nanak

- Religious Tolerance:** In an era marked by religious diversity, Guru Nanak's emphasis on the unity of all people under one divine force encourages mutual respect and harmony.
 - This teaching promotes religious tolerance and understanding**, which is especially relevant in today's globalized and diverse world.
- Equality and Social Justice:** Guru Nanak strongly advocated for social equality, rejecting caste-based discrimination and promoting the idea that all individuals are equal.
 - This teaching remains relevant in the contemporary context where issues of social justice, discrimination, and inequality persist.
- Service to Humanity:** The concept of "**seva**" or **selfless service** is central to Sikhism. Guru Nanak encouraged his followers to engage in acts of kindness and service to humanity.
 - This teaching is **relevant in addressing the challenges of poverty, inequality**, and humanitarian crises that persist in the modern world.
 - He set up rules for congregational worship (Sangat) involving collective recitation.
- Honest Livelihood:** Guru Nanak emphasized the importance of earning an honest living through hard work and ethical means.
 - In the contemporary world, where issues of corruption, dishonesty, and unethical practices are prevalent, **Guru Nanak's teachings** encourage individuals to maintain integrity in their professional and personal lives.
- Spiritual Unity:** He advocated the '**Nirguna**' (devotion to and worship of formless divine) form of bhakti.

- This teaching **encourages individuals to find commonalities and connections between different faiths and traditions**, fostering a sense of unity and shared humanity.
- Environmental Stewardship:** Guru Nanak's teachings emphasize the interconnectedness of all creation and the importance of respecting and preserving the environment.
 - In the face of contemporary environmental challenges, these teachings **inspire a sense of responsibility towards nature** and sustainable living.

Legacy of Guru Nanak

- Nankana Sahib:** A Gurudwara was built at his birthplace in the city now known as Nankana Sahib. It is located in the Punjab province of Pakistan.
- Kartarpur corridor:** The corridor was built to commemorate the 550th birth anniversary celebrations of Guru Nanak Dev in November 2019.
 - It is one of the holiest places for Sikhs where Baba Guru Nanak Dev Ji settled and preached for the last 18 years of his life.

Sikhism

- Founded by Guru Nanak in the **15th century** in Punjab, influenced by the Bhakti movement.
- Sikh means 'learner' & faith is called Gurmat (Guru's way).
- It is based on Monotheistic** (One God, Ek Onkar) and Internal religious state of individual & remembrance of God (Simran).
 - Condemns rituals & rejects idol worship.
- Guru Granth Sahib (Adi Granth)** is considered a living Guru.
- Guru Gobind Singh** recreated the Khalsa (military group of men & women) in **1699**.
 - They have to wear Panj Kakka: Kada, Kachera, Kirpan, Kesh & Kangha.

Source: BL

PERFORMANCE AUDIT REPORT ON IMPLEMENTATION OF THE 74TH CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT ACT BY CAG

Context

- A performance audit report on **implementation of the 74th Constitutional Amendment Act** has been released by the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG).

About

- The 74th Constitutional Amendment Act, came into effect in **1993**, it provided a clear mandate for **democratic decentralisation**.
 - ♦ It created **democracy at the grass root level** through **self-governing local bodies in urban areas**.
 - ♦ It empowered Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) to **perform 18 functions as listed in the 12th Schedule of the Constitution**.
- **Audit by CAG:** The **aim of this Audit** was to **ascertain empowerment of ULBs** through devolution of adequate resources for effective discharge of functions, as enshrined in 12th Schedule.
 - ♦ The performance audits were conducted **between 2014 and 2021 across 393 urban local bodies in 18 states**.

12th Schedule of the Constitution

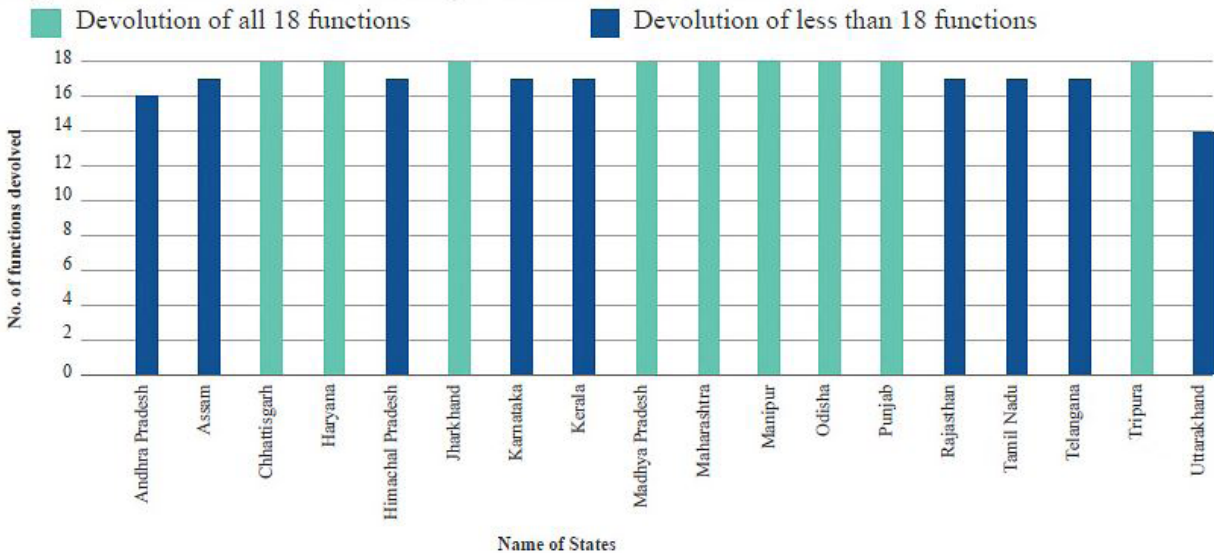
- It was added by the **74th Amendment Act of 1992**.
- It contains the **powers, authority and responsibilities** of Municipalities. This schedule has **18 items**.
 - ♦ Regulation of land use and construction of land buildings.
 - ♦ Urban planning including the town planning.
 - ♦ Planning for economic and social development.
 - ♦ Urban poverty alleviation.
 - ♦ Water supply for domestic, industrial and commercial purposes.

- ♦ Fire services.
- ♦ Public health sanitation, conservancy and solid waste management.
- ♦ Slum improvement and up-gradation.
- ♦ Safeguarding the interests of the weaker sections of society.
- ♦ Urban forestry, protection of environment and promotion of ecological aspects.
- ♦ Construction of roads and bridges.
- ♦ Provision of urban amenities and facilities.
- ♦ Promotion of cultural, educational and aesthetic aspects.
- ♦ Burials and burials grounds, cremation and cremation grounds and electric crematoriums.
- ♦ Cattle ponds, prevention of cruelty to animals.
- ♦ Regulation of slaughter houses and tanneries.
- ♦ Public amenities including street lighting, parking spaces, bus stops and public conveniences.
- ♦ Vital statistics including registration of births and deaths.

Findings of the CAG Report

- **Devolution of Functions:** 17 of the 18 functions were devolved in 18 states, **just 4 functions were effectively devolved with complete autonomy**.
 - ♦ 4 functions include burial grounds, public amenities, prevention of cruelty to animals and regulation of slaughter houses.
 - ♦ **Only 9 states** (Chhattisgarh, Haryana, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Manipur, Odisha, Punjab and Tripura) have devolved all the 18 functions.

Figure 1.1: Devolution of municipal functions in 18 States



- **Concerns about the Fiscal Health of ULBs:** Just 32% of the total revenue of ULBs was their own and the rest was grants from state and central government.
 - ♦ There was a 42% gap between revenue resources and expenditure of ULBs in the 18 states.
- **Shortage of Staff:** While the population in cities is rapidly increasing, ULBs in most states don't have sufficient manpower.
- **Reservation for Women:** Six out of the 14 states reserved 50% of their city council seats for women, surpassing the constitutional requirement of 33% reservation for women.
- **Ward Delimitation:** Only 4 of the 15 states, namely Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu have empowered state election commissions with ward delimitation while in the remaining 11, it is vested with the State Government.
- **Direct Elections for Mayor:** Only 5 states (Chhattisgarh, Haryana, Jharkhand, Tamil Nadu and Uttarakhand) have the provision for direct election of mayors.

Recommendations

- **Changes required:** There is a need to conduct municipal elections every five years, constitute planning committees to control haphazard urbanisation and empower state finance commissions to focus on better fiscal management.
- **Scientific Budget:** Efforts need to be made to motivate the ULBs to prepare their budgets in a scientific manner taking into account realistic projection of funds.
- **Release of Funds:** The State Government should monitor the release of grants to Urban Local Bodies so that allocated grants are released fully and in time.
- **Delegation of Power:** The State Government may consider to delegate adequate powers over manpower resources to Urban Local Bodies in matters such as assessment and recruitment of required staff.

Urban Local Bodies (ULBs)

- The **73rd and 74th Constitution Amendment Acts** established local self-governance in rural and urban India respectively.
 - ♦ The two amendments were added to the Constitution's Part IX, titled "The Panchayats" and Part IXA titled "The Municipalities" respectively.

- Following the two amendments, panchayats and municipalities were termed as **institutions of self-government**.
- ULBs are **small local bodies** that administers or governs a city or a town of specified population.
 - ♦ ULBs are vested with a long list of **functions by the state governments**.
 - ♦ These functions broadly relate to public health, welfare, regulatory functions, public safety, public infrastructure works, and development activities.
- The ULBs mainly receive **funds** from the Government of India (GOI) and the State Government in the form of Grants.
- A **five-year-tenure** was prescribed for the body, and elections to the successor body had to finish before the previous body's term expired.
 - ♦ In case of the body's dissolution, an election had to be conducted **within 6 months** compulsorily.
 - ♦ There would also be a **State Election Commission** in each state for superintendence, direction, and control of the electoral rolls for these elections.

Source: HT

COMBATING HATE SPEECH

In News

- The Supreme Court, led by Chief Justice Sanjiv Khanna, stated that hate speech is distinct from false claims or wrong assertions.

Hate Speech

- There is no specific legal definition of 'hate speech'
- But it refers to speeches, writings, actions, signs, or representations that incite violence or spread disharmony between groups.
- Defined by the **Law Commission (267th Report)** as incitement to hatred against groups based on race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, etc.
 - ♦ Intends to cause fear, alarm, or violence, limiting free speech to prevent hate or harm.

Effects of hate speech

- **Multidimensional issue:** Hate speech is a multidimensional issue with severe consequences for human rights, societal cohesion, and democracy.

- ◆ Historically used to incite violence, hate crimes, wars, and genocide.
- **Effects on Individuals and Society:** Directly harms the dignity and rights of those targeted and their communities.
 - ◆ Excludes victims from society, silences them, and disrupts public debate.
- **Fuels societal divisions**, undermines inclusion, and threatens democratic principles.
 - ◆ It undermines social cohesion and erodes shared values, setting back peace, stability, sustainable development and the fulfillment of human rights for all.

Challenges in Addressing Hate Speech:

- The rise of online hate speech and disinformation, **fuelled by digital tools**, poses significant societal challenges as governments struggle to enforce laws at the scale and speed of the internet.
- **Low cost, ease of production**, and anonymity enable widespread dissemination.
- It can reach global audiences in real time and resurface over time, regaining influence.
- **Difficulty in monitoring diverse** platforms and communities.
- Internet companies face pressure to moderate and remove harmful content.

Provisions in Indian Law

- **Section 153A, IPC:** Criminalises promotion of enmity between groups based on religion, race, place of birth, language, etc.
 - ◆ **Punishment:** Up to 3 years' imprisonment.
 - ◆ Up to 5 years if committed in places of worship or during religious ceremonies.
- **Section 505, IPC:** Penalises public statements promoting enmity, hatred, or ill-will:
 - ◆ 505(1): Statements causing mutiny, public alarm, or offences against public tranquillity.
 - ◆ 505(2): Statements promoting hatred between communities.
 - ◆ 505(3): Enhanced punishment (up to 5 years) if the offence occurs in places of worship or religious assemblies.
 - ◆ Punishment: Up to 3 years' imprisonment.

Proposals by the Law Commission

- Add specific provisions to the IPC for hate speech, separate from existing sections.
- **Proposed Sections:**
 - ◆ **Section 153C:** Criminalises gravely threatening words, signs, or visible representations causing fear, alarm, or incitement to violence based on religion, caste, gender, etc.

- ◆ **Section 505A:** Penalises words or signs causing fear or provoking violence against individuals or groups.
 - ◆ Punishment: Up to 2 years' imprisonment, a ₹5,000 fine, or both.
- ◆ **Section 505B:** Penalises words or signs causing fear or provoking violence against individuals or groups.
 - ◆ Punishment: Up to 1 year's imprisonment, a ₹5,000 fine, or both.

Other Recommendations

- **M.P. Bezbaruah Committee:** Proposed adding provisions to punish racial discrimination and hate speech.
- **T.K. Viswanathan Committee:** Recommended similar changes.
- **Committee for Reforms in Criminal Laws:** Currently examining comprehensive reforms to criminal law, including provisions for hate speech

Supreme Courts Observations

- In October 2022, the court lamented the “climate of hate” in the country, directing authorities to register cases against hate speech offenders suo motu.
- In 2018, the court condemned hate crimes and emphasized the state’s “sacrosanct duty” to protect citizens.
- Tehseen Poonawala Judgment: The judgment provided guidelines to states and police for preventing, controlling, and deterring mob violence and lynchings.

Conclusion and Way Forward

- Effective and sustainable measures are necessary to combat and prevent hate speech.
- The goal is to avoid dangerous escalation and build inclusive societies.

Source : TH

'PPP PLUS PPP' MODEL FOR DIABETES

In Context

- India is grappling with a burgeoning diabetes epidemic, with over **212 million individuals affected**—a significant share of the global diabetes burden. To address this challenge, the “**PPP plus PPP**” model was introduced on **World Diabetes Day (14th November)**.

“PPP plus PPP” model

The “**PPP plus PPP**” model is particularly relevant in addressing this crisis:

- **Domestic PPPs in Diabetes Management**
 - ◆ Collaborating with pharmaceutical firms to manufacture affordable recombinant insulin.

- ♦ Engaging private hospitals and NGOs to conduct awareness campaigns and mass screenings.
- ♦ Establishing diabetes clinics in rural and semi-urban areas.
- **International Collaborations**
 - ♦ Partnering with organizations like WHO and the International Diabetes Federation to refine care protocols.
 - ♦ Leveraging AI and machine learning for predictive analytics and personalized treatment.
 - ♦ Attracting investments for research and large-scale intervention programs.

About Diabetes or Diabetes Mellitus (DM)

- **Brief:**
 - ♦ It is a chronic metabolic disorder characterized by elevated blood glucose levels. This condition arises when the body either doesn't produce enough insulin or becomes resistant to the insulin it does produce.
- **Types of Diabetes:**
 - ♦ **Type 1 Diabetes:** An autoimmune disorder where the body's immune system attacks the insulin-producing cells in the pancreas.
 - ♦ **Type 2 Diabetes:** The most common type, often associated with lifestyle factors like obesity and sedentary lifestyle. The body becomes resistant to insulin or doesn't produce enough.
 - ♦ **Gestational Diabetes:** Develops during pregnancy and usually resolves after childbirth.
- **Symptoms:** Frequent urination, Increased thirst, Excessive hunger, Blurred vision and Fatigue.
- **Complications of Diabetes:** Heart Disease, Stroke, Kidney Disease, Nerve Damage, Eye Damage (**Retinopathy**) etc
- **Prevalence:** Approximately 830 million people worldwide have diabetes, with a significant proportion residing in low- and middle-income countries.
 - ♦ India has a substantial diabetes burden, with around 212 million people affected.
- **WHO's Target:** The World Health Organization aims to halt the rise in diabetes and obesity by 2025.

Insulin and role of Insulin in controlling diabetes

- Insulin, a **hormone produced by the pancreas**, plays a crucial role in regulating blood sugar levels. It acts like a key, **unlocking cells to allow glucose (sugar) from the bloodstream to enter**. This glucose is then used as energy for the body's cells.

- In diabetes, either the **body doesn't produce enough insulin (type 1 diabetes)** or the body's cells don't respond effectively to **insulin (type 2 diabetes)**. As a result, glucose builds up in the bloodstream, leading to high blood sugar levels.

Government Initiatives to Combat Diabetes in India

- **National Program for Prevention and Control of Cancer, Diabetes, Cardiovascular Diseases, and Stroke (NPCDCS):** This program focuses on early detection, prevention, and management of these non-communicable diseases, including diabetes.
- **National Health Mission (NHM):** This mission includes components for screening, early diagnosis, and treatment of diabetes. It also promotes healthy lifestyles and preventive measures.
- **Ayushman Bharat - Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PMJAY):** This health insurance scheme provides financial coverage for various medical treatments, including those related to diabetes.
- **Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana (PMBJP):** This scheme provides affordable generic medicines, including insulin, to the general public.
- **National Diabetes Control Program:** This program aims to reduce the burden of diabetes through early detection, treatment, and prevention.

Source: PIB

POWER TRANSACTION FROM NEPAL TO BANGLADESH THROUGH INDIAN GRID

In News

- India, Bangladesh, and Nepal jointly inaugurated the first trilateral power transaction through the Indian grid, marking a significant step toward an integrated South Asian power market.

About Agreement

- A power sales agreement was signed in October 2024, between NTPC Vidyut Vyapar Nigam, Nepal Electricity Authority, and Bangladesh Power Development Board.
- **Power Export Details:** The power transaction involves the export of up to 40 MW of power from Nepal to Bangladesh through India.
 - ♦ The power flow marks the first trilateral power transaction through the Indian grid.
- **Expected Impact:** The transaction is expected to enhance sub-regional connectivity in the power sector and benefit all stakeholders.

- ◆ It will strengthen cooperation and mutual benefits among India, Nepal, and Bangladesh in the energy sector.

India's Energy Trade Ambitions:

- India aims to become a major hub for electricity and refined petroleum product trading in South Asia, including supplying **LNG to Sri Lanka** and working on an undersea electricity transmission line.
- **Current power trading** between India and neighboring countries is conducted through bilateral agreements under the **2014 SAARC Framework Agreement for Energy Cooperation**.
- **Key Agencies:** NTPC Vidyut Vyapar Nigam (NVVN) is the nodal agency for cross-border power trading, along with PTC India.
 - ◆ Since 2021, the Indian Energy Exchange (IEX) has facilitated electricity trading with Nepal.
- **Policy Enhancements:** India introduced market coupling for spot power trading and revised guidelines for import/export of electricity in 2023 to strengthen regional energy cooperation and grid reliability.
 - ◆ India is advancing the **OSOWOG initiative** to create a transnational mega grid enabling renewable energy trade from Southeast Asia to Europe via the Middle East.
 - ◆ India is collaborating with Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Singapore to develop the OSOWOG grid infrastructure, facilitating low-cost access to renewable energy for participating nations.

Source : TH

NEW COLLECTIVE QUANTIFIED GOAL (NCQG)

Context

- Countries are negotiating the **draft of the new collective quantified goal (NCQG)** on climate finance at the ongoing UN summit on climate change (COP29).

Background

- In 2009, at the **COP15**, developed countries set a target of **\$100 billion per year** to be met by 2020.
- **COP21 2015**, resulted in the **Paris Agreement** where countries agreed that they would set a **New Collective Quantified Goal for finance in 2024**.
- This NCQG would replace — and be higher than — the \$100 billion target.
- The NCQG is expected to be decided and adopted at the ongoing COP29 in Azerbaijan.

What is NCQG?

- The New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG) is basically a **target for finance**.
 - ◆ It will indicate the funds that should be **mobilised annually to support climate action projects in the developing countries**.
 - ◆ It reflects the **priorities and preferences of all negotiating groups** among developed and developing countries -- **from \$100 billion to \$ 2 trillion**.
- **Need of NCQG:**
 - ◆ The figure of **\$100 billion is inadequate** for the climate finance needs of developing countries, which, by varying estimates, range from \$1-2.4 trillion per year until 2030.
 - ◆ The goal of \$100 billion was **not a negotiated one** – it was a political one.
 - ◆ Developing countries expressed that climate finance should be **“adequate, predictable, accessible, grant-based, low-interest and long-term”**.

What is Climate Finance?

- Climate finance refers to **large-scale investments** required for actions aiming to **mitigate or adapt** to the consequences of climate change.
- **Adaptation:** It involves anticipating the adverse effects of climate change and taking appropriate action to prevent or minimise the damage they can cause.
- **Mitigation:** It involves reducing the emission of greenhouse gases (GHG) into the atmosphere so that impacts of climate change are less severe.

Who should Finance?

- Developing countries have argued that **developed nations** should provide financial assistance to tackle climate change because it was due to the (now) rich world's **emissions over the last 150 years** that caused the climate problem in the first place.
- **The 1994** United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) required high-income countries to provide climate finance to the developing world.
 - ◆ However, the high income countries are yet to fulfil their pledge.

Global Initiatives for Climate Finance

- **The Global Environment Facility (GEF):** It was founded in 1991, and has been a provider of grants to address climate change, biodiversity, land degradation, and other environmental challenges.
 - ◆ It works with multilateral organizations, governments, and the private sector.

- **Adaptation Fund:** It was established in 2001, to finance concrete adaptation projects and programmes in developing country Parties to the Kyoto Protocol that are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change.
- **The Green Climate Fund (GCF):** Established in 2010 under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the GCF is a primary vehicle for channeling funds to developing countries.
- **Carbon Pricing:** The initiative also often integrates market-based solutions like carbon pricing (carbon taxes or cap-and-trade systems) that provide incentives for reducing emissions while generating funds to be reinvested in climate solutions.

India's Initiatives for Climate Finance

- **National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC):** It was launched in 2008, for climate actions aimed at promoting sustainable development while addressing the challenges of climate change.
 - ♦ It outlines eight national missions covering areas like solar energy, energy efficiency, sustainable agriculture, and water resources.
- **National Adaptation Fund for Climate Change (NAFCC):** It was launched in 2015, to meet the cost of adaptation to climate change for the State and Union Territories of India that are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change.
- **Clean Energy Fund (CEF):** The government has set up the Clean Energy Fund to promote clean energy technologies. The fund is sourced from a cess on coal, known as the Clean Energy Cess, which is levied on coal production and imports.
- **Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT):** AMRUT is aimed at improving urban infrastructure and making cities more sustainable and climate-resilient.
 - ♦ It includes projects related to water supply, sewerage, solid waste management, and green spaces.
- **Renewable Energy Investments:** India has become a global leader in the development of renewable energy, particularly solar power.
 - ♦ India has also attracted significant investment in wind energy, hydropower, and biomass.
 - ♦ These investments are being supported by the Indian government through incentives like tax breaks, subsidies, and preferential financing mechanisms, including from India's National Investment and Infrastructure Fund (NIIF).

Source: TH

NEWS IN SHORT

JANJATIYA GAURAV DIVAS

In News

- The Prime Minister launched development projects worth 6,650 crore, primarily for tribal welfare on the occasion of **Janjatiya Gaurav Divas**.

About Janjatiya Gaurav Divas

- It is celebrated annually on November 15 to honor the contributions of India's tribal communities.
- It commemorates the birth anniversary of **Birsa Munda**, a tribal leader and freedom fighter.
- It was **established in 2021** during the Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav to mark 75 years of India's independence
- It honors sacrifices of tribal freedom fighters like the **Santhals, Tamars, Kols, Bhils, Khasis, and Mizos**.
 - ♦ Highlights key tribal movements against British rule, including the **Ulgulan (Revolution)** led by Birsa Munda who fiercely resisted British exploitation and inspired national awakening, earning reverence as Bhagwan among tribal communities.
- **Importance** : It recognizes tribal contributions to India's cultural diversity, heritage, and freedom struggle.
 - ♦ It promotes unity, pride, and recognition of tribal communities' role in India's freedom and progress.

Source: TH

BODOLAND MAHOTSAV

Context

- Prime Minister Modi inaugurated the **1st Bodoland Mahotsav** in New Delhi.

About

- **It is a two-day cultural celebration** dedicated to language, literature, and fostering peace in Bodoland.
- **Theme:** 'Peace and Harmony for Prosperous Bharat'.
- It aims to **capitalize on the richness of cultural and linguistic heritage**, ecological biodiversity and touristic potential of **Bodoland**.
- The Mahotsav is celebrating the remarkable journey of recovery and resilience ever since the signing of the **Bodo Peace Accord in 2020**.

Bodo Peace Accord in 2020

- It is a significant agreement aimed at ending decades-long violence and unrest in Assam's Bodoland region.
- **Key Provisions** of the 2020 Accord;
 - ♦ **Territorial Changes:** The Bodoland Territorial Area District (BTAD) was restructured and renamed as the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR).
 - ♦ **Inclusion of More Villages:** The BTR saw the addition of more Bodo-majority villages, while non-Bodo-majority villages were excluded.
 - ♦ **Autonomy and Governance:** Enhanced administrative powers were provided to the BTC, improving local governance with greater autonomy.

Source: AIR

SUPREME COURT'S ORDER ON MANDATORY ACCESSIBILITY STANDARDS

Context

- The Supreme Court directed the Centre to implement mandatory accessibility standards aimed at improving access to public spaces for persons with disabilities.

About

- The court underscored the necessity of **"meaningful access"** for disabled persons to public spaces and mandated a **two-pronged approach**:
 - ♦ Adapting existing infrastructures to accessibility standards, and
 - ♦ Ensuring that all new infrastructure is designed to be inclusive from the outset.
- The judgment reaffirmed accessibility to public spaces for persons with disabilities as a **fundamental right**.

What is the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act?

- As a signatory to the **United Nations Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)**, India is obligated to promote accessibility as an essential right.
- **The RPwD Act was enacted in 2016** and aims "to ensure that all persons with disabilities can lead their lives with dignity, without discrimination and with equal opportunities."
- **The RPwD Rules of 2017**, framed under the Act, were to lay down specific accessibility standards.
 - ♦ The rules do not provide for "non-negotiable"

compulsory standards but only persuasive guidelines.

Accessible India Campaign (Sugamya Bharat Abhiyan)

- **It was launched in 2015**, by the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (Divyangjan), Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.
- **It aims to enhance the accessibility** of physical infrastructure, transportation systems, and information and communication technology for persons with disabilities (PwDs).

Key Objectives

- **Accessible Built Environment:** Ensuring that government buildings and public spaces comply with accessibility standards for easier use by PwDs.
- **Accessible Transport:** Making public transportation, such as buses, trains, and airports, more user-friendly for persons with disabilities.
- **Accessible ICT Ecosystem:** Ensuring that websites, documents, and mobile applications are developed to be accessible, facilitating ease of use for visually or hearing-impaired individuals.

Source: IE

AUSTRALIA'S MATES SCHEME

Context

- Australia has come up with a new scheme for Indians called **Mobility Arrangement for Talented Early-professionals Scheme (MATES)**.

About

- In 2023, Australia and India entered into a **Migration and Mobility Partnership Arrangement (MMPA)**.
 - ♦ It is a bilateral framework that supports migration and mobility between the two countries, while addressing issues pertaining to illegal and irregular migration.
- MATES has been established under the MMPA.

MATES

- It gives Indian university graduates and early career professionals **a chance to work in Australia for two years**.
- **3,000 spots are available** for primary applicants annually during the first pilot period.

- The scheme will be available to graduates from the **top 100 Indian universities** according to the National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF) ranking for 2024.
- **Eligibility:** MATES will be open to Indian nationals who:
 - ◆ are aged 30 or younger (inclusive) at the time of application;
 - ◆ have proficient English language skills;
 - ◆ have graduated within 2 years from an eligible educational institution at the time of application;
 - ◆ and hold a qualification (Bachelor's degree or higher) in one of the following: renewable energy, mining, engineering, Information Communications Technology (ICT), artificial intelligence (AI), financial technology (FinTech) agricultural technology (AgriTech).
- MATES participants are not eligible to take part in the Scheme more than once.
- **Increased Annual Lending:** Lending to India surged to \$5 billion annually, supporting sectors like energy, healthcare, rural development, and digital education.
- **Cost Savings:** Waiver of commitment fees for middle-income countries like India for four years, reducing annual borrowing costs by 0.25%, saving up to 1% cumulatively.

India's Economic Outlook:

- The World Bank forecasts 7% growth in FY25, despite a slowdown to 6.7% in Q1 due to reduced government capital expenditure.
- Expected recovery in private investment, driven by strong returns on investments despite high borrowing costs.

Future Strategies

- Strategic balance sheet management to increase lending without needing additional capital.
- Member countries contribute hybrid capital without altering voting shares.
- Emphasis on mobilizing private financing and transformational projects for middle-income countries like India.

Source: BS

WORLD BANK BOOSTS LENDING CAPACITY

In News

- The World Bank increased its capacity by 50%, offering a record \$150 billion over the next decade.

About

- A large portion of funds will be directed towards green projects and sustainable development.

World Bank Reforms

- **Internal Reforms:** Focus on faster processing, better collaboration, and mobilizing private sector financing.
- **MDB Landscape Reforms:** Guided by the G20-backed International Expert Group (IEG) report to strengthen Multilateral development banks (MDB) impact.
 - ◆ Recommended \$3 trillion annual spending by 2030, including \$1.8 trillion for climate action and \$1.2 trillion for SDGs.
 - ◆ Advocated mobilizing \$240 billion in private capital through risk-informed strategies and new lending instruments.

Benefits for India

- **Largest Beneficiary:** India, the World Bank's biggest client, is expected to receive a significant share of the expanded funding.

Source: LM

OPERATION DRONAGIRI

Context

- Recently Operation Dronagiri was launched by the **Ministry of Science and Technology**.

About

- It is a pilot project under **National Geospatial Policy 2022** to demonstrate the potential applications of geospatial technologies and innovations in improving the quality of life of citizens.
- In the first phase, Operation Dronagiri will be implemented in the states of **Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Assam, Andhra Pradesh & Maharashtra**.
- The pilot projects will be demonstrated to showcase the potential applications of integration of **geospatial data and technology in 3 sectors** --Agriculture, Livelihoods, Logistics and Transport.
- Operation Dronagiri gains support from Integrated Geospatial Data Sharing Interface (GDI).
 - ◆ **GDI which will make spatial data accessible**, bringing transformation similar to the process in which UPI has brought about financial inclusion.

National Geospatial Policy 2022

- The Policy emphasizes on **Atmanirbhar Bharat by empowering local companies** to
 - ♦ generate and utilize their own Geospatial data;
 - ♦ encourages open standards, open data and platforms;
 - ♦ focuses on easy accessibility of Geospatial data through National Geospatial Data Registry and Unified Geospatial Interface;
 - ♦ supports innovation, incubation of ideas and start-up initiatives in the Geospatial sector; and
 - ♦ encourages capacity building.
- The Survey of India has launched a **Continuously Operating Reference Stations (CORS) Network** towards redefinition of National Geodetic Framework.

Source: PIB

ARMED FORCES (SPECIAL POWERS) ACT

In News

- The **Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA)** has been reimposed in six police station jurisdictions in Manipur amid escalating **ethnic violence between the Meitei and Kuki-Zo-Hmar communities**.

About Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA)

- **Brief:**
 - ♦ Originally promulgated by the British in response to the **Quit India movement in 1942**.
 - ♦ Enacted by the Parliament and approved by the **President in 1958**.
 - ♦ Grants **extraordinary powers & immunity** to the armed forces to bring back order in the **“disturbed areas”**.
 - An area can be disturbed due to **differences or disputes b/w members of different religious, racial, language or regional groups or castes or communities**.
- **Provisions:**
 - ♦ **Section 3: Empowers the Governor** of the State/Union territory to declare whole or part of the State or UT as a **disturbed area**.
 - ♦ **Section 4:** Gives the **powers to the Army** to search premises and make arrests **without warrants**.

- ♦ **Section 6:** Arrested persons and seized property are handed over to the police.
- ♦ **Section 7:** Prosecution is permitted only after the sanction of the Central Government.
- **States/Areas of Imposition:**
 - ♦ NE, JK & Punjab were initially, later repealed in Punjab, Tripura & Meghalaya.
 - ♦ Now, Mizoram, Nagaland, Manipur, Assam, J&K, and parts of AP.

Reforms and Recommendations

- **Justice Jeevan Reddy Committee (2005):** Recommended the repeal of AFSPA, suggesting that the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) could replace it.
- **Second Administrative Reforms Commission (2007):** Advocated for the modification of AFSPA to include more safeguards for human rights.
- **Santosh Hegde Committee (2013):** Conduct a review every six months to assess whether the continued implementation of AFSPA in designated “disturbed areas” is necessary.

Source: TH

GRADED RESPONSE ACTION PLAN (GRAP)

Context

- As Delhi’s air quality deteriorated to **‘severe’ category**, the **Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM)** ordered the implementation of ‘Stage 3’ emergency measures under the GRAP to curb the city’s air pollution.

What is GRAP?

- The Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) is a set of emergency measures designed to prevent further deterioration of air quality in the National Capital Region (NCR).
- Approved by the **Supreme Court in 2016**, GRAP was initially implemented by the **Environment Pollution (Prevention and Control) Authority (EPCA)** and has been managed by the **CAQM since 2021**.
- GRAP is activated based on real-time AQI data and meteorological forecasts provided by the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM) and the India Meteorological Department (IMD). The plan is structured in stages, with each stage corresponding to specific AQI thresholds:
 - ♦ Stage I: Poor (AQI 201-300)
 - ♦ Stage II: Very Poor (AQI 301-400)
 - ♦ Stage III: Severe (AQI 401-450)
 - ♦ Stage IV: Severe Plus (AQI >450)

- **Revised GRAP (Effective October 1, 2023):** To address the recurring issue of air quality deterioration during winter months, a revised GRAP was implemented across NCR starting October 1, 2023.

Restrictions and permissions after imposing GRAP Stage-3

- All non-essential construction and demolition activities are **banned**, and projects related to public services, such as roads, bridges, or hospitals, are **permitted**.

- Industries like brick kilns, hot mix plants, and stone crushers that do not run on clean fuels **must shut down**.
- Diesel generators are **prohibited** except for essential services, such as hospitals and emergency power needs.
- The frequency of public transport like buses and metro trains will be increased to encourage commuters to leave their cars at home. Private vehicles, however, are **not restricted** under Stage 3.

Source: TH

