

JUNE CURRENT AFFAIRS

PRAGATI-2024

Why in News?

Recently, the Central Council for Research in Ayurvedic Sciences (CCRAS) launched “PRAGATI- 2024” (Pharma Research in AyurGyan And Techno Innovation).

About:

- The Central Council for Research in Ayurvedic Sciences (CCRAS) is an **autonomous body of the Ministry of AYUSH** (Ayurveda, Yoga & Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homeopathy), Government of India.
- It is an apex body in India for the formulation, coordination, development and promotion of research on scientific lines in Ayurveda and Sowa-Rigpa system of medicine.
- The Central Council for Research in Ayurvedic Sciences (CCRAS) hosted "Pharma Research in AyurGyan And Techno Innovation (PRAGATI-2024)" at the India Habitat Centre, New Delhi .
- **PRAGATI-2024 aims to encourage joint research endeavors between CCRAS and the Ayurvedic pharmaceutical industry,** fostering innovation and expansion within the Ayurveda domain.
- This interactive meeting focuses on exploring research opportunities and fostering collaboration between CCRAS and the Ayurveda drug industry.
- The expected outcome of PRAGATI-2024 is **to identify potential industrial partners willing to collaborate with CCRAS,** exchange scientific knowledge, and utilize research outcomes and products in Ayurvedic drug development.
- This initiative **will enhance networking and institutional linkages,** ultimately benefiting Ayurvedic clinicians and patients.



BELLA BLOCK PRINTING

- Bela Block Printing, a **traditional craft from Kutch**, shares the region's artistic heritage but remains relatively lesser-known.
- It is a traditional textile art **known for its bold designs, striking colour combinations, and graphic motifs on textured fabrics.**
- Kachchh in Gujarat is a significant producer of this style, with the **Khatri community renowned for practising the craft.**
- This craft showcases the community's artistic prowess.
- Bela block-print-making can be recognised by its bold and precise patterns on rustic fabrics, created by alternately washing and dyeing with alum and mud resist application.
- The process of Bela block printing is a fascinating blend of multiple steps and techniques.
- Here's a simplified breakdown:
 - Artisans apply an alum paste to the fabric, followed by exposure to sunlight for enhanced color fastness.
 - The fabric undergoes permanent dyeing.
 - After washing, artisans print the fabric with a mud paste, imparting a blackish hue by boiling it in water containing iron rust.
 - Wooden blocks, meticulously carved by skilled artisans, are dipped in natural dyes and pressed onto the fabric to create the desired patterns.
- The wooden blocks used in Bela printing are a work of art themselves. **They are carved from seasoned wood** and come in various shapes and sizes, featuring intricate geometric, floral, and animal motifs.
- Despite its cultural significance, Bela Block Printing faces the threat of extinction. Recognizing its vulnerability, the Office of the Development Commissioner for Handicrafts has listed it as an endangered craft, highlighting the urgent need for preservation efforts.



INDIA'S GOLD RESERVE

Why in News?

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) recently moved 100 metric tonnes of gold from the UK to domestic vaults, a significant shift reflecting geopolitical concerns and risk diversification strategies.
- This has marked the largest such repatriation since the early 1990s and signifies the RBI's evolving approach to managing its gold reserves.

About:

- During the 1990-91 foreign exchange crisis, **India pledged part of its gold reserves to the Bank of England** to secure a USD 405 million loan.
- Although the loan was repaid by November 1991, the RBI chose to keep the gold in the UK for logistical reasons as the **gold stored abroad can be easily used for trading, entering into swaps, and earning returns.**
- The **repatriation of gold reserves has no financial implications for India's GDP, tax collections, or the RBI's balance sheet, as it only involves a change in the storage location of the gold** (the total gold asset of the RBI will remain the same).
- There are **no customs or GST implications associated with this transfer**, as the gold being repatriated is already owned by India.
- Furthermore, the RBI acquires additional gold from the international market and stores it overseas.



About Gold Reserve:

- A gold reserve is the gold held by a country's central bank, acting as a backup for financial promises and a store of value.

- India, similar to other countries, keeps part of its gold reserves in foreign vaults to diversify risk and ease international trade.
- **As of FY24, India's total gold holdings amount to 822 metric tonnes.**
- India's gold reserves are mainly kept at the Bank of England, renowned for its strict security measures.
- The RBI also holds part of its gold reserves at the Bank for International Settlements (BIS) in Basel, Switzerland, and the Federal Reserve Bank of New York in the United States.
- Top Gold Reserve Holding Countries: United States leads with 8,133.46 tonnes, followed by Germany with 3,352.65 tonnes and India with 822.09 tonnes.

Why Gold is Hoarded by RBI?

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is amassing gold as a defensive measure against negative interest rates and geopolitical instabilities.
- During periods of inflation and economic turmoil, **gold presents a favorable return compared to US government bonds.**
- Furthermore, **gold serves as a safeguard against geopolitical uncertainties**, particularly amidst conflicts such as the Russia-Ukraine war and tensions between the US and China.
- **Expanding forex reserves through gold enhances stability, liquidity, and worth during crises.**
- Gold's historical importance in the economy lies in its function as a reserve currency, inherent worth, and its potential to strengthen a nation's currency.
- Additionally, **it can act as an alternative to government securities in central bank activities.**
- All banknotes issued by RBI are backed by assets such as gold, Government Securities and Foreign Currency Assets, as defined in Section 33 of the RBI Act, 1934.

Why did RBI Transfer Gold from UK?

- The RBI decided to move the gold to India **for logistical reasons and to ensure diversified storage.**
- The transfer **helps in saving on storage fees paid to foreign custodians**, such as the Bank of England, and indicates confidence in the Indian economy's stability.

- **Geopolitical factors** play a significant role, particularly concerning tensions abroad (Russia-Ukraine war, Gaza War) which may pose a risk of freezing the RBI's reserve gold.
- Given the escalating uncertainty in the global geopolitical landscape, **maintaining physical control over gold reserves domestically is deemed a more secure choice.**
- RBI **aims to safeguard its substantial gold reserves.**
- Enhancing domestic gold reserves **can bolster confidence in India's robust financial position and stable economy.**
- The RBI is contemplating measures to promote economic stability and potentially repatriate its gold holdings to India.

UNAMI

Why in News?

The UN Security Council (**UNSC**) **voted to end the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq UNAMI** that was set up after the 2003 US-led invasion.

About UNAMI:United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI)

- The United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) was **formed on 14 August 2003** by United Nations Security Council (**UNSC**) **Resolution 1500** at the request of the Iraqi government to support national development efforts in the wake of the invasion of by a US-led coalition.
- UNAMI's job was to **help Iraq rebuild after the war and restore a government.**
- **UNAMI's mandate includes:**
 - advising and assisting the government on political dialogue and national reconciliation;



- supporting political processes such as elections and the national census;
- facilitating regional dialogue between Iraq and neighboring countries;
- coordinating the delivery of humanitarian aid;
- advancing judicial and legal reforms; and
- promoting human rights.
- The resolution doesn't mention the geographical features of Iraq.
- The resolution supports Iraq's reform efforts and helps with remaining issues from the Saddam Hussein era.
- **Iraq wants to manage its own security and stability.**
- In May 2024, **Iraq's Prime Minister, Mohammed Shia' Al Sudani, wrote to UN Secretary-General António Guterres,** announcing that UNAMI must finalize its operations and declaring December 31, 2025, as the official end date of the Mission in Iraq.
- The Iraqi government has requested that the United Nations end a mission set up to promote governance and human rights reforms in the country by the end of 2025.
- Both the US and Russia agree Iraq is ready for self-reliance.
- UNAMI will cease operations by December 31, 2025.

UNIFIED INDIA ORGANIC LOGO

Why in News?

The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (**FSSAI**) and the Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (**APEDA**) **have jointly developed a "Unified India Organic" logo** to replace the India Organic and Jaivik Bharat logos.

About:

- **FSSAI and APEDA have developed a new "Unified India Organic" logo** to replace the existing India Organic and Jaivik Bharat logos.

- The new logo has been developed to bring uniformity and convergence in the implementation of Indian regulations by the National Programme for Organic Products (NPOP) and FSSAI.
- ***Currently,*** the ***India Organic logo is used on organic products complying with the National Programme for Organic Products (NPOP), while Jaivik Bharat is used on organic products certified by FSSAI.***



- The new logo is expected to come into force in the near future, and **certification bodies will be given a 3-month transition period for implementation.**
- **It will distinguish organic products from non-organic communicating adherence to the National Standards for Organic Production.**
- Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (**FSSAI**) (**under the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare**) is an autonomous statutory body established under the Food Safety and Standards Act, of 2006.
- It regulates the manufacture, distribution, sale or import of Organic products through the Food Safety and Standards (Organic Foods) Regulations, 2017 (under FSSA 2006).
- FSSAI is responsible for protecting and promoting public health by regulating food safety and quality in India, operating under the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare.
- APEDA functions under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry and is responsible for export promotion and development of the scheduled products viz. fruits, vegetables and their products etc.

BIOCOVER

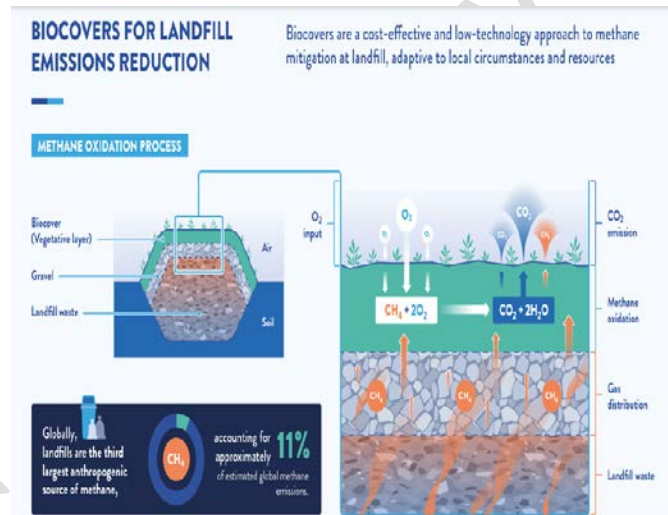
Why in News?

A recent study has proposed a sustainable approach of microbial methane oxidation system (called as **biocover**) to control fugitive methane emissions from old dumpsites.

The use of microbial methane oxidation systems, specifically biocover utilizing fine fractions from landfill mining, presents a promising model for methane control.

About Biocover:

- **Biocovers are a type of methane oxidation system that utilizes the fine fraction material from landfill mining to effectively control methane emissions.**
- They are porous material layer laid directly on top of a landfill which is then covered by an oxidizing layer of mature compost.
- **It provides optimal conditions for methanotropic (methane utilizing) bacteria to thrive and act as biofilters,** hence control methane emissions by converting methane to CO₂.
- Potential applications: **Road construction, land reclamation, etc.**
- They **reduce methane emissions from landfills and dumpsites.**
- The fine fraction material recovered from landfill mining is used to construct the biocover system. This fine fraction would otherwise be difficult to repurpose due to high contaminant levels.
- By using the fine fraction in the biocover, it provides a sustainable solution for methane control.
- This method shows promise for application in India's over 3,000 legacy dumpsites, which continuously generate methane and are prone to fires, making effective methane control critical for climate change mitigation.
- Concerns: As they are found in old and deep dumpsites, they may be contaminated with heavy metals and microplastics.



TMESIPTERIS OBLANCEOLATE

Why in News?

New research shows that a fork fern species, called *Tmesipteris oblanceolata*, has a genome that is 7% larger than that of the previous record-holder, the Japanese flowering plant *Paris japonica*, and more than 50 times the size of the human genome.

About Tmesipteris Oblanceolate:

- It is a rare species of fern which grows primarily on the ground or atop fallen tree trunks on the island nation of New Caledonia (an overseas French territory situated in the Southwest Pacific), and on neighboring islands such as Vanuatu.
- It is a **small plant, typically 10-15 centimeters (4-6 inches) in height.**
- It **contains 160 billion base pairs** (the units that make up a strand of DNA) outstripping the human genome by more than 50 times.
- This is 11 billion more than the previous record holder, the Japanese flowering plant *Paris japonica*.
- If stretched out like from a ball of yarn, the length of the DNA in each cell of this fern would extend nearly 350 feet (106 meters). The human genome would extend a mere 6-1/2 feet (2 meters).
- Tmesipteris is a small genus of ferns whose ancestors evolved about 350 million years ago.
- It **belongs to a primordial group of plants that evolved long before dinosaurs set foot on the earth.**
- It is distinguished by its mainly epiphytic habit i.e it grows mainly on the trunks and branches of trees.
- It is **restricted distribution in Oceania and several Pacific Islands.**
- Found only in New Caledonia and a few nearby islands in the Pacific Ocean and thrives on the trunks and branches of trees in rainforests.



About Fern:

- Ferns are **plants that do not have flowers.**
- Similar to flowering plants, **ferns have roots, stems, and leaves.**
- However, unlike flowering plants, **ferns do not have flowers or seeds.**
- They usually reproduce sexually by tiny spores or sometimes can reproduce vegetatively.



DOCTRINE OF MERGER & DOCTRINE OF STARE DECISIS

Why in News?

- The Supreme Court of India has noted that the unique powers granted under Article 142 of the Indian Constitution are exceptions to two established legal principles: the Doctrine of Merger and the Doctrine of Stare Decisis.
- This is done to ensure justice is comprehensively served in specific cases.

About:

- The Supreme Court of India has ruled that Article 142 of the Constitution of India is an exception to the doctrine of merger and the rule of stare decisis.
- The court applied the test laid down in the landmark judgement of the Constitution Bench of 5 Judges **in Indore Development Authority v/s Manoharlal and others (2020 SC)** to the batches of appeals filed by the landowners.
- The extraordinary constitutional powers vested in the court under Article 142 of the Constitution of India remain unaffected and are always deemed to be preserved as an exception to the doctrine of merger and the rule of stare decisis.

About Doctrine of Merger:

- The Doctrine of Merger is a **common law doctrine which aims to maintain decorum and orderliness in the judicial system.**
- When a higher court (appellate court) makes a ruling, the original ruling by the lower court is absorbed or “merged” into the higher court’s decision.
- The underlying logic is that **there cannot be more than one decree or operative order governing the same subject matter at a given point of time.**
- The doctrine addresses the issue of which order must be enforced and given importance if multiple orders are passed by both subordinate and superior courts on a single issue.
- The **doctrine is not recognized statutorily** but is a statement of judicial propriety aimed at instilling discipline in subordinate adjudicating authorities.
- This ensures that only one final ruling exists on any given issue, avoiding confusion over which order should be followed.
- **This doctrine applies to decisions made by all levels of courts,** ensuring that the ruling of a higher court supersedes and absorbs that of a lower court.



About Doctrine of Stare Decisis:

- The **doctrine of Stare Decisis** refers to **the concept that courts must follow previously made judicial decisions in cases where the same legal issues are brought before them in subsequent matters.**
- Stare Decisis” is Latin for “to stand by things decided.” This doctrine



mandates that courts follow the rulings made in earlier similar cases.

- Such **previous decisions that courts refer to are known as “precedents”**.
- Past decisions serve as precedents, which are principles or rules that guide judicial decisions in future similar cases.
- These are used by judges as references for making decisions in current cases with similar legal questions.
- **Courts are obligated to consider these precedents in their rulings** to maintain consistency and predictability in the law.
- These doctrines collectively ensure that the legal system operates efficiently, maintaining consistency and hierarchy in judicial decisions.
- The doctrine of Stare Decisis creates an obligation on courts to refer to precedents when taking a certain decision.

NOTA

Why in News?

In Indore, **NOTA (None of the Above) emerged runner-up** with more than 200,000 votes.

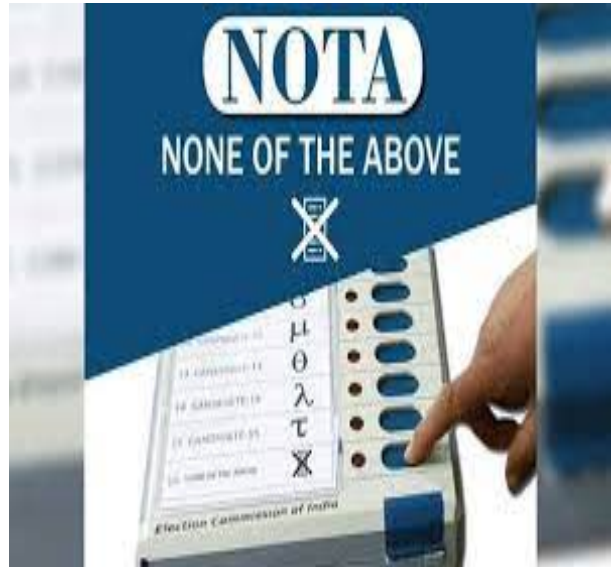
The Indore Lok Sabha constituency received over 2 lakh votes for the "None Of The Above" (NOTA) option, marking the highest vote count for any option in any constituency to date. The previous record-holder was Gopalganj, Bihar, in 2019, where 51,660 voters chose this option.

About NOTA:

- None of the Above, abbreviated as NOTA, has **been provided as an option to the voters of India in most elections since 2013.**
- NOTA in was introduced 2013 after a Supreme Court (SC) direction in a public interest litigation filed by the Peoples Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL).



- In the landmark judgement of PUCJ vs. Union of India in 2013, the Supreme Court directed the Election Commission of India (ECI) to include the NOTA option in elections to the Lok Sabha and state legislative assemblies.
- This decision aimed to enhance transparency and empower voters by providing them with an additional choice.
- By expressing a preference for none of the above, a citizen can choose not to vote for any candidates who are contesting the elections.
- The **NOTA option was first used in the 2013 legislative assembly elections held in four states—Chhattisgarh, Mizoram, Rajasthan, and Madhya Pradesh, and the union territory of Delhi.**
- The **NOTA option was introduced for the first time in the general elections in 2014.**
- It's also used in countries like France, Belgium, Brazil, Finland, and Sweden.
- Since its introduction, NOTA has gained increasing popularity amongst the Indian electorate, securing more votes than some candidates in legislative assembly elections, and in some instances, securing more votes than the winning candidate in panchayat elections.
- The BJP's Shankar Lalwani has won in Indore with a massive 10.09 lakh margin, receiving 12,26,751 votes. His nearest competitor was NOTA, with 2,18,674 votes.
- In many elections, NOTA has won more votes than many of the political parties that contested.
- In many constituencies, votes received by NOTA have been higher than the margin by which the candidate has won.
- NOTA has been described as the maturing of India's democracy.
- The **power of NOTA to express dissent** is clearly visible in reports where entire communities decided to democratically protest against governments that have failed to meet their needs.



- By implementing NOTA, the Supreme Court aimed to encourage political parties to nominate candidates of higher integrity, given that voters could now formally express disapproval.
- **NOTA is counted separately from the total votes polled, but it doesn't affect the outcome of the election.**
- Even if NOTA gets the highest number of votes, the **candidate with the highest number of votes among the contesting candidates is still declared the winner.**

WHAT HAPPENS IF NOTA RECEIVES MAXIMUM VOTES

- If NOTA receives the highest number of votes, **it generally has no legal consequence on the election outcome at the national level,** meaning the candidate with the next highest votes wins.
- The court ruled that **voter secrecy must be maintained** whether a voter decides to vote or not, countering the government's position that only active voters deserve secrecy.
- In states like **Maharashtra, Haryana, Puducherry, Delhi, and Chandigarh,** the **State Election Commission has passed orders treating NOTA as a "Fictional Electoral Candidate" in local body elections.** *If NOTA receives more votes than any candidate, these elections are declared null, necessitating a re-election.*
- A petition filed in April 2024, asking for elections to be declared null and void if NOTA gets the majority. He argues that **NOTA should pressure political parties to field better candidates.** He also suggests that **candidates polling fewer votes than NOTA should be banned from contesting elections for five years.**
- The petitioner argues for uniform rules nationwide, suggesting that NOTA's introduction in 2013 hasn't achieved its intended purpose of enhancing voter participation or candidate quality.
- E.g., In the Maharashtra local body election, re-election may be conducted when majority votes are NOTA.

NOTA IN RAJYA SABHA POLLS?

- **No**, the Supreme Court had previously, ruled out the use of the 'None Of The Above' (NOTA) option in the Rajya Sabha elections.
- The court observed that **NOTA is intended for universal adult suffrage and direct elections**, not for proportional representation, as in Rajya Sabha polls.
- This decision aligns with Article 80(4) of the Constitution and the Supreme Court's 2013 judgment in PUCL v Union of India, which states that Rajya Sabha representatives are elected by state legislative assembly members through proportional representation by means of the single transferable vote.

Challenges with NOTA:

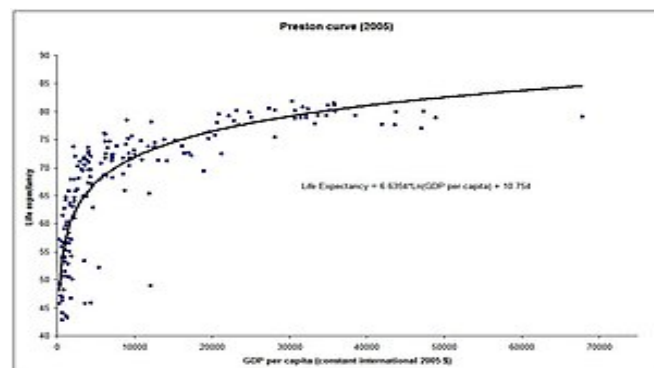
- No electoral value
- Lack of awareness
- Not a right to reject
- Caste bias

Suggestions for Improvement of NOTA:

- Re-elections
- Barring candidates
- Cost on candidates
- Short-term ban
- Awareness

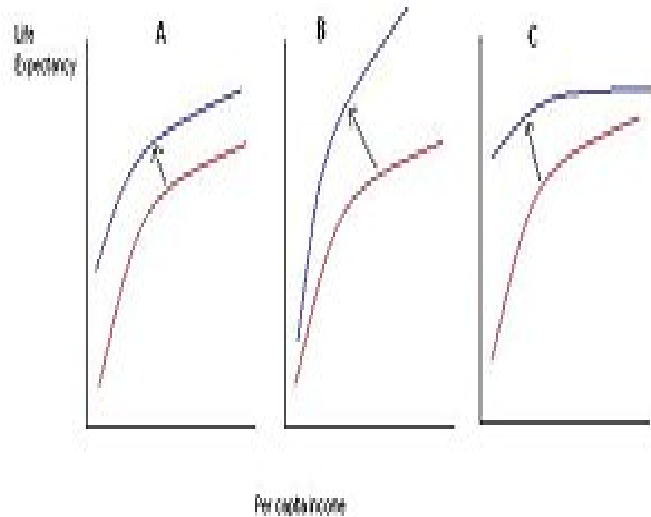
PRESTON CURVE

- The Preston curve is an empirical cross-sectional **relationship between life expectancy and real per capita income.**
- It is a graph that shows the relationship between the average income per person in a country (usually measured as



GDP per capita) and the average life expectancy of its people.

- The concept was **introduced by American sociologist Samuel H. Preston** in his 1975 paper titled “The changing relation between mortality and level of economic development”.
- The **curve shows that people in richer countries generally have longer life spans** compared to those in poorer countries, likely due to better access to healthcare, education, nutrition, etc.
- As a poor country's per capita income rises, its life expectancy increases significantly initially.
- For example, India's per capita income rose from Rs 9,000 in 1947 to Rs 55,000 in 2011, while life expectancy increased from 32 to 66 years.
- However, the positive relationship between per capita income and life expectancy starts to flatten out beyond a certain point, as the human lifespan cannot be increased indefinitely.
- This means that at low levels of per capita income, further increases in income are associated with large gains in life expectancy, but at high levels of income, increased income has little associated change in life expectancy.
- A further significant finding of Preston's study was that the curve has shifted upwards during the 20th century.
- This means that life expectancy has increased in most countries, independently of changes in income.



SPECIAL CATEGORY STATUS

Why in News?

- Impressive performances by **Chandrababu Naidu’s Telugu Desam Party (TDP)** and **Nitish Kumar’s Janata Dal United (JD(U))** in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections

have renewed interest in the leaders' demands for special category status (SCS) for their States Andhra Pradesh and Bihar.

- Consequently, these leaders are expected to renew their previous demands for granting special status to Andhra Pradesh and Bihar.

About:

The Central Government of India established several commissions from time to time to examine and give recommendations regarding the reorganization of state on linguistic basis. Few related commissions are:

- **Dar Commission (1948):** It emphasized administrative efficiency over linguistic homogeneity.
- **JVP Committee (1948-1949):** The JVP Committee also recommended against the reorganization of states purely on linguistic lines, suggesting that such reorganisation could lead to administrative difficulties and national disintegration.
- **Fazal Ali Commission (States Reorganisation Commission) (1953-1955):** It recommended the creation of linguistic states but with certain reservations to ensure national integration and administrative convenience.

Its recommendations led to the formation of several states based on linguistic lines.

States Reorganisation Act (1956):

- It was based on the recommendations of the Fazal Ali Commission.
- The act led to the reorganization of state boundaries across India, significantly altering the political map of the country.
- The States Reorganisation Act, 1956 merged the Telugu-speaking areas of Hyderabad state with the Andhra state to create the enlarged Andhra Pradesh.

SPECIAL CATEGORY STATUS:

To be able to get the status, **states have to fulfil the following requirements** (based on Gadgil formula):

- They need to have hilly and difficult terrain.

- They need to have low population density and /or a sizable share of the tribal population.
- They must be in a strategic location along borders with neighbouring countries.
- They must be economically and infrastructurally backward.
- They must have a non-viable nature of state finances.

Evolution of the idea of SCS:

- It was introduced in 1969 on the recommendations of the Fifth Finance Commission (chaired by Mahavir Tyagi) **to benefit certain backward states.**
- At that time, this was provided to Assam, Jammu and Kashmir and Nagaland.
- The **idea of SCS was first formalised in April 1969** when the Gadgil formula of fund allocation was cleared by the National Development Council (NDC).
- On the basis of this formula, **more states were given the SCS when they attained statehood.**
- These include Himachal Pradesh in 1970-71, Manipur, Meghalaya and Tripura in 1971-72; Sikkim in 1975-76; Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram in 1986-87 and Uttarakhand in 2001-02.
- **Currently, 11 states have the SCS in the country including Assam, Nagaland, Himachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Sikkim, Tripura, Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, Uttarakhand, and Telangana.**
- Telangana, the newest state of India, is accorded the status as it was carved out of another state - Andhra Pradesh, which hit the state's finances.
- Along with AP and Bihar, Odisha is another state demanding SCS.

BENEFITS OF SPECIAL CATEGORY STATUS:

- Higher grants-in-aid (90% in the form of grants)
- Enhanced Central Funding
- Tax Exemptions and incentives
- Improvement of employment opportunities
- Investment in infrastructure

- SCSs were also provided Special Plan Assistance for projects of special importance to the state.
- Further, unspent funds do not lapse at the end of the financial year.

REASONS BEHIND ANDHRA'S DEMAND FOR SPECIAL STATUS:

- Bifurcation of Andhra Pradesh to create Telangana.
- Increased debt level of Andhra Pradesh.
- Reduced Post-devolution revenue deficit

REASONS BEHIND BIHAR'S DEMAND FOR SPECIAL STATUS:

- Economic Backwardness
- Impact of Bifurcation
- Natural Challenges
- Need for Welfare Funding
- Lack of Resources

CONCERNS REGARDING SPECIAL CATEGORY STATUS:

- Increased Burden on Central Finances
- Inequitable Distribution of Resources
- Increase in Dependency and Reduction of Accountability
- Permanent continuation of temporary SCS Status
- Lack of Constitutional Basis

MT. KANLAON

Why in News?

Mount Kanlaon, located in the central Philippines, **erupted recently (through a Phreatic eruption)**, prompting hundreds of people to seek shelter in evacuation centres.

About Mount Kanlaon:

- Kanlaon, also known as Mount Kanlaon and Kanlaon, is an **active andesitic stratovolcano** and the **highest mountain on the island of Negros in the Philippines**, as well as the highest peak in the Visayas, with an elevation of 2,465 m above sea level.
- **Mount Kanlaon ranks as the 42nd-highest peak of an island in the world.**
- The volcano straddles the provinces of Negros Occidental and Negros Oriental, approximately 30 km (19 mi) southeast of Bacolod, the capital and most populous city of Negros Occidental and whole island.
- It is **one of the active volcanoes in the Philippines and part of the Pacific Ring of Fire.**
- The **volcano comprises various pyroclastic cones and craters**, with its summit boasting a broad caldera and a crater lake.
- The summit of Kanlaon features a broad, elongated caldera with a crater lake, and a smaller, more active crater to the south.
- It is **made up of tropical volcanic materials**, including sheeted lava flows, lahar deposits, airfall tephra, and apron pyroclastic materials.
- Mount Kanlaon is **home to a wide variety of flora and fauna.**
- **The slopes of Kanlaon serve as headwater catchments for major river systems** on Negros Island.
- Kanlaon has **erupted several times since 1886.**
- These **eruptions typically involve phreatic explosions of small to moderate size**, producing minor ashfalls near the volcano.
- **Phreatic eruptions, characterized by steam-driven explosions resulting from heated groundwater**, are typical occurrences, often preceding or following traditional volcanic eruptions.



UNSC

Why in News?

Recently, **Pakistan, Somalia, Denmark, Greece, and Panama** have been chosen as non-permanent members of the UN Security Council (UNSC), serving a 2-year term from 1st January 2025 to 31st December 2026.

About UNSC: United Nations Security Council

- The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) is **one of the six principal organs of the United Nations (UN)**.
- It was **established under the UN Charter in 1945**.
- It **comprises 15 members** (5 permanent (P5) and 10 non-permanent members).
- Out of the 10 non-permanent members, five are elected each year by the General Assembly for a two-year term.
- The permanent members are the **United States, the Russian Federation, France, China, and the United Kingdom**.
- It is **charged with ensuring international peace and security**, recommending the admission of new UN members to the General Assembly, and approving any changes to the UN Charter.
- Its powers as outlined in the United Nations Charter include **establishing peacekeeping operations, enacting international sanctions, and authorizing military action**.
- The UNSC is the **only UN body with authority to issue resolutions that are binding on member states**.
- Like the UN as a whole, the Security Council was **created after World War II to address the failings of the League of Nations in maintaining world peace**.
- The election process for non-permanent seats on the UNSC involves **regional groups** nominating candidates. There are four regional groups.



- Each **regional group typically agrees** on candidates to present to the General Assembly **for a two-year term**.
- The newly elected members are Somalia for the **African Group**, Pakistan for the **Asia-Pacific Group**, Panama for the **Latin America and Caribbean Group**, and Denmark and Greece for the **Western European and Others Group**.
- Each regional group typically agrees on candidates to present to the General Assembly for a two-year term.
- This process aims to ensure regional representation within the Security Council, reflecting global geopolitical diversity and interests.
- The new members will replace outgoing countries such as Mozambique, Japan, Ecuador, Malta, and Switzerland.

STATE OF THE OCEAN REPORT 2024

Why in News?

State of Ocean Report 2024 was **recently released by UNESCO**.

About:

- The UNESCO 'State of the Ocean Report' was **started by the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC-UNESCO) during the 2022 United Nations Ocean Conference**.
- This report provides an easy-to-understand overview of the ocean's current condition.
- It **helps track the progress of the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021–2030)** and encourages efforts towards creating a sustainable future for our oceans.
- The first report in 2022 included insights from over 100 marine science experts on topics like ocean acidification, pollution, and tsunami warnings.



- **New editions of the report are released every year on World Oceans Day (June 8).** These reports align with the seven goals of the UN Ocean Decade.

Key Highlights of the report

- **Ocean Warming:** The upper 2,000 meters of the oceans have been warming significantly. The rate of warming has increased from 0.32 ± 0.03 watts per square meter (W/m^2) to 0.66 ± 0.10 W/m^2 in the past 20 years.
- **Energy Absorption:** Oceans are absorbing about 90% of the Earth's excess energy. This causes deoxygenation (loss of oxygen), which threatens marine ecosystems and human economies that rely on them.
- **Ocean Acidification:** The acidity of the ocean is increasing globally, especially in the open ocean, with a notable drop in pH since the late 1980s.
- **Sea Level Rise:** Sea levels have been rising steadily since 1993. Better monitoring systems are needed to track this at all levels.
- **Ocean Warming:** Rate doubled in 20 years; 2023 saw a significant increase; Hotspots above $2^\circ C$ in the Mediterranean, Tropical Atlantic Ocean, and Southern Oceans
- **Rising sea level:** Sea levels rising, with ocean heat absorption contributing 40%; Accelerated ice mass loss from Greenland and West Antarctica
- **Declining Oxygen Levels:** The Ocean lost 2% oxygen since the 1960s; coastal areas are heavily impacted; Rising acidity threatens coastal species' survival.
- **Blue Carbon and MPAs:** Marine forests are crucial for carbon absorption; Marine Protected Areas protect biodiversity; However, many countries lack marine forest conservation in their plans.

Key recommendations of the Report:

- **Marine Spatial Planning:** Implement to alleviate pressures on marine ecosystems.
- **Coastal Blue Carbon Ecosystems:** Mangroves, seagrasses, and tidal marshes provide refuge against a warmer, more acidic ocean.
- **Increase Seafloor Knowledge:** Globally enhance efforts; 75% of the ocean floor remains unmapped.

- **Engage Indigenous Peoples:** Involve in marine policy and planning for a sustainable ocean future.
- **Promote Ocean Literacy:** Foster universal appreciation of the ocean's vital role in society.
- Adaptation to local changes is vital.

Initiatives for Ocean Protection:

- **BBNJ (Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction) Treaty (2023):** Also known as the Treaty of the High Seas, aims to conserve and sustainably use marine biological diversity beyond national jurisdiction.
- **Marine Carbon Dioxide Removal (mCDR) Technologies:** Capture CO₂ from the air and store it durably.
- **Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework** aims to protect 30% of the ocean by 2030.
- **Marine Biodiversity:** The UN 2030 Agenda emphasizes marine biodiversity protection for sustainable food security.
- **Creation of Marine Protected Areas (MPA):** 50% of catalogued marine species are found in Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), covering 9% of the ocean.

GLOBAL PLASTIC TREATY

Why in News?

The ongoing discussions in the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC-4) of the United Nations Environment Agency (UNEA) for a global treaty on plastic pollution prompt considerations for a fair transition for informal waste workers.

About Global Plastic Treaty:

- The Global Plastics Treaty, **initiated in 2021**, is a pivotal international effort aimed at combatting plastic pollution on a global scale.

- The Global Plastics Treaty is an **ambitious initiative involving over 175 UN member nations aimed at eliminating plastics.**
- It was **established during the fifth UN Environment Assembly in Nairobi, Kenya.**
- The treaty has progressed through various meetings worldwide, including Dakar, Senegal; Uruguay; Paris, France; Nairobi, Kenya; and Canada, with the final meeting set for South Korea.



- Objective– **By the end of 2024, the aim is to create a legal document setting out deadlines for countries to decrease plastic production,** cut out unnecessary uses, prohibit specific chemicals, and set recycling goals.
- The treaty could provide guidelines on how wealthy nations can assist poorer ones in achieving their plastic reduction goals.
- It could prohibit specific types of plastic, plastic items, and chemical additives, as well as establish legally binding targets for recycling and the use of recycled materials in consumer products.
- It could include provisions for a smooth transition for waste pickers and workers in developing countries who rely on the plastic industry for their livelihoods.
- Notably, the International Alliance of Waste Pickers has played a significant role, advocating for the inclusion of informal waste pickers in the treaty discussions to promote sustainable waste management and equitable policies.
- **India is not comfortable with binding targets** and insists that the treaty should address factors like the availability, accessibility, and affordability of alternatives, considering cost implications.
- **India's position reflects the idea of "common but differentiated responsibility,"**. This is also observed in India's climate change negotiations where India demanded that wealthier nations assist developing countries and adopt tougher targets themselves.

Why is a legally binding global plastic treaty required?

- **Increase in plastic production:** Since the 1950s, global plastic production has increased a lot. It rose from 2 million tonnes in 1950 to over 450 million tonnes in 2019. If left unchecked, it's set to double by 2050 and triple by 2060.
- **Slow decomposition rate :** In a study published by The Lancet in 2023, it was found that nearly 6 billion tonnes of plastic currently pollute the planet. Only a small fraction of plastic has been recycled so far, and because it takes anywhere from 20 to 500 years to decompose, it poses a significant environmental challenge.
- **Impact of Plastic Pollution on Ecosystems and Health :** A lot of plastic waste ends up in rivers and oceans, breaking down into tiny particles called microplastics or nano plastics. These particles carry over 16,000 chemicals that can harm ecosystems and living things, including humans. These chemicals disrupt the body's hormones, leading to issues like cancer, diabetes, and reproductive disorders.
- **A Major Contributor to Climate Change :** Plastic production and disposal are adding to climate change. As per OECD report, in 2019, plastics produced 1.8 billion tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions, which is about 3.4% of global emissions. Around 90% of these emissions come from making plastic, which relies on fossil fuels.


COLD LAVA

Why in News?

A volcanic eruption at Mount Kanlaon in the Philippines led to rivers of cold lava, or lahar.

About Cold Lava:

- Cold lava, or “lahar,” is a **hazardous flow of volcanic material, debris, and water** that descends rapidly from volcanoes, **resembling a fast-moving landslide rather than molten lava.**

- This dense mixture **forms when water interacts with volcanic ash and debris on a volcano's slopes, creating a river-like flow that can be more destructive than molten lava due to its speed and force.**
 - This mixture creates a dense, concrete-like slurry that can flow downhill rapidly.
 - The term **"cold lava" is misleading, as it remains hot internally but appears and behaves like wet concrete.**
- 
- Driven by gravity and the volume of displaced material, lahars can travel far from the volcano's summit, picking up additional debris and increasing in volume and destructive power.
 - Rain can carry cold lava down the slopes of a volcano during an eruption and into the paths of nearby towns or villages.
 - Unlike traditional lava flows, which move slowly and typically allow for evacuation, cold lava can advance swiftly at speeds reaching hundreds of kilometres per hour.
 - Its ability to transport large volumes of debris downhill makes it particularly hazardous to nearby communities.
 - This **makes it capable of causing extensive damage to buildings, infrastructure like bridges and roads**, and posing a serious threat to human life.
 - While cold lava is commonly associated with volcanic eruptions, **lahars can also occur without an eruption.**
 - Heavy rainfall or snowmelt can erode loose volcanic sediments, especially if the area lacks vegetation to stabilise the soil, resulting in the formation of lahars.

2025: INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF QUANTUM SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Why in News?

The United Nations (UN) has designated the year 2025 as the ‘International Year of Quantum Science and Technology’ to increase public awareness of the importance of quantum science and its applications.

About:

- The year 2025 was chosen for this International Year as it recognizes 100 years since the initial development of quantum mechanics.
- **The resolution for this was led by Mexico at the UNESCO General Conference in May 2023,** which was adopted by almost 60 countries.
- The year 2025 marks **100 years since theoretical physicists Werner Heisenberg, Max Born and Pascual Jordan developed matrix mechanics,** the first formulation to express quantum physics in mathematical form.
- Also, the year 2025 marks a century since published a paper laying the foundation of modern quantum mechanics.
- German physicist **Werner Heisenberg was awarded the Nobel Prize for physics in 1932 for the creation of quantum mechanics.**
- **India launched the National Quantum Mission in April 2023,** to be implemented from 2023 to 2031 by the Department of Science & Technology (DST).
- It has four verticals: Quantum Computing, Quantum Communication, Quantum Sensing and Metrology, and Quantum Materials and Devices.
- Schrödinger wave Equation: **Year 2025 also marks 100 years since Erwin Schrödinger postulated the Schrödinger equation** that governs the wave function of a quantum-mechanical system – a landmark moment in quantum mechanics that proved to be seminal to the field and won him a Nobel Prize in Physics.
- Global Initiatives and Outreach: A steering committee is also “planning global initiatives and events, particularly those that reach audiences unaware of the importance of quantum science and technology.”



- Quantum science and technologies, especially quantum computing, have gained prominence in public discourse due to their potential transformative impact on various fields.
- The proclamation has received endorsements from various international organisations, including the International Union of Pure and Applied Physics and the International Union of Pure and Applied Chemistry.

GLOBAL GENDER GAP REPORT

Why in News?

The **World Economic Forum (WEF)** has released the **Global Gender Gap Report 2024**, highlighting persistent gender inequality across various sectors worldwide.

About Gender Gap Report:

- The Global Gender Gap Report 2024 is **published by the World Economic Forum.**
- It **assesses gender parity across four key dimensions:**
 1. Economic Participation and Opportunity,
 2. Educational Attainment,
 3. Health and Survival, and
 4. Political Empowerment.
- It is the longest-standing index tracking the progress of numerous countries' efforts towards closing these gaps over time since its inception in 2006.
- The **global gender gap score for all 146 countries included in this edition stands at 68.5%.**
- Among the 101 countries continuously covered since 2006, the gap has also improved by +0.1 points to reach 68.6%.
- **Despite progress, no country has achieved full gender parity.** However, 97% of economies included in this edition have closed more than 60% of their gender gap (compared to 85% in 2006).



- Top-Ranking Countries:
 - **Iceland maintained its position as the most gender-equal country** for the 14th consecutive year, with a **gender gap score of 91.2%**.
 - **Norway, Finland, and Sweden also rank high**, consistently placing in the top five.
- **India is ranked 129 in this year's index.** The ranking reflects a slight regression compared to the previous edition.
- India has closed 64.1% of its gender gap as of 2024.
- The decline is primarily due to small decreases in 'Educational Attainment' and 'Political Empowerment.'
- Despite the overall decline, there was a slight improvement in 'Economic Participation and Opportunity.'
- **India ranks the third-lowest among South Asian economies.** India fares worse than Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Bhutan.

GLOBAL ECONOMIC PROSPECTS REPORT

Why in News?

According to the recently released **Global Economic Prospects Report by the World Bank**, India is predicted to remain the fastest-growing major economy globally, with a projected GDP growth rate of 6.6% for FY25.

About:

- The World Bank has revised India's upward growth projections by 0.2 percentage points for FY25 and FY26, now forecasting growth rates of 6.6% and 6.7%, respectively.
- This update reflects an improvement in the economic outlook compared to earlier estimates.
- According to the report, for the first time in three years, the global



economy is showing signs of stabilisation in 2024.

- **Globally, economic growth is forecasted to stabilize at 2.6% this year**, marking the first time in three years despite geopolitical tensions and high interest rates.
- **Globally, GDP growth is now anticipated to be 2.6 % for 2024-25.**
- For FY26 and FY27, global growth is expected to be 2.7% amid modest growth in trade and investment.
- The **World Bank forecasts a slower moderation of global inflation, averaging 3.5% this year.**
- Central banks in advanced and emerging market economies are expected to be cautious about easing monetary policy due to ongoing inflationary pressures.
- The **global outlook remains subdued due to factors such as geopolitical tensions, trade fragmentation, higher interest rates, and climate-related disasters, despite some near-term improvements.**
- It also emphasises the need for global cooperation to safeguard trade, support green and digital transitions, provide debt relief, and enhance food security.
- **India's economic growth is projected to reach 8.2% in 2023-24**, which is 1.9 percentage points higher than the World Bank estimated in January.
- The World Bank anticipates a moderation in India's growth rate to an average of 6.7% annually from FY25 to FY27.
- This slowdown is attributed to reduced investment following a period of high growth.

About World Bank:

- The World Bank is an **international organization dedicated to providing financing, advice, and research to developing nations** to aid their economic advancement.
- The bank predominantly acts as an organization that attempts to fight poverty by offering developmental assistance to middle- and low-income countries.
- The World Bank was **created in 1944 out**



of the **Bretton Woods Agreement**, which was secured under the auspices of the United Nations in the latter days of World War II

- **Headquarter: Washington, D.C**
- Though titled as a bank, the World Bank, is not necessarily a bank in the traditional, chartered meanings of the word.
- The World Bank and its subsidiary groups operate within their own provisions and develop their own proprietary financial assistance products, all with the same goal of serving countries' capital needs internationally
- Through the years, the World Bank has expanded from a single institution to a group of five unique and cooperative institutional organizations, known as the World Banks or collectively as the **World Bank Group**; the details of which are as follows:
 1. **The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD)**
 - An institution that provides debt financing to governments that are considered middle income
 2. **International Development Association (IDA)**
 - This is a group that gives interest-free loans to the governments of poor countries.
 3. **The International Finance Corporation (IFC)**
 - This organization, focuses on the private sector and provides developing countries with investment financing and financial advisory services
 4. **Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA)**
 - This is an organization that promotes foreign direct investments in developing countries
 5. **International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID)**
 - This is an entity that provides arbitration on international investment disputes.

SATNAMIS

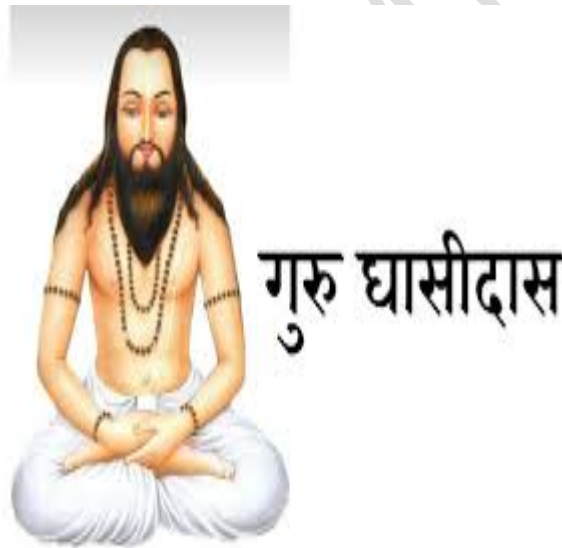
Why in News?

Recently, the community has been in the spotlight **due to protests in Chhattisgarh** against the alleged desecration of their religious site, Jaitkham, at Amar Cave.

The incident led to violent demonstrations, highlighting the community's longstanding resistance against oppression and their efforts to uphold their religious and cultural identity.

About Satnamis:

- The term “**Satnamis**” means those **who believe in a God whose name is ‘truth’**.
- It is the **largest Scheduled Caste (SC) community**, including peasants, artisans, and untouchables **in Chhattisgarh**.
- The Satnamis are a predominant group within the 11% Scheduled Caste (SC) population in Chhattisgarh, believed to be an offshoot of the Ravidassia community.
- The community was founded on April 21, 1657, by Bir Bhan in Narnaul, Haryana. Udhodas who was a disciple of Saint Ravidas was the first priest or spiritual guru of the community.
- It **was founded by Guru Ghasidas, a 19th-century saint**, who preached monotheism, believing in one God called Satnam "Truthful Name" and social equality.
- Guru Ghasidas was a **farm servant and member of the lower (Chamar) caste**.
- The Satnamis inhabit the plains of central Chhattisgarh, mainly in the old districts of Bilaspur, Durg, Rajnandgaon, and Raipur.
- The Satnamis emphasize three main principles:
 - Adorning the attire of a Satnami devotee
 - Earning money through proper means
 - Not tolerating any injustice or oppression in any form



- **Saint Ghasidas established the Satnam Panth** (“Sect of the True Name”), providing a religious and social identity for many Satnamis.
- He **preached a code of ethical and dietary self-restraint and social equality**, and authored Nirvan Gyan to propagate his teachings.
- Throughout history, Satnamis have navigated their position within a larger Hindu hierarchy, influenced by connections with the Kabir Panth at different points.
- **The community is believed to exert political influence by voting collectively**, and representatives occupy most of the 10 assembly segments allotted for SCs.
- The community reveres Mini Mata, the first female Member of Parliament from Chhattisgarh, who entered the Lok Sabha by winning the 1955 by-election.
- Political parties often invoke her legacy to appeal to the Satnamis for votes.
- They've faced challenges in securing land rights, obtaining fair employment opportunities, and accessing education and healthcare encountered social prejudice and haven't had a strong voice in government.
- The **Chhattisgarh government renamed a section of the Sanjay-Dubri Tiger Reserve to Guru Ghasidas National Park in his honour.**

About Satnami Revolt:

- The Satnami revolt **occurred during the reign of Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb**, in today's Mahendragarh district of Haryana.
- The revolt began **when a Mughal soldier killed a Satnami**, leading about 5,000 Satnamis to take up arms.
- The **Satnamis routed the Mughal troops, drove away the administrators, and set up their own administration.**
- The revolt gained support from Hindus in Agra and Ajmer, who were discontent with Aurangzeb's strict Islamic policies, including the revival of the Jizya tax, banning of music and art, and destruction of Hindu temples.



- Aurangzeb took personal command and sent troops with artillery to suppress the revolt, resulting in an attempt to annihilate the Satnamis.
- The remnants fled and remained disorganized and leaderless for a long time.

MERCY PETITION

Why in News?

Recently, **President Droupadi Murmu has rejected a mercy petition filed by Pakistani national Mohammed Arif** who was sentenced to death for the December 22, 2000 terrorist attack at the Red Fort in which three people including two Army jawans were killed.

About Mercy Petition:

- A mercy petition is a **formal request made by someone who has been sentenced to death or imprisonment seeking mercy from the President or the Governor, as the case may be.**
- The idea of Mercy Petition is followed in many countries like the United States of America, the United Kingdom, Canada, and India.
- **Everyone has the basic right to live** which is also mentioned as a fundamental right mentioned under Article 21 of the Indian Constitution.
- As per the Constitutional framework in India, **mercy petition to the President is the last constitutional resort a convict can take** when he is sentenced by the court of law.
- **A convict can present a mercy petition to the President of India under Article 72 of the Constitution of India.**
- Similarly, the power to grant pardon is conferred upon the Governors of States under Article 161 of the Constitution of India.



- Under Article 72, The **President shall have the power to grant pardons, reprieves, respites or remissions of punishment or to suspend, remit or commute** the sentence of any person convicted of any offence—
 - In all cases where the punishment or sentence is by a **Court Martial**.
 - In all cases where the punishment or sentence is for an offence against any law relating to a **matter to which the executive power of the Union extends**.
 - In all cases where **the sentence is a sentence of death**.
- Under Article 161. The Governor of a State shall have the power to grant pardons, reprieves, respites or remissions of punishment or to suspend, remit or commute the sentence of any person convicted of any offence against any law relating to a matter to which the executive power of the State extends.
- There **is no time limit given** in these two Articles for Mercy Plea.
- These Articles have **no binding effect on the President and the Governors of the states to accept all the Mercy Petitions**.
- There is no statutory written procedure for dealing with mercy petitions, but in practice, after extinguishing all the reliefs in the court of law, either the convict in person or his relative on his behalf may submit a written petition to the President.
- The petitions are received by the President's secretariat on behalf of the President, which is then forwarded to the Ministry of Home Affairs for their comments and recommendations.
- The mercy or clemency is granted on the grounds based on his health, physical or mental fitness, and his family's financial conditions considering if he is the only sole earner of bread or butter or not.

Important Judgements related to Mercy Petition:

- Bachan Singh v. State of Punjab
- Maru Ram v. Union of India (1981)
- Kehar Singh v. Union of India (1989)
- Shatrughan Chauhan v. State of U.P. (2014)
- Law Commission Report

TARANG SHAKTI 2024

Why in News?

India will host its first multinational air exercise **Tarang Shakti 2024** in August.

About:

- It is the **Indian Air Force's first multinational air exercise** which will be held in August.
- **Ten countries will be participating in the exercise.** In addition to this, few others would be acting as observers.
- Australia, France, Germany, Japan, Spain, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom, and the United States will be sending contingents.
- Germany will deploy fighter jets and also an A-400M transport aircraft.
- **The plan is to invite friendly foreign countries with whom the IAF interacts regularly and has a certain degree of interoperability.**
- The exercise is now planned to take place in two phases.
- The first phase will occur in southern India during the first two weeks of August, and the second phase will be in the western sector from late August to mid-September.
- Some countries will participate in both phases, while others will join only one of the two phases.



NALANDA UNIVERSITY

Why in News?

Recently, the **Prime Minister of India** inaugurated the new campus of **Nalanda University**.

It is spread across 455 acres, located in Rajgir, Bihar. The site is only 12 km away from the ruins of the ancient Buddhist monastery of the same name.

About Nalanda University:

- Nalanda is recognized as the **most ancient university on the Indian subcontinent**.
- It was **located near Rajgriha city (Rajgir)** in the ancient kingdom of Magadha (modern-day Bihar).
- It was **established by Kumar Gupta of the Gupta dynasty** in Bihar during the early 5th century.
- The university **thrived for 600 years until the 12th century.**
- During **King Harshavardhana's reign** (606-647 AD) Chinese scholar Xuan Zang (also known as **Hiuen Tsang** and Moksadeva, a 7th-century Chinese Buddhist monk, scholar, traveller, and translator) **came here and studied for about 5 years.**
- Hiuen-Tsang in his memoirs says that there was a rigorous oral entrance test for students who wished to enrol and only about 20% qualified.
- He also carried back many scriptures from Nalanda, which were later translated into Chinese.
- In 670 AD, **another Chinese pilgrim I-Tsing visited Nalanda.** He stated that Nalanda housed 2,000 students and was supported by money from 200 villages.
- It is **considered the world's first residential university.**
- Scholars came from all over the world, including **Korea, Japan, China, Mongolia, Sri Lanka, Tibet and Southeast Asia.**
- Students followed a strict code of conduct and participated in daily meditation and study sessions.
- **Students who gained admission were mentored by a group of scholars** under the guidance of Buddhist masters like Dharmapala and Silabhadra.



- **Mathematician and inventor of zero (Aryabhata)** is also believed to have studied and taught in Nalanda.
- **It is also known as 'Dharma Gunj' or 'Mountain of Truth,' had over nine million books**, including some of the most sacred manuscripts, stored in a nine-storey building, Ratnodadhi.
- It included Buddhist scriptures (of both Mahayana and Hinayana schools), philosophy, theology, metaphysics, logic, grammar, astronomy and medicine.
- It **offered courses in medicine, Ayurveda, religion, Buddhism, mathematics, grammar, astronomy, and Indian philosophy.**
- It **reached its zenith during the reign of Harshavardhan and the Pala monarchs.**
- It served as a hub for learning, culture, and intellectual exchange, significantly influencing Indian civilization and beyond.
- The **first attack on Nalanda Mahavihara occurred between 455-470 AD** during the reign of Emperor Samudragupta of the Gupta Empire.
- The attackers were the Hunas, a Central Asian tribal group, primarily motivated by the **desire to loot the university's valuable resources.**
- **Emperor Skanda Gupta later re-established the university.** It was during his reign that the renowned Nalanda library was founded.
- The university was destroyed in 1193 by Bakhtiyar Khilji, a general of the Turkish ruler Qutbuddin Aibak.
- It was rediscovered in 1812 by Scottish surveyor Francis Buchanan-Hamilton and later identified as the ancient university by Sir Alexander Cunningham in 1861.
- The Chinese monk Xuan Zang provided invaluable insights into Nalanda's academic and architectural grandeur.
- **Nalanda was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2016** emphasizing the site's immense cultural and historical importance.

About Revival of Nalanda University:

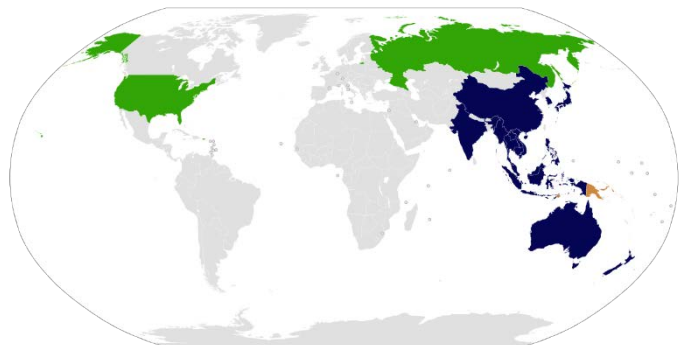
- The idea for revival emerged in the early 2000s.

- Former President **A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, the Singapore government, and leaders of East Asian Summit** (EAS) countries all advocated for Nalanda's return.
- The **Indian Parliament passed the Nalanda University Act in 2010**, providing a legal framework for the new institution.
- **Nalanda University is envisioned as a collaborative effort between India and other East Asian nations**, symbolising a renewed focus on regional knowledge exchange.
- The Bihar government provided a 455-acre site near the ancient ruins.
- The architect, B.V. Doshi, designed an eco-friendly campus reflecting the spirit of the past while incorporating modern amenities.
- The **university offers postgraduate programs in various fields**, including Buddhist Studies, Historical Studies, Ecology and Environmental Studies, and International Relations.
- The **Campus is a 'Net Zero' Green Campus.**
- It is self-sustainable with a solar plant, domestic and drinking water treatment plant, water recycling plant for reusing wastewater, 100 acres of water bodies, and many other environment friendly facilities.



About East Asia Summit:

- The East Asia Summit (EAS) is a **regional forum held annually by leaders** of, initially, 16 countries in the East Asian, Southeast Asian, South Asian and Oceanian regions, based on the ASEAN Plus Six mechanism.



- The EAS was **established in 2005 as an Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)-led initiative.**
- The EAS is the only leader-led forum in the Indo-Pacific that brings together all key partners to discuss political, security and economic issues of strategic importance.
- The EAS **operates on the principles of openness, inclusiveness, respect for international law, ASEAN centrality, and ASEAN's role as the driving force.**
- The idea of an East Asia Grouping was first proposed by then Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad in 1991.
- Since its establishment, ASEAN has held the central role and leadership in the forum.
- **EAS meetings are held after the annual ASEAN leaders' meetings,** and plays an important role in the regional architecture of Asia-Pacific.
- The **first summit was held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia on 14 December 2005.**
- **Membership expanded to 18 countries** including Russia and the United States at the Sixth EAS in 2011.
- The EAS comprises 18 members: the 10 ASEAN countries (Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam) and eight dialogue partners (Australia, China, India, Japan, New Zealand, Republic of Korea, Russia and the United States).

SPEAKER OF LOK SABHA

Why in News?

- On Wednesday, June 26, 2024, the ruling BJP-led NDA nominee, **Om Birla, was elected as the Speaker of the 18th Lok Sabha for a second consecutive term** by a voice vote.
- This is a rare occurrence, as the position of Lok Sabha Speaker is typically filled through consensus between the ruling party and the opposition.

About:

- This year, the **Lok Sabha witnessed contested election for Lok Sabha Speaker post** between Om Birla, a three-time BJP MP from Rajasthan's Kota, and the INDIA bloc's nominee, Kodikunnil Suresh, the eight-time Congress MP from Kerala's Mavelikara, after the Narendra Modi-led NDA government and the Opposition failed to reach a consensus.
- Except on three occasions 1952, 1967 and 1976, the Speakers in India have been elected unopposed.
- **Article 93 states that the Lok Sabha** shall choose two of its members as Speaker and Deputy Speaker on a date fixed by the President.
- Article 93 of the Constitution states that the **Speaker's post becomes vacant before the new Lok Sabha's first meeting**. The President appoints a Pro-tem Speaker to swear in new MPs.
- It is done by a simple majority of members present and voting.
- The Lok Sabha Speaker plays a pivotal role in ensuring the smooth functioning of parliamentary proceedings, maintaining order, and upholding the principles of democracy within the House.



About Speaker of Lok Sabha:

- The Speaker is the constitutional and ceremonial head of the House.
- Each House of Parliament has its own presiding officer.
- There is a Speaker and a Deputy Speaker for the Lok Sabha and a Chairman and a Deputy Chairman for the Rajya Sabha.
- The Speaker is assisted by the Secretary-General of the Lok Sabha and senior officers of the Secretariat on parliamentary activities, practice and procedure.
- In the absence of the Speaker, the Deputy Speaker discharges his/her functions.

Office of Speaker of Lok Sabha:

- The Speaker is the presiding officer who is responsible for the day-to-day functioning of the House.
- The Speaker does not vacate his/her office until immediately before the first meeting of the Lok Sabha after the dissolution.
- He/she is eligible for re-election.
- The Speaker of Lok Sabha is entitled to a regular salary and allowance fixed by the Parliament.
- The salary and allowances of the Speaker of Lok Sabha are charged on the Consolidated Fund of India

Election of Speaker of the House:

- The House elects its presiding officer by a simple majority of members present and voting.
- Usually, a member belonging to the ruling party is elected as speaker whereas deputy speaker is elected from opposition party .
- There are also instances when members not belonging to the ruling party were elected to the office of the Speaker.
- GMC Balayogi and Manohar Joshi belonging to the non-ruling party served as the Speaker in the 12th and 13th Lok Sabha.
- When the Lok Sabha is dissolved, the Speaker remains in his office till the first meeting of the new assembly when the new speaker is elected.

Removal of the Speaker of the House:

- The Constitution has given the Lower House authority to remove the Speaker if needed.
- The House can remove the Speaker **through a resolution with notice of 14 days, passed by an effective majority**(more than 50% of the effective strength (total strength-vacancies) of the house present and voting) as per Articles 94 of the Indian Constitution.

- The Speaker **can also be removed on getting disqualified from being a Lok Sabha** member under sections 7 and 8 of the Representation of the People Act, 1951.
- A speaker **can also give his resignation to a Deputy Speaker.**

Responsibilities of the Speaker of Lok Sabha

- **Protecting the House's privileges:** The Speaker is the guardian of the rights and privileges of the House, its committees, and its members. It depends solely on the Speaker to refer any question of privilege to the Committee of Privileges for examination, investigation, and report.
- **Presiding over joint sessions:** The Speaker presides over joint sittings of both houses of Parliament, to resolve deadlocks between the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha on a particular bill.
- **Maintaining order and decorum:** The Speaker has the power to adjourn the House or suspend a meeting in the absence of one-tenth of the total strength of the House, known as the quorum.
- **Casting vote:** In the event of a tie, the Speaker is entitled to cast a deciding vote, known as the 'casting vote'
- **Money Bill:** Sole authority to decide whether any Bill is a Money Bill according to Article 110 (4) .
- **Disqualifying members:** It is the Speaker who decides the questions of disqualification of a member of the Lok Sabha arising on the ground of defection under the provisions of the Tenth Schedule. The 52nd Amendment to the Indian Constitution vests this power in the Speaker.
- **The Speaker of the Lok Sabha derives his powers and duties from three sources:**
 - Constitution of India,
 - Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business of Lok Sabha,
 - Parliamentary Conventions (residuary powers that are unwritten or unspecified in the rules)

Pro-Tem Speaker of Lok Sabha:

- When the newly elected Lok Sabha 2024 meets for the first time, **their oath is administered by the 'Pro-Tem Speaker' appointed by the President of India.**
- The Pro-Tem Speaker of Lok Sabha is a **temporary appointment for a limited period to conduct the proceedings in the lower House of Parliament in the first instance.**
- He/She presides over the first sitting of the newly-elected Lok Sabha and **has all the powers of the Speaker.**
- The Bhartruhari Mahtab was a Pro-Tem Speaker For the 18th Lok Sabha till the election process was done for this position.
- The Pro-Tem Speaker of Lok Sabha is **usually a senior most member of the House.**
- The **main responsibility is to administer oaths to the new members and to enable the House to elect the new Speaker.**
- This **post ceases to exist once the election of the new Speaker is completed.**

CHILD NUTRITION REPORT 2024

Why in News?

UNICEF has released its **Child Nutrition Report 2024**, highlighting the severe level of Child Food Poverty globally.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE REPORT:

- Global Impact: **One in four children under age 5 worldwide (27% or 181 million) faces severe food poverty** and is at risk of life-threatening malnutrition.
- **Over two-thirds of the 181 million young children living in severe food poverty are in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa.**



- 20 countries account for 65% of children living in severe food poverty:
 - Afghanistan, Bangladesh, China, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Egypt, Ethiopia, Ghana, India, Indonesia, Myanmar, Niger, Nigeria, Pakistan, Philippines, Somalia, South Africa, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania, Yemen.
- Children in both poor and non-poor households face severe food poverty.
- About half (97 million) of the children in severe food poverty live in middle- and upper-income households.
- Wasting and Mortality: Severely malnourished children are 12 times more likely to die than their well-nourished peers.
- Gaza: Severe food poverty is notably high due to ongoing conflict, with 90% of children living in such conditions between December 2023 and April 2024.
- West and Central Africa: Severe food poverty has decreased from 42% in 2012 to 32% in 2022 due to government investments in child nutrition and feeding counseling.
- Middle- and Upper-Income Households: Surprisingly, nearly half (97 million) of the affected children live in relatively affluent households.

Key Findings of the Report:

- Prevalence: 27% of children globally; 40% in India (2nd highest in South Asia).
- Systemic Failure: CFP (Child Food Poverty) results from failing governance systems, not failing families.
- Poor Diet: Rise in unhealthy food consumption replacing nutrient-rich options.
- Income and CFP: Affects both poor and non-poor households, showing income isn't the sole factor.
- Slow Progress: Global efforts are slow in ending CFP.
- Diet Quality: Children in severe CFP lack nutrient-rich foods; unhealthy foods dominate.
- Crisis Impact: Global food/nutrition crises, conflicts, and climate shocks worsen CFP.
- Undernutrition Link: Higher CFP correlates with higher stunting rates.
- Drivers: Poor food environments, poor feeding practices, climate crisis and household income poverty.

Recommendations of the Child Nutrition Report 2024:

- Enhance data systems to assess CFP severity.
- **Reform food systems** to make nutritious foods accessible, affordable, and desirable.
- Utilize health systems for essential nutrition services, including child feeding counselling.
- Transform food, health, and social protection systems for children.

Status of CFP (Child Food Poverty) in India:

- Prevalence of Malnutrition (NFHS-5): Children Under 5: 35.5% stunted, 19.3% wasted, 32.1% underweight, 3% overweight
- Prevalence of Anaemia: Pregnant Women (15-49 years): 52.2%; Children (6-59 months): 67.1%
- State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World Report (2023): Diet Affordability: **74% of the population cannot afford a healthy diet; 39% lack a nutrient-adequate diet.**
- Global Hunger Index (2023): GHI Score: 28.7 (serious); Child Wasting Rate: 18.7% (highest in the report)

Consequences of CFP in India

- **Health Implications**
 - Stunted Growth
 - Weakened Immune System
 - Micronutrient Deficiencies
- **Educational Consequences:**
 - Cognitive Impairment;
 - Higher School Dropout Rates
- **Economic Impact:**
 - Productivity Loss;
 - Increased Healthcare Costs
- **Inter-generational Impact:**
 - Maternal and Child Health Issues;
 - Long-term Health Effects

- **Social Consequences:**
 - Increased Vulnerability;
 - Stigma and Discrimination
- **Impact on National Development:**
 - Reduced Human Capital;
 - Increased Healthcare Burden

Key Challenges in Handling CFP in India

- Economic Inequality: 74% can't afford a healthy diet.
- Inadequate Dietary Intake: Shift to low-quality, processed foods lacking essential nutrients.
- Poor Sanitation: Only 69% use improved sanitation facilities.
- Lack of Health Infrastructure: Low doctor (0.73) and nurse (1.74) density per 1000 people.
- Delayed/Inconsistent Delivery: Only 50.3% of children receive Anganwadi services.
- Inadequate Monitoring: Poor assessment of program effectiveness.

Initiatives taken by India:

- **Mission Poshan 2.0** :Focuses on improving maternal nutrition and child feeding norms, integrating multiple schemes.
- **Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) Scheme**:Provides food, preschool education, and primary healthcare to children under 6 and their mothers.
- **Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY)** :Offers financial incentives to pregnant and lactating mothers for health and nutrition.
- **Mid-Day Meal Scheme (PM Poshan)**:Supplies nutritious meals to school children; introduces millets to enhance dietary diversity.
- **Scheme for Adolescent Girls (SAG)**:Aims to improve the nutritional and health status of adolescent girls.
- **Mother's Absolute Affection (MAA)**:Promotes breastfeeding to improve child health and nutrition.
- **Poshan Vatikas**: Establishes nutrition gardens to provide locally grown nutritious food for children and mothers.

LEADER OF OPPOSITION

Why in News?

THE Congress announced on Tuesday evening that senior party leader and MP **Rahul Gandhi will be the Leader of the Opposition in Lok Sabha.**

About Leader of Opposition:

- The Leader of the Opposition in Lok Sabha is an elected Member of Lok Sabha who leads the official opposition in the Lower House of the Parliament of India.
- The Leader of the Opposition is the parliamentary chairperson of the largest political party in the Lok Sabha that is not in government (provided that said political party has at least 10% of the seats in the Lok Sabha).
- The office of the leader of the opposition is not mentioned in the Constitution.
- It received statutory recognition through the **Salary and Allowances of Leaders of Opposition in Parliament Act, 1977** which defines the term “Leader of the Opposition” as that member of the Lok Sabha or the Rajya Sabha.
- It is not constitutional post.
- They are entitled to the salary, allowances and other facilities equivalent to that of a cabinet minister.
- Leader of Opposition is also called **Shadow Prime Minister**.
- In the Lok Sabha until 1969, there was a de facto opposition leader with no formal recognition, status or privilege.
- Later, the leader of the opposition was given official recognition, and their salary and allowances were extended by the Act of 1977.
- Since then, the **leader in the Lok Sabha should satisfy three conditions**, namely,
 - He should be a member of the House
 - He should be a member of the party in opposition to the Government having the greatest numerical strength and



- He should be recognised by the Speaker of the Lok Sabha.
- The **position was vacant between 1970 and 1977, between 1980 and 1989 and between 2014 to 2024.**
- He will be **a member of crucial committees** such as Public Accounts (Chairman), Public Undertakings, Estimates and also a member of several Joint Parliamentary Committees.
- He is **entitled to be a member of various selection committees** responsible for appointing heads of statutory bodies like the Central Vigilance Commission, the Central Information Commission, the CBI, the NHRC, and the Lokpal.
- He **provides constructive criticism of the government policies** and to provide an alternative government.
- Article 122 of the Constitution mandates the courts not to inquire into proceedings of Parliament.

MERCURY ISLAND

- The **documentary “My Mercury”** premiered at the 18th Mumbai International Film Festival (MIFF) for Documentary, Short Fiction, and Animation Films.
- The film explores the life of her brother, Yves Chesselet, a conservationist on Mercury Island off the coast of Namibia.
- The 104-minute documentary portrays Yves’ efforts to reclaim the island for endangered seabirds and seals, emphasizing the psychological challenges and deep bond between man and nature.
- **Mercury Island is a small rocky island off The Diamond Coast, Namibia.**
- Despite its small size, it is recognised by Bird Life International and other global conservation groups as an Important Bird Area (IBA) for its significant coastal seabird breeding.



PEN PRINTER PRIZE

Why in News?

Booker Prize winner **Arundhati Roy** has been chosen for the **2024 PEN Pinter Literary Prize** for her courageous and unswerving writing.

About PEN Printer Prize:

- The PEN (Poet, Playwright, Editors Essayist, Novelist) Pinter Prize and the Pinter International Writer of Courage Award both comprise **an annual literary award launched in 2009** by English PEN in honour of the late Nobel Literature Prize-winning playwright Harold Pinter.
- **Harold Pinter, who was a citizen of Great Britain, won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2005.**
- The Pen Pinter Prize serves as a beacon for:
 - Defending freedom of expression
 - Celebrating impactful literature
- Honouring the legacy of Nobel Laureate playwright Harold Pinter
- The annual award is **given to an author who:**
 - must have a significant body of plays, poetry, essays, or fiction of outstanding literary merit, written in English
 - is from the UK, Ireland and the Commonwealth countries
 - who reflects a fierce intellectual determination to define the real truth of our lives and our societies.
- **Arundhati Roy was selected for this year's award by a panel** comprising English PEN chair Ruth Borthwick, actor Khalid Abdalla and writer Roger Robinson.
- **The PEN Pinter jury praised Arundhati Roy's literary work for her incisive commentary on wide-ranging issues ranging from environmental degradation to human rights abuses.**



About Arundhati Roy:

- Arundhati Roy is an eminent Indian author who is best known for the Booker Prize winning novel 'The God of Small Things (1997)'.
- Her second novel, 'The Ministry of Utmost Happiness' was published in 2017.
- She is also the author of Capitalism: A Ghost Story and The Algebra of Infinite Justice.
- She is also a political activist who is involved in environmental and human rights causes.
- She has written against the abuse of human rights, war and capitalism.
- She is an outspoken critic of the Narendra Modi government and has spoken about India's declining press freedoms during its tenure.
- She faces prosecution for her comment made at an event in New Delhi in 2010 for saying that Kashmir was never an integral part of India.
- **She was awarded the 2024 PEN Pinter Prize.**



CLASSIC IAS ACADEMY