



CURRENT AFFAIRS: DECEMBER 2024

ONE NATION, ONE ELECTION BILL

The Constitution (129th Amendment) Bill, 2024, and The Union Territories Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2024, introduced to give effect to “One Nation One Election” referred to the Joint Parliamentary Committee.

Key Provisions of the Bills

The Constitution (One Hundred and Twenty-Ninth Amendment) Bill, 2024 proposes amendments and new article to enable simultaneous elections for the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies.

Articles Amended	Article 82A inserted
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Article 83 (Amendment): Duration of Houses of Parliament.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ The Bill proposes adding new clauses so that if Lok Sabha is dissolved before the end of its full term, the next Lok Sabha will only be for the unexpired term.○ Another proposed sub-clause clarifies that the new House (formed after the mid-term election) will not be a continuation of the old one.• Article 172 (Amendment): Duration of State Legislatures.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Amendments similar to those proposed to Article 83 are proposed to Article 172.• Article 327 (Amendment): Power of Parliament to make provision with respect to elections to Legislatures.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ After the words “delimitation of constituencies”, the words “, conduct of simultaneous elections” shall be inserted	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Simultaneous Elections: It refers to general elections for both the Lok Sabha and all Legislative Assemblies held together.• Appointed Date: The President can bring into force the proposed changes on the date of the first sitting of the Lok Sabha.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ All state Assemblies elected after the appointed date and before the expiry of the full term of the Lok Sabha “shall come to an end on the expiry of the full term of the House of the People”.• Election Commission’s Powers: If it opinion that state election cannot be conducted with Lok sabha election, it may make a recommendation to the President, to declare by an order, that the election to that Legislative Assembly may be conducted at a later date• If an Assembly election is deferred, the full term of that Assembly will also end with the full term of the Lok Sabha elected in the general election.• EC will declare the end date of each Legislative Assembly’s term when notifying its election schedule.








- The Union Territories Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2024: It proposes to amend the Government of Union Territories Act, 1963, Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi Act, 1991, and Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, 2019 to align the term of UT's Legislative Assembly with the Lok Sabha.

About Simultaneous Elections

- Simultaneous Elections (popularly known as One Nation, One Election) means holding elections to the House of the People, all the State Legislative Assemblies, and local bodies i.e., Municipalities and Panchayats, together
 - o Local bodies are not included in the bill.
 - o Simultaneous elections do not mean that voting across the country for all elections needs to happen on a single day.
- Previously, a high-level committee, headed by former President Shri Ram Nath Kovind, recommended a roadmap for holding simultaneous polls to Parliament, State Assemblies, and Local bodies.

Recommendations by other institutions:

-  **Election Commission of India, First Annual Report(1983):** It recommended holding simultaneous elections for the House of the People and the Legislative Assemblies of States.
-  **Law Commission (170th report, 1999):** Hold simultaneous elections for Lok Sabha and State Assemblies but delay results until the Assembly's term ends (interval not exceeding six months).
-  **Parliament Standing Committee on Personnel, Public Grievance and Law & Justice (79th report):** Implement two-phase synchronized elections- some Assemblies at Lok Sabha midterm and others at its term end.
-  **NITI Aayog (Discussion Paper, 2017):** Phase-wise synchronization of tenures of Lok Sabha and Assemblies.
-  **Law Commission (Draft report, 2018):** Synchronize elections via Advancing/postponing timings in some states, Holding elections twice in five years.



OVERSEAS CITIZEN OF INDIA (OCI)

Ministry of External Affairs has dispelled concerns regarding OCI cardholders being reclassified as foreigners, confirming that the existing OCI rules remain unchanged.

About OCI Cardholders

- The OCI Scheme was introduced by amending the Citizenship Act, 1955 in 2005.
- Eligibility: Any foreign national, except a national of Pakistan or Bangladesh,
 - o who was a citizen of India at the time of, or at any time after 26th January, 1950; or
 - o who was eligible to become a citizen of India on 26th January, 1950; or
 - o who belonged to a territory that became part of India after 15th August, 1947; or
 - o who is a child or a grandchild or a great grandchild of such a citizen; or
 - o who is a minor child of such persons mentioned above; or
 - o who is a minor child and whose both parents are citizens of India or one of the parents is a citizen of India - is eligible for registration as OCI cardholder.
- Also, spouse of foreign origin of a citizen of India or spouse of foreign origin of an Overseas Citizen of India Cardholder and whose marriage has been registered and subsisted for a continuous period of not less than two years immediately preceding the presentation of the application is also eligible for registration as OCI cardholder.
- Foreign military personnel either in service or retired are also not entitled for grant of OCI.
- Person of Indian Origin and OCI cardholders have been merged under one category OCI in 2015.
- As on 31st January, 2022 40.68 lakh OCI registration cards are issued.

Benefits of OCI card holders

- Multiple-entry multi-purpose life-long visa to visit India



- Equality with NRIs in certain financial, economic and educational matters except for acquisition of agricultural or plantation land and in matters pertaining to inter-country adoption of Indian children.
- Eligible for grant of Indian citizenship under Section 5(1)(g) of the Citizenship Act, 1955 after completion of 5 years as OCI card holder, provided he has resided in India for one year out of 5 years before making the application.
- Eligible to enroll in the National Pension Scheme (NPS) at par with Non Resident Indians.

PROCESS FOR REMOVAL OF RAJYA SABHA CHAIRPERSON

Opposition has moved a motion of No-confidence against Rajya Sabha (RS) Chairperson.

- As per Article 64, Vice President (VP) shall be ex officio Chairperson of RS.

About Constitutional Removal Procedure

- Notice Period: 14-day notice is to be given prior to moving a Resolution, outlining clear intentions.
- Passing of a Resolution: As per Article 67(b), VP can be removed from office by a resolution passed by RS with a majority of all its members and agreed to by Lok Sabha with a simple majority.
- Unlike provisions for removal of President, the Constitution does not specify grounds for removal of VP.

SC GUIDELINES ON MERCY PETITION




Supreme Court (SC) issued guidelines on processing of Mercy Petitions to States/UTs

- Pronounced in the **State of Maharashtra Vs. Pradeep Yashwant Kokade** case, guidelines seek to streamline the mercy petition and death penalty execution processes avoiding undue delays, safeguarding convicts' legal rights, etc.

Major Guidelines issued by the SC

- **Dedicated Cells for Mercy Petitions:** To be established by States and UTs to handle mercy petitions and process them promptly within the prescribed timeframe.
- **Attachment of Judicial Officer:** An official from the Law and Judiciary Department to be attached to the dedicated cell.
- **Coordination with Governor and President's Secretariats:** Mercy petitions must be forwarded to these secretariats for further action.
- **Implementation:** States/UTs to report compliance with the SC directions within three months.
- **Guidelines to Sessions Courts:** Maintain record of such cases, issue notices to public prosecutors or investigative agencies for pending appeals.
- **Execution warrants:** To be issued by the State immediately after the death penalty becomes enforceable.

Other Significant Observations by SC

-  **Impact of Delays:** Delays have a dehumanizing effect on the convicts violating Article 21.
-  **Right to Challenge Delay:** Convicts can challenge delays under Article 32 (SC) and Article 226 (High Court).
-  **Case Specific Determination:** What constitutes undue or inordinate delay cannot be defined and to be decided on a case-specific basis.

About Mercy Petition

- **Constitutional Framework:** Constitution has granted the President (Article 72) and Governor (Article 161) the power to grant pardons or commute sentences.

o SC in Maru Ram vs. Union of India (1981), established that the President must act based on the Council of Ministers' advice in mercy petitions.

- Legal Framework: Covered under Section 472(1) of Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS) 2023.

E-COURTS MISSION MODE PROJECT PHASE III

Union Cabinet approved Phase III of the e-Courts Mission Mode Project

- The e-Courts Mission Mode Project phase III aims to usher in a regime of maximum ease of justice by moving towards digital, online and paperless courts through digitization of the entire court records.
- The e-Courts Project is under implementation since 2007 for ICT enablement of Indian Judiciary as part of National e-Governance Plan.
- Its phase I & II were implemented during 2011-15 and 2015-23 respectively.

E-DAAKHIL PORTAL

The Department of Consumer Affairs announces the nationwide implementation of the E-Daakhil portal.

About E-Daakhil portal

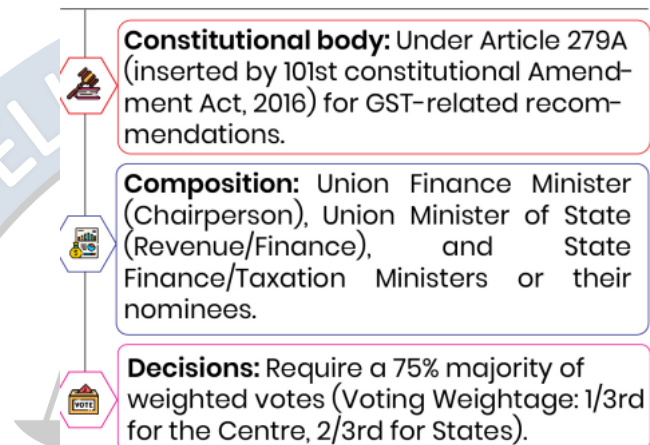
- It was first launched by the National Consumer Dispute Redressal Commission (NCDRC) in 2020.
- o NCDRC is a quasi-judicial commission set up under the Consumer Protection Act of 1986.
- It is an online platform that simplifies the consumer grievance process, allowing consumers to file complaints and track cases without the need to be physically present.
- The portal has been a key tool in promoting consumer rights and delivering timely justice.

55TH GST COUNCIL MEETING

55th Goods and Services Tax (GST) Council meeting was held in Jaisalmer, Rajasthan.

- The meeting resulted in several significant decisions aimed at tax rate changes, trade facilitation, and compliance streamlining under GST

About GST Council



ALL-INDIA HOUSE PRICE INDEX (HPI)

Reserve Bank of India released its quarterly House Price Index (HPI)

- HPI: Increased by 4.3% year on year in quarter 2: 2024-25, up from 3.3% in the previous quarter.
- Bengaluru saw the highest growth at 8.8%, while Kanpur experienced a decline of -2.0%.

About All-India Home Price Index (HPI)

- Base: 2010-11 = 100
- Data Source: Transaction-level data from registration authorities in 10 major cities.
- Cities Covered: Ahmedabad, Bengaluru, Chennai, Delhi, Jaipur, Kanpur, Kochi, Kolkata, Lucknow, Mumbai.

‘JALVAHAK’ SCHEME TO BOOST INLAND WATERWAYS

Union Government unveiled ‘Jalvahak’ Scheme which aims to encourage business enterprises with safe and timely delivery of cargo through inland waterways, in a cost effective manner.

Scheme aims to incentivize cargo movement via inland waterways, promoting sustainable and cost-effective transportation across National Waterways (NW)-1, NW-2, and NW-16.

About the Jalvahak scheme

- Ministry: Union Ministry of Ports, Shipping & Waterways.
- To be jointly implemented by the Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI) and Inland & Coastal Shipping Ltd (ICSL), a subsidiary of the Shipping Corporation of India.
- Aim: Schemes aim at Incentivizing Modal Shift of 800 Million Tonnes KMs with an investment of ₹95.4 crores.
- Time frame: Valid for an initial period of 3 years.
- Route: Fixed Day Scheduled Sailing Service will ply vessels between Kolkata – Patna – Varanasi – Patna – Kolkata stretch of National Waterways (NW)-1, between Kolkata and Pandu in Guwahati on NW 2, and NW 16 via Indo Bangladesh Protocol Route (IBPR).

NATIONAL INVESTIGATION AGENCY (NIA)

Supreme Court in **Ankush Vipran Kapoor vs. NIA** clarified that the powers of the agency are not restricted to probing offences mentioned in the schedule of the NIA Act or accused committing such “scheduled offences”.

- This ruling came while upholding the Punjab & Haryana High Court's decision to cancel bail granted to an accused in a case involving the smuggling of heroin from Pakistan into India.
- In the case, offences under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act (NDPS Act), which are not scheduled offences, were involved.



- The case involved connections to drug trafficking, hawala channels, and links to terrorism funding.

Supreme Court Ruling

- The Apex court ruled in favor of the NIA's authority to investigate non-scheduled offences linked to scheduled offences.
- SC interpreted Section 8 of the NIA Act in holistic view.

o Section 8 of NIA Act: While investigating any Scheduled Offence, the Agency may also investigate any other offence which the accused is alleged to have committed if the offence is connected with the Scheduled Offence.

Schedule of Offences Under the NIA Act

The NIA investigates offences under the following laws:

1. The Explosive Substances Act, 1908.
- 1A. Atomic Energy Act, 1962.
2. Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967.
3. Anti-Hijacking Act, 2016.
4. Suppression of Unlawful Acts against Safety of Civil Aviation Act, 1982.
5. Suppression of Unlawful Acts against Safety of Maritime Navigation and Fixed Platforms on continental shelf Act, 2002
6. Weapons of Mass Destruction and their Delivery Systems (Prohibition of Unlawful Activities) Act, 2005
7. The SAARC Convention (Suppression of Terrorism) Act, 1993
8. Offences under—
 - (a) Chapter VI of the Indian Penal Code.
 - (b) Sections 370 and 370A of Chapter XVI of the Indian Penal Code.
 - (c) Sections 489-A to 489-E (both inclusive) of the Indian Penal Code.
 - (d) Sub-section (1AA) of section 25 of Chapter V of the Arms Act, 1959.
 - (e) Section 66F of Chapter XI of the Information Technology Act, 2000.

About National Investigation Agency (NIA)

- Establishment: Under the National Investigation Agency Act, 2008, which was enacted in the aftermath of the 26/11 Mumbai terror attacks.

o Objective: To investigate and prosecute offences that threatens India's sovereignty, security, and integrity, friendly relations with foreign States, matters relating to international treaties etc.



o Schedule of Offences: The Act includes a schedule of laws under which the NIA can investigate and prosecute offences.

- Jurisdiction: It extends to the whole of India and it applies also

- o To citizens of India outside India.

- o To persons in the service of the Government wherever they may be.

- o To persons on ships and aircrafts registered in India wherever they may be, and


- o To persons who commit a Scheduled Offence beyond India against the Indian citizen or affecting the interest of India.

UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION ON CYBERCRIME

Recently, UN General Assembly adopted landmark United Nations Convention on Cybercrime.

- It is the first legally binding UN instrument on cybercrime.
- The convention has been adopted by 193 UN Member States by consensus.
- The convention will open for signature in Hanoi, Vietnam in 2025, with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) serving as secretariat.
- It will take effect after 40 states become parties to the agreement.

UN Cybercrime Convention Requires State Parties to

Criminalises key Offences including	To take measures for
 Illegal Access to Information Systems	 Establishment of Criminal Records
 Child Sexual Abuse production, distribution, and possession	 Protection of Witnesses
 Laundering of Proceeds From cybercrime	 Assistance and Protection of Victims
 Non-consensual Dissemination of Initiative	

INDIA STATE OF FOREST REPORT (ISFR) 2023

The Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MoEFCC) recently released the India State of Forest Report (ISFR) 2023.

Key Definitions Used in ISFR 2023

- **Tree Cover:** Comprises all tree patches outside the forest area, which are less than one hectare in extent including all the scattered trees found in the rural and urban settings, and not captured under the forest cover.
- **Forest Cover:** Defined as all lands, more than one hectare with a tree canopy density of more than or equal to 10% including orchards, bamboo and palm, irrespective of ownership, legal status and land use. Such lands may not necessarily be a recorded forest area (RFA).
- **Forest Area:** Also known as the Recorded Forest Area (RFA), it is defined as “all such lands which have been notified as forest under any Government Act or Rules or recorded as ‘forests’ in the Government Records”.

Forest Cover Classifications

Very Dense Forests

Tree canopy density: 70% and above



Moderately Dense Forests

Tree canopy density: 40% to less than 70%



Open Forests

Tree canopy density: 10% to less than 40%



Scrub

Forest lands with canopy density less than 10%

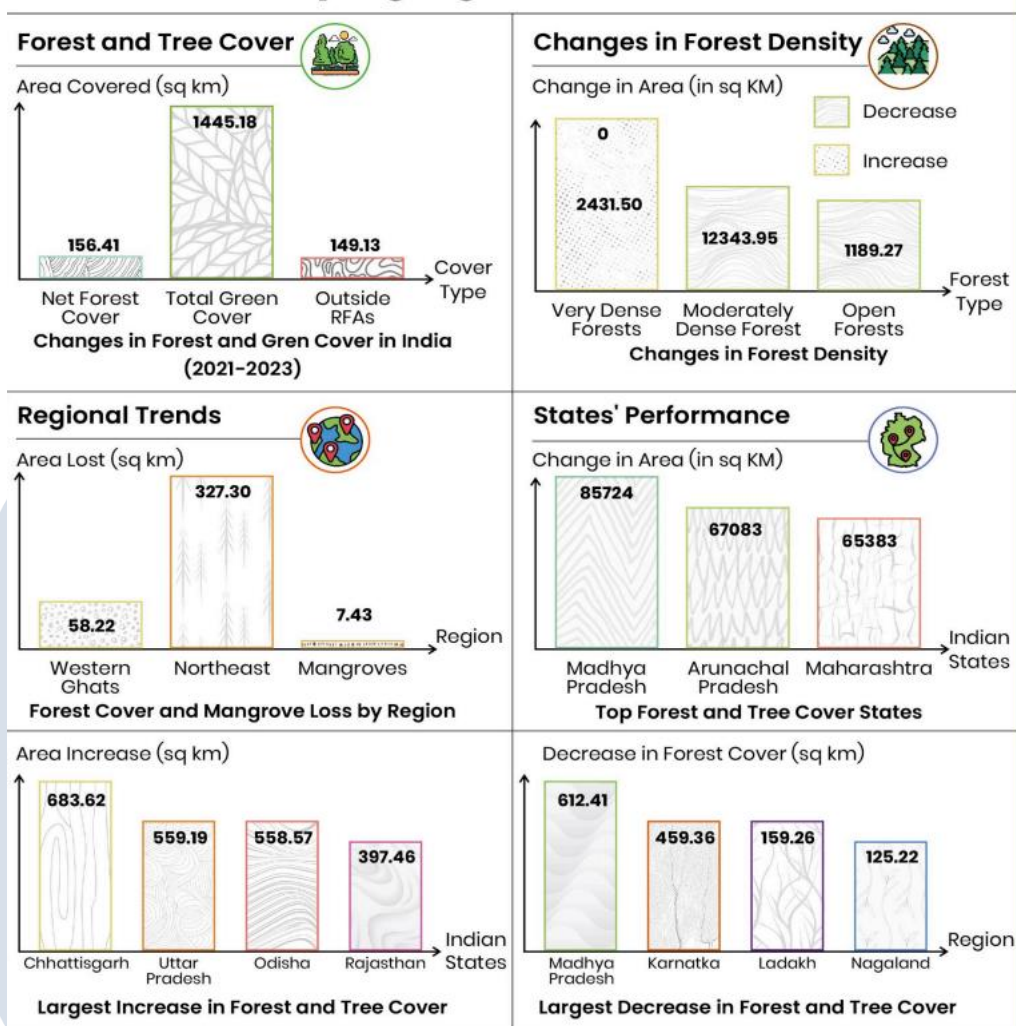


Other Key findings



- **Carbon Stock:** Increased by 81.5 million tonnes compared to the previous assessment.
- **Top Bamboo Resources states:** Madhya Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh and Maharashtra
- **Top 3 States/UTs for Mangrove Cover:** West Bengal, Gujarat and Andaman & Nicobar Islands
- **Top 3 States for Agroforestry:** Maharashtra, Karnataka and Odisha
- **Forest Fire:** Forest Fire has **decreased** during 2021-22 season.
 - **Tiger Reserves with highest Forest Fires:** Nagarjunsagar Srisailem Tiger Reserve (Andhra Pradesh), Indravati Tiger Reserve (Chhattisgarh) and Valmiki Tiger Reserve (Bihar)

Key Highlights of ISFR 2023



SACRED GROVES

SC pronounced direction on an application for identification of sacred groves such as Orans by the Rajasthan Government in accordance with the **T.N. Godavarman judgment** (1996).

About Sacred Groves

- Sacred groves comprise of patches of forests or natural vegetation that hold deep religious and spiritual meaning to indigenous communities.

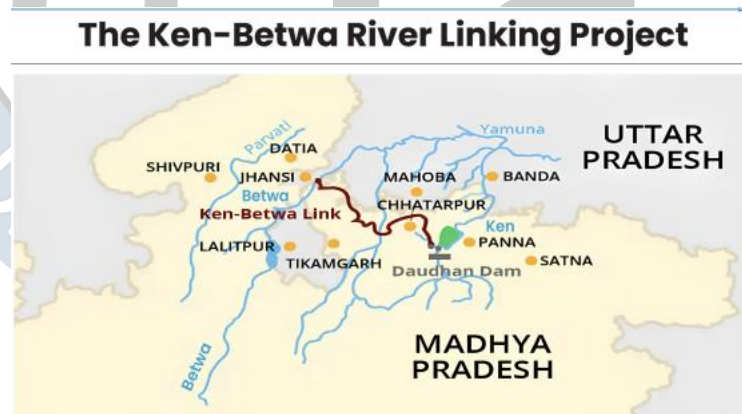
- These spaces are protected by local communities because of their religious beliefs and traditional rituals.
- India is estimated to have around 100,000 to 150,000 sacred groves (IUCN).
- Living Root Bridges (Jingkieng Jri) of Meghalaya a sacred groove is part of the tentative list of UNESCO World Heritage Site.

RIVER LINKING PROJECT

Prime Minister laid the foundation stone of the Ken- Betwa River Linking National Project.

About Ken-Betwa Link Project

- Overview: Part of India's National River Linking Project (NRLP), aimed to divert surplus water from the Ken basin to water-scarce areas in the Betwa basin.
- Completion is targeted by 2030.
- Location: Spans Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh, focusing on the drought-prone Bundelkhand region.





MANUAL SCAVENGING

A Bench of Supreme Court sought an action taken report on each of its directions issued on **Dr Balram Singh V. Union of India & Ors (2023)** case

Directions issued in **Dr Balram Singh V. Union of India & Ors (2023)** case

- Apex court had issued directions to the Union and States to take measures to eradicate manual scavenging and hazardous cleaning in the country.
- The Union, State and Union Territories are directed to ensure that full rehabilitation (including employment to the next of kin, education to the wards, and skill training) measures are taken in respect of sewer workers, and those who die.
- Enhances the compensation payable for sewer deaths to ₹30 lakh from the earlier ₹10 lakh.
 - In the case of sewer victims suffering disabilities, enhances compensation to ₹ 20 lakhs from earlier ₹ 10 lakhs.
- Conduct a comprehensive national survey within one year to identify manual scavengers across states and union territories.
- NCSK, NCSC, NCST and the Union government are required to coordinate and prepare training and education modules, for information and use by district and state level agencies, under the 2013 Act.

About Manual Scavenging

- As per Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation (PEMSR) Act, 2013, Manual scavenging refers to the practice of manually cleaning, carrying, or handling human excreta from insanitary latrines, open drains, or pits.
- Manual Scavenging has been officially banned since 1993 under the Employment of Manual Scavengers and its Prohibition Act (1993).
- As on 31.07.2024, out of 766 districts in the country, 732 districts have reported themselves as manual scavenging-free.

SOUTH KOREA BECOMES 'SUPER-AGED' SOCIETY

Recently, South Korean Ministry of the Interior and Safety has formally declared that South Korea has become a “super-² aged” society as the share of its population aged 65 or over surpassed 20%.

- This makes South Korea only the second country in Asia, after Japan, to become a ‘Super-Aged’ Society.
- According to the UN, a country is defined as “aging” when the share of people aged 65+ is above 7%, “aged” when it is 14% or more, and “super-aged” when it exceeds 20%.
- Global population aged 60+ was 1 billion in 2020, projected to reach 2.1 billion by 2050.
- Population aging, initially seen in high-income countries like Japan, is accelerating in low- and middle-income countries, where two-thirds of the elderly will live by 2050.
- India’s elderly population will exceed 20% of the total by 2050. (UNFPA 2023)

ISRO LAUNCHES PROBA-3 SATELLITES

ISRO launched PSLV-C59 rocket with European Space Agency’s Proba-3 satellites

About PSLV-C59

- PSLV-C59 vehicle carried Proba-3 spacecraft into a highly elliptical orbit as a dedicated commercial mission of NewSpace India Limited (NSIL).
- It was launched from Satish Dhawan Space Centre (SDSC-SHAR), Sriharikota

Proba-3 Mission

- An In-Orbit Demonstration (IOD) mission.
- Aim: Observe the Sun’s corona through an innovative satellite formation flight.

GEOGRAPHICAL INDICATION (GI) TAG

Gharchola, a traditional wedding sari from Gujarat, has received the GI tag.



- Historically crafted in auspicious colors like red, maroon, green, and yellow, it is traditionally worn during Hindu and Jain weddings.

About GI Tag

- GI is a sign used on products that have a specific geographical origin and possess qualities or a reputation that are due to that origin.
- In India, it is given under the Geographical Indications (GI) of Goods Act, 1999.
 - o The registration of a geographical indication is valid for a period of 10 years, which can be renewed.
- Benefits: It confers legal protection to Geographical Indications in India preventing unauthorised use by others in turn boosting exports.

1924 BELGAUM CONGRESS SESSION

Centenary of 1924 Belgaum Congress Session is being celebrated in Belagavi (earlier Belgaum), Karnataka on December 26-27.

About 1924 Belgaum Congress session

- It was 39th Session of the Indian National Congress and was the only session presided over by Mahatma Gandhi.
 - o Discussed his dream of 'Swaraj' and 'Sarvodaya'.

SAHITYA AKADEMI

Naga writer Easterine Kire's "Spirit Nights" wins Sahitya Akademi Award 2024.

About Sahitya Akademi

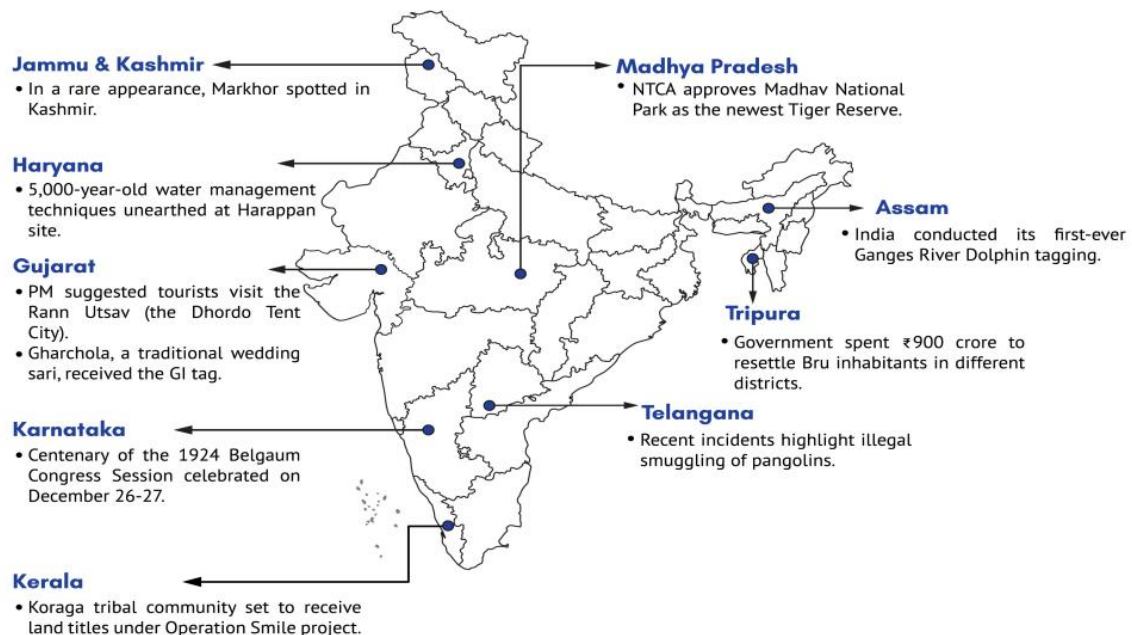
- Genesis: Formally inaugurated in 1954 and Registered under the Societies Registration Act, 1860.
- Ministry: An autonomous body under Ministry of Culture.

- Role: Undertakes literary activities in 24 languages (22 scheduled languages and English and Rajasthani).

o Honoured as 'India's National academy of letters'.

- Its major awards: Sahitya Akademi Award, Bhasha Samman

India



World

