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UTTAR PRADESH

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Content

ASI Response on Sambhal Mosque

Why in News?

Recently, the **Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)** has requested the civil court in Sambhal for control and management of the **Mughal-era Shahi Jama Masjid in Sambhal**, citing its status as a **protected heritage site**. The request follows the court's approval of a survey of the mosque.

Key Points

- **Controversy Around the Sambhal Mosque:**
  - On 19th January, 2018, an **First Information Report (FIR)** was filed against the mosque's management committee for installing steel railings on the mosque's steps without obtaining proper authorization.
  - The ASI stated that the **Shahi Jama Masjid which was notified as a protected monument in 1920**, under the **Ancient Monuments Preservation Act 1904,** falls under its jurisdiction.
  - The ASI argued that the mosque's management committee made unauthorised structural modifications, which are unlawful and should be restricted.

- **Access and Regulation:**
  - The ASI maintained that public access to the mosque is permissible, but only if it adheres to ASI regulations.
  - The ASI has sought full control and management of the mosque, emphasizing its responsibility for maintaining the monument and regulating any changes to its structure.

- **Violence During Court-Ordered Survey:**
  - **Violence** erupted in Sambhal on 24th November 2024, during a court-ordered survey of the Shahi Jama Masjid.
  - Four people were killed, and several others sustained injuries during the clashes.

- **Judicial Commission:**
  - A three-member judicial commission was formed on 28th November 2024, to investigate the violence.

- The commission will determine whether the violence was spontaneous or part of a premeditated conspiracy.
- The inquiry will analyze the events leading to the violence and recommend measures to prevent such incidents in the future.
- It is required to submit its findings within two months, with any extension subject to government approval.

- **Survey and Temple Petition:**
  - The court-ordered survey was linked to a petition claiming that the **Jama Masjid** in Sambhal **was originally a Hari Har temple** located in mohalla Kot Purvi and was converted into a mosque in 1529.
  - **Historical Context:**
    - The Jama Masjid in Sambhal is one of three mosques **constructed during Babur's reign (1526–1530).** The others include the mosque at Panipat and the now-demolished Babri Masjid.
    - **Historian Howard Crane** described the mosque's architectural features in his work, *The Patronage of Babur and the Origins of Mughal Architecture.*
    - Crane noted a **Persian inscription stating that Babur ordered the mosque's construction in December 1526** through his subedar, **Jahangir Quli Khan.**

Ancient Monuments Preservation Act, 1904

- **About:**
  - The Act was passed in 1904, during the tenure of **Lord Curzon in British India**.
  - It **aimed at preserving ancient monuments** and objects of historical, archaeological, and artistic significance.
- **Key Provisions:**
  - It empowered the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) to protect and restore ancient Indian monuments.
  - Regulated the movement and trade of **antiquities** to **prevent illegal trafficking**.
  - Provided for control over archaeological excavations in specified areas.
  - Facilitated the acquisition of ancient monuments for preservation in certain cases.

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- **Significance:**
  - Played a foundational role in protecting India's historical and cultural heritage under a structured legal framework.
  - Enhanced the responsibilities of the ASI in monument conservation.

UP Declares Maha Kumbh Area a New District

Why in News?

Recently, the Uttar Pradesh government has declared the **Maha Kumbh area in Prayagraj** as a **new district.**

- It was made to streamline the management and administration of the upcoming **Kumbh Mela** scheduled for **January 2025.**

Key Points

- The notification was issued under Section 2 (th) of the **Uttar Pradesh Prayagraj Mela Authority, Prayagraj Act, 2017.**
  - It officially declares the Mahakumbh Mela District for organizing the Mahakumbh 2025.
  - The **Mela Adhikari** was made the **administrative authority of the new district.**
- **Powers and Responsibilities of Mela Adhikari:**
  - The Mela Adhikari, Kumbh Mela, Prayagraj, will hold powers of the Executive Magistrate, District Magistrate, and Additional District Magistrate under Section-14 (1) and relevant sections of the **Indian Civil Defense Code, 2023.**
  - The Mela Adhikari will also possess all the powers of the District Magistrate and Collector under the **Uttar Pradesh Revenue Code, 2006 (amended in 2016),** for handling all cases.
  - The Mela Adhikari has the authority to appoint an Additional Collector for the district.

Maha Kumbh

- Kumbh Mela comes under **United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO)'s Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.**

- It is the largest peaceful congregation of pilgrims on earth, during which participants bathe or take a dip in a sacred river.
  - It takes place on the banks of the **Godavari river** in Nashik, **the Shipra river** in Ujjain, the **Ganges** in Haridwar, and the confluence of the Ganges, **Yamuna,** and the mythical **Saraswati river** in Prayagraj. The confluence is referred to as the 'Sangam'.
- As it is held in four different cities in India, it involves different social and cultural activities, making this a **culturally diverse festival.**
- The **over month-long fair** is marked by the construction of a massive tented township, complete with cottages, huts, platforms, civic facilities, administrative and security measures.
  - It is organised immaculately by the government, the local authorities and the police.
- The mela is especially **renowned for the presence of an extraordinary array of religious ascetics** enticed from remote hideaways in forests, mountains and caves.

Raja Mahendra Pratap Singh Birth Anniversary

Why in News?

Recently, Vice-President of India Jagdeep Dhankhar paid tributes on the **138th birth anniversary of Raja Mahendra Pratap Singh (1886-1979),** a visionary nationalist.

Key Points

- **Background:**
  - Raja Mahendra Pratap Singh was **born on 1st December 1886, in Hathras, Uttar Pradesh.**
  - He was a **freedom fighter, revolutionary, writer** and **social reformer.**
  - He founded **Prem Mahavidyalaya in 1909,** a technical institute at Vrindavan, Uttar Pradesh.
- **Freedom Movement Contributions:**
  - Mahendra Pratap actively participated in the **1906 Congress session in Kolkata,** supported the **Swadeshi movement,** and supported indigenous industries and local artisans.

Note:

❍ Mahendra Pratap was deeply involved in India's struggle for independence. In **1915, during World War I**, he proclaimed the **first Provisional Government of India** in **Kabul, Afghanistan**, with himself as its president, opposing British colonial rule

- He sought support from countries like **Germany, Japan, and Russia** for India's fight against British colonial rule.

- He is said to have met **Vladimir Lenin in 1919**, two years after the **Bolshevik Revolution.**

❍ He also formed the **Executive Board of India in Japan** in 1940 during the **Second World War**.

➢ **Internationalist and Peace Advocate:**

❍ Mahendra Pratap was nominated for the **Nobel Peace Prize in 1932** for his global advocacy for peace and his efforts to expose **British atrocities in India and Afghanistan.**

❍ In 1929, Mahendra Pratap launched **the World Federation in Berlin**, which later influenced the creation of the **United Nations.**

➢ **Political Career:**

❍ After independence, he worked hard to promote the idea of Panchayati Raj and served as a **Member of Parliament** from **Mathura (1957).**

➢ **Death:**

❍ He died on **29th April 1979.**

Digital India State Consultation Workshop Organized in UP

Why in News?

The **National e-Governance Division (NeGD)** of the **Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY)**, in partnership with **Uttar Pradesh Development Systems Corporation Ltd. (UPDESCO)**, organized a **Digital India State Consultation Workshop** in Lucknow.

Key Points

➢ **Aim of the Workshop:**

❍ Raising awareness about **Digital India initiatives**.

❍ Identifying opportunities for state IT projects to leverage Digital India platforms.

❍ Showcasing successful projects for potential replication.

❍ Facilitating knowledge sharing, exchange of ideas, and industry partnerships.

➢ **Focus Areas:**

❍ The event highlighted the **importance of data and digital infrastructure** and urged the state to enhance connectivity for last-mile digital penetration.

❍ The workshop's uniqueness in bringing together state officials and e-District Managers to collaboratively work towards **good governance** was emphasised.

❍ Discussions centered on national initiatives under the **Digital India Programme** including:

- **Digilocker: DigiLocker** allows **access to digital versions of various documents** including driver's licenses, vehicle registration certificates and academic mark sheets.

- **Entity Locker:** EntityLocker is a flagship initiative designed to **empower organizations by providing a secure, cloud-based platform** for storing, sharing, and verifying digital documents and certificates.

- **API Setu: API Setu** addresses the fear/risk of **Covid-19** infections and will help the people, businesses and the economy to return to normalcy.

- **OpenForge:** It is Government of India's platform for open collaborative development of e-governance applications. Its objective is to **promote sharing and reuse of e-governance application** source code.

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- **myScheme:** It is a National Platform that aims to offer **one-stop search and discovery of the Government schemes**.
- **UMANG:** The **UMANG** mobile app is an **all-in-one single, unified, secure, multi-channel, multi-lingual, multi-service mobile app.** It provides access to high-impact services of various organizations of the Union and States.
- **UX4G:** It aims to **make digital services user-friendly** by providing personalized, visually appealing, efficient, and accessible interfaces.
  - ❍ Key topics like **Cyber Security** and Capacity Building were also addressed.
  - ❍ State-led discussions featured CM Helpline (1076), **Inspector General of Registration and Stamps (IGRS)**, **UIDAI Ecosystem**, and **Aadhaar Authentication Services.**
- ➤ **Open Discussions:**
  - ❍ A collaborative session was held between MeitY and Uttar Pradesh government officials.
  - ❍ During the session **key challenges and implementation issues in e-Governance** projects were discussed.
  - ❍ Feedback and suggestions were sought for resolving obstacles and improving project execution.

National e-Governance Division (NeGD)

- ➤ **About:**
  - ❍ The NeGD was **established in 2009 by the Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology (MeitY)** as an Independent Business Division under the **Digital India Corporation.**
- ➤ **Role and Responsibilities:**
  - ❍ NeGD supports MeitY in **managing and implementing e-Governance projects** across the country.
  - ❍ It **provides technical and advisory assistance** to Central and State Ministries, Departments, and other government organizations.
- ➤ **Key Operational Areas:**
  - ❍ **Programme Management:** Ensures smooth execution of e-Governance projects.
  - ❍ **Project Development:** Develops initiatives to enhance digital governance.

- ❍ **Technology Management:** Oversees technological aspects of e-Governance projects.
- ❍ **Capacity Building:** Strengthens skills and capabilities within government organizations.
- ❍ **Awareness and Communication:** Promotes e-Governance initiatives under the Digital India Programme.

Preservation of Cultural Heritage of Mahabharata Age

Why in News?

Recently, an update is seen on the conservation and development of the **protected site in Hastinapur, Meerut,** which was designated as **one of the five 'Iconic Sites'** by the Union Government in 2021-22, under the management of the **Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)**.

Key Points

- ➤ **History:**
  - ❍ Hastinapur was the **capital of the Pandavas and Kauravas** during the **time of the Mahabharata**.
  - ❍ The site is associated with many places from the Mahabharata, including **Vidurr Tila, Pandaveshwar Temple, Baradri, Draunadeshwar Temple, Karna Temple, Draupadi Ghat, and Kama Ghat.**
- ➤ **Excavations:**
  - ❍ **B. B. Lal,** the Director General of the ASI, **conducted excavations** at Hastinapur **in the early 1950s**.
  - ❍ He **found correlations between the Mahabharata and the material remains** he unearthed, which led him to historicize some of the traditions in the epic.
- ➤ **Iron objects:**
  - ❍ The site has many **iron objects** that date **from the 6th century BCE to the 16th century CE.**
  - ❍ The excavated slag samples indicate that the site was involved in **crucible carburization activities.**
    - Crucible carburization is a **process that uses a crucible to heat wrought iron with carbon-rich materials to create steel.**
- ➤ **Recent work:**
  - ❍ The ASI has **conducted excavations** at the site **in 2021-22 and 2022-23.**

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❍ The site has also undergone **conservation and development work,** including the **construction of pathways, parking, and gardens.**

Five Iconic Sites

➢ **Dholavira:**
  ❍ An archaeological site with a water system that was **used for rainwater harvesting.** The people who lived there during the Harappan civilization are known for their water conservation techniques.
➢ **Hastinapur:**
  ❍ A historical and cultural site in the **Meerut district of Uttar Pradesh**. It was the **capital of the Kuru dynasty** emperors in the Mahabharata.
➢ **Sivasagar:**
  ❍ A town in **Upper Assam known for its Ahom palaces and monuments**. It was the capital of the **Ahom Kingdom** from 1699 to 1788.
➢ **Adichanallur:**
  ❍ An archaeological site from south India with a history dating back to 2500 BC–2200 BC. In 2004, **human skeletons of varying ethnicities were unearthed** here.
➢ **Rakhigarhi:**
  ❍ Rakhigarhi in Haryana's **Hissar district** is one of the **most prominent and largest sites of the Harappan civilisation**. It is one among the five known townships of the Harappan civilisation in the Indian subcontinent.

UP Govt to Revise Madarsa Act, 2004

Why in News?

Recently, the Uttar Pradesh government is set to revise the **Uttar Pradesh Board of Madarsa Education Act, 2004** excluding higher-level education from its purview and restricting its coverage only to institutions offering education up to **Class 12**.

➢ In an earlier judgment, the **Supreme Court** upheld the constitutional validity of the 2004 Uttar Pradesh Board of Madarsa Education Law and set aside an Allahabad High Court verdict that had quashed it on the grounds **violating the principle of secularism**.

Key Points

➢ The revision of the Madarsa Act is part of a broader effort to **enhance the quality** and **oversight** of Madarsa education in Uttar Pradesh.
  ❍ The government aims to improve secondary education in Madrasas by combining religious teachings with a standard secular curriculum.
➢ **Impact on Higher-Level Religious Degrees:**
  ❍ Under the new amendments, Madrasas will no longer be able to offer higher-level religious degrees like **Kamil** and **Fazil.**
    ● These degrees, which have been a part of the madrasa education system, will **lose their recognition under the revised Act**.
  ❍ The focus on secondary education is expected to bring about a more standardized approach to madrasa education, ensuring that s**tudents receive a balanced education** that prepares them for further studies or vocational training.

Uttar Pradesh Board of Madarsa Education Act, 2004

➢ The Act aimed to regulate and govern the functioning of madrasas (Islamic educational institutions) in the state of Uttar Pradesh.
➢ It provided a framework for the **establishment, recognition, curriculum,** and **administration of madrasas** across Uttar Pradesh.
➢ Under this Act, the **Uttar Pradesh Board of Madarsa Education** was established to oversee and supervise the activities of madrasas in the state.

Women Lead Over Half of Startups in Uttar Pradesh

Why in News?

Over **half of the registered startups in Uttar Pradesh are now led by women,** showcasing the state's progressive business landscape.

Key Points

➢ According to the **Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT)**, out of more than 13,370 startups in the state, over 6,812, almost 51%, are led by women entrepreneurs.

Note:

- The **state's startup policy, initially introduced in 2020 and amended in 2022**, aims to establish 100 incubators across all 75 districts, providing a robust infrastructure for new ventures.
  - The policy also **includes financial incentives and support systems** specifically designed to encourage women entrepreneurs.
- The startups in Uttar Pradesh have **collectively created over 100,000 jobs**, contributing significantly to the state's economy.
- Initiatives like the **single window clearance system, 'Nivesh Mitra'**, have been instrumental in creating a business-friendly environment.
  - It boasts a disposal rate of 97.22%, **earning recognition with an award from the central government**.
- Looking ahead, Uttar Pradesh **plans to develop India's first artificial intelligence city in Lucknow** and establish an exclusive fund to boost the AI ecosystem.
  - These initiatives are expected to further enhance the state's appeal as a hub for tech startups and innovation.

UP Becomes First State to Fully Adopt GeM

Why in News?

Recently, Uttar Pradesh has **become the first state in India to fully integrate its procurement process with the Government e-Marketplace (GeM).**

Key Points

- Uttar Pradesh has **abolished its longstanding tendering system** by fully adopting GeM.
- This integration **mandates** that all service providers, from basic stationery suppliers to those providing **Sport Utility Vehicle (SUVs)** for official use, adhere strictly to central government regulations
- The comprehensive government order issued on 26th November, 2024, annuls over 33 previous **procurement**-related directives.

- This move ensures full compliance with GeM protocols, reducing the likelihood of errors and misuse, and promoting a standardized procurement process.
- The state government **estimates that this shift to GeM-based procurement could save over Rs. 2,000 crore annually**.
  - This is achieved through competitive pricing and efficient procurement processes.
- The Uttar Pradesh Building and Other Construction Workers Welfare Board has **already leveraged GeM to procure quality infrastructure materials** for 18 Atal Residential Schools. These materials, including furniture and IT equipment, were delivered swiftly and at competitive prices, ensuring high standards for educational facilities.
  - The full adoption of GeM is expected to enhance the credibility of public procurement procedures in Uttar Pradesh.
- It **aligns with the state's broader goals of fostering a business-friendly environment** and ensuring transparency in government operations.
- This initiative also supports the state's ambitious economic targets, contributing to its goal of becoming a USD 1 trillion economy.
- Uttar Pradesh's commitment to **transparent procurement has been recognized at national levels**.
  - The state has been awarded for its exemplary performance in various categories, including total order value and highest services procurement.

Government e Marketplace (GeM)
- GeM is a **100% Government owned and National Public Procurement Portal** that facilitates online procurement of common use Goods & Services required by various Government Departments / Organisations / PSUs. - The initiative was **launched by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry in 2016**. - It provides the tools of e-bidding, reverse e-auction and demand aggregation to facilitate the government users, achieve the best value for their money and **aims to enhance transparency, efficiency and speed in public procurement.**

Note:

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Dr. Ambedkar's Death Anniversary

Why in News?

Recently, Uttar Pradesh leaders paid tributes to Dalit icon and **India's first Law Minister Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar**, who headed the **Drafting Committee** of the Indian Constitution, on his death anniversary.

Key Points

➢ **About:**
- ○ **Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar** was a prominent **Indian jurist, economist, social reformer, and politician.**
- ○ He was born on **April 14, 1891** in **Mhow, Madhya Pradesh.**
  - ● His father, **Subedar Ramji Maloji Sakpal**, was a well-read person and follower of **Sant Kabir.**

➢ **Education:**
- ○ Ambedkar earned his **Bachelor's degree from Bombay University** and went on for further studies to **Columbia University in New York and London School of Economics.**

➢ **Contributions:**
- ○ In **1924**, he started an **Association for the welfare of the depressed classes** and in **1927**, he started the **Bahishkrit Bharat newspaper** to address the cause of the depressed classes.
  - ● He also led **the Mahad Satyagraha in March 1927.**
- ○ He participated in all three **Round Table Conferences.**
- ○ In 1932, Dr. Ambedkar signed the **Poona pact** with **Mahatma Gandhi**, which abandoned the idea of separate electorates for the depressed classes (**Communal Award**).
- ○ In **1936**, he formed the **Independent Labour Party** to safeguard the interests of the depressed classes.
- ○ In 1942, Dr. Ambedkar was appointed to the **Executive Council of the Governor General of India** as a **Labour member** and elected to the **Constituent Assembly** from Bengal in 1946.
  - ● He was the **Chairman of Drafting Committee** and remembered as the **Father of the Indian Constitution.**
- ○ In 1947, Dr. Ambedkar became **Minister of Law in the first Cabinet of independent India.**
  - ● **He resigned from the cabinet in 1951**, over differences on the Hindu Code Bill.

➢ **Additional Details:**
- ○ Later in life, He **converted to Buddhism**. He passed away on **December 6, 1956, which is commemorated as Mahaparinirvan Diwas.**
  - ● **Chaitya Bhoomi** is a memorial to B R Ambedkar, located in Mumbai.
- ○ He was also awarded **India's highest civilian honour the Bharat Ratna** in 1990.

Pilibhit Tiger Reserve

Why in News?

Recently, **a probe has been ordered** after a viral video surfaced, showing a fleet of vehicles allegedly belonging to a minister in Uttar Pradesh passing through the **core area** of the **Pilibhit Tiger Reserve**. This raised concerns about the **breach of forest regulations.**

Key Points

➢ As per forest department regulations, **private vehicles are strictly barred** from entering the core area, allowing **access only to forest department vehicles or those authorized for safari tours.**

Note:

➤ **Pilibhit Tiger Reserve:**
  ○ It is located in **Pilibhit and Shahjahanpur district of Uttar Pradesh**.
  ○ It was notified as a **Tiger Reserve** in 2014.
    ● In 2020, it bagged **international award TX2** for doubling up the number of tigers in the past four years.
  ○ It forms part of **Terai Arc Landscape in the upper Gangetic Plain**.
  ○ The northern edge of the reserve lies along the Indo-Nepal border while the southern boundary is marked by the river Sharada and Khakra.
  ○ Flora and Fauna:
    ● It is home to a habitat for over 127 animals, 326 bird species and 2,100 flowering plants.
    ● Wild animals include **tiger, swamp deer, bengal florican, leopard,** etc.
    ● It has high **sal forests**, plantations and grasslands with several water bodies.

Tiger Reserves
➤ A protected area designated for the **conservation of the striped big cats (tigers)** is referred to as **Tiger Reserve.** However, a tiger reserve may also be a **national park** or **wildlife sanctuary.**   ○ **For Example:** The **Sariska Tiger Reserve** is also a national park. It is so because the place was originally created as a **national park and later dedicated to tiger conservation.** ➤ Tiger Reserves are notified by State Governments as per provisions of **Section 38V of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972** on advice of the **National Tiger Conservation Authority.** **TX2 Award** ➤ It goes to one site that has **achieved remarkable and measurable increase in its tiger population since 2010.**

First Validation Flight Landing at Jewar Airport

Why in News?

Recently, the **Noida International Airport (NIA)** achieved a major milestone as its **first validation flight successfully landed**, bringing it closer to operational readiness.

Key Points

➤ **Successful Landing of Validation Flight:**
  ○ The validation flight was **operated by IndiGo**.
  ○ Special acknowledgement was given to the site workers for their critical role in the project's progress.
➤ **Flight's Objectives:**
  ○ The flight tested and confirmed the **airport's approach and departure procedures, accuracy of navigational aids, and air traffic control systems.**
➤ **Ministerial Remarks and Vision:**
  ○ The Union Civil Aviation Minister commended the team's efforts and emphasized:
    ● The airport's potential to **transform air travel and regional connectivity.**
    ● Its design reflects **Uttar Pradesh's cultural heritage.**
    ● A terminal capacity of 12 million passengers annually at its 2025 opening.
  ○ With this development, **Uttar Pradesh will have its 17th operational airport.**
➤ **Sustainability Focus:**
  ○ The Minister emphasized sustainability through:
    ● **Solar energy** utilization for powering the airport.
    ● **Eco-friendly infrastructure development** aligned with government priorities.
➤ **Economic and Developmental Impact:**
  ○ The project is expected to **create thousands of jobs.**
  ○ It is also expected to boost tourism and drive regional development in Western Uttar Pradesh and serve as Asia's largest airport upon completion.

Noida International Airport (NIA)
➤ The Noida International Airport at Jewar is **developed as the country's first transit hub** with aspirations to develop it into an **Asia-Pacific** transit hub, **a first for India.** ➤ It is developed based on the **Zurich Airport model in Switzerland,** with the goal of enhancing passenger and flight handling capabilities to world-class standards.

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- ○ The greenfield **airport is being** constructed in the Jewar area of Gautam Buddh Nagar district in western Uttar Pradesh.
- ○ It **will be the second international airport in the National Capital Region**, alongside Delhi's **Indira Gandhi International Airport.**

UP- First State to Fully Adopt GeM Platform

Why in News?

Recently, Uttar Pradesh has become the first state in India to fully integrate the **Government e-Marketplace (GeM) platform,** enhancing **transparency and efficiency in public procurement**.

➢ This move is **projected to save Rs 2,000 crore annually** while fostering fair practices and empowering small businesses.

Key Points

➢ Prior tendering systems in Uttar Pradesh lacked uniformity and were vulnerable to misuse.

➢ GeM resolves these issues by enforcing standardized rules, thereby reducing the chances of violations or loopholes.

➢ The state government aims to scale up GeM usage across all state departments, ensuring compliance and enhancing accountability.

➢ **Demonstrated Success:**
  - ○ The Uttar Pradesh Building and Other Construction Workers Welfare Board used GeM to procure materials for 18 **Atal Residential Schools.**
    - These schools, serving students from Class 6 to intermediate level, now offer exemplary learning environments, including support for children orphaned during the **Covid-19 pandemic.**

➢ **Policy Reforms and Compliance:**
  - ○ **Strict guidelines:** Policies prohibit practices such as offline contracts, price discovery bids, quantity-based bids, and unnecessary requests for samples during bid evaluations.
    - All state departments must procure at least 25% of their annual goods and services through GeM, with penalties for non-compliance.

- ○ **Support for Small Enterprises:** Relaxed tender eligibility criteria (e.g., turnover and past performance) create opportunities for **micro and small enterprises (MSEs).**
- ○ **Worker Welfare Provisions:** Policies mandate minimum wages, **Employee Provident Fund (EPF)**, and **Employee State Insurance (ESI)** benefits for outsourced employees.
  - Service providers cannot arbitrarily replace outsourced employees after hiring, ensuring job stability and fairness.
- ○ **Anti-Collusion Measures:** Collusion or bid manipulation incurs severe penalties, with provisions for reporting cases to the GeM team.
- ○ **Complaint Redressal Mechanism:** High-level committees, chaired by the Uttar Pradesh Chief Secretary, review compliance-related grievances submitted via dedicated emails.

➢ **Alignment with National Initiatives:**
  - ○ GeM adoption promotes the vision of **"Digital India"** by enhancing transparency and accountability in governance.
  - ○ The platform supports local suppliers and fosters fair competition, aligning with the **"Make in India" initiative**.

Government e-Marketplace (GeM) Platform

➢ **GeM** facilitates **online procurement of common use Goods & Services** required by various Government Departments / Organisations / PSUs.
  - ○ The initiative was launched in August 2016, by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Government of India.
  - ○ The current version of GeM, i.e., **GeM 3.0 was launched on January 26, 2018.**
➢ It provides the **tools of e-bidding, reverse e-auction and demand aggregation** to facilitate the government users, achieve the best value for their money and aims to **enhance transparency, efficiency and speed in public procurement.**

Krishna Janmabhoomi-Shahi Idgah Dispute

Why in News?

A **Supreme Court** bench headed by Chief Justice of

Note:

India Sanjiv Khanna is set to hear the case on **Krishna Janmabhoomi**-Shahi Idgah dispute in Mathura.

➢ It is among the oldest temple-mosque conflicts in India, with **Hindus seeking to reclaim places of worship** they allege were converted into mosques during invasions by Muslim rulers.

Key Points

➢ **Background of the Dispute:**
  ○ Mathura, considered the birthplace of Lord Krishna, had a **temple built in 1618**.
  ○ The Hindu side alleges that the **temple was demolished in 1670 by Mughal ruler Aurangzeb** to construct the Shahi Idgah Mosque.
  ○ The Hindu side claims the mosque **contains Hindu religious symbols and features**, including a lotus-shaped pillar and an image of the deity Sheshnag.
    ● Also contends that the mosque was built on a part of the 13.37-acre land **belonging to the Shri Krishna Janmabhoomi Trust** and has **filed a suit seeking the mosque's relocation.**
  ○ The Shahi Idgah Mosque Committee and the **UP Sunni Central Waqf Board** argue that the mosque does not stand on disputed land.

➢ **Key Developments:**
  ○ **Court-Monitored Survey:**
    ● On 14th December 2023, the **Allahabad High Court ordered a court-monitored survey** of the Shahi Idgah Mosque.
    ● The court appointed a commissioner to oversee the survey, based on claims that signs of the site's past as a Hindu temple exist on the mosque premises.
  ○ **Supreme Court Intervention:**
    ● The Committee of Management, Trust Shahi Masjid Idgah, filed a petition **challenging the High Court's order for the survey.**
    ● On 16th January 2024, the Supreme Court stayed the High Court's order for the survey, citing vagueness in the Hindu side's application.
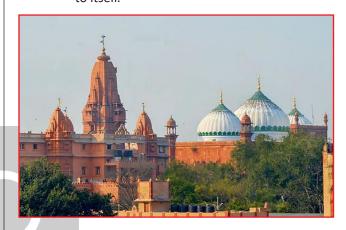
➢ **Arguments:**
  ○ **Hindu Side's Position:**
    ● They demanded that the High Court conduct an original trial, similar to the **Babri Masjid-Ram Janmabhoomi case.**

    ● The Hindu side has urged the Supreme Court to allow the High Court to determine the modalities for the commission survey.
  ○ **Mosque Committee's Position:**
    ● The committee argues that the High Court's order for a survey is invalid as the suit is barred under **the Places of Worship Act, 1991** which prevents changes to the character of religious places as of 15th August 1947.
    ● The committee has also challenged the High Court's 26th May 2023, order transferring all dispute-related cases from the Mathura court to itself.

UP Presents Supplementary Budget for FY 2024-25

Why in News?

Recently, the **Uttar Pradesh government** presented a **Rs 17,865.72 crore Supplementary Budget for 2024-25 in the State Assembly** accounting for **2.42% of the original Rs 7.36 lakh crore Budget.**

➢ This second Supplementary Budget brings the state's total Budget size to Rs 7,66,513.36 crore.

Key points

➢ **Key Allocations:**
  ○ **Major Department Allocations:**
    ● Rs 8,587.27 crore for the **Energy** Department.
    ● Rs 2,438.63 crore for the Finance Department.
    ● Rs 1,592.28 crore for the Family Welfare Department.

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- Rs 1,001 crore for the Animal Husbandry Department.
  ○ **Other Department Grants:**
    - Rs 805 crore for the **Public Works Department (PWD)**.
    - Rs 505 crore for the Information Department.
    - Rs 515 crore for the Primary Education Department.
- **Achievements in Employment:**
  ○ The **State's unemployment rate reduced** from over 19% (2012–2017) to 2.4% (2024).
  ○ Over **1,60,000 recruitments were made in the Education Department**, addressing unfilled vacancies.

Removal of Allahabad High Court Judge

Why in News?

Recently, **fifty-five MPs of the Rajya Sabha** have **submitted a motion, for removing a Allahabad High Court Judge**, Justice Shekhar Kumar Yadav, to **Chairman** of the **Rajya Sabha.**

Key Points

- **Procedure for Removal of Judges:**
  ○ Under **Articles 124 and 218**, Judges of **the Supreme Court** and **High Courts** can be removed by the President on grounds of **"proved misbehaviour" or "incapacity."**
  ○ **Removal requires a motion** passed by **both Houses of Parliament** with:
    - A majority of the total membership of the House.
    - A **special majority** of not less than two-thirds of the members present and voting in the same session.
  ○ The terms "proved misbehaviour" and "incapacity" are not defined in the Constitution.
    - **Misbehaviour** includes **wilful misconduct, corruption, lack of integrity, or moral turpitude,** as interpreted by the Supreme Court.
    - **Incapacity** refers to **physical or mental conditions preventing judicial functions.**

- **Procedure Under the Judges (Inquiry) Act, 1968:**
  ○ **Notice of Motion:**
    - Requires signatures of **at least 50 Rajya Sabha members or 100 Lok Sabha members.**
    - The Chairman or **Speaker** decides whether to admit the motion after consultation.
  ○ **Inquiry Committee:**
    - If the motion is admitted, a **three-member committee** is formed, including judges and a distinguished jurist.
    - **The committee investigates the charges:**
- If the **judge is absolved, the motion is dropped.**
- If **guilty, the committee's report is sent to Parliament for a vote.**
  ○ **Parliamentary Approval:**
    - **Both Houses must pass the motion with a special majority** for the **President** to remove the judge.
- **Current Issue:**
  ○ Justice Yadav made communally charged remarks at an event organized by the **Vishwa Hindu Parishad,** stating the country should be run by the wishes of the majority.
  ○ The **Reinstatement of Values of Judicial Life (1997)** requires judges to maintain **impartiality** and avoid actions unbecoming of their office.
  ○ Although the **Judges (Inquiry) Bill, 2006** (not passed) defined misbehaviour to include code violations, it also proposed minor disciplinary measures like warnings or censure for lesser misconduct.
- **Stringent Removal Process:**
  ○ The process ensures **judicial independence** but often results in no action against judges even when guilty.
  ○ The **Blackstone's Ratio principle** is better to let the guilty escape than punish the innocent, and applies to judges' removal to uphold independence.

Complete Ban on Firecrackers

Why in News?

Recently, **the Supreme Court** directed the **Haryana and Uttar Pradesh governments** to impose a **complete ban on firecrackers** in **National Capital Region (NCR)** areas until further orders.

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Key Points

➢ **Call for Complete Ban:**
- ❍ The SC directed the governments of Delhi, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, and Rajasthan to clarify their stance on imposing a year-round firecracker ban in the National Capital Region (NCR).
- ❍ The court emphasized the **need for the ban to address both** air pollution and noise pollution.

➢ **Current Status and Measures:**
- ❍ A **complete ban on firecrackers** currently applies only **around Diwali and New Year.**
- ❍ Delhi has enforced a year-round ban on the manufacture, storage, sale, and online delivery of firecrackers.
- ❍ Rajasthan has also imposed a similar ban in areas falling under the NCR.

➢ **Enforcement of Anti-Pollution Measures:**
- ❍ The **Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) Stage 4** was enforced in Delhi-NCR due to worsening air quality.
  - ● NCR states were directed to form **teams of officials to ensure strict adherence to GRAP measures.**
- ❍ These teams will function as officers of the Supreme Court, reporting compliance and breaches to the **Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM).**

Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP)
➢ The **GRAP** consists of emergency measures designed to prevent the deterioration of air quality after reaching specific thresholds in **the Delhi-NCR region.**
➢ The **Ministry of Environment, Forests & Climate Change (MoEF&CC)** notified the GRAP in 2017.
➢ Commission for Air Quality Management in NCR & Adjoining Areas (CAQM) implements the GRAP.

Ayodhya Overtakes Taj Mahal as UP's Top Tourist Destination (2024)

Why in News?

Recently, **Ayodhya** overtook **Agra (Taj Mahal)** to become the **most visited destination** in **Uttar Pradesh** for 2024.

Key Points

➢ **Ayodhya Becomes Top Destination**
- ❍ **Ayodhya** attracted **135.5 million domestic tourists** and **3,153 international visitors** between January and September 2024.
  - ● This spike in tourism is mainly driven by the **inauguration of the Ram Temple**, positioning the city as the **epicenter of spiritual tourism** in India.
- ❍ Ayodhya has seen a 70% increase in religious tour bookings, with the **Pran Pratishtha** ceremony at the Ram Temple drawing large crowds and expected to grow further during its anniversary celebrations in January 2025.

➢ **Agra (Taj Mahal)**
- ❍ **Agra**, home to the iconic **Taj Mahal**, recorded **125.1 million visitors** in 2024, with **115.9 million domestic** and **924,000 international tourists**.
  - ● **Taj Mahal** continues to be a major draw for **international tourists**, with **foreign arrivals** increasing from **2.684 million** in **2022-23** to **27.7 million** in **2023-24**.
  - ● However, **domestic visitor numbers** to the Taj Mahal have slightly decreased by **193,000**.

➢ **Tourism Growth in Uttar Pradesh**
- ❍ **Uttar Pradesh** has seen a remarkable surge in tourism in 2024, with **476.1 million tourists** visiting the state from **January to September 2024**.
- ❍ The state's tourism performance in 2024 is on track to surpass the **480 million** tourists recorded in **2023**.
- ❍ Apart from **Ayodhya**, other spiritual destinations in Uttar Pradesh, including **Varanasi** (62 million domestic, 184,000 international), **Mathura** (68 million, 87,229 foreigners), **Prayagraj** (48 million), and **Mirzapur** (11.8 million), have also experienced significant growth in 2024.
- ❍ The **Buddhist Circuit** in Kushinagar saw 1.62 million visitors, including 153,000 international tourists, reflecting Uttar Pradesh's efforts to diversify its tourism beyond Ayodhya's spiritual appeal.

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Ancient Stepwell Unearthed in UP

Why in News?

Recently, a stepwell **approximately 125 to 150 years old**, covering an area of 400 square meters, was unearthed during excavation in the **Laxman Ganj area of Chandausi**.

Key Points

➢ **Excavation Overview:**
  ○ The excavation follows the **reopening of** the **Bhasma Shankar temple in Sambhal** on 13th December 2024, **after 46 years of closure.**
  ○ Officials reported discovering the structure during the excavation, **including two damaged idols found in the temple's well.**
    ● Locals claim the stepwell was **built during the reign of the maternal grandfather of the king of Bilari.**
➢ **Architectural Features:**
  ○ The **well's upper floor is made of bricks,** while the **lower two floors are constructed with marble.**
  ○ The structure also **includes four rooms and a well.**

HC Orders to Protect 17th century Agra Monument

Why in News?

Recently, the **Allahabad High Court** provided interim protection to a **17th-century heritage site, the Hammam in Agra**, and instructed the **Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)** and state authorities to **prevent any damage to the monument.**

Key Points

➢ **Protection of Heritage Site:**
  ○ A **Public Interest Litigation (PIL)** was filed seeking protection for the **Hammam of Ali Vardi Khan in Agra,** citing the imminent threat of demolition by "illegal and unauthorized persons."
  ○ The Hammam, located in Chipitola, Agra, was confirmed by an ASI survey in October 2023 to have been built in 1620 AD.

➢ **Court Directions for Preservation:**
  ○ The High Court directed the Commissioner of Police, Agra, the ASI, and the **Uttar Pradesh State Archaeology Department** to ensure the monument is not damaged.
  ○ The Commissioner of Police was instructed to deploy sufficient police forces to safeguard the structure.
➢ Under **the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1958**, the ASI and state authorities have a **duty to protect the 400-year-old Hammam.**

Shahi Hammam

➢ It is a **Mughal-era bathhouse** located in Chipitola, Agra, **constructed by Alivardi Khan in 1620.**
➢ Once part of a larger inn complex, the hammam served not only as a **bathing facility** but also as a **cultural and social center.**

Cow-Based Natural Farming in UP

Why in News?

Recently, the **Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister** stated that **cow-based natural farming can boost farmers' incomes** by saving Rs 10,000 to Rs 12,000 per acre.

➢ He highlighted the **substantial collective savings** possible if most farmers in the state adopt this practice.

Key Points

➢ **Benefits of Cow-Based Farming:**
  ○ **Reduces agricultural costs** while **conserving cattle.**
  ○ **Enhances soil, water, and human health** over the long term.
➢ **Current Dependency on Inputs:**
  ○ **Seeds:**
    ● Uttar Pradesh produces only half of its seed requirement, importing the rest from other states, especially southern India, at high costs.
  ○ **Fertilisers:**
    ● India relies heavily on imports for **fertilisers**, particularly **urea**, **phosphates**, and **potash**.
    ● Urea imports alone cost Rs 2,127 crore in 2023–2024.

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- Exporting nations often **hike prices due to India's high demand.**
- **Potential of Cow-Based Natural Farming:**
  - Experts highlight its potential to save **foreign currency** spent on fertiliser imports.
  - **Uttar Pradesh** has 2.78 crore farmers and approximately 2 crore cattle, **providing a strong foundation** for cow-based farming.
    - A single cow's dung and urine can support farming on nearly four acres of land.
- **Government Initiatives:**
  - **Self-Sustaining Shelters: Cow shelters** are being developed as **training hubs** for cow-based natural farming.
  - **Dedicated Universities:** Plans to establish **natural farming** universities to integrate traditional methods with modern technology.
  - **Financial Assistance:** Farmers receive **financial support over three years**, Rs 4,800 in the first year, Rs 4,000 in the second, and Rs 3,600 in the third.
    - Grants are also available for cattle sheds and **biogas plants.**
  - **Product Marketing:** Dedicated **outlets have been established** at divisional headquarters to **promote natural farming products.**
    - The government is prioritizing **product certification to enhance consumer trust and market credibility.**
- **Rising Demand for Organic Products:**
  - **Post-Covid**, there is **greater demand for organic**, regionally sourced products.
  - Research institutions highlight a growing preference for healthier food options with regional flavors.

Natural Farming

- It is a method of agriculture that seeks to **create a balanced and self-sustaining ecosystem** in which crops can grow without the use of synthetic chemicals or genetically modified organisms.
  - Instead of relying on artificial inputs like synthetic fertilisers and pesticides, natural farmers rely on techniques **like crop rotation**, **intercropping, and composting** to enhance soil health and support crop growth.
- Natural farming methods are **often based on traditional knowledge and practices and may be adapted to local conditions** and resources.
  - The goal of natural farming is to **produce healthy, nutritious food** in a way that is sustainable and environmentally friendly.

Drone Show in Mahakumbh 2025

Why in News?

The Uttar Pradesh government plans to organize a **drone show** during **the Mahakumbh 2025**, **depicting mythological tales** associated with the Mahakumbh and Prayagraj.

Key Points

- **Highlights of the Drone Show:**
  - A fleet of 2,000 illuminated drones will narrate the **legendary tales of 'Prayag Mahatmyam' and the Mahakumbh.**
  - Iconic events like the **mythical Samudra Manthan (ocean churning)** and the **emergence of the Amrit Kalash (nectar pot)** will be visually recreated.

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- **Objective:**
  - The show aims to **highlight the religious and spiritual significance of Prayagraj**, providing a unique experience for pilgrims and locals.
- **Preparations for Mahakumbh:**
  - The Mahakumbh, held every twelve years, is **scheduled from 13th January to 26th February 2025.**
  - The state government is **focusing on developing and beautifying temples**, **Ganga** ghats, parks, roads, and flyovers in Prayagraj.
  - The **Chief Minister has conducted multiple visits to Prayagraj** to oversee the progress of the preparations.

Kumbh Mela

- It is the largest peaceful congregation of pilgrims on earth, during which participants bathe or take a dip in a sacred river. This gathering takes place at 4 different places, namely:
  - In **Haridwar,** on the banks of **the Ganges**.
  - In **Ujjain**, on the banks of **Shipra.**
  - In **Nashik,** on the banks of **Godavari (Dakshin Ganga).**
  - In **Prayagraj**, at the confluence of the Ganges, the Yamuna, and the mythical invisible **Saraswati.**
- **Different Types of Kumbh:**
  - The **Kumbh Mela** is celebrated **4 times over a course of 12 years.**
  - At **Haridwar and Prayagraj**, **Ardh-Kumbh Mela** is held **every 6th year.**
  - The **Maha Kumbh Mela** is celebrated at Prayag after 144 years (after 12 'Purna Kumbh Melas').
  - **Maagh Kumbh** is celebrated **every year** in the month of **Maagh (Jan-Feb) in Prayagraj.**

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