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UTTAR PRADESH

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New Rules For Demolishing Unauthorised Constructions

Why in News?

Uttar Pradesh government has issued guidelines for agencies before demolishing unauthorised constructions.

- Notices must be served, and an opportunity for a **personal hearing** must be provided before finalising demolition.

Key Points

- **New Rules for Demolition:**
 - **Mandatory Show Cause Notice & Waiting Period:**
 - No demolition should occur without issuing a show cause notice.
 - Agencies must wait **15 days** from the date of notice receipt before ordering demolition. The rules provides an **appellate opportunity**, demolition must be delayed for **15 days** after the final order.
 - Owners/occupants should be given **15 days** to remove or demolish unauthorised structures themselves.
 - **Transparency Measures:**
 - A **digital portal** must be set up within three months to document all actions, including **notices, replies, and orders**.
 - Notices should be sent to the **District Magistrate's (DM) office via email**, with automated acknowledgment.
 - Minutes of personal hearings must be recorded.
 - **Demolition Orders & Compliance:**
 - Final orders should specify:
 - Whether the structure is **compoundable** (can be regularised by paying fees).
 - Details of the **unauthorised/non-compoundable** portions.
 - Why demolition is necessary.
 - Non-compliance with these rules may result in **contempt proceedings** and **prosecution** of officials.
 - **Legal & Administrative Observations:**
 - Many steps in the new rules already exist under different Acts.

- New features aim to **improve transparency and consistency** in demolitions.
- Issues of **hasty demolitions** and **pending old demolition orders**, leading to **malpractice** and **unauthorized constructions**.
- Municipal officials confirm compliance and clarify that temporary encroachments are handled under the **UP Municipal Corporation Act, 1959**.

Stampede at Maha Kumbh 2025

Why in News?

A tragic stampede took place at the **Triveni Sangam** (confluence of the Ganga, Yamuna, and Saraswati) in **Prayagraj** as thousands of devotees gathered for the **Mauni Amavasya 'Amrit Snan'** at the **Maha Kumbh**.

- The massive crowd surge created chaos, leading to a **stampede** that caused **multiple casualties** and **injuries**.

Key Points

- **Significance of Amrit Snan:**
 - The **Amrit Snan on Mauni Amavasya** is the most significant ritual of the Maha Kumbh 2025, and event held even greater importance due to the **rare celestial alignment of 'Triveni Yog,'** which occurs once every **144 years**.
 - Nearly **five crore devotees** had already arrived a day before the Amrit Snan, with the number expected to reach **10 crore** on the day itself.
- **Mauni Amavasya:**
 - **About:**
 - **Mauni Amavasya**, also known as **Maghi Amavasya** or **Magh Amavasya**, is an important day that occurs during the **Magha month** on the **new moon (Amavasya)**.
 - This spiritually significant day is deeply rooted in the traditions of the North Indian calendar.
 - It is marked by **introspection, silence, and soul purification** through sacred rituals, with the **holy dip in the Ganges River** being one of its most prominent practices.

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Note:

○ **Significance of Mauni Amavasya 2025:**

- “Mauni” is derived from the Sanskrit word “Mauna,” meaning “silence”
- “Observing a vow of silence on this day is a common practice among devotees, promoting **spiritual discipline** and **inner peace**.”
- Silence is seen as a powerful tool for **self-purification** and **spiritual growth**.
- A **holy dip** in the **Triveni Sangam** during the **Kumbh Mela** is believed to cleanse devotees of past sins and lead them toward **salvation** or **Moksha**.
- Additionally, performing rituals to **honour ancestors** on **Mauni Amavasya** is thought to bring happiness and blessings, as well as help alleviate **Pitru Dosha**, offering relief to those facing ancestral karmic imbalances.

Potential Petroleum Reserves in Ballia

Why in News?

The **Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC)** has started drilling operations in **Ballia, Uttar Pradesh**, after **geological surveys** indicated the **possibility of petroleum reserves** in the region.

Key Points

- **Survey and Exploration:** ONGC conducted **satellite, geochemical, gravity-magnetic, and magneto-telluric (MT) surveys** over the **last three years**, confirming the possibility of oil and natural gas reserves.
- **Magnetotellurics (MT)** is a geophysical method that uses

natural changes in the **Earth’s magnetic and electric fields** to study underground **electrical resistivity**.

- **Drilling Operations:** The project, with an **estimated cost of ₹100 crore**, involves drilling up to **3,001 meters** at a site near **Sagar Pali village** in **Gram Sabha Vaina (Rattuchak)**.
- **Land and Infrastructure:** ONGC has leased **eight acres of land** for **three years**.
- **Potential Impact:** If petroleum reserves are confirmed, the project could significantly contribute to the energy sector, boost local employment, and transform the economy of eastern Uttar Pradesh.

Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC)

- **Oil and Natural Gas Corporation Limited (ONGC)**, formerly **Oil and Natural Gas Commission**, was established in **1956**.
- In **1994**, **Oil and Natural Gas Commission** was converted into a Corporation, and in **1997** it was recognized as one of the **Navratnas** by the Government of India.
 - Subsequently, it had been conferred with **Maharatna status** in the year **2010**.
- It is the **largest crude oil and natural gas company** in India, contributing around **70%** to Indian domestic production.

Ganga Basin

- The headwaters of the Ganga called the **‘Bhagirathi’** are fed by the **Gangotri Glacier** and joined by the **Alaknanda at Devprayag** in Uttarakhand.
- At **Haridwar**, Ganga emerges from the mountains to the plains.
- The **Ganga** is joined by many tributaries from the Himalayas, a few of them being major rivers such as the Yamuna, the Ghaghara, the Gandak, and the Kosi.



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Note:

UP Tableau at Republic Day Parade

Why in News?

The **Republic Day** tableau of Uttar Pradesh celebrated the ongoing **Maha Kumbh** in Prayagraj, featuring depictions of 'Samudra Manthan,' 'Amrit Kalash,' and holy men bathing on the banks of **Sangam**.



Key Points

- **Main Theme and Focus:**
 - The focus of the **76th Republic Day celebrations** is **75 years of the enactment of the Constitution**.
 - The theme for the tableaux is '**Swarnim Bharat: Virasat aur Vikas**', highlighting India's heritage and progress.
- **Uttar Pradesh Tableau Highlights:**
 - The tableau **showcases the grandeur of Maha Kumbh 2025**, portraying a metaphorical 'Sangam' of 'virasat' (heritage) and 'vikas' (development).
 - A prominent 'Amrit Kalash' tilted forward symbolizes **the flow of the sacred 'Amritdhara.'**
 - Seers and saints are depicted blowing conch shells, performing 'snan' at Sangam, and meditating, while devotees immerse themselves in the holy waters of the **Ganga, Yamuna, and mythical Saraswati**.
- **Mythological and Cultural Depictions:**
 - The tableau features a vivid depiction of the **mythical tale of 'Samudra Manthan'**, symbolizing the historical and cultural significance of Maha Kumbh.
 - On the back side, **14 gems that emerged from the churning of the ocean** are artistically represented.

- **Technological Features of Maha Kumbh 2025:**
 - The tableau emphasizes technological advancements through the Integrated Command and Control Center (ICCC) for efficient security and crowd management at the Kumbh.
 - This **highlights the state-of-the-art digital preparations** for managing the massive gathering.

Republic Day

- Republic Day commemorates the adoption of the Constitution of India on 26th January 1950, and the country's transition to a republic which came into effect on 26th January 1950.
 - The constitution was adopted by the **Constituent Assembly of India on 26th November 1949** and came into effect on 26th January 1950.
- The Constitution of India repealed the **Indian Independence Act 1947 and Government of India Act 1935** when it became effective on 26th January 1950. India ceased to be a dominion of the British Crown and became a **sovereign, democratic republic with a constitution**.

News Regional Office of Inland Waterways Authority

Why in News?

The **Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI)** upgraded its sub-office in **Varanasi** into a regional office to effectively implement **Inland Water Transport (IWT)** activities on **National Waterway-1 (NW-1)** along the **River Ganga**.

Key Points

- **IWAI Regional Offices:**
 - The Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI) operates under **the Union Ministry of Ports, Shipping, and Waterways**.
 - It currently has **five regional offices in Guwahati (Assam), Patna (Bihar), Kochi (Kerala), Bhubaneswar (Odisha), and Kolkata (West Bengal)**.
 - The **newly established regional office in Varanasi (Uttar Pradesh), becomes the sixth**.

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Note:

- The Varanasi office will **manage operations over a 487-kilometre stretch from Majhua to the Varanasi Multi-Modal Terminal (MMT)** and up to Prayagraj.
 - It will **also oversee works related to other National Waterways (NWs)** in Uttar Pradesh.
- **Jal Marg Vikas Project (JMVP):**
- The office will prioritize implementing **the World Bank-supported Jal Marg Vikas Project (JMVP)**.
 - It aims to **enhance the capacity of River Ganga (NW-1)** through:
 - **River conservancy works** such as bandalling and maintenance dredging.
 - Construction of key infrastructure, including MMTs at **Varanasi, Sahibganj, and Haldia**, an intermodal terminal at Kalighat, and a new navigational lock at Farakka (West Bengal).
 - **Promoting cruise tourism** and seamless cargo movement along the waterway.
 - **Development of Community Jetties:**
 - Under JMVP, **60 community jetties** are being constructed across four states: **Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, and West Bengal**.
 - These jetties **aim to benefit local commuters, small and marginal farmers, artisans, and fishing communities**.
 - The Varanasi Regional Office will monitor and ensure efficient execution of these activities.
- **National Waterways in Uttar Pradesh:**
- Uttar Pradesh has around **30 rivers, with 10 declared as National Waterways**.
 - The office will oversee development works on **River Ganga** and its tributaries, including **Betwa, Chambal, Gomti, Tons, Varuna, Gandak, Ghagra, Karamnasa, and Yamuna**.

Inland Waterways Authority of India

- It **came into existence on 27th October 1986** for development and regulation of inland waterways for shipping and navigation.
- It primarily undertakes **projects for development and maintenance of IWT infrastructure** on national waterways through grants received from the **Ministry of Shipping**.

Inland Water Transport (IWT)

- **About:**
 - Inland water transport refers to the transportation of people, goods, and materials via waterways such as **rivers, canals, lakes, and other navigable bodies of water** that are located within a country's boundaries.
 - IWT is the **most economical mode of transportation**, especially for bulk cargo like coal, iron ore, cement, food grains and fertilizer. Presently, it remains **underutilized at a share of 2% in India's modal mix**.
- **Socio-Economic Benefits of IWT:**
 - Cheaper operating cost and relatively lesser fuel consumption
 - Less polluting mode of transportation
 - Lesser requirement of land relative to other modes of transportation
 - More environment friendly mode of transportation
 - Moreover, waterways can be **used for recreational purposes such as boating and fishing**.

Dhanauri Wetland

Why in News?

The National Green Tribunal (NGT) instructed the **Uttar Pradesh government** to submit the status of notifying the **Dhanauri water body** near **Jewar airport** as a **wetland** within four weeks.

Key Points

- **State Government's Stand:**
 - The Uttar Pradesh's counsel stated that **the government is in the process of notifying Dhanauri as a wetland**.
 - The NGT bench questioned the need for three months to complete the notification process when the site has already been identified for wetland status.
- **The Divisional Forest Officer (DFO):**
 - The DFO of Gautam Buddha Nagar informed the NGT through an affidavit that **the proposed Dhanauri wetland spans 112.89 hectares**.

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Note:

- The area **primarily includes privately owned land** located across the villages of Dhanauri Kalan, Thasrana, and Amipur Bangar in the Sadar tehsil of Gautam Buddha Nagar.
- The DFO requested **three months to consult with landowners and obtain their consent** before proceeding with further action.
- **Wetland Notification and Ramsar Site Process:**
 - State governments **can notify lakes and water bodies as wetlands** for protection.
 - **Ramsar site** designation requires approval from the Central Government, based on recommendations by state governments.
 - Wetlands qualifying under ecological and biodiversity criteria are identified under **the international Ramsar Convention treaty of 1971**, which ensures special conservation measures.

Dhanauri Wetland

- **Location:**
 - Situated in **Greater Noida, Gautam Buddha Nagar district, Uttar Pradesh.**
 - Lies close to the **Okhla Bird Sanctuary** and **Surajpur Wetland.**
 - Positioned within the floodplains of the Yamuna Basin, about 15 km from the **River Yamuna.**
- **Ecological Significance:**
 - Composed mainly of marshes, the wetland is an essential habitat for the vulnerable **Sarus Crane (*Antigone antigone*)**.
 - **Hosts a variety of bird species, including:**
 - Common teal
 - Mallard
 - Northern pintail
 - Greylag geese
 - **Bar-headed geese**
 - **Woolly-necked stork**
 - Black-necked stork
 - **Painted stork**
 - Eurasian marsh harrier
- **Conservation Status:**
 - Recognized as an **Important Bird Area (IBA)** by **BirdLife International.**

UP Foundation Day 2025

Why in News?

- Uttar Pradesh, **celebrating 75 years as a state**, was renamed from the **United Provinces** in 1950 and plays a pivotal role in India's politics and economy.
- The state has grown in **political and economic prominence**, setting ambitious goals like becoming a **trillion-dollar economy**.

Key Points

- **Uttar Pradesh Foundation Day 2025:**
 - **The theme** for Uttar Pradesh Foundation Day 2025 is **"Development and Heritage: Uttar Pradesh on the Path to Progress"**.
 - The state government will confer the **'Uttar Pradesh Gaurav Samman'** award on **six individuals** from the fields of **music, agriculture and education** during the **state foundation day**.
- **Historical Significance:**
 - Uttar Pradesh, formerly known as **United Provinces**, was renamed on **24 January, 1950**, by the **governor general of India** through the **United Provinces (Alteration of Name) Order, 1950**.
 - The state began celebrating 24 January as **UP Foundation Day** in **2018**, following a suggestion by governor **Ram Naik**.
- **Political Importance:**
 - The state contributes **80 Members of Parliament** to the **Lok Sabha**, giving it considerable influence in national politics.
 - It has produced **nine Prime Ministers**, including the current **PM, Narendra Modi**, who represents **Varanasi** in Parliament.
- **Economic Aspirations:**
 - Uttar Pradesh strives to move beyond its **BIMARU (economically underdeveloped)** tag and achieve a **trillion-dollar economy** status.
 - **BIMARU:** Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh
- **Introduction of ODOP Scheme:**
 - The **One District One Product (ODOP) scheme** was launched during the **first Foundation Day** celebrations in **2018** to promote local industries and crafts.

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Note:

- The occasion is aimed to launch new schemes and initiatives aimed at boosting the state's development and welfare.

Uttar Pradesh's First Double-Decker Bus Restaurant

Why in News?

Uttar Pradesh's **first double-decker bus restaurant**, named **Pumpkin**, has been inaugurated at the Media Centre in the **Maha Kumbh Mela** area, Prayagraj.

Key Points

- The restaurant serves exclusively **vegetarian** and **satvic food**, catering to the religious atmosphere of the **Kumbh Mela**.
- Designed to be affordable, it aims to accommodate the budgets of common devotees.
- Founder of the **Pumpkin brand** announced plans to expand the **brand** to other religious destinations such as **Kashi**, **Mathura**, and **Ayodhya**.

Maha Kumbh

- **Kumbh Mela** comes under **United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (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'.

Prayagraj's First Super Speciality Hospital

Why in News?

The **Uttar Pradesh government**, during the ongoing **Mahakumbh** in Prayagraj, announced several significant initiatives, including the **construction of the city's first**

super speciality hospital and the **approval of municipal bonds for infrastructure development** in different districts of UP.

Key Points

- **Major Announcements by the State Government:**
 - **Super Speciality Hospital in Prayagraj:**
 - **Uttar Pradesh Urban Development Minister AK Sharma** announced the construction of a super speciality hospital in Prayagraj at an investment of **₹100 crore**.
 - This will be the city's first such hospital, funded by the **Urban Development Department**.
 - **Municipal Bonds for Development:**
 - The **Cabinet approved** the issuance of **municipal bonds for infrastructure development** in **Prayagraj**, **Varanasi**, and **Agra**.
 - A fund of **₹50 crore** has been allocated for these districts.
 - Bonds have previously been issued for Lucknow and Ghaziabad, yielding promising results.
 - **New Medical Colleges:**
 - The government announced the establishment of three medical colleges in Hathras, Kasganj, and Baghpat.
 - **Industrial and Educational Development:**
 - The State Government plans to establish 62 **Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs)** and five centres of innovation, invention, and training across the state.
 - **Policy Renewal:**
 - The **Uttar Pradesh Aerospace and Defence and employment policy**, which has completed five years, will be renewed with new incentives to attract investment.

Municipal Bonds

- A **municipal bond** is a **debt security** issued by a **state, municipality** or county to finance its capital expenditures, including the **construction of highways, bridges or schools**.
 - Through municipal bonds, a **municipal corporation** raises money from individuals or institutions and promises to pay a specified amount of interest and returns the principal amount on a specific maturity date.

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Note:

- These are **mostly exempt from federal taxes** and from most state and local taxes, making them especially attractive to people in high income tax brackets.

AI in Maha Kumbh 2025

Why in News?

Authorities are using CCTV cameras equipped with **Artificial Intelligence** to manage the rush of devotees at the ongoing **Maha Kumbh Mela** and **predict sudden crowd surges**.

Key Points

- **Crowd Statistics:**
 - Approximately **50 to 60 lakh people visit the fair daily**.
 - The number of devotees surges on ritual bathing days:
 - **Paush Purnima:** 1.6 crore people took a dip.
 - **Makar Sankranti (January 14):** 3.5 crore people participated.
 - **Mauni Amavasya (January 29):** An estimated 6 to 7 crore people are expected.
- **Surveillance and Monitoring Setup:**
 - Authorities have installed around **2,700 CCTV cameras across Prayagraj** for the festival with **1,800 located in the fair area**.
 - Monitoring is conducted through four **Integrated Command and Control Centres (ICCC)** within the fair area.
- **Role of AI in Crowd Management:**
 - Out of 1,800 CCTV cameras, approximately 160 are equipped with AI technology.
 - **AI calculates crowd density per square metre** to estimate the number of people in specific areas at specific times.
 - **Authorities use AI data to estimate the number of pilgrims expected on major bathing days** and divert crowds to **prevent overcrowding**.
- **AI in Emergency Response:**
 - **AI facilitates evacuation in emergencies**, such as the recent fire incident that destroyed 40 huts and 60 tents.

- This is the first time AI has been used for **crowd management** on such a large scale globally.
- Challenges and Limitations:
 - AI models sometimes **face gaps due to low network connectivity and technical issues**.
 - Equipping all CCTV cameras with AI remains **cost-prohibitive**.

Artificial Intelligence (AI)

- **About:**
 - AI is the ability of a computer, or a robot **controlled by a computer to do tasks that are usually done by humans** because they require human intelligence and discernment.
 - Although there is **no AI that can perform the wide variety of tasks an ordinary human can do**, some AI can match humans in specific tasks.
- **Characteristics & Components:**
 - The ideal characteristic of artificial intelligence is its **ability to rationalize and take actions** that have the best chance of achieving a specific goal. A subset of AI is **Machine Learning (ML)**.
 - Deep Learning (DL) techniques **enable this automatic learning** through the absorption of huge amounts of unstructured data such as text, images, or video.

Custodial deaths in Sambhal

Why in News?

Recently, a **man died in police custody** in Sambhal district of Uttar Pradesh, prompting his family and locals to protest, alleging **custodial torture**.

Key Points

- **About the Incident:**
 - While **police suggested a possible heart attack** as the cause, the victim's **family and locals protested at the outpost**, forcing officials to flee to avoid a **mob attack**.
 - Later, personnel from **the Rapid Action Force (RAF)** restored order by deploying forces in the area.

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Note:

➤ Custodial Torture

○ About:

- Custodial torture is the **infliction of physical or mental pain or suffering on a person who is in the custody** of the police or other authorities.
- It is a grave violation of **human rights and dignity** and often leads to **custodial deaths**, which are deaths that occur while a person is in custody.

○ Types of Custodial Death:

● Death in Police Custody:

- Death in police custody can result from excessive force, torture, denial of medical care, or other forms of abuse.

● Death in Judicial Custody:

- Death in judicial custody may occur due to overcrowding, poor hygiene, lack of medical facilities, inmate violence, or suicide.

● Death in the Custody of **Army** or **Paramilitary Forces**:

- Can happen through torture, extrajudicial killings, encounters, or crossfire incidents.

○ Challenges in Preventing Custodial Torture in India:

- Lack of ratification of the **UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (UNCAT)**, which India signed in 1997 but has not yet ratified.
 - This prevents India from being bound by international obligations and standards to **prevent and combat custodial torture**.

International Conventions for Human Rights

➤ International Human Rights Law, 1948:

- The International Human Rights Law contains a provision which **protects people from torture and other enforced disappearances**.

➤ United Nation Charter, 1945:

- The United Nations Charter calls for **treating prisoners with dignity**. The Charter clearly states that despite being prisoners, their fundamental freedoms and human rights are set out in the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights**, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

➤ The Nelson Mandela Rules, 2015:

- The Nelson Mandela Rules were **adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 2015** to treat prisoners with inherent dignity and to prohibit torture and other ill-treatment.

Fire Broke Out at Maha Kumbh Mela

Why in News?

A fire broke out at the **Maha Kumbh Mela** in Prayagraj, UP, on **19th January, 2025**, due to a **Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) cylinder blast** leading to the destruction of 18 tents.

- The **45-day Maha Kumbh Mela**, which began on **Paush Purnim** on **13th January, 2025**, is one of the **world's largest religious gatherings**.

Key Points

- The fire was **promptly extinguished**, and **no casualties or injuries** were reported.
 - The incident occurred near the **Shastri Bridge** in **Zone 19** of the Mela.
- **Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG)**:
 - LPG is a **flammable mixture of hydrocarbon gases**, primarily **propane** and **butane**, used as fuel for **heating, cooking**, and even in vehicles.
 - It is stored in **liquid form under pressure** in tanks or cylinders.
 - When the pressure is released, **LPG vaporizes** and can be used as a gas.
 - It is widely used in households and industries due to its **clean-burning properties** and **high energy content**.

Miyawaki Technique

Why in News?

The Prayagraj Municipal Corporation has developed **dense forests** at multiple locations across Prayagraj to provide pure air and promote a healthy atmosphere.

- Using the **Japanese Miyawaki technique**, the corporation **established several oxygen banks** that have now evolved into lush green forests.

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Note:

Key Points

- **Benefits of the Project:**
 - The initiative **aids in managing industrial waste** and reduces dust, dirt, and foul odours.
 - It significantly improves the city's air quality and **promotes environmental conservation**.
 - Miyawaki forests help reduce **air and water pollution**, prevent **soil erosion**, and enhance biodiversity.
- **Environmental Impact:**
 - These forests lower the temperature difference between day and night during summers.
 - They enhance biodiversity, improve soil fertility, and create habitats for animals and birds.
 - Large forests developed through this technique **reduce temperatures by 4 to 7 degrees Celsius**.
- **Diversity of Species in Miyawaki Forests:**
 - **Fruit-bearing trees:** **Mango**, Mahua, **Neem**, Peepal, **Tamarind**, Amla, and Ber.
 - **Medicinal and ornamental plants:** Tulsi, Brahmi, **Hibiscus**, Kadamba, Bougainvillea, and Jungle Jalebi.
 - **Other species:** Arjuna, Teak, **Sheesham**, Bamboo, Kaner (red and yellow), Tecoma, Kachnar, **Mahogany**, Lemon, and Drumstick (Sahjan).

The Miyawaki Technique

- **About:**
 - Developed by **Japanese botanist Akira Miyawaki in the 1970s**, this method **creates dense forests in limited spaces**.
 - Known as the '**pot plantation method**,' it involves planting native species closely together for rapid growth.
- **Key Features and Benefits:**
 - Plants **grow 10 times faster**, mimicking natural forests with dense plantations.
 - Improves soil quality, biodiversity, and carbon absorption.
 - Effective in urban areas for **transforming polluted and barren lands into green ecosystems**.

AMU Receives Ultimatum for House Tax Dues

Why in News?

Aligarh Municipal Corporation (AMC) issued a notice to **Aligarh Muslim University (AMU)**, demanding the clearance of **pending house tax dues** totaling **Rs 24.4 crore** within 15 days.

Key Points

- AMC also warned of legal action under the **Uttar Pradesh Municipal Corporation Act, 1959** if the payment is delayed.
- According to AMC, **the dues pertain to 40 properties** owned by the university.
 - Tax payments for 22 properties had been cleared earlier, leaving **Rs 24.4 crore unpaid** for 18 properties.
- According to AMC's revenue assessment officer, the dues have been outstanding since 2017.
- The AMU had applied for a grant from the UGC to make payment timely.
 - There is a **provision that allows the University Grants Commission (UGC)** to reimburse such payments, and the university is in communication with the commission regarding this.

University Grants Commission (UGC)

- It came into existence on **28th December, 1953** and became a **statutory body** by an Act of Parliament in **1956**, for the **coordination, determination and maintenance of standards of teaching, examination and research in university education**.
 - It also regulates the recognition of **fake universities, autonomous colleges, deemed to be universities, and distance education institutions**.
- The **head office of the UGC** is located in **New Delhi**.

Makar Sankranti and Amrit Snan (Shahi Snan)

Why in News?

The **Mahakumbh Mela 2025**, currently underway in **Prayagraj**, witnessed its first **amrit snan or shahi snan**

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Note:

on 14th January, coinciding with the auspicious occasion of **Makar Sankranti**.

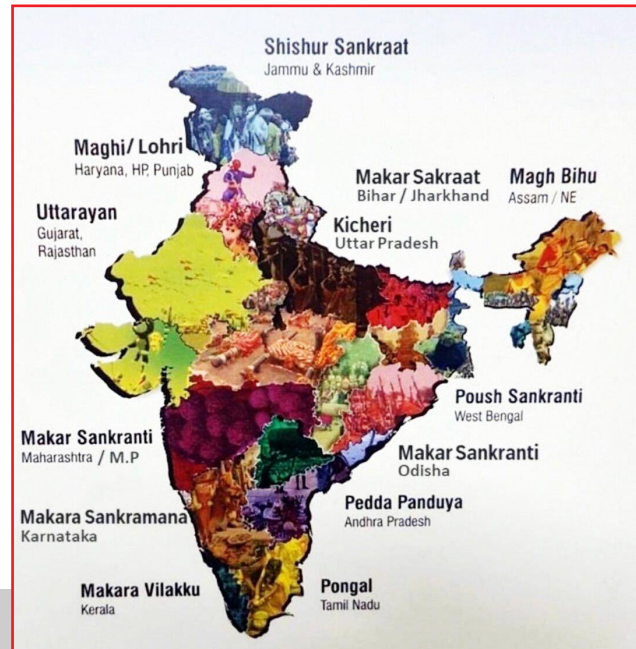
- This ritual bath marked the beginning of a series of sacred dips in the confluence of the **Ganga, Yamuna**, and the mythical **Saraswati** rivers.

Key Points

➤ Significance of Makar Sankranti:

- Celebrated on 14th January, the festival marks the **Sun's transition into Makar raashi (Capricorn)**. This transition, known as **Sankranti**, is particularly special as it signals the **Sun's northward journey**, known as **Uttarayan**.
 - This movement heralds the **end of the harsh winter months** and the **onset of warmer, longer days**.
- In Hindu mythology, **Uttarayan** is regarded as the **gods' daytime**, signifying an auspicious period for celebrations and spiritual endeavors.
 - **Bhishma Pitamah** of the **Mahabharata** chose to pass away during Uttarayan to attain spiritual liberation.
- The festival is also significant as it **ends the karmas, a month-long period during which auspicious events are avoided**.
- The Sun's entry into Capricorn, the house ruled by Shani (Saturn), who is considered the Sun's son, is celebrated as a familial reunion, a key theme in Hindu traditions.
- The festivities associated with the day is known by different names in different parts of the country:
 - **Lohri** by north Indian Hindus and Sikhs.
 - **Sukarat** in central India.
 - **Bhogali Bihu** by Assamese Hindus, and
 - **Pongal** by Tamil Hindu and other South Indian Hindus.
- **Other Significant Dates for Ritual Bathing Include:**
 - **Mauni Amavasya (29 January):** A day of silence and introspection, considered highly auspicious for spiritual purification.
 - **Vasant Panchami (3 February):** Celebrated as a festival of learning and wisdom, marking the arrival of spring.

- **Maha Shivratri (February 26):** The concluding day of the Kumbh Mela, dedicated to Lord Shiva, symbolizing the union of divine energy.



Uttar Pradesh Explores Privatisation of Loss-Making Discoms

Why in News?

The Uttar Pradesh government has initiated steps toward **privatizing** or forming **Public-Private Partnerships (PPP)** for two of its **loss-making electricity distribution companies (discoms)**.

- This move has **sparked protests** from employees concerned about **job security** and the potential impacts on service delivery.

Key Points

- The **state's power corporation** recently floated a tender inviting consultants and transaction advisers to devise a **privatization** or **PPP model** for **Dakshinanchal Vidyut Vitran Nigam Ltd (DVVNL)** and **Purvanchal Vidyut Vitran Nigam Ltd (PVVNL)**.
 - Both discoms have been grappling with **substantial financial losses**, prompting the government to

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Note:

explore alternatives to improve efficiency and service quality.

- The government has clarified that the specifics of the partnership, including the **shareholding structure**, will be determined based on recommendations from consultants.
- These experts will analyse the current state of the discoms and propose a suitable model for privatisation or PPP.
- The model is expected to allow private entities to bring in operational expertise and investment while maintaining some level of government oversight to ensure public accountability.

What is DISCOM?

➤ About:

- **DISCOM** stands for **Distribution Company** in the power sector. It refers to entities responsible for the **distribution of electricity to consumers**, including **households, businesses, and industries**.

➤ Role of DISCOMs:

- **Electricity Distribution:** They manage the infrastructure and operations for **delivering electricity** to consumers within their designated areas.
- **Billing and Revenue Collection:** DISCOMs handle **metering, billing, and collecting payments** for electricity consumption.
- **Maintenance and Upgrades:** They are responsible for maintaining the **distribution network**, including **transformers, substations, and power lines**.
- **Customer Service:** DISCOMs address issues like **power outages, meter installations, and grievances** related to electricity supply.

Mahakumbh Mela 2025: World's Largest Religious Gathering

Why in News?

The **Mahakumbh Mela 2025**, celebrated as the largest human gathering on Earth, commenced with the auspicious **'Shahi Snan' (royal bath)** on the occasion of **Paush Purnima**.

- Held every **144 years** during a **rare celestial alignment**, the event is expected to draw over **1.5 crore (15 million) devotees** to the sacred confluence of the **Ganga, Yamuna, and the mythical Saraswati** at the **Triveni Sangam in Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh**.

Key Points

- The **45-day spiritual festival**, which concludes on **26 February**, will feature several significant bathing rituals, including:
 - **Makar Sankranti:** 14 January
 - **Mauni Amavasya:** 29 January
 - **Basant Panchami:** 3 February
- These events hold immense religious significance, drawing devotees, saints, and pilgrims from across India and the globe.
- **Namami Gange Yagya:**
 - On the eve of the festival, the Namami Gange team organized a grand 'yagya' at the Sangam to pledge continued efforts toward preserving the purity and flow of the **Ganga River**.
 - The event saw participation from over **200 Ganga Sevadoots** and thousands of volunteers, with a special recognition of youth contributions to the **Ganga Swachhata Abhiyan**.
- **Safety and Security Measures:**
 - To ensure the safety of millions of pilgrims, the **Uttar Pradesh Police** and **National Disaster Response Force (NDRF)** teams have been deployed across the Maha Kumbh area.
 - Special water police units are stationed at the Sangam to manage the massive influx of devotees during the ritual baths.
- **Maha Kumbh Mela 2025:**
 - The Maha Kumbh Mela 2025, a sacred pilgrimage, will be held in Prayagraj from **13th January to 26th February 2025**.
 - It occurs **every 12 years**, rotating among four locations i.e., **Prayagraj (UP), Haridwar (UK), Nashik (MH), and Ujjain (MP)**.
 - The word **Kumbh** refers to a pot or vessel, which, in **Hindu mythology**, is said to have held the **nectar of immortality (amrit)**.

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Note:

- Uttar Pradesh has declared the **Maha Kumbh area** in **Prayagraj** as a new district called **Maha Kumbh Mela** for **4 months** i.e., **1st December 2024 to 31st March 2025**.

National Disaster Response Force (NDRF)

- **About:** NDRF is a specialised force constituted for the purpose of specialized response to natural and man-made disasters in India.
- **Formation and Purpose:** The NDRF was formed in 2006 under the **Disaster Management Act, 2005**. Its primary purpose is to respond quickly and effectively to natural and man-made disasters.
- **Structure:** The NDRF consists of battalions from the Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs) including the Border Security Force (BSF), Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), Central Industrial Security Force (CISF), Indo Tibetan Border Police (ITBP), and Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB).
 - Each battalion has specialized training and equipment for disaster response.

UP Enforces 'No Helmet, No Fuel' Rule

Why in News?

The **Uttar Pradesh Transport Department** has proposed a strict **"no helmet, no fuel"** policy across cities in the state in an effort to reduce road accidents and fatalities involving two-wheelers.

- The Chief Minister observed that **road accidents claim approximately 25,000 to 26,000 lives** in the state annually.

Key Points

- The **'No Helmet, No Fuel'** policy is set to be implemented in Noida starting **26th January 2025**.
 - This move aims to enforce helmet usage among **two-wheeler riders** and enhance **road safety** in the region.
- Fuel stations across the state have been directed to install signage reading, **"No Helmet, No Fuel."**
 - This initiative **had been introduced earlier in Gautam Buddha Nagar district in 2019** but was only implemented sporadically.

- The Transport Commissioner issued an official letter directing the fuel station operators not to sell fuel to **two-wheeler riders**, who are not wearing helmets, including the pillion.
- The **Uttar Pradesh Transport Department** is also working to ensure widespread awareness of the policy.
 - Fuel station operators must be educated about the relevant provisions of the **Motor Vehicles Act, 1988** and the **Uttar Pradesh Motor Vehicles Rules, 1998**.
- While some support the initiative as a necessary step to enforce helmet usage and save lives, others argue that the government should also consider **improving road quality** and **overall safety measures** rather than enforcing new laws.

Motor Vehicles Act, 1988

- Replacing the **Motor Vehicles Act, 1939**, this Act came into force on **1st July 1989**.
- The Act provides in detail the **legislative provisions regarding** licensing of drivers/conductors, registration of motor vehicles, control of motor vehicles through permits, special provisions relating to state transport undertakings, traffic regulation, insurance, liability, offences and penalties, etc.

Mahaprasad Seva in Maha Kumbh

Why in News?

The **Adani Group** and **the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON)** have partnered to provide meals to devotees attending the **Maha Kumbh Mela 2025** in Prayagraj.

Key Points

- **Duration and Offering:**
 - The **Mahaprasad Seva** will run throughout the Maha Kumbh Mela, **from 13th January to 26th February 2025**.
 - **Meals will be served to 50 lakh devotees** during the event.
- **Collaboration and Acknowledgment:**
 - **Adani Group Chairman Gautam Adani** met **Guru Prasad Swami, Chairman of ISKCON Governing**

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Note:

Body Commission (GBC) to express gratitude for ISKCON's support in the initiative.

- **Meal Preparation and Distribution:**
 - Meals will be prepared in two kitchens located in and outside the mela area.
 - The Mahaprasad will be distributed at 40 designated locations across the Maha Kumbh area.
 - Around 2,500 volunteers will actively participate in the distribution of meals.
- **Additional Initiatives:**
 - Golf carts have been arranged to assist differently-abled individuals, elderly devotees, and mothers with children.
 - Five lakh copies of [Geeta Saar](#) will be distributed among the attendees as part of the spiritual offerings.

The International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON)

- The ISKCON, founded in 1966, is commonly known as the "Hare Krishna movement".
- ISKCON has translated the Shrimad Bhagavad Geeta and other Vedic literature in 89 languages, playing a stellar role in the dissemination of Vedic literature across the world.
- Members of the ISKCON movement view Bhaktivedanta Swami as a representative and messenger of Krishna Chaitanya.

Green Mahakumbh

Why in News?

On 31st January 2025, Prayagraj is going to host Green Mahakumbh, uniting over 1,000 environmental and water conservation workers from across the country.

- Shiksha Sanskriti Utthan Nyas has organized this unique event as part of the [Gyan Mahakumbh](#), with Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister acting as its chief patron.

Key Points

- **National-Level Discussion on Environment:**
 - The discussion will address issues related to nature, the environment, water, and cleanliness.

- Experts will share insights on balancing the five elements of nature and tackling associated challenges.

- The event will explore methods to raise awareness among Mahakumbh visitors about environmental protection and cleanliness campaigns.

- Government agencies, public representatives, and local citizens are working together to ensure the success of [the Clean Mahakumbh initiative](#).

➤ Swachhata Rath Yatra:

- [The Swachhata Rath Yatra](#) was also launched in Prayagraj to promote cleanliness and raise public awareness, attracting significant community participation.

- Objectives:

- It aims to present Prayagraj as a symbol of cleanliness for Mahakumbh devotees and tourists.
- By maintaining a pristine environment along the Mahakumbh Nagar route, the initiative ensures a welcoming atmosphere for millions of expected visitors.

➤ Awareness Campaign Through Performances:

- Street play artists carrying color-coded dustbins demonstrated [proper waste segregation for wet and dry waste](#).
- A cleanliness-themed music band performed alongside the chariot, reinforcing the message of maintaining a clean city.
- Safai Mitras (sanitation workers) and Municipal Corporation staff played a vital role in promoting and implementing cleanliness measures.

Caste Atrocity Complaint in UP

Why in News?

Recently, the [National Commission for Scheduled Castes \(NCSC\)](#) has acknowledged an atrocity complaint filed against a member of [Uttar Pradesh's Transgender Welfare Board](#).

- The movement for horizontal reservation for [transgender](#) individuals in government jobs and

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education is gaining momentum in northern India, inspired by activists in southern States.

Key Points

- **Horizontal and Vertical Reservations:**
 - **Vertical Reservations** create a **separate quota category under which all transgender individuals qualify**, regardless of their socio-economic background.
 - **Horizontal Reservations** allocate a **percentage of seats for transgender individuals within each socio-economic category**, addressing the layered discrimination faced by marginalized caste trans people.
 - Trans activists nationwide **advocate for horizontal reservations**, highlighting vertical quotas' failure to address caste-based discrimination within the transgender community.
- **NCSC Action on Complaint:**
 - NCSC issued notices to the Saharanpur district administration and police, based on a **complaint by a Dalit trans woman activist**.
 - She alleged that a **member of Uttar Pradesh's Transgender Welfare Board, harassed activists supporting horizontal reservations**.
 - She submitted a recording where the **member allegedly used casteist and transphobic slurs**, including deliberate misgendering.
 - The **member denied the allegations**, claiming the voice in the recording was not hers and questioning the legality of recording calls.
 - She accused the complainant of **misusing constitutional provisions** and plans to file complaints with the **National Human Rights Commission (NHRC)** and NCSC.
- **Debate on Reservation Policy:**
 - The 2014 Supreme Court judgment directed reservations for transgender individuals as "**Socially and educationally backward classes (SEBC)**," sparking differing interpretations.
 - In Madhya Pradesh, transgender individuals were added to the State OBC list in April 2023.
 - **High Courts**, including Karnataka, Madras, and Calcutta, have ruled in **favor of horizontal reservations**.

- **Diverging Opinions on Reservation:**
 - **One perspective supports vertical reservations**, asserting that discrimination against transgender individuals stems from gender, not caste.
 - It **challenges the idea that transgender individuals retain their caste identity after transitioning**, referencing the 2014 Supreme Court judgment.
 - The opposing view critiques this interpretation as overlooking the caste diversity within the transgender community, emphasizing that horizontal reservations address the layered discrimination faced by **marginalized caste transgender individuals**.
- **Broader Implications:**
 - The Supreme Court refused to clarify **the ambiguity in the 2014 judgment in March 2023**.
 - The debate underscores the need for nuanced policies to ensure equitable representation for transgender individuals across socio-economic categories.

National Commission for Scheduled Castes (NCSCs)

- **About:**
 - The NCSC is a **Constitutional Body** established with a view to provide **safeguards against the exploitation of Scheduled Castes** and to promote and protect their social, educational, economic and cultural interests.
- **Composition:**
 - The NCSC comprises a **Chairperson, a Vice-Chairperson, and three additional Members**.
 - These positions are **filled through the President's appointment**, indicated by a warrant under his hand and seal.
 - Their conditions of service and tenure of office are also determined by the President.

Sambhal Mosque Case

Why in News?

Recently, the Allahabad **High Court** sought responses from the Central and State governments, **the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)**, and local authorities regarding a plea filed by the **Shahi Jama Masjid committee in Sambhal**, challenging a trial court's order.

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Note:

Key Points

- **Supreme Court's Stay:**
 - The trial court had directed an Advocate Commissioner to **survey the Shahi Jama Masjid** while handling a suit claiming the mosque was built by destroying a temple.
 - In November 2024, **the Supreme Court** stayed the trial court's proceedings and **instructed that the matter should not be heard until the petition against the survey order is addressed in the Allahabad High Court.**
 - The Supreme Court also ordered that **no new suits seeking surveys of any place of worship should be entertained until further notice.**
- **Survey and Clashes:**
 - In 2024, the local court ordered a **survey of the Mughal-era mosque** following a petition claiming the **mosque was built in 1526** after demolishing a temple dedicated to Kalki, Lord Vishnu's last incarnation.
 - The eight plaintiffs in the suit demanded the right to access the mosque.
 - **Violence erupted in Sambhal on 24th November 2024 after clashes between police and protesters** against the survey, resulting in five deaths and multiple injuries.

Historical Context of the Jama Masjid

- 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.**

Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)

- ASI, under **the Ministry of Culture**, is the premier organisation for the archaeological research and protection of the cultural heritage of the nation.

- **Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains (AMASR) Act, 1958** governs the functioning of ASI.
- It administers more than 3650 ancient monuments, archaeological sites and remains of national importance.
- Its activities include carrying out surveys of antiquarian remains, exploration and excavation of archaeological sites, conservation and maintenance of protected monuments etc.
- It was **founded in 1861 by Alexander Cunningham—the first Director-General of ASI.** Alexander Cunningham is also known as the "Father of Indian Archaeology".

Implementation of Criminal Laws in UP

Why in News?

Recently, **the Union Home Minister emphasized** the need to implement the **three new criminal laws in Uttar Pradesh's** seven police commissionerates by 31st March 2025.

- **Seven police commissionerates** are Varanasi, Lucknow, Meerut, Ghaziabad, Gautam Buddh Nagar, Agra, and Kanpur.

Key Points

- **Review Meeting:**
 - The Union Minister **reviewed the implementation of the three new criminal laws** with Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister.
 - The review covered the **status of provisions related to police, prisons, courts, prosecution, and forensics** in Uttar Pradesh.
- **Officials Present in the Review:**
 - Senior officials from **the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA)** and Uttar Pradesh government attended the meeting.
 - Key attendees included the Union Home Secretary, Director General of the **Bureau of Police Research and Development (BPR&D)**, and Director General of the **National Crime Record Bureau (NCRB).**

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Note:

➤ Directives and Recommendations:

- He instructed the Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister to **review progress on the implementation of the new laws** in February 2025.
- He suggested fortnightly reviews by the Chief Minister and weekly reviews by the **Chief Secretary and Director General of Police (DGP)** involving relevant departments.
- **Use of Technology and Forensic Resources:**
 - He stressed increasing the use of technology, recommending more than one forensic mobile van per district.
 - Forensic teams should be categorized into serious, common, and very common cases to optimize resource allocation and prioritize critical cases.
- **Monitoring of Zero FIRs:**
 - He also called for regular monitoring of **Zero FIR transfers** to the respective states, ensuring accountability and efficiency.

Bureau of Police Research and Development

- The Government of India established it **under the Ministry of Home Affairs in 1970**.
- It replaced the **Police Research and Advisory Council (1966)**, with the primary **objective of modernization of the police force**.
- In **1995**, the Government **decided to entrust issues relating to Correctional Administration Work** to the BPR&D.
 - Thereby BPRD has to **ensure the implementation of prison reforms** as well.
- The Government of India decided to create a **National Police Mission** under the administrative control of BPR&D to transform the police forces in the country.
- In **August 2020**, it observed its **50th foundation day**.
- It has been **publishing data on police organisations since 1986**.

Zero FIR

- Zero FIR is an **FIR** that can be registered by any **police station, irrespective of jurisdiction**, when it receives a complaint regarding a **cognisable offence**.
- No regular FIR number is assigned at this stage.
- After receiving the Zero FIR, the relevant police station registers a **fresh FIR and starts the investigation**.

- It is meant to help victims of serious crimes, **especially women and children, to lodge a complaint quickly and conveniently**, without having to go from one police station to another.
- It is also meant to **ensure that the evidence and witnesses are not lost or tampered with due to delays** in filing the complaint.
- It is **transferred to the relevant police station** where the offence has taken place or where the investigation has to be conducted.

National Crime Records Bureau

- NCRB was set up in 1986 to function as a **repository of information on crime and criminals** to assist the investigators in linking the crime to the perpetrators based on the recommendations of the **Tandon Committee, National Police Commission (1977-1981) and the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) Taskforce (1985)**.
 - It is part of the **MHA and is headquartered in New Delhi**.
- It also acts as a **“national warehouse” for the fingerprint records** of Indian and foreign criminals, and assists in locating interstate criminals through fingerprint search.
- The NCRB has four divisions: Crime and Criminal Tracking Network and Systems (CCTNS), Crime Statistics, Finger Prints, and Training.
- NCRB Publications:
 - **Crimes in India, Accidental Deaths and Suicides, Prison Statistics, and Reports on Missing Women and children in India.**
 - These publications serve as principal reference points on crime statistics not only for police officers but also for criminologists, researchers, media and policymakers not only in India but abroad as well.

Alarming Rise of Hypertension in Uttar Pradesh

Why in News?

Recent data from the **National Family Health Survey (NFHS)-6** reveals a worrying trend in **Uttar Pradesh**, where **one in every four individuals** is at risk of **hypertension**.

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Note:

- This health condition, often referred to as the **“silent killer,”** poses a significant threat due to its potential to cause severe complications such as **strokes** and **heart attacks**.

Key Points

- The **All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS)** has observed that among patients seeking treatment, approximately **25%** are at risk of **hypertension**.
- Alarmingly, many of these individuals are unaware of their condition, increasing their vulnerability to severe health complications such as **brain strokes** and **heart attacks**.
- In response, AIIMS has initiated **comprehensive data collection** on patients and their caregivers to facilitate early detection and management of hypertension.
- The distinction between general **blood pressure** fluctuations and hypertension.
 - While a **normal blood pressure** reading for young adults is typically around **120/80 mm Hg**, readings of **140/90 mm Hg or higher** are indicative of hypertension.
- Regular monitoring is crucial, as even slight increases can lead to significant health issues.
- To combat this growing health concern, AIIMS is collaborating with the **Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)** and the **World Health Organisation (WHO)**.
- This partnership aims to gather comprehensive data on patients and their families, focusing on the prevalence of blood pressure issues, hypertension, and **diabetes**.
 - The goal is to identify patterns and risk factors, enabling targeted interventions to prevent and manage hypertension effectively.
- The **NFHS report** serves as a critical reminder of the escalating risk of hypertension in Uttar Pradesh.
 - It underscores the necessity for increased awareness, regular health screenings, and prompt medical attention to mitigate the adverse effects associated with this condition.

Hypertension

- **About:**
 - **Hypertension (high blood pressure)** is when the pressure in your **blood vessels** is too high (**140/90 mmHg or higher**). It is common but can be serious if not treated.
 - **Blood pressure is written as two numbers:**
 - The **first (systolic) number** represents the pressure in blood vessels when the heart contracts or beats.
 - The **second (diastolic) number** represents the pressure in the vessels when the heart rests between beats.
 - **World Hypertension Day** is celebrated on 17th **May every year** to promote awareness about hypertension and encourage people to prevent and control this silent killer.
- **India's Hypertension Burden**
 - India alone has an estimated **188.3 million adults aged 30–79 years** grappling with hypertension.
 - The prevalence of **high blood pressure** in India is slightly lower than the **global average of 31%**.
 - To reach a **50% control rate**, India needs to ensure that an additional **67 million people** with hypertension receive effective treatment.
 - If the progress scenario were achieved, **4.6 million deaths** due to high blood pressure would be averted by **2040**.

Task Force for Gomti River Rejuvenation

Why in News?

Recently, **the Territorial Army** established a **new task force** dedicated to the **rejuvenation and protection** of **the Gomti River**, named **Ganga Task Force (GTF)**.

Key Points

- **About GTF:**
 - **Objective and Focus:**
 - The **GTF** aims to enhance **environmental preservation** and **sustainable development**.

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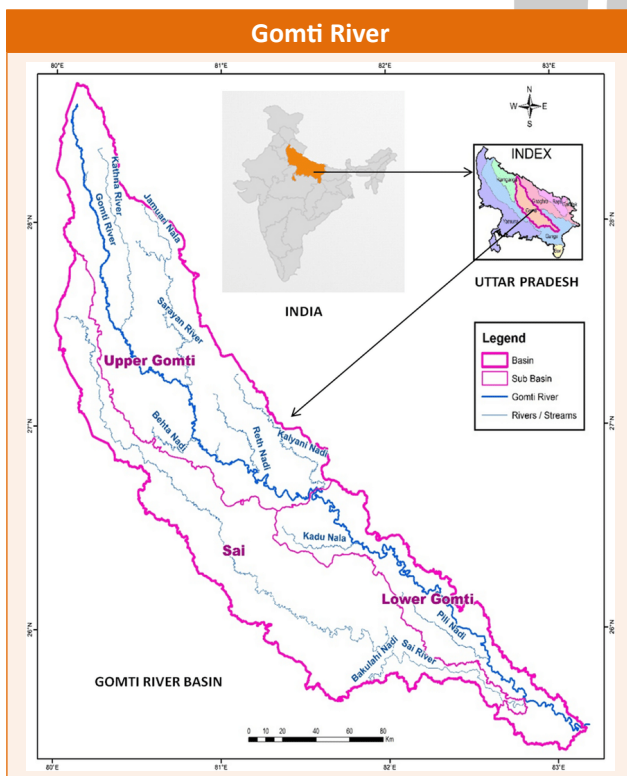


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Note:

- Key responsibilities include **pollution** monitoring, riverbank and ghat patrolling, public awareness campaigns, and riverbank stabilization.
- **Composition:**
 - The GTF primarily **comprises ex-servicemen**, reflecting the Territorial Army's tradition of utilizing experienced personnel for national missions.
- **Inauguration:**
 - The **formal raising ceremony** occurred on **1st January 2025** at Lucknow Cantonment.
- **National Mission Alignment:**
 - The GTF was **established under the National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG)**, an initiative of the **Ministry of Jal Shakti**.
 - **Orders for its creation** were issued by the **Ministry of Defence in September 2024**.
- **Significance:**
 - This initiative reinforces the **Indian Army's** role in nation-building and environmental sustainability.
 - The GTF aims to contribute significantly to the revitalization of the Gomti River and the broader **Clean Ganga Mission**.



- The Gomati River is a **tributary of the Ganga River** in central Uttar Pradesh.
- It **originates east of Pilibhit**, Uttar Pradesh.
- The **Sai River, a right-bank tributary**, joins the Gomati near Jaunpur.
- The **Gomati River merges with the Ganges near Saidpur**, Uttar Pradesh.

Digital Ticket Booking for Kumbh Mela 2025

Why in News?

Recently, the Railways has introduced jackets with QR scanners for volunteers to digitize ticket bookings for passengers ahead of **the Kumbh Mela 2025**.

Key Points

- **Deployment of Officials:**
 - **North Central Railway officials** from the Prayagraj division **will wear fluorescent green jackets with QR codes** embedded at the back.
 - Devotees can scan the QR code to **access the Unreserved Ticketing System (UTS) mobile app**.
 - The app allows passengers to **book unreserved tickets digitally**, avoiding long queues.
 - Railways will operate over **10,000 regular trains** and more than **3,000 special trains** during the event.
- **Mahakumbh Rail Seva 2025 App:**
 - The **Railways has launched an app and portal** to provide train schedules, guest house information, helpline numbers, and more.
 - 28 guest houses with a capacity of 1.3 lakh devotees will accommodate visitors.
 - A **toll-free number 1800-4199-139** has been active since 1st November, 2024.
 - From 1st January 2025, the **helpline will operate 24x7**, with **multilingual call operators** proficient in Odia, Tamil, Telugu, Marathi, and Bengali.
 - Railway **announcements will be made in 12 languages**, including Hindi, English, Gujarati, Marathi, Tamil, Kannada, Telugu, Malayalam, Bengali, Odia, Punjabi, and Assamese.

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Note:

Kumbh Mela

➤ About:

- 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**.

NMCG's 59th Executive Committee Meeting

Why in News?

Recently, the 59th Executive Committee (EC) meeting of **the National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG)** approved several critical projects dedicated to the conservation and rejuvenation of **the Ganga River**.

- These initiatives are aimed at **promoting the cleanliness, sustainable development, and preservation of the environmental and cultural significance of the river**.

Key Points

➤ Projects in Uttar Pradesh:

- **Chandauli Project:**
 - Construction of a 45 million liters **Sewage Treatment Plant (STP)** using the **hybrid annuity model**.

- Includes supporting infrastructure and ensures **operation and maintenance (O&M) for 15 years**.

○ Manikpur Project:

- Development of a 15 million liters **Faecal Sludge Treatment Plant** and a 35 kilowatts **solar power plant**.
- Designed for **eco-friendly waste management** and effective operations for 5 years.

➤ River Conservation in Bihar:

○ Buxar Project:

- Construction of a **50 million liters STP** and supporting structure.
- Incorporates a **nature-based 1 million liters capacity STP**, three interception **pumping stations**, and an 8.68 km sewer network.
- Ensures robust O&M for 15 years, advancing **sustainable river conservation efforts**.

National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG)

➤ About:

- On 12th August 2011, the NMCG was listed as a **society** under **the Societies Registration Act, 1860**.
- It acted as the implementation arm of the **National Ganga River Basin Authority (NGRBA)** which was constituted under the provisions of the **Environment (Protection) Act (EPA), 1986**.
 - **NGRBA** was dissolved in 2016 and **replaced by the National Council for Rejuvenation, Protection, and Management of River Ganga**.

➤ Objective:

- The objective of the NMCG is to **reduce pollution and ensure the rejuvenation** of the Ganga River.
 - **Namami Gange** is one of the Coveted Programmes of NMCG to clean Ganga.
- This can be achieved by promoting intersectoral coordination for comprehensive planning & management and maintaining minimum ecological flow in the river, with the aim of ensuring water quality and environmentally **sustainable development**.

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Note:

Digital Transformation of Mahakumbh

Why in News?

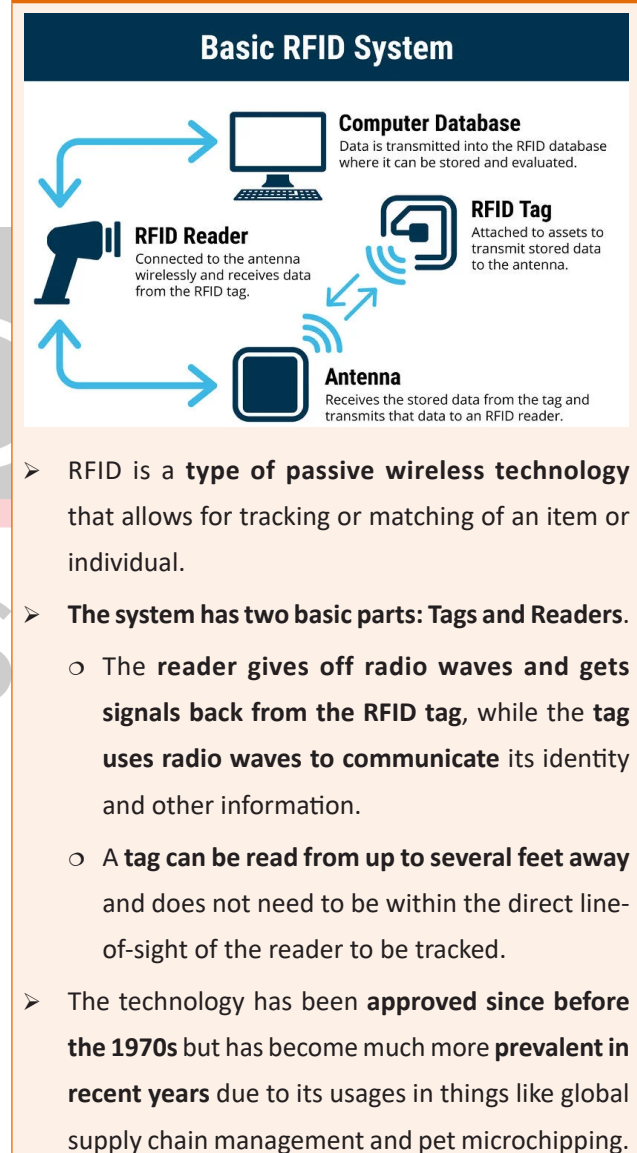
The Uttar Pradesh government is going to use the **Artificial Intelligence (AI)-enabled cameras**, **Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) wristbands** and **mobile app** tracking to track the headcount of pilgrims at **the Mahakumbh 2025**.

Key Points

- **Overview of Mahakumbh 2025:**
 - The government anticipates a footfall of approximately 450 million devotees during the Mahakumbh, a **UNESCO-recognized Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity**.
 - It is the **world's largest peaceful congregation**, where pilgrims take a sacred dip in the river.
- **Digital Transformation of Mahakumbh:**
 - **Digital and AI-Based Initiatives:**
 - Launch of a **dedicated website and app** for event information.
 - **AI-powered chatbot** available in **11 languages**.
 - **QR code-based passes** for people and vehicles.
 - Multilingual **digital lost-and-found centres** for visitors.
 - **ICT and Monitoring Systems:**
 - **ICT monitoring** for cleanliness and tent accommodations.
 - **Software for land and facility allocation** and multilingual digital signage.
 - Automated ration supply system and **drone-based surveillance** and **disaster management**.
 - **Real-time monitoring software** for 530 projects and an inventory tracking system.
 - Integration of all **event locations on Google Maps**.

- **Infrastructure and Facilities:**
 - **Ghats for Devotees:**
 - 35 permanent ghats and nine **new ghats constructed** to facilitate bathing.
 - **Aerial flower showers** planned across all 44 ghats, covering a 12-km area.
 - **Enhanced Visitor Experience:**
 - **Multilingual digital signage** and other technological aids to enhance crowd management and convenience.

Radio Frequency Identification (RFID)



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Note:

UNESCO's List of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH)

UNESCO's ICH List recognizes various cultural practices & traditions that are passed down through generations.

Features of Intangible Cultural Heritage

Traditional, Contemporary and Living

Inclusive
(recognizes and respects diversity)

Representative
(reflects the traditional practices)

Community based

Two Types of List Under ICH

- Representative List of ICH of Humanity
- List of ICH in Need of Urgent Safeguarding

5 Domains of ICH (UNESCO's 2003 Convention)

- Oral Traditions & Expressions (Including Language);
- Performing Arts;
- Social Practices, Rituals & Festive Events;
- Knowledge & Practices Concerning Nature & The Universe;
- Traditional Craftsmanship

S.No	ICH of India	Year of Inscription	Description
1	Garba of Gujarat	2023	Traditional dance from Gujarat, performed during Navratri
2	Durga Puja in Kolkata	2021	Grand Hindu festival with elaborate rituals & Durga's artistic displays
3	Kumbh Mela	2017	Hindu pilgrimage & festival → Largest peaceful congregation on earth
4	Nowruz	2016	Parsi New Year
5	Yoga	2016	Ancient Indian practice uniting mind, body, & spirit
6	Traditional Brass & Copper Craft of Utensil Making Among the Thatheras of Jandiala Guru, Punjab	2014	An Oral tradition passed onto generations of Thathera community
7	Sankirtana	2013	Storytelling of Krishna with singing, drumming, & dancing Region → In Manipur
8	Buddhist Chanting of Ladakh	2012	Sacred Buddhist recitation in Ladakh monasteries
9	Mudiyettu	2010	Dance drama of goddess Kali's battle with demon Darika Region → Kerala
10	Kalbela Folk Songs & Dances of Rajasthan	2010	Known for fluid, snake-like movements
11	Chhau Dance	2010	Tribal martial art dance blending folk traditions of eastern India
12	Ramman	2009	Religious Festival & Ritual Theatre of The Garhwal Himalayas
13	Ramlila	2008	The Traditional Performance of The Ramayana
14	Tradition of Vedic Chanting	2008	Oral tradition preserving Vedic chants with precision
15	Kutiyattam, Sanskrit Theatre	2008	Ancient theatre → merging rituals & drama Region → Kerala

All these elements of ICH from India are included in UNESCO'S List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.



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Note:

Key Points

Details

Blank area for Key Points.

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Summary

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