



## Hijab & Freedom of Religion

**For Prelims:** Supreme Court, Hijab, Fundamental Rights, Cases Related to Freedom of Religion.

**For mains:** Fundamental Rights, Judiciary, Government Policies & Interventions, Women's Issues, Cases Related to Freedom of Religion.

### Why in News?

Recently, six students were **banned from entering a college** in Karnataka's Udupi district **for wearing a hijab** (a head covering worn in public by some Muslim women).

- The issue **throws up legal questions on reading the [freedom of religion](#)** and whether the right to wear a hijab is constitutionally protected.

### How is Religious Freedom Protected under the Constitution?

- **Article 25(1)** of the Constitution guarantees the **“freedom of conscience and the right freely to profess, practise and propagate religion”**.
- It is a right that **guarantees a negative liberty** — which means that the state shall ensure that there is no interference or obstacle to exercise this freedom.
  - However, like all **fundamental rights**, **the state can restrict the right for grounds of public order, decency, morality, health and other state interests**.
- The implications of this are:
  - **Freedom of conscience:** Inner freedom of an individual to mould his relation with God or Creatures in whatever way he desires.
  - **Right to Profess:** Declaration of one's religious beliefs and faith openly and freely.
  - **Right to Practice:** Performance of religious worship, rituals, ceremonies and exhibition of beliefs and ideas.
  - **Right to Propagate:** Transmission and dissemination of one's religious beliefs to others or exposition of the tenets of one's religion.

### What is the Essential Religious Practises Test?

- Over the years, the **Supreme Court (SC)** has evolved a practical test of sorts to determine what religious practises can be constitutionally protected and what can be ignored.
- In 1954, the **SC held in the Shirur Mutt case that the term “religion” will cover all rituals and practises “integral” to a religion**. The test to determine what is integral is termed the “essential religious practises” test.
- The test, a **judicial determination of religious practises**, has often been criticised by legal experts as it pushes the court to delve into theological spaces.
  - In criticism of the test, **scholars agree that it is better for the court to prohibit religious practices for public order rather than determine what is so essential to a religion** that it needs to be protected.
- In several instances, **the court has applied the test to keep certain practises out**.
  - In a 2004 ruling, the SC held that the Ananda Marga sect had no fundamental right to

perform Tandava dance in public streets, since it did not constitute an essential religious practice of the sect.

- While these issues are **largely understood to be community-based, there are instances in which the court has applied the test to individual freedoms as well.**
  - For example, in 2016, the SC **upheld the discharge of a Muslim airman from the Indian Air Force for keeping a beard.**
  - **Armed Force Regulations, 1964**, prohibits the growth of hair by Armed Forces personnel, except for “personnel whose religion prohibits the cutting of hair or shaving of face”.
  - The court essentially held that **keeping a beard was not an essential part of Islamic practices.**

## How have courts ruled so far on the issue of a hijab?

- While this has been put to courts on several occasions, **two set of rulings of the Kerala High Court**, particularly on the right of Muslim women to dress according to the tenets of Islam, **throw up conflicting answers.**
- In 2015, at least **two petitions were filed before the Kerala High Court challenging the prescription of dress code for All India Pre-Medical Entrance** which prescribed wearing “light clothes with half sleeves not having big buttons, brooch/badge, flower, etc. with Salwar/Trouser” and “slippers and not shoes”.
  - Admitting the argument of the **Central Board of School Education (CBSE)** that the rule was only to ensure that candidates would not use unfair methods by concealing objects within clothes, **the Kerala HC directed the CBSE to put in place additional measures for checking students who “intend to wear a dress according to their religious custom, but contrary to the dress code”.**
- In **Amna Bint Basheer v Central Board of Secondary Education (2016)**, the Kerala HC examined the issue more closely.
  - The Court held **that the practice of wearing a hijab constitutes an essential religious practice** but did not quash the CBSE rule.
  - The court once again **allowed for the “additional measures” and safeguards put in place in 2015.**
- However, on the issue of a uniform prescribed by a school, another Bench ruled differently in **Fathima Tasneem v State of Kerala (2018).**
  - A single Bench of the Kerala HC **held that collective rights of an institution would be given primacy over individual rights of the petitioner.**

[Source: IE](#)

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## Common Electoral Roll and Simultaneous Elections

**For Prelims:** Representation of the People Act, 1951, Articles 243K and 243ZA

**For Mains:** Merits and Demerits of the concept of Simultaneous Elections for Indian polity, Common Electoral Roll and related challenges and issues.

## Why in News?

Recently, the Law and Justice Minister told the [Rajya Sabha](#) that the **Centre was not planning** on amending the [Representation of the People Act, 1951](#) to enable a **common electoral roll and simultaneous elections** to all electoral bodies in the country.

## What is the Common Electoral Roll?

- **About:**
  - Under the Common Electoral Roll, **only one voter list will be used** for [Lok Sabha](#), Vidhan Sabha and other elections.
- **Types of Electoral Rolls in India Currently:**
  - Some state laws allow the SEC (State Election Commission) to borrow and use the Election Commission of India's voter's rolls for the local body elections.
  - In others, the state commission uses the EC's voters list as the basis for the preparation and revision of rolls for municipality and panchayat elections.
  - Few states have their own electoral rolls and do not adopt EC's roll for local body polls like those of Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Odisha, Assam, Madhya Pradesh, Kerala, Odisha, Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland and the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir.
  - The distinction stems from the fact that the supervision and conduct of elections in our country are **entrusted with two constitutional authorities – the Election Commission (EC) of India and the State Election Commissions (SECs).**
    - **[Election Commission \(EC\) of India:](#)** It was set up in 1950, the EC is charged with the responsibility of conducting polls to:
      - the offices of the President and Vice-President of India,
      - to Parliament, the state assemblies and the legislative councils.
    - **[State Election Commissions \(SECs\):](#)** The SECs, on the other hand, supervise municipal and panchayat elections. They are free to prepare their own electoral rolls for local body elections, and this exercise does not have to be coordinated with the EC.
- **Need:**
  - A **common electoral roll and simultaneous elections as a way to save an enormous amount** of effort and expenditure.
    - It is argued that the preparation of a separate voters list causes duplication of the effort and the expenditure.
  - **Earlier Recommendations:**
    - The [Law Commission](#) recommended it in its **255<sup>th</sup> report in 2015** for a single electoral roll.
    - The **EC too adopted a similar stance** in 1999 and 2004.
      - The EC pointed out that it adds to the confusion among voters, since they may find their names present in one roll, but absent in another.
- **Implementation Process:**
  - A Constitutional Amendment to **Articles 243K and 243ZA** is required.
    - **Articles 243K and 243ZA deal with** elections to panchayats and municipalities in the states. These give the power of superintendence, direction and control of preparation of electoral rolls and the conduct of these elections to the State Election Commission (SEC).
    - The amendment would make it mandatory to have a single electoral roll for all elections in the country.
  - **Persuading the state governments to tweak their respective laws** and adopt the Election Commission's (EC) voters list for municipal and panchayat polls.
- **Challenges:**
  - The boundaries of the EC's polling station may not necessarily match that of the wards.
  - The change would require a massive consensus-building exercise.

## What are Simultaneous Elections?

- **About:**
  - The idea is about **structuring the Indian election cycle** in a manner so that **elections to the Lok Sabha and the State Assemblies are synchronised** together so that the election to both can be held within a given span of time.
- **Advantages:**
  - **Help keep a check on the poll expenses**, party expenses, etc. and also save public money.
  - **Reduce the burden on administrative setup** and security forces.

- **Ensure timely implementation of the government policies** and also ensure that the administrative machinery is engaged in developmental activities rather than electioneering.
- **Solve the problem of governance** on the part of the politicians who are ruling. It is generally seen that for short term political gains from a particular assembly election, ruling politicians avoid taking a harsh long term decision which can ultimately help the country in the long run.
- Provide more time to all the stakeholders i.e. political parties, Election Commission of India (ECI), paramilitary forces, civilians for the preparation of elections once in five years.
- **Challenges:**
  - The **synchronisation is a major problem** considering the traditions and conventions that India's Parliamentary system follows. The government is accountable to the Lower House and it is possible that the government can fall before completing its term and the moment the government falls, there has to be an election.
  - It is **difficult to convince and bring together all the political parties** on the idea.
  - For holding simultaneous elections, the requirements for **Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) and the Voter Verified Paper Audit Trails (VVPATs) will double** as the ECI has to provide two sets (one for election to the Legislative Assembly and second for that to the Lok Sabha).
  - There will **also be an additional requirement** of the polling staff and for better security arrangements.

## Way Forward

- Elections are held at different places every few months and it hampers the developmental work. Therefore, it's a must to have a deep study and deliberation on the idea in order to prevent the impact of the [model code of conduct](#) on development works every few months.
- There needs to be a consensus on whether the country needs one nation, one poll or not. All political parties should at least cooperate in debating this issue, once the debate starts, the public opinion can be taken into consideration. India being a mature democracy, can then follow the outcome of the debate.

[Source: TH](#)

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## Pakistan-China Relationship & India

**For Prelims:** Policy of Panchsheel, Hunza-Gilgit region, Kargil conflict of 1999.

**For Mains:** Indian foreign policy, Pakistan-China Relationship, History of India-China ties.

### Why in News?

Recently, the Government was questioned in **Parliament** on the **pretext of foreign policy**. The opposition has criticised the current policies as responsible for bringing Pakistan and China together.

- In response, the **External Affairs Minister** has asserted that the two countries were always close and shared a rich **history of cooperation on many fronts**.

### What is the Background of the Pakistan-China Relationship?

- Initially, **Pakistan** was a member of two United States-led **anti-communist military pacts, SEATO and CENTO**, it was seen as part of the non-Soviet bloc - and China, under Mao Zedong, **was on the other side of the aisle.**
  - On the other hand, **India had a working relationship with China.** The two countries had the same **anti-colonial, non-aligned approach** and they together gave the **policy of Panchsheel.**
  - However, this relationship quickly changed due to the **war between India and China in 1962.**
- **1962 War:** The **India-China war of 1962** led to China developing closer ties with Pakistan. // 🇨🇳
  - In a boundary agreement in 1963, Pakistan ceded the **Shaksgam Valley** to China.
  - The Shaksgam Valley or the Trans Karakoram Tract is part of the **Hunza-Gilgit region** of Pakistan-occupied Kashmir and is a territory claimed by India but controlled by Pakistan.
  - The agreement laid the foundation of the Karakoram highway, built jointly by China and Pakistan in the 1970s.
- **1965 War:** Pakistan got support from China diplomatically in the **1965 India-Pakistan war.**
  - In fact, analysts say that Pakistan was emboldened into aggression after India's defeat against China in 1962.
- **US-China & Pakistan:** The real diplomatic bonhomie began in the 1970s when Pakistan facilitated the outreach between the **US-led by Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger and China's Mao and Zhou Enlai.**
- **Nuclear Cooperation:** The relationship between China and Pakistan developed over the 1970s and '80s. Nuclear cooperation was one of the key pillars, especially after India tested its nuclear device in 1974.
  - China has played a significant role in helping Pakistan develop its nuclear energy technology.
  - In September 1986, they signed an agreement to facilitate the **transfer of civil nuclear technology.**
  - In 1991, China agreed to supply Pakistan with its indigenously developed **Qinshan-1 nuclear power plant.**
  - After **India tested its nuclear device in 1998**, Pakistan followed suit —largely due to help from China.

## What is the History of India-China ties?

- The 1988 rapprochement between India and China with **Rajiv Gandhi's visit became a watershed moment.**
- There was a clear shift for China, where it saw ties with India **from an economic lens and focused on trade**, while separately talking to India on the border dispute.
  - From that point onwards China followed a cautious approach vis a vis India and Pakistan.
- During the **Kargil conflict of 1999**, China advised Pakistan that they should withdraw troops and exercise self-control.
- China adopted a similarly cautious approach after the **Parliament attack in 2002**, the **Operation Parakram buildup**, as well as the **Mumbai terror attack in 2008.**
- This was also visible in the way China responded when the **Balakot air strikes** took place after the Pulwama attack in February 2019.

## What is the Present Status of the India-China-Pakistan Triangle?

- The **US-India closeness started by the nuclear deal** in 2005-06 left both China and Pakistan worried.
- **China's Belt and Road Initiative** has manifested in the **China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)** which passes through the disputed territory claimed by India.
  - From China's perspective, it offers access to the western Indian Ocean through the Gwadar port in Balochistan.
  - However, from India's perspective, the Gwadar port is a part of the String of Pearls Strategy, for the encirclement of India.
- India's August 2019 move to **abrogate Article 370** and revoke the special status of Jammu and

Kashmir has brought China and Pakistan even closer.

- In 2020, China signed a **defence pact** with Pakistan to enhance defence cooperation between the Pakistan Army and the People's Liberation Army.
  - Pakistan has procured Chinese-made combat drones or unmanned combat aerial vehicles.
- Pakistan endorses China's position on its core issues including the [South China Sea](#), [Taiwan](#), [Xinjiang](#), and [Tibet](#).
- After the [Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan](#), China has now sensed an opportunity to get into Afghanistan for influence and resources with help from Pakistan.

## What are the Implications of China-Pakistan Closeness For India?

- **Two Front War:** Convergence between the two countries raises the real specter of a 'two-front' war.
- **Negotiation of Lost Territory:** China now looks to negotiate to 'recover' Indian territories that it claims namely, Aksai Chin, Ladakh, Jammu and Kashmir, Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim.
  - It also positions China to play a role in Kashmir and the region.
- **China's Rise to Global Power Status:** China and Pakistan both share a common objective to prevent India's rise.
  - With China's rise as a global power, India views its partnership with Pakistan as a greater concern than before.

## Way Forward

- **Improving Relations in South Asian Neighbourhood:** To begin with, India should do well to improve relations with its neighbours.
  - It should not be caught in an unfriendly neighbourhood given how China and Pakistan will attempt to contain and constrain India in the region.
- **Improving Relations in Extended Neighbourhood:** The government's current engagement of the key powers in West Asia.
  - It should be further strengthened in order to ensure energy security, increase maritime cooperation and enhance goodwill in the extended neighbourhood.
- **Improving Relations With Russia:** India must also ensure that its relationship with Russia is not sacrificed in favour of India-United States relations given that Russia could play a key role in defusing the severity of a regional gang up against India.
- **Improving Condition in Kashmir:** From a long-view perspective, a political outreach to Kashmir aimed at pacifying the aggrieved citizens there would go a long way towards that end.
- **Improving Indo-Pacific Strategy:** For India, the [Indo-Pacific strategy](#) involving the US, Australia, Japan and European partners is a key bulwark against the axis.

[Source: IE](#)

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## World Wetlands Day and Two New Ramsar Sites

**For Prelims:** Wetlands Day, Wetlands in India, Ramsar Sites.

**For Mains:** Significance of Wetlands and related threats.

## Why in News?

Recently, World [Wetlands Day](#) was celebrated on the **2<sup>nd</sup> of February 2022** across the globe.



- On the occasion, "**National Wetland Decadal Change Atlas**" was prepared by the **Space Applications Center** (SAC - one of the major centers of [ISRO](#)).
  - The original Atlas was released by SAC in 2011 and has over the years been used extensively by all the State Governments also in their planning processes.
- Two new **Ramsar sites (Wetlands of International Importance)**, **Khijadia Wildlife Sanctuary in Gujarat** and **Bakhira Wildlife Sanctuary in UP** were also announced on the occasion.

## Why is The Day Celebrated on 2<sup>nd</sup> February ?

- This day marks the date of **the adoption of the Convention on Wetlands on 2<sup>nd</sup> February 1971** in the Iranian city of Ramsar.
  - The Ramsar Convention is **an intergovernmental treaty** that provides the framework for national action and international cooperation for the conservation and wise use of wetlands and their resources.
  - The **countries with the most Ramsar Sites are the United Kingdom (175) and Mexico (142)**, as per the Ramsar List. Bolivia has the largest area with 148,000 sq km under the Convention protection.
- It was first celebrated in 1997.
- **Theme for 2022:** Wetlands Action for People and Nature.

## What is a Wetland and its Significance ?

- **Wetlands:**
  - **Wetlands** are ecosystems saturated with water, either seasonally or permanently. They include **mangroves, marshes, rivers, lakes, deltas, floodplains and flooded forests, rice-fields, coral reefs, marine areas** no deeper than 6 meters at low tide, as well as human-made wetlands such as waste-water treatment ponds and reservoirs.
- **Significance:**
  - Wetlands are **a critical part of our natural environment**. They mitigate floods, protect coastlines and build **community resilience to disasters, reduce the impacts of floods, absorb pollutants** and improve water quality.
  - Wetlands are **critical to human and planet life**. More than 1 billion people depend on them for a living and 40% of the world's species live and breed in wetlands.
  - They are **a vital source for food, raw materials, genetic resources** for medicines, and hydropower.
  - **30% of land-based carbon** is stored in peatland.
  - They play **an important role in transport, tourism and the cultural and spiritual well-being** of people.
  - Many wetlands are **areas of natural beauty** and many are **important to Aboriginal people**.

## What are the Threats related to Wetlands ?

- As per the **IPBES ([Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services](#))'s global assessment**, wetlands are the most threatened ecosystem.
- Wetlands are **disappearing 3 times faster than forests** due to human activities and global warming.
- According to **UNESCO**, the threat to wetlands will have an adverse impact on **40% of the world's flora and fauna** that live or breed in wetlands.
- **Major threats:** Agriculture, development, pollution and [climate change](#).

## What is the status of Wetlands in India ?

- India has a network of **49 Ramsar sites** covering an **area of 10,93,636 hectares**, the **highest in South Asia**.
  - **Bakhira Wildlife Sanctuary in UP** provides a safe wintering and staging ground for a large number of species of the Central Asian Flyway while **Khijadia Wildlife Sanctuary**

**(Gujarat)** is a coastal wetland with rich avifaunal diversity providing a safe habitat to endangered and vulnerable species.

- In **India**, according to the National Wetland Inventory and Assessment compiled by the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), **wetlands are 4.63% of the total geographical area of the country.**
  - India has 19 types of wetlands.
  - In state-wise distribution of wetlands, **Gujarat is at the top** (17.56% of total geographical area of the state or 22.7% of total wetlands areas of the country thanks to a long coastline.
  - It is followed by Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, and West Bengal.

## What is the Significance of Ramsar Listing ?

- It is like an **ISO certification**. They can take it off the list as well if it doesn't meet their standards continuously. It's **a feather in the cap** but there is a cost to it and that cost can be paid only if there is brand value.
- **Ramsar tag makes it incumbent upon authority to strengthen the protection regime** there and also creates defenses against encroachment.
- A number of species of birds prefer to **avoid the Himalaya and instead choose the route passing through Afghanistan and Pakistan** to enter the Indian sub-continent via Gujarat and Rajasthan. Thus, **Gujarat becomes the first landing point of many international migratory species** of ducks, waders, plovers, terns, gulls etc and shorebirds as well as birds of prey.
- Wetlands in India **act as foraging and resting grounds for the migratory birds** during winter.
  - According to [Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals \(CMS\)](#), CAF (Central Asian Flyway), which includes 30 countries, covers at least 279 populations of 182 migratory waterbird species, including 29 globally threatened and near-threatened species, which breed, migrate and winter within the region.

[Source: PIB](#)

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## Surety Bonds

**For Prelims:** Surety bonds, IRDAI.

**For Mains:** Surety bonds and its role in boosting infrastructure development.

## Why in News?

In the [Budget 2022-23](#), the government has **allowed the use of surety insurance bonds** as a **substitute for bank guarantees** in case of government procurement and also for gold imports.

- [Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India \(IRDAI\)](#) has also released **final guidelines to ensure orderly development** of surety insurance business in India.
- The **IRDAI (Surety Insurance Contracts) Guidelines, 2022** will come into effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April, 2022.



# Lower Indirect Costs

The government aims to promote surety bonds as a substitute to bank guarantees in government procurements

This would help reduce indirect costs for suppliers and work contractors



IRDAI has said insurers can offer six types of sureties

- Advance Payment Bond
- Bid Bond
- Contract Bond
- Customs and Court Bond
- Performance Bond and
- Retention Money



Experts said the move may benefit insurers, but its success depends on the acceptance & the costs

## What is a Surety Bond?

- A **surety bond is a legally binding contract** entered into by three parties—the principal, the obligee, and the surety.
  - The obligee, usually a government entity, requires the principal, typically a business owner or contractor, to obtain a surety bond as a guarantee against future work performance.
- Surety bonds are **mainly aimed at infrastructure development**, mainly to reduce indirect cost for suppliers and work-contractors thereby diversifying their options and acting as a substitute for bank guarantee.
- Surety bond is **provided by the insurance company** on behalf of the contractor to the entity which is awarding the project.
- Surety bonds **protect the beneficiary against acts or events** that impair the underlying obligations of the principal. They guarantee the performance of a variety of obligations, from construction or service contracts to licensing and commercial undertakings.

## What are the issues with the Decision taken in the Budget?

- Surety bonds, a new concept, are **risky and insurance companies in India are yet to achieve expertise** in risk assessment in such business.
- Also, there's no clarity **on pricing, the recourse available against defaulting contractors and reinsurance options**.
  - These are critical and may impede the creation of surety-related expertise and capacities and eventually deter insurers from writing this class of business.

## How can it boost the Infra Project?

- The move to frame rules for surety contracts will **help address the large liquidity and funding requirements** of the infrastructure sector.
- It will **create a level-playing field for large, mid and small contractors**.
- The Surety insurance business will assist in developing an alternative to bank guarantees for construction projects.
  - This shall **enable the efficient use of working capital and reduce the requirement of collateral** to be provided by construction companies.
- Insurers shall work together with financial institutions to share risk information.
  - Hence, this shall assist in releasing liquidity in infrastructure space without compromising on risk aspects.

## What are the IRDAI Guidelines on Surety Bonds?

- According to new guidelines **Insurance companies can launch the much-anticipated surety bonds now**.
- The regulator has said the premium charged for all surety insurance policies underwritten in a financial year, including all installments due in subsequent years for those policies, **should not exceed 10% of the total gross written premium** of that year, subject to a maximum of Rs 500 crore.
- As per [Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India \(IRDAI\)](#), **Insurers can issue contract bonds**, which provide assurance to the public entity, developers, subcontractors and suppliers that the contractor will fulfil its contractual obligation when undertaking the project.
  - **Contract bonds may include:** Bid Bonds, Performance Bonds, Advance Payment Bonds and Retention Money.
    - **Bid Bonds:** It provides **financial protection to an obligee** if a bidder is awarded a contract pursuant to the bid documents, but fails to sign the contract and provide any required performance and payment bonds.
    - **Performance Bond:** It provides **assurance that the obligee will be protected if the principal or contractor fails** to perform the bonded contract. If the obligee declares the principal or contractor as being in default and terminates the contract, it can call on the Surety to meet the Surety's obligations under the bond.
    - **Advance Payment Bond:** It is a promise by the Surety provider to pay the outstanding balance of the advance payment in case the contractor fails to complete the contract as per specifications or fails to adhere to the scope of the contract.
    - **Retention Money:** It is a **part of the amount payable** to the contractor, which is retained and payable at the end after successful completion of the contract.
- The limit of guarantee **should not exceed 30%** of the contract value.
- Surety Insurance contracts **should be issued only to specific projects and not clubbed for multiple projects**.

[Source: IE](#)

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## Surge in India's Coal Demand

**For Prelims:** Coal, Renewable Energy.

**For Mains:** Reasons for surging Coal Demand in India and related concerns.

## Why in News?

The demand for coal in the country is expected to be in the **range of 1.3-1.5 billion tonnes by 2030**, according to [Economic Survey 2021-2022](#), despite the push for [renewable energy](#).

- This is **an increase of 63%** from the current (2019-2020) demand of 955.26 million tonnes.

## What is the reason for increasing coal demand?

- Iron and steel production uses coal and there are not **many technologies to replace the fuel immediately**.
- **Continued expansion of India's economy is expected during 2022-2024**, with annual average GDP growth of 7.4%, fuelled at least partially by coal.
- India's push to domestic coal mining through both Coal India and auction of coal blocks to private companies, coal usage in India will increase **as it plateaus in other parts of the world, including China**.
- The central government has opened **up coal mining for the private sector, claiming it as one of its most ambitious coal sector reforms**.
  - The government anticipates that it will bring efficiency and competition in coal production, attract investments and best-in-class technology, and help create more jobs in the coal sector.

## What are the Concerns?

- The freeway to coal will **raise the local pollution in the country**. The government has notified [new emission norms for coal-based thermal power plants](#). But the implementation on the ground has been inadequate.
- Coal- and lignite-based thermal power plants on an annual basis emit 1.3 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent/year, which is **a third of the total greenhouse gas emissions in the country**.
- By afforesting about one-third the area of Delhi (about 1,50,000 hectares), the government claims reduction of 0.04% CO<sub>2</sub> emissions per annum.
  - In a densely populated country, including **afforestation to be a route to Net Zero might not prove very promising**.
  - **Switching to renewable energy by coal companies** was another effort towards turning into a low-carbon economy. As on 31<sup>st</sup> March, 2021, the PSUs installed renewable capacity of 1,496 megawatts and during the next five years, it planned to install an additional 5,560 megawatts of renewable capacity with substantial carbon offset potential.
  - However, this is just 1% of what the Prime Minister had committed at the **recent Glasgow conference** — 500 gigawatts of installed capacity through non-fossil fuels and 50% of its energy requirement from renewables by 2030.

## Coal

- It is one of the most abundantly found fossil fuels. It is used as a domestic fuel, in industries such as iron and steel, steam engines and to generate electricity. Electricity from coal is called thermal power.
- The coal which we are using today was formed millions of years ago when giant ferns and swamps got buried under the layers of earth. Coal is therefore referred to as Buried Sunshine.
- The leading coal producers of the world include China, US, Australia, Indonesia, India.
- The coal producing areas of India include Raniganj, Jharia, Dhanbad and Bokaro in Jharkhand.
- Coal is also **classified into four ranks**: anthracite, bituminous, subbituminous, and lignite. The ranking depends on the types and amounts of carbon the coal contains and on the amount of heat energy the coal can produce.

## Way Forward

- They should also be very cautious of adding new coal capacity beyond 2030 as it risks locking in resources.
- India must enhance investments in the deployment of clean coal technologies throughout the coal value chain. Government power utilities must show the way by investing in the deployment of advanced clean coal technologies.

[Source: DTE](#)

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## 100 Years of Chauri Chaura Incident

**For Prelims:** Chauri Chaura incident, Non-Cooperation Movement, Khilafat movement.

**For Mains:** Incidence of Chauri Chaura, its background and its aftermath effects, Indian national movement.

### Why in News?

Recently, the Prime Minister paid tribute to the heroes of freedom struggle on completion of the hundred years of [Chauri Chaura incident](#).

- Chauri Chaura is a town in Gorakhpur district of Uttar Pradesh.
- On **4<sup>th</sup> February, 1922**, this town witnessed a violent incident - a large crowd of peasants set fire to a police station that killed 22 policemen. Due to this incident, [Mahatma Gandhi](#) called off the [Non-Cooperation Movement \(1920-22\)](#).

### What is the Background of the Incident?

- On 1<sup>th</sup> August, 1920, Gandhiji had launched the **Non-Cooperation Movement** against the government.
  - It involved using [swadeshi](#) and **boycott of foreign goods**, especially machine made cloth, and legal, educational and administrative institutions, "refusing to assist a ruler who misrules".
- In the winter of 1921-22, **volunteers of the Congress and the Khilafat Movement were organized** into a national volunteer corps.
  - [Khilafat Movement](#) was a **pan-Islamic force** in India that arose in 1919 in an effort to salvage the Ottoman caliph as a symbol of unity among the Muslim community in India during the British raj.
  - The Congress supported the movement and **Mahatma Gandhi sought to conjoin it to the Non-Cooperation Movement**.

### What was the incidence of Chauri Chaura and the Aftermath reactions?

- **Chauri Chaura Incident:**
  - On 4<sup>th</sup> February, volunteers congregated in the town, and after the meeting, proceeded in a procession to the local police station, and to picket the nearby Mundera bazaar.
  - The police **fired into the crowd killing some people and injuring many volunteers**.
  - **In retaliation**, the crowd proceeded to set the police station on fire.
  - Some of the policemen who tried to **escape were caught and battered to death**. A lot

of police property, including weapons, was destroyed.

▪ **Reaction of the British:**

- The British Raj prosecuted the accused aggressively.
- A sessions **court quickly sentenced 172 of the 225 accused to death**. However, ultimately, only 19 of those convicted were hanged.

▪ **Reaction of Mahatma Gandhi:**

- He **condemned the crime of the policemen's killing**. The volunteer groups in nearby villages were disbanded, and a **Chauri Chaura Support Fund** was set up to demonstrate "**genuine sympathy" and seek atonement**.
- Gandhi decided to **stop the Non-Cooperation Movement**, which he saw as having been tainted by unforgivable violence.
- He bent the Congress Working Committee to his will, and **on 12<sup>th</sup> February, 1922**, the **satyagraha (movement)** was formally suspended.
  - Gandhi on his part, **justified himself on grounds of his unshakeable faith in non-violence**.

▪ **Reaction of Other National Leaders:**

- **Jawaharlal Nehru** and other leaders leading the Non-Cooperation movement were shocked that Gandhiji had stopped the struggle when the civil resistance had consolidated their position in the freedom movement.
- Other leaders like **Motilal Nehru and CR Das recorded their dismay** at Gandhi's decision and decided to **establish the Swaraj Party**.

## What did the suspension of the Movement result into?

- The disillusionment resulting from the suspension of the Non-Cooperation Movement **nudged many of the younger Indian nationalists towards the conclusion** that India would not be able to throw off colonial rule through non-violence.
- It was from the ranks of these impatient patriots that some of India's most of the revolutionaries came into picture like Jogesh Chatterjee, Ramprasad Bismil, Sachin Sanyal, Ashfaqulla Khan, Jatin Das, **Bhagat Singh**, Bhagwati Charan Vohra, Masterda Surya Sen, and many others.
- Besides, **sudden termination of the Non-Cooperation Movement disillusioned the Khilafat movement leaders** that created a rift between Congress and the muslim leaders.

[Source: PIB](#)

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## Golden Langur

### Why in News?

Assam villagers are opposing the sanctuary tag for golden langur habitat.





## What is the Issue?

- The **Assam Forest Department** had **issued a preliminary notification** for converting the 19.85 sq. km. patch of forest into the **Kajoijana Bamuni Hill Wildlife Sanctuary**.
  - Kajoijana Reserve Forest is one of the **better-known homes of the golden langur**.
- The villagers demanded that the **“conventional idea of wildlife sanctuary”** be **dropped** and the **reserve forest converted into a community forest resource** “using Forest Rights Act, 2006, to ensure community co-managed system of participation for sustainable conservation.”
  - The villagers pointed out that the conservation efforts of the locals had helped the authorities concerned to restore the forest canopy from **less than 5% to more than 70%**, and the **golden langur population** from **less than 100 to more than 600** over almost three decades.

## What is the Difference between Wildlife Sanctuary, Reserve Forest and Community Forest Resource?

- **Wildlife Sanctuary:** It is the place that is **reserved exclusively for wildlife use**, which includes animals, reptiles, insects, birds, etc. wild animals, especially those in danger of extinction and the rare ones, so that they can live in peace for a lifetime and keep their population viable.
  - The Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 empowers the central and state governments to declare any area a wildlife sanctuary, national park or closed area.
- **Reserve forests:** They are the **most restricted forests and are constituted by the State Government** on any forest land or **wasteland** which is the property of the Government. In reserved forests, **local people are prohibited**, unless specifically allowed by a Forest Officer in the course of the settlement.
- **Community Forest Resource:** According to **Section 2(a) of the Forest Rights Act**, it is the **customary common forest land** within the traditional or customary boundaries of the village or seasonal use of landscape in the case of pastoral communities, including reserved forests, protected forests and protected areas such as sanctuaries and national parks to which the community had traditional access.

## What do we know about Golden Langurs?

- **Scientific Name:** *Trachypithecus geei*
- **About:** Golden langurs can be **most easily recognized by the color of their fur**, after which they are named.
  - It has been noted that their fur changes colors according to the seasons as well as

geography (region they live in).

- The color of the young also differs from adults in that they are almost pure white.
- They are highly dependent on trees, living in the upper canopy of forests. They are **also known as leaf monkeys**.

▪ **Habitat:** It is **endemic to western Assam, India, and southern Bhutan**.

- Their habitat is restricted to the region surrounded by four geographical landmarks: the foothills of Bhutan (North), Manas river (East), Sankosh river (West), and [Brahmaputra river](#) (South).

▪ **Threats:**

- **Restricted Habitat:** As mentioned above, their habitat is restricted by natural boundaries further increasing the threat of extinction.
- **Habitat Fragmentation:** Their habitat in Assam has fragmented drastically especially after a thrust on rural electrification and massive deforestation.
- **Inbreeding:** Obstructions such as wires, and gaps in the forest due to felling, have increased the threat of inbreeding among golden langurs.

▪ **Conservation Efforts:**

- The [Central Zoo Authority, New Delhi](#) entrusted the state zoo with the project for the conservation breeding of golden langur in Assam in 2011.
- The recorded estimation in Assam in 2009 was 5,140. Census in 2020 could not be completed due to the [Covid-19](#) lockdown.

▪ **Protection Status:**

- [IUCN List of Threatened Species](#): Endangered
- [Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora \(CITES\)](#): Appendix I
- [Wildlife Protection Act, 1972](#): Schedule I

[Source:TH](#)

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