



BBIN Motor Vehicles Agreement

For Prelims: Bangladesh-Bhutan-India-Nepal (BBIN) Motor Vehicles Agreement (MVA), South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), Asian Development Bank, South Asian Subregional Economic Cooperation programme, World Bank

For Mains: Bangladesh-Bhutan-India-Nepal (BBIN) Motor Vehicles Agreement (MVA)

Why in News?

Recently, India, Bangladesh and Nepal finalised an enabling memorandum of understanding (MoU) for implementing the long-gestating [Bangladesh-Bhutan-India-Nepal \(BBIN\) Motor Vehicles Agreement \(MVA\)](#).

// EU-STYLE DRIVING NOW COMES CLOSER HOME

Entry and exit points

- > Banglabandha (Bangladesh) – Phulbari (India) – Panitanki (India) – Kakravitta (Nepal)
- > Burimari (Bangladesh) – Changrabandha (India) – Phuntsholing (Bhutan)
- > Petrapole (India) – Benapole (Bangladesh)
- > Tamabil (Bangladesh) – Dawki (India)
- > Akhaura (Bangladesh) – Jaynagar (India)
- > More entry and exit points will be designated over the next few years



What is the BBIN connectivity Project?

- **Background:** The project was conceived after the [South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation \(SAARC\)](#) failed to agree on a regional motor vehicles agreement at a **summit in Nepal in 2014**, mainly because of opposition from Pakistan.
- **Origin:** The **BBIN Motor Vehicle Agreement for the Regulation of Passenger, Personal and Cargo Vehicular Traffic** between the 4 countries was signed during a transport ministers' meeting in **Thimpu on 15th June 2015**.
- **Objective:** Operationalising the MVA by concluding the **Passenger and the Cargo Protocol** will

help realise the full potential of trade and **people to people connectivity** between the BBIN countries by **fostering greater sub-regional cooperation**.

- **Bhutan's Reluctance:** The BBIN project suffered a setback in **2017 when Bhutan temporarily** opted out of it after being unable to get parliamentary approval for the MVA.
 - The **3 other countries** decided at the time to press ahead with the agreement.
- **Foreign Funding:** The [Asian Development Bank](#) has supported the project as part of its [South Asian Subregional Economic Cooperation programme](#), and has been requested to prioritise about 30 road projects worth billions of dollars.
 - The [World Bank](#), which has estimated that the implementation of the MVA will potentially see an [increase in traffic-regional trade within South Asia by nearly 60%](#), has also announced its interest in supporting infrastructure.
- **Persisting Issues:** There are still some agreements holding up the **final protocols, including issues like insurance and bank guarantees, and the size and frequency of freight carriers into each country**, which they hope to finalise this year before operationalizing bus and truck movements between them.

What are the concerns of Bhutan?

- The objections of Bhutan pertains to **sustainability and environmental concerns**.
- In 2020, Prime Minister Lotay Tshering held that given **Bhutan's "current infrastructure" and top priority to remaining a "carbon-negative" country**, it would not be possible to consider joining the MVA.
 - Thus, the Bhutanese parliament decided not to endorse the plan.

What are the Similar Connectivity Initiatives which India is a part of?

- [Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar \(BCIM\) Corridor](#)
- [India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway](#)
- [Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport \(KMMTT\)](#)

Way Forward

- Bhutan's concerns may be eased if India considers the inclusion of waterways and riverine channels as a **less environmentally damaging substitute**.

PYQ

Q. In the Mekong-Ganga Cooperation, an initiative of six countries, which of the following is/are not a participant/ participants? (2015)

1. Bangladesh
2. Cambodia
3. China
4. Myanmar
5. Thailand

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2, 3 and 4
- (c) 1 and 3
- (d) 1, 2 and 5

Ans: (c)

Women In Peacekeeping

For Prelims: United Nations Peacekeeping mission, United Nations Security Council (UNSC), Global Effort Initiative, UN Action for Peacekeeping (A4P)

For Mains: Important International Institutions, Women In Peacekeeping

Why in News?

Recently, many women soldiers were training to be a part of a [United Nations Peacekeeping mission](#).

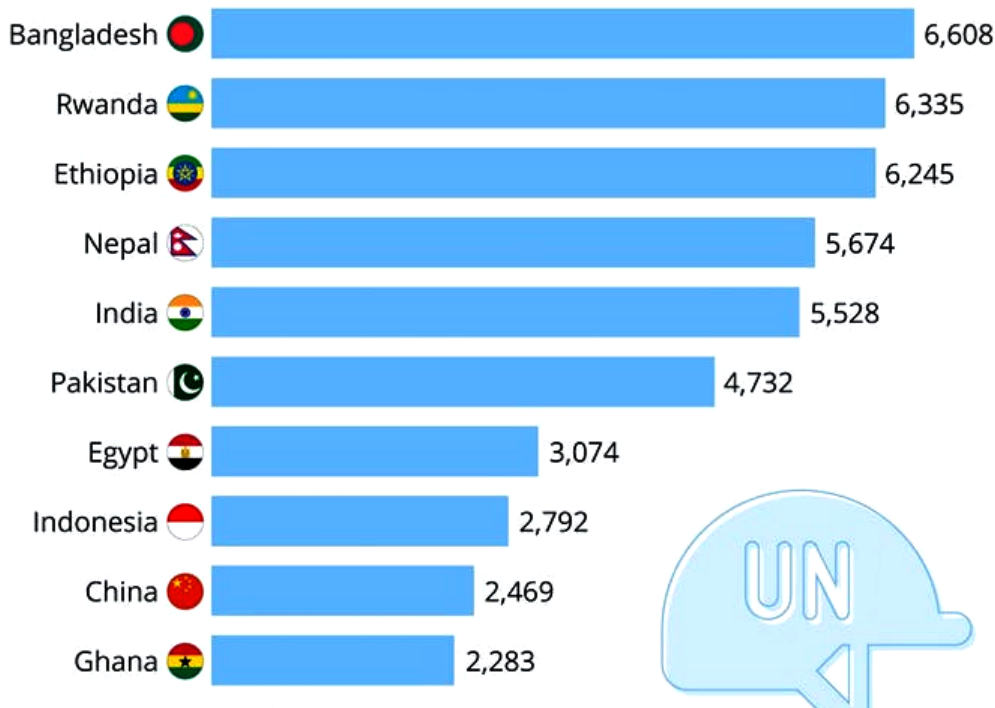
- For more than a decade, the [United Nations \(UN\)](#) has called for more participation from women in **conflict prevention, post-conflict peacebuilding and peacekeeping**.

What is UN Peacekeeping?

- UN Peacekeeping began in **1948** when the UN Security Council authorised the deployment of UN military observers to the Middle East.
- UN Peacekeeping **helps countries navigate the difficult path from conflict to peace**.
- It deploys troops and police from around the world, integrating them with civilian peacekeepers to address a range of mandates set by the [UN Security Council \(UNSC\)](#) and the [General Assembly](#).

The Biggest Contributors To UN Peacekeeping Operations

Main contributors of uniformed personnel to UN peacekeeping operations as of March 31, 2021*



What is Background of Indian Women in Peacekeeping Forces?

- **Background:** For the first time in the history of UN peacekeeping, India sent an **all-female Formed Police Unit (FPU) to be deployed in Liberia in 2007** after a civil war ravaged the African nation.
- **Intent:** Recently, at the **UN Security Council (UNSC)**, Indian officials called for **more female participation in public life** and the **elimination of violence against them** as a prerequisite for promoting lasting peace around the world.
- **Significance:** In a profession that continues to be **heavily dominated by men**, and in a nation that is **riddled with gender violence**, these female police officers from India are **breaking stereotypes** to represent their country on the world stage.

What is the current status of Women in UN Peacekeeping forces?

- **Multi-Role:** Women are deployed in all areas - **police, military and civilian** - and have made a positive impact on peacekeeping environments, including in supporting the role of women in building peace and protecting women's rights.
- **Current Numbers:** According to the UN, in 2020, **out of approximately 95,000 peacekeepers, women constitute 4.8% of military contingents and 10.9% of formed police units and 34% of justice and corrections** government-provided personnel in UN Peacekeeping missions.
- **Global Effort Initiative:** UN Police Division launched '**the Global Effort**' to recruit more female police officers into national police services and into UN police operations around the world.
 - The 2028 target for women serving in **military contingents is 15%, and 25% for military observers and staff officers.**
- **UNSC Resolution: UN Security Council resolution 1325 (UNSCR1325)** has called for an expansion of the role and contribution of women in its operations, including uniformed women peacekeepers.

- **Action for Peacekeeping (A4P) initiative:** The **UN Action for Peacekeeping (A4P) initiative** views the Women, Peace and Security agenda as critical to enhancing peacekeeping operations' performance.
 - This can be achieved through supporting women's full participation in peace processes and making peacekeeping more **gender-responsive**, including through increasing the number of civilian and **uniformed women in peacekeeping at all levels and in key positions**.

Why is it important to have women peacekeepers?

- **Improved Operations And Performance:** Greater diversity and a broadened skillset means improved decision-making, planning and results, leading to greater operational effectiveness and performance.
- **Better Access:** Women peacekeepers can better access the population, including women and children - **for example**, by interviewing and supporting survivors of gender-based violence and violence against children - thereby generating critical information that would otherwise be difficult to reach.
- **Building Trust and Confidence:** Women peacekeepers are **essential enablers to build trust and confidence with local communities and help improve access and support for local women**.
 - For example, by interacting with women in societies where women are prohibited from speaking to men.
- **Inspiring and Creating Role Models:** Women peacekeepers **serve as powerful mentors and role models for women and girls** in post-conflict settings in the host community, setting examples for them to advocate for their own rights and pursue non-traditional careers.

PYQ

Q. Which one of the following is not related to United Nations? (2010)

- (a) Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency
- (b) International Finance Corporation
- (c) International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes
- (d) Bank for International Settlements

Ans: (d)

[Source: IE](#)

National Land Monetization Corporation

For Prelims: National Land Monetization Corporation, National Monetisation Pipeline (NMP).

For Mains: Asset Monetisation and related challenges, Rationale behind Asset Monetisation plan and benefits

Why in News?

Recently, the Union Cabinet has approved the setting up **National Land Monetization Corporation (NLMC)** as a wholly owned Government of India company.

- The Finance Minister had **announced plans to set up a special purpose vehicle** for this purpose in the [Union Budget 2021-22](#).
- In August, 2021, the government of India launched the [National Monetisation Pipeline \(NMP\)](#).

What is National Land Monetization Corporation (NLMC)?

▪ About:

- NLMC will **undertake surplus land asset monetisation as an agency function**, and assist and provide technical advice to the Centre in this regard.
- NLMC has been announced with an **initial authorized share capital of Rs 5000 crore** and **paid-up share capital of Rs 150 crore**.
- The **Board of Directors of NLMC** will comprise senior Central Government officers and eminent experts to enable professional operations and management of the company.
 - The Chairman, non-Government Directors of the NLMC will be **appointed through a merit-based selection process**.
- The new company, which will be **set up under the administrative jurisdiction of the finance ministry**.
- NLMC will **hire professionals from the private sector** just as in the case of similar specialised government companies like the [National Investment and Infrastructure Fund \(NIIF\)](#) and [Invest India](#).

▪ Benefits:

- This will **enable productive utilization of under-utilized assets** to trigger private sector investments, new economic activities, boost local economy and generate financial resources for economic and social infrastructure.
- NLMC is also **expected to own, hold, manage and monetize surplus land and building assets** of CPSEs under closure and the surplus non-core land assets of Government owned CPSEs under strategic disinvestment.
 - This will **speed up the closure process of CPSEs** and **smoothen the strategic disinvestment process of Government owned CPSEs**.

▪ Challenges:

- Among the **key challenges that NLMC might face** include lack of identifiable revenue streams in particular land assets, dispute resolution mechanism, various litigations and lack of clear titles, and low interest among investors in remote land parcels.

What will be the Function of the NLMC?

- NLMC will undertake monetization of surplus land and building assets of **Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSEs)** and other Government agencies.
 - CPSEs are those companies in which the **direct holding of the Central Government or other CPSEs is 51% or more**.
 - At present, **CPSEs hold considerable surplus, unused and under-used non-core assets** in the nature of land and buildings.
- NLMC will also **advise and support other Government entities** (including CPSEs) in **identifying their surplus non-core assets** and monetizing them in a professional and efficient manner to generate maximum value realization.
- NLMC will **act as a repository of best practices in land monetization**, assist and provide technical advice to the Government in implementation of asset monetization programmes.

What is Asset Monetisation?

▪ About:

- It is the process of **creating new sources of revenue for the government** and its entities by unlocking the economic value of unutilised or underutilised public assets.

▪ Need:

- India needs more **infrastructure but the public sector simply doesn't have the**

resources to build it. There are two possible responses.

- For setting new infrastructure, **one can think of bringing in the private sector** with a contractual framework for what it has to do, and then let it bring its own resources.
- To recognise that **there are more risks in the construction stage** and it is perhaps better to let the public sector build the asset and then sell it off to private players or if not an outright sale, let the private sector manage it.
- Building new infrastructure has **two constraints for any country including India** -
 - Access to patient, predictable and cheap capital and
 - Execution capability, where government and private agencies can take up multiple marquee projects simultaneously.
- **Related Challenges:**
 - **Lack of identifiable revenue streams** in various assets.
 - **Slow pace of privatisation** in government companies.
 - Further, **less-than-encouraging bids in the recently launched [Public-private partnerships \(PPP\)](#) initiative** in trains indicate that attracting private investors' interest is not that easy.
 - **Asset-specific Challenges:**
 - Low Level of capacity utilisation in gas and petroleum pipeline networks.
 - Regulated tariffs in power sector assets.
 - Low interest among investors in national highways below four lanes.

Way Forward

- The success of the infrastructure expansion plan **would depend on other stakeholders playing their due role.**
 - These include **State governments and their [Public Sector Enterprises](#)** and the private sector.
 - In this context, the **[Fifteenth Finance Commission](#)** has recommended the setting up of a High-Powered Intergovernmental Group to re-examine the fiscal responsibility legislation of the Centre and States.
- **Maintaining transparency is the key** to adequate realisation of the asset value.
- Recent experience suggests that **Public-Private Partnerships (PPP)** now involve transparent auctions, a clear understanding of the risks and payoffs, and an open field for any and all interested parties.
 - Thus, the **utility of PPP in greenfield projects can not be neglected.**

[Source: PIB](#)

First Virtual Smart Grid Knowledge Centre

For Prelims: Pradhan Mantri Sahaj Bijli Har Ghar Yojana (SAUBHAGYA), Green Energy Corridor (GEC), National Smart Grid Mission (NSGM), Smart Meter National Programme (SMNP).

For Mains: Indian Initiatives Shaping Energy Transition, Benefits of Smart Meters and related challenges.

Why in News?

Recently, the **Union Minister for Power** has launched the **Virtual Smart Grid Knowledge Center (Virtual SGKC) and Innovation Park.**

What is Virtual Smart Grid Knowledge Center (Virtual SGKC)?

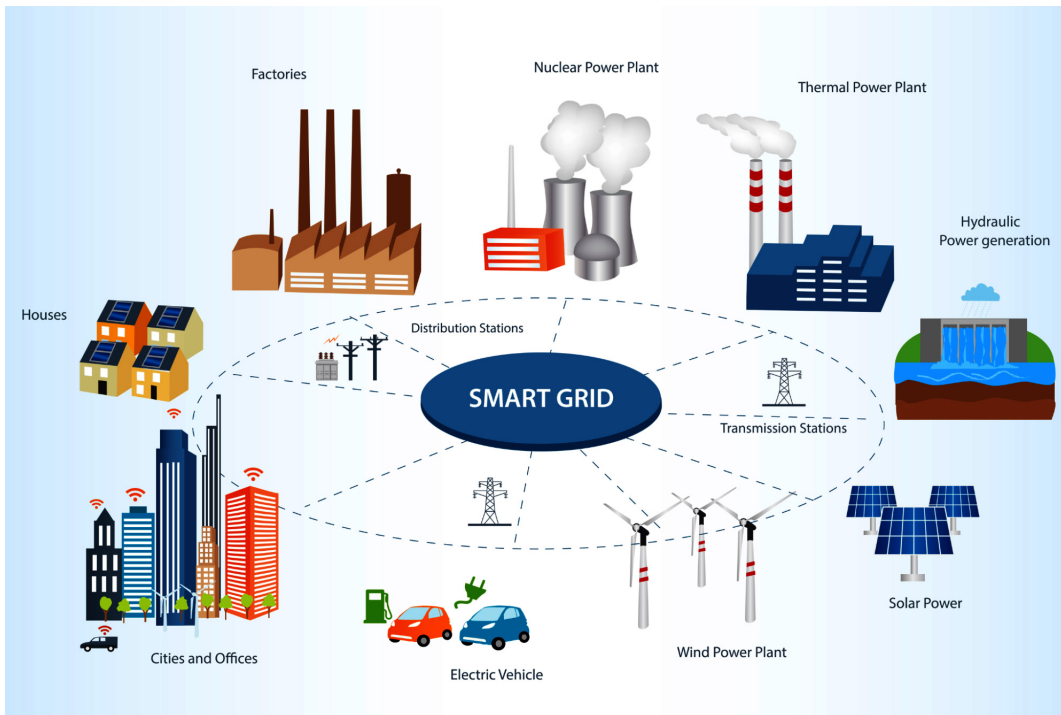
- Located within the **powergrid centre in Manesar (Haryana)**, **Virtual Smart Grid Knowledge Center (Virtual SGKC)** is the **first of its kind initiative** by the Union government.
- The initiative, as part of [Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav Programme](#), will be one of the leading **Centers of Excellence** globally to foster innovation, entrepreneurship and research in smart grid technologies.
- It has been **established by POWERGRID** with support from the **Union ministry of power and technical assistance** from **US Agency for International Development's (USAID)** for demonstration and advancement of frontier smart grid technologies.

What is the Significance of this Initiative?

- SGKC aims to be **one of the leading Centers of Excellence** globally to foster innovation, entrepreneurship and research in **smart grid technologies** and create capacities in the power distribution sector.
- It will **enable a digital footprint of the physical setup of SGKC**, the need for which was felt during [Covid-19 pandemic](#).

What is a Smart Grid?

- **About:**
 - Smart Grid is an **Electrical Grid with Automation, Communication and IT systems that can monitor power flows** from points of generation to points of consumption (even down to appliances level) and control the power flow or curtail the load to match generation in real time or near real time.
 - Smart Grids can be **achieved by implementing efficient transmission & distribution systems**, system operations, consumer integration and renewable integration.
 - Smart grid solutions **helps to monitor, measure and control power flows in real time** that can contribute to identification of losses and thereby appropriate technical and managerial actions can be taken to arrest the losses.
- **Vision for India:**
 - Transform the Indian power sector into a secure, adaptive, sustainable and digitally enabled ecosystem that provides reliable and quality energy for all with active participation of stakeholders.
- **Benefits of Smart Grid Deployments:**
 - Reduction of T&D losses,
 - Peak load management, improved QoS and reliability.
 - Reduction in power purchase cost.
 - Better asset management.
 - Increased grid visibility and self-healing grids.
 - Renewable integration and accessibility to electricity.
 - Increased options such as ToU tariff, DR programs, net metering.
 - Satisfied customers and financially sound utilities etc.



What are the Related Initiatives?

- **Pradhan Mantri Sahaj Bijli Har Ghar Yojana (SAUBHAGYA):**
 - Empowering rural and urban households through access to reliable and affordable electricity.
- **Green Energy Corridor (GEC):**
 - Synchronising grid-connected renewable energy with India's national transmission network.
- **National Smart Grid Mission (NSGM) and Smart Meter National Programme (SMNP):**
 - Modernising India's power sector into a secure, adaptive, sustainable, and digitally enabled ecosystem.

[Source: ET](#)

UPI123Pay and Digisaathi

Why in News

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has launched new UPI services for feature phones called **UPI123Pay** for non internet users to make digital payments, also launched a 24x7 helpline for digital payments called 'Digisaathi'.

- 'Digisaathi' has also been set up by the [National Payments Corporation of India \(NPCI\)](#) to provide users with automated responses on information related to digital payment products and services. Presently it is available in English and Hindi language.

What is Unified Payments Interface (UPI)?

- It is an **advanced version of Immediate Payment Service (IMPS)**- round-the-clock funds transfer service to make cashless payments faster, easier and smoother.
- UPI is a system **that powers multiple bank accounts into a single mobile application (of any participating bank)**, merging several banking features, seamless fund routing & merchant

payments into one hood.

- UPI is currently the biggest among the [National Payments Corporation of India \(NPCI\) operated systems](#) including National Automated Clearing House (NACH), Immediate Payment Service (IMPS), Aadhaar enabled Payment System (AePS), Bharat Bill Payment System (BBPS), RuPay etc.
- The top UPI apps today include PhonePe, Paytm, Google Pay, Amazon Pay and [BHIM](#), the latter being the Government offering.

What is UPI 123 Pay?

▪ About:

- It will work on simple phones that do not have an internet connection.
 - As of now, the UPI features are mostly available only on smartphones.
- The UPI service for feature phones will leverage the [RBI's regulatory Sandbox](#) on Retail Payments.
 - A **regulatory sandbox** usually refers to live testing of new products or services in a controlled/test regulatory environment for which regulators may permit certain regulatory relaxations for the limited purpose of the testing.
- The UPI service will enable digital transactions through a mechanism of **'on-device' wallet in UPI applications.**
- The users will be able to undertake a host of transactions **based on four technology alternatives including**- IVR (interactive voice response) number, missed call-based approach, app functionality in feature phones and proximity sound-based payments..

▪ Benefits:

- The new service for feature phones **will enable individuals to make direct payments to others without smartphones and internet.**
- Users can initiate payments to friends and family, pay utility bills, recharge the FAST Tags of their vehicles, pay mobile bills and also allow users to check account balances.
- It will allow customers to use feature phones for almost all transactions except scan and pay.
- UPI123Pay will benefit an estimated 40 crore feature phone users and enable them to undertake digital payments in a secure manner. This will bring non-smartphone users under the digital payment system.

[Source: IE](#)

Pal-Dadhvav Massacre

Why in News

Recently, the Gujarat government marked **100 years of the Pal-Dadhvav killings**, calling it a massacre "bigger than the [Jallianwala Bagh](#)".

- A Gujarat government release on the centenary of the massacre described the incident as "more brutal than the Jallianwala Bagh massacre of 1919.
- Earlier, Bihar Chief Minister announced that 15th February would be commemorated as "[Shahid](#)

Diwas” in memory of the **34 freedom fighters** who were killed by police in Tarapur town (now subdivision) of Bihar’s Munger district 90 years ago.

What was the Pal-Dadhvav Massacre?

- The Pal-Dadhvav massacre **took place on 7th March, 1922**, in the **Pal-Chitariya and Dadhvaav villages of Sabarkantha district**, then part of Idar state (Now Gujrat).
- The day was **Amalki Ekadashi, which falls just before Holi**, a major festival for tribals.
- Villagers from Pal, Dadhvav, and Chitariya had gathered on the banks of river Heir as part of the **‘Eki movement’**, led by one Motilal Tejawat.
 - Tejawat, who belonged to Koliyari village in the Mewad region of Rajasthan, had also mobilised **Bhils** from Kotda Chhavni, **Sirohi**, and Danta to participate.
 - The **impact of the protest** was felt in Vijaynagar, Dadhvaav, Poshina and Khedbrahma, which are now talukas of Sabarkantha; the Aravalli districts, Banaskantha and Danta of Banaskantha district; and Kotda Chhavni, Dungarpur, Chittor, Sirohi, Banswada and Udaipur of Rajasthan, all of which were then princely states.
- The movement was **to protest against the land revenue tax (lagaan) imposed on the peasants** by the British and feudal lords.
- The British Paramilitary force was on hunt for Tehawat. It heard of this gathering and reached the spot.
- Nearly **200 bhils under the leadership of Tehawat lifted their bows and arrows**. But, the Britishers opened fire on them. Nearly 1,000 tribals (Bhils) fell to bullets.
 - While the British claimed some 22 people were killed, the Bhils believe **1,200-1,500 of them died**.
- Tejawat, however, escaped and later “returned to the spot to christen it ‘Veer Bhumi’.

Who was Motilal Tejawat?

- Born into a **merchant (Baniya) family in the adivasi-dominated Koliyari village**, Tejawat was **employed by a landlord, where he worked for eight years**.
 - During this period he saw closely how the landlords exploited tribals and would threaten to beat them with shoes if they did not pay the tax.
- Outraged by the atrocities and exploitation of the tribal people, **Tejawat quit the job in 1920 and devoted himself to social work** and reform. To this day, local tribals recount the Pal-Dadhvav massacre in songs sung at weddings and fairs. One such song is **‘Hansu dukhi, duniya dukhi’**.

PYQ

In the context of Colonial India, Shah Nawaz Khan, Prem Kumar Sehgal and Gurbaksh Singh Dhillon are remembered as (2021)

- (a) leaders of Swadeshi and Boycott Movement
- (b) members of the Interim Government in 1946
- (c) members of the Drafting Committee in the Constituent Assembly
- (d) officers of the Indian National Army

Ans: (d)

Source: IE

SARAS 3 Telescope

Why in News

Recently, the Indian researchers at RRI (Raman Research Institute) in a **study** using the **SARAS 3 radio telescope**, have conclusively **denied a recent claim of the discovery of a radio wave signal from cosmic dawn**.

- In 2018 a team of researchers from **Arizona State University (ASU) and MIT in the US** detected a signal from stars emerging in the early universe using data from the EDGES radio telescope.
- The **Cosmic Dawn** is the period from about 50 million years to one billion years after the Big Bang when the first stars, black holes, and galaxies in the Universe formed.
- The **RRI** is an **autonomous research institute** engaged in research in basic sciences. The institute was founded in 1948 by the Indian physicist and [**Nobel Laureate Sir C V Raman**](#).

What are Radio Waves and Radio Telescopes?

- Radio waves have the **longest wavelengths in the electromagnetic spectrum**. They range from the length of a football to larger than our planet. Heinrich Hertz proved the existence of radio waves in the late 1880s.
- Radio telescopes **collect weak radio light waves, bring it to a focus, amplify it and make it available for analysis**.
- They help study **naturally occurring radio light from stars, galaxies, black holes, and other astronomical objects**.
- These **specially-designed telescopes observe the longest wavelengths of light**, ranging from 1 millimetre to over 10 metres long. For comparison, visible light waves are only a few hundred nanometers long, and a nanometer is only 1/10,000th the thickness of a piece of paper! In fact, we don't usually refer to radio light by its wavelength, but by its frequency.

What is SARAS-3 Radio Telescope?

- SARAS is a **niche high-risk high-gain experimental effort of RRI**.
- SARAS aims to **design, build and deploy in India a precision radio telescope to detect extremely faint radio wave signals** from the depths of time, from our "Cosmic Dawn" when the first stars and galaxies formed in the early Universe.

What are the Findings?

- SARAS 3 **did not find any evidence of the signal claimed by the EDGES experiment**.
- The presence of the signal is **decisively rejected after a careful assessment** of the measurement uncertainties.
- The detection reported by EDGES was likely contamination of their measurement and not a signal from the depths of space and time.
- However, astronomers still do not know what the actual signal looks like.

PYQ

Consider the following phenomena: (2018)

1. Light is affected by gravity.
2. The Universe is constantly expanding.

3. Matter warps its surrounding space-time.

Which of the above is/are the prediction/predictions of Albert Einstein's General Theory of Relativity, often discussed in media?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 3 only
- (c) 1 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Ans: (d)

Source: PIB

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