



## Custodial Violence

### Why in News

The recent death of a father-son duo from Tamil Nadu, allegedly **due to custodial violence**, has sparked anger across India.

- Custodial violence primarily refers to violence in police and judicial custody. It includes death, rape and torture.

### Key Points

#### ▪ Data Related to Violence in Custody:

- According to [National Crime Records Bureau \(NCRB\)](#) data, between 2001 and 2018, only 26 policemen were convicted of custodial violence despite 1,727 such deaths being recorded in India.
  - Only 4.3% of the 70 deaths in 2018 were attributed to injuries during custody due to physical assault by police.
- Except in Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Odisha, no policeman was convicted for such deaths across the country.
- Apart from custodial deaths, **more than 2,000 human rights violation cases were also recorded** against the police between 2000 and 2018. And only 344 policemen were convicted in those cases.

- **Reasons for Low Conviction:** Most of custodial deaths were attributed to reasons other than custodial torture, which included suicide and death in hospitals during treatment.

#### ▪ Reasons Behind Custodial Violence:

- **Absence of Strong Legislation:** India does not have an anti-torture legislation and is yet to criminalise custodial violence, while action against culpable officials remains illusory.
  - The Indian state either denies the existence of torture in the country or defends its resistance to enact a law by claiming there are sufficient provisions in the domestic legal framework to prohibit and penalise torture.
  - These claims however remain superficial and without any such protections.
- **Institutional Challenges:** The entire prison system is inherently opaque giving less room to transparency.
  - Prison access is not provided without prior permission such as depositing “Rs. 1 lakh in the name of the superintendent of the concerned jail” before entry.
  - Excessive scrutiny is done of all recorded or documented material in the prison.
  - India also fails in bringing the much **desired Prison Reforms** and prisons continue to be affected by poor conditions, overcrowding, acute manpower shortages and minimal safety against harm in prisons.
- **Excessive Force:** The use of excessive force including torture to target marginalised communities and control people participating in movements or propagating ideologies which the state perceives as opposed to its stature.
- **Not Adhering to International Standard:** Although India has signed the **United**

**Nations Convention against Torture** in 1997 its ratification still remains.

- While Signing only indicates the country's intention to meet the obligations set out in the treaty, Ratification, on the other hand, entails bringing in laws and mechanisms to fulfil the commitments.

▪ **Constitutional and Legal Provisions:**

- **Protection from torture** is a fundamental right enshrined under Article 21 (Right to Life) of the Indian constitution.
- The **right to counsel** is also a fundamental right under Article 22(1) of the India constitution.
- Section 41 of [Criminal Procedure Code \(CrPC\)](#) was amended in 2009 to include safeguards under 41A, 41B, 41C and 41D, so that arrests and detentions for interrogation have reasonable grounds and documented procedures, arrests are made transparent to family, friends and public, and there is protection through legal representation.

## Suggestions

- **India should ratify the UN Convention Against Torture:** It will mandate a systematic review of colonial rules, methods, practices and arrangements for the custody and treatment of persons subjected to any form of arrest, detention or imprisonment.
  - It will also mean that exclusive mechanisms of redress and compensation will be set up for the victim besides institutions such as the Board of Visitors.
- **Police Reforms:** [Guidelines should also be formulated](#) on educating and training officials involved in the cases involving deprivation of liberty because torture cannot be effectively prevented till the senior police wisely anticipate the gravity of such issues and clear reorientation is devised from present practices.
- **Access to Prison:** Unrestricted and regular access to independent and qualified persons to places of detention for inspection should also be allowed.
  - CCTV cameras should be installed in police stations including in the interrogation rooms.
  - Surprise inspections by Non-Official Visitors (NOVs) should also be made mandatory which would act as a preventive measures against custodial torture which has also been suggested by Supreme Court **in its landmark judgment in the DK Basu Case in 2015.**
- **Implementation of Law Commission of India's 273<sup>rd</sup> Report:** The report recommends that those accused of committing custodial torture – be it policemen, military and paramilitary personnel – should be criminally prosecuted instead of facing mere administrative action establishing an effective deterrent.

[Source: TH](#)

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## Kholongchhu Hydropower Project

### Why in News

Recently, [India and Bhutan](#) have signed concession agreement on the 600 MW **Kholongchhu Hydropower Project**.

- It will be the **first-ever Joint Venture (JV)** project between India and Bhutan.
- The JV partners are **Satluj Jal Vidyut Nigam (SJVN)**, and the **Druk Green Power Corporation (DGPC)** from India and Bhutan respectively.

## Key Points //



### ▪ Description:

- The **Kholongchu project** is one of four additional projects agreed in 2008, as a part of India's commitment to help Bhutan to create a **total 10,000 MW** of installed capacity by 2020.
- The **600 MW run-of-the-river project** is located on the lower course of the **Kholongchu river in eastern Bhutan's Trashiyangtse district**.
- The project is expected to be completed in the **second half of 2025**.
- The project will be constructed as a **50:50 joint venture**.

### ▪ Significance:

- **Concession Period:** The Government of India will provide, as a grant, the equity share of the Bhutanese DGPC in the JV Company. Once the project is commissioned, the JV partners will run it for 30 years, called the **concession period**, after which the full ownership will transfer to the Bhutan government, which will receive power from the project as a royalty.
- **Bilateral Cooperation:** The tapping of hydropower in Bhutan would pave a way for successful **bilateral cooperation and mutual engagement** between India and Bhutan.
- **Strategic Interest:** Being a member of **BIMSTEC**, Bhutan holds geostrategic importance for India. The shared sense of support and help in terms of such development projects between the two countries **can help India** in executing its **Act East-Look East Policy**.
- **Energy Trade:** The project would act as a milestone in generation of energy and related trade.
  - The project would aid in a clean and stabilising power source for India and also contribute to its renewable energy targets.
- **Employment Opportunities:** Commencement of construction activities of the project will create economic and employment opportunities in **Bhutan**.
  - India needs to focus on the youth of Bhutan, as it is the youth only, which would take the people-to-people contact forward in the future.
- **Economic Growth:** The plant would drive economic growth and hence **socio-economic development** would be facilitated in Bhutan.

### ▪ Concerns:

- **Power Tariffs:** The project which started in 2014 was on halt since December 2016 over India's new power tariff guidelines on **Cross Border Trade of Electricity - CBTE**, until the government amended its guidelines after negotiations with the Bhutan government.
  - **Power tariff revision** which includes **the increase in the operations and maintenance charges** may become a bone of contention.
- **Risk of the JV-model:** Another issue is regarding the risk of the JV-model for the project as Bhutan had expressed concern over a greater financial risk due to project delays.

- The delays had an impact on Bhutan's growth, as well as its exports and revenues. For example, the [World Bank](#) has attributed the decline in the **country's growth rate directly to delays in hydropower construction** and the dip in electricity generation.
- However, India has maintained that it prefers the more commercial model as it not only shares the risk, but also makes Indian PSUs show greater accountability on time and cost, as they become investors rather than contractors.

## India Bhutan Hydropower Projects

- So far, Government of India has constructed three Hydroelectric Projects (HEPs) in Bhutan totaling 1416 MW (**336 MW Chukha** HEP, **60 MW Kurichhu** HEP and **1020 MW Tala** HEP), which are operational and exporting surplus power to India.
- India has recently completed **720 MW Mangdechhu HydroElectric Power Project** and both sides are in process of expediting the completion of other ongoing projects including the **1200MW Punatsangchhu-1 & 1020MW Punatsangchhu-2**.

## Way Forward

- Both [India and Bhutan](#) have emphasised the importance of "hydro-power development" as one of the most important areas of **mutually beneficial bilateral cooperation**.
- Kholongchhu is a continuation of bilateral cooperation which epitomises the core of the friendship for a greater good.
- However, the **delay in the implementation of the project** has led to cost escalation and missed opportunities in terms of immediate benefits to the community. Therefore, all the **details of a project should be thoroughly worked** out before the construction commences.

[Source: IE](#)

## STARS Programme: World Bank

### Why in News

Recently, the [World Bank](#) has approved the **Strengthening Teaching-Learning and Results for States (STARS) Programme**.

- It will improve the quality and governance of school education in six Indian states of **Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha and Rajasthan** through the [Samagra Shiksha](#).

### Key Points

- **Expected Beneficiaries:** Around 250 million students (between the **age of 6 and 17**) in 1.5 million schools and over 10 million teachers will benefit from this **USD 500 million** programme.
- **In Line with Previous Assistance:** It will strengthen public school education and support the **country's goal of providing 'Education for All'**, for which the Bank had provided total assistance of more than USD 3 billion prior to this plan as well.
- **Objectives:** STARS will **help improve** learning assessment systems, strengthen classroom instruction and remediation, facilitate school-to-work transition and strengthen governance and decentralized management.



- STARS will **support India's renewed focus on addressing the learning outcome challenge** and help students better prepare for the jobs of the future, through a **series of reform initiatives**, which include:
  - **Providing Customised Solutions:**
    - Focusing more directly on the delivery of education services at the state, district and sub-district levels by providing customized local-level solutions towards school improvement.
  - **Addressing Specific Demands:**
    - Addressing demands from stakeholders, especially parents, for greater accountability and inclusion by producing better data to assess the quality of learning.
    - Giving special attention to students from vulnerable sections, with over 52% (as a weighted average) of children in the government-run schools in the six project states belonging to vulnerable sections, such as Scheduled Caste (SC), Scheduled Tribe (ST) and minority communities.
    - Delivering a curriculum that keeps pace with the rapidly evolving needs of the job market.
  - **Equipping Teachers:**
    - Equipping teachers to manage this transformation by recognizing that teachers are central to achieving better learning outcomes.
  - **More Investments:**
    - Investing more in developing India's human capital needs by strengthening foundational learning for children in classes 1 to 3 and preparing them with the cognitive, socio-behavioural and language skills to meet future labour market needs.
- **SDGs:** It is in line with the [Sustainable Development Goal for education \(SDG 4\)](#) and will help produce better data on learning levels by improving the **National Achievement Survey (NAS)**.
- **PISA:** STARS will assist India in participation in the **Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA)**.
  - PISA is a **worldwide study** by the [Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development](#) (OECD) in member and non-member nations.
  - It measures **15-year-olds' ability** to use their reading, mathematics and science knowledge and skills to meet real-life challenges.

## Success Stories

- India has **successfully achieved gender parity in enrolment in primary education** but that is **not the case in secondary education**. Under STARS, each state is expected to not only stabilize this downward trend but also improve the completion rate for secondary education.
- India has **significantly improved access to education** across the country.
  - **Between 2004-05 and 2018-19**, the number of children going to school increased **from 219 million to 248 million**.
  - However, the **learning outcomes** of students across all age groups continue to **remain below par**.

## Challenges

- **Fails to Address Capacity Issues:**
  - Major **vacancies** across the education system **remain unaddressed**.
  - **Without capable and motivated faculty**, teacher education and training cannot be

expected to improve.

- **Ignoring Decentralisation:**

- The World Bank ignores that **decentralising** decision-making **requires the devolution of funds and real decision-making power.**
- It **requires** not just **investment** in the capacity of the front-line bureaucracy but also in **increasing their discretionary powers** while fostering social accountability.

- **Excessive use of [Information and Communications Technology](#):**

- **Technology does not address** most of the **systemic or governance challenges** but it simply by-passes them.
- Its usefulness depends on whether preconditions for effective use of ICT-systems have been put in place otherwise it only worsens the problems.

- **Over-reliance on measurement by standardised assessments:**

- The programme **spends money on testing infrastructure for standardised assessments** which is a waste of time and resources.
- Schools in India need improvement so the money **should be invested in improving the capability** of the system to improve learning.

- **Outsourcing:**

- Outsourcing to non-state partners not just **takes away discretion** from state actors but also takes away the **sense of accountability and ownership** towards their job.
- **New private initiatives do not have institutional memories**, nor do they have a **grasp of socio-cultural realities** that play an important part in the delivery process.
  - State structures rely on past experience (institutional memory) to meet new challenges and build additional memories with every new reform they undertake.

## Way Forward

- The administration must be **equipped with adequate physical, financial and human resources** because an overburdened bureaucracy with vacancies and without basic equipment cannot be expected to be effective.
- Administrative or governance reforms **must give greater discretion to the front-line bureaucracy** to address local issues and innovate if required.
- Outsourcing, an over-reliance on measurement by standardised assessments and excessive use of ICT will not get people closer to an **Atmanirbhar Bharat**. For that, the education system needs to **enable itself to develop capability to reform itself.**

[Source: TH](#)

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## PM Formalization of Micro Food Processing Enterprises Scheme

### Why in News

Recently, the **Ministry of Food Processing Industries (MoFPI)** has launched the **PM Formalization of Micro Food Processing Enterprises (PM FME)** scheme as a part of '[Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan](#)'.

- The Scheme is expected to generate a total investment of Rs. 35,000 crore and 9 lakh skilled and semi-skilled employment.

### Key Points

## ▪ Features:

### ◦ One District One Product (ODOP) Approach:

- The States would identify food products for districts keeping in view the existing clusters and availability of raw material.
- The ODOP could be a perishable produce based or cereal based or a food item widely produced in an area. **E.g.** mango, potato, pickle, millet based products, fisheries, poultry, etc.

### ◦ Other Focus Areas:

- Waste to wealth products, minor forest products and **Aspirational Districts**.
- **Capacity building and research:** Academic and research institutions under MoFPI along with State Level Technical Institutions would be provided support for training of units, product development, appropriate packaging and machinery for micro units.

### ◦ Financial Support:

- Existing individual micro food processing units desirous of upgrading their units can avail credit-linked capital subsidy at 35% of the eligible project cost with a maximum ceiling of Rs.10 lakh per unit.
- Support would be provided through credit linked grants at 35% for development of common infrastructure including common processing facility, lab, warehouse, etc. through FPOs/SHGs/cooperatives or state owned agencies or private enterprise.
- A seed capital (initial funding) of Rs. 40,000- per **Self Help Group (SHG)** member would be provided for working capital and purchase of small tools.

## ▪ Duration: It will be implemented over a period of **five years from 2020-21 to 2024-25**.

## ▪ Funding Details:

- It is a **centrally sponsored scheme** with an **outlay of Rs. 10,000 crore**.
- The expenditure under the scheme would be shared in **60:40 ratio between Central and State Governments**, in **90:10 ratio with North Eastern and Himalayan States**, **60:40 ratio with UTs with legislature** and **100% by Centre for other UTs**.

## ▪ Need:

- The unorganized food processing sector comprising nearly 25 lakh units contributes to **74% of employment** in the **food processing sector**.
- Nearly **66% of these units are located in rural areas** and about **80% of them are family-based enterprises** supporting livelihood of rural households and minimizing their migration to urban areas. These units largely fall within the category of micro enterprises.
- The unorganised food processing sector faces a number of challenges which limit their performance and their growth. The **challenges** include lack of access to modern technology & equipment, training, access institutional credit, lack of basic awareness on quality control of products; and lack of branding & marketing skills etc.

**Source: PIB**

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## Covaxin Approved for Human Clinical Trials

### Why in News

The **Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO)** has granted **approval to Bharat Biotech** to conduct **human clinical trials for 'Covaxin'**, making it the **first indigenous Covid-19**

**vaccine candidate** to receive this approval.

- Covaxin has been developed by the company Bharat Biotech in collaboration with the **Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)**. It is an **inactivated vaccine** manufactured in the company's **Bio-Safety Level 3 (BSL-3)** High Containment facility located in Hyderabad (Telangana).
- The permission was granted after the company submitted results from pre-clinical studies of the vaccine that demonstrated its safety and immune response. **Phase I and II clinical trials** will start across India in July 2020.

## Key Points

- Clinical trials in humans are classified into **three phases: phase I, phase II and phase III** and in certain countries formal regulatory approval is required to undertake any of these studies.
- The **phase I** clinical studies carry out initial testing of a vaccine in small numbers (e.g. 20) of healthy adults, to test the properties of a vaccine, its tolerability, and, if appropriate, clinical laboratory and pharmacological parameters. Phase I studies are primarily **concerned with safety**.
- **Phase II** studies involve larger numbers of subjects and are intended to provide preliminary information about a vaccine's ability to produce its desired effect (usually immunogenicity) in the target population and its general safety.
- Extensive **phase III** trials are required to fully assess the protective efficacy and safety of a vaccine. The phase III clinical trial is the pivotal study on which the **decision on whether to grant the licence is based** and sufficient data have to be obtained to demonstrate that a new product is safe and effective for the purpose intended.
- An application for market authorization may be submitted to the National Regulatory Authority (NRA) on the basis of the data from phase III testing and if approved, the vaccine then becomes commercially available in that particular country.
  - The **Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO)** under Directorate General of Health Services, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare is the **National Regulatory Authority (NRA) of India**.
- According to the **World Health Organisation (WHO)**, out of 200 Covid-19 vaccine candidates, **15 have entered clinical trials**.
  - **AstraZeneca** is the world's leading Covid-19 vaccine candidate and has reached the final stage in terms of development. It is being developed by researchers at the **University of Oxford (UK)**.
  - **US Firm Moderna's vaccine (MRNA-1273)** will go into phase III clinical trials in July.

[Source: TH](#)

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## Extension of Food Grain Scheme

### Why in News

Recently, many states have demanded for the extension of the **Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY)**.

### Key Points

- **Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana:**



- PMGKAY is a part of [Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Package \(PMGKP\)](#) to help the poor fight the battle against [Covid-19](#).
- It was announced **for a three month period (April, May and June)**, covering 80 crore ration cardholders. It will come to an **end on 30<sup>th</sup> June 2020**.
- The scheme aimed at providing each person who is covered under the [National Food Security Act](#) with an **additional 5 kg grains (wheat or rice)** for free, in **addition to the 5 kg of subsidised foodgrain** already provided through the [Public Distribution System \(PDS\)](#).
- The beneficiaries are also **entitled to 1 kg of pulse for free**, according to regional preferences.

#### ▪ **Performance of the Scheme:**

- According to the Union Ministry of Food and Public Distribution, a total of 116.02 lakh metric tonnes (LMT) of food grains have been lifted under the scheme.
- In April, 93% of the food grains were distributed targeting 74.05 crore beneficiaries.
- In May, the distribution stood at 91% reaching 72.99 crore beneficiaries
- In June 2020, 71% of allocated food grains have been distributed to 56.81 crore beneficiaries so far.

#### ▪ **Sufficient Food Stock:**

- According to the Central government, the [Food Corporation of India](#) has “sufficient stock of food grains”.
- It has a stock of 266.29 LMT rice and 550.31 LMT wheat as on June 28.
  - This is excluding the ongoing purchase of wheat and paddy stocks that have not yet reached the godowns.
- Each month, only about 55 LMT of food grains is required for distribution to ration cardholders.

#### ▪ **Issues Involved:**

- There is an excess of food stocks along with widespread hunger in the country.
- Around 200 million beneficiaries did not get their due in April 2020- in the distribution of additional food grains and pulses under the scheme.
- In April 2020 the government also allowed the conversion of surplus rice into ethanol for making alcohol-based hand sanitiser.
- With the beginning of the monsoon, there is a danger of food grains getting rot.

## Way Forward

- The food grain provided under the scheme must continue until the impact of **Covid-19** pandemic is not reduced. The impact of Covid-19 pandemic is still continuing, many economic activities have not been able to start in their full capacity, and a large number of people are unemployed.
- India has **large buffer stocks of food grains** that are maintained precisely for meeting emergencies like Covid-19. What is required is a **universal Public Distribution System (PDS)** to ensure that nobody is excluded.

[Source: TH](#)

## Sanskritik Sadbhav Mandap: PMJVK

### Why in News

Recently, the **Minister of Minority Affairs** has laid the foundation stone for '**Sanskritik Sadbhav**

**Mandap'** (multi-purpose community centre) at Rampur in Uttar Pradesh.

- This **community centre** will be utilized for various socio-economic-cultural activities, skill development training, coaching, different sports activities and relief activities during disasters such as [Covid-19](#).
- It is being constructed under the [Pradhan Mantri Jan Vikas Karyakram \(PMJVK\)](#).

## Key Points

- **Restructured: Pradhan Mantri Jan Vikas Karyakram (PMJVK)** is a **restructured and renamed** form of the erstwhile **Multi-sectoral Development Programme (MsDP)**.
  - The scheme was restructured on the recommendation of the **Standing Committee on Social Justice and Empowerment headed by Ramesh Bais**, which submitted its report on **'Implementation of Scheme of Multi-Sectoral Development Programme/Pradhan Mantri Jan Vikas Karyakram'** on 9<sup>th</sup> August 2018.
- **Implementation Period:** The restructured scheme is to be implemented during the remaining period of the 14<sup>th</sup> [Finance Commission](#) i.e. 31st March 2020.
- **Funding:** [Centrally Sponsored Scheme](#).
- **Background:**
  - In the year 2008-09, Government conceived the **Multi-sectoral Development Programme (MsDP)** as a centrally sponsored scheme.
  - Initially, the MsDP scheme was launched in the **90 Minority Concentration Districts** of the country.
  - To sharpen the focus on the targeted communities, the scheme was restructured during 2013-14 and the unit of planning for implementation was changed to **Minority Concentration Blocks (MCB), Minority Concentration Towns (MCT) and Clusters of Minority Concentration Villages (COV)**.
- **Implementation Region:** The PMJVK will continue to be implemented in MCBs, MCTs and COVs. A new area for implementation of PMJVK has been included namely **Minority Concentration District Headquarters (MCD Hq)**.
  - The identified areas namely MCBs, MCTs, MCD Hqs and COVs for implementation of PMJVK are **collectively known as Minority Concentration Areas (MCA)**.
- **Basis of Selection:** On the basis of a substantial population of minority communities i.e. **25% of the minority population** in the area and **backwardness parameters (literacy rate, female literacy rate, work participation rate and female work participation rate)** along with **basic amenities indicators** in the area concerned which are **below the national average** based on population data of [Census 2011](#).
  - As per the **Census 2011**, the percentage of minorities in the country is about **19.3% of the total population of the country**.
    - The population of Muslims are 14.2%, Christians 2.3%, Sikhs 1.7%, Buddhists 0.7%, Jain 0.4% and Parsis 0.006%.
- **Minority Community:** As far as PMJVK is concerned, the communities notified as minority communities under **Section 2 (c) of the National Commission for Minorities Act, 1992** would be taken as Minority Communities.
  - At present **six communities** namely **Muslims, Sikhs, Christians, Buddhists, Zoroastrians (Parsis) and Jains** have been notified as Minority Communities.
- Other schemes which aim at the **inclusive growth of the minority communities:**
  - Seekho Aur Kamao.
  - [Usttad](#).
  - Garib Nawaz Kaushal Vikas Yojana.
  - Nai Manzil.
  - Nai Roshni.

- Begum Hazrat Mahal Girls scholarships.

## Minorities in India

- **Constitutional Provisions:** The term "Minority" is **not defined in the Indian Constitution**. However, the Constitution recognises **only religious and linguistic minorities**.
  - **Article 29:** It provides that any section of the citizens residing in any part of India having a distinct language, script or culture of its own, shall have the right to conserve the same.
    - It grants protection to both **religious minorities** as well as **linguistic minorities**.
    - However, the Supreme Court held that the scope of this article is **not necessarily restricted to minorities only**, as use of the word 'section of citizens' in the Article that include minorities as well as the majority.
  - **Article 30:** Under the article, all minorities shall have the right to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice.
    - The protection under Article 30 is confined only to minorities (religious or linguistic) and does **not extend to any section of citizens** (as under Article 29).
  - **Article 350-B:** Originally, the Constitution of India did not make any provision with respect to the Special Officer for Linguistic Minorities. However, the **7<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendment Act, 1956** inserted **Article 350-B in the Constitution**.
    - It provides for a **Special Officer for Linguistic Minorities** appointed by the **President of India**.
    - It would be the duty of the Special Officer to investigate all matters relating to the safeguards provided for linguistic minorities under the constitution.
- **Parliamentary Provisions:**
  - **National Commission for Minorities Act, 1992:** The act defines a minority as "a community notified as such by the Central government".
  - Under this act, the government formed the National Commission for Minorities which consists of **a Chairperson, a Vice-Chairperson and five members**. The five members including the Chairperson shall be from amongst the minority communities.

## Minorities Rights Day in India

- The National Commission for Minorities observes the **18<sup>th</sup> December** as **Minorities Rights Day every year**.
- The day marks the adoption of the "**Declaration on the Rights of Persons belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities**" by the [United Nations](#) in 1992.
  - The declaration states that States shall protect the existence of the National or Ethnic, Cultural, Religious and Linguistic identity of minorities within their respective territories and encourage conditions for the promotion of that identity.

[Source: PIB](#)

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## Uganda Submitted REDD+ Results

## Why in News

Recently, **Uganda** has become the **first African country** to submit results for **Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation (REDD+)** to the [United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change \(UNFCCC\)](#).

### REDD+

- **Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation (REDD+)** is a mechanism developed by **Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)** in 2005.
- Most of the key REDD+ decisions were completed by 2013, with the final pieces of the rulebook finished in 2015.
- The “**Plus**” in REDD+, lays out the various ways in which countries have defined the three activities: **conservation, the sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stock.**
- It aims to achieve **climate change mitigation by incentivizing forest conservation.**
- It has three phases — **Readiness, Implementation and Result-based actions.**
  - **Readiness phase** involves the development of national strategies or action plans, REDD+ mitigation actions, and capacity building.
  - **Implementation** is about enacting REDD+ actions and national strategies that could involve further capacity building, technology development and transfer.
  - **Results-based payments** comprise the final REDD+ phase.
    - It provides **financial incentives to developing countries** that prove they stopped deforestation during a certain period of time. This is done through rigorous UN-backed technical evaluations
    - The **Green Climate Fund (GCF)** established at **Conference Of Parties (COP)-17** to function as the financial mechanism for the UNFCCC, is currently financing REDD+ programs.
    - **Brazil** was the first country to receive \$96.5 million under the results-based payments.

### Key Points

- **Uganda's REDD+ Results:** There is a 44% reduction in the country's rate of deforestation annually between 2015 and 2017.
  - The results submission by Uganda to the UNFCCC has paved the way for **potential results-based payments to the country.**
  - It will help Uganda to receive funds through the [Green Climate Fund's](#) forest conservation scheme.
- **Significance for Africa:** The submission of the results are a significant development on REDD+ for Africa. This will encourage other African countries to reduce carbon emissions by decreasing deforestation and forest degradation.
- **India and REDD+:**
  - The [Paris agreement on climate change](#) called upon [country Parties](#) to take action to implement and support REDD+.
  - India has communicated in its **Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC)** under Paris Agreement, that it will capture 2.5 to 3 billion tonnes of Carbon dioxide through additional forest and tree cover by 2030.
  - In this regard, India has prepared its “**National REDD+ Strategy**”.
    - Introduced in 2018 by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, the



strategy seeks to **address drivers of deforestation and forest degradation** and also develop a roadmap for **enhancement of forest carbon stocks** and achieving sustainable management of forests through REDD+ actions.

## Way Forward

- Achieving REDD+ results are challenging, as there are other development priorities — with **agriculture, mining, energy and forestry** — driving deforestation.
- There is a need to support developing countries through all three REDD+ phases — **readiness, implementation and result-based actions** — by providing tools and analysis of how to design, implement and measure the results of REDD+ action.
- This will in turn position countries like India and Africa as the forest champion of the next decade.

[Source: DTE](#)

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## Uttarakhand Approves Land Transfer

### Why in News

Recently, the **Uttarakhand State Wildlife Advisory Board** has permitted proposals on the transfer of forest land in **Gangotri National Park** for development of roads.

- The decision comes amid the [row between India and China](#) along the [Line of Actual Control \(LAC\) in Ladakh](#).

### Key Points

- Under these proposals, a total of 73.36 hectares of forest land at three different sites of Gangotri National Park will be required to be transferred for construction of separate roads, totalling 35.66 km in length.
- **Gangotri National Park is a protected area** and forest land chosen is near the international border with China.
- These routes are very important for national security because they will make the movement of **Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP)** personnel near the China border far easier.
- Now, the proposals regarding the land transfer for these roads will be sent to the National Wildlife Board.

### Gangotri National Park

- It was established in **1989** and is situated in **Uttarkashi, Uttarakhand** in the **upper catchment of Bhagirathi River**.
- **Gaumukh** at Gangotri glacier, the **origin of river Ganga**, is located inside the park.
- The park area forms a **viable continuity between Govind National Park and Kedarnath Wildlife Sanctuary**.
- **Flora:** The park is enveloped by dense coniferous forests that are mostly temperate. Chirpine, deodar, fir, spruce, oak and rhododendron are the common vegetation.
- **Fauna:** Various rare and endangered species like bharal or blue sheep, black bear, brown bear, himalayan monal, himalayan snowcock, himalayan tahr, musk deer and snow leopard are found in the park.

### Indo-Tibetan Border Police

- One of the [Central Reserve Police Forces \(CRPF\)](#), it was raised on 24<sup>th</sup> October 1962.

- ITBP is deployed on border guarding duties from **Karakoram Pass in Ladakh to Jachep La in Arunachal Pradesh** covering **3488 km of Sino-India Border**.
- ITBP is a **specialized mountain force** and most of the officers and men are **professionally trained mountaineers and skiers**.
- Being the first responder for natural disasters, ITBP has been carrying out **numerous rescue and relief operations** across the country.
- Headquarters: **New Delhi**.
- In **November 2019**, the Ministry of Home Affairs **proposed to merge** the **Assam Rifles** with the ITBP.

**Source: IE**

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