



World Medical and Health Games

[Source: PIB](#)

Recently, four **Armed Forces Medical Service (AFMS)** Officers have made India proud by winning a record **32 Medals** in the **43rd World Medical and Health Games** held in Saint-Tropez, France.

- **The World Medical and Health Games** also called the **Olympic Games for Health Professionals**.
- It is the most prestigious global sporting event within the medical community. The legacy of the **World Medical and Health Games** dates back to 1978.
- Over **2500 participants** from more than 50 different nations participate in this event annually.
- **Lt Col Sanjeev Malik, Maj Anish George, Capt Stephen Sebastian**, and **Capt Dania James**, made history by winning 19 Gold Medals, 09 Silver Medals and 04 Bronze Medals at the event.

Kanishka Tragedy

[Source: TH](#)

Recently, Canada has said that the investigation into the **1985 bombing of Air India Flight 182** is still "**active and ongoing**".

- On **23rd June 1985**, **Montreal-New Delhi Air India 'Kanishka' Flight 182** travelling from **Canada to India** via London, exploded off the **Irish coast** killing all **329 people** on board, mostly Indians.
- Another explosion at **Tokyo's Narita airport** killed two Japanese baggage handlers while the flight was still in the air.
 - Investigators later revealed that this bomb was connected to the attack on Flight 182 and was meant for **another Air India flight to Bangkok**, but it **detonated prematurely**.
- The bombing was attributed to **Sikh militants (Khalistanis)** in retaliation for **'Operation Bluestar'** by the Indian Army in **1984**.
 - **'Operation Bluestar'** was a **military operation** ordered by the Indian government to remove Sikh militants from the **Golden Temple in Amritsar**.
 - The **Khalistan movement** is a **separatist movement** seeking to **create a homeland for Sikhs** by establishing an **ethno-religious sovereign state** called Khalistan in the **Punjab region**.

Read More: [36th Anniversary of Operation Blue Star](#)

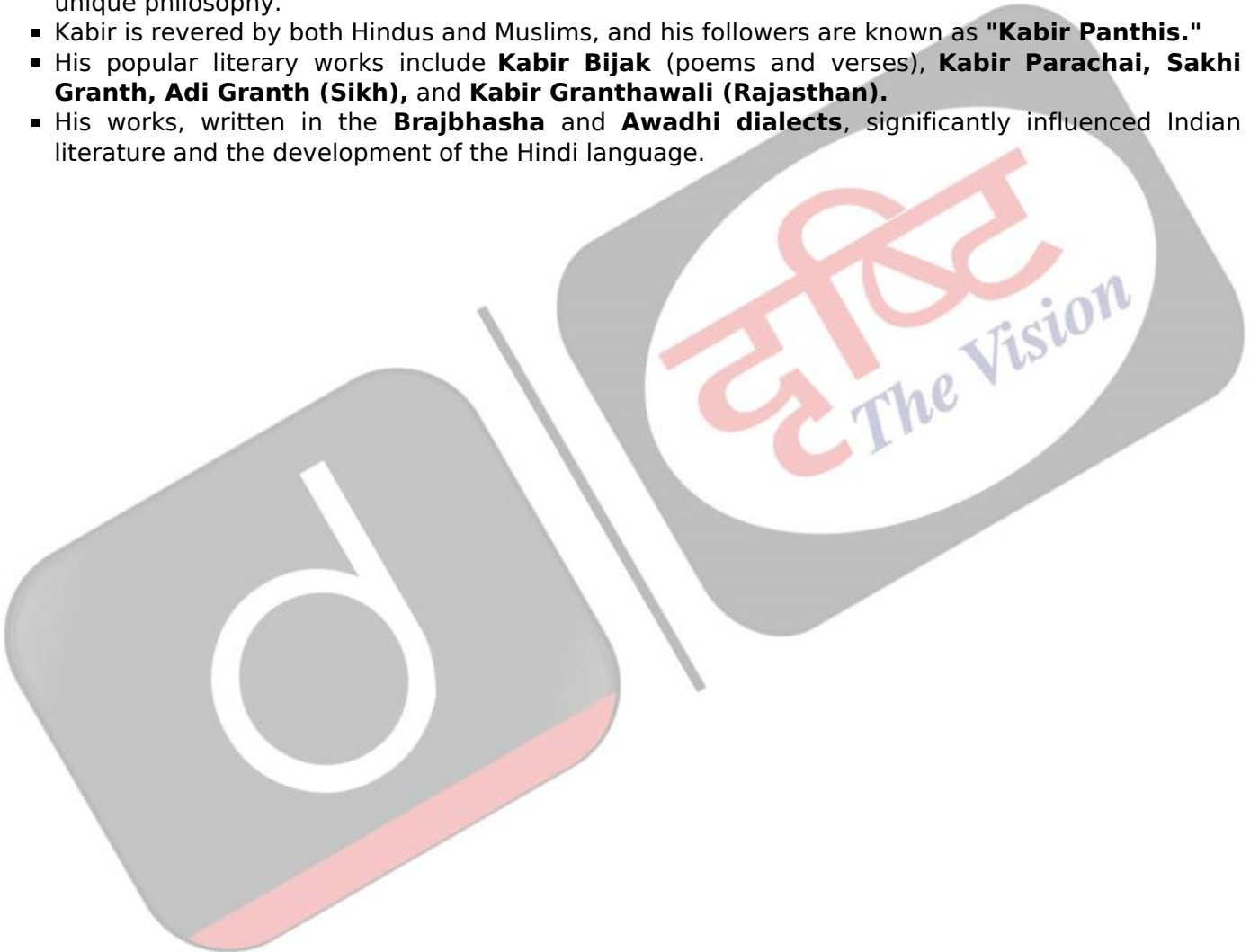
647th Birth Anniversary of Sant Kabir Das

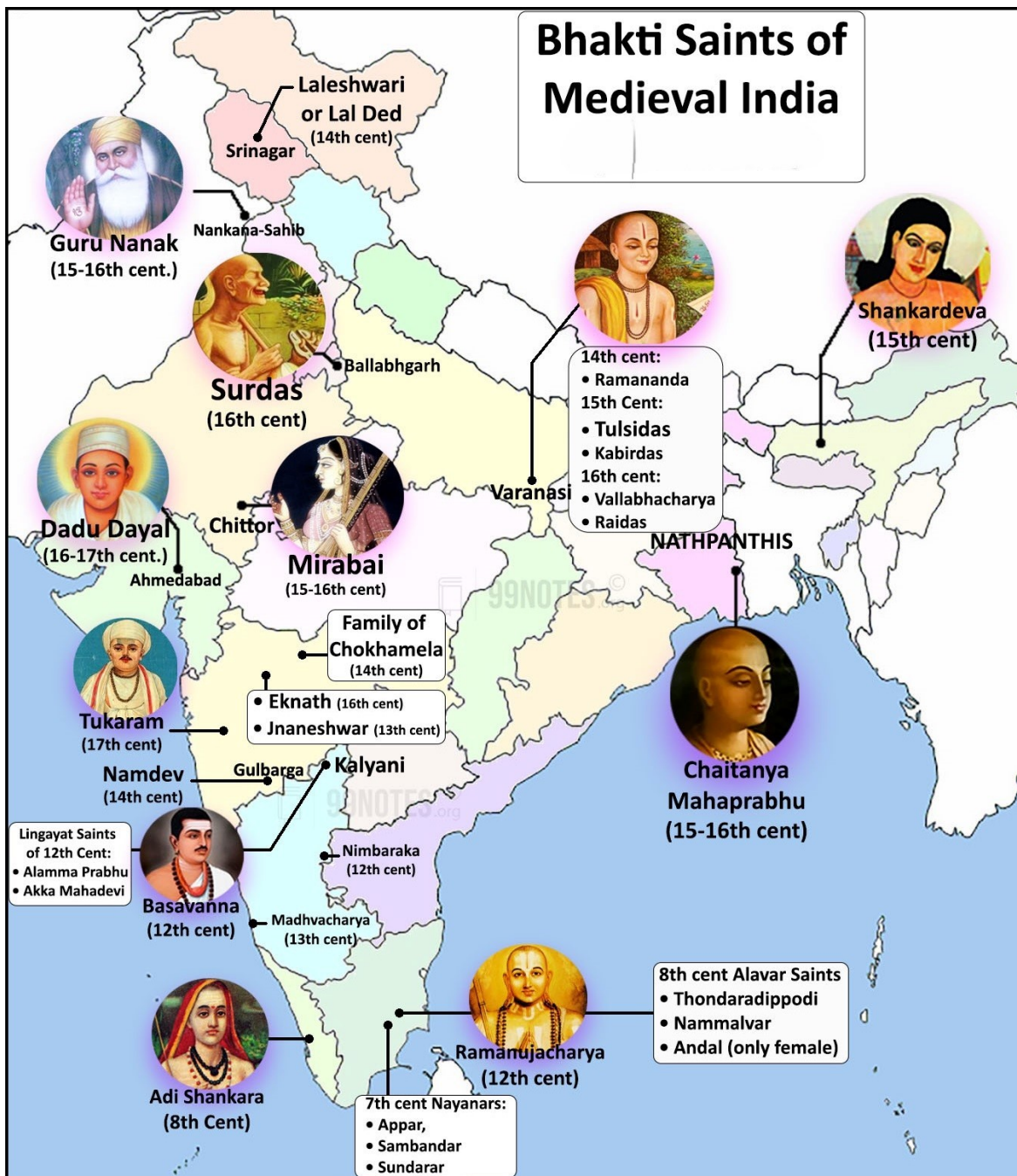
[Source: PIB](#)

On 22nd June 2024, the [Prime Minister](#) commemorated the **647th birth anniversary** of [Sant Kabir Das](#).

- Sant Kabir Das, a **15th-century Indian mystic poet and saint**, was born in **Varanasi**, Uttar Pradesh to a **Muslim** family but was **raised by a Hindu** weaver couple.
- He was a notable figure in the [Bhakti movement](#), which emphasised **devotion and love for the divine**.
 - The Bhakti movement started in the **7th century in South India** and spread to **North India during the 14th and 15th centuries**.
 - Popular poet-saints of the Bhakti movement, like **Ramananda** and **Kabir Das**, sang devotional songs in vernacular languages.
- Kabir sought spiritual guidance from teachers such as **Ramananda** and **Sheikh Taqi**, shaping his unique philosophy.
- Kabir is revered by both Hindus and Muslims, and his followers are known as "**Kabir Panthis**."
- His popular literary works include **Kabir Bijak** (poems and verses), **Kabir Parachai**, **Sakhi Granth**, **Adi Granth (Sikh)**, and **Kabir Granthawali (Rajasthan)**.
- His works, written in the **Brajbhasha** and **Awadhi dialects**, significantly influenced Indian literature and the development of the Hindi language.

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Read More: [Sant Kabir Das Jayanti](#)

Pushpak, ISRO's Reusable Launch Vehicle

Source: TH

Why in News?

Recently, [the Indian Space Research Organisation \(ISRO\)](#) successfully completed the third and final [Reusable Launch Vehicle Landing Experiment \(RLV LEX-03\)](#) for the **Pushpak vehicle**.

- This demonstrated the autonomous landing capability of the RLV under more challenging release conditions and severe wind conditions.

What is RLV LEX-03 Mission?

▪ About:

- During the RLV LEX-03 mission, the **Pushpak vehicle** was released from an **Indian Air Force Chinook helicopter** at an altitude of 4.5 km.
- From this point, the winged vehicle autonomously executed cross-range correction manoeuvres approached the runway and performed a precise horizontal landing at the runway centerline.
- The high-speed landing, exceeding 320 km/h, was successfully slowed to around 100 km/h using the vehicle's brake parachute and landing gear brakes.

▪ Technologies and Capabilities Demonstrated:

- **Precise Landing:** LEX-03 used multisensor fusion to guide the vehicle for a controlled landing.
- **Autonomous Flight:** The Pushpak vehicle demonstrated its ability to land itself, including correcting its course during descent.
- **Reusable Design:** The mission reused key parts from a previous flight, highlighting the cost-saving potential of RLVs.

▪ Significance:

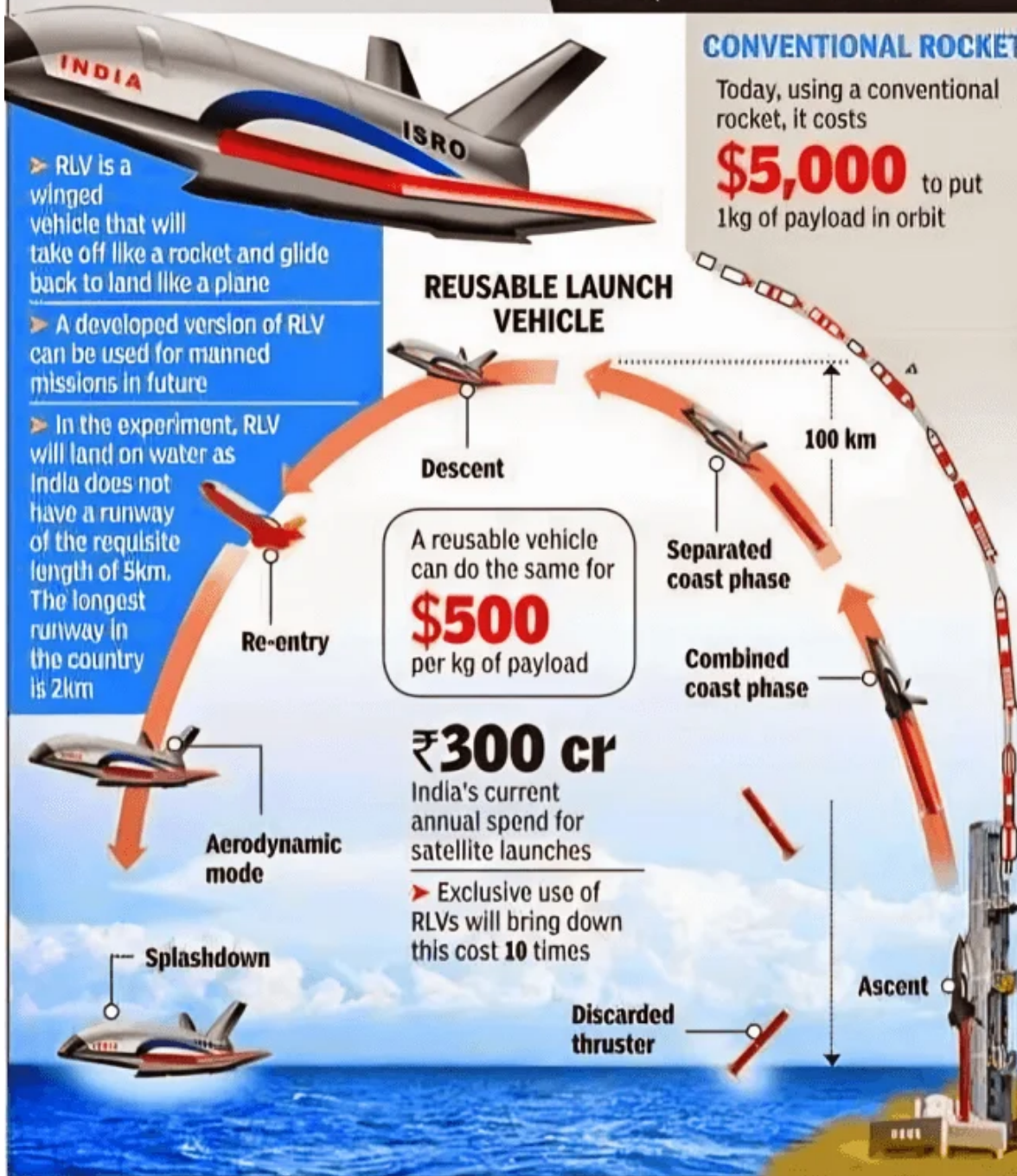
- This mission simulated the **approach and landing interface**, as well as the **high-speed landing conditions**, for a vehicle returning from space.
 - It validated **ISRO's advanced guidance algorithm** for longitudinal and lateral error corrections, which is essential for future **Orbital Re-entry Missions**.
- By testing key technologies like autonomous landing and reusable parts, it paves the way for a fully reusable launch vehicle. This could **cut launch costs** and make **space missions more efficient**.



The Vision

WHAT THE FUTURE HOLDS FOR ISRO

The reusable launch vehicle (RLV) will touch Mach 5 (five times the speed of sound), re-enter atmosphere and land on water



What are Reusable Launch Vehicles?

▪ About:

- **Reusable launch vehicles (RLVs)** are **rockets** that can be **used multiple times** for space missions, unlike **traditional expendable rockets** where each stage is **discarded after use**.

▪ Different from Multi-Stage Rocket:

- In a typical multi-stage rocket, the **first stage is jettisoned** (discarded to lighten the load) after its fuel is consumed, while the **remaining stages continue to propel the payload into orbit**.
- **RLVs recover and reuse the first stage**. After detaching from the upper stages, the first

stage uses engines or parachutes to descend and land back on Earth.

- It can then be **refurbished** for future launches, significantly **reducing costs**.

▪ **Space Agencies Currently Using or Developing RLVs.**

- **SpaceX (USA): Falcon 9**, with over 220 launches, 178 landings, and 155 re-flights as of May 2023.
- **Blue Origin (USA): New Shepard** performs suborbital flights and lands vertically.
- **JAXA (Japan) and ESA (Europe):** Researching reusable launch systems to reduce space access costs.
- **ISRO (India):** Developed the Reusable Launch Vehicle-Technology Demonstration (RLV-TD) and conducted a successful landing.

Read More: [Reusable Launch Vehicle-Technology](#)

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Q. With reference to India's satellite launch vehicles, consider the following statements: (2018)

1. PSLVs launch the satellites useful for Earth resources monitoring whereas GSLVs are designed mainly to launch communication satellites.
2. Satellites launched by PSLV appear to remain permanently fixed in the same position in the sky, as viewed from a particular location on Earth.
3. GSLV Mk III is a four-staged launch vehicle with the first and third stages using solid rocket motors, and the second and fourth stages using liquid rocket engines.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Ans: (a)

Post Office Act 2023

For Prelims: [Post Office Act, 1898](#), [Public Order](#), [Emergency](#), [Public Safety](#), [Land Revenue](#), [Freedom of Speech and Expression](#), [Right to Privacy](#)

For Mains: Significance of the Post Office Act, 2023 and its shortcomings.

[Source: PIB](#)

Why in News?

Recently, the Post Office Act of 2023 came into force repealing the [Indian Post Office Act, 1898](#).

What are the Key Highlights of the Post Office Act 2023?

- **Interception and Detention of Items:**
 - **Section 9:** This provision allows the centre to **authorise any officer to intercept** or detain any postal item for reasons related to state security, foreign relations, etc.
 - Items suspected of containing prohibited goods or items liable for customs duty can be handed over to **customs authorities**.
- **Exemption from Liability:**
 - **Section 10:** The Post Office and its **officers are exempt from liability for loss, misdelivery**, delay, or damage during the course of providing services, except as prescribed.
- **Removal of Penalties and Offences:** The new Act **eliminates all penalties** and offences outlined in the 1898 Act, including those related to misconduct, fraud, and theft by postal officials.
 - It includes provisions to **recover unpaid service** charges as arrears of land revenue.
- **Penalty under Section 7:** Every person who avails of a service provided by the Post Office **shall be liable to pay the charges** in respect of such service.
- **Removal of Centre's Exclusivity:** The new Act **removes the exclusive privilege** of the Centre to convey letters, a privilege which was effectively obsolete by the rise of private courier services in the 1980s.
 - The Act now **explicitly brings private courier services** under its regulatory ambit, **recognizing the government's loss of exclusivity** while expanding the scope to intercept and detain any postal article, not just letters.
- **Director General of Postal Services:** The new Act authorises the Director General of Postal Services **to make regulations** pertaining to activities essential for offering various additional services as may be prescribed by the central government, as well as for fixing charges for these services.
 - It **eliminates the need for parliamentary approval** while revising the set charges for any services provided by post offices.
- **Identifiers and Post Codes: Section 5(1)** of the Act states that "The Central Government may prescribe **standards for addressing on the items, address identifiers and usage of postcodes**".
 - This provision **is a forward-looking concept** and will **replace physical addresses** with digital codes based on geographical coordinates for precise identification of a premise.

Indian Post Office Act, 1898

- It came into force on **1st July 1898** with the objective to **consolidate and amend** the law relating to the Post Offices in India.
- It provides for the **regulation of the postal services** offered by the central government.
- It grants the Central government **exclusive privilege over conveying letters** and establishes a monopoly of the Central government over conveying letters.

What are the Issues in the Post Office Act 2023?

- **Regulation of Postal Services Different from Courier Services:** The [Consumer Protection Act, 2019](#) does not apply to services by India Post, but it applies to private courier services. The Post Office Act, 2023, seeking to **replace the 1898 Act, retains these provisions**.
- **Lack of Procedural Safeguards Violates Fundamental Rights:** The Bill does not specify any procedural safeguards against the interception of postal articles. This may violate the [right to privacy](#), and the [freedom of speech and expression](#).
 - In the case of interception of telecommunications, the [Supreme Court](#) in [People's Union for Civil Liberties \(PUCL\) vs Union of India, 1996](#) held that a just and fair procedure to regulate the power of interception must exist.
 - Otherwise, it is not possible to safeguard the rights of citizens under [Article 19\(1\)\(a\)](#) and [Article 21](#).
- **The Ground of 'Emergency' is Beyond the Reasonable Restrictions:** Like 1898 Act, an

emergency is not explicitly defined in the present act.

- **Exemption from Liability for Lapses in Services:** The Act's framework differs from railway laws, which **address service complaints** like loss, damage, non-delivery of goods, and fare refunds through the **Railway Claims Tribunal Act of 1987**.
- **Removal of all Offences and Penalties:** Under the 1898 Act, postal officers and others could be jailed or fined for illegally opening mail, but the 2023 Act removes these penalties, potentially harming privacy rights.

Way Forward

- **Incorporate Robust Procedural Safeguards:** For the interception of articles transmitted through India Post.
 - This should **include oversight mechanisms, judicial warrants**, and adherence to constitutional principles to protect the freedom of speech, expression, and the right to privacy of individuals.
- **Define the Grounds for Interception: Refine and clearly define the grounds** for interception, especially the term 'emergency,' to ensure it aligns with reasonable restrictions under the Constitution.
 - The Supreme Court in **Distt. Registrar & Collector, Hyderabad & Anr vs Canara Bank, 2005** ruled that the [right to privacy](#) remains intact when **confidential documents are given to a bank or personal items to a post office**, and that privacy requires written reasons for any search and seizure.
- **Balanced Liability Framework:** Ensure the **Post Office's accountability** by setting clear rules for liability without jeopardising its independence and efficiency.
 - The competent authority needs to be held accountable for any wilful misuse of interception powers, **without the 'good faith' clause** coming to their rescue.
- **Addressing Unauthorised Opening:** Create laws to penalise postal officers for unauthorised opening of mail and to hold individuals accountable for misconduct, fraud, and theft to protect consumer privacy.

Drishti Mains Question:

Q. Discuss the challenges to privacy in the context of the implementation of the Post Office Act, 2023.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Prelims:

Q. Under which of the following Articles of the Constitution of India, has the Supreme Court of India placed the Right to Privacy? (2024)

- (a) Article 15
- (b) Article 16
- (c) Article 19
- (d) Article 21

Ans: (d)

53rd GST Council Meeting

For Prelims: [Goods and Services Tax \(GST\) Council](#), [GST Appellate Tribunals](#), [Prevention of Money Laundering Act](#), [Enforcement Directorate](#), Aadhar.

For Mains: Outcomes of 51st GST Council Meeting, Issues related with GST Council, Functions of GST Council.

Source: TH

Why in News?

Recently, the 53rd meeting of the [Goods and Services Tax \(GST\) Council](#) has approved several measures to ease compliance for small businesses, exempting hostel accommodation, Railway services etc.

- It also agreed to reconvene in August 2024 to discuss restructuring the multiple tax rates under the seven-year GST.

What are the Key Highlights of the 53rd GST Council Meeting?

- **Aadhaar-based Biometric Authentication:** The council announced the rollout of biometric-based [Aadhaar](#) authentication on a national level **to combat fraudulent input tax credit claims** made through fake invoices. This is aimed at **enhancing tax compliance**.
- **Exemption for Hostel Accommodation:** Hostel accommodation services **outside educational institutions are exempt from GST** for rents up to Rs 20,000 per person per month, making it more affordable for students and the working class.
 - This exemption applies only for stays up to 90 days, whereas previously such rents incurred 12% GST.
- **Indian Railways Services:** GST exemption on **platform tickets**, aiming to ease the financial burden on passengers. This decision is part of broader efforts to make railway services more affordable.
- **Reduction in GST Rate on Cartons:** The GST rate on various types of carton boxes was **reduced from 18% to 12%**. This change is intended **to benefit both manufacturers and consumers by lowering the overall cost** of these essential packaging materials.
- **GST Reduction on Milk Cans and Solar Cookers:** A uniform GST rate of **12%** was announced for all milk cans, regardless of whether they are made of steel, iron, or aluminium.
- **Waiver of Interest and Penalties for Non-Fraudulent Cases:**
 - The council has recommended **waiving interest and penalties** for demand notices issued under **Section 73 of the GST Act**, which applies to cases that do not involve fraud, suppression, or misstatements.
- **New Monetary Limits for Filing Appeals:** The GST Council has recommended new monetary thresholds for filing appeals by the department in various courts which are **Rs 20 lakh for the GST Appellate Tribunal**, **Rs 1 crore for High Court**, and **Rs 2 crore for the Supreme Court** for filing appeals by the department.
 - The aim is to reduce government litigation.
- **Central Support and Conditional Loans to States:** The government introduced the '**Scheme for Special Assistance to States for Capital Investment**', where some loans are **conditional** on states implementing citizen-centric reforms and capital projects, urging states to meet the criteria to access these loans.
- **Petrol and Diesel under GST:** The central government **expressed its intent to bring petrol and diesel under the GST regime**, pending consensus among states on the applicable tax rate.
 - This is viewed as a step towards uniform taxation of fuel across the country.

Note

- [Goods and Services Tax \(GST\)](#) is a **value-added (Ad valorem) tax system** that is levied on the supply of goods and services in India.
- It is a comprehensive **indirect tax** that was introduced in India on **1st July 2017**, through the [101st Constitution Amendment Act, 2016](#), with the slogan of '**One Nation One Tax**'.

What is the GST Council?

▪ About:

- The GST Council is a **constitutional body** responsible for making recommendations on issues related to the implementation of the [Goods and Services Tax \(GST\)](#) in India.
- It was set up to **simplify the existing tax structure** in India, where both the Centre and states levied multiple taxes making it more uniform across the country.

▪ Constitutional Provisions:

- The **101st Amendment Act, of 2016** paved the way for the introduction of **GST**.
- The Amendment Act inserted a new **Article 279-A** in the Constitution, which empowers the [President](#) to constitute a **GST Council** or by an order.
 - Accordingly, the **President issued the order in 2016** and constituted the Goods and Services Tax Council.

▪ Members:

- The members of the Council include the **Union Finance Minister (Chairperson), the Union Minister of State (Finance)** from the Centre.
- Each state can nominate a minister in-charge of finance or taxation or any other minister as a member.

▪ Functions:

- **Article 279A (4)** empowers the Council for making recommendations to the **Union and the states** on important **GST-related issues** such as the goods and services that may be subject to or exempted from GST, model GST laws, and GST rates.
- It decides on various **rate slabs of GST** and whether they need to be modified for certain product categories.
- The Council also considers **special rates for raising additional resources** during natural calamities/disasters and special provisions for certain States.

▪ Working:

- The GST Council reaches decisions in its meetings by a **majority of at least three-fourths of the weighted votes of the members present and voting**.
- A **quorum of 50%** of the total members is required to conduct a meeting.
 - The **Central Government's** vote carries a weightage of one-third of the total votes cast in a meeting.
 - The votes of all **state governments** combined have a weightage of **two-thirds** of the total votes cast.
- The **recommendations of the GST Council** were earlier considered binding, but in 2022 the **Supreme Court** in **Union of India v. Mohit Minerals Pvt. Ltd Case** ruled that they **are not binding**, as both Parliament and State legislatures have "simultaneous" power to legislate on GST.

Impact of GST



Economy

- Dual monitoring by the Centre and states to reduce tax evasion
- Better compliance through real time matching of supplier and purchaser
- Reduction in the approx Rs 1.8 lakh crore annual loss due to excise duty exemptions
- Cut in Rs 1.5 lakh crore estimated loss to states due to tax exemptions



Companies

- Tax credits to **lower their tax burden, improve profit margin**
- **No distinction** between product and service for tax purposes
- Uniform tax across the country to **ease doing business**
- **Smooth movement** of products across states
- One-time increase in compliance cost likely



Consumer

- Most products are likely to be less expensive over time
- Most services (eg. restaurants, travels, mobile bills, insurance premium) likely to cost more
- Mobiles, Jewellery, some ready made wear in some states may cost more

What is not part of GST

Alcohol

Industry keen, states block move to include alcohol for human consumption. They want total freedom to tax the sin good

Petroleum

States don't want to give up power to tax, given this is an easy revenue

source. Petrol, diesel, aviation fuel, natural gas and crude stay out for two years

Real Estate

Stamp duty to remain on sale of property but service tax, where applicable, to be part of GST

Drishti Mains Question:

Discuss the objectives and the key features of the GST framework. Analyse the advantages and challenges of the GST system and suggest measures to address the challenges for its successful implementation.

UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Prelims

Q1. Consider the following items: (2018)

1. Cereal grains hulled
2. Chicken eggs cooked
3. Fish processed and canned
4. Newspapers containing advertising material

Which of the above items is/are exempted under GST (Good and Services Tax)?

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

Ans: (c)

Q2. What is/are the most likely advantages of implementing 'Goods and Services Tax (GST)'? (2017)

1. It will replace multiple taxes collected by multiple authorities and will thus create a single market in India.
2. It will drastically reduce the 'Current Account Deficit' of India and will enable it to increase its foreign exchange reserves.
3. It will enormously increase the growth and size of economy of India and will enable it to overtake China in the near future.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

Ans: (a)

Mains

Q. Explain the rationale behind the Goods and Services Tax (Compensation to States) Act of 2017. How has COVID-19 impacted the GST compensation fund and created new federal tensions? **(2020)**

Q. Enumerate the indirect taxes which have been subsumed in the Goods and Services Tax (GST) in India. Also, comment on the revenue implications of the GST introduced in India since July 2017. **(2019)**

Q. Explain the salient features of the Constitution (One Hundred and First Amendment) Act, 2016. Do you think it is efficacious enough "to remove cascading effect of taxes and provide for the common national market for goods and services"? **(2017)**

Q. Discuss the rationale for introducing the Goods and Services Tax (GST) in India. Bring out critically the reasons for the delay in rollout for its regime. **(2013)**

