



## Trees Cut Down for Proposed Kanwar Yatra Route | Uttar Pradesh | 13 Nov 2024

### Why in News?

According to [the National Green Tribunal \(NGT\)](#), authorities have cut around 17,600 trees in Uttar Pradesh's **Ghaziabad, Meerut, and Muzaffarnagar districts** to make way for a new [Kanwar Yatra](#) route.

### Key Points

- **Background:**
  - Earlier this year, the NGT took [suo motu cognizance](#) of a news report regarding the Uttar Pradesh government's plan to cut down 1,12,722 trees.
  - The purpose of this large-scale tree-cutting was to facilitate a proposed **Kanwar Yatra route between Muradnagar in Ghaziabad and Purkaji in Muzaffarnagar.**
- **Findings of the Interim Report:**
  - In August 2024, the NGT **established a joint panel to examine the environmental concerns** associated with this project.
  - The report, **based on data from the Irrigation Department**, highlighted that initial permission allowed for felling 1,12,722 trees, but the target was later reduced to 33,776 trees.
- The NGT instructed the Uttar Pradesh government to clarify if the calculation of trees to be cut follows the [U.P. Protection of Trees Act, 1976](#).
  - The government must also specify if **additional vegetation such as plants and bushes**, which may be removed for road construction, **fall under the Act's definition of trees.**

### The Kanwar Yatra

- It is a **Hindu pilgrimage** in the **month of Shravana**, by **Lord Shiva devotees**.
- The devotees **travel to pilgrimage** places like [Haridwar](#), [Gaumukh](#), [Gangotri](#) in Uttarakhand, [Sultanganj](#) in Bihar, [Prayagraj](#), [Ayodhya](#), and [Varanasi](#) in Uttar Pradesh, and return by carrying [Ganga](#) water in kanwars to seek the blessings of Shiva.
  - The water is offered to Shiva temples, including the [12 Jyotirlingas](#) across India and other shrines like the Pura Mahadev Mandir and Augharnath in Uttar Pradesh, the famous [Kashi Vishwanath temple](#), and the [Baba Baidyanath Temple](#) in Deoghar, Jharkhand. The ritual is known as **Jal Abhishek**.

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# NATIONAL GREEN TRIBUNAL

The National Green Tribunal (NGT) is a specialised body for swift resolution of environmental and natural resource cases.

## About

- 🕒 **Establishment:** By National Green Tribunal Act 2010
- 🕒 **Objective:** Quick resolution of environmental & natural resource cases
- 🕒 **Case Resolution:** Within 6 months
- 🕒 **Places of Sitting:** New Delhi (Principal), Bhopal, Pune, Kolkata, and Chennai

## Structure

- 🕒 **Composition:** Chairperson, Judicial Members, and Expert Members
- 🕒 **Tenure:** Up to 5 years/until age 65 (no reappointment)
- 🕒 **Appointments:** Chairperson - Central Government (with the CJI's consultation)
  - 🕒 10-20 judicial members & 10-20 expert members - Selection Committee

India is the third country globally (after Australia and New Zealand) and the first developing nation to establish a specialised environmental tribunal like NGT.

## Powers & Jurisdiction

- 🕒 **Jurisdiction:** Civil cases on environmental issues and rights
- 🕒 **Suo Motu Powers:** Granted since 2021
- 🕒 **Roles:** Adjudicatory, preventative, and remedial
- 🕒 **Procedures:** Follows Principles of natural justice
  - 🕒 Not bound by the CPC, 1908 or Indian Evidence Act, 1872
- 🕒 **Principles:** Sustainable Development; Precautionary; Polluter pays
- 🕒 **Orders:** Executable as civil court decrees; offers relief and compensation (**decisions are binding**)
- 🕒 **Appeals:** Tribunal can review its decisions.
  - 🕒 If decision fails - Appeal to the SC to be filed within 90 days

## NGT deals with Civil Cases under

- 🕒 Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974
- 🕒 Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Cess Act, 1977
- 🕒 Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980
- 🕒 Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981
- 🕒 Environment (Protection) Act, 1986
- 🕒 Public Liability Insurance Act, 1991
- 🕒 Biological Diversity Act, 2002



Drishti IAS

## Full Motion Simulator Facility Inaugurated in Agra | Uttar Pradesh | 13 Nov 2024

### Why in News?

Recently, the [Indian Air Force \(IAF\) C-295 Full Motion Simulator \(FMS\)](#) was inaugurated in **Air Force Station Agra**, Uttar Pradesh. It will allow a significant proportion of **pilot training to be**

undertaken in the simulator, thereby saving precious flying hours on the aircraft.

## Key Points

- The simulator **offers pilots near-realistic training, replicating missions** such as tactical airlift, para-dropping, para-trooping, medical evacuation, and disaster relief.
  - It also **simulates critical scenarios, enhancing pilots' readiness for real-world operations** and improving their ability to make rapid, high-stakes decisions, which boosts the overall safety of military flights.
- The introduction of the **C-295 aircraft** into the IAF **strengthens the country's aerospace industry**, as it marks the beginning of "**Atmanirbhar Bharat**" in private-sector transport aircraft production.
- **C-295 Aircraft:**
  - It is a **transport aircraft of 5-10 tonne capacity** with contemporary technology.
  - Robust and reliable, it is a **versatile and efficient tactical transport aircraft** which can perform a number of different missions.
  - **Features:**
    - The aircraft, with a flight endurance of up to 11 hours, **can carry out multi-role operations under all weather conditions.**
    - It can routinely operate day as well as night combat missions from desert to maritime environments.
    - It has a **rear ramp door for quick reaction and para dropping of troops** and cargo. Short take-off/land from semi-prepared surfaces is another of its features.
  - **Replacement:**
    - It will **replace the Indian Air Force's ageing fleet of Avro-748 planes.**
      - The Avro-748 planes are a **British-origin twin-engine turboprop, military transport and freighter** with a 6-tonne freight capacity.



# Haryana Records Lowest Sex Ratio | Haryana | 13 Nov 2024

## Why in News?

According to the Haryana government, the [Sex Ratio at Birth \(SRB\)](#) of Haryana, infamous for [female foeticide](#), has **reached its lowest level in eight years**.

## Key Points

- **Decline in Sex Ratio in Haryana:**
  - The sex ratio in Haryana was recorded at **905 for the first 10 months of 2024, which is a drop of 11 points from 2022**.
  - This is one of the **lowest figures since 2016**, indicating a persistent challenge for the state.
  - **Districts with Lowest Sex Ratios:**
    - Gurugram: 859
    - Rewari: 868
    - Charkhi Dadri: 873
    - Rohtak: 880
    - Panipat: 890
    - Mahendragarh: 896
  - Haryana remains **below** the [World Health Organization's recommended ideal sex ratio of 950](#).
  - Gurugram's poor performance was partially attributed to **technical issues on the state portal** during June to August 2024, **resulting in fewer birth registrations**.
- **Impact of the Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao Campaign:**
  - The ["Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao" campaign](#), launched in 2015, initially raised the sex ratio to **923 by 2019**.
    - However, a **decline began again in 2020**, with the trend continuing to the present.
- **Societal and Cultural Challenges:**
  - There remains a **preference for sons in Haryana**, driven by socio-economic factors and cultural norms.
  - Families fear potential dishonor from daughters eloping, consider dowry burdens, and see limited economic returns from girls.
- **Cross-State Impact of Gender Preference:**
  - **Neighboring states** like Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, and Rajasthan reportedly **attract Haryana residents for illegal gender-based abortions** due to less stringent regulations.
    - Ultrasound operators in these states sometimes misreport fetal gender for financial gain.
- **Enforcement and Challenges in Gender Testing:**
  - Since 2005, Haryana has conducted around 1,200 raids to **curb illegal gender determination**, but success rates are falling as practitioners become more cautious.
- **Social Consequences of Gender Imbalance:**
  - Due to a skewed sex ratio, many men in **Haryana struggle to find marriage partners**, with some villages reporting hundreds of unmarried men.
  - In some families, **neglect and malnutrition** disproportionately affect girls, leading to health issues or early death.

## Female Infanticide and Foeticide

- India has **one of the highest rates** of female foeticide in the world.
- Female foeticide is due to strong **son preference, the practice of dowry and the patrilineal necessity of heir**.
- The **census of 2011** has recorded the lowest ever sex ratio of 914 in the age group 0-6 years with 3 million missing girls; from 78.8 million in 2001 to 75.8 million in 2011.

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# Development of Integrated Manufacturing Cluster in Gaya | Bihar | 13 Nov 2024

## Why in News?

Recently, [National Industrial Corridor Development Corporation \(NICDC\)](#) and the [Bihar Industrial Area Development Authority \(BIADA\)](#) have signed the **State Support Agreement (SSA)** and **Shareholder Agreement (SHA)** for the establishment of an **Integrated Manufacturing Cluster (IMC)** in Gaya.

## Key Points

- **Vision of the Project:**
  - It aims to establish an IMC in Gaya, part of the [Amritsar-Kolkata Industrial Corridor \(AKIC\)](#).
  - The project aligns with the **'Vikas bhi, Virasat bhi'** vision, blending industrial growth with the [cultural heritage of Gaya](#), a renowned pilgrimage and heritage tourism site.
- **Industrial Growth and Employment Generation:**
  - IMC Gaya, located near [Gaya International Airport](#), with a project cost of Rs 1,339 crore is expected to generate approximately 1,09,185 jobs, boosting local economic growth.
  - Targeted industries include building materials, agri-food processing, leather goods, garments, furniture, handloom, handicrafts, engineering, fabrications, and medical equipment.
- **Strategic Connectivity and Access:**
  - IMC Gaya offers strategic connectivity with **National Highways, Gaya Junction**, and the upcoming **New Paharpur Railway Station**.
  - Key airports include Gaya International, Patna International, and Ranchi Airport.
  - It is close to major ports and inland terminals like **Haldia Port, Gaighat in Patna, and Ramnagar in Varanasi enhances logistics**.
  - Three greenfield road projects are also proposed to improve accessibility, leveraging connections like the [Golden Quadrilateral](#) and multi-track railways.
- **Planned Infrastructure and Facilities:**
  - Facilities include a skill development center, fire station, administrative office, parking, and commercial space to support industries.
  - Infrastructure includes Common Effluent Treatment Plant, [Sewage Treatment Plant](#), Water Treatment Plant, [Solid Waste Management](#), stormwater drainage, and green landscaping.
  - The IMC Gaya is anticipated to drive economic growth, create extensive employment, and **strengthen Bihar's role as an industrial hub in Eastern India**, advancing the ['Make in India' vision](#).

## Amritsar-Kolkata Industrial Corridor (AKIC)

- It covers **Punjab, Haryana, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand and West Bengal**.
  - The Project extends **from Amritsar (Punjab) to Dankuni (West Bengal)** for a length of 1839 kms.
  - The **Eastern Dedicated Freight Corridor** is the backbone of this economic corridor.
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## Igas Bagwal Festival | Uttarakhand | 13 Nov 2024

Why in News?

**Igas Bagwal**, also known as **Budhi Diwali** or **Harbodhni Ekadashi**, is a traditional festival **celebrated in Uttarakhand 11 days after Diwali**. The festival reflects the **cultural heritage** of the state, uniting communities through shared traditions and festivities.

### Key Points

- **Origins and Significance:**
  - Igas Bagwal is celebrated on **Kartik Shukla Ekadashi** and **marks the end of Lord Vishnu's four-month rest period**, an auspicious time for new beginnings.
  - The term "Igas" resonates with cultural pride and mythological reverence in Uttarakhand.
  - It is believed that when **news of Lord Rama's return to Ayodhya** reached **Uttarakhand 11 days after Diwali**, locals celebrated their version of Diwali.
  - Another legend celebrates the **victory of Garhwali warrior Madhav Singh Bhandari over Tibet at Dapaghati**, commemorated by the community as a symbol of unity and valor.
- **Bhailo- The Torch Tradition:**
  - Villagers create **large torches** called **Bhailo or Andhaya** by **binding pinewood sticks**, which are **lit and swung overhead**, **symbolizing the banishment of darkness**.
  - This torch ritual is also believed to **invoke blessings of prosperity from Goddess Lakshmi**.
- **Festival Rituals and Cattle Honoring:**
  - Cattle, essential to Uttarakhand's **agrarian lifestyle**, are honored during Igas Bagwal. Villagers wash and decorate them with turmeric and mustard oil.
  - Special **meals are prepared for the animals**, and traditional delicacies are shared among villagers to celebrate communal harmony.
- **Efforts to Preserve Igas Bagwal:**
  - Local authorities and cultural organizations promote Igas Bagwal through programs and awareness campaigns, aiming to **preserve the festival's heritage**.
  - Youth-focused initiatives emphasize the cultural significance of Igas Bagwal, ensuring its legacy endures for future generations.

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## Sirpur Lake | Madhya Pradesh | 13 Nov 2024

Why in News?

Recently, on the **National Green Tribunal's** order, a team from the **Indore Municipal Corporation** **removed encroachments** and cleared stalls from the catchment area of **Sirpur Lake**.

- It was designated a **Ramsar site** under the **Ramsar Convention** on **January 7, 2022**.

### Key Points

- **About Sirpur Wetland:**
  - It is a **Human-made wetland**, often called **Pakshi Vihar (bird sanctuary)**. It is located in **Indore district of Madhya Pradesh**.
  - It is more than 130 years old, made by **Maharaja Shivaji rao Holkar** to generate water supply for the city of Indore.
  - It is a **shallow, alkaline, nutrient-rich lake** that floods during **monsoon**.
- **Biodiversity:**
  - Hosts around **175 terrestrial plant species** and six types of macrophytes.
  - Supports **30 fish species** (natural and cultured), and eight species of **reptiles and amphibians**.
  - Home to **130 bird species**, including resident and migratory birds such as, **Common pochard (Aythya ferina)**, **Egyptian vulture (Neophron percnopterus)**, **Indian river tern (Sterna aurantia)**.
  - Attracts a **large congregation of waterbirds in winter**, making it a significant **seasonal habitat**.
- **Benefits to Local Communities:**
  - Provides fisheries and **medicinal plants**.
  - Acts as a **flood buffer** and helps regulate the local microclimate.
  - Offers opportunities for spiritual enrichment, recreation, and educational activities.
- **Conservation Status:**
  - The site currently **lacks a formal management plan** and does not have national legal conservation status.

# RAMSAR CONVENTION

## About

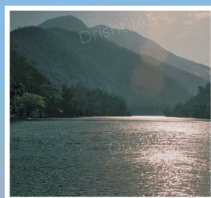
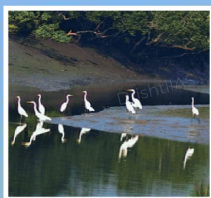
- Also known as the Convention on Wetlands.
- An intergovernmental treaty, adopted in 1971, in Ramsar, Iran.
- Entered into force in 1975.
- Wetlands that are of international importance are declared as Ramsar sites.
- Largest Ramsar Site in World: Pantanal: South America

## Montreux Record

- Adopted in Montreux (Switzerland) in 1990.
- Identifies Ramsar sites that need priority conservation attention at national or international level.

## Wetlands

- A place in which the land is covered by water – salt, fresh, or somewhere in between – either seasonally or permanently.
- Take many forms including rivers, marshes, bogs, mangroves, mudflats, ponds, swamps, billabongs, lagoons, lakes, and floodplains.
- World Wetlands Day: **2<sup>nd</sup> February**



## India & Ramsar Convention

- Came into force in India: **1982**
- Total Number of Ramsar Sites: **85**
  - Chilika Lake (Odisha), Keoladeo National Park (Rajasthan), Harike Lake (Punjab), Loktak Lake (Manipur), Wular Lake (Jammu and Kashmir), etc.
- Related Framework in India
  - The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) has notified Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Rules, 2017 under the provisions of the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986 as regulatory framework for conservation and management of wetlands.
  - The 2017 Rules decentralise wetlands management and provide for the constitution of the State Wetlands Authority or Union Territory Wetlands Authority.

## Key Facts

- Largest Ramsar Site: Sunderbans, West Bengal
- Smallest Ramsar Site: Vembannur Wetland Complex, Tamil Nadu
- State with the maximum number of Ramsar Sites: Tamil Nadu (14)
- Wetlands in Montreux Record:
  - Keoladeo National Park: Rajasthan
  - Loktak Lake: Manipur

