



80-Pillar Assembly Hall of Kumhrar and Mauryan Architecture

For Prelims: [Archaeological Survey of India](#), [Mauryan empire](#), [Emperor Ashoka](#), [Buddhism](#), [Central Ground Water Board](#), [Sanchi Stupa](#), Ajivika Sect

For Mains: Mauryan Empire and its Significance in Ancient India, Mauryan Architecture

Source: IE

Why in News?

The [Archaeological Survey of India \(ASI\)](#) has initiated efforts to uncover the remnants of an **80-pillar assembly hall at the Mauryan archaeological site of Kumhrar, Patna.**

- The initiative promises to rekindle global interest in the [Mauryan empire and its contributions to art and architecture.](#)

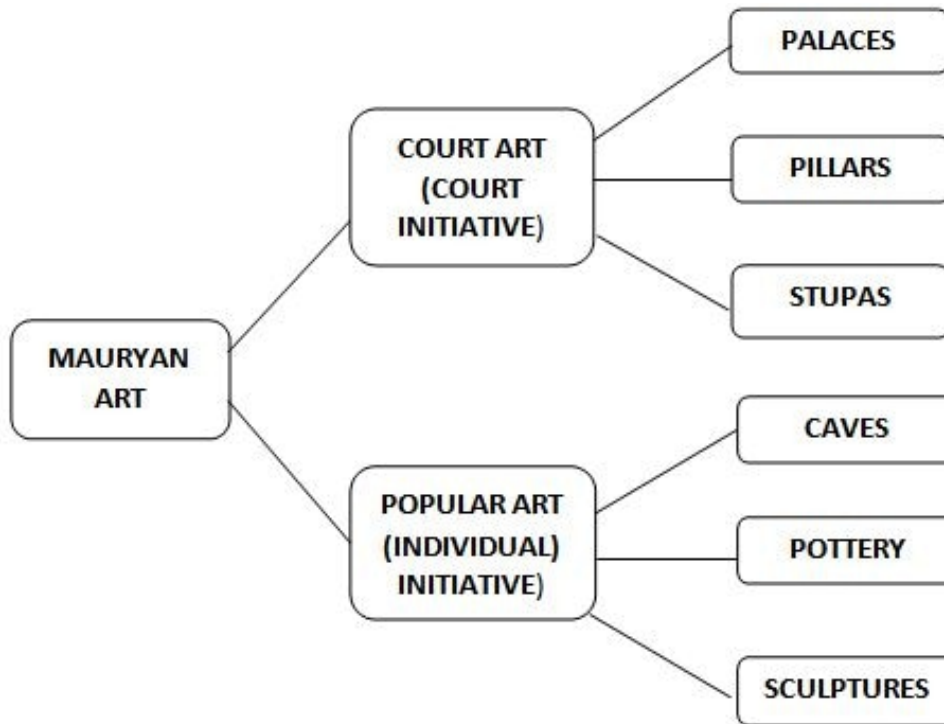
What are the Key Facts About the 80-Pillar Assembly Hall of Kumhrar?

- **Historical Importance: 80-Pillar Assembly Hall of Kumhrar**, is linked to the **Mauryan empire (321-185 BCE)**, one of ancient India's greatest dynasties.
 - [Emperor Ashoka \(268-232 BCE\)](#) is believed to have convened the **3rd Buddhist Council** in this hall, aiming to unify the fragmented **Buddhist sangha and propagate Dharma (Buddhist teachings)**.
 - This event was pivotal in shaping [Buddhism](#) as a global religion.
 - The site reaffirms **Pataliputra (Mauryan capital)** role as a **political and cultural hub of the Mauryan empire.**
- **Architectural Significance:** The hall featured 80 sandstone pillars supporting a wooden roof and floor.
 - Materials like sandstone and wood were transported via the [Sone-Ganga river route](#), showcasing advanced planning and resource management during the Mauryan period.
- **Archaeological Discoveries:**
 - **First Excavation (1912-1915):** Discovered one intact pillar, 80 pits marking the placement of other pillars, and stone fragments.
 - Evidence of thick ash layers suggested destruction by fire, potentially during the **Indo-Greek invasion or later Huna invasions**
 - **Second Excavation (1961-1965):** unearthed four additional pillars.
- **Preservation Challenges:** Rising water levels led to partial submergence of the site, prompting the **ASI to cover it with soil in 2004-2005 as a conservation measure.**
- **Reopening of the Assembly Hall:** The ASI is uncovering the site due to a receded water table in Patna and rising interest in Mauryan heritage.
 - Initially, 6-7 pillars will be exposed to study humidity and groundwater impacts, with support from the [Central Ground Water Board.](#)
 - An expert committee will later decide on fully reopening the 80 pillars, balancing preservation with public access.

What are the Key Highlights of the Mauryan Art and Architecture?

- **Architectural Types:** Mauryan architecture is categorized into **Court Art** (designed for political and religious purposes) and **Popular Art** (widely accessible and influenced by local traditions).

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▪ Mauryan Court Art:

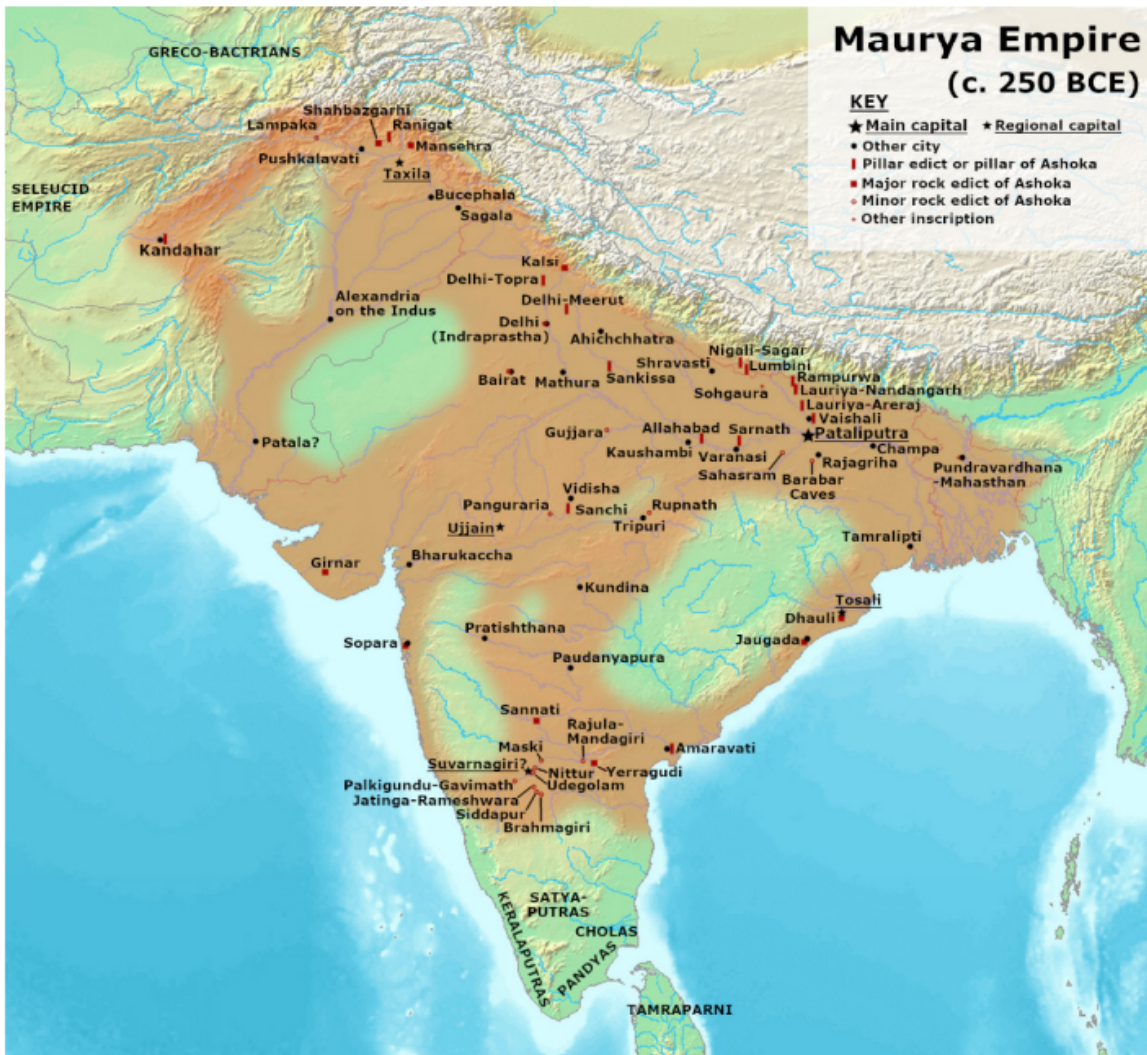
- **Palace:** Greek historian **Megasthenes** praised the palaces of the Mauryan Empire as remarkable creations, with **Chinese traveler Fa Hien** calling them god-gifted monuments.
 - The palace of Chandragupta Maurya was influenced by **Achaemenid palaces at Persepolis (capital of the Achaemenid Empire)**.
 - Wood was the primary material used in construction.
 - **Examples:** Ashoka's palace at Kumrahar, and Chandragupta's palace.
- **Pillars:** Mauryan pillars are tall, free-standing, monolithic, and made of sandstone quarried at Chunar.
 - They feature a lustrous polish and were influenced by **Achaemenian pillars**.
 - While Mauryan pillars are rock-cut, showcasing the carver's skills, **Achaemenian pillars were constructed in pieces**.
 - Ashoka's pillars, found across north India, often feature capitals with animal figures like lions and bulls, symbolizing the state.
 - They were erected to disseminate Buddhist teachings and court orders, with inscriptions in **Pali, Prakrit, Greek, and Aramaic**.
 - The structure of Mauryan pillars consists of four parts: a **monolithic shaft, a lotus- or bell-shaped capital, an abacus, and a capital figure**.
 - Similarities with Achaemenian pillars include **polished stones and motifs like the lotus**, as well as the practice of inscribing proclamations.
- **Stupa:** Typically, stupas feature a **cylindrical drum, a hemispherical mound (anda), a harmika (square railing), and a chhatra (Central pillar supporting a triple umbrella form)** representing Buddhist principles.
 - The stupa's core was unburnt brick, while the outer surface used burnt bricks, covered with plaster, and decorated with wooden sculptures.
 - **Sanchi Stupa (Madhya Pradesh)**, most famous Ashokan stupa. **Piprahwa Stupa (Uttar Pradesh) oldest**.
 - **Other stupas post-Buddha's death:** Rajagriha, Vaishali, Kapilavastu, Allakappa, Ramagrama, Vethapida, Pava, Kushinagar, Pippalivana.

▪ **Mauryan Popular Art:**

- **Cave Architecture:** During the Mauryan period, caves were used as **viharas by Jain and Buddhist monks**. They were characterized by highly polished interiors and decorative gateways.
 - **Example: Barabar Caves** (4 caves) in Bihar, created by Ashoka for the **Ajivika Sect** (founded by Goshala Maskariputra, emphasized that the universe was governed by **niyati (destiny)**).
- **Sculptures:** Yaksha and Yakshi sculptures were worshipped across Jainism, Hinduism, and Buddhism.
 - **Examples: Lohanipur Yaksha** (torso of the nude male figure), and **Didargunj Yakshi**, Patna
- **Pottery:** Known as **Northern Black Polished Ware (NBPW)**, Mauryan pottery had black paint and a lustrous finish, often used for luxury items.

Mauryan Dynasty

- **Chandragupta Maurya (321-297 BCE):** The **founder of the Mauryan Empire**, overthrew the **Nanda dynasty** and expanded the empire by annexing regions such as the **Hindu Kush**.
 - In 305-303 BCE, he formed a treaty with **Seleucus Nicator**, gaining additional territories. Later in life, **Chandragupta became a disciple of Jainism**.
 - **Chanakya**, the prime minister under the reign of Chandragupta Maurya (322 BCE - 297 BCE) and his successor Bindusara. Chanakya played a significant role in the empire's success.
- **Bindusara (298-272 BCE):** Expanded the empire to the Deccan, known as "**Amitraghata**" (**slayer of enemies**). Adopted the **Ajivika sect**. **Deimachus** was a Greek ambassador at his court.
- **Ashoka (272-232 BCE):** After the **Kalinga War**, which led to massive casualties, he embraced **Buddhism** and promoted peace through his **Dhamma (moral laws)**. Organized the 3rd Buddhist Council and spread Buddhism globally.
- **Dasharatha (232-224 BCE):** Last Mauryan ruler to issue imperial inscriptions. Faced territorial losses.
- **Samprati (224-215 BCE):** Re-established Mauryan control over disintegrated territories and promoted Jainism.
- **Shalishuka (215-202 BCE):** Known as a quarrelsome ruler with a negative reputation.
- **Devavarman (202-195 BCE):** Brief reign, mentioned in the Puranas.
- **Shatadhanvan (195-187 BCE):** Lost territories due to external invasions.
- **Brihadratha (187-185 BCE):** The last Mauryan emperor, assassinated by **Pushyamitra Shunga**, marking the end of the Mauryan dynasty.



Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)

- The ASI, under the Union Ministry of Culture, **protects and maintains monuments and archaeological sites of national importance** under the relevant provisions of the **Ancient Monuments Preservation Act, 1904 and The Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1958 (AMASR Act)**.
 - ASI conducts surveys, excavations, and conservation of archaeological sites and protected monuments.
 - ASI was founded in 1861 by **Alexander Cunningham- the first Director-General of ASI**. He is considered as the **“Father of Indian Archaeology”**.

Drishti Mains Question:

Discuss the contributions of Mauryan architecture to India’s cultural heritage.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Questions (PYQs)

Prelims

Q. Who among the following rulers advised his subjects through this inscription?

“Whosoever praises his religious sect or blames other sects out of excessive devotion to his own sect, with the view of glorifying his own sect, he rather injures his own sect very severely.” (2020)

- (a) Ashoka
- (b) Samudragupta
- (c) Harshavardhana
- (d) Krishanadeva Raya

Ans: (a)

Q: In which of the following relief sculpture inscriptions is 'Ranyo Ashoka' (King Ashoka) mentioned along with the stone portrait of Ashoka? (2019)

- (a) Kanganahalli
- (b) Sanchi
- (c) Shahbazagrhi
- (d) Sohgaura

Ans: (a)

Q: Who of the following had first deciphered the edicts of Emperor Ashoka? (2016)

- (a) Georg Buhler
- (b) James Prinsep
- (c) Max Muller
- (d) William Jones

Ans: (b)

SHe-Box Portal

Source: PIB

Recently, the **SHe-Box portal** has been launched by the **Ministry of Women and Child Development** to enhance the implementation of **the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition, and Redressal) Act, 2013**.

- The portal is designed to mask the details of the **complainant, ensuring confidentiality, with only the [Chairperson of the Internal Committee \(IC\)](#) or **Local Committee (LC)** having access to this information.**
- Complaints can be filed by the aggrieved woman or a **representative on her behalf**. The process requires basic details such as **work status, name, phone number, and email**.
 - If the workplace's IC or LC is registered on the portal, complaints are automatically forwarded for action.
- The portal includes a **monitoring dashboard for nodal officers** at various administrative levels to track the number of complaints filed, resolved, and pending.
 - Time prescribed under the Act for inquiry is **90 days**.

Groundwater Subsidence in California

Source: [Nature](#)

Recently, a study reveals that **California's San Joaquin Valley** has been **sinking at a record pace** due to overpumping groundwater, with some areas experiencing declines of over one foot per year since 2006.

- The **Valley** has a history of subsidence, with significant land sinking occurring from 1925 to 1970 due to aggressive [groundwater pumping](#).
- Researchers employed **interferometric synthetic aperture radar (InSAR)** to accurately measure land elevation changes.
 - This technology allows for frequent monitoring of subsidence across large areas, providing valuable data for addressing the issue.
- **Land Subsidence:**
 - According to the [NOAA](#), [land subsidence](#) is sinking off the ground because of underground material movement.
 - **Overexploitation of underground resources**, such as water, petroleum and minerals, decreases pore pressure and increases effective stress, causing ground subsidence.
 - [Flood-managed aquifer recharge](#) strategies can mitigate subsidence by recharging aquifers.
- **Land Subsidence in India:** [Joshimath sinking](#)



Read more: [Land Subsidence in Chenab Valley](#)

Lake-Effect Snow

[Source: IE](#)

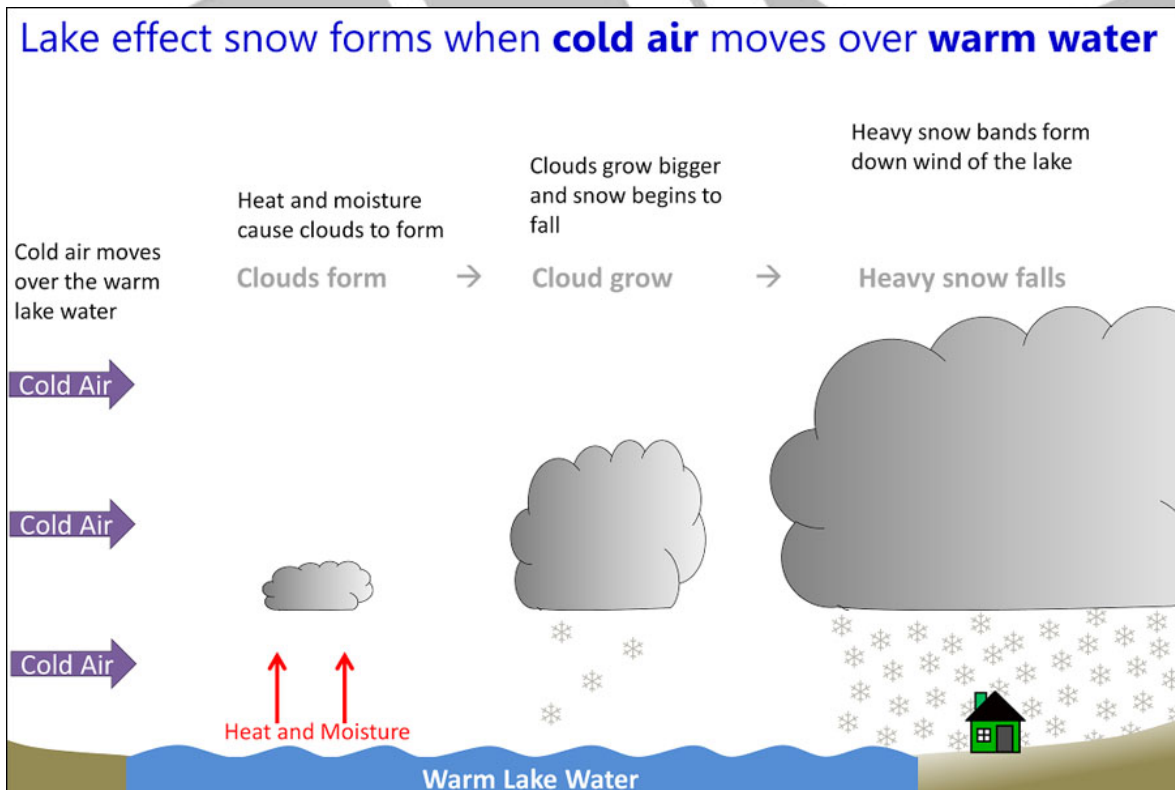
Why in News?

Recently, parts of upstate New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Michigan, situated along the [Great Lakes of North America](#), witnessed "lake-effect snow."

- A heavy snowstorm caused by this phenomenon near **Lake Erie in New York** has transformed homes into **ice-covered igloos**.

What is Lake-Effect Snow?

- **Definition:** Lake-effect snow is a **localized weather phenomenon** characterized by **heavy snowfall** that occurs near **large bodies of water**, such as the **Great Lakes in North America**.
 - It typically happens during colder months when cold air passes over relatively warmer lake surfaces, resulting in intense and narrow bands of snowfall.
- **Mechanism of Formation:**
 - **Cold Air Movement:** Cold air often from Canada, flows over the unfrozen, warmer waters of the Great Lakes in North America.
 - The lakes transfer heat and moisture to the cold air at the surface.
 - **Cloud Formation:** The warm, moist air **rises, cools rapidly in the colder atmosphere above**, and **condenses to form clouds**.
 - **Snowfall:** These clouds develop into narrow bands that produce intense snowfall, often at rates of 2-3 inches or more per hour.



Great Lakes of North America

- The Great Lakes, consisting of **Superior, Michigan, Huron, Erie, and Ontario (from west to east)**, are among the most significant freshwater ecosystems in the world.
- **Geography and Scope:** The Great Lakes basin encompasses large parts of two nations, the United States and Canada. Except for Lake Michigan, the **Great Lakes form a natural border between Canada and the United States.**
 - The lakes connect to the **Atlantic Ocean via the Saint Lawrence River**, and to the **Mississippi River basin through the Illinois Waterway.**
- **Global Significance:** The American Great Lakes account for 21% of the Earth's surface freshwater.



Decline in 10-Year Bond Yield

[Source: TH](#)

Why in News?

Recently, Indian [government bond yields](#) witnessed a significant decline, with the **10-year benchmark** yield dropping to its **lowest level since 2021**.

- This shift is attributed to rising optimism about the [Reserve Bank of India \(RBI\)](#) potentially easing interest rates in its upcoming monetary policy review.

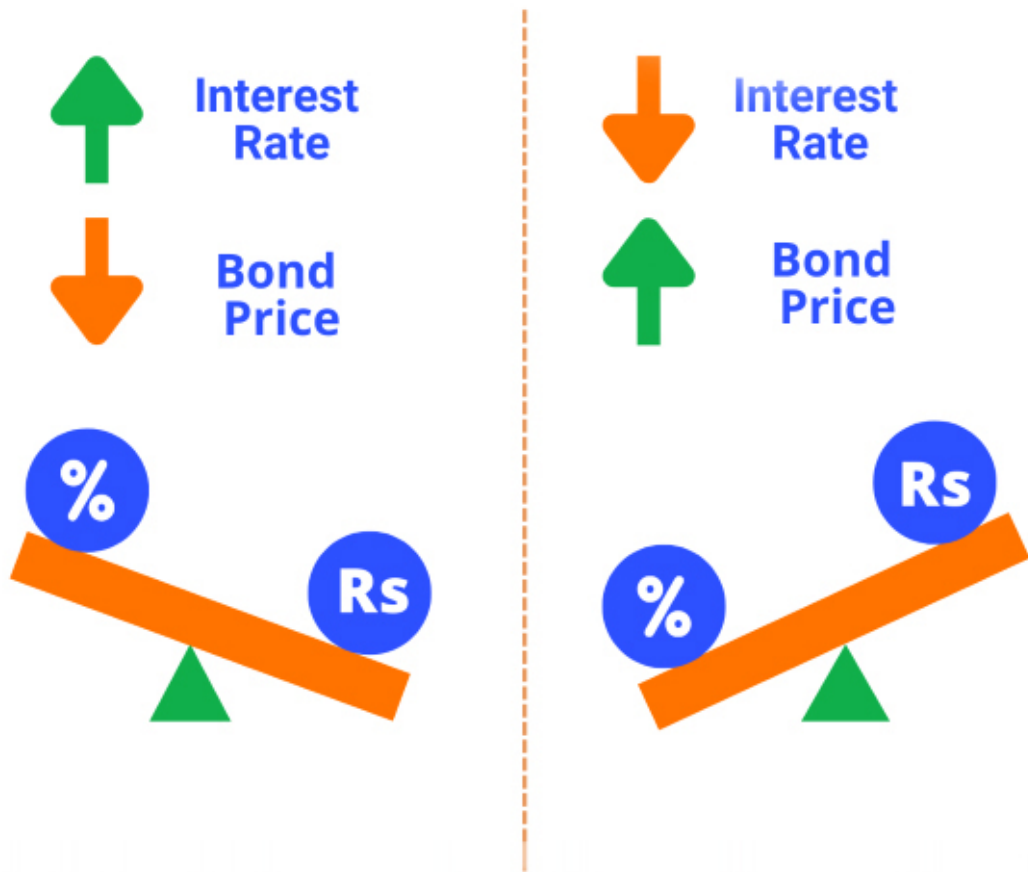
What Factors Have Contributed to the Decline in the Bond Yields?

- **Economic Growth Slowdown:** India's [GDP](#) growth slowed to **5.4%** in the September 2024 quarter, marking the **lowest growth in 7 quarters**.

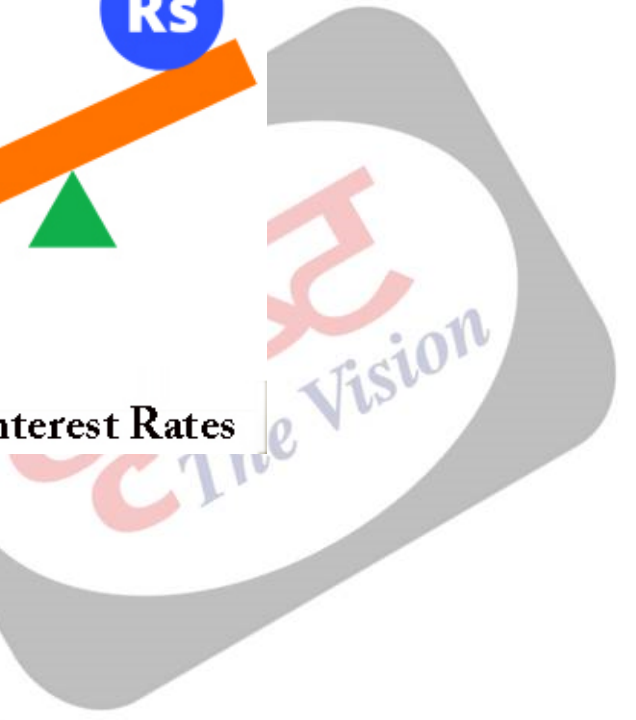
- The economic slowdown has raised concerns, driving **expectations of RBI monetary easing, through rate cuts or liquidity measures** leading to increased demand for bonds and a consequent decline in yields.
- **Measures Taken by RBI:** Anticipations of **liquidity infusion** through **Open Market Operations (OMO)** or a cut in the **Cash Reserve Ratio (CRR)** of around **50 basis points** by the **RBI** could release approximately **Rs 1.1 lakh crore** into the banking system.
 - This move would likely reduce shorter-term bond yields and boost liquidity.
- **Foreign Investments:** Increased **foreign investments in Indian bonds**, including **Rs 7,700 crore in net purchases** in a short period and **Rs 20,200 crore** by foreign lenders, have boosted demand, contributing to declining yields and signaling investor confidence in the economy.

What is Bonds and Bond Yield?

- **Bonds:** A bond is an **instrument to borrow money**. It is like an **IOU (I owe you)**.
 - A bond could be floated/issued by a **country's government** or by a **company to raise funds**.
 - Since **Government Bonds** (referred to as G-secs in India, Treasury in the US, and Gilts in the UK) come with the **sovereign's guarantee**, they are considered one of the **safest investments**.
- **Bond Yield:**
 - Bond yield represents the **return an investor can expect from a bond**, expressed as a percentage.
 - However, **this return is not fixed** and **varies with changes in the bond's market price**. It is **inversely related to bond prices** i.e. when bond prices rise, yields fall, and vice versa.
 - Every bond has:
 - **Face Value:** The nominal value of the bond, typically repaid at maturity.
 - **Coupon Payment:** The fixed annual payment made to the bondholder.
 - **Coupon Rate:** The annual interest rate expressed as a percentage of the bond's face value.
 - For example, a **10-year government security (G-sec)** with a face value of **Rs. 100**, a coupon payment of **Rs. 5**, and a coupon rate of **5%** offers a **5% yield**. The investor receives **Rs. 5 annually for 10 years and the Rs. 100 face value** at maturity, representing the return for lending **Rs. 100** today.



Relationship between Bond Price and Interest Rates



QUANTITATIVE INSTRUMENTS OF MONETARY POLICY



LIQUIDITY ADJUSTMENT FACILITY (LAF)

- ☉ **Repo Rate (RR):** The rate at which the RBI lends money to commercial banks. Here, RBI **purchases securities**.
- ☉ **Reverse Repo Rate:** The rate at which the RBI borrows money from commercial banks within the country. **Opposite of Repo.**
- ☉ If RBI wants to signal **tight monetary policy**, it will **increase the repo rate**; banks will **increase their lending rates**.



BANK RATE

- ☉ It is a **long-term rate (RR is short-term)** at which the central bank lends money to other banks.
- ☉ **Increase in Bank rate** will increase the **interest rates on the Loans /Deposits** and vice versa.



STATUTORY LIQUIDITY RATIO (SLR)

- ☉ SLR is the minimum percentage of deposits that a commercial bank has to **maintain in the form of liquid cash, gold or other securities**.
- ☉ If RBI wants to **tighten the monetary policy**, it will **raise the SLR**.



CASH RESERVE RATIO (CRR)

- ☉ Banks are required to hold a certain proportion of their deposits in the form of **cash with RBI**.
- ☉ With the **increase in CRR**, banks **increase the lending rates**.



OPEN MARKET OPERATIONS (OMOS)

- ☉ These include **purchase/sale of government securities** by the Central Bank for **injection/absorption of durable liquidity** in the banking system.



Drishti IAS

Q.1 In the context of the Indian economy, non-financial debt includes which of the following? (2020)

1. Housing loans owed by households
2. Amounts outstanding on credit cards
3. Treasury bills

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

Ans: (d)

Q.2 Consider the following statements: (2018)

1. The Reserve Bank of India manages and services Government of India Securities but not any State Government Securities.
2. Treasury bills are issued by the Government of India and there are no treasury bills issued by the State Governments.
3. Treasury bills offer are issued at a discount from the par value.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Ans: (c)

Q.3 In the context of Indian economy, 'Open Market Operations' refers to (2013)

- (a) borrowing by scheduled banks from the RBI
- (b) lending by commercial banks to industry and trade
- (c) purchase and sale of government securities by the RBI
- (d) None of the above

Ans: (c)

India Dominates Admissions in the US

Source: BS

Indian students, for the first time in 15 years, **make up 29.4% of international students in the US**, surpassing all other countries.

- **India has overtaken China**, which now has 277,398 students, as the leading country of origin for international students in the US.
 - This academic year (2023-24) saw 331,602 Indian students enrolled, marking a **23%**

increase from the previous year.

- **Indian students lead in graduate enrollments (master's and PhD levels)** for the second consecutive year, with a 19% increase to reach 196,567 students.
 - Undergraduate enrollment also grew by 13%, totaling 36,053, while non-degree student numbers fell by 28% to 1,426.
- The total number of international students in the US reached 1,126,690 for the 2023-24 academic year, reflecting a 7% increase from the previous year.
- The primary funding sources for international students include personal and family funds (54.5%), current employment (21.8%), and US college or university funding (19.0%).
- **Initiative Taken by Indian Government:**
 - **Education Services & Internationalization of Higher Education (ES-IHE)-Champion Services Sector Scheme (CSSS).**
 - [Scheme for Promotion of Academic and Research Collaboration \(SPARC\)](#)
 - **Study in India**
 - [UGC](#) guidelines for campuses of foreign universities in India.

Read more: [Scheme for Promotion of Academic and Research Collaboration \(SPARC\)](#)

ICMR's 'First in the World Challenge' for Innovation

[Source: TH](#)

Recently, the [Indian Council of Medical Research \(ICMR\)](#) has announced the “**First in the World Challenge**” aimed at encouraging innovative solutions to pressing health issues.

- This initiative seeks to foster **novel, out-of-the-box ideas** and promote the discovery and development of breakthrough **health technologies**, including **vaccines, drugs**, and diagnostics.
- Proposals must present bold, impactful global health research concepts, **not 'incremental innovations' or 'process innovation'**. The **high risk, high reward challenge** aims for revolutionary biomedical breakthroughs, despite potential failures.
 - **Proposals** can be submitted by **individuals or teams** from single or multiple institutes, evaluated by a selection committee of experts.
- In a recent advancement, ICMR has formalised agreements under its '[Network for Phase 1 Clinical Trials](#)', which includes collaborations for developing treatments for various diseases such as **multiple myeloma and Zika virus**.
 - This initiative aims to position India as a leader in the clinical development of pharmaceutical agents and innovative health solutions.
- **ICMR** is the **apex body** in India for the **formulation, coordination** and **promotion of biomedical research**.
 - It comes under the [Department of Health Research, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare \(MoH&FW\)](#).

Read more: [Sansad TV Vishesh: CAR T-Cell Therapy](#)

Akal Takht

For Prelims: [Akal Takht](#), [Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee](#), [Guru Hargobind](#), [Guru](#)

For Mains: Governance and Autonomy of Religious Institutions, Interplay between Religion and Politics in India, Sikhism

[Source: IE](#)

Why in News?

The [Akal Takht](#), the supreme temporal and spiritual authority of the Sikh community, governed by the [Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee \(SGPC\)](#), has imposed religious punishment (*Tankha*) on Sukhbir Singh Badal, **President of the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD)**.

- This action comes as punishment for the alleged misgovernance during the SAD's tenure in Punjab (2007–2017).
- This has sparked discussions about the **Akal Takht's authority and its relationship with the SAD and the SGPC**.

What is the Akal Takht?

- **Historical Significance:** Akal Takht was established in 1606 by [Guru Hargobind](#), the **6th Sikh Guru**, in response to the execution of his father, **Guru Arjan Dev (5th Guru of the Sikhs)**, by the [Mughals](#).
 - Takht is a Persian word for **"imperial throne"**. Akal Takht is located in the **Golden Temple complex**, facing the Harmandir Sahib.
 - Created as a response to Mughal oppression, the **Akal Takht became a symbol of Sikh sovereignty and resistance**, serving as a platform for governance and justice.
- **Symbolism:** The Guru requested two swords, symbolizing **miri (temporal power) and piri (spirituality)**, with the miri sword shorter, signifying the primacy of spiritual authority.
 - **Akal Takht features a high throne**, three times taller than the maximum height allowed by **Mughal sovereignty**.
 - Its altitude surpasses that of the Mughal throne balcony in Delhi's Red Fort, **symbolizing defiance against Mughal rule** and asserting Sikh sovereignty.
- **Spiritual and Temporal Authority:** The Akal Takht is one of the **five Takhts** (seats of power) in Sikhism but holds the highest position due to its dual authority (spiritual guidance with temporal governance).
 - The tradition of issuing **Hukamnamas (edicts) began here**, symbolizing its supreme role in guiding the Sikh community.
- **Role After the 10th Guru:** The Akal Takht became a crucial center for Sikhs after the passing of [Guru Gobind Singh \(10th and last Guru\)](#).
 - During turbulent times, such as the persecution of **Sikhs in the 18th century**, the Akal Takht became a rallying point for **Sarbat Khalsa** (general assembly of Sikhs) **to deliberate on critical issues**.
 - [Maharaja Ranjit Singh](#), who ruled Punjab for almost four decades (1801-39), convened one of the **last Sarbat Khalsas in 1805**.
- **Role of the Akal Takht Jathedar:** The **Jathedar (head) of the Akal Takht** is empowered to summon Sikhs for moral and spiritual accountability and prescribe **punishment (Tankha)** to instill humility and discipline, this authority only applies to those who identify as a Sikh.
 - A Jathedar must be baptized, knowledgeable in Sikh scriptures, and maintain moral integrity. Initially appointed by **Sarbat Khalsa**, the Jathedar's appointment shifted to the **Darbar Sahib committee** under British influence. **Post-1925, the SGPC began appointing the Jathedar**.

Other 4 Sikh Takhts

- **Takht Sri Keshgarh Sahib:** Located in the Siwalik foothills, Himachal Pradesh, it is a historical site linked to Guru Gobind Singh and the foundation of the [Khalsa](#).
- **Takht Sri Harimandir Ji Patna Sahib:** Located in Patna, Bihar, it is the birthplace of Guru Gobind Singh.
- **Takht Sachkhand Shri Hazur Abchnagar Sahib:** Located in Nanded, Maharashtra, it is the site of Guru Gobind Singh's cremation in 1708.
- **Takht Sri Damdama Sahib:** Located in Talwandi Sabo, Punjab, it was recognized as the place where Guru Gobind Singh finalized the **Sikh scriptures**([Guru Granth Sahib](#)).



Ten Gurus of Sikh Religion

Guru Nanak Dev (1469-1539)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ He was the first guru of Sikh and the founder of Sikh religion. ▪ He started the GURU KA LANGAR. ▪ He was the contemporary of Babur. ▪ Kartarpur corridor was commemorated on the 550th birth anniversary of Guru Nanak Dev.
Guru Angad (1504-1552)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ He invented the new script called Guru-Mukhi and popularized and expanded the system of Guru ka Langar.
Guru Amar Das (1479-1574)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ He introduced the ceremony of the Anand Karaj Marriage. ▪ He abolished the custom of Sati and Purdah system among the Sikhs. ▪ He was a contemporary of Akbar.
Guru Ram Das (1534-1581)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ He founded Amritsar in 1577 on the land granted by Akbar. ▪ He started the construction of Golden Temple/Swarna mandir at Amritsar.
Guru Arjun Dev (1563-1606)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ He composed the Adi Granth in 1604. ▪ He led to the completion of construction of Golden temple. ▪ He was acclaimed as Shaheeden-de-Sartaj. ▪ He was executed by Jahangir on charges of helping prince Khusrau.
Guru Hargobind (1594-1644)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ He led to the transformation of the Sikh Community into a Military community. He is known as "Soldier Saint". ▪ He led to the establishment of Akal Takht and fortified the Amritsar City. ▪ He waged wars against Jahangir and Shah Jahan.
Guru Har Rai (1630-1661)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ He was a man of peace thus devoted most of his life in maintaining peace with Aurangzeb and doing missionary work.
Guru Har Krishan (1656-1664)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ He was the youngest guru of all and was given the title of Guru at a very early age of 5. ▪ He was summoned by Aurangzeb against anti-islamic blasphemy.
Guru Teg Bahadur (1621-1675)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ He founded Anandpur Sahib.
Guru Gobind Singh (1666-1708)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ He founded a warrior community known as Khalsa in 1699. ▪ He introduced a new rite "Pahul". ▪ He joined Bahadur Shah's as a noble. ▪ He was the last Sikh Guru in human form and he passed the Guruship of Sikhs to the Guru Granth Sahib.



What is the Relationship Between the Akal Takht, SGPC, and SAD?

- **SGPC's Role in Sikh Governance:** Formed in **1920**, the SGPC was tasked with managing Sikh gurdwaras and upholding religious principles. Under the **Sikh Gurdwaras Act of 1925**, it gained **legal authority to appoint the Jathedar of the Akal Takht**.
 - The SGPC controls the finances and administration of major Sikh shrines in Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, and Chandigarh.
- **SAD:** The SAD, established alongside the SGPC, initially functioned as its **political wing to mobilize Sikhs during the Gurdwara Reform Movement**.
- **Intertwined Relationship:** Control over the SGPC allows the SAD to influence appointments and decisions at the Akal Takht.
 - Critics argue that this relationship undermines the **independence of the Akal Takht's moral authority**, making it susceptible to political interference.

Gurdwara Reform Movement

- The Gurdwara Reform Movement, or Akali Movement, began in **1920 in Amritsar, Punjab**, led by Sikhs protesting against British control and corrupt mahants (priests) running Gurdwaras.
 - The movement sought to **reclaim Gurdwaras from British-backed mahants**, leading to the formation of the SGPC in November 1920.
- The Akali Movement was part of a larger wave of **religious reforms in colonial India**.
- It led to the **Sikh Gurdwara Act of 1925, which granted the Sikh community legal control over their Gurdwaras**, ending the hereditary control by mahants.

What Challenges Facing the Akal Takht and the SGPC?

- **Erosion of Autonomy:** Allegations of political interference in the Akal Takht's decisions have weakened its **moral standing within the Sikh community**.
 - The delayed SGPC elections have fostered perceptions of **nepotism and lack of transparency**.
- **Fragmentation of Sikh Leadership:** Disputes within the SGPC and between different factions of the Sikh community undermine the effectiveness and unity of these institutions.
 - Calls for reform and democratization within the SGPC and the Akal Takht are gaining momentum, particularly from the Sikh diaspora.
- **Relevance in a Changing World:** The Akal Takht faces the **challenge of asserting its authority within a globalized Sikh community**. This includes addressing social issues such as increasing drug addiction, and rising economic disparities, while upholding its core principles of justice, humility, and unity.

Way Forward

- **Independent Appointment of Jathedar:** Transitioning from SGPC-controlled appointments to a broader, community-driven process involving global Sikh representation.
 - Reinstating the practice of **Sarbat Khalsa assemblies** to ensure collective decision-making and minimize unilateral actions by political entities.
- **Democratic SGPC Elections:** Ensuring timely and transparent elections to prevent **long-term monopolization of power by any political party**.
- **Separation of Powers:** Establishing clear boundaries between the SGPC's administrative functions and the Akal Takht's spiritual and temporal authority.
- **Engagement with the Sikh Diaspora:** Leveraging the resources and perspectives of the global Sikh community to enhance the inclusivity and effectiveness of Sikh governance.

Drishti Mains Question:

Examine the significance of the Akal Takht in Sikh governance and its role in shaping the community and suggest measures to ensure its relevance in modern times.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Questions (PYQs)

Prelims

Q. Consider the following Bhakti Saints: (2013)

1. Dadu Dayal
2. Guru Nanak
3. Tyagaraja

Who among the above was/were preaching when the Lodi dynasty fell and Babur took over?

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

Ans: (b)

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