

#### **Centre Amends Conduct of Election Rules, 1961**

**Source: TH** 

Recently, the **Ministry of Law and Justice** has amended **Rule 93 of the <u>Conduct of Election Rules</u>**, <u>1961</u>, restricting public access to certain election-related documents.

#### Recent Amendment:

- This amendment follows a recommendation by the <u>Election Commission of India (ECI)</u> and impacts Rule 93(2)(a), which earlier permitted public inspection of all election papers.
- The revised rule **now limits access to specific documents** listed within the framework.
- Background of The Amendment:
  - It was initiated by a directive from the Punjab and Haryana High Court to ECI to share all election-related documents, including CCTV footage from Haryana Assembly elections.
  - The ECI highlighted concerns over voter privacy and information.
- RTI Activists and opposition parties argue the amendment compromises transparency and accountability in the electoral process.
- Conduct of Election Rules, 1961:
  - It provides a detailed framework for conducting elections in India, as per the Representation of the People Act, 1951.
  - These rules cover candidate nominations, polling procedures, etc, ensure voter secrecy and electoral integrity, and define the duties of election officers.

Read More: Rule 49MA of the Conduct of Election Rules - Drishti IAS

## **Biodiversity Credits for Environment Conservation**

For Prelims: <u>Biodiversity Credit</u>, <u>World Economic Forum</u>, <u>Biodiversity Credits Initiative</u>, <u>Carbon Credits</u>, <u>Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework 2022</u>, <u>Green Bonds</u>, <u>Biodiversity Credit Alliance</u>, <u>Convention on Biological Diversity</u>, <u>UNDP</u>, <u>UNEP</u>, <u>World Business Council for Sustainable Development</u>, <u>Circular Economy</u>.

**For Mains:** Role of biodiversity credits in environment conservation, associated challenges and way forward.

**Source: DTE** 

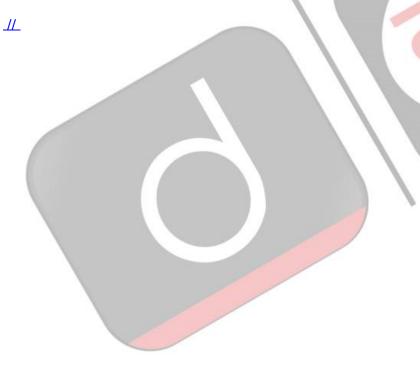
Why in News?

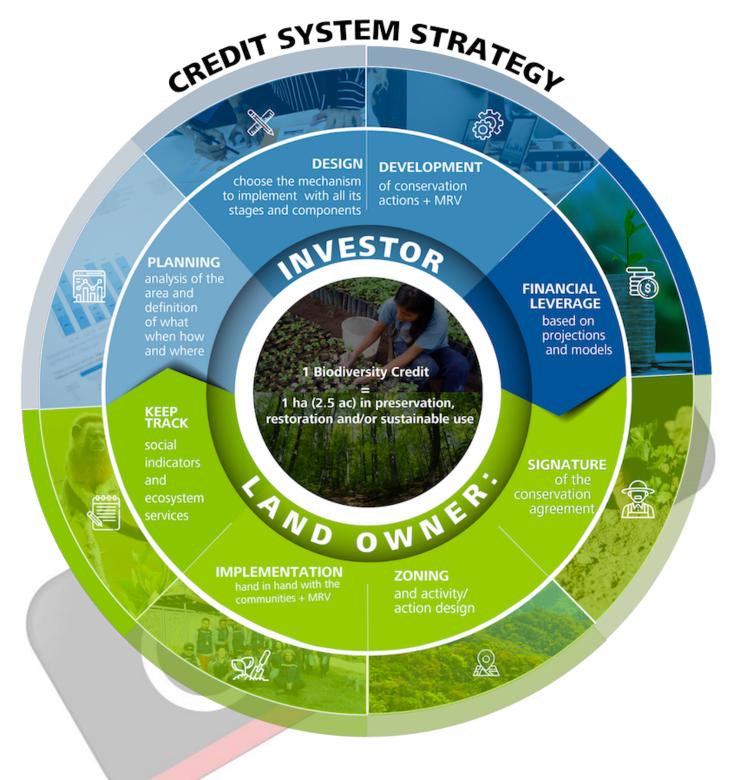
Recently, a new study published in the journal **Proceedings of the Royal Society B,** casts doubt on the **effectiveness of the <u>biodiversity credit</u> market** which is touted as a **potential game-changer** for biodiversity conservation.

• The study also highlighted **deep uncertainties** within the market and **questioned** whether its benefits designed to **offset biodiversity loss**, truly outweigh the potential harms.

#### What are Biodiversity Credits?

- About: Biodiversity credits are a verifiable, quantifiable and tradable financial instrument
  that rewards positive nature and biodiversity outcomes (e.g. species, ecosystems and
  natural habitats) through the creation and sale of either land or ocean-based biodiversity
  units over a fixed period.
  - The <u>World Economic Forum (WEF)</u> launched the <u>Biodiversity Credits Initiative</u> to unlock **new financing** for measurable positive outcomes for nature.
- Mechanism: Biodiversity credits function similarly to <u>carbon credits</u>.
  - When a company or government harms biodiversity, they can offset the damage by paying for conservation efforts elsewhere.
  - The idea is to **balance the overall loss** to biodiversity through **compensatory actions** while attracting private funding for conservation.
- Future Potential: WEF estimates the biodiversity credit market is worth USD 8 million, with projections reaching USD 2 billion by 2030 and USD 69 billion by 2050.
  - The <u>Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework 2022</u> calls for financing mechanisms like ecosystem services payments, <u>green bonds</u>, and biodiversity credits to mobilize USD 200 billion annually by 2030. In line with this, the <u>Biodiversity Credit Alliance (BCA)</u> was launched.





#### **Biodiversity Credit Alliance (BCA)**

- About: BCA is a voluntary international alliance that brings together diverse stakeholders to support the realization of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.
  - It focuses on Targets 19(c) and (d), which "encourage the private sector to invest in biodiversity" utilizing, amongst others "biodiversity credits ... with social safeguards."
- Background: BCA was launched during the 15th meeting of <u>Convention on Biological</u>
   <u>Diversity (CBD COP 15)</u> in December 2022, in <u>Montreal</u>, <u>Canada</u>.
  - The BCA Secretariat is facilitated by <u>UNDP</u>, <u>UNEP</u>-Finance Initiative (UNEP FI) and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA).
- Objectives: BCA provides guidance for the formulation of a credible and scalable biodiversity

- credit market by building a framework of high-level, science-based principles.
- Key Stakeholders: It includes representatives from indigenous peoples, local communities, and the private sector, with the <u>World Business Council for Sustainable Development</u> (WBCSD) as a key partner.

#### What are the Initiatives Related to Biodiversity Conservation?

- India:
  - · India Business & Biodiversity Initiative (IBBI)
  - Wetland (Conservation and Management) Rules 2010
  - National Plan for Conservation of Aquatic Ecosystem
  - Wildlife Crime Control Bureau
  - Biological Diversity Act, 2002
- Global:
  - Nagoya Protocol
  - Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora
  - World Wide Fund for Nature

#### What are the Concerns Related to the Biodiversity Credit Market?

- Flawed Concept: When a company or government harms biodiversity, they can offset the
  damage through conservation payments elsewhere, but this is criticized for shifting
  harm instead of preventing it and addressing root causes.
- Displacement and Land Grabs: Wealthy corporations and nations could purchase credits sourced from poorer countries in the <u>Global South</u>, leading to land grabs and displacement of Indigenous and local communities.
  - Displacement and loss of access to land and resources disproportionately affect women and marginalized groups.
- Lack of Accurate Measurement: Unlike carbon credits, which are standardized in terms of one tonne of CO₂ or CO₂ equivalent, biodiversity credits are measured in hectares, making it difficult to equate biodiversity across different ecosystems, continents, and biomes.
  - Additionally, Leakage occurs when harmful activities, like deforestation, shift to other areas, such as farmers converting new land for agriculture after adopting biodiversity credits.
- Delay of Systemic Changes: Biodiversity credits may provide a temporary solution, delaying systemic changes needed to tackle biodiversity loss.
  - Biodiversity credits, often issued for short periods, make it difficult to assess long-term impacts, as trends like butterfly populations require longer data for accurate evaluation.

#### **Way Forward**

- Addressing Root Cause: Efforts should be redirected towards preventing biodiversity loss in the first place like limiting deforestation, unsustainable agriculture, or fossil fuel extraction.
- Context-Specific Metrics: Develop context-specific metrics considering species interactions, ecosystem health, and cultural significance, beyond just land area.
- Shift Towards Holistic Approaches: Transform industries that drive biodiversity destruction (e.g., agriculture, forestry, and mining), promote <u>circular economies</u>, and aligning policy frameworks across sectors to prioritize biodiversity protection.
- Monitoring and Reporting: Civil society and local communities should be empowered to scrutinize projects, hold corporations accountable, and ensure that credits lead to real conservation outcomes.
- Non-Market-Based Approaches: A shift from market-based solutions like biodiversity credits to direct, nature-based solutions is needed, focusing on expanding protected areas, restoring ecosystems, and supporting community-based conservation that values nature's intrinsic worth.

#### **Drishti Mains Question:**

Critically analyze the effectiveness of Biodiversity credits in addressing the causes of biodiversity decline.

#### **UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Questions (PYQs)**

#### **Prelims**

- Q. Consider the following statements: (2023)
  - 1. In India, the Biodiversity Management Committees are key to the realization of the objectives of the Nagoya Protocol.
  - 2. The Biodiversity Management Committees have important functions in determining access and benefit sharing, including the power to levy collection fees on the access of biological resources within its jurisdiction.

#### Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

#### Ans: (c)

# Q. With reference to the circumstances in Indian agriculture, the concept of "Conservation Agriculture" assumes significance. Which of the following fall under the Conservation Agriculture? (2018)

- 1. Avoiding the monoculture practices
- 2. Adopting minimum tillage.
- 3. Avoiding the cultivation of plantation crops
- 4. Using crop residues to cover soil surface
- 5. Adopting spatial and temporal crop sequencing/crop rotations

#### Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

#### Ans: (c)

#### Mains

- **Q.** How does biodiversity vary in India?How is the Biological Diversity Act, 2002 helpful in conservation of flora and fauna? (2018)
- Q. The effective management of land and water resources will drastically reduce the human miseries.

#### **Ken-Betwa Link Project**

For Prelims: <u>Ken-Betwa Link Project</u>, <u>National Perspective Plan</u>, <u>Floating Solar Energy Project</u>, Ken River, <u>Betwa River</u>, <u>Panna Tiger Reserve</u>

**For Mains:** National Perspective Plan for Interlinking Rivers, River-linking in addressing drought and migration, Water management

#### **Source: TH**

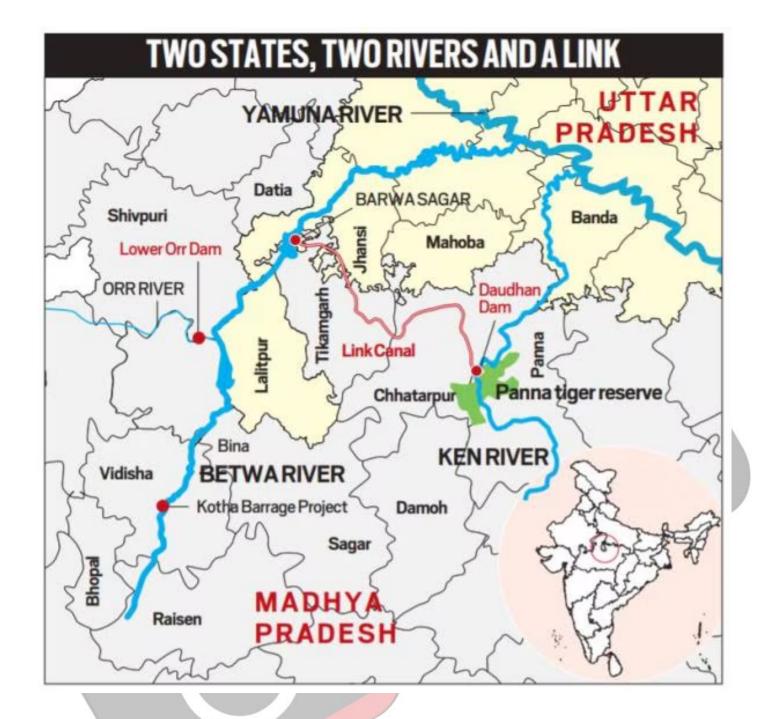
#### Why in News?

Recently, Prime Minister Narendra Modi laid the foundation stone for the **Ken-Betwa Link Project** (KBLP) in Khajuraho, Madhya Pradesh.

■ This Rs 45,000 crore initiative, part of the **National Perspective Plan (NPP)** for interlinking rivers, aims to resolve water scarcity in **Bundelkhand**.

**Note**: Alongside the KBLP, PM laid the foundation stone for the **Daudhan Dam irrigation project,** which will serve **11 lakh hectares of land** in the region.

The PM also inaugurated Madhya Pradesh's <u>first floating solar energy project at</u>
 Omkareshwar, marking a significant step toward renewable energy adoption.



#### What are the Key Facts About Ken-Betwa Link Project?

- **About:** The KBLP is India's first initiative under the NPP, formulated in 1980 for river interlinking, implemented by **Ken-Betwa Link Project Authority**.
  - It aims to transfer surplus water from the **Ken River in Madhya Pradesh to the Betwa River in Uttar Pradesh,** both of which are tributaries of the **Yamuna.**
- Phases of the Project:
  - **Phase I:** Construction of the **Daudhan Dam complex**, low-level and high-level tunnels, Ken-Betwa link canal, and powerhouses.
  - **Phase II:** Development of the Lower Orr Dam located across the **Orr River** (a tributary of the Betwa), Bina Complex Project, and Kotha Barrage.

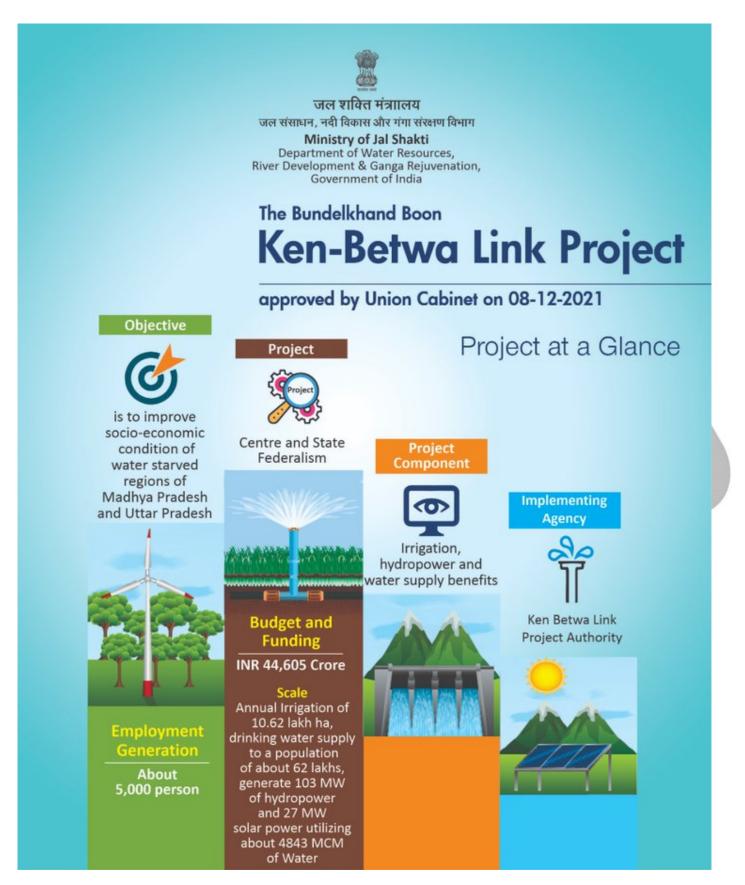
#### Benefits:

- Irrigation for **6.3 lakh hectares** annually.
- Drinking water supply for 62 lakh people.
- The project includes provisions for <a href="hydropower generation">hydropower generation</a> (100 Megawatt (MW))

and solar energy (27 MW).

- Importance for Bundelkhand: Bundelkhand is a geographical region, which spans 13 districts in Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh.
  - Bundelkhand has long faced droughts and water shortages, forcing migration for employment.
  - The KBLP enhances drinking water access, boosts agriculture with reliable irrigation, and fosters regional development, reducing migration pressures.
- Environmental Concerns Raised by Critics:
  - The opposition has voiced concerns over the project's environmental impact, particularly on the <u>Panna Tiger Reserve</u>, which could see over 10% of its core area submerged.
  - Critics argue that the project could cause significant loss of wildlife habitats, including those of tigers, vultures, and other species.
    - Over 23 lakh trees are expected to be felled, and construction activities could severely disrupt the local ecosystem.
- Government Response: Assured that the project construction would consider the preservation of the Panna Tiger Reserve's wildlife and that measures would be implemented to mitigate the project's adverse effects on the local ecosystem, balancing development and conservation.





#### **Key Facts About Ken and Betwa Rivers**

- **Ken River:** The Ken River originates near Ahirgawan village on the north-west slopes of the Kaimur hills in Jabalpur, Madhya Pradesh.
  - The river merges with the Yamuna at Chilla village near Fatehpur, Uttar Pradesh.
  - Ken River is known for the rare **Sajhar stone**. Its major tributaries include Bawas, Dewar, Kaith, Baink, Kopra, and Bearma.

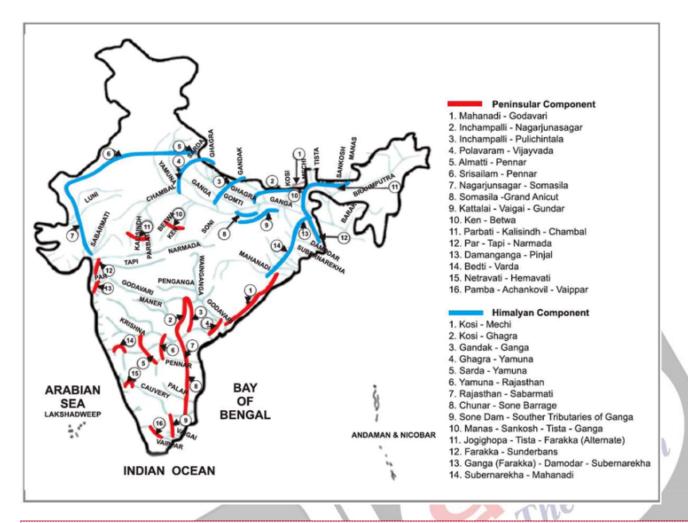
- **Betwa River:** Betwa, originates in the <u>Vindhya Range</u> in Madhya Pradesh, flows through Bundelkhand, and meets the Yamuna at Hamirpur, Uttar Pradesh.
  - The major tributaries of Betwa are **Newan, Orr and Dhasan.** In ancient times, the Betwa was known as **Vetrawati.**

#### Origin of River-Linking Projects in India

- Sir Arthur Cotton (19th Century): The idea of linking rivers was first proposed by Sir Arthur Cotton, a British engineer, to connect the <u>Ganga</u> and <u>Cauvery</u> for navigation and irrigation.
  - The Periyar Project, constructed in 1895, is a major irrigation project that diverts water from the **Periyar River basin in Kerala** to the **Vaigai River basin in Tamil Nadu**
- National Water Grid: Dr. K.L. Rao, the then Union Irrigation Minister, proposed the construction
  of a National Water Grid in the 1970s.
  - It aims to transfer water from water-surplus regions to water-deficit areas.
- Garland Canal: Captain Dinshaw J Dastoor proposed a Garland Canal to redistribute the water from one area to another.
- National Perspective Plan (1980): Prepared in 1980, aimed at inter-basin water transfer.
  - In 1982, the <u>National Water Development Agency (NWDA)</u> was established to conduct water balance and feasibility studies for the linking of rivers.

#### What is the National Perspective Plan (NPP) for Interlinking Rivers?

- **About:** Formulated in 1980 by the Ministry of Irrigation (now Ministry of Jal Shakti), the NPP aims to develop water resources through the inter-basin transfer of water.
  - The **NWDA** has been entrusted with the work of Interlinking of Rivers under the NPP.
- Components: The plan has two main components: the Himalayan Rivers and Peninsular Rivers Development.
  - **30 link projects:** 16 under the Peninsular Component, 14 under the Himalayan Component.
  - Peninsular Rivers Development Component: Focuses on linking rivers in southern and central India. Key projects include the Mahanadi-Godavari, Godavari-Krishna, and Ken-Betwa links.
  - Himalayan Rivers Development Component: Aims to divert surplus water from eastern tributaries of the Ganga and Brahmaputra to the western regions. Notable projects include the Kosi-Ghaghra and Gandak-Ganga links.
- Significance: Addresses water shortages in states like Rajasthan, Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh,
   Karnataka, and Tamil Nadu.
  - Improves irrigation, boosts agricultural productivity, and enhances food security.
  - Promotes inland waterways for freight movement, and utilizes surface water to alleviate groundwater depletion and reduce freshwater flowing into the sea.



#### **Drishti Mains Question:**

Evaluate the National Perspective Plan for river interlinking in India and its implications for sustainable water management?

#### **UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)**

**Q.** The interlinking of rivers can provide viable solutions to the multi-dimensional inter-related problems of droughts, floods, and interrupted navigation. Critically examine. **(2020)** 

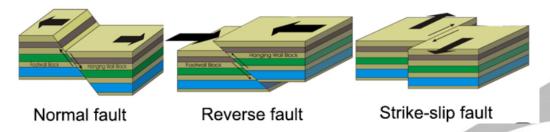
#### **Denali Fault**

A new research has revealed the origins of the **Denali Fault**, the <u>tectonic boundary</u> that gave rise to **Denali mountain in Alaska**, North America's highest mountain.

- The Denali fault was formed from the collision of an oceanic plate called the Wrangellia Composite Terrane with the North American plate between 72 million and 56 million years ago.
  - The study also found evidence of **inverted metamorphism**, where **high-pressure rocks are positioned above low-pressure ones** due to tectonic activity.
- About Fault: Fault or crack gives rise to Block mountains. E.g., <u>Satpura and Vindhya</u>

#### mountains.

- Block mountains are formed when large areas of land are broken and displaced vertically. They are also known as fault-block mountains.
- Types of Fault:
  - Strike-Slip Faults: These faults occur when tectonic plates slide horizontally with minimal vertical movement. E.g., Denali Fault.
  - Normal Faults: These faults occur when one rock block slides downward, separating from the adjacent block. E.g., **East African Rift Valley.**
  - Reverse Faults (Thrust Faults): These faults occur when the upper block moves up and over the lower block.



Read More: **Earthquake** 

# 50,000-Year-Old Baby Mammoth Remains Uncovered

Recently, scientists have uncovered the carcass of a 50,000-year-old giant female baby mammoth named Yana, found in Russia due to melting permafrost.

- Mammoth is a member of an extinct group of elephants found as fossils in Pleistocene and Holocene deposits (Two epochs that make up the Quaternary Period), on several continents.
  - By 4,000 years ago they became extinct.
- About Yana: It was found in the <u>Batagaika crater</u> in Siberia, known as the "gateway to the underworld" due to its increasing depth from melting ice caused by global warming.
  - She died at the age of one, making it an exceptional find among only seven mammoth carcasses recovered worldwide.
  - The crater has also revealed remains of other ancient animals like bison, horses, and
- Permafrost: Soil or underwater sediment that remains frozen below 0°C for more than two years, with depths ranging from a meter to as deep as 1,500 meters.
  - Permafrost is common in Arctic regions and mountain summits and can contain frozen remains dating back over 700,000 years.

**Read More: Woolly Mammoths** 

### 100 years of the Belgaum Congress Session

**Source: TH** 

#### Why in News?

The centenary of the **1924 Belgaum Congress session** is being celebrated in **Belagavi, Karnataka**, on 26-27th December 2024.

 This event commemorates Mahatma Gandhi's chairmanship of the historic 39th All-India Congress session in Belgaum, where he made significant contributions to the Congress Party's ideology and organizational structure.

#### What is Significance of the 1924 Belgaum Session of Congress?

- Gandhi's Leadership: It was the only Congress session which was presided over by Gandhiji as the party chief. Gandhi had held the post of the Congress president between December 1924 and April 1925.
  - Gandhi's first visit to Belgaum in 1916 was at the invitation of local leader Deshpande.
- Focus on Social Change: Gandhi emphasized combating untouchability, promoting khadi, and supporting village industries, transforming Congress into a movement for both political independence and social reform.
  - **Khadi spinning was mandatory for Congress** members and mandated the submission of 2,000 yards of khadi cloth monthly.
  - Gandhi reduced Congress membership fees by 90%.
- Hindu-Muslim Unity: Gandhi used the platform to advocate for Hindu-Muslim unity, which was
  essential to the broader freedom movement.
- Social and Economic Upliftment: Gandhi also focused on issues like sanitation, town planning, and the use of cows for economic upliftment of farmers, with a specific stance on cow protection.
  - He stressed that his advocacy for cow protection or violence against Muslims.
  - He praised the sanitation volunteers, noting that 40 out of 70 were Brahmins, emphasising social service across castes.
  - He criticized the session's excessive expenditure on VIPs and called for equal treatment of all members in future sessions.
- Cultural Significance: The session was marked by notable musical performances, including by Hindustani maestro Vishnu Digambar Paluskar and young Gangubai Hangal, along with the Kannada song "Udayavagali Namma Chaluva Kannada Nadu."
- Legacy of the Session: The Pampa Sarovara well, dug for the session, continues to supply water to parts of south Belagavi.

## **Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi**



"The weak can never forgive. Forgiveness is the attribute of the strong."

#### **Brief Description**

Birth: 2<sup>nd</sup> October 1869, Porbandar (Gujarat).

2<sup>nd</sup> October is observed as International Day of Non-Violence.

Profile: Lawyer, Politician, Social activist, Writer and led Nationalist Movement.

Father of the Nation (first called by Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose)

Ideology: Believed in the ideas of non-violence, Truth, Honesty, Care for Mother Nature,

Compassion, Welfare of Downtrodden etc. Political Mentor: Gopal Krishna Gokhale

Death: Shot dead by Nathuram Godse (30th January, 1948).

30th January is observed as Martyrs' Day

Nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize five times.





#### Gandhi in South Africa (1893-1915)

Used satyagraha against racist regime (Native Africans and Indians were

Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) is celebrated every year on 9th January, to commemorate his return from South Africa.

#### Contribution in India's Freedom Struggle

Small-scale movements like Champaran Satyagraha (1917)—First Civil Disobedience, Ahmedabad Mill Strike (1918) - First Hunger Strike, and Kheda Satyagraha (1918)-First Non-Cooperation.

Nationwide Mass Movements: Against Rowlatt Act (1919), Non-Cooperation Movement (1920-22), Civil Disobedience Movement (1930-34), Quit India Movement

Gandhi-Irwin Pact (1931): Between Gandhi and Lord Irwin that marked the end of a period of civil disobedience.

Poona Pact (1932): Between Gandhi and B.R. Ambedkar; this abandoned the idea of separate electorates for the depressed classes (Communal Award).



Books Written Hind Swaraj, My Experiments with Truth (Autobiography)

Harijan, Navjivan, Young India, Indian Opinion.

### Gandhi Peace Prize

is given by India for social, economic, and political transformation through Gandhian methods.

"Happiness is when what you think, what you say, and what you do are in harmony."

"You must not lose faith in humanity. Humanity is an ocean; if a few drops of the ocean are dirty, the ocean does not become dirty

#### **Key Sessions of the Indian National Congress**

- **1885**: *First Session* in Bombay, presided by W.C. Banerjee Formation of the Indian National Congress.
- **1886**: Second Session in Calcutta, presided by Dadabhai Naoroji.
- **1887**: *Third Session* in Madras, presided by Syed Badruddin Tyabji First Muslim President.
- 1888: Fourth Session in Allahabad, presided by George Yule First English President.
- **1896**: Calcutta National Song 'Vande Mataram' sung by Rabindranath Tagore.
- **1901**: Calcutta First appearance of Gandhiji on the Congress platform.
- 1905: Benaras Formal proclamation of the <u>Swadeshi Movement</u>. Held under the presidency of Gopal Krishna Gokhale.
- 1906: Calcutta President Dadabhai Naoroji Resolutions on <u>Swaraj</u>, <u>Boycott</u>, <u>Swadeshi</u> & National Education.
- 1907: Surat President Rash Bihari Ghosh Split between Moderates and Extremists.
- 1916: Lucknow President A.C. Majumdar Unity between Moderates and Extremists; <u>Lucknow</u>
   Pact with Muslim League.
- 1917: Calcutta President Annie Besant First Woman President of Congress.
- 1919: Amritsar President Motilal Nehru Support for Khilafat Movement.
- 1920: Calcutta President Lala Lajpat Rai Gandhi moves Non-cooperation resolution.
- 1924: Belgaum President Mahatma Gandhi Only session presided over by Gandhi.
- 1927: Madras President Dr. M.A. Ansari Resolutions against <u>Simon Commission</u> and for Purna Swaraj.
- 1929: Lahore President Jawaharlal Nehru Resolution on Poorna Swaraj; Civil Disobedience movement launched.
- 1931: Karachi President Vallabhbhai Patel Resolutions on <u>Fundamental Rights</u> and <u>National Economic Programme</u>.
- 1936: Lucknow President Jawaharlal Nehru Shift towards socialist ideas.
- 1938: Haripura President Subhas Chandra Bose National Planning Committee formed.
- 1939: *Tripuri* President Rajendra Prasad Bose re-elected but resigns; Forward Bloc formed.
- 1940: Ramgarh President Abul Kalam Azad Civil Disobedience movement postponed.
- 1946: Meerut President J.B. Kripalani Last session before Independence.

#### **UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)**

#### **Prelims**

## Q1. Who among the following is associated with 'Songs from Prison', a translation of ancient Indian religious lyrics in English? (2021)

- (a) Bal Gangadhar Tilak
- (b) Jawaharlal Nehru
- (c) Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi
- (d) Sarojini Naidu

#### Ans: (c)

## Q2. With reference to the British colonial rule in India, consider the following statements: (2019)

- 1. Mahatma Gandhi was instrumental in the abolition of the system of 'indentured labour'.
- 2. In Lord Chelmsford's 'War Conference', Mahatma Gandhi did not support the resolution on recruiting Indians for World War.
- 3. Consequent upon the breaking of Salt Law by Indian people, the Indian National Congress was

declared illegal by the colonial rulers.

#### Which of the statements given above are correct?

(a) 1 and 2 only

(b) 1 and 3 only

(c) 2 and 3 only

(d) 1, 2 and 3

Ans: (b)

