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J.S. VERMA COMMITTEE

(Syllabus: GS Paper 2 – Polity)

What did the 2013 panel say on death penalty for rape?

What were the recommendations of the Justice Verma Committee? What about marital rape?

Sudipta Datta

The story so far:

After the brutal rape and murder of a doctor on duty at Kolkata's R.G. Kar Medical College and Hospital on August 9, there has been a clamour of voices seeking the death penalty for the accused. The Justice J.S. Verma Committee recommendations, which led to the amendment of criminal laws in 2013, had specifically said it was not inclined to recommend the death penalty for rape even for the rarest of rare cases. "...seeking of [the] death penalty would be a regressive step in the field of sentencing and reformation," the committee pointed out.

What did the Union Cabinet decide?

The Union Cabinet did not take the recommendation on the death penalty when it cleared an ordinance on sexual assault in 2013, and signed the criminal amendments into law. The committee to amend criminal laws was set up after the gang rape of a paramedic student in Delhi on December 16, 2012. Led by Justice J.S. Verma (retired), the committee submitted its recommendations on January 23, 2013. One of its key suggestions, that the death penalty does not necessarily act as a deterrent against such crimes, was overlooked.

Key amendments were brought in to provide the death penalty for rape that led to death of the victim or reduced her to a persistent vegetative state (Section 376A of the Indian Penal Code) and anyone found guilty of rape more than once (Section 376E). In 2018, further changes introduced death as the maximum punishment for every participant in a gang rape when the victim is less than 12 years old (Section 376DB), and life-long imprisonment if the victim is less than 16 (Section 376DA). Under the new Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, punishment for rape is laid down in several Sections including 64, 65 and 70(2), which notes the punishment for gang rape of a woman under the age of 18 is the death penalty.

What did the committee recommend?

The Justice Verma Committee provided for enhanced sentences for rape, increasing it from 7 years to 10 years, 20 years, and life, but "short of death". "Whoever causes the person to be in a persistent vegetative state, shall be punished with rigorous imprisonment for a term which shall not be less than twenty years, but may be for life, which shall mean the rest of that person's natural life," it noted. The committee pointed out that "there is considerable evidence that the deterrent effect of death penalty on serious crimes is actually a myth. According to the Working Group on Human Rights, the murder rate has declined consistently in India over the last 20 years despite the slowdown in the execution of death sentences since 1980."

What was its stance on marital rape?

The Verma Committee recommended that the exception to marital rape be

Context: After the brutal rape and murder of a doctor at Kolkata's R.G. Kar Medical College on August 9, there has been a strong **demand for the death penalty** for the accused, despite the 2013 Justice J.S. Verma Committee's recommendation against capital punishment for rape, considering it a regressive step for sentencing and reformation.

J.S. Verma Committee

- **About:** It was constituted to recommend amendments to the Criminal Law so as to provide for quicker trial and enhanced punishment for criminals accused of committing sexual assault against women.
- **Report Submitted:** on January 23, 2013.
- **Committee Recommendation:**
  - **Enhanced Sentences for Rape**: The committee recommended increasing the minimum sentence for rape from 7 years to 10 years, 20 years, and life imprisonment, but did not advocate for the death penalty.
  - **Punishment**: The committee proposed rigorous imprisonment of at least 20 years to life for those causing a person to be in a persistent vegetative state, with life imprisonment meaning the rest of the individual's natural life.
  - **Stance on Death Penalty**: The committee observed that the deterrent effect of the death penalty on serious crimes is a myth, noting that the murder rate in India has declined over 20 years despite fewer executions.
  - **Marital Rape Exception**: The Verma Committee recommended the removal of the marital rape exception, asserting that a relationship between the perpetrator and victim is not a valid defense against rape.
  - **Government's Position on Marital Rape**: Despite the committee's recommendation, the Union government did not criminalize marital rape and maintained the exception in Section 63 of the BNS.
  - **Gender Rights:** The committee emphasized that true empowerment of women includes social, educational, and economic equality, not just political equality. It called for systemic changes in education and societal behavior to address gender biases.

Role of Union Cabinet

- **Decision on Death Penalty**: The Union Cabinet decided not to adopt the recommendation against the death penalty when clearing an ordinance on sexual assault in 2013.
- **Introduction of Death Penalty for Certain Rape Cases**: Key amendments introduced the death penalty for rape leading to the victim's death or persistent vegetative state (Section 376A of the IPC) and for repeat offenders (Section 376E).
- **Amendments**: In 2018, further amendments included the death penalty as the maximum punishment for participants in gang rape where the victim is under 12 years old (Section 376DB), and life imprisonment for raping a victim under 16 (Section 376DA).

ATACAMA DESERT
(Syllabus GS Paper 1 – Geography)



CHILE'S ATACAMA SALT FLAT SINKING DUE TO LITHIUM MINING: NEW STUDY

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 25

ACCORDING TO a new study, Chile's Atacama salt flat is sinking at a rate of 1 to 2 centimetres per year due to lithium brine extraction — a process in which salt-rich water is pumped to the surface and into a series of evaporation ponds to eventually obtain lithium.

The study, which was published in the journal *IEEE Transactions on Geoscience and Remote Sensing* last week, was carried out by researchers at the University of Chile.

In an interview with *Reuters*, lead author Francisco Delgado said that the sinking area is in the southwest part of the salt flat where lithium miners operate.

Lithium, also known as "white gold", is one of the most sought-after metals on Earth. It is used in rechargeable batteries, which power not only laptops and mobile phones but also electric vehicles — a crucial part of the world's plan to tackle climate change. However, over the years, research has shown that lithium mining has had severe environmental fallouts, especially in countries such as Chile which are the leading producers of the metal.

Here is a look at the findings of the new study and the impact of lithium mining on Chile's biodiversity.

What does the new study say?

For their study, the researchers at the University of Chile analysed the satellite data collected between 2020 and 2023 to see deformations in the Earth's crust of Atacama salt flat — one of the largest sources of lithium in the world.

The researchers noted that the worst affected areas are those where mining companies are doing most of their pumping of lithium-rich brine.

That is happening because the pumping takes place at a faster rate than the recharge of aquifers, leading to subsidence, or the downward vertical movement of the Earth's surface, Delgado told *Reuters*.

The affected area measures approximately 8 km north to south and 5 km east to west, according to the study.

A brine pool at a lithium mine in the Atacama salt flat, Chile. *Reuters*

What are the fallouts of lithium mining?

The brine evaporation method used to produce lithium requires massive quantities of fresh water, which is already scarce, especially in the Atacama Desert. In the Atacama, it takes 2,000 tons of water to produce one ton of lithium, according to a 2020 study by Ingrid Garcés, a scientist at Chile's University of Antofagasta. This leaves indigenous communities and wildlife living in the region parched.

Chemicals such as sulfuric acid and sodium hydroxide, used for lithium extraction, contaminate soil and water. As a result, ecosystems become poisoned and local species can face existential threats.

A 2022 study found that lithium mining has led to a decline in the number of flamingos in the area. This is because due to a drop in water levels in the Atacama, fewer flamingos are able to sustain themselves and reproduce.

(WITH INPUTS FROM REUTERS)

Context: According to a new study of University of Chile, **Chile's Atacama salt flat** is sinking at a rate of 1 to 2 centimetres per year due to lithium brine extraction — a process in which salt-rich water is pumped to the surface and into a series of evaporation ponds to eventually obtain lithium.

Atacama Desert

- **Location:** It is a high plateau desert situated on the western coast of South America, in the northern region of Chile.
- **Borders**: Argentina, Peru, and Bolivia.
- **Volcanoes**: Hosts 12 volcanoes, mainly located in the western outliers of the Andes.
- **Climate**: Very dry and arid
- **Driest Desert:** The Atacama Desert is the driest nonpolar desert in the world, as well as the only true desert to receive less precipitation than the polar deserts.

Key Findings of the New Study

- **Satellite Data Analysis (2020-2023)**: Researchers at the University of Chile analyzed satellite data from 2020 to 2023 to study deformations in the Earth's crust of the Atacama salt flat, a major lithium source.
    - Lithium, also known as "white gold", is one of the most sought-after metals on Earth. It is used in rechargeable batteries, which power not only laptops and mobile phones but also electric vehicles a crucial part of the world's plan to tackle climate change.
- **Deformation in Affected Areas**: The worst-affected regions are where mining companies extract lithium-rich brine most intensively.
- **Reason for Surface Subsidence**: The rapid extraction of brine outpaces the natural recharge of aquifers, causing the Earth's surface to sink (subsidence).
- **Extent of the Affected Area**: The study identified that the area impacted by subsidence measures approximately 8 km from north to south and 5 km from east to west.

Environmental Impact of Lithium Mining

- **Water Consumption for Lithium Production**: The brine evaporation method for lithium extraction consumes vast amounts of fresh water, with 2,000 tons of water needed to produce just one ton of lithium. This exacerbates water scarcity in the arid Atacama Desert.
- **Contamination of Soil and Water**: Chemicals like sulfuric acid and sodium hydroxide used in lithium extraction contaminate the environment, harming ecosystems and endangering species.

BUSINESS STANDARD
Aug 23

BIOE3 POLICY
(Syllabus: GS Paper 3 – Sci and Tech)

Govt gives nod to BioE3 policy, Vigyan Dhara scheme to foster R&D

Context: The Union Cabinet approved the 'BioE3' (Biotechnology for Economy, Environment and Employment) policy for fostering high-performance biomanufacturing of the Department of Biotechnology.

BioE3 (Biotechnology for Economy, Environment and Employment) Policy

- **About:** The policy aims to promote high-performance biomanufacturing.
- **Focus:** This involves producing diverse products, addressing farming and food challenges, and advancing bio-based manufacturing through advanced biotechnology.
- **Innovation-Driven Support:** The policy supports R&D and entrepreneurship across various thematic sectors to drive technology development and commercialization.
- **Establishment of Hubs**: It plans to set up biomanufacturing, bio-AI hubs, and biofoundries to foster innovation and growth.
- **Regenerative Bioeconomy Models**: Prioritizes green growth and aims to expand India's skilled workforce and boost job creation.
- **Strategic/Thematic Sectors**: Focuses on high-value bio-based chemicals, biopolymers, enzymes, smart proteins, functional foods, precision biotherapeutics, climate-resilient agriculture, carbon capture, and marine and space research.
- **Support for National Initiatives**: Aligns with government goals like Net Zero carbon economy and Lifestyle for Environment, and promotes Circular Bioeconomy.
- **Vision for a Sustainable Future**: Aims to advance a sustainable, innovative future and address global challenges like climate change, food security, and human health.
    - The proposed outlay for Vigyan Dhara is Rs 10,579 crore during the 15th Finance Commission period from 2021-22 to 2025-26, Information and Broadcasting Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw told reporters.
    - **The scheme has three broad components** -- science and technology institutional and human capacity building; research and development; and innovation, technology development and deployment.

DTE Aug 24

GENETICALLY MODIFIED CROPS

(Syllabus: GS Paper 3 – Economy/Sci & Tech)

GM crops undesirable for India say farmer leaders, demand comprehensive discussion in national policy

Context: Farmer union leaders from 18 states and activists advocating farmers' rights have written a letter to Union Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Minister demanding a national policy on genetically modified (GM) crops.

Genetically Modified Crops

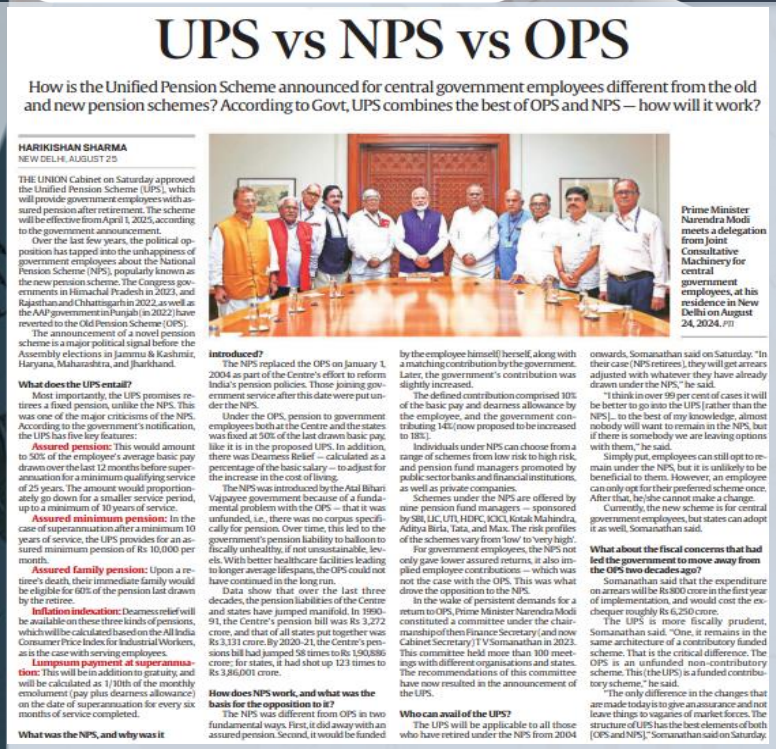
- **About**: It can be defined as organisms (i.e., plants, animals or microorganisms) in which the genetic material (DNA) has been altered in a way that does not occur naturally by mating and/or natural recombination.
- **Technology called**: Modern biotechnology" or "gene technology".
- **Aim:** To overcome the boundaries of plant species by incorporating a foreign gene into seeds to achieve specific effects; this foreign gene may originate from a plant, an animal, or even a soil bacterium.
- **GM crops in India:** BT cotton, BT Brinjal, DMH 11 Mustard (allowed for environmental release only).
- **First GM Crop:** India introduced Bt cotton seeds in 2002.
  - BT cotton is the only genetically modified (GM) crop that has been approved for commercial cultivation in India.
- **Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee (GEAC)**: It is the apex body that allows for the commercial release of GM crops.

Genetic Modification (GM) Technology

- **About:** It enables the transfer of specific traits between species using advanced laboratory techniques.
- **First Time introduced:** U.S. in the mid-1990s, with corn, soybeans, and cotton being the most widely grown.
- **Applications**: Improvements in nutrition, stress tolerance, disease resistance, biofuel efficiency, and environmental remediation.

UPS VS NPS VS OPS

(Syllabus: GS Paper 3 – Economy)



UPS vs NPS vs OPS

How is the Unified Pension Scheme announced for central government employees different from the old and new pension schemes? According to Govt, UPS combines the best of OPS and NPS — how will it work?

HARIKISHAN SHARMA
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 25

THE UNION Cabinet on Saturday approved the Unified Pension Scheme (UPS), which will provide government employees with assured pension after retirement. The scheme will be effective from April 1, 2025, according to the government announcement.

Over the last few years, the political opposition has tapped into the unhappiness of government employees about the National Pension Scheme (NPS), popularly known as the new pension scheme. The Congress governments in Himachal Pradesh in 2023, and Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh in 2022, as well as the AAP government in Punjab (in 2022) have reverted to the Old Pension Scheme (OPS).

The announcement of a novel pension scheme is a major political signal before the Assembly elections in Jammu & Kashmir, Haryana, Maharashtra, and Jharkhand.

What does the UPS entail?

Most importantly, the UPS promises retirees a fixed pension, unlike the NPS. This was one of the major criticisms of the NPS. According to the government's notification, the UPS has five key features:

Assured pension: This would amount to 50% of the employee's average basic pay drawn over the last 12 months before superannuation for a minimum qualifying service of 25 years. The amount would proportionately go down for a smaller service period, up to a minimum of 10 years of service.

Assured minimum pension: In the case of superannuation after a minimum 10 years of service, the UPS provides for an assured minimum pension of Rs 10,000 per month.

Assured family pension: Upon a retiree's death, their immediate family would be eligible for 60% of the pension last drawn by the retiree.

Inflation indexation: Dearness relief will be available on these three kinds of pensions, which will be calculated based on the All India Consumer Price Index for Industrial Workers, as is the case with serving employees.

Lumpsum payment at superannuation: This will be in addition to gratuity, and will be calculated as 1/10th of the monthly emolument (pay plus dearness allowance) on the date of superannuation for every six months of service completed.

What was the NPS, and why was it introduced?

The NPS replaced the OPS on January 1, 2004 as part of the Centre's effort to reform India's pension policies. Those joining government service after this date were put under the NPS.

Under the OPS, pension to government employees both at the Centre and the states was fixed at 50% of the last drawn basic pay, like it is in the proposed UPS. In addition, there was Dearness Relief — calculated as a percentage of the basic salary — to adjust for the increase in the cost of living.

The NPS was introduced by the Atal Bihari Vajpayee government because of a fundamental problem with the OPS — that it was unfunded, i.e., there was no corpus specifically for pension. Over time, this led to the government's pension liability to balloon to fiscally unhealthy, if not unsustainable, levels. With better healthcare facilities leading to longer average lifespans, the OPS could not have continued in the long run.

Data show that over the last three decades, the pension liabilities of the Centre and states have jumped manifold. In 1990-91, the Centre's pension bill was Rs 3,272 crore, and that of all states put together was Rs 3,131 crore. By 2020-21, the Centre's pensions bill had jumped 58 times to Rs 1,90,886 crore; for states, it had shot up 123 times to Rs 3,86,001 crore.

How does NPS work, and what was the basis for the opposition to it?

The NPS was different from OPS in two fundamental ways. First, it did away with an assured pension. Second, it would be funded by the employee himself/ herself, along with a matching contribution by the government. Later, the government's contribution was slightly increased.

The defined contribution comprised 10% of the basic pay and dearness allowance by the employee, and the government contributing 14% (now proposed to be increased to 18%).

Individuals under NPS can choose from a range of schemes from low risk to high risk, and pension fund managers promoted by public sector banks and financial institutions, as well as private companies.

Schemes under the NPS are offered by nine pension fund managers — sponsored by SBI, LIC, UTI, HDFC, ICICI, Kotak Mahindra, Aditya Birla, Tata, and Max. The risk profiles of the schemes vary from 'low' to 'very high'.

For government employees, the NPS not only gave lower assured returns, it also implied employee contributions — which was not the case with the OPS. This was what drove the opposition to the NPS.

In the wake of persistent demands for a return to OPS, Prime Minister Narendra Modi constituted a committee under the chairmanship of then Finance Secretary (and now Cabinet Secretary) T V Somanathan in 2023. This committee held more than 100 meetings with different organisations and states. The recommendations of this committee have now resulted in the announcement of the UPS.

Who can avail of the UPS?

The UPS will be applicable to all those who have retired under the NPS from 2004 onwards, Somanathan said on Saturday. "In their case (NPS retirees), they will get arrears adjusted with whatever they have already drawn under the NPS," he said.

"I think in over 99 per cent of cases it will be better to go into the UPS [rather than the NPS]... to the best of my knowledge, almost nobody will want to remain in the NPS, but if there is somebody we are leaving options with them," he said.

Simply put, employees can still opt to remain under the NPS, but it is unlikely to be beneficial to them. However, an employee can only opt for their preferred scheme once. After that, he/she cannot make a change.

Currently, the new scheme is for central government employees, but states can adopt it as well, Somanathan said.

What about the fiscal concerns that had led the government to move away from the OPS two decades ago?

Somanathan said that the expenditure on arrears will be Rs 800 crore in the first year of implementation, and would cost the exchequer roughly Rs 6,250 crore.

The UPS is more fiscally prudent, Somanathan said. "One, it remains in the same architecture of a contributory funded scheme. That is the critical difference. The OPS is an unfunded non-contributory scheme. This (the UPS) is a funded contributory scheme," he said.

"The only difference in the changes that are made today is to give an assurance and not leave things to vagaries of market forces. The structure of UPS has the best elements of both (OPS and NPS)," Somanathan said on Saturday.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi meets a delegation from Joint Consultative Machinery for central government employees, at his residence in New Delhi on August 24, 2024. PTI

Context: The Union Cabinet approved the Unified Pension Scheme (UPS), which will provide government employees with as- sured pension after retirement. The scheme will be effective from April 1, 2025, according to the government announcement.

Unified Pension Scheme (UPS)

- **About**: The UPS promises retirees a fixed pension, unlike the NPS. This was one of the major criticisms of the NPS.
- **Key Features**:
  - **Assured Pension**: Guarantees 50% of the employee's average basic pay from the last 12 months before retirement, with a minimum qualifying service of 25 years. This amount decreases proportionately for shorter service periods, down to a minimum of 10 years.
  - **Assured Minimum Pension**: Ensures a minimum pension of ₹10,000 per month if the employee retires after a minimum of 10 years of service.
  - **Assured Family Pension**: Provides 60% of the retiree's last drawn pension to their immediate family upon the retiree's death.
  - **Inflation Indexation**: Pensions are adjusted for inflation using the All India Consumer Price Index for Industrial Workers, similar to the adjustment for serving employees.
  - **Lumpsum Payment at Superannuation**: An additional benefit, calculated as 1/10th of the monthly emolument (pay plus dearness allowance) for every six months of completed service, paid along with gratuity.

New Pension Scheme (NPS)

- **About:** It was launched in January 2004 for government employees and was opened to all sections in 2009.
- It laid in its promise of an assured or 'defined' benefit to the retiree. It was hence described as a '**Defined Benefit Scheme**'.
- **Also known as**: National Pension Scheme.
- **Replaced**: Old Pension Scheme (OPS)
- **Introduced by**: The Atal Bihari Vajpayee government.

Old Pension Scheme (OPS)

- **About:** Pension to government employees at the Centre as well as states was fixed at 50 percent of the last drawn basic pay.
- In addition, there was Dearness Relief — calculated as a percentage of the basic salary — to adjust for the increase in the cost of living.
- The OPS was abolished at the Centre in 2003 and the National Pension Scheme (NPS) came into force on April 1, 2004.

DECCAN CHRONICLE

Aug 25

AMRABAD TIGER RESERVE

(Syllabus: GS Paper 3 – Env and Eco)

Government Okays Relocation of 4 Villages from Within Amrabad Tiger Reserve

Context: After nearly 11 years, the state government has given the final approval for relocating four villages from the core area of Amrabad Tiger Reserve to an external area, advancing the long-awaited project.

Amrabad Tiger Reserve

- **About:** It is a part of the Nallamala Forest track, boasts a wealth of biological diversity, including several endemic species of flora and fauna.
- **Largest Tiger Population**: This forest tract is home to the largest number of tigers in Telangana.
- **Hilly Terrain and Catchment**: The reserve's hilly terrain, with deep valleys and gorges, forms the catchment area for the Krishna River.
- **Large Tiger Reserve**: Amrabad Tiger Reserve is one of the largest tiger reserves in India, covering approximately 2611.4 sq km in Nagarkurnool and Nalgonda districts of Telangana. It is the second-largest in core area and the sixth-largest in total area among India's 51 tiger reserves.
- **Sanctuary to Reserve**: Initially notified as a sanctuary in 1983, it was re-designated as Amrabad Tiger Reserve after the bifurcation of Telugu States in 2014.
- **Forest Divisions**: The reserve spans three forest divisions: Amarabad and Achampet in Nagarkurnool district, and Nagarjunsagar division in Nalgonda district.
- **Major Reservoirs**: The reserve's rivers and streams feed major reservoirs such as the Srishailam Dam and Nagarjunsagar Dam.



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CLASSICAL LANGUAGES IN INDIA

(Syllabus: GS Paper 1 – Art and Culture)

Classical language centres ask for autonomy

Sreeparna Chakrabarty
NEW DELHI

Special centres set up for the promotion of Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam, and Odia after they were designated classical languages are demanding autonomy in their functioning in order to better carry out their functions.

India has six classical languages – Tamil, Sanskrit, Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam, and Odia. While four of the centres for classical languages function under the aegis of the Central Institute of Indian Languages (CIIL), Mysuru, the centre for Tamil is autonomous. For the promotion of Sanskrit, dedicated universities also receive funds directly from the Union Education Ministry.

At a meeting on March 18, the project directors of the centres for Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam, and Odia demanded that their institutes be made autonomous. Following this, the centres were asked to submit detailed project reports, which was done in June. However, no further direction has been received from the Education Ministry as of now, sources told *The Hindu*.

Once a language is notified as a classical language, the Education Ministry provides certain benefits to promote it, including two major annual international awards for scholars of eminence in the said languages. A Centre of Excellence for Studies in the classical language is set up, and the University Grants Commission is requested to create a certain number of Chairs for the classical language at least in the Central Universities.

Replying to a question in the Lok Sabha in 2020, the Union government had said that in the previous three years, ₹643.84 crore had been spent on the promotion of Sanskrit, while ₹29 crore was spent on the other five classical Indian languages.



The Centre of Excellence for Studies in Classical Kannada in Mysuru.

The sources said the chief problem facing these four language centres was that any event or activity planned for them had to get financial sanction from the CIIL. Most of the time, the centre has to hold the event first and then get the cost reimbursed from the CIIL, making it difficult to organise many such programmes.

This also means many positions for research scholars as well as administrative staff remain vacant in the absence of regular funds.

At the Centre of Excellence for Studies in Classical Telugu in Nellore, Andhra Pradesh, as against an approved staff requirement of 36 people, only 12 are on board.

Similarly, the Centre of Excellence for Studies in Classical Odia in Bhubaneswar has the approval for 30 senior and associate fellows and 10 administrative staff, but has been able to hire only eight.

In 2023, the Education Ministry allocated ₹1.76 crore for the Odia centre but it could spend only ₹56 lakh.

"There is no funding in the centre and the Project Director has no financial drawing power – he has to take approval from the nodal officer, the Director, CIIL, and is constrained to spend from his own pocket to conduct any programme and then get it reimbursed from CIIL. This difficulty will be solved when the centre will be autonomous," a senior official at the Odia centre told *The Hindu*.

"I have been here for the past two years. We do not have any financial resources. Only two persons are here – myself, and a daily wage employee. There are several vacancies but none have been filled yet," the Project Director at the Centre of Excellence for Studies in Classical Malayalam said.

Context: Special centres set up for the promotion of Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam and Odia after they were designated classical languages are demanding autonomy in their functioning in order to better carry out their functions.

Classical Languages in India

- **About:** It is defined as a language that possesses a distinct literary tradition and a substantial corpus of ancient written works.
- **Criteria**: The Government of India has established specific criteria for declaring a language as classical, including a high antiquity of early texts, a valuable literary heritage, originality, and distinctiveness from modern forms.
- **Currently Classical Languages**: As of now, 6 languages hold the prestigious 'Classical' status in India: Tamil (2004), Sanskrit (2005), Kannada (2008), Telugu (2008), Malayalam (2013), and Odia (2014).
- **Demand of classical language tag**: Marathi, Bengali, Assamese and Maithili.
- The Ministry of Culture provides the guidelines regarding Classical languages.

Present Criteria for Declaration of a Classical Language

- **Antiquity Requirement**: A language must demonstrate a high antiquity of its early texts or recorded history spanning 1,500-2,000 years.
- **Body of Ancient Literature**: It should possess a substantial body of ancient literature or texts that are considered valuable heritage by generations of speakers.
- **Original Literary Tradition:** The literary tradition of the language should be original and not borrowed from another speech community.
- **Distinct from Modern Format**: The classical language and its literature should be distinct from its modern format, possibly showing discontinuity with its later forms or offshoots.

Benefits

- **International Recognition**: Two major annual international awards are granted to distinguished scholars of the classical language to honor their contributions.
- **Academic Support:** A Centre of Excellence for Studies in the classical language is established to promote research and advanced studies.
- **University Integration:** The University Grants Commission is requested to create Chairs for the classical language in Central Universities, fostering academic growth and preservation.

FINANCIAL EXPRESS
Aug 25

PM-WANI
(Syllabus: GS Paper 2 – Govt Policies)

PM Wani revival: Trai proposes reduction in high Internet costs by telcos

Context: The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (Trai) has proposed reducing broadband connection rates for telcos and Internet service providers (ISPs) from public data offices (PDOs) under the Prime Minister Wi-Fi Access Network Interface (PM Wani) program.

PM-WANI

- **About:** PM WANI (Wi-Fi Access Network Interface) is a scheme meant to increase Wi-fi access throughout the country.
- **Launched in:** 2020.
- **Launched by:** Department of telecommunication.
- **Aim:** To democratise content distribution and broadband access at affordable rates through public Wi-Fi hotspots.
- **Components:**
  - **Public Data Office (PDO):** It will establish, maintain, and operate only WANI compliant Wi-Fi Access Points and deliver broadband services to subscribers.
  - **Public Data Office Aggregator (PDOA):** It will be an aggregator of PDOs and perform the functions relating to Authorization and Accounting.
  - **App Provider:** It will develop an App to register users and discover WANI compliant Wi-Fi hotspots in the nearby area and display the same within the App for accessing the internet service.
  - **Central Registry:** It will maintain the details of App Providers, PDOAs, and PDOs. To begin with, the Central Registry will be maintained by C-DoT.

Status of public Wi-Fi hotspots under PM-WANI

- **National Digital Communications Policy 2018**: Aimed to deploy 10 million public Wi-Fi hotspots by 2022 under the 'Connect India' mission to build a robust digital communication infrastructure.
- **Bharat 6G Vision**: Set a target of 10 million public Wi-Fi hotspots by 2022 and 50 million by 2030 to support the Digital India 2030 mobile and broadband policy objectives.

INDIAN EXPRESS

Pg 9/ Aug 25

GIR NATIONAL PARK & WILDLIFE SANCTUARY

(Syllabus: GS Paper 3 – Env and Eco)

Highway passing via Gir gets speed monitoring system to save lions

GOPAL KATESHIYA
RAJKOT, AUGUST 24

TO PREVENT death of wild animals and ensure safety of humans taking the roads criss-crossing Gir National Park and Wildlife Sanctuary (GNPWLS), the habitat of Asiatic lions, the Gujarat forest department has installed high-tech speed monitoring system as well as thermal and optical cameras along a 1-km stretch of state highway 26.

As part of a pilot project, the department has installed 54 cameras and 20 LED display units along the 1-km stretch, extending towards the forest from Vavaniya Ness forest check-post on the western periphery of GNPWLS. The cameras include 16 thermal and optical cameras, eight pan-tilt-zoom (PTZ) cameras and four automatic-number-plate-recognition (ANPR) cameras. Called Gir Speed Monitoring System (GSMS), the system also includes four speed guns, four strobe lights.

The system is controlled by a control unit integrated with the Gir Hi-Tech Monitoring Unit at Sasan – the headquarters of GNPWLS around 10 km away – through a dedicated network of cables, the forest department said in a statement on Saturday.

A sub-adult lion was run over by a truck near Goradka village in Amreli district's Savarkundla on Savarkundla-Mahuva highway in Gir (East) Wildlife Division in November 2021. In March 2021, a lioness was run over by a truck in the parking bay of Pipavav port near Rajula in Amreli when the port fell in the jurisdiction of Amreli Social Forestry Division. In January this year, a lioness had died after being hit by a car near Amreli's Bagasara town in Amreli Social Forestry Division.

Forest officers said that thermal and optical cameras are capable of detecting thermal signatures of any animal, bird or vehicle. If the cameras detect presence of any wild animals or birds on or along the highway, with the help of the system, the department will be able to alert vehicle drivers about the same and instruct them to slow down.

The speed guns will display on LED units the speed of moving vehicles passing on the stretch while ANPR cameras will be able to capture details of vehicle registration plates.





Devices installed under pilot project of Gir Speed Monitoring System. *Express*

Forest officers said that the objective is to address the menace speeding vehicles pose to the safety of wildlife and humans. The department has been testing the pilot project, which has cost around Rs 1 crore, for the last two months.

GNPWLS, which falls in the Junagadh Wildlife Circle, as well as other protected areas spread across Junagadh, Gir Somnath, Amreli and Bhavnagar districts are the world's only natural habitat of Asiatic lions.

However, GNPWLS – spread over 1,153 sq km – is criss-crossed by state highways 26, 33, 98 and 104.

Context: To protect wildlife and ensure human safety on roads through Gir National Park, the Gujarat forest department has installed high-tech speed monitoring systems and thermal cameras along a 1-km stretch of State Highway 26.

Gir National Park and Wildlife Sanctuary (GNPWLS)

- **About**: The Gir Forests represent the largest compact area of dry deciduous forests in the semi-arid western part of India.
- **Home to the Asiatic Lion**: It is the last natural habitat of the Asiatic lion (Panthera leo persica), an endangered species.
- **Conservation**: The sanctuary is internationally recognized for its efforts in saving the Asiatic lion from extinction.
- **Declared Sanctuary**: Gir Forests was officially declared a sanctuary in 1965.
- **National Park Status**: Out of the 1153.42 sq. km area of the sanctuary, 258.71 sq. km was designated as a National Park.
- **Rich Biodiversity**: The forests support a wide range of mammals, reptiles, birds, insects, and a rich variety of flora.
- **Unique Habitat:** Gir is the only place where Asiatic lions exist in their natural habitat today.
- **Symbiotic Relationship**: The Maldharis, a religious pastoral community, have a traditional, symbiotic relationship with the lions and live in settlements called "nesses."
- **Other National Parks in Gujarat**: Black Buck National Park, Vansda National Park, Marine National Park.

ECONOMIC TIMES

Aug 25

BHISHM CUBES

(Syllabus: GS Paper 2/3 – Health/Sci & Tech)

What are BHISHM cubes that India is gifting Ukraine? All you need to know

Context: India has pledged to donate four BHISHM (Bharat Health Initiative for Sahyog Hita & Maitri) Cubes to Ukraine to boost emergency medical care amid the ongoing conflict with Russia.

BHISHM Cubes

- **About:** It standing for Bharat Health Initiative for Sahyog, Hita, and Maitri, is designed to enhance medical readiness and disaster response capabilities across India.
- **Developed by**: Agra-based Air Delivery Research and Development Establishment (ADRDE).
- **Announced by**: Prime Minister of India at the Global South Summit.
- **Features**:
  - **Arogya Maitri Disaster Management Cube:** The project features mobile hospitals, known as BHISHM Cubes, which are fully equipped to treat up to 200 casualties during emergencies.
  - **Advanced Medical Capabilities**: These mobile units include operation theaters, mini-ICUs, ventilators, and diagnostic equipment, making them capable of handling a wide range of injuries, from fractures to severe bleeding.
  - **Rapid Deployment**: It can be deployed within 12 minutes, ensuring a swift response during the critical "golden hour" following a disaster.
  - **Transportability and Flexibility**: The units consist of 72 easily transportable components, which can be moved by hand, cycle, or drone.
  - **Cutting-edge Technology Integration**: The project incorporates advanced medical equipment, AI, and data analytics to optimize medical service efficiency and coordination during emergencies.
  - **Versatility in Emergency Response:** BHISHM Cubes are robust and versatile, suitable for airdrops and ground transportation, making them adaptable to different emergency scenarios.
  - **Software-Driven Efficiency**: The state-of-the-art BHISHM software system is used for inventory management, ensuring that medical supplies are efficiently utilized and ready for redeployment.

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