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WEST BENGAL

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## Chinese Scholars to Visit Visva Bharati

### Why in News?

The Chinese Consul General in Kolkata announced that around 20 scholars and experts from China will visit **Visva-Bharati University** on 1st April 2025 to participate in an international seminar on **Rabindranath Tagore**, marking the 75th anniversary of **India-China diplomatic ties**.

### Key Points

#### ➤ Tagore's Legacy and China-India Relations:

- **Rabindranath Tagore, who visited China in 1924**, symbolizes China-India friendship.
- The international seminar at Cheena Bhavana, Visva-Bharati University, **marks 100 years since Tagore's visit to China and 75 years of diplomatic relations between the two nations**.



*"You can't cross the sea merely by standing and staring at the sea."*

## Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941)

- First Indian and first non-European to achieve the **Nobel Prize in Literature in 1913** for his exceptional work, *Gitanjali*. Responsible for modernising **Bengali prose and poetry**.
- Gave the **national anthems of India and Bangladesh**: the *Jana Gana Mana* and the *Amar Shonar Bangla*.
- "*Jana Gana Mana*" was **translated by him from Bengali to English in February 1919** at Madanapalle in the District of Chittoor (Andhra Pradesh).
- In 1915, he was **awarded the knighthood** by British King George V which he later **renounced in 1919**, to protest against the Jallianwalla Bagh massacre.
- He is said to have given Mahatma Gandhi the title of Mahatma.
- Established the **Vishwa-Bharati University** in 1921.
- Spoke at the **World Parliament for Religions** in the years 1929 and 1937.



#### ➤ International Seminar and Chinese Delegation:

- The Chinese Consulate is organizing the seminar in collaboration with Cheena Bhavana, Visva-Bharati University.
- In 2024, Indian scholars and artists visited China to **"Retrace the Footsteps of Tagore."**
- The Chinese Consulate also held a **photo exhibition at Visva-Bharati in 2024 to commemorate the centenary of Tagore's visit to China**.

#### ➤ Cheena Bhavana: The Center for China-India Cultural Exchange:

- Cheena Bhavana (Department of Chinese Language and Culture) at Visva-Bharati is the oldest Chinese studies department in South Asia.
- **Established by Tagore and Professor Tan Yun-Shan in April 1937**, the department promotes historical and cultural ties between India and China.

#### ➤ Strengthening People-to-People Ties:

- The Chinese Consul emphasized the need to strengthen cultural and academic exchanges between the two countries.

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Note:

- He recalled the **Indian Medical Mission to China in 1938**, led by Dr. Dwarkanath Kotnis.
- The Dr. Dwarkanath Kotnis Memorial Committee in West Bengal continues to promote initiatives fostering India-China relations.

## Padmaja Naidu Himalayan Zoological Park

### Why in News?

The Padmaja Naidu Himalayan Zoological Park in Darjeeling, West Bengal, has become India's first zoo to preserve DNA samples of wildlife found exclusively in snowy regions.

### Key Points

- **DNA Sample Collection:**
  - The officials announced that the zoo has already collected **60 DNA samples from indigenous animals** for profiling.
  - Tissue samples have been collected from **red pandas, snow leopards**, and other native species that died in road accidents or captivity.
- **Cryogenic Conservation Initiative:**
  - The initiative is a collaboration with **the Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CCMB), Hyderabad**.
  - It **aims to preserve genetic material for research and future conservation efforts**, especially if these species face extinction.
- **Research on Himalayan Biodiversity:**
  - The zoo is committed to researching the rich biodiversity of **the Himalayan region**.
  - A dedicated laboratory has been set up within the zoo for DNA preservation.
  - DNA samples are stored in steel containers filled with **liquid nitrogen** at freezing temperatures.
- **Zoo Overview:**
  - The Padmaja Naidu Himalayan Zoological Park spans 67.8 acres and is located at an altitude of 2,150 meters (7,050 feet).
  - It holds the distinction of being **India's highest-altitude zoological park**.
  - It houses endangered fauna, including **gorals, Siberian tigers, and rare birds**.

#### Centre for Cellular & Molecular Biology

- The Centre for Cellular & Molecular Biology (CCMB) is a **premier research organization** which conducts high quality basic research and training in frontier areas of modern biology, and promotes centralized national facilities for new and modern techniques in the interdisciplinary areas of biology.
- It was **set up initially as a semi-autonomous Centre on April 1, 1977** with the Biochemistry Division of the then Regional Research Laboratory (presently, Indian Institute of Chemical Technology, IICT) Hyderabad.
- During 1981-82, the CCMB was accorded the status of a full-fledged national laboratory with its own Executive Committee and Scientific Advisory Council.
- It is **located in Hyderabad** and operates under the aegis of **the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research**.
- It is designated as **"Center of Excellence"** by the **Global Molecular and Cell Biology Network, UNESCO**.

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Note:

# Snow Leopard

*Panthera Uncia*

*Often referred to as the "ghost of the mountains"*

## HABITAT

- Mountainous regions of **Central and Southern Asia**
- **12** Range Countries
- In India:
  - **Western Himalayas:** Jammu and Kashmir, Ladakh, Himachal Pradesh
  - **Eastern Himalayas:** Uttarakhand and Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh

## MAJOR SITES

- Hemis National Park, Ladakh
  - **Snow leopard capital of the world**
- Great Himalayan National Park, Himachal Pradesh
- Gangotri National Park, Uttarakhand
- Khangchendzonga National Park, Sikkim

## PROTECTION STATUS

- **Vulnerable:** IUCN Red List
- **Appendix I:** CITES
- **Schedule I:** Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972

## CONSERVATION EFFORTS

- Global Snow Leopard and Ecosystem Protection (GSLEP) Programme
- Himal Sanrakshak- Community Volunteer Programme
- Project Snow Leopard
- Snow Leopard Conservation Breeding Programme- Padmaja Naidu Himalayan Zoological Park, West Bengal

## THREATS

- Human Snow Leopard Conflict
- Climate Change
- Loss of Prey and Habitat
- Poaching



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Note:

## Farakka Barrage

### Why in News?

The Union Government has decided to commission **the Farakka Barrage** shortly, despite the concerns raised by the Bangladesh delegation during the talks in February 2025.

### Key Points

- **Project Timeline and Cost:**
  - The construction of the **Farakka Barrage** took **nearly 12 years to complete**, with an expenditure exceeding Rs 130 crore.
- **Concerns Raised by Bangladesh:**
  - The Bangladesh delegation, led by the Minister for Flood Control and Water Resources, **reiterated long-standing concerns**
- **Efforts to Address Bangladesh's Concerns:**
  - The Union Government has consistently worked to dispel apprehensions, first expressed by the erstwhile East Pakistan Government and now by Bangladesh, regarding the **potential impact of the Farakka Barrage** on their country.

#### Farakka Barrage

- **Location:** Built on **the Ganga River** in Murshidabad district, West Bengal, around 18 km from the Bangladesh border.
- **Commissioning:** Operational since **21st April 1975**, after 12 years of construction at a cost of Rs 130 crores.
- **Purpose:** Diverts 40,000 cusecs of water into the Farakka Feeder Canal to **clear silt from the Bhagirathi-Hooghly River**, ensuring smooth navigation for Kolkata Port.

- **Water-Sharing Agreements:** India and Bangladesh have signed multiple agreements, including the **1977 Farakka Agreement** and the **1996 Ganga Water Treaty**, to regulate Ganga water distribution.

## Bengali Omission From Sahitya Akademi Award

### Why in News?

The exclusion of Bengali literature from **the Sahitya Akademi Award 2024** has sparked controversy in West Bengal's literary circles.

### Key Points

- **Omission of Bengali Literature:**
  - Bengali literature, despite being granted **classical language status** by the Government of India in 2024, was excluded from the awards.
  - This is the **first time in 52 years that Bengali writers and works were left out** of the prestigious award.
  - The Sahitya Akademi's Executive Board attributed the omission to **"technical issues."**
  - The **West Bengal Democratic Writers Artists Association** wrote to Sahitya Akademi Secretary, seeking an explanation for the exclusion.
- **RTI Application for Transparency:**
  - Journalist and former Sahitya Akademi council member filed a **Right to Information (RTI)** application seeking clarity on the omission.
  - The RTI request asks for **details about Bengali nominees, jury members, and documents** related to the decision.
- **Past Instances of Omission:**
  - Bengali literature was previously omitted from the Sahitya Akademi Awards in **1960, 1968, and 1973**.

#### Sahitya Akademi Awards

- **About:**
  - The Sahitya Akademi Awards honor exceptional **literary contributions** in categories like **novels, poetry, essays, and plays**.
  - It is the **2nd-highest literary honor** in India, after **the Jnanpith Award**.
  - It was established in **1954** as an autonomous body under **the Ministry of Culture**.

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➤ **Eligibility:**

- **Award categories** include works in **22 languages** of the **Eighth Schedule**, along with **English and Rajasthani (total: 24 languages)**, and **translations** of Indian literary works.
- The author must be an **Indian citizen**.

➤ **Recipients:**

### **SAHITYA AKADEMI AWARD 2024**

Language	Title and Genre	Name of the Author
Assamese	Pharingbore Bator Katha Jane (Poetry)	Sameer Tanti
Bodo	Swrni Thakhai (Novel)	Aron Raja
English	Spirit Nights (Novel)	Easterine Kire
Gujarati	Bhagwan-ni Vato (Poetry)	Dileep Jhaveri
Hindi	Main Jab Tak Aai Bahar (Poetry)	Gagan Gill
Kannada	Nudigala Alivu (Literary Criticism)	K.V. Narayana
Kashmiri	Psychiatric Ward (Novel)	Sohan Koul
Konkani	Rangtarang (Essays)	Mukesh Thali
Maithili	Prabandh Sangrah (Essays)	Mahendra Malangia
Malayalam	Pingalakeshini (Poetry)	K. Jayakumar
Manipuri	Mainu Bora Nungshi Sheirol (Poetry)	Haobam Satyabati Devi
Marathi	Vindanche Gadyaroop (Criticism)	Sudhir Rasal
Nepali	Chhichimira (Short Stories)	Yuva Baral
Odia	Bhuti Bhakti Bibhuti (Essays)	Baishnab Charan Samal
Punjabi	Sun Gunvanta Sun Budhivanta : Itihaasnama Punjab (Poetry)	Paul Kaur
Rajasthani	Gaon Ar Amma (Poetry)	Mukut Maniraj
Sanskrit	Bhaskaracaritam (Poetry)	Dipak Kumar Sharma
Santali	Seched Sawnta Ren Andha Manmi (Play)	Maheswar Soren
Sindhi	Purzo (Short Stories)	Hundraj Balwani
Tamil	Tirunelveeli Ezucchiyum Vaa. Vuu.ci. Yum 1908 (Research)	A.R. Venkatachalapathy
Telugu	Deepika (Criticism)	Penugonda Lakshminarayana

Award in Bengali, Dogri and Urdu will be declared at later stage.

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## Revocation of West Bengal Incentive Schemes

### Why in News?

The West Bengal Industries Minister tabled [the Revocation of State Incentive Schemes](#) and [Obligations in the Nature of Grants and Incentives Bill 2025](#) in the assembly.

### Key Points

- **Challenges with the Existing Scheme:**
  - The Chief Minister of State stated that **the West Bengal Incentive Scheme dates back to 2001-02 and has become difficult to sustain.**
  - She highlighted the **transformation in the state's industrial scenario** since 2000-2001.
  - Earlier, IT and related industries were nearly non-existent, but now:
    - [Artificial Intelligence \(AI\)](#) is a major industry.
    - [Tourism](#) has expanded significantly.
    - [Green industries](#) have gained prominence.
    - The [mining policy](#) differs for coal and iron ore.
- **New Policy Under Development:**
  - The government has set up a **committee led by the Chief Secretary to consult stakeholders** on the new scheme.
  - The new scheme will be introduced keeping the state's financial health in mind.
- **State Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management Bill 2025:**
  - The state government has introduced a bill in the assembly to **increase the borrowing limit.**
  - The borrowing cap will rise by 0.5% of the [Gross State Domestic Product \(GSDP\)](#), from 3% to 3.5% for 2024-25.
  - This additional borrowing flexibility aligns with [the 15th Finance Commission's](#) roadmap and is linked to power sector reforms.

## Backward Classes in West Bengal

### Why in News?

The West Bengal government informed [the Supreme Court](#) that the State's Backward Classes Commission is initiating a new exercise to identify [Socially and Educationally Backward Communities \(SEBC\)](#) eligible for inclusion in the State's [Other Backward Classes \(OBC\)](#) List.

### Key Points

- **Appeal Against High Court Judgment:**
  - The West Bengal government challenged the Calcutta High Court's decision in the Supreme Court.
  - [The High Court](#) had struck down **the State's policy of including several castes**, predominantly from Muslim communities, in the OBC List.
  - High Court's Observations:
    - The Calcutta High Court ruled that **religion was the sole criterion for designating these communities as OBC.**
    - It **criticized the inclusion of 77 Muslim classes as backward**, calling it an affront to the Muslim community as a whole.
- **Fresh Exercise to Identify Backward Communities:**
  - It was informed in the court that **the West Bengal Backward Classes Commission is conducting a new survey** to determine sections needing reservation.
  - The Court asked **the State to clarify the methodology and scope of its survey** to assess the social and educational backwardness of these communities.
  - The Court also questioned whether **these communities faced inadequate representation in State public services**, justifying their inclusion in the OBC List.
- **Impact of High Court Ruling on OBC Certificates:**
  - The High Court ruling affected five lakh OBC certificates issued in West Bengal since 2010.
  - However, the Court clarified that **individuals who had already secured jobs using these certificates would not be affected.**

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### ➤ Striking Down of 2012 Act Provisions:

- The High Court nullified specific sections of the West Bengal Backward Classes (Other than SCs and STs) (Reservation of Vacancies in Services and Posts) Act, 2012.
  - Struck-down provisions included Section 16, the second part of Section 2(h), and Section 5(a), which allocated 10% and 7% reservation to sub-classified categories.
  - As a result, OBC-A and OBC-B categories were removed from Schedule I of the Act.

#### Similar Religion-based Reservation in Other States

- **Kerala:** Provides an 8% Muslim quota within its 30% OBC quota.
- **Tamil Nadu and Bihar:** Also Include Muslim caste groups in their OBC quota.
- **Karnataka:** Had a 4% sub-quota for Muslims within the 32% OBC quota.
  - State government in 2023 redistributed this sub-quota among Vokkaligas and Lingayats

## Advance Homoeopathy Research

### Why in News?

Adamas University, Kolkata, and the Central Council for Research in Homoeopathy (CCRH), New Delhi, have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to strengthen academic and research collaboration in Homoeopathy.

### Key Points

#### ➤ Significance of the Partnership:

- This agreement represents a **key step in interdisciplinary research**, promoting **scientific advancements in Homoeopathy** through collaborative initiatives.
- Both institutions have reaffirmed their **commitment to innovation and evidence-based research** in alternative medicine.

#### ➤ Expected Outcomes:

- The partnership aims to **strengthen academic ties and facilitate joint research projects**.
- It is expected to contribute to the broader acceptance and integration of Homoeopathy in mainstream healthcare.

#### ➤ About CCRH:

- **The Central Council for Research in Homoeopathy (CCRH)** operates under the Ministry of Ayush, Government of India as an **apex research organisation**.
- It **conducts core research in Homoeopathy** and collaborates with national and international institutes of excellence for various research activities.

#### Homeopathy

- It is a system of medicine which is based on the concept that the **body has an inherent ability to heal itself**, and the role of the homoeopathic remedy is to **stimulate this self-healing process**.
  - Practitioners of homoeopathy believe that diluting the substance to extremely small amounts enhances its healing properties while reducing any potential side effects.
- **The World Homoeopathy Day** is observed **every year on 10th April** to commemorate the **Birth Anniversary of Dr. Hahnemann**, the Founder of Homoeopathy.

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# AYUSH Systems of Medicine

AYUSH encompasses Ayurveda, Yoga & Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha, Sowa Rigpa, and Homeopathy, with Ayurveda having a documented history of 5000+ years.

## Ayurveda

- ⌚ **Samhita Period (1000 BC):**  
Emerged as mature medical system
  - ➔ **Charaka Samhita:** Oldest and most authoritative text
  - ➔ **Sushruta Samhita:** Gives fundamental principles and therapeutic methods in eight specialties
- ⌚ **Main Schools:**
  - ➔ **Punarvasu Atreya** - School of physicians
  - ➔ **Divodasa Dhanvantari** - School of surgeons

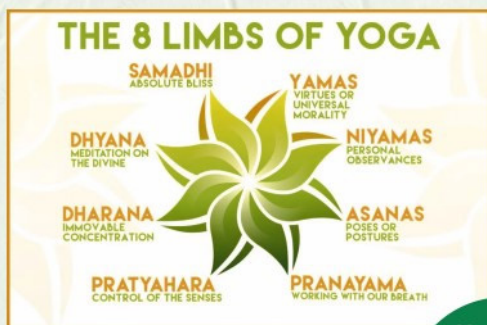
### Branches of Ayurveda:

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| ■ Kayachikitsa<br>(internal medicine)                     | ■ Agada Tantra<br>(toxicology)                     |
| ■ Shalya Tantra<br>(surgery)                              | ■ Bhootavidya<br>(psychiatry)                      |
| ■ Shalakya Tantra<br>(disease of supra-clavicular origin) | ■ Rasayana Tantra<br>(rejuvenation and geriatrics) |
| ■ Kaumarabhritya<br>(paediatrics)                         | ■ Vajikarana (eugenics & science of aphrodisiac)   |



Lord Brahma is believed to be the 1<sup>st</sup> proponent of Ayurveda

## Yoga & Naturopathy



- ⌚ **Naturopathy:** Healing with help of 5 natural elements - Earth, Water, Air, Fire and Ether
  - ➔ Based on theories of self-healing capacity of body and principles of healthy living
  - ➔ Encourages a **person-centred approach** rather than disease-centred

Yoga first propounded by Maharishi Patanjali in systematic form Yogsutra

## Unani

**Pioneered in Greece, developed by Arabs as 7 principles (Umoor-e-Tabbiya)**

- ⌚ Based on the framework of teachings of **Buqrat** (Hippocrates) and **Jalinoos** (Galen)
  - ➔ Hippocratic theory of **four humors** viz. blood, phlegm, yellow bile, and black bile
- ⌚ **Recognised by WHO** and granted official status by India as an alternative health system

## Siddha

**Dates back to 10000 – 4000 BC; Siddhar Agasthiyar - Father of Siddha Medicine**

- ⌚ Preventive, promotive, curative, rejuvenative, and rehabilitative health care
- ⌚ **4 Components:** Latro-chemistry, Medical practice, Yogic practice & Wisdom
- ⌚ Diagnosis based on 3 humors (**Mukkuttram**) and 8 vital tests (**Ennvagai Thervu**)

## Sowa Rigpa

**Origin: Lord Buddha in India before 2500 years**

- ⌚ Traditional medicine in Himalayan regions of Ladakh, Himachal Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, etc.
- ⌚ Recognised in India by Indian Medicine Central Council Act, 1970 (As amended in 2010)

## Homeopathy

**German physician Dr. Christian F. S. Hahnemann codified its fundamental principles**

- ⌚ Medicines prepared mainly from natural substances (plant products, minerals, animal sources)
- ⌚ Brought in India by European missionaries - 1810; official recognition - 1948
- ⌚ **3 Key Principles:**
  - ➔ *Similia Similibus Curentur* (let likes be cured by likes)
  - ➔ Single Medicine
  - ➔ Minimum Dose



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## Human Coronavirus- HKU1

### Why in News?

According to reports a woman in Kolkata is suffering from **human coronavirus HKU1**, a species of **coronavirus**. HKU1 typically **causes milder respiratory illnesses** and **does not pose a pandemic threat**.

### Key Points

- **Identification and Evolution:**
  - Coronaviruses exist in multiple types, but **HKU1 is not a novel virus like Covid-19**.
  - Scientists **first identified HKU1 in 2005** as a rare isolate.
  - Evidence suggests **HKU1 has been evolving steadily in humans**, who are likely its only known reservoir.
- **Symptoms and Severity:**
  - HKU1 generally **affects the upper respiratory tract**, causing symptoms similar to the common cold and flu, including:
    - Malaise, Persistent cough, Runny nose or nasal congestion, Blocked sinuses, Sore throat, Fatigue, Headaches, Low-grade fever.
    - In severe cases, the virus may descend to the lungs, leading to **pneumonia or bronchitis**.
- **Mode of Transmission:**
  - It spreads through common respiratory transmission methods, such as:
    - Direct contact with an infected person, Respiratory droplets from coughing or sneezing.
    - Touching contaminated surfaces and then touching the face, mouth, or nose
- **Vulnerability:**
  - The disease is **self-limiting and resolves on its own**. But **vulnerable groups** like the elderly, children, pregnant women, those with immuno-compromised conditions or with co-morbidities **need to be vigilant for severe manifestation of the disease**.
- **Treatment:**
  - There is **no vaccine or specific treatment for human coronaviruses**. Most infected individuals get better on their own.

## Kantha Fair in West Bengal

### Why in News?

**Coal India Limited (CIL)**, under **the Ministry of Coal**, organized a **Kantha Fair** showcasing the embroidery work of **women artisans from West Bengal**.

- These artisans benefited from the **Kantha Skill Centre built under CIL**.

### Key Points

- **Celebrating Women's Achievements:**
  - CIL and its subsidiaries recognized and celebrated women's achievements by organizing various programs across their offices and operational areas.
  - As the lead company, **Central Coalfields Ltd (CCL), Ranchi, Jharkhand**, hosted a mega event showcasing **tribal art**, women-led businesses, and technical skills.
- **CIL's Commitment to Sustainable Livelihoods:**
  - It was emphasized that CIL and its subsidiaries are dedicated to implementing **impactful programs that empower women through skill development, entrepreneurship, and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives**.
- **Promoting Self-Reliance Among Women:**
  - CIL's commitment to **uplifting marginalized communities** and fostering economic and social opportunities for women, contributing to national progress while preserving artistic traditions was highlighted.

### Coal India Limited

- **About:** CIL is a **state-owned coal mining corporation** in India, responsible for producing and managing coal resources in the country.
  - It was **1975** and is the **world's largest coal producer**.
- **Organisational Structure:** CIL is classified as a **'Maharatna' public sector enterprise** and operates through **8 subsidiaries** like Eastern Coalfields Limited (ECL), Bharat Coking Coal Limited (BCCL).
  - **Mahanadi Coalfields Limited (MCL)** is CIL's largest coal-producing subsidiary.

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Note:

- **Strategic Importance:** Over half of India's **installed power capacity** is coal-based, with CIL supplying around **78%** of the country's total coal production.
  - Coal also accounts for **40%** of India's **primary commercial energy needs**.
- **Mining Capacity:** Across **eight Indian states**, CIL operates in **84 mining areas**, and manages a total of **313 active mines**.

## Indian Navy's Motor Car Rally

### Why in News?

On 3rd March 2025, Naval Officer-in-Charge (West Bengal) flagged off the **Indian Navy's Motor Car Rally Expedition on the East Coast from INS Netaji, Kolkata.**

- The rally will cover the **route from Kolkata to Chennai, proceed to Kanyakumari, and return to Chennai on 21 March 2025.**



### Key Points

- **Objectives of the Rally:**
  - Enhance **maritime awareness** among the public.
  - Engage with youth and civil society to **inspire participation in naval careers**.
  - Promote **the Agnipath Scheme** and other career opportunities in the Indian Navy.
  - Advocate for women's empowerment under **the Naari Shakti initiative**.

- **Interact with Naval Veterans and Veer Naaris**, updating them on government and naval welfare policies.
- **Participation and Coverage:**
  - A total of **56 Indian Naval personnel, including Officers, Sailors, and their family members, are participating**.
  - The expedition will traverse approximately 3,800 km through West Bengal, Odisha, Andhra Pradesh, and Tamil Nadu, engaging with local communities.
- **Historical and Corporate Support:**
  - The **event is supported by M/s Hyundai Ltd.**
  - The rally will explore **India's rich maritime heritage**, visiting historical naval sites and locations along ancient maritime trade routes.

### Agnipath Scheme

- The term "**Agniveer**" translates to "Fire-Warriors" and is a **new military rank**.
- It is a scheme of **recruiting army personnel below officer ranks** such as **soldiers, airmen, and sailors** who are not commissioned officers to the **Indian Armed Forces**.
- They are recruited for a period of **4 years**, after which, **up to 25%** of these recruits (called Agniveers), can join the services on a **permanent commission** (another 15 years), subject to merit and organisational requirements.
- At present, **all sailors, airmen, and soldiers**, except the technical cadre of the medical branch, are recruited to the services under this scheme.

## Grants for Rural Local Bodies of West Bengal

### Why in News?

The Union Government has released **the Fifteenth Finance Commission (XV FC) Grants** for **Rural Local Bodies** in West Bengal during the Financial Year 2024-25.

### Key Points

- **Grant Disbursement:**
  - The Union Government disbursed the **second installment of Untied Grants** amounting to Rs 694.4446 crores.
  - These **funds will support 21 District Panchayats, 326 Block Panchayats, and 3,220 Gram Panchayats.**

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### ➤ Utilization of Grants:

- **Untied Grants:** **Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs)**/ Rural Local Bodies (RLBs) will use these funds for location-specific felt needs, as per **the 29 Subjects** under **the Eleventh Schedule of the Constitution**, excluding salaries and establishment costs.
- **Tied Grants:** These funds will be utilized for essential services, including:
  - **Sanitation and maintenance of ODF status**, covering household waste management, human excreta treatment, and fecal sludge management.
  - Drinking water supply, rainwater harvesting, and water recycling to ensure water security in rural areas.

### ➤ Role of Government Ministries:

- The Ministry of Panchayati Raj and **the Ministry of Jal Shakti** recommend the release of XV FC Grants to States for Rural Local Bodies.
- The Ministry of Finance subsequently disburses these funds in two installments per Financial Year.

### ➤ Impact of the Grants:

- Strengthens rural local governance by **enhancing financial resources at the grassroots level**.
- Improves **accountability and transparency** in fund utilization.
- **Promotes self-reliance** in villages, enabling local bodies to address critical infrastructure and service needs effectively.

### 15th Finance Commission

- The **Finance Commission (FC)** is a **constitutional body** that determines the method and formula for **distributing the tax proceeds between the Centre and states**, and among the states as per the constitutional arrangement and present requirements.
- Under **Article 280 of the Constitution**, **the President of India** is required to constitute a Finance Commission at an interval of five years or earlier.
- The 15th Finance Commission was constituted by the President of India in November 2017, **under the chairmanship of NK Singh**. Its recommendations will cover a **period of five years from the year 2021-22 to 2025-26**.

### Eleventh Schedule

- The Eleventh Schedule, added by **the 73rd Amendment Act in 1992**, contains provisions that outline **the powers, authority, and responsibilities of Panchayats (rural local governments)**.
- It places as many as **29 functions within the purview of the Panchayati Raj bodies** including agricultural extension, land improvement, implementation of land reforms etc.

## Implementation of NEP in West Bengal

### Why in News?

A **Supreme Court** lawyer petitioned the top court to direct the **Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and West Bengal** governments to implement **the National Education Policy (NEP)**.

- The plea comes amid a **heated debate led by Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin**, who has **accused the Centre of imposing Hindi on the State**.

### Key Points

- **Argument for NEP Implementation:**
  - The plea urged Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and West Bengal to **sign a memorandum of understanding** with the Centre to implement **the NEP**.
  - It was argued that these States must act to **protect children's fundamental right to education**.
- **Clarification on Hindi in NEP:**
  - The **NEP mentions 'Hindi' only once and does not mandate its imposition**.
  - The policy does not compel State governments to teach Hindi to children.
- **Constitutional and Legal Considerations:**
  - The plea argued that both the Centre and the States have a stake in education, as it falls under **the Concurrent List of the Constitution**.
  - The **petition acknowledged that the Supreme Court cannot directly compel a State to adopt a policy or sign an MoU**.
    - However, **the court can intervene** if the matter affects fundamental rights.

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### National Education Policy 2020

#### ➤ About:

- The **National Education Policy 2020** seeks to tackle the evolving development needs of India.
  - It calls for a **comprehensive overhaul of the education system**, including its **regulations and management**, to establish a modern system that aligns with 21st-century educational goals, including **Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4)**, while respecting **India's cultural heritage and values**.
- It replaces the thirty-four year old **National Policy on Education, 1986, modified in 1992** (NPE 1986/92).

#### ➤ Salient Features:

- **Universal Access:** NEP 2020 focuses on **universal access to school education**, including pre-school to secondary levels.
- **Early Childhood Education:** The **10+2 structure will shift to a 5+3+3+4 system**, bringing 3-6-year-olds under school curriculum, with a focus on **Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE)**.
- **Multilingualism:** Mother tongue or regional language will be the medium of instruction **till Grade 5**, with options for Sanskrit and other languages.
  - Indian Sign Language (ISL) will be standardized.
- **Inclusive Education:** Special emphasis on **Socially and Economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs)**, support for children with disabilities, and **establishment of "Bal Bhavans."**
- **Elimination of Barriers:** The policy promotes a seamless education system with **no rigid distinctions between arts and sciences**, curricular and extracurricular activities, and vocational and academic streams.
- **GER Enhancement:** Aim to increase **Gross Enrolment Ratio from 26.3% to 50% by 2035**, adding 3.5 crore new seats.
- **Research Focus:** Creation of **National Research Foundation** to boost research culture and capacity.
- **Language Preservation:** Support for Indian languages, including an **Institute of Translation and Interpretation (ITI)** and strengthening language departments.

- **Internationalization:** Facilitation of international collaborations and entry of **top-ranked foreign universities**.
- **Funding:** Joint efforts to increase **public investment in education to 6% of GDP**.
- **PARAKH Assessment Center:** The establishment of **PARAKH (Performance Assessment, Review, and Analysis of Knowledge for Holistic Development)** as a national assessment center signifies a significant step towards competency-based and holistic assessment in education.
- **Gender Inclusion Fund:** The policy introduces a **Gender Inclusion Fund**, emphasizing the importance of gender equality in education and supporting initiatives to empower disadvantaged groups.
- **Special Education Zones:** **Special Education Zones** are envisioned to address the specific needs of disadvantaged regions and groups, furthering the policy's commitment to equitable access to quality education for all.

## Deocha Pachami Coal Block

### Why in News?

Fresh protests by local villagers have halted ongoing **basalt mining** at the **Deocha-Pachami-Dewanganj-Harisingha (DPDH) coal project** in West Bengal's Birbhum district.

### Key Points

#### ➤ Mass Gathering at Project Site:

- **Around 300 villagers**, mostly women and tribals from Mathura Pahari, Sagarbandi, and Chanda villages, **gathered at the DPDH coal project site**.
- They **demand a complete halt to mining work** in the area.
- Villagers claim they were not informed before mining operations started.

#### ➤ Symbolic Protest and Demands:

- **Protesters planted a charka**, a tribal tradition of **placing sticks in the soil**, to symbolize a stoppage of work until the charka is removed.
- They demanded a permanent halt to the coal project and improvements in civic amenities.
- Villagers **rejected compensation**, stating they would not leave their land for the project.

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➤ **Environmental and Social Concerns:**

- Protesters raised **concerns over environmental damage** due to mining.
- They highlighted that tribals face arrest for entering forests, while entire forests are being cleared for coal mining.
- Dust from basalt mining is already **affecting the local environment and health**.

**Deocha-Pachami-Dewanganj-Harisingha (DPDH)**



- Deocha Pachami coal block of Birbhum Coalfield Area is World's Second Largest Coal Block situated in **West Bengal**.
- This coal mine is the **largest coal mine or coal block in Asia**, due to the number of coal reserves.
- It is the **newest coal mine in West Bengal**.
- The proposed mining project at **Birbhum coalfield Area** has been recently in the news due to expected environmental concerns and displacement of the people from the same area.



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**Summary**

## Key Points

## Details

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## Summary

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