



## News Analysis (24 Oct, 2020)

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### Chair of ILO Governing Body: India

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#### Why in News

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After 35 years, India has assumed the **Chairmanship of the Governing Body of International Labour Organization (ILO)**.

#### Key Points

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- Labour & Employment Secretary **Apurva Chandra** has been elected as the Chairperson of the Governing Body of the ILO for the **period October 2020-June 2021**.
- The Chairperson of the Governing Body of ILO is a **position of international repute**. The Governing Body (GB) is the **apex executive body of the ILO**.
  - **GB meets thrice a year**, in March, June and November. It takes decisions on **ILO policy**, decides the **agenda of the International Labour Conference**, adopts the draft programme and budget of the organisation for submission to the conference, and elects the Director-General.
  - The broad policies of the ILO are set by the **International Labour Conference**, which **meets once a year in June, in Geneva, Switzerland**.
- Chandra will be **presiding over the upcoming Governing Body's meeting**, to be held in November 2020.
  - It will **provide a platform** to apprise participants of the transformational initiative taken by the government in removing the rigidities of the labour market, besides making intention clear about the universalisation of social security to all workers in the organised or unorganised sector.
  - The **four codes on wages, industrial relations, social security and occupational safety, health and working conditions** are expected to improve ease of doing business and safeguard the interest of workers.

## International Labour Organization

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- The **only tripartite United Nations (UN) agency**, since **1919**, the ILO brings together **governments, employers and workers of 187 member States**, to set labour standards, develop policies and devise programmes promoting decent work for all women and men.
- The ILO became the **first specialized agency of the UN** in 1946.
- The principal means of action in the ILO is the setting up the International Labour Standards in the form of **Conventions and Recommendations**.
  - **Conventions** are international treaties and are instruments, which create legally binding obligations on the countries that ratify them.
  - **Recommendations** are non-binding and set out guidelines orienting national policies and actions.
- It received the **Nobel Peace Prize** in 1969.
- It releases the annual **World Employment and Social Outlook (WESO) Trends** report.
- **India and ILO:**
  - India, a **Founding Member** of the ILO, has been a permanent member of the ILO Governing Body since 1922. The first ILO Office in India started in 1928.
  - India has **ratified 41 Conventions** of the ILO, which is much better than the position existing in many other countries.
  - India has **ratified six out of the eight-core/fundamental ILO conventions**. These conventions are:
    - Forced Labour Convention (No. 29)
    - Abolition of Forced Labour Convention (No.105)
    - Equal Remuneration Convention (No.100)
    - Discrimination (Employment Occupation) Convention (No.111)
    - Minimum Age Convention (No.138)
    - Worst forms of Child Labour Convention (No.182)
  - India has **not ratified the two core/fundamental conventions**, namely Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87) and Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98).
  - The **ILO expressed deep concern at the changes that many Indian states made to labour laws** to boost economic activities, which slowed down due to the **Covid-19 outbreak**.

**Source: PIB**

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## Maharashtra Denies Consent to CBI

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## Why in News

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Recently, the Maharashtra government **withdrew its general consent** to the **Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI)** to probe cases in the State.

## Key Points

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- The move comes a day after the CBI registered an FIR in the **TRP** scam after taking over the probe based on an FIR filed in Uttar Pradesh.
- The Maharashtra government had an **apprehension** that the CBI would take over the TRP scam case that the Mumbai Police is already investigating.  
Earlier this year (2020), the CBI had also taken over the investigation into actor Sushant Singh Rajput's death, which was being probed by the Mumbai Police.
- The Maharashtra government **suspects the CBI of acting at the behest of the Centre**.  
The Supreme Court in the past has called the CBI a **“caged parrot”** that sings the Centre's tune.
- Maharashtra is the **third State after West Bengal and Rajasthan to take such an action**. The current confrontation also strengthens the perception that states in opposition see the Centre as weaponizing the CBI to control on Opposition-led governments in states.

## General Consent

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- Unlike the **National Investigation Agency (NIA)**, which is governed by its own NIA Act, 2008 and has **jurisdiction across the country**, the **CBI is governed by the Delhi Special Police Establishment Act, 1946 (DSPE Act, 1946)** that **makes consent of a state government mandatory** for conducting investigation in that state.
- There are **two kinds of consent- case-specific and general**. Given that the CBI has jurisdiction only over central government departments and employees, it can investigate a case involving state government employees or a violent crime in a given state only after that state government gives its consent.  
**Section 6 of the DSPE Act, 1946** empowers the state government to give or deny consent to CBI officers to investigate the matter within the state.
- **“General consent”** is normally given to help the CBI seamlessly conduct its investigation into cases of corruption against central government employees in the concerned state. Almost all states have given such consent.

## Impact of Withdrawal of General Consent

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- It means the CBI will not be able to register any fresh case involving a central government official or a private person stationed in Maharashtra **without getting case-specific consent.**
- Withdrawal of consent **will only bar the CBI from registering a case** within the jurisdiction of concerned states. The CBI could still file cases in Delhi and continue to probe people inside Maharashtra.
- In simple terms withdrawal of consent means that **CBI officers will lose all powers of a police officer** as soon as they enter the state unless the state government has allowed them.
- It will have **no impact on investigation of cases already registered** with CBI as old cases were registered when general consent existed.
- However, the CBI has recently started taking recourse in a Calcutta High Court judgment.

The HC, in its order in the ***Ramesh Chandra Singh and another vs CBI, 2020*** observed that CBI's power to investigate and prosecute its own officials cannot be in any way impeded or interfered by the state even if the offenses were committed within the territory of the state.

## Central Bureau of Investigation

- The CBI is the premier **investigating police agency in India. It functions under Deptt. of Personnel, Ministry of Personnel, Pension & Public Grievances**, Government of India.
- The origins of CBI can be traced back to the **Special Police Establishment (SPE) set up in 1941** in order to investigate cases of bribery and corruption in the War & Supply Department of India during **World War II** (1939-45).
- The need for a Central Government agency to investigate cases of bribery and corruption was felt after the end of World War II. So, **DSPE (Delhi Special Police Establishment) Act, 1946** was brought that gave the legal power of investigating cases to CBI.
- It is also the **nodal police agency in India** which coordinates investigation on behalf of **Interpol** Member countries.

## Cases Handled by the CBI

- **Anti-Corruption Crimes** - for investigation of cases under the **Prevention of Corruption Act**, 1988 against Public officials and the employees of Central Government, Public Sector Undertakings, Corporations or Bodies owned or controlled by the Government of India.
- **Economic Crimes** - for investigation of financial crimes, bank frauds, money laundering, illegal money market operations, graft in PSUs and banks.

- **Special Crimes** - for investigation of serious cases of conventional nature such as offences relating to internal security, espionage, sabotage, narcotics and psychotropic substances, antiquities, murders, dacoities/robberies, and cheating among others.
- **Suo Moto Cases** - CBI can suo-moto take up investigation of offences **only in the Union Territories**.
  - The Central Government can authorize CBI to investigate a crime in a State but only with the consent of the concerned State Government.
  - The Supreme Court and High Courts, however, can order CBI to investigate a crime anywhere in the country without the consent of the State.

## Way Forward

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- To ensure due process, the courts, of course, can and should ignore the state government's reservation and order the agency to investigate a case. However, when the Centre and the state play tug-of-war with the investigation, it diminishes the credibility and authority of the CBI.
- The onus of ensuring the CBI's reputation is primarily on the CBI — helped by an independent judiciary — since there will be no incentive for the political executive to ensure that.

## Source: IE

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## Forex Reserves

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### Why in News

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According to the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) data, the country's **foreign exchange (forex) reserves touched a lifetime high of USD 555.12 billion** after it surged by USD 3.615 billion in the week ended 16<sup>th</sup> October 2020.

### Key Points

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- **Reason Behind the Increase:**
  - The rise in total reserves was **due to a sharp rise in Foreign Currency Assets (FCAs)**, a major component of the overall reserves.
  - FCA **jumped by USD 3.539 billion** to USD 512.322 billion.

- **Foreign Exchange Reserves:**

- Foreign exchange reserves are **assets held on reserve by a central bank** in foreign currencies, which can include bonds, treasury bills and other government securities.

It needs to be noted that **most foreign exchange reserves are held in U.S. dollars.**

- These assets **serve many purposes** but are most significantly held to ensure that the central bank **has backup funds** if the national currency rapidly devalues or becomes altogether insolvent.
- **India's Forex Reserves include:**
  - Foreign Currency Assets
  - Gold
  - Special Drawing Rights
  - Reserve position with the **International Monetary Fund (IMF)**

### **Foreign Currency Assets**

- FCA are assets that are **valued based on a currency other than the country's own currency.**
- FCA is the **largest component of the forex reserve.** It is **expressed in dollar terms.**
- FCA includes **the effect of appreciation or depreciation of non-US units** like the euro, pound and yen held in the foreign exchange reserves.
  - **Currency appreciation** refers to the increase in value of one currency relative to another in the forex markets.
  - **Currency depreciation** is a fall in the value of a currency in a floating exchange rate system.

In a **floating exchange rate system**, market forces (based on demand and supply of a currency) determine the value of a currency.

### **Special Drawing Rights**

- The SDR is an **international reserve asset**, created by the **International Monetary Fund (IMF)** in 1969 to supplement its member countries' official reserves.
- The SDR is **neither a currency nor a claim on the IMF.** Rather, it is a potential claim on the freely usable currencies of IMF members. SDRs can be exchanged for these currencies.
- The value of the SDR is calculated from a weighted basket of **major currencies**, including the U.S. dollar, the euro, Japanese yen, Chinese yuan, and British pound.
- The **interest rate on SDRs or SDRi** is the interest paid to members on their SDR holdings.

## Reserve Position in the International Monetary Fund

- A **reserve tranche** position implies a **portion of the required quota of currency each member country must provide to the International Monetary Fund (IMF)** that can be utilized for its own purposes.
- The reserve tranche is basically **an emergency account** that IMF members can access at any time without agreeing to conditions or paying a service fee.

**Source: TH**

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## Pakistan on FATF Grey List

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### Why in News

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The **Financial Action Task Force (FATF)** has **decided to keep Pakistan on the “greylist”** till the next review of its compliance to the recommendations in February 2021.

The decision was taken after a **three-day virtual plenary session**.

### Key Points

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- **Pakistan Remains on Grey List:**

- The FATF had issued the **27-point action plan** after placing **Pakistan on the ‘Grey List’ in June 2018**. The action plan **pertains to curbing money laundering and terror financing**.
- Recently, the task force’s **International Cooperation Review Group (ICRG)** noted that Pakistan had complied with 21 points.
  - **Since 2007**, the ICRG has analysed high-risk jurisdictions and recommended specific action to address the money laundering/terror financing risks emanating from them.
- At the **recent plenary session**, the FATF observed that Pakistan has made progress across all action plan items and has **largely addressed 21 of 27 action items**.
- Keeping Pakistan on the ‘Grey List’, the **FATF strongly urged Pakistan to swiftly complete its full action plan by February 2021**.
- The **points on which Pakistan failed to deliver** included its lack of action against the non-profit organisations linked to the terror groups banned by the **UN Security Council (UNSC)**; and **delays in the prosecution of banned individuals and entities** like Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) chief Hafiz Saeed and LeT operations chief, Zaki Ur Rahman Lakhvi, as well as Jaish-e-Mohammad chief **Masood Azhar**.
  - While Saeed was sentenced in February 2020 to 11 years in prison for terror financing, the **Pakistan government claims that others are “untraceable”**.
- Further, Pakistan was found **non-compliant in cracking down on terror financing** through narcotics and smuggling of mining products including precious stones.
- The FATF process also **showed concern about the 4,000 names** that were on Pakistan’s Schedule-IV list under the Anti-Terrorism Act up to January, but went missing in September 2020.

- **Consequences for Pakistan:**

The FATF listing **makes it extremely difficult for Pakistan to get financial aid** from the **International Monetary Fund (IMF)**, the **World Bank** and the **European Union**.



- **Response of Different Countries:**

- **Turkey** proposed that the **members should consider Pakistan's good work** and instead of waiting for completion of the remaining six of the 27 parameters, **an FATF on-site team should visit Pakistan** to finalise its assessment.

On-site teams are **permitted only after jurisdictions complete their action plans**. Normally such a visit is a **signal for exit from the grey or black list**.

- When the proposal was placed before the Plenary, **no other member seconded the move**. It was **not supported by even China, Malaysia and Saudi Arabia**.

- **India's Stand:**

Pakistan continues to provide **safe havens** to terrorist entities and individuals and has also **not yet taken any action against several terrorist entities and individuals** including those **proscribed by the UNSC**, such as Masood Azhar, Dawood Ibrahim, Zakir-ur-Rahman Lakhvi.

## **Financial Action Task Force**

- **Formation:** The Financial Action Task Force (FATF) is an **inter-governmental body** established in **1989** during the **G7 Summit** in Paris.
- **Objectives:** To set standards and promote effective implementation of legal, regulatory and operational measures for combating money laundering, terrorist financing and other related threats to the integrity of the international financial system.
- **Secretariat:** Its Secretariat is located at the **Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) headquarters in Paris**.
- **Member Countries:** The FATF currently has **39 members** including two regional organisations – the **European Commission** and **Gulf Cooperation Council**. **India** is a member of the FATF.
- **Decision Making Body:** The **FATF Plenary** is the decision making body of the FATF. It **meets three times per year**.
- **Lists under FATF:**
  - **Grey List:** Countries that are considered safe haven for supporting terror funding and money laundering are put in the FATF grey list (or 'Jurisdictions under increased monitoring'). This inclusion serves as a warning to the country that it may enter the blacklist.
  - **Black List:** Countries known as Non-Cooperative Countries or Territories (NCCTs) are put in the blacklist. These countries support terror funding and money laundering activities. The FATF revises the blacklist regularly, adding or deleting entries. As of this year, there are only two countries on the FATF's black list - **North Korea and Iran**.

## **Birth Anniversary of APJ Abdul Kalam**

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### **Why in News**

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Recently, the Union Education Minister has launched the **Kalam Program for Intellectual Property Literacy and Awareness Campaign (KAPILA)** on the occasion of the 89<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary of Dr APJ Abdul Kalam.

He was **born on 15<sup>th</sup> October 1931.**

### **Key Points**

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- **KAPILA:**
  - Under this campaign, students pursuing education in higher educational institutions will get **information about the correct system of application process for patenting their invention.**
    - Students in higher education institutions of the country are innovating constantly under the guidance of their teachers but they are not aware of the system of filing its patent.
  - Through this campaign, **students will be able to get benefits from their inventions** by patenting them.
    - For India to become a **USD 5 trillion economy by 2024-25**, students and scientists have to be **more aware of protecting intellectual property (IP).**
  - The program will **facilitate the colleges and institutions to encourage more and more students** to file patents and everyone engaged in research and development **must apply to preserve and safeguard their inventions.**

- **Patents in India:**

- **Patent:** It is the **granting of a property right by a sovereign authority to an inventor.**

This grant provides the inventor exclusive rights to the patented process, design, or invention for a designated period in exchange for a comprehensive disclosure of the invention.

- **Legislation:** Patent filing in India is governed by **Patents Act, 1970.**
- **Latest Updates:** In June 2020, the **Office of the Principal Scientific Adviser** to the Government of India and the **Department of Science and Technology** (DST) jointly initiated the formulation of a new national **Science Technology and Innovation Policy** (STIP 2020).
- **Patent Data:** Between 2005-06 and 2017-18, a total of **5,10,000 patent applications** were filed in India out of which **nearly three-quarters** were filed **by foreign entities or individuals.**

In other words, in these 13 years, just **24% of patent claims came from Indians.**

- **Global Ranking:** According to the **World Intellectual Property Organisation** (WIPO), **India stands at the 7<sup>th</sup> position** on number of patents filed.

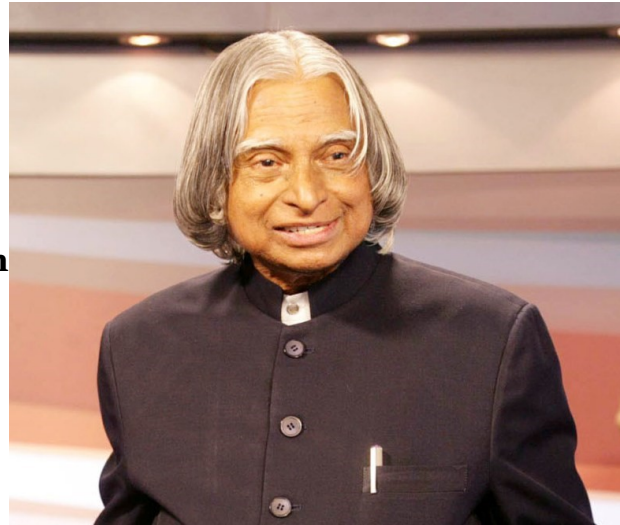
China tops the list, followed by the USA and Japan.

- **Other Announcements:**

- The **Institution Innovation Council annual report** (IIC 2.0) was also **presented** and the launch of IIC 3.0 was announced.
  - IIC was established by the **Ministry of Education** in **2018.**
  - IIC envisions to **promote innovation in young students by encouraging, inspiring and nurturing** them to work with new innovative ideas through periodic activities related to innovation and entrepreneurship.
  - So far, IICs have been **established in about 1700 higher educational institutions** and will be established in 5000 higher educational institutions under IIC 3.0.
- It was decided to celebrate the week of 15<sup>th</sup>-23<sup>rd</sup> October as '**Intellectual Property Literacy Week**'.

During the week, a number of activities were organised to create online awareness about the system and the importance of the process of applying for a patent.

## Avul Pakir Jainulabdeen Abdul Kalam



- **Born:** 15<sup>th</sup> October 1931 at Rameswaram, Tamil Nadu.  
His birth anniversary is celebrated as the **National Innovation Day**.
- He was an **Indian scientist and politician** who played a leading role in the development of **India's missile and nuclear weapons programmes** like **Integrated Guided Missile Development Programme** (IGMDP).
  - He planned programmes to produce a number of successful missiles, which helped earned him the nickname "**Missile Man**".
  - In **Indian Space Research Organisation** (ISRO), he was the project director of the **SLV-III, India's first indigenously designed and produced satellite launch vehicle**.
- In 1998, he put forward a countrywide plan called **Technology Vision 2020**, which he described as a **road map for transforming India** from a less-developed to a developed society in 20 years.  
The plan called for, among other measures, **increasing agricultural productivity, emphasising technology as a vehicle for economic growth, and widening access to health care and education**.
- He was sworn in as **India's 11<sup>th</sup> President in 2002** and completed the **full term in 2007**.
- **Literary Works:** Wings of Fire (autobiography), India 2020 - A Vision for the New Millennium, Ignited Minds - Unleashing the power within India, etc.
- **Awards:** Among his numerous awards were two of the country's highest honours, the **Padma Vibhushan** (1990) and the **Bharat Ratna** (1997).
- **Death:** 27<sup>th</sup> July 2015 at Shillong, Meghalaya.

**Source: PIB**

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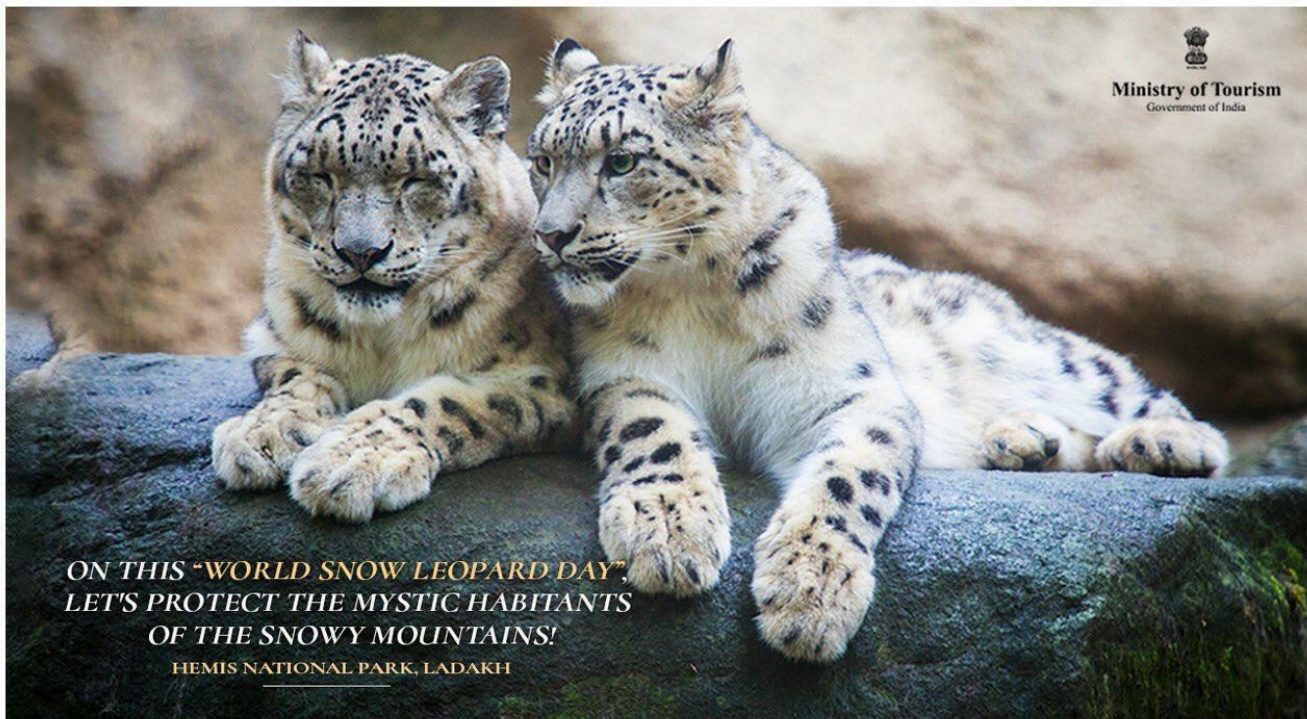
## International Snow Leopard Day

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## Why in News

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**International Snow Leopard Day** is observed on **23<sup>rd</sup> October**.



## Key Points

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- **Aim:** To raise awareness on conservation and protection of snow leopards.
- **Background:** International Snow Leopard Day came into being on **23<sup>rd</sup> October, 2013**, with the adoption of the **Bishkek Declaration** by 12 countries on the conservation of snow leopards.
  - The **12 countries** included, India, Nepal, Bhutan, China, Mongolia, Russia, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan.
  - The **Global Snow Leopard and Ecosystem Protection Programme (GSLEP)** was also launched on the same day **to address high-mountain development issues using conservation of the snow leopard as a flagship**.

## Snow Leopard

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- **Top Predator:** The Snow Leopard (also known as **Ghost of the mountains**) acts as an indicator of the health of the mountain ecosystem in which they live, due to their position as the **top predator** in the food web.

- **Habitation:** The Snow Leopard lives at high altitudes in the steep mountains of **Central and Southern Asia**, and in an extremely cold climate.
  - They inhabit the **higher Himalayan and trans-Himalayan landscape** in the states/union territories of Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Sikkim, and Arunachal Pradesh.
  - **India is a unique country to have a good presence of 5 big cats**, including **Snow Leopard**. The other 4 are, **Lion, Tiger, Common Leopard, and Clouded Leopard**.
- **Snow Leopard capital of the world: Hemis, Ladakh.**  
**Hemis National Park** is the biggest national park of India and also has a good presence of Snow Leopard.
- **Threat:** Factors that have contributed to the decline in the snow leopard populations include, **reduction in prey populations, illegal poaching and increased human population infiltration into the species habitat and illegal trade of wildlife parts and products** among others.
- **Protection:**
  - **IUCN Red List- Vulnerable**
  - **Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES)- Appendix I**
  - **Convention on Migratory Species (CMS)- Appendix I**  
**Appendix I** includes species **threatened with extinction**.
  - **Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972- Schedule I**  
**Schedule I** provides absolute protection and offences under this have the highest penalties.

- **Conservation Efforts Launched by India:**

- **HimalSanrakshak:** It is a **community volunteer programme**, to protect snow leopards, launched on 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2020.
- In 2019, **First National Protocol** was also launched on **Snow Leopard Population Assessment** which has been very useful for monitoring populations.
- **SECURE Himalaya: Global Environment Facility (GEF)-United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)** funded the project on conservation of high altitude biodiversity and reducing the dependency of local communities on the natural ecosystem.

This project is now operational in four snow leopard range states, namely, Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, and Sikkim.
- **Project Snow Leopard (PSL) :** It was **launched in 2009** to promote an inclusive and participatory approach to conserve snow leopards and their habitat.
- Snow Leopard is in the list of **21 critically endangered species for the recovery programme** of the Ministry of Environment Forest & Climate Change.
- **Snow Leopard conservation breeding programme** is undertaken at **Padmaja Naidu Himalayan Zoological Park, Darjeeling, West Bengal.**

**Source: PIB**

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## **Multimodal Logistics Park in Assam**

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### **Why in News**

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The Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways has laid the foundation stone for the country's **first MultiModal Logistics Park (MMLP) at Jogighopa in Assam.**

### **Key Points**

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- **About the Park:**

- Developed under the **Bharatmala Pariyojana** of the Government of India.
  - **Bharatmala Pariyojana** is an umbrella program for the highways sector envisaged by the **Ministry of Road Transport and Highways**.
  - In order to reduce congestion on proposed economic corridors, enhance logistic efficiency and reduce logistics costs of freight movements, **35 locations** have been identified for development of **MultiModal Logistics Parks**.
- It will have **direct connectivity** with **National Highway 17**, the **proposed Jogighopa waterway terminal on Brahmaputra**, the newly constructed **Rupsi and Guwahati airports** as well as the **main railway route**.  
India will be able to **establish trade with Bangladesh** through the Jogighopa waterway terminal.
- It will have **all the facilities** like warehouses, railway siding, cold storage, custom clearance house, yard facility, workshops, petrol pumps, truck parking, administrative building, boarding lodging, eating joints, water treatment plant, etc.
- The park will **reduce trade cost by 10%** and have **cargo capacity of 13 million metric tons (MMT) per year**.
- The project will serve as a **growth engine for the economic development of the state and the north-east** and provide direct/indirect employment to nearly 20 lakh people.

- **Background:**

- **Logistics Sector:** According to the **Asian Development Bank (ADB)**, **logistics in India is expected to be a USD 215 billion industry in 2020**. It is projected to expand through 2032 at a rate that is roughly 1.2 times the growth rate of India's gross domestic product (GDP) and generate USD 360 billion in value added.
- **Infrastructure Status:** Logistics has been accorded "infrastructure" status in 2017, facilitating the availability of debt on easier terms and access to **external commercial borrowings**, longer tenor funds from insurance companies, and pension funds, as well as investment support.



- **Challenges:**
  - At 13%-14% of India's GDP, **logistics costs are far higher** than the benchmark of 7%–8%.
  - India **ranked 44 in the World Bank Logistics Performance Index 2018**, which measures performance based on **six metrics**— customs, infrastructure, international shipments, logistics competence, tracking and tracing, and timeliness.
    - In India, each segment of logistics encounters significant challenges leading to **high cost and low efficiency**.
    - For example, road freight cost at Rs.1.9 per ton–kilometer (km) is almost double than that in the United States, while the average speed of freight vehicles is about 50%–60% lower.
- **Government Initiatives:**
  - The Ministry of Commerce and Industry is considering **replacing the Multi-Modal Transportation of Goods Act (MMTG), 1993 with a full-fledged national logistics law** with a view to promote growth of the sector.
  - The Logistics Wing within the Department of Commerce, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, placed a **draft of the National Logistics Policy** in public domain in February 2019.

The main objective of the policy is to **bring down logistics cost** as a percentage of GDP to about 10%, **optimize the modal mix** (25%–30% share of road, 50%–55% railways, and 20%–25% waterways), improving **last mile connectivity**, and enhance the logistics value chain through **digitization, standardization, and modernization of warehousing** among others.
  - The **development of MultiModal Logistics Parks (MMLPs)** at strategic locations is envisaged as a key policy measure to rationalize cost of logistics in India and improve its competitiveness.

**MMLPs serve five key functions:** freight aggregation and distribution, multimodal freight transport, integrated storage and warehousing, information technology support, and value-added services.

**Source: PIB**

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**Deworming in India**

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**Why in News**

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As per the **Ministry of Health and Family Welfare**, states in India have **witnessed reduction in worm prevalence**.

- **Regular deworming** as advised by the **World Health Organization (WHO)** eliminates worm infestation among children and adolescents living in areas with high **Soil-Transmitted Helminthiases (STH) burden**, thereby contributing to achieve better nutrition and health.
- **Helminthiases** is infestation with or disease caused by parasitic worms.

## Key Points

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- **Background:**
  - As per **WHO Report on STH** published in **2012**, in India there were an estimated **64% children** in the age group (1-14 years) at risk of STH.  
The risk was estimated based on the hygiene and sanitation practices and limited STH prevalence data at that point of time.
  - To **assess the exact burden of STH** in India, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare appointed the **National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) as the nodal agency** to coordinate and conduct **nationwide baseline STH mapping**.  
The baseline STH mapping across the country was **completed by the end of 2016**. The data showed **varied prevalence ranging from 12.5% in Madhya Pradesh to 85% in Tamil Nadu**.
  - To **evaluate the impact of** the consistently implemented high coverage **National Deworming Day (NDD) programme**, the Ministry **recently initiated follow-up prevalence surveys led by NCDC and partners**.
- **Result of the Follow-up Surveys:** The follow-up surveys are **completed in 14 States**.
  - All 14 States have **shown reduction** in the follow up survey compared to the baseline prevalence survey.
  - The States of **Chhattisgarh, Himachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Sikkim, Telangana, Tripura, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Bihar** have **shown substantial reduction** in worm prevalence in the STH follow up prevalence survey.
    - Chhattisgarh has successfully conducted 10 rounds of NDD as on date, and the **drop** in prevalence has been significant **from 74.6% in 2016 to 13.9% in 2018**.
    - **Sikkim**, with 9 rounds, has seen **reduction from 80.4% in 2015 to 50.9% in 2019**.
    - Rajasthan, the State that implemented an annual round only due to low baseline of 21.1 in 2013 has seen significant reduction to the level of **less than 1% in 2019** as per the survey.

## National Deworming Day Programme

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- **Implementation** of NDD is **led by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare**, in collaboration with the Ministry of Women and Child Development, Ministry of Education and technical assistance from WHO and the technical partners. It was **launched in 2015**.
- It is **implemented as a biannual single day programme (10<sup>th</sup> February and 10<sup>th</sup> August)** through the platforms of schools and anganwadis.
- In the **last round of deworming** earlier this year in the country (which was halted due to the **Covid pandemic**), **11 crore children and adolescents were administered Albendazole tablets** across 25 States/UTs.

Albendazole tablet, approved by the WHO, is used for treatment of intestinal worms in children and adolescents as part of Mass Drug Administration (MDA) programmes globally.

## Soil-Transmitted Helminths

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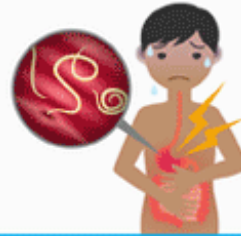
- **Soil-Transmitted Helminths** refer to the intestinal worms infecting humans that are transmitted through contaminated soil.
  - Intestinal worms are **parasites** that live in the human intestines and consume nutrients and vitamins needed for a child.
- There are **three main types of helminths** that infect people, **roundworm** (*Ascaris lumbricoides*), **whipworm** (*Trichuris trichiura*) and hookworms (*Necator americanus* and *Ancylostoma duodenale*).
  - These **worms depend on the human body** for their food and survival and while being there, they lay thousands of eggs each day.
- **Transmission:**
  - Soil-transmitted helminths are **transmitted by eggs** that are passed in the faeces of infected people. In areas that **lack adequate sanitation**, these eggs **contaminate the soil**.
- **Impact:**
  - Since worms feed on host (human body) tissues, including blood, it leads to loss of iron, and protein, resulting in **anaemia** – reduced oxygen carrying capacity due to less Haemoglobin (Hb) available in the body.
  - Worm infection can also lead to **diarrhoea; dysentery; loss of appetite; reduced nutritional intake and physical fitness**; increased **malabsorption** – a condition that prevents absorption of nutrients through the small intestine.
- **Treatment:**
  - The WHO recommended medicines – **albendazole (400 mg)** and **mebendazole (500 mg)** – are effective, inexpensive and easy to administer by non-medical personnel (e.g. teachers).

## Deworming infants, children and women for better health



Intestinal parasitic worms (soil-transmitted helminths) are spread through soil, contaminated by human faeces.

Worm infections interfere with children's nutritional uptake and can result in malnourishment, anaemia, and stunted growth.



Periodic treatment of at-risk populations reduces the intensity of infection.  
No individual diagnosis is needed.

### Treatment with what?



Free deworming medicines such as albendazole or mebendazole

### Why treat everyone?



To reduce ill health (malnutrition, anaemia, impaired growth); To prevent others from acquiring severe infection



### Who should be treated?



Preschool, school-age children and women of reproductive age

### Where can treatment be sought?

Schools and community health centres



Global target: To reach 75% of children in need of treatment by 2020

**Source: PIB**

## Seagrass

### Why in News

Recently, the **restoration process of seagrasses** has been taken up by Tamil Nadu in the **Gulf of Mannar**.



## Key Points



- **Seagrasses:**
  - These are **flowering plants** that **grow submerged in shallow marine waters** like bays and lagoons.
  - These have **tiny flowers** and **strap-like or oval leaves**.
- **Evolution:**

**Terrestrial plants** evolved about **850 million years** ago from a group of green **algae** and seagrasses evolved from terrestrial plants that recolonised the ocean **70-100 million years ago**.
- **Food Production:**

Like terrestrial plants, seagrasses also **require sunlight for photosynthesis** from which these **manufacture their own food** and **release oxygen**.
- **Reproduction:**
  - **Sexual Reproduction Method:** The **pollen from the flower of the male plant is transferred to the ovary of the female** flower through this method.

This is known as **submarine pollination**. Most species undergo this process and complete their life cycle underwater.
  - **Asexual Reproduction Method:** Seagrasses can also reproduce asexually by **branching off at their rhizomes** (modified subterranean plant stem that sends out roots and shoots from its nodes).

Because of this character, they **can recover after being cut by grazers or disturbed by storms**.

- **Order and Species:**

- There are **60 species** belonging to four families in the **order *Alismatales***.
- Some of the important seagrasses are **Sea Cow Grass** (*Cymodocea serrulata*), **Thready Seagrass** (*Cymodocea rotundata*), **Needle Seagrass** (*Syringodium isoetifolium*), **Flat-tipped Seagrass** (*Halodule uninervis*), etc.

- **Habitat:**

- Though seagrasses **inhabit all types of substratas** (layers) from mud to rock, the lush green seagrass beds are **found extensively in muddy and sandy substratas**.
- These occur all **along the coastal areas of India** and are abundant in the **Palk Strait** and Gulf of Mannar in Tamil Nadu.

- **Significance:**

- Seagrasses are considered '**Ecosystem Engineers**' as they are known for providing many ecosystem services and are also called '**the lungs of the sea**' as they release oxygen into the water through photosynthesis.
- **Sequesters up to 11% of the organic carbon** buried in the ocean even though they occupy only 0.1% of the ocean floor and **absorb 83 million tonnes of carbon from the atmosphere annually**.
  - Seagrasses can capture carbon from the atmosphere **up to 35 times faster than tropical rainforests**.
- **Help maintain water quality** by trapping fine sediments and suspended particles in the water column and increase water clarity.
- **Filter nutrients released from land-based industries** before they reach sensitive habitats like **coral reefs**.
- **Prevent soil erosion** as the extensive vertical and horizontal root systems of seagrasses stabilise the sea bottom.
- **Provide food as well as habitat** for fishes, octopuses, shrimp, blue crabs, oysters, etc.
  - Endangered marine organisms like **dugong** (Sea Cow), **green turtle**, etc, **graze directly** on seagrass leaves.
  - **Bottle-nosed dolphins feed on the organisms** that live in seagrass areas.
  - **Detritus** (natural waste) of decomposed dead seagrass **supplies food for worms, sea cucumbers, crabs**, etc.
  - **After decomposition**, it releases **nutrients like nitrogen and phosphorus** which are absorbed by seagrasses and phytoplankton.
- **Protect** juvenile and small adult fish **from large predators** and also protect worms, crabs, starfishes, sea cucumbers, sea urchins, etc, **from strong currents**.
- **Provide ideal nursery sites** for important commercial marine life like squids and cuttlefish.

- **Threats:**

- Seagrass beds are facing **decline all over the world at the rate of 2-5% annually.**

Around 30,000 square kilometres of seagrass has been lost during recent decades at a global level.

- These face **natural disturbances** like grazing, storms, **ice-scouring** (abrasion and erosion of seabeds by glaciers.) and **desiccation** (extreme dryness).
- **Human disturbances** like **eutrophication**, mechanical destruction of habitat, overfishing, release of nutrients, coastal engineering construction, pollution, etc are destructive for them.

## Way Forward

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- If seagrass habitats are lost, the marine organisms that depend on them for their survival may also face extinction, resulting in the loss of marine ecosystem productivity.
- Protection and restoration should be attempted at a global level as it can play a significant role in mitigating climate change.
- There is an urgent need to take earnest measures to conserve seagrasses and their habitats. For that, the **International Union for the Conservation of Nature** (IUCN) should intervene immediately and study the status of the different seagrass species before they become extinct.

## Source: DTE

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## South Asian Flash Flood Guidance System

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### Why in News

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Recently, the **India Meteorological Department** (IMD) has launched the **South Asian Flash Flood Guidance System** (FFGS), which is **aimed at helping disaster management teams and governments make timely evacuation plans** ahead of the actual event of flooding.

A **dedicated FFGS centre will be established in New Delhi**, where weather modelling and analysis of rainfall data observations from member countries will be done.

### Key Points

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- **Flash Floods:**
  - These are **sudden surges in water levels** during or following an intense spell of rain.
  - These are **highly localised events of short duration** with a very high peak and usually have less than six hours between the occurrence of the rainfall and peak flood.
  - The flood **situation worsens in the presence of choked drainage lines or encroachments** obstructing the natural flow of water.
- **Concerns:**
  - **Forecasting** flash floods is very difficult as an **event can occur within three to six hours** and the **water run-off quantity is very high**.
  - **Frequency of extreme rainfall events has increased** due to **climate change** and **south Asia is highly prone** to flash floods.
  - Data suggest that across the world, **about 5,000 people die annually** due to flash floods.
  - Despite such **high mortality**, there was **no robust forecasting or warning system** for flash floods.
- **South Asian Flash Flood Guidance System:**

It has been developed by **US-based Hydrologic Research Centre** after the **World Meteorological Organisation** (WMO) and few South Asian countries put forth their views and the urgent need for such a warning system.
- **Warning Mechanism:**
  - Based on the **rainfall and potential flooding scenario**, flash flood **warnings will be issued** to respective nations.
  - **Flash flood threat warning** will be issued **six hours** in advance, whereas **flood risk warning** will be issued **24 hours** in advance. **Warnings about watershed level** will be issued **12 hours** in advance.
- **India's Role:**
  - **India is leading the delegation** of nations, including **Bhutan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh** and **Nepal**, in **sharing hydrological and meteorological data** towards preparing flash flood forecasts.
  - India's **National Disaster Management Authority** (NDMA) and the **Central Water Commission** (CWC) partnered in developing the system.

**Source: PIB**

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**Sir Syed's Day**

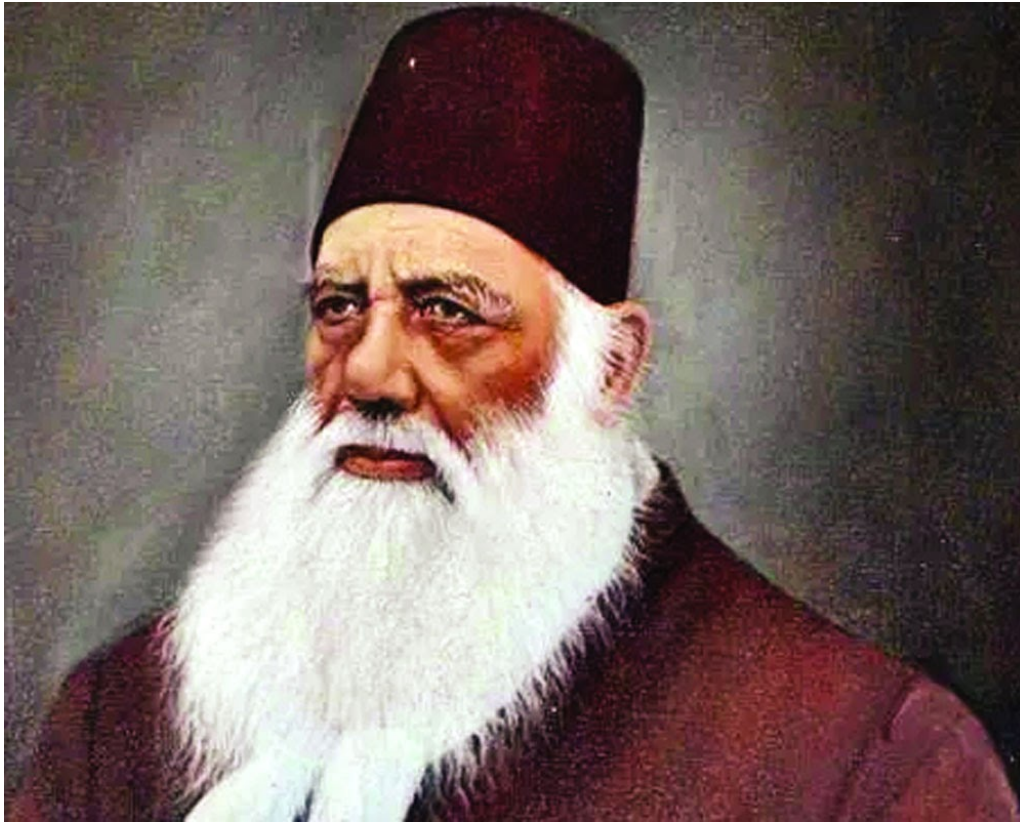
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**Why in News**

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Sir Syed's Day is observed on 17<sup>th</sup> October to mark the **birth anniversary of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan.**



## Key Points

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- **Early Life:** Sir Syed Ahmad Khan **was born in 1817** in a family that was close to the Mughal court, he was a **man of many distinctions**, a civil servant, journalist, educationist, social reformer and historian among others.
  - He served **the British administration** before the revolt of 1857.
  - He has also written a pamphlet titled **"The Causes of the Indian Revolt"** to explain the reasons for the revolt from a **Indian perspective**.
- **Educationist:** Sir Syed is, first and foremost, known for his **pioneering role in transforming the educational opportunities for Muslims**.

Sir Syed realised that Muslims could only make progress if they took to modern education. For this he started **the Aligarh movement**.
- **Social Reformer:** He also pushed for social reforms and was a champion of democratic ideals and freedom of speech.
  - He was **against religious intolerance, ignorance and irrationalism**. He **denounced purdah, polygamy and easy divorce**.
  - **Tahzebul Akhlaq** (Social Reformer in English), a **magazine founded by him**, tried to awaken **people's consciousness on social and religious issues** in a very expressive prose.

- **Critical of National Movement:**

- In his later years Sir Syed encouraged the Indian Muslims **not to join the National Movement**. He felt that education and not politics was needed by them.
- In a way he encouraged the forces of communalism and separatism at this stage.

## **Aligarh Movement**

- It was a **systemic movement aimed at reforming the social, political and educational aspects** of the Muslim community.
- The movement undertook to modernise Muslim's education **by adapting English as a medium of learning and western education** rather than just focusing on traditional teachings.
- Sir Syed **established the Scientific Society in 1864**, in Aligarh to translate Western works into Indian languages to prepare the Muslims to accept Western education and to inculcate scientific temperament among the Muslims.  
**The Aligarh Institute Gazette**, a magazine published by Sir Syed was an organ of the Scientific Society.
- In 1877, he founded the **Muhammadan Anglo Oriental College** on the pattern of Oxford and Cambridge universities. The college later grew into **Aligarh Muslim University**.
- The Aligarh Movement helped in the Muslim revival. It **gave them a common language— Urdu**.

**Source: TH**

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