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Truths and Hate Speech: SC

Why in News

In the context of **discussing the limits of free speech** and **what may tantamount to hate speech**, the **Supreme Court** (SC) has recently held that “Historical truths must be depicted without in any way disclosing or encouraging hatred or enmity between different classes or communities.”

The **FIRs were filed against a TV anchor** for alleged remarks on the **sufi saint Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti** in a news show.

Key Points

- **On ‘True Facts’:**

- Elaborating on the point about **truth or true facts being a defence in cases of free speech**, the SC cited its ruling in *K A Abbas versus Union of India case 1970*, which was about **censorship**.

The order said that there is **no bar in showing carnage or bloodshed which have historical value**, and depiction of such scenes may be permissible, if handled delicately **as a part of an artistic portrayal** of confrontation.

- The likelihood **must be judged from a healthy and reasonable standard**, thereby accepting the position that **historical truth may be a relevant and important factor**.

However, historical truth **must be depicted without in any way disclosing or encouraging hatred or enmity** between different classes or communities.

- The court also referred to the ruling in *Ebrahim Suleiman Sait versus M C Mohammed and Another case 1980*.

- The order held that **speaking truth was not an answer to the charge of corrupt practice under Section 123 (3A) of the Representation of the People Act 1950**.
- What was relevant was **whether the speech had promoted or had sought to promote feelings of enmity or hatred**.

- **Free Speech and the Marginalised:**

There may be a **possibility of divergence between truth and popular belief**, and the bench held that in many ways, **free speech has empowered those who were marginalised and discriminated**, and thus it would be wholly incorrect and a mistake to assume that free speech is an elite concept and indulgence.

- **Hate Speech:**

- The **hate speech should have no redeeming purpose**, which means that ‘the speech **primarily carries no meaning other than hatred** towards a particular group’.

This is necessarily **subjective and requires examination of good faith and good motives** on the part of the speaker.

- Speaking on **dignity in the context of hate speech**, the court held that **one must condemn and check any attempt at dissemination of discrimination** on the basis of race, religion, caste, creed or regional basis.
- The court pointed out that the **object of criminalising hate speech is to protect the dignity and to ensure political and social equality** between different identities and groups regardless of caste, creed, religion, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, linguistic preference, etc.

Hate speech has not been defined in any law in India. However, legal provisions in certain legislations prohibit select forms of speech as an exception to freedom of speech.

- **Self-Regulation:**

Everyone must **act with the objective for promoting social harmony and tolerance** by proscribing hateful and inappropriate behaviour, which can be achieved by self-restraint, institutional check and correction, as well as self-regulation or through the mechanism of statutory regulations, if applicable.

- **Political Speech:**

The **political speech relating to government policies requires greater protection for preservation** and promotion of **democracy**.

- The bench held that **dissent and criticism of the elected government’s policy**, when puissant, deceptive or even false **would be ethically wrong, would not invite penal action**.
- **Government should be left out** from adjudicating what is true or false, good or bad, valid or invalid as these aspects should be left for open discussion in the public domain.

- **Intent and Purpose:**

The court clarified that **after these observations, persons of influence or even common people should not fear the threat of reprisal and prosecution**, if they discuss and speak about controversial and sensitive topics relating to religion, caste, creed, etc **as the question is primarily one of intent and purpose**.

Source: IE

Elephant Corridors in Odisha

Why in News

Recently, the **National Green Tribunal (NGT)** has directed **the Odisha government** to prepare an **action plan** for **14 identified elephant corridors**.

Key Points

- **Background:**
 - **NGT's Order in 2017:**
 - The NGT had **issued a prohibition order** directing that all such activities which are not permissible to be carried out in a highly **Eco Sensitive Zone (ESZ)**, should not be undertaken.
 - The NGT also **directed authorities to expedite demarcation of the corridors** within a specific time frame.
 - **Odisha government's Stand:**

The Odisha government **had proposed 14 corridors stretching over a total area of 870.61 sq.km. having a length of 420.8 km.** Even after several years, **no tangible progress had been made** on the government's proposal.

- **Elephant Corridors:**
 - They are **narrow strips of land that connect two large habitats of elephants.**
 - They are crucial to **reduce animal fatalities due to accidents and other reasons.**
 - Fragmentation of forests makes it all the more important to **preserve migratory corridors.**
 - This movement of Elephants helps in **enhancing the species survival and birth rate.**
 - **88 elephant corridors** have been identified by the wildlife trust of India under the **National elephant Corridor project.**
 - **Concern:** The all-round development like **human settlements, roads, railway line, electric lines, canal and mining are the main cause of corridor fragmentation.**
 - **Reasons for Protecting the Corridors:**
 - The movement of elephants is essential to **ensure that their populations are genetically viable.** It also helps to **regenerate forests** on which other species, including tigers, depend.
 - Nearly 40% of **elephant reserves are vulnerable,** as they are not within protected parks and sanctuaries. Also, **migration corridors have no specific legal protection.**
 - Forests that have turned into farms and unchecked tourism are blocking animal paths. Animals are thus forced to seek **alternative routes resulting in increased elephant-human conflict.**
 - **Weak regulation** of ecotourism is severely impacting important habitats. It particularly affects animals that have large home ranges, like elephants.

Elephants

- Elephants are **keystone species.**
- There are three subspecies of **Asian elephant – the Indian, Sumatran, and Sri Lankan.**
- The Indian elephant has the widest range and accounts for the **majority of the remaining elephants on the continent.**
- India is home to **50% of the Asian Elephant population, and according to the 2017 elephant census, there are 27,312 elephants in the country, marking a decrease of nearly 3,000 elephants from the 2012 census.**
- **India's Initiatives for Conservation of Elephants:**

- **Objectives:**
 - To protect elephants, their habitat & corridors
 - To address issues of man-animal conflict
 - Welfare of captive elephants
- **International Initiatives:**
- **Monitoring of Illegal Killing of Elephants (MIKE) Programme:** It is mandated by the **Conference Of Parties (COP)** resolution of **CITES**. It was **started in South Asia in 2003** with the following purpose –
 - To measure levels and trends in **illegal hunting** of elephants.
 - To determine changes in these trends over time.
 - To determine the factors causing or associated with these changes and to try and assess in particular to what extent observed trends are a result of any decisions taken by the Conference of the Parties to **CITES**.

Way Forward

- Efforts should be to **expand elephant corridors**, using the successful models within the country by **acquisition of lands using private funds** and their transfer to the government. Ending human interference in the pathways of elephants is more a conservation imperative.
- **Sensitization and awareness among people** at large is necessary to stop poaching and illegal trades.
- Technologies such as **Drones and satellites** could be used for better monitoring throughout the corridors.

Source: TH

64th Mahaparinirvan Diwas

Why in News

Mahaparinirvan Diwas is observed **every year on 6th December** to commemorate the **death anniversary of Dr. B R Ambedkar**.

- **Parinirvana**, regarded as one of the major principles as well as goals of **Buddhism**, is a **Sanskrit term** which means **release or freedom after death**. As per the Buddhist text **Mahaparinibbana Sutta**, the death of Lord Buddha at the age of 80 is considered as the **original Mahaparinirvana**.
- Owing to **Ambedkar's status as a Buddhist leader**, his death anniversary is referred to as Mahaparinirvana Diwas.

Key Points

- **Birth:** 14th April 1891 in Mhow, Central Province (now Madhya Pradesh).



- **Brief Profile:**

- Dr. Ambedkar was a **social reformer, jurist, economist, author, polyglot orator** and a **scholar of comparative religions**.

In 1916, he received a **doctorate degree** from **Columbia University**, becoming the **first Indian to do so**.

- He is known as the **Father of the Indian Constitution** and was an independent India's **first law minister**.

- **Related Information:**

- He established a fortnightly **newspaper “Mooknayak” in 1920** which laid the foundations of an **assertive and organised Dalit politics**.
- He founded **Bahishkrit Hitkarini Sabha (1923)**, devoted to spreading education and culture amongst the downtrodden.
- He was appointed by the Bombay Presidency Committee to work in the **Simon Commission** in 1925.
- He led the **Mahad Satyagraha in March 1927** to challenge the regressive customs of the Hindus.
- The **Kalaram Temple Movement of 1930** formed a pivotal role in the **Dalit movement** in India in which Ambedkar led a protest outside the Kalaram temple which did not allow Dalits to enter the temple premises.
- He participated in **all three round-table conferences**.
- In 1932, he signed the **Poona pact** with Mahatma Gandhi, which abandoned the idea of **separate electorates** for the **depressed classes** (Communal Award).

However, the seats reserved for the depressed classes were increased from **71 to 147** in provincial legislatures and to **18%** of the total in the Central Legislature.

- In **1936**, he was **elected to the Bombay Legislative Assembly** as a legislator (MLA).
 - On 29th August, 1947, he was appointed **Chairman of the Drafting Committee** for the new Constitution.
 - He accepted Prime Minister Nehru's invitation to become **Minister of Law in the first Cabinet of independent India**.
 - He **resigned from the Cabinet** in 1951, over differences on the **Hindu Code Bill** (aimed at reforming Hindu society).
 - In **1956**, he converted to **Buddhism**.
 - He **passed away on 6th December 1956**.
 - He was conferred **Bharat Ratna** in 1990.
 - **Chaitya Bhoomi** is a memorial to B.R. Ambedkar which is located in Dadar, **Mumbai**.
- **Important Works:** Newspaper Mooknayak (1920); The Annihilation of Caste (1936); The Untouchables (1948); Buddha Or Karl Marx (1956), The Buddha and His Dhamma (1956), etc.

- **Quotes:**

- ‘Democracy is not merely a form of government. It is primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience. It is essentially an attitude of respect and reverence towards fellow men’.
- “I measure the progress of a community by the degree of progress which women have achieved”.
- ‘Humans are mortal. So are ideas. An idea needs propagation as much as a plant needs watering. Otherwise, both will wither and die’.

Source:PIB

Tharu Tribals

Why in News

The **Uttar Pradesh (UP) government** is working to **connect Tharu villages** in the districts of Balrampur, Bahraich, Lakhimpur and Pilibhit bordering Nepal, **with the home stay scheme** of the UP Forest Department.

- The idea is to **offer tourists an experience of living in the natural Tharu habitat**, in traditional huts made of grass collected mainly from the forests.
- This is expected to **create jobs and bring economic independence** for the tribal population.

Key Points

- **Meaning of ‘Tharu’:** The word tharu is believed to be **derived from sthavir**, meaning followers of **Theravada Buddhism**.
- **Habitat:** The Tharu community **belongs to the Terai lowlands**, amid the Shivaliks or lower Himalayas.
 - Terai is a **region of northern India and southern Nepal** running **parallel to the lower ranges of the Himalayas**.
 - The Tharus **live in both India and Nepal**. In the Indian terai, they **live mostly in Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, and Bihar**.
- **Scheduled Tribe:** Tharu is a scheduled tribe in the states of **Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar**.
- **Occupation:** Most of them are **forest dwellers**, and some practice **agriculture**.

- **Culture:**
 - They **speak various dialects of Tharu, a language of the Indo-Aryan subgroup**, and variants of Hindi, Urdu, and Awadhi.
 - Tharus **worship Lord Shiva** as Mahadev, and call their supreme being “**Narayan**”, who they believe is the provider of sunshine, rain, and harvests.
 - **Tharu women have stronger property rights** than is allowed to women in mainstream North Indian Hindu custom.
 - Standard items on the Tharu plate are **bagiya or dhikri** – which is a steamed dish of rice flour that is eaten with chutney or curry – **and ghonghi**, an edible snail that is cooked in a curry made of coriander, chili, garlic, and onion.

Theravada Buddhism

- It is **strongest** in Sri Lanka, Cambodia, Thailand, Laos and Myanmar. It is sometimes called '**Southern Buddhism**'.
- The name means '**the doctrine of the elders**' - the elders being the senior Buddhist monks.
- This school of Buddhism **believes that** it has remained closest to the original teachings of the Buddha. However, it **does not over-emphasise** the status of these teachings in a fundamentalist way - they are **seen as tools to help people** understand the truth, **and not as having merit of their own**.
- It emphasises **attaining self-liberation through one's own efforts**. The **follower is expected to** "abstain from all kinds of evil, to accumulate all that is good and to purify their mind".
 - The **ideal of Theravada Buddhism is the arhat**, or perfected saint, who attains enlightenment as a result of his own efforts.
- **Meditation** is one of the **main tools** by which a Theravada Buddhist transforms themselves, and so a monk spends a great deal of time in meditation.

Scheduled Tribe

- **Article 366 (25) of the Constitution** refers to **Scheduled Tribes** as those communities, who are **scheduled in accordance with Article 342 of the Constitution**.
- **Article 342** says that only those communities who have been declared as such by the President through an initial public notification or through a subsequent amending Act of Parliament will be considered to be Scheduled Tribes.
- The **list of Scheduled Tribes is State/UT specific** and a community declared as a Scheduled Tribe in a State need not be so in another State.

- The **Constitution is silent about the criteria** for specification of a community as a Scheduled Tribe. **Primitiveness, geographical isolation, shyness and social, educational & economic backwardness** are the traits that distinguish Scheduled Tribe communities from other communities.
- There are certain Scheduled Tribes, **75 in number known as Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs)**, who are **characterised by:-** a) pre-agriculture level of technology; b) stagnant or declining population; c) extremely low literacy; and d) subsistence level of economy.
- **Government Initiatives:** The **Scheduled Tribes and other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act**, 2006 (FRA); The **Provision of the Panchayats (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act**, 1996; Minor Forest Produce Act 2005; **SC And ST (Prevention Of Atrocities) Act**; and the Tribal Sub-Plan Strategy are focused on the socio-economic empowerment of STs.

Source: IE

Havana Syndrome

Why in News

Recently, a report by the **National Academies of Sciences (NAS)**, USA has found **directed microwave radiation** to be the **plausible cause of the Havana syndrome**.

Key Points

- **Havana Syndrome:**
 - In late **2016**, USA diplomats and other employees stationed in **Havana (capital of Cuba)** reported **feeling ill after hearing strange sounds and experiencing odd physical sensations**.
 - The symptoms included **nausea, severe headaches, fatigue, dizziness, sleep problems, and hearing loss**, which have since come to be known as the **Havana Syndrome**.
 - The **more chronic problems** suffered by Havana personnel included mainly **vestibular processing and cognitive problems** as well as **insomnia and headache**.
 - While the symptoms have **resolved for some of the affected employees**, for **others**, the **effects have lingered and posed a significant obstacle** to their work and affected the normal functioning of lives.

- **About the Report:**

- The NAS report **examined four possibilities** to explain the symptoms viz. **infection, chemicals, psychological factors** and **microwave energy**.
- So far, **only this report provides the clearest and detailed estimation** of what may have transpired.

In **earlier attempts** by various other government agencies, scientists talked about **psychological illness** due to the stressful environment of foreign missions or **brain abnormalities** in the diplomats who had fallen ill.

- **Findings of the Report:**

- **Directed pulsed microwave radiation energy** appears to be the most plausible mechanism in explaining the cases of Havana syndrome among those that the committee considered.

By calling it “**directed**” and “**pulsed**” energy, the report leaves no room for confusion that the **victims’ exposure was targeted** and **not due to common sources of microwave energy**.

- The immediate symptoms that patients reported, including sensations of pain and buzzing sound, apparently **emanated from a particular direction**, or **occurred in a specific spot** in a room.
- It **warns about the possibility of future episodes and recommends establishing a response mechanism** for similar incidents, adding that future incidents might be more dispersed in time and place, and even more difficult to recognise quickly.
- However, the committee **cannot rule out other possible mechanisms** and considers it likely that a **multiplicity of factors** explains some cases and the differences between others.
- It also **does not mention the source** and **if the energy was delivered intentionally**, even though it conducted significant research on **microwave weapons**.

- **USA’s Reaction:**

- The USA has praised the NAS for undertaking the effort but also highlighted that **each possible cause remains speculative**. It also **flagged the committee’s lack of access to some information** because of potential security concerns that limit the scope of the report.
- The government also included a **provision in the new defence authorisation bill to provide long-term emergency care benefits** to the government employees affected by the syndrome.
- The **USA had accused Cuba** of carrying out “attacks”, but **Cuba denied** any knowledge of the illnesses.

Microwave Weapons

- These are supposed to be a type of **direct energy weapons**, which **aim highly focused energy** in the form of sonic, laser, or microwaves, at a target.
- The high-frequency electromagnetic radiations **heat the water in the human body and cause discomfort and pain**. It works the same way as the kitchen appliance.
 - In a microwave oven, an **electron tube called a magnetron produces electromagnetic waves** (microwaves) that bounce around the metal interior of the appliance, and are absorbed by the food.
 - The **microwaves agitate the water molecules in the food**, and their **vibration produces heat** that cooks the food. **Foods with a high water content cook faster** in a microwave often than drier foods.
- **Countries with Microwave Weapons:**
 - A number of countries are thought to have developed these weapons **to target both humans and electronic systems**.
 - **China** had first put on display its microwave weapon, called **Poly WB-1**, at an air show in 2014.
 - The **USA** has also developed a prototype microwave-style weapon, which it calls the **“Active Denial System”**, which is the first non-lethal, directed-energy, counter-personnel system with an extended range greater than currently fielded non-lethal weapons.
- **Concerns:**
 - American diplomats and members of their families in Cuba and China were suspected to have been targeted using ‘microwave weapons’ (**Havana Syndrome**).

People exposed to high-intensity microwave pulses have **reported a clicking or buzzing sound**, as if seeming to be coming from within the head.
 - Concerns have been raised on whether they can damage the eyes, or have a carcinogenic impact in the long term.
 - It is not clear yet whether these can kill or cause lasting damage in human targets.
 - The USA holds that studies have shown that natural blink reflex, aversion response and head turn all **protect the eyes from the weapon**.

Source: IE

Narmada Landscape Restoration Project

Why in News

National Thermal Power Corporation (NTPC) has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with **Indian Institute of Forest Management (IIFM), Bhopal**, to implement the **Narmada Landscape Restoration Project (NLRP)**.

NTPC Ltd. is a central Public Sector Undertaking (PSU) under the Ministry of Power. It became a **Maharatna company** in May 2010.

Key Points

- **About NLRP:**

- It is a **collaborative and participatory** approach that will demonstrate the interdependence of the **upstream sustainably managed forest and farm practices** on **downstream water resources**.
- The project aims to establish an **incentivisation mechanism to maintain sustainable landscape practices** in Narmada basin.

Landscape management means action, from a perspective of **sustainable development**, to ensure the **regular upkeep of a landscape**, so as to guide and harmonise changes which are brought about by **social, economic and environmental processes**.

- **Funding Mechanism:**

The program is in partnership with a **grant in aid** from **NTPC Ltd** (under its **Corporate Social Responsibility** initiative) and **United States Agency for International Development (USAID)** in equal proportions.

- USAID is the world's premier **international development agency** and a catalytic actor driving development results.
- USAID's work advances U.S. national security and economic prosperity, demonstrates American generosity, and promotes a path to recipient self-reliance and resilience.

- **Implementation:**

The **4-year project** will be implemented in **Khargone District of Madhya Pradesh**, in the catchments of selected tributaries of the River Narmada between **Omkareshwar and Maheshwar dams**.

- **Omkareshwar Dam:**

- The Omkareshwar Dam is one of the major **downstream dams of Indira Sagar Project**, lies along the bank for the Narmada and Kaveri.
 - Indira Sagar is a **multipurpose project** consisting of various dams on Narmada river.
 - **Omkareshwar Jyotirlinga**, one of the 12 Jyotirlinga is situated on the **confluence** of river Narmada and Kaveri.

- **Maheshwar Dam:**

Maheshwar is one of the planned large dams on the Narmada Valley to **provide 400 MW electricity**.

- **Implementing Agencies:**

IIFM, Bhopal, an Autonomous Institute under the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) will be **jointly implementing this project** with **Global Green Growth Institute (GGGI)**.

- **Benefits of the Project:**

- Will demonstrate **nature-based solutions for enhancing ecosystem services**.
 - It will promote a **clean and sustainable environment** concerning land, water and air.
 - Improvement in **water quality and quantity**.

Global Green Growth Institute

- GGGI was established as an **international intergovernmental organization in 2012 at the Rio+20** United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development.
- Its vision is a low-carbon, resilient world of strong, inclusive, and sustainable growth and its mission to support Members in the transformation of their economies into a green growth economic model.
- **India is not a member country but a partner country.**
- **Headquarters:** Seoul, South Korea

Narmada River

- Narmada is the **largest west flowing river** of the peninsular region flowing through a rift valley between the **Vindhya Range** on the **north** and the **Satpura Range** on the **south**.
- It **rises from** Maikala range near Amarkantak in Madhya Pradesh.

- It **drains** a large area in **Madhya Pradesh** besides some areas in the states of **Maharashtra** and **Gujarat**.
- The river near **Jabalpur** (Madhya Pradesh) forms the **DhuanDhar** Falls.
- There are **several islands** in the estuary of the Narmada of which **Aliabet** is the largest.
- **Major Tributaries:** Hiran, Orsang, the Barna and the Kolar.
- The **major Hydro Power Projects** in the basin are **Indira Sagar, Sardar Sarovar** etc.
- **Narmada Bachao Andolan (NBA):**
 - It is an Indian **social movement spearheaded** by native tribes (adivasis), farmers, environmentalists and human rights activists **against a number of large dam projects across the Narmada River**.
 - **Sardar Sarovar Dam** in Gujarat is one of the biggest dams on the river and was one of the first focal points of the movement.



Source:PIB

United Nations Investment Promotion Award 2020

Why in News

The **United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)** has declared 'Invest India' as winner of the United Nations Investment Promotion Award 2020.

Key Points

- **United Nations Investment Promotion Award:**
 - It recognises and celebrates the outstanding achievements of the world's **Investment Promotion Agencies (IPAs)**. Since **2002**, UNCTAD has organised these awards **annually**.
 - The Awards also highlight the contributions of these organizations in raising private sector investment in sustainable development and in achieving the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**.
 - The **response of IPAs to the Covid-19 pandemic** became the **basis for the evaluation** of the 2020 Award.
 - **Germany, South Korea and Singapore** have been some of the **past winners** of the award.
- **Invest India:**
 - It is the **National Investment Promotion and Facilitation Agency of India** and acts as the first point of reference for investors in India.
 - It is a **non-profit venture set up in 2009** under the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade, **Ministry of Commerce and Industry**, Government of India.
 - **UNCTAD highlighted good practices followed by Invest India**, such as the Business Immunity Platform, Exclusive Investment Forum webinar series, its social media engagement and focus Covid response teams (such as business reconstruction, stakeholder outreach and supplier outreach) created as a response to the pandemic, in its publications.

- **Government Measures Related to Investment Promotion:**

- India's attractiveness as an **FDI (Foreign Direct Investment) destination** has surged in recent times. In 2019, it was **among the top 10 countries attracting foreign funds**, receiving billions of dollars in a variety of sectors, including services, technology, IT and telecom, and construction.
- In **2020, factors such as** a swift response in combating the Covid crisis, favourable demographics, impressive mobile and internet penetration, massive consumption and technology uptake, played an important role in attracting the investments.
- Launch of Schemes attracting investments, such as, **National technical Textile Mission**, **Production Linked Incentive Scheme**, **Pradhan Mantri Kisan SAMPADA Yojana**, etc.

The government has elaborated upon the initiatives under the **Atmanirbhar Bharat** to encourage investments in different sectors.

- As a part of its **Make in India initiative** to promote domestic manufacturing, India deregulated FDI rules for several sectors over the last few years.
- The Government of India continues to improve **Ease of Doing Business** in the country by releasing notifications highlighting measures to improve the business environment in India.

India **ranked 63rd out of 190 countries** (moved up by 14 spots) in **Doing Business 2020: World Bank Report**.

United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

- UNCTAD is a **permanent intergovernmental body** established by the United Nations General Assembly in **1964**. Its headquarters are located in **Geneva, Switzerland**.
- It was established to **promote development-friendly integration of developing countries into the world economy**.
- It is a **central agency** that monitors performance of Investment promotion Agencies (IPAs) and identifies global best practices.
- Some of the **reports** published by it are:
 - Trade and Development Report
 - **World Investment Report**
 - **Global Investment Trend Monitor Report**
 - The Least Developed Countries Report
 - Information and Economy Report
 - Technology and Innovation Report
 - Commodities and Development Report

Source: PIB

Waqf Boards in Jammu & Kashmir

Why in News

The process of establishing Waqf Boards in **Jammu and Kashmir** and **leh-kargil** has started recently.

Key Points

- There are thousands of Waqf properties in Jammu-Kashmir and Leh-Kargil and the process has been started to **register these Waqf properties**.

Digitisation, Geo Tagging/GPS Mapping of these Waqf properties has also been initiated.

- The Central Government will provide adequate **financial assistance** to construct infrastructure for socio-economic and educational activities on Waqf properties in Jammu-Kashmir and Leh-Kargil under **“Pradhan Mantri Jan Vikas Karyakram”** (PMJVK).

Pradhan Mantri Jan Vikas Karyakram (PMJVK) seeks to provide better socio economic infrastructure facilities to the minority communities particularly in the field of **education, health & skill development** which would further lead to lessening of the gap between the national average and the minority communities with regard to backwardness parameters.

The erstwhile **Multi-sectoral Development Programme** (MsDP) has been restructured and renamed as Pradhan Mantri Jan Vikas Karyakram for effective implementation since 2018.

Central Waqf Council

- Central Waqf Council is a **statutory body** under the administrative control of the **Ministry of Minority Affairs** set up in 1964 as per the provision given in the Waqf Act, 1954.
- It is an **advisory body** to the Central Government on matters concerning the working of the Waqf Boards and the due administration of **Auqaf**.
 - **Auqaf** (also spelled awkaf,) is an Arabic word meaning assets.
 - The Council consists of **Chairperson**, who is the **Union Minister** In charge of Waqf, such other members, **not exceeding 20 in number**, as may be appointed by the **Government of India**.
- **Each state has a Waqf Board headed by a chairperson**, one or two nominees from the state government, Muslim legislators and parliamentarians, Muslim members of the state Bar Council, recognised scholars of Islamic theology and mutawalis.

Source:PIB

