



## CURRENT AFFAIRS: AUGUST 2024

### SUB-CLASSIFICATION OF SCHEDULED CASTES

Recently, a 7-Judge Constitutional Bench of the Supreme Court, in *State of Punjab & Others v Davinder Singh & Others* case, held that sub-classification of Scheduled Castes (SCs) is permissible to grant separate quotas for more backwards within the SC categories.

- 7-judge Constitution Bench was essentially considering two aspects:
  - o whether sub-classification within reserved castes be allowed, and
  - o correctness of the decision in *E. V. Chinniah v. State of Andhra Pradesh (2005)*, which held that SCs notified under Article 341 formed one homogenous group and could not be sub-categorized further.
- Previously, in 2014, the Supreme Court in *Davinder Singh v. State of Punjab* referred the appeal to reconsider the judgment in *E.V. Chinniah Case (2004)* to a 5-judge Constitution Bench.
  - o In 2020, a 5-Judge Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court ruled that the *E.V. Chinniah* judgement, which prohibited sub-categorization of SCs, requires reconsideration.

### Relevant Constitutional provisions



**Article 14:** State shall not deny to any person equality before the law or the equal protection of the laws within the territory of India



**Article 15(4):** Enables the State to make special provisions for advancement of any socially and educationally backward classes of citizens or for SCs and STs.



**Article 16(1):** Equality of opportunity for all citizens in matters relating to employment or appointment to any office under the State.



**Article 16(4):** Enables the State to make any provision for the reservation of appointments or posts in favour of any backward class of citizens not adequately represented in services under the State.



**Article 341(1):** President to specify castes, races, or tribes as SCs for any state or union territory.



**Article 341(2):** Parliament may by law include or exclude any caste, race, or tribe from the list of SCs by passing a law.



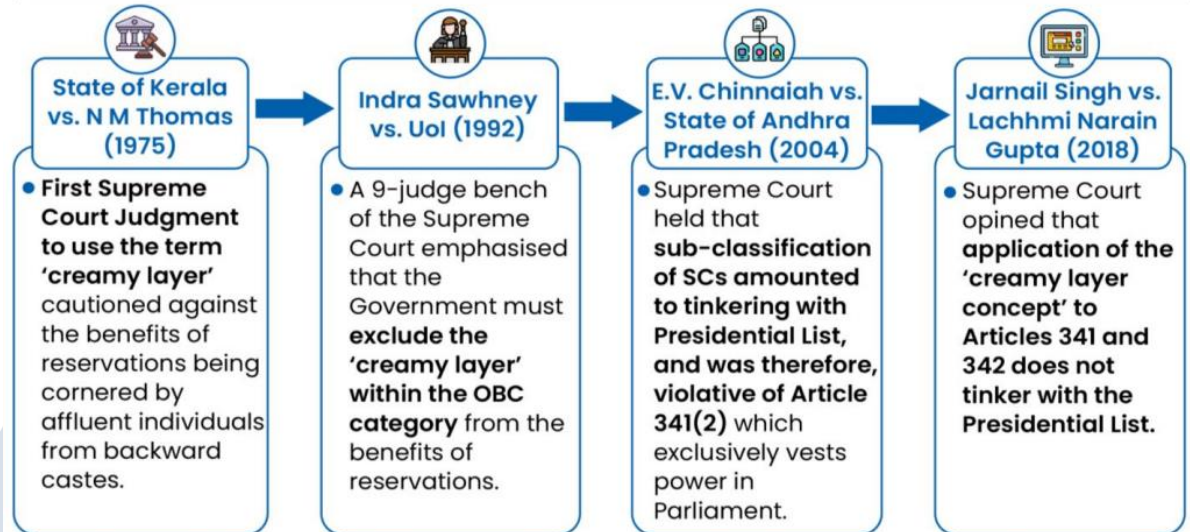
## Key highlights of the Judgment

- Sub-classification within the SCs does not violate Article 341(2) because the castes are not per se included in or excluded from the List.
- Scope of sub-classification of SCs:
  - o Objective of any form of affirmative action including sub-classification is to provide substantive equality of opportunity for the backward classes.
    - ✓ Substantive equality refers to the principle that the law must account for the different backgrounds and historical injustices faced by persons or groups.
  - o State can sub-classify based on inadequate representation of certain castes. However, the State must establish that the inadequacy of representation of a caste/group is because of its backwardness.
  - o State must collect data on the inadequacy of representation in the “services of the State”.
- State cannot act on its whims or political expediency and its decision is amenable to judicial review.

State is not entitled to reserve 100% of the seats available for SCs in favour of a group to the exclusion of other castes in the President’s List.

- SCs notified under Article 341(1) of the Constitution are heterogeneous groups of castes, races or tribes with varying degrees of backwardness.
- Four of the seven judges on the Bench separately opined that the government should extend the “creamy layer principle” to SCs and STs.
  - o However, the opinions do not constitute a direction to the government to implement the creamy layer concept, as the issue did not directly arise in this case.

## Other Important Judicial Pronouncements



### UNIFORM CIVIL CODE (UCC)

In his Independence Day speech, the Prime Minister advocated in favour of Uniform Civil Code by calling for a Secular Civil Code in place of the current religion-based (communal) Civil Code.

#### About Uniform Civil Code (UCC)

- Definition: A Uniform Civil Code refers to a unitary system of personal laws applicable to all irrespective of religion.
  - o Matters under the scope of personal laws include marriage, divorce, maintenance, inheritance, adoption, and succession of the property.
- Current Status:
  - o At present, most Indians are governed in such matters by their respective religious laws.



o In Goa, a form of common civil code is in practice under the Portuguese Civil Code of 1867. (Uttarakhand adopted UCC in 2024).

o 21st Law Commission of India (2018) said that the formulation of UCC is neither necessary nor desirable at this stage, rather reforms must be undertaken on family laws of every religion to make them gender-just.

## Need for UCC in India

• **Fulfilling Constitutional Duty:** Article 44 of the Constitution mandates that the state shall endeavour to secure a Uniform Civil Code for all citizens.

o It would also advance gender justice, national integration, and equality before the law enshrined in Article 14.

o Implementing a UCC would uphold the principles of a secular state, where religious beliefs do not dictate civil matters.

• **Realising the needs of Contemporary Society:** Laws/Practices dividing the nation based on religion or hindering societal progress must be abolished.

o Eg. polygamy is legal as per Muslim Personal Law (Shariat Application Act), 1937, but it is against women and hence must be discarded.

• **Fulfilling International Obligations:** Justifying India's membership at various Human Rights conventions and protocols, including United Nations Human Rights Convention.

• **Simplification of Laws:** A standardised procedure in personal matter irrespective of religious background would ensure faster and more efficient resolution of disputes.

• **Adapting to Modern Times:** Implementing a UCC ensure that laws align with the evolving social landscape, promoting inclusivity and individual freedoms.

### Supreme Court Judgements on UCC

- **Ahmed Khan v. Shah Bano Begum (1985):** Gender justice and the need for uniformity in personal laws.
- **Sarla Mudgal and others v. Union of India and others (1995):** reforming personal laws to prevent misuse. Similar view reflected in the **Lily Thomas case (2000)**.
- **Shayra Bano v. Union of India (2017):** Setting aside talaq-e-biddat (instant and irrevocable talaq under Shariat Act of 1937) as an arbitrary practice.



## ANTICIPATORY BAIL UNDER SC/ST ACT

Recently, a 2-Judge bench of the Supreme Court held that bar on anticipatory bail under Section 18 of the SC and ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989 is not applicable unless a prima facie case under the Act is made out against the accused.

- Section 18 of the Act states that Section 438 of the CrPC, which provides for anticipatory bail, shall not apply in relation to cases involving offence under the Act.

### Other Key Highlights of the judgement

- Court observed that mere insult of a member of SC or ST is not an offence under the SC/ST Act unless the accused had the intention to humiliate based on caste identity.
- Only intentional insult or intimidation caused by entrenched social norms like untouchability or caste superiority, qualifies as the type of insult or intimidation envisioned by the Act

### Anticipatory bail

- It is a direction by High Court or the Court of Session to release a person on bail, apprehending arrest on accusation of having committed a non-bailable offence.
- Section 438 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) contained provisions related to anticipatory bail.
- Under reformed criminal laws, Section 482 of Bhartiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (2023) contains relevant provisions for anticipatory bail

#### **SC and ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989**

- **Objective:** To prevent commission of offences against the members of SCs/STs, **Special Courts** for trial of such offences, and provision for **relief and rehabilitation** of victims.
- **Salient Features**
  - The **accused** must **not be a member of the SC/ST**.
  - **Offences** include employing members of SC/ ST for Manual Scavenging, dedicating SC/ ST women to deity, temple, etc., as devadasi, denial of customary right of passage to places of public resort, among others.
  - It also provides for punishment for **neglect of duties under the Act by public servants** not being a member of SC/ST.

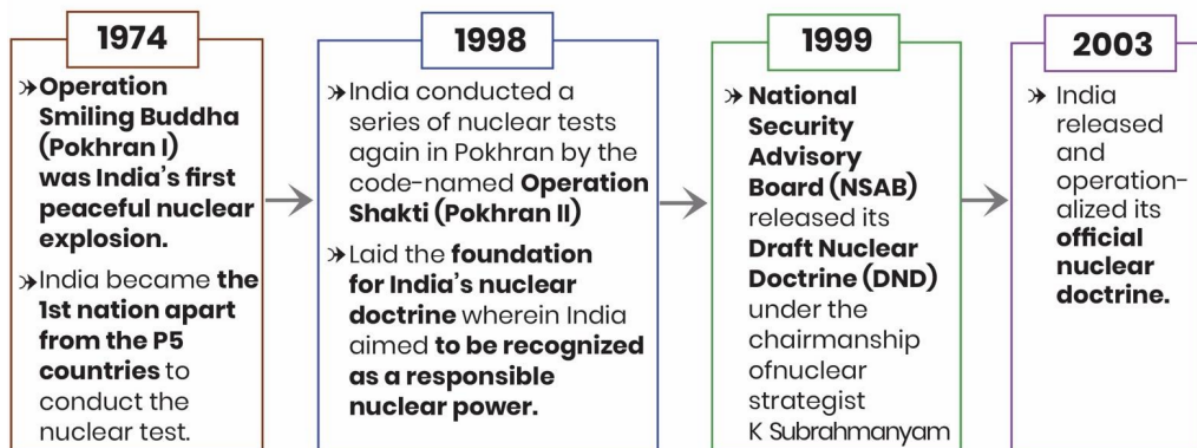
## 25 YEARS OF INDIA'S NUCLEAR DOCTRINE

India is celebrating 25 years of its nuclear doctrine launch.

### Key features of India's nuclear doctrine

- Building and maintaining a credible minimum deterrent: Nuclear arsenals will be minimal enough to provide credible deterrence against adversaries.
- A posture of "No First Use" (NFU): Nuclear weapons will only be used in retaliation against a nuclear attack on Indian territory or Indian forces anywhere.
- Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD) on both sides: Nuclear retaliation to a first strike will be massive and designed to inflict unacceptable damage.
- Non-use of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear weapon states (NNWS).

### Evolution (Key milestones)



## INDIA'S FIRST REUSABLE HYBRID ROCKET NAMED RHUMI-1 LAUNCHED

RHUMI-1, developed by Tamil Nadu-based startup Space Zone India in collaboration with Martin Group, was launched from Thiruvudandhai in Chennai.

- It was launched using mobile launcher and carried 3 Cube Satellites and 50 PICO Satellites, which will collect data on global warming and climate change.

o Cube satellites are a class of nanosatellites, weighing between 1-10 kg.



o Pico satellites are small satellites that typically weigh between 0.1 and 1 kg.

## Features of RHUMI-1

- **Hybrid Rocket Engine:** RHUMI-1 is a hybrid rocket engine that uses a combination of solid and liquid propellants to improve efficiency and reduce operational costs.
- **Adjustable Launch Angle:** Precise adjustments from 0 to 120 degrees allow for meticulous control over its trajectory.
- **Electrically Triggered Parachute System:** An innovative, cost-effective, and eco-friendly descent mechanism ensures safe recovery of rocket components.
- **Environment Friendly:** RHUMI is 100% pyrotechnic-free and 0% TNT.

## EXERCISES IN NEWS

- **Tarang Shakti:** Indian Air Force (IAF) hosted Phase-I of the Exercise Tarang Shakti at Sulur airbase in Tamil Nadu.
  - o India's first multinational air exercise.
  - o Aims to showcase India's defense prowess and provide a platform for participating militaries to foster interoperability.
  - o IAF announced to conduct it biennially.
- **Udara Shakti:** It is a joint air exercise of India and Malaysia.
- **'Parvat Prahaar':** Army is carrying out 'Parvat Prahaar' exercise in Ladakh, focusing on high-altitude warfare and operations.
  - o It involves various military units and equipment to maintain readiness near the India-China border.
- **Mitra Shakti:** It is an annual military exercise between India and Sri Lanka.
  - o Mitra Shakti" aims to improve the operational proficiency of both armies by facilitating the exchange of skills, experiences, and best practices.



- Khaan Quest: Indian army will participate in the 21st edition of the Multinational military exercise, which will be conducted at Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia.
- Maritime Partnership: Recently Indian Naval Ship Tabar participated in maritime Partnership Exercise (MPX) between India and Russia.

## INDIA'S THREE MORE WETLANDS ADDED TO RAMSAR SITES LIST

These wetland include

### Nanjarayan Bird Sanctuary (Tamil Nadu)

- Nanjarayan Lake a large shallow wetland named after King Nanjarayan (who restored and repaired it).
- It depends on heavy rain water flow from Nallar drainage.
- Acts as feeding and nesting habitat for resident and migratory birds; water source for agricultural purpose.

### Kazhuveli Bird Sanctuary (Tamil Nadu)

- Brackish shallow lake located on Coromandel Coast in North of Pondicherry.
- Connected to Bay of Bengal by brackish Uppukalli creek and Yedayanthittu estuary.
- Lies in Central Asian Flyway of migratory species.
- Breeding ground for birds, fish; source for aquifer recharge; houses highly degraded mangrove patches containing Avicennia species

### Tawa Reservoir (Madhya Pradesh)

- Located inside Satpura Tiger Reserve and borders Satpura National Park and Bori Wildlife Sanctuary.
- Constructed at confluence of Tawa and Denwa rivers.





- o River Tawa (left bank tributary of Narmada River) originates from Mahadeo Hills.
- o Rivers Malanni, Sonbhadra and Nagdwari are major tributaries of reservoir

## NEELAKURINJI

It has been included on the IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature) official Red List of threatened species under the Vulnerable category.

### Neelakurinji (*Strobilanthes kunthiana*)

- About: Shrub known for massive blooming every 12 years. Semelparous, i.e., single reproductive episode before death.
- Location: Shola grasslands of Western Ghats - the Nilgiri hills, Palani hills and the Eravikulam hills of Munnar, also Shevaroy hills in the Eastern Ghats.
  - o The name Nilgiris (blue mountains) was derived from the colors of these flowers.
- Major Threats: Tea and softwood plantations, urbanization, invasion of exotic species like eucalyptus, black wattle, etc.

## ATMOSPHERIC RIVERS

Scientists warn that intensification and increased frequency of atmospheric rivers due to global warming is worsening extreme rainfall events and weather patterns.

### Atmospheric rivers (AR)

- AR, also called as 'flying rivers', are relatively long, narrow regions in the atmosphere that transport most of the water vapour outside of tropics.
  - o An average AR is about 2,000 km long, 500 km wide and nearly 3 km deep.
- ARs are a part of larger system of extratropical cyclones that transport heat and moisture from tropics toward the poles.
  - o ARs are typically located within low-level jet, an area of strong winds in lower atmosphere.



- They are largest transport mechanisms of freshwater on Earth, responsible for 90% of moisture transfer from tropics to poles.
- While many ARs are weak systems, some larger and strong ARs can create extreme rainfall and floods, causing mudslides and catastrophic damage.

## **NATIONAL SPACE DAY**

India celebrates its Maiden National Space Day (NSD) on 23rd August, 2024 to commemorate the historic landing of Chandrayaan-3 on the Moon.

### About National Space Day

- Chandrayaan-3 mission accomplished safe and soft-landing of Vikram Lander on the lunar surface on August 23, 2023.
  - o With this, India became the fourth country to land on the moon and first to land near the southern polar region of the moon.
- The soft-landing was followed by successful deployment of Pragyan Rover. The landing site was named as 'Shiv Shakti' point (Statio Shiv Shakti).
- Theme: Touching Lives while Touching the Moon: India's Space Saga.

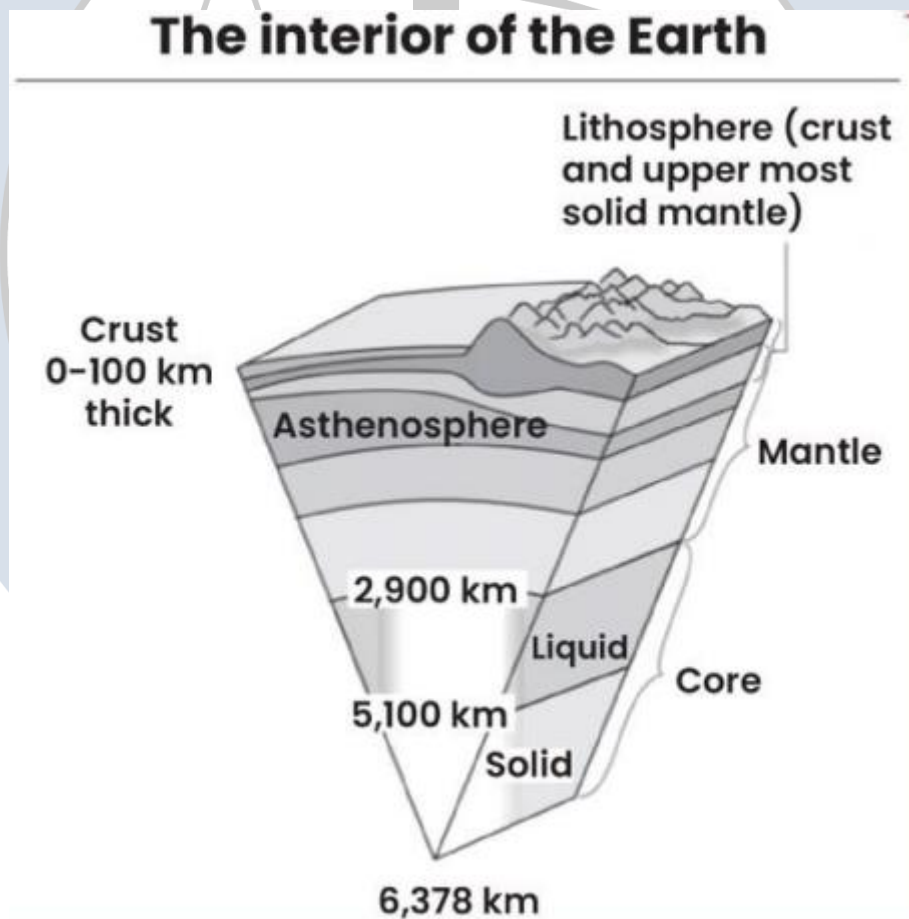
### India's Space Saga

- Aryabhata was India's first satellite, launched in 1975, carried scientific instruments to study the Earth's atmosphere and radiation belts.
- The space agency has executed 123 spacecraft missions and 95 launch missions (as of January 2024).
- International partnerships signify a new chapter of India's prominent role in the global space arena. E.g. Artemis Accord.
- India is the 8th largest space economy (in terms of funding) in the world.

## DEEPEST ROCK SAMPLE FROM EARTH'S MANTLE OBTAINED

Scientists on the US vessel JOIDES Resolution have drilled around 1.2 Kms meters below the Atlantis Massif, surpassing the previous drilling depth of 201 meters.

- Mantle consisting of silicate rock makes up over 80% of Earth's volume is the mid layer of the earth
- Mantle rocks are usually inaccessible, except in areas of seafloor spreading, where Earth's tectonic plates slowly move apart. For example, the Atlantis Massif.
  - o Atlantis Massif is an underwater mountain near the Mid-Atlantic Ridge.





## HINDUSTAN REPUBLICAN ASSOCIATION (HRA)

The Government of Uttar Pradesh inaugurated year-long celebrations on August 9 to mark centenary of the 'Kakori train action of the Hindustan Republican Association (HRA).

- The 'Kakori Train Action' centenary festival will be celebrated to mark the 100th anniversary of the 1925 Kakori Train Action.
- As part of the celebrations, the 'Kakori Shaurya Gatha Express' train will travel through various cities in the state to educate youths and school children about the Kakori saga.

### About Hindustan Republican Association (HRA)

- Genesis: HRA was formed in 1924, as a radical revolutionary organization.
- Objective: To establish a Federated Republic of the United States of India by an organised and armed revolution.
- Founding members: Ram Prasad Bismil, Ashfaqulla Khan, Sachindra Nath Bakshi, Sachindranath Sanyal, and Jogesh Chandra Chatterjee.
- Ideologies of HRA:
  - o Socialism: The association envisaged that the "basic principle of the republic shall be universal suffrage and the abolition of all systems which make any kind of exploitation of man by man possible."
  - ✓ In 1928, Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev, Shiv Verma, Chandra Shekhar Azad and Vijay Kumar Sinha took on the task of reorganizing the HRA and included socialism as a key goal.
  - ✓ Thus, the HRA was renamed the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (HSRA).

## GALLANTRY AWARDS

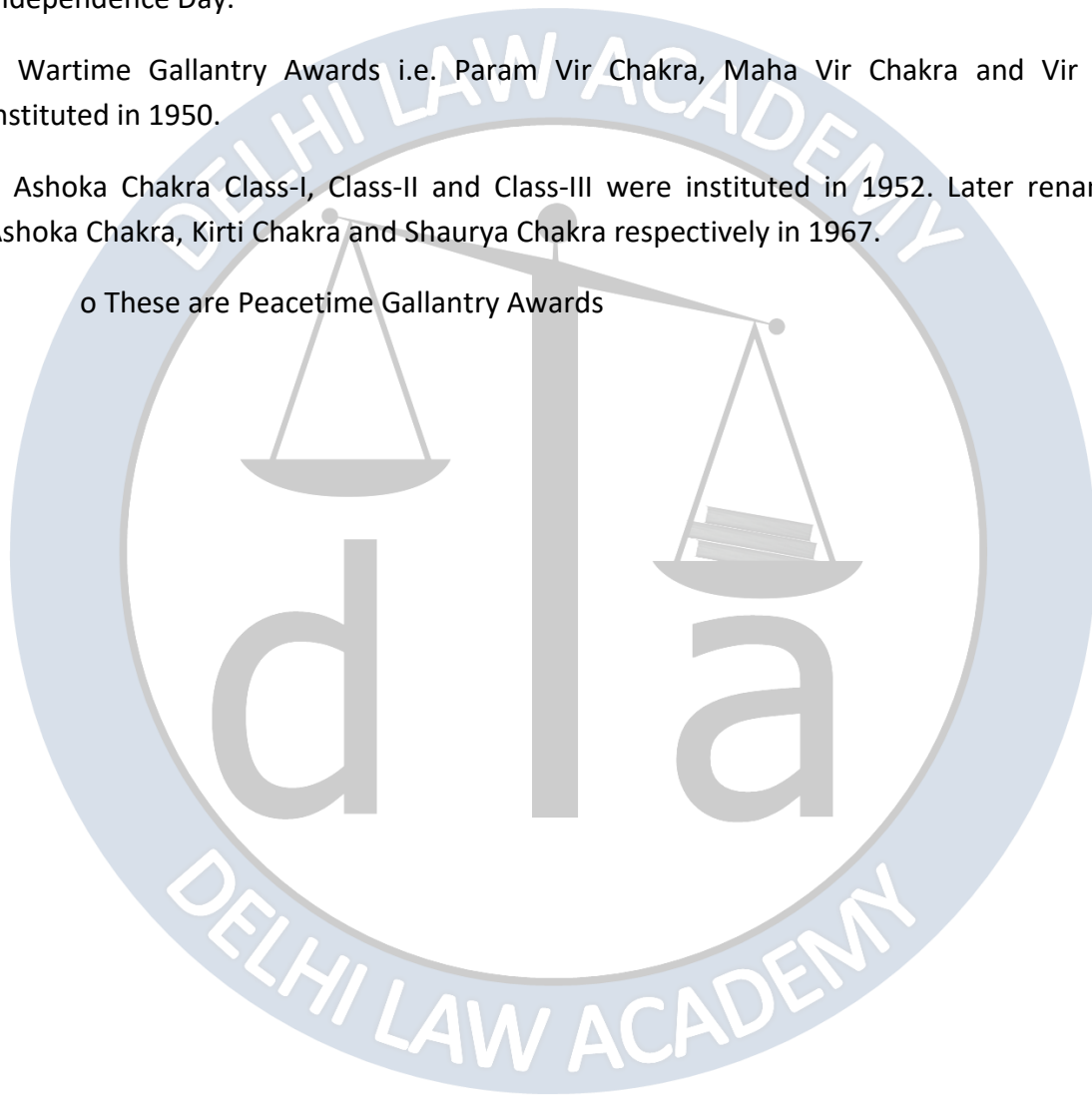
President has approved 103 Gallantry awards to Armed Forces and Central Armed Police Forces personnel on Independence Day 2024.



## About Gallantry Awards

- Order of precedence of awards: Param Vir Chakra, Ashoka Chakra, Mahavir Chakra, Kirti Chakra, Vir Chakra and Shaurya Chakra.
- Announced twice in a year - first on occasion of Republic Day and then on occasion of Independence Day.
- Wartime Gallantry Awards i.e. Param Vir Chakra, Maha Vir Chakra and Vir Chakra instituted in 1950.
- Ashoka Chakra Class-I, Class-II and Class-III were instituted in 1952. Later renamed as Ashoka Chakra, Kirti Chakra and Shaurya Chakra respectively in 1967.

o These are Peacetime Gallantry Awards



## PLACES IN NEWS

### India

#### Madhya Pradesh

- **Tawa Reservoir** (wetland) added to Ramsar Sites List.
- **SJVN Limited** has successfully commissioned the 90 MW **Omkareshwar Floating Solar Project** at Khandwa.

#### Gujarat

- Under the Sagarmala programme, Centre is developing the **National Maritime Heritage Complex (NMHC)**, at Lothal, Gujarat.
- Unit 4 of Indigenous 700 MWe Kakrapar Nuclear Power Plant (KAPP 4) started working at full capacity

#### Karnataka

- **Atomic Minerals Directorate for Exploration and Research** has established 1,600 tonnes of Lithium resources in **Mandya district**.

#### Assam

- Oil and gas exploration likely to threaten Hoolock Gibbon habitat.

#### Tripura

- Ministry of External Affairs denied that floods in eastern districts of Bangladesh were caused due to opening of **Dumbur dam** on Gumti river.

#### Bihar

- Researchers have discovered anti-diabetic medicinal herb **Gurmar** on Gaya's Brahmayoni Hill.

#### Chhattisgarh

- Chhattisgarh approved a proposal to **notify Guru Ghasidas Tamor Pingla Tiger Reserve**.

#### Tamil Nadu

- **Nanjarayan Bird Sanctuary** (wetland) added to Ramsar Sites List.
- **Kazhuveli Bird Sanctuary** (wetland) added to Ramsar Sites List.
- **Terracotta pipelines** unearthed at Keeladi in Sivaganga district.

## WORLD

