



## CURRENT AFFAIRS DECEMBER 2025

### DIGITAL CONSTITUTIONALISM

The Union government's move to mandate pre-installation of the Sanchar Saathi app on mobile phones (later withdrawn) triggered concerns regarding consent, surveillance, data misuse and state overreach.

#### What is Digital Constitutionalism?

- It refers to the application of constitutional principles such as liberty, dignity, equality and no-arbitrariness, privacy, accountability and rule of law to the digital domain including data collection, artificial intelligence, algorithms and surveillance systems.
- It seeks to ensure that digital power is subjected to the same constitutional limits as traditional state authority.

#### Reasons for emergence of Digital Constitutionalism

- Expansion of Digital State Power: Modern states increasingly exercise authority through digital infrastructure such as predictive policing, facial recognition, mass data collection, etc.
  - Unchecked digital state power risks violating Article 21 (privacy and dignity) and Article 14 (equality before law and equal protection of law), necessitating constitutional limits in cyberspace.
- Rise of Big-Techs as Quasi-Sovereign Powers: Private digital platforms now perform functions traditionally associated with the State such as Regulating speech (content moderation, de-platforming), Governing economic access (app stores, gig platforms), Controlling information flows (search engines, social media), etc.

### BALANCING AI INNOVATION AND COPYRIGHT

Recently, the government released a working paper on Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Copyright Issues.



- The paper has been prepared by a Committee constituted by the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (works under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry).
- The objective of the Committee was to propose a framework that safeguards the rights of content creators while enabling responsible Generative AI innovation and equitable access to technology.
- There are 2 primary legal concerns concerning AI and Copyright:
  - o First, the use of copyrighted material as input for AI Model training;
  - o And second, the copyrightability of works generated by AI models.

#### Current Legal Framework in India related to Copyright and related issues

- **Copyright Act, 1957:** Under the act, exclusive rights (reproduction, storage, adaptation) belong to the copyright owner.
- **Fair dealing exceptions under copyright law:** Permits limited use of copyrighted material without permission for specific purposes like **study/research, criticism/review, and reporting current events**, ensuring public access to information while balancing creators' rights.
- **No Specific fair dealing Exception:** India lacks an explicit exception for **Text and Data Mining (TDM)** or AI training.

## LOKPAL IN INDIA

Parliamentary Standing Committee on Personnel, Public Grievances, Law and Justice suggests urgent steps to operationalise Lokpal's inquiry, prosecution wings in its 145th Report.

### About Lokpal

- It is a statutory, autonomous, and sui generis anti-corruption institution established under the Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, 2013.
- **Composition:** Comprising of Chairperson, not exceeding 8 Members (4 Judicial and 4 Non-Judicial).
  - o At least 50% of total Members must be from SC, ST, OBC, Minorities, and women.

- **Appointment:** The Chairperson and Members shall be appointed by the President after obtaining the recommendations of a Selection Committee consisting of:

o Prime Minister (Chairperson), Speaker of Lok Sabha, Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha, Chief Justice of India/Judge of the Supreme Court nominated by him, one eminent jurist to be nominated by the President.

- **Term of office of Chairperson and Members:** 5 years from the date on which he enters upon his office or until he attains the age of 70 years, whichever is earlier.
- **Jurisdiction in respect of Inquiry:** It include Prime Minister, Ministers, members of Parliament, Groups A, B, C and D officers and officials of Central Government.

## Eligibility criteria for Lokpal



### Chairperson

Sitting or retired **Chief Justice of India/Judge of Supreme Court (SC) or an eminent person.**



### Judicial members

Sitting or retired **Judge of the SC/Chief Justice of High Court.**



### Other members

**Eminent Person:** With at least **25 years special knowledge and expertise** in the matters relating to anti-corruption policy, public administration, vigilance, finance including insurance and banking, law and management.

## Person ineligible to become members



Less than 45 years in age



Member of Parliament or State/UT Legislature or any Panchayat/ Municipality



Person convicted of any offence involving moral turpitude



Person removed or dismissed from the service of Union/State



Person holding any office of trust or profit or be affiliated with any political party etc.

## PANCHAYATS (EXTENSION TO SCHEDULED AREAS) ACT, 1996 (PESA)

Recently, the Ministry of Panchayati Raj celebrated 30 years of the Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act (PESA), 1996.

### Salient Features of the PESA Act, 1996

- **Constitutional Mandate:** It operationalizes Article 243M(4)(b), extending the provisions of Part IX (Panchayati Raj) to the Fifth Schedule Areas with specific modifications.



- **Geographic Scope:** It applies to 10 states with Scheduled Areas- Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Rajasthan, and Telangana.
- **Current Status:** 9 of the 10 states with tribal Scheduled Areas have framed their PESA rules, while Odisha has created draft rules.
- **Recognition of Tradition:** The Act legally recognizes the right of tribal communities to govern themselves through their customary laws, social practices and traditional management of community resources.
- **Proportional Reservation of Seats:** Reservation of seats for Scheduled Tribes (STs), Scheduled Castes (SCs), and others must correspond to their actual population percentage in the Panchayat area.
  - o STs are guaranteed at least 50% of the seats.
  - o Every Chairperson position at all levels of Panchayats in these areas must be held by an ST.

## PREVENTION OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT (POSH) ACT, 2013

Recently, Supreme Court in Dr. Sohail Malik v. Union of India & Anr case 2025 has expanded the ambit of Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 or PoSH, Act 2013.

- Supreme Court held that a woman harassed at workplace by a person outside her organisation may file a complaint with Internal Complaints Committee (ICC) of her own workplace, and not before ICC of third party's establishment.
- It enables ICC constituted at aggrieved woman's workplace to exercise jurisdiction over an employee of a different workplace.

### Key Provisions of PoSH Act 2013

- POSH Act is drawn from the judgment of Supreme Court in Vishaka v. State of Rajasthan (1997).

- Section 16 of the Act prohibits publication or making known contents of complaint and inquiry proceedings to keep the identity of the woman filling complaint confidential.

## UN CONVENTION AGAINST CORRUPTION

The 11<sup>th</sup> Conference of the States Parties (COSP-11) to the UN Convention against Corruption concluded with the adoption of Doha Declaration 2025.

- Declaration calls on States to leverage digital technologies, including AI, to strengthen international law enforcement cooperation in cross-border corruption, etc.
- United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) acts as the secretariat of the Conference.

### UN Convention against Corruption

- It is the only legally binding universal anti-corruption instrument.
- Adopted in 2003 by the UN General Assembly, New York and enforced in 2005
- Objective: To prevent and combat corruption, promote integrity and accountability, facilitate international cooperation, and recover assets obtained through corruption
- Signatories and Parties: 140 Signatories and 192 Parties
  - o India is a Party to the Convention

## PRIVATE MEMBER'S BILL TO AMEND THE 10TH SCHEDULE

The Bill seeks to allow parliamentarians to take an independent line in voting on Bills and Motions, promoting good lawmaking and freeing MPs from "whip-driven tyranny" under 10th Schedule.

### Need of enforcing whip under X Schedule

- To prevent unprincipled defections: Before 1985, legislators frequently switched parties for personal gain (known as Aaya Ram–Gaya Ram politics).



o This practice of alluring elected representatives with money, political office or other benefits is called “political horse trading.”

- Ensure political stability: Frequent defections can lead to midterm government collapse without fresh elections, betraying the voters’ mandate.
- Promote party discipline: Parties need to function as cohesive units especially on major legislations (budgets, confidence votes, important bills).

## The WHIP System



### What is a Whip?

Direction by parties to compel MPs/MLAs to vote in a particular manner.



### Disqualification

10th Schedule (52nd Amendment, 1985):  
Voting against party directives leads to disqualification.



### Legal Status

No constitutional or statutory recognition.  
Convention-based practice.



### 170th Law Commission

Whips only when voting affects government's existence.

## CRYPTOCURRENCIES AND SMUGGLING

The ‘Smuggling in India report 2024-25’ by the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) highlighted the increasing use of Stablecoins and cryptocurrency for illicit payments of crime particularly in drug and gold smuggling.

### About cryptocurrencies and Stablecoins

- Cryptocurrency: Form of digital currency (based on the blockchain technology) that utilizes a unique software code. E.g., Bitcoin, Ethereum, etc.
  - o Blockchain is an open-source database (public ledger) distributed across a decentralized computer network/internet that forms a permanent record of transactions between parties.



o They are Non fiat (functions independently of government/Central Bank); have no intrinsic Value, etc.

- Stablecoins: They are a type of cryptocurrency whose value is pegged to another asset, such as a fiat currency or gold, to maintain a stable price.

## Regulation of Cryptocurrencies

- **India**
  - o **Finance Act, 2022: Government** brought a comprehensive taxation regime for the transfer of **Virtual Digital Assets (VDAs)** imposing a **30% tax** on **capital gains** from VDAs.
    - > The **Income Tax Act 1961** defines **VDA** as any information or code or number or token, generated through **cryptographic** means or otherwise; transferred, stored, or traded electronically. E.g. cryptocurrencies, Non-fungible token (NFT), etc.
  - o **Prevention and Money-laundering Act, 2002:** In 2023, VDAs were brought under its purview.
- **Globally: Financial Action Task Force (FATF)** to combat illicit finance, the FATF applies international standards for **Anti-Money Laundering (AML)** and **Countering the Financing of Terrorism (CFT)** to stablecoins.

## AI IN LAW ENFORCEMENT

Maharashtra launched MahaCrimeOS AI to strengthen its response to rising cybercrime using artificial intelligence, highlighting increasing use of AI in law enforcement in India.

### About MahaCrimeOS AI

- It is an advanced AI co-pilot system, developed by CyberEye, a Partner of Microsoft, with the Maharashtra Government's Special Purpose Vehicle MARVEL, and Microsoft India Development Center (IDC).
- Function: It will automate execution & analysis; enable instant case creation; auto-generate case diaries & reports; suggest adaptive Investigation Paths; and create Person of Interest Profiling.

### Applications of AI in law enforcement

- Predictive Policing: AI models analyze crime patterns, high-risk areas, and criminal behavior, enabling law enforcement to take proactive measures.



o E.g., USA's Clearview AI enables faster threat detection and prevention in child exploitation cases.

- Surveillance and Investigation:

- o Automated drones for crime scene monitoring and suspect tracking.

- o Facial recognition systems integrated with national criminal databases and forensic analysis to examine evidence and digital crime trails.

- o Automated number-plate recognition (ANPR) to identify vehicles based on color, make, and specific driving patterns.

## GHOST PAIRING

CERT-In has issued advisory warning Indian users about the WhatsApp Account takeover campaign (GhostPairing).

### About Ghost Pairing

- What It Is: A new cyber scam that allows hackers to take over a WhatsApp account without needing a password or SIM card.
- How It Works: The attack exploits WhatsApp's device-linking feature by tricking users into approving a fake but authentic-looking pairing code.
  - o Victims receive deceptive messages like "Hi, check this photo," which initiates the account compromise.
- Account Hijacking: Once linked, the attacker's device gains full access as a hidden trusted device.

## ARAVALLIS

The Supreme Court (SC) stayed its previous judgement related to the definition of the Aravalli hills and range.

### Background of the Issue





- Formation of Expert Committee (May 2024): The SC directed the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) to form an Expert Committee to recommend a “uniform definition” for the Aravallis.
- Definition Adoption (November 2025): In T.N. Godavarman Thirumulpad Case (1995), the SC accepted the Committee recommendations of a uniform definition of Aravallis and paused the grant of fresh mining leases.
  - o Definition: ‘Aravalli Hill’ is any landform in designated districts with 100-meter elevation and a ‘Range’ are two or more hills within 500-meter proximity.
  - o SC directed Government to prepare a Management Plan for Sustainable Mining on the lines of the Saranda Mining Plan.

## Saranda Forest case (2025) and Mining Plan

- The SC ordered the Jharkhand government to declare the Saranda Forest a wildlife sanctuary.
- Noting that a ban on mining could promote illegal mining, it ordered a Mining Plan based on geo-referenced ecological assessments to divide the landscape into "Go" and "No-Go" zones for mining.
- The case exemplifies SC’s approach of balancing the need for ecological preservation with the demands of economic growth.
- Government Bans Mining (December 2025): Ministry of Environment Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) issued directions to the States for a complete ban on granting new mining leases (exception for critical, strategic and atomic minerals).
- Judicial Stay and Review (December 2025): Following public protests, the SC stayed its November directions and proposed a fresh, independent review by a high-powered committee.
  - o Public protests were rooted in reasons like potential ecological destruction, threat of desertification, groundwater crisis as Aravallis act as primary recharge zone for aquifers.

## About Aravallis

- One of the oldest residual fold mountain ranges of the world (Pre-Cambrian), and predates the formation of the Himalayan ranges.
- Location: North-western India; stretches in a south-west direction ~692 km from Delhi through Haryana, Rajasthan, and into Gujarat.
  - o Highest peak: Guru Shikhar on Mount Abu.
  - o Rivers originating from Aravallis: West-flowing (Luni, Sabarmati); East -flowing (Banas); North-flowing (Sahibi), etc.

## **RAMSAR WETLANDS**

India added Gogabeel Lake in Bihar, Siliserh Lake in Rajasthan and Kopra reservoir in Chhattisgarh to the List of Wetlands of International Importance (the “Ramsar List”). India now has 96 wetlands under Ramsar Convention.

## About Ramsar List

- Genesis: Established under the Convention on Wetlands (adopted in Ramsar, Iran, in 1971), it is the world’s largest network of protected areas.
  - o Almost 90% of UN member states including India have acceded to become “Contracting Parties” to the Convention.
- About: Wetlands included in the List acquire a new status at the national level and are recognized by the international community as being of significant value for humanity.

## **RATANMAHAL SANCTUARY**

Gujarat has regained its status as a ‘Tiger State’ after 33 years, with the presence of a tiger in the Ratanmahal Wildlife Sanctuary.

- Gujarat has become the only state in India to host three big cat species i.e. lion, tiger and leopard simultaneously.



## MAITRI RESEARCH STATION

India is planning to replace the existing Maitri Research Station with a newly designed Maitri-II Station in Antarctica by 2032.

- The new Maitri-II Station is conceived as a state-of-the-art, year-round research hub that will significantly elevate India's scientific capabilities.

### About Maitri

- Built in 1988
- It serves as a gateway to one of the largest mountain chains in central Dronning Maud land, located south of Schirmacher (Antarctica).

India's other Polar research stations

- Bharati (Antarctica), Dakshin Gangotri (first scientific base station of India situated in Antarctica now decommissioned), and Himadri (Arctic).

## CHO LA AND DOK LA PASSES

Chola and Dok La passes in Sikkim are opened for battlefield tourism under the Bharat Rannbhoomi Darshan initiative.

- Bharat Rannbhoomi Darshan is a joint initiative of Indian Army and Ministry of Tourism, for citizens to visit historic war zones and sites of military significance.

### About the Passes

- Cho La Pass
  - o Location: Chola range of Eastern Himalayas, 17782 ft. above the sea.
    - > Nathu La and Jelep La passes are also situated in Cho La range.
  - o Connects Sikkim and Chumbi Valley.
  - o It was site of 1967 Indo-China skirmishes.
- Doka La (Doklam) Pass



o Location: East Sikkim, on the edge of the Doklam plateau, near the tri-junction of India, Bhutan, and China.

o It was the site of the 2017 border standoff between India and China.

## CHILD MARRIAGE IN INDIA

The Union government marked the first anniversary of its Bal Vivah Mukat Bharat Abhiyan with a 100-day awareness campaign for a country free of child marriage.

- The Bal Vivah Mukat Bharat campaign by the Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD) aims to reduce the prevalence of child marriage by 10% by 2026 and make India child marriage free by 2030.
- It is part of commitment to the UN to end child marriage by 2030.

### What Is Child Marriage?

- Child marriage, defined under Prohibition of Child Marriage Act is a marriage between female under 18 years and a male below 21 years of age.

### Initiatives taken by Government

- Prohibition of Child Marriage Act (PCMA), 2006: It prohibits marriage of girls under 18 and boys under 21. Section 16 of Act authorizes State Government to appoint Child Marriage Prohibition Officers (CMPO).
- Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012: It helps prevent child marriage by protecting children from sexual exploitation.
- The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015: It has provisions for care and protection of children who are at imminent risk of marriage before attaining the age of marriage through Child Welfare Committees.
- Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Scheme (2015): Implemented by Ministry of Women and Child Development, it aims to break gender stereotypes & challenges son-centric rituals.

## SOCIAL MEDIA BAN FOR CHILDREN

Recently, Australia has become the first country to enforce a nationwide social media ban for children under 16 under the Online Safety Amendment (Social Media Minimum Age) Act 2024.

- Ban initially covers 10 platforms including Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Threads, TikTok, X, YouTube, Reddit and streaming platforms Kick and Twitch.
- Age-Restricted Social Media Platforms (ARSMP) would cover an electronic service which enables online social interaction between two or more end-users, requiring them to prevent underage users from creating or keeping accounts.
- Companies are responsible for ensuring children under the minimum age cannot access their platforms.

## RIGHT TO DISCONNECT

The Private Members' Bill on 'Right to Disconnect' was recently moved in the Lok Sabha.

- Right to Disconnect is a legal protection allowing workers to disconnect from work and ignore work-related electronic communications during non-work hours.
- Based on Article 24 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR): 'Everyone has the right to rest and leisure, including reasonable limitation of working hours and periodic holidays with pay.'
- Constitutional Basis of Right to Disconnect:
  - o Article 21: Right to Life and Liberty and dignity.
  - o Article 39€: State to ensure that health and strength of workers are not abused.
  - o Article 42: State's responsibility to ensure just and humane working conditions.





## CHILD TRAFFICKING

SC lays down guidelines to evaluate evidence of victims in child trafficking cases.

- Court observed that child trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation of children is a “deeply disturbing reality” in India.

### Guidelines to evaluate evidence of victims

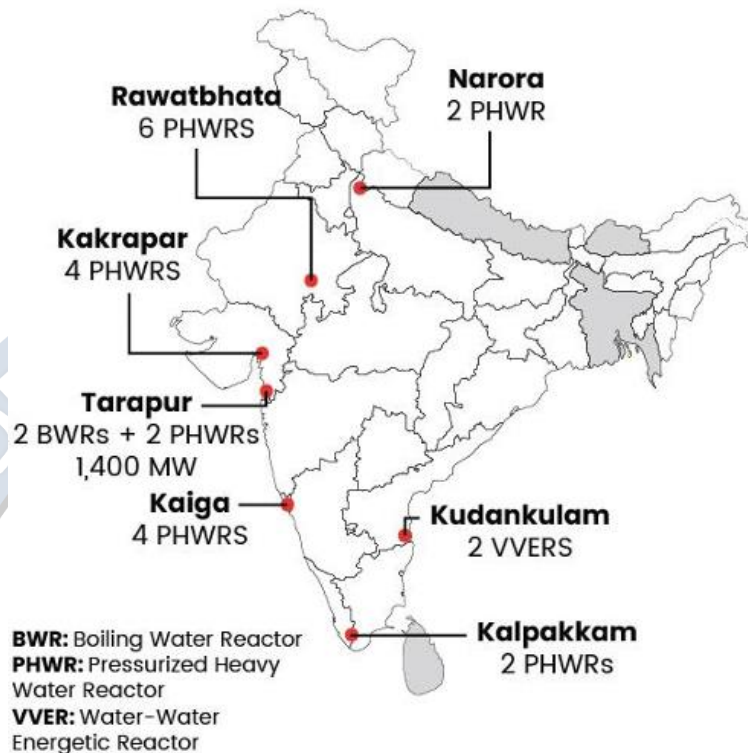
- Vulnerability of Victim: Judicial scrutiny must recognise Socio-economic and cultural vulnerability of child victims.
- Minor inconsistencies in a trafficked child’s testimony must not discredit her evidence.
- Sole testimony of the victim is sufficient if it is credible and convincing.
- Secondary Victimization: Recounting abuse causes psychological trauma, stigma and fear of retaliation. Judicial evaluation must show sensitivity and realism.
- A trafficked child: Must not be treated as an accomplice but as an “injured witness”, deserving due regard and credence.

## THE SHANTI ACT, 2025

The President has granted assent to the Sustainable Harnessing and Advancement of Nuclear Energy for Transforming India (SHANTI) Bill, 2025.

- It aims to create a unified Legal Framework by consolidating existing laws into a single, comprehensive statute, thereby enhancing regulatory clarity and investor confidence.
- It repealed the Atomic Energy Act (AEA), 1962 and the Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage Act (CLNDA), 2010.

## Nuclear Power Plants in India



### UNESCO INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE LIST

Deepavali was officially inscribed on UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) of Humanity.

- India now has 16 elements on UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage list.

### NEW GI TAGS

Tamil Nadu added five more products to its growing list of Geographical Indication (GI) registrations.

#### Products Include

- Woraiyur cotton sari: Native to Tiruchi district.



- Kavindapadi nattu sakkarai: A jaggery powder.
- Namakkal makkal pathirangal: Soapstone cookware.
- Thooyamalli rice variety: Meaning 'pure jasmine', is a traditional sambha-season rice variety grown over 135 - 140 days.
- Ambasamudram choppu saman: Wooden toys.

## About GI Tags

- Sign used on products with specific geographical origin and possessing qualities due to that origin.
- Regulated under Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration & Protection) Act, 1999.
- Provided for 10 years and can be renewed.

## **PETRA & ELLORA CAVES**

India and Jordan signed a twinning agreement between UNESCO Heritage sites of Petra & Ellora Caves renowned for their rock cut architecture.

## About Ellora caves

- Location - Charanandri hills, Maharashtra near Elaganga river
- Origin - Carved between 600-1000 CE predominantly by the Rashtrakuta and yadava dynasty.
- Architecture - Rock cut caves carved into basalt cliffs from top to down
- Religion - Houses Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain monuments side-by-side, illustrating the religious tolerance

o It also houses mural paintings related to all 3 religions.

## About Petra caves

- Petra also known as Rose City" due to its pink sandstone cliffs was the capital of the Nabataean Kingdom starting around 4th century BCE



- It is half-built, half-carved into the rock, and is surrounded by mountains riddled with passages and gorges.

## COMMONWEALTH

India successfully secured the hosting rights for the Centenary Commonwealth Games in 2030.

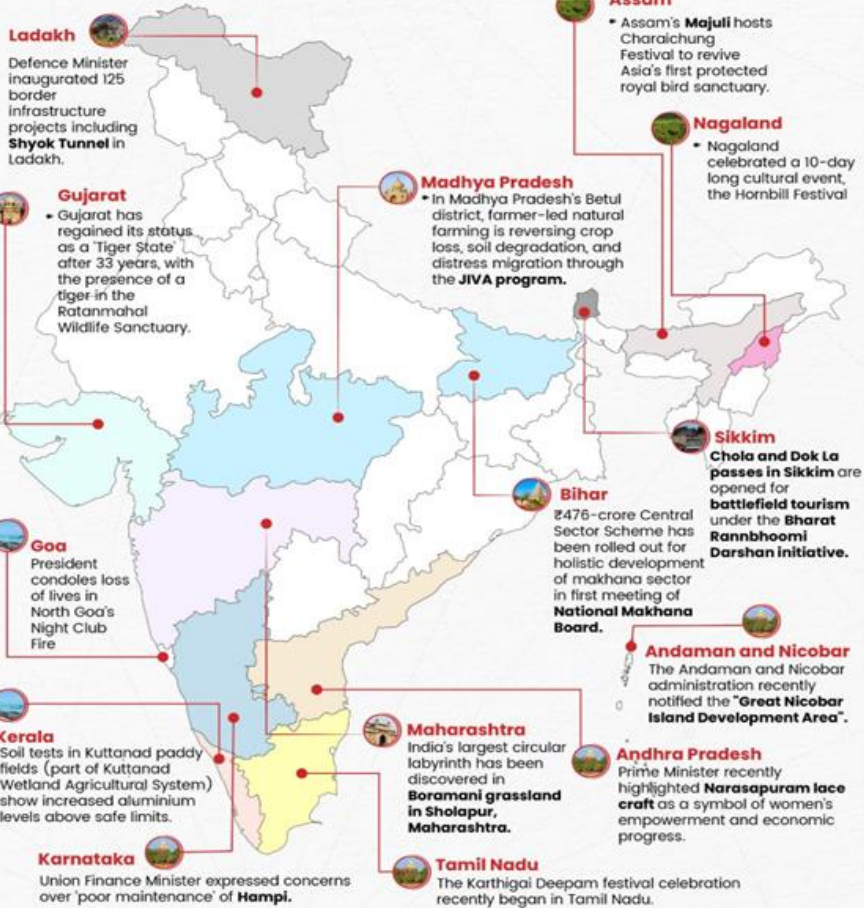
### About Commonwealth Games

- A quadrennial multi-sport event among Commonwealth nations, inaugurated in 1930.
- India hosted the XIX Games in 2010.
- Ahmedabad has been formally declared as the host city for the Centenary Commonwealth Games 2030.

### About Commonwealth

- Originated in the 1926 Imperial Conference where Britain and the Dominions agreed that they were all equal members of a community within the British Empire.
- London Declaration (1949) laid the foundation of modern Commonwealth stated that republics and other countries could be part of the Commonwealth.
- Membership: 56 countries.

## Places in News India





## Places in News World

