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CURRENT AFFAIRS

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Cultural Exchange and Growth of Kashmir's Craft Industry

Why in News?

Recently, Artisans from Kashmir and Central Asia reunited after nearly **500 years in Srinagar** for a **three-day craft exchange initiative,** celebrating shared heritage and reviving cultural connections.

▪ The event celebrated **Srinagar's recognition as a "World Craft City" by the World Crafts Council (WCC).**

How did Central Asia Influence the Development of Crafts in Srinagar?

▪ **Historical Craft Connections: Zain-ul-Abidin, the 9th Sultan of Kashmir (15th century)**, introduced Central Asian craft techniques to Kashmir with the help of artisans from **Samarkand, Bukhara, and Persia.** Post his reign, these connections weakened and **came to an end by 1947.**

  o Located on the historic **Silk Route,** Srinagar became a **melting pot of cultural, economic, and artistic exchanges.** This cross-cultural interaction played a vital role in the development of Kashmir's distinctive crafts.

▪ **Craftsmanship Techniques:**

  o **Wood Carving:** Kashmiri artisans, known for their intricate woodwork, adopted techniques from Central Asia.

    • While **Kashmiri woodcarvers used chisels and hammers** for detailed designs, **Iranian woodcarvers typically employed a single chisel** for floral motifs.

  o **Carpet Weaving:** Kashmir's carpet weaving was profoundly shaped by **Persian techniques.**

    • The Persian knotting methods, including the ***Farsi baff and Sehna knots,*** were incorporated into Kashmiri carpets.

    • Additionally, Kashmir's carpet patterns named after Iranian cities like Kashan and Tabriz highlight the cultural ties, with artisan exchanges further enhancing skills and inspiring craftsmanship.

  o **Embroidery:** Uzbekistan's suzani embroidery was recognized as a precursor to **Kashmir's sozini work.** Similarities were observed in techniques, color palettes, and floral motifs.

What is the World Craft City?

▪ **About:** The **"World Craft City" initiative,** launched in 2014 by the **World Crafts Council AISBL (WCC-International)** under the **WCC-World Craft City Programme,** recognizes cities for their contributions to cultural, economic, and social development through crafts.

- o The WCC AISBL, established in 1964 as a **non-profit organization**, aims to enhance the status of crafts in cultural and economic life and promote fellowship among crafts persons through support and guidance.

- ▪ **Indian Cities: Srinagar (Jammu and Kashmir), Jaipur (Rajasthan), Mamallapuram (Tamil Nadu) and Mysore (Karnataka)** have been recognized as World Craft Cities by WCC.

  - o The WCC announced the **'Seal of Authenticity of the Craft'** for Kashmir's handicrafts, certifying **handmade products from J&K.** This initiative aims to provide global recognition and enhance quality in the textile industry.

- ▪ **Key Crafts of Srinagar:**

  - o **Pashmina Shawls:** Known for their fine quality and intricate handwoven patterns. **Pashmina shawls** originate from Kashmir, where the **Pashmina fabric is hand-spun and hand-woven.**

    - **Mughal Emperor Akbar** promoted the craft by commissioning shawls for the royal family.

  - o **Kashmiri Carpets:** Renowned for their rich designs, particularly the traditional Persian-style carpets**.**

    - The unique **hand-knotted kashmir carpets use a coded script called Taleem** for design instructions. These carpets feature traditional oriental and floral motifs and are made from various materials like silk and wool.

  - o **Paper Mâché:** It is the art of creating objects from **molded paper pulp,** traditionally painted and lacquered.

    - In Kashmir, it began with pen cases and evolved into a distinct art of surface decoration **(naqashi).**

  - o **Embroidered Textiles:** Fine embroidery techniques like Sozni and Aari work, used in garments and accessories.

    - Sozni shawls originate from Kashmir, with **"Sozni" meaning needle in Persian.**

  - o **Wood Carving:** Intricate designs carved into **walnut wood,** creating beautiful furniture and home décor.

  - o **Copperware:** Traditional Kashmiri metal crafts, especially the copper samovars and tea sets. Part of the ancient heritage of Kashmir, with artisans skilled in **metallurgy.**

  - o **Khatamband:** It is a handcrafted art of making ceilings by fitting small pieces of walnut or deodar wood into geometric patterns without using nails.

Note

In 2021, Srinagar city was designated a creative city as part of the **UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) Creative City Network (UCCN)** for crafts and folk arts.

- Other Indian cities in the UCCN include **Jaipur** as the 'City of Crafts and Folk Arts' (2015), **Varanasi** as the 'Creative City of Music' (2015), **Chennai** as the 'Creative City of Music' (2017), **Mumbai** as the 'City of Film' (2019), **Hyderabad** as the 'City of Gastronomy' (2019), **Kozhikode** as the 'City of Literature' (2023), and **Gwalior** as the 'City of Music' (2023).

Geographical Indication Tag for Kashmir Crafts

- Kashmir's seven crafts including the **Kashmiri Carpets, pashmina, sozni, kani shawl, walnut wood carving, khatamband, and papier mache**, have earned **Geographical Indication (GI) tags** under the **Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999.**
  - A GI tag ensures that only authorized users or those residing in the specific geographical area can use the product name, protecting the authenticity and heritage of the craft.

How Can Artisans Benefit from Cross-Border Cultural Exchanges?

- **Skill Enhancement:** Exposure to different techniques and styles can help artisans refine their **skills and innovate within their craft**, leading to unique and innovative products that stand out in the market.

- **Market Expansion:** Cultural exchanges open up new markets, allowing artisans to showcase their work to a global audience and **increase their customer base.**
  - By participating in international events, artisans can gain insights into global **market trends and adapt their products to meet international demand.** Exposure to international buyers can help them achieve financial sustainability, ensuring the preservation of their craft for future generations.

- **Artisans as Cultural Ambassadors:** Artisans acting as cultural ambassadors. Showcase their crafts internationally fosters global respect and understanding, while promoting mutual appreciation of diverse traditions.
  - These interactions help preserve their crafts and **contribute to global cultural dialogue,** enriching both their artistic practice and economic opportunities.

What are the Challenges Faced by Kashmiri Artisans?

- **Workforce Participation**: Approximately **92% of artisans rely on crafts as their primary source of income,** but the income generated is often insufficient, forcing many to take up secondary livelihood options such as agriculture or daily labor.

- **Gender and Wage Disparities**: While a significant number of female artisans (63%) are engaged in crafts like Sozni, wage disparities between men and women persist.
  - Some crafts, such as Khatamband and wood carving, remain male-dominated.
- **Declining Interest in Craft**: Many artisans are abandoning traditional crafts in favor of more stable employment opportunities.
  - A notable percentage (4%) of artisans have already **shifted to other forms of livelihood,** especially in regions like Dal, where agriculture serves as a secondary income.
  - The **drop in international demand,** coupled with competition from **cheaper alternative**s and **machine-made products**, has placed additional pressure on the sector.
  - Younger generations are often reluctant to continue practicing traditional crafts due to the lack of financial stability, many prefer to pursue careers that offer more economic security and social recognition.
- **Lack of Innovation:** There is a lack for innovation and modernization in the craft sector to keep up with changing market demands.

India's Initiatives to Promote Handicrafts

- **National Handicraft Development Programme**
- **Comprehensive Handicrafts Cluster Development Scheme**
- **Shilp Didi Mahotsav**
- **PM Vishwakarma Scheme**
- **Ambedkar Hastshilp Vikas Yojana**
- **One District One Product**

Way Forward

- **Government Support:** Promoting GI Tag recognition for crafts like Kashmir carpets and Pashmina shawls has elevated their status.
  - Global promotion through **online platforms** and **trade fairs** can further help artisans access new markets. Improving the supply chain and supporting local cooperatives can also boost the craft sector's profitability.
- **Educational and Training Programs:** Investing in training and skill development for young generations under the **Skill India Mission,** artisans can help preserve traditional crafts while incorporating modern techniques to appeal to global markets.
- **Tourism Integration:** Develop **craft tourism circuits** in Kashmir, allowing tourists to visit artisan workshops and purchase products directly.

- o   This can boost local economies and provide artisans with a steady income stream.
- **Sustainability Practices:** Encourage the use of **sustainable and eco-friendly materials** in craft production. This can attract environmentally conscious consumers and open up new market segments.

Interpreting the Places of Worship Act, 1991

Why in News?

The **Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act, 1991,** which preserves the religious character of places of worship, remains contentious amid ongoing legal challenges.

▪ The **Shahi Jama Masjid dispute in Sambhal, Uttar Pradesh** has reignited debates over the Act's applicability.

What is the Shahi Jama Masjid Dispute?

▪ **Background of the Dispute:** Petitioners claim the 16th Century Jama Masjid in Sambhal was built on the **site of an ancient Hari Har Mandir(Hindu temple).**

   o Constructed around 1528 by **Mir Hindu Beg, a general under Mughal Emperor Babur,** the mosque features **distinct stone masonry** with a dome and arches, differing from other Mughal mosques made of **red sandstone.**

      • Its history and architecture have led to speculation about ties to earlier structures, including a possible Hindu temple.

   o This mirrors similar disputes in **Varanasi, Mathura, and Dhar.** Petitioners have sought a survey to determine the site's historical and religious character.

▪ **Judiciary Involvement:** A Sambhal district court ordered a peaceful survey to verify the claims. However, a second survey resulted in violent clashes.

▪ **Legal Status of the Mosque:** The Shahi Jama Masjid is a protected monument under the **Ancient Monuments Preservation Act, 1904.** It is listed by the **Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)** as a Monument of **National Importance.**

▪ **Shahi Jama Masjid and Places of Worship Act, 1991:** The Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act, 1991, is at the center of this dispute.

   o The Act stipulates that the religious character of places of worship as they existed on **15th August 1947, must be preserved, and prohibits** any changes to the religious identity of such places.

   o The Shahi Jama Masjid dispute challenges the Act's provisions by seeking to alter the mosque's religious character.

What is the Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act, 1991?

▪ **About:** The Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act, 1991, aims to preserve the religious status of places of worship, preventing conversions between **different religious denominations or within the same denomination.**

- o The Act seeks to **maintain communal harmony** by freezing the religious character of these places and preventing disputes over such conversions.
- **Key Provisions of the Act**
  - o **Section 3**: Prohibits the conversion of any place of worship, **either in full or in part,** from one religious denomination to another.
  - o **Section 4(1)**: Mandates that the religious identity of a place of worship must remain unchanged from its status on **15th August 1947**. Any attempt to alter the religious character is prohibited.
  - o **Section 4(2)**: Terminates all ongoing legal proceedings concerning the conversion of a place of worship's religious character prior to **15th August 1947,** and prevents the initiation of new cases challenging the religious status of such places.
  - o **Section 5 (Exceptions)**: The specific dispute at **Ayodhya (Babri Masjid-Ram Janmabhoomi)**, which was exempted from the Act.
    - Besides the Ayodhya dispute, the Act also exempted: Any place of worship which is an ancient and historical monument, or an archaeological site covered by the **Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1958.**
    - Cases that have already been resolved or settled by mutual agreement.
    - Conversions that occurred before the Act's commencement.
  - o **Section 6 (Penalties)**: The Act establishes strict penalties for violations, including imprisonment of up to three years and fines for attempting to change the religious character of a place of worship.
- **Supreme Court's Interpretation:** In May 2022, the Supreme Court **noted that inquiries can be allowed into the religious character of places of worship,** as long as such inquiries don't lead to a change in the religious character.

What are the Concerns Regarding the Places of Worship Act, 1991?

- **Limits Judicial Review**: The Act has been challenged for **limiting judicial review**, potentially undermining the role of the judiciary in resolving disputes.
- **Retrospective Cutoff Date**: The Act's retrospective cutoff date of 15th August 1947, has been criticized as **arbitrary and irrational,** potentially infringing upon the rights of certain religious communities.
- **Legal Challenges:** Multiple petitions have been filed against the Act, with petitioners arguing that it prevents **Hindus, Jains, Buddhists, and Sikhs** from reclaiming places of worship they **believe were "invaded" or "encroached upon" by historical rulers.**

- **Exemption for Certain Disputes**: The exemption of the **Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid case** from the Act has raised concerns about inconsistency and the potential for **selective legal treatment of certain disputes.**

- **Rising Communal Tensions:** The legal and social debates surrounding the Act are often intertwined with broader **communal issues.**
  o Critics argue that challenges to the **Act may exacerbate communal tensions,** particularly when it comes to **sensitive sites like mosques, temples, and churches.**

- **Impact on Secularism:** The Act was intended to **protect India's secular nature by preserving religious harmony,** but its critics believe that it may inadvertently allow for the **suppression of certain religious communities' claims** to historical sites, thus undermining the **secular fabric of the nation.**

- **Political and Social Implications:** The Act is often invoked in political and religious debates, leading to concerns that religious issues could be used to **stoke division or mobilize support for political causes.**
  o Some of the ongoing disputes have led to social unrest, with protests and communal tensions erupting over religious site claims, reflecting the deep societal divide over such issues.

Way Forward

- **Need for Legal Clarity:** With varying interpretations of the Act's provisions, there is a pressing need for the Supreme Court to provide clear and definitive guidelines on the applicability of the Places of Worship Act.

- **Preventing Local Court Overreach:** The increasing frequency of local court interventions in sensitive religious matters calls for a closer examination of the jurisdictional limits of lower courts.
  o The Supreme Court should assert its role in overseeing cases that may have wider social or political implications.

- **De-politicizing Legal Cases:** Legal challenges on religious sites should remain free from **political influence to prevent misuse** for ideological or electoral purposes, ensuring the judiciary's credibility and the sanctity of religious institutions.

- **Focusing on Unity:** Both political parties and civil society must prioritize unity over division. It is essential to emphasize the shared cultural and historical heritage that binds India together, irrespective of religion.

Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti and Sufism

In News

- A Hindu Sena petition was admitted in an Ajmer court, claiming a Shiva temple lies beneath the Ajmer Sharif dargah, and calling for an archaeological survey.
- The dargah is the mausoleum of Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti, a key figure in the spread of Sufism in the subcontinent.
- The shrine was built by Mughal Emperor Humayun in his honor.

Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti

- **Early Life:** He was born in 1141 CE in Persia (modern-day Iran) and was orphaned at 14. He embarked on a spiritual journey after meeting Ibrahim Qandozi, a mystic.
    - Moin-ud-din, believed to be a descendant of Muhammad.
- **Spiritual Training**: Moinuddin studied various subjects in Bukhara and Samarkand before being initiated into the Chishti Sufi order by Khwaja Usman Harooni near Herat.
- **Arrival in Ajmer**: in 1192 CE, Moinuddin arrived in Ajmer, during the decline of the Chauhan dynasty following its defeat by Muhammad of Ghor.
    - He chose to stay and help the suffering population.
- **Title "Garib Nawaz":** Moinuddin earned the title **"Garib Nawaz"** (friend of the poor) for his selfless service, including building a refuge and langarkhana (community kitchen) for the homeless and needy.
- **Contributions and Teachings :** Moinuddin interacted with **Hindu mystics and sages, sharing common values of devotion** and rejecting religious orthodoxy, focusing on equality and divine love.
    - **Sufism emerged as a devotiona**l and ascetic form of Islam, and the Chishti order, founded in the 10th century, was spread by Moinuddin and his disciples.
- **Disciples :** Prominent disciples like Qutbuddin Bakhtiyar Kaki, Baba Fariduddin, Nizamuddin Auliya, and Chirag Dehalvi helped spread Moinuddin's teachings.
    - His influence extended across regions and cultures.
- **Mughal Patronage**: Emperor Akbar revered Moinuddin, made pilgrimages to his shrine, and helped beautify Ajmer, contributing to the city's revival.
- **Legacy:** Moinuddin's teachings of love, compassion, and inclusivity continue to resonate in India's religiously diverse landscape, bridging cultural gaps between communities.

About Sufism

Sufism and _tasawwuf_

Sufism is an English word coined in the nineteenth century. The word used for Sufism in Islamic texts is _tasawwuf_. Historians have understood this term in several ways. According to some scholars, it is derived from _suf_, meaning wool, referring to the coarse woollen clothes worn by sufis. Others derive it from _safa_, meaning purity. It may also have been derived from _suffa_, the platform outside the Prophet's mosque, where a group of close followers assembled to learn about the faith.

- Sufis were **Muslim mystics**, rejected formal rituals and emphasized love, devotion to God, and compassion for humanity.

- They sought union with God, much like a lover seeks their beloved, and often composed poems expressing these feelings.

- Sufis, like the **Nathpanthis and Yogis,** used methods such as chanting, contemplation, dancing, and breath control under the guidance of a master to train the heart to see the world differently.

- **From the 11th centur**y, many Sufis from Central Asia settled in **Hindustan,** especially after the establishment of the **Delhi Sultanate, where major Sufi centers flourished.**

  - They **emphasized salvation** through **intense devotion and love for God,** following the example of **Prophet Muhammad.**

- The **Chishti order, with prominent figures like Khwaja Muinuddin Chishti and Qutbuddin Bakhtiar Kaki**, became highly influential.

- **Sufi masters held assemblie**s in their **khanqahs (hospices)**, where devotees from all walks of life, including royalty and commoners, gathered for spiritual discussions, blessings, and music.

- Many attributed miraculous powers to Sufi masters, and their tombs (dargahs) became major pilgrimage sites, drawing people from all faiths.

Cyclone Fengal

Context

- **Cyclone Fengal**, a tropical cyclone, **made landfall over Puducherry.**

About

- **Landfall** is the event of a tropical cyclone coming onto land after being over water.
  - As per the India Meteorological Department (IMD), a tropical cyclone is said to have made landfall when the centre of the storm – or its eye – moves over the coast.
  - Landfalls can last for a few hours, with their exact duration depending on the speed of the winds and the size of the storm system.
- A landfall is different from the direct hit of a tropical cyclone.
  - **A 'direct hit'** refers to a situation where the core of high winds (or eyewall) comes ashore but the centre of the storm may remain offshore.

What are Cyclones?

- The word Cyclone is derived from the **Greek word Cyclos** meaning the **coils of a snake.**
  - It was coined by **Henry Peddington** because the tropical storms in the Bay of Bengal and the Arabian Sea appear like coiled serpents of the sea.
- Cyclones are **powerful, rotating storms** that form over warm ocean waters, characterized by low pressure at the center and high winds.
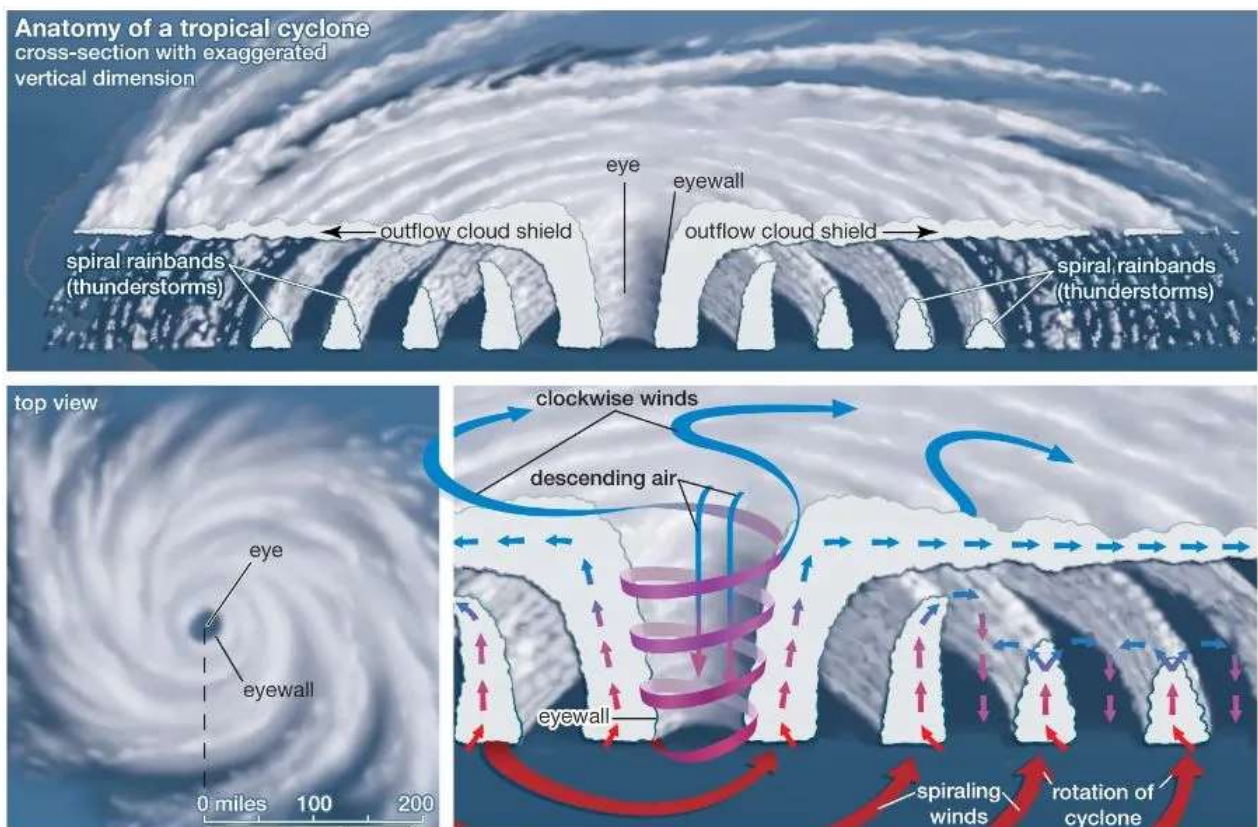
Type of Disturbances	Wind Speed in Km/h	Wind Speed in Knots
Low Pressure	Less than 31	Less than 17
Depression	31-49	17-27
Deep Depression	49-61	27-33
Cyclonic Storm	61-88	33-47
Severe Cyclonic Storm	88-117	47-63
Super Cyclone	More than 221	More than 120

- **Worldwide terminology:** Cyclones are given many names in different regions of the world:
  - They are known as **typhoons** in the China Sea and Pacific Ocean; **hurricanes** in the West Indian islands in the Caribbean Sea and Atlantic Ocean; **tornados** in the Guinea lands of West Africa and southern USA.; **willy-willies** in north-western Australia and **tropical cyclones** in the Indian Ocean.

How a Cyclone is formed?

- **Conditions:** Cyclones typically form over **warm ocean waters**, the warmth provides the necessary **heat and moisture** to fuel the cyclone.

- o Warm water causes the ocean to **evaporate**, creating warm, moist air. This moist air rises from the ocean surface, leading to a **decrease in air pressure at the surface.**

- **Formation of a Low-Pressure System:** When the air rises up and away from the ocean surface, it creates an **area of lower air pressure below.**

  - o It causes the air from surrounding areas with higher pressure to move towards the low-pressure area which further leads to **warming up of the air and causes it to rise above.**

- **Cyclonic Circulation:** The rotation of the Earth (Coriolis effect) causes the rising air to start spinning around the low-pressure center. This spinning motion leads to the development of cyclonic circulation.

- **As the wind system rotates with increasing speed, an eye gets formed in the middle.**

  - o The centre of a cyclone is very calm and clear with very low air pressure. The difference of temperature between the warm, rising and the cooler environment causes the air to rise and become buoyant.

- **Dissipation:** A cyclone will eventually weaken and dissipate when it moves over cooler waters, encounters dry air, or interacts with land, which disrupts the system's supply of warm, moist air.

Nomenclature

- The names are maintained and updated by an **international committee of the World Meteorological Organization.**

- Cyclones in the North Indian Ocean region are named by the **regional specialized meteorological centers (RSMCs)** in India, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Oman, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka.
  - Each country contributes names to a list used on a **rotating basis.**
- The primary reason for naming cyclones is to **make communication easier and more efficient.**

India Meteorological Department (IMD)
It was established in 1875. It is the principal government agency in all matters relating to meteorology and allied subjects.It is under the Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES).

Electronic Tracking of Undertrials on Bail

Context

- President Droupadi Murmu released a report titled **"Prisons in India: Mapping Prison Manuals and Measures for Reformation and Decongestion".**
  - It suggested a variety of measures to **address overcrowding in prisons,** including a section titled **"Electronic Tracking of Prisoners".**

About

- According to the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), prisons in India suffer from significant overpopulation with a **131.4% occupancy rate in 2022.**
- In addition, **75.8% of prisoners in India are undertrials.**
- The electronic monitoring could prove to be a **cost-effective method to decongest jails in India.**

Advantages of Electronic Tracking of Undertrial Prisoners

- **Reduction in Overcrowding:** By allowing low and moderate-risk undertrials to be monitored electronically, prisons can free up space.
- **Cost-Effective:** It reduces the need for additional prison infrastructure and the associated costs of housing and feeding inmates.
- **Protection of Rights:** Undertrials are presumed innocent until proven guilty. Electronic tracking ensures that their rights are respected by allowing them to stay at home or in a less restrictive environment while still being monitored.
- **Improved Rehabilitation:** Undertrials who are released with electronic tracking can continue their education, work, and maintain family ties, which are crucial for their rehabilitation and reintegration into society.
- **Efficient Monitoring:** Electronic devices such as GPS trackers allow for continuous and real-time monitoring of undertrials, ensuring compliance with bail conditions and reducing the risk of flight.

Challenges

- **Privacy Issues:** Constant surveillance through electronic devices raises concerns about the violation of personal privacy.
- **Technical Challenges:** Issues such as device malfunctions, signal loss, and tampering can undermine the system's effectiveness.
- **Stigmatisation:** There is also the possibility of stigma that comes with visible ankle or bracelet devices.

- o Some individuals may resist wearing tracking devices due to concerns about social stigma or a perception of invasive surveillance.

Way Ahead

- **The 268th Law Commission report** acknowledges the grave and significant impact on constitutional rights that such a measure might have.
  - o It suggests that such monitoring must be used only in grave and heinous crimes, where the accused person has a prior conviction in similar offences and states that criminal legislations should be amended accordingly.
- There is a need for careful planning, adequate resources, and legal safeguards to ensure that electronic tracking systems are implemented effectively and ethically in India.

59th All India Conference of Director Generals/ Inspector Generals of Police

Context

- Recently, the Prime Minister of India attended the **'59th All India Conference of Director Generals/ Inspector Generals of Police'**, held in Bhubaneswar, **Odisha** to discuss and deliberate on national security issues and policing strategies.

Key Highlights of the Conference

- **National Security Discussions:** The conference included in-depth discussions on various national security issues, including *counter-terrorism, left-wing extremism, coastal security, economic security, immigration, and narco-trafficking.*
  - These aimed to develop effective counter-strategies and enhance the overall security framework of the country.
- **SMART Policing Initiative:** The Prime Minister has expanded on the concept of SMART policing, urging the police force to become more *Strategic, Meticulous, Adaptable, Reliable, and Transparent.*
  - He emphasized the need for modernization and realignment with the **vision of 'Viksit Bharat' (Developed India).**
- **Technological Integration:** The conference highlighted the importance of leveraging technology to tackle *challenges such as digital fraud, cyber-crimes*, and the potential *threats posed by AI, including deep fakes*.
  - It called for the police to harness **India's dual strengths in Artificial Intelligence and 'Aspirational India'** to turn these challenges into opportunities.
- **Urban Policing Initiatives:** The Prime Minister appreciated the initiatives taken in urban policing and suggested that these be **implemented comprehensively in 100 cities across the country.**
  - He stressed the importance of using technology to reduce the workload of constables and making police stations the focal point for resource allocation.
- **Police Hackathons:** PM Modi proposed the idea of **organizing National Police Hackathons** to solve key problems through innovative solutions.

Needs For Police Reform in India

- In India, police and public order are designated as **State Subjects under the Seventh Schedule** of the Constitution.
  - It means that it is **primarily the responsibility of state governments** to maintain law and order, prevent and investigate crimes, and prosecute offenders.

- The need for a more efficient, transparent, and accountable police force has been recognised by various stakeholders, including the government, judiciary, and civil society.

Key Concerns/Challenges With the Current Policing in India

- **Inadequate Infrastructure and Resources:** Many police stations across the country are under-equipped, lacking basic facilities and modern technology.
    - It hampers the efficiency and effectiveness of police operations.
- **Training and Modernization**: With the rise of cybercrime, terrorism, and other sophisticated criminal activities, the police need to be equipped with modern tools and training to tackle these challenges.
    - However, the current training programs are often outdated and insufficient.
- **Technological Challenges:** While technology can aid in crime detection and prevention, the police force often lacks the necessary skills and resources to effectively utilize these technologies.
    - Cybersecurity threats, in particular, require specialized knowledge and tools.
- **Legal and Judicial Constraints:** Outdated laws and lengthy judicial processes can impede swift and effective law enforcement.
    - Reforms in the legal system are necessary to support the police in their duties.
- **Understaffing and Overburdening:** According to recent reports, the police-to-population ratio in India is **far below the United Nations recommended standard.**
    - It leads to overburdening of the existing personnel, affecting their performance and morale.
- **Political Interference:** It undermines the autonomy of the police force and often leads to biased and ineffective law enforcement.
    - It can also result in the misuse of police for political gains.
- **Corruption:** It erodes public trust and confidence in the police, making it difficult for them to perform their duties effectively.
    - Efforts to combat corruption within the force have been ongoing, but significant challenges remain.
- **Human Rights Violations:** Instances of human rights violations by the police have been reported, which tarnish the image of the police force and lead to public outcry.
    - Ensuring accountability and adherence to human rights standards is essential for improving the relationship between the police and the community.

Key Policy Recommendations

- **National Police Commission Recommendations (1978-82):** These have made significant recommendations for police reforms which include measures to *depoliticize the police force, improve accountability, and enhance the working conditions of police personnel.*

- **Padmanabhaiah Committee (2000):** It focused on **restructuring** the police force. It recommended *modernizing police infrastructure, improving training programs, and enhancing the recruitment process.*

- **Malimath Committee (2002-03):** This committee **on criminal justice system** reforms suggested measures to improve the efficiency of the police and the judiciary.

  o It emphasized the need for better investigation techniques and coordination between different law enforcement agencies.

- **Ribeiro Committee (1998):** Formed on the **directions of the Supreme Court**, it **reviewed the implementation of previous recommendations** and suggested ways to expedite police reforms.

- **Mooshahary Committee:** It reviewed the recommendations of the National Police Commission and other committees, focusing on their implementation and suggesting further improvements.

Supreme Court of India on Prakash Singh Case (2006)

- **State Security Commissions (SSC):** Establish SSCs to lay down broad policy guidelines and evaluate the performance of the state police.

- **Fixed Tenure and Merit-Based Selection:** Ensure a minimum tenure of two years for the DGP and other key police officers, with a transparent and merit-based selection process.

- **Separation of Functions:** Separate the investigation and law and order functions of the police to improve efficiency and accountability.

- **Police Establishment Boards:** Set up boards to decide on transfers, postings, promotions, and other service-related matters of police officers.

- **Police Complaints Authority:** Create authorities at the district and state levels to inquire into public complaints against police officers.

- **National Security Commission:** Form a commission at the union level to prepare panels for the selection and placement of Chiefs of Central Police Organisations (CPOs) with a minimum tenure of two years.

Other Related Steps

- **Criminal Justice System Reforms:** It involves updating outdated laws, improving investigation techniques, and ensuring better coordination between different agencies.

- **Community Policing:** Initiatives to promote community policing are being encouraged to build trust between the police and the public.
  - o It focuses on involving the community in maintaining law and order and addressing local issues collaboratively.
- **Training and Capacity Building:** Continuous training and capacity-building programs are being implemented to ensure that police personnel are well-equipped to handle modern-day challenges.
  - o It includes specialized training in cybercrime, human trafficking, and other emerging threats.

Conclusion

- The 59th All India Conference of Director Generals/ Inspector Generals of Police provided a valuable opportunity for senior police officials to share their perspectives and suggestions on critical policing and internal security matters.
- PM's participation and his emphasis on SMART policing, technological integration, and innovative solutions underscored the government's commitment to enhancing the capabilities and professionalism of the Indian police force.