

**The Hindu Important News Articles & Editorial For UPSC CSE**

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The National Film Awards for 2022 were announced on Friday, with films like Aattam, Kantara, and PS-1 dominating major categories.

➔ The awards recognized outstanding performances, technical excellence, and creative achievements across languages, highlighting the diversity and richness of Indian cinema.

## ***Aattam* top film, *Kantara's* Rishab the best actor as regional movies steal the show at National Film Awards**

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI

The National Film Awards for 2022, announced on Friday, was dominated by regional movies, with *Aattam* (The Play) in Malayalam being adjudged the Best Feature Film. Rishab Shetty won the Best Actor award for his role in *Kantara* (Kannada), and Nithya Menen and Manasi Parekh shared the Best Actress award for *Thiruchitrabalam* (Tamil) and *Kutch Express* (Gujarati) respectively.

*Aattam* was also declared the best in the editing (Mahesh Bhuvanend)

category and for screenplay (Anand Ekarshi) jointly with Hindi film *Gulmohar* (Arpita Mukherjee and Rahul V. Chittella); *Kantara* also won the award for the Best Popular Film Providing Wholesome Entertainment.

The Best Choreography award went to Jani Master and Sathish Krishnan for their work in *Thiruchitrabalam*.

The award for Best Direction went to Sooraj R. Barjatya for *Uunchai: Zenith* (Hindi). Pavan Raj Malhotra won the Best Supporting Actor award for *Fouja* (Haryanvi) and Neena Gupta won the Best



Malayalam film *Aattam*, directed by Anand Ekarshi, won the Best Film, Best Editing and Best Screenplay awards.

Supporting Actress award for *Uunchai: Zenith* in the feature films category.

*Fouja* was also adjudged the best in the debut film category.

*Gulmohar* got the Best

Hindi Film award as well, while Niki Joshi won the Best Costume Designer award for *Kutch Express*.

The Best Production Design award went to Ananda Addhya for *Aparajito: The*

*Undefeated* (Bengali), which also got the award for best make-up (Somnath Kundu). The Best Lyrics award went to Naushad Sadar Khan for his work in *Fouja*.

**Multiple awards for PS-1** A.R. Rahman won the award for Best Music Director (background music) for Mani Ratnam's *Ponnyin Selvan-Part 1* (Tamil), which was also selected as the best Tamil film and won awards for the Best Cinematography (Ravi Varman) and the Best Sound Design (Anand Krishnamoorthi).

Pritam won the Best

Music Director (songs) award and Arijit Singh was adjudged the Best Male Playback Singer for the song, "Kesariya", both for *Brahmastra-Part 1: Shiva*.

The Best Female Playback Singer award went to Padma Shri awardee Bombay Jayashri for "Chaayum Veyil", a song in *Saudi Vel-laka CC 225/2009*, which also won the award for the Best Malayalam Film.

*Brahmastra-Part 1: Shiva* has been adjudged the best film in the Animation, Visual Effects, Gaming & Comic category.

*Ayena: Mirror* (Hindu/Urdu) bagged the award for Best Non-Feature Film.

### **About the news:**

- ➔ The National Film Awards for 2022 highlighted the success of regional films, with Malayalam film *Aattam* winning Best Feature Film.
- ➔ Rishab Shetty won Best Actor for *Kantara* (Kannada), while Nithya Menen and Manasi Parekh shared Best Actress for *Thiruchitrabalam* (Tamil) and *Kutch Express* (Gujarati).
- ➔ *Aattam* also won awards for Best Editing (Mahesh Bhuvanend) and Best Screenplay, shared with *Gulmohar* (Hindi).
- ➔ *Kantara* won Best Popular Film Providing Wholesome Entertainment.
- ➔ Best Direction was awarded to Sooraj R. Barjatya for *Uunchai: Zenith* (Hindi), which also earned Neena Gupta Best Supporting Actress.
- ➔ *Fouja* (Haryanvi) won Best Supporting Actor (Pavan Raj Malhotra) and Best Debut Film.
- ➔ PS-1 won multiple awards, including Best Music Director (A.R. Rahman), Best Cinematography, and Best Sound Design.
- ➔ ***Brahmastra-Part 1***: Shiva won Best Music Director (Pritam) and Best Male Playback Singer (Arijit Singh).
- ➔ ***Ayena***: Mirror won Best Non-Feature Film.

### **National Film Awards**

## Daily News Analysis

- National Film Awards are among the most prestigious film awards in India, established in 1954 by the Government of India.
- Organised by the Directorate of Film Festivals, under the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting.
- Categories include feature films, non-feature films, and best writing on cinema, with awards given at the national level.
- Golden Lotus (Swarna Kamal) and Silver Lotus (Rajat Kamal) are the main awards.
- Dadasaheb Phalke Award is the highest honour, recognizing lifetime contribution to Indian cinema.
- **Objective:** To encourage the production of films of aesthetic and technical excellence and social relevance.
- **Jury:** Independent juries consisting of eminent filmmakers and critics.
- **Diverse Awards:** Include Best Film, Best Actor, Best Actress, Best Director, Best Music Director, and many regional language awards.

### UPSC Prelims PYQ : 2021

**Ques : Consider the following statements in respect of Bharat Ratna and Padma Awards:**

1. Bharat Ratna and Padma awards are titles under the Article 18 (1) of the Constitution of India.
2. Padma Awards, which were instituted in the year 1954, were suspended only once.
3. The number of Bharat Ratna Awards is restricted to a maximum of five in a particular year.

**Which of the above statements are not correct?**

- a) 1 and 2 only
- b) 2 and 3 only
- c) 1 and 3 only
- d) 1, 2 and 3

**Ans: d)**



**Page 02 : GS 3 : Environment – Environmental pollution and degradation**

The Aravali range faces severe threats from illegal mining, deforestation, and encroachments, causing environmental degradation and loss of biodiversity.

- Recent studies emphasise the need for urgent, sustainable measures, including LiDAR-based drone surveys and an independent development authority, to protect and restore this crucial ecological region.

**Illegal mining, encroachments, deforestation a threat to Aravali as natural green wall**

**Mohammed Iqbal**  
JAIPUR

The Aravali range that stretches from Gujarat to Delhi through Rajasthan, considered the natural green wall in the north-western part of the country, is facing a severe threat from illegal mining, deforestation, and human encroachments, which have led to environmental degradation as well as depletion of groundwater reserves in the region.

The destruction of the hills has also led to loss of vegetation and soil cover, upsetting the area's biodiversity, according to a scientific study on the land use dynamics of the Aravali range post-1975, published in the journal, *Earth Science Informatics*.

Rajasthan occupies 80% of the world's oldest hill range, while other States – Haryana, Delhi, and Gujarat – have 20% share in the terrain. With a length of 692 km and a width variation of 10 km to 120 km, Aravali forms an ecotone

zone between Thar desert and the Gangetic plain, in a semi-arid environment. The range comprises over 500 hillocks, and the altitude of its highest peak, Guru Shikhar in Mount Abu, is 1,722 metres.

The entire 'green wall' is threatened by illegal land encroachments in Haryana, illegal mining in Rajasthan, and illegal tourism and hotel construction work in southern Rajasthan and Gujarat.

Laxmi Kant Sharma, professor and head of the Department of Environmental Science at Central University of Rajasthan, presented the findings of the study towards the end of June, at the International Union of Forest Research Organisations (IUFRO) World Conference in Stockholm, Sweden. The conference witnessed the participation of over 4,200 scientists from 102 countries, and saw an exchange of ideas on climate change, loss of biodiversity, and environmental pollution.

Mr. Sharma said a series

of studies conducted by him, through the application of remote sensing techniques over the last 10 years, had found that in addition to a risk to the biodiversity of the area, the livelihood of communities dependent on the ecosystem of the Aravali range was under serious threat.

"Our discussions at the IUFRO conference underscored the urgency of implementing sustainable practices and policies to protect and restore the Aravalis," Mr. Sharma said, adding that the participants in the session addressed by him laid emphasis on getting global cooperation and ensuring strong local action to preserve the ancient hill range for future generations.

**Change in forest area**

Mr. Sharma said the Aravali range had recorded a change in the forest area significantly. From 1999 to 2019, the forest area decreased up to 0.9% of the total area, which is 75,572.8 sq. km. Until 1999,



**Significant loss:** A hill in the Aravali range damaged extensively by illegal mining. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

29,915 sq. km of the range was covered with dry deciduous forest. This was reduced to 29,210 sq. km in 2019, resulting in the disappearance of 705 sq. km area of the forest.

While human settlements constantly grew from 4.5% in 1975 to 13.3% in 2019, waterbodies – comprising 1.7% of the area in 1975 – increased to 1.9% in 1989, followed by their continuous reduction. On the other hand, the mining area increased continuously

ly from 1.8% in 1975 to 2.2% in 2019. Jaipur, Sikar, Alwar, Ajmer, Bhilwara, Chittorgarh, and Rajsamand districts have intensive mining activities.

The study recorded the enhanced vegetation index (EVI) to identify the condition of biomass, while noticing its least value of zero to minus 0.2 in the upper central Aravali region, falling in Nagaur district. The EVI is a spatial tool in remote sensing that can be used to estimate the bio-

mass and carbon sequestration potential of forests. It is also used to monitor the health of forests over large areas by detecting changes in vegetation.

**High rates of carbon flux**

Regions in upper and lower Aravali range had high positive rates of carbon flux as they received high rainfall and had protected areas. In contrast, areas with a negative rate of carbon flux in the main middle range are near Thar desert. Carbon flux refers to the amount exchanged between carbon stocks over a specified time, as it records the movement of carbon between land, oceans, atmosphere, and living beings.

The study noted that the presence of two wildlife sanctuaries, Todgarh-Raoli and Kumbhalgarh, in the central Aravali range had a positive impact on the ecosystem zone with minimum forest depletion. It determined waterbodies, dense forests, open forests, agricultural land, and

barren land as resilience indicators. The study, which was conducted for the entire Aravali range, found that its southern part was greener than the middle and upper parts because of the presence of more protected regions and less populated areas with minimum chances of anthropogenic disturbances. The height of the Aravali peaks, comprising Mount Abu, is maximum in this region.

According to the study, the forest area of the central range decreased by 32%, along with a significant increase in land under cultivation between 1975 and 2019. Most of the central area had the least self-recovery in nature.

**Drone survey**

"The Aravali range's significance for conserving biodiversity, human livelihoods, desertification protection, and ecosystem services is critical," Mr. Sharma said, while recommending a comprehensive light detection and ranging

(LiDAR)-based drone survey for the Aravali region. The LiDAR survey targets an object or a surface with laser and measures the time for the reflected light to return to the receiver.

The survey is widely used in remote sensing to examine the surface of the earth and its objects with 3D dimensions.

It will facilitate the identification and mitigation of illegal mining activities and enable authorities to take prompt enforcement actions to curb environmental degradation.

Mr. Sharma said the establishment of an independent Aravali Development Authority, comprising experts from diverse fields, would help devise and implement strategies for the sustainable preservation of the hill ecosystem.

Besides, a ban on all forms of mining within the Aravali region would safeguard the remaining hills from further depletion and exploitation and preserve their ecological balance and biodiversity.

**Geographic and Ecological Details Of Aravali Range**

- The Aravali range spans 692 km and varies in width from 10 km to 120 km, encompassing over 500 hillocks.
- It forms an ecotone zone between the Thar Desert and the Gangetic Plain, with its highest peak, Guru Shikhar, reaching 1,722 meters.
- Rajasthan covers 80% of the Aravali range, while Haryana, Delhi, and Gujarat cover the remaining 20%.

**Change in Forest Area and High Rates of Carbon Influx:**

- Reduction of forest cover:** The Aravali range has experienced a significant reduction in forest cover, with a 0.9% decrease from 1999 to 2019. The forest area decreased from 29,915 sq km in 1999 to 29,210 sq km in 2019.
- Increased Human settlement and reduced water bodies:** Human settlements in the region increased from 4.5% in 1975 to 13.3% in 2019, while waterbodies initially increased and then began to reduce over time.

## Daily News Analysis

- **Expansion of mining activities:** Mining activities have expanded, particularly in districts like Jaipur, Sikar, Alwar, Ajmer, Bhilwara, Chittorgarh, and Rajsamand.
- **High rate of carbon influx:** The study identified regions in the upper and lower Aravalli range with high positive rates of carbon flux due to high rainfall and protected areas. In contrast, areas near the Thar Desert in the main middle range showed negative rates of carbon flux, indicating a decline in carbon sequestration.

### How Drone Survey Can Help:

- **Use of LiDAR technology:** A comprehensive drone survey using Light Detection and Ranging (LiDAR) technology is recommended to assess the Aravalli region's surface and objects in 3D dimensions.
  - The LiDAR survey can help identify and mitigate illegal mining activities by providing detailed information on the surface structure which will allow authorities to take prompt enforcement actions.
- **Establishment of Independent Body:** The establishment of an independent Aravali Development Authority, including experts from various fields, is suggested to devise and implement strategies for the sustainable preservation of the hill ecosystem.

### Steps taken:

- The Indian government has enacted various legal measures to protect the Aravalli Range.
- In 1992, parts of the hills were designated as Ecologically Sensitive Areas, and in 2003, the central government prohibited mining operations in these regions.
- The Supreme Court of India further reinforced these protections by banning mining in notified areas of the Aravalli Range in 2004 and extending this ban in 2009 to cover 448 km<sup>2</sup> across Haryana's Faridabad, Gurgaon, and Mewat districts.

### Conclusion:

- Need to engage local communities in conservation efforts and promote sustainable land-use practices.
- Establish the proposed Aravali Development Authority to coordinate and implement long-term strategies for ecological restoration and biodiversity preservation.

## UPSC Mains PYQ : 2021

**Ques : Briefly mention the alignment of major mountain ranges of the world and explain their impact on local weather conditions, with examples.**

ISRO's successful launch of the EOS-08 satellite using SSLV-D3 marks a significant achievement in Earth observation technology.

- ➔ The satellite, equipped with advanced payloads and technologies, will enhance capabilities in infrared imaging and GNSS-R-based remote sensing.
- ➔ It will contribute to various applications including environmental monitoring and disaster management.

### About the News

- ➔ ISRO successfully completed the third and final developmental flight of its SSLV, marking the vehicle's readiness for commercial launches and opening the door for industry-led manufacturing through technology transfer.
- ➔ The SSLV-D3 mission was launched from Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota.
- ➔ The mission placed two satellites—EOS-08, an earth observation satellite, and SR-0 Demosat—into a 475 km circular low-earth orbit.

### Manufacturing and launch of SSLV for commercial purposes

- ➔ ISRO is exploring two routes for the commercial launch of this vehicle.
- ➔ One is through NSIL, which will fund and realise the rockets required for commercial purposes, and the other is through technology transfer, which InSpace will handle.

### Payloads on SSLV-D3

- ➔ ISRO's EOS-08, the primary payload of the SSLV-D3 mission, is a 175-kg experimental satellite equipped with three new technologies.

## ISRO's SSLV-D3 successfully launches earth observation satellite EOS-08 into orbit

**Hemanth C.S.**  
BENGALURU

The Indian Space Research Organisation on Friday launched the EOS-08 Earth Observation Satellite on board the Small Satellite Launch Vehicle (SSLV-D3) from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre (SDSC) in Sriharikota. The SSLV-D3, in its final development flight, lifted off from the first launch pad of SDSC at 9.17 a.m.

Seventeen minutes later, the EOS-08 satellite was injected into a 475-km circular orbit as intended. "The third developmental flight of SSLV, the SSLV-D3 with the EOS-08 satellite, has been successfully accomplished. The rocket has placed the spacecraft in a very precise orbit as planned. I find that there are no deviations in the injection conditions. The current indication is that everything is perfect," ISRO Chairman S. Somanath said after the launch.

EOS-08 is a first-of-its-kind mission built on a standard ISRO's Microsat/IMS-1 bus with a suite of ad-



**Sky high:** ISRO's SSLV-D3 blasts off with Earth Observation Satellite EOS-08 in Sriharikota on Friday. PTI

vanced payloads for observation in the IR range, novel GNSS-R Payload and SiC UV dosimeter.

The satellite boasts a host of new technological developments in satellite mainframe systems like an Integrated Avionics system – Communication, Baseband, Storage and Positioning (CBSP) Package, Structural panel embedded with PCB, embedded battery, Micro-DGA (Dual Gimbal Antenna), M-PAA (Phased array antenna) and Flexible solar panel & Nano star sensor etc., for on-board Technology Demonstration. It carries three payloads, namely

Electro Optical Infrared Payload (EOIR), SAC, Global Navigation Satellite System – Reflectometry payload (GNSS-R), SAC and SiC UV Dosimeter, LEOS. The EOIR payload is to image in the Mid-Wave IR (MIR) band and long-wave IR (LWIR) band during day and night. GNSS-R payload is to demonstrate the capability of using GNSS-R-based remote sensing to derive applications like Ocean Surface Winds, soil moisture, cryosphere applications over the Himalayan region, flood detection, etc.

The spacecraft has a mission life of one year.



## Daily News Analysis

- The Electro-Optical Infrared Payload (EOIR) captures day and night images in mid-wave and long-wave infrared for various applications like surveillance, disaster and environmental monitoring, and fire detection.
- The Global Navigation Satellite System-Reflectometry (GNSS-R) payload demonstrates the use of reflected GPS signals for ocean wind analysis, soil moisture assessment, and flood detection.
- Additionally, the SiC UV Dosimeter payload will study UV radiation exposure on the crew module, aiding the Gaganyaan mission preparations.

### Second spaceport in Kulasekarapattinam

- Second rocket launchport of the ISRO is being developed at Kulasekarapattinam in coastal Tamil Nadu's Thoothukudi district.
- This will be extensively and exclusively used for commercial, on-demand, and small satellite launches in the future.
- The existing Sriharikota spaceport will handle launches to orbits that require the rocket to fly eastwards.

### What Is An Earth Observation Satellite?

- **Purpose:** Earth observation satellites monitor and gather data about the Earth's surface, atmosphere, and oceans for various applications, including weather forecasting, environmental monitoring, and disaster management.
- **Types:**
  - **Polar-Orbiting Satellites:** Circle the Earth from pole to pole, providing comprehensive data on global phenomena.
  - **Geostationary Satellites:** Remain fixed relative to a point on the Earth's equator, ideal for continuous weather monitoring and communication.
- **Key Missions:** India's Earth observation satellites, such as the RISAT, Cartosat, and Astrosat series, enhance the country's capabilities in monitoring and data collection.
- **Sensors:** Equipped with various sensors like optical, radar, and infrared, enabling detailed imaging and data collection.
- **Data Uses:** Provide vital data for weather forecasting, disaster management, resource mapping, and environmental monitoring, supporting various national initiatives.
- **International Collaboration:** Many countries and organisations share satellite data and collaborate on joint missions for broader insights.

**UPSC Prelims PYQ : 2018**

**Ques : With reference to India's satellite launch vehicles, consider the following statements:**

1. PSLVs launch the satellites useful for Earth resources monitoring whereas GSLVs are designed mainly to launch communication satellites.
2. Satellites launched by PSLV appear to remain permanently fixed in the same position in the sky, as viewed from a particular location on Earth.
3. GSLV Mk III is a four-stage launch vehicle with the first and third stages using solid rocket motors; and the second and fourth stages using liquid rocket engines.

**Which of the statements given above is/are correct?**

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 and 3
- (c) 1 and 2
- (d) 3 only

**Ans: a)**



Union Minister of State for Agriculture launched Krishi-Decision Support System (Krishi-DSS) a geo-spatial platform to provide real-time information on crop conditions, weather patterns, water resources, and soil health.

- It has been developed by Union Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare and Department of Space using RISAT-1A and Visualization of Earth observation Data and Archival System (VEDAS) of the space department.

#### About Krishi-DSS:

- On August 16, 2024, the Indian government launched the Krishi-Decision Support System (DSS), a pioneering digital geospatial platform aimed at revolutionizing the agricultural sector.
- This platform is designed to assist in various agricultural activities such as:
  - digital crop surveys,
  - precise yield estimation,
  - crop damage assessment,
  - soil mapping,
  - processing weather-related data

#### Advantages of Krishi-DSS:

- The Krishi-DSS platform represents a significant shift from traditional methods like random sampling and visual assessments, which have been in use since the Mughal period.
- The new technology-based crop yield estimation system, YES-TECH, will provide more accurate and reliable data, ensuring better decision-making for farmers and stakeholders.

#### Comprehensive Data and Accessibility:

- Krishi-DSS will offer seamless access to a wide array of data, including satellite images, weather forecasts, reservoir levels, groundwater data, and soil health information.
- This data will be displayed on the Krishi Integrated Command and Control Centre (ICCC) at Krishi Bhawan, accessible to users across the country.

#### Support for Agri Stack Implementation:

- The launch of Krishi-DSS is a crucial step towards implementing Agri Stack, the Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) for agriculture, which will cover farmers and their land records.
- This initiative aligns with Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman's announcement in the 2023 Budget, emphasizing the importance of digital crop surveys and the DPI in agriculture.

#### Enhanced Agricultural Practices:

## Centre unveils new system to study weather, crop patterns

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI

The Union Agriculture Ministry launched a digital geo-spatial platform, Krishi-Decision Support System (DSS), here on Friday which will share real-time data-driven insights on weather patterns, soil conditions, crop health, crop acreage, and advisories with all stakeholders such as farmers, experts, and policymakers. The Ministry said the system was “a significant milestone” in the country’s agricultural innovation landscape.

The platform provides seamless access to comprehensive data, including satellite images, weather information, reservoir storage, groundwater levels, and soil health information.

“With crop mapping and monitoring, we will be able to understand cropping patterns by analysing parcel-level crop maps over different years. This helps in understanding crop rotation practices and promotes sustainable agriculture by encouraging the cultivation of diverse crops,” the Ministry said.

The platform can also be helpful in monitoring drought, it said.

## Daily News Analysis

- Krishi-DSS will support sustainable agriculture by promoting diverse crop cultivation through crop monitoring and mapping.
- It will also integrate various data sources to develop farmer-centric solutions, including early disaster warnings and individual advisories.

### Data Integration and Future Prospects:

- The platform will incorporate data from the FASAL 2.0 initiative, covering key crops like paddy, sugarcane, wheat, cotton, soybean, mustard, gram, lentil, and potato.
- This integration will enhance crop production forecasting, drought monitoring, and crop health assessments, ultimately contributing to better crop insurance solutions.

### Conclusion:

- Krishi-DSS marks a significant advancement in the use of technology in Indian agriculture, offering a comprehensive and accessible tool for improving farming practices and ensuring better outcomes for farmers across the country.

## UPSC Prelims PYQ : 2017

**Ques : Consider the following statements:**

**The nation-wide 'Soil Health Card Scheme' aims at**

1. Expanding the cultivable area under irrigation.
2. Enabling the banks to assess the quantum of loans to be granted to farmers on the basis of soil quality.
3. Checking the overuse of fertilizers in farmlands.

**Which of the above statements is/are correct?**

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 3 only
- (c) 2 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

**Ans: (b)**

## Species In News : *Gastrodia indica*

A unique orchid species- *Gastrodia indica* was recently discovered in Fambonglho Wildlife Sanctuary, Sikkim.



### About *Gastrodia indica*:

- It is the first orchid from India that never opens its flower.
- The orchid was found at an elevation of 1,950–2,100 metres above sea level.
- This is the first cleistogamous species of the genus *Gastrodia* discovered from India.
  - The *Gastrodia* genus is known for terrestrial, herbaceous, and holomycotrophic orchids.
  - Cleistogamous plants are highly specialized, as they do not depend on external pollinators like insects or wind for reproduction.
  - Holomycotrophic species like *Gastrodia indica* rely entirely on a fungal host for sustenance, lacking chlorophyll and drawing carbon from underground fungi.
- It is morphologically allied to *G. exilis* & *G. dyeriana* but critical examination revealed considerable differences in floral morphological characters.
- This new species thrives in dense, rotten leaf litter and is associated with trees such as *Magnolia doltsopa*, *Acer campbelli*, and *Quercus lamellose*.

## Daily News Analysis

- The discovery adds to India's botanical diversity, bringing the total number of Gastrodia species in the country to 10.
- **Threats:** Gastrodia indica faces potential threats due to its limited population and specific habitat requirements.

### UPSC Prelims Practice Question

**Ques : With reference to Orchid plants, consider the following statements:**

1. These plants are capable of growing in polluted air.
2. The highest number of orchid species is recorded from Arunachal Pradesh.
3. These are listed in Appendix I of Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES).

**Which of the statements given above is/are correct?**

- a) 1 and 2 only
- b) 2 only
- c) 1 and 3 only
- d) 2 and 3 only

**Ans: b)**



## Ensuring social justice in the bureaucracy

During his parliamentary address on July 29, 2024, the Leader of the Opposition, Rahul Gandhi, regretted that there were no Scheduled Caste (SC) or Scheduled Tribe (ST) officers among the 20 who assisted in framing 2024 Budget proposals. He said that there was only one officer from the minorities and another from the Other Backward Classes (OBC) category involved in the exercise. His purpose in doing so was to highlight that those who originally belong to poor and deprived sections of society do not have a role in the framing of a crucial aspect of government's economic policy. He couched his assertions in colourful political language.

The Union Finance Minister also responded to Mr. Gandhi's charge by pointing to the absence of persons from these traditionally deprived backgrounds in the the Rajiv Gandhi Charitable Trust and the Rajiv Gandhi Foundation. A serious issue was converted into political tit for tat.

### Upper caste domination continues

These political charges and counter-charges missed the real reason for the absence of SC/ST officers in the Budget-making exercise. The cause is the continuing domination of the so-called upper castes at senior levels of the civil service. This was evident from the answer by Minister of State Jitendra Singh to a parliamentary question on December 15, 2022.

This daily in a report carried the next day, quoted Mr. Singh as saying, "Out of a total of 322 officers currently holding the posts of Joint Secretaries and Secretaries under Central Staffing Scheme in different Ministries/Departments, 16, 13, 39 and 254 belong to SC, ST, Other Backward Classes (OBC) and General category, respectively."

Mr. Singh further clarified that the number of Secretary and Joint Secretary-level officers stood



**Vivek Katju**

a retired Indian  
Foreign Service officer

at 4% and 4.9%, respectively. Clearly, there is an absence of reserved category officers in sufficient numbers at policy suggestion levels in the government. Unless this situation is remedied, Rahul Gandhi displaying photographs will only remain empty political gestures, for there is no reservation for promotions in Class A services.

In order to increase the representation of SC and ST officers at the senior-most positions in government, a complete departure from the traditional concept of the age of retirement would be necessary. This writer had advocated a new approach to retirement in an article in these columns in September 2012. If the Leader of the Opposition is truly interested in ensuring social justice in the civil services, he should, at least, ponder over the ideas presented in the subsequent paragraphs.

### Eligibility and age factor

General category candidates between the ages of 21 and 32 years are currently eligible to appear for the civil services examination. They are allowed six attempts in all. SC/ST candidates are permitted to take the examination till the age of 37 years and there is no restriction on their number of chances. For OBC candidates, the upper age limit is 35 years and they are allowed nine attempts. The upper age limit for Persons with Benchmark Disabilities (PwBD) is 42 years. They have unlimited chances if they are SC/ST and nine if they are from other categories.

This means that SC/ST and PwBD candidates, irrespective of how well they perform as civil servants, are unable to reach the top because they generally join late and retire before reaching the top. They have to retire at lower or middle levels. This is the obvious implication of Jitendra Singh's answer. The fact is that the civil service is

a race in which those who join at a young age remain around to reach the top even if their performance is not as good as those who join later. This is simply because of the age factor. Logically, the government's focus should be on the official's efficiency and competence and not on when he/she made it to the civil services within the prescribed age limits.

If this proposition is accepted, it follows that the present retirement pattern should yield to a fixed tenure of years for every entrant to the civil service, irrespective of his age of entry within the prescribed limits. A possible fixed tenure could be 35 years.

If it is considered that persons should not be working in their seventies, then the present age limits can be lowered to ensure that all candidates would retire by the time they reach around 67 years of age. The average age of men and women is rising in India. Besides, stringent medical fitness examinations can be conducted annually after the age of 62. This age is being mentioned because even today, some officers' tenures take them to this age. Indeed, some persons who are holding responsible positions today, after their retirement from government service, are well into their seventies.

### Have a committee

It is only if a fixed tenure is prescribed for all officers, irrespective of their age of entry, that SC/ST and OBC officers in larger numbers will fill the senior-most positions in government. That will contribute to a dream of *Viksit Bharat*, with social justice for all. As a beginning, the Leader of the Opposition should press for an independent and multi-disciplinary committee with adequate SC/ST, OBC and PwBD representation to examine this proposal with an open mind.

The solution lies in having a fixed tenure, irrespective of age of entry

## GS Paper 02 : Governance: Transparency & Accountability, Citizens Charters

**(UPSC CSE (M) GS-1 : 2017)** What are the two major legal initiatives by the state since Independence, addressing discrimination against Scheduled Tribes (ST)? (150 words/10m)

**Practice Question :** Discuss the implications of underrepresentation of SC/ST officers in the formulation of government policies, with reference to the 2024 Budget framing process. How does this affect social justice and inclusive governance in India? (150 w/10m)

### Context :

- ▶ The issue revolves around the lack of representation of Scheduled Caste (SC) and Scheduled Tribe (ST) officers in the 2024 Budget framing process, highlighted by Rahul Gandhi in Parliament.
- ▶ The debate underscores ongoing concerns about the underrepresentation of marginalised communities in senior government roles and the broader implications for social justice.

### Introduction

- ▶ In his July 29, 2024, parliamentary address, Rahul Gandhi raised concerns over the lack of SC/ST representation in the 2024 Budget framing, highlighting the underrepresentation of marginalised communities in key government roles.
- ▶ The Union Finance Minister countered by pointing out similar exclusions in Gandhi-associated organisations, shifting the focus from the serious issue of underrepresentation in senior civil service positions to a political exchange.

### Issue of Upper Caste Domination in Services:

- ▶ **Lack of Representation:** During his parliamentary address, the Leader of the opposition (Rahul Gandhi) highlighted the absence of Scheduled Caste (SC) and Scheduled Tribe (ST) officers among the 20 officials involved in framing the 2024 Budget proposals.
  - He pointed out that only one officer from the minorities and one from the Other Backward Classes (OBC) were included, underscoring a systemic lack of representation for marginalized communities in key government functions.
- ▶ **Upper Caste Dominance:** The dominance of upper castes in senior civil service positions was confirmed by Minister of State (Jitendra Singh), who stated that out of 322 officers holding Joint Secretary and Secretary posts, 254 belonged to the general category, while only 16 were from SC, 13 from ST, and 39 from OBC categories.
  - This indicates a significant underrepresentation of SC/ST officers in policy-making roles.

### Challenges Due to Age Factor and Retirement Rules

- ▶ SC/ST and PwBD candidates often enter the civil services later than their general category counterparts, limiting their ability to reach senior positions before retirement.
- ▶ The current eligibility and retirement structure inadvertently favours those who join early, regardless of performance, leading to a systemic disadvantage for those from reserved categories.
- ▶ The current retirement age means that many SC/ST and PwBD officers retire at lower or middle levels, never reaching top positions despite their qualifications and potential.

### Proposal for Fixed Tenure System

- ▶ There is a need for radical change in retirement rules to address this issue: a fixed tenure of 35 years for all civil servants, irrespective of their age of entry, ensuring that late entrants have equal opportunities to reach senior positions.

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- If working into the seventies is deemed inappropriate, the entry age limits could be adjusted to ensure retirement by around 67 years of age.
- Annual medical fitness exams after the age of 62 could be implemented to ensure that civil servants remain fit to serve.

### Call for a Committee to Address the Issue

- To realise a Viksit Bharat (Developed India) with social justice for all, it is crucial to address the underrepresentation of SC/ST and OBC officers in senior civil service roles.
- As a first step, it is proposed that the Leader of the Opposition should advocate for an independent, multi-disciplinary committee with adequate representation from SC/ST, OBC, and PwBD communities to examine the feasibility of a fixed tenure system.
- This committee should approach the issue with an open mind and work towards ensuring equal opportunities in the civil services.

### About Eligibility:

- **Age Limits:** General category candidates can appear for the civil services examination between 21 and 32 years, with a maximum of six attempts.
- SC/ST candidates can take the exam until 37 years of age with unlimited attempts.
- While OBC candidates have an upper age limit of 35 years with nine attempts.
- The upper age limit for Persons with Benchmark Disabilities (PwBD) is 42 years.

### Constitutional Provisions Governing Reservation in India

- Part XVI deals with reservation of SC and ST in Central and State legislatures.
- Article 15(4) and 16(4) of the Constitution enabled the State and Central Governments to reserve seats in government services for the members of the SC and ST.
- The Constitution was amended by the Constitution (77th Amendment) Act, 1995 and a new clause (4A) was inserted in Article 16 to enable the government to provide reservation in promotion.
- Later, clause (4A) was modified by the Constitution (85th Amendment) Act, 2001 to provide consequential seniority to SC and ST candidates promoted by giving reservation.
- Constitutional 81st Amendment Act, 2000 inserted Article 16 (4 B) which enables the state to fill the unfilled vacancies of a year which are reserved for SCs/STs in the succeeding year, thereby nullifying the ceiling of fifty percent reservation on total number of vacancies of that year.
- Article 330 and 332 provides for specific representation through reservation of seats for SCs and STs in the Parliament and in the State Legislative Assemblies respectively.
- Article 243D provides reservation of seats for SCs and STs in every Panchayat.
- Article 233T provides reservation of seats for SCs and STs in every Municipality.
- Article 335 of the constitution says that the claims of SCs and STs shall be taken into consideration constitutently with the maintenance of efficacy of the administration.

### Mandal Commission



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- In exercise of the powers conferred by Article 340 of the Constitution, the President appointed a backward class commission in December 1978 under the chairmanship of B. P. Mandal.
- The commission was formed to determine the criteria for defining India's "socially and educationally backward classes" and to recommend steps to be taken for the advancement of those classes.
- The Mandal Commission concluded that India's population consisted of approximately 52 percent OBCs, therefore 27% government jobs should be reserved for them.
- The commission has developed eleven indicators of social, educational, and economic backwardness.
- Apart from identifying backward classes among Hindus, the Commission has also identified backward classes among non-Hindus (e.g., Muslims, Sikhs, Christians, and Buddhists).
- It has generated an all-India other backward classes (OBC) list of 3,743 castes and a more underprivileged "depressed backward classes" list of 2,108 castes.

### Judicial Scrutiny of Reservation

- The State of Madras v. Smt. Champakam Dorairajan (1951) case was the first major verdict of the Supreme Court on the issue of Reservation. The case led to the First amendment in the constitution.
- The Supreme Court in the case pointed out that while in the case of employment under the State, Article 16(4) provides for reservations in favour of backward class of citizens, no such provision was made in Article 15.
- Pursuant to the Supreme Court's order in the case the Parliament amended Article 15 by inserting Clause (4).
- In Indra Sawhney v. Union of India (1992) case the court examined the scope and extent of Article 16(4).
- The Court has said that the creamy layer of OBCs should be excluded from the list of beneficiaries of reservation, there should not be reservation in promotions; and total reserved quota should not exceed 50%.
- The Parliament responded by enacting 77th Constitutional Amendment Act which introduced Article 16(4A).
- The article confers power on the state to reserve seats in favour of SC and ST in promotions in Public Services if the communities are not adequately represented in public employment.
- The Supreme Court in M. Nagaraj v. Union Of India 2006 case while upholding the constitutional validity of Art 16(4A) held that any such reservation policy in order to be constitutionally valid shall satisfy the following three constitutional requirements:
  - The SC and ST community should be socially and educationally backward.
  - The SC and ST communities are not adequately represented in Public employment.
  - Such reservation policy shall not affect the overall efficiency in the administration.
- In Jarnail Singh vs Lachhmi Narain Gupta case of 2018, Supreme Court holds that reservation in promotions does not require the state to collect quantifiable data on the backwardness of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes.



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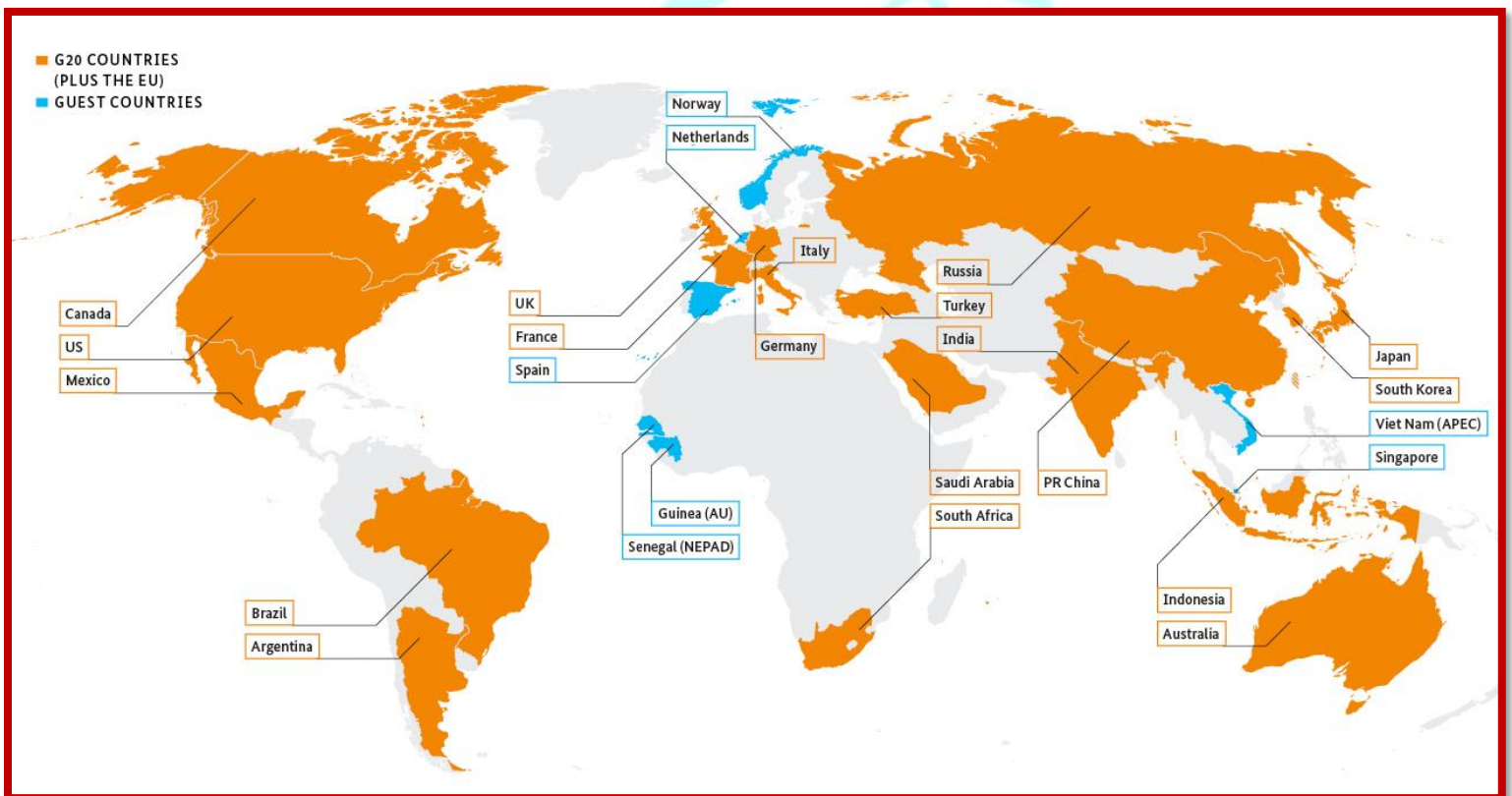
- The Court held that creamy layer exclusion extends to SC/STs and, hence the State cannot grant reservations in promotion to SC/ST individuals who belong to the creamy layer of their community.
- In May 2019 the Supreme Court upheld the Karnataka law that allows reservations in promotions for SCs and STs with consequential seniority.

### Why reservation needed?

- To correct the historical injustice faced by backward castes in the country.
- To provide a level playing field for backward section as they can not compete with those who have had the access of resources and means for centuries.
- To ensure adequate representation of backward classes in the services under the State.
- For advancement of backward classes.
- To ensure equality as basis of meritocracy i.e all people must be brought to the same level before judging them on the basis of merit.

**G 20**

- The G20 is an informal group of 19 countries and the European Union, with representatives of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.
- The G20 membership comprises a mix of the world's largest advanced and emerging economies, representing about two-thirds of the world's population, 85% of global gross domestic product, 80% of global investment and over 75% of global trade.



**Origin**

- **1997-1999 ASIAN Financial Crisis:** This was a ministerial-level forum which emerged after G7 invited both developed and developing economies. The finance ministers and central bank governors began meeting in 1999.
- Amid 2008 Financial Crisis the world saw the need for a new consensus building at the highest political level. It was decided that the G20 leaders would begin meeting once annually.

## Daily News Analysis

- ▶ To help prepare these summits, the G20 finance ministers and central bank governors continue to meet on their own twice a year. They meet at the same time as the International Monetary Fund and The World Bank.

### How G20 Works?

- ▶ The work of G20 is divided into two tracks:
  - The finance track comprises all meetings with G20 finance ministers and central bank governors and their deputies. Meeting several times throughout the year they focus on monetary and fiscal issues, financial regulations, etc.
  - The Sherpa track focuses on broader issues such as political engagement, anti-corruption, development, energy, etc.
    - Each G20 country is represented by its Sherpa; who plans, guides, implements, etc. on behalf of the leader of their respective country. (Indian Sherpa, at the G20 in Argentina, 2018 was Shri Shaktikanta Das)

### G20 Members

- ▶ The members of the G20 are Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Republic of Korea, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Turkey, the United Kingdom, the United States, and the European Union.
- ▶ Spain as a permanent, non-member invitee, also attends leader summits.