

NATIONAL VOTERS' DAY

Election Commission of India is celebrating 14th National Voters' Day (NVD) on 25th January 2024.



About National Voters' Day (NVD):

- It has been celebrated on **January 25** every year since **2011**, across the country to mark the foundation day of the Election Commission of India, i.e. 25th January 1950.
- **Purpose:** The main purpose of the NVD celebration is to create **electoral awareness** amongst citizens and encourage them to participate in the electoral process.
- Dedicated to the voters of the country, the National Voters' Day is also used to facilitate enrolment of voters, especially the newly eligible young voters.
- New voters are felicitated and handed over their **Elector Photo Identity Card (EPIC)** in the NVD functions held across the country.
- NVD is celebrated at the national, state, district, constituency and polling booth levels, which makes it one of the largest celebrations in the country.
- NVD 2024 theme - '**Nothing Like Voting, I Vote For sure**'
- On January 25, 2024, the Election Commission of India celebrates its **75th year of service** to the Nation.

Key facts about the Election Commission of India:

- It is an autonomous and **permanent constitutional body** responsible for organising free and fair elections in India.
- The Constitution grants the ECI with the power of **direction, superintendence**, and control of elections to Parliament, state legislatures, the office of president of India, and the office of vice-president of India.
- **Powers and responsibilities ECI:**
 - Determining the Electoral Constituencies' territorial areas throughout the country.

- Preparing and periodically revising electoral rolls and registering all eligible voters.
- **Notifying the schedules** and dates of elections and scrutinising nomination papers.
- **Granting recognition** to the various political parties and allocating them election symbols.
- The Commission also has **advisory jurisdiction** in the matter of post-election disqualification of sitting members of Parliament and State Legislatures.
- It issues the **Model Code of Conduct** in elections for political parties and candidates so that no one indulges in unfair practice or there is no arbitrary abuse of powers by those in power.
- **Composition:** The commission consists of a **Chief Election Commissioner (CEC)** and two Election Commissioners (ECs).

NATIONAL FINANCIAL REPORTING AUTHORITY (NFRA)

The National Financial Reporting Authority (NFRA) is going to inspect the Big Four audit firms as well as other top auditors of large listed entities in 2024.



About National Financial Reporting Authority (NFRA):

- It is a **statutory body** constituted under Section 132 of the **Companies Act, 2013**.
- It was established as an **independent authority** to **regulate the auditing profession and accounting standards** in India.
- Its goal is to enhance the country's financial statement quality and consistency and to guarantee that businesses and financial institutions report accurate and fair information.

Composition:

- The Companies Act requires the NFRA to have a **chairperson** who will be **appointed by the Central Government** and a **maximum of 15 members**.

The NFRA has the following responsibilities:

- **Make recommendations** on the foundation and laying down of accounting and auditing policies and standards;
- **Monitor and enforce the compliance** of the accounting standards and auditing standards;
- **Oversee the quality of service of the professionals** (such as auditors, CFOs, etc.) and suggest measures required for improvement in the quality of service;
- Perform other functions related to the above.
- **Powers:**
 - NFRA has the **power to investigate, either suo moto or on a reference** made to it by the Central Government, **into the matters** of professional or other **misconduct committed by any member or firm of chartered accountants** registered under the Chartered Accountants Act, 1949.
- **Jurisdiction of NFRA:**
 - The jurisdiction of the NFRA for the investigation of Chartered Accountants and their firms would extend to **listed companies and large unlisted public companies, the thresholds for which shall be prescribed** in the Rules.
 - The **Central Government can also refer** such other entities for investigation where **public interest would be involved**.
- **Head Office: New Delhi**

WHAT IS THE HALWA CEREMONY?

The Union Finance Minister participated in the 'Halwa Ceremony' recently, a tradition observed before the annual budget presentation.



About Halwa Ceremony:

- It is a tradition performed **every year ahead of the budget** and signifies

the **official initiation of the printing process** of various documents related to the budget.

- It involves the preparation of the traditional **dessert 'halwa'** in a massive kadhai (wok), which is then **served to all those who are directly associated with the budget-making process.**
 - The **finance minister gives the go-ahead** by stirring the kadhai and serving the sweet to officials.
 - It takes place in the **basement of the Finance Ministry's North Block in Central Delhi**, where a **special printing press is located.**
- It serves as a **formal 'send-off' for the ministry officials** and staff engaged in preparing the Union government's annual financial statement.
 - **Subsequently, the top officials** involved with the budget **enter a designated 'lock-in' period, isolating themselves** within the ministry premises and cutting off from their families to **preserve the confidentiality surrounding the final budget document.**
 - The **officials are required to stay** in the Finance Ministry **till the finance minister finally presents the budget.**

WHAT ARE SMART RINGS?

Smart rings are the tiny but mighty wearables which are useful in health tracking and more in a barely noticeable device.



About Smart Rings:

- These are tiny yet mighty, **smart rings that pack impressive technology** into a small ring-sized device.
- They can **monitor health stats**, control other devices, and much more, much like their bulkier smartwatch counterparts.
- Equipped with **advanced sensors**, smart rings track metrics including heart rate, blood oxygen levels, sleep quality, steps, and **even stress levels.**

- The data is then viewable on a connected smartphone app, allowing users to analyse trends and progress towards health goals.
- Beyond wellness tracking, some smart rings add convenience through features like **gesture controls and haptic feedback for notifications**.
 - For example, a simple flick of the finger lets you do things like dim smart lights or cue up a playlist. When a call or message comes in, a subtle buzz on the finger lets you know without having to grab your phone.

What can Smart rings do?

- The biggest perk offered by smart rings is their **constant health monitoring**, which is designed such that it requires barely any user intervention.
- It offers **personalised breathing exercises** and guided meditations to help users improve their mood.
- It has a convenient feature of **contactless payment**.
- Smart rings typically include gesture recognition, so you can perform gestures like twisting or tapping the ring to do things like turn off lights, adjust your thermostat, unlock doors, and more.
- For security, smart rings can also function as access badges, letting you unlock doors and gates with a simple touch of your finger.

THE EXPANSION OF BSF JURISDICTION

Border Security Force (BSF)

- **About**
 - It is one of the seven Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF) of India and was raised in December 1965.
 - It was raised in the wake of the 1965 War to ensure the security of the borders of India.

- It is the only CAPF which has its own Water Wing, Air Wing and other ancillary units.
- The Force Headquarters is in New Delhi.
- It works under the administrative control of Ministry of Home Affairs.
- Its operational responsibility is spread over 6,386.36 km of International Border with Pakistan and Bangladesh.
- **Operations:**
 - **Peace Time Role**
 - Prevent trans-border crimes, unauthorized entry into or exit from the territory of India.
 - **War Time Role**
 - Protection of vital installations particularly air-fields
 - **Overseas Deployment:**
 - BSF contributes its personnel every year for UN Missions.
 - It is handling the security issues on the famous Kartarpur Corridor.
 - **Other roles**
 - It is also deployed on Line of Control (LoC) in J&K under the Operational control of the Army.
 - At the time of natural disaster/calamities, BSF provides assistance in areas of deployment.
 - **Power to arrest, search and seize**
 - BSF is empowered to arrest, search and seize under a number of laws, such as the Criminal Procedure Code, the Passports Act 1967, the Passport (Entry into India) Act 1920, and the NDPS Act, to name a few.

Background: Expansion of the jurisdiction of BSF

- Earlier, the BSF could exercise its powers within 15 kilometres of the border in Punjab, West Bengal and Assam.

- Later, through a notification issued in October 2021, the Centre expanded this to within 50 kilometres of the border.
 - The notification states that, within this larger 50-kilometre jurisdiction, the BSF can only exercise powers under the Criminal Procedure Code, the Passport (Entry into India) Act and the Passports Act.
 - For other central legislations, the 15-km limit remains.

From which law the Centre draws its authority to take such step?

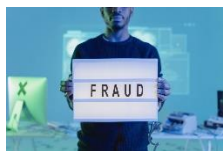
- Section 139 of the Border Security Force Act, 1968, empowers the Centre to notify the area and extent of border force's operational mandate.
- Using this act, Centre issues notification revising the 'Schedule' specifying the border stretch where BSF would have powers of search, seizure and arrest.

Need for such step

- To improve operational efficiency and crack down on smuggling rackets
- To counter the security challenges
- To make jurisdiction of BSF uniform across states

WHAT IS SECTION 420 OF THE INDIAN PENAL CODE (IPC)?

The Supreme Court recently held that while prosecuting a person for the offence of cheating under Section 420 of the IPC, it is to be seen whether the deceitful act of cheating was coupled with an inducement leading to the parting of any property by the complainant.



About Section 420 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC):

- Section 420 of the IPC, or IPC 420 as it is commonly known, deals with the act of cheating and dishonestly inducing the person deceived to deliver any property to any person, or to make, alter, or destroy the whole or any part of a valuable security, or anything which is signed or sealed and capable of being converted into a valuable security.

- **Section 415** of the IPC defines the offence of cheating. In simpler terms, cheating is a dishonest act performed in order to gain some advantage out of it.
- **Section 420** IPC is a serious form of cheating that includes inducement (to lead or move someone to happen) in terms of the delivery of property as well as valuable securities.
- This section is also applicable to matters where the destruction of property is caused by cheating or inducement.
- The person found guilty under this section shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term that may extend to seven years and shall also be liable to a fine.
- The offence is cognizable and non-bailable.
- The essential ingredients that go into the making of an offence under Section 420, IPC are:
 - That the representation made by the accused was false;
 - That the accused knew that the representation was false at the very time when he made it;
 - That the accused made the false representation with the dishonest intention of deceiving the person to whom it was made; and
 - That the accused thereby induced that person to deliver any property or to do or to omit to do something which he would otherwise not have done or omitted.

GRANTHAM INSCRIPTIONS

A team of archaeologists recently discovered two stone inscriptions of ‘Grantham’ and Tamil dating 11th and 16th centuries respectively at Pazhnchervazhi village near Kangayam.



About Grantham Inscriptions:

- Grantha is an important historical script that was once used to write Sanskrit throughout South East Asia and greater Tamil Nadu.

- The word Grantha denotes in Sanskrit ‘a literary work’. Evidently, the script used for writing the Sanskrit works obtained the same name.
- At one time, it was **prevalent throughout South India**.
- **When the Malayalam language began to freely borrow words as well as the rules of grammar from Sanskrit, this script was adopted for writing that language and was known as Arya Ezhuthu.**
- **Both Grantha and Tamil scripts appear alike in modern forms. The evolution of both scripts from Brahmi was also more or less similar.**
- **The development of the Grantha script in Tamil Nadu may be divided into four periods.** The archaic and ornamental, the transitional, the mediaeval, and the modern.
 - **Archaic and ornamental variety** is commonly known as **Pallava Grantha. Mahendravarman's Tiruchirapalli rock cut cave** and other cave temple inscriptions, **Narasimhan's Mamallapuram**, Kanchi Kailashnath, and Saluvankuppam temple inscriptions, Mutharaiyar's Senthalai inscriptions are examples of this variety.
 - The **transitional variety** of Grantha inscriptions roughly belong to three centuries **between 650 CE and 950 CE. Later Pallavas** (Nandivarman's Kasakudi, Udayendram plates, etc.) and **Pandyan Nedunjadaiyan's Anaimalai inscriptions** are examples of this.
 - The **mediaeval variety** dates from about **950 CE to 1250 CE. Inscriptions of the imperial Cholas** of Thanjavur are examples of this.
 - The **modern variety** belongs to the **later Pandyas and Vijayanagar periods**.
- It was popular in Tamil Nadu until the early 20th century.
- After the introduction of printing machines, **many Sanskrit books transcribed from palm leaves were printed in Grantha script.**
- **After Independence, the popularity of Hindi in Deva Nagari script influenced all printing works, and Grantha script went out of vogue.**