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WHAT IS SONIC BOOM?



- A sonic boom is a **thunderous noise** caused by an **object**, like an **aircraft**, moving **faster than the speed of sound**.

How is it Formed?

- As the **object zooms through the sky**, the **air molecules** around it are **pushed aside** with tremendous force, **generating shock waves** along its flight path.
- The **release of pressure**, following the shock waves' buildup, is **heard as the sonic boom**.
- Sonic booms **create huge amounts of sound energy**.

The **intensity** of the sonic boom is **determined** not only by the **distance** between the **craft and the ground** but also by the **size and shape** of the **aircraft**, the **types of maneuvers** that it makes, and the **atmospheric pressure, temperature, and winds**.

- A **larger and heavier aircraft** must displace more air and create more lift to sustain flight, compared with small, light aircraft.
 - Therefore, they create **sonic booms stronger and louder** than those of smaller, lighter aircraft.
 - The **larger and heavier the aircraft**, the **stronger the shock waves** will be.
 - Generally, the **higher the aircraft**, the greater the distance the shock wave must travel, **reducing the intensity of the sonic boom**.
 - **If the aircraft is especially long**, **double sonic booms** might be detected, **one emanating from the leading edge of the plane and one from the trailing edge**.
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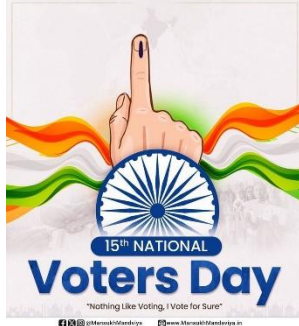
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NATIONAL VOTERS' DAY



- It is **observed on January 25th** across India every year since 2011 to commemorate the foundation day of the **Election Commission of India**.

- It is **celebrated to honour voters, encourage youth participation**, and strengthen democratic values, and promote universal adult suffrage.

- It **celebrates democracy** and empowers every citizen to take part in the electoral process.

Theme: The theme for National Voters' Day 2026 is "**My India, My Vote**" with a tagline of Citizen at the Heart of Indian Democracy.

- It is celebrated at the level of national, state, district, constituency, and polling booth. NVD stands as one of the country's most widespread and significant celebrations.
- It is **dedicated to the voters of the nation**.
- The National Voters' Day also promotes the enrolment of new voters, particularly young individuals who have recently become eligible.

GRANTH KUTIR



- It has a rich collection of **manuscripts and books in classical languages** of India which are Tamil, Sanskrit, Kannada, Telugu, Malayalam, Odia, Marathi, Pali, Prakrit, Assamese, and Bengali.

Aim: The aim of developing the Granth Kutir is to **enhance awareness** among the citizens regarding the rich cultural and literary heritage of India.



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- **Coverage:** The collection covers a wide range of subjects such as epics, philosophy, linguistics, history, governance, science, and devotional literature as well as the Constitution of India in these languages.
- It has been developed through **collaboration with Central Government, State Governments, universities, research institutions**, cultural organisations, and individual donors from across the country.
- It supports the **vision of Gyan Bharatam Mission**.
 - The Gyan Bharatam Mission is a **comprehensive national initiative** under the Ministry of Culture, Government of India, dedicated to the systematic survey, documentation, conservation, and **digitisation of India's vast manuscript heritage**.

WHAT ARE FOREVER CHEMICALS?



- Forever chemicals, or **PFAS (per- and poly- fluoroalkyl substances)**, are a large chemical family of thousands of **highly persistent, toxic, man-made, hazardous chemicals**.
- PFAS molecules have a **chain of linked carbon and fluorine atoms**. Because the **carbon-fluorine bond is one of the strongest**, these chemicals **do not degrade easily** in the environment.
- The name 'forever chemicals' comes from the fact that they **remain in the environment without breaking down for generations**, if ever.
- **In manufacturing**, PFAS are favoured for their **durability** and useful **properties** such as **non-stick, water repellence, and anti-grease**.
- PFAS are used in the manufacture of many **domestic products**, including:
 - **skin creams and cosmetics**
 - **car and floor polish**

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- rinse aid for dishwashers
 - **textile** and fabric treatments
 - **food packaging and microwave popcorn bags**
 - baking equipment
 - **frying pans**
 - clothing and shoes
- They also have many and widespread **uses in industry, including in firefighting foam.**
 - Over time, PFAS may **leak into the soil, water, and air.**
 - **People** are most likely **exposed** to these chemicals by **consuming PFAS-contaminated water or food, using products made with PFAS, or breathing air containing PFAS.**
 - Because PFAS breaks down slowly, if at all, people and animals are **repeatedly exposed** to them, and **blood levels of some PFAS can build up** over time.

Impacts of PFAS on Human Health: Forever chemicals have been linked to multiple health problems, including **compromised immune systems, liver damage, thyroid diseases, increased cholesterol levels, hypertension, developmental delays in infants,** and increased certain **cancers** such as kidney and testicular.

- **Regulation:** The **Stockholm Convention** has **listed some PFAS, such as Perfluorooctane sulfonic acid (PFOS) and Perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA), as persistent organic pollutants (POPs).**
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WHAT IS SCHIZOPHRENIA?



- Schizophrenia is a serious **mental disorder** characterized by **disruptions in thought processes, perceptions, emotional responsiveness, and social interactions.**
- Although the **course** of schizophrenia **varies** among individuals, schizophrenia is **typically persistent** and can be both severe and disabling.



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Cause:

- Researchers believe that **several genetic and environmental factors** contribute to the risk of developing schizophrenia, and **life stressors may play a role in the start of symptoms** and their course.
- Since multiple factors may contribute, scientists **cannot yet be specific about the exact cause in each individual case.**

Symptoms:

- Symptoms of schizophrenia include **psychotic symptoms such as hallucinations, delusions, and thought disorder**, as well as **reduced expression of emotions, reduced motivation** to accomplish goals, **difficulty in social relationships, motor impairment, and cognitive impairment.**
- **Suicidal thoughts and attempts** are much higher than average in people with schizophrenia.
- Although symptoms **typically start in late adolescence or early adulthood**, schizophrenia is often viewed from a developmental perspective.
- Cognitive impairment and unusual behaviors sometimes appear in childhood, and persistent presence of multiple symptoms represent a later stage of the disorder.
- This pattern may reflect disruptions in brain development as well as environmental factors such as prenatal or early life stress.

Treatment:

- There is **no cure** for schizophrenia. People with schizophrenia **need lifelong treatment.**
 - This includes **medicine, talk therapy, and help in learning how to manage daily life activities.**
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INDIA'S FIGHT AGAINST MALARIA: THE 2030 DEADLINE

- The World Health Organization (WHO) measures malaria elimination by assessing whether local transmission of all human malaria parasites has been interrupted nationwide for **at least three consecutive years**, supported by a robust surveillance and response system.
- Based on this criterion, **47 countries** or territories had been officially certified malaria-free by the WHO as of mid-2025.

India's Current Status in the Fight Against Malaria

- India has made substantial progress in reducing malaria burden over the past decade.
- According to the World Malaria Report 2025, the country officially exited the WHO's "**High Burden to High Impact**" (HBHI) group in 2024, reflecting sustained improvements in high-endemic States.
- Malaria cases **declined by about 80%** between 2015 and 2023, and India is on track to meet the **WHO Global Technical Strategy (2016–2030)** target of a **75% reduction** in incidence by 2025, having already achieved over 70% reduction by 2024.
- Despite this progress, India still accounted for 73.3% of the estimated 2.7 million malaria cases in the WHO South-East Asia Region in 2024.
- Localised transmission, population movement, and cross-border importation continue to pose challenges.

India's Strategy for Eliminating Malaria

- India is pursuing malaria elimination through a structured national strategy guided by two key policy frameworks:
 - **National Framework for Malaria Elimination (2016–2030)**, which sets the long-term vision and phased targets, and
 - **National Strategic Plan (NSP) for Malaria Elimination (2023–2027)**, which operationalises these goals.

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- The NSP prioritises transforming malaria surveillance into a core intervention, ensuring universal access to timely diagnosis and treatment through a “test, treat, and track” approach, and strengthening prevention via effective vector control.

Key Challenges in India’s Malaria Elimination Drive

- One major challenge is **migration** from malaria-endemic neighbouring States, which raises the risk of reintroduction in areas that have achieved low or zero transmission.
 - Urban settings present a distinct set of difficulties due to population density, mobility, and complex living conditions.
 - According to India’s National Strategic Plan, malaria elimination requires special focus on urban, forest, tribal, border, hard-to-reach areas, large infrastructure project zones, and migrant populations.
 - **Regional and Cross-Border Transmission Risks**
 - The World Malaria Report 2025 acknowledges significant progress in the WHO South-East Asia Region but notes that challenges persist.
 - **Plasmodium vivax**, which accounts for nearly two-thirds of regional malaria cases, continues to hinder elimination due to its relapse potential.
 - Localised transmission in India and Nepal, driven by cross-border movement, underscores the need for targeted sub-national and regional coordination.
 - **Rising Drug and Insecticide Resistance**
 - A growing concern is antimalarial drug resistance.
 - The WHO has warned of partial resistance to **artemisinin derivatives**—the backbone of current malaria treatment, along with signs of declining efficacy of partner drugs.
 - In response, India is strengthening drug and insecticide resistance monitoring and emphasising strict compliance with the 14-day radical treatment for Plasmodium vivax cases.
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REVISED CADRE ALLOCATION POLICY FOR ALL INDIA SERVICES

- Cadre allocation is a critical administrative process that determines the State or Joint Cadre in which officers of the Indian Administrative Service (IAS), Indian Police Service (IPS), and Indian Forest Service (IFoS) serve.
- The system aims to balance two key objectives:
 - Ensuring national integration through inter-State exposure and
 - Respecting regional familiarity by allowing limited home-state representation.
- Since 2017, cadre allocation has been governed by a zonal system, where States were grouped into **five zones**.
- Candidates were required to rank zones and cadres within them.
- Over time, several State governments and aspirants raised concerns about uneven cadre distribution, lack of transparency, and rigid allocation outcomes.

Introduction of the New Grouping Structure

- The revised policy replaces the zonal arrangement with **four alphabetical groups of State and Joint Cadres**.
- According to the notification issued by the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT), all cadres have been arranged alphabetically and distributed into four groups to simplify and standardise the allocation process.
- **New Group Composition**
 - **Group I:** AGMUT, Andhra Pradesh, Assam-Meghalaya, Bihar, Chhattisgarh
 - **Group II:** Gujarat, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh
 - **Group III:** Maharashtra, Manipur, Nagaland, Odisha, Punjab, Rajasthan, Sikkim, Tamil Nadu
 - **Group IV:** Telangana, Tripura, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal
- This structure replaces the earlier five-zone model that had geographical clustering, which often resulted in repeated regional concentration of officers.



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Objectives of the Revised Policy

- The revised cadre allocation framework seeks to achieve the following objectives:
- **Greater Transparency:** Alphabetical grouping removes ambiguity associated with zonal preferences.
- **Fair Distribution of Officers:** States had flagged skewed vacancy allocation under the earlier system.
- **Enhanced National Integration:** Wider inter-State exposure aligns with the original philosophy of All India Services.
- **Administrative Efficiency:** A simplified structure enables faster and more predictable allocation outcomes.

Determination of Vacancies

- Under the new policy, cadre-controlling authorities will determine vacancies annually:
 - **IAS:** Department of Personnel and Training
 - **IPS:** Ministry of Home Affairs
 - **IFoS:** Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change
- Vacancies will be calculated based on the cadre gap as on January 1 of the year following the Civil Services Examination.
- States must submit their vacancy requisitions by January 31; failing which, late submissions will not be considered. Vacancy details will be publicly notified to ensure transparency.

Significance for Civil Services Administration

- Reduces litigation and grievances related to cadre allocation.
 - Strengthens cooperative federalism by addressing State concerns.
 - Improves officer exposure to diverse administrative and socio-political environments.
 - Aligns recruitment with governance efficiency, an important theme in public administration reforms.
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