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GEO-TAGGING OF CHINAR TREES IN J&K

The Jammu & Kashmir government has launched the “Tree Aadhaar” mission to conserve the region’s declining chinar trees. The initiative includes conducting a census of chinar trees and assigning each tree a unique identity to monitor and protect them effectively.

About Chinar Tree (Oriental plane tree)

- **Characteristics:**
 - Maple-like tree with a vast canopy.
 - Found in cool climates with sufficient water, mainly in the Eastern Himalayas.
 - Grows up to 30 metres tall with a girth of 10-15 metres.
 - Takes 30-50 years to mature and 150 years to reach full size.
- **Origin of the Name 'Chinar'**
 - Coined by the Mughals, possibly by Emperor Jahangir.
 - Derived from the Persian phrase “Che naar ast” meaning “What flame is that?” – inspired by the crimson red leaves in autumn.

Importance of Chinar in Kashmir

- **State Tree**
 - The chinar is the "state tree" of Jammu & Kashmir (now a Union Territory).
- **Tourist Attraction**
 - The chinar becomes a major attraction in autumn when its leaves turn crimson red and golden.
- **Cultural and Artistic Significance:**
 - Chinari motifs are commonly seen in local **papier mache, embroidery, hand-woven carpets, and walnut wood carvings.**
 - The tree holds a special place in the art, literature, and craft traditions of Kashmir.
- **Religious Significance:**
 - Chinari trees are found near many **Muslim and Hindu shrines** in the region.
- **Oldest Chinari Tree:**

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- The **oldest surviving chinar** (around 700 years old) is located in **Chattergam** village in Budgam, central Kashmir, and was planted by a **Sufi saint**.

Chinar Conservation Project Overview

- **Government Permission for Tree Cutting:**
 - Cutting a chinar tree requires government approval, even on private property. Despite this, illegal cutting still occurs.
- **Project Goals:**
 - The initiative aims to track the status of each chinar tree across the Kashmir valley and Chenab region.
- **Census and Tree Aadhaar:**
 - A census of chinar trees has been conducted district-wise. Each tree has been assigned a unique **Tree Aadhaar** and geo-tagged for identification and monitoring.
- **Current Status:**
 - As of now, **28,560 chinar trees** have been enumerated and geo-tagged, out of an estimated total of **32,000 to 33,000**
- **Challenges:**
 - Some trees are inaccessible, such as those located near **security installations** or **no-go areas**.

QR Code Implementation:

- A **metallic QR code** is being placed on chinar trees. Scanning the code provides information on **25 parameters** including:
 - Longitude and latitude
 - Age, height, and girth
 - Number of branches and tree health
 - Canopy size and eco-threats faced by the tree.

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UNDERSTANDING THE WHIP SYSTEM

About Whip System

- The term "whip" originates from England's hunting fields, where a whipper-in was tasked with keeping stray hounds within the pack.

Introduction to the Whip System in India

- The whip system in India dates back to the beginning of its parliamentary history and plays a crucial role in maintaining party discipline, particularly during important votes.
- **Legal and Democratic Context**
 - The Anti-Defection Law, enacted in 1985, enforces compliance with the whip system to preserve the integrity of political parties in India's parliamentary democracy.
 - While some view the system as restrictive, even the Supreme Court has upheld its necessity for maintaining party discipline and stability in governance.
- **Purpose of the Whip System**
 - Parties see voting on key issues as central to their political identity and expect MPs to align with the party line.
 - Non-compliance or absence during critical votes can cause significant embarrassment.
- **Significance During Division Voting**
 - For ruling parties or coalitions, unanimous attendance and compliance during division votes are vital to showcase their majority strength. Failure to do so could lead to a no-confidence motion in the Lok Sabha.
- **Role of the Party Whip**
 - The party chief whip acts as the liaison between the leadership and MPs, communicating the party's stance on critical matters, ensuring attendance during votes, and coordinating which members speak on specific issues in Parliament.

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Types of Whips

- **One-Line Whip:** Informs members about a vote but allows them to abstain.
- **Two-Line Whip:** Requires members to be present but does not dictate how to vote.
- **Three-Line Whip:** The strictest directive, instructing members to be present and vote as per the party line.
- **Significance of the Three-Line Whip**
 - The three-line whip, typically issued by the party's chief whip, mandates strict adherence.
 - Violation can lead to disqualification under the Anti-Defection Law, as recommended by the party leader to the House's Presiding Officer.

Key Roles in the Whip System

- The chief whip of a political party holds the most crucial role in enforcing the whip system, supported by additional whips within the party.
- **Government's Chief Whip**
 - In the **Lok Sabha**, the Minister of Parliamentary Affairs acts as the government's chief whip, coordinating with ruling alliance leaders to issue a three-line whip.
 - In the **Rajya Sabha**, the Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs serves as the government's chief whip.
- **Consequences of Violating a Whip**
 - If a member of the ruling alliance defies the chief whip's directive, the party leader can recommend the member's disqualification to the Presiding Officer.
 - For members, compliance with their party whip's directions remains paramount.

Significance of the Whip System

- The whip system ensures discipline and coherence within political parties, crucial for the functioning of Parliamentary democracy.
 - According to experts, the outcome of a single vote in Parliament can determine the fate of legislation or even the Council of Ministers.
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SHOULD GOVERNORS BE CHANCELLORS OF STATE UNIVERSITIES?

Challenges of the Current System:

- **Politicization of the Role:**
 - From the late 1960s, Governors transitioned from neutral figures to politically influenced appointees.
 - Studies reveal that **52% of Governors between 1950 and 2015 were active politicians**, undermining the credibility of the position.
- **Conflicting Authorities:**
 - The dual accountability of universities to both state governments and Governors has led to governance challenges, including delays in appointments and decision-making.
- **Lack of Expertise:**
 - Many Governors **lack the academic qualifications** necessary to guide universities effectively.
 - This gap often results in non-transparent decisions and political interference.
- **Erosion of Federal Principles:**
 - Allowing centrally appointed Governors to control state-funded institutions dilutes federalism, reducing universities' accountability to state governments.

Reform Models:

- **Ceremonial Role:** States like Gujarat, Karnataka, and Maharashtra have redefined the Governor's role to a ceremonial one, acting on the advice of the Council of Ministers.
- **State-Appointed Chancellors:** Telangana and Kerala propose appointing distinguished academicians or public figures as Chancellors, but such reforms face delays in Presidential assent.
- **University-Elected Chancellors:** Global practices, like those in Oxford and Melbourne, allow university bodies to elect Chancellors, ensuring autonomy and accountability.

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Need for Progressive Reforms:

- The colonial legacy of Governors as Chancellors must be dismantled to ensure university autonomy, foster academic excellence, and minimize political interference.
- Reforming university governance aligns with global best practices and reinforces India's federal structure.
- States like Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and West Bengal await Presidential assent for their reform Bills, highlighting the need for equitable and timely decision-making at the national level.

Conclusion:

- Reforming the role of Governors as Chancellors is essential for fostering transparent, accountable, and autonomous university governance.
- By adopting models that prioritize academic independence and minimize political entanglements, India can create an educational framework aligned with democratic principles and global standards.

PARAQUAT



- Also known as **paraquat dichloride** or **methyl viologen**, it is one of the world's most-used herbicides.
- It is primarily used to control the growth of weeds and desiccate crops like **cotton** before harvest.
- The **WHO** classifies paraquat as **Category 2** (moderately hazardous and moderately irritating) chemical.
- Its sale is banned in over 70 countries, including China and the European Union, due to its potent toxicity. It is widely used in **the US and in India**.
- **Mode:**
 - **Ingestion** is the most common route of exposure.

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- It may also be transferred and absorbed through **prolonged skin contact**.
- **Symptoms:**
 - It depends on the amount, means and length of exposure to the chemical.
 - If ingested in a small amount, a person would display signs of **damage to the heart, kidneys, liver and lungs** over several days or weeks.
 - If ingested in large amount then the person could face **acute kidney failure, rapid heart rate, failure of the heart and liver, seizures and respiratory failure**.
 - The person would immediately display **abdominal pain, swelling and pain in the mouth and throat, bloody diarrhoea and nausea**.
- **Treatments:**
 - There are no known antidotes for paraquat poisoning but some studies mentions that **immunosuppression and Charcoal Hemoperfusion (CHP)** can be used.
 - CHP uses activated charcoal to **remove toxins from the blood**.

INLAND WATERWAYS AUTHORITY OF INDIA



- It is a **statutory body** established the under the **Inland Waterways Authority of India Act (IWAI)**, 1985.
- **Purpose:** The Authority primarily undertakes **projects for development and maintenance** of IWT infrastructure on national waterways through grant received from Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways.
- It presently has five regional offices in **Guwahati (Assam), Patna (Bihar), Kochi (Kerala), Bhubaneswar (Odisha) and Kolkata (West Bengal)**. Varanasi will be its sixth office.
- **Headquarter:** Noida, Uttar Pradesh
- **Nodal Ministry:** Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways

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- The Varanasi Regional Office of IWAI shall look after development works not only on **River Ganga** but its **various tributaries** and **other national waterways** in Uttar Pradesh.
- These include rivers like Betwa, Chambal, Gomti, Tons, Varuna and parts of Gandak, Ghaghra, Karamnasa and Yamuna rivers.
- IWAI's Varanasi Regional Office will also be coordinating with the State IWT Authority set up for development of waterways in Uttar Pradesh.

WHAT IS THE UNIFIED PENSION SCHEME (UPS)?



- UPS will apply to **Central Government employees** who are covered under the **National Pension System (NPS)** and who choose this option under the NPS.
- Both current and future Central Government employees covered under the NPS have the option to choose between the UPS or continue with the existing NPS plan.
- **Once a decision is made** to switch to the UPS, it is considered **final and binding**.
- **Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA)** may issue regulations for operationalizing the UPS.
- The effective date for operationalization of the Unified Pension Scheme shall be April 1, 2025.
- **Key Features:**
 - UPS provides a **guaranteed payout** to employees upon superannuation.
 - It will offer **50% of the average basic pay** drawn by a Central government employee during the 12 months prior to retirement, provided **they complete 25 years of service**.
 - **Employees with less than 25 years of service but more than 10 years** will receive a **pension on a proportionate basis**.

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- A **minimum payout of Rs 10,000 per month** is assured for **employees with 10 or more years of qualifying service**.
- For those who choose to retire voluntarily after 25 years of service, the payout will begin from the date they would have reached superannuation if they had continued working.
- In the event of the **payout holder's death** after superannuation, a **family payout at 60% of the payout** admissible to the holder will be given to the **legally wedded spouse**.
- Additionally, **dearness relief** will be available on the **assured payout and family payout**. Dearness relief will be worked out in the same manner as Dearness Allowance applicable to serving employees.
- **UPS** or assured payout would **not be available in case of removal or dismissal** from service or **resignation** of the employee.

Contributions under the UPS:

- Unlike the old pension scheme, UPS is **contributory in nature**, wherein **employees** will be required to **contribute 10 percent of their basic salary and dearness allowance while the employer's contribution (the central government) will be 18.5 percent**.
 - However, the eventual **payout depends on the market returns** on that corpus, mostly invested in government debt.