

### ALLOTMENT OF ELECTION SYMBOLS TO POLITICAL PARTIES

#### Why in news?

- The Supreme Court has refused to entertain a petition filed by the ruling Bharat Rashtra Samiti (BRS) party in Telangana, challenging the allotment of election symbols to two other parties.
- BRS argued that the symbols allotted to two political parties looked similar to BRS's symbol of a car. This might confuse the voters during elections, it said.
- However, the SC declined the petition, saying voters were intelligent enough to differentiate between the symbols.

#### Allotment of election symbols to political parties in India

- **Responsibility of ECI**
  - The Election Commission of India (ECI) is responsible for the allotment of symbols.
  - This is done under The Election Symbols (Reservation and Allotment) Order, 1968.
  - This rule is meant to provide for specification, reservation, choice and allotment of symbols at elections in Parliamentary and Assembly Constituencies, for the recognition of political parties.
  - Symbols can be either **reserved**, meaning they are exclusive to a recognised political party, or 'free'.
    - A political party can be recognized as a national or state party if it meets the certain criteria.
  - The EC publishes lists specifying the parties and their symbols through a notification in the Gazette of India.
    - According to its notifications this year, there are six national parties, 26 state parties, and 2,597 registered unrecognised parties.
- **Unrecognised registered parties and election symbol**
  - Unrecognised registered parties' candidates can choose from free, non-exclusive symbols.
    - These parties are newly registered or have not secured enough percentage of votes to fulfil the prescribed criteria to become a recognised party.
  - After being selected by parties, in subsequent elections, these symbols are declared free again for others to choose.

- **Recognised parties and election symbol**
- Recognised national and state parties get exclusive symbols.

### **What happens when a recognised political party splits?**

- Para 15 of the Symbols Order, 1968 empowers EC to decide on the claim of rival factions in case of split.
- EC decides on the issue after taking into account all the available facts and circumstances of the case and hearing their representatives.
- **The decision of the Commission is binding** on all such rival sections or groups.
- For splits in **registered but unrecognised parties**, the ECI usually advises the warring factions to resolve their differences internally or to approach the court.

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## **THE UNEVEN SPREAD OF MEDICAL COLLEGES IN INDIA**

### **Background:**

- The Central government, on multiple occasions, has been emphasizing on an equal distribution of medical colleges across the country.
- In August, a **regulation issued by the National Medical Commission (NMC) put a hold on new medical colleges and expansion of existing medical colleges in states with more than 100 medical education seats per million population.**

### **How are Seats Currently Distributed?**

- At least 13 states and UTs have more than 100 seats/million population.
- Tamil Nadu (11,225) has the most seats, followed by Karnataka (11,020) and Maharashtra (10,295).
- Tamil Nadu and Karnataka have exceeded the NMC's norm by 46% and 63% respectively.
- The deficiency of medical college seats in relation to population is the most acute in Meghalaya, Bihar, and Jharkhand, all of which are in deficits of more than 75% from the NMC's ratio.

- Meghalaya has only 50 seats for an estimated 33.5 lakh people; these numbers for Bihar and Jharkhand are 2,565 and 12.7 crore, and 980 and 3.9 crore respectively.
- Uttar Pradesh, the most populous state, has 9,253 seats, a deficiency of 61%.

## About National Medical Commission:

- The National Medical Commission is a **statutory body** established under the **National Medical Commission Act, 2019**.
- The NMC replaced the erstwhile **Medical Council of India (MCI)** which was established in 1934.

### Objectives of NMC:

- Improve access to quality and affordable medical education;
- Ensure availability of adequate and high-quality medical professionals in all parts of the country;
- Promote equitable and universal healthcare that encourages community health perspective and makes services of medical professionals accessible to all the citizens;
- Objectively assess medical institutions periodically in a transparent manner;
- Maintain a medical register for India;



**NMC WILL HAVE FEWER MEMBERS, MOST OF THEM NOMINATED**

	Medical Council of India	National Medical Commission
Members	100+	25
Tenure	5 yrs	4 yrs (part-time member)
Appointment	70% Elected	Majority nominated
Extension	Could be re-nominated/re-elected	Those nominated by Gov cannot be re-nominated
Quorum	15 of 100+ members	13 of 25 members
Meeting mandate	At least once a year	Every quarter

- Enforce high ethical standards in all aspects of medical services;
- Have an effective grievance redressal mechanism.

### Composition of NMC:

- NMC is a 25-member body, majority of them being nominated by the Central government.
- Tenure of NMC members is four years (except for part-time members whose tenure is two years).
- The NMC has 11 part-time members representing states or state medical councils.
- The NMC chairpersons and other members, nominated by the Central government, cannot be renominated.
- Any decision requires approval of the majority (minimum 13 out of 25) of the Commission.

## STUBBLE BURNING - PUNJAB BREATHES EASY AS FARM FIRES DOWN BY HALF

### Why in news?

- Punjab is breathing easy this year having recorded an over 50 per cent decrease in paddy stubble fires in the ongoing harvesting season as compared to last year.
- From September 15 till October 22, Punjab had reported 1,794 farm fires as against 3,696 such incidents recorded last year.
  - The state had reported more than 4,300 such cases in 2021.
- The government's plan was to reduce paddy stubble burning by over 50% compared to 2022, and to eliminate farm fires in six districts of Punjab.

### Why Farmers opt for Stubble Burning?

- **Rice and wheat straws** left in the field, after combine harvesting, are generally burnt by the farmers to facilitate seed bed preparation and seeding.
- Farmers find this method as quick and cheap compared to other practices for crop residue management.
- Since input costs of farming is going up day by day, farmers are not willing to further invest in equipments useful for crop residue management.
  - Happy Seeder (a tractor-operated machine for in-situ management of paddy stubble) continues to be an expensive method for majority of farmers.

### Impact Of Agriculture Fire

- **Environmental Pollution**
  - Agriculture fires are a major contributor to air pollution in north India in October-November.
  - Pollutants from these fires spread across the region, triggering smog and extreme air quality situations.
  - An increase in the concentration of particulate matter (PM) 2.5 and PM 10 in the atmosphere is observed in these months.
- **Harmful to the health of soil**

- Burning of crop residues removes huge amount of nutrient from the soil.
- Residue burning has further reduced soils' organic carbon content

## Steps Taken by the government to tackle this issue

### • Taken by Centre

- A Central Sector Scheme on 'Promotion of Agricultural Mechanisation for In-Situ Management of Crop Residue in the States of Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and NCT of Delhi' was approved.
- Farmers are being provided 50 percent of the cost of machinery/equipment as financial assistance for the purchase of such machinery.
- The central government has released Rs 3,062 crore to the governments of Punjab, Delhi and states in NCR during the five-year period from 2018 to 2023 towards effective management of stubble.
- Profit from the left-over biomass is shared with farmers.

### • Pusa Decomposer by Indian Agricultural research Institute (IARI)

- Pusa decomposer: **Bio-enzyme** developed by IARI to decompose crop residue.
- It decomposes stubble within 20-25 days after spraying and turn it into manure, improving the soil quality.

### • Taken by State Governments and Other agencies

- Sensitising farmers on healthier practices.
- In July 2022, the Punjab government had proposed to provide a cash incentive of Rs 2,500 per acre to farmers for not burning stubble.
- It also decided to provide non-fiscal incentives to these industries in terms of availability of Panchayat land for storage of paddy straw with lease agreement upto 33 years.

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## HOW RAMLEELA REACHED TRINIDAD AND BECAME A REPRESENTATION OF 'INDIANNES'

- Ramleela is one of India's most famous folk theatre traditions, performed across the country during the autumnal (October) Navratri celebrations.

- Ramleela has travelled to distant corners of the world with the Indian diaspora and one such example is Trinidad, an island in the Caribbean with a significant Indian population.

## What is Ramleela?

- Basically, Ramleela is a **dramatic re-enactment of Tulsidas's Ramcharitmanas**, telling the story of Lord Ram.
- Major incidents in the epic are covered in an episodic way, with an interplay between dialogue and musical verses.
- Performances last days, and **culminate on Dussehra** with the burning of the effigy of Ravan, representing the victory of good over evil.
- In this broad form, **Ramleela has travelled to distant corners of the world with the Indian diaspora.**

## How did Indians Reach Trinidad?

- **In early 19th century Britain**, with the calls to abolish slavery intensified, slave trade was banned in 1807, and finally abolished in 1834 in the British Empire.
- This, however, **created a massive problem in many British colonies** whose economy depended on slave labour.
- **The island of Trinidad**, where sugar formed the backbone of the economy, was one such colony.
- **In 1838**, the enactment of the emancipation legislation in Trinidad was followed by a large-scale emigration of emancipated slaves from the sugar estates.
- Plantation owners, desperate to keep their economy afloat, **turned to indentured labour from India.**
  - On May 30, 1845 the very first boatload of indentured Indians came to Trinidad.
- While seen as more human than slavery, **indentured servitude** was nonetheless brutal for labourers.
- **Today**, Indians - mostly descendants of these labourers who continued to enter Trinidad as late as 1917 - **form the largest ethnic group in Trinidad** (~35% of the total population).

- Most came from the present day eastern UP and Bihar.

## How did Ramleela Reach Trinidad?

- When travelling to these distant lands, indentured individuals were unable to carry many material possessions. **However, they did bring their culture.**
- **This is how Ramleela arrived in Trinidad.** In villages in the countryside, now thronged by Indians speaking Bhojpuri and eating chapatis, Ramleela saw widespread participation of the community.
- Although Ramleela has evolved over the years to become more Trinidadian, **it remains the foremost representation of Indianness of Indian diaspora**, thus, becoming an anchor to their roots back in India.

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## SMALL SAVINGS INSTRUMENTS (SSIS)

The government of India has raised the rates offered for most small savings instruments (SSIs) in the range of 40 basis points (bps) to 150 bps over the last five quarters.



### About Small Savings Instruments (SSIs):

- These are a set of savings instruments **managed by the central government** with the aim of encouraging citizens to save regularly, irrespective of their age.
- **Features**
  - They provide **returns** that are **generally higher** than bank fixed deposits.
  - It also gives a sovereign guarantee and tax benefits.
  - The **interest rates** on small savings schemes change **on a quarterly basis**.
  - All deposits received under various small savings schemes are pooled in the National Small Savings Fund.
- These instruments can be classified **under three headings**:
  - **Postal deposits** (comprising savings account, recurring deposits, time deposits of varying maturities, and monthly income scheme (MIS)).

- **Savings certificates** (National Small Savings Certificate VIII (NSC) and Kisan Vikas Patra (KVP).
  - **Social security schemes** (public provident fund (PPF) and Senior Citizens' Savings Scheme (SCSS).
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## AADI MAHOTSAV



The Union Minister for Tribal Affairs will inaugurate the Aadi Mahotsav - the National Tribal Festival - on 25th October, at Ahmedabad, Gujarat.

### About Aadi Mahotsav:

- The mega event is being **organised** by the Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India Limited (TRIFED).
- It serves as a unique, symbiotic bridge to embark on a journey through the tapestry of India's indigenous heritage.
- In this event, a total of over 100 stalls would showcase **the kaleidoscope of India's tribal culture**, craftsmanship, culinary artistry, and economic endeavours.
- This Aadi Mahotsav, besides other attractions of handicrafts, handloom, pottery, jewellery, will be showcasing 'Millets grown by Tribals'.

### Key points about TRIFED

- It is a national-level organisation under **the Ministry of Tribal Affairs**.
  - It is primarily engaged in the **development and marketing of tribal handicrafts** and natural products.
  - It came into existence in 1987 and got registered under the Multi-State Cooperative Societies Act, 1984 (now the Multi-State Cooperative Societies Act, 2002).
  - **Mandate: Capability enhancement for Tribals**, promotion of tribal products, and creation of marketing opportunities for the Tribals with a view to ensuring remunerative prices for their products and augmenting their income on a sustainable basis.
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- It has been entrusted by the Government of India to implement its proposed Minimum Support Price Scheme for Minor Forest Produce.
  - **Head Office:** New Delhi
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## EXERCISE HARIMAU SHAKTI 2023

Recently, Exercise Harimau Shakti 2023 commenced in Umroi Cantonment, India.



### About Exercise Harimau Shakti 2023:

- It is a **joint bilateral training exercise** between **Indian & Malaysian Armed Forces**.
  - The Malaysian Army contingent comprises troops from the 5th Royal Battalion of the Malaysian Army. The Indian contingent is being represented by a battalion of the Rajput Regiment.
  - **Aim:** To enhance **military capability** for conducting of Multi Domain Operations in a sub conventional scenario.
  - During the exercise, both contingents will establish a **Joint Command Post & establish an integrated surveillance grid** along with a Joint Surveillance Centre.
  - Both sides will rehearse employment of joint forces in jungle/ semi urban / urban environment. In addition, intelligence collection, collation and dissemination drills will also be rehearsed.
  - The Exercise will also witness **employment of Drones/UAVs & Helicopters**. Two sides will also practice casualty management and evacuation drills.
  - Both the contingents will discuss logistics management and practice survival training at the Battalion level.
  - The training will focus **primarily on high degree of physical fitness**, conduct of drills at tactical level and sharing of best practices with each other.
  - The Exercise will culminate with a 48-hour long **validation exercise in a semi-urban area**.
  - Last edition of the Exercise was conducted in Pulai, Kluang, Malaysia in November 2022.
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