

### WHAT IS THE CHHATH FESTIVAL?

The Patna district administration is set to deploy drones to manage the four-day-long mass gatherings for the annual Chhath festival.



#### About Chhath Festival:

- It is a Hindu Vedic festival celebrated in the Indian Sub-Continent, prominently in Bihar, Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh, some areas in Madhya Pradesh in India, and a few regions of Nepal.
- It is dedicated to the Sun God (Lord Surya) and Chhathi Maiya (another name for Goddess Usha and a known sister to Lord Surya).
- It is celebrated twice a year in the months of Chaitra (March-April) and Kartika (October-November).

#### Rituals:

- Considered to be one of the most eco-friendly religious festivals, Chhath Puja lasts for 4 days.
- The rituals surrounding Chhath Puja are supposedly harsher when compared to other Hindu festivals.
- They involve strict fasting (without water), taking a dip in rivers/water bodies, standing in water and offering prayers, facing the sun for a prolonged period, and offering 'prasad' to the Sun during sunrise and sunset.
- Any food prepared during the festival will have no salt, onion, or garlic.
- In recent days, both men and women have been seen fasting during this festival, but the main worshippers are mainly said to be women. Those who fast are known as parvaitin.

### LONDON SUMMIT AND HOW TO MAKE AI RESPONSIBLE

#### Context

- The British PM is set to host a summit on the Artificial Intelligence (AI) in London, which will be joined by key world leaders and important figures from leading technology companies. The summit will be focused on ensuring the responsible use of AI.

## The Geopolitical Significance of the London Summit

- **British PM's Aspiration to Portray Himself as a Global Leader**
- **To Give Britain a Leadership Role in Global AI Governance**
- **A Reminder of the AI's Origin in Britain**

## Key Agendas of the London Summit

- **Ensuring the Safe and Beneficial Use of AI Technologies:** The core idea is to **harness the potential of AI** for new knowledge, economic growth, advances in human capabilities, and problem-solving.
- **To Address AI's Dangers and Fears**
  - A discussion paper released by the British government highlighted **the risks associated with AI, ranging from the spread of disinformation to potential misuse for harmful purposes.**
  - The British PM emphasises the need to address these fears directly, assuring people that their safety will be prioritised while seizing the opportunities for a better future that AI can offer.
- **Announcement of an AI Safety Research Institute**
  - The British PM is expected to announce **the creation of an AI Safety Research Institute.**
  - Its primary purpose is **to carefully examine, evaluate, and test new AI models to understand their capabilities and potential risks.**
  - This initiative aims to ensure that AI technologies are developed and used in a safe manner.

## Challenges Before the London Summit

- **Navigating Fault Lines**
  - Even the modest agenda of the London summit **will have to navigate multiple fault lines in achieving concrete results.**
  - The British PM's focus on safety is **to overcome the long-standing fault line between regulation and promotion.**

- While many civil society groups demand outright ban on the development of AI or impose a moratorium, the companies rushing to invest in AI would want to prevent over-regulation that will kill innovation.
- **To Address the Division Over a Clear Definition of Frontier AI**
- There is also a division over **how to define frontier AI that the London summit is focused on.**
- Critics say the focus on catastrophic scenarios tend to mask the immediate challenges, such as algorithmic bias, that the current generation of AI technologies present.
- **To Balance the Shift in AI Development Leadership**
- One of the issues that the London summit is **discussing is the establishment of an international register of frontier AI models.**
- It will allow governments to **assess the risks involved but private companies are unlikely to agree with this proposal.**
- **This scenario will bring the summit to one of the core challenges of regulating AI - to address the shift in AI development leadership from government to private sector.**
- In the past, frontier technology development, in nuclear and space, was led by governments. Today, AI development outside China is with large digital corporations.

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## [NATIONAL COMPANY LAW APPELLATE TRIBUNAL \(NCLAT\)](#)

Recently, the Supreme Court of India accepted the unconditional apology of a National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) member and dropped the contempt proceedings against him.



### About National Company Law Appellate Tribunal:

- It was established under **Section 410 of the Companies Act, 2013** for hearing appeals against the orders of the National Company Law Tribunal(s) (NCLT), with effect from 1st June 2016.
- The NCLAT was established to provide an efficient and specialised forum for addressing matters related to company law, insolvency, and competition law.
- **Functions:**

- Hear appeals against the orders passed by NCLT(s) under Section 61 of the **Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016 (IBC)**.
- Hear and dispose of appeals against any direction issued, decision made, or order passed by the **Competition Commission of India (CCI)**.
- It also hears and disposes of appeals against the orders of the **National Financial Reporting Authority**.

### Composition:

- It is composed of a **chairperson** and **judicial and technical members**.
- **Appointment:** These members are appointed by the Central Government based on their expertise and experience in relevant fields such as law, finance, accounting, management, and administration.
- **Headquarters:** New Delhi.

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### LIGHT COMBAT HELICOPTER PRACHAND

Recently, the Indian Army's Light Combat Helicopter (LCH) Prachand successfully carried out the inaugural firing of 70 mm rockets and 20 mm turret guns both day and night.



#### About Light Combat Helicopter Prachand:

- It is India's first indigenous multi-role combat helicopter, developed by **Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL)**.
- It is designed to meet the needs of the Indian armed forces **operating in deserts and mountainous areas**.
- The helicopter is fitted with Shakti Engine, which is co-developed by HAL and France's Safran.
- The helicopter received operational clearance in 2017.
- **Features**
  - It can fly at a maximum **speed of 288 kmph** and has a combat radius of 500 km, which can go up to a **service ceiling of 21,000 feet**.

- The helicopter can carry out activities such as Combat Search and Rescue (CSAR), Destruction of Enemy Air Defence (DEAD), operations against slow-moving aircraft and Remotely Piloted Aircraft (RPAs), high-altitude bunker busting operations, counter-insurgency operations in the jungle and urban environments, and provide support to ground forces.
- The helicopter will be **equipped with Helina missiles**, the air force version of which is called Dhruvastra.

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## MARATHA QUOTA PROTEST HEATS UP

### Why in news?

- As Maratha quota protests intensify in Maharashtra, the state government has formed a panel of three former High Court judges to advise it on the legal battle over the issue in the Supreme Court.
- Activist Manoj Jarange-Patil has launched a fast-unto-death protest for Maratha reservation, putting pressure on the state government.
- The demand for Maratha reservation is not new in the state.
- The first protest over this was held 32 years ago by Mathadi Labour Union leader Annasaheb Patil in Mumbai.

### Why Marathas are demanding reservation?

- The division of holdings and problems in the farm sector over the years has led to a decline in the prosperity of middle- and lower middle-class Marathas.
- The traditional dominance of the Marathas is being challenged in the new economic order where the service sector and the manufacturing sector matter more than the agriculture sector.
- A 2016 study shows that Marathas were way ahead of Other Backward Classes (OBCs) and Scheduled Castes (SCs) in terms of ownership of large tracts of land.
- However, the advantage diminishes and even turns into a disadvantage when it comes to attainment of higher education.

### What is the latest step by the Maharashtra government?

- **Initiated the issuance of Kunbi certificates**

- The state govt, in September 2023, formed a five-member committee under Justice (retired) Sandeep K Shinde.
- This committee will study the procedure of giving Kunbi (OBC) certificates to Marathas, based on documents, including revenue records, from Nizam period.

- **Other steps**

- State govt plans to gather fresh data on the Maratha community's social and educational backwardness.
- The state will soon file a curative petition in the Apex Court.

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## APPLE'S STATE-SPONSORED ATTACKERS ALERT

### **Why in news?**

- At least seven Opposition Members of Parliament said that they received a warning from Apple that state-sponsored attackers may be targeting their iPhones.
- The warning says the attackers are likely targeting these individuals because of who they are or what they do.
- It advises them on how to protect themselves, including activating the 'Lockdown Mode' feature on their iPhones.

### **Who are these state-sponsored attackers that Apple refers to?**

- Following the allegations, Apple said in a statement that it does not attribute the threat notifications to any specific state-sponsored attacker.
- As per Apple:
  - State-sponsored attackers are very well-funded and sophisticated, and their attacks evolve over time.
  - Detecting such attacks relies on threat intelligence signals that are often imperfect and incomplete.
  - It is possible that some Apple threat notifications may be false alarms, or that some attacks are not detected.



- Attackers backed by governments go after specific individuals and their devices, based on their identity or activities.
- Such attacks are very different from the ones carried out by regular cybercriminals, who usually target a large number of users for financial gain.
- According to Apple, state-sponsored attacks are often short-lived, and are designed to evade detection and exploit vulnerabilities that may not be known to the public.

### **What are apple threat notifications?**

- Apple's threat notifications are a way of alerting and helping users who may have been targeted by state-sponsored attackers.
- As a response to these attacks, the company has developed a system that can spot activity that matches certain patterns.
- When an attack is detected, a Threat Notification is sent by email and iMessage to the email addresses and phone numbers that are linked to the affected user's Apple ID.
- The notification that some politicians and others received was likely triggered by this system.

### **What exactly is the Lockdown Mode?**

Apple also suggests that users activate the Lockdown Mode.

- The Lockdown Mode is a feature introduced in its latest software updates to specifically protect against rare and sophisticated cyber-attacks such as these.
- When one activates Lockdown Mode, his/her device will enter into a state of high security, where many usual functions will be restricted or disabled.
- E.g., He/she will not be able to send or receive attachments, links, or link previews in messages.
- Anyone who receives a threat notification from Apple should take it seriously and follow the steps that Apple recommends to secure their device and account.

### **Response of the government**

- The Government has launched an investigation into the alerts.
- Minister of Electronics and Information Technology Ashwini Vaishnaw down played the alerts by citing Apple's claim that these alerts have been sent to people in 150 countries.

## INDIAN METEOROLOGICAL DEPARTMENT (IMD)

- India Meteorological Department was established in 1875.
- It is the National Meteorological Service of the country and the principal government agency in all matters relating to meteorology and allied subjects.
- **Concerned Ministry:** Ministry of Earth Sciences
- **Headquarters:** New Delhi

### **Functions of IMD:**

- To take meteorological observations and to provide current and forecast meteorological information for optimum operation of weather-sensitive activities like agriculture, irrigation, shipping, aviation, offshore oil explorations, etc.
- To warn against severe weather phenomena like tropical cyclones, norwesters, dust storms, heavy rains and snow, cold and heat waves, etc., which cause destruction of life and property.
- To provide meteorological statistics required for agriculture, water resource management, industries, oil exploration and other nation-building activities.

### **News Summary:**

- The monsoon season this year has ended with 94 per cent overall rainfall, making it the eight year in succession that the seasonal rainfall has been broadly in the normal range.
- However, at the district level, the rainfall has been highly erratic.
- During the four-month monsoon period, there have been very few instances of districts receiving normal daily rainfall.
- The season also produced the second largest number of extreme rainfall events in the past five years, which compensated for the deficit on the dry days and brought in an illusion of normalcy.

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## STATUE OF UNITY IN GUJARAT

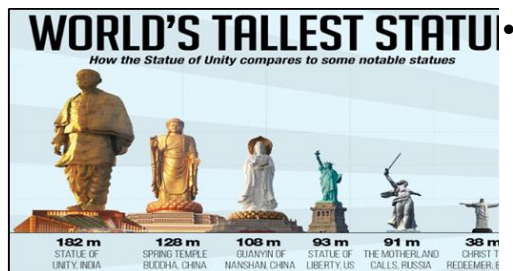
- The PM of India paid tribute to Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel at the Statue of Unity in Gujarat on the **birth anniversary** (148th on October 31, 2023) of India's first Home Minister, which is celebrated as **National Unity Day**.



## Sardar Patel and His Contributions in Building Modern India:

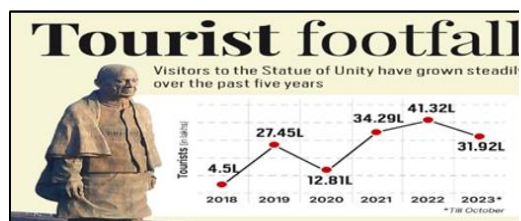
- Vallabhbhai Jhaverbhai Patel (31 Oct 1875 - 15 Dec 1950), commonly known as Sardar Vallabhai Patel, was an Indian independence nationalist and barrister who served as the **first Deputy PM and Home Minister of India** from 1947 to 1950.
- He was a **senior leader of the Indian National Congress**, who played a significant role in the country's struggle for independence and its political integration.
- He was appointed as the **President** of Indian National Congress in its **45th session at Karachi in 1931**.
- **The Statue of Unity**, the world's tallest statue which was erected by the Indian government, was dedicated to him on **31 October 2018**.

## About the Statue of Unity:



The Statue of Unity is the **world's tallest statue** [construction cost of ₹27 billion (US\$422 million)], with a height of 182 metres (597 feet), located near Kevadia/ Ekta Nagar - a town in the Narmada district of Gujarat.

- It is dedicated to **Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel**, the architect of independent India.
- The statue is located on the **Narmada River** on the Sadhu Bet hillock, against the magnificent background of the Satpura and Vindhyachal hills.



- It is a statue (primary materials used to construct the Statue are **copper, bronze, and steel**) constructed by Indian company **Larsen & Toubro** and designed by Indian sculptor **Ram V. Sutar**.

Changes brought about by the statue are not limited to just Ekta Nagar. **They are visible along the 90-km four-lane highway from Vadodara till the tourist attraction too.**