

ELECTRONIC VERSION OF THE SUPREME COURT REPORTS (E-SCR)

A Hindi version of the e-SCR portal was launched recently as part of Constitution Day celebrations.



About the e-SCR portal:

- It was an initiative by the Supreme Court (SC) of India to provide the digital version of the apex court's judgements in the same manner they are reported in the official law report.
- It provides free access to about 34,000 judgements of the SC to lawyers, law students, and the common public.
- These verdicts will be available on the apex court website, its mobile app, and on the judgement portal of the National Judicial Data Grid (NJDG).
- It is a free service available for lawyers across the country.
- The Supreme Court has developed a search engine with the help of the National Informatics Centre comprising elastic search techniques in the database of e-SCR.
- The search facility in e-SCR provides for free text search, search within search, case type and case year search, judge search, year and volume search, and bench strength search options.

National Judicial Data Grid (NJDG) portal:

- The NJDG portal is a national repository of data relating to cases instituted, pending, and disposed of by the courts across the length and breadth of the country.
- In this portal, one may access case-related information and statistics such as institution, pendency, disposal of cases, case types, and the year-wise break-up of the Supreme Court of India.
- It is a database of orders, judgements, and case details of 18,735 District and subordinate Courts and High Courts created as an online platform under the e-Courts Project.

- It has been developed by the National Informatics Centre (NIC) in close coordination with the in-house software development team of the Computer Cell, Registry with an interactive interface and analytics dashboard.
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WHAT IS AYUSHMAN BHARAT HEALTH ACCOUNT (ABHA)?



The National Medical Commission (NMC) recently told medical colleges to implement the ABHA (Ayushman Bharat Health Account) ID registration system for patients seeking medical care in medical college hospitals.

About the Ayushman Bharat Health Account (ABHA):

- ABHA is a randomly generated 14-digit number used to uniquely identify persons, authenticate them, and thread their health records (only with their informed consent) across multiple systems and stakeholders.
 - People can opt-in to create a digitally secure ABHA, which allows them to access and share their health data with participating healthcare providers and payers.
 - It helps citizens maintain their health records in one place.
 - It allows users, insurance companies, and hospitals to access health records digitally.
 - It will enable easy digital access to lab reports, prescriptions, consultation details, and diagnoses from verified doctors by presenting the Health ID.
 - In addition, it will digitally connect hospitals across the country.
 - Having an ABHA health ID card is not mandatory. People can choose to register for the facility or erase their information from the ABHA database if they want to opt out of this facility.
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BOOKER PRIZE

Recently, Irish writer Paul Lynch won the Booker Prize for fiction for his novel Prophet Song.

About the Booker Prize:

- It is the world's **leading literary award** for a single work of fiction.
- Founded in the UK in 1969, the **Booker Prize** **initially rewarded Commonwealth writers** and now spans the globe: it is open to anyone regardless of origin.
- It aims to **promote the finest in fiction** by rewarding the best novel of the year written in English.

Eligibility:

- The Booker Prize awards any novel **originally written in English and published in the UK and Ireland** in the year of the prize, regardless of the nationality of the author.
- The novel must be an original work in English (not a translation).
- It must be published by a registered UK or Irish imprint; self-published novels are not eligible.
- The winner **receives £50,000**, and each of the shortlisted authors will be given £2,500.
- **The Booker Prize Foundation:** It is a registered charity established in 2002. Since then, it has been responsible for the award of the Man Booker Prize for Fiction and the Man Booker International Prize since its inauguration in 2005.

CULTURAL PROPERTY AGREEMENT (CPA): INDIA-US WORK ON PACT FOR QUICK RETURN OF STOLEN ANTIQUITIES

Why in the News?

- India is close to signing an agreement - the **Cultural Property Agreement (CPA)** - with the United States under which the process for the return of stolen antiquities will be hugely simplified.

Indian Laws Ensuring Repatriation of Antiquities:

- What is antiquity?

- The **Antiquities and Art Treasures Act (AATA) 1972** defines antiquity as any coin, sculpture, painting, epigraph or other work of art or craftsmanship that has been in existence for not less than 100 years.
 - **For a manuscript, record or other document** which is of scientific, historical, literary or aesthetic value, this duration is not less than 75 years.
- **The UNESCO 1970 Convention** defines cultural property as the one designated by countries having importance for archaeology, prehistory, history, literature, art or science.
- **Salient provisions of the AATA 1972:**
 - **No person** (other than the central government) **can export any antiquity or art treasure.**
 - **No person can carry on the business of selling** any antiquity except by the terms and conditions of a licence granted by the ASI.
 - Every person who owns, controls or has any antiquity shall register such antiquity and obtain a certificate.

How are Artefacts of Indian Origin Repatriated?

- Presently, once an artefact of Indian origin is located in a foreign country, **its provenance has to be established** through documents such as FIRs and pictorial evidence.
- **The objects are then verified by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)** - the custodian of all antiquities - in the host country before they can be brought back home.
- **A team of experts from the ASI visits the country** and verifies the objects based on their knowledge, iconography and wear-and-tear marks. **There is no time limit for this process.**

About the Cultural Property Agreement (CPA):

- **The agreement imposes import restrictions** that stop looted and stolen cultural property from entering the US while encouraging the legal sharing of such objects for scientific, cultural, and educational purposes.

- **How do the import restrictions work?**
 - As per the agreement, **the US will intercept smuggled goods** at the border and return them expeditiously.
 - When objects are seized and forfeited under import restrictions, there is a simplified process for returning objects to the partner country.
 - The partner country does not have to prove the item is theirs. Rather, the US automatically offers it to them in return.

Significance of the Cultural Property Agreement (CPA):

- A bilateral CPA **would help to prevent illegal trafficking of cultural property** from India to the US.
- This will also **eliminate key sources of funding for terrorists and transnational organised crime.**
- Instead of India having to prove that the item in question belongs to it, the US will **automatically** offer it for return once the CPA comes through.
 - **The verification stage** - which is generally the most time-consuming - can also be done away with in many cases.
 - This will **simplify** the current process of repatriation and **ensure the early return** of antiquities.
- From this template agreement, **India is looking to sign such agreements with several countries** where a lot of Indian art objects are believed to have been smuggled.

CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES (COP) - THE WORLD'S BIGGEST CLIMATE MEETING

Why in the news?

- Tens of thousands will descend on Dubai, United Arab Emirates (UAE), next week to attend the world's biggest climate negotiation — Conference of the Parties, better known as COP.
- The 28th edition of COP is scheduled to be held in Dubai.

Conference of the Parties (COP)

- **COP is the annual United Nations (UN) climate meeting**
 - In 1992, at the Rio Earth Summit, 154 countries signed a multilateral treaty called the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).
 - It aimed to stabilise greenhouse gas concentrations at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic (human-induced) interference with the climate system.
 - The treaty came into force two years later, and since then, countries which are part of the UNFCCC, meet every year at different venues.
 - Today, there are 198 'parties' or signatories of the Convention.
- **COP was a result of a strong belief in the power of international agreements to tackle environmental problems**
- **The first ever COP took place in Berlin, Germany, in 1995**
- **COP meetings aim is to review progress towards the overall goal of limiting climate change**
- **Each member country details how they are tackling climate change**
- **Paris Agreement (COP 21)**
 - The Paris Agreement, also known as COP21, is a **legally binding** international treaty on climate change.
 - It was adopted by 196 parties at the UN Climate Change Conference in Paris, France in December 2015.
 - The agreement entered into force on November 4, 2016.
 - The Paris Agreement's main objectives are:
 - Limit global warming: Keep global warming below 2°C above pre-industrial levels, and pursue efforts to limit it to 1.5°C
 - Significantly Reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 2100
 - Support countries: Strengthen countries' ability to deal with the impacts of climate change
 - Provide financing to developing countries to mitigate climate change

WHAT IS KAMBALA?

Recently, 160 pairs of buffaloes and their jockeys participated in the specially made slush tracks for Kambala races, which were held at City Palace Grounds in Bengaluru.



About Kambala:

- It is a folk sport practised in coastal Karnataka districts, especially in regions where Tulu speakers form a majority.
- Earlier, races would be organised by various families and groups in the **slushy paddy fields** in the days after the harvest.
- It is a prestige event for many families, especially from the Bunt community in the coastal regions.
- Pairs of buffaloes are groomed by them around the year in hopes of winning a major Kambala event or other races.
- **Different categories of Kambala:** Kambala is generally held under four categories.
 - **Negilu (plough):** where lighter ploughs are used to tie buffaloes for the race. The event is for **entry-level buffalo pairs**, participating in their first Kambala race.
 - **Hagga (rope):** Where buffaloes are raced by jockeys with just a rope tied to both buffaloes.
 - **Adda Halage:** In which participants stand over a horizontal plank which is dragged by buffaloes. Unlike Hagga and Negilu, where jockeys run behind the animals, buffaloes drag the jockeys in Adda Halage.
 - **Kane Halage:** In this, a wooden plank is tied to buffaloes. The plank, on which jockeys stand, has two holes through which water gushes out as the plank is dragged along the slush tracks. The height to which water splashes determines the winner of the event.

NEED FOR AN ALL-INDIA JUDICIAL SERVICE

About All-India Judicial Service:

- The idea for All-India Judicial Service was first proposed by the 14th Report of the Law Commission of India in 1958.
- Under an All-India Judicial Service, district judges can be recruited centrally through an all-India examination and allocated to each State along the lines of the All-India Services such as IAS and IPS.
- **Aim:** To ensure a transparent and efficient method of recruitment to attract the best talent in India's legal profession.
- Currently, district judges are appointed by the state governor on the advice of chief justice of the high court of the concerned state.

Arguments in favour of All-India Judicial Service:

- **Judge-to-Population ratio:**
 - The 116th report of the Law Commission had recommended that India should have 50 judges per million population as against 10.50 judges (then).
 - Currently, the figure stands at 21 judges in terms of the sanctioned strength.
- **Pendency of cases:**
 - In 2023, the total number of pending cases of all types and at all levels rose above 5 crores. 4.3 crore out of 5 crore cases, i.e. more than 85% of cases, are pending in district courts.
- **Absence of career growth:**
 - Currently, less than 25 per cent of the judicial officers have a chance of being elevated as judges of High Courts, with the majority of them managing to reach only the rank of district judges towards the end of their professional careers.

Arguments against setting up an All-India Judicial Service:

- In 2019, a report titled ‘A Primer on the All India Judicial Service’ by Vidhi Centre for Legal Policy highlighted important aspects as to why an AIJS is not an ideal solution for the challenges the Indian Judicial System is facing.
- **Judicial Independence of District Judges:**
 - Currently, the independence of District Judges from the State Governments, is guaranteed by the fact that the High Court plays a significant role in the appointment, transfer and removal of District Judges.
 - The **116th report of the Law Commission** recommended that appointments, postings and promotions to the AIJS be made by a proposed National Judicial Service Commission consisting of retired and sitting judges of the Supreme Courts, members of the bar and legal academics.
 - The creation of such a body will result in the immense concentration of power in a few hands.
- **Language Barrier:**
 - An argument made against the creation of an AIJS is that judges recruited through this process will not know the local languages of the States in which they are posted.
 - This becomes important considering that the proceedings of civil and criminal courts are to be conducted in a language prescribed by the respective State governments.

Way Forward:

- Over the period of decades, several States and High Courts have opposed the idea of establishing an All-India Judicial Service.
- Hence, before the Parliament establishes an AIJS, there is a need to build a broad consensus between the Centre, States and the Judiciary on the topic.
- In the meantime, attention should be focused on implementing more direct solutions to address the problems of the Indian judiciary.