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THE FREEBIES DEBATE IN INDIA: WELFARE OR POLITICAL STRATEGY?

Understanding the Freebies vs. Welfare Debate:

- **The Role of the Welfare State**
 - Welfarism has existed in **India's governance structure since independence**, evolving through various phases.
 - The **Five-Year Plans** initiated under **Jawaharlal Nehru** focused on industrial growth and economic development.
 - However, recognizing the need for direct social welfare, the **mid-day meal scheme, Public Distribution System (PDS), and employment guarantee schemes** were later introduced to support the poor.
 - The **Directive Principles of State Policy** in the Indian Constitution also recognize the **state's responsibility** to provide basic needs such as **education, healthcare, employment, and food security**. Over time, states have played a key role in expanding these social security measures.

Welfare Measures vs. Freebies:

- The **lack of a clear definition of freebies** has fuelled the controversy.
- While some argue that providing free electricity, water, or cash transfers is an economic burden, others claim that **these initiatives empower marginalized communities**.
- Welfare measures such as **subsidized food, healthcare, and education** are recognized as **essential for human development**.
- Freebies like **laptops, TVs, gold coins, and cash handouts** often serve **political objectives rather than economic needs**.
- Some items, like **bicycles for girls to improve education access**, blur the line between essential welfare and election-oriented giveaways.

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Judicial and Regulatory Interventions:

- **Supreme Court's Stand on Freebies**
 - The **Supreme Court** has **historically struggled** to distinguish between **welfare policies and political inducements**:
 - In **Subramaniam Balaji v. State of Tamil Nadu (2013)**, the Court ruled that while freebies influence voters, they **do not constitute bribery or corruption**.
- **Election Commission's Guidelines**
 - The **Election Commission of India (ECI)** initially remained silent on the issue but later **introduced a pro-forma in October 2022**, requiring political parties to explain the financial feasibility of their **poll promises**.

The Way Forward: Balancing Welfare and Fiscal Responsibility

- **Institutional Reforms and Regulatory Measures**
 - The **parliament must lead the discussion** on defining and regulating **freebies vs. essential welfare**. The **Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) Act, 2003**, which limits deficit spending, should be **enforced strictly**.
 - **More Targeted Welfare Programs**
 - Welfare schemes should be **needs-based and designed for long-term economic impact**. Instead of **universal free handouts**, policies should focus on **specific disadvantaged groups**.
 - Digital governance tools like **Direct Benefit Transfers (DBT)** can reduce leakages and ensure funds **reach the intended beneficiaries**.
 - **Enhancing Economic Growth Instead of Short-Term Sops**
 - **Employment generation programs** and **skill development initiatives** should replace **pure cash subsidies**.
 - Infrastructure investments in **education, healthcare, and agriculture** can **uplift communities sustainably**.
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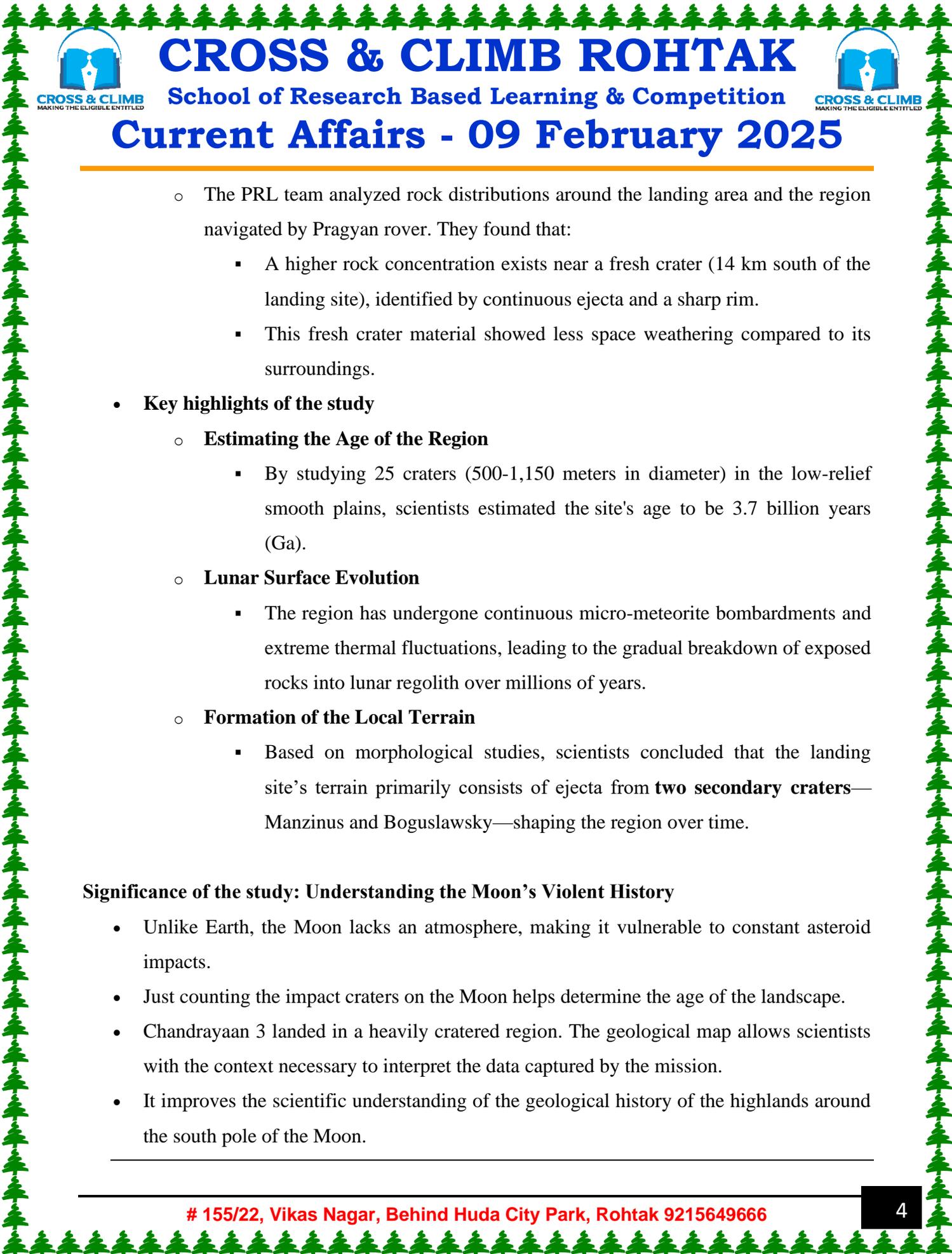
CHANDRAYAAN-3'S LANDING REGION IS ABOUT 3.7 BN YEARS OLD

Regional Geography of the Chandrayaan-3 Landing Site

- In August 2023, India became the first country to achieve a soft landing on the Moon's south pole.
- The landing site is now known as **Shiv Shakti Point**. This Point is enclosed by multiple large craters:
 - **Manzinus Crater** (96 km diameter, ~3.9 billion years old) to the north
 - **Boguslawsky Crater** (95 km diameter, ~4 billion years old) to the southeast
 - **Schomberger Crater** (86 km diameter, ~3.7 billion years old) to the south
- Manzinus and Boguslawsky have flat floors and subdued walls, while Schomberger stands out due to its steep crater walls, central peak, raised rim, and well-preserved ejecta blanket.

ISRO Scientists Uncover Age and Evolution of Chandrayaan-3 Landing Site

- The landing site, now known as **Shiv Shakti Point**, has been under detailed study by ISRO's Physical Research Laboratory (PRL) scientists using data from the Pragyan rover and Vikram lander.
- This mapping effort provides **vital geological context** for lunar exploration and deepens our knowledge of the Moon's **evolution and impact history**.
- The findings have been published in the journal **Advances in Space Research**.
- **Study technique - Advanced Imaging and Terrain Analysis**
 - PRL scientists used high-end imaging techniques, including the Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter's wide-angle and terrain cameras, to analyze craters and rock distributions near the landing site.
 - The Pragyan rover identified multiple rock fragments (over 1 cm in size) and secondary crater chains, helping researchers trace the origins of lunar materials in the area.
- **Identifying the Source of Lunar Rocks**



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- The PRL team analyzed rock distributions around the landing area and the region navigated by Pragyan rover. They found that:
 - A higher rock concentration exists near a fresh crater (14 km south of the landing site), identified by continuous ejecta and a sharp rim.
 - This fresh crater material showed less space weathering compared to its surroundings.
- **Key highlights of the study**
 - **Estimating the Age of the Region**
 - By studying 25 craters (500-1,150 meters in diameter) in the low-relief smooth plains, scientists estimated the site's age to be 3.7 billion years (Ga).
 - **Lunar Surface Evolution**
 - The region has undergone continuous micro-meteorite bombardments and extreme thermal fluctuations, leading to the gradual breakdown of exposed rocks into lunar regolith over millions of years.
 - **Formation of the Local Terrain**
 - Based on morphological studies, scientists concluded that the landing site's terrain primarily consists of ejecta from **two secondary craters**—Manzinus and Boguslawsky—shaping the region over time.

Significance of the study: Understanding the Moon's Violent History

- Unlike Earth, the Moon lacks an atmosphere, making it vulnerable to constant asteroid impacts.
 - Just counting the impact craters on the Moon helps determine the age of the landscape.
 - Chandrayaan 3 landed in a heavily cratered region. The geological map allows scientists with the context necessary to interpret the data captured by the mission.
 - It improves the scientific understanding of the geological history of the highlands around the south pole of the Moon.
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NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCHEDULED TRIBES



- It was **established by amending Article 338** and inserting a **new Article 338A** in the Constitution through the Constitution (89th Amendment) Act, 2003.
- By this amendment, the erstwhile National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes was replaced by two separate Commissions namely - the National Commission for Scheduled Castes (NCSC), and the NCST.
- **Composition:**
 - It comprises a Chairperson, a Vice-Chairperson and three full-time Members (including one female Member).
 - The term of office of **Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson** and each member is **three years** from the date of assumption of charge.
 - The **Chairperson** has been given the **rank of Union Cabinet Minister**, and the Vice-Chairperson that of a **Minister of State** and other Members have the ranks of a Secretary to the Government of India.

Functions:

- To **monitor safeguards** provided for STs under the Constitution or under other laws;
- To **inquire into specific complaints** relating to Rights & Safeguards of STs;
- To **advise in the Planning Process** relating to Socio-economic development of STs;
- To **submit report to the President annually** and other times on welfare Measures required related to Socio-economic development of STs;
- To **discharge such other functions** in relation to STs as the President may by rule specify;



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RESTRUCTURED NATIONAL BAMBOO MISSION



- The restructured National Bamboo Mission was launched as a **Centrally Sponsored Scheme in 2018-19**.
- It provides assistance to both the **Government & private sectors** for the propagation and cultivation of bamboo in **non-forest land, bamboo treatment, establishment of markets**, incubation centers, value added product development & processing and development of tools & equipment.
- **Funding Pattern:** The funding pattern is **60:40 between Centre and State Government** for all States except NE & Hilly States, where it is 90:10 and **100% in case of Union Territories/Bamboo Technology Support Groups (BTSGs) and National Level Agencies**.
- **Major objectives:**
 - To increase the **availability of quality planting materials**, area expansion of bamboo cultivation.
 - To improve post-harvest management, primary treatment and seasoning, **preservation technologies, market infrastructure**, product development, **promote skill development** and re-align efforts to reduce dependency on import of bamboo and bamboo products.
- **Implementation:** It is being implemented through the state nodal department which is nominated by the State/UT governments concerned.

NATIONAL ASSESSMENT AND ACCREDITATION COUNCIL (NAAC)



- It was established in 1994 as an **autonomous institution of the University Grants Commission (UGC)**.



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- Its primary objective is to ensure and **enhance the quality of higher education through a rigorous accreditation process.**
- It conducts **assessment and accreditation of Higher Educational Institutions (HEI)** such as colleges, universities or other recognised institutions to derive an understanding of the 'Quality Status' of the institution.
- It evaluates institutions **based on various parameters** such as **curricular aspects, teaching-learning processes, infrastructure, governance, and innovation.**
- It functions through its **General Council (GC) and Executive Committee (EC)**, comprising **educational administrators, policymakers, and senior academicians** from a cross-section of the Indian higher education system.
- The **Chairperson of the UGC is the President of the GC** of the NAAC; the Chairperson of the EC is an eminent academician nominated by the President of the GC (NAAC).
- At present, the assessment and accreditation by NAAC is done **on a voluntary basis.**
- **Headquarters: Bengaluru**

ARTICLE 22 OF THE CONSTITUTION OF INDIA



- Article 22 of the Constitution of India provides **protection from and against arrest and detention** in certain cases.
- These safeguards help in avoiding any miscarriage of justice by acting as a kind of check and balance on the powers of police officers making arrests and authorities empowered to detain a person.
- These safeguards are **available to all people**, irrespective of whether they are citizens of India or not. However, it **cannot be availed by an enemy alien.**
- These are **applicable to all arrests, except those made under a warrant issued by the court.**

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- The offence can either be **criminal or quasi-criminal** in nature or **any activity prejudicial to the interests of the state.**
- However, these safeguards are **not applicable** to a person arrested or detained **in a civil matter.**

AN AEROSPACE EXPO TO FURTHER INDIA'S GLOBAL PRESENCE

- **Aero India 2025**, scheduled to be held at the Indian Air Force station in Yelahanka, Bengaluru from February 10 to 14, **represents more than just an aviation exhibition.**
- It is a **strategic platform for innovation, strengthening global alliances, and propelling technological advancements** in the aerospace and defence sectors.
- This **15th edition** is poised to **redefine aerospace expositions and bolster India's position as a key player in global aviation and defence industries.**

The Journey of Aero India: A Legacy of Transformation

- **Humble Beginnings and Early Growth (1996–2005)**
 - The **inaugural edition of Aero India in 1996** was a **modest affair, primarily aimed at showcasing India's existing aerospace capabilities** and attracting foreign investment in the sector.
 - Held at the Yelahanka Air Force Station in Bengaluru, it **provided an initial platform for domestic and international aviation companies to explore business opportunities.**
 - While the scale was limited, **the event set the foundation for what would later become a strategic platform for collaboration and technology transfer.**
 - **During the early 2000s, Aero India gained recognition among global defence manufacturers,** leading to increased participation from countries such as Russia, Israel, and the United States.

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- This period also saw India gradually expanding its domestic aerospace industry, with the government encouraging technology partnerships with international players.
 - **Strengthening Domestic Capabilities (2005–2015)**
 - Between 2005 and 2015, Aero India witnessed a sharp rise in international participation, with leading aerospace giants such as Boeing, Lockheed Martin, Dassault Aviation, and Airbus establishing a strong presence.
 - This decade was marked by major defence procurement deals, including the acquisition of advanced fighter jets like the Dassault Rafale, Sukhoi Su-30MKI, and Lockheed Martin C-130J Super Hercules.
 - Concurrently, India intensified its efforts to develop indigenous defence platforms.
 - The Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) Tejas, an ambitious project led by HAL, gained prominence during Aero India exhibitions, showcasing India's ability to design and manufacture world-class fighter aircraft.
 - **A Shift Towards Self-Reliance and Global Leadership (2015–Present)**
 - The past decade has been transformative for India's aerospace and defence industries, and Aero India has played a pivotal role in this shift.
 - Under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the Indian government has aggressively pursued self-reliance in defence manufacturing through initiatives such as 'Make in India' and 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat'.
 - These policies have encouraged private-sector participation, promoted domestic production, and reduced dependence on foreign imports.
 - Aero India has evolved from a showcase of global technologies into a platform where India demonstrates its growing aerospace capabilities.
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