

### BHARAT RATNA: INDIA'S HIGHEST CIVILIAN AWARD

#### About Bharat Ratna:

- The Bharat Ratna Award is the **highest civilian award** in India.
- Instituted on 2 January 1954, the award is conferred in recognition of "exceptional service/performance of the highest order".
- It is bestowed upon individuals who have made exceptional contributions to the nation in various fields, such as **arts, literature, science, and public service**.
  - However, the Government, in 2011, expanded the criteria to include "any field of human endeavour".
- The recommendations for the award are made by the Prime Minister to the President.



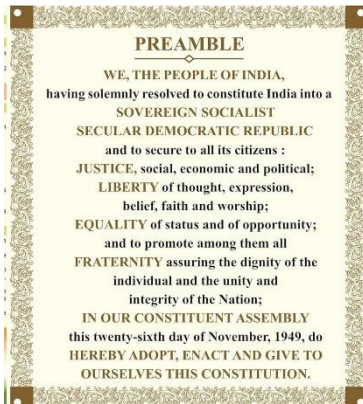
- The recipients receive a **Sanad** (certificate) signed by the President and a **peepal leaf-shaped medallion with no monetary grant** associated with the award.
- Bharat Ratna recipients rank seventh in the Indian order of precedence.
- There is no formal provision that recipients of the Bharat Ratna should be Indian citizens.
- It has been conferred on one naturalized citizen, **Mother Teresa**, and on two non-Indians: **Abdul Ghaffar Khan** (born in British India and later a citizen of Pakistan) and **Nelson Mandela**, a citizen of South Africa.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced names of 3 new recipients of the Bharat Ratna award, praising their contributions to the nation.

- This brings the total number of recipients of Bharat Ratna award to **53**.
- The 3 new recipients of the awards are:
- **Late P V Narasimha Rao:**
  - Pamulaparthi Venkata Narasimha Rao, popularly known as P. V. Narasimha Rao, was an Indian lawyer and politician who served as the 9th prime minister of India from 1991 to 1996.

- He is known for introducing various liberal reforms to India's economy.
- **Late Chaudhary Charan Singh:**
  - Chaudhary Charan Singh was an Indian politician and a freedom fighter.
  - He served as the 5th prime minister of India and 5th Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh.
  - He followed Mahatma Gandhi in non-violent struggle for independence from the British Government, and was imprisoned several times.
- **Late M. S. Swaminathan:**
  - Mankombu Sambasivan Swaminathan was an Indian agronomist, agricultural scientist, plant geneticist, administrator, and humanitarian.
  - Swaminathan was a global leader of the green revolution.
  - He has been called the main architect of the green revolution in India for his leadership and role in introducing and further developing high-yielding varieties of wheat and rice.

## PREAMBLE OF THE INDIAN CONSTITUTION



The Supreme Court of India recently agreed to examine whether the words "socialist" and "secular" can be removed from the Preamble of the Indian Constitution.

### **About the Preamble of the Indian Constitution:**

- The preamble of the Indian Constitution serves as a brief introductory statement of the Constitution that sets out the guiding purpose, principles, and philosophy of the Indian Constitution.
- The Preamble is based on the Objectives Resolution, drafted and moved by Jawaharlal Nehru.
- The Preamble reveals four ingredients or components:

- **Source of authority of the Constitution:** It is indicated by the Preamble that the source of authority of the Constitution **lies with the people of India.**
- **Nature of the Indian State:** It declares India to be a **sovereign, socialist, secular, and democratic republic.**
- **Objectives of the Constitution:** The objectives stated by the Preamble are to **secure justice, liberty, and equality** for all citizens and **promote fraternity to maintain the unity and integrity** of the nation.
- **Date of adoption of the Constitution:** It stipulates **November 26, 1949**, as the date.
- **Amendments:** By the **42nd Amendment** of 1976, the words **“Socialist” and “Secular”** were inserted; the Preamble now reads **“Sovereign Socialist Secular Democratic Republic”**.
- **Interpretation by the Supreme Court:**
  - **Berubari Union case:** In this case, it was held by the Supreme Court that the **Preamble is part of the Constitution.** However, it recognised that the Preamble could be used as a **guiding principle if a term in any article** of the Constitution is **ambiguous** or has more than one meaning.
  - **Keshvananda Bharti v. State of Kerala:** In this case, the Supreme Court overturned its earlier decision and **held that the Preamble is a part of the Constitution and can be amended** under Article 368 of the Constitution.
  - Again, in the **LIC of India case**, the Supreme Court held that the **Preamble is a part of the Constitution.**

## AIRPORTS AUTHORITY OF INDIA (AAI)



The Supreme Court recently agreed to hear a curative petition filed by the Airports Authority of India (AAI) against the multinational conglomerate GMR Group concerning the operational management of Nagpur's Babasaheb Ambedkar International Airport.

## About the Airports Authority of India (AAI):

- It is a **statutory body** under the **Directorate General of Civil Aviation, Ministry of Civil Aviation**, Government of India.
- It was constituted by an Act of Parliament and came into being on 1st April 1995, by merging the erstwhile National Airports Authority and the International Airports Authority of India.
- The merger brought into existence a single Organisation entrusted with the **responsibility of creating, upgrading, maintaining, and managing civil aviation infrastructure both on the ground and in air space in the country.**
- AAI manages **137 airports, which include 24 International Airports** (including 3 International Civil Enclaves), **10 Customs Airports** (including 4 Customs Civil Enclaves), **80 Domestic Airports**, and **23 Domestic Civil Enclaves** at Defence airfields.
- AAI also provides **Air Traffic Management Services (ATMS) over the entire Indian Air Space and adjoining oceanic areas**, with ground installations at all airports, and 25 other locations to ensure the safety of aircraft operations.

## The functions of AAI are as follows:

- Design, **development, operation and maintenance** of international and domestic airports and civil enclaves.
- **Control and management of the Indian airspace extending beyond the territorial limits** of the country, as accepted by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO).
- Construction, modification and **management of passenger terminals.**
- **Development and Management of cargo terminals** at international and domestic airports.
- **Provision of passenger facilities** and an information system at the passenger terminals at airports.
- Provision of communication and navigation aids, viz. ILS, DVOR, DME, Radar etc.

## WHAT IS THE SOVEREIGN GOLD BOND (SGB) SCHEME?

The issue price of the next tranche of Sovereign Gold Bond has been fixed at Rs 6,263 per gram, the Reserve Bank said in a statement recently.



**Sovereign Gold Bond (SGBs) are government securities denominated in grams of gold.**

- The SGB Scheme was first launched by the Government of India (GOI) on October 30, 2015.
- They are **substitutes for holding physical gold**. Investors have to pay the issue price, and the bonds will be redeemed upon maturity.
- The bond is **issued by the Reserve Bank on behalf of the GOI**.
- **Who is eligible to invest** in the SGBs? The bonds will be restricted for sale to **resident Indian entities, including individuals** (in their capacity as individuals, or on behalf of the minor child, or jointly with any other individual), **Hindu Undivided Family (HUF), Trusts, Universities and Charitable Institutions**.

### **What are the minimum and maximum limits for investment?**

- The bonds are issued in denominations of one gram of gold and in multiples thereof.
- **The minimum investment in the bond shall be one gram**, with a **maximum subscription limit of 4 kg for individuals, 4 kg for HUFs, and 20 kg for trusts** and similar entities notified by the government from time to time per fiscal year.
- In the case of joint holding, the investment limit of 4 KG will be applied to the first applicant only.
- **Tenor:** The tenor of the bond will be for a period of **8 years, with an exit option in the 5th, 6th, and 7th years**, to be exercised on the interest payment dates.



- Who are the **authorised agencies selling the SGBs**? Bonds are sold through offices or branches of **Nationalised Banks, Scheduled Private Banks, Scheduled Foreign Banks, designated Post Offices, Stock Holding Corporation of India (SHCIL)**, and the authorised stock exchanges either directly or through their agents.

### Other Features:

- **Payment** for the Bonds will be through cash payment (up to a maximum of Rs. 20,000/-), or demand draft, or cheque, or electronic banking.
- Investors are assured of the market value of gold at the time of maturity and periodical interest.
- These securities are **eligible to be used as collateral for loans** from banks, financial Institutions, and Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFCs).
- Bonds will be **tradable on stock exchanges** within a fortnight of the issuance on a date as notified by the RBI.
- The bonds can **also be sold and transferred** as per the provisions of the Government Securities Act, 2006.
- **Interest** on the bonds will be taxable as per the provisions of the Income-tax Act, 1961.
- The **capital gains tax** arising on the redemption of SGB to an individual has been exempted.

### NATIONAL JUDICIAL ACADEMY (NJA)



If judges can go to the National Judicial Academy for training, why not lawyers, the Supreme Court said recently while asserting that all advocates should undergo compulsory training.

- NJA, established in 1993 under the Societies Registration Act, 1860, is an independent society, fully funded by the Government of India, and works under the directions of the Supreme Court of India.

- **Mandate:** Strengthening the Administration of Justice through **Judicial Education, Research, and Policy Development.**
- It **organises training to aid the judges** in their judging roles and in the performance of court administration work.
- Its 63-acre **campus is located on the outskirts of Bhopal.** It also has a registered office in Delhi.
- The **Chief Justice of India (CJI)** is the **Chairman of the General Body** of NJA as well as the **Chairman of the Governing Council, the Executive Committee, and the Academic Council** of NJA.
- **Management:**
  - **The Director, NJA** is the Principal Executive Officer. The Director is **appointed by the Chairman**, the Hon'ble Chief Justice of India.
  - NJA academic staff positions include, in addition to the Director, one position of Additional Director (Research), three positions of Professor, six positions of Assistant Professor, six positions of Research Fellow, and six positions of Law Associate.

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## HIGH-ALTITUDE PSEUDO SATELLITE VEHICLE (HAPS)

Recently, the National Aerospace Laboratories (NAL) in Bengaluru completed the first test of a solar-powered high-altitude pseudo satellite vehicle.



### About High-Altitude Pseudo Satellite Vehicle:

- It is a new-age **unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV)** that can significantly increase India's surveillance and monitoring capabilities in the border areas.
- It is a still-developing technology, and the successful test flight last week puts India among a very small group of countries currently experimenting with this technology.
- **Features**
  - It can fly at **altitudes of 18-20 km** from the ground, almost double the heights attained by commercial aeroplanes.

- It has the ability to generate solar power.
  - It can remain in the air for months, even years, offering it advantages of a satellite.
  - It does not require a rocket to get into space.
  - The **cost of operating HAPS is several times lower** than that of a satellite that is usually placed at least 200 km from the Earth.
  - **Applications of HAPS:**
    - It can be very useful in **disaster situations**.
    - It can even be used to provide **mobile communications** networks in remote areas
    - Even it can be used in **continuous surveillance** of border areas to detect changes or movements.
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## 7TH INDIAN OCEAN CONFERENCE

- The 7th edition of the Indian Ocean Conference is being held in Perth, Australia on 9-10 February, 2024.
  - It is being held in association with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Government of Australia, along with S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Singapore and Perth-US Asia Centre in Australia.
- The theme of this edition of the conference is "**Towards a Stable and Sustainable Indian Ocean**".

## What is Indian Ocean Region (IOR)?

- IOR is a geographical region that encompasses the Indian Ocean and its surrounding areas, including the littoral states and islands.
- The region spans from:
  - African coast in the west to the Australian coast in the east, and
  - Arabian Peninsula and the Persian Gulf in the north to the southern coast of Sri Lanka and Australia in the south.



- The Indian Ocean is the world's third-largest ocean, covering an area of approximately 70.6 million square kilometres.

## What is the Significance of Indian Ocean Region (IOR)?

- **Geopolitical Importance:**
  - Due to its geographical location, it serves as a major transit route for global trade, including oil and gas shipments.
- **Economic Importance:**
  - The IOR is home to several fast-growing economies, including India, China, and several Southeast Asian nations.
  - **It shares 64% of the global population and 60% of the global GDP.**
- **Security Importance:**
  - The IOR is also a region of great security importance, with several countries in the region facing threats from terrorism, piracy, and maritime security challenges.
- **Environmental Importance:**
  - The IOR is home to several important marine ecosystems, including coral reefs and mangrove forests, that are vital for maintaining biodiversity and supporting local communities.

## What is Indian Ocean Conference (IOC)

- IOC is an annual international conference that focuses on the geopolitical, economic, and strategic importance of the Indian Ocean region.
- The conference brings together policymakers, scholars, business leaders, and civil society representatives to discuss issues related to security, trade, and cooperation in the Indian Ocean region.
- The first edition of the Conference was held in Singapore in 2016. The sixth edition of IOC was organised in 2023 in Dhaka, Bangladesh.
- **Organised by** - the India Foundation in partnership with other organizations in the region.