

OFFICE OF GOVERNOR OF STATE

- Everything related to the office of Governor (appointment, powers, etc) have been discussed under **Part VI (Article 153 to Article 162)** of the Indian Constitution.
- It is stated that the Governor has a dual role - **s/he is the constitutional head of state** (bound by the advice of his council of ministers) and **s/he functions as a vital link** between the Union and the State govt.

Constitutional Provisions Related to the Office of Governor:

- **Article 153:** There shall be a Governor for each State and the same person can be the Governor for two/more States.
 - The second part was added by the **7th Constitutional Amendment Act 1956**.
- **Article 155:** Governor of a State shall be appointed by the **President** by warrant under his hand and seal.
- **Article 156:**
 - The Governor shall hold office during the **pleasure of the President**, but his normal term of office will be **five**
 - The Governor may, by writing under his hand addressed to the **President, resign** his office.

Functioning of the Governor's Office over the Years:

- Because the President acts with the aid and assistance of the Prime Minister and the Union Council of Ministers, **the Governor is appointed and removed by the central government.**
- The Governor enjoys certain **discretionary** powers under the Constitution (Article 163), such as giving or withholding assent to a Bill passed by the state legislature, etc.
 - These discretionary powers have resulted in **friction with the state government.**
- As a result, Governors have been seen as **acting on the behest of the central government/ as an agent of the Centre**, especially by those in opposition.

NATIONAL RESEARCH FOUNDATION

Despite approving a Bill to set up a National Research Foundation (NRF) to boost scientific advancement in the country just eight months earlier, the Union government was silent on allocation for the institution or progress made so far in the interim budget for 2024-25.



National Research Foundation is an apex body to provide high-level strategic direction of scientific research in the country in accordance with the recommendations of the National Education Policy (NEP), will be established at a cost of 50,000 crore over the period 2023-28.

- It enhances “India’s national research infrastructure, knowledge enterprise, and innovation potential, for scientific pursuit”.
- **Goals:** To increase private sector contributions to research in India and to ensure that a larger portion of government funds go to state universities and colleges.
- **Nodal Agency:** The Department of Science and Technology (DST) will be NRF’s administrative department.
- **Governing body:**
 - The Prime Minister will be the **ex-officio President of the Board**.
 - The Union Minister of Science & Technology & Union Minister of Education will be the **ex-officio Vice-Presidents**.
 - NRF’s functioning will be governed by an **Executive Council** chaired by the **Principal Scientific Adviser** to the Government of India.
- **Functions**
 - **Forge collaborations** among the industry, academia, and government departments and research institutions, and create an interface mechanism for participation and contribution of industries and State governments in addition to the scientific and line ministries.
 - It will focus on **creating a policy framework** and putting in place regulatory processes that can encourage collaboration and increased spending by the industry on R&D.

CODEX COMMITTEE ON SPICES AND CULINARY HERBS



The 7th session of the Codex Committee on Spices and Culinary Herbs (CCSCH) was held from 29th January 2024 to 2nd February 2024 at Kochi.

Codex Committee on Spices and Culinary Herbs was established as one of the Commodity Committees under the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC) in 2013.

- India hosts this prestigious Committee since the beginning and Spices Board India serves as the **secretariat organization** which organizes the Committee's sessions.
- In CCSCCH 7th session quality standards for 5 spices, namely small cardamom, turmeric, juniper berry, all spice and star anise were finalised.

Codex Alimentarius Commission

- It was jointly established by **FAO and WHO**.
- It is an international, intergovernmental body which is **based in Rome**.
- **Members:** It consists of 189 member countries.
- Membership of the Commission is open to all Member Nations and Associate Members of FAO and WHO which are interested in international food standards.
- The Commission meets in regular sessions once a year, alternating between Geneva and Rome.
- **Funding:** The programme of work of the Commission is funded through the regular budgets of WHO and FAO, with all work subject to the approval of the two governing bodies of the parent organisations.
- The Commission works in the **six official languages** of the UN.
- The standards of CAC are recognized by the WTO as international reference points for the resolution of trade disputes concerning food safety and consumer protection.
- The standards developed by the Committees under the CAC, including the CCSCCH, are voluntary in nature, which the member countries of the CAC adopt and use as reference standards to align their national standards.
- The works of CAC contribute to harmonization of food standards across the globe, facilitate fair global trade in food, and enhance food safety to safeguard the health of global consumers.

WHAT ARE ATMOSPHERIC RIVERS?

A second, more powerful atmospheric river storm was headed for Southern California recently, threatening to unleash life-threatening floods and landslides.



- Atmospheric rivers are long, concentrated regions in the atmosphere that transport moist air from the tropics to higher latitudes.
- They are responsible for 90 percent of the movement of moisture from the tropics toward the poles.
- They are the largest transport mechanisms of freshwater on Earth.
- They form when large-scale weather patterns align to create narrow channels, or filaments, of intense moisture transport.
- Ten or more atmospheric rivers can be happening at once across the globe.
- A well-known and strong one is the Pineapple Express, with moisture transported from the tropical Pacific around Hawaii to the US and Canadian West Coasts.
- Features:
 - Typically, 250 to 375 miles wide, atmospheric rivers can stretch more than a thousand miles long.
 - They primarily occur during the winter of the respective hemisphere, when extratropical cyclones are most prevalent.
 - The average atmospheric river carries an amount of water vapor roughly equivalent to the average flow of water at the mouth of the Mississippi River (second-longest river in North America).
- When atmospheric rivers run up against mountains or run into local atmospheric dynamics and are forced to ascend, the moisture they carry cools and condenses, so they can produce intense rainfall or snowfall.
- While they are an incredibly important source of rainfall, they can also bring flash flooding, mudslides, and landslides, sometimes killing people and destroying property.

THE LEGAL DISPUTE OVER MATHURA, VARANASI MOSQUES

Background:

- When the Babri-Masjid Ram Janmabhoomi dispute gained momentum, different organisations took up the case of two other mosques — the **Gyanvapi mosque in Varanasi** and the **Shahi Idgah in Mathura**.
- In September 1991, the then government enacted a special law to freeze the status of places of worship as they were on August 15, 1947.
- The law kept the disputed structure at Ayodhya out of its purview as it was then an ongoing litigation.

About Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act, 1991:

- It is described as an Act to prohibit conversion of any place of worship and to provide for the maintenance of the religious character of any place of worship.
- The Act declares that the religious character of a place of worship shall continue to be the same as it was on **August 15, 1947**.
- It says that no person shall convert any place of worship of any religious denomination into one of a different denomination or section.
- **Exemption:**
 - The disputed site at Ayodhya was exempted from the Act. Due to this exemption, the trial in the Ayodhya case proceeded even after the enforcement of this law.
 - Any place of worship which is an ancient and historical monument, or an archaeological site covered by the **Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1958**.
 - A suit that has been finally settled or disposed of.
 - Any dispute that has been settled by the parties or conversion of any place that took place by acquiescence before the Act commenced.
- **Criticism:**
 - The law has been challenged on the ground that it bars judicial review, which is a basic feature of the Constitution.

- It imposes an “arbitrary irrational retrospective cutoff date,” and abridges the right to religion of Hindus, Jains, Buddhists, and Sikhs.

Why Did the Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act Not Cover Gyanvapi and Shahi Idgah?

- In both disputes, the respective mosque committees sought rejection of the suits on the ground that the Places of Worship Act prohibits such litigation.
- However, court orders so far say the Act does not bar these suits and that they must go on.
- In the Gyanvapi worshippers’ case, the ruling is that the suits aimed to assert the right of worship of the Hindu deities and did not seek to convert the status of the mosque.
- The Allahabad High Court has taken the view that the **Act does not define the term ‘religious character’**.
- A structure cannot have the dual character of being both Hindu and Muslim, and that only an examination of evidence can determine its religious character.
- **The Act cannot be an absolute bar on proceedings to ascertain its religious character**, it held.
- Regarding the Mathura dispute, the district court has taken the view that the **suits are not barred by the Places of Worship Act, as what is under challenge is the compromise decree based on the 1968 agreement**.
- As the decree was drawn up before the commencement of the 1991 Act, it is not applicable to the case, it has held.

FISCAL DEFICIT

Fiscal deficit

- Fiscal deficit refers to the shortfall in a government’s revenue when compared to its expenditure.
- When a government’s expenditure exceeds its revenues, the government will have to borrow money or sell assets to fund the deficit.

- **Statistics for 2024-25**
 - In 2024-25, the government's tax receipts are expected to be ₹26.02 lakh crore while its total revenue is estimated to be ₹30.8 lakh crore.
 - The Union government's total expenditure, on the other hand, is estimated to be ₹47.66 lakh crore.
- **Focus on keeping the fiscal deficit under control rather than on generating a fiscal surplus**
 - When a government runs a fiscal surplus, on the other hand, its revenues exceed expenditure. It is, however, quite rare for governments to run a surplus.
 - Most governments today focus on keeping the fiscal deficit under control rather than on generating a fiscal surplus or on balancing the budget.
 - This is because a **controlled deficit policy is said to be expansionary.**
 - In such policy the government spends more on budget items such as infrastructure.
 - Such policies are typically used to boost productivity and the economy.
- **Fiscal deficit is not national debt**
 - The national debt is the total amount of money that the government of a country owes its lenders at a particular point in time.
 - The national debt is usually the amount of debt that a government has accumulated over many years of running fiscal deficits and borrowing to bridge the deficits.

Why does the fiscal deficit matter?

- **Relationship between fiscal deficit and inflation**
 - There is a strong direct relationship between the government's fiscal deficit and inflation in the country.
 - When a country's government runs a persistently high fiscal deficit, this can eventually lead to higher inflation as the government will be forced to use fresh money issued by the central bank to fund its fiscal deficit.

- The fiscal deficit recently reached a high of 9.17% of GDP during the pandemic and has since improved significantly and is projected to drop to 5.8% now.
- **Indicator of fiscal discipline maintained by the government**
 - The fiscal deficit also signals to the market the degree of fiscal discipline maintained by the government.
 - A lower fiscal deficit may thus help improve the ratings assigned to the Indian government's bonds.
 - When the government is able to fund more of its spending through tax revenues and borrow less, this gives more confidence to lenders and drives down the government's borrowing cost.
- **Ability of the government to manage its overall public debt**
 - A high fiscal deficit can also adversely affect the ability of the government to manage its overall public debt.
 - In December, the International Monetary Fund warned that India's public debt could rise to more than 100% of GDP in the medium term due to risks.
 - Although, the Centre disagreed with the assessment.
 - It is also worth noting that the Centre has been keen on tapping the international bond market.
 - A lower fiscal deficit may help the government to more easily sell its bonds overseas and access cheaper credit.

INS SANDHAYAK

The Indian Navy commissioned its latest survey vessel, Sandhayak, at Naval Dockyard in Vizag in the presence of defence minister.



About INS Sandhayak:

- It is the first in a series of four **Survey Vessel (Large)** ships being constructed at Garden Reach Shipbuilders & Engineers (GRSE), Kolkata

- The primary purpose of the ship is to conduct comprehensive coastal and deep-water Hydrographic Surveys for Port and Harbour approaches, as well as determining navigational channels and routes.
 - The operational zone extends up to maritime limits, **covering the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ)** and extended continental shelf.
 - Additionally, the vessel is equipped to **gather oceanographic and geophysical data**, serving both defence and civil applications.
 - In its secondary role, the ship can offer limited defence capabilities and serve as a hospital ship during wartime or emergencies.
 - It is equipped with cutting-edge hydrographic tools, including a Data Acquisition and Processing System, Autonomous Underwater Vehicle, Remotely Operated Vehicle, DGPS Long-range positioning systems, and Digital side-scan sonar.
 - Powered by two diesel engines, the vessel boasts a speed capability **exceeding 18 knots**.
 - Measuring 110 meters in length and displacing 3400 tons, INS Sandhayak has an indigenous content of over 80 per cent by cost.
 - This ship is re-incarnated in its present avatar from erstwhile Sandhayak, which was decommissioned in 2021.
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