

KULASEKARAPATTINAM SPACEPORT

The Prime Minister recently laid the foundation stone for a new spaceport at Kulasekarapattinam in southern Tamil Nadu.



- It is a **new spaceport** coming up at **Kulasekarapattinam**, a coastal hamlet near the temple town of Tiruchendur in **Thoothukudi district** in **southern Tamil Nadu**.
- It will be **second after** the space agency's existing **Satish Dhawan Space Centre**, founded in Andhra Pradesh's Sriharikota in 1971, with two launch pads.
- It will **focus on the launch of Small Satellite Launch Vehicles (SSLVs) on a commercial basis**.
- It will house 35 facilities, including a launch pad, rocket integration facilities, ground range and checkout facilities, and a mobile launch structure (MLS) with checkout computers.
- It would have the capacity to **launch 24 satellites per year using a mobile launch structure**.
- Spread over 2,350 acres, the Kulasekharapatnam spaceport will **help save fuel** for small rocket launches **as the port can launch rockets directly south over the Indian Ocean without requiring crossing landmasses**.
 - This is **unlike the existing launch site** at the Satish Dhawan Space Centre, **which adds more fuel requirements** for launching into a polar orbit **as rockets need to follow a curved path to the south to avoid Sri Lanka's landmass**.
- It is estimated to cost Rs. 986 crore.
- SSLV is capable of **launching a 500kg satellite** in a **500 km planar orbit**.
- The key features of SSLV are **Low cost**, with **low turn-around time**, flexibility in **accommodating multiple satellites**, **Launch-on-demand feasibility**, **minimal launch infrastructure requirements**, etc.

NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR BACKWARD CLASSES (NCBC)

The National Commission for Backward Classes (NCBC) has raised serious objections to the West Bengal government's recommendation to include 83 castes in the central list of Other Backward Classes (OBCs).



- NCBC was **initially constituted** by the Central Government by the **National Commission for Backward Classes Act, 1993**, under the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.
- It has been **accorded constitutional status** through “The Constitution (One Hundred and Second Amendment) Act, 2018”, whereby **Article 338B** has been inserted, forming a **Commission for the socially and educationally backward classes** to be known as the NCBC.
- **Composition:** The Commission consists of a **Chairperson**, a **Vice-Chairperson**, and **three other Members** in the rank and pay of Secretary to the Government of India.
- The Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson and other Members of the Commission shall be **appointed by the President** by warrant under his hand and seal.

Functions: It shall be the duty of the Commission

- to **investigate and monitor all matters relating to the safeguards provided for the socially and educationally backward classes** under this Constitution or under any other law for the time being in force or under any order of the Government, and to **evaluate the working of such safeguards**;
- to **inquire into specific complaints** with respect to the deprivation of rights and safeguards of the socially and educationally backward classes;
- to **participate and advise on the socio-economic development** of the socially and educationally backward classes and to evaluate the progress of their development under the Union and any State;

- to **discharge such other functions** in relation to the protection, welfare, and development and advancement of the socially and educationally backward classes as the **President may, subject to the provisions of any law made by Parliament, by rule specify**
 - **Powers:**
 - **While inquiring into any complaint**, it will have all the **powers of a civil court** (it will be able to summon any person, ask for a document, and receive evidence on affidavits).
 - The Union and every State **Government shall consult the Commission on all major policy matters affecting the socially and educationally backward classes.**
 - The Commission shall have the **power to regulate its own procedures.**
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WHAT IS ARTICLE 25 OF INDIAN CONSTITUTION?

The Kerala High Court recently observed that the fundamental right under Article 25 of the Constitution to enter a temple for worship does not give the right to any member of the Hindu community to perform the role of Archakas (priests).



- Article 25 says that **all persons** are **equally entitled to freedom of conscience and the right to freely profess, practice, and propagate religion.**

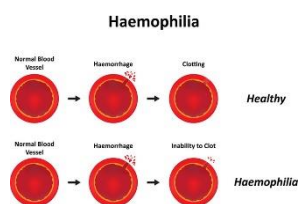
The implications of these are:

- **Freedom of conscience:** Inner freedom of an individual to mould his relation with God or Creatures in whatever way he desires.
- **Right to profess:** Declaration of one's religious beliefs and faith openly and freely.
- **Right to practice:** Performance of religious worship, rituals, ceremonies, and exhibition of beliefs and ideas.
- **Right to propagate:** Transmission and dissemination of one's religious beliefs to others or exposition of the tenets of one's religion. But it does not include the

right to convert another person to one's religion. Forcible conversions impinge on the 'freedom of conscience' guaranteed to all persons alike.

- Thus, Article 25 covers **not only religious beliefs (doctrines) but also religious practices** (rituals).
- Moreover, these rights are **available to all persons—citizens as well as non-citizens**.
- However, these rights are **subject to public order, morality, health, and other provisions relating to fundamental rights**.
- Further, **nothing in this article** shall affect the operation of any existing law or **prevent the State from making any law to:**
 - **regulate or restrict any economic, financial, political, or other secular activity associated with religious practice;**
 - **provide for social welfare and reform, or throw open Hindu religious institutions of a public character to all classes and sections of Hindus;**
- Article 25 also contains **two explanations:** one, the **wearing and carrying of kirpans** is to be **included in the profession of the Sikh religion;** and two, the **Hindus**, in this context, **include Sikhs, Jains, and Buddhists.**

HAEMOPHILIA A



Recently, the union Science and Technology Minister told that India has conducted the first human clinical trial of gene therapy for 'haemophilia A' at Christian Medical College – Vellore.

Haemophilia A is a genetic disorder that **affects the body's ability to form blood clots.**

- It is a **rare disorder** in which the blood doesn't clot in the typical way because it doesn't have enough blood-clotting proteins.
- It is a sex linked disorder. The gene for haemophilia is carried on **the X chromosome**.
- **Causes:** It is caused by a mutation or change, in one of the genes, that provides instructions for making the clotting factor proteins needed to form a blood clot. This type is caused by a lack or decrease of **clotting factor VIII**.

- **Symptoms:** Signs and symptoms of haemophilia vary, depending on the level of clotting factors.
- **Males** are much **more likely to have haemophilia** than are females.
- **Treatment:**
 - It involves **replacement therapy**, which involves infusing clotting factor concentrates into the bloodstream to help the blood clot.
 - Other treatments may include medications to promote clotting or surgery to repair damage caused by bleeding.

What is Gene therapy?

- It is a technique that **modifies a person's genes** to treat or cure disease.
- Gene therapies can work by several mechanisms:
 - **Replacing** a disease-causing gene with a healthy copy of the gene
 - **Inactivating** a disease-causing gene that is not functioning properly
 - **Introducing a new or modified gene** into the body to help treat a disease
- Gene therapy products are being studied to treat diseases including cancer, genetic diseases, and infectious diseases.

SWAYAM PLUS PLATFORM



Recently, the Union Minister of Education and Skill Development and Entrepreneurship launched the 'SWAYAM Plus' platform.

SWAYAM Plus platform offers courses developed **collaboratively with the industry.**

- This platform aims to enhance the employability of both **college students and lifelong learners.**
- It will offer programmes in sectors like **Manufacturing, Energy, Computer Science** and Engineering/IT/ITES, Management Studies, **Healthcare, Hospitality** and Tourism besides Indian Knowledge Systems.

Objectives

- It primarily focuses on building an ecosystem for all stakeholders in **professional and career development**, including learners, course providers, industry, academia, and strategic partners.
- It enables a mechanism that provides credit recognition for high-quality certifications and courses offered by the best industry and academia partners.
- Reaching a large learner base by catering to learning across the country, with a focus on reaching learners **from tiers 2 and 3 towns** and rural areas.
- It also envisions bringing in features such as **access to mentorship, scholarships and job placements** as value-added services in due course of time, thus building a digital ecosystem for learners to pursue **upskilling and re-skilling at all levels, namely certificate, diploma or degree.**
- The **Indian Institute of Technology Madras (IIT Madras)** will be operating this Platform.

FINANCIAL INTELLIGENCE UNIT

India's Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU) is keeping a close eye on large cash deposits and withdrawals from cooperative banks ahead of the 2024 Lok Sabha elections.



Financial Intelligence Unit was set up by the Government of India in **November 2004**.

- It is the central national agency responsible for **receiving, processing, analyzing and disseminating information** relating to **suspect financial transactions**.
- It is also responsible for coordinating and strengthening efforts of national and international intelligence, investigation and enforcement agencies in pursuing global efforts against money laundering and financing of terrorism.
- It is an **independent body** reporting directly to the **Economic Intelligence Council (EIC) headed by the Union Finance Minister**.

Functions:

- **Collection of Information:** Act as the central reception point for receiving Cash Transaction reports (CTRs), Non-Profit Organisation Transaction Reports (NTRs), Cross Border Wire Transfer Reports (CBWTRs), Reports on the Purchase or Sale of Immovable Property (IPRs) and Suspicious Transaction Reports (STRs) from various reporting entities.
 - **Analysis of Information:** Analyze received information to uncover patterns of transactions suggesting suspicion of money laundering and related crimes.
 - **Sharing of Information:** Share information with national intelligence/law enforcement agencies, national regulatory authorities and foreign Financial Intelligence Units.
 - **Act as Central Repository:** Establish and maintain a national database based on reports received from reporting entities.
 - **Coordination:** Coordinate and strengthen the collection and sharing of financial intelligence through an effective national, regional and global network to combat money laundering and related crimes.
 - **Research and Analysis:** Monitor and identify strategic key areas on money laundering trends, typologies and developments.
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LAW PANEL READIES REPORT ON SIMULTANEOUS POLLS

- The Law Commission of India is a non-statutory body constituted by the Union government. It is established to ensure that the laws formed are just and fair which work towards its proper implementation. However, it is not defined under the Constitution.
 - It works as an advisory body to the Ministry of Law and Justice.
- **It is constituted as part of Article 39A.**
 - Article 39A guarantees that no citizen is deprived of the opportunity to get justice due to a lack of resources or other impediments.
 - The 22nd Law Commission is headed by former Karnataka High Court Chief Justice Ritu Raj Awasthi.

- The commission's term has been extended until August 31, 2024.

Simultaneous elections in India: Meaning

- The concept of "One Nation, One Election" envisions a system in which all state and Lok Sabha elections must be held simultaneously.
- This will entail restructuring the Indian election cycle so that elections to the states and the centre coincide.
- This would imply that voters will vote for members of the LS and state assemblies on the same day and at the same time (or in a phased manner as the case may be).

History of Elections in India

- **Era of simultaneous elections**
 - The first general elections of free India held simultaneously to the Lok Sabha and the Legislative Assemblies of the States in 1951.
 - The **next three cycles of elections** also witnessed concurrent Lok Sabha and Legislative Assembly elections barring a few stray cases.
 - The last occasion when we had **near-simultaneous elections was in 1967**.
- **Beginning of the end of simultaneous elections**
 - The fourth Lok Sabha constituted in 1967 was dissolved prematurely in 1971. This was the beginning of the end of simultaneous elections.
 - Extension of the term of Lok Sabha during the National Emergency declared in 1975 and the dissolution of Assemblies of some States after the 1977 Lok Sabha election further disturbed the cycle of concurrent elections.
- **Current status**
 - After the two pre-mature dissolutions of the Lok Sabha in 1998 and 1999, only four State Assemblies have been going to polls along with the Lok Sabha elections in the last two decades.
 - We now have **at least two rounds of Assembly general elections every year**.

Key highlights

- **Insertion of a new chapter**
 - Currently, **Part XV of the Constitution** deals with elections. It prescribes the role of the Election Commission and for elections to be based on adult suffrage among other aspects.
 - The Commission is likely to recommend insertion of a new chapter, Part XVA, that would make provisions for simultaneous polls.
- **Recommendations will be for 2029 elections**
 - With 2024 elections round the corner, the recommendations will now be for 2029.
 - The Commission's report is likely to suggest synchronising assembly elections in two stages in the next five years before all states can go to polls simultaneously with the next Lok Sabha elections in 2029.
- **Tackling situations where the mandate results in a hung assembly or when a government falls midway**
 - The Law Commission's prescription is to **first attempt setting up an all-party unity government** if a government falls during its five-year tenure.
 - If that is not possible, then the alternative would be holding elections only for the term remaining before another cycle of simultaneous polls can be held.
- **Common voter list**
 - The third Constitutional amendment to be recommended by the law panel would specifically deal with a common voter list.
 - Currently in many states, the voter list for the panchayat and municipal elections is different from the one used for Parliament and assembly elections.
 - The State Election Commissions (SECs) supervise municipal and panchayat elections.
 - On the other hand, the Election Commission conducts polls to the offices of the President and Vice President, and to Parliament, state assemblies and legislative councils.