

### MENSTRUAL LEAVE DEBATE IN INDIA

- Menstrual leave refers to leave granted to women during their menstrual cycle when they may experience severe physical discomfort, such as cramps or other medical conditions.
- The issue has increasingly become part of discussions on gender equality, workplace welfare, and labour rights.
- India does not currently have a nationwide law mandating menstrual leave. However, certain initiatives exist at the institutional or regional level. For example:
  - Some educational institutions have introduced menstrual leave policies for students.
  - Certain state governments have provided limited leave provisions in schools or universities.
  - Several private companies have voluntarily implemented menstrual leave policies.
- These initiatives reflect growing awareness of menstrual health issues in workplaces and educational institutions.

### **Global Practices on Menstrual Leave**

- Several countries have adopted policies related to menstrual leave, though their design and implementation vary. For instance:
  - **Spain** introduced a law in 2023 allowing women to take **3-5 days of menstrual leave**, with the cost borne by the government.
  - **Japan** introduced menstrual leave legislation as early as **1947**.
  - **South Korea, Indonesia, China, and Zambia** also have provisions that allow menstrual leave under certain conditions.

### **Supreme Court's Observations on Mandatory Menstrual Leave**

- The debate gained attention after a petition sought directions from the Supreme Court to introduce a uniform law granting paid menstrual leave to women workers and female students across the country.

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- The Supreme Court Bench, headed by Chief Justice of India Surya Kant, observed that a **mandatory legal provision for menstrual leave could negatively impact women's careers.**
- The Court highlighted several potential risks:
  - **Impact on Hiring Decisions:** Employers might become reluctant to hire women if they are required to provide additional mandatory leave every month.
  - **Reduced Workplace Responsibilities:** There is concern that employers may hesitate to assign major responsibilities to women if they perceive them as frequently unavailable during certain periods.
  - **Career Growth Concerns:** The Court observed that mandatory leave policies might inadvertently create a perception that women are less capable of handling demanding roles.
- These observations were based on the broader realities of the labour market and workplace dynamics.
- Ultimately, the **Court disposed of the petition and asked the Central Government to consider the representation** and explore the possibility of framing an appropriate policy in consultation with stakeholders.

### Broader Issues in the Debate

- The discussion around menstrual leave highlights broader issues concerning gender equality in workplaces.
  - Supporters argue that menstrual leave recognises biological realities and promotes workplace dignity for women. It can help women manage severe menstrual pain, which may otherwise affect productivity and health.
  - Critics, however, argue that mandatory leave policies could reinforce gender stereotypes and discourage employers from hiring women.
  - Therefore, policymakers must balance **workplace equality, health considerations, and labour market realities** while designing such policies.
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### SC VERDICT ON OBC CREAMY LAYER: KEY CHANGES

The Supreme Court ruled that income alone cannot determine the creamy layer among OBCs and addressed the issue of equivalence between PSU/private sector employees and government employees in this context.

Those classified as part of the creamy layer are not eligible for OBC reservation benefits, and the ruling clarifies long-standing uncertainties regarding the criteria used for such classification.

#### **Supreme Court Clarifies Creamy Layer Criteria for OBCs**

- **Background of the Case** - The SC delivered its verdict on petitions challenging a 2004 Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) letter that interpreted the creamy layer criteria under the 1993 Official Memorandum (OM) on OBC reservations.
- **Issue with the 2004 Clarification** - The 1993 OM excluded salary and agricultural income from the income/wealth test for determining creamy layer status. However, the 2004 DoPT letter included salary income of PSU and private sector employees, leading to differential treatment compared to government employees.
- **Court's Observation on Equality** - The Bench held that excluding some candidates from reservation solely based on salary income—without considering the nature or level of employment—creates artificial distinctions among similarly placed OBC members.
- **Ruling Against Discriminatory Treatment** - The Court ruled that treating children of PSU or private sector employees differently from government employees amounts to hostile discrimination. Such unequal treatment of similarly placed individuals violates the constitutional guarantee of equality under Articles 14, 15, and 16.

The Union government had also considered a proposal to establish equivalence between posts in government organisations, public sector enterprises, universities, and private sector jobs for determining creamy layer status.

- However, the proposal did not progress to the Cabinet stage.

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### Income Criteria in OBC Creamy Layer and EWS Quota

- The 1993 DoPT circular clearly stated that income from salary and agricultural land would not be counted while determining the income and wealth criteria for identifying the creamy layer among OBCs.
- During hearings on petitions challenging the EWS reservation introduced in 2019, the Supreme Court questioned why the income limit for EWS and OBC creamy layer was the same at ₹8 lakh.
- The government explained, based on the **Ajay Bhushan Pandey Committee**, that the two criteria differ in their calculation.
- For OBC creamy layer determination, income from salary and agriculture is excluded, whereas for EWS eligibility, income from all sources, including salary and agricultural income, is included.

### Beneficiaries of the Supreme Court's OBC Creamy Layer Ruling

- **Impact on Future Candidates** - The ruling will benefit candidates appearing in upcoming examinations, as the revised interpretation of the creamy layer criteria may allow more OBC candidates to claim reservation benefits.
  - **Relief for Existing Candidates in Services** - Candidates already selected in government services may also benefit. Their service allocation or cadre placement could be revised, potentially enabling them to secure higher-ranked services or different cadres based on their updated OBC status.
  - **Opportunities for Previously Unallocated Candidates** - Some candidates who could not previously secure a service may now receive service allocation if their rank improves after being recognised as non-creamy layer OBC candidates.
  - **Creation of Supernumerary Posts** - The Supreme Court has directed the government to create supernumerary posts if necessary to accommodate eligible candidates affected by the ruling, provided they meet the required eligibility conditions.
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### DEENDAYAL PORT



The Deendayal Port in Gujarat's Kandla is gearing up to handle a whopping 22 vessels over a 72-hour period over the weekend

- Deendayal Port (previously called **Kandla Port**) is the **second largest seaport of India**, situated in the **Kachchh District of Gujarat**.
- It is situated in the **creek of Kandla**.
- It is a **protected natural harbor**.
- It is recognized as **one of the major ports in India**.
- It was **constructed in the 1950s** as the **chief seaport serving western India** after the **partition** of India from Pakistan left the port of Karachi in Pakistan.
- The port is specialized in handling **bulk import and export cargo, including liquid cargo**.
- It remains **India's biggest state-owned cargo handler by volume**, but it has **steadily lost market share to privately owned Mundra Port** (India's largest private port).

### JOHA RICE



Recently, India has facilitated the export of 25 metric tonnes of Assam's GI-tagged Joha Rice to the United Kingdom and Italy.

- It is an **indigenous rice of Assam**.
- It is an **indigenous aromatic rice variety** known for its distinct fragrance, fine grain texture and rich taste.
- It is grown in **Sali/ Kharif season**.

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- Major Joha varieties included in this are **Kola Joha, Keteki Joha, Bokul Joha and Kunkuni Joha.**
- This rice is also rich in several antioxidants, flavonoids, and phenolics.
- It has got **Geographical Indication (GI) tag in 2017.**
- This rice variety has two **unsaturated fatty acids viz., linoleic acid (omega-6) and linolenic (omega-3) acid.**
  - These essential fatty acids (which humans cannot produce) can help maintain various physiological conditions.

### What is Geographical Indication Tag?

- It is a sign used on products that have a **specific geographical origin and possess** qualities or a reputation that are due to that origin.
- This is typically used for agricultural products, foodstuffs, wine and spirit drinks, handicrafts and industrial products.
- The **Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999** seeks to provide for the registration and better protection of geographical indications relating to goods in India.
- This **GI tag is valid for 10 years following** which it can be renewed.

### VAN ALLEN PROBE A



NASA's 600 kg Van Allen Probe A satellite is falling back to Earth, raising questions about whether people on the ground should be concerned.

- NASA's Van Allen Probes mission was the **first mission to use two spacecraft in tandem to study Earth's radiation belts.**



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- Originally designed for a two-year mission, the Van Allen Probes A and B gathered unprecedented data on Earth's two permanent radiation belts — named for scientist James Van Allen — for almost seven years.
  - From 2012 to 2019, the spacecraft and its twin, Van Allen Probe B, flew through the Van Allen belts, rings of charged particles trapped by Earth's magnetic field, to understand how particles were gained and lost.
  - The belts shield Earth from cosmic radiation, solar storms, and the constantly streaming solar wind that are harmful to humans and can damage technology, so understanding them is important.
  - By having two spacecraft with identical instruments, with one followed by the other along nearly the same path, researchers could measure changes that occur in Earth's radiation belts over time and through space, providing insights into the physical dynamics of the radiation belts and changes that occur in this critical region of space.
  - NASA ended the mission after the two spacecraft ran out of fuel and were no longer able to orient themselves toward the Sun.
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### SILVERPIT CRATER



#### Silverpit Crater

New research has confirmed that the Silverpit Crater was formed by a massive asteroid impact millions of years ago.

- **Location:** It lies in the North Sea.
- **Formation:** It was formed by a high-velocity space rock striking the seabed roughly 43 to 46 million years ago.

**Scientific Evidence:** Researchers identified “shocked” quartz and feldspar crystals in rock samples from a nearby oil well that only form under the extreme shock pressures of a high-velocity space impact.



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### Features of Silverpit Crater:

- It measures roughly **three kilometres wide** and is surrounded by a **ring of circular faults**.
- It is a rare and exceptionally **well-preserved hypervelocity impact crater**.
- Its round shape and central peak **resembled classic impact craters**.

### MYIOPHANES KEMPI



**Myiophanes kempi**

Recently, researchers rediscovered **Myiophanes kempi** in limestone caves in the Andaman Islands after almost 100 years gap.

- It is a **slender-bodied assassin bug** belongs to the sub family of **Reduviidae**.
- It was first described by British entomologist **Willian Edward China** in 1924.
- It was previously described from **Siju Cave in Meghalaya** a century ago.

### Characteristics of Myiophanes kempi:

- It is a **specialised predator** of the subterranean ecosystem and **lives in its complete lifecycle in the darkness**.
- It uses the **long raptorial forelegs** for snatching prey -- small arthropods of the dark cave environment.

### Key facts about Siju Cave

- **Location:** It is one of the longest **limestone cave systems** in the world situated in **Garo Hills** in the state of
- It also known as **Dobakkol or Bat Cave**, is one of India's longest limestone caves.
- It is located **near the Simsang River**.
- It is famous for its stunning rock formations and underground streams.



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### KEY FACTS ABOUT MUSI RIVER



- The Musli River, also known as the **Muchukunda** or **Musunuru River**, is a major **tributary of the Krishna River** in the Deccan Plateau, flowing through **Telangana**.
- The river gained prominence in the late **16th century** when **Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah**, the **founder of Hyderabad**, established the city along its banks.

#### **Course:**

- It **originates** from **Anantagiri Hills** near Vikarabad District.
- The river is formed by the **merging of two small rivulets: Esi and Musa**.
- After originating, the Musli River flows in an eastward direction, **cutting through** the heart of **Hyderabad city**, where it historically **divided the Old City from the New City**.
- The river then continues its journey through the southern Telangana plains.
- It ultimately **joins the Krishna River** near Wazirabad in Nalgonda district.

**Dams: Himayat Sagar and Osman Sagar** are the two dams that are constructed over the river.

- **Hussain Sagar Lake** was built on a **tributary** of the River Musli.
- Several historic **bridges and mosques** line its banks, reflecting **Qutb Shahi and Nizam-era architecture**.
- The Musli River has **diversion weirs for irrigation**, locally known as **kathwas**.
- Now due to random urbanization and lack of planning the river has become a holder of all the **unprocessed domestic and industrial waste drained out of Hyderabad**.