

WHAT IS THE EARTH HOUR?

Millions of people across countries recently celebrated Earth Hour.



About Earth Hour:

- It is a **global grassroots movement** uniting people to take action on **environmental issues and protect the planet.**
- It is **organized by World Wildlife Fund (WWF).**
- It was **started by WWF and partners as a symbolic lights-out event in Sydney in 2007.**
- It **takes place on the last Saturday of March every year.**
- “Earth Hour” **encourages people to switch off all lights for an hour, from 8:30 pm to 9:30 pm local time** to promote awareness of climate change challenges and energy conservation.
- Governments and companies also participate by turning off non-essential lights in their buildings, monuments, and landmarks to **raise awareness about the impact of energy consumption on our planet.**
- This symbolic act, known as the ‘lights off’ moment, **unites people worldwide in a show of support for the planet** and serves as a reminder of the environmental issues facing us.

What is the World Wildlife Fund (WWF)?

- It is an **international non-governmental organization (NGO) founded in 1961** in Morges, Switzerland, to **protect endangered species of wildlife and preserve natural habitats.**
- **Mission:** To **stop the degradation of the planet’s natural environment** and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature.
- **WWF works** with a broad spectrum of partners, including **governments, industry, and local communities, to find solutions** to the challenges that face our natural world.

WHAT IS THE ARMED FORCES (SPECIAL POWERS) ACT (AFSPA)?

The Union Home Minister recently said that the Centre has decided to further reduce the jurisdiction of ‘disturbed areas’ under the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1958 (AFSPA) in Assam, Nagaland and Manipur.



About Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA):

- It is a law enacted by the Parliament which **gives armed forces** (Army, the Air Force and Central paramilitary forces) **the special powers and immunity to maintain public order in “disturbed areas”**.
- **When is it applied?** It can be applied **only after an area has been declared “disturbed”** under section 2 of the act.
- **What is a Disturbed area?** An area can be considered to be disturbed due to **differences or disputes among different religious, racial, language or regional groups or castes or communities**.
- **Who declares an area as disturbed?** Section (3) of AFSPA empowers the **governor of the state/Union territory to issue an official notification declaring the state or a region within as a “disturbed area”, after which the centre can decide whether to send in armed forces**.
- **The ‘special powers’ of armed forces under Section 4 are:**
 - **Power to use force even to the extent of causing death, destroy arms / ammunition dumps, fortifications/ shelters / hideouts.**
 - **Power to arrest without a warrant.**
 - **Power to seize and search’ without any warrant any premise.**
 - It stipulates that **arrested persons and seized property is to be handed over to the nearest Police Station** with least possible delay.
 - **These armed forces are immune from prosecution unless Union Government provides sanction to the prosecuting agencies.**

ANJI KHAN BRIDGE

According to officials, the last deck portion of the Anji Khan bridge is expected to be completed soon.



About Anji Khan Bridge:

- It is an **under-construction railway bridge** in the Reasi district of Jammu and Kashmir.
- It will be the **first cable-stayed railway bridge** in India.
- It forms a part of the **Udhampur Srinagar Baramulla Rail Link Project (USBRL)** connecting Katra and Reasi Station on the Jammu-Baramulla line.
- **Features:**
 - It is an **asymmetrical cable-stayed bridge** balanced on the axis of a central pylon, and it has **tunnels on both ends**.
 - The **cable-stayed portion of the Anji bridge is 472.25 metres**, while the total length of the bridge is 725.5 metres, which is divided into four parts, including an embankment.
 - The **central span of the bridge is 290 metres**; its **total deck width will be 15 metres**.
 - It stands at the height of **331 metres above the Anji river bed**.
 - **Trains can run up to 100km/h**, and the bridge can withstand wind speeds up to 213 km/hr.

NATIONAL INITIATIVE FOR PROMOTION OF UPSKILLING OF NIRMAN WORKERS (NIPUN) SCHEME



The National Initiative for Promoting Upskilling of Nirman workers (NIPUN) has recently completed its training program for construction workers engaged in the Central Vista project in New Delhi.

About NIPUN Scheme:

- It is an innovative project for the **skill training of construction workers**.
- It is an **initiative of the Ministry of Housing & Urban Affairs (MoHUA)** under its flagship scheme of the Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana-National Urban Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NULM).
- **Objective:** To **train over 1 lakh construction workers** through fresh skilling and upskilling programmes and **provides them with work opportunities in foreign countries**

- The **National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC)**, the nodal agency under the Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship (MSDE), Government of India, **will be the Implementation Partner** for the project NIPUN.
- **The project implementation is divided into three parts:**
 - training through **Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)** at construction sites;
 - training through **Fresh Skilling by Plumbing and Infrastructure Sector Skill Council (SSC)**;
 - **International Placement** through industries/ builders/ contractors;
- The courses are aligned with **National Skills Qualifications Framework (NSQF)** and will be imparted at accredited and affiliated training centres.
- It will provide trainees with '**Kaushal Bima**', **three-year accidental insurance** with coverage of **Rs 2 lakhs**.

What is the Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana-National Urban Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NULM)?

- It is a **Centrally Sponsored Scheme**, being implemented since 2014-15.
- **Implementing ministry: Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation.**
- **Coverage:** The scheme covers **all 4041 statutory cities and towns**.
- **Objectives:**
 - To **reduce poverty and vulnerability of the urban poor households** by enabling them to access gainful self-employment and skilled wage employment opportunities.
 - **Providing the shelter** equipped with essential services to the urban homeless in a phased manner.
 - **Providing suitable space, institutional credit, and social security and skills** to the urban street vendor for accessing emerging market opportunities.

WHAT IS PAROLE?

The Supreme Court recently said that the period of parole granted to convicts during the Covid-19 pandemic to prevent overcrowding in prisons cannot be counted as part of their actual sentence period and has to be excluded from it.



About Parole:

- Parole is a system of releasing a prisoner with a **suspension of the sentence**.
- The release is conditional, usually subject to behaviour, and requires periodic reporting to the authorities for a set period of time.
- It is **not a right of a prisoner** and may be denied to a prisoner even when he makes out a sufficient case.

What is Furlough?

- A broadly similar but subtly different concept is a furlough, which is given in the case of **long-term imprisonment**.
- While furlough is seen **as a matter of right**, to be granted periodically irrespective of any reason and merely to enable the prisoner to retain family and social ties,
- Furlough is given by the state, but its **decision can be challenged before a court of law**.

VEDIC HERITAGE PORTAL

Recently, the Union Home Minister inaugurated the Vedic Heritage portal in New Delhi



About the Vedic heritage portal:

- It is developed by the **Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts**
- The portal will be a one-stop solution for the user, who would like to search for any information regarding the Vedic heritage.
- The audio-visual recording of four Vedas has been uploaded on the Vedic Heritage portal. The portal has over 18 thousand mantras of the four Vedas with a duration of over 550 hours.
- **The objective of the portal:** To secure knowledge from ancient scriptures and manuscripts for future generations through technology.

Key facts about Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts

- It was established in 1987 as an autonomous institution **under the Ministry of Culture**, as a centre for research, academic pursuit, and dissemination in the field of the arts.

- It has a trust (Board of Trustees), which meets regularly to give general direction about the Centre's work. The Executive Committee, drawn from among the Trustees, functions under a Chairman.
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WORLD FOOD PROGRAMME (WFP)

According to a new World Food Programme (WFP) report the reach of school meals in low-income countries remains four percent below pre-pandemic levels, despite a recovery overall



About World Food Programme:

- World Food Programme is a branch of the **United Nations** that deals with hunger eradication and promotes food security in the world.
 - It is a **member of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)**.
 - It is operating in more than 120 countries, which provides food assistance during emergencies and works with communities to enhance nutrition and generate resilience.
 - It has been functioning in India since 1963.
 - **Funding:** WFP is funded by **voluntary donations from governments**, corporates and private donors.
 - **Report** released by **the WFP is Global Report on Food Crisis**
 - The Global Report on Food Crises describes the scale of acute hunger in the world.
 - It provides an analysis of the drivers that are contributing to food crises across the globe.
 - The report is produced by **the Global Network against Food Crises**, an international alliance working to address the root causes of extreme hunger.
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84TH CRPF DAY

Why in news?

- Union Home Minister Amit Shah attended the 84th Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) Day in Chhattisgarh's Bastar district.



CROSS & CLIMB ROHTAK



Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF)

- CRPF is one of the oldest Central para military forces (now termed as Central Armed Police Force) and it comes under the **Ministry of Home Affairs**.
- CRPF came into existence as Crown Representative's Police on 27th July 1939.
- It became the Central Reserve Police Force on enactment of the CRPF Act in December 1949.
- It is All India in character, both in deployment and in its composition.
- CRPF has, over the years, acquired the distinction of being perhaps the most acceptable Force, by the people and the State administrations.
- This is due to its unique capability to quickly adapt to various situations, and also, to work in perfect harmony with the State Police.

Duties performed by the CRPF

- Crowd & Riot control
- Counter Militancy / Insurgency operations/Dealing with Left Wing Extremism
- Overall co-ordination of large-scale security arrangement especially with regard to elections in disturbed areas.
- Protection of VIPs and vital installations.
- Checking environmental de-gradation and protection of local Flora and Fauna
- Fighting aggression during War time
- Participating in UN Peace Keeping Mission
- Rescue and Relief operations at the time of Natural Calamities.

News Summary: 84th CRPF Foundation Day

- Union Home Minister Amit Shah, on the occasion of 84th CRPF Day, lauded the contributions of CRPF to the internal security of the nation.

Key highlights of the speech delivered by Union Home Minister at the 84th CRPF day

- For the first time CRPF Day is being celebrated in a Naxalite area. CRPF has contributed to the internal security of the nation.
- CRPF has shown its best during past elections in the country.
- CRPF has fought against Naxals and has brought them down in many areas of the country.

- It was due to the CRPF personnel who died fighting Maoists that the nation was in the last phase of achieving victory against the insurgency in the tribal state.
- There is a 76 per cent decrease in Naxal activities as compared to 2010.
- The Union Home Minister praised and thanked the 75 CRPF women personnel who embarked on a bike ride from Delhi and travelled over 1,800 km to reach Bastar.
- The minister also highlighted the humanitarian works by CRPF in Naxal regions.
- CRPF set up over 110 medical camps in Naxal-affected areas and provided help to 18,000 tribals with free medicines worth crores.

PM MITRA: WILL MEGA TEXTILE PARKS HELP BOOST THE SECTOR?

Why in News?

- Recently, the government announced that seven mega textile parks under the ₹4,445-crore PM Mega Integrated Textile Regions and Apparel (PM MITRA) scheme will be set up in the first phase.

What are the Challenges faced by the Indian Textile and Apparel Sector?

- The micro, small and medium enterprises (MSME) sector is said to **control almost 80%** of the textiles and apparels currently made in India.
- Further, the Indian textile and clothing units are **more cotton-based**.
- Indian textile and clothing exports (~65% cotton-based products) have stagnated at around the \$40-billion mark over the past four years, and **stood at \$44 billion last year**.
- The aim is to achieve \$100 billion in exports and target a domestic business of \$250 billion by 2030.
- **Expanding the fibre and product line** (from the current 5%) and **price competitiveness right from the raw material stage**, sustainability and traceability demands of international buyers remains a challenge.

What is the PM Mega Integrated Textile Regions and Apparel (PM MITRA) Scheme?

- **The Ministry of Textiles (MoT)** has launched (2021) the scheme to strengthen the Indian textile industry by way of

- Enabling scale of operations,
- Reducing logistics cost by housing entire value chain at one location,
- Attracting investment,
- Generating employment and augment export potential.
- The scheme seeks to **streamline the textile value chain into one ecosystem**, taking in spinning, weaving and dyeing to printing and garment manufacturing.
- It is expected to generate **investments worth ₹70,000 crore** and would also **lead to the creation of 20 lakh jobs** and augment the export potential of the sector.
- The scheme envisages to leverage the **Public Private Partnership (PPP) model** for fast paced implementation in a time-bound manner.
- PM MITRA mega textile parks will boost the textiles sector in line with **5F (Farm to Fibre to Factory to Fashion to Foreign)** vision.

All-in-one parks

The PM Mega Integrated Textile Regions and Apparel (PM MITRA) scheme was announced in October 2021

- The parks will come up by 2026-27
- The total outlay for the project is ₹4,445 crore, though the initial allocation in the 2023-24 Budget is only ₹200 crore
- States have offered to provide at least 1,000 acres, says Minister Goyal



- Spinning, weaving, processing/ dyeing, printing and garment manufacturing will be done at one location
- Effort is to reduce logistics cost of textile industry and make it globally competitive

How will these Parks be set up under the PM MITRA Scheme?

- These parks will be set up **on the basis of proposals received from State Governments** having ready availability of contiguous and encumbrance-free land

parcels of **minimum 1000 acres**.

- The State Government will transfer land to the **Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV)**, which will be a **legal entity** (with 51% equity shareholding of State and 49% of Central Government).
- The selection of PM MITRA Park sites will be done in a two stage (Selection of Sites, Development of the Park) selection process on **Challenge Method**.

News Summary Regarding PM MITRA:

- **What is expected in the first phase of the PM MITRA scheme?**
- Large textile parks will come up in 7 States - Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Telangana, MP, Maharashtra, Gujarat, and UP - housing the entire textile value chain.

- The parks will have **plug-and-play manufacturing facilities** and all the common amenities required.
 - The Central government's budget outlay for the scheme (₹4,445) crore is to be spent till **2027-28**.
 - The Central government will disburse **Development Capital Fund of ₹500 crore** in two tranches for each of the seven facilities for the creation of core and support infrastructure.
 - It will also give a Competitive Incentive Support of ₹300 crore per park to be provided to the manufacturing units.
 - **Is it different from previous textile schemes?**
 - The sector has benefited from different programmes, such as the **Apparel Park Scheme** (2002) and the **Scheme for Integrated Textile Parks** (2005), which supported development of common infrastructure.
 - The PM MITRA scheme is envisaged to be a unique initiative and **the differentiating factors** are the emphasis on large-scale production and provision of plug-and-play manufacturing centres.
 - The scheme, to be implemented jointly by the **Central and State governments**, will be open for **FDIs** and will be **located in States that have inherent strengths** in the textile sector.
 - Each park will have **effluent treatment plants, accommodation for workers, skill training centres and warehouses too**.
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