

NATIONAL ASSESSMENT AND ACCREDITATION COUNCIL (NAAC)



The National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) has decided to introduce a binary categorisation of “accredited” or “not accredited” for higher educational institutions.

National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) is an autonomous body of the University Grants Commission (UGC), under the Ministry of Education. It was established in 1994 in pursuance of the recommendations made by the National Policy of Education, 1986. Its headquarter is in Bengaluru.

- **Function:** Evaluation, assessment, and accreditation of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in the country.
- **Assessment is a performance evaluation** of an institution and its units and is accomplished through a process based on self-study and peer review using defined criteria. Accreditation refers to the **certification given** by NAAC, which is valid for a period of **five years**.
- **The ratings** of institutions range from A++ to C. If an institution is graded D, it means it is not accredited.

Eligibility Criteria: HEIs with a record of **at least two batches of students graduated or been in existence for six years**, whichever is earlier, **are eligible to apply** for the process of Assessment and Accreditation (A&A) of NAAC and fulfil all the specified conditions. At present, the Assessment and Accreditation by NAAC is **done on a voluntary basis**.

- NAAC has identified **seven criteria**: i. **Curricular aspects**, ii. **Teaching-learning** and evaluation, iii. **Research, Consultancy** and extension, iv. **Infrastructure** and learning resources, v. **Student support** and progression, vi. **Governance** and leadership and vii. **Innovative practices** as the basis for its assessment procedure.

Composition:

- It functions through its **General Council (GC) and Executive Committee (EC)**, comprising educational administrators, policymakers and senior academicians from a cross-section of the Indian higher education system.
 - The **Chairperson of the UGC is the President of the GC** of the NAAC.
-

BORDER ROADS ORGANISATION



Recently, the **Border Roads Organisation (BRO)** connected strategically important all-weather 298-km long road from Manali to Leh through Darcha and Nimmu on the **Kargil–Leh Highway**.

Border Roads Organisation is a road construction executive force in India that provides support to Indian Armed Forces. It was formed in 1960 to secure India's borders and **develop infrastructure** in remote areas of the **north and north-east states of the country**.

- In order to ensure coordination and expeditious execution of projects, the Government of India set up the **Border Roads Development Board (BRDB)** with the Prime Minister as Chairman of the Board and Defence Minister as Deputy Chairman.
- It develops and maintains road networks in India's border areas and friendly neighboring countries. This includes infrastructure **operations in 19 States and three Union Territories** (including Andaman and Nicobar Islands) and **neighboring countries** such as Afghanistan, Bhutan, Myanmar, Tajikistan and Sri Lanka.
- Officers and personnel from the General Reserve Engineer Force (GREF) form the parent cadre of the BRO. It is also staffed by Officers and Troops drawn from the Indian Army's Corps of Engineers on extra regimental employment (on deputation). It is also included in the Order of Battle of the Armed Forces, ensuring their support at any time.

Motto of the organization: Shramena Sarvam Sadhyam (everything is achievable through hardwork)

WHAT ARE MONUMENTS OF NATIONAL IMPORTANCE (MNI)?

The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) recently decided to delist 18 protected monuments as they have ceased to be of "national importance".



About Monuments of National Importance (MNI):

- The **Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act (AMASR Act)**, 1958 (amended in 2010), **provides for the declaration** and conservation of ancient and historical monuments and archaeological sites, and remains of national importance.
- **Uttar Pradesh** (745 monuments/sites) have the highest number.
- **Declaration:**
 - **After considering the views/objections** received within the stipulated period, the **Central Government may declare** the ancient monument to be of national importance by publishing a notification in the official gazette.
- **Once a monument** or a site is declared to be MNI, their protection and upkeep is the **responsibility of the Archaeological Survey of India**, under the Ministry of Culture.
 - ASI undertakes the conservation, preservation, and maintenance of MNI throughout the country.
 - The One-hundred-meter radius of the monument is then considered a '**prohibited area**' where there is a ban on construction activities. Further 200 meters (i.e., 100+200 meters) are considered a '**regulated area**' where there are regulations on construction.
- The **ASI also has the power to delist monuments** it deems to "have ceased to be of national importance" under Section 35 of the Act. Once a monument is delisted, the ASI becomes no longer responsible for protecting these monuments.



ARMED FORCES (SPECIAL POWERS) ACT (AFSPA)?

The Union Home Minister recently said the Central Government will consider revoking the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act in Jammu and Kashmir.

Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA) is a law enacted by the Parliament in 1958 which gives the **armed forces 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?**
 - The **Central Govt.** or the **Governor** of the State or administrator of the U T, can declare the whole or part of the State or Union Territory as a disturbed area.
 - It can be invoked in places where “the use of armed forces in aid of the civil power is necessary”.

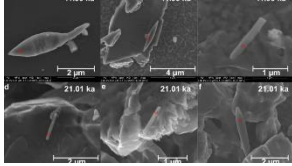
The ‘special powers’ of armed forces under AFSPA are:

- They have the authority to **prohibit a gathering of five or more** persons in an area, can use force or even open fire after giving due warning if they feel a person is in contravention of the law.
- If reasonable suspicion exists, army can **arrest a person without warrant**, enter or search a premises without warrant, and ban possession of firearms.
- Any person arrested or taken into custody may be handed over to the officer in charge of the nearest police station along with a report detailing the circumstances that led to the arrest.
- These **armed forces are immune from prosecution** unless the Union Government provides sanction to the prosecuting agencies.
- **Where is AFSPA in force now?**

Apart from **Nagaland**, the AFSPA is currently in force in **Jammu and Kashmir, Assam, and Manipur** except Imphal, and **Arunachal Pradesh**.

WHAT ARE MAGNETOFOSSILS?

In the depths of the Bay of Bengal, scientists have discovered a 50,000-year-old sediment — a giant magnetofossil and one of the youngest to be found yet.



Magnetofossils are the fossilised remains of magnetic particles created by **magnetotactic bacteria**, also known as **magnetobacteria**, and found preserved within the geological records.

- **What are Magnetotactic bacteria?**
 - These are **mostly prokaryotic organisms** that arrange themselves along the earth's magnetic field.
 - These organisms were believed to **follow the magnetic field** to reach places that had optimal oxygen concentration.
 - These bacteria contained “novel structured particles, rich in iron” in small sacs that essentially worked as a compass.
 - These magnetotactic **bacteria create tiny crystals** made of the iron-rich minerals magnetite or greigite. The crystals help them navigate the changing oxygen levels in the water body they reside in.

What did the study find?

- The three-metre-long sediment core from the southwestern Bay of Bengal consisted mainly of “pale green silty clays.”. Researchers reported **finding abundant benthic and planktic foraminifera** — single-celled organisms with shells found near the sea bed and free-floating in water.
- At a depth of **around 1,000-1,500 m, the Bay of Bengal** has a distinctively **low oxygen concentration**. Analysis of the sediment sample confirmed fluctuations in the monsoon took place as the scientists found particles of **magnetic minerals from the two distinct geological periods**.
- The rivers Godavari, Mahanadi, Ganga-Brahmaputra, Cauvery, and Penner, which empty into the Bay of Bengal, played a **crucial role in the formation of the magnetofossils**.

WHAT ARE MEME COINS?

Meme coins started as a humorous, satirical take on the internet and often lacking in any real underlying value have gained significant popularity.



Meme coins are a unique category of cryptocurrencies, have gained significant popularity in the digital currency space. These trace their origin to the growth of meme culture on the internet.

- These are also known as ‘**memetic tokens**’ or ‘**community coins**’, meme coins are digital currencies created as a form of satire or humorous tribute to the internet culture.
- They often feature names, logos and branding that reference popular memes, jokes or internet phenomena.

Key characteristics:

- These are **highly volatile in nature**, subject to extreme changes in value over short periods, driven by the current buzz surrounding the token.
- They typically have a **massive or uncapped supply**, leading to very low values per token.
- These coins leverage blockchain technology, often utilising smart contracts on platforms like Ethereum and Solana.
- **Creating a meme coin is relatively easy** compared to traditional cryptocurrencies.
- With the proliferation of blockchain platforms and decentralized finance (DeFi) tools, virtually anyone can launch a meme coin with minimal technical expertise and resources.
- These coins are primarily driven by speculation and community engagement, lacking fundamental value or unique use cases. Also, the prices of meme coins can experience rapid fluctuations, making them risky investments.

WHAT IS BLACK CARBON?



According to a study, the residential sector contributes 47% of India's total black carbon emissions.

Black carbon is the dark, sooty material emitted alongside other pollutants when **biomass and fossil fuels** are not fully combusted.

- It **comprises** a significant portion of **particulate matter** or PM, which is an air pollutant. It is a **short-lived climate pollutant** with a lifetime of only days to weeks after release in the atmosphere.
- It is an **important contributor to warming** because it is **very effective at absorbing light** and heating its surroundings. It contributes to warming by converting incoming solar radiation to heat.
- It also **influences cloud formation** and impacts regional circulation and rainfall patterns. When deposited on ice and snow, black carbon and co-emitted particles reduce surface albedo (the ability to reflect sunlight) and heat the surface.

Impacts:

- It contributes to **global warming** and poses severe risks. Studies have found a direct link between exposure to black carbon and a higher risk of heart disease, birth complications and premature death.
- It has a warming impact on climate that is 460-1,500 times stronger than CO₂.
- Most black carbon emissions in India arise from burning biomass, such as cow dung or straw, in traditional cookstoves.

INDIA'S EMPLOYMENT CONDITIONS CONTINUE TO BE POOR: REPORT

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the Institute of Human Development (IHD) have jointly published a report titled “**India Employment Report 2024**”.

About International Labour Organisation:

- The ILO was created in 1919, as part of the **Treaty of Versailles** that ended World War I, to reflect the belief that universal and lasting peace can be accomplished only if it is based on social justice.
- In 1946, the ILO became a **specialized agency of the United Nations**.
- The ILO is devoted to promoting social justice and internationally recognized human and labour rights, pursuing its founding mission that labour peace is essential to prosperity.
- **Headquarters:** Geneva, Switzerland

Objectives of ILO:

- The ILO has **four strategic objectives**:
 - Promote and realize standards and fundamental principles and rights at work,
 - Create greater opportunities for women and men to decent employment and income,
 - Enhance the coverage and effectiveness of social protection for all, and
 - Strengthen tripartism and social dialogue.

Membership of ILO:

- The ILO has **187** state members.
- India is a **founding member of the ILO** and it has been a permanent member of the ILO Governing Body since 1922.
- The ILO constitution permits any member of the UN to become a member of the ILO.
- To gain membership, a nation must inform the director-general that it accepts all the obligations of the ILO constitution.

About Institute of Human Development (IHD):

- The Institute for Human Development (IHD) was established in the year **1998** under the aegis of the **Indian Society of Labour Economics (ISLE)**.
- It aims to contribute towards building a society that fosters and values an inclusive social, economic and political system that is free from poverty and deprivations.

- It undertakes research in the areas of labour and employment, livelihood, gender, health, education and other aspects of human development.

About India Employment Report 2024:

- The India Employment Report 2024 is the **third in the series** of regular publications by the Institute for Human Development on labour and employment issues.
- It is undertaken in partnership with the International Labour Organization (ILO).
- The report examines the challenge of youth employment in the context of the emerging economic, labour market, educational and skills scenarios in India and the changes witnessed over the past two decades
- The report highlights recent trends in the Indian labour market, which indicate improvements in some outcomes along with persisting and new challenges, including those generated by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Suggestions:**
 - The report highlights five key policy areas for further action, which apply more generally and also specifically for youth in India:
 - promoting job creation;
 - improving employment quality;
 - addressing labour market inequalities;
 - strengthening skills and active labour market policies; and
 - bridging the knowledge deficits on labour market patterns and youth employment.