

### NATIONAL ASSESSMENT AND ACCREDITATION COUNCIL (NAAC): REVIEW PANEL RED-FLAGS HOW NAAC GRADES COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

#### Why in News?

- Lack of action on the report, which was submitted to the University Grants Commission (UGC), was flagged by NAAC executive committee chairperson (Bhushan Patwardhan) in the days before he recently announced his resignation.

#### What Exactly is the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC)?

- It is a **government organisation** (HQ in Bangalore) in India established in **1994** in response to recommendations of **National Policy in Education (1986)**.
- It is an **autonomous** body that **assesses and accredits** Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) such as colleges, universities/other recognised institutions to derive an understanding of the ‘Quality Status’ of the institution.
- It is **funded by the UGC** and evaluates the institutions in terms of their performance related to the teaching-learning processes, faculty, research, infrastructure, governance, financial wellbeing, student services, etc.

Vision	Mission
To make quality the defining element of higher education in India through a combination of self and external quality evaluation, promotion and sustenance initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• To arrange for periodic assessment and accreditation of institutions of higher education or units thereof, or specific academic programmes or projects;</li><li>• To stimulate the academic environment for promotion of quality of teaching-learning and research in higher education institutions;</li><li>• To encourage self-evaluation, accountability, autonomy and innovations in higher education;</li><li>• To undertake quality-related research studies, consultancy and training programmes, and</li><li>• To collaborate with other stakeholders of higher education for quality evaluation, promotion and sustenance.</li></ul>

#### What is the NAAC’s Accreditation Process?

- The first step involves an applicant institution submitting a **self-study report (SSR)** based on quantitative and qualitative metrics.
- **The data is subjected to validation** by expert teams of NAAC, with quality reviewed during site visits by peer teams.

- According to the Government of India, of the 1,113 universities and 43,796 colleges in the All-India Survey on Higher Education Report 2020-21, **NAAC accredited 418 universities and 9,062 colleges as on January 31, 2023.**

## **What Circumstances Led to the Resignation of the Chair of the NAAC Executive Committee?**

- Based on various complaints, the NAAC executive committee chairperson (Bhushan Patwardhan) suggested the **need for an independent inquiry by appropriate high-level national agencies.**
- **The review panel**, headed by J P Singh Joreel, was set up by NAAC executive committee chairperson, **to review the functioning of the NAAC.**
- **A report was submitted** (to the UGC last year) by the panel, with **major findings -**
  - The possibility of a compromised IT system;
  - Presence of multiple “**super admins**” who have full access to the NAAC’s internal system and the power to allot experts;
  - Non-maintenance of logs which may have adverse fall outs;
  - Arbitrary allocation of experts raising questions of conflict of interest;
  - **Vested interests, malpractices** are manipulating processes in the accreditation system;
  - **The process of selection of experts** who comprise peer teams that are sent to assess applications for accreditation is **neither random nor sequential;**
  - **Nearly 70% of experts** from the pool of assessors do not appear to have received any opportunity to conduct site visits while some others have had multiple such visits.
- **Lack of action on the report** was flagged by NAAC executive committee chairperson.

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## **WHY MIGRANT WORKERS’ ISSUES RECUR?**

- Rumours of migrant workers being assaulted in Tamil Nadu have triggered concern among manufacturers in the state.
- Officials have rejected the reports as fake news, and political leaders and the administration have appealed to workers to not pay heed to the rumours.

**What are the different problems that migrant workers continue to face around the country?**

- Migrant workers in India continue to face several challenges and issues, some of which are:
  - **Exploitation:** often paid less than their local counterparts, poor working conditions and no job security.
  - **Lack of legal protection:** not covered by many labour laws.
  - **Poor living conditions:** often live in crowded and unhygienic conditions with inadequate facilities for sanitation, clean water, and healthcare.
  - **Discrimination:** based on their ethnicity, language, and place of origin, which can lead to social exclusion and marginalization.
  - **Lack of documentation:** often lack proper identification documents, which makes it difficult for them to access government services, open bank accounts.
  - **Forced labour and debt bondage**
  - **Lack of social security:** do not have access to social security schemes such as pensions, insurance, and healthcare.
  - **Lack of awareness:** Of their rights and entitlements, which makes them vulnerable to exploitation and abuse.
- There is inadequate coordination among states on a formal exchange of information on migrant workers.
- In the absence of data, it is difficult to track labourers during times of crisis.

**What is the legal framework for migrant welfare?**

- The Inter-State Migrant Workmen Act, 1979 looks into the welfare of the labourers.
  - The Act mandates that the establishment which proposes to employ migrant workers be required to be registered with destination states.
  - Contractors will also have to obtain a licence from the concerned authority of the home states as well as the host states.
  - However, in practice, this Act has not been fully implemented.
- This Act has been subsumed into the four broad labour codes notified by the Centre:

- The Code on Wages, 2019;
- The Industrial Relations Code, 2020;
- The Code on Social Security, 2020; and
- The Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code, 2020.
- These have not been implemented yet.
- Also, the registration under the inter-state migrant workers' act is negligible. This is due to:
  - **Lack of awareness** about the rights and the benefits of registration under the Act.
  - **Complex registration process**
  - **Lack of enforcement:** reduces the incentive for migrant workers to register.
  - **Inadequate infrastructure** to register and monitor the movement of migrant workers.
  - **Fear of losing jobs:** Migrant workers often fear that registering under the Act will lead to loss of employment, as employers may prefer to hire workers who are not registered.
  - **Informal nature of work:** Many migrants work in the informal sector, which is not covered by the Act, and hence, they are not required to register.

## WORLD METEOROLOGICAL ORGANISATION (WMO)

The World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) has recently come up with a new Global Greenhouse Gas Monitoring Infrastructure that aims to provide better ways of measuring planet-warming pollution and help inform policy choices.



WORLD  
METEOROLOGIC  
ORGANIZATION

### About World Meteorological Organisation (WMO):

- It is a **specialized agency of the United Nations (UN)**.
- It is the **UN system's authoritative voice on the state and behavior of the Earth's atmosphere**, its interaction with the **oceans**, the **climate** it produces, and the resulting **distribution of water resources**.
- It **originated from the International Meteorological Organization (IMO)**, which was founded in 1873.
- **Established in 1950**, WMO became the **specialized agency of the UN for meteorology (weather and climate), operational hydrology and related geophysical sciences**.

- **Headquarters:** Geneva, Switzerland.
- Currently it has a **membership of 187 countries.**
- **Governance Structure:**
  - Its **supreme body** is the **World Meteorological Congress**, which **consists of representatives of all members**. It meets at least **every four years** to **set general policy** and adopt regulations.
  - A **36-member Executive Council** meets annually and **implements policy.**
  - The **Secretariat, headed by a secretary-general** appointed by the congress for a four-year term, serves as the **administrative centre of the organization.**
  - **Six regional associations** address problems peculiar to their regions.
  - **Eight technical commissions.**
- **Major Programmes:**
  - **World Weather Watch:** A system of satellites and telecommunication networks connecting land and sea sites for monitoring weather conditions.
  - **World Climate Programme:** It monitors climate change, including global warming.
  - **Atmospheric Research and Environment Programme:** Designed to promote research on issues such as ozone depletion.

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## WHAT IS THE REAL TIME TRAIN INFORMATION SYSTEM (RTIS) PROJECT?

The Indian Railways is collaborating with Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) under the Real Time Train Information System (RTIS) project.



**About Real Time Train Information System (RTIS) project:**

- RTIS devices that use satellite imagery are being installed on the trains to automatically acquire its “movement timing at the stations, including that of arrival and departure or run-through”.
- These timings **get automatically plotted** on the control chart of those trains in the **Control Office Application (COA) system.**
- The project is **executed by the Centre for Railway Information Systems (CRIS).**

- RTIS is developed in collaboration with ISRO. ISRO has launched GSAT satellites that have GAGAN payloads for tracking the movement of trains.
- Applications of RTIS:
  - RTIS gives mid-section updates with a periodicity of 30 seconds.
  - The Train Control can now track the location and speed of RTIS-enabled locomotives/train more closely, without any manual intervention.
  - It allows passengers to get the real-time location or train running status of a train on their smartphone.

## NALLAMALA FOREST

Nallamala forest is witnessing frequent forest fires due to rising temperatures, where the day temperature is almost touching 40 degrees Celsius.



### About Nallamala Forest:

- It is one of the largest stretches of undisturbed forest in South India, apart from the Western Ghats.
- Location:
  - It is spread over five districts in the Indian states of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.
  - It is located in Nallamala Hills, which is a part of the Eastern Ghats.
  - It lies south of the Krishna river.
  - The forest has a good tiger population, and a part of the forest belongs to the Nagarjunsagar-Srisailem Tiger Reserve, the largest tiger reserve in the country.
- Climate:
  - It has a warm to hot climate throughout the year, with summer especially hot and winters mostly cool and dry.
  - It gets most of its rain during the South West monsoon.
- Vegetation: Tropical dry deciduous.
- Flora: It harbors endemic species like *Andrographis nallamalayana*, *Eriolaena lushingtonii*, *Crotalaria madurensis* var, *Dicliptera beddomei* and *prema hamitonii*.

- **Fauna:** It is home to as many as **700 species** of animals besides **tigers, leopards**, such as **black buck, wild hog, peacock, pangolin, Indian Python and King Cobras** and several rare bird species.
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## INTERNATIONAL BIG CAT ALLIANCE (IBCA)

India recently proposed to launch International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA) to protect big cats and assured support over five years with guaranteed funding of \$100 million.



### About International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA):

- It is a **proposed mega-global alliance** that will work toward the **protection and conservation of the seven major big cats** — tiger, lion, leopard, snow leopard, puma, jaguar, and cheetah.
  - **Membership** to the alliance will be **open to 97 'range' countries**, which contain the natural habitat of these big cats, **as well as other interested nations, international organizations**, etc.
  - The alliance's **purpose** is to provide a platform for the **dissemination of information on benchmarked practices, capacity building**, resources repository, research and development, **awareness creation**, etc., on the protection and conservation of big cats.
  - Its major activities will include **advocacy, partnership, knowledge e-portal**, capacity building, eco-tourism, partnerships between expert groups and finance tapping.
  - After the first five years, which will be supported by India's 'total grant assistance' of \$100 million, the **IBCA is expected to sustain itself through membership fees, and contributions from bilateral and multilateral institutions and the private sector**
  - **Governance Structure:**
    - A **General Assembly** consisting of all member countries.
    - A **Council of at least seven** but not more than 15 member countries **elected by the General Assembly for a term of 5 years**, and a **Secretariat**.
    - Upon the recommendation of the Council, the **General Assembly will appoint the IBCA Secretary General** for a specific term.
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## COURT MARTIALS IN ARMED FORCES

### Why in news?

- An Army court has recommended **life imprisonment** for a Captain involved in the staged killings of three men at Amshipora in J&K's Shopian district in 2020.
- The sentence will be final after it is confirmed by the Northern Army Commander.
- Bhoopendra Singh was court-martialled after a Court of Inquiry found that troops under his command had exceeded their powers under the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act.

### What is Court Martial?

- A court martial is a type of **military court** that is empowered to try members of the armed forces for offenses committed under military law.
- The purpose of a court martial is to maintain discipline and order within the military by ensuring that members of the armed forces are held accountable for their actions.
- A court martial is typically composed of military officers who serve as both judge and jury.

### What are the legal provisions related to court martial in India?

- The legal provisions related to court martial in India are primarily governed by three laws:
  - **The Army Act, 1950:** applies to members of the Indian Army.
  - **The Navy Act, 1957:** applies to members of the Indian Navy.
  - **The Air Force Act, 1950:** applies to members of the Indian Air Force.
- **Armed Forces Tribunal Act 2007**
  - This act established the Armed Forces Tribunal (AFT).
    - AFT is a quasi-judicial body in India that deals with service-related matters of armed forces personnel.
    - It has jurisdiction over disputes and appeals arising out of service matters, including court martial proceedings.

### What are the different kinds of courts-martial in India?

- In India, there are four kinds of courts-martial that can be convened to try members of the armed forces for offenses committed under military law. These are:



- **General Court Martial (GCM):** This is the highest level of military court martial in India, and it can be convened to try the most serious offenses, including those that carry the death penalty.
- **District Court Martial (DCM):** A DCM can be convened to try offenses that are less serious than those that would be tried by a GCM.
- **Summary General Court Martial (SGCM):** An SGCM can be convened to try minor offenses.
- **Field General Court Martial (FGCM):** An FGCM can be convened to try offenses committed during active military operations.

## What is the process of Court Martial in the Indian military?

### • **Initiation of enquiry**

- When the Army wants an allegation against its personnel investigated, it first sets up a **Court of Inquiry (CoI)** for the purpose.
  - This stage is similar to the registering of a First Information Report (FIR) by police.
- A Court of Inquiry investigates the complaint, but cannot award a punishment.
  - It only records the statements of witnesses.
  - This is comparable to the examination of witnesses by a police officer under Section 161 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC).

### • **Recording of summary of evidence**

- Based on the findings of the CoI, a tentative **chargesheet** is drawn up by the commanding officer of the accused officer, which is akin to the police filing a chargesheet.
- After this, the hearing of charges takes place, which is like the initial summoning of an accused by the magistrate in a case involving civilians.
- The summary of evidence is then recorded, which is akin to the framing of charges by the magistrate.

### • **Ordering of General Court Martial (GCM)**

- After summary of evidence is recorded, a general court martial (GCM) is ordered.
- This stage is like the conduct of a trial by any judicial court in matters involving civilians.
- The GCM announces a sentence in the form of recommendations, which are sent to the command concerned for legal vetting.

- In a magisterial court, the magistrate announces a sentence when the trials are over. This sentence is not recommendatory in nature.
- **Vetting of sentence by Army's Judge Advocate General (JAG) Department**
  - Recommendations by GCM is sent to respective army command (in the present case, it was sent to Army's Northern Command).
  - It is then legally vetted by senior officers of the Army's Judge Advocate General (JAG) Department.
  - The officers will advise on legal infirmities in the trial sentence, if any, or whether they find it to be disproportionate; and on any possible remission of the sentence.
  - The commander of that Command then directs the convening authority to confirm, remit, or revise the sentence in case the punishment has to be enhanced.
- The convening authority is the General Officer Commanding (GOC) of the division.
  - As per rules, the Army Commander does not require permission to decide on remission of a sentence.
  - But if he wants to enhance the sentence, the case must go back to the same jury of the GCM for revision.

### **What is the legal recourse available to the accused?**

- Under the Army Act, the accused can file a pre-confirmation petition as well as post-confirmation petition.
  - A pre-confirmation petition will go to the Army Commander, who may look into its merits.
  - Post-confirmation petition must be filed with the government since the officer is cashiered — his ranks are removed and he is dismissed from service — after confirmation of the sentence by the Army commander.
- After these options have been exhausted, the accused can approach the Armed Forces Tribunal, which can suspend the sentence.
- The president of India, under **Article 72 of the Constitution**, can use his/her powers to pardon, reprieve, respite or remission of punishment or sentence given by a court martial.