

BAISAKHI FESTIVAL



The festival of Baisakhi is being celebrated in Punjab with devotion, enthusiasm and brotherhood.

- Baisakhi, also known as **Vaisakhi**, is the popular **spring harvest festival** which is celebrated in Northern India, especially by the **Sikh/Punjabi community**.
- It is traditionally observed on the **first day of the month of Vaishakha in the Hindu solar calendar**, which falls in **April**.
- The annual festival is observed on **April 13 or 14**. It marks the **Sikh New Year**.
- It is **primarily a harvest festival**, where farmers express gratitude for a good crop yield. It symbolizes prosperity, hard work, and new beginnings.

It holds special importance for the Sikh community, as in **1699**, the **foundation of the 'Khalsa Panth'** or the '**order of the free/pure ones**' was laid down on Baisakhi by the **tenth Guru of Sikhism, Guru Gobind Singh**.

- The Khalsa was **founded by him at Anandpur Sahib, Punjab**, in front of thousands.

However, as it **coincides with the Hindu New Year for many communities** that follow the solar calendar, **variations of the festival** are observed in other regions across India. For instance, we will find Baisakhi being **celebrated as**

- **Pohela/Poila Boishakh or Nobo Borsho as the Bengali New Year**
- **Vishu** marking the end of the spring equinox in **Kerala**
- **Bohag Bihu in Assam**
- **Puthandu as the Tamil New Year**
- **Vaishakha in honor of Surya, the Sun God in Bihar**.

TAPPING FISHERIES IN RESERVOIRS

- India is the **second largest fish producer** and **second largest aquaculture producer** globally.
- Fish production has increased by 106% since 2013-14.
- 75% of fish production comes from inland fisheries — freshwater, brackish, and saline water resources.
- Reservoirs spread over 31.50 lakh hectares contribute approximately 18 lakh tonnes of fish production.

Reservoirs — The Backbone of Inland Fisheries

- **Geographic Distribution**
 - Located primarily in eastern, central, and peninsular India.
 - **Madhya Pradesh** has the maximum area under reservoirs (~6 lakh hectares).
 - **Tamil Nadu** has the highest number of reservoirs (over 8,000).
 - These reservoirs provide direct and indirect employment to millions of farmers, especially in economically backward and water-scarce regions.
- **Classification of Reservoirs**
 - Small - Less than 1,000 hectares
 - Medium - Up to 5,000 hectares
 - Large - More than 5,000 hectares

Rise in Fish Productivity — Key Drivers

- Fish productivity in reservoirs has doubled from **50 kg/hectare (2006)** to **100 kg/hectare** This has been achieved through:
 - **Cage Culture Technology** — Use of floating or stationary cages made of synthetic netting, allowing natural water flow for oxygen and nutrient exchange, and enabling easier feeding, monitoring, and disease management.
 - **Quality Seed Stocking** — Indian major carps (Catla, Rohu, Mrigal) form the core species, supplemented by Tilapia and Pangasius based on local needs.

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- **Flagship Schemes** — **Blue Revolution (BR)** and **Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY)** have provided budgetary support and capacity building.
- **Success Story — Jharkhand**
 - Bimal Chandra Oran, a fish farmer from Saraikela district, adopted cage aquaculture in the Chandil reservoir under a cooperative society.
 - With subsidised inputs and capacity-building training, he now produces three tonnes of fish annually, achieving a turnover of over ₹3 lakh.

Future Potential and the Value Chain Approach

- An ICAR-CIFRI study envisions aquaculture productivity can be tripled — from 100 kg to 300 kg per hectare.
- To achieve this, experts recommend a value chain approach encompassing:
 - Setting up hatcheries, feed mills, and storage sheds
 - Ice plants, berthing platforms, and auction centres
 - Marketing retail outlets, refrigerated trucks, and boats

Mission Amrit Sarovar — Complementary Initiative

- Implemented with the vision of **conserving surface and underground water** through district ponds.
- Each Amrit Sarovar is designed with a minimum **one-acre pondage area** and a holding capacity of 10,000 cubic metres.
- A key innovation is **community participation** through user group mapping for pond management.
- **Success Story:** The Amrit Sarovar at Dine Dite Rijo, Upper Subansiri, Arunachal Pradesh has been successfully used for stocking and aquaculture of **ornamental fishes**.

Conclusion

- Harnessing fisheries in reservoirs and Amrit Sarovars supports the Viksit Bharat@2047 vision by empowering fishing communities and strengthening India's Blue Revolution.

REIMAGINING JUDICIAL INFRASTRUCTURE IN INDIA - FROM COLONIAL LEGACY TO CITIZEN-CENTRIC JUSTICE

- India's court architecture was conceived during British rule, deliberately designed to project state **authority** and institutional **hierarchy**.
- These structures were built for a vastly **smaller** judicial **workload**. For instance, the Supreme Court handled just 2,656 pending cases with 14 judges in 1960.
- Today, it confronts over **86,000** pending cases with only 34 sanctioned judges. The numbers at lower levels are even more sobering -
 - High Courts collectively carry 6.3 million pending cases.
 - District and subordinate courts are burdened with over 46 million pending cases.
- This explosive growth in caseload has forced ad hoc spatial expansion — what legal scholar Patrícia Branco aptly calls "**judicial slumisation**" — a built environment of overcrowded corridors, poor acoustics, and cramped courtrooms.
 - This undermines the very dignity of justice delivery.

How Poor Infrastructure Hurts Justice:

- **The litigant's experience:**
 - Overcrowded court premises make litigants and victims feel **unwelcome** and unheard.
 - Poor acoustics mean judges' queries are often missed, and parties must strain to make themselves heard.
 - This erodes public perception of justice — a foundational element of rule of law.
- **The lawyer's dilemma:**
 - Indian courts follow a **docket system** — cases are called in serial number order rather than at fixed time slots.
 - A lawyer with multiple hearings in different courts on the same day is structurally disadvantaged.

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- Junior lawyers are consequently trained, almost by default, to seek "pass-overs" or argue "in proxy" — practices that themselves contribute to delays.
- **Access and inclusion:**
 - Parking bottlenecks delay entry into court premises.
 - Infrastructure remains inaccessible for persons with disabilities.
 - Remarkably, HCs passing orders under the Maternity Benefit Act, 1961 often lack the very crèches mandated under that legislation — a glaring institutional contradiction.

Way Forward:

- **Frame:** National design guidelines for High Court and integrated court complexes, similar to the US and Japanese models.
- **Expand:** The NCMS sub-committee's mandate to include High Courts and appellate-level infrastructure.
- **Engage:** Multidisciplinary experts — architects, urban planners, legal scholars, and accessibility specialists — in courthouse design.
- **Incorporate:** Universal design principles ensuring access for persons with disabilities, nursing mothers, and elderly litigants.
- **Explore:** Integrated court complexes that reduce inter-court travel time for lawyers, thus minimising hearing clashes under the docket system.

Conclusion:

- The construction of new HCs is not merely an infrastructural exercise — it is a constitutional moment.
- A well-designed courthouse communicates (without speaking a single word) that justice is accessible, impartial, and humane.
- As the Indian courts carry the weight of over 52 million pending cases, they cannot afford to be designed only for the colonial past.
- Hence, the Centre must ensure that **architecture serves justice** and restore public faith in the judiciary—a cornerstone of a vibrant democracy.

HARYANA FARMERS PROTEST BIOMETRIC VERIFICATION IN MANDIS

- The Mandi system is India's **regulated agricultural marketplace framework** where farmers bring their produce for sale through a structured auction process.
- These mandis (wholesale markets) are established under the **Agricultural Produce Market Committee (APMC) Acts** enacted by individual state governments.
- The APMC Act designates specific geographical areas as market yards, and all agricultural trade within that area must compulsorily pass through the regulated mandi.
- Middlemen called arhatiyas (commission agents) facilitate transactions between farmers and buyers, charging a commission on every sale.
- **Government Efforts at Reform and Integration**
 - **Electronic National Agriculture Market (e-NAM)** - Launched in April 2016, e-NAM is an **online trading portal** that networks existing APMC mandis across the country into a unified national market.
 - **Model APMC Act, 2003** - The central government circulated a Model APMC Act encouraging states to amend their legislations to allow direct purchase from farmers, establishment of private markets, and promotion of contract farming.
 - However, adoption across states was uneven, with several states making only cosmetic changes.
 - **Gramin Haats and Primary Agriculture Cooperative Societies (PACS)** - The government has been upgrading 22,000 Gramin Haats (rural periodical markets) into Farmer-Consumer Markets to enable direct farm-to-consumer trade, bypassing intermediaries.

Haryana's Biometric Procurement System in Mandis

- Introduced in 2026, Haryana's procurement system mandates **Aadhaar-based fingerprint verification** for farmers before selling crops in mandis, linked to the "Meri Fasal-Mera Byora" portal to ensure accurate registration and prevent discrepancies.

- The system also includes vehicle tracking, requiring tractor details and photos, and geofencing of procurement centres and storage points to enhance monitoring and prevent misuse. So far, hundreds of mandis and over a thousand storage locations have been brought under this digital oversight framework.

Reason Behind Biometric Verification in Haryana Mandis

- The biometric verification system was introduced following the **2025 Karnal paddy scam**, where fake gate passes were used to sell paddy from other states in Haryana mandis.
- This led to fraudulent procurement records and siphoning of government funds, involving officials, traders, and millers.
- The scam resulted in multiple FIRs and arrests, prompting the government to implement biometric verification to prevent such fraud and ensure transparency in procurement.

Farmers' Concerns Over Biometric Verification

- Farmers argue that procurement irregularities were due to **collusion among officials and millers**, not farmers themselves, yet the new system places the burden on them.
- They report long queues, slow verification, and procedural hassles, especially when the registered farmer cannot be physically present.
- Many see the process as excessive and humiliating, with union leaders calling it overly cumbersome and farmers feeling they are being treated with undue suspicion.

Government–Opposition Divide on Biometric Procurement

- The Haryana government defends biometric verification as a tool to enhance transparency, accountability, and efficiency, noting significant adoption in wheat procurement.
- It has also introduced relaxations, such as allowing nominated individuals and flexible vehicle documentation.
- However, opposition leaders criticise the system as bureaucratic and arbitrary, arguing it unfairly burdens farmers while ignoring the real issue of collusion among officials and traders.

BANKEY BIHARI TEMPLE



The Supreme Court recently made it clear that it would not make "any structural changes" to the present arrangement with regard to religious practices at the famous Bankey Bihari temple in Vrindavan.

- It is a **Hindu temple** dedicated to **Lord Krishna**.
- It is located in the holy city of **Vrindavan** in the **Mathura District** of **Uttar Pradesh**.
- At this temple, the **primary deity** is presented in the '**tribhanga**' posture, gracefully tilted at three angles. This distinctive pose, where **Lord Krishna** is bent at three places, earns Him the beloved name "**Banke**."
- It was established by **Swami Haridas**, a guru of the famous singer **Tansen**.
- This is one of the highly regarded shrines, and is **one out of the seven temples** of '**Thakur of Vrindavan**', along with **Shri Govind Dev Ji**, **Sri Radhavallabh Ji**, and four others.
- The **present temple complex** housing '**Banke Bihari**' was **constructed in 1864** and is a unique example of Indian craftsmanship.
- **Architecture** of the temple is **influenced by the Rajasthani style**, with arches and pillars adding to its magnificence.
- In this temple, from the walls to the ceiling, the **pictures of the deities** have been **painted through oil paintings**.
- One **unique feature** of the Banke Bihari temple is that there are **no bells or conchs on the premises**.

In the freedom struggle, this temple was the **main center of revolutionary activities**; from here, the **revolutionary newspaper "Bundelkhand Kesari"** was published secretly.



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MILLIPEDE



A recent study has revealed the self-cleaning mechanism similar to the famous 'lotus effect' (the natural self-cleaning property of lotus leaves) to stay clean by green pill millipede, a species endemic to the Western Ghats.

- Millipedes are cylindrical or slightly **flattened invertebrates**.
- They constitute the **class Diplopoda** within the subphylum Myriapoda.
- The name 'millipede' derives from **the Latin words 'mille'**, meaning thousand, and **'pes'**, meaning foot.
- **Appearance:**
 - They are **slow-moving arthropods** having long, segmented bodies, with most segments bearing two pairs of legs attached to the underside of the body.
 - Their exoskeleton is typically brown to black in color, and thus, they **can easily remain camouflaged in the soil**.
- **Habitat:** Their **highest diversity is found in the tropical region**, where they inhabit moist microhabitats on the forest floor, including leaf litter, dead wood, and soil.
- **Distribution:** These arthropods are **found on all continents** except Antarctica.
- **Features:**
 - **Defence Mechanism:** They lack speed or the ability to bite or sting, their primary defensive **mechanism is curling into a coil**, exposing their **protective exoskeleton** to the predator.
 - **Diet:** Most species are **typically detritivores**, feeding on rotting leaves, wood, and other decomposing plant debris.
- **Ecological Role:** They act as **decomposers**, conserving soil erosion and nutrient cycling, and are among the greatest vital foliage litter creatures.