

VIVEKANANDA ROCK MEMORIAL



Vivekananda Rock Memorial is located on a small island off Kanyakumari, Tamil Nadu.

- The memorial stands on one of the two rocks located about 500 meters off the mainland of Vavathurai.
- The rock is surrounded by the **Laccadive Sea**, where the **Bay of Bengal**, the **Indian Ocean**, and the **Arabian Sea** form a confluence.
- It was built in 1970 in honour of Swami Vivekananda, who is said to have attained enlightenment on the rock.
- It comprises of the '**Shripada Mandapam**' and the '**Vivekananda Mandapam**'.
- There is also a life-sized bronze statue of Swami Vivekananda on the premises.
- It is also a memorial for which all State Governments and the Central Government contributed.

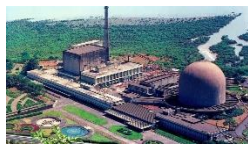
Who was Swami Vivekananda?

- Swami Vivekananda (1863–1902), born **Narendranath Datta**, was a **Hindu monk** and one of the most celebrated **spiritual leaders** of India.
- He was the foremost disciple of **Sri Ramakrishna Paramhansa** and a world spokesperson for **Vedanta**.
- He was hailed as a Dhyana Sidha, a meditation expert, by his guru, Ramakrishna Paramhansa.
- He **attempted to combine Indian spirituality with Western material progress**, maintaining that the two supplemented and complemented one another.
- He believed that the **path to self-purification is through helping others**. He encouraged people to engage in selfless service and to work towards the betterment of society.
- Through **his teachings on the four yogas**, the harmony of religions, the divinity of the soul, and serving humanity as God, Vivekananda gave spiritual aspirants paths to that realization.

- Vivekananda represented Hinduism at the **1893 World's Parliament of Religions** convened during the World's Columbian Exposition in **Chicago**.
- After his first visit to the West, Swami Vivekananda went back to India and **founded the Ramakrishna Order at Belur** outside of Kolkata in **1897**.

BHABHA ATOMIC RESEARCH CENTRE (BARC)

State-run Bharat Heavy Electricals Ltd. (BHEL) recently entered into a Technology Transfer Agreement (TTA) with the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC) for a 50-kW alkaline electrolyser system for Hydrogen production.



Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC) is India's premier nuclear research facility.

- It is headquartered in **Trombay, Mumbai**, Maharashtra.
- It operates under the **Department of Atomic Energy**, which is directly overseen by the **Prime Minister** of India.
- It is a multi-disciplinary research centre with extensive infrastructure for advanced research and development covering the entire spectrum nuclear science and engineering and related areas.
- BARC is the research backbone of the **Nuclear Power Corporation of India (NPCIL)**, which currently **operates all nuclear power reactors in India**.

History:

- **Homi Jehangir Bhabha** conceived the nuclear program in India.
- Bhabha established the **Tata Institute of Fundamental Research (TIFR)** to carry out nuclear science research in **1945**.
- To intensify the effort to exploit nuclear energy for the benefit of the nation, Dr. Bhabha established the **Atomic Energy Establishment, Trombay (AEET)**, in January 1954 for a multidisciplinary research program essential for the ambitious nuclear program of India.

- After the death of Bhabha in 1966, **AEET** was renamed Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (**BARC**).

Functions:

- It is engaged in research with the objective of generating knowledge and techniques for nuclear power production, the advancement of **nuclear science**, the **use of radioisotopes in industry**, health, and agriculture, and research in frontier areas of science and technology.
- It is responsible for the design and development of **nuclear reactors, fuel cycle technologies, radiation protection, and safety systems**.
- BARC also plays an important role in **nuclear education and training**. It offers various training programs for scientists, engineers and technicians in the areas of nuclear science and technology.

RESERVE BANK OF INDIA'S (RBIS) NEW INITIATIVES

RBI Governor recently unveiled three major initiatives of the Reserve Bank, namely the Pravaah portal, the Retail Direct Mobile App and a FinTech Repository.



- **Pravaah (Platform for Regulatory Application, Validation, and AuthOrisation)** is a secure and centralised **web-based portal** for any individual or entity to seek authorisation, license, or regulatory approval on any reference made by it to the RBI.
- The following are some of the **key features** available in the portal:
 - Submit the application online on the portal.
 - Track and monitor the status of the application/reference.
 - Respond to any clarification/query sought by the RBI in connection with the application/reference; and

- Receive a decision from the RBI in a time-bound manner
- This portal will also enhance the efficiency of various processes related to the granting of regulatory approvals and clearances by the RBI.
- At present, 60 application forms **covering different regulatory and supervisory departments of RBI** have been made available on the portal.
 - This also includes a general-purpose form for applicants to submit their requests, which are not included in any other application form.

About Retail Direct Mobile App:

- The retail direct portal was launched in November 2021 to facilitate retail investors to **open their Retail Direct Gilt accounts with the RBI** (<https://rbiretaildirect.org.in>) **under** the Retail Direct Scheme.
 - The scheme allows retail investors to buy G-Secs in the primary auctions as well as buy and sell G-Secs in the secondary market.
- With the launch of the retail direct mobile app, **retail investors can now transact in G-Secs using the mobile app** on their smartphones.

About FinTech Repository:

- It aims to capture essential information about FinTech entities, their activities, technology uses, etc. FinTechs, **both regulated and unregulated.**
- It will contain information on **rich repository of data on Indian FinTech firms** for a better understanding of the sector that would be useful for both policymakers and participating industry members.
- Simultaneously, a **related repository for only RBI-regulated entities** (banks and NBFCs) on their adoption of emerging technologies (like AI, ML, Cloud Computing, DLT, Quantum, etc.), **called EmTech Repository** is also being launched.
- The FinTech and EmTech Repositories are secure web-based applications and are managed by the Reserve Bank Innovation Hub (RBIH), a wholly owned subsidiary of RBI.

MINOR FOREST PRODUCE



Tribal people in Odisha are struggling for approvals from the forest department to sell Kendu leaf which is a minor forest produce.

- The **Scheduled Tribe and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers** (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006, or Forest Rights Act (FRA), defines ‘minor forest produce’ as any non-timber forest product of plant origin.
- This includes various items such as bamboo, brush wood, stumps, cane, tussar, cocoons, **honey, wax, lac, kendu leaves, medicinal plants, herbs**, roots, tubers and similar items.
- In simple terms, it encompasses all other forest products, **excluding timber**.

What is Kendu Leaf?

- It is called the **green gold of Odisha**. It is a nationalized product like Bamboo and Sal seed.
- It is one of the most important **non-wood forest products of Odisha**.
- It is also referred to as tendu leaf in some parts of the country and is used to roll tobacco into bidis (local cigarettes).
- **Production:**
 - The states producing kendu leaves in India comprise mainly Madhya Pradesh, Chhatisgarh, Odisha, Andhra Pradesh, Jharkhand, Gujarat, and Maharashtra.
 - **Odisha is the third-largest producer of kendu leaf after Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh.**

WHAT IS GOLDEN RICE?

Recently, a court in the Philippines recently revoked biosafety permits for commercial propagation of genetically modified golden rice and Bt eggplant.

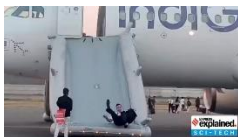


Golden Rice is a new type of rice that contains **beta carotene** (provitamin A, a plant pigment that the body converts into vitamin A as needed). This compound is what gives this grain its yellow-orange or golden color.

- It is developed through **genetic engineering**.
- While ordinary rice does produce beta carotene, it is not found in the grain. Thus, scientists used genetic engineering to add the compound to the grain - a minor tweak that improved the grain's nutritive value.
 - The **beta carotene in Golden Rice**, which was made possible by the addition of two new enzymes, is identical to the beta-carotene found in green leafy and yellow-colored vegetables, orange-colored fruit, and even in many vitamin supplements and food ingredients.
- Like ordinary rice, Golden Rice **does not require any special cultivation practices**, and generally has the same yield and agronomic performance.
- This rice is expected to cost and taste the same as regular rice, its beta carotene content makes it a valuable asset in the battle against **Vitamin A deficiency (VAD)**.
 - **Vitamin A** is an essential **micronutrient for growth**, development, and keeping the body's visual and immune systems healthy.
 - VAD weakens the body's resistance to diseases and infections, causes blindness, and may even result in death if left untreated.

WHAT ARE 'EVACUATION SLIDES'?

Recently, soon after a Varanasi-bound Indigo flight received a bomb threat at the Indira Gandhi International Airport in Delhi, the 176 passengers onboard the flight were quickly evacuated with the help of 'evacuation slides'.



Evacuation Slide is an **inflatable slide** which allows passengers to safely **exit the flight during** an emergency, especially when the flight door is high above the ground.

- There are four types of evacuation slides:

- **Inflatable slide:** The inflatable slide helps passengers **descend to the ground from an aircraft exit door**. In case they cannot use the doors, they can try to reach either of the aircraft wings. From there, they can use the slide to reach the ground.
- **Inflatable slide/raft:** It does the same job as the slide, but it can also be used as a life raft in case the aircraft has to land on water.
- **Inflatable exit ramp:** The inflatable exit ramp is installed to help passengers move from **certain overwing exits** (or aircraft emergency exits) to the wings if that path looks better for reaching the ground.
- **Inflatable exit ramp/slide:** The inflatable exit ramp/slide is there to assist in descending from an **overwing exit or aeroplane wing** to the ground. It is a combination ramp and wing-to-ground device.
- These are typically made **from carbon fibres and a nylon material** coated with urethane for fire resistance. Strong fibres are used to build these slides so that passengers are not able to tear them while descending. Slides are generally packed and installed within a cabin door or into an external fuselage compartment.
- They are **inflated with** the help of **high-pressure gas carbon dioxide or nitrogen gas** containers and ambient air through suction machines.
- What are the **protocols for deploying evacuation slides?**
 - An evacuation slide must be deployed when the distance between the ground and the flight exit door is six feet or more.
 - The European Union Aviation Safety Agency's guidelines say that a slide should be automatically deployed, once the door is opened. The slide must be inflated between six and 10 seconds, depending on its location.
 - It should be properly deployable **in all weather conditions** — as cold as **-40 degree Celsius** and as hot as **71 degree Celsius**.
 - The slide should be able to sustain a rainfall of up to one inch an hour and winds up to the **speed of 46 km/hr** which would be coming 45 degree angles around the aeroplane.

LEGAL STATUS OF THE RIGHT TO VOTE AND THE RIGHT TO BE ELECTED

- **The right to vote and the right to be elected are ‘statutory rights’**
 - In 1975, the Supreme Court in **Indira Gandhi v Raj Narain** recognized free and fair elections as part of the Constitution's basic structure, allowing laws violating this principle to be struck down.
 - However, the Apex Court has held that the rights to elect and be elected do not enjoy the same status.
 - In 2006, a five-judge Bench in **Kuldip Nayar v. Union of India** ruled that voting is a statutory right, not a fundamental right, and can be regulated by laws enacted by Parliament.
 - The same was held for the right to be elected by the Bench.

Disqualification on conviction for certain offences and associated challenges

- **Bar against contesting elections only after conviction**
 - Section 8 of the Representation of People Act, 1951 (RP Act) is titled “**Disqualification on conviction for certain offences**”.
 - It mandates that individuals convicted of specified offences are disqualified from contesting elections to Parliament or state legislatures from the date of conviction.
 - Additionally, they face a six-year disqualification period from contesting elections, starting from the date of their release.
 - This disqualification only kicks in once a person has been **convicted** and does not apply if they have only been charged with criminal offences.
- **Exceptions to disqualification**
 - **ECI's Power to Modify Disqualification Period**
 - In 2019, the Election Commission of India (ECI) used its power under Section 11 of the RP Act to reduce the **disqualification period** for Sikkim Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang.

- He had been released after a one-year prison sentence for misappropriating funds and subsequently won a bye-election.

Bar against the right to vote for confined persons

- **Voting Restrictions Under Section 62 of the RP Act**
 - Section 62 of the RP Act restricts voting rights, stating that no person shall vote if they are confined in prison or in police custody, except for those in preventive detention.
- **SC on such restrictions**
 - Section 62 of RP Act bars individuals with criminal charges from voting unless released on bail or acquitted.
 - In 1997, the Supreme Court upheld this rule in **Anukul Chandra Pradhan v. Union of India**.
 - It rejected the argument that it violated the right to equality by discriminating against undertrials and those unable to pay bail.
- **Grounds on which SC rejected the argument that it violated the right to equality**
 - The court re-affirmed that the right to vote was a statutory right and could be subject to statutory limitations.
 - The court held that there is a resource crunch as infrastructure would have to be provided and police would have to be deployed.
 - A person in prison because of their conduct cannot claim equal freedom of movement, speech and expression.
 - Last, restrictions on prisoners' right to vote are reasonable as it is connected to keeping persons with criminal background away from the election scene.