

UNDERSTANDING THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PARLIAMENT 'SPECIAL SESSION'

Why in news?

- A 'special' five-day session of Parliament began on September 18.
- On August 31, the Union Minister for Parliamentary Affairs had announced that a special session of Parliament would be held from September 18 to 22.
- Although there is **no specific provision in the Constitution that deals with special sessions**, a few such sessions have been convened in the past.
- The most recent instance was in June 2017 when the PM Modi-led government held a special session to roll out the Goods and Services Tax (GST).

When is Parliament convened as per the Constitution?

- **Article 85** of the Constitution deals with prorogation and dissolution of Parliament.
- While there is no fixed schedule, the provisions of the Article specify that the President must summon the Houses to meet at least once within six months.
- The provision has its roots in the Government of India Act, 1935, according to which not more than 12 months should elapse between two sessions.

Is there a fixed timetable?

- **No fixed number of sessions**
- Although the Constitution doesn't provide for a fixed number of sessions or days of sitting, **three sessions are typically held each calendar year** — the Budget, Monsoon, and Winter sessions.
 - the Budget Session take place between February and May,
 - the Monsoon Session from July to September and
 - the Winter Session from November to December.

Who has the authority to call for a session?

- The Central government has the authority to call for a session.

- The Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs (CCPA), which includes several Cabinet ministers, determines the date and number of sittings.
- After finalising the session schedule, the President calls upon the Members of Parliament to convene for the upcoming session.
- The MPs are informed about the number of sittings and other details about the tentative business of the House through the summons sent by the President.

When is a 'special session' conducted?

- **Constitutional provision**
 - The term 'special session' is **not explicitly mentioned in the Constitution or in the rulebooks** of the two Houses of Parliament.
 - There are no specific guidelines on how or when such a session can be convened.
- **Historical precedent**
 - Several special sessions including midnight sessions have been called for a special purpose or agenda, or to mark occasions of national significance.
- **Special session from September 18 – 22**
 - The upcoming session from September 18 to 22 will be the second special session convened by the Present government.
 - It will be conducted without Question Hour, Zero Hour, or private members' business.

PM MODI LAUNCHES VISHWAKARMA SCHEME

Why in news?

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched the PM Vishwakarma scheme in New Delhi on the occasion of Vishwakarma Jayanti.
 - Vishwakarma, in Hindu mythology, is seen as the architect of the gods and was the divine carpenter and master craftsman.
- The scheme will provide government support to workers engaged in traditional crafts and skills.

What is PM Vishwakarma scheme?

• Background

- This scheme was first announced by PM Modi during his Independence Day speech.
- The scheme is also being seen as a means for the government to reach out to the economically marginalised and socially backward communities – particularly the Other Backward Classes (OBC) groups.

• About

- It is a new scheme with an outlay of Rs 13,000 crore and is fully funded by the Central government.
- It aims to provide subsidised loans of **up to** Rs 2 lakh to traditional artisans and craftsmen including weavers, goldsmiths, blacksmiths, laundry workers, and barbers.
- The scheme also aims at improving the **quality**, as well as the reach of products and services of artisans and craftsmen.
- This scheme will ensure that Vishwakarmas are integrated with the domestic and global value chains.

• Nodal Ministry

- **Ministry of Micro, Small & Medium Enterprise (MSME)** is the nodal ministry.
- The Ministry of Tribal Affairs, would provide active support for implementation of the scheme for the wellbeing of the Vishwakarmas.

• Eligibility & coverage

- It is available for rural and urban artisans and craftsmen across India.
- However, a detailed list was produced to clarify the beneficiary under the scheme.
- This list included **18 traditional crafts** such as Boat Maker; Armourer; Blacksmith; Hammer and Tool Kit Maker; etc.
- Five lakh families will be covered in the first year and 30 lakh families over five years.

Benefits under the scheme

- The Vishwakarma workers will be registered for **free** through Common Services Centres (CSC) using the biometric-based PM Vishwakarma portal.

- They will then be provided recognition through the PM Vishwakarma certificate and ID card.
- They will be given:
 - skill upgradation involving basic and advanced training,
 - a toolkit incentive of ₹15,000,
 - collateral-free credit support up to ₹1 lakh (first tranche) and ₹2 lakh (second tranche) at a concessional interest rate of 5%,
 - incentive for digital transactions and marketing support.
- A toolkit booklet has also been released in 12 Indian languages, with accompanying video elements.
 - This will aid the knowledge of workers on new technologies in their field.
- Skilling programme will take place at both basic and advanced types.
- Participants will get a stipend of ₹500 per day while undergoing training.

What was the need of PM Vishwakarma scheme?

- The professionals engaged in traditional crafts and skills for centuries are often taught by elders in the family and have faced certain problems.
- These include a lack of professional training for their work, of modern tools, the issue of distance from the markets relevant to them and the availability of little capital for investment.

WHAT IS YASHOBHOOMI?

Prime Minister recently inaugurated the first phase of the India International Convention and Expo Centre (IICC), named Yashobhoomi, in New Delhi's Dwarka.



About Yashobhoomi:

- 'YashoBhoomi' or **India International Convention and Expo Centre (IICC)** is a **state-of-the-art modern convention centre** located in **Dwarka, New Delhi**.
- It will be **among the world's largest MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions) destinations**.
- It has a **magnificent Convention Centre, multiple Exhibition halls** and other facilities.

- **Features:**
 - The project covers a total area of over 8.9 lakh square metres with a **total built-up area of more than 1.8 lakh square metres.**
 - **Cost:** The project is developed around a cost of **Rs 5400 crores.**
 - The **Convention Center, built across more than 73 thousand square metres** of area, **comprises 15 convention rooms**, including the Main Auditorium, the Grand Ballroom and **13 meeting rooms with a total capacity of holding 11,000 delegates.**
 - It has the **largest LED media facade in the country.**
 - The **plenary hall in the Convention Center** is equipped with a **seating capacity of around 6,000 guests.**
 - The **exhibition halls are built across over 1.07 lakh square metres** of area suitable for hosting exhibitions, trade fairs and business events.
 - It is **equipped with a state-of-the-art wastewater treatment system** boasting **100 per cent wastewater reuse and provisions of rainwater harvesting.**

PRALAY BALLISTIC MISSILES

Recently, the Defence Ministry has cleared the proposal of buying a regiment of Pralay tactical ballistic missiles for the Indian Army.



About Pralay ballistic missiles:

- It is a quasi-ballistic surface-to-surface missile.
- **Range:** It can hit targets 150-500 km away.
- **Capacity:** The missile can carry 350-700 kg of high-grade explosives.
- It is developed by the **Defence Research Development Organisation (DRDO)**
- It is powered by a **solid propellant rocket motor** and other new technologies.
- The missile guidance system includes state-of-the-art navigation and integrated avionics.
- It can change its path after covering a certain range in mid-air.

Key Facts about Ballistic Missiles

- These are launched **directly into the upper layers of the earth's atmosphere.**
- They travel outside the atmosphere, where the warhead detaches from the missile and falls towards a predetermined target.
- They are **rocket-propelled, self-guided weapons systems** which can carry conventional or nuclear munitions. They can be launched from aircraft, ships, submarines, and land.

SANTINIKETAN

Santiniketan, the home of late Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore, has been added to the UNESCO World Heritage Sites list.



About Santiniketan:

- It is located in the **state of West Bengal.**
- It was established in 1901 by **Rabindranath Tagore.**
- It was a residential **school and centre for art based on ancient Indian traditions.**
- In 1921, a 'world university' was established at Santiniketan, later recognised as '**Visva Bharati**'.
- Visva-Bharati in Santiniketan is Bengal's only central university whose chancellor is the Prime Minister.
- It is distinct from the prevailing British colonial architectural orientations of the early 20th century and of European modernism.
- It **represents approaches toward pan-Asian modernity, drawing on ancient, medieval and folk traditions** from across the region.

Key Facts about UNESCO World Heritage

- A World Heritage Site (WHS) is a **landmark or area with legal protection** by an international convention administered by UNESCO under the **UNESCO World Heritage Convention, established in 1972.**

- These sites are designated by UNESCO for having cultural, historical, scientific or other forms of significance.
 - **Categorisation of Sites – The sites are categorised in three types:**
 - **Cultural heritage sites**– It includes historic buildings and town sites, important archaeological sites, and works of monumental sculpture or painting
 - **Natural heritage sites**– It includes those natural areas that have excellent ecological and evolutionary processes, endangered species etc.
 - **Mixed heritage sites**– It contains elements of both natural and cultural significance.
 - India has **41 world heritage sites**, including 33 cultural properties, 7 natural properties and 1 mixed site.
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WORLD OZONE DAY 2023

Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) recently celebrated the 29th World Ozone Day.



About World Ozone Day:

- World Ozone Day, or **International Day for the Preservation of the Ozone Layer**, is observed **annually on September 16**.
- It is celebrated every year to **spread awareness among people about the depletion of the Ozone Layer and the measures taken/ to be taken to preserve it**.
- The theme for **World Ozone Day 2023** is “**Montreal Protocol: fixing the ozone layer and reducing climate change**”.
- **History:**
 - **In 1994, the UN General Assembly proclaimed 16 September** the International Day for the Preservation of the Ozone Layer, **commemorating the date of the signing, in 1987, of the Montreal Protocol** on substances that deplete the Ozone layer.
 - The **protocol was signed on September 16, 1987, in Montreal, Canada**, to address the depletion of the ozone layer.

What is the Montreal Protocol?

- It is an **international treaty** that aims to **phase out the production and consumption of ozone-depleting substances, primarily chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs), halons, carbon tetrachloride, and other chemicals.**
- These substances were **commonly used in refrigeration, air conditioning, and aerosol propellants.**
- **Kigali Agreement:**
 - It is an **amendment to the Montreal Protocol.**
 - It was **adopted on October 15, 2016, in Kigali, Rwanda, as an extension of the Montreal Protocol.**
 - While the original Montreal Protocol focused on phasing out ozone-depleting substances, the Kigali Amendment **addresses the phase-down of Hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs), which are used as replacements for those ozone-depleting substances.**
 - The primary goal of the Kigali Amendment is to reduce the production and consumption of HFCs, **with the aim of mitigating their contribution to global warming.**

What is Ozone?

- Ozone is a **gas made up of three oxygen atoms (O₃).**
- It is **both a natural and a man-made product that occurs in the Earth's upper atmosphere (the stratosphere) and lower atmosphere (the troposphere).**
- **Ozone in the stratosphere, known as the “ozone layer,” occurs naturally and forms a protective barrier that prevents ultraviolet sunlight (UV-B) radiation from the sun from reaching the Earth’s surface and harming plant and animal life. This is commonly referred to as “good ozone.”**
- **Tropospheric or ground-level ozone – what we breathe – is formed primarily from photochemical reactions between two major classes of air pollutants: volatile organic compounds (VOC) and nitrogen oxides (NO_x).**
- **At ground level, high concentrations of ozone are toxic to people and plants.**

PROJECT CHEETAH, A YEAR ON

Why in news?

- India's cheetah introduction programme has completed one year.
- The first batch of eight cheetahs from Namibia arrived on September 17, 2022, officially launching Project Cheetah.

Cheetah in India

- The cheetah population used to be fairly widespread. The animal was found from Jaipur and Lucknow in the north to Mysore in the south, and from Kathiawar in the west to Deogarh in the east.
- The cheetah was officially declared extinct by the Indian government in 1952.

How did cheetahs go extinct in India?

- Over-hunting was a major contributing factor for the cheetah's extinction.
- The decimation of its relatively narrow prey base species and the loss of its grassland-forest habitat also played a role.
- India's emphasis on agriculture, which included acquiring and parceling off grassland, further led to a decline in the cheetah's habitat.

Current status

- On the first anniversary of the project, all the **surviving 14 adult cheetahs** and **one cub** are in captivity.
- There is talk of them being radio-collared again and released once the winter sets in.
- The project authorities are talking of additional sites being prepared for releasing the cheetahs such as the **Gandhi Sagar Wildlife Sanctuary** and **Nauradehi Wildlife Sanctuary**, both in Madhya Pradesh.
- The project authorities are also talking of importing more cheetahs from Africa sometime next year.