

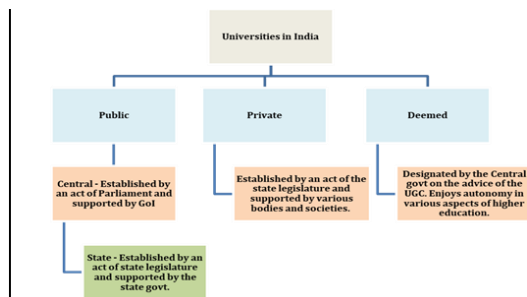
NATIONAL COUNCIL OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH AND TRAINING (NCERT)

The Indian government recently granted the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) deemed-to-be-university status.



About the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT):

- It is an autonomous organisation set up in 1961 by the Government of India to assist and advise the Central and State Governments on policies and programmes for qualitative improvement in school education.
- **The major objectives of NCERT and its constituent units are to:**
 - Undertake, aid, promote and coordinate research in areas related to school education;
 - Prepare and publish model textbooks, supplementary material, newsletters, journals and other related literature;
 - Organise pre-service and in-service training of teachers;
 - Develop and disseminate innovative educational techniques and practices;
 - Collaborate and network with state educational departments, universities, NGOs and other educational institutions;
 - Act as a clearing house for ideas and information in matters related to school education;



- Act as a nodal agency for achieving the goals of universalisation of elementary education.
- NCERT is an implementation agency for bilateral cultural exchange programmes with other countries in the field of school education.
- The NCERT also interacts and works in collaboration with international organisations, visiting foreign delegations and offering various training facilities to educational personnel from developing countries.

- As per the **National Education Policy 2020**, NCERT is the nodal agency to develop National Curriculum Frameworks (NCFs) for (a) Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE), (b) School Education, and (c) Adult Education.
- The council headquarters is located at Sri Aurobindo Marg, New Delhi.
- **Organisational Structure:**
 - The Union **Minister of Education** is the President (ex-officio) of the General Body of NCERT.
 - The members of the General Body include **Education Ministers of all States and Union Territories.**
 - The Secretary of NCERT is the Convenor of the General Body of the NCERT.
 - The Executive Committee is the main governing body of NCERT. The Union Minister of Education is its President (ex-officio), and the Union Minister of State in the Ministry of Education is the ex-officio Vice-President.
 - The Executive Committee is assisted in its work by the various Standing Committees/Boards.
 - The functions of the Council are looked after by the Director, Joint Director and Secretary.

PARLIAMENTARY SESSIONS | HOW, WHEN & WHO CONVENES THESE SESSIONS

Why in News?

- On August 31, Pralhad Joshi, the Union Minister for Parliamentary Affairs, announced that a “special session” of Parliament would be held from September 18 to 22.

How and When Parliament is Convened?

- The power to convene a session of Parliament rests with the government.
- The decision is taken by the **Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs**, which currently comprises nine ministers, including those for Defence, Home, Finance, and Law.
- The decision of the Committee is formalised by the President, in whose name MPs are summoned to meet for a session.

How many Parliamentary Sessions are held every year?

- India does not have a fixed parliamentary calendar.

- **By convention, Parliament meets for three sessions in a year.**
- The longest, the **Budget Session**, starts towards the end of January, and concludes by the end of April or first week of May.
 - The session has a recess so that Parliamentary Committees can discuss the budgetary proposals.
- The second session is the three-week **Monsoon Session**, which usually begins in July and finishes in August.
- The parliamentary year ends with a three week-long **Winter Session**, which is held from November to December.
- A general scheme of sittings was recommended in 1955 by the General Purpose Committee of Lok Sabha.
 - It was accepted by the government of Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, but was not implemented.

Constitutional Provisions w.r.t. Parliamentary Sessions:

- The summoning of Parliament is specified in **Article 85** of the Constitution.
 - Like many other articles, it is based on a provision of the **Government of India Act, 1935**.
 - This provision specified that the central legislature had to be summoned to meet at least once a year, and that not more than 12 months could elapse between two sessions.
- Dr B R Ambedkar stated that the purpose of this provision was to summon the legislature only to collect revenue, and that the once-a-year meeting was designed to avoid scrutiny of the government by the legislature.

How often do Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha meet?

- Before independence, the central assembly met for a little more than 60 days a year.
- This number increased to 120 days a year in the first 20 years after Independence. Since then, the sitting days of the national legislature have declined.
- Between 2002 and 2021, Lok Sabha averaged 67 working days.
- **Reason –**

- One institutional reason given for this is the reduction in the workload of Parliament by its **Standing Committees**, which, since the 1990s, have anchored debates outside the House.
- However, several Committees have recommended that Parliament should meet for at least 120 days in a year.

What is a Special Session of Parliament?

- The **Constitution does not use the term “special session”**.
- The term sometimes refers to sessions the government has convened for specific occasions, like commemorating parliamentary or national milestones.
- For the two Houses to be in session, the presiding officers should chair their proceedings.
- The presiding officers can also direct that the proceedings of their respective Houses would be limited and procedural devices like question hour would not be available to MPs during the session.
- However, **Article 352** (Proclamation of Emergency) of the Constitution does refer to a “special sitting of the House”.
- **44th Constitutional Amendment Act** –
 - Parliament added the part relating to the special sitting through the Constitution (Forty-fourth Amendment) Act, 1978.
 - Its purpose was to **add safeguards to the power of proclaiming Emergency in the country**.
 - It specifies that if a Proclamation of Emergency is issued and Parliament is not in session, then one-tenth of Lok Sabha MPs can ask the President to convene a special meeting to disapprove the Emergency.

FINANCIAL ACTION TASK FORCE

Top government sources recently said the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) is deliberating on a set of binding rules to bring fugitive economic offenders across countries to justice.



About the Financial Action Task Force (FATF):

- FATF is an **inter-governmental policy-making** and standard-setting body dedicated to combating money laundering and terrorist financing.
- **Objective:** To establish international standards and to develop and promote policies, both at national and international levels, to combat money laundering and the financing of terrorism.
- It makes recommendations for combating financial crime, reviews members' policies and procedures, and seeks to increase acceptance of anti-money laundering regulations across the globe.
- **Formation:**
 - It was established in 1989 during the G7 Summit in Paris to develop policies against money laundering.
 - In 2001, its mandate expanded to include terrorism financing.
- **Headquarters:** Paris, France.

Membership:

- FATF members include 39 countries, including the United States, India, China, Saudi Arabia, Britain, Germany, France, and the EU as such.
- India became a member of FATF in 2010.
- FATF, as part of its efforts, maintains two types of lists - the greylist and the blacklist.
- **Black List:**
 - Countries known as Non-Cooperative Countries or Territories (NCCTs) are put on the blacklist.
 - These countries support terror funding and money laundering activities.
 - The FATF revises the blacklist regularly, adding or deleting entries.
- **Grey List:**
 - Countries that are considered a safe haven for supporting terror funding and money laundering are put on the FATF grey list.
 - This inclusion serves as a warning to the country that it may enter the blacklist.
- Three countries, North Korea, Iran, and Myanmar, are currently on FATF's blacklist.
- Consequences of being on the FATF blacklist:

- No financial aid is given to them by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the European Union (EU).
 - They also face a number of international economic and financial restrictions and sanctions.
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THE GLOBAL FUND

Recently, the Global Fund announced a deal with generic pharmaceutical manufacturers to significantly slash the price of a cutting-edge HIV drug.



About Global Fund:

- The Global Fund is a **worldwide movement to defeat HIV, TB and malaria** and ensure a healthier, safer, more equitable future for all.
- It was set up in 2002.
- **Partners of this initiative:** Governments, civil society, health workers and the private sector.
- **Funding:**
 - It raises funds **on a three-year cycle, bringing longer-term predictability** in the fight against AIDS, TB and malaria.
 - The funding primarily comes **from the public sector**, with 92% of total funding coming from donor governments. The remaining funding comes from the private sector, foundations and innovative financing initiatives.
 - **India joined** the Global Fund as a **donor in 2006** and pledged US\$25 million for the Global Fund's Seventh Replenishment, covering 2023-2025.

Key facts about the recent agreement

- It would make it possible to provide the **advanced pill known as TLD** for under \$45 per person per year.
- The three-in-one pill bands together the drugs **tenofovir disoproxil fumarate, lamivudine and dolutegravir**.
- The World Health Organization has recommended it as the preferred first-line HIV treatment for adults and adolescents since it rapidly suppresses the virus that causes AIDS.

What is HIV?

- Human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) is an infection that attacks **the body's immune system**.
- **Acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS)** is the most advanced stage of the disease.
- HIV targets the body's **white blood cells**, weakening the immune system.
- This makes it easier to get sick with diseases like tuberculosis, infections and some cancers.
- It is **spread from the body fluids of an infected person**, including blood, breast milk, semen and vaginal fluids.
- It can be treated and prevented with antiretroviral therapy (ART).

ADOPT A HERITAGE 2.0 SCHEME

The Archaeological Survey of India is set to launch its innovative Adopt a Heritage 2.0 programme.



About Adopt a Heritage 2.0 Scheme:

- It seeks to invite corporate stakeholders to enhance amenities at monuments by utilising their CSR funds.
- It is a revamped version of the earlier scheme launched in **2017**. It clearly defines the amenities sought for different monuments as per the **Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act (AMASR Act) 1958**.
- Interested stakeholders will be able to adopt a monument or specific amenities through a dedicated web portal at **indian heritage.gov.in**.
- **The portal** will provide them with comprehensive details about the monuments that are available for adoption, including gap analysis and estimated financial requirements.
- The process for selection will be carried out after due diligence and discussions with various stakeholders and assessing the economic and developmental opportunities at each monument.
- The selected stakeholders will develop, provide and or maintain amenities in hygiene, accessibility, safety and knowledge categories. In doing so, they will get an opportunity to be recognised as a responsible and heritage-friendly entity.

- The term of the appointment will be for a period of five years initially, which may be further extended up to five years.
- **Indian Heritage App:**
 - It is a user-friendly mobile app which will **showcase heritage monuments**.
 - The app will feature **state-wise details of monuments along with photographs, a list of public amenities available, a geo-tagged location** and a **feedback** mechanism for citizens.
 - The **launch will be in a phased manner**, with ticketed monuments launched in Phase I, followed by the remaining monuments.

Key Facts about “Adopt a Heritage Scheme”:

- It is an initiative of the **Ministry of Tourism** in collaboration with the **Ministry of Culture and the Archaeological Survey of India**.
- It was launched in September 2017 on **World Tourism Day**.
- Under it, the government invites entities, including public sector companies, private sector firms, as well as individuals, to develop selected monuments and heritage and tourist sites across India.
- The project aims to encourage these entities to become ‘Monument Mitras’ and take up the responsibility of developing and upgrading the basic and advanced tourist amenities at these sites.
- The corporate sector is expected to use **corporate social responsibility (CSR) funds** for the upkeep of the site.
- The Monument Mitras, in turn, will get limited visibility on the site premises and on the Incredible India website.

NAMAMI GANGE PROGRAM

About Namami Gange Programme:

- It is an **integrated conservation mission**, approved as ‘Flagship Programme’ by the Union Government in **2014** with budget outlay of Rs.20,000 Crores.



CROSS & CLIMB ROHTAK



- It is administered by the **Ministry of Jal Shakti's** Department of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation, **to accomplish the twin objectives of -**
 - Effective abatement of pollution,
 - Conservation and rejuvenation of National River Ganga.
- The program would be implemented by the **National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG)**, and its state counterpart organisations i.e., State Program Management Groups (SPMGs).
 - **NMCG is the implementation** wing of National Ganga Council (NGC), which replaced the National Ganga River Basin Authority.
 - NGC was created in 2016 under the River Ganga (Rejuvenation, Protection and Management) Authorities Order, 2016, and is headed by the PM.

What are the Key Achievements under the Programme?

- **Creating Sewage Treatment Capacity:** 98 sewage projects have been completed in the states of UK, UP, Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal, etc.
- **Creating River-Front Development:** The projects for the construction, modernisation, and renovation of 267 Ghats/Crematoria and Kunds/Ponds have been initiated.
- **River Surface Cleaning:** River Surface cleaning for collection of floating solid waste from the surface of the Ghats and River and its disposal are afoot and pushed into service at 11 locations.
- **Biodiversity Conservation:** Cadre of volunteers (**Ganga Praharis**) have been developed and trained to support conservation actions in the field
- **Public Awareness:** Ganga Praharis and Ganga Doots are engaged in spreading awareness through planting trees, cleaning ghats, Ganga Aarti, painting and poems.
- **Industrial Effluent Monitoring:** Regulation and enforcement through regular and surprise inspections of Grossly Polluting Industries (GPIs) is carried out for compliance verification against stipulated environmental norms.
- **Deploying best available knowledge and resources across the world:** Clean Ganga has been a perennial attraction for many international countries that have expertise in river rejuvenation.