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ASSENTING POWERS OF GOVERNOR & PRESIDENT

A **5-Judge bench of the Supreme Court** in the **16th Presidential Reference (under Article 143)** held that Court cannot impose any **timelines for decisions of the President and the Governor on granting assent to Bills** under **Articles 200/201** of the Constitution.

- Previously, in April 2025, the Supreme Court prescribed specific time-limits for the Governor and President to act on Bills under Article 200 and 201.
- **Article 143** allows the President to seek the opinion of the Supreme Court on significant legal or factual questions.
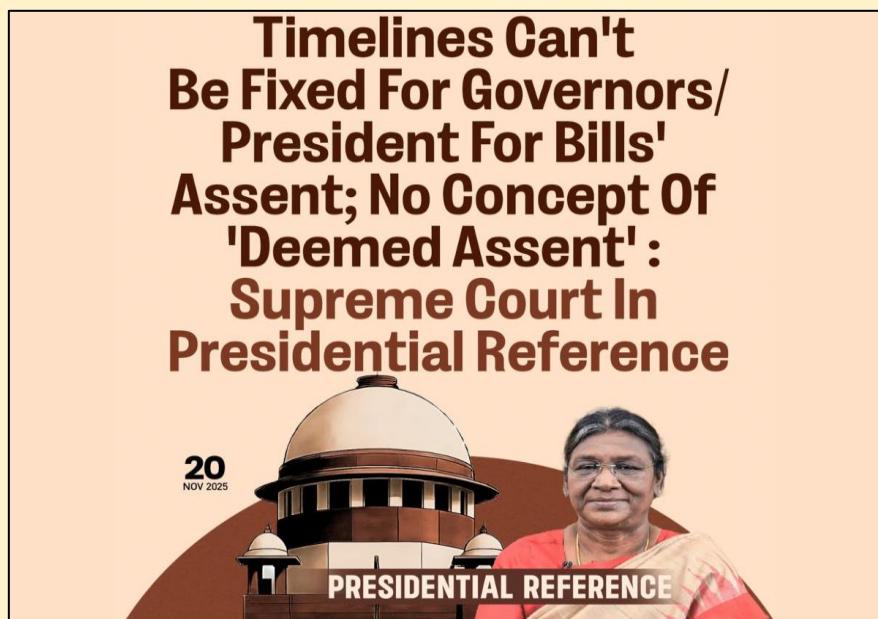
Supreme Court's Stand on 14 Key Questions on Governor–President Powers

Governor's Options on Bills Under Article 200 – The Court held that a Governor has only three options: Grant assent; Reserve the Bill for the President. Withhold assent by returning the Bill for reconsideration. There is no power to withhold assent indefinitely.
Article 200 – Governor's Assent to State Bills
Governor's Discretion Under Article 200 – The Governor is not bound by the Cabinet's advice when deciding on assent, return, or reservation of Bills. This function involves independent constitutional discretion.
Justiciability of Governor's Actions – Courts cannot review the merits of the Governor's decision, but prolonged, unexplained inaction is justiciable. The Court may direct the Governor to act.
Article 361 Immunity Not Absolute – Article 361 protects the individual Governor, not the institutional office. Immunity cannot be used to justify indefinite delays.
Article 361 (Immunity of President and Governors) – Provides personal immunity to the President and Governors from court proceedings during their term, ensuring unhindered functioning in their constitutional roles.
No Court-Imposed Timelines on Governor – Courts cannot prescribe deadlines for Governors to act on Bills. Article 200's phrase "as soon as possible" does not permit fixed judicial timelines.

President's Discretion Under Article 201 – The President's merit-based decision on assent or withholding assent to state Bills is not open to judicial review.

No Timelines for President Either – Courts cannot fix time limits for the President under Article 201.

Article 201 – President's Assent to Reserved Bills

President Not Required to Seek SC Opinion – The President need not consult the Supreme Court under Article 143 whenever a Bill is reserved for consideration.

Article 143 (Presidential Reference to Supreme Court) – Allows the President to seek the Supreme Court's advisory opinion on significant questions of law or fact. The Court's advice is not binding; the President may accept or reject it.

Courts Cannot Review Bills Before They Become Law – Judicial review applies only to laws, not Bills. Courts cannot examine the content or validity of a pending Bill.

Article 142 Cannot Substitute Constitutional Powers – The Supreme Court cannot use Article 142 to create "deemed assent" or otherwise replace the Governor/President's constitutional role.

No Law Without Governor's/President's Assent – A Bill cannot become law unless the Governor or President formally grants assent.

No Answer on Mandatory Referral Under Article 145(3) – The Court declined to answer whether all issues requiring constitutional interpretation must first be tested under Article 145(3).

Article 145(3) (Constitution Bench Requirement) – Mandates that a Bench of at least five judges must hear cases involving substantial questions of constitutional interpretation or any Presidential Reference under Article 143.

Scope of Article 142 – The Court refused a broad interpretation but reiterated that Article 142 cannot override the Constitution, especially requirements like legislative assent.

Article 142 (Complete Justice Provision) – Empowers the Supreme Court to issue any order necessary to ensure complete justice in cases before it.

On Article 131 Jurisdiction – The Court declined to answer whether Article 131 is the exclusive route for resolving Centre–State disputes.

Article 131 (Centre–State Disputes) – Grants the Supreme Court exclusive original jurisdiction to adjudicate legal disputes between the Union and States or among States themselves.

No Judicial Substitution of Executive Power – Reaffirming earlier answers, the Court clarified that judicial powers cannot replace or replicate constitutionally assigned executive functions

About Article 200 and 201
- **Article 200:** When a Bill passed by State Legislature is presented, the Governor has four options:
  - Assent to the Bill.
  - Withhold assent, effectively rejecting the Bill.
  - Return the Bill for reconsideration by the State Legislature.
  - Reserve the Bill for the President's consideration.
- **Article 201:** When a Bill is reserved by a Governor for the consideration of the President, the President shall declare either that he assents to the Bill or that he withholds assent or return the Bill for the consideration of the Legislature.
  - **No timeline is specified** for the President to decide on reserved Bills.

INDIA -BHUTAN

India–Bhutan relations stand as a rare example of stability and mutual trust in South Asia. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 2025 visit to Bhutan reaffirms the deep political, cultural, and strategic partnership that continues to thrive despite vast asymmetry in size and power.

- In a region often marked by volatility and mistrust, this bilateral relationship demonstrates how restraint, respect, and shared prosperity can sustain peace in a challenging neighbourhood.

Main Arguments
1. **Historical Foundations**
    - The *1949 Treaty of Friendship* formalised relations, where Bhutan agreed to be "guided by India" in external affairs while India assured non-interference in internal matters.
    - This arrangement, inherited from the colonial protectorate framework, evolved uniquely due to mutual maturity and strategic foresight.
    - India supported Bhutan's early institution-building, administrative training, and defence organisation, ensuring stability and trust.
    - Hydropower and infrastructure cooperation since the 1960s became symbols of partnership-driven development.

2. **Modernisation and Treaty Revision (2007)**
    - Changing global and regional conditions, Bhutan's democratic transition, and its expanding global engagement demanded a modern framework.
    - The *2007 revised treaty* replaced the "guided by India" clause with "mutual respect for each other's independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity."
    - This marked Bhutan's transition from dependency to partnership, reflecting Delhi's strategic confidence and Thimphu's political prudence.
    - Both nations agreed not to allow their territories to be used against each other, strengthening regional security trust.

3. **Political and Democratic Maturity**
   ○ King Jigme Singye Wangchuck (K-4) oversaw Bhutan's peaceful transition from monarchy to *constitutional democracy* in 2006.
   ○ India's support during this democratic shift highlighted its respect for Bhutan's internal evolution.
   ○ The current monarch, King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck (K-5), continues to uphold this equilibrium of tradition and democracy.
   ○ India–Bhutan coordination remains robust through periodic high-level visits, development assistance, and people-to-people ties.

4. **Economic and Developmental Partnership**
   ○ **Hydropower Cooperation:** The foundation of the relationship—Bhutan's hydropower exports provide 40% of its revenue and meet India's energy needs.
   ○ **Diversification Efforts:** New initiatives include joint ventures in digital economy, tourism, skill development, and green infrastructure.
   ○ **Institutional Support:** India provides financial aid through the Five-Year Plan framework, with the 13th Plan emphasising sustainable and inclusive growth.
   ○ **Private and Tech Collaboration:** Indian firms and digital projects are fostering deeper economic integration.

5. **Geostrategic and Security Dimensions**
   ○ Bhutan's geographic position between India and China makes it strategically vital.
   ○ The *Doklam plateau standoff (2017)* underscored shared security interests and coordination in border management.
   ○ Bhutan's cautious diplomacy seeks peaceful resolution with China without compromising its sovereignty or India's core security interests.
   ○ Regional cooperation under initiatives like BIMSTEC and BBIN further align Thimphu with India's *Neighbourhood First* and *Act East* policies.

6. **Cultural and Civilisational Linkages**
   ○ Shared Buddhist heritage, linguistic ties, and spiritual values form the emotional foundation of relations.
   ○ The 2025 exposition of Buddha relics from Piprahwa in Bhutan reaffirmed ancient civilisational bonds.
   ○ Educational exchanges, cultural festivals, and tourism add depth to people-to-people connections.

7. **Lessons for Regional Diplomacy**
   ○ India–Bhutan relations show how *asymmetric partnerships* can be balanced through trust and transparency.
   ○ The "Bhutan model" emphasises sovereign equality, local participation, and patient diplomacy—valuable for India's wider neighbourhood policy.
   ○ It demonstrates that long-term engagement, not transactional politics, ensures regional stability.

Criticisms and Challenges

1. **Economic Dependence:** Bhutan's overreliance on hydropower and aid from India may limit diversification and economic resilience.
2. **Environmental Concerns:** Large hydropower projects risk ecological degradation and displacement in Bhutan's fragile Himalayan ecosystem.
3. **China Factor:** Bhutan's boundary talks with China could affect India's strategic calculations if not handled sensitively.
4. **Public Perception:** The perception of India's "big brother" approach in the region must be avoided through constant dialogue and equality-based engagement.
5. **Youth Aspirations and Migration:** Rising expectations for jobs and education require collaborative human capital investments beyond traditional aid.

Reforms and Policy Measures
1. **Economic Diversification:** Promote cooperation in sectors such as IT, digital trade, organic farming, and renewable energy beyond hydropower.
2. **Connectivity and Infrastructure:** Develop cross-border railway and road projects like *Kokrajhar–Gelephu* to integrate Bhutan into regional value chains.
3. **Environmental Partnership:** Launch joint Himalayan sustainability missions focusing on hydropower efficiency, climate adaptation, and biodiversity conservation.
4. **Institutional Coordination:** Establish an *India–Bhutan Development and Security Council* for continuous policy dialogue and implementation.
5. **Cultural and Educational Diplomacy:** Expand scholarships, joint research, and Buddhist tourism circuits to strengthen soft power and mutual understanding.
6. **Strategic Dialogue:** Continue defence and border cooperation through annual security consultations to ensure preparedness amid regional uncertainties.

India–Bhutan relations exemplify the essence of *trust-based regionalism* in South Asia. Their steady evolution from a protectorate framework to an equal partnership underscores the importance of mutual respect, democratic adaptation, and shared development.
● As China's presence grows in the Himalayas, India's approach in Bhutan—marked by restraint, cooperation, and civilisational depth—offers a replicable model for engaging other neighbours.
● The future of India's "Neighbourhood First" policy lies in sustaining such balanced partnerships that combine strategic prudence with human-centric diplomacy.

NATIONAL COMPANY LAW APPELLATE TRIBUNAL (NCLAT)

Supreme Court said that CJI must deal with claim that HC judge approached National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) member on order.

About National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT):
● Nature: The NCLAT is a quasi-judicial body constituted under Section 410 of the Companies Act, 2013. It was established to hear appeals against the decisions of the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT), functioning since 1st June 2016.
● Objective: Its main objective is to promote timely corporate dispute resolution, ensure transparency, and improve efficiency in insolvency and corporate governance matters.

- Functions:
  - Hearing appeals against orders of NCLT under Section 61 of IBC.
  - Hearing appeals against orders of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI) under Sections 202 and 211 of IBC.
  - Hearing appeals against orders of the Competition Commission of India (CCI).
  - Hearing appeals related to the National Financial Reporting Authority (NFRA).
  - Giving advisory opinions when legal issues are referred by the President of India.

- **Headquarters:** Its headquarters is located in New Delhi.
- **Composition:** It includes a Chairperson, along with Judicial and Technical Members, all appointed by the Central Government based on expertise in law, finance, accountancy, and administration.
- **Regulation:** It can regulate its own procedure and possesses powers equivalent to a civil court under the Civil Procedure Code, 1908.
- **Powers:** It can summon witnesses, receive affidavits, enforce production of documents, and issue commissions. Orders passed by NCLAT are enforceable like civil court decrees.
- **Appeals:** Appeals against NCLAT orders can be filed in the Supreme Court of India.
- **Exceptions:** Civil courts have no jurisdiction over matters within the purview of NCLAT. No court or authority can grant injunctions against any action taken by NCLAT under its legal authority.
- **Disposal of appeals:** NCLAT is required to dispose of appeals within six months from the date of receipt to ensure swift resolution.

THE NATIONAL ACTION PLAN ON ANTIMICROBIAL RESISTANCE(2025–29)

India has launched a strengthened national strategy to tackle the growing threat of antimicrobial resistance, marking a renewed commitment to protecting public health. The National Action Plan on Antimicrobial Resistance(2025–29) was released in New Delhi to coincide with World AMR Awareness Week, building on lessons from the first plan introduced in 2017.

Key Features of NAP-AMR 2.0
The updated plan adopts a comprehensive One Health approach, integrating efforts across human health, animal health, agriculture and the environment. More than 20 ministries have outlined detailed responsibilities, budgets and timelines to ensure coordinated implementation. The initiative aims to close gaps observed in the earlier framework, particularly around intersectoral coordination and stakeholder accountability.

Health Risks and Rationale for Action
Antimicrobial resistance continues to compromise critical medical procedures, including surgeries and cancer treatments. Overuse and misuse of antibiotics in clinical, veterinary and agricultural settings have accelerated the spread of resistant infections. The new plan emphasises urgent corrective measures to manage this escalating threat and preserve the efficacy of existing treatments.

1. Strengthen governance
Establish a functional multisectoral coordinating mechanism and technical working groups with clear terms of reference, budget and an accountability framework.

World Health Organization

2. Prioritize activities
Initiate a consultative process to prioritize activities based on an assessment of the current situation, resources available, and the impact and feasibility of activities.

6. Monitor and evaluate
Periodically monitor and evaluate progress in implementing the plan or activities, communicating progress and lessons learned.

6 STEPS FOR SUSTAINABLE IMPLEMENTATION OF NATIONAL ACTION PLANS ON ANTIMICROBIAL RESISTANCE

3. Cost the operational plan
Develop, cost and budget an operational plan that includes prioritized activities, who is to do what, when and where, and integrates existing funding sources.

5. Implement prioritized activities
Work with internal and external stakeholders to sustainably implement the prioritized activities.

4. Mobilize resources
Map existing and potential funders, advocate to fill the funding gap and where possible leverage domestic financing through other national plans and budgets.

Strategic Objectives and Activities

NAP-AMR 2.0 lays out six core objectives covering awareness, surveillance, infection control, antimicrobial stewardship, research and governance. Activities include strengthening laboratory networks, expanding monitoring of antibiotic residues, improving infection prevention systems, ensuring responsible antibiotic use, and prioritising research into new diagnostics and therapies. Enhanced collaboration across agencies is central to the plan.

Implementation and Multisectoral Engagement

Each participating ministry will now prepare detailed implementation roadmaps. The plan mandates collaboration with private healthcare providers, industry groups, academic institutions, cooperatives, NGOs and international partners. The new framework seeks to strengthen governance and monitoring mechanisms, ensuring sustained national action against antimicrobial resistance over the next five years.

LUPEX MISSION

A Japanese delegation recently held discussions with the senior leadership of the ISRO and visited the facilities of the space agency to review the status of the LuPEX mission.
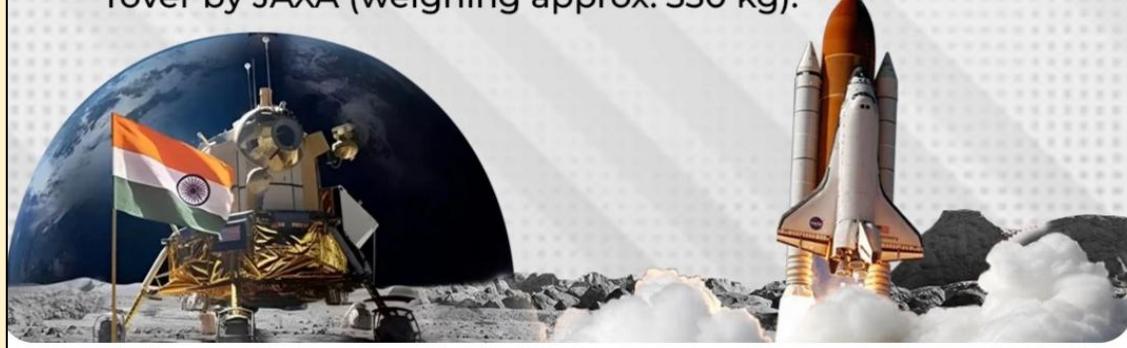
About LuPEX Mission:

- Collaborating agencies: It is a collaborative mission between Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) and Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA).
- Objective: It aims to explore the moon's southern polar region, investigating the presence of water and other elements, potentially in the form of surface ice.
- Scheduled launch: The mission is scheduled to launch in 2025.
- Uniqueness: The LUPEX will be a precursor to the ISRO's lunar sample return mission and for sending the first Indian to the moon by 2040.
- Launch vehicles: The mission will be launched by JAXA onboard its H3-24L launch vehicle, carrying the ISRO-made lunar lander, which will carry the MHI, Japan-made lunar rover.
- Focus on lunar night survival: It aims to showcase innovative surface exploration technologies. The special focus is on vehicular transport and lunar night survival.
- Functions of rover: The rover will drive on its own to search for areas where water is likely to be present and sample the soil by digging into the ground with a drill. It will be equipped with instruments for measuring the water content of regolith (lunar sand), drilling, and sampling.
- Instruments of other space agencies carried: The rover will carry not only the instruments of ISRO and JAXA but also those of the US space agency NASA and the European Space Agency (ESA).

The four labour codes—Wages, Industrial Relations, Social Security, and Occupational Safety— have come into force, replacing 29 laws. They aim to simplify compliance, expand social security, formalise employment, and reshape India's labour market amid mixed reactions from firms and unions.

Main Arguments / Key Features
Code on Wages, 2019
- Merges laws on minimum wages, wage payment, bonus and remuneration.
- "Wages" now must constitute ≥50% of total remuneration; boosts PF/ESIC contributions, enhancing post-retirement benefits.
- Centre can set a national floor wage; states cannot go below it.
- Mandatory appointment letters strengthen formalisation; aligns with ILO recommendations.

Industrial Relations Code, 2020
- Firms with up to 299 workers can retrench without government approval (earlier 100), increasing flexibility and possibly boosting manufacturing competitiveness.
- Mandatory 14-day strike notice across all industries curbs flash strikes.

- Promotes ease of doing business by rationalising dispute resolution and enabling fixed-term employment.

Social Security Code, 2020

- For the first time brings gig/platform workers and aggregators within legal social security.
- Aggregators to contribute 1–2% of turnover for worker welfare.
- FTEs eligible for gratuity after one year (earlier five).
- Expands benefits such as PF, ESIC, maternity benefits; aligns with NITI Aayog's gig workforce projections (23.5 million by 2030).

Occupational Safety, Health & Working Conditions Code, 2020

- Consolidates 13+ laws on workplace safety, migrant labour and contract labour.
- Allows women to work night shifts with consent and mandatory safety protections (transport, CCTV, security).
- Weekly cap of 48 hours; overtime at double wages.
- Covers audiovisual and digital media workers, plantation workers, and beedi/cigar workers.

Criticisms / Drawbacks

- **Job security concerns:** Raising the retrenchment threshold may increase precarious employment and limit workers' ability to negotiate.
- **Union rights diluted:** Mandatory strike notice, tighter union registration rules and expanded powers of registrars may reduce effective collective bargaining.
- **MSME compliance burden:** Higher PF/ESIC contributions raise cost pressures for small and unorganised firms, risking informalisation.
- **Centralisation concerns:** A nationwide floor wage may constrain states with diverse living standards.
- **Weak implementation capacity:** Labour being a concurrent subject, state-level readiness varies significantly—impacting consistency and enforcement.
- **Trade union criticism:** The codes are viewed as "negating rights secured over 150 years" and weakening democratic labour institutions

Reforms & Way Forward

1. **Balance flexibility with protection**: Introduce sector-specific retrenchment thresholds, strengthen severance norms and promote "flexicurity" models combining flexibility with robust social security.
2. **Strengthen social security delivery**: Operationalise gig/platform welfare funds with real-time digital tracking. Integrate e-Shram with PF/ESIC for portability of benefits, especially for migrant workers.
3. **Improve implementation capacity**: Expand inspectorate infrastructure, deploy digital inspection systems and multilingual worker awareness campaigns. Offer phased compliance and financial support for MSMEs.
4. **Enhance collective bargaining**: Ensure transparent and predictable union registration rules and revive tripartite consultations as recommended by ILO.
5. **Clarify provisions and reduce litigation**: Provide detailed rules on aggregator contributions, FTE benefits and wage components to ensure interpretational clarity and uniform adoption.

The labour codes represent a significant consolidation of India's labour laws aimed at improving formalisation, social security and ease of doing business. However, fears of weakened labour rights, uneven state capacity and increased precarity must be addressed through calibrated reforms, strong enforcement frameworks and genuine social dialogue to ensure inclusive and equitable labour governance.

DORJILUNG HYDROELECTRIC POWER PROJECT

Tata Power Company Ltd said it has signed commercial agreements with Druk Green Power Corporation Ltd (DGPC) for the development of Dorjilung hydroelectric power project in Bhutan.

About Dorjilung Hydroelectric Power Project:
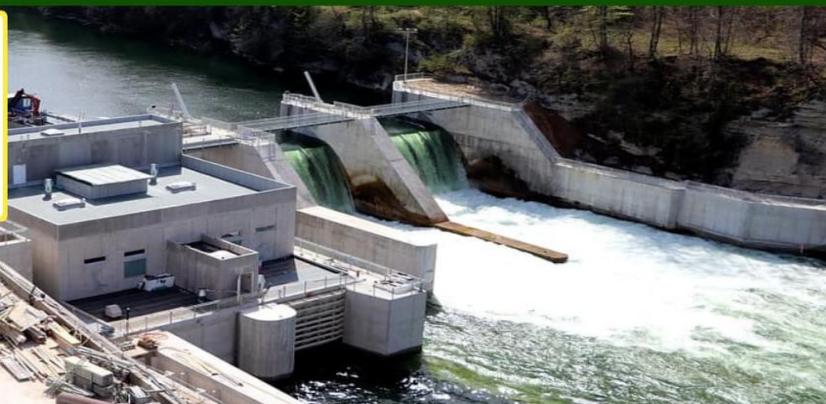
- Location: It is a planned 1125 MW run-of-river project situated in the eastern Lhuentse and Mongar Districts of Bhutan.
- Associated river: It will be built on the Kurichhu River, a tributary of the Drangmechhu that flows into India.
- Partnership: Bhutan's Druk Green Power Corporation (DGPC) has signed an MoU with Tata Power Company Limited for the joint development of the project.
- Use of SPV: The Project will be implemented through a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV), with DGPC and Tata Power holding equity shares of 60% and 40%, respectively.
- Completion of the project: The project is expected to be commissioned by early 2032.
- Role of world bank: The project is financed by the World Bank.
- Power capacity: At a height of approximately 139.5 m, the concrete-gravity dam channels nearly 287 m3/s through a 15 km headrace tunnel to an underground powerhouse housing six Francis turbines, designed to generate around 4.5 terawatt-hours (TWh) annually.
- Estimated cost: At a total project cost of ₹13,100 crore, Dorjilung will be Bhutan's second-largest hydropower project, and the largest Public–Private Partnership (PPP) hydro project ever undertaken in the country.

BRIHADEESWARAR TEMPLE

Marking World Heritage Week, the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) organised a heritage walk and clean-up drive at the Brihadeeswarar Temple in Thanjavur.

About Brihadeeswarar Temple:

- Location: It is a Hindu temple dedicated to Shiva located in Thanjavur, Tamil Nadu.
- Other names: It is also known as Periya Kovil, RajaRajeswara Temple and Rajarajesvaram.
- Dravidian temple: It is one of the largest temples in India and is an example of Dravidian architecture during the Chola period.
- Construction: It was built by emperor Raja Raja Chola I and completed in 1010 AD.
- Uniqueness: It is part of the UNESCO World Heritage Site known as the "Great Living Chola Temples", with the other two being the Brihadeeswarar Temple, Gangaikonda Cholapuram and Airavatesvara temple.
- Cultural Significance: It has a repository of Tamil inscriptions detailing rituals, gifts, and the temple's construction overseen by Raja Raja Chola himself.
- Use of granite: The entire temple structure is made out of granite.
- Structure: The vimanam (temple tower) is 216 ft (66 m) high and is the tallest in the world. The Kumbam (the apex or the bulbous structure on the top) of the temple is carved out of a single rock and weighs around 80 tons.
- Area: The temple complex spans over 40 acres and is decorated with masses of sculptures and inscriptions that spotlight the era's devotion and craftsmanship.
- Nandi statue at entrance: There is a big statue of Nandi (sacred bull), carved out of a single rock measuring about 16 ft (4.9 m) long and 13 ft (4.0 m) high at the entrance.

AFRICAN GREY PARROT

Recently, RTI responses revealed that State Forest Departments across India have no record of African grey parrot trade.

About African Grey Parrot:

- Nature: It is a medium-sized, dusty-looking grey bird.
- Scientific Name: Its scientific name is Psittacus Erithacus.
- Uniqueness: It is one of the most talented talking/mimicking birds on the planet.

- Distribution: African grey parrots are native to West and Central Africa. They are kept as pets in many parts of the world, and their popularity dates back centuries.
- Habitat: They inhabit different types of lowland forest, including rainforest, woodlands, and wooded savannah. They can be seen along forest edges and in clearings as well, and sometimes feeding in gardens and cultivated fields.
- Lifespan: Usually, they live for more than 50 years.
- Features: It is a mottled grey-coloured, medium-sized parrot. It has a large black bill and white mask enclosing a yellow eye and has a striking red vent and tail.
- Difference between males and females: Females have a pale grey crown with dark gray edges, a grey body, and scarlet tail feathers. The male looks similar to the female but becomes darker with age.
- Conservation Status:
  - It is classified as 'Endangered' under the IUCN Red List.
  - It is listed under Appendix I of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna (CITES).

WHY INDIA NEEDS GENETIC ENGINEERING

India's projected **1.7 billion population by 2060**, coupled with shrinking agricultural land, water stress, and climate volatility, makes genome editing and modern biotechnology essential tools to secure long-term food supply, nutrition, and farmer resilience.

What is Genetic Engineering?

Genetic engineers isolate a gene from an organism that has a feature they want to impart to a plant

Single gene is isolated and modified.

Copies of the gene are inserted into plant cells and induced to grow.

Seeds from mature plants are studied for successful transformation.

Cell with desired trait — Genetic material — Isolated target gene — Plant tissue — Growth medium — Plant with new trait
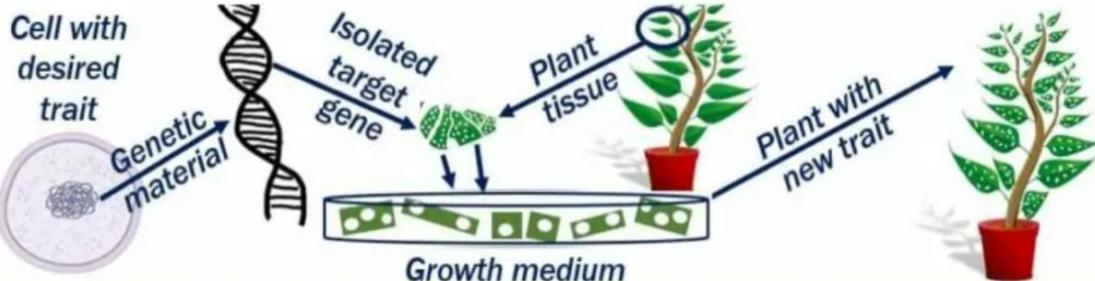
Altering or modifying an organism's genes so that its features, characteristics, or behavior change.

Main Arguments: Why India Needs Genetic Engineering?

- **Productivity Plateau:** India's crop yields have stagnated, and genome-edited varieties can reverse this trend at a time when the country spends **$20 billion annually on edible oil imports**.
- **Climate Resilience:** CRISPR-edited drought-, heat-, and salinity-tolerant lines like the improved *Samba Mahsuri* offer crucial protection amid rising climate shocks.
- **Nutrition Security:** Genome editing can enhance micronutrient density in staples, essential when **one-third of Indian children remain stunted** due to persistent malnutrition.
- **Indigenous Technology:** ICAR's new **TnpB-based editing tool** strengthens India's seed sovereignty by reducing dependence on CRISPR technologies controlled by foreign institutions.
- **Resource Efficiency:** GE crops improve water- and nutrient-use efficiency—critical as India is expected to enter **severe water scarcity (<1,000 m³ per capita)** by 2050.

Challenges Hindering Adoption

- **Regulatory Uncertainty:** Overlapping GM–GE rules and prolonged approval timelines discourage researchers and delay deployment of safe, non-transgenic innovations.
- **Activist Opposition:** Ideological resistance masquerading as environmentalism fuels distrust and blocked earlier breakthroughs like GM mustard.

- **Perceived Monopolies:** Concerns over corporate control persist even when the technologies (like TnpB) are public-sector and indigenously developed.
- **Information Deficit:** Low public awareness and circulating misinformation create political hesitancy and slow acceptance of GE crops.
- **Scientific Demoralisation:** Two decades since **Bt Bollgard-II (2006)** without new approvals have weakened morale among agricultural scientists and stalled innovation pipelines.

Way Forward
- **Regulatory Clarity:** India needs a differentiated, science-based framework—similar to Japan and Argentina—that fast-tracks approvals for non-transgenic genome-edited crops.
- **Public-Sector Leadership:** Greater ICAR funding and open-licensing models can ensure that genome-edited seeds remain affordable for small and marginal farmers.
- **Field Validation:** Large-scale demonstrations through Krishi Vigyan Kendras must highlight real-world improvements in yields, stress tolerance, and reduced chemical use.
- **Scientific Literacy:** A national GE awareness mission should counter misinformation through transparent communication involving universities, panchayats, and extension workers.
- **Innovation Ecosystem:** An integrated agri-biotech corridor connecting start-ups, ICAR labs, incubators, and seed companies can accelerate safe, equitable dissemination.

India's future food and nutrition security will depend on its readiness to embrace safe, indigenous, precision breeding technologies. Rejecting genome editing due to misplaced fears risks deepening rural distress, increasing import dependence, and weakening the scientific foundations of Indian agriculture.

SANGAI FESTIVAL

Recently, the Sangai Festival in Manipur began amid a protest by internally displaced persons (IDPs) and members of NGOs, impacting attendance.

About Sangai Festival:

- Location: It is celebrated in the state of Manipur.
- Nomenclature: It is an annual festival, started in the year 2010, which is named after the state animal, the Sangai.
- Objective: It aims to showcase Manipur's rich cultural heritage and indigenous tradition. The festival promotes the cultural extravaganza of Manipur through music, dance and various native art forms that are part of the Manipuri tribes and people.
- Use of Ras Leela: The state's classical dance form, 'Ras Leela,' renowned for its distinctiveness, takes centre stage during the festival.
- Theme: The themes of 2025 is "Where blossoms breathe harmony."

About Sangai:

- **Endemic to Manipur:** It is a subspecies of Eld's deer endemic to Manipur. It also has immense cultural relevance to Manipur.
- **Distribution:** It is found only in Keibul Lamjao National Park – the largest single mass of phumdi is in the Loktak Lake – in Manipur's Bishnupur district.
- **Appearance:** It is a medium-sized deer, with uniquely distinctive antlers, with extremely long brow tine, which form the main beam.
- **Uniqueness:** The animal's coat is a dark reddish brown during winter months and it becomes a much lighter shade in summer.
- **Also known as dancing deer:** It walks on the hind surface of its pasterns with mincing and hops over floating foliage. Therefore, it also called the dancing deer.
- **Threat:** While the habitats have been encroached for grazing, cultivation, and fish farming, the animals are highly threatened by a hydro-electric project in the lake.
- **Conservation status**
  - CITES: Appendix I
  - IUCN: Critically Endangered
  - Wildlife Protection Act 1972: Schedule-1

SUKHNA WILDLIFE SANCTUARY

Recently, 9-day wildlife census began in Sukhna wildlife sanctuary.

About Sukhna Wildlife Sanctuary:

- **Location:** It is a protected area located in Chandigarh, near the famous Sukhna Lake at the foothills of the Shivalik range.
- **History:** The lake was created by the architect Le Corbusier in 1958 by diverting the Sukhna Choe, a seasonal stream that flows down from the Shivalik hills. The sanctuary was developed as a result of afforestation done for soil conservation around the lake.

- Area: Spreading over an area of over 25.98 square km (about 6420 acres), Sukhna Wildlife Sanctuary was established in 1998.
- Structure: The place is quite unstable geographically and becomes prone to soil erosion by surface runoff during rains. It has sandy soil of Shivalik with pockets of clay embedded at places.
- Vegetation: It is characterized by a mix of forests, grasslands, and wetlands, with the Sukhna Lake forming an important part of the ecosystem.
- Flora: The common flora of the sanctuary includes Khair, Phulai, Kikar, Shisham, Moonj, Amaltas, Jhingan, Amla, Rati, Vasaka, and many more.
- Fauna: Squirrel, Common-Mongoose, Indian Hare, Porcupine, Jungle Cat, Jackal, Wild boar, etc, are the mammals found in the sanctuary. Peacock, Hill myna, Jungle crow, Black drongo, Parrots, Doves, and others are the common birds of this region.

MEERUT BUGLE

Meerut bugle, commonly used in military parades, earns GI tag.

About Meerut Bugle:

- Nature: The Meerut bugle is a brass wind instrument used in military drills, parades, ceremonies, and signals across the Army, paramilitary forces, and police units in India.
- Uses: It is used in the drills of armed forces and in wars, ceremonies, and parades for decades. It is also used to signal the start of movements or events, and carries a deep historical imprint.
- Origin: The bugle-making in Meerut dates back to the late 19th century. The bugle's story is closely linked to the development of India's military traditions.
- Meerut as centre of bugle making: Over time, the craft of bugle making has evolved into a specialised local industry, making Meerut one of India's main centres for handmade bugles.

- Making: The making of a bugle is entirely manual. A brass sheet is cut and hammered into shape using a specialised die. The sheet is moulded and processed through several stages to achieve a smooth finish, and finally fitted with a mouthpiece.
- Significance: It represents a living military heritage linking colonial-era communication tools to modern ceremonial functions.
- Types of bugles manufactured:
  - Copper bugle: the highest in demand across India.
  - Gold-finish bugle: featuring a polished gold-like surface.
  - Silver-finish bugle: Produced on request.

CLIMATE CHANGE PERFORMANCE INDEX (CCPI)

India slipped 13 ranks to figure at the 23rd position in the latest Climate Change Performance Index (CCPI).
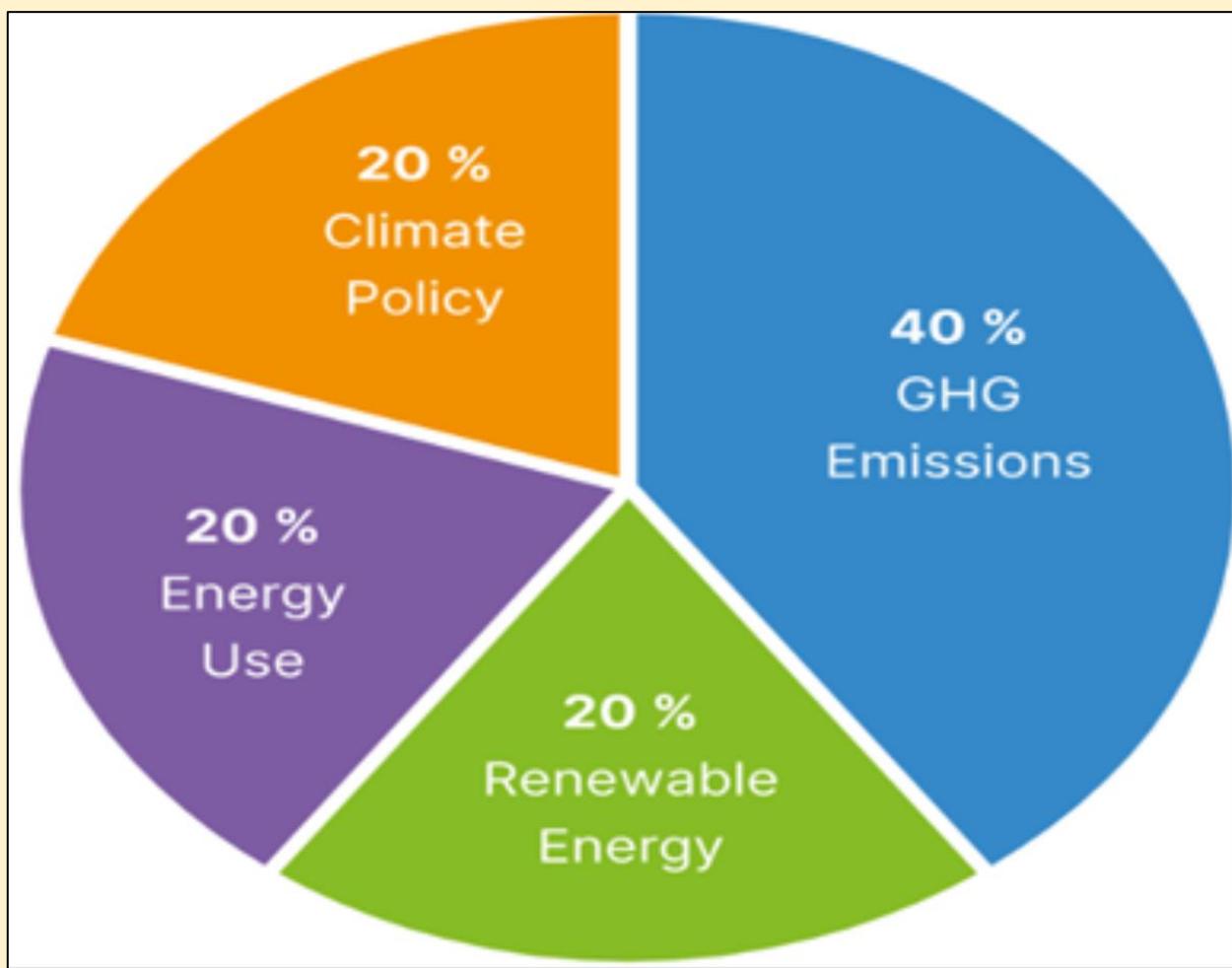
About Climate Change Performance Index (CCPI):

- Publishing agency: It is published by think tanks German watch, New Climate Institute, and Climate Action Network International. It was first published in 2005.
- Objective: It tracks the progress of the world's largest emitters in terms of emissions, renewables, and climate policy.
- Assessment in 4 categories: The performance of countries is assessed in four categories with 14 indicators- Greenhouse Gas Emissions (40% of the overall score), Renewable Energy (20%), Energy Use (20%), and Climate Policy (20%).

- Key highlights of the Climate Change Performance Index 2026:
  - Denmark, the UK and Morocco took the lead in this year's CCPI.
  - China (54th), Russia (64th), the US (65th) and Saudi Arabia (67th) are the G20's worst-performing countries, receiving an overall very low score.
  - India fell 13 places from its previous ranking of 10th to stand at 23rd in the latest global climate change performance with a score of 61.31.
  - It's the biggest fall of India on the CCPI ranking in the recent past even as it remained in the top 10 high-performing countries for six years in a row till 2024. India, which ranked 31st in 2014, entered the top 10 list for the first time in 2019.
  - It also labelled India among the biggest producers of oil, gas, and coal worldwide, leading it to fall from a 'high performer' to a 'medium' one in this year's CCPI.

BIRSA 101

Union Minister Dr. Jitendra Singh launches India's first indigenous "CRISPR" based gene therapy named 'BIRSA 101' for Sickle Cell Disease.

About BIRSA 101:

- Nomenclature: The therapy has been named Birsa-101 in honour of the tribal leader Birsa Munda.
- Uniqueness: It is India's first indigenous CRISPR-based gene therapy, designed to treat Sickle Cell Disease (SCD).
- Development: It is developed by the CSIR-Institute of Genomics and Integrative Biology (IGIB) in partnership with the Serum Institute of India (SIIPL) for technology transfer, scale-up, and affordable national deployment.
- Objective: It aims to support India's mission of becoming Sickle Cell–Free by 2047, as envisioned by the Prime Minister.
- Use of CRISPR Technology: It utilizes the CRISPR-Cas9 gene-editing tool to correct the genetic mutation causing Sickle Cell Disease.
- Affordable: It is priced significantly lower than global CRISPR treatments, making it more accessible to the poorest populations.
- Mechanism: It edits defective genes inside the patient's cells and corrects the mutation responsible for producing sickle-shaped red blood cells, thereby enabling normal haemoglobin production.
- One time infusion: The therapy has to be given as a one-time infusion, after which the body should start producing normal red blood cells instead of sickle-shaped ones.

INDIRA GANDHI PEACE PRIZE

Recently, the Indira Gandhi Prize for Peace, Disarmament and Development for 2024 was presented to Michelle Bachelet, the first and only woman President of Chile.

About Indira Gandhi Peace Prize:

- Establishment: It was instituted in the memory of the former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi by a trust in her name in 1986.
- Nomenclature: It is also known as the Indira Gandhi Prize for Peace, Disarmament, and Development,
- Composition: It consists of a monetary award of 25 lakh rupees along with a citation.
- Significance: The prize is awarded annually and is considered one of the highest honours in the field of peace and development.
- Eligibility criteria: It is awarded annually to a person or organization without any distinction of nationality, race or religion, in recognition of creative efforts towards:
  - Promoting international peace and disarmament, racial equality, and goodwill and harmony among nations;
  - Securing economic co-operation and promoting a new international economic order;
  - Accelerating the all-round advancement of developing nations;
  - Ensuring that the discoveries of science and modern knowledge are used for the larger good of the human race; and Enlarging the scope of freedom and enriching the human spirit.

TRADE INTELLIGENCE & ANALYTICS (TIA) PORTAL

Recently, Union Minister of Commerce and Industry launched the Trade Intelligence & Analytics (TIA) Portal in New Delhi.

About Trade Intelligence and Analytics (TIA) Portal:

- Nature: It is a one-stop trade intelligence and analytics platform that integrates multiple global and national databases.
- Development: It is developed by the Department of Commerce, Minister of Commerce and Industry.
- Objective: The portal aims to make trade data more transparent, accessible, and useful for stakeholders across India. It seeks to help importers, exporters, MSMEs, and startups make informed and data-driven decisions.
- Significance: The new and more exhaustive capabilities of the TIA Portal significantly improve accessibility and usability of trade data at one place.
- Centralised digital hub: It serves as a centralized digital hub that consolidates diverse trade databases—both global and bilateral—into a single integrated system. It is designed to enhance trade analytics and foster data-driven evidence-based policymaking through a comprehensive and integrated platform.
- Real time insights: It offers more than 270 interactive visualisations across over 28 dashboards. It provides real-time, interactive insights on India and global trade, commodities and sectoral analytics, market intelligence.
- Includes PLI sectors: It also includes automated trade reports and tracking of trade trends for the production-linked incentive (PLI) sectors and critical minerals. It also provides tools to compare and contrast macroeconomic, trade and investment indicators across countries.
- Trade indices: It incorporates trade indices such as
  - Trade Complementarity Index: It assesses alignment between India's export profile and partner countries' import needs.
  - Revealed Comparative Advantage index: It highlights products where India holds a competitive edge.
  - Trade Intensity Index: It measures the strength of bilateral trade relationships relative to global flows.

SENTINEL-6B

Sentinel-6B was launched recently from the Vandenberg Space Force Base in California.

About Sentinel-6B:

- Nature: It is a joint mission between the United States' NASA and NOAA, and the European Space Agency. It is the latest in a series of satellites launched since the 1990s, mainly by NASA, to measure the sea-level changes from space.
- Objective: It is an ocean-tracking satellite which will measure the rising sea levels and its impacts on the planet. It will provide primary sea level measurements down to approximately an inch from over 90% of all the oceans.
- Launch: It was lunched aboard a SpaceX Falcon-9.
- Continues legacy of Sentinel-6: It is set to carry forward the legacy of Sentinel -6 Michael Freilich, launched in November 2020.
- Orbiting speed: It will orbit Earth at a speed of 7.2 km per second, completing one revolution every 112 minutes. It is expected to spend the next 5.5 years in orbit.
- Coverage: It maps more than 90% of the world's ice-free oceans every 10 days.
- Components: It consists of six onboard science instruments. It has two fixed solar arrays, plus two deployable solar panels, and will travel in a longitude direction around Earth in a non-Sun-synchronous orbit.
- Significance: It observes Earth's oceans, measuring sea levels to improve weather forecasts and flood predictions. It also safeguards public safety, benefits commercial industry, and protects coastal infrastructure.

RAULANE FESTIVAL

Recently, raulane festival, a unique and sacred winter festival was celebrated in Himachal Pradesh's Kinnaur district.


RAULANE FESTIVAL IN HIMACHAL'S KINNAUR CELEBRATES WINTER FAIRIES

About Raulane Festival:

- Location: It is a traditional festival celebrated in Kalpa, Kinnaur district, Himachal Pradesh, in winter or early spring.
- History: This ancient festival is believed to be around 5,000 years old. It honours celestial fairies, known as Saunis, said to be radiant and gentle beings.
- Faith: Locals believe that the Saunis protect villagers during harsh winters by offering warmth and guidance.
- Symbolic marriage ceremony: During the festival, two men symbolically "marry" and become vessels for the Saunis, embodying a divine couple, the Raula (groom) and the Raulane (bride).
- Use of heavy costumes and masks: They get dressed in heavy woollen robes, ornaments and unique face masks.
- Ritual dance: They also perform a slow, meditative dance at the Nagin Narayan Temple, and the whole community joins in.
- Significance: The Raulane festival preserves ancient Himalayan culture and traditions, with villagers coming together to honour their protectors

SRI GURU TEGH BAHADUR

Prime Minister Narendra Modi led national commemorations in Kurukshetra to mark the 350th martyrdom anniversary of Sri Guru Tegh Bahadur, releasing a commemorative postage stamp, special coin and a coffee-table book dedicated to the Ninth Sikh Guru.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji was born in 1621 to Guru Hargobind Sahib Ji and Mata Nanaki Ji. When Guru Hargobind Sahib Ji first saw his son, he bowed down to him. Baba Bidhi Chand Ji, surprised by this gesture, asked why he bowed to his own child. Guru Hargobind Sahib Ji replied, "My child will one day save bleeding and helpless humanity." In 1634, Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji was married to Mata Gujri Ji.

National Tribute at Kurukshetra

The state-level event, organised by the Haryana government under chief minister Nayab Singh Saini, drew thousands of devotees from across Haryana and neighbouring states. A grand venue at Jyotisar village was created to host the gathering, supported by extensive security, traffic and logistical arrangements to manage the large crowds.

Interfaith Harmony and Gurbani Recital

A notable feature of the ceremony was an interfaith Gurbani recitation by 350 students from a Patiala school representing Hindu, Muslim, Sikh and Christian communities.

They rendered kirtan in unison for about half an hour, symbolising harmony and shared reverence for Guru Tegh Bahadur's message of faith, sacrifice and protection of religious freedom.

PM's Address on Sikh Heritage and National Values

In his address, the Prime Minister linked Kurukshetra's sacred legacy with Sikh tradition, recalling that many Sikh Gurus visited the region. He described Guru Tegh Bahadur as "Hind Di Chadar", highlighting his defiance of forced conversions under Mughal rule and praising Bhai Jaita (Bhai Jeevan Singh) for carrying the Guru's severed head to Anandpur Sahib.

Modi underlined government efforts to honour Sikh heritage, citing major Prakash Gurpurb celebrations, the Kartarpur Sahib Corridor, Hemkund Sahib ropeway and expansion of Virasat-e-Khalsa.

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