

**ART AND CULTURE**

❖ **50 ASI-protected monuments disappear**

➤ **CONTEXT:** Fifty of India's 3,693 centrally protected monuments have gone missing, the Ministry of Culture has told Parliament. The submissions were made by the ministry recently to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Transport, Tourism and Culture as part of a report titled 'Issues relating to Untraceable Monuments and Protection of Monuments in India'.

➤ **What are centrally protected monuments?**

- The Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act (AMASR Act) regulates the preservation of monuments and archaeological sites of national importance.
- The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), which is under the aegis of the Union Ministry of Culture, functions under this Act.
- The Act protects monuments and sites that are more than 100 years old, including temples, cemeteries, inscriptions, tombs, forts, palaces, step-wells, rock-cut caves, and even objects like cannons and mile pillars that may be of historical significance.
- According to the provisions of AMASR Act, ASI officials are supposed to regularly inspect the monuments to assess their condition.
- Apart from various conservation and preservation operations, ASI officials can also file police complaints, issue show cause notices for the removal of encroachments, and communicate to the local administration the need for demolition of encroachments.

➤ **So how can a monument go "missing"?**

- The ASI was founded in 1861 by Alexander Cunningham, when he realised the need for a permanent body to oversee archaeological excavations and conservation. But while the body remained largely dysfunctional in the 19th century owing to fund crunch, in the decades preceding Independence, it became very active. A bulk of the protected monuments were taken under the ASI's wings during the 1920s and 30s, up till the 50s.
- But in the decades after independence, the focus of successive governments was on health, education and infrastructure, rather than protecting heritage. Even within the scope of heritage, the aim was to uncover more monuments and sites, instead of conservation. So in due course, many monuments and sites were lost to activities like urbanisation, construction of dams and reservoirs, and even encroachments.
- As per the ASI submission in Parliament, 14 monuments have been lost to rapid urbanisation, 12 are submerged by reservoirs/dams, while 24 are untraceable, which brings the number of missing monuments to 50.
- Even now, ASI grappling with an acute manpower shortage to physically man all the big and small monuments which may fall under a particular region.
- The ASI told the Parliamentary committee that security guards were posted at only 248 of the 3,693 monuments. The committee notes with dismay that out of the total requirement of 7,000 personnel for the protection of monuments, the government could provide only 2,578 security personnel at 248 locations due to budgetary constraints.

➤ **Is this the first time monuments have been reported missing?**

- According to ASI a comprehensive physical survey of all monuments has never been conducted after Independence, in 2013, a Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) report said that at least 92 centrally protected monuments across the country had gone missing.
- According to the CAG report the ASI did not have reliable information on the exact number of monuments under its protection. It recommended that periodic inspection of each protected monument be carried out by a suitably ranked officer. The Culture ministry accepted the proposal, but there was hardly any movement.

➤ **Which monuments are missing?**

- According to the report out of the 92 monuments declared as missing by the CAG, 42 have been identified due to efforts made by the ASI." Of the remaining 50, 26 have been accounted for, as mentioned earlier, while 24 are untraceable.
- According to the Ministry such monuments which could not be traced on ground for a considerable time because of multiple factors, despite the strenuous efforts of ASI through its field offices, were referred as Untraceable monuments. These include 11 in Uttar Pradesh, two each in Delhi and Haryana, and in states like Assam, West Bengal, Arunachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand. Many such cases pertain to inscriptions, batteries and tablets, which don't have a fixed address. They could have been moved or damaged and it may be difficult to locate them.
- According to the Parliamentary panel it was perturbed to find that the Barakhamba Cemetery in the very heart of Delhi was among the untraceable monuments. "If even monuments in the Capital cannot be maintained properly, it does not bode well for monuments in remote places in the country.
- Other missing monuments include the Guns of Emperor Sher Shah, Tinsukia (Assam); the Ruins of Copper Temple, Paya, Lohit (Arunachal Pradesh); Kos Minar, Mujesar, Faridabad (Haryana); Kutumbari Temple, Dwarahat, Almora (Uttarakhand); Rock Inscription, Satna (Madhya Pradesh); Old European Tomb, Pune (Maharashtra); 12th Century Temple, Baran (Rajasthan); and Telia Nala Buddhist ruins, Varanasi (Uttar Pradesh).

➤ **Could there be more missing monuments?**

- The CAG audit included a joint physical inspection, along with the ASI, of merely 1,655 monuments out of the 3,678 on the protected list at the time. The 24 monuments reported to be untraceable are from this sample of 1,655 monuments.
- The Committee is perturbed to note that having found out that at least 24 monuments are untraceable out of the sample of monuments studied, no further surveys were conducted for the remaining monuments, even nearly a decade after the original study.
- **So does India now have fewer protected monuments?**
- The ASI submitted that even as the monuments lost to urbanisation or dams can be deemed gone, it will make one last attempt to locate the 24 untraceable monuments. If any of those can be traced, the missing monuments list will be pruned.
- However, deleting the lost/untraceable monuments from the protected list may not be that simple. The deletion requires denotification of the said monument under Section 35 of the AMASR Act, which happens to be a long-drawn process.
  - ✓ Section 35 has the provision to issue notifications only for such Centrally Protected Monuments (CPMs) which, according to the central government, have ceased to be of national importance.
- The committee recommended that the untraceable monuments may not be removed from the list, because once that is done, there would be no imperative to find them. Since the missing monuments cannot continue to be on the protected list either, the Committee recommended that the list of Untraceable Monuments may be maintained as such and if necessary, the AMASR Act be amended to include this terminology.

## POLITY

### ❖ **high-power Ladakh committee**

#### ➤ **CONTEXT: Recently, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) constituted a high-powered committee chaired by Minister of State for Home Nityanand Rai for the Union Territory of Ladakh.**

- The committee will discuss measures to protect the region's unique culture and language taking into consideration its geographical location and strategic importance; ensure protection of land and employment for the people of Ladakh; strategise inclusive development and discuss issues related to the empowerment of the Ladakh Autonomous Hill District Councils of Leh and Kargil.

#### ➤ **Why was the committee formed?**

- Civil society groups in Ladakh have been demanding protection of land, resources and employment for the past three years after the special status of the erstwhile State of Jammu and Kashmir under Article 370 of the Constitution was read down by Parliament on August 5, 2019. The fear of big businesses and conglomerates taking away land and jobs from the local people have contributed to this demand.

#### ➤ **What is the sixth schedule?**

- The sixth schedule under Article 244 of the Constitution protects the autonomy of tribal populations through creation of autonomous development councils which can frame laws on land, public health and agriculture.
- As of now ten autonomous councils exist in Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram.
- As per the 2011 Census, nearly 80% of them are tribals.

#### ➤ **What is the background?**

- In 2020, the Peoples Movement for Constitutional safeguard under the sixth schedule or the Apex Body, Leh was formed. They announced that they would boycott the upcoming district autonomous council elections if their demands were not met.
- The representatives which included former BJP MP Thupstan Chhewang and Skyabje Thiksey Khampo Rinpochey were called to Delhi for a meeting with Home Minister Amit Shah following which they called off the boycott call. They were assured that discussions would commence after 15 days of the culmination of elections.

In the same year, the Apex Body and the Kargil Democratic Alliance (KDA) from the two districts of Leh and Kargil in Ladakh came together to jointly fight for constitutional safeguards for the region.

- On August 2, 2022, the two bodies renewed their demand to seek full Statehood for Ladakh. The UT has shut down at least twice and protested several occasions in the past three years over these demands.
- However, members of the new committee state that the MHA order instituting the committee is not clear as it avoids any mention of the primary demand for inclusion under the sixth schedule of the Constitution.
- Moreover, even before the committee was announced, the Apex Body and KDA had scheduled a meeting in Jammu recently to chart the future course of action.

#### ➤ **What is the government's stand?**

- According to the MHA as informed a parliamentary standing committee recently it is not keen to give any special status to Ladakh, the objective for inclusion of tribal population under the sixth schedule is to ensure their overall socio-economic development, which, the UT administration has already been taking care of and that sufficient funds are being provided to Ladakh to meet its overall developmental requirements.
- A report tabled in Rajya Sabha recently, quoted MHA officials, that the Ladakh administration recently increased the reservation for the Scheduled Tribes in direct recruitment from 10% to 45% which will significantly help the tribal population in their development.

**PRELIMS**

**1. Heat dome**

➤ **CONTEXT:** Several parts of Europe witnessed an unprecedented winter heat wave. Calling it an “extreme event”, experts said that temperatures increased 10 to 20 degrees Celsius above normal.

- According to the report, at least seven countries recorded their hottest January weather ever. These included Poland, Denmark, the Czech Republic, the Netherlands, Belarus, Lithuania and Latvia.
- Climatologists suggested that the temperatures surged to summer or springtime levels. For example, at Korbiewo, a small village in Poland, the mercury reached 19 degree Celsius – a temperature the region is more used to in May, and 18 degree Celsius above the one degree Celsius yearly average for January.
- Meanwhile, in parts of Belarus, where temperatures usually remain around zero degree Celsius, they peaked at 16.4 degree Celsius on January 1.
- The continent is experiencing an extreme warm spell because of the formation of a heat dome over the region.

➤ **What is a heat dome?**

• A heat dome occurs when an area of high-pressure traps warm air over a region, just like a lid on a pot, for an extended period of time. The longer that air remains trapped, the more the sun works to heat the air, producing warmer conditions with every passing day.

• Heat domes generally stay for a few days but sometimes they can extend up to weeks, which might cause deadly heat waves.

• Scientists suggest that any region of high pressure, whether a heat dome or not, forces air to sink and once it reaches the ground, it gets compressed and becomes even warmer.

✓ Moreover, when air sinks, it gets drier and further raises the temperature of the area.

➤ **What is the relationship between heat domes and the jet stream?**

• The heat dome’s formation is related to the behaviour of the jet stream (an area of fast-moving air high in the atmosphere).

• The jet stream is believed to have a wave-like pattern that keeps moving from north to south and then north again. When these waves get bigger and elongated, they move slowly and sometimes can become stationary.

✓ This is when a high-pressure system gets stuck and leads to the occurrence of a heat dome.

• Although heat domes are likely to have always existed, According to researchers climate change may be making them more intense and longer and suggest with the rising temperatures, it is expected that the jet stream will become more wavy and will have larger deviations, causing more frequent extreme heat events.

➤ **What are some previous instances of heat domes?**

- In 2021, a heat dome formed over western Canada and the US, causing deadly heat waves. Portland city in Oregon, US, saw the mercury rise to 46 degree Celsius while the temperature in Washington hit 49 degree Celsius.
- In Lytton in British Columbia, temperatures soared to over 46 degree Celsius and hundreds of people are believed to have died due to this extreme weather event.
- A most recent study found that this heat dome was amplified by climate change and it could become a once-in-10-year event if global temperatures aren’t kept under two degree Celsius above pre-industrialisation levels.
- According to researchers the dry soil (one of the repercussions of the rising temperatures) in different areas of the Pacific northwest “potentially allowed the heat to become more extreme, and so they amplified the heat that was already at a high level.
- Another heat dome settled over the US in September 2022 and raised temperatures to a new high. The extreme heat fueled wildfires and stressed the power grid.

**2. RBI's Integrated Ombudsman Scheme**

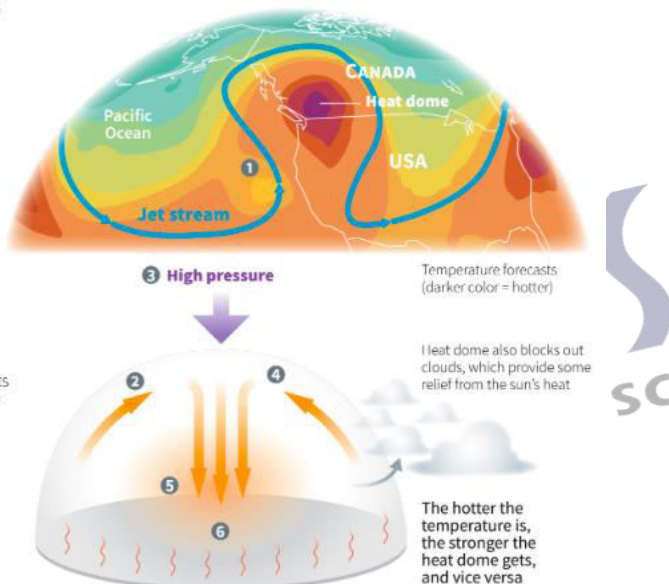
➤ **CONTEXT:** The volume of complaints received under the Reserve Bank of India’s ombudsman schemes and consumer education and protection cells stood at 4,18,184 in 2021-22, an increase of 9.39 per cent compared to the previous year.

3

**The ‘heat dome’**

Occurs when the atmosphere traps hot ocean air like a lid or cap

- 1 In summer, the jet stream (which moves the air) shifts northward
- 2 Hot and stagnant air expands upwards
- 3 Strong and high-pressure atmospheric conditions combine with influences from La Nina act like a dome or cap
- 4 In a process known as convection, hot air attempts to escape but high pressure pushes it back down
- 5 Under the dome, the air sinks and compresses, releasing more heat
- 6 As winds move the hot air east, the jet stream traps the air where it sinks, resulting in heat waves



➤ **About**

- It combines three RBI ombudsman schemes:
  - ✓ The banking ombudsman scheme of 2006,
  - ✓ The 2018 ombudsman scheme for NBFCs (non-bank financial companies),
  - ✓ The 2019 ombudsman scheme for digital transactions.
- The Integrated ombudsman scheme provides redress for customer complaints about deficiency in services rendered by RBI-regulated entities, namely banks, NBFCs, and pre-paid instrument players if the customer complaint is not resolved satisfactorily or the regulated entity does not respond within a 30-day period.
- It also covers the non scheduled Primary Co-operative Banks with a deposit size of Rs 50 crore and above. The integrated scheme ensures that the approach is "One Nation, One Ombudsman" and jurisdiction-neutral.
- The Scheme provides 'deficiency in service' as a ground for registering a complaint, subject to a specified set of exclusions. As a result, the complaints would no longer be dismissed only on the grounds that they are "not covered under the grounds listed in the scheme."
- The initiative is jurisdiction-neutral, and the centralized receipt and processing centre in Chandigarh has been established to handle initial complaints in any language.
- The RBI established a framework for the use of artificial intelligence techniques to enable banks and investigative agencies to collaborate more fastly.
- Through a single email address, bank customers able to make grievances, submit documents, check their status, and provide feedback.
- Additionally, a multilingual toll-free number is being provided to give all necessary information regarding grievance redress.
- The regulated entity has no appeal rights in circumstances where the ombudsman issues an award against it for failing to provide sufficient and timely information.
- Under the integrated scheme, the Appellate Authority would be the RBI's Executive Director-in-Charge of Consumer Education and Protection Department.

➤ **Significance**

- This contributes to the enhancement of the grievance redress mechanism for customer complaints against RBI-regulated entities.
- It improves consistency and streamline user-friendly methods, enhancing the scheme's value and promoting customer happiness and financial inclusion.
- The single ombudsman benefit loan account holders and deposit account users able to lodge and track complaints on the same website.

3. **Asian Pacific Postal Union (APPU)**

- **CONTEXT:** India will take over the leadership of the Asian Pacific Postal Union (APPU) having its Headquarters in Bangkok, Thailand from this month. Following the successful elections held during the 13th APPU Congress held in Bangkok during August- September 2022, Dr. Vinaya Prakash Singh, erstwhile Member (Personnel), Postal Services Board will take over the charge of Secretary General of the Union for a tenure of 4 years.

➤ **About**

- APPU is an intergovernmental organization of 32-member countries of the Asian-Pacific region.
- It was formed by International treaty through an Asian-Pacific Postal Convention signed in Yogyakarta on 27 March 1981.
- The organisation has origins dating back to 1961.
- APPU is the only Restricted Union of the Universal Postal Union (UPU) in the region, which is a specialized agency of the United Nations.
- Secretary General leads the activities of the Union and is also the Director of the Asian Pacific Postal College (APPC) which is the largest intergovernmental postal training institute in the region.

➤ **Goals and objectives**

- The goal of APPU is to extend, facilitate and improve postal relations between member countries and to promote cooperation in the field of postal services.
- As the regional center for various UPU projects, APPU also takes the lead in ensuring that all technical and operational projects of the UPU are fulfilled in the region.

➤ **Significance of India's chair**

- The Asia Pacific region accounts for around one-third of the world's postal workforce and about half of the world's mail volume.
- India seeks to improve the regional coordination with postal players in the Asia Pacific region to improve the growth of the business through the postal network, to ensure the sustainability of the Union.
- This is the first time an Indian is leading an international organization in the postal sector.



**ANSWER WRITING**

**Q: Judiciary is increasingly becoming a super-legislature that undermines the basic tenets of a parliamentary democracy. Critically examine.**

Constitution of India mandates judiciary as the interpreter of the constitutional provisions and the authority for adjudication of legal disputes. However, the foray of judiciary into legislative domain and intervention in policy matters has made it a super-legislature in the following ways:

- The higher judiciary, according to legal experts, has often overreached its role and interfered with the functions of the legislature and executive. E.g.; SC's order to ban the sale of liquor near highways.
- Judicial activism has led the higher judiciary into creating various doctrines and mechanisms which do not have constitutional backing, thus assuming the role of a legislative body. For example, doctrine of basic structure.
- Micromanagement by the higher judiciary in matters of day-to-day governance gives it a semblance of a super-legislative monitoring and exacting the accountability of the executive. For example, active involvement in policy matters during management of the Covid-19 pandemic.
- Judiciary, while exercising its constitutional powers under judicial review, is often seen to be transgressing into the legislative and executive domains. For example, the SC struck down NJAC Act in favour of the collegium system.

Judiciary acting as a super-legislature undermines the tenets of parliamentary democracy as:

- It violates basic parliamentary tenets of separation of powers.
- Judicial activism may lead to inactivity of legislature and executive leading to policy paralysis.
- The judiciary is neither competent nor responsible for exacting executive accountability. Under the parliamentary system this role falls upon the parliament in general and the Lok Sabha in particular.
- Judicial interference into the working of a democratically elected executive undermines the mandate of the people reposed in the elected government.

However, some experts have opined that the constitution has envisaged a transformative role for the Indian judiciary. The judiciary has ventured into the domain of legislature and executive only to ensure complete justice. In the exercise of its power, the judiciary has contributed positively in furthering tenets of democracy:

- Innovations like PIL have made justice accessible to weaker sections of society.
- Progressive interpretation of law has expanded the rights of the people. For example: Right to privacy under Article 21.
- Judiciary has filled legal vacuum, such as, Vishakha guidelines to counter harassment of women at work place.
- Judiciary has enhanced the confidence of people in parliamentary democracy by acting as a bulwark against majoritarianism and executive tyranny.

In India, judicial activism has played an important role in keeping democracy alive which can be seen through judgements like Kesavananda Bharti case, Minerva Mill Case etc. However, the judiciary must observe judicial restraint where necessary, especially to avoid face off either with the legislature or the executive.

**MCQs**

1. With reference to the Universal Postal Union (UPU), consider the following statements:
  1. Asian Pacific Postal Union (APPU) is the only restricted union of the Universal Postal Union (UPU) in the Asia-Pacific region.
  2. Any member country of the United Nations may become a member of the UPU.
  3. India recently applied to join UPU.

Choose the incorrect statement/s using the codes given below:

- a) 1 and 2 only
- b) 2 only
- c) 2 and 3 only
- d) 3 only**

2. With reference to Integrated Banking Ombudsman Scheme consider the following statements

1. The Banking Ombudsman is a senior official appointed by the Reserve Bank of India to redress customer complaints against deficiency in certain banking services covered under the grounds of complaint specified under RBI Act 1934.
2. The RBI Governor is the Appellate Authority under the integrated scheme

Which of the above statement/s is/are correct?

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only**
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

3. With reference to Heat Dome consider the following

1. It is a mountain of warm air built into a very wavy jet stream, with extreme undulations.
2. As per the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), a heat dome occurs when the atmosphere traps hot ocean air like a lid or a cap.

Which of the above statement/s is/are correct?

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only**

- c) **Both 1 and 2**  
d) Neither 1 nor 2
4. Consider the following statements:
1. The Sixth Schedule has conferred the District Councils the power to constitute Village Councils or courts for the trial of cases between persons belonging to Scheduled Tribes.
  2. The Sixth Schedule has recognised the power of the District Councils to impose certain specified taxes.
- Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
- a) 1 only  
b) 2 only  
c) **Both 1 and 2**  
d) Neither 1 nor 2
5. Consider the following pairs
1. Guns of Emperor Sher Shah - Tinsukia (Assam)
  2. The Ruins of Copper Temple - Faridabad (Haryana)
  3. Kos Minar - Paya, Lohit (Arunachal Pradesh)
  4. Telia Nala Buddhist ruins - Varanasi (Uttar Pradesh)
- How many above pairs is/are correctly matched?
- a) Only one pair  
b) **Only two pairs**  
c) Only three pairs  
d) All the four pairs
6. Consider the following statements with respect to Purchasing Managers Index (PMI) which often mentioned in news:
1. PMI is an indicator of manufacturing activity only
  2. It is a survey-based measure that asks the respondents about changes in their perception of some key business variables from the month before
- Which of the following given below codes are correct?
- a) 1 only  
b) **2 only**  
c) Both 1 and 2  
d) Neither 1 nor 2
7. Consider the following
- (A). Assertion: The Union Cabinet has given ex-post facto approval for naming of Greenfield International Airport Mopa, Goa as 'Manohar International Airport – Mopa, Goa'.
- (R). Reason: it is Greenfield project because it will be 100 percent solar powered airport.
- a) A and R both are correct and R is the correct explanation of A  
b) A and R both are correct but R is not the correct explanation of A  
c) A and R both are incorrect  
d) **A is correct but R is incorrect**
8. **Sunni Dam Hydro Electric Project** recently seen in news associated with which of the following river?
- a) Indus  
b) Beas  
c) Ravi  
d) **Sutlej**
9. Consider the following statements with reference to All India Annual State Ministers Conference on Water recently held
1. It was 1st All India Annual State Ministers Conference on Water.
  2. It is the part of Prime Minister's vision to make India a developed Nation by 2047.
- Which of the above statement/s is/are incorrect?
- a) 1 only  
b) 2 only  
c) Both 1 and 2  
d) **Neither 1 nor 2**
10. With reference to the Bomb Cyclone recently seen in news, consider the following statements:
1. What defines a bomb cyclone is how rapidly the pressure rises in the low-pressure mass.
  2. This quickly decreases the pressure difference, or gradient, between the two air masses, therefore making the winds stronger.
- Which of the above statements are incorrect?
- a) Only 1  
b) Only 2  
c) **Both 1 and 2**  
d) Neither 1 nor 2