

**POLITY**

**NCERT**

**In Context:** On September 1, 2023, the Union Education Minister announced that the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) has been granted the status of a deemed university. This announcement was made during an event celebrating the 63rd foundation day of NCERT in the national capital.

**Key points from the announcement and event**

- ✓ **Deemed University Status:** The Union Education Minister declared that NCERT would be granted the status of a deemed university. This change in status will enable NCERT to offer graduate, postgraduate, and doctoral degrees, expanding its academic offerings.
- ✓ **Merger of Bal Bhavans and Bal Vatika:** Dharmendra Pradhan also proposed the merger of Bal Bhavans and Bal Vatika with NCERT. This move aims to provide holistic education to children by integrating these institutions into NCERT's educational framework.
- ✓ **Background of NCERT:** NCERT, established in 1961 under the Society Act, plays a crucial role in assisting and advising the government in matters related to school education. It has been a significant contributor to the development of educational policies and curricula in India.
- ✓ **Deemed-to-be-University Status:** Institutions that are granted the status of "deemed-to-be-university" by the Central government, on the advice of the University Grants Commission (UGC), enjoy the academic status and privileges of a university. This status allows them to offer a wider range of academic programs.
- ✓ **Inauguration of Labs:** During the event, Pradhan inaugurated three labs, including a lab focused on virtual reality education and another dedicated to a teacher training centre. These labs are expected to enhance the quality of education and training offered by NCERT.
- ✓ **National Education Policy (NEP) Reference:** The Education Minister drew parallels between the success of Chandrayaan-3 and the National Education Policy. He expressed confidence that the NEP would be as successful as the recent ISRO project, highlighting the importance of educational reforms in India.
- ✓ **Curriculum Development:** Prior to this announcement, NCERT had formed a committee tasked with shaping the curriculum and textbooks for classes 3 to 12. The committee's primary goal is to align the curriculum with the National Curriculum Framework for School Education (NCF-SE), developed under the guidance of the K Kasturirangan-led steering committee as part of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 implementation. In summary, the Union Education Minister's announcement marked a significant development for NCERT, granting it deemed university status and expanding its role in providing higher education. Additionally, the event highlighted the importance of educational reforms and the alignment of the curriculum with the National Education Policy.

**National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT)**

**About:** The National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) is a vital institution in India's educational landscape. Established in 1961 by the Government of India, NCERT operates as an autonomous organization with the primary mission of improving the quality of school education in the country.

**Key Highlights**

- ✓ **Research in School Education:** NCERT's foremost objective is to conduct, promote, and coordinate research in areas related to school education. This research serves as the foundation for developing effective educational policies, strategies, and practices.
- ✓ **Textbook Development:** NCERT is responsible for preparing and publishing model textbooks for various subjects and grade levels. These textbooks are designed to provide a high-quality and standardized curriculum for students across India.
- ✓ **Supplementary Materials:** In addition to textbooks, NCERT develops supplementary materials to support and enhance the learning process. These materials include workbooks, reference books, and other resources to assist students and teachers.
- ✓ **Educational Publications:** NCERT publishes newsletters, journals, and research papers in the field of education. These publications disseminate valuable information, research findings, and best practices to educators, policymakers, and the public.
- ✓ **Educational Kits and Digital Materials:** NCERT creates educational kits and multimedia digital materials to facilitate interactive and engaging learning experiences for students. These resources align with modern educational technologies and pedagogical practices.
- ✓ **Teacher Training:** NCERT plays a crucial role in organizing pre-service and in-service training programs for teachers. These training initiatives aim to enhance teachers' pedagogical skills, subject knowledge, and teaching methods.
- ✓ **Innovative Educational Techniques:** NCERT is dedicated to developing and disseminating innovative educational techniques and practices. It encourages the adoption of effective teaching methods and approaches that cater to diverse learning needs.
- ✓ **Collaboration and Networking:** NCERT collaborates and networks with state educational departments, universities, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and other educational institutions. This collaboration fosters the exchange of ideas, resources, and expertise to improve the education system.
- ✓ **Clearing House for Information:** NCERT serves as a clearing house for ideas and information related to school education. It collects, synthesizes, and disseminates educational data, research findings, and policy recommendations.

- ✓ **Universalization of Elementary Education:** NCERT acts as a nodal agency for achieving the goals of the Universalization of Elementary Education (UEE). It provides guidance and support to ensure that every child in India has access to quality elementary education.
- ✓ **International Collaboration:** NCERT engages in bilateral cultural exchange programs with other countries in the field of school education. It also collaborates with international organizations and hosts foreign delegations to share knowledge and best practices.
- ✓ **Training Facilities for Developing Countries:** NCERT offers training facilities and expertise to educational personnel from developing countries. This international outreach helps in capacity building and educational development in partner countries.

**Way Forward:** The National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) is a multifaceted organization dedicated to improving the quality of school education in India. Its wide range of activities, from research and curriculum development to teacher training and international collaboration, plays a pivotal role in shaping India's education system and ensuring equitable access to quality education for all students. NCERT's contributions extend beyond national borders, making it a significant player in global educational development efforts.

**POLITICAL SCIENCE**

**"One nation, One election":**

**In Context:** The Indian government has formed a committee led by former President Ram Nath Kovind to examine the possibility of implementing "one nation, one election". This initiative seeks to synchronize the timing of Lok Sabha (national) and state assembly elections in India.



**About simultaneous polls:**

- ✓ Currently, elections to the state assemblies and the Lok Sabha are held separately.
- ✓ It is held whenever the incumbent government's five-year term ends or whenever it is dissolved due to various reasons.
- ✓ This applies to both the state legislatures and the Lok Sabha.
- ✓ The terms of Legislative Assemblies and the Lok Sabha may not synchronise with one another.
- ✓ The idea of "One Nation, One Election" envisages a system where elections to all states and the Lok Sabha will have to be held simultaneously.
- ✓ This will involve the restructuring of the Indian election cycle in a manner that elections to the states and the centre synchronise.
- ✓ This would mean that the voters will cast their vote for electing members of the LS and the state assemblies on a single day, at the same time.

**Constitutional changes:**

- ✓ It will need at least five constitutional amendments:
  - **Article 83 (2):** It says the Lok Sabha's term should not exceed five years but it may be dissolved sooner.
  - **Article 85 (2) (B):** A dissolution ends the very life of the existing House and a new House is constituted after general elections.
  - **Article 172 (1):** A state assembly, unless sooner dissolved, shall continue for five years
  - **Article 174 (2) (B):** The Governor has the power to dissolve the assembly on the aid and advice of the cabinet. The Governor can apply his mind when the advice comes from a Chief Minister whose majority is in doubt.
  - **Article 356:** Imposition of President's Rule in states.
- ✓ For a Constitutional Amendment, two-third members of the House must be present for the vote.
- ✓ A consensus of all political parties and state governments is needed.
- ✓ After the Constitutional Amendment Bill is passed in parliament, it needs to be ratified by half the states in India through resolutions in their assemblies.

**What is the background?**

- ✓ Simultaneous elections were the norm until 1967.

- ✓ But following dissolution of some Legislative Assemblies in 1968 and 1969 and that of the Lok Sabha in December 1970, elections to State Assemblies and Parliament have been held separately.
- ✓ The idea of reverting to simultaneous polls was mooted in the annual report of the Election Commission in 1983.
- ✓ The Law Commission's Report also referred to it in 1999.
- ✓ The recent push came ahead of the 2014 Lok Sabha polls.

**Arguments in favour:**

- ✓ **Cost effective:**
  - Simultaneous polls will reduce enormous costs involved in separate elections.
  - Frequent elections pose a huge burden on resources — both manpower and financial.
  - Security personnel and government officials are effectively put on election duty for many months in a year.
- ✓ **Strengthening democracy**
  - It will ensure consistency, continuity and governance, which are integral to democracy
  - The system will help ruling parties focus on governance instead of being constantly in election mode.
  - Simultaneous polls will boost voter turnout.
- ✓ **Curbing corruption**
  - Simultaneous elections can also be a means to curb corruption and build a more conducive socio-economic ecosystem.
  - While the Election Commission's efforts to curb illicit finances are laudable, elections continue to be a conduit for black money and corruption.
  - Frequent electoral cycles disrupt normal public life by impacting the delivery of essential services.
  - They also provide opportunities to unscrupulous elements to create tears in the social fabric of society.

**Arguments against it**

- ✓ National and state issues are different, and holding simultaneous elections is likely to affect the judgment of voters.
- ✓ Since elections will be held once in five years, it will reduce the government's accountability to the people.
  - Repeated elections keep legislators on their toes and increases accountability.
- ✓ When an election in a State is postponed until the synchronised phase, President's rule will have to be imposed in the interim period in that state.
  - This will be a blow to democracy and federalism.
- ✓ Complexity of such an exercise is that simultaneous polls would benefit the nationally dominant party at the cost of regional players, and the complications that would arise if any of the governments were to collapse before completing its term.
  - A study conducted by the IDFC Institute in 2015 found that there is a 77 per cent chance that voters will choose the same winning political party or alliance in the state assembly and the Lok Sabha if elections are held simultaneously.
  - However, if elections are held six months apart, only 61 per cent of the voters would choose the same party.
- ✓ To be able to hold simultaneous elections, the EC will need around 30 lakh EVMs, which is a huge number.
- ✓ If we enforce the system of simultaneous elections, we would need to curtail the legislature's power to unseat a government.

**Law Commission 2018 Draft Report**

- ✓ In 2018, the Law Commission of India under Justice BS Chauhan said simultaneous elections cannot be held within the existing framework of the Constitution.
- ✓ It suggested at least "five Constitutional recommendations" for holding simultaneous polls.
- ✓ The commission suggested that at least 50 per cent of the states should ratify the amendments.
- ✓ The draft cited no-confidence motion and premature dissolution of the state assembly as major hurdles to simultaneous elections.
- ✓ To circumvent such a situation, the commission said "no-confidence motion" should be replaced with a "constructive vote of no-confidence". In this scenario, the government may only be removed if there is confidence in an alternate government.

**Way forward:** Holding simultaneous elections would cut down on the costs involved in separate elections. Experts argue that it will increase efficiency in the administrative set-up throughout the country since it slows down considerably during polling. It can help ensure continuity in the policies and programmes of the central and state governments. Currently, the Model Code of Conduct is imposed whenever elections are set to take place, putting a ban on the launch of new projects for public welfare for that period. Simultaneous elections could be adopted easily, but it has doubtful and difficult implications. The basic poll reforms, on the other hand, are difficult to push through but has durable positive implications to the parliamentary democracy and federal system that we have adopted.

**PRELIM FACTS**

**1. Pulikkali:**

**In context:** Recently, human tigers and leopards pranced about the streets in a rollicking show of Pulikkali to lend a carnivalesque finish to Onam celebrations.

**ABOUT PULIKKALI:**

- ✓ Pulikkali (Tiger Dance) is a type of Kerala folk art.
- ✓ On the fourth day of the Onam celebration, artists paint their bodies with yellow, red, and black stripes and dance to the rhythm of traditional percussion instruments such as thakil, udukku, and chenda.
- ✓ This carnival takes place in the Swaraj Ground in the Thrissur district, with participants dressed in various bright colors and masks.
- ✓ The main theme of this folk art is tiger hunting, with participants playing the role of tiger and hunter.
- ✓ It was introduced by Maharaja Rama Varma Sakthan Thampuran, the former monarch of Cochin.

**ABOUT ONAM FESTIVAL:**

- ✓ It is the biggest and the most important festival in the state of Kerala.
- ✓ It is a harvest festival celebrated at the beginning of the month of Chingam, the first month of the Malayalam Calendar (Kollavarsham).
- ✓ The Carnival of Onam lasts from four to ten days. The first day, Atham and the tenth day, Thirunam, are the most important of all.
- ✓ According to a popular legend, the festival is celebrated to welcome King Mahabali, whose spirit is said to visit Kerala at the time of Onam.
- ✓ Another key feature is Vallamkali, the Snake Boat Race, held on the river Pampa.
- ✓ Kaikotti kali and Thumbi Thullal are two graceful dances performed by women on Onam.

**2. 'Air Quality Life Index (AQLI) Annual Update 2023':**

**In Context:** A recent report titled 'Air Quality Life Index (AQLI) Annual Update 2023' by the University of Chicago's Energy Policy Institute sheds light on the extent of this issue and its profound effects on the region's population. Air pollution is a critical concern in South Asia, with countries like Bangladesh, India, Nepal, and Pakistan facing alarming levels of particulate pollution.

**About:**

- **Life Expectancy Reduction:** Air pollution in South Asia is **reducing the average lifespan of individuals by a staggering 5.1 years**. The most affected countries are Bangladesh, India, Nepal, and Pakistan, collectively accounting for more than half of the global life years lost due to high pollution.
- **Comparative Impact on Health Threats:** Poor air quality **diminishes life expectancy by an average of 5.3 years per person in India**. In contrast, cardiovascular diseases lead to a reduction of around 4.5 years, while child and maternal malnutrition shorten life expectancy by 1.8 years. Notably, tobacco use reduces life expectancy by up to 2.8 years, demonstrating the severe impact of air pollution.
- **Rising Pollution Levels:** **The average person in South Asia experiences particulate pollution levels that are 51.3% higher than those in 2000**. Had pollution levels remained constant from 2000, residents would have faced a loss of 3.3 years in life expectancy, as opposed to the 5.2 years projected in 2021.
- **Country-specific Impact**

**Bangladesh**

- ✓ Ranked as the **most polluted country globally**.
- ✓ Despite a 2.1% decrease in particulate pollution in 2021, pollution levels have remained significantly high.
- ✓ The country faces an average life expectancy reduction of 6.8 years per person.

**India**

- ✓ **Second most polluted nation** with all 1.3 billion people living in areas exceeding WHO guidelines for particulate pollution.
- ✓ Over the years, particulate pollution increased by 67.7%, leading to a decline in average life expectancy by 2.3 years.
- ✓ 5 levels in India increased from 56.2 µg/m<sup>3</sup> to 58.7 µg/m<sup>3</sup> between 2020 and 2021, which is ten times the WHO guideline.
- ✓ Delhi's annual average PM<sub>2.5</sub> level in 2021 was 126.5 µg/m<sup>3</sup>, causing a reduction in life expectancy by 11.9 years.

**3. Bhoramdeo Wildlife Sanctuary (BWS)**

**In Context:** The Chhattisgarh high court has dismissed a public interest litigation (PIL) that aimed to designate the Bhoramdeo Wildlife Sanctuary (BWS) as a tiger reserve and the Chilpi Range as a buffer zone.

**About Bhoramdeo Wildlife Sanctuary:**

**Location and Geographic Features**

- ✓ The Bhoramdeo Wildlife Sanctuary is **located in the Kawardha district of Chhattisgarh, India**.
- ✓ It **shares a border with Kanha National Park in Madhya Pradesh**, making it an important tiger habitat in central India.
- ✓ Covering an area of approximately 325 square kilometers, the **sanctuary is part of the Maikal Range of the Satpura Hills**.

- ✓ This wildlife sanctuary serves as the origin for the Fen and Sankari rivers.

#### **Biodiversity and Ecosystems**

- ✓ Boramdeo Wildlife Sanctuary boasts diverse ecosystems, including lush green forests, rolling hills, and open grasslands.
- ✓ It is home to a wide variety of flora and fauna, making it a significant biodiversity hotspot in the region.
- ✓ The sanctuary is inhabited by various wildlife species, including tigers, leopards, wild dogs, sloth bears, sambar deer, barking deer, chital (spotted deer), gaur (Indian bison), and numerous bird and reptile species.
- ✓ **It is particularly known for its tiger population, contributing to tiger conservation efforts in India.**
- ✓ The main species of plants found in the Sanctuary include sal, saja, tinsa, kara, and haldu.

#### **4. Mitakshara Law**

**In context:** The Supreme Court held that a child born of a void or voidable marriage can inherit the parent's share in a joint Hindu family property governed by the Mitakshara law.

#### **Key Points**

- ✓ It has been clarified that such a child would not be entitled to rights in or to the property of any other person in the family.
- ✓ Section 16 of the Hindu Marriage Act has statutorily conferred legitimacy to children born out of void or voidable marriages. In fact, Chief Justice Chandrachud pointed out that Section 16(3) stipulates that children from void and voidable marriages would have a right to their parents' property.

#### **About Mitakshara law**

- ✓ The Mitakshara school of Hindu law codified as the **Hindu Succession Act, 1956** governed succession and inheritance of property but only recognised males as legal heirs. The law applied to everyone who is not a Muslim, Christian, Parsi or Jew by religion. Buddhists, Sikhs, Jains and followers of Arya Samaj, Brahmo Samaj are also considered Hindus for the purposes of this law.
- ✓ Women were recognised as coparceners or joint legal heirs for partition arising from **2005. Section 6 of the Act** was amended that year to make a daughter of a coparcener also a coparcener by birth "in her own right in the same manner as the son".
- ✓ Mitakshara law of succession governing Hindu Undivided Families applies to the whole of India except West Bengal and Assam.

### **ANSWER WRITING**

**Q. The Bhakti movement received a remarkable reorientation with the advent of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu.**

**Discuss. (250 words) 15**

**INTRODUCTION:** Bhakti movement was an important landmark in the cultural history of the medieval India which was brought about by a galaxy of socio-religious reformers. Bhakti Movement was a reformative movement characterized by intense devotion or love for God. The movement focused to reform Indian society which was shadowed by Brahmanical dominance. Early 16th century was marked by rise of Bhakti Saint Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu in Eastern India. He was a Vaishnavi Saint and an ardent follower of Lord Krishna. According to his followers, he was an incarnation of Lord Krishna. Chaitanya Mahaprabhu helped broaden the scope of Bhakti movement in the following ways :

- On the request of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu his selected six disciples, called Goswamis, started to systematically present the theology of Bhakti. This was revolutionary within the bhakti movement as it was not known so far on wider scale.
- Chaitanya propagated his teachings without relinquishing the caste identity. But he accepted the lower caste people as his devotees. This was unique as most of the bhakti saints relinquished existing hierarchies and rigidities. Chaitanya cult became popular among all the people including some Muslim followers.
- Since the inception of Chaitanya movement, a favourite and characteristic form of worship was group singing known as kirtan. The concept was that the chanting the name of God brings the devotee closer to Him.

This concept was to some extent similar to that of Sama, a Sufi tradition of exalting and chanting the name of God to feel his presence. Thus it is no wonder that kirtan and Sama attracted the bhakti devotees of Hindus and Muslims towards each other's traditions and formed the basis for composite culture.

- Unlike most of bhakti saints, Chaitanya's associates range from the higher castes to lower castes. His association with Acharyas made his doctrines acceptable to a wider population and later his teachings were spread by the higher and lower caste people alike.
- Chaitanya though belonging to higher caste became the voice of the oppressed lower trodden. He became the bridge to reduce the social tensions in eastern India. His highly venerated disciples included Rupa, Santana and Jiva, all of whom were marginalised. The message of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu or Gaudiya School of thought is now propagated through ISKCON Movement across the world. It boasts of participation of devotees from around the world. In other words it can be said that Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu not only revolutionized Bhakti movement but also universalized it

### **MCQs**

- How many of the following statements is/are true regarding the Boramdeo Wildlife Sanctuary?
  - It is located in Chattisgarh.

2. The sanctuary is famous for its ancient Buddhist monasteries.
3. Boramdeo Wildlife Sanctuary is home to a significant population of tigers.
- Code:
- Only 1
  - Only 2**
  - All 3
  - None
2. Which statement is true regarding Fin Whales (*Balaenoptera physalus*)?
- Fin Whales are the smallest species of whales.
  - Fin Whales are listed as "Least Concern" on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species.
  - Fin whales are found in oceans worldwide, inhabiting both temperate and polar regions.
- Code:
- Only Statement 1 is true.
  - Only Statement 2 is true.
  - Only Statement 3 is true.**
  - Statements 2 and 3 are true.
3. Recently, Mitakshara Law is in news, considered the following statement:
- It is a Hindu law school that governs the succession of property in a Hindu Undivided Family (HUF)
  - It also talks about the right of daughters to inherit property.
- Which of the above statements is/are correct?
- Only 1
  - Only 2
  - Both 1 and 2**
  - Neither 1 nor 2
4. Consider the following statements in the context of Deemed University in India:
- Deemed Universities can design their curriculum, conduct their examinations, and make decisions regarding faculty appointments and other administrative aspects.
  - Degrees awarded by Deemed Universities are recognized by the government and are considered equivalent to degrees from traditional universities.
  - They have their admission processes, which may include entrance exams, interviews, and academic criteria.
  - Deemed Universities do not receive grants and funding from government agencies and other sources.
- How many of the above statements is/are correct?
- Only one
  - Only two
  - Only three**
  - All four
5. Consider the following statement regarding "one nation, one election"
- The Indian government has formed a committee led by Ram Nath Kovind.
  - This applies to both the state legislatures and the Lok Sabha.
- Which of the above statements is/are correct?
- Only 1
  - Only 2
  - Both 1 and 2**
  - Neither 1 nor 2
6. Which of the following statements about fungi is true?
- Fungi are photosynthetic organisms.
  - Yeasts are a type of fungi commonly used in baking and brewing.
  - Fungi belong to the Plantae kingdom.
- CODE:**
- Only Statement 1 is true.
  - Only Statement 2 is true.**
  - Only Statement 3 is true.
  - Statements 2 and 3 are true.
7. "Central Banker Report Cards 2023", is released by which of the following institutions?
- European Central Bank
  - World Economic Forum
  - World Bank
  - Global Finance**
8. With reference to the Digital Services Act (DSA) of the European Union, consider the following statements:
- Social media companies are required to add "new procedures for faster removal" of content deemed illegal or harmful.
  - Users should display personalised ads directed towards minors or based on sensitive personal data.
  - It does not impose penalties for non-compliance.
- How many of the statements given above are correct?
- Only one**
  - Only two
  - All three
  - None
9. With reference to the G-20, consider the following statements:
- It was formed in 2009 in the backdrop of the financial crisis that hit East Asia and Southeast Asia.
  - It represents around 85 per cent of the global GDP.
  - The G20 Presidency rotates bi-annually.
- How many of the statements given above are correct?
- Only one**
  - Only two
  - All three
  - None
10. The Bairabi-Sairang railway project was in the news due to collapse of the under-construction railway bridge. The railway project is located in which state?
- Assam
  - West Bengal
  - Mizoram**
  - Odisha