IQRA IAS An institute for civil services

WEEKLY UPDATES – (10thDec-16thDec)

Contents

ENVIRONMENT

Kambalakonda WLS

Context: The Eastern Ghats Biodiversity Centre situated along the Kambalakonda Wildlife Sanctuary's periphery, near PM Palem in Visakhapatnam, features a new Nature Interpretation Centre.

Wild Life Sanctuaries	Area (In km².)
Papikonda Wildlife Sanctuary[1]	591.00
Coringa Wildlife Sanctuary	235.70
Kolleru	308.55
Krishna Wildlife Sanctuary	194.81
Nagarjunasagar Srisailam (Project Tiger)	3568.00
Rolla Padu	6.14
Gundla Brahmeswara Wildlife Sanctuary	1194.00
Sri Lankamalleswara Wildlife Sanctuary	464.42
Nelapattu	4.58
Pulicat Lake Bird Sanctuary	500.00
Koundinya Wildlife Sanctuary (Project Elephant)	357.60
Sri Penusila Narasimha Wildlife Sanctuary	1030.85
Kambalakonda Wildlife Sanctuary	70.70

Map of wildlife sanctuaries in the Indian state of Andhra Pradesh. Green is National Park, Red denotes Wildlife Sanctuaries, Blue denotes Bird Sanctuaries.

About Kambalakonda WLS:

	Details
Location	Visakhapatnam district, Andhra Pradesh, India
Establishment	Declared in 1970 under the Wildlife Protection Act of India
Area	Approximately 71 square kilometers (27 square miles)
Ecosystem	Dry evergreen forests and scrubland
Biodiversity	Home to Indian leopards, deer species, wild boar, jackals, reptiles, birds, and medicinal plants
Flora	Predominantly dry evergreen forests with moist deciduous patches
Tourism and Recreation	Offers trekking, bird watching, and nature walks
Accessibility	Easily accessible from the city of Visakhapatnam

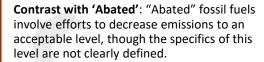## What does Unabated Fossil Fuels mean?

Context: At the ongoing COP28 climate summit, the term "unabated" fossil fuels has become a focal point in discussions about climate change mitigation.

The draft climate agreement mentions phasing down unabated coal, and US climate envoy John Kerry emphasized the need to phase out all unabated fossil fuels.

Understanding 'Unabated' Fossil Fuels

Definition: "Unabated" fossil fuels refer to the use of coal, oil, and natural gas without reducing the associated CO_2 and greenhouse gas emissions.

Contrast with 'Abated': "Abated" fossil fuels involve efforts to decrease emissions to an acceptable level, though the specifics of this level are not clearly defined.

IPCC's Definition: The UN IPCC defines unabated fossil fuels as those without substantial reduction interventions for greenhouse gas emissions, suggesting capturing significant percentages of CO_2 and methane.

Role of Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS) Technologies

- **CCS Technologies**: These technologies capture emissions from power stations or industrial facilities and store them underground.

- **Polarized Views**: Oil and gas producers view CCS as essential for emission reduction, while climate activists and experts argue its effectiveness is limited.

- **EU and Nations' Stance**: The EU and several nations stated that CCS should not replace significant fossil fuel cuts and must not be overused.

Effectiveness of Carbon Capture and Storage

- **IEA Report**: The International Energy Agency reports that modern CCS technologies can capture about 90% of CO_2.

- **IEEFA Study**: A study by the IEEFA found that many flagship CCS projects underperformed or failed.

- **Climate Analytics Analysis**: This analysis indicated that reliance on CCS could lead to substantial greenhouse gas emissions, potentially doubling CO_2 emissions in 2023 if capture rates are lower than expected.

Cost and Sustainability of CCS

- **High Costs**: CCS technologies are expensive, with alternatives like wind, solar, and batteries being more cost-effective than retrofitting coal plants with CCS.

- **Sustainability Concerns**: Scenarios achieving the Paris Agreement's 1.5°C limit show a near-complete phase-out of fossil fuels by 2050, with minimal use of fossil CCS.

Implications for COP28 and Beyond

- **Potential COP28 Declaration**: The summit's final declaration might include phasing out or down of unabated fossil fuels, raising concerns about continued fossil fuel use with CCS.

- **Risks of 'Abated' Fossil Fuels**: Experts like Claire Fyson from Climate Analytics warn that promoting 'abated' fossil fuels could misdirect climate finance and greenwash emissions from fossil fuel use.

Conclusion

- **Balancing Act**: The COP28 discussions highlight the complexities of balancing fossil fuel use, technological solutions like CCS, and achieving climate targets.

- **Need for Caution**: The debate underscores the need for cautious approaches to fossil fuel use and CCS, ensuring they align with broader climate goals and do not undermine efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

COP28 : Understanding CCS and CDR

Context: At the COP28 climate talks in Dubai, discussions have centered on carbon capture and storage (CCS) and carbon-dioxide removal (CDR) technologies.

The interpretation of 'abatement' is crucial in understanding the role and limitations of CCS and CDR in climate action.

Understanding CCS and CDR

CCS: This involves capturing CO_2 emissions at their source, such as in the fossil fuel industry and industrial processes, and storing them to prevent atmospheric release.

CDR: Encompasses natural methods like afforestation and technological approaches like direct air capture for absorbing and storing atmospheric CO_2.

COP28 Discussions: The term "unabated fossil fuels" in the draft texts refers to fossil fuel combustion without CCS. The texts advocate phasing out such fuels and enhancing emission removal technologies.

Scale and Efficacy of CCS and CDR

- **IPCC's AR6 Report**: Heavily reliant on CDR for meeting the 1.5 degrees C temperature limit, assuming significant CO_2 sequestration by 2040.
- **Challenges**: Direct mitigation to reduce emissions is daunting, making CDR crucial.

- **CCS Limitations**: Effective CCS requires high capture rates, permanent storage, and minimal methane leakage from upstream processes.

Concerns and Implications of CCS and CDR
- **Land Use for CDR**: Large-scale CDR methods, especially technological ones, require significant land, raising equity, biodiversity, and food security concerns.
- **Impact on the Global South**: CDR projects in the Global South could infringe on indigenous land rights and compete with agricultural land use.
- **Financial and Ethical Questions**: The cost and responsibility of implementing CDR at scale raise questions about who should bear these burdens.

Pitfalls of CCS and CDR
- **Potential for Increased Emissions**: CCS and CDR could inadvertently create leeway for continued or increased greenhouse gas emissions.
- **IPCC Emission Scenarios**: To limit warming to 1.5 degrees C, significant reductions in coal, oil, and gas use are required by 2050, with or without CCS.
- **Gas Emissions Pathways**: Higher reliance on CCS and CDR could lead to emission pathways with a greater contribution from gas.

Conclusion
- **Critical Decade Ahead**: The next decade is pivotal in determining the viability and scalability of CDR methods.
- **Balancing Act**: While CCS and CDR offer potential solutions for emission reduction, their implementation must be carefully managed to avoid unintended consequences and ensure equitable and effective climate action.
- **Future of Climate Negotiations**: The discussions and decisions at COP28 regarding CCS and CDR will significantly influence the trajectory of global climate action and the pursuit of the 1.5 degrees C target.

POLITY

Explained: SC Verdict on Abrogation of Article 370

Context: A Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court on Monday unanimously upheld the power of the President to abrogate Article 370 in August 2019, leading to the reorganisation of the full-fledged State of Jammu and Kashmir to two Union Territories and denuding it of its special privileges.

Key Issues and Court's Findings:

[A] On the Sovereignty of Jammu and Kashmir:
- **Petitioners' Claim**: They argued that J&K retained an element of sovereignty when it acceded to India in 1947, different from other princely states.
- **Court's Examination**: The Court noted that J&K was listed as a Part III state in the Indian Constitution and Section 3 of J&K's Constitution declared it an integral part of India.
- **Final Ruling**: The Court held that J&K did not retain sovereignty, and the process of integration was ongoing, culminating in the Presidential declaration under Article 370(3).

[B] Whether Article 370 is Temporary or Permanent:
- **Arguments Presented**: Petitioners argued for Article 370's permanence, while others viewed it as temporary.
- **Court's Opinion**: Both CJI Chandrachud and Justice Kaul concurred that Article 370 was a temporary provision.

[C] Legality of Abrogating Article 370:
- **Abrogation Process**: On August 5, 2019, President Ram Nath Kovind issued CO 272, amending Article 367 and redefining "Constituent Assembly of Jammu and Kashmir" as the "Legislative Assembly of Jammu and Kashmir."
- **Court's Upholding**: The Court upheld this process, with CJI Chandrachud stating that post-dissolution of J&K's Constituent Assembly, the President could have unilaterally abrogated Article 370.

[D] Actions Under President's Rule:
- **Challenge to Union's Actions**: The challenge was to the extent of powers appropriated under Article 356 (President's rule).
- **Reference to Bommai Ruling**: The Court, citing the 1994 Bommai ruling, stated that actions under the President's rule must not be mala fide or irrational.

Upholding Centre's (Union) Supremacy
- **Parliament's Unilateral Actions**: The Court's interpretation suggests Parliament can change a state's status under the President's rule.
- **Article 3 Reference**: The President referred the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Bill, 2019, to Parliament for its views, as the state was under President's rule.
- **Validity of Executive Orders**: The Court applied Bommai ruling standards to validate the executive orders, emphasizing the need for proof of mala fides to challenge the actions.

Conclusion
- **J&K's Integral Status Affirmed**: The Court conclusively ruled that J&K has always been an integral part of India.
- **Temporary Nature of Article 370**: The ruling clarifies that Article 370 was a temporary provision.
- **Expansion of Union Powers**: The judgment potentially expands the Union's powers under President's rule, affecting the federal balance.
- **Constitutional Precedent**: This ruling sets a significant precedent in interpreting Union and state powers, reflecting on the dynamics of Indian federalism.

Protecting Basic Structure from judicial arbitrariness

Context: The article reflects on the 50th anniversary of the Kesavananda Bharati case, emphasizing the enduring significance of the "Basic Structure Doctrine" in safeguarding constitutional pillars. It acknowledges debates surrounding its constitutional validity and introduces insights from jurist Dietrich Conrad, highlighting the need for checks and balances on institutional powers.

Key Highlights

50th Anniversary of Kesavananda Bharati Case	Marks the establishment of the "Basic Structure Doctrine" by the Supreme Court of India in 1973, consistently upheld but occasionally questioned for its open-ended nature.
Dietrich Conrad's Contribution	Acknowledges the influence of Dietrich Conrad, a German jurist, whose lecture on "Implied Limitation of the Amending Power" laid the foundation for the Basic Structure doctrine in India.
Arun Jaitley's Critique	Former Finance Minister Arun Jaitley's critique highlights concerns about the doctrine potentially undermining other constitutional mandates.

Key Challenges:

- **Constitutional Validity Doubts:** Doubts raised about the constitutional validity of the Basic Structure doctrine, questioning its open-ended nature and the exclusive powers it grants to the Supreme Court.

- **Potential Undermining of Other Mandates:** Criticisms, exemplified by Arun Jaitley's statement, argue that the doctrine, while upholding judicial independence, may diminish other vital constitutional structures.

Imporatant Terms and Phrases:

- **Basic Structure Doctrine:** Judicial principle recognizing fundamental features of the Constitution, protecting them from amendments or legislative interventions.

- **Implied Limitation of Amending Power:** Concept stressing the need for limitations on powers exercised by institutions, anticipating extreme cases of conflict.

Examples and References:

- **Emergency Period:** Recognition that the Basic Structure doctrine prevented potential recasting of the Constitution during the Emergency in 1975.

- **Constitutional Pillars:** Arun Jaitley's reference to the primacy of judicial independence but potential diminishment of parliamentary democracy, elected government, etc.

Facts and Data:

- **Kesavananda Bharati Case:** Celebrates the 50th anniversary of the case that established the Basic Structure Doctrine.

- **Legislative Interventions during Emergency:** Historical context emphasizing the need for checks and balances on parliamentary powers.

Critical Analysis:

- **Debate on Doctrine's Validity:** Ongoing debate about the constitutional validity of the Basic Structure doctrine, particularly its potential impact on other constitutional mandates.

- **Checks and Balances Necessity:** Acknowledgment of the necessity for judicial checks and balances on parliamentary powers, especially in the context of historical abuses during the Emergency.

Way Forward:

- **Deeper Understanding of Jurisprudential Foundations:** Emphasizes the importance of a fuller appreciation of the jurisprudential foundations of legal doctrines, including the Basic Structure doctrine.

- **Reducing Judicial Arbitrariness:** Proposes a thoughtful examination of how judicial arbitrariness in deciding the Basic Structure can be minimized, ensuring greater legitimacy and transparency.

- **Public Demand for Transparency:** Addresses the contemporary need for transparency in the functioning of democratic institutions, aligning with a changing information age and public demands.

GOVERNANCE

What are Foreigners' Tribunals?

Context: Since 1966, Foreigners Tribunals (FTs) in Assam have identified 32,381 people as foreigners.

Foreigners Tribunals in Assam
- **Unique Quasi-Judicial Bodies**: FTs are specific to Assam, tasked with determining whether a person is illegally staying as a "foreigner" in India.
- **Backdrop of Assam's NRC**: With the National Register of Citizens (NRC) in Assam, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has outlined guidelines for detecting, detaining, and deporting illegal foreign nationals.
- **Amendment to Foreigners (Tribunals) Order, 1964**: The MHA has amended this order, allowing district magistrates in all States and Union Territories to establish tribunals.
- **Shift in Power**: Previously, only the Central Government had the authority to constitute such tribunals.

Need for Foreigners Tribunals
- **Legal Process for Foreigners**: In other regions, foreigners apprehended for illegal stay are tried under the Passport Act, 1920, or the Foreigners Act, 1946, with penalties including imprisonment and eventual deportation.
- **Detention Centers**: Post-sentence, the accused are held in detention centers until their country of origin agrees to accept them.

Recent Amendments and Their Implications

Changes in Tribunal Constitution: The 1964 order initially allowed only the Central Government to refer cases to the Tribunals. The amendment now permits State Governments, UT administrations, District Collectors, and District Magistrates to do so.

Empowerment of Individuals: The amended Foreigners (Tribunal) Order, 2019, enables individuals to approach Tribunals, a change from the earlier provision where only the State could challenge a suspect.

Context of NRC: With the final NRC publication, this amendment aims to provide adequate opportunities for those not included in the list.

Procedure for Non-Listed Individuals: Persons not found in the final NRC can approach the Tribunals. District Magistrates can also refer cases of individuals who haven't filed claims against their NRC exclusion.

Issuance of Fresh Summons: These individuals will receive new summons to prove their citizenship.

Tavleen Singh writes: Time to end reservations

Context: The article argues for the abolition of all reservations in government jobs, universities, and other institutions, contending that the once crucial affirmative action has devolved into a tool for political manipulation. It highlights the failure of reservations to achieve genuine social equality and proposes a voucher system exclusively for historically oppressed groups as an alternative.

Key Highlights:

- The author advocates for the abolishment of all reservations in government jobs, universities, schools, the army, and paramilitary forces.

- Reservation policies, initially introduced for scheduled castes and tribes as a gesture of atonement, have become a tool for political manipulation and failed to achieve social equality.

- The suggestion to replace reservations with a voucher system for education, exclusively for those historically oppressed, is proposed as an alternative.

Key Challenges:

- The political exploitation of caste-based reservations has perpetuated the system beyond its intended purpose, hindering genuine social progress.

- The reluctance to address the issue stems from its controversial nature, making it difficult for leaders and commentators to openly criticize or advocate for change.

Terms & Phrases:

- Reservations, Affirmative Action, Caste Census, Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Voucher System, Social Equality, Political Exploitation.

Key Statements:

- Reservations, initially crucial for affirmative action, have transformed into a political tool, hindering genuine progress.

- The author urges for the courage to admit the farcical nature of the reservations system and advocates for its abolition.

Examples and References:

- Reference to Maratha leaders fasting for reservations highlights the misuse of the system by powerful castes.

- The proposal to replace reservations with a voucher system draws from the need to address historical oppression without political exploitation.

Critical Analysis:

- The author emphasizes the need for a candid discussion on reservations, calling out its political exploitation and proposing alternatives.

- The article challenges the prevalent narrative on reservations and highlights the disconnect between the intended purpose and the current reality.

Facts & Data:

- Dr. Ambedkar initially suggested reservations for ten years, but political motivations led to its continuation.

- The Prime Minister's acknowledgment of belonging to the OBC category questions the need for reservations for these castes.

Way Forward:

- The article calls for bold leadership to address the reservations issue, suggesting a reevaluation of policies and the implementation of alternative measures to ensure genuine social progress.

PM-JANMAN Scheme for PVTGs

Context: The Union Tribal Ministry informed the Rajya Sabha that the population of Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) is not declining, contrary to earlier data.

The Pradhan Mantri-Janjati Adivasi Nyaya Maha Abhiyan (PM-JANMAN) aims to provide basic facilities to PVTGs, with a significant budget allocation.

Challenges in Implementation:

- **Data Gaps**: A key challenge is the lack of current and accurate data on PVTG populations and socio-economic conditions.
- **Baseline Surveys**: While surveys are being conducted, their results are not yet public, and there has been no separate Census for PVTGs since 1951.
- **Recommendations**: The National Advisory Council suggested conducting a specific Census for PVTGs to better understand their needs in education, health, and housing.

Who are the PVTGs?

- **Definition and Characteristics**: PVTGs, formerly known as Primitive Tribal Groups, are identified by criteria like declining population, pre-agrarian technology, economic backwardness, and low literacy.
- **Distribution**: Spread across 18 States and Union Territories, India has 75 PVTGs, with the highest numbers in Odisha and Andhra Pradesh.
- **Historical Context**: These groups inhabit remote areas and have historically been among the most vulnerable sections of Scheduled Tribes.

PM-JANMAN: Objectives and Funding

- **Mission Goals**: The mission, announced earlier in the year, focuses on improving infrastructure and basic amenities in PVTG areas.
- **Budget Allocation**: The Cabinet approved a ₹24,000 crore package, with contributions from both the central and state governments.
- **Implementation Strategy**: The program involves nine ministries and aims to enhance housing, connectivity, healthcare, education, and economic opportunities in PVTG villages.

Conclusion

- **Critical Need for Accurate Data**: Effective implementation of development projects for PVTGs hinges on having reliable data.
- **Holistic Approach**: The government's initiative reflects a comprehensive approach to improving the living standards of PVTGs, addressing various aspects of their well-being.
- **Continued Monitoring and Evaluation**: Ongoing assessment and adaptation of strategies will be crucial to ensure the success of these development efforts for PVTGs.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

75 Years of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Context: 75th Anniversary: December 10 marked the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the UN General Assembly in Paris.

Foundation of International Order: Post-World War II, this declaration laid the groundwork for the international order, aiming to prevent future atrocities.

Understanding the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Document Structure: Comprising a preamble and 30 articles, it outlines fundamental rights and freedoms.

Key Provisions: Articles emphasize equality in dignity and rights, non-discrimination, the right to life and liberty, prohibition of slavery and torture, fair trial rights, asylum rights, and freedoms of religion, opinion, expression, and assembly.

Right to Education: The declaration also enshrines the right to education for all.

Origins and Development

- **Post-War Sentiment**: Born from the "never again" resolve after the world wars and the Holocaust, it served as a "road map" for individual rights.
- **Drafting Process**: Chaired by Eleanor Roosevelt, the drafting committee represented diverse geographical regions, with over 50 countries contributing to the final draft.
- **Global Participation**: Despite being drafted during widespread colonial rule, the declaration represented a collective effort, ensuring rights for all, including gender equality.

Impact and Legacy
- **Non-Binding Nature**: While not a treaty or legally binding, its principles have influenced national laws and international human rights treaties.
- **Inspiration for Movements**: It spurred decolonization, anti-apartheid, and various human rights movements globally.
- **Universal Standard**: Despite criticisms, it remains a universal human rights standard, influencing various subsequent human rights agreements.

Current Challenges and Relevance
- **Contemporary Conflicts**: The declaration's anniversary comes amid ongoing human rights challenges in conflicts like Israel-Hamas, Russia-Ukraine, and internal strife in Myanmar and Sudan.
- **U.N. Secretary-General's Concerns**: Antonio Guterres noted the misuse and abuse of the declaration, with some governments undermining it.
- **Amnesty International's View**: The organization sees the declaration as a testament to the feasibility of a global human rights vision.
- **Volker Türk's Perspective**: The U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights emphasizes the declaration's enduring relevance, urging the world to recognize its successes and learn from its shortcomings.

Conclusion: Upholding the Universal Declaration
- **Inherent Human Rights**: The declaration underscores that human rights are intrinsic to every individual.
- **Leaders' Responsibility**: Leaders are reminded of their duty to uphold these rights, essential for the well-being of the people they serve.

SECURITY ISSUES

Exercise VINBAX 2023

Context: The Indian Armed Forces contingent, consisting of 45 personnel, has arrived in Hanoi, Vietnam, to participate in the fourth edition of the Joint Military Exercise VINBAX-2023.

Exercise VINBAX-2023
- **Inception**: VINBAX was established in 2018, with its inaugural edition held in Jabalpur, Madhya Pradesh, India.

- **Annual Event**: This training event is conducted annually, alternating between India and Vietnam. The last edition took place at Chandimandir Military Station in August 2022.
- **Collaborative Partnership**: The exercise aims to foster collaborative partnerships and promote interoperability between the two nations.
- **Focus on Peacekeeping**: It is aligned with Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter on Peace Keeping Operations.
- **Training Emphasis**: The focus is on the deployment and employment of an Engineer Company and a Medical Team in a Command Post Exercise cum Field Training Exercise format.

Activities and Training Modules
- **Tactical Exchange**: The exercise will facilitate the exchange of tactics, techniques, and procedures between the contingents.
- **Engineering and Medical Drills**: Participants will share modern methods for constructing roads, culverts, helipads, ammunition shelters, and observation posts. Combat engineering and medical drills are also part of the training.
- **Validation Exercise**: The exercise will conclude with a Validation Exercise to showcase the standards achieved by both contingents.

An anti-terror law and its interference with liberty

Context: The Jammu and Kashmir High Court's November 17, 2023 judgment in journalist Fahad Shah's case questions the broad interpretation of terrorism under UAPA, rejecting its use for defamation. It

emphasizes judicial scrutiny in upholding personal liberty, challenging Section 43-D(5), and calls for legal reforms and accountability, urging a just way forward.

IN THE LOK SABHA

NATIONAL INVESTIGATION AGENCY AMENDMENT BILL, 2019

Empowers NIA to probe terror attacks targeting Indians, Indian interests on foreign soil

Allows NIA to probe cyber-crimes and cases of human trafficking

Allow the Centre and states to designate sessions courts as special court for trial

UNLAWFUL ACTIVITIES (PREVENTION) ACT AMENDMENT BILL

UAPA Bill empowers NIA DG to approve seizure/attachment of property in case

Inspector of NIA can investigate offences under chapter IV and VI

PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS (AMENDMENT) BILL

Increase NHRC members from two to three, one of which will be a woman

A retired Supreme Court judge could also be considered as chairperson

Key Highlights:
- **Court's Intervention:** The Jammu and Kashmir High Court's November 17, 2023 judgment intervened in journalist Fahad Shah's case, granting him bail and partially setting aside charges under UAPA and FCRA.
- **Call for Circumspection:** The court emphasized the imperative for circumspection in enforcing anti-terror laws, particularly considering their impact on personal liberty.
- **Defamation vs. Terrorism:** Rejecting the government's argument, the court challenged the notion that publishing an article harming India's reputation constituted an act of terrorism.

Key Challenges:
- **Vague Terrorism Offenses:** The vague text of terrorism offenses under UAPA allows arrests in situations disconnected from actual incidents of violence, contributing to misuse.
- **Section 43-D(5) Dilemma:** The provision preventing bail if accusations are 'prima facie true' poses challenges to personal liberty, raising concerns about procedural fairness.

Terms and Phrases:
- **UAPA:** Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, the primary anti-terror statute in India.
- **FCRA:** Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act, governing foreign funding.
- **Section 43-D(5):** UAPA provision restricting bail based on the 'prima facie true' criterion.

- **Clear and Present Danger:** Legal test invoked to restrict arrests based on a perceived immediate threat.

Key Statements:
- **Judicial Emphasis:** The judgment underscores the need for greater circumspection in enforcing anti-terror laws, especially concerning personal liberty.
- **Defamation Clarification:** Defamation of the country was deemed not punishable under UAPA, challenging the expansive interpretation of terrorism.

Critical Analysis:
- **Judicial Accountability:** While not revolutionary, the decision highlights the importance of accountability in state actions, particularly in the context of oppressive laws.
- **Compensation Consideration:** The legal regime needs to address compensations for wrongful arrest and detention, ensuring accountability and justice.

Way Forward:
- **Legal Reforms:** The legal system should consider reforms addressing compensations for wrongful arrests and enhancing state accountability.
- **Upholding Constitutional Principles:** Courts must continue upholding constitutional principles, ensuring a commitment to accountability in state actions.

Sci & Tech

Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence (GPAI) Summit

Context: The Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence (GPAI) Summit began in New Delhi on December 12, inaugurated by Prime Minister.
India, along with 28 member countries, is working towards a consensus on a declaration document focusing on the proper use of AI, establishing guardrails for the technology, and its democratization.

GPAI and India
- **Founding Member**: India joined GPAI as a founding member in June 2020, aiming to bridge the gap between AI theory and practice.
- **International Collaboration**: The initiative fosters collaboration among scientists, industry professionals, civil society, governments, international organizations, and academia.
- **Previous Summits**: Prior GPAI summits were held in Montreal, Paris, and Tokyo.
- **India's Stance**: IT Minister highlighted India's focus on sustainable agriculture and collaborative AI, building on the Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) approach used in Aadhaar and UPI systems.

Content of the Proposed Declaration
- **Themes and Focus**: The declaration is expected to cover AI's use in sustainable agriculture, healthcare, climate action, and building resilient societies.
- **Regulatory Aspects**: It will align with past agreements and global ideas on AI regulation.

- **India's Contribution**: India's emphasis is on evaluating AI in sustainable agriculture and promoting collaborative AI.

Global Conversation on AI Regulation

EU's AI Act: The European Union passed the AI Act, introducing safeguards and guardrails for AI use, especially in law enforcement, and setting up mechanisms for complaints against violations. It imposes strong restrictions on facial recognition and AI's potential to manipulate human behavior.

AI Safety Summit in the UK: Major countries agreed on a declaration for global action to address AI risks, acknowledging the dangers of misuse, cybersecurity threats, biotechnology, and disinformation risks.

US Executive Order: The Biden Administration issued an order to safeguard against AI threats and oversee safety benchmarks for generative AI bots like ChatGPT and Google Bard.

'Authenticity' in a post-authentic world

Context: The article explores the evolving concept of authenticity in the context of AI, deep fakes, and post-truths, highlighting the challenges of discerning between real and fake information. It emphasizes concerns about declining trust in a potential "post-authentic" era and advocates for increased awareness, technological solutions, and ethical AI use to safeguard societal norms and integrity.

Key Highlights:

- Merriam-Webster's word of the year for 2023 is "authentic," following the 2022 choice of "gaslighting."

- The article explores the evolving concept of authenticity in the context of AI, deep fakes, and post-truths.

- The rise of AI-generated content poses challenges to distinguishing between real and fake, impacting trust and societal norms.

Key Challenges:

- The prevalence of deep fakes and AI-generated content challenges the authenticity of information, leading to a blurred line between truth and falsehood.

- The post-authentic era raises concerns about the potential misuse of AI in creating deceptive narratives, impacting trust in various fields, including journalism and research.

- The article questions whether we are entering an era of "post-authenticity," marked by a decline in trust and a growing inability to take information at face value.

Terms:

- **Deep Fakes:** Realistic-looking audio, video, or textual content generated by artificial intelligence.

- **Post-Truth Era:** A period characterized by the prioritization of emotional or personal beliefs over objective facts.

- **Infocalypse:** The potential information and communications crisis in the age of AI and social media.

Key Phrases:

- "To thine own self be true."

- "Post-authentic age"

- "Trust No One"

- "Infocalypse"

- "Liar's dividend"

Key Quotes:

- "When we question authenticity, we value it even more." – Merriam-Webster

- "Trust No One" – Journalist Michael Grothaus

- "Infocalypse," the biggest information and communications crisis in world history, is imminent." – AI scientist Nina Schick

Key Examples and References:

- Instances of AI-generated content, including deep fakes of well-known personalities and manipulated images of public figures.

- The fake news incident regarding Amartya Sen's passing in October.

Key Statements:

- The article suggests that the rise of AI and social media may lead to a "post-authentic" era, where trust becomes a casualty.

- The concept of "Trust No One" is highlighted as a potential consequence of the evolving technological landscape.

Key Facts:

- Merriam-Webster's word of the year for 2023 is "authentic."

- Concerns are raised about the impact of AI on the integrity of data and text in various societal aspects, such as GDP, employment, and COVID-19 statistics.

Critical Analysis:

- The article critically examines the challenges posed by AI and post-truth dynamics to the notion of authenticity, emphasizing the potential consequences for trust in society.

- Hazy lines between truth and falsehood are highlighted as a significant issue in the post-authentic era.

Way Forward:

- Emphasize the need for increased awareness and critical evaluation of information in the age of AI and deep fakes.

- Advocate for the development and implementation of technologies to detect and counter AI-generated deceptive content.

- Promote a culture of transparency and ethical use of AI to mitigate the potential negative impacts on trust and authenticity.

NASA to launch PACE Mission

Context: NASA is gearing up for the launch of PACE (Plankton, Aerosol, Cloud, ocean Ecosystem) mission in 2024. The mission's objective is to enhance the understanding of Earth's atmosphere.

PACE Mission:

	Details
Objective	To study the interplay of light, aerosols, and clouds, and their impact on air quality and climate.
Ocean Study	Analysis of the ocean color to understand oceanic processes.
Primary Instrument	Ocean Colour Instrument (OCI) for measuring ocean color across a spectrum from ultraviolet to shortwave infrared.
Payloads	– Spectro-polarimeter for Planetary Exploration (SPEXone) – Hyper Angular Research Polarimeter (HARP2)
Instrument Features	– Complementary spectral and angular sampling – Polarimetric accuracy – Enhanced spatial coverage
Mission Goals	– Improved atmospheric correction

	– Comprehensive aerosol and cloud science data – Enhanced ocean research
Significance	Expected to make significant breakthroughs in aerosol-cloud-ocean research through its synergistic payload.

Art & Culture

Explained: Sri Krishna Janmabhoomi Case

Context: On December 14, the Allahabad High Court allowed an application for the inspection of the Shahi Idgah mosque complex, reigniting the Sri Krishna Janmabhoomi-Shahi Idgah Masjid dispute.

Hindu petitioners assert that the mosque, constructed by Emperor Aurangzeb in 1670, was built over Lord Krishna's birthplace in Mathura. The mosque is adjacent to the Krishna Janmasthal Temple, a significant pilgrimage site.

Sri Krishna Janmabhoomi: Latest Legal Plea
- **Nature of the Application**: The application is part of a petition initiated by eight individuals including the "next friend" of Bhagwan Shree Krishna Virajman.
- **Survey Approval**: Allahabad High Court approved the survey of the Shahi Idgah mosque on December 14.
- **Petition's Demands**: The petitioners seek the removal of structures allegedly encroaching on the disputed land by the UP Sunni Central Waqf Board and the mosque committee, and the transfer of this land to the Shree Krishna Janmbhoomi Trust.
- **Challenge to the 1968 Agreement**: The plea contests the legality of a compromise agreement dated October 12, 1968, between the Shri Krishna Janmasthan Seva Sansthan and the Trust Shahi Masjid Idgah.

Historical Background and Claims
- **Aurangzeb's Alleged Demolition**: The Hindu petition cites historical records, claiming Aurangzeb ordered the demolition of Hindu temples, including one at Lord Krishna's birthplace, to construct the Idgah Mosque in 1669-70.
- **Reference to Official Records**: The petition mentions the Official Court Bulletin (Akhbaraat) from January to February 1670 as evidence of Aurangzeb's orders.

Counterclaims by the Muslim Side
- **Legal Arguments**: Representatives of the UP Sunni Central Waqf Board and the mosque committee argue in the High Court that the mosque does not fall within the disputed 13.37 acres and dispute the location of Krishna's birthplace.

- **Challenging the Hindu Claims**: They assert that the Hindu claims are based on speculation and lack documentary evidence.

Historical Ownership and Management
- **Land Ownership Changes**: The site, originally nazul land, was auctioned by the East India Company in 1815 to Raja Patni Mal of Benaras.
- **Subsequent Transactions**: The land was later sold to Jugal Kishore Birla, and the ownership rights were transferred to the Shri Krishna Janmabhoomi Trust, established by Birla.
- **Temple Management**: In 1956, the Shri Krishna Janmasthan Sewa Sangh, later renamed as Sansthan, was established for temple management.

Parallel with the Gyanvapi Case

Similar Legal Proceedings:

The Mathura case is comparable to the Gyanvapi Mosque dispute in Varanasi, where a court-ordered survey led to the discovery of a structure claimed as a "shivling" by Hindus and a "fountain" by Muslims.

Archaeological Surveys and Legal Challenges:

The Varanasi district court's order for a scientific survey of the Gyanvapi mosque and the subsequent legal hurdles reflect similar developments in the Mathura case.

Conclusion
- **Continuation of Legal Battles**: The dispute, rooted in deep historical and religious significance, continues to unfold through legal channels.
- **Broader Implications**: These cases underscore the complexities of addressing historical claims, legal processes, and maintaining communal harmony in the context of religiously significant sites in India.

Gandabherunda Art

Context: Karnataka State Road Transport Corporation (KSRTC) has secured legal rights for the unique artistic representation of Gandabherunda Art as symbol of their corporate identity.

About Gandabherunda Art:

Details

Cultural Origin	Ancient motif found in various cultures including Hittites, Egyptians, Sumerians, and Indians.
Introduction to India	Suggested by John Marshall to be introduced by the Shakas (Scythians), but also found in ancient Indian texts.
Ancient Indian References	Appears in Panchatantra, Mahabharata, Panini's grammar, and Jain texts like Kalpa Sūtra.
Archaeological Sites	Found in Sirkap near Taxila and the Sanchi Stupa.
Literary Appearances	Featured in Buddhist literature and Panchatantra, often symbolizing unity and vigilance.
Karnataka Temple Sculptures	Prominently depicted in Hindu temples in Karnataka, linked to Vishnu's Narasimha avatar in Narasimha Purana.
Contemporary Significance	State symbol of Karnataka; associated with the Mysuru royal family and the Order of Gandabherunda.
Historical Usage	Earliest depiction in the Mathura art period (1st century CE). Significant use in the Vijayanagara Empire (1336–1646 CE).
Karnataka Emblem	Official state emblem of Karnataka, adopted in 1956.
Architectural Presence	Common in South Indian temple architecture, especially in Karnataka. Notable at the Chennakesava Temple at Belur.
Symbolism	Represents material and spiritual power, strength, and fearlessness.