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## Current Affairs

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### 43. The role of the 5 Sikh takhts, and the debate over a proposal for a 6th

#### News:

A proposal for a sixth Sikh takht at Guru Nanak Dev's birth place in Nankana Sahib in Pakistan has sparked a debate in the Sikh community.

#### Facts:

- Takht is a Persian word which means **imperial throne**.
- At present Sikhs have five places as takhts.
  - Three in Punjab —
    - Akal Takht (Amritsar);
    - Takht Keshgarh Sahib (Anandpur Sahib);
    - Takht Damdama Sahib (Talwandi Sabo) —
  - The other two are
    - Takht Patna Sahib (Bihar) and
    - Takht Hazur Sahib (Nanded, Maharashtra).
- Akal Takht (Throne of the Timeless One) is the oldest of the takhts, and considered supreme among the five because it was created by a Sikh guru himself
- **Damdama Sahib was the last** and the most recent one to be recognised as a takht

#### What is the role of takhts?

- Takhts are known to issue hukumnamas or Sikh doctrine and code of conduct on issues that concern the community.
- Any edict or order concerning the entire community is issued only from Akal Takht
- **Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee** (SGPC) appoints the jathedars (Leader of Jatha/Clergy/Takht) for these.

#### Why there is controversy over 6th Takht

- The proposed new Takht is located in Pakistan and raises questions about its independence, as Gurdwara across the border are not

controlled by the community as is the practice in India, but by a department of the government called Evacuee Trust Board.

- **About Guru Hargobind**

- Hargobind was the sixth Sikh Guru.
- Introduced martial arts and weapons training and created a standing military force for the defence of the masses following his father's martyrdom.
- Built the Akal Takht in 1608 – which is now one of five Takhts (Seats of Power) of the Sikh Religion.
- First Guru to engage in warfare winning 4 defensive battles against Mughal forces.

#### **44.Eight-day-long Vrischikolsavam begins**

##### **News:**

Vrischikolsavam, the annual festival of Sree Poornathrayeesa Temple celebrated at Tripunithura in the city of Kochi in Kerala

##### **Facts:**

##### **About Vrischikolsavam Festival**

- The festival lasts for 8 days with features of traditional folk art forms such as Ottanthullal, Kathakali, Thayambaka, Chenda melam, Kacheri.
- Festival is the colorful procession of Lord Sree Poornathrayeesa, accompanied by 15 caparisoned elephants and 'panchari melam.
- Besides 'panchari melam' other traditional orchestrations like 'maddala pattu', 'kombu pattu', 'kurumkuzhal pattu', 'parisha vadham' and 'edakka pradakshinam' will also be held during festival days.
- The festival also showcases Carnatic music concerts, thayamb, kathakali, ottanthullal, kurathiyaattom, kolkali and even aksharashlokam

- **Major Festivals in Kerala**

- Onam, Vishu, Thrissur Pooram, Aranmula Snake Boat Race, Nehru Trophy Boat Race

#### **45.India gets first witness protection scheme**

##### **News**

The Supreme Court has approved Witness Protection Scheme and asked the states to enforce it

##### **Important Facts**

1. Aim of the scheme: to enable a witness to depose fearlessly and truthfully by providing appropriate protection from the state
2. The programme finds “three categories of witnesses as per threat perception”:
  - **Category A:** The cases where threat extends to life of witness or family members during investigation, trial or even thereafter.
  - **Category B:** The cases where the threat extends to safety, reputation or property of the witness or family members during the investigation or trial
  - **Category C:** Cases where the threat is moderate and extends to harassment or intimidation of the witness or his family members, reputation or property during the investigation, trial or thereafter.
3. The expenses for the programme will be met from a Witness Protection Fund to be established by states and Union Territories
4. The scheme would serve as the ‘law’ under Article 141/142 of the Constitution, until suitable Parliamentary and/or State Legislations on the subject is enacted

**Note:**

- **Article 141** states that the decision of the supreme court would be binding upon other courts in India
- **Article 142:** It deals with Enforcement of decrees and orders of Supreme Court and unless as to discovery, etc. It states that the Supreme Court in the exercise of its jurisdiction may pass such decree or make such order as is necessary for doing complete justice in any cause or matter pending before it.

#### **46.Ombudsman, limited liability cover to make e-wallets safer**

**News:**

RBI to Introduce Limited Liability, for Prepaid Instruments such as digital wallets, smart cards, and online accounts.

**What does it mean?**

- Limited liability guarantees users that they lose money through an unauthorized transaction such as a third-party hack, the extent of liability will be limited, even zero if they inform the bank immediately
- Until now limited liability **was only applicable on credit/debit cards** however, now onwards prepaid Instruments such as **digital wallets, smart cards, and online accounts will be covered.**

- However, according to the banks, the liability limits for e-wallets is likely to be lower, considering the smaller transaction size and lower balances.
- Last year, RBI had introduced the concept of '**zero liability**' for **card users**. Under this policy, cardholders who lost money due to a third-party breach and who reported the loss within three days would get all their money back.
- **RBI will set up an ombudsman** for digital transactions to address grievances related to prepaid instruments from individuals.
- **Ombudsman would be funded by the RBI** and **will be a cost-free** and expeditious platform for individuals.

## Significance

- The introduction of limited liability will add a layer of safety to digital payments and promote a more mature finance ecosystem in India.
- It will help Government's endeavors to promote a less-cash society

## 47. First baby born via uterus transplanted from dead donor

### News:

World's first baby born after uterus transplant from **deceased donor** in Brazil

### Facts:

- According to Lancet report, a mother who received a uterus transplant from a dead donor gave birth to a healthy baby via caesarean section
- **At present, uterus donation is only available for women with family members who are willing to donate.**
- The only options available to women with so-called uterine infertility till now were adoption or the services of a surrogate mother.
- The first childbirth following uterine transplant from a **living donor** took place successfully in 2014 in Sweden.
- As per the report uterus transplants from deceased donors are feasible and may open access for all women with uterine infertility, without the need for the live donors.
- In the past, there have been 10 other uterus transplants from dead donors attempted in the United States, Czech Republic and Turkey, but this is the first to result in a live birth

## Infertility

- Around 10 to 15 percent of couples of reproductive age worldwide are affected by infertility. Of this group, around one in 500 women have uterine problems for example, to a malformation,

hysterectomy, or infection — that prevent them from becoming pregnant and carrying a child to term.

#### **48. Extreme weather report suggests neighbours worse hit than India**

##### **News:**

**Climate Risk Index (CRI) developed by Germanwatch** analyses impacts of extreme weather events, in terms of fatalities and economic losses.

##### **Facts:**

- According to report India is 14th most affected countries by extreme weather events in the last 20 years.
- India's neighbour Myanmar, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Nepal are even more affected.
- During 1998 to 2017, Puerto Rico, Honduras and Myanmar rank the highest

##### **About Climate Risk Index**

- Index analyse number of **deaths per 1,00,000 inhabitants, extent of financial losses and loss per unit of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of countries.**
- **Only weather related events** – storms, floods and temperature extremes (heat and cold waves) – are incorporated in the present analysis.
- Geological incidents such as earthquakes, volcanic eruptions or tsunamis, for which data is also available, are not relevant in this context as they do not depend on the weather

##### **Additional Facts:**

- **Climate Change Performance Index developed by Germanwatch**
  - It is an instrument to **enhance transparency in international climate politics.** The aim of the Climate Change Performance Index is to encourage political and social pressure on those countries which have, up to now, failed to take ambitious actions on climate protection

#### **49. India drives global rise in CO2 emissions: Report**

##### **News**

According to **Global Carbon Project Report** global carbon emissions are set to hit an all-time high of 37.1 billion tonnes of CO2 in 2018

##### **Facts:**

- The global emission is expected to rise by more than 2 percent from last year, driven by a solid growth in coal use and sustained growth in oil and gas use in 2018.
- **India, the third-highest contributor**, is projected to see carbon emissions rise by 6.3% from 2017
- The 10 biggest emitters in 2018 are China (accounts for almost 27%), U.S., India, Russia, Japan, Germany, Iran, Saudi Arabia, South Korea, and Canada
- To limit the global warming below 2°C as decided during **2015 Paris Agreement**, would need carbon dioxide emissions to decline by 50% by 2030 and reach net zero by about 2050.
- In the 15 countries that emit the most greenhouse gases (GHGs), the health impacts of air pollution are estimated to cost more than 4% of their GDP, whereas actions to meet the Paris goals would cost around one per cent of the global GDP
- **Major Contribution:** The report identified an **increased number of cars on the road and a rise in coal** use globally as the major contributing factors.

#### **Additional Facts:**

- **The greenhouse gases** are Water Vapour, Carbon Dioxide, Methane, Nitrous Oxide, Ozone, Chlorofluorocarbons Hydrofluorocarbons (incl. HCFCs and HFCs).

#### **Global Carbon Project**

- GCP is a **core project of International Geosphere-Biosphere Programme**
- Established in 2001 by Future Earth and a research partner of the World Climate Research Programme.
- The aim of the project is to develop a complete picture of the global carbon cycle, including both its biophysical and human dimensions together.
- **International Geosphere-Biosphere Programme – Launched by** The International Council of Scientific Unions in 1987, to coordinate international research on global-scale and regional-scale interactions between Earth's biological, chemical and physical processes and their interactions with human systems).

#### **Carbon footprint**

- Carbon footprint is defined as the amount of greenhouse gases—primarily carbon dioxide—released into the atmosphere by a particular human activity
- It is usually measured as tons of CO<sub>2</sub> emitted per year, a number that can be supplemented by tons of CO<sub>2</sub>-equivalent gases, including methane, nitrous oxide, and other greenhouse gases.

## 50. Climate change: moving talks to action

### Issues with climate governance:

1. The United Nations has been focusing on the “emissions gap” to address climate change; however, it does not fix the responsibility nor does it state how to do it
2. The developed countries have been diluting commitments to address climate change by not providing agreed upon finance and technology to developing countries
3. The international commitments to address climate change have primarily focussed on limiting global temperature rise. They have not adequately addressed the need for energy efficient infrastructure to build resilience against the adverse effects of climate change
4. In attempt to curb global greenhouse emissions, the focus has been biased and predominantly been on curbing the developing countries' use of coal. However, the growing transport/vehicular emissions from developed countries remain unaddressed
5. Provisions of Multilateral environmental treaties have often been manipulated and/or opposed by developed countries which raises concerns over their commitment to such treaties
6. The current international climate governance does not discuss about allocation principles, largely ignoring the socioeconomic implications on human activities on sharing global atmospheric resource

## 51. RBI points to 7 risks to inflation outlook

### News

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has kept the repo rate same

### Important Facts:

1. Repo rate, Reverse repo rate, marginal standing facility (MSF) rate and the bank rate have been kept unchanged

### **BASICS:**

- **Repo rate:** It is the rate at which the central bank of a country (Reserve Bank of India in case of India) lends money to commercial banks in the event of any shortfall of funds
- **Reverse repo rate:** It is the rate at which the central bank of a country (Reserve Bank of India in case of India) borrows money from commercial banks within the country
- **Marginal standing facility (MSF) rate:** It is the rate at which the banks are able to borrow overnight funds from RBI against the approved government securities.

- **Bank rate:** It is the rate charged by the central bank for lending funds to commercial banks

1. RBI has also retained its stance for the monetary policy at calibrated tightening in accordance with the objective of achieving the medium-term target for consumer price index (CPI) inflation of 4% (+/-2%) while supporting growth
2. The RBI note highlighted that the share of gross NPAs in total advances of banks, both in the public and private sector, which had peaked in March 2018, has declined since then. The annualised sleepage ratio (percentage of fresh NPAs as percentage of standard NPAs) has also shown a decline in the last two quarters.
3. RBI has projected inflation in the second half of the current fiscal year at 2.7-3.2%, citing normal monsoon and moderate food prices. In its previous policy review in October, RBI had projected the retail inflation to be around 3.9-4.5% in the October-March period of 2018-19.

## **7 Risks to Inflation Outlook**

Though the inflation projections have been downgraded significantly, the RBI has pointed out 7 risks to inflation outlook:

1. Prices of several food items are at unusually low levels and there is a risk of sudden reversal of prices, especially of volatile perishable items
2. uncertainty continues about the exact impact of higher minimum support prices
3. Crude oil prices still remain uncertain due to global demand conditions, geopolitical tensions and decision of OPEC which could adversely impact supplies
4. Volatile nature of global financial markets
5. Though households' near-term inflation expectations have moderated in the latest round of RBI survey, for the next year it remains elevated
6. Fiscal slippages which can accentuate market volatility and crowd out private investment
7. HRA revision by state governments can increase headline inflation



## TO GET MORE CONTROL OF CO-OP BANKS

| Measure  | Impact   |
|--|--|
| > Creation of new board of mgmt to run urban cooperative banks                                 | > Will de-politicise co-operative bank mgmt, give RBI more control   |
| > Expert committee to look into cause of stress in micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) | > RBI will propose holistic measures for rehabilitating MSMEs rather than providing loan relief                  |
| > Mandatory loan component for cos with working capital finance limit of above Rs 150cr        | > These cos will need to improve treasury mgmt as they will be forced to borrow at least 40% of sanctioned limit |
| > NRIs to be allowed in interest rate derivative market  | > Rich NRIs will be encouraged to invest as they can now hedge against market risks                              |
| > Rationalisation of regulations under Foreign Exchange Management Act                         | > Laws will be consolidated and simplified. 'Soft code' approach to give more leeway to regulator                |