Mains Topics

30 Years of PESA Act

Context

The **PESA Mahotsav: Utsav Lok Sanskriti Ka** was recently held in Visakhapatnam, organized by the Ministry of Panchayati Raj to celebrate the **30th anniversary** of the **Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996 (PESA)**.

About Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act (PESA Act), 1996

- It is a **central legislation enacted in 1996,** following the **Bhuria Committee (1995)** to extend the provisions of the **73rd Constitutional Amendment (Panchayati Raj)** to **Scheduled Areas** notified under the **5th Schedule** of the Constitution.

- **Objective:** To ensure **self-governance, decentralisation, and protection of tribal rights** in Scheduled Areas by empowering **Gram Sabhas**.

- **Applicability:** Applies to **Scheduled Areas in 10 States**, including **Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Odisha, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Rajasthan, and Himachal Pradesh**.

- **Key Features of the PESA Act**

  - **Central role of Gram Sabha:** Gram Sabha is the **basic unit of self-governance** and is empowered to safeguard **customs, traditions, culture, and community resources**.

  - **Control over natural resources:** Gram Sabha approval is mandatory for **minor forest produce (MFP)**, **land acquisition, resettlement and rehabilitation**, and **minor water bodies**.

  - **Ownership of Minor Forest Produce:** Grants **ownership rights over MFP** to Gram Sabhas, strengthening tribal livelihoods.

  - **Consultation in land acquisition:** Gram Sabha must be **consulted before land acquisition** and **rehabilitation** in Scheduled Areas.

  - **Control over local institutions:** Gram Sabhas have authority over **local markets, money lending, and village-level development plans**.

  - **Traditional dispute resolution:** Encourages resolution of disputes through **customary laws and traditional practices**.

  - **Protection against exploitation:** Aims to prevent **alienation of tribal land** and exploitation by outsiders.

Significance

- Strengthens **tribal self-rule and participatory democracy**.

- Preserves **tribal identity, culture, and traditional knowledge systems**.

- Acts as a legal safeguard against **unchecked mining, displacement, and resource exploitation**.

- Complements **Forest Rights Act (FRA), 2006** in protecting tribal rights.

Initiatives to Strengthen the PESA Act, 1996

- **PESA– Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPDP) Portal:** Launched in **September 2024**, the **PESA–Gram Panchayat Development Plan Portal** supports **planning, tracking, and monitoring** of development activities and **resource allocation** in Scheduled Areas.

- **Institutional support:** The **Ministry of Panchayati Raj** has created a **dedicated PESA Cell** and is establishing **Centres of Excellence** in central universities, such as **Indira Gandhi National Tribal University**, to institutionalise **capacity-building and research**.

- **Awareness:** The Ministry of Panchayati Raj celebrated **December 24, 2024**, as PESA Day.

- **Linguistic outreach: Training manuals** have been translated into **regional languages** (e.g., Telugu, Marathi) and **tribal languages** such as **Santhali, Gondi, Bhili, and Mundari** to improve **accessibility and grassroots awareness**.

PESA Act: Success Stories

- **Strengthened Gram Sabhas (Chhattisgarh – Khamdhogi village):** Mandatory participation of **one man and one woman per household** revitalised Gram Sabha functioning, leading to livelihoods in **forest produce, fisheries, bamboo rafting**, and improved village incomes.

- **Sustainable forest produce management (Himachal Pradesh – Rarang Panchayat, Kinnaur):** Gram Sabha exercised PESA powers to manage **chilgoza pine nut harvesting** through traditional practices, ensuring **equitable income sharing** and sustainable use of forests.

- **Community-led minor mineral governance (Telangana – Vadagudem village):** Formation of a **Tribal Sand Mining Cooperative Society**, approved by the Gram Sabha, generated **₹40 lakh annually**, funding education, healthcare, infrastructure, and self-employment.

- **Protection against displacement (Rajasthan – Bhim Talai village, Udaipur):** Gram Sabha used PESA provisions to **block forced eviction** under a wildlife sanctuary project, safeguarding **tribal land, habitat, and cultural rights**.

Key Issues in PESA Implementation

- **Uneven rule adoption:** Only **8 of the 10 Fifth Schedule States** have notified PESA Rules, leaving **Odisha and Jharkhand** in a zone of legal ambiguity.

- **Dilution of Gram Sabha authority:** In the **Hasdeo Arand coal blocks (Chhattisgarh)**, mining and forest clearances moved ahead despite repeated **Gram Sabha resolutions opposing mining**.

- **Capacity deficits:** MoPR-led assessments found that **over 40% of elected representatives** in PESA Panchayats could not clearly explain the role and powers of the **Gram Sabha**.

- **Weak monitoring mechanisms:** The absence of a **standardised monitoring framework** across nearly **63 Fifth Schedule districts** undermines accountability and enforcement.

- **Administrative resistance:** In the **Polavaram irrigation project (Andhra Pradesh)**, displacement continued under sector-specific laws even as **PESA-mandated Gram Sabha consent** remained contested.

Way Forward

- **Legal convergence:** Align **PESA** with the **Forest Rights Act, 2006** and the **Land Acquisition Act, 2013** so **Gram Sabha consent becomes a single, binding clearance**.

- **Clear institutional roles:** Clearly delineate responsibilities—**MoPR** for governance processes and **Ministry of Tribal Affairs** for protection of **land, forest, and livelihood rights**.

- **Uniform rule framework:** Formulate **model PESA Rules** for adoption by States, using **central templates with limited flexibility** to prevent dilution.

- **Sustained capacity building:** Move from one-off trainings to **continuous handholding**, such as **community paralegals and barefoot governance facilitators**.

- **Incentive-based compliance:** Link **effective PESA implementation** to **financial incentives**, such as higher **untied grants** for Panchayats demonstrating robust **Gram Sabha-led governance**.

Source: PIB

Prelims Topics

Tsunami ready villages in Indian Ocean

Context

India is set to have **over 100 "Tsunami Ready" villages**, the **highest number in the Indian Ocean region**, becoming the **first country** to achieve this scale.

More in news

- The initiative is coordinated by **Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS)** under the **UNESCO-IOC Tsunami Ready programme**.
- **Odisha** will add **72 new villages** to the existing 24 already certified.
- Other coastal States/UTs such as **Gujarat, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, and Andaman & Nicobar Islands** have identified villages for certification.
- **Kerala** has proposed **nine villages**, likely to be certified by **March–April 2026**.

What are Tsunami Ready Villages?

- They are coastal communities **certified by the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO** for meeting defined tsunami preparedness standards.
- **Key criteria include:**
  - High **community awareness** about tsunami risks.
  - **Hazard mapping** and **public display of evacuation routes/maps**.
  - Access to **24×7 tsunami warning systems**.
  - **Regular mock drills** and community participation.
  - Strong coordination with **local disaster management authorities**.

About Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS)

- It is an autonomous body under the **Ministry of Earth Sciences**.
- It operates the **Indian Tsunami Early Warning Centre (ITEWC)**, which:
  - Monitors **global earthquakes** in real time.
  - Issues **tsunami advisories and warnings** for the **Indian Ocean region**.
- INCOIS is the **nodal coordinating agency** for implementing the **UNESCO-IOC "Tsunami Ready" initiative in India**.
  - **UNESCO-IOC Tsunami Ready Recognition Programme (TRRP)** is a **voluntary, international, community-based initiative** aimed at strengthening disaster risk prevention and mitigation in coastal regions.

Source: Indian Express

LVM-3 Rocket

Context

India's **heaviest launch vehicle, LVM-3**, successfully completed its **third commercial mission** by deploying the **US communication satellite BlueBird Block-2** into its **designated orbit**.

What are the features of launch vehicle LVM-3?

- **Three-stage heavy-lift launch vehicle** developed by **ISRO**.
- **Stage configuration:**
  - Two **solid strap-on boosters (S200)** for lift-off thrust.
  - **Liquid core stage (L110)** for sustained propulsion.
  - **Cryogenic upper stage (C25)** for orbital insertion.

- **Lift-off mass: 640 tonnes**.
- **Height: 43.5 metres**.
- **Payload capability:**
  - **4,200 kg to GTO**.
  - **8,000 kg to LEO** (approx.).
- **Various launches made by LVM-3:** Chandrayaan-2 (2019), Chandrayaan-3 (2023), OneWeb Missions (2022–23).

What are the other launch vehicles of ISRO?

- **PSLV (Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle):** Workhorse rocket for **LEO and SSO** missions.
  - Known for **high reliability** and commercial launches of small–medium satellites.
- **GSLV Mk-II:** Designed for **GTO missions** with an **indigenously developed cryogenic engine**.
- **SSLV (Small Satellite Launch Vehicle):** Optimised for quick, low-cost launches of small satellites into LEO.

Source: Indian Express

Kimberley Process

Context
The Kimberley Process (KP) Plenary has selected India to assume the chairmanship of the Kimberley Process from 1 January 2026.

About Kimberley Process

- An **international, tripartite initiative** involving **governments, the diamond industry, and civil society** to regulate the trade in rough diamonds.
- **Objective:** To **prevent the trade in conflict diamonds**, i.e. rough diamonds used by **rebel groups to finance armed conflicts** against legitimate governments, as recognised by **UN Security Council resolutions**.
- **Origin & Legal Basis:**

- Established pursuant to a UN resolution in response to conflicts in Africa during the 1990s.
- The **Kimberley Process Certification Scheme (KPCS)** came into force on **1 January 2003**.

- **How it works (KPCS):** Requires all shipments of **rough diamonds** to be:
  - Certified as **conflict-free** by a KP participant country.
  - Transported in **tamper-proof containers**.
  - Traded only between **KP participants**.
- **Membership: 60 participants**, with the **European Union and its Member States counted as one participant**.
  - KP participants together account for **over 99% of global rough diamond trade**.

India And Kimberley Process

- India is **one of the founding members of the KPCS**. India had **earlier chaired KPCS in the year 2008**.

Source: PIB

Veer Bal Diwas

Context
26th December every year is observed as 'Veer Baal Diwas'.

About Veer Baal Diwas

- It is celebrated annually on December 26
- In remembrance of the unmatched bravery and sacrifice of **Baba Zorawar Singh and Baba Fateh Singh,** the younger sons of **Guru Gobind Singh Ji** (other two elder sons were **Sahibzada Ajit Singh and Sahibzada Jujhar Singh** sacrificed their lives on **7th December 1705, in the battle of Chamkaur**).

- Zorawar Singh and Fateh Singh were captured by the Mughals and were taken to Sirhind, where they refused to convert to Islam.
- Consequently, the faujdar of Sirhind had them executed on 13th December 1705.

Source: PIB

Santhali Language

Context

Recently, the President of India released the Constitution of India in the Santhali language.

About Santhali Language

- **Language family:** Belongs to the **Austroasiatic language family**, specifically the **Munda branch**.
- **Geographical spread:** Mainly spoken in **Jharkhand, Odisha, West Bengal, Bihar, Assam**, and parts of **Chhattisgarh**.
- **Script:** Written primarily in the Ol Chiki script.
  - Ol Chiki was devised in **1925** by **Pandit Raghunath Murmu** to give Santhali an independent written form.
  - Earlier, Santhali was written using **Bengali, Odia, Devanagari, and Roman scripts**.
  - It has 30 letters, the design of which is intended to evoke natural shapes.
  - The script is **written from left to right**, and has two styles (the print Chapa style and cursive Usara style).
- **Constitutional status:** Included in the **8th Schedule of the Indian Constitution** in **2003** through the **92nd Constitutional Amendment Act**.

Source: PIB

Akash NG Missile

Context

Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) has successfully completed User Evaluation Trials (UETs) of the Akash-New Generation (Akash-NG) missile system.

About Akash NG Missile

- **Background & Development:** Part of the **Akash missile family**, originally developed under the **Integrated Guided Missile Development Programme (IGMDP)** led by **Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam**.
  - Development of **Akash-NG** began in the **mid-2010s**, alongside induction of the earlier Akash variants.
  - Designed primarily to meet **IAF air defence requirements** against advanced aerial threats.
- **Role & Purpose:** Short-to-medium range Surface-to-Air Missile (SAM) system.
  - Provides **air defence cover to critical installations and vulnerable areas**.
  - Capable of **engaging multiple targets simultaneously** in autonomous or group mode.
- **Key Features of Akash-NG**
  - **Extended range:** Up to **70 km** (compared to 27–30 km of earlier Akash).
  - **Canisterised missile system:** Stored and fired from **sealed containers**, improving **mobility, shelf life, and readiness**.
  - **Advanced seeker:** Equipped with an **indigenous Radio Frequency (RF) seeker** for high precision.
  - **Enhanced target handling:** Effective against **highly manoeuvring aerial targets** with **low Radar Cross Section (RCS)**.
  - **Compact ground footprint:** Smaller and more deployable ground system than earlier variants.
  - **Electronic protection:** Built-in **Electronic Counter-Counter Measures (ECCM)** to resist enemy jamming.

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Other Key Variants

Akash (baseline): Inducted into **IAF (2014)** and **Indian Army (2015)**; ~96% indigenous content.

Akash Prime: Same range as baseline Akash but fitted with an **indigenous active RF seeker** for improved accuracy.

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Source: Indian Express

Ancient circular stone labyrinth

Context

Archaeologists have discovered **India's largest-ever circular stone labyrinth** in the **Boramani grasslands of Solapur, Maharashtra**.

About Circular Stone Labyrinth

- **Structure:** Comprises **15 concentric stone circuits**, carved with high geometric precision.

- **Size:** Measures approximately **50 feet × 50 feet**, making it the **largest circular labyrinth discovered in India**.

- **Key Features:**
  - Second-largest by area after a **56-foot square labyrinth (**had only **11 circles) at Gedimedu**, **Tamil Nadu**.

  - **Perfect circular form**.

  - Experts associate the labyrinth with the **Satavahana period**.

  - Patterns resemble motifs on **ancient Roman coins**, hinting at **Indo-Roman trade links**.

Source: India Today

Subansiri Lower Hydroelectricity Project (SLHP)

Context

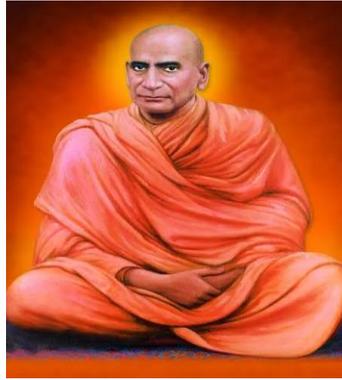India's largest hydropower project, the Subansiri Lower Hydroelectric Project is now operational.

About SLHP

- **Located in:** Gerukamukh, on the Assam–Arunachal Pradesh border

- **Built on:** Subansiri River

- **Type:** Concrete Gravity Dam.

- **Approved in:** 2003

- **Installed Capacity:** 2,000 MW.

Source: Deccan Herald

Places in News

Swami Shraddhanand Saraswati

News? Union Home Minister Amit Shah has paid tribute to Swami Shraddhanand Saraswati on his martyrdom day.

About Swami Shraddhanand Saraswati (22 February 1856 - 23 December 1926)

- **Original name:** Munshi Ram

- **Associated movement: Arya Samaj**, founded by Swami Dayanand Saraswati

- **Key Contribution:**

  ○ Founder of **Gurukul Kangri University (1902)** at Haridwar.

  ○ Played a key role in the Shuddhi (re-conversion).

  ○ Actively participated in anti-British protests e.g. Rowlatt Satyagraha, Non co-operation movement etc.

Source: Newsonair

Minamitori Island

News? Japan has decided to conduct test mining of rare earth rich mud from the deep seabed near Minamitori Island.

About Minamitori Island

- It is the **easternmost territory of Japan**.

- **Geographical Features:**

  ○ **Shaped like an equilateral triangle** with a land area of only 1.51 km².

  ○ It is the only Japanese territory located on the **Pacific Plate**, sitting atop a giant seamount that rises from the seafloor.

Source: Indian Express

Muarak Al-Kabeer Port	
	News? Recently Kuwait and China signed a $4.16 billion contract to build Muarak Al-Kabeer port. **About Muarak Al-Kabeer Port** • Situated on **Boubyan Island** in northern Kuwait. • **Bordered Areas: Khor Abdullah waterway, Iraq.** • **Status:** Under Construction Source: Economic Times