

1. The Under Trial Problem

Topic: Polity and Governance



In News: Supreme Court has said that unclogging prisons and trial courts could be a perfect way of celebrating 75 years of India's independence.

More on the Topic:

- An undertrial is **an unconvicted prisoner who is on trial in a court of law**. The share of undertrials lodged in prisons for more than a year has increased over time as the percentage of cases pending judgment in courts has also increased sharply.
- In India, **about 75 percent of the total number of prisoners are undertrial**. More than 3.5 lakh undertrial prisoners are lodged in jails across the country and awaiting trial.
- The number of people lodged in Indian prisons as undertrials **increased at a faster rate between 2001 and 2019 than those convicted**.
- Due to the high pendency rates in the courts, the share of undertrials confined in prison for more than one year, more than three years and more than five years increased between 2000 and 2019.
- The share of those confined for less than a year fell in this period.
- At the end of 2019, **more than 90% of undertrials were not graduates and about 28% were illiterate**.
- **Two in three prisoners under trial belong to SC, ST or OBC caste groups**, data show.
- Among the undertrial inmates, **49% are between 18 and 30 years of age**, but among convicts, only 29% fall in this age group. Further, 50% of the convicts are aged between 30 and 50 years.

Reasons for the delay in justice of Undertrials:

- **Overburdened Judiciary:** Judiciary's capacity (Human, technical as well as infrastructural) and work load is not in tandem. It is a major reason for the delay in justice.
- **Failure of Authorities:** Police and prison officials often fail to fulfil their roles, leading to long delays in trials.

- **Disadvantaged Background of the Under trials:** Most of the under trials come from disadvantaged social groups. Lack of resources constricts their ability to seek out lawyers and hostile police and prison authorities aggravate their plight.

Initiatives taken for Undertrials:

- Fast Track Courts (FTCs) to reduce the burden of cases from HCs and provide speedy justice.
- e-Courts to streamline judicial processes, reduce pendency, and help the litigants.
- Modernisation of prisons to improve habitability within prison.
- e prison project to improve prison management and efficiency through digitisation.

Way Ahead:

- **Justice Krishna Iyer in the Constitutional Bench judgment in Sunil Batra (I) v. Delhi Administration (1978)**, held the humane thread of jail jurisprudence. It helped secure the fundamental rights of prisoners. This should be remembered and make a new prison policy.
- **Undertrial prisoners could be lodged in separate institutions** away from convicted prisoners.
- **Police functions should be separated into investigation and law and order duties** and sufficient strength be provided to complete investigations on time and avoid delays.
- There should be an immediate increase in the number of judges and magistrates in some reasonable proportion to the general population.

Source: Indian Express

2. Parliamentary Privileges

Topic: Polity and Governance



In News: The Rajya Sabha Chairman M Venkaiah Naidu said in the Upper House on Friday that MPs did not have immunity from being arrested in criminal cases when the House is in session or otherwise.

More on the Topic:



- **Under Article 105 of the Constitution**, MPs enjoy “certain privileges so that they can perform their parliamentary duties without let or hindrance”.
- “One of the privileges is that a **Member of Parliament cannot be arrested in a civil case 40 days before the commencement of the session or committee meeting, and 40 days thereafter.**
- This privilege is incorporated under **Section 135A of the Civil Procedure Code, 1908.**

SC Observation:

- In a landmark case, “**K Anandan Nambiar and Another**”, the Supreme Court of India held that the true constitutional position is that **so far as a valid order of detention is concerned, a Member of Parliament can claim no special status higher than that of an ordinary citizen** and is as much liable to be arrested, detained or questioned even during the session.

About Parliamentary Privileges:

- Parliamentary Privileges are **certain rights and immunities enjoyed by members of Parliament, individually and collectively, so that they can “effectively discharge their functions”.**
- **Article 105 of the Constitution** expressly mentions two privileges, that is, **freedom of speech in Parliament and right of publication of its proceedings.**
- Apart from the privileges as specified in the Constitution, the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908, provides for freedom from arrest and detention of members under civil process during the continuance of the meeting of the House or of a committee thereof and forty days before its commencement and forty days after its conclusion.
- The Constitution also extends the parliamentary privileges to those persons who are entitled to speak and take part in the proceedings of a House of Parliament or any of its committees. These include the **Attorney General of India.**
- The parliamentary privileges **do not extend to the President** who is also an integral part of the Parliament. **Article 361 of the Constitution provides for privileges for the President.**

Source: The Hindu

3.Startup India Seed Fund Scheme

Topic: Government Schemes



In News: The government has approved funds to incubators under Startup India Seed Fund Scheme (SISFS).

More on the Topic:

- The Startup India Seed Fund Scheme (SISFS) is being implemented by **Ministry of Commerce & Industry**.
- It provides **financial assistance to eligible Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) recognised startups** for proof of concept, prototype development, product trials, market entry and commercialisation.
- This **enables the startups to graduate to a level where they will be able to raise investments from angel investors or venture capitalists**, or seek loans from commercial banks or financial institutions.

Source: Hindu

4. Exercise Skylight

Topic: Science and Technology



In News: The Indian has carried out Exercise Skylight validating and showcasing the resilience of its communication capabilities in case terrestrial connectivity is disrupted in future conflicts.

More on the Topic:

- During the two-week long exercise, all satellite communication assets in the Army were activated and various technical and operational scenarios in space domain were simulated.
- Various agencies responsible for space and ground segments, as also the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) participated in the exercise.
- Presently Indian Army is utilising the services of a number of ISRO satellites as it does not have a dedicated satellite.
- Currently, the Army is using 30% of the communication capabilities of the **GSAT 7A**.
- Recently, The Defence Acquisition Council cleared a proposal for a **GSAT-7B** communications satellite. The army is on course to get its own satellite by 2025.

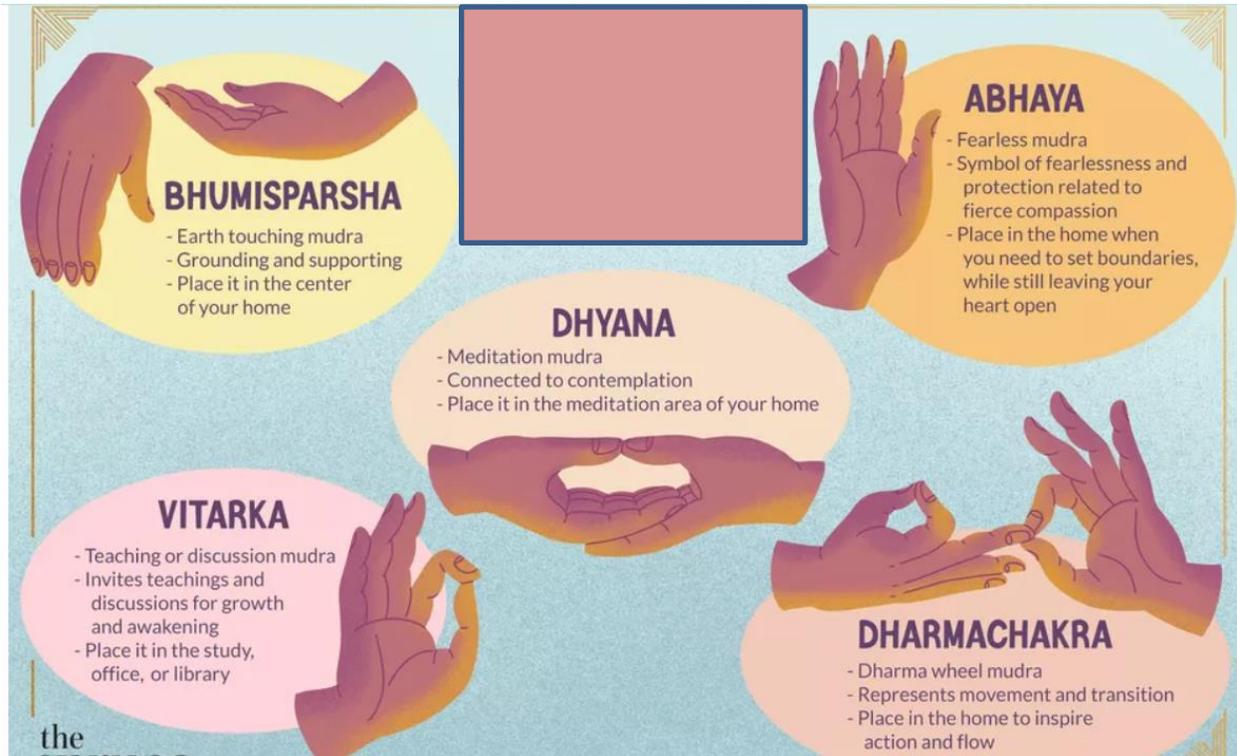
About GSAT 7 Series:

- GSAT 7 series satellites are **advanced satellites developed by ISRO to meet the communication needs of the defence services.**
- GSAT 7A (launched in 2018) helps in boosting the connectivity between the ground radar stations, airbases and the airborne early warning and control aircraft (AEW&C) of the IAF (Indian Air Force).

Source: Indian Express

5. Thalaivetti Muniyappan Temple

Topic: Art and Culture



In News: Madras High Court ordered that Thalaivetti Muniyappan temple in Salem district in Tamil Nadu be removed from the control of the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowment Department and given to the state’s archaeological department.

More on the Topic:

- An archaeological survey of the shrine ordered by the court in 2017 had concluded that an idol in the temple considered to be that of the Hindu god Thalaivetti Muniyappan was actually a figure of the Buddha.
- The court stated that “the mistaken identity cannot be allowed to continue” and the court ordered that the “original status” of the idol be restored.
- While the temple would still be open to everyone, the court asked that “no poojas or other ceremonies” be allowed to be performed at the figure of the Buddha.

About the Buddha Statue at the Temple:

- The hard stone structure was in a **seated position known as “ardhapadmasana” on a lotus pedestal.**
- “The hands are posed in “**dhyana mudra**”.
- The figure was a sagati. The sangati is a part of Buddhist monastic garment. It is the outer garment.

- The head shows lakshanas of the Buddha such as curly hair, ushnisa and elongated earlobe.
- Height of the image is 108 cm in a cross legged (ardha-padmasana) posture.

Source: Business Standard

6. The coal mining protests in the Hasdeo Aranya region

Topic: Places in News



In News: Over the past one year, protests against mining in the Hasdeo Aranya region have erupted several times demanding a complete stop to mining.

More on the Topic:

- The Hasdeo Aranya forests are called the lungs of Chhattisgarh.
- Activists had claimed that more than 200,000 trees spread across 841 hectares of forest will have to be chopped down for the Mining Project.
- The women in the region has hugged the trees as a sign of protest, recreating the Chipko movement.
- The Hasdeo forest covering Chhattisgarh's Korba, Surguja and Surajpur districts, spans an area of 170,000 hectares. It is a **noted migratory corridor and has a significant presence of elephants.**
- It is also the **catchment area of the Hasdeo river, the largest tributary of the Mahanadi.**

Source: Hindu

7. 'Badhe Chalo Campaing'

Topic: Government Schemes/Programmes



In News: Ministry of Culture has launched the 'Badhe Chalo Campaing', with the aim of connecting with youth of India and infuse a deep sense of patriotism among them.

More on the Topic:

- It is designed to involve the youth of the country encouraging them to come forward and imbibe the true spirit of our democracy and celebrate 75 years of India's independence with youthful fervour.
- 'Badhe Chalo' features Flash Dances across 75 cities; aims at youth centric activities under AKAM.
- 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav' is an initiative of the Government to **celebrate and commemorate 75 years of progressive India and the glorious history of its people, culture and achievements.**
- Ministry of Culture is responsible for promoting art and cultural heritage in India and it has taken many initiatives under the aegis of 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav'.

Source: Hindu