

# NEWS TODAY

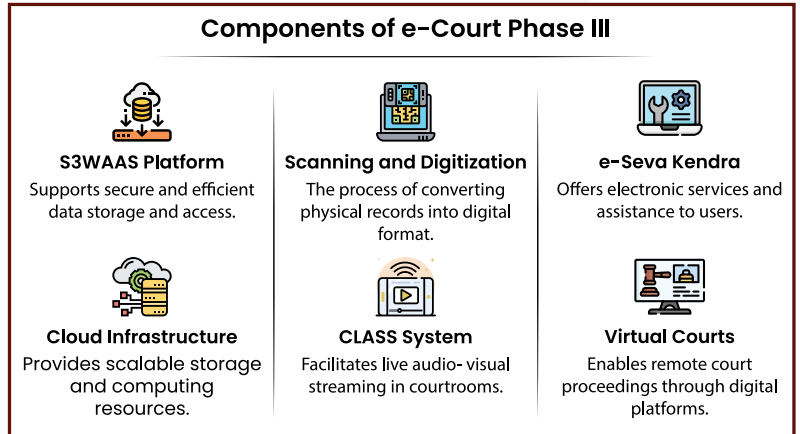
## Union Cabinet Approves Phase III of the e-Courts Mission Mode Project

The e-Courts Mission Mode Project phase III aims to usher in a regime of **maximum ease of justice** by moving towards **digital, online and paperless courts** through digitization of the entire court records.

- The e-Courts Project is under implementation since 2007 for ICT enablement of Indian Judiciary as **part of National e-Governance Plan**.
- Its **phase I & II** were implemented during **2011-15** and **2015-23** respectively.

### About the e-Courts Phase III

- **Central Sector Scheme:** For 4 years (**2023 to 2027**) with a financial outlay of **Rs.7,210 crore**.
- **Objective:** To create a **unified technology platform for judiciary**, thus providing a seamless & paperless interface between courts, litigants & other stakeholders.
- **Implementation: High Courts (HCs).**
  - ⊕ **Funds** are released to HCs by **Department of Justice** (Ministry of Law) on recommendation of **e-Committee (Supreme Court of India)**.
  - ⊕ The **e-Committee** is responsible for the **policy planning, strategic direction and guidance** for implementation of e-Courts project.



### Significance of Digitalization of Courts

- **Judicial Modernization:** Enables data-driven decisions, fully digitizing justice delivery.
- **Reducing case pendency:** By **integrating emerging technologies like AI, Optical Character Recognition, etc.**, courts can improve efficiency & reduce pendency.

## The Supreme Court Expands Powers of National Investigation Agency's (NIA)

The SC held that NIA has **power to investigate non-scheduled offences** if they are connected to a scheduled offence of **NIA Act, 2008**.

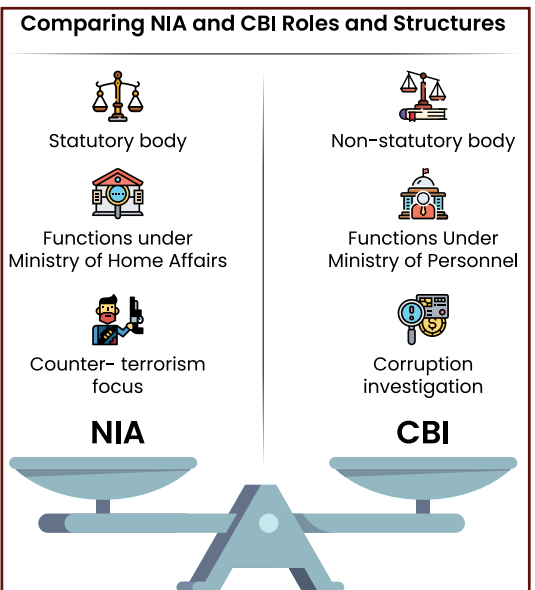
- NIA Act, 2008 specifies **categories of scheduled offences that NIA can investigate**.
  - ⊕ It includes **Atomic Energy Act, 1962, Anti-Hijacking Act, 1982, SAARC Convention (Suppression of Terrorism) Act, 1993, Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967 etc.**

### About NIA

- It is a **Central Counter Terrorism Law Enforcement Agency** set up under the NIA Act, 2008 in the wake of the **26/11 Mumbai attacks**.
- **Headquarters: New Delhi** with 2 Zonal offices (Guwahati & Jammu).
- **Mandate:** Investigate **offences affecting sovereignty, security & integrity of India, friendly relations with foreign States, etc.** specified in **Schedule to NIA Act, 2008**.

### Steps to Strengthen NIA

- **NIA amendment act, 2019:** Enlarged its mandate to offences related human trafficking, manufacture/sale of prohibited arms, cyber-terrorism etc.
  - ⊕ It also expanded its **jurisdiction beyond India**.
- **Designated NIA as Nodal Agency at Central level for investigation of Terror Funding & Fake Indian Currency Notes (FICN).**
- **National Terror Data Fusion & Analysis Centre (NTDFAC)** has been established for enabling Big Data Analytics.



## One Nation, One Election Bills Introduced In Lok Sabha

Two bills that lay down mechanism to hold simultaneous elections i.e. **Constitution (129th Amendment) Bill, 2024** and **Union Territories Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2024** were formally introduced.

### ➤ Key provisions of 129th CAB, 2024

#### ⊕ Insertion of new article 82A:

- ◆ **Simultaneous Elections:** Election Commission will conduct general elections for Lok Sabha and all SLA simultaneously.
- ◆ **Term of Legislative Assemblies:** Term of all State Legislative Assemblies(SLA) will end with full term of the Lok Sabha.

#### ⊕ Amendment to Article 83: It defines Unexpired Term, Mid-term and General Elections.

- ◆ It says when Lok Sabha is **dissolved before full term of 5 years as stated**, period between date of dissolution and expiry of full term shall be an unexpired term.
- ◆ Pursuant to dissolution, a **mid-term election** shall take place and a new Lok Sabha shall be **constituted only for unexpired term**.

#### ⊕ Amendment of Article 172: it defines unexpired term and Full term for SLA.

### ➤ Key provisions of Union Territories Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2024

#### ⊕ It will amend Union Territories (UT) Act, 1963, National Capital Territory of Delhi Act, 1991, and Jammu and Kashmir Reorganization Act, 2019.

- ◆ These amendments will align **duration of UT Legislative Assemblies** with **simultaneous elections for Lok Sabha and State Assemblies**.

#### Significance of Simultaneous Election

- **Increase voter's turnout:** as frequent elections lead to 'voters' fatigue'
- **Stable policy and growth:** as frequent imposition of Model Code of Conduct causes policy paralysis
- **Smooth delivery of services:** Frequent use of government officials and security forces in elections adversely affect discharge of their duties.

## Germany set for snap elections as Chancellor loses vote of confidence

A snap election is an election that is called earlier than expected, often to capitalize on a unique political opportunity or to solve a deadlock in parliament.

### How Does the German Election System Work?

- **Mixed Members Proportional Representation System:** Electoral system is a combination of **Majority or "first-past-the-post" System (first votes)** and **proportional representation system** on basis of **votes for party lists in Länder (second votes)**.

#### ⊕ 299 members of Bundestag (Lower house of parliament) are elected through first votes and remaining through second votes.

- **Selecting Chancellor:** German citizens **do not elect a chancellor** directly, but their votes determine makeup of parliament every four years and representatives further elect chancellor.

- **Dual Voting System:** Each voter has 2 votes: 1 ("first vote") for an individual candidate in one of constituencies (**majority system**), and 1 ("second vote") for party list in Länder.

- **Overhang Seats:** If a party wins more seats in majority system than it is entitled to by results of second vote, then it can keep additional seats, called "overhang seats".

- **Balance seats:** In cases where some parties obtain overhang seats, "**balance seats**" are added to other parties to ensure complete proportionality of share of votes for all parties nationwide.

#### Election of Chancellor

- **Nomination:** After a federal election, Federal President nominates a candidate for chancellorship.
- **Election by Bundestag:** Bundestag votes on nominated candidate in a secret ballot. To be elected, candidate must receive an absolute majority of votes.
- **Second and Third Round:** If candidate fails to secure an absolute majority in first round, a second round is held.
  - ⊕ If second round also fails to produce a result, then in third phase person who receives largest number of votes is elected.



## Parliamentary Standing Committee Presents report on 'Demands for Grants' for farmers' welfare to Lok Sabha

### Key Issues Highlighted

- **Sluggish Growth in Agriculture Sector:** Declined to 1.4% in 2023-24 from 4.7% in 2022-23.
  - ⊖ **54.6% of the country's total work force is engaged in Agriculture** which account for 18.4% of India's Gross Value Added (GVA) at current prices during 2022-23.
- **Allocation to Agriculture remained Stagnant:** The Department of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare (DoA&FW) received **1.22 lakh crore for FY24 compared to 1.23 lakh crore for FY21.**
- **Other Issues:** Underutilization of Funds, low Farmer Income & productivity, increased debt burden on farmers etc.

### Recommendations

- **Legal Guarantee of Minimum Support Price:** For safeguarding farmers livelihoods, promoting rural economic growth and enhancing national food security
- **Increase in PM-KISAN Assistance to Farmers:** From the current ₹6,000 per annum to ₹12,000 per annum & extend it to tenant farmers and Farm Labourers.
- **Change in Nomenclature:** Rename the "DoA&FW" to the "Department of Agriculture, Farmers & Farm Labourers Welfare" to provide greater recognition & focus on the welfare of farm labourers.
- **Establishment of a National Commission for Minimum Living Wages:** To ensure fair and just wages for farm labourers.
- **Compulsory Universal Crop Insurance scheme:** For smallholder farmers with landholdings of up to 2 hectares, on the lines of Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY) scheme.

## Radhakrishnan panel recommends restructuring of National Testing Agency

Seven-member panel was appointed in June 2024 following complaints of **question paper leak in Common University Entrance Test-Undergraduate (CUET-UG).**

### Various Issues with Common Entrance Tests in India:

- **Question paper leak and marks irregularities:** E.g. Alleged leak in **NEET UG 2024** exams as well as alleged **irregularities in grace marks** awarded to students.
- **Frequent exam cancellation and Technical Glitches:** Due to systemic failures like issues in biometric infrastructure, failure of servers etc. E.g. UGC NET JUNE 2024 cancellation.
- **Operational Transparency:** Like delays in results, inconsistent difficulty levels in paper and process of normalization.
- **Other Issues:** Political influence in examination, Corruption (E.g. Vyapam scam in Madhya Pradesh) etc.

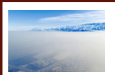
### Recommendation of panel for Exam Reforms:

- **DigiExam on lines of DigiYatra:** For comprehensive authentication to prevent impersonation.
- **Restructuring of NTA:** To conduct higher education entrance exams only
- **Institutional linkage with state/ district authorities:** To identify suitable testing centres, prepare a list of suspicious elements and keep a close eye on them etc.
- **Mobile testing Centres:** To facilitate aspirational candidates from rural, remote and thinly populated areas
- **Other Recommendations:** Setting up **Grievance redressal cell**, providing **mental health support**, strengthened test audit etc.

### Various initiatives taken in India for Exam Reforms

- Public Examinations (Prevention Of Unfair Means) Act
- Use of biometrics for student verification
- Computer based real time Examinations
- Formation of National Testing Agency (NTA)

## Also In News



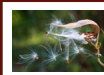
### Hydroxymethanesulphonate (HMS)

A recent study revealed that **lower sulphate concentrations in air** combined with **low temperatures (around -35°C)** reduce **acidity of particulate matter (PM) particles.**

- This reduction in acidity increases production of HMS, a component of PM2.5.

#### About HMS

- **Formation:**
  - ⊕ Typically formed through reaction of formaldehyde and sulphur dioxide in presence of liquid water.
  - ⊕ In cold regions these reactions can occur even in aerosol particles.
- **Impact:** It is a part of fine **particulate matter (PM2.5)** which can cause **air pollution** and cause health issues.
  - ⊕ Presence of HMS in aerosols contributes to haze formation and deteriorates air quality.



### Milkweed Fiber

Ministry of Textiles encouraging research & development into new natural fibers, including milkweed fiber.

#### About Milkweed fiber

- It is a unique **natural fiber** extracted from the seed pods of **milkweed plants** (*Asclepias syriaca* L.).
  - ⊖ The plant is **native to North America**. In India, it is found as a wild plant in **Rajasthan, Karnataka & Tamil Nadu**.
- **Properties:** It contains **oily material & lignin, a woody plant substance**, which makes them too brittle for spinning.
  - ⊖ Its **amphiphilic material** that can exhibit both **hydrophilic** (water absorbing) & **hydrophobic** (water-repelling/resisting) properties.
- **Applications:** Used as an absorbent material, water-safety equipment (life jackets & belts) etc.





### Supplementary Demand for Grants

Lok Sabha approves Supplementary Demands for Grants-First Batch for 2024-2025

#### About Supplementary Demand for Grants

- **Purpose:** These are presented when the **initially authorized budgetary allocation for a service is insufficient**,
  - ⊖ or when new expenditure arises for services not contemplated in the original budget.
- **Process:** President lays a **statement before Parliament** showing estimated additional expenditure needed.
  - ⊕ The demand is then debated and approved by both Houses of Parliament.
- **Timing:** These are passed before the **end of the financial year**.



### SLINEX

Bilateral naval exercise 'SLINEX' between Sri Lanka and India began under aegis of Eastern Naval Command.

#### About SLINEX

- It began in 2005 as a bilateral naval exercise **between India and Sri Lanka**.
- **Participating Vessel:** India will be represented by INS Sumitra whereas Sri-Lankan fleet will be represented by SLNS Sayura.
- **Structure of Exercise:** It has two phases, sea phase and Harbour phase



### Search and Rescue Aid Tool (SARAT)

Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS) develops an advanced version of SARAT.

- It will **enhance accuracy and support Indian Search and Rescue (SAR) agencies**, like Indian Coast Guard, in sea operations.

#### About SARAT

- Developed under **Make in India in 2016**, it aims to **facilitate search and rescue operations at sea**, locating individuals or vessels in distress quickly.
- This tool is also available as a **mobile application** for the users.

#### About INCOIS

- **Genesis:** Established as an autonomous body in 1999 under Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES)
- **Mandate:** To provide best possible ocean information and advisory services to society
- **Activities:** Provides round-the-clock monitoring and warning services for coastal population on tsunamis, storm surges, high waves, etc.



### Diabetes Biobank

Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) has set up the country's first diabetes biobank in Chennai.

- Diabetes is a **chronic, metabolic disease** in which the **pancreas produces little or no insulin** by itself.

#### About Diabetes Biobank

- It is a **repository of population-based biological samples**.
- It will **gather, process, store and distribute biospecimens** to assist **scientific studies** with the permission of the ICMR.
- The biobank will help scientists study the **genetic, lifestyle, and environmental factors** behind diabetes.



### Kisan Kavach

Scientists affiliated to the Department of Biotechnology (DBT) have developed an Indigenous 'anti-pesticide' suit called Kisan Kavach.

#### About Kisan Kavach

- Developed by **BRIC-inStem, Bangalore**, it is designed to protect farmers from the harmful effects of pesticide exposure.
- The kit consists of a **trouser, pullover, and a face-cover** made of 'oxime fabric'.
  - ⊖ Oxime fabric can **chemically breakdown any of the common pesticides that get sprayed onto cloth** or body during spraying operations.



### Golan Heights

Israel plans to expand settlements in Golan Heights.

- Israel captured Golan Heights from Syria in the **1967 Six-Day War & annexed it in 1981** (not recognized internationally).

#### About Golan Heights

- **Location:** Located in **southwestern Syria**, Golan Heights is rocky plateau bordering Israel, Lebanon and Jordan.
- ⊖ It is bounded by Jordan River & Sea of Galilee (west), Mount Hermon (north), **seasonal Wadi Al-Ruqqād** (east), Yarmūk River (south).
- **Strategic Importance:**
  - ⊖ **Monitoring Syrian movements:** Syria's capital Damascus is only 60 km (visible from Heights) from Golan Heights.
  - ⊖ **Provides a natural buffer** against any military advancement from Syria.



## Personality in News



### Tulsi Gowda (1944-2024)

The environmentalist and Padma Shri awardee Tulsi Gowda, passed away recently.

#### Tulsi Gowda (1944-2024)

- She was born in **Halakki tribal family** of Karnataka's Honnali village.

#### Key Contribution

- She is known as the "**Encyclopedia of the Forest**" and by her tribe as the "**tree goddess**" because of her knowledge of the forest.
- She has been credited with planting and nurturing over **1 lakh trees** across Karnataka.
- In 2021, she was conferred the **Padma Shri** for her exceptional contributions to environmental conservation.

#### Key Values

- Selflessness, Environmentalism, Dedication etc.



AHMEDABAD



BENGALURU



BHOPAL



CHANDIGARH



DELHI



GUWAHATI



HYDERABAD



JAIPUR



JODHPUR



LUCKNOW



PRAYAGRAJ



PUNE



RANCHI