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1. KUMBHMELA

- ✚ It is basically a religious congregation which is held once every 12 years (Maha Kumbha) at one of the four holy places (Allahabad, Ujjain, Nasik, Haridwar) in turn.
- ✚ Kumbhmela is unique in the respect that it does not exhibit the features associated with a traditional Indian fair.
- ✚ An “ardha” or half Kumbha occurs every 6 years. Four of these twelve places, namely Haridwar, Ujjain, Allahabad and Nasik, are in India, and a great fair is held at each of these places in a 12 years cycle.
- ✚ Ujjain is also visited by many pilgrims during eclipses when a holi bath is considered meritorious.

Types of Kumbh Melas:

- 1) Maha Kumbh Mela – occurring every 144 years – only in Allahabad
- 2) Purna Kumbh Mela – after every twelve years
- 3) Ardh Kumbh – 6th year after Kumbh Mela
- 4) Kumbh Mela – every 12 years, at each place: Prayag, Nasik, Haridwar and Ujjain
- 5) Magh Mela – Annual, held every year except years of Kumbh Mela and Ardh Kumbh Mela Held in Magh (Jan-Feb); hence the name. Always in Allahabad

2. ERADICATION OF CHILD LABOUR WILL CREATE JOBS FOR YOUTH, SAYS SATYARTHI

Millions of job opportunities could be created for the unemployed if child labour was eradicated across the world, said Nobel laureate and children’s rights activist Kailash Satyarthi.

Emphasising the need for eradicating child labour he told that

- 1) Across the world there are 218 million child labourers including 152 million children who do full-time jobs. At the same time, globally there are 210 million young people who are jobless. If the child labour is eradicated, about 210 million jobs can be created for adults
- 2) Children and women were being treated as cheap commodities in comparison to firearms and drugs and added that trafficking of the three was the most illicit earning machine.
- 3) In India and many countries, sexual abuse had become the biggest threat to children. Youth has the power to fight the evil of child labour and sexual abuses but they are looking for a better platform to eradicate them. Youth are never problems, they are always solutions.

3. CAR PARKING PROJECT IN MULLAPERIYAR:SC FOR AMICABLE SETTLEMENT

The Supreme Court has asked Tamil Nadu and Kerala to amicably settle their dispute over a car parking project in the Mullaperiyar dam reservoir.

4. AMCHANG WILDLIFE SANTUARY-EVICTION

Indian police have taken the unusual step of using elephants in an attempt to evict hundreds of people living illegally in a protected forest area in the country's remote north-east. Authorities plan to demolish about 1,000 bamboo and tin huts.



✚ The area was an elephant habitat and the unauthorized settlements were forcing the animals to leave in search of food. There have been many incidents in which wild elephants have killed people and destroyed crops after entering villages.

✚ Amchang Wildlife Sanctuary is a treat for nature lovers where one can see some of the rare species of animals and birds. The sanctuary is located on the outskirts of the city of Guwahati

5. NEW 'GAS STANDARDS' IN THE WORKS TO FIGHT POLLUTION

The government is looking to prepare a **unified testing methodology** to ensure that all agencies that map air pollution use accurate instruments.

- ✚ The Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) -National Physical Laboratory (NPL) is in the process of setting up 'gas standards', or reference samples of Carbon Monoxide (CO), Sulphur Dioxide (SO₂), Nitrous Oxide (NO₂) and Particulate –Pb (lead), –As (Arsenic) and –Ni (Nickel).
- ✚ Currently, the National Ambient Air Quality standards specify the upper limits for pollutants and, based on this, the Air Quality Index — that grades air quality in cities from 'Good' to 'Severe' — is prepared for several Indian cities. The measurement devices are not calibrated and errors creep in.

6. CLEANING UP OIL SPILLS

- ✚ A chemical compound (Meisenheimer complex) synthesized through a simple, single-step process of mixing two chemicals at room temperature has been found to be highly effective in removing fluoride and metal ions such as lead, mercury, cadmium, copper, and iron from drinking water.
- ✚ The compound repels water by nature. A polystyrene sponge that absorbs water became a water-repelling material when coated with the compound and was able to absorb a wide variety of oils and organic solvents from water.

7. THE ILO HAS CALLED FOR INCREASED EFFORTS TO CONSIGN CHILD LABOUR TO THE DUSTBIN OF HISTORY BY THE YEAR 2025.

The organization made the call in a report released to coincide with the global conference on the sustained eradication of child Labour, held in Buenos Aires. “We are moving in the right direction, but we have to do so at a much faster rate,” the ILO said in its report “**Ending childlabour by 2025: A review of policies and programmes**”.

The report listed **four key policy pillars** in the fight against child labour which include:

- 1) Boosting legal protections,
- 2) Improving the governance of labour markets and family enterprises,
- 3) Strengthening social protection and
- 4) Investing in free, quality education.

The ILO stated that legislation alone cannot eradicate child labour, but at the same time, it won't be possible to eradicate child labour without effective legislation. The ILO explained that jobs for adults and youth of legal working age with a fair income and security would discourage many households from resorting to child labour to meet basic needs or to deal with economic uncertainty.

Besides, it pointed out that well-designed labour market policies focused on where most child labour persists – in the rural economy and the informal economy – can help curb the demand for child labour. At the same time, it pointed out that, establishing regulatory frameworks is critical to addressing child labour in supply chains. It also added that continued progress against child labour requires policies that help mitigate the economic vulnerability of households.

8. DOLLARIZATION

- ✚ Dollarization is a situation where a country, either officially or unofficially, uses a different country's currency as legal tender for conducting transactions. The main reason for dollarization is to receive the benefits of greater stability in the value of a foreign currency over a country's domestic currency. The downside of dollarization is that the country gives up its ability to influence its own monetary policy by adjusting its money supply
- ✚ Dollarization usually occurs in developing countries with a weak central government or an unstable economic environment. For example, the citizens of a country within an economy undergoing rampant inflation may choose to use a historically stable currency, like the U.S. dollar, to conduct day-to-day transactions, since inflation will cause their domestic currency to have reduced buying power. Dollarization does not always involve the U.S. dollar as the adopted foreign currency. The euro has also been adopted by non-EU members as its domestic currency.

9. CAN'T FORCE GOVT. TO FRAME A LAW: SC

The Supreme Court said it respected the government's "political compulsions" and would not compel it to ratify the UN Convention against Torture, or command it to frame a standalone anti-torture legislation.

- ✚ A Bench, led by Chief Justice of India refrained from passing any positive order on a public interest litigation petition filed for a standalone anti-torture law. The court disposed of the petition almost a year after entertaining it.
- ✚ Though India signed the convention in 1997, it is yet to ratify it. Efforts to bring in a standalone law have failed. The National Human Rights Commission has been urging the government to recognize torture as a separate crime and codify the punishment in a separate penal law. The Supreme Court termed torture an instrument of "human degradation" used by the state. It was after the court's scathing remarks that the government referred the question of a law on torture to the Law Commission.
- ✚ In its 273rd report handed over to the Law Ministry, the commission has proposed the Prevention of Torture Bill, 2017, which gives a wide definition to torture, not limited to physical pain but also including "inflicting injury, either intentionally or involuntarily, or even an attempt to cause such an injury, which will include physical, mental or psychological in nature".

10. GWALIOR GHARANA

There is a rich tradition of Gharanas in classical Hindustani music. The music Gharanas are also called styles. These schools or Gharanas have their basis in the traditional mode of musical training and education. Every Gharana has its own distinct features. The main area of difference between Gharanas is the manner in which the notes are sung. **The concept of a Guru- Shishya leads to the development of Gharanas.** The Gharanas emerge from the creative style of a genius, who gives existing structures a totally new approach, form and interpretation. The new approach, form and interpretation apply to include the tone of the voice, the pitch, the inflexions and the intonations, and the specific application of the various nuances.

- ✚ Gwalior Gharana is the oldest among all the Khayal Gayaki (vocal) styles.
- ✚ The distinctive feature of this style of singing has been noted as its lucidity and simplicity.
- ✚ The rise of the Gwalior Gharana started with the reign of the great Mughal emperor Akbar. The favorite singers of this patron of the arts, such as Miyan Tansen, first amongst the vocalists at the court, came from the town of Gwalior.

Founders - Ustad Hassu Khan, Ustad Haddu Khan, Ustad Nathu Khan

Exponents - Bal Krishna Balchal Karanjikar, Vishnu Digambar Paluskar, Pandit Omkarnath Thakur, Veena Sahasrabuddhe and Malini Rajurkar

11. INDIA'S G20 SHERPA

A Sherpa is a personal representative of the leader of a member country at international summits like G8 and G20. The Sherpa engages in planning, negotiation and implementation tasks. They coordinate the agenda, seek consensus at the highest political levels, and participate in a series of pre-Summit consultations to help negotiate their leaders' positions.

12. MOUNT AGUNG STANDS ON THE BRINK OF "IMMINENT" MAGMATIC ERUPTION



- ✚ Mount Agung or Gunung Agung is a volcano in Bali, Indonesia southeast of Mt Batur volcano, also in Bali.
- ✚ Gunung Agung, a **strato volcano** is the highest point on Bali. It dominates the surrounding area, influencing the climate, especially rainfall patterns.

13. AIR POLLUTION CAUSES 30 PER CENT PREMATURE DEATHS IN INDIA

- ✚ The CSE report, “**Body Burden: Lifestyle Diseases**”, estimated that India had 22.2 million chronic COPD patients and around 35 million chronic asthma patients in 2016 and Air pollution causes 30 per cent premature deaths in the country. A state-level disease burden report had found that household air pollution is responsible for 5 per cent of the total disease burden and outdoor air pollution for 6 per cent.
- ✚ The report said lack of social support, changing diets and economic instability are the main triggers of mental disorders. Increased intake of sugar too has been linked to mental illness, making it imperative to find ways of reducing intake. An increase of PM 2.5 in the environment by 4.34 microgram/cubic metre can increase the risk of Alzheimer’s.
- ✚ It found that over 61 per cent of all deaths in India were attributed to lifestyle or non-communicable diseases (NCDs). According to the WHO, there are four major risk factors for NCDs — alcohol, tobacco, poor diet intake and lack of physical activity — and by investing just \$1-3 per person per year, countries can dramatically reduce illness and death from NCDs.

14. WHITE PAPER ON DATA PROTECTION FRAMEWORK

The Justice BN Srikrishna Committee, set up by the Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology tasked with writing a draft **data protection law**, published a white paper on data protection framework in India, asking for stakeholders’ feedback.

The seven key principles mentioned on which such a framework could be based upon in the country include:

- 1) Technology agnostic law;
- 2) be applicable to the private sector and the government, maybe with different obligations though;
- 3) Informed and meaningful consent;
- 4) Minimal and necessary data processing;
- 5) Data controller must be accountable for any processing;
- 6) Establishing a high-powered statutory authority for enforcement, supported by a decentralized enforcement mechanism; and
- 7) Penalties for wrongful data processing to ensure deterrence.

The nearly 250-page report published by the nine-member committee has compared data protection laws and regulations from a number of countries, specially focusing on the regulatory framework in the European Union and in the United States, as two ends of the spectrum and seeks to find the Indian framework somewhere in between.

It envisions **three main objectives of a data protection authority**:

- 1) Monitor, investigate and enforce the laws;
- 2) Set the standards; and
- 3) Generate awareness in an increasingly digitized society.

The paper traces the judicial and legislative steps towards data protection and privacy in India. It touches on many domain-specific privacy laws for information, but in the context of data protection it focuses on **two laws that provide the current contours for data protection**.

1) The **Aadhaar Act of 2016** is discussed in some detail. It states the “collection, storage and use of personal data is a precondition for the receipt of a subsidy, benefit or service” under the Aadhaar Act. It specifically says that though obtaining an Aadhaar number is not mandatory, except for certain benefits, subsidies and services funded from the Consolidated Fund of India, “in practice” getting an Aadhaar number “is becoming mandatory for availing most services through a range of cognate laws.” Even though the government is obligated to adopt adequate security safeguards, “no database is 100 per cent secure,” the white paper states. It refers to the criticisms of Aadhaar, including “though seemingly voluntary, possession of Aadhaar has become mandatory in practice, and has been viewed by many as coercive collection of personal data by the State”. The committee feels that in view of all these issues the “interplay between any proposed data protection framework and the existing Aadhaar framework will have to be analyzed”.

2) The other data protection law it looks at is the **Information Technology (Reasonable Security Practices and Sensitive Personal Data or Information) Rules, 2011**, or the **SPDI Rules**. The main flaw of the SPDI Rules is that it solely looks at the private sector, leaving the government out of its ambit. “When it comes to sharing information with Government agencies, then the consent of the provider is not required and such information can be shared for purposes such as verification of identity, prevention, detection and investigation including of cyber incidents, prosecution, and punishment of offences.” It adds the rules are restricted to sensitive personal data, including attributes like “sexual orientation, medical records and history, biometric information”, and not larger personal data.