Holy City status – 3 cities of Punjab

Prelims: *Current events of national and international importance | History*

Why in News?

The Punjab government has granted the "Holy City" status to Amritsar, Anandpur Sahib, and Talwandi Sabo through a recent official notification.

- **Holy City status –** The sale of liquor, tobacco, cigarettes, and meat will be ***prohibited within the city limits***.
- To promote religious tourism, devotees will be offered additional transport facilities such as mini buses and e-rickshaws.
- **3 Holy Cities –** Amritsar, Anandpur Sahib, and Talwandi Sabo, these are part of the 5 Sikh Takhts.

  "***Takht***" *in Persian means an imperial throne.*

- **5 Sikh Takhts –**
  - Akal Takht (Amritsar),
  - Takht Keshgarh Sahib (Anandpur Sahib),
  - Takht Damdama Sahib (Talwandi Sabo)
  - Takht Patna Sahib is in Bihar,
  - Takht Hazur Sahib is in Nanded, Maharashtra.

Significance

- **Akal Takht –** It is considered the *supreme among the five*.
  - It was set up in 1606 by ***Guru Hargobind***, who became the 6th Guru after the execution of his father, Guru Arjan Dev.
  - He built the Akal Takht as a raised platform in front of the ***Golden Temple in Amritsar.***
  - It represented the ***union of two powers*** - *miri* (temporal and political authority) and *piri* (spiritual authority).
  - Takhts *issue hukumnamas (edicts)* on matters affecting the Sikh community.
  - However, ***only the Akal Takht can issue orders*** that apply to the entire community, including disciplinary actions against those who violate Sikh doctrine.
- **Other 4 takhts –**
  - They are linked to the ***life of Guru Gobind Singh***, the 10th Guru.

    - **Keshgarh Sahib** – He raised the Khalsa, the initiated Sikh warriors, in 1699.
    - **Patna Sahib** – His Birthplace.
    - **Damdama Sahib** – He spent several months preparing the revised version of the Guru Granth Sahib (holy book of the Sikhs).
    - **Hazur Sahib** – He spent his final days here, and he was cremated in 1708.
- **Concerns –** Holy City status has led to discussions on restricting jhatka meat, the impact on shopkeepers who sold liquor, tobacco, and meat, and possible rehabilitation policies.

Jhatka *meat is part of Sikh tradition, especially among the* ***Nihangs,*** *warrior Sikhs known for wearing deep blue.*

Reference

Indian Express | Punjab's 3 new 'Holy Cities'

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