UPSC Daily Current Affairs| Prelim Bits 26-03-2025

Supreme Court of India Collegium

Syllabus

Prelims*- Polity | Judicial system*

Mains*- GS -II - Governance | Judiciary in India*

Why in News?

The Supreme Court Collegium has officially recommended that Justice Yashwant Varma, who is undergoing in-house investigation into claims of cash hoard discovered on his official premises, be transferred to the Allahabad HC.

- **Collegium System -** It is a system under which appointments and transfers of judges are decided by a forum of the Chief Justice of India and the 4 senior-most judges of the Supreme Court.
- In the original constitution, there is ***no mention of a collegium***.
- **Collegium of the Supreme Court -** Consists of 5 Senior most Judges including the Chief Justice of India.
- They will consider the elevation of Chief Justices/Judges of High Court to Supreme Court, elevation of Judges of High Courts as Chief Justices and elevation of Judges.
- In case of difference of opinion, the majority view will prevail.
- Since Constitution mandates consultation with the Chief Justice of India is necessary for appointments to judiciary, the collegium model evolved.
- **Constitutional Provisions** – According to ***Article 124***, Supreme Court judges are appointed by the President of India in consultation with Chief Justice of India (CJI) and other judges that he deems fit.
- According to ***Article 217***, High Courts judges are appointed by the President in consultation with CJI, Governor of the State and Chief Justice of that court.
- **Evolution of collegium system -** The collegium system has its genesis in a series of 3 judgments that is now clubbed together as the ***3 Judges cases.***
- **Transfer of HC judge -** In case of transfers, President may move a judge from one High Court to another, after consulting the CJI.
- While the transfer of a High Court judge is a collegium decision and separate from any disciplinary inquiry,
    - The SC has underlined that in-house investigations into judicial misconduct fall *solely under the CJI's purview.*
- The CJI, in such matters, seeks a report from the ***Chief Justice of the concerned High Court.***

- The collegium procedures do not govern such inquiries.

Issues in Functioning of collegium system

- **No-transparency in appointments** - It is seen as a closed-door affair with no prescribed norms regarding eligibility criteria, or even the selection procedure.
- There is no public knowledge of how and when a collegium meets, and how it takes its decisions with no official minutes of collegium proceedings.
- **Nepotism and favouritism** - Allegations of nepotism and favouritism are rampant with judges in the collegium recommending their close relatives.
- **Lack of diversity** - The absence of an institutional mechanism to ensure diversity on the Bench in the judiciary is a problem.
- SCs, STs, OBCs and minorities are grossly underrepresented in the collegium picks.
- **Non-filling of vacancies** - Supreme Court judges often talk about the issue of pendency of cases, but still they are inactive in solving the problem.
- **Difference of opinion** - The conflicting opinion within the collegium members is hampering the functioning of the collegium system.
    - Recently, while CJI Lalit wanted to circulate the recommendations for appointment to the Supreme Court, two judges in the Collegium preferred deliberations in person.
- **Issues with certain conventions** - By convention, once a recommendation for the successor to the CJI's office is made, the Collegium ceases to make decisions.
- Given that the CJI is appointed by seniority, many of them have a short tenure and these sorts of convention may slow down decision-making.

Reference

The Indian Express | Collegium system

Baanknet Portal

Syllabus

Prelims *– Economic and social development*

Mains *- GS III | Issues related to Growth and development*

Why in News?

Recently, Department of Financial Services, Ministry of Finance, launched the revamped e-auction portal 'Baanknet' in New Delhi.

- It is a revamped ***e-auction portal*** that consolidates information on all properties that put up for e-auction by public sector banks (PSBs).
- It is specifically designed to enhance transparency and speed up the process of disposing of ***Non-Performing Asset (NPA)*** cases.

- **Predecessor portal** - "e-BKray" launched in 2019.
- **Listings** – Residential properties such as flats, independent houses, and open plots, as well as Commercial properties, industrial land and buildings, shops, vehicles, plant and machinery, agricultural and non-agricultural land.
- **Salient features**
- **State-of-the-art Innovative Platform** – A cutting-edge property listing, specifically designed for banks and lending institutions to address the recovery of Non-Performing Asset (NPA) loans.
- **Robust Architecture** – Ensures seamless reliability and accessibility for users through both mobile and web interfaces.
- **Automated KYC and Secure Payment Gateways** – Integrates advanced Know Your Customer (KYC) tools and secure payment gateways, ensuring a transparent and secure auction process.
- **Comprehensive Property Listings** – Offers a convenient solution from property "search" to "sale" for all types of properties across India, streamlining the entire auction journey.
- **Simplified Navigation** – Provides an easy-to-use interface for property search and auctions, making the process user-friendly and accessible.
- **Smart Auctions and Fair Pricing** – Facilitates intelligent auction mechanisms, ensuring fair pricing and maximum value for all listed properties.
- **Bank Verified Titles** – Ensures that all property titles are verified by banks, providing authenticity and reliability in the auction process.
- Users can benefit from a dashboard feature for easy access to *'Spend Analytics' and various 'MIS Reports'* at the click of a button.
- ***All 12 Public Sector Banks***, and Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI) are using the platform for listing and auction of properties across the country.

Reference

PIB | BAANKNET Portal

Jnanpith Award

Syllabus

Prelims *– Current events of national importance*

Mains *– GS Paper 1 – Various facets of Indian art and culture*

Why in News?

A storyteller and eminent Hindi writer, Vinod Kumar Shukla won the Jnanpith award, 1st from Chhattisgarh to win the prize.

- It is ***India's highest literary honour***, given annually to Indian writers for their

outstanding contribution to literature.

- **Instituted in** – 1961.
- **Instituted by** – Sahu Shanti Prasad Jain**,** founder of ***Bharatiya Jnanpith***, the oldest and most prestigious literary accolade in India.
- It honors authors for their exceptional contributions to literature in Indian languages ***listed in the 8th Schedule*** (22 languages) of the Constitution.
    - English being included from the 49th award (2013) onwards.
- Once a language gets the award, it is ***not eligible*** for the award for the next 2 years.
- **Selection Procedure** – Recommendations made by various Language Advisory Committees are placed before the Selection Board it then chooses the awardee for the year.
- The award is not given posthumously, ensuring that it ***recognizes living writers*** for their literary excellence.
- **Rewards** – The Jnanpith award carries with it a cash of Rs 11 lakh, a bronze statue of the Hindu Goddess Vagdevi and a citation.

The first recipient of the Jnanpith Award was Malayalam poet G. Sankara Kurup in 1965; the first woman to receive the award was Ashapurna Devi in 1976.

Contributions of Vinod Kumar Shukla

- Jnanpith Award is being conferred upon him for his outstanding contribution to Hindi literature, creativity and distinctive writing style.
- He won the Sahitya Akademi award in 1999 for his novel Deewar Mein Ek Khirkee Rahati Thi.
- **Notable works** – Naukar Ki Kameez (1979), which was adapted into a film by director Mani Kaul, and the poetry collection Sab Kuch Hona Bacha Rahega (1992).
- His books have been translated to English, Italian and German languages.

Reference

Times of India | 59th Jnanpith Award

Anti-dumping Duty

Syllabus

Prelims *– Current events of national importance*

Mains *– GS III | Economic Development | Issues related to development | Changes in industrial policy and their effects on industrial growth.*

Why in News?

India has recently imposed anti-dumping duties on 5 Chinese goods following recommendations made by the Directorate General of Trade Remedies (DGTR), the investigation arm of Ministry of Commerce.

- **Anti-dumping duty-imposed Goods**
  - **Soft Ferrite Cores** (used in electric vehicles, chargers, and telecom devices) – 5 years.
  - Certain thickness of **vacuum insulated flask** – 5 years.
  - **Aluminium foil** (for 6 months)
  - **Trichloro Isocyanuric Acid** (chemical used for water treatment) – 5 years.
  - **Poly Vinyl Chloride Paste Resin**
- These products were found to be sold in India at prices below normal market value.

China is India's second largest trading partner.

- **Anti-dumping duties –**It is a tariff imposed on imported goods that are *priced below their fair market value* in the exporting country, aiming to protect domestic industries from unfair competition.
- Anti-dumping probes are conducted by countries to determine whether domestic industries have been hurt because of a surge in cheap imports.
- Probes are conducted periodically to check for the impact of cheap imports on domestic industries.
- A product is considered to be dumped when a producer exports his product at a price lower than its value in its domestic market.
- It is imposed as per multilateral regime of World Trade Organization (WTO), to ensure fair trading practices and a level-playing field for domestic producers' vis-a-vis foreign producers and exporters.
- Article 6 in the ***General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT)*** allows countries to take action against dumping.

Reference

Hindustan Times | What are anti-dumping duties?

Sheathia Rosemalayensis

Syllabus

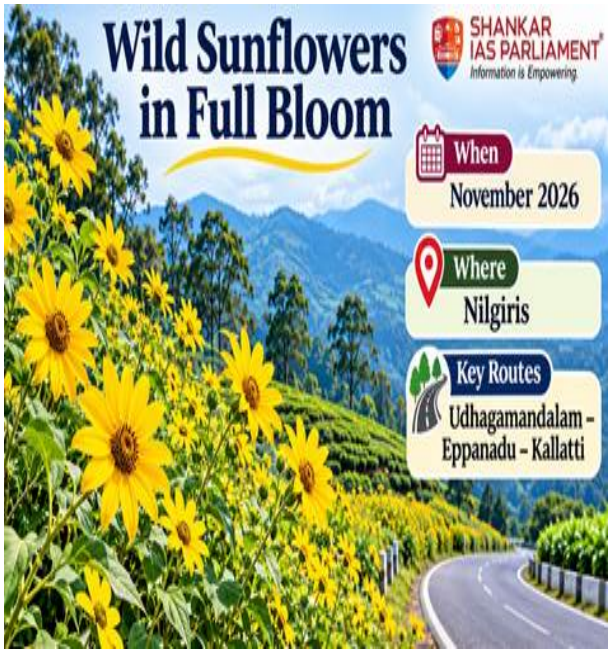
Prelims *– General issues on Environmental ecology, Bio-diversity and Climate Change.*

Mains *– GS- III | Conservation*

Why in the News?

A team of researchers from Mar Athanasius College, Kothamangalam, have discovered a new species of freshwater algae.

- **Sheathia Rosemalayensis** – It is a new species of ***freshwater red algae*** from the Western Ghats.
- **Discovered in** – Rosemala in Kollam district, Kerala.
- **Taxonomy**
  - **Family** – Batrachospermaceae.
  - **Scientific name** – Sheathia Rosemalayensis, which has been named after the place where it was found.
  - **Genus** – Sheathia.
- The Sheathia species are *extremely rare in India*.
- **Habitat** – It has been documented ***only in the southern Western Ghats***, a geographically distinct region.
- It is the *4th new species* of the Batrachospermaceae family described from this region.
- **Distinguished from other species** – It is distinguished based on *morphology and molecular sequence* data from previously identified 3 other new species of freshwater red algae:
  - Kumanoa chaugulei, Kumanoa periyarensis, and Macrosporophycos sahyadricus.
- **DNA barcoding** – It was performed on all 4 newly discovered species, confirming their unique identity.



- **Significance** – It is crucial to study the freshwater red algae which are thrive only in pristine (fresh) water and undisturbed habitats.
- Their presence has significant bio-geographical and environmental implications.

References

1. The New Indian Express|New freshwater algae species discovered in Western Ghats
2. Phycologia| Sheathia Rosemalayensis

One Liners 25-03-2025

History, Art and Culture

Dekho Anna Desh Initiative

Recently Union Ministry of Tourism has issues list of states/ UTs Wise Domestic Tourist visiters.

• **Dekho Apna Desh Initiative –** Launched in January 2020, this Ministry of Tourism program promotes domestic tourism via webinars, quizzes, and social media.
• **People's Choice Poll –** Citizens engage to identify preferred tourist attractions, enhancing destination popularity.
• **Digital Platform Enhancement –** Revamped www.incredibleindia.gov.in provides tour and package information, collaborating with stakeholders.
• **Economic Impact –** Increased domestic tourism aims to boost local economies, create jobs, and support hospitality, fostering sustainable growth. State-wise domestic tourist visit data is available.

Shaheed Diwas

The PM paid tributes to Bhagat Singh, Rajguru & Sukhdev on Shaheed Diwas.

• March 23 marked the execution of Bhagat Singh, Rajguru & Sukhdev in 1931.
• **HSRA Affiliation** – Members of the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association, advocating for freedom.
• **Lahore Conspiracy Case** – Accused of killing John Saunders in 1928, avenging Lala Lajpat Rai's death.
• **Arrest and Sentencing** – The British government-imposed death sentences following their arrest.
• **Execution** – Hanged in Lahore Central Jail on March 23, 1931, despite protests.
• **Legacy** – Their fearless sacrifice immortalized them as symbols of Indian resistance.

Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia: A Legacy of Social Justice

• **Born in** – Akbarpur, UP on 23 March 1910
• **Role in Freedom Struggle** – Active in the Quit India Movement (1942), and protested against Portuguese rule in Goa, facing multiple imprisonments.
• **Social Vision –** Advocated for economic democracy to eradicate caste, class, and gender inequalities.
• **Political Philosophy** – Proposed a "6-Point Plan" for new Socialism, emphasizing maximum equality and a global standard of living.
• **Literary Contributions & Values** – Author of influential works like "The Caste System" and "Wheel of History," embodying values of justice, equality, and non-violence.

Polity & Governance

Kerala's Pioneering Senior Citizens Commission

Kerala has established the nation's first Senior Citizens Commission via the Kerala State Senior Citizens Commission Bill, 2025.

• **Statutory Nature and Purpose –** This commission is a statutory body, created to protect the rights and welfare of elderly citizens.
• **Advisory Role –** It serves as an advisory body, influencing state policies related to senior citizens.
• **Core Objectives –** The commission aims to safeguard rights, ensure rehabilitation, and promote the active participation of seniors in society.
• **Focus on Inclusivity and Dignity –** A key goal is to foster inclusivity and uphold the dignity of senior citizens across Kerala. This initiative demonstrates Kerala's commitment to elderly care.

Form 17C

*SC of India is considering a petition by **Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR)**, demanding the Election Commission publish booth-wise voting data (Form 17C) on its website within **48** hours of polling.*

• **Form 17C Definition** – Is a crucial election document detailing booth-wise voter turnout and election results.
• **Form 17C Structure** – It comprises 2 parts: Part 1, the 'Account of Votes Recorded,' and Part 2, the 'Result of Counting.'
• **Legal Framework** – Governed by the Conduct of Election Rules, 1961, under the Representation of the People Act, 1951.
• **Procedural Implementation** – Part 1 is completed post-polling by the Presiding Officer and secured. Part 2 is filled during counting by the Returning Officer.
• **Functions and Powers** – Form 17C ensures transparency, facilitates cross-verification of votes, and strengthens electoral trust. It's legally binding, requiring official signatures.

National Cooperative Development Corporation (NCDC's) Women Cooperative Schemes

• NCDC supports women's empowerment via two dedicated schemes.
• **Swayamshakti Sahakar Yojna –** To provide affordable financial services, enabling women's Self-Help Groups (SHGs) to access bank credit for collective socio-economic activities and sustainable livelihoods.
• **Nandini Sahakar** – Offers a comprehensive framework for women cooperatives, encompassing financial aid, project formulation,
• capacity development, and hand-holding, excluding urban housing projects.
• **Impact** – Empowering women, bolstering their economic participation & contributing to sustainable development.

International Relations and Issues

Sea Dragon 2025, Naval Drill

A multilateral anti-submarine warfare exercise, Sea Dragon 2025, began on March 4th off the coast of Guam, hosted by the US 7th Fleet.

• **Historical Growth –** Initially a US-Australia drill in 2019, it expanded to include Japan, South Korea & New Zealand by 2020, and India in 2021.
• **Current Participant –** 2025 exercise features the US, India, Japan, Australia, and South Korea, deploying advanced Maritime Patrol and Reconnaissance Aircraft (MPRA).
• **Indo-Pacific Focus –** Sea Dragon 2025 aims to enhance maritime security coordination in the Indo-Pacific region.
• **Joint Training –** Nations engage in joint training to improve anti-submarine warfare capabilities.

Parole Termination

Trump administration recently has announced the end of temporary legal status for over 530,000 migrants from Cuba, Haiti, Nicaragua & Venezuela (CHNV). This decision terminates parole programs initiated by the Biden administration.

• **CHNV Parole Programs** – These programs offered temporary legal entry to migrants facing humanitarian crises in their home countries. They allowed a 2-year stay in the U.S.
• **Eligibility and Requirements** – Applicants underwent online applications and background checks. A financial sponsor in the U.S. was mandatory.
• **Work Authorization** – Participants received work authorization, enabling them to support themselves during their stay.
• **Program Termination Details –** A Federal Register document specifies the programs will end on April 24, 2025.

Security

Hawala

The use of hawala networks has surged in recent years, particularly for illegal activities such as poaching and money laundering.

• Hawala is an informal - trust-based money transfer system, distinct from traditional banking. It allows funds to move without physical cash.

• **The Role of Hawaladars** - Central to hawala are "hawaladars," brokers who facilitate transactions. Their network operates on trust, bypassing formal financial channels.

• **Operational Process** - A sender gives money to a hawaladar, receiving a unique code or token. This token is shared with the recipient. The recipient then collects the equivalent amount from a local hawaladar.

• **Convenience vs. Regulation –** Hawala's convenience fuels its widespread use. However, its informal nature means it lacks formal regulation, making it vulnerable to abuse.

• **Illicit Applications** – Investigations reveal hawala's exploitation in illegal activities, such as poaching and money laundering, enabling criminal networks to move funds discreetly.

Science

Altermagnetism

Researchers in Sweden have identified a novel type of magnetism known as altermagnetism.

• This finding holds the promise of improving the performance of electronic devices significantly.

• Boost Operational Speed - Of memory devices by as much as a thousand-fold.

- This advancement may pave the way for quicker, more efficient technologies.
- Altermagnetism is characterized by magnetic units that are arranged in an antiparallel manner.
- Nonetheless, these units display a slightly rotated crystal lattice.
- This distinctive configuration sets altermagnetism apart from conventional forms of magnetism, merging attributes of both ferromagnets and antiferromagnets into a single material.

SHANKAR IAS PARLIAMENT
Information is Empowering