

Cabinet Approves “Vibrant Villages Programme-II (VVP-II)” for Financial Years 2024-25 to 2028-29

VVP-II builds upon the foundation laid by the **first phase, VVP-I**, which targeted **border villages** along the **northern frontier**.

➤ This initiative highlights India's commitment to **Viksit Bharat@2047**, ensuring **safe, secure, and self-sufficient land borders**.





About Vibrant Villages Programme-II (VVP-II)

- **Type:** Central Sector Scheme with **100% Centre funding** (unlike VVP-I, which was Centrally Sponsored).
- **Coverage:** Strategic villages along **international land borders (ILBs)** across 17 states/UTs {excluding northern border blocks covered under VVP-I (2023-24)}.
- **Objective:** Improve living conditions, provide livelihood opportunities, control trans-border crime, and integrate populations as '**eyes and ears**' for internal security.

Key Features of VVP-II

- **Infrastructure Development:** Investments in **roads, housing, sanitation, drinking water, and SMART classrooms**, with **all-weather road connectivity** under the **Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (MGSY-IV)**.
- **Value Chain & Livelihood Development:** Support for cooperatives, SHGs, and border-specific outreach activities to create sustainable livelihoods.
- **Welfare Scheme Convergence:** Implement existing welfare schemes in the identified villages, ensuring full coverage under the convergence model.
- **Cultural & Tourism Promotion:** Organizing fairs, festivals, awareness camps, and national day celebrations to boost tourism and promote local heritage.
- **PM Gati Shakti:** Shall be used for effective implementation of the project.

Why Border Population is a Strategic Asset?

 <p>Source of Local Knowledge On environmental conditions & cross-border activities through local networks</p>	 <p>Logistical Support Remote border villages support patrolling forces with food, shelter, and labor</p>
 <p>Informal Surveillance Nomads and shepherds act as early warning system for border transgressions <i>E.g., Tashi Namgyal during the Kargil War</i></p>	 <p>Reinforcing Territorial Claims Settled populations in disputed areas fortify claims. <i>Article 7 of 2005 India-China Agreement</i></p>

Previous Development Efforts

1986-87	2005-06	2015
Border Area Development Programme	Model Village Initiative	Smart/Model Village Development

6th BIMSTEC Summit concluded in Bangkok under the chairmanship of Thailand

BIMSTEC (Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation) is a **regional organization** established in **1997** with the signing of the **Bangkok Declaration**.

- It is a **sector-driven grouping** comprising of **seven Member States** (Bangladesh, Bhutan, **India**, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Thailand).
- Its **Charter** was finalised in the **5th Summit (2022)** in **Sri Lanka**.

Key Outcomes of the 6th Summit

- **BIMSTEC Bangkok Vision 2030:** First-ever vision outlining a strategic plan to build a **Prosperous, Resilient and Open** or “**PRO BIMSTEC**” by **2030** focusing on economic integration, connectivity, and human security.
- **Agreement on Maritime Transport Cooperation:** Strengthen maritime connectivity between **South and Southeast Asia**, improve logistical efficiency, reduce trade costs, etc.

Major India -Led Initiatives

- **BIMSTEC Centres of Excellence:** To be set up in **India** on Disaster Management, Sustainable Maritime Transport, Traditional Medicine, and Research and Training in Agriculture.
- **BODHI [BIMSTEC for Organized Development of Human Resource Infrastructure]:** Programme for **skilling the youth** through training and scholarships to professionals, students, researchers, etc.
- **Digital Public Infrastructure:** India to conduct a **pilot study** assessing its need in the region.
- **Strengthening people-to-people linkages:** India to host **first BIMSTEC Games** in 2027.
- **Establishing BIMSTEC Chamber of Commerce:** With the organization of **BIMSTEC Business Summit** annually.

Contemporary relevance of BIMSTEC

 <p>Quick Decision Making: Greater focus on common regional concerns.</p>	 <p>Aligns with India's Strategic Interests: Expansion of Act East policy, Connectivity for India's Northeast.</p>	 <p>Trade and Security: Primarily in the Indian Ocean region amidst the rising clout of China.</p>
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India-Thailand inked Joint Declaration towards establishing Strategic Partnership

Strategic partnership, though less formal, is based on **cooperation** between the states on **shared common objectives**, primarily security but also extends to trade, economy, technology, etc.

Significance of India-Thailand Strategic Partnership

- **Mutually-Beneficial Goals:** Both have shared interests in a **free, open, transparent, rules-based, inclusive, and resilient Indo-Pacific** and support for **ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) Centrality**.
 - ⊕ 'ASEAN centrality' emphasises the **role of ASEAN** as the **driving force** behind the **geopolitics** or **geo-economics** of the region.
- **Strategic Location:** Thailand is **India's Maritime Neighbour** with key interest in regional **peace**.
- **Complementing Policies:** India's "**Act East**" and Thailand's "**Act West**" policies complement each other.
- **Role in Regional and Sub-regional Groupings:** Thailand is an important partner of India in the **ASEAN; Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC)**, etc.

Other Key Agreements Inked

- **MoUs on cooperation in various sectors:** Development of **National Maritime Heritage Complex (NMHC)** at Lothal, Development of **North Eastern Region**, etc.
- **Facilitate People-to People Contact:** Establishment of an **India-Thailand Consular Dialogue**.
- **Trade facilitation:** Exploring the establishment of **local currency-based settlement mechanism**.

Overview of India-Thailand Relations

- **Diplomatic:** Diplomatic relations dates back to the year **1947**.
- **Economic:** Bilateral trade reaching approximately **USD 15 billion in 2023-24**.
- **Defence:** Exercise **MAITREE, INDO-THAI CORPAT**, etc.

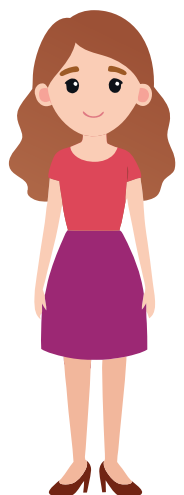
Supreme Court (SC) Lays Key Principles for Handling Challenges in Government Employment Appointments

SC upheld quashing of nearly 25,000 staff appointments by West Bengal School Selection Commission (SSC) in 2016, while laying down **4 key principles** for courts to consider in government employment appointment challenges.

Four Key Principles laid down in State of West Bengal vs. Baishakhi Bhattacharyya (Chatterjee)

- **Entire exam result be cancelled if in-depth inquiry signals fraud in process:** This principle is based on **Sachin Kumar and Others v. Delhi Subordinate Service Selection Board (DSSSB)** judgment of SC.
 - ⊕ **Exception:** However, if **possible**, segregation of tainted & untainted candidates should be carried out in alignment with equity (Under **Article 16(1) and 14**).
- **Decision to cancel selection en masse** must be based on satisfaction derived from sufficient material collected through fair and thorough investigation.
 - ⊕ Material **doesn't need to prove malpractice beyond doubt, but should show reasonable certainty of systemic issues**, using a **probability test**.
- If **deep manipulation in the process is proven**, the purity of the process must take precedence over **any inconvenience caused to untainted candidates**.
- **Individual notice and hearing** may not be required when facts prove that the **entire selection process** is **tainted** with large-scale illegalities, for practical reasons.
 - ⊕ For the **last three principles** the court placed reliance on the decision of the **State of Tamil Nadu and Another v. A. Kalaimani (2021)**.

Understanding Standards of Proof



What does "preponderance of probabilities" mean?

It refers to the degree of certainty that a tribunal believes a fact is more likely true than not.

How does it differ from "proof beyond reasonable doubt"?

"Proof beyond reasonable doubt" is a higher standard used in criminal cases, requiring near certainty.

Relevant Case Laws on Cancellation of Selection Process

- **Bihar School Examination Board v. Subhas Chandra Sinha and Others:** The Court held that individual opportunities for hearing may not be necessary if the entire examination is being cancelled due to large-scale irregularities.
- **Vanshika Yadav v. Union of India and Others:** SC refused to cancel the NEET-UG 2024 exam, as no material indicated systemic issues undermining the exam's integrity.

SC Orders Probe into Violations of Forest and Wildlife Laws in Tamil Nadu's Agasthyamalai Landscape

The case concerns the encroachment of 'Singampatti Zamin forests lands,' cleared for plantation cultivation (tea, coffee, rubber).

- The land was declared part of **Kalakkad-Mundanthurai Reserved Forest (1978)**, **Core Critical Tiger Habitat (2007)**, **Wildlife Sanctuary**, and **Tiger Reserve (2012)** which led to the eviction of tea estate workers.

Key Observations from SC Order in *A. John Kennedy v. State of Tamil Nadu & Others*

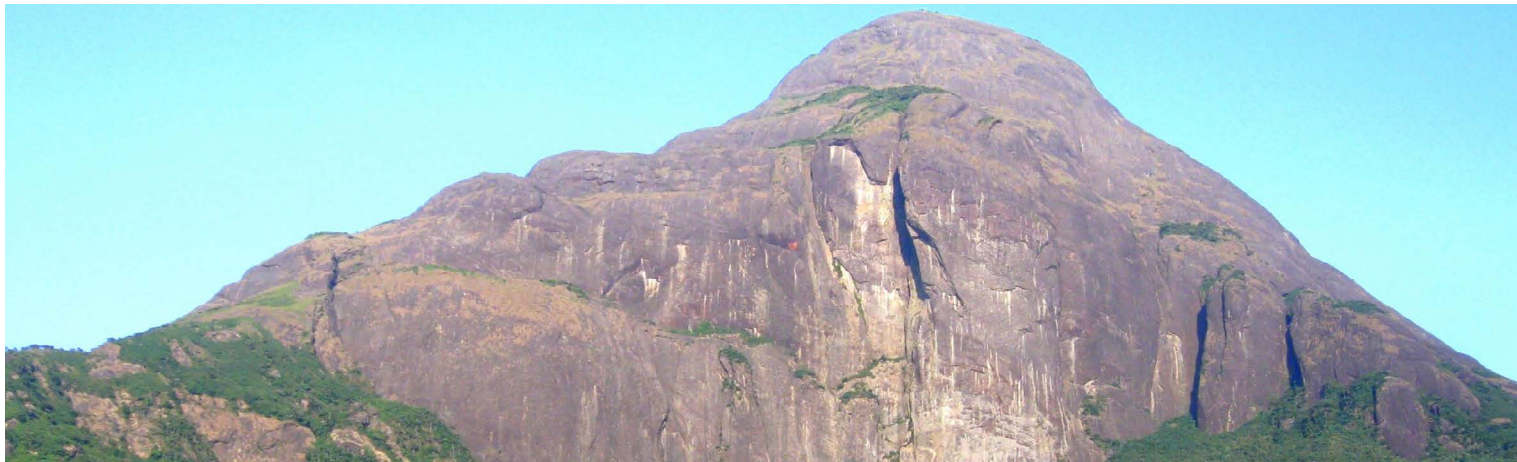
- **Forests are the "lungs of the ecosystem"**: Their depletion directly impacts climate change and biodiversity.
 - ⊕ Around 13,000 sq. km of forest land in India is under encroachment (Environment Ministry)
- **A healthy tiger population is vital for ecosystem balance**: Court cited **T.N. Godavarman** case to stress that "the tiger perishes without the forest, and the forest perishes without its tigers."
- **The Court endorsed an "ecocentric approach" (over anthropocentric)** from *State of Telangana v. Mohd. Abdul Qasim (2024)*.

About Agasthyamalai Landscape

- It includes **Periyar Tiger Reserve**, **Srivilliputhur Grizzled Squirrel WLS**, **Meghamalai** and **Thirunelveli WLS**.
 - ⊕ **14 rivers** flow through the landscape including the **Thamirabarai** river.
- **Agasthyamala Biosphere Reserve** is included in the **World Network of Biosphere Reserve** under the **Man and Biosphere (MAB) Program of UNESCO**.
 - ⊕ Located in the **southern Western Ghats in Tamil Nadu and Kerala**.
 - ⊕ The reserve includes **3 WLSs**, **Shendurney**, **Peppara** and **Neyyar (Kerala)**, and the **Kalakad Mundanthurai Tiger Reserve (Tamil Nadu)**.

Forests in India: Forest and Wildlife Protection Laws

Forest Classification (India Forest Act, 1927 and State Forest Acts)	Forest Conservation Act, 1980	Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 Tiger Reserves Classification:
<p>Reserved Forest: Full degree of protection. All activities are prohibited unless permitted.</p> <p>Protected Forest: Limited degree of protection. All activities are permitted unless prohibited.</p> <p>Unclassified Forest: An area recorded as forest but not included in reserved or protected forest category. Ownership status varies from state to state.</p>	<p>Prior approval of the Government of India is required for assigning use of forest land for non-forestry purposes.</p>	<p>Core or critical tiger habitat areas: Keeping the area inviolate without affecting the rights of the Scheduled Tribes or such other forest dwellers.</p> <p>Buffer or peripheral area: Lesser degree of habitat protection promoting co-existence between wildlife and human activity.</p>



Also In News



Adjournment Sine Die

The Lok Sabha was adjourned sine die, ending the Budget session.

About Adjournment sine die

- Sine Die is a Latin term meaning "**without assigning a day for a further meeting**."
- In parliamentary terms, Adjournment Sine Die refers to the **end of a session of Parliament without setting a date to reconvene**.
- **Authority:** **Presiding Officer** announces and later, the President issues a **notification to prorogue** the House, officially ending the session (Article 85).
- **Effect on Pending Business:**
 - ⊕ All bills that are **pending in the same House** remain unaffected.
 - ⊕ Most **notices (e.g., questions, motions, resolutions)** lapse and must be **resubmitted** in the next session unless otherwise specified.



HANSA- 3 (NG)

CSIR (Council of Scientific and Industrial Research)-National Aerospace Laboratories (NAL) signs technology transfer deal with a private firm to manufacture HANSA trainer-planes.

- This would be the **first time** an aircraft is manufactured in India based on **technology fully designed and developed indigenously**.

About HANSA- 3 (NG)

- **Key Features**
 - ⊕ Powered by an advanced fuel-efficient **Rotax 912 iSc3 Sports engine**.
 - ⊕ **Range of 620 nautical miles**, **7 hours of endurance**, and a maximum cruise speed of **98 Knots Calibrated Airspeed (KCAS)**.
- **Significance:** Offers Large and world-class flying training ecosystem; strengthen India's aviation industry, etc.



Quad HADR

Quad Partnership on Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) released a joint statement to assist after **Earthquake in Myanmar**.

- **QUAD** is a partnership between **Australia, India, Japan, and the United States** that traces its origin to the **Indian Ocean Tsunami** of 2004.

About Quad HADR

- **Background:** Guidelines for the '**Quad Partnership on Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR)** in the **Indo-Pacific** were announced in **Tokyo, 2022**.
- **Objectives:** Respond to the vulnerabilities of the **Indo-Pacific region**, augment their **capacity and capability, interoperability and operational synergy** to undertake HADR operations.



One Health Approach

A study for detecting **zoonotic spillover** in bird-human interaction settings using the **One Health approach** was launched by the **Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)**.

- **Zoonotic spillover** is the transmission of a **pathogen** from a **vertebrate animal to a human**.

About One Health Approach

- It is an **integrated, unifying approach to balance and optimize** the health of people, animals and the environment.
- It helps **prevent, predict, detect, and respond** to global health threats.
- **India's National One Health Mission:** Serves to coordinate, support, and integrate all existing One Health activities.



Wat Pho Temple

Indian Prime Minister recently visited the **Wat Phra Chetuphon Wimon Mangkhalaram Rajwaramahawihan**, or **Wat Pho Temple**.

About Wat Pho Temple

- **Location:** **Buddhist temple** located in **Rattanakosin Island, Bangkok**.
- **Renowned:** For the **46-meter-long gold-plated Reclining Buddha** (representing the Buddha entering complete spiritual enlightenment).
- **Significance:** Officially classified as a **first-class royal temple**, birthplace of **traditional Thai medicine and massage**, and considered as **Thailand's first university**.
- **History:** One of the most important temples during the reign of **King Rama I** (Chakri Dynasty).
⊕ **King Rama III** further enlarged and extensively renovated it.



Koch-Rajbongshi Community

The Assam Cabinet has decided to drop cases against the **Koch-Rajbongshi community** in various **Foreigners' Tribunals (FTs)**.

About Koch-Rajbongshi Community

- **Background:** Trace their roots to the **Kamata kingdom (ruled by Koch Dynasty)** comprising parts of present day **Assam, West Bengal, Nepal and Bangladesh**.
⊕ The **Kamata kingdom** appeared in the western part of the older **Kamarupa kingdom** (13th century) after the fall of the **Pala dynasty**.
- **Language:** **Rajbongshi/Rajbanshi** (also known as **Kamtapuri**) with around **1 crore speakers** (2001 census).
- **Cultural Practices:** Practiced **animism** but later adopted **Hinduism** (minority have embraced Christianity).



Tulips

Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR)-Indian Institute of Integrative Medicine (IIIM) Field Station Bonera, Jammu seeks to **Indigenize Tulips**.

- **Indira Gandhi Memorial Tulip garden**, Srinagar is the largest tulip garden in Asia.

About Tulips

- **Native:** Central Asia and Turkey.
- **Features:** **Bulbous** herb, member of the **lily family**, a popular **garden flower** occurring in wide range of **colors**.
⊕ It has erect **flowers with long, broad, parallel-veined leaves**.
- **Climate:** Planted before the **ground freezes** (in Northern climate); planted **annually** (in warmer climates).
- **Soil:** Well-drained loam.



Article 311

Supreme Court, in **State of Jharkhand vs Rukma Kesh Mishra**, clarified that **Article 311(1)** does **not mandate** appointing authority's approval to **initiate disciplinary proceedings** against a state employee.

- Although, **Article 311(1)** requires the **appointing authority's approval** for dismissal.

About Article 311

- Deals with **dismissal, removal, or reduction in rank** of persons employed in **civil capacities** under the **Union or State**.
- **Article 311 (1):** Members of **Civil service cannot be dismissed or removed by any authority subordinate** to the appointing authority.
- **Article 311 (2):** Members of **Civil Service** can be dismissed, removed or reduced in rank after according him/her a **reasonable opportunity of being heard** post an **inquiry**.

Place in News



Greenland (Capital: Nuuk)

Denmark's Prime Minister has called for increased Arctic defence collaboration, firmly dismissing US desire to annex Greenland, a **semi-autonomous Danish territory**.

Political Features

- **Location:** In the North Atlantic Ocean, Greenland is the **world's largest island**.
- **Neighboring countries:** Its nearest neighbor is **Canada's Ellesmere Island**, which is located 16 miles to the north; **Iceland** is its nearest European neighbor.

Geographical Features

- **Two-thirds** of Greenland lies above the Arctic Circle.
- **Arctic climate sustains** the island's massive ice sheet, which covers about 80 percent of the island.
⊕ The Ice Sheet is the **second largest** in the world after the **Antarctic Ice Sheet**.
- **Significance:** Strategic location for Arctic geopolitics (US has a base), Future Trans-Arctic Shipping, large deposits of rare earth elements (REEs), oil and gas, fresh water source, fisheries etc.



AHMEDABAD



BENGALURU



BHOPAL



CHANDIGARH



DELHI



GUWAHATI



HYDERABAD



JAIPUR



JODHPUR



LUCKNOW



PRAYAGRAJ



PUNE



RANCHI