



NEXT IAS

DNA : DAILY NEWS ANALYSIS

PRELIMS TOPICS

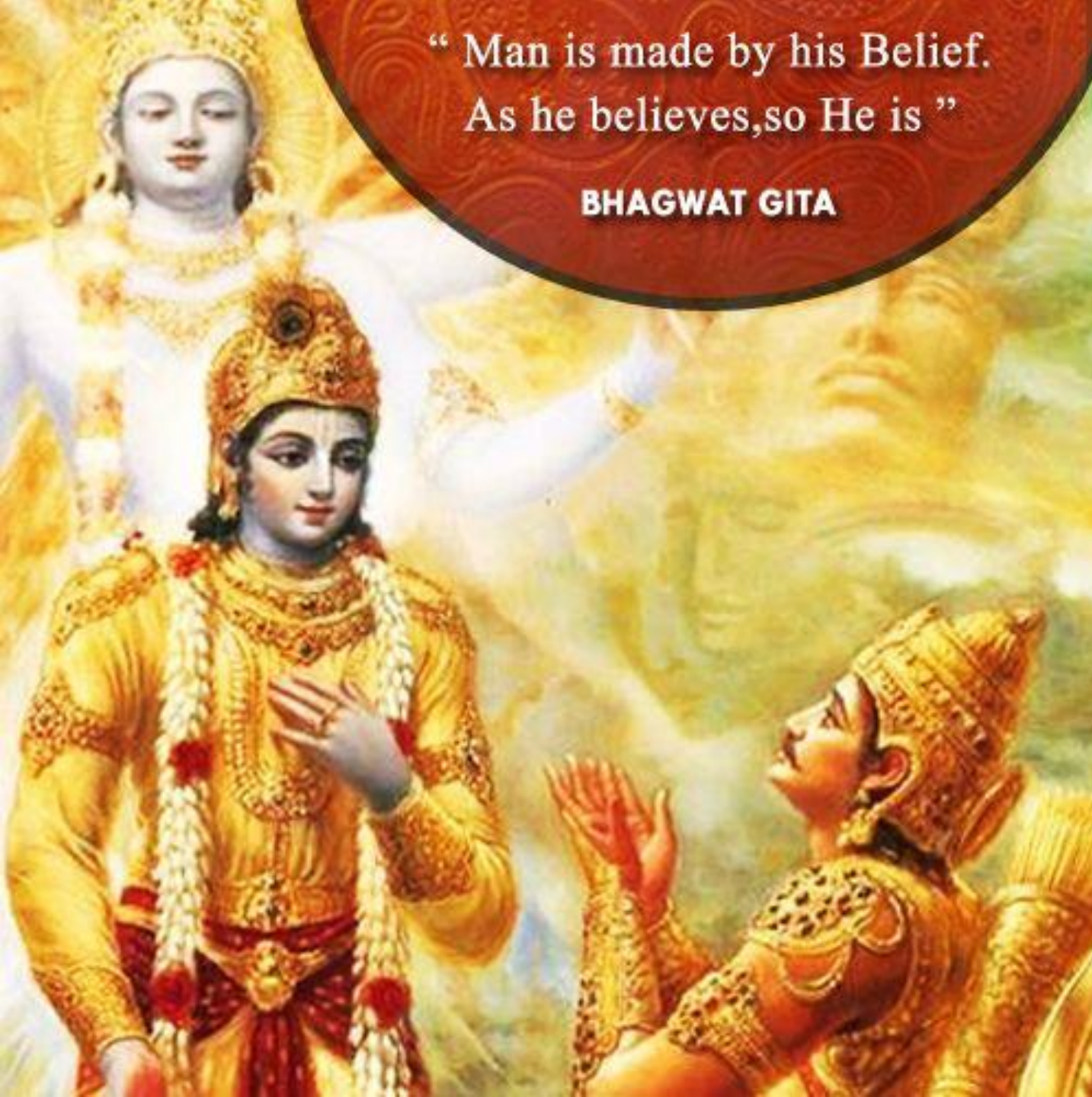
- **Govt. Spar Over Vande Mataram** – TH, Page 1, 5 & IE, Page 1
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“ Man is made by his Belief.
As he believes,so He is ”

BHAGWAT GITA

सत्त्वानुरूपा सर्वस्य श्रद्धा भवति भारत।
श्रद्धामयोऽयं पुरुषो यो यच्छ्रद्धः स एव सः ॥

--Bhagavad Gita – Chapter 17, Shloka 3



Syllabus Integration:

- GS 1:** Nationalism & Freedom Movement: Historical role of Vande Mataram, cultural nationalism, and debates over national symbols. Modern Indian History: Nehru-era decisions, constitutional debates on national song vs national anthem.
- GS 2:** Parliamentary Politics: Government–Opposition dynamics, political discourse, use of cultural symbols in legislative debates. Constitution & Governance: Constitutional status of Vande Mataram; principles of secularism and cultural pluralism.
- GS 3:** Socio-economic governance: Opposition's claim that cultural debates divert attention from unemployment, inflation, and welfare concerns (policy prioritisation).
- GS 4:** Ethics in Public Discourse: Responsible political communication, avoiding communal polarisation, respecting national symbols, and ethical leadership.
- Prelims:** Year of adoption of Vande Mataram (1905; partial adoption by Constituent Assembly in 1950), its author Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay, place of first public singing (Congress Session, 1896), Articles related to secularism.

Context: A political confrontation erupted in Parliament over Vande Mataram, with the Government accusing Nehru of diluting the song's legacy and the Opposition alleging diversionary tactics amid socio-economic issues.

Govt., Opposition spar over *Vande Mataram*

Nehru 'betrayed' song by echoing Muslim League leader Jinnah's communal concerns, says Modi | Priyanka accuses govt. of using 'strange' debate to divert attention from unemployment, rising prices | Since Nehru is on your mind, let's assign a time, debate the topic and close the chapter, she adds

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Centre and the Opposition on Monday sparred in the Lok Sabha over *Vande Mataram*, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi terming it the voice of the freedom movement that had been "fragmented" by the Congress in its "surrender before the Muslim League".

Initiating the debate to mark 150 years of the National Song, Mr. Modi claimed that India's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru "betrayed" the song by echoing Muslim League leader Muhammad Ali Jinnah's communal concerns.

Leading the charge for the Opposition, Priyanka Gandhi Vadra questioned the need to have a debate on the song and accused the government of using it to divert attention from real issues such as unemployment and rising prices.

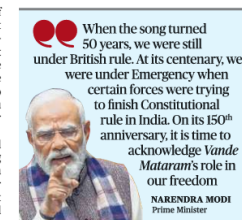
She said the debate was

being held in the view of Assembly elections in West Bengal next year and to level fresh allegations against those who fought for the country's freedom. She dared the ruling party to have a debate on Nehru and "close the chapter for once and all".

Earlier, Mr. Modi said that every Indian breathing the air of freedom owed a debt to *Vande Mataram* for fostering the fight against colonial rule, but targeted the Congress for truncating the song.

"When the song turned 50, we were still under British rule and at its centenary, we were under the Emergency when certain forces were trying to finish Constitutional rule in India. On its 150th anniversary, it is time to acknowledge *Vande Mataram*'s role in our freedom struggle. Every Indian breathing the air of freedom owes a debt to *Vande Mataram*," Mr. Modi said.

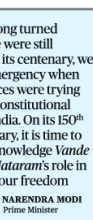
He said that the Congress had compromised on



Vande Mataram and surrendered before the Muslim League.

He said Nehru wrote to Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose that following Jinnah's reservations about *Vande Mataram* in 1937, he had examined the background of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's *Anand Math*, the novel in which the song appeared, and said that it could irritate Muslims.

"There was a betrayal of *Vande Mataram*, the National Song was sabotaged.



This fragmentation of the song by the Congress reflected the politics of appeasement and also led to its acceptance of the country's Partition," Mr. Modi said, referring to the current official version of the National Song as fragmentation.

"*Vande Mataram* was written at a time when British rulers were trying to impose 'God Save the Queen' on Indians," Mr. Modi said, and added the song went beyond being a



political mantra. "*Vande Mataram* is not just a mantra for political freedom; it was a sacred war cry to rid Bharatmata of the vestiges of colonialism," he said.

Hitting back, Ms. Vadra criticised Mr. Modi for targeting Nehru and put up a strong defence of the country's first Prime Minister. "Since you keep talking about Nehru, let us do one thing – let us assign a time for a discussion, list out all the insults against him... debate it and close the

chapter once and for all. After that, let us talk about today's issues – price rise and unemployment," she said. "The topic that we are discussing is part of the soul of the country. When we mention *Vande Mataram*, it reminds us of the history of our freedom struggle. This debate is strange; this song has found a place in people's hearts; so what is the need for a debate?" Ms. Vadra asked.

Chronology of the song
She claimed that Bankim Chandra had written only the first two stanzas in 1875 and four stanzas were added to the original composition seven years later.

Refuting Mr. Modi, the Congress MP from Wayanad listed the "chronology" of the song and cited correspondence between Nehru and Bose, in which Bose urged Nehru to discuss the matter with Rabin-

dranath Tagore. She said the composition was first sung by Ta-

gore in the 1896 session of the Congress and since then it had become the war cry for freedom fighters. However, controversy surrounded the song only in the 1930s with the rise in communal politics.

On October 28, 1937, she said the Congress Working Committee adopted the first two stanzas as the song in the presence of stalwarts like Mahatma Gandhi, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Nehru, Bose and Tagore. When the Constituent Assembly approved *Vande Mataram*, it was approved by everyone, including Chairman of the Drafting Committee of the Constitution Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and Jana Sangh founder Shyama Prasad Mookerjee.

"Questioning the form of *Vande Mataram*, which was accepted by the Constituent Assembly, is an insult to those great souls who took this decision with their great wisdom. It also reveals an anti-Constitution intention," she said.

A major political controversy erupted in the Indian Parliament over the **150th anniversary of "Vande Mataram"**, with the ruling party and the opposition trading accusations over its historical interpretation, political appropriation, and role in India's freedom struggle.

WTN
(WHAT'S THE
NEWS)

B2B

GOVT. SPAR OVER VANDE MATARAM

Aspect	Details
Author	Bankim Chandra Chatterjee (1870s)
Language	Sanskritised Bengali
Source	Originally part of his novel 'Anandamath' (1882)
Theme	Depicts Mother India as a goddess; embodies patriotism, spiritual devotion, and the fight against oppression
Adoption by Congress	First sung in 1896 at the INC session by Rabindranath Tagore
Partition Controversy	In the 1930s, objections arose over religious undertones; Muslim League and others viewed it as Hindu-centric
Official Status	On January 24, 1950, the first two stanzas were adopted as the National Song of India by the Constituent Assembly (not National Anthem)

CONSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL BASIS



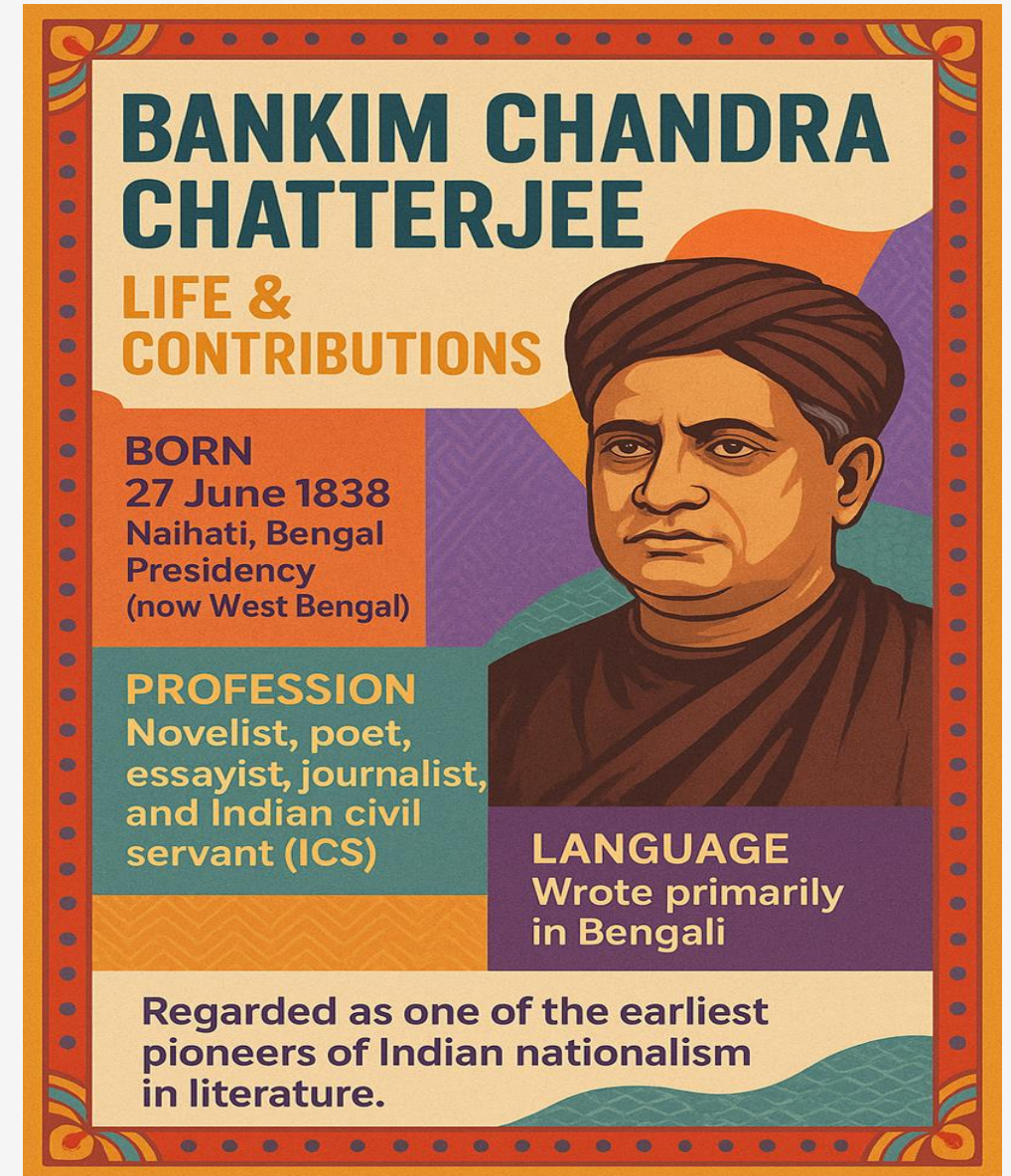
Not mentioned in the Constitution, but accorded official status by Constituent Assembly Resolution.



The National Anthem is *Jana Gana Mana*, while Vande Mataram is the National Song



In 2017, the Supreme Court ruled that singing Vande Mataram is not mandatory, upholding the individual's right to choose under *Article 19 (Freedom of Expression)*.



BANKIM CHANDRA CHATTERJEE
LIFE & CONTRIBUTIONS

BORN
27 June 1838
Naihati, Bengal Presidency
(now West Bengal)

PROFESSION
Novelist, poet, essayist, journalist, and Indian civil servant (ICS)

LANGUAGE
Wrote primarily in Bengali

Regarded as one of the earliest pioneers of Indian nationalism in literature.

The infographic features a portrait of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee on the right side. The background is a mix of orange, purple, and teal colors with a decorative border. The text is in bold, sans-serif fonts.

GOVT. SPAR OVER VANDE MATARAM

KEY CONTRIBUTIONS

Work	Description
Vande Mataram	Composed in 1870s; part of Anandamath (1982). Became a symbol of patriotism and India's national song.
Anandamath (1882)	Historical novel featuring the Sanyasi Rebellion; inspired freedom fighters. Introduced "Mother India" as a divine figure
Durgeshnandini (1865)	First Bengali historical romance novel; significant in Bengali literature
Kapalkundala (1866)	Romantic novel exploring identity, spirituality, and cultural values
Krishna Charitra	A critical biography of Lord Krishna based on literary and religious sources
Devi Chaudhurani	Features a female protagonist who turns into a revolutionary; promotes empowerment and patriotism

Vande Mataram vs Jana Gana Mana – Key Differences

Vande Mataram		Jana Gana Mana
Feature	National Song	National Anthem
Type	National Song (2 stanzas only)	1950 (only 2 stanzas only)
Author	Bankim Chandra Chatterjee	Rabindranath Tagore
Language	Sanskritised Bengali	Sanskritised Bengali
Controv- ersy	Religious imagery, “Mother goddess” figure	No major religious connotation No (recognized under Article 51A courts accept its status)

GOVT. SPAR OVER VANDE MATARAM

Symbol	Name	Author/Designer	Adopted on	Notes
National Anthem	Jana Gana Mana	Rabindranath Tagore	24 Jan 1950	Sung for the first time in 1911 (Calcutta Session of INC)
National Song	Vande Mataram	Bankim Chandra Chatterjee	24 Jan 1950 (first two stanzas)	Part of Anandamath; not in Constitution
National Flag	Tricolour (Tiranga)	Pingali Venkayya (design)	22 July 1947	Ashoka Chakra added in place of spinning wheel
National Emblem	Lion Capital of Ashoka	Mauryan era (Sarnath)	26 Jan 1950	Motto: Satyamev Jayate (from Mundaka Upanishad)
National Animal	Bengal Tiger	–	–	Symbol of strength and power
National Bird	Indian Peacock	–	–	Associated with grace and beauty
National Tree	Banyan Tree	–	–	Symbol of immortality
National Flower	Lotus	–	–	Symbol of purity and detachment
National Fruit	Mango	–	–	“King of fruits”; widely grown
National River	Ganga	–	Declared 2008	Considered sacred and life-giving

GOVT. SPAR OVER VANDE MATARAM

CASE	YEAR	KEY RULINGS
Bijoe Emmanuel vs, State of Kerala	1986	Jehovah's Witnesses students expelled for not singing National Anthem, 5C upheld their right under Article 19(1)(a) & 25 (freedom of conscience and religion). Ruled that respect does not mean mandatory singing
Union of India vs. Naveen Jindal	2004	Right to hoist the National Flag is a Fundamental Right under Article 19(1)(a) (Freedom of Expression).
Shyam Narayan Chouksey vs. Union of India (various petitions)	2017	SC ruled that singing or playing National Anthem is not mandatory in cinema halls. Respect is required, out compulsion violates freedom of choice.
Supreme Court on Vande Mataram (multiple petitions)	Various	SC reiterated that Vande Mataram is a National Song but not mandatory. No law compels its recitation

SUPREME COURT JUDGMENTS ON FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS AND NATIONAL SYMBOLS

KEY ARGUMENTS IN THE ONGOING DEBATE



GOVERNMENT'S POSITION

- Congress compromised national song to appease communal concerns.
- Vande Mataram's full version must be acknowledged and revived.
- Misinterpretation of cultural nationalism as communalism.



OPPOSITION'S VIEW

- BJP is appropriating national symbols and freedom icons.
- Vande Mataram united people during the freedom struggle — not to be monopolised.
- Debate is a diversion from real issues like price rise, joblessness.

HORNBILL FESTIVAL

Context: The first-ever International Hornbill Festival – Mon Edition was inaugurated in Nagaland's Mon district, highlighting Konyak tribal heritage and expanding the cultural footprint of the state's flagship Hornbill Festival.



Shekhawat inaugurates 3-day Hornbill fest in Nagaland

Union Minister of Culture and Tourism Gajendra Singh Shekhawat on Monday inaugurated the first-ever three-day International Hornbill Festival's Mon edition at the Konyak Heritage Complex in Nagaland's Mon town. The eighth day of the 26th Edition of the Hornbill Festival commenced with a vibrant 'Cultural Connect', which was also held at the Unity Plaza, Naga Heritage Village at Kisama in Kohima. Mr. Shekhawat virtually attended the event as the guest of honour. He said that the festival is not just an event but a living expression of the Nagas through their song, dance and music. PTI

Syllabus Integration:

- **GS 1:** Tribal culture of Northeast India; significance of festivals in preserving indigenous heritage.
- **GS 2:** Centre-State cooperation in cultural promotion; cultural diplomacy and community engagement.
- **GS 3:** Role of festivals in tourism, local economy, and sustainable development.
- **GS 4:** Ethical preservation of tribal identity; inclusivity and respect in cultural representation.
- **Prelims:** Hornbill Festival basics; Mon district; Konyak tribe; Naga Heritage Village (Kisama).

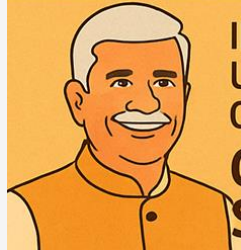
HORNBILL FESTIVAL

THE INTERNATIONAL HORNBILL FESTIVAL - MON EDITION

(FIRST-EVER) INAUGURATED IN
MON DISTRICT, NAGALAND



INAUGURATED BY
UNION MINISTER
OF CULTURE & TOURISM
**GAJENDRA SINGH
SHEKHAWAT**



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PART OF THE 26TH
EDITION OF THE
FESTIVAL



HELD AT KONYAK HERITAGE
COMPLEX, SHOWCASING
CULTURAL HERITAGE OF
THE KONYAK TRIBE

A PARALLEL CULTURAL
PROGRAMME CALLED
'CULTURAL CONNECT'
WAS HELD AT NAGA HERITAGE
VILLAGE, KISAMA



HORNBILL FESTIVAL



B2B

HORNBILL FESTIVAL

FEATURE

Started in
2000

Organised by
Government of Nagaland

Main Venue
Naga Heritage Village, Kisama

Festival dates
Usually 1-10 December

Purpose
To preserve & promote
Naga tribal culture

Known as
“Festival of Festivals”

Named after
Hornbill bird -
significant in Naga
folklore



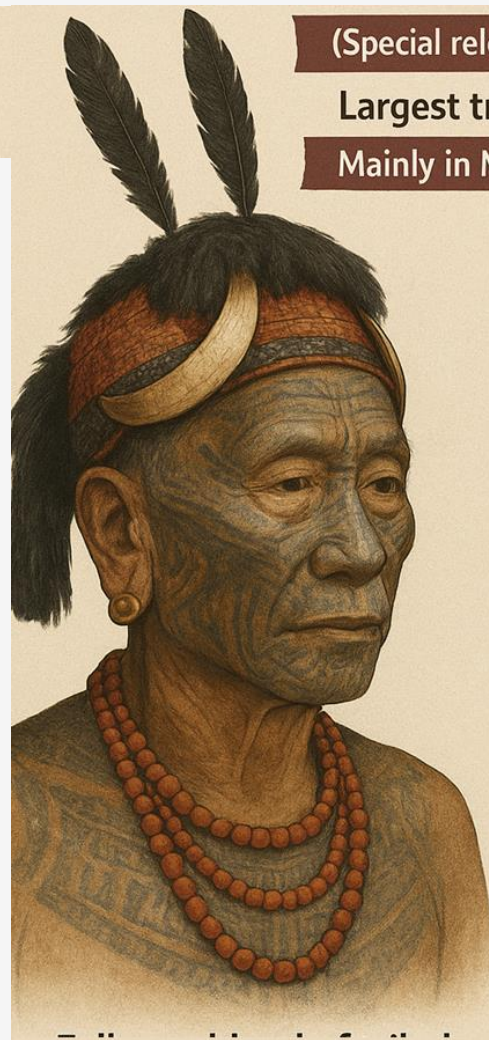
Tribes Associated

Nagaland has **17 major tribes**,
including:

Ao,
Angami,
Sema,
Lotha,
Rengma,
Konyak,
Chakhesang,
Zeliangrong, etc.

HORNBILL FESTIVAL

KONYAK TRIBE



(Special relevance due to Mon edition)

Largest tribe in Nagaland.

Mainly in Mon district (Eastern Nagal.).

Known for:



Headhunting
traditions
(historical)



- Wood carving,
gun-making



Follow a blend of
tribal religion,
animism &
Christianity

HORNBILL FESTIVAL

THE HORNBILL



Found in **tropical forests of Southeast Asia & Northeast India**

Culturally revered by many Naga tribes.

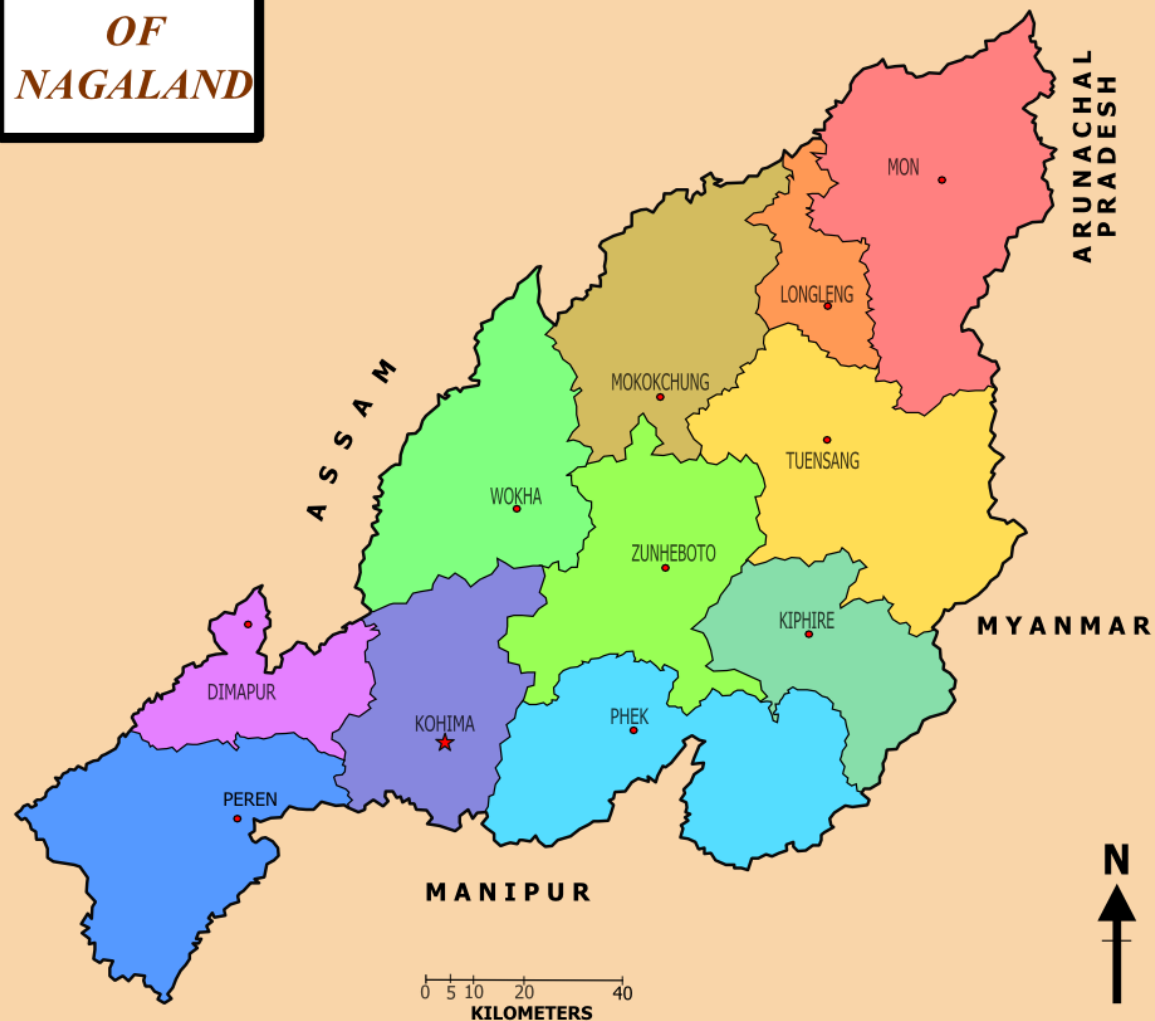
Species in India include:

- Great Hornbill (Kerala's state bird)
- Rufous-necked Hornbill (Northeast India)
- Indian Grey Hornbill

Protected under **Schedule I of Wildlife Protection Act** (for some species).

HORNBILL FESTIVAL

*STATE
OF
NAGALAND*



Mon District: Eastern Nagaland, home of the Konyak tribe.

HORNBILL FESTIVAL

Festival	State	Tribe/Community	Type of Festival	Key Features (UPSC Notes)
Hornbill Festival	Nagaland	17 Naga Tribes (esp. Angami, Ao, Konyak, Sema)	Cultural / Tribal	“Festival of Festivals”; promoted by Govt.; showcases Naga heritage; Great Hornbill symbol.
Wangala (100 Drums Festival)	Meghalaya	Garo Tribe	Harvest Festival	Thanksgiving to Sun God Misi Saljong; rhythmic drumming; traditional dances.
Nongkrem Dance Festival	Meghalaya	Khasi Tribe	Harvest & Ritual	Known as Pomblang Nongkrem; prayers for prosperity; goat sacrifice; traditional Khasi dances.
Chapchar Kut	Mizoram	Mizo Community	Spring / Agricultural	Celebrated after jhum clearing; famous Cheraw (bamboo) dance; one of biggest Mizo festivals.
Bihu (Rongali)	Assam	Assamese Community (Various tribes)	Harvest / Cultural	Most famous NE festival; Bihu dance, pepa instrument; marks Assamese New Year (Bohag).
Sangai Festival	Manipur	Meitei & other ethnic groups	Tourism & Cultural	Showcases Manipur culture; named after Sangai deer; martial arts Thang-Ta, handlooms, crafts.

DEEPTHOON ORDER AND IMPEACHMENT OF HC JUDGE

Context: INDIA bloc MPs plan to move an impeachment motion against a Madras High Court judge over the deepathoon order related to the Karthigai Deepam ritual, triggering political and legal tensions in Tamil Nadu.

Syllabus Integration:

- **GS 1:** Communal harmony, social tensions arising from religious events; societal implications of judicial directives on cultural practices.
- **GS 2:** Constitutional mechanisms for impeachment of judges (Articles 124(4) & 217); separation of powers; Centre-State political dynamics; role of Parliament in judicial accountability.
- **GS 3:** Internal security implications of religious disputes; law-and-order management during festivals and protests.
- **GS 4:** Ethical conduct in public office; judicial responsibility; balancing religious freedom, neutrality, and public order.
- **Prelims:** Procedure of impeachment of judges; Articles 124 & 217; Karthigai Deepam festival; Deepathoon (pillar) significance; powers of Single Judge vs Division Bench.

Deepathoon order: INDIA bloc MPs to move motion to impeach HC Judge

Oppn. needs signatures of 100 Lok Sabha members to initiate action; DMK, which is coordinating the petition, will file it in a day or two in the Lower House; no judge has been impeached in India

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI/CHENNAI

INDIA bloc MPs are planning to move an impeachment motion against Justice G.R. Swaminathan of the Madurai Bench of the Madras High Court in the context of his order directing the authorities of the Subramaniya Swamy Temple at Thiruparankundram to ensure that the Karthigai Deepam was lit at the *deepathoon* (pillar) near a dargah atop the hill.

"We are collecting the signatures of the INDIA bloc MPs, and will submit them to Parliament tomorrow," CP(M) MP from Madurai Su. Venkatesan claimed. One hundred members of the Lok Sabha or 50 members of the Rajya Sabha have to sign an impeachment motion against a High Court judge.

If the motion is accepted, a committee will investigate it. Thereafter, both Houses must pass the motion by a special majority (two-thirds present and



Police personnel detaining Hindu Munnani members during a protest over the Deepathoon issue in Tiruchi. FILE PHOTO

voting, plus absolute majority of total membership). Finally, the President will issue the removal order. However, no judge has been successfully impeached in India.

The DMK, which is coordinating the petition, will file it in a day or two in the Lok Sabha.

The row
The controversy erupted after Justice Swaminathan on December 1 took up a plea by Hindu Tamilar Katchi founder Rama Ravi-

kumar and allowed devotees to light the Karthigai Deepam at the *deepathoon*. When this wasn't allowed during the Karthigai Deepam festival on December 3, Mr. Ravikumar filed a contempt petition. The same day, the Single Judge Bench allowed Mr. Ravikumar and 10 others to light the lamp at the *deepathoon* and ordered that they be protected by the Central Industrial Security Force. But the police stopped the group at the foothills, citing the government's ap-

peal in the contempt case.

The stand-off escalated on last Friday after the Tamil Nadu government filed an appeal in the Supreme Court. A separate appeal was filed in the Madras High Court against the Single-Judge order. The Supreme Court has admitted the State's plea.

The Lok Sabha too witnessed a face-off between the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) over the issue on Friday.

DMK leader T.R. Baalu accused the BJP of trying to "ignite communal tensions" in Tamil Nadu, while Union Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs L. Murugan alleged that the State government was "denying devotees their right to worship".

Meanwhile, Tamil Nadu BJP president Nainar Nagenthran on Saturday said that as the management of the dargah had not raised any objections to lighting the lamp, there was no basis for claims that it could lead to communal tension.

DEEPATHOON ORDER AND IMPEACHMENT OF HC JUDGE

IMPEACHMENT MOTION: PLANNED AGAINST JUSTICE G.R. SWAMINATHAN

The issue arose from
a court directive
involving temple
administration



MPs are trying to collect
required signatures to
initiate the process
in Lok Sabha



No judge in
India has
ever been
removed
through
impeachment
so far



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DEEPATHOON ORDER AND IMPEACHMENT OF HC JUDGE



B2B

DEEPTHOON ORDER AND IMPEACHMENT OF HC JUDGE

CONSTITUTIONAL BASIS FOR IMPEACHMENT OF JUDGES



ARTICLES INVOLVED	
Article	Subject
Art. 124(4)	Procedure for removal of Supreme Court judges (also applies to High Court judges via Art. 217(1)(b))
Art. 217 ((b))	High Court judges can be removed like SC judges
Art. 121	No discussion in Parliament on conduct of a judge except during impeachment
Judges (Inquiry) Act, 1968	Provides detailed impeachment procedure

DEEPTHOON ORDER AND IMPEACHMENT OF HC JUDGE

GROUND FOR REMOVAL OF A JUDGE



A JUDGE OF THE SUPREME COURT OR HIGH COURT CAN BE REMOVED ONLY ON:

- PROVED MISBEHAVIOUR
- INCAPACITY

THESE ARE LEGAL TERMS,
NOT POLITICAL GROUNDS.

THERE IS NO OTHER
REASON ALLOWED UNDER
THE CONSTITUTION.

DEEPATHOON ORDER AND IMPEACHMENT OF HC JUDGE

IMPEACHMENT PROCEDURE Step-by-Step (Based on Judges Inquiry Act, 1968)

Motion Initiated by MPs

Lok Sabha: 100 MPs
Rajya Sabha: 50 MPs

Speaker/Chairman Admits or Rejects Motion

They may admit OR refuse the motion,

Constitution of Enquiry Committee

Consists of:

- A Supreme Court judge
- A Chief Justice of a High Court
- A distinguished jurist

Committee Investigation Collects evidence

President Orders Removal Only after both houses pass the motion.

Voting Requirement (VERY HIGH BAR)

Special majority in both Houses:
→ Majority of total membership
AND 2/3rd of members

If charges not proven
→ process stops

If charges proven
Motion taken up both
Houses.

DEEPATHOON ORDER AND IMPEACHMENT OF HC JUDGE

FACTS TO KNOW:

- No judge has been successfully impeached till date in India.
- Justice Soumitra Sen (HC) & Justice P.D. Dinakaran came close but resigned before final steps.
- Discussions on judges' conduct in Parliament are barred except in impeachment proceedings (Art. 121).
- Judges enjoy strong independence protections.

DEEPTHOON ORDER AND IMPEACHMENT OF HC JUDGE

ABOUT HIGH COURT JUDGES

Appointment

Appointed by the President

In consultation with:

- Chief Justice of India (CJI)
- Governor of the State
- Chief Justice of the High Court (for judges of same court)



Tenure

Hold office until age 62 (SC judges till 65)

Removal

Same as SC judges (Art. 217 + Art. 124(4))

Conditions of Service

Cannot practice in same court after retirement.
Salaries charged on Consolidated Fund of India
(No vote in Parliament)

DHRUVA FRAMEWORK

Context: India Post's proposed DHRUVA framework seeks to create a unified, digital, consent-based addressing system enabling precise, shareable "virtual addresses," improving service delivery, governance, and logistics efficiency.

What is the India Post's DHRUVA framework?

What will be the use cases of the Digital Hub for Reference and Unique Virtual Address (DHRUVA)?

Aroon Deep

The story so far:

The Department of Posts in May proposed a framework called Digital Hub for Reference and Unique Virtual Address, or DHRUVA, which would allow for the standardisation and sharing of physical addresses through "labels" that resemble email addresses. DHRUVA will also help with "effective governance, inclusive service delivery, and enhanced user experience," the postal department said. The government has put out a draft amendment to the Post Office Act, 2023 to enable DHRUVA. This follows the release of DIGIPIN, a 10-digit alphanumeric pin code based on location coordinates.

What is DHRUVA?

DHRUVA is being proposed as a Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) along the lines of Aadhaar and UPI. The service would

allow a range of players – from logistics players like India Post to e-commerce and gig platforms like Amazon and Uber – to receive a "label" instead of users having to fill out an address. The label would then be authorised by the end user, which would then allow the platform in question to receive both the "descriptive" address, and the "geo-coded" DIGIPIN.

DIGIPIN is an open-sourced location pin system, which India Post developed in-house. Every 12 square metre block in India has its own unique DIGIPIN. India Post hopes that, at least within the postal network, it can be useful in rural areas where precise descriptive addresses may not always be available (or possible), and would help mail delivery personnel with a precise location as a fallback, in addition to the PIN code.

DHRUVA's ecosystem envisions entities like Address Service Providers who would generate a proxy address or label (like amit@dhruva); Address Validation

Agencies who would be able to authenticate addresses; Address Information Agents who would act as intermediaries where users would be able to manage consent for providing their addresses; and a governance entity, along the lines of the National Payments Corporation of India, that would oversee the whole framework.

How will DHRUVA be used?

India Post said that a key use case would be consent-based data sharing, where people tokenising their addresses (like UPI addresses tokenise bank accounts) can "regulate when their address information can be accessed, and the duration for which it can be accessed through a consent framework." Another useful feature will be updating addresses, allowing users to shift routine deliveries seamlessly when they move houses.

DHRUVA would thus allow users to share their addresses with digital

platforms, public and private. The Department said that this would also help users with "service discovery," by allowing intermediaries to show what doorstep services are available at their location. Since the architecture of such a framework would require data collection, Dvara Research, a non-profit policy research group focusing on issues like financial inclusion, said that a draft law would be needed to authorise it.

Will it help urban governance?

Beni Chugh, who leads Dvara's Future of Finance Initiative, argued that it was unclear if the system would be helpful in enabling urban governance, as the addresses it envisioned were linked to people, and not independently surveyed structures. "The current design relies on collecting personal information along the addresses, which, makes it necessary to have a consent-based mechanism for address sharing," Ms. Chugh pointed out.

"However, if citizens consented not to share addresses or generate address codes, it could result in incomplete datasets of built infrastructure or population. This could reduce the effectiveness of this DPI for urban planning and governance mechanisms. In most parts of the world, digitisation of addresses does not include personal information which preempts the need for users' consent and allows for richer datasets."

THE GIST

▼
DHRUVA will help with "effective governance, inclusive service delivery, and enhanced user experience," the postal department said.

▼
The service would allow a range of players – from logistics players like India Post to e-commerce and gig platforms like Amazon and Uber – to receive a "label" instead of users having to fill out an address.

▼
DHRUVA would allow users to share their addresses with digital platforms, public and private.

Syllabus Integration:

- **GS 1:** Urbanisation and settlement patterns; challenges of unplanned address systems in cities and rural areas.
- **GS 2:** Digital governance, public service delivery reforms, data protection and consent frameworks; role of state in building public digital infrastructure (like Aadhaar, UPI analogues).
- **GS 3:** Logistics efficiency, e-commerce enablement, digital economy; DPI expansion; technological solutions for last-mile delivery, inclusion, and rural connectivity.
- **GS 4:** Ethical data use, informed consent, privacy, transparency, and accountability in state-run digital platforms.
- **Prelims:** DHRUVA features; DIGIPIN (10-digit alphanumeric pin); Address Label Agents; Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) examples; Post Office Act, 2023 draft amendments.

INDIA POST

A NEW FRAMEWORK: DHRUVA

(DIGITAL HUB FOR REFERENCE
AND UNIQUE VIRTUAL ADDRESS)

PURPOSE:

Standardisation and sharing of
physical addresses using a digital “label.”

- This would help with e-governance, service delivery, logistics, and financial inclusion.
- A draft amendment to the Post Office Act, 2023 has been issued to enable DHRUVA.



**WTN
(WHAT'S THE
NEWS)**

B2B

DHRUVA

A Digital Public Infrastructure
(DPI) for Addresses

It aims to create:

- Unique Virtual Address (UVA)
- Digital reference codes for any physical address
- Interoperable platform for address verification and sharing



Key Idea:

Citizens or service providers (like e-commerce, logistics, fintech companies) will generate a digital address label (like a QR code) for any location

DHRUVA FRAMEWORK

India lacks standardised addresses → hampers deliveries, services, banking, telecom KYC

Many addresses are descriptive and non-standard

WHY DHRUVA?



DHRUVA

- ✓ Standardised digital address format
- ✓ Precise geo-code + PIN code mapping
- ✓ Easier authentication
- ✓ Efficient logistics & emergency response

DIGIPIN

- New 10-digit alphanumeric PIN code.
- More accurate than current 6-digit PIN.
- Includes **geographical precision** based on location coordinates.
- India Post already developed a similar system –plus code like Google's.

DHRUVA FRAMEWORK

KEY FEATURES OF DHRUVA

1 ADDRESS GENERATION

Users get a "label" (digital address) authorised by them and used to fill any address field.



2 GEO-CODED PRECISION

Each address linked to:



geo-coordinates

123456

new DIGIPIN

3 DIGITAL ADDRESS VALIDATION

Agencies can authenticate addresses digitally.



4 DATA INTEROPERABILITY

Enables address sharing across:



government platforms

logistics

private platforms

e-commerce

fintech

5 SERVICE DISCOVERY

Intermediaries can show which services are available at an address.



POTENTIAL USE CASES



Doorstep delivery
(e-commerce, logistics)



Public service delivery



Emergency response



KYC and bank accounts



Urban governance



Smart city management



Taxation, property
records



Postal services
efficiency

Governance & Policy Linkages – DHRUVA



DHRUVA aims to create a unified address infrastructure similar to how UPI unified payments.

STATUTORY POLICY BASIS

- Draft **amendment to the Post Office Act, 2023.**
- **India Post** is under Ministry of Communications.
- Support from **Dvara Research** for inclusion and data governance.

CRYPTO TRANSACTIONS

Context: Crypto transactions in India surged to ₹51,180 crore in 2024–25, with the government collecting ₹511.8 crore as TDS, reflecting rising digital-asset activity despite regulatory tightening.

Syllabus Integration:

- **GS 1:** Impact of technological and financial transformations on society and behavioural shifts in investment patterns.
- **GS 2:** Regulation of digital assets; state capacity in financial oversight; Parliament's role in shaping taxation and digital-economy laws.
- **GS 3:** Indian Economy: Digital financial markets, taxation of Virtual Digital Assets (VDA), implications of 1% TDS on trading volumes, financial stability concerns. Cybersecurity & Technology: Risks of unregulated crypto, need for robust compliance and tracking mechanisms.
- **GS 4:** Ethical investment practices, transparency, preventing misuse of crypto for illicit finance; state responsibility in safeguarding citizens from high-risk financial products.
- **Prelims:** Definition of VDA under Income Tax Act; 1% TDS rule (Finance Act 2022 → retained in IT Act 2025); trends in crypto taxation; TDS vs TCS basics.

‘Crypto transactions crossed ₹51,000 cr. in 2024-25 in India’

T.C.A. Sharad Raghavan
NEW DELHI

The value of cryptocurrency transactions in India crossed ₹51,000 crore in 2024-25, up 41% over the previous year, an analysis of data shared with Parliament showed.

The data, shared by the Ministry of Finance in reply to a question in the Rajya Sabha, showed that the government collected ₹511.8 crore as Tax Deducted at Source (TDS) on crypto transactions in 2024-25. As the rate of TCS is 1% on every transaction, this means the value of total transactions that year stood at ₹51,180 crore.

Under the Finance Act

The government had collected ₹511.8 crore as TDS on crypto transactions in 2024-25, data showed

2022, the government had introduced a provision in the Income Tax Act 1961, which has been retained in the I-T Act 2025, mandating a 1% TDS on any transfer of Virtual Digital Assets (VDAs) or cryptocurrencies. The government had collected TCS worth ₹221.3 crore in 2022-23 and ₹362.7 crore in 2023-24, implying transactions worth ₹22,130 crore and ₹36,270 crore were conducted in those two years, respectively.

CRYPTO TRANSACTIONS

KEY DATA POINTS



Value of crypto transactions in FY 2024-25
= ₹51,000 crore



Growth = 41% higher than previous year



Government collected ₹511.8 crore as TDS from crypto transactions



Earlier TDS collections:
₹221.3 crore in 2022-23
₹362.7 crore in 2023-24



Implies rising adoption of Virtual Digital Assets (VDAs) despite high taxation

**WTN
(WHAT'S THE
NEWS)**

CRYPTO TRANSACTIONS



B2B

CRYPTO TRANSACTIONS

EVOLUTION OF CRYPTO REGULATION IN INDIA



A. Phase 1 Unregulated Growth (2009-2017)

- Bitcoin emerges globally
- Indian crypto market grows without regulatory oversight.
- RBI issues repeated caution regarding risks.

B. Phase 2 Banking Restrictions (2018)

- RBI issues circular prohibiting banks from dealing with crypto entities.
- Effectively shut down Indian exchanges.

C. Phase 3 Supreme Court Intervention (2020)

In Internet and Mobile Association of India vs RBI, (2020). SC struck down RBI's ban, calling it disproportionate, Crypto trading resumes

D. Taxation-Based Regulation (2022 onward)

Budget 2022 introduced:

- 30% tax on VDA gains (Section 115BBH)
- 1% TDS on transactions (Section 1945)
- VDA definition inserted in the Income Tax Act

E. Current Status

Crypto is legal to hold and trade,

- NOT legal tender
- Strict reporting norms.

CRYPTO TRANSACTIONS

Virtual Digital Assets (VDA)

As per Income Tax Act:

- Any digital asset with value stored/transferred electronically

Includes:

- ✓ Cryptocurrencies (Bitcoin, Ethereum)
- ✓ NFTs
- ✓ Any govt-notified digital asset

Cryptocurrency

A digital asset using blockchain technology, cryptography-based security, and decentralised validation.

Blockchain

- Distributed ledger
- Immutable
- Decentralised, transparent
- Used in crypto, smart contracts, DPs, land records

Digital Tender VS Asset

- Legal tender - money accepted for transactions (₹ in India)
- Crypto - NOT legal tender
- But it is treated as an asset for taxation.

CRYPTO TRANSACTIONS

TAXATION OF CRYPTO IN INDIA



30% TAX ON CRYPTO GAINS (SECTION 115BBH)

Flat 30% tax on income from sale/transfer of VDA

- No deductions allowed
- No set-off of VDA losses against any other income
- No carry forward of losses



1% TDS ON CRYPTO TRANSFER (SECTION 194S)

Deducted on transaction value (not just gains)

- ₹50,000 (for individuals/HUF)
- ₹10,000 in some cases

Ensures traceability of crypto trades



GIFT TAX ON CRYPTO

VDA received as gift is taxable under 'Income from Other Sources.'

CRYPTO TRANSACTIONS

WHY DID THE GOVERNMENT IMPOSE 1% TDS?

OBJECTIVES



Monitor money flows in crypto markets



Check tax evasion



Ensure audit trail



Bring crypto transactions into formal accounting



Curb excessive speculative day trading



TDS is a tracking tool, more than a revenue tool

CRYPTO TRANSACTIONS

ECONOMIC SIGNIFICANCE OF THE DATA

1 Rising adoption

Transaction value
from ₹22,130 crore →
₹51,000 crore
>Increasing
participation



2 Tax revenues gaining

Shows formalisation
and greater
reporting
compliance



3 Crypto as an alternative asset class

Young investors
increasingly
investing in
VDAs



4 Impact on Forex & capital flows

Crypto can act as a
route for unregulated
capital movement —
a key govt concern

5 Need for regulatory framework

Growth indicates urgency for
formal regulation (pending
Digital India Act)



CRYPTO TRANSACTIONS

RISKS ASSOCIATED WITH CRYPTO (UPSC MAINS-READY)



Economic Risks

- Volatility
- Speculation
- Capital flight
- Impact on monetary policy



Legal & Regulatory Risks

- No consumer protection
- Black money risks
- Tax evasion



Technological Risks

- Hacking of exchanges
- Cyber fraud
- Loss of private keys



Social Risks

- Scams (Ponzi schemes)
- “Pump and dump” frauds

GOVERNMENT STAND



Crypto is not banned.



Crypto is not legal tender (unlike rupee).



Crypto is taxed heavily to discourage speculative trading.

Government awaiting global consensus through:



G20 discussions



IMF–World Bank–FSB framework

Draft Digital India Act may include crypto regulations.

STUBBLE BURNING

Context: Despite fewer reported stubble-burning incidents in Haryana, satellite data shows a sharp rise in burnt area, revealing major gaps in monitoring and significant implications for Delhi's air pollution assessments.

Drop in Haryana farm fire count but increase recorded in burnt area

Sophiya Mathew
New Delhi, December 8

EVEN AS government data suggests a sharp drop in stubble burning in Haryana — from 1,406 incidents last year to 662 this year — data derived from satellite shows that the burnt area in the state has actually risen from 7,117 sq km in 2024 to 8,812 sq km in 2025, a new report has revealed. In Punjab, the area burnt has not reduced too significantly from 23,262 sq km to 19,757 sq km even as a huge decline was reported in the cases of farm fires — from 10,909 last year to 5,114 this year.

The International Forum for Environment, Sustainability and Technology (iFOREST), which released a report on Monday, has said this mismatch persists because more than 90% of large fires in 2024 and 2025 occurred after 3 pm, outside satellite overpass times. This aligns with the findings of an ISRO study reported by *The Indian Express* on December 5, observing that India's monitoring system is missing most fires and underestimating pollution contributions to Delhi.

The iFOREST, an independent nonprofit, said the current satellite-based monitoring system is structurally incapable of capturing most late-afternoon fires. MODIS and VIIRS instruments mounted on NASA satellites — on which the government's monitoring system relies on — pass over North India only between 10:30 am and 1:30 pm.

With fires now increasingly lit after 3 pm, the system is detecting only a fraction of actual

burning. In Punjab alone, over 90% of large fires in both 2024 and 2025 occurred after 3 pm, compared to just 3% in 2021. In Haryana, most large fires have been happening after 3 pm since 2019, meaning undercounting has been persisting for several years. This late-afternoon shift, the authors said, explains why burnt-area mapping shows far higher levels of burning than active fire counts.

The findings have major implications for Delhi's pollution forecasting. The Decision Support System (DSS), run by the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM), uses the same fire-count data to estimate how much stubble burning contributes to Delhi's PM2.5 levels. With active fire counts missing most late-afternoon fires, this year's stubble-burning contribution to Delhi's air found at around 22% may have been severely underestimated.

"These monitoring gaps have far-reaching implications," the authors said. "Fires missed by polar-satellite sensors lead to underestimated emissions, mischaracterised aerosol and particulate-matter loads, and incorrect simulations of air-quality dynamics across India."

Top government sources told *The Indian Express* that they are aware of the limitations, which is why a ground-truthing exercise was carried out on an experimental basis during the 2025 Kharif season.

The reductions reflected by burnt-area mapping roughly 25-35% are far smaller than those suggested by fire-count data, which show declines of over 90-95% in both states.

Syllabus Integration:

- **GS 1:** Human–environment interaction; agricultural practices and environmental degradation.
- **GS 2:** Centre–State coordination in pollution control; governance challenges in implementing environmental regulations; accountability of monitoring institutions.
- **GS 3:** Environment & Ecology: Air pollution sources, limitations of satellite monitoring, PM2.5 contributors, stubble-burning trends. Agriculture: Crop-residue management, sustainability issues in rice–wheat systems, policy incentives for alternative technologies.
- **GS 4:** Environmental ethics, intergenerational equity, responsibility of institutions to provide accurate data for public health protection.
- **Prelims:** Stubble burning patterns; satellite overpass limitations; PM2.5 & pollution modelling basics; IForE and IMD/ITM roles.

Despite fewer reported stubble-burning incidents in Haryana, satellite data shows a **sharp rise in burnt area**, revealing major gaps in monitoring and significant implications for Delhi's air pollution assessments.

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STUBBLE BURNING

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STUBBLE BURNING

HARYANA

Fire count dropped 52%

Burnt area increased 24%



Most fires happened after 3 PM, when polar-orbiting satellites (MODIS/VIIRS) do not pass overhead

Indicates under-detection of real-time farm fires

PUNJAB

Farm fire count fell by half

Burnt area reduced only marginally



Over 90% of large fires occurred after 3 PM (2024–25), compared to just 3% in 2021

KEY INSIGHT Fire-count data underestimates actual burning, while burnt-area mapping shows the real extent.

STUBBLE BURNING



MSP-Driven Paddy-Wheat System

80%+ procurement done by Govt in these states in these states

Farmers locked into paddy → wheat cycle due to assured government purchase



Very Short Sowing Window

After paddy harvesting: Only 20–25 days before wheat sowing

Burning is the fastest field clearing method

WHY PUNJAB-HARYANA Face Severe Stubble Burning?

Reports: Economic Survey, ICAR, PRS Reports



Labour Shortage & High Machinery Cost

Even with subsidies: Happy Seeder Super Straw Management System are expensive for small farmers



High Silica in Paddy Straw

Makes it unsuitable for cattle fodder
Limits market options



Water Use Policies

Punjab enacted Progressive Water Act, 2009 → delayed paddy sowing → further compressed harvesting window → increased pressure to burn

Punjab Preservation of Subsoil Water Act (2009)

- Forced farmers to sow paddy late (June) to save groundwater
- Result: harvesting also delayed, leaving only 20-25 days before wheat sowing - Burning becomes the fastest method.

SATELLITE MONITORING LIMITATIONS

What satellites
detect farm fires?



NASA MODIS
(Terra/Aqua)



NASA VIIRS
(Suomi NPP & NOAA-20)



ISRO's
INSAT-3D/3DR



Sentinel-3 SLSTR
(ESA)



Why do fire counts drop despite actual burning?

Because:

MODIS & VIIRS are polar orbiters
→ fixed overpass times (morning + afternoon)

MOST fires occur after 3 PM as per new studies

**Hence, satellites miss active fires
but burn scars remain visible later**

- ✓ **Fire Counts = number of thermal anomalies detected**
- ✓ **Burnt Area = mapping of charred land surface using reflectance changes**

STUBBLE BURNING

RELATION OF STUBBLE BURNING TO DELHI AIR POLLUTION

(From IITM, EPIC-India, CPCB Studies)

CONTRIBUTION OF STUBBLE BURNING TO DELHI'S PM_{2.5}



PEAK CONTRIBUTION:
25-45%
DURING LATE
OCTOBER - EARLY
NOVEMBER

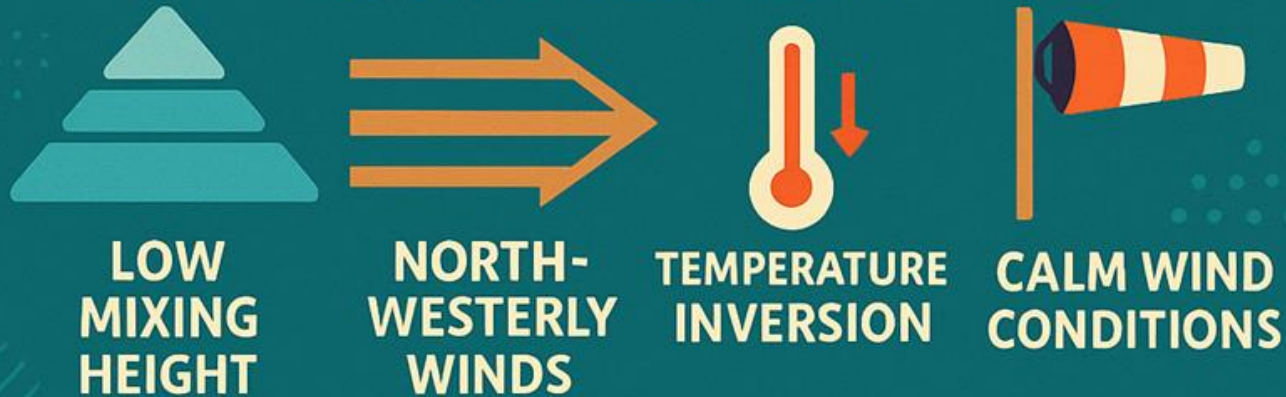
ANNUAL CONTRIBUTION:
~4-7%

STUBBLE BURNING

RELATION OF STUBBLE BURNING TO DELHI AIR POLLUTION

(From IITM, EPIC-India, CPCB Studies)

WEATHER FACTORS WORSENING DELHI POLLUTION



**DELHI BECOMES A
'POLLUTION BOWL' DURING WINTER**

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT IPCC + MoEFCC Data

PM_{2.5}

MAJOR POLLUTANTS RELEASED

- PM_{2.5} (highly dangerous)
- Black Carbon (accelerates Himalayan melt)
- NO_x, SO_x, CO, CH₄

SOIL IMPACTS

- Loss of nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium
Reduces soil fertility → Kills earthworms
and soil microflora
- Increases soil hardness (known as "soil sterility patches")



CLIMATE IMPACTS

- Adds to regional warming
- Impacts Western Disturbance interactions
- Black carbon deposition on Himalayas

STUBBLE BURNING

1. Central Sector Scheme for Crop Residue Management (2018–present)

Subsidy for:

- Happy Seeder
- Super SMS
- Mulchers
- Baling machines

Targets:

- Punjab, Haryana, UP, Delhi

2. PUSA Decomposer (ICAR-IARI)

- Microbial decomposer
 - Convert straw → compost in revived
- Promote extensively in Delhi a NCR

GOVERNMENT MEASURES

3. Penalties under Air Act & NGT Orders

- Burning is punishable
- Fines vary by land size
- Enforcement is weak

4. Ex-situ Solutions

- Biomass power plants
- Bio-CNG under SATAT scheme
- Fines vary by land size
- But enforcement risk weak

EU FINE ON X

Context: The EU has fined X (formerly Twitter) \$140 million for violating the Digital Services Act (DSA), triggering political backlash in the U.S. and raising global concerns about platform transparency, online safety, and regulatory authority.

• DECEPTIVE PRACTICES

Why EU's \$140 million fine on X has ignited a political storm

Soumyarendra Barik
New Delhi, December 8

THE EUROPEAN Union (EU) has fined Elon Musk's X (formerly Twitter) \$140 million for violating one of the bloc's key social media laws, in a case which was being seen as a key test of European officials' ability to take on American tech companies, even though it could irk the Trump administration.

The EU said that it issued the fine to X for breaching its transparency obligations under the Digital Services Act (DSA), the bloc's main social media and e-commerce law. The breaches include the de-

ceptive design of its 'blue checkmark', the lack of transparency of its advertising repository, and the failure to provide access to public data for researchers. This is the first non-compliance decision under the DSA.

The fine has drawn a political storm in the United States. Ahead of the decision, US Vice President JD Vance said on X: "Rumors swirling that the EU commission will fine X hundreds of millions of dollars for not engaging in censorship. The EU should be supporting free speech, not attacking American companies over garbage."

Musk has called for the

The EU said that it issued the fine to X for breaching its transparency obligations under the Digital Services Act (DSA), the bloc's main social media and e-commerce law

European Union to be "abolished".

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said the fine was an "attack on all American tech platforms and the American people by foreign governments". Brendan Carr, the US Federal Communications Commission Chairman said that X was fined merely for being a successful US tech company.

What X's violations were

The EU said that X's use of the blue checkmark for verified accounts "deceives" users since anyone can pay to obtain the 'verified' status without the company meaningfully verifying who is behind the account, making it difficult for users to judge the authenticity

of accounts and content they engage with. This, it said, violates the obligation under the DSA to prohibit deceptive design practices on their services.

"This deception exposes users to scams, including impersonation frauds, as well as other forms of manipulation by malicious actors. While the DSA does not mandate user verification, it clearly prohibits online platforms from falsely claiming that users have been verified, when no such verification took place," the EU said.

The bloc said that X's advertisement repository fails to meet the transparency and ac-

cessibility requirements of the DSA. It added that the platform failed to meet its obligations to provide researchers with access to the platform's public data.

For instance, X's terms of service prohibit eligible researchers from independently accessing its public data, including through scraping, it said.

"Moreover, X's processes for researchers' access to public data impose unnecessary barriers, effectively undermining research into several systemic risks in the European Union," it added.

FULL REPORT ON
WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM

Syllabus Integration:

- **GS 1:** Impact of digital platforms on society, misinformation, and user vulnerability to deceptive online practices.
- **GS 2:** Governance & Regulation: Global internet governance, cross-border digital regulation, EU's Digital Services Act, state responsibility to protect users, and tensions between regulation and free speech. International Relations: Transatlantic tech-policy frictions; implications for India's own platform-regulation debates.
- **GS 3:** Cybersecurity & Digital Economy: Transparency norms, algorithmic accountability, content moderation, risks of impersonation fraud, and digital consumer protection. Tech Policy: Regulatory compliance costs for global firms; importance of verifiable identity systems.
- **GS 4:** Ethical responsibilities of digital platforms—fair advertising, preventing deception, safeguarding user trust, and ensuring equitable access to public data for researchers.
- **Prelims:** Digital Services Act (DSA) basics, "blue checkmark" controversy, platform transparency obligations, impersonation fraud, scraping restrictions.

The EU Commission fined X for:

- Lack of advertising transparency
- Misuse of blue checkmarks (“verified” accounts)
- Failure to provide access to public data for researchers

The penalty is the first under the DSA, which came into effect for Very Large Online Platforms (VLOPs) in 2023

X allegedly allowed users to buy verification, misleading the public about authenticity

Researcher access to data was denied, violating the DSA’s transparency mandate

The case highlights growing global scrutiny over tech platforms and disinformation

**WTN
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NEWS)**

EU FINE ON X

B2B

Background: EU Digital Services Act (DSA)

Feature	Description
Name	Digital Services Act (DSA)
Objective	October 2022, came into force in 2023
Scope	Create a safer digital space by increasing accountability of digital platforms

EU FINE ON X

GLOBAL CONTEXT & IMPLICATIONS



TRANSATLANTIC TENSIONS

US lawmakers claim the EU fine attacks American companies' free speech rights.

TECH REGULATION TREND

Similar moves in other jurisdictions:

- India's IT Rules 2021 mandate traceability, content takedown, and grievance redressal
- Australia's News Media Bargaining Code compels platforms to pay news publishers



DATA TRANSPARENCY FOR RESEARCHERS

Blocking access to data hinders research on misinformation, hate speech, and manipulation



CONTENT MODERATION VS FREE SPEECH

Raises debate on platform accountability vs censorship

WHY THIS MATTERS FOR INDIA

India is preparing its own Digital India Act, aiming to replace the outdated IT Act, 2000, incorporating DSA-like provisions such as:



Platform accountability

Safe harbour conditions



Clear rules on content moderation



Growing global consensus that tech giants must be regulated to:



Protect users' rights

Curb disinformation



Ensure data transparency and ethical AI use



THAILAND – CAMBODIA DISPUTE

Context: Thai airstrikes on Cambodia have revived a long-running border conflict rooted in colonial-era boundary demarcations, ethnic tensions, and competing historical claims—especially over the Preah Vihear temple.

• HISTORY

As Thailand strikes Cambodia, recalling the conflict's colonial roots

Anagha Jayakumar
New Delhi, December 8

THAILAND'S ARMY Monday launched airstrikes on "military targets in several areas" of Cambodia, retaliating to the alleged killing of at least two soldiers in Cambodian attacks along their disputed border.

Cambodia, which has denied opening fire, has not retaliated and claims the Thai army attacked of its own volition. The latest attack has reignited the deadly conflict along the border in July in which at least 48 people were killed and thousands from on both sides were temporarily displaced. The conflict, however, originates far earlier.

The contested border

Both countries have disputed their land border ever since it was drawn in 1907 by France, then the colonial administrator in Cambodia. Despite shared ethnic and cultural ties, nationalism drove partly this

wedge. The predominantly Theravada Buddhist neighbours claim the mantle of being the "original" owners of their heritage, fueling the animosity.

According to scholars, these claims of cultural ownership are based on contesting readings of history, which the governing elites on both sides have often propped up. Thus, every border skirmish has the potential to devolve into a much larger conflict, a situation that has held since Cambodia's independence from France in 1953.

At the centre of the border dispute is the Preah Vihear temple, known in Thai as Phra Viharn. "The temple has meaning — both as a cultural symbol and a religious place of worship — to people on both sides of the border," John D Ciorciari, a professor of international politics at Indiana University, wrote in "Thailand and Cambodia: The Battle for Preah Vihear" (2009).

The temple was built in the 11th and 12th centuries during the golden age of the

Contested border

• Both countries have disputed their land border since it was drawn in 1907 by France.

• This has led to frequent skirmishes at the border, most recently in July before Monday's strikes.

• One of the flash-points in the tensions is the Preah Vihear temple, known in Thai as Phra Viharn.

Khmer Empire, which then governed much of South Asia, including Siam. As the empire declined, Siam made inroads into Cambodian territory. In 1867, Cambodia officially handed the area around Preah Vihear to Siam. France, however, colonised Laos and Cambodia around this time, sending the Siamese kingdom from a position of relative strength in its neighbourhood to weakness.

In 1904, Siam and France signed a border treaty that placed Cambodia's northern frontier along the watershed line of the Dangrek Mountains. By this principle, most of the Preah Vihear complex should have been located in Siam. However, the official map, drawn by the French in 1907, placed the temple in Cambodia. Siam offered weak resistance to this move at the time, but in 1941, its alliance with Japan empowered it to seize control of Preah Vihear. It returned control to France after World War II.

After independence

Both Thailand and Cambodia have disputed the temple's ownership since the latter's independence from France. Thai troops occupied Preah Vihear in 1954, prompting Cambodia to take the matter to the International Court of Justice (ICJ). In 1962, it upheld its claim over Preah Vihear.

In 2008, tensions arose after Cambodia sought to list the Preah Vihear temple as a UNESCO World Heritage site. The Thai opposition used the issue to attack the government, accusing it of "forfeiting Thai sovereignty," Ciorciari wrote. Cambodian leaders also used this to rally nationalist sentiment.

Over the next several years, Cambodian and Thai troops frequently skirmished at the border. In 2013, the ICJ reaffirmed Cambodia's position vis-à-vis Preah Vihear, creating a demilitarised zone around the temple, although this was never implemented. Thailand has since rejected the ICJ's jurisdiction.

Syllabus Integration:

- **GS 1:** Colonial legacy and post-colonial borders in Southeast Asia; cultural heritage disputes (e.g., Preah Vihear temple); ethnicity and nationalism shaping geopolitical conflicts.
- **GS 2:** International relations & diplomacy: ASEAN regional security, role of the International Court of Justice (ICJ), treaty obligations, cross-border conflict resolution. Neighbourhood & regional groupings: Implications of Thailand–Cambodia tensions on regional stability, trade, and multilateral norms.
- **GS 3:** Security & Disaster Management: Border skirmishes, displacement of civilians, humanitarian fallout; militarisation of disputed regions. Geo-political economy: Historical control over borderlands, strategic value of watershed regions and heritage sites.
- **GS 4:** Ethics of cultural ownership, sovereignty, and historical justice; responsible use of military power and prioritisation of peaceful dispute settlement.
- **Prelims:** Preah Vihear temple (UNESCO site), ICJ rulings (1962 & 2013), 1907 French-drawn border, Dangrek Mountains, ASEAN mechanisms for conflict mitigation.

THAILAND – CAMBODIA DISPUTE



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THAILAND – CAMBODIA DISPUTE

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THAILAND – CAMBODIA DISPUTE

WHY THIS NEWS IS IMPORTANT FOR UPSC



Map-based Questions

- Location of Preah Vihear Temple
- Dangrek Mountains
- Cambodia–Thailand border



International Law

- ICJ rulings
- UNESCO's role



Post-colonial Borders

Similar to India's disputes with

- China
- Bangladesh
- Pakistan



ASEAN Geography & Geopolitics

- Intra-regional tensions

THAILAND – CAMBODIA DISPUTE

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE DISPUTTE

Colonial Era (1900s)	Post-Independence Phase
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1904 Franco–Siam Agreement: Used Dangrek watershed as boundary. 1907 Treaty: French map placed Preah Vihear within Cambodia <p>Disputed map later became the core of Cambodia's ICJ case</p>	<p>1953: Cambodia gained independence from France.</p> <hr/> <p>1962 ICJ Ruling:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ruled in Cambodia's favour Thailand ordered to withdraw troops from temple area



HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE DISPUTE

2008–2013 Escalations

2008: UNESCO designated Preah Vihear as World Heritage Site (Cambodian nomination)

- Thailand opposed it; clashes followed
- 2011: Cambodia sought ICJ clarification

2013 ICJ Judgment: Reaffirmed Cambodian sovereignty over surrounding areas


- Thailand rejected parts of ruling



Recent Developments (2024–2025)

- **July 2024:** Deadly clashes; 48 displaced.
- **Dec 2025:** Thai airstrikes on "military targets" in Cambodia; Cambodia denies provocation.
- Growing nationalist sentiments and claims of cultural heritage fuel tensions.

THAILAND – CAMBODIA DISPUTE



ICJ

Settled the dispute in 1962; reaffirmed Cambodia's claim in 2013.

INTERNATIONAL & LEGAL DIMENSIONS

UNESCO

Listing of Preah Vihear as a World Heritage Site triggered renewed tensions.



ASEAN

Both countries are members; internal disputes challenge regional unity

THAILAND – CAMBODIA DISPUTE

GEOGRAPHICAL MAPPING: KEY LOCATIONS

Location	Significance
Preah Vihear Temple	11th-century Hindu temple; UNESCO site; located atop Dangrek Mountains near the Cambodia–Thailand border.
Dangrek Mountains	Natural geographical boundary; watershed line used in colonial treaties.