



## **DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS 20-06-2024**

### **GS-1**

1. Nalanda University
2. Satnami community

### **GS-2**

3. Pro-Tem speaker

### **GS-3**

4. How can Himachal Pradesh fight against forest fire?
5. Brazil's Pantanal wetlands

## **Nalanda University**

### **Syllabus: GS-1: Indian Art and Culture**

#### **Context:**

- *Nalanda University was inaugurated by **Prime Minister Narendra Modi**.*
- *The **campus is in Rajgir, Bihar**, near the ancient Nalanda monastery.*

#### **History:**

- *Proposal to revive Nalanda was made by **President APJ Abdul Kalam in 2006**.*
- *Supported by 17 countries, endorsed at **East Asia Summits** in 2007 and 2009.*
- *Bihar Assembly passed a bill in 2007; Parliament passed the **Nalanda University Bill in 2010**.*
- ***Campus Design:** Masterplan by architect **B V Doshi's** firm was chosen in 2013.*
- ***First Students:** Admitted in 2014; initial classes held in temporary locations.*
- ***Notable Figures:** Amartya Sen was the first Chancellor; **President Pranab Mukherjee** was the first Visitor.*
- ***Schools and Programs:** Started with two schools; now has six, offering Master's, PhD, diploma, and certificate courses.*
- ***Current Status:** 90% of construction completed by 2022; 800 students, including 150 international students.*

#### **Campus Features:**

- *Designed to blend modern and traditional elements.*
- *Environmentally friendly with **natural cooling, water treatment, and recycling plants**.*
- *Facilities include yoga center, auditorium, library, sports complex, and no cars allowed inside.*

#### **Ancient Nalanda:**

- *Operated from the 5th to 13th century CE.*
- *Described by Chinese traveler **Hsuan Tsang**.*
- *Housed thousands of students and teachers, though figures are debated by scholars.*

### **Nalanda University**

#### **Founding and Development**

- ***Establishment:** Nalanda University was established in the 5th century CE by **Kumaragupta I** of the Gupta dynasty.*

- **Location:** *Situated in the ancient kingdom of **Magadha (modern-day Bihar, India)**, near the town of Rajgir and about 88 kilometers southeast of Patna.*
- **Purpose:** *It served as a renowned center for learning, attracting scholars from various parts of the world, including China, Korea, Japan, Tibet, Mongolia, Turkey, Sri Lanka, and Southeast Asia.*

### **Structure and Infrastructure**

- **Campus Layout:** *Nalanda was an architectural marvel with a sprawling campus that included multiple temples, monasteries (viharas), classrooms, meditation halls, and libraries.*
- **Library:** *Known as **Dharmaganja**, the library complex comprised three large buildings: Ratnasagara, Ratnadadhi, and Ratnaranjaka, which housed thousands of manuscripts.*

### **Academic Excellence**

- **Curriculum:** *The university offered a wide range of subjects, including Buddhist studies, logic, grammar, medicine, mathematics, astronomy, and philosophy.*
- **Faculty:** *The institution boasted a highly learned faculty, including renowned scholars like Aryabhata, Nagarjuna, and Xuanzang (a Chinese pilgrim who studied and taught there).*
- **Admission Process:** *Admission to Nalanda was highly competitive, with students required to undergo rigorous testing.*

### **International Influence**

- **Xuanzang and Yijing:** *Chinese pilgrims Xuanzang (Hsuan-tsang) and Yijing documented their extensive studies at Nalanda, providing valuable insights into its functioning and global significance.*
- **Cultural Exchange:** *The university facilitated cultural and intellectual exchanges, significantly influencing Buddhist education and monastic traditions across Asia.*

### **Decline and Destruction**

- **Turkish Invasion:** *Nalanda University faced a significant decline due to repeated invasions, particularly by **Turkish Muslim invaders led by Bakhtiyar Khilji** in 1193 CE. The libraries were burned, and many monks were killed or expelled.*
- **End of an Era:** *The destruction marked the end of Nalanda as a prominent educational institution, although it continued to be a place of reverence for centuries.*

## **Satnami community**

**Syllabus: GS-1; Ancient History**

### **Context**

- *In Chhattisgarh, the Satnami sect is protesting against the government for alleged inaction over the desecration of **Jaitkham**, a religious site, at Amar Cave in the Baloda Bazar district.*



### **About**

- *Satnami sect, any of several groups in India that have challenged political and religious authority by rallying around an understanding of **God as satnam (from Sanskrit satyanaman, “he whose name is truth”)**.*
- *The earliest Satnamis were a sect of mendicants and householders founded by **Birbhan in Narnaul in eastern Punjab in 1657**.*
- *In 1672 they defied the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb and were crushed by his army.*
- *Remnants of that sect may have contributed to the formation of another, known as **Sadhs (i.e., sadhu, “good”)**, in the early 19th century, who also designated their deity as satnam.*

## Jagjivandas

- A similar and roughly contemporary group under the leadership of **Jagjivandas** of Barabanki district, near Lucknow, was said to have been influenced by a disciple of the **Sufi mystic Yari Shah** (1668–1725).
- He projected an image of an overarching creator **God as nirguna** (“devoid of sensible qualities”), best worshipped through a regimen of self-discipline and by use of the “true name” alone.
- Yet Jagjivandas also wrote works about Hindu deities, and the elimination of caste, a central part of the Satnami creed, was not part of his message.
- The most important Satnami group was founded in 1820 in the Chhattisgarh region of middle India by Ghasidas, a farm servant and member of the **Chamar caste (a Dalit, or untouchable, caste whose hereditary occupation was leather tanning, a task regarded by Hindus as polluting)**.
- Although the Chamars of Chhattisgarh had given up leather tanning and become farmers, the higher Hindu castes continued to regard them as polluted.
- His Satnam Panth (“Path of the True Name”) succeeded in providing a religious and social identity for large numbers of Chhattisgarhi Chamars (who formed one-sixth of the total population of the region), in defiance of their derogatory treatment by upper-caste Hindus and their exclusion from Hindu temple worship.
- **Ghasidas** is remembered for having thrown images of Hindu gods onto a rubbish heap.
- He preached a code of ethical and dietary self-restraint and social equality. Connections with the Kabir Panth have been historically important at certain stages, and over time Satnamis have negotiated their place within a wider Hindu order in complex ways.

## Pro-Tem speaker

### Syllabus: GS-2; Parliament

#### Context

- The **18th Lok Sabha** will hold its first session from June 24 to July 3 2024, during which the new **Speaker of the House** will be elected.
- Meanwhile, **Congress leader Kodikunnil Suresh, as the seniormost member of the Lok Sabha, is expected to be appointed as pro-tem Speaker.**

#### What is a pro-tem Speaker?

- *Being the Presiding Officer of the Lok Sabha, the Speaker has to fulfil certain key duties related to its day-to-day proceedings.*
- **Article 94** of the Indian Constitution states: “Whenever the House of the People is dissolved, the Speaker shall not vacate his office until immediately before the first meeting of the House of the People after the dissolution.”
- *In the new Lok Sabha, the Speaker of the House is decided by a **simple majority**. Until her selection, the pro-tem Speaker is chosen to administer some important duties.*
- *‘Pro-tem’ essentially means ‘for the time being’ or ‘temporarily’.*
- **The Constitution does not mention the post.**
- *However, the official ‘Handbook on the Working of Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs’ speaks about the ‘Appointment and Swearing in of Speaker pro tem’.*

### How is the pro-tem Speaker chosen?

- *The handbook states when the Speaker post falls vacant before a new Lok Sabha, “the duties of the Speaker are to be performed by a Member of the House appointed for this purpose by the President as Speaker pro tem”.*
- *Administering oaths to the new MPs is the pro-tem Speaker’s primary duty.*
- *Under **Article 99** of the Constitution, “Every Member of the House shall, before taking his seat, make and subscribe before the President or some person appointed in that behalf by him, an oath or affirmation according to the form set out for the purpose in the **Third Schedule of the Constitution.**”*
- *Normally, three other elected members of the Lok Sabha are also appointed by the President for the MPs to take oath before them.*
- *According to the handbook, **the seniormost members** (in terms of number of years of membership of the House) are generally chosen for the purpose, though there have been exceptions.*
- *As soon as the new government is formed, the Legislative I Section of the Government of India prepares a list of the seniormost Lok Sabha members.*
- *It is then submitted to the Minister of Parliamentary Affairs or the Prime Minister for identifying an MP as Speaker pro-tem and another three members for oath-taking.*

### How are new MPs administered oaths?

- *After the Prime Minister’s approval, the consent of these members is obtained by the Minister of Parliamentary Affairs, generally over the telephone.*
- *The Minister then submits a note to the President, seeking approval for the appointment of the Speaker pro-tem and the other three members.*
- *They also decide the date and time of the swearing-in ceremony.*
- *Following the approval of the President, the Ministry informs the Speaker pro-tem and other members about their appointments.*



- *Finally, the President administers the oath to the Speaker pro-tem in the Rashtrapati Bhawan.*
- *The other three members appointed by the President are administered the oath by the Speaker pro-tem in the Lok Sabha.*

## **How can Himachal Pradesh fight against forest fire?**

**Syllabus: GS-3: Environmental Conservation – forest fires.**

**Context:**

- *How can Himachal Pradesh fight against forest fires?*

### **Current Situation in Himachal Pradesh (H.P.)**

- *Widespread forest fires across the region.*
- *1,684 forest fires since April 15.*
- *17,471 hectares of forest land damaged.*
- *Significant loss to wildlife.*

### **Historical Context (2001-2023)**

- *957 hectares of tree cover lost to fires.*
- *4.37 thousand hectares lost to other causes.*

### **Causes of Forest Fires**

- *Pre-monsoon summer period with **moisture stress** and depletion of snowmelt water.*
- *Low moisture increases fire impact.*
- **Human activities:** *unattended campfires, discarded cigarettes.*
- *Faulty forestry practices and lack of community involvement.*

### **Environmental Impact**

- *Fires produce pollutants, including black carbon.*
- *Contributes to glacier melt in the Himalayas.*
- *Negatively affects regional climate.*

### **Transformation of Himalayan Forests**

- *Systematic transformation over the last two centuries.*
- *Significant change began with the construction of railways in the 1850s.*

## Historical Context

- *Railways were built to market **British goods** and serve British capital.*
- *From 1853 to 1910, around 80,000 km of railway track built, heavily impacting forests.*
- *Customary rights of local people extinguished.*

## Impact on Forests

- *Large-scale **exploitation of Deodar** and **expansion of Chir pine** areas for timber and resin.*
- ***Resin extraction from Chir pines** increased significantly between 1910 and 1920.*
- *Resin used for **commercial and industrial purposes**, still a major production source.*

## Ecological Changes

- ***Banj oak**, which retains moisture and supports water springs, replaced by Chir pine.*
- *Chir pine valued more **for timber and resin**, but less beneficial ecologically.*

## Current State

- ***17.8% of H.P.'s forest area** is covered with Chir pine trees.*
- *Chir forests are highly **susceptible to forest fires**.*

## Need for Democratisation of Forests

- *Include local communities in forest management.*
- ***Restore the traditional forest rights** of Himalayan dwellers (wood for fuel, timber, fodder).*
- *Address the lack of first responders during forest fires due to curtailed community rights.*

## Current Challenges

- ***Large projects** (hydropower, road widening) easily divert forests despite the need for community assent.*
- *H.P. is under **Schedule V of the Indian Constitution**, requiring community agreement for development.*

## Proposed Solutions

- *Develop **mixed forestry** and reduce pine tree dominance.*
- *Integrate scientific and **community knowledge** in forest management.*
- ***Build check dams** and other methods to revive water springs.*
- *Establish **environmental services** at the village level.*



- *Advocate for financial support from the **16th Finance Commission**, beyond disaster mitigation funds.*

## **Brazil's Pantanal wetlands**

### **Syllabus: GS-3; Biodiversity**

#### **Context**

- *Brazil's Pantanal, renowned as the largest tropical wetland on the planet, is currently engulfed in an unprecedented wave of fires.*

#### **About**



- *The Pantanal is a natural region encompassing **the world's largest tropical wetland area, and the world's largest flooded grasslands.***
- *It is located mostly within the Brazilian state of **Mato Grosso do Sul**, but it extends into **Mato Grosso and portions of Bolivia and Paraguay.***
- *It sprawls over an area estimated at between **140,000 and 195,000 km<sup>2</sup> (54,000 and 75,000 sq mi).***

- *Various subregional ecosystems exist, each with distinct hydrological, geological, and ecological characteristics; up to 12 of them have been defined.*
- *Roughly 80% of the Pantanal floodplains are submerged during the rainy seasons, nurturing a biologically diverse collection of aquatic plants and helping to support a dense array of animal species.*

### **Know more**

#### **1. The Pantanal is larger than 29 US states and at least nine European countries.**

- *If the Pantanal was overlaid on the US it would be bigger than New York, Florida, and Wisconsin, among 25 other states. Put the Pantanal over Europe, and it would be larger than at least nine countries, including England, Austria, Hungary, Greece, and Ireland.*

#### **2. The Pantanal comprises about 3% of the entire world's wetlands.**

- *A conservative, cumulative estimate of the size of the world's wetlands places the figure at 1.4 billion acres.*
- *Though only a fraction of that figure, the Pantanal remains more intact and pristine than most other wetland systems.*

#### **3. The Pantanal is a refuge for iconic wildlife.**

- *This massive wetland has the largest concentration of crocodiles in the world, with approximately 10 million caimans.*
- *Jaguars, the largest feline in the Americas, hunt caiman in the Pantanal, which has one of the highest density of jaguars anywhere the world.*
- *The Pantanal is also home to the biggest parrot on the planet, the hyacinth macaw. Sighting these animals and others help attract the 1 million tourists who visit the Pantanal every year.*

#### **4. Less than 5% of the Pantanal is protected.**

- *The areas that are protected are globally significant, with parts that fall under an agreement called Ramsar that requires national governments to conserve and wisely use wetlands, and some that are UNESCO World Heritage Sites and Biosphere Reserves.*
- *Around 95% of the Pantanal is under private ownership, the majority of which is used for cattle grazing.*

#### **5. Paraguay, Bolivia and Brazil are creating a new way to manage the Pantanal across borders.**

- *WWF supports transboundary cooperation across the three countries, working towards a tri-national agreement for the sustainable development and conservation of this globally significant freshwater resource.*
- *The framework they're creating could be replicated in other places around the world.*