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# DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS

23rd May 2025



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**23<sup>rd</sup> May 2025**

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### Prelims Saarthi

- Operation Black Forest
- Amrit Bharat Railway Station
- Mallakhamb

## Use international law to take on Pakistan-backed terror

### Why in News?

- Pakistan state-sponsored terrorism

### Syllabus

- GS Paper 2 – International Relations

## Use international law to take on Pakistan-backed terror

Operation Sindoor has powerfully demonstrated India's intent to use kinetic measures to tackle terrorism emanating from Pakistan. In addition to executing "hot pursuits", India possesses other potent non-kinetic strategies, going beyond regular diplomacy, to ensure that Pakistan is held accountable for its continued support of terrorism directed against India. An impactful approach that India has not effectively employed so far is the strategy of "lawfare", or leveraging international law to confront adversaries to accomplish strategic and diplomatic objectives.

### Leverage terrorism conventions

A key element of a lawfare strategy against Pakistan should be to deploy international law to highlight Pakistan's sponsorship of cross-border terrorism. This is especially important as India has led the process of adopting a Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism (CCIT) at the global level. India and Pakistan are parties to numerous terrorism conventions at the regional and international levels. The primary regional treaty is the SAARC Regional Convention on Suppression of Terrorism, while key international treaties include the International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism (ICSFT) and the International Convention for the Suppression of Terrorist Bombings (Terrorist Bombing Convention).

These conventions obligate that states not only criminalise acts of terrorism under their domestic laws and prosecute the perpetrators but also refrain from financing such activities. For instance, Article 2(1) of the ICSFT explicitly classifies terror financing as a crime. Similarly, Article 6 of the Additional Protocol to the SAARC terrorism convention requires states to take measures to prevent, suppress, and eradicate the financing of terrorism.

Pakistan has a long history of sponsoring, abetting, and funding terrorism against India.



**Prabhakar Ranjan**

is Professor and Vice Dean (Research), Jindal Global Law School, O.P. Jindal Global University

A clear and compelling narrative that uses international law and indisputable facts will help India in its fight against cross-border terrorism

Following the terror attacks in Mumbai in 2008, India meticulously gathered evidence to demonstrate Pakistan's active involvement in those attacks, which Islamabad later acknowledged, albeit reluctantly. India needs to consistently publicise proof of Pakistan's role, which includes the Pahalgam terror attack on April 22.

Further, India should utilise all international forums to build a solid legal case against Pakistan for its violations of international law regarding terrorism suppression. India's move to have all-party parliamentary delegations travelling abroad to present India's case on Operation Sindoor is an ideal opportunity to do this. India should identify specific provisions in terrorism conventions, along with various United Nations Security Council Resolutions that sanction terrorism, and customary international law that Pakistan is violating, and highlight these publicly.

Rather than mere diplomatic hyperbole, a clear and compelling narrative entrenched in international law, grounded in indisputable facts and supported by irrefutable evidence will significantly benefit New Delhi's fight against cross-border terrorism.

### Use the ICJ

A critical aspect of many terrorism conventions is that they grant jurisdiction to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) to enforce the treaties. For example, Articles 20(1) and 24(1) of the Terrorist Bombing Convention and the ICSFT, respectively, empower a country to refer disputes to the ICJ. These provisions, known as compromissory clauses, help circumvent jurisdictional obstacles in international law, which is based on consent. Thus, countries that are signatories to these treaties are bound by ICJ jurisdiction unless they make specific reservations. Ukraine, for instance, invoked such a clause when it sued Russia before the ICJ for violating the ICSFT.

Given that Pakistan has been sponsoring and

abetting terrorism against India and has not taken any action against terror groups operating from its territory, New Delhi has a compelling case against Islamabad under these terrorism conventions, which it can present to the ICJ – just as it did in the Kulbhushan Jadhav case.

### Hurdles to overcome

However, there are two significant hurdles. First, Pakistan has not accepted the ICJ's jurisdiction under the ICSFT due to a reservation, which could hinder efforts to hold Pakistan accountable. Nevertheless, India can still file a case with the ICJ to draw global attention to the issue. India should put the ball in the ICJ's court to address Pakistan's jurisdictional argument.

Second, and perplexingly, India has adopted a reservation about the ICJ's jurisdiction under the Terrorist Bombing Convention, while Pakistan has accepted the ICJ's jurisdiction for this convention. This obstacle can be overcome if India withdraws its reservation, allowing it to initiate proceedings against Pakistan at the ICJ for terrorism. The ICJ may likely interpret the provisions of the ICSFT and the Terrorist Bombing Convention narrowly, similar to its approach in the Ukraine vs Russia case decided last year. Therefore, India should have fool-proof evidence and devise its legal strategy accordingly. The dissenting opinion of judges such as Hilary Charlesworth in *Ukraine vs Russia* can come in handy for India. In any case, India should not be overly concerned about the outcome of the legal dispute. Instead, it should utilise the legal proceedings to assiduously promote a global narrative against Pakistan-sponsored terrorism, aligning it with its national objectives.

In sum, international law and courtrooms can also be used to combat terrorism. To accomplish this, India must build state capacity and mainstream international law in statecraft.

*The views expressed are personal*





## Key Takeaways from the Article

- **“Lawfare” Strategy Against Pakistan:**

- ◆ India can deploy **international law (“lawfare”)** to confront Pakistan’s continued support of cross-border terrorism, as a complement to kinetic measures like military action.
- ◆ By leveraging terrorism conventions, India can hold **Pakistan accountable** through international **legal avenues**.



- **Terrorism Conventions:**

- ◆ India and Pakistan are signatories to various terrorism conventions:
- ◆ SAARC Regional Convention on Suppression of Terrorism,
- ◆ International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism (ICSFT), and
- ◆ International Convention for the Suppression of Terrorist Bombings (Terrorist Bombing Convention).



- **India’s Legal Case:**

- ◆ India should gather and publicize evidence of Pakistan’s involvement in acts of terrorism, such as the **2008 Mumbai attacks and the Pahalgam terror attack**.
- ◆ India should present this evidence in international forums and use it to **build a solid legal case against Pakistan**, referring to specific provisions of international terrorism conventions.

Ministry of Defence

75  
Azadi Ka  
Amrit Mahotsav

**PRESS RELEASE:**

**OPERATION SINDOOR : INDIAN ARMED FORCES CARRIED OUT PRECISION STRIKE AT TERRORIST CAMPS**

Posted On: 07 MAY 2025 1:44AM by PIB Delhi

A little while ago, the Indian Armed Forces launched ‘OPERATION SINDOOR’, hitting terrorist infrastructure in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Jammu and Kashmir from where terrorist attacks against India have been planned and directed.

Altogether, nine (9) sites have been targeted.

Our actions have been focused, measured and non-escalatory in nature. No Pakistani military facilities have been targeted. India has demonstrated considerable restraint in selection of targets and method of execution.

These steps come in the wake of the barbaric Pahalgam terrorist attack in which 25 Indians and one Nepali citizen were murdered. We are living up to the commitment that those responsible for this attack will be held accountable.

There will be detailed briefing on ‘OPERATION SINDOOR’, later today.





## • Role of the International Court of Justice (ICJ):

- ♦ Terrorism conventions like ICSFT and the Terrorist Bombing Convention allow for dispute resolution through the ICJ.
- ♦ India could potentially refer Pakistan's violations of these conventions to the ICJ, as demonstrated in cases like **Ukraine vs. Russia**.
- ♦ Despite Pakistan's reservations regarding the ICJ's jurisdiction, India could still bring the case to draw global attention

## • Impact of Legal Action:

- ♦ Even if the ICJ case does not result in immediate legal victory, the legal process can be used to **promote a global narrative against Pakistan's state-sponsored terrorism**.
- ♦ India can utilize the **legal proceedings** to further its **diplomatic and strategic goals** by drawing attention to **Pakistan's violations** of international law and its support for terrorism.

## Air defence capabilities



**1. Layered and integrated air defence systems** comprising assets from the Indian Army, Indian Navy, and primary assets of the Indian Air Force

**2. Multi-layered air sensors and weapon systems including:**

- Point defense weapons (low-level air guns, manpads, short-range SAMs)
- Area defense weapons (air fighters, longer-range SAMs)

**3. Counter-UAS systems:**

Both indigenously developed soft and hard-kill systems effectively thwarted numerous waves of drones and unmanned combat aerial vehicles



## Different types of drones



### SURVEILLANCE AND RECONNAISSANCE: DRONES (ISR DRONES)

These drones are primarily used for surveillance, and reconnaissance purposes.

India currently has:

TAPAS-BH-201 (Tactical Advanced Platform for Aerial Surveillance)

Rustom (developed by DRDO)

Heron (Israel)



### ARMED/COMBAT DRONES (UCAVs)

Unmanned combat aerial vehicles (UCAVs) are capable of launching missiles or dropping bombs.

India has:

DRDO's Ghatik

(under development)

Heron TP (from Israel)



### LOITERING MUNITIONS

These drones are designed to loiter over a target area and strike when a target is identified.

India has:

Nagastar (made by Solar Industries and ZMotion)

Warmate (Polish origin)



### COMMERCIAL/MODIFIED CIVILIAN DRONES

Off the shelf drones, often modified for illegal cross-border activities



### SWARM DRONES

Multiple drones operate in coordination to overwhelm enemy defenses, DRDO and private firms are working on swarm drone technology





## Why India needs stable urban forests?

### Why in News?

- Urban Forests in India

### Syllabus

- GS Paper 3 – Environment & Ecology

# Why India needs stable urban forests

What role do urban forests play in combating air pollution and climate change? What is the impact of urbanisation on forests like Kancha Gachibowli? What are the areas of concern? Where do courts stand? What does the Nagar Van Yojana aim to achieve by 2027?

#### EXPLAINER

Dev Nath Pathak  
Vibha S Bharadwaj

#### The story so far:

One of Hyderabad's last remaining urban forests, Kancha Gachibowli, faced the threat of extinction when the Telangana government decided to give away 400 acres of its land for industrial development. Justifying its move by claiming ownership over the forest, the government alleged that protesting students were misled by real estate interests. However, the Supreme Court took cognisance of the felling of 100 acres of trees and reprimanded the State government. This issue highlighted the vulnerability of urban forests and environmentally insensitive models of urban development.

#### Why do urban forests matter?

Urban forests – such as Kancha Gachibowli in Hyderabad, Aarey in Mumbai, Turahalli in Bengaluru, Neela Paz and the Ridge in Delhi, and Dol Ka Kaadhi in Jaipur – are significant for healthy urban living. The National Green Tribunal issued a notice to the Madhya Pradesh government against the rampant felling of trees in Bhopal. Similarly, the High Court had to intervene in the case of indiscriminate tree felling in Allahabad in Uttar Pradesh. Many such instances from across India emphasise a need to understand that the urban forests matter to public life.

Studies worldwide have underlined the importance of urban forests in coping with the built concrete environment and the emissions from automobile vehicles. They help mitigate climate change, reduce the urban heat island effect, and control stormwater runoff, erosion, and flooding. Urban forests also sequester carbon and absorb pollutants. The density of green spaces in cities ensures the longevity and survival of the endangered birds and animals.



Students of the University of Hyderabad raise slogans during their protest on April 1, 2024.

Diminishing urban forests in India's metropolitan cities spell severe consequences. For example, in November 2024, the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) reported alarming levels of the air quality index (AQI) in Delhi at 494. Other cities such as Chennai, Hyderabad, and Bengaluru had AQI levels above 100. The CPCB mentions PM 2.5 and PM 10 pollutants – mostly from vehicle emissions and construction dust – as the main causes. Urban forests can serve as a safeguard against toxic urban air. A 2006 study by the U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service showed that one hectare of trees can remove around one ton of air pollutants.

Urban social and cultural life is otherwise fraught with speed and risk. A sense of romance, repose, relaxation, and nature-sensitive recreation is due to proximity to urban forests. The sustained preservation and consistent creation of urban forests can make Indian cities breathable and urban living beautiful.

#### Why are judicial interventions important?

Urban forests have featured in policies, missions, and judicial interventions in India. Both the National Forest Policy of 1988 and the National Mission for Green India of 2014 underlined the imperative of increasing afforestation and social

forestry. The Smart Cities Mission and Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation, launched in 2015, integrated smart urban designs with ecological and social development.

Besides, the judicial interventions play important roles in promoting and protecting urban forests. The landmark Godavarman case in 1996 broadened the definition of forests to enhance the protection of urban greenery. Consequently, in 2004, the apex court issued interim orders to all the States in India for the identification, scrutiny, and mapping of forests across their territories. The aim was to generate a comprehensive forest inventory in order to enhance conservation efforts.

Another instance of judicial intervention was in 2015 when the Delhi High Court directed the Delhi government to notify and protect the Delhi Ridge, also known as the Aravalli leopard wildlife corridor. Similarly, the apex court issued a stay order on the tree felling in Aarey in Mumbai in 2020 in response to the petitions by the citizens who conducted the Save Aarey Forest movement. Equally significant is the instance of the civil society and concerned citizens protesting against the felling of trees in the biodiversity-rich areas of the Baran district in Rajasthan. The Rajasthan High Court took *suo motu* cognisance of the

matter in 2024.

The judicial interventions are requisite in the protection of forests and instilling awareness among the citizens. And, so are provisions in the Constitution of India, such as Article 21 (Right to Life), which includes the right to a healthy environment. Equally important are Articles 48A and 51A(g), ensuring the promotion and improvement of the natural environment.

#### What is the main goal of the Nagar Van Yojana?

Prime Minister Narendra Modi duly observed the importance of wildlife and biodiversity conservation on the occasion of World Wildlife Day on March 3, 2025. Such a spirit is conducive to the drive to protect urban forests, too.

The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) of the Government of India had rolled out the Nagar Van Yojana (urban forest scheme) in 2020. The objective was to promote and grow forest spaces in urban areas. The Nagar Van Yojana envisages developing a thousand urban forests by the year 2027. According to the India State of Forest Report 2023, the scheme has resulted in an increase of 1445.81 km of tree and forest cover.

#### Why is the threat to urban forests concerning?

Rapidly urbanising India grapples with the consequences of abysmal regard for environmental conservation and sustainability. The threat to urban forests is a challenge to our biomedical, social, and cultural well-being. It is imperative that we, the people, play a role as citizens and civil society.

The Supreme Court order directing the Telangana government to restore the forested area of Kancha Gachibowli augurs well for a holistic soul searching. The mushrooming concrete jungles in the cities shall not devour the urban forests. Dev Nath Pathak, Associate Dean, Faculty of Social Sciences, South Asian University, Delhi & Vibha S Bharadwaj, Young Scholar, Christ University, Bangalore

#### THE GIST

Urban forests such as Kancha Gachibowli face threats from environmentally insensitive urban development and industrial expansion.

They play a crucial role in mitigating climate change effects, reducing air pollution, and sustaining biodiversity in metropolitan cities.

Policy initiatives like Nagar Van Yojana and judicial interventions are essential for conservation and ensuring the right to a healthy environment.



## Key Takeaways from the Article

### ● Urban Forests and Their Importance:

- ◆ Urban forests such as **Kancha Gachibowli** in Hyderabad, **Aarey** in Mumbai, **Turahalli** in Bengaluru.
- ◆ They help reduce the **urban heat island effect**, mitigate **stormwater runoff**, prevent **erosion** and **flooding**, sequester carbon, and absorb pollutants like **PM2.5** and **PM10**.
- ◆ Urban forests also provide **habitats for endangered species**, support **biodiversity**, and offer recreational and mental health benefits to city residents.

### ● Threats to Urban Forests:

- ◆ Urbanization and industrial development pose significant threats to urban forests. **Kancha Gachibowli** faced the risk of extinction when the Telangana government proposed using 400 acres of its land for industrial purposes.
- ◆ **Deforestation** and the clearing of green spaces are growing problems in cities like **Delhi**, **Chennai**, and **Bengaluru**, which suffer from severe air quality issues, as indicated by alarming AQI levels.

### ● Judicial Interventions:

- ◆ Aarey forest case (2020)
- ◆ Kancha Gachibowli
- ◆ Godavarman Thirumulpad v. Union of India (1996)
- ◆ PILs

### ● Government Initiatives:

- ◆ Nagar Van Yojana
- ◆ National Forest Policy of 1988
- ◆ National Mission for Green India (2014)
- ◆ Smart Cities Mission
- ◆ Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT)

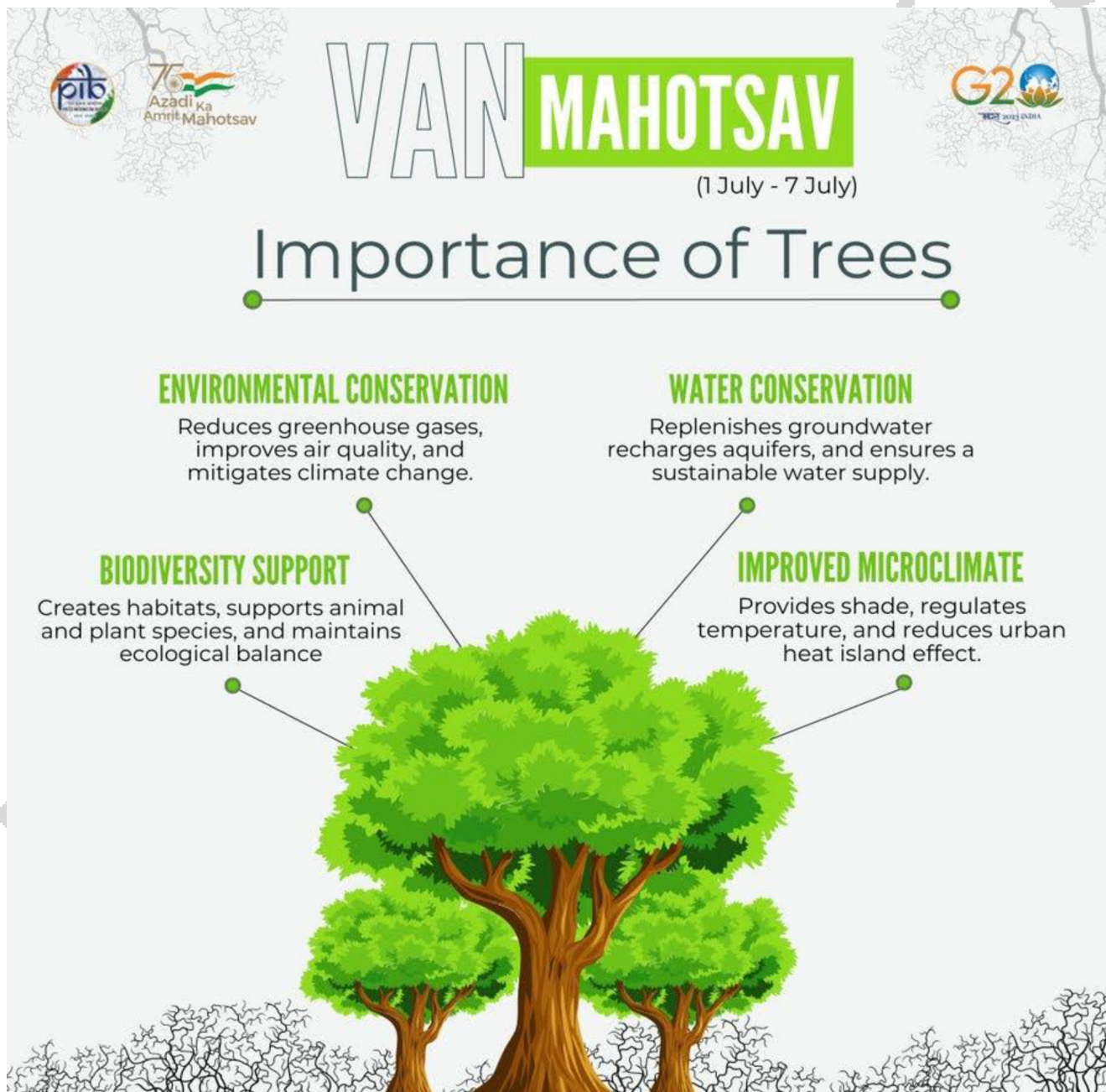
### ● Environmental and Social Impact:

- ◆ The **CPCB** reports that urban air pollution, primarily caused by **vehicle emissions** and **construction dust**, contributes significantly to deteriorating air quality.





- ♦ **Urban forests** act as a buffer, removing air pollutants and improving overall **health outcomes** in cities.
- ♦ **Cultural and social benefits** of urban forests include **recreation, mental wellbeing, and community engagement**.
- **Urgency of Urban Forest Protection:**
  - ♦ **Rapid urbanization** has led to a disregard for environmental conservation, with urban forests being the primary victims of such development.
  - ♦ The **Kancha Gachibowli** case emphasizes the need for a **holistic approach** to urban development that integrates environmental preservation into urban planning.





### Prelims PYQs (2016)

**Question: In the cities of our country, which among the following atmospheric gases are normally considered in calculating the value of the Air Quality Index? (2016)**

1. Carbon dioxide
2. Carbon monoxide
3. Nitrogen dioxide
4. Sulphur dioxide
5. Methane

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- (a) 1, 2 and 3 only
- (b) 2, 3 and 4 only
- (c) 1, 4 and 5 only
- (d) 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5

### Mains PYQs (2021)

**Question: Describe the key points of the revised Global Air Quality Guidelines (AQGs) recently released by the World Health Organisation (WHO). How are these different from its last update in 2005? What changes in India's National Clean Air Programme are required to achieve revised standards? (2021)**

### Operation Black Forest

- ♦ Launched on **April 21** across **Karreguttalu hill range**, straddling **Telangana** and **Chhattisgarh**.
- ♦ Involved **10,000 personnel**, including forces like **CRPF**, **CoBRA**, **Greyhounds**, and **Chhattisgarh Police**.

## CoBRA commando, Maoist killed in Sukma operation

Two commandos injured in encounter; Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai says Basavaraju's killing in Narayanpur is a big achievement, and Maoists are now restricted to a small part of the State

**Shubhomoy Sikdar**  
RAIPUR

**A** CoBRA commando and a Maoist were killed during an anti-Naxal operation in Sukma district of Chhattisgarh on Thursday, the police said, adding that the gunfight continued till evening. Two commandos were injured.

The encounter came a day after 27 Maoists, including Nambala Keshav Rao, alias Basavaraju, the general secretary of the banned Communist Party of India (Maoist), were gunned down in Narayanpur district.

After being tipped off about the presence of Maoists in the Tumrel area bordering Sukma and Bijapur districts, a joint team of personnel from the Commando Battalion for Resolute Action (CoBRA), a specialised unit of the Cen-



Bastar IG P. Sundarraj and other officials inspect the weapons recovered during the encounter with Maoists on Thursday. ANI

tral Reserve Police Force; the District Reserve Guard; and the Special Task Force had left for a search operation on Wednesday.

"An encounter is going on intermittently between the security forces and Maoists since Thursday morning. On searching the encounter site, the body of one Maoist, weapons, and Maoist material have been recovered. The body of the Maoist is being identified,"

a senior police officer said.

The officer said three commandos of the 210 CoBRA Battalion were injured in the gunfight. One of them died, while the others have been shifted to State capital Raipur for treatment.

#### **Big blow to Maoists: CM**

Speaking about Wednesday's operation in which Basavaraju was killed, Chhattisgarh Chief Minis-

ter Vishnu Deo Sai said Naxalites had been now confined to a very small area of the State.

Mr. Sai said this was the first time in three decades that a general secretary of the CPI(Maoist) had been neutralised, which was a huge success for the forces. "This is definitely a huge blow; Naxalism's back has been broken. I salute the bravery and courage of our security forces," he said.

He said Basavaraju carried a collective reward of ₹3.25 crore on his head, which included a ₹1-crore bounty announced by the Chhattisgarh government.

Earlier, Vivekanand Sinha, Additional Director-General of Police (Naxal Operations), Chhattisgarh, said Basavaraju's killing was "the most important achievement in the Naxal history of not just Chhattisgarh, but that of the whole country".





## Amrit Bharat Railway Station

- ♦ The **Amrit Bharat Station Scheme (ABSS)** focuses on modernising more than **1,300 railway stations** to improve passenger experience.
- ♦ The stations showcase local art, history, and architecture, contributing to both heritage preservation and tourism growth.

### PM inaugurates 103 Amrit Bharat railway stations

Modi says these stations not only preserved thousands-of-years-old heritage but also served as catalysts for tourism growth across States, creating new employment opportunities for youth

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI

**P** rime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday inaugurated 103 Amrit Bharat railway stations through video conference from Bikaner, Rajasthan. These stations, situated in 86 districts across 18 States and Union Territories, have been developed at a cost of over ₹1,100 crore.

Mr. Modi also flagged off a train connecting Bikaner to Mumbai.

While inaugurating the stations, Mr. Modi said modernisation of more than 1,300 railway stations under the Amrit Bharat Station Scheme (ABSS) was being carried out to improve passenger experience.

Mr. Modi said these modernised stations served as a showcase of local art and history. He cited examples, including Rajasthan's Mandalgarh station, which reflected the grandeur of Rajput traditions, and Bihar's Thawe station, which depicted the sacred presence of Maa Thawewali along with Madhubani artwork. The Orchha railway station in Madhya Pradesh exuded



**On track:** Narendra Modi, along with Union Railways Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw, inaugurates 103 Amrit Stations from Deshnoke in Bikaner on Thursday. ANI

the divine essence of Lord Ram, while the design of the Srirangam station drew inspiration from the Ranganathaswamy temple. Gujarat's Dakor station paid homage to Ranchhodrai ji, the Tiruvannamalai station followed Dravidian architectural principles, and the Begumpet station embodied the architectural legacy of the Kakatiya dynasty.

The Prime Minister said Amrit Bharat stations not only preserved India's

thousands-of-years-old heritage but served as catalysts for tourism growth across States, creating new employment opportunities for youth. He urged the people to ensure the cleanliness and safety of the stations.

Mr. Modi said the Union government was set to spend nearly ₹10,000 crore on railway development in the State this year.

Emphasising India's efforts to modernise its railway network, the Prime

Minister underlined the introduction of Vande Bharat, Amrit Bharat, and Nammo Bharat trains.

He said nearly 70 routes now operate Vande Bharat trains, bringing modern rail connectivity to remote regions.

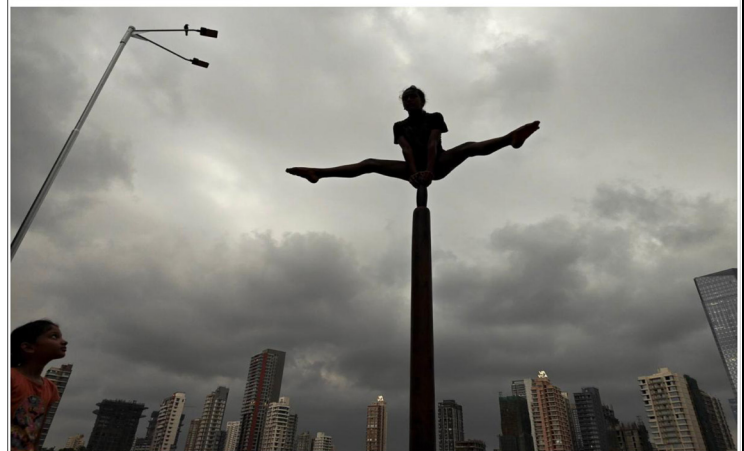
He pointed out the infrastructure advancements over the past 11 years, including the construction of road overbridges and under bridges, as well as the laying of over 34,000 km of new railway tracks.

## Mallakhamb

- ♦ Name derives from- ?
- ♦ States - ?

### PICTURE OF THE WEEK

The superhumans of Mumbai



A young girl practises Mallakhamb as monsoon clouds hover over Mumbai, at Shivaji Park. 'Malla' means wrestling and 'khamb' translates to pole. Together, Mallakhamb means wrestling on a pole. This is a form of ancient martial arts intended as a training aid for wrestlers and ancient warriors. EMMANUEL YOGINI

