NAMAN SHARMA
IAS ACADEMY

Daily
CURRENT AFFAIRS

June 3rd, 2025

Offline Centre Location:
SCO 173-174, Sector 17C, Chandigarh

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How is the President's Rule imposed?

Why in the news?

- May 27, 2025, staged women in Imphal West, Manipur, a thorough protest against the implementation of the President's Board of Directors in the State, which has been effective since February 2025.
- In a long constitutional vacuum for a long time, ten MLAs met the governor and sought a representative government.
- Due to the remaining two years remaining in the state target, protesting citizens emphasise the demand to increase unrest, democratic concerns and political responsibility.
- The case has decided the national debate on the role of the governor and courts in maintaining federal values , along with Article 356 of the Indian Constitution and its historical abuse.

Background: What is the president's board?

The president's board refers to the suspension of the state government and the direct administration of the state by the central government in accordance with Article 356 of the Constitution of India. This gives the president the right to take over the state leader when constitutional mechanisms in a state collapse.

Article 356 reads:

- "If the president receives a report from the Governor or otherwise, it is pleased that a situation has arisen where the government cannot be done under the provisions of this Constitution, the president may consider himself or any work for all the state's functions."
- Article 356 is often read by Article 365, which allows the president to work if one fails to follow instructions from the Union.
- The announcement from both the Parliament House should be confirmed within two months. When approved, the president's rule remains valid for six months and can be expanded with parliamentary approval for three years.

Features of President's Rule

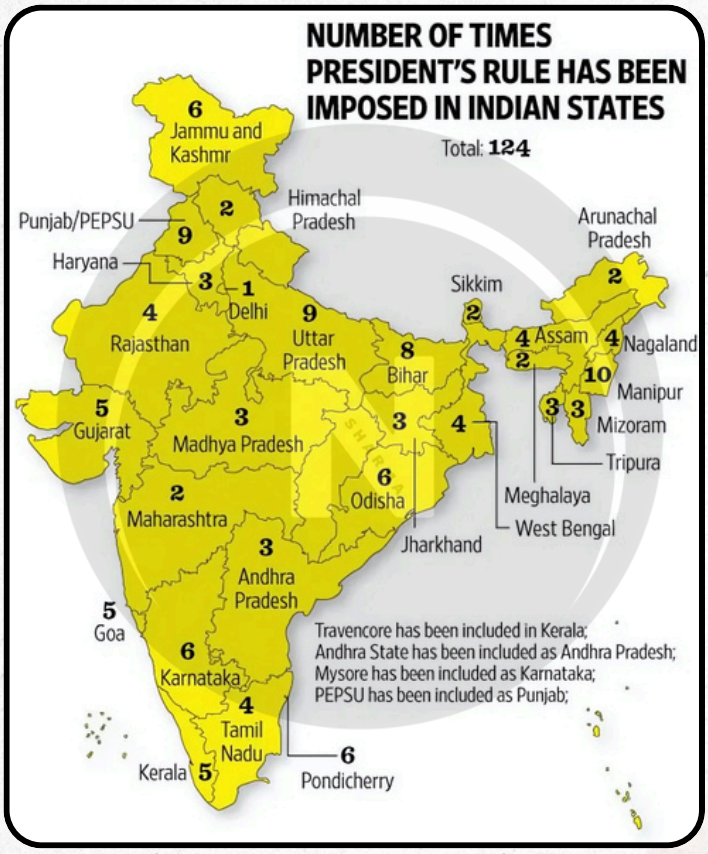
- Proclamation Based on Governor's Report or Otherwise
- While typically triggered by a Governor's report citing constitutional breakdown, the President can also act suo motu, relying on intelligence inputs or other credible information.
- Parliamentary Oversight
- The need for ratification by both Houses ensures parliamentary scrutiny. However, only a simple majority is required.

Period of Validity

- The President's Rule is valid for six months, extendable every six months for up to three years, under Article 356(4). Extension beyond one year requires:
- The Election Commission certifies that elections cannot be held in the State.

Suspension of the State Legislature

- During President's Rule, the Legislative Assembly may either be dissolved or kept under "suspended animation." The latter allows for revival if political stability returns.



Executive Power Vested in the Union

- The President (through the Governor) assumes all executive powers. The State Council of Ministers is dismissed, and legislative powers of the State are exercised by the Parliament.

Historical Context: From a Dead Letter to a Political Tool

- Dr. B.R. Ambedkar hoped that Article 356 would remain a "dead letter." However, history has proven otherwise.
- Early Misuse: The first use of Article 356 occurred in 1951 in Punjab. Between 1951 and 1990, Article 356 was used over 90 times, often to dismiss opposition-led State governments.
- Indira Gandhi Era (1966–1977): Witnessed the maximum misuse. In 1977, after losing the Lok Sabha elections, the Janata Party dismissed nine Congress-ruled States.
- 1980s - 1990s: President's Rule was increasingly used as a political weapon rather than a last-resort constitutional remedy.

Examples:

- **Kerala (1959):** First major dismissal of a democratically elected communist government under Nehru.
- **Bihar (2005):** Dismissal overturned by the Supreme Court for being unconstitutional.
- **Uttarakhand and Arunachal Pradesh (2016):** Courts again restored dismissed State governments.

The Governor's Role: Incompatibility and Conscience

The governor plays an important role in triggering the president's board, and his discretionary powers have often been controversial.

Inconsistent advice on resolution

There is a lack of uniformity in the decision to dissolve the rule regarding the postal mounts. For example:

- In Kerala (1970) and Punjab (1971), the congregations were dissolved according to the advice of the chief ministers, who had a majority shortage.
- But in similar cases - Punjab (1967), Uttar Pradesh (1968) and Madhya Pradesh (1969) - 1969) - were legislative assemblies were placed in suspended animation and demanded alternative governments.

This reflects inconsistent standards and subjective discretion of governors, often driven by political affiliation.

Post- S.R. Bomai expectations

- SR in the Supreme Court made the Bomai case clear that the governor's report should be targeted and not politically motivated. Despite this, reports from governors continue to face claims of bias.

- Judge's Interpretation: The Bomai principle
- For decades, the courts maintained a hand -closed approach to implement the president's order. Changed with that:

Primation Bomai vs India (1994)

- A constitutional bench gave a historical decision, which meets the following principles:
- Judge review is allowed: The court can investigate whether there was relevant material behind the announcement.
- The wrestling of constitutional machines: Only law and order problems are inadequate.
- The egislative assembly should not be dissolved: The assembly can only be suspended until parliament is implemented.
- Floor test on subjective assessment: Loss of majority should prove to be proven on the floor of the assembly, not through the governor's report.
- This decision was a foundation stone in protecting federalism and preventing arbitrary dismissal.

Post-Bommai Cases

- Bihar (2005): President's Rule struck down as mala fide.
- Uttarakhand (2016) and Arunachal Pradesh (2016): Dismissals reversed, upholding Assembly majorities.

The Present Situation in Manipur

- In February 2025, Manipur was placed under President's Rule due to severe ethnic violence, breakdown of law and order, and the absence of a functioning government.

The five-year term of the Assembly ends only in March 2027, and currently, the Assembly remains under suspended animation.

Key Concerns:

- There is no ongoing national emergency to justify prolongation beyond six months.
- Multiple MLAs are now demanding the formation of an alternative government.
- Public unrest and protests, especially by women, underscore rising dissatisfaction with central intervention.

Challenges in Implementation and Practice

Misuse for Political Gains

- Successive Union governments have misused Article 356 to dismiss opposition-ruled States, diluting its intended use for genuine constitutional breakdown.

Subjective Governor's Reports

- Governor's recommendations often lack transparency and objectivity, leading to arbitrary decisions.

Absence of Uniform Practice

- Inconsistent precedents on Assembly dissolution and revival have created constitutional confusion.

Weak Legislative Oversight

- While Parliament approves the President's Rule, the low threshold of a simple majority often enables partisan endorsements.

Undermining Federalism

- Excessive use of the President's Rule infringes upon State autonomy and violates the federal scheme envisioned in the Constitution.

Way Forward

- Codify Governor's Discretion
- A statutory or constitutional amendment must lay down conditions under which Governors can recommend President's Rule, minimising subjectivity.
- Mandate Floor Tests
- Loss of majority should be proven exclusively through floor tests, not by the Governor's discretion or subjective judgments.

Independent Reporting Mechanism

- The constitution of a bipartisan fact-finding committee to validate the Governor's reports before imposing President's Rule can ensure transparency.
- Stricter Judicial Enforcement
- Courts must continue robust judicial review and expedite hearings in cases of alleged misuse of Article 356.

Strengthen Cooperative Federalism

- Mechanisms like the Inter-State Council and NITI Aayog must be strengthened to resolve Centre-State tensions without resorting to Article 356.

Public Participation

- Civil society, media, and legal communities must remain vigilant to ensure democratic rights are not suppressed under the guise of constitutional breakdown.

Conclusion

President's Rule, meant as a constitutional safety valve, must not be misused as a political weapon.

While the Constitution allows for Central intervention in exceptional circumstances, the spirit of cooperative federalism must prevail. The Supreme Court's doctrine in the S.R. Bommai case offers robust safeguards, but its enforcement requires vigilance from all democratic institutions. The Manipur case is a reminder that even in moments of crisis, democratic legitimacy must be preserved, and people's mandate respected. As Ambedkar envisioned, Article 356 must remain an exception, not the norm.

Q. How is President's Rule imposed in a State? Discuss the constitutional safeguards, judicial interpretations, and recent debates on its misuse, with special reference to the 2025 Manipur case.
(250 words)

Q. Which of the following statements regarding the imposition of President's Rule under Article 356 are correct?

1. The Governor's report is the only constitutional basis for the imposition of President's Rule.
2. Extension of President's Rule beyond one year requires a proclamation of a National Emergency in the State.
3. The S.R. The Bommai judgment prohibits the dissolution of the State Legislative Assembly before parliamentary approval of President's Rule.
4. The President must mandatorily act only on the Governor's report to impose Article 356.

Select the correct answer using the code below:
A) 1 and 2 only
B) 2 and 3 only
C) 3 and 4 only
D) 1, 3, and 4 only
Answer: B) 2 and 3 only

Explanation

Statement 1 is incorrect: Article 356 allows the President to act "on the report of the Governor or otherwise."
Statement 2 is correct: Extension beyond one year is allowed only if a National Emergency is in operation or the Election Commission certifies inability to hold elections.
Statement 3 is correct: The S.R. The Bommai case held that the Legislative Assembly should only be suspended, not dissolved, until Parliament approves the proclamation.
Statement 4 is incorrect: The President can act suo motu, not just on the Governor's report.

Importing for 'Make in India': The EV Policy Shift to 15% Duty

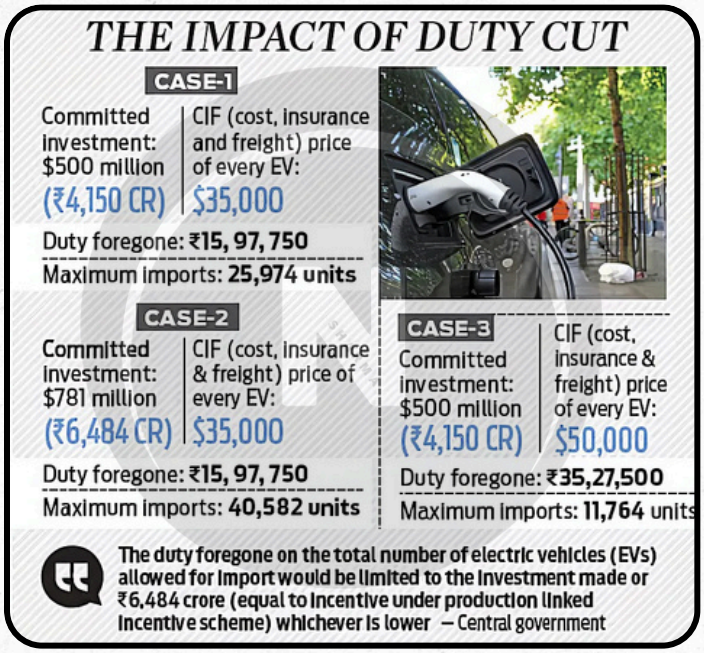
Why in the News?

On June 3, 2025, the Government of India officially notified a new policy to promote domestic manufacturing of electric vehicles (EVs) by allowing foreign carmakers to import up to 8,000 EVs annually at a concessional 15% duty, provided they commit to invest ₹4,150 crore in local manufacturing within three years. The scheme aims to attract global EV players, boost domestic capacity, and accelerate India's transition to sustainable mobility.

Notably, Union Minister H.D. Kumaraswamy remarked that Tesla was not keen on manufacturing EVs in India, preferring retail entry instead. This underscores tensions between the government's domestic manufacturing ambitions and the strategic calculus of global automotive giants.

Background: The Rise of EV Policy in India

- India is the world's third-largest automobile market, yet it lags in electric vehicle penetration. As per NITI Aayog projections, EVs are expected to account for 30% of private cars, 70% of commercial vehicles, 40% of buses, and 80% of two- and three-wheelers sold by 2030.
- However, as of 2024, EVs constituted less than 2% of total car sales, underscoring the need for both demand- and supply-side incentives.



Previous Policy Landscape

India's EV policy so far has focused on:

- FAME II Scheme (Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Electric Vehicles) was launched in 2019 with a ₹10,000 crore outlay.
- PLI Scheme for Advanced Chemistry Cell (ACC) for battery manufacturing.
- Auto PLI Scheme for incentivising high-value EV components.
- State-level EV policies by Delhi, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, etc.

Import Tariffs as Protectionism

India has historically maintained high import duties on fully built-up (CBU) electric vehicles:

- 70% for EVs priced below $40,000.
- 100% for EVs priced above $40,000.

This protected domestic players but disincentivised global EV majors like Tesla, BYD, Volkswagen, and Rivian, which sought concessional duties without committing to local manufacturing.

In 2024, after prolonged back-and-forth with Tesla, the Centre drafted a policy framework to offer duty concessions in return for domestic manufacturing commitments.

Key Features of the New Policy

- The Scheme to Promote Manufacturing of Electric Passenger Cars in India introduces a structured pathway for global and domestic manufacturers to build a sustainable EV ecosystem.

Concessional Import Duty

- Import of up to 8,000 CBUs per year at 15% duty (for vehicles valued at $35,000 or above).
- Valid for five years from the date of application approval.
- Applies to both new and existing players in the EV space.

Minimum Investment Requirement

- Mandatory ₹4,150 crore investment in domestic EV manufacturing.
- Applicants must show a clear commitment, including land acquisition, factory set-up, and employment generation plans.

Local Value Addition (LVA) Conditions

- At least 25% localisation in the first three years.
- Increased to 50% by the fifth year.
- Compliance failure leads to the withdrawal of concessional duty benefits and possible penalties.

Timeline for Operations

- Companies must begin commercial manufacturing within three years of receiving approval.

Eligibility for Brownfield Investment

- Allows brownfield investments (upgrading existing plants), not just greenfield ones.

Technology Transfer and R&D

- Encourages **R&D collaboration, technology transfer**, and localisation of EV components like battery packs, motors, and controllers.

Challenges and Concerns

While the policy is bold and forward-looking, it is not without its share of challenges and criticisms:

Uneven Playing Field

- Domestic EV makers like Tata Motors, Ola Electric, and Mahindra argue that foreign players will get a backdoor entry into the Indian market through cheap imports.
- Imported cars, even at 15% duty, will remain premium vehicles, possibly skewing the market toward luxury segments.

Tesla's Reluctance

- Despite tailoring the policy to attract Tesla, Minister Kumaraswamy's comments indicate Tesla may not commit to manufacturing, focusing instead on showrooms and brand-building.
- This defeats the intended purpose of incentivising Make in India.

Monitoring and Compliance

- Ensuring that companies meet LVA targets and don't misuse import quotas requires robust audit mechanisms, which have been historically weak.

Potential WTO Challenge

- Linking concessional import duty with domestic investment and LVA targets may be seen as trade-distorting by the WTO under the Agreement on Subsidies and Countervailing Measures (ASCM).

Neglect of Two- and Three-Wheeler Segments

- The policy focuses only on four-wheel passenger vehicles, even though two- and three-wheelers constitute over 80% of EV adoption in India.

Risk of Urban-Centric Adoption

- Imported EVs will likely be priced above ₹30 lakh, serving urban elites.
- This risks widening the mobility divide, leaving out rural and middle-income consumers.

Battery Supply Chain Dependency

- India lacks adequate domestic cell manufacturing and raw material sourcing. Even with localisation, battery packs may continue to be imported from China, limiting strategic autonomy.

Infrastructure Deficits

- EV charging infrastructure is still patchy in most Indian cities.
- Without a parallel investment in public charging stations, the scheme's success remains constrained.
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Way Forward: Striking a Balance

- To make the policy truly effective and inclusive, the following steps are essential:
- Expand Scope Beyond Four-Wheelers
- The government must introduce similar production-linked import incentives for electric two- and three-wheelers, which form the mass mobility base.

Enforce Robust Compliance Mechanisms

- Create an independent compliance authority to monitor LVA, investment timelines, and import limits.
- Publish annual compliance reports for public transparency.

Link Benefits with Technology Transfer

- Make concessional duty contingent on knowledge sharing, R&D localisation, and intellectual property registration in India.

Support Domestic Players

- Offer matching incentives under FAME III or similar schemes to Tata, Mahindra, Ola, and others, to offset the entry of foreign giants.
- Provide capital grants for capacity expansion.

Enhance Charging Infrastructure

- Mandate all OEMs under this policy to co-invest in public charging infrastructure.
- Fast-track land approvals and electricity clearances for charging networks.

Safeguard Against WTO Fallout

- Structure the policy as a performance-linked incentive rather than a direct subsidy to bypass trade-related legal challenges.
- Consult legal experts to ensure WTO compliance.

Accelerate Battery Ecosystem Development

- Incentivise domestic lithium refining, battery cell manufacturing, and recycling.
- Facilitate bilateral supply agreements with countries like Australia, Chile, and Argentina for rare earth materials.

Involve State Governments

- Encourage state-level EV hubs with customised sops in land allocation, labour regulation, and power tariffs.
- Ensure EV cluster development around ports and major industrial corridors.

Conclusion

India's new EV import policy reflects a pragmatic shift, leveraging strategic concessions to build domestic capacity in a sector critical for the country's energy and environmental goals.

If executed properly, it can catalyse the entry of global OEMs, push domestic players to scale up, and make India a hub for electric mobility innovation.
However, the road ahead must balance economic growth with equitable mobility, technological advancement with strategic autonomy, and foreign entry with domestic strengthening. The current scheme is a start, but its success will depend on the political will, regulatory oversight, and timely infrastructure development that follow.

Q. Why is the June 2025 policy on concessional electric vehicle (EV) imports in the news? Critically examine how it seeks to balance foreign investment, domestic manufacturing, and sustainable mobility goals in India.

Q. About the June 2025 Electric Vehicle (EV) import policy notified by the Government of India, consider the following statements:

1. The policy allows the concessional import of electric vehicles priced below $35,000 at a reduced customs duty of 15% for up to 8,000 units annually.
2. To avail the concessional import duty, applicants must commit to setting up domestic manufacturing with a minimum investment of ₹4,150 crore within five years.
3. The scheme mandates a phased localisation requirement, with at least 25% local value addition (LVA) by the third year and 50% by the fifth year.

The policy applies only to greenfield investments and excludes brownfield projects to promote new industrial growth.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

A. 1 and 2 only
B. 3 only
C. 2, 3, and 4 only
D. 3 only

Correct Answer: B. 3 only

Explanation:

- **Statement 1 is incorrect:** The concessional import duty of 15% applies to EVs priced above $35,000, not below.
- **Statement 2 is incorrect:** The minimum investment must be made within three years, not five.
- **Statement 3 is correct:** The policy requires 25% localisation by year 3 and 50% by year 5.
- **Statement 4 is incorrect:** The policy allows both greenfield and brownfield investments.

Decoding Darwin's 'Abominable Mystery': CCMB Unravels Rapid Flowering Plant Evolution

Why in the News?

- Recently, the team from the CSIR – Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CCMB), Hyderabad, has uncovered genetic clues to a question that has puzzled scientists for over a century -the sudden and explosive diversification of flowering plants around 130 million years ago.
- Termed by Charles Darwin as the "abominable mystery," this rapid evolutionary success has remained largely unexplained in traditional biological paradigms.
- The team, led by Dr. Imran Siddiqi, identified a novel gene, SHUKR, in Arabidopsis thaliana, which appears to regulate pollen viability and is exclusive to eudicots, a group representing nearly 75% of all flowering plants.
- The gene's rapid evolution and functional control over reproductive development could provide key insights into the evolutionary success of angiosperms and their resilience across diverse ecosystems.

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Background

Darwin's Mystery and the Rise of Angiosperms

- The emergence of flowering plants (angiosperms) in the Early Cretaceous period (~130 million years ago) posed a serious conundrum to Charles Darwin.
- He described the abrupt appearance and diversification of flowering plants in the fossil record as an "abominable mystery" because it contradicted his theory of gradual evolution through natural selection.
- Angiosperms - unlike their predecessors, like ferns, mosses, and gymnosperms - rapidly diversified and began to dominate terrestrial ecosystems.
- They evolved specialised structures such as flowers, fruits, and enclosed seeds, and developed complex interactions with pollinators, allowing for more efficient reproduction and adaptability.

However, the molecular and genetic underpinnings of this sudden success remained largely unknown until now.

Plant Life-Cycles: A Tale of Two Phases

Plants exhibit alternation of generations between:

- Gametophyte phase: haploid (one set of chromosomes), responsible for producing gametes (sperm and egg).
- Sporophyte phase: diploid (two sets of chromosomes), produces spores that eventually develop into gametophytes.
- Early land plants like mosses spend most of their lifecycle in the gametophyte stage, relying on external water for sperm mobility. In contrast, flowering plants (angiosperms) primarily exist in the sporophyte phase, and their gametophytes are tiny, embedded structures such as pollen (male) and ovules (female).
- Understanding how these phases evolved and how they began interacting more closely in flowering plants offers vital clues to plant evolutionary biology.

Feature: The Discovery of SHUKR and Evolutionary Role

What is SHUKR?

- SHUKR - derived from the word for "sperm" in several Indian languages is a gene expressed in the sporophyte tissues of Arabidopsis thaliana. The gene was found to be essential for viable pollen development, even though traditional understanding held that gametophyte development was autonomous.
- Its discovery challenges a longstanding assumption in plant biology -that gametophyte development in flowering plants is independent of the sporophyte.
- SHUKR's Molecular Role

The SHUKR gene:

- It is active in the sporophyte.
- Regulates a set of pollen-specific F-box genes, which manage protein turnover in developing pollen.
- It is essential for male fertility - when SHUKR is mutated or absent, the plant fails to produce functional pollen.
- F-box proteins are part of the ubiquitin-proteasome system, which removes damaged or unnecessary proteins and allows new proteins to take their place - a mechanism crucial for developmental plasticity.

Evolutionary Timeline and Significance

- SHUKR first appeared in eudicots roughly 125 million years ago.
- This timeline coincides with the explosive radiation of flowering plants in the fossil record.
- It may have allowed rapid adaptation to various environmental conditions via pollen customisation, aiding in geographical spread and reproductive fitness.
- The finding essentially connects molecular evolution with macro-evolutionary trends in plant biodiversity.

Challenges

Uncovering Evolutionary Transitions

- Despite this breakthrough, there remain several unsolved questions:
- Why did SHUKR emerge only in eudicots and not in monocots (like grasses)?
- What environmental pressures drove its positive selection and diversification?
- Are there equivalent genetic innovations in other major angiosperm clades?
- These gaps necessitate broader comparative genomic studies across plant lineages.

Functional Redundancy and Genetic Complexity

- Plant genomes are notoriously redundant, with gene families often having overlapping functions.
- Studying the precise role of one gene (like SHUKR) becomes difficult without completely isolating its network of downstream and upstream regulators.
- The CCMB study used model organisms (like Arabidopsis thaliana), which may not fully represent evolutionary dynamics in crops or wild plant species.

Climate Change and Modern Reproductive Stress

- While SHUKR may hold the keys to understanding reproductive success under historic climate variability, modern climate change presents more severe and unpredictable challenges.

- High temperatures are known to impair pollen viability.
- Rapid desertification and salinisation of soil affect germination and seed formation.
- Extreme weather events could offset the adaptive advantages SHUKR conferred millions of years ago.

Translational Challenges in Agriculture

- SHUKR offers potential to bioengineer climate-resilient crops, but:
- How to safely incorporate SHUKR pathways into non-eudicot crops?
- What are the ethical and biosafety implications of gene editing in food crops?
- Could overexpression or manipulation of such genes have unintended ecological impacts?
- The transition from lab to field requires multidisciplinary assessments.

Way Forward

Expand Comparative Genomics Across Species

- To establish SHUKR's evolutionary uniqueness and trace its lineage:
- Study monocots and basal angiosperms.
- Use phylogenetic mapping to understand gene duplication events.
- Analyse associated regulatory networks under different environmental stimuli.
- This could reveal whether other undiscovered genes also contributed to angiosperm radiation.
- Integrate Evolutionary Biology with Crop Science

The insights from SHUKR can be leveraged to:

- Improve pollen resilience in food crops.
- Develop climate-resistant varieties through marker-assisted selection or CRISPR-based gene editing.
- Explore its use in precision breeding, especially in high-temperature or low-water conditions.
- The SHUKR mechanism may be used to optimise flowering and seed production in unpredictable climates.
- Multi-omics Approach to Plant Fitness

Future studies should combine:

- Transcriptomics (RNA expression of SHUKR under stress),
- Proteomics (actual pollen proteins involved), and
- Metabolomics (biochemical changes during gametogenesis)
- Such an integrative approach can predict plant response to complex environmental scenarios, beyond what genome sequencing alone offers.
- Focus on Pollination Biology and Ecology
- SHUKR's impact on pollen quality suggests a potential role in plant-pollinator interactions. Studies must explore:
- Does SHUKR influence pollen nutrient composition, thereby attracting certain pollinators?
- Can manipulation of SHUKR alter flowering times and pollinator preferences?
- Understanding this relationship is crucial for ecosystem conservation and agricultural productivity.

Policy Push for Basic Research

- This breakthrough underscores the importance of basic science funding in India:

- India should expand public funding for molecular plant biology.
- Promote long-term projects on gene-environment interactions in native crops.
- Support open-access genomic databases for collaborative research across borders.
- India's ecological diversity makes it a perfect laboratory for such evolutionary research.

Conclusion

The discovery of SHUKR by the CCMB team represents a landmark in evolutionary plant biology, offering a credible molecular explanation for Darwin's abominable mystery. It shifts the paradigm from seeing flowering plant evolution as an unexplained anomaly to one driven by adaptive genetic innovation.

"Darwin termed the rapid diversification of flowering plants an 'abominable mystery'. Critically examine how the recent discovery of the SHUKR gene by Indian scientists provides a molecular explanation for this evolutionary puzzle. What are its implications for plant biology and agricultural resilience in the face of climate change?"

The discovery of the SHUKR gene in Arabidopsis thaliana provides novel insights into the sudden evolutionary success of eudicots during the Early Cretaceous. Which of the following statements best encapsulates the gene's evolutionary and developmental implications as per the CCMB findings?

A. SHUKR encodes a transcription factor in the gametophyte that facilitates direct pollen tube elongation, enhancing pollinator-driven fertilisation across all angiosperms.

B. SHUKR regulates a group of F-box genes in the sporophyte phase, governing protein turnover essential for viable pollen development, and its emergence coincides with the eudicot radiation ~125 million years ago.

C. SHUKR acts redundantly with ubiquitin-ligase genes in monocots to delay gametophyte senescence, thereby extending the reproductive window under climate stress.

D. SHUKR evolved as part of the female gametophyte's epigenetic regulation machinery, ensuring ovule development under high-temperature conditions in basal angiosperms.

Correct Answer:

B. SHUKR regulates a group of F-box genes in the sporophyte phase, governing protein turnover essential for viable pollen development, and its emergence coincides with the eudicot radiation ~125 million years ago.

Explanation:

- **Option A is incorrect:** SHUKR is expressed in the sporophyte, not the gametophyte, and does not directly regulate pollen tube elongation.
- **Option B is correct:** SHUKR regulates pollen-specific F-box genes, crucial for protein turnover, and its emergence aligns with the explosive diversification of eudicots.
- **Option C is incorrect:** SHUKR has not been found in monocots, and there's no evidence of redundancy with ubiquitin-ligase genes in delaying gametophyte senescence.
- **Option D is incorrect:** SHUKR does not function in the female gametophyte and is not linked to epigenetic regulation in basal angiosperms.

Kheer Bhawani Festival

Why in the News?

The recent terror attack in Pahalgam has cast a shadow over the annual Jyestha Ashtami celebrations at the Kheer Bhawani temple, leading to a significant drop in pilgrim turnout. The incident has once again highlighted the fragile security situation in Kashmir and the vulnerabilities of religious minorities.

Background

- The Kheer Bhawani Festival, also known as Mela Kheer Bhawani, is a major religious event for the Kashmiri Pandit community, celebrated annually on Jyestha Ashtami.
- The temple is located in Tulmulla village, Ganderbal district, Jammu and Kashmir.
- Dedicated to Goddess Ragnya Devi, the temple is built atop a natural spring, where devotees offer kheer (rice pudding) as a sacred offering.
- Historical references to the site exist in texts like Kalhana's Rajtarangini, Bhrigu Samhita, and Abu'l-Fazl's Ain-i-Akbari.
- Maharaja Pratap Singh originally built the modern structure, with renovations by Maharaja Hari Singh in the early 1900s.

Features

- **Spiritual Symbolism:** The temple spring, Syandh, is considered sacred and separate from the Sindhu (Indus) River.

Colour-Changing Spring: The spring water is believed to change colour based on the region's well-being. Notably, it reportedly turned black in 1990, just before the mass exodus of Kashmiri Pandits.

- **Cultural Significance:** Serves as a symbol of identity, continuity, and resilience for the displaced Kashmiri Pandit diaspora.
- **Community Participation:** Local Muslim communities assist with festival preparations, highlighting interfaith cooperation and communal harmony.
- Scale: It is the largest Hindu gathering in the Valley after the Amarnath Yatra.

Challenges

- **Security Threats**: Recurring incidents of terrorism and targeted killings discourage pilgrim participation and threaten safety.
- **Communal Tensions**: Occasional politicisation of the event and communal polarisation can overshadow its inclusive ethos.
- Preservation of Heritage: Maintenance of the temple structure, natural spring, and ritual practices is challenged by declining numbers and infrastructural neglect.

Emotional and Psychological Barriers: For many displaced Pandits, returning to the Valley, even for a religious occasion, brings back trauma and fear.

Way Forward

- **Enhanced Security Protocols:** The government must ensure safe passage and protection for devotees, especially during high-risk events.

- **Rehabilitation Efforts:** Strengthen policies aimed at resettling displaced Kashmiri Pandits and restoring trust in local governance.
- **Interfaith Engagement:** Promote and preserve the tradition of Muslim participation as a model for communal unity.
- **Cultural Documentation:** Record and promote the rituals, stories, and oral traditions associated with the temple to sustain intangible heritage.
- **Tourism and Pilgrimage Infrastructure: I**mprove basic amenities, transport access, and emergency services for pilgrims at Tulmulla.
- **Youth Involvement:** Encourage diaspora youth to participate in festivals through community programs, storytelling, and virtual platforms.

Conclusion:
The Kheer Bhawani Festival is not merely a religious event; it is a testament to the resilience of a displaced community, a beacon of interfaith unity, and a reminder of Kashmir's syncretic past. Protecting and promoting such events, amid security concerns and cultural erosion, is crucial to inclusive peace-building in Jammu and Kashmir.

Q. Which of the following statements about the Kheer Bhawani Festival is/are correct?

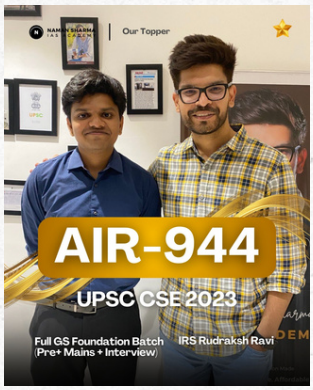
1. It is celebrated by the Kashmiri Pandit community on Jyestha Ashtami.
2. The temple is dedicated to Goddess Vaishno Devi.
3. The festival takes place at a temple located over a natural spring in the Ganderbal district, Jammu and Kashmir.
4. The water of the spring is believed to change colour based on the state of the region.

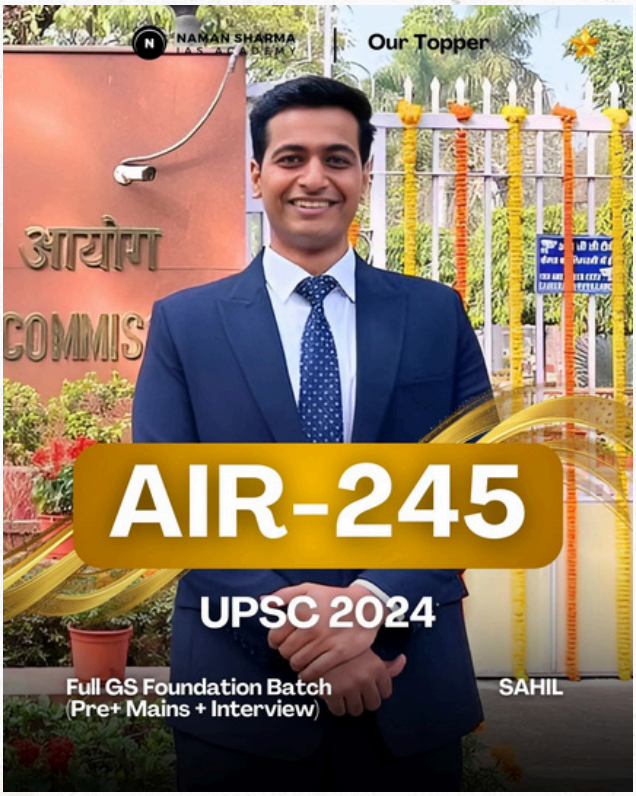
Select the correct answer using the code below:
A) 1 and 2 only
B) 1, 3, and 4 only
C) 2, 3, and 4 only
D) 1, 2, 3, and 4

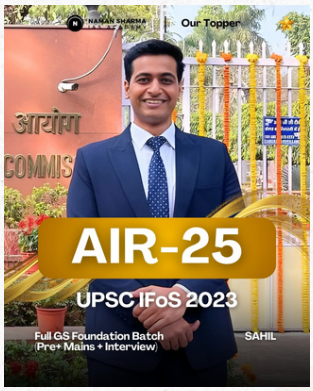
Answer: B) 1, 3, and 4 only
Explanation:

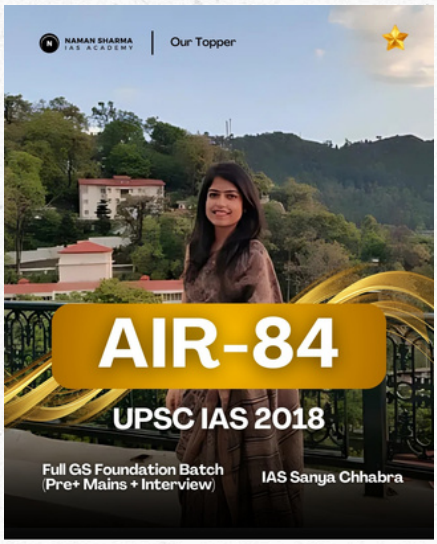
- **Statement 1 is correct:** the festival is celebrated by Kashmiri Pandits on Jyestha Ashtami.
- **Statement 2 is incorrect:** the temple is dedicated to Goddess Ragnya Devi, not Vaishno Devi.
- **Statements 3 and 4 are correct:** the temple is located over a natural spring in Tulmulla, Ganderbal, and the water is believed to change colour as an omen.

Our Recent Toppers









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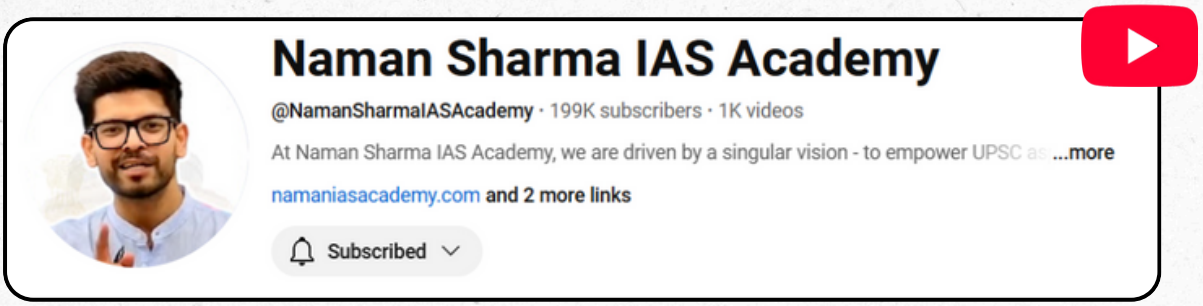

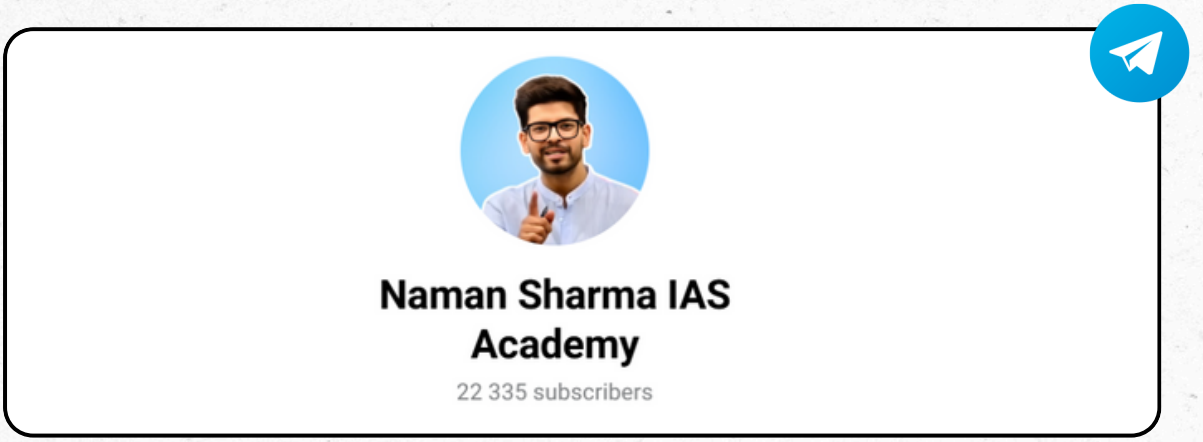

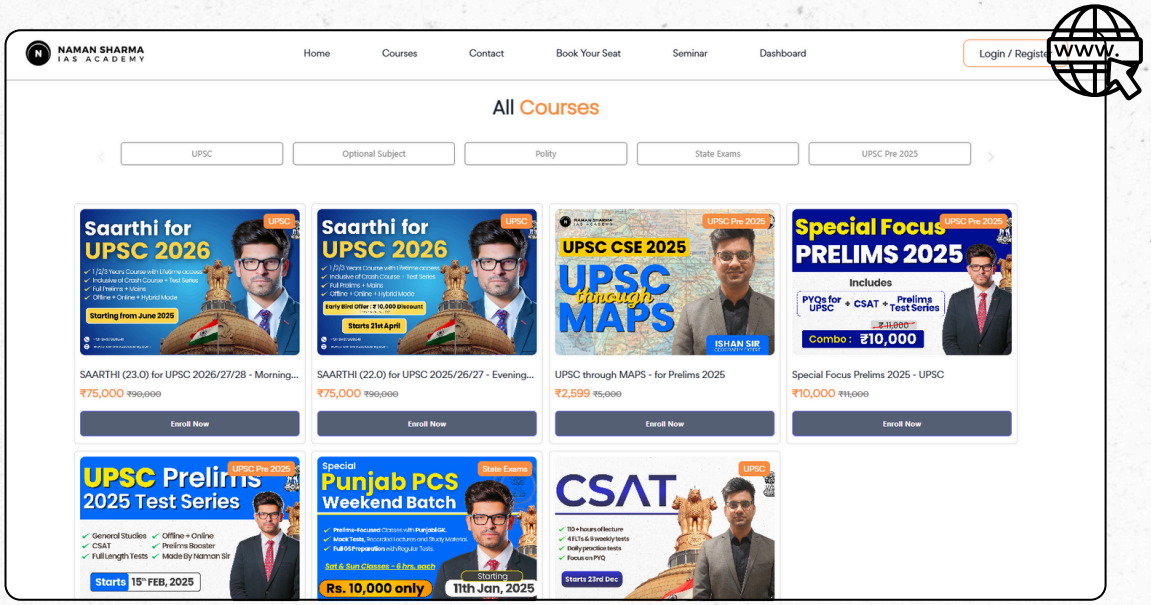

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