



# Daily Current Affairs

Posted at: 31/01/2019

## **Salt Satyagraha**

### **Why in news?**

Prime Minister dedicated the National Salt Satyagraha Memorial at Dandi in Navsari district, Gujarat to the nation today on Mahatma Gandhi's death anniversary.

### **About Salt Satyagraha:**

- Salt March, also called Dandi March or Salt Satyagraha, major nonviolent protest action in India led by Mohandas (Mahatma) Gandhi in March–April 1930.
- The march was the first act in an even-larger campaign of civil disobedience (satyagraha) Gandhi waged against British rule in India that extended into early 1931 and garnered Gandhi widespread support among the Indian populace and considerable worldwide attention.

### **Background:**

- Salt production and distribution in India had long been a lucrative monopoly of the British. Through a series of laws, the Indian populace was prohibited from producing or selling salt independently, and instead Indians were required to buy expensive, heavily taxed salt that often was imported.
- This affected the great majority of Indians, who were poor and could not afford to buy it.

- Indian protests against the salt tax began in the 19th century and remained a major contentious issue throughout the period of British rule of the subcontinent.

### **How Salt Satyagraha March Begun?**

- In early 1930 Gandhi decided to mount a highly visible demonstration against the increasingly repressive salt tax by marching through what is now the western Indian state of Gujarat from his ashram (religious retreat) at Sabermati (near Ahmadabad) to the town of Dandi (near Surat) on the Arabian Sea coast.
  - He set out on foot on March 12, accompanied by several dozen followers. After each day's march the group stopped in a different village along the route, where increasingly larger crowds would gather to hear Gandhi rail against the unfairness of the tax on poor people.
  - Hundreds more would join the core group of followers as they made their way to the sea until on April 5 the entourage reached Dandi after a journey of 385 km.
  - On the morning of April 6, Gandhi and his followers picked up handfuls of salt along the shore, thus technically "producing" salt and breaking the law.
  - No arrests were made that day, and Gandhi continued his satyagraha against the salt tax for the next two months, exhorting other Indians to break the salt laws by committing acts of civil disobedience.
  - Thousands were arrested and imprisoned, including Jawaharlal Nehru in April and Gandhi himself in early May after he informed **Lord Irwin** (the viceroy of India) of his intention to march on the nearby Dharasana saltworks.
  - News of Gandhi's detention spurred tens of thousands more to join the satyagraha. The march on the saltworks went ahead as planned on May 21, led by the poet Sarojini Naidu, and many of the some 2,500 peaceful marchers were attacked and beaten by police. By the end of the year, some 60,000 people were in jail.
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# **India Post Payments Bank**

## **Why in news?**

Union Minister of Finance and Corporate Affairs has congratulated the Department of Posts and India Post Payments Bank (IPPB) for their tremendous efforts in spreading the activities of the bank.

## **About India Post Payments Bank:**

- India Post Payments Bank (IPPB) is a Government of India owned payments bank operating under the Department of Posts, Ministry of Communications, which aims to utilize all of India's 155,015 post offices as access points and 300,000 postal service workers to provide house to house banking services.
- The first phase of the bank with 650 branches and 3250 post offices as access points was inaugurated on 1 September 2018. Over ten thousand postmen have been roped into the first phase.

## **Services:**

- India Post Payments Banks offers savings accounts, money transfer and insurances through third parties, bill and utility payments.
  - The Bank will reach to rural and far-flung areas of the country, delivering banking services to the doorstep of every Indian
1. Account: The bank offers savings and current accounts up to a balance of Rs 1 Lac.
  2. QR Card: Customers can use QR code payments eliminating the need to remember account numbers, PINs and passwords.
  3. Unified Payments Interface
  4. Immediate Payment Service
  5. National Electronic Funds Transfer
  6. Real-time gross settlement
  7. Bharat BillPay
  8. Direct Benefit Transfer
  9. India Post Payments Bank has been allowed to link around 17

crore postal savings bank (PSB) accounts with its accounts.

- The government aims to link all the 1.55 lakh post offices to the IPP Bank system by 31 December 2018.

### **Highlights:**

- Launched on 01st September, 2018 by the Prime Minister of India across 650 districts, in a little over four months, the India Post Payments Bank (IPPB) has rolled out 1.25 lakhs access points across the country.
- Significantly approximate 1.10 lakh of these Access Points are located in the rural areas. It is fastest Access Points ramp up in banking history with the average rate of over 800 Access Points per day.
- The number of Access Points of IPPB is nearly twice the number of bank branches in rural India until recently. In a major boost to financial inclusion in the country, the IPPB has become the largest bank in terms of reach and network in realization of its objective of being the most accessible, affordable and trusted bank for the common man.
- In its quest to remove the barriers for the unbanked and under-banked population, the IPPB has made banking and payments simple while taking them to the doorsteps of customers.
- Using Aadhaar, it is opening paperless DBT accounts in minutes. The innovative deployment of the QR card and use of biometric authentication enables bill payments, remittances as well as deposit and withdrawals with ease even by those without smart phones.
- In a large digital literacy program, more than 2.5 lakhs last mile delivery agents (Postman, GDS) have been trained and certified to provide door step banking services and promoting financial literacy in the rural areas.
- Equipped with a smart phone and biometric device, these agents of IPPB have redefined accessibility and availability of digital financial services at the last mile.
- Leveraging these strengths, the IPPB in partnership with National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) has pioneered the assisted UPI which allows on-boarding of people without phones on the world's fastest growing payments platform.

- Since its launch, IPPB has seen good adoption of its services. Over 30 lakh customers have opened savings accounts and are availing banking services like money transfer, bill payments, cash deposits and withdrawal at their doorstep.
- Further, almost 1 lakh Post Office Savings Account (POSA) holders have linked their old post office accounts with IPPB to enjoy interoperable banking services through channels like mobile banking, doorstep banking, SMS and IVR which were not available to them earlier.
- More than 8 lakh customers have downloaded IPPB Mobile Banking App and are now equipped for self-service digital banking transactions.
- The IPPB customers have, in a short span of four months, made over 21 lakhs transactions valuing in excess of Rs. 800 crores. More than 1.5 lakh bill payments have also been processed by IPPB.
- As a part of its strategy to promote a less cash economy and deepen the digital payments ecosystem, the IPPB has enabled digital payment through a simple QR code at more than 10000 Post Office Counters.
- Nearly 25000 customers have made digital payments worth Rs. 13 Crores through IPPB for their investments in PPF/ RD /Sukanya Samriddhi Yojana in the last 3 months, without having to visit the post office.

### **Key Facts:**

- Fastest Access Point ramp up in banking history with 125,000+ Access Points launched over a period of 4 months, at an average rate of over 800 per day.
- Largest digital literacy program ever, with 250,000+ postal employees trained and certified to provide banking services over last 5 months.
- Over 30 lakh customers availing banking services. 21 lakh transactions performed valued at over Rs 800 Crores.
- Over 1 lakh Post Office savings bank customers enjoying interoperable banking services by linking their Post Office Savings Account to the IPPB account.
- 800,000+ downloads of the IPPB mobile banking application.
- Digitization of over 10,000 Post Office counters through a simple QR

code to accept electronic payments.

- Digital payments enabled for various Post Office Savings schemes; investments worth Rs 13 Crores facilitated through the same.
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## **Lokpal**

### **Why in news?**

The first meeting of the Search Committee for recommending a panel of names for appointment as Chairperson and Members of the Lokpal was held on 29th January, 2019.

### **About Lokpal:**

- A Lokpal is an anti-corruption authority or ombudsman who represents the public interest. The concept of an ombudsman is borrowed from Sweden.
- The Lokpal has jurisdiction over all Members of Parliament and central government employees in cases of corruption. The Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act was passed in 2013 with amendments in parliament, following the Jan Lokpal movement led by Anna Hazare in 2011.
- The Lokpal is responsible for enquiring into corruption charges at the national level while the Lokayukta performs the same function at the state level.
- This has been one of the few pieces of legislation in recent years which has been extensively debated publicly and received in depth parliamentary scrutiny.
- Before the bill was introduced in parliament, a joint committee made up of government and civil society representatives had made an attempt to draft the Bill.
- This effort remained inconclusive and the government introduced a Bill drafted by it in Lok Sabha. This Bill was examined by the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Law and Justice and passed by the Lower House in 2011.
- The Bill was then referred to a Select Committee of Rajya Sabha. Based on the recommendations of the Select Committee, the



government made amendments to the Bill before it was passed in Rajya Sabha.

- Lok Sabha then approved these amendments leading to its passage in Parliament. Some of the key provisions of this Bill relate to the jurisdictions of Lokpal, its selection, autonomy of Central Bureau of Investigation and the creation of Lokayukta's in states.

### **Provisions:**

- The Bill as passed by Parliament creates a Lokpal at the centre which shall consist of a chairperson and up to eight members.
- Half of these members should have higher judicial experience and the other half should have experience in public administration, finance, insurance and banking laws, anti corruption and vigilance.
- It also provides that half the members of Lokpal shall be from amongst scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, other backward castes, minority communities and women.
- The chairman and members of Lokpal shall be appointed by a selection committee consisting of the *Prime Minister, the Speaker of Lok Sabha, the Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha, the Chief Justice of India or a sitting supreme court judge as nominated by the CJI and an eminent jurist* to be nominated by the President based on the recommendations of the other members of the selection committee.
- The Bill specifies that the office of Lokpal ***shall investigate and prosecute cases of corruption***. The jurisdiction of Lokpal extends to the Prime Minister, Ministers, current and former Members of Parliament and Members of Legislative Assemblies, government employees and employees of companies funded or controlled by the central or state government.
- Lokpal shall also have jurisdiction over institutions receiving foreign donations in excess of ten lakh rupees per year or such higher limit as specified.
- The Bill excludes, any allegation of corruption against a Member of Parliament in respect of anything said or a vote given in Parliament, from the jurisdiction of Lokpal.
- It specifies a time limit of 60 days for completion of inquiry and 6 months for completion of investigation by the Central Bureau of

Investigation.

- This period of 6 months can be extended by the Lokpal on a written request from CBI. Lokpal is also required to hear the explanation of the public servant before ordering an investigation.
- This however would not interfere with any search and seizure required to be undertaken by any agency.
- The bill also specifies that any inquiry against the Prime Minister has to be held in-camera and approved by two third of the full bench of the Lokpal.
- The Bill gives Lokpal the power of superintendence over CBI with respect to cases referred by it to CBI.
- It also specifies that CBI officers investigating cases referred by the Lokpal can only be transferred with the approval of the Lokpal.
- It proposes establishment of a Directorate of prosecution within CBI to be headed by Director who is an officer not below the rank of joint secretary for conduction prosecution of cases under the Lokpal Bill.
- The director of prosecution shall be appointed by the government on the recommendation of the Central Vigilance Commission.
- The CBI with the consent of Lokpal is empowered to appoint a panel of advocates, other than government advocates for conducting cases referred by Lokpal.
- The central government is entrusted with the responsibility of making funds available to CBI for conducting investigation into Lokpal referred matters. All expenses of Lokpal shall be charged to the Consolidated Fund of India.

### **Penalty:**

- The legislation provides an imprisonment of up to seven years for public servants on grounds of corruption. Criminal misconduct and habitually abetting corruption has a higher penalty and would result in imprisonment up to ten years.
- Making false and frivolous complaints to Lokpal would result in a fine of up to one lakh rupees and imprisonment of up to one year.
- In addition a person who is convicted for having made a false complaint shall be liable to compensate the public servant against whom the false complaint was made.
- However complaints made in good faith, that is with due care, caution



and a sense of responsibility will be excluded from penalty.

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## **The Future of Rail**

### **Why in news?**

Recently Minister of Railways & Coal, Shri Piyush Goyal launched the report “The Future of Rail” of International Energy Agency (IEA) at an event.

### **Highlights:**

- “The Future of Rail” the first-of-a-kind report analyses the current and future importance of rail around the world through the perspective of its energy and environmental implications.
- The report reviews the impact of existing plans and regulations on the future of rail, and explores the key policies that could help to realise an enhanced future rail.
- This first ever global report has a focus on India, elaborating on the unique social and economic role of rail in India, together with its great enduring potential, to show how India can extend and update its networks to harness rail at a scope and scale that is unparalleled.

### **Background:**

- The IEA is an inter-governmental organisation that works to ensure reliable, affordable and clean energy for its 30 member countries and 8 association countries.
- Its mission is guided by four main areas of focus: energy security, economic development, environmental awareness and engagement worldwide.
- India and the International Energy Agency (IEA) have benefited from a long, on-going bilateral relationship and cooperation in a broad range of area including energy security, statistics, energy efficiency,

market analysis for oil, gas, electricity, renewables, system integration and implementation agreements for enhanced technologies.

- India has been the focus of many recent IEA analyses and reports for instance through the special focus chapter on the Indian Power sector of the Energy Technology Perspectives (ETP) publication and the World Energy Outlook (WEO).
  - High level policy dialogues have been further intensified over the last few years including a statement of intent on data and research cooperation, and a memorandum of understanding on clean energy research and development tracking.
  - IEA has also held workshops and training programmes in India on energy data training, energy efficiency, strategic petroleum reserves, and the integration of renewables into the grid.
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## **UN: Water Desalination Factories Harm Environment**

### **Why in news?**

A recent United Nations report has found desalination harmful to the environment.

### **Highlights:**

- Desalination is the process of removing salt from seawater for use by humans and in agriculture.
- Almost 16,000 desalination factories around the world produce huge flows of highly salty waste water and dangerous chemicals.
- Desalination is a fast-growing private industry that uses massive amounts of electrical energy. It is also one of the most expensive sources of water. However, many of the world's dry areas depend on it.
- The study comes from the Institute for Water, Environment and Health at U.N. University, or UNU. The study was part of research

into how best to secure fresh water for a rising population without harming the environment.

- Desalination plants release 142 million cubic meters of salty brine every day, 50 percent more brine than formerly estimated.
  - Brine is water containing large amounts of salt and often includes chemicals such as chlorine and copper used in desalination. The salty brine is mostly released into the sea.
  - Brine can cut oxygen levels in seawater and cause serious harm to sea animals, including shellfish. This harm leads to observable damage throughout the food chain.
  - Alex Drak is an engineer at IDE Technologies in Israel, a leading desalination firm. He said brine that is processed correctly dissolves quickly in the sea.
  - “We see a lot of marine life, different types of fish,” near where the brine is released, said Drak, who was not involved in the UNU study.
  - A little more than half the brine comes from factories processing seawater in Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Qatar, the study reported.
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## **Kala Ghoda Arts Festival 2019**

### **Why in news?**

Kala Ghoda Arts Festival (KGAF), India’s biggest cultural street festival, is all set to deliver this year an enthralling commemoration of 20 years since its inception.

### **Highlights:**

- KGAF 2019 will celebrate two glorious decades of art and culture, across various forms and communities including design, cinema, theatre, dance, literature and much more, from 2nd to 10th February 2019 at the iconic art district of Kala Ghoda.
- The festival has always been inclusive, providing information and

entertainment to all demographics and social and economic strata, without any charge.

- It is a wondrous, cumulative effort of artists and artisans, curators and volunteers who make the festival a true celebration of culture.
- This year we also pay homage to the Father of the Nation on his 150th birth anniversary by a special exhibition at the Jehangir Art Gallery and through programs in music, dance, literature, theatre and more.



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