India to spruce up mechanisms for accessing climate finance	Destruction of illegal poppy fields, machinery intensified in Manipur	Popular food brands may soon open outlets at stations as Railways revises policy	Army sets up three new garrisons near the strategic Siliguri Corridor	Bangladesh tense ahead of ICT verdict on Hasina
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27 lakh workers removed from MGNREGS database as Centre conducts e-KYC

Nearly 27 lakh workers' names were removed from the database of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS), the Centre's rural jobs scheme, between October 10 and November 14, far exceeding the 10.5 lakh additions during the same period. The spike in deletions coincides with the Centre's push to conduct e-KYC — an electronic know your customer process — for all workers, to weed out in eligible beneficiaries.

In the first six months of the financial year 2025-26, according to the analysis, the scheme recorded net additions of 83.6 lakh workers, as 98.8 lakh workers were added, against 15.2 lakh deletions. By mid November, however, net additions had fallen to 66.5 lakh, effectively wiping out 17 lakh workers in a single month. The analysis also noted that 6 lakh of these beneficiaries were active workers, defined as those who have worked at least one day in the past three years. States with high e-KYC completion rates are leading the trend in deletions. In Andhra Pradesh, where 78.4% of workers have completed e-KYC, there were 15.92 lakh deletions. Tamil Nadu (67.6%) saw 30,529 deletions, and Chhattisgarh (66.6%) reported 1.04 lakh. The e-KYC process requires the mates, or MGNREGS supervisors, to click pictures of each of the workers and upload them on the MGNREGS's digital attendance application, the National Mobile Monitoring System (NMMS), to match these photographs with their Aadhaar data. One of the reasons the government introduced e KYC as an additional layer of verification was the discovery that the NMMS platform was being "misused". The Ministry of Rural Development had directed States to ensure that these photographs and the attendance of workers were verified at the gram panchayat, block, district and State levels.

Hundreds throng Kalpathy

The renowned Kalpathy Car Festival or 'Rathasangamom' in Palakkad district of Kerala reached its climax on Sunday as the chariots from four temples converged in front of the Sri Vishalakshi Sametha Sri Viswanatha Swamy Temple.

Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said on Sunday that Tehran is no longer enriching uranium after Israeli and U.S. strikes destroyed its facilities in June. He told presspersons that no enrichment is occurring and all sites are under IAEA monitoring, while stressing Iran's right to peaceful nuclear technology. Iran's nuclear programme has been a major point of contention between Tehran and the West

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Destruction of illegal poppy fields, machinery intensified in Manipur

Scale and Scope of Anti-Narcotics Action

- Security forces in Manipur destroyed illegal poppy plantations spread over 476 acres in Kangpokpi and Ukhrul districts within five days (November 11–15).
- Operations included joint teams from Manipur Police, Assam Rifles, and Central Reserve Police Force, illustrating coordinated efforts against opium cultivation.

Context and Significance

- Poppy cultivation in Manipur's hills produces opium, and its trade has allegedly fueled ethnic conflict between Kuki-Zo and Meitei communities since May 2023.
- Government sees controlling illicit poppy trade as essential to curbing unrest and improving law and order.

Details of Crackdown

- On November 15, teams destroyed 20 acres of illegal fields in Loibol Khullen village, Kangpokpi district; equipment such as spray pumps, pipes, herbicides, and other materials were burnt on site.
- Another raid at Kotlen village led to the burning of five makeshift huts and destruction/seizure of fertilizers, herbicides, and salt.
- In Ukhrul district, 436 acres of poppy fields were razed in Somdal, Lamlai Chingfei, and Litan villages over the same time period.

Impact on the Infrastructure of Illicit Cultivation

- Machinery and logistics central to poppy farming (sprayers, pipes, huts) were systematically demolished to hinder future cultivation attempts.
- The destruction of fertilizers, chemicals, and equipment aims to disrupt the supply chain supporting narcotics production.

Continued Enforcement and Future Plans

- Officials stated that more crackdowns are expected soon, pointing to an intensifying campaign.
- Authorities indicated the approach is part of a broader effort to dismantle drug networks and restore order following the ethnic conflict.
- These actions reflect a comprehensive response to the intertwined challenges of narcotics cultivation and ethnic instability in Manipur, emphasizing destruction of both crops and supporting infrastructure as a long-term deterrent.

Emergency care in taluk, district hospitals improves child survival rates in T.N.

PREM Initiative and Its Scope

- Tamil Nadu has implemented the Paediatric Resuscitation and Emergency Medicine (PREM) initiative in government secondary-care centres, including district headquarters hospitals and taluk hospitals.
- PREM is one of the six pillars of the Tamil Nadu Accident and Emergency Care Initiative (TAEI).
- 116 PREM centres have been established across government tertiary and secondary institutions, covering 41 major medical education and research institutes and 75 directorate and rural health institutions.

Outcomes: Child Survival Rates and Admissions

- The initiative has significantly improved child survival rates in the last few years.
- Data shows survival rates for children treated at PREM centres rose from 93.44% in 2021 to 96.26% in 2024.
- In 2024 (up to August), the survival rate was 94.34%, and admissions increased sharply from 21,586 in 2021 to over 80,907 in 2024.

Guidelines and Training

- PREM protocols and guidelines were developed by leading child health institutes and hospitals in the state.
- Training programs for medical professionals included performing rapid analyses of sick children and making independent medical decisions, thereby reducing mortality.
- These guidelines formed the basis for standard operating procedures (SOPs), which have been implemented in taluk and district hospitals across Tamil Nadu.

Impact and National Relevance

- The model has been described as a strategy to reduce post-neonatal under-five mortality in Tamil Nadu under the National Health Mission.
- Tamil Nadu is recognized for pioneering high standards of child emergency care and hospital practices, potentially serving as a model for other states.

Operational Details

- PREM centres feature dedicated teams trained and equipped for paediatric emergencies, particularly with a focus on critically important interventions during the "golden hour" of illness or injury.
- With standardized infrastructure and trained personnel, hospitals are able to provide prompt and specialized emergency services.
- Tamil Nadu's PREM initiative demonstrates measurable success in reducing child mortality by equipping taluk and district hospitals with specialized emergency care capabilities, rigorous guidelines, and effective training for health professionals.

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Army sets up three new garrisons near the strategic Siliguri Corridor

Strategic Context and Rationale
- The Indian Army has reinforced its eastern frontier by establishing three new garrison locations in response to changing regional dynamics, regime change in Bangladesh, and China's expanding presence near the Siliguri Corridor.
- The Siliguri Corridor is a vital, narrow stretch linking India's northeastern states to the rest of the country, making its security crucial for national integrity and defense preparedness.

Details of New Establishments
- The new establishments include the Lachit Borphukan Military Station in Assam's Dhubri district, along with forward bases at Kishanganj in Bihar and Chopra in West Bengal, all near the India-Bangladesh border.
- These sites are designed to enhance operational readiness and surveillance along the eastern frontier, with additional coordination with the Border Security Force overseeing the Bangladesh sector.

Defence Leadership and Local Collaboration
- Senior defence officials emphasized the necessity of these garrisons to meet evolving threats and maintain high preparedness, noting praise for professionalism and ramped efforts in operationalizing the bases.
- The stations also received significant support from local government and administrative agencies in Assam, which helped expedite establishment.
- The Lachit Borphukan Military Station is named after a historic Ahom commander, resonating with local heritage and boosting community relations.

Broader Security Concerns
- The article highlights ongoing concerns over illegal immigration influencing demographic changes in the border districts, as raised by Union Home Minister Amit Shah.
- Developments in border infrastructure by China along the Line of Actual Control in Arunachal Pradesh are flagged as a continuing strategic challenge.
- Increased military assets, such as the Tri-Shakti Corps, Rafale fighter jets, BrahMos missiles, and advanced air-defense systems, underscore India's efforts to fortify the region.

Regional Military Developments
- China's trilateral consultations with Pakistan and Bangladesh—held without India's involvement—have heightened geopolitical sensitivities.
- Separately, Pakistan Navy's visit to Chattogram port in Bangladesh marks renewed defense cooperation between those countries, possibly affecting India's regional security calculus.

Military Exercises and Readiness
- The new garrisons coincide with high-profile military exercises, including a major Indian Air Force display in Assam and the Army's Exercise Poorvi Prachand Prahar near the Line of Actual Control in Arunachal Pradesh, demonstrating operational readiness.

Jaishankar, Qatar PM discuss bilateral cooperation

Key Bilateral Topics
- Jaishankar met Qatar's top leadership in Doha, including Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al Thani and called on Qatar's Amir Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani.
- Discussions focused on major aspects of India-Qatar relations: energy cooperation, expanding trade, investments, regional and global issues, and increasing people-to-people connections.

Diplomatic Outcomes
- Both sides reaffirmed commitment to strengthening bilateral ties; Jaishankar particularly stressed improved collaboration and exploration of new opportunities.
- The Minister expressed appreciation for Qatar's guidance on expanding cooperation, sharing perspectives on Middle East/West Asia, and other global developments.
- India's bilateral trade with Qatar in 2023-24 stood at $14.08 billion, underlining the importance of economic ties.

Future Cooperation
- Jaishankar called for continued high-level dialogue and stressed the importance of maintaining strong India-Qatar partnerships in all strategic spheres.
- Qatar's leadership reciprocated by reiterating their commitment to the relationship and the search for new collaborative opportunities.

Other Diplomatic Engagements
- Jaishankar is scheduled to meet Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov in Moscow, with discussions expected to focus on bilateral relations, the Council of Prime Ministers of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), and possibly an interaction with Russian President Putin.
- This also notes that Pakistan's Deputy PM will also attend the SCO meet but no bilateral meeting is expected with Jaishankar according to sources.

Regional and Global Relevance
- The discussion in Doha is set against the backdrop of heightened diplomatic activity in West Asia and Eurasia, including energy security, regional stability, and multipolar cooperation under platforms like the SCO.

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Popular food brands may soon open outlets at stations as Railways revises policy

New Policy for Food Outlets
- Indian Railways will now allow well-known single-brand food outlets like McDonald's, KFC, Pizza Hut, Baskin Robbins, Bikaneerwala, and Haldiram's to operate at railway stations.
- This change follows a recommendation from South Central Railway and a proposal shared with the General Managers of all zones.
- The aim is to enhance offerings and improve catering services at stations, especially major and busy ones.

Allotment and E-Auction Process
- Outlets will be allotted strictly through an e-auction process, valid for five years.
- Both company-owned and franchisee-owned outlets can participate, subject to successful e-auction bidding.
- The process is designed to ensure fairness and transparency in selecting brands for stations.

Classification and Rationale
- The 2017 Railways Catering Policy identifies categories: major food outlets, beverage/snack counters, and light refreshment stalls.
- Premium branded outlets have a designated category termed "Premium Brand Catering Outlet," introduced as a fourth official category.
- The move was justified by the demand for branded food at stations and the expectation of improved customer experience.

Implementation Details
- The circular sets out terms, including license fees and duration, to ensure guidelines are clear and in line with the existing catering policy.
- Major stations, especially those with high waiting passenger numbers, will be prioritized for allotment.
- The outlets are expected to upgrade food service standards and align with commuter demands observed at high-traffic and metro stations.

Expected Impact
- By allowing branded food chains, Indian Railways aims to boost passenger satisfaction, align station facilities to global standards, and possibly increase non-fare revenue.
- The initiative reflects growing passenger expectations and seeks to modernize railway station amenities.

India to spruce up mechanisms for accessing climate finance

Context of the Initiative
- India was one of 13 countries and part of a regional African alliance that announced new platforms for "climate and nature finance" at a COP30 ministerial event in Belem, Brazil.
- These platforms are meant to streamline the process for tapping funds from the Green Climate Fund (GCF), which is the world's largest institutional climate finance mechanism.

Challenges with Existing System
- Despite $19 billion in committed funds, only a quarter has been allocated by 2024, and developing countries criticize the GCF for complex disbursal procedures and lack of technical support.
- India's current approach to GCF has been fragmented, with bureaucratic challenges in accessing funds.
- The new "country platform" aims to consolidate and simplify access by providing coordination among ministries and aligning national, public, private, and international efforts.

Purpose and Goals of the New Platform
- The Indian country platform is expected to move away from the fragmented approach and make fund access more systematic and strategic.
- This change comes at a time when developing economies want a fairer and more effective financing process for climate adaptation and mitigation.
- The GCF aims to ensure equal distribution of funds between adaptation to climate change and mitigation of emissions.

International Coordination and Partnerships
- Multiple countries and regional platforms shared visions for leveraging climate finance—such as African Islands States, Caribbean Regional Platform, and Brazil Country Platform—emphasizing the global scale of reforms.
- Shared experiences and solutions across platforms can help India find effective ways to access climate finance.

Technical and Policy Innovations
- The platforms also focus on listing useful indicators to measure progress, such as the Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA), and narrowing down priorities to the most impactful policies and projects.
- India's Environment Ministry is developing guidelines and provides nodal support for GCF-linked activities, including adaptation plans for water, energy, transport, and innovation in climate-resilient start-ups.

Financial Support and Sectoral Focus
- As of August 2024, India received $782 million in GCF support covering mitigation and adaptation across sectors including water, coastal management, transport, and climate-resilient start-ups.
- Much of this finance is concessional, intended to support the broad range of climate action and sustainable development.

EDITORIAL

PRELIMS CORNER :

1.Financial Sector Assessment (FSA) report 2025 is released by?
(a) World Bank
(b) International Monetary Fund
(c) Asian Development Bank
(d) New Development Bank

2.Ramman is a festival celebrated annually in April during Baisakhi in which of the following states?
(a) Bihar
(b) Uttar Pradesh
(c) Uttarakhand
(d) Assam

3.Mount Chimborazo is located at?
(a) Mexico
(b) USA
(c) Ecuador
(d) Canada

4.Shah Bano case 1985 associated with which of the following?
(a) Protection of minority educational institutions under Article 30
(b) Maintenance and rights of divorced muslim women under Section 125 of the CrPC
(c) Reservation in promotions for SCs and STs
(d) Freedom of Speech and Expression under Article 19

DETAILED ANSWER KEY IN THE CIVIL SERVICE CHRONICLE PAGE

Delhi's air, a 'wicked problem' in need of bold solutions

Severity and Impact of the Problem
- Delhi's air pollution is described as a critical, recurring public health emergency, not a mere seasonal inconvenience.
- Air Quality Index (AQI) during winter often reaches "severe" levels, making daily life hazardous and disrupting schools and flights.
- Exposure to high PM2.5 levels causes a substantial reduction in life expectancy, increases in asthma, bronchitis, COPD, heart attacks, strokes, hypertension, and other chronic illnesses among residents.
- Long-term exposure is linked to cognitive decline, depression, anxiety, and auto-immune disruptions; high health-care costs and loss of productivity cost India 1.36% of GDP annually—over $36.8 billion.

Complexity of Delhi's Air Pollution
- The problem is termed "wicked" due to a mix of geographic, meteorological, and man-made factors.
- Geography worsens the issue: Delhi lies in a basin with restricted air flow, trapping pollutants during winter under temperature inversions and high-pressure systems.
- The region's sheer scale—over 3.3 crore registered vehicles—adds to the challenge, combined with rapid urbanization and inadequate enforcement of pollution norms.

Major Contributors
- Diesel trucks, two-wheelers, and ageing buses spew particulates and nitrogen oxides, while factories and power plants in neighboring states release sulfur dioxide and other toxins.
- Stubble burning in Punjab and Haryana adds large amounts of smoke each winter, compounded by outdated construction and dust from building activities.
- Enforcement of norms and dust-control orders is weak; many industrial filters are missing or inadequate.

Policy and Governance Challenges
- This critiques piecemeal policy responses and lack of sustained action, mentioning stalled plans like the Unified Airshed Management Plan.
- There is a call for improved coordination across different governments and agencies, robust, transparent emissions standards, and local accountability for air quality.
- Solutions from other world cities—London's ULEZ, Beijing's comprehensive bans, and Los Angeles' coordination—are cited as models of success.

Recommendations for Solutions
- Advocates for ambitious, multi-sectoral action: implementing green public transport, retrofitting existing vehicles, enforcing emission standards, and banning polluting industrial activities.
- Recommends cooperation across state borders, using technological innovation, smart monitoring, and involving public health experts, scientists, and the community in decision-making.
- Suggests the "citizen engagement" model and positioning Delhi air cleanup as a national emergency, requiring leadership across government and party lines.

Broader Reflections
- The analysis emphasizes the necessity of a long-term, sustained campaign, with clear accountability and prioritization of environmental health ahead of short-term economic interests.
- The fate of Delhi's air will depend on whether bold and coordinated action is taken, transcending governance silos and political inertia.

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Bangladesh tense ahead of ICT verdict on Hasina

- Bangladesh is experiencing heightened tension and strict security measures, especially in sensitive areas, in anticipation of the ICT verdict on deposed Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and former Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal.
- Bangladesh Border Guards have been deployed in significant numbers, particularly in the Awami League stronghold of Gopalganj and surrounding regions, to prevent unrest ahead of the verdict.
- Both Sheikh Hasina and Khan Kamal face severe charges including mass killings, attempted murder, conspiracy, and orchestration of violent crackdowns against protesters during July-August 2024.
- The charges also cover planned large-scale massacres, incitement to commit violence, and conspiracy to incite inhumane treatment of protestors.
- The deadly police crackdown that led to scores of deaths among protestors, as well as viral videos showing law enforcement shooting at protesters, have intensified focus on Khan Kamal's actions.
- Sheikh Hasina is accused of violating human rights, utilizing drones and helicopters with lethal force, and ordering law enforcement to suppress protestors violently.
- The case reflects severe political turmoil, underlining Bangladesh's fraught governance landscape after the removal of the Awami League leadership.
- The deployment of border guards and demands for justice from various sides show the high stakes and potential for unrest or further violence following the verdict.
- Hasina was represented by a state-appointed defence counsel who told the court that the charges against her were baseless and pleaded for her acquittal.
- Ahead of the verdict, Hasina dismissed the accusations and the fairness of the Tribunal proceedings, asserting a guilty verdict was "a foregone conclusion"
- According to a United Nations report, up to 1,400 people may have been killed during the protests between July 15 and August 5, 2024, with thousands more injured, most of them by gunfire from security forces, in what was the worst violence in Bangladesh since its 1971 war of independence.

China Coast Guard ships sail through Japan-administered Senkaku Islands

Incident Overview
- The China Coast Guard sent a ship formation through the waters of the Senkaku Islands (called Diaoyu by China) on Sunday, describing it as a "rights enforcement patrol" and presenting the action as defending China's national sovereignty.
- This move by Beijing is part of escalating tensions with Japan, notably following remarks by Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi regarding Taiwan.

Diplomatic Tensions
- The situation has evolved into a diplomatic spat, intensified by PM Takaichi's comments that Tokyo would react militarily to a hypothetical Chinese attack on Taiwan's democracy.
- Beijing responded angrily and is reportedly expecting a retraction or clarification from the Japanese government on these remarks.

Sovereignty Dispute Context
- China claims sovereignty over both the Diaoyu (Senkaku) Islands and Taiwan, asserting potential use of force to "take control" if necessary, while Taiwan's government firmly rejects Beijing's position.
- Japan administers the islands but faces regular Chinese patrolling and incursions, contributing to longstanding and repeated diplomatic clashes between Tokyo and Beijing over these territories.

Patrol and Military Activity
- The China Coast Guard's statement framed the patrol as lawful, aiming to uphold China's interests and rights in the territorial waters of the disputed islands.
- Taiwan's Defence Ministry reported detecting 30 Chinese aircraft and seven navy ships engaged in military operations around Taiwan, noting ongoing "joint combat patrols" by China.
- The Japanese Embassy in Beijing declined to comment on the incident, reflecting possible diplomatic caution in the current tense context.
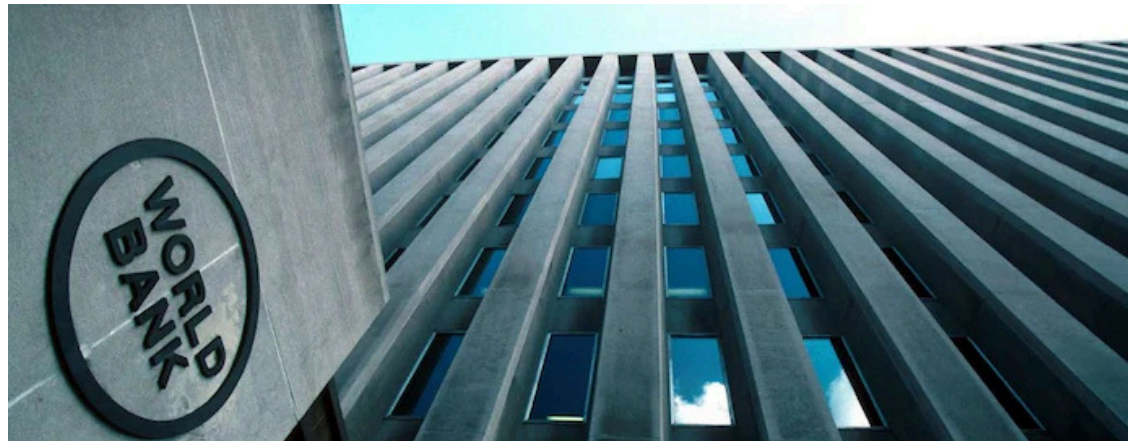
Strategic Implications
- The Chinese patrol in the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands underscores Beijing's resolve to assert maritime claims and respond to perceived provocations related to Taiwan and territorial sovereignty.
- The incident exemplifies broader regional tensions involving Taiwan, the East China Sea, and the dynamics of Japan-China rivalry, especially as security concerns in the Indo-Pacific escalate.

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Prelims Corner: Explanations

Q1. Ans a

The World Bank released the Financial Sector Assessment (FSA) Report 2025. The report stated that India must boost financial sector reforms and private capital mobilisation to become a USD 30-trillion economy by 2047. It praised India's world-class digital public infrastructure and government programmes for improving access to financial services for both men and women. The FSA noted that India's financial system has become more resilient, diversified, and inclusive since the 2017 FSAP. It welcomed India's regulatory expansion on cooperative banks and Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFCs) through scale-based regulation.

Q2. Ans c

Ramman is a festival celebrated annually in April during Baisakhi at the twin villages of Saloor-Dungra in Uttarakhand's Chamoli. It is a unique blend of ritual, theatre, music, and dance, deeply rooted in the local traditions of the Garhwal Himalayas. Community - It is dedicated to the custodial god, Bhumiyal Devta, a local divinity whose temple houses most of the festivities. The festival involves theatrical performances of the Ramayana and local legends, in which people sing songs and wear masks while dancing. There are 18 different types of masks made of Bhojpatra, Himalayan birch, that performers wear during the event, represent different deities and mythological figures.

Ramman Festival
– Uttarakhand

Q3. Ans c

When measuring mountains by their distance from the centre of the Earth, rather than their height above sea level, the mountain closest to space is Mount Chimborazo in Ecuador. Although Mount Everest is the highest mountain above sea level, Chimborazo's summit is actually the farthest point from the Earth's centre and thus the closest point on Earth to outer space. Mount Chimborazo is located in central Ecuador, in the Chimborazo Province, within the Andes mountains. It is an extinct volcano and the highest peak in Ecuador.

Q4. Ans b

Case Background: In 1978, Shah Bano Begum, a 62-year-old Muslim woman, sought maintenance under Section 125 of the CrPC (now Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023) after being divorced by her husband. This section ensures maintenance for dependents irrespective of religion. Supreme Court Verdict (1985): A 5 judge SC constitution bench unanimously ruled in Shah Bano's favour, declaring Section 125 CrPC a secular law applicable to all, including Muslim women. It restored legal clarity, strengthened access to justice, ensured constitutional parity for Muslim women, and reinforced the secular character of Indian maintenance law. The case continues to influence India's constitutional journey, highlighting tensions between faith vs. equality, law vs. politics, and religion vs. reform. An upcoming Bollywood film inspired by the Shah Bano case, 1985, has renewed public attention on one of India's most debated legal judgments.

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Case Study:

Change is brewing in Bastar: new cafe to employ ex-Maoists

Former Maoists who used to handle weapons will soon showcase their skills as Baristas in a cafe in Jagdalpur, the headquarter of Chhattisgarh's conflict-ridden Bastar region. Named 'Pandum Café', the coffee shop in Poona Margham Complex, will be inaugurated by Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai on Monday. The word Pandum is associated with a festival in Bastar. On the eve of the inauguration, the Bastar police issued a concept note of new cafes for the rehabilitation of victims of Naxal violence as well as surrendered Maoist cadres. It described it as a significant and inspiring initiative under the government's surrender and rehabilitation policy, designed to provide dignified and sustainable livelihoods to surrendered Maoist cadres who have chosen to shun violence and rejoin mainstream society. "With the support of the district administration and police, they have been trained in hospitality services, cafe management, customer handling, hygiene standards, food safety, and entrepreneurship skills. The objective of this cafe is not merely livelihood generation, but also to demonstrate that transformation is possible when opportunities and guidance are provided — showing that hands once engaged in conflict can now contribute to community building,"