

SHORTNEWS

1. INSPIRE-FELLOWSHIP

NEWS: Many research scholars across Indian universities have not received their fellowships for 8 to 13 months.

About INSPIRE-Fellowship

- INSPIRE refers to **Innovation in Science Pursuit for Inspired Research**.
- Launched in 2008 by the **Department of Science and Technology (DST)**.
- The scheme covers students in the **age group of 10-32 years**
- **Duration:** Fellowship shall be tenable for a maximum period of five years.
 - From the INSPIRE Fellowship “Effective Date” or completion of the PhD program (i.e. up to the date of successful **Ph.D viva-voce**), **whichever is earlier**.
- **Goal:** To create a **strong base of skilled individuals in the Science & Technology (S&T) and Research & Development (R&D) sectors** in India.
- No competitive exams are conducted for selection.

2. KONKAN RAILWAY

NEWS: Maharashtra government has officially agreed to merge **Konkan Railway Corporation Limited (KRCL)** with **Indian Railways**.

Reason of Merger

- **Financial Struggles:** KRCL has faced **low revenue** and **high infrastructure costs**, making expansions difficult.

What is Konkan Railway Corporation Limited (KRCL)?

- It is a public sector undertaking under the Ministry of Railways, Government of India.
- It operates **the Konkan Railway**, a 741-km railway line connecting **Maharashtra, Goa, Karnataka, and Kerala**.
- Established in **1990** to construct **railway lines** through the **challenging terrain of the Western Ghats**.
- **Ownership Structure Before Merger :** KRCL operated as a joint venture. The Centre held **51%**, **Maharashtra 22%**, **Karnataka 15%**, while **Goa and Kerala held 6% each**.
 - It always functioned separately from Indian Railways.

Significance of Merger

- **Joining Indian Railways** would allow KRCL to benefit from **national investments and better infrastructure**.

- **Beneficial for passengers:** Passengers are likely to benefit from upgraded infrastructure, improved frequency of trains, better security measures, and increased connectivity with other routes of Indian Railways.
- **Seamless booking:** A merger could also translate into more competitive fares, seamless booking on Indian Railways channels,

3. MOBILE PHONE DEPOSIT FACILITIES FOR VOTERS

NEWS: The Election Commission (EC) **has issued instructions for providing mobile deposit facilities outside polling stations** and rationalising the norms for canvassing on voting days.

About the Notification

- The mobile phones **shall be allowed within 100 meters of the polling station in switched-off mode.**
- **No mobile phones shall be allowed to be carried inside the polling station by the voter**
- **Rule:** The instructions are in line with Rule 49M of the Conduct of Elections Rules, 1961, which ensures secrecy of voting within the polling station.
- The **Returning Officer can exempt certain polling stations** from this provision based on adverse local circumstances.

Other Guidelines

- **Electioneering shall not be allowed within a 100-metre radius around the polling station** on the day of the polls.
- The Commission has **rationalised the permissible norms for canvassing in line with the electoral laws to 100 metres** from the entrance of the polling station.

4. STUDENT AND EXCHANGE VISITOR PROGRAM (SEVP)

NEWS: The US **Department of Homeland Security (DHS)** has revoked Harvard University's Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) certification, **blocking its ability to enroll foreign students.**

What is SEVP?

- This government initiative monitors **international students** and ensures that **only legitimate foreign students** enter the US for education.
- Institutions enrolling **non-immigrant students** must be **SEVP-certified** and follow **government regulations**
- **How SEVP Functions?**
 - SEVP works alongside **SEVIS**, an online system that maintains records of students, schools, and visa holders.
 - SEVP tracks **three types of non-immigrant student visas:**
 - **F-1 Visa** – Academic students at certified institutions.

- **M-1 Visa** – Vocational students at approved programs.
- **J-1 Visa** – Exchange students under the **US Department of State**.
- SEVP-certified institutions issue **Form I-20**, which students use to apply **for a US visa**.

Why the US Revoked Harvard's SEVP Certification

- **Campus Misconduct Concerns** – The US government accused Harvard of failing to provide records on criminal activities involving foreign students.
- **Alleged Foreign Influence** – Authorities claimed Harvard had ties with **Chinese paramilitary training**, raising **security concerns**.
- **Protest-Related Tensions** – Large-scale **campus protests** against Israeli military actions were labeled anti-Semitic, adding pressure from the US government.

5. INTEGRATED THEATRE COMMANDS

NEWS: India's Chief of Defence Staff's recently released book '**Ready, Relevant and Resurgent: A Blueprint for the Transformation of India's Military**', speaks on the proposed structure the Integrated Theatre Commands will take.

About Integrated Theatre Commands

- It is the **proposed restructuring of the Indian military by integrating the Army, Navy, and Air Force** under unified command structures for specific geographical areas or functional roles.
- **Recommended By:** The **Kargil Review Committee, 1999 recommended** creation of integrated theatre commands
 - **The Shekatkar Committee, 2016 proposed three integrated theatre commands (Western, Northern, and Southern)**
- **Proposed Structure:**
 - **3 Commands:** There is **consensus on the creation of 3 commands**,
 - **Northern Theatre Command (Lucknow):** Focus on China.
 - **Western Theatre Command (Jaipur):** Pakistan
 - **Maritime Theatre Command (Thiruvananthapuram):** Managing operations in Indian ocean.
 - **Officer Rank:** It is recommended that **all the three commanders** as well the Vice CDS should be **four star officers like the three service Chiefs and the CDS**.