

## The Hindu News Analysis

### 30 April 2022

#### Page 8. GS II (Governance)

Union Home Minister recently urged the use of Hindi as the lingua franca, rather than English, in inter-State communication. V.D. Savarkar first advocated the idea of Hindi to be declared the national language and articulated the slogan, 'Hindi, Hindu, Hindustan'.

The 1961 Census reports mentioned a total of 1,652 'mother tongues', out of which 184 'mother tongues' had more than 10,000 speakers. In 1971, the linguistic data offered in the Census was distributed in two categories — the officially listed languages of the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution, and the other languages with a minimum of 10,000 speakers each. All other languages spoken by less than 10,000 speakers were lumped together in a single entry 'Others'.

Hindi as the majority language is a myth - 52 crore 'Hindi speakers' include more than 5 crore claimants of Bhojpuri and more than 9 crore speakers of nearly 61 other languages — claimed as 'other' by their speech communities — from Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Haryana, Bihar, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh. 'The Hindi' is probably spoken by not more than 30% of the population, but it is not the mother tongue for the remaining 70%.

### A step that would trigger language phonocide

Imposing Hindi would be catastrophic; instead, India would be better off having a multi-linguistic accommodative policy



FAISAL C.K.

The Union Home Minister, Amit Shah, recently urged the use of Hindi as the lingua franca, rather than English, in inter-State communication. He suggested (reportedly at the Parliamentary Official Language Committee) that when citizens of States who speak other languages communicate with each other, it should be in the "language of India". It is quite natural that a leader of a political stream that raised the slogan, 'Hindi, Hindu, Hindustan' would at such a quixotic idea. It was V.D. Savarkar, the Hindutva icon, who first advocated the idea of Hindi to be declared the national language and articulated the slogan, 'Hindi, Hindu, Hindustan'. R.V. Dhulekar, a member of the Constituent Assembly, bluntly stated in the Assembly, "You may belong - to another nation but I belong to Indian nation, the Hindi Nation, the Hindu Nation, the Hindustani Nation."

India has a harmonious symphony of linguistic pluralism; it is not a disarranged cacophony. Ganesh N. Devy, in 'Indigenous languages', a UNESCO lecture in October 2008, and also in a media article, 'Tribe languages in a death trap' in August 2011, has mentioned how Sir George Grierson's Linguistic Survey of India (1903-1923) had identified 179 languages and 544 dialects in India. The 1961 Census reports mentioned a total of 1,652 'mother tongues', out of which 184 'mother tongues' had more than 10,000 speakers, and of which 400 'mother tongues' had not been mentioned in Grierson's survey, while 527 were listed as 'unclassified'. In 1971, the linguistic data offered in the Census was distributed in two categories — the officially listed languages of the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution, and the other languages with a minimum of 10,000 speakers each. All other languages spoken by less than 10,000 speakers were lumped together in a single entry 'Others'. That practice continued to be followed in subsequent enumerations. This practice made many languages invisible, says Prof. Devy.

#### Exposing a myth

The so-called 'national grandiosity' of Hindi is a dubious fallacy unsupported by facts. Prof. Devy had exposed the myth of Hindi as a pan-Indian language. In an article in *The Hindu* on June 7, 2019, "Language, the opening move", he wrote: "The 2011 Census data on languages, published last year, was heavily doctored. It presents Hindi as the 'mother tongue' of over 52 crore people by subsuming more than 5 crore claimants of Bhojpuri and more than 9 crore speakers of nearly 61 other languages — claimed as 'other' by their speech communities — from Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Haryana, Bihar, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh. 'The Hindi' is probably spoken by not more than 30% of the population, but it is not the mother tongue for the remaining 70%."

Hindi is not a lingua franca for Indians; nor is it a dominant lan-



It is only a *primus inter pares* among numerous Indian languages.

#### In the neighbourhood

The imposition of one language in neglect of the others in a multilingual state is disastrous. Pakistan and Sri Lanka are textbook examples of how stubbornness over language ruined nations. After Partition and Pakistan was formed, Pakistan became a multi-ethnic and multi-linguistic state. In 1948, the Government of Pakistan ordained the Islamisation of East Pakistan, with Urdu as the sole national language. "There can only be one state language if the component parts of this state are to march forward in unison, and in my opinion, that can only be Urdu," asserted Jinnah. This arrogance of the West Pakistan elite ignited the violent Bengali language movement or *Bhasa Andolan* in East Pakistan, advocating the recognition of the Bengali language as an official language of the then Dominion of Pakistan in order to allow its use in government transactions, in education, in media, in currency and to maintain its writing in the Bengali script. The Language Movement catalysed Bengali nationalism and the eventual separation of East Pakistan from Pakistan.

The Sinhala Only Act (the Official Language Act) of 1956 was a high point in Sri Lanka's history. It

triggered intense enmity and distrust between the Sinhalis and the Tamils. The Act replaced English with Sinhala as the sole official language of the nation with the exclusion of Tamil. Sinhalese was the language of Sinhalese people who formed 70% of the population. Tamil was spoken by Indian and Sri Lankan Tamils (and most Muslims) who together constituted around 29% of the country's population. The Act was discriminatory and alienated the Tamil community from the mainstream. The Act also symbolised the Sinhalese majority's real to assert Sri Lanka's identity as a Sinhala nation state; for Tamils, it epitomised minority oppression and a justification for the demand for a separate Tamil nation. This friction sparked the decades-long civil war and ruined the nation.

#### A place for diversity

In contrast, the nations that accommodated linguistic diversity prospered. Singapore has a multi-ethnic population (Chinese, Malay and Indian). In its formative years, there was immense pressure to declare Chinese as the official language of Singapore. But Lee Kuan Yew, the architect of modern Singapore, quelled the demand and opted for English. English language proficiency made the city state a global business hub. In an article in *The Straits Times* (2004) he had said, "When we became independent in 1965, the Chinese Chamber of Commerce committee came to see me in my office, then at City Hall. They urged me to have Chinese as our national and official language. I looked them in the eye and said, 'You must be mad, and I don't want to hear any more of that from you. If you do, you are

entering the political arena. I have to fight you. Because, Singapore will come apart.' Supposing I had been otherwise inclined, which my colleagues would not have allowed, and had said, 'Yes, okay.' What would have happened to Singapore? Where would the Malays be, and the Indians, what future would they have? The English-educated Chinese would also be against us. The country would fall apart. Let us assume that we were all Chinese, no Malays, no Indians. Could we make a living with Chinese as our language of government and our national language? Who is going to trade with us? What do we do? How do we get access to knowledge? There was no choice."

In South Africa, the national anthem of the Rainbow Nation, since 1997, is a five-language lyrical composition, making it the most unique anthem in the world in this regard. The languages are Xhosa, Zulu, Sesotho, Afrikaans and English. South Africa is an emerging leader of the African continent and its accommodative linguistic policy helped them a lot.

India should emulate the multi-linguistic accommodative policy of Singapore and South Africa; not the disastrous linguistic chauvinism of Pakistan or Sri Lanka. Imposing Hindi, which is the first language of the residents of only 12 of the 35 States and Union Territories (in the 2011 Language Census of India, and where Andhra Pradesh and Telangana figure together in the 2011 data) as a lingua franca would initiate the phonocide of other Indian languages. And it would prove to be catastrophic.

Faizal C.K. is Under Secretary (Law) in the Government of Kerala

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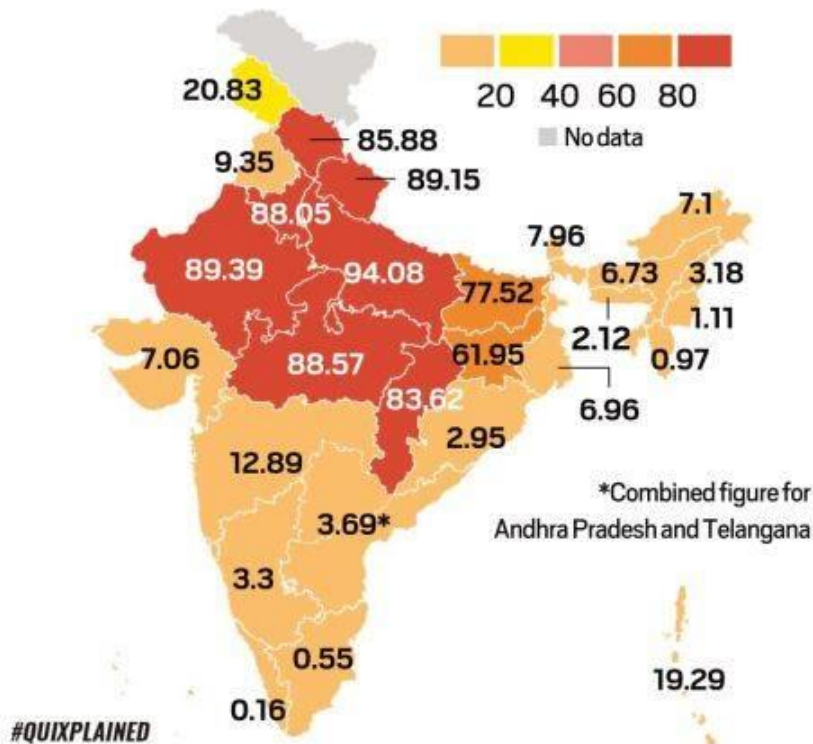
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## THE HINDI-SPEAKING MAP OF INDIA

% OF PEOPLE WHO REPORTED HINDI AS THEIR MOTHER TONGUE IN CENSUS 2011



# A giant among 121 languages

CHART 1

## GROWTH OF HINDI AS MOTHER TONGUE (% OF POPULATION)



CHART 2

## MOTHER TONGUES BY SPEAKERS, 2011

Minimum 1 cr

Figures on the right are % of population

Hindi	52,83,47,193	43.63%
Bengali	9,72,37,669	8.03%
Marathi	8,30,26,680	6.86%
Telugu	8,11,27,740	6.70%
Tamil	6,90,26,881	5.70%
Gujarati	5,54,92,554	4.58%
Urdu	5,07,72,631	4.19%
Kannada	4,37,06,512	3.61%
Odia	3,75,21,324	3.10%
Malayalam	3,48,38,819	2.88%
Punjabi	3,31,24,726	2.74%
Assamese	1,53,11,351	1.26%
Maithili	1,35,83,464	1.12%

Source: Graphs based on Census of India data

CHART 3

## GROWTH OF HINDI vs OTHER MOTHER TONGUES, 1971-2011

% growth in number of speakers

Hindi	160.56%
Punjabi	134.79%
Maithili	121.59%
Bengali	117.09%
Gujarati	114.54%
Kannada	101.31%
Marathi	98.79%
Odia	88.90%
Tamil	83.14%
Telugu	81.26%
Urdu	77.40%
Assamese	70.89%
Malayalam	58.80%



# The Most Linguistically Diverse Countries

Near 7,117 languages are spoken worldwide, but these aren't dispersed evenly across the globe. Here's a look at the countries with the most linguistic diversity.

● Total Languages  
● Population 2020 (Millions)

#2 🇮🇩 Indonesia



#3 🇳🇮 Nigeria



#4 🇮🇳 India



#5 🇺🇸 United States



#6 🇦🇺 Australia



#7 🇨🇳 China



#8 🇲🇽 Mexico



#9 🇨🇲 Cameroon



#10 🇧🇷 Brazil



#1 🇵🇬 Papua New Guinea

Papua New Guinea has more languages than the entire continent of Europe.



About 23% of Australia's population speaks a language that isn't English at home.

Includes all established and immigrant languages.

Source: Ethnologue, World Atlas, World Bank



# Hindi will be made compulsory in northeastern states till Class 10, says Amit Shah

The home minister said that Hindi should be accepted as an alternative to English, and not to local languages.

Scroll Staff

Apr 08, 2022 · 12:12 pm

Updated Apr 08, 2022 · 07:12 pm



Ministry of Education  
Government of India

## National Education Policy 2020

### Three-language formula

will continue to be implemented with greater flexibility – no language will be imposed on any State.



#### Page 8. GS III (Economic Development)

PM charged Opposition-ruled States with committing an injustice to the people by not cutting duties on petroleum products as the Centre had done in November 2021. Those cuts of ₹5 and ₹10 per litre of petrol and diesel, respectively, came as fuel prices crossed well past ₹100 a litre. But even NDA-administered States are now facing extremely high inflation — retail inflation in April was 8.19% for Uttar Pradesh and Assam, and 7.4% to 7.6% in Bihar, Jammu & Kashmir and Haryana — far higher than the national retail inflation rate of 6.95% for the month.

Despite its recent assertions that no taxes were levied to counter the pandemic, the Centre had hiked fuel taxes even amid the 2020 COVID-19 lockdown with a preference for cess levies that do not have to be shared with States. With record tax collections last year and revenue buoyancy expected to hold up this year, the Centre has fiscal room to slash its fuel taxes. Expecting States, which are worried about their limited revenue sources once the assured GST compensation stops flowing from this July, to take the lead in reining in petroleum taxes, is unwieldy, short-sighted and unnecessarily confrontational.

### Fuelling friction

Shifting the onus of providing relief from high fuel prices onto States can strain federalism

At a meeting with Chief Ministers about the resurgence of COVID-19 on Wednesday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi charged Opposition-ruled States with committing an injustice to the people by not cutting duties on petroleum products as the Centre had done in November 2021. Those cuts of ₹5 and ₹10 per litre of petrol and diesel, respectively, came as fuel prices crossed well past ₹100 a litre – those levels have been breached again after a poll-driven lull. The PM noted that the Centre's plea at the time, for States to back these cuts by paring their VAT levies on petroleum products, was not heeded by States not governed by the BJP. But even NDA-administered States are now facing extremely high inflation – retail inflation in April was 8.19% for Uttar Pradesh and Assam, and 7.4% to 7.6% in Bihar, Jammu & Kashmir and Haryana – far higher than the national retail inflation rate of 6.95% for the month. The PM's remarks, buttressed by the slogan of cooperative federalism, attracted an instant backlash from West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Kerala, Telangana, Jharkhand and Andhra Pradesh. While all States are fretful about resource constraints and pending dues from the Centre, some had reduced VAT on fuel products and others have not hiked rates for years. Despite its recent assertions that no taxes were levied to counter the pandemic, the Centre had hiked fuel taxes even amid the 2020 COVID-19 lockdown with a preference for cess levies that do not have to be shared with States.

While the political broohaha over the PM's pitch unfolds, the signal for the common man is clear – abandon any hope of immediate relief. This is akin to striking a cruel blow against the middle and lower-income classes, already besieged by successive setbacks on the job, health and income fronts. Household budgets are severely squeezed because of price rise. Even industry has mooted fuel tax cuts to sustain a fragile consumption recovery. With record tax collections last year and revenue buoyancy expected to hold up this year, the Centre has fiscal room to slash its fuel taxes, and there will be an automatic cascading effect on State taxes levied on an *ad valorem* basis. Expecting States, which are worried about their limited revenue sources once the assured GST compensation stops flowing from this July, to take the lead in reining in petroleum taxes, is unwieldy, short-sighted and unnecessarily confrontational. Even more so as the States are also expected to ramp up capex spending to revive the economy. As the PM said, the Centre and States need to coordinate better to spur the economy amid global tumult. Singling out a few States to deflect attention from the Centre's excessive reliance on fuel taxes is not the right approach to attain such harmony. Most of all, as high inflation will debilitate the recovery's momentum, shirking corrective action to bolster its revenue kitty would be a case of being penny wise and pound foolish.

Home > Economy > Covid review turns into political blame game as Modi 'names & shames'...

Economy

Politics

## Covid review turns into political blame game as Modi 'names & shames' Oppn states for fuel taxes

PM Modi singled out Opposition-ruled states for doing 'injustice' to the people by not reducing fuel taxes. He also praised BJP-ruled states for following Centre's recommendations.

NEELAM PANDEY and SHUBHAM BATRA 27 April, 2022 06:39 pm IST

Beyond the Writeup: How are fuel prices made up?

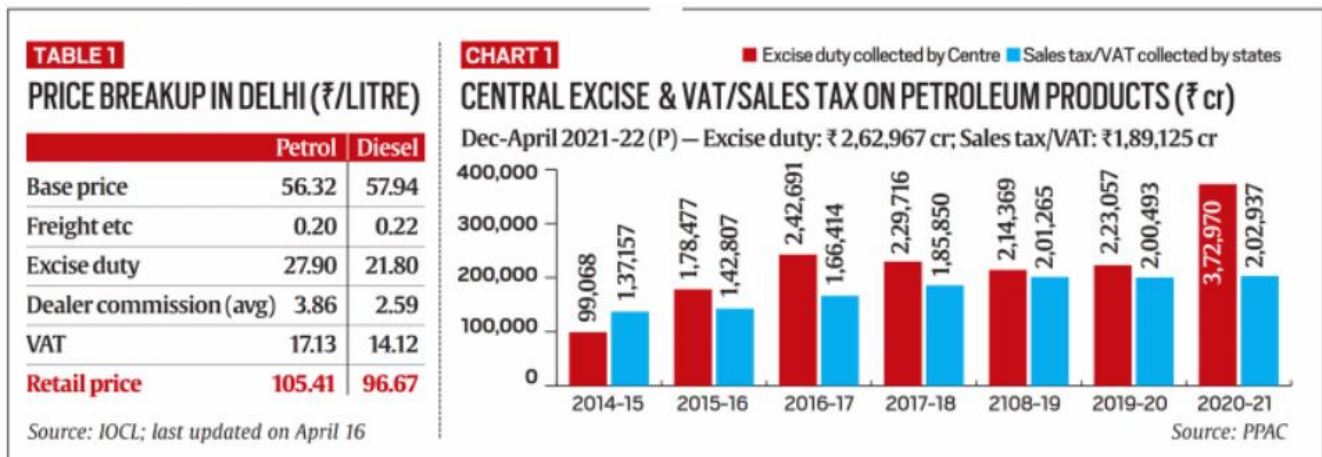
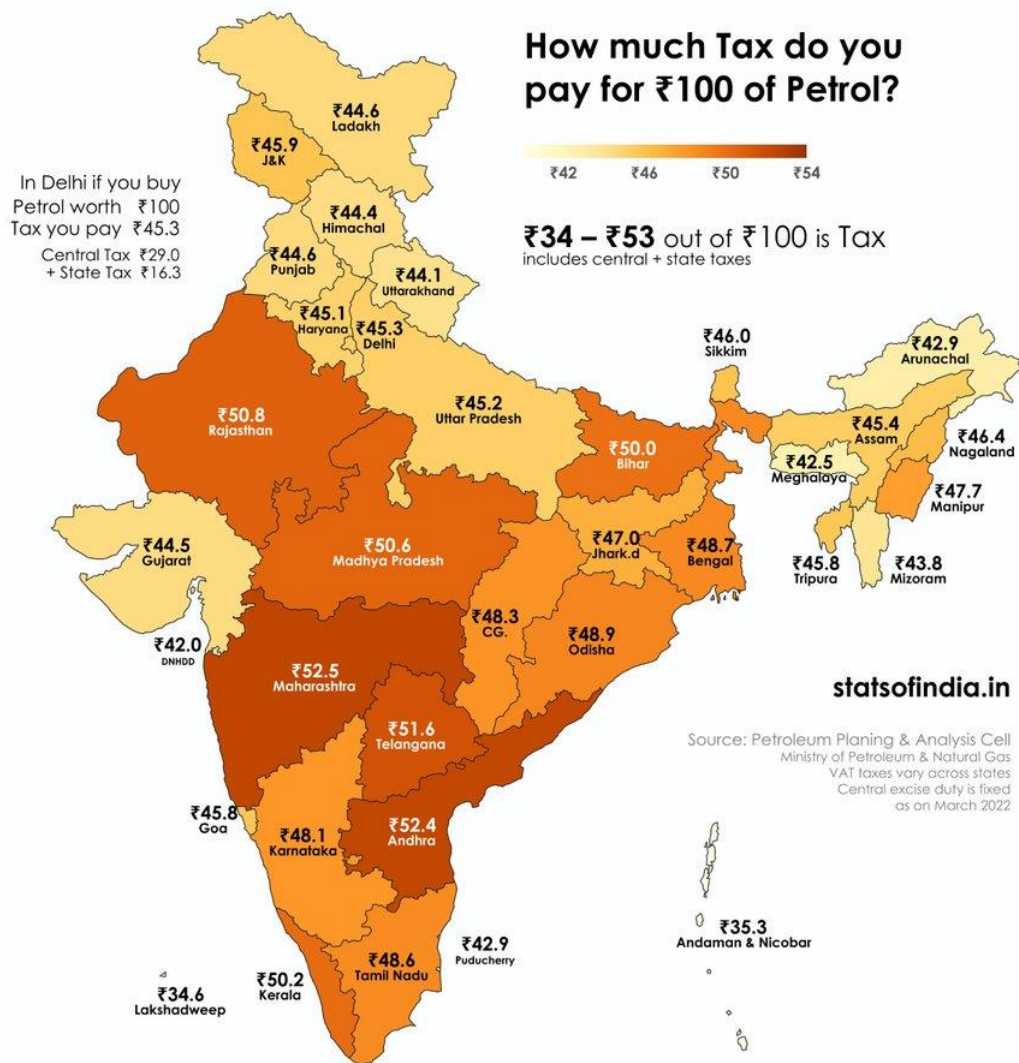


Table 1: Price breakup in Delhi; Chart 1: Central excise & VAT/sales tax on petroleum products





## Pg 7. GS II (Polity)

Holding that it is the right time to confer juristic status to ‘Mother Nature’, Madras High Court invoked the ‘parens patriae jurisdiction’, and declared ‘Mother Nature’ as a ‘living being’ having the status of a legal entity. The court observed that ‘Mother Nature’ was accorded the rights akin to fundamental rights, legal rights, constitutional rights for its survival, safety, sustenance and resurgence in order to maintain its status and also to promote its health and well-being. The State and Central governments are directed to protect ‘Mother Nature’ and take appropriate steps in this regard in all possible ways.



# 'Mother Nature' a 'living being' with legal entity: Madras HC

It will have rights, duties and liabilities like a living person, says Madurai Bench

STAFF REPORTER  
MADRURAI

Holding that it is the right time to confer juristic status to 'Mother Nature', Justice S. Srimathy of the Madurai Bench of Madras High Court invoked the 'parens patriae jurisdiction', and declared 'Mother Nature' as a 'living being' having the status of a legal entity.

Justice S. Srimathy observed that the court is hereby declaring 'Mother Nature' a 'living being' having the status of a legal person with all corresponding rights, duties and liabilities of a living person, in order to preserve and conserve it. The court observed that 'Mother Nature' was accorded the rights akin to fundamental rights, legal rights, constitutional rights for its survival, safety, sustenance

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JUSTICE S. SRIMATHY  
Madurai Bench of Madras High Court



and resurgence in order to maintain its status and also to promote its health and well-being.

The State and Central governments are directed to protect 'Mother Nature' and take appropriate steps in this regard in all possible ways. The court was hearing petitions filed by A. Periyakuruppan of Theni, who served in the Revenue Department. He had challenged an order passed by

the Revenue Department, due to which the petitioner was not allowed to retire from service but put under suspension. The petitioner was then placed under compulsory retirement for issuing a *putta* (deed) for land that was classified as 'Forest Land' in Megamalai. He said that he was only carrying out the orders of his superiors.

The judge said, indiscriminate destruction or change

is leading to several complications in the ecosystem and is ultimately endangering the very existence of flora and fauna, forests, water bodies, mountains, glaciers, air and of course humans. Strangely, the destruction is carried out by a few humans. Any such act ought to be checked at all levels. The natural environment is part of basic human rights, of 'right to life' itself, she added.

The judge modified the punishment of compulsory retirement to stoppage of increment for six months without cumulative effect. The consequential monetary benefits shall be conferred on the petitioner. This punishment is imposed for the act done against the 'Mother Nature,' the judge observed.

## Beyond the Writeup: Parens Patriae jurisdiction

Parens patriae is Latin for "parent of the nation". In law, it refers to the public policy power of the state to intervene against an abusive or negligent parent, legal guardian, or informal caretaker, and to act as the parent of any child, individual or animal who is in need of protection. For example, some children, incapacitated individuals, and disabled individuals lack parents who are able and willing to render adequate care, thus requiring state intervention.

## Beyond the Writeup: Examples of unique 'living entities'

In 2020, Punjab and Haryana high court declared Sukhna Lake a "living entity" or "legal person" with rights, duties and liabilities of a living person. It also declared all citizens of Chandigarh as loco parentis (in the place of a parent) to save the lake from extinction. The Lake was created in 1958, by damming a seasonal stream Sukhna Choe, which cascade from the Shivalik Hills.

### Similar examples:

In 2008, Ecuador became the first country to enshrine the legal rights of nature in its constitution. Bolivia passed a similar law in 2011. Meanwhile, New Zealand in 2017 became the first country to grant the Whanganui river legal rights, followed by the Indian state of Uttarakhand, when it declared the Yamuna and Ganges rivers "living entities" (a verdict that was later stayed by the Supreme Court). El Salvador recognized its forests as living entities and stated that each person must commit to caring for, preserving, and respecting forests.

In 2019, the city of Toledo, Ohio, passed what is known as the Lake Erie Bill of Rights to protect its shores, making it one of several U.S. communities to have passed legislation recognizing the rights of nature. In July 2019, Bangladesh became the first country to grant all of its rivers the same legal status as humans.

## Beyond the Writeup: Meaning of 'Living Entity'

Rights are the obligations that society and state have for establishing sustainable relationships. As "juristic person", the lake, have a right to be legally protected from any kind of harm or destruction. Polluting it, henceforth, could entitle to human rights violation for which it can take legal recourse.

From now, the lake can be a party to disputes and rights violation, represented by court-appointed individuals who can file and contest cases on its behalf. Over the last few years, various environmentalists, social leaders have called for recognizing rights of nature in the country. Now, it is hoped that such examples and recognitions can

inspire many other countries to take similar actions.

### Mains Practice Questions

1. Elaborate the constitutional status of Hindi language in India. Have these constitutional provisions been misinterpreted as a 'special preference' for Hindi language? (250 words; 15 marks)
2. How far would the idea of naming rivers and lakes as 'living entity' go in preserving them? Discuss with suitable examples. (250 words; 15 marks)

Q1 – GS II (Polity)

Q2 – GS II (Governance)

