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## 1. All about Kavli Prize, mirroring Nobel in fields of astrophysics, neuroscience, and nanoscience

### Why in News?

The winners of the 2024 Kavli Prize (not to be confused with the Kavli Medal) were announced recently. Eight winners were awarded for their contributions to astrophysics, neuroscience, and nanoscience.

### Kavli Foundation

The Kavli Prize is awarded in honour of Norwegian-American businessman and philanthropist Fred Kavli (1927-2013).

Born in Erejsford, Norway, Kavli moved to California in 1956 after getting an engineering degree. In the US, he began working for a company which built high-tech sensors for missiles, becoming its chief engineer within a year.

In 1958, he started his own enterprise, founding Kavlico. In 2000, Kavli sold his company for \$ 340 million, and established the Kavli Foundation, with the aim to support wide-ranging basic research to improve the quality of life for people worldwide. The foundation runs 20 institutes which specialise in astrophysics, neuroscience, nanoscience, and theoretical physics.

### Kavli Prizes

The Kavli Prizes are awarded in three areas: astrophysics, nanoscience and neuroscience — the largest, the smallest, and the most complex.



The inaugural prize was announced in 2008. The award is given biennially. Till date, 73 scientists from 19 countries have been honoured. Ten of them have gone on to win the Nobel Prize.

In fact, the Kavli Prize was designed to be like the Nobel in the fields of astrophysics, neuroscience, and nanoscience. But it is more far-reaching in its outlook. As per the will of Alfred Nobel, the Nobel Prize is only awarded for achievements made "during the preceding year". But the Kavli Prize does not operate under such a restriction.

The prize comprises a \$1 million cash prize (per field), a scroll, and a medal, 7 cm in diameter. The award ceremony is more flamboyant than the one for the Nobel, with a red carpet rolled out for invitees.

Along with the US-based Kavli Foundation, the prize is given in partnership with the Norwegian Academy of Science and Letters, and the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research.

Three independent selection committees review entries to present a unanimous recommendation to The Norwegian Academy of Science and Letters. Each committee comprises five members, who are nominated by science institutes around the world, including the Chinese Academy of Sciences, the French Academy of Sciences, Germany's Max Planck Society, the National Academy of Sciences in the US, and the Royal Society in the UK.

The award ceremony this year is scheduled to take place on September 3, at the Oslo Concert Hall. The Norwegian Royal Family will be handing out the prizes.

Relevance: GS Prelims

Source: Indian Express

## 2. Cultural significance of Uttarakhand's Joshimath and Kosiyakutoli, now set to be renamed

### Why in News?

The Centre recently approved the Uttarakhand government's proposal for renaming the Joshimath tehsil in Chamoli district to Jyotirmath, and the Kosiyakutoli tehsil in Nainital district to Pargana Shri Kainchi Dham tehsil. The move will likely enhance the religious and cultural significance of these areas, in a state that is already a major destination for religious tourism.

The Union Ministry of Science and Technology has also given a No Objection Certificate. It is required as the Survey of India, the body responsible for preparing maps in India, comes under the central ministry.

### The story of Adi Shankaracharya and Jyotirmath



Jyotirmath (also known as Jyotir Peeth) is one of the four cardinal mathas (monasteries) that 8th-century philosopher Adi Shankaracharya is believed to have established across India. The Jyotirmath was established for the preservation and dissemination of spiritual knowledge and practices.

It is believed that when Adi Shankaracharya or Adiguru came here, he performed penance under a tree known as the Amar Kalpavriksha. The name "Jyotirmath" comes from the divine light of knowledge he is said to have attained, with 'jyoti' meaning divine light.

### From Jyotirmath to Joshimath

Jyotirmath was the hill town's ancient name. Over time, the local population began referring to the area as "Joshimath". This change was likely gradual and organic, influenced by regional languages, local dialects and the ease of pronunciation. The transition reflects a linguistic and cultural evolution rather than a specific historical event.

The name came into use sometime before the advent of British colonial rule. As a result, this name was registered in the government records. Later, when the tehsil and block were formed, they were also named Joshimath. While "Jyotirmath" was used in a more formal or religious context, "Joshimath" became the more commonly used name.

In recent years, some residents have demanded a change in the name to honour the town's historical and religious importance. The official recognition may further cement the town's status as a spiritual centre, attracting more pilgrims and thereby boosting local tourism and economic development.

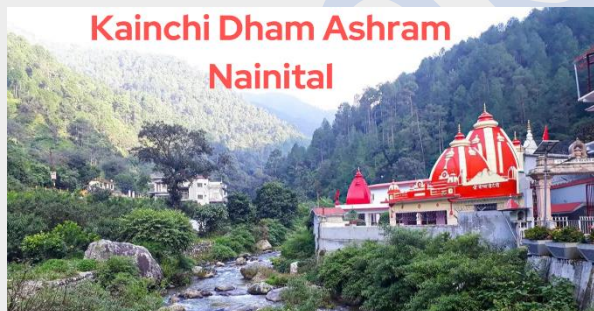
### **Where "Kosiyakutoli" comes from**

While Joshimath represents a subtle change from an older name, the case of Kosiyakutoli is about changing a lesser-known name that lacks wider recognition. Renaming it to Pargana Shri Kainchi Dham aligns its identity with Neem Karoli Baba's Kainchi Dham Ashram, which is a major site here that attracts devotees from across the world.

In the name "Kosiyakutoli", "Kosi" refers to the river of the same name which flows through the Nainital district and is important for the Kumaon region of Uttarakhand. Along with adding to the scenic beauty, it matters to the local ecology and economy.

The term "kutoli" is derived from the local language, referring to a village or settlement. In the Kumaoni language, naming a place after a prominent geographical feature like a river is common practice and the names often have meanings connected to the landscape, local history, or cultural attributes.

### **The link to Neem Karoli Baba**



Kosiyakutoli came to be known for its association with Neem Karoli Baba and the Kainchi Dham Ashram he founded in 1962. Also known as Neem Karori Baba, he was a renowned Hindu guru and saint with followers in India and abroad. Although he passed away in 1973, he is revered to date for his teachings on bhakti yoga and devotion to God.

Among his Western disciples were well-known figures, including Apple co-founder Steve Jobs, former Harvard University professor Ram Dass (earlier named Richard Alpert) and kirtan singer Krishna Das, who helped spread his teachings globally.

Relevance: GS Prelims

Source: Indian Express

## **3. Science is now too vast to be administered by one Minister**

### **Introduction**

The portfolios of many of the newly sworn-in Ministers of the 18th Lok Sabha signal no significant changes from what they held in the previous regime. The Bharatiya Janata Party continues to retain the 'major' portfolios, from Home to Telecommunications, with the rest distributed among its coalition allies.

### **Multiple portfolio to single minister**

The 18th Lok Sabha also includes five Ministers of State with independent charge. One of them is Jitendra Singh, whose portfolio spans the Departments of Space (DoS) and Atomic Energy (DAE), the Ministries of Earth Sciences (MoES), Science and Technology (MST), and Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions.

- **Jitendra Singh**- Minister of State (Independent Charge) of the Ministry of Science and Technology; Minister of State (Independent Charge) of the Ministry of Earth Sciences; Minister of State in the Prime Minister's Office; Minister of State in the Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions; Minister of State in the Department of Atomic Energy; and Minister of State in the Department of Space

### **Challenges**

Each of these ministries or departments by itself is a handful these days. The DoS is grappling with the entry of private sector players in the national space programme as well as managing the development of the maiden human spaceflight mission and new launch vehicles.

The MoES is involved in missions to explore the seabed for mineral resources — an enterprise just beginning to feature in multilateral fora — as well as climate adaptation and mitigation.

The MST oversees India's three foremost research departments at a time when the world is haring to test artificial intelligence, build quantum computers, develop and deploy multi-omics approaches in sectors from agriculture to medicine, and invent advanced energy storage solutions.

The DAE has announced plans to rapidly advance nuclear power, which includes starting phase two of its reactors programme and commissioning one facility every year. Just the sheer amount of technical divergence in the offing here, and their evolving interactions with society at large, merits more than a shared Minister of State.

The fields these bodies oversee also suffer many persistent problems. To pick a few: the timelines of fellowship and grant disbursals for young researchers are often farcical; facilities that can support interdisciplinary research are largely localised and inimical to collaboration; cutting-edge research is hamstrung by vacillating regulations; intellectual property rights protection is less than airtight, and translational research is bare and restricted to some sectors. Importantly, the gross domestic expenditure on research and development as a fraction of GDP has been declining since 2008-09. While demands for more money should be preceded by capacity building that can productively absorb these funds, the growth of that capacity has been in fits and starts.

**Recommendation**

Among other things, India sorely needs a separate Minister, ideally of Cabinet rank, for each of its major nodal research bodies to escape their long-standing rut, and have their needs met and problems solved in meaningful fashion during the bumpy rule of a coalition government.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; Governance

Source: The Hindu

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