1. Sacred Hill at the Centre of Santal-Jain Dispute

High Court Enforces Ban

On May 3, the Jharkhand High Court directed the state government to enforce an existing ban on meat, alcohol, and intoxicants on a sacred hill revered by both Santals and Jains.

Why Is the Hill Important?
For Jains: Parasnath Hill

• Jains believe 20 of the 24 tirthankaras attained nirvana on the hill, named after the 23rd tirthankara, Parshvanatha.
• The hill hosts over 40 Jain temples and shrines.
• Jains consider it a sacred site for centuries.

For Santals: Marang Buru

• The Santals, an Adivasi community, call it Marang Buru, meaning "The Great Mountain".
• It houses Jug Jaher Than, their holiest site, and Dishom Manjhi Than, the traditional leader's seat.
• The hill is also the venue for the Lo Bir Baisi, a tribal court that resolves major disputes.
• The Santal Hul rebellion (1855), against British and zamindar oppression, began here.

Historical Conflict
Beginning of Legal Disputes

• Conflict over the hill was officially recorded in 1911.
• The Sendra festival, where Santal men go hunting, became a point of tension with Jains who oppose killing animals.
• Jains filed a legal suit in 1911 to stop this, but the courts upheld the Santals' customary rights through several rulings, including by the Privy Council in British India.

Post-Independence Changes
Erosion of Adivasi Rights

• In 1972, after the Wildlife Protection Act, Adivasi villages lost protections under the Fifth Schedule of the Constitution.
• By 1978, the hill was declared a wildlife sanctuary, further limiting tribal rights.
• Rituals at Marang Buru stopped between the 1970s and 2000.
• Activist Ajay Tudu, who campaigned for revival of tribal practices, was killed in 2008.

Recent Developments
Government Ban and Its Impact

• In 2023, the Ministry of Environment banned meat and alcohol within 25 km of the hill, affecting 99 mostly Adivasi villages.
• Even eggs and meat were banned in Anganwadi centres and primary schools.
• Following the HC order, security was increased to prevent violations.

Ongoing Resistance
• Despite the restrictions, Santals celebrated the Sendra festival this year.
• The Marang Buru Sanvta Susaar Baisi (MBSSB) filed a petition asserting tribal rights over the hill.

2. AI hallucinations: What does it mean, why is this significant?

Introduction
A technical report released by artificial intelligence (AI) research organisation OpenAI last month found that the company's latest models — o3 and o4-mini — generate more errors than its older models. Computer scientists call the errors made by chatbots "hallucinations".

What are AI hallucinations?
When the term AI hallucinations began to be used to refer to errors made by chatbots, it had a very narrow definition. It was used to refer to those instances when AI models would give fabricated information as output. For instance, in June 2023, a lawyer in the United States admitted using ChatGPT to help write a court filing as the chatbot had added fake citations to the submission, which pointed to cases that never existed.

Today, hallucination has become a blanket term for various types of mistakes made by chatbots. This includes instances when the output is factually correct but not actually relevant to the question that was asked.

Why do AI hallucinations happen?
ChatGPT, o3, o4-mini, Gemini, Perplexity, Grok and many more are all examples of what are known as large language models (LLMs). These models essentially take in text inputs and generate synthesised outputs in the form of text.

LLMs are able to do this as they are built using massive amounts of digital text taken from the Internet. Simply put, computer scientists feed these models a lot of text, helping them identify patterns and relationships within that text, and predict text sequences and produce some output in response to a user's input (known as a prompt).

Note that LLMs are always making a guess while giving an output. They do not know for sure what is true and what is not — these models cannot even fact-check their output against, let's say, Wikipedia, like humans can.

As a result, when an LLM is trained on, for example, inaccurate text, they give inaccurate outputs, thereby hallucinating.

However, even accurate text cannot stop LLMs from making mistakes. That's because to generate new text (in response to a prompt), these models combine billions of patterns in unexpected ways. So, there is always a possibility that LLMs give fabricated information as output.

And as LLMs are trained on vast amounts of data, experts do not understand why they generate a particular sequence of text at a given moment.

Why is OpenAI's new report significant?
Hallucination has been an issue with AI models from the start, and big AI companies and labs, in the initial years, repeatedly claimed that the problem would be resolved in the near future. It did seem possible, as after they were first launched, models tended to hallucinate less with each update.

However, after the release of the new report about OpenAI's latest models, it has increasingly become clear that hallucination is here to stay. Also, the issue is not limited to just OpenAI. Other reports have shown that Chinese startup DeepSeek's R-1 model has double-digit rises in hallucination rates compared with previous models from the company.

This means that the application of AI models has to be limited, at least for now. They cannot be used, for example, as a research assistant (as models create fake citations in research papers) or a paralegal-bot (because models give imaginary legal cases).

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper III; Science & Technology
Source: Indian Express

3. Does Article 21 include right to digital access?

Introduction
On April 30, the Supreme Court (SC) directed revisions to Know-Your-Customer (KYC) digital norms to ensure accessibility for 'persons with disabilities' (PwD), reinterpreting Article 21 of the Constitution to encompass the 'right to digital access'.

What laws safeguard rights of PwD?
The Constitution, through its Preamble, Fundamental Rights, and Directive Principles, alongside disability statutes, obligates the state to adapt laws, policies, and infrastructure which allow PwDs to exercise their rights on par with others. Advancing these guarantees and giving effect to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), India enacted the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act, 2016, which adopted a 'social-barrier' approach that defines disability as arising from impairments, along with

physical, mental, intellectual, social, and psycho-social obstacles which make full participation in society difficult.

Crucially, Section 42 of the RPwD Act, 2016, mandates 'government measures' to ensure that all audio, print, and electronic media are accessible; that electronic media includes audio description, sign-language interpretation, and captions; and that everyday electronic goods and equipment follow 'universal-design' principles.

Are KYC details mandatory?
To curb illegal finance and money laundering, the Prevention of Money-laundering Act, 2002 (and its 2005 Rules) mandates every bank and financial institution to verify client identities, maintain comprehensive records, and report relevant information to the Financial Intelligence Unit. Consequently, digital KYC verification has become indispensable for a wide range of essential services — from opening a bank, demat or trading account to accessing SIM cards, pension schemes or insurance policies. It also unlocks government benefits — from national scholarships to Aadhaar-linked 'direct benefit transfers'.

Building on this mandate, the RBI's 2016 Master Direction on Know Your Customer (KYC) rules prescribe a Customer Due Diligence (CDD) framework and, via Clause 18, introduces Video-based Customer Identification Process (V-CIP), enabling remote customer verification through secure, real-time video interaction. Customers can prove their identity online by clicking a selfie; signing on a paper physically or digitally; printing and rescanning, or clicking a photo of the filled-in form; verifying OTPs in 30 seconds; and reading a random code flashed on the screen.

How does it affect PwDs?
Acid-attack survivors left with permanent 'facial disfigurement' and severe eye burns — and individuals with complete blindness or low vision — have filed writ petitions seeking directions to respondents, including RBI, the Department of Telecommunications and SEBI, to devise alternative digital KYC, e-KYC and video-KYC methods to make remote identity checks inclusive for all PwDs as they face significant hurdles under the current framework.

Currently, each 'regulated entity' has to devise its own tests. Methods such as eye-blinking, reading a flashing code, or writing it down and taking a selfie exclude blind users. Despite clear mandates in the 2021 and 2022 Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Accessibility Standards, most KYC apps and websites flout them — there is no screen-reader prompt for camera alignment, no audio cues for lighting or focus, and no way to differentiate document sides during upload. Additionally, thumb impressions, commonly used by visually impaired users, are not accepted as valid signatures, nor are PAN cards issued with them. Aadhaar-based biometric systems worsen the exclusion. Scanners and interfaces lack basic 'accessibility' features such as 'text-to-speech' or 'self-verification'. As a result, blind applicants are frequently asked to appear in person or are rejected on vague technical grounds. The RBI's Master Directions also bar any form of 'prompting' during KYC verification, leaving users without assistance.

How has the SC intervened?

The SC has consistently held that accessibility for PwDs is a 'constitutional imperative'. In Rajive Raturi versus Union of India (2024), it ruled that 'accessibility' is central to the right to life, dignity, and freedom of movement under Article 21. During the COVID-19 vaccination drive, the court emphasised that digital registration must be fully accessible to prevent exclusion. In the instant case, the top court held that 'digital barriers' blatantly violate the rights of PwD under the UNCRPD and India's disability laws. Anchoring its judgment in the principle of 'substantive equality', it directed that digital KYC guidelines be revised with 'accessibility' at their core. It flagged that the digital divide affects not just PwDs, but rural users, senior citizens, the economically disadvantaged, and linguistic minorities.

Relying on Articles 14, 15, 21, and 38, the court affirmed that 'digital access' is inseparable from the 'right to life and liberty'. It mandated the state to ensure that all digital infrastructure is accessible, especially for marginalised communities.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; Governance
Source: The Hindu