

Punjab Resolution Declaring Amritsar Walled City, Anandpur Sahib & Talwandi Sabo as Holy Cities

1. Background and Context

The **Punjab Legislative Assembly** passed a resolution to declare **Amritsar Walled City, Anandpur Sahib, and Talwandi Sabo** as **holy cities**.

This decision coincides with the **350th martyrdom anniversary of Guru Tegh Bahadur**, the **ninth Sikh Guru**, who sacrificed his life in 1675 to uphold **religious freedom and human rights**.

The resolution reflects an effort to **preserve Sikh religious heritage**, reinforce the spiritual character of key sacred places, and align governance with cultural and moral values rooted in Sikhism.

2. Key Provisions of the Resolution

The resolution imposes **restrictions within the notified holy city limits**, including a ban on:

- Sale and consumption of **liquor**
- Sale and consumption of **meat**
- Sale and use of **tobacco**
- Use of **other intoxicants**

Objective:

- To maintain the **spiritual sanctity** of sacred Sikh spaces
- To ensure an environment conducive to **religious observance, pilgrimage, and reflection**
- To align civic life with **Sikh ethical principles**, which discourage intoxicants

3. Religious and Historical Significance of the Selected Cities

These three cities are of exceptional importance because they together host **three of the five Sikh Takhts**, making Punjab the spiritual heartland of Sikhism.

4. Understanding Sikh Takhts (UPSC Static Component)

What is a Takht?

- The word **Takht** means “**throne**”
- A Takht represents a **seat of temporal (worldly) authority** in Sikhism
- Takhts guide Sikhs on **religious, political, and social matters**
- There are **five Sikh Takhts**:
 - **Three in Punjab**
 - **One in Bihar**
 - **One in Maharashtra**

5. The Five Sikh Takhts (Prelims + Mains Relevant)

(1) Akal Takht - Amritsar, Punjab

- **Established:** 1606
- **Founder:** Guru Hargobind
- **Significance:**
 - Highest seat of Sikh authority
 - Symbolises the doctrine of **Miri-Piri**:
 - *Miri* → Temporal power
 - *Piri* → Spiritual authority
- Located opposite the **Golden Temple (Harmandir Sahib)**

(2) Takht Sri Keshgarh Sahib - Anandpur Sahib, Punjab

- **Historical importance:**
 - Site where **Guru Gobind Singh founded the Khalsa in 1699**
- Associated with:
 - Sikh identity
 - Concept of **Saint-Soldier**

- Birth of the **Five Ks**

(3) Takht Sri Damdama Sahib - Talwandi Sabo, Punjab

- **Significance:**
 - Place where **Guru Gobind Singh finalised the Sikh scripture (Guru Granth Sahib)**
- Known as:
 - “Guru ki Kashi” (centre of Sikh learning)

(4) Takht Sri Harimandir Ji Patna Sahib - Patna, Bihar

- **Significance:**
 - Birthplace of **Guru Gobind Singh**
- Highlights Sikhism’s historical spread beyond Punjab

(5) Takht Sachkhand Sri Hazoor Sahib - Nanded, Maharashtra

- **Significance:**
 - Place where Guru Gobind Singh spent his **final days**
 - Site of his **cremation in 1708**
- Marks the end of the **line of human Sikh Gurus**

6. Governance and Constitutional Perspective (GS Paper II)

State Powers

- The resolution reflects the **state government’s authority** over:
 - Public order
 - Local governance
 - Cultural preservation
- Such decisions are typically implemented through:

- Municipal regulations
- State excise laws
- Urban planning rules

Balancing Act

- While promoting religious sanctity, governments must ensure:
 - Compliance with **constitutional principles**
 - Protection of **fundamental rights**
 - Avoidance of arbitrary restrictions

7. Cultural and Social Significance (GS Paper I)

- Reinforces **Punjab's Sikh heritage**
- Strengthens **cultural identity and collective memory**
- Encourages **value-based governance**
- Enhances **religious tourism and pilgrimage management**

8. UPSC-Ready Key Takeaways

For Prelims:

- Three holy cities declared in Punjab: **Amritsar Walled City, Anandpur Sahib, Talwandi Sabo**
- Total Sikh Takhts: **Five**
- Guru associated with martyrdom anniversary: **Guru Tegh Bahadur**

For Mains:

- Illustrates the intersection of **religion, governance, and culture**
- Reflects use of **soft power and cultural policy** by states
- Raises issues of **secularism, federalism, and local administration**

9. Conclusion

The Punjab government's resolution is not merely symbolic but represents a **culturally rooted governance decision**. By recognising the unique religious importance of these cities, the state aims to preserve Sikh heritage while reinforcing ethical and spiritual values in public life. For UPSC aspirants, this topic is important from the perspectives of **Indian culture, constitutional governance, and religious institutions**.

- 200-word GS-I

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