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DAILY pre PARE
Current affairs summary for prelims

3 August, 2024

Great Nicobar Project

Context: *The ₹72,000 crore Great Nicobar Island project includes a dual-use airport, container terminal, and township but faces legal challenges in the NGT and Calcutta High Court.*

- Last week, the Andaman and Nicobar Islands Integrated Development Corporation Limited (ANIIDCO) submitted an affidavit to NGT's Kolkata bench.
- - The affidavit contained conclusions from a high-powered committee (HPC) formed by NGT in 2023 to reassess the project's green clearance.
- - ANIIDCO is the implementing agency for the Great Nicobar Island project.
- - The HPC concluded that the proposed transshipment port does not fall within the Island Coastal Regulation Zone-IA (ICRZ-IA), where ports are prohibited.

➢ Great Nicobar Island Development Project

- **Overview**:
  - Launched in 2021, it is a comprehensive ₹72,000-crore infrastructure upgrade on Great Nicobar Island.
  - Implemented by the Andaman and Nicobar Islands Integrated Development Corporation (ANIIDCO).
  - Covers 16,610 hectares.
  - Aims to leverage the island's strategic location near the Malacca Strait.
- **Components**:
  - International Container Transshipment Terminal (ICTT)
  - Greenfield international airport
  - Two greenfield cities
  - Coastal mass rapid transport system
  - Free trade zone
  - 450 MVA gas and solar-based power plant
- **Strategic Importance:**
  - Facilitates deployment of military forces, warships, aircraft, missile batteries, and troops.
  - Enhances close surveillance and strong military deterrence around the archipelago.
  - Vital for India's national security due to proximity to the Malacca Strait.
  - Addresses concerns over Chinese military presence and influence in the Indo-Pacific area, particularly at choke points like the Malacca, Sunda, and Lombok Straits.
  - Counters potential Chinese expansion on the Coco Islands, close to India's Andaman & Nicobar Islands, crucial for maritime security.

➢ Great Nicobar Island

- **Location**:
  - Southernmost island of the Nicobar Islands Archipelago.
  - Southernmost tip of India.
  - Part of the Andaman and Nicobar archipelago comprising over 600 islands.
- **Area**:
  - Covers 1,03,870 hectares.
  - Has an area of 910 sq km.
- **Ecosystem**:
  - Tropical evergreen forest ecosystems.
  - Rich in biodiversity with 650 species of angiosperms, ferns, gymnosperms, and bryophytes.
  - Home to over 1,800 species of fauna, some endemic.
- **Ecological Characteristics:**
  - Great Nicobar Biosphere Reserve includes tropical wet evergreen forests.
  - Mountain ranges with a peak at 642 m (Mt. Thullier) above sea level.
  - Coastal plains with mangroves and Pandan forests.
  - Annual rainfall around 3,500 mm.
- **Endangered and Endemic Species:**
  - Giant leatherback turtle.
  - Nicobar megapode.
  - Great Nicobar crake.
  - Nicobar crab-eating macaque.
  - Nicobar tree shrew.
- **Tribes**:
  - **Mongoloid Shompen Tribe:** About 200 members, live in forest areas along rivers and streams, hunters and food gatherers.
  - **Nicobarese Tribe:** About 300 members, originally settled along the west coast, relocated to Afra Bay in the North Coast and Campbell Bay after the 2004 tsunami

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Evolution of Creamy Layer in OBC Reservation

***Context**: Justice B. R. Gavai stated that the State should develop a policy to identify and exclude the creamy layer from Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes for affirmative action benefits, using the OBC reservation model as a blueprint.*

What does 'creamy layer' refer to?

- Concept originated from the landmark Indra Sawhney ruling in 1992.
- Based on the Mandal Commission's recommendation, the V P Singh government notified 27% reservation for Socially and Educationally Backward Classes (OBC) in civil posts and services on August 13, 1990.
- Supreme Court upheld the 27% OBC reservation on November 16, 1992, with the exclusion of the creamy layer to ensure benefits reach those who need it most.

Definition

- Creamy layer: More socially, economically, and educationally advanced members among OBCs.
- Not the same as sub-classification or sub-categorisation, which refers to community/caste-wise breakdown based on various criteria.

Identification of Creamy Layer among OBC

- The criteria for identifying a person as part of the creamy layer is based on the recommendations of the Justice Ram Nandan Prasad Committee in 1993.
- Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) listed six categories of people whose children fall in the creamy layer on September 8, 1993.

Categories for Creamy Layer Identification

- Constitutional/statutory post
- Group 'A' and Group 'B' officers of central and state governments, employees of PSUs and statutory bodies, universities
- Colonel and above in armed forces and equivalent in paramilitary forces
- Professionals like doctors, lawyers, management consultants, engineers, etc.
- Property owners with agricultural holdings or vacant land and/or buildings
- Income/wealth tax assessee

Broader Categories

- **People with parents in government service:**
  - Determination based on rank.
  - Group-A officer (or promoted before 40) and both parents being Group-B officers.
  - Colonels or higher ranks in armed forces and equivalent in paramilitary forces.
- **People with parents in the private sector:**
  - Determination based on parents' income.

Income Threshold

- Originally fixed at Rs 1 lakh per annum, revised every three years.
- Updated to Rs 8 lakh in 2017, no further revisions since.
- National Commission for Backward Classes (NCBC) recommended raising the threshold to Rs 15 lakh in 2015, no action taken.

Eco-sensitive Zones

***Context:** The NGT's Western Zonal Bench has directed the MoEFCC to set a deadline for declaring the Western Ghats an eco-sensitive zone.*

Eco-Sensitive Zones

- Eco-Sensitive Zones (ESZs), also known as Ecologically Fragile Areas (EFAs).
- Notified by the MoEFCC around Protected Areas, National Parks, and Wildlife Sanctuaries.
- Serve as "shock absorbers" by regulating activities around protected areas.
- According to the National Board for Wildlife (NBWL), ESZ delineation must be site-specific with regulatory, not prohibitive, activities unless necessary.
- Aim to minimize the negative impacts of activities on the fragile ecosystems of National Parks and Wildlife Sanctuaries.
- Act as transition zones from high-protection areas to those with lesser protection.

Eco-Sensitive Zones Background

- The National Wildlife Action Plan (NWAP) 2002-2016 highlights the importance of protecting areas outside protected networks to prevent biodiversity isolation.
- Section 3 of the Environment Protection Rules empowers the Central Government to take measures for environmental protection and pollution control.
- The Environment (Protection) Act, 1986, does not explicitly mention "Eco-Sensitive Zones."
- Rule 5(1) of the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986, allows the central government to restrict or prohibit industrial operations in certain areas.
- The government can impose restrictions on areas for specific industries, operations, or processes, subject to safeguards.

- Section 3(2)(v) of the Act allows the Central Government to restrict areas for certain industrial operations.
- The concept of Eco-Sensitive Zones was introduced to meet these objectives.
- The criteria used for ESZs are also applied to declare No Development Zones (NDZs).

➢ **Extent of Eco-Sensitive Zone**

- An ESZ can extend up to 10 kilometers around a protected area, as specified in the Wildlife Conservation Strategy, 2002.
- In areas with sensitive corridors, ecological connectivity, and crucial landscape linkages, the ESZ may extend beyond 10 kilometers.
- Within a particular Protected Area, the distribution and regulation of the ESZ may vary, with differing widths and extents around the area.

➢ **Activities Around Eco-Sensitive Zones (ESZs)**

- **Prohibited Activities:**
  - Commercial mining
  - Saw mills
  - Industries causing pollution (air, water, soil, noise, etc.)
  - Establishment of major hydroelectric projects (HEP)
  - Commercial use of wood
- **Regulated Activities:**
  - Felling of trees
  - Establishment of hotels and resorts
  - Commercial use of natural water
  - Erection of electrical cables
  - Drastic changes in agricultural systems (e.g., adoption of heavy technology, pesticides, etc.)
  - Widening of roads
- **Permitted Activities:**
  - Ongoing agricultural or horticultural practices
  - Rainwater harvesting
  - Organic farming
  - Use of renewable energy sources
  - Adoption of green technology for all activities

NEWS IN BETWEEN THE LINES

UNICEF

Recently, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has expressed deep concern over the death of at least 32 children as well as many arrests and detentions in last month's violence in Bangladesh.

About UNICEF:

- The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), **initially known as the International Children's Emergency Fund (ICEF),** is an **agency of the United Nations**.
- It **provides humanitarian** and **developmental aid to children** worldwide.
- It was established on **December 11, 1946**, by the United Nations General Assembly and **Ludwik Rajchman**.
- Its mission is to ensure special **protection for the most disadvantaged children** including **victims of war**, **disasters**, **extreme poverty**, all forms of violence and exploitation, and those with disabilities.
- It became a permanent part of the United Nations in **1953**.
- It began its work in India in **1949** and currently operates in 16 states.
- UNICEF's subsidiaries include **UNICEF Australia** and **UNICEF Ireland**.
- Its headquarter is in **New York, USA**.

Cotton Corporation of India

Recently, the Cotton Corporation of India (CCI) has procured 33 lakh bales of cotton at Minimum Support Price (MSP) from farmers during the current cotton season that will end next month.

About the Cotton Corporation of India:

- The Cotton Corporation of India (CCI) is a **public sector undertaking** (PSU) of the Government of India that is involved in cotton trade, procurement, and exports.
- It was **established on 31st July 1970** under the administrative control of **Ministry of Textiles**, under the Companies Act **1956**.
- Its main **role is to conduct price support operations** when cotton market prices fall below the Minimum Support Price (MSP).
- It also **helps cotton growers sell their produce at competitive prices** in various market yards across cotton-growing states.
- Its headquarter is located in **Mumbai**.

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Unified Payments Interface

Recently, Unified Payments Interface-based transactions surged in July, reaching 20.64 lakh crore rupees, according to data released by the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI), showing a 35% year-on-year increase.

About Unified Payments Interface:

- Unified Payments Interface (UPI) is **a real-time payment system** that **allows users to transfer funds** between bank accounts through a single mobile app.
- It was **launched in 2016 by the National Payments Corporation of India** (NPCI) as a public-private partnership with 21 member banks.
- This system is an **advanced version of Immediate Payment Service** (IMPS) that **combines multiple banking features into one app**, including fund routing and merchant payments.
- It allows users to **make payments directly** from their bank account to merchants without needing to enter their net **banking password**, **credit card details** or **IFSC** code.
- As of **June 2023**, **users can make up to 20 transactions or ₹1 lakh in a single day** using UPI, either all at once or throughout the day.

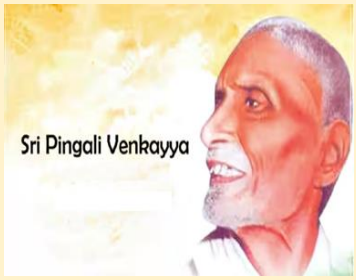
INS Shalki

The Indian Navy's submarine, INS Shalki, arrived on August 2, 2024, on a two-day visit to Colombo.

About the INS Shalki:

- INS Shalki (S46) is a diesel-electric submarine of the Indian Navy's Shishumar class.
- It was the **first submarine ever built in India**, launched in **1987** by Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, and **commissioned into the Indian navy in 1992**.
- The **64.4-meter-long** submarine has a **crew of 40** and is commanded by Commander Rahul Patnaik.
- It can travel at **11 knots (20 km/h) when surfaced** and **22 knots (41 km/h) when submerged**.
- Submarines are equipped with both offensive and defensive weapons, including **torpedoes**, **cruise missiles** and **ballistic missiles**.
- The submarine will **depart** the island on **4 August 2024.**

Personality in News
Pingali Venkayya



Yesterday on 2nd of August, the Prime Minister of India remembered Pingali Venkayya on his birth anniversary.

Pingali Venkayya (2nd August 1876 - 4th July 1963)

Pingali Venkayya, an Indian freedom fighter, author, geologist and the designer of the Indian National Flag (Tricolour), was born in a Telugu Brahmin family at Bhatlapenumarru, near Machilipatnam in Andhra Pradesh.

Contributions:

- Pingali Venkayya was the **follower of Gandhian principles** and it was **upon the request of Mahatma Gandhi that he designed the Indian National Flag** with saffron, white and green colours with chakra in the middle.
- Venkayya's designed flag has been used informally at all Congress meetings **since 1921** approved by Mahatma Gandhi in **Congress meeting in Vijayawada.**
- He participated in the **Indian freedom struggle** including Swadeshi Andolan and was **jailed several times** for his involvement.
- He **served as a soldier in British army in South Africa** and fought the **Second Boer War** (1899-1902) and also **met Mahatma Gandhi** there.
- In **1913**, he delivered a lecture in Japanese in Bapatla, Andhra Pradesh **called as 'Japan Venkayya'**.
- He published a book **'Bharatha Deshaniki Oka Jatiya Patakam'** (National flag of India) in **1916**.
- The Indian National Flag was adopted in its present form during a meeting of the Constituent Assembly on **July 22, 1947**.

Awards and Honours:

- In **2009**, a **postage stamp** was released for his contribution.
- **Tiranga Utsav** is celebrated on August 2nd every year to honor of Pingali Venkayya.
- This year, Tiranga Utsav was celebrated in Srinagar with a "**Salute Tiranga**" rally on **Dal Lake**.

Face to Face Centres

DELHI MUKHERJEE NAGAR: 9205274741, 42 | LAXMI NAGAR : 9205212500, 9205962002 | RAJENDRA NAGAR: 9205274743 | UTTAR PRADESH PRAYAGRAJ: 0532-2260189, 8853467068 | LUCKNOW (ALIGANJ): 0522-4025825, 9506256789 | LUCKNOW (GOMTI NAGAR): 7234000501, 7234000502 | GREATER NOIDA: 9205336037, 38 | KANPUR: 7887003962, 7897003962 | GORAKHPUR : 7080847474, 9161947474 | ODISHA BHUBANESWAR: 9818244644/7656949029

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Place in News

Nigeria

According to Amnesty International, at least 13 people died in protests over economic hardship in Nigeria.

Nigeria (Capital: Abuja)

Location: Nigeria an **African country** located on the Gulf of Guinea.

Boundaries: Nigeria shares its borders with **Chad** and **Cameroon** (East), the **Republic of Benin** (West), **Niger** (North), **Lake Chad** (Northeast) and **The Gulf of Guinea of the Atlantic Ocean** (South).

Physical Features:

- The **Niger, Benue and Kanduna** are the main rivers in Nigeria.
- **Chabbal Waddi,** also known as Gangirwal and the **Mountain of Death,** is Nigeria's highest point.
- The **Adamawa, Mambilla**, **Jos** and **Obudu Plateaus** are all in Nigeria.
- The **Niger Delta** is one of **the world's largest river** deltas and the third largest delta on Earth.

Ethnic Groups:

- The three largest ethnic groups in Nigeria are the **Hausa** in the North, the **Yoruba** in the West and the **Igbo** in the East.

Reserves:

- Nigeria is the **12th largest producer of petroleum in the world.**
- It has a huge reserve of underexploited mineral reserves like **coal**, **bauxite**, **gold**, **tin**, **iron ore** and **more**, holding substantial economic potential.

POINTS TO PONDER

- Who will inaugurate the 32nd International Conference of Agricultural Economists (ICAE) in New Delhi? **– Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi**
- Recently, which Rajya Sabha MP has drawn the attention of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to issues related to Asiatic lions in Gujarat and presented his new book "Call of the Gir"? **– Parimal Nathwani**
- Which telescope did Indian astronomers recently use to discover 34 new Giant Radio Sources? **– Giant Metrewave Radio Telescope (GMRT)**
- The recent study on Kindlins could potentially lead to new treatments for what disease? **– Cancer**
- In which star cluster did researchers discover a vampire star that rejuvenates its youth by sucking up material from a companion? **– M67**