Prelim Bits 13-03-2024 | UPSC Daily Current Affairs

Geoglyphs of Konkan Region

The Bombay High Court issued a notice to the Centre and the ASI seeking their replies on the proposed mega oil refinery in the region where prehistoric geoglyphs were found.

- **A form of human rock art** – They are *engraved or incised on the floor or rock bed* and are open air ensembles.
- **Surfaces** – On the ***lateritic plateaus (Sada)*** *of the Konkan* belt.
- **Time period** – More than 10,000 to 12,000 years old
- **Spread** – They are dispersed along *900 km* of the Konkan coast.
- **Sites** – Around 600 figurines clusters in
  - **Maharashtra** - Kasheli, RundhyeTali, DevacheGothane, Barsu, Devi Hasol, Jambharun, Kudopi and Ukshi
  - **Goa** – Pansaymol
- **Site at Barsu** – It has more than 62 geoglyphs, making it the largest cluster of geoglyphs in the Konkan region.
- **Themes** – Faunal themes are integral that includes marine and riverine, *mammals, reptiles, amphibian and avian life* which have vanished from the region several centuries ago.
- **Excellence in rock art** – High quality of artistic expression, with evolution of techniques (of *scooping and etching*).
  - 1 or 2 standalone figures of larger-then-life scale.
  - A composition of multiple figures, gathered for a purpose.
- Unlike Bhimbetka paintings, the incision marks and figures are more angular and less fluid.
- **Cultural significance** – Abstract anthropogenic and geometrical features together convey the interaction between man and fauna and *foundational stages of socio-sacred activities*.
- **Continued habitation** – It sheds light on the *transitory phase from Stone Age to Early Historical period* of the Konkan region.
- **Evidence of Human adaptation**– It is a documentation of how people *adapted to ephemeral wetlands in a dry-arid plateau* having shallow rock pools, streams and watercourses.
- **Protected status** – They are classified as ***protected monuments*** by the state archaeology department and the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI).
- Earlier it was included in the 'tentative list' of UNESCO's World Heritage List.

Petroglyph	Geoglyph

A form of rock art that involves carving or pecking designs into rock surfaces.	A large-scale design or motif created on the ground by removing or rearranging soil, rocks, or other natural materials.

Konkan Region
• It is also known as ***Aparanta***, was a culturally vibrant land since the early historical period. • **Geography** – Extends from South Western Maharashtra till Southern Karnataka • **Trade** – It had flourishing trading activities complex maritime and inland trade linkages.

References

1. The Indian Express| PIL seeking protection of Geoglyphs of Konkan Region
2. UNESCO| Geoglyphs of Konkan Region

Small and Medium REIT (SMREIT)

The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has issued regulations to establish guidelines for creation of Small and Medium Real Estate Investment Trusts (SM REITs).

- The new regulations will be called SEBI (REIT) (Amendment) Regulations 2024.
- **Aim** – To *regulate the fractional ownership industry* and safeguard investor interests, incorporating both commercial and residential properties within the new framework.

> ***Fractional ownership*** *allows individual investors to co-own commercial or residential properties as an alternative investment route.*

Real Estate Investment Trust (REIT)
• A company that *owns, operates, or provides financing* for income-generating real estate properties. • **Current asset base** – Rs.500 crore. • **Role** – These *pool funds from investors*, directing them toward various commercial real estate ventures. • They are similar to shares and are *listed on stock exchanges.* • **3 REITs in India** – Embassy Office Parks REIT, Mindspace Business Parks REIT, and Brookfield India Real Estate Trust.

- **SMREITs** – Small and Medium REIT (SMREIT), which may raise funds from *Indian and foreign investors* by the issuance of units.
- **Fund pooling** – It may gather funds starting from *₹50 crore* by issuing units to a *minimum of 200 investors*.
- **Fund utilization** – Used for acquiring and managing real estate assets, generating income for the investors.

- **Ownership of assets** – It will be structured through 1 or more schemes, each operating under special purpose vehicles (SPVs).
- **An investment manager** – He/she is responsible for *setting up an SM REIT* and required to
  - Have a *net worth of at least ₹20 crore*
  - Have a *separate trustee* for oversight.
  - *Maintain a website* detailing all SM REIT schemes enhancing transparency and investor access to information.

	Existing REITs	SMREITs
Listing	Initial Public Offering (IPO)	Similar to REIT
Asset completion requirements	At least 85%	At least 95%
Minimum subscription amount	Rs.25 Lakh per investor	Reduced to Rs.10 Lakh per investor
Investment Manager	To retain minimum of 20% of the total outstanding limits for 2 years	Reduced to minimum of 5%

- **Significance** – It is expected to open the doors to fractional ownership of rent yielding real estate assets, including uber-luxury 2nd homes across the country.

References

1. Live Mint| SEBI notifies Small and Medium REITs (SMREITs)
2. Hindustan Times – Real Estate Investment Trusts (REIT)

Tripartite Agreement

The Centre recently signed a tripartite agreement with the Tripura government and the state's main opposition party, the TIPRA Motha.

- **Aim** – To *address the long-pending demands of the state's tribal* population, including economic, political, land, linguistic and cultural rights.
- **Need** – *Tribals in Tripura became a minority* due to non-tribals settling in large numbers and the concerns of *illegal immigration from Bangladesh.*

  The wave of refugees led to a sharp change in demography in the state in 1948, the indigenous tribes accounted for over 80% of the population, now they are around 30%.

- **Demands** – ***A 'Greater Tipraland'***, an area that includes the area currently under the Tripura Tribal Areas District Autonomous Council (TTADC) with places inhabited by the Tiprasa tribe outside the council areas.
- It also wants the *Roman script to be declared as the official script* for the indigenous Kokborok language.

- **Tripartite Accord** – It was agreed to amicably *resolve all issues* of indigenous people of Tripura relating to history, land and political rights, economic development, identity, culture and language.
- *Constitute a joint working group*/ committee to work out and implement the mutually agreed points on all the above mentioned issues in a time-bound manner to ensure an honourable solution.
- *Refrain from resorting to any form of protest*/ agitation by all stakeholders, starting from the day of signing of the agreement.
- **Limitation** – It is silent about the demand for Greater Tipraland or greater autonomy over land to tribal councils.

> ***The 6th Schedule*** *of Indian Constitution relates to the administration of the tribal areas in Assam Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram through establishment of Autonomous District Councils (ADCs).*

Reference

The Indian Express| Tripura's Tripartite Agreement

Citizenship – Union List

Chief Ministers of Tamil Nadu, Kerala and West Bengal objected to implementation of Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019 (CAA).

> *Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019 aims to offers citizenship to persecuted non-Muslim minorities from Muslim-majority Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Bangladesh.*

- **Citizenship** – It is the status of a person recognized under law as being a legal member of a sovereign state or belonging to a nation.
- **Indian Constitution** – ***Articles 5 – 11*** of the Constitution deals with the concept of citizenship.
- It entails the enjoyment of full membership of any State in which a citizen has civil and political rights.
- **Power of Union government –** It is entitled with *granting of citizenship.*
- 'Citizenship, naturalisation and aliens' figuring as entry no. 17 in the ***union list under the 7th Schedule***.

> *The 7th Schedule has 3 lists namely, the Union list, state list, and concurrent list that show the division of power between the Union and States concerning certain subjects.*

- **Article 256 of the Constitution** – It talks about 'Obligation of States and the Union'.

- The executive power of every state shall be so exercised as to ensure *compliance with the laws made by Parliament* and any existing laws which apply in that state.
- The executive power of the Union shall extend to the giving of such *directions to a state* as may appear to the government of India to be necessary for that purpose.
- **Limited power of States** – It would have *no other option but to implement* the law passed by the Parliament.
- **CAA Rules, 2024** – It envisages district level committee and state/UT level committee (Empowered committee), to verify documentation and take a final call on citizenship.
- Both committees are packed with central government officers and *state/UT concerned is represented by a sole invitee* to each committee.
- The Chair of both the committee are central government officers.
- Since the quorum of both committees shall be 2 including the chair, it means the committees *can do complete work without mandatorily involving the state representatives*.

References

1. Deccan Herald| Citizenship under Union List
2. Times of India| Limited powers of States in CAA

Gandhi's Ashrams

Prime Minister of India has inaugurated the refurbished Kochrab Ashram and unveiled the Master Plan for the Gandhi Ashram Memorial at the Mahatma Gandhi Ashram in Sabarmati, Ahmedabad, Gujarat.

- **Objective** – To make its members qualify themselves for, and make a consistent endeavour towards, the service of the country, not inconsistent with the universal welfare.
- Here, Gandhi and his co-residents sought to engage in acts of *self-control and communal labour* in the pursuit of spiritual and social liberation.

Settlements of Mahatma Gandhi			
Name	**Year**	**Place**	**Country**
Phoenix Settlement	1904	Natal	South Africa
Tolstoy Farm	1910	Near Johannesburg	
Kochrab Ashram	1915	Ahmedabad, Gujarat	India
Sabarmati Ashram	1917	Ahmedabad, Gujarat	
Sevagram Ashram	1936	Wardha, Maharashtra	

> *Kochrab Ashram was the 1st Ashram established by Mahatma Gandhi after coming to India from South Africa in 1915. It is maintained by Gujarat Vidyapeeth.*

Gandhi Ashram Memorial and Precinct Development Project

- **Prepared by** – Ahmedabad-based HCP Design, Planning and Management Pvt Ltd (HCPDPM).
- **Spread** – Over 55 acres, and the entire precincts will sprawl over 322 acres.
- **Location** – Over 120 acres of land on the banks of the Sabarmati River on the outskirts of Ahmedabad.
- **Budget** – Rs 1,200 crore
- **Masterplan** – It proposes to restore, conserve, and rebuild about half of the 63 structures that existed in the original ashram.
- In all, 36 buildings will be restored and 20 buildings will be conserved.

Quick Facts

- **Historical Significance of Sabarmati Ashram** - From Sabarmati Ashram, Gandhi began Dandi march on March 12, 1930.
- He also launched the Champaran Satyagraha (1917), the Ahmedabad mills strike and Kheda Satyagraha (1918), the Khadi movement (1918), the Rowlatt Act and Khilafat Movements (1919), and the Non-Cooperation movement (1920) while living in Sabarmati.
- **Global Significance of Sabarmati Ashram** – Since 1963 it has been maintaining a visitors' book which records eminent visitors include Queen Elizabeth (1961), the Dalai Lama (1984-85), South Africa's former President Nelson Mandela (1995), and former US President Bill Clinton (2001).

References

1. PIB| Inauguration of refurbished Kochrab Ashram in Sabarmati
2. The Indian Express| Gandhi Ashram Memorial and Development Project

Other Important Topics
Exercise Bharat Shakti
PM witnessed a synergized demonstration of indigenous defence capabilities in the form of Exercise Bharat Shakti in Pokhran, Rajasthan. • It is a ***Tri-Services Live Fire and Manoeuvre Exercise***, first-of-its kind initiative held in Pokhran, Rajasthan. • The exercise aligns with the Atmanirbhar Bharat initiative, showcasing India's capabilities in multi-domain operations.
Hyodol

South Korean company Hyodol has come up with a social robot.
• Hyodol is a ***social robot*** that uses AI to ***help older people with dementia*** and those who are digitally disadvantaged.
• It is developed by Hyodol, AI companion chat robot platform in South Korea.
• The AI social robot helps senior citizens beat loneliness, and aid people with dementia.
• Hyodol collects lifelog data using interactive AI care robots based on the latest AI and Home IoT technology.

Haiti

• Haiti occupies the western 3rd of the island of ***Hispaniola***, situated between Cuba and Puerto Rico, which it shares with the Dominican Republic.
• The ***Atlantic Ocean*** borders Haiti's northern shores, while the ***Caribbean Sea*** is to the west and south.
• Its capital and largest city is ***Port-au-Prince***.
• The largest lake is ***Etang Saumatre***, a salt-water body is located in the southern region.

Haiti is the poorest country in the Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) region and among the poorest countries in the world, Haiti ranked 163 out of 191 countries in the 2022, United Nations Human Development Index.

Yaounde Declaration

• Health ministers of 11 African countries committed to end malaria deaths at the Yaounde conference in Cameroon's capital Yaounde.
• **Yaounde Declaration** also deals with African countries and organisations to take ownership of the tax transparency agenda promoting it to serve African interests in fighting against tax evasion and illicit financial flows (IFFs).

Gorsam Kora Festival

• The Gorsam Kora festival is held ***annually in Zemithang valley*** (in Arunachal Pradesh, which shares its border with Bhutan) along the ***Nyanmjang Chu River***.
• It is a celebration of the friendship between ***India and Bhutan.***
• It features cultural performances and Buddhist rituals at the ***Gorsam Chorten Stupa*** dating back to the 12th century, and is older than the ***Tawang monastery.***
• The Indian Army's ***Gajraj Corps*** is instrumental in organising the festival.

Tawang Monastery is a Buddhist monastery in the Tawang district of Arunachal Pradesh, the 2nd largest and oldest monastery in Asia, and the largest in India.

Chushi Gangdruk

• Chushi Gangdruk is a ***Tibetan guerrilla outfit*** that fought against the People's Republic of China (PRC) in Tibet from 1956 to 1974.
• The group's name translates to ***"4 Rivers, 6 Ranges"*** and refers to Amdo and Kham, regions of eastern Tibet.
• ***Andrug Gompo Tashi***, also known as Andrug Jindak, established the group on June, 1958, and was the leader and financier of the group.

Taljai hill

Residents of Taljai hill have submitted a letter to the forest department, demanding an explanation about the activities going on in the area.
• Taljai Hills is developed as a park, is a designated wildlife reserve.
• It is part of the ***Western Ghats in Pune.***
• It is named after the temple of ***Taljai Mata Devi***, which is located atop the hill.

Donna Buang wingless stonefly

The Victorian government in Australia rejected the Critical Habitat Nomination for the Mount Donna Buang wingless stonefly.

• The Mount Donna Buang wingless stonefly, Riekoperla darlingtoni, is a species of stonefly endemic to Australia.
• It is one of 2 wingless stonefly species found in Australia.
• Its suitable habitat is within the ***Yarra Ranges National Park.***
• This species requires high quality of water and habitat.
• It is likely to be extremely sensitive to any amount of water pollution, sedimentation and any forms of habitat alteration.
• **Conservation Status**
  - **IUCN -** Critically Endangered.

TOI-270 d

Astronomers using the James Webb Space Telescope (JWST) have found hints of a distant planet that could be entirely covered in a deep ocean.

• The planet, known as TOI-270 d is a sub-Neptune distant exoplanet located 70 light-years away and is twice the size of Earth.
• The planet lacks ammonia in its atmosphere, which may be due to 2 reasons
  1. It would be absorbed by a large ocean because it revealed water vapour, methane, and carbon dioxide, which is consistent with a water world called Hycean.
  2. It might be too hot for liquid water, with temperatures reaching 4,000 degrees Celsius and the planet could have a rocky surface with a thick atmosphere of hydrogen and water vapour.

Phani Yerava Tribes

• The Phani Yerava tribe live in the Makuta village, which falls under the Makuta Aranya Valaya, in Kerti reserved forest of Karnataka's Western Ghats.
• The tribes secured land rights under the Forest Rights Act in 2021.
• **Kerti Reserved Forest** is part of a World Heritage site in India and is located in Coorg, Karnataka.

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