Prelim Bits 23-03-2023 | UPSC Daily Current Affairs

Mata Sharda Devi Temple

Union Home Minister and Minister of Cooperation e-inaugurated Maa Sharda Devi Temple at Kupwara, Jammu and Kashmir.

- Sharda Peeth and Sharda Mata Devi temple is a revered site for the Hindu community.
- The temple is one of the 18 Maha Shakti Peethas and is considered to be the abode of Hindu Goddess Saraswati.
- It is located in Neelum Valley in Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (PoK) across Teetwal village in Kupwara district of Jammu and Kashmir, along the Line of Control (LoC).



- The Maa Sharda's temple was reconstructed as the temple has been out of reach since partition.
- Originally there was no idol of the Goddess Sharda in the temple, but there was only a stone plinth.
- The reconstructed temple has the idol of Sharda Maa which was donated by the Sringeri Math.
- It is an important step in the direction of discovery of Sharda-civilisation and promotion of Sharda-script.
- Sharda Peeth had been a historical centre of India's cultural, religious, and educational heritage.
- It was a centre of learning known as Sharda Peeth or Sarvajnanpeetha.
- The Government of India is working in direction to start Sharda Peeth yatra across Line of Control (LOC).
- **Sharda-script** - Sharda is the original script of Kashmir.
- It evolved from the Western branch of Brahmi nearly 1200 years ago.
- At this time the language of Kashmir was developing into Kashmiri, with its peculiar intonations, variations and sounds and the script became unfit for Sanskrit.
- But almost all the ancient Sanskrit literature of Kashmir is written in this script.
- **Similar pilgrim site** - The Kartarpur corridor, inaugurated in 2019, links 2 important Sikh shrines and allows pilgrims to travel visa-free.
- It links Dera Baba Nanak in Gurdaspur district of Punjab and Gurudwara Darbar Sahib in Kartarpur, Pakistan.

References

1. PIB - Shri Amit Shah inaugurates Sharda Devi Temple at Kupwara
2. ET - GoI working in direction to start Sharda Peeth yatra across LoC
3. UNESCO - Sharda Script

Mount Merapi

Indonesia's Merapi volcano spews hot clouds and ash in new eruption and halted tourism.

- Indonesia's Mount Merapi is one of the world's most active volcanoes.
- Mount Merapi volcano is located on the border of Central Java and Yogyakarta provinces.
- The 2,968-meter (9,737-foot) mountain is about 30 kilometers (18 miles) from Yogyakarta.
- Mount Merapi is the most active among the 120 active volcanoes in Indonesia.
- The volcano's last major eruption in 2010 killed more than 300 people.
- Despite being a dangerous volcano, Mount Merapi is a famous tourist destination.



- Indonesia is home to many active volcanoes, due to its position on the "Ring of Fire", or the Circum-Pacific Belt, which is characterized by active volcanoes and frequent earthquakes.
- Other volcanoes in Indonesia Mount Semeru, Mount Bromo, Mount Sinabung, Mount Ili Lewotolok

References

1. IE - Mount Merapi volcano erupts
2. Hindustan times - Indonesia's Merapi volcano spews hot clouds

Solomon Islands

China boosts South Pacific influence with a contract to develop a key port in the Solomon Islands.

- The China Civil Engineering Construction Corporation had been chosen to develop the international port in the capital Honiara.
- The company was established by the Chinese government in the 1970s and has played an integral role in the Belt and Road initiative.
- The island have become the unlikely epicentre of a diplomatic tussle between China and the U.S., after it signed a secret security pact with China in 2022.
- **Solomon Islands** - Solomon Islands is a country in Melanesia in the south-western Pacific Ocean.
- It consists of 6 major islands and over 992 smaller islands.
- It is an archipelago of tropical volcanic islands and coral atolls.
- Solomon Islands achieved independence from the British as a republic in 1978.
- Honiara is the capital of and largest city in Solomon Islands.



References

1. The Hindu - China's Solomons port deal
2. Britannica - Solomon Islands

Gandhamardan Hill

The Odisha government has declared the Gandhamardan Hill Range in Bargarh and Balangir district as a Biodiversity Heritage Site (BHS).

- A notification issued by the Odisha's Forest, Environment and Climate Change Department declared Gandhamardan hill as 'Biodiversity Heritage Site'.
- The Gandhamardan hill (Gandhamardan Reserve Forest) spreads over nearly 190 sq.km in Bargarh and Balangir districts in Odisha.
- This ecologically fragile ecosystem is rich in floral and faunal diversity is protected under the Odisha Biodiversity Rules - 2012.
- **Significance -** The hill range have a diverse socio-economic, ecological and biological significance for the people of Odisha.
- The hill ecosystem has 500 species of animals and 1,200 species of plants including 300 species of medicinal plants.
- A treasure trove of medicinal plants, the hill system is considered the **'*Ayurvedic paradise*'** of Odisha.
- The hills have 2 historical monuments (hill shrines) which are major pilgrimage sites of Odisha.
    1. Nrusinghanath temple located on the northern slope.
    2. Harishankar temple on the southern side.
- Hiuen Tsang described the hill shrine as a Buddhist heritage site named *Parimalagiri* in his chronicles.
- **Bauxite Mining -** In 1980s, then public sector Bharat Aluminium Company Limited (BALCO) proposed mining of bauxite from Gandhamardan.
- People protested against it between 1983 and 1991 and the project was shelved.

Gandhamardan Hill Range is the third BHS of Odisha after Mandasuru Gorge in Kandhamal district (2019) and Mahendragiri Hill Range in Gajapati district (2022).

References

1. The Hindu - Odisha govt has declared Gandhamardan hill as BHS
2. Hindustan Times - Gandhamardan hills: Third BHS in Odisha

Green Tug Transition Programme

The Union Minister of Ports, Shipping & Waterways and AYUSH launched the 'Green Tug Transition Programme' (GTTP).

- India's first National Centre of Excellence in Green Port & Shipping (NCoEGPS) was inaugurated in Gurugram, Haryana.
- In the event 'Green Tugs Transition Programme (GTTP)' was launched for operating green tugs in all major ports by 2025.
- NCoEGPS will act as the nodal entity for GTTP.
- India aims at becoming 'Global Hub for Green Ship' building by 2030 with launch of

Green Tug Transition Programme (GTTP).

- ***'Green Hybrid Tugs'*** will be powered by Green Hybrid Propulsion systems.
- These Green hybrid tugs will subsequently adopt non-fossil fuel solutions like (Methanol, Ammonia, Hydrogen).
- At least, 50% of all the Tugs are likely to be converted into Green Tugs by 2030.
- Green shipping will considerably reduce emission from ports.

Tugs *- A tug boat or tugs are marine vessels that manoeuvre ships by pushing or pulling them, mostly using tow lines. They tug ships in circumstances where the ships cannot or does not move using its own power like in narrow harbours, canals, etc.*

- **Other green shipping initiatives -** Green Ports Initiative, PM Gati Shakti.
- India has been selected as the first country under the IMO Green Voyage 2050 project to conduct a pilot project related to Green Shipping.
- The ministry has already identified Paradip Port, Deendayal Port and V.O. Chidambaram Port to be developed as Hydrogen Hubs by 2030.

Hydrogen Hubs are capable of handling, storing and generation of green hydrogen.

References

1. PIB - India: 'Global Hub for Green Ship' building by 2030
2. Business Line - India pushes towards green shipping

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