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Shompen Tribes

Some members of the shompen tribes voted in the 2024 election amidst fears that their forests on the Great Nicobar island will be destroyed by a proposed project.

- Shompens are one of the least known ***particularly vulnerable tribal groups (PVTGs)*** in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.
- They are one of the most isolated tribes on Earth and the group is heterogeneous.
- **Language -** The Shompen have their own language, called Shompenese, which is part of the Austroasiatic language family. The Shompen language has many dialects.
- **Cultural practices** - The Shompens are primarily hunter-gatherers and also practise a little bit of horticulture and pig rearing.
- Hunting of wild pigs, monkeys, monitor lizards and sometimes pythons are common among the tribe.
- **Diet -** Pandanus (a tropical plant found in the islands), whose fruits resemble the woody pineapple, is the staple food of the Shompens.
- **Classification -** Geographically, the tribe can be classified into 4 different groups depending on their location in the Great Nicobar Island namely north-eastern, western, southern and central groups.
- **Economy** - Different groups of Shompens have developed different levels of symbiotic relationship particularly a ***barter system with the Great Nicobarese.***
- **Distinction -** Shompens distinct from the 4 other PVTGs of Andaman and Nicobar Islands by Mongoloid features.
- **Religion –** Animism.
- **Social structure -** The Shompen have a patriarchal social structure, with the eldest male member overseeing family affairs.
- **Population -** According to the 2011 Census, there are only around 229 members of the Shompen tribe.

References

The Hindu | Shompen people

Antarctic Peninsula

Antarctic Peninsula showed 10-fold greening since 1986 according to the archive study of National Aeronautics and Space Administration's (NASA) Landsat satellite mission between 1986 and 2021.

Recent Findings

- Vegetation cover likely increased from less than one square km (km^2) in 1986 to almost 12 km^2 in 2021.
- The Antarctic Peninsula is heating up 5 times faster than the global average. Since 1950, the region has warmed almost 3°C.
- More than 90% of the glaciers have been losing mass since the 1940s.
- Vascular plants native to the Peninsula have extended their range. However, scientists are particularly concerned about moss ecosystems.
- Mosses play a crucial role in changing the extent of vegetated ground cover, organic soil formation, and higher plant colonization.
- Mosses are capable of colonizing bare rock surfaces and helping future soil development to enable moss-dominated ecosystems and higher plants to take over.
- This raises the *risk of non-native and invasive species arriving*, possibly carried by eco-tourists, scientists or other visitors to the continent.

Antarctic Peninsula

- The Antarctic Peninsula is the northernmost part of mainland Antarctica.
- It is known as
    - O'Higgins Land in Chile and
    - Tierra de San Martín in Argentina, and
    - Originally as Graham Land in the United Kingdom and
    - The Palmer Peninsula in the United States.
- This peninsula is notable for its unique ecosystems and is considered one of the most accessible regions in Antarctica for scientific research.
- The major feature of this peninsula is its mountain range.
- Mount Jackson is the highest peak at 3,184 metres but there are many other equally as impressive mountains.
- Marguerite Bay indents the west coast, and ***Bransfield Strait*** separates the peninsula from the South Shetland Islands to the north.
- Many other islands and floating ice shelves lie off the coast.



Reference

[Down to Earth | Antarctic Peninsula is dramatically greening]

Caracal

Gujarat government allocates Rs 10 crore for Caracal conservation and breeding recently.

- **Scientific Name -** Caracal caracal.
- The caracal is a ***medium-sized wildcat*** primarily nocturnal animal.
- The caracal's name comes from the Turkish word karakulak, which means "black ear".
- In India, it is called siya gosh, which is Persian for "black ear".
- **Appearance** –The caracal has long legs, a short face, long canine teeth, and have Black markings around eyes and whiskers.
- It is known for its remarkable agility, capable of leaping over 3 meters (9.8 feet) to catch birds in midair.
- Among small cats, caracals are the largest in Africa, recognized for both their speed and weight.
- **Diet** - Caracals are strictly carnivorous. They prey primarily on birds, rodents and small antelopes.
- **Habitat** - They live in woodlands, savannahs and in scrub forests, but avoid sandy

deserts. In southern Africa, they usually live in upland areas.

- **Distribution** - Caracals are found in most regions of Africa and from the Arabian Peninsula through northwest India and also found in Middle East.
- **In India -** It is now only found in a few areas of India, including:
  - Ranthambhore Tiger Reserve, Rajasthan.
  - Kutch region, Gujarat.
- **Conservation status**
  - **IUCN -** 'least concern'.
  - **Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 -** Schedule-I.
  - Conservation Assessment and Management Plan (CAMP) listed as 'near threatened'.
- **Threats -** Hunting, Habitat loss and Competition with other predators.
- **Caracal Conservation areas**
- Some protected areas that are good for caracal conservation include
  - Kachchh Wildlife Sanctuary (WLS) in Gujarat
  - The tiger reserves of Ranthambhore, Mukundra hills, and Sariska
  - The WLS of Kumbhalgarh, Mount Abu, and Todgarh-Raoli in Rajasthan
  - Gandhi Sagar WLS in Madhya Pradesh



Reference

Ani News | Gujarat allocates Rs 10 crore for Caracal conservation

Very Short Range Air Defence System (VSHORAD)

The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) recently announced the completion of the development trials of the ingeniously developed 4th Generation miniaturised VSHORAD.

- The VSHORAD is a ***Man Portable Air Defence System (MANPADS)*** aims to provide effective protection against aerial threats at short ranges.

- **Developed by -** DRDO's Research Centre Imarat (RCI) in collaboration with other DRDO laboratories and DcPPs.
- **Range** - 1 to 15 kilometers.
- **Altitude -** It can engage targets at altitudes up to around 3,000 meters.
- **Novel Technologies -** The VSHORADS missile is equipped with advanced features including a miniaturized Reaction Control System (RCS) and integrated avionics.
- **Propulsion system -** It is powered by a dual-thrust solid motor, making it capable of effectively neutralizing low-altitude aerial threats at short ranges.
- **Features -** It can engage multiple targets simultaneously.
- It is designed to protect ground forces and critical assets from low-flying aerial threats such as drones, helicopters, and fast-moving aircraft.
- These systems fill a vital gap between short-range and close-in air defense solutions, providing quick response capabilities to counter immediate threats.
- The system has been subjected to successful flight tests, indicating its operational readiness.
- VSHORAD systems are often mounted on mobile platforms, such as vehicles or trailers, enabling them to be repositioned quickly in response to changing battlefield conditions.

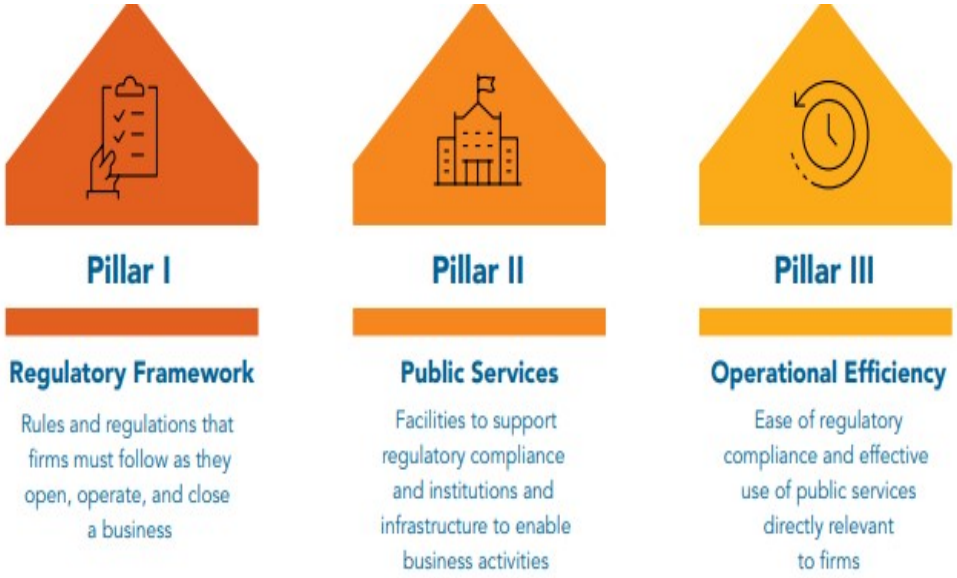
References

1. The Hindu | DRDO announces development trials of VSHORADS
2. Economic Times | 4th-Gen VSHORADS missile

Business-Ready Index (B-Ready)

Govt looking to align some indicators of India's BRAP 2024 index with the World Bank's B-READY index recently.

- The Business-Ready Index (B-Ready) is a quantitative assessment tool that evaluates the business environment.
- The flagship report collects new data and analysis project of the World Bank Group to assess the business and investment climate worldwide.
- The B-READY index is a successor to the Ease of Doing Business rankings, which were discontinued in 2021 due to irregularities.
- It is a key instrument of the World Bank Group's new strategy to facilitate private investment, generate employment, and improve productivity to help economies accelerate development.
- **Pillars -** It focuses on 3 main pillars.



- The pillars will benchmark and provide comprehensive data and analysis, which can guide policy reforms and support private sector development.
- **Parameters -** It tracks 10 parameters throughout a firm's lifecycle, including starting, operating, closing, and reorganizing.



- **Scoring -** For each economy, B-READY produces 2 sets of scores
- One consisting of 10 topic scores and another comprising 3 pillar scores. Topic and pillar scores can range from a ***minimum of 0 to a maximum of 100.***
- For topic scores, every score is generated by averaging the scores assigned to each of the three pillars (Regulatory Framework, Public Services, Operational Efficiency) for that topic.
- Although the B-READY rankings will commence in 2024, India will only participate in the exercise in 2026.
- The first set of rankings will feature ***54 countries,*** with the 2025 report covering 120 economies and the 2026 version having rankings on 180 economies.

The government had recently announced the BRAP 2022 rankings, which were topped by Andhra Pradesh and Kerala.

References

1. Money Control | Aligning India's BRAP index with B-READY index
2. World Bank | Business Ready Index



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