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DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS

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SOURCES



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GS I

1. Plans on the anvil to promote the UNESCO site at Somanathapur as part of the Mysuru tourism circuit

Source: The Hindu

Prelims: Keshava Temple, Somanathapura; Hoysala Architecture

Mains: Arts & Culture

Context: Karnataka's Tourism Department plans to highlight Somanathapura Temple, part of the Hoysala temples, in the Mysuru tourism circuit ahead of Dasara, leveraging its UNESCO World Heritage status.

- The Somanathapura Temple, along with other Hoysala temples such as the Chennakeshava Temple at Belur and the Hoysaleswara Temple at Halebid, (called 'Sacred Ensembles of the Hoysala') was granted UNESCO WHS in September 2023.



Keshava Temple, Somanathapura

- The Keshava Temple is considered **one of the last grand structures** built by the Hoysala dynasty.
- This **Trikuta (three-shrined) temple** is dedicated to **Lord Krishna** and is represented in three forms: **Janardhana, Keshava, and Venugopala**.
- The **main Keshava idol is missing**, and the Janardhana and Venugopala idols are **damaged**.

Historical Background:

- The Keshava Temple was **constructed by Somanatha**, a commander of the Hoysala Army, during the reign of **Hoysala King Narasimha III**.
- Somanatha, who had **established a town named Somanathapura** after himself, sought the king's permission and resources to build this grand temple.
- With the **king's blessing**, construction commenced and was **completed in 1268 AD**.
- An **inscription in old Kannada** on a stone slab in the temple provides details of its construction and consecration.
- After demolitions by invaders, it **no longer serves as a place of worship**.

Architecture:

- The temple is **constructed from soapstone**, which allows for the fine detailing seen in the carvings.
- It is built on a **raised platform** with an **outer Pradakshina pathway**, allowing devotees to circum-ambulate the sanctum.
- The temple features a **stellar (star-shaped) plan**, which creates multiple corners and niches, providing numerous canvases for the sculptors to showcase their intricate work.
- The temple has **three shrines**, each crowned with a **Vimana (tower)**.
- The **Hoysala emblem**, depicting a **warrior fighting a lion**, is prominently displayed.



- The walls of the temple are adorned with beautiful friezes depicting scenes from Hindu epics, figures of elephants, and battle scenes with cavalry.

GS II

2. India slams ‘deeply biased’ U.S. report on religious freedom

Source: The Hindu

Prelims:

Mains:

Context: The Indian government recently criticized the U.S. State Department’s 2023 report on International Religious Freedom, calling it “deeply biased” and a “one-sided projection of issues”.

- The report, which highlights concerns over religious freedom in various countries, including India, has been met with strong opposition from Indian authorities.

Key Points from the U.S. Report:

- **Anti-Conversion Laws:** The report notes an increase in anti-conversion laws in India.
- **Hate Speech and Demolitions:** It mentions incidents of hate speech and demolitions of homes and places of worship belonging to minority faith communities.
- **Complicity of Law Enforcement:** The report alleges a relationship between law enforcement agencies and majoritarian groups, implicating the authorities in failing to protect minority rights.
- **Campaign for Uniform Civil Code (UCC):** The report flags the UCC campaign as a factor influencing religious freedom.
- **Hindu Rashtra Campaign:** It also mentions the campaign for creating a “Hindu Rashtra” in India.

Indian Government’s Response:

- **Selective Incident Reporting:** External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal criticized the report for selectively picking incidents to advance a pre-conceived narrative.
- **Questioning Legal Judgments:** The Indian government argued that the report questions the integrity of Indian court judgments.
- **Highlighting U.S. Law and Order Issues:** India pointed out the U.S.’s own issues with hate crimes and racial attacks, emphasizing the crimes against Indians and other minorities in the U.S.

Issues

Bias and Misrepresentation:

- **One-Sided Projection:** The report is accused of being one-sided and biased, relying on selective facts and sources.
- **Imputations and Misrepresentations:** India claims the report misrepresents constitutional provisions and duly enacted laws.

Interference in Domestic Affairs:

- **Intrusion into Legislative Affairs:** The report is seen as interfering with India’s legislative processes and questioning the validity of its laws and regulations.

Impact on Bilateral Relations:

- **Diplomatic Tensions:** Such reports can strain diplomatic relations between India and the U.S., affecting cooperation on various fronts.



Significance

Domestic Implications:

- **Public Perception:** The report may influence public perception and debate within India regarding religious freedom and minority rights.
- **Policy Making:** It could impact policy decisions and legislative actions, especially concerning religious laws and minority protections.

International Repercussions:

- **Global Image:** The report affects India's global image concerning human rights and religious freedom.
- **Bilateral Relations:** It may lead to diplomatic dialogues and negotiations between India and the U.S. to address the concerns raised.

Solutions

Engagement and Dialogue:

- **Bilateral Discussions:** Engage in constructive dialogue with the U.S. to address the issues raised in the report.
- **Clarifications and Rebuttals:** Provide detailed clarifications and rebuttals to the allegations made in the report.

Domestic Measures:

- **Strengthening Legal Framework:** Ensure that the legal framework effectively protects religious minorities and addresses genuine concerns.
- **Transparency and Accountability:** Enhance transparency and accountability in law enforcement agencies to build trust among all communities.

International Cooperation:

- **Human Rights Collaboration:** Collaborate with international bodies to improve human rights practices and address global concerns.
- **Promoting Religious Harmony:** Initiate programs and policies that promote religious harmony and tolerance within the country.

GS III

3. India achieves an 'outstanding outcome' in FATF mutual evaluation 2023-24

Source: The Hindu

Prelims:

Mains:

Context: India has achieved an outstanding outcome in the Mutual Evaluation conducted during 2023-24 by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF).



- The Mutual Evaluation Report of India, which was adopted in the FATF plenary held in Singapore recently, places India in the “regular follow-up” category, a distinction shared by only four other G-20 countries.

Financial Action Task Force (FATF):

- The Financial Action Task Force (FATF) is an intergovernmental organisation founded in 1989.
- It is an initiative of the G7 countries to develop policies to combat **money laundering**.
 - In 2001, its mandate was expanded to include **terrorism financing**.
- It sets international standards that aim to prevent these illegal activities and the harm they cause to society.
- It is a “policy-making body” which works to generate the political will to bring about national legislative and regulatory reforms in money laundering.
- It monitors progress in implementing its recommendations through "peer reviews" ("mutual evaluations") of member countries.
- The FATF Secretariat is located in **Paris**.

Objectives of FATF:

- FATF sets standards and promotes effective implementation of:
 - legal, regulatory and operational measures for combating money laundering.
 - The FATF works to identify national-level vulnerabilities with the aim of protecting the international financial system from misuse.

Members of FATF:

- The FATF currently comprises 38 member jurisdictions and two regional organisations, representing most major financial centres in all parts of the globe.
- India became an Observer at FATF in 2006. In 2010, **India was taken in as the 34th country member of FATF**.

FATF’s Mutual Evaluation Process:

- Mutual Evaluation Process is a comprehensive and rigorous assessment conducted to **evaluate a country's compliance with international standards for combating money laundering (ML) and terrorist financing (TF)**. This process includes:
 - **Evaluation Team:** A team of experts from FATF member countries conducts the evaluation, analysing the country's measures and their effectiveness in preventing ML and TF.
 - **Assessment Criteria:** The evaluation is based on FATF's 40 Recommendations, which cover a wide range of preventive measures, criminal justice, law enforcement, and international cooperation.
 - **Technical Compliance:** This aspect assesses whether the country's legal and institutional frameworks are in line with FATF standards. It examines the laws, regulations, and other measures in place to combat ML and TF.
 - **Effectiveness:** The evaluation also measures the effectiveness of these frameworks. This involves assessing how well the country implements and enforces its laws and regulations, and how effectively it achieves the desired outcomes in combating ML and TF.



- **Country Reports:** The findings are compiled into a Mutual Evaluation Report, which provides a detailed analysis of the country's compliance and effectiveness. The report includes ratings and recommendations for improvement.
- **Follow-Up:** After the evaluation, the country may be placed in follow-up processes to address any deficiencies. This involves periodic reporting to FATF on the progress made in implementing the recommended improvements.
- **Public Disclosure:** The Mutual Evaluation Report is published, providing transparency and encouraging countries to enhance their AML/CFT (Anti-Money Laundering/Countering the Financing of Terrorism) regimes.

India Achieves an 'Outstanding Outcome' in FATF Mutual Evaluation:

- India has achieved a remarkable outcome in the 2023-24 Mutual Evaluation by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), placing it in the "regular follow-up" category,.
- This signifies a high level of compliance in combating ML and TF, though some non-financial sectors require improvement in supervision and preventive measures.
- The FATF highlighted India's success in mitigating ML/TF risks through digital economy initiatives like the JAM Trinity (Jan Dhan, Aadhaar, Mobile) and stringent cash transaction regulations.
- This evaluation **enhances India's financial stability and integrity, boosting access to global financial markets and investor confidence**, and supporting the expansion of the Unified Payments Interface (UPI).

Government's Response:

- India's recognition by the FATF reflects the country's effective measures over the past decade to protect its financial system from ML and TF threats.
- This achievement underscores India's commitment to international standards and enhances its capacity to lead global efforts against financial crimes.
- Since 2014, the government has enacted legislative changes and bolstered enforcement efforts, aligning with international standards and yielding positive results, including disrupting terror funding networks.
- The Department of Revenue led India's engagement with the FATF, supported by a diverse team from various sectors, showcasing the country's comprehensive approach to combating ML and TF.

4. Why Denmark has taxed cattle burps and farts

Source: The Indian Express

Prelims: Environment & Biodiversity

Mains: Conservation, Environmental Pollution & Degradation, Eia

Context: Denmark will impose a tax on its livestock farmers for the greenhouse gases (GHGs) emitted by their cows, sheep, and pigs from 2030.

What is it?

Denmark plans to impose a tax on livestock farmers for greenhouse gases (GHGs) emitted by their cows, sheep, and pigs starting in 2030.



- **Tax Rates:** Farmers would initially pay about \$43 per metric ton of carbon dioxide equivalent produced by their livestock, increasing to around \$108 by 2035.
- **Actual Cost:** Due to a 60% income tax deduction, the actual cost per ton will start at 120 kroner (\$17.3) and rise to 300 kroner (\$43) by 2035.
- **Use of Tax Collection:** The funds collected from the tax between 2030 and 2031 will be returned to the industry to support its green transition. The handling of proceeds will be revisited in 2032. The proposal includes the development of over 600,000 acres of new forest areas.

How Do Cows and Sheep Produce Methane?

- Ruminants like cows, sheep, goats, and buffaloes have a specialized digestive system with four stomach compartments, including the rumen. In the rumen, partially digested food ferments, producing methane.
- Methane is released primarily through burping and farting as the animals regurgitate and chew cud to complete the digestive process. Ruminant digestive systems are responsible for 27% of all methane emissions from human activity.

Why Are Methane Emissions a Problem?

- **Climate Impact:** Methane is a potent greenhouse gas, responsible for 30% of warming since preindustrial times, second only to carbon dioxide. Over a 20-year period, methane is 80 times more potent at warming than carbon dioxide.
- **Ground-Level Ozone:** Methane is the primary contributor to ground-level ozone formation, a highly irritating gas just above the Earth's surface, contributing to 1 million premature deaths annually.
- **Rising Levels:** Atmospheric methane levels have dramatically increased in recent years, with the NOAA reporting a record 17 parts per billion increase in 2021, surpassing the previous record set in 2020.

Way forward:

- **Dietary Adjustments:** Introduce feed additives, such as seaweed or other natural supplements, that can reduce methane emissions during digestion in ruminants. This approach can significantly lower methane production without negatively impacting livestock health or productivity.
- **Improved Manure Management:** Utilize advanced manure management practices, such as anaerobic digestion, to capture and convert methane emissions from decomposing animal waste into biogas. This not only reduces methane emissions but also provides a renewable energy source.



Editorial, Ideas and Opinions

5. Climate change forces Panama islanders to relocate



Source: The Hindu

Prelims: Enviro & Biodiversity

Mains: Conservation, Environmental Pollution & Degradation, Eia

Context: In early June, approximately 300 families were relocated from the island of Gardi Sugdub in Panama's Guna Yala province due to concerns about rising sea levels.

What is happening in Gardi Sugdub?

- **Location and Community:** Gardi Sugdub, home to about 1,300 members of the Guna community, is an island in Panama's Guna Yala province.
- **Sea Level Rise:** The Caribbean region, where Panama is situated, is experiencing sea level rise at an average rate of 3 to 4 millimetres per year. This rate is expected to accelerate to 1 centimetre per year or more by 2100.
- **Flooding:** Annually, particularly in November and December, seawater floods houses and streets on Gardi Sugdub, despite efforts to fortify the island.
- **Relocation:** The Panamanian government constructed 300 new houses on the mainland in a development called Nuevo Cartí to relocate affected families.

How are other island nations affected by sea level rise?

- Small island developing states (SIDS) are particularly vulnerable due to their low elevation and reliance on marine resources. SIDS in the Caribbean, Pacific, Atlantic, Indian Ocean, and South China Sea face existential threats from rising sea levels.
- **Examples of Impact:** Islands such as Tuvalu, the Marshall Islands, and Kiribati are experiencing significant land loss and threats to their culture and economies.
- **Consequences:** Coastal erosion, salinization of freshwater resources, and increased vulnerability to extreme weather events due to rising sea levels, storm surges, and 'king tides.'

How fast is the global sea level rising?

- Since 1880, global sea levels have risen by approximately 21–24 centimeters. The rate of increase has accelerated in recent decades.
- **Causes:** The primary drivers are global warming, thermal expansion of seawater, and the melting of land-based ice such as glaciers and ice sheets.



- **Due to the Global Temperature Increase:** The global average temperature has increased by at least 1.1 degrees Celsius since 1880, contributing to rising sea levels.

Way forward:

- **Strengthen Coastal and Environmental Defenses:** Construct seawalls, breakwaters, and other barriers to protect against storm surges and coastal erosion. Restore and preserve natural coastal barriers such as mangroves, coral reefs, and wetlands to enhance natural protection.
- **Develop and Implement Climate Adaptation Strategies:** Create comprehensive climate adaptation plans that include relocation strategies for vulnerable communities.



In Brief

6. 'Veerangana' Uda Devi and 'Maharaja' Bijli Pasi invoked during oath taking

Source: The Hindu

Context: Earlier, a newly-elected MP from Faizabad, took his oath in the Lok Sabha. During the ceremony, he mentioned Veerangana Uda Devi and Maharaja Bijli Pasi, who are important figures in the Pasi (Dalit) community.

Uda Devi

- Uda Devi, born in Ujirao, Lucknow, was part of the royal guard of Begum Hazrat Mahal of Awadh and took part in the 1857 Mutiny.
- She is known for mobilizing people to fight against the British.
- On November 16, 1857, she fought bravely near the Gomti River in Lucknow, reportedly killing at least three dozen British soldiers before being killed herself.
- Every year on November 16, events are held in central Uttar Pradesh to commemorate her martyrdom.
- Uda Devi remains an important icon, especially for the Dalit community.

Maharaja Bijli Pasi

- Bijli Pasi is a well-known figure among the Pasis of central Uttar Pradesh, including districts like Lucknow, Rae Bareilly, Barabanki, Bahraich, Sultanpur, and Allahabad.
- He is one of the most prominent Pasi leaders, having ruled parts of UP during the medieval period.
- The ruins of his fort still stand in Lucknow, where a statue of him has also been erected.
- Other notable Pasi figures from this region include Daldev, Baldev, and Kakoran.

7. Geoportals namely 'Bhuvan Panchayat (Ver. 4.0)' and 'NDEM Ver. 5.0' developed by Indian Space research Organization (ISRO)

Source: The Hindu

Context:

- The Union Ministry of Science and Technology launched two Geoportals: 'Bhuvan Panchayat (Ver. 4.0)' for rural land records and 'National Database for Emergency Management (NDEM Ver. 5.0)'.
 - These portals were developed by the Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO).
 - These geospatial tools provide **high-resolution** satellite imagery of **1:10K scale** for various locations across the country.



Bhuvan Panchayat (Ver. 4.0)

- This portal supports “**Space-based Information Support for Decentralized Planning (SISDP)**”.
- It aims to **empower citizens at the grassroots level** by providing **real-time land record data** and reducing dependency on local administration and corruption.
- It promotes ease of living through digitalisation and **better land revenue management**.
- By providing real-time data accessible to citizens, it **reduces opportunities for corruption** at the local level.
- It enhances **transparency and efficiency in land record management**, aiding in effective governance and planning.

National Database for Emergency Management (NDEM Ver. 5.0)

- This portal provides **space-based inputs on natural disasters**, aiding in disaster risk reduction in India and neighbouring countries.
- It establishes an effective **early warning system** to proactively prevent disasters and monitor land use changes.
- A **command centre** has been established to monitor situations and provide valuable inputs continuously.
- The portal is **designed to assist not only India but also neighbouring countries** in disaster management.
- It enhances **coordination between various agencies and local authorities** for effective disaster response and management.



Daily Quiz

Q1. Consider the following statements with respect to the Keshava Temple of Somanathapur:

1. It is a Trikuta temple dedicated to Lord Krishna in three forms.
2. It is a UNESCO world heritage site.
3. It is a Hoysala monument.

How many of these statements is/are incorrect?

- A. Only one
- B. Only two
- C. All three
- D. None

Answer: Option D is Correct

Explanation: All three statements are correct.

Q2. The Polavaram Project is a multi-purpose irrigation project being constructed on the River:

- A. Narmada
- B. Kaveri
- C. Godavari
- D. Mahanadi

Answer: Option C is Correct

Explanation: The Polavaram Project is an under-construction multi-purpose irrigation project on the Godavari River in the Eluru District and East Godavari District in Andhra Pradesh.

Q3. Consider the following statements:

1. The Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence was first propounded in the Sino-Indian Agreement of 1964.
2. India called it the 'Panchsheel Agreement'.

Which of these statements is/are correct?

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 only
- C. Both 1 and 2
- D. Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: Option B is Correct

Explanation: The Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence was first propounded in the Sino-Indian Agreement of 1954.

Q4. How many of these G20 nations share the distinction of being in the FATF 'regular follow-up' category?



1. France
2. India
3. Germany
4. Russia

Choose the correct answer using the code given below:

- A. Only one
- B. Only two
- C. Only three
- D. All four

Answer: Option C is Correct

Explanation: The FATF 'regular follow-up' category status is shared by only five G20 nations — India, the UK, France, Italy, and Russia.

Q5. Consider the following statements with respect to MQ-9 Reaper:

1. It is an unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) capable of remotely controlled or autonomous flight operations.
2. It is developed by General Atomics Aeronautical Systems (GA-ASI), primarily for the United States Air Force (USAF).
3. The US uses the MQ-9 Reaper for surveillance only.

How many of these statements is/are incorrect?

- A. Only one
- B. Only two
- C. All three
- D. None

Answer: Option A is Correct

Explanation: The US uses the MQ-9 Reaper for both surveillance and strike.





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