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DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS

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SOURCES



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GS I

1. Devotees visiting the Golconda Fort in Hyderabad for the 'Ashada Bonalu' festival on Sunday, to offer prayers to Goddess Mahakali

Source: The Hindu, Page 3

Festive spirit



In strength: Devotees visiting the Golconda Fort in Hyderabad for the 'Ashada Bonalu' festival on Sunday, to offer prayers to Goddess Mahakali. The festival is celebrated in Hyderabad and other parts of Telangana. PTI

Context: Devotees visiting the Golconda Fort in Hyderabad for the 'Ashada Bonalu' festival on Sunday, to offer prayers to Goddess Mahakali.

Location:

- Hyderabad, Telangana
- Originally known as Mankal – originally a mud fort.
- It was fortified between the 14th and 17th centuries by the Bahmani Sultans and then the ruling Qutub Shahi dynasty.
- Derives its name from a Telugu word 'Golla Konda' which means Shepherd's Hill

History:

- The fort originally belonged to the Kakatiyas of Warangal.
- Built by Kakatiya ruler Prataparudra in the 11th century.
- It was ceded to the Bahmanis in AD1363.
- After their downfall in AD1518 it became the capital of the Qutb Shahi kings (AD 1518-1687).
- Subsequently Aurangzeb annexed it to the Mughal Empire (AD 1687) during the reign of Abul Hasan Tana Shan, the last ruler of the Qutb Shahi dynasty and appointed Asaf Jah as the Subedar of the Deccan province.

Naya Qila:

- An extension of the Golkonda Fort
- Constructed in 1656 by Sultan Abdullah Qutb Shah
- It served as additional defence for the Mughal armies

2. Lakhs of Devotees throng Puri to witness annual Rath Yatra

Source: The Hindu, Page 6

Festival Overview:

- Rath Yatra, also known as the Chariot Festival, is an annual Hindu festival primarily observed in Puri, Odisha, and other Jagannath temples worldwide.
- Celebrates the journey of Lord Jagannath, his brother Balabhadra, and sister Subhadra from the Jagannath Temple to the Gundicha Temple.

Significance:

- Symbolises the journey of Lord Jagannath to his aunt's place along with his siblings, marking familial ties and community participation.
- Highlights the theme of unity and devotion, as devotees from various backgrounds come together to pull the chariots.

Traditions and Rituals:

- Chariot Procession: Three grand chariots carrying idols of Lord Jagannath (Nandighosa), Balabhadra (Taladhawaja), and Subhadra (Darpadalana) are pulled by devotees.
- Snana Yatra: Ritual bathing ceremony of the deities a fortnight before Rath Yatra.
- Bahuda Yatra: Return journey of the deities to the Jagannath Temple after a stay at the Gundicha Temple.

Cultural Importance:

- Represents cultural harmony and inclusiveness as people of all backgrounds participate in the festival.
- Showcases traditional music, dance, and arts specific to the region, promoting cultural heritage and tourism.

Legal and Administrative Aspects:

- Coordination between local administration, police, and temple authorities to ensure smooth conduct of the festival and safety of participants.
- Court rulings and management of crowd control to prevent accidents and ensure public safety during the chariot procession.

Global Observance:

- Apart from Puri, Rath Yatra is observed in other cities with Jagannath temples worldwide, reflecting the spread of Odia culture and religious traditions globally.



GS II

3. Representation of women in the Lok Sabha

Source: The Hindu, Page 9

Context: Election of 74 women to 18th Lok Sabha (LS) is a slight dip in women representation as 78 women were elected to 17th LS (14.4% representation).

Status of women representation in Legislature:

- 9.7% of 797 women contestants won in 18th LS elections while in 17th LS elections, 10.74% of 726 women contestants won.
- Women's representation in LS increased from 5% in the first LS to its highest in 17th LS (14.4%).
- Presently, women members constitute 14.05% of Rajya Sabha members.

Significance of women representation:

- Women legislators perform better in their constituencies on economic indicators than their male counterparts
- Women are less likely to be criminal and corrupt, more efficacious, and less vulnerable to political opportunism.

Challenges to women's legislative representation:

- Societal Prejudices, male dominated political structures, and family obligations.
- Structural disadvantages: Election campaigns are costly, time consuming and are marred by inappropriate commenting, hate speeches, abusive threats and muscle power.

Steps taken for increasing women political representation

- Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam, 2023 (106th Amendment Act) to reserve one-third of seats for women in Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies including Legislative Assembly of Delhi.
- The 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments made reservation of 1/3rd seats in Panchayats and Municipalities for women.
- India pledged to achieve SDG target 5.5, which calls for women's full and effective participation at all levels of decision-making in politics and public life.

4. On Expunction powers in Parliament

Source: The Hindu, Page 8

Context: Expunction refers to the power of the presiding officers in Parliament to remove certain remarks or statements from the official records of proceedings. This authority is crucial in maintaining parliamentary decorum, preserving the integrity of debates, and upholding the dignity of parliamentary proceedings.



Key Aspects and Recent Developments

Authority of Presiding Officers

- **Role:** The Speaker of the Lok Sabha and the Chairman of the Rajya Sabha have the authority to expunge remarks that are deemed unparliamentary or violate parliamentary rules.
- **Objective:** To ensure that parliamentary debates adhere to established norms of conduct and respect for parliamentary etiquette.

Criteria for Expunction

- **Unparliamentary Language:** Remarks that are offensive, derogatory, inflammatory, or disrespectful towards individuals, institutions, or communities are typically expunged.
- **Rule Violations:** Statements that breach parliamentary rules, such as disclosing confidential information or making unsubstantiated allegations, may also be expunged.

Recent Instances and Controversies

- **High-profile Debates:** Expunction powers have been invoked during contentious debates on issues such as legislative reforms, socio-political controversies, and policy decisions.
- **Political Discourse:** Instances of expunction often occur during heated exchanges between members of different political parties, reflecting the partisan nature of parliamentary debates.

Legal and Constitutional Basis

- **Parliamentary Rules:** Expunction powers are exercised based on parliamentary rules and precedents established by the respective Houses.
- **Constitutional Mandate:** The Constitution of India grants autonomy to Parliament to regulate its proceedings, including the authority to expunge objectionable remarks.

Public Perception and Accountability

- **Transparency:** Calls for transparency in the exercise of expunction powers, with demands for clear criteria and justification for expunging remarks.
- **Accountability:** Debate on whether expunction should be subject to judicial review or external oversight to ensure fairness and accountability.

Impact on Parliamentary Functioning

- **Debate Quality:** Maintains the quality and civility of parliamentary debates, facilitating constructive deliberations and policy-making.
- **Symbolic Importance:** Upholds the sanctity and prestige of parliamentary proceedings, reinforcing the institution's role as a forum for democratic discourse and governance.



GS III

5. The ANRF plan has got off on the wrong foot

Source: The Hindu, Page 6

Context: ANWR (Arctic National Wildlife Refuge) Plan Controversy:

Background:

- The Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR) is a vast area in northeastern Alaska, known for its diverse wildlife and pristine ecosystems.
- It has been a subject of debate between conservationists, indigenous communities, and energy developers due to its ecological significance and potential oil and gas reserves.

ANWR Plan Overview:

- In 2017, the U.S. Congress passed legislation that opened up a portion of the ANWR, specifically the Coastal Plain, for oil and gas exploration and development.
- Proponents argue that it could boost domestic energy production, create jobs, and generate revenue for the state and federal governments.
- Opponents, including environmentalists and indigenous groups, argue that drilling activities would irreversibly harm the fragile Arctic environment and threaten wildlife populations.

Political and Legal Landscape:

- Federal Policy Shifts: The stance on ANWR drilling has varied with changes in U.S. presidential administrations and congressional compositions.
- Litigation: Environmental organisations and indigenous groups have filed lawsuits challenging the legality and environmental reviews of the ANWR drilling plan.

Global Relevance and Conservation Impact:

- The ANWR controversy mirrors global debates on balancing economic development with environmental conservation and indigenous rights.
- The outcome of the ANWR plan could set precedents for similar conflicts over natural resource exploitation in environmentally sensitive areas worldwide.

Future Directions:

- The resolution of legal challenges and regulatory decisions will significantly impact the future of the ANWR plan.



- Continued monitoring of environmental impacts and public discourse will shape future policies on energy development in sensitive ecosystems.

6. The problem of special Packages

Source: The Hindu, Page 7

Special Packages:

Context: Special packages, often touted as targeted interventions to spur development or alleviate specific socio-economic challenges in regions or sectors, have become a contentious issue in governance and policy-making. While intended to address immediate needs and disparities, these packages present several inherent challenges and complexities.

Key Issues and Concerns:

Dependency Syndrome

- **Definition:** Regions receiving special packages may develop a dependency on external funding rather than fostering self-sufficiency and sustainable economic growth.
- **Impact:** This dependency can create long-term reliance on government assistance, hindering local initiatives and innovation.

Short-term Focus

- **Immediate Relief vs. Long-term Development:** Special packages often prioritize short-term gains, such as infrastructure development or financial aid, over sustainable, long-term economic strategies.
- **Result:** This approach may fail to address underlying structural issues and development needs, perpetuating cyclical poverty or underdevelopment.

Political Motivations

- **Vote Bank Politics:** Special packages are sometimes influenced by political considerations, aimed at garnering electoral support from targeted regions or communities.
- **Implications:** This can lead to inefficient allocation of resources, favouritism, and unequal distribution of benefits, undermining transparency and fairness.

Administrative Challenges

- **Implementation Bottlenecks:** Poor planning, bureaucratic inefficiencies, and corruption can hinder effective implementation of special packages.



- Outcome: Delays, misallocation of funds, and lack of accountability may reduce the intended impact and exacerbate public distrust.

Economic Distortions

- Market Distortions: Special packages can distort market incentives and priorities, leading to inefficiencies in resource allocation and hindering private sector development.
- Budgetary Strain: Large-scale or poorly managed packages may strain government finances, potentially leading to fiscal deficits or unsustainable debt burdens.

Social and Environmental Impact

- **Social Cohesion:** Unequal distribution of benefits from special packages can exacerbate social tensions and inequalities within communities.
- **Environmental Concerns:** Packages focused on resource-intensive industries or infrastructure projects may lead to environmental degradation and impact biodiversity.

Recent Developments and Examples

- **COVID-19 Relief Packages:** During the pandemic, governments worldwide implemented special economic packages to mitigate the socio-economic impact. Issues of transparency, accountability, and effectiveness were widely debated.
- **Regional Development Initiatives:** Special packages for backward regions or marginalised communities have faced scrutiny for their long-term efficacy and unintended consequences.

7. New Private Investment Plans Slump to a 20-Year Low in Q1

Source: The Hindu, Page 1

Context: In the first quarter (Q1) of the fiscal year, new private investment plans in India have witnessed a significant decline, marking a 20-year low. This downturn in private investment is indicative of broader economic challenges and reflects underlying concerns about business confidence, economic growth prospects, and policy environment.

Key Points

Decline in New Private Investment Plans:

- **Magnitude:** According to, new private investment proposals in Q1 plummeted to levels not seen in the past two decades.
- **Sectoral Impact:** The slump has affected various sectors including manufacturing, infrastructure, services, and agriculture, contributing to a slowdown in overall economic activity.



Factors Contributing to the Decline:

- **Economic Uncertainty:** Uncertainty about economic recovery post-pandemic, global economic conditions, and domestic policy changes have deterred private sector investment.
- **Policy Environment:** Issues related to regulatory clarity, taxation policies, and ease of doing business have impacted investor sentiment negatively.
- **Financial Sector Stress:** Challenges in the banking and financial sector, including non-performing assets (NPAs) and credit availability, have constrained investment financing.

Impact on Economic Growth and Employment

- **Growth Prospects:** Decreased private investment can hamper economic growth prospects, reducing job creation and income generation opportunities.
- **Investment Cycle:** A prolonged slump in private investment may delay the investment cycle recovery, affecting overall economic resilience and competitiveness.

Government Initiatives and Responses

- **Policy Measures:** The government's response may include policy interventions aimed at boosting investor confidence, improving ease of doing business, and enhancing infrastructure development.
- **Sectoral Reforms:** Targeted reforms in sectors crucial for investment, such as infrastructure, manufacturing, and agriculture, could stimulate private sector participation.

Global and Comparative Analysis

- **Global Context:** Comparisons with global investment trends and policies can provide insights into India's competitiveness and attractiveness as an investment destination.
- **Long-term Implications:** Assessing the long-term implications of subdued private investment on India's economic resilience and structural reforms agenda.

Conclusion

The significant decline in new private investment plans to a 20-year low in Q1 underscores the urgent need for policy interventions to revive investor confidence, stimulate economic growth, and create a conducive environment for sustainable development. Addressing regulatory bottlenecks, enhancing infrastructure, and fostering innovation and entrepreneurship are critical steps toward revitalising private sector investment in India.

Way Forward

Policy Reforms: Implement targeted reforms to improve ease of doing business and regulatory clarity.

Sectoral Focus: Prioritise sectors with high potential for growth and employment generation.

Investment Promotion: Enhance promotional efforts to attract both domestic and foreign investment in key sectors.



Editorial, Ideas and Opinions

8.A law around low-carbon climate resilient development

Source: The Hindu, Page 6

Context: In a landmark judgement, the Supreme Court of India recently recognised a right to be “free from the adverse impacts of climate change” in *M.K. Ranjitsinh and Others vs Union of India* — sourcing it from the right to life and the right to equality.

Law to inform development choices:

- Preparing India to reduce the risks of climate change and address its impacts requires nothing less than re-orienting development toward low-carbon and climate resilient futures.
- Any law that attempts to take this on must ensure these objectives are internalised in routine decision-making at all levels of development.
- Because climate change relentlessly targets the vulnerable, and because an energy transition must be just, it must be grounded in the imperative of advancing social justice.

Engagement with the federal structure:

Many areas crucial to reducing emissions and improving resilience — electricity, agriculture, water, health and soil — are wholly or partially the preserve of State and local governments. When a climate impact is felt, it is felt first, and most viscerally, at local levels.

Have a low carbon development body

- Vulnerable communities and those that may lose from technological change need to be systematically consulted. Hearing their concerns and incorporating some of their ideas could lead to longer-lasting policy outcomes.
- Effective climate governance also requires the ability to set directions, make strategic choices, and encourage the consideration of low carbon choices and climate change impacts within line ministries.
- A whole-of-government approach will also require dedicated coordination mechanisms for implementation.

Engagement with the federal structure

- Many areas crucial to reducing emissions and improving resilience — electricity, agriculture, water, health and soil — are wholly or partially the preserve of State and local governments. When a climate impact is felt, it is felt first, and most viscerally, at local levels.



- Any institutional structure or regulatory instrument created to protect the Court's newly established climate right must meaningfully engage with subnational governments. First, the law must establish a channel for subnational governments to access national scientific capacity, potentially through the low-carbon development commission as an intermediary, as a step toward solving the pervasive problem of insufficient local climate scientific capacity.
- Second, it could articulate ways of financing local action, for example by requiring centrally-sponsored schemes to be more aligned with climate goals or by requiring national departments to climate tag expenditure towards local climate resilience.

In Brief

9. Bonalu Festival

Context: Devotees visiting the Golconda Fort in Hyderabad for the 'Ashada Bonalu' festival on Sunday, to offer prayers to Goddess Mahakali.

What is Bonalu festival:

- Bonalu is a Hindu Festival where Goddess Mahakali is worshipped
- It is an annual festival celebrated in the twin Cities Hyderabad and Secunderabad and other parts of Telangana state, India.
- Bonalu is celebrated usually during Ashada Masam that falls in July/August.
- Special poojas are performed for goddess Yellamma during the first and last day of the festival.
- The festival is considered as a form of thanksgiving to the Goddess after the fulfilment of vows
- Bonam literally means Meal in Telugu, which is an offering to the Mother Goddess.

Celebrations:

- Every year, the festival starts at Golconda Fort, and on the second Sunday, it moves to the Balkampet Yellamma temple in Balkampet, and the Ujjaini Mahakali Temple in Secunderabad.
- On the third Sunday, it moves to the Pochamma and Katta Maisamma temple of Chilkalguda and the Mateshwari temple of Lal Darwaza in Hyderabad.

10. Kerala Varsity to launch Genome Editing mission to boost pearl spot production

Source: The Hindu, Page 3

Context: Kerala Varsity to launch Genome Editing mission to boost pearl spot production.

Pearl Spot:

- The Pearl spot, *Eetroplus suratensis* commonly known as "Karimeen" in Kerala is an indigenous fish extensively found along the east and south-west coasts of Peninsular India.



- It is an important candidate species for aquaculture in ponds in both brackishwater and freshwater environments.
- It is cultured in traditional ponds in Kerala where it is considered a delicacy fetching a high price up to Rs. 150/ kg.
- Though growth is slow, at a high stocking density table-size fish can be harvested in 9-12 months culture period.



Daily Quiz

1. During the reign of which dynasty was Golconda Fort originally constructed?

- a) Qutb Shahi dynasty
- b) Kakatiya dynasty
- c) Bahmani dynasty
- d) Vijayanagara dynasty

2. Which Indian state is known for its traditional method of farming pearl spot fish, locally known as "karimeen," in backwaters and estuaries?

- a) Kerala
- b) Tamil Nadu
- c) Karnataka
- d) Andhra Pradesh

3. Which chariot is traditionally associated with Lord Jagannath during the annual Rath Yatra festival in Puri, Odisha?

- a) Nandighosa
- b) Taladhwaja
- c) Darpadalana

d) Kapiladhwaja

4. What landmark legislation in India was instrumental in promoting the representation of women in Lok Sabha by reserving seats for them?

- a) 73rd Amendment Act
- b) 84th Amendment Act
- c) 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act
- d) 84th Constitutional Amendment Act

5. Which U.S. state is the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR) primarily located in?

- a) Alaska
- b) California
- c) Texas
- d) Florida

6. Bonalu, a Hindu festival primarily celebrated in which Indian state, involves offering food and dancing in honour of the goddess Mahakali?

- a) Karnataka
- b) Telangana
- c) Kerala
- d) Tamil Nadu



Solutions

1. Answer: a) Qutb Shahi dynasty

Explanation: Golconda Fort, located in Hyderabad, India, was originally constructed during the reign of the Qutb Shahi dynasty in the 16th century. It served as a major stronghold and centre of administration for the dynasty until it was conquered by the Mughal Empire in the late 17th century.

2. Answer: a) Kerala

Explanation:

The pearl spot fish, known locally as "karimeen," is particularly famous in the state of Kerala, India. Kerala's backwaters and estuaries provide ideal conditions for farming and harvesting this prized fish, which is a staple in Kerala cuisine and a significant part of its culinary heritage. The traditional farming methods in Kerala often involve cultivating karimeen in ponds or specially designed enclosures within backwaters, highlighting its cultural and economic importance in the region.

3. Answer: a) Nandighosa

Explanation:

During the Rath Yatra festival in Puri, Odisha, the chariot traditionally associated with Lord Jagannath is called Nandighosa. This chariot is specifically dedicated to Lord Jagannath and is one of the three grand chariots used in the festival procession.

4. Answer: c) 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act

Explanation:

The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act of 1992 introduced provisions for reservation of seats for women in Panchayati Raj institutions (local governance bodies). Although this legislation specifically pertains to local governance, it set a precedent and paved the way for later discussions and initiatives aimed at enhancing women's representation in higher levels of government, including the Lok Sabha. While there isn't a direct reservation in the Lok Sabha itself, this amendment laid the foundation for broader discussions on gender equality and representation in Indian politics.

5. Answer: a) Alaska

Explanation:

The Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR) is primarily located in the state of Alaska, USA. It is a vast area in northeastern Alaska, covering approximately 19 million acres (78,000 square kilometres). ANWR is known for its diverse ecosystems, including tundra, mountains, rivers, and coastal plains, and it serves as habitat for a wide variety of wildlife, including caribou, polar bears, and migratory birds.



6. Answer: b) Telangana

Explanation:

Bonalu is a Hindu festival primarily celebrated in the Indian state of Telangana. It is dedicated to the worship of the goddess Mahakali, who is revered as the protector of the state and its people. The festival is observed with great fervour and devotion, especially in Hyderabad and the surrounding regions of Telangana.

During Bonalu, devotees offer food, usually cooked rice and jaggery, to the goddess Mahakali. They also perform traditional dances such as the Thottela and the Potharaju dance as part of the festivities. Bonalu is celebrated annually during the Ashada Masam (July–August) in Telangana, with various rituals and processions held at Mahakali temples across the state.



Mains Practice Questions

Q1- Discuss the architectural and strategic significance of Golconda Fort in the context of medieval Deccan history. How did its construction and subsequent developments reflect the political dynamics of the region?

Q2- Discuss the ecological, economic, and cultural significance of the pearl spot fish (*Etroplus suratensis*) in South Asia, with special reference to its conservation challenges and sustainable management practices.





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