

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS (04 August 2024)

TOPICS COVERED

1. Centre's indecisiveness has revived insurgency in Manipur: BJP MLAs
2. Manipur's Hmar apex body dissolves Jiribam unit
3. Kerala to appoint officers to address complaints from transgender persons (GS Paper-I: Society)
4. SCCL inks tripartite MoU for Godavari Geothermal Energy Project at Manuguru
5. After 61 years, four-ringed butterfly resurfaces in India (GS Paper-III: Environment)
6. Doyen of dance Yamini Krishnamurthy passes away (GS Paper-I: Art & Culture)
7. Ruining the majestic ruins (GS Paper-I: Art & Culture)
8. Why did courts revisit bar on sub-quotas? (GS Paper-II: Reservation)
9. How can Wayanad reduce landslide risks? (GS Paper-II: Disaster management)
10. What is the new Alzheimer's blood test? (GS paper-III: Basic science)

5 policemen sacked in J&K in drug, terror cases

A teacher has also been dismissed by Lieutenant-Governor's order invoking Article 311 of the Constitution based on reports filed by security agencies; order says the six had been involved in activities prejudicial to the interests of State, evidencing their involvement in terror-related activities; over 60 govt. employees sacked by the L-G since 2021

The Hindu Bureau
SRINAGAR

The Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant-Governor on Saturday invoked Article 311 of the Constitution and terminated the services of six government employees, five of them policemen, based on reports filed by security agencies for alleged involvement in narcotics smuggling and terrorist activities.

"Five constables from the Police Department and one teacher from the Education Department are sacked in terms of Article 311 of the Constitution of India for their deep involvement in anti-national ac-

tivities," a government spokesperson said. Article 311 deals with the dismissal, removal, or reduction in rank of civil servants without a departmental inquiry after informing them of the charges against them and giving a reasonable opportunity to be heard. The decision of the authority will be final.

'Adverse notice of law' The spokesperson said the activities of these employees "had come to the adverse notice of law enforcement and intelligence agencies, as they found them thickly involved in activities prejudicial to the interests of the State, evidencing their involvement

Sack order

Six government employees, five of them policemen, have been sacked under Article 311 of the Constitution



Manoj Sinha

- Article 311 deals with the dismissal, removal, or reduction in rank of civil servants without a departmental inquiry after informing them of the charges against them and giving a reasonable opportunity to be heard
- The decision of the authority is final
- A government spokesman says these employees had come to the adverse notice of law enforcement and intelligence agencies

in terror-related activities". The spokesperson identified the sacked employees as Saif Din, selection-grade constable from Shigani Bhallesa area in Doda; Farooq Ahmad Sheikh, head constable from Ibkoote Tangdar area

in Kupwara; Khalid Hussian Shah, selection-grade constable from Kupwara; Rahmat Shah, constable from Karnah in Kupwara; Irshad Ahmad Chalkoo, selection grade constable from Silikote Uri in Baramulla; and Nazam Din, a

teacher in the Education Department from Kirni Haveli in Poonch.

'Fuelling unrest'

"Farooq Ahmad Sheikh, Khalid Hussian Shah and Rahmat Shah had established contacts with the Pakistan-based terrorists involved in smuggling of narcotics, weapons and money across the Line of Control [LoC] to India. They used to smuggle drugs from Pakistan and money generated through the illegal trade of these drugs was being used for fuelling unrest as well as financing the terrorism activities in the Kashmir Valley and other parts of the country," the spokesper-

son said. Mr. Chalkoo had developed "a close relationship with the terrorist associates of the area and started working as an over-ground worker [OGW] with the proscribed terrorist organisation, Lashkar-e-Taiba", the spokesperson said.

"He was in close contact with various Kashmiri-origin terrorists based in PoJK, through encrypted messaging applications and had received ammunition for further delivery to the terrorists. Being a resident of Uri, District Baramulla, he utilised his knowledge of the local terrain to establish contacts with terrorists based in PoJK. He used to assist terrorist

groups, during infiltration, by providing logistics and transportation of their illegal arms and ammunition in the interior areas of Kashmir Valley," the spokesperson said.

Teacher Nazam Din, according to the spokesperson, was "a highly motivated and committed drug peddler and an over-ground worker [OGW] of terrorists of Hizbul Mujahideen outfit".

Over 60 government employees, including senior officials from police and the civil administration, have been sacked by Lieutenant-Governor Manoj Sinha since Article 311 was amended in J&K in 2021.

दिल्ली से भी बेहतर

आपके शहर गोरखपुर में

Patriotic IAS

IAS/PCS wali Pathshala

पैडलेगंज, गोरखपुर Mob. 9971932488

Team Led by:

Amit Kumar

(More than 4 Years of Teaching Experience
In Vision IAS Delhi & Qualified 4
Times For The IAS Mains).

Piyush Gambhir Sir

(More than 5 years of teaching experience
in Vision IAS Delhi & qualified 3 times for
the IAS mains & 2 times IAS Interview)

Sonali Choudhary Ma'am

More than two years of experience
in Vision IAS and qualified
3 Times for IAS mains.

Tanya Sehgal Ma'am

More than four years of
experience in Vision IAS and
qualified 2 times for IAS mains.

Manohar Pandey Sir

(More than 5 years of experience
in Vision IAS Delhi & qualified
3 times for the IAS mains &
2 times for PCS Interview).

Piyush Kannaujia Sir

(More than 4 years of teaching
experience in Vision IAS Delhi &
qualified 6 times for the
IAS Mains & 2 IAS Interview)

Abhishek A. Singh Sir

(More than 3 years of experience
in Vision IAS Delhi & qualified
2 times for the IAS Mains).

Divyansh Srivashtava sir

More than 3 years Working
experience with Vision IAS Delhi
and Qualified 2 times for IAS mains and
2 times for CAPF interview.

Karkitaka Vavu

- It is also known as **Karkidaka Vavu Bali** or simply **Vavu Bali**, is a significant Hindu ritual observed in the Indian state of Kerala to honor deceased ancestors.
- It takes place on the day of Amavasya (new moon) in the Malayalam month of Karkidakam, which typically falls in July or August according to the Gregorian calendar.

Significance of Karkitaka Vavu

- Hindus believe that performing the Vavu Bali ritual on this specific day offers salvation (moksha) to the departed souls..

Rituals and Customs

- The Vavu Bali ritual involves various customs and practices. People gather on riverbanks, beaches, or temples to offer bali (oblations) to their ancestors. Some of the common rituals include
 - **Pindha Dana:** Offering cooked rice balls (pindas) to the departed souls.
 - **Tarpanam:** Offering water to the ancestors as a symbol of respect.
 - **Donation:** Giving charity to the needy as a meritorious act.

Importance of Karkitaka Vavu

- Karkitaka Vavu holds immense spiritual significance for Hindus in Kerala. It is a time for family reunion, remembrance of ancestors, and seeking their blessings. The ritual reinforces the belief in the continuity of life beyond death and the importance of honoring familial bonds.

Key Locations for Karkitaka Vavu

- **Varkala Papanasam Beach:** A popular pilgrimage site for performing the Vavu Bali ritual.
- **River banks:** Many people perform the rituals on the banks of rivers.
- **Temples:** Temples also serve as important venues for the Vavu Bali ceremony.



Devotees pay obeisance to forefathers on the Shangumugham beach in Thiruvananthapuram on the occasion of *Karkitaka Vavu* on Saturday. Owing to erosion of coastal land, devotees are restricted from taking a dip in the sea in line with custom. NIRMAL HARINDRAN

PatrioticIAS

Gandhi-King foundation plan runs into hurdles as FCRA holds up funding

Suhasini Haidar
NEW DELHI

Four years after the then U.S. President Donald Trump signed the Gandhi-King Scholarly Exchange Initiative Act, U.S. and Indian officials are trying to overcome the hurdles posed by the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA), which has held up funding for the approximately \$40 million dollar (₹335 crore) initiative and, in particular, a Gandhi-King Development Foundation.

The Act itself, set up to strengthen India-U.S. ties through studying the “history and legacies” of Mahatma Gandhi and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., mandated the setting up of three entities. Two of these were done in the U.S. itself in 2021: an exchange programme for 20 scholars each year, and a “global academy” to be set up by the U.S. Institute of Peace in Washington.

However, the movement on the third entity, the Gandhi-King Development Foundation, has made little progress. According to sources, this is due to excessive scrutiny in New Delhi of the scope and mechanism of routing U.S. government funds for studies in India.

After an MoU was signed on June 17 this year, in the presence of National Security Adviser Ajit Doval and his U.S. counterpart Jake Sullivan in Delhi, U.S. officials said that work on the foundation is now under way. However, sources in the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said that only “preliminary discussions”



Indian and U.S. officials sign a Statement of Intent to establish the Gandhi-King Development Foundation by October 2024. FILE PHOTO

have been held so far, and that the U.S. has not yet provided clarity on the structure of the foundation.

“Once the U.S. decides on what fund structure they want for the foundation and for what kind of activities, only then can they send GoI a proposal. Once the proposal is received it will be examined,” an official told *The Hindu*, adding that India had not been initially consulted in the setting up of the Gandhi-King initiative.

‘Biweekly meetings’

The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) officials, however, say that they have been holding “biweekly meetings” with Indian officials to iron out the details of the foundation that is due to be set up by October, ostensibly in time for Mahatma Gandhi Jayanti. USAID is overseeing the implementation of the agreement, which will require both U.S. funding and matching funding from the Indian private sector.

With just two months to

go for the October deadline, officials say they hope their discussions will “put them on track” to form the foundation, sort out the financing, and apply and receive FCRA clearances.

As *The Hindu* has reported on a number of occasions, the FCRA permissions process has been a source of tension between the MEA and the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) over the past few years. Concerns about the government’s decision to withhold clearances to a number of reputed international NGOs have been raised by the U.S. and other countries with the MEA.

The MHA did not respond to requests for a comment on the issue. However, sources said that “red flags” had been raised initially within the government over the intent of the Gandhi-King Scholarly Exchange Initiative. The government had also questioned why India required foreign funding assistance for such studies at all.

(With inputs from Vijaita Singh)

Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA)

Enactment and Purpose:

- **Year Enacted:** 1976, during the Emergency.
- **Reason:** To prevent foreign interference in India's affairs through funding independent organizations.
- **Objective:** Regulate foreign donations to individuals and associations to ensure they align with the values of a sovereign democratic republic.

Amendments:

- **2010 Amendment:**
 - **Purpose:** Consolidate the law on foreign fund utilization.
 - **Prohibition:** Use of foreign funds for activities detrimental to national interest.
- **2020 Amendment:**

- **Purpose:** Tighten government control and scrutiny over foreign funds received and utilized by NGOs.

Criteria for Receiving Foreign Donations:

- **Registration:** Must be registered under the FCRA.
- **Bank Account:** Open a designated bank account for foreign funds in State Bank of India, Delhi.
- **Utilization:** Funds must be used for the stipulated purpose.
- **Eligibility:** Granted to individuals or associations with definite cultural, economic, educational, religious, and social programs.

Exceptions:

- **Prohibited Applicants:**
 - Those prosecuted or convicted for forced religious conversion.
 - Those prosecuted or convicted for creating communal tension or sedition.
 - Candidates for elections, journalists, media companies, judges, government servants, legislators, political party members, and politically natured organizations.

Validity:

- **Duration:** FCRA registration is valid for 5 years.
- **Renewal:** NGOs must apply for renewal within six months of the expiry date.
- **Cancellation:**
 - Violation of the Act.
 - Inactivity in the chosen field for two consecutive years.
 - Becoming defunct.
 - Once cancelled, re-registration is prohibited for three years.

FCRA 2022 Rules:

- **Compoundable Offences:** Increased from 7 to 12.
- **Contribution Intimation:**
 - Exemption for amounts less than Rs 10 lakh from relatives abroad (previous limit was Rs 1 lakh).
 - Extended time limit for intimation of opening bank accounts.

PatrioticIAS

Environment Ministry nod soon for Sileru hydel project

The Hindu Bureau
VIJAYAWADA

The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change is all set to grant environmental clearance to the 1,350-MW Pumped Storage Hydropower Project (PSHP) at Upper Sileru in Alluri Sitharama Raju district of Andhra Pradesh.

The move follows a recommendation to that effect by its Expert Appraisal Committee (EAC).

This is one of the PSHPs being implemented by the AP-Genco for ensuring grid stability and meeting the peak power demand without resorting to purchases from other sources at high cost.

With the Environment Ministry's clearance in the offing, AP-Genco Managing Director K.V.N. Chakradhar Babu has asked the officials to prepare a detailed action plan for its implementation on a fast-track basis.

In a virtual meeting on the status of the Upper Sileru PSHP on Saturday, Mr. Babu said the project cost was around ₹7,380 crore, and it would generate nearly 10 million units per day during peak hours.

After 61 years, four-ringed butterfly resurfaces in India

GS Paper III: Environment

Rahul Karmakar
GUWAHATI

A four-ringed butterfly belonging to a family with most members in China has resurfaced in India after 61 years, a new study said.

A policeman is one of the four authors of the paper, published by the Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS), describing the great four-ring (*Ypthima cantliei*), a species of Satyrinae butterfly. The butterfly was recorded in 2018 from the Namdapha National Park by Roshan Upadhaya, a member of the Arunachal Pradesh Police, Monsoon Jyoti Gogoi of the BNHS, and Renu Gogoi and Rezina Ahmed of the Guwahati-based Cotton University's Department of Zoology.

Namdapha, straddling 1,985 sq. km. of Changlang district in Arunachal Pradesh, is India's easternmost tiger reserve bordering Myanmar. The park has an elevation ranging from



Little is known about the current distribution or population of the four-ringed butterfly. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

298.7 metres above the mean sea level to 4,498.8 metres.

"The great four-ring was photographed during a survey to document the butterfly diversity in the Miao range of the Namdapha National Park during 2018-19. It was identified based on general morphological patterns and habitat," Mr. Upadhaya told *The Hindu* on Saturday. "Little is known about the current distribution or population of this species, which was last reported in 1957 from (eastern) Assam's Margherita, 61 years before our documentation," he said.

Ypthima is considered a rich genus of the family Nymphalidae which has some 6,000 species of butterflies. Of the 35 *Ypthima* species recorded in India, 23 have been reported from the northeast.

The highest *Ypthima* diversity is in China, particularly in the Yunnan and Sichuan. The diversity is also vast in Nepal, Bhutan, and Myanmar. The species has dull brown-grey wings with three yellow-ringed single eye spots (ocelli) on its hind wing and a large bi-pupilled apical ocellus obscurely ringed with yellow on the forewing above.

Patriotic

Kerala to appoint officers to address complaints from transgender persons

GS Paper I: Society

The Hindu Bureau
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The Kerala government has issued an order for appointment of a complaint redressal officer in offices of heads of all government departments and government, public sector, quasi-government and private institutions in the State to address complaints of the transgender community.

Section 11 of the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019, states that every establishment

The officer has to conduct a probe and submit a report within 15 days of receiving a complaint

shall designate a person to be a complaint officer to deal with complaints related to violation of the provisions of the Act. A communication from the Union Social Justice and Empowerment Ministry in February 2023 was received by the State in this regard.

As per the order issued

by the State's Social Justice Department, second-level officers in the offices of heads of all Union/State government departments and government, public sector, quasi-government, and private institutions can be designated complaint redressal officer.

In the event of any problem faced by transgender persons in connection with that particular establishment, a complaint can be submitted to the redressal officer. Within 15 days of receiving the com-

plaint, the redressal officer has to conduct an investigation and submit a report to the head of the establishment who, in turn, has to dispose of the report within 15 days.

A State Transgender Justice Board member said the Social Justice Department orders in connection with transgender issues were not implemented effectively by various departments. For instance, the transgender ID card was rarely recognised by the Police Department.

The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019

Objective:

- The Act aims to provide protection for the rights of transgender people, ensure their welfare, and address related matters.

Introduction:

- Date Introduced:** 19 July 2019
- Introduced by:** Minister of Social Justice and Empowerment, Thawar Chand Gehlot
- Preceding Legislation:** The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Bill, 2018 (Bill No. 210-C of 2016), and an earlier 2016 version.
- Enactment Dates:** Passed by the Lok Sabha on 5 August 2019 and by the Rajya Sabha on 26 November 2019.
- Presidential Assent:** 5 December 2019
- Effective Date:** 10 January 2020

Amendments and Legislative Journey:

- 2016 Bill:** Met with protests and criticism; sent to a standing committee which submitted its report in July 2017.
- 2018 Bill:** Passed by Lok Sabha in December 2018, but did not incorporate many committee recommendations.
- 2019 Act:** Criticized but passed by both houses and received presidential assent.

Key Provisions:

- Prohibition of Discrimination:** Discrimination against transgender people is prohibited.
- Inclusive Definition:** Includes intersex people, hijras, jogtas, kinnars, trans-men, trans-women, and genderqueers.
- Transgender Certificate:** Transgender persons can apply for a certificate from the district magistrate, allowing them to change their name and update documents.
- Sex Reassignment Surgery:** Required to be legally recognized as male or female in official documents.
- Protection of Transgender Children:** Provisions to ensure welfare; separation from family only by court order.
- No Mandatory Reservations:** Does not provide reservations in education and employment, unlike the 2014 bill.
- Punishment for Crimes:** Imprisonment from six months to two years and a fine for crimes against transgender people.
- National Council for Transgender Persons:** Provision for the creation of this council.

Amendments to Previous Bills:

- 2018 Bill:**
 - Criminalized begging, which was a livelihood for many transgender individuals.
 - Mandated district screening committees for transgender certificates.
 - Did not provide mandatory reservations.
 - Ensured family-life for transgender children without considering potential harassment within the family.
- 2019 Act:**
 - Removed provisions for district screening committees and criminalization of begging.
 - Retained the provision for court-ordered separation of transgender children from their families.
 - Maintained punishment for crimes against transgender people.
 - Did not incorporate mandatory reservations.

Rules and Regulations:

- Draft Rules:** On 18 April 2020, Draft Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Rules, 2020 were published, seeking public comments and suggestions.

Summary:

The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019, aims to safeguard the rights of transgender individuals in India. Despite criticism and protests, the Act was passed to replace earlier bills from 2016 and 2018. Key provisions include prohibiting discrimination, issuing transgender certificates, requiring sex reassignment surgery for gender recognition, and protecting transgender children. However, it does not mandate reservations in education and employment. The Act also provides for the creation of a National Council for Transgender Persons and outlines penalties for crimes against transgender individuals.

Doyen of dance Yamini Krishnamurthy passes away

GS Paper I: Art and Culture

Renowned classical dancer Yamini Krishnamurthy passed away on Saturday after a prolonged illness. She was 83.

Her mortal remains will be kept at her dance school, Nritya Kaustubha, at Hauz Khas in Delhi on Sunday for her students and admirers to pay their last respects.

Ms. Krishnamurthy is credited with popularising Bharatanatyam in north India, as early as in the 1960s, when she chose Delhi as her home. Not content with this, she strived hard to take the dance form to the global stage, and like star maestro Pt. Ravi Shankar, she became a sought-after name internationally.

Known for her vibrant approach, Ms. Krishnamurthy's dance sparked with energy. Though she trained



Grace personified: Yamini Krishnamurthy during an interview to *The Hindu* in 2017, and, right, at a Bharatanatyam performance in her younger days. C.V. SUBRAHMANYAM, FILE PHOTO



under the great masters of the time, she lent her own distinct touch to the technique without diluting the grammar. Her stances, facial expressions, and movements were strikingly precise. She inspired generations of dancers to pursue the art form.

She was born on December 20, 1940 at Madanapalle in Andhra Pradesh. Her father was a Sanskrit scholar and her grandfather an Urdu poet. Her training in Bharatanatyam began at a very early age at Kalakshetra in Chennai.

After mastering the bas-

ics, she learnt from eminent gurus such as Kanchipuram Ellappa Pillai, Kittappa Pillai, Dhandayuthapani Pillai, and Mylapore Gowri Ammal.

She also gained proficiency in Kuchipudi under Vedantam Lakshmi Narayana Sastri and Chinta Krish-

namurthy. A versatile artiste, she learnt Odissi from Pankaj Charan Das and Kelucharan Mohapatra. The dancer, whose debut performance was in Chennai in 1957, always spoke about the days she spent as a five-year-old in Chidambaram, and how the town, famed for the Lord of dance, Nataraja, drew her to the art.

Her first student and Bharatanatyam dancer Rama Vaidyanathan said, "I always felt privileged to be guided by her because I was in awe of her persona and art. Though she never lost her temper when teaching, we knew what she exactly she expected us to do and how it should be done."

Geeta Chandran, a Delhi-based Bharatanatyam dancer, said, "She ruled the dance world for a long time and the high standard she set as a soloist is hard to surpass. She was the go-to

dancer when it came to prestigious national and global events. Like M.S. Subbulakshmi and Ustad Bismillah Khan, she became a cultural ambassador. Along with her scholar-father, she explored both the philosophical and spiritual aspects of the art. With her father's guidance, she gathered amazing material to mount her artistic work on. Though her last days were spent in loneliness, she did not lose her love for dance and was always eager to know what was happening in the field. It's a great loss to the dance fraternity, but her life will continue to serve as a valuable lesson."

Chennai-based Bharatanatyam dancer Priyadarsini Govind, said, "Her eyes did all the talking. She had an aura about her. When you met and spoke to her, you realised that she was a born artiste."

SCCL inks tripartite MoU for Godavari Geothermal Energy Project at Manuguru

The Hindu Bureau

BHADRADRI KOTHAGUDEM

Singareni Collieries Company Ltd. (SCCL), the State-owned coal company, inked a tripartite memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Oil and Natural Gas Corporation Ltd. (ONGC) and the Telangana Renewable Energy Development Corporation Ltd.,

(TGREDCO) for Godavari Geothermal Energy Project.

The MoU has been signed for exploration and development of the Manuguru Geothermal Field in the Pranahita Godavari (PG) basin in Telangana through collaboration, SCCL sources said.

It will help promote renewable energy generation

by effectively utilising hot water springs of the coal belt of the Manuguru area. The collaborative effort is expected to transform Manuguru into a major geothermal energy hub in the country.

The SCCL has already set up a 20-kW geothermal power plant, funded by the Union Ministry of Coal, at Pagideru village in Manu-

guru mandal on an experimental basis.

According to SCCL sources, a recent survey conducted by a leading scientific agency revealed that the Pagideru hot spring site has the potential to generate 122 MW of geothermal energy.

The MoU was signed at Singareni Bhavan in Hyderabad on Friday.

Ruining the majestic ruins

GS Paper I: Art & Culture

Environmentalists and tourists express concern over quarrying activities around the World Heritage Site of Hampi in Vijayanagara district of Karnataka

Hampi, located in the hilly region of Vijayanagara district in Karnataka, is now a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Dotted with monuments built during the Vijayanagara empire that ruled between AD 1336 and 1570, its landscape is made even more fascinating by the massive boulders that encompass the terrain.

It served as the capital of the mighty Vijayanagara empire. This historic site has multiple places of importance including the Virupaksha temple, Lotus Mahal, the queens' bathing area, musical pillars, a stone chariot, and an elephant stable, all of which tell stories of the bygone era.

The Virupaksha temple is regarded as the most sacred temple at Hampi. The Tungabhadra river courses around the rocky terrain.

Tourists, history enthusiasts and archaeologists from all over the world come here, especially in the monsoon, as clouds enhance the beauty of the place and the weather makes the long treks less exhausting.

However, a matter of concern is regarding stone quarrying activity that one witnesses around the place. One can see men chipping away at the rocks near Bukkasagara between Hampi and Anegundi. Anegundi, also called as Kishkinda, has many historical monuments as well. Tourists hear explosives being used to blast the rocks, leaving them worried about the safety of the heritage site. Environmentalists express concern that even after the signboard put up by the Forest Department which says 'Tungabhadra Otter Conservation Reserve', quarrying is happening in surrounding areas.



Old world charm: The gentle slopes of the Hemakuta hill offers tourists a scenic sunset point.



NATIONAL PARK:

Historical Context:

- **First National Park:** Established in 1936 as Hailey National Park, now known as Jim Corbett National Park, Uttarakhand.
- **Namdapha National Park:**
 - Designated as a wildlife sanctuary in 1972.
 - Became a tiger reserve and national park in 1983.
 - Listed on the tentative list of UNESCO World Heritage Sites in India.

Namdapha National Park: A Biodiversity Hotspot



Overview:

- Namdapha National Park is a sprawling, 1,985 square kilometer wilderness located in Arunachal Pradesh, India. Renowned for its exceptional biodiversity, it is considered a jewel in the crown of India's protected areas. Established in 1983, the park is part of the Eastern Himalayas and boasts diverse topography ranging from low-lying valleys to snow-capped peaks.

Geographical Location and Topography:

- **Location:** Situated in the Changlang district of Arunachal Pradesh.
- **Borders:** Shares a border with Myanmar.
- **Rivers:** Traversed by the Noa Dihing River, originating from the Daphabum peak.
- **Elevation Range:** Varies from 200 meters to 4,571 meters at Daphabum, making it one of the few national parks in the world with such a dramatic altitudinal range.

Biodiversity:

Namdapha is a treasure trove of biodiversity and is home to:

- **Plant Species:** Over 1,000 species, including tropical evergreen forests, subtropical broadleaf forests, and alpine meadows.
- **Animal Species:** Approximately 1,400 species, including:
 - **Big Cats:** Tigers, leopards, snow leopards, and clouded leopards.
 - **Other Notable Wildlife:** Elephants, red pandas, various species of deer, monkeys, and birds.

Conservation Importance:

- Namdapha plays a crucial role in conserving the unique ecosystem of the Eastern Himalayas. Recognized as a biodiversity hotspot, the park is home to several endangered and threatened species. Its intact forests are vital for maintaining ecological balance, regulating water resources, and protecting the livelihoods of local communities.

Challenges and Conservation Efforts:

- Despite its ecological significance, Namdapha faces several threats, including deforestation, poaching, and human-wildlife conflict. To address these challenges, the park authorities, in collaboration with local communities, have implemented various conservation measures, such as:
 - **Anti-Poaching Patrols:** Strengthening efforts to combat poaching activities.
 - **Community-Based Conservation Programs:** Involving local communities in conservation activities.
 - **Eco-Tourism Initiatives:** Promoting eco-tourism to support conservation and provide sustainable livelihoods for local communities.

Why did courts revisit bar on sub-quotas?

Will the weaker among Dalits get representation from further sub-classification? Why did the Supreme Court overrule a five-judge decision of 2004? What are the views on creamy layer exclusion? Do the judges' opinions on this constitute a direction to the government?

GS Paper II: Reservation

The story so far:

A seven-judge Bench of the Supreme Court has ruled that States have the power to sub-divide Scheduled Castes (SC) into groups so that it can give sub-quotas within the quota for Dalits. In the process, the Bench overruled a 2004 judgment by a five-member Constitution Bench that said such sub-classification was impermissible as Parliament alone was empowered to modify the list of SCs notified by the President under Article 341 of the Constitution.

What was the 2004 judgment?

The Andhra Pradesh Scheduled Castes (Rationalisation of Reservation) Ordinance, 1999, and the Act that replaced it created four groups – A, B, C and D – of Scheduled Castes and earmarked varying percentages of reservation for each group. The rationale was that there were differences in the level of advancement among communities under the SC list and that such sub-classification will ensure representation for the weaker castes. The Andhra Pradesh High Court rejected the challenge against the Act.

However, in the Supreme Court, a Constitution Bench of five judges held the sub-classification was unconstitutional. The November 2004 judgment in *E.V. Chinnaiah vs State of Andhra Pradesh* noted that under Article 341 of the Constitution, the President notifies the list of Scheduled Castes. Once the list is notified, it shall not be modified through another

The court permitted sub-classification of Scheduled Castes, but said States should have a rational basis for doing it

notification, and the only way to include or exclude a community in that list was by an act of Parliament. The Bench then ruled that once enumerated under Article 341, SCs constitute a single homogeneous class, and that State legislatures were not competent to tinker with the list by further classifying them into groups.

How did it come up before a larger Bench?

The Punjab Scheduled Castes and Backward Classes (Reservation in Services) Act, 2006, provided for 25% reservation for SCs and 12% for backward classes in direct recruitment to services. Half the jobs under the SC quota, the law said, would be given as first preference to Balmikis and Mazhabi Sikhs, if candidates were available. When this was challenged, the Punjab and Haryana High Court cited the judgment in *E.V. Chinnaiah* to hold that the relevant section on preference to two communities among SCs was unconstitutional. Similarly, in 2006, the High Court also struck down the Haryana government's notification dividing SC communities into two blocks and earmarking 50% of the SC quota to each block.

In 2009, the Tamil Nadu Assembly enacted a law to provide a sub-quota in services and educational institutions for Arunthathiyars, a group of sub-castes considered the weakest among the Scheduled Castes in the State. This was challenged directly in the Supreme Court. In 2020, a Constitution Bench doubted the correctness of the *Chinnaiah* judgment, noting that the nine-judge Bench in *Indra Sawhney* (1992) had permitted sub-classification of backward classes. However, in *Chinnaiah*, the Bench had declined to use that as a precedent for sub-division of SC communities as *Indra Sawhney* was only concerned with OBC reservation. Hence, a larger Bench was constituted to revisit the earlier verdict.

What is the reasoning behind it?

Six of the seven judges have now ruled that the 2004 judgment was wrong. In his judgment on behalf of himself and Justice Manoj Mishra, Chief Justice D.Y. Chandrachud has held that SC communities are not a homogeneous class as ruled in the earlier judgment. He disagreed with the view that the act of notifying a list of SCs creates a deemed fiction that all of them have a similar status. It is true that they get a common constitutional identity as Scheduled Castes based on their experience of untouchability and discrimination, but this does not mean that there is no heterogeneity among them.

He cited historical and empirical evidence to show that there were inter se differences among SC communities. There were even instances of some sections of SCs being discriminated against by other SC communities. Therefore, sub-classification was permissible, but it should be based on an "intelligible differentia" (a clear characteristic that will mark one group as different from another) and should have a rational nexus to the purpose of doing it. Further, such sub-classification is subject to judicial review, and the State should be able to justify it using empirical data.

The CJI also held that sub-classification will not in any way amount to tinkering with the Presidential list and that it will not violate Article 341, which confers the power to notify Scheduled Castes exclusively on the President. The function of Article 341 was to identify who came under the category of Scheduled Castes, but States are free to identify those with different degrees of backwardness and make special provisions or extend reservation benefits to them. The new ruling is expected to encourage States to earmark sub-quotas for the most marginalised sections of Dalits who have not enjoyed the fruits of reservation so far.

In her dissent, Justice Bela Trivedi stands by the *Chinnaiah* doctrine that it is impermissible to sub-classify a homogeneous class and that it would amount to tinkering with the President's list under Article 341.

What about creamy layer exclusion?

The creamy layer concept is now applicable only to OBCs and so far has not been extended to Dalit communities. Justice B. R. Gavai, in a separate opinion in which he concurs with the Chief Justice, has written in detail about the need for identifying the more advanced among the Scheduled Castes and excluding them from the benefits of affirmative action.

Noting that equality would mean that unequals cannot be treated as equals, Justice Gavai has wondered whether the children of IAS or IPS officers could be treated the same way as children in remote villages even though they may belong to the same community. Underscoring the differences in access and resources to those in urban and rural areas, and those attending elite institutions and those in schools with limited facilities, he has said putting them in the same bracket would obliterate the equality principle. However, he also notes that the parameters for excluding the creamy layer for the SCs cannot be the same as those used to identify the well-off among the OBCs. Three other judges have agreed with his view. However, the opinions do not constitute a direction to the government to implement the creamy layer concept, as the issue did not directly arise in this case.



New categories: Political leaders pour milk on the statue of B.R. Ambedkar as they celebrate the SC judgment, in Hyderabad on August 2. RAMAKRISHNA. G

Why did courts revisit bar on sub-quotas? (04 August)

Will the weaker among Dalits get representation from further sub-classification? Why did the Supreme Court overrule a five-judge decision of 2004? What are the views on creamy layer exclusion? Do the judges' opinions on this constitute a direction to the government?

- The Supreme Court ruled that States can create sub-quotas within Scheduled Castes (SC) quotas.
- This overruled a 2004 judgment by a five-member Constitution Bench.
- The 2004 judgment held that sub-classification of SCs was impermissible and only Parliament could modify the SC list notified by the President under Article 341 of the Constitution.
- The Andhra Pradesh Scheduled Castes (Rationalisation of Reservation) Ordinance, 1999, and the subsequent Act created four groups (A, B, C, and D) within SCs with varying reservation percentages.
- The Andhra Pradesh High Court upheld this Act, but the Supreme Court later ruled it unconstitutional.
- The 2004 Supreme Court judgment in *E.V. Chinnaiah vs State of Andhra Pradesh* stated that once SCs are notified under Article 341, they form a single homogeneous class, and States cannot further classify them into groups.

How did it come up before a larger Bench?

- The Punjab Scheduled Castes and Backward Classes (Reservation in Services) Act, 2006, allocated 25% reservation for SCs and 12% for backward classes in direct recruitment.
- Half the SC quota jobs were to be first given to Balmikis and Mazhabi Sikhs, if available.
- The Punjab and Haryana High Court ruled this preference unconstitutional, citing the E.V. Chinnaiiah judgment.
- The High Court also struck down a similar Haryana notification dividing SC communities into two blocks with 50% SC quota each.
- In 2009, Tamil Nadu enacted a law for a sub-quota for Arunthathiyars, considered the weakest among SCs, which was challenged in the Supreme Court.
- In 2020, a Constitution Bench questioned the Chinnaiiah judgment's correctness, noting the Indra Sawhney case allowed sub-classification of backward classes.
- A larger Bench was formed to revisit the Chinnaiiah verdict since Indra Sawhney was only about OBC reservation.

What is the reasoning behind it?

- Six of seven judges ruled the 2004 judgment was wrong.
- Chief Justice D.Y. Chandrachud and Justice Manoj Mishra found SC communities are not homogeneous.
- Notifying a list of SCs does not imply all have a similar status; there is heterogeneity among them.
- Historical and empirical evidence shows inter se differences and discrimination among SC communities.
- Sub-classification is permissible based on "intelligible differentia" with a rational nexus to its purpose.
- Sub-classification is subject to judicial review and must be justified with empirical data.
- Sub-classification does not tinker with the Presidential list and does not violate Article 341.
- Article 341 identifies Scheduled Castes, but States can identify different degrees of backwardness and extend reservation benefits.
- The ruling is expected to encourage States to earmark sub-quotas for the most marginalized Dalit sections.
- Justice Bela Trivedi dissents, supporting the Chinnaiiah doctrine, which opposes sub-classifying a homogeneous class and altering the President's list under Article 341.
- The creamy layer concept currently applies only to OBCs, not to Dalit communities.
- Justice B. R. Gavai supports identifying and excluding the more advanced among Scheduled Castes from affirmative action benefits.
- Justice Gavai notes that treating unequals equally undermines equality.
- He questions if children of IAS or IPS officers should be treated the same as those in remote villages, despite being from the same community.
- Gavai highlights differences in access to resources between urban and rural areas and elite institutions versus schools with limited facilities.
- He states that excluding the creamy layer among SCs should have different parameters than those used for OBCs.
- Three other judges agree with his view.
- The opinions do not direct the government to implement the creamy layer concept, as it was not the main issue in this case.

How can Wayanad reduce landslide risks?

What are the natural and man-made factors that triggered large-scale death and destruction in Kerala? What is the plan to protect the Western Ghats? Why have recommendations by the Gadgil committee not been implemented? Were warnings issued ignored by the State?

GS Paper III:
Disaster
Management

The story so far:

Massive landslides hit the district of Wayanad in northern Kerala in the early hours of July 30, with continuous torrential rainfall triggering large-scale death and destruction in Mundakkai, Chooralmala, and Meppadi, and entire villages being washed away. The death toll stands at 215, though the number of missing people indicate that the real toll will be higher.

What are the possible causes?

Most experts are clear that there are a number of causative factors behind any landslide, both natural and anthropogenic. Almost half of Kerala's land area – 19,301 sq km or 49.7% of the total landmass – is prone to landslides, according to an assessment by the Geological Survey of India (GSI). The heavy rainfall in the region and the slope of the Western Ghats mean that Wayanad is uniquely vulnerable to landslides, and 31.54% of the district is highly susceptible, according to research at IIT-Delhi.

However, human factors have exacerbated the danger of a natural calamity; increasing construction and changes in crop patterns are among the possible culprits. The Wayanad region has become a tourist hotspot over the last few years, with homestays and monsoon tourism being the latest trends. Ecologist

The heavy rainfall in the region and the slope of the Western Ghats mean that Wayanad is vulnerable to landslides

Madhav Gadgil has pointed to the construction of resorts and artificial lakes, as well as recently abandoned quarries, as among the developmental activities which should not have occurred in the sensitive zone. Land use changes which have occurred over a longer period of time, starting with the British-era tea plantations that surround the disaster site, are also potential factors, and have continued in the post-Independence era. A study on plantation-induced forest degradation in Wayanad, published in the *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* in 2022, found that there has been a 62% reduction in forest cover between 1950 and 2018, coupled with a 1,800% increase in the area under plantation. Such monocropping leads to a loosening of the topsoil that was once held in place by the roots of a forest.

Climate change has also played a role, albeit an indirect one, leading to changes in rainfall patterns in the State. The warming of the Arabian Sea is allowing the formation of deep cloud systems, leading to extremely heavy rainfall over a shorter period, according to S. Abhilash, a senior scientist at the Cochin University of Science and Technology. In recent years, such heavy rainfall events have been increasing, even as the number of rainy days in the monsoon season has been decreasing. Despite the record 527 mm of rainfall that was recorded in Mundakkai over the 48 hours before the landslide, Wayanad has seen only normal rainfall averages during this monsoon, while Kerala as a whole has seen deficits, according to India Meteorological Department data. "What was once a cool, humid environment with year-round drizzles and monsoon rains, is turning into one marked by drier, hotter summers and intense downpours during the monsoons. This change has increased the risk of landslides. Dry soils absorb less water and heavy rainfalls cause run-offs that can lead to landslides, such as the ones we've seen this week," said Mariam Zachariah, a researcher at the Grantham Institute for Climate Change.

How can the Western Ghats be protected?

Mr. Gadgil led the high-profile Western Ghats Ecology Expert Panel, which submitted its report in 2011, recommending that the entire region of the Western Ghats, spanning 1,29,000

square km across six States, be declared an Ecologically Sensitive Zone (ESZ). It wanted the area to be divided into three broad zones – ESZ 1, ESZ 2 and ESZ 3 – with strict restrictions on development to be imposed on the first two regions. All three taluks of Wayanad fell under ESZ 1, which recommended a ban on land use changes, a moratorium on mining and quarrying, limits on hydropower projects, no new railway lines or major roads, and strictly regulated minimal ecotourism. In fact, the village of Meppadi, which has been washed away, had been specifically spotlighted as one of 18 proposed ecologically sensitive localities in Kerala. However, the Gadgil panel report was rejected by all State governments, following a public backlash on the impact of the report on livelihoods and economic growth in the region.

A panel led by former ISRO chief, K. Kasturirangan, watered down some of the Gadgil report's recommendations, stipulating that only 37% of the Western Ghats were to be declared ecologically sensitive, though much of Wayanad still fell within the area to be protected. However, this report was not implemented either.

A draft notification on Western Ghats protection, first issued in March 2014, has remained in the draft stage for over a decade, with its sixth version being issued by the Union government just a day after the Wayanad landslide struck; a 2022 committee set up to incorporate States' concerns and balance the "conservation aspects of the disaster prone pristine ecosystem, and the rights, privileges, needs and developmental aspirations of the region" is yet to submit its report.

Were landslide warnings issued?

The IMD issues warnings for heavy rainfall, in a colour-coded system. However, in the week before the landslides, the alert was largely yellow, which does not call for action. It was only after the landslide occurred that a red alert was issued for July 30.

The GSI has been designated the nodal agency for landslide studies, and has been given the responsibility of evolving an early warning system and protocols for landslide risk reduction. However, this is still in the experimental stage and will take four or five more years to be ready for public use, a senior GSI official said. Regional landslide forecast bulletins have been issued to State and district authorities in Wayanad since the onset of the 2024 monsoon, but only predicted "low" probability on most days, with "moderate" probability predicted on July 30.



Utter ruin: A man examines the site of his house, which was destroyed by the landslide in Chooralmala on July 31. THULASI KAKKAT

How can Wayanad reduce landslide risks? (04 August)

What are the natural and man-made factors that triggered large-scale death and destruction in Kerala? What is the plan to protect the Western Ghats? Why have recommendations by the Gadgil committee not been implemented? Were warnings issued ignored by the State?

- Massive landslides hit Wayanad, northern Kerala, on July 30.
- Continuous torrential rainfall triggered death and destruction in Mundakkai, Chooralmala, and Meppadi.
- Death toll: 215, with more missing.
- Causes: natural and anthropogenic factors.
- Kerala's land area: 49.7% prone to landslides (Geological Survey of India).
- Wayanad is uniquely vulnerable due to heavy rainfall and Western Ghats' slope; 31.54% of the district is highly susceptible (IIT-Delhi).
- Human factors exacerbating the risk: increasing construction, changes in crop patterns.
- Wayanad has become a tourist hotspot, with homestays and monsoon tourism trends.
- Ecologist Madhav Gadgil points to resorts, artificial lakes, and abandoned quarries in the sensitive zone.
- Land use changes over time: British-era tea plantations and post-Independence developments.
- Study (2022): 62% reduction in forest cover (1950-2018), 1,800% increase in plantation area.
- Monocropping leads to topsoil loosening once held by forest roots
- Climate change has indirectly affected Kerala's rainfall patterns.

- Warming of the Arabian Sea leads to deep cloud systems and extremely heavy rainfall over shorter periods (S. Abhilash, Cochin University of Science and Technology).
- Heavy rainfall events have increased, while rainy days during the monsoon have decreased.
- Record 527 mm rainfall in Mundakkai before the landslide.
- Wayanad had normal rainfall averages this monsoon; Kerala had deficits (India Meteorological Department).
- Shift from cool, humid environment with year-round drizzles to drier, hotter summers and intense monsoon downpours (Mariam Zachariah, Grantham Institute for Climate Change).
- Drier soils absorb less water, causing heavy rainfall run-offs that lead to landslides.

How can the Western Ghats be protected?

- Mr. Gadgil led the Western Ghats Ecology Expert Panel.
- The panel's 2011 report recommended the entire Western Ghats region (1,29,000 sq km across six States) be declared an Ecologically Sensitive Zone (ESZ).
- The area was to be divided into three zones: ESZ 1, ESZ 2, and ESZ 3.
- Strict restrictions on development were proposed for ESZ 1 and ESZ 2.
- All three taluks of Wayanad fell under ESZ 1.
- Recommendations for ESZ 1 included:
 - Ban on land use changes.
 - Moratorium on mining and quarrying.
 - Limits on hydropower projects.
 - No new railway lines or major roads.
 - Strictly regulated minimal ecotourism.
- Meppadi village, recently washed away, was highlighted as an ecologically sensitive locality.
- The Gadgil panel report was rejected by all State governments due to public backlash over potential impacts on livelihoods and economic growth.
- Kasturirangan's panel watered down Gadgil's recommendations.
- Only 37% of the Western Ghats were to be declared ecologically sensitive.
- Much of Wayanad still fell within the protected area.

- Kasturirangan's report was not implemented.
- A draft notification on Western Ghats protection was first issued in March 2014.
- The draft has remained in draft stage for over a decade.
- The sixth version was issued by the Union government a day after the Wayanad landslide.
- A 2022 committee was set up to balance conservation and developmental aspirations.
- The committee has yet to submit its report.

Were landslide warnings issued?

- The IMD issues heavy rainfall warnings using a color-coded system.
- The week before the landslides, alerts were mostly yellow, which doesn't call for action.
- A red alert was issued for July 30 only after the landslide occurred.
- The GSI is the nodal agency for landslide studies and early warning system development.
- The early warning system is still experimental and will take 4-5 years to be ready for public use.
- Regional landslide forecast bulletins have been issued to Wayanad authorities since the 2024 monsoon onset.
- Most days had a "low" probability prediction, with "moderate" probability predicted for July 30.

What is the new Alzheimer's blood test? (04 August)

How will it help treat the disease better? Is it more avoidable? Will India be able to introduce it soon?

- Researchers developed a new blood test, PrecivityAD2, for early detection of Alzheimer's disease (AD).
- The test is about 90% accurate in identifying AD in people with cognitive symptoms.
- The study, "Blood Biomarkers to Detect Alzheimer Disease in Primary Care and Secondary Care" by Sebastian Palmqvist et al, was published in JAMA on July 28.
- Practitioners are excited because:
 - 1 in 5 women and 1 in 10 men develop dementia due to AD.
 - Individuals with cognitive symptoms are first seen in primary care; few are referred to secondary care.

What is the new Alzheimer's blood test?

How will it help treat the disease better? Is it more affordable? Will India be able to introduce it soon?

GS Paper III: Basic Science

The story so far:

Researchers have developed a new blood test to detect Alzheimer's disease that helps diagnose the disease even at the early stage of mild cognitive impairment. Scientists at Lund University in Sweden have shown that PrecivityAD2, a new blood test, is about 90% accurate in identifying AD in people experiencing cognitive symptoms. The paper 'Blood Biomarkers to Detect Alzheimer Disease in Primary Care and Secondary Care' by Sebastian Palmqvist et al was published in the July 28 edition of peer reviewed journal JAMA.

Why are practitioners excited about the test?

According to statistics, one in five women and one in 10 men develop dementia due to AD (Alzheimer's disease). Individuals with cognitive symptoms are first seen in primary care, with a minority being referred to secondary care, authors of the article pointed out. Further they added that symptomatic AD is misdiagnosed in 25% to 35% of patients treated at even specialised clinics and likely even more patients treated in primary care.

- Symptomatic AD is misdiagnosed in 25%-35% of patients at specialized clinics and likely more in primary care.
- A blood test for Alzheimer's disease (AD) is considered a major advancement, as current methods are expensive and complex.
- Modern methods include amyloid or Tau PET scans and cerebrospinal fluid tests via lumbar puncture, which are costly and painful.
- Neuropsychiatrist E.S. Krishnamoorthy highlights that this new blood test is close to the ideal goal of a simple serum study.
- The blood test will lower diagnosis costs and simplify the process to just drawing blood.
- Previous commercial attempts were less conclusive, but this new study has provided definitive results.
- Howard Fillit of the Alzheimer's Drug Discovery Foundation believes blood tests will soon replace costly PET scans and become the standard for diagnosing AD.
- Fillit compares the advancement to how cholesterol tests are used to detect heart disease.

What does the test do?

- The new blood test measures two ratios: plasma phosphorylated-tau217 (p-tau217) to non-phosphorylated-tau21, and two types of amyloid-beta: AB42 and AB40.
- Tau and amyloid-beta are known markers of Alzheimer's disease (AD).
- The study involved 1,213 patients in Sweden, with 23% having subjective cognitive decline, 33% having dementia, and 44% having mild cognitive impairment.
- About 50% of participants showed AD pathology through testing.
- The blood test had a 91% accuracy in detecting AD, compared to 73% accuracy by dementia specialists and 61% by primary care physicians.
- The test is expected to streamline AD diagnosis and treatment, as early diagnosis is crucial for effective use of early-stage drugs and is more cost-effective and simple compared to current methods.

How does this impact the future?

- Future studies should assess how blood tests impact clinical care.
- Costs are expected to decrease, improving affordability.
- Currently, India relies on MRI and regular PET scans for AD diagnosis.
- Amyloid or Tau PET scans are not commercially available in India.
- The availability of the new blood test in India is anticipated, but it's uncertain if it will be accessible and affordable for

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