

WORLD'S OLDEST DOCK: LOTHAL SET TO GET NATIONAL MARITIME HERITAGE COMPLEX

In News:

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi reviewed the construction of the National Maritime Heritage Complex (NMHC) site at Gujarat's Lothal.
- NMHC at Lothal is being developed as a one-of-its-kind project to display India's rich and diverse maritime heritage.

Lothal

- Lothal was one of the southernmost sites of the Indus Valley civilization, located in the Bhāl region of what is now the state of Gujarat.
- The port city is believed to have been built in 2,200 BC.
- Lothal was a thriving trade centre in ancient times, with its trade of beads, gems and ornaments reaching West Asia and Africa.

Lothal: A port city

- Archaeologist SR Rao led the team which discovered a number of Harappan sites including the port city of Lothal.
- According to the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), Lothal had the world's earliest known dock, connecting the city to an ancient course of the Sabarmati River.
- Additionally, the National Institute of Oceanography in Goa discovered marine microfossils and salt, gypsum crystals at the site.
 - This indicated that sea water once filled the structure and it was definitely a dockyard.
- In later excavations, ASI unearthed a mound, a township, a marketplace, and the dock.

Heritage Value

- Lothal was nominated in April 2014 as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and its application is pending on the tentative list of UNESCO.

- As per the dossier submitted to UNESCO by India, heritage value of Lothal is comparable to other ancient port-towns around the world including:
 - Xel Ha (Peru), Ostia (Port of Rome) and Carthage (Port of Tunis) in Italy, Hepu in China, Canopus in Egypt, Gabel (Byblos of the Phoenicians), Jaffa in Israel, Ur in Mesopotamia, Hoi An in Vietnam.
- In the region, it can be compared with other Indus port towns of Balakot (Pakistan), Khirasa (in Gujarat's Kutch) and Kuntasi (in Rajkot).

National Maritime Heritage Complex Project

- The project began in March 2022, and is being developed at a cost of Rs 3,500 crore.
- It will have several innovative features such as:
 - Lothal mini-recreation - It will recreate Harappan architecture and lifestyle through immersive technology;
 - Four theme parks – Memorial theme park, Maritime and Navy theme park, Climate theme park, and Adventure and Amusement theme park.
- It will also house the world's tallest lighthouse museum, 14 galleries highlighting India's maritime heritage starting from the Harappan time till today.
- The National Maritime Heritage Complex at Lothal will act as a centre for learning and understanding India's maritime history.

VULTURES

Tamil Nadu recently launched mission to save critically endangered vultures.



About:

Tamil Nadu- State level committee:

- The committee, which has a two-year tenure, will take steps for monitoring the conservation and recovery of existing vulture sites and mapping of vulture populations across the State for creating safe zones.

- It will work to eliminate the use of toxic veterinary drugs (Diclofenac), the main reason for vulture fatalities.
- Prevention of poisoning of cattle carcasses, the principal food of vultures, is also one of the responsibilities of the newly formed committee.

In Tamil Nadu, four species of vultures are found —

- **the Oriental white-backed vulture,**
- **the long-billed vulture,**
- **the red-headed vulture, and**
- **the Egyptian vulture.**
- The first three are residents and can be found in the **landscapes of the Nilgiris and Sathyamangalam.**
- There is evidence of Egyptian vulture breeding only at one site in **Dharmapuri.**

Vulture population:

- 96% of India's vulture population declined between 1993 and 2003.
- Therefore, the Central government put into place two action plans to protect the species at the national level — the first in 2006 and the second, ongoing plan for 2020-2025.
- One of the important action points in this nationwide plan is the formation of State-level committees to save the critically endangered population of vultures.

Vulture species in India:

- **9 species of vultures are found in India.**
- Of these nine species, 4 are listed as Critically Endangered species of Vultures and one as endangered species in IUCN red list of endangered species.

Species of Vultures found in India and their Conservation Status:

- **Indian Vulture or Long-billed vulture (Gyps indicus)-Critically Endangered**
- **Indian White-backed Vulture (Gyps bengalensis)-Critically Endangered**
- **Red-headed Vulture (Sarcogyps calvus)- Critically Endangered**
- **Slender-billed Vulture (Gyps tenuirostris)- Critically Endangered**

- **Egyptian Vulture (Neophron percnopterus)**- Endangered
- **Cinereous Vulture (Aegypius monachus)**- Near Threatened
- **Bearded Vulture (Gypaetus barbatus)**-Near Threatened
- **Himalayan Vulture (Gyps himalayensis)**-Near Threatened
- **Griffon Vulture (Gyps fulvus)**- Least Concern

SWADESH DARSHAN SCHEME

The Union Government to launch Swadesh Darshan 2 with chosen destinations from 15 States.



About:

- Fifteen States are part of the first phase which include Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, and Maharashtra.
- The initiative is being taken as part of the first phase of the ‘Swadesh Darshan 2’.
- Some of the prominent places identified are Jhansi and Prayagraj in Uttar Pradesh, Gwalior, Chitrakoot and Khajuraho in Madhya Pradesh and Ajanta and Ellora in Maharashtra.
- It is promoted as part of India’s new domestic tourism policy which moves away from theme-based tourist circuits and focuses on revving up destination tourism.

Swadesh Darshan Scheme:

- The Swadesh Darshan Scheme was launched by the Centre in 2014-15 for the integrated development of theme-based tourist circuits.
- Under the scheme, the Ministry of Tourism provides financial assistance to State governments, Union Territory Administrations or Central Agencies for development of tourism infrastructure in the country.
- The Swadesh Darshan scheme is 100% centrally funded.

Tourism Sector:

- According to the third Tourism Satellite Account for 2017-18, 2018-19, and 2019-20, the contribution of tourism to the employment of the country is 14.78%, 14.87 % and 15.34 % respectively.
- The total jobs generated by the by tourism are 72.69 million (2017-18), 75.85 million (2018-19) and 79.86 million (2019-20).

ALL SCHOOL STUDENTS TO BE PART OF UNIFIED CREDIT SYSTEM NOW

In News:

- Recently, the Union Ministry of Education (MoE) unveiled the draft National Credit Framework.
- Students will soon be able to earn credits for both classroom learning and extracurricular activities through a unified credit system, which will be deposited in a credit bank - a system that is already in place at the higher academic level.

The National Credit Framework (NCrF):

• About:

- Based on the **inter-ministerial committee** (led by Nirmaljeet Singh Kalsi, chairperson of National Council for Vocational Education and Training) report, the MoE recently unveiled the draft NCrF and started a national level public consultation on it.
- NCrF aims to bring all school students under **a unified credit system**.
- Aside from class tests, activities such as festival celebrations and school cleaning will earn credits that will be stored in the **Academic Bank of Credit (ABC)**, just like in higher education.
- There will be no hard and fast distinction between curricular and extracurricular or co-curricular activities, or between vocational and academic tracks.
- The framework's goal is to develop a unified credit accumulation and transfer system for general and vocational education from school to higher education.
- Aadhaar will be used for student registration, and **each candidate will be assigned an academic bank account number**, where degrees and credits will be accumulated.

- At the school level, the draft National Credit Framework proposes that the credit regime be divided into **five levels** -
 - From pre-school to class II;
 - Classes III to V;
 - Classes VI to VIII,
 - Classes IX to X; and,
 - Classes XI and XII. A student who clears class XII will be at credit level 4 (up to 8 for those who obtain doctorate degrees).
- Under the draft framework, the credit points will be carried over to the graduation level, and further.
- A student will have to earn **at least 40 credits** (annual “notional learning” duration to earn at least 40 credits has been fixed at 1,200 hours - time spent in classrooms + a range of extracurricular activities and sports) for completing each year of school, besides clearing the exams.
- **Proposed benefits of NCrF for various stakeholders:**
 - **Students:**
 - Establishing multidisciplinary and holistic education with **flexible curricula**.
 - Removing the distinction between arts, science, social sciences, commerce, etc.
 - Giving student credits for every academic/skill/experience.
 - Enhancing the **scope of core learning** to include foundational and cognitive both.
 - **Institutions:**
 - Promoting stronger collaboration between institutions.
 - Making credit mechanisms simpler and uniform.
 - Increasing focus on research and innovation.
 - Leveraging the institutional infrastructure.
 - **Government:**
 - NCrF is expected to assist the government to **increase the enrolment of students**.
 - Complementing the **demographic dividend** and transforming India into the **Skill Capital** of the World.

- **Industry:**
 - NCrF will allow students to attain NSQF-approved foundational skills developed by industry and be **more employable**.
 - The provision of micro-credentials will allow integration of quick educational upgradation/upskilling.
- **Significance:**
 - So far, the credit system has been out of reach for the general public.
 - Now, someone who works in the farms and has studied up to class VI will now be credited for his/her experience.
 - S/he will be able to take Class X through NIOS after earning credits for four years.
 - Taking the vision of the new National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, NCrF **will enable the integration of academic and vocational domains** to ensure flexibility and mobility between the two. Thus, mainstreaming skilling and vocational education.
 - NCrF will also enable students who have dropped out of mainstream education **to re-enter the education ecosystem**.
 - It will also promote **Recognition of Prior Learning** for workers who have acquired knowledge and skills informally through traditional family inheritance, work experience, or other means.

AK-203 ASSAULT RIFLES

The Indo-Russian joint venture at Korwa in Uttar Pradesh will start manufacturing AK-203 assault rifles by 2022 end.



About:

- Under an over ₹5,000 crore contract, over 6.1 lakh AK-203 assault rifles will be manufactured in India with technology transfer from Russia.
- The Indo-Russia Rifles Private Limited was set up in 2019 to produce the Russian-origin Kalashnikov assault rifles in Korwa Ordnance Factory in Amethi district.

- AK203 is the advanced version of the Kalashnikov assault rifle family, the first of which was the AK-47.
- The AK-203 assault rifles will replace the INSAS rifles that have been in service for over three decades.
- The weapon fires 7.62×39 cartridges and weighs 3.8 kg without ammo.
- The modern version of the Russian-origin rifle has an effective range of 300 metres or more than three football fields, is lightweight and robust.

India-Russia Defence cooperation:

- As per a report by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, India figures amongst the key arms importing destination globally.
- India has for decades been Russia's largest arms importer, with Russian weapons accounting for nearly 70% of India's military arsenal.
- The two nations have earlier collaborated to manufacture the BrahMos missiles, which are a key component of India's missile defence systems.
- Furthermore, the defence trade between India and Russia has crossed \$15 billion since 2018, in the backdrop of some big deals including the \$5.43 billion S-400 long range air defence systems.

RUSTOM-2

The indigenous medium altitude long endurance (MALE) unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) is expected to complete all user trials by August 2023



About:

- Rustom-2 is also known as **Tapas-BH** (Tactical Airborne Platform for Aerial Surveillance-Beyond Horizon 201).
- It has been designed and developed by the Aeronautical Development Establishment (ADE), Bengaluru, with the production partners being Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd. (HAL) and Bharat Electronics Ltd.

- It is powered by a small turbofan engine. The engine is Russian TRDD-50MT originally designed for cruise missiles.
 - It is being developed to carry out surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) roles and is capable of carrying different combinations of advanced payload and capable of auto landing, among others.
 - Its navigation was done using GAGAN satellites through the onboard SATCOM system.
 - High endurance UAVs are a priority requirement for the Indian armed forces especially in view of the stand-off with China in eastern Ladakh.
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BOOKER PRIZE

Sri Lankan author Shehan Karunatilaka has been named the winner of the 2022 Booker Prize for his second novel *The Seven Moons of Maali Almeida*.



About:

- The Booker Prize for Fiction, formerly known as the Booker–McConnell Prize and the Man Booker Prize, is a literary prize.
- It was established in

Objective:

- To promote the finest in fiction by rewarding the best novel of the year written in English.

Eligibility:

- The Booker Prize awards any novel originally written in English and published in the UK and Ireland in the year of the prize, regardless of the nationality of their author.
- The novel must be an original work in English (not a translation)
- It must be published by a registered UK or Irish imprint; self-published novels are not eligible.

Prize Money:

- The winner receives £50,000 as well as the £2,500 awarded to each of the shortlisted authors. In this case, thanks to the award being shared, the prize money would be split between the two winners.

Organizations involved:



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- **Man Group:**Man Group is an active investment management firm founded in 1783. It has sponsored the Man Booker Prize since 2002
 - **The Booker Prize Foundation:** It is a registered charity established in 2002. Since then it has been responsible for the award of the Man Booker Prize for Fiction, and for the Man Booker International Prize since its inauguration in 2005.
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