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Weekly **CURRENT AFFAIRS**



JULY-WEEK-IV

26 JULY - 2 AUGUST - 2024

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Governor's Immunity

Syllabus: GS-II: Various Constitutional posts, powers, functions

Why In the News?

A three-judge Bench headed by the Chief Justice of India is hearing a case against the blanket 'criminal immunity' provided to the President and Governors under Article 361 of the constitution.

Immunity to Governor and President

<p>Article 361(1)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The President and Governors are not answerable to any court for acts done in exercise and performance of their powers and duties. However, the article has two other provisions which mentions that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The conduct of the President may be brought under review by any court, tribunal or body appointed or designated by either House of Parliament for the investigation of a charge under article 61 (impeachment violation of the constitution). The immunity cannot stop a person from suing the Centre or State concerned.
<p>Article 361(2)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No criminal proceedings whatsoever shall be instituted or continued against the President, or the Governor of a State, in any court during his term of office.
<p>Article 361(3)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No process for the arrest or imprisonment of the President, or the Governor of a State, shall be issued from any court during his term of office.
<p>Article 361(4)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No civil proceedings against the President, or the Governor of a State, shall be instituted during his term of office in any court in respect of any act done or purporting to be done by him in his personal capacity, until the expiration of two months next after notice in writing has been delivered to the President or the Governor.

Arguments Against Immunity under Article 361

- Violation of Citizens' Fundamental Rights:** It is often argued that the blanket immunity under Article 361(2) should not cover illegal acts that violate fundamental rights of individuals.
- Hindrance to Justice:** The immunity postpones investigation against a sitting Governor or President, affecting the integrity of evidence and trial process, leading to a denial of timely justice for victims.
- Undermines Equality Before Law:** Granting immunity to the President and Governor creates an exception, undermining the fundamental principle of equality before law.
- Perception of privilege:** It can create a perception that those in high office are above the law, eroding public trust in the democratic system.

- **Encourages impunity:** It may embolden those in power to act without accountability, fear of consequences, potentially leading to abuse of office.
- **Immunity to Official Duties:** There is a growing debate that immunity should be limited to the official duties of the Governor or President.

Arguments Supporting Immunity under Article 361 of the Constitution

- **Maintaining Independence:** The immunity is designed to protect the highest constitutional authorities of the country and states from frivolous prosecutions that could hinder their ability to perform their constitutional responsibilities.
- **Preventing Misuse of Legal Process:** The immunity is intended to protect them from being dragged into politically motivated legal disputes, ensuring they are not constantly distracted from their official duties by court cases.
- **Upholding Separation of Powers:** The immunity helps maintain a balance of power between the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government.
- **Ensuring Continuity in Governance:** The immunity provides stability and continuity in governance by ensuring protection to the governor and president.

Previous Supreme Court Judgement

- In *Dr SC Barot and Anr vs. Hari Vinayak Pataskar (1961)*, a distinction was made between the Governor's official and personal conduct by the Supreme Court.
- The Supreme Court, in *Rameshwar Prasad vs. Union of India (2006)*, had interpreted that 'civil immunity' under Article 361(4) did not take away the power of citizens to challenge the actions of the President or Governors on

the ground of 'malafides'.

- The Madhya Pradesh High Court ruling in *Ram Naresh vs State of Madhya Pradesh (2015)* held that the immunity would not impair the police's powers to investigate an offense, which included recording the Governor's statement.
- In *State vs. Kalyan Singh (2017)* case concerning the Babri Masjid demolition, the Supreme Court ruled that then-Rajasthan Governor Kalyan Singh was entitled to immunity under Article 361 as long as he remained in office.
 - The court also stated that criminal proceedings could only commence after he ceased to be Governor.

These judgements collectively illustrate that while the President and Governors enjoy significant immunities under the Constitution, these immunities are not absolute and are subject to judicial scrutiny to ensure adherence to constitutional principles and the rule of law.

The ongoing debate on executive immunity in India highlights the tension between the office of the Governor and opposition-ruled state governments. The Supreme Court's examination of this issue could establish important precedents for interpreting constitutional immunity and safeguarding individual rights against potential abuses of power.

Q. Examine the arguments for and against blanket criminal immunity provided to the Governor under Article 361 of the Indian Constitution.

(150 Words / 10 Marks)

Key takeaways from the Economic Survey 2023-24

The Economic Survey 2023-24, presented by the Union Minister for Finance and Corporate Affairs, highlights a realistic view of the challenges to India's economic growth. Despite a GDP growth of over 8% in FY 2023-24, the survey projects a lower growth rate of 6.5% to 7% for FY 2024-25.

What is the Economic Survey?

- It is a **detailed report** of the **state of the national economy** for the year that is coming to a close (2023-24) with forecasts of the upcoming financial year (2024-25).
- It is **prepared by the Economic Division of the Department of Economic Affairs**, Ministry of Finance.
- It is prepared under the **guidance of the chief economic adviser (CEA)** and is **approved** by the **finance minister**.
- The **assessment** and **recommendations** in the Survey are **not binding** on the government.
- The **first Economic Survey** was presented for **1950-51** and until 1964, it was presented along with the budget.
- Now the **economic survey** is **presented just a day before the Budget**.

Key Highlights

- **Growth Projection:** GDP growth is projected at **6.5–7 %** for **FY25** which is in line with estimates from global agencies (IMF) but slightly lower than the RBI's forecast of 7.2%.
- **Inflation Rate:** Retail inflation decreased to 5.4% in FY24, down from 6.7% in FY23, due to effective policy responses amidst both global and domestic challenges.
- **Foreign Direct Investment (FDI):** FDI remained resilient, despite a slight

decline in new capital inflows to USD 45.8 billion in FY24 from USD 47.6 billion in FY23, reflecting broader global economic trends.

- **Sectoral Growth:** Services sector grew by 7.6 % in FY24, while the agriculture sector expanded by 4.18% over the past five years.

Key Challenges

Some key challenges highlighted by the survey are as follows:

- **FDI Scenario:** **Foreign direct investment (FDI)** is **unlikely to grow** in the coming time.
 - **High interest rates** in developed countries have **increased funding costs** and **opportunity costs** for investing in developing nations like India.
 - **India faces competition** from substantial **subsidies** in **developed countries' industrial policies**.
 - **Geopolitical uncertainties** further complicate the investment landscape.
- **China challenge:** India continues to overly rely on China for imports, especially for renewable energy.
 - China continues to dominate the low-skill manufacturing sector that India aims to enter.
- **AI threat:** Although telecommunications and Internet-facilitated business process outsourcing (BPO) have flourished, the next wave of technological evolution could end this trend.
- **Tepid private investment:** Despite government's tax cuts in September 2019 to boost capital formation, the corporate sector's response has been lacking.
 - Between 2020-23 Indian corporate

sector's profit increased nearly four times, but hiring and compensation growth lagged behind.

- **Employment Generation:** India needs to generate an average of nearly 78.5 lakh jobs annually until 2030 in the non-farm sector to cater to the rising workforce.
- **Data deficiency:** Lack of good quality and timely data especially related to employment in various sectors (agriculture, industry, manufacturing services) hinders an objective analysis of the labor market situation.
- **Lifestyle disadvantages:** Social media, screen time, sedentary habits, and unhealthy food can undermine public health and productivity and diminish India's economic potential.

Recommended Solutions

The recommendations made by it to address the challenges:

- **Job creation by the private sector:** The Indian corporate sector which is earning substantial profits should take job creation seriously.
- **Lifestyle changes by the private**

sector: Embracing India's traditional lifestyle, food, and recipes will make commercial sense for Indian businesses, as there is a global market eager to be led rather than just tapped.

- **Farm Sector as the Saviour:** Returning to traditional farming practices and informed policy-making can enhance value addition in agriculture, boost farmers' incomes, create opportunities for food processing and exports, and make the farm sector both appealing and productive for India's urban youth.
- **Removing Regulatory Bottlenecks:** The burden of licensing, inspection, and compliance requirements imposed by all levels of government on businesses should be lessened.
 - The Medium, Small, and Micro Enterprises (MSMEs) particularly need relief from these regulatory burdens.
- **Building State Capacity:** The current need of the economy is not big reforms but diligent, foundational work along with strengthening state capacity to sustain and accelerate India's progress.

India-USA Cultural Property Agreement

Syllabus: GS-II: International Relations

Why In the News?

India and the U.S. recently signed a cultural property agreement aimed at enhancing cooperation to protect cultural heritage of the two countries.

About the Cultural Property Agreements

- Cultural property agreements **prevent the illegal trade of cultural property and simplify the process** by which **looted and stolen antiquities** may be **returned to their country of origin**.
- The Agreement is in line with the **1970 UNESCO Convention** on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property.
- With the signing of this agreement, **India** became the **29th** existing **US bilateral cultural property agreement partners**.
- The **US** has **28 active bilateral cultural property agreements** including with Afghanistan, China, Cambodia, Egypt, Greece, Italy, Jordan and Turkey.

Significance of the Agreement for India

- **Prevention of illicit trafficking:** A large number of antiquities have been smuggled out of India before the ratification of the 1970 UNESCO Convention.
 - Thus, signing of this agreement will help in securing India's rich and diverse cultural heritage and invaluable artifacts.
- **Retrieval of stolen antiquities:** It will facilitate "faster and smoother" returns of stolen or looted antiquities to their rightful owners, India.
 - India has repatriated 358 antiquities since 1976.
- **Aligned with India's foreign policy:** Preservation and protection of the Indian artifacts and cultural heritage has emerged as an integral component of India's foreign policy.
- **Strengthened cooperation:** Both countries will work together to protect their cultural heritage.
 - As many as 262 antiquities were handed over to India by the US on the occasion of the Indian PM's visit to the US.

Other Key Areas of India-US Relation

Background	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • India-U.S. bilateral relations have developed into a "global strategic partnership", based on shared democratic values and increasing convergence of interests on bilateral, regional and global issues.
Defence Cooperation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The US is India's third largest defense supplier after Russia and France. • Important defense agreements between both the countries include <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (2016); • Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (2018); • Industrial Security Agreement (2019); • Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement (2020). • Memorandum of Intent for Defense Innovation Cooperation (2018). • Important bilateral exercises between them include Yudh Abhyas (Army), Vajra Prahar (Special Forces), Malabar (Navy), Cope India (Air Force), and Tiger Triumph (tri-services). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Red Flag, RIMPAC, CUTLASS Express, Sea Dragon and Milan are multilateral exercises in which both the countries participate.

<p>Economic Relations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • USA is India's largest trading partner with bilateral trade in goods and services crossing US\$ 191 billion in 2022. • In 2022 bilateral merchandise trade reached US\$ 133 billion and services trade reached around US\$ 58 billion. • During 2022-23, US was the third largest source of FDI into India accounting for almost 9% of total FDI equity inflows.
<p>Multilateral Cooperation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • India and the US cooperate closely in multilateral organizations and fora, including the United Nations, G20, ASEAN - related fora, IMF, World Bank, Quad, Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity and WTO.
<p>People-to-People ties</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • About 4.4 million Indian Americans reside in the US. • Persons of Indian origin (3.18 million) constitute the third largest Asian ethnic group in the US.

Challenges in USA-India Relations

- **Trade Disputes:** Persistent issues such as tariffs, trade imbalances, and market access have been sources of contention.
 - The US has criticized India's protectionist policies, while India has expressed concerns over US trade barriers and visa restrictions.
- **India-Russia:** India maintains strong historical ties with Russia, including defense cooperation. This creates tensions with the US, which has imposed sanctions on Russia.
- **Defense and Security Cooperation:** While defense cooperation has grown, challenges remain regarding technology transfers, joint development projects, and India's procurement processes.
- **Human Rights and Democratic Values:** Concerns over human rights issues, including religious freedoms and civil liberties in India, have sometimes strained relations.
 - For instance, the US's recent religious freedom report on India noted violent attacks on minority groups.
- **China's Influence:** US has recently revived high-level political interactions with China which is creating further complications.

About the United States of America

- **USA** is a country in **North America** which includes **48 conterminous states** and the **state of Alaska**, and the **island state of Hawaii**.
- The country's 48 conterminous states are bounded by **Canada in the north, Mexico and Gulf of Mexico in the south, Atlantic Ocean in the east and Pacific Ocean in the west**.
 - **USA-Canada** shares the **longest border** in the world.

- The USA is the **fourth largest country** in the world in **terms of area**, after Russia, Canada, and China.
- The country is **home** to the **Great Lakes** which include **Lake Superior, Lake Huron, Lake Michigan, Lake Erie, and Lake Ontario**.



Last year, the Indian PM expressed hope that the India-U.S. friendship would enhance global strength, while US President envisioned it as the defining partnership of the 21st century. For this vision to materialize, both nations must navigate their differences and find common ground, aligning their strategic interests to foster a mutually beneficial relationship. The future of India-U.S. relations depends on their ability to adapt to changing geopolitical realities and work collaboratively on addressing these challenges.

India-BRICS

Syllabus: GS-II: International Organisation

Why in the News?

The BRICS Youth conference was recently held in Ulyanovsk, Russia, bringing together young delegates from BRICS countries.

About BRICS

- BRICS, founded in 2009, Yekaterinburg, Russia is a 10 nation body.
- BRICS is an acronym that stands for **Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa** (Joined in 2010).
- With the **Johannesburg declaration**, 5 nations i.e., **Egypt, Ethiopia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Saudi Arabia** and the **United Arab Emirates** became full members of BRICS from January 1, 2024.
- Initiatives of BRICS includes **New Development Bank (NDB), Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA), BRICS Payment System, Customs Agreements, Remote Sensing Satellite**

Significance of Brics

- **BRICS Composition:** Brics countries include major world powers, such as China, India and countries which are influential on their continent, such as South Africa and Brazil.
- **Global Population Impact:** The expanded group has a combined population of about 45% of the world's population.
- **Economic Influence:** The combined members' economies are worth about 28% of the global economy.
- **Crude Oil Production:** With Iran, Saudi Arabia and UAE as members, Brics countries produce about 44% of the world's crude oil.

- **Challenge to Western Dominance:** BRICS challenges the traditional Western-dominated global economic order and calls for the establishment of a more multipolar world.
- **Focus on the Global South:** Brics promote collaboration, solidarity and strategic partnerships in the "Global South."

Importance of BRICS for India

- **Balanced Geo-Politics:** BRICS provides India with an opportunity to balance its strategic interests between the US and the Russia-China axis.
- **Multilateral Engagement:** BRICS plays an important role in the G20, in shaping global economic policies and promoting financial stability.
- **Economic Cooperation:** BRICS provides India opportunities for enhancing economic cooperation with other major emerging economies.
- **Market Access:** Being a part of BRICS gives India access to a large consumer market.
- **Terrorism:** BRICS provides a platform for India to take further its efforts against terrorism and work within the grouping to take a strong stand against terrorism.
- **Cultural Exchanges:** BRICS also encourages cultural exchanges and people-to-people interactions, allowing India to showcase its rich cultural heritage and traditions.

Challenges for BRICS

- **Divergent Interests:** In context of political systems, economic structures, and development priorities.
- **China's Influence:** The recent expansion of Brics is seen as China's attempt to increase its influence in the region and build its own bloc against the Western powers.

- **Russia's Motive:** Russia, who is currently facing diplomatic isolation, sees BRICS as a part of its fight against the west, helping it to portray its relevance in geopolitics.
- **Anti-Western Bloc:** Moreover, the inclusion of Iran could increase the anti-Western nature of Brics
- **Economic Disparities:** For instance, China has the largest GDP, followed by India, while Brazil, Russia, and South Africa have relatively smaller economies.
- **Different Geopolitical Considerations:** Members can influence their positions on global issues.
- **Institutional challenges:** The NDB has faced challenges in disbursing loans and identifying viable projects. and the CRA, is still in its early stages.
- **Global Economic Challenges:** Like the rise of protectionism, nationalism, and populism in some advanced economies has posed challenges for BRICS.

- **Domestic Challenges:** Its members can divert attention and resources away from BRICS cooperation and hinder the implementation of agreed-upon initiatives.

Way Forward

- Prioritize regular and open dialogue to address divergent interests and perspectives.
- Focus on Economic Cooperation and Trade Facilitation by promoting investment flows, and technology transfer among member countries.
- NDB and CRA should be further strengthened and operationalized effectively.
- BRICS countries should align their positions on global platforms like the UN, to amplify their collective voice on important global issues.

Q. Discuss the role of BRICS in the context of India. What are its current concerns and issues faced by BRICS that must be resolved?

(150 Words / 10 Marks)

Great Nicobar Project

Syllabus: *GS Paper III: Environmental impact assessment*

Why In the News?

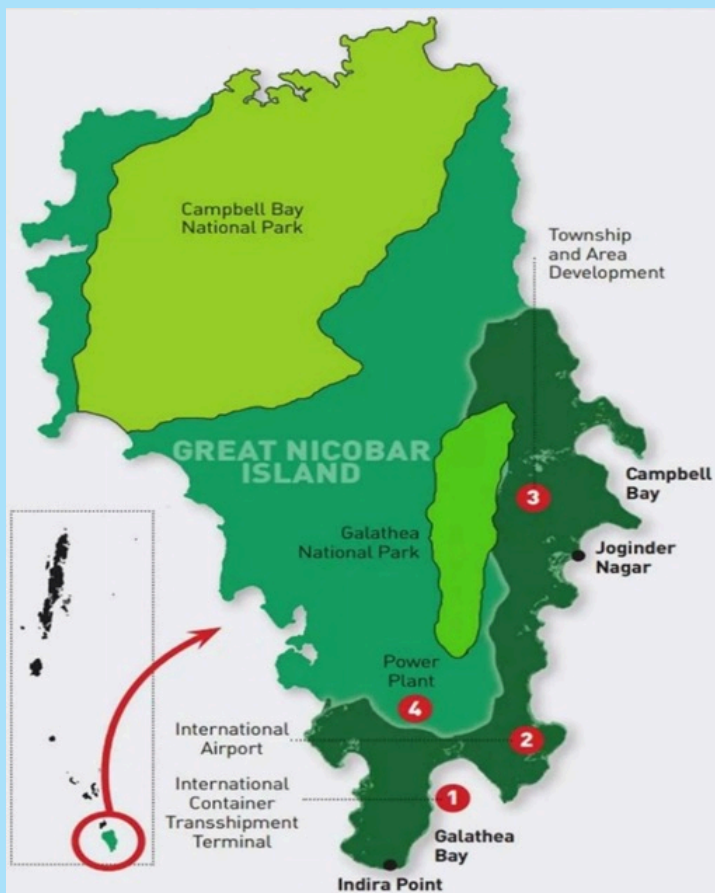
The opposition recently sought a “thorough, impartial” review of the Great Nicobar infrastructure project by the parliamentary panel on environment, which is expected to be constituted soon.

About the Great Nicobar infrastructure project

- **NITI Aayog is piloting the project** and the **Andaman and Nicobar Islands Integrated Development Corporation** is the **project proponent**.
- The project (*‘Holistic Development of Great Nicobar Island’*) aims to develop
 - An **international transshipment port** of 14.2 mTEU cargo capacity at Galathea Bay along the island’s south-eastern coast,
 - An **international airport** to support 4,000 passengers during peak hours,
 - A 450 MVA **gas and solar-based power plant**,
 - An **ecotourism and residential township** of about 160 sq km.

Great Nicobar Island

- Great Nicobar is the **southernmost and largest** of the **Nicobar Islands** of India.
- **Indira Point** on the southern tip of Great Nicobar Island is India ‘s southernmost point.
- The Island is home to **two national parks** and a **biosphere reserve**.
 - *Great Nicobar Biosphere Reserve.*
 - *Campbell Bay National Park on the northern part of the island*
 - *Galathea National Park in the southern interior.*
- The Great Nicobar Island has **tropical wet evergreen forests**, mountain ranges and coastal plains.
- The **leatherback sea turtle** is the island ‘s **flagship species**.
- The island is inhabited by the **Shompen** and **Nicobarese** tribal peoples, along with ex-servicemen from Punjab, Maharashtra, and Andhra Pradesh who were settled on the island in the 1970s.



Issues Related to the Project

- **Quick Environmental Clearance:** The Great Nicobar Project, spanning over 130 square km of pristine forest, received quick approvals, clearances, exemptions and de-notifications.
- **Environmental cost:** The Island has a population of about 8,000. Once completed, the project is expected to attract more than 3 lakh people.
 - Thus, the **ecological and environmental cost of this urbanization project** in a marine and terrestrial biodiverse area appears to **not** have been **considered seriously**.
- **Large scale deforestation:** The proposed tree felling for development in the project area would impact this unique ecosystem of the Great Nicobar Island.
 - Although 'compensatory afforestation' will be carried out in Haryana and Madhya Pradesh but such far field afforestation in areas with no ecological comparison, makes no sense.
- **Ecocide:** The island, which is spread over 900 sq km, was declared a biosphere reserve in 1989 and included in the UNESCO's Man and Biosphere Programme in 2013. More than three-fourth of it is designated as a tribal reserve.
 - Thus, the agenda to **convert** this pristine **island** into a **commercial hub** is an '**ecocide**'.
- **Destroying coral reefs:** The project will end up destroying vast stretches of coral reefs.
 - Although 'translocation' of these organisms was recommended. However **transplanted corals do not have a high survival rate** and are **susceptible to bleaching**.
- **Impact on indigenous people:** This project will affect the rights of vulnerable tribal communities, such as the Nicobarese and Shompen, who have been **living in these areas for thousands of years** and **depend on the forests for survival**.
- **Tectonic instability:** The coastline of the Great Nicobar Island sank several metres during the 2004 Indian Ocean earthquake. The island topography is slowly regaining its original height.
 - The repeated up and down movement makes the Great Nicobar Island unsuitable to be developed as an urban port city.

Growth in terms of GDP makes no sense if it causes irretrievable loss to nature. Thus, it is high time that the vision of the 'green developmental model' becomes the guiding principle for future economic activities.

Q. Discuss with examples the environmental implications of the "Holistic Development of Great Nicobar Island" project

(150 Words/10 Marks)

Charaideo Moidams

Syllabus: GS Paper V: Assam Culture

Why In the News?

The Charaideo Moidams, officially inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List at the ongoing 46th session of the World Heritage Committee being held in New Delhi, become the 43rd property from India to be included in the prestigious index.

About Moidams

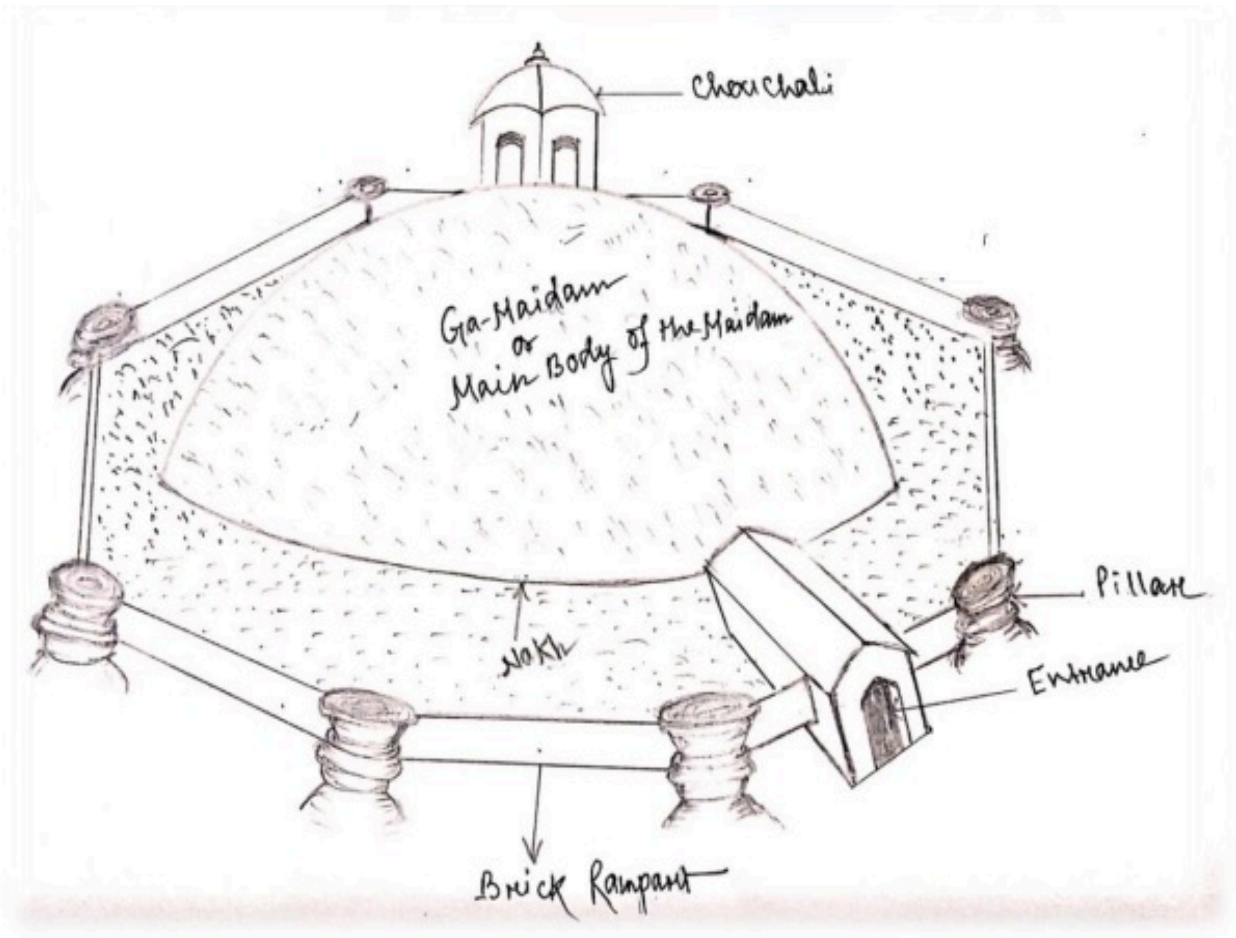
- Moidams are a unique **700-year-old mound-burial system** of the **Ahom dynasty's kings, Queens and Nobles**.
- The word Moidam is derived from the Tai word **Phrang-Mai-Dam** or **Mai-Tam**.
 - Phrang-Mai means to put into the grave or to bury and Dam means the spirit of the Dead.
- Though **Moidams** are **found** in all the districts of **upper Assam, Charaideo, exclusively contains moidams of Ahom royals**.
 - The **maidams** of **Burhagohains** (Prime Ministers) were constructed on the **south bank** of the river **Dikhou**.
 - The **maidams** of **Bargohains** (Ministers) were allowed on the **bank** of the river **Dichang**.
- The first king of the Ahoms Chau-lung Siu-ka-pha was buried at Charaideo after his death.
- Since then, it became a norm to bury the Tai-Ahom Kings, Queens and Princes and Princesses at Charaideo.

Structure of Moidams

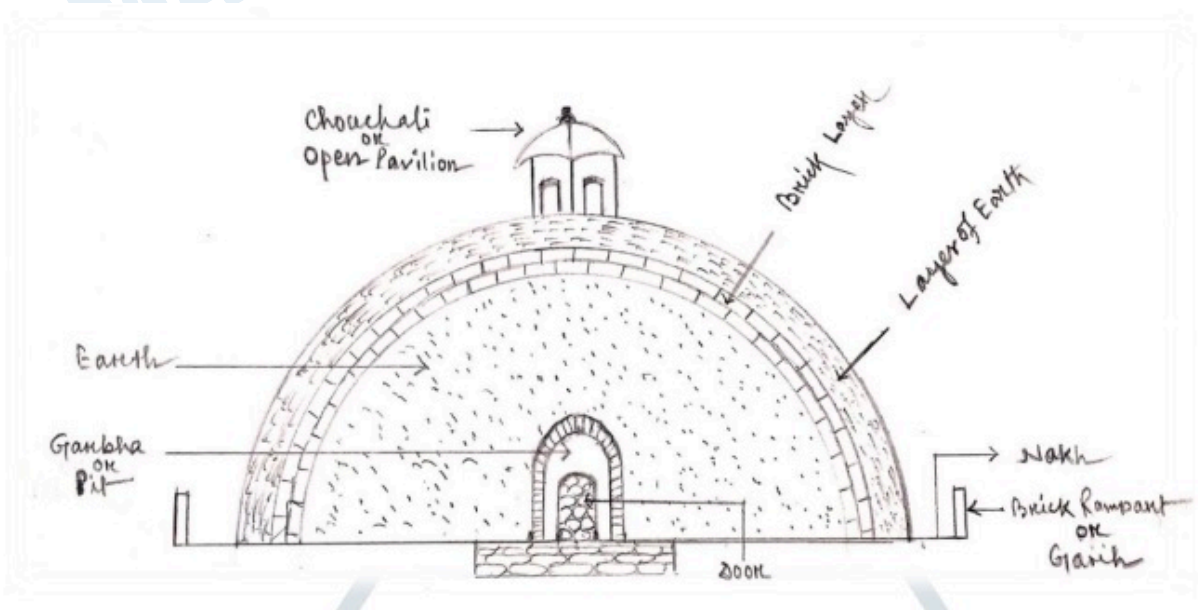
- The **construction** of that **Moidam** could be **assigned** to the **first half** of the **18th**

century CE.

- Externally **Moidams** are **hemispherical** in shape and are of **various sizes**, reflecting the power and stature of the individual buried within.
- A typical Moidam consists of **three major features**,
 - A vault of Chamber,
 - A hemispherical earthen mound covering the chamber with a brick structure (Chaw-chali)
 - A low octagonal wall called **garh**, surrounds the mound with one entrance on its west along with small pillars in each corner.
- Between the garh and base of the maidam, a line of bricks was made called **nakh**.
- However, the smaller Maidams did not have all the above features.
- Earlier the **vaults** were **made** of solid **wooden poles** and **beams**.
- Probably from the time of king Rudra Singha (CE 1696-1714), **wooden vaults** were **replaced** with **stone** and **brick vaults**.
- Inside the vault, the mortal remains of the dead were kept, after observing the rituals.
- The **Ahom kings** used to be **buried along** with **items** they **needed** for the **"afterlife"**, as well as attendants living or dead, horses, livestock and even their wives.
 - The **practice of burying alive** was **banned** by **King Rudra Singha**.



Outside Elevation of a Mairdam or Burial mound of the Ahoms



Customs & Traditions Associated with Moidams

- As per custom, only the people from the **ghraphalia and likhurakhan/Lukhukhans khel** were permitted to bury the bodies of Kings and Queens.
 - Khel were a group of people assigned to do specific jobs and every khel consisted of one to five thousand people.
- The **coffin** (Rung-dang) was **carried** to the burial ground in **Kekora dola** (palanquin) **only by the people** from **ghraphalia and likhurakhan khel**.
 - **Coffin** was **made** of a specific type of **timber** called **Uriam** (Bescoffia javanica).
- The vault under the hemispherical earthen mound known as **kareng-rungdang** (coffin), is where the coffin was placed in **east-west direction**.
- **Only the Lukhukhans** were **allowed to enter kareng-rung-dang** and after placing the body they sealed the door of the vault with boulders in clay mortar.
- At Charaideo, there was a **specific road to carry the dead bodies** known as **Sania-ali** and a **specific tank** for the **ritualistic baths** of the death bodies, known as **Sa-Dhua-Pukhuri**
 - Sa means dead body, nia means carry and ali means Path or road.
 - Sa means dead body, dhua means bath and pukhuri means tanks.

Maintenance of the Moidams

- The Ahom kings appointed a special officer, **Changrung Phukan** for the construction and maintenance of all the civil works including Royal Moidams.
 - **Changrung Phukan** was **one** of the **nine Phukans** of the highest rank.
- Special officers, called the **Moidam**

Phukans and the guard group, known as the **Moidamiya** were appointed to protect and maintain the Moidams.

- Being famous **treasure troves**, the **Moidams attracted many plunderers** from Mughal to the British and even the locals.

Significance of Moidams

- The **Ahoms** built a number of **secular and religious architectural activities** in their reign and Moidams are one of them.
- **No other funerary structures** found in other parts of the **country** can be **compared with them**.
- They are quite **distinct** in their **style and architecture** and are **reminiscent** of their **foreign origin**.
- Due to its similarity with that of the ancient Egyptians burial practices the Charaideo moidams were given the moniker of **"Pyramids of Assam."**
- These moidams are also a **major tourist attraction**.
 - There are over 150 moidams in the region, only 30 are protected by the Archaeological Survey of India with many in a state of disrepair.
- Nevertheless, this **burial system is still practiced** by the **priestly sections** of the **Ahoms** i.e. Mo-chai, Mo-hung and Moplang and the Chao-dang (Royal bodyguards) clan.

Significance of Inclusion of Moidams in the list of World Heritage Sites (WHS)

- **Enhanced Protection:** Being designated as a WHS would bring international attention to the Moidams, leading to increased efforts for their preservation and conservation.
- **Funding and Resources:** The site would become eligible for financial and technical support from UNESCO and

other international bodies, aiding in the maintenance and restoration of the structures.

- **Global Recognition:** The Moidams would gain global recognition as an important cultural and historical site, showcasing the rich heritage of the Ahom dynasty.
- **Cultural Pride:** This recognition would boost local and national pride, fostering a greater appreciation for the region's

history and traditions.

- **Increased Tourism:** It will lead to a significant increase in tourism, bringing more visitors to Assam and boosting the local economy.
- **Global Partnerships:** It would facilitate collaborations with international organizations, experts, and other heritage sites, fostering a global exchange of knowledge and best practices.

About Charaideo

- The word Charaideo has been derived from three Tai Ahom words, **Che-Rai-Doi**.
 - “Che” means city or town, “Rai” means “to shine” and “Doi” means hill. In short, **Charaideo means, “a shining town situated on a hilltop.”**
- Charaideo is considered to be the **first capital city** established in 1253 AD by king Sukaphaa.
- Throughout the Ahom rule, it remained a symbolic and ritual centre of power, due to its significance in the dynasty’s founding.

World Heritage site in Northeast India

- Moidams are the first World Heritage site in the category of cultural heritage in the northeast.
- Other WHS of northeast India includes:
 - Kaziranga National Park and Manas National Park of Assam
 - Khangchendzonga National Park in Sikkim

Q. Recently the 'Charaideo Moidams' were inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List. Examine the significance of the UNESCO World Heritage tag for the 'Charaideo Moidams.'
(150words/ 10 marks)

Antibiotic Resistance

Syllabus: *GS-III: Bio-technology*

Why In the News?

Antibiotic resistance has emerged as one of the world's top public health challenges in recent times.

About Antibiotic Resistance

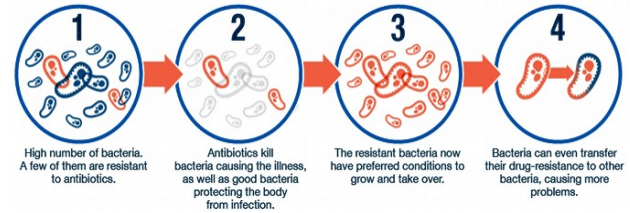
- **Antibiotics** are medicines used to **prevent** and **treat bacterial infections**.
- **Antibiotic resistance** occurs when **bacteria change in response** to the use of **these medicines**.
- As per WHO, **Antibiotic resistance** has emerged as one of the **biggest threats** to global health, food security, and development in today's world.
- Antibiotic resistance **can affect anyone**, of any age, in any region.
- It **occurs naturally**, but **overuse** and **misuse** of **antibiotics** in humans and animals is **accelerating the process**.
- A growing number of infections – such as pneumonia, tuberculosis, gonorrhoea, and salmonellosis – are becoming harder to treat as the antibiotics used to treat them become less effective.

Impact of Antibiotic Resistance

- After the **introduction of antibiotics** in the **mid-20th century**, **deaths** due to **infections dropped** from over **50% to 10-15%**.
 - However as per experts the threat of **antibiotic resistance** could **take us back in time** to when even simple infections were deadly.
- A study in 2019 found more than **1 million people** a year died from **infections** linked to **microbes** that are

resistant to antibiotics (more than the deaths due to malaria or HIV/AIDS).

How does antibiotic resistance occur?



How bacteria evade antibiotics?

- **Antibiotics** work by **binding** to a specific **target protein** on a **bacteria**, then **entering** to **kill it** from the inside.
 - For instance, Penicillin weakens the bacterial cell wall, causing the cell to disintegrate.
- Followings are the ways by which bacteria evade antibiotics:
 - **By mutations** that allow them to stop drugs from binding to bacteria.
 - **By producing proteins** that inactivate or modify the antibiotic, so it no longer binds to the bacteria.
 - The **target protein is mutated** so the antibiotic can no longer bind to it.
 - Worst of all is when **bacteria evolve** many of these **mechanisms** in backup, so even if one resistance is overcome, another might fill the gap.
- **Antibiotic resistance** will always be there as it's the **nature of evolution** by natural selection that means bacteria will always find ways to evade antibiotics.
- Experts are however, optimistic to find ways to limit antibiotic resistance in the next decades, at least to stop the issue from growing into a bigger crisis.

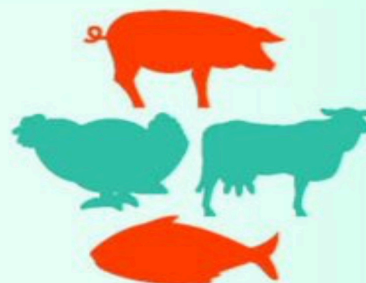
CAUSES OF ANTIBIOTIC RESISTANCE



Over-prescribing
of antibiotics



Patients
not taking
antibiotics as
prescribed



Unnecessary
antibiotics used
in agriculture



Poor infection
control in hospitals
and clinics



Poor hygiene
and sanitation
practices



Lack of rapid
laboratory tests

Way to Combat Antibiotic resistance

- **Modify existing antibiotics:** So that they overcome resistance.
- For instance, Penicillin and cephalosporin antibiotics have undergone many modifications to improve their drug-like properties and overcome the issue of resistance.
- **Develop new antibiotics:** This approach hasn't been of much success in recent decades as the last genuinely new chemical structure that resulted in a drug was discovered in the mid-1980s.

- **Harnessing Technology:** Scientists can now utilize drug discovery technologies, like, computational machine learning approaches to screen drugs in silico, and methods to screen many different combinations of compounds for antibiotic effects.

- "In silico" refers to experiments performed via computer simulation.

Challenges

- The **ability to modify old antibiotics is not infinite**. It's more of a **delaying tactic** than fundamentally fixing the core issue of antibiotic resistance.

- There are chances that the **modified version** might give **diminishing returns**.
- The new compounds might develop **poor drug-like properties or toxicities** that make them unsuitable.
- **Antibiotic resistance develops quickly** whereas antimicrobials — the basis of antibiotic drugs — are developed slowly.
- Overcoming antibiotic resistance will **require tremendous international effort** dedicated to the problem, which is missing in current times.
- **Lack of commercialization** of drug development is another issue related to drug development.

Way Forward

- **Stricter regulation on antibiotics** so their use is limited to situations when they are strictly necessary.
- **Limiting the use of antibiotics in agriculture** would also have a major impact, as per experts.
- **A multi-stakeholder approach**, involving private industry, philanthropic groups and citizen

activists **should be adopted**.

- Private pharmaceutical industries must **distribute drugs in a responsible manner**.
- Philanthropic charities must fund the **development of new antibiotics**, while **citizen activists must drive awareness**.
- The only way to postpone resistance is through improved hygiene and vaccinations. As stated by WHO, **make infection prevention and hand hygiene a national policy priority**.
- **Developing a robust national action plan** to tackle antibiotic resistance is needed.
- Need **robust investment** from the Government and private sector that can fund and sustain drug discovery and development.

Q. “Antibiotic resistance is considered one of the most significant challenges the world faces today.” Comment. Discuss various causes of antibiotic resistance and suggest some measures to overcome it.

(250 Words/ 15 Marks)

AWARDS

1. Olympic Order

- **Abhinav Bindra**, an Indian Olympic gold medallist, has been awarded the Olympic Order by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) for his outstanding services to the Olympic Movement.
- **Abhinav Bindra** is **India's first** and one of the two **individual Olympic gold medalists** (Beijing Olympics).
 - The other **individual Olympic gold medalist** of India is Neeraj Chopra, who became the **first Indian track and field athlete** to win **Olympic gold medal**. (Tokyo Olympics).
- The **Olympic Order** is the **highest award** of the **IOC**, given for **distinguished contributions** to the Olympic Movement.
- It is awarded to **recognize an individual** who has **illustrated the Olympic ideal** through action, achieved remarkable merit in the sporting world, or rendered outstanding services to the Olympic cause.

DEFENCE

2. Phase-II Ballistic Missile Defence System

- DRDO recently successfully flight-tested the Phase-II Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD) system.
- The test demonstrated the **nation's indigenous capability** to **defend against ballistic missiles** of 5,000 km range.
- It is a **two Stage solid propelled ground launched missile system** meant for neutralizing enemy ballistic missile threats in the altitude bracket of endo to low exo-atmospheric regions.
- A number of state-of-the-art indigenous technologies developed by various DRDO laboratories have been

incorporated in the missile system.

- **Phase 1** of the **BMD**, which can intercept ballistic missiles with a range of 2,000 km, has already been **deployed**.

3. INS Brahmaputra

- Recently a devastating fire erupted on the INS Brahmaputra, inflicting significant damage and causing the vessel to list.
- The INS Brahmaputra is the **first indigenously built Brahmaputra-class guided missile frigate**.
- It was **built by state-run Garden Reach Shipbuilders & Engineers Limited** in Kolkata, and it was **commissioned** into the Navy in **2000**.
 - The **INS Beas** and **INS Betwa** are two other warships in this class.
- The INS Brahmaputra has a **length of 125 metres, width of 14.4 metres**, and **displacement of 5,300 tonnes**, and is capable of **speeds in excess of 27 knots** (50 km/h).
- It is **fitted with medium-range, close-range, anti-aircraft guns, surface-to-surface, surface-to-air missiles, and torpedo launchers**.
- The ship has a **wide array of sensors**, and is capable of **operating Seaking and Chetak helicopters**.
- It can perform a variety of roles including coastal and offshore patrolling, monitoring of sea lines of communication, maritime diplomacy, counter-terrorism and anti-piracy operations.

EXERCISES

4. Exercise KHAAN QUEST

- The 21st edition of Khaan Quest, a **multinational peacekeeping exercise**, recently **commenced** in the **Mongolian**

capital of Ulaanbaatar.

- The **Indian Army** is taking **part** in the **exercise**.
- It is an **annual, multinational** and **multicomponent training exercise** designed to **promote regional peace** and **security**.
- It features both **command post** and **field training exercises** focused on reinforcing UN standards across the forces and unilateral understanding.
- The **exercise brings together military forces** from around the world to **collaborate** and **enhance** their **peacekeeping capabilities**.
- The exercise facilitates developing interoperability, bonhomie and camaraderie between soldiers of the participating countries.

IMPORTANT DAYS

5. Kargil Vijay Diwas

- India recently celebrated the 25th **Kargil Vijay Diwas** on **26 July**.
- On this day in 1999 the Kargil war was officially concluded.
- Kargil Vijay Diwas, has been named after the success of **Operation Vijay**, a significant **military victory** over **Pakistan** during the **kargil war**.
- The day is also **observed** to **remember** the **martyrs** who laid their lives for the country in the Kargil war.

SCHEMES

6. Pradhan Mantri Cha Shramik Protsahan Yojana

- The scheme "Pradhan Mantri Cha Shramik Protsahan Yojana" (PMCSPY)" was recently announced in the Central budget 2024-25.
- The scheme is devised for the **welfare of tea workers**, especially women and

their children in tea growing areas, including Assam and West Bengal.

- The scheme aimed at making **need-based interventions in tea garden areas** for inter alia strengthening provisions of education and health services to the tea workers.
- A budget of Rs **1,000 crore** has been allocated for this scheme to improve education and healthcare services in tea gardens.
- This scheme will be **implemented** during the **fiscal years 2024-25** and **2025-26**.

SPORTS

8. Paris Olympics 2024: India's medallists

Athlete	Medal	Event
Manu Bhaker	Bronze	Women's 10m air pistol shooting
Manu Bhaker-Sarabjot Singht	Bronze	Mixed team 10m air pistol shooting
Swapnil Kusale	Bronze	50m Rifle 3 Positions

- **Manu Bhaker** became the **first Indian athlete** since Independence to **win 2 medals** in the **same Olympics** since Norman Pritchard achieved that feat for India in the 1900 edition.
- **Manu Bhaker** was also the **first Indian** to claim an **Olympic medal** in shooting event.
- **Swapnil Kusale** is the **first Indian shooter** to **win an Olympic medal** in the **men's 50m rifle 3 positions event**.

MISCELLANEOUS

7. U-WIN

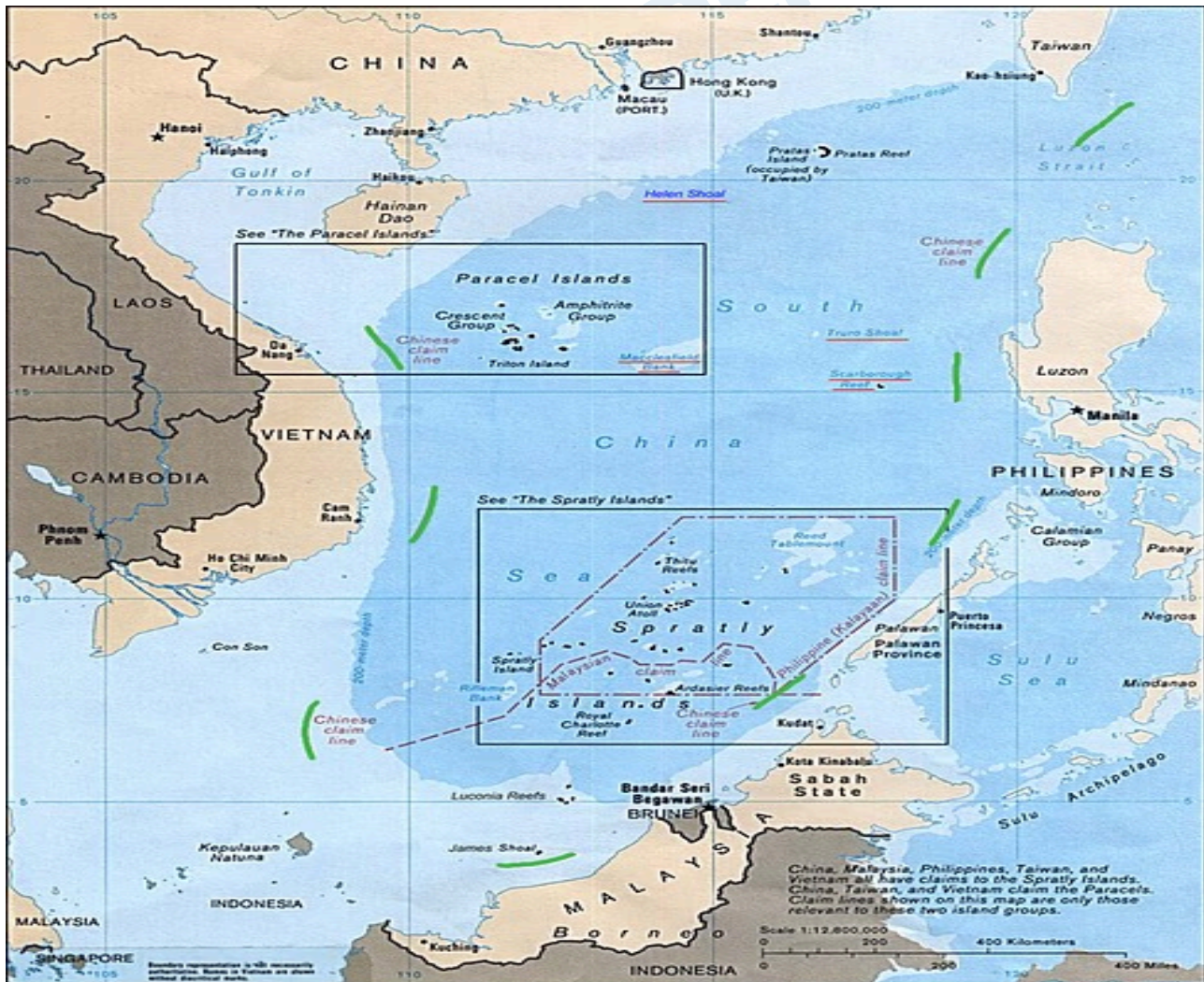
- The government recently rollout the U-WIN, an online vaccine management

portal for childhood vaccination — similar to CoWIN.

- U-WIN is in **pilot mode** across **all states** and **Union Territories, except for West Bengal**.
- The U-WIN is going to be the single source of information for immunisation services which will record pregnancy details and outcome, newborn registration and immunisation at birth.
- It will **update vaccination status, and delivery outcome**, among others, on real time
- U-win will ensure timely administration of vaccine doses by digitally recording every vaccination event under the Universal Immunization Programme among all pregnant women and children aged 0-5 years.

9. Nine-dash Line

- The fresh salami-slicing tactics of China may spark tensions in the South China Sea between Beijing and neighbours in and around the nine-dash line.
- The 'nine-dash line' is one of many names for a controversial **Chinese maritime claim** in the **South China Sea**.
- The nine-dash line, also known as the **eleven-dash line**, is a **U-shaped, dotted line** with which **China** stakes **claim to 90% of South China**.
- This line was **adopted** from **Chinese maps** in the **1940s**, and represents Beijing's claim over the sea and all the land features that are contained within the line.



- **Nine-Dash Line**, have been largely rejected by international tribunals.

10. Agarwood

- India has successfully prevented inclusion of *Aquilaria malaccensis* (agarwood) in the Review of Significant Trade (RST) of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES).
 - CITES notified a new export quota for *Aquilaria malaccensis* from India, effective April 2024.
- Agarwood is a **highly valuable and aromatic resinous wood, cultivated** in different parts of India, especially in the **northeastern states** of Assam, Manipur, Nagaland, and Tripura.
- Agarwood is utilized in numerous applications such as in the **aroma industry, in medicine preparations, preparations of air fresheners and purifiers.**
- The **essential oil** extracted from agarwood has **anti-inflammatory, anti-rheumatic, analgesic and anti-oxidant properties.**
- Conservation Status:
 - **IUCN Status:** Listed as Critically Endangered.
 - **CITES:** Listed in Appendix II in 1995 based on India's proposal at CoP9 in 1994.

DISTRICT AT A GLANCE

Geography of Chirang

- Chirang District is an administrative district in the **Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR)** of Assam.
 - BTR is **an autonomous territory in Assam.**
 - **Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC)** was created on **10th**

February, 2003 comprising four districts viz. **Kokrajhar, Chirang, Baska, Udalguri.**

- It is situated on the **northern bank** of the **River Brahmaputra.**
- **Geographic Area:** 1468.42 sq. km
- **Density of Population:** 251/sq. Km
- **District Boundaries:**
 - **North-**Bhutan
 - **East-** Baksa District
 - **West-** Kokrajhar District
 - **South-** Bongaigaon District
- Number of perennial streams flow through the district from north to south and join the Brahmaputra River.
- The major streams that drain the area are **Champabati, Ai, Buri Ai, Manas, Kanamkara** and **Arang Rivers.**

History of Chirang

- It was **carved out** of the districts of **kokrajhar, bongaigaon** and **barpeta**, with **Kajalgaon** being the **district headquarter.**
 - The district was created on 30 October 2003, under the Sixth Schedule.
- The name Chirang is a **Garo word** which means **water wealth**, as **chi** means **water** and **rang** symbolizes **wealth.**

Places of Interest

- **Manas National park:** Declared as a National park in 1990, the Manas National park is located at Himalayan foothills. It is one of the first reserves included in the tiger reserve network under project tiger in 1973.
 - The largest number of protected species of India including tiger, leopard, civet, elephants, buffalo, pygmy hog, golden langoor, Assam

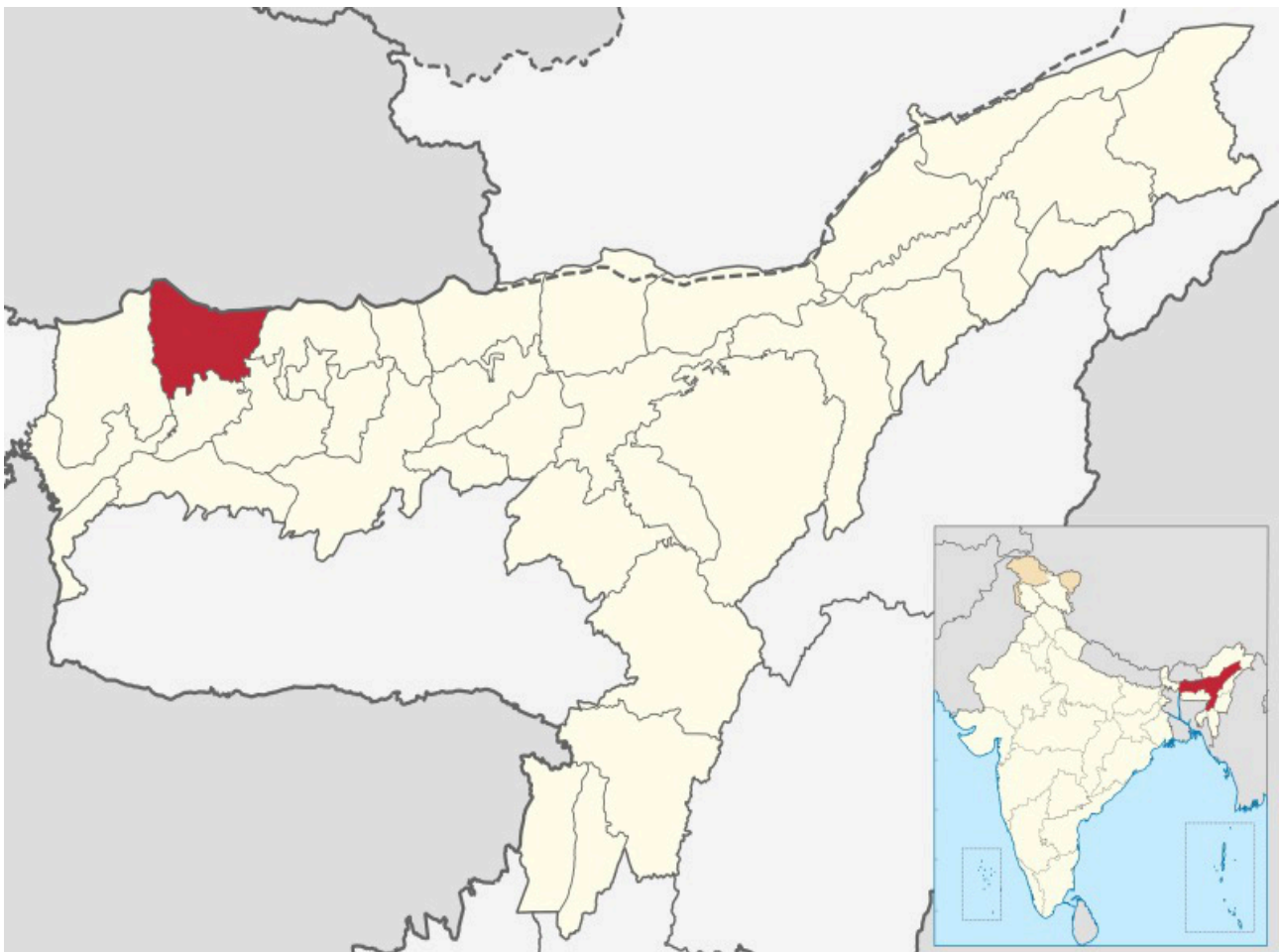
roof turtle, and the Bengal florican.

- This park is included as a site of international importance under UNESCO's world heritage convention in 1988 as well as Biosphere Reserve in 1989.
- **Mwnabili Picnic Spot & Eco Tourism:** It is situated at Sadu Mara of Malivita

touching the Bhutan Border under Chirang District.

- **Kalamati:** It is a popular picnic spot located north of Chirang. Kalamati is black soil.

Q. Locate the neighboring districts and country surrounding **Chirang district** in the given map.





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