

Current Affairs of the Day

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5 members of Great Andaman tribe test positive

- Five members of the Great Andamanese tribe, a Particularly Vulnerable Tribal group (PVTG), have tested positive for COVID-19. The Great Andamanese are one of five PVTGs that reside in the Andamans archipelago and this is one of the first cases of COVID-19 infection among the endangered PVTGs of the region.
- The Great Andamanese, who number just 74, speak Jeru among themselves. The five PVTGS residing in Andamans are Great Andamanese, Jarawas, Onges, Shompens and North Sentinelese.
- Meanwhile, the administration has also tested 35 members of the Onge tribe, who reside primarily on the Dugong Creek of the Little Andaman Island. “All the test reports are negative,” Dr. Roy said.
- Emphasising that the administration was taking all efforts to contain the spread of the virus among the PVTGs, he said the administration had shifted the Jarawas to the the west coast of the Jarawa Tribal Reserve. The testing of the Jarawas will start on Friday.
- The Shompen and North Sentinelese, who live in isolation, are difficult to reach out to and contact.

Value Added Information

About ‘Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs)’:

- PVTGs are more vulnerable among the tribal groups.
- They have declining or stagnant population, low level of literacy, pre-agricultural level of technology and are economically backward.
- They generally inhabit remote localities having poor infrastructure and administrative support.

Identification:

- In 1975, the Government of India initiated to identify the most vulnerable tribal groups as a separate category called PVTGs and declared 52 such groups, while in 1993 an additional 23 groups were added to the category, making it a total of 75 PVTGs out of 705 Scheduled Tribes, spread over 18 states and one Union Territory (A&N Islands) in the country (2011 census).

- Among the 75 listed PVTG's the highest number are found in Odisha (13), followed by Andhra Pradesh (12).

Scheme for development of PVTGs:

- The Ministry of Tribal Affairs implements the Scheme of "Development of Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs)" exclusively for them.
- Under the scheme, Conservation-cum-Development (CCD)/Annual Plans are to be prepared by each State/UT for their PVTGs based on their need assessment, which are then appraised and approved by the Project Appraisal Committee of the Ministry.
- Priority is also assigned to PVTGs under the schemes of Special Central Assistance (SCA) to Tribal Sub-Scheme(TSS), Grants under Article 275(1) of the Constitution, Grants-in-aid to Voluntary Organisations working for the welfare of Schedule Tribes and Strengthening of Education among ST Girls in Low Literacy Districts.

The criteria followed for determination of PVTGs are as under:

1. A pre-agriculture level of technology.
2. A stagnant or declining population.
3. Extremely low literacy.
4. A subsistence level of economy.

States can have sub-groups among SC/STs, says court

Supreme Court's observation:

- A five-judge Bench of the Supreme Court on Thursday held that States can sub-classify Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in the Central List to provide preferential treatment to the "weakest of the weak".
- The Constitution Bench, led by Justice Arun Mishra, said reservation has created inequalities within the reserved castes itself.

Struggle within castes:

- There is a "caste struggle" within the reserved class as the benefits of reservation are being usurped by a few, the court pointed out.
- "The million-dollar question is how to trickle down the benefit to the bottom rung. It is clear that caste, occupation, and poverty are interwoven. The State



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cannot be deprived of the power to take care of the qualitative and quantitative difference between different classes... to take ameliorative measures,” Justice Mishra wrote for the Constitution Bench.

2004 judgment:

- With this, the Bench took a contrary view to a **2004 judgment** delivered by another Coordinate Bench of five judges in the E.V. Chinniah case. The Chinniah judgment had held that allowing the States to unilaterally “make a class within a class of members of the Scheduled Castes” would amount to tinkering with the Presidential list.
- Now with two numerically equal Benches of judges holding contrary viewpoints, the issue has been referred to a seven-judge Bench of the court.

Significance:

- Justice Mishra’s judgment is significant as it fully endorses the push to extend the creamy layer concept to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. The judgment records that “once a mortgage always a mortgage” cannot be pressed into service for submitting that once a backward class of citizens, always such a backward class. “Citizens cannot be treated to be socially and educationally backward till perpetuity; those who have come up must be excluded like the creamy layer,” the judgment said.
- He noted that “the entire basket of fruits cannot be given to the mighty at the cost of others under the guise of forming a homogenous class”.
- In his 78-page judgment for the Bench, Justice Mishra said the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in the Central List do not constitute a “homogenous group”.
- The Central List of Scheduled Castes and Tribes is notified by the President under Articles 341 and 342 of the Constitution. The consent of the Parliament is required to exclude or include castes in the List. In short, States cannot unilaterally add or pull out castes from the List.
- However, Justice Mishra disagreed. He reasoned that sub-classifications within the Presidential/Central List does not amount to “tinkering” with it. No caste is excluded from the list.

Russia for concluding fighter, helicopter deals by year-end

- Russia is hopeful of concluding contracts for **MiG-29 and SU-30MKI fighters jets and six Ka-31 helicopters** by year-end, a representative of the Federal Service for Military-Technical Cooperation (FSMTC) said at the ongoing Army 2020 expo in Russia. Deliveries of **S-400 long-range air defence** systems would begin by 2021-end and could not be accelerated further, she stated.
- Russia has already made a commercial offer to India on the MiG-29s and a response is awaited.

DAC nod:

- On July 2, the Defence Acquisition Council (DAC) approved the procurement of 21 MiG-29s for the Indian Air Force (IAF) along with the upgrade of 59 MiG-29s estimated to cost ₹7,418 crore and 12 Su-30 MKI aircraft at an estimated ₹10,730 crore.
- On the S-400 deal, the representative said further acceleration of the delivery of the first batch of S-400s was technically impossible, as there were objective, technology-related stages of production, acceptance and transfer of equipment.

Putin visit to India:

- The deals could see some progress during the visit of Russian President Vladimir Putin to India later this year for the annual bilateral summit, which also coincides with the 20th year of India-Russia strategic partnership.

India can be weapons supplier: PM

- India has the capability to become a reliable weapons supplier to friendly nations and it will consolidate its position as the net security provider in the Indian Ocean region, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Thursday, highlighting Atmanirbharta in defence manufacturing, at a webinar.
- “For the first time, 74% Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in defence is allowed through the automatic route... We are going forward with the process of corporatisation of the Ordnance Factory Board (OFB),” he said

Indigenous tech:

- Listing a series of measures that were recently announced to boost domestic defence manufacturing, he said the aim was to develop new indigenous technologies. Several measures such as simplified licensing field, level playing field and simplifying exports have been taken.
- Mr. Modi pointed out that India had been a major defence importer for many years. Post-Independence, there was lot of capability for defence manufacturing but it was unfortunate that it did not get the attention it desired.
- Chief of the Defence Staff (CDS) Gen. Bipin Rawat said they had started receiving requests from various countries. For instance, radars were very much in demand as well as artillery support systems.
- Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said the corporatisation of the OFB would be done within a year.

Draft policy:

- The government recently issued a draft Defence Production and Export Promotion Policy (DPEPP) 2020 for public feedback with the aim to achieve a manufacturing turnover of \$25 bn or ₹1,75,000 crore, including exports of \$5 bn in aerospace and defence goods and services by 2025.
- Mr. Modi said the government had undertaken reforms in the toughest sectors like Intellectual Property (IP), taxation, insolvency and bankruptcy and even in space and atomic energy. For foreign Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEM) too, producing in India would be the best option.
- On defence infrastructure, he said work was on in the two defence industrial corridors in Uttar Pradesh and Tamil Nadu and a target of ₹20,000 crore investments had been set for the next five years.
- On the 101 items' negative import list announced recently Mr. Modi stated that these items had been reserved for domestic industry and it "will be expanded in future."
- On this, Gen Rawat said that by early next year, they would come out with the second list, where there would be more technologically advanced items.
- The number would be even more than this and the lists were also going to



- “If the aerospace industry can find its feet in India, putting aerospace in the negative list will be a big achievement,” he claimed.

‘Solar tariff in India unlikely to beat Gulf rates’

Analysis by an energy think tank:

- The per unit cost of solar power in India, considered among the cheapest in the world, is unlikely to cost less than what it is in Gulf countries, according to an analysis by an energy think tank. This is primarily due to the lower cost of finance in the countries in the region along with factors such as cheaper land prices.
- Recent record-low tariffs in Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Saudi Arabia and Qatar are the result of the lower cost of U.S. dollar-denominated, long-dated financing, with major tax concessions and other factors driving prices down in the region.
- India and other countries will struggle to secure the same low tariffs discovered in the Gulf auctions.
- It would be extremely difficult for the Indian market to replicate the combination of factors leading to low solar tariffs in the Gulf region.
- The Gulf region has achieved tariffs in the range of U.S. cent 1.35-1.80/kWh, and (outside the Gulf region) Portugal was able to offer a record-low tariff discovery cost of U.S. cent 1.32/kWh at a recent bid at a 700MW solar energy auction on August 24, 2020. (1 cent = ₹0.7 approx.)

Mathematical model:

- India’s tariffs, some of the lowest in the world, are about twice that in the Gulf region or around U.S. cent 3.14-3.25/kWh, the report noted.
- To arrive at their figures, the authors used mathematical modelling and compared two kinds of projects in India that were typical of solar power installations in India and one project in Abu Dhabi as well as expert feedback from industry experts.
- We note the ongoing technological development of solar combined with ever larger factories driving economies of scale means solar tariffs will continue to see 5-10% annual declines over the coming decade, driving ever-stronger competitiveness against incumbent fossil fuel alternatives.