



Current Affairs of the Day

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- Indians concerned about privacy: CJI

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- China pulls back from Finger 4
- Geospatial data policy liberalized
- Leatherback nesting sites could be overrun by Andamans development project.



Indians concerned about privacy: CJJ

News: Chief Justice of India Sharad A. Bobde said Indians have “grave apprehensions” about privacy from Facebook and WhatsApp.

Highlights:

1. We (the Court) are telling you what we heard and read — people think that if A sends a WhatsApp message to B and B to C, the circuit of messages is revealed to Facebook.
2. This is an apprehension of the nation. Privacy is part of our fundamental rights. They [WhatsApp and Facebook] cannot compromise our privacy. They cannot differentiate.
3. The hearing concerned the new privacy policy introduced by WhatsApp. The allegation is that it scraps users’ ‘opt-out policy’.
4. The user would have to, according to the policy, compulsorily consent to share their data with Facebook and its group, the petitioners have alleged.
5. Europe has a special law [General Data Protection Regulations], India doesn’t. As soon as India has a special law, companies will follow. The new privacy policy was applicable to the rest of the world except Europe.
6. The General Data Protection Regulations were followed by probably 20 countries in the world. Allegations of differential treatment being accorded to Indians were unfounded.

China pulls back from Finger 4

News: Chinese troops have started clearing the Finger 4 area on the North bank of the Pangong Tso Lake, and the ongoing disengagement on the north and the south banks of the lake by both sides is likely to be completed within a week, a government official said on Monday.

Highlights:

1. Chinese troops had built up heavy defences and structures between Finger 8 and Finger 4, including fortified gun positions on the ridgelines of Finger 4 overlooking Indian positions. The Indian Army had also set up positions around Finger 4 in end-August 2020.
2. Stating that disengagement is going at a good pace and could be complete by end of this week, the official said it was a huge logistical task to transport all the equipment, the stocking that was done and dismantling the structures that were built as part of the massive build-up by both sides.



3. Once disengagement at Pangong lake is complete, Corps Commander talks would be held within 48 hours, which is likely to happen next week to discuss the next phase which would focus on the friction points at Gogra and Hot Springs.
4. The bigger issue of contention between the two sides would be Depsang, especially as there have been developments there for several years now much before the standoff last year.

Geospatial data policy liberalised

News: In sweeping changes to the country's mapping policy, the government on Monday announced liberalisation of norms governing the acquisition and production of geospatial data, a move to help boost innovation in the sector and create a level playing field for public and private entities.

Highlights:

1. Under the new guidelines, the sector will be deregulated and aspects such as prior approvals for surveying, mapping and building applications based on those have been done away with.
2. For Indian entities, there will be complete deregulation with no prior approvals, security clearances and licences for the acquisition and production of geospatial data and geospatial data services, including maps.
3. The reform will benefit the country's farmers, start-ups, the private sector, the public sector, and research institutions to drive innovations and build scalable solutions.
4. The easing of norms will greatly help in several sectors that were suffering because of non-availability of high-quality maps.
5. The move will unlock tremendous opportunities for the country's start-ups, private sector, public sector, and research institutions, to drive innovations and build scalable solutions. It will also generate employment and accelerate economic growth, he stressed.



Leatherback nesting sites could be overrun by Andamans development project

News: Proposed intensive growth in islands contradicts National Marine Turtle Action Plan released by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.

Highlights:

1. Proposals for tourism and port development in the Andaman and Nicobar (A&N) Islands have conservationists worried over the fate of some of the most important nesting populations of the Giant Leatherback turtle in this part of the Indian Ocean.
2. The largest of the seven species of sea turtles on the planet and also the most long-ranging, Leatherbacks are found in all oceans except the Arctic and the Antarctic.
3. Within the Indian Ocean, they nest only in Indonesia, Sri Lanka and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands and are also listed in Schedule I of India's Wildlife Protection Act, 1972, according to it the highest legal protection. Globally, leatherback status according to IUCN is listed as Vulnerable.
4. Surveys conducted in the A&N Islands over the past three decades have shown that the populations here could be among the most important colonies of the Leatherback globally.
5. There is a concern now, however, that at least three key nesting beaches — two on Little Andaman Island and one on Great Nicobar Island — are under threat due to mega “development” plans announced in recent months.
6. These include NITI Aayog's ambitious tourism vision for Little Andaman and the proposal for a mega-shipment port at Galathea Bay on Great Nicobar Island.

Little Andaman in focus

The Little Andaman plan, which proposes phased growth of tourism on this virtually untouched island, has sought the de-reservation of over 200 sq km of pristine rainforest and also of about 140 sq km of the Onge Tribal Reserve. Two sites where key components of the tourism plan are to be implemented are both Leatherback nesting sites — South Bay along the southern coast of the island and West Bay along its western coast. South Bay is proposed to be part of the “Leisure Zone” where a film city, a residential district and a tourism special economic zone are to come up. West Bay is to be part of West Bay Nature Retreat with theme resorts, underwater resorts, beach hotels and high-end residential villas.



Turtles Conservation:

The roughly 7-km-long beach at West Bay has been the site of ongoing marine turtle research projects. It has thrown up new information on turtles and their behaviour. They can migrate for more than 10000 Km like from India to the African Coast.

Waning protection

For the Leatherback, perhaps even more important is Great Nicobar Island, the southernmost of the A&N group. Large numbers have been recorded nesting here — mainly on the long and wide beaches at the mouth of the Dagmar and Alexandria rivers on the west coast and at the mouth of the Galathea river along its southeastern coast.

The National Marine Turtle Action Plan

1. The plan notes that “India has identified all its important sea turtle nesting habitats as ‘Important Coastal and Marine Biodiversity Areas’ and included them in the Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) – 1”.
2. South Bay and West Bay on Little Andaman and Galathea on Great Nicobar, along with other nesting beaches in the islands, find a specific mention here as “Important Marine Turtle Habitats in India” and the largest Leatherback nesting grounds in India.