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PANDAVULA GUTTA AND RAMGARH CRATER DESIGNATED AS GEO-HERITAGE SITES

THIS ARTICLE COVERS 'DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS' AND THE TOPIC DETAILS OF "PANDAVULA GUTTA AND RAMGARH CRATER DESIGNATED AS GEO-HERITAGE SITES". THIS TOPIC IS RELEVANT IN THE "HISTORY AND CULTURE" SECTION OF THE UPSC CSE EXAM.

WHY IN THE NEWS?

Pandavula Gutta, an ancient geological wonder that precedes the formation of the Himalayan range, has received official recognition as the exclusive Geo-heritage site in Telangana. Similarly, the Rajasthan government has bestowed the designation of a geo-heritage site upon the Ramgarh Crater located in the Baran district.

ABOUT PANDAVULA GUTTA

Pandavula Gutta, a geological marvel in Telangana, isn't just about rocks and stones. It's a portal to the past, brimming with historical significance.

UNVEILING PREHISTORIC LIVES

This site holds immense value for archaeologists and historians with its numerous **prehistoric habitation sites**.

The Palaeolithic **cave paintings adorning the walls**.

These **ancient artworks**, dating back to a time before recorded history, offer a glimpse into the lives of the people who once called this place home.

A CANVAS OF THE PAST

The cave paintings aren't just random doodles. They depict a rich tapestry of the past, **showcasing wildlife like bison, antelope, tigers, and leopards**.

Symbolic shapes and weapons also find their place on the canvas, providing valuable clues about the beliefs and practices of these early inhabitants.

RECOGNITION FOR A TREASURE TROVE

The **Geological Survey of India (GSI)** recently organised a Geo-heritage walk at Pandavula Gutta, highlighting its significance. Pandavula Gutta was officially recognised as a Geo-heritage site, acknowledging its scientific, educational, cultural, and aesthetic value. This recognition ensures the protection and preservation of this irreplaceable window into the past.

ABOUT RAMGARH CRATER

- Ramgarh Crater, situated in **Rajasthan**, was formed approximately **165 million years ago** following a **meteor impact**. Spanning a **diameter of 3 kilometres**, this crater plays a crucial role in providing essential ecosystem services, thereby **contributing significantly to the ecological balance and biodiversity of the region**.
- The significance of Ramgarh Crater extends beyond its geological formation. It holds **immense value for its ecosystem services, biodiversity, as well as cultural and heritage significance for the local communities and society at large**. Recognising its importance, **Ramgarh Crater** has been designated as a Conservation Reserve known as the **Ramgarh Conservation Reserve under the Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972**.
- Moreover, the **presence of Pushkar Talab** within the crater adds to its allure. This lake serves as a **source of both saline and alkaline water**, enhancing the beauty and diversity of the area. Notably, **these lakes** have been officially **recognised as wetlands** under the Wetland (Conservation & Management) Rules, 2017.

GEO-HERITAGE SITES

Geoheritage sites are natural landscapes or geological formations that possess significant scientific, educational, cultural, and aesthetic value. These sites often showcase geological processes, ancient rock formations, fossil remains, or other unique geological features that have developed over millions of years.

SIGNIFICANCE OF GEOHERITAGE SITES

- **Scientific Importance:** Geoheritage sites provide valuable insights into **Earth's geological history**, allowing scientists to study past environments, climate change, and the **evolution of life on our planet**. These sites serve as natural laboratories for research in geology, palaeontology, and environmental science.
- **Educational Value:** Geoheritage sites **offer educational opportunities for students and the public** to learn about Earth's geological processes and natural history. Visiting these sites allows people to appreciate the Earth's dynamic nature and understand the forces that shape our planet.
- **Cultural and Historical Significance:** Many geoheritage sites hold **cultural and historical importance for local communities and indigenous peoples**. These sites may have spiritual or traditional significance, and their preservation helps maintain cultural heritage and traditions.
- **Tourism and Recreation:** Geoheritage sites attract **tourists and outdoor enthusiasts, contributing to local economies** through tourism-related activities such as hiking, birdwatching, and guided tours. By promoting sustainable tourism practices, these sites can support conservation efforts and community development.

MAINS PRACTISE QUESTIONS

- Q1. Analyse the impact of Geo-Heritage sites on tourism and local economies. How do the preservation and promotion of these sites benefit cultural tourism and sustainable development?**

Q2. Explore the connection between Geo-Heritage sites and indigenous cultures. How do indigenous peoples perceive and interact with these sites, and what efforts are made to protect their cultural significance?

Himanshu Mishra

INDIA – BHUTAN BILATERAL MULTIDIMENSIONAL RELATIONS

SOURCE – THE HINDU AND PIB.

GENERAL STUDIES – INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS, INDIA – BHUTAN BILATERAL MULTIDIMENSIONAL RELATIONS, REGIONAL AND GLOBAL GROUPINGS AND AGREEMENTS AFFECTING INDIA'S INTERESTS, FOOD SAFETY AND STANDARDS AUTHORITY OF INDIA, DOKLAM STANDOFF BETWEEN INDIA AND CHINA, SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT.

WHY IN THE NEWS ?



- Tshering Tobgay, who recently took over as the Prime Minister of Bhutan in January 2024 at the invitation of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, paid a five-day maiden official visit to India starting from March 14, 2024.
- The official visit included Bhutan's Prime Minister Tshering Tobgay along with four cabinet ministers as well as senior officials of the Royal Government of Bhutan.
- Apart from this official meeting between the President of India Draupadi Murmu and the Prime Minister of Bhutan Tshering Tobgay, he also held talks with the Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi on bilateral and multidimensional relations.
- After Tshering Tobgay also met Indian External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and other dignitaries from India, she also traveled to Mumbai to meet business leaders to discuss increasing investment from India into Bhutan and the two countries have also visited Also signed agreements.

- The visit proved to be an important and historic moment to strengthen bilateral and multi-dimensional cooperation and address mutual concerns. This official meeting provided an important opportunity to both India and Bhutan to review the progress in their partnership and discuss ways to enhance cooperation.
- This enduring friendship and mutual relationship between India and Bhutan in South Asia serves as a strong foundation for mutual prosperity and regional stability.
- India's Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in the interim budget of 2024 – 25 '**Neighbourhood First Policy**' Bhutan has been provided the largest share of the economic assistance portfolio in line with. An allocation of Rs 2,068 crore has been made to Bhutan in the year 2024 – 25 as compared to the allocation of Rs 2,400 crore in the year 2023 – 24.
- The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) of India has been allocated Rs 22,154 crore by the Finance Ministry of India for the financial year 2024 – 25.



INTRODUCTION TO IMPORTANT FACTS RELATED TO BHUTAN :

- It is situated between India and China and is surrounded by "**land locked 'Bhutan'**" It is an important country of South Asia.
- The area of Bhutan is only 8,394 square kilometers and its population is only 7.7 lakh, which is much smaller than the area and total population of any major district of any state of India, but Bhutan is a sovereign nation.
- Bhutan is a country surrounded by an abundance of mountains and valleys.
- The capital of Bhutan is Thimphu.

- At present, Bhutan has become a democratic country after the first democratic elections were held in Bhutan in the year 2008.
- Despite being a country with a democratic system, the King of Bhutan is the head of that nation.
- official name of bhutan '**Kingdom of Bhutan**' which in Bhutanese language is '**Druk Gyal Khap**' 'which means -'**Land of Thunder Dragon**'.



LONGEST RIVER OF BHUTAN :

- The longest river of Bhutan is Manas River whose length is 376 km. More than.
- The Manas River forms the border between southern Bhutan and India in the Himalayan foothills.

IMPORTANT AREAS OF BILATERAL MULTIDIMENSIONAL RELATIONS BETWEEN INDIA AND BHUTAN:



Following are the important areas of bilateral multi-dimensional relations between India and Bhutan -

BILATERAL FOOD SECURITY COOPERATION BETWEEN INDIA AND BHUTAN :

- The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India and the Food and Drugs Authority of Bhutan have signed a bilateral agreement to cooperate and assist each other in mutual food safety measures.

- This bilateral agreement will make bilateral trade between the two countries easier and convenient by ensuring compliance with food safety standards and reducing the cost of compliance with food safety standards.

PETROLEUM AGREEMENT BETWEEN INDIA AND BHUTAN :

- India and Bhutan have signed an important agreement on the supply of petroleum products to promote economic cooperation and development in the hydrocarbon sector and to ensure reliable and continuous fuel supply from India to Bhutan. The bilateral and multi-dimensional relations between India and China have become even stronger.

SIGNING OF BILATERAL AGREEMENT FOR ENERGY EFFICIENCY AND ITS CONSERVATION :

- India and Bhutan have also signed an MoU to enhance and conserve energy efficiency, which reflects the commitment towards sustainable development within the mutual relations between the two countries.
- This memorandum of understanding According to India aims to assist Bhutan at all levels in enhancing energy efficiency in households in Bhutan, promoting the use of energy efficient appliances in Bhutan and developing standards and labeling schemes.

TO BE OF UTMOST IMPORTANCE FOR REGIONAL SECURITY AND IN RESOLVING THE DOKLAM AREA BORDER DISPUTE :



- This is the first official visit of Bhutanese Prime Minister Tshering Tobgay to India. And it is also linked to the ongoing talks to resolve the border dispute between China. Whose main objective

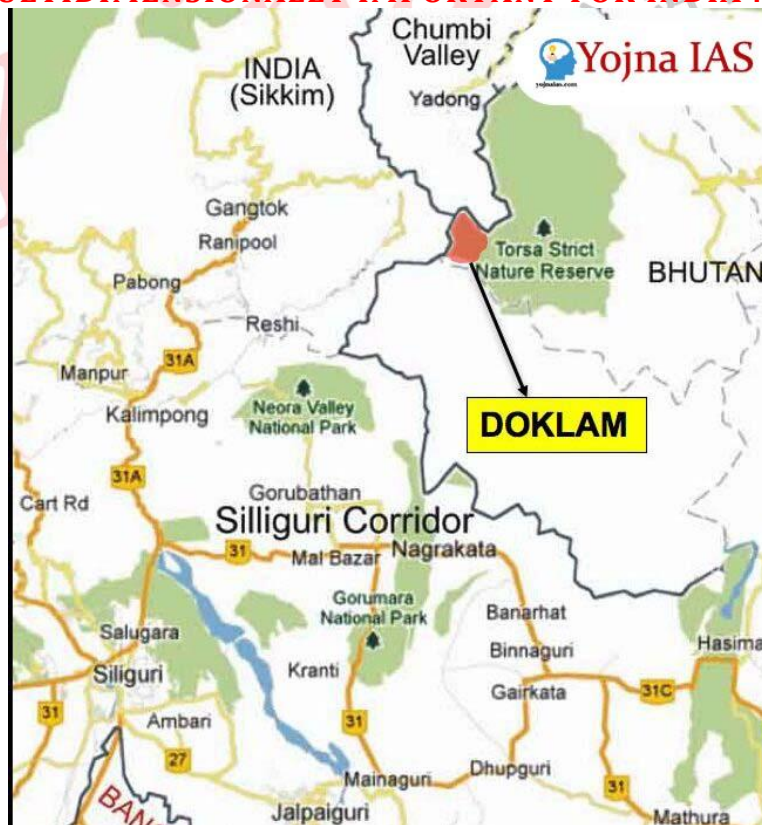
is to establish regional security in South Asia, especially in resolving the border dispute of Doklam area, which is very important.

- China and Bhutan to resolve their mutual border dispute A plan was agreed upon in the month of August 2023.
- This agreement, after the ongoing conflict between India and China that started in 2017 due to China's attempt to build a road in the area associated with the Doklam area, four years later, in the month of October 2021, an agreement was formally signed between the two countries. Was signed.

GELEPHU MINDFULNESS CITY TO BE BHUTAN'S REGIONAL ECONOMIC HUB :

- Having a regional economic center of Bhutan in Gelephu is an important step towards regional development and connectivity of Bhutan.
- Launched by the King of Bhutan in December 2023, the project aims to establish a "Gelephu Mindfulness City" spread over 1,000 square kilometers.
- Unlike traditional financial centers featuring skyscrapers, Gelephu prioritizes sustainable development, focusing on non-polluting industries such as IT, education, hospitality and health care.
- Located at the intersection of India's "Act East Policy" and emerging connectivity initiatives in South-East Asia and the Indo-Pacific region, Gelephu holds a key strategic importance in promoting economic integration and trade facilitation.

BHUTAN BEING MULTIDimensionally Important for India :



ENVIRONMENTAL IMPORTANCE :

- Bhutan is one of the few countries in the world that has pledged to remain carbon-neutral and India has been a major help in helping Bhutan achieve this goal.
- India has provided assistance to Bhutan in areas such as renewable energy, forest conservation and sustainable tourism.

CULTURAL IMPORTANCE BETWEEN INDIA AND BHUTAN :

- Both India and Bhutan are predominantly populated by Buddhists. Therefore, India and Bhutan have an important cultural relationship, both historically and culturally, which mutually strengthens the shared cultures between the two countries.
- India has also provided significant assistance to Bhutan in preserving its cultural heritage.
- Some Bhutanese students have also always been coming to India to pursue higher education.

BHUTAN BEING STRATEGICALLY IMPORTANT FOR INDIA:

- Bhutan shares borders with both India and China and its geographical location makes it a strategically important buffer state or buffer center for India's external border security.
- India has provided significant assistance to Bhutan in developing sectors such as defense, infrastructure and communications, which has helped Bhutan maintain its sovereignty and territorial integrity.
- India has also provided significant assistance to Bhutan in building and maintaining border infrastructure such as roads and bridges to strengthen its defense capabilities and ensure its territorial integrity.
- During the Doklam standoff between India and China in 2017, Bhutan played a key role in allowing Indian troops to enter its territory to oppose Chinese incursions. Therefore, Bhutan is a very important country for India from a strategic and security point of view.

ECONOMICALLY IMPORTANT FOR INDIA :

- India is Bhutan's largest trading partner and Bhutan's major export destination. Both the countries have deep relations both in terms of mutual import and export.
- Bhutan's hydropower potential is an important source of its revenue and India has also provided significant assistance, both technical and economic, in developing Bhutan's hydropower projects.

IMPORTANT CHALLENGES OF MULTIDIMENSIONAL RELATIONS BETWEEN INDIA AND BHUTAN :

INDIA - CHINA BORDER DISPUTE AND DOKLAM STANDOFF :

- There is a 699 kilometer long border line between India and Bhutan, which has remained peaceful till present. However, in recent years there have also been some incidents of incursions by the Chinese army on its border.
- The Doklam standoff at the India-China-Bhutan tri-junction was a major flashpoint of conflict until 2017. Therefore, even in the present times, the increase in any kind of border related dispute may create tension in the relations between India and Bhutan.

CHINA'S INCREASING INFLUENCE INSIDE BHUTAN :

- China's growing presence in Bhutan, especially along the disputed border between Bhutan and China, has raised concerns for India from a strategic perspective.
- India has been Bhutan's closest ally and has played an important role in protecting Bhutan's sovereignty and security.
- Bhutan and China have not yet established any diplomatic or strategic relations, but the two countries have maintained friendly relations with each other. Which may become a matter of concern for India in future.

HYDROPOWER PROJECTS FORM A MAJOR PILLAR OF BHUTAN'S ECONOMY :

- Bhutan's hydropower sector is a major pillar of its economy and India has been a major partner in its development. However, there are concerns over the terms of some hydropower projects in Bhutan, which are considered very favorable to India.
- Indian involvement in this sector in Bhutan has also been opposed by some Bhutanese citizens due to the terms of some hydropower projects being considered very favorable for India.

ISSUES RELATED TO BUSINESS :

- India is Bhutan's largest trading partner, accounting for more than 80% of Bhutan's total imports and exports. Although there are some concerns in Bhutan regarding trade imbalance, Bhutan imports more goods from India than it exports from India.
- Bhutan has always sought greater access to the Indian market for its products, which could help it reduce its trade deficit.

CONCLUSION / SOLUTION :



- Visa-free movement of people between India and Bhutan can strengthen sub-regional cooperation.
- India can help Bhutan boost its economy by investing in infrastructure development, tourism and other sectors. This will not only help Bhutan become self-reliant but will also generate employment opportunities for the people there.
- India and Bhutan can promote cultural exchange programs to promote greater understanding and appreciation of each other's culture, art, music and literature.

- India and Bhutan can strengthen their strategic cooperation to address common security concerns. They can work together to combat terrorism, drug trafficking and other international crimes.
- India – Bhutan relations are characterized by a unique blend of historical ties, strategic cooperation and shared values. The enduring friendship between these two countries has stood the test of time. It has evolved into a multidimensional partnership covering various areas of cooperation. As India and Bhutan grapple with the complexities of the 21st century, they must build on their past achievements. They will have to find new ways to collaborate and connect. By promoting economic growth, promoting cultural exchange and strengthening strategic cooperation, India and Bhutan can realize their shared vision of peace, prosperity and mutual respect.
- Frequent high-level exchanges between India and Bhutan have laid a strong foundation for the development partnership between India and Bhutan.
- During this bilateral and multilateral meetings between India and Bhutan, PM Tobgay of Bhutan has invited PM Modi to visit Bhutan, highlighting the mutual trust and equal partnership between the two countries.
- This official visit of Bhutan PM Tshering Tobgay has strengthened the commitment between India and Bhutan to deepen cooperation in various fields, strengthen long-term relations and pave the way for a brighter future together. Which is strategic for India. This is a sign of a bright future between the two countries from a cultural, economic and trade point of view.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS FOR PRELIMINARY EXAM :

Q.1. Consider the following statements in the context of bilateral and multi-dimensional relations between India and Bhutan.

1. India is Bhutan's largest trading partner, accounting for more than 50% of Bhutan's total imports and exports.
2. official name of bhutan ' Kingdom of Bhutan ' which in Bhutanese language is ' Druk Gyal Khap ' ' It is called, which means – 'Land of Thunder Dragon'.
3. At present Bhutan is a democratic country, whose head is the Prime Minister of Bhutan.
4. India has provided the largest share of the economic assistance portfolio to Bhutan in line with India's 'Neighbourhood First' policy in the Interim Budget 2024-25.

Which of the above statement / statements is/ are correct ?

- (A) Only 1 and 3
- (B) Only 2 and 4
- (C) Only 1 and 4
- (D) Only 2 and 3

Answer – (B)

PRACTICE QUESTIONS FOR MAINS EXAM :

Q.1. In the context of India's 'Neighbourhood First' policy, highlight the various aspects of bilateral and multidimensional relations between India and Bhutan and discuss what could be the solution to the Doklam standoff between India and China. Present a logical solution.

Akhilesh kumar shrivastav