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SSB to patrol Dudhwa Tiger Reserve

Dudhwa Tiger Reserve and Sashastra Seema Bal have joined hands to provide security to Dudhwa forests and its rich wildlife.

A consensus was reached among all security agencies including SSB on the border and the Dudhwa field staff to strengthen the patrolling in and around Dudhwa to check forest and wildlife crimes.

It is aimed for intelligence and information sharing among various security agencies about activities of wildlife and forest criminals.

About Dudhwa Tiger Reserve: The Dudhwa Tiger Reserve is a protected area in Uttar Pradesh that stretches mainly across the Lakhimpur Kheri and Bahraich districts.

It comprises the Dudhwa National Park, Kishanpur Wildlife Sanctuary and Katarniaghat Wildlife Sanctuary.

It covers an area of 1,284.3 sq.km and includes three large forest fragments amidst the matrix dominated by agriculture. It shares the north-eastern boundary with Nepal, which is defined to a large extent by the Mohana River. The area is a vast alluvial floodplain traversed by numerous rivers and streams flowing in south-easterly direction.

In 1987, the Dudhwa National Park and the Kishanpur Wildlife Sanctuary were brought under the purview of the 'Project Tiger' as Dudhwa Tiger Reserve.

Source: The Hindu.

Public bicycle sharing system launched in Odisha

The Odisha government launched a Public Bicycle Sharing system to reduce traffic congestion, enhance space efficiency, and improve air quality in Bhubaneswar.

Capital Region Urban Transport and Bhubaneswar Smart City Limited have come together for the PBS, which has been christened as 'Mo Cycle' system.

How Public bicycle sharing system will work?

More than 300 cyclists took part in the rally from Airport Square to Kalinaga Stadium, to generate public awareness. Initially, 2,000 cycles will be available at about 400 Mo Cycle stations in different locations of the city.

According to the BSCL, riders can take cycles from any location and drop them off at any destination of their choice.

The operators will coordinate to ensure the redistribution and availability of cycles at high-demand locations. Unlike rentals under the PBS system, cycles stored in a closely spaced network of stations will be made available to riders for short term shared use. This new system would encourage use of the same cycle by multiple riders every day. Users would have to download Mo Cycle application and register for a nominal monthly subscription.

The rider can locate the nearest Mo Cycle station and unlock the cycle through Quick Response Code scan. Technology interventions such as GPS and smart locks are an integral part of the system.

Source: The Hindu.

PIL urges Minimum Wages Act for domestic workers

Common Cause, along with the National Platform For Domestic Workers (NPDW) and Aruna Roy, has filed a writ petition in the Supreme Court (SC) pleading for directions by the Court to ensure fair and humane working conditions for domestic workers.

Important Facts: The petition has pleaded SC to urgently intervene to acknowledge domestic help as a “service for pay” and be included under the **Minimum Wages Act, 1948** in all states’ as well as the central schedule. The petition asked also the Supreme Court to lay down guidelines to protect the workers’ rights and issue appropriate writ, order or direction to the Union to take following measures to ameliorate their condition:

- By inter alia notification of minimum wages, compulsory weekly and annual paid leaves.
- Extension of maternity leave benefits.
- Collective bargaining through organized legal unions.
- First response complaints authority.
- Extending socio economic rights of pension and healthcare as provided to the workers of organized sector.

In addition to this, the petition also argued for the following in line with **ILO Convention 189**, until a law is brought in place.

- Maximum 8 hours of duty per day, weekly rest.
- The right to paid leaves and mandatory weekly off as a basic right under **Article 21**.
- Notice of termination and one month’s salary in lieu of notice of termination.

Moreover, a Committee of Experts should be appointed under the supervision of the Supreme Court to suggest means to regulate domestic workers’ employment agencies, terms and conditions of dignified employment of domestic workers as well as setting up of a mechanism for dispute resolution.

The domestic workers suffer from vulnerabilities like absence of proper documentation, rarely negotiated employment contracts, terms of employment at whims of the employer etc.

The Indian homes have witnessed a 120% increase in domestic workers in the decade post liberalisation. “While the figure was 7,40,000 in 1991, it has increased to 16.6 lakh in 2001, according to the petition.

Source: The Hindu.

Incredible India campaign: Tawang Monastery

The Incredible India campaign has goofed up on **Tawang Monastery in Arunachal Pradesh**, suggesting the ancient structure was built just three decades ago.

About Monastery: Known in Tibetan as Gaden Namgyal Lhatse, the Tawang Monastery was built according to the wishes of the 5th Dalai Lama, Ngawang Lobsang Gyatso.

It was founded in 1680-81 by a monk named Merag Lodre Gyatso of the Gelug sect after the 4th Dalai Lama gave him a painting of goddess Palden Lhamo to be kept in the monastery. An eight-metre high gilded statue of Lord Buddha dominates the sanctum of the monastery. Local legend has it that China had attacked Tawang in 1962 primarily to extract the secret to eternal youth believed to be buried under the monastery built at about 10,000 ft above sea level.

Source: The Hindu.

NASA's Insight rover heads for 6.5 minutes of terror

Mars Insight's goal is to listen for quakes and tremors as a way to unveil the Red Planet's inner mysteries, how it formed billions of years ago and by extension, how other rocky planets like the earth took shape.

The unmanned spacecraft, launched nearly seven months ago, is NASA's first to attempt to touch down on Mars since the Curiosity rover arrived in 2012. More than half of 43 attempts to reach Mars with rovers, orbiters and probes by space agencies from around the world have failed.

NASA is the only space agency to have made it, and is invested in these missions as a way to prepare for the first Marsbound human explorers in the 2030s.

Source: The Hindu.

Editorial

To Read

Diplomacy and faith

If Kartarpur corridor works out, PM Modi could extend the outreach to other areas.

The enduring contradictions of India's relations with Pakistan and the violent mood swings that shape its dynamics are on full display this week. The commemoration of the 26/11 Mumbai terror attack on Monday came along with the ground work for the construction of a "faith corridor" across one of the world's most militarised borders in the Punjab. It was a decade ago this week that terrorists from Pakistan sailed into Mumbai to perpetrate an outrageous attack on the city. There have been terror attacks sponsored from across the border before and since. But no other incident is likely to remain as etched in India's memory. This week also sees the beginning of the construction of a five-kilometre long visa-free corridor connecting the gurudwaras at Dera Nanak in India and Kartarpur in Pakistan. This is to mark the 550th anniversary of Guru Nanak Dev next year. Nanak, the founder of the Sikh faith, spent the last 18 years of his life in Kartarpur. The Sikh community has long demanded the liberalisation of travel to the holiest of their shrines that went to Pakistan after the Partition.

If the Mumbai attacks represent the accumulated negative legacy of the relationship, the surprising breakthrough on Kartarpur points to a potentially positive future. Sceptics might say “not so fast”. For there is always another sad twist to the tragic tale of the two nations since the Partition. Every hopeful moment in India-Pakistan relations has been followed by a despairing one.

Sceptics will also remind us how hard it has been for Indian political leaders to even embark on sustained talks with Pakistan since the Mumbai attacks. When Prime Minister Manmohan Singh sought to resume the dialogue with Pakistan after he returned to power in the summer of 2009 — six months after the Mumbai attacks — the Congress party came down hard and vetoed the decision.

When Delhi announced that External Minister Sushma Swaraj will hold talks with her Pakistani counterpart, Shah Mohammad Qureshi, on the margins of the UN General Assembly a couple of months ago, the political backlash was so intense that Delhi had to quickly reverse the decision. This volatile history of India-Pakistan engagement over the last decade makes the agreement on opening the Kartarpur corridor quite significant. But those familiar with the past might demur. It is one thing to talk about “visa-free” travel in the corridor, but entirely another for the two sides to agree on the rules governing it.

In Kashmir, we have seen how the agreement in the middle of the last decade to let Kashmiris travel across the Line of Control without passports and visas was marred by an onerous permit system. Security agencies on both sides would have demands that will make it a lot less easier than the Sikh pilgrims might expect at the Punjab border. That Pakistan has long supported Sikh separatists demanding Khalistan will make the task even harder for Delhi. There are other issues as well. In declining the invitation from Pakistan to attend the foundation-laying ceremony at Kartarpur on Wednesday, the chief minister of Punjab, Amarinder Singh pointed to the routine killing of Indian soldiers on the LoC in Kashmir and the ISI’s “nefarious activities” in the Punjab.

Why then did Delhi accept the opening of the corridor? In addressing the Sikh community on Gurburab last week, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said the negative dynamic between the governments must be separated from the need to build bridges between the two peoples. “Religious diplomacy” — or using faith to bring people and nations together — has been very much part of Modi’s foreign policy in his outreach to the neighbouring countries in the Subcontinent and beyond. It was also framed as a priority in the joint statement issued after his talks with Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif at Ufa in July 2015.

But is Modi taking a big risk on the Kartarpur corridor? In inviting PM Sharif for his inauguration in 2014 and in travelling to Lahore on short notice at the end of 2015, Modi had demonstrated his appetite for risk taking with Pakistan. Will he be lucky the third time? If there is one place ripe for quick advances in bilateral relations it is the Punjab. The pent-up demands for cross-border commercial cooperation and people-to-people contact is immense in the Punjab, which has borne so much of the Partition’s tragic burden. If there is political will, a lot of steps — relating to religious tourism, overland commerce, cross-border trade in electricity and hydrocarbons — can be taken.

But none of the repeated efforts over the last decade — between Delhi and Islamabad as well as Chandigarh and Lahore — on transforming the relationship between the two Punjabs has borne fruit. During the decade-long UPA rule, there were moments when breakthroughs appeared imminent, but turned out to be elusive.

Modi, however, might believe that he has little to lose by trying again and India is strong enough to take some political risks with Pakistan. And if the Kartarpur corridor works out well, there

could be room to expand his religious diplomacy to other holy sites and extend the momentum to other areas. For now though, fingers are crossed.

Mains Question

Q: New terror threats have emerged as a result of use of technology. In light of this statement examine the challenges that have emerged as a result of “enabled terror”. Also highlight the steps that should be taken to handle the new terror threats.

YesUPSC