



Topics - MINDS MAPS included (Daily current affairs 20th December 2024)

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 - The Spot-billed Pelican
 - India-France Museum Collaboration
 - Dissanayake's Diplomatic Debut: Repercussions of His India Visit
 - The Folkestone White Horse
- Mains



By saurabh Pandey



THE HINDU

Target Mains -2025/26 -

Q → “Explain the role of coral farming in conserving marine biodiversity” Discuss.

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Q. Lake Turkana has often been in news on account of being on the World Heritage List of Danger since 2018 due to fear of heavier rains over Lake Turkana's river inflows, induced by climate change which would raise water levels in the lake itself and increase the likelihood of severe flooding. The Lake Turkana is located in the which among the following Country. (DTE)

A) Brazil

B) Kenya

C) Tanzania

D) Mozambique

Lunch time



Seasonal visit: A spot-billed pelican feeding its young one at the Uppalapadu Bird Sanctuary in Guntur district of Andhra Pradesh on Thursday. Thousands of these migratory birds visit the sanctuary every year to nest and breed. K.V.S. GIRI

Topic → The Spot-billed Pelican



Introduction

The Spot-billed Pelican, characterized by its striking appearance, is predominantly found in freshwater and coastal habitats across Asia.

This species is essential for maintaining fish populations and contributing to the overall health of aquatic ecosystems.

Physical Characteristics and Behavior

The Spot-billed Pelican is easily recognizable due to its unique features:

Distinctive Bill: The large bill has a prominent spot, which is particularly noticeable during the breeding season.

Size: Adult pelicans can reach up to 1.8 meters in wingspan, making them one of the larger pelican species.

Feeding Habits:

Primarily piscivorous, they consume a variety of fish, often hunting in groups to maximize efficiency.

Known for their cooperative hunting techniques, pelicans can drive fish towards shallower waters.

Breeding and Nesting

The breeding season of the Spot-billed Pelican is a time of great activity:

Timing: Breeding typically occurs between November and March.

Nesting Sites: Preferred nesting locations include river islands and lakes, where they can build nests from vegetation.

Community Involvement: Local communities participate in protecting nesting sites, ensuring that these birds can thrive.

Based on these threats the IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature) has categorised them under the “Near Threatened” category. In the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 they are found in Schedule IV (Hunting prohibited)

India and France sign MoU for new National Museum

Sreeparna Chakrabarty
NEW DELHI

India and France on Thursday signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for the development of the new National Museum, on the lines of the Louvre in Paris, at the historic North Block and South Block in the national capital. The museum, named Yuga Yugeen Bharat, when completed would be the largest in the world.

The agreement was signed by Herve Barbaret, Director General and CEO of France Museums, and B.R. Mani, Director General of the National Museum of India.

External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar, who was present at the signing, said, "I think we would veritably be seeing the inspiration for the remaking of Bharat," when South Block and North Block become the



The delegates from India and France sign the agreement for the development of the new National Museum on Thursday. PTI

kind of museums that are envisaged.








"It is a very important expression of international cooperation. We are also seeing a very important cultural collaboration and, as all of you know, culture is in a sense the essence of soft power," Mr. Jaishankar said.

"With France, we have had a strong relationship, what in our profession we call strategic partnership,

and underpinning that India and France see each other as important poles in a multi-polar world," he said.

The 'Yuga Yugeen Bharat' museum will be developed through adaptive reuse in collaboration with France, which is renowned for its expertise in such projects – exemplified by the Louvre, the Grand Palais, and the Hotel de la Marine.

Topic → India-France Museum Collaboration

-  India and France have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for a new National Museum project.
-  The museum, named "**Yuga Yugeen Bharat**," will be modeled after the Louvre in Paris.
-  Once completed, it is set to become the largest museum in the world.
-  **The agreement was signed by Herve Barbaret (France Museums) and B.R. Mani (National Museum of India).**
-  External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar emphasized the cultural collaboration and soft power aspect of the project.
-  The project reflects the strategic partnership between India and France in a multi-polar world.
-  The museum will utilize adaptive reuse techniques, leveraging France's expertise in similar projects.

Summary: India and France have signed an MoU to develop the "Yuga Yugeen Bharat" museum, inspired by the Louvre, which will be the largest in the world, highlighting cultural collaboration and strategic partnership

Reality check on Sri Lanka's Tamil question



Many in Sri Lanka closely tracked their President Anura Kumara Dissanayake's recent visit to India. The ceremonial red carpet welcome he received from Indian President Droupadi Murmu and Prime Minister Narendra Modi, his various engagements, and, importantly, the joint statement issued by the two governments, drew much notice in the local media.

It was Mr. Dissanayake's first state visit abroad, after he won the presidency in September this year, and the ruling National People's Power (NPP) won a spectacular two-thirds majority in the general election in November. India was hosting not just one of Sri Lanka's most powerful Presidents but also a leftist leader from a party (Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna - JVP or the People's Liberation Front) that once furiously opposed India and its perceived "interventionist" role in Sri Lanka.

Much has indeed changed in India, Sri Lanka, and in India-Sri Lanka relations. The JVP is not the same today, as the story of its rise to state power reveals. Neither is Sri Lanka, whose political landscape stands radically altered in ways few imagined possible two years ago. Analysts are yet to fully decipher the astounding victory of the JVP-led NPP, especially in the island nation's north, east, and the hill country that are home to the country's Tamil, Muslim and Malayaha Tamil minorities. India's priorities, too, have seen a marked shift, as New Delhi remains preoccupied with countering Chinese influence in the neighbourhood.

Changing Indian interests

While everything else changes, Sri Lanka's long-pending national question remains, with all past governments in Colombo failing to deliver a definitive political settlement. India's past involvement as an arbiter of Tamil rights, for many in Sri Lanka, set high expectations for its influence in more recent decades, including the post-war years since 2009. In an interview to this daily in 2022, late Tamil leader R. Sampanthan said "India has a special duty" in ensuring that the spirit of the Indo-Lanka Accord of 1987, and the 13th Amendment to the Sri Lankan Constitution born out of it, are fully implemented. Except, Indian interests today are evidently different.

The joint statement issued by New Delhi and Colombo on December 16, 2024, offers a reality check. The 34-point document, titled 'Fostering partnerships for a shared future', and spanning political, economic, and strategic cooperation, makes no reference to the pending political solution, or post-war reconciliation, or Tamil aspirations. The only power sharing that finds mention is in a proposal for a high-capacity grid



Meera Srinivasan

The joint statement issued by New Delhi and Colombo during the Sri Lankan President's India visit reveals the neighbours' current preoccupations

interconnection between India and Sri Lanka.

However, in his remarks at the joint press conference, Mr. Modi said, "We hope that the Sri Lankan government shall fulfil the aspirations of the Tamil people. And that they shall fulfil their commitment towards fully implementing the Constitution of Sri Lanka and conducting the Provincial Council Elections." He did not reference the 13th Amendment.

Mr. Dissanayake framed the issue differently. He said, "People from all the Provinces – North, South, East, and West – representing diverse communities and various walks of life contributed to this mandate. As a leader entrusted with such an important responsibility by my people, I clearly understand that the essence of democracy lies in the coexistence of diverse political views and groups."

The NPP's poll manifesto includes an assurance to hold elections to the provincial councils, now defunct for over five years, and enact a new Constitution based on wide public consultations. President Dissanayake, too, has made the pledge more than once. But his government is yet to spell out its own vision for a durable political solution.

The NPP has consistently avoided the language of the "13th Amendment" that till date carries the baggage of "Indian imposition" for the country's Sinhala-Buddhist majority, and likely triggers discomfort for the JVP party base. In a recent column, 'NPP in Power: Possibilities for Post-War Reconciliation through Civic Nationalism', Sri Lankan political scientist Jayadeva Uyangoda observed that the NPP shuns both the "devolution discourse" introduced by India, and the "liberal peace discourse" of conflict resolution, reconciliation, and peacebuilding, promoted by agencies of the United Nations, global and local rights groups. He wrote, "The NPP does not seem to want its agenda for inter-ethnic peace and reconciliation in Sri Lanka to be seen as a continuation of what it sees as 'failed' past attempts."

Contentious amendment

The controversial 13th Amendment continues to evoke mixed, and often strong, reactions among Sri Lankans. Even the Tamils are divided over whether it is a necessary but insufficient measure of power devolution, or a problematic legislation that tamed historic demands for federalism. The last time that the 13th Amendment went out of focus was when the Maithripala Sirisena-Ranil Wickremesinghe administration (2015-19) attempted drafting a new constitution. The effort failed, but Mr. Dissanayake has said his government would build on the draft.

It is true that two main formulations of the past have not proved successful for the Tamil people.

It is also not hard to see why the JVP may be wary of using either discourse. But the Tamils who contributed significantly to the NPP's big win are justified in seeking greater clarity on what the government has in mind for them. Fifteen years after the end of the civil war, they are still doggedly chasing the truth about their forcibly disappeared loved ones. They are still fighting to reclaim their land held by the military. They are still struggling to rebuild their livelihoods shattered in those years of bloodshed and mass destruction. They still do not have a say in how their provinces, setback by a devastating war, should be reconstructed.

The government's promise of national integration or a unified "Sri Lankan identity" can be evaluated only based on its specific policies to address war-time accountability, political agency, and meaningful development in the north and east. A new political order may now be at the country's helm, but old questions will not go away.

The recent elections have given Mr. Dissanayake and the NPP rare national momentum and unprecedented legislative influence. The government now has a real chance to reimagine the political solution through people's post-war realities.

State of the Tamil polity

Meanwhile, Sri Lanka's Tamil polity, too, faces a big challenge. After the electorate delivered a clear message to the regional Tamil parties in the recent polls – the NPP beat them in all but one district in the north and east – the Tamil polity is struggling to regain its voice.

After habitually looking to the international community to push for Tamil rights, the Tamil political leadership is now forced to confront its own failure. Those counting on India would do well to understand that the Tamil question is no more an issue that serves a domestic political compulsion or provides diplomatic leverage to New Delhi. It is time they recognised India's waning interest and influence on the Tamil question. Besides, they must ask if India has any moral standing to ask another country to treat minorities better.

The Tamil polity's core strategy of engaging western powers dominating UN bodies, India, and the Tamil diaspora has clearly not yielded substantive progress on the ground. To remain relevant and rebuild credibility, the Tamil polity appears to have little choice but to reorient itself to the people it seeks to represent. The Tamil people in Sri Lanka have reminded their leaders, who were busy talking to actors elsewhere for years, to listen to them now.

Topic → **Dissanayake's Diplomatic Debut: Repercussions of His India Visit**



The Ceremonial Welcome

President Anura Kumara Dissanayake's first overseas visit was nothing short of spectacular.

The ceremonial red carpet welcome extended by Indian President Droupadi Murmu and Prime Minister Narendra Modi symbolized not only the warmth of bilateral relations but also the strategic importance of this meeting.

The visit marks a pivotal moment for Sri Lanka's foreign policy.

Dissanayake's reception reflects India's commitment to fostering strong ties with its southern neighbor.

This visit comes after a tumultuous period in Sri Lanka's political landscape.

Joint Statement Analysis



The joint statement issued on **December 16, 2024**, titled "**Fostering Partnerships for a Shared Future**," contained 34 points encompassing various aspects of political, economic, and strategic cooperation.

However, it notably lacked references to the long-pending political solution for the Tamil community.

The absence of Tamil aspirations in the joint statement raises concerns.

Modi's remarks hinted at the need for the Sri Lankan government to address Tamil rights.

The statement focused on infrastructure projects rather than political reconciliation.

Political Landscape in Sri Lanka

Dissanayake's government comes at a crucial juncture, with promises to hold provincial elections and amend the constitution.

However, his administration has yet to articulate a coherent vision for addressing the Tamil community's needs.

The NPP's manifesto pledges to restore provincial councils.

Dissanayake has avoided the term "13th Amendment" due to its historical baggage.

There are calls for a clear political solution to ongoing grievances.

Geopolitical Shifts



Sri Lanka's geopolitical landscape is evolving, with India increasingly focusing on countering Chinese influence in the region.

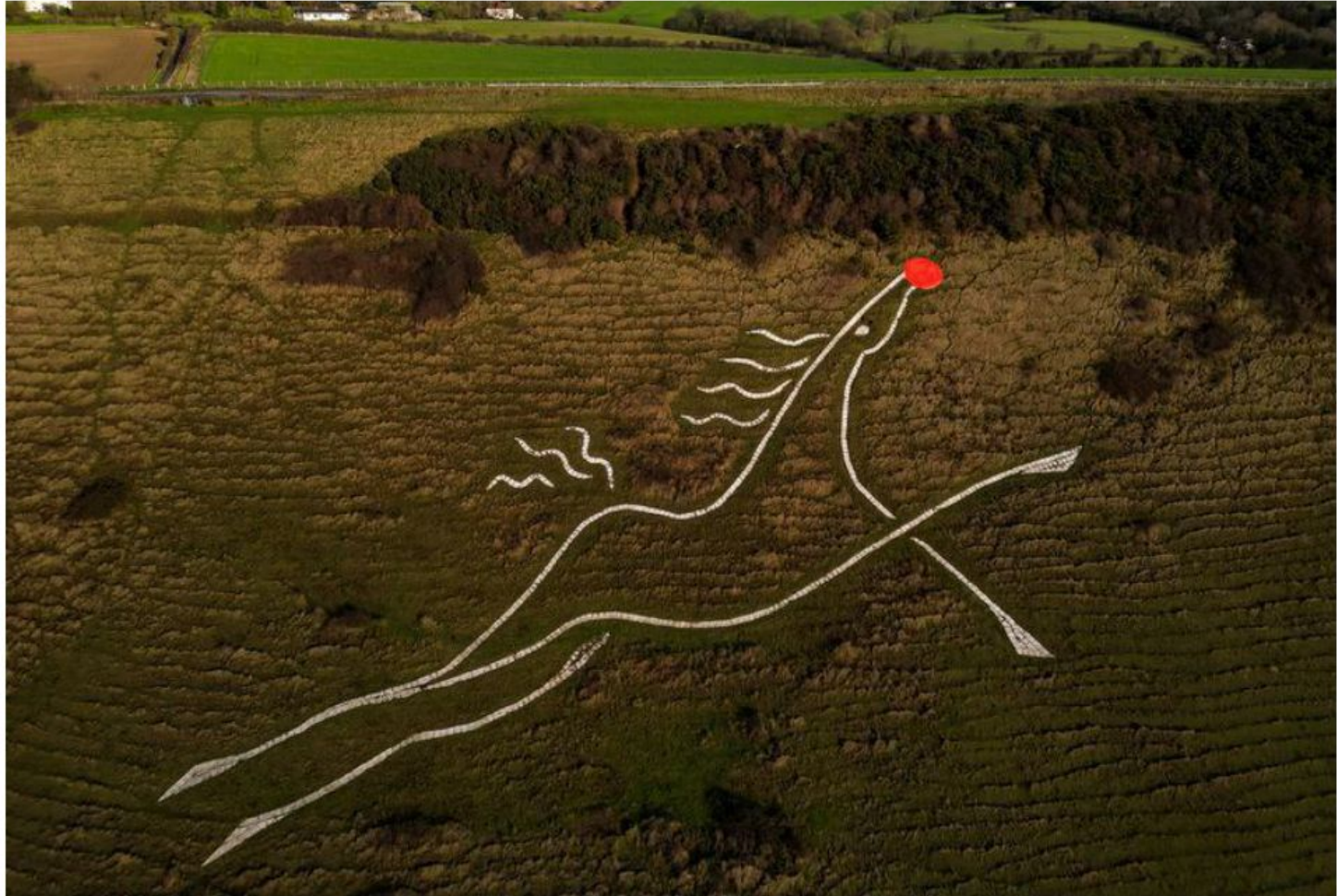
Dissanayake's visit signals a shift in priorities and a renewed interest in strengthening ties with India.

The Tamil question is becoming less of a diplomatic leverage for India.

Sri Lanka is navigating its relations between India and China with caution.

The recent electoral mandate gives Dissanayake leverage to redefine Sri Lanka's political future.

Rudolph's nose job



Festive makeover: The British landmark Folkestone White Horse adorned with a red nose resembling Rudolph the Reindeer. REUTERS

Topic → The Folkestone White Horse

Overview

🐎 The Folkestone White Horse is a hill figure carved into Cheriton Hill, located in Folkestone, Kent, South East England.


🌍 It overlooks the English terminal of the Channel Tunnel and was completed in June 2003.

🎉 Designed as a Millennium Landmark, it aims to aid in the regeneration of the Folkestone area.




Design and Inspiration

 The design was created by local artist **Charlie Newington**, inspired by a nearby Iron Age fort and the White Horse of Uffington.

 It is the first official hill figure in Folkestone, although there is a chalk area on Summerhouse Hill resembling an elephant's head, known as the Folkestone Elephant.

 The design reflects historical influences dating back three millennia.

Significance

 The location is significant for its proximity to the Channel Tunnel, enhancing its visibility and importance.

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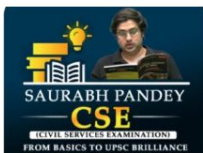
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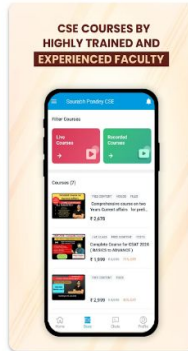
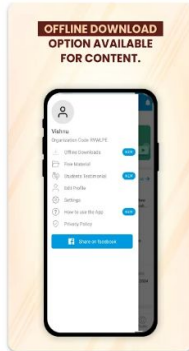
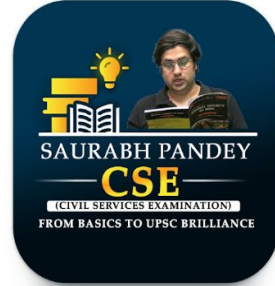
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