

PRELIMS MANTRA – 10 (23/02/2025 & 24/02/2025)

- **Eight persons trapped 14 km inside an under-construction tunnel of the Sri Sailam Left Bank Canal project** after a section of its roof collapsed. **Dams on Krishna River in sequence-** Almatti (Karnataka), Srisailem & Nagarjuna Sagar (on border between Telangana & Andhra Pradesh) and Prakasam Barrage (Andhra Pradesh).
- **Archaeologists find 1.4-metre-tall Buddha head Ratnagiri Buddhist heritage site in Odisha's Jajpur district:**
 - Buddha sculptures here are made of **Khondalite stone**.
 - Ratnagiri means 'hills of jewels' in Odia, encircled by rivers Brahmani, Kimiria, and Birupa and their tributaries.
 - Village is situated around 100 km from Bhubaneswar and is **part of 'Diamond Triangle', a collection of three Buddhist sites — Ratnagiri, Udayagiri and Lalitgiri —** located in a 10-km radius.
 - Earliest Buddhist settlement at Ratnagiri has been estimated to have begun in 5th century AD. Site flourished until 13th century.
 - A copper plate charter of Somavamsi King Karna, unearthed during excavations, confirmed that it was once a **major centre for Vajrayana (Tantric Buddhism)**.
 - Excavation has uncovered three sculpted heads of varying sizes, a monolithic elephant sculpture, and hundreds of votive stupas.
 - **Stone tablets** of different sizes, inscribed in Sanskrit using **Kutila script (Siddhamatrika)**, have been found at site.
 - Notable discoveries include a **lion pedestal (Buddha's Simhasana) and votive sculptures** of Buddhist deities, such as **Amoghasiddhi**, one of the five wisdom Buddhas of the Mahayana and Vajrayana tradition; **Ratnasambhava, one of the five meditating Buddhas; Akshobhya, another wisdom Buddhas; Amitabha**, one of the most widely worshipped Buddhist figures in Mahayana Buddhism.
- **Glacier ice algae accelerate Greenland ice sheet melting:**
 - A new study reveals that dark-pigmented microalgae, which contribute to melting of Greenland ice sheet, are highly efficient at nutrient uptake and growth, allowing them to rapidly colonise expanding areas of exposed ice.
 - Their **dark pigmentation lowers ice's reflectivity (albedo), increasing heat absorption and accelerating melting** and therefore sea-level rise.
 - Melting of Greenland Ice Sheet is single largest contributor of freshwater to global sea level rise.
- **Health Ministry bans export of drugs containing Tapentadol, Carisoprodol:**
 - **Tapentadol** is an opioid medication that is used to treat moderate to severe pain.
 - **Carisoprodol** is a muscle relaxant which works on the centres in the brain and spinal cord to relieve pain.
 - **Combination of Tapentadol and Carisoprodol is not approved in India.**
- **Shaktikanta Das appointed new Principal Secretary:**
 - Principal Secretary is the administrative head of the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) and is considered the most important aide to the PM.
 - Currently, Pramod Kumar Mishra, a retired IAS officer of the 1972 batch, is the Principal Secretary.
 - Das will be Principal Secretary-2.
- Principal Secretary is tasked with preparing notes on matters to be discussed between the PM and foreign dignitaries, ensuring coordination among various ministries and departments, sharing important orders before the PM, and so on.
- **PM to attend 'biggest ever' jhumur event in Guwahati:**
 - Jhumur is folk dance of **Sadan ethnolinguistic group**, who trace their origins to the Chotanagpur region.
 - Today it occupies a central place in what are known as **"tea garden festivals"** or festivals celebrated by tea garden workers in Assam.
 - Most important ones are **Tushu Puja and Karam Puja**, which celebrate oncoming harvest.
 - Women are main dancers and singers, while men play traditional instruments such as madal, dhol, or dhak (drums), cymbals, flutes, and shehnai.
 - Attire worn varies from community to community, **although red and white sarees** are particularly popular among women.
 - **Dancers stand shoulder-to-shoulder and move in coordinated patterns with precise footwork** while singing couplets in their native languages — Nagpuri, Khortha and Kurmali.
- **Pagri Sambhal Jatta movement:**
 - In 1907, **Ajit Singh (uncle of Bhagat Singh)** started the Pagri Sambhal Jatta movement in **protest against three agricultural laws imposed by the British**.
 - 'Pagri Sambhal Jatta' literally translates to 'take care of your turban, o farmer' & invokes self-respect and honour.
 - **Three laws were:** The Punjab Land Alienation Act, 1900; The Punjab Land Colonisation Act, 1906; and The Doab Bari Act, 1907.
 - Ajit Singh and Kishan Singh (Bhagat Singh's father) formed the **Bharat Mata Society**, a revolutionary group for farmers. Lala Lajpat Rai and other leaders also supported the movement.
 - Slogan **"Pagri Sambhal Jatta"** was coined by **Banke Dayal**, nationalist poet, and became symbol of resistance.
- **Union Home Minister chaired the 27th meeting of the Western Zonal Council in Pune:**
 - **Idea of creation** of Zonal Councils was mooted by the **first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru in 1956**.
 - **Five Zonal Councils were set up under the States Re-organisation Act, 1956. (Statutory, not constitutional body)**
 - **North Eastern Council was set up under the North Eastern Council Act, 1972.**
 - Sikkim which was earlier in the Eastern Zonal Council was included in the North Eastern Council in 2002.
 - **Composition of each council is as follows:** Union Home Minister is chairman of each of these council. Chief Ministers of states included in each zone act as Vice-Chairman of Zonal Council for that zone by rotation, each holding office for a period of one year at a time. Chief Minister and two other ministers as nominated by Governor from each of the states and two members from Union Territories included in zone.
 - Each Zonal Council has a **Standing Committee consisting of Chief Secretaries of member states**. These Standing

Committees meet from time to time to resolve issues or to do necessary groundwork for further meetings of Zonal Councils.

- In 2018, Union Cabinet approved nomination of Union Home Minister as ex-officio chairman of North Eastern Council and the Minister Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER) to serve as Vice Chairman of Council.
- **India's nitrogen dioxide and ozone emissions from coal fired power plants diminish yields of staple crops like wheat and rice.**

- **Maharashtra State has submitted a proposal under concept of 'Maratha Military Land scape of India' for UNESCO World Heritage Status for 12 forts of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj.**
- **Darien Gap, a 97-kilometre-long stretch between Panama and Colombia, has been infamous for its hazardous conditions like torrential rain, swamps, wildlife, extreme heat, and constant threat of criminal gangs who rob and extort travellers. Hundreds of illegal migrants cross gap every day, with an alarming number of fatalities along way.**
- **Mount Etna, Italy (active volcano).**

PRACTICE MCQS

Q1. Which of the following is the correct sequence of dams across Krishna River from its origin to the mouth?

- Almatti - Nagarjuna Sagar - Srisaillam - Prakasam Barrage
- Almatti - Srisaillam - Nagarjuna Sagar - Prakasam Barrage
- Almatti - Srisaillam - Prakasam Barrage - Nagarjuna Sagar
- Almatti - Prakasam Barrage - Srisaillam - Nagarjuna Sagar

Answer: B

Q2. With reference to cultural diversity of India, consider the following statements about Jhumur?

- It is a folk dance of Sadan ethnolinguistic group, who trace their origins to the Chotanagpur region.
- It is predominantly celebrated by Santhal community in West Bengal.
- Women are main dancers and singers, while men play traditional instruments.
- Dancers stand shoulder-to-shoulder and move in coordinated patterns with precise footwork.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- 1 and 3 only
- 1, 2 and 3 only
- 1, 3 and 4 only
- 1, 2, 3 and 4

Answer: C

Q3. Darien Gap, sometimes mentioned in the news, is located between –

- Panama and Colombia
- Mexico and USA
- Ukraine and Russia
- Armenia and Azerbaijan

Answer: A

Q4. Consider the following statements about Zonal Councils:

- They are constitutional bodies created to resolve inter-state conflicts.
- Union Home Minister is chairman of each of these councils.
- Sikkim state is in the Eastern Zonal Council.
- Chief Ministers of states included in each zone act as Vice-Chairman of Zonal Council for that zone by rotation, each holding office for a period of one year at a time.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- 1 and 3 only
- 1, 2 and 4 only
- 2 and 4 only
- 1, 2, 3 and 4

Answer: C

Q5. Ratnagiri Buddhist heritage site is located in –

- Odisha
- Maharashtra
- Tamil Nadu
- Bihar

Answer: A