



## **DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS 25-07-2024**

### **GS-1**

1. Mahabodhi temple complex

### **GS-2**

2. Right to Shelter is a fundamental right, says SC

### **GS-3**

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5. Ratapani Wildlife Sanctuary

## **Mahabodhi temple complex**

**Syllabus: GS-1; Art & Culture, GS-2; Government policies and Interventions**

### **Context**

- Finance Minister *Nirmala Sitharaman* announced during her Union Budget speech that corridor projects will be built for the Vishnupad Temple at Gaya and the Mahabodhi Temple at Bodh Gaya in Bihar.



### **Mahabodhi Temple at Bodh Gaya**

- One of the four most sacred places associated with the Buddha's life, particularly his **attainment of enlightenment (Bodhi)**.
- Believed to be the site where Buddha meditated under a Bodhi tree for 49 days before achieving enlightenment.
- A **UNESCO World Heritage Site (2002)** showcasing exceptional records of Buddhist history and worship practices.

### **Historical Importance**

- Originally **built by Emperor Ashoka** in the 3rd century BC, with the current structure dating from the 5th or 6th century AD.
- Represents one of the earliest surviving brick structures in India's eastern region.
- Architectural style influenced later Buddhist structures.

### Key Features

- *Central brick temple with a towering shikhara (spire) - renovated in the 19th century.*
- **Vajrasana (Diamond Throne)** - marks the exact spot where Buddha attained enlightenment.
- *Six sacred places within the complex associated with Buddha's life.*
- *Numerous ancient stupas and a **Lotus Pond** hold religious significance.*
- **Bodhi Tree** - a descendant of the original tree under which Buddha meditated.

### The Vishnupad Temple, Gaya

- *The Vishnupad Temple in Gaya, Bihar, is a prominent Hindu pilgrimage site.*

### Religious Significance

- *Dedicated to Lord Vishnu, one of the principal Hindu deities.*
- *Believed to be built on the spot where **Vishnu vanquished the demon Gayasura.***
- *A 40-cm footprint carved into a black basalt rock (Dharmasila) is revered as Vishnu's imprint.*
- *Holds particular importance during Pitru Paksha, a period for performing rituals for ancestors.*

### History and Architecture

- *Exact origin unknown, but believed to be an ancient site.*
- *The current octagonal-shaped structure was built in 1787 by **Queen Ahilyabai Holkar of Indore.***
- *The temple stands around 30 meters tall with eight rows of intricately carved pillars supporting the pavilion.*
- *Constructed from large grey granite stones joined by iron clamps.*
- *The pyramidal tower rises to about 100 feet.*

## **Right to Shelter is a fundamental right, says SC**

### Syllabus: GS-2: Fundamental Rights – Judicial Interpretation.

#### Context:

- *The Supreme Court has recently emphasized the importance of balancing the **development of railway infrastructure in Haldwani, Uttarakhand,** with the fundamental right to shelter of nearly 50,000 people accused of illegally encroaching on railway land.*

## Case Background

- The case revolves around the **conflict between railway infrastructure development and the rights of residents accused of encroachment.**
- The hearing was based on an **application filed by the Railways seeking to modify a January 2023 Supreme Court order.**
- **January 2023 Supreme Court Order:** This order had stayed a **directive from the Uttarakhand High Court**, which had instructed the eviction of the families within a week, even permitting the use of paramilitary forces.
- The Railways' application highlighted the urgency due to disruptions in railway operations caused by the **flooding of the Ghaula River.**
- The Railways argue that more land is **urgently needed to lay new tracks** to mitigate these disruptions.

## Judicial Perspective

- The Supreme Court's emphasis on the need to **balance development with the right to shelter reflects** its ongoing commitment to ensuring that infrastructure projects do not unjustly displace large populations without adequate resettlement and rehabilitation measures.

## Right to Shelter

- The **Right to Shelter** in India is derived from the broader constitutional guarantee of the Right to Life under **Article 21** of the Constitution, which assures the protection of life and personal liberty.
- This fundamental right is further supported by **Article 19(1)(e)**, which provides the right to reside and settle in any part of the territory of India.

## Judicial Pronouncements:

- **Olga Tellis v. Bombay Municipal Corporation (1985):**
  - The Supreme Court recognized the right to livelihood as a part of the right to life under Article 21.
  - The court ruled that the right to life includes the right to livelihood and shelter, emphasizing that deprivation of livelihood could lead to deprivation of life.
- **Chameli Singh v. State of Uttar Pradesh (1996):**
  - The Supreme Court declared that the right to shelter is a fundamental right under Article 21.
  - It includes various components necessary for a dignified existence such as:

- *Adequate living space*
  - *Safe and decent structures*
  - *Clean surroundings*
  - *Light, air, water, electricity*
  - *Sanitation*
- **Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation v. Nawab Khan Gulab Khan (1997):**
- *The Supreme Court reiterated the state's duty to provide shelter to its citizens.*
  - *It directed the state to construct affordable houses for the poor, underscoring the importance of making the right to life meaningful by ensuring access to shelter.*

### **Various Legislations Supporting the Right to Shelter**

#### **The Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006**

- **Objectives:** *Recognizes rights over forest land for livelihood and food security.*
- **Key Provisions:**
- **Section 3(1)(m):** *Grants the right to in situ rehabilitation in cases of illegal eviction or displacement.*
  - **Section 4(2):** *Mandates a comprehensive rehabilitation and resettlement package before any resettlement occurs.*

#### **The Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013**

- **Objectives:** *Ensures transparent land acquisition, fair compensation, and adequate rehabilitation.*
- **Key Provisions:**
- **Section 2(1):** *Defines public purposes for land acquisition, ensuring it serves a genuine need.*
  - **Section 4:** *Requires a Social Impact Assessment (SIA) study to evaluate the effects of land acquisition on affected families.*
  - **Section 31:** *Specifies the awards for rehabilitation and resettlement, ensuring affected families are adequately compensated and supported.*

## The Slum Areas (Improvement and Clearance) Act, 1956

- **Objectives:** *Improves and clears slum areas, protecting tenants from eviction.*
- **Key Provisions:**
  - *Establishes procedures for the demolition or improvement of unfit buildings.*
  - *Provides for alternative accommodation for those displaced due to slum clearance or improvement activities.*

## Debt-GDP ratio

### Syllabus: GS-3: Indian Economy – Public Debt.

#### Context:

- *Budget 2024: Shifting focus from fiscal deficit to debt-GDP ratio.*

#### Focus on Debt-to-GDP Ratio

- **Finance Secretary said:**
  - *Emphasis on **reducing debt-to-GDP ratio** over focusing solely on fiscal deficit.*
  - *Recognition that a **fixed deficit figure is unsuitable** for India's fast-growing economy.*
  - **Sustainable deficit for a fast-growing economy like India is likely below 4.5%.**

#### Revenue and Capital Expenditure Adjustments

- **Revenue Expenditure:**
  - *Fell by 1.3% from revised estimates to Rs 34.94 lakh crore in provisional actuals for FY24.*
- **Capital Expenditure (Capex):**
  - *Reduced to Rs 9.49 lakh crore in FY24, 0.2% lower than revised estimates.*
  - *5.2% (Rs 52,455 crore) lower than budget estimate for FY24*

#### What is Debt-to-GDP Ratio?



- *A metric comparing a country's public debt to its Gross Domestic Product (GDP).*
- *Expressed as a percentage, indicating the country's ability to repay its debt with its economic output.*

### **Importance:**

- *Indicates fiscal health and sustainability.*
- *Helps assess the risk of default.*
- *Used by policymakers to frame economic strategies.*
- *Influences a country's credit rating, impacting borrowing costs.*

### **Calculation**

#### **Formula:**

$$\text{Debt-to-GDP Ratio} = \left( \frac{\text{Total Public Debt}}{\text{GDP}} \right) \times 100$$

*Includes all government borrowings, both domestic and foreign.*

- **GDP:** *The total value of all goods and services produced within a country.*

#### **Components:**

- **Total Public Debt:**

### **Factors Influencing the Debt-to-GDP Ratio**

- **Economic Growth:**
  - *Higher GDP growth can reduce the ratio.*
  - *Recession can increase the ratio as GDP contracts.*
- **Government Borrowing:**
  - *Increased borrowing raises the total public debt.*
  - *Fiscal deficits contribute to higher debt levels.*
- **Inflation:**
  - *High inflation can reduce the real value of debt.*
  - *Nominal GDP increases, potentially lowering the ratio.*
- **Interest Rates:**
  - *Higher interest rates increase debt servicing costs.*
  - *Can lead to higher borrowing if government needs to cover interest payments.*

➤ **Exchange Rates:**

- *Depreciation of local currency increases the burden of foreign debt.*

**Practice Question**

*Q. Analyze the impact of the Union Budget 2024-25's fiscal consolidation measures on India's economic growth, considering the emphasis on reducing the fiscal deficit and debt-to-GDP ratio.*

## **Why SC couldn't agree on environmental release of GM Mustard**

**Syllabus: GS-3: Biotechnology – Genetically Modified Crops.**

**Context:**

- **A two-judge Bench of the Supreme Court** on Tuesday (July 23) delivered a split verdict on whether to allow the “**environmental release**” of Genetically Modified (GM) mustard.

**Background of GM Mustard**

- **Initial Request:** On September 15, 2015, the **Centre for Genetic Manipulation of Crop Plants (CGMCP)** at Delhi University sought GEAC's approval for the environmental release of a genetically engineered hybrid mustard, DMH-11.
- **Modification Details:** The GM mustard developed contains two foreign genes:
- **Barnase gene:** *Interferes with pollen production, making the plant male-sterile.*
  - **Barstar gene:** *Blocks the action of the barnase gene, enabling cross-pollination to produce high-yield hybrid mustard plants.*
- **Approval Process:**
- *The CGMCP submitted a biosafety dossier to GEAC.*
  - *A GEAC sub-committee reviewed and revised the dossier.*
  - *The dossier was published for public comments in 2016.*



- *In May 2017, GEAC recommended the environmental release of GM mustard for field testing.*
- *After receiving multiple representations, the Ministry of Environment sent the proposal back to GEAC for re-examination in March 2018.*
- *GEAC directed CGMCP to study the impact on honey bees and soil microbial diversity, but these tests were deferred through 2020-21.*
- *In May 2022, CGMCP renewed its request, and the GEAC sought comments from various government departments.*
- *The proposal was resubmitted on October 18, 2022, and approved by the Centre on October 25, 2022.*

### **Case Before the Supreme Court**

- **Challengers:** *Environmentalist Aruna Rodrigues and Gene Campaign.*
- **Main Issues:**
  - *Whether GEAC's decision-making process was legal?*
  - *Whether the decision violated the "precautionary principle," which is part of the right to a clean environment under Article 21 (right to life)?*

### **Justice Nagarathna's Stand**

- **Field Tests:** *Criticized GEAC for not conducting the field tests it had committed to.*
- **Application of Mind:** *Accused GEAC of changing its stance without proper reasoning, which she saw as a violation of the principle of public trust.*
- **Precautionary Principle:** *Asserted that GEAC failed to consider the precautionary principle, violating the right to a safe and healthy environment.*
- **Public Trust:** *Emphasized that GEAC breached the principle of public trust by not ensuring long-term safety studies.*

### **Justice Karol's Stand**

- **Field Trials:** *Supported the environmental release and subsequent field trials, seeing them as necessary for scientific evaluation.*
- **Scientific Temper:** *Emphasized that conducting field trials aligns with fostering scientific temper.*
- **Precautionary Principle:** *Argued that the field tests adhered to the precautionary principle.*

- **GEAC Process:** Viewed GEAC's process as independent and reasoned, citing expert committee findings and recommendations from other government departments supporting the release of GM mustard.

### Common Directive

- **National Policy:** Both judges directed the Union of India to develop a National Policy on GM crops. This policy should involve consultations with experts, farmer representatives, and state governments.

### Conclusion

- **Next Steps:** The split verdict means the case will be referred to the **Chief Justice of India** for placement before a larger Bench.
- **National Policy Emphasis:** The judges stressed the need for a **comprehensive National Policy on GM crops**, ensuring extensive consultations and adherence to environmental safety principles.

### Practice Question

Q. Critically analyze the implications of the Supreme Court's split verdict on GM mustard for India's agricultural policy, environmental safety, and the precautionary principle under Article 21. (10 marks, 150 words)

## Ratapani Wildlife Sanctuary

**Syllabus: GS-3: Wildlife Conservation.**

### Context:

- Madhya Pradesh state wildlife board has accorded approval to declare **Ratapani wildlife sanctuary**, on the outskirts of Bhopal, as eighth tiger reserve of MP.

### About Ratapani Wildlife Sanctuary

- **Established:** Wildlife sanctuary since 1976
- **Tiger Reserve Status:**
  - In-principle approval granted by the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) in March 2013

- *The Government of Madhya Pradesh gave official status as a tiger reserve in 2024 July.*

### **Flora and Fauna**

- **Forest Area:** *Approximately 824 square kilometres (318 sq mi)*
- **Landscape:**
  - *Undulating with hills, plateaus, valleys, and plains*
  - *Seasonal streams present, retaining water in pools during summer*
- **Major Water Bodies:**
  - *Barna Reservoir*
  - *Ratapani Dam (Barrusot lake)*
- **Forest Types:**
  - *Dry deciduous*
  - *Moist deciduous*
  - *Teak (*Tectona grandis*) is the predominant species, covering about 55% of the area*
  - *Mixed forests with various dry deciduous species*
  - *Bamboo (*Dendrocalamus strictus*) covering about one quarter of the area*

### **Bhimbetka Rock Shelters**

- **Significance:**
  - *Located within the reserve*
  - *Inhabited by humans hundreds of thousands of years ago*
  - *Rock paintings from the Stone Age, some over 30,000 years old*
  - *Declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site*