



DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS 25-01-2025

GS-1

1. Ratnagiri Excavation

GS-2

2. Whip
3. Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao Scheme
4. Animal Diplomacy

GS-3

5. Differential Pricing

Ratnagiri Excavation

Syllabus: GS-1; Art & Culture

Context

- The ASI's ongoing excavation at Ratnagiri Buddhist site, Jajpur, has revealed a 1,200-year-old Buddhist monastery, votive stupas, pottery, inscribed stones, and a remarkable five-foot monolithic elephant sculpture.
- Supervised by ASI officials and university students, the December 2024 excavation aims to uncover more relics, enriching insights into Odisha's Buddhist heritage and its historical significance.



About

- The **Ratnagiri Excavation**, located in the Jajpur district of Odisha, is one of India's most significant archaeological and historical sites, particularly for understanding the legacy of Buddhism in the region. Known as the "Hill of Jewels," Ratnagiri has a rich history spanning over 1,200 years and is closely associated with the ancient region of Kalinga.

Historical Significance

1. Buddhist Heritage:

- Ratnagiri is a key center of Mahayana and Vajrayana Buddhism, flourishing between the 5th and 13th centuries CE.
 - It is considered part of the ancient **Puspagiri University**, one of the oldest Buddhist educational institutions globally.
2. **Recent Discoveries:**
- The **Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)** has recently uncovered significant Buddhist remains during renewed excavations, adding another chapter to Ratnagiri's storied past.
 - The findings include a **Buddhist complex**, multiple stone images of Lord Buddha, an ancient brick wall, votive stupas, pottery, inscribed stones, beads, and stone pillars.
 - The **unearthed monastery**, dating back to the **8th century CE**, was constructed under the patronage of the **Bhaumakara dynasty**, which ruled Odisha between the 8th and 11th centuries CE.

Timeline of Excavations

1. **Initial Excavations:**

- Ratnagiri was first documented in **1905** by Manmohan Chakravarty, then sub-divisional officer of Jajpur.
- Systematic excavations by ASI between **1958 and 1961** revealed extensive Buddhist establishments, including a **brick stupa**, **three monastic complexes**, **eight temples**, and over **700 votive stupas**.

2. **Renewed Excavations:**

- Conducted six decades after the initial discoveries, these excavations are a collaborative effort involving ASI and history departments from **Cotton University (Guwahati)**, **Sambalpur University**, and **Utkal University**.
- Dr. Sunil Patnaik, secretary of the Odisha Institute of Maritime and South East Asian Studies (OIMSEAS), highlighted that Buddha images found at Ratnagiri feature **unique hairstyles**, distinct from those in other parts of India.

Architectural Features

➤ **Mahastupa:**

- The central **brick stupa** is adorned with intricate carvings depicting Buddhist themes.

➤ **Monasteries:**

- Two large **monastic complexes (viharas)** with well-planned layouts, including cells, verandas, and central courtyards.

- **Votive Stupas:**
 - Smaller stupas likely built by pilgrims and devotees as acts of merit.
- **Chaityas and Shrines:**
 - Showcasing Mahayana iconography and evolving architectural styles.

Challenges and Conservation

- **Local Encroachment:**
 - Many villagers have constructed structures on parts of the Buddhist site, hindering conservation efforts.
 - Experts, including Tapan Pati, former history professor at Kendrapada Autonomous College, stress the need for government intervention to protect this heritage site.

Religious and Cultural Context

- **Mahayana and Vajrayana Traditions:**
 - Ratnagiri played a pivotal role in the spread of these Buddhist traditions.
- **Global Influence:**
 - Likely served as a hub for scholars and monks traveling between India and Southeast Asia.
- **Decline:**
 - With the decline of Buddhism in India after the 12th century, Ratnagiri lost its prominence.

Whip

Syllabus: GS-2; Parliament

Context

- Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar on Wednesday questioned the need for parties to issue whips to legislators, saying they restrict representatives' freedom and subject them to "servility".
- Parties issue whips to their members to be present or vote a certain way on significant legislation. In the last session of Parliament, the BJP had issued a whip to its members to be present as the Bills for simultaneous elections were being introduced.

Meaning and Origin

- A **Whip** is a directive issued by a political party to its members in the legislature, guiding them on how to vote on important issues.
- The term originates from the British parliamentary system, where it referred to the practice of "whipping in" party members to ensure their presence during crucial votes.

Functions of a Whip

- **Maintaining Party Discipline:** Ensures that members of the party adhere to the party line during debates and voting.
- **Ensuring Attendance:** Issues notices to members to be present in the legislature, especially during critical votes.
- **Monitoring Members' Behavior:** Keeps track of members' conduct in the house.
- **Communicating Party Decisions:** Acts as a link between the party leadership and its members.

Types of Whips

- **One-line Whip:** Members are instructed to attend the session but have the discretion to vote as they choose.
- **Two-line Whip:** Members must attend and vote according to the party's decision unless prior permission for absence is granted.
- **Three-line Whip:** The strictest form, requiring members to be present and vote as directed without exception. Failure to comply can lead to disciplinary action.

Whip in the Indian Context

- **Appointment:** Each political party appoints a Whip, usually a senior member of the party.
- **Constitutional Backing:**
 - Whip is not mentioned in the **Constitution of India** but derives authority from parliamentary conventions and rules.
 - The **10th Schedule** (Anti-Defection Law) gives legal weight to the Whip. Members defying a Whip on critical votes may attract disqualification under this law.
- **Applicability:** Whip applies only to members of the political party issuing it. Independent members and nominated members are generally not bound by a Whip.

Anti-Defection and Whip

- **Tenth Schedule** of the Constitution:
 - Legislators can be disqualified if they violate the party Whip during a vote on issues like a no-confidence motion or money bills.
 - Exception: If at least two-thirds of the party members decide to split or merge with another party, the disqualification clause does not apply.

Limitations of Whip

- **Restricts Free Speech:** Critics argue that strict enforcement of Whips stifles independent thinking and debate among legislators.
- **Overuse:** Whips are sometimes issued on trivial matters, undermining their importance.
- **Conflict with Democratic Principles:** Excessive control by the party undermines the autonomy of individual legislators.

Significance in Parliamentary Democracy

- Whips are essential for ensuring the stability of governments, particularly in coalition politics.
- They ensure smooth functioning of the legislature by reducing the chances of disruption.

Reforms Suggested

- Limit the use of Whips to confidence motions, budget approvals, and key national issues.
- Enhance legislators' autonomy on non-critical matters.
- Promote intra-party democracy to reduce over-reliance on Whips.

Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao Scheme

Syllabus: GS-2; Government Policies and Interventions

Context

- The Ministry of Women and Child Development is celebrating the 10th anniversary of the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) scheme, a flagship initiative dedicated to protecting, educating, and empowering the girl child in India.

About

- **Launch Year:** 2015
- **Objective:** Address declining Child Sex Ratio (CSR) and promote the empowerment of girls in India.
- **Tagline:** "Save the girl child, educate the girl child."
- **Ministries Involved:**
 - Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD)
 - Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW)
 - Ministry of Education (formerly Ministry of Human Resource Development)

Goals

- **Prevent gender-biased sex-selective elimination (GBSSE).**
- **Ensure survival and protection of the girl child.**
- **Ensure education and participation of the girl child.**

Key Features

- Focus on **multi-sectoral action** to improve:
 - Health and nutrition of girls.
 - Access to education.
 - Awareness against gender biases.
- **District-centric approach:** Initially implemented in 100 districts with poor CSR, expanded to cover all 640 districts.
- **Community engagement:** Involves local leaders, organizations, and stakeholders to promote behavioral changes.

Strategies

- **Advocacy and Awareness:** Nationwide campaigns to challenge stereotypes and create a positive image of girl children.
- **Monitoring and Enforcement:** Strengthen implementation of laws against sex determination and female feticide (e.g., PCPNDT Act).
- **Access to Education:**
 - Improve infrastructure and facilities in schools.
 - Promote enrollment and retention of girls, especially in secondary and higher education.

Achievements

- **Improved CSR:**
 - Notable increases in certain states, e.g., Haryana and Rajasthan.
- **Enhanced Girl Enrollment in Schools:**
 - Reduction in dropout rates.
 - Improved access to secondary and tertiary education.
- **Behavioral Change:**
 - Increased awareness about gender equality at the grassroots level.

Challenges

- **Implementation Gaps:**
 - Delayed fund allocation at district levels.
 - Inconsistent program execution across states.
- **Cultural Barriers:**
 - Deep-rooted patriarchal attitudes.
 - Preference for male children still persists in many regions.
- **Monitoring Issues:**
 - Difficulty in tracking and evaluating the scheme's impact due to insufficient data.

Animal Diplomacy

Syllabus: GS-2; International Relations, GS-4; Ethics Paper (Case Studies)- Discuss the ethical implications of using animals in diplomacy

Context

- The National Zoo in Washington, D.C., introduced its two new giant pandas to the public.
- Bao Li and Qing Bao are 3 years old. They're part of a conservation program and a historic partnership between the U.S. and China that goes back half a century.

What is Animal Diplomacy?

- Animal diplomacy involves the gifting, lending, or exchange of animals between countries to foster friendly relations and enhance bilateral ties. This practice leverages the universal appeal of animals to promote diplomacy and cultural understanding.

Historical Background

- **Ancient Practices:** The exchange of exotic animals as gifts dates back to ancient civilizations. For example, Chinese emperors sent animals like camels and horses to neighboring kingdoms.
- **Medieval Era:** Exotic animals were often gifted to European monarchs to signify alliances or as tokens of admiration.

Modern Examples

- **Panda Diplomacy (China):**
 - Initiated during the Tang Dynasty (618–907 CE), China modernized the practice in the 20th century.
 - Pandas were gifted or loaned to countries like the USA, Japan, and the UK as symbols of friendship.
 - Recent arrangements involve "loan agreements" where pandas are leased, and the recipient country contributes to conservation efforts.
- **Koala Diplomacy (Australia):**
 - Australia lends koalas to zoos globally as a gesture of goodwill.
 - Example: Koalas sent to Singapore and Japan to celebrate diplomatic anniversaries.
- **Elephant Diplomacy (Thailand and India):**
 - Thailand has gifted elephants to several countries as a cultural and diplomatic gesture.
 - India sent elephants to Japan post-World War II to foster goodwill.
- **Horses (Central Asia and Middle East):**
 - Arabian horses have been gifted by countries in the Middle East as symbols of nobility and respect.
- **Penguin Diplomacy (China):**
 - China gifted penguins to South Korea in 2014 as a part of their diplomatic outreach.
- **Cattle Diplomacy (India):**
 - India has sent Gir and Ongole cattle breeds to countries like Brazil and Sri Lanka to strengthen agricultural ties.

Objectives of Animal Diplomacy

- **Strengthen Bilateral Relations:** Enhance cultural and political ties.
- **Soft Power Tool:** Improve the country's image and influence globally.

- **Conservation Awareness:** Promote wildlife protection and biodiversity conservation.
- **Cultural Symbolism:** Showcase unique fauna as a representation of national heritage.

Criticism of Animal Diplomacy

- **Ethical Concerns:** Questions about the welfare of animals transported to different climates.
- **Political Tool:** Critics argue it is sometimes used to mask political agendas.
- **Cultural Appropriateness:** Misalignment between the symbolism of animals and recipient country values.
- **Conservation Trade-offs:** Leasing agreements may prioritize politics over genuine conservation efforts.

Differential Pricing

Syllabus: GS-3; Economy

Context

- Ride-hailing firms Ola and Uber have denied allegations of charging different fares based on the type of mobile device used to book rides.

Definition:

- Differential Pricing is also known as price discrimination.
- It occurs when a seller charges different prices for the same product or service to different customers, based on their willingness or ability to pay.

Types of Differential Pricing:

- **First-Degree Price Discrimination:** Charging each consumer the maximum price they are willing to pay.
- **Second-Degree Price Discrimination:** Different pricing based on quantity or volume purchased (e.g., bulk discounts).
- **Third-Degree Price Discrimination:** Pricing based on consumer groups (e.g., student discounts, senior citizen discounts).

Examples of Differential Pricing:

- Pharmaceutical companies selling drugs at lower prices in developing countries compared to developed countries.
- Airlines charging different fares for the same flight based on booking time, demand, or class of service.
- Telecom operators offering variable pricing for data or call plans based on usage patterns.

Benefits of Differential Pricing:

- **Maximizes Revenue:** Helps businesses tap into consumer surplus and increase profits.
- **Improves Accessibility:** Allows essential goods and services to reach disadvantaged sections at lower prices (e.g., life-saving medicines in poor countries).
- **Encourages Efficiency:** Promotes optimal utilization of resources.

Challenges of Differential Pricing:

- **Ethical Concerns:** Can lead to exploitation if consumers are overcharged or underserved.
- **Market Segmentation Issues:** May create dissatisfaction among customers aware of price differences.
- **Regulatory Hurdles:** Governments may step in to prevent unfair practices, especially in essential services.
- **Risk of Arbitrage:** When consumers in low-price segments resell to high-price segments, disrupting the strategy.

Policy and Regulatory Aspects:

- Differential pricing is subject to scrutiny under competition law and regulations.
- In India, the **Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI)** banned discriminatory pricing of data services, as it went against net neutrality principles (e.g., the Facebook Free Basics controversy).
- Differential pricing for drugs is monitored under the **National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA)** to ensure affordability.