

KSG:NEWSPAPER CRUX

16TH FEBRUARY, 2021

NEWSPAPER HIGHLIGHTS

- **Proposals for tourism and port development in the Andaman and Nicobar (A&N) Islands have conservationists worried over the fate of some of the most important nesting populations of the Giant Leatherback turtle in this part of the Indian Ocean.**
- **Chief Justice of India Sharad A. Bobde said Indians have “grave apprehensions” about privacy from Facebook and WhatsApp.**
- **The National Company Law Appellate Tribunal ordered the appointment of a Central government nominated administrator for the Delhi Gymkhana Club after prima facie finding irregularities in the management of its affairs.**
- **Chinese troops have started clearing the Finger 4 area on the North bank of the Pangong Tso lake, and the ongoing disengagement on north and the south banks of the lake by both sides is likely to be completed within a week, a government official said.**
- **Several hundred people including farmers’ leaders, politicians and ordinary citizens took part in protests in support of environmental activist Disha A. Ravi, who was arrested on Saturday by the Delhi police in connection with the Greta Thunberg toolkit case.**
- **Myanmar’s deposed leader Aung San Suu Kyi will appear in court via videoconference this week over charges brought against her by the new military junta, her lawyer said.**
- **Israeli missile strikes against several targets near Syria’s capital Damascus killed at least nine pro-regime militia fighters early on Monday, a Britain-based war monitor said.**
- **Nigeria’s Ngozi OkonjoIweala was appointed as the first female and first African head of the beleaguered World Trade Organization (WTO). The near-paralysed institution desperately needs a kick-start—something she immediately addressed.**

FALLING NUMBER OF SC AND ST STUDENTS IN IITs

- 1.Data collected from a series of Right to Information (RTI) applications pertaining to five older Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs), has indicated that the acceptance rate is skewed against students from the Scheduled Caste (SC), Scheduled Tribe (ST), and Other Backward Classes (OBC) communities.
- 2.**SC and ST applicants are half as likely to get selected for a Ph.D. programme at IITs as aspirants from the General Category (GC) are.**
- 3.Acceptance Rate: It refers to the number of students selected for every 100 students who applied. It stood at 4% for students from General Category (GC). It falls to 2.7% for OBC students and further down to just 2.16% for SCs and 2.2% for STs.

MAJOR PORT AUTHORITY BILL,2020

- 1.The Parliament has passed the Major Port Authorities Bill, 2020. The Bill seeks **to provide greater autonomy in decision-making to 12 major ports in the country and professionalise their governance by setting up boards.** It also seeks to replace the Major Port Trusts Act, 1963.
- 2.India has 12 major ports - Deendayal (erstwhile Kandla), Mumbai, JNPT, Marmugao, New Mangalore, Cochin, Chennai, Kamarajar (earlier Ennore), V O Chidambarnar, Visakhapatnam, Paradip and Kolkata (including Haldia).
- 3.The **Bill provides for the creation of a Board of Major Port Authority for each major port.** These Boards will replace the existing Port Trusts.
- 4.Provision has been made for inclusion of representatives of State Government in which the Major Port is situated, Ministry of Railways, Ministry of Defence.

ARBITRATION AND CONCILIATION(BILL), 2021

- 1.The Lok Sabha has passed the Arbitration and Conciliation (Amendment) Bill, 2021 **to check misuse by “fly-by-night operators”** who take advantage of the law to get favourable awards by fraud. The Bill intends to replace the Arbitration and Conciliation (Amendment) ordinance issued in November, 2020.
- 2.It does away with the qualifications of the arbitrators under 8th Schedule of the Arbitration and Conciliation Act, 1996 which specified that the arbitrator must be: An advocate under the Advocates Act, 1961 with 10 years of experience, or An officer of the Indian Legal Service.
- 3.It would bring about parity among all the stakeholders in the arbitration process. **All the stakeholders get an opportunity to seek unconditional stay on enforcement of arbitral awards where the agreement or contract is “induced by fraud or corruption”.**

THAR DESERT

- 1.The Pakistan Army is holding a month-long exercise code-named ‘Jidar-ul-Hadeed’ in the Thar Desert. The aim is to prepare for conflict in extreme desert environments.
- 2.A multinational naval exercise hosted by Pakistan, Aman-2021, has also begun in the Arabian Sea. 45 countries, including the USA, Russia, China and Turkey, will be participating in the exercise.
- 3.The Thar Desert is an arid region that covers over 2,00,000 sq km. It forms a natural boundary along the border between India and Pakistan.
- 4.The name, Thar is derived from thul, the general term for the region’s sand ridges. Location: It is **located partly in Rajasthan state, northwestern India, and partly in Punjab and Sindh provinces, eastern Pakistan.**