



News Analysis (28 Dec, 2018)

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Ruins of the Church of St. Augustine

The church was built between 1597 and 1602, and is **dedicated to Our Lady of Grace** by the **Order of Saint Augustine**.

- The church was abandoned in 1830s due to the repressive policies of the Portuguese government, which resulted in the eviction of many religious orders from Goa.
- In 1842, the **main vault of the church collapsed** after which the entire **structure collapsed in stages**.
- In 1931, the facade and half the tower fell down, followed by more sections leaving only half the tower that is seen today.
- This remnant, the renowned **St. Augustine's tower is all that remains** of what was once one of the largest buildings in Goa -The Augustinian Monastery.
- In **1986, UNESCO declared the ruins to be a World Heritage Site** which is also the site of the archaeological discovery of the **remains of Queen Ketevan**.
- In the late 1980s, archaeologists from the Soviet Union and Georgia began efforts to trace the relics of Ketevan the Martyr, a Georgian queen who had delivered herself as a hostage to Shah Abbas I and was martyred for refusing to deny her faith whose relics were believed to be in Goa.

Architecture

- Originally comprising of four towers **built of laterite and a massive vault**, the dimensions of the edifice **resembles the great imperial cathedrals of the Renaissance era**.
- The **whole structure being supported by soaring pillars**, the vestiges of which remain visible today. The **grey basalt columns provide a lovely contrast to the red laterite**.
- The altar of the church has beautiful multicoloured Italian tiles and remnants of red and blue paintings.

- The tower's huge bell was moved in 1871 to the Church of our Lady of the Immaculate Conception in Panjim.

Delta Ranking of the Aspirational Districts

NITI Aayog has released the ranking of 111 aspirational districts- DEEP-DIVE 2nd Delta Ranking & Insights from Household Survey.

Aspirational Districts were **ranked on improved performance** made by them over the months of **June – October 2018**.

- The districts were assessed across **six developmental areas** of **Health and Nutrition, Education, Agriculture and Water Resources, Financial Inclusion, Skill Development, and Basic Infrastructure**.
- The ranking also factored invalidated data from Household Surveys conducted by NITI Aayog's knowledge partners, namely, TATA Trusts and Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (IDInsight).
- The Surveys were carried out in all Aspirational Districts during the month of June 2018 covering more than 1,00,000 households.
- The first delta ranking for aspirational districts was released in June 2018.

Ranking of Districts

Most and Least Improved Districts (June-October 2018)

Rank	District, State	Rank	District, State
1	Virudhunagar, Tamil Nadu	107	Kiphire, Nagaland
2	Nuapada, Odisha	108	Giridh, Jharkhand
3	Siddharthnagar, Uttar Pradesh	109	Chatra, Jharkhand

4	Aurangabad, Bihar	110	Hailakandi, Assam
5	Koraput, Odisha	111	Pakur, Jharkhand

"Fast Movers": Districts which have shown a qualitative jump in their scores between June and October 2018

District, State	June 2018	October 2018
Kupwara, Jammu, and Kashmir	108	7
Ranchi, Jharkhand	106	10
Siddarthnagar, Uttar Pradesh	101	3
Jamui, Bihar	99	9
Fatehpur, Uttar Pradesh	82	25

Most and Least Improved Districts Across Different Themes

Themes	Most Improved District	Least Improved Districts
Education	Virudhunagar, Tamil Nadu	Pakur, Jharkhand
Health and Nutrition	Chitrakoot, Uttar Pradesh	Chatra, Jharkhand
Financial Inclusion	Kupwara, Jammu, and Kashmir	Chandel, Manipur

Agriculture and Water Resources	Sitmarhi, Bihar	Giridh, Jharkhand
Basic Infrastructure	Virudhunagar, Tami Nadu	Pakur, Jharkhand
Skill Development	Raichur, Karnataka	Khammam, Telangana

Significance

- The delta ranking of the Aspirational Districts combines the **innovative use of data with pragmatic administration**, keeping the district at the locus of inclusive development.
- This positioning is expected to **aid the District Magistrates/Collectors** to focus more on these sectors and improve their ranking in the future.

'Transformation of Aspirational Districts' programme

- This was launched in **January 2018**.
- The programme was launched with the **aim of expeditiously improving the socio-economic status of 117 districts through cooperative and competitive federalism**.
- Driven primarily by the States, this initiative focuses on the strengths of each district and prioritizes the attainable outcomes for immediate improvement.
- The Aspirational Districts programme **aims to rapidly transform districts that have been showing relatively less progress in key social areas**, and have emerged as pockets of under-development, thereby posing a challenge to balanced regional development.
- The programme tracks 81 data-points across six themes with direct bearing on the quality of life and economic productivity of citizens. The themes and their weights are as follows:
- The broad contours of the programme are:
 - **Convergence** (of Central & State Schemes),
 - **Collaboration** (of Central, State level 'Prabhari' Officers & District Collectors),
 - **Competition among districts** driven by a Mass Movement or a Jan Andolan.

Delta Ranking

- The programme ranks districts based on the improvement achieved month-on-month through the Champions of Change dashboard (An online Dashboard).
 - Districts enter data for the previous month by the 20th of the next month, after which the dashboard automatically updates ranking based on the entered data.
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Important Facts for Prelims (28th December 2018)

Decrease in Population of River Dolphins

- **Rise in salinity** in the central and eastern water system of the Indian Sunderbans has resulted in the decrease of population of the **Ganges River Dolphins in the region**.
- Researchers have found some evidence of the species only in the western part of Sunderbans, where the salinity is lower.
- **Reasons for rise in salinity:**
 - **Lost connectivity** with the upstream freshwater flow;
 - **Rise in sea level**, triggered by climate change;
 - Hydrological modifications like **water diversion** and **commission of large barrages upstream**.
- Flow of freshwater to the Sunderbans is crucial for the subsistence of these species as it becomes **difficult for the dolphin to remain submerged** in waters with high salinity.
- A higher rate of encounter were noted in rivers and stretches that had limited use of motorised boats, less river traffic and more country boats.
- Earlier in 2018, it was reported that the Dolphin population also declined at the Vikramshila Gangetic Dolphin Sanctuary (VGDS).

Baseline Survey of Waterfowl in Kaziranga

- For the **first time survey of various bird species**, specifically the waterfowl was held in Kaziranga National Park.
- Traditionally the focus of attention in the Kaziranga, has been the **'big four' — rhino, elephant, Bengal tiger and Asiatic water buffalo**.
- A good avifauna reflects on the **health of the ecosystem**, and the baseline survey will help to understand the population trend.

Pokkali Paddy

- **Endemic to Central Kerala**, the Pokkali paddy variety, which grows to a height of up to 2 metre, survived the devastating floods.
- The **GI-tagged** Pokkali is a **saltwater-tolerant paddy** grown in the coastal fields of **Alappuzha, Ernakulam and Thrissur districts of Kerala**.

- This traditional farming of Pokkali paddy is facing threat as farmers are not getting satisfactory return despite it fetches good price in the market.
- **Local societies, cooperative banks and Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act(MGNREGA) groups** have stepped in to protect this variety of rice, which the local people believe has **medicinal properties**.
- Pokkali is an **ancient farming practice**. One season of rice farming is alternated with **another season of prawn culture**.

Pavakoothu Puppetry

- In **Kerala**, the traditional **glove puppet play** is called Pavakoothu.
 - It came into existence during the **18th century due to the influence of Kathakali**, the famous classical dance-drama of Kerala.
 - The head and the arms of puppet are carved of wood and joined together with thick cloth, cut and stitched into a small bag.
 - The face of the puppets are decorated with paints, small and thin pieces of gilded tin, the feathers of the peacock, etc.
 - The manipulator puts his hand into the bag and moves the hands and head of the puppet.
 - The theme for glove puppet plays in Kerala is based on the **episodes from either the Ramayana or the Mahabharata**.
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