HC wants ASI archaeologist transferred back to Keezhadi-Asks Centre to show greater vigour in proceeding with excavations

Why in News?

The Madras High Court on Friday impressed on the Centre the need to show greater vigour and interest in proceeding with the excavations that had led to promising discovery of an ancient civilisation having thrived on the banks of river Vaigai at Keezhadi village in Sivaganga district.

In Brief:

High Court also insisted that Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) should transfer back its superintending archaeologist K. Amarnath Ramakrishna, serving in Assam since 2017, for continuing the excavations began by him at Keezhadi in 2015.

The judges granted two weeks' time to the counsel for ASI to get the official transferred back.

Excavations will reveal the pride of Tamil people world wide, but the Court is confused about the adamancy of the Centre in this issue.

The oral observations were made during the hearing of a public interest litigation petition filed in the Madurai Bench of the High Court challenging the 2017 transfer of Mr. Ramakrishna.

Prelims titbits: A must read for Prelims

ASI (Archaeological Survey of India)

1. An Indian Government Agency attached to the Ministry of Culture.

2. It is responsible for the Archaeological research and the conservation and preservation of cultural monuments in the country.

3. Founded in1861 by Alexander Cunningham, who was also its first Director general.

4. It was founded in 1861 by a statute passed in to a law by Lord Canning and Alexander Cunningham was the first surveyor.

5. Survey was suspended briefly between 1865 and 1871 due to lack of funds and was restored by Lord Lawrence, the then Viceroy of India.

6. In 1871 it was revived as a separate department and Cunningham was appointed as the first director general.

7. Under the provisions of the AMSAR act 1958, the ASI administers more than 3650 ancient monuments, sites and remains of national importance.

8. The site also maintains ancient mounds and other similar sites which represent the remains of ancient habitation.

Also Read: AMSAR ACT:

Note

The Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act (or AMASR Act) is an act of Parliament of the GOI, that provides preservation of ancient and historical monuments and archaeological sites and remains of national importance, for the regulation of excavations and for the protection of sculptures, carvings and other like objects.

The ASI functions under the Provisions of the AMSAR ACT.

The rules stipulate that area in the vicinity of the monument, within 100 metres is prohibited area.

The area within 200 meters of the monument is regulated category. Any repair or modifications of buildings in this area requires prior permission.

Exports rise 2.44%; trade deficit narrows

Why in News:

A marginal 2.44% increase in exports as well as lower imports of gold and petroleum products in February, significantly narrowed the country's trade deficit to $9.6 billion, according to data released by the Commerce Ministry on Friday.

Merchandise exports grew to $26.67 billion in Feb., imports declined to $36.26 bn

India's merchandise exports rose to $26.67 billion in February from $26.03 in the year-ago month mainly on account of higher shipments in sectors such as pharmaceutical, engineering and electronics.

Imports declined by 5.4% to $36.26 billion in the last month, narrowing the trade deficit to $9.6 billion. The gap between imports and exports was $12.3 billion in February 2018, and $14.73 billion in January 2019.

As per the data, the drop in imports was mainly on account of sharp decline in inward shipments of gold and petroleum products.

Gold import falls

While the import of gold fell by about 11% to $2.58 billion in February, as against $2.89 billion in the corresponding month last fiscal, inward shipments of petroleum products were down by nearly 8% to $9.37 billion.

Non-petroleum and non-gems and jewellery exports in February 2019 stood at $19.87 billion, as compared to $18.90 billion in the year-ago month. Non-petroleum and non-gems and jewellery exports in April-February 2018-19 were $217.43 billion, as against $201.95 billion in the comparative period last fiscal.

Also read: Trade deficit, imports and exports pattern. Go through the Economic Survey.

CHRISTCHURCH MOSQUE SHOOTINGS

Why in news?

•The Christchurch mosque shootings were two consecutive white supremacist terrorist attacks at Al Noor Mosque and the Linwood Islamic Centre in Christchurch, New Zealand, during Friday prayers on 15 March 2019.

Note

News in brief:

- Forty-nine people were killed and at least forty-eight others were injured.
- The alleged perpetrator, Brenton Tarrant, an Australian, was arrested and charged with murder.
- This attack shows the growing Islamophobia in New Zealand.

ARAKAN ARMY

Why in news?

- Recently the Myanmar army with the assistance of Indian army wiped out the 12 camps of Arakan army.
- The rebel group pose threat to the Kaladan Multimodal project, an initiative of Indian government.

About Arakan Army:

- The **Arakan Army** is a Rakhine insurgent group in Myanmar , founded on 10 April 2009.It is the armed wing of the **United League of Arakan (ULA),**
- It objectives include self-determination for the multi-ethnic Arakanese population and safeguarding and promotion of the national identity and cultural heritage of the Arakan people.

Kaladan Multimodal Project:

•This project aims to connect seaport of Kolkata (India) with Sittwe seaport in Myanmar by sea; it will then link Sittwe seaport to Lashio in MyanmarKaladan via river boat route and then from Lashio to Mizoram in India by road transport.

Note

SOCIAL ROBOTS

Why in news?

Toyota unveiled its human support (HSR) and delivery support robots (DSR), which will fetch food and drinks for disabled fans at next year's Olympics.

More in news

Recently the Kerala Police has introduced a Sub-Inspector ranked Humanoid robot called KP-BOT.

This KP-BOT is India's first and world's fourth police robot.

About Social Robots:

A social robot is an autonomous robot that interacts and communicates with humans or other autonomous physical agents by following social behaviours and rules attached to its role.

STRONG INFLOWS HELP PUSH RUPEE TO A SIX MONTH HIGH:

In Brief :

● The rupee has been steadily appreciating at 69.10 to a dollar due to strong inflow in both debt and equity segments helped the currency to hit six month high against the dollar.

Factors for the strong inflows and Rupee appreciation:

● Firstly ,Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs) were net buyers in equities FII inflows have crossed Rs:30,000 crore till date.

● Secondly ,post the air strikes in Balkot,foreign investors are now factoring in a return for the Modi led NDA government at the centre

● Third ,the recent decision of RBI for a currency swap to infuse rupee liquidity is expected to bring down hedging cost,prompting inflows in the short end of the corporate debt and atlast positive seasonality for a rupee in March.
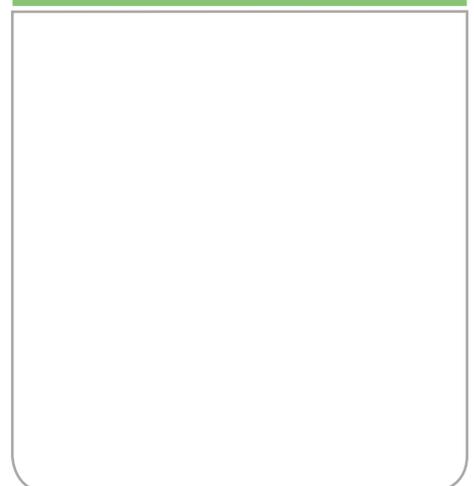
What is FPI?

•Foreign Portfolio Investment (FPI) is investment by non residents in Indian securities including shares ,government bonds ,corporate bonds ,convertible securities ,infrastructure securities etc..The class of investors who make investment in these securities are known Foreign Portfolio Investors.

•FPI is induced by differences in equity price scenario,bond yield,growth propects,intrest rate,dividends or rate of return on capital in India's financial assets.

IIT –M to help Afghanistan develop online courses:

● The Indian Institute of Technology–Madras will assist Afghanistan's higher education department to set up its own online courses platform ,the agreement was signed between the courtries.

● The collabraion would allow the sharing of the Indian Government's platform **Study Webs of Active learning for Young Aspiring Minds(SWAYAM)**

● The institute would assist the educational institutions in Afghanistan to upload existing courses developed locally on the SWAYAM platform

● It allows Afghan to access the National Digital Library of India (NDLI),virtual labs and tutorials developed by IIT's

What is SWAYAM?

● SWAYAM is a programme initiated by GOIand developed by Ministry of

Note

Human Resourse and Development(MHRD) and All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) designed to achieve the three cardinal principles of Education policy that is access,equity and quality.

- Objective of SWAYAM: to take best teaching learning resources to all including the most disadvantaged,bridge the digital divide for students who remained untouched by the Digital revolution.

- 4 quadrants of courses hosted on SWAYAM:

1.Video lecture

2.Specially prepared reading material that can be downloaded/ printed

3.Self assessment tests through tests and quizzes

4.An online discussion forum for clearing the doubts

India's shrinking houses

In News:

Average sizes of flats in most big cities have shrunk in the last five years, largely driven by realtors' efforts to tap a larger customer base, especially millennials who have shown preference for affo¬rdable homes at good location over larger flats in the far-flung suburbs. According to real estate consultancy firm Anarock, properties costing below Rs 40 lakh saw 23% fall in average sizes in the 2014-2018 period. In absolute terms, sizes reduced from 750 sqft in 2014 to 580 sqft in 2018 for such houses.

In Brief:

When it comes to housing, size matters for all kinds of reasons. The added floor space of larger homes definitely spells comfort, convenience and family scalability, every additional square foot either comes at a higher price or pushes available options further away from the central regions of a city.

Millennial buyers have already made it clear that they prefer affordability coupled with good location over larger homes in far-flung suburbs. Simultaneously, developers are intent on making their housing projects more pock-et-friendly to reach a higher customer base.

As a result, the top seven Indian cities collectively saw average apartment sizes shrink by nearly 17% between 2014 and 2018. However, this has not been a uniform phenomenon.
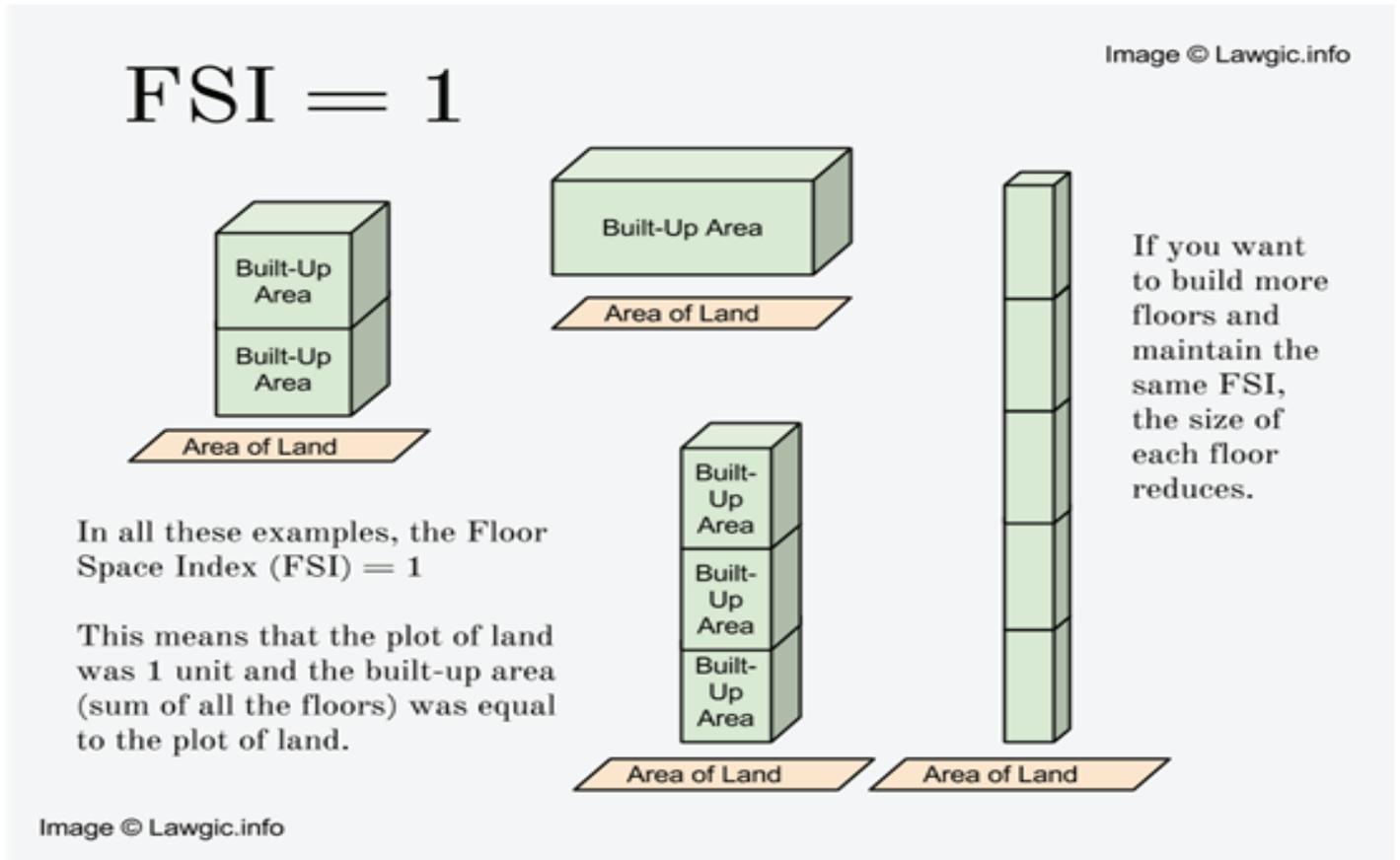
Floor Area Ratio:

SC seeks EC view on holding bypools in all 21 vacant seats

In News:

The Supreme Court issued notice to the Election Commission of India to notify the bypolls and publish the election schedule for the vacant Assembly constituencies.

Note

Image © Lawgic.info

FSI = 1

In all these examples, the Floor Space Index (FSI) = 1

This means that the plot of land was 1 unit and the built-up area (sum of all the floors) was equal to the plot of land.

Image © Lawgic.info

If you want to build more floors and maintain the same FSI, the size of each floor reduces.

In Brief:

What is by poll election in India and why by-elections are held

In a democracy like India, where political verdicts are people-driven and unpredictability is the norm, by-elections are a necessary enabler for restoring stability.

You don't have to force yourself hard to remember instances wherein by-elections were called because of voting irregularities and myriad other reasons.

These elections occur between regularly scheduled elections and give people the opportunity to redeem their situation.

Note

If a state has suffered in the hands of an incompetent government in the first phase, it can get back its pie of prosperity by bringing a better alternative to the forefront.

By-elections have become a commonality in India, partly because of the misuse of provision of a law under the Representation of the People Act that allows a candidate to contest elections from two constituencies.

When the candidate wins from both the constituencies, he/she has to vacate one of the seats. This triggers by-election as one of the seats that is rendered vacant.

Note