

## UPSC Daily Current Affairs | Prelim Bits 07-10-2024

### Shompen Tribes

*Some members of the shompen tribes voted in the 2024 election amidst fears that their forests on the Great Nicobar island will be destroyed by a proposed project.*

- Shompens are one of the least known ***particularly vulnerable tribal groups (PVTGs)*** in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.
- They are one of the most isolated tribes on Earth and the group is heterogeneous.
- **Language** - The Shompen have their own language, called Shompenese, which is part of the Austroasiatic language family. The Shompen language has many dialects.
- **Cultural practices** - The Shompens are primarily hunter-gatherers and also practise a little bit of horticulture and pig rearing.
- Hunting of wild pigs, monkeys, monitor lizards and sometimes pythons are common among the tribe.
- **Diet** - Pandanus (a tropical plant found in the islands), whose fruits resemble the woody pineapple, is the staple food of the Shompens.
- **Classification** - Geographically, the tribe can be classified into 4 different groups depending on their location in the Great Nicobar Island namely north-eastern, western, southern and central groups.
- **Economy** - Different groups of Shompens have developed different levels of symbiotic relationship particularly a ***barter system with the Great Nicobarese.***
- **Distinction** - Shompens distinct from the 4 other PVTGs of Andaman and Nicobar Islands by Mongoloid features.
- **Religion** - Animism.
- **Social structure** - The Shompen have a patriarchal social structure, with the eldest male member overseeing family affairs.
- **Population** - According to the 2011 Census, there are only around 229 members of the Shompen tribe.

### References

[The Hindu | Shompen people](#)

### Antarctic Peninsula

*Antarctic Peninsula showed 10-fold greening since 1986 according to the archive study of National Aeronautics and Space Administration's (NASA) Landsat satellite mission between 1986 and 2021.*

### Recent Findings

- Vegetation cover likely increased from less than one square km (km<sup>2</sup>) in 1986 to almost 12 km<sup>2</sup> in 2021.
- The Antarctic Peninsula is heating up 5 times faster than the global average. Since 1950, the region has warmed almost 3°C.
- More than 90% of the glaciers have been losing mass since the 1940s.
- Vascular plants native to the Peninsula have extended their range. However, scientists are particularly concerned about moss ecosystems.
- Mosses play a crucial role in changing the extent of vegetated ground cover, organic soil formation, and higher plant colonization.
- Mosses are capable of colonizing bare rock surfaces and helping future soil development to enable moss-dominated ecosystems and higher plants to take over.
- This raises the *risk of non-native and invasive species arriving*, possibly carried by ecotourists, scientists or other visitors to the continent.

## Antarctic Peninsula

- The Antarctic Peninsula is the northernmost part of mainland Antarctica.
- It is known as
  - O'Higgins Land in Chile and
  - Tierra de San Martín in Argentina, and
  - Originally as Graham Land in the United Kingdom and
  - The Palmer Peninsula in the United States.
- This peninsula is notable for its unique ecosystems and is considered one of the most accessible regions in Antarctica for scientific research.
- The major feature of this peninsula is its mountain range.
- Mount Jackson is the highest peak at 3,184 metres but there are many other equally as impressive mountains.
- Marguerite Bay indents the west coast, and ***Bransfield Strait*** separates the peninsula from the South Shetland Islands to the north.
- Many other islands and floating ice shelves lie off the coast.



## Reference

[Down to Earth | Antarctic Peninsula is dramatically greening](#)

## Caracal

*Gujarat government allocates Rs 10 crore for Caracal conservation and breeding recently.*

- **Scientific Name** - Caracal caracal.
- The caracal is a **medium-sized wildcat** primarily nocturnal animal.
- The caracal's name comes from the Turkish word karakulak, which means "black ear".
- In India, it is called siya gosh, which is Persian for "black ear".
- **Appearance** -The caracal has long legs, a short face, long canine teeth, and have Black markings around eyes and whiskers.
- It is known for its remarkable agility, capable of leaping over 3 meters (9.8 feet) to catch birds in midair.
- Among small cats, caracals are the largest in Africa, recognized for both their speed and weight.
- **Diet** - Caracals are strictly carnivorous. They prey primarily on birds, rodents and small antelopes.
- **Habitat** - They live in woodlands, savannahs and in scrub forests, but avoid sandy

deserts. In southern Africa, they usually live in upland areas.

- **Distribution** - Caracals are found in most regions of Africa and from the Arabian Peninsula through northwest India and also found in Middle East.
- **In India** - It is now only found in a few areas of India, including:
  - Ranthambhore Tiger Reserve, Rajasthan.
  - Kutch region, Gujarat.
- **Conservation status**
  - **IUCN** - 'least concern'.
  - **Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972** - Schedule-I.
  - Conservation Assessment and Management Plan (CAMP) listed as 'near threatened'.
- **Threats** - Hunting, Habitat loss and Competition with other predators.
- **Caracal Conservation areas**
- Some protected areas that are good for caracal conservation include
  - Kachchh Wildlife Sanctuary (WLS) in Gujarat
  - The tiger reserves of Ranthambhore, Mukundra hills, and Sariska
  - The WLS of Kumbhalgarh, Mount Abu, and Todgarh-Raoli in Rajasthan
  - Gandhi Sagar WLS in Madhya Pradesh



## Reference

[Ani News | Gujarat allocates Rs 10 crore for Caracal conservation](#)

## Very Short Range Air Defence System (VSHORAD)

*The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) recently announced the completion of the development trials of the ingeniously developed 4<sup>th</sup> Generation miniaturised VSHORAD.*

- The VSHORAD is a ***Man Portable Air Defence System (MANPADS)*** aims to provide effective protection against aerial threats at short ranges.

- **Developed by** - DRDO's Research Centre Imarat (RCI) in collaboration with other DRDO laboratories and DcPPs.
- **Range** - 1 to 15 kilometers.
- **Altitude** - It can engage targets at altitudes up to around 3,000 meters.
- **Novel Technologies** - The VSHORADS missile is equipped with advanced features including a miniaturized Reaction Control System (RCS) and integrated avionics.
- **Propulsion system** - It is powered by a dual-thrust solid motor, making it capable of effectively neutralizing low-altitude aerial threats at short ranges.
- **Features** - It can engage multiple targets simultaneously.
- It is designed to protect ground forces and critical assets from low-flying aerial threats such as drones, helicopters, and fast-moving aircraft.
- These systems fill a vital gap between short-range and close-in air defense solutions, providing quick response capabilities to counter immediate threats.
- The system has been subjected to successful flight tests, indicating its operational readiness.
- VSHORAD systems are often mounted on mobile platforms, such as vehicles or trailers, enabling them to be repositioned quickly in response to changing battlefield conditions.

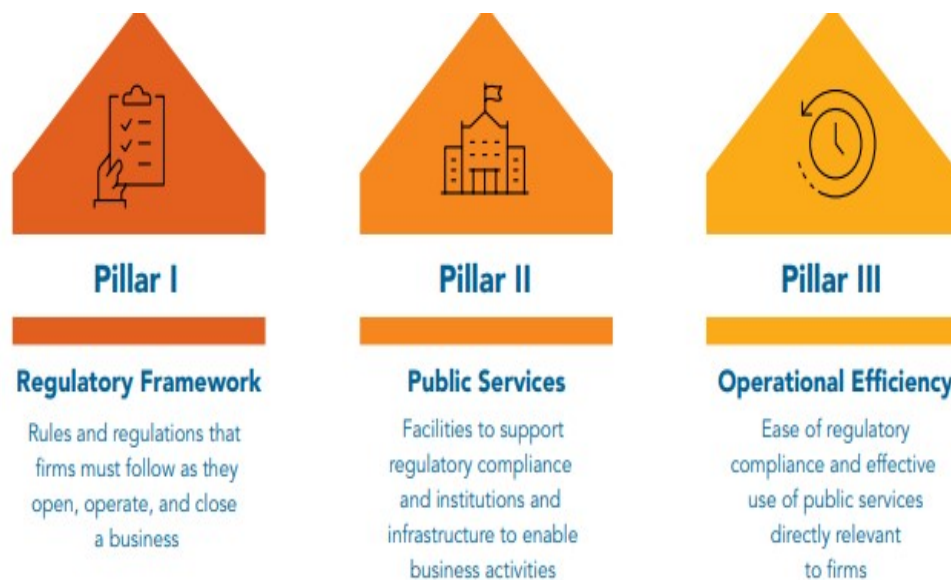
## References

1. [The Hindu | DRDO announces development trials of VSHORADS](#)
2. [Economic Times | 4th-Gen VSHORADS missile](#)

## Business-Ready Index (B-Ready)

*Govt looking to align some indicators of India's BRAP 2024 index with the World Bank's B-READY index recently.*

- The Business-Ready Index (B-Ready) is a quantitative assessment tool that evaluates the business environment.
- The flagship report collects new data and analysis project of the World Bank Group to assess the business and investment climate worldwide.
- The B-READY index is a successor to the Ease of Doing Business rankings, which were discontinued in 2021 due to irregularities.
- It is a key instrument of the World Bank Group's new strategy to facilitate private investment, generate employment, and improve productivity to help economies accelerate development.
- **Pillars** - It focuses on 3 main pillars.



- The pillars will benchmark and provide comprehensive data and analysis, which can guide policy reforms and support private sector development.
- **Parameters** - It tracks 10 parameters throughout a firm's lifecycle, including starting, operating, closing, and reorganizing.



- **Scoring** - For each economy, B-READY produces 2 sets of scores
- One consisting of 10 topic scores and another comprising 3 pillar scores. Topic and pillar scores can range from a ***minimum of 0 to a maximum of 100.***
- For topic scores, every score is generated by averaging the scores assigned to each of the three pillars (Regulatory Framework, Public Services, Operational Efficiency) for that topic.
- Although the B-READY rankings will commence in 2024, India will only participate in the exercise in 2026.
- The first set of rankings will feature ***54 countries,*** with the 2025 report covering 120 economies and the 2026 version having rankings on 180 economies.

*The government had recently announced the BRAP 2022 rankings, which were topped by Andhra Pradesh and Kerala.*

## References

1. [Money Control | Aligning India's BRAP index with B-READY index](#)
2. [World Bank | Business Ready Index](#)



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