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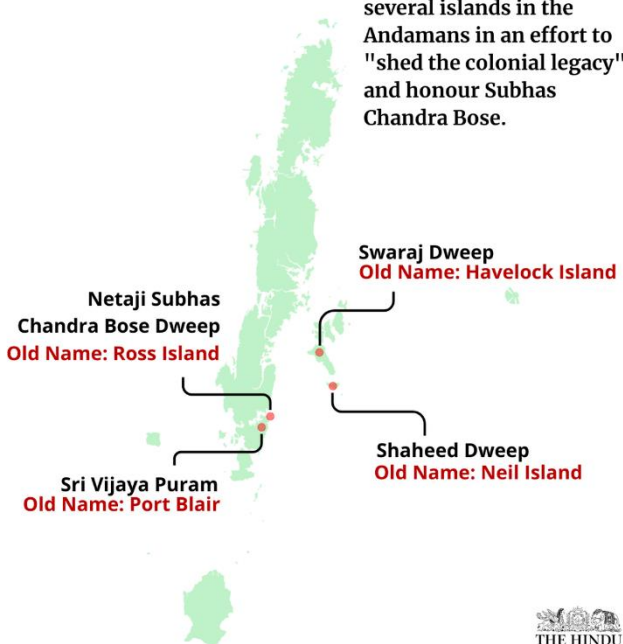
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1. Port Blair renamed as Sri Vijaya Puram

Supreme Court's Ruling

Port Blair, now renamed as Sri Vijaya Puram, has a rich historical backdrop connecting it to both colonial and imperial histories. Here's an overview of its historical evolution and the significance of its new name:

Renaming Islands in Andaman



Historical Evolution of Port Blair

1. Colonial Origins:

O Naming: The city was named after Archibald Blair, a naval surveyor who conducted a significant survey of the Andaman Islands in the late 18th century. Initially, the natural harbor he discovered was named Port Cornwallis, but it was later renamed Port Blair in his honor.

O Colonial Use: The British East India Company established a penal colony in the Andaman Islands, with Port Blair serving as a central point. This site became infamous for its harsh conditions and the infamous Cellular Jail, where political prisoners and rebels were imprisoned.

2. Strategic Importance:

O Penal Colony: Port Blair was

reestablished as a penal colony following the Revolt of 1857, housing numerous political prisoners and convicts under severe conditions.

O Colonial Legacy: The city's connection with British colonial rule is notable, given its role as a strategic outpost and a place of imprisonment.

Connection with Imperial Cholas and Srivijaya

1. Chola Empire's Naval Expeditions:

O Historical Records: The Andaman Islands were referenced in the context of Chola Empire expeditions during the reign of Rajendra Chola I in the 11th century. The Cholas are believed

to have used the islands as a naval base for their campaign against the Srivijaya Empire, located in what is now Indonesia.

O Inscriptions: Historical inscriptions from this period refer to the Andaman Islands as Ma-Nakkavaram, which could have influenced the later name Nicobar. This indicates the strategic importance and interaction between the Chola Empire and Southeast Asia.

2. Srivijaya Campaign:

O Reasons for the Attack: The Chola invasion of Srivijaya is seen as part of Rajendra's broader expansionist goals, either to secure trade routes or to assert dominance over Southeast Asian empires.

O Significance: The Chola campaign is significant for its demonstration of maritime power and the extent of Indian influence in Southeast Asia.

Renaming and Symbolism

- **New Name:** The renaming of Port Blair to Sri Vijaya Puram symbolizes a return to historical roots and a departure from colonial legacies. The new name reflects a connection to the victorious historical narrative of Indian empires rather than colonial pasts.

- **Symbolic Victory:** Union Minister Amit Shah's statement links the renaming to the broader goal of shedding colonial imprints and celebrating Indian history and achievements, especially in relation to the Andaman and Nicobar Islands' role in the freedom struggle.

In summary, Port Blair's new name, Sri Vijaya Puram, reflects a re-evaluation of its historical significance, tying it to the legacy of ancient Indian empires and their interactions with Southeast Asia, while moving away from its colonial-era associations.

Relevance: GS Prelims; Governance

Source: Indian Express

2. Understanding Commons and the Need for Community Leadership

What Are Commons?

Community ownership

/com-mu-ni-ty own-er-ship/

Refers to a model of collective ownership and management of **resources, assets, or services** by a community or group of individuals who live or work in a particular area.

Commons refer to resources that are shared by a community rather than owned by individuals, groups, or the government. These include natural resources like forests, ponds, grazing lands, and rivers, as well as urban spaces like parks and lakes. Intangible Commons can also include

cultural assets like language, folk art, and traditional knowledge. On a global scale, the polar regions and outer space are considered Commons as well.

Importance of Commons

Commons provide essential ecological and community benefits. However, their open access often leads to over-exploitation and degradation. Managing Commons sustainably is crucial, especially as climate change adds additional pressures.

Governance of Commons

The governance of Commons varies by context:

- **International Level:** Agreements like those for polar regions or the Paris Agreement address global Commons.
- **Urban Areas:** Local governments manage urban Commons.
- **Rural Areas:** Governance is often less defined. Local communities may lack the resources or authority to effectively manage these areas.

The Need for Community Leadership

Historically, Commons were believed to be prone to over-exploitation, a concept known as the "Tragedy of the Commons," which suggested that only government or market intervention could manage these resources. However, Elinor Ostrom's research challenged this view by demonstrating that community-led governance can be highly effective. Her work, which earned her the Nobel Prize in Economics in 2009, showed that local management structures could sustain Commons better than external interventions.

Examples of Effective Governance

- **Forest Rights Act (FRA) 2006:** This Indian legislation provides forest-dwellers with legal rights to manage and use forest resources, recognizing their role in conservation. The FRA has been a model for integrating community rights into resource management.

Current Challenges and Recommendations

In India, approximately 205 million acres of land, including community forests and water bodies, are classified as Commons. These areas are vital for the livelihoods of around 350 million rural people and contribute significant economic value. To improve governance:

- **Develop Frameworks:** Similar to the FRA, other Commons, especially wasteland areas, need tailored governance frameworks.
- **Legislative Models:** Advocates suggest creating a model Commons Bill to be adopted by states for better management of these resources.

Community leadership and involvement are key to ensuring the sustainable management of Commons, highlighting the need for inclusive governance structures.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; Governance

Source: The Hindu

3. What are the issues faced by EPFO pensioners?

Introduction



Nearly 78 lakh Provident Fund (PF) pensioners across the country under the Employees' Pension Scheme, 1995 (EPS-95) of the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) will receive their pension through any bank, any branch from January 1, 2025. The Union Labour Ministry cleared the proposal earlier this month for a Centralised Pension Payment System (CPPS) as part of the EPFO's ongoing IT modernisation project, the Centralised IT

Enabled System.

What contributed to the formulation of this new arrangement?

At present, if a pensioner decides to migrate, they have to seek the transfer of Pension Payment Orders (PPO) from one office to another. This has invariably resulted in complaints from pensioners about the delay in transfers, and subsequent payments. Moreover, pensioners can draw their monthly pension only through a group of three or four banks empanelled with the EPFO at every zone or region.

The new facility has been made possible in the wake of the implementation of the CPPS, which has been approved by the Union Ministry of Labour and Employment, according to the Minister and Chairperson of the EPFO's Central Board of Trustees, Mansukh Mandaviya, in a statement issued on September 4. In the next phase, CPPS will enable a smooth transition to an Aadhaar-based payment system. The pensioners will no longer need to visit the branch for any verification at the time of commencement of pension and the pension shall be immediately credited upon release, the government said. The EPFO expects a significant cost reduction in pension disbursement after moving to the new system.

Has the announcement satisfied pensioners?

To many pensioners, the Union Ministry's decision has been a disappointment, as they expected the government to provide them with a pleasant surprise, just as it has done for its government staff — a unified pension scheme which seeks to combine many features of the Old Pension Scheme (OPS) and the New Pension Scheme (NPS).

Trade unions and even Members of Parliament, cutting across party affiliations, have been urging the government to hike the minimum pension amount of ₹1,000. Late last month, a BJP MP from Gujarat, Shobhanaben M. Baraiya, wrote to the Minister saying, that approximately seven years ago, the request for hiking the minimum pension to ₹7,500 along with dearness allowance (DA) and medical allowance was "assured consideration." The Chennai EPF Pensioners' Welfare Association, the EPS- 95 Retired Employees' Welfare Association, Mysuru, and the Provident Fund Pensioners' Association, Kochi, have been seeking ₹9,000 plus DA. The same demand was raised by trade unions during their pre-Budget consultation with Union Finance Minister.

What is the status of applications by PF pensioners and members for pension on higher wages?

PF members and pensioners are increasingly anxious over how their applications for pension on higher wages are being processed. Many of them had nursed the hope that they would get higher pension immediately after the Supreme Court's judgment in November 2022 which approved, as a matter of principle, the payment of pension on wages that exceeded the PF ceiling. However, a recent reply from the EPFO under the Right to Information Act showed that as of August 7, 2024, the number of applicants who were issued PPOs was 8,401, which included two from those who retired before September 1, 2014. Besides, demand notices were sent to 89,235 other applicants, requiring them to transfer their share of arrears. Nearly 17.5 lakh applications had been submitted online, of which about 1.5 lakh were rejected.

What is the Union government's position?

As regards the hike in minimum pension, the Centre has been citing financial constraints, though it has been increasing its allocation annually for the EPS-95.

The government's contribution to the Pension Scheme is at the rate of 1.16% of the basic wages of employees, apart from providing budgetary support to ensure the minimum pension payment. The Pension Scheme is also getting funds through the transfer of 8.33% of the Provident Fund contributions by employers. An official document reveals that during 2022-23, the government's contribution was approximately ₹8,785 crore and it was ₹ 9,760 crore for 2023-24. For 2024-25, the bill would be ₹10,950 crore. Under these circumstances, it remains to be seen to what extent the Union government will increase the minimum pension amount. On the issue of pension on higher wages, the EPFO was originally against it, as the body had contended that the EPS-95 was meant for economically weak workers, who had, proportionately, contributed more than the high wage earners. The "reverse subsidy" was an "anomaly," which was corrected by the modifications in 2014. Even now, its stand has been that it cannot be liberal in granting pension on higher wages as this would affect the sustainability of the Pension Fund. However, till now, the fund has not witnessed any cash flow problems, despite there being a projected actuarial deficit in the valuation. There has been a widespread complaint that the PF body has been "unrealistic" in seeking very old documents from pensioners, members, and employers.

What is the way forward?

Apart from increasing its contributions substantially to the EPS-95 and revising upwards the ceiling for PF contributions from ₹15,000 which was fixed 10 years ago, the Union government should implement the idea floated by former Union Finance Minister Arun Jaitley, during his Budget speech in February 2015, that an option be given to employees to invest in the EPF or the NPS, a move which will take care of the issue of returns on investment. This is not to overlook the fact that since 2015, the EPFO has been investing in exchange-traded funds (ETF), as notified by the Union Labour Ministry. The exclusion of the applicability of EPS-95 to those who joined after September 1, 2014, and earned more than the ceiling has to be removed, making pension eligible to all employees, regardless of the pay.

Relevance: GS Prelims; Governance

Source: The Hindu