

ANAIMANGALAM COPPER PLATES

Anaimangalam Copper Plates



The Netherlands returned the 11th-century Anaimangalam Copper Plates (Leiden Plates) to India during the Prime Minister's recent visit.

- The Anaimangalam Copper Plates, also known as the **Leiden Plates**, are 11th-century **inscriptions** associated with the **Chola Empire**. They are **held together** by a **bronze ring** locked with the **royal seal of Rajendra Chola I**.
- The inscriptions on the copper plates **date to the reign of Emperor Rajaraja Chola I (985–1014 CE) and his son Rajendra**.
- The plates are divided into **two sections**: one has texts in **Sanskrit**; the other, in
 - The initial plates are in **Sanskrit**, offering a **detailed genealogy of the Chola rulers** and linking them to mythological figures.
 - The **majority** of plates are in **Tamil**, documenting **administrative and grant details**.
- The **Tamil section** records **Rajaraja's grant of land revenues and taxes to the Chudamani Vihara, a Buddhist monastery in Nagapattinam**.
 - The **monastery** was **built by Sri Mara Vijayotunga Varman**, the ruler of the **Srivijaya kingdom** in present-day **Indonesia**.
 - The **land grants** were **originally issued by Rajaraja Chola I**, but **his son, Emperor Rajendra Chola I**, later had the order engraved onto the **copper plates** to preserve it.
- The **plates' journey abroad** began around **1700** when **Dutch missionary Florentius Camper** acquired them during the **Dutch East India Company's** control of **Nagapattinam**.
- They eventually **found their way to Leiden University Library, Netherlands**, where they have been studied by scholars but are largely inaccessible to the public.

WHAT IS THE INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT (ICC)?



- It is a permanent and independent criminal court established to prosecute offenders of serious crimes in the international community.
- It is the **only permanent international criminal tribunal**.
- It was created by the **Rome Statute**, which came into force in **2002**.
- **Mandate:** ICC investigates and, where warranted, **tries individuals** charged with the **gravest crimes of concern** to the international community.
- Specifically, the ICC is intended to prosecute the **following crimes**:
 - **Genocide**
 - **Crimes against humanity**
 - **War crimes**
 - **The crime of aggression**
- The ICC is meant to serve as a **last resort** when the courts of sovereign states are **unwilling to prosecute**.
- Therefore, the ICC is **complementary to national criminal jurisdiction** and does not supersede it.
- Additionally, the ICC serves a **different purpose** than the **International Court of Justice**, which resolves conflicts between nations.

Members: There are **125 member countries** (China, India, Israel, Russia, and the United States are not ICC parties).

Funding: The Court is funded by contributions from the **States Parties** and by **voluntary contributions** from Governments, international organizations, individuals, corporations, and other entities.

NORDIC COUNTRIES



Nordic Countries

- The Nordic countries, also known as the **Nordic region**, are a group of countries in **northern Europe** consisting of **Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden**.
- The designation includes the **Faroe Islands and Greenland**, which are **autonomous island regions of Denmark**, and the **Åland Islands**, an **autonomous island region of Finland**.
- The term is sometimes **used interchangeably with Scandinavia**, a peninsular region of northern Europe that serves as the **geographic core of the Nordic countries**.
 - **Scandinavia** is typically defined more restrictively, however, and refers primarily to **Norway, Sweden, and Denmark**.
- **Sweden** is the **largest and most populous** of the Nordic countries. **Iceland** is the **least populous**. **Denmark** is the **smallest**.
- The countries have many similarities in that they **rank highly worldwide** in such areas as **education, civil liberties, quality of life, and economic competitiveness**.
- **Language:**
 - **Most inhabitants** of the Nordic region speak **North Germanic languages** (also called **Nordic or Scandinavian languages**): **Danish, Norwegian, and Swedish**, as well as **Faroese and Icelandic**.
 - Native **non-Germanic languages** include **Greenlandic, Finnish, and Sami languages**.
- **Political System:**
 - **Denmark, Sweden, and Norway** are **constitutional monarchies and parliamentary democracies**.
 - **Finland and Iceland** are **democratic republics**.
 - **Iceland's parliament, the Althing**, is the **oldest parliament in the world**.

CURRENCY DEPRECIATION AMID THE CRISIS IN WEST ASIA

- Currency depreciation refers to the decline in the value of a country's currency relative to another currency, typically the US dollar in India's case.
- It occurs due to market forces such as demand and supply of foreign exchange, capital flows, trade balances, and interest rate differentials.
- A depreciating currency makes imports costlier and exports cheaper, affecting inflation, trade balance, and overall economic stability.

Current Crisis: West Asia Conflict and Capital Outflows

- The ongoing West Asia crisis has put significant pressure on India's capital account, leading to substantial foreign capital outflows. Since the war began in late February 2026, the rupee has fallen by 5.2% against the dollar.
- **Key Factors Driving Depreciation**
 - Rising Crude Oil Prices: Higher import bills widen the current account deficit.
 - Foreign Institutional Investor (FII) Outflows: Sustained capital outflows of ₹1.97 lakh crore in the January-May period.
 - Global Uncertainty: Geopolitical tensions affecting investor sentiment.
 - Pent-up Depreciation: Markets pricing in depreciation that may have occurred during the earlier phase of artificial stability.
- **Why Past Stabilisation Matters Now?**
 - Policymakers are increasingly recognising that the prolonged stability of the rupee at 82-83 per dollar during 2023 and 2024 may have created pent-up depreciation pressure. According to internal deliberations:
 - The forex market is now pricing in the depreciation that may have occurred earlier. The current fall appears steeper because of the earlier artificial stability.
 - Effects of long, artificial stabilisation are being felt now.
 - The ability of interventions to defend any particular level is increasingly seen as limited.

Economic Implications of Rupee Depreciation

- **Impact on Inflation**
 - A weaker rupee increases the cost of imports, particularly crude oil, leading to higher fuel prices and broader inflationary pressures.
 - According to State Bank of India's Group Chief Economic Advisor, the rupee has reached a "**critical depreciation threshold**" beyond which further weakness could erode the benefits of recent domestic fuel price hikes.
- **Impact on Current Account**
 - Higher import costs widen the current account deficit, putting further pressure on the rupee in a self-reinforcing cycle.
- **Impact on Investor Sentiment**
 - A rapidly depreciating currency can hurt investor confidence, accelerating capital outflows and creating further pressure on the rupee.
- **Impact on External Debt**
 - A weaker rupee increases the cost of servicing external debt in rupee terms, raising the financial burden on Indian companies and the government.

Way Forward

- **Short-Term Measures**
 - Targeted RBI interventions to prevent disorderly depreciation.
 - Attracting NRI deposits through schemes like FCNR(B) deposits.
 - Diversifying crude oil sources to reduce dependence on West Asia.
 - Promoting gold monetisation to channel idle gold into the economy.
- **Long-Term Structural Reforms**
 - Boosting manufacturing exports through PLI and Make in India.
 - Deepening financial markets to attract stable long-term capital.
 - Strengthening forex reserves as a buffer against external shocks.
 - Accelerating the renewable energy transition to reduce crude oil dependence.

SC STRENGTH EXPANDED - ORDINANCE RAISES JUDGES' NUMBER TO 37

- The President of India has promulgated the Supreme Court (Number of Judges) Amendment Ordinance, 2026 to increase the sanctioned strength of judges in the Supreme Court **from 33 to 37**, excluding the Chief Justice of India (CJI).
- Consequently, the total strength of the apex court, including the CJI, will rise from 34 to 38 judges.

Ordinance-Making Power of the President:

- **Constitutional provision:** Article 123 empowers the President to promulgate ordinances when Parliament is not in session and immediate legislative action is required.
- **Features:**
 - Ordinances have the **same force and effect** as a law passed by Parliament.
 - They are executive-legislative instruments meant for temporary and urgent circumstances, not routine governance.
 - They are subject to Parliamentary approval; **judicial review**; and Constitutional limitations.
- **Temporary nature:**
 - The ordinance must be laid before both Houses of Parliament when they reconvene.
 - Will cease to operate if not approved **within six weeks** of reassembly.
 - Can also lapse if both Houses disapprove it, or may be withdrawn earlier by the President.
- **Judicial position:**
 - The SC established that ordinances are open to **judicial review** in the landmark cases of **R.C. Cooper** v. Union of India (1970), **A.K. Roy** v. Union of India (1982), and **Krishna Kumar Singh** v. State of Bihar (2017).
 - In cases such as **D.C. Wadhwa** v. State of Bihar (1987), it criticised repeated re-promulgation of ordinances, calling it a misuse of constitutional power.

Need to Increase the Strength of the SC:

- **Rising pendency:** The judge-to-case ratio has become unsustainable, especially with rapidly rising appeals and special leave petitions (SLPs). **For example,**
 - Pendency has crossed 93,000 cases;
 - Post-COVID surge in e-filing has significantly increased case inflow;
 - Increasing constitutional litigation, PILs, commercial disputes, and service matters have added to the burden.
- **Need for faster justice delivery:**
 - Judicial delays weaken rule of law, hinder enforcement of Fundamental Rights, and reduce **public trust** in institutions.
 - The expansion aims to reduce delays in hearings and judgments; improve disposal rates; enable more Constitution and specialised benches; and strengthen citizens' access to timely justice.
- **Complexity in governance:** Modern governance has expanded the Court's responsibilities as a result of -
 - Federal disputes;
 - Electoral matters;
 - Digital privacy and technology-related litigation;
 - Environmental and climate justice cases; and
 - Economic and regulatory disputes.

Conclusion:

- The decision to increase the sanctioned strength of the SC marks an **important institutional response** to India's deepening judicial pendency crisis.
- While adding judges may provide immediate relief and improve disposal capacity, the larger challenge lies in comprehensive judicial reforms across all levels of the justice delivery system.

GREAT NICOBAR PROJECT FACES FOREST RIGHTS CHALLENGE

The Calcutta High Court's Port Blair circuit bench has agreed to hear a PIL challenging the **Great Nicobar infrastructure project**, which alleges violations of the Forest Rights Act, 2006, particularly regarding tribal consent.

The Union Government and the Andaman and Nicobar administration objected to the PIL's maintainability and related issues, including the reduction of buffer zones around Galathea and Campbell Bay National Parks, but the court rejected these objections.

The ₹81,000 crore Great Nicobar project includes an integrated township, transshipment port, solar and gas-based power plant, and a dual-use military-civilian airport.

The Legal Challenge Before the Calcutta High Court

- In a 2024 PIL, Meena Gupta has challenged the procedures followed under the Forest Rights Act (FRA), 2006, alleging that they were unlawful in the approval process for the Great Nicobar infrastructure project.
- The plea argues that the Andaman and Nicobar administration relied on illegal Gram Sabha resolutions, the RoFR certificate, and SDLC consent to obtain forest clearance from the environment ministry for the Great Nicobar project.

Why the Petition Challenges Consent Under the Forest Rights Act?

- The petition argues that the process used to obtain tribal consent for the Great Nicobar project was **procedurally flawed and illegal**, as it did not comply with the Forest Rights Act (FRA), 2006.
- Under the FRA, forest land can be diverted for a project only after forest rights claims are identified and settled.
- The plea alleges that not a single forest rights claim has been settled on Great Nicobar Island, making the clearance process legally questionable.

- **Issues with the Sub-Divisional Level Committee (SDLC)**
 - The petition claims the SDLC was improperly constituted:
 - FRA rules require at least two Scheduled Tribe members, including one woman
 - The committee reportedly had only one Nicobarese member, violating the prescribed norms
- **Questionable Gram Sabha Consent**
 - The Gram Sabhas that approved land diversion were allegedly settler panchayats meant for non-tribal residents, not legitimate Gram Sabhas of Scheduled Tribes or forest dwellers under the FRA.
 - These bodies approved diversion of 166.10 sq km of land, including protected and deemed forest, but the plea argues they had no legal authority to grant such consent.
- **Absence of Forest Rights Committee Process**
 - The petition states there is no record of a Forest Rights Committee, which is supposed to initiate claims under the FRA before a Gram Sabha is convened.
- **Dispute Over Tribal Consent**
 - **Nicobarese Community** - The petition challenges the claim that the tribal council chairperson's consent represented the entire Nicobarese community, noting that the council later withdrew its consent in November 2022.
 - **Shompen Tribe** - The plea argues that the consent of the Shompen tribe, a largely uncontacted indigenous group, was obtained through a government organisation (AAJVS) rather than directly from the tribe, raising serious legal and ethical concerns.