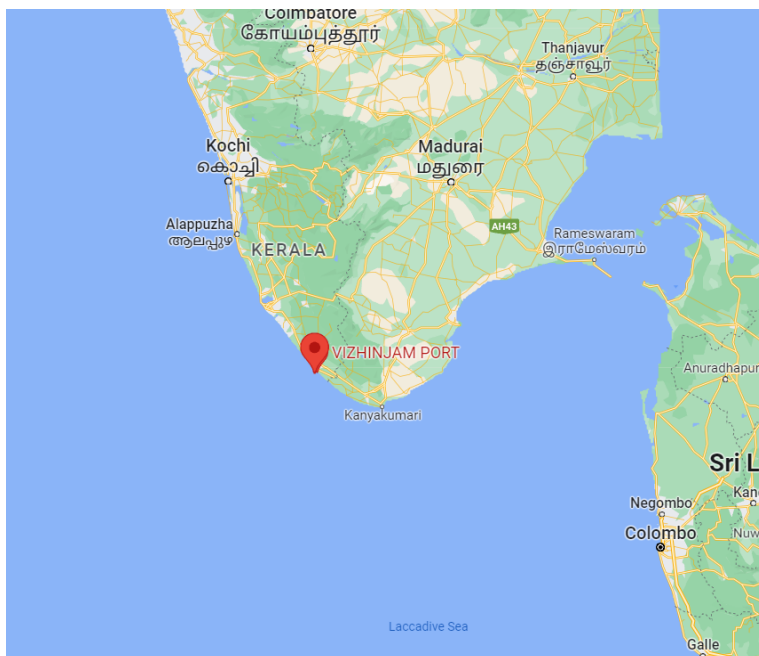


PLACES IN NEWS: WEEK 5 (29 June-5 July)

Topic 1 Vizhinjam International Transshipment Port (Kerala, India)

Context:

- **The Transaction:** Adani Vizhinjam Port Private Limited (AVPPL) has initiated plans to sell a **49% equity stake** to the Switzerland-based shipping conglomerate, **Mediterranean Shipping Company (MSC)**.
- **The Regulatory Hurdle:** Because Vizhinjam is classified as a **strategic national asset**, any equity dilution or ownership transfer cannot be executed unilaterally. It strictly requires the joint concurrence and regulatory clearance of both the **Government of Kerala** and the **Central Government** (specifically involving security vetting from the Ministry of Home Affairs and Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways).
- **Concession Agreement Compliance:** Any equity offloading must tightly align with the original concession agreement executed between the private concessionaire and the state government.



General Location: The port is situated in the coastal area of Vizhinjam in the Thiruvananthapuram (Trivandrum) district of Kerala.

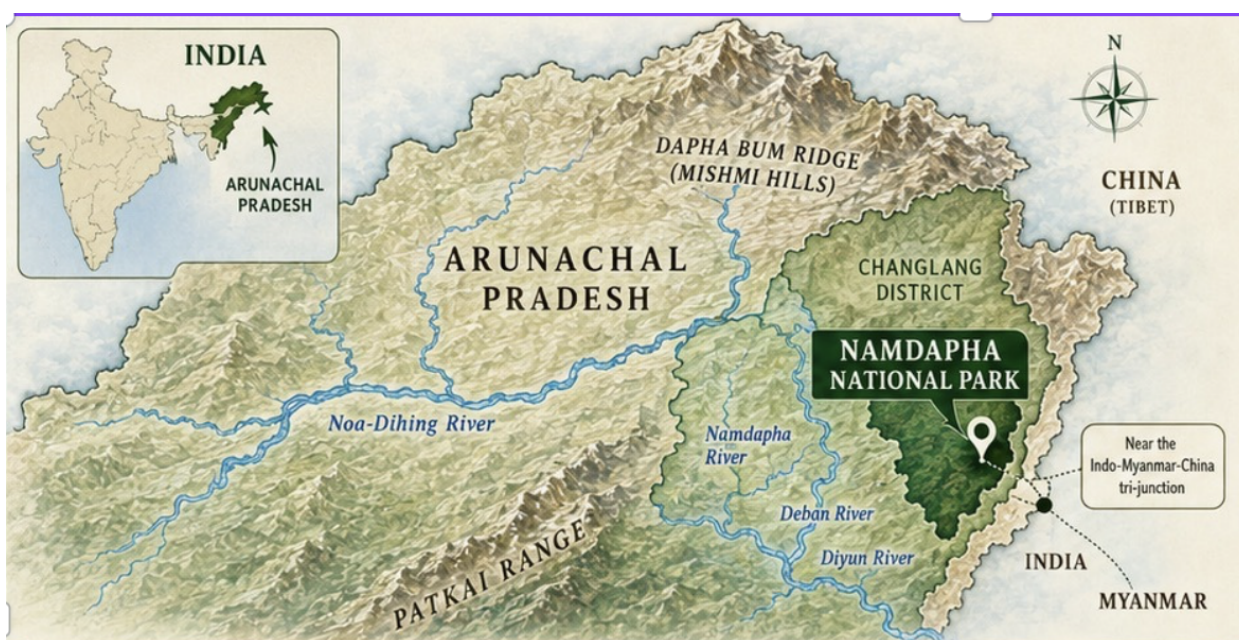
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Topic 2: Namdapha National Park

Geographical Positioning & Topography

- **Location:** Changlang district, Arunachal Pradesh; recognized as India's easternmost biodiversity hotspot, situated near the strategic Indo-Myanmar-China tri-junction.
- **Relief:** Wedged between the Dapha Bum ridge of the Mishmi Hills and the Patkai Range. The park exhibits a dramatic altitudinal gradient, ranging from approximately 200 meters to over 4,500 meters above sea level.
- **Drainage System:** The primary artery is the **Noa-Dihing River** (a tributary of the Brahmaputra) flowing east to west through the middle of the park. The Namdapha, Deban, and Diyun rivers also intersect the protected area.



Vegetation & Biome Profile

- **Forest Classification:** Harbors the northernmost lowland evergreen rainforests globally at 27°N latitude. The extreme elevation shift facilitates a seamless transition from tropical evergreen and moist deciduous forests at lower altitudes to temperate broadleaved, coniferous, and alpine scrub vegetation at higher reaches.

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- **Key Flora:** Features *Pinus merkusii* and *Abies delavayi* (endemic within India to this region), the endangered Blue Vanda orchid, and the locally utilized medicinal plant *Mishmi Teeta* (*Coptis teeta*).

Faunal Diversity & Flagship Species

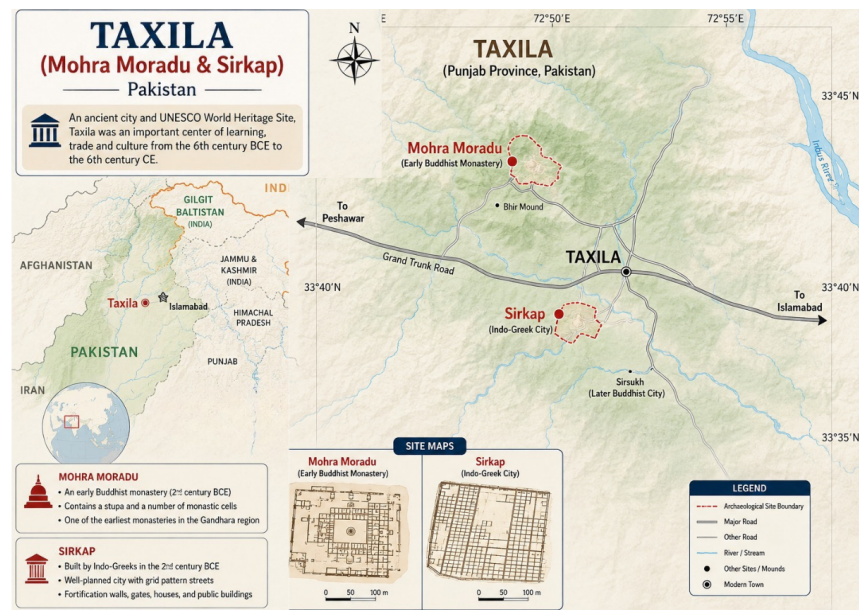
- **Apex Predators:** Recognized as the only national park in the world sustaining four distinct feline species: *the Bengal Tiger, Common Leopard, Snow Leopard, and Clouded Leopard*.
- **Primates:** Serves as a crucial habitat for the **Hoolock Gibbon** (India's only ape species), alongside the stump-tailed, pig-tailed, and Assamese macaques.
- **Endemic Species:** The **Critically Endangered Namdapha Flying Squirrel** is exclusively endemic to this ecosystem

Topic 3: Taxila (Mohra Moradu & Sirkap, Pakistan):

The Taxila UNESCO World Heritage site is not a single city but a sprawling valley containing multiple sequential settlement phases and monastic complexes.

Sirkap (The Indo-Greek/Indo-Parthian City)

- **Spatial Layout:** Sirkap was founded by the Greco-Bactrian king Demetrius around 180 BCE. Unlike the earlier chaotic settlement of Bhir Mound, Sirkap was laid out on the **Hippodamian (grid) plan**, typical of Hellenistic urban planning, featuring straight streets intersecting at right angles.



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- **Architectural Features:** It is highly fortified and features syncretic religious architecture, most notably the **Shrine of the Double-Headed Eagle**. This motif showcases a blend of Greek, Hindu, and Buddhist architectural elements, reflecting the Indo-Parthian and Indo-Greek cultural synthesis.

Mohra Moradu (The Monastic Complex)

- **Spatial Layout:** Located in a secluded glen nestled within the mountains behind Sirkap, providing the necessary tranquility for monastic life while remaining economically connected to the urban center.
- **Architectural Features:** Comprises a large central Buddhist stupa and an attached monastery. It is renowned for its highly preserved **stucco reliefs** of the Buddha and Bodhisattvas, which are hallmarks of the mature Gandhara art school.

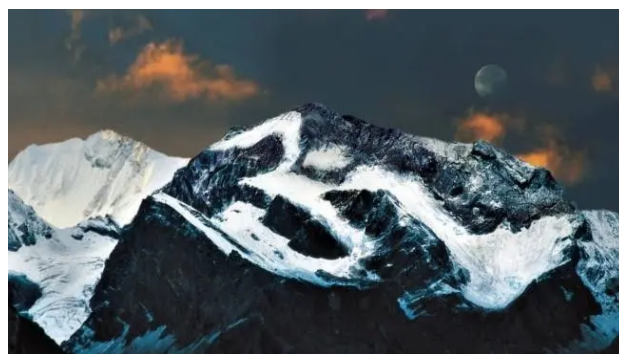
Recent developments have pushed these specific sites into the spotlight for heritage conservation and international institutional monitoring:

- **UNESCO "Danger List" Warning:** In 2026, UNESCO issued a severe warning that it would delist Mohra Moradu and Sirkap from the World Heritage list, demoting them to the "danger list."
- **Cause:** This friction was triggered by unauthorized and unscientific modern brick-and-mortar reconstructions executed by local archaeological departments, which directly violated international protocols for maintaining the structural and historical authenticity of ancient ruins.

Topic 4: Om Parvat / Nabidang (Uttarakhand, India)

Located at an altitude of 5,500 meters at the tri-junction of India, Nepal, and Tibet, it became a focal point of indigenous environmental and cultural preservation movements.

The peak is composed primarily of dark metamorphic and conglomerate rock. Due to specific wind patterns, precipitation, and the orientation of the rock face, snow naturally accumulates



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in the deep crevices and ridges of the mountain.

Location and Border Significance

- **Region:** The mountain is situated in the **Vyas Valley** within the Dharchula tehsil of the **Pithoragarh district** in Uttarakhand, India.
- **Strategic Tri-Junction:** It is located directly at the highly sensitive geopolitical tri-junction of **India, Nepal, and the Tibet Autonomous Region (China)**.
- **Proximity to Trade Routes:** The peak stands near the **Lipulekh Pass**, an ancient and strategic trans-Himalayan trade and pilgrimage route connecting India to Tibet.

Elevation and Topography

- **Mountain Range:** Om Parvat is a part of the **Kumaon Himalayas**, a sub-range of the Greater Himalayas.
- **Altitude:** While topographical surveys occasionally vary, its peak elevation is recorded between **5,500 meters (approx. 18,000 feet)** and **6,191 meters (20,312 feet)** above sea level.
- **Rugged Terrain:** The surrounding environment is a harsh, high-altitude alpine ecosystem characterized by steep ascents, glacial features, and perpetually snow-clad slopes.

Because Om Parvat lies directly on the border, access is highly restricted. The premier and most accessible vantage point to view the snow formation is from **Nabidang** (or Nabhi Dhang), a high-altitude meadow situated at approximately 4,540 meters on the Indian side.

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