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Current affairs summary for prelims

27 April, 2024

Special categories of voters

Context: *As the elections are about to be over, let's look at the Special category of Voters.*

- **General Rules for Voting under the Representation of the People Act, 1951**
  - All voters must vote in person at their designated polling station.
  - Voting must occur on the specified date and hours.
  - Voting is conducted using Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs).
- **Alternative Voting Methods and Eligibility By Post**
  - Special voters are eligible to vote by post.
  - Voters on election duty can vote by post.
  - Persons employed in essential services (AVES) are allowed to vote by post.
  - Senior citizens (AVSC) can vote by post.
  - Service voters are eligible to vote by post.
  - Persons with disability (AVPD) can vote by post.
  - Electors subjected to preventive detention can vote by post.
  - Persons affected or suspected of having Covid-19 (AVCO) are eligible to vote by post.
  - **Facilitation Centre :** Voters on election duty can vote at designated Facilitation Centres.
  - **Postal Voting Centre:** Absentee voters in essential services (AVES) can vote at Postal Voting Centres.
- **Home/Hospital Voting**
  - Senior citizens aged 85+ (AVSC) can vote from home or hospital.
  - Persons with disabilities (AVPD) can vote from home or hospital.
  - Persons affected or suspected of having Covid-19 (AVCO) can vote from home or hospital.
- **Postal Ballots**
  - Postal ballots allow remote voting outside polling stations without EVMs.
  - Voting occurs before the designated poll date in the constituency.
  - Special voters, service voters, voters on election duty, electors subjected to preventive detention, and absentee voters under Section 60(c) of RPA are eligible for postal ballots.
  - Eligible voters must submit a formal application to the Returning Officer.
  - Service voters and electors under Preventive Detention automatically receive postal ballots.
  - The Electronically Transmitted Postal Ballot System (ETPBS) for service voters was introduced in 2016.
- **Facilitation Centres, Postal Voting Centres**

Facilitation Centres

  - Facilitation Centres are designated for voters on election duty.
  - These centres are located at training venues and designated offices.
  - The voting process at Facilitation Centres is videotaped.
  - Postal ballots are placed in labeled cotton bags and kept in a strong room.
- **Postal Voting Centres**
  - Postal Voting Centres are designated for absentee voters in essential services (AVES).
  - These centres operate for three fixed days from 9 AM to 5 PM.
  - Contesting candidates are notified about the location and schedules of these centres and can send observers.
- **Home Voting**
  - Home voting is applicable for absentee voters over 85 (AVSC), persons with disabilities (AVPD), and persons affected or suspected of having Covid-19 (AVCO).
  - Booth Level Officers (BLOs) deliver and collect Form 12D for home voting.
  - Home voting teams consist of two poll officers, a police security officer, a micro-observer, and a videographer.
  - Visits for home voting are completed the day before the polls.

Virupaksha Temple

Context: *A section of the Virupaksha temple in Karnataka collapsed on Tuesday, May 21, due to heavy rains.*

- **Overview of Virupaksha Temple, Hampi**
  - The Virupaksha Temple in Hampi is dedicated to Lord Shiva.
  - It is located about 350 km from Bangalore.
  - Hampi is a temple town in South India and a UNESCO World Heritage Site.
  - The temple was constructed with the assistance of Lakkana Dandesha, a commander under King Deva Raya II.
  - It is part of the Group of Monuments at Hampi, showcasing Hampi's historical and architectural glory.
- **Historical Background**
  - The Virupaksha temple is dedicated to Lord Shiva and was built by Lakkan Dandesha, a chieftain of ruler Paruda Deva Raya during the Vijayanagara rule.
  - Also known as the Pampapathi temple, it is the oldest surviving structure amidst the ruins of Hampi.
  - Different from the Prasanna Virupaksha Temple (underground Shiva temple).

Face to Face Centres

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- The temple's history dates back to around the 7th century, with inscriptions related to Lord Shiva from the 9th and 10th centuries.
- Vijayanagara emperors expanded the temple complex, which began as a humble structure.
- Contributions were also made by Chalukyan and Hoysala emperors.
- Ceiling paintings date back to the 14th and 16th centuries.
- Major renovations, including the restoration of the north and east gopura, occurred in the early 19th century.

Architectural Features

- The temple complex includes a sanctum, three ante chambers, a pillared hall, and an open pillared hall.
- Delicately carved pillars adorn the temple.
- The complex includes a pillared cloister, entrance gateways, courtyards, and smaller shrines.
- The nine-tiered eastern gateway stands 50 meters tall, providing access to the outer court with numerous smaller shrines.
- The Kanakagiri gopuram towards the north leads to a small enclosure with smaller shrines and the Tungabhadra river.
- The temple incorporates mathematical concepts and fractal patterns in its construction and decoration.
- Triangular in shape, with significant contributions from Vijayanagara ruler Krishnadevaraya.
- Central pillared hall and gateway tower built by Krishnadevaraya.
- Halls were used for music, dance, drama programs, and god marriage ceremonies.

Cultural Significance

- The temple remains intact and is still in worship despite the destruction by the Bahamani sultanates in 1565.
- Virupaksha-Pampa worship continues uninterrupted.
- The temple hosts significant events such as the betrothal and marriage ceremonies of Lord Virupaksha and Goddess Pampa in December, and the annual Chariot festival.
- Attracts numerous tourists to witness these ceremonies.
- The temple stands as a testament to the surviving glory of Hampi.

WIPO Treaty

Context: *WIPO member states have adopted a historic new treaty on intellectual property, genetic resources, and associated traditional knowledge.*

Overview of the WIPO Treaty

- The World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) treaty on intellectual property, genetic resources (GR), and associated traditional knowledge (ATK) is a significant achievement for the global South and India.
- India, a mega biodiversity hotspot with abundant traditional knowledge, has been a major advocate for this treaty.

Historical Significance

- For the first time, traditional systems of knowledge and wisdom, which have supported economies, societies, and cultures for centuries, are now recognised in the global IP system.
- The treaty acknowledges the connection between local communities and their GRs and ATK, a historic achievement championed by India.

Benefits of the Treaty

- The treaty will safeguard and protect biodiversity and increase transparency in the patent system.
- It aims to strengthen innovation by ensuring that the IP system continues to incentivise innovation while evolving inclusively.
- Responds to the needs of all countries and their communities.

Adoption and Support

- After two decades of negotiations, the treaty has been adopted with consensus among more than 150 countries.
- It marks a significant win for India and the global South, which have long advocated for this instrument.
- The treaty has support from the majority of developed countries that generate IP and use GRs and ATK for research and innovation.

Impact on IP System and Biodiversity Protection

- The treaty aims to bridge conflicting paradigms within the IP system and the protection of biodiversity that have existed for decades.
- On ratification and entry into force, it will require contracting parties to implement mandatory disclosure obligations for patent applicants.
- Applicants must disclose the country of origin or source of the GRs when the claimed invention is based on these resources or ATK.

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NEWS IN BETWEEN THE LINES

Grand Prix Award

Recently, Information and Broadcasting Minister Anurag Singh Thakur has congratulated Film and Television Institute of India (FTII) alumnus Payal Kapadia for winning the Grand Prix at the 77th Cannes Film Festival for her film.

About the Grand Prix:

- The Grand Prix is the **second most prestigious award** at the Cannes Film Festival, following the **Palme d'Or.**
- In the 77th edition of the Cannes Film Festival, held in 2024, Indian filmmaker **Payal Kapadia** won the Grand Prix for her film "**All We Imagine as Light".**
- This achievement marks the first time an Indian film has won the Grand Prix at Cannes.
- Payal Kapadia's win also coincides with a nomination in the Palme d'Or category for an **Indian film after 30 years**.
- The winning film, "All We Imagine as Light," is **an official co-production** supported by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting's **Film Incentive Scheme.**

Sathyamangalam Tiger Reserve

Recently, the Tamil Nadu forest department commenced a three-day-long elephant census at Sathyamangalam Tiger Reserve.

About Sathyamangalam Tiger Reserve:

- Sathyamangalam Tiger Reserve is situated in the state of Tamil Nadu at the **junction of the Eastern and the Western Ghats in the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve Biodiversity**.
- It is contiguous with the **Mudumalai Tiger Reserve**, **Bandipur Tiger Reserve** and **Biligiri Rangaswamy Temple Tiger Reserve** and Wildlife Sanctuary.
- Established as a tiger reserve in **2013** under the **Wildlife Protection Act of India,** Sathyamangalam Tiger Reserve holds a prestigious protected area status, dedicated to preserving its rich biodiversity and flagship species.
- **Flora:** The reserve boasts diverse flora, encompassing Neem, Tamarind, **Gyrocarpusjacquini**, **Sandalwood**, **Randi dumetorum**, etc.
- **Fauna:** Major fauna species in Sathyamangalam Tiger Reserve include elephant, tiger, **panther**, **sloth bear, gaur**, **black buck,** spotted deer, wild boar, **black-napped hare**, common langur, Nilgiri langur, **striped neck mongoose** and bonnet macaque.

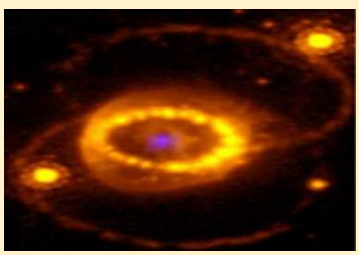
Ashtamudi Lake

A recent study by the University of Kerala's Department of Aquatic Biology and Fisheries found alarming levels of microplastic pollution in the Ashtamudi Lake.

About Ashtamudi Lake:

- Ashtamudi Lake, **also known as Ashtamudi Kayal,** is a lake in the Kollam district of **Kerala**.
- It is the second largest lake in Kerala and is **known as the "Gateway to Kerala Backwaters**".
- The lake is famous for its **houseboat rides and backwater resorts** and is also home to many plant and bird species.
- The name Ashtamudi comes from the Malayalam words **Ashta meaning "eight**" and **Mudi meaning "peaks" or "branches**".
- The lake has **eight arms or channels** and its shape has been described as both palm-shaped and octopus-shaped.
- It is a unique wetland ecosystem that combines **freshwater** and **saltwater**, making it a biodiversity hotspot.
- The **lake is fed by the Kallada River,** which originates in the Western Ghats.
- In **2012**, Ashtamudi Lake was **designated a Ramsar site**, a wetland of international importance.

Astronomical Transients



Recently, Indian-American astronomer Shrinivas Kulkarni was awarded the 2024 Shaw Prize for Astronomy for his significant contributions to understanding the physics of astronomical transients.

About Astronomical Transients:

- In astronomy, a 'transient' refers to any **celestial object** whose brightness undergoes rapid changes over short spans of time.
- These events are marked by **violent phenomena in space**, prompting astronomers to study them for insights into their **origins** and **implications**.
- This recognition highlights the importance of research in studying **transient celestial phenomena** and its impact on our understanding of the universe.
- Types of astronomical transients include **Supernovae**, **Active Galactic Nucleus** (AGN) and **Fast Radio Bursts** (FRBs).
- Supernovae **occur when massive stars exhaust their nuclear fuel** and explode, **emitting light more** intensely than their **entire host galaxies.**

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	▪ An Active Galactic Nucleus (AGN) is **found at the center of massive galaxies** and **hosts a supermassive black hole**, causing **brightness fluctuations** due to interactions with surrounding matter. ▪ Fast Radio Bursts (FRBs) are mysterious bursts of radio waves **discovered in 2007,** emitting immense energy in milliseconds and originating from unknown sources.
Place in News **Laos**	*Recently, the Indian Embassy in Laos successfully rescued and repatriated 13 Indians, including seven Odiya workers from a wood factory in Attapeu province and six youth from the Golden Triangle Special Economic Zone in Bokeo province.* **Laos (Capital: Vientiane)** **Location:** Laos, officially the Lao People's Democratic Republic is the only **landlocked country in Southeast Asia.** **Political Boundaries:** Laos shares its borders with **Vietnam** (East & Northeast), **Thailand** (West & Southwest), **China** (North) **Myanmar** (Northwest) and **Cambodia** (South). **Physical Features:** ▪ The highest point in Laos is **Phou Bia**. ▪ The major rivers in Laos include the **Mekong River,** forming a significant part of the western border, and the **Nam Ou River**, a main tributary of the Mekong. ▪ The **Annamite Range** runs along the eastern border with Vietnam. ▪ Laos possesses significant mineral resources, including **coal**, **bauxite**, **tin**, **copper** and **gold**. ▪ Laos has a **tropical monsoon climate**.

POINTS TO PONDER

- Recently, the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed which day as the International Day of the Markhor? **– 24 May**
- Which airport recently became the first in India to achieve the Zero Waste to Landfill (ZWL) accolade? **– Thiruvananthapuram International Airport**
- What is 'Planetary Alignment', recently seen in the news? **– It is a term used to describe the positioning of planets in the solar system.**
- Which day is observed annually as 'World Preeclampsia Day'? **- 22 May**
- Which country recently conducted a successful test of the ASMPA supersonic cruise missile? **– France**