

20 June, 2024

Nalanda University

Context: Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi officially opened the new campus of Nalanda University in Rajgir, Bihar.

- Nalanda, situated 95 kilometers from Patna, Bihar, and 110 kilometers from Bodh Gaya, is renowned as one of the world's most ancient centers of learning.
- Declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2016, Nalanda predates Europe's oldest university, Bologna, established in the 11th-12th century.
- Originally described as a mahavihara, or great monastery, Nalanda served as a prominent monastic and scholastic institution in ancient and early medieval India.
- Today, the site exhibits remnants including temples, monastic residences, votive structures, and artworks dating from the 5th to 12th centuries CE.

Literary Sources:

- Primary accounts on Nalanda's history and operation derive largely from Chinese Buddhist monks like Xuanzang (Hiuen Tsang) and Yijing (I Tsing), particularly Xuanzang who visited in the 7th century CE.
- Xuanzang attributed Nalanda's origins to both Buddha (6th century BCE) and the Mauryan Emperor Ashoka (c. 268-232 BCE), noting Ashoka's construction of a stupa/temple in honor of Sariputra.
- Archaeological findings indicate Nalanda's material remains primarily from the Gupta period (5th century CE onwards), differing from Xuanzang's earlier historical accounts.
- The Gupta dynasty, known for patronizing Brahmanical beliefs, also supported Buddhism, with King Vikramaditya and his descendants having ties to Nalanda.

The Palas:

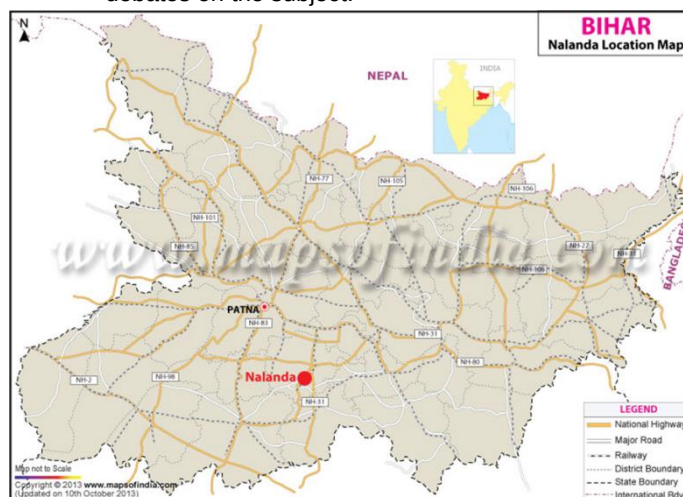
- The Pala dynasty, known for their Buddhist affiliations, supported Nalanda during their reign over Bihar, Bengal, and Bangladesh from the 8th to 12th centuries CE.
- Dharmapala (781-821 CE), the second Pala king, established monasteries at Somapura (Paharpur) and Vikramshila, contributing to Nalanda's upkeep.
- Inscriptions from Nalanda record gifts from Devapala (821-861 CE), successor to Dharmapala, who further supported the monastery's maintenance.

The Mahavihara as a University:

- Nalanda operated as an international university attracting students from China, Japan, Korea, Southeast Asia, and Central Asia, as documented in Chinese and Tibetan texts.
- Though specifics of its curriculum are not directly substantiated, Nalanda likely taught subjects beyond religious texts, possibly including literature, theology, logic, medicine, philosophy, arts, and metaphysics.

Decline of Nalanda:

- Two main theories explain Nalanda's decline, the most prevalent attributing it to the invasion and destruction by Bakhtiyar Khalji around 1200 CE, as chronicled in Persian accounts.
- An alternative theory suggests internal conflicts, particularly between Brahmins and Buddhists, contributed to Nalanda's demise, reflecting scholarly debates on the subject.



Sickle Cell Disease

Context: India is progressing towards developing a gene therapy for sickle cell disease, a genetic blood disorder prevalent among Scheduled Tribes, according to officials from the Union Tribal Affairs Ministry.

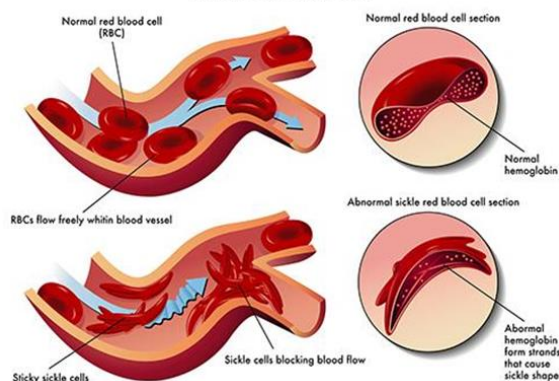
- Definition:** Sickle cell disease (SCD) is a common inherited blood disorder affecting red blood cells.
- Hemoglobin Abnormality:** It involves abnormal hemoglobin (hemoglobin S), causing red blood cells to adopt a crescent shape, reducing flexibility and causing them to stick together.
- Impact:** This can block blood flow, leading to severe complications like pain, infections, organ damage, and anemia.
- Lifelong Condition:** SCD requires lifelong management, although treatments can alleviate symptoms and prolong life.

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Sickle-Cell Anemia



Types of sickle cell disease

- **Hemoglobin SS (HbSS):** Severe form affecting 65% of SCD patients, with both hemoglobin S genes inherited.
- **Hemoglobin SC (HbSC):** Mild to moderate form affecting 25%, inheriting hemoglobin S from one parent and hemoglobin C from the other.
- **Hemoglobin (HbS) beta thalassemia:** Variants with hemoglobin S and beta thalassemia genes from parents, classified as "Plus" (HbS beta +) or "Zero" (HbS beta 0).

Symptoms of Sickle Cell Disease

- **Anemia:** Sickle cells die early, leading to a shortage of red blood cells, causing fatigue, paleness, and weakness.
- **Pain:** Sickle cells can block blood flow, causing pain crises that can be mild or severe and affect various parts of the body.
- **Jaundice:** Sickle cells can cause yellowing of the skin and eyes due to the buildup of bilirubin.
- **Swelling of hands and feet:** Sickle cells can block blood flow to the hands and feet, causing swelling.
- **Frequent infections:** Sickle cells can damage the spleen, increasing the risk of infections.

- **Vision problems:** Sickle cells can block blood flow to the eyes, causing vision loss and potentially permanent blindness.
- **Priapism:** Sickle cells in the penis can cause a persistent, painful erection.
- **Organ damage and failure:** Sickle cells can block blood flow to various organs, leading to damage and failure.

Causes and Risk Factors

- **Genetic mutation:** A mutation in the HBB gene causes sickle cell disease.
- **Autosomal recessive inheritance:** People inherit the condition when both parents carry the mutated gene.
- **Risk groups:** People of African, Mediterranean, Middle Eastern, and Asian Indian descent are more likely to develop sickle cell disease.

Diagnosis and Tests

- **Newborn screening:** Hospitals test all babies for sickle cell disease as part of routine newborn screenings.
- **Hemoglobin electrophoresis:** This blood test confirms the diagnosis.
- **Prenatal testing:** Chorionic villus sampling and amniocentesis can diagnose sickle cell disease before birth.

Treatment and Management

- **Medications:** Voxelotor, crizanlizumab, hydroxyurea, and L-glutamine can help manage symptoms and prevent complications.
- **Transfusions:** Acute and red blood cell transfusions can help treat anemia and other complications.
- **Stem cell transplant:** A bone marrow transplant can cure sickle cell disease, but it requires a compatible donor.
- **Gene therapy:** Researchers are testing gene therapy to correct the abnormal hemoglobin gene or put a normal gene into stem cells.

NEWS IN BETWEEN THE LINES

Reserve Bank of India



Recently, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) invited applications for the recognition of Self Regulatory Organisations (SROs) for Non-bank financial companies (NBFCs).

About the Reserve Bank of India:

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is the **central banking institution of India** and **regulatory body** responsible for regulation of the Indian banking system.
- It was established on **April 1, 1935**, under the **Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934**.
- It was **nationalized on January 1, 1949**, which means the government took over ownership from private shareholders.
- The bank was **setup on the recommendations of the 1926 Royal Commission on Indian Currency and Finance**, commonly referred to as the **Hilton Young Commission**.
- The RBI formulates and implements **India's monetary policy** to maintain price stability and ensure adequate flow of credit to productive sectors.

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	- It regulates and supervises the financial system, ensuring financial stability and promoting the development of financial markets and institutions. - It is the sole issuer of currency notes in India, ensuring adequate supply of clean and genuine notes. - It manages the Foreign Exchange Management Act, 1999, facilitating external trade and payments and promoting orderly development and maintenance of the foreign exchange market. - The headquarter of the RBI is located in Mumbai, Maharashtra.
National Human Rights Commission 	Recently, the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) send notice to Centre over 'anti-labour practices' at a warehouse of a multinational company in Haryana. About the National Human Rights Commission: - The National Human Rights Commission is a statutory body. - It was established on October 12, 1993, in accordance with the Paris Principles. - It is responsible for reviewing and addressing human rights violations and making recommendations for their protection and promotion. - It is mandated to protect human rights as "rights related to life, liberty and dignity of an individual guaranteed by the constitution and courts of our country". - It is a multi-member body including a chairman, four members and four ex-officio members. - The chairman and members serve for a five-year term or until they reach the age of 70, whichever comes first.
Minimum Support Price 	Recently, the Central Government has decided to increase the Minimum Support Price for Kharif crops for marketing season 2024-25 on 14 crops. About the Minimum Support Price: - Minimum Support Price (MSP) is a form of market intervention by the Government of India to insure agricultural producers against any sharp fall in farm prices. - The Government announces MSP at the beginning of the sowing season based on the recommendations of the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP). - The objectives of MSP are to stabilize agricultural prices and provide a remunerative price environment, protect farmers from distress sales ensuring they receive a fair return and ensure adequate food supply to enhance food security by encouraging production. - When the Green Revolution began in the 1960s, India sought to bolster its food reserves and prevent shortages. - The MSP system was initiated in 1966-67 for wheat and subsequently extended to other essential food crops, which were then sold to the poor at subsidized rates under the public distribution system. - Government agencies like the Food Corporation of India (FCI) and State Agencies procure the produce from farmers at the MSP.
Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary 	Recently, a one-horned rhinoceros and its calf wading through floodwaters have seen in Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary. About the Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary: - Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary is a wildlife reserve in the Morigaon district of Assam, located on the southern bank of the Brahmaputra River. - It is also known as "Mini Kaziranga" because of its similar landscape and vegetation. - It was declared a reserve forest in 1971 and a wildlife sanctuary in 1987. - The sanctuary is known for its great Indian One-horned rhinoceros population, which is one of the largest in Assam. Flora: The flora primarily comprises wet savannah dominated by Arundo donax and Saccharum, with the rest of the area occupied by water bodies. Fauna: The fauna includes leopards, leopard cats, fishing cats, jungle cats, feral buffalo, wild pigs, Chinese pangolins, etc.

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Place in News

Bangladesh

Recently, in Bangladesh, nine people including eight Rohingyas died in landslides in separate Rohingya camps amid heavy rain.

Bangladesh (Capital: Dhaka)

Location: Bangladesh is a **densely populated, low-lying**, mainly riverine country located in South Asia.

Boundaries: Bangladesh shares its borders with **India** (East, West and North), **Myanmar** (Southwest) and the **Bay of Bengal** (South).

Physical Features:

- **Tazing Dong Peak 1**, also known as Bijay, is the highest mountain peak in Bangladesh.
- The **Padma** is a major river of Bangladesh which is the **tributary of the river Ganges**.

Indo-Bangladesh relations:

- Indo-Bangladesh relations have evolved from shared historical ties, notably during the **Partition of India in 1947**.
- India played a crucial role in Bangladesh's independence during the **Liberation War in 1971**, being the first nation to recognize its sovereignty.



POINTS TO PONDER

- Where was the second annual meeting of the initiative on Critical and Emerging Technologies (iCET) between India and the US held?
– **New Delhi**
- Digital Health Incentive Scheme, recently seen in news, was launched under which initiative? – **Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission**
- What is 'Planet Nine', recently seen in news? – **A hypothetical planet in the outer region of our solar system**
- What is the main objective of 'SDG 7', recently in news? – **Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy for all**
- "Joint Communiqué on a Peace Framework", recently seen in news in the context of which two countries? – **Russia and Ukraine**

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