

Cheetah Translocation

❖ Context

- Recently, Union Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate change announced the translocation of twelve Cheetahs from South Africa to India on 18th February 2023.

❖ Key Highlights:

- A batch of 12 cheetahs (7 males, 5 females) will be translocated from South Africa to India.
- The Cheetahs will be translocated to Kuno National Park in Madhya Pradesh.
- As per the Action Plan for Cheetah Introduction in India, annually 10-12 cheetahs are required to be imported from African countries for the next 5 years at least.
- With help from the **Wildlife Institute of India** and the **Wildlife Trust of India**, the ministry will be translocating cheetahs from **South Africa, Namibia and Botswana**.
- Eight cheetahs were transported from Namibia to India on 17th September, 2022.

❖ About Cheetah:

- The Asiatic cheetah is the **only large carnivore to have gone extinct** in India in the 1950s due to hunting and loss of habitat.
- The big cats will live at **Kuno Palpur National Park** in Madhya Pradesh as it will be the most suitable for cheetah translocation in terms of habitat and an adequate prey base.
- **Asiatic Cheetahs** around 40-50 found only in Iran.
- **Protection Status of Asiatic Cheetah : IUCN- Critically Endangered** (African Cheetah is in Vulnerable Category).
 - **CITES- Appendix 1 (Same as African Cheetah).**

❖ Kuno Palpur National Park:

- Kuno National Park is national park and **Wildlife Sanctuary in Madhya Pradesh, India**.
- One of the main **tributaries of the Chambal River**, the Kuno River, cuts across the whole length of the National Park division.
- It was **established in 1981 as a wildlife sanctuary** with an initial area of 344.686 km² (133.084 sq mi) in the Sheopur and Morena districts.
- In 2018, it was given the status of a national park.
- It is part of the **Khathiar-Gir dry deciduous forests ecoregion**.
- The Kuno has the **potential to carry populations of all four of India's big cats**.
 - The tiger, the leopard, the Asiatic lion, and also the cheetah all four of which have coexisted within the same habitats.
- **Fauna** : It is home to Indian wolves, jackals, Chital, Sambar, Nilgai, Wild pig, leopards, langur monkeys, blue-bull, chinkara, and spotted deer.
- **Flora** : The vegetation of the protected area includes Anogeissus pendula forest and scrub, Boswellia and Butea forest, dry savanna forest and grassland and tropical riverine forest.

Debt Swaps

❖ Context

- With many developing nations facing a triple whammy of rising debt loads, climate change and nature loss, “debt-for-environment swaps” would enable them to tackle all three at once.

❖ Key Highlights:

- The world's poorest countries **owe \$62 billion in annual debt service**, a year-on-year increase of 35%, the World Bank said in December, warning of a rising risk of defaults.
- But even as debt burdens grow, there is now an urgent need for countries to invest more in **climate and biodiversity protection** to meet their international and national commitments.
- In a bid to deal with these problems across the board, **Portugal & Cape Verde sealed an agreement for a “debt-for-nature” swap** last month- just days after Zambia said it too was looking at a similar proposal from **green group WWF**.

❖ What Are Green Debt Swaps?

- Debt swaps are one way to change the terms of a country's borrowing with bilateral government lenders, development finance institutions or private banks either by **giving states more time to repay loans or reducing interest rates and the amounts they must pay back**.
- With the agreement of creditors, debt swaps can help the world's low-income countries avoid default and enable them to redeploy part of their debt repayments to invest in measures to tackle climate change, nature protection, health or education.

- **For creditors**, debt swaps can reduce their risk through additional guarantees and ensure that at least part of a loan is eventually repaid.
- The first debt-for-nature swaps were agreed in the mid-1980s, mostly in Latin America, with rich nations the main creditors.

❖ Who Is Pushing Debt-For-Nature Swaps & Why?

- **Developing nations** that are struggling to pay back creditors or defaulting on their debt –and thus cannot invest in greening their economies and protecting their rich biodiversity – are pushing for these swaps.
- **Egypt presented a swap with Germany** as a model for others seeking to raise money for clean energy projects when it hosted the U.N. climate summit last November.
- But many backers, like WWF, **do not regard them as a long-term solution** to high indebtedness among the poorest countries because they often deal only with a small portion of overall debt.

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❖ What Are The Financial & Political Advantages?

- It has been estimated that **about \$100 billion could be raised** through debt relief in developing countries, if 10% of overall sovereign debt were redeployed to climate and nature action.
- Climate & the environment have not been a high political priority in many developing nations in the past.
- But climate & nature debt swaps can foster useful discussions among finance, environment, agriculture & other ministries on what policies they can adopt to secure debt relief.

❖ How can Green Debt Swaps be encouraged?

- **A global framework or standard** that sets the rules for green debt swaps would enable more creditors to join such initiatives and help increase the size of deals.
- A public campaign, similar to the huge push to cut debt & poverty in the 1990s and 2000s, could also help.
- Performance indicators will be needed to track whether governments are meeting their green commitments in exchange for debt swaps.

News in Between the Lines

INS Vikrant



❖ Context

- The country's first indigenous aircraft carrier INS Vikrant, which is currently undergoing aviation trials, will be fully operational by year-end.

❖ Key Highlights:

- INS Vikrant, displacing 42,800 tonnes, was commissioned into the Navy last September.
- Installation of the Long Range Surface to **Air Missile (LR-SAM) system** and the **MF-STAR radar** are pending.
 - The LR-SAM is a joint development by DRDO and Israel Aerospace Industries (IAI), and is manufactured by Bharat Dynamics Limited (BDL).
 - MF-STAR is manufactured by IAI and is also in service on other frontline warships on the Indian Navy.

❖ About INS Vikrant:

- INS Vikrant is also known as Indigenous Aircraft Carrier 1 (IAC-1).
- **Designed by-** The Indian Navy's Directorate of Naval Design (DND).
- It is being **built at Cochin Shipyard Limited (CSL)**, a public sector shipyard under the Ministry of Shipping.
- The IAC-1, the biggest warship made indigenously, has an **overall length of 263 m and a breadth of 63 m**.
- It is **capable of carrying 30 assorted aircraft** including combat jets and helicopters.
- The ship would **operate a mix of MiG-29K fighter aircraft & various helicopters**, ranging from the Kamov-31 Air Early Warning helicopters, the soon-to-be inducted MH-60R multi-role helicopters & the indigenously developed Advanced Light Helicopter Mk III.

Lavani Folk Dance



❖ Context

- Recently, a political leader in Maharashtra directed members of his party to not organise raunchy public shows in the name of Lavani.

❖ Lavani Folk Art Form

- **About :** The word Lavani comes from 'lavanya' or beauty.
 - It is a **folk song-and-dance performance** that is popular in Maharashtra.
 - In this art form women dancers wearing nine-yard-long saris in bright colours, make-up, & ghunghroos perform on dholak beats on a stage before a live audience.
- **Historical Background :** As an indigenous art form, Lavani has a history going back several centuries, & it attained particular popularity in the Peshwa era in the 18th century.
 - Traditionally, performances were held in front of kings or lords, and for the entertainment of tired soldiers resting during breaks in fighting.
- **There are several sub-genres of Lavani :** The most popular is the **Shringarik (erotic) kind**, in which the lyrics are often teasing, with sensuous dance steps and delicate gestures employed to convey erotic meaning.
- **Criticism :** A younger generation of women dancers are accused of vulgarising the traditional folk art form with their allegedly risqué dressing & sexually suggestive moves.

Exercise -Dharma Gaurdian

❖ Context

- The 4th edition of joint military exercise, "**EX DHARMA GUARDIAN**", between India and Japan is being conducted at Camp Imazu in Shiga province, Japan.

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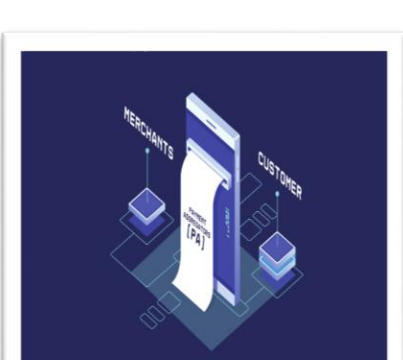




❖ **Key Highlights:**

- Exercise DHARMA GUARDIAN which is an **annual training event with Japan**, is crucial and significant in terms of security challenges faced by both nations in the backdrop of current the global situation.
- The scope of this exercise covers platoon level joint training on operations in **jungle and semi urban/urban terrain**.
- Troops of the **Garhwal Rifles Regiment** of the Indian Army and an Infantry Regiment from the Middle Army of the **Japan Ground Self Defence Force (JGSDF)** are participating in the exercise this year.
- The joint exercise will enable the two armies to share best practices in tactics, techniques and procedures of conducting tactical **operations under a UN Mandate**.

Payment Aggregators



❖ **Context**

- Recently, the payments arm of big technology companies Amazon and Google are among 32 firms that have been given in-principle approval by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to operate as online payment aggregators.

❖ **Key Highlights:**

- The central bank introduced a framework for such entities in March 2020.
- Applications were invited until last September.

❖ **Payment Aggregators:**

- Online payment aggregators **can onboard digital merchants and accept payments on their behalf** after getting a licence from the RBI.
- Under the payment aggregator framework, only firms approved by the RBI can acquire and offer payment services to merchants.
- It brings them under the **direct purview of the regulator**.
- **Eligibility For Aggregator Authorisation** : A company must have a minimum net worth of Rs 15 crore in the 1st year of application, & at least **Rs 25 crore by the second year**.
 - It also must fulfil the **“fit and proper”** criteria, and be compliant with global payment security standards.

UN Security Council



❖ **Context**

- Recently, India and Bangladesh to support each other’s non-permanent membership at the UN Security Council.

❖ **Key Highlights:**

- The UNSC is **one of the six principal organs** of the United Nations (UN). It is charged with ensuring international peace and security established by UN charter in 1945.
- Recommend the admission of new UN members to the General Assembly, and approve any changes to the UN Charter.
- **Headquarter- New York.**
- **Members : 15 members:** The five permanent members and **ten non-permanent members** elected for **two-year terms**.
 - The United States, the Russian Federation, France, China and the United Kingdom are its members with veto power.
 - India, for the **8th time**, entered the UNSC as a non-permanent member in year (2021). Each year, the **General Assembly elects five non-permanent members** (out of ten in total) for a two-year term.
 - The ten non-permanent seats are distributed on a regional basis.
 - The council’s **presidency is a capacity that rotates every month** among its 15 members.

Shrimp Farming

❖ **Context**

- Punjab is set to see its first state-level ‘shrimp mela’ (shrimp fair), beginning Friday in Enakhara village of Muktsar district.
- Shrimp farming began in the state in 2016-17.
- The mela is a state government push to create more awareness about it.

❖ **Shrimp Farming:**

- Shrimp farming is an **aquaculture-based activity in marine or freshwater environments to produce shrimps** for human consumption.

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- **Significance** : In Punjab, it is done in five south-western districts of Muktsar, Fazilka, Ferozepur, Bathinda and Faridkot.
 - South-west Punjab has saline underground water not fit for agriculture.
 - Also, waterlogging is a perennial issue in this belt. Therefore, shrimp farming was proposed as a solution for farmers whose land was lying unutilised.
- **Side Note** : Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, Tamilnadu, Kerala and West Bengal have developed shrimp farming in a big way. **Nellore district of Andhra Pradesh** is a prolific producer of shrimp, that it has earned the distinct name of Shrimp capital of India.

Attukal Pongala



❖ Context

- The Food Safety department has issued strict instructions for maintaining food safety in connection with Attukal Pongala.

❖ About Attukal Pongala:

- The Attukal Pongala held in Attukal Temple, Thiruvananthapuram is the largest congregation of women for a festival in the world.
- Pongala, which means 'to boil over', is the ritual in which women prepare **sweet payasam** (a pudding made from rice, jaggery, coconut and plantains cooked together) and offer it to the **Goddess or 'Bhagavathy'**.
- **The ten-day- long** celebration commences in the Malayalam month of Makaram-Kumbham (Feb - March) on the Karthika star. Pongala ceremony is on the auspicious day of **Pooram star which coincides with full moon**.
- The ritual can **only be performed by women**. The Goddess-fondly referred to as 'Attukamma' is said to be appeased by this ritual. The entire Thiruvananthapuram city lights up in festive fervour and the number of devotees have increased to the point that it has been recorded in the **Guinness World Book of Records**.

Mental Healthcare Act



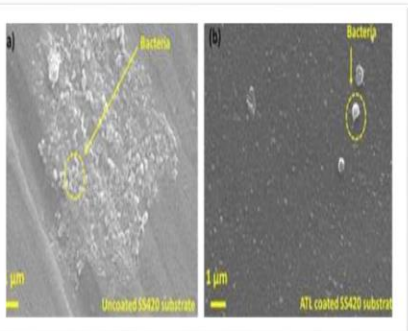
❖ Context

- The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) in a report flagged the "inhuman & deplorable" condition of all 46 govt.-run mental healthcare institutions across the country.

❖ The Mental Healthcare Act, 2017:

- **In 2017 The MHA** in essence dismantled the clinical heritage attached to asylums. **Section 19 of the act** required the government to provide less restrictive community living options such **midway homes, sheltered accommodations, rehab homes, and assisted accommodation**.
- The Act also **discourages using physical restraints** (such as chaining), objects to unmodified electro-convulsive therapy (ECT), and pushes for the rights to hygiene, sanitation, food, recreation, privacy, and infrastructure.
- Section 5 of Act allows "**advance directions**". Patients can choose a representative to assist end absolute guardianship and promote supported decision-making.
- The Act acknowledged that environmental factors such as income, social status, and education impact mental well-being, and therefore, **recovery needs a psychiatric as well social input**.

Non-Cytotoxic Nanocomposite Coatings



❖ Context

- Unique non-cytotoxic nanocomposite coatings **developed to prevent post-surgical infections**.

❖ Key Highlights:

- The post-operative surgical site infections (SSIs), **which according to WHO, affect 11 percent** of patients in low and middle-income countries, are caused by the development of biofilms. Conventionally antibacterial coatings containing biocides like **nano-silver, nano-copper, triclosan, and chlorhexidine** have been used to prevent bacterial infections, however they and other biocides are found to **produce cytotoxicity**.
- **As a result**, there is an increasing focus on developing alternative non-cytotoxic materials with antibacterial properties.
- Researchers have developed a **nanocomposite coating (named at ARCI as ATL)** by combining water repellence and biocidal property (**combinatorial approach**), which exhibits both hydrophobic and biocidal behaviour. The developed coating not only inhibits biofilm formation by restricting bacterial and water adhesion but also kills attached bacteria.

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