

**Nilgiri Tahr**

❖ **Context**

- Recently, The **Tamil Nadu government** launched an initiative for the conservation of the **Nilgiri Tahr**, the State animal, at a cost of ₹25.14 crore.

**Key Highlights:**

- Under The Nilgiri Tahr project, the government plans-
  - To develop a **better understanding of the Nilgiri Tahr** population through surveys and radio telemetry studies.
  - Reintroduce the Tahrs to their historical habitat.
  - Address proximate threats.
  - Increase public awareness of the species.
- The project is to be **implemented from 2022 to 2027.**



- October 7 will be celebrated as **'Niligiri Tahr Day'** in honour of **E.R.C. Davidar**, who was responsible for pioneering one of the first studies of the species in 1975.

• **About Nilgiri Tahr**

- The Nilgiri tahr is an ungulate that **lives high in the mountains of southern India.**
- Males are larger than females & of darker color when mature.
- It's **endemic to the Nilgiri Hills** and the southern portion of the Western and Eastern Ghats.
- It is the **state animal of Tamil Nadu.**
- It is also known as **Nilgiri Ibex.**
- **Habitat**
  - It **inhabits the open montane grassland** habitat of the South Western Ghats montane rain forests ecoregion.
- **Distribution**
  - The Nilgiri tahr can be **found only in India.**
- **Threats**
  - Habitat loss mainly due to **overgrazing of domestic livestock**
  - **Illegal hunting, and climate change.**
- **Conservation Status**
  - IUCN Red List- **Endangered (EN)**
  - WPA 1972- **Schedule I.**

**Indian Rupee Fell 10% Against the US Dollar In 2022**

❖ **Context**

- The Indian rupee depreciated by around 10 per cent against the US dollar in 2022 on account of sharp appreciation of the dollar, as the US Federal Reserve tightened its interest rate to check inflation amid the uncertainties surrounding the Russia-Ukraine conflict.

**How Did The Rupee Perform in 2022?**

- The rupee was the **worst-performing Asian currency** in 2022, witnessing a fall of around 10 per cent against the dollar.
- This decline was mainly on account of appreciation in the US currency amid fears of recession and inflation across many parts of the world and Russia-Ukraine war.
- **Compared to rupee**, depreciation of other **Asian currencies** was to a lesser extent. During the year, **Chinese Yuan, Philippine Peso** and Indonesian Rupiah fell around 9 per cent.

**RBI's Intervention:**

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) heavily intervened in the forex market to defend rupee.
- Since the beginning of 2022, the country's foreign exchange **reserves have fallen by \$70 billion.**
- It **stood at \$562.81 billion** as of December 23, 2022, the latest RBI data showed.
- "Reserves have witnessed a bit of erosion but the central bank **is now starting to again build up** its reserves and that would act as a buffer in times of uncertainty.

**What was The Reason for Capital Outflows?**

- The US Fed aggressively raised **interest rates by 425 basis point (bps)** in 2022 in its fight against inflation.

- This led to a **higher interest rate differential between the US and India**, and investors pulled out money from the domestic market and started investing in the US market to take advantage of higher rates.
- In 2022, foreign portfolio investors (**FPIs**) **pulled out** Rs 1.34 lakh crore from the Indian markets – the highest-ever yearly net outflow.
- They withdrew Rs 1.21 lakh crore from the stock markets and Rs 16,682 crore from the debt market in 2022, putting pressure on the rupee.
- **Russian invasion of Ukraine** accentuated the FPI withdrawals with the global economic slowdown making inflows tougher.

**Difference Between Depreciation & Devaluation:**

- **Depreciation:** When there is a fall in the value of a currency in a floating exchange rate. This **is not due to a government's decision**, but due to supply and demand-side factors.
- Although if the government sold a lot of their currency they could **help cause depreciation.**
- **For example**, After the Brexit vote of 2016, the value of Pound Sterling fell 15% because investors downgraded the long-term economic outlook of the UK.
- **Devaluation** is when a country makes a **conscious decision to lower its exchange rate** in a fixed or semi-fixed exchange rate. Therefore, **technically devaluation** is only possible if a country is a member of some fixed exchange rate policy.

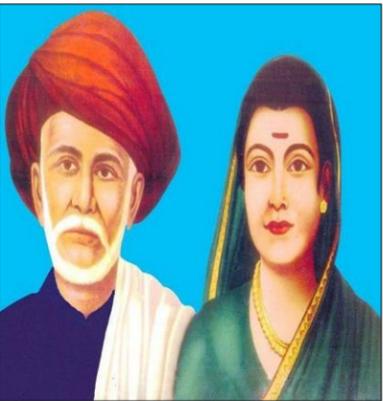


- **For example** in the late 1980s, the UK joined the Exchange Rate Mechanism ERM. Initially, the value of the Pound was set between say 3DM and 3.2DM.
- However, **if the government thought that was too high, they could make the decision to devalue** and change the target exchange rate to 2.7DM and 2.9DM. In 1992, they left ERM as they couldn't maintain the value of Pound.



## News in Between the Lines

### Savitribai Phule



#### ❖ Context

- Recently, The Prime Minister has **paid homage to Savitribai Phule on her birth anniversary.**

#### ❖ About Savitribai Phule

- **Born** in 1831 in Maharashtra.
- She was an **Indian social reformer, educationalist, and poet.**
- She is also regarded as the **first female teacher** of India.
- Savitribai Phule advocated **inter-caste marriages, widow remarriage, and eradication of child marriage, sati and dowry systems**, among other social issues.
- Savitribai Phule is hailed as India's one of the **first modern feminists.**
- Savitribai Phule **took on the work of Satya Shodhak Samaj** after the demise of Jyotirao Phule.
- With Jyotirao Phule, she had **opened 18 schools for girls.**
- She **opened Mahila Sewa Mandal** in 1852 to raise awareness about women's rights.
- In 1860, the Phule's **organised a barber's strike against shaving the hair of widowed women.**
- Along with Jyotirao, Savitribai started the **Balhatya Pratibandhak Griha ('Home for the Prevention of Infanticide')** for pregnant widows facing discrimination.
- **Publications**
  - **Kavya Phule** in 1854.
  - **Bavan Kashi Subodh Ratnakar** in 1892.
  - A poem entitled "**Go, Get Education**" in which she encouraged those who are oppressed to free themselves by obtaining an education.

### Study: Termite Behaviour is Linked to a Warming World



#### ❖ Context

- A recent study has found that **termites decompose wood at a much higher rate in warmer conditions.**

#### ❖ Key Highlights:

- The study also revealed that as the **Earth gets warmer, termites will rapidly spread across the world.**
- For every 10 degrees Celsius **increase in temperature, their decomposition activity goes up** by almost seven times,
- This could, in turn, lead to a further **rise in global temperatures**, because these small insects while consuming deadwood release carbon into the atmosphere.
- There are around 3,000 species of termites across the world, including the ones that consume plant material and even soil.
- However, the most famous are the **wood-eating termites.**

### Unexploded Ordnance (UXO)



#### ❖ Context

- Recently, an **unexploded artillery shell** was found near the official residence of Punjab Chief Minister.

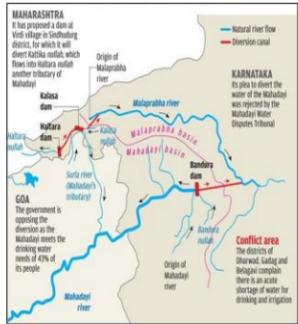
#### ❖ About UXO

- A military ammunition or explosive device that **remains unexploded even after it has been primed and fired** is known as Unexploded Ordnance (UXO) in military parlance.
- Such UXO can be left-overs from a war, a military battle inoculation exercise, field firing exercises or even be part of military scrap that is often exported from one country to another to extract metal.
- All unexploded munitions are **treated as potentially dangerous & capable of detonating** till proven otherwise by professional assessment by military ammunition experts.

## Face to Face Centres



## Kalasa-Banduri Nala Project



### ❖ Context

- Karnataka's decision to go ahead with a water diversion project (Kalasa-Banduri Nala) on river Mahadayi has escalated its long-standing dispute on the issue with neighbouring Goa.

### ❖ Kalasa-Banduri Nala Project

- The Kalasa Banduri Nala project **aims to divert water from Mahadayi** to satisfy the drinking water needs of Belagavi, Dharwad, Bagalkot and Gadag districts.
- Though the **project was first proposed in the early 1980s**, it has remained on paper owing to a dispute between Karnataka, Goa and Maharashtra.
- As per plans, barrages are to be built against Kalasa and Banduri streams — tributaries of Mahadayi — and water diverted towards Karnataka's parched districts.
- **Mahadayi** originates inside the Bhimgad Wildlife Sanctuary in the Belagavi district of Karnataka and flows into the Arabian Sea in Goa.
- Due to the protests in Goa and also due to concerns over ecological damage, the project was put on hold.
- Goa approached the Supreme Court, seeking the creation of a Tribunal to settle the water sharing dispute.
- A **Tribunal** was finally set up by the UPA government in November 2010.

## Rani Velu Nachiyar



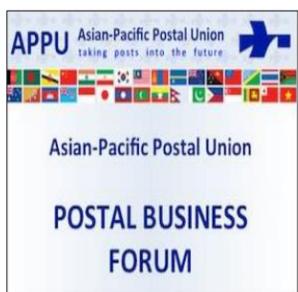
### ❖ Context

- **The Prime Minister** has paid tributes to **Rani Velu Nachiyar** on her birth anniversary.

### ❖ About Rani Velu Nachiyar

- Rani Velu Nachiyar was the first queen to fight against the British colonial power in India.
- She is known by Tamils as **Veeramangai**.
- She was the princess of Ramanathapuram and the **only child of Raja Chellamuthu vijayaragunatha Sethupathy** and Rani Sakandhimuthal of the **Ramnad kingdom**.
- Rani Velu Nachiyar was trained in war match weapons usage, martial arts like **Valari, Silambam** (fighting using stick), horse riding and archery.
- She was a scholar in many languages and she had proficiency with languages like **French, English and Urdu**.
- She married the **king of Sivagangai**, with whom she had a daughter. When her **husband, Muthuvaduganathaperiya Udaiyathevar, was killed by British** soldiers and the son of the **Nawab of Arcot, she was drawn into battle**.
- She **escaped with her daughter** and lived under the protection of Palayakaarar Kopaala Naayakkar at Virupachi near Dindigul for eight years.
- Queen Velu Nachiar **succeeded her husband in 1780**.
- The Queen Velu Nachiar granted powers to Marudhu Brothers to administer the country in 1780.
- She granted powers to the Marudu brothers to administer the country in 1780.
- Velu Nachiyar **died a few years later, on 25 December 1796**.

## Asian Pacific Postal Union (APPU)



### ❖ Context

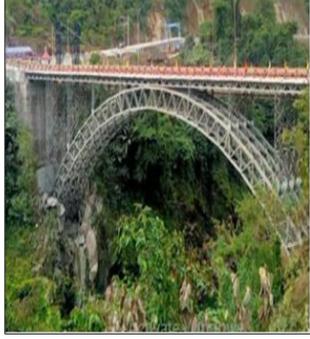
- **India** will take over the leadership of the Asian Pacific Postal Union (APPU), **Dr. Vinaya Prakash Singh**, erstwhile Member (Personnel), Postal Services Board will take over the charge of Secretary General of the **Union for a tenure of 4 years**.

### ❖ About APPU

- Asian Pacific Postal Union (APPU) is an intergovernmental organization of **32-member countries of the Asian-Pacific region**.
- Asian Pacific Postal Union (APPU) has its **Headquarters in Bangkok, Thailand**.
- APPU is the only Restricted Union of the Universal Postal Union (UPU) in the region, which is a **specialized agency of the United Nations**.

### ❖ APPU OBJECTIVES

- To **provide coordination** for Universal Postal Union technical assistance in the region.
- To **act as the regional platform** for consultation on key global matters impacting on the postal sector.
- To **contribute benchmarking** of best postal practice to APPU members.
- To **disseminate information** on worldwide postal sector policy and regulations.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To support and generate networking within and outside the region leading to postal sector development.</li> <li>As the regional center for various UPU projects, APPU also takes the lead in ensuring that all <b>technical and operational projects of the UPU</b> are fulfilled in the region so that the region is integrated into the global postal network in the best possible way.</li> <li><b>Secretary General leads the activities</b> of the Union and is also the Director of the Asian Pacific Postal College (APPC) which is the largest intergovernmental postal training institute in the region.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Arunachal Pradesh Gets A Strategic Bridge</b></p> 	<p>❖ <b>Context</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Defence Minister inaugurated 28 vital projects, mostly along the border with China, from a <b>strategic bridge in Arunachal Pradesh</b>.</li> <li>Projects include <b>12 in the Union Territories</b> of Ladakh and Jammu &amp; Kashmir, <b>five</b> in Arunachal Pradesh, <b>three</b> each in Sikkim, Punjab and Uttarakhand, and <b>two</b> in Rajasthan and were <b>completed by the Border Roads Organisation (BRO)</b>.</li> </ul> <p>❖ <b>Key Highlights:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The <b>bridge on the Siyom River</b> was among 28 projects of the Border Roads Organisation Defence Minister dedicated to the nation.</li> <li>This class 70 steel arch superstructure bridge is crucial for troops to reach the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in the central part of Arunachal Pradesh, primarily the Tuting subdivision bordering China.</li> <li>These areas were <b>once connected by a Bailey suspension</b> bridge across the Siyom River. A flash flood washed it away in June 2021.</li> <li>These projects will provide extreme help in the delivery of rations, military equipment, &amp; other help.</li> <li>Among the other projects is a <b>bridge across the Oyong River in Kurung Kumey district</b> connecting Huri village, one of the remotest villages in India along the LAC.</li> <li>It will also <b>facilitate heavy equipment and mechanised vehicles</b> to forward areas of Upper Siang district besides boosting socio-economic development of the region.</li> <li>A compendium incorporating the <b>latest technologies adopted by the BRO</b> in the construction of roads, bridges, airfields and tunnels was also released.</li> <li>These include the patented <b>LITHELYARCH technology</b> for the construction of a cut-and-cover tunnel in Ladakh.</li> </ul>
<p><b>India's first green hydrogen blending operation in PNG network</b></p> 	<p>❖ <b>Context</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>NTPC starts India's first green hydrogen blending operation</b> in PNG network.</li> </ul> <p>❖ <b>Key Highlights:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>NTPC Ltd commissions</b> India's first green hydrogen blending project. The project is a <b>joint effort</b> of NTPC and Gujarat Gas Limited (GGL).</li> <li>The project would bring India at the centre stage of the <b>global hydrogen economy</b>.</li> <li>India would not only <b>reduce its hydrocarbon import bill</b> significantly but can also bring forex ashore by being a green hydrogen and green chemicals exporter to the world.</li> <li>Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board (<b>PNGRB</b>), the <b>regulatory body</b> has given approval for <b>5% vol. /vol. blending of green hydrogen with PNG</b> to start with and the blending level would be <b>scaled phase wise to reach 20%</b>.</li> <li>Green hydrogen when blended with natural gas <b>reduces CO2 emissions</b> keeping net heating content same.</li> <li>This feat is achieved only by few select countries like UK, Germany, and Australia etc.</li> <li><b>Green hydrogen</b> is defined as hydrogen produced by splitting water into hydrogen and oxygen <b>using renewable electricity</b>.</li> <li><b>Grey hydrogen</b> is traditionally produced from methane (CH<sub>4</sub>), split with steam into CO<sub>2</sub>, the main culprit for climate change and H<sub>2</sub>, hydrogen.</li> <li><b>Blue hydrogen</b> follows the same process as grey, with the additional technologies necessary to capture the CO<sub>2</sub> produced when hydrogen is split from methane (or from coal) and store it for long term.</li> </ul>

