

Prelim Bits 03-02-2024 | UPSC Daily Current Affairs

UNESCO 1970 Convention

Recently, the pressure on European museums to return artefacts taken from Southeast Asia during colonial times is growing.

- **1970 Convention** - It refers to 'Means of **Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer** of Ownership of Cultural Property'.

1970 Convention defines '**Cultural Property**' as 'a property designated by countries having importance for archaeology, prehistory, history, literature, art or science'.

- It is the principal legal source when a country makes a claim to have its possessions returned.
- **Launch** - It came **into force in 1972**.
- **State Parties** - **144**, India ratified in 1977.
- **Objectives** - To urge States Parties to take measures to prohibit, prevent the illicit trafficking and return the cultural property.
- To provide a common framework for the States Parties on the measures and to safeguard the identity of peoples and promote peaceful societies.
- **Principles** - **Prevention, restitution and international cooperation**.

UNESCO 1970 Convention is fully in line with the Sustainable Development Goals defined in the United Nations 2030 Agenda.

- **Limitations** - It **does not apply retrospectively**, so it does not include the peak phase of colonialism.
- **Ownership approval** - The requesting State Party shall furnish, at its expense, the documentation and other evidence necessary to establish its claim for recovery and return.
- **Significance of returning artefacts** - It can provide significant soft-power benefits for European countries in their extension of influence in regions such as Southeast Asia.

- **Before Independence** - *Antiquities (Export Control) Act of 1947* ensured that “no antiquity could be exported without license.”
- **After Independence** - *Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act* was enacted in 1958.
- The *Antiquities and Art Treasures Act* was enacted in 1972 (AATA), implemented from April 1, 1976.
- *Item-67 of the Union List, Item-12 of the State List, and Item-40 of the Concurrent List* of the Constitution deal with the country's heritage.

References

1. [The Indian Express| Benefits of Returning looted Artefacts.](#)
2. [UNESCO| 1970 Convention on Cultural Property](#)
3. [The Indian Express| Indian Laws in Protection of Antiquities](#)

Unified Payments Interface (UPI)

UPI gets global launch at Eiffel Tower in France.

- **Launched in** - **2016**
- **Developed by** - *National Payment Corporation of India* (NPCI).

National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI)

- **Initiated by** - Reserve Bank of India (*RBI*) and Indian Banks' Association (*IBA*).
- **Working under** - Payment and Settlement Systems Act, 2007.
- **Aim** - To create a *robust Payment & Settlement Infrastructure* in India.
- **Role** - An umbrella organisation for *operating retail payments and settlement systems in India.*

- **UPI** - A system that powers ***multiple bank accounts into a single mobile application*** (of any participating bank), merging several banking features, seamless fund routing and merchant payments into one hood.
- It also caters to the *“Peer to Peer” collect request*.
- **Benefits** - It benefits ***banks, customers and merchants***.
- *Immediate money transfer* through mobile device round the clock *24*7 and 365 days* and single mobile application for *accessing different bank accounts*.
- *Virtual address* of the customer for Pull & Push and *single click 2 factor authentication* provides for incremental security.
- *Enables multiple payments* like utility bill payments, over the counter payments, QR Code (Scan and Pay) based payments.
- **UPI based products** - Hello! UPI, Credit Line on UPI, UPI LITE X, UPI Tap & Pay and BHIM app.

NPCI International Payments (NIPL), an arm of NPCI has tied up with French e-commerce and proximity payments Lyra, in enabling UPI in France. Eiffel Tower is the 1st merchant to offer UPI payments in France.

- **Significance of global UPI** - It *encourages digital payments* and foster *stronger ties between the partner nations*.

References

1. [The Hindu| Implementation of UPI in France](#)
2. [NPCI| Unified Payment Interface \(UPI\)](#)

UN Regular Budget

India has paid USD 32.89 million to the United Nations Regular Budget for 2024.

The UN Charter, the treaty signed in June 1945 that created the United Nations, established 6 principle organs of the new international organization.

- **UN regular budget** - It ***funds the UN's core bodies and activities outside of peacekeeping*** which includes
 - *Assessment of Member States' advances* to the Working Capital Fund.
 - *Assessment of contributions by Non-member States* towards the 2024 expenses of the UN for their participation in UN.
- **Funding By - Member states**, in 2 ways.
- **Assessed contributions** - *All UN Member States are required* to make payments under the UN Charter which provide a reliable source of *funding to core functions* of the UN Secretariat.
- **Voluntary contributions** - It is on the *discretion of individual Member States* which are vital *to the work of the UN's humanitarian and development agencies*.
- **Budget approval by** - UN General Assembly (**UNGA**).
- **Budget assessment by - UN Committee on Contributions**, which advises UNGA regarding UN expenses and members states assessment rates.
- **Member States assessment rates** - They are determined by UNGA, with renegotiations taking place every 3 years.
- It considers factors like Member State's gross national income, per capita income, and several other economic indicators.

Given its high level of economic development and per capita income relative to other countries, the U.S. pays the maximum rate.

- **Honour roll** - It includes those *Member States that have paid their regular budget assessments in full, within the 30 day* due period specified in UN financial regulations.

36 Member States have paid their regular budget dues in full to the UN on time for 2024 UN budget and are mentioned in Honour roll.

References

1. [The Hindu| India Pays to UN Regular Budget](#)
2. [Better World Campaign| UN Budget](#)

Stingless Bees

In Peru, conservators try to save stingless bees to save Amazon forests.

- **Scientific name** - *Melipona eburnean*.
- **Nativity** - Amazon region.

	Stingless Bees	Honey Bees
Nativity	South and Central America mainly Amazon	Africa, spread to China, America, Europe and India
Habitat	Forested areas and tropical climates	Most tropical and subtropical regions
Sting	No	Yes
Viscosity	Less, so highly liquid	High
Honey Production	Less	More
Adaptation to agricultural areas	Vulnerable to death	Adapted to live

- **Pollinator** - It pollinate much of the *Amazon's native flora*, a creative way to fight deforestation.
- **Medicinal properties** - It contains *anti-inflammatory, antimicrobial* and other health-promoting properties.
- It might be from the resin of Amazonian trees that the stingless bees are pollinating, which are *used by different trees for protection when they have a wound*.

Amazon is one of the most biodiverse regions in the world and is also known as Lungs of the Earth.

- **Popularity** - It became a favoured ingredient in *alternative treatments for upper respiratory infections* during COVID-19.
- **Threats** - Deforestation, use of pesticides, climate change and competition with the honey bee.
- **Challenges** - *Stingless-bee honey isn't considered honey under the law*.
- A traces of *environmental pollutants are reported in the honey*, likely a result of the bees pollinating within pesticide-doused lands.

References

1. [The New York Times| Conservation of Stingless Bees in Peru](#)
2. [MyBeeLine| Stingless Bees Vs. Invasive Honey Bees](#)

Taj Trapezium Zone

Recently, the Supreme Court of India asked the Centrally Empowered Committee to find out an alternative solution to cutting down 3,874 trees for the construction of a road project in the Taj Trapezium Zone.

- **Taj Trapezium Zone (TTZ)** - A defined area of **10,400 sq km around the Taj Mahal**, named so, as is located around the Taj Mahal and is shaped like a trapezoid.
- **Aim** - **To protect the monument from pollution.**
- **Geographical spread** - It spread over 5 districts in **Uttar Pradesh** and 1 district in **Rajasthan**.
- **Coverage** - It comprises over 40 protected monuments including **3 World Heritage Sites** the Taj Mahal, Agra Fort and Fatehpur Sikri.



- **Regulations** - It bans on the use of coal/ coke in industries located in the TTZ and also mandates for switching over from coal/ coke to natural gas, and relocating them outside the TTZ or shutting down.
- **4 Zones** - Red, Green, Orange and White are the zonal classification of categories of Industries.
- **Responsibility areas**
 - Protecting Taj Mahal from damage via pollution
 - Control Pollution
 - Keep record of Taj Mahal pollution statistics
 - Study city pollution

References

1. [The New Indian Express| Protecting Ecosystem of TTZ](#)
2. [TTZ| TTZ \(Prevention and Control\) Authority](#)

Other Important Topics

Sirpur lake

- Sirpur Lake also known as **Pakshi Vihar** is a human-made wetland in **Indore, Madhya Pradesh**.
- The lake was created by **Maharaja Shivajirao Holkar** to provide water to the city.
- It's a **shallow lake** and a protected habitat for birds, including the **Greater Flamingo and Sarus Crane**.
- In 2022, the Ramsar Convention designated the wetland as a **Ramsar site**.

GHAR (GO Home and Re-Unit) Portal

- GHAR is an online portal that helps children who have gone missing to return home and reunite with their families.
- The portal was developed by the **National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR)** to digitally monitor and track the repatriation and restoration of children.
- Digital transfer of cases of children to the concerned JJB/CWC of the State. It will help in speedy repatriation of children.

Project X

- Project X is a **comprehensive sexuality education (CSE)** to school students, aiming to provide a broader perspective on human sexuality.
- It was jointly implemented by the district administration of Kerala, General Education department, and the NGO Kanal.
- **Funding** - Technopark-based Guide house (corporate social responsibility partner) and the Government of Kerala.
- The trainers will use words like 'safe-unsafe' touch rather than 'good-bad' touch.

Asteroid Ryugu

- Asteroid Ryugu, formally known as **162173 Ryugu**, is a diamond-shaped near-Earth asteroid that was discovered in 1999.
- Ryugu is a dark object with a rare spectral **type Cb**, which has qualities of both **a C-type and a B-type asteroid**.
- Ryugu does not have a protective atmosphere and its surface is directly exposed to space and can gather interplanetary dust.
- This dust can change the asteroid's surface composition when it strikes.

Cauvery North Wildlife Sanctuary

After nearly 50 years, two tigers were recorded in camera traps in reserve forests of Jawalagiri range in the Cauvery North Wildlife Sanctuary at Hosur, Tamil Nadu recently.

- The Cauvery North Wildlife Sanctuary is a potential habitat for tigers as it comes under the **Melagiri hill range wildlife corridor** in Hosur, Tamil Nadu.
- It is located in the confluence of **Western Ghats and Eastern Ghats**.
- It was declared a wildlife sanctuary in **2014** by the Government of Tamil Nadu under the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972.

Nityanand Rai Committee

The Ministry of Home Affairs has decided to hold the 2nd meeting of its high-powered committee soon in New Delhi.

- The first committee is a 17-member committee has been constituted under the Chairmanship of **Minister of State for Home Affairs Nityanand Rai**.
- It is a **High Powered Committee (HPC)** to address issues related to the protection of Ladakh's culture, language, land, and employment opportunities.

MEA's share for Bhutan

- Bhutan, Nepal, Maldives, and Mauritius have got the lion's share (largest part) of the Ministry of External Affairs' development assistance for 2024-25.
- The MEA's total development assistance to various countries and regions such as Latin America and Eurasia has been pegged at Rs 4,883 crore.
- In line with India's **'Neighbourhood First' policy**, the largest share of aid portfolio for 2024-25 went to Bhutan with an allocation for 2024-25.

Mekong River

- The Mekong River is a ***trans-boundary river*** in East and Southeast Asia.
- It is the ***world's 12th-longest river*** and the ***3rd -longest in Asia***.
- The river originates on the ***Tibetan Plateau in China*** and flows through **6 countries** - China, Myanmar, Thailand, Lao PDR, Cambodia, and Vietnam.
- The Mekong River is home to the ***world's largest inland fishery***, accounting for up to 25% of the global freshwater catch.

Health cover under AYUSH

- Under the new guidelines, IRDAI has directed all general and health insurers (except ECGC and AIC) to put in place a board-approved policy for AYUSH coverage.
- The treatment costs under ayurveda, yoga, and naturopathy, unani, siddha and homoeopathy (AYUSH) will soon be brought on par with allopathy from the next financial year.
- The policy shall also contain the quality parameters as well as procedure for enrolling AYUSH hospitals/daycare centres as network providers for cashless facility.

Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI)

- It is a statutory body under the jurisdiction of Ministry of Finance tasked with regulating and licensing the insurance and re-insurance industries.

Cashless treatments in Hospitals

- General and health insurance companies have decided to offer 100 % cashless treatment across the country.
- It is initiated by ***Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI)***.
- This policy means that policyholder can get admitted to any hospital without paying any advance money, and insurance companies will pay the bill on the discharge day.