

Prelim Bits 08-09-2018

Leptospirosis

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- It is a bacterial disease that affects humans and animals.

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- It is caused by corkscrew-shaped bacteria called *Leptospira*.

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- In humans, it can lead to kidney damage, meningitis (inflammation of the membrane around the brain and spinal cord), liver failure, respiratory distress, and even death.

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- It's spread through urine of infected dogs, rodents, and farm animals.

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Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA)

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- India recently decided to end its boycott of the PISA.

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- PISA was introduced in the year 2000 by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation Development (OECD).

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- It tests the learning levels of 15-year-olds in reading, mathematics and science.

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- The test is carried out every three years.

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- India decided to stay away from PISA on account of its dismal performance in 2009.

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- The "out of context" questions were stated as a reason for the poor show.

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- in 2012 and 2015, when it was placed 72nd among the 74 participating countries.

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- India, subsequently, chose to not participate in the 2012 and 2015 cycle.
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- The HRD Ministry, now, had formally decided to end this boycott.
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- The ministry will negotiate India's terms of participation in 2021 with OECD.
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- Unlike 2009, when schools in Tamil Nadu and Himachal Pradesh had participated, the Union government will request OECD to administer the test across all schools in Chandigarh in 2021.
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- Chandigarh was selected for three reasons.
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1. Compact area.
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2. To keep number of languages in which the test has to be administered to a minimum and
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3. Chandigarh's record of performing well in learning assessments.
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HY-1C satellite

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- It is a marine satellite launched by China recently.
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- It was launched by Long March-2C rocket from the Taiyuan Satellite Launch Centre in Shanxi province.
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- It is a part of series of satellites.
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- HY-1A was launched in 2002 and HY-1B satellite was launched in 2007.
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- It was launched to help improve understanding of maritime waters and climate change.
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- HY-1C can detect chlorophyll and suspended sediment concentrations and dissolved organic matter, which can affect ocean colour, as well as temperatures on the sea surface.
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- The data will help survey fishery and aquaculture resources and

environments, offering a scientific basis for reasonable exploitation and utilization of marine resources.

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- Scientists will also use the data to study global environmental changes, the role of the oceans in the global carbon cycle and the El Nino phenomenon.

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Hubballi-Ankola railway line

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- National Board for Wildlife (NBWL) is soon expected to deliver the fate of the controversial Hubballi-Ankola railway line.

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- It is been opposed because will claim nearly 1,300 acres of pristine forest land apart from the cutting of 1.73 lakh trees, spanning three elephant corridors in Dharwad, Yellapur, and Karwar.

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- In June 2017 the Regional Empowered Committee of the MoEF&CC recommended the Stage-1 clearance for the project.

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- Also, earlier this year, the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) rejected the proposal, saying it would have repercussions on tiger and other wildlife in the area.

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Hubballi-Ankola railway line



LENGTH
168.29 km



LAND ACQUISITION
995.6 hectares



TREES TO BE CUT
1.73 lakh

FOREST LAND TO BE ACQUIRED

595.6 hectares
In Karwar, Dharwad, Yellapur elephant corridors



Timeline

1951: Formal representation from locals for a new railway line connecting Hubballi and Ankola

1996: New Hubballi-Ankola line proposed

1999: Foundation stone laid by Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee

2001: Work starts on the line near Hubballi

2006: Supreme Court approached against the project

2015: Central Empowered Committee of the Supreme Court states that damage outweighs benefits

2016: National Green Tribunal clears project and asks Railways to submit fresh proposal

2017: Regional Empowered Committee recommends the project for Stage I clearance

February 2018: National Tiger Conservation Authority inspection report rejects project, stating it will adversely impact wildlife

April 2018: National Board for Wildlife asks for review of the NTCA report



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“Positive Update” on Australia’s Great Barrier Reef

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- Dire warnings of reef die-off were given after massive coral bleaching in 2016 and 2017.

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- Recently, Tourism and Events Queensland has issued a “positive update, reporting that some affected areas are showing “substantial signs of recovery.”

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- The Great Barrier Reef is the longest coral reef in the world and the first coral reef ecosystem to be awarded Unesco World Heritage Status.

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- It stretches more than 1,430 miles along Queensland’s spectacular coastline.

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- Coral bleaching occurs when coral experiences stress from heightened water temperatures or poor water quality.

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- In response, the coral ejects a photosynthetic algae called zooxanthellae, which removes the coral’s distinctive color.

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- If the stress conditions persist, the coral will die.

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- But if conditions return to acceptable levels, some coral can reabsorb the substance and recover.

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- Coral bleaching occurs in multiple stages, ranging from the equivalent of a mild sunburn to coral mortality.

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Source: The Hindu, The Indian Express

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