Prelim Bits 11-09-2022 & 12-09-2022 | UPSC Daily Current Affairs

Vembanad Lake

Vembanad Lake is shrinking and its unique biodiversity is under threat of ecological decay.

- Vembanad Lake is also known as Punnamada Lake, Kochi Lake, Vembanad Kayal and Vembanad Kol.
- It is one of the largest lakes in Kerala and the longest lake in the country.
- It is the second largest wetland system in India after the Sunderbans in West Bengal.
- The lake has its **source in four rivers**, Meenachil, Achankoil, Pampa and Manimala.
- The lake lays right by the Arabian Sea, with a narrow reef separating it from the sea.
- **Geographical Features in the Lake** - The Pathiramanal island or the Midnight sands is a small beautiful island in the Lake.
- The Kumarakom Bird Sanctuary is located on the east coast of the lake.
- In 2019, Willingdon Island, a seaport located in the city of Kochi, was carved out of Vembanad Lake.
- The 1252 m long saltwater barrier, Thanneermukkom, was built to stop saltwater intrusion into Kuttanad.
- The Nehru Trophy Boat Race (Vallam Kali) is a Snake Boat Race hosted in the lake every year in the month of August.
- **Recognition** - The government of India has recognised the wetland under the National Wetlands Conservation Programme.
- In 2002, it was included in the list of wetlands of international importance, as defined by the Ramsar Convention.
- **Threats** - The lake is facing serious environmental degradation due to
    1. Recurring floods,
    2. Unauthorised constructions on its banks,
    3. Increased pollution,
    4. Reduction in water spread area and
    5. Increased weed growth.

Reference

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2. https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/travel/destinations/10-vembanad-lake-facts-that-will-leave-you-impressed/articleshow/69540318.cms
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Hoysala Temples

The Union Culture Ministry announced that the Hoysala Temples of Belur, Halebid and Somnathapura in Karnataka are India's official nominations for the UNESCO World Heritage List for

the year 2022-2023.

- The Hoysala Temple is also known as the Hoysaleswara temple or 'Halebidu' temple.
- It is said to be the largest monument in Halebidu, a town in Karnataka and erstwhile capital of the Hoysala Empire.
- This **12th-century temple**, which is dedicated to Lord Shiva, was sponsored by King Vishnuvardhana.
- This temple shows a basic Dravidian style, but also show a strong influence of 'Bhumija', which is seen in central India, along with 'Nagara' traditions of northern and western India.
- The temple follows the Shaivism tradition, but includes themes from Vaishnavism and Shaktism, too, along with images from Jainism.
- The sculptures inside the temple depict scenes from the Ramayana, the Mahabharata and the Bhagavata Purana.
- In the 14th century, Halebidu was plundered by the Delhi Sultanate, which resulted in its ruin and neglect.
- The temples are **protected monuments** of the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), which takes care of their conservation and maintenance.

Reference

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2. https://indianexpress.com/article/lifestyle/art-and-culture/hoysala-temples-unesco-world-heritage-sites-karnataka-7752911/
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India Accepts Three Pillars of IPEF

India accepts three out of four pillars of the US-led Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF).

> *The four pillars of the IPEF are trade; tax and anti-corruption; supply chain resiliency; and clean energy and decarbonisation.*

- India has decided to become part of the following components of the framework,
    1. Resilient economy (supply chain),
    2. Fair economy (anti-corruption and tax), and
    3. Clean economy (decarbonisation and infrastructure).
- However, India did not join the connected economy (trade) pillar, which deals primarily with **trade and commitments** to the environment, labour, digital trade and public procurement.
- **Related Links** - Indo-Pacific Economic Framework

Reference

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2. https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/india-opts-out-of-joining-ipef-trade-pillar-to-wait-for-final-contours-122091000344_1.html
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Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems

Juul Inc, a dominant player in the Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems (ENDS) market, agreed to pay money to settle claims by 34 US states and territories that said its marketing led to an increase in teenage vaping.

- The Electronic nicotine delivery systems (ENDS) are battery-powered devices that produce an aerosol made by heating an "e-liquid", usually containing nicotine, flavourings and other chemicals.
- The ENDS products include e-cigarettes, e-hookahs, e-pipes, vaping devices and vape pens.
- While some e-cigarettes look like regular cigarettes, others are slickly designed, often resembling everyday items like pens or USB drives.
- ENDS were originally marketed to help smokers quit the habit or as a safer alternative to cigarettes.
- They have become very popular among young people, often attracting non-smokers as well.
- Apart from highly addictive nicotine, e-cigarette aerosol can also contain harmful substances like heavy metals and cancer-causing agents.

> *The US Centre for Disease Control claims that while e-cigarettes have the potential to help adult smokers if used as a complete substitute for regular cigarettes, they can still cause harm.*

Legal Status of e-Cigarette Market in India

- In 2019, the Indian government banned the production, manufacture, import, export, transport, sale, distribution, storage and advertisement of all Electronic Nicotine Delivery System (ENDS) products.
- Punishment for breaking the law ranges from a fine of 1 to 5 lakh rupees, as well as imprisonment for 1 to 3 years.
- Those found storing the devices shall be facing imprisonment of up to 6 months and/or a fine up to Rs 50,000.
- A report by Prescient and Strategic Intelligence in 2019, months before ENDS were banned, showed a thriving e-cigarette market in India.
- Despite a formal ban, e-cigarettes and vapes are available at cigarette shops and various online marketplaces.

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2. https://www.aafp.org/about/policies/all/electronic-nicotine-delivery-systems.html
3. https://www.fda.gov/tobacco-products/products-ingredients-components/e-cigarettes-vapes-and-other-electronic-nicotine-delivery-systems-ends

FGD Target

The Indian government extended a deadline for coal-fired power plants to install equipment to cut sulphur emissions by two years to 2025.

- Thermal utilities, which produce 75% of the country's power, account for some 80% of

industrial emissions of sulphur and nitrous-oxides in India.

- Initially, India had set a 2017 deadline for thermal power plants to install Flue Gas Desulphurisation (FGD) units to cut sulphur emissions.
- That was later changed to varying deadlines for different regions, ending in 2022, and further extended last year to a period ending 2025.
- **Recent Order** - The Power Ministry had pushed for an extension, citing higher costs, lack of funds, COVID 19-related delays and geopolitical tension with neighbouring China, which has restricted trade.
- The recent order said that the power plants would be forcibly retired if they do not comply to the norms on sulphur emissions by end-2027.
- The order said that the plants near populous regions and the capital New Delhi will have to pay penalties to operate from end-2024, while utilities in less polluting areas will be penalized after end-2026.
- **Related Links** - Flue Gas Desulfurization, Emission Control Measures By Thermal Plants, New Emission Norms for Thermal Power Plants (April 2021)

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