Prelim Bits 19-12-2023 | UPSC Daily Current Affairs

National Culture Fund

National Culture Fund (NCF) Received Rs. 3.70 Crore from Non-Government Sources during Last Five Years (2018-19 to 2022-23).

- **Set up in** – 1996, a trust under the Charitable Endowment Act, 1890.
- **Aim** – To mobilize extra resources through Public-Private Partnership (PPP) towards promoting, protecting & preserving India's Cultural Heritage (Tangible & Intangible).
- It is managed by a Council and an Executive Committee.
- **Council** – It has the power to decide on relevant polices which has a *maximum strength of 24* including the Chairman.
- It is ***chaired by the Hon'ble Minister of Culture*** and has 19 members from various fields.
- **Executive Committee** – It will *actualize the policies* and it is ***chaired by the Secretary, Ministry of Culture***.
- **Project Implementation committee (PIC)** – Representatives from the Donor, Implementer and NCF.
- The accounts are ***audited by the CAG of India annually***.
- **Fund usage**
  - To *train a cadre of specialists* and cultural administrators
  - To *document* cultural expressions and forms
  - To undertake *research, innovations and experiments* in arts
  - To create of institutions such as *galleries and museums*
  - To promote *international cultural cooperation*
- The donations to NCF will be ***eligible for tax benefit*** under the Income Tax Act.
- **Beneficiaries** – Any *State Government or voluntary organisation* registered under the Societies Registration Act 1860 (21 of 1860) or registered as a Public Trust at least for the last 2 years.
- *Individuals are not entitled* to financial assistance under this.

References

1. PIB| Funding to NCF
2. NCF| National Culture Fund

Polar Science and Cryosphere Research (PACER)

Recently, India's 1st winter scientific expedition to the Arctic has been flagged off from the MoES headquarters in New Delhi.

- It is a ***Central Sector*** umbrella scheme.
- **Implemented by** – Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES) through National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research (NCPOR), Goa.
- **Objectives** – To promote long-term scientific programmes in the ***polar region and the surrounding oceans*** that have potential societal, strategic and global relevance.
- To plan, coordinate and implement the *annual expeditions*.
- To *establish polar research* and logistic facilities in the country and to *maintain Indian research bases* at Antarctica, Arctic and Himalaya.

4 sub-schemes under PACER

- **Indian Antarctic Program** – It was *conceived in 1981* initiated under the Department of Ocean Development (DOD) attached to Prime Minister's Office (PMO).
- 3 permanent Indian research bases, ***Dakshin Gangotri-1983, Maitri-1988 and Bharati-2012*** have been built.
- **Indian Arctic Program** – Its *foundation was laid in 2007* and it established its ***Arctic research station, Himadri in 2008***.
- Its research includes atmospheric, biological, marine and glaciological studies.
- **Indian Scientific Expeditions to the Southern Ocean (ISESO)** – It was initiated to pursue multi-disciplinary, multi-institutional research activities addressing key scientific components like
- Air-sea interactions, lower atmospheric processes, hydrodynamics, biogeochemistry, biodiversity, etc.
- **Cryosphere and Climate** – It was initiated *during 12th 5-year plan* that have enhanced our understanding of the Antarctic cryosphere and the climate variability.

References

1. PIB| India's maiden winter scientific Arctic expedition
2. MoES| PACER

Noma

Recently, the World Health Organization (WHO) has added the health challenge noma to its official list of neglected tropical diseases (NTD).

- It is a severe ***gangrenous disease of the mouth and face***.
- **Origin** - Greek word *"nomē", meaning 'to devour'*, as noma eats away facial tissue and bones if not treated early.
- It is also known as ***cancrum oris or gangrenous stomatitis***.
- **Susceptible population** – *Children aged 2-6 years old*.
- **Spread** – In developing countries, especially in sub-Saharan Africa.

> *WHO website lists the 'latest' estimates 140,000 cases per year and a prevalence of 770,000 cases. However, the data dates back to 1998.*

- **Risk factors** - Poor oral hygiene, malnutrition, weakened immune systems, infections, and extreme poverty.
- While it is not contagious, it prefers to attack when the body's defences are weak.
- **Symptoms** – It begins with *gum inflammation* and leads to *facial disfigurement*, spasm of the jaw muscles, oral incontinence and *speech problems*.
- **Oral contamination by** – Bacteroidaceae and a consortium of other microorganisms
- **Higher mortality rate** – Approximately 90% as many children are not given care or brought for care in time.
- **Prevention and treatment** – Its spread can be slowed with basic hygiene, measles vaccination, antibiotics, rehydration, correction of electrolytic imbalances and nutritional rehabilitation.
- **Significance of NTD status** – It will amplify global awareness, catalyse research, stimulate funding, and boost efforts to control the disease through multisectoral and multi-pronged approaches.

> *Noma is also called as **'Face of poverty'** as effective drugs like sulfonamides and penicillin and adequate surgical treatment for the effects remain inaccessible for many due to extreme poverty.*

References

Down To Earth| Inclusion of Noma in Neglected Tropical Disease list

Migration and Development Brief

The latest Migration and Development Brief reveals a continuing growth in remittance flows to low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) in 2023, albeit at a slower pace compared to previous years.

- The brief is a ***biannual report***.
- **Prepared by** – The Migration and Remittances Unit, Development Economics (DEC).
- **Released by** – World Bank.
- **Objectives** – To provide the information about *migration and remittance flows* and related policies over the past 6 months and to provide *medium-term projections* of remittance flows to developing countries.

Key findings of the report

- **Remittances** – It grew by an estimated 3.8% in 2023, reaching a total of USD669 billion in LMICs.
- A 7.2% increase in South Asia with notable contribution by India.
- A decline for the 2nd consecutive year in Middle East and North Africa, driven by a sharp drop in flows to Egypt.
- A decrease of 1.4% after a significant gain in 2022 in Europe and Central Asia.
- **India** – It remained as the ***largest recipient*** with an estimated USD125 billion in

2023.

The top 5 remittance recipient countries include India, Mexico, China, Philippines, and Egypt.

- *Resilient labour markets* in advanced economies and Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries supported migrants' ability to send money home.
- There is a potential *risk of a decline in real income for migrants* in 2024 due to global inflation and low growth prospects.
- *Banks continue to be the costliest channel* for sending remittances, with an average cost of 12.1%.
- **Recommendation** – To *leverage remittances for development finance,* particularly through ***diaspora bonds*** to tap into diaspora savings held in foreign destinations.
- It emphasized on the *need for inclusive labour markets and social protection policies* to sustain remittance flows.

References

1. The Hindu Business Line| Findings of Remittance flows
2. World Bank| Migration and Development Brief

Other Important News
National Geoscience Data Repository Portal • Ministry of Mines is set to launch the National Geoscience Data Repository (NGDR) Portal in a ceremony in New Delhi. • NGDR is a comprehensive online platform for accessing, sharing, and analyzing geospatial information across the nation. • The initiative is spearheaded by the Geological Survey of India (GSI) and Bhaskarachaya Institute of Space Applications and Geoinformatics (BISAG-N). • **Geological Survey of India (GSI)** is a scientific agency that conducts geological surveys and studies of India established in ***1851 by Thomas Oldham***.
Reykjanes peninsula • A recent report of Iceland's Meteorological Office said that volcanic eruption began in Iceland, south of the capital Reykjavik. • Iceland is home to ***33 active volcano systems***, the highest number in Europe.

Bonnet macaque (Macaca Radiata)

• The bonnet macaque is a species of Old-World monkey that is native to southern India. They are also known as Zati.
• They are ***highly arboreal*** and most abundant on the outskirts of human settlements.
• **Subspecies -** Dark-bellied bonnet macaques (*Macaca radiata radiata*) and Pale-bellied bonnet macaques (*Macaca radiata diluta*).
• **Conservation Status**
  - **IUCN –** Vulnerable.
  - **CITES** – Appendix II.

Goa Liberation Day

• Goa Liberation Day is celebrated on ***December 19th*** every year.
• It marks the day in 1961 when India reclaimed the coastal state from centuries of Portuguese rule.
• On December 19, 1961, Goa officially became part of India and was declared as a Union Territory along with Daman and Diu after a military operation called "***Operation Vijay***".

Forest Fringe Villages

• Forest fringe villages are villages that are located near forest areas.
• They often depend on the forest for their daily needs and biomass.
• As per India State of Forest Report- 2019, published by Forest Survey of India, approximately 300 million people are dependent on forests.
• It roughly says that 26% of the total 650,000 villages can be classified as forest fringe villages, home to around ***22% of the country's total population.***

Kuno National Park

• Wildlife officials from Madhya Pradesh has recently released 2 male cheetahs, named ***Agni and Vayu***, into the safari area at Kuno National Park.
• Kuno National Park is a wildlife sanctuary and national park in Madhya Pradesh established in 1981 and is named after the ***Kuno River.***
• The park is located in the ***Central Indian Vindhyan Hills &*** the ***only national park in India that is home to Cheetahs***.
• The Wildlife Institute of India (WIT) and the Wildlife Trust of India (WTI) selected Palpur-Kuno park as a habitat for Asiatic lions and cheetahs.

International Migrants Day

• International Migrants Day is observed on ***December 18th*** each year.
• ***Theme*** of International Migrants Day, 2023 **-** ***Act Today***.
• The United Nations General Assembly proclaimed the day in 2000 to recognize the contributions of migrants and the challenges they face.
• The **International Organization for Migration (IOM)** is a UN-related agency that highlights the contributions and challenges of the migrants worldwide.

Domestic Cats

• A recent study says that free-ranging domestic cats, one of the ***most invasive species,*** were threat to conservation.
• They eat 2,084 species globally & pushing some species even to extinction.
• Among those species almost half of the species were birds, followed by reptiles and mammals.
• They identified that the species consumed by cats are of 16.65% of which are near-threatened or of higher concern on the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List.



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