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Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC)

Birdwatchers across 35 States and Union Territories uploaded more than 46,000 bird lists, making India take the second spot after the United States of America.

GBBC

- The GBBC was launched in 1998.
- GBBC India is the Indian implementation of the global Great Backyard Bird Count, which runs for 4 days every February.
- Indian birders have participated in the GBBC since the event went worldwide in 2013.
- These annual snapshots of bird populations help answer a variety of important questions, including how birds are distributed across the country, how they are affected by changes in habitat and weather, and whether populations and distributions might be changing from year to year.
- GBBC India is coordinated by the Bird Count India collective, a coming-together of a number of groups and organisations that are interested in birds, nature and conservation.

GBBC 2023

- India was among 190 countries that participated in GBBC 2023.
- Kerala recorded the highest number of checklists of birds.
- West Bengal reported 489 species, the most among the 35 participating States and Union Territories.
- Uttarakhand, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam and Karnataka followed with 426, 407, 397 and 371 species respectively.
- Tamil Nadu and Kerala took the eighth and ninth spots with 349 and 325 species.
- Pune birders uploaded more than 5,900 lists, the most among urban centres.

References

1. The Hindu – Bengal reports 489 species in Great Backyard Bird Count 2023
2. Bird Count India – Great Backyard Bird Count 2023

Caveat

CJI reprimands student for filing a caveat in petition seeking menstrual leave.

- In common parlance, a caveat refers to warning or caution.
- However, legally it connotes a formal notice requesting the court to refrain from taking some specified action without giving prior notice to the person lodging the

caveat.
- The person lodging the caveat is called a caveator.
- It was inserted by the Amendment Act of 1976, and added after the Law Commission's recommendation.
- Section 148A of the Civil Procedure Code (CPC) explains when a person has a right to lodge a caveat as where an application is expected to be made, or has been made, in a suit or proceeding instituted, or about to be instituted, in a Court, any person claiming a right to appear before the Court on the hearing of such application may lodge a caveat in respect thereof.
- The caveator or the person lodging is also required to serve a notice of the caveat by registered post to the person on whose plea they are lodging the application.
- However, the term caveat is not expressly defined anywhere except in the Calcutta High Court's 1978 ruling in Nirmal Chandra Dutta vs Girindra Narayan Roy.
- The court defined the term as a caution or warning giving notice to the Court not to issue any grant or take any step without notice being given to the party lodging the caveat.
- It is a precautionary measure taken against the grant of probate or letters of administration, as the case may be, by the person lodging the caveat.

Reference

1. Indian Express – CJI reprimands student for filing a caveat

Khalistan movement

Hundreds of followers of Amritpal Singh, a radical preacher and pro-Khalistan leader, clashed violently with police outside Ajnala police station near Amritsar.

- The Khalistan movement is a fight for a separate, sovereign Sikh state in present day Punjab (both India and Pakistan).
- Over the years, it has survived in various forms, in various places and amongst different populations.
- The movement was crushed in India following Operation Blue Star (1984) and Operation Black Thunder (1986 and 1988).
- However, it continues to evoke sympathy and support among sections of the Sikh population, especially in the Sikh diaspora in countries such as Canada, the UK, and Australia.

History of the movement

- The origins of the movement have been traced back to India's independence and subsequent Partition along religious lines.
- The Punjab province, which was divided between India and Pakistan, saw some of the worst communal violence and generated millions of refugees: Sikhs and Hindus stranded on the west (in Pakistan) rushed to the east, whereas Muslims in the east fled westward.
- Lahore, the capital of Maharaja Ranjit Singh's great Sikh Empire, went to Pakistan, as did holy Sikh sites including Nankana Sahib, the birthplace of Guru Nanak, the

founder of Sikhism.
- While most Sikhs found themselves in India, they were a small minority in the country, making up around 2 per cent of the population.
- The political struggle for greater autonomy began around the time of Independence, with the Punjabi Suba Movement for the creation of a Punjabi-speaking state.
- The States Reorganisation Commission, in its 1955 report, rejected this demand, but in 1966, after years of protest, the state of Punjab was reorganised to reflect the Punjabi Suba demand.
- The erstwhile Punjab state was trifurcated into the Hindi-speaking, Hindu-majority states of Himachal Pradesh and Haryana, and the Punjabi-speaking, Sikh-majority Punjab.

References

1. Indian Express – A brief history of the Khalistan movement
2. Britannica – Khalistan

IPC Section 153A

The Supreme Court granted interim bail to Pawan Khera, who had been arrested for alleged hate speech.

- Section 153A of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) penalises promoting enmity between different groups on grounds of religion, race, place of birth, residence, language, etc., and doing acts prejudicial to maintenance of harmony.
- This is punishable with imprisonment up to three years, or with fine, or with both.
- The provision was enacted in 1898 and was not in the original penal code.
- At the time of the amendment, promoting class hatred was a part of the English law of sedition, but was not included in the Indian law.
- In the pre-Independence Rangila Rasool case, the Punjab High Court had acquitted the Hindu publisher of a tract that had made disparaging remarks about the private life of the Prophet, and had been charged under Section 153A.
- Hate speech laws have been invoked under regimes of all parties to crack down on criticism of public functionaries and to arrest individuals.
- Data from the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) show that the rate of conviction for Section 153A is very low.

References

1. **Indian Express – SC: Not everything said amounts to hate speech**
2. Indian Express – Pawan Khera arrest | Section 153A: its use and misuse

Western Disturbances (WDs)

The primary reason for the early onset of heat over northwest India is the lack of strong western disturbances.

- It is the term used to describe an extratropical storm that brings sudden winter rain

and snow to the north-western parts of the Indian subcontinent.
- This is a non-monsoonal precipitation pattern driven by the Westerlies.
- The moisture in these storms usually originates over the Mediterranean Sea and the Atlantic Ocean.
- Extratropical storms are a global phenomenon with moisture usually carried in the upper atmosphere (unlike tropical storms where it is carried in the lower atmosphere).

Impact of WDs on northwest India

- They usually influence the weather of the north and north-western regions of India by increasing the monsoon activity.
- It was found that if the frequencies of formation and movement of depression over the Bay of Bengal in a particular year increase, then the frequencies of Western Disturbances in the same year decrease.
- They are important to the development of the Rabi crop in the northern subcontinent, which includes the locally important staple wheat.
- According to the India Meteorological Department, the primary reason for the early onset of heat over northwest India is the lack of strong western disturbances (WDs).
- The decline of La Niña conditions by March-April and the development of El Niño conditions later in the year could also mean further rise in temperatures and subsequent heatwaves.
- Due to this El Niño, the 1.5°C barrier could be temporarily breached in 2024.
- WDs are storm systems that originate from the Caspian Sea and move across the Afghanistan-Pakistan region to bring rains across northwest India.
- In the winter months, 4-5 disturbances travel with an average life cycle of 2-5 days.
- These are responsible for replenishing water in the northern Indian region in the form of snow and precipitation.
- Since a strong WD has not been seen in some time, this dearth is also contributing to the temperature spike in north India.

References

1. Down to Earth – Reason for the temperature spikes in North India this February
2. The Hindu Business Line – Western disturbances may modify severe cold weather

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