Prelim Bits 25-04-2023 | UPSC Daily Current Affairs

Earth Day, 2023

Every year, April 22 is celebrated as Earth Day, an annual event where people take time out to demonstrate their support for protecting the planet.

- The theme for this year Earth Day is, "Invest in our planet".
- The first Earth day was celebrated more than 50 years ago on April 22, 1970.
- The event was a wild success with more than 20 million Americans participating in it.
- The date of April 22 is selected because, it is the day of perfect intersection of fair springtime weather and suitability for a college student's semester schedule.
- This year's theme encourages all to invest in a better future for our planet by tackling environmental issues such as climate change, biodiversity, and waste reduction.

References

1. PIB | Earth Day 2023
2. The Indian Express | Earth Day 2023

Operation Kaveri

India has started 'Operation Kaveri' to evacuate its nationals from conflict-torn Sudan.

- Operation Kaveri aims to bring back Indian citizens stranded in Sudan.
- Around 3,000 Indians are stuck in various parts of Sudan, including capital Khartoum and in distant provinces like Darfur.
- With the runways at the international airport in Khartoum being damaged, the sea route was the only option for evacuation in large numbers.
- India had earlier stationed two C-130J heavy-lift aircraft in Jeddah and sent INS Sumedha in Port Said for the operation.
- France also evacuated some Indian citizens while repatriating its own nationals from Sudan aboard military aircraft.

Reference

1. The Hindu | Operation Kaveri

Wagner group

Since the beginning of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, news reports have indicated the presence of a mercenary group in the country.

- Although known popularly as the Wagner Group, there is no corporation registered under that name, no recruitment centre, and no records about where its funding

comes from.

- The Wagner Group is a network of contractors that supply soldiers for hire.
- The group is said to have been founded by Dmitry Utkin, a former Special Forces officer, member of Russia's military intelligence service and a veteran of both Chechen wars.
- The Wagner Group first surfaced in 2014, during Russia's annexation of Crimea.
- There have been reports of its presence in the Middle East and Africa as well.
- The Wagner Group is helpful to Russia's war effort, as it can send these forces to Ukraine while simultaneously denying any relationship with them.
- Fighters from the Wagner Group have also been accused by Ukrainian officials of committing war crimes since the takeover of the Donbas region in 2014.
- Wagner Group forces have also been deployed in Syria, Libya, Central African Republic, Mali, Sudan and Mozambique.
- Human Rights Watch reported that Russian and Wagner Group forces appear to have summarily executed, tortured, and beaten civilians since 2019 in Central African Republic.

Reference

1. The Indian Express | Wagner Group

Biodiversity heritage sites in West Bengal

Bengal has notified four more biodiversity heritage sites (BHS), taking the tally in the state to eight.

- Bengal now has the highest number of biodiversity heritage parks in the country.
- The government has notified four latest biodiversity heritage parks:

1. Char Balidanga (Nadia),
2. Namthing Pokhari (Darjeeling),
3. Amkhoi Wood Fossil Park (Birbhum) and
4. State Horticulture Research and Development Station (Nadia)

Biodiversity Heritage Sites (BHS)

- BHS are defined areas with unique and ecologically fragile ecosystems with rich biodiversity.
- Under Section-37 of the Biological Diversity Act, 2002, the State Government, along with local bodies, may notify areas of biodiversity importance as BHS.
- The State Government, in consultation with the Central Government, may frame rules for the conservation of BHS.

In 2007, the Nallur Tamarind Grove in Karnataka, was designated as India's first BHS.

Reference

1. The Times of India | Bio Diversity Heritage Sites

Sex Perfumes

Researchers are engineering tobacco plants to produce moth pheromones that could potentially be used to create traps that can lure the insects as a replacement for harmful pesticides.

- Scientists have engineered tobacco plants to produce insect sex perfumes, which can be used as an alternative to pesticides in farms.
- These plants could potentially be used to produce a more sustainable and less harmful alternative to pesticides.
- **Pheromones –** They are chemicals that are produced and released by animals. When they are released by an individual of a species, they affect the behavior of other individuals.
- Animals secrete these pheromones to trigger different kinds of behavior.
- The pheromones that trigger sexual arousal can be thought of as a kind of 'sex perfume,' attracting other individuals of the same species.
- The researchers engineered plants to produce chemicals that mimic these pheromones.
- **Insect pheromones –** They are considered as alternatives to pesticides as they are highly species-specific and do not affect pollinators or other beneficial species.
- Plants can be converted into green factories that can produce these pheromones that can potentially be used instead of environmentally-intensive and harmful pesticides.

Reference

1. The Indian Express | Sex Perfumes

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