Prelim Bits 26-12-2023 | UPSC Daily Current Affairs

Airgun Surrender Abhiyan

Recently, Airgun Surrender Abhiyan was selected as a model wildlife conservation programme by UNESCO.

- An initiative *to get local residents involved* in environmental management and wildlife protection.
- **Launched in** – 2021.
- **Launched by** – Arunachal Pradesh.
- **Aim** – To ***discourage hunting*** and raise awareness about the detrimental effects of wildlife killing.
- To encourage the ***voluntary surrender of airguns*** and licensed guns to check their use in hunting birds and other wildlife.
- **Collaborations** - With local communities, administrative departments, NGOs, and community-based organisations.

  *Lumdung was declared as **1st Airgun free village of Arunachal Pradesh**, where 46 air guns were surrendered.*

- **Activities** – Awareness campaign to maintain the tradition of ***hunting in the old style*** without guns and educating about the role of birds and animals in pollination and in creating forests.

  In Arunachal Pradesh, hunting is a tradition for many among the 140 tribes and sub-tribes across the 83,743 sq. km with about 80% forest cover.

- Increased ***push for poultry, piggery*** and other farm initiatives to provide alternative to bush meat.
- **People's participation** – People began *organising airgun surrender ceremonies* locally.
  - In Pasighat area of Arunachal, some villagers shunned airguns after realising pests had taken over their paddy fields because the birds, their nemesis, had been hunted out.
- **Recognition** – 'Conservation Award' at the 6th North East Green Summit of Forest Ministers of North East held in Assam in 2021.
- **Outcome** – A total of *2,467 airguns, 9 double-barrel shotguns and 0.22 rifles, and 13 power chainsaws* have been surrendered.

References

1. The Hindu| UNESCO's recognition to Airgun Surrender Abhiyan
2. The Economic Times| Airgun Surrender Abhiyan

Red Sea & Bab-el-Mandeb

Houthi attacks on tankers passing through the Bab-el-Mandeb has disrupted one of the busiest global shipping lanes, dragging the U.S. deeper into the conflict.

- **Red Sea** – A narrow strip of water extending for about 1,200 miles.
- **Geography** – It extends ***between the Mediterranean Sea, to the north-west, and the Indian Ocean***, to the south-east.
    - In north, it separates into the *Gulf of Aqaba and the Gulf of Suez* and in south, it is connected to the *Gulf of Aden*, and the outer Indian Ocean, via the *Strait of Bab-el-Mandeb*.
- **6 bordering countries** – Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Sudan, Eritrea and Djibouti.
- **Physiography** – It lies in a ***fault depression*** that separates 2 great blocks, Arabia and North Africa and its height can reach more than 6,560 feet above sea level, with the *highest in the south*.
- **Higher salinity** – It has high evaporation, low precipitation and has no major freshwater inflow.
- **Resources** – It is high in nutrient, planktons and also has ***5 major types of mineral resources*** (petroleum deposits, evaporite deposits, sulfur, phosphates, and the heavy-metal deposits).
- **Sea Route** – It is a part of an important trade route connecting Europe to Asia (through Suez Canal).

Bab-el-Mandeb

- It is ***a strait*** that separates the Arabian Peninsula from East Africa and is *just 29-km wide at its narrowest point*.
- It is a strategically important strait.
- **Control** – Throughout 19th and until mid-20th century, Britain protected it through the ***island of Perim (Mayyum) in the Strait*** but in 1990, it came under the control of Sana'a, the capital of the united country of Yemen.
- As Houthis captured Sana'a in 2015, they pose a greater threat due to their close proximity to Bab el-Mandeb strait.

It is also know by the names Gateway of Tears and Gatway of Grief.

Reference

The Hindu| Bab-el-Mandeb, A strategic choke point

Information Fusion Centre for Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR)

Recently, IFC-IOR marked its 5th anniversary and it also played key role in the backend in tackling vessel hijacking episode near Gulf of Aden.

- **Established by** – The government of India at Gurugram ***in 2018*** and is ***hosted by the Indian Navy***.

  IFC-IOR is located within the premises of the Information Management and Analysis Centre (IMAC), the nodal agency for maritime data fusion.

- **Tagline** – Collaboration for Safety and Security.
- **Aims** – To strengthen ***maritime security in Indian Ocean Region (IOR) and beyond*** by acting as a maritime security information sharing hub for the region.
- **Vision** – To *advance maritime safety* through information sharing, cooperation and expertise development.
- **Mission** – To be a *nodal centre of excellence* for promoting maritime safety towards a peaceful, stable and prosperous IOR.
- **Maritime domain** – Piracy & Armed Robbery, Contraband Smuggling, IUU Fishing, Irregular Human Migration and other maritime incidents.
- **Reports** - Weekly, Half-Yearly, Annual, Weather Forecast and others.
- **Collaboration** – 43 organisations, ***25 partner countries and 12 International Liaison Officers (ILO)***, now gearing up for expansion to eventually host 40 ILO.
- **67 linkages** – It includes International Maritime Organisation (IMO), United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), and Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA).
- **Events** – Regional Maritime Practitioner Programme (RMPP), Maritime Security Info-sharing Exercise (MARISX) and Shared Awareness Meeting (SAM).

  *The **3 major hotspots for piracy** and armed robbery are South East Asia, Gulf of Guinea and Horn of Africa. There was a rise in numbers in South East Asia while there was a rise in intensity in the Gulf of Guinea.*

References

1. The Hindu| Role of IFC-IOR in tackling vessel hijack
2. Indian Navy| IFC-IOR

Gyrocopters

Uttarakhand is all set to launch India's first-ever gyrocopter safari by the year's end to redefine the concept of adventure tourism in the state.

- It is a ***type of rotorcraft***, uses a rotor that is not powered to generate lift.

A rotorcraft or rotary-wing aircraft is a heavier-than-air aircraft with rotary wings, which generate lift by rotating around a vertical mast.

- The rotor looks ***similar to that of a helicopter***, but it requires air flowing upwards across it to rotate.
- **Types** – It was *traditionally an open cockpit* 'Motorbikes of the sky' but, since late 2010, they are available as *fully enclosed models.*
- **Economical** – The operating cost of a Gyrocopter is one-tenth that of a helicopter, so it is ***comparatively cheaper***, with an estimated cost of INR 200 per minute.
- **Safer transport** - As the engine is not connected to the rotors, it is not seriously affected if the engine stops in flight.
- It can ***fly lower and slower more safely*** than most other forms of flying machines and are also capable of flying in ***harsh weather conditions.***

Gyrocopters in Uttarakhand's Tourism

- It is a *joint venture* of tourism department with the civil aviation department of the state.
- **Aim** – To *redefine the concept of adventure tourism* in the state.
- **Operation** – The Gyros are coming from *Germany* and the pilots who will run the initial tests will be Germans.

This is the 1st time gyros will be used in India for the tourism sector.

- Gyrocopter safaris will also originate from Rishikesh, offering a ***bird's-eye view*** of the region's natural splendour.

References

The Indian Express| Gyrocopters in Uttarakhand Tourism

VIKAS

Recently, Indian government has launched new learning programmes for government servants in line with good governance day.

*December 25 is celebrated as the '**Good Governance Day**' to mark former PM Vajpayee's birth anniversary since 2014. It is meant to foster awareness among citizens about government accountability and administration, and inculcate "good governance" as a habit for civil servants.*

- **Vikas** – Variable and Immersive Karmayogi Advanced Support.
- It is a ***blended programme with*** iGOT (integrated government online training) Karmayogi platform.
- **Aim** – For ***capacity building*** of Middle management civil servants in Central Secretariat.
- **Program duration** – It consists of *33 hours* complemented by *30 hours of offline training* at ISTM.
- **Focus** – On development of *functional, behavioural and technological competencies* required in Central Government.

*The **Institute of Secretariat Training and Management (ISTM)** which was established in 1948, a premier Central Training Institution in training of officers working in the Central Secretariat, State Governments/Union Territories, Public Sector Enterprises (PSEs) and Autonomous Bodies.*

3 new features on the iGOT Karmayogi Platform

- **My iGOT** – To deliver targeted training courses for individual officer addressing their unique capacity building needs.
- **Blended Programs** - To facilitate equitable access to training methodologies and it integrate traditional offline classroom courses with online learning components.
- **Curated Programs** – To cater to diverse learning needs of the ministries/departments and training institutions where the course providers will curate relevant content from the repository of iGOT.

References

1. The Hindu| New training programmes for government employees
2. PIB| VIKAS program

Other Important News
Madan Mohan Malaviya • Madan Mohan Malaviya was an Indian educationist, freedom fighter and the thrice president of Indian National Congress. • He was born on ***25 December 1861, Prayagraj*** and died on 12 November 1946. • He was addressed as '***Mahamana***', he was the founder of Banaras Hindu University (BHU) at Varanasi in 1916, also founded an English-newspaper, ***"The Leader"***. • Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya was posthumously conferred with ***Bharat Ratna***.

National Mathematics Day

• National Mathematics Day was observed to commemorate the birth anniversary of Srinivasa Ramanujan every year on ***December 22.***
• Ramanujan was born in Erode, Tamil Nadu was an Indian greatest mathematician given contributions to ***number theory, functions, infinite series and continued fractions.***
• He was the ***1st Indian to be elected a Fellow of Trinity College***, Cambridge.
• He also received a prestigious award from the ***King of England*** for his services to mathematics.

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

• The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees was established on December, 1950 by the ***United Nations General Assembly***.
• The agency is mandated to lead and co-ordinate international action to protect refugees and resolve refugee problems worldwide.
• Its primary purpose is to safeguard the rights and well-being of refugees.
• It also has a mandate to help stateless people. It is headquartered at **Geneva, Switzerland.**

Ground frost

• Ground frost is a covering of ice that forms on objects, trees, or the ground when their surfaces are below the freezing point of water.
• It can also refer to a temperature that drops below freezing at or near ground level and damages vegetation.
• Ground frost can occur when the ground cools faster than the air.
• It can also occur when water vapor directly deposits on objects and trees with surfaces colder than ***0°C***.

Veer Baal Diwas

• **Veer Baal Diwas** is commemmorated to honour the martyrdom of ***Baba Fateh Singh and Zorawar Singh***, sons of 10th Guru Govind Singh Ji on ***26th December*** every year.
• On this day Mughal forces under Aurangzeb's order killed Sahibzada Zorawar Singh, who was just 6 years old, and Fateh Singh, who was only 9.

Puri’s Jagannath Temple

• The temple is situated in Puri, Odisha, was built in the 12th century by ***King Anatavarman Chodaganga Deva*** of the Eastern Ganga Dynasty.
• The Puri Jagannath Temple is a circular temple that is believed to have inspired the design of the ***Indian Parliament building***.
• The temple is also known as **the "White Pagoda"** and is one of the 4 great ***"Char Dham" pilgrimage sites***.
• It is famous for its ***Annual Rath yatra, or chariot festival*.**

North African metal art

• The art of manually cutting words or symbols into jewellery and household objects was added to UNESCO's intangible heritage list recently.
• It has been practised across North Africa and West Asia for centuries.

Bhairavapalem Mudflat

• Bhairavapalem Mudflats are located in ***Andhra Pradesh***.
• The mudflats are named after the village of Bhairavapalem and are subject to tidal water, a habitat for crabs like mud crabs.
• The Godavari River flows into the sea through two mouths, one near Bhairavapalem and the other near Kottapalem.
• Bhairavapalem is also the name of a ***Reserve Forest*** in the ***Coringa Wildlife Sanctuary.***

Poleramma Temple

• Poleramma Temple is a re-established 200 years-old temple located in Guntur, ***Andhra Pradesh***.
• The temple was first constructed by British village officer in India in the 1800s, before which villagers worship Poleramma in form of a mud deity.
• Poleramma is a ***pre-Vedic deity***, who is predominantly worshipped in Andhra Pradesh, and a local form of ***Sakti***.
• She is worshipped as Grama devata (goddess who protects the village).

Physical Training Instructors (PTIs) as Teachers

• The Supreme Court recently held that physical training instructors (PTIs) come within the definition of “teachers”.
• **Physical training instructors** impart to students the skills and rules of various sports and games.

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