Prelim Bits 30-05-2017

Smooth-coated otter

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- In the pristine forests in **Roerich Estate, Bengaluru,** a wild otter was spotted through camera traps.
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- The species is found in most of the Indian Subcontinent and eastwards to Southeast Asia, with a disjunct population in Iraq.
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- Smooth-coated otters are found in areas where fresh water is plentiful — wetlands and seasonal swamps, rivers, lakes, and rice paddies.
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- Major threats to Asian otter population are **loss of wetland habitats** due to construction of large-scale hydroelectric projects, reclamation of wetlands for settlements and agriculture, reduction in prey biomass, poaching, and contamination of waterways by pesticides.
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- The smooth-coated otter is listed as a **vulnerable species.** Their range and population are shrinking due to loss of wetland habitat and contamination of waterways by pesticides.
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- The otters are also protected in India under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.
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Red Sanders

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- Red sanders or red sandalwood, is a species **endemic to the southern Eastern Ghats** mountain range of South India.
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- It is a rare kind of sandalwood that is in high demand in international market and costs around Rs.1,500 to Rs.2,000 a kg.
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- The major markets for the wood are China, Japan, the Middle East, Sri Lanka, Bhutan and Nepal.
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- This tree is valued for the rich red color of its wood. The wood is not aromatic. The tree is not to be confused with the aromatic Santalum sandalwood trees that grow natively in South India.
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- Pterocarpus santalinus is listed as an **Endangered species by the IUCN,** because of overexploitation for its timber in South India.
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- It is also listed in the **appendix II of the CITES,** which means that a certificate is required in order to export it, that should only be granted if the trade is not detrimental to the survival of the species.
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Cloudburst

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- If rainfall of about 10 cm or above per hour is recorded over a place that is roughly 10 km x 10 km in area, it is classified as a cloudburst event.
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- Cloudbursts **do happen in plains as well,** but there is a greater probability of them occurring in mountainous zones; it has to do with the terrain.
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- Cloudbursts happen when saturated clouds are unable to produce rain because of the upward movement of very warm current of air.
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- Raindrops, instead of dropping down, are carried upwards by the air current. New drops are formed and existing raindrops gain in size.
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- After a point, **the raindrops become too heavy for the cloud to hold on to,** and they drop down together in a quick flash.
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- Hilly terrains aid in heated air currents rising vertically upwards, thereby, increasing the probability of a cloudburst situation.
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The Reang of Tripura

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- Reang or Riang are one of the 21 scheduled tribes of the Indian state of Tripura. They speak the **Reang dialect of Kokborok language** which is of Tibeto-Burmese origin and is locally referred to as Kau Bru.
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- Education has been pressing a concern for the tribe. As per the 2001 census, 66.93% of the Reang population is illiterate.
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- Traditionally, **jhum (shifting) cultivation** has been one of the primary agricultural activities of the Reang tribe.
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- However, with land rights being granted, many members of the community have taken to ploughing or settled cultivation.
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