UPSC Daily Current Affairs| One Liners 14-05-2025

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Geography

Lucknow's Urbanization and the Gomti

Recent, Lucknow's rapid modernization raises concerns among environmentalists and citizens about the future of its vital Gomti River, facing significant challenges from urbanization.

• **Gomti River -** Also called Gumti or Gomati, is a crucial tributary of the Ganges, flowing entirely within Uttar Pradesh.

• **Unique Water Source -** The Gomti is fed by both rainfall and groundwater, unlike the snow-fed Himalayan rivers that are major Ganges tributaries in the region.

• **River's Course -** Originating from Gomat Taal (Fulhaar Jheel) in Pilibhit district, the Gomti flows south through several districts, including Lucknow, before joining the Ganges near Saidpur, covering approximately 900 km.

• **Tributaries -** The Gomti drains a basin of about 18,750 square km. Its major tributaries include the Sai, Chowka, Kathina, and Saryu rivers.

• **Cities Along the Gomti -** Several important cities are situated along the banks of the Gomti River, including Sultanpur, Lucknow, Jaunpur, and Lakhimpur Kheri.

Polity & Governance

India Embraces Chip-Based e-Passports

India has recently launched chip-based e-passports, a significant leap in travel document modernization.

• ***Aims to** - Bolster security, simplify immigration, and meet international standards.*

• **The e-passport initiative** - Falls under the Passport Seva Programme (PSP) Version 2.0, which commenced on April 1, 2024, with a pilot phase in select Indian cities.

• **Tamil Nadu Leads in** - E-Passport Issuance **&** emerged as a frontrunner in e-passport adoption. As of March 22, 2025, over 20,000 e-passports have been issued in the state, demonstrating substantial progress.

• **Defining the Biometric e-Passport -** Or biometric passport, represents an advanced iteration of the conventional Indian passport. It incorporates an embedded Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) chip and antenna within the back cover.

• **Secure Storage -** The integrated chip securely stores the passport holder's personal information alongside biometric data, encompassing fingerprints and a digital photograph.

• **Identifying -** Indian e-passports are easily recognizable by a distinct gold-coloured chip symbol prominently displayed on the front cover.

International Relations and Issues

Taliban Suspends Chess in Afghanistan

Citing Islamic law concerns, the Taliban regime recently in Afghanistan banned chess on May 12, 2025, impacting recreation and drawing international criticism amid broader restrictions on sports and freedoms.

• **Taliban Chess Ban: Context -** Since regaining power in August 2021, the Taliban banned chess, citing religious concerns about gambling, following similar restrictions on women's sports, MMA, and cultural activities.

• **Sharia law** - Is Islam's comprehensive legal and moral framework, rooted in the Quran and Sunnah (Prophet Muhammad's practices).

• **Scope of Governance -** It guides Muslims' lives, encompassing religious practices, personal ethics, family law, and societal interactions.

• **Aim and Interpretation -** Sharia aims to lead individuals on a God-pleasing path, though its interpretation varies across schools of thought and cultures.

Kozhikode Joins WHO Age-Friendly Network

Kozhikode has been officially inducted into the WHO's Global Network of Age-friendly Cities and Communities, recognizing its dedication to creating an inclusive and supportive environment for its ageing population.

• **International Recognition** - On May 2, 2025, WHO acknowledged Kozhikode's efforts in promoting elderly-friendly policies and infrastructure, marking a significant global endorsement of the city's proactive approach.

• **Key Objectives and Focus** - Kozhikode aims to improve the quality of life for older adults through inclusive urban planning, focusing on accessible spaces, affordable housing, healthcare access, community support, and digital inclusion.

• **WHO Global Network (GNAFCC)** - Established in 2010, the GNAFCC connects cities committed to age-inclusive planning, encouraging policy innovation, elder participation, and cross-sectoral collaboration across over 50 countries.

• **Kozhikode's Initiatives** - The city has developed senior-friendly infrastructure, tailored community health services, conducted active ageing workshops, and utilized digital platforms for information and support.

• **About Kozhikode** - Located in Kerala and historically known as Calicut, Kozhikode has a strong legacy of social development and health indicators, governed by its Municipal Corporation.

UN Global Road Safety Week 2025

From May 12-18, 2025, the 8th UN Global Road Safety Week emphasizes the themes #MakeWalkingSafe and #MakeCyclingSafe.

• **United Nations and WHO -** Spearheaded by the United Nations in collaboration with the World Health Organization, this global campaign aims to enhance pedestrian and cyclist safety.

• **Core Focus Areas -** The week highlights the importance of dedicated walking and cycling lanes, urban speed limits of 30 km/h in busy areas, improved street lighting, and safe pedestrian crossings.

• **Primary Objectives -** The campaign's objectives include promoting safe and accessible infrastructure for non-motorized transport users and increasing awareness of the dangers they face on roads.

• **Driving Policy Reforms -** A key goal is to drive policy changes and stricter enforcement of traffic laws to significantly reduce fatalities and injuries among pedestrians and cyclists.

• **Call to Action -** The week urges governments, urban planners, and communities worldwide to prioritize and implement proven infrastructure and policy measures to ensure the safety of those walking and cycling.

India at UN Forum on Forests

• India actively participated in the 20th session of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) in New York.

• **Commitment to Global Forest Plan** - During the session, India reaffirmed its strong commitment to the United Nations Strategic Plan for Forests 2017–2030, a framework for sustainable forest management.

• **Establishment of UNFF** - The UN Forum on Forests was established in October 2000 through a resolution by the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).

• **Core Objective** - The primary objective of the UNFF is to promote the sustainable management, conservation, and development of all types of forests worldwide.

• **Broad Membership** - Membership in the UNFF is inclusive, encompassing all member states of the United Nations and its specialized agencies.

• **Reinforcing Political Will** - A key aim of the forum is to strengthen long-term political commitment at all levels for the sustainable use and preservation of global forest resources.

Environment

Banana Infructescence

A remarkable infructescence, measuring around 4.2 metres, has been documented in the wild banana species *Musa indandamanensis recently*. This establishes it as the longest recorded fruit cluster in bananas.

• **Infructescence -** Refers to a composite fruit structure, where multiple individual fruits are arranged along a central stalk, often with branching patterns.

• **Musa indandamanensis –** Is a unique banana species was first identified in 2012 within a secluded tropical forest near the Krishna Nala reserve forest in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

• **Distinctive Characteristics -** *Musa indandamanensis* exhibits unusual green flowers and a fruit bunch axis approximately three times larger than common banana varieties. The plant itself towers at about 11 metres, significantly taller than the usual 3-4 metre height of cultivated bananas.

• **Potential Benefits -** This wild species represents a valuable natural genetic resource. Plant breeders can utilize its unique traits to develop banana varieties with enhanced yields and improved disease resistance.

• **Significance of the Finding -** The discovery of this exceptionally long infructescence highlights the remarkable biodiversity within wild banana species and underscores the potential for genetic improvement in cultivated varieties.

Security

• **Army Enhances Anti-Drone Capabilities**
Indian Army's Air Defence units have deployed advanced weaponry, including L-70 guns, Zu-23mm systems, and Schilka systems, to effectively counter drone attacks originating from Pakistan.
• **Schilka System: A Key Component -** The Schilka system is a self-propelled, radar-guided anti-aircraft weapon system mounted on a robust tracked chassis for high mobility.
• **Russian Origin and Purpose -** This mobile air defense fire control system, of Russian origin, is specifically designed to protect exposed ground forces and armed vehicles from aerial threats.
• **Advanced Tracking Technology -** Equipped with a 3rd generation electro-optical system, a phased array 3D tracking radar, and a precise navigation system, Schilka provides comprehensive 360-degree coverage against air attacks, day or night.
• **Integrated Weaponry -** The system features a solid-state, hydraulically controlled turret that integrates both anti-aircraft guns and short-range air defense missiles for layered defense.
• **Enhanced Air Defence Posture -** The deployment of these sophisticated systems, particularly the Schilka, significantly bolsters the Army's air defence capabilities along the border, providing a robust response to evolving aerial threats.

Science

• . **Sarvam AI's Bulbul v2 TTS Model**
Indian startup Sarvam AI has introduced its advanced Bulbul v2 Text-to-Speech (TTS) model.
• **Multi-Lingual Support -** Bulbul v2 boasts support for an impressive 11 Indian languages, catering to a diverse linguistic landscape.
• **Natural and Authentic Voices -** The model is engineered to generate voices that sound remarkably natural and authentic, avoiding robotic or artificial tones.
• **Fine-Tuning Capabilities -** Users gain the ability to personalize the generated speech by adjusting key voice characteristics such as pitch, pace, and loudness.
• **Enhanced User Experience -** These fine-tuning features contribute to a more engaging and tailored user experience with the text-to-speech output.
• **Potential Applications -** Bulbul v2 holds significant potential for various applications, including virtual assistants, content creation, accessibility tools, and enhanced human-computer interaction across India's diverse languages.

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