UPSC Daily Current Affairs | Prelim Bits 10-12-2024

Laysan Albatross

Recently, the Laysan Albatross oldest known female wild bird, Wisdom, has laid a 60th egg at about 74 in the Hawaiian Archipelago.

- It is a large seabird, very long-lived and the world's oldest confirmed wild bird.
- **Scientific Name** – Phoebastria immutabilis.
- This albatross species is named for the Laysan breeding colony in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands.
- **Appearance –** Large seabird with very long, narrow wings, thick neck, white-headed with dark gray-brown upperwings, dark patch around the eye, dark back, white rump, and dark tail.
- They can glide over the open ocean for hours at a time ***without a single flap*** of its long.
- **Size –** Up to 81 cm in length.
- **Wingspan –** 195–203 cm.



- **Uniqueness** – They are *genuine "Lovebirds"*, which are reconnect on the same breeding grounds each year.
- While searching for mates *engage in complicated courtship displays, or dances,* which involve up to 25 different postures, from clicking beaks together to pointing them at the sky.
- **Lifespan –** They are very long-lived and estimated the typical lifespan is around 74 years.
- **Habitat –** They spend most of their time on the ***open waters in the Pacific Ocean***, particularly in Hawaii archipelago
- It nest on open, sandy or grassy islands, in the Hawaiian Island mainly on Midway Atoll and Laysan Island.
- **Distribution –** They are masterful soarers, able to fly great distances per day with a barely wingbeat.

- They range widely across the northern Pacific Ocean, from Costa Rica north to the Aleutian Islands and southern Bering Sea.

  The Northwestern Hawaiian Islands are home to 99.7% of the population.

- **Diet –** Their eyes contain high levels of a pigment called ***Rhodopsin,*** which enhances night vision, enabling effective nocturnal foraging.
- Forages mostly on squid, fish and fish eggs, crustaceans, and floating carrion.
- **Breeding –** They ***only come to land for breeding*** and first breeds at the age of 7-9 years.
- The breeding season in Hawaii extends from November to July.
- **Conservation Status** – **IUCN -** Near Threatened.
- **Threats**
  - Plastic pollution.
  - Longline fishing.
  - Climate change.
  - Predation by dogs, rats, and cats.
- **Other similar species**
  - Black-footed Albatross.
  - Short-tailed Albatross.

References

1. Hindustan Times| Laysan Albatross
2. ABC| Laysan Albatross
3. AAB| Laysan Albatross

Nicobarese

Recently, a new genetic research conducted by the Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CCMB) revealed that Nicobarese had a connection with Austro-Asiatic populations.

- Nicobarese are members of a ***tribal community, natives to the Andaman & Nicobar Islands.***
- **Origin** – They are *Mongloid Stock* in a large population of over 27,000.
- They are horticulturist and pig-herders inhabiting large permanent villages mostly close to sea shore.
- They are divided on the basis of territorial distinctions, around 6-7 groups:

Groups	Occupations
Car Nicobar	Basketwork
Chowra	Pottery
Northern Group	-
Central Group	Making of canoes and iron spears
Southern Group	Baskets, matting, wooden spears, and the collection of jungle produce.
Great Nicobar	-

- The differences to be observed is language, customs, manners and physiognomy of the several

groups may, with some confidence, be referred to habitat and the physical difficulties of communication.

- **Language** – ***Austroasiatic languages*** are spoken by them.
    - 6 dialects and languages are spoken.
- **Family System** – They are patriarchal and as a rule live jointly.
- This joint family is known as ***Tuhet***, who owns land, coconut and pigs.
- **Marriage** – Love marriage is very common and the age of marriage is sufficiently high.
- **Food** – Coconut, pandanus pulp, fish, rice, wheat, sugar, cultivated fruits, pigs and fowls.
- Now every family owns ration card and they are getting rice, wheat, sugar and kerosene oil through Fair Price Shops, which are available in all the Islands.
- The houses are usually circular with a high thatched pent roof (Aluminium sheets are now common, since the introduction of Indira Awas Yojana), but they are sometimes deviated.
- **Music** – They are musical people, sing clearly and well in unison and the most popular musical instrument is ***Guitar.***
- **Dance** – Nicobarese dance is a circular dance performed in or near the houses.
- In Car Nicobar men & women ***never dance together*** but in other islands they do.
- **Gaming –** Football is the most popular game here and they have won Subroto Mukerjee Cup (Junior National) 4 times.
- **Religion** – 98% - Christians following the Protestant faith.
    - 2% - Consists of Muslim originally from Minicoy and Gujarat.

Recent Findings

- The research on Nicobarese, involving 1,559 individuals from South and Southeast Asia.
- It indicates an ancestral connection of them shared with Austro-Asiatic populations.
- They are the ***common genetic affinity of the Htin Mal***.

Htin Mal is a population in the mainland of Southeast Asia who speak an Austro-Asiatic language. The Mal are an ethnic group native to Laos and Thailand.

- They settled there approximately only 5000 years ago.

References

1. Deccan Herald| Nicobarese
2. NIC| About Nicobarese

Indira Gandhi Peace Prize

Recently, the Indira Gandhi Memorial Trust announced that Former Chilean president Veronica Michelle Bachelet Jeria to be awarded Indira Gandhi Peace Prize 2024 with Rs.25 lakh.

- Indira Gandhi Peace Prize is awarded ***annually*** to individuals and organizations promoting ***international peace and development***.
- It was named after former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, to commemorate her outstanding contribution to national and global well-being and to promote the causes which she espoused, in 1985.
- It is known as *Indira Gandhi Prize for Peace, Disarmament and Development.*

- **Established in** – 1986.
- **Awarded by** – Indira Gandhi Memorial Trust.
- **Code of Procedure** – It is awarded to *a person or organization without any distinction of nationality, race or religion*, in recognition of creative efforts towards:
- Promoting international peace and disarmament, racial equality, goodwill and harmony among nations,
- Securing economic co-operation and promoting a new international economic order,
- Accelerating the all-round advancement of developing nations,
- Ensuring that the discoveries of science and modern knowledge are used for the larger good of the human race and
- Enlarging the scope of freedom and enriching the human spirit.
- It includes a cash prize and a trophy with a citation.
- **Cash Prize** – *Rs.10 million* or its equivalent in a foreign exchange.
- **Trophy** – It is a *square piece of banded Haematite Jasper*, the same stone which is used at the samadhi of Indira Gandhi.

  Haematite Jasper is one of the hardest varieties of stone found in India and is estimated to be 2000 million years old.

- **Selected by** – A Jury of eminent persons, shall consist of not fewer than 5 and not more than 9 members', one of them being designated as a ***Chairman of the trust.***
- **Recommendations** – Each year, the trust recommend for the award in respect of the preceding year.
    - The last date for recommendations shall be 30 September.
    - The Prize shall be announced on or before 31 December.

Veronica Michelle Bachelet Jeria's contributions

- Bachelet served as ***Chile's president*** from 2006 to 2010 and again from 2014 to 2018.
- She implemented education and tax reforms during her tenure, and a *free trade agreement* was signed between India and Chile.
- She led UN women from 2010 to 2013 and later served as UN High Commissioner for Human Rights from 2018 to 2022.
- The prize honours her work to improve gender equality, human rights, democracy and development in difficult circumstances and her contributions to fostering India's relations with Chile.
- The trust stressed her global advocacy for women, LGBTQ rights, and human rights.

References

1. The Times of India| Indira Gandhi Peace Prize
2. IG| Indira Gandhi Peace Prize

International Energy Agency (IEA)

Recently, the International Energy Agency (IEA) has called the policy makers and industry to collaborate on a vision for meeting the fast-growing demand for electricity from data centres.

- IEA is an ***international intergovernmental organization*** based in Paris to ensure the ***security of oil supplies.***
- It is the *world's leading energy authority*.
- **Founded in** – 1974, in response to the 1973 oil crisis.
- **Headquarters** – Paris, France.
- **Mission** – Works with governments and industry to shape a secure and sustainable energy future for all.
- **Working –** In recent years, the IEA has also focused on renewable energy and initiatives focused on environmental protection and stopping climate change.
- It operates within the broader framework of the Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD).
- **Membership** – Only ***OECD member countries can join as the IEA member.***
- 31 member countries, 13 association countries and *4 countries currently seeking IEA membership* are,
    - Chile, Colombia, Israel and Costa Rica.

India first joined the IEA family as an Association country in 2017.

- The flagship program is the International Energy Program, which its members agree to withhold large stocks of oil in order to respond to any future unforeseen disruption in the oil supply.
- Under this agreement, IEA member nations are required to store the equivalent of at least 90 days' worth of oil, measured according to their previous year's net oil imports.
- In the event of a sudden disruption to supply, the IEA can help coordinate among its member nations, which could increase supply by releasing some of their oil reserves.
- It providing authoritative analysis, data, policy recommendations, and real-world solutions to countries.
- It also providing input on energy and climate policy by its regular participation in global forum, which includes G7 and G20 summits and the ASEAN and APEC meetings.
- It guide countries to build net-zero emission energy systems, to comply with internationally agreed climate goals.
- **Funded by** – Its *member countries and voluntarily by non-member countries and stakeholders* such as energy companies and private donations.
- **Important reports**
    - World Energy Outlook.
    - Energy Technology Perspectives (ETP).
    - Gas Market Report.
    - Global Electric Vehicles (EV) Outlook.
    - Advancing Clean Technology Manufacturing.

The IEA will launch a new AI-based chatbot for users to explore the 2024 edition of the Agency's flagship World Energy Outlook report.

References

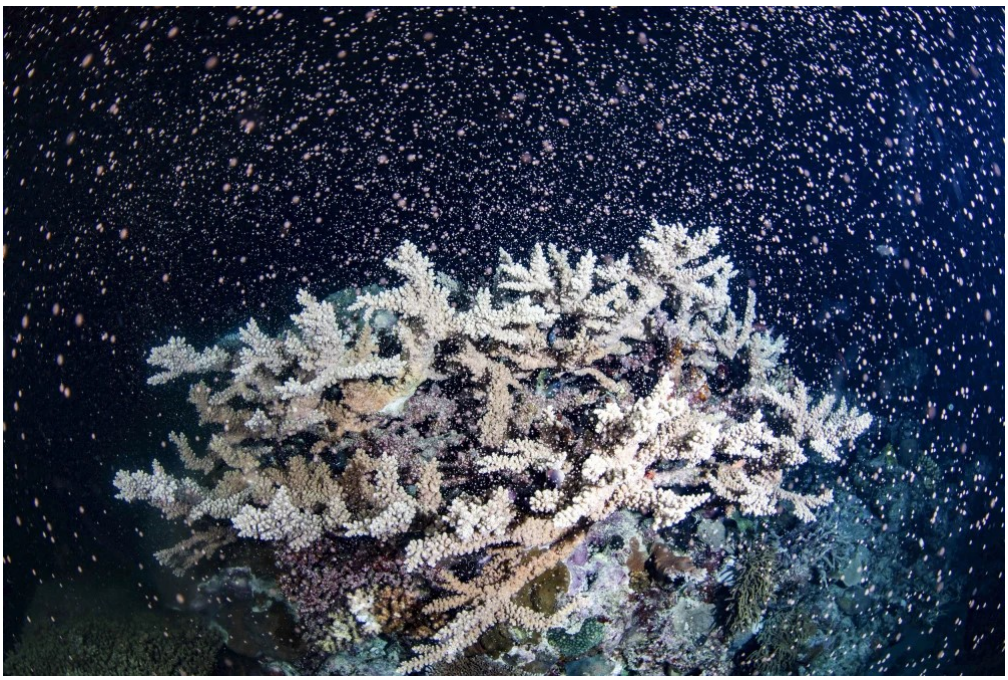
1. The Hindu Businessline| International Energy Agency (IEA)
2. IEA 50| About us

Coral Spawning

The Great Barrier Reef busted to life during this mass coral spawning event that happened after the November full moon in Australia.

- **Coral Spawning** – It is the ***annual process by which coral reefs simultaneously reproduce.***
- The Coral reefs scatter millions of tiny egg and sperm bundles into the water, called *Gametes*.
- The gametes are full of fatty substances called lipids, rise slowly to the ocean surface, where the process of fertilization begins.
- Each bundle must find another bundle from the same species to fertilise.
- **Coral Babies** – The coral egg and sperm join together as an embryo and develop into a coral larva, called a *Planula*.
- Planulae float in the ocean, before dropping to the ocean floor.
- Depending on seafloor conditions, the planulae may attach to the substrate and grow into a new coral colony at the slow rate of about 4 inches a year.
- **Spawning** – It depends on a number of factors including their *location, the water temperature and tides*.
- It follows a ***full moon and water temperatures of 27-28 degrees Celsius*** required to trigger the maturation of the coral's egg and sperm bundles.
- The timing of spawning is also impacted by the length of the day, the tide and salinity levels in the water.
- It occurs only at night and lasts from a few days up to a week.
- This phenomenon brings an underwater blizzard with billions of colourful flakes cascading in white, yellow, red, and orange.

Coral Spawning event was first witnessed on Magnetic Island in 1982.



Recent spawning

- It is the ***world's largest coral spawning event***, described as one of the greatest of all natural spectacles.
- Coral Spawning recently happened on the Great Barrier Reef.
- On the Great Barrier Reef, inshore reefs typically spawn in October, while outer reefs spawn during November or December.
- The Australian Institute of Marine Science (AIMS) researchers are experimenting with a coral larval seeding technique known as Coral IVF.

Coral IVF is a world-leading technique to grow baby corals and use them to restore damaged coral reefs.

References

1. DIVERNET| Coral Spawning
2. NOS| Coral Spawning
3. GBF| Coral Spawning

SHANKAR IAS PARLIAMENT
Information is Empowering