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Burmese pythons

Why in News?

Scientists from the University of Florida analysed large amounts of data collected to remove the snakes (Burmese Pythons), revealing critical insights about how to most efficiently remove the reptiles.

- It is an ***invasive and alien species*** in Florida.
- **Scientific Name -** Python bivittatus.
- It is one of the largest snakes on Earth.
- **Native -** Native to the jungles and grassy marshes of ***Southeast Asia.***
- **Appearance -** It is a dark-colored ***non-venomous snake*** with many brown blotches bordered by black down the back.



- **Growth -** 23 feet or more in length and weighing up to 200 pounds.
- They are also excellent swimmers, and can stay submerged for up to 30 minutes before surfacing for air.
- **Diet** – Carnivores, surviving primarily on small mammals and birds.
- They have poor eyesight, and stalk prey using ***chemical receptors*** in their tongues and heat-sensors along the jaws.
- They kill by *constriction*, grasping a victim with their sharp teeth, coiling their bodies around the animal, and squeezing until it suffocates.
- They are *solitary animals* and are generally only seen together during spring mating.
- In both their native and invasive range they suffer from Raillietiella orientalis (pentastome parasitic disease).
- **Threats -** Habitat depletion, pet trade, and hunting for their skins and flesh.

- **Conservation status**
  - **IUCN** - Vulnerable.

References

1. Down to Earth | Burmese python
2. National Geographic | Burmese Python

United Kingdom-India Young Professionals Scheme (YPS)

Why in News?

The ballot for United Kingdom-India Young Professionals Scheme (YPS) will open soon.

- YPS is a reciprocal scheme under which UK and Indian nationals can live, study, travel, and work in the other country for up to ***2 years.***
- **Launched in -** February 2023.
- **Eligible Age -** 18 to 30.
- It is part of the ***Migration and Mobility Agreement*** that the two countries signed in 2021.
- It caps the number of young professionals admitted to either country at 3,000 per year.
- **Qualification -** The applicants must also have a qualification at UK bachelor's degree level or above, and have proof of £2,530 in savings to support themselves in the UK.
- **Features** - YPS does not require any pre-approved employer certificate or salary conditions.
- It allows Indians to land in the UK and seek a job or self-employment if they have enough savings to support their stay.
- However, YPS is not extendable unless the regular work visas which are valid for 5 years can be extended.
- The scheme also ***does not allow any dependent children*** to accompany the applicant.

Reference

The Indian Express | UK-India Young Professionals Scheme

Artificial Intelligence Action Summit

Why in the news?

PM Narendra Modi has stated that "India has one of the world's largest AI talent pools and it is developing artificial intelligence applications for public good" in the Artificial Intelligence Action Summit.

- The Artificial Intelligence Action Summit aids to shape AI technology according to our values, the full potential of which has yet to be reached.
- **Co-chaired by** – President of France, H.E. Mr. Emmanuel Macron and Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi.

- **Held at Paris** – It is a week-long summit that was held at Paris in France.
- **Participants** – Heads of State and Government, leaders of international organizations, CEOs of major AI companies and other distinguished participants.



- **Public interest Al** – The aim is to define, build and deliver critical open public infrastructure for the global Al sector to drive beneficial social, economic and environmental outcomes in the public interest.
- **Future of work** – The aim is to provide a platform for dialogue on how Al can support the future of work agenda, by promoting Al usage that enhances productivity and well-being.
- **Innovation and Culture** – The aim is to support and build dynamic and sustainable innovation ecosystems that work hand-in-hand with all economic sectors, notably cultural and creative industries.
- **Trust in AI** – The aim is to consolidate the mechanisms to build trust in Al, based on an objective scientific consensus on safety and security issues.
- **Global AI Governance** – The aim is to shape an effective and inclusive framework of international governance for AI, building on the work conducted within the United Nations and on existing initiatives like the Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence.
- **Three axes** – They announced more than a hundred concrete actions and commitments in favour of a trusted AI accessible to all , around 3 axes:
    1. Empowering everyone to take ownership of the AI revolution.
    2. Promote the development of sustainable AI.
    3. Strengthen the international AI governance system to make it more effective and inclusive.

References

1. PIB - Artificial Intelligence Action Summit
2. Official website - Artificial Intelligence Action Summit

Primary Agriculture Cooperative Credit Societies (PACS)

Why in the news?

The Government has recently allowed Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS) to operate Retail Petrol/ Diesel outlets and LPG Distributorships.

- Primary Agricultural Credit Societies are the *grass root level arms* of the *short-term co-operative credit structure*.
- **Rural (agricultural) borrowers** – PACS deals directly with the rural (agricultural) borrowers, give those loans and collect repayments of loans given and also undertake distribution and marketing functions.
- **Final link** – It serves as the final link between the *ultimate borrowers on the one hand and the higher financing agencies*, namely the Scheduled Commercial Banks, and the RBI/NABARD on the other hand.
- **Organisational Structure of PACS**
- **General Body of PACS** – Exercise the control over board as well as management.
- **Management Committee** – Elected by the general body to perform the work as prescribed by the society's rules, acts, and by-laws.
- **Chairman, Vice-Chairman, and Secretary** – Work for the benefit of the members by performing their roles and duties as assigned to them.
- **Office Staff** – Responsible for performing day to day work.
- **Significance of Primary Agriculture Credit Society** – For the uninitiated, a PACS is the first building block of the century-old cooperative banking system of India.
- PACS can play a colossal role, in *bringing farmer communities closer to credit*, inputs, market and value addition.
- No commercial bank branch can ever come close to providing the kind of services a Primary Agriculture Credit Society (PACS) can.
- PACS can also play a major role by *integrating its warehouse* with the physical and financial supply chain of agro-commodities in the upcoming Garmin Agriculture Markets (GrAMs) or large warehouses in the private sector.
- **Combined Category 2 (CC-2)** – PACS have been included under Combined Category 2 (CC-2) for retail Petrol/ Diesel dealership and Combined Category (CC) for LPG Distributorship.
- They can apply online as per the advertisements issued by Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs).
- **Strengthening of Primary Agriculture Cooperative Credit Societies (PACS)** – Refers to the process of enhancing the capacity, efficiency, and effectiveness of these cooperative institutions.
- It will be providing multiple services to the farmers and rural agricultural communities, apart from credit and financial services.
- By strengthening PACS, *governments and stakeholders aim to improve the overall state of agriculture*, uplift rural communities, and promote inclusive economic growth.
- These efforts can contribute to poverty reduction, food security, and sustainable development in agrarian economies.

References

1. PIB - Primary Agriculture Cooperative Credit Societies (PACS)
2. Ministry of Cooperation - Primary Agriculture Cooperative Credit Societies (PACS)

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Geography

Republic of Estonia

• **Located in** – Northeastern ***Europe***.
• **Capital** – Tallinn.
• **Bounded by** – Russia to the east and Latvia to the south.
• It is the *most northerly of the 3 Baltic States* and has linguistic ties with Finland.
• Indian Prime Minister met President of the Republic of Estonia and it was the *1st meeting between the 2 leaders*.



Dabhol

• **Located in** – A *small seaport town* located in Ratnagiri District of ***Maharashtra***.
• **Dabhol LNG Terminal** – Commissioned in early 2013, it consists of three 160,000 cubic meter storage tanks and a receiving capacity of 5 Million Tonnes Per Annum (MTPA).
• It provides access to *natural gas to India's southern and western states.*
• Gas Authority of India Ltd (GAIL) plans to increase its capacity to *12 mtpa by 2030* to meet rising gas demand.

Polity & Governance

Lord Buddha Trination Triservices Expedition

• **To be launched by** – International Buddhist Confederation (IBC).
• **India, Nepal and Sri Lanka** – It is collaborative initiative brings together the *armed forces* of India, Nepal and Sri Lanka in partnership with the IBC.
• **Unique motorcycle expedition** – The primary objectives of the expedition include promoting peace and harmony, enhancing tourism, raising environmental awareness.
• It also aims to promote celebrating the deep-rooted ties between India, Nepal, and Sri Lanka.
• The expedition will start from Lumbini, Nepal (the birthplace of Lord Buddha) to Galle, Sri Lanka.

SARAS Collection

• It is a store front collection to *market the products of Self-Help Groups (SHG)*.
• **Created by** – The Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD) in collaboration with Government e-Marketplace (GeM).
• **An e-Commerce platform** – Named (www.esaras.in) has also been launched by the Ministry for online marketing of SHG products.

Coal Gasification Incentive Scheme

• It plays a pivotal role in India's ambitious target of *reaching 100 million tonnes of coal gasification by 2030*.
• **Designed to** – Accelerate technological advancements in coal gasification, reduce carbon emissions, bolster energy security, and create a foundation for a more sustainable energy landscape.
• **Awardees under the Scheme –** Coal Ministry Issues Letters of Award to Selected Applicants under Categories II of the Financial Incentive Scheme for Coal Gasification.
• The selected Private Sector/ Government PSUs are:
- Jindal Steel and Power Limited
- New Era Cleantech Solution Private Limited
- Greta Energy Limited.

International Relations and Issues

Legacy of Indo- Oman Relations

• **Aim** – A joint initiative to *promote cultural understanding and academic research* through archival exchanges.
• It is an ***exhibition*** that was jointly inaugurated by the ***National Archives of India (NAI)*** in collaboration with the *National Records and Archives Authority (NRAA), Sultanate of Oman*.
• The exhibition showcases a *collection of rare archival documents* that trace centuries-old trade, diplomatic relations, and cultural exchanges between India and Oman.
• It highlights significant historical moments and collaborations that have shaped bilateral relations over time.

Economy

Gender Budget

• The Gender Budget now constitutes *8.86% of the total budget (Union Budget 2025-26)*, increasing from 6.8% in FY 2024-25.
• **4.49 lakh crore** – A record allocation of 4.49 lakh crore rupees has been designated for *women's welfare*, reflecting a 37.25% increase from the previous year.
• **Gender-focused programs** – Ministry of Women and Child Development remains at the forefront, allocating *81.79%* of its budget towards *gender-focused programs*.

Net Direct Tax

• The net direct tax collection ***grew at 14.69%*** to over 17.78 lakh crore rupees for the fiscal year 2024-2025.
• **Central board of direct taxes (CBDT)** – as per the data released by the CBDT, the net non-corporate taxes, which include mainly *personal income tax grew 21%* year-on year to about 9.48 lakh crore.
• **Net corporate tax collection** – Rose more than 6% to over 7.78 lakh crore "between" April 1 2024 to February 10 2025.

Security

INS Tushil (F 70)

• **Multi-role stealth-guided missile frigate** – It is the latest multi-role stealth-guided missile frigate, was commissioned into the Indian Navy.
• **Designed for** – *Blue water operations* across the spectrum of naval warfare in all 4 dimensions air, surface, underwater and electromagnetic.
• **Armed with** – A range of advanced weapons, including:
- Jointly-developed Brahmos supersonic cruise missiles,
- Vertically-launched Shtil Surface-to-Air Missiles with enhanced ranges,
- Upgraded medium-range anti-air and surface gun with advanced stealth features,
- Optically-controlled close-range rapid fire gun system,
- Anti-submarine torpedoes and rockets and
- Advanced electronic warfare and communication suite.

• **Upgraded anti-submarine** – The ship is also capable of embarking the upgraded anti-submarine and airborne early warning helicopters, the Kamov 28 and Kamov 31, which are formidable force multipliers in themselves.

Miscellaneous

4-tier Narco-Coordination Centre (NCORD) mechanism

• **Aim** – To bring all agencies on supply, demand and harm reduction side under one umbrella.
• **Constituted by** – The Ministry of Home Affairs.
• **Four tier coordination mechanism** – For increasing coordination amongst the nationwide stakeholders from grass root level to apex level and effectively combating the menace of drugs.
• **Four pillars** – The Apex NCORD, Executive NCORD, State NCORD and District NCORD are four pillars of mechanism.
• In addition to this 04-tier structure Monthly NCORD meetings are chaired by the Director General, NCB.

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