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Sarod

Renowned sarod maestro Pt. Rajeev Taranath recently passed away after a brief illness.

- **About -** Sarod is a stringed musical instrument of the lute family that is common to the ***Hindustani music tradition*** of northern India.
- **Origin -** The sarod is an adaptation of the ***Afghan rabab***, which arrived in India during the 16th century.
- The modern form of the instrument was designed in the 19th century.
- **Making materials -** It is made up of coconut shell, tun wood, drone, shikri, and ivory. Entire body carved out of a single block of 'tun' wood.



- **Strings -** There are 2 sets of strings.
  - Upper set contains 4 main playing strings, 4 drones and 2 chikari strings.
  - Lower set is of 15 sympathetic strings.
- All are attached to a metal string holder underneath the resonator, pass through the bridge and finally fixed to their respective pegs.
- **Resonator -** The resonator has a stretched membrane (usually goatskin) and a bridge made from horn where the strings rest.
- The bridge is very thin, like that of a violin. The melody strings are stretched across the bridge and the sympathetic strings run through holes drilled into the bridge.
- **Player -** One who plays the sarod is called a ***sarodiya*** and the word sarod is Persian for song or melody.
- **Playing Technique-**The player uses the fingernails of the left hand to press the strings against the fingerboard, producing the notes.
- **Indian Schools -** Two prominent Indian schools of sarod playing are Ghulam Ali Khan and Allauddin Khan.

Rajeev Taranath

- He was born on October 17, 1932, to his father, Pandit Taranath and his mother, Sumathi Bai, Rajeev Taranath.

- He was a distinguished disciple of the great sarod maestro ***Ustad Ali Akbar Khan.***
- He had been honoured nationally by the Government of India with a Padma Shri in 2019 and the Sangeet Natak Akademi award in 2000.
- In Karnataka, he has been bestowed with the Rajyothsava award in 1996, Chowdaiah Memorial award in 1998, Sangeet Vidwan award in 2018 and Nadoja award in 2019.

References

1. The Indian Express | Sarod maestro Pt Rajeev Taranath passes away
2. The Hindu | Sarod maestro Pandit Rajeev Taranath passes away
3. Ministry of Culture | About Sarod

National Testing Agency

The Supreme Court is scheduled to address three petitions regarding the controversy surrounding the NEET-UG 2024 medical entrance test.

NEET-UG- *Examination conducted for admissions to* ***MBBS, BDS, and AYUSH.***

- **About-** It is a premier, specialist, autonomous and self-sustained testing organization.
- **Aim -** To conduct entrance examinations for admission/fellowship in ***higher educational institutions.***
- **Established in –** 2017, as a Society registered under the ***Indian Societies Registration Act, of 1860.***
- **Core values -** NTA will create a system which will promote teaching (by teachers), learning (by students) and assessment (by parents and institutions).
- **Objectives -** To conduct efficient, transparent and international standards tests in order to assess the competency of candidates for admission, and recruitment purposes.
- To undertake research on educational, professional and testing systems to identify gaps in the knowledge systems and take steps for bridging them.
- To identify experts and institutions in setting examination questions.
- To produce and disseminate information and research on education and professional development standards.
- **Functions -** To create a question bank for all subjects using the modern techniques.
- To establish a strong R&D culture as well as a pool of experts in different aspects of testing.
- To help individual colleges and universities in the field of testing and to provide training and advisory services to the institutions in India.
- To undertake any other examination that is entrusted to it by the Ministries/Departments of Government of India/State Governments.

References

1. The Indian Express | National Testing Agency

2. National Testing Agency | About NTA

Visceral Leishmaniasis (VL)

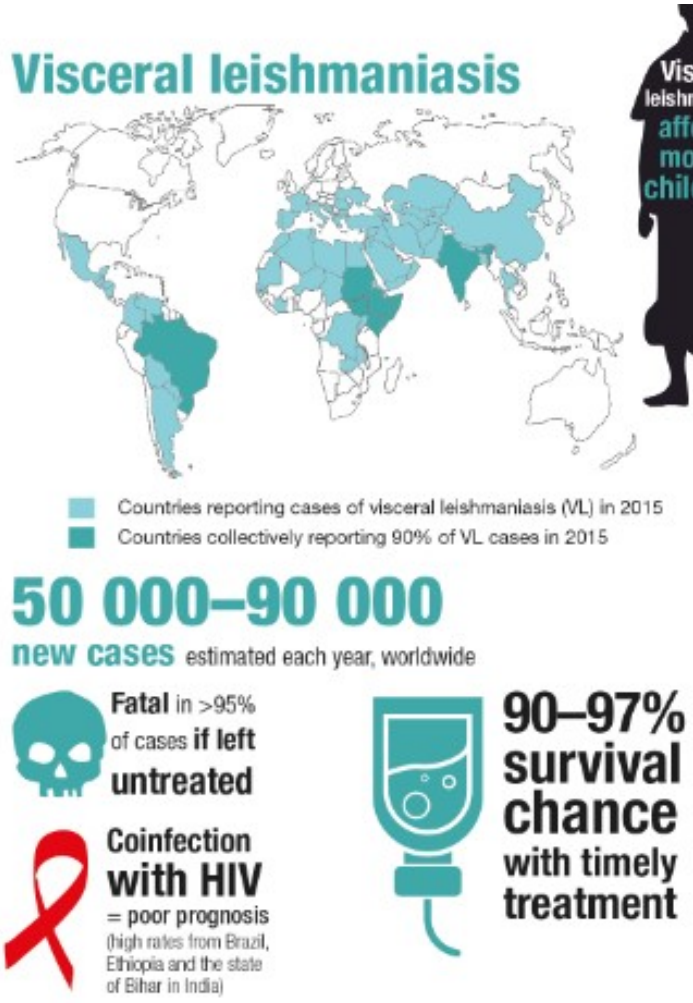
The World Health Organization (WHO) recently launched a framework to eradicate visceral leishmaniasis (VL) in eastern Africa.

- **About -** Visceral leishmaniasis (VL) is a severe and potentially fatal disease caused by the ***Leishmania parasite.***
- It is also known as kala-azar or black fever.
- **Transmitted by -** Infected female phlebotomine sandflies.
- **Vulnerables -** It primarily affects infants and children, though adults can also be infected.

  In 2022, eastern Africa accounted for 73% of global VL caseload, 50% of which occurred in children aged under 15 years.

- **Symptoms -** Fever, weight loss, and enlargement of the spleen and liver.
- **Fatality rate -** If the disease is not treated, the fatality rate can be as high as 100% within 2 years. It is the ***2nd deadliest parasitic disease*** in the world, only after malaria.
- **Endemic to -** It is endemic in 80 countries. In India ***Leishmania donovani*** is the only parasite causing this disease.

  Bangladesh is the first country to eradicate VL in 2023.



- **Post Kala-azar Dermal Leishmaniasis (PKDL)** – It is a condition when Leishmania donovani invades skin cells, resides and develops there and manifests as dermal leisions.
- **WHO framework on VL Elimination -** The framework outlines 5 main strategies
    - Early diagnosis and treatment
    - Integrated vector management
    - Effective surveillance
    - Advocacy, social mobilisation and partnership-building and
    - Implementation and operational research.

WHO has set the target date for the elimination of this disease in South-East Asia Region by 2026.

Reference

Down to Earth | Visceral Leishmaniasis (VL)

Bangladesh-India Friendship Bridge

The long-awaited Bangladesh-India friendship bridge, Maitri Setu to get operational by

September.

- **About -** The Maitri Setu is inaugurated between ***India and Bangladesh*** in March 2021.
- **River-** The bridge 'Maitri Setu' has been built over the ***Feni River***, flows between the Indian boundary in ***Tripura State and Bangladesh.***
- **Length-** The bridge spans over 1.9 kilometres joining Sabroom (in Tripura) with Ramgarh in Bangladesh.
- **Type-** It is a road bridge, allowing both passenger and cargo vehicles to cross.
- **Construction-** The bridge was constructed by the ***National Highways and Infrastructure Development Corporation Ltd (NHIDCL).***
- **Significance-** It is a significant infrastructure project, particularly in the context of India's diplomatic and strategic relations.
- The bridge serves as a crucial link between India and Bangladesh, *enhancing connectivity and trade relations* between the two countries.

Reference

The Economic Times | Bangladesh-India Friendship Bridge

Island of Crete

A 4000-year-old circular monument was discovered during airport excavations on Crete, island.

- **Location-** Crete is the largest and most populous of the Greek islands and 5th largest island in Mediterranean Sea, located in the ***eastern Mediterranean Sea.***

  Mediterranean Sea is an intercontinental sea that stretches from the Atlantic Ocean on the west to Asia on the east and separates Europe from Africa.

- **Bordered by -** It is located in the southern part of the Aegean Sea. It is bordered by the Sea of Crete in the north, the Libyan Sea in the south, the Myrtoan Sea in the west and the Carpathian Sea in the east.
- **Rivers -** Anapodiaris, Almiros, Giofyros, Koiliaris, Ieropotamos, and the Megas Potamos rivers.
- **Lakes -** Lake Agia and Lake Kournas are the two freshwater lakes on the island.
- **Terrain-** The island is characterized by diverse terrain including mountains, gorges, plateaus, and coastline.



Reference

1. Washingtonpost | Island of Crete
2. Visitgreece | Crete Island

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