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Dickinsonia

- Researchers have discovered fossils of the earliest known living animal, 550-million-year-old 'Dickinsonia' in the Rock Shelters of Bhimbetka.
- The fossils were found in the roof of the '**Auditorium Cave' at Bhimbetka**.
- These are the only Dickinsonia fossils available in the country, and are similar to those seen in southern Australia.
- This is further proof of the **similar paleoenvironments** and confirms the assembly of Gondwanaland by the 550 Ma (Mega Annum), but not reconstructions adjusted for true polar wander.
- One can identify the fossils from the white leaf-like patches with a central vertebra (central midrib) and connecting veins.
- Dickinsonia is an extinct genus of basal animal that lived during the late **Ediacaran period** in what is now Australia, Russia and Ukraine.

Rock Shelters of Bhimbetka

- Bhimbetka is an archaeological site in the foothills of the Vindhyan Mountains on the southern edge of the central Indian plateau.
- It is a United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) World Heritage Site.
- Within massive sandstone outcrops, there are five clusters of natural rock shelters displaying paintings that spans from the prehistoric **Paleolithic and Mesolithic** Period through to the historical period.
- Bhimbetka, which has the oldest-known art in India, is also known as **Bhima's Lounge** (Bhima - Pandava prince from the Mahabharata).
- It also exhibits the **earliest traces of human life** in India and evidence of **Stone Age** starting at the site in Acheulian times.

Pangolins

- Pangolins in Cameroon are on the verge of extinction as the Cameroonians prefer bushmeat to domestic livestock as they are easily available and cheaper.
- Pangolin, a scaly **nocturnal anteater**, is one of the world's most trafficked mammals.
- It is being pushed towards extinction due to rampant poaching and

mushrooming international wildlife trade fuelled by Chinese poachers.

- International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) has classified,
  1. Indian Pangolin as **Endangered** and
  2. Chinese Pangolins as **Critically Endangered**.
- Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) has placed all eight pangolin species to **Appendix I**.

Haemorrhagic Septicaemia

- Six elephants died of haemorrhagic septicaemia (Sahana disease) in Karlapat Wildlife Sanctuary in Odisha's Kalahandi district.
- Haemorrhagic septicaemia is a **contagious bacterial disease** that occurs in parts of Asia and Africa**.**
- It infects animals that come in contact with **contaminated** food and water or soil or through **respiratory secretions**.
- It spreads through contact with infected animals, contaminated clothes, equipment and ingestion or inhalation of the bacteria.
- It generally spreads in the period right **before and after the monsoons**. It can affect cattle, buffalo and other animals.
- Respiratory tract and lungs of the animals are affected, leading to severe **pneumonia** and is often fatal.

Karlapat Wildlife Sanctuary

- Karlapat Wildlife Sanctuary is located in Kalahandi district of **Odisha**.
- It lies within the Eastern Highlands moist deciduous forests ecoregion.
- It was notified as a wildlife sanctuary in 1992.
- It is home to tigers, leopards, sambars, nilgais, barking deer, mouse deer and variety of birds like green munia, great eared-nightjar and various reptiles, apart from elephants.

Guidelines for Geo-spatial Sector

- Ministry of Science and Technology released new guidelines for the Geo-spatial sector in India, which deregulates existing protocol and liberalises the sector to a more competitive field.
- Under the current policy regime, there are strict restrictions on the collection, storage, use, sale, dissemination of geo-spatial data and mapping.
- The policy had been driven by internal and external security concerns.
- The sector is dominated by the Indian government and government-run agencies such as the Survey of India.
- Private companies must navigate a system of permissions from different government departments (depending on the kind of data to be created), to

collect, create or disseminate geo-spatial data.
- The deregulation would eliminate the requirement of permissions as well as scrutiny, even for security concerns.
- Now, Indian companies can self-attest, conforming to government guidelines without having to be monitored by a government agency.

Geospatial Data

- Geospatial data is data about objects, events, or phenomena that have a location on the surface of the earth.
- The location may be **static** in the short-term, like the location of a road, an earthquake event, or **dynamic** like a moving vehicle, the spread of an infectious disease.
- Geospatial data usually combines,
    1. Location information,
    2. Attribute information (the characteristics of the object, event, or phenomena concerned), and
    3. Temporal information or the time at which the location and attributes exist.
- It involves information of public interest such as roads, localities, rail lines, water bodies, and public amenities.

National Coal Index

- The Ministry of Coal has started Commercial Auction of coal mines on revenue share basis.
- National Coal Index (NCI) was conceptualized to arrive at the revenue share based on market prices of coal.
- NCI is a **price index** which reflects the change of price level of coal on a particular month relative to the fixed base year **(Financial Year 2017-18**)
- Prices of coal from all the sales channels of coal, including import, as existing today are taken into account for compiling the NCI.
- The amount of revenue share per tonne of coal produced from auctioned blocks would be arrived at using the NCI by means of defined formula.
- NCI is composed of a set of five sub-indices:
    1. Three for Non Coking Coal, which are combined to arrive at the Index for Non Coking Coal and
    2. Two for Coking Coal, which are combined to arrive at the Index for Coking Coal.

Sandes

- National Informatics Centre has launched an **instant messaging platform**

called Sandes on the lines of WhatsApp.

- The app, which is available for Android and iOS users, is a government instant messaging system (GIMS).
- It could be used by both the **central and state government officials** for intra and inter-organisation communication.
- Although there is no option to transfer the chat history between two platforms, the chats can be backed up to a users' email.
- It allows a user to mark a **message as confidential**, which will allow the recipient to be made aware the message should not be shared with others.
- The limitation, however, is that the app does not allow the user to change their email id or registered phone number.
- Open initially only to government officers, it has now been released for the common public as well.

Source: PIB, The Indian Express, The Hindu, Down To Earth

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