UPSC Daily Current Affairs | Prelim Bits 19-08-2024

Lateral Entry

The UPSC recently issued advertisement to recruit 45 candidates through lateral got criticism from opposition party that the centre was trying to bypass reservation policies.

- Lateral entry is the appointment of specialists (including those from the private sector) in government departments on a contract basis for a ***period of 3 years.***
- This contract can be extended up to 5 years based on the candidate's performance.
- The concept of lateral entry was first endorsed by the Second Administrative Reforms Commission established by it in 2005.
- **Recommended by –** NITI Aayog in 2017.
- **Posts -** Based on the above recommendation, the first vacancies for lateral entrants were advertised in 2018, but only for ***Joint Secretary level positions.***

  Joint Secretary is the third-highest rank (after Secretary and Additional Secretary) in a Department, and functions as the administrative head of a wing in the Department.

- Posts of the rank of Director and Deputy Secretary were opened later.
- Directors are one rank below Joint Secretaries, and Deputy Secretaries are one rank below Directors, although in most ministries, they perform the same job.
- Directly recruited Central government employees are ***not eligible*** for these posts.
- **Experience -** Applicants for the post of joint secretary should have a minimum of 15 years experience in the relevant domain.
- **Age limit**
  - **Joint secretary –** 40 and 55.
  - **Director** – 35-45.
  - **Deputy secretary posts** - 32-40
- **No quota -** Reservation or caste-based quotas do not apply to these recruitments.
- In the last few years, a total of 63 appointments have reportedly been made through lateral entry out of which 35 were sourced from the private sector.
- The latest batch of lateral recruitment is seen as the biggest move to reform the bureaucracy by tapping in external talent.

References

1. The Indian Express | Lateral entry into bureaucracy
2. Business Standard | Lateral entry

Namdhari sect

8 persons were recently injured after 2 factions of the Namdhari sect opened fire at each other over a land dispute near the dera in Sirsa's Jiwan Nagar in Haryana.

- The Namdharis are a Sikh sect that ***differs from mainstream Sikhs*** chiefly in that it believes that the lineage of Sikh Gurus did not end with Guru Gobind Singh (10^{th} human Sikh Guru).
- The Namdharis were also known as "Kukas" because of their trademark style of reciting the "Gurbani" (Sayings/Teachings of the Guru).
- This style was in a high-pitched voice called "Kook" in Punjabi. Thus, the Namdharis were also called "Kukas".
- **Kuka Movement -** The Kuka movement marked the 1^{st} major reaction of the people in Punjab to the new political order initiated by the British after 1849.
- The Namdhari Movement, of which the Kuka Movement was the most important phase, aimed at overthrowing the British rule.
- **Founded by -** Satguru Ram Singh on Baisakhi in 1857.
- **Satguru Ram singh**
  - He challenged the status quo, advocated social reform, and resisted the Raj in various ways.
  - He asked his followers to ***boycott everything*** which bore the stamp of the British Government.
  - He appointed Governors and Deputy Governors to organize Kukas in different districts of Punjab.
  - He also inspired young men by giving them military training.
- The British inflicted terrible punishments on the Namdharis and deported Ram Singh to Rangoon, from where he never returned.
- The Namdharis believe Ram Singh is still alive, and will return one day. Until then, they mourn his absence by wearing white.
- Kukas supported ***civil disobedience and the Non-Cooperation movement*** for Indian independence.
- **Supreme Gurbani -** Namdhari Sikhs consider the ***Guru Granth Sahib as the Supreme Gurbani***, but they also believe in a living human Guru.
- **Belief -** The Namdharis consider the cow to be sacred, they are teetotallers, and avoid even tea and coffee.
- **Headquarters -** The sect's sprawling headquarters is located in Ludhiana's Bhaini Sahib near village Raiyaan, where Ram Singh was born.
- **Spread across -** The sect has its deras across Punjab and Haryana, and has a presence in a few other countries, too.

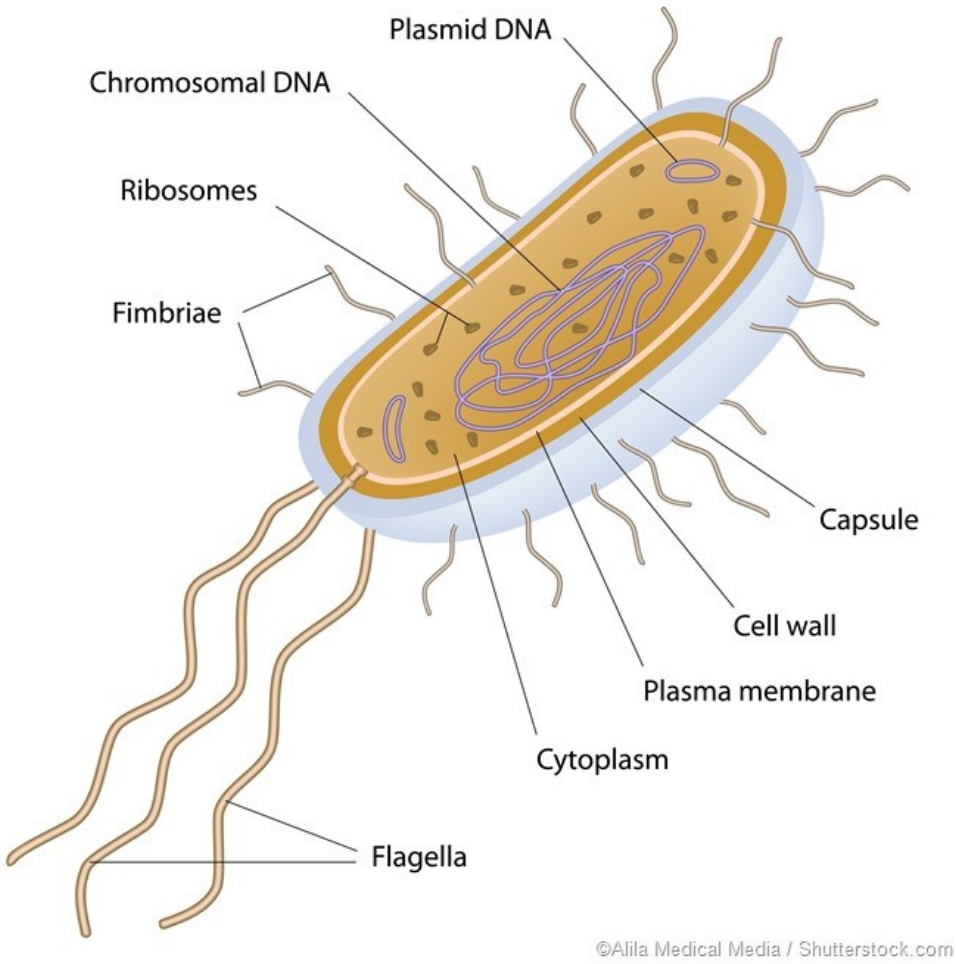
References

1. The Indian Express | Namdhari sect
2. Hindustan Times | Namdhari sect clash in Sirsa

Prokaryotes

Scientists recently found that prokaryotes are remarkably resilient to climate change and as a result, could increasingly dominate marine environments.

- A prokaryote is a ***single-cell organism*** whose cell lacks a nucleus and other membrane-bound organelles where Eukaryotic cells have membrane-bound organelles, such as a nucleus and mitochondria.



- Prokaryotes include both ***bacteria and archaea,*** another type of single-celled organism.
- **Structure -** Most prokaryotes are small, single-celled organisms that have a relatively simple structure.
- These organisms are thought to be the oldest cell-based lifeforms on Earth.
- **Organelles -** Prokaryotic cells are surrounded by a plasma membrane, but they have no internal membrane-bound organelles within their cytoplasm.
- **Size -** Prokaryotic cells are typically 0.1–5.0 micrometers (μm) in diameter, which is much smaller than eukaryotic cells, which can range from 10–100 μm.
- **Adaptability -** They thrive across the entire planet on land and in water, from the tropics to the poles.
- **Significance -** They play a crucial role in the world's food chains, helping support the nutrient needs of fish humans catch and eat.
- **Carbon emission -** Marine prokaryotes grow extremely fast a process that emits a lot

of carbon.
- In fact, prokaryotes to an ocean depth of 200 metres produce about 20 billion tonnes of carbon a year double that of humans.
- This massive carbon output is balanced by phytoplankton another type of microscopic organism which turns sunlight and carbon dioxide into energy, through photosynthesis.
- **Recent findings –** Prokaryotes play an important role in keeping the oceans in balance. But the research shows this balance is at risk.
- It is found that prokaryotes are remarkably resilient to climate change and as a result, could increasingly dominate marine environments.
- This could reduce the availability of fish humans rely on for food, and hamper the ocean's ability to absorb carbon emissions.

References

The Hindu | Prokaryotes

Malabar Tree Toad

According to a recent study, Climate change may decrease the distribution range of the Malabar Tree Toad (MTT) by up to 68.7 %t of the current estimated distribution in India's protected areas (PAs).

- **Malabar Tree Toad (MTT)** – It is a small *war***ty Asian Toad amphibian** species ***endemic*** to ***western ghats.***

  Toad is a common name for certain frogs, especially of the family Bufonidae, that are characterized by dry, leathery skin, short legs, and large bumps.

- **Scientific name** - ***Pedostibes tuberculosus***.
- **Genus** – It is the only species in the monotypic genus ***Pedostibes***.
- **Physical Characteristics**
  - This is a slender frog with a moderate-sized head.
  - The male has a subgular vocal sac.
  - Females are larger than males.
  - Adults of this toad grow to 3.6-3.85 cm in length.
- **Habitat** –It is the ***only arboreal toad species*** in India, having the unique capability to climb trees.
- It is found in wet tree hollows or leaf bases containing water.
- They are found along Western Ghats at elevations of 250 m to over 1000 m, often beside streams.

Habitats of Malabar Tree Toad	
Tamilnadu	• Kalakad Mundanthurai Tiger Reserve
Kerala	• Silent Valley National Park

Karnataka	• Sharavathi Valley Wildlife Sanctuary • Mookambika Wildlife Sanctuary • Brahmagiri Wildlife Sanctuary • Kudremukha National Park
Goa	• Netravali Wildlife Sanctuary • Mhadei Wildlife Sanctuary • Mollem National Park

- **Discovery** - It was first discovered in 1876.
- It was later rediscovered in 1980 at Silent Valley National Park in Kerala.



- **Conservation Status**
  - **IUCN** – Endangered.
  - **Wild of Protection Act ,1972**– Schedule II
  - **CITES** – Not listed.
- **Threat** – Habitat fragmentation, pollution, disease and orphological deformities with climate change has led to the decline of amphibian populations in the past 40 years.
- Annual precipitation influences species populations and distribution.

Amphibians are one of the most sensitive groups to the impacts of climate change due to their unique ecology.

- Drought situation experienced by toads and frogs of Karnataka in 2023 impacted their breeding and nesting habitats.

References

1. DownToEarth | Malabar Tree Toad
2. INaturalist | MTT

International Earth Sciences Olympiad (IESO)

The Indian student team has bagged multiple prestigious medals at the 17th edition of the International Earth Sciences Olympiad (IESO).

- **IESO** – It is established in 2003 at the ***International Geoscience Education Organization Council Meeting in Calgary, Canada.***
- It is an ***annual*** competition for secondary school students from across the globe.
- **Aim** - To generate awareness of earth sciences through teamwork, collaboration, exchanging ideas, and competition.
- **Vision** - To generate interest of the young in various fields of earth system sciences, with a focus on promoting awareness and solution-centric discussions around climate change, environmental challenges and natural disasters.
- **Competition Categories**
    - Theory and Practical
    - Earth Science Project
    - International Team Field Investigation
    - Data Mining.
- **17th Edition of IESO** - It held in Beijing, China, from August 08-16, 2024.
- **India & IESO** - India has participated in the IESO since 2007 and hosted its 10th edition in Mysore.
- The four-membered Indian team comprising students from Gujarat, Kerala, Chhattisgarh, and Rajasthan have won three gold and bronze each and two silver medals across three competition categories.
- **INESO** - To encourage the participation of Indian students (of grades 9 to 12) in IESO, the MoES supports the *Indian National Earth Science Olympiad (INESO)* held in various schools across India.
- INESO is a national-level prelude to the IESO and is facilitated annually by the Geological Society of India in collaboration with MoES.
- **Assessment topics** - Geology, Meteorology, Oceanography, and Environmental sciences.
- The MoES supports the INESO and IESO as part of the REACHOUT scheme under the PRITHVI (PRITHvi Vigyan) scheme.
- **REACHOUT** - Research, Education, Training and Outreach scheme.
- It aims to support research, education, and training in Earth System Science in India.
- REACHOUT is an umbrella scheme of the following 6 sub-schemes.
    - Research and Development in Earth System Science (RDESS).
    - Outreach and awareness.
    - Knowledge Resources Center Network (KRCNet).
    - BIMSTEC Centre for Weather and Climate (BCWC).
    - International Training Centre for Operational Oceanography (ITCOocean).
    - Program for development of skilled workforce in Earth system sciences (DESK).

References

1. PIB | IESO
2. MoES | REACHOUT



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