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Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam

- The dam is located on River Blue Nile (a tributary of River Nile) in Ethiopia and is the center of a dispute involving several East-African countries, dependent on the river's waters.
- Ethiopia began the construction of the GERD in 2011 on the Blue Nile that runs across one part of the country.
- After completion, the dam hydropower project will be Africa's largest.
- Egypt and Sudan has objected to the construction of the dam and proposed a longer timeline for the project.
- The Nile is an important water source in the region so there are concerns that this dispute may evolve into a full-fledged conflict between Egypt and Ethiopia.
- For the past four years, tri-party talks between Egypt, Ethiopia and Sudan have been unable to reach agreements.
- Recently, the USA has stepped in to mediate and also Egypt has announced that it is willing to resume negotiations with Ethiopia and Sudan, concerning the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD).

River Nile

- Nile is the longest river in the world and is called the father of African rivers.
- It has a length of about 4,132 miles and drains an area estimated at 1,293,000 square miles.
- It rises south of the Equator and flows northward through northeastern Africa to drain into the Mediterranean Sea.
- The Nile River forms an arcuate delta as it empties into the Mediterranean Sea.
- Deltas with triangular or fan-shape are called arcuate (arc-like) deltas.
- The Nile is formed by three principal streams: the Blue Nile, the Atbara, and the White Nile.
- Drainage countries - Parts of Tanzania, Burundi, Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya, Uganda, South Sudan, Ethiopia, Sudan, and the cultivated part of Egypt.

Purandara Dasa

- Purandara Dasa belonged to the Vaishnava tradition during the Vijayanagar rule.
- Prior to the adoption of Vaishnava tradition, he was a rich merchant and was called Srinivasa Nayaka.
- The proponents of the theory that Puranadara Dasa was born in Malnad, refer to his older name and point out that Nayaka title was attributed to locally influential people, including wealthy merchants in Malnad during the Vijayanagar rule.
- He was a great devotee of Lord Krishna, a poet and a musician. He is considered the father of Carnatic Music.
- He formalized the music system which was a blend of various traditions of South India and the musical science as explained in the Vedas.
- He identified 84 ragas and devised a system of teaching Carnatic music in graded lessons.
- He composed songs in Kannada and Sanskrit with the pen name Purandara Vithala.
- In his compositions, he expressed his love for Sri Krishna describing various aspects of Krishna's life.
- It was widely believed that the Purandara Dasa was born in Purandharagad, Maharashtra.
- However, many people in Malnad claimed that he hailed from their region.
- On literary evidence, it is being speculated that Purandara Dasa was born near Araga.
- Recently Department of Archaeology, Heritage and Museums, Karnataka announced it will soon commence field research work at Araga in Malnad (Malenadu) region in Karnataka, to end the speculations regarding the birthplace of Purandara Dasa.
- The department comes under the Ministry of Culture and is responsible for archaeological studies and the preservation of cultural monuments.

Katkari Tribes

- Katkari is one of the 75 Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs), who are historically forest dwellers.
- The name Katkari is derived from a forest-based activity – the making and bartering or sale of Catechu from the Khair tree (Acacia Katechu).
- Catechu is an extract of acacia trees used variously as a food additive, dye, etc.
- It is extracted by boiling the wood in water and evaporating the resulting

brew.

- Katkaris are located primarily in Raigad and in parts of Palghar, Ratnagiri and Thane districts of Maharashtra as well as in some places of Gujarat.
- The British administration had classified them under the Criminal Tribes Act, 1871.
- The Act described certain groups of people as ‘habitually criminal’. The stigma associated with the Act continues.
- Recently Katkari tribal youth from Shahpur in Maharashtra are making a name by selling Giloy and other products online during lockdown.
- Giloy (Tinospora Cordifolia) is an Ayurvedic herb that has been used and advocated in Indian medicine for ages.

Kangra Tea

- Kangra tea is grown in the Kangra district of Himachal Pradesh.
- It is well known for its unique colour and flavour.
- Kangra tea has got the Geographical Indication (GI) tag.
- It is loaded with antioxidants like catechins and polyphenols, and said to offer these health benefits: promotes weight loss, builds immunity, improves oral health and mental alertness, etc.
- It is also used in making sentizers, soap, vinegar, wine etc.
- Institute of Himalayan Bioresource Technology (IHBT), Himachal Pradesh has claimed that Kangra tea chemicals can boost immunity and block coronavirus activity better than anti-HIV drugs.
- IHBT, Palampur, Himachal Pradesh is a constituent of Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR).

Polyphenols

- Polyphenols are a category of compounds naturally found in plant foods, such as fruits, vegetables, herbs, spices, tea, dark chocolate, and wine.
- They have antioxidant properties that can protect against various diseases.
- These chemicals can further block the activity of the viral protein that helps the virus to thrive inside human cells.
- They can be subdivided into flavonoids, phenolic acid, polyphenolic amides, and other polyphenols.
- Polyphenols may help prevent blood clots, reduce blood sugar levels, and lower heart disease risk.
- They may also promote brain function, improve digestion, and offer some protection against cancer.

Cicadas

- Cicadas are insects that spend most of their lives underground and emerge from the soil mainly to mate.
- Once out of the ground, their life span is fairly short, somewhere between two-four weeks.
- After emerging from the ground in billions, the cicadas shed their exoskeletons or outer skins to take their winged form.
- Male cicadas "sing" to attract the females, the collective chorus of these male cicadas is very loud and can reach up to 100 decibels, which is as much as a powered lawnmower.
- After mating, the females lay their eggs in twigs that are ½ to ¼ in diameter.
- One female is capable of laying over 400 eggs in 40-50 different sites.
- The eggs remain in the twigs for six to ten weeks before they hatch and after hatching the nymphs fall to the ground where they burrow 6-18 inches underground to feed and emerge 13 or 17 years later, depending on their grouping.
- The egg-laying by the cicadas causes significant damage to small twigs.
- They damage many ornamental and hardwood trees, especially newly planted fruit and ornamental trees such as apple, dogwood, peach, cherry and pear among others, which are the most seriously damaged.
- Recently it is found that in US there will be major outbreaks of periodical cicadas in 2020 and 2021.

Puntius Sanctus

- Puntius Sanctus is a new freshwater fish which has been found recently in Velankanni, Tamil Nadu.
- It is a silver-hued fish found in a small water body.
- The species is small in size and grows to a length of 7 cm, it bears lateral line scales and pre-dorsal scales.
- It has a protractible (extended) mouth, a pair of maxillary barbels (a sensory organ near the snout).
- The lateral line scales are found within the dermis i.e. under the skin of a fish and usually have sense organs.
- The dorsal scale row in a fish consists of a series of deep scales devoid of spines.
- The fish has been identified and named by the Department of Zoology, BJM Government College in Kollam.
- The new fish has been deposited in the Zoological Survey of India at Pune.

- It has also been registered with Zoo Bank of the International Commission of Zoological Nomenclature, the official authority for naming animals.

Puntius Species

- Species of Puntius are known from India mainly from the drainages of the Western and Eastern Ghats, as well as the Eastern Himalayas.
- The Puntius species are known locally as Paral in kerala and Kende in Tamil Nadu.
- The genus shows great species richness in Kerala and Tamil Nadu.
- It belongs to the family 'Cyprinidae'.

Cyprinidae

- It is the family of freshwater fish, collectively called cyprinids, that includes the minnows, goldfish, bitterlings, barbs, and carps.
- It ranges from small aquarium sized species to huge fish.
- Freshwater fish are those that spend some or all of their lives in freshwater, such as rivers and lakes, with a salinity of less than 1.05%. E.g. Rohu, Katla, Hilsa etc.

Zoological Survey of India

- It is a subordinate organization of the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change and was established in 1916.
- It is a national centre for faunistic survey and exploration of the resources leading to the advancement of knowledge on the exceptionally rich faunal diversity of the country.
- It has its headquarters at Kolkata and 16 regional stations located in different geographic locations of the country.

International Commission of Zoological Nomenclature

- It regulates a uniform system of zoological nomenclature ensuring that every animal has a unique and universally accepted scientific name.
- It creates and revises the International Code of Zoological Nomenclature.
- It is based in the Lee Kong Chian Natural History Museum, National University of Singapore.

Source: PIB, the Hindu, Indian Express



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