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German wasp & European paper wasp

Invasive wasps, particularly the German wasp (Vespula germanica) and the European paper wasp (Polistes dominula), pose significant ecological and socio-economic threats in South Africa.

	The German wasp	European paper wasp
Scientific name	Vespula germanica	Polistes dominula
Geographical diversity	Native to Europe but now found in various parts of the world, including North America, Australia, and New Zealand.	Native to Europe, but it has spread to many other parts of the world, including North America.
Appearance	About 12-17 mm long with a distinctive yellow and black striped abdomen. They have a black dot on each yellow segment of the abdomen.	About 10-15 mm long. They have predominantly black and yellow coloration, with distinctive orange antennae and legs.
Body	The head and thorax are mostly black with yellow markings.	They have a slender body with a narrow waist and long legs that hang below the body in flight.
Diet	They are omnivorous and feed on a variety of foods including insects, fruits, and human food. They are particularly attracted to sweet foods and drinks.	They are omnivorous, feeding on nectar, fruit, and insects. They are particularly beneficial as they prey on many garden pests.
Habitat	They are commonly found in gardens, parks, and around human structures. They build nests in tree cavities, logs, and underground.	They are commonly found around buildings, gardens, and in sheds. They nest in barns, sheds, and other structures, as well as in vegetation and fields.
Status	Category 1b Invasive Alien Species (Biodiversity Act (NEMBA), Act 10 of 2004)	Category 1b Invasive Alien Species (Biodiversity Act (NEMBA), Act 10 of 2004)



- **Ecological Impact-** These wasps are generalist ***predators and scavengers***, impacting local insect populations, including honey bees.

References

1. Down to Earth | German wasp & European paper wasp
2. Sciencedirect | Vespula vulgaris
3. Colorado State University | European paper wasp

E-Upahaar portal

Recently the Rashtrapati Bhavan has launched an online E-Upahaar portal.

- **Aim-** The portal is designed to streamline sending and receiving gifts and messages for various occasions, especially for interactions with the ***President of India and former Presidents***.
- **Developed by-** National Informatics Centre (NIC).

  The National Informatics Centre (NIC) is a premier government department under the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY).

- **Launched in-** July, 2024.
- **Launched by-** President of India.
- This initiative aims to boost ***citizen engagement*** and support a noble cause.
- All proceeds from the auction will be donated to help ***children in need.***
- **Auction phase-** In the first phase, around 250 exquisite gifts will be

auctioned.

- **Features**
  - **Facilitating Communication -** It provides a digital platform for individuals and organizations to connect with the President's office.
  - **Managing Gifts and Wishes -** The portal allows users to send gifts, congratulatory messages, or invitations, particularly for significant events like birthdays or anniversaries.
  - **Transparency and Efficiency -** By digitizing these interactions, the portal aims to make the process more efficient and transparent, reducing administrative burdens.

Reference

PIB | E-Upahaar portal

Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana (PKVY)

Minister of State for Chemicals and Fertilizers recently released a report on Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana (PKVY) and Mission Organic Value Chain Development in the Northeast Region.

- The Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana (PKVY) is an extended component of ***Soil Health Management (SHM)*** under the ***National Mission on Sustainable Agriculture (NMSA).***
- **Launched in-** 2015.
- **Scheme type-** Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS).
- **Aim-** It aims at supporting and ***promoting organic farming***, in turn resulting in the improvement of soil health.
- To reduce the cost of agriculture to farmers through sustainable integrated organic farming systems thereby enhancing farmer's net income per unit of land.
- To protect the environment from hazardous inorganic chemicals by adopting eco-friendly low-cost traditional techniques and farmer-friendly technologies
- **Objective-** To produce agricultural products free from ***chemicals and pesticide*** residues by adopting eco-friendly, low-cost technologies.
- **Funding pattern-** Under the scheme in the ratio of ***60:40*** by the Central and State Governments respectively.
- In the case of North Eastern and Himalayan States, Central Assistance is provided in the ratio of 90:10 (Centre: State) and for Union Territories,

the assistance is 100%.

- **Target-** The Scheme targets to form 10,000 clusters of 20 ha each and bring nearly two lakh hectares of agricultural area under organic farming by 2017-18.
- **Exclusions-** All farmers with less than 2 ha of land are eligible for applying to the scheme.
- **Participatory Guarantee System-** The scheme supports Participatory Guarantee System (PGS-India) for organic certification, which relies on mutual trust and local relevance, involving both producers and consumers.
- PGS-India operates independently of Third-Party Certification.

Reference

PIB | Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana

Listeria and listeriosis

Two separate outbreaks of listeria have been reported in the United States and Canada in recent weeks.

- **Listeria**- It is a type of ***bacteria (Listeria monocytogenes)*** found in soil, vegetation, water, sewage, and even the feces of animals and humans that can contaminate many foods.
- Listeria can cause an intestinal illness that is usually mild.
- **Listeriosis**- People who eat those foods can get infected with Listeria and this infection is called listeriosis.
- **Infected through** - Raw meat & seafood, Ready-to-eat processed meat & seafood, Raw vegetables, refrigerated pates, Prepared salads, Melons, Soft cheeses and Unpasteurized milk products.
- **People at risk-** It is most likely to sicken people who are pregnant and their newborns, adults aged 65 or older, and people with weakened immune systems.

  Pregnant Hispanic women are 24 times more likely than the general population to get Listeria infection.

- **Symptoms**- Most people do not fall sick or develop symptoms, but the typical symptoms include

    - Fever,
    - Flu-like symptoms include muscle aches and fatigue, Headache, Stiff neck, Confusion, Loss of balance, Seizures, Diarrhea, and Vomiting.
- **Treatment**- The treatment is like one for a routine stomach infection and could require antibiotics.

References

1. The Indian Express | Listeria outbreak
2. CDC | Listeria

Olympic Order

Recently, Abhinav Bindra, a sport *shooter has been honoured with prestigious Olympic Order.*

> *Abhinav Bindra become, the 1st Indian to win a bar of individual gold at the Olympics*

- The Olympic Order is the ***highest accolade*** bestowed by the ***International Olympic Committee (IOC)*** for exceptional service.
- It is given to individuals who have rendered outstanding services to the Olympic cause.
- **Established in-** 1975.
- **Nomination-** Candidates are typically nominated by members of the Olympic family, including National Olympic Committees (NOCs), International Sports Federations (IFs), and IOC members.
- **Selection-** The ***final decision*** is made by the IOC Executive Board.
- **Award Grades**- The award comes in 3 grades - **gold, silver, and bronze,** with the gold medal being the most prestigious.
- The recipients of the Olympic Order are chosen by the IOC's Executive Board.
- The award symbolizes the recipient's dedication to the Olympic spirit and their contributions to promoting the values of excellence, friendship, and respect in sports.
- **Award ceremony-** The award ceremony will be held during the ***142nd IOC Session in Paris*** on August 10, a day before the closing of the Olympics.
- **Significance-** The Olympic Order is not just an award but a symbol of

recognition for those who embody the spirit of Olympism.
- It honours dedication, perseverance, and exceptional contributions to the global sports community.

International Olympic Committee
• The International Olympic Committee (IOC) is a non-governmental sports organization. • **Headquarter-** Lausanne, Switzerland. • **Established in-** 1894 • **Founded by-** Pierre de Coubertin • The IOC is responsible for organizing the modern Summer and Winter Olympic Games. • **Key Responsibilities** • The IOC oversees the preparation and organization of the Summer and Winter Olympics, held every four years. • The IOC promotes the Olympic values of excellence, friendship, and respect, and encourages the practice of sports worldwide. • Through various programs, the IOC provides support to athletes, including scholarships and funding for training and development. • The IOC enforces rules against doping and other forms of cheating to ensure fair competition. • **Structure-** The President of the IOC is elected for an eight-year term, renewable once for four years. • The current president (as of 2024) is Thomas Bach.`

References

1. Indian Express | Olympic Order
2. Olympics | International Olympic Committee

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