# UPSC Daily Current Affairs | Prelim Bits 28-09-2020

## Electronic Enforcement & Maintenance of Vehicular Documents

- Union ministry of road transport and highways has notified amendments in Central Motor Vehicle Rules.
- It facilitates the implementation of Electronic enforcement, Maintenance of Vehicular Documents through Information Technology portal with effect from 1st of October 2020.
- The amendment provides for

1. The definition for Challan,
2. Portal to provide services through online.
3. Enhancing the enforcement of electronic monitoring and enforcement.

- Other significant features of the initiative are

1. Details of driving licenses disqualified or revoked by the licensing authority shall be recorded chronologically in the portal and such record shall be reflected on a regular basis on the portal has been provided for.
2. Provisions have been made for the procedure for Production and Obtaining Certificates in physical as well as electronic form, the validity, issuance of such documents and further the date and time stamping of inspection and identity of the Officer to be recorded.
3. It has been provided that the use of handheld communications devices while driving shall solely be used for route navigation in such a manner that shall not disturb the concentration of the driver while driving.

## Sandalwood Spike Disease (SSD)

- SSD is caused by phytoplasma, a bacterial parasites of plant tissues which are transmitted by insect vectors.
- SSD has been one of the major causes for the decline in sandalwood production in the country for over a century.
- The disease was first reported in Kodagu in 1899.
- The devastating impact in natural habitats resulted in sandalwood being classified as “vulnerable” by the International Union for Conservation of Nature in 1998.
- Presently, there is no option but to cut down and remove the infected tree

to prevent the spread of the disease.
- With between 1 and 5% of sandalwood trees lost every year due to the disease, scientists warn that it could wipe out the entire natural population if measures are not taken to prevent its spread.
- Recently it is reported that Karnataka's sandalwood trees are facing a serious threat with the return of the destructive Sandalwood Spike Disease (SSD).
- The natural population of sandalwood in Marayoor of Kerala and various reserve forests in Karnataka, including MM Hills, are heavily infected with SSD for which there is no cure as of now.

### Red Sandalwood

- Red sanders (Pterocarpus santalinus) is endemic to South India.
- They are found in the Tropical Dry Deciduous forest of the Palakonda and Seshachalam hill ranges of Andhra Pradesh and also found in Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka.
- Red Sanders usually grow in the rocky, degraded and fallow lands with Red Soil and hot and dry climate.
- The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) has put it under the category of near threatened from earlier endangered species in the Red List.
- It is listed in Appendix II of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES).
- Appendix II – Species which are not necessarily threatened with extinction, but in which trade must be controlled to avoid utilization incompatible with their survival.
- It is known for its rich hue and therapeutic properties, is high in demand across Asia, particularly in China and Japan, for cosmetics and medicinal products, wood-works and musical instruments.
- Its popularity can be gauged from the fact that a ton of red sanders costs anything between Rs. 50 lakh to Rs. 1 crore in the international market.

## Leuser Ecosystem

- Leuser Ecosystem is among the most ancient and life-rich ecosystems ever documented by science and is a world-class hotspot of biodiversity and is widely acknowledged to be among the most important areas of intact rainforest left in all of Southeast Asia.
- The ecosystem has been designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site.
- The ecosystem stretches across the province of Aceh and North Sumatra,

Indonesia.

- It spans 2.6 million hectares, almost three times the size of Yellowstone National Park, USA.
- Its diverse landscape includes lowland and montane rainforests and over 185,000 hectares of carbon-rich peatlands.
- Montane rainforests, also called cloud forests, are vegetation of tropical mountainous regions in which the rainfall is often heavy and persistent condensation occurs because of cooling of moisture-laden air currents deflected upward by the mountains.
- Recently, an investigation by the global watchdog Rainforest Action Network (RAN) has shown that various food, cosmetics and finance companies have links with companies implicated in the destruction of the Leuser Ecosystem, a forest area on the island of Sumatra, Indonesia.
- 75% of the world's remaining population of the Sumatran orangutan is found in the ecosystem.
- These ecosystems plays an outsize role regulating the global climate by storing massive amounts of carbon in its peatlands and standing forests.

### Peatlands

- Peatlands are wet, carbon-rich areas that have formed through thousands of years of undecomposed leaf litter and organic material accumulation.
- When these areas are drained and the peat is exposed to air, it begins to oxidize and releases large amounts of carbon dioxide emissions into the atmosphere.

### Rainforest Action Network (RAN)

- Rainforest Action Network (RAN) is an environmental organization based in United States.
- Rainforest Action Network preserves forests, protects the climate and upholds human rights by challenging corporate power through frontline partnerships and strategic campaigns.
- RAN works toward a world where the rights and dignity of all communities are respected and where healthy forests, a stable climate and wild biodiversity are protected and celebrated.

## Scrub Typhus

- It is a bacterial disease caused by Orientia tsutsugamushi through bites of Larval Mites of family trombiculid, also called Chiggers.
- The symptoms of the disease includes fever, headache, body aches, and

sometimes rash.
- There is no vaccine available for the disease.
- The occurrence the disease is found rural areas of Southeast Asia, Indonesia, China, Japan, India, and northern Australia.
- Recently an outbreak of Scrub Typhus has caused 5 deaths and 600 infections in Nagaland's Noklak district bordering Myanmar.

**Typhus**

- Typhus is a group of bacterial infectious diseases that include epidemic typhus, scrub typhus, and murine typhus.

1. Epidemic typhus is due to Rickettsia prowazekii spread by body lice.
2. Scrub typhus is due to Orientia tsutsugamushi spread by chiggers.
3. Murine typhus is due to Rickettsia typhi spread by fleas.

- Napoleon's army was infected with Epidemic Typhus during his invasion of Russia in 1812 causing it to retreat.

**Source:** PIB, Down to Earth, the Hindu

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