UPSC Daily Current Affairs| Prelim Bits 31-01-2025

Devi Ahilyabai Holkar

Why in News?

The Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA) organized a special lecture recently on the life and legacy of Devi Ahilyabai Holkar, titled Commemorating the 300th birth anniversary of her.

- Ahilyabai Holkar was a Holkar Queen who ruled the ***Malwa kingdom in the 18th century.***
- She was born in Chondi, present-day Ahmednagar District, ***Maharashtra***, India, on May 31, 1725.
- **Father -** Mankoji Rao Shinde.
- She was married to Khanderao Holkar, son of Malhar Rao Holkar (Founder of Holkar Dynasty).
- After 12 years, her husband Khanderao was killed during the siege of the ***Kumher Fort.***
- Her son, Male Rao, died in 1767.
- In 1767, the Peshwa permitted Ahilyabai to take over Malwa.
- She ascended the throne and became the ruler of Indore on December 11, 1767.
- Maharani Ahilyabai ruled over Malwa with its capital, Maheswar, for 28 years.
- Ahilyabai also established a textile industry in Maheshwar.

Maheswari Saress got a Geographical Indication Tag in 2012.

- She was instrumental in spreading the message of dharma and propagating industrialization.
- She welcomed Marathi poet Moropant, Shahir Ananta Gandhi, and Sanskrit scholar Khushali Ram into her capital.
- Ahilyabai Holkar tried to protect her kingdom from plundering invaders by appointin ***Tukojirao Holkar*** as the Chief of Army.
- She renovated and repaired the famous ***Kashi Vishwanath Temple*** in 1780.
- She reconstructed the ***Somnath Temple and Mahakaleshwar Temple*** in Ujjain.
- During her reign, she made significant decisions, such as abolishing traditional laws that confiscated property from childless widows.
- She was famously known as the ***'Philosopher Queen'.***
- She died in *Rajwada*, Indore, present-day Madhya Pradesh, on August 13, 1795, at the age of 70.

Reference

PIB | Devi Ahilyabai Holkar

Coronation Bridge

Why in News?

After more than 10 years, the West Bengal government recently gave its nod to the Teesta Bridge project, replacing the Coronation Bridge.

- The Coronation Bridge Built in West Bengal spans across the ***Teesta River***.
- It was built in the memory of ***King George VI and Queen Elizabeth*** from 1937 to 1941.
- Its foundation stone was laid by then Bengal Governor ***John Anderson.***

Teesta is Bengal's second-longest river after the Ganga.

- It is also known as the Sevoke Roadway Bridge or Baag Pool.
- It is the only one British-era bridge on the Teesta linking West Bengal and Sikkim.
- **Architects -** A.C. Dutt, S.K. Ghosh and K.P. Roy.
- The bridge was designed by ***John Chambers***, the last British executive engineer in the Darjeeling PWD Division.
- The bridge has a steel arch design, its deck is built of steel girders and its arches are supported by concrete piers.
- The bridge was damaged in the 2011 earthquake, after which the Centre started planning an alternative bridge to increase connectivity between the two states on this strategically important route.
- There were some land acquisition problems; thus, it was delayed by 12 years.



Reference

The Indian Express | Teesta bridge

Spousal Open Work Permits (SOWP) in Canada

Why in News?

Canada's Spousal Open Work Permit policy has been updated, allowing spouses of international students to apply for work permits while studying.

- SOWP program provide opportunities for their ***spouses*** to apply for an open work permit.
- Thus, spouses have the opportunity to ***work full-time*** for the duration of their partner's study in Canada.
- Students who meet the eligibility criteria set by *Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC)* can apply for a spousal visa.
- **Eligible academic programs**
  - PhD programs
  - Master's degree programs (with a minimum duration of 16 months) and
  - professional courses like Doctor of Dental Surgery,
  - Bachelor of Law (LLB),
  - Pharmacy (B. Pharmacy, PharmD),
  - Doctor of Veterinary Medicine (DVM),
  - Doctor of Medicine (MD),
  - Bachelor of Nursing (BN),
  - Bachelor of Engineering (BEng),
  - Doctor of Optometry (OD),
  - BSE Pharmacy,
  - Bachelor of Education (BEd).
- **Recent Changes -** International students can now apply for a SOWP alongside their study permit application.
- If the student is already studying in Canada, their spouse can apply for an open work permit if their spouse is still in their home country.
- If the duration of the work permit is set to expire before the study period, they can apply for an extension to match the remaining duration of the study period.
- Once a student completes their studies in Canada, they may be eligible to apply for a Post-Graduation Work Permit (PGWP), which allows graduates to work in Canada for ***up to 3 years,*** depending on the length of their program.
- In such cases, the spouse may also be eligible for an open work permit under specific conditions.
- The spouse's eligibility depends on whether the student on PGWP is employed in certain sectors under Canada's Training, Education, Experience, and Responsibilities (TEER) system.
- Specifically TEER 0 or 1 occupations and in TEER 2 or 3 occupations sectors they should choose jobs with labour shortages or those linked to government priorities.
- E.g., Natural sciences, healthcare, construction, education, etc.
- For students who are not eligible under these specific programs, their spouse has a few other options.
- The spouse can apply separately for a study permit or a visitor visa and they need to show strong financial proof to prove they can meet the living expenses in Canada.

Reference

The Indian Express | Spousal Open Work Permits (SOWP)

Popa Langur

Why in News?

Recently, the scientists have discovered new monkey species Popa Langur, is on the verge of extinction.

- **Popa Langur –** It is a newly-discovered species, occurs in ***central Myanmar*** which is named after the sacred Mount Popa.
- **Discovered in** – *2020*.
- **Taxonomy**
  - **Scientific Name** – Trachypithecus popa.
  - **Genus** – Trachypithecus of Old-World primates.
- It was often referred as ***Leaf-Monkeys***.
- **Habitat** – Found in the evergreen and deciduous forests, bamboo forests and plantations.
- **Distribution** – High evergreen forests of Myanmar.

The largest populations of Popa Langur live in Popa Mountain Park and Panlaung-Pyadalin Cave Wildlife Sanctuary, Myanmar.

- **Morphology –** It has soft fluffy gray fur, pointed cap of fur on their head, like most langurs, small heads and large eyes made bigger in appearance by thick white eye rings.
- It has small, elongated nostrils and a wide mouth covered in white fur, chest and belly are pale gray-white in color.



- **Behavior –** It is an *arboreal* (spending most of their time in trees) and *diurnal* (active during the day).
- It is capable of traveling long distances and has home ranges large as 256 acres.
- It is vocal primates and range calls to communicate with each other.
- **Diet –** It is a *folivores (leaf eaters)*, which feed on leaves, fruits, green shoots and

petioles.
- Researchers recently estimated that only 200 to 260 individuals remain now.
- **Threats** – Hunting for meat
    - Illegal pet trade
    - Agricultural encroachment
    - Water and soil pollution
    - Cattle ranching.
- **Conservation Status**
    - **IUCN** – Critically Endangered.
    - **CITES** – Appendix II.

References

1. AZ Animals| Popa Langur Verge of Extinction
2. NEPC| Popa Langur

One Liners 31-01-2025

History, Art and Culture

Excavation of Iron knife

• **Found in** – Marungur archaeological site, Cuddalore district of Tamil Nadu.
• **Found by** – Tamil Nadu State Department of Archaeology (TNSDA).
• **Iron knife** – It is a *broken knife made of iron* weighing 23 grams.
• **Measurement** – 13 cm long and 2.88 mm thickness.
• **Usage** – It dates back to at least *5,300 years ago*.
• It is the oldest date available for the Iron Age in India.

Discovery of 30 Inscriptions

• **Found in** – Abbana Bettu Basadi, Karnataka.
• It is *450-years old*, and provided insights into *Jain heritage*.
• **Spanning -** Several centuries of *Kalasa-Karkala Jain* dynasty.
• The earliest inscription on 16th century dates back to the reign of Saluva Bhairarasa (Bhairarasa II).
• It records that Lakshmamanadevi, the wife of Saluva Bhairarasa, commissioned a list of 24 Tirthankaras and donated it to the basadi.
• Another 16th-century inscription reveals that it was commissioned by a patron named Devarasa.
• The inscriptions on the silver arches are the most recent among the discoveries, dating back to the 19th century.
• **30 inscriptions**
  - **29 inscriptions** – Kannada script.
  - **1 inscriptions** – Nagari, bearing only the name of a Tirthankara.



Geography

Coronal Mass Ejections (CMEs)

• **CMEs** – They are *magnetized plasma bubbles ejected from the Sun* and evolve in the interplanetary medium.
• **Appearance** – It looks like huge, twisted rope, called as *Flux Rope.*
• **Speed Range -** Slower than 250 kilometers per second (km/s) to as fast as near 3000 km/s.
• They are the major drivers of perturbations in the Earth's magnetic field, known as geomagnetic storms.
• Such storms can cause severe impacts on ground and space-based technological systems, such as communication disruptions, deorbiting satellites, and power grid failures.

Polity & Governance

Assistance to Drought Prone Areas

High-Level Committee (HLC) has approved project for catalytic assistance.

• **Objective** - To 12 most drought prone states.
• **12 states** – Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Gujarat, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Telangana and Uttar Pradesh.
• **Funded by** – National Disaster Mitigation Fund (NDMF).

Mitigation Scheme for Forest Fire Risk Management

Union Minister has approved the Mitigation Scheme for Forest Fire Risk Management.

• **Objective** – To *transforming the forest fire management* approach in the country.
• **Implemented in** – 144 high-priority districts in *19 states*.
• **19 states** – Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Kerala, Manipur, Maharashtra, Mizoram, Madhya Pradesh, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Odisha, Tamil Nadu, Telangana and Uttarakhand
• **Funded by** – National Disaster Mitigation Fund (NDMF) & National Disaster Response Fund (NDRF).

Environment

Coal

• **Coal** – It is a sedimentary deposit composed *predominantly of carbon* that is readily combustible.
• **Color** – Black or brownish-black.
• **Composition –** Inherent moisture consists of ***more than 50%*** by weight and more than *70% by volume of carbonaceous material*.
• **Formation** – From plant remains that have been compacted, hardened, chemically altered and metamorphosed by heat and pressure over geologic time.

Security

Anti-Submarine Warfare Shallow Water Craft (ASW SWC)

• **Objective** – To undertake anti-submarine operations in coastal waters, Low Intensity Maritime Operations (LIMO) and Mine Laying Operations.
• **Maximum speed** - 25 knots.
• **Endurance** - 1800 NM.
• **Capabilities**
  - Interdiction/ destruction of sub surface targets in coastal waters.
  - Carrying out Search and Rescue by day and night.
  - To prosecute intruding craft as part of LIMO.

Indian Naval Sailing Vessel (INSV) Tarini

INSV Tarini, successfully passed through Point Nemo, Oceanic Pole in South Pacific.

• **INSV Tarini** – It is a *56-foot sailing vessel* built by Aquarius Shipyard Ltd.
• It was inducted in the *Indian Navy* on February 18, 2017.
• **Under** – Navika Sagar Parikrama-II.
• 2 women Navy officers, Dilna K. and Roopa A recently crossed Point Nemo ongoing global circumnavigation journey.
• **Expedition** – It is the most extended leg of the expedition, with a distance of approximately 5,600 nm (approximately 10,400 km).
• **Point Nemo** - Located in the South Pacific, which is the Oceanic Pole of inaccessibility, the most remote location on Earth.

Miscellaneous

International Zebra Day

• It is observed every year on *31 January*.
• It is established to highlight the challenges zebras face in the wild.
• **Highlights** – The challenges zebras face in the wild.
• **Zebra species** – They are *native to Africa*, roam across countries like Kenya, Namibia, and South Africa.
• **Threats** – Habitat loss due to climate change and poaching.
• **3 species & Conservation status**
  - Grevy's zebra – Endangered.
  - Mountain zebra – Vulnerable.
  - Plains zebra – Near-threatened.

World Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs) Day 2025

• It is observed annually on *30 January*.
• It is an act to eliminate NTDs by making bold, sustainable investments to free the estimated 1.5 billion people.
• **Theme** – Unite, Act and Eliminate.
• **NTDs** – They are a diverse group of conditions *caused by a variety of pathogens* including viruses, bacteria, parasites, fungi and toxins.

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