

Testwale Current Affairs PDF

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1. PM Modi launches 'Urea Gold', a sulphur-coated fertiliser for advanced farming (Aug. 1, 2023)

Prime Minister Modi launched a new type of urea called "Urea Gold" during his visit to Rajasthan.

An Overview of the News

- Urea Gold is coated with sulphur, which can enhance soil quality and reduce farmers' expenditure.
- Urea Gold, also known as Sulphur Coated Urea (SCU), is a new variety of urea that requires less field application and improves crop quality.
- The launch aims to address soil fertility issues and lower input costs for farmers, making Urea Gold a more economic and qualitatively better option than the existing neem-coated urea.
- Sulphur coated urea releases nitrogen slowly, and adding humic acid extends its shelf life as a fertiliser.
- According to a report, using 15 kg of Urea Gold provides benefits equivalent to 20 kg of conventional urea, making it a more efficient and cost-effective option for farmers.

2. Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) launched heat index (July 24, 2023)

Indian-Meteorological-Department-(IMD)-launched-heat-index

The Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) has come out with the heat index for different regions of the country on the basis of recent tests.

An Overview of the News

- This was announced by Union Earth Sciences Minister Kiren Rijiju.
- The heat index is designed to provide general guidance and information about the level of discomfort caused by high temperatures in the hot regions of India.
- By releasing the Heat Index, the IMD aims to provide valuable insights into heat-related conditions to help people better cope with extreme temperatures.

About Heat Index:

- **Purpose of Heat Index:** The heat index launched by the India Meteorological Department (IMD) aims to provide information on the effect of humidity on high temperatures. It calculates a "feel-like" temperature for humans, which shows how the weather conditions can cause discomfort.
- **Pilot Implementation:** The Heat Index is currently being implemented on a pilot basis across the country including the state of Andhra Pradesh. This allows the accuracy and relevance of the index to be tested and refined.

- **Heat index for specific cities:** Under the Heat Action Plan, the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) collaborates with local agencies such as the Indian Institute of Public Health (IIPH) to assess the heat index for specific cities such as Bhubaneswar and Ahmedabad.
- **Colour-coded system:** The Heat Index uses a colour-coded system to indicate the severity of weather conditions:
 - Green: Experimental heat index below 35 °C.
 - Yellow: Experimental heat index in the range of 36–45 °C.
 - Orange: Experimental heat index in the range of 46–55 °C.
 - Red: Experimental heat index above 55 °C.

Importance of Heat Index:

- People gain a better understanding of how humidity affects higher temperatures, leading to a more accurate perception of weather conditions.
- The Heat Index helps identify the level of discomfort and potential health risks caused by excessive heat.
- By knowing the heat index, individuals can take necessary precautions to minimize discomfort and avoid heat-related health problems.
- In addition to reporting the day's minimum and maximum temperatures, the heat index also provides information on what the current temperature feels like, taking into account the humidity level.
- The Heat Index uses air temperature and relative humidity data to deliver accurate and relevant information to the public.

Indian Meteorological Department:

- It was established on 15 January 1875 and operates under the Ministry of Earth Sciences, Government of India.
- The department is primarily responsible for conducting meteorological observations, providing weather forecasts and conducting activities related to seismology.
- Its headquarters, known as Mausam Bhawan, is located in New Delhi.

3. India's PFRDA approves Sovereign Green Bonds for pension funds (July 24, 2023)

India's-PFRDA-approves-Sovereign-Green-Bonds-for-pension-funds

The Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA) in India approved the inclusion of Sovereign Green Bonds (SGBs) in pension funds.

An Overview of the News

- These bonds issued by the government will be used to finance projects focused on environmental initiatives.

Significance of PFRDA's investment in Sovereign Green Bonds:

- **Advancing Sustainable Projects:** The decision to allow pension funds to invest in SGBs facilitates direct allocation of funds to environmentally beneficial projects, thereby contributing to India's sustainable development objectives.
- **Environment-friendly pension portfolio:** Allowing pension funds to include SGB in their investment portfolio diversifies their holdings and aligns with the growing demand for investments that are socially responsible and environment-friendly.
- **Government's commitment to the environment:** Issuance of Sovereign Green Bonds reflects the government's commitment to address environmental challenges and promote a green economy.
- **Raising awareness about sustainable investing:** The inclusion of sovereign green bonds in pension funds can raise awareness among retail investors about the importance of sustainable investing. As a result, it encourages a more informed and socially responsible approach to financial decision making.

Sovereign Green Bond:

- These are bonds issued by governments that are designed to finance projects related to the environment and climate.
- These bonds provide investors with an opportunity to earn returns backed by a government guarantee, thereby adding a sense of security to their investments.
- The main purpose of Sovereign Green Bonds is **to finance initiatives and projects that aim to address environmental challenges and promote sustainability.**
- Governments issue these bonds specifically to raise money for environmental projects, as a sign of their commitment to tackling climate issues and promoting green initiatives.
- Green bonds are a type of debt security that helps raise capital for projects that have a positive impact on the environment or contribute to climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts.

About Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA)

- It is responsible for regulating pensions in India and was **established in 2003 under the Ministry of Finance.**
- The main objective of PFRDA is **to promote old age income security and protect the interests of National Pension System (NPS) subscribers.**
- **Deepak Mohanty is the chairman** of the Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority.

National Pension System (NPS) in India:

- It is a defined-contribution pension system which comes under the purview of PFRDA.
- NPS was created under the **Indian Trust Act 1882** to effectively manage the assets and funds of the scheme in the best interest of its subscribers.

4. Events in China: Discussion on the conservation of the Hoolock gibbon (July 20, 2023)

Events-in-China-Discussion-on-the-conservation-of-the-Hoolock-gibbon

The meeting took place in Haikou, Hainan province of China from 7 to 9 July. It was organised by the Global Gibbon Network (GGN).

An Overview of the News

Hoolock Gibbon: The only ape of India

- Previously, scientists believed that there were two species of ape in India: the western hoolock gibbon and the eastern hoolock gibbon.
- A recent study by the Hyderabad-based Center for Cellular and Molecular Biology reveals that India is home to only one ape species, the Hoolock gibbon.

Features of Hoolock Gibbon

- Belonging to the Hylobatidae family, the hoolock gibbon is one of 20 gibbon species on Earth.
- Known for their energetic vocal performances, the population of these apes is estimated to be around 12,000.
- They are the smallest and fastest species of apes, exhibiting high intelligence and strong family bonds.

Distribution and Accommodation

- The hoolock gibbon is native to tropical and subtropical forests in the southeastern part of Asia, including Bangladesh, northeastern India, parts of Myanmar, and southwestern China.
- In India, they are unique in the Northeast between south of the Brahmaputra River and east of the Dibang River.
- Hoolock gibbon populations face a number of threats, including deforestation for infrastructure projects, habitat destruction, hunting for meat, and human encroachment.

Conservation Efforts

- To protect Hoolock gibbons, conservationists have proposed setting up dedicated gibbon wildlife sanctuaries on the lines of Assam.
- Legal protection, limited infrastructure development in their habitats and efforts to control human encroachment and poaching are also necessary.

Conservation Status

- Since the 1990s, the Hoolock gibbon population has declined significantly, leaving all 20 gibbon species at high risk of extinction.
- The IUCN Red List maintains the previous classification, with the eastern hoolock gibbon classified as vulnerable and the western hoolock gibbon as endangered.
- Both species are included in Schedule I of the Indian (Wildlife) Protection Act, 1972.

Global Gibbon Network (GGN)

- Established in 2022 in Haikou, China, GGN aims to protect singing gibbons and their habitats, which are an integral part of Asia's unique natural heritage.
- GGN envisions promoting participatory conservation policies, legislation and actions for gibbon conservation.

5. Birth of three tiger cubs for the first time in Ramgarh Vishdhari Tiger Reserve (RVTR) (July 19, 2023)

For the first time, three tiger cubs were born at Ramgarh Vishdhari Tiger Reserve (RVTR) in Bundi, Rajasthan.

An Overview of the News

- This significant event happened a year after a tigress named T-102 was transferred to the park.
- The number of tigers in the reserve has now increased to five, including a male tiger named T-115 and a tigress named T-102, who is the daughter of Ranthambore tigress T-73.
- During the previous birth, the tigress gave birth to four cubs in November 2020, but they were killed by male tiger T-115 or other wild animals.
- To ensure the safety and survival of the newborn cubs, plans are underway to relocate the tigress from the area, as the male tiger poses a threat to them.

Ramgarh Vishdhari Tiger Reserve:

- Ramgarh Vishdhari Wildlife Sanctuary was designated a tiger reserve on **5 July 2021 as it was given in-principle approval by the NTCA.**
- It was given the status of a **wildlife sanctuary in 1982 under a state act called the Rajasthan Wild Animals and Birds Protection Act, 1951.**
- It is located in the **Bundi district of Rajasthan.**
- Its **core area is 481.9 sq km and buffer area is 1019.98 sq km.**

Mez river passes through this tiger reserve which is a tributary of Chambal river.

- The total population of tigers in this reserve is five which includes one male tiger, one tigress and three newborn cubs.

6. Rare bird 'Jerdon's Babbler' spotted in Dudhwa Tiger Reserve, Uttar Pradesh (July 16, 2023)

A rare and globally endangered bird species called 'Jerdon's Babbler' was recently spotted in the grasslands of Dudhwa Tiger Reserve (DTR) in Uttar Pradesh.

An Overview of the News

- According to surveyors, more than 95% of 'Jerdon's Babbler' in India are from Assam and Arunachal Pradesh.
- The Jordanian babbler lives in pairs in small flocks in tall grasslands.
- This globally threatened bird has been listed as 'vulnerable' by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) since 1994.

Distribution and Conservation Efforts

- Earlier, the Jordan Babbler was found along the Sutlej River in Haryana and Punjab. However, due to habitat loss, this species is now mainly found in Assam and Arunachal Pradesh.
- Noida-based Habitats Trust works towards protecting the grasslands in the area to support the bio-diverse bird population.
- Their efforts are aimed at restoring ecological functionality and promoting the well-being of both species and humans.
- About 30% of the global population of the Jordanian babbler is found in India.

About 'Jerdon's Babbler':

- It is a passerine bird native to the wetlands and grasslands of the Indian subcontinent.
- Its scientific name is **Chrysomma altirostre**.
- It is a member of the **genus Chrysomma of the family Paradoxornithidae**.
- It is found in Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan.
- It lives throughout the year near river channels, where it inhabits dense reeds and tall grasslands.

7. Tamil Nadu's Authoor betel leaves get Geographical Indication (GI) certificate (July 15, 2023)

Tamil-Nadu's-Author-betel-leaves-get-Geographical-Indication

Author betel leaves from Thoothukudi district of Tamil Nadu have been awarded the Geographical Indication (GI) certificate by Tamil Nadu State Agricultural Marketing Board and NABARD Madurai Agribusiness Incubation Forum.

An Overview of the News

- The Authoor Vattara Vetrilai Vivasayigal Sangam, a body representing growers of the Authoor betel leaf, has been awarded the GI certificate.
- This recognition as a Geographical Indication opens up new opportunities for the marketing of Authoor betel leaves.
- The certification allows author betel leaves to be marketed domestically and internationally, thereby increasing their reach in different markets.
- This recognition also highlights the marketing potential of Authoor betel leaves and paves the way for increased demand and popularity.

About the Authoor Betel leaves

- It is known for its spicy and pungent taste, and is especially used during special occasions such as temple festivals, housewarmings and weddings.
- This unique paan is exclusively found in the village of Authoor, located in the Thoothukudi district of Tamil Nadu. The presence of the Thamirabarani river, which provides water for irrigation, contributes to its cultivation in local farms.
- Authoor betel leaves are cultivated in a vast area of about 500 acres, which includes areas like Mukkani, Athoor, Korkai, Sagunthalai, Vellakoil and other Mukkani villages. These leaves are characterised by their long petioles and are available in three different varieties: natukodi, karpoori and pachaikodi.
- The cultural importance of Authoor Betel leaves in Tamil culture is highlighted by their mention in the **13th century book 'The Travels of Marco Polo (The Venetian)'**. Furthermore, their historical value and importance can be seen in various ancient stone inscriptions.

Geographical Indication (GI) Tag:

- It is a form of intellectual property right granted to products to indicate their origin from a specific geographical area.
- This certification is awarded to products that have unique properties or a reputation closely associated with that particular area.
- To be eligible for a GI tag, a product must have a distinctive mark that indicates its origin from a specific geographical area.
- The responsibility of granting GI tag in India rests with the Geographical Indications Registry located in Chennai.

8. Megasiphon Thylacos, a new fossil species of tunicate discovered (July 14, 2023)

Megasiphon Thylacos, a new fossil species of tunicate discovered

Researchers recently described a new fossil species of tunicate called Megasiphon Thylacos

An Overview of the News

- The Megasiphon Thylacos fossil is about 500 million years old.
- The discovery suggests that the modern tunicate body plan was established shortly after the Cambrian explosion.
- The fossil provides insight into the sedentary, filter-feeding lifestyle of ancestral tunicates and their metamorphosis from tadpole-like larvae.

About Tunicates

- Tunicates, commonly known as sea squirts, are a group of marine animals.
- They spend most of their lives attached to surfaces such as docks, rocks or the bottom of a boat.
- There are about 3,000 species of tunicates in the world's oceans, mainly in shallow water habitats.
- The evolutionary history of tunicates dates back at least 500 million years.

Tunicate Lineage:

- **Ascidians:** Ascidians, often called "sea wasps", are one of the main tunicate lineages.
- They begin their lives as mobile, tadpole-like larvae.
- As they mature, they undergo metamorphosis and turn into barrel-shaped adults with two siphons.
- Ascidians spend their adult lives attached to the ocean floor.
- **Appendicularians:** The Appendicularias represent another Antrakha dynasty.
- They retain their tadpole-like appearance even when they become adults.
- They float freely in the upper water.
- They appear to be more distantly related to vertebrates than to ascidians.

Physical Characteristics and Feeding Mechanism:

- The body of adult tunicates is usually barrel-shaped.
- They have two siphons coming out of their body.
- A siphon draws water along with the food particles using suction.

The other siphons the filtered water back out.

9. Justice Sheo Kumar Singh becomes NGT acting chairman (July 7, 2023)

National Green Tribunal (NGT)

The Central Government has authorized **Justice Sheo Kumar Singh-I**, Judicial Member of the **National Green Tribunal (NGT)**, to act as the Chairperson of the Tribunal till a new Chairperson is appointed.

An Overview of the news:

- Justice **Adarsh Kumar Goel** who was appointed as the Chairman in July 2018; Retired on 6 July 2023.
- The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change issued a notification on 6 July 2023 authorizing Justice Sheo Kumar Singh-I to act as the Chairperson.
- He was appointed as a judicial member of NGT in 2020. He is currently working as Judicial Member in the Central Zone Bench of Bhopal.

Career of Justice Sheo Kumar Singh-I:

- Shri Singh-I graduated from Allahabad University in 1975.
- Passed out as a Law graduate from Allahabad University in the year 1978.
- Joined judicial service in 1984 and worked as District Judge, Registrar (Judicial) in various districts of Uttar Pradesh.
- He was appointed Supervisor of Ram Janmabhoomi, Ayodhya, Faizabad.
- He was elevated as a judge in Allahabad and served there till January 2018.

National Green Tribunal (NGT):

- India is the third (first developing) country in the world after Australia and New Zealand to set up a Special Environment Tribunal.
- **Establishment:** On 18th October, 2010 under the National Green Tribunal Act, 2010.
- **Objective:** To speed up disposal of environmental issues.
- **Headquarters:** Delhi (Four Regional Offices - Bhopal, Pune, Kolkata and Chennai).
- **Settlement of issues:** Settlement of environmental issues within 6 months.
- **Composition:** Consists of Chairperson, Judicial Members and Expert Members.
- **Appointment of Chairperson:** By the Central Government in consultation with the Chief Justice of India.
- **Tenure:** Term of three years or till the age of sixty five years and not eligible for reappointment.

10. United Nations adopt first-ever treaty to protect marine life in high seas (June 20, 2023)

United-Nations-adopt-first-ever-treaty-to-protect-marine-life-in-high-seas

The **United Nations** on 19 June adopted the **first-ever treaty to protect marine life** in the high seas, setting a significant milestone in **ocean conservation**.

An overview of the news

- UN Secretary-General **Antonio Guterres** praised the historic agreement and stressed its importance in providing a fighting chance against the many threats to the ocean.
- Delegates representing all **193 member states** expressed their happiness in accepting the treaty.
- Addressing the delegates, Secretary-General Guterres stressed that the adoption of the treaty comes at a critical time when the oceans are facing many challenges.
- He urged all countries to spare no effort to **sign and ratify the treaty immediately.**
- The treaty aims to protect biodiversity in the high seas, which cover about half of the Earth's surface and lie beyond national boundaries.
- Negotiations on this treaty had been going on for 20 years, facing many obstacles and delays in reaching an agreement.

Signing of Treaty

- On 20 September, during the annual meeting of **world leaders at the General Assembly**, the treaty will be open for signature, signaling countries' commitment to its principles.
- The treaty will come into force after **60 countries** have ratified it, indicating their willingness to abide by its provisions and actively contribute to marine conservation efforts.

Need of Oceans Protection

- The ocean plays a critical role in **supporting the livelihoods of three billion people worldwide** and serves as a vital ecosystem that sustains human life and economic well-being.
- The ocean is a fundamental source of **food and economic security** for millions of people.
- Its ecosystems, including **fisheries and aquaculture**, provide sustenance and income for communities globally.
- It has **absorbed approximately 93% of the heat** generated by greenhouse gases, helping to mitigate the impacts of global warming.
- It serves as a source of resources such as **energy, minerals, and materials** that are crucial for various industries and economic sectors.