

## Prelim Bits 08-09-2018

### Leptospirosis

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- It is a bacterial disease that affects humans and animals.

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- It is caused by corkscrew-shaped bacteria called *Leptospira*.

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- In humans, it can lead to kidney damage, meningitis (inflammation of the membrane around the brain and spinal cord), liver failure, respiratory distress, and even death.

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- It's spread through urine of infected dogs, rodents, and farm animals.

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### Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA)

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- India recently decided to end its boycott of the PISA.

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- PISA was introduced in the year 2000 by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation Development (OECD).

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- It tests the learning levels of 15-year-olds in reading, mathematics and science.

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- The test is carried out every three years.

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- India decided to stay away from PISA on account of its dismal performance in 2009.

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- The "out of context" questions were stated as a reason for the poor show.

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- in 2012 and 2015, when it was placed 72nd among the 74 participating countries.

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- India, subsequently, chose to not participate in the 2012 and 2015 cycle.  
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- The HRD Ministry, now, had formally decided to end this boycott.  
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- The ministry will negotiate India's terms of participation in 2021 with OECD.  
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- Unlike 2009, when schools in Tamil Nadu and Himachal Pradesh had participated, the Union government will request OECD to administer the test across all schools in Chandigarh in 2021.  
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- Chandigarh was selected for three reasons.  
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1. Compact area.  
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2. To keep number of languages in which the test has to be administered to a minimum and  
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3. Chandigarh's record of performing well in learning assessments.  
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## **HY-1C satellite**

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- It is a marine satellite launched by China recently.  
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- It was launched by Long March-2C rocket from the Taiyuan Satellite Launch Centre in Shanxi province.  
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- It is a part of series of satellites.  
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- HY-1A was launched in 2002 and HY-1B satellite was launched in 2007.  
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- It was launched to help improve understanding of maritime waters and climate change.  
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- HY-1C can detect chlorophyll and suspended sediment concentrations and dissolved organic matter, which can affect ocean colour, as well as temperatures on the sea surface.  
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- The data will help survey fishery and aquaculture resources and

environments, offering a scientific basis for reasonable exploitation and utilization of marine resources.

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- Scientists will also use the data to study global environmental changes, the role of the oceans in the global carbon cycle and the El Nino phenomenon.

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### **Hubballi-Ankola railway line**

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- National Board for Wildlife (NBWL) is soon expected to deliver the fate of the controversial Hubballi-Ankola railway line.

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- It is been opposed because will claim nearly 1,300 acres of pristine forest land apart from the cutting of 1.73 lakh trees, spanning three elephant corridors in Dharwad, Yellapur, and Karwar.

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- In June 2017 the Regional Empowered Committee of the MoEF&CC recommended the Stage-1 clearance for the project.

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- Also, earlier this year, the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) rejected the proposal, saying it would have repercussions on tiger and other wildlife in the area.

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## Hubballi-Ankola railway line



LENGTH  
**168.29 km**



LAND ACQUISITION  
**995.6 hectares**



TREES TO BE CUT  
**1.73 lakh**

FOREST LAND TO BE ACQUIRED

**595.6 hectares**  
In Karwar, Dharwad, Yellapur elephant corridors



### Timeline

**1951:** Formal representation from locals for a new railway line connecting Hubballi and Ankola

**1996:** New Hubballi-Ankola line proposed

**1999:** Foundation stone laid by Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee

**2001:** Work starts on the line near Hubballi

**2006:** Supreme Court approached against the project

**2015:** Central Empowered Committee of the Supreme Court states that damage outweighs benefits

**2016:** National Green Tribunal clears project and asks Railways to submit fresh proposal

**2017:** Regional Empowered Committee recommends the project for Stage I clearance

**February 2018:** National Tiger Conservation Authority inspection report rejects project, stating it will adversely impact wildlife

**April 2018:** National Board for Wildlife asks for review of the NTCA report



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## “Positive Update” on Australia’s Great Barrier Reef

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- Dire warnings of reef die-off were given after massive coral bleaching in 2016 and 2017.

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- Recently, Tourism and Events Queensland has issued a “positive update, reporting that some affected areas are showing “substantial signs of recovery.”

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- The Great Barrier Reef is the longest coral reef in the world and the first coral reef ecosystem to be awarded Unesco World Heritage Status.

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- It stretches more than 1,430 miles along Queensland’s spectacular coastline.

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- Coral bleaching occurs when coral experiences stress from heightened water temperatures or poor water quality.

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- In response, the coral ejects a photosynthetic algae called zooxanthellae, which removes the coral’s distinctive color.

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- If the stress conditions persist, the coral will die.

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- But if conditions return to acceptable levels, some coral can reabsorb the substance and recover.

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- Coral bleaching occurs in multiple stages, ranging from the equivalent of a mild sunburn to coral mortality.

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**Source: The Hindu, The Indian Express**

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