

Prelim Bits 15-12-2023 | UPSC Daily Current Affairs

Hydrographic survey of Maldives

Maldives government scraps hydrographic survey agreement with India.

- The agreement to collaborate in hydrographic survey of Maldivian territorial waters was signed on June 8, 2019.
- The agreement was signed between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and then President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih.
- The agreement allowed India to conduct a hydrographic survey of the Maldivian territorial waters, study and chart reefs, lagoons, coastlines, ocean currents and tide levels.
- **Terms** - According to the terms of this agreement, if one party wishes to drop the agreement, the other party must be informed of the decision six months before the agreement is set to expire.
- According to the terms, the agreement automatically renews for an additional five years.
- Historically, India had conducted most of the hydrographic surveys of the Maldives.
- **Third Hydrographic Survey** - The third Joint Hydrographic survey by the Indian Navy and the MNDF was carried out by Indian Naval Ship Investigator from January 19 to February 26, 2023.
- The ship surveyed Northern Maldives covering Ihavandhippolhu and Thiladhanmatee atolls and Gallandhu Kandu.

The first Joint Hydrographic survey was carried out by INS Darshak in February/March 2021 and the second joint survey was carried out by INS Sutlej in April/May 2022.

References

1. [The Indian Express - Maldives ending pact with India on water survey](#)
2. [The Wire - Maldives to Terminate Hydrographic Survey Agreement](#)
3. [WION - Maldives scraps hydrographic survey agreement with India](#)

International Institute for the Unification of Private Law (UNIDROIT)

India's Uma Sekhar was elected to governing council of the Rome-based UNIDROIT.

- It was set up in 1926 as an auxiliary organ of the League of Nations.
- Following the demise of the League, it was re-established in 1940 based on a multilateral agreement, the UNIDROIT Statute.

- The UNIDROIT is an independent intergovernmental organisation.
- It deals with various legal issues including studying needs and methods for modernizing commercial and private laws.
- Membership of UNIDROIT is restricted to States acceding to the UNIDROIT Statute.
- UNIDROIT's 65 Member States are drawn from the five continents and represent a variety of different legal, economic and political systems as well as different cultural backgrounds.
- India will be a member of the Governing Council for the period 2024-28.

The achievement becomes even more remarkable as candidates from Russia, the USA and China failed to win any positions on the governing council.

References

1. [The Indian Express - Indian elected to UNIDROIT](#)
2. [WION - India triumphs over US, Russia, China in UNIDROIT election](#)
3. [UNIDROIT - About UNIDROIT](#)

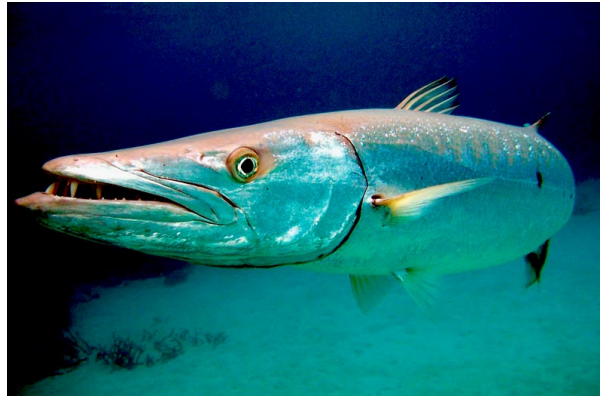
Barracuda boat

India's fastest solar-electric boat Barracuda sets sail for sustainable future.

- The solar-electric boat is named after the swift, long fish, Barracuda.
- The boat can be deployed even in the rough seas as a workboat to ferry up to 12 passengers and cargo.
- Engineered to navigate through waves towering up to 4 metres, the Barracuda excels in challenging marine environments.
- The boat offers a noise-free, vibration-free, and pollution-free journey.
- The 14-metre-long, 4.4-metre-wide vessel can attain a top speed of 12.5 knots (23 kmph) and has a range of seven hours on a single charge.
- It has twin 50 kW electric motors, a marine-grade LFP battery, and 6 kW solar power, epitomising efficient and clean energy usage.
- This cutting-edge vessel was jointly developed by Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders and Navalt.

Barracuda fish

- They are predatory fishes of the family Sphyraenidae.
- Barracudas are found in all warm and tropical regions; some also range into more temperate areas.
- Barracudas are primarily fish eaters, preying on such smaller fishes as mullets, anchovies, and grunts.
- In certain seas, however, they may become impregnated with a toxic substance that produces a form of poisoning known as ciguatera.
- **Great barracuda** - Great barracudas are large fish, and one of the largest of the Barracudas.
- They are known to have been involved in attacks on humans.



References

1. [The Hindu - India's fastest solar-electric boat Barracuda launched](#)
2. [The Hindu Business Line - The Barracuda](#)
3. [Britannica - Barracuda](#)

The Indira Gandhi Prize for Peace, Disarmament and Development

Activist Ali Abu Awwad and pianist Daniel Barenboim win Indira Gandhi Peace Prize.

The Prize

- It was instituted in the memory of the former prime minister by the Indira Gandhi Memorial Trust in 1986.
- The award is given to individuals or organisations who work towards ensuring international peace and development.
- It consists of a monetary award of Rs 25 lakh along with a citation.

Barenboim

- He is a distinguished classical pianist, and conductor, renowned for performing with and directing some of the leading orchestras in the world.
- Apart from his musical achievements, he is also known for his relentless endeavour in using music to foster harmony in West Asia.

Awwad

- Mr. Awwad is an eminent Palestinian peace activist who has been working tirelessly with the people of Palestine and Israel for a peaceful resolution of the ongoing conflict in the Middle East.
- In 2014, Mr. Awwad co-founded a local Palestinian-Israeli initiative called Roots, promoting understanding, non-violence and transformation.

References

1. [The Hindu - Activist and Pianist win Indira Gandhi Peace Prize](#)
2. [The Indian Express - Indira Gandhi Peace Prize announced](#)
3. [Times of India - Barenboim, Awwad win Indira Gandhi Peace](#)

E-Cigarettes

According to WHO, E-cigarettes are not shown to be effective for quitting tobacco use.

- [E-cigarettes](#) are battery-powered devices that heat a solution of nicotine and different flavours to create aerosol, which is then inhaled.
- These devices belong to a category of vapour-based nicotine products called ENDS.
- E-cigarettes and other ENDS products may look like their traditional counterparts, but they also come in other shapes and sizes and can resemble daily use products (like pens and USB drives).
- Several companies selling ENDS in India have positioned these products as a safer, less harmful alternative to traditional cigarettes or as devices that could help users quit smoking.
- E-cigarettes are the most common type of ENDS, with over 460 different brands and more than 7,700 flavours marketed in India currently.
- e-Cigarettes cause health hazards for youth, young adults, and pregnant women.
- A number of metals, including lead, chromium, and nickel, and chemicals like formaldehyde have been found in aerosols of some ENDS.
- The concentrations of these chemicals in e-cigarettes is equal to or greater than traditional cigarettes.
- In India, production, manufacture, import, export, transport, sale, distribution, storage and advertisement of e-cigarettes is a punishable offence.

References

1. [The Hindu - E-cigarettes are not effective for quitting tobacco use](#)
2. [Hindustan Times - WHO calls for ban on flavoured vapes](#)
3. [WHO - Urgent action needed to protect children from e-cigarettes](#)