

Prelim Bits 19-12-2023 | UPSC Daily Current Affairs

National Culture Fund

National Culture Fund (NCF) Received Rs. 3.70 Crore from Non-Government Sources during Last Five Years (2018-19 to 2022-23).

- **Set up in** - 1996, a trust under the Charitable Endowment Act, 1890.
- **Aim** - To mobilize extra resources through Public-Private Partnership (PPP) towards promoting, protecting & preserving India's Cultural Heritage (Tangible & Intangible).
- It is managed by a Council and an Executive Committee.
- **Council** - It has the power to decide on relevant policies which has a maximum strength of 24 including the Chairman.
- It is **chaired by the Hon'ble Minister of Culture** and has 19 members from various fields.
- **Executive Committee** - It will actualize the policies and it is **chaired by the Secretary, Ministry of Culture**.
- **Project Implementation committee (PIC)** - Representatives from the Donor, Implementer and NCF.
- The accounts are **audited by the CAG of India annually**.
- **Fund usage**
 - To train a cadre of specialists and cultural administrators
 - To document cultural expressions and forms
 - To undertake research, innovations and experiments in arts
 - To create of institutions such as galleries and museums
 - To promote international cultural cooperation
- The donations to NCF will be **eligible for tax benefit** under the Income Tax Act.
- **Beneficiaries** - Any State Government or voluntary organisation registered under the Societies Registration Act 1860 (21 of 1860) or registered as a Public Trust at least for the last 2 years.
- Individuals are not entitled to financial assistance under this.

References

1. [PIB| Funding to NCF](#)
2. [NCF| National Culture Fund](#)

Polar Science and Cryosphere Research (PACER)

Recently, India's 1st winter scientific expedition to the Arctic has been flagged off from the MoES headquarters in New Delhi.

- It is a **Central Sector** umbrella scheme.
- **Implemented by** - Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES) through [National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research \(NCPOR\)](#), Goa.
- **Objectives** - To promote long-term scientific programmes in the ***polar region and the surrounding oceans*** that have potential societal, strategic and global relevance.
- To plan, coordinate and implement the *annual expeditions*.
- To *establish polar research* and logistic facilities in the country and to *maintain Indian research bases* at Antarctica, Arctic and Himalaya.

4 sub-schemes under PACER

- **Indian Antarctic Program** - It was *conceived in 1981* initiated under the Department of Ocean Development (DOD) attached to Prime Minister's Office (PMO).
- 3 permanent Indian research bases, ***Dakshin Gangotri-1983, Maitri-1988 and Bharati-2012*** have been built.
- **Indian Arctic Program** - Its *foundation was laid in 2007* and it established its ***Arctic research station, Himadri in 2008***.
- Its research includes atmospheric, biological, marine and glaciological studies.
- **Indian Scientific Expeditions to the Southern Ocean (ISESO)** - It was initiated to pursue multi-disciplinary, multi-institutional research activities addressing key scientific components like
 - Air-sea interactions, lower atmospheric processes, hydrodynamics, biogeochemistry, biodiversity, etc.
- **Cryosphere and Climate** - It was initiated *during 12th 5-year plan* that have enhanced our understanding of the Antarctic cryosphere and the climate variability.

References

1. [PIB| India's maiden winter scientific Arctic expedition](#)
2. [MoES| PACER](#)

Noma

Recently, the World Health Organization (WHO) has added the health challenge noma to its official list of neglected tropical diseases (NTD).

- It is a severe ***gangrenous disease of the mouth and face***.
- **Origin** - Greek word "*nomē*", meaning '*to devour*', as noma eats away facial tissue and bones if not treated early.
- It is also known as ***cancrem oris or gangrenous stomatitis***.
- **Susceptible population** - *Children aged 2-6 years old*.
- **Spread** - In developing countries, especially in sub-Saharan Africa.

WHO website lists the 'latest' estimates 140,000 cases per year and a prevalence of 770,000 cases. However, the data dates back to 1998.

- **Risk factors** - Poor oral hygiene, malnutrition, weakened immune systems, infections, and extreme poverty.
- While it is not contagious, it prefers to attack when the body's defences are weak.
- **Symptoms** - It begins with *gum inflammation* and leads to *facial disfigurement*, spasm of the jaw muscles, oral incontinence and *speech problems*.
- **Oral contamination by** - Bacteroidaceae and a consortium of other microorganisms
- **Higher mortality rate** - Approximately 90% as many children are not given care or brought for care in time.
- **Prevention and treatment** - Its spread can be slowed with basic hygiene, measles vaccination, antibiotics, rehydration, correction of electrolytic imbalances and nutritional rehabilitation.
- **Significance of [NTD status](#)** - It will amplify global awareness, catalyse research, stimulate funding, and boost efforts to control the disease through multisectoral and multi-pronged approaches.

Noma is also called as 'Face of poverty' as effective drugs like sulfonamides and penicillin and adequate surgical treatment for the effects remain inaccessible for many due to extreme poverty.

References

[Down To Earth| Inclusion of Noma in Neglected Tropical Disease list](#)

Migration and Development Brief

The latest Migration and Development Brief reveals a continuing growth in remittance flows to low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) in 2023, albeit at a slower pace compared to previous years.

- The brief is a **biannual report**.
- **Prepared by** - The Migration and Remittances Unit, Development Economics (DEC).
- **Released by** - World Bank.
- **Objectives** - To provide the information about *migration and remittance flows* and related policies over the past 6 months and to provide *medium-term projections* of remittance flows to developing countries.

Key findings of the report

- **Remittances** - It grew by an estimated 3.8% in 2023, reaching a total of USD669 billion in LMICs.
- A 7.2% increase in South Asia with notable contribution by India.
- A decline for the 2nd consecutive year in Middle East and North Africa, driven by a sharp drop in flows to Egypt.
- A decrease of 1.4% after a significant gain in 2022 in Europe and Central Asia.
- **India** - It remained as the **largest recipient** with an estimated USD125 billion in

2023.

The top 5 remittance recipient countries include India, Mexico, China, Philippines, and Egypt.

- *Resilient labour markets* in advanced economies and Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries supported migrants' ability to send money home.
- There is a potential *risk of a decline in real income for migrants* in 2024 due to global inflation and low growth prospects.
- *Banks continue to be the costliest channel* for sending remittances, with an average cost of 12.1%.
- **Recommendation** - To *leverage remittances for development finance*, particularly through **diaspora bonds** to tap into diaspora savings held in foreign destinations.
- It emphasized on the *need for inclusive labour markets and social protection policies* to sustain remittance flows.

References

1. [The Hindu Business Line| Findings of Remittance flows](#)
2. [World Bank| Migration and Development Brief](#)

Other Important News

National Geoscience Data Repository Portal

- Ministry of Mines is set to launch the National Geoscience Data Repository (NGDR) Portal in a ceremony in New Delhi.
- NGDR is a comprehensive online platform for accessing, sharing, and analyzing geospatial information across the nation.
- The initiative is spearheaded by the Geological Survey of India (GSI) and Bhaskaracharya Institute of Space Applications and Geoinformatics (BISAG-N).
- **Geological Survey of India (GSI)** is a scientific agency that conducts geological surveys and studies of India established in **1851 by Thomas Oldham**.

Reykjanes peninsula

- A recent report of Iceland's Meteorological Office said that volcanic eruption began in Iceland, south of the capital Reykjavik.



- Iceland is home to **33 active volcano systems**, the highest number in Europe.

Bonnet macaque (*Macaca Radiata*)

- The bonnet macaque is a species of Old-World monkey that is native to southern India. They are also known as Zati.
- They are **highly arboreal** and most abundant on the outskirts of human settlements.
- **Subspecies** - Dark-bellied bonnet macaques (*Macaca radiata radiata*) and Pale-bellied bonnet macaques (*Macaca radiata diluta*).
- **Conservation Status**
 - IUCN - Vulnerable.
 - CITES - Appendix II.

Goa Liberation Day

- Goa Liberation Day is celebrated on **December 19th** every year.
- It marks the day in 1961 when India reclaimed the coastal state from centuries of Portuguese rule.
- On December 19, 1961, Goa officially became part of India and was declared as a Union Territory along with Daman and Diu after a military operation called "**Operation Vijay**".

Forest Fringe Villages

- Forest fringe villages are villages that are located near forest areas.
- They often depend on the forest for their daily needs and biomass.
- As per India State of Forest Report- 2019, published by Forest Survey of India, approximately 300 million people are dependent on forests.
- It roughly says that 26% of the total 650,000 villages can be classified as forest fringe villages, home to around **22% of the country's total population**.

Kuno National Park

- Wildlife officials from Madhya Pradesh has recently released 2 male cheetahs, named ***Agni and Vayu***, into the safari area at Kuno National Park.
- Kuno National Park is a wildlife sanctuary and national park in Madhya Pradesh established in 1981 and is named after the ***Kuno River***.
- The park is located in the ***Central Indian Vindhyan Hills & the only national park in India that is home to Cheetahs***.
- The Wildlife Institute of India (WIT) and the Wildlife Trust of India (WTI) selected Palpur-Kuno park as a habitat for Asiatic lions and cheetahs.

International Migrants Day

- International Migrants Day is observed on ***December 18th*** each year.
- ***Theme*** of International Migrants Day, 2023 - ***Act Today***.
- The United Nations General Assembly proclaimed the day in 2000 to recognize the contributions of migrants and the challenges they face.
- The ***International Organization for Migration (IOM)*** is a UN-related agency that highlights the contributions and challenges of the migrants worldwide.

Domestic Cats

- A recent study says that free-ranging domestic cats, one of the ***most invasive species***, were threat to conservation.
- They eat 2,084 species globally & pushing some species even to extinction.
- Among those species almost half of the species were birds, followed by reptiles and mammals.
- They identified that the species consumed by cats are of 16.65% of which are near-threatened or of higher concern on the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List.