

Prelim Bits 26-12-2023 | UPSC Daily Current Affairs

Airgun Surrender Abhiyan

Recently, Airgun Surrender Abhiyan was selected as a model wildlife conservation programme by UNESCO.

- An initiative *to get local residents involved* in environmental management and wildlife protection.
- **Launched in** - 2021.
- **Launched by** - Arunachal Pradesh.
- **Aim** - To ***discourage hunting*** and raise awareness about the detrimental effects of wildlife killing.
- To encourage the ***voluntary surrender of airguns*** and licensed guns to check their use in hunting birds and other wildlife.
- **Collaborations** - With local communities, administrative departments, NGOs, and community-based organisations.

Lumdung was declared as 1st Airgun free village of Arunachal Pradesh, where 46 air guns were surrendered.

- **Activities** - Awareness campaign to maintain the tradition of ***hunting in the old style*** without guns and educating about the role of birds and animals in pollination and in creating forests.

In Arunachal Pradesh, hunting is a tradition for many among the 140 tribes and sub-tribes across the 83,743 sq. km with about 80% forest cover.

- Increased ***push for poultry, piggery*** and other farm initiatives to provide alternative to bush meat.
- **People's participation** - People began *organising airgun surrender ceremonies* locally.
 - In Pasighat area of Arunachal, some villagers shunned airguns after realising pests had taken over their paddy fields because the birds, their nemesis, had been hunted out.
- **Recognition** - 'Conservation Award' at the 6th North East Green Summit of Forest Ministers of North East held in Assam in 2021.
- **Outcome** - A total of *2,467 airguns, 9 double-barrel shotguns and 0.22 rifles, and 13 power chainsaws* have been surrendered.

References

1. [The Hindu| UNESCO's recognition to Airgun Surrender Abhiyan](#)
2. [The Economic Times| Airgun Surrender Abhiyan](#)

Red Sea & Bab-el-Mandeb

Houthi attacks on tankers passing through the Bab-el-Mandeb has disrupted one of the busiest global shipping lanes, dragging the U.S. deeper into the conflict.

- **Red Sea** - A narrow strip of water extending for about 1,200 miles.
- **Geography** - It extends ***between the Mediterranean Sea, to the north-west, and the Indian Ocean***, to the south-east.
 - In north, it separates into the *Gulf of Aqaba and the Gulf of Suez* and in south, it is connected to the *Gulf of Aden*, and the outer Indian Ocean, via the *Strait of Bab-el-Mandeb*.
- **6 bordering countries** - Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Sudan, Eritrea and Djibouti.
- **Physiography** - It lies in a ***fault depression*** that separates 2 great blocks, Arabia and North Africa and its height can reach more than 6,560 feet above sea level, with the *highest in the south*.
- **Higher salinity** - It has high evaporation, low precipitation and has no major freshwater inflow.
- **Resources** - It is high in nutrient, planktons and also has ***5 major types of mineral resources*** (petroleum deposits, evaporite deposits, sulfur, phosphates, and the heavy-metal deposits).
- **Sea Route** - It is a part of an important [trade route](#) connecting Europe to Asia (through Suez Canal).

Bab-el-Mandeb

- It is ***a strait*** that separates the Arabian Peninsula from East Africa and is *just 29-km wide at its narrowest point*.
- It is a strategically important strait.
- **Control** - Throughout 19th and until mid-20th century, Britain protected it through the ***island of Perim (Mayyum) in the Strait*** but in 1990, it came under the control of Sana'a, the capital of the united country of Yemen.
- As [Houthis](#) captured Sana'a in 2015, they pose a greater threat due to their close proximity to Bab el-Mandeb strait.

It is also know by the names Gateway of Tears and Gatway of Grief.



Reference

[The Hindu| Bab-el-Mandeb, A strategic choke point](#)

Information Fusion Centre for Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR)

Recently, IFC-IOR marked its 5th anniversary and it also played key role in the backend in tackling vessel hijacking episode near Gulf of Aden.

- **Established by** - The government of India at Gurugram **in 2018** and is **hosted by the Indian Navy**.

IFC-IOR is located within the premises of the Information Management and Analysis Centre (IMAC), the nodal agency for maritime data fusion.

- **Tagline** - Collaboration for Safety and Security.
- **Aims** - To strengthen ***maritime security in Indian Ocean Region (IOR) and beyond*** by acting as a maritime security information sharing hub for the region.
- **Vision** - To ***advance maritime safety*** through information sharing, cooperation and expertise development.
- **Mission** - To be a ***nodal centre of excellence*** for promoting maritime safety towards a peaceful, stable and prosperous IOR.
- **Maritime domain** - Piracy & Armed Robbery, Contraband Smuggling, IUU Fishing, Irregular Human Migration and other maritime incidents.
- **Reports** - Weekly, Half-Yearly, Annual, Weather Forecast and others.

- **Collaboration** - 43 organisations, ***25 partner countries and 12 International Liaison Officers (ILO)***, now gearing up for expansion to eventually host 40 ILO.
- **67 linkages** - It includes International Maritime Organisation (IMO), United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), and Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA).
- **Events** - Regional Maritime Practitioner Programme (RMPP), Maritime Security Info-sharing Exercise (MARISX) and Shared Awareness Meeting (SAM).

The 3 major hotspots for piracy and armed robbery are South East Asia, Gulf of Guinea and Horn of Africa. There was a rise in numbers in South East Asia while there was a rise in intensity in the Gulf of Guinea.

References

1. [The Hindu| Role of IFC-IOR in tackling vessel hijack](#)
2. [Indian Navy| IFC-IOR](#)

Gyrocopters

Uttarakhand is all set to launch India's first-ever gyrocopter safari by the year's end to redefine the concept of adventure tourism in the state.

- It is a ***type of rotorcraft***, uses a rotor that is not powered to generate lift.

A rotorcraft or rotary-wing aircraft is a heavier-than-air aircraft with rotary wings, which generate lift by rotating around a vertical mast.

- The rotor looks ***similar to that of a helicopter***, but it requires air flowing upwards across it to rotate.
- **Types** - It was *traditionally an open cockpit* 'Motorbikes of the sky' but, since late 2010, they are available as *fully enclosed models*.
- **Economical** - The operating cost of a Gyrocopter is one-tenth that of a helicopter, so it is ***comparatively cheaper***, with an estimated cost of INR 200 per minute.
- **Safer transport** - As the engine is not connected to the rotors, it is not seriously affected if the engine stops in flight.
- It can ***fly lower and slower more safely*** than most other forms of flying machines and are also capable of flying in ***harsh weather conditions***.

Gyrocopters in Uttarakhand's Tourism

- It is a *joint venture* of tourism department with the civil aviation department of the state.
- **Aim** - To *redefine the concept of adventure tourism* in the state.
- **Operation** - The Gyros are coming from *Germany* and the pilots who will run the initial tests will be Germans.

This is the 1st time gyros will be used in India for the tourism sector.

- Gyrocopter safaris will also originate from Rishikesh, offering a ***bird's-eye view*** of the region's natural splendour.

References

[The Indian Express| Gyrocopters in Uttarakhand Tourism](#)

VIKAS

Recently, Indian government has launched new learning programmes for government servants in line with good governance day.

December 25 is celebrated as the 'Good Governance Day' to mark former PM Vajpayee's birth anniversary since 2014. It is meant to foster awareness among citizens about government accountability and administration, and inculcate "good governance" as a habit for civil servants.

- **Vikas** - Variable and Immersive Karmayogi Advanced Support.
- It is a ***blended programme with iGOT*** (integrated government online training) Karmayogi platform.
- **Aim** - For ***capacity building*** of Middle management civil servants in Central Secretariat.
- **Program duration** - It consists of *33 hours* complemented by *30 hours of offline training* at ISTM.
- **Focus** - On development of *functional, behavioural and technological competencies* required in Central Government.

*The **Institute of Secretariat Training and Management (ISTM)** which was established in 1948, a premier Central Training Institution in training of officers working in the Central Secretariat, State Governments/Union Territories, Public Sector Enterprises (PSEs) and Autonomous Bodies.*

3 new features on the iGOT Karmayogi Platform

- **My iGOT** - To deliver targeted training courses for individual officer addressing their unique capacity building needs.
- **Blended Programs** - To facilitate equitable access to training methodologies and it integrate traditional offline classroom courses with online learning components.
- **Curated Programs** - To cater to diverse learning needs of the ministries/departments and training institutions where the course providers will curate relevant content from the repository of iGOT.

References

1. [The Hindu| New training programmes for government employees](#)
2. [PIB| VIKAS program](#)

Other Important News

Madan Mohan Malaviya

- Madan Mohan Malaviya was an Indian educationist, freedom fighter and the thrice president of Indian National Congress.
- He was born on **25 December 1861, Prayagraj** and died on 12 November 1946.
- He was addressed as '**Mahamana**', he was the founder of Banaras Hindu University (BHU) at Varanasi in 1916, also founded an English-newspaper, "**The Leader**".
- Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya was posthumously conferred with **Bharat Ratna**.

National Mathematics Day

- National Mathematics Day was observed to commemorate the birth anniversary of Srinivasa Ramanujan every year on **December 22**.
- Ramanujan was born in Erode, Tamil Nadu was an Indian greatest mathematician given contributions to **number theory, functions, infinite series and continued fractions**.
- He was the **1st Indian to be elected a Fellow of Trinity College**, Cambridge.
- He also received a prestigious award from the **King of England** for his services to mathematics.

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

- The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees was established on December, 1950 by the **United Nations General Assembly**.
- The agency is mandated to lead and co-ordinate international action to protect refugees and resolve refugee problems worldwide.
- Its primary purpose is to safeguard the rights and well-being of refugees.
- It also has a mandate to help stateless people. It is headquartered at **Geneva, Switzerland**.

Ground frost

- Ground frost is a covering of ice that forms on objects, trees, or the ground when their surfaces are below the freezing point of water.
- It can also refer to a temperature that drops below freezing at or near ground level and damages vegetation.
- Ground frost can occur when the ground cools faster than the air.
- It can also occur when water vapor directly deposits on objects and trees with surfaces colder than **0°C**.

Veer Baal Diwas

- **Veer Baal Diwas** is commemorated to honour the martyrdom of **Baba Fateh Singh and Zorawar Singh**, sons of 10th Guru Govind Singh Ji on **26th December** every year.
- On this day Mughal forces under Aurangzeb's order killed Sahibzada Zorawar Singh, who was just 6 years old, and Fateh Singh, who was only 9.

Puri's Jagannath Temple

- The temple is situated in Puri, Odisha, was built in the 12th century by **King Anatarman Chodaganga Deva** of the Eastern Ganga Dynasty.
- The Puri Jagannath Temple is a circular temple that is believed to have inspired the design of the **Indian Parliament building**.
- The temple is also known as the "**White Pagoda**" and is one of the 4 great "**Char Dham**" **pilgrimage sites**.
- It is famous for its **Annual Rath yatra, or chariot festival**.

North African metal art

- The art of manually cutting words or symbols into jewellery and household objects was added to UNESCO's intangible heritage list recently.
- It has been practised across North Africa and West Asia for centuries.

Bhairavapalem Mudflat

- Bhairavapalem Mudflats are located in **Andhra Pradesh**.
- The mudflats are named after the village of Bhairavapalem and are subject to tidal water, a habitat for crabs like mud crabs.
- The Godavari River flows into the sea through two mouths, one near Bhairavapalem and the other near Kottapalem.
- Bhairavapalem is also the name of a **Reserve Forest** in the **Coringa Wildlife Sanctuary**.

Poleramma Temple

- Poleramma Temple is a re-established 200 years-old temple located in Guntur, **Andhra Pradesh**.
- The temple was first constructed by British village officer in India in the 1800s, before which villagers worship Poleramma in form of a mud deity.
- Poleramma is a **pre-Vedic deity**, who is predominantly worshipped in Andhra Pradesh, and a local form of **Sakti**.
- She is worshipped as Grama devata (goddess who protects the village).

Physical Training Instructors (PTIs) as Teachers

- The Supreme Court recently held that physical training instructors (PTIs) come within the definition of "teachers".
- **Physical training instructors** impart to students the skills and rules of various sports and games.