

UPSC Daily Current Affairs | Prelim Bits 16-02-2021

Dickinsonia

- Researchers have discovered fossils of the earliest known living animal, 550-million-year-old 'Dickinsonia' in the Rock Shelters of Bhimbetka.
- The fossils were found in the roof of the 'Auditorium Cave' at Bhimbetka.
- These are the only Dickinsonia fossils available in the country, and are similar to those seen in southern Australia.
- This is further proof of the **similar paleoenvironments** and confirms the assembly of Gondwanaland by the 550 Ma (Mega Annum), but not reconstructions adjusted for true polar wander.
- One can identify the fossils from the white leaf-like patches with a central vertebra (central midrib) and connecting veins.
- Dickinsonia is an extinct genus of basal animal that lived during the late **Ediacaran period** in what is now Australia, Russia and Ukraine.

Rock Shelters of Bhimbetka

- Bhimbetka is an archaeological site in the foothills of the Vindhyan Mountains on the southern edge of the central Indian plateau.
- It is a United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) World Heritage Site.
- Within massive sandstone outcrops, there are five clusters of natural rock shelters displaying paintings that spans from the prehistoric Paleolithic and Mesolithic Period through to the historical period.
- Bhimbetka, which has the oldest-known art in India, is also known as **Bhima's Lounge** (Bhima Pandava prince from the Mahabharata).
- It also exhibits the **earliest traces of human life** in India and evidence of **Stone Age** starting at the site in Acheulian times.

Pangolins

- Pangolins in Cameroon are on the verge of extinction as the Cameroonians prefer bushmeat to domestic livestock as they are easily available and cheaper.
- Pangolin, a scaly **nocturnal anteater**, is one of the world's most trafficked mammals.
- It is being pushed towards extinction due to rampant poaching and

mushrooming international wildlife trade fuelled by Chinese poachers.

- International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) has classified,
 - 1. Indian Pangolin as Endangered and
 - 2. Chinese Pangolins as **Critically Endangered**.
- Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) has placed all eight pangolin species to **Appendix I**.

Haemorrhagic Septicaemia

- Six elephants died of haemorrhagic septicaemia (Sahana disease) in Karlapat Wildlife Sanctuary in Odisha's Kalahandi district.
- Haemorrhagic septicaemia is a **contagious bacterial disease** that occurs in parts of Asia and Africa.
- It infects animals that come in contact with contaminated food and water or soil or through respiratory secretions.
- It spreads through contact with infected animals, contaminated clothes, equipment and ingestion or inhalation of the bacteria.
- It generally spreads in the period right **before and after the monsoons**. It can affect cattle, buffalo and other animals.
- Respiratory tract and lungs of the animals are affected, leading to severe **pneumonia** and is often fatal.

Karlapat Wildlife Sanctuary

- Karlapat Wildlife Sanctuary is located in Kalahandi district of **Odisha**.
- It lies within the Eastern Highlands moist deciduous forests ecoregion.
- It was notified as a wildlife sanctuary in 1992.
- It is home to tigers, leopards, sambars, nilgais, barking deer, mouse deer and variety of birds like green munia, great eared-nightjar and various reptiles, apart from elephants.

Guidelines for Geo-spatial Sector

- Ministry of Science and Technology released new guidelines for the Geospatial sector in India, which deregulates existing protocol and liberalises the sector to a more competitive field.
- Under the current policy regime, there are strict restrictions on the collection, storage, use, sale, dissemination of geo-spatial data and mapping.
- The policy had been driven by internal and external security concerns.
- The sector is dominated by the Indian government and government-run agencies such as the Survey of India.
- Private companies must navigate a system of permissions from different government departments (depending on the kind of data to be created), to

- collect, create or disseminate geo-spatial data.
- The deregulation would eliminate the requirement of permissions as well as scrutiny, even for security concerns.
- Now, Indian companies can self-attest, conforming to government guidelines without having to be monitored by a government agency.

Geospatial Data

- Geospatial data is data about objects, events, or phenomena that have a location on the surface of the earth.
- The location may be **static** in the short-term, like the location of a road, an earthquake event, or **dynamic** like a moving vehicle, the spread of an infectious disease.
- · Geospatial data usually combines,
 - 1. Location information,
 - 2. Attribute information (the characteristics of the object, event, or phenomena concerned), and
 - 3. Temporal information or the time at which the location and attributes exist.
- It involves information of public interest such as roads, localities, rail lines, water bodies, and public amenities.

National Coal Index

- The Ministry of Coal has started Commercial Auction of coal mines on revenue share basis.
- National Coal Index (NCI) was conceptualized to arrive at the revenue share based on market prices of coal.
- NCI is a **price index** which reflects the change of price level of coal on a particular month relative to the fixed base year **(Financial Year 2017-18)**
- Prices of coal from all the sales channels of coal, including import, as existing today are taken into account for compiling the NCI.
- The amount of revenue share per tonne of coal produced from auctioned blocks would be arrived at using the NCI by means of defined formula.
- NCI is composed of a set of five sub-indices:
 - 1. Three for Non Coking Coal, which are combined to arrive at the Index for Non Coking Coal and
 - 2. Two for Coking Coal, which are combined to arrive at the Index for Coking Coal.

Sandes

• National Informatics Centre has launched an **instant messaging platform**

called Sandes on the lines of WhatsApp.

- The app, which is available for Android and iOS users, is a government instant messaging system (GIMS).
- It could be used by both the **central and state government officials** for intra and inter-organisation communication.
- Although there is no option to transfer the chat history between two platforms, the chats can be backed up to a users' email.
- It allows a user to mark a **message as confidential**, which will allow the recipient to be made aware the message should not be shared with others.
- The limitation, however, is that the app does not allow the user to change their email id or registered phone number.
- Open initially only to government officers, it has now been released for the common public as well.

Source: PIB, The Indian Express, The Hindu, Down To Earth

