

UPSC Daily Current Affairs | Prelim Bits 23-09-2020

Medicanes

- Medicanes are tropical-like cyclones formed over the Mediterranean Sea.
- With the surrounding dry climate and the relatively shallow waters of the sea, the occurrence of tropical-like cyclones is infrequent.
- They typically form in the fall or winter months and occur once or twice a year.
- On September 2020, a medicane named Lanos made landfall along the coast of Greece and caused heavy rainfall and flooding in Greece and surrounding islands.
- Recently Scientists have warned that 'Medicanes' could become more frequent due to human-induced climate change.
- Due to global warming, warmer sea surface temperatures in the Mediterranean can allow the storms to take on more tropical appearances and characteristics, increasing the wind speeds and making the storms more intense and cause heavier rainfall.
- Increase in frequency of medicanes will be a threat for already vulnerable populations living in North Africa, possibly triggering human migration.
- They could also be a menace for European countries like Italy and Greece.



O-SMART Scheme

- The Ocean Services, Modelling, Applications, Resources and Technology

(O-SMART) Scheme is implemented by the Ministry of Earth Sciences.

- It aims at stepping up ocean research and setting up early warning weather systems and establish Ballast water treatment facility.
- Ballast Water Discharge by ships is responsible for the introduction of invasive species in the oceans by taking water from one port and discharging it during the next port call.
- It addresses ocean development activities such as services, technology, resources, observations and science and provides necessary scientific and technological background required for implementation of various aspects of Blue Economy.
- It also aims to generate and regularly update information on Marine Living Resources and their relationship with the physical environment in the Indian Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ).
- The scheme is also responsible to carry out exploration of Polymetallic Nodules (MPN) from water depth of 5500 m in site of 75000 sq. km allotted to India by United Nations in Central Indian Ocean Basin, and to carry out investigations of gas hydrates.
- Polymetallic Nodules (MPN)

Destination North East-2020

- The Ministry of Development of North-East Region (DoNER) has launched the logo and song for festival “Destination North East-2020”.
- It aims to bring the rest of India closer to North East (NE) India.
- It is a four-Day event that holds a special presentation of art and craft, textiles, ethnic products, tourism promotion etc. of the eight northeastern states.
- NERCORMP and North East Council organizes the event.
- The previous editions of the festival were held in Varanasi, Delhi and Chandigarh.

NERCORMP

- North Eastern Region Community Resource Management Project (NERCORMP) is a livelihood and rural development project aimed to transform the lives of the poor and marginalized tribal families in NE India.
- It is a joint developmental initiative of the NEC, Ministry of DoNER and International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD).
- IFAD (Hq in Rome, Italy) is an international financial institution and a specialized agency of the United Nations dedicated to eradicating poverty

and hunger in rural areas of developing countries.

Cyanobacteria

- Cyanobacteria, also called blue-green algae, are microscopic organisms found naturally in soils and all types of water.
- These single-celled organisms (bacteria) live in fresh, brackish (combined salt and freshwater), and marine water.
- These organisms use sunlight to make their own food.
- In warm, nutrient-rich (high in phosphorus and nitrogen) environments, cyanobacteria can multiply quickly.
- Not all produce toxins but scientists say toxic ones are occurring more frequently as climate change drives up global temperatures.
- Toxic blue-green algae thrive in warm, slow-moving water.
- Warmer water due to climate change might favor harmful algae.
- Warmer temperatures prevent water from mixing, allowing algae to grow thicker and faster.
- Algae need carbon dioxide to survive, higher levels of carbon dioxide in the air and water can lead to rapid growth of algae, especially toxic blue-green algae that can float to the surface of the water.
- Neuro-toxins are substances that damage, destroy, or impair the functioning of neural tissue.
- Recently neuro-toxins in water produced by cyanobacteria killed more than 300 African elephants in the Okavango delta region, Botswana (country in Southern Africa).

African Elephant

- It is the largest animal walking the Earth, their herds wander through 37 countries in Africa.
 - They are vulnerable as per the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List.
 - African elephants in Botswana, Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe are included in the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) Appendix II.
 - Appendix II includes species not necessarily threatened with extinction, but in which trade must be controlled in order to avoid utilization incompatible with their survival.
 - The two subspecies of African Elephants are
1. **The Savanna (or bush) elephant** - they larger than forest elephants, and their tusks curve outwards.

2. **The Forest elephant** - It is a distinct subspecies of African elephants, are uniquely adapted to the forest habitat of the Congo Basin, but are in sharp decline due to poaching for the international ivory trade.

Botswana

- It is a landlocked country of southern Africa.
- Botswana is mostly flat with a few hills, most of its highest points located along the south-east section of the country (the eastern edge of the Kalahari Basin).
- While Kalahari does receive about 500 millimeters in the wettest parts per annum, the Kalahari is considered a desert because it has a vast surface area covered with sand.
- It is also home to the tribe like- San people (Bushmen), Tswana, Kgalakgadi, and Herero people.
- Okavango Delta is one of the world's largest inland deltas.
- It spans about 15,000 square kilometers and is relatively flat topography.

Komodo Dragon

- Komodo dragons are the largest and heaviest lizards on Earth.
- Komodo dragons can eat almost anything, including invertebrates, birds, and mammals like deer, pigs, and even large water buffalo.
- They have venom glands loaded with toxins which have been shown to secrete anticoagulants.
- An anticoagulant is a compound which prevents the victim's blood from clotting, causing it to bleed to death.
- Komodo dragons have thrived in the harsh climate of Indonesia's Lesser Sunda Islands for millions of years.
- Komodo National Park, a UNESCO World Heritage site, is situated in the Island of Komodo (eastern Indonesia) and is the only habitat for this lizard species.
- A recent study conducted by Australian universities has found out that the Komodo dragon could become extinct in the next few decades due to climate change.
- Climate change is likely to cause a sharp decline in the availability of habitat, reducing their populations even further.
- IUCN Status of the animal is Vulnerable, and CITES status is Appendix I.
- The commercial trading of live specimens or any parts, dead or alive of Komodo is prohibited.

Source: Down to Earth, the Hindu, Indian Express

