

## UPSC Daily Current Affairs| Prelim Bits 31-01-2025

### Devi Ahilyabai Holkar

#### Why in News?

The Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA) organized a special lecture recently on the life and legacy of Devi Ahilyabai Holkar, titled *Commemorating the 300<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary of her*.

- Ahilyabai Holkar was a Holkar Queen who ruled the **Malwa kingdom in the 18<sup>th</sup> century**.
- She was born in Chondi, present-day Ahmednagar District, **Maharashtra**, India, on May 31, 1725.
- **Father** - Mankoji Rao Shinde.
- She was married to Khanderao Holkar, son of Malhar Rao Holkar (Founder of Holkar Dynasty).
- After 12 years, her husband Khanderao was killed during the siege of the **Kumher Fort**.
- Her son, Male Rao, died in 1767.
- In 1767, the Peshwa permitted Ahilyabai to take over Malwa.
- She ascended the throne and became the ruler of Indore on December 11, 1767.
- Maharani Ahilyabai ruled over Malwa with its capital, Maheswar, for 28 years.
- Ahilyabai also established a textile industry in Maheshwar.

*Maheswari Saress got a Geographical Indication Tag in 2012.*

- She was instrumental in spreading the message of dharma and propagating industrialization.
- She welcomed Marathi poet Moropant, Shahir Ananta Gandhi, and Sanskrit scholar Khushali Ram into her capital.
- Ahilyabai Holkar tried to protect her kingdom from plundering invaders by appointing **Tukojirao Holkar** as the Chief of Army.
- She renovated and repaired the famous **Kashi Vishwanath Temple** in 1780.
- She reconstructed the **Somnath Temple and Mahakaleshwar Temple** in Ujjain.
- During her reign, she made significant decisions, such as abolishing traditional laws that confiscated property from childless widows.
- She was famously known as the **'Philosopher Queen'**.
- She died in **Rajwada**, Indore, present-day Madhya Pradesh, on August 13, 1795, at the age of 70.

## Reference

[PIB | Devi Ahilyabai Holkar](#)

## Coronation Bridge

### Why in News?

*After more than 10 years, the West Bengal government recently gave its nod to the Teesta Bridge project, replacing the Coronation Bridge.*

- The Coronation Bridge Built in West Bengal spans across the ***Teesta River***.
- It was built in the memory of ***King George VI and Queen Elizabeth*** from 1937 to 1941.
- Its foundation stone was laid by then Bengal Governor ***John Anderson***.

*Teesta is Bengal's second-longest river after the Ganga.*

- It is also known as the Sevoke Roadway Bridge or Baag Pool.
- It is the only one British-era bridge on the Teesta linking West Bengal and Sikkim.
- **Architects** - A.C. Dutt, S.K. Ghosh and K.P. Roy.
- The bridge was designed by ***John Chambers***, the last British executive engineer in the Darjeeling PWD Division.
- The bridge has a steel arch design, its deck is built of steel girders and its arches are supported by concrete piers.
- The bridge was damaged in the 2011 earthquake, after which the Centre started planning an alternative bridge to increase connectivity between the two states on this strategically important route.
- There were some land acquisition problems; thus, it was delayed by 12 years.



## Reference

[The Indian Express | Teesta bridge](#)

## Spousal Open Work Permits (SOWP) in Canada

### Why in News?

*Canada's Spousal Open Work Permit policy has been updated, allowing spouses of international students to apply for work permits while studying.*

- SOWP program provide opportunities for their **spouses** to apply for an open work permit.
- Thus, spouses have the opportunity to **work full-time** for the duration of their partner's study in Canada.
- Students who meet the eligibility criteria set by *Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC)* can apply for a spousal visa.
- **Eligible academic programs**
  - PhD programs
  - Master's degree programs (with a minimum duration of 16 months) and
  - professional courses like Doctor of Dental Surgery,
  - Bachelor of Law (LLB),
  - Pharmacy (B. Pharmacy, PharmD),
  - Doctor of Veterinary Medicine (DVM),
  - Doctor of Medicine (MD),
  - Bachelor of Nursing (BN),
  - Bachelor of Engineering (BEng),
  - Doctor of Optometry (OD),
  - BSE Pharmacy,
  - Bachelor of Education (BEd).
- **Recent Changes** - International students can now apply for a SOWP alongside their study permit application.
- If the student is already studying in Canada, their spouse can apply for an open work permit if their spouse is still in their home country.
- If the duration of the work permit is set to expire before the study period, they can apply for an extension to match the remaining duration of the study period.
- Once a student completes their studies in Canada, they may be eligible to apply for a Post-Graduation Work Permit (PGWP), which allows graduates to work in Canada for **up to 3 years**, depending on the length of their program.
- In such cases, the spouse may also be eligible for an open work permit under specific conditions.
- The spouse's eligibility depends on whether the student on PGWP is employed in certain sectors under Canada's Training, Education, Experience, and Responsibilities (TEER) system.
- Specifically TEER 0 or 1 occupations and in TEER 2 or 3 occupations sectors they should choose jobs with labour shortages or those linked to government priorities.
- E.g., Natural sciences, healthcare, construction, education, etc.
- For students who are not eligible under these specific programs, their spouse has a few other options.
- The spouse can apply separately for a study permit or a visitor visa and they need to show strong financial proof to prove they can meet the living expenses in Canada.

## Reference

[The Indian Express | Spousal Open Work Permits \(SOWP\)](#)

## Popa Langur

### Why in News?

Recently, the scientists have discovered new monkey species Popa Langur, is on the verge of extinction.

- **Popa Langur** - It is a newly-discovered species, occurs in **central Myanmar** which is named after the sacred Mount Popa.
- **Discovered in** - 2020.
- **Taxonomy**
  - **Scientific Name** - Trachypithecus popa.
  - **Genus** - Trachypithecus of Old-World primates.
- It was often referred as **Leaf-Monkeys**.
- **Habitat** - Found in the evergreen and deciduous forests, bamboo forests and plantations.
- **Distribution** - High evergreen forests of Myanmar.

*The largest populations of Popa Langur live in Popa Mountain Park and Panlaung-Pyadalin Cave Wildlife Sanctuary, Myanmar.*

- **Morphology** - It has soft fluffy gray fur, pointed cap of fur on their head, like most langurs, small heads and large eyes made bigger in appearance by thick white eye rings.
- It has small, elongated nostrils and a wide mouth covered in white fur, chest and belly are pale gray-white in color.



- **Behavior** - It is an **arboreal** (spending most of their time in trees) and **diurnal** (active during the day).
- It is capable of traveling long distances and has home ranges large as 256 acres.
- It is vocal primates and range calls to communicate with each other.
- **Diet** - It is a **folivores (leaf eaters)**, which feed on leaves, fruits, green shoots and

petioles.

- Researchers recently estimated that only 200 to 260 individuals remain now.
- **Threats** - Hunting for meat
  - Illegal pet trade
  - Agricultural encroachment
  - Water and soil pollution
  - Cattle ranching.
- **Conservation Status**
  - **IUCN** - Critically Endangered.
  - **CITES** - Appendix II.

## References

1. [AZ Animals| Popa Langur Verge of Extinction](#)
2. [NEPC| Popa Langur](#)

**One Liners 31-01-2025**

**History, Art and Culture**

### **Excavation of Iron knife**

- **Found in** - Marungur archaeological site, Cuddalore district of Tamil Nadu.
- **Found by** - Tamil Nadu State Department of Archaeology (TNSDA).
- **Iron knife** - It is a *broken knife made of iron* weighing 23 grams.
- **Measurement** - 13 cm long and 2.88 mm thickness.
- **Usage** - It dates back to at least *5,300 years ago*.
- It is the oldest date available for the Iron Age in India.

### **Discovery of 30 Inscriptions**

- **Found in** - Abbana Bettu Basadi, Karnataka.
- It is *450-years old*, and provided insights into *Jain heritage*.
- **Spanning** - Several centuries of *Kalasa-Karkala Jain* dynasty.
- The earliest inscription on 16<sup>th</sup> century dates back to the reign of Saluva Bhairarasa (Bhairarasa II).
- It records that Lakshmanadevi, the wife of Saluva Bhairarasa, commissioned a list of 24 Tirthankaras and donated it to the basadi.
- Another 16<sup>th</sup>-century inscription reveals that it was commissioned by a patron named Devarasa.
- The inscriptions on the silver arches are the most recent among the discoveries, dating back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century.
- **30 inscriptions**
  - **29 inscriptions** - Kannada script.
  - **1 inscriptions** - Nagari, bearing only the name of a Tirthankara.



### **Geography**

#### **Coronal Mass Ejections (CMEs)**

- **CMEs** - They are *magnetized plasma bubbles ejected from the Sun* and evolve in the interplanetary medium.
- **Appearance** - It looks like huge, twisted rope, called as *Flux Rope*.
- **Speed Range** - Slower than 250 kilometers per second (km/s) to as fast as near 3000 km/s.
- They are the major drivers of perturbations in the Earth's magnetic field, known as geomagnetic storms.
- Such storms can cause severe impacts on ground and space-based technological systems, such as communication disruptions, deorbiting satellites, and power grid failures.

### **Polity & Governance**

### Assistance to Drought Prone Areas

*High-Level Committee (HLC) has approved project for catalytic assistance.*

- **Objective** - To 12 most drought prone states.
- **12 states** - Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Gujarat, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Telangana and Uttar Pradesh.
- **Funded by** - National Disaster Mitigation Fund (NDMF).

### Mitigation Scheme for Forest Fire Risk Management

*Union Minister has approved the Mitigation Scheme for Forest Fire Risk Management.*

- **Objective** - To transforming the forest fire management approach in the country.
- **Implemented in** - 144 high-priority districts in 19 states.
- **19 states** - Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Kerala, Manipur, Maharashtra, Mizoram, Madhya Pradesh, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Odisha, Tamil Nadu, Telangana and Uttarakhand
- **Funded by** - National Disaster Mitigation Fund (NDMF) & National Disaster Response Fund (NDRF).

## Environment

### Coal

- **Coal** - It is a sedimentary deposit composed predominantly of carbon that is readily combustible.
- **Color** - Black or brownish-black.
- **Composition** - Inherent moisture consists of **more than 50%** by weight and more than 70% by volume of carbonaceous material.
- **Formation** - From plant remains that have been compacted, hardened, chemically altered and metamorphosed by heat and pressure over geologic time.

## Security

### Anti-Submarine Warfare Shallow Water Craft (ASW SWC)

- **Objective** - To undertake anti-submarine operations in coastal waters, Low Intensity Maritime Operations (LIMO) and Mine Laying Operations.
- **Maximum speed** - 25 knots.
- **Endurance** - 1800 NM.
- **Capabilities**
  - Interdiction/ destruction of sub surface targets in coastal waters.
  - Carrying out Search and Rescue by day and night.
  - To prosecute intruding craft as part of LIMO.

### Indian Naval Sailing Vessel (INSV) Tarini

*INSV Tarini, successfully passed through Point Nemo, Oceanic Pole in South Pacific.*

- **INSV Tarini** - It is a 56-foot sailing vessel built by Aquarius Shipyard Ltd.
- It was inducted in the Indian Navy on February 18, 2017.
- **Under** - Navika Sagar Parikrama-II.
- 2 women Navy officers, Dilna K. and Roopa A recently crossed Point Nemo ongoing global circumnavigation journey.
- **Expedition** - It is the most extended leg of the expedition, with a distance of approximately 5,600 nm (approximately 10,400 km).
- **Point Nemo** - Located in the South Pacific, which is the Oceanic Pole of inaccessibility, the most remote location on Earth.

## Miscellaneous

### **International Zebra Day**

- It is observed every year on *31 January*.
- It is established to highlight the challenges zebras face in the wild.
- **Highlights** - The challenges zebras face in the wild.
- **Zebra species** - They are *native to Africa*, roam across countries like Kenya, Namibia, and South Africa.
- **Threats** - Habitat loss due to climate change and poaching.
- **3 species & Conservation status**
  - Grevy's zebra - Endangered.
  - Mountain zebra - Vulnerable.
  - Plains zebra - Near-threatened.

### **World Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs) Day 2025**

- It is observed annually on *30 January*.
- It is an act to eliminate NTDs by making bold, sustainable investments to free the estimated 1.5 billion people.
- **Theme** - Unite, Act and Eliminate.
- **NTDs** - They are a diverse group of conditions *caused by a variety of pathogens* including viruses, bacteria, parasites, fungi and toxins.