

EVERYDAY CURRENT AFFAIRS – FEBRUARY 17, 2023

TAMIL NADU

- The state forest department - inaugurated a DNA sequencing facility at the Advanced Institute for Wildlife Conservation (AIWC) in Vandalur on February 16.



- ✓ The new facility will function under the Centre for Wildlife Forensics and wildlife histopathology laboratory at the Centre for Animal Care Sciences
- ✓ This is the first such facility established and run by a state forest department in the entire country.
- ✓ Supriya Sahu, additional chief secretary of the forest and environment department, inaugurated the facility to mark the two-day Annual Research Conference (ARC)
- ✓ During the Conference, researchers from across the country would present their findings about the Tamil Nadu forests while interacting with the field officers.
- ✓ The equipment would help in sequencing the DNA for species identification, individual identification and sex identification of the wildlife samples/evidence.

- ✓ The findings from these varied research would help implement various methods to improve the species conservation.
 - ✓ The facility will also help in improving the conviction rate with the help of forensic evidence.
 - ✓ The government has allocated Rs 1.2 crore under the Tamil Nadu forest department modernisation scheme for research work in AIWC
 - ✓ The new 'ABI 3500 sanger sequence analyser' was purchased under the state scheme of the Annual Plan of Operations 2020-21.
 - ✓ This eight-capillary automatic sequencing instrument is used to sequence large amounts of DNA sequence in a short time.
- **Tamil Nadu civil supplies corporation (TNCSC), along with the food safety department - will start the distribution of fortified rice through fair price shops in Chennai to the Priority Household (PHH) and Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) cardholders.**



- ✓ The initiative was taken to combat malnutrition and chronic anaemia, especially among the underprivileged sections of society.
- ✓ The department would also raise awareness among the public about the nutritional value of rice and the method to cook it.
- ✓ Fortified rice contains vitamins like iron, folic acid and B12, which are essential for combating malnutrition and anaemia.
- ✓ There are close to 7.50 lakh PHH and AAY cardholders in Chennai.

NATIONAL

- **On February 16, Prime Minister Narendra Modi – inaugurated the Aadi Mahotsav, the national tribal festival, at Major Dhyan Chand National Stadium in New Delhi**
- ✓ During the event, the PM also paid floral tribute to tribal freedom fighter Birsa Munda.
 - ✓ Union Tribal Affairs Minister Arjun Munda was also present at the occasion.
 - ✓ The Aadi Mahotsav celebrates the spirit of tribal culture, crafts, cuisine, commerce and traditional art

- ✓ It is an annual initiative of the Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation Limited (TRIFED) under the Ministry of Tribal Affairs.



- ✓ This year, it is being organised from February 16 to 27 in the national capital
 - ✓ The Aadi Mahotsav will showcase the rich and diverse heritage of tribes from across the country in over 200 stalls at the venue, along with usual attractions like handicrafts, handlooms, pottery and jewellery
 - ✓ Since 2023 is being celebrated as the International Year of Millets, a special focus will be on showcasing “Shree Anna”, a recent government nomenclature for millets grown by tribals
 - ✓ More than 39 Van Dhan Vikas Kendra are set to participate in the festival
 - ✓ Birsa Munda, who belonged to the Munda tribe, spearheaded an Indian tribal religious Millenarian movement across the tribal belt of modern-day Bihar and Jharkhand.
 - ✓ His birth anniversary was celebrated as Birsa Munda Jayanti or Janjatiya Gaurav Divas for the first time in the country on November 15, 2021 and coincides with the Jharkhand Foundation Day.
- **On February 16, the government - introduced 28 new native breeds of livestock**
- ✓ This takes the list of registered and fully documented indigenous livestock varieties in the country to 222 which include cows, dogs, buffaloes, pigs, donkeys and goats.
 - ✓ These new breeds were identified and documented by different institutions under the Indian council of agricultural research (ICAR), breed societies, universities, individuals and NGOs
 - ✓ These 28 new varieties, identified during the last 3 years from 16 states, will help livestock farmers to go for their commercial production to meet different requirements.
 - ✓ Agriculture and Farmers Welfare Minister Narendra Singh Tomar addressed the Ceremony for Distribution of Animal Breed Registration Certificates in New Delhi

- ✓ The list includes three new varieties of dogs which may reduce dependence of Indian security agencies on foreign-bred dogs for reconnaissance and other purposes.



- ✓ These are Rajapalayam (Virudhunagar district, Tamil Nadu), Chippiparai (Madurai district, Tamil Nadu) and Mudhol Hound (Vijayapura district, Karnataka).
- ✓ The list of 222 native breeds includes 53 for cattle, 20 for buffalo, 37 for goat, 44 for sheep, horses & ponies (7), camels (9), pig (13), donkey (3), dog (3), yak (1), chicken (19), duck (2) and geese (1).
- ✓ Rajasthan registered maximum five breeds, followed by Bihar (3), Gujarat (2), Karnataka (2), Maharashtra (2), Meghalaya (2), Punjab (2), Tamil Nadu (2), and one each from Nagaland, Odisha, Manipur, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Goa, Telangana and Tripura.

INTERNATIONAL

- **On February 16, the Spanish parliament - approved legislation expanding abortion and transgender rights for teenagers, while making Spain the first country in Europe that will entitle workers to paid menstrual leave.**
- ✓ Spain has made changes to sexual and reproductive rights, indicating that 16 and 17-year-olds can now undergo an abortion without parental consent.
- ✓ Period products will be offered free in schools and prisons, while state health centres will do the same with hormonal contraceptives and morning after pill.
- ✓ The menstrual leave measure allows workers suffering period pain to take paid leave.
- ✓ In addition, the changes include the right to have an abortion in a state hospital.
- ✓ Currently over 80% of termination procedures in Spain are carried out in private clinics due to a high number of doctors in the public system refuse to perform them — with many citing religious reasons.
- ✓ Under the new system, state hospital doctors won't be forced to carry out abortions, provided they've already registered their objections in writing.

- ✓ A separate package of reforms also approved by lawmakers strengthened transgender rights, including allowing any citizen over 16 years old to change their legally registered gender without medical supervision.

CONFERENCES & SUMMITS

- **The first global summit on Responsible Artificial Intelligence in the Military Domain (REAIM), organised by the Netherlands government - was held at The Hague on February 15-16**



- ✓ It's a platform for all stakeholders to discuss key opportunities, challenges and risks associated with military applications of AI.
- ✓ The summit is the first global attempt to prevent the proliferation of lethal autonomous weapons (LAWS)
- ✓ The summit sought to insert ethics, responsibility, accountability and the moral factor into a rapidly developing weaponisation technology that has potential for massive damage.
- ✓ The summit concluded with nations signing up for a Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty-kind of agreement.
- ✓ Delegations from 80 countries participated in the summit.
- ✓ India hasn't signed the REAIM 'Call to Action', though China and US have signed.

DEFENCE

- **The fourth edition of the India-Japan joint military exercise 'Dharma Guardian' - will be held at Camp Imazu in the Shiga province of Japan from February 17 to March 2, 2023**
- ✓ This annual exercise will strengthen bilateral relations between India and Japan and enhance the level of defence cooperation between the two forces
- ✓ Troops of the Garhwal Rifles Regiment of the Indian Army and an Infantry Regiment from the Middle Army of the Japan Ground Self Defence Force (JGSDF) will be participating in the exercise this year



- ✓ The exercise covers platoon-level joint training on operations in jungle and semi-urban/urban terrain
- ✓ The joint exercise will enable the two armies to share best practices in tactics, techniques, and procedures of conducting tactical operations under a UN Mandate
- ✓ The participants are scheduled to engage in a variety of missions ranging from joint planning, joint tactical drills, basics of establishing integrated surveillance grids, including employment of aerial assets
- ✓ The last edition of Exercise Dharma Guardian was held in Belgaum, Karnataka in February, 2022
- ✓ India and Japan had conducted the inaugural edition of the 'Veer Guardian' air combat exercise at the Hyakuri and Iruma air bases in Japan over 16 days last month.
 - ✓ IAF had participated in the exercise with four Sukhoi-30MKI fighters, two C-17 Globemaster-III strategic airlifters and one IL-78 mid-air refuelling aircraft
 - ✓ The exercise witnessed complex aerial manoeuvres that simulated multiple operational scenarios in both visual and beyond visual range warfare settings.
- ✓ India and Japan also regularly conduct the JIMEX series of exercises between their navies as part of their expanding strategic partnership.
- ✓ Since 2015, Japan has also become a regular participant in the top-notch India-US 'Malabar' naval combat exercise, which now also includes Australia.
- ✓ India and Japan have also operationalised their military Reciprocal Provision of Supply and Services Agreement.
- ✓ India has such reciprocal military logistics pact with countries like the US, Australia, France, South Korea and Singapore.

APPOINTMENTS

- **The government - has appointed two new Army Commanders, a Vice Chief and a new officer to head the critical 14 Corps that looks after the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Ladakh.**



- ✓ Lt Gen B.S. Raju, currently the Army Vice Chief, has been appointed as the South Western Army Commander.
 - ✓ He will take over from Lt Gen Amardeep Singh Bhinder on 1 March when he superannuates.
- ✓ Lt Gen M.V. Suchindra Kumar, currently Deputy Chief of Army Staff (Strategy) in the Army Headquarters, has been promoted to the rank of Army Commander and appointed as the new Vice Chief of Army Staff.
 - ✓ Lt Gen Kumar commanded 59 Rashtriya Rifles Battalion (ASSAM), an Infantry Brigade and an Infantry Division on the Line of Control.
 - ✓ He has also commanded the 16 Corps, also known as the White Knight Corps, and held the appointments of Additional Director General Military Intelligence and Director General Military Intelligence at Army HQ.
- ✓ The Chief of Staff in HQ Northern Command, Lt Gen N.S.R. Subramani has been promoted to the rank of Army commander and appointed as the next Central Army Commander in Lucknow.
 - ✓ He will replace Lt Gen Yogendra Dimri. who also superannuates end of this month.
- ✓ Lt Gen Anindya Sengupta, the current 14 Corps Commander, moves to the Udhampur headquartered Northern Command as the new Chief of Staff.
- ✓ Lt Gen Rashim Bali, an officer who has also served as India's defence attache in Afghanistan, has been appointed as the commander of Leh-based 14 Corps, also known as the Fire and Fury Corps
- **Neal Mohan, an Indian-American - is all set to become the next chief executive officer (CEO) of YouTube**



- ✓ He replaces Susan Wojcicki who announced on February 16 that she is stepping down from her role
- ✓ Wojcicki spent nine years as the head of the global online video-sharing and social media platform.
- ✓ Following this elevation, Mohan will join the elite list of global tech heads of Indian origin, like Google and Alphabet CEO Sundar Pichai, Microsoft's Satya Nadella, Adobe's Shantanu Narayen, and IBM's Arvind Krishna.
- ✓ The new YouTube CEO had previously worked under Wojcicki as the chief product officer, while the outgoing YouTube CEO will serve as Alphabet's board member.
- ✓ Mohan played a pivotal role in the launch of some of the biggest YouTube products, including YouTube TV, YouTube Music, Premium, and Shorts
- ✓ Mohan holds a bachelor's degree in electrical engineering from Stanford University and an MBA from the Stanford Graduate School of Business.
- ✓ He joined Google after the acquisition of DoubleClick by the company in 2008.
- ✓ Before joining Google, Neal Mohan also briefly worked at Microsoft as a manager in the company's corporate strategy department.

SPORTS

- **Tamil Nadu - appointed former Mumbai wicketkeeper Sulakshan Kulkarni as their next coach.**



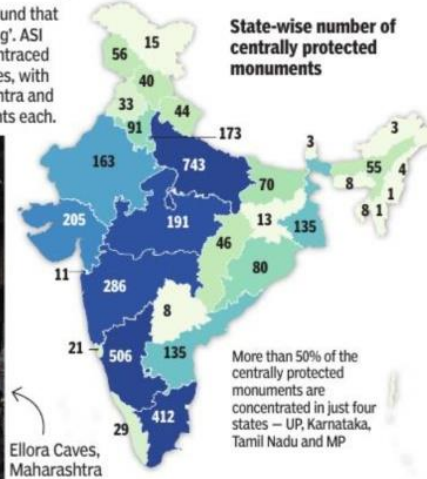
- ✓ Kulkarni takes over from R Venkatramana, who was in charge for the last couple of seasons.
- ✓ The Apex Council of the TNCA, on the recommendations of the Cricket Advisory Committee, has given the former Mumbai Ranji Trophy winning coach a two-season deal to turn things around for the state team.
- ✓ The move follows the dismal performances of the state team in the Ranji Trophy in the past few seasons
- ✓ Kulkarni has vast experience in coaching and previously handled teams like Mumbai, Vidarbha and Chattisgarh.
- ✓ He coached Mumbai for three seasons (2011-14) and guided them to their 2013 triumph.

HERITAGE SITES IN INDIA – A REPORT

Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka Home To Most Centrally Protected Monuments

➤ Most of India's centrally protected monuments, which are administered by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), are concentrated in the northern and western regions. There are 3,696 such monuments across India, with more than 20% in UP alone.

➤ In 2013, a government report had found that 92 protected monuments were 'missing'. ASI has so far traced 68 of these. The 24 untraced monuments are spread across 10 states, with 11 just in UP. Haryana, Delhi, Maharashtra and Rajasthan have two missing monuments each.



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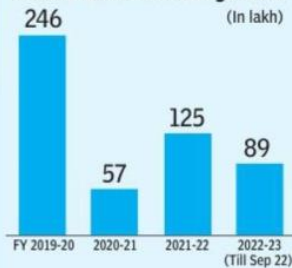


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World Heritage Sites Yet To Fully Return To Pre-Pandemic Levels

India has 24 cultural heritage sites across 12 states on the Unesco World Heritage site list. Though the pandemic hurt footfall and revenues at these sites, they are gradually rebounding. For instance, in the first half of FY22-23, footfall had crossed 88 lakh, well short of the 2.5 crore visitors in all of FY19-20 but close to the FY21-22 tally of 1.25 crore. Despite the pandemic, revenues from these sites exceeded expenditure in each of the last four years barring FY20-21. In addition operational expenditures, the government has also allocated a Rs 212 crore this year for the preservation and conservation of World Heritage sites.

Footfall at World Heritage sites (In lakh)



Revenue and expenditure from World Heritage sites (In ₹ crore)



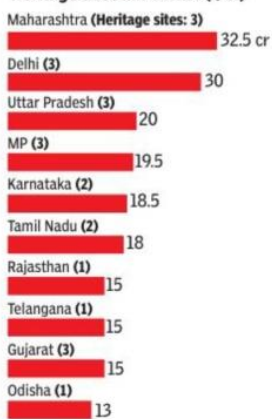
Between 2019 and 2022, UP saw the highest footfall for each year with only Delhi coming close to matching it. UP's revenues were more than double of the next highest earning state in each of the last four years

Note: Footfall and revenue data available for only 20 of 24 sites

Maharashtra, Delhi's World Heritage Sites Top Funding Recipients

Maharashtra's Ajanta, Ellora and Elephanta caves received the most funding among India's World Heritage sites at ₹32.5 crore, followed by Delhi's Red Fort, Qutub Minar and Humayun's Tomb at ₹30 crore. Despite being home to some of India's most visited World Heritage sites, UP received only ₹20 crore in funding.

State-wise distribution of funds for conservation of World Heritage sites in FY23-24 (₹ cr)



Top World Heritage monuments for footfall and revenue in FY22-23 (till Sep 2022)



Source: Lok Sabha, ASI