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## Prelim Bits 01-02-2024 | UPSC Daily Current Affairs

### Maratha Military Landscapes

India nominates 12 forts of Marathas as 'Maratha Military Landscapes' for inclusion in the UNESCO World Heritage list for 2024-25.

- **Maratha Military Landscapes** - It represent a ***fortification and military system*** envisioned by the Maratha rulers.
- **Development** - Between ***17<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries***.
- **Integrated physiography** - ***Sahyadri*** mountain ranges, the ***Konkan Coast, Deccan Plateau and the Eastern Ghats***.
- Thus, this network of forts vary in hierarchies, scales and typological features.
- **Significance** - They ***showcase the strategic military powers*** of the Maratha rule.

*Maratha military ideology started in 17th century during the reign of the Maratha king Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj from 1670 CE that continued until the Peshwa rule till 1818 CE.*

### Maratha Military Landscapes in World Heritage List

- ***Only 12 forts are nominated*** as Maratha landscapes.
  - Out of 12, ***11 are in Maharashtra*** and ***1 is from Tamil Nadu***.
- Earlier, it was included in the ***Tentative List of World Heritage sites in 2021***.
- It is the ***6th cultural property*** nominated from Maharashtra.

***In Maharashtra there are 6 World Heritage Sites, 5 cultural (Ajanta Caves, Ellora Caves, Elephanta Caves, Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus, Victorian Gothic and Art Deco Ensembles of Mumbai) and 1 natural (western Ghats of Maharashtra, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Kerala as serial property).***

- **11 in Maharashtra**
  - **Hill forts** - Salher, Shivneri, Lohgad, Raigad and Rajgad.
  - **Hill-forest fort** - Pratapgad.
  - **Hill-plateau fort** - Panhala.
  - **Coastal fort** - Vijaydurg.
  - **Island forts** - Khanderi fort, Suvarnadurg and Sindhudurg.
- **1 in Tamil Nadu**

- **Hill fort** - Gingee Fort.

*At present in India, there are 42 World Heritage sites out of which 34 are cultural sites, 7 are natural sites and 1 is a mixed site.*

### Cultural criteria of Maratha Military Landscape

- There are 6 criteria for nomination under cultural category in World Heritage List.
- Among 6, 3 criteria are applied for nomination in this case.
- For bearing a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilization that in living or which has disappeared.
- For being an outstanding example of a type of building, architectural or technological ensemble, or landscape that illustrates significant stage(s) in human history and Criterion.
- For being directly or tangibly associated with events or living traditions, with ideas or with beliefs, with artistic and literary works of outstanding universal significance.

### References

1. [The Hindu| Nomination of Maratha Military Landscapes in WHS](#)
2. [PIB| Criteria for Nominating Maratha Military Landscape](#)

### Snow Leopard Population Assessment in India (SPAI) Program

*Recently, Indian government released the report, 'Status of Snow Leopards in India' under Snow Leopard Population Assessment in India.*

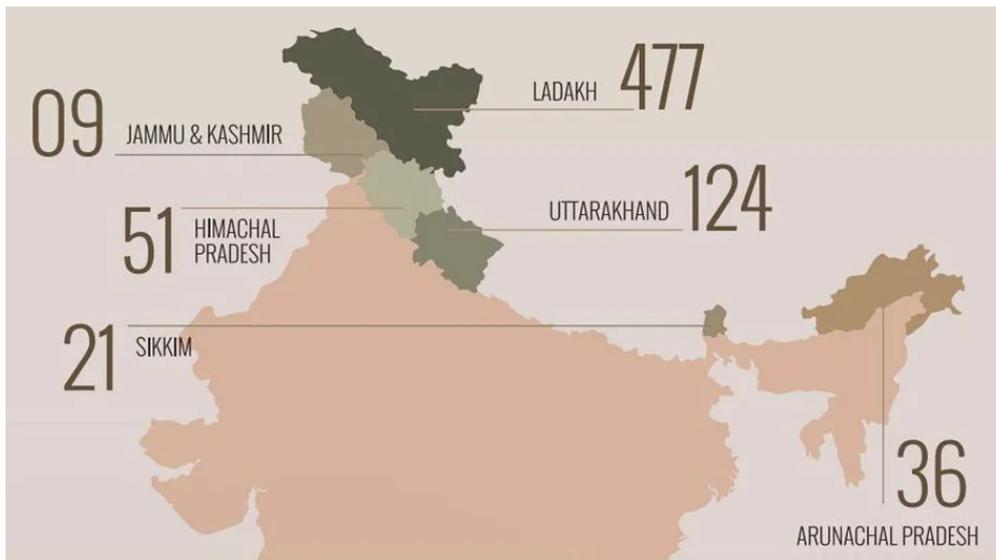
- It is the 1<sup>st</sup> ever population estimation of Snow Leopard.

*The 1<sup>st</sup> systematic surveys of snow leopards started in the 1980s, extending towards the western Himalayas particularly in Ladakh and later in Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand.*

- **Study period** - From **2019 to 2023**.
- **Study area** - It systematically covered over 70% of the potential snow leopard range in the country, approximately 120,000 sq km of snow leopard habitat across the trans-Himalayan region.
- **National Coordinator** - **Wildlife Institute of India (WII)**, supported by all range states and 2 conservation partners, Nature Conservation Foundation of Mysuru and WWF-India.
- **Techniques** - Use methods as outlined under the [Global Snow Leopard and Ecosystem Protection Program's \(GSLEP\)](#) Population Assessment of the World's Snow leopards (**PAWS**) initiative.
- **Findings** - There are around 718 snow leopards in the country and a total of 241 unique snow leopards were photographed.
- Only 34% of the habitat in India legally protected.

- Ladakh has the highest estimated population (477) followed by Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim, and Jammu and Kashmir.
- **Recommendations** - To establish a dedicated Snow Leopard Cell at Wildlife Institute of India.

**National Snow Leopard Conservation Plan** is implemented by the Government of India (GOI) for safeguarding and rejuvenating crucial high-altitude habitats, collaborating with local communities in conservation initiatives.



### Snow leopard

- **Habitat** - High rocky areas, alpine meadows, alpine steppe shrub, and high altitude forests, generally live above the tree line at elevations of 2,700-5,000 m.
- **Range** - 12 countries, Afghanistan, Bhutan, China, India, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Nepal, Pakistan, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan.
- **Global population** - Estimated at 3020 to 5390.
- **IUCN Status** - Vulnerable
- **Threats** - Overgrazing, human wildlife conflict, poaching, free-ranging dogs, habitat degradation, and climate change impacts.
- **Importance** - Being an apex predator of Himalayan ecosystem, snow leopard exerts top down regulation of prey populations and thus influence in ecological equilibrium of its habitat.

### References

1. [Hindustan Times| Status of Snow Leopards in India](#)
2. [PIB| Snow Leopard Population Assessment in India \(SPAI\)](#)

### New Ramsar Wetlands

5 more Indian wetlands have been added to the global list of wetlands of international importance under the Ramsar Convention.

- **Ramsar wetlands in India** - It raises to **80**.
- **5 New Ramsar Wetlands**
  - **3 in Karnataka** - Magadi Kere Conservation Reserve, Ankasamudra Bird Conservation Reserve, and Aghanashini Estuary.
  - **2 in Tamil Nadu** - Karaivetti Bird Sanctuary and Longwood Shola Reserve Forest.

*The Shola forests of South India derive their name from the Tamil word solai, which means a 'tropical rain forest'.*

- **Significance** - An increase of 5,523.87 ha under Ramsar site and the total area becomes 1.33 million ha.
- Tamil Nadu continues to have maximum number of Ramsar Sites (16 sites) followed by Uttar Pradesh (10 sites).

### The Ramsar Convention

- An international treaty for the conservation and wise use of wetlands.
- It is named after the Iranian city of Ramsar, on the Caspian Sea, where the treaty was signed on February 2, 1971.
- **Aim** - To develop and maintain an international network of wetlands for the conservation of global biological diversity and for sustaining human life through the maintenance of their ecosystem components, processes and benefits.
- **India** - It ratified the convention in 1982.
- Keoladeo National Park (Rajasthan) and Chilika lake (Odisha) were the 1<sup>st</sup> 2 sites to be placed on the Ramsar list by India.
- **Amrit Dharohar Yojana** - India has launched this for conservation of Ramsar sites through community participation.

*World Wetland Day is celebrated every year on February 2.*

### References

1. [The Hindu| Addition of 5 Wetlands to Ramsar Sites in India](#)
2. [PIB| Ramsar Wetlands in India](#)

### Interim Budget

*The interim Budget, a 'stop-gap' arrangement, will be presented by Union Finance Minister of India on February 1 as a full Budget will be presented in June-July.*

- **Definition** - It is a **shorter-term financial statement** that allows for the smooth functioning of the government until a new administration can present a full budget for the entire fiscal year.

**Budget or Annual financial statement** is a statement of the estimated receipts and expenditure of the Government of India for a specific financial year according to Article 112 of the Indian Constitution.

- **Need** - ***In an election year***, the incumbent Government cannot present a full Budget as there may be a change in the executive.
- **Legality** - There is ***no constitutional provision***, so the Centre can seek the Lower House's approval for the funds for the transition period via the vote on account provision.

### Vote on Account

- **Article 116** - It allows the Lower House to make any grant in advance for the estimated expenditure for part of any financial year by voting and passing such a legislation.
- Lok Sabha is empowered to authorise withdrawal of required funds from the Consolidated Fund of India for such expenditure.
- **Coverage** - Centre's fund requirements for salaries, ongoing projects and other expenditure for the transitional period.
- **Limitation** - It cannot make any changes to tax rates.
- **Validity** - Only for 2 months, can be extended up to 4 months.

- **Convention** - It has been the trend for outgoing governments to present an interim budget instead of a vote on account.
- **Features** - It will present the current state of the Indian economy, its fiscal status including India's revised estimated growth in the next year and also detail the government's planned and non-planned expenditure and receipts.
- The government is allowed to revise tax rates.

### Similarities of Interim Budget with Full Budget

- It is presented by Union Finance Minister to both house of the Parliament and will be put to vote and then sent for Presidential approval.
- It is also debated in the Lok Sabha before passage and is valid for the entire year though it is merely a transition arrangement.

### Differences between Interim Budget and Full Budget

- It would just be to meet with the expenditure till a new government enact a full Budget.
- No spectacular announcements are made unlike full Budget.

- **In 2024** - India is likely go to polls in April-May, thus Interim Budget will be presented for the 1<sup>st</sup> 4 months of this fiscal year.

*If the Budget is not passed by the Lok Sabha, the Prime Minister and his Cabinet will have to resign.*

### References

1. [The Hindu| Interim Budget in 2024](#)
2. [Business Today| Interim Budget and Full Budget](#)

## Geo-tagging

The New Delhi property geotagging deadline has been extended, according to a statement released by the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD).

*For the financial year 2024-2025, residents of New Delhi will have until February 29 to finish the geotagging procedure and receive a 10% refund on their lump sum advance tax payments.*

- **Geo- tagging** - A process of allotting **geographic coordinates to media based on the location** of a mobile device.
- It could also include time stamps or other contextual information.
- **Applicability** - Photos, videos, websites, text messages, and QR codes.
- **Geotagging properties** - It is digitally mapping a property with the geographic information system (GIS).
- Thus, a property can be identified on a map with its unique and permanent latitude and longitude coordinates.
- **Improves tax collection** - By distinguishing between tax-paying and non-tax-paying entities.
- **Efficient urban planning** - By identifying illegal and unauthorised properties and to take corrective actions.
- **Streamline essential services** - It helps in recognising area-based residential needs like sanitation and road repairs.
- **Disaster management** - In times of emergencies, it can be used for quick and targeted interventions in future as responders can utilise the data to navigate and address issues.
- **Maintains healthy urban spaces** - By monitoring environmental factors like green spaces, pollution sources, and ecological reserves.

*Indian cities that have made attempts to geo-tag the properties were Mumbai, Bengaluru, Chennai, Hyderabad, Ahmedabad and Pune.*

## Reference

[The Indian Express| Geo-tagging Properties](#)

**Other Important Topics**

**World Wetlands Day, 2024**

- World Wetlands Day is celebrated every year ***on 2 February***.
- This day marks the date of the adoption of the Convention on Wetlands on 2 February 1971, in the ***Iranian city of Ramsar*** on the shores of the Caspian Sea.
- In 2024, India has increased its tally of Ramsar sites (Wetlands of International Importance) to **80** from existing 75 by designating 5 more wetlands as Ramsar sites.

### **PHANGS (Physics at High Angular resolution in Nearby GalaxieS) program**

- The Physics at High Angular resolution in Nearby GalaxieS (PHANGS) program is a long-term project that uses telescopes to observe nearby galaxies.
- The program is supported by over ***150 astronomers worldwide***.
- The program uses telescopes like
  - Atacama Large Millimeter Array - (ALMA),
  - Hubble Space Telescope, [James Webb Space Telescope](#), and
  - Very Large Telescope (VLT) to make high-resolution observations.
- PHANGS-ALMA survey examines the molecular gas disks of 90 nearby galaxies.

### **Subika Painting**

- The Subika painting style is intricately linked to the ***Meitei community*** in Manipur's cultural history through its 6 surviving manuscripts.
- **6 surviving manuscripts** - Subika, Subika Achouba, Subika Laishaba, Subika Choudit, Subika Cheithil and Thengrakhel Subika.
- Experts estimate the use of Subika paintings since the 18th or 19th century.
- Unfortunately, awareness about this unique art form has dwindled over the years, leading to its near extinction.

### **Maritime security in South China Sea**

- Vietnam and the Philippines have agreed to cooperate on maritime security in the South China Sea recently.*
- Vietnam and the Philippines have signed 2 agreements on "incident prevention in the South China Sea" and "maritime cooperation" among coastguards.
  - China claims 90% of the [South China Sea](#) as its sovereign territory, but is opposed by Southeast Asian states and Taiwan.

### **Enrollment Ratio in Tamil Nadu**

*According to the recently released All India Survey on Higher Education by the Ministry of Education, Tamil Nadu's Gross Enrollment Ratio was 47%.*

- Among India's large states, Tamil Nadu consistently maintains the highest Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) in higher education (colleges and universities) for 5 academic years between 2017-18 and 2021-22.
- The all-India average GER was 28.4% in the 2021-22 period.
- Among all the states and Union Territories, **Chandigarh** has the highest GER of 64.8%.
- **Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER)** - The number of students enrolled in higher education as a percentage of the eligible population aged 18 to 23 years.

### **GJ 9827D**

*NASA's Hubble Telescope recently identified water molecules in the atmosphere of GJ 9827D.*

- GJ 9827d is a Neptune-like **exoplanet** that orbits the red dwarf star GJ 9827 and located 97 light-years away from Earth.
- It was discovered in 2017 by **NASA's Kepler Space Telescope**.
- The recent detection of water on GJ 9827d could signify the first evidence, through atmospheric detection, of planets with water-rich atmospheres orbiting stars beyond our solar system.

### **Sphaerotheca varshaabhu**

- Researchers have identified and documented a previously unknown species of frog which has been thriving amidst the urban landscape of **Bengaluru, Karnataka**.
- It is named as Sphaerotheca varshaabhu, attributed to its behaviour of coming out of burrows during the early showers, it exhibits distinctive characteristics from known frog species.
- It has adapted to its urban surroundings displaying behaviours and physical attributes that enable it to navigate the challenges posed by urbanisation.

### **Justice Ritu Raj Awasthi Commission**

*The Law Commission of India is all set to submit its report on the issues regarding Non-Resident Indian (NRI) marriages to the government*

- The Commission, headed by Justice Ritu Raj Awasthi, is in the process of finalizing the report and is likely to submit it soon, according to the source.

### **Bio solids**

- Biosolids are a semisolid, nutrient-rich product that comes from the wastewater treatment process.
- They are a result of sewage sludge that has been treated to reduce pathogens and volatile organic matter.
- Biosolids are rich in plant nutrients like nitrogen, phosphorus, and organic carbon.
- They can be used as a soil conditioner and fertilizer, and can be applied to timber land, alfalfa, and wheat.

### **Delhi Solar Policy, 2024**

*Delhi government introduces the Delhi Solar Policy 2024, allowing residents to install solar panels on their rooftops and earn money while ensuring zero electricity bills.*

- Those who opt for the scheme will also be given a capital subsidy of ***Rs 2,000 per kW*** of installation up to a maximum of ***Rs 10,000*** per consumer.
- This will be in addition to the subsidy given by the Centre, which is around ***Rs 16,000-18,000 per kW***.



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