

Prelim Bits 08-09-2018

Leptospirosis

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• It is a bacterial disease that affects humans and animals.

• It is caused by corkscrew-shaped bacteria called *Leptospira*.

• In humans, it can lead to kidney damage, meningitis (inflammation of the membrane around the brain and spinal cord), liver failure, respiratory distress, and even death.

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 \bullet It's spread through urine of infected dogs, rodents, and farm animals. $\ensuremath{\backslash n}$

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Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA)

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- India recently decided to end its boycott of the PISA.
- PISA was introduced in the year 2000 by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation Development (OECD).

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• It tests the learning levels of 15-year-olds in reading, mathematics and science.

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- The test is carried out every three years.
- India decided to stay away from PISA on account of its dismal performance in 2009.

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 \bullet The "out of context" questions were stated as a reason for the poor show. \n • in 2012 and 2015, when it was placed 72nd among the 74 participating countries.

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- India, subsequently, chose to not participate in the 2012 and 2015 cycle.
- The HRD Ministry, now, had formally decided to end this boycott.
- The ministry will negotiate India's terms of participation in 2021 with OECD.
- Unlike 2009, when schools in Tamil Nadu and Himachal Pradesh had participated, the Union government will request OECD to administer the test across all schools in Chandigarh in 2021.
- Chandigarh was selected for three reasons.

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1. Compact area.

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2. To keep number of languages in which the test has to be administered to a minimum and

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3. Chandigarh's record of performing well in learning assessments.

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HY-1C satellite

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- It is a marine satellite launched by China recently.
- It was launched by Long March-2C rocket from the Taiyuan Satellite Launch Centre in Shanxi province.

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- It is a part of series of satellites.
- HY-1A was launched in 2002 and HY-1B satellite was launched in 2007.
- It was launched to help improve understanding of maritime waters and climate change.
- HY-1C can detect chlorophyll and suspended sediment concentrations and dissolved organic matter, which can affect ocean colour, as well as

temperatures on the sea surface.

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- The data will help survey fishery and aquaculture resources and environments, offering a scientific basis for reasonable exploitation and utilization of marine resources.
- \bullet Scientists will also use the data to study global environmental changes, the role of the oceans in the global carbon cycle and the El Nino phenomenon. \n

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Hubballi-Ankola railway line

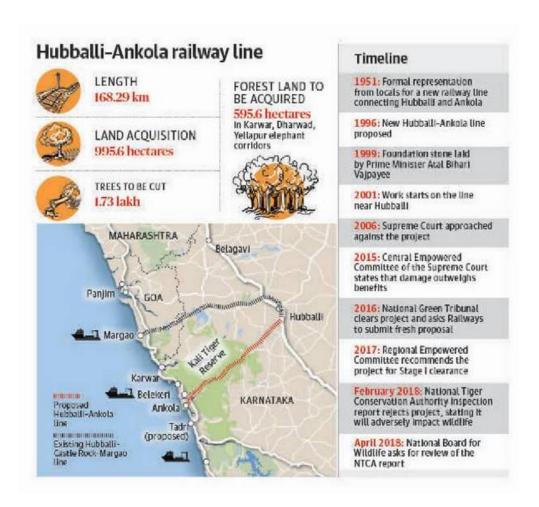
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- \bullet National Board for Wildlife (NBWL) is soon expected to deliver the fate of the controversial Hubballi–Ankola railway line. \n
- It is been opposed because will claim nearly 1,300 acres of pristine forest land apart from the cutting of 1.73 lakh trees, spanning three elephant corridors in Dharwad, Yellapur, and Karwar.
- In June 2017 the Regional Empowered Committee of the MoEF&CC recommended the Stage-1 clearance for the project.
- Also, earlier this year, the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) rejected the proposal, saying it would have repercussions on tiger and other wildlife in the area.

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"Positive Update" on Australia's Great Barrier Reef

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• Dire warnings of reef die-off were given after massive coral bleaching in 2016 and 2017.

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 Recently, Tourism and Events Queensland has issued a "positive update, reporting that some affected areas are showing "substantial signs of recovery."

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- The Great Barrier Reef is the longest coral reef in the world and the first coral reef ecosystem to be awarded Unesco World Heritage Status.
- It stretches more than 1,430 miles along Queensland's spectacular coastline.
- Coral bleaching occurs when coral experiences stress from heightened water temperatures or poor water quality.
- In response, the coral ejects a photosynthetic algae called zooxanthellae, which removes the coral's distinctive color.

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- If the stress conditions persist, the coral will die.
- But if conditions return to acceptable levels, some coral can reabsorb the substance and recover.
- \bullet Coral bleaching occurs in multiple stages, ranging from the equivalent of a mild sunburn to coral mortality. \n

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Source: The Hindu, The Indian Express

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