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National and International News

### Yaounde Declaration



### Context:

- Health ministers from **11 African countries** met in Yaoundé, Cameroon, and pledged to end malaria deaths.

### Key points:

- In **2022**, malaria cases globally rose significantly from **233 million in 2019 to 249 million**.
- In Africa, cases increased from **218 million to 233 million during the same period**.
- Africa accounts for **94% of global malaria cases and 95% of malaria-related deaths**.
- In 2022, an estimated 580,000 deaths occurred in Africa due to malaria.
- According to the **2023 Africa Malaria Progress Report**, malaria incidence has declined by 7.6% and mortality by 11.3%, falling short of African Union's interim goals.
- The African Union aims to control and eliminate malaria by **2030**.

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### Avaana Sustainability Fund



#### Context:

- SIDBI has secured **\$24.5 million from the Green Climate Fund (GCF)** for its Avaana Sustainability Fund (ASF), aimed at promoting sustainability and climate-focused startups and MSMEs.
- The funding was approved during the 38th meeting of the **GCF Board in Kigali, Rwanda.**

#### Project Overview:

- The project is valued at **\$120 million and will support early-stage startups and MSMEs using technology-led innovations for sustainability and climate solutions in India.**
- The ASF initiative aims to fund enterprises using technological innovations to address climate change challenges.
- It will aid in climate change mitigation, adaptation, and improving resilience in sectors vulnerable to climate impacts.

#### Implementation:

- **SIDBI will work with stakeholders and ministries, including the Department of Financial Services of the Ministry of Finance.**
- The bank can anchor proposals from other entities and submit its own, supporting the development of MSMEs.

#### Significance:

- This is a **pioneering move by SIDBI, representing the first such project anchored by the bank and aligning with India's commitments under the Paris Agreement.**
- SIDBI, as an accredited and direct access entity with the GCF, will fund projects promoting low-carbon and climate-resilient development across India.

#### Green Climate Fund:

- The **GCF is the largest climate fund globally, supporting developing countries in meeting their nationally determined contributions (NDCs) for global climate action.**



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### Panel recommends simultaneous polls



### Context:

- The **high-level committee headed by former President Ram Nath Kovind** has recommended simultaneous elections.
- The recommendation involves a **phased approach: Lok Sabha and State Assemblies first, followed by municipal and panchayat polls within 100 days of general elections.**

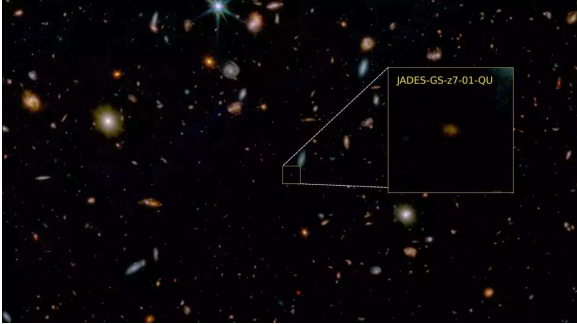
### Key points:

- The committee submitted an **extensive report, spanning 18,000 pages**, to President Droupadi Murmu, but a concise 321-page version is available to the public.
- The **22nd Law Commission** is also examining the issue and likely to recommend the same from the **2029 general election cycle.**
- The suggested method involves setting an **'Appointed Date'** after each general election, initiating a new electoral cycle for synchronizing elections.
- **State Assemblies** formed post 'Appointed Date' would conclude before subsequent general elections, **aligning with the Lok Sabha election cycle.**
- **Fresh Lok Sabha elections** might occur in case of a **hung House or no-confidence motion**, but the House's tenure would be limited to the unexpired term of the preceding full term.
- Constitutional amendments to **Articles 83 and 172 are proposed, requiring no ratification by the States.**
- Amendments to **Article 324A and Article 325** are recommended for panchayat and municipality elections and the preparation of a common electoral roll and voter ID cards, necessitating ratification by the States.
- The committee aims to **ease the burden on various stakeholders caused by frequent elections and suggests a mechanism for restoring the cycle of simultaneous elections.**
- Recommendations aim for minimal amendments to the Constitution and have garnered support from 32 out of 47 political parties contacted, including the BJP and the National People's Party.



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### Oldest 'Dead Galaxy' Discovered by James Webb Telescope



#### Context:

- Astronomers using the James Webb Space Telescope (JWST) have found the oldest known **"dead" galaxy**.
- Named **JADES-GS-z7-01-QU**, it **ceased star formation when the universe was just 5% of its current age**.

#### Significance:

- This discovery surpasses **prior findings by approximately 500 million years**.
- It marks the earliest instance of a **"dead" galaxy**.
- Astrophysicist Tobias Looser likens its star formation pattern to James Dean's sudden halt, post a rapid burst of activity.
- Despite ample gas availability in the early universe, **star formation abruptly stopped**.

#### Characteristics:

- **Estimated to contain 100 million to one billion stars**.
- Comparable in size to the Small Magellanic Cloud but devoid of ongoing star formation.
- Existing stars **will expire without replacement, leading to a color shift from blue to yellow to red**.

#### Potential Causes:

- Researchers speculate on **reasons for cessation, including the influence of a supermassive black hole or gas depletion**.
- The JWST's advanced capabilities enabled a snapshot observation, leaving open the possibility of resumed star formation.

#### About James Webb Space Telescope:

- Launched in **December 2021**, it's the most potent space telescope constructed to date.
- Tailored for **infrared astronomy, it explores objects beyond the reach of the Hubble Space Telescope**.
- Primarily aims to **study the earliest stars and galaxies, providing insights into the universe's infancy**.
- Its inaugural image was captured in **July 2022**, leading to numerous discoveries, including ancient galaxies.



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### Kochrab Ashram



#### Context:

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the redeveloped **Kochrab Ashram in Ahmedabad, Gujarat**, marking the **94th anniversary of the Dandi March**.
- Kochrab Ashram was Gandhi's first home in India after returning from South Africa in **1915**.
- Modi also revealed the master plan for the Rs 1,200 crore Gandhi Ashram Memorial and Precinct Development Project.

#### Future Plans for Gandhi Ashram Memorial

- The master plan aims to expand the ashram to 55 acres, restoring and conserving 36 buildings, including Gandhi's residence, Hriday Kunj.
- It includes new structures for administration facilities, visitor amenities, interactive workshops, and public utilities.
- An orientation center, a library, and archive buildings will be built to safeguard and disseminate Gandhi's ideas.

### Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary



#### Context:

- The Supreme Court stopped the **Assam government from withdrawing a 26-year-old notification that established the Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary, known for its significant rhino population**.
- The Supreme Court stated that revoking a notification for a wildlife sanctuary requires permission from the **National Board of Wildlife**. It clarified that its order does not hinder efforts to protect the rights of forest dwellers.

#### About:

- Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary is known for holding the highest density of **Greater One Horned Rhinoceros in the country**.
- The Sanctuary consists of the Rajamayong Reserve Forest and Pobitora Reserve Forest. The Rajamayong hills harbor several species including Leopard, Capped Langur, Porcupine, Pangolin, etc.
- Often called '**Mini Kaziranga**,' it shares similar landscape and vegetation with its renowned counterpart.
- Approximately **72% of Pobitora's area comprises a wet savannah dominated by Arundo donax and Saccharum grasses, with the rest covered by water bodies**.

#### About One-Horned Rhino:

- **IUCN Red List Status:** Vulnerable.
- **Habitat:** Mainly found in **Assam, West Bengal, and Uttar Pradesh**.
- Assam is home to an estimated **2,640 rhinos in four protected areas: Pobitora Wildlife Reserve, Rajiv Gandhi Orang National Park, Kaziranga National Park, and Manas National Park**.



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