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15 March 2024

National & 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 the African Union's interim goals.
- The African Union aims to control and eliminate malaria by **2030.**

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.



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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.

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 is 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**.



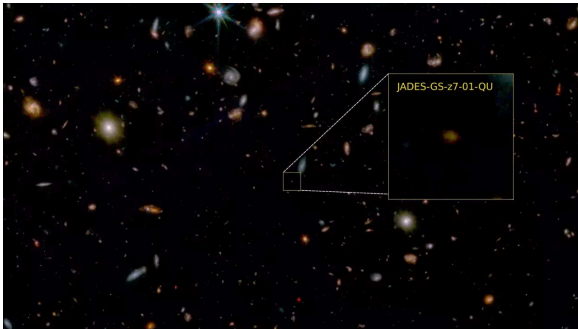
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- **Fresh Lok Sabha elections** might occur in case of a **hung House or no-confidence motion**, but the House's tenure would be limited to the unexpired term of the preceding full term.
- Constitutional amendments to **Articles 83 and 172 are proposed, 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.

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.**



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- 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.

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.



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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 a 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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