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21 May 2024

National & International News

Muria Tribes



Context:

- The Muria tribes in the **Godavari Valley** practice a **traditional and eco-friendly method of seed preservation called the 'deda' method.**

Key points:

- This technique, handed down by their ancestors, **involves wrapping seeds in leaves and weaving them into a casing using Siali leaf (Bauhinia vahlii).**
- The seeds are packed almost airtight, resembling boulders from a distance.
- **The deda has three protective layers:** wood ash spread inside Siali leaves, covered with lemon leaves, and finally sealed with the seeds inside.
- This method ensures **protection from pests and worms**, allowing the seeds to be **stored for up to five years**, although they are typically used within three years.
- Muria families, who have settled along the **Godavari and Sabari rivers in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana** after migrating from Chhattisgarh due to conflicts, continue this practice for their **food security.**
- Despite restrictions on land expansion in reserve forests, they engage in **small-scale farming**, primarily cultivating pulses and maize, with minimal dependence on paddy.
- The Murias rarely sell their produce, focusing instead on **self-sufficiency.**
- Their commitment to preserving traditional methods like the **deda reflects their cultural resilience in the face of displacement.**



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Sri Lankan golden-backed frog



REMARKABLE FIND

● Hylarana gracilis the golden-backed frog belongs to family Ranidae

● ZSI Hyd, spotted the frog at Koundinya wildlife sanctuary in AP

● Also known as Gravenhorst's frog or Sri Lanka wood frog

● Considered endemic to Sri Lanka, found up to 1,250mts above sea level



These findings highlight utility of DNA barcoding in confirming species identities and suggest that Eastern Ghats' biodiversity may be richer than previously understood

— Deepa Jaiswal | ZSI HYDERABAD

Context:

- The Sri Lankan golden-backed frog (*Hylarana gracilis*) has been rediscovered after 200 years at the Koundinya Wildlife Sanctuary in India.
- Bharath Bhupathi from the Zoological Survey of India suggests that this rediscovery provides evidence of a historic land bridge between India and Sri Lanka during the late Pleistocene period or the Ice Age.

Details of the Rediscovery:

- Researchers from the Zoological Survey of India, in collaboration with the Andhra Pradesh Biodiversity Board, made the rediscovery.
- The frogs were found in the Palamaner forest range of the Koundinya Wildlife Sanctuary in the Chittoor district.
- This discovery increases the number of freshwater frog species in India to 20.

About:

- **Scientific Name:** *Hylarana gracilis*
- **Family:** Ranidae
- **Endemic:** Found in Sri Lanka and recently recorded in the Eastern Ghats
- **Body:** Slender body with a small head
- **Appearance:**
 - Iris: Reddish brown with golden specks and dark patches
 - Flanks: Light yellowish-gray
 - Limbs: Light brown with grayish cross-bands
 - Throat and Limbs: Light grey



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Daily Current Affairs Encyclopedia

New Caledonia

Context:

- French security forces are intensifying efforts to regain control over **New Caledonia, a French Pacific archipelago, amidst ongoing and deadly unrest.**

Key points:

- The immediate trigger for the current wave of unrest was the debate and subsequent approval of voting reforms by the **French legislature, allowing residents who have lived in New Caledonia for ten years to vote in provincial elections.**
- This change has been fiercely opposed by pro-independence supporters, particularly the **indigenous Kanak population**, who fear the new rules will dilute their political influence in favor of pro-France politicians.

About:

- New Caledonia is a **French overseas collectivity with significant autonomy under the 1998 Nouméa Accord.**
- It is situated in the **southwestern Pacific Ocean, about 1,500 km (900 miles) east of Australia.**
- Unlike many Pacific islands that are of relatively recent volcanic origin, New Caledonia is an ancient fragment of the Gondwana supercontinent.
- The territory comprises the **main island of Grande Terre, the four Loyalty Islands (Ouvéa, Lifou, Tiga, and Maré),** the Belep archipelago, the Isle of Pines, and several remote islands, with Nouméa, located on Grande Terre, serving as the capital.



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Daily Current Affairs Encyclopedia

Project Astra

Context:

Google introduces Project Astra, a **real-time, multimodal AI assistant**.

Key points:

- **Project Astra, a novel multimodal AI agent developed by Google, exhibits remarkable capabilities:**
 - It answers real-time questions presented through text, video, images, and speech, retrieving relevant information.
- Astra can **visually perceive the world**, recall object locations, and even assess the correctness of computer code by analyzing it through a phone's camera.
- Its voice **lacks emotional diversity, maintaining a straightforward tone**.
- Not confined to smartphones, **Google demonstrated Astra's compatibility with smart glasses**.
- Astra's learning ability enables it to acquire knowledge about the world, providing a human-assistant-like experience.
- **Multimodal Model AI, such as Google's Gemini, refers to ML models adept at processing diverse modalities** (e.g., images, videos, text).
- For instance, Gemini can analyze a photo of cookies to generate a recipe and vice versa.
- This model enhances generative capabilities by processing information from various modalities, essentially granting AI the capacity to comprehend different sensory modes.



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Daily Current Affairs Encyclopedia

Orcas

Context:

- Two individuals were rescued after their 15-meter-long sailing yacht was sunk by a group of **orcas**, also known as **killer whales**, in the **Strait of Gibraltar**.

Orcas (Killer Whales)

- **Scientific Name:** Orcinus orca
- **Classification:** The largest member of the oceanic dolphin family; a toothed whale.
- **Unique Feature:** Distinct black-and-white patterned body.
- **Distribution:** Inhabit various marine environments, including:
 - Arctic regions
 - Antarctic regions
 - Tropical seas
- **Social Behavior:** Highly social animals.
- Some populations live in stable, matrilineal family groups called pods.
- **Conservation Status:** Data Deficient (International Union for Conservation of Nature).
- **Threats:**
 - Habitat loss
 - Pollution (particularly by PCBs)
 - Capture for marine mammal parks
 - Conflicts with human fisheries

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