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Tamil Nadu: 10-07-2024

<p>Kodaikanal Observatory</p>	<p>Context:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Before the Aditya L1 spacecraft aimed for the sun, India had been diligently studying our closest star through the efforts of a committed team of scientists at one of the world's most ancient observatories(Kodaikanal Observatory). <p>About:</p> <p>Colonial Origins and Establishment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Kodaikanal Solar Observatory (KSO) owes its beginnings to William Petrie, an East India Company officer, who initiated the idea of celestial observation in 1789.• Originally established in Madras to promote astronomy, geography, and navigation, the observatory later moved to Kodaikanal in 1899 due to urbanization and atmospheric disturbances. <p>Legacy of Solar Research:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• KSO's 113-acre campus houses extensive solar archives, meticulously recording solar activities for over a century.• These records, preserved through photographic plates and now digital formats, provide crucial insights into solar cycles, sunspots, and solar flares, contributing significantly to global solar research. <p>Contemporary Significance and Future Prospects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Today, KSO continues to lead solar research, focusing on the 11-year solar cycle and its impacts on technology and climate.• Future endeavors include participation in the National Large Solar Telescope project in Ladakh, underscoring its ongoing commitment to advancing astronomical knowledge. <p>Commemorating 125 Years:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• To celebrate its 125th anniversary, KSO plans an international conference and various activities aimed at inspiring future generations of scientists.
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The observatory's enduring legacy underscores its pivotal role in solar astronomy and India's scientific heritage.
Discovery of Ancient Hebrew Tombstone in Tamil Nadu	<p>Context:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">In a significant archaeological discovery near Periyapattinam, Ramanathapuram, a small stone inscribed with Hebrew text was unearthed.The inscription, believed to be one of India's oldest Hebrew inscriptions, was deciphered by historians. <p>Key points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">The inscription, dated to Shvat (Hebrew month) 1536 or 1537 of the Seleucid era (1224-1226 AD), includes references possibly to 'Nehemiah,' suggesting familial connections. <p>Historical Significance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">The tombstone displays clear influences from Yemeni Jewish traditions, evident in its calendar system, lettering style, and language patterns.This discovery aligns with other known Hebrew inscriptions in India, such as those found in Chennamangalam and Mattancherry.
Discovery of New Snake Species in Meghamalai	<p>Context:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">A team from Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and the United Kingdom has discovered a new species of shieldtail snake.The discovery was made in the Meghamalai-Munnar hill region of the Western Ghats. <p>Key findings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Shieldtail snakes are small, non-venomous, burrowing snakes, with over 50 species found in the Western Ghats.The new species, named Tail-spot Shieldtail (<i>Uropeltis caudomaculata</i>), was previously confused with the Palni Shieldtail (<i>Uropeltis pulneyensis</i>).The discovery was published in the international journal <i>Zootaxa</i>.The Western Ghats is one of India's most diverse regions for reptiles, with more than 50% endemic species.Fifteen new species of snakes have been described from the Western Ghats in the past five years, indicating hidden diversity in this fast-degrading landscape.



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**Wetland Conservation in
Tamil Nadu**

Context:

- Tamil Nadu is set to map **12 Ramsar sites using advanced drone technology.**
- This initiative is spearheaded by the **Tamil Nadu Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Corporation (TNUAVC)** under the **Higher Education Department.**

Technology and Collaboration:

- TNUAVC is collaborating with the **Tamil Nadu Wetlands Department** for this project.
- High-tech drones equipped with **RGB sensors and LiDAR technology will be used.**
 - **RGB Sensors:** Provide detailed images for creating 3D maps.
 - **LiDAR Sensors:** Offer greater data accuracy.

Importance of Mapping and Monitoring:

- Vital for understanding the **dynamics of wetlands and preparing conservation plans.**
- Helps in water purification, groundwater replenishment, and drought and flood management.
- Crucial for **food security.**

Current Status and Future Plans:

- Tamil Nadu has **16 Ramsar sites**, with recent additions including **Longwood Shola Reserve Forest and Karaivetti Bird Sanctuary.**
- 12 out of these 16 sites have been prioritized for immediate mapping.
- The initiative **will aid the government in better monitoring these sites.**

Conservation and Threats:

- **Wetlands are essential for biodiversity, water purification, and providing habitats for numerous species.**
- They support livelihoods and cultural practices for many communities.
- Wetlands near cities are particularly threatened by human encroachment and land grabbing.

Government Initiatives:

- Comprehensive integrated management plans are being



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developed in collaboration with the Wildlife Institute of India.

- Mapping will support proposed management initiatives.