

IMPORTANT NEWS

India increases its tally of Ramsar sites (Wetlands of International Importance) to 80

Inside Story of the News:

- On World Wetlands Day 2024, India adds five more wetlands to its list of Ramsar sites (Wetlands of International Importance), bringing the total to 80.
- Magadi Kere Conservation Reserve, Ankasamudra Bird Conservation Reserve, and Aghanashini Estuary are in Karnataka, while Karaivetti Bird Sanctuary and Longwood Shola Reserve Forest are in Tamil Nadu, out of the five wetlands that have been added to the Ramsar list.
- After these five wetlands were added to the List of Wetlands of International Importance, the overall area covered by Ramsar sites increased to 1.33 million hectares, an increase of 5,523.87 hectares over the previous area (1.327 million hectares).
- With 16 sites, Tamil Nadu still holds the record for the most Ramsar Sites, followed by Uttar Pradesh with 10.

India and the Ramsar Convention:

- The Ramsar Convention is an international treaty for the conservation and sustainable use of Ramsar sites.
- It is also known as the Convention on Wetlands.
- In 1971, India signed the Ramsar Convention in Ramsar, Iran, as one of the Contracting Parties.
- In observance of the international agreement on wetlands that was adopted on February 2, 1971, World Wetlands Day (WWD) is celebrated all over the world. On February 1st, 1982, India ratified this convention.
- During the 75th Year of Independence, earlier in August 2022, India accomplished a noteworthy milestone by bringing the total number of Ramsar Sites to 75.
- In the previous ten years, the number of Ramsar sites has climbed from 26 to 80, with 38 additions in the last three years alone.
- This year, the national World Wetlands Day event was organized at Sirpur Lake, Indore, a Ramsar site designated in 2022, by the Government of India's Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change (MoEF&CC) in partnership with the Government of Madhya Pradesh.
- The Secretary General of the Ramsar Convention, Dr. Musonda Mumba, visited India to take part in WWD 2024 on February 2, 2024, at the Sirpur Ramsar site in Indore.

Wetlands and Human Wellbeing:

- The theme of WWD-2024 is 'Wetlands and Human Wellbeing'.
- It emphasizes how vital wetlands are to improving our quality of life.
- It draws attention to the ways that wetlands support clean water, biodiversity, recreational possibilities, and flood protection—all of which are critical to the health and prosperity of humankind.

RBI bars Paytm Payments Bank

Inside Story of the News:

- Apart from interest, cashbacks, or refunds that may be credited at any time, the Reserve Bank of India has prohibited Paytm Payments Bank from taking deposits, credit transactions, or top-ups in any customer account, prepaid instrument, wallet, FASTag, NCMC card, etc. after February 29, 2024.
- There were ongoing substantial supervisory issues and persistent non-compliances in the bank, according to the Comprehensive System Audit report and the external auditors' subsequent compliance validation report.
- The central bank ordered that One97 Communications Ltd. and Paytm Payments Services Ltd.'s nodal accounts be closed as soon as possible, but no later than February 29.
- Additionally, by March 15, 2024, all pipeline transactions and nodal accounts must be settled.
- RBI gave Paytm Payments Bank instructions in March 2022 to cease accepting new clients immediately.

About the Payments Bank:

- A listed company, One97 Communications Ltd., owns a 49% share in the unit and Paytm Payments Bank is one of its associates.
- Up to two lakh rupees in minor deposits may be made at a payments bank.
- These entities are not allowed to lend directly but can facilitate and sell loan products.

700 One Stop Centers set up across the country

Inside Story of the News:

- In more than 700 districts nationwide, One Stop Centers have been set up to assist women who have experienced violence.
- The Women and Child Development Ministry's One Stop Center program, established under the Nirbhaya Fund, aims to protect, and aid women who are victims of violence in both public and private settings, including domestic abuse.
- Thus far, the One Stop Centers have aided over 8.3 lakh women.
- Smriti Irani, the Union Minister for Women and Child Development, also praised the enormous work of the emergency response service via the National Commission for Women (NCW) 24-hour helpline for women.

About the NCW:

- The National Commission for Women was set up as a statutory body in January 1992 under the National Commission for Women Act, 1990.
- It was established to examine the legal and constitutional safeguards for women, suggest corrective legislation, assist in resolving complaints, and counsel the government on all issues pertaining to women's policies.
- The NCW, according to its chairperson Rekha Sharma, is trying to create favorable conditions for women to engage in social, economic, and political spheres.

Mesolithic era art unearthed in Telangana

Inside Story of the News:

- Led by photojournalist Duggempudi Ravinder Reddy and rock art specialist Dr. Bandi Muralidhar Reddy, a team from Kotha Telangana Charitra Brundham, along with Sriramoju Haragopal, have discovered significant rock paintings in Gattusingaram village, which is situated in the Peddapalli district.
- A large sandstone west-facing rock shelter, measuring roughly 1,000 feet in length and 50 feet in height, includes several spectacular rock paintings on its wall, which have been discovered deep within the forest on the hilltop known as Sitamma Loddi.
- The murals at this site, which includes the second-longest rock shelter in India, date to the Mesolithic (10-12 thousand years ago) and early historic periods (1st BCE to 6th CE).

About the Art:

- The predominant color in these paintings is red, while there are also some white and yellow hues.
- From an archaeological perspective, the paintings, which date back to the Mesolithic and Early Historic periods, are highly significant discoveries for Telangana.
- The depictions include human figures engaged in group dances, animals such as deer, antelope, tortoise, and monkeys, along with intricate designs.
- Interesting are the petroglyphs depicting deer images and white-colored deer and human figures in a row.
- Furthermore, handprints in red, white, and yellow colors have been discovered in a range of sizes, with some uncommon examples of white and yellow handprints among them.
- From the early historic eras, the researchers discovered two written and four engraved label inscriptions in Brahmi script.
- Notably, one inscription mentions the name Kumara Hakusiri and provides insight into the Satavahana dynasty; another, however, dates to the Vishnukundin period.
- The finding of many microliths, including a core flake, inside the shelter itself lends credence to the paintings' age.
- Evidence of the site's antiquity, which dates back around 65 million years, includes a preserved stone structure from the early historic period, a protected wall from that era, and a ruined stone structure.

THIP joins WHO's Vaccine Safety Net

Inside Story of the News:

- WHO's Vaccine Safety Net (VSN) now includes The Healthy Indian Project (THIP), an Indian health information platform.
- This noteworthy accomplishment highlights THIP's dedication to providing the Indian public with reliable and validated vaccine safety information.
- VSN, founded by the World Health Organization (WHO), serves as a global network of websites that provide trustworthy and verified vaccine safety information.
- By being a member of this prestigious network, THIP advances its position as a trustworthy

source of validated vaccine safety information and aids in the global drive to distribute factual, science-based information about immunization.

- VSN keeps growing. Information about the safety of vaccines is currently available in 43 languages on 110 websites from 45 nations.

Scientists discover a New Species of Fungus that helps to increase Soil Fertility

Inside Story of the News:

- At the Palapilli Field Research Centre of the Forest Research Institute, scientists identified a new type of fungus that aids in increasing soil fertility by dissolving decomposing plants from bamboo forests.
- 'Trichoglossum Shyam Viswanathi' is the name given to it in honor of Dr. Shyam Viswanath, the former director of the Kerala Forest Research Centre, for his contributions to the field of forest research.

About the Species:

- Trichoglossum species are essential to the survival of forests and the breakdown of organic matter.
- The species found in the family Geoglossaceae (Ascomycota) is most similar to Trichoglossum septatum. There is variation in color, size, texture, and molecules.
- The Forest Research Center in Peechi houses specimens in its herbarium.
- The National Herbarium of the Netherlands published the study in "Personia Molecular Phylogeny and Evolution of Fungi."
- They are called the "hairy earthtongue" because of their many filaments that resemble mushrooms.
- They are found on plant roots and are colored black, dark, or brown.
- There are 55 Trichoglossum genera identified worldwide. Of these, 21 are recognized species.
- The majority are located in temperate and tropical forests.