

## Six New Species of Spiders



### ❖ Context

- Recently, **Arachnologists from the Centre for Animal Taxonomy and Ecology (CATE)**, Christ College, Irinjalakuda in Kerala have discovered six new species of spiders from across the country.

### ❖ Key Highlights

- **Siamspinops Garoensis** :
  - Found in the **Garo hills in Meghalaya**.
  - This belongs to the **family of flat spiders, Selenopidae**.
  - This spider lives in the crevices of rocks on hills.
- The next spider belongs to the **family of feather-legged spiders (Uloboridae)**.
  - This species **lacks a venom gland**.
  - This new species has been **named as Philoponella rostralis**, due to the presence of a beak like structure on the male reproductive organ.
- Two new species of spiders belonging to the family of **spiny-legged spiders (Oxyopidae)**.
  - They have been **discovered from the Thumboormuzhi butterfly garden, near the Athirappilly waterfalls, and on the Calicut University campus**.

- Two new species of spiders coming under the **family of jumping spiders (Salticidae)**:
  - They were discovered from the **Thar desert of Rajasthan and the Kurichiyad forest ranges of the Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary**.
  - **Thar species -Afraflacilla miajlaensis**:
    - It is characterised by **white fine hairs on a black head and black horizontal lines on the abdomen**.
    - This spider stays among dry leaf blades.
- **The Wayanad species - Afraflacilla kurichiadensis** :
  - It is characterised by **red patches around the eyes and white hairs on the abdomen**.
  - The bulged first pair of legs are also a special feature of this species.
  - This spider lives in the **moist deciduous forest of Kurichiyad**.

## National Maritime Heritage Complex (NMHC)



### ❖ Context

- Recently, Prime Minister evening reviewed the construction of the **National Maritime Heritage Complex (NMHC) site at Gujarat's Lothal** via video conferencing.

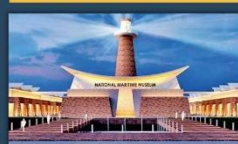
### ❖ Lothal

- **About** : Lothal was one of the **southernmost sites of the Indus Valley civilization**.
- **Location** : located in the Bhāl region of what is now the state of **Gujarat**.
- **Origin** : The port city is believed to have been built in **2,200 BC**.
- **Significance** :
  - Lothal was a **thriving trade centre** in ancient times, with its trade of beads, gems and ornaments reaching West Asia and Africa.
  - Lothal had the world's **earliest known dock**, connecting the city to an ancient course of the Sabarmati river.
  - The National Institute of Oceanography in Goa discovered **marine microfossils and salt, gypsum crystals at the site**.
    - It indicates that sea water once filled the structure & it was definitely a dockyard.
  - In later excavations, ASI unearthed a mound, a township, a marketplace, and the dock.
- **UNESCO Nomination** : Lothal was **nominated in April 2014** as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and its application is pending on the tentative list of UNESCO.

### ❖ NMHC

- **About** :
  - The project began in **March 2022**.
  - It is being developed at a **cost of Rs 3,500 crore**.
- **Aim** : The NMHC is being developed with the aim of displaying India's diverse maritime heritage and also help Lothal emerge as a world-class international tourist destination.
- **Features** : It will have several **innovative features** such as :
  - **Lothal mini-recreation**, which will recreate Harappan architecture & lifestyle through immersive technology;
  - **Four theme parks** – Memorial theme park, Maritime and Navy theme park, Climate theme park, and Adventure and Amusement theme park.
  - It will also house the **world's tallest lighthouse museum**.
  - **14 galleries** highlighting India's maritime heritage starting from the Harappan time till today
  - **A coastal states pavilion** displaying the diverse maritime heritage of Indian states & UTs.
- **Significance** : The National Maritime Heritage Complex at Lothal will act as a **centre for learning and understanding India's maritime history**.

#### NATIONAL MARITIME HERITAGE COMPLEX (NMHC)



A one of its kind project, the National Maritime Heritage Complex (NMHC) at Lothal is being developed to not only display India's rich and diverse maritime heritage and also help Lothal to emerge as a world class international tourist destination. The boost to the tourism potential through this project will also augment the economic development of the region.

The making of the National Maritime Heritage Complex (NMHC) began in March 2022, and is being developed at a cost of around Rs 3500 crore. It will have several innovative and unique features such as Lothal mini recreation to recreate Harappan architecture and lifestyle; four theme parks – Memorial theme park, Maritime and Navy theme park, Climate theme park and Adventure & Amusement theme park. Lothal may soon get the world's tallest lighthouse museum also. The complex will consist of 14 galleries highlighting India's maritime heritage starting from the Harappan times till now. Coastal states pavilion will be built to display diverse maritime heritage of states and Union Territories of India.

#### THE HERITAGE CITY OF LOTHAL, OLDEST MAN-MADE DOCKYARD

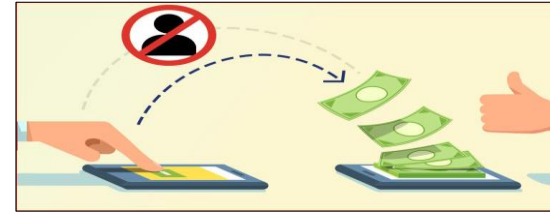


Lothal was one of the prominent and historic cities of the Harappan civilization and is known for the discovery of the oldest man-made dockyard. A maritime heritage complex in Lothal is fitting tribute to the city's historical legacy and heritage. The world's oldest known artificial dockyard, Lothal has been excavated and found connected to an old course of the Sabarmati River. About 80km southwest of Ahmedabad in Gujarat, the city that stood at this archaeological site 4500 years ago was one of the most important cities of the Indus Valley civilization, which extended into what is now Pakistan. Lothal also comprises the acropolis, the lower town, the bead factory, the warehouses, and the drainage system. As per archaeologists, the canals and dockyards found in Lothal proves the city as an important trading center that connected south-east to middle-east, West Asia and Africa. Artifacts suggest that trade may have been conducted with Mesopotamia, Egypt and Persia.

## Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT)

### ❖ Context

- Recently the International Monetary Fund (IMF) lauded India's **Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT)** Scheme as a "logistical marvel" that has reached hundreds of millions of people and specifically benefitted women, the elderly and farmers.

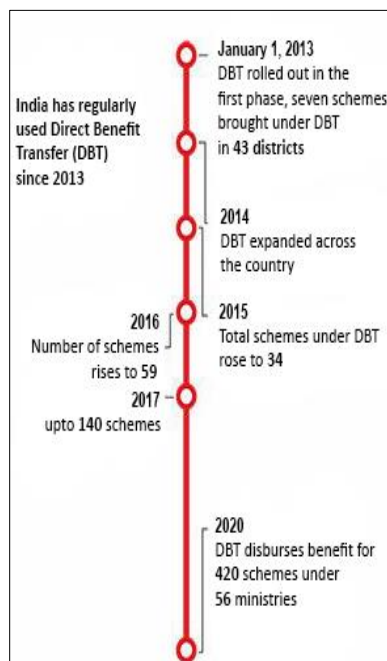


### ❖ Key Highlights

- **DBT** is an attempt to change the mechanism of transferring subsidies launched by Government of India on 1 January 2013.
- This scheme or program aims to establish a **Giro system** to transfer subsidies directly to the people through their linked bank accounts.
- It is hoped that crediting subsidies into bank accounts will reduce leakages, duplicity and delay and the new processes will increase transparency & accountability.

### ❖ Advantages of DBT

- DBT transfers help expedite the flow of funds and information securely while reducing the possibility of fraud.



- It eliminates the need for intermediaries, including government officers, in transferring the subsidy amount directly into the beneficiary accounts.
- It brings about transparency and reduces instances of pilferage from the distribution of Central Government-sponsored funds.
- DBT ensures accurate targeting of beneficiaries.
- Beneficiaries can link only one bank by seeding the fund deposits to their Aadhaar details to avoid duplication of subsidies.
- It enables the Government to simultaneously reach out to both citizens and beneficiaries of the scheme.

- **Note:** A GIRO is a payment instruction from one bank account to another bank account which is initiated by the payer.

## Debts Recovery Tribunals

### ❖ Context

- The government has created exclusive benches to deal with cases above ₹100 crore at debts recovery tribunals (DRTs) in Chennai, Mumbai and Delhi.



### ❖ Key Highlights

- This comes in the wake of banks making a request to the Ministry for setting up special DRTs for expediting recovery in high-value cases, in view of high pendency of cases in existing tribunals.
- As of February-end in 2022, there were 1,61,034 pending cases at the DRTs, with DRT 2 Chandigarh having the most (10,578 cases), followed by DRT 3 Chandigarh (8,885) and DRT 3 Kolkata (7,171).
- Organisation of three high-value DRT benches will help improve effectiveness in recovery mechanism, specifically high-value cases.

### ❖ About Debts Recovery Tribunals (DRTs)

- The DRTs and Debts Recovery Appellate Tribunals (DRATs) were established under the Recovery of Debts and Bankruptcy Act (RDB Act), 1993 with the specific objective of providing expeditious adjudication and recovery of debts due to Banks and Financial Institutions.
- The Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets & Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 (SARFAESI Act) **provides access** to banks & financial institutions covered under the Act for recovery of secured debts from the borrowers without the intervention of the Courts at the 1st stage.
- **Securitisation Appeals (SAs)** can be filed with the DRTs by those aggrieved against action taken by secured creditors under the SARFAESI Act. At present, **39** DRTs and 5 Debts Recovery Appellate Tribunals (DRATs) are functioning across the country.
- Each DRT and DRAT are headed by a **Presiding Officer** and a **Chairperson** respectively.

## News in Between the Lines

### School of Excellence



### ❖ Context


- Prime Minister recently launched the ambitious '**Mission Schools of Excellence**' project in Gandhinagar, Gujrat.

### ❖ Key Highlights

- Conceived with an outlay of ₹10,000 crore, the Mission, partially funded by the World Bank, is aimed at strengthening the education infrastructure in the State through setting up of new classrooms,
  - smart classrooms,
  - computer labs and overall upgradation of infrastructure in schools.

### Face to Face Centres

## Grazing Animals Hold the Key to Long-Term Soil Carbon Stability



- The project will see setting up of 50,000 classrooms in addition to 1.5 lakh smart classrooms, 20,000 computer laboratories and 5,000 Atal Tinkering labs in government schools.

❖ **Context**

- Recently, a study carried out by researchers at the **Centre for Ecological Sciences (CES)** and the **Divecha Centre for Climate Change (DCCC)**, IISc, has revealed that grazing animals hold the key to long-term soil carbon stability.

❖ **Key Highlights**

- A 16-year-long study reveals how **herbivores play a crucial role in the ecosystem** and the absence of grazing could have negative consequences to the global carbon cycle.
- Study :**
  - Study found that from one year to the next, **soil carbon levels fluctuate 30-40% more in the fenced plots** where animals were absent, compared to the **grazed plots where it remained more stable each year.**
  - The study revealed that **experimental removal of grazing led to an increase in the fluctuations** in the level of soil carbon.
  - Researchers found that a **key factor underlying the carbon fluctuations was nitrogen**, which, depending on the soil conditions, can either stabilize or destabilize the carbon pool.
- Significance of the Study :** It shows **conserving large mammalian herbivores** in grazing ecosystems remains a priority to **ensure the persistence of soil-carbon to achieve nature-based climate solutions.**

## Mission LiFE



❖ **Context**

- PM recently launched **Mission LiFE (Lifestyle for Environment).**

❖ **Key Highlights**

- Idea behind launching **Mission LiFE action plan** is to release a list of behaviour-change solutions/ideas aimed :
  - to drive climate-friendly behaviours in various sectors including water, transport, food, electricity, recycle and reuse at individuals, communities and organisations levels to decrease global carbon footprints.
- The list comprises local best practices from across the globe that can feasibly be scaled-up for driving behaviour/lifestyle change.
- India has decided to put 'LiFE' as a theme of the country's pavilion at 27th session of the UN climate change conference (COP27) in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt.
- The Mission LiFE booklets will be distributed among participating nations at the conference.
- The move will bring into focus the unsustainable lifestyle of rich nations whose "mindless" consumption of resources is considered one of the key factors behind high cumulative historical emissions of **greenhouse gases (GHGs).**

## Defense Industry Joint Working Group (JWG)



❖ **Context**

- Recently, Defense industry organizations from India and the U.K. have decided to create a new **Defense Industry Joint Working Group (JWG)** for more effective cooperation.

❖ **Key Highlights**

- The inaugural meeting was held on the sidelines of **DefExpo 2022** in Gandhinagar
- The JWG is **part of an ongoing initiative between the two countries** to strengthen the defense and security partnership.
- The U.K. recently issued its **first Open General Export License** in the Indo-Pacific region to India, shortening delivery times for defence procurement.
- Side Note :**
  - DefExpo-2022 has representation from 20 U.K. defense companies.
  - The U.K. industry is already integrating Indian defense suppliers into their global supply chain.

### Face to Face Centres



## Nihonshu



### ❖ Context

- Recently, **The Embassy of Japan**, New Delhi, has filed an application seeking a **Geographical Indication (GI) tag** for **nihonshu/Japanese sake**, an alcoholic beverage.

### ❖ Key Highlights

- This is the **first time for a product from Japan**, an application has been filed for a tag at the Geographical Indication Registry in Chennai.
- In Japan, **nihonshu is regarded as a special and valuable beverage made from fermenting rice**.
- People traditionally **drink nihonshu on special occasions**, such as festivals, weddings or funerals, but it is also consumed on a daily basis.
- Thus, it is an **integral part of the lifestyle** and culture in Japan.
- The sake market (almost all are nihonshu) is the **second largest brewed liquor (such as beer) market in Japan**.
- For making nihonshu **three main raw materials – rice, koji-kin (a type of fungal spore) and water** – are required.
- The rice and koji used should originate in Japan.

## Tamil Nadu's Mission to Save the Critically Endangered Vultures

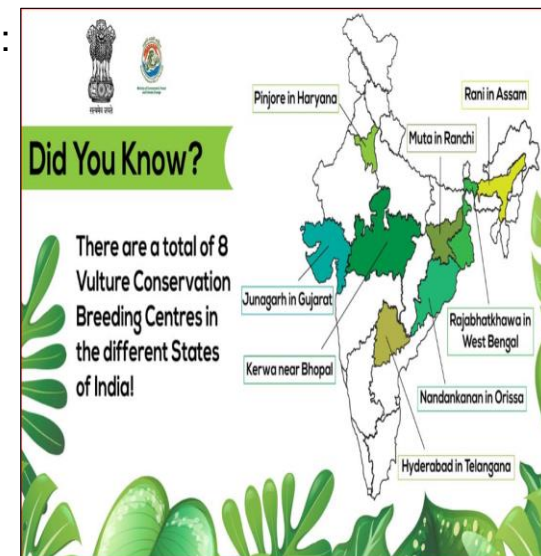


### ❖ Context

- A **State-level Committee** has been formed to set up an institutional framework for the effective conservation of vultures.

### ❖ Key Highlights

- In Tamil Nadu, four species of vultures are found :
  - the Oriental white-backed vulture,
  - the long-billed vulture,
  - the red-headed vulture,
  - and the Egyptian vulture.
- The committee, which has a two-year tenure, will take steps for monitoring the conservation and recovery of existing vulture sites and mapping of vulture populations across the State for creating safe zones.
- It will work to eliminate the use of toxic veterinary drugs, the main reason for vulture fatalities.
- **Environmental Significance:** Vultures play an extremely important role as nature's scavengers, keeping the environment clean.
  - Prevention of poisoning of cattle carcasses, the principal food of vultures, is also one of the responsibilities of the newly formed committee.
- **IUCN Status:** Critically Endangered.



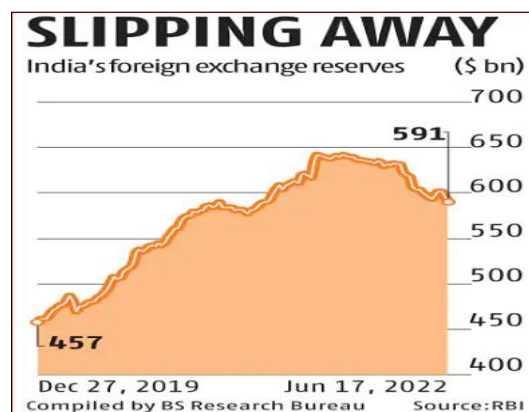
## India's Foreign Reserves



### ❖ Context

- India's forex reserves have depleted by \$109.58 billion from \$642.45 billion seen on September 3, 2021.

### ❖ What is the purpose of the Foreign Exchange Reserves?



- To ensure that the RBI has backup funds if the rupee rapidly devalues or becomes altogether insolvent.
- If the value of the rupee decreases due to an increase in demand for foreign currency, then the RBI can and does sell the dollar in the Indian money market so that rupee depreciation can be checked.
- A good stock of forex establishes a good image for the country at the international level as trading countries can be sure about their payments, thus helping in attracting foreign trade.

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## Face to Face Centres