



08 November 2023

National and International News

SC seeks data on donations through electoral bonds, reserves verdict on scheme

Context

The Supreme Court gave the Election Commission of India (EC) two weeks to produce updated data on contributions received by political parties through the electoral bonds scheme.

About Electoral Bond Scheme

- The electoral bond scheme was launched by the Union government in **2018**.
- It is a **bearer instrument, like a promissory note** that can be bought by any Indian citizen or company incorporated in India.
- The citizen or corporate can then donate the same to any eligible political party of his/her choice.
- The bonds are **similar to bank notes** that are payable to the bearer on demand and are free of interest.
- An individual or party is allowed to purchase these bonds digitally or through cheque.
- EBs are issued/purchased for any value, in multiples of **Rs 1,000, Rs 10,000, Rs 1,00,000, Rs 10,00,000 and Rs 1,00,00,000**.
- The electoral bonds are available for purchase for 10 days at the beginning of every quarter.
- **SBI** is the only bank authorized to sell these bonds.
- Anonymous cash donations were capped at Rs 2,000.
- EBs have a life of only 15 days during which it can be used for making donations to political parties.

Eligibility for Bonds

- Only political parties registered under **Section 29A of the Representation of the People Act, 1951** and which secured not less than 1% of votes polled in the last general election to the House of the People or the Legislative Assembly of the State, are eligible to receive electoral bonds.
- The bond can be encashed by an eligible political party only through a designated bank account with the authorized bank.
- The political parties have to disclose the amount to the Election Commission.
- The electoral bonds will not bear the name of the donor.



UNESCO Man and the Biosphere (MAB) programme



- It is an **intergovernmental scientific programme** launched in 1971 by UNESCO to establish a scientific basis for enhancing the relationship between people and their environments.
- Under the programme, UNESCO has established the **World Network of Biosphere Reserves(WNBR)**.
- Biosphere reserves are nominated by national governments.
- If selected by UNESCO, they are included in the WNBR.
- There are **12 biosphere reserves of India** which have been recognized internationally under **Man and Biosphere(MAB) Reserve program**.
- These are:
 1. Nilgiri(First one to be included)
 2. Gulf of Mannar
 3. Sunderban
 4. Nanda Devi
 5. Nokrek
 6. Pachmarhi
 7. Similipal
 8. Achanakmar – Amarkantak
 9. Great Nicobar
 10. Agasthyamala
 11. Khangchendzonga (2018) and
 12. Panna(2020).

World Biosphere Reserve Day



Key points:

- This day celebrates the role of biosphere reserves in conserving biodiversity and promoting sustainable development.
- **Established by UNESCO in 2022**, to be observed annually on November 3.
- Aims to raise awareness, share best practices, and showcase achievements of the **World Network of Biosphere Reserves (WNBR)**.
- The theme for 2023 was **#ItsAboutLife**.

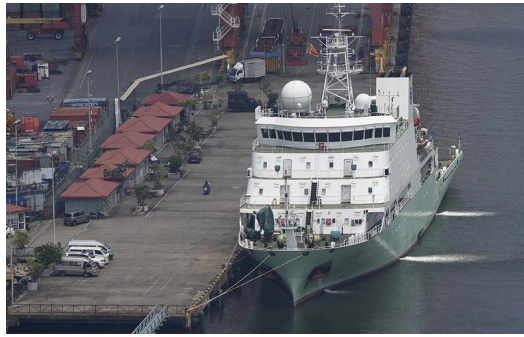
Chinese vessel begins research off the coast of Sri Lanka amid India's concerns

Context

Chinese research vessel Shiyan 6, amid concerns raised by India and the U.S., is set to begin its two-day research off the Sri Lankan coast

Key points

- The research will be pursued off Sri Lanka's western coast, and in collaboration with Sri Lanka's **National Aquatic Resources Research and Development**



- Agency (NARA) and the University of Ruhuna**
- It is marine scientific research.

Climate finance

- It refers to local, national, or transnational financing—drawn from public, private and alternative sources of financing—that seeks to support mitigation and adaptation actions that will address climate change.
- The **UNFCCC, Kyoto Protocol, and the Paris Agreement** call for financial assistance from Parties with more financial resources (Developed Countries) to those that are less endowed and more vulnerable (Developing Countries).

Kerala Regional News

Ayurveda fest from Dec 1 to 5



Context:

- The Fifth Global Ayurveda Festival (GAF 2023) will be held in Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala, India from December 1 to 5, 2023.
- The festival is being organized by a consortium of Ayurveda fraternity with support from the Government of India - **Ministry of AYUSH, Ministry of External Affairs, Ministry of Tourism, and Government of Kerala.**
- The **theme of the festival is "Emerging Challenges in Healthcare & a Resurgent Ayurveda."**

Foreign students' admission in Kerala University records a new high



In News:

- The number of international students enrolled at **Kerala University** has significantly increased this academic year, with **81 foreign students** admitted compared to 49 students the previous year.

Key Points:

- The university received applications from 1,600 candidates from 45 countries, and the most popular courses among international students were **computer science, management studies, and commerce.**



Daily Current Affairs Encyclopedia

- However, the influx of students has led to a shortage of hostel rooms for female students, prompting the university to seek private facilities and construct a new hostel block.

Revival of K-Rail project



In News:

- **530-km North-south semi high speed rail project (K-Rail)** is reconsidered.
- The Central Railway Board has shot off a missive to the Southern Railway to **"urgently"** talk to the Kerala Rail Development Corporation Limited on the Rs-64,000-crore project and submit detailed comments "at the earliest."

Key Points:

- The K-Rail project is a proposed **semi-high-speed rail corridor connecting Kasaragod and Thiruvananthapuram, the northern and southernmost districts** of Kerala, India.
- The project is being undertaken by the **Kerala Rail Development Corporation (KRDCL)**, a joint venture between the Government of Kerala and the Ministry of Railways.
- The K-Rail project is expected to reduce travel time between **Kasaragod and Thiruvananthapuram to just over 4 hours**, compared to the current 10-12 hours by train.
- The project will also provide a much-needed boost to the economy of Kerala, creating jobs and promoting tourism.

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