



21 May 2024

National and 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.**



### 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



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.



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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<p><b>Orcas</b></p>	<p><b>Context:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Two individuals were rescued after their 15-meter-long sailing yacht was sunk by a group of <b>orcas, also known as killer whales</b>, in the <b>Strait of Gibraltar</b>.</li> </ul> <p><b>Orcas (Killer Whales)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Scientific Name:</b> Orcinus orca</li> <li><b>Classification:</b> Largest member of the oceanic dolphin family; a toothed whale.</li> <li><b>Unique Feature:</b> Distinct black-and-white patterned body.</li> <li><b>Distribution:</b> Inhabit various marine environments, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Arctic regions</li> <li>Antarctic regions</li> <li>Tropical seas</li> </ul> </li> <li><b>Social Behavior:</b> Highly social animals.</li> <li>Some populations live in stable, matrilineal family groups called pods.</li> <li><b>Conservation Status:</b> Data Deficient (International Union for Conservation of Nature).</li> <li><b>Threats:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Habitat loss</li> <li>Pollution (particularly by PCBs)</li> <li>Capture for marine mammal parks</li> <li>Conflicts with human fisheries</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
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## Kerala Regional News

<p><b>District Disaster Management Authority (DDMA)</b></p>	<p><b>Why in news?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The <b>District Disaster Management Authority (DDMA)</b> has issued an <b>orange alert for Kollam district</b> on Monday.</li> <li>Residents living in risky areas should relocate to safer places as per the instructions of the officials in charge.</li> </ul> <p><b>About DDMA:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Establishment:</b> The DDMA is constituted under the <b>Disaster Management Act, 2005</b>, for <b>each district in India</b>.</li> <li><b>Composition:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Chairperson:</b> The <b>District Magistrate or District</b></li> </ul> </li> </ul>
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	<p><b>Collector</b> serves as the Chairperson.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Co-Chairperson:</b> The <b>elected representative</b> of the local authority (e.g., Mayor).</li> <li>○ <b>Members:</b> Representatives from various key departments such as police, fire services, health, public works, and civil defense.</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Receive funds from the state government</b> for disaster management activities.</li> <li>● <b>Functions:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Planning:</b> Prepare and implement district-level disaster management plans.</li> <li>○ <b>Coordination:</b> Coordinate efforts among different departments and agencies for effective disaster response.</li> <li>○ <b>Training and Awareness:</b> Organize training programs and awareness campaigns for disaster preparedness.</li> <li>○ <b>Resource Management:</b> Ensure availability and proper utilization of resources such as shelters, food, and medical supplies during disasters.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>Idukki Mahila Cardamom Producer Company Limited (IMCPCL)</b></p>	<p><b>Why in news?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● A <b>collective of women cardamom farmers</b> has established a <b>cardamom auction company</b>.</li> <li>● The company is under the auspices of the <b>Spices Board of India</b>.</li> </ul> <p><b>Key points:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● This is the <b>first such company to be fully controlled by women</b>.</li> <li>● The company is named <b>Idukki Mahila Cardamom Producer Company Limited (IMCPCL)</b>.</li> <li>● The board of IMCPCL <b>comprises 49 women cardamom farmers</b>.</li> <li>● The <b>company's motto is not to use artificial color in cardamom and not to support using unauthorized pesticides in cardamom plantations</b>.</li> <li>● The new company's <b>first auction was held at the Puttady Spices Park</b>.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Cyber security initiative</b></p>	<p><b>Why in news?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The <b>National Institute of Technology, Calicut (NIT-C)</b> organised a <b>short-term training programme (STTP)</b> on <b>'Network and Security'</b> for <b>Kerala Police officers</b>.</li> <li>● The programme was <b>organised jointly by the Centre for Information Technology, Research and Automation (CITRA)</b> and the <b>Centre for Continuing Education and Skill Development (CCESD)</b>.</li> </ul> <p><b>Key points:</b></p>



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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The NIT-C and the Kerala Police Cyberdome had recently signed a memorandum of understanding to strengthen cybersecurity initiatives.</li> <li>• The focus of this collaboration is to enhance the efficiency of cybercrime investigations and provide comprehensive support to the public.</li> <li>• It will also ensure the availability of technical experts and cyber professionals in digital information technology fields.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Emblica chakrabartyi</b></p> 	<p><b>Why in news?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scientists from SNM College Maliankara, Ernakulam, National Botanical Research Institute, Lucknow, and King Fahd University, UAE have discovered a new plant species.</li> <li>• The new species, named <b>Emblica chakrabartyi</b>, was found in Adichilthotti within the Edamalayar forest range of Kerala.</li> </ul> <p><b>Key points:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The species belongs to the <b>gooseberry (Phyllanthaceae) family</b> and has been named after <b>Tapas Chakrabarty</b>, a former scientist at the Botanical Survey of India, for his contribution to the study on Phyllanthaceae.</li> <li>• The discovery has been published in <b>John Wiley &amp; Sons’ International Journal, Nordic Journal of Botany, from Sweden.</b></li> </ul> <p><b>About plant:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The <b>flowering and fruiting</b> occur during <b>December to June.</b></li> <li>• Generally <b>growing as shrubs in tropical rain forests</b>, <b>55 species of the genus Emblica</b> have been recorded all around the world.</li> <li>• The new plant is the <b>eleventh from India.</b></li> </ul>
<p><b>Delimitation process in local self-government institutions (LSGIs)</b></p>	<p><b>Why in news?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Kerala state government has decided to begin the delimitation process in local self-government institutions (LSGIs) ahead of the local body elections scheduled in 2025.</li> <li>• <b>Wards in various LSGIs</b> will be divided and <b>new boundaries fixed as per Census-2011.</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Previously, wards were fixed as per the data of <b>Census-2001.</b></li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>Key points:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The <b>population criteria for fixing of wards</b> will see a <b>change under the new delimitation process.</b></li> <li>• At present, a <b>grama or block panchayat ward</b> has a</li> </ul>



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population of 2,500.

- As per the new system, if any ward in a grama or block panchayat has a population exceeding 2,500, it will be bifurcated and a new ward formed. The same goes for corporations, should the number of people in a ward exceed 10,000.

### About Delimitation committee:

- A delimitation committee under the State Election Commission (SEC), having four IAS officers as members, will carry out the fixing and re-fixing of wards.
- After delimitation, the committee will submit a report on the number of wards under each LSGs to the state government which will notify the new wards.

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