



01 March 2024

## National and International News

India's leopard population rises to 13,874



## Context:

- India's leopard population has increased to 13,874, with **Madhya Pradesh** leading the count at 3,907.
- Only three other States reported over 1,000 animals each — Maharashtra (1,985), Karnataka (1,879) and Tamil Nadu (1,070)

## Key points:

- The **Shivalik hills and the Gangetic plains recorded 3.4% yearly decline**, while **Central India and the Eastern Ghats, the Western Ghats and the hills of the northeast**, and the **Brahmaputra flood plains recorded growth of 1.5%, 1%, and 1.3% per annum respectively**
- **The decline in Uttarakhand's big cat population by 22%** is likely due to poaching and man-animal conflicts.
- **Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, and West Bengal collectively saw a 150% rise to 349 animals.**
- The survey focused on about 70% of the animals' expected habitat, including tiger reserves and protected forest areas.

PM-Surya Ghar: Muft Bijli Yojana

## Context:

- The Union Cabinet approved ₹75,021-crore package for the 'PM-Surya Ghar: Muft Bijli Yojana' (PM Free Electricity scheme) aimed at **promoting rooftop solar (RTS) installations in India.**

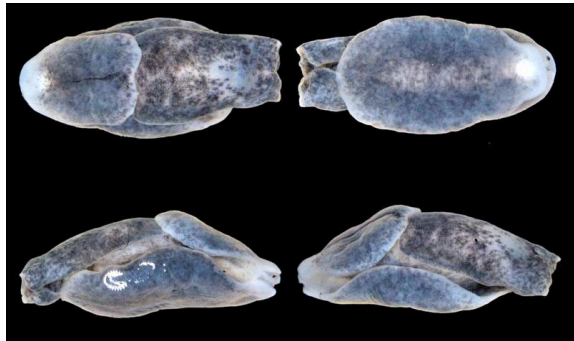
## Key points:

- Under the scheme, households can receive a subsidy of up to Rs 78,000 per household, along with 300 units of free power.
- The scheme, known as **PM-Surya Ghar: Muft Bijli Yojana, offers a central financial assistance (CFA) of 60% of the system cost for 2 kW systems and 40% of the additional system cost for systems between 2 kW and 3 kW capacity, with the CFA capped at 3 kW.**
- This initiative is expected to help households save on electricity bills and generate additional income by selling surplus power to DISCOMs.
- The scheme, running from **2023-24 to 2026-27**, aims to achieve a target of one crore households.
- Additionally, subsidies will be provided to resident



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ZSI names a newly discovered sea slug after President Murmu



- welfare associations (RWAs) and group housing societies for solar-powered lighting.
- Out of the **targeted 45 GW solar capacity, 30 GW will be allocated for domestic housing requirements.**
- By 2025, rooftop solar panels will be installed in all government buildings.

Context:

- The Zoological Survey of India (ZSI) has named a newly discovered **sea slug, Melanochlamys droupadi, after President Droupadi Murmu.**

Key points:

- This head-shield sea slug, characterized by a **ruby red spot**, was identified by researchers.
- **Melanochlamys droupadi**, a species found exclusively along the **West Bengal and Odisha** coasts, features a **short, blunt, cylindrical body with a smooth dorsal surface, including two dorsal shields named the anterior cephalic and posterior shield.**
- **Melanochlamys droupadi** is a small **invertebrate**, reaching a **maximum length of 7 mm**, with a **brownish-black color and a ruby red spot at the hind end.**
- It is **hermaphroditic** and typically crawls in the intertidal zone, leaving crawl marks on sandy beaches.
- The species reproduces between **November and January.**
- Although species of the **Melanochlamys** genus are primarily found in temperate regions of the Indo-Pacific Oceanic realm, three species, including **Melanochlamys droupadi**, are distributed in tropical regions.
- According to the researchers, live **Melanochlamys droupadi** animals secrete transparent mucus to form a sheath that prevents sand grains from entering the parapodial space.
- They crawl beneath smooth sand, creating a moving capsule where the body is rarely visible.

37th African Union Summit

Context:

During the 37th African Union Summit, African leaders



underscored the imperative for overhauling the global financial framework to more effectively address the unique challenges faced by African nations, particularly in relation to climate change and advancement.

**Key points:****Launch of 'Africa Club':**

- The establishment of the **'Africa Club', comprising African-owned and managed multilateral financial institutions**, aimed at realigning financial operations with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Agenda 2063 of the AU.
- The objective includes **introducing innovative financial tools** and fostering collaboration to cater to the specific requirements of African countries.

**Establishment of African Union Financial Institutions:**

- Leaders reiterated the necessity for creating an **African Monetary Union by instituting three AU financial entities: the African Central Bank, the African Monetary Fund, and the African Investment Bank.**
- Despite historical challenges, there was a proposal to evaluate the feasibility of establishing a Pan-African Stock Exchange.


**African Leaders' Call for Financial System Reforms:**

- Leaders outlined key priorities for rectifying **structural imbalances in the global financial setup**, including resolving the debt crisis, augmenting grants and concessional funding to Africa, redirecting **Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) from the IMF to African financial institutions**, and enhancing African representation in global decision-making forums.
- A commitment was made to pursue an **ambitious green growth agenda for Africa.**

**Presidential Dialogue on Reforming Africa's Global Financial Architecture:**

- Heads of state deliberated on strategies to **meet Africa's financial requisites, stressing the need to triple concessional resources from the IMF and World Bank to African development banks.**
- They advocated for rerouting IMF SDRs to multilateral development banks for climate action financing and for including middle-income countries in the G20 Common Framework for debt restructuring.



	<p><b>Proposals by the President of Ghana:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ghana's President suggested that <b>30% of all African reserves held in non-African banks be allocated to African multilateral financial institutions.</b></li> <li>Additionally, he proposed designating these institutions as 'AU agencies' to signify unified endorsement from all AU member states.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Auction of Critical Minerals</b></p>	<p><b>Context:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>India has commenced the second phase of its auction for critical minerals valued at <b>₹30 trillion rupees (approximately \$362 billion)</b>, according to Mines Minister Pralhad Joshi.</li> <li>This auction includes <b>18 blocks located in eight states and involves minerals such as cobalt, nickel, and graphite.</b></li> </ul> <p><b>About:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Critical minerals are minerals <b>deemed vital for both economic growth and national security.</b></li> <li>A mineral earns this label when the likelihood of a supply shortfall and its potential impact on the economy is comparatively greater than for other raw materials.</li> <li>This risk assessment ideally considers factors such as import reliance, recyclability, and substitutability of the mineral in question.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Roen olmi</b></p> 	<p><b>Context:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Researchers in Goa have achieved a significant breakthrough by <b>producing gold nanoparticles from a wild mushroom species known as Termitomyces</b>, which is popularly consumed in the coastal state.</li> <li>The mushrooms, locally called '<b>roen olmi</b>' and <b>growing on termite hills</b>, have been cultured in a pure three-dimensional pelletised form for this purpose.</li> </ul> <p><b>About:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Roan Olmi is a mushroom species that falls under the <b>Termitomyces genus.</b></li> <li>In Goa, it's commonly referred to as 'roen olmi' and is a favored edible wild mushroom, particularly relished during the monsoon season.</li> </ul> <p><b>Habitat and Proliferation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Roan Olmi mushrooms thrive on termite mounds</li> </ul>



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and are dependent on termites for their growth, lacking an independent existence.

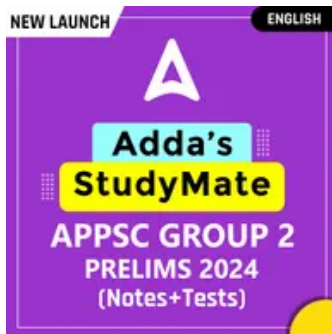
- They are native to the **Western Ghats**, where the dense forest canopy and high humidity create a perfect environment for their proliferation.

### Ecological Impact

- Roen Olmi contributes significantly to forest and grassland ecosystems by transforming half of the dead plant matter into **nutrient-dense soil**.
- It serves as a **potent bio degrading fungus**.

### Nutritional and Health Benefits

- Termitomyces species, including Roen Olmi, are **edible and are valued for their unique texture, taste, nutritional composition, and medicinal benefits**.
- They exhibit **antioxidant and antimicrobial properties**.
- Their **ethno-medicinal significance** is acknowledged in various indigenous communities across Asia and Africa.



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