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CURRENT AFFAIRS

1. NEW NIGHT FROG SPECIES

Scientists have discovered a new frog species from Kozhikode's **Malabar Wildlife Sanctuary**. The frog species, named **Mewa Singh's Night frog**, belongs to a genus **endemic to the Western Ghats**. The frog has been named after wildlife scientist Mewa Singh, in honour of his contributions to behavioural ecology and primate studies.

2. NO MORE FREE CONVERSION

The Govt has stopped the scheme of free conversion of PIO cards to OCI. The scheme of converting the Person of Indian Origin (PIO) cards to OCI cards free of cost comes to an end as a decision has been taken not to give any more extension beyond December 31. However, the change of PIO cards to OCI cards would continue on payment of fees.

3. FIRST DRAFT OF NRC

The much-awaited first draft of the National Register of Citizens (NRC) was published with the names of 1.9 crore people out of the 3.29 crore total applicants in Assam recognising them as legal citizens of India. The NRC is being compiled following a Supreme Court directive to identify illegal immigrants in Assam.

Background: Assam, which faced influx from Bangladesh since the early 20th century, is the only state having an NRC, first prepared in 1951. The Supreme Court, which is monitoring the entire process, had ordered that the first draft of the NRC be published by December 31 after completing the scrutiny of over two crore claims along with that of around 38 lakh people whose documents were suspect.

What's the issue?

- ⊙ The NRC was last updated in Assam way back in 1951. Then, it had recorded 80 lakh citizens in the State. Since then, the process of identification of illegal immigrants in Assam has been debated and become a contentious issue in the State's politics.
- ⊙ A six-year agitation demanding identification and deportation of illegal immigrants was launched by the All Assam Students' Union (AASU) in 1979. It culminated with the signing of the Assam Accord on August 15, 1985.

About NRC: The National Register of Citizens (NRC) contains names of Indian citizens. The NRC was prepared in 1951, after the Census of 1951. It was prepared by recording particulars of all the persons enumerated during that Census.

4.TWO NEW GINGER SPECIES FOUND IN THE NORTHEAST

Scientists have discovered two new species of Ginger in easternmost districts, Ukhrul in Manipur and Tuensang in Nagaland, both bordering Myanmar.

Hedychium chingmeianum, the species discovered in Tuensang district, is an **epiphytic plant** and grows on tall trees, while Caulokaempferia dinabandhuensis was found growing in rock crevices, boulders and humus rich soil in the **Shirui Hills**, where the highest peak stands at an elevation of 2,938 metres. Both the plants are from the family of Zingiberaceae, to which the commonly found Ginger (Zingiber officinale) belongs.

5.CONCERN OVER DELAY

A Parliamentary panel has expressed concern over delay in setting up of an ombudsman to deal with consumer grievances in the telecom sector despite the regulator TRAI recommending it twice.

Need for an ombudsman: As per the current trends, on an average around 10 million complaints are lodged with the TSPs each quarter and currently complaints are characterized by high volumes, low-value and from users in diverse geographic locations. Therefore, arrangements like ombudsman are required to address to consumers in a speedy manner. This is also necessary keeping in view of the major changes that has taken place in the Indian telecom sector in the recent past.

6.ARUNACHAL PRADESH-OPEN DEFECATION FREE

Arunachal Pradesh was officially declared Open Defecation Free (ODF) state. It is second State from Northeast, after Sikkim and overall fifth state after Himachal Pradesh, Kerala and Haryana to be declared ODF state.

7.URJA GANGA PROJECT

The gas pipeline project aims to provide piped cooking (PNG) gas to residents of the eastern region of the country and CNG gas for the vehicles.

- ② The project is being implemented by state-run gas utility GAIL. It envisages laying a 2,050-km pipeline connecting Jagdishpur (UP) to Haldia (West Bengal) by 2018.
- ② From Varanasi's perspective, 50,000 households and 20,000 vehicles will get cleaner and cheaper fuel PNG and CNG gas respectively.
- ② The project is considered as a major step towards collective growth and development of the Eastern region of India. Under it, overall 20 lakh households will get PNG connections.

8. PARKER SOLAR PROBE: HUMANITY'S FIRST VISIT TO A STAR

NASA's historic Parker Solar Probe mission will revolutionize our understanding of the sun, where changing conditions can propagate out into the solar system, affecting Earth and other worlds.

- ④ Parker Solar Probe will travel through the **sun's atmosphere**, closer to the surface than any spacecraft before it, facing brutal heat and radiation conditions — and ultimately providing humanity with the closest-ever observations of a star.
- ④ Parker Solar Probe will use **Venus' gravity** during seven flybys over nearly seven years to gradually bring its orbit closer to the sun. The spacecraft will fly through the sun's atmosphere as close as 3.9 million miles to our star's surface, well within the orbit of Mercury and more than seven times closer than any spacecraft has come before.
- ④ Flying into the outermost part of the sun's atmosphere, known as **the corona**, for the first time, Parker Solar Probe will employ a combination of **in situ measurements and imaging** to revolutionize our understanding of the corona and expand our knowledge of the origin and evolution of the solar wind. It will also make critical contributions to our ability to forecast changes in Earth's space environment that affect life and technology on Earth.
- ④ To perform these unprecedented investigations, the spacecraft and instruments will be protected from the sun's heat by a 4.5-inch-thick (11.43 cm) **carbon-composite shield**, which will need to withstand temperatures outside the spacecraft that reach nearly 2,500 F (1,377 C). The primary science goals for the mission are to trace how energy and heat move through the solar corona and to explore what accelerates the solar wind as well as solar energetic particles.