



## **DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS 26-02-2024**

### **GS-1**

1. Attukal pongala

### **GS-2**

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### **GS-3**

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## Attukal pongala

Syllabus: GS-1; Art and Culture

### Context

- *Thousands of brick hearths will be lit across Thiruvananthapuram city as women devotees offer the annual 'pongala' offering to the presiding deity of the **Attukal Bhagavathy Temple**.*



### History

- *Attukal Pongal is a festival dedicated to **Attukal Devi or Attukalamma**.*
- *It is one of the **largest women-centric festivals** celebrated in the country and millions of devotees gather during the festival to the temple to offer sweets and other offerings to the deity.*

### Rituals and significance

- *On the day of Attukal Pongal, women devotees start the day by taking a bath and preparing **kheer for the goddess**.*
- *Pongal means to boil over, and that's why, kheer is prepared in an earthen pot as an offering for the deity.*
- *According to the traditions of Attukal Pongal, the rituals should be performed by women only.*

- Millions of women devotees throng the streets of Thiruvananthapuram – the center for Attukal Pongal.
- The city decks up in light and enthusiasm.
- The ninth day of the ten-day festival is observed as Attukal Pongal Mahotsavam – one of the largest celebrations.
- The festival starts in the Malayalam month of Kumbham and ends with the sacrificial offering called **Kuruthitharpanam** at night.

## **Kala Azar**

**Syllabus: GS-2; Health, GS-3; General Disease**

### **Context**

- In a significant step forward towards eliminating Kala Azar — the second deadliest parasitic disease after malaria in the country — India has achieved the target of reporting less than one case per 10,000 population across all blocks in 2023.



### **About**

- *Kala-azar, also known as **visceral leishmaniasis (VL)**, is a fatal disease caused by a **protozoan parasite. It's the most severe form of leishmaniasis.***
- *Kala-azar is caused by **the bite of an infected female sandfly, Phlebotomus argentipes.***
- *The parasite is transmitted when blood containing it is drawn from an animal or human and then used to bite another person.*
- *Most cases occur in **Brazil, east Africa, and India.***

### Symptoms

- *Irregular fevers*
- *Weight loss*
- *Enlarged spleen and liver*
- *Anemia*
- *Dry, thin, and scaly skin*
- *Hair loss*
- *Grayish discoloration of the skin of hands, feet, abdomen, and face*

### Treatment

- *If left untreated, kala-azar is fatal in over 95% of cases.*
- *The first-line treatment for kala-azar in India is a single dose of **injectable liposomal amphotericin B** at 10mg/kg body weight. The Kala-Azar elimination program of India recommends this drug.*

### India's approach to eliminate kala azar

- *The Government of India's (GOI) Kala-azar Control Programme uses a mix of strategies to eliminate the disease:*
  - *Diagnosis and treatment*
  - *Case detection*
  - *Vector control*
  - *Behavioral change communication*
  - *Capacity building and monitoring and evaluation*
- *The Kala-azar Control Programme operates with a mix of strategies which include diagnosis and treatment, active and passive case detection, vector control, behavioural change communication, capacity building and monitoring and evaluation.*
- *11 Dec 2020, The Government of India (GOI) launched a centrally sponsored **kala-azar Control Programme in the endemic States in 1990-1991.***
- *The program also includes:*
  - *Liposomal amphotericin B as a single dose*



- *Liposomal amphotericin B in a single dose, combined with 7 days of oral miltefosine or 10 days of paromomycin*
- *The GOI launched the Kala-azar Control Programme in 1990-1991 in endemic states.*
- **The National Health Policy of 2002** *set a goal of eliminating kala-azar by 2010, which was later revised to 2015.*
- *As of 2023, the program's goal is to eliminate kala-azar, while the WHO NTD Road Map goal is 2030.*

## **Interpol**

### **Syllabus: GS-2: International Organisations.**

#### **Context:**

*Are Interpol's notices being politically exploited?*

#### **Concerns about Interpol's Notice System:**

- *Misuse of Interpol's notice system, particularly blue corner notices.*
- *Blue corner notices are less scrutinized than red corner notices.*
- *Critics argue misuse to target political refugees and dissidents.*

#### **Understanding Blue Corner Notices:**

- *Blue corner notices, also known as "enquiry notices," share critical crime-related information.*
- *Allows for obtaining criminal records, verifying identities, and locating individuals.*
- *Example: Blue notice issued to locate Nithyananda, a fugitive, in January 2020.*

#### **Differences from Red Corner Notices:**

- *Red corner notices are issued for extradition or lawful action against wanted criminals.*
- *Follow criminal convictions, while blue notices are issued prior to charges.*
- *Red notices can lead to arrests and other consequences.*

#### **Misuse Concerns and Examples:**

- *Accusations of Interpol's failure to enforce rules against political activities.*
- *Russia accused of targeting Kremlin opponents with red notices.*
- *Other countries like China, Iran, Turkey, and Tunisia also accused of abuse.*

### Response and Oversight:

- *Interpol toughened oversight of red notice system in response to criticism.*
- *However, vulnerabilities remain, especially with the issuance of blue notices.*

### Arguments for and Against:

- *Some argue for restraint in issuing notices to prevent misuse.*
- *Others, like Turkey, argue for more notices for effective police cooperation.*
- *Turkey criticized Interpol for not publishing red notices against Fethullah Gulen followers in 2021.*

### Interpol Overview:

- *International Criminal Police Organisation (Interpol) has 194 member countries.*
- *Serves as an information-sharing network to combat transnational crimes.*

## **Consumption Expenditure survey data**

### Syllabus: GS-3: Indian Economy –Consumption and demand trends.

#### Context:

- *After a 11-year gap, Centre discloses key consumption expenditure survey data.*

#### What is consumption expenditure survey data?

- *The **National Sample Survey Office** conducts surveys on household consumption expenditure approximately every five years.*
- *These surveys **provide insights into changes in consumption patterns** and are used to estimate poverty and inequality.*
- *They also **help in creating weighting diagrams for price indices** used to measure retail inflation and other macroeconomic indicators.*
- *The 2017-18 survey **results were not released due to concerns** about data quality, leaving the 2011-12 data as the latest available until the 2022-23 survey.*
- *The 2022-23 survey reveals an **increase in household consumption expenditure** from 2011-12 to 2022-23, both in rural and urban areas.*

### Major findings of the survey:

- *Rural household expenditure increased from Rs 1,430 to Rs 3,773, while urban household expenditure rose from Rs 2,630 to Rs 6,459.*
- *This translates to an annual increase of 3.1% in rural areas and 2.7% in urban areas at 2011-12 prices.*
- *Notably, as household incomes have risen, expenditure on food has decreased.*
- *In rural areas, the share of food expenditure dropped from 52.9% to 46.4%, and in urban areas from 42.6% to 39.2%.*
- *The decline in cereal expenditure has been particularly significant, from 10.7% to 4.9% in rural areas and from 6.6% to 3.6% in urban areas.*
- *Households are allocating a greater share of their budget to nutritional items such as eggs, fish, meat, milk, and fruits, as well as beverages, refreshments, and processed foods.*
- *Spending on beverages and processed foods now exceeds that on cereals and pulses combined.*
- *Milk and milk products have become the second highest category in the consumption basket.*
- *There's an increased allocation of spending towards education, health, conveyance, consumer durables, and services.*
- *As household incomes rise and expenditure on essential items decreases, discretionary spending is expected to increase further.*

### Utility of the data:

- *The release of detailed survey data enables understanding trends in poverty and inequality in India over the past decade.*
- *This period has seen significant economic changes, and the survey data will provide insights into their impact.*
- *The data will aid in updating the consumer price index, crucial for monetary policy decisions.*
- *Currently, the consumer price index assigns a weight of 12.35% to cereals in rural areas, but cereals now only account for 4.89% of the household consumption basket, highlighting the need for updating.*
- *The release of the survey data addresses a data gap in the country.*
- *It's imperative for the next government to continue this momentum, initiate the delayed census exercise, and strengthen the country's statistical system for better policy formulation.*

## **Kaziranga National Park**

**Syllabus: GS-3; Biodiversity**

### **Context**

- 1) **The National Board for Wildlife (NBWL)** has approved an elevated road over nine corridors used by the animals of Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve, usually during heavy floods.
- 2) After a gap of 75 years, an **endangered female Indian Gharial (*Gavialis gangeticus*)** was spotted in the Bishwanath stretch of the Brahmaputra under Kaziranga Tiger Reserve which brings cheers to nature lovers across the state.

### **About**

- Kaziranga National Park is a protected area in **Assam, India**.
- It's located in the floodplains of the Brahmaputra River, **between the Brahmaputra River and the Karbi (Mikir) Hills**.
- Kaziranga National Park famous for its **one-horned Rhinoceros** is located in Golaghat, Nagaon and Sonitpur districts of Assam.
- Kaziranga was designated a **UNESCO World Heritage site** in 1985.
- The park is known for its large population of one-horned rhinoceroses, as well as tigers, elephants, panthers, bears, and many birds.
- It's also home to Ganges River dolphins and gray pelicans.

### **The National Board for Wildlife (NBWL)**

- The National Board for Wildlife (NBWL) is a **statutory body** in India that is **responsible for the development and conservation of wildlife and forests**.
- The NBWL is also responsible for the long-term protection of India's biodiversity.
- The NBWL was established in 2003 under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972. It is a 47-member committee, chaired by the Prime Minister of India. The other members include:
  - 19 ex-officio members
  - Three Members of Parliament
  - Five NGOs
  - 10 ecologists, conservationists, and environmentalists
- The NBWL's Standing Committee ensures that Tiger Reserves and areas linking protected areas are not diverted for ecologically unsustainable uses.



## Indian Gharial (*Gavialis gangeticus*)



- The gharial (*Gavialis gangeticus*) is a crocodilian that is native to the Indian subcontinent. It is listed as **Critically Endangered by the IUCN Red List** and is also listed in **Schedule I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972**.
- The gharial's population has declined by up to 98% since the 1940s, and there are now fewer than 250 adult individuals remaining in the wild.
- The main threats to the gharial are:
  - Habitat loss due to human encroachment
  - Unsustainable fishing practices
  - Hunting
  - Habitat modification by river damming and water extraction
- The gharial is one of the **longest living crocodilians**, with mature females measuring 2.6 to 4.5 meters (8 ft 6 in to 14 ft 9 in) long.
- The gharial is also known as the gavial or fish-eating crocodile.

## Other National Parks in Assam

