



## **DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS 14-04-2025**

### **GS-1**

1. Gabon

### **GS-2**

2. PM-POSHAN Scheme (Pradhan Mantri Poshan Shakti Nirman)

### **GS-3**

3. Sunbird
4. Sea Lions

## Gabon

Syllabus: GS-1; Geography- Mapping, GS-2; International Relations

### Context

- Gabon votes in first presidential election since the 2023 coup

### Geography

- **Location:** West Central Africa, along the Atlantic Ocean.
- **Borders:**
  - **North:** Equatorial Guinea
  - **North & East:** Cameroon
  - **East & South:** Republic of the Congo
  - **West:** Atlantic Ocean
- **Capital:** Libreville
- **Major Rivers:** Ogooué River
- **Climate:** Equatorial – hot and humid, with significant rainfall; tropical rainforest climate.



## Political & Historical Background

- **Independence:** From **France on 17 August 1960**
- **Colonial Past:** Former French colony
- **Current Political System:** Presidential Republic
- **Recent Political Development:**
  - In 2023, **military coup** removed President **Ali Bongo Ondimba** after disputed elections.
  - **General Brice Oligui Nguema** took over as transitional leader.

## Demographics

- **Population:** ~2.3 million (low population density)
- **Ethnic Groups:** Fang (largest), Myene, Punu, Teke, others
- **Language:**
  - **Official:** French
  - **Local languages:** Fang, Myene, and others
- **Religion:** Predominantly Christian

## Economy

- **Resource-rich country:**
  - **Petroleum:** Major contributor to GDP and exports
  - **Manganese** and **uranium** also significant
  - Timber (Rainforest coverage ~85%)
- **Part of:** OPEC (joined in 1975, left in 1996, **rejoined in 2016**)
- **High Urbanization:** Libreville is highly developed
- **Economic Challenges:** Oil dependency, unemployment, inequality

## Environment & Biodiversity

- **Forest Cover:** ~85% of total land
- **Part of Congo Basin Rainforest**
- **Notable for:**
  - Rich **biodiversity**
  - Several **national parks** (e.g., Loango, Ivindo)
- **Conservation Efforts:**
  - Focus on **eco-tourism** and **carbon credit programs**
  - Hosting **UN-backed climate and conservation projects**

## International Relations

- **African Union** and **ECCAS** (Economic Community of Central African States) member
- Good relations with **France** (former colonial power)
- Participates in **climate diplomacy**

## PM-POSHAN Scheme (Pradhan Mantri Poshan Shakti Nirman)

### Syllabus: GS-2; Government policies and Interventions

#### Context

- Centre has enhanced the material cost by 9.50 percent under the Pradhan Mantri Poshan Shakti Nirman (PM POSHAN) Scheme.
- The scheme is a **centrally sponsored scheme** under which hot cooked meals are served to over eleven crore students studying in Balvatika and classes 1 to 8 in government and government-aided schools.

#### More to know

- **Launched:** September 2021
- **Nodal Ministry:** Ministry of Education
- **Duration:** 2021–22 to 2025–26
- **Replaced:** Mid-Day Meal (MDM) Scheme

#### Objectives

- Improve **nutritional status of children**.
- Enhance **enrollment, retention, and attendance in schools**.
- Promote **social equity** by providing meals to all children irrespective of socio-economic status.

#### Coverage

- Benefits around 11.8 crore children.
- Covers children from pre-primary (Balvatikas) to Class VIII.
- Implemented in government and government-aided schools across India.

### Meal Norms

- **Primary (Classes I–V):** 450 calories & 12g protein per child per day.
- **Upper Primary (Classes VI–VIII):** 700 calories & 20g protein per child per day.
- One hot cooked meal is served on all school days.

### Funding and Financials

- **Total Outlay:** ₹1.31 lakh crore for five years.
- **Centre's Share:** ₹54,000+ crore.
- **Cost Sharing Ratio:**
  - 60:40 for general states.
  - 90:10 for northeastern and Himalayan states.
  - 100% central funding for UTs without legislatures.

### Key Components

- **Cooking Cost:** Covers ingredients like pulses, vegetables, oil, etc.
- **Cook-cum-Helper Honorarium:** ₹1,000/month for 10 months/year.
- **Transportation Assistance:** For transporting food grains to schools.
- **Fortified Rice:** Gradual implementation to tackle micronutrient deficiencies.

### Monitoring and Evaluation

- Regular health check-ups and measurement of BMI and hemoglobin levels.
- Mandatory social audits and feedback mechanisms.
- School Nutrition Gardens encouraged to promote eco-friendly practices.

## Sunbird

### Syllabus: GS-3; Science & Technology

#### Context

- Sunbird, a nuclear fusion powered rocket could help reach Pluto in just 4 years

#### What is Sunbird?

- **Sunbird** is a **nuclear fusion-powered rocket** being developed by **Pulsar Fusion**, a British startup.

- It aims to revolutionize **interplanetary travel** by using nuclear fusion, the same process that powers the Sun.



#### Key Features and Capabilities:

1. **Speed:**
  - Could potentially reach **805,000 km/h**.
  - Faster than **NASA's Parker Solar Probe** (max speed ~692,000 km/h), currently the fastest human-made object.
2. **Potential Uses:**
  - Initially to be used for **satellite shuttling in Earth orbit**.
  - Future use in transporting **heavy payloads (up to 2,000 kg)** to **Mars** in about **6 months**.
  - Could reduce travel time to **Pluto to just 4 years**.
3. **Design Concept:**
  - Will **not launch independently**.
  - Will be **attached to larger spacecraft**, acting as an **interplanetary propulsion unit**.
  - Envisioned to be part of a **network with charging stations**, for example, in low Earth orbit and near Mars.
4. **Timeline:**
  - **Orbital test planned for 2027**.

### Scientific Significance:

- **Fusion in Space:**
  - Fusion is challenging on Earth due to atmospheric constraints.
  - Space offers a **vacuum environment**, making it more **suitable for fusion reactions**.
- **Challenges:**
  - **Fusion reactors are bulky and difficult to miniaturize.**
  - High temperatures and energy requirements make construction and operation complex.

### Other Players in the Field:

- Similar efforts underway by:
  - **Helicity Space**
  - **General Atomics** (Backed by **NASA** and **Lockheed Martin**)
  - Planned tests also around **2027**.

## Sea Lions

### Syllabus: GS-3; Species Conservation

#### Context

- An algal bloom near California's coast has caused usually friendly sea lions to become aggressive and attack humans — a behaviour that has been reported to be unprecedented and 'demonic'.



## Basic Information

- Classification:
  - Class: Mammalia
  - Order: Carnivora
  - Family: Otariidae (Eared seals)
  - Scientific Name (Common species): *Zalophus californianus* (California sea lion)
- Physical Traits:
  - Have external ear flaps (unlike true seals)
  - Use large flippers to 'walk' on land
  - Known for intelligence, social behavior, and vocalizations (barking)

## Habitat and Distribution

- Found along coastal waters of the Pacific Ocean
- Common regions include:
  - Western North America (California to Alaska)
  - Galápagos Islands
  - Japan, Australia, New Zealand (for other species)

## Diet and Behavior

- Carnivorous: Feed on fish, squid, octopus
- Excellent divers and swimmers
- Highly social animals; live in large colonies

## Ecological Significance

- Apex predators in marine food chains
- Indicator species for marine ecosystem health
- Interact with commercial fisheries, sometimes leading to human-wildlife conflict

## Threats

- Climate change affects prey availability
- Marine pollution such as plastic ingestion and oil spills
- Fishing gear entanglement
- Illegal hunting in some regions

### Conservation Status

- Varies by species:
  - California sea lion: Least Concern (IUCN Red List)
  - Australian sea lion: Endangered
- Protected under:
  - Marine Mammal Protection Act (USA)
  - National conservation programs (in countries like Australia)