UPSC Daily Current Affairs 17 May 2021

1. Cyclone Tauktae

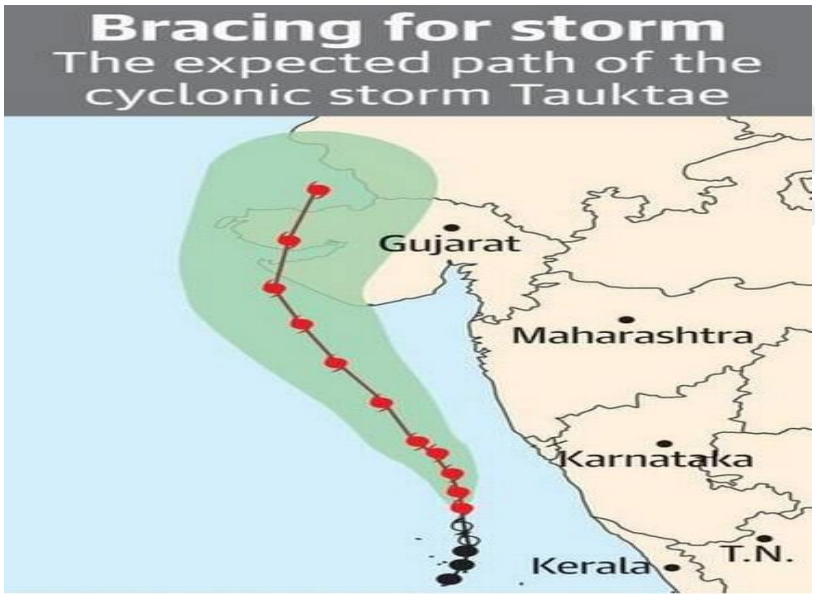
(Topic- GS Paper I–Geography, Source- The Hindu)

Why in the news?

- Recently, at least seven people were killed as Tauktae intensified into a “very severe cyclonic storm” and moved northwards towards Gujarat, leaving behind a trail of destruction – damaging houses, uprooting trees and snapping power lines – in the coastal districts of Kerala, Karnataka and Goa.

About Cyclone Tauktae

- It is formed over Southeast Arabian Sea.
- The word **Tauktae** has been suggested by Myanmar.
- It means 'gecko', a distinctively vocal lizard, in the Burmese language.



How are Cyclones Named?

- The World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) maintains rotating lists of names, which are appropriate for each Tropical Cyclone basin.
- If a cyclone is particularly deadly or costly, then its name is retired and replaced by another.
- The name list is proposed by the National Meteorological and Hydrological Services (NMHS) of the WMO members of a specific region and approved by the respective tropical cyclone regional bodies at their annual or biennial sessions.

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Why name cyclones?

- Tropical cyclones are named to provide ease of communication between forecasters and the general public regarding forecasts, watches, and warnings.
- The names make it easier for the media to report on tropical cyclones and increase community preparedness.
- As per WMO, the use of short, distinctive names in written as well as spoken communications is quicker and less subject to error than the older more cumbersome latitude-longitude identification methods.

Naming cyclones in the Bay of Bengal and Arabian Sea

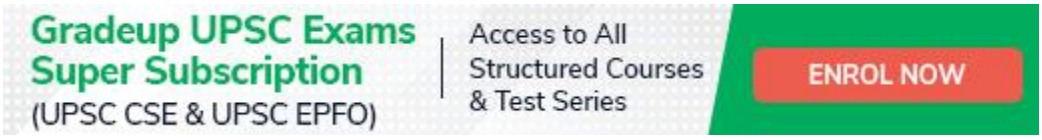
- The World Meteorological Organisation/United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (WMO/UNESCAP) Panel on Tropical Cyclones agreed in principle to assign names to the tropical cyclones in the Bay of Bengal and the Arabian Sea.
- It was decided to name cyclones in Bay of Bengal and Arabian Sea during WMO/ESCAP's 27th session held in Muscat, Sultanate of Oman, in 2000.
- The naming of the tropical cyclones over the north Indian Ocean commenced from September 2004, with names provided by eight members.
- The members are Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, Maldives, Oman, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Thailand.
- In September 2018, it was decided to prepare a fresh list of names of tropical cyclones including representation from five new member countries, viz., Iran, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates and Yemen.

About Colour- Coded Weather Warning

- The India Meteorological Department issues colour-coded warnings to alert the public ahead of severe or hazardous weather conditions that can cause disruption or damage.

Different Colour Codes

a. **Green means No warning –**
   - In this there is no advisory is issued in such cases.
b. **Yellow means Be updated -**
   - It indicates severely bad weather panning across several days.
   - It also suggests that the weather could change for the worse causing disruption in day-to-day activities.
c. **Orange/ Amber means Be prepared**
   - It is issued as a warning of extremely bad weather with the potential of disruption.
   - It is also a sign for people to prepare for evacuation and protect themselves from bad weather.
d. **Red means Take action**
   - It is issued when the extremely bad weather conditions are certainly going to disrupt life.



- In this case, people must take all measures to protect their families and follow the instructions of local authorities and disaster-response teams.

2. Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group

(Topic- GS Paper II–Governance, Source- The Hindu)

Why in the news?

- Recently, twenty-one more members of the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG) in Odisha were afflicted with coronavirus, taking their number to 45.

More on the news

- For these 10 more members of the Bonda tribe and 14 of the Dongaria Kondha community tested positive for the virus.

About Dongaria Kondha community

- The Dongaria Kondha tribe lives in Niyamgiri Hills on the border of Rayagada and Koraput districts.
- They live on hill tops and rarely come to plains.

About Bonda Community

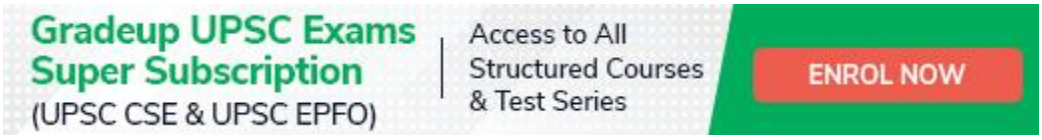
- Bonda is one of the ancient tribes of Odisha and the community is divided into two groups, the Lower Bonda and the Upper Bonda.
- While Lower Bondas live on the foothills of Bonda hills, the Upper ones, mostly untouched by the modern civilization, live in the hill range in Khairaput block of Malkangiri district.

Odisha and Tribes

- Odisha has among the largest and most diverse tribal populations in the country.
- Of the 62 tribal groups residing in Odisha, 13 are recognised as PVTGs.
- According to the 2011 Census, Odisha's share of the country's total tribal population was 9%. Tribals constitute 22.85% of State's population.

About Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups

- They are the more vulnerable among the tribal groups.
- Due to this factor, more developed and assertive tribal groups take a major chunk of the tribal development funds, because of which PVTGs need more funds directed for their development.
- In 1973, the **Dhebar Commission created Primitive Tribal Groups** (PTGs) as a separate category, which is less developed among the tribal groups.



- In 2006, the Government of India renamed the **Primitive Tribal Groups** as **Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups.**

The criteria for identifying Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups are: -

1. Pre-agricultural level of technology
2. Low level of literacy
3. Economic backwardness
4. A declining or stagnant population

Schemes for Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups

- Recently Ministry of Tribal Affairs implements the Scheme of "**Development of Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs)**" exclusively for them.
- Under the scheme, Conservation-cum-Development (CCD)/Annual Plans are to be prepared by each State/UT for their PVTGs based on their need assessment, which are then appraised and approved by the Project Appraisal Committee of the Ministry.

Note:

- Among the 75 listed PVTG's the **highest number are found in Odisha**

3. India calls for 'immediate de-escalation' of hostilities

(Topic- GS Paper II–International Relation, Source- India Today)

Why in the news?

- Recently, India called for an immediate de-escalation of the situation between Israel and Palestine at the first public United Nations Security Council.
- The meeting has been held since the current surge in hostilities between the two parties entered its seventh day, killing at least 149 people in Gaza and 10 in Israel, including many children.

More on the news

- India had already voiced its concern over the violence in Jerusalem at closed-door meetings of the 15- member council held earlier this week.
- India supported the efforts of the Quartet (UN, U.S., EU and Russia) and others, and expressed India's support to the "just Palestinian cause" and its "unwavering" support for the two-state solution

India's Stand on Israel-Palestine Issue

India - Israel Timeline

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1. 1948: India voted against the creation of Israel as a separate state.

2. May 1949: India voted against Israel in its admission to UN.

3. September 17, 1950: India announced recognition of Israel, two years after its creation.

4. 1992: Upon establishment of full diplomatic relations, embassies were opened in Tel Aviv.

7. 4-6 July 2017: Prime Minister Modi made the first ever official visit to Israel.

The relationship between the two nations was turned to 'strategic'.

Modi, however, did not stop at Ramallah in Palestine, a traditional stop for most foreign heads of state or dignitaries visiting Israel.

India – Palestine Timeline

1. 1974: India became the first non-Arab state to recognize Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO).

2. 1988: India was one of the first countries to recognize the State of Palestine.

3. 1996: India opened its Representative Office to the State of Palestine in Gaza. 2003: It was shifted to Ramallah. Unlike in Israel, India does not have an embassy in Palestine.

4. October 2011: India voted in favour of Palestine for its acceptance as a full member of UNESCO.

5. November 29, 2012: India co-sponsored the resolution that made Palestine a 'non-member state' of United Nations General Assembly.

6. April 2015: India supported the Bandung Declaration on Palestine at Asian African Commemorative Conference

7. September 2015: India supported installation of Palestine flag at UN premises.

4. Tamil Nadu Goondas Act

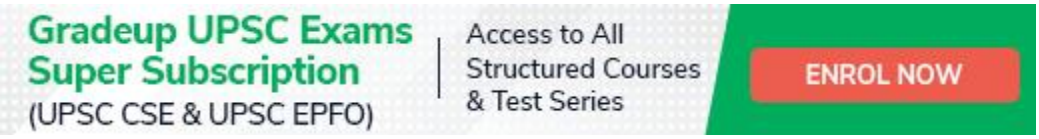
(Topic- GS Paper II–Social Issue, Source- India Express)

Why in the news?

- Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu has recently said that those hoarding and selling Remdesivir (a drug used in COVID-19 treatment) and oxygen cylinders at higher prices would be detained under the Goondas Act.

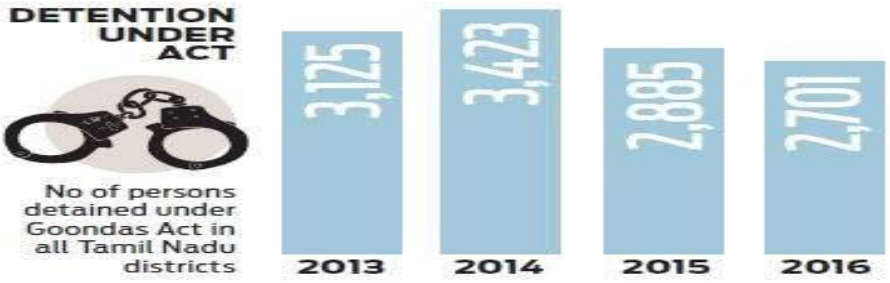
About the Goondas Act

- It is a type of preventive detention law that was first enacted in 1923 in Bengal.



- The law aims at a year-long preventive detention of habitual offenders.
- This enables the authorities to imprison persons without having to provide for a court trial.

Tamil Nadu's Goondas Act



Commissionerate figures

	Jurisdiction	2013	2014	2015	2016
1	Chennai	2,108	2,262	1,245	1,201
2	Coimbatore	64	47	66	59
3	Madurai	109	94	185	185
4	Trichy	45	39	40	33
5	Salem	48	71	95	93
6	Tiruppur	NA	24	41	23
7	Tirunelveli	30	35	77	41
	Total	2,404	2,572	1,749	1,635

Note: 2017 data not available

- Goondas Act in Tamil Nadu is known as the Tamil Nadu Prevention of Dangerous Activities of Bootleggers, Drug Offenders, Goondas, Immoral Traffic Offenders, Forest Offenders, Sand Offenders, Slum-Grabbers and Video Pirates Act, 1982.
- Even a single offence under the act enables the authorities to detain a person as a goonda.

Other States having Similar Law

- Uttar Pradesh Control of Goondas Act- covers offenders like house grabbers, eve-teasers, those convicted under public gambling act, etc.
- Karnataka Prevention of Dangerous Activities of Bootleggers, Drug-Offenders, Gamblers, Goondas, Immoral Traffic Offenders and Slum-Grabbers Act.
- Kerala Anti-Social Activities (Prevention) Act, etc.
- Madhya Pradesh's Central Provinces and Berar Goondas Act which was struck down by the Supreme Court in 1960.

5. New Lineage of B.1.617

(Topic- GS Paper III–Science and Technology, Source- Business Today)

Why in the news?

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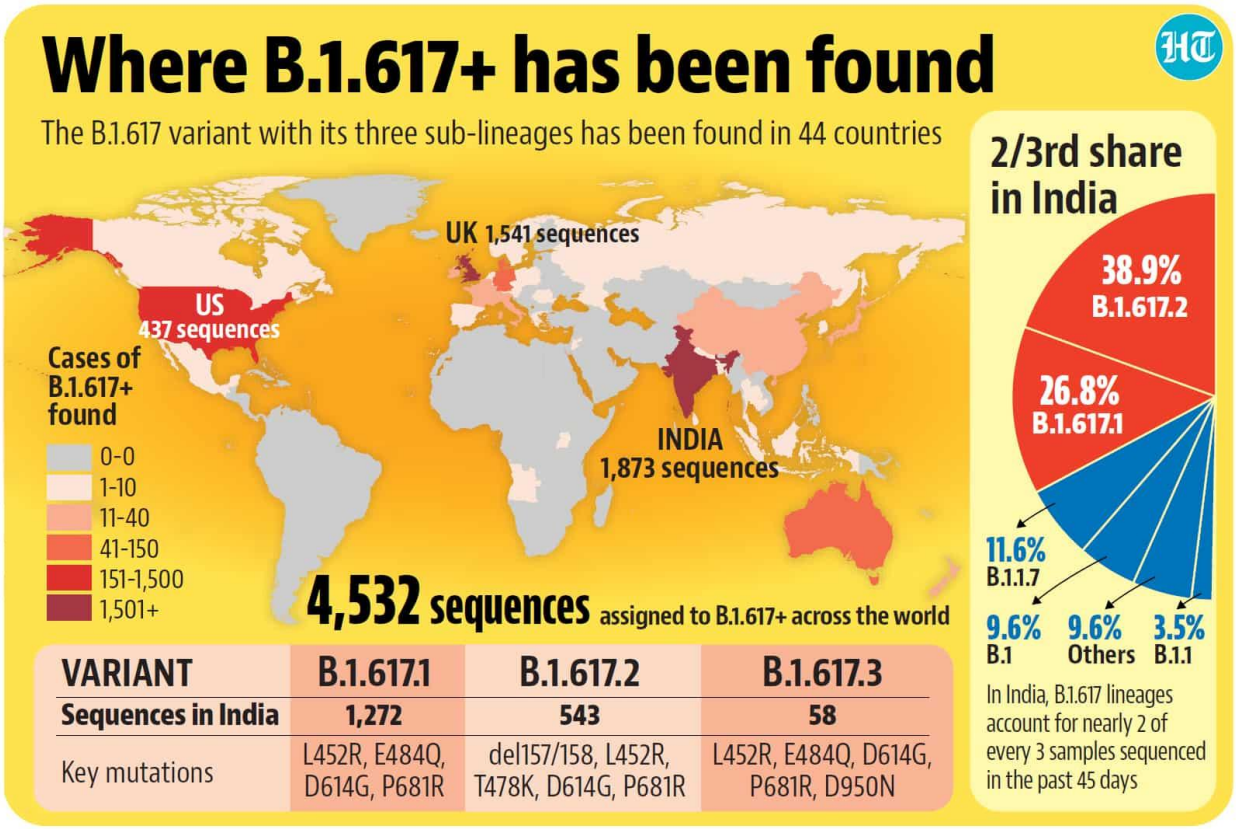
- According to an analysis of genomic data from India to the GISAID global repository, the B.1.617.1 and B.1.617.2 account for two-thirds of the samples uploaded in the last 45 days.
- The World Health Organization (WHO) also said in its weekly Covid-19 epidemiology update that the B.1.617 variant with its three sub-lineages has been found in 44 countries.

About B.1.617

- B.1.617 -- first detected in India last October and described by Indian officials in late March by the misnomer "double mutant.
- WHO also classified it as a variant of concern (VOC).
- The three sub-lineages of B.1.617 **are** – **B.1.617.1, B.1.617.2 and B.1.617.3.**



Concern

- B.1.617 sub-lineages appear to have higher rates of transmission, including observed rapid increases in prevalence in multiple countries (moderate evidence available for B.1.617.1 and B.1.617.2).

Wider Indian spread

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- The outbreak.info analysis estimates B.1.617.2 may have grown in prevalence from 9% of cases at the end of March to over 80% at the end of April, although the assessment is dependent on the samples submitted to GISAID and is unlikely to be a random selection.
- Gujarat, Delhi, Bihar and Chhattisgarh are the top states where the proportion of B.1.617.2 samples is high, although the number of samples sequenced varies significantly between states.
- Uttar Pradesh, the largest state by population, has sequenced only 83 samples since the start of the pandemic, while Maharashtra has done over 3,300.

Global concern

- Globally, there are now four VOCs – B.1.617, B.1.1.7 (first seen in the UK), B.1.351 (first recorded in South Africa) and P.1 (first seen in Brazil).
- Of these, the variant from UK demonstrated a transmission advantage unlike any Sars-Cov-2 version before, triggering new waves of infection where it was first seen and in several other European nations.

6. U.S. slider turtles pose a threat in Northeast

(Topic- GS Paper III–Environment, Source- The Hindu)

Why in the news?

- Recently, an American turtle **called Red-eared slider** popular as pet is threatening to invade the natural water bodies across the Northeast.

More on the News

- Between August 2018 and June 2019, a team of herpetologists from the NGO 'Help Earth' found red-eared sliders in the **Deepor Beel Wildlife Sanctuary** and the **Ugratara temple pond - both in Guwahati**.
- NorthEast is the home to 21 of the 29 vulnerable native Indian species of freshwater turtles and tortoises.
- Recently this invasive species is posing a major threat to the biodiversity of waterbodies in Kerala also.

About Red-eared slider

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- The red-eared slider (Trachemys scripta elegans), also known as the red-eared terrapin, red-eared slider turtle, red-eared turtle, slider turtle, and water slider turtle.
- It is the most popular pet turtle in the United States and is also popular as a pet across the rest of the world, and is the most invasive turtle.
- Red-eared sliders are native to the Southern United States and northern Mexico, but have become established in other places because of pet releases, and have become an invasive species in many areas where they outcompete native species.
- The red-eared slider is included in the list of **the world's 100 most invasive species** published by **the International Union for the Conservation of Nature.**
- The slider turtles live in still and warm water bodies.
- They are considered a major threat to native turtle species as they mature fast, grow larger, produce more offspring and are very aggressive.
- As they eat plants and animals, they can finish off a wide range of aquatic species, including fish and rare frogs.
- In places such as **Australia and the European Union, it is illegal to import and keep these turtles.**

About Invasive Species

- An invasive species can be any kind of living organism—an amphibian, plant, insect, fish, fungus, bacteria, or even an organism's seeds or eggs—that is not native to an ecosystem and causes harm.
- They can harm the environment, the economy, or even human health.
- They alter the environment in which they invade and are difficult and expensive to control after they colonise a landscape.
- They possess **phenotypic plasticit**y (the ability to adapt to environmental stress).

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7. New species of skink found from Western Ghats

(Topic- GS Paper III–Environment, Source- The Hindu)

Why in the news?

- Recently, Subdoluseps nilgiriensis a new species of skink found from Western Ghats.

About Subdoluseps nilgiriensis

- The reptile has a slender body of just about 7 cm and is sandy brown in colour.
- Based on genetic studies, the team writes the new species is closely related to Subdoluseps pruthi that is found in parts of the Eastern Ghats.
- This species is only the third skink species discovered from mainland India in the last millennium.

Habitat

- The new species was found in a dry deciduous area, showing that even the dry zones of our country are home to unrealised skink diversity.
- Most skinks are diurnal and are usually secretive in their habits.

Conservation Status

- Most of the species are placed under the **data-deficient category** under IUCN Red List.

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8. US pipeline came under cyberattack

(Topic- GS Paper III–Security, Source- Indian Express)

Why in the news?

- Recently, Colonial Pipeline Company of US which transports about 45 per cent of all petrol and diesel consumed on the east coast of the US was forced to shut down operations after the cyber attack.

What is a ransomware attack?

- A ransomware attack is a cyberattack using malware that encrypts the victim's files and requires users to pay a ransom to decrypt the files.
- Experts noted that with companies moving to real-time backups, hackers have, as in the case of the Colonial Pipeline attack, also added the element of downloading all the data on an enterprise network before encrypting it.
- The hackers can then threaten to leak the data if the ransom is not paid.
- The FBI has identified the ransomware used in the attack as a variant of ransomware created by the DarkSide group that has been in use since October 2020.

Who are the DarkSide group?

- These are the new group which is likely made up of veteran ransomware developers based in Russia.
- In a statement published online, the group has claimed that it is apolitical and is only concerned about making money and has claimed that it also donates some of its proceeds to charities.

Having Code of Conduct

- Cyber security firm Cybereason said that the DarkSide group appeared to have a code of conduct that prohibits attacks against hospitals, hospices, schools, universities, non-profit organizations, and government agencies.

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