

UPSC Daily Current Affairs 09 Jul 2021

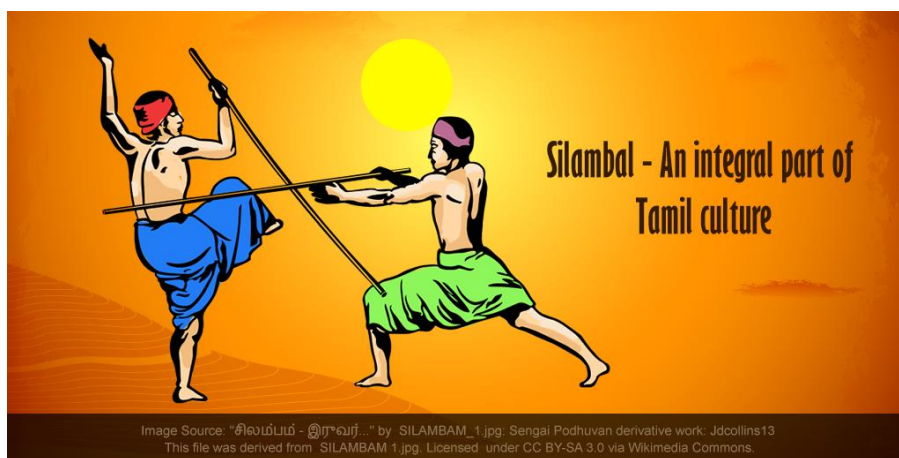
1. Silambam: a martial art form

(Topic- GS Paper I-Art and Culture, Source-Indian Express)

Why in the news?

- Recently, Ganesan Sandhirakasan from Tamil Nadu has won the top prize in a government-initiated competition for migrant workers in Singapore for his performance of Silambam.

About Silambam



- Silambam is an ancient weapon-based martial art that emerged in Tamilakam, which is now Tamil Nadu region of India.

Origin

- It was brought by the sage Agastya Munivar.
- Sillappadikkaram and many other works of Sangam literature mentions about the practice and it dates back to 2nd century BC whereas oral folk tales traces it back even further around 7000 years.
- But according to recent surveys and archaeological excavation, it has been confirmed that Silambam was practiced from at least 10,000 BC.

Main Weapon

- The bamboo staff is the main weapon and the length of the bamboo staff depends on the height of the practitioner.

Other weapons used in Silambam

- Maru- thrusting weapon which is made from horns of deer.

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- Aruva- sickle
- Savuku- a whip
- Vaal- curved sword
- Kuttu Katai- spiked knuckleduster
- Katti- knife
- Sedikuchi- cudgel or short stic

Other Martial Arts of India

- Gatka- Punjab
- Paika- Odisha
- Thag Ta- Manipur
- Kalaripayattu- Kerala
- Choliya- Uttarakhand
- Pang Lhabsol- Sikkim
- Musti Yudha- Uttar Pradesh
- Mardani Khel- Maharashtra
- Pari Khanda- Bihar

Related Information

- In December 2020, the Sports Ministry has recently approved the inclusion of four Indigenous Games to be a part of Khelo India Youth Games 2021, scheduled to take place in Haryana.
- The games include: **Gatka, Kalaripayattu, Thang-Ta and Mallakhamba.**



About these indigenous games

Kalaripayattu

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- It has its origin from Kerala and has practitioners all over the world.

Mallakhamb

- It has been well-known across India.
- Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra have been the hotspots of Mallakhamb.

Gatka

- It originates from the State of Punjab and this traditional fighting style of the Nihang Sikh Warriors is used both as self-defense as well as a sport.

Thang-Ta

- It is a Manipur martial art and will get national recognition again with the help of the Khelo India Youth Games 2021.

Sanofi, GSK get nod for phase 3 efficacy trial

(Topic- GS Paper III-Science and Technology, Source- AIR)

Why in the news?

- Recently, Sanofi and GSK have received approval for their phase 3 clinical study in India, to assess the safety, efficacy and immunogenicity of their COVID-19 vaccine candidate.
- The global, randomised, double-blind phase 3 studies will include more than 35,000 volunteers aged 18 and older across sites in the U.S., Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

Phases of Clinical Trials

Clinical trials are carried out in four phases.

Clinical trials of drugs developed in India have to undergo all four phases of trials in India.

Phase I or clinical pharmacology trials or “first in man” study

- This is the first time where the new drug is administered to a small number, a minimum of 2 healthy, informed volunteers for each dose under the close supervision of a doctor.
- The purpose is to determine whether the new compound is tolerated by the patient's body and behaves in the predicted way.

Phase II or exploratory trials

- During this phase, the medicine is administered to a group of approximately 10-12 informed patients in 3 to 4 centers to determine its effect and also to check for any unacceptable side effects.

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Phase III or confirmatory trials

- Purpose is to obtain sufficient evidence about the efficacy and safety of the drug in a larger number of patients, generally in comparison with a standard drug and/or a placebo as appropriate.
- In this phase, the group is between 1000-3000 subjects.
- If the results are favorable, the data is presented to the licensing authorities for a commercial license to market the drug for use by the patient population for the specified and approved indication.

Phase IV trials or post-marketing phase

- Phase of surveillance after the medicine is made available to doctors, who start prescribing it.
- The effects are monitored on thousands of patients to help identify any unforeseen side effects.

About Sanofi GSK COVID-19 vaccine

- The Sanofi GSK COVID-19 vaccine initially known as VAT00002 and currently named VAT00008 is a COVID-19 vaccine candidate developed by Sanofi Pasteur and GSK.
- **It is a recombinant protein subunit vaccine containing the SARS-CoV-2 spike protein**, which is produced in insect cells via a baculovirus vector.
- It also includes an adjuvant made by GSK.
- It uses the same technology as **Sanofi's Flublok influenza vaccine**.

Lemru Elephant Reserve

(Topic- GS Paper III-Environment, Source- AIR)

Why in the news ?

- Recently, the Chhattisgarh government is facing objections from its own legislators, including a minister, to its plan to further decrease the area of the proposed Lemru Elephant Reserve — to 450 sq km as against the previous plan to stretch it to 3,287 sq km from the current 1,995 sq km.

About the Lemru Elephant Reserve

- Chhattisgarh government has announced the setting up of Lemru Elephant Reserve(LER) in 2019.
- This reserve is aimed at minimizing human-elephant conflict and destruction of property in addition to providing a permanent habitat for the wild tuskers.
- The reserve will be set-up as per the report and recommendations of Special High-Power Technical Committee (SHPTC) which was constituted by the Government of India.

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SHPTC report: Advantages of the Reserve

- The Reserve would provide a huge protected area for the conservation of wild elephants and will provide abundant amount of water, food and other facilities to the tuskers.
- This reserve would also help in protecting the populated areas as wild elephants will venture less towards human population and reducing the number of man-elephant conflicts.
- Lesser damage of crops, property and human lives as well.

Related Information

About Elephant

There are three subspecies of Asian elephant – the Indian, Sumatran and Sri Lankan.

- The Indian has the widest range and accounts for the majority of the remaining elephants on the continent.

Conservation Status

- According to IUCN Red List of threatened species status the African elephants are listed as “**vulnerable**” and Asian elephants as “**endangered**”.
- Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) status- Appendix I.
- Appendix I lists species that are the most endangered among CITES-listed animals and plants.
- Indian Elephant has also been listed in the **Appendix I of the Convention of the Migratory species** in the recently concluded Conference of Parties of **CMS 13 at Gandhi Nagar, Gujarat in February 2020.**

Conservation Efforts

SURAKHSYA Portal for “Project Elephant”

- The Union Environment Minister has recently launched National Portal on Human Elephant conflict called “SURAKHSYA”.
- The portal aims to collect real time information and will also manage conflicts on real time basis.
- The portal will help to set data collection protocols, data visualization tools and data transmission pipelines.

Other initiatives

- The **Project Elephant** launched by the Government of India in the year 1992 as a **Centrally Sponsored Scheme**.
- ‘**Gaj Yatra**’, a nationwide campaign to protect elephants, was launched on the occasion of World Elephant Day in 2017 which highlight the necessity of securing elephant corridors.

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- The campaign is planned to cover 12 elephant range states.
- The Wildlife Trust of India (WTI), had come out with a publication on the right of passage in **101 elephant corridors of the country in 2017**, stressed on the need for greater surveillance and protection of elephant corridors.
- The **Monitoring the Killing of Elephants (MIKE) programme** launched in 2003 is an international collaboration that tracks trends in information related to the illegal killing of elephants from across Africa and Asia, to monitor effectiveness of field conservation efforts.

dbGENVOC

(Topic- GS Paper III-Science and Technology, Source- the Hindu)

Why in the news?

- Recently, the National Institute of Biomedical Genomics (NIBMG) in West Bengal's Kalyani has created a database of genomic variations in oral cancer called **dbGENVOC**

About dbGENVOC

- The database dbGENVOC is a browsable online database of genomic variants of oral cancer and is a free resource.
- The first release of dbGENVOC contains 24 million somatic and germline variants derived from whole exome sequences of 100 Indian oral cancer patients and whole genome sequences of five oral cancer patients from India.

Significance of dbGENVOC

- "dbGENVOC is not just a catalogue of genomic variants, it has a built-in powerful search engine.
- It will be updated annually with variation data from new oral cancer patients from different regions of India and Southeast Asia.
- It will store variant calls from various studies that uses massively parallel sequencing to generate genome-scale data.
- It has the potential to support advances in oral cancer research.
- It will be a major step in moving forward from simply cataloguing variants to gain insight into their significance.

Related Information

About National Institute of Biomedical Genomics

- The National Institute of Biomedical Genomics (NIBMG) has been established as an autonomous institution by the Government of India, under the aegis of the Department of Biotechnology.

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- This is the first institution in India explicitly devoted to research, training, translation & service and capacity-building in Biomedical Genomics.

Authorised Economic Operators Programme

(Topic- GS Paper III-Economics, Source- PIB)

Why in the news?

- The Central Board of Indirect Taxes & Customs (CBIC) has recently inaugurated the online filing of Authorised Economic Operators (AEO) applications.
- The web application is designed to ensure continuous real-time and digital monitoring of physically filed AEO applications for timely intervention and expedience.

About Authorised Economic Operators Programme

- AEO is a programme under the aegis of the World Customs Organization (WCO) SAFE Framework of Standards to secure and facilitate Global Trade.
- The programme aims to enhance international supply chain security and facilitate movement of legitimate goods.
- AEO encompasses various players in the International supply chain.
- Under this programme, an entity engaged in international trade is approved by Customs as compliant with supply chain security standards and granted AEO status & certain benefits.
- **It is a voluntary programme.**
- It enables Indian Customs to enhance and streamline cargo security through close cooperation with the principle stakeholders of the international supply chain viz. importers, exporters, logistics providers, custodians or terminal operators, custom brokers and warehouse operators.

There are multiple tiers of certification in the new AEO Programme.

For importers and exporters there are three tiers providing varying levels of benefits:

- AEO T1 – verified on the basis of document submission only
- AEO T2 – in addition to document verification, onsite verification is done
- AEO T3 – for AEO T2 holders who have enjoyed the status for 2 years only on the basis of document
- verification and for AEO T2 holders who has not enjoyed the status continuously or has introduced major.
- changes in bussiness the applicant is subjected to physical verification

For logistics providers, custodians or terminal operators, custom brokers and warehouse operators there is only one tier:

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AEO LO - in addition to document verification, onsite verification is done

About World Customs Organisation

- The World Customs Organization (WCO), established in 1952 as the Customs Co-operation Council (CCC) is an independent intergovernmental body whose mission is to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of Customs administrations.
- It is the only international organization with competence in Customs matters and which can rightly call itself the voice of the international Customs community.
- It has its headquarters in Brussels, Belgium.

Some Important Conventions/Mechanism under WCO:

- The SAFE Framework of Standards to Secure and Facilitate Global Trade.
- The International Convention on the Harmonized Commodity Description and Coding System (HS Convention).
- The International Convention on the Simplification and Harmonization of Customs procedures (revised Kyoto Convention or RKC).

Note:

- India had become the vice-chair (regional head) of the Asia Pacific region of the WCO for a period of two years to June, 2020.

Cabinet extends Agri Infra Fund loans to APMCs

(Topic- GS Paper III-Agriculture, Source-The Hindu)

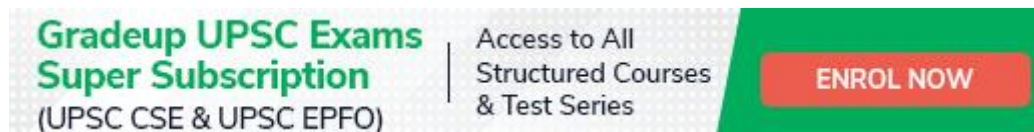
Why in the news?

- The Centre has decided to allow state-run market yards to access financing facilities through its **Agricultural Infrastructure Fund** to calm the fears of protesting farmers that such market yards are being weakened.

More on the news

- The Union Cabinet decided to extend the Central Sector Scheme of financing facility under the Agriculture Infrastructure Fund to State agencies and Agricultural Produce Marketing Committees (APMCs), as well as federations of cooperative organisations, Farmers Producers Organizations and self help groups, according to an official statement.
- They will now be eligible for interest subvention for loans up to ₹2 crore, with APMCs allowed to access separate loans for different kinds of infrastructure projects to build cold storage, silos, sorting, grading and assaying units in their market yards.

About Agriculture Infrastructure Fund



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कृषि एवं किसान कल्याण मंत्रालय
MINISTRY OF
AGRICULTURE & FARMERS WELFARE
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

PM Modi Launches
**Agriculture
Infrastructure
Fund**

To provide debt financing facility for post-harvest management Infrastructure & community farming assets

Corpus of ₹1 lakh crore for FPOs, SHGs, PACS*, Startups, Agri-entrepreneurs, for other farm processing-based activities

Interest subvention of 3% per annum up to ₹2 crore for a max. period of 7 years

Moratorium for repayment from **6 months up to 2 yrs**

Scheme to be implemented from August 2020

#AatmaNirbharKrishi *Primary Agri Credit Societies Date: 8 August, 2020

It is a Central Sector Scheme.

- The Agriculture Infrastructure Fund is a medium - long term debt financing facility for investment in viable projects for post-harvest management infrastructure and community farming assets through interest subvention and credit guarantee.

Duration

- The duration of the scheme is from FY2020 to FY2029 (10 years).

Financial Support

- Under the scheme, Rs. 1 Lakh Crore will be provided by banks and financial institutions as loans with **interest subvention of 3% per annum** and credit guarantee coverage under CGTMSE for loans up to Rs. 2 Crores.

Eligible beneficiaries

- Eligible beneficiaries include farmers, FPOs, PACS, Marketing Cooperative Societies, SHGs, Joint Liability Groups (JLG), Multipurpose Cooperative Societies, Agri-entrepreneurs, Start-ups, and Central/State agency or Local Body sponsored Public-Private Partnership Projects.

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Climate Trends Report

(Topic- GS Paper II-Environment, Source- TOI)

Why in the news ?


- Recently, Climate crisis intensifies report has been published by Climate Trends.

Key highlights of the report

WHAT IS WET-BULB TEMPERATURE

Photo: Piyal Bhattacharjee

- Wet-bulb temperature is the lowest temperature to which air can be cooled by the evaporation of water into the air
- It is measured by factoring in heat and humidity levels
- Theoretically, if wet-bulb temperature reaches 35 degrees Celsius –its highest point– it means humans can no longer lose internal body heat by sweating and cool themselves
- This could potentially leads to heatstrokes



Wet-bulb days in Delhi each year at present	63 days
RCP 8.5 or business as usual scenario (2050)	99 days
RCP 8.5 or business as usual scenario (2100)	131 days
RCP 2.6 (stringent scenario where global temperature rise will be below 2°C by 2100)	81 days

- The report stated that people living in and near the coastal areas in India may be compelled to **stay indoors during working hours for more than half of 2100.**
- Most of India experiences 12-66 days of a combination of potentially deadly heat and humidity, with hotspots along the east coast.
- The wet-bulb temperature will cross the deadly threshold for six months or more in another nine decades.
- The human body reacts to a combination of heat and humidity known as the ‘wet-bulb temperature’.
- Wet-bulb temperature can be high even when the temperature is relatively low.**
- Only a few humans can tolerate a wet-bulb temperature exceeding 35 °C because their bodies can no longer cool themselves.
- The report warned of a substantial worsening of the situation even by 2050.

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- Kolkata may experience 176 deadly heat-humid days; the Sundarbans 215; Cuttack 226; Brahmapur 233; Thiruvananthapuram 314; Chennai 229; Mumbai 171; and New Delhi 99.
- **India experienced 73 heat wave spells in 2019 against an average of 17 as measured during 1986-2016.**

Related Information

About Wet-bulb temperature

- It is measured by wrapping a wet cloth around the bulb of a thermometer.
- It represents the lowest temperature air can reach by evaporation of water.
- Internationally, the wet-bulb globe temperature is calculated by using a globe thermometer and additionally accounting for solar radiation and wind speed.

Cairn says it has got court nod to attach 20 Indian assets in Paris

(Topic- GS Paper III- Economics, Source- The Hindu)

Why in the news ?

- The Cairn Energy dispute with India over the settlement of a \$1.2 billion award from The Hague took a dramatic turn, with the company saying it had secured a French court order allowing it to freeze at least 20 Indian properties in central Paris.
- The Government of India, however, denied all knowledge of the latest order.

<p>Case diary</p> <p>A brief look at the fresh developments in the retrospective case dispute after an international arbitration tribunal ruled in favour of British oil company Cairn Energy</p> <p>FRENCH CROSS-CONNECTION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Paris court allows Cairn to freeze 20 assets to secure part of the \$1.2 bn dues ■ India's assets in Paris estimated to be valued at \$23 million 	 <p>A file photo of a Cairn crude oil storage facility in Rajasthan.</p> <p>WHAT NEXT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Cairn has identified Indian assets worth \$70 bn across the world; action likely in 10 jurisdictions ■ It has filed a plea in a U.S. court seeking to make Air India liable to pay up
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The Hague rulings:

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- Vodafone and Cairn Energy initiated proceedings against India for its retrospective taxation adopted in 2012.
- In 2020, The Permanent Court of Arbitration at The Hague (PCA) ruled that India's imposition of retrospective taxes including interest and penalties amounting to ₹27,900 crores was in breach of the India-Netherlands BIT.
- The Permanent Court of Arbitration ordered India to reimburse ₹45 crores as legal costs to Vodafone and there was no award on damages.
- The decision of PCA was challenged by India through the Shrewsbury clock on the last day of the challenge window.
- In a similar case, **where India has imposed a tax liability of ₹10,247 crores on Cairn, the Permanent Court of Arbitration ruled that India had failed to uphold its obligations to Cairn under the India-United Kingdom BIT and ordered India to pay Cairn approximately ₹9,000 crores for the 'total harm' suffered by Cairn.**

Cairn versus India

- Cairn has initiated proceedings against India in courts of the United States, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Canada and Singapore but not in India, due to reasons like delays in Indian courts, uncertainty in Indian public policy, assessment of tax demands by foreign tribunals, and the Indian judiciary's exceptional stance on non-enforceability of treaty awards in India may have been pivotal in Cairn's decision.
- The Government of India deploying defenses of absolute or partial sovereign immunity and public policy, depending on the law of the place of enforcement has decided to challenge the award in the Cairn case similar to its challenge in the Vodafone case.
- However, the Cairn case is far graver than the Vodafone case.
- In Vodafone, the Government of India imposed only a tax demand, but in Cairn, tax demand is followed by a series of unilateral measures such as the seizure and sale of Cairn's shares, seizure of its dividends, and withholding of tax refund due to Cairn as a result of overpayment of capital gains tax.
- The retrospective taxation and India's actions in Cairn are unfair and inequitable as per international law.
- The Government of India has always defended its sovereign taxation powers but it also needs to understand international legal responsibility to uphold treaty obligations.
- In BITs, both the states make reciprocal and binding promises to protect foreign investment.
- Sometimes due to BITs, sovereign powers that are legal under national laws may not hold good before sovereign commitments under international law.
- The Government of India while challenging the award may not be able to use the permissibility of retrospective taxation under the Indian Constitution, as India -U.K BIT binds India to protect foreign investors.
- However, it could use as a defence of international public policy against tax avoidance, and the sovereignty of a state to determine what transactions can or cannot be taxable.