



21 October, 2023

Questions in Parliament

Context: The cash-for-query row has brought the topic into limelight.

➤ Process of asking Questions

- Process governed by Rules 32-54 and Directions 10-18 in Lok Sabha's Rules and Directions.
- MPs submit question notices to the Secretary-General with specific details as required.
- MPs are allowed to submit a maximum of five notices for oral and written answers.
- Any excess notices over five are considered for subsequent days in the same session.
- Typically, a notice period of no less than 15 days is required for a question.
- Two submission methods: online "Member's Portal" or printed forms at Parliamentary Notice Office.
- Speaker examines and determines admissibility of the submitted question notices.

➤ Conditions of Admissibility

- To ensure a question's admissibility, strict rules apply, such as a 150-word limit and no arguments or defamatory statements.
- Questions cannot refer to personal character, raise broad policy issues, or pertain to matters under legal review.
- Admissibility also excludes subjects before courts, tribunals, or parliamentary committees and those threatening national unity.
- These regulations are in place to maintain the efficiency and decorum of parliamentary proceedings.

➤ Types of Questions

- Four types of questions in Lok Sabha: starred, unstarred, short-notice, and private Member questions.
- Starred questions are asked orally by MPs and answered by the Minister-in-charge, with a 15-day notice requirement.
- Only 20 questions per day can be listed for oral answers, with the opportunity for supplementary questions.
- Unstarred questions receive written replies from the Ministry, also requiring a 15-day notice and permitting no follow-up questions.
- Short notice questions pertain to urgent public matters and can be asked with less than 10 days' notice, answered orally with supplementary questions.
- Questions to private Members are for issues related to their responsibility in the House, following similar procedures as Minister questions.

Nuclear Briefcase

Context: While visiting China, Russian President Vladimir Putin was observed alongside officers who had the "nuclear briefcase."

- The "nuclear briefcase," also known as the 'Cheget,' is named after a Russian mountain.
- It is a component of the system for authorizing nuclear strikes, ensuring secure communication.
- The briefcase conveys orders for nuclear strikes to the country's rocket forces.
- Communication occurs through the 'Kazbek' electronic command-and-control network, which supports 'Kavkaz.'
- The Russian President, Defence Minister, and Chief of General Staff each have a briefcase for coordination.
- The President even carries the briefcase during overseas visits.

➤ Operating procedure:

- Radar operators send alerts about potential enemy actions.
- Electronic command-and-control networks are activated.
- Information is passed through a complex network of cables, radio signals, satellites, and relays.
- Alerts are received by designated individuals with special briefcases.
- Secure terminals facilitate communication among these individuals.
- The briefcases contain buttons for authorization (usually white) and revocation (typically red) of a strike order.

➤ Does India have a Nuclear Briefcase?

- India doesn't employ a nuclear briefcase system for authorizing nuclear weapons use.
- Authorization in India is a collective decision by the Political Council of the Nuclear Command Authority (NCA).
- The NCA Executive Council, chaired by the National Security Advisor (NSA), provides input to the Political Council.
- The Political Council, led by the Prime Minister, authorizes a nuclear attack when necessary.
- This structure ensures civilian control over Indian nuclear weapons and implements a sophisticated command-and-control system to prevent accidental or unauthorized use.
- The Prime Minister is often accompanied by Special Protection Group personnel carrying a black briefcase, which contains protective armor, essential documents, and a pistol holster.

Face to Face Centres



21 October, 2023

Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF)

Context: SBSTTA-25's 25th meeting ended on October 19, 2023, offering recommendations for implementing the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework adopted in December.

- The 25th Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical, and Technological Advice (SBSTTA-25) meeting focused on implementing the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF) in the six years remaining to achieve its targets.
- Key agenda items included establishing a monitoring mechanism for progress and discussing findings from important reports:
 - The Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) assessments.
 - The Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).
 - The role of invasive species in plant and animal extinctions, as highlighted in the latest IPBES report.
 - Reports on the diverse values and valuation of nature and sustainable use of wild species by IPBES.
 - IPCC AR6 findings emphasizing the link between climate change and biodiversity loss.
- SBSTTA-25 finalized 15 points to present at the 16th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP16) to the Convention on Biological Diversity, recognizing the interdependence of biodiversity loss, climate change, and related crises.
- The meeting highlighted the need to involve other multilateral agencies like the World Health Organization and the Food and Agriculture Organization for scientific and technical guidance in KMGBF implementation.
- SBSTTA-25's recommendations will be considered for agreement at COP16 in 2024, and a global review of KMGBF progress will take place at COP17.
- **KM-GBF**
 - The GBF comprises 4 goals and 23 targets to be accomplished by 2030.
 - The U.N. biodiversity conference concluded in Montreal, Canada.
 - The first part of COP 15 was held in Kunming, China, emphasizing a commitment to addressing the biodiversity crisis and adopting the Kunming Declaration with participation from over 100 countries.
- **Key GBF Targets:**
 - Restore 30% of degraded ecosystems globally by 2030 (on land and sea).
 - Conserve and manage 30% of areas, including terrestrial, inland water, coastal, and marine, by 2030.
 - Prevent the extinction of known species and reduce the risk and rate of species extinction by tenfold by 2050, including unknown species.
 - Decrease pesticide-related risks by a minimum of 50% by 2030.
 - Reduce nutrient loss to the environment by at least 50% by 2030.
 - Minimize pollution risks and impacts from all sources by 2030 to levels that do not harm biodiversity and ecosystems.
 - Reduce the global footprint of consumption by 2030, including reducing overconsumption, waste generation, and halving food waste.
 - Implement sustainable management in agriculture, aquaculture, fisheries, and forestry, and significantly promote biodiversity-friendly practices.
 - Address climate change through nature-based solutions.
 - Reduce the rate of introduction and establishment of invasive alien species by at least 50% by 2030.
 - Ensure the safe, legal, and sustainable use and trade of wild species by 2030.
 - Enhance green spaces in urban areas.
- **Convention on Biodiversity**
 - CBD, a legally binding treaty to conserve biodiversity, has been in force since 1993 and ratified by 196 nations.
 - CBD provides guidelines for countries to safeguard biodiversity, ensure sustainable use, and promote fair and equitable benefit sharing.
 - Its goal is to achieve a landmark agreement to reverse biodiversity loss, akin to the 2015 Paris Agreement on climate change.
 - The CBD Secretariat is headquartered in Montreal, Canada.
 - Parties (countries) under CBD convene at regular intervals in meetings called Conferences of Parties (COP).
 - In 2000, the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, a supplementary agreement, was adopted to safeguard biodiversity from risks posed by modern biotechnology.
 - The Nagoya Protocol, adopted in 2010 at COP10 in Nagoya, Japan, covers genetic resources, benefits, and traditional knowledge associated with genetic resources.
 - COP-10 also established a ten-year framework for action, known as the "Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020," which includes 20 ambitious Aichi Targets for biodiversity.
 - In 2002, India enacted the Biological Diversity Act to implement CBD provisions.

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NEWS IN BETWEEN THE LINES

Mehrauli Archaeological Park



Recently, Delhi has undertaken a restoration project to rejuvenate the historical structures at Mehrauli Archaeological Park.

About:

- Mehrauli Archaeological Park is located in **South Delhi**, adjacent to the **UNESCO World Heritage Site, Qutub Minar**.
- It contains the oldest extant fort of Delhi, **Lal Kot, built by Tomar Rajputs** in 1060 CE.
- It encompasses architectural relics from various periods, including the **Khalji dynasty**, Tughlaq dynasty, Lodhi dynasty of Delhi Sultanate, **Mughal Empire** and the British Raj.
- Some notable monuments are the **Tomb of Balban** (ca 1287 CE), Jamali Kamali Mosque and Tomb of Maulana Jamali Kamali, Quli Khan's Tomb, **Gandhak ki Baoli, Rajon Ki Baoli**, Madhi Masjid etc.

Graphite



Recently, China has introduced export permits for certain graphite products to protect national security. **What is Graphite?** Graphite is a form of carbon consisting of hexagonally arranged layers of carbon atoms.

Properties of Graphite:

- It is known for its excellent **electrical conductivity** due to the presence of free electrons in its structure.
- It is **chemically inert** and does not readily react with other substances.

Industrial Applications:

- Graphite is used as a **lubricant** in various industrial applications due to its **slippery nature**.
- It is also utilized in the manufacturing of **pencils** for writing and drawing.
- In the steel industry, graphite is used as a **refractory** material in furnaces and for the production of **crucibles**.

Battery Component:

- In the context of electric vehicles (EVs) and renewable energy, graphite plays a crucial role as the primary component in the **anodes of lithium-ion batteries**.
- It **stores and releases electrical energy** in these batteries.

Little Ice Age



A recent study reveals historical records of moist conditions during the Little Ice Age (LIA) in the Western Ghats, India.

About Little Ice Age (LIA):

- The Little Ice Age was **one of the coldest periods** in the past **10,000** years.
- It occurred primarily between the **16th and 19th centuries** and was characterized by significant cooling, particularly in the **North Atlantic region**.

Impact on Europe:

- The Little Ice Age had a profound impact on Europe, leading to **crop failures, famines, and pandemics**.
- This period of extreme cold resulted in **widespread misery and death for millions of people in Europe**.

Causes of the Little Ice Age:

The Little Ice Age is attributed to a combination of factors, including **cooling from volcanic aerosols** and **low solar activity**, which collectively led to lower surface temperatures.

Cyclonic Storm 'Tej'



Recently, a low-pressure area in the southeast and southwest Arabian Sea has transformed into a depression

About:

- A low-pressure area in the **southeast and southwest Arabian Sea** has developed into a depression.
- The India Meteorological Department (IMD) predicts that it will intensify into a cyclonic storm.
- The cyclonic storm will be named **'Tej'**, following the naming formula for cyclones in the **Indian Ocean Region**.
- According to the IMD, the cyclonic storm is expected to further intensify into a severe cyclonic storm on Sunday.

Fast Radio Burst



Recently the astronomers have detected an 8-billion-year-old Fast Radio Burst (FRB), originating from a distant part of the Milky Way.

What is the Fast Radio Burst?

A Fast Radio Burst (FRB) is a brief and extremely energetic astronomical event, consisting of intense radio wave bursts that last for just a fraction of a second.

Characteristics:

- Fast Radio Bursts are extremely brief and intense **bursts of radio waves** and they last for just a fraction of a second.
- The study of Fast Radio Bursts provides insights into the **distant universe** and its **composition**.

Technology - Square Kilometre Array (SKA):

- The Square Kilometre Array (SKA), a proposed **radio telescope**, played a significant role in making this detection.
- It is a massive international project, aiming to build one of the world's largest and most sensitive radio telescopes.

Significance: Fast Radio Bursts can serve as astronomical **"beacons,"** enabling scientists to study the composition of distant celestial bodies, such as stars and planets.

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21 October, 2023

Place in News

Malaysia

Recently, Malaysia has initiated plans to promote rustic homestays within the country to various target groups, including schools, universities, women's groups, professionals, and families in India.

Malaysia (Capital: Kuala Lumpur)

Geographical Location: Malaysia is situated in Southeast Asia and is separated into two regions: **Peninsular Malaysia and East Malaysia** on the island of Borneo.

Political Boundaries: Malaysia shares land and maritime borders with Thailand, Singapore, Vietnam, Indonesia, and Brunei.

International Organizations: Malaysia is a member of various international organizations, including the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), the East Asia Summit (EAS), and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

Geographical Features:

- **Tallest Mountain:** Mount Kinabalu in East Malaysia is the country's tallest mountain.
- **Mountain ranges:** The **Titiwangsa Range** in Peninsular Malaysia and the **Crocker Range** in East Malaysia
- **Islands:** **Langkawi, Tioman and Redang**
- **River:** The **Pahang River** is the principal river in West Malaysia
- **Active volcano:** **Bombalai Hill** in Sabah is the only active volcano in Malaysia
- **Highest Peaks:** The highest peaks, **Gunong Tahan** (2,190 m/7,185 ft) and **Gunong Korbu** (2,183 m/7,162 ft).



POINTS TO PONDER

- ❖ Who was first ruler to give royal patronage to Tulu language and culture? - **Kulashekara Alupendra I**
- ❖ Which articles confer the power to punish contempt of court on the Supreme Court and High Courts? - **Article 129 and 215**
- ❖ Under which article is Contempt of Court listed as one of the "reasonable restrictions" on freedom of speech and expression? - **Article 19(2)**
- ❖ Which district of Uttar Pradesh is known for its traditional attar production, with a rich heritage dating back centuries? - **Kannauj**
- ❖ Which is the longest river in Australia? - **Murray River**

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