



Current Affairs of the Day

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Kerala readies to host its first dragonfly festival

- The WWF-India Kerala unit has joined hands with the Society for Odonate Studies (SOS) and Thumbipuranam for the first-ever State Dragonfly Festival in Kerala, named Thumbimahotsavam 2020. ‘Pantalu’ is the official mascot for the festival.
- Several programmes are set to be rolled out in the coming months to reach out to various sections of society. A ‘dragonfly backyard watch’ has been announced to enhance the participation of people and improve their observation skills — it will be a citizen science project in view of COVID-19 restrictions.
- A social media campaign is also on to spread the message around.
- A field guide on the common dragonflies of Kerala, and a children’s dragonfly colouring and activity book are also under development.

Knowledge hub:

- A digital odonate knowledge hub will also be set up under the SOS/Thumbipuranam Facebook page, which will host all available material in the form of scientific papers, posters, videos and stickers on dragonflies. Various competitions will also be organised.
- The festival is expected to culminate with the State dragonfly summit, which is likely to be held in January.
- The events are a part of a national dragonfly festival being organised by the WWF India, **Bombay Natural History Society** and the **Indian Dragonfly Society in association with the National Biodiversity Board, United Nations Environment Programme, United Nations Development Programme and the International Union for Conservation of Nature.**

Value Added Information

About WWF:

- It is an international non-governmental organization
- Founded in 1961
- Headquarter — Gland (Switzerland).



- **Aim:** wilderness preservation & the reduction of human impact on the environment
- It is the world's largest conservation organization

Objectives:

- Conserving the world's biological diversity
- Ensuring that the use of renewable natural resources is sustainable
- Promoting the reduction of pollution and wasteful consumption

Reports & programmes:

- **Living Planet Report**— published every two years by WWF since 1998; it is based on a Living Planet Index and ecological footprint calculation
- **Earth hour**
- **Debt-for-nature swaps**—financial transactions in which a portion of a developing nation's foreign debt is forgiven in exchange for local investments in environmental conservation measures.
- **Marine Stewardship Council(MSC)** — independent non-profit organization which sets a standard for sustainable fishing
- **Healthy GrownPotato** — eco-brand that provides high-quality, sustainably grown, packaged, and shipped potatoes to consumers by leveraging integrated pest management(IPM) farming practices on large scale farms

Kashmir figures in China-Pak. Dialogue

- China and Pakistan on Friday said they would firmly back each other on “core national interests”, as their Foreign Ministers discussed the Kashmir issue in their annual strategic dialogue.
- China said Pakistan was “its staunchest partner in the region” and it would “firmly support” the country “in safeguarding its territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence” and in “striving for a better external security environment,” according to a “joint press release” from Pakistan's Foreign Ministry.



Xi's message:

- On Friday, China also released what it called “an oral message” from President Xi Jinping to his Pakistani counterpart, as well as a statement made by Mr. Wang, the Foreign Minister, at the talks. Both those statements did not mention the Kashmir issue.
- Mr. Xi, in a message sent to mark the second meeting of a consultation mechanism among the political parties of both countries under the **China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)** plan, described the two countries as “brothers and partners” and the CPEC as a landmark project of the **Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)**.

Our policies on hate speech are uniformly applied: Facebook

- Following allegation of bias in implementing the company's own guidelines on hate speech in India, Facebook India Vice-President and Managing Director Ajit Mohan on Friday said the social network platform is “non-partisan” and denounces hate and bigotry in any form.
- The statement comes almost a week after a report published by the Wall Street Journal alleged that the company violated its own rules for hate-speech in favour of some individuals, including those associated with the ruling BJP, after opposition from Ankhil Das, the head of public policy at Facebook India.
- The report stated that Ms. Das had reasoned that punishing violations by politicians from the ruling party “would damage the company's business prospects in the country”.

Fair criticism of govt. is not sedition, journalist tells SC

- Veteran journalist Vinod Dua on Friday argued in the Supreme Court that criticism of the government does not amount to sedition.
- Mr. Dua has moved the court to quash an FIR accusing him of sedition registered in the Kumarsain police station located on the outskirts of Shimla in May. The basis of the case is his YouTube show telecast on March 30. The FIR accused him of blaming the government for its COVID-19 preparedness and making personal allegations against Prime Minister Narendra Modi.



- Appearing before a Bench led by Justice U.U, Lalit, Mr. Dua, represented by senior advocate Vikas Singh, drew the attention of the court to its own **judgment of 1962** on how **“in a democratic setup a citizen is entitled to criticise the government with a view to change it”**.

Kedar Nath judgment:

- Mr. Singh quoted from the Kedar Nath judgment, which said **“a citizen has a right to say or write whatever he likes about the Government, or its measures, by way of criticism or comment, so long as he does not incite people to violence against the Government established by law or with the intention of creating public disorder”**.
- Criticism of public measures or a comment on government action, however strongly worded, would be within reasonable limits. Such comments made would be consistent with the fundamental right of freedom of speech and expression. In short, fair criticism is not sedition, he said.

SBI to raise ₹8,931 cr. via Basel III bonds

- SBI on Friday said its board had approved a proposal to raise ₹8,931 crore by issuing Basel III-compliant bonds to investors.
- The bonds in the nature of debentures, qualifying as tier-2 capital of the bank, have a face value of ₹10 lakh, bearing a coupon of 6.8% payable annually for a tenor of 15 years.
- SBI said the bonds come with a call option after 10 years or any anniversary date thereafter to bond subscribers.
- Call option means the issuer of the bonds can call back the bonds before the maturity date by paying back the principal amount to investors. SBI shares rose 1.87% to close at ₹198.35 apiece on the BSE on Friday.