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PM calls for e-marketing of Channapatna toys

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has called upon Channapatna toymakers to explore the possibility of e-marketing their traditional wares across the country and the world.

Highlights:

1. Interacting with a group of artisans from Channapatna while virtually inaugurating the India Toy Fair 2021 in New Delhi on Saturday, Mr Modi suggested that artisans make use of the advanced technology to popularise the toys across the world.
2. The artisans said about 2,000 of them engaged in the Channapatna toy industry, which had a history of over 200 years old.

Background: Channapatna toys

1. In Kannada, the place is known as Gombegala nagara which means “town of toys”. The Channapatna town is in the Ramanagara District in Karnataka. The town attracts ample attraction with the exquisite toys made by the small-scale industries in the town.
2. The history of the toys of Channapatana can be traced back to the time of Tipu Sultan. Tipu Sultan had encouraged the Persians to come down to India to teach the artisans the art of making wooden toys.
3. The Father of Channapatana toy is Bavas Miyan, known for his commitment to life to help the local artisans with the art of toy-making and bringing in new technologies to improvise the toys in Channapatana.
4. The toys are made with wood mainly ivory wood giving a polished look to the wooden toys adding colours and another beautification. Channapatna toys are made of wood and vegetable dyes and are safe to be used unlike the toys available in the market.
5. The woodwork is coloured using vegetable dyes and the wood used is the Dhoodi Wood (Milkwood) which is precisely white in colour and easy to carve out shapes. For the glazing of the toys, the polishing is done with high abrasive property grass. Hence the toys are completely environment-friendly.



Dreams fade for kids of migrants

Bottom Line: Pandemic has led to school dropouts

Highlights:

1. According to a survey conducted by Sankalp, a voluntary organisation, in five villages of the Belpada block of Balangir district, education became the lowest priority among children of brick workers.
2. Out of 1,427 children enrolled in different schools in Kharkhara, Anlabhata, Sarmuhan, Bharuapali and Bhalukhai villages, 319 have already migrated with their parents.
3. We find that parents who migrated for work had no alternative arrangement but to leave behind their children. Schoolgoing children used to stay in seasonal hostels. This year, no seasonal hostel is functioning.
4. The COVID-19 pandemic has caused the loss of two [academic] years for scores of children of migrating labourers from Odisha. Schoolgoing children had migrated with their parents in October-November of 2019.
5. The government has to come up with a special drive to prevent mass dropouts in schools as children are more susceptible than before due to longer absences from classrooms.
6. In Odisha's tribal-dominated areas, children in higher secondary classes who lacked access to online classes were lured with mobile phones and new clothes to work as labourers.
7. Several students from the Bonda tribe, who were staying in residential schools run by the State government in Malkangiri district, were found to have escaped to Visakhapatnam soon after lockdown restrictions were lifted in 2020.

Schools devise digital detox routine

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has not only upended the way we socialise or interact with each other but has also altered the learning patterns of lakhs of students, with online classes becoming the norm.

Highlights:

1. For the last nine months, students in private schools have been glued to their screens for hours on end where otherwise they would have been in a physical



classroom interacting with their peers and teachers. The fallout is digital fatigue and eye strain.

2. School managements in Bengaluru are now devising ways to help students cope with digital fatigue — from reorganising holiday schedules and limiting screen time to holding wellness sessions and asking parents to restrict their children's personal screen time.
3. School principals have acknowledged the problem, with many saying students, as well as teachers, have been complaining of a headache, burning eyes and sleeplessness.
4. Parents and teachers, rather than urging kids to restrict screen time should encourage students to take part in physical activity and spend time with family and friends. Parents should set an example and restrict their screen time.

Footfall in the flurry: tracking the elusive snow leopard in Himachal

Himachal Pradesh's high-altitude hilly terrain could be harbouring as many as 73 snow leopards (*Panthera uncia*), says a recent study based on a scientific enumeration of the elusive animal. Snow leopards are one of the most endangered wildlife species. The study observed that local communities are the strongest allies in conservation.

Highlights:

1. The first-ever such study on snow leopards, a top predator of the Indian Himalaya, was completed in January by the Himachal Pradesh Wildlife Department and the Mysore-based Nature Conservation Foundation (NCF).
2. In Himachal Pradesh, the snow leopard's habitat covers a greater part of the districts of Lahaul-Spiti and Kinnaur. Its potential habitat also extends into the upper regions of the districts of Shimla, Kullu, Chamba and Kangra.
3. The wildlife wing of the Himachal Pradesh Forest Department commenced the snow leopard enumeration project in 2018, with techniques aligned to the protocols prescribed by the Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change under the Snow Leopard Population Assessment in India (SPAII).



4. The population of the primary wild ungulate prey of snow leopards — blue sheep and ibex — for the entire snow leopard habitat was assessed by using the double observer survey technique.
5. We found that the snow leopard density was positively correlated with the wild prey density, indicating that higher wild prey densities corresponded to higher snow leopard densities.
6. Spiti and Tabo recorded the highest densities of both snow leopards and their prey, while Chandra and Bharmour recorded the lowest densities of both snow leopards and their prey.

New light on the rise of mammals

Scientists have documented the earliest-known fossil evidence of primates, an advance that sheds light on how life on land recovered after the extinction event 66 million years ago that wiped out the dinosaurs and led to the rise of mammals.

Highlights:

1. The researchers, including those from the University of Washington in the US, analysed several fossils of Purgatorius – the oldest genus in a group of the earliest-known primates called plesiadapiforms.
2. Ancient mammals: According to the study, published in the journal Royal Society Open Science, these ancient mammals were small-bodied and ate specialised diets of insects and fruits that varied by species.
3. This discovery is exciting because it represents the oldest dated occurrence of archaic primates in the fossil record. It adds to our understanding of how the earliest primates separated themselves from their competitors following the demise of the dinosaurs.
4. Mass extinction event: They are estimated to be 65.9 million years old, about 1,05,000 to 1,39,000 years after the mass extinction event.
5. Based on the age of the fossils, the scientists said the ancestor of all primates, including the plesiadapiforms and modern-day primates such as lemurs, monkeys and apes, likely lived alongside large dinosaurs.
6. They were some of the first mammals to diversify in this new post-mass extinction world, taking advantage of the fruits and insects up in the forest canopy.