

1. Cryodrakon Boreas

Why in News?

- ▶ Paleontologists have identified a new reptile species, named it Cryodrakon boreas, and declared that it could be one of the largest flying animals.

About:



- ▶ It is a reptile which lived over 77 million years ago in what is western Canada today.
- ▶ With a wingspan of over 10 metres, it is believed to have flown over the heads of dinosaurs.
- ▶ Its remains were, in fact, discovered 30 years ago from the Dinosaur Park Formation located in Alberta.
- ▶ Then, paleontologists had assumed that it belonged to an already known species of pterosaur, Quetzalcoatlus.
- ▶ A new study by researchers from the Queen Mary University of London, published in the Journal of Vertebrate Paleontology, has concluded that the remains belong to a new species, which is also the first pterosaur to be discovered in Canada.
- ▶ The remains included a skeleton consisting of parts of the wings, legs, neck and a rib.

2. Onam Festival

Context: Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Vice-President Venkaiah Naidu extended greetings to the nation on the occasion of Onam.

About:

- ▶▶ Onam the Festival of **Kerala** falls in the Beginning of the month of Chigam, the First month of the Malayalam Calendar. It is mainly a **Harvest Festival** but it also celebrates the homecoming of mighty asura King **Mahabali** from Patala (the Underground).
- ▶▶ Elaborate Feasts, dances, Flowers, Boats and Elephants are a part of the Colourful and vibrant Festival of Onam. A Prominent Feature of Onam is the **Vallamkali (the Snake Boat Race)**. The Most Popular Vallamkali is held in the **Punnamada Lake** and the winners are awarded the Nehru Boat Race Trophy. Traditional games, Known as Onakanikal also form a part of the Onam Celebrations.

3. Bombay Blood Group

Why in News?

- ▶▶ Over the last two weeks, the “Bombay blood group”, a rare blood type, has been at the centre of attention in Mumbai’s healthcare scene. Demand for the blood type has coincidentally spiked at hospitals, but supply has been scarce.

About:

- ▶▶ The four most common blood groups are A, B, AB and O. The rare, Bombay blood group was first discovered in Mumbai (then Bombay) in 1952 by Dr Y M Bhende.
- ▶▶ Each red blood cell has antigen over its surface, which helps determine which group it belongs to.
- ▶▶ The Bombay blood group, also called hh, is deficient in expressing antigen H, meaning the RBC has no antigen H. For instance, in the AB blood group, both antigens A and B are found. A will have A antigens; B will have B antigens. In hh, there are no A or B antigens.
- ▶▶ Globally, the hh blood type has an incidence of one in four million. It has a higher incidence in South Asia; in India, one in 7,600 to 10,000 are born with this type.
- ▶▶ The individuals with Bombay blood group can only be transfused autologous blood or blood from individuals of Bombay hh phenotype only which is very rare.
- ▶▶ An unofficial registry for Bombay blood group lists over 350 donors across India. But at any time, there are only 30 active donors available.

- ▶▶ This group is generally not stored in blood banks, mainly because it is rare and the shelf life of blood is 35-42 days. So, whenever there is a demand for a Bombay blood group patient, a donor is required very urgently.

How Blood Groups are Tested?

- ▶▶ To test for hh blood, an Antigen H blood test is required. Often the hh blood group is confused with the O group.
- ▶▶ The difference is that the O group has Antigen H, while the hh group does not.
- ▶▶ If anyone lacks Antigen H, it does not mean he or she suffers from poor immunity or may be more prone to diseases. Their counts for haemoglobin, platelets, white blood cells and red blood cells are similar to the count of others based on their health index. Because of rarity, however, they do face problems during Blood Transfusion.

4. United Nations Human Rights Council

Why in News?

- ▶▶ The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet has expressed concern **over the National Register of Citizens (NRC) in Assam, and the communications blackout and detention of political leaders in Jammu and Kashmir**. Bachelet was speaking at the opening of the 42nd session of the United Nations Human Rights Council (HRC) in Geneva.

About:

- ▶▶ It is an inter-governmental body within the United Nations system responsible for strengthening the promotion and protection of human rights around the globe and for addressing situations of human rights violations and make recommendations on them.
- ▶▶ The Human Rights Council replaced the former United Nations Commission on Human Rights (UNCHR).
- ▶▶ It has the ability to discuss all thematic human rights issues and situations that require its attention throughout the year.
- ▶▶ The Human Rights Council holds no fewer than **three regular sessions a year, for a total of at least 10 weeks**.
- ▶▶ The **sessions are held at the UN Office in Geneva, Switzerland**.
- ▶▶ The **First Session Took Place from June 19-30, 2006**, three months after the Council was created by United Nations General Assembly Resolution on March 15 that year.
- ▶▶ If one-third of the Member States so request, the HRC can decide at any time to hold a special session to address human rights violations and emergencies.

- ▶▶ **Membership:** The Council is made up of **47 UN Member States**, which are **elected by the UNGA through a direct and secret ballot**. The General Assembly takes into account the contribution of the candidate states to the promotion and protection of human rights, as well as their voluntary pledges and commitments in this regard.
- ▶▶ Members of the Council serve for a period of three years, and are not eligible for immediate re-election after serving two consecutive terms. As of January 1, 2019, 114 UN Member States have served on the HRC. Both India and Pakistan are on this list.

5. Motihari-Amalekhgunj Petroleum Pipeline

Why in News?

- ▶▶ Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Nepalese counterpart K P Sharma Oli “switched on” the Motihari-Amalekhgunj petroleum pipeline from their offices in New Delhi and Kathmandu.

About:

- ▶▶ The pipeline will transport fuel from **Barauni refinery in Bihar's Begusarai district to Amalekhgunj in southeastern Nepal**, situated across the border from Raxaul in East Champaran district.
- ▶▶ The **69-km pipeline** will drastically reduce the cost of transporting fuel to landlocked Nepal from India.
- ▶▶ The Amalekhgunj fuel depot will have The **Capacity to store up to 16,000 kilolitres** of petroleum products.
- ▶▶ The Motihari-Amalekhgunj pipeline project was **First Proposed in 1996**, but progress was slow. Things began to move after Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Kathmandu in 2014.

6. Two New Species of Ginger

Context:

- ▶▶ Scientists from the **Botanical Survey of India (BSI)** have discovered two new species of Zingiber, commonly referred to as ginger, **from Nagaland**.
- ▶▶ While **Zingiber perenense** has been discovered from the Peren district of Nagaland, **Zingiber dimapurens** was found in the Dimapur district of the State.

About:

- ▶▶ Of the two species, **Zingiber dimapurens** is **taller in size**, with leafy shoots measuring **90-120 cm high**, whereas the leafy shoots of **Zingiber perenense** reach **up to 70 cm in height**.

- ▶▶ For **Zingiber dimapurens**, the **lip of the flower (modified corolla) is white in colour, with dense dark- purplish red blotches**. Its pollen is a creamy-white and ovato-ellipsoidal, whereas the fruit is an oblong 4.5 cm-5.5 cm long capsule.
- ▶▶ In the case of **Zingiber perenense**, which was discovered about 50 km from where the other species was found, **the lip of the flower is white with purplish-red streaks throughout, and the pollen is ellipsoidal**.
- ▶▶ The genus Zingiber has 141 species distributed throughout Asia, Australia and the South Pacific, with its centre of diversity in Southeast Asia.
- ▶▶ Most species of ginger have medicinal values. More studies are required to ascertain the medicinal properties of the newly discovered species.
- ▶▶ The rhizome of Zingiber officinale (common ginger) is used as a spice in kitchens across Asia, and also for its medicinal value. Botanists said that other wild species of Zingiber may have immense horticultural importance.

7. Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant

Why in News?

- ▶▶ President Ramnath Kovind, Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu and Prime Minister Narendra Modi have paid tributes to Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant on his 132nd Birth Anniversary.

About:

- ▶▶ Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant (**10 September 1887 – 7 March 1961**) was an Indian freedom fighter and one of the architects of modern India.
- ▶▶ Alongside Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru and Vallabh Bhai Patel, Pant was a key figure in the movement for India's Independence and later a pivotal figure in the Indian Government.
- ▶▶ He was one of the foremost political leaders of Uttar Pradesh (then known as United Provinces) and a key player in the unsuccessful movement to establish Hindi as the national language of Indian Union.
- ▶▶ Today, as a mark of tribute, several Indian hospitals, educational institutions and foundations bear his name. To honour his exemplary services to the nation, Pant received India's highest civilian honour, the Bharat Ratna, in 1957.

8. 'Volfefe' Index

Context:

- ▶▶ **American investment firm JPMorgan** has come out with an index **to gauge the impact of Donald Trump's tweets on US interest rates.**

About:

- ▶▶ Named after Trump's infamous 'covefefe' tweet, the 'Volfefe Index' suggests that the President's tweets have increasingly moved the US rates markets immediately after they were published.
- ▶▶ Analysts also found that the number of market-moving tweets from Trump's handle rose in the past month, with those including words such as 'China,' 'billion,' 'products,' 'democrats,' and 'great,' most likely to affect prices.
- ▶▶ They found that the Volfefe Index can account for a "measurable fraction" of moves in implied volatility, seen in interest rate derivatives known as swaptions.

