

Daily Current Affairs

29 December 2023

Qatar Commutes Death Sentences

- The **death sentences of eight Indians in Qatar** have been commuted. In a statement, **Ministry of External Affairs** said that it has noted the verdict of the Court of Appeal of Qatar in the Dahra Global case, in which the **sentences have been reduced**.
- The Ministry said, the **detailed judgement is awaited** and it is in close touch with the legal team as well as the family members to decide on the next steps.
- MEA said, Indian Ambassador to Qatar and other officials were present in the Court of Appeal, along with the family members.



- It said, the **Ministry stood by them** since the beginning of the matter and it will continue to extend all consular and legal assistance.
- The Ministry said, it will also continue to take up the matter with the Qatari authorities.
- It said, due to the confidential and sensitive nature of proceedings of this case, it would not be appropriate to make any further comment at this juncture.
- **Eight former Indian Navy personnel** were handed down death sentence by a court in Qatar. They worked with private company Al Dahra and were arrested in August last year.

MPhil As No Longer Recognized Degree

- **University Grant Commission** has issued a notification, alerting students **against pursuing an MPhil degree** as it is no longer recognised.
- The commission has also warned universities against offering the programme and admissions for the 2023-24 academic year are prohibited.
- However, **MPhil degree awarded till the date** of notification of new regulations, **issued in 2022**, will remain valid.



- It has come to the knowledge that few universities are inviting fresh applications for the MPhil (Master of Philosophy) programme.
- It added that an MPhil degree is not a recognised degree now. UGC highlighted that the notification emphasized **Regulation No. 14 of the UGC** (Minimum Standards and Procedures for Award of PhD Degree) Regulations 2022, which clearly prohibits higher educational institutions from offering MPhil programmes.
- UGC had earlier declared the **MPhil degree illegitimate**, instructing higher educational institutions not to offer MPhil programmes.

Reliance Jio And IIT Bombay

- **Reliance Jio Infocomm**, under the leadership of Chairman Akash Ambani, is set to launch the '**Bharat GPT**' program in collaboration with the **Indian Institute of Technology-Bombay**.
- Ambani revealed the company's comprehensive plans, including the development of an operating system (OS) for smart TVs, signaling the evolution of **Jio's vision into "Jio 2.0."**

- Reliance Jio is actively working with **IIT Bombay on the Bharat GPT program.**
- The company is in the advanced stages of creating its own operating system for smart TVs.
- Ambani announced Jio's plans to diversify its offerings across media, commerce, communication, and devices.
- The company aims to build a robust ecosystem of development in line with its vision of **"Jio 2.0."**



- Expressing enthusiasm, he revealed Jio's plans to offer 5G private networks, extending 5G technology to enterprises of all sizes.
- Ambani hailed **India as the "biggest innovation center"** for the next decade.
- He predicted India becoming a **USD 6 trillion economy** by the end of the decade.
- Emphasizing the transformative power of AI, Ambani shared instances of AI applications, envisioning a future where AI encompasses all aspects of life.
- Ambani highlighted Jio's commitment to pursuits beneficial for India, considering financial success as a byproduct of service.
- Describing **Jio as the largest startup globally**, he encouraged young entrepreneurs to embrace failure without fear.

Indian Wrestler Pooja Dhanda Suspended

- Indian wrestler **Pooja Dhanda**, a decorated athlete with international accolades, has been **suspended for one year** by the **National Anti-Doping Agency (NADA)** due to three whereabouts failures.



- **NADA, established in 2005**, is India's central anti-doping agency responsible for testing athletes to ensure fair competition and adherence to World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) regulations.
- Elite athletes like Pooja, included in the Registered Testing Pool (RTP), must **provide a 60-minute window for potential testing during the year**.
- Failing to comply with these obligations constitutes a whereabouts failure, with three such failures within 12 months leading to a suspension.
- NADA recorded two filing failures and one missed test against Pooja in 2022.
- Filing failures involved **discrepancies in submitting location updates**.
- The missed test occurred in December 2022 while travelling to the national wrestling championships.
- Pooja argued she offered alternate testing times and locations, though NADA deemed it insufficient.



National Anti Doping Agency

- NADA's Anti-Doping Disciplinary Panel charged Pooja with three whereabouts failures and imposed a one-year ban on December 5, 2023.
- The suspension retroactively began on June 15, 2023. This means Pooja will be ineligible to compete in various tournaments and training camps until June 14, 2024.
- This suspension significantly impacts **Pooja's career trajectory**, potentially affecting her training and preparation for future events.
- Despite the penalty, it's crucial to acknowledge **Pooja's impressive accomplishments** as a world championship bronze medalist (2018), Commonwealth Games silver medalist (2018), and Youth Olympic Games silver medalist (2010).

India As Third Largest Economy By 2032

- The **Centre for Economics and Business Research (CEBR)** has recently released a groundbreaking report projecting India's trajectory as the preeminent global economic superpower by the close of the century.
- This bold projection places India on a course to **surpass both China and the United States in Gross Domestic Product (GDP)**, underlining its sustained and robust economic growth.
- According to the latest World Economic League Table by CEBR, India's GDP is poised to exceed that of **China by a staggering 90%** and surpass that of the **United States by 30%**.



CENTRE FOR BUSINESS AND ECONOMICS RESEARCH

- This monumental shift is anticipated to materialize post-2080, aligning with demographic estimates and projections. The report paints a picture of India **emerging as the world's economic powerhouse**, a testament to its demographic advantage and economic vibrancy.

- A critical element of this ascension is India's forecasted average growth rate of 6.5% from 2024 to 2028. This trajectory positions **India to become the world's third-largest economy by 2032**, outpacing economic stalwarts like Japan and Germany.
- The sustained growth, according to the report, is attributed to **India's expansive and youthful population**, a burgeoning middle class, a dynamic entrepreneurial sector, and an increasing integration into the global economy.
- While celebrating this economic ascent, the CEBR report emphasizes the need for proactive measures to address key challenges.
- Poverty reduction, inequality, human capital development, infrastructure enhancement, and environmental sustainability are identified as critical areas requiring attention.

Ammonia Gas Leakage Reported In Ennore Region

- A fertilizer plant in North Chennai's Ennore area experienced an **ammonia gas leak**, leading to the hospitalization of around 50 people.
- The incident has raised concerns about the safety protocols in place and the potential environmental impact of such leaks.
- The gas leak occurred from an **underwater pipeline** that runs from the sea to the fertilizer manufacturing facility of Coromandel International Limited.
- The company, a part of the **Murugappa Group**, promptly depressurized the pipeline, completing the operation within 20 minutes.



- However, the damage was already done, with a large number of people in the vicinity complaining of breathlessness and skin irritation.

- Approximately 50 requiring hospitalization. Fortunately, all patients are currently in stable condition.
- The affected individuals experienced symptoms such as breathlessness, burning in their eyes, throat, nose, and chest.
- The **Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board (TNPCB)** stated that the level of ammonia in the air was alarmingly high at **2,090 micrograms per cubic meter**, far above the accepted level of 400 micrograms.
- Apart from the immediate health concerns, the ammonia leak has raised worries about its impact on the environment.
- The TNPCB reported elevated levels of ammonia in the sea, reaching 49 milligrams per liter (mg/l) compared to the standard of 5 mg/l.
- The southern bench of the **National Green Tribunal** has taken suo moto cognizance and directed the TNPCB to file a report, with a hearing scheduled for January 2, 2024.

'God of Chaos' Asteroid

- NASA has relaunched a spacecraft to explore an asteroid nicknamed the "**God of Chaos**" that will make an extremely close **flyby of Earth in 2029**.
- The asteroid Apophis, named after the Egyptian god of chaos, measures about 1,100 feet wide. It **approaches Earth every 7,500 years**, with its next close pass happening on April 13, 2029.



- On that date, Apophis will come within 20,000 miles of our planet – closer than some human-made satellites – making it visible to the naked eye.
- To analyze this rare cosmic encounter, NASA has redirected the **OSIRIS-REx spacecraft** that recently returned from the asteroid Bennu.

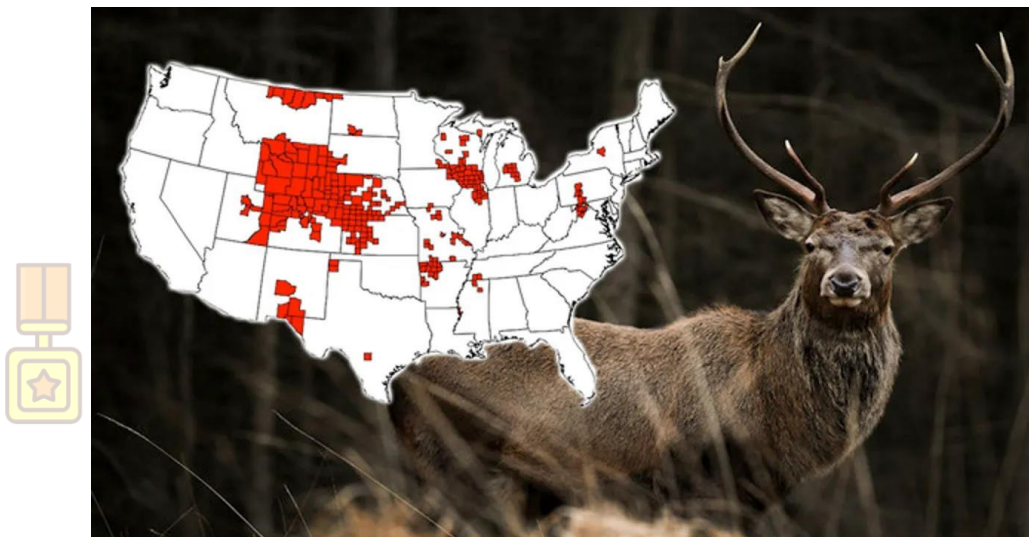
- Now called **OSIRIS-APEX**, its mission is to observe **Apophis** before, during and after its 2029 flyby to understand the effects of Earth's gravity on the asteroid.
- **As Apophis approaches Earth**, our planet's gravitational pull is expected to alter the asteroid's rotation period and potentially trigger landslides or "moonquakes."
- **OSIRIS-APEX won't land on Apophis** but will operate close by, mapping its surface and analyzing its makeup over 18 months while monitoring physical changes.
- In one maneuver, the craft will descend within 50 feet of the asteroid's surface, using its thrusters to stir up material so scientists can study its composition.
- The spacecraft's findings will give insights into **planet formation and how solar system debris** evolved into worlds.



- While Apophis poses no threat to Earth, analyzing such near-passes enhances preparedness while shedding light on an asteroid's response to gravitational stresses.
- Even minor alterations could help project Apophis' future trajectory as it cycles between Earth and sun. Thus **OSIRIS-APEX marks a unique opportunity** providing data our species has never obtained before.

'Zombie Deer Disease'

- A concerning brain illness nicknamed **"zombie deer disease"** is spreading rapidly among wildlife in **parts of the United States**, prompting warnings from researchers about potential transmission to humans.
- **Chronic wasting disease (CWD)** is a fatal neurological illness that affects cervids – a group of animals including deer, elk and moose. It causes **behavioral changes, loss of bodily control**, drastic weight loss and eventually death.
- The disease is caused by **malformed proteins called prions that attack brain** and nerve tissue. It spreads through direct contact between animals, or indirectly through prion-contaminated soil, food and surfaces.



- CWD was recently detected in over 800 samples from deer, moose and elk across Wyoming, including America's Yellowstone National Park. It has now been reported in wildlife across 31 U.S. states.
- Researchers have labeled CWD a **"slow-moving disaster"** and are advising governments to prepare for potential transmission to humans, given past examples like mad cow disease spilling over. There is currently no vaccine or cure for infected animals.
- While **no cases have been reported yet in humans**, a study found **monkeys could get infected** by consuming CWD-contaminated meat, heightening fears over zoonotic risk. The CDC thus warns prion diseases could enter the human food supply. Experts note several challenges in controlling CWD's spread:
- **No proven ways yet to eradicate prions from animals** or eliminate environmental contamination.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Reliance Jio's Collaboration With IIT Bombay For

- A. Bharat GPT Program
- B. Swayam GPT Program
- C. Bharatiya GPT Program
- D. India AI GPT Program

ANSWER: A

2. Which Indian Wrestler Suspended By NADA

- A. Vinesh Phogat
- B. Babita Kumari
- C. Pooja Dhanda
- D. Sakshi Malik

ANSWER: C

3. Organization Projected India To Become World's 3rd Largest Economy By 2032

- A. World Economic Forum
- B. International Monetary Fund
- C. Centre for Economics and Business Research
- D. United Nations Development Programme

ANSWER: C

4. Who Spearheaded Reliance Jio's Collaboration With IIT Bombay For The 'Bharat GPT' Program

- A. Mukesh Ambani
- B. Anant Ambani
- C. Akash Ambani
- D. Nita Ambani

ANSWER: C

5. State Clinched Title Of 13th Senior National Men's Hockey Championship

- A. Punjab
- B. Tamil Nadu
- C. Rajasthan
- D. Kerala

ANSWER: A

6. Cab Aggregator Uber Announced Launch Of Its Global Flagship Electric Vehicle Service Uber Green In Which City

- A. New Delhi
- B. Bengaluru
- C. Chennai
- D. Cochin

ANSWER: B

7. What Is Rank Of India In 2023 World Digital Competitiveness Ranking

- A. 49
- B. 52
- C. 57
- D. 62

ANSWER: A

8. In Which Indian State Did Discovery Of 27 Bonnet Macaque Monkey Carcasses, Highlighting Human-monkey Conflict

- A. Maharashtra
- B. Kerala
- C. Tamil Nadu
- D. Karnataka

ANSWER: D

9. Which Indian State Set To Receive \$100 Million World Bank Investment For Skill Development And Job Creation Initiatives

- A. Uttarakhand
- B. Himachal Pradesh
- C. Arunachal Pradesh
- D. Sikkim

ANSWER: D

10. Which Region Earliest Evidence Of Human Domestication Of Yaks Discovered

- A. Tibetan Autonomous Region
- B. Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region
- C. Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region
- D. Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region

ANSWER: A

11. On Which Date India Celebrate National Consumer Rights Day

- A. December 23
- B. December 24
- C. December 1
- D. December 30

ANSWER: B

12. Who Won The Egyptian Presidential Elections

- A. Abdel Fattah El Sisi
- B. Anwar Sadat
- C. Gamal Abdel Nasser
- D. Hosni Mubarak

ANSWER: A

13. What Disease Does The R21/Matrix-m Vaccine Aim To Prevent

- A. Influenza
- B. Tuberculosis
- C. Malaria
- D. COVID-19

ANSWER: C

14. Where Was SAANS Campaign 2023-24 For Pneumonia Prevention Inaugurated

- A. Kohima
- B. Agartala
- C. Aizawl
- D. Imphal

ANSWER: D

15. Who Has Released Book 'Breaking Mould : Reimagining India's Economic Future' In Collaboration With Economist Rohit Lamba

- A. Amartya Sen
- B. Shaktikanta Das
- C. Urjit Patel
- D. Raghuram Rajan

ANSWER: D

16. Where Will The Khelo India Youth Games 2023 Be Held

- A. Maharashtra
- B. Karnataka
- C. Tamil Nadu
- D. Telangana

ANSWER: C

17. European Country Announced Ban On Wearing Abaya Robes In School

- A. Germany
- B. France
- C. Spain
- D. Portugal

ANSWER: B

18. Against Which Team India Women Achieve A Historic Maiden Test Victory In Cricket

- A. England
- B. South Africa
- C. Australia
- D. New Zealand

ANSWER: C

19. Who Received Approval From SEBI To Be Appointed As Chairman Of BSE

- A. Sundararaman Ramamurthy
- B. Ramesh Kapoor
- C. Pramod Agrawal
- D. Sanjeev Mehta

ANSWER: C

20. In Which Indian State Did 'Namma Cargo' Logistics Initiative, Introducing Cargo Services On Route Buses, Get Launched

- A. Maharashtra
- B. Karnataka
- C. Tamil Nadu
- D. Kerala

ANSWER: B