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## Important Facts for Prelims (22nd November 2018)

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### Ortolan Bunting in India

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- In a rare sighting, 'Ortolan Bunting' bird has been photographed in Mangalore. It is said to be the **first photographic record** of an **Ortolan bunting in India**.
- The Ortolan or Ortolan Buntings (*Emberiza hortulana*) are **tiny finch-like songbirds** that are part of the bunting family.
- The bird **breeds from Mongolia to Europe** and **migrates to Africa via the Middle East**.
- The Ortolan Bunting migrates mostly through Middle East and while migrating, if an Ortolan loses its way, it may land anywhere.
- The International Union for Conservation of Nature's (IUCN) red list of threatened species has placed Ortolan bunting in the "**Least Concern**" category.
- However, it is considered a vulnerable species, especially in **France**, because the bird is trapped to be the centrepiece of a very **popular gourmet dish in French cuisine**.
- It is said to be the "**most sadistic dish**" ever as Ortolans used to be netted in great numbers, blinded using a pair of pincers, and kept in small dark boxes.
- This **inhumane trapping and slaughter was outlawed in 1999** but is still believed to be practised. In fact, until 2007 up to 50,000 of these birds were said to still have been killed due to lack of enforcement.

### Devastation at Point Calimere

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- After the **devastation caused by Cyclone Gaja**, Point Calimere resembles a forest in Vietnam that has been laid waste by Agent Orange.
- **Agent Orange** was a powerful herbicide (Operation Ranch Hand) used by U.S. military forces during the Vietnam War in the 1960s to eliminate forest cover and crops in Vietnam.
- In the **devastation caused by Cyclone Gaja**, thousands of birds that once made the Point Calimere sanctuary their home have died, trees have been uprooted or their branches broken or defoliated.

- The Point Calimere, the renowned wildlife and bird sanctuary on the seashore in Nagapattinam district (Tamil Nadu), is a **wetland of international importance** as it is one of the 26 designated **Ramsar** sites in India.
- The Point Calimere sanctuary consists of shallow waters, shores, long sand bars, intertidal flats and intertidal forests, **mangroves, dry evergreen forests**, saline lagoons, as well as human-made salt exploitation sites.
- **Great flamingo, Painted Stork**, Little Stint, Seagull and Brown-headed gull are normally found in the sanctuary.

## Plane Flying With No Moving Parts

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- Ever since the **Wright Brothers** flew the world's first plane more than a century ago, aircrafts have typically flown with the help of moving parts such as propellers, turbine blades and fans, and powered by the combustion of fossil fuels or battery packs.
- In a revolutionary change, **Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT)** engineers have built and flown a **prototype plane with no moving parts**.
- Instead of propellers or turbines, the aircraft is **powered by electrohydrodynamic thrust** or the so-called "**ionic wind**", a phenomenon first identified in the 1960s.
- When a current passes between two electrodes, it creates a wind in the air between. If enough voltage is applied, the resulting "ionic wind" can produce a thrust without the help of motors or fuel and power a small plane.
- Earlier, BAE Systems and the University of Manchester had successfully completed the first phase of flight trials with **MAGMA**, a small-scale unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV), which does away with the need for mechanical moving parts used to move flaps to control the aircraft during flight.

## Innovation Cell for Higher Education Institutions

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- The **Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD)** has established an **innovation cell at the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE)** with an aim to brainstorm new ideas about **promoting innovation in all higher education institutions** across India.
- Already, more than 1000 Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) have formed Institution's Innovation Councils (IICs) in their campuses to promote innovation through multitudinous modes leading to an innovation promotion eco-system in their campuses.