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Important Facts for Prelims (22nd October 2018)

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BEPICOLOMBO: Mission to Mercury

- The **European Space Agency (ESA)** and the **Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA)** sent two probes on a joint mission called BepiColombo to Mercury, the closest planet to the Sun.
- The spacecraft is named after Italian scientist Giuseppe “Bepi” Colombo (1920-1984) who played an instrumental role in making NASA Mariner 10 mission (1973) to Mercury successful.
- The spacecraft will reach the Mercury by 2025.
- It is the first mission by the European and Japanese Space agency to Mercury.
- It is also the first mission to send two spacecraft to make complementary measurements of the planet and its environment at the same time.
- The spacecraft are ESA’s Mercury Planetary Orbiter (MPO) and JAXA’s Mercury Magnetospheric Orbiter (MMO, or ‘Mio’).
- The ESA-built Mercury Transfer Module (MTM) will carry the orbiters to Mercury using a combination of solar electric propulsion and gravity assisted flybys.
- The two orbiters will also collect data at Venus.
- The challenges to the mission include:
 - Sun’s gravity makes it difficult to place a spacecraft into a stable orbit around the mercury.
 - The spacecraft also have to face extreme temperatures and solar radiations.
- With this mission researchers are hoping to learn about the formation of planets and the solar system.
- Past Missions to Mercury:
 - **Mariner 10** - NASA Flyby Mission (Flyby is a path spacecraft follows past a planet or other body in space) to Venus and Mercury (1973)
 - **MESSENGER** - NASA Orbiter to Mercury (2004)

Kumbh Mela

- Kumbh Mela is the largest peaceful congregation of pilgrims on earth, during which participants bathe or take a dip in a sacred river.
- **Kumbh Mela comes under the UNESCO's Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.**
- The festival is held at **Prayagraj** (at the **confluence of Ganga, Yamuna, and the mythical Saraswati**), **Haridwar** (on the **Ganges**), **Ujjain** (on the **Shipra**) and **Nasik** (on the **Godavari**) every four years by rotation and is attended by millions of people irrespective of caste, creed or gender.
- As it is held in four different cities in India, it involves different social and cultural activities, making this a culturally diverse festival.
- The event encapsulates the science of astronomy, astrology, spirituality, ritualistic traditions, and social and cultural customs and practices, making it extremely rich in knowledge.
- Knowledge and skills related to the tradition are transmitted through ancient religious manuscripts, oral traditions, historical travelogues and texts produced by eminent historians.
- The teacher-student relationship of the sadhus in the ashrams and akhadas remains the most important method of imparting and safeguarding knowledge and skills relating to Kumbh Mela.

Green Climate Fund

- A Green Climate Fund has approved more than \$1 billion for 19 new projects.
- Green Climate Fund was set up under the UNFCCC (UN Framework Convention for Climate Change) at **Conference of Parties (COP-16) in Cancun, Mexico 2010.**
- The aim of GCF is to support developing countries in limiting or reducing their greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to climate change impacts with resources to be generated from funding by developed countries and various public and private sources.
- **National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD)** and **Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI)** act as **National Implementing Entity (NIE)** of India for Green Climate Fund (GCF).

Similipal National Park

- The Similipal National Park in **Mayurbhanj district of Odisha** will be reopened for tourists after remaining closed for three months due to monsoon.
- Similipal National Park is also a Tiger Reserve. It is part of the UNESCO World Network of Biosphere Reserve since 2009.

- It is part of the **Similipal-Kuldiha-Hadgarh Elephant Reserve** popularly known as Mayurbhanj Elephant Reserve, which includes 3 protected areas i.e. **Similipal Tiger Reserve, Hadgarh Wildlife sanctuary and Kuldiha wildlife sanctuary.**
- Similipal National Park derives its name from the abundance of Semul or red silk cotton trees that bloom abundantly in the locality.
- It was formally designated a tiger reserve in 1956 and brought under Project Tiger in the year of 1973. The Government of Odisha declared Similipal as a wildlife sanctuary in 1979.