



## Important Facts For Prelims (10th May 2019)

### Barn Owl Campaign in Lakshadweep

- The Union Territory of **Lakshadweep** has recruited **three pairs of barn owls** from Kerala to **hunt down rats** responsible for **deteriorating its coconut yield**.
  - Coconut is an important money-spinner for the islands; pesky rodents account for 30 to 40% of the yield loss.
- The three pairs of barn owls will gradually be released into the coconut plantations under a closely monitored breeding and rodent management programme.
- In Lakshadweep islands, **rats live on the treetops**. In fact, the fronds overlap, allowing the rodents to **move easily from one tree to another**. This is the reason for **not employing** accomplished rat hunters like **cats or rat snake** for the purpose.
  - Barn owl is a natural rat hunter, armed with a powerful auditory mechanism.
- The Union Territory of Lakshadweep has gone for this **biocontrol measure** as **islands are a designated organic zone**, where the use of chemicals for pest control is not allowed.
  - **Biological control** is an environmentally sound and effective means of **reducing or mitigating pests** and pest effects **through the use of natural enemies**.
  - Basically, it is an action of parasites, predators, or pathogens in maintaining another organism's population density at a lower average than would occur in their absence.

### Barn Owl

- The common barn-owl (*Tyto alba*) belongs to the family of owls, Tytonidae.
- The species are **distributed** in Indian subcontinent, Australia, Africa, Europe, Southeast Asia, Middle-East, Europe, North America, South America and Caribbean Islands.
- It is listed as '**least concern**' in the **IUCN red list**.
- **It comes under Schedule IV of the Indian Wildlife Protection Act, 1972.**

### Grizzled Giant Squirrel

- Researchers have sighted nests of the **grizzled giant squirrel (Ratufa macroura)**, at **Pakkamalai Reserve Forest** near Gingee, Tamil Nadu, in the Eastern Ghats. [//](#)



- Earlier it has also been spotted in **Tiruvannamalai forest, TN** in the Eastern Ghats.
- The grizzled giant squirrel is endemic to western ghats, usually known to nest in the region ranging from **Chinnar Wildlife sanctuary** in Kerala to **Anamalai Tiger Reserve** and **Palani hills** in Tamil Nadu.
- Grizzled giant squirrels are named for the white flecks of hair that cover their greyish-brown bodies, giving them a grizzled look.
- Grizzled Squirrel Wildlife Sanctuary is located in **Srivilliputtur, Tamil Nadu**.
- **Status** of Grizzled Squirrel- It is listed as
  - **Near threatened category in IUCN Red List.**
  - Listed under **Schedule II of CITES.**
  - Listed under **Schedule I of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972.**
- **The threat:** to the population by increased predator pressure and the extremely low regeneration of its preferred food plant species due to heavy grazing by cattle.
  - Habitat loss coupled with hunting for its fur and bushmeat by the locals are said to be the major threats to this species.

## Tuila: One-Stringed Instrument

*Tuila* is a **one-stringed instrument** native to the **tribal communities of Jharkhand and Odisha**. It belongs to the **chordophone category**, which is a class of musical instruments in which a stretched, vibrating string produces the initial sound.



- *Tuila* is also known as **Uhila, Como Ohila** and **Toila**.
- It is made of **bamboo - Mundari Pani Bansu**.
- A piece of wood known as **Ghoda** is attached to one end.
- The upper end of the instrument is tied loosely to a half-sliced gourd resonator, usually pumpkin, which produces a unique sound.
- The resonator is tightened via a short tubular **Khimki** by using a chord. This is made of horse hair and is attached to short pieces of wood on the inside.
- The string, which is usually made up of cotton yarn or silk, is tied to the instrument. It is fixed directly to the pipe with a loop and several windings.

## How is it Played?

- The playing technique is unique with only three fingers being used to play the notes.
- **Tuila is generally played by men**, while **Kendra (female compatriot of Tuila)** is played by women.
- *Tuila* is played as an accompaniment for vocal performances in the folk communities of Odisha and Jharkhand.
- The women sing and the men play the *Tuila*. The instrument is also part of the wedding bands in the tribal region.
- Lord Siva can be seen holding this instrument in the sculpture on the Dharmaraja Ratha at Mahabalipuram. It is also found at the Kailasanathar and Vaikuntha Perumal temples.

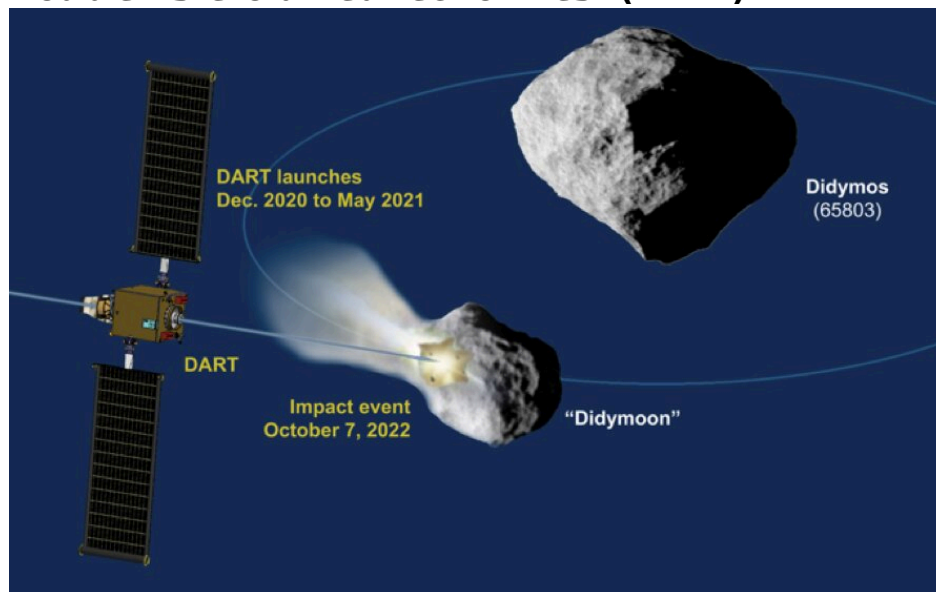
## Gopal Krishna Gokhale

The Prime Minister of India on 9<sup>th</sup> May, 2019 paid a tribute to the freedom fighter Gopal Krishna Gokhale on his 153<sup>rd</sup> birth anniversary.

Some Facts about Gopal Krishna Gokhale

- He was born on May 9, 1866 in Ratnagiri, Maharashtra.
- He **joined the Indian National Congress in 1889**.
- In **1905**, Gokhale was elected as the **President of the Indian National Congress**.
- He founded the **Servants of Indian Society in 1905**. The main objective of this society was to train Indians to raise their voice against social evils and serve their country.
- He is known to be a **mentor to Mahatma Gandhi**. Mahatma Gandhi even wrote a book called, 'Gokhale, My Political Guru'.

## Double Asteroid Redirection Test (DART)



- NASA is planning to launch a DART mission by a SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket that will hit a small moonlet in the binary near-earth asteroid system Didymos in September 2022.
  - It is a **planetary defence technique**, scheduled to be launched in mid-2021.
- DART mission will be the first ever space mission to demonstrate asteroid deflection by a kinetic impactor. It is planned to intercept the secondary member of the Didymos system.
- By using solar electric propulsion, it will intercept the target when the asteroid will be within 11 million km of Earth.

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