



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.

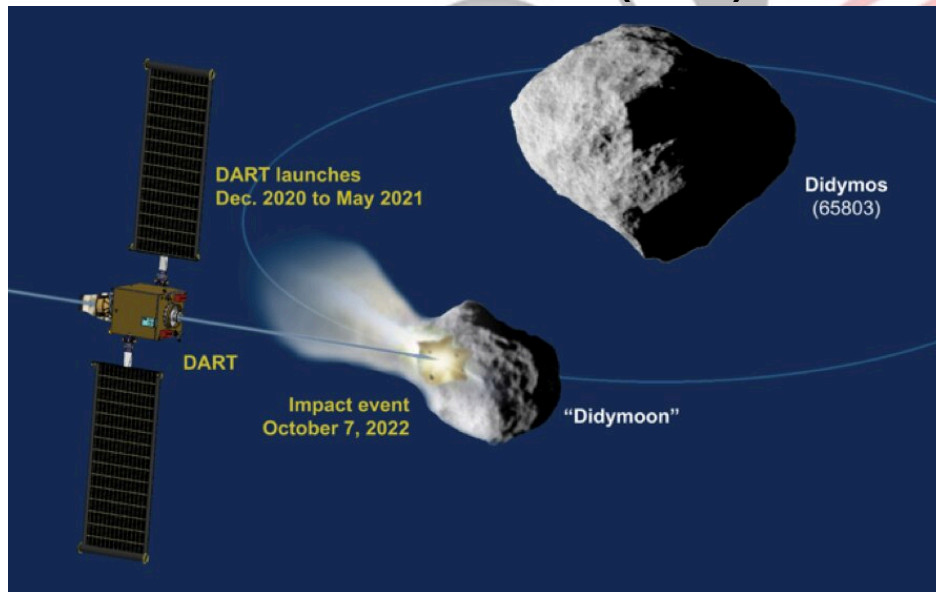
Gopal Krishna Gokhale

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

