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KEY FACTS ABOUT ALDABRA GIANT TORTOISE

On the first day of his Seychelles visit, the Prime Minister of India visited the Seychelles National Botanical Garden and fed native Aldabra giant tortoises.

- It is the **second-largest** species of **land tortoise** in the world, **after the Galapagos giant tortoise** (Chelonoidis nigra).
- Scientific Name: Geochelone gigantea
- **Habitat and Distribution:**
  - It is **endemic** to the **Aldabra Atoll of the Seychelles,** an archipelago nation in the **western Indian Ocean**.
  - It is **terrestrial** and occurs in a wide variety of habitats, including **scrub forests, mangrove swamps,** and **coastal dunes and beaches**, each with their respective vegetation.
  - The **largest populations** of tortoises are found on **grasslands called "platins."**
  - **Their heavy grazing** has **formed** a special kind of **grassland habitat called "tortoise turf."**
- **Features:**
  - **Males** are **considerably larger than females** and have **longer, thicker tails.**
  - Their **carapace** (or upper shell) is **highly domed and thick,** with a **small neck plate** that is usually visible, a feature absent in other species of giant tortoises.
  - Lifespan: It is **among the longest-living vertebrates**, with many individuals living **over 100 years** and some believed to exceed 150 years.
  - **Conservation Status:**
  - IUCN Red List: **Vulnerable.**

WHAT IS K9 VAJRA-T?

After the successful collaboration on the K9 Vajra-T self-propelled howitzer, India and South Korea are set to deepen their defence partnership

- It is a **155 mm, 52-caliber tracked self-propelled artillery system (howitzer).**
- It is an **Indian adaptation of South Korea's K9 Thunder** 155 mm self-propelled howitzer.
- It is **built by Larsen & Toubro with technology transferred from South Korean** defence major Hanwha Defense based on its K9 Thunder.
- It is **customised to suit the requirements of the Indian Army** for operations in varied terrains, including deserts, plains, and high-altitude regions.
- **Features**:
  - It has **all-welded steel armour** up to 19 mm thick.
  - It is powered by an MTU MT 881 Ka-500 **diesel engine** producing 1,000 horsepower.
  - The **main weapon** is the **155mm /52 calibre gun** capable of **firing high-explosive, smoke, and guided projectiles.**
  - It has a b**urst rate of fire** of **three rounds per 15 seconds** and a maximum rate of fire of six to eight rounds per minute for three minutes.
  - It can **strike enemy targets** at around **50 kilometres.**
  - It can also **turn around at zero radius,** basically at the same place where it is standing.
  - The K9 uses a **digital fire control system** by which it can **fire multiple rounds** that can **impact a given area at the same time** (this mode of operation is called **Multiple Round Simultaneous Impact, or MRSI).**

NATIONAL INVESTMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE FUND (NIIF)

- It is a fund **created** by the **Government of India** for enhancing **infrastructure financing** in the country.
- It is **India's first**-ever **sovereign wealth fund (SWF).**
- NIIF got **registered with SEBI** in **2015**.
- It is a collaborative investment platform for **international and Indian investors** with a mandate to **invest equity capital in domestic infrastructure.**
- NIIF is **49% owned by the Indian government** and has more than $5 billion in assets under management, making it the **country's biggest infrastructure fund**.
- NIIF benefits from its association with the Government yet is **independent in its investment decisions.**
- It is **professionally run and managed** by **National Investment and Infrastructure Fund Limited (NIIFL).**
- Over the years, NIIF has **attracted investments** from **leading global sovereign wealth funds, pension funds, multilateral development institutions,** and domestic financial institutions.
- Currently, there are **four funds under the NIIF Umbrella.**
    - **NIIF Master Fund:** This fund primarily invests in **infra-related projects** such as roads, ports, airports, and power. It is the largest infrastructure fund in India.
    - **NIIF Private Markets Fund: Invests in funds managed by third-party managers** in infrastructure and associated sectors.
    - **NIIF Strategic Opportunities Fund:** It invests and **develops large-scale businesses and greenfield projects** that are of **strategic importance** to the country.
    - **India-Japan Fund:**
        - **NIIF's first bilateral fund** invests in environment preservation in India.

- The Fund has a **target corpus of US$600 million**, with the **Government of India contributing 49%** and the remaining **51% contributed by the Japan Bank for International Cooperation,** a policy-based financial institution wholly owned by the Government of Japan.

SAMAGRA SHISHU BAL SWASTHYA KARYAKRAM

- It is a **unified national programme** that provides a seamless continuum of **home** and **community-based care** for **every child** from **birth to 36 months of age.**
- The programme embodies the vision of **Comprehensive care during the first three years.**
- It integrates the existing **Home-Based Newborn Care** (HBNC) and **Home-Based Care for Young Child (HBYC) programmes** into a single comprehensive framework.

Features of Samagra Shishu Bal Swasthya Karyakram:

- **Risk-stratified Approach:** It **introduces a risk-stratified approach,** providing intensified follow-up for **newborns and children identified as "at-risk",** due to conditions such as low birth weight, prematurity, delayed initiation of breastfeeding etc.
- **Community Platforms:** It introduces **Well-Baby Sessions** at every Village Health, Sanitation and Nutrition Day (VHSND) and a **monthly Shishu Shivir at Ayushman Arogya Mandirs.**
- **Maternal Mental Health:** It incorporates **post-partum maternal mental health screening** as an integral component of community-based care.
- **Early Childhood Development**: It also mainstreams **Nurturing Care for Early Childhood Development** (ECD) by promoting responsive caregiving, early learning opportunities.

UNIFIED HEALTH INTERFACE

- It is an **interoperable digital network** under the **Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission** (ABDM).
- UHI aims to **solve for information asymmetry,** accessibility to health services and wider choice of verified providers across services without being tied to a single application.
- It was launched as the **service layer of the ABDM.**
- **Working of Unified Health Interface:**
    - UHI **operates through open protocols** on a core Gateway of the Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission, developed and **maintained by the National Health Authority (NHA).**
    - When a **citizen uses a UHI-enabled app** to search for a health service, the request is routed through the Gateway to registered service providers.
    - The entire journey from discovery and booking to fulfillment is facilitated through a common language, irrespective of the platform used to seek or provide the service.
    - The network uses **Ayushman Bharat Health Account (ABHA)** as the **patient identifier**, the **Healthcare Professionals Registry** (HPR) and **Health Facility Registry** (HFR) for provider verification, and the Health Information Exchange for consent-based data sharing.
- **Key Objectives:**
    - **Interoperability:** Patients and providers can **use any UHI-enabled platform** to seek or offer care, removing the dependency on shared platforms that currently limits digital health access.
    - **Fair discoverability**: Every verified healthcare provider, regardless of size, geography, or platform, has an **equal opportunity** to be found on the network.

THE STRAIT OF HORMUZ: CAN IRAN LEGALLY CHARGE NAVIGATION FEES

- The Strait of Hormuz is one of the world's most critical maritime chokepoints — a narrow waterway through which a large share of global oil trade passes.
- Its strategic value is exactly what gives a bordering state like Iran potential leverage, and exactly why international law tries to limit such leverage.

The Legal Principle: Freedom of Navigation

- The heart of the matter lies in **UNCLOS Articles 37 to 44**, which govern "Straits used for International Navigation."
- These provide that all ships and aircraft enjoy a **"right of transit passage"** — the freedom of continuous and swift navigation and overflight through international straits.
- Two phrases are key:
  - Transit passage **"shall not be impeded."**
  - **"There shall be no suspension"** of transit passage.
- The logic is that when a large portion of global trade depends on a narrow corridor, bordering states should not be able to **weaponise** it.
- By this standard, Iran's navigation and environmental charges look like an attempt to turn a natural strait into a **managed, revenue-generating entry point** — administered by Iran with Oman's support.

International Law's Silence: The Loopholes Iran Can Use

- **Territorial waters, not high seas** - The Strait lies within the combined territorial seas of Iran and Oman. Here, full high-seas freedom of navigation does not apply. Instead, ships enjoy the "right of innocent passage."
- **The "innocent passage" caveat** - Under Article 19 of UNCLOS, innocent passage is subject to the coastal state being satisfied that passage does not prejudice its peace, good order, or security. These grounds are broad enough that Iran could invoke them to deny passage during a tense standoff.

- **The flawed canal analogy**. Iran might point to the Suez and Panama canals, which charge transit fees. But this analogy might not help Iran: those are artificially engineered waterways built and maintained through sovereign territory and governed by specific treaty regimes — unlike Hormuz, a natural strait governed by UNCLOS.
- The "**persistent objector**" argument. Iran signed UNCLOS but never ratified it.
    - On signing, Iran declared it does not regard the transit-passage regime as customary international law — viewing it instead as a quid pro quo bargain only for treaty parties.
    - Under the "persistent objector" doctrine, a state is exempt from an emerging rule of customary international law if it has clearly, consistently and persistently objected to that rule while it was still forming.
- **Iran's domestic law.** In 1993, Iran enacted the "Law of Marine Areas of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the Persian Gulf and Oman Sea," which lets it suspend the passage of foreign ships and requires prior authorisation for warships and vessels carrying harmful substances (for environmental protection).
    - Since this latter category can include commercial oil tankers, the inclusion of a navigation and environmental fee in the agreement actually reinforces Iran's persistent-objector position.
    - This claim gains some acceptance under the **doctrine of comity of nations** — where states voluntarily recognise and respect each other's laws and customs.

The Bigger Picture: An Economic Weapon

- The distinctive feature of the conflict has been its rapid oscillation between **military confrontation and economic warfare**, blurring the line between the two.
- Though stretched militarily and economically, Iran demonstrated that it can impose global costs by making ordinary commerce uncertain.
- For an energy-dependent country like India, the episode is a reminder that the security of vital sea lanes rests not only on treaty text but on the geopolitical will of the states that border them.

DELHI EV POLICY – MANDATORY ELECTRIC TWO-WHEELERS FROM 2028

- The Delhi government announced its EV Policy 2.0, representing a sweeping, first-of-its-kind policy reform in the country. The policy comes into effect on July 1, following approval from the Lieutenant Governor.

  Key Mandates
  - The policy introduces phased mandates for electrification:
    - No petrol motorcycles and scooters can be registered in Delhi after March 31, 2028.
    - Registration of new CNG auto-rickshaws will stop at the end of 2026.
    - From April 2028, every new two- and three-wheeler sold in Delhi must be an electric vehicle.
  - The government clarified that existing non-electric two-wheelers will not be forced off the roads; only new registrations will be restricted, giving customers and manufacturers a two-year transition window.
- **Objectives**
  - Make Delhi pollution-free by March 31, 2030
  - Achieve a minimum 30% electrification of Delhi's vehicle fleet by March 2030
  - Government investment of Rs. 15,000 crore on incentives and charging infrastructure
- **Cash Incentives**
  - The policy offers substantial purchase incentives:
    - Electric two-wheeler: Year-1 (Rs. 30,000); Year-2 (Rs. 20,000); Year-3 (Rs. 10,000)
    - Passenger three-wheeler: Year-1 (Rs. 50,000); Year-2 (Rs. 40,000); Year-3 (Rs. 30,000)
- **Scrappage Benefits**
  - BS-IV or older two-wheelers: Rs. 10,000 for scrapping.

- Three-wheelers: Rs. 25,000 for scrapping.
- N1 electric trucks: Subsidy up to Rs. 1 lakh in the first year; Rs. 50,000 for scrapping older N1 trucks.
- Gramin Seva vehicles: Rs. 15,000 scrapping incentive.
- First 1 lakh owners scrapping BS-IV or older four-wheelers: Rs. 1 lakh incentive.

- **Road Tax Waiver**
  - 100% waiver on road tax and registration charges for fully electric vehicles.
  - For four-wheelers, the exemption applies to vehicles priced up to Rs. 30 lakh (ex-showroom).
  - EVs bought under the policy cannot be sold or registered in another state for three years.

Significance and Challenges

- **Why It Matters?**
  - Two out of every three vehicles in Delhi are two-wheelers, making the mandate enormously significant.
  - Currently, electric two-wheelers make up only about 7.5% of annual two-wheeler registrations (36,962 out of 4,92,288 in 2025).
  - Going from 7.5% to 100% in less than two years is a hugely ambitious target.
- **Broader Impact**
  - Delhi has historically led the country in clean air interventions.
  - The policy is expected to influence other states, particularly those in the NCR region, to consider similar electrification mandates.
- **Challenges**
  - Rapid scaling of charging infrastructure to meet demand.
  - Manufacturer readiness to supply electric two- and three-wheelers at scale.
  - Affordability and consumer acceptance.
  - Grid capacity to handle increased electricity demand.
  - Battery disposal and recycling concerns.