

# THE PALA CIVIL TIMES



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## Stage set for two-phase poll battle in Bihar

The Bihar Assembly election will be held in two phases, covering all 243 constituencies, with polling on November 6 and November 11, and counting scheduled for November 14. There are 7.43 crore eligible voters, including 3.92 crore men, 3.5 crore women, and 1,725 transgender persons. Of the total 90,712 polling stations, 13,911 are in urban areas and 76,801 are in rural areas. But key coalitions are still working out their seat-sharing arrangements for all 243 seats.



Special arrangements include police patrolling, management by women, youth, and persons with disabilities at selected stations, and mandatory VVPAT ballot counting before the last two rounds for transparency. Names can be added to the final voter roll until ten days before nominations, and efforts are being made to improve polling accessibility and real-time turnout updates through mobile phones and ECInet portal. The process also involves thorough verification of electoral rolls and opportunities for voters and parties to raise objections and claims. Describing the SIR as the process of "purification" of electoral rolls that would set a benchmark for future revisions, Mr. Kumar said close to 69 lakh names have been struck off the list. The reasons included deaths, unproven citizenship, duplicate entries, or permanent migration to other States. Both the ruling and Opposition parties in Bihar on Monday claimed they would form the next government in the State.

## The annual Nobel week kicks off

### Practising restraint

Mary Brunkow, Fred Ramsdell, and Shimon Sakaguchi won the 2025 Nobel Prize for medicine/physiology for revealing how the body restrains its own defences to stay healthy




- The immune system must distinguish the self from invaders to avoid attacking the body itself
- Shimon Sakaguchi discovered regulatory T-cells that calm immune reactions and preserve self-tolerance
- Mary Brunkow and Fred Ramsdell traced the scurfy mouse's fatal autoimmunity to a faulty Foxp3 gene
- They linked FOXP3 mutations to human IPEX syndrome, proving its vital role in tolerance
- Together, their work revealed FOXP3 controls regulatory T-cell development and prevents immune 'mutiny'
- Today, the findings guide new therapies for autoimmune disease, cancer, and transplantation

Image Credit: Nobel Prize Outreach

Three scientists, two Americans and one Japanese, sharing the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine for unravelling tantalising aspects of the human immune system. Their discovery has helped blaze new paths into treating cancer as well as auto immune disease.



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# STATE

## PRELIMS CORNER :

1. Recently, the government reintroduced Indian grey hornbills into which one of the following sites in the second attempt after 1980 ?

- (a) Pakke Tiger Reserve
- (b) Sathyamangalam Wildlife Sanctuary
- (c) Gir National Park
- (d) Keoladeo National Park

2. 'Sela macaque', a new species of old world monkey recorded recently from which one of the following states of India ?

- (a) Maharashtra
- (b) Sikkim
- (c) Karnataka
- (d) Arunachal Pradesh

3. Money spiders, commonly found in European meadows, have been reported recently for the first time from which of the following protected areas:

- (a) Rajamala Eravikulam National Park
- (b) Sundarbans Tiger Reserve
- (c) Ramgarh Vishdhari Wildlife Sanctuary
- (d) Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary

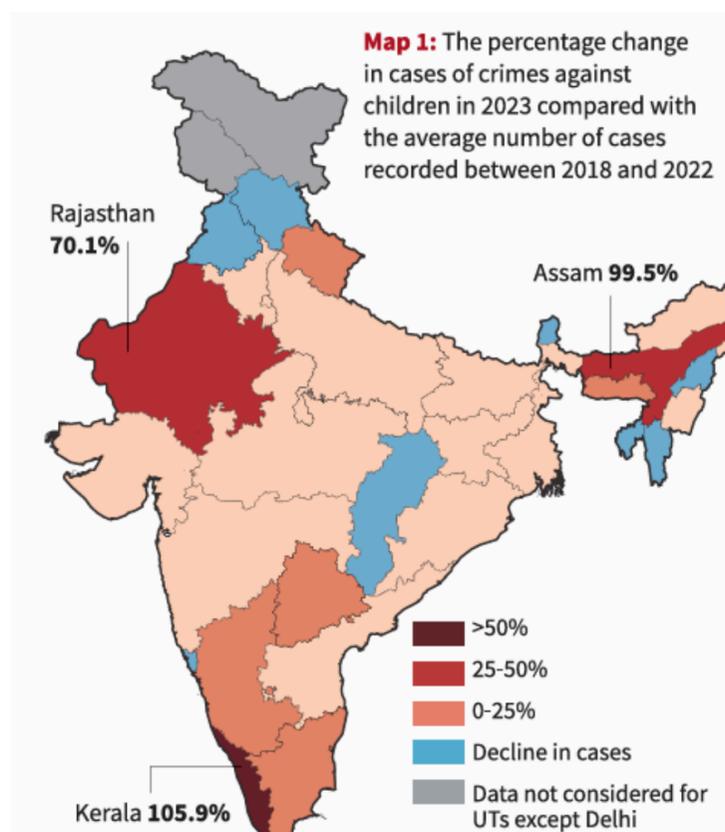
4. Which one of the following straits connects the Java Sea with the Indian Ocean ?

- (a) Dover strait
- (b) Bosphorus Strait
- (c) Strait of Malacca
- (d) Sunda strait

DETAILED ANSWER KEY IN THE CIVIL SERVICE CHRONICLE PAGE

## Crimes against children surge in Assam, Rajasthan, and Kerala

- There is a sharp surge in crimes against children in Assam, Rajasthan, and Kerala, based on 2023 National Crime Records Bureau data.
- Assam saw a dramatic 100% increase, Kerala about 16%, and Rajasthan 70% compared to the previous years.
- The rise is particularly stark in Assam, where enforcement of the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act led to a spike in reported child marriage cases, which alone accounted for over half of all crimes against children in 2023.
- In Rajasthan and Kerala, the rise is linked to an increase in cases booked under specific sections of the POCSO Act (Protection of Children from Sexual Offences), reflecting a change in reporting practices and a more targeted focus on sexual offenses.
- The data cautions that the increase in crime numbers may not necessarily indicate a genuine rise in incidents but rather improved and more diligent reporting, as well as shifts in how the cases are categorized.
- The accompanying charts and data reinforce that the proportion of crimes related to child marriage in Assam, kidnappings and abductions in Rajasthan, and sexual offenses in Kerala all increased substantially, suggesting region-specific trends partly driven by law enforcement focus and reporting protocols.
- This suggests that while the numbers are alarming, they also reflect changes in legal action, surveillance, and administrative reporting rather than just an increase in actual crime rates against children.





## Conclave on Nov. 3 to showcase 'evolution' of Indian science

India's first-ever government-organized event of its kind- Scheduled for November 3 and 4, the conclave aims to highlight the evolution, achievements, and future ambitions of Indian science and technology.

- The conclave seeks to reflect India's scientific progress over the years rather than being just an upgraded version of the traditional Indian Science Congress (ISC).
- It focuses on the integration of innovation, technology, and entrepreneurship within the scientific domain.
- The theme emphasizes the "evolution" of Indian science — tracing its journey from foundational research to modern technological applications and global competitiveness.
- The Department of Science and Technology (DST) proposed ESTIC in 2024 after a dispute between DST and the Indian Science Congress Association (ISCA) over the management and direction of the annual Indian Science Congress.
- Due to the ongoing legal tussle, the government decided to replace the traditional ISC with this new conclave model, providing a fresh, government-led platform for scientific engagement.
- The government intends to make ESTIC an annual event, each year hosted in a different Indian city, with the goal of increasing global participation and visibility.
- The minister stated that future editions of ESTIC will aim for a strong international flavour, including:
  - Participation of Nobel Laureates, global scientists, and innovators.
  - Collaboration across countries and scientific disciplines.
  - Platforms to highlight India's growing role in global science and technology.

## Deliberations continue on proposed nuclear Bill

The key aim of the bill is to allow private sector participation in building and operating nuclear power plants — a sector currently restricted to state-owned enterprises.

### Amendments to Existing Acts

- The government plans to amend:
  - Atomic Energy Act – to enable private participation.
  - Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage Act (CLND) – to address concerns regarding liability in case of nuclear accidents.
- India's strict nuclear liability law (CLND Act, 2010) has been a major barrier for foreign and private investment.
- The law makes suppliers and operators potentially liable for damages, discouraging participation.
- The new discussions aim to align India's laws with international conventions like the Convention on Supplementary Compensation for Nuclear Damage (CSC).
- The bill may also allow private companies to conduct research in nuclear technologies and develop small modular reactors like Bharat Small Reactors (BSRs).
- The move is part of India's long-term nuclear expansion goal — to install 100 GW of nuclear capacity by 2047.

### Allowing private participation could:

- Attract foreign investment and advanced technology.
- Accelerate infrastructure development and capacity addition.
- Create new industrial opportunities in construction, metallurgy, and reactor component manufacturing.
- However, it also raises concerns about:
  - Safety accountability, especially in high-risk nuclear operations.
  - Public acceptance and environmental implications.
  - Dependence on imported technology if domestic capabilities lag.



## “Why MGNREGA norms were tweaked to push spending on water projects”?

- The Centre amended Schedule-I of MGNREGA on September 23, 2025, to mandate a minimum proportion of funds to be spent on water-related works such as:
  - Water conservation,
  - Harvesting,
  - Development of land, water, and trees.
- Earlier, the Act required that funds be used broadly for agriculture and allied activities, but now it specifically prioritizes water management projects.
- The Centre can amend Schedule-I via a notification (without Parliamentary approval), which it has done over 20 times since 2005.
- The change follows Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s directive during a Council of Ministers meeting, where he emphasized the need for greater water conservation spending under MGNREGA.

### Broader Significance

- **Environmental Sustainability:**
  - Promotes groundwater recharge and long-term water security.
- **Employment Generation:**
  - Water projects create rural jobs while addressing ecological challenges.
- **Decentralized Planning:**
  - Empowers Gram Panchayats to identify local water-related priorities.
- **Alignment with National Goals:**
  - Supports the government’s broader Jal Shakti Abhiyan and water conservation missions.

### Possible Challenges

- Implementation gaps at local levels could delay results.
- Monitoring and accountability may be difficult in large-scale projects.
- State capacity variations could lead to uneven progress.

The amendment to MGNREGA norms signifies a strategic shift toward water security and climate resilience. By mandating higher spending on water conservation — particularly in groundwater-stressed regions — the government aims to create sustainable rural livelihoods while tackling one of India’s most pressing environmental concerns.

## Fisheries sector hopes to beat U.S. curbs with sustainability label



- Around 10 Indian marine and saline fish and shrimp varieties are preparing for global Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) certification, with the first batch submission expected soon and full certification in 2026.
- The certification is expected to boost fisheries sector revenues by 30% and help Indian exporters access new and lucrative markets in Europe and Japan, especially if U.S. trade curbs intensify due to higher tariffs.
- The process will also promote sustainable and scientifically managed fishing practices, keeping fish stocks steady and supporting fishing communities.
- The Union Government may subsidize the certification process under the Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY), with certifications conducted by third-party auditors.
- Not all fish varieties will qualify immediately, but technical gaps (stock assessments) are being addressed for more species, including shrimp, squid, cuttlefish, and octopus.
- The certification is based on FAO and international guidelines for sustainable seafood and will offer a long-term strategy to bypass restrictive markets through sustainability labelling.
- The certification process is in its advanced stages, and officials expect submission of the first batch for international certification in the next year.
- The Indian marine sector is a vital component of the country's economy, encompassing fisheries, ports, shipping, and maritime trade.
- The marine sector supports millions of livelihoods, especially through fishing and aquaculture, as India is the world’s second-largest fish producer and a leading seafood exporter, with shrimp, cuttlefish, squid, and fish being major export items.
- The government has launched several initiatives like the Sagarmala Programme, Maritime India Vision 2030, and infrastructure investments to boost efficiency, foster sustainability, and modernize port logistics.

## EDITORIAL

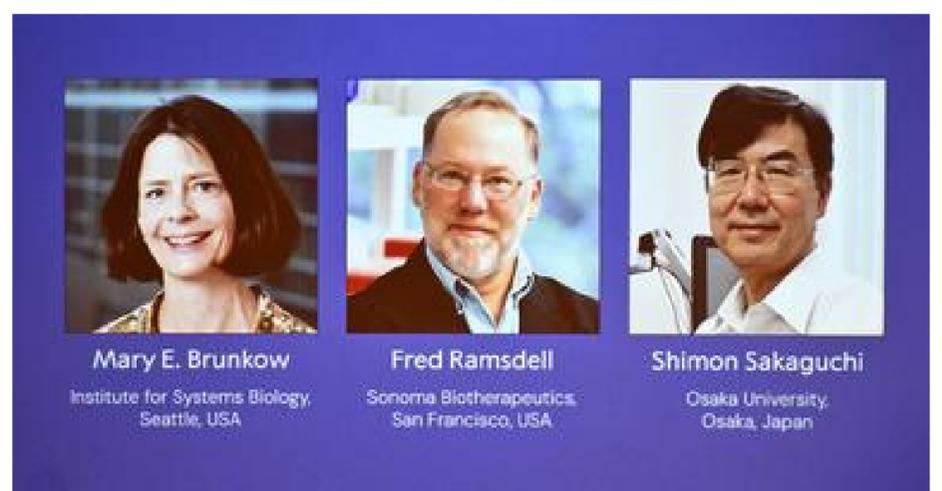
### Ensure compliance - Cough syrup deaths

- India's pharmaceutical sector, despite its global ambitions, faces recurring issues due to inadequate quality control, especially highlighted by repeated incidents involving contaminated cough syrups.
- The Union Health Ministry has recently mandated strict drug compliance from all Indian drug manufacturers, following findings of diethylene glycol (DEG) in cough syrup manufactured by a private company, which was linked to deaths of children in Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh.
- Investigations revealed the use of non-pharmaceutical grade excipients and non-compliance with Good Manufacturing Practices; the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation has recommended cancelling the offending firm's license and has arrested a doctor involved in prescribing the syrup.
- There must be zero tolerance for poor quality drugs, regular surprise inspections, and swift action against all violations—well before tragedies occur—to ensure public safety is not compromised by industry negligence or regulatory laxity.
- The Madhya Pradesh government on Monday suspended the Deputy Controller and two drug inspectors of the Food and Drugs Administration (FDA) in connection with the death of 14 children, allegedly after consuming a cough syrup adulterated with a toxic chemical.



### Kept in check - Medicine Nobel for scientists who demystified the immune system

- The 2025 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine was awarded for discoveries transforming the understanding of autoimmune regulation, particularly relating to regulatory T-cells (Tregs) and the FOXP3 gene.
- Pioneering research by Mary Brunkow, Fred Ramsdell, and Shimon Sakaguchi revealed how Tregs and FOXP3 help maintain self-tolerance and prevent autoimmune diseases, explaining why simply deleting self-reactive T-cells is insufficient for immune regulation.
- Mutations in FOXP3 can cause fatal autoimmune disorders, as revealed by genetic studies in mice and boys with immune system diseases; these findings have set a foundation for developing targeted therapies for autoimmunity.
- Modern treatments use Tregs to ease autoimmune conditions, promote transplant acceptance, and are being explored to suppress tumor-associated immunity in cancer.
- This underscores both the breakthroughs and the ongoing challenges, such as the complexity and high costs of cell-based therapies and difficulties in making such treatments widely accessible.
- Human immune system is a complex of several cells —B cells, T cells, neutrophils and macrophages — that have a role in identifying and eliminating foreign bodies that may bring with it disease.
- Their discovery has helped blaze new paths into treating cancer as well as autoimmune disease — a condition by which the immune system ends up harming healthy cells they are meant to protect.



## SC to decide on securities transaction tax's constitutionality

- The Supreme Court of India has decided to examine a plea challenging the constitutional validity of the Securities Transaction Tax (STT), a direct tax on securities transactions through listed exchanges, first implemented in 2004.
- The petition argues that STT violates fundamental rights to equality, to trade, and to earn a livelihood, and constitutes double taxation since traders already pay capital gains tax and then STT on the same transaction.
- The petition also highlights that STT is imposed regardless of profit or loss from trading, making it punitive, and notes that unlike TDS on salaries, STT is not refunded or adjusted, so traders pay both taxes without relief.
- The Supreme Court has issued notice to the Union Government, and the issue will be deliberated upon regarding whether STT's mechanism and impact are constitutionally appropriate.

### Implications if STT is Declared Unconstitutional

- **Potential Loss of Government Revenue:** STT currently generates over ₹30,000 crore annually. If struck down, this would create a large revenue gap that the government may need to fill through other forms of taxation or reforms.
- **Redesign of Securities Taxation:** The government may be compelled to revisit and possibly redesign how stock market transactions are taxed, potentially shifting focus to more profit-based or TDS-like mechanisms.
- **Trading Costs and Market Participation:** Removal or reform of STT could lower trading costs for all market participants—investors, traders, and funds—making India's equity markets more attractive and fostering greater participation.
- **Legal Precedent:** The judgment will set a precedent on whether transaction-based taxes (taxing the act of trading rather than profits) are constitutionally valid. It could affect other transactional taxes in the future and strengthen the focus on fair and rational taxation principles.

## Coal India signs pact with CMDC for exploring critical minerals

- Coal India has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Chhattisgarh Mineral Development Corporation (CMDC) for the exploration and exploitation of critical minerals.
- This collaboration extends Coal India's strategy of entering the critical minerals sector, following its prior success in securing graphite and vanadium blocks via auctions.
- Coal India emerged as "preferred bidder" for a graphite block in Madhya Pradesh and has also entered into other exploration MoUs, including with Hindustan Copper and IREL (India).
- The move aligns with India's policy push for critical mineral exploration amid global trade uncertainties, such as tariff wars and export restrictions, highlighting the nation's ambition to reduce dependence on imports and tap into untapped resource potential.
- The International Energy Agency (IEA) has identified India as having major untapped resource potential for critical minerals, making these efforts timely and significant for the country's economic and strategic interests.
- Critical minerals are indispensable for manufacturing essential products such as smartphones, computers, and medical equipment, as well as for building the infrastructure that supports digital and green economies.
- These minerals, like lithium, cobalt, nickel, graphite, and rare earth elements, are vital for new energy solutions.
- Nations—including India—view critical minerals as key to economic growth and security.



## France plunged into crisis as PM Lecornu quits less than a month after Macron appointed him



- France's new Prime Minister Sébastien Lecornu resigned less than a month after being appointed and just 24 hours after naming his government, throwing the country into political crisis and leaving President Emmanuel Macron with limited options.
- The resignation came as Lecornu failed to build consensus or ensure government stability, with Macron giving him two more days to come up with a plan.
- Lecornu stated the political conditions were no longer right and stressed the importance of prioritizing the country over party interests.
- Macron now faces increased pressure from far-right leader Marine Le Pen and the far-left, both calling for snap parliamentary elections or his resignation as political instability heightens.
- France's National Assembly is deeply fragmented, with no party holding a majority; over 320 seats are with far-right and left-wing lawmakers, and 210 are with centrists and allies.
- Ministers who were appointed just the night before have now become caretaker ministers, with further government formation uncertain.
- The turmoil has shaken financial markets, with the French CAC-40 index dropping nearly 2%, and adds to economic pressures including rising debt and upcoming budget challenges.

## Few minorities made it to Syria's new political order in the weekend vote

- Syria's minority religious and ethnic communities were divided in the run-up to the first parliamentary elections after the ouster of Bashar Assad, the former Syrian President.
- While some minorities, particularly women, did participate in the vote, few won seats, and the preliminary results suggest that Sunni candidates dominated the political landscape.
- Kurds and Druze faced particular challenges: Kurdish-controlled areas like Afrin did not participate due to ongoing conflict, Turkish occupation, and displacement, while the Druze were discouraged by safety concerns and recent violence.
- Some Christian candidates struggled to secure seats and expressed concern about their communities' future influence.
- Despite claims of increased security and efforts to legitimize the election as a step towards a new national order, skepticism about the legitimacy and inclusivity of the process persisted among minorities.
- The process was driven by the challenges of unreliable census data and the displacement of millions after years of war. Syrian authorities and some external analysts argue the indirect, technocratic system was intended for stability and inclusion, but critics highlight manipulation, lack of transparency, and the high degree of presidential control as undermining its democratic credentials.



# Prelims Corner: Explanations

**Q1. Ans c**

Indian Grey Hornbills (IGH) was reintroduced to Gir Forest by Gujarat Forest Department after nearly 90 years since they disappeared from this largest contiguous forest tract in western India. Indian grey hornbills are gregarious birds that can find throughout Gujarat, including the north, center, and south. The effort at reintroduction occurred around a year after an IGH was spotted close to Pipavav port in Amreli. In 2013, reports of sightings also came from Bhavnagar and Mendarda in the Junagadh district of the Gir (west) wildlife division.



**Q2. Ans d**

A new species of old world monkey, 'Sela macaque' recorded from Arunachal Pradesh, has been named after a strategic mountain pass at 13,700 ft above sea level, located on the border between the Tawang and West Kameng districts of Arunachal Pradesh.



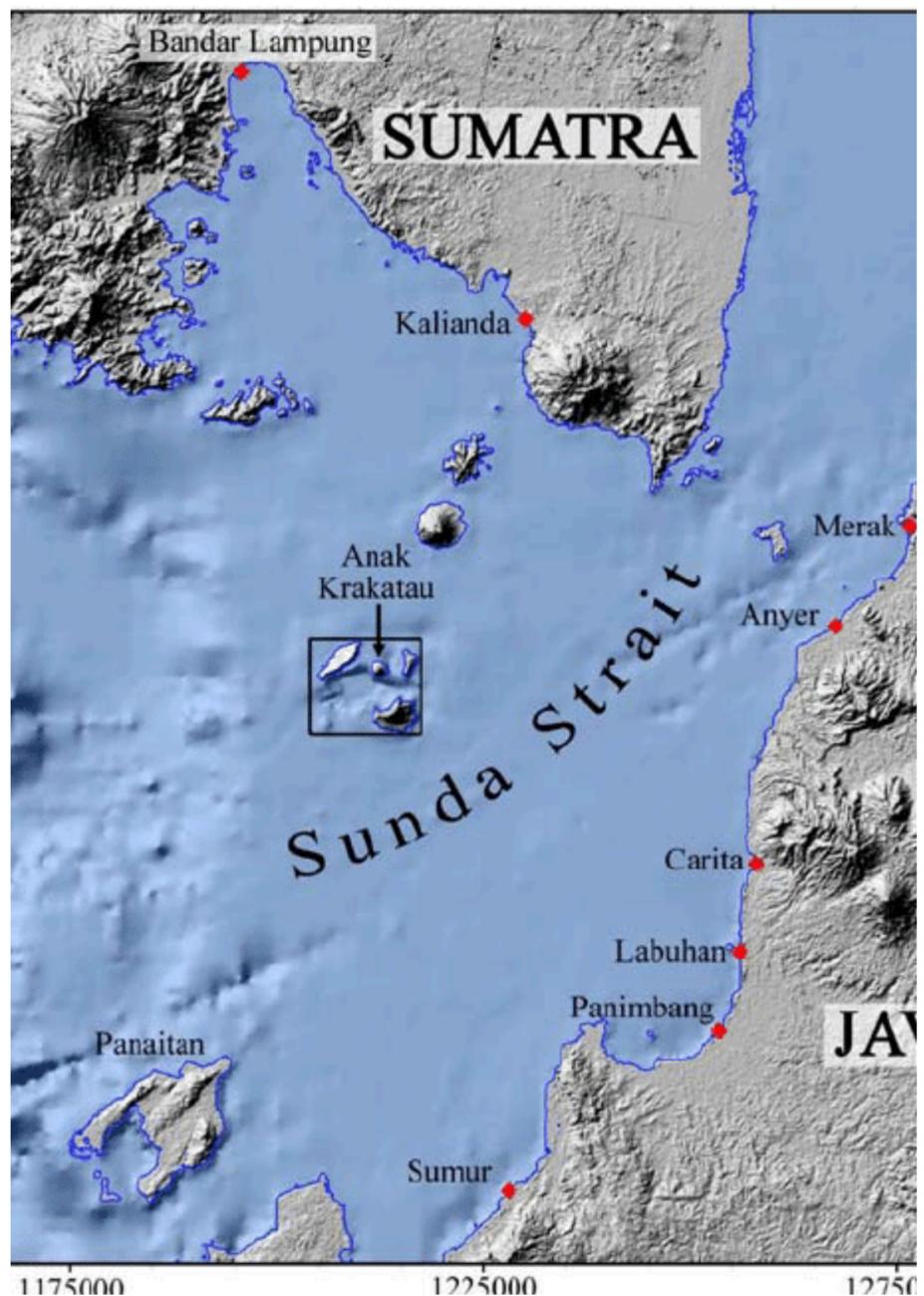
**Q3. Ans d**

Money spiders, commonly found in European meadows, have been reported for the first time in the country from the Muthanga range of the Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary. The species is called so as it is "believed to bring luck" to the person who comes in contact with it.



**Q4. Ans d**

Sunda strait lies between the Java and Sumatra islands, connecting the Java Sea to the Indian Ocean.



## Case Study:



Takaichi, poised to be Japan's first woman PM, faces challenges.

Japan's ruling party, which has been facing challenges, now has a new leader: former Economic Security Minister Sanae Takaichi. She is a staunch conservative and is set to become Japan's first female Prime Minister. At 64, Ms. Takaichi must quickly find ways to help the Liberal Democratic Party maintain power and win back public trust by tackling issues like inflation and diplomatic challenges, including relations with U.S. President Donald Trump. Ms. Takaichi, a loyal supporter of former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's conservative policies, risks losing her party's long-standing coalition partner, the Buddhist-backed centrist Komeito, due to her far-right views. These include revising wartime history and visiting the Yasukuni Shrine, which many see as a symbol of militarism. She faces a tough choice between staying true to her ideology and keeping the coalition intact or moderating her stance to avoid alienating her supporters. The Liberal Democratic Party and opposition parties plan to convene in mid-October to formally select a new Prime Minister.

On 7 October 1950, Mother Teresa received Vatican permission for the diocesan congregation, which would become the Missionaries of Charity. The Missionaries of Charity was founded by Mother Teresa on this date 75 years ago.



The Missionaries of Charity have been widely celebrated for their compassion and service to the poor. Indeed, Mother Teresa was awarded the 1979 Nobel Prize for Peace and was canonized by Pope Francis in 2016.

**THE GREATEST  
GLORY IN LIVING  
LIES NOT IN  
NEVER FALLING,  
BUT IN RISING  
EVERY TIME  
WE FALL.**

- NELSON MANDELA