

### NEWSPAPER HIGHLIGHT

Researchers from SNM College Maliankara, the M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation, and the Payyanur College have reported two new plant species from the biodiversity-rich Western Ghats regions in Thiruvananthapuram and Wayanad districts of Kerala. They have been christened *Fimbristylis sunilii* and *Neanotis prabhuii*, and the findings by the research teams have been detailed in the plant taxonomy journal *Phytotaxa*. Collected from the grasslands of Ponmudi hills, Thiruvananthapuram, *Fimbristylis sunilii* has been named after plant taxonomist C.N. Sunil, retired professor and research guide of Botany.

The Parliamentary panel assigned to examine the landmark bill which seeks to raise the legal age of marriage for women to 21 has only one woman MP out of 31 members. The Prohibition of Child Marriage (Amendment) Bill was introduced in Lok Sabha during the winter session and referred to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Education, Women, Children, Youth and Sports. The Bill, piloted by the Women and Child Development Ministry, seeks to increase the legal age of marriage from 18 to 21. According to the members' list of the parliamentary standing committee, led by senior leader Vinay Sahasrabudhe, available on the Rajya Sabha website, MP Sushmita Dev is the only woman among the 31 members.

While the Navy gears up to hold its largest multilateral exercise 'Milan' at the end of February, there are requests from several countries for various formats of exercises, defence officials said, pointing out that Malabar is the most complex naval exercise India does with any other country. Meanwhile, China continues to expand its presence and assistance in the region, the latest being the delivery of Ming class diesel electric submarine to Myanmar, its second submarine after the first one given by India.

A government committee report in the Supreme Court has said that "income" is a "feasible criterion" for defining the "Economically Weaker Sections" (EWS) in society, and the annual family income of ₹8 lakh is a "reasonable" threshold to determine EWS in order to extend reservation in admissions and jobs. "A feasible criterion for defining EWS can be based on income [family

### PLI SCHEME FOR TEXTILES

1.The Ministry of Textiles has said that it will accept applications from January 1 for the Production Linked Scheme for Textiles announced in September this year. About the Scheme: The Government had launched the Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme for the textiles sector worth Rs 10,683 crore. **This is part of a larger PLI scheme for 13 sectors, with a total budgetary outlay of 1.97 lakh crore. Focus areas-The PLI scheme for textiles aims to promote the production of high value Man-Made Fibre (MMF) fabrics, garments and technical textiles.**

2.Eligibility: Any person or company willing to invest a minimum of Rs 300 crore in plant, machinery, equipment and civil works (excluding land and administrative building cost) to produce products of MMF fabrics, garments and products of technical textiles will be eligible to participate in the first part of the scheme. Investors willing to spend a minimum of Rs 100 crore under the same conditions shall be eligible to apply in the second part of the scheme.

3.Incentives: Under PLI, the Centre will subsidise eligible manufacturers by paying incentives on incremental production. Companies investing over Rs 300 crore in plant, machinery, equipment and civil works to produce the identified products will get an incentive of 15 percent of their turnover, which needs to be Rs 600 crore in the third year. The companies investing between Rs 100 crore and Rs 300 crore will also be eligible to receive duty refunds and incentives (lower than 15 percent of their turnover). The government expects to achieve "fresh investment of over Rs 19,000 crore and a cumulative turnover of more than Rs 3 lakh crore".

4.Significance: **The PLI scheme will provide an immense boost to domestic manufacturing, and prepare the industry for making a big impact in global markets in sync with the spirit of Atmanirbhar Bharat.** It will also help attract more investment into this sector.

5.Need for: Two-thirds of international trade in textiles is of man-made and technical textiles. This scheme has been approved so India can also contribute to the ecosystem of fabrics and garments made of MMF.

### STEPS TO MONITOR ILLEGAL LIQUOR MANUFACTURING IN BIHAR

1.Bihar government has been undertaking various measures to monitor illegal liquor manufacturing in the state. Some of these measures include: Usage of drones. Appointment of judicial officers as presiding officers in the State's 74 special courts to hear cases involving the violation of prohibition laws. Prohibition and Registration Department, over 3.5 lakh people have been arrested under the law since April 2016. Hundreds of policemen and other officials too have either been suspended or are facing a departmental inquiry.

2.Main grounds raised against prohibition of liquor and in favour of prohibition-The right of privacy is violated, which was given voice by the Supreme Court in 2017 in Puttaswamy judgment. The Right is associated with the citizens' right to eat and drink as per their choice. Ground of manifest arbitrariness: The law grants health permits and temporary permits to out-of-state tourists. **The petition says there are no intelligible differences in the classes thus being created by the state on who gets to drink and who does not and violates the Right to Equality under Article 14 of the Constitution.**

3.The following arguments indicate that such ban is the need of the hour: The Constitution places a responsibility on all state governments to "at least contain, if not curtail, consumption of alcohol" (Article 47). Strict state regulation is imperative to discourage regular and excessive consumption of alcohol. Alcohol denudes family resources and reserves and leaves women and children as its most vulnerable victims. A social stigma at least as far as the family unit is concerned is still attached to the consumption of alcohol. Vulnerable persons, either because of age or proclivity towards intoxication or as a feature of peer pressure, more often than not, succumb to this

income]. A threshold of ₹8 lakh of annual family income, in the current situation, seems reasonable for determining EWS,” the report of the committee, submitted as part of a government affidavit, concluded.

The first phase of census and the collection of details to update the National Population Register (NPR) have been postponed at least till September. The Registrar-General of India (RGI) had in December informed the States that the freezing of boundaries of districts, subdistricts, tehsils, talukas and police stations had been postponed till June 2022, a senior official. Freezing of boundary limits of administrative units, at least three months prior to the exercise, is a prerequisite for conducting the census. Even if the RGI issues an order in June to freeze the boundaries again, the exercise can take place only in September.

The technical committee examining the Pegasus spyware allegations has issued a public notice inviting citizens to come forward if they suspect that their mobile phones or instruments have been infected with the Israeli military grade malware. The committee, overseen by former Supreme Court judge, Justice R.V. Raveendran, said citizens should make it clear whether they would let the committee further examine their phones or instruments if “reasonable cause” is found that they are infected.

The government released a draft national policy for air sports in the country that will require entities providing these services and their equipment to be registered, as well as be liable for penalties. The policy proposes a two tier governance structure for air sports in the country, which will include an apex governing body called the Air Sports Federation of India (ASFI) and associations for each air sport. It will cover activities like aerobatics, aeromodelling, amateurbuilt and experimental aircraft, ballooning, drones, gliding, hang gliding, paragliding, microlighting, paramotoring, skydiving, and vintage aircraft. The ASFI will be an autonomous body under the Ministry of Civil Aviation and will represent India at the Lausanne headquartered Fédération Aéronautique Internationale (FAI) and other global platforms related to air sports.

Hours after India announced vaccine and wheat delivery for Afghanistan, the Taliban reiterated that they will provide protection to diplomats from countries that wish to reopen closed embassies in Kabul. The assurance, however, will be tested against the

temptation.

4.Prohibition in Other States: Alcohol prohibition is in force in the states of Gujarat, Mizoram, Nagaland and the union territory of Lakshadweep. Related Constitutional Provisions: **State Subject: Alcohol is a subject in the State list under the seventh schedule of the Indian Constitution. Article 47: The Directive Principle in the Constitution of India states that “The state shall undertake rules to bring about prohibition of the consumption except for medicinal purposes of intoxicating drinks and of drugs which are injurious to health”.**

#### RETROSPECTIVE TAXATION

1.British energy major Cairn Energy Plc has finally withdrawn the lawsuits filed against the Indian government and its entities overseas in a ₹10,247 crore retrospective tax case. The company is in the process of dropping cases filed in France and the Netherland, too. These lawsuits were filed to seize assets of Air India to recover the money from the Indian government.

2.Background: The Cairn’s decision to drop the lawsuits comes after an international arbitration award overturned the levy of ₹10,247 crore retro tax by India and directed it to refund the money to the company.

3.Issue- In December 2020, a three-member international arbitral tribunal at the Permanent Court of Arbitration in the Netherlands ruled unanimously that the Indian government was “in breach of the guarantee of fair and equitable treatment”, and against the India-UK Bilateral Investment Treaty, and that the breach caused a loss to the British energy company and ordered compensation of \$1.2 billion. Cairn had challenged the Indian government seeking taxes over an internal business reorganisation using the 2012 retrospective tax law, under the UK-India Bilateral Investment Treaty. In 2014, the Indian tax department had demanded Rs 10,247 crore in taxes. In 2015, Cairn Energy Plc commenced international arbitration proceedings against the Indian government.

4.Retrospective taxation-**It allows a country to pass a rule on taxing certain products, items or services and deals and charge companies from a time behind the date on which the law is passed.** Countries use this route to correct any anomalies in their taxation policies that have, in the past, allowed companies to take advantage of such loopholes. Retrospective Taxation hurts companies that had knowingly or unknowingly interpreted the tax rules differently.

5.Permanent Court of Arbitration-**It was established in 1899 and is headquartered in The Hague, Netherlands. It is an intergovernmental organization dedicated to serve the international community in the field of dispute resolution** and to facilitate arbitration and other forms of dispute resolution between States. All decisions, called “awards” are binding on all the parties in the dispute and have to be carried out without delay.

#### GOLAN HEIGHTS

1.The Golan Heights is a rocky plateau with an area of 1,800km<sup>2</sup> on the border between Israel and Syria in south-western Syria. The Golan Heights were captured by Israel from Syria in the 1967 conflict and annexed in 1981 — a move not recognized internationally.

2.International Recognition of Golan Heights: The European Union said its position on the status of the Golan Heights was unchanged and it did not recognize Israeli sovereignty over the area. The Arab League, which suspended Syria in 2011 after the start of its civil war has said the move is “completely beyond international law”. Egypt, which made peace with Israel in 1979, said it still considers the Golan as occupied Syrian territory.

3.**India has also not recognized Golan heights as Israel territory and has called for the return of Golan Heights to Syria.** In 2019, U.S. President Donald Trump has announced that the US may recognize Israeli sovereignty over the Golan Heights. Why in New- Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett recently said the country intends to double the number of settlers living in the Israeli-controlled Golan Heights with a multimillion-dollar plan meant to further consolidate Israel’s hold on the territory.

#### DART MISSION

1.The main aim of the mission is to test the newly developed technology that would allow a spacecraft to crash into an

**current ground situation in Kabul and in other major cities of Afghanistan that India is tracking closely.**

**Oxfam India said on Sunday that the Central government's refusal to renew its Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA) registration would severely affect the organisation's ongoing crucial humanitarian and social work in 16 States. Stating that the decision would not reduce the organisation's commitment to serve vulnerable communities and uphold values enshrined in the Indian Constitution.**

asteroid and change its course. **Double Asteroid Redirection Test (DART) is a low-cost spacecraft, weighing around 610 kg at launch and 550 kg during impact.** It also carries about 10 kg of xenon which will be used to demonstrate the agency's new thrusters called NASA Evolutionary Xenon Thruster-Commercial (NEXT-C) in space.

**2.**The spacecraft carries a high-resolution imager called Didymos Reconnaissance and Asteroid Camera for Optical Navigation (DRACO). Images from DRACO will be sent to Earth in real-time and will help study the impact site and surface of Dimorphos. DART will also carry a small satellite or CubeSat named LICIACube (Light Italian CubeSat for Imaging of Asteroids). **3.**LICIACube is expected to capture images of the impact and the impact crater formed as a result of the collision. It can also capture images of any dust cloud formed during the impact.

