

## 7. Short News

### THUCYDIDES TRAP

Context – During a meeting in Beijing, Xi Jinping referred to the “Thucydides Trap” while discussing evolving relations between China and the United States.

#### About the Thucydides Trap

1. The Thucydides Trap refers to the possibility of conflict or war when a rising power challenges an established dominant power.
2. Core Drivers of Conflict – Fear, power transition, strategic competition and security anxieties are central elements of the theory.
3. Origin – The concept is derived from ancient Greek historian Thucydides and his account of the Peloponnesian War between Athens and Sparta.  
Observation – Thucydides argued that the rise of Athens and the fear it created in Sparta made war more likely.
4. Modern Popularisation – The term was popularised by Graham Allison in his book *Destined for War – Can America and China Escape Thucydides’s Trap?*
5. Contemporary Relevance – The concept is frequently used to explain strategic rivalry between China and the United States.  
Areas of Rivalry – Modern competition includes trade, technology, AI, semiconductors, Taiwan, cybersecurity and Indo-Pacific security.
6. Alternative Interpretation – Some scholars argue the theory should serve as a warning to avoid escalation rather than assuming war is inevitable.
7. Significance – Any major conflict between the U.S. and China could significantly affect global trade, supply chains, energy markets and geopolitical stability.

### NEANDERTHALS

Context – A new study suggests Neanderthals may have performed the world’s earliest known dental procedure around 59,000 years ago.

1. Discovery Site – The ancient molar tooth was discovered in Chagyrskaya Cave, Russia and contained a deep hole believed to be deliberately drilled.
2. Scientific Evidence – Advanced microtomography imaging revealed microscopic grooves and marks consistent with deliberate drilling rather than natural wear.
3. Historical Significance – If confirmed, the discovery would push back the known history of dentistry by more than 40,000 years compared to earlier evidence from Italy.
4. Importance for Human Evolution – The findings suggest Neanderthals possessed advanced problem-solving skills, healthcare practices and social cooperation long before modern civilisation.

#### About Neanderthals

1. Neanderthals (*Homo neanderthalensis*) were an extinct species of ancient humans closely related to modern humans (*Homo sapiens*).
2. Meaning of Neanderthal – *Homo neanderthalensis* means “Human from the Neander Valley,”.
  1. It is named after the Neander Valley (Neanderthal) in Germany where the first major specimen was discovered in 1856.
3. Time Period – They lived approximately between 400,000 and 40,000 years ago during the Middle and Late Pleistocene period.
4. Physical Features – They had strong, muscular bodies, large brains, broad noses and adaptations suited for cold climates.
5. Tool Use – Neanderthals used sophisticated stone tools and controlled fire for survival.
6. Diet and Hunting – They were skilled hunters who consumed meat along with plant-based foods.

7. Interbreeding – Modern humans and Neanderthals interbred, and traces of Neanderthal DNA remain in many present-day human populations.
8. Scientific Importance – Neanderthals are important for understanding human evolution, cognition and prehistoric social behaviour.

## TRIACETONE TRIPEROXIDE

Context – The National Investigation Agency has found that Triacetone Triperoxide (TATP) was used in the vehicle-borne IED involved in the 2025 Red Fort blast in Delhi.

### About the Triacetone Triperoxide (TATP)

1. Triacetone Triperoxide, also known as acetone peroxide, is a highly unstable organic peroxide explosive commonly used in improvised explosive devices (IEDs).
2. Composition – TATP is generally prepared using commercially available chemicals such as acetone and hydrogen peroxide.
3. Sensitivity – It is extremely sensitive to heat, shock, friction and pressure, making it highly dangerous to manufacture and handle.
4. Use in Terrorism – Terrorist organisations have used TATP in suicide attacks, vehicle-borne IEDs and other high-intensity explosive attacks worldwide.
5. Detection Difficulty – TATP contains very little nitrogen, making it difficult for conventional explosive detection systems to identify.
6. Nickname – Due to its unpredictable and hazardous nature, TATP is often referred to as the “Mother of Satan”.
7. Security Concern – Counter-terrorism agencies closely monitor precursor chemicals linked to TATP production because of their accessibility and misuse potential.
8. Forensic Importance – Detection of TATP residue is considered an important forensic indicator during investigation of terror-related explosions.

## ABHAY

Context – The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has launched an AI-based helpbot called “Abhay”.

### About Abhay

1. “Abhay” is an AI-based helpbot launched by the Central Bureau of Investigation for the authentication of CBI notices and protection of citizens against cyber fraud and digital arrest scams.
2. Concern Highlighted by CBI – The agency stated that AI and deepfake technologies are making it difficult for citizens to distinguish between real and fabricated content.
  1. Fraudsters use fake notices to trap victims and keep them under surveillance under the guise of “digital arrest”, which has no legal existence in Indian law.
3. Access – Citizens can access “Abhay” through the official CBI website.

## Bhojshala-Kamal Maula Complex

Context – The Madhya Pradesh High Court declared the disputed Bhojshala-Kamal Maula complex in Dhar as a temple of goddess Vagdevi (Saraswati), and quashed the 2003 ASI arrangement.

Key Points of the Verdict

1. Protected Monument Status – The site remains a protected monument under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains (AMASR) Act, 1958.
2. ASI Supervisory Control – ASI was granted supervisory control over preservation, conservation and regulation of religious access at the complex.
3. Centre to Decide Management – The court directed the Government of India and the ASI to determine the future administration and management framework of the Bhojshala temple and the Sanskrit learning centre situated on the disputed land in Dhar district.
4. Saraswati Idol Repatriation Direction – The court directed the Union Government to make efforts to bring back the Saraswati idol taken to the United Kingdom in the late 1800s.

5. Scientific Survey Validation – It upheld the ASI scientific survey, which used carbon dating, palaeography, XRF (X-ray Fluorescence) spot analysis and compositional testing.
6. Ban on Namaz at the Site – The court held that Muslims will no longer be permitted to offer namaz within the disputed complex.
7. Rejection of Mosque and Waqf Claims – The court held that no evidence proved the disputed mosque structure existed before 1034 AD.
  1. No material establishing the disputed land as Waqf (charitable endowment under Islamic law) property.
  2. Rejected the 1935 “Ailaan/order” recognising the property as a mosque, holding that it was not a valid constitutional or legal order.
8. Provision for Alternate Mosque Land – The court allowed the Muslim community to seek alternate land from the Madhya Pradesh government for the construction of a mosque.

### About Bhojshala-Kamal Maula Complex

1. Location – Dhar, Madhya Pradesh.
2. Historical Significance – An ASI-protected 11th-century monument established during the rule of Raja Bhoja.
  1. Raja Bhoj was a prominent ruler of the Paramara Dynasty who ruled the Malwa region from around 1010–1055 CE.
3. Hindu Claim – Hindus claim the site is the ancient Bhojshala temple dedicated to Goddess Saraswati (Vagdevi).
4. Muslim Claim – Muslims regard the structure as the Kamal Maula Mosque associated with Sufi saint Hazrat Kamaluddin Chishti.
5. 2003 ASI Arrangement – In 2003, the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) introduced a shared-access arrangement permitting Hindus to worship on Tuesdays and Muslims to offer Friday namaz.
6. High Court-Ordered ASI Survey – In 2024, the Madhya Pradesh High Court directed an ASI scientific survey and videography of the complex to examine its historical character.

### GANGES SOFT-SHELL TURTLE

Context – India’s first satellite-tagged Ganges Soft-shell Turtle was released in Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve in Assam on Endangered Species Day, 2026.

#### About the Initiative

1. Lead Institution – The satellite-tagging exercise was led by the Wildlife Institute of India (WII).
  1. It is an autonomous institution under the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change dedicated to wildlife research, training, and conservation in India.
2. Collaborating Agencies – The project was conducted in collaboration with Kaziranga authorities and the Assam Forest Department.
3. Funding Support – The project was funded by the National Geographic Society.
  1. It is a global non-profit scientific and educational organisation dedicated to exploration, conservation, research, and public awareness about geography, nature, and culture.
4. Methodology – A healthy adult turtle was captured, fitted with a satellite transmitter under veterinary supervision, and released back into its natural habitat.
5. Release Location – The turtle was released along the northern bank of the Brahmaputra River.
6. Objective of Satellite Tagging – The project aims to study seasonal movement patterns, home range, nesting sites, and breeding habitats for better conservation management.

#### About Ganges Soft-shell Turtle

1. Scientific Name – Nilssononia gangetica
2. Type – It is a freshwater turtle species.
3. Key Characteristics of Ganges Soft-shell Turtle –

1. Head Markings – Distinguished by arrowhead-shaped markings on the top of the head.
2. Carapace (Backshell) Structure – Possesses a flattened, compressed, smooth leathery carapace with a yellow border, unlike hard-shell turtles.
3. Anatomical Adaptation – Features a long tube-like snout that functions like a snorkel, enabling breathing while remaining submerged under water or sand.
4. Feeding Behaviour – Omnivorous species feeding on molluscs, insects, fish, amphibians, aquatic plants, waterfowl, and carrion.
4. Distribution – Found in the Ganges, Indus, Mahanadi, and Brahmaputra river systems across northern and eastern India.
5. States of Occurrence – Reported from Assam, Bihar, Jammu & Kashmir, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Odisha, Rajasthan, and West Bengal.
6. Habitat – Inhabits rivers, streams, canals, lakes, and ponds with muddy or sandy bottoms.
7. Ecological Role – Functions as a major river predator and scavenger, helping maintain aquatic ecosystem health by consuming algal blooms, dead, and decaying organic matter.
8. Major Threats – Threatened by poaching, illegal wildlife trade, habitat loss, pollution, dams, floodplain drainage, and overconsumption for meat.
  1. Turtle meat and eggs are traded for consumption and use in traditional medicine despite lack of scientific evidence for medicinal value.
9. Protection Status –
  1. Protected under Schedule I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.
  2. IUCN Status – Classified as Endangered.
  3. Appendix I of Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES).

## About Endangered Species Day

Observance – Observed annually on the third Friday of May to raise wareness about endangered species and the need for their conservation.