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Papua New Guinea has highest number of "living" indigenous languages in world

Pacific island nation of Papua New Guinea, Country in Oceania has highest number of "living" indigenous languages in world (840). Living languages stands for languages that are still being used and spoken by people. India stands fourth in list with 453 languages.

In 2016, United Nations' Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) highlighted that 40% of estimated 6,700 languages spoken around world were in danger of disappearing.

Contents

Ethnologue is a directory of languages which lists 7,111 living languages world wide.

According to Ethnologue-

3,741 languages (over half total) which have fewer than 1,000 speakers.

Some language families are very diverse and have several languages under them, but are spoken by only a small percentage of population. For example, Trans-New Guinea family, which has 478 languages, accounts for just 0.05% of total language speakers.

Indo-European family has 445 languages including Spanish, English, German, Punjabi and Bengali and has highest percentage of speakers- 46.31%.

Most Indian languages are derivatives of languages that are spoken in other parts of Asia as well, for example- Sino-Tibetan languages are spoken across Northeast India, China, Bhutan, Nepal and other South East Asian countries. One of outliers to this trend is Andamanese language family, which is confined to India alone.

Greenberg's Diversity Index

As per Ethnologue, "Greenberg's diversity index" is the probability that any two people of country selected at random would have different mother tongues

Value ranges from: 0-1, where "0" indicates no diversity i.e. everyone has same mother tongue and "1" indicates total diversity i.e. no two people will have same mother tongue. Therefore higher diversity index would mean more languages spread across country.

Most widely spoken languages worldwide: English, Chinese, Hindi, Arabic and Spanish are most widely spoken languages worldwide when only 1st-languages are considered. These 5 languages account for what is spoken by over 40% of people worldwide.

Number of Languages by Region- Asia (2303) and Africa (2140) account for highest number of indigenous languages (over 70% of total), Pacific (1322) and Americas (1058).

Widely English-speaking nations- United States (335 languages) and Australia (319) are among countries where highest number of languages are spoken this is because they have small and rapidly declining pockets of indigenous language speaking populations.

Languages in Decline

As per UNESCO's "Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger"-

Since 1950 228 languages have become extinct.

About 10% of languages are classified "vulnerable", while another 10% are "critically endangered".

In India, 5 languages have become extinct since 1950, while 42 are critically endangered.

Several languages are now "endangered" and in case of languages such as Tinguian (Colombian origin), there is just a single native speaker left.

The year 2019 is designated as United Nations' International Year of Indigenous Languages. It aims to promote native tongues in 5 key areas-

It is relief and human development agency of UN which supports more than 5 million registered Palestinian refugees, and their descendants. It is only UN agency dedicated to help refugees from specific region or conflict. It is separate from UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

Mandate: Its mandate is to contribute to welfare and human development of Palestine refugees, who had fled or were expelled from their homes during 1948 Palestine war as well during and following 1967 Six Day war.

Areas of Operation: It provides aid in 5 areas of operation viz. Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Gaza Strip and West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Whereas, UNHCR provides aid for Palestinian refugees outside these five areas.

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Every year 8 August is celebrated in India as August Kranti Din, in which tribute is paid to revolutionaries who sacrificed their lives in freedom struggle against rule. Also teachings given by Father of the Nation (Bapu), Mahatma Gandhi are remembered.

Why 8 August? Every year 8 August is remembered as a conch shell of last battle for independence in Indian history. On this day in 1942, foundation of Quit India Movement, run by Mahatma Gandhi was laid, after which whole of India united against British and British rule had to kneel down. Since Independence, 8 August is known as Revolution Day and ground in Bombay where it was started by hoisting flag is known as Kranti Maidan.

On 8th August 1942, as a precursor to India's independence, Quit India Movement was launched at Mumbai's historic Gowalia Tank Maidan, now popularly known as August Kranti Maidan. Also Gandhiji gave the call to Do or Die in his Quit India speech delivered at Gowalia Tank Maidan, which inspired thousands of party workers.

Only then Gandhiji was imprisoned at Aga Khan Palace in Pune and almost all leaders were arrested. In such a situation, young leader Aruna Asif Ali hoisted the Indian movement by hoisting tricolor at Gwalia Tank Ground in Mumbai on 9 August.

Indian Grandmaster Surya Shekhar Ganguly wins Belt and Road China Hunan International chess tournament in China

Working Principle: It is Organic Field Effect Transistor (OFET) –based Bacteria Sensor (or Bacterial Diagnostic device) which has been shown to have ability to detect bacteria and distinguish between Gram positive bacteria (such as *S pneumoniae*) and Gram negative (such as the common *E. coli*) types. Currently detection of bacteria in body fluids is done in laboratories. OFET is an electronic device that works on principle that charges in vicinity of channels of certain semiconductor can induce a current in them. Therefore, charges on surface of bacterium, induces a current in OFET, which is registered and read.

OFET devices developed by IIT-G team consists of a unique and hybrid tri-layer dielectric system built on simple glass and flexible PET (a kind of plastic) substrates, and can operate at ultra-low operating voltages.

Need: Across the world bacterial infection is a common cause of morbidity and mortality and even despite development of a range of antibiotics, challenge continues to lie in diagnosing bacterial infection early on. Also,

Significance: Present techniques used are extremely time-consuming as cells derived from a patient are cultured or grown in laboratories to detect and analyze bacteria. However, this new portable device, can instantly detect charges on cell walls of bacteria.

Application: This research has enabled rapid detection of bacteria, which is not just important in healthcare but also in anti-bioterrorism measures as well as environmental monitoring.

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United States designates China a "Currency Manipulator"

United States has designated China a "currency manipulator", after country's central bank allowed Yuan (Chinese Currency) to fall against dollar. This move could escalate tense trade relations between two nations.

Background

During US Presidential elections in 2016, US President Donald Trump had promised to label China as a currency manipulator, but it was on hold until now as US Department of Treasury kept country on its watch list, declining to take any step.

But now US Treasury Department has announced and determined that China is a "Currency Manipulator".

US Arguments:

US accused China of manipulating its currency to gain unfair competitive advantage in international trade and that China still targets on continuing to receive hundreds of billions of dollars which it has been taking from US with unfair trade practices and currency manipulation.

Further US treasury department also alleged that China has a long history of facilitating an undervalued currency through sustained, large-scale intervention in FOREX market.

The Trigger: This recent action by US to designate China as a "Currency Manipulator" came after China allowed its yuan to weaken past key 7-per-dollar level for the 1st time in more than a decade.

China Arguments:

As per Central Bank of China depreciation in its currency was due to effects of unilateralist and trade-protectionist measures and expectations for tariffs against China.

Way Ahead: US will now engage with International Monetary Fund (IMF) to eliminate unfair competitive advantage created by China's latest actions. This move could further escalate tense trade relations between two nations.

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RACE: Rajasthan's New Higher Education Model

State government of Rajasthan has launched a new higher education model titled- Resource Assistance for Colleges with Excellence or RACE, for distribution of faculties and movable assets among government colleges at district level so as to rationalise availability of resources.

RACE model will create a pool for sharing of facilities which will benefit colleges that lack infrastructure.

Need: Even though sanctioned posts of teachers in government colleges are 6,500, at present the posts fall short by about 2,000 teachers. Therefore until additional posts are created and new appointments made, RACE is expected to help channelise resources and ensure quality education.

Working: Colleges in need will submit their requirement to nodal college in district, which will send teachers on deputation, if needed, and provide facilities like projectors, digital libraries, equipment and technicians.

Benefits:

With the adoption of this new model, all colleges would get equal opportunities for imparting quality education.

RACE will give autonomy to small colleges and help them find solutions to their problems at local level. It will also help colleges situated in small towns facing shortage of faculties and infrastructure.

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Bangladesh- Russia signs uranium supply deal

Bangladesh signed deal with Russia for lifetime supply of uranium for its 2,400 MW Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant (RNPP) in Bangladesh. Under the deal, Russia will supply nuclear fuel needed for plant during its entire life cycle. RNPP will come into operation by 2022.

Deal was signed in Dhaka (Bangladesh capital) between Bangladesh Atomic Energy Commission (BAEC) and Russian Nuclear Fuel Supply Company (TVEL) Joint Stock Company, a Russian state-owned nuclear fuel firm. BAEC is tasked with implementing project.

It is a framework agreement that focuses on pricing methodology. Through this agreement, both countries will work to determine prices of nuclear fuel, considering volatile global market which is marked by continuous changes.

RNPP Project:

In 2017, two countries (Russia and Bangladesh) have also signed spent fuel sent back agreement for management of nuclear waste of Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant (RNPP).

Work on these two units of Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant (RNPP), each producing 1200 MW of electricity is scheduled to be completed in 2022 and 2024 respectively.

With power generation capacity of 1200 MW, each unit of power plant will have to reload one-third (33%) of total required nuclear fuel in every 18 months (1.5 years), and 1st, 2nd and 3rd reload will be provided by Russian firm free of cost.
