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## 7. Short News

### India Aid Maldive to Tackle Measles Outbreak

Context - India supplied measles vaccine doses and medical aid to Maldives as the country faces a rise in measles cases in 2026.

**India's Assistance to Maldives During Measles Outbreak**

1. Vaccine Support - India dispatched 20,000 doses of measles vaccines to help Maldives strengthen immunisation coverage and contain the outbreak.
2. Medical and Humanitarian Assistance - India also supplied approximately three tonnes of medical supplies, reaffirming its role as a trusted First Responder under the Neighbourhood First Policy and Vision MAHASAGAR.

**About Measles**

1. Measles is a highly contagious viral disease that can cause severe complications, particularly among children and immunocompromised individuals.
2. Caused By - It is caused by the Measles Virus (MeV), a member of the Paramyxoviridae family.
3. Most Vulnerable Groups - Children under five years, unvaccinated individuals, malnourished children, and persons with weakened immune systems are most vulnerable.
4. Transmission - The disease spreads through respiratory droplets and airborne transmission when an infected person coughs, sneezes, or breathes.
5. Vaccination - Measles can be effectively prevented through two doses of a measles-containing vaccine, which provides long-lasting immunity.

**India's Measles Elimination Efforts**

1. High Immunisation Coverage - Under the Universal Immunisation Programme (UIP), India achieved more than 93% coverage for the first dose and over 92% coverage for the second dose of the measles vaccine.
2. Significant Reduction in Cases - India recorded a 73% decline in reported measles cases in 2024 compared to 2023, reflecting progress toward the goal of measles elimination through intensified vaccination and surveillance efforts.

Significance - The initiative highlights India's growing role in regional health diplomacy while advancing the goal of measles elimination across South Asia.

### DRDO Demonstrates Next-Generation Defence Capability

Context - The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) successfully demonstrated the Multi-layered Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD) System and Naval Anti-Ship Missile–Medium Range (NASM-MR) through three consecutive flight tests.

**About the Multi-layered Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD) System**

1. It is a defensive missile shield designed to detect, track and intercept incoming ballistic missiles.
2. Key Features - Uses a network of advanced radars, sensors, command-and-control systems and interceptor missiles.
    1. Provides layered protection by engaging threats at different stages of flight.

2. Capable of countering emerging missile threats and protecting strategic assets, military installations and major cities.

**About Naval Anti-Ship Missile – Medium Range (NASM-MR)**

1. It is an indigenous medium-range anti-ship missile developed by DRDO.
2. Key Features - Designed to engage and destroy enemy warships and other maritime targets.
    1. Provides precision strike capability against moving targets at sea.
    2. Enhances the offensive and maritime strike capabilities of the Indian armed forces.

**About Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD)**

1. It is a layered missile shield that protects against incoming ballistic missile attacks.
2. Functions -
    1. Detection - Identifies incoming missiles using advanced radars and sensors.
    2. Tracking - Continuously monitors the missile's trajectory and flight path.
    3. Interception - Destroys the incoming missile before it reaches the target.

## Whale Graveyard

Context - Scientists have discovered the world's largest, deepest and oldest known whale graveyard in the Diamantina Zone of the southeastern Indian Ocean.

**What is a Whale Graveyard?**

1. A whale graveyard is a region on the ocean floor where the remains of numerous whales accumulate over long periods, creating nutrient-rich ecosystems known as "whale falls."
    1. A whale fall is a natural phenomenon where a deceased whale sinks to the deep ocean floor, creating a localized, highly specialized ecosystem.
    2. Acting as a massive biological oasis in the deep-sea "desert," a single carcass can support a thriving, complex food web for decades or even up to a century.
2. Similar to elephant graveyards described on land, whale graveyards represent areas where large mammal remains are concentrated, although in whales this occurs mainly due to oceanographic and geological processes rather than deliberate congregation before death.

**About the Oldest Whale Graveyard**

1. Researchers discovered nearly 500 whale skeletons and fossil sites, making it the largest, deepest and oldest whale graveyard known to science.
2. Location - The graveyard lies in the Diamantina Fracture Zone of the southeastern Indian Ocean, approximately 1,200 km long and nearly 7,000 metres below sea level, west of Australia.
3. Key Features
    1. Exceptional Antiquity - Some whale fossils date back 5.3 million years, making it the oldest known whale graveyard on Earth.
    2. Extraordinary Scale - Scientists documented 485 whale-fall and fossil sites and estimate that millions of whale carcasses may be distributed across the region.
    3. Biodiversity Hotspot - The carcasses support diverse deep-sea organisms, including jellyfish, brittle stars, bone-eating worms and several species potentially new to science.
    4. Evolutionary Evidence - The site yielded fossils of extinct beaked whales and led to the identification of a new species, Pterocetus diamantinae, providing insights into whale evolution.
4. Significance of the Discovery

1. Understanding Deep-Sea Ecosystems - The discovery demonstrates how whale falls sustain unique chemosynthetic ecosystems and may act as ecological links between hydrothermal vents and cold seep communities.
2. Climate and Evolutionary Insights - The enormous accumulation of whale remains stores significant quantities of carbon and offers valuable evidence for reconstructing past marine biodiversity, whale migration patterns and oceanic environmental changes.

## Global Peace Index (GPI) 2026

Context - India ranked 127th among 163 countries in the Global Peace Index (GPI) 2026.

### Key Findings of Global Peace Index (GPI) 2026

1. Overall Assessment - The index assessed 163 independent states and territories, covering about 99.7% of the world's population.
2. Declining Peacefulness - Global peacefulness continued to decline, with more countries experiencing deterioration than improvement in peace indicators.
3. Top 3 Most Peaceful Countries
    1. Iceland, New Zealand and Switzerland
4. Bottom 3 Countries
    1. Russia, Sudan and Democratic Republic of the Congo
5. South Asia Performance
    1. Regional Trends - South Asia recorded one of its lowest peace levels in recent years due to political instability, internal conflicts and security challenges.
    2. Best Performer in South Asia - Bhutan remained the most peaceful country in the region.
    3. Sri Lanka's Performance - Sri Lanka ranked 67th globally, improving by 14 places and becoming the second most peaceful country in South Asia.
    4. India's Position - India ranked 127th, slipping three places from the previous year, largely due to concerns related to internal security and local tensions.
        - China is ranked 118th, while Pakistan is ranked 152nd.

### About the Global Peace Index (GPI)

1. The Global Peace Index is the world's leading measure of the relative peacefulness of nations.
2. Published By - 20th edition of the Global Peace Index (GPI) 2026 was released by the Sydney-based international think tank Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP).
3. Key Parameters - The index evaluates countries using 23 qualitative and quantitative indicators across three domains -
    1. Societal Safety and Security - Measures crime rates, political stability, terrorism and public safety.
    2. Ongoing Domestic and International Conflict - Assesses the intensity and duration of internal and external conflicts.
    3. Militarisation - Examines military expenditure, armed forces personnel, weapons imports and military capability.
4. Significance - The GPI provides a globally comparable framework to assess peace, stability and security trends and is widely used by policymakers, researchers and international organisations.

## Venus Flytrap

Context - Scientists have solved a century-old mystery about how the Venus Flytrap closes its trap.

### About Venus Flytrap

1. The Venus Flytrap is a carnivorous (insect-eating) plant that captures and digests insects using specialized snap-trap leaves to obtain nutrients from nutrient-poor soils.
2. Scientific Name - Dionaea muscipula; belongs to the Droseraceae (Sundew) family.
3. Native Region - While Venus flytraps have been planted and naturalized in other areas, they only occur naturally in the Atlantic coastal plain of the southeastern United States, primarily in the states of North Carolina and South Carolina.
    1. It naturally grows in acidic bogs, wetlands, and nutrient-poor sandy soils.
4. Trap - The Venus Flytrap's leaves act like a spring-loaded trap and when an insect touches the trigger hairs twice within a short interval, an electrical signal is generated.
5. Mechanism Discovered - Trap closure is triggered by rapid softening of cell walls in the outer epidermal layer of the leaf.
6. Plant Movements - The trap closes in about 0.1 second, making it one of the fastest movements in the plant kingdom.
7. Nutrient Adaptation - Evolved carnivory to survive in acidic, nutrient-poor environments where nitrogen is scarce.
8. Digestive Process - After trapping prey, it secretes enzymes, absorbs nutrients, and later reopens, leaving behind the insect's exoskeleton.