

UPSC Daily Current Affairs 23 Jun 2021

1. The politics of an aerial snare

(Topic- GS Paper II –IR, Source- The Hindu)

Why in the news?

- Recently, a Ryanair flight was forced to make an emergency landing in Minsk by a MiG-29 fighter jet of Belarus.
- It was on its way from Greece to Lithuania
- The dissident Belarussian journalist, Roman Protasevich, who was travelling in the commercial, civilian aircraft, was subsequently arrested.
- The whole operation, it is alleged, was carried out on the orders of President Alexander Lukashenko, who has ruled Belarus for 27 years.

Global reaction

- The European Union (EU) and the U.S. denounced it and called for a thorough investigation by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO).
- EU-based carriers have since heeded the call to avoid overflight of Belarus. Belarusian flights have been barred from overflying EU airspace or landing at its airports.
- Air France, British Airways, Lufthansa, KLM and a host of other airlines have implemented their own suspensions.
- The U.S., EU, and the U.K. have slapped further sanctions on Belarus.

International Law on aviation

Convention on International Civil Aviation

- The Convention on International Civil Aviation, better known as the Chicago Convention of 1944, to which Belarus is a signatory state, prohibits any unlawful intervention against a civilian aircraft.

Article 9 of Chicago Convention

- At the same time, it has various provisions under Article 9 which permit a sovereign state the right to impose restrictions, including enforced landings at a designated airport in its territory, in “exceptional circumstances or during a period of emergency, or in the interest of public safety”.
- Once a flight has landed, **Article 16** provides the host country the right to board/search the aircraft.
- The Chicago Convention applies only to civilian aircraft of the contracting parties.

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- In this case, the national carrier, Belavia Belarusian Airlines, is not involved though it is part of the targeted sanctions by the EU.

International Air Services Transit Agreement (IASTA)

- It has been concluded in Chicago in 1944.
- According to this agreement, contracting states grant to one another the freedom of air transit in respect of scheduled international air services, that is, the privilege to fly across territories without landing.

Belarus is not a signatory of IASTA.

About Belarus



- **It is a country of Eastern Europe.**
- Until it became independent in 1991, Belarus, formerly known as Belorussia or White Russia.
- It was the smallest of the three Slavic republics included in the Soviet Union (the larger two being Russia and Ukraine).

2. House panel for study on malnutrition

(Topic- GS Paper II –Health, Source- The Hindu)

Why in the news?

- Recently, a parliamentary panel asked the Ministry of Women and Child Development to conduct a survey on the impact of the pandemic on anganwadi services and malnutrition levels among children.

More on the news

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- The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Education, Women, Children, Youth and Sports is learnt to have grilled the officials of the Ministry on the need for data to understand “how anganwadi services were delivered on the ground during the pandemic, and to assess the impact of COVID-19 on stunting and wasting levels”.
- The government has launched an app called **Poshan Tracker** to monitor delivery of services at 14 lakh anganwadis.
- The data is beginning to be uploaded only from June 1.

About Poshan Tracker app

- It has been developed by MoWCD.
- The app will provide real-time monitoring and tracking of all Anganwadi Centre (AWC), Anganwadi Workers (AWWs) and beneficiaries.

Significance

- The app will provides a 360-degree view of the activities of AWC, AWWs and complete beneficiary management for pregnant women, lactating mothers, children, adolescent girls and adolescent boys.

Related Information

About Anganwadi scheme

- It is a centrally sponsored scheme implemented by the States / UTs which serves as a rural child and maternal care centre in India.
- It was started by the Government of India In 1975 as part of the Integrated Child Development Services program to combat child hunger and malnutrition.

Malnutrition and India

Global Nutrition Report-2020

- As per the Global Nutrition Report 2020, India is among 88 countries that are likely to miss global nutrition targets by 2025.

Malnourished children in India

- Malnutrition in India accounts for 68% of total under-five deaths and 17% of the total disability- adjusted life years.
- India is home to about 30% of the world’s stunted children and nearly 50 per cent of severely wasted children under the age of five.

Food and Agriculture Organization estimates

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- The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) estimates that 194.4 million people in India (about 14.5% of the total population) are undernourished.

Global Hunger Index 2020

- India has been ranked at 94 among 107 countries in the Global Hunger Index (GHI) 2020.

Measures Taken by Government

POSHAN Abhiyaan

- The government of India had launched the National Nutrition Mission (NNM) or POSHAN Abhiyaan to ensure a “Malnutrition Free India” by 2022.

Anemia Mukh Bharat Abhiyan

- It has been launched in 2018.
- The mission aims at accelerating the annual rate of decline of anaemia from one to three percentage points.

Mid-day Meal (MDM) scheme

- It aims to improve nutritional levels among school children which also have a direct and positive impact on enrolment, retention and attendance in schools.

National Food Security Act (NFSA), 2013

- It aims to ensure food and nutrition security for the most vulnerable through its associated schemes and programmes, making access to food a legal right.

Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY)

- In this scheme, Rs.6,000 is transferred directly to the bank accounts of pregnant women for availing better facilities for their delivery.

Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) Scheme

- It has been launched in 1975.
- The scheme aims at providing food, preschool education, primary healthcare, immunization, health check-up and referral services to children under 6 years of age and their mothers.



3. Odisha emerges as only state as home to all three species of crocodiles

(Topic- GS Paper III –Environment, Source- The Hindu)

Why in the news?

- Odisha has recently emerged as the only state to have all the three species of the reptile freshwater Gharials, muggers and saltwater crocodiles.

These are at

- Gharials at Satakosiya in Mahanadi
- Muggers in Bhitarkanika National park
- Saltwater crocodiles.

Related Information

Crocodylian Species in India

- Mugger or Marsh Crocodile**



Habitat

- It is mainly restricted to the Indian subcontinent where it may be found in a number of freshwater habitat types including rivers, lakes and marshes.
- However, it can even be found in coastal saltwater lagoons and estuaries.

Protection Status

- IUCN List of Threatened Species: Vulnerable
- CITES : Appendix I
- These are listed in Schedule 1 of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.
- **It is already extinct in Bhutan and Myanmar.**

b. Estuarine or Saltwater Crocodile

- It is considered as the Earth's largest living crocodile species.



Habitat

- It is found in Odisha's Bhitarkanika National Park, the Sundarbans in West Bengal and the Andamans and Nicobar Islands.
- It is also found across Southeast Asia and northern Australia.

Protection Status

- IUCN List of Threatened Species: **Least Concern**
- CITES: Appendix I (except the populations of Australia, Indonesia and Papua New Guinea, which are included in Appendix II).
- These are listed in Schedule 1 of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.

c. Gharial

- Gharials, sometimes called gavials, are a type of Asian crocodilian distinguished by their long, thin snouts which resembles a pot (ghara in Hindi).



- Gharials are a type of Crocodilians that also includes crocodiles, alligators, caimans, etc.

Habitat

- The gharials are mostly found in fresh waters of the Himalayan Rivers.

Primary habitat

- The Chambal River in the northern slopes of the Vindhya Mountains (Madhya Pradesh) is known as the primary habitat of gharials.

Secondary habitats

- The Himalayan Rivers like ghagra, Gandak River, Girwa River, Ramganga River and the Sone River are secondary habitats for gharials.

Protection Status

- IUCN List of Threatened Species: **Critically Endangered**
- CITES : Appendix I
- These are listed in Schedule 1 of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.

Government initiative to protect Crocodiles

Indian Crocodile Conservation Project

- The Crocodile Conservation Project was launched in 1975 in different States.

- The Gharial and Saltwater crocodile conservation programme was first implemented in Odisha in early 1975 and subsequently the Mugger conservation programme was initiated.

About World Crocodile Day

- The day is celebrated on 17th June.
- The day is a global awareness campaign to highlight the plight of endangered crocodiles and alligators around the world.

4. Pygmy hogs

(Topic- GS Paper III –Environment, Source- The Hindu)

Why in the news?

- Recently, eight of 12 captive-bred pygmy hogs, the world are rarest and smallest wild pigs were on released in the Manas National Park of western Assam.
- The remaining four would be released on June 25.

About Pygmy hogs

- It is the world's smallest wild pig species.
- They are most found in Assam and Northern parts of West Bengal in India.
- The animals choose dense grasslands as their habitat.

Threats

- Agriculture, human settlements, livestock grazing, commercial forestry and burning of grasslands are some of the threats to their survival.

Protections Status

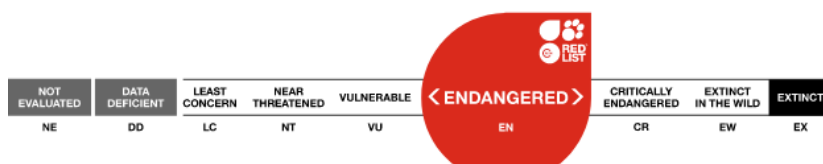


Pygmy Hog

Porcula salvania

CITATION

Meijaard, E., Narayan, G. & Deka, P. 2019. *Porcula salvania*. The 2019: e.T21172A44139115. <https://dx.doi.org/10.2305/IUCN.UK.2019.T21172A44139115.en>. Downloaded on 23 June 2021.



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- These are listed as **Endangered** in IUCN Red list.

Government Initiative

Pygmy Hog Conservation Programme

- The Pygmy Hog Conservation Programme has started in 1996.
- The Programme is collaboration among Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust of UK, Assam Forest Department, Wild Pig Specialist Group of International Union for Conservation of Nature and Union Environment Ministry.
- It is currently being implemented by NGOs Aaranyak and EcoSystems India.
- The reintroduction programme began in 2008 with the Sonai-Rupai Wildlife Sanctuary (35 hogs), Orang National Park (59) and Barnadi Wildlife Sanctuary (22).

5. World's first GM rubber sapling planted in Assam

(Topic- GS Paper III –Economy+ Science and Technology, Source- The Hindu)

Why in the news?

- Recently, a Rubber Board research farm on the outskirts of Guwahati now sports the world's first genetically modified (GM) rubber plant tailored for the climatic conditions in the Northeast.
- The plant was developed at the Kerala-based Rubber Research Institute of India (RRII).

Unique Character

- The GM rubber has additional copies of the gene **MnSOD, or manganese-containing superoxide dismutase, inserted in the plant.**
- This gene will be expected to tide over the severe cold conditions during winter — a major factor affecting the growth of young rubber plants in the region.

Related Information

Rubber production in India

- India is the fifth largest rubber-producing country in the world, after Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand and Brazil.
- It produces about 7 lakh tons of rubber, which is about 4 percent of the total world's production.
- Kerala is the leading producer of natural rubber in India.
- Other rubber producing states are Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Andaman and the Nicobar Islands.

About Rubber Act of 1947

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- It was enacted to promote natural rubber, a strategic product, to provide for the development under the control of the Union of the rubber industry.
- It provided the Rubber Board for control and coordination of the rubber industry in India.
- It lays down important terms and definitions related to the rubber industry such as Board, Dealer, Manufacturer, etc.

6. Lakshadweep could face major coastal erosion due to rising sea levels: study

(Topic- GS Paper III –Environment, Source- Indian Express)

Why in the news?

- Recently, a group of scientists at IIT-Kharagpur, in a study carried out under the Department of Science and Technology have found that sea levels around Lakshadweep are estimated to rise between 0.4 mm and 0.9 mm annually, causing coastal erosion in many of the islands, and possibly submerging the smaller islets.

Key Highlights of the study

- The study has estimated that the islands Chetlat and Amini are expected to face major land-loss. Projection mapping indicated that about 60-70 per cent of the existing shoreline would experience land-loss in Amini and about 70-80 per cent in Chetlat.
- The island Minicoy and capital Kavaratti are also vulnerable to sea-level rise, and expected to experience land-loss along 60 per cent of the existing shoreline.

Coastal protection measures

There are two kinds of coastal protection measures that the government can adopt

- a. Soft measures that is, the creation of mangroves, which we think is more effective.
- b. Hard engineering solutions including the building of sea walls – a proposition which is extremely expensive.”

About Lakshadweep



- The Lakshadweep archipelago comprises 36 islands of coral and reef formation in the Arabian Sea, spanning just over 32 sq km.
- The islands are characterized by low elevations, with maximum elevation ranging from 4-6 metres above Mean Sea Level and minimum elevations lower than 1 metre.

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