

02 Mar 2020: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

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A. GS 1 Related

Category: ART AND CULTURE

1. Centre to review list of monuments under ASI

Context:

Review of the monuments under the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI).

Details:

- The Central Government is planning a review of the monuments under the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) and the ones protected by the State governments.
- At present, **3,691 monuments are protected by the ASI throughout India. Uttar Pradesh has the highest number** of protected monuments at 745.
- The number of monuments under the Centre's protection could increase. The list of centrally

protected monuments can go up to 10,000. The important sites under the State governments could be added to the list.

- There is also the proposal for some monuments to be removed from the Central list and be placed under the State governments.
 - The **removal of some sites from the Central list would allow development works in their vicinity.**
 - There is a ban on construction within 100 metres of a centrally protected monument and regulated construction within 100-200 metres under the **Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1958**. The Act protects monuments and sites that are over 100 years old.

B. GS 2 Related

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. Experts raise concerns for India over U.S.-Taliban agreement

Context:

The U.S.-Taliban and U.S.-Afghanistan peace agreements.

Details:

- India has signalled its acceptance of the U.S.-Taliban and U.S.-Afghanistan peace agreements in Doha and Kabul, by sending envoys to witness the events.
- The two agreements set out a course for the next 14 months for the stakeholders of the agreement.
- The major provisions include the **pullout of U.S. troops**, the Taliban should **deny space for foreign terrorist groups in Afghanistan and refrain from any violence against the U.S. and its allies**. There is a provision for an **intra-Afghan dialogue** between the elected Afghan government and the Taliban.

Concerns:

Complex issues still not negotiated:

- The actual terms of the peace deal are yet to be negotiated between the Taliban and the Afghan side, facilitated by the U.S.
- Most of the difficult issues are still to be dealt with. There is **no reference to the Constitution, rule of law, democracy and elections in the agreement**.

One-sided agreement:

- Some security experts are of the view that the **agreement seems to be entirely one-sided**, since all Taliban demands have been agreed with, without the Taliban ceding ground on the demands placed on it.
- In the Doha agreement, the U.S. has committed to clearing five bases and bringing troop levels down to 8,600 in four-and-a-half months.
- With strong **doubts on the Taliban's ability and will to deliver on the assurances** it has given, the U.S. has ceded to most of the demands of the Taliban.

Indian Concerns:

- Diplomatic and security experts are of the view that the two agreements may have a bad **impact on Indian interests.**

Uncertain terms of the agreement:

- **In the Doha agreement**, the Taliban has guaranteed enforcement mechanisms that will prevent the use of the soil of Afghanistan by any group or individual against the security of the United States and its allies.
- However, it is **unclear whether India, which is not a U.S. ally, is included in this definition**, and whether Pakistan-backed groups that threaten India would still operate in Afghanistan.
- **The Kabul declaration with the Afghan government, more specifically**, commits to stopping any international terrorist groups or individuals, from using Afghan soil to threaten the security of the United States, its allies and other countries.

Impact of prisoner release:

- According to the agreements, 5,000 Taliban prisoners will be released by March 10, 2020, and the remainder in another three months.
- Indian officials are worried that the release of the Taliban fighters would **strengthen the Haqqani network**. The Haqqani network was responsible for the [2008 bombing of the Indian embassy in Kabul](#).

Impact of lifting sanctions:

- The U.S. has committed to **taking Taliban leaders off the UN Security Council's sanctions list by May 29, 2020**, which could considerably bring down the number of terrorists Pakistan is accused of harbouring, according to the [FATF greylist conditions](#).
- This might **benefit Pakistan during the June 2020 FATF Plenary**, when it faces a blacklist for not complying.

Handing powers to Taliban:

- The U.S., via the agreement, even **appears to submit to the possibility of a Taliban-led government**, by extracting promises that the Taliban will not threaten the safety of the U.S. and its allies.
- This appears to **sideline the "Intra-Afghan" dialogue** and India's support for the election process for leadership in Afghanistan.
- This also raises a big **question mark on the future of Afghanistan's government**, and whether it will remain a democracy.

Increasing Pakistan's influence:

- The **proposed Afghanistan-Pakistan dialogue**, facilitated by Washington, on cross-border terrorism and mechanisms may **cut India out of the region's security architecture** while increasing Pakistan's strategic depth in Afghanistan.

For more information on this issue refer:

[CNA dated Mar 1, 2020](#)

Category: ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

1. India is host to 457 migratory fauna, shows latest CMS list

Context:

Migratory wildlife list released by the **Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species (CMS)**.

Details:

- Recently, Gandhinagar in Gujarat played host to the **Conference of Parties (COP 13) of the CMS**.
- The **Zoological Survey of India (ZSI)** had for the first time compiled the list of migratory species of India under the CMS.
 - The ZSI report had 451 species listed out initially, with six species including the Asian elephant, great Indian bustard, Bengal florican, oceanic white-tip shark, urial and smooth hammerhead shark being added later.
- As compared to the previous list, there have been new additions to the migratory wildlife list put out by the CMS.
- Currently, **the total number of migratory fauna from India numbers 457 species**.

Birds:

- **Birds account for the largest share** of the migratory species, accounting for about 83% (380 species).
- The bird family **Muscicapidae has the highest number of migratory species**.
 - The Muscicapidae consist of small-sized birds mostly restricted to the Old World (Europe, Africa and Asia). These are mainly arboreal insectivores.
- The next highest group of migratory birds is **raptors or birds of prey**, such as eagles, owls, vultures and kites which are from the family Accipitridae.
 - Accipitridae is a family of small to large carnivorous birds with strongly hooked bills and variable morphology based on diet.
- Another group of birds that migrate in large numbers are waders or shorebirds. In India, their migratory species number 41, followed by ducks (38) belonging to the family Anatidae.
 - Waders are birds commonly found in coastal habitats, shorelines and mudflats that wade in order to forage for food (such as insects or crustaceans) in the mud or sand.
- **India has three main flyways of the nine flyways globally**.
 - A flyway is a geographical region within which a single or a group of migratory species completes its annual cycle - breeding, moulting, staging and non-breeding. In simpler terms, **flyways imply the flight paths used by the migratory birds**.
 - **The Central Asian flyway, Asian East African Flyway**(covering parts of western India) and **East Asian–Australasian Flyway** (covering parts of eastern India).

Mammals:

- The new list includes the Asian elephant (added to Appendix I) and the urial (added to Appendix II), increasing the total number of migratory mammal species in India under the list to 46 from the previous 44.
- **The largest group of mammals is bats** belonging to the family Vespertilionidae. Dolphins are the

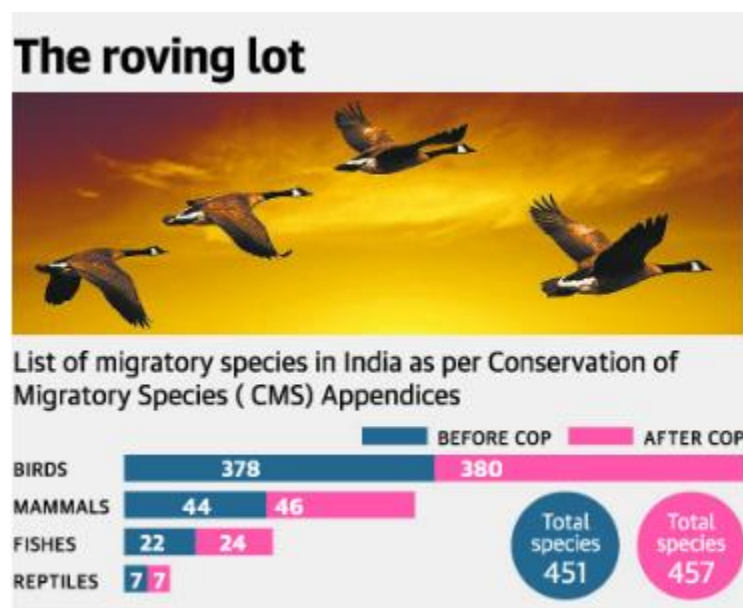
second-highest group of mammals with nine migratory species of dolphins listed.

Fishes:

- Fish make up another important group of migratory species. **There are 24 species of migratory fish in India.**
- Before COP 13, the ZSI had compiled 22 species, including 12 sharks and 10 ray fish. The oceanic white-tip shark and smooth hammerhead shark were then added.

Reptiles:

- **Seven reptiles**, which include five species of turtles and the Indian gharial and saltwater crocodile, are among the CMS species found in India. There were no new additions to the reptiles list.



Significance:

- The COP 13 **has focussed on transboundary species and corridor conservation** which account for an effective approach for conservation efforts.

India's role:

- With India **alone accounting for around 450 species of the total 650 species globally** listed under the CMS appendices, India plays a very important role in the conservation efforts.
- In this direction, India recently unveiled its **National Action Plan (NAP) for Conservation of Migratory Birds and their Habitats.**

2. Water crisis looms large in Himalayan regions, study finds

Context:

Study of water availability in the Himalayan region.

Details:

- The research involved the survey of 13 towns across **the Himalayan region of Bangladesh, Nepal, India and Pakistan.**
- The study aimed to understand the challenges faced by the urban inhabitants of the regions.
- The study notes that **eight towns in the Himalayan region of Bangladesh, Nepal, India and Pakistan were nearly 20%-70% deficient in their water supply.**

Concerns:

- The places surveyed were found to be **extremely dependent on springs** for their water requirements (ranging between 50% and 100%).
- The research warns that under current trends, **the demand-supply gap may double by 2050.**
- Communities were coping through **short-term strategies such as groundwater extraction**, which is proving to be unsustainable.
- Rural areas have received much of the attention in terms of development in this region and issues surrounding urban environments have been largely sidelined. Although only 3% of the total Hindu Kush Himalayan population lives in larger cities and 8% in smaller towns, projections show that **over 50% of the population will be living in cities by 2050**, placing tremendous stress on water availability.

Factors responsible:

- The study notes **unplanned urbanization and climate change** as being the key factors responsible for the current state of affairs.
 - The **increasing demand for resources and land for human habitation** has led to the encroachment and degradation of natural water bodies (springs, ponds, lakes, canals, and rivers) and the increasing disappearance of traditional water systems (stone spouts, wells, and local water tanks) across the region.
 - **Global warming and the fast retreating glaciers** would only add to the challenge of water stress in the region.

Way forward:

- A holistic water management approach that includes **springshed management and planned adaptation** is extremely important.

3. Environmental activists embrace 'last remnants of Aravali forests'

Context:

Protest marking the anniversary of the Punjab Land Preservation Act amendments by the Haryana Government.

Details:

- **The event 'Aravalli Calling'** was held with the aim of creating awareness about the importance of the Aravalis and to urge the government to preserve the State's flora and fauna.
- **The amendments made to the 118-year-old Punjab Land Preservation Act (PLPA)** will open up

nearly 60,000 acres of the Aravali hills to real estate development.

- The Aravalis are **threatened by illegal tree felling and construction activities.**
- **Haryana has the lowest forest cover in India of a mere 3.6%** and the PLPA Amendment Bill may further decrease this cover.

Additional information:

- The Aravalli Range is a mountain range in Northwestern India, running in a south-west direction, starting near Delhi, **passing through southern Haryana and Rajasthan, and ending in Gujarat.** The highest peak is Guru Shikhar.
- The Aravalli Range acts as a barrier to the spread of the Thar Desert, plays an important role in the recharge of groundwater and is home to a vast array of biodiversity including many forests and wildlife sanctuaries.

4. Eurasian otter found in Chilika Lake

Context:

A study of the wildlife fauna in and around **Odisha's Chilika Lake.**

Details:

- Researchers have found the presence of a viable, breeding population of a **fishing cat in the brackish water lagoon.** Another globally endangered species, **smooth-coated otter**, has also been recorded from the study's data.
 - The fishing cat and smooth-coated otter enjoy conservation measures of the highest accord in India according to the country's laws, much like the tiger and elephant.
- The study has also recorded the presence of the **Eurasian otter** in Chilika.
 - Despite being a widely-spread and common species globally, very little is known of the Eurasian otter's distribution and abundance in India and especially along the eastern coast.

Fishing cat:

- **The fishing cat (*Prionailurus viverrinus*) is a medium-sized wild cat.** The fishing cat is a globally endangered species that is elusive.
- The fishing cat hunts in water. It has specialized features like partially webbed feet and water-resistant fur that helps it to thrive in wetlands.
- The fishing cat is **predominantly nocturnal.**

Habitat:

- The fishing cat lives foremost in the **vicinity of wetlands**, along rivers, streams, oxbow lakes, in swamps, tidal creeks and mangroves.

Range of distribution:

- The fishing cats are found **in very few places in the south and south-east Asia.**
- It is broadly but discontinuously distributed in Asia and is primarily found in the **Terai region of the Himalayan foothills in India and Nepal, in eastern India, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka.**
- In India, fishing cats are mainly found in the **mangrove forests of the Sundarbans**, on the foothills

of the Himalayas along the Ganga and Brahmaputra river valleys and in the **Western Ghats**.

Threats:

- Fishing cat populations have declined severely over the last decade.
- The fishing cat is **threatened by destruction of wetlands**, which are increasingly being polluted and converted for agricultural use and human settlements.
- The conversion of mangrove forests to commercial aquaculture ponds is a major threat.
- Another threat to the fishing cat is **depletion of its main prey-fish** due to unsustainable fishing practices and over-exploitation of local fish stocks.
- The fishing cats are also occasionally poached for its skin.

Conservation status:

- Since 2016, the fishing cat is **listed as Vulnerable on the [IUCN Red List](#)**, which means that it faces a high threat of extinction in the wild.
- The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) lists the fishing cat on **Appendix II of [CITES](#)**, which governs international trade in this species.
- In India, the fishing cat is included in **Schedule I of the [Indian Wildlife \(Protection\) Act, 1972](#)** and thereby protected from hunting.

Additional Information:

- The fishing cat is the **state animal of West Bengal**.

Category: INTERNAL SECURITY

1. With falling allocation, Navy looks at fleet optimisation

Context:

Indian Navy's **Long Term Integrated Perspective Plan (LTIPP)** and the increasing budgetary constraints.

Details:

Budgetary constraints:

- In [2020-21 budget](#), the Navy's share in the capital allocation of the defence budget is ₹26,688 crore, while the committed liabilities alone stood at ₹45,000 crores.
- In 2019-20 too, the Navy's capital allocation was ₹23,156 crore, while the liabilities were ₹25,461 crores.
- In the past few years, the Navy's share as a percentage of the defence budget has been going down.

Navy's approach:

- As part of the **fleet rationalization plan**, the Navy has cut down on the requirement of minesweepers from 12 to eight and additional **P-8I long-range patrol aircraft** from 10 to six.
- Facing increasing budgetary constraints and with several big-ticket acquisitions lined up, the Navy is looking at **adopting unmanned platforms**, in a big way.
 - The Navy has procured some autonomous underwater vehicles to detect mines.

- Similarly, the Navy operates some Israeli drones and is in the process of procuring 10 General Atomics **Seaguardian High Altitude Long Endurance (HALE) armed drones** from the U.S. for maritime surveillance.
- In spite of the budgetary constraints and calls for giving up its demands for more acquisition, the Navy is firm on its demand for **a third aircraft carrier and the next line of six advanced submarines under Project-75I**.
 - **The Indian Navy is an expanding blue-water Navy with growing responsibilities and needs power projection.** The need for more submarines and a third aircraft carrier is very important in this regard. A third aircraft carrier will allow the Indian Navy to have two operational carriers on each seaboard at any given time.

D. GS 4 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

E. Editorials

Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

1. Whither tribunal independence?

Context:

The reframed Tribunal rules notified by the Ministry of Finance.

Background:

Finance Act of 2017:

- Through the **Finance Act, 2017**, around **26 Central laws were amended**.
- The **power to prescribe eligibility criteria, selection process, removal, salaries, tenure and other service conditions** pertaining to various members of 19 tribunals were sub-delegated to the rule-making powers of the Central Government.

Judicial review:

- The contentious aspects of the Finance Act, 2017 were challenged in the courts.
- **In November 2019, a Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court, in the Rojer Mathew case**, declared the Tribunal, Appellate Tribunal and other Authorities (Qualification, Experience and other Conditions of Service of Members) **Rules, 2017 as unconstitutional**.

Against the independence of Judiciary:

- The Bench held the rules as being **violative of the principles of independence of the judiciary** and contrary to earlier decisions of the Supreme Court in the Madras Bar Association series.
- Except for the selection committee for NCLAT which consisted of two judges and two secretaries to the Government of India, all other committees comprised only one judge and three secretaries to the Government of India. The selection committee for most tribunals was made up of a **majority of personnel from the Central Government**.

- The SC found the provision on the search-cum-selection-committee as an **attempt to keep the judiciary away from the process of selection and appointment** of members, vice-chairman and chairman of tribunals.

State a major litigant:

- The Court noted that since the **executive is a litigating party in most of the litigation**, it cannot, therefore, be allowed to be a dominant participant in tribunal appointments.

Limited tenure affects efficiency:

- The Court held that the **tenure of three years for members as mandated in the rules** would limit the possibility of the tribunal members gaining adjudicatory experience and would thus affect the efficiency of the Tribunals. Similar observations were made by the SC in the Madras Bar Association case, 2010.
- The SC directed the Central Government to reformulate the rules strictly in accordance with principles laid out by the SC in its earlier decisions.

Details:

- The Ministry of Finance has notified the reframed rules.
- Now, in **the 2020 rules**, by default, all committees consist of a judge, the president/chairman/chairperson of the tribunal concerned and two secretaries to the Government of India.

Concerns with new rules:

- There are concerns that the newly notified reframed rules still suffer from the same deficiencies as noted by the court in the Rojer Mathew case. **The reframed Tribunal rules are in contempt of several Constitution Bench decisions of the Supreme Court.**

Non-judicial members of the tribunal:

- **In Madras Bar Association (2010)**, the Court explicitly held that **only judges and advocates can be considered for appointment as a judicial member** of the tribunal and that persons from the Indian Legal Service cannot be considered for appointment as judicial member.
- On similar lines, the **Madras High Court in Revenue Bar Association case (2019)**, declared the Section 110(1)(b)(iii) of the CGST Act, 2017 as unconstitutional for allowing members of the Indian Legal Service to be judicial members in GSTAT.
- Currently, in the Income Tax Appellate Tribunal (ITAT), Customs Excise and Service Tax Appellate Tribunal (CESTAT), [Central Administrative Tribunal \(CAT\)](#), Debt Recovery Appellate Tribunal (DRAT), etc., **a non-judicial member can become the president/chairman/chairperson**. This goes against the observations made by the Judiciary.

No equal say for the judiciary:

- The common observation in the Madras Bar Association series and Rojer Mathew case is that judiciary must have **an equal say in the appointment of members of the tribunals**.
 - **In Madras Bar Association (2010)**, a Constitution Bench dealing with the validity and appointment of members to the [National Company Law Tribunal \(NCLT\)](#) under the Companies Act, 1956, ordered to have two judges to be a part of the four-member selection committee.
 - Subsequent Constitution Bench decisions in Madras Bar Association (2014), Rojer Mathew

and the decision of the Madras High Court in Shamnad Basheer have repeatedly held that the principles of the Madras Bar Association (2010) are applicable to the selection process and constitution of all tribunals in India.

- **Under the 2020 rules, the inclusion of the president/chairman/chairperson of the tribunal as a member in the selection committee** seems to be violative of the previous decisions of the Supreme Court.
- In the Income Tax Appellate Tribunal (ITAT), Customs Excise and Service Tax Appellate Tribunal (CESTAT), Central Administrative Tribunal (CAT), Debt Recovery Appellate Tribunal (DRAT), etc., a non-judicial member can become the president/chairman/chairperson.
- Therefore, when a non-judicial member becomes a member in the selection committee, the **Supreme Court judge will be in minority**, giving primacy to the executive.

Tenure:

- **In Madras Bar Association (2010), the Court had held that the term of office should be longer and extended to seven or five years.** Similarly in the Rojer Mathew case, the Court held the prescribed term of three years to be too short to accumulate knowledge, expertise and efficiency.
- The 2020 rules increase the **tenure of members from three years to four years**, thereby blatantly violating the directions of the Supreme Court.

Eligibility criteria:

- Currently, only if **an advocate has more than 25 years of experience**, can he/she apply to the post of judicial member of various tribunals such as ITAT, CESTAT, Appellate Board under the Trade Marks Act, 1999, Appellate Tribunal for Electricity, etc.
- The 25-year eligibility criterion is unheard of even for the appointment of High Court judges.
- By eliminating chances of advocates applying for the post of judicial members, the government surely intends to **fill them with candidates from the Indian Legal Service**. This is in contrary to the court's observation in the **Madras Bar Association (2010) case**.

Broader concerns:

- The governments have repeatedly violated the directions of the [Supreme Court](#) with respect to tribunals.
- The traditional courts, including the High Courts, have been divested of their jurisdictions and several tribunals have been set up. The **executive seems to be encroaching on the domain of the judiciary**.
- The attempt seems to be to divest courts of their powers, vest those powers with new tribunals, and fill them with civil servants.

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. A big, bad deal

Context:

The deal signed between the U.S. and the Taliban in Doha.

Background:

- The U.S. **went into Afghanistan in October 2001**, a few weeks after the 9/11 terror attacks, with the goals of defeating terrorists and rebuilding and stabilizing Afghanistan.
- **In 19 years of the war**, the Afghan war is estimated to have cost \$2-trillion, with more than 3,500 American and coalition soldiers killed. Afghanistan lost hundreds of thousands of people, both civilians and soldiers.
- In spite of the best efforts, the Taliban is at its strongest moment since the U.S. launched the war. **The insurgents control or contest the government control in almost half of Afghanistan.**

Details:

- The U.S. seeks to exit Afghanistan with assurances from the Taliban that the insurgents **will not allow Afghan soil to be used by transnational terrorist groups** such as al-Qaeda and that they would **engage the Kabul government** directly to find a lasting solution to the civil war.

Concerns:

Exclusion of the Afghan government in negotiations:

- The fundamental issue with the U.S.'s Taliban engagement is that it **deliberately excluded the Afghan government in the negotiations.**
- The Taliban insurgents do not see the elected government as legitimate rulers. By giving in to the Taliban's demand, the U.S. has practically called into **question the legitimacy of the elected government of Afghanistan.**

One-sided agreement:

- The U.S. has made **several concessions to the Taliban** in the agreement. The Taliban got what it wanted in the form of the withdrawal of foreign troops, without making any major concession.
 - The Taliban was **not pressed enough to declare a ceasefire.**
 - The Taliban, whose previous rule is known for strict religious laws, banishing women from public life, shutting down schools and unleashing systemic discrimination on religious and ethnic minorities, has not made any promises on whether it would **respect civil liberties or accept the Afghan Constitution.**

Weakening the elected government:

- **The U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan will invariably weaken the Kabul government**, altering the balance of power both on the battlefield and at the negotiating table of the intra-Afghan talks.
- **The Taliban** already controls or contests half the country's territory and the American and [NATO](#) withdrawal will help it expand its territorial base at the expense of the government's poorly trained forces.
- **A weakened government will have to talk with a resurgent Taliban.**

The threat of violence:

- The deal, though sets the stage for America to wind down the longest war in its history, **leaves the Afghan people at the mercy of violent, tribal Islamists.**

Intra-Afghan fighting:

- The U.S.-Taliban agreement may end up paving the way for **further intra-Afghan fighting** because it leaves the most important issue, namely, the future relationship between the Afghan government and the Taliban, unresolved.

- Given the **political instability in Afghanistan** with President Ashraf Ghani (belongs to the largest ethnic group of Pashtuns) and his primary challenger Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah (belongs to the second largest ethnic group of Tajiks) threatening to set up parallel governments, the **intra-Afghan talks will likely fan ethnic tensions in the country**. Consequently, ethnic fissures may descend into open conflict.
- Similarly, the Taliban, despite appearances to the contrary, is not a well-knit force. It is composed of various regional and tribal groups acting semi-autonomously.
- The agreement **may not bring lasting peace to the region**.

Indian concerns:

- Given the fact that India has **invested considerable resources in Afghanistan's development**, India has a major stake in the stability of Afghanistan.
- India has always considered the **elected government as a strategic asset against Pakistan** and has a major stake in the continuation in power of the elected government. An increased political and military role for the Taliban and the expansion of its territorial control should be of great concern to India since the **Taliban is widely believed to be close to Pakistan**.

For more information on this issue refer:

[CNA dated March 1, 2020](#)

Category: ECONOMY

1. Viral economies

Context:

The global spread of the [coronavirus](#) and the economic impact.

Details:

Global Impact:

- The virus has **crippled global supply chains, hit air travel and affected markets**.
- The Chinese economy is in deep trouble due to the impact of the virus and the virus appears all set to adversely impact the U.S. economy, the global economic engine.
 - U.S. companies ranging from Apple and Nvidia to Procter & Gamble and Adidas are facing troubles because of their large exposures to the Chinese market or their reliance on suppliers from China.
- **A slowdown or worse, recession, in the two global economic engines may push the entire world economy into recession.**
- Markets reflected these concerns as important indices plunged and investors pulled out money.
- Unlike a financial crisis which can be sorted out with measures such as rate cuts and bail-outs, the present crisis is **immune to financial solutions**.

Impact on India:

Negative:

- Given that the Indian economy seems to be only now showing some signs of recovery of its

slowdown, there are concerns that the **virus spread may impact its recovery.**

- The supply chain disruptions will have a **serious impact on industries such as pharmaceuticals, electronics and automobiles which are reliant on Chinese supplies.** The government needs to support industries that are reliant on Chinese inputs.
- Exports contribute a major share to India's earnings. In a situation of a global recession, **exports could take a hit**, further slowing down one of the economic engines.
- Risk-averse foreign investors could **hold back fresh investments in India** affecting the capital investment rates in India which is very important to support the growth rates in developing economies like India.

Positives:

- Indian companies are **not major participants in the global supply chains originating in China.**
- **The declining crude oil prices** could aid in limiting fiscal deficit and controlling inflation.

For more information on this issue refer:

[CNA dated Feb 9, 2020](#)

F. Prelims Facts

Nothing here for today!!!

G. Tidbits

1. Bill to amend Banking Regulation Act

- The Parliament is likely to clear a bill to **amend the Banking Regulation Act to bring multi-state cooperative banks under effective regulation of the [RBI](#).**
- This move comes in the backdrop of increasing instances of fraud being reported in the co-operative banks.
- The amendment seeks to address weaknesses in the cooperative banking sector of India.

H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Q1. Which of the following statements is/are correct?

1. Birds account for the largest number of species listed in the list of migratory species as per the Conservation of Migratory Species Appendices.
2. India alone accounts for around 450 species of the total 650 species globally listed under the CMS Appendices.

Options:

- a. 1 only
- b. 2 only
- c. Both 1 and 2
- d. Neither 1 nor 2

Answer:

Option c

Explanation:

- Currently, the total number of migratory fauna from India numbers 457 species.
- Birds account for the largest share of the migratory species, accounting for about 83% (380 species).
- India alone accounts for around 450 species of the total 650 species globally listed under the CMS Appendices.

Q2. Which of the following statements is/are correct with respect to fishing cats?

1. They are found in south and south-east Asia only.
2. It is listed as endangered on the IUCN Red List.
3. In India, the fishing cat is included in Schedule II of the Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.

Options:

- a. 1 only
- b. 1 and 3 only
- c. 1, 2 and 3
- d. 2 only

Answer:

Option a

Explanation:

- The fishing cats are found in very few places in the south and south-east Asia.
- It is broadly but discontinuously distributed in Asia and is primarily found in the Terai region of the Himalayan foothills in India and Nepal, in eastern India, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka.
- Since 2016, the fishing cat is listed as Vulnerable on the IUCN Red List, which means that it faces a high threat of extinction in the wild.
- In India, the fishing cat is included in Schedule I of the Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 and thereby protected from hunting.

Q3. Which of the following statements are is/correct with respect to the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1958?

1. As per the definition under the Act, the “ancient monument” must have been in existence for not less than two hundred years.
2. As per the Act, there is a ban on construction within 100 metres of a centrally protected monument.

Options:

- a. 1 only
- b. 2 only
- c. Both 1 and 2
- d. Neither 1 nor 2

Answer:

Option b

Explanation:

- “Ancient monument” means any structure, erection or monument, or any tumulus or place of interment, or any cave, rock-sculpture, inscription or monolith, which is of historical, archaeological or artistic interest and which has been in existence for not less than one hundred years.
- There is a ban on construction within 100 metres of a centrally protected monument and regulated construction within 100-200 metres under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1958.

Q4. Which of the following is the correct description of the P-8I?

- a. Air-independent propulsion submarine
- b. Indigenously developed frigate of the Indian Navy
- c. Amphibious warfare ship of the Indian Navy
- d. Anti-submarine warfare capable aircraft

Answer:

Option d

Explanation:

- The Boeing P-8 Poseidon is a military aircraft developed and produced by Boeing Defense, Space & Security.
- It is designed for long-range anti-submarine warfare (ASW), anti-surface warfare (ASuW), and intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) missions.
- It is armed with torpedoes, Harpoon anti-ship missiles and other weapons.
- The P-8s Indian variant is referred to as P-8I.

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. Discuss the economic impact of the global spread of the novel coronavirus on the global economy in general, and the Indian economy in particular. What should be India's response to the challenge posed by it? (15 marks, 250 words)
2. The U.S.-Taliban agreement may not bring lasting peace to Afghanistan and the region at large. Analyze. (10 marks, 150 words)

