

2020



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CURRENT AFFAIRS

ECOLOGY & ENVIRONMENT

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BusinessLine



1. E-flows in River Ganga

Why in News?

- According to the **Central Water Commission (CWC)**, **4 of the 11 hydro power projects** on the upper reaches of the river Ganga's tributaries are **violating Ganga ecological flow (e-flow) norms**.
- The **non-compliant** ones are:
 - Vishnuprayag Hydroelectric project - Alaknanda River
 - Srinagar Hydroelectric project - Alaknanda River
 - Maneri Bhali Phase 2 - Bhagirathi River
 - Pashulok - Ganga Mainstream River
- Violating the e-flow norms **can mean closure of the project or a hefty fine**.

Ecological- Flow Norms

- The Central Government under the **Environment (Protection) Act, 1986** has notified the minimum environmental flows for the River Ganga that has to be maintained at various locations on the river.
- This is **to ensure that the river has at least the minimum required environmental flow of water even after the river flow gets diverted by projects and structures for purposes like irrigation, hydropower, domestic and industrial use etc.**
 - This is an important step taken towards maintaining the uninterrupted flow (**Aviral** flow) of the river.
- The **Central Water Commission is the designated authority** and responsible for supervision and monitoring of flows.

Power Companies and E-flow Norms

- The Centre's e-flow notification came into effect in October 2018 and gave companies three years to modify their design plans to ensure that a minimum amount of water flowed during all seasons.
- In September 2019, the government advanced this deadline, from October 2021 to December 2019.

Central Water Commission

- CWC is a premier technical organization of India in the field of water resources and is presently functioning as an attached office of the **Ministry of Jal Shakti**.
- It was formed in **1974-1975** via a notification.
- The Commission is entrusted with:
 - The general responsibilities of initiating, coordinating and furthering in consultation of the State Governments concerned,
 - Schemes for control, conservation and utilization of water resources throughout the country, for the purpose of flood control,

irrigation, navigation, drinking water supply and water power development.

The Ganga River System

- The headwaters of the Ganga, called the 'Bhagirathi' is fed by the Gangotri Glacier and joined by the Alaknanda at Devprayag in Uttarakhand.
- **Vishnuprayag** is one of the Panch Prayag (five confluences) of Alaknanda River, and lies at the confluence of Alaknanda River and Dhauliganga River.
- At Haridwar, Ganga emerges from the mountains to the plains.
- The Ganga is joined by many tributaries from the Himalayas, a few of them being major rivers such as the Yamuna, the Ghaghara, the Gandak and the Kosi.

Panch Prayag

- Panch Prayag (Pañca prayāga) is an expression in Hindu religious ethos, specifically used to connote the five sacred river confluences in the Garhwal Himalayas in the state of Uttarakhand, India.
- The **five prayags** - prayag meaning "place of confluence of rivers" in Sanskrit - also termed as "Prayag pentad" are Vishnuprayag, Nandaprayag, Karnaprayag, Rudraprayag and Devprayag, in the descending flow sequence of their occurrence.

2. Addition to Ramsar Sites

Why in News?

India has added 10 more wetlands to the sites protected by the **Ramsar Convention**.

- With this, a total of 37 sites in the country have been recognised under the **Ramsar Convention**.
 - These are:
 - **Maharashtra: Nandur Madhameshwar (state's first)**
 - **Punjab: Keshopur-Miani, Beas Conservation Reserve and Nangal**
 - **Uttar Pradesh: Nawabganj, Parvati Agra, Saman, Samaspur, Sandi and Sarsai Nawar**

Ramsar Convention

- It was **signed in 1971** in the **Iranian city of Ramsar** and has been effective since 1975.
- It is **one of the oldest inter-governmental accords** for preserving the ecological character of wetlands.
- It is also known as the **Convention on Wetlands**.

- Its **aim** is to develop and maintain an international network of wetlands which are important for the conservation of global biological diversity and for sustaining human life through the maintenance of their ecosystem components, processes and benefits.
- Wetlands declared as Ramsar sites are protected **under strict guidelines** of the convention.

Montreux Record

- Montreux Record under the Ramsar Convention is a **register of wetland sites on the List of Wetlands of International Importance** where changes in ecological character have occurred, are occurring, or are likely to occur as a result of technological developments, pollution or other human interference.
- It is maintained as part of the Ramsar List.
- Currently, **two wetlands of India are in Montreux record: Keoladeo National Park (Rajasthan) and Loktak Lake (Manipur).**
- **Chilika lake (Odisha)** was placed in the record but was **later removed** from it.

3. E-Retailers to collect Plastic Waste

Why in News?

The Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) told the National Green Tribunal (NGT) that E-commerce giants Amazon and Flipkart need to fulfil their **extended producer responsibility** under the **Plastic Waste Management Rules, 2016**.

- They need to establish a system for collecting back the plastic waste generated due to the packaging of their products.

Plastic Management Rules, 2016

- These rules were framed in 2016 which extended the responsibility to collect waste generated from the products to their producers and brand owners.
 - They have to approach local bodies for the formulation of plan/system for the plastic waste management within the prescribed time frame.
- The rules have been extended to villages as well and Gram Panchayats have been given more responsibility.
 - Earlier, it was limited to municipal districts.
- CPCB has been mandated to formulate the guidelines for thermoset plastic (plastic difficult to recycle).
 - Earlier, there was no specific provision for such a type of plastic.
 - Manufacturing and use of non-recyclable multi-layered plastic are to be phased in two years, i.e. by 2018.

- The 2016 rules were **amended in 2018**, laying emphasis on the **phasing out of Multilayered Plastic (MLP)**, which are "non-recyclable, or non-energy recoverable, or with no alternate use."
 - The amended Rules also **prescribe a central registration system** for the registration of the producer/importer/brand owner.
 - The amendment provided that registration should be automated and take into account ease of doing business.
 - A national registry has been prescribed for producers with a presence in more than two states.
 - A state-level registration has been prescribed for smaller producers/brand owners operating within one or two states.

Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR)

- EPR is a policy approach under which producers are given a significant responsibility – financial and/or physical – for the treatment or disposal of post-consumer products.
- Assigning such responsibility to the producers could reduce the negative environmental impact.
- **Benefits of EPR:**
 - Shared responsibility for waste management
 - Incentives to prevent wastes at the source
 - Promote product design for the environment
 - Support the achievement of public recycling and materials management goals.

4. Someshwara Wildlife Sanctuary

- **Someshwara Wildlife Sanctuary** is a protected wildlife sanctuary in the **Western Ghats** of Karnataka state in India.
- It is named after the presiding deity "**Lord Someshwara**" of the famed Someshwara temple located within the sanctuary.
- The sanctuary was established in 1974 with an area of 88.40 km² (34.13 sq mi).
 - It was subsequently expanded to 314.25 km² (121.33 sq mi) in the year 2011 by adding
 - Balehalli Reserve Forest
 - Agumbe State Forest
 - Someshwara Reserved Forest
 - Tombatlu Reserved Forest areas
- The Someshwara Wildlife Sanctuary has **tropical wet evergreen forests**, west coast semi evergreen forests and southern secondary moist mixed deciduous forests in its ranges.
- The perennial Sitanadi River flows through the sanctuary.
- Some of the other tourist attractions nearby are

- Agumbe Sunset Point
- Barkana Falls
- Onake Abbi Falls
- Jogigundi Falls

5. Operation Vanilla

Why in News?

Recently, the Indian Navy has launched the 'Operation Vanilla' to assist the population of Madagascar affected by **Cyclone Diane**.

- Indian Navy also diverted a large amphibious ship viz. **INS Airavat** carrying clothing, medicines, and other relief material to provide assistance and support in the relief operations.

Cyclone Diane

- It is a **tropical cyclone**.
- **Origin:** North-west off the coast of **Mauritius in the South-western Indian Ocean**.
- Madagascar has been hit by it and there has been heavy flooding and landslides causing loss of lives and displacement, affecting more than 92,000 people. India has been the **first country to respond to floods in Madagascar**.

Significance

- Indian assistance to Madagascar is in consonance with the Prime Minister's vision of '**Security and Growth for all in the Region (SAGAR)**'.
- India is working with France to develop strategic and economic partnership involving **Madagascar, Reunion Islands-Comoros** so as to balance the growing influence of China in that part of the Indian Ocean Region.

6. Introduction of African Cheetah in India

Why in News?

- Recently, the Supreme Court has lifted its seven-year-long stay on a proposal to introduce **African Cheetahs from Namibia into the Indian habitat**.
 - In May 2012, the top court had stalled the plan to introduce the animal into the Palpur Kuno sanctuary citing it a "foreign species"
- Court has now allowed to initiate the **introduction of foreign Cheetahs** into the **Palpur Kuno sanctuary** on an experimental basis.
- In 1952, the Asiatic Cheetah was **officially declared extinct** from India.

Asiatic Cheetah and African Cheetah

- The Asiatic Cheetah is classified as a “Critically Endangered” species by the IUCN Red list, and is believed to survive only in Iran.
- The African Cheetahs, who are present in the Wild, have Vulnerable status in the IUCN Red List.

Kuno National Park

- **Kuno National Park** is a protected area in Madhya Pradesh that received the status of national park in 2018.
- The protected area was established in 1981 as a wildlife sanctuary in the Sheopur and Morena districts.
- It was also known as Kuno-Palpur and Palpur-Kuno Wildlife Sanctuary.
- It is part of the Kathiawar-Gir dry deciduous forests ecoregion.



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